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## **HOPWA Provider Spotlight: Lutheran Social Services of Northern California**

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The Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) program received its first direct appropriations on October 28, 1992. The first appropriation provided formula funding to 39 jurisdictions including 11 states, Puerto Rico, and 27 cities. Thirty years later, the HOPWA program has grown and currently provides funding to 143 formula jurisdictions, 82 competitive permanent supportive housing (PSH) grants, 20 competitive special projects of national significance (SPNS) grants and over 1,000 project sponsors. This HOPWA Provider Spotlight series is part of HOPWA's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary recognition and highlights

HOPWA programs throughout the nation along with the important work they are doing to ensure low-income people living with HIV and their families have access to safe, stable housing.

This HOPWA Provider Spotlight features an interview with Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of Northern California located in San Francisco, California and includes information on LSS's work with formerly incarcerated people with HIV. LSS is also featured in new HOPWA resources titled, [Homecoming: Life after Incarceration](#). *Homecoming* focuses on raising awareness of the myriad challenges and barriers people experience as they re-enter society after incarceration. The resource showcases examples of organizations, subject matter experts, Federal and local officials, advocates, and community members who are leading the way in supporting the reentry population and features the often-marginalized voices of people with lived experience. *Homecoming* has a secondary focus on the connection between HIV and incarceration and highlights the challenges and opportunities that exist in addressing the housing and health needs of people with HIV exiting jails and prisons.

- Watch the documentary style [video episodes](#) which use the unique capabilities of film to humanize this topic. Each video is 20-40 minutes in length and includes interviews with post-release housing and services clients and providers, as well as researchers and policy makers in the field.
- Explore the [toolkit](#) which includes a book with chapters that dive deeply into key topics related to incarceration, housing, and HIV.

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## HOPWA Provider Spotlight Interview

**HOPWA Provider:** Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of Northern California

**Location:** San Francisco, California

**Website:** [www.lssnorcal.org](http://www.lssnorcal.org)

**Twitter Handle:** @LSSNorCal

**What is your organization's mission? Broadly, what kind of services does your organization provide?**

LSS of Northern California's mission is to promote stability and honor the dignity of those we serve by providing supportive housing services that lead to self-sufficiency. LSS provides supportive housing services to help low-income adults and families who have experienced homelessness or housing instability. Services provided are money management, case management, and resident activities.

Three of our programs in San Francisco support people living with HIV. Our HUD-funded [Forensic Housing Program](#) specifically houses formerly incarcerated people living with HIV. Services provided include: coordinated case management, [money management](#), linkages to HIV prevention, access to benefits counseling, workshops/groups focused on teaching basic life skills, access to medical, access to oral health care, and access to behavioral health services targeting post-incarcerated individuals living with HIV.

**Where is your organization located?**

Our agency territory runs from San Luis Obispo County up to the California/Oregon border. Currently our programs cover San Francisco, Contra Costa, Sacramento, Shasta, San Joaquin, and Yolo counties.

**How long has your organization been active? When did you first receive HOPWA funds?**

Our organization was founded in 1968. LSS first received HOPWA funds in March 2012.

**How do HOPWA funds contribute to your organization's mission? What services or programs within your organization are supported by HOPWA funds?**

Only our Forensic Housing Program is supported by HOPWA funding. This funding makes it possible to provide permanent housing, onsite staffing, programming, and supportive services to 30 formerly incarcerated individuals at any time.

**What is a major success that your organization has been able to achieve with the aid of HOPWA funds?**

Our program has historically been a great stabilizing factor for many people leaving incarceration over the past 10 years we have administered the program. (The program was handled by a previous agency for about 10 years prior.) One of our recent major successes has been our ability to safely house and support our participants during the ongoing pandemic, specifically with HOPWA CARES Act funding. We were able to address immediate needs around safety and security as well as food and transportation.

**What principles, strategies, and/or best practices guide your organization in serving formerly incarcerated people with HIV?**

As an agency, LSS fully promotes and supports a very client-centered approach to working with all our clients, residents, and program participants. Harm Reduction theory is a big part of how we do this.

**How does your work connect to the National HIV/AIDS strategy and contribute to ending the HIV epidemic?**

The overall goal of our program is to stabilize and support all of our participants after incarceration, including connecting with medical case management and medical care. In being successful in this endeavor, we feel we are contributing to the overall goal of getting to zero by promoting overall health and prevention measures.

**What challenges or barriers has your organization faced while serving formerly incarcerated people with HIV? How has your organization addressed or surmounted those challenges?**

The availability of appropriate affordable housing continues to be a barrier here. There are not enough units or opportunities to support all of the need specifically for formerly incarcerated people living with HIV. Also, the program has historically been underfunded, and with no opportunity for additional HOPWA funding, onsite programming and activities are not funded to any significant extent. Our agency has been creative over the years to seek out additional grants, private funding, and in-kind opportunities to meet this need to better support the housing site.

**What hopes or goals does your organization have for the future? How do you see HOPWA supporting those goals?**

LSS hopes to be able to continue to support this specific group of people in need as housing and other services for persons with chronic conditions fold into the wider set of housing and services for other low-income individuals. HOPWA can support this goal by continuing to fund programs like these until the issues of overall access to appropriate support and care for formerly incarcerated individuals living with HIV can be achieved.

**Is there anything else that you'd like to share (something that makes your organization unique, advice for other HOPWA providers, etc.)?**

Our relationships and partnerships with other local community programs and agencies have helped this program be a continued success. Leveraging these community resources

and support for the people we house has been key to the overall success of the program and the people we serve.

**Note:** *A special thank you to the staff at LSS for sharing the important work being done in Northern California to provide needed housing and services to people living with HIV and their families.*

Visit [HOPWA program's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary](#) for more information.

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