Targeted Population

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development defines four broad categories of homelessness:

- Individuals & families who are living in a place not meant for human habitation (including an emergency shelter) or are exiting an institution where he/she resided for 90 days or less.
- Individuals & families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence.
- Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state.
- People who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous conditions.

January 2017 Point-in-Time count - 1,111 Total Homeless individuals

Age breakdown:
- 413 people, <18 years old
- 106 people, 18-24 years old
- 592 people, >24 years old

Clerkship Goals

- Immerse ourselves in the targeted population to understand the living conditions, circumstances, and various medical and mental health challenges among the targeted population.
- Familiarize ourselves with resources available among the community including: Medical & Mental Health Care, Meal sites, Shelters, Veteran Services, Employment, Safety, Legal Aid, and Case Management.
- Create an informational Resource Card with contact information for available resources to distribute among the homeless population, within shelters, and throughout UMass Medical Center and UMass Memorial.
- Emphasize the complex interactions between physical & mental health, substance abuse, and poverty with housing insecurity and directly work with providers encompassing all areas of health disparities.

Community Health Link

Community Healthlink (CHL) provides prevention, treatment, & recovery programs addressing mental health, addiction, & homelessness for adults, children & families in Central Massachusetts.

- Homeless Outreach and Advocacy Project (HOAP) offers comprehensive services to the region’s homeless, including screenings, assessments, counseling, healthcare, rehabilitation, case management, and referral to support systems.
- Outreach performed by HOAP staff is done in the community, through a variety of shelters and other emergency care programs.

Outcomes of Clerkship

We hope CHL, HOAP, Department of Public Health, Outreach & Crisis Intervention Teams as well as medical professionals within the UMass system will utilize our “Quick Resource Guide” When treating or interacting with the homeless population.

In turn:
- Homeless clients will be more likely to follow through with service or take initiative.
- Staff among the listed organizations will have resources readily available to obtain the appropriate needs for the homeless client.
- The homeless clients plan of care will be managed more efficiently and safely among organizations with the resource card in use.
- As future clinicians, we will be able to understand the complex needs of this population and provide the proper services for these individuals.

Key Points for Provider

- Identify determinants of homelessness
  - Individual
  - Social
  - Environmental
- Aim to treat underlying mental health conditions including substance abuse
- Employ harm reduction strategies
- Establish a trusting relationship and a safe environment for the client, withholding judgement

References:
- UMass Memorial Community Health Link http://www.communityhealthlink.org/chl/