



**We are
Called**

TO HEAL. TO UNITE. TO JUSTICE.

Team Reflection—HUDDLE

No. 24 Housing Instability

Housing instability arose as a leading plight has been exposed and exacerbated by the prolonged pandemic. Without a pinpoint definition, housing instability captures a continuum between homelessness and stable, secure housing. It manifests in many forms, such as trouble paying rent, overcrowding, frequent moves, staying with relatives, or spending the bulk of household income on housing. Close to half of all renters (47.5%) are cost burdened. [24H.1] Black Americans comprise 40% of housing-insecure individuals and Hispanic Americans 20%. [24H.2] Families headed by women account for one-third of the homeless population. [24H.3] Youth who experience housing instability also experience generally poorer health, increased asthma and lifetime risk of depression, as well as possible developmental delays. Adults can experience significantly higher rates of mental health problems, and higher prevalence of HIV, substance abuse, tuberculosis, and other chronic conditions. Without stable housing, individuals experience less connection to healthcare resources. This leads to a greater likelihood of compromised overall health and enables diseases to advance into latent phases that are more difficult to treat. Public policy can complicate matters with the criminalization of homelessness. [24H.4]

The search to call a place home goes back before biblical times. Not only this, more than any before him, Pope Francis has shown special affection to homeless individuals. He spent his 80th birthday dining with homeless people he invited inside the Vatican. He made unannounced visits to a free clinic administering COVID-19 vaccinations to homeless individuals, along with countless other acts of charity. Health systems, too, are addressing the challenges housing insecurity presents with substantial community investment. Such deep investments not only reflect a Catholic commitment of integral human development, they also represent how a health system, as an anchor institution, can impact substantial change for the health of communities and vulnerable populations. [24H.5]

Consider

- When I pass by tents under a viaduct or an individual pushing a rusty grocery cart overflowing with stuffed plastic bags, what reaction do I notice first welling up within me? What biases, or social narratives might I need to overcome to embrace housing-insecure individuals as freely as Pope Francis?

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- What does my hospital and health system do to better the experience of housing insecurity in the community?

Let us pray together

*O Lord, to whom no one is a stranger
and from whose help no one is ever distant,
look with compassion on those without a place to live;
we pray you restore them to a home of their own,
and give us a kind heart to help the homeless in their need.
We ask this in your holy and eternal name, AMEN.*

Adapted from Catholic Charities USA, Shelter the Homeless [prayer resource](#).

[24H.1] Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. The State of the Nation's Housing, 2018. http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Harvard_JCHS_State_of_the_Nations_Housing_2018.pdf

[24H.2] The National Alliance to End Homelessness. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/inequality/>

[24H.3] Hayashi, S. 2016. How Health and Homelessness are Connected—Medically. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/01/how-health-and-homelessness-are-connectedmedically/458871/>

[24H.4] <https://www.cdc.gov/php/publications/topic/resources/resources-homelessness.html>

[24H.5] <https://www.chausa.org/publications/catholic-health-world/archives/issues/september-15-2019/bon-secours-mercy-dignity-health-advance-affordable-housing-initiatives>

Additional Background Information

Dignity Health Press Center: <https://www.dignityhealth.org/sacramento/about-us/press-center/08-09-2018-dignity-health-announces-investment-in-the-city-of-sacramentos-homeless-initiative>;

See also:

1. <https://buildhealthyplaces.org/sharing-knowledge/blogs/news/press-release-new-dignity-health-investment-health-equity/>
2. <https://www.chausa.org/publications/health-progress/article/september-october-2019/boundless-collaboration-a-philosophy-for-sustainable-and-stabilizing-housing-investment-strategy>
3. CBS, "60-Minutes," November 22, 2020. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/public-school-enrollment-coronavirus-pandemic-60-minutes-2020-11-22/>
4. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/housing-instability>
5. University of Chicago, Chapin Hall: <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/VoYC-LGBTQ-Brief-FINAL.pdf>; See also: <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/lgbtq-youth/homelessness>