

4.3.1: Holistic Care

Holistic, interdisciplinary care is essential to address the multiple and complex health problems homeless people face. Federally funded Health Care for the Homeless projects were created to provide the coordinated services these individuals require. In the first segment of this module, you will learn more about how holistic care -- for acute, chronic, and behavioral health needs -- meets the complex needs of people experiencing homelessness.

What is holistic care?

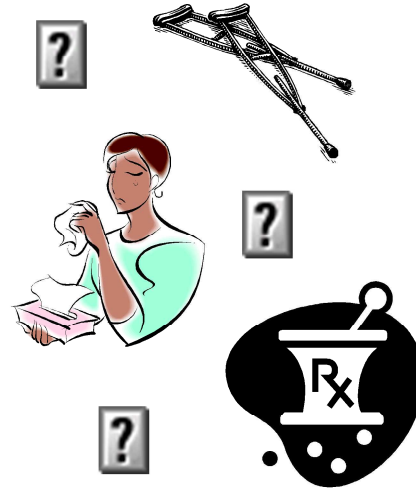
- Broad based
- Comprehensive
- Continuous
- Individualized
- Addressing medical and psychosocial needs



What is holistic care? Also referred to as integrated services, holistic care is thought to be most effective when it is broad-based, comprehensive, continuous and individualized, simultaneously addressing clients' medical and psychosocial needs. Holistic care provides care to each of the "three homes" HCH worker Ken Kraybill describes: the self or the body, the house or the place we 'nest,' and the larger groups or communities in which we are members.

Why holistic care?

- 60-yr-old female:
gangrenous foot ulcers
secondary to diabetes
mellitus; hypertension;
history of
schizophrenia (lapsed
medication); widowed,
unemployed, currently
residing in emergency
shelter.



Adapted from *Healing Hands*, Aug 1999

Why holistic care? Consider this case. A sixty year old woman with diabetes has foot ulcers that have developed gangrene. She also has heart problems and struggles with schizophrenia, for which she is currently un-medicated. Her caregivers know that she is also widowed and unemployed, and is currently living in an emergency shelter.

How many immediate needs can you identify that are related to this patient's health and well-being? What needs will she have in three months? In six months? In one year?

Providing holistic care

Consumers with glasses at 4th
Street Clinic,
Salt Lake City



Photo by McMicken HCH Dental
Project, Cincinnati

- Behavioral health care
- Primary care
- Preventative care
- Dental care
- Eye care
- Pharmacy
- Benefits acquisition
- Transportation and referrals to specialty care

Adapted from Healing Hands, Aug 1999

HCH projects provide holistic care to clients who are physically and emotionally ill, are poor, isolated and living in crisis. For some, this means offering counseling and mental health services alongside treatment for chronic and acute illnesses. Many projects also offer dental, optometry, and pharmacy services under the same roof. Many projects also strive to include benefits specialists on staff to help people apply for entitlement programs like food assistance, disability, and housing.

Some projects are able to include many services under one roof, or in one cluster of offices – also known as “one-stop shop.” When projects can’t co-locate services, they assist with appointment making and transportation as much as possible. Case management to coordinate various services is often a necessity. Each HCH project meets its clients’ need in its own unique way.

Holistic care helps

- Rosenheck R, et al. *Am J Public Health*, 88(11): 1610–5, November 1998.



Photo by Alan Pickett

At least one study has shown that integration of services for housing assistance, mental and general health care, substance abuse treatment, income support and vocational rehabilitation resulted in an increased percentage of mentally ill homeless clients with independent housing.



“Three Homes” **Reading Assignment**

The reading assignment for this module is a theory called “Three Homes” developed by long-time outreach worker and trainer Ken Kraybill.

Afterwards, in the first video of this segment, you’ll hear from both consumer and provider perspectives on holistic, integrated care.