



Camden Coalition
of Healthcare Providers



The National Center
for Complex Health & Social Needs
An initiative of the Camden Coalition

Virtual learning summary: Accessing housing from a consumer perspective

July-August 2019

Presenters:

- Dennis Heaphy, Healthcare Advocate, Disability Policy Consortium
- Rodney Dawkins, Community Health Worker, Heartland Alliance
- Jamal Brown, Community Advisory Committee member, Camden Coalition
- Janice Tufte, Patient Partner, UWCertain
- Alayna Tillman, Volunteer Support group leader, USC Caregiver Resource Center

Session descriptions:

Safe, stable housing is a key component of maintaining health and wellbeing. However, individuals with complex health and social needs face compounded barriers when experiencing homelessness that further limit their access to housing. In July and August, representatives from our 2018 cohort of **National Consumer Scholars** joined us to explore the compounded barriers that people with complex health and social needs face when experiencing homelessness, as well as the supports and services necessary for them to thrive once they are in stable housing.

The webinar featured National Consumer Scholars Dennis Heaphy, Rodney Dawkins, and Jamal Brown in a discussion of the barriers to housing created by identification requirements. They also shared potential policy and organizational solutions to these barriers to help providers and advocates better serve their communities.

In the Office Hours session, National Consumer Scholars Janice Tufte and Alayna Tillman discussed the history of housing policy, the current landscape of supportive housing models across the country, and the importance of wrap-around services for individuals with complex health and social needs in permanent supportive housing programs. In addition, they shared their experiences advocating for improved access and services in their communities.

Discussion summary:

Webinar

- 1. How can government agencies, nonprofits, and others make it easier for people experiencing homelessness to obtain identification and vital records?**
Managed care organizations could provide financial support to obtain identification for individuals experiencing homelessness since these documents may improve their quality of life as well as reduce costs.

States and localities can act to waive fees for people experiencing homeless and expand the forms of documentation that can be used to obtain a state ID or driver's license. Ultimately, any organization or government body should consult consumers with life experience encountering these barriers for insight into the best ways to eliminate them on a systematic level.

2. What are unexpected forms of ID that others may not know about, especially when someone does not have any of the traditional documents?

Though it varies by state and locality, it may be possible to use medical records, letters from medical and social service providers, high school records, bank and credit card statements, or court decrees. Providers should be willing to get creative and review all possibilities for acceptable documentation.

3. How do you document the chronicity of someone's homeless/show a history of chronic homelessness?

If someone has not had frequent contact with the shelter system, a history of chronic homelessness can still be created with documentation of outreach and service provision by your organization and by other community-based organizations in your area. Medical and hospital records may also be used to establish a timeline of chronic homelessness.

Expert highlights

- Developing and implementing best practices to end chronic homelessness will require listening to and learning from people with the lived experience of chronic homelessness.
- A lack of identification documents can prevent individuals experiencing chronic homelessness from accessing needed services to improve their health and wellbeing. Accompanying clients through the process of obtaining identification and other vital records is an essential first step to overcome this barrier.
- Permanent supportive housing is a cost-effective solution that has been shown to lower public costs and improve health and wellbeing. As Janice Tufte shared, the model "can allow individuals to achieve goals they have identified, find stability where they had not before, offer the opportunity to work on better health and actually plan for the future."

Office Hours

1. Once someone is in a permanent supportive housing program, what services and resources do they need in order to stay housed?

Above all, providers need to ask participants what matters most to them and what services and resources they need or want. Besides urgent physical and behavioral services, providers should also prioritize opportunities for community involvement, especially to address social isolation. The Camden Coalition runs a weekly Housing First support group for the participants in its program to connect with their peers over shared challenges and successes. Participants in the program are also members of the Coalition's Community Advisory Council with other community residents.

2. What are the specific housing needs of individuals with complex health and social needs, especially those with physical disabilities? What makes a supportive housing program for this population different?

A participant's mobility and their potential unit's accessibility should be considered before placing them in housing. It is also important to consider the unit's environment and location, including its proximity to the person's natural supports and services, proximity to transportation and necessities, and a sense of community.

3. How can providers build trusting relationships in supportive housing programs specifically? When someone is a participant in this kind of program, how do these relationships with their care team and community affect them?

Trust needs to be built from both directions, from provider to participant and vice versa. In addition, people developing housing programs should work to be aware of their own biases and to not rush to judgement. They need to trust that individual knows themselves well. Open communication is key.

Resources:

1. **Webinar: Accessing housing: Overcoming the documentation barrier**
2. **Office Hours for Complex Care: Supportive housing from a consumer perspective**
3. **My Resource Pal** for South Jersey services; **Aunt Bertha** for nationwide services
4. **National Healthcare for the Homeless Council**
5. **National Alliance to End Homelessness**
6. **National Coalition for the Homeless**
7. **National Council of State Housing Agencies**

About the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers

We are a multidisciplinary nonprofit working to improve care for people with complex health and social needs in Camden, NJ, and across the country. The Camden Coalition works to advance the field of **complex care** by implementing person-centered programs and piloting new models that address chronic illness and social barriers to health and wellbeing. Supported by a robust data infrastructure, cross-sector convening, and shared learning, our community-based programs deliver better care to the most vulnerable individuals **in Camden** and **regionally**.

Through our **National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs** (National Center), the Camden Coalition's local work also informs our goal of building the field of complex care **across the country**. Launched in 2016, the National Center exists to inspire people to join the complex care community, connect complex care practitioners with each other, and support the field with tools and resources that move the field of complex care forward.

For more information about the Camden Coalition, visit www.camdenhealth.org.