

Homeless Health and Respite Needs in Fargo-Moorhead

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Abstract: **Introduction.** Homelessness continues to increase in the Fargo, ND and Moorhead, MN community, and insufficient data exist to describe the health needs of its chronically homeless population. An informal needs assessment in 2010 revealed a variety of unmet health needs and barriers to health care access, and the priority need voiced was for a medical respite program. **Purpose.** A formal health needs assessment was performed to evaluate and describe the health needs of Fargo-Moorhead chronically homeless persons and involve stakeholders in program planning. **Methods.** A mixed method approach was used to evaluate the health needs of Fargo-Moorhead chronically homeless persons from the perspectives of consumers and service providers. Surveys and semi-structured interviews were administered to shelter staff, health service providers, and consumers (n=156) in three phases. **Results.** Consumers (n=103) reported non-health priority needs and untreated health conditions, though many reported having a regular place for care. Shelter staff (n=10) described many unmet health needs and barriers to health care access, and discussed needs for other supportive services in the area. Health service providers (n=43) also described multiple health and service needs, and the need for a recuperative care setting for this population. **Discussion.** Though a variety of resources are currently available for homeless health, barriers to access and gaps in care still exist. Recommendations for program planning include development of a medical respite program, service provider education on cultural competence and trauma-informed care, and steps to ensure consumer outreach and coverage for health and supportive services. This project also supports the need for affordable housing in the Fargo-Moorhead area.