

Case Study Form: The HIV Enhanced Engagement Team (HEET)

1. Name of Program

The HIV Enhanced Engagement Team (HEET) is a collaborative partnership in Seattle, Washington, involving the Downtown Emergency Service Center (housing and residential supports and grant administration), Evergreen Treatment Services (case management), The Compass Center (emergency shelter), AIDS Housing of Washington (systems integration) and Northwest Resource Associates (evaluation).

2. Brief Summary

Funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), Special Projects of National Significance (SPNS) program, HEET is locally operated and administered as an integrated, multi-agency initiative by Seattle's Downtown Emergency Services Center. HEET provides outreach, engagement, case management, and emergency and permanent housing to homeless persons living with HIV/AIDS. The program is specifically focused on those who are hardest to house: Homeless persons who have not successfully engaged with existing AIDS case management, housing, mental health and substance abuse programs. Most of the individuals served have extensive and ongoing histories of poly-substance abuse and criminal justice system involvement and have been evicted from previous housing due to behavioral problems related to substance abuse and mental illness.

Referrals to the HEET program come primarily from social work staff in the King County Jail, as well as from HIV/AIDS service providers, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, and the Washington State Department of Corrections.

HEET employs three outreach workers/case managers who offer a low-barrier, harm reduction approach to outreach and engagement and ongoing case management supports to clients admitted to the project. These staff members are employed by Evergreen Treatment Services as part of their Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) team. REACH is an outreach-oriented community team focused on engaging and housing individuals identified as chronic public inebriates. Staff is housed and operates out of the Downtown Emergency Service Center's Lyon Building. The HEET case management staff work with referral sources to assess referrals to the HEET program, provide community-based outreach and ongoing case management services to HEET clients (regardless of whether they are incarcerated or in the community), assist HEET clients in meeting court-related appointments and obligations, support HEET clients as they prepare for the transition from homelessness to emergency or permanent housing, and work with clients to achieve client-identified goals and desired outcomes.

HEET also employs one Residential Services Specialist (staff at the Downtown Emergency Service Center), who provides housing support to 10 units of permanent housing dedicated to

HEET clients at the Morrison Hotel in downtown Seattle. The Morrison includes 190 units of permanent, supportive housing for disabled individuals recovering from chronic homelessness. Residential services include help with the application process for housing, assistance with tasks related to moving in and establishing a new home, and development of basic social and daily living skills required to remain successfully housed and sustain tenancy over time.

Additional shelter-based emergency housing is provided by the Compass Center at several locations in the city. Through a contract between DESC and the Compass Center, shelter beds are made available as needed to HEET clients who are in the engagement phase of services. Both pre-recovery beds (that will tolerate substance use) and clean-and-sober beds are available. The HEET program also has access to five Shelter Plus Care vouchers to house clients who do not need the level of 24-hour housing supports provided at the Morrison units. These tenant-based vouchers are provided for HEET clients under the umbrella of Evergreen’s REACH program, which maintains a contract for Shelter Plus Care with Plymouth Housing Group, the county’s Shelter Plus Care manager.

The HEET evaluation (Northwest Resources Associates) tracks the success of the program over time, as measured by several key variables, including: duration of tenancy, nature and extent of continued involvement with the criminal justice system, development of treatment plans and increases in client stability over time. Evaluation staff collects and processes data from multiple sources, including the HEET case managers, the HEET Residential Services Specialist and the King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention.

AIDS Housing of Washington maintains an active role in the HEET program, facilitating monthly meetings of the HEET Team, which includes representatives from each of the collaborating agencies. AHW staff and consultants assist the HEET partners in identifying and negotiating system-level barriers to program success, (e.g., identification of additional housing resources as needed, development of relationships with key stakeholders in the HIV/AIDS and criminal justice systems such as the Lifelong AIDS Alliance, the Northwest Family Center, the Harborview Madison Clinic and the Washington State Department of Corrections, etc.)

3. Contact information

***Program Name: HIV Enhanced Engagement Team (HEET)
Contact Information***

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4. Goals and Philosophy

The overall goals of the HEET Project include:

- Engaging, housing and serving people living with HIV/AIDS who have not successfully engaged in existing housing and service programs due to complex problems that include active substance use disorders, mental illness, criminal justice system involvement and poor housing histories
- Promoting an interdisciplinary, cross-systems approach to engaging, housing and serving people living with HIV/AIDS in order to meet the range of client needs wherever they are in the process of stabilization and recovery
- Demonstrating the capacity of the service system to successfully house and treat those who are among the most challenging of persons living with HIV/AIDS
- Documenting cross-system service efficiencies (such as reduced utilization of jail and crisis system services) that are achieved when high-need, high-risk persons living with HIV/AIDS are successfully housed and provided with supportive services in the community

The philosophy of the HEET Project is rooted in the concepts of “Housing First”:

- The HEET Team functions under the assumption that every human being has the capacity to engage in meaningful relationships that can lead to making choices to increase personal health and well-being.
- The HEET Team seeks to meet each client where he or she is personally, socially, emotionally and physically.
- Services are provided in the community, including to clients located in local and state correctional facilities.
- The Program does not consider re-arrest, relapse, decompensation or eviction from housing as an individual failure, but components of ongoing physical and psychological illnesses.
- The door to the HEET Project is always open for HEET clients, who are encouraged to continue to sustain contact with the program over extended periods of time that may be disrupted by re-incarceration, hospitalization and other challenges.

The goals of the client services provided by the HEET project include:

- Increase client stability/level of functioning
- Facilitate client access to appropriate housing
- Assist clients in securing entitlements
- Improve client quality of life (involvement in socialization/community/meaningful activity)
- Reduce negative consequences/harmful outcomes of clients' addiction
- Improve client access to/utilization of appropriate health care
- Reduce periods of incarceration
- Assist clients in maintaining stable housing
- Help facilitate client engagement in community-based HIV/AIDS case management systems

5. Background Information

The concept for the HEET project was developed as part of a regional planning initiative called the AIDS Housing and Service Systems Integration Initiative (AHSSI). Utilizing unexpended, one-time HOPWA funds, the City of Seattle provided an 18-month planning grant to AIDS Housing of Washington to focus on cross-system barriers to effective housing, treatment and support services for persons living with HIV/AIDS. AHW staff and consultants assembled the AHSSI Advisory Council, a broad range of stakeholders, comprised of four individuals living with HIV/AIDS who had histories of homelessness and representatives from multiple systems, including: HIV/AIDS services and housing, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, low-income and supportive housing developers and providers, local law enforcement, courts and jails, state social service and correctional authorities and local governmental authorities with the responsibility for health, housing and human services.

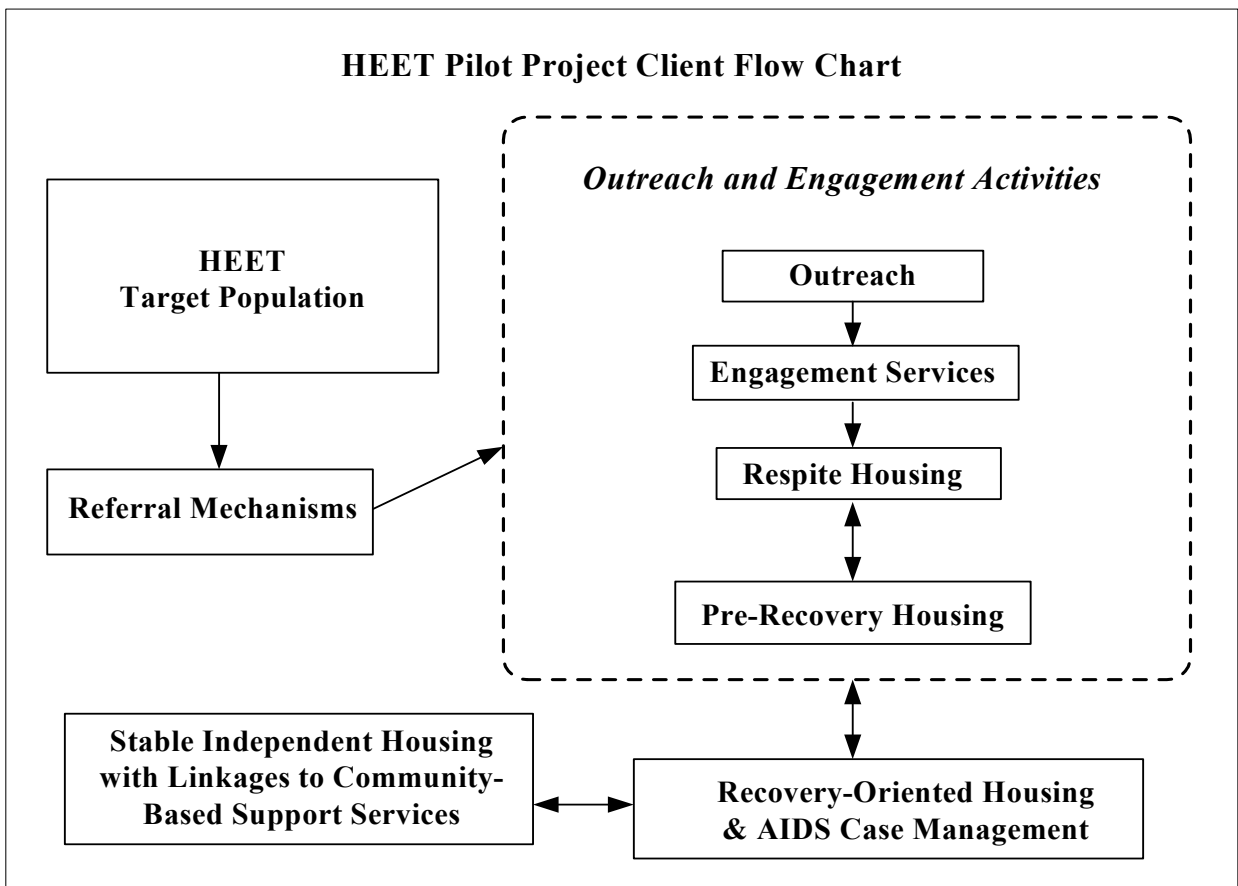
Early on in the planning process, the Council determined that its primary focus would be on those individuals living with HIV/AIDS who were falling through the region's extensive housing and social services safety net. This included individuals who were not even able to access or succeed in the Lyon Building, a 64-unit, permanent housing facility for people living with HIV/AIDS, mental illness and substance use disorders. Although some AHSSI members were skeptical and maintained that "some people just can't be housed," AHSSI moved forward under the assumption that even the most challenging clients with significant medical, mental health, drug/alcohol and criminal justice involvement could be housed if the right mix of outreach, engagement, case management and emergency and permanent housing were made available within a harm reduction framework.

The 18-month planning grant included resources to hire a full-time staff position and an external consultant to conduct research and to assist in staffing and facilitating the work of the AHSSI Advisory Council. AHSSI staff collected data from across multiple systems in an effort to determine how many individuals living with HIV/AIDS were falling through the existing safety nets and might be eligible for HEET Team services. Although difficult to pinpoint with any accuracy, AHSSI staff estimated that there might be as many as 80 to 120

of these individuals, and that we might anticipate successfully engaging a significant portion of this group.

As part of the data collection process, it was determined that the HEET target population group included a disproportionately large number of both African-American and Native American individuals. This led to extensive discussion by the AHSSI Advisory Council about the definition and importance of culturally competent service delivery, and how to best cultivate the required competencies in program staff that might be hired to conduct outreach activities.

The AHSSI Advisory Council developed a basic model for the HEET program that is illustrated in the chart #1, below.



Once the HEET model was established, a partnership among the agencies that comprise the HEET program was established, and the Downtown Emergency Service Center assumed the lead role in submitting an application for funding to HUD under the auspices of their HOPWA SPNS competition. Funding was awarded to DESC, and the program was mobilized under their leadership. The initial grant included capital resources to help pay for the development of ten units of permanent housing dedicated to HEET clients.

Both formal contractual relationships and informal working agreements were set in place to define the relationships among all of the HEET partnering agencies. In addition, a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was created and signed by key representatives from the human services, housing and criminal justice system in order to stimulate and sustain the systems-level relationships on which HEET would depend for its success.

A HEET work group chaired by AIDS Housing of Washington was established and continues to meet on a monthly basis to address issues and problems that emerge in mobilization of the program, ensure ongoing cross-system dialogue and planning related to housing and treatment needs of HEET clients, to celebrate program successes and to ensure ongoing evaluation of program activities. (See more complete description of the work group contained in Section 6.i., below.)

The implementation of HEET has been highly successful in meeting the goals and objectives created by the AHSSI Advisory Council. Through the creation of extensive relationships with staff working in the jail and other engagement locations, within its first 18 months of operation, the HEET team identified more than 75 individuals meeting the criteria for HEET services. The ten units of permanent housing set aside in the Morrison Hotel were filled rapidly. Of the original group of tenants, 87.5% of whom had spent more than half of their time prior to engagement in disorganized homelessness¹, only one individual has not remained stably housed. (This individual moved to California.)

Initially, the HEET Team was funded to hire two full-time outreach/case managers, based on the data collected during the AHSSI planning process that suggested the program might be able to engage a limited portion of the 80 to 120 individuals we anticipated might be eligible for HEET services. Eighteen months into the project, each of the case managers were carrying a full individual caseload of 30 clients, with 4-6 new referrals being documented monthly.² As a result, additional Ryan White CARE Act Title I funds were requested to add a third full-time outreach/case management position to the HEET team.

With the 10 dedicated permanent apartments filled (as well as a few additional units at the Morrison made available to HEET clients by DESC, above and beyond the 10 dedicated units), the need for additional permanent housing was brought to the HEET work group for consideration. This discussion resulted in negotiation with Plymouth Housing Group, the local Shelter Plus Care manager for an additional five Shelter Plus Care units dedicated to HEET clients. Locating and securing these units required working with existing Shelter Plus Care landlords to encourage them to accept HEET clients (and the services that support them), many of whom have housing and behavioral histories that might otherwise exclude

¹ Data provided by the HEET evaluators. Disorganized homelessness is defined as living on the streets, staying irregularly with friends or family, irregular use of shelter facilities, etc.

² It is interesting to note that many of these new referrals have come not only from the established referral sources such as the county jail, but from current HEET clients who were enthusiastic about the program and referred friends and acquaintances made while incarcerated in state prison.

them from existing housing programs. Even these additional five units, however, are insufficient to meet the demand for permanent housing being created by the HEET Project. The limited availability of accessible, affordable, permanent, housing remains one of the most significant challenges faced by HEET.

6. Program Summary

a. Number of units operated

Currently (as of March 2006) the HEET team provides ongoing services to 63 clients. The addition of a third case manager has increased the program's capacity to 90 clients. There are a flexible number of emergency shelter beds available to these clients on an as-needed basis, as well as ten dedicated permanent housing units in the Morrison Hotel, a permanent supportive housing facility owned and operated by DESC. Once the HEET units at the Morrison Hotel were filled, five dedicated Shelter Plus Care vouchers were added to the program's housing portfolio to help accommodate client housing needs. HEET utilizes existing housing resources for its clients, rather than isolating members of the target population in a separate building in the community.

b. Pre-release planning

Pre-release planning services are an active component of HEET's outreach and engagement activities. The King County Jail is a primary referral source for HEET clients, and program staff work actively with incarcerated clients and jail staff to complete pre-release plans and formal release linkages. HEET staff is able to connect with clients while incarcerated, and at the immediate point of release. HEET staff also sustains contact with clients who may be incarcerated for longer periods of time in state facilities. Individuals are encouraged to re-connect with HEET services in the community at the time they complete required sentences. HEET staff work actively with Community Corrections Officers (parole/probation) to ensure successful linkage to community-based services as state-level offenders return to the community.

c. Employment assistance

Most HEET clients are not employed, nor seeking active employment. For those who are interested in and able to work, HEET staff is able to make referrals to existing vocational and employment services.

d. Transitional counseling/therapy

HEET case managers and the residential support staff provide ongoing counseling and supportive services to HEET clients, including transitional counseling. As clients are able to accept additional services and become eligible for these services, (e.g., enrollment in the public mental health system, chemical dependency treatment, AIDS case management), linkages to these services are secured and transitioning of primary client responsibilities is

able to shift to these allied systems. This transitioning process is essential to sustaining ongoing capacity within HEET to accept new client referrals.

e. Staff (Full-time, part-time, etc.)

The HEET staff configuration includes:

- 3.0 FTE Outreach workers/case managers (addition of the 3rd full-time position is pending)
- 1.0 FTE Residential Services Specialist

Special attention was given to issues of cultural competency in working with African-American and Native American populations in the hiring and training of program staff. Supervision of the HEET outreach workers/case managers is provided by the REACH team managers at Evergreen Treatment Services. Supervision of the residential support services specialist is provided by DESC's Project Manager for the Morrison Hotel. Staff from AIDS Housing of Washington provides support to systems-level activities and administrative support to the HEET work group.

f. Eligibility requirements

The target population for HEET program clients includes the following criteria:

- HIV-positive
- Homeless
- Chemically dependent
- Current or past involvement with the criminal justice system
- Focus on adults not in custody of dependent children
- Those not currently engaged in HIV/AIDS case management system

The goal of screening and assessment of clients is to screen individuals "in" to service rather than "out" of eligibility for care.

g. Rent details

Individuals sign leases for their permanent units in the Morrison Hotel, as well as leases for their tenant-based Shelter Plus Care units. HEET clients must pay 30% of any income towards rent.

h. Visitor regulations/policies

Individuals housed in the shelter beds maintained by the Compass Center, the DESC Morrison Hotel or various Shelter Plus Care units must agree to the visitor regulations and policies maintained by the specific housing program.

i. Ongoing mechanisms

The HEET work group has met approximately once a month since the inception of the program. The monthly meetings of the HEET work group are attended by:

- HEET team staff
- REACH team managers
- Morrison Hotel project manager
- DESC's Director of Housing Programs
- Executive Directors of DESC and ETS
- HEET program evaluators from Northwest Resource Associates
- Senior staff from AIDS Housing of Washington
- A systems integration consultant working for AIDS Housing of Washington

The agendas for these meetings are developed by staff at AIDS Housing of Washington. Each meeting begins with a report on program activities from the HEET staff, and then moves into a detailed discussion of specific program issues and problem areas, such as ongoing data collection requirements related to HEET clients, the need for additional low-barrier permanent housing, etc. Program milestones and successes are celebrated. Once each quarter, the HEET program evaluators elicit from the HEET work group an inventory of program changes and developments that have had a significant positive or negative impact on the program's success. (See Section 7.d., below.) Although these monthly meetings are staff and labor intensive, the regularity of these meetings and the ongoing discussion of programmatic issues has provided a forum critical to the successful implementation and management of this multi-agency, multi-system effort.

The HEET program staff maintains an extensive database on HEET clients. This data both helps to inform outreach, engagement, case management and housing support activities as well as the formal HEET program evaluation (see below). The database, which is maintained in an electronic format, was designed by the DESC Information Services Department specifically for the HEET program. Members of the HEET team and program evaluators were all involved in the database design process, and meet on a periodic basis to ensure the timeliness, accuracy and completeness of the data entered into the system.

j. NIMBY issues

Because the initial planning process and AHSSI Advisory Council were so inclusive in their membership and discussion, HEET has met only minimal resistance during the implementation phase and has won a broad degree of support among housing and service providers in the HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, mental health and criminal justice systems. The evidence of the program's success with housing those who are among the most difficult to serve has won over even those members of the AHSSI Advisory Council who were skeptical at the outset of the planning process.

The program has faced some challenges finding landlords participating in the Shelter Plus Care program who are willing to accept HEET clients into their permanent housing units.

Because of their histories of involvement with the criminal justice system and substance use histories, many landlords consider HEET clients to be less than ideal tenant candidates. Through clarifying the role of HEET case managers in providing on-site services to these tenants, several Shelter Plus Care landlords have been willing to admit HEET clients to the units that they manage.

7. Learnings and Outcomes

a. Keys to success

The success of the HEET program has been dependent on a number of critical components:

- A community with an established track record of successfully housing difficult-to-serve clients, including those living with HIV/AIDS
- An extensive, inclusive 18-month planning process that built a research- and data-based consensus on the target population and desired program goals among all involved systems
- The assignment of full-time staff to support the 18-month planning process, including research activities
- The presence of staff and consultants with experience in facilitation of group processes, “boundary spanning” across multiple systems and the creation of viable proposals for funding
- The active involvement of consumers in the planning process with histories of HIV/AIDS, homelessness, substance abuse and criminal justice system involvement
- The development of a formal model for the HEET program, and consensus on the value of implementing the model in the local community
- Securing HOPWA SPNS funds to finance implementation of the HEET model
- The hiring of direct service staff with the skills and personalities required to conduct outreach and engagement activities with the target population
- Special attention to the provision of culturally competent services to a target population that is disproportionately African-American and Native American
- The execution of a formal working agreement across participating agencies, securing their participation in the program
- The construction of strong working relationships with allied systems, including the local jail
- The securing of low-barrier, pre-recovery oriented, permanent housing units that are dedicated to HEET clients
- Regular cross-agency/cross-system meetings of the key participants in the HEET program
- The presence of a formal evaluation of the HEET program that tracks the successes of the program over time

b. Major challenges faced and strategies employed for overcoming them

Because the Seattle/King County community has had extensive experience with the planning and mobilization of specialized housing and supportive service programming, most of the challenges that might have been faced were anticipated and avoided through the AHSSI planning process and the structured environment in which the HEET program was mobilized. (See section 7.a., above.)

The largest single challenge that continues to face HEET is the capacity of our region to supply the permanent supportive housing units needed as HEET clients become ready for them. This issue, however, is a reflection of the larger issue of homelessness in King County; it is estimated that 8,000 individuals and family members are homeless on any given night in the Seattle/King County region.

c. Words of wisdom for others seeking to replicate

- Stating that there are persons who “simply can’t be housed” is a misstatement, which can be more accurately framed as follows: “There are some individuals that existing supportive housing programs have not been able to successfully house.” Housing these individuals may not be simple (or inexpensive), but with the right configuration of housing and supportive services, even the most challenging, multiple-problem client can be successfully housed.
- Cross-system efforts and interdisciplinary services are critical to successfully housing multiple-issue clients. However, such cross-system efforts are unlikely to succeed without dedicated “boundary spanning” staff with the time, skills and resources required to promote effective cross-systems planning, program development and implementation.
- Keep planning processes inclusive. The more systems and stakeholders involved, the broader the degree of consensus that will emerge to support the program goals and design. When in doubt, err on the side of inclusiveness.
- The provision of staff dedicated to the planning process is central to making change happen.
- Involving consumers in the planning process is critical to success, and greatly assists the process in staying honest and focused.
- Hiring staff with the skills to address the cultural diversity of the target population is critical to successful outreach and engagement of a population that has historically had considerable difficulty accessing housing and supportive services.
- In order to successfully engage and house individuals with criminal justice system histories, establishing close relationships with staff in the local jail and the state community correctional systems is essential. These criminal justice system partners will welcome your involvement in their work, as soon as they realize that what you have to offer can help to keep some of their most difficult offenders out of incarceration settings.

- Program start-up may be slow as word gets out that services are available. Over time, increased awareness of the program and trust in the program staff who make themselves visible in the community will pay off in increasing client referrals.
- Address gaps and barriers that emerge during the implementation of the program, keeping eligibility criteria and program requirements flexible enough to adapt to the realities that the program encounters in the community. No matter how much pre-mobilization planning occurs, the program design and service model will never completely anticipate the realities that will be encountered during the implementation phase.
- Celebrate program successes as they occur, and support and encourage program staff who may be breaking new ground with the model and services being provided.

d. Synopsis of any program evaluation efforts undertaken

The HEET project is being independently evaluated on both the system and client levels. Northwest Resource Associates, Inc., a Seattle-based human services evaluation firm, is conducting the evaluation. At the systems level, a qualitative approach is being used to place the HEET Project in proper environmental context. The systems-level review is tracking important events and/or significant changes within the social service milieu, the local housing environment, the criminal justice system and monitoring funding and resource availability for services needed by HEET clients. Ultimately, the system review findings will form a concurrent timeline with the implementation of the HEET Project.

At the client level, an outcome evaluation is tracking housing stability, utilization of a number of community services, and incarcerations. A pre- to post- program contact comparison will be conducted for housing history; usage of services such as medical, substance abuse, mental health, and entitlements; and incarcerations in the local county jail system. The expectation is that housing stability will increase for clients enrolled in the HEET program. It is anticipated that client use of community services will reflect patterns of: 1) increased receipt of supportive services; 2) decreased use of emergency services; and, 3) reduced episodes of incarceration.

e. What makes program distinctive or exceptional?

- The HEET target population is focused on those individuals who have not been able to successfully engage with the range of services available to them in the community, including existing “low-barrier” housing and service programs.
- HEET offers pre-recovery services, meeting clients “where they are” without building unreasonable expectations set in a timeframe that clients will be unable to accommodate.
- HEET offers a multi-system, multi-agency, integrated, interdisciplinary approach to the successful housing and support of multiple-problem clients.
- HEET has successfully housed individuals that even the most seasoned professionals in the local system doubted could be stably housed.

8. Partners

Several of the agencies participating in the HEET project maintain independent web sites at the follow addresses:

www.aidshousing.org

www.compasscenter.org

www.desc.org

www.evergreentreatment.org

www.nwresource.org

In addition, valuable information and a resource directory to help communities to better address offender re-entry issues for persons living with HIV/AIDS can be accessed in a recent AIDS Housing of Washington publication: *From Locked Up to Locked Out: Creating and Implementing Post-Release Housing for Ex-Prisoners*. Copies of this publication may be requested from AIDS Housing of Washington by using the Web site listed above, or by calling 206-322-9444.

HIV Enhanced Engagement Team (HEET)

A Demographic Profile of Clients Served as of March 22, 2006

Outreach and Engagement Services

Gender		Frequency	Percent
	Male	64	81.0%
	Female	15	19.0%
	Total	79	100%

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Caucasian	35	44.3
African American	28	35.4
Latino	7	8.9
Native American	6	7.6
Vietnamese/Cambodian/ Laotian	1	1.3
Afro-Ethnic	2	2.5
Total	79	100.0

Veterans Status	Frequency	Percent
Not a Veteran	66	83.5
Viet Nam Era Vet	3	3.8
Post Viet Nam Era Vet	4	5.1
Veteran--Era Unknown	3	3.8
Unknown	3	3.8
Total	79	100.0

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-29	8	10.1
30-39	28	35.4
40-49	30	38.0
50-59	13	16.5
Total	79	100.0

Ongoing Services

Of the individuals receiving outreach and engagement services, 54 individuals have been engaged and registered as clients as of November 2005. One of these is known to have become deceased.

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	9	14.3
Male	54	85.7
Total	63	100.0

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Caucasian	28	44.4
African American	23	36.5
Latino	6	9.5
Native American	4	6.3
Afro-Ethnic	2	3.2
Total	63	100.0

Veterans Status	Frequency	Percent
Not a Veteran	51	81.0
Viet Nam Era Vet	3	4.8
Post Viet Nam Era Vet	3	4.8
Veteran--Era Unknown	3	4.8
Unknown	3	4.8
Total	63	100.0

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-29	5	7.9
30-39	21	33.3
40-49	26	41.3
50-59	11	17.5
Total	63	100.0