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## **AIDS: 100,000 homes campaign in Chicago enjoys success**

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Chicago's single most vulnerable woman—HIV-positive, alcoholic mother of seven, homeless for many years—now has a home.

This holiday season, she was one of Chicago's 212 most vulnerable homeless people who are sleeping inside, in their own beds, instead of out in the cold. That heartwarming fact is a result of the 100,000 Homes Campaign here in Chicago. One year ago, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) partnered with the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) and Beacon Therapeutic to lead a campaign to identify and find stable housing for the city's most vulnerable people.

In its first year of implementation, the 100K Homes Campaign has been a success most vividly told and understood through the stories of the people housed, said Arturo Bendixen, AFC's vice president for housing partnerships.

"The Chicago 100K Homes Campaign is extremely important for our city as it is the first time that we have focused and worked together to house the most vulnerable homeless," Bendixen said.

"These are the people who usually remain on our streets or in shelters for years because of their challenges, often mental health and substance abuse issues, and the inability of our systems of care to respond to their health and social needs," he said.

Chicago is one of 103 communities participating in the 100K Homes Campaign, a national effort to house the 100,000 most vulnerable homeless people in the country. Chicago is also a pilot site for finding homes for vulnerable families, as opposed to individuals. So far, 35 families have been housed through the initiative.

This past year has yielded a clear picture of successes and challenges to learn from, as outlined by Loyola University's Center for Urban Research and Learning's "Evaluation of the 100,000 Homes Campaign in Chicago," released earlier this month.

There have been challenges, starting with finding the most vulnerable people—a designation based on years of homelessness, age, substance use and mental health issues, and health problems that make a person likely to die if they continue to be on the streets. Finding available housing units for them has been another.

There were also challenges, as outlined in the Loyola report, with coordination of the various agencies working together and integrating the services.

"In this first year we learned that really 'hard' people can be housed and we re-learned that

supportive housing works and makes a huge impact on changing lives—health, connectedness, community," said Betsy Benito, director of the CSH's Illinois Program.

"This campaign has been successful in moving the entire 'system' to recognize the seriousness of 'vulnerable' households, including families," Benito said. "We have changed policies and priorities on a system-level so that we are becoming intentional and more transparent about how people who are homeless get connected to the housing resources they need."

The success of the 100K Homes Campaign in Chicago has been significant, both statistically and anecdotally. Consider the single most vulnerable woman identified in Chicago—an HIV-positive, homeless, alcoholic mother of seven children has a litany of health problems beyond her HIV diagnosis, including kidney and renal disease, a history of strokes, Hepatitis C, kidney disease and cirrhosis, and past brain trauma.

She is now living in her own apartment in a supportive housing environment. She has kept her primary care appointments, maintained a clean apartment, and cut back on the hard liquor. She has also worked to mend broken relationships with her children. And her viral load is now undetectable.

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