



Flexible Services: Homes as a Component of Treatment

The Connection: Health through Housing

In the United States, it's common practice to detect and treat disease in medical settings. Yet the origins of illness can be identified long before someone enters a doctor's office.

An estimated 70 percent of differences in health status are associated with people's social and physical environment, including the quality, affordability, stability and location of a person's home. The result is striking disparities that adversely affect low-income communities.

As a proven and powerful nonprofit that improves communities and people's lives by making well-designed homes affordable, Enterprise Community Partners recognizes its role in laying a foundation for health and well-being nationwide.

We foster community improvement from the ground up, connecting homes to health care and other important resources like schools, economic mobility and transit.

For more than 30 years, we have brought together nationwide know-how, partners, policy leadership and investment to multiply the impact of local development. We also developed the standards to create greener, healthier communities.

We know there's more work to be done and we will continue finding innovative solutions because where you live affects the life – and health – you can have.

A Stable, Affordable Home's Impact on Disease Management

A home is a key component of preventive health care; however, once a person is facing a health crisis, it becomes a necessary part of their treatment.

When patients do not have a stable place to live, they are unable to properly manage their health conditions. Research links homelessness with improper medication storage, an inability to maintain a healthy diet, trouble keeping up with subsequent doctor appointments, and an increased likelihood of engaging in risky health behaviors.

With the health care sector increasingly acknowledging the importance of treating the whole person and not just the health condition, Enterprise is exploring new, sustainable financing mechanisms that will cover housing costs as part of a holistic treatment plan.

Pilot Project: Oregon Flexible Services

In Oregon, Enterprise and partners are demonstrating that investing health care dollars into affordable housing with services can be a cost-effective way to improve the delivery of care and improve health outcomes for vulnerable residents.

The two-year Flexible Services Pilot Project, launched in 2016, is underway as Oregon faces a dual crisis: a growing financial deficit and rising health care costs. In Portland, the situation has been exacerbated by the number of individuals and families with significant health care needs who also lack access to a stable, affordable home.

Oregon's 1115 Medicaid waiver allows Coordinated Care Organizations to use Medicaid Flexible Services to provide health related expenditures that are cost effective and designed to improve health and care delivery. The Oregon Health Authority's policies state that flexible services can include assistance with food and transportation to help Medicaid recipients manage their health – as well as the **“housing supports related to social determinates of health** (e.g., shelter, utilities, critical repairs) and **home/living environment items or improvements.”**



Oregon Pilot Project: Focus on Vulnerable People

With the flexibility of the state’s Medicaid waiver, Enterprise – together with our state and local partners in Oregon – is testing the benefits of redirecting Medicaid resources to vital housing-related services. To date the pilot has served 58 families experiencing a health crisis that poses a risk to their housing stability due to, for example, an inability to work while recovering or transitioning from an inpatient treatment facility to permanent housing.

Participants include low-income households in Multnomah County with a focus on people of color, people with mental and physical health and/or substance use issues, and people with histories of frequent, high-acuity and high-cost care.

Initially the program planned to provide individuals and families with up to \$500 a month in rental assistance for one year, making it possible for families to live in a stable home. As the program continued and rental prices rose the rental assistance was adjusted to meet the client’s needs of increased monthly assistance over a shorter period. In most cases, clients need an average of \$700 a month for 10 weeks to regain stability. Assistance is made possible through flexible Medicaid services as well as grant funding. The types of housing-related services available as part of the pilot include:

- Rental assistance
- Eviction prevention
- Rapid re-housing
- Tenancy sustaining services
- Service/care coordination for people experiencing a health and housing crisis
- Benefits enrollment and/or access to local clinics and mental health services

Measuring the Impact of Critical Housing Support

The pilot program, ending December 2017, aims to illustrate the value of using Medicaid resources to help beneficiaries obtain critical housing support. We will measure changes in health care costs, health care utilization frequency and type, benefit enrollment, and connections to mental and physical health care providers. Based on the findings, Enterprise will work to implement similar systems and policy support across Oregon and potentially nationwide to improve residents’ health and well-being, and reduce health spending through stable affordable homes connected to services.

A Child’s Health Emergency

Janet* is a full-time construction flagger and a single mom of triplets – three 15-year-old boys. When one of her sons developed hip pain and a pronounced limp, she took him to the doctor. He needed not just orthopedic surgery but months of painstaking rehabilitation afterward. Resources made possible through Oregon’s Flexible Services Pilot Project helped ensure that the family’s home was not in jeopardy. That stability helped Janet care for her son during his extensive recovery and ensure her family’s well-being until she was able to return to work.

*Name changed

Project Partners

FamilyCare, Human Solutions, Inc., Oregon Health Authority, Project Access NOW

Health/Service Agencies

Homeless Youth Continuum, NAMI Oregon, Native American Youth & Family Center, New Avenues for Youth, Outside In Rosewood Family Health Center, Wallace Medical Center

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