

The Hearing Connection

Improving and Increasing Access and Quality of Hearing Health Care to Individuals Experiencing or At Risk of Homelessness

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Project Description: My project was to improve equity of hearing healthcare for the homeless population in San Francisco through direct patient care and provider training/education.

Problem Statement: There are systemic barriers to the unmet need of managing/treating hearing loss in the homeless population, in particular- patient access to care, provider knowledge on referral process/protocol to connect patients to services and patient/provider knowledge on the importance of hearing healthcare as it relates to the social determinants of health/overall health and wellness.

Goals: To pilot a program through a partnership with Project Homeless Connect that would improve and increase both access and quality of hearing healthcare for homeless individuals. Ultimately, using impact-based results/outcomes of this program model to replicate and scale statewide.

Outcome-Oriented Objectives:

1. Complete 500 hearing screenings
2. Dispense hearing aids and accessories to 100 patients
3. Conduct educational training for 250 healthcare providers
4. To provide a sustainable model of care for other organizations to implement

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Results

- Initial planning began in September 2018
- Results presented through March 2020 (program put on hold due to COVID-19):

January
2019
program
started

65
patients fit
with hearing
aids

225
healthcare
providers
trained

180
hearing
screenings
completed

“For the first time in a long time, I feel
alive, thank you so much”

“My confidence is coming back”

Next Steps

- Resume program services (September 2020)
- Meet with stakeholders and update/revise MOU as needed
- Follow up with patients to assess impact-based outcomes- qualitative feedback positive, but quantitative data needed in order to secure additional funding
- Ultimate goal is to create a sustainable model of care that can be replicated and scaled statewide

Lessons Learned

- Cultivating key strategic partnerships in the initial phases of program implementation is critical to ongoing success
- Letting go of expectations enabled me to quickly adapt and pivot as needed
- Leaning on the expertise of others to maximize my own learning and understanding of the extremely complex challenges faced by this clinical population. Do your homework!
- Knowing when to step up and step back as a leader is extremely important for guiding a team and an organization through a crisis and minimizing burnout