



# Housing is Health

## Care Navigation for Homeless Patients

*It is well known that the most significant social determinant of health is safe, affordable housing. With several thousand men, women and children in Milwaukee County considered homeless or 'precariously housed' at any point in time, the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership is working with the Milwaukee County Housing Division (MCHD) to create pathways for homeless patients – especially those with complex medical and behavioral health needs – to secure sustainable housing and supportive services.*

In 2019 the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership launched a *Housing is Health* initiative for homeless patients receiving care at Advocate Aurora Sinai, Ascension St. Joseph, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and Froedtert Hospital.

The initiative incorporates MCHD social workers or "navigators," who help patients secure temporary housing, provide case management, and aid in their ultimate transition to permanent housing stability. The supportive services that navigators help patients secure include public benefits, mental health / AODA treatment, tenancy education, and employment counseling, as examples. Navigators work with each patient from the time of contact until the individual is considered 'housing stable;' a process which can extend over many months.

*Housing is Health* hopes to serve more than 200 patients over the next two years. Eligible patients:

- are current **inpatients, in observation** or are **ER patients**
- are **uninsured** or on straight **Medicaid** (*fee for service/non-HMO*)
- are frequent hospital users at high risk of readmission, or excess length of stay due to homelessness
- meet the HUD definition of "**literally homeless**"

### "Literally Homeless" definition:

- Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation
- Is living in publicly or privately-operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (*including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels / motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs*), or
- Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution

*Housing is Health* is aligned with the MCHD's [Housing First](#) model, which has shown that stable, permanent housing has a positive impact on health outcomes and yields cost-savings by mitigating the utilization of inpatient and emergency services once someone is housed. MCHD has seen excellent outcomes working with the hardest to serve individuals who have often been homeless for years on the streets of Milwaukee. The success of its Housing First model in Milwaukee County has proven that once individuals are successfully housed and their basic needs met, they are far more likely to engage in mental health care, substance use treatment and other supportive services.

## MILWAUKEE HEALTH CARE PARTNERSHIP

