

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 to at risk individuals. At risk individuals are people who are exiting or at risk of entering inpatient, behavioral healthcare settings. HARPS uses Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) from Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Certified Peers 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
- 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 moving.

Many 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 at-risk of homelessness (broad definition of homeless, couch surfing included).

Authority

In the 2014 supplemental budget, the Legislature 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 BHOs.


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/Optum, Spokane and Salish.

In 2017, the Legislature allocated an additional \$2,762,000 for another HARPS team that will be located in the Thurston-Mason BH ASO.

2017-19 budget and staffing model

Each team consists of three FTEs (a MHP professional and two certified peer counselors). Total team annual costs: \$190,440.

Housing bridge subsidies are estimated at \$500 per person for three months across all the eight sites.



Each region is allocated funds for bridge subsidies. The 'bridge' subsidy may be used for application fees, security deposits, utilities assistance, and rent.

In the 2019 Legislative Session HARPS was awarded an additional \$500,000 for bridge subsidies for individuals exiting Substance Use Disorder Treatment.

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

FY 19 cost and number served

- Total referrals from the state hospitals: 26
 - Housed: 20
 - Receiving supportive housing services: 6
- Statewide totals:
 - Housed: 1747 from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

Received/receiving supportive housing services: 479

Key partners

BH ASOs and their respective local mental health and housing provider agencies.

For more information

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