

# What Are the Defining Characteristics of Medical Respite Care?



Medical respite care, also known as recuperative care, is acute and post-acute medical care for people experiencing homelessness who are too ill or frail to recover from a physical illness or injury on the streets but who are not ill enough to be in a hospital.

These programs provide a short-term, safe place to stay so people experiencing homelessness may have an opportunity to rest, recover, and heal in a safe environment while accessing medical care and supportive services.

## Common characteristics of these programs include the following:

- **Closes the gap** between medical facilities and community programs that cannot provide necessary medical and supportive services.
- Provides an **economical, high-quality, and innovative** space for healing aimed at **lowering the burden and cost** of public systems.
- **Improves the efficiency of hospitals and health systems** by increasing discharge options, offering emergency room diversion, decreasing inpatient length of stay, and lowering readmission rates.
- Provides advocacy for participants and secures safe dispositions that show **respect for human dignity**.
- Serves as an **integral component of the Continuum of Care (CoC)** for homeless services.
- Offers a **service delivery model that reflects unique community needs**, priorities, and resources.
- **Provides stability and facilitates continuity of care** through case management, care coordination, and health education from referral to discharge.
- **Removes barriers to health care** by providing an opportunity to access medical and supportive services needed to heal and recover.
- **Ensures participant-centered, individualized care and discharge plans** that are guided by medical needs.
- **Engages participants** in their recuperation and discharge planning **by meeting people where they are and building a sense of trust and belonging**.

## MRC is not...

Medical respite serves as a connector between the housing and healthcare continuum, but it is important to note that medical respite care is not a:

- Skilled nursing facility
- Assisted living facility
- Other long-term care facility
- Supportive housing program
- "Caregiver respite" facility

## NIMRC knows MRC

The National Institute for Medical Respite Care (NIMRC) is a special program of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, launched in 2020 as the first national institute to advance best practices, expert services, and state-of-the-field knowledge in MRC. Scan the code or visit [nhchc.org/nimrc](https://nhchc.org/nimrc) to learn more.



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON MEDICAL RESPITE CARE

MARCH 2025

## **Foundational Documents**

- [Standards for Medical Respite Care](#)
- [Guiding Principles for Medical Respite Care](#)
- [The Framework for Medical Respite Care](#)
- [The Models of Medical Respite Care](#)
- [NIMRC Certification for Medical Respite Programs](#)

## **Policy & Advocacy**

- [Executive Summary of the Medical Respite Care Literature Review](#)
- [Medical Respite Care: Financing Approaches](#)
- [Barriers to Accessing Higher Levels of Care: Implications for MRC Programs](#)
- [Medicaid & Managed Care: Financing Approaches for Medical Respite Care](#)

## **Resources for Programs**

- [MRC Tool Kit \(research, templates, planning materials, etc.\)](#)
- [Webinars](#)
- [Online Course Library](#)
- [Program Development Guide](#)

## **Ways to Connect with Us**

- [Join the Respite Care Providers' Network](#)
- [Technical Assistance Request](#)
- [Medical Respite/Recuperative Care Program Directory](#)



The National Health Care for the Homeless Council is the premier national organization working at the nexus of homelessness and health care. Grounded in human rights and social justice, the NHCHC mission is to build an equitable, high-quality health care system through training, research, and advocacy in the movement to end homelessness.