



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

Housing and Delivery System Reform Collaborations

From Idea to Action: Building the
Team for Housing and Health
Collaborations

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the US Department of Health and Human Services contracted with the Urban Institute in 2015 to examine existing housing and health collaborations and how health care delivery and payment system reforms may support those collaborations. This guide and the companion guide, *Making It Real, Keeping It Real: Implementing Housing and Health Collaborations*, build on previous Urban research and offer technical assistance to communities, organizations, and individuals interested in integrating health care and housing services. See also the [environmental scan](#) and [issue brief](#) produced for this project.

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Introduction

From Idea to Action: Building the Team for Housing and Health Collaborations is a technical assistance guide to getting started on a housing and health collaboration with partners in your state or community.

Benefits of Housing and Health Integration

Cooperation between housing and health organizations can provide vulnerable people with complex health conditions better access to stable housing, health care, and other services that help keep them healthy and safe. Collaborations with health care providers can help affordable housing developers and property managers ensure that their tenants have the support they need to maintain housing stability. Health care partners can benefit from timely care delivery that reduces health complications, avoidable emergency department visits, and other costly care. Communities can benefit from helping people who experience homelessness to obtain stable housing and services that may reduce interactions with law enforcement and emergency responders.

Getting Started

Policymakers, community agencies, and health care providers are often interested in integrating housing and health care but may not know where to start. This guide offers advice for building these partnerships. The following steps can help bring together the right *partners*, *decisionmakers*, and *stakeholders*. Each step plays an important role in a strong housing and health collaboration, but depending on your circumstances, you may wish to implement them in a different order.

A companion guide, [Making It Real, Keeping It Real: Implementing Housing and Health Collaborations](#), provides more in-depth information on key issues and decisions for planning, developing, and implementing a housing and health collaboration.

Partner	Decisionmaker	Stakeholder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A member of the working collaboration ■ Actively participates in implementing the housing and health collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A leader or decisionmaker whose buy-in is important because they can commit resources ■ Provides authority and support for partners to implement the collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A community member or organization ■ Buy-in is helpful but typically not essential ■ May provide support, but not as an active working partner
<p><i>Examples</i> Housing specialist from Medicaid health plan Local housing authority</p>	<p><i>Examples</i> Medicaid and housing administrators Elected officials</p>	<p><i>Examples</i> Mental health and disability advocacy organizations Local or state affordable housing management associations Medicaid advisory group</p>

Get to Know Potential Partners

Goal: Identify key system partners with a strong interest in housing and health collaboration

An important first step to building a housing and health collaboration is to talk with potential partners and find common ground.

Seek Out Potential Partners

- **Draft a list** of stakeholders, potential partners, and points of contact who are involved in health or housing and who may serve overlapping populations. Common partners include
 - » state or local interagency councils on homelessness,
 - » state or local housing authorities,
 - » local homelessness service organizations,
 - » state Medicaid agencies or Medicaid managed care organizations,
 - » state mental health agencies or community mental health programs,
 - » federally qualified health clinics,
 - » state or local aging and disability agencies, and
 - » state departments of corrections, local sheriffs, or police departments.

Open the Conversation

- **Write a phone script and email message** letting potential partners know who you are, what the issue is, and why you think they play an important role in the solution. The message should be customized to each recipient. Ask for a brief meeting to discuss your proposal.
- **Meet with potential partners.** Describe the issues a housing and health collaboration can address.
- **Pinpoint challenges.** Unpack any concerns your potential partners have about health, housing, and specific populations.
- **Ask for data or stories** that illustrate their organizations' challenges and impact.
- **Ask what improvement would look like.** Learn how the organization would evaluate whether its challenges were lessened or outcomes improved.

Identify Potential Partners with Strong Interest

- **Brainstorm opportunities and ideas for collaboration** with potential partners. Determine their level of interest in developing a housing and health collaboration, potential contributions, and expectations or goals.
- **Create a list of key partners** who bring strong interest, potential contributions, and goals or expectations that align well with a housing and health collaboration. Note other organizations or agencies who may serve as key stakeholders or future partners.

CASE STUDY

Cedar Sinai Park, an affordable housing provider in Portland, Oregon, wanted to connect its low-income seniors and residents with disabilities to health care and services to help them maintain their quality of life and avoid institutional care. The organization initiated talks with more than 20 partners in the community, ranging from small nonprofit service providers to government agencies and the state Medicaid health plan. After months of discussions, nine organizations stepped forward to form Housing with Services, LLC.

Craft a Shared Vision

Goal: Partners agree on a shared vision and form a working group

To develop the foundation for a successful housing and health collaboration, key partners should agree on a shared vision and framework.

Develop a Shared Vision

- **Develop a one-sentence vision statement** that captures the group's shared long-term goal or desired change that will result from the housing and health collaboration.

Outline a Shared Framework

- **Outline the problem**, region of focus (e.g., state, county, city), and, if possible, target population(s).
- **Highlight relevant data** on housing and health service needs whenever possible. (See the appendix for resources and examples.)
- **Describe the impact** of the problem on people and systems (e.g., emergency departments and homeless shelters). Estimate potential fiscal impact whenever possible.
- **Identify a potential solution** to the problem, citing local, regional, and/or national examples of housing and health programs if possible.
- **Include draft objectives and measures** for evaluating program success. Identify what success would look like.

Form a Partner Working Group

- **Form a working group** of key partners and other staff who will take the lead in developing a project concept and plan for a housing and health collaboration.

CASE STUDY

The Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers (Camden, New Jersey) used data from three local hospitals to mobilize support for its program. By sharing troubling trends in emergency room and hospital use, the organization gained financial support from local foundations for programs to help keep people out of high-cost services. This resulted in better care for people with high needs and significant cost savings.

Draft a Project Concept

Goal: Partners develop a compelling project concept and detailed plan

To get your housing and health collaboration started, convene the working group of key partners and staff. Achieve clarity and agreement on a project concept to ensure that everyone is on the same page from the beginning.

Develop a Project Concept

- **Draft an initial project concept.** Using your shared vision document/framework outline as a starting point, identify the target population(s), service package (housing services, health care and social support services), and delivery model. See the companion guide, *Making It Real, Keeping It Real: Implementing Housing and Health Collaborations*, for help in identifying and developing the key components of the project for your housing and health collaboration.
- **Make it visual.** Include color graphs and pictures to help illustrate the project concept or relevant data.
- **Add brief partner stories or quotes** to illustrate the challenges people or organizations face.
- **Clarify objectives and measures** that are realistic and relevant.
- **Format into an attractive handout and PowerPoint** for presentation to stakeholders and decisionmakers. (See the appendix for examples.)

Get Stakeholder Buy-in

- **Share the project concept** with stakeholders (e.g., mental health and disability advocacy organizations, Medicaid advisory groups, affordable housing organizations, community health and mental health clinics, and people who represent possible program participants) by getting on meeting agendas or holding focus groups.
- **Use feedback** from stakeholders to inform the project concept.

Develop a Project Plan

- **Shape a detailed plan** based on the agreed-upon concept and set of desired outcomes and measures. Use *Making It Real, Keeping It Real* to guide your efforts. *Note:* You may want to seek buy-in from decisionmakers on the project concept before developing a detailed plan.

Pitch to Decisionmakers

Goal: Key decisionmakers agree to support the housing and health project concept or plan

Once a project concept or plan is developed, seek the buy-in, or sponsorship, of decisionmakers whose influence or authority is necessary for partners to fully commit to a housing and health initiative.

Identify Key Decisionmakers

- **Create a list of decisionmakers** (e.g., county commissioners, legislators, executives, agency administrators) whose buy-in is needed for partner organizations to commit time and resources.

Form a Pitch Team

- **Identify a “champion” to help make the pitch.** A champion is a leader, often an elected official or influential community leader, who can bring other decisionmakers on board.
- **Form a pitch team** of the people best-suited to influence key decisionmakers. The pitch team should vary for each decisionmaker based on relationships and experience, if possible.
 - » Each pitch team should include one person who can speak readily about the issue and the housing and health collaboration as a possible solution.
 - » Use the project concept or project plan handout and PowerPoint to support your pitch.
 - » One or two people should have strong influence with the decisionmaker(s) or be frontline workers with credibility (e.g., emergency medical technicians, police officers, or social workers).
 - » Identify what you want from a decisionmaker in advance. Are you asking for the organization’s political support or time and resources?
 - » Plan meeting roles for the pitch team in advance. The person who is likely to have the strongest influence with a decisionmaker should sum up the meeting and next steps. This is the role your champion should play, if you have one.

Get Decisionmaker Buy-in

- **Present your pitch** to decisionmakers.
- **Give people time to process.** Create space in your presentation for questions, comments, and concerns.
- **Identify shared interests.** Ask how a housing and health collaboration might improve outcomes or lessen challenges the decisionmaker cares about.
- **Don't oversell.** You don't need to have all the answers or address every concern. Instead, explain your process for finding solutions and note that you will keep the decisionmaker involved and informed along the way.
- Ask decisionmakers to support the housing and health collaboration. Clarify the type of support or commitment you need.

CASE STUDY

Health and housing integration advocates in New York found a champion at the highest level of state government. Governor Cuomo, who had previous experience in housing and understood its connection to health, led the establishment of the Medicaid Redesign Team to address quality of care and rising health care costs in the state's Medicaid program.

Keep the Connection

Goal: Partners provide regular email updates and quarterly stakeholder updates

Good communication is vital to the success of any partnership, particularly those geared toward problem-solving. Communicate regularly throughout the process to ensure that people understand the vision and are informed about issues, progress, and next steps.

Keep the Collaboration on Track

- **Create an email group** for members of the partner working group and collaboration staff to facilitate communications.
- **Set up regular meetings** of the partner working group to plan, identify issues, explore solutions, report on action steps taken, and commit to next steps.
- **Keep everyone on track** by emailing action-oriented minutes after each meeting that identify any agreements, action steps, timelines, and responsibilities.

Keep Stakeholders Informed

- **Create a stakeholder email group.** Include key decisionmakers and community stakeholders.
- **Host events or meetings** and invite stakeholders to share information, build connections, and facilitate collaboration.
- **Send out a brief quarterly update** for decisionmakers and stakeholders that inspires and informs them about progress, issues, opportunities, and next steps. Share quarterly updates with collaboration partners and staff as well.

CASE STUDY

The Bronx Health and Housing Consortium is a membership organization of local health, housing, social service, and governmental agencies united to better connect their clients to health care, housing, and social services. To encourage cross-sector collaboration, the consortium hosts various events and workshops that allow different organizations to learn about each other's work, share information, and establish connections necessary to build working relationships and facilitate greater coordination of services.

Promote Media Coverage

Goal: Media coverage every 3 to 6 months to highlight the housing and health collaboration

To maintain support from partners, decisionmakers, and stakeholders promote the vision and highlight successes regularly in the media and the larger community.

Frame Your Message

- **Briefly describe the problem** using two to three statistics (local data if possible) and describe your initiative. If you are just getting started, share your vision for the future.
- **Put a real face on the issues** with a brief anecdote or success story.
- Talk about any data-driven or qualitative observations of improved health outcomes, such as reduction in costs or use of emergency services.
- **Mention leaders and decisionmakers** (e.g., elected officials, hospital executives) who have provided leadership and support, if appropriate.

Promote Media Coverage

- **Seek out reporters** who cover health news or relevant topics.
- **Place stories** in partners' newsletters and websites.
- **Post to social media** using a unique, dedicated hashtag (e.g., #housing4health).
- **Host events** at building sites or openings of new programs. Invite elected officials, key stakeholders, and community leaders.

Leverage Media Attention

- **Send links to published stories to potential partners** (e.g., community foundations, local developers, bank officers) and ask if you can meet to discuss the collaboration.
- **Share media stories** with partners, collaboration staff, decisionmakers, and stakeholders.

TIP

Ask a partner organization to help create a one- to three-year marketing plan or to provide assistance with messaging or media contacts.

Appendix

Data Sources

US Census Bureau American Community Survey

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

US Census Bureau American Housing Survey

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs/>

500 Cities: Local Data for Better Health (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)

<https://www.cdc.gov/500Cities/>

Kaiser State Health Facts

<http://kff.org/statedata/>

County Health Rankings

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/node/20>

Partners in Information Access for the Public Health Workforce: Health Data Tools and Statistics

https://phpartners.org/health_stats.html

Continuum of Care Homeless Populations and Subpopulations Reports

Results of annual point-in-time homeless counts for each Continuum of Care program

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-homeless-populations-and-subpopulations-reports/>

US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Picture of Subsidized Households

Demographic data on households in HUD rental assistance programs at the national, state, and public housing agency level

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/assthsg.html>

Urban Institute: Mapping America's Rental Housing Crisis

County-level calculations of the number of affordable, available, and adequate rental units for every 100 extremely-low-income renters

<http://apps.urban.org/features/rental-housing-crisis-map/>

Examples of Data Use in Communications

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services: Housing for Health

http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/dhs/217171_HFHOverview.pdf

Hennepin Health (Minnesota Department of Human Services and Hennepin County Collaborative for Healthcare Innovation)

https://www.nhpf.org/uploads/Handouts/DeCubellis-slides_12-07-12.pdf

Oregon Health and Housing Learning Collaborative

<https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/download?fid=10027&nid=13360>



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