



Sean Humphrey House

NEED
HISTORY AND MISSION
CURRENT STATUS

THE NEED

Developments in the treatment of HIV/AIDS, particularly medication “cocktails” have made it possible for many persons living with AIDS to live longer and more independently. Such is not the case for persons who are low income and who may also suffer from mental illness, substance abuse and/or developmental disabilities. These conditions frequently result in severe rejection by family, friends and their community. They prevent access to needed medication even when they are available, reduce effectiveness of medications, and compound the likelihood of complications and premature death. Oftentimes these persons are forced to “live in the streets” where their only support is those with similar problems and where they continue behaviors that further threaten their own health and that of the community. Furthermore, their needs do not tend to engender public sympathy.

HISTORY AND MISSION

Sean Humphrey House is one of only three Adult Family Homes licensed by the State of Washington to provide: a residence, meals, medication management services, medical supervision, recreational activities and other supportive services to persons living with HIV/AIDS and who also may suffer from other diseases, mental illness, substance abuse, and/or developmental disabilities. Sean Humphrey House is unique when compared to housing typically available to this population. It is a modern, uniquely equipped tastefully decorated, beautifully landscaped, six-bedroom home, with a large kitchen, dining, living, library, recreation areas, and gardens. Impetus for establishing Sean Humphrey House was the response of parents, family and the community to the concerns of a young man dying with AIDS - Sean Humphrey – about those who, “do not have the family, friends, community and financial support that I have.” Using personal resources, community contributions, and loans from local financial institutions and the federal government, the home opened in January of 1996.

Within months of becoming operational, new medication regimes allowed many residents who had expected a shortened life, to return to more independent living. The vacuum quickly filled by those discussed above – persons who are indigent, mentally ill, and suffering from chemical and/or alcohol addiction. Public monies have become the primary sources of funding.

Severe reductions in staffing were required owing to income levels that were barely sufficient to cover even the most basic level services to persons with very complex needs. Without a last minute injection of support from local government, some local foundations, and the intervention of key political leaders, Sean Humphrey House would have closed its doors in the spring of 1999.

Regardless of the on-going financial challenges, a new spirit of commitment has emerged. Staff and volunteers have been inspired to demonstrate that living in a beautiful home, in a family-like environment that minimizes social distance between staff and residents, will foster feelings of self-esteem, safety, and sense of security that promotes health status and sustains life. Evidence of success is already apparent in the number of residents who have been able to make the behavioral changes required to live their lives as they choose and not as their disease directs.

CURRENT STATUS

While the level of public funding has improved, it remains significantly below that which is considered necessary for persons living with HIV/AIDS who suffer from other illnesses and/or disabilities. Studies conducted by AIDS Housing of Washington in 1998 resulted in a recommendation to the Washington State Department of Social and Health Service that levels of reimbursement to Adult Family Homes serving persons living with HIV/AIDS be between \$175 and \$210 per resident per day. The Department's response was an increase to approximately \$95 per day. Over a decade later, the daily reimbursement remains the same at approximately \$95. The continued flux in the economy threatens to reduce the current reimbursement rate.

Sean Humphrey House continues to face challenges that would threaten the most stable of organizations. Sean Humphrey House has a commitment to fulfill a critical role in the continuum of services to persons living with HIV/AIDS in the community that is unique in the State of Washington and perhaps, the nation.