

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



Happy, Healthy Children in Shelter and in Supportive Housing

*Session Three:
Keeping Children Healthy in
Community Living*

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Primum non nocere
First, do no harm

Agenda

POLL

- Common Physical Health Issues
- Prevention and Treatment
- Common Behavioral Health Issues
- Prevention and Treatment
- Real Threats
- Red Flags
- Focus Points



Physical Health Issues:

- Children who are homeless for more than 6 months are at high risk for poor health outcomes – the longer the experience of homelessness, the greater the risk
- Respiratory infections 4 times as often
- Ear infections twice as often
- Gastrointestinal problems five times as often
- Four times more likely to have asthma
- Higher risk for obesity

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/09/180903101732.html>

<https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2018-supplemental-anticipatory-guidance.pdf>

Physical Health Issues: *What else?*

Lice

Scabies

Bed bugs

Influenza

COVID

Ringworm

Why?

Physical living conditions

Dehydration/Nutrition

Exposure

Sleep deprivation

Lack of physical exercise

Lack of privacy

Lack of consistency?

Lack of stability?



Prevention: For the Agency

- According to the CDC - #1 way to prevent illness is through hand washing
- How easy is it for a child to frequently wash their hands with warm water and soap in your program?
- Would you use the bathroom that the children in your program use?

Prevention: For the Agency

Tissues

Toilet
paper

Hand
sanitizer?

Trash

Diaper
stations



Prevention: For the Agency

- Dish washing
- Laundry (clothes, sheets, towels, stuffed animals, coats, blankets)
- What is never or rarely washed – toys, playpens, furniture, strollers, etc.
- Make a plan to regularly sanitize all surfaces

What else?

Prevention: For the Family

- How do we encourage (mandate?) good hygiene?
- Address in community meetings
- Address in case management
- How do we empower families to prioritize their own health?
- Encouraging well child visits, vaccinations, sick child visits (challenging under *Housing First*)
- How do we model good health?
- How is good health actually *discouraged*?

Treatment

- Are you enrolled in Medicaid?
- Do you have your insurance card?
- Do you know who your primary care provider is – does it need to change?
- What will you do if you or your child get sick while you are in shelter?
- Building strong relationships with local clinics, health department





Behavioral Health Issues

- Twice the rate of learning disabilities
- Three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems
- Four times the rate of developmental delays
- Increased risk for depression, anxiety, suicidality

Prevention

Encourage self expression

Encourage personal choice, agency

Create settings where feelings can be discussed, memories processed

Offer positive, sustainable coping mechanisms

Safety Planning – increases sense of control

Look for permanent sources of trust, help, support

Treatment

Encourage family to seek help if needed

Encourage family to speak tell their story to providers, therapists, etc.

Familial coping mechanisms

Medication?

Therapy in shelter?

Threats to Physical and Emotional Health in Shelter

Trauma of shelter

Food availability
(foods that are
liked, familiar)

Privacy

Sleep

Play

Ability to complete
school work,
participate in extra-
curricular activities

Proximity to
extended family,
pets

Exposure to
dangerous
substances

Exposure to people
who are unstable,
unhelpful

Threats to Physical and Emotional Health

- Child may not report symptoms or feelings in order to protect family, avoid punitive action or unpleasant consequences
- Parents may not report symptoms for same reasons and to avoid CPS
- How does your program respond to physical sickness or emotional instability?
- Do you know what you are mandated to report?

Red flags

Failure to Thrive

Signs of physical neglect, abuse (bruises, scars, play activities, fear of family, art)

Signs of sexual abuse (play, art, scratching, bruising, lice in eyelids)


Lethargy

Changes or extremes in eating and/or sleeping patterns

Self harm and suicide are contagious

Suicide games

Plans to hurt themselves or others



Who sees this child?

Growth and Development

Eating and Sleeping

Physical Exercise

Symptoms of Physical and/or
Behavioral Illness



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