

Why GAO Did This Study

Over 1.2 million people in the United States are estimated to have HIV. Research has shown that persons with HIV who lack stable housing are less likely to adhere to HIV care. HUD's HOPWA program and HRSA's Ryan White program provide grants to localities that can be used to fund housing and supportive services specifically for persons with HIV.

GAO was mandated to review housing assistance for persons with HIV. This report addresses (1) the need for housing assistance for persons with HIV and the extent to which assistance reaches communities, (2) results achieved through HOPWA and Ryan White, and (3) federal oversight of these programs. GAO analyzed program data as of 2012, reviewed policies, and visited a non-generalizable sample of four geographically diverse cities that received both HOPWA and Ryan White funding.

What GAO Recommends

If Congress wishes HOPWA funding to be more effectively targeted, it should consider revising the funding formula to reflect the number of living persons with HIV. GAO also recommends that (1) HUD require a consistent methodology for estimating unmet housing needs and (2) both HUD and HRSA improve the reliability and use of performance data to manage their programs. HRSA agreed with GAO's recommendations. HUD agreed with the first recommendation but disagreed with the second, stating that it already assesses trends in some program data. GAO clarified that HUD should identify reporting issues by analyzing trends in its unmet housing need data.

View [GAO-15-298](#). For more information, contact Daniel Garcia-Diaz at (202) 512-8678 or garciadiazd@gao.gov.

PERSONS WITH HIV

Funding Formula for Housing Assistance Could Be Better Targeted, and Performance Data Could Be Improved

What GAO Found

The extent to which persons with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) need housing assistance is not known, in part because the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) estimate of the housing needs of persons with HIV, including those with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), is not reliable. HUD does not require Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) grantees to use a consistent methodology to calculate unmet need. The agency has taken steps towards developing a standard methodology, but it has not established time frames for finalizing these efforts. GAO's work on assessing data reliability indicates that data should be consistent. Because HUD does not require grantees to use selected data sources in a consistent manner, the reported information on unmet housing needs of persons with HIV are not comparable across jurisdictions and are not useful and reliable. In addition, the statutory HOPWA funding formula is based on cumulative AIDS cases since 1981, including persons who have died, rather than on current numbers of persons living with HIV (including those with AIDS). This approach has led to areas with similar numbers of living HIV cases receiving different amounts of funding. Because HOPWA funds are awarded based on cumulative AIDS cases, these funds are not being targeted as effectively or equitably as they could be.

Agency data for HOPWA and the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Ryan White program indicate most recipients of assistance obtained stable, permanent housing, but Ryan White housing data may have limitations. HRSA, within the Department of Health and Human Services, does not require Ryan White grantees to maintain current data on clients' housing status. However, it uses the data that grantees report to calculate the proportion of clients that have stable housing. HRSA is charged with tracking Ryan White clients' housing status as a part of the White House's National HIV/AIDS Strategy. Federal internal control standards state that events should be promptly recorded to maintain their relevance and value to management in controlling operations and making decisions. Because HRSA does not require grantees to maintain current data on clients' housing status, HRSA's data may be of limited usefulness in tracking the National HIV/AIDS Strategy goal of improving clients' housing status.

HUD and HRSA perform oversight activities but may be missing opportunities to use data to improve performance. HUD staff conduct risk-based monitoring of HOPWA grantees, and HRSA staff have improved monitoring of Ryan White grantees. HUD and HRSA both collect performance data from their grantees and take steps to ensure that the data are complete and submitted in a timely manner. HUD uses performance data to create summaries of program performance but does not have a specific process for comparing individual grantees' year-to-year data for unmet housing need. Federal internal control standards note the importance of such comparisons. By not analyzing these trends, HUD may not be identifying and addressing reporting problems. In addition, HRSA staff responsible for monitoring Ryan White grantees do not review grantee data on housing assistance provided. Federal internal control standards state that activities need to be established to monitor performance measures. By not focusing attention on housing data, HRSA staff with monitoring responsibility are not proactively using available resources to monitor individual grantees' contributions to the National HIV/AIDS Strategy goal of improving clients' housing status.