



Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless

Quarterly Newsletter

April - June 2021

Thank You Project Roomkey Medical Screeners!



Since the onset of the pandemic, a group of dedicated volunteer MDs, Nurse Practitioners, and Physician Assistants have supported Alameda County's isolation and quarantine Project Roomkey site.

Fourteen hours a day, seven days a week, these volunteer medical screeners have reviewed every referral that came through Operation Comfort to determine whether the person needed supplemental psychiatric support, were stable enough for admission, or required medication refills to make it through their stay.

These COVID-19 heroes have stepped up to assist when shelters were closed due to outbreaks, large groups of people were referred from encampments, respite centers, and detox facilities who required isolation or quarantine. This resourceful and committed group of providers have figured out how to secure late-night transportation, obtain dialysis services for COVID-19 positive patients, and remotely assess every type of medical and psychiatric illness. They have supported an extraordinary program through unparalleled times and have dealt gracefully with every curve ball COVID-19 threw their way.

Thank you to this exceptional group for all that they have done to support Alameda County's COVID-19 response!

Harrison Alter

Aislinn Bird
Lauri Paolinetti
Marc Sapir
Sarah Krasny
Julia Peterson
Caitlin Higginbotham
Laura Turiano
Ann Stevens
Mike Peterson
Crystal Terry
Anne Young
Tia Vang
Edie Silber
Carol West
Meaghan Saint
Tamika Bailey
Jillian Kelter
Linda Dubins
Sarah Pontell
Brian Kwan
Jodi Gorman

Homeless Mortality Task Force

Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless (ACHCH) works to assess the needs of our homeless patient population on many levels and homeless mortality is a critical area where we have focused our work.

We are developing a County Homeless Mortality Task Force to bring together public health epidemiologists, the coroners office, Alameda Health System, health care and homeless service providers, and advocates and people experiencing homelessness. The group will create, guide, and review ongoing homeless mortality review processes, including annual homeless death reporting and quarterly homeless death reviews.



Currently, we are working with the public health department and other partners on an annual countywide homeless mortality count and review. We're coming up with this data through close analysis of state death records, coroner data, data matching, and reports from the

community. Visit our **website** to become a community reporter.

ACHCH and its partners value life. We honor our dead, we learn from their lives, and we should also learn from their deaths. By reviewing deaths – every death – we can develop better coordination and better care to improve the lives of the living and prevent needless deaths.

Nationwide agencies such as the CDC, HUD or HHS don't document nationwide deaths in homelessness. Last year only 68 major municipalities carried out homeless mortality counts, and far fewer have mortality review processes. ACHCH collaborated with the **National Health Care for the Homeless Council** to create a nationwide Homeless Mortality Working Group. This group is comprised of health care providers, homeless advocates, public health workers, and university researchers to coordinate meetings, presentations, and to share resources.

The Homeless Mortality Working Group developed the first ever **Homeless Mortality Toolkit**. The group concluded that, nationwide, between 20,000 and 50,000 people experiencing homelessness died in 2019.

In Alameda County, there is not a comprehensive documentation of homeless deaths. ACHCH reviewed death records of people that we know died in homelessness in 2020 and found stunning differences in the way that people experiencing homelessness die compared to the average population.

*Suicide 3x *Overdose 10x *Accidental death 4x
*Homicide 3x *Unknown 8x

These numbers are incomplete but point to the essential importance of knowing who died, and carefully reviewing how they died, so we can work to prevent these deaths.

A key goal for ACHCH is continuing to collaborate with the Homeless Mortality Task Force to help guide data collection and provide recommendations to reduce homeless mortality.

Visit our **website** for more information and become a community reporter.

ACHCH Oral Health Integration & Services

ACHCH has remained committed to dental access and case management services throughout the pandemic.

Under the leadership of Dr. Bahar Amanzadeh, DDS, MPH, the ACHCH Dental

Consultant, our program has begun work to increase dental services, dental case management and access for homeless patients.

We are pleased to share that our presentation, Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Approach to Oral Health Integration and Services,

was presented at the National Oral Health Conference Connecting Globally for Oral Health Conference on April 17, 2021.

In addition, Dr. Amanzadeh, was co-author of a National Health Care for the Homeless issue brief titled **COVID-19 & the HCH Community Maintaining Access to Dental Services**.



Program Highlights

We are honored that the work of Health Care for the Homeless, and our contracted providers, has received much recognition over the last several months.

- **Berkeleyside** published a story about LifeLong Medical Care Street Health team's efforts to vaccinate unhoused residents living in Oakland and Berkeley. The stories highlighted the team's vaccination work with unhoused residents including those who are hesitant about being vaccinated.
- California Health Care Foundation highlighted the work of **ACHCH Street Medicine in Alameda County**
- ACHCH was featured in **California State briefs** spotlighting the work we have lead on Alameda County to provide the COVID-19 vaccine.
- AHS Shelter Health COVID-19 services, part of our ACHCH shelter vaccination campaign, was featured in the AHS ReConnect Newsletter: **Getting to the Hearts (and Arms) of Homeless in Alameda County - Alameda Health System**.
- ACHCH's Dr. Harrison Alter was featured in the **Street Spirit newspaper**.

Our COVID-19 Response

Since late February,

ACHCH has worked to provide free low barrier access to COVID-19 vaccines for unhoused, sheltered, and vulnerably housed individuals throughout Alameda County through enhanced shelter and street health program models.



Patient education, vaccine choice, and regional community care sites are core to our vaccination service delivery model and our goal of providing access to the COVID-19 vaccination to all people experiencing homelessness who desire to get vaccinated.

Including the efforts of our key partners, we have collectively provided over 4,800 doses of COVID-19 vaccines in encampments and shelters across Alameda County.

In addition to vaccinations, community care surveillance COVID-19 testing remains a key part of our response, as we remain vigilant to the ongoing pandemic. We have provided over 8,700 tests to date.

Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless partnered with the International Maritime Center (IMC) to provide Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccinations to seafarers entering the Port of Oakland. The IMC is a 200-year-old interfaith worldwide network that supports the health and welfare of seafarers. Any partnership to vaccinate seafarers has potential for positive impact on a global scale. "With global health equity in mind, this opportunity is an important public health intervention," said Jared Bunde, ACHCH RN. ACHCH plans to support seafarer vaccination efforts weekly and is working towards scaling efforts by transitioning services and collaborating with additional vaccine providers.

We update the COVID-19 guidance and materials on a regular basis and continue to facilitate our weekly homeless provider COVID-19 community call to keep our community informed and mobilized. Please visit our **website** for more information on our COVID-19 response and community calls.



Alameda County Health Care for the

Homeless

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Mental Health
Services Act (MHSAs)
Alameda County Behavioral Health

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