

These agencies contributed to and subscribe to the harm reduction housing guidelines.

AIDS Foundation
OF CHICAGO



Heartland Human Care Services, Inc.



Heartland Health Outreach, Inc.



HARM REDUCTION HOUSING: GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENTS

Harm reduction housing

is designed to maximize access to housing and provide the support necessary to minimize the loss of housing for people who use substances and engage in other high-risk behaviors. Typically, individuals who are appropriate for this type of housing have not been successful in mainstream housing or have cycled in and out of homelessness due to the consequences of high-risk behaviors.

Harm reduction housing offers a continuum of service models and strategies. For some, abstinence will be an immediate goal. For others, the focus will be on improving the quality of life while taking steps to reduce the harm caused by risky behaviors—steps that may or may not lead to abstinence. Models will vary based on location, the type of lease involved, the amount of support provided by the program, and the kind of people served by the program. Regardless of the model, the goal of harm reduction housing is always the same – to maximize access to and minimize loss of housing, while taking into account the rights of the individual along with the needs and well being of the community.

When you participate in a harm reduction housing program:

- The program will establish and maintain a relationship with you even if you choose to engage in high-risk behaviors. Your decision to engage in a high-risk behavior is not a reason in and of itself to exclude you.
- Staff will inform you about your rights and responsibilities regarding your housing: your continued participation in housing or services will be based on your functioning and adherence to these expectations, not on whether you engage in high-risk behaviors. You will also be educated about the rights and responsibilities of the housing program and staff.
- You will be allowed to choose the kind of supportive services you want to receive. Engaging in services, however, is not a requirement or a condition for keeping your housing.
- Success is defined as maintaining housing, rather than behavior change. Any behavioral goals that are established will be developed based first and foremost on your desires, in collaboration with staff recommendations.
- With the help of the staff, you will learn how to be a good neighbor as a way to maintain your lease and right to housing.
- You will explore with staff ways to change, reduce, or eliminate high-risk behaviors in order to help you meet your responsibilities to the program. The information provided to you will be accurate and balanced, neither minimizing nor exaggerating the dangers and potential consequences of high-risk behaviors and substance use. The intent is to help you review and weigh choices while preserving housing.
- It is likely that you will be ambivalent about the process of change. Therefore, staff will look for opportunities to help you build motivation for change as you explore ways to reduce the harm that results from high-risk behaviors.
- You will develop a housing plan with staff that identifies strategies and steps you can take in the event you are at risk for becoming homeless. Staff will refer you to more appropriate permanent housing in the event your current housing is no longer an option.
- Staff who support harm reduction housing recognize that the decision-making power rests with you, the participant, and that they and the housing program are partners with you in the change process.