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This study funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. We thank them for their support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the authors alone, and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Foundation.
for People Experiencing HOMELESSNESS in Denver

Our Collective Work
PERSPECTIVES of the HEALTHCARE LANDSCAPE for People Experiencing HOMELESSNESS in Denver

Presentation Outline

- Study Design
- Gaps in available services to homeless populations
- Critical challenges to accessing care
- Continuity of care, and
- What is working well in current system

Your input and discussion is key!
The Study

Purpose:
The study explores the impact of permanent supportive housing (PSH) on the health outcomes of chronically homeless individuals.

Target Population:
Chronically homeless individuals who are high users of public systems including those who frequently cycle in and out of jail.

Housing is Health Care
The Study

METHODS

Conducted 17 in-depth interviews with administrators and service providers working in health-relevant fields serving homeless populations.

Questions focused on: health conditions, common healthcare needs, access to care, continuity of care, barriers to care, and health care while incarcerated.

Housing *is* Health Care

- Denver Health
- Denver CARES
- CCH
- Stout St. Health Center
- Colorado Access

- MHCD
  - Denver’s Road Home
  - Behavioral Health Court
  - Denver Public Library
  - Denver Jail

Denver Jail

Denver's Road Home

Behavioral Health Court

Denver Public Library
## Health Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance Abuse</th>
<th>Communicable Diseases</th>
<th>Cardiac, Pulmonary, and Gastrointestinal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol abuse</td>
<td>Influenza</td>
<td>Cardiovascular disease</td>
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<td>Alcohol induced seizures</td>
<td>Hepatitis C</td>
<td>Pulmonary issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Common cold</td>
<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</td>
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<td>Cirrhosis of the liver</td>
<td>Pneumonia</td>
<td>HIV</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)</td>
<td>AIDS</td>
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<td>Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)</td>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
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<td>Mental Health</td>
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<td>Anxiety disorder</td>
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<td>Depression</td>
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<td>Schizophrenia</td>
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<td>Panic disorder</td>
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<td>Suicidality</td>
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<td>Posttraumatic Stress Disorder</td>
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<td>Bipolar disorder</td>
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<td>Physical Disability</td>
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<td>Hernia</td>
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<td>Amputation</td>
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<td>Limited eyesight or blindness</td>
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<td>Hearing impairment</td>
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<td>Mobility impairment</td>
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<td>Epilepsy</td>
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<td>Environment-Related</td>
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<td>Broken bones</td>
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<td>Bruises</td>
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<td>Traumatic brain injury</td>
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<td>Frostbite</td>
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<td>Wounds</td>
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<td>Sepsis</td>
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<td>Bedbugs</td>
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<td>Pain-Related</td>
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<td>Back pain</td>
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<td>Joint pain</td>
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<td>Chronic pain</td>
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<td>Diet-related</td>
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<td>Cholesterol</td>
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<td>Diabetes</td>
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<td>Dental</td>
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<td></td>
<td>General tooth decay</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bruxism (tooth grinding)</td>
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<td>Gum disease</td>
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“Housing is what gets me down the most ... I have nothing for [them] because we do not have enough affordable housing.”

“Denver Health provides a motel room for a person to heal. There is not any nursing care associated with it. It is just a location.”

Arapahoe House was “really doing some dual diagnosis work, but now they’re gone.”

“... if you want to get treatment for mental health you have to get your substance abuse under control first.”

Co-Occurring Substance Abuse Treatment/ Mental Health Care

Basic Needs Services

Respite Care

Housing is Health Care
Inpatient Psychiatric & Substance Abuse Treatment

In-patient psychiatric and substance abuse hospitalization beds are simply unavailable for this population.

Mental Health Treatment

There are mental health service providers but the need is so great, wait lists are very long for services. Interviewees reported a 3-6 month wait for psychiatric medications.

Housing is Health Care
Challenges

1. Individual level barriers to accessing care
2. Ways that the homeless context impedes health
3. Components in the larger system of care that limit access to quality care

Housing is Health Care
Challenges

Individual Level

- Previous trauma
- Fear and shame
- Lack of information

Homeless context

- Maslow’s Hierarchy
- Transportation
- Limited access to technology
- Limited self-care resources for health

Health system level

- Unwelcoming care facilities
- Admittance policies
- Missed appointment policies
- Insurance coverage
- Discharge practices

Housing is Health Care
### Challenges

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<tr>
<th>Individual Level</th>
<th>Homeless context</th>
<th>Health system level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous trauma</td>
<td>Maslow’s Hierarchy</td>
<td>Unwelcoming care facilities</td>
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<td>Fear and shame</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Admittance policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of information</td>
<td>Limited access to technology</td>
<td>Missed appointment policies</td>
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<td>Limited self-care resources for health</td>
<td>Insurance coverage</td>
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<td>Discharge practices</td>
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**Housing is Health Care**
“They get healthier, but I’m not sure that I’d every say that they are really healthy.”
1. Who we talked to
   - Behavioral Health Court
   - Colorado ACCESS
   - Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
   - Denver Health
   - Denver CARES
   - Denver Jail
   - Denver Public Library
   - Denver’s Road Home
   - Mental Health Center of Denver
   - Stout St. Health Clinic

2. Service Gaps
   - Basic Needs
   - Respite Care
   - Co-Occurring Substance Abuse Treatment/ Mental Health Care
   - Inpatient Psychiatric & Substance Abuse Treatment
   - Mental Health Treatment

3. Challenges
   - Previous Trauma
   - Fear and shame
   - Lack of information/knowledge
   - Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
   - Transportation
   - Limited access to technology
   - Limited self-care resources for health
   - Unwelcoming care facilities
   - Admittance policies
   - Missed appointment policies
   - Insurance coverage
   - Discharge practices

Housing is Health Care
Continuity of Care

The coordination of services that are typically isolated and often complex, in order to achieve a shared goal.

Organizational Coordination

Individual Coordinators

Medicaid

KEY ELEMENTS OF CONTINUITY OF CARE

Housing is Health Care
Continuity of Care

Individual Coordinators

Medicaid enrollment specialists
Behavioral health navigators
Probation officers
Certified addiction counselors
Case managers
Peer navigators

“There might be more than enough people to help assist a person, but if they’re not talking to each other [it won’t work].”

Housing is Health Care
Continuity of Care

Housing is Health Care

Organizational Coordination

Stout Street Health Center
Referrals (Sheriff’s Dept.)
Denver Jail
Medical screening:
- Identify chronic medical issues
- Screened for tuberculosis, communicable diseases
- Mental health screening
- Assessed for jail placement
Continuity of Care

Housing is Health Care

Treatment and Care Coordination in Jail

WHILE INCARCERATED

- Inmates can request medical attention
- Chronic conditions are medically monitored
- Medical conditions receive medication
- Detox
- Substance abuse program (Suboxone regiment)
- High Acuity Treatment (HAT) program

Care Coordination in Jail
“[They are locked down] because they’re considered to be a special population in the jail and not part of the general population. To some degree that’s good because they’re often more vulnerable [and] can be victimized by the more predatory inmates ... locked down for 23 hours a day ... doesn’t really help people who are mentally ill, doesn’t really help people that aren’t mentally ill as a matter of fact.”

“They’re ordered to be held in custody until [a certain date] and that date starts at midnight. Then they’ll be homeless. They have nowhere to go. And God forbid they got arrested in July and they got out in December. They don’t have winter clothes or blankets, or if they did, they’ve all been stolen by now.”
Inmates with substance abuse problems do not receive the resources and support system to stay sober.

Length of prescriptions and follow-up care upon release are inadequate.
One interviewee described Medicaid as the “golden ticket.”
Continuity of Care

**LIMITATIONS**

- Not all providers accept Medicaid
- Medicaid providers have long waitlists
- Patients on parole need an approved treatment provider (ATP) – list heavily backlogged
- Pharmacies often unable to access real time Medicaid membership information
- Billing is complex and services costly for chronically homeless individuals with untreated chronic health conditions

Housing *is* Health Care
Continuity of Care

- Medicaid “pause” inconsistent
- Prior to 2017, inmates lost Medicaid coverage altogether
- Lag-time between enrollment and when coverage begins
- Re-application required for different counties

Housing *is* Health Care
What Works Well

- Passion
- Commitment
- Dedication
- Medicaid expansion
- Stout Street Health Center’s integrated care model

Housing is Health Care
What Works Well

• Denver invested in Office of Behavioral Health Strategies (behavioral health navigators)
• Co-responders program (case managers dispatched with police officers)

Denver Health has its own Medicaid enrollment department

Service providers in jails working to improve medical care:
• Drug court
• HAT program
• Substance abuse program
• Health pod

Housing is Health Care
Promising Approaches

**TRAUMA INFORMED CARE:** A person’s behavior can be due to underlying pain, trauma or illness. Engaging in a relationship-based approach is an important aspect to health care delivery.

“They see that person who’s intoxicated ... but they forget to put their trauma lens on and try to figure out where that comes from.”

**HARM REDUCTION MODEL:** Acknowledge that behaviors which have been primary coping skills for persons on crisis will not change drastically overnight. Rather, a reduction in harmful behaviors can be seen as a win.

**SYSTEM TO ACCOMMODATE UNIQUE NEEDS OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS:**
- Increased outreach to patients in respite care
- Integrate maintenance of durable equipment into shelter environments
- Individual storage lockers

Housing *is* Health Care
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