



DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF MEDICAL RESPITE CARE

The Respite Care Providers' Network (RCPN) defines **medical respite care** as acute and post acute medical care for homeless persons 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.

The following *Defining Characteristics of Medical Respite Care*** were affirmed by the RCPN in Boston, MA, December 2001 and updated in Nashville, TN in October 2008:

- A short term specialized program focused on homeless persons who have a medical injury/illness and may also have mental illness or substance abuse issues
- Comprehensive residential care providing participants the opportunity to rest while being able to access hospitality, medical and supportive services that assist in their recuperation
- Length of stay is determined by medical need and progress on an individual treatment level
- Whole person care through collaboration with other local providers who offer a variety of services to participants during their stay in respite care and also provide continuity of care when the participant moves into the community
- Respect for human dignity of all residents and staff
- Active involvement by participants in the process of their recuperation and discharge planning
- A bridge that closes the gap between acute medical services currently provided in hospitals/emergency rooms, homeless shelters that do not have the capacity to provide the needed recuperative care and more permanent housing options
- Low cost, high quality and innovative care which result in emergency room diversion, additional hospital discharge options and cost avoidance for hospitals and communities
- Diverse service delivery models reflecting unique community needs, priorities, and resources
- An integral component of the continuum of care for homeless services in any community

**Note: Though the RCPN has adopted the term “medical respite,” it acknowledges and accepts programs with these characteristics that use other descriptors (e.g. interim, infirmary, or recuperative care).