

Pathway to Supportive Housing

This report examines housing insecurity in metropolitan areas and the implementation of taxes to address it, focusing on Portland, Oregon's Measure 26-210. The measure aims to generate \$2.5 billion to combat houselessness (Ballotpedia, 2020). Challenges persist in caring for unhoused individuals, particularly in hospital discharge processes impacting their health (Cole et al., 2023). Establishing referral partnerships with community-based nonprofit organizations (CBOs) specializing in unhoused services can significantly improve patient outcomes (staff: Denver Health, Providence Health & Services, UHealth, Sutter, and University of Washington Medicine, personal communication). This report identifies key issues affecting Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) in establishing enduring referral partnerships with CBOs and utilizing Measure 26-210 funds to serve at-risk patients.

Methods

OHSU's Division of Management Master of Healthcare Administration students conducted a research project on hospital and community-based partnerships to connect unhoused individuals to housing. To perform this work, they searched the web for reports, research papers, guidance on social determinants of health, housing, hospital, community-based partnerships, and screening for housing insecurity. Interviews with nonprofit CBOs, hospital officials, and Measure 26-210 funding officials were also performed.

Findings

Hospitals regularly screen patients to identify unhoused individuals and connect them to resources. However, partnerships between CBOs and hospitals face challenges due to several factors. CBOs primarily receive referrals through county-coordinated entry programs, but the lack of housing knowledge among hospital staff, conflicting timelines, patient frustration, and long waitlists for housing create hurdles (staff: CTS, CAP, CCC, and NARA, personal communication). Furthermore, counties prioritize housing assistance for individuals with disabling conditions who have been unhoused for a long time. Those criteria may differ from the patients whom hospitals seek to connect to supportive housing services (staff: Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties, personal communication). Patients who are unable to access housing assistance may experience poorer health outcomes, increased emergency department visits, and higher healthcare costs (staff: Asante Health System, Denver Health, Kaiser Permanente, Keck Medicine of USC, PeaceHealth, Providence Health & Services, Salem Health, Sutter Health, UC-Health, University of Washington Medicine, personal communication). This exacerbates health inequities and can deepen social and economic disparities among vulnerable populations. Additionally, backlogs in housing applications can create obstacles in forming partnerships between hospitals and CBOs (staff: Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties, personal communication). Hospitals and CBOs face challenges in partnering to connect unhoused individuals to housing, but stronger collaboration and communication can improve these partnerships.

Recommendations

To facilitate effective coordination and partnerships, it is recommended that two new job roles be created: Project Coordinator and Community Health Worker (CHW). The Project Coordinator role would oversee high-level partnerships with CBOs focused on housing and other

social determinants of health (SDOH) resources. Collaboration with the OHSU Government Relations team and the Oregon Housing & Community Services department would be another crucial function, along with leveraging the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and upcoming funding. The project coordinator would also collaborate with the OHSU Foundation and apply for the Oregon Housing & Community Services Grant to secure additional funding sources. Establishing a Community Health Worker (CHW) position would support social workers, help navigate resources for houseless patients, and address SDOH factors, it is expected that this would help reduce unnecessary emergency department visits and lower hospital costs. These recommendations aim to strengthen partnerships, improve resource access, secure funding, and enhance support for houseless patients at OHSU.

Conclusion

Addressing housing insecurity and establishing partnerships between healthcare institutions and CBOs are crucial to improving health outcomes for unhoused individuals. Healthcare institutions, like OHSU, have a unique opportunity to meaningfully improve the health of the populations they serve by addressing health housing insecurity and other social determinants of health. Strong partnerships with CBOs ensure holistic patient care, addressing medical needs and housing support. Prioritizing houselessness can transform lives, improve health outcomes, reduce healthcare costs and foster inclusive and compassionate communities in Portland, Oregon.

Team Members

Marian Clark
Virgil Dickson
Elizabeth Reeder
Nathan Robertson
Sarah Rushen
April Vann

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References

- Ballotpedia. (2020). Portland Metro, Oregon, Measure 26-210, Income and Business Taxes for Homeless Services (May 2020). Ballotpedia.
[https://ballotpedia.org/Portland_Metro,_Oregon,_Measure_26-210,_Income_and_Business_Taxes_for_Homeless_Services_\(May_2020\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Portland_Metro,_Oregon,_Measure_26-210,_Income_and_Business_Taxes_for_Homeless_Services_(May_2020))
- Cole, K. L., Findlay, M. C., Earl, E., Sherrod, B. A., Cutler, C. B., Nguyen, S., Grandhi, R., & Menacho, S. T. (2023). Understanding the Unique Challenges Faced by Homeless Patients With Acute Traumatic Neurosurgical Injuries. Neurosurgery.
<https://doi.org/10.1227/neu.0000000000002408>

Interviewees

Community-Based Organizations:

- Call to Safety (Director of Services) - Interviewed by S. Rushen on May 3, 2023
- Cascade AIDS Project (Deputy Director, Housing and Support Services) - Interviewed by S. Rushen on May 17, 2023
- Central City Concern (Senior Director, Supportive Housing and Employment Services) - Interviewed by S. Rushen on May 2, 2023
- Community of Hope (Program Director) - Interviewed by S. Rushen on May 11, 2023
- Native American Rehabilitation Association [NARA] (Director of Housing Services) - Interviewed by A. Vann and V. Dickson on May 5, 2023

County Officials:

- Clackamas County Health, Housing & Human Services (Deputy Director, Housing and Community Development) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on May 2, 2023
- Joint Office of Homelessness Services, Multnomah County (Operations Supervisor) - Interviewed by M. Clark on May 11, 2023
- Joint Office of Homelessness Services, Multnomah County (Planning and Evaluation Manager) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on April 27, 2023
- Washington County Department of Housing Services (Program Coordinator, Washington County Health and Human Services) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on April 28, 2023

Hospitals:

- Asante Health System (Resource Manager) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on April 24, 2023
- Denver Health (Physician) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on May 1, 2023
- Kaiser Permanente (Local Government Relations Manager) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on April 24, 2023
- Kaiser Permanente (Senior Program Manager, Community, and Social Health) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on April 24, 2023
- PeaceHealth (Director of Care Management) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on April 27, 2023
- Providence Health & Services (Medical Social Worker) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on May 2, 2023

Providence Health & Services (Community Clinic Behavioral Health and Operations Manager) -
Interviewed by V. Dickson on May 2, 2023

Providence Health & Services (Director of Compliance, Quality & Innovation, Providence
Supportive Housing) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on April 14, 2023

Providence Supportive Housing (Executive Director) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on April 19,
2023

Salem Health (Chief Communications and Community Relations Officer) - Interviewed by V.
Dickson on April 24, 2023

Sutter Health (Director, Community Health) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on May 11, 2023

Sutter Health (Government Affairs Director) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on May 11, 2023

UCHealth (Project Coordinator) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on May 1, 2023

UCHealth (Senior Director, Care Management) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on May 1, 2023

UCHealth (Social Work Manager) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on May 1, 2023

USC University Hospital (Director and Co-Founder, Division of Street Medicine, Assistant
Professor of Family Medicine) - Interviewed by V. Dickson on May 9, 2023

University Washington Medicine (Manager, Housing, Employment, ER High Utilizers) -
Interviewed by V. Dickson on April 27, 2023