StreetHealth

The New ACHCH Backpack Street Psychiatry Program

In the summer of 2017, Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless was awarded a HRSA AIMS (Access Increases in Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services) grant. With this seed money, HCH created StreetHealth, a backpack medicine team providing low-barrier psychiatric and substance use disorder treatment to those experiencing homelessness and residing in encampments in downtown Oakland. We aim to engage our most vulnerable neighbors living on the streets, provide quality, evidence-based behavioral health care, and linkage to a medical home and other social services. StreetHealth was designed after months of research, interviews, and review of the literature regarding best practices. In addition to providing top-quality, field-based care, we aim create a program that is scalable, replicable, and eventually assist other communities in establishing similar programs.

Our team consists of a psychiatrist (Aislinn Bird, MD, MPH), a UCSF public psychiatry fellow (previously Colin Buzza, MD, MHP, MSc, and current UCSF public psychiatry fellow, Dr. Kate Benham), a nurse care manager (Jared Bunde, RN), and an outreach worker (Wilma Lozada), along with ACHCH leadership and a consultant pharmacist from Alameda County BHCS (Seth Gomez, PharmD). We engage patients through a consistent weekly outreach schedule and build trust over frequent, short visits. Many engagement tools are utilized based on specific patient needs, including: naloxone kits with opiate overdose prevention education, safe injection kits, hygiene kits, referrals to dental and optometry, and Coordinated Entry System (CES) assessments. Warm hand-offs to social services such as legal and case management providers, housing navigators, and health insurance technicians, are a priority.

A psychiatric evaluation starts with engagement with the outreach team, who assesses for needs, goals and current resources, as well as schedules field-based appointment windows with the psychiatrist as needed. The psychiatrists join the team two days a week in targeted outreach and provide psychiatric evaluations, assessments, and treatment, including immediate access to a small formulary of medications carried securely in a backpack. Close follow up is provided by the outreach team. The nurse care manager holds a program cell phone during business hours and maintains a flexible schedule for general outreach and time-limited intensive case management throughout the week.

Currently, we serve four encampments located close to the TRUST Health Center, which is a community health center collaboration between LifeLong Medical Care and HCH that provides a wide range of services to people experiencing homelessness. The clinic is staffed by StreetHealth psychiatrists, which allows for continuity of care from the field to the clinic, where many more services can be accessed.

Since our pilot program started in March, we have evaluated and provided medication to five patients in the field, supported two field-based buprenorphine inductions to treat opiate use disorder, provided fifty naloxone kits with one documented opioid overdose reversal, connected eleven new and three prior patients to the TRUST Health Center, as well as provided additional outreach and linkage services.

StreetHealth is now moving out of the pilot phase and analyzing lessons learned to inform our first expansion to new sites, finalize program policies, and strengthen partnerships.

For more information
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On Site Dental: Hope Health Smiles

On-Site Dental Care Foundation has provided low or no cost comprehensive oral health services to unserved and underserved adult populations since 2003. Services are delivered on a mobile practice that travels throughout the Bay Area to people who are homeless, undocumented, low income, migrant workers, and HIV positive.

A case management model is currently used to manage the care and services provided for this population. On-Site has a treatment case manager on staff who coordinates with dentists, patients, and site social workers to ensure the patient’s treatment is scheduled in an efficient and timely manner.

Services provided include exams, periodontal screening, oral cancer screening, prophylactic visits, deep root cleaning, fillings, root canals, crowns, extractions, and full or partial dentures. On-Site is currently applying for Denti-Cal certification in order to better serve the communities in need of oral health services.

One of the objectives of On-Site’s services is to keep the targeted population of patients out of local emergency rooms due to dental emergencies. The average cost of a visit to the emergency room related to dental issues is $749. In addition, the ER is not equipped to handle severe dental situations, so in order to resolve the problem, the patient will be referred to a provider and have to pay for an additional visit to a dentist. The average cost of a visit to On-Site is $165.

The On-Site staff is culturally competent and speaks 3 languages. Since 55% of the patients are Hispanic, many of our staff speak Spanish, and all treatment forms are in both English and Spanish.

For the Alameda Health Care for the Homeless program, On-Site provides 50 service days annually at sites recommended by HCH staff. The mobile unit visits the site each Friday for about 15-20 weeks. Annually 200-250 patients are seen in partnership with the HCH program. At each scheduled appointment, the patients receive oral health education in an effort to change or modify home oral health care.

Why mobile dentistry? By locating at sites frequented or familiar to the targeted populations many of the barriers to access are negated. For the homeless population in particular, medical and dental services can be easily integrated for a better continuum of care.

For more information, Call our office (650) 773-0333. Visit our website https://www.osdcf.org/
2018 Summer Solstice Celebration:

*Celebrating the Strengths, Resilience, and Successes of People Experiencing Homelessness.*

Homelessness Is Not Permanent!

On June 21, 2018, the longest day of the year, the Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Consumer/Community Advisory Board (HCH CCAB), along with staff of the HCH Program and Lifelong TRUST Health Center, came together to celebrate the strengths and successes of people who are overcoming incredible barriers to gain housing, create community, and support our common mission of ending homelessness.

The Summer Solstice is the first day of summer and the longest day of the year. It is a day filled with light, and it is one in which we can honor the strength, resilience, and spirit of individuals who have overcome the multitude of obstacles people experiencing homelessness face in obtaining stable housing. For years we have observed the Winter Solstice, the darkest day, by mourning those who have died on the streets due to homelessness. This was the first time the HCH CCAB celebrated Summer Solstice.

The HCH CCAB joined partner programs in New York City, Miami, Baltimore, Seattle, San Francisco, in their Solstice celebration, coordinated through the National Health Care for the Homeless Council’s National Consumer Advisory Board (NCAB).

The celebration included a luncheon served to some 60 homeless participants by HCH and Lifelong staff. Participants enjoyed inspirational music performed by Brenda Whitfield and Tom Rudderow. Master of Ceremonies Bennie Whitfield and other HCH CCAB members presented five community members with Local Hero Awards and each gave a speech.

The awardees included:

- **Nino Parker**: Inspiring and leading all through energetic organizing for homeless-led cleanup work, self-organizing, and support services to those living alongside him at the Lake Merritt encampment.
- **Bobby “Qui” Quiñones**: Honored for his effort, energy, and inspiration building tiny homes and community among people experiencing homelessness at “The Village” encampment and is a member of Feed The People.
- **Janny Castillo**: For years years of dedicated service, support, and organizing of aging people experiencing homelessness as a beloved member of St. Mary’s Senior Center, WRAP and many community organizations.
- **Kimberlee Burks**: Honored for her years of struggle to overcome homelessness and her strength and love in supporting countless persons in the Hayward area as an advocate, organizer, and friend.
- **Pastor Preston Walker**: Celebrated for his political wisdom, his organizing, drive, and focus in meeting the spiritual and health needs of people experiencing homelessness in downtown Oakland.
- **Maven Carter-Griffin**: Saluted for her dedicated and determined organizing and leadership at the Wood Street encampment in Oakland, representing for the rights of people experiencing homelessness on an international stage.

Each awardee gave a heartfelt and uplifting speech, inspiring and moving the 60+ attendees and staff. The event was followed with a raffle including prizes donated by members of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, Lifelong Medical Care, and East Oakland Community Project.

The HCH CCAB would like to thank all our supporters and salute the strength and resiliency of all the folks who participated this year. See you next Solstice!

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