




**HOMELESS & HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER**

## Identifying and Addressing Behavioral Health Needs in Encampments

November 13, 2024



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## Disclaimer

The Homeless and Housing Resource Center is a program operated by Policy Research, Inc. and developed under grant 1H79SM083003-01 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Interviews, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.

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
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## ASL Interpretation and Transcription

- We have arranged for ASL interpretation services during this meeting. The ASL interpreters are:
  - Pamela Mitchell
  - Dave Gratzner
- Live transcription is available
  - Click Live Transcript  and then select Show Subtitle
  - Subtitles can be moved within the window and re-sized
- If you are experiencing technical difficulties, please contact [info@hhrctraining.org](mailto:info@hhrctraining.org)



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## Interpretation Instructions

- This webinar includes live Spanish interpretation. To listen in Spanish, use  and choose Spanish audio.
- Este webinar incluye interpretación en vivo al español. Para escuchar en español, use  y elija audio en español.

**Watch:**

- ☒ Sign Language off
- ☐ American Sign Language

**Listen In:**

- ☐ Original Audio (Interpretation off)
- ☒ English
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Hmong

Mute Original Audio



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## Webinar Instructions

- All participant lines will be muted and the chat feature is disabled
- Questions:** Please submit your questions using the Q&A feature
- Slides:** Available now on HHRC website: <https://hhrctraining.org/events-webinars>
- Recording:** Will be available on the HHRC website tomorrow
- Evaluation:** Link will be shared at the end and browser should redirect you
- Certificate of Participation** (no CEUs are offered): Provided after the evaluation is completed



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## Land Acknowledgment

Our conversation today includes all of us, who are located across many communities.

**Most of our communities reside on unceded ancestral lands or acquired by unhonored treaties.** We acknowledge the people of these lands, past and present and **honor with gratitude the land itself, and its people.**

We also honor the brilliance and humanity of all immigrant labor, including voluntary, involuntary, trafficked, forced, and undocumented peoples, **whose labor**, remains hidden in the shadows **but still contributes to the wellbeing of our collective community.**



CommonSpirit  
USC Street Medicine  
NATIONAL HEALTH CARE  
HOMELESS COUNCIL

Source: [Native Land](#)

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## Agenda

- Overview of the behavioral health needs of people living in encampments, principles for engagement, and how encampment sweeps affect health
- Circle the City, Phoenix, AZ: Program Experience
- USC Street Medicine, Los Angeles, CA: Program Experience
- Panel
  - Joseph Becerra, CADC II, Supervising Community Health Worker and Certified Addiction Treatment Counselor
  - Denise Benson, she/her, Mental Health Street Medicine Case Manager
  - Rafael Martinez, LCSW, Director of Behavioral Health
  - Thomas Davis, he/him, Outreach Patient Navigator

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## Behavioral Health Needs of PEH

- 21% of people experiencing homelessness report having a serious mental illness (SMI)<sup>1</sup>
- 16% of people experiencing homelessness (PEH) report having a substance use disorder<sup>1</sup>
- In 2023, 39% of all people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. were unsheltered; looking at just individuals (not families), over 50% were unsheltered<sup>2</sup>
- Lack of stable housing and challenges meeting basic needs make addressing behavioral health needs much more challenging

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1. <https://www.samhsa.gov/blog/addressing-social-determinants-health-among-individuals-experiencing-homelessness>
2. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness/>

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## Behavioral Health Needs of PEH, Cont.

The relationship between behavioral health conditions and homelessness is complex and bi-directional

- Behavioral health conditions can contribute to a person becoming homeless
- Behavioral health conditions may begin after someone becomes unhoused
- Behavioral health conditions may become exacerbated by the stress of homelessness



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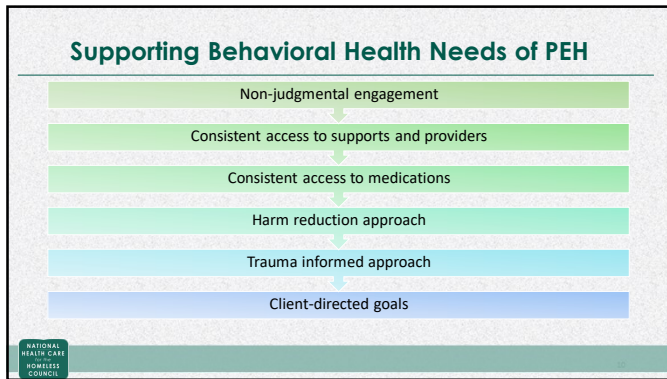
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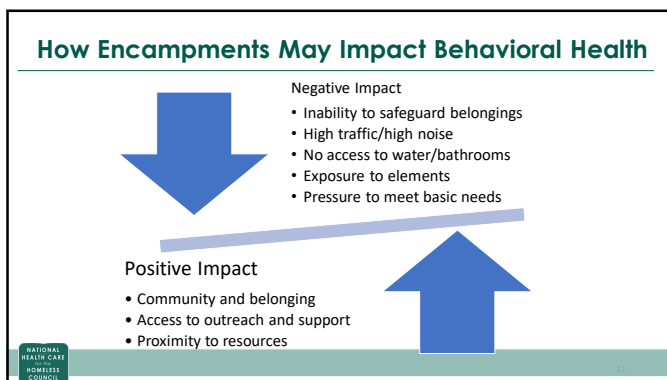
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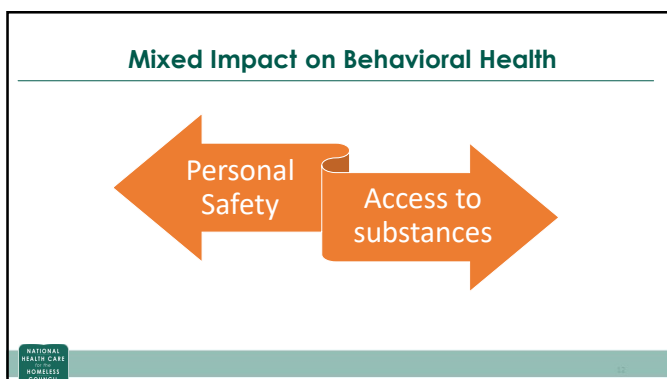
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### Grants Pass Decision

- In June 2024, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the practice of fining and ticketing people who sleep in public does not violate the Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishment ([Johnson vs. Grants Pass](#))
- While many communities were already conducting encampment sweeps, this ruling provides more backing to the practice of ticketing and arresting people for being unsheltered
- Sweeps and arrests can occur without offering services or referrals to shelter or housing
- While the ruling allows for these practices, it does not mandate them

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Source: <https://nhchc.org/supreme-court-rules-against-unhoused-people-in-grants-pass-case/>

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### Impact of Encampment Sweeps on Health

- Impact personal safety and trust in available supports
- Loss of belongings including medicine, safer use supplies
- Loss of contact and trust with needed medical care and supports
- Harm people's ability to continue moving towards permanent housing
- Disproportionately impact historically marginalized groups

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Resource: [APHA: Protecting the Health and Well-Being of People Living Unsheltered by Stopping Forcible Displacement of Encampments](#)

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# USC

**Community Health Workers in Street Medicine:**  
Presenter: Joseph Becerra, Supervising Community Health Worker

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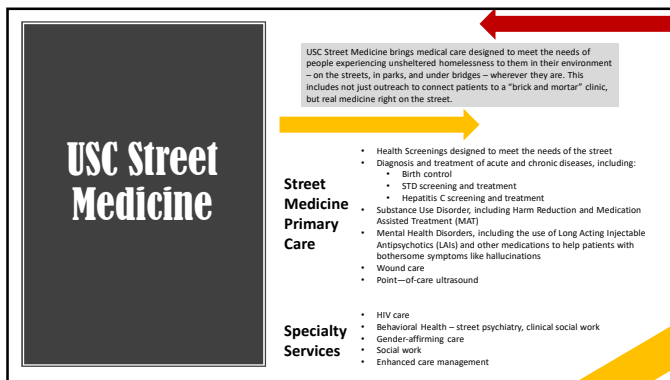
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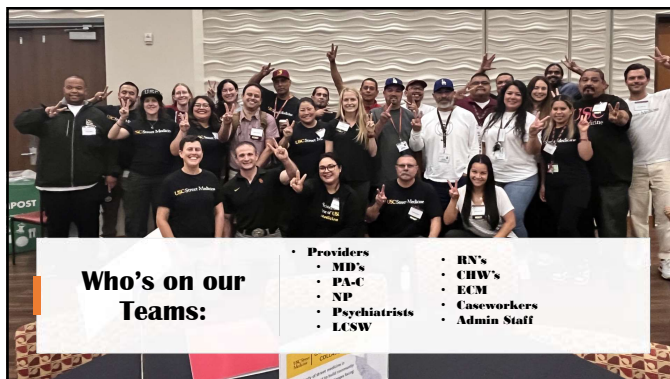
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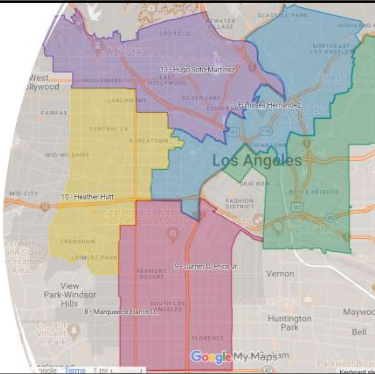
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## How do we decide where to go?

- Outreach
- Referrals
  - Patient to Patient
  - City/CD Partners
  - Hospitals
  - Community
  - External Organizations



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## Role of the CHW



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## Role of the CHW, Cont.

- Scene Safety
- Harm Reduction
- Outreach
- Engagement
- Team Support
- Truck Inventory
- Admin Duties



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## Role of the CHW: Patient Engagement



How do you start engagements and earn a client's trust?



What are a few strategies you use when a client doesn't seem interested in talking to you?

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## Responding to Mental Health Needs



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## Connection to Care Team

[www.circlethecity.org](http://www.circlethecity.org)

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## Introductions

- Denise Benson-Case Manager for Mental Health Street Medicine Team
- Thomas Davis- Patient Navigator for Outreach Team
- Patrick Leonard- Lead Patient Navigator
- Rafael Martinez- Director of Behavioral Health



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## Connection to Care Team

- "Clean up" efforts have scattered and isolated people
- The team has a skill set of engaging people
- Not medical or BH providers – cost effective
- Identify encampments and engage
- Provide real-time information to CTC mobile, street medicine teams by dropping pins for outreach
- Pilot with Denise and Thomas was successful and CTC has secured funding for 2 full time staff and a vehicle.



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### Prepping for the Day

- Lots of cold water this hot summer!
- Laptops and phones
- The right attitude
- Mapping out the day

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### Engagement and Building Trust when Approaching Encampments

- Compassion and Humility
- Authenticity and Naturalness
- Attitude of equality and acceptance
- "We are not the police."
- No Pressure
- Listening- Responding to the answer of "Is there anything we can help you with?"
- Many are already familiar with and trust Circle the City

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### Safety, Safety, Safety

- One "no", no go
- Be aware of body language
- Is there a "vibe"? that it is not a safe environment
- Is response welcoming and conversation or does it feel standoffish and answers are short?
- Approach with humility and respect – Avoid causing defensiveness
- Approach with authenticity and genuineness
- Avoid a "formal assessment interview" process

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### More than Dropping a Pin for the Team

- It is important to drop that pin so a team can follow up on folks
- Also important to listen for opportunities to provide support, encouragement and resources at the moment
- Mental health
- Substance use
- Social Determinants of Health resources
- Follow up visits to encampments



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### THANK YOU!!!

Rafael Martinez  
Rmartinez@circlethecity.org



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### Panelists

- **Joseph Becerra**, CADAC II, Supervising Community Health Worker and Certified Addiction Treatment Counselor
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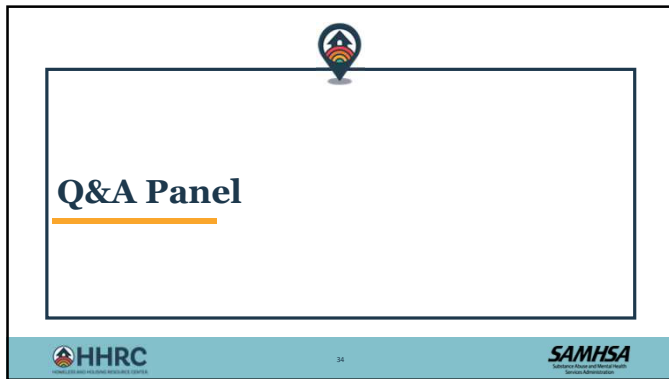
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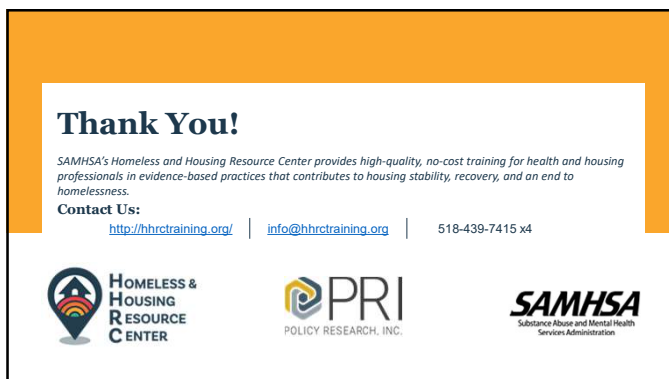
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