



HEALTH FUNDERS *for* HOUSING JUSTICE

Welcome to the quarterly digest of **Health Funders for Housing Justice**, a network of Funders Together to End Homelessness representing the intersection of healthcare and housing justice. With questions and suggestions for future editions, [email Michael Durham](#).

Health and Housing Spotlight



At the October meeting of [Health Funders for Housing Justice](#), Emma Heffernan, CEO of the [HealthSpark Foundation](#), explained how housing/homelessness situates within their work for systems change as a healthcare conversion foundation serving Montgomery County, PA ([view her slides](#)). She showcased their funding for research and evaluation projects that support the local continuum of care to uncover local data that has proven necessary to activate other funders and providers.

For example, when C4 Innovations launched SPARC, its [landmark study](#) on racial equity and homelessness in 2018, its national focus spurred interest in what this looked like at a more local level. So they funded SPARC to replicate the study locally, using [the report](#) to prompt a racial equity strategy in their CoC.

This theme resonated with others, reminding us that even major health systems are beholden to the politics of the communities where their hospitals reside. It takes tact and deep relationship-building to manifest housing justice values in many of these locales.

Resource:

Assembling Regional Funder Networks for Housing Justice



This conversation points to Funders Together's rationale for organizing local or [regional funder networks](#). We support local coalitions of philanthropy to actualize national best practices in their unique contexts and relationships, exploring what they can do together that they cannot do alone. Coincidentally, this theme emerges as we just [published a new report](#) on organizing funder networks, which includes case studies of three FTEH networks in Chicago, Baltimore, and San Diego.

How can health funders support such networks? [Read the resource](#).

[Read the Resource](#)



Imagination Corner



[Homeless Persons' Memorial Day](#) (HPMD) occurs every year on December 21st, the longest night of the year. It underscores the violence of having to endure the dark and cold reality of living unhoused. Most now understand that *housing is healthcare*, but we should also remember that the inverse is true: deprivation of housing is deadly. On average, people experiencing homelessness die 30 years earlier than stably housed people. People without homes also experience higher rates of [violence](#) and murder as we have witnessed [again and again](#). With leverage in the healthcare industry and increasingly influential in continuums of care, how can health funders affect the mortality of homelessness?

Of course, we must prioritize preventing homelessness and shortening it when it takes place. That's the housing is healthcare piece. But as homelessness rises nationwide, we

should embrace a both/and strategy and work to prevent as many deaths as possible. Because every human being matters.

The [National Health Care for the Homeless Council](#) (NHCHC), along with the [National Coalition for the Homeless](#), hosts an annual memorial commemorating everyone who died while homeless. This event draws attention to the deadliness of homelessness and makes crucial space for mourning those we lost. We say their names and lament their passing. At minimum, health funders and health systems can leverage their public relations influence to promote HPMD and everything it represents. Health systems should also consider supporting local vigils in their own communities. See the [NHCHC social media toolkit](#)



As the NHCHC also points out, health systems and other health funders can play a crucial role in improving [data collection on mortality](#) of people experiencing homelessness. Some communities have deployed that influence to effect policy change and adapt services.

Funders may also leverage their influence to demolish the prejudice against people experiencing homelessness, [promoting public narratives](#) that name the causes of homelessness as a result of racist and oppressive systems rather than individual failures.

Finally, health systems can prevent deaths by providing higher quality healthcare to people experiencing homelessness through a comprehensive continuum of services. It may seem obvious, but since too many communities lack life-saving services like [syringe exchange](#), [safe consumption sites](#), [street medicine](#), and [medical respite care](#) – and since healthcare providers' [stigma](#) against people who are homeless persists – it bears emphasizing that fewer people would die while homeless if they received better healthcare services.

How is your organization working to ensure no one dies while homeless? [Let us know](#).



Recent Resources

[The U.S. Playbook to Address Social Determinants of Health](#) | November 2023 | White House Domestic Policy Council Office of Science and Technology Policy | As part of a package of resources and directives announced in November by the Biden-Harris Administration, this publication names housing insecurity first among structural drivers of health inequity.

[Housing First is a Matter of Health](#) | October 2023 | National Alliance to End Homelessness | Co-authored by Vanessa Davis of Kaiser Permanente, a member of Health Funders for Housing Justice, this article explains the health benefits of housing first as the model continues to face misguided criticism.

[Stanford Health Care's Investment in Homelessness Prevention](#) | October 2023 | Destination: Home | This brief profile explains why Stanford Health Care has taken action to prevent homelessness before it begins.



In the News

[The Biden-Harris Administration Takes Action to Improve Health and Wellbeing by Addressing Social Determinants of Health](#)

November 2023 | HHS Press Office

[Health Care 'Game-Changer'? Feds Boost Care for Homeless Americans](#)

October 2023 | KFF Health News

[California's new mental health court rolls out to high expectations and uncertainty](#)

October 2023 | AP News

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