HEALTH & HOUSING: WHAT’S THE CONNECTION?

1. **Poor health causes homelessness**
   - Loss of job/income, medical debts
   - Mental health/addiction can alienate friends & family
   - Lack of income = eviction

2. **Homelessness causes poor health**
   - Exposure to weather, street violence, parasites, unclean conditions, disease
   - Exacerbation of existing health conditions & creation of new ones
   - Poor sleep/inability to rest; lack of food/contaminated food

3. **Lack of housing complicates treatment**
   - Competing priorities (safety, food, shelter)
   - Adherence to medical plan (medications, wound care, diet)
   - Hospital discharge to streets

HENCE....

- High rates of acute, chronic & communicable illnesses (3-6 times)
- Multiple complex morbidities
- Intermittent/low access to care – OR – high ED & hospital utilization/readmission
- Discharge difficulties/poor outcomes
- Deferred care & high costs
- Challenges exiting homelessness
- Premature mortality

WHAT IS SUPPORTIVE HOUSING?

- Not time-limited
- Same lease as anyone in the community
- No requirement for sobriety
- Services are voluntary and consumer-driven
- Wide range of team-based services:
  - Medical
  - Behavioral health
  - Case management
  - Care coordination
  - Employment/rehab
  - Living skills
  - Family stabilization

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING & HEALTH OUTCOMES

- Extensive literature available in past 20 years: peer-reviewed, public data, informal studies
- Core finding: Housing improves health & lowers total cost of care
  - Specific findings vary by study type, population, intensity of services & other factors
- Lower rate of alcohol/drug use; fewer visits to ER/hospital and jail
- Decrease risk behaviors (unsafe sex, injection drug use, prostitution, etc.)
- Increase adherence to medications, medical plans
- Better manage diabetes, asthma, hypertension, HIV, mental health, hepatitis & other chronic conditions
- Greater engagement in care, stabilize health, prevent deterioration
- Stronger (re)connection to family, employment, community
OPPORTUNITIES AT ALL LEVELS

- Strategies & plans to prevent/end homelessness
- Commitment to improve health & focus on outcomes
- Greater awareness of the link between health & housing (*social determinants of health*)
- Greater access to health care services through Medicaid
- Broader implementation of supportive housing in wide range of communities
- Targeted federal priorities linked to funding initiatives
- Increased partnerships between housing & health agencies as well as local providers

BUILDING THE BRIDGE: HEALTH TO HOUSING

- Health care providers are in a rapidly changing environment (*Medicaid is just one area*)
- Focus on outcomes and cost = need for broader investment in evidence-based practices (*like supportive housing*)
- Efficiency: Nothing we do works well when patients live on the street or in unstable housing arrangements

- Housing is health care
CONTACT

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