Addressing Housing and Health

A FOCUS OF CENTRAL CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH'S INVESTMENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Central California Alliance for Health (the Alliance) is an award-winning regional Medi-Cal managed care health plan that serves over **40% of the population** in Mariposa, Merced, Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties. The Alliance connects more than 455,000 Medi-Cal members to providers and programs to provide accessible, quality health care.

Housing: An Important Foundation for Health

Housing is one of the most important social determinants of health that directly impacts health outcomes.[1] Evidence shows that supportive housing for individuals improves the health outcomes of individuals and reduces costs to the overall health care system. Factors such as mental illness, chronic health conditions, disabilities and histories of trauma make it difficult for some individuals to maintain housing without assistance.[2] Supportive housing provides intensive services (e.g., case management) for individuals to remain housed by helping tenants address physical and mental health needs and substance use conditions. Case management, often provided onsite where people are housed, can also provide other assistance to individuals such as help applying for benefits, gaining employment, managing a lease and connecting individuals to primary health care providers.

THE HEALTH AND HOUSING LINK

Individuals experiencing homelessness:

Suffer all illnesses at **three to six times** the rates experienced by housed individuals.*

Are **four times** more likely to be hospitalized.*

Experience higher death rates.*

*Maness and Khan, "Care of the Homeless: An Overview."

Creating Local Health Care Solutions

The Alliance makes investments in housing and housing services in the communities it serves through the Alliance's Medi-Cal Capacity Grant Program and the Alliance's administration of incentive programs offered by the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). The Alliance provides grants to increase the availability, quality and access of health care and supportive resources for Medi-Cal members and to address social drivers that influence health and wellness in our communities. DHCS incentive programs support capacity building among housing service providers to serve the Medi-Cal population.

Alliance Grant Program Builds Capacity for Housing and Health

Given the adverse effects of homelessness on an individual's health and the evidence that housing leads to positive health outcomes, the Alliance has made several investments to support the development and construction of permanent supportive housing for unhoused members. Between 2016 and 2021, the Alliance awarded five capital grants totaling $10.6M to support the construction of low-income housing projects. When all projects are completed, the projects will yield a total of 433 housing units, 83 of which are designated for Alliance members with complex needs for permanent supportive housing with onsite case management services. Additionally, the Alliance's Grant Program funded a Navigation Center in the city of Merced that provides unhoused individuals with low barrier transitional housing and onsite case management.

The Alliance also implemented a Recuperative Care Pilot from March 2021 to June 2022 through the Medi-Cal Capacity Grant Program. The pilot funded recuperative care and bridge housing for unhoused Alliance Medi-Cal members who were discharged from the hospital and recovering from an acute illness or injury. With provider partnerships in each county, the pilot created the foundation for a successful transition to Community Supports implementation under CalAIM. These services are now reimbursable through Medi-Cal as Recuperative Care and Short-Term Post-Hospitalization Housing.

[1] Arabo, Wilkniss, Malone and Isasi, "Housing as Health Care: A Road Map for States."
[2] Dohler et al., "Supportive Housing Helps Vulnerable People Live and Thrive in the Community."

CalAIM Expands Housing Services and Network

The Alliance's investments in housing and housing services aim to improve Medi-Cal member health outcomes, reduce hospital admissions and emergency department utilization, and reduce the cost of health care for members experiencing homelessness.

In 2022, the Alliance began administering DHCS incentive programs, including the CalAIM Incentive Payment Program (IPP) and the Housing and Homelessness Incentive Program (HHIP). These programs have been instrumental in addressing member needs and developing partnerships to expand capacity for housing-related services.

IPP provides funding for Enhanced Care Management and Community Supports providers who provide housing and health-related services to unhoused Medi-Cal members. Funding is used to strengthen providers' staffing capacity, increase physical footprint of spaces to serve members, and address care management and data sharing capabilities, infrastructure and technology.

HHIP addresses homelessness and housing through collaborative planning and implementation of services and supports. The Alliance worked with each Continuum of Care (CoC) in Alliance service areas to develop Local Homelessness Plans (LHP) that identify and address housing and service gaps. The Alliance subsequently funded many of the LHP priorities, including data connectivity and coordinated entry systems, to improve coordination of care and increase outreach.

In fall 2022, the Alliance utilized HHIP funding to launch the Street Medicine Pilot with one provider in each county. Street Medicine is defined as a set of health and social services that address the unique needs and circumstances of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. These services are delivered directly to them in their own environment. The pilot will run from May 2023 to December 2024, with the goal of creating the foundation for Street Medicine to be a reimbursable Medi-Cal benefit offered by the Alliance.

HHIP INVESTMENTS IN THE ALLIANCE SERVICE AREAS:

- Landlord Engagement Program.
- Street outreach.
- People with lived experience (PLE) included in Continuum of Care boards.
- Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) and Alliance data interoperability.
- Electronic health record support for housing-related service providers.
- Strategy to address state-funded Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention program disparities and inequities.
- Alliance internal capacity for tracking and managing referrals for Community Support providers.

Mercy Medical Center Merced received HHIP funding to purchase a mobile clinic and other street medicine infrastructure.

For more information about the Medi-Cal Capacity Grant Program, please visit **www.thealliance.health/grants**.

For more information about Enhanced Care Management and Community Supports, please visit **www.thealliance.health/ecmcsprovider**.

HEALTHY PEOPLE. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.