Homelessness – The Other Pandemic: How Our Complex Care Program is Helping

Imagine the overwhelming stress of being homeless, dealing with mental and health issues, finding shelter, food, and having to fend for yourself on a daily basis. Now imagine having these issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the shelters in your community are full and sheltering in place seems impossible.

The pandemic has exacerbated the vulnerability of homeless individuals in our county, especially those with chronic and complex medical conditions. “We have been working closely with the County of Marin and other agencies to temporarily place our patients in hotels, but we’re not always successful,” explains Cayenne Bierman, LCSW, the Clinic’s Behavioral Health Manager for Complex Care Services. Cayenne’s team works closely with high-risk patients to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations, promote healthy living, and provide ongoing care as well as support. They also collaborate with several local organizations that provide resources like housing, financial and legal aid, food, and much more.

Successfully Housed Before COVID-19 Pandemic

Shortly before the pandemic started, Colleen Horowitz, MPH, BSN, RN, one of the team’s nurses, helped two of her patients find stable housing and start a new life. Both had been experiencing severe mental health issues, and were struggling with every aspect of their lives — feeling profound shame and anger in addition to coping with health problems. After months of support and guidance, she was able to help them both find a place to live. Now, she continues to support them by checking in on a regular basis via telemedicine appointments, ensuring that they are getting to a better emotional, physical, and financial place.

“I’m thrilled for these two patients of mine” reports Colleen. “They have a safe place to live and are able to follow public orders, which benefits themselves as well as our community at large.”

Unfortunately, Colleen and her team members continue to have unhoused patients who are dealing with the challenges brought on by the pandemic—crowded shelters and food pantries, scarcity of jobs, higher risk factors to contracting coronavirus, and more.

“We are urgently looking to house them while addressing their medical and behavioral health needs, traumas, domestic violence and other factors that have a direct impact on their health and that have worsened during the pandemic,” reports Evelyn Aguilar, MSW, another Complex Care team member.
Staff Spotlight

Meet Leigha Andrews, MBA – The Clinics’ new Senior Director of Medical Services.
Leigha joined the Clinics in June and is providing leadership and support to our medical clinics’ operations teams. She comes to us with over 15 years of experience and expertise in management and leadership. Her most recent position was at Open Health Care Clinic—a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. There she served as a Director of Clinical Services and oversaw their medical, dental, and behavioral health departments.

“Leigha brings many years of operational experience and a strong commitment to the underserved populations who our Clinics serve. We are thrilled to have her on board.”
Dr. Mitesh Popat, CEO.

Committed to Helping the Most Vulnerable

Working at an FQHC intensified her desire to help and make a difference. She is looking forward to continue to fulfill this passion here in Marin.

“The opportunity to work for a healthcare organization that breathes its mission and has such a committed team of providers and staff makes this a dream job,” says Leigha.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology with a concentration in Microbiology from the Southern University of Baton Rouge, Louisiana and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix.

Your Donations Ensure our Future

First Virtual Summer Solstice Celebration a Success! Over $240,000 raised

Thanks to technology, our very first virtual Summer Solstice Celebration was held on June 24, with 160 supporters participating online. We had the pleasure of honoring Dr. Matt Willis, Dr. Timothy Sowerby and Melissa Osheroff as this year’s Community Health Champions. Each has made significant contributions to support our clinics and community.

Our lively Fund-a-Need led by Dr. Jose Chibras and Dr. Elizabeth Horevitz reached the goal of meeting a $25,000 matching grant from the Nancy & Richard Robbins Family Foundation. Proceeds will support the Clinics’ COVID-19 response programs.

Many thanks to all of our sponsors including: PharMedQuest, Susan & Dennis Gilardi, Nancy & Richard Robbins Family Foundation, Arrow Benefits Group, and Sutter Novato Community Hospital. To watch the event go https://www.marinclinic.org/news-events/summer-solstice/2020-summer-solstice-celebration/

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