

Just-In-Time Learning Series: MANAGEMENT ESSENTIALS FOR THE UNHOUSED POPULATION IN A DISASTER SETTING



Sarah Stella, MD and Ed Farrell, MD

Dr. Stella is a hospitalist physician at Denver Health specializing in the treatment of people experiencing homelessness. Dr. Farrell is a physician with Colorado Coalition for the Homeless providing clinical and street-based care to people experiencing homelessness

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS (PEH)

Someone is experiencing homelessness if they are:

- *Sheltered*: sleeping in a shelter designed for temporary living.
- *Unsheltered*: sleeping somewhere not designed for regular sleeping
 - Includes parks, tents, abandoned buildings, cars, RVs etc.

Homelessness disproportionately impacts:

- Racial and ethnic minoritized populations
- the LGBTQ population
- People with disabilities
- Older populations

Homelessness is a dangerous health condition associated with:

- Increased risk of acute illness, serious infection, disabling health conditions, substance use, overdose risk, hospitalization, ED use, and exposure to environmental health hazards.
- Increased victimization and violence
- Increased mortality and decreased life expectancy

Vulnerability Factors for PEH

Lack of resources to meet basic needs

Decreased healthcare access

Crowded or unsafe living conditions

Pre-existing health conditions

Communication challenges

Limited social capital

Historical trauma and mistrust

THE 5PS: WHY PEH WON'T SEEK CARE OR LEAVE WHERE THEY ARE

Partners

Possessions

Pets

Police

Psychiatric
Conditions/PTSD

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PEH IN DISASTERS

- Create authentic, effective partnerships with PEH before, during, and after disasters.
- Involve lived experts often and as early as possible
- Inclusive low-barrier strategies should “meet people where they are”
- Consider harm reduction and trauma-responsive care at all levels of response
- Key stakeholder alignment and response
- Engage frontline healthcare and service providers
- Utilize communication from trusted messengers that is simple, concise, and clear.

The associated training video to this document was published on 09/02/2024. The training can be viewed on YouTube at Mountain Plains RDHRS. The MPRDHRS JIT Learning Series is funded by Award Number 6 HITEP200043-01-03 from the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR). The content of this document is a product of the individual speakers and does not represent the official policy or position of the U.S. Government. This information is not meant to be a substitute for medical professional advice, diagnosis, or treatment.