

Housing and Recovery through Peer Services (HARPS) program

Overview

Homelessness is traumatic and cyclical. People with mental health and substance use disorders are most at risk for becoming homeless. Lack of housing interferes with one's ability to receive services and jeopardizes the chances for successful recovery. The Housing and Recovery through Peer Services (HARPS) program provides supportive housing services and short-term housing bridge subsidies to at risk individuals. At risk individuals are people who are exiting, or at risk of entering inpatient behavioral healthcare settings.

HARPS uses the Evidence-Based Practice, (EBP) Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) model from Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Certified Peers counselors deliver these services and follow the principles of the EBP:

- Choice in housing (including location and composition)
- Access to housing (Housing First)
- Integrated housing (Scattered throughout the community)
- Separation of housing and services
- Rights of Tenancy
- Flexible and voluntary services (varying frequency and intensity)
- Safe, decent, and affordable housing

The HARPS Program provides short-term, bridge subsidies to assist individuals with costs associated with housing such as application fees, deposits, first/last month's rent etc.

Some of the HARPS participants also qualified for long-term housing subsidies through the Department of Commerce.

Eligibility requirements

HARPS priority populations:


- Individuals who experience behavioral health disorders (either a mental health disorder, substance use disorder, or both) and who demonstrate a medical necessity for inpatient behavioral health services; or
- Individuals who are discharged from, or at risk of entering:
 - Psychiatric inpatient settings; or
 - Substance abuse treatment inpatient settings;
- Individuals who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness (broad definition of homeless, couch surfing included).

Eligible individuals can choose to access the subsidies or services.

Authority

In the 2014 supplemental budget, the legislature adopted 2SSB 6312 and funded three HARPS supportive housing pilot projects in North Sound BH ASO, Greater Columbia BH ASO, and Great Rivers BH ASO to:

- Assist individuals' transition from institutional settings into permanent supportive housing;
- Provide the basis for supportive housing services; and
- Provide integration opportunities between substance use treatment services and BH ASOs.



In 2016, the legislature allocated an additional \$2 million from the state general funds and \$762,000 of the federal block grant to expand the HARPS Program to four more BH ASOs: King County, Pierce/Optom, Spokane, and Salish.

In 2017, the Legislature adopted ESSB 5883 and allocated an additional \$2,762,000 for another HARPS team that is located in the Thurston-Mason BH ASO.

In 2020, two additional HARPS Teams were created: one in the Southwest region, and another in the North Central region of the state, providing statewide coverage.

2019-20 budget and staffing model

Each team consists of three FTEs (a MHP professional, supervisor or clinical oversight and two certified peer counselors). Each team's annual budget for staffing: \$190,440.

Housing bridge subsidies are estimated at \$500 per person for three months across the ten sites. Each region is allocated funds for bridge subsidies. The bridge subsidy may be used for cost related to housing such as application fees, security deposits, utilities assistance, and rent.

In the 2019 Legislative Session, HARPS was awarded an additional \$1,000,000 for bridge subsidies specifically for individuals exiting Substance Use Disorder Treatment.

FY 20 number served

Total referrals from the state hospitals: 11

Statewide totals:

Housed: 1453 from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

Received/receiving supportive housing services: 379

Statewide SUD only totals:

Housed: 219 from January 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020

Received/receiving supportive housing services: 42

Key partners

BH ASOs and their respective local mental health and housing provider agencies as well as direct contracts

Housing and recovery through Peer Services program (HARPS) fact sheet
December, 2020

with the following providers; Greater Lakes Mental Health Care (Pierce region), Consumer Voices Are Born (Southwest region), and Catholic Charities (North Central region).

For more information

Wanda Johns, wanda.johns@hca.wa.gov, 360-725-1947