Housing is Health Care

Charlotte Bruce
December 18th, 2023
NLIHC Tenant Talk
Multiple Pieces of Housing and Health

Taylor, L. *Health Affairs*, 2018
Stability: The Home Iceberg

HOMELESS

HIDDEN HOMELESS:

HOUSING INSECURE

- Multiple moves
- Overcrowded
- Doubled Up
- Behind on rent

UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING
Housing instability and homelessness impact health across the lifespan

**Prenatal period**
- Pre-term birth
- Low birth weight
- Pregnancy complications
- Stress

**Early childhood**
- Development delay
- Poor overall health
- Hospitalization risk
- Weight trajectory
- Food Insecurity

**Childhood/adolescence**
- Adverse educational outcomes
- Poor mental/behavioral health outcomes
- Weight trajectory
- Food Insecurity

**Adulthood**
- Poor general health
- Anxiety/depression
- Increased need for urgent health services
- Medication adherence
- Weight trajectory
- Food Insecurity
Health Care Cost of Housing Instability

- Massachusetts ALONE
- Estimated in 2017 (likely higher today)

LONG-TERM COSTS OF UNSTABLE HOMES TO THE HEALTH SYSTEM ARE $111 BILLION*

$76.8 Billion OVER TEN YEARS
Includes increased costs for hospitalizations, ambulatory visits, dental procedures, mental health care, and medications

$34.3 Billion OVER TEN YEARS
Includes increased costs for hospitalizations, ambulatory visits, dental procedures, medications, and special education services

Total cost: $111 Billion over ten years
Levels of Housing Instability Interventions for Health Systems

- Research/Screening
- Systems Connected/integrated
- Policy
Housing Rx

- **Pilot Randomized Control Trial** at Boston Medical Center, 2016-2020 (76 families)

- **Eligibility criteria:**
  - Families w/ child < 11 years old, receives primary care at BMC
  - Experiencing housing instability
    - Homelessness in past year
    - Behind on rent in past year
    - Moved 2+ times in past year
    - Paying > 50% of income on housing
  - At least one medically complex member
    - Child or adult w/ 3+ ED visits in past year
    - Child w/ medical conditions requiring 2+ specialists
  - Medicaid-eligible
Housing Rx

- **Partnership between:**
  - Health system (BMC)
  - Research group (Children’s HealthWatch)
  - Housing services agency (Project Hope)
  - Local housing authority (BHA)
  - Medical-legal partnership
  - Community development corporation (Nuestra Comunidad)

- **Intervention:**
  - Paired with Care Coordinator at Project Hope, created a housing plan together
  - Combination of services:
    - Financial counseling and benefits connection
    - Legal services
    - Priority access to public housing
THANK YOU