

**NATIONAL
HEALTH CARE**
for the
**HOMELESS
COUNCIL**

Outreach & Enrollment into Health Coverage:

A Frontline Guide for Engaging People Experiencing Homelessness

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Today's Presenters



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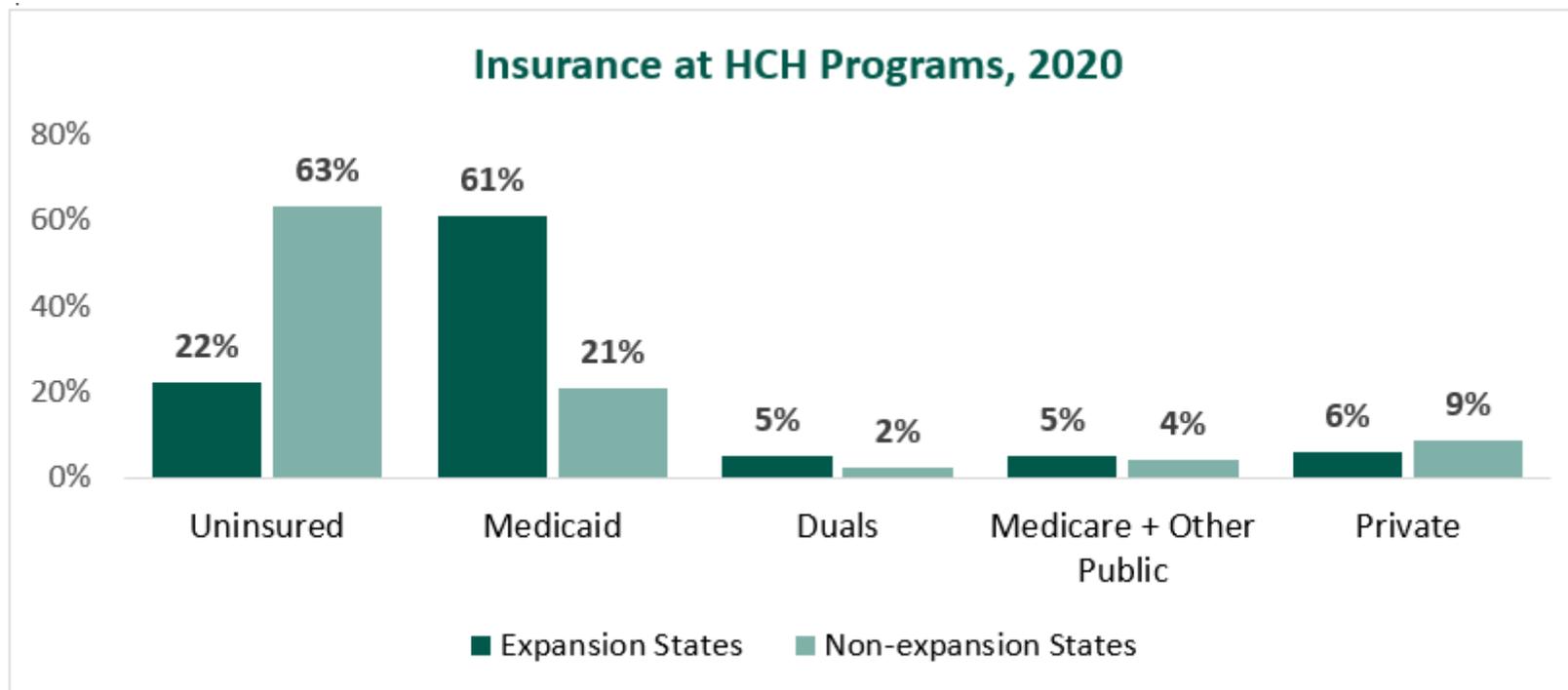
Focusing on People Experiencing Homeless is Important

- More than 550,000 homeless individuals on a single night; homelessness has been steadily increasing since 2016 (This is a conservative estimate from PIT Count 2020)
- Unsheltered homelessness is on the rise (30% increase since 2015)
- Many are uninsured and have multiple health conditions
- Insurance eligibility creates new possibilities for care
- Significant challenges to enrollment & engagement in care
- Unwinding of the public health emergency will have disproportionate impact on people experiencing homelessness (PEH) who require redetermination

Source: [Endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-2021/](https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-2021/)

Mostly Medicaid Recipients/Eligible

- 85% of HCH clients are <100% FPL; 69% are insured across all states (2020)



Source: [Nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/HCH-Insurance-Issue-Brief_2020.pdf](https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/HCH-Insurance-Issue-Brief_2020.pdf)

Broad Ranges in Coverage in All States (2020)

Eligibility ≠ Enrollment ≠ Access to Care

	Expansion States	Non-expansion States
Uninsured	10%-86%	56%-86%
Medicaid	13%-72%	5%-33%
Duals	0%-14%	1%-4%
Medicare	0%-12%	2%-14%
Private	0%-25%	3%-27%

Source: [Nhhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/HCH-Insurance-Issue-Brief_2020.pdf](https://nhhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/HCH-Insurance-Issue-Brief_2020.pdf)

Challenges to Coverage & Care

- Unstable housing means priorities are focused on basic needs: shelter, food, safety
- Poor experiences with public systems create distrust
- Lack of mailing address and frequently changing contact information
- Low literacy (including tech literacy), lack of documentation
- Significant behavioral health conditions add challenges to navigating systems alone
- Follow-up needed as part of application process
- Trusted staff/providers have changed or are no longer open
- Connecting client to appropriate provider (clients feel “bounced around”)

Strategies

1. Think outside the box for outreach

- Partner with existing homeless service providers
- Go where people receive services (soup kitchens, shelters, encampments)
- Take iPads and other handheld devices to enhance mobility
- Appointments may be hard for clients to keep; be flexible and offer walk-in/extended hours

2. Don't "sell" coverage; ask what's most important to them

- Ask what current problems they are having with their health or where they usually go for health care. This may highlight areas where they are not able to access needed services because they are uninsured.
- Highlight the ways in which getting enrolled with insurance can help meet those needs or connect them to additional resources that might help those problems.

3. Empower clients with information

- Be concrete about next steps in the process. What they can expect and when.

Strategies (cont'd)

4. Building trust takes time through small steps & repetition

- You may have to conduct outreach to the same person many times
- Understand clients may not have had good experiences with enrollment in the past (or with programs in general)
- Many clients are hesitant to enroll since they think it will have a negative financial impact on them due to costs or services or a decreasing of other benefits
- Partner with trusted homeless outreach providers who know the community and can “vouch for you”

5. Engage consumers in the process

- Learn from the experts – do not assume what will work or what the needs are – ask!
- Provide compensation for expertise

6. Scan identification information and offer to share copies with them

- IDs, birth certifications and income verification are difficult to keep—and expensive to replace – do not only use it for your needs, offer to email them copies

Strategies (cont'd)

7. Skip the acronyms and use familiar language

- If it sounds confusing, people will lose interest. Find out how the community refers to it
- Make it easy to understand, even if it means doing a number of the steps yourself

8. Enroll to engage in care (it's not just a card)

- The goal is to facilitate health care; focus the conversation on accessing services
- Connect clients to appropriate providers able to address needs

9. Have information to take away

- Personalize information for the specific region you are in – this might mean adding contact information or specific addresses to standardized pamphlets
- Make sure individual understands what the next steps are and what to do if they do not happen

10. Have a consistent presence

- Go regularly to the same place and keep to the schedule so you become familiar & trustworthy

Advocating for Change

Things that could help homeless service providers support the shared goal of enrolling individuals in health insurance and engaging them in care:

- Creating a tool that can be used to train new staff in the community would decrease confusion and improve access (at the CMS or State level)
- Mandate that states adopt a digital portal for enrollment assistance for community organizations to use (PEAK pro)
- Investment in tech literacy and training videos for consumers
- New ex-parte process in CO. Remains to be seen how effective, but will hopefully greatly assist in keeping clients enrolled
- Wet signature for re-determination. Recently added as a requirement in CO. Additional hurdle for our clients to clear to stay enrolled

Outreach & Enrollment Resources

NHCHC: <https://nhchc.org/policy-issues/medicaid-outreach-and-enrollment/>

- Outreach training and TA
- Enrollment toolkit
- ACA Policy briefs & webinars
- **Consumer and frontline worker FAQs** (*tailored for expansion & non-expansion state workers*)
- **O&E Quick Guide and Tip Sheet for frontline workers**

TIP SHEET: Strategies for Building Client Engagement

Practical Advice from Frontline Homeless Service Providers

JANUARY 2014



This tip sheet is drawn from the National Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) Council's Outreach & Enrollment Quick Guide¹, which provides practical strategies for outreach and enrollment activities. One foundational element of outreach and enrollment is building client engagement. Clients are engaged when they are regularly interacting with outreach staff, making their clinic appointments, and/or generally showing an involvement in the process. However, achieving this level of engagement often requires much effort on the part of frontline staff. This tip sheet highlights advice from the quick guide's key experts—including outreach workers, community health workers, case managers, hospital liaisons, and disability assistance staff—regarding strategies they use in their everyday work to build client engagement.

Get to know the individual's personal narrative.

Frontline workers emphasized the importance of getting to know the individual in a laid back, open-ended manner. Try to learn about the individual's personal narrative, including where he/she is from, how long he/she has been homeless, and what life circumstances may have led to an unstable housing situation. Show empathy and understanding, while not pushing an agenda.

Have a consistent presence in the community.

Reputation, approachability, and visibility are important elements for building client engagement. Because it often takes several encounters to increase someone's comfort and willingness to engage, key experts emphasized the importance of establishing a consistent and regular schedule at outreach locations. Make an effort to be out in the community more than inside the office.

Follow up and follow through.

In the early stages of relationship-building, make sure to follow up often with clients. If it has been a week since you have had contact, meet the client in the community or give them a call if they have a phone. If you tell the client you are going to complete a task, always follow through. These acts of consistency build trust and encourage engagement on the client's part.

Encourage clients to set goals.

Goal-setting is perhaps the most effective way to build client engagement. Encourage the client to identify goals he or she would like to achieve. Consider both short- and long-term accomplishments. Ensure that you are not imposing your own goals or those of your agency, but encouraging the client to pursue his or her personal goals. Express to the client how you can provide assistance toward achieving these goals and develop an action plan together. Always keep your end of the deal to continue building trust.

¹ The Outreach & Enrollment Quick Guide is available at: <http://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/outreach-enrollments-quickguide.pdf>

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