



Our Year of

WORKING TOGETHER TO END HOMELESSNESS



Physical Health, Mental Health, and Addiction Challenges

Factors Contributing to Physical Health, Mental Health and Addiction Challenges

- » Precedence for food, water, safety, and shelter over seeking health care leads to fragmented care, with high costs and poorer outcomes.
- » Chronic physical health issue(s) interfering with ability to work.
- » Lack of access to routine health care treatment.
- » Untreated mental illness, lower rate of diagnosed mental health disorders, and substance use disorders due to the stigma associated with it and insufficient mental health resources.
- » Lack of emotional and family support can cause sadness and behavioral health issues (addiction).
- » Co-occurring health issues.
- » Continue to experience trauma from being homeless.
- » Resistance to available care due to mistrust and perception of being judged.
- » Insufficient accessible mental health and substance abuse treatment services.
- » Difficulty in contacting services due to cognitive issues.
- » Lack of dependable transportation to attend medical and other appointments.

Some Current Strategies to Address Health Needs

- » San Mateo County Medical Center and outpatient clinics
- » Primary and mental health care for clients experiencing street homelessness (Street Medicine and Mobile clinic)
- » Mobile Dental Clinic
- » County and CBO (Community Based Organization) outpatient clinics addressing behavioral health and recovery
- » Homeless Health Care Coordination (HCH) Team
- » Service Connect to support adults returning to the community following incarceration
- » Homeless Engagement, Assessment, & Linkage (HEAL) Team field-based outreach, engagement and intervention services
- » Community health and crisis response team (CCRT)
- » Supportive housing options (Mental Health, Veterans, addiction recovery)

Some Identified Unmet Health Needs to Consider

- » Of the patients experiencing homelessness who received services through the Healthcare for Homeless (HCH) /Farmworker Health (FH) program in 2018, 25.9% (1,201) were diagnosed with mental health disorders and 17.1% (793) were diagnosed with substance use disorders.
- » Unsheltered individuals were more likely to identify incontinence, kidney issues/failure, and accidental falls causing injury as a problem they faced in the last year.
- » Unsheltered populations are at higher risk of cancer due to pollution and exposure to carcinogens.
- » Unsheltered populations are more likely to be diagnosed during the later stages of cancer, resulting in higher cancer mortality rates than sheltered individuals.
- » For both dental pain/problems and chronic pain, unsheltered individuals were slightly more likely to report them as a “major problem” than sheltered individuals.
- » 12% of all patients experiencing homelessness seen in 2021 had a diagnosis of diabetes and 30% were diagnosed with high blood pressure, but these rates are probably low because many homeless individuals living on the streets and in shelters maybe undiagnosed.



274 respondents identified these top six problems over the last 12 months in the 2019 HCH/FH survey:

- 1 Stress or anxiety
- 2 Dental pain and other problems
- 3 Feeling depressed
- 4 Feeling lonely, sad, or isolated
- 5 Chronic pain
- 6 Weight management/healthy eating