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Coronavirus pandemic and economic dislocation doubles need for HIV services

- EMO's HIV Services seeks \$106,589 to purchase equipment and supplies, and to hire additional staff

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) HIV Services has seen a dramatic increase in the need for food, housing assistance, and psychosocial support for Oregonians with HIV/AIDS who are age 55 or older or who are immunocompromised.

This demand is driven by HIV Services acting as a hub for other agencies serving this population. In addition to organizations referring clients to EMO's HIV Services at a quickening pace, one organization has found hotel rooms for 25 clients but needs meal support. Another organization has eight clients in need of food.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, EMO's HIV Services programs were able to offer meals, case management referral services, and social supports for dozens of individuals who are HIV positive or have AIDS five days a week at the HIV Day Center, and meal delivery to home-bound individuals through the Daily Bread Express.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, EMO's HIV Services has increased its services, providing 115 individuals seven meals a week. The Daily Bread Express is delivering 55 meals a week to home-bound clients, 25 clients are picking up meals in person at EMO's HIV Day Center, and an additional 35 individuals have been referred to our services from partner organizations.

While HIV Services staff and volunteers are eager to serve, the caseload is putting an increased strain on food services staff. "We are trying to gear up, because we can't currently meet that demand," Chris Eves, EMO Community Ministry administrator said. "We need to either start an entire evening shift at our central kitchen, or turn our Day Center into a full production kitchen."

Britt Conroy, EMO Public Policy director, added, "COVID-19 is merciless in its targeting of our elderly neighbors and those with compromised immune systems. We can help community members with HIV/AIDS by helping them self-isolate by providing medically-appropriate meals for pick-up or through home delivery."

An investment of roughly \$100,000 and the support of the community will allow HIV Services to meet the dramatically increased need for food our vulnerable neighbors.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a statewide association of faith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through direct service programs, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, creation justice and public policy advocacy.