

Housing is Healthcare Wellness West in the Fight for Housing Access

One of the most important drivers of health equity is housing security. The lack of housing (or the lack of adequate housing) affects a person's health in all sorts of ways. Unstable housing or homelessness leads to anxiety and stress, which impacts health. Inadequate housing conditions, such as overcrowding, lack of heating and cooling, and poor air quality create health issues. Unstable housing also negatively impacts access to healthcare – like seeing a doctor and receiving treatment. In short, housing is one of the most significant Social Determinants of Health (SDOH).

Wellness West has conducted more than 16,040 health risk screening assessments over the last two years. Twenty-five percent of our patients are currently housing insecure. And 12 percent report being homeless/sheltered while 9% reported not feeling physically and emotionally safe at home.

According to the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, there are currently more than 68,000 homeless people in the city. That's an increase of nearly 3,000 from last year. And the problem is shamefully correlated to race. About 30 percent of Chicago's population is Black, but 82 percent of those experiencing homelessness are Black.

Wellness West has a multi-pronged approach. Our Community Health Workers routinely refer clients to shelters and other resources to provide immediate relief. For longer-term solutions, Wellness West is a key partner in the Flexible Housing Pool, a program developed in collaboration with Cook County Health and the City of Chicago to find and place qualifying applicants into permanent stable housing. Wellness West so far has placed 14 individuals in housing through this program.

To learn more about the critical issue of housing in Chicago and what Wellness West and other advocates are doing about it, **please join us Nov. 7 for a Health and Housing Forum at Malcolm X College.**

Go here to register: <https://tinyurl.com/3eytey5h>

Our Progress



Wellness West's Speaking Opportunities

Wellness West leaders Art Jones and Lillian Davis presented to the CMS Health Equity Conference in Washington, D.C.

Their presentation, entitled "A West Side Story: Re-imagining the Provider Network and Healthcare Workforce," provided the overview of how Wellness West is transforming old paradigms of healthcare delivery.

The presentation is available for download here: <https://tinyurl.com/3be2bzvm>



From left: Art Jones, Wellness West Clinical Advisor; Lillian Davis, Wellness West Senior Program Manager; Vacheria Keys (panel moderator)

Client Stories

Two inspiring women are now in permanent housing with the help of their "Angel" and Wellness West.



From left: Renee Washington (client), Angel Sanders (CHW), Sonya Hughes (client). Photo courtesy Austin Weekly News

they didn't give up. And then they met Angel Sanders. Angel is a Community Health Worker for Westside Health Authority, a Wellness West partner. As a lifelong Austin resident, Angel started the application process for both women to the Flexible Housing Pool.

Renee and Sonya will both tell their personal stories at the upcoming Wellness West Health and Housing Forum on Nov. 7 at Malcolm X College.

You can also read about them in this Austin Weekly News article: <https://tinyurl.com/y4msybxk>

"I'm going to thank God in advance," Sonya Hughes said at the start of the application process for the Flexible Housing Pool.

Sonya had suffered from chronic homelessness for much of her adult life. She is responsible for two nieces (6 and 10) while their parents struggle with their own health issues.

Renee Washington was also enduring housing insecurity since she suffered a traumatic brain injury at her workplace five years ago. It affected every aspect of her life.

It was easy for both women to assume that stable housing was an unreachable goal. But they didn't give up. And then they met Angel Sanders. Angel is a Community Health Worker for Westside Health Authority, a Wellness West partner. As a lifelong Austin resident, Angel started the application process for both women to the Flexible Housing Pool.

"I have so many clients that need housing. We're doing everything we can to find housing for those who have not been selected for housing assistance."

In the News

Wellness West is regularly covered in the news media. Go to the link below for an example of recent coverage.



WVAZ-FM 102.7: "Chicago Speaks" <https://www.spreaker.com/e/qTsgtURWSHFm—56417125>

"Wellness West is a pioneering collaboration committed to transforming healthcare delivery and health outcomes representing Chicago's diaspora, especially on the West Side. The entire collaborative is truly committed to becoming a national model for the rest of the country!"



Jose R. Sanchez
Board Chair
Wellness West



Donald Dew
Board Vice Chair
Wellness West

"The West Side of Chicago is suffering because of historic disinvestments, structural racism and inadequacies in the current health and social service system. Wellness West is a coming together of the key organizations that can make a difference."

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