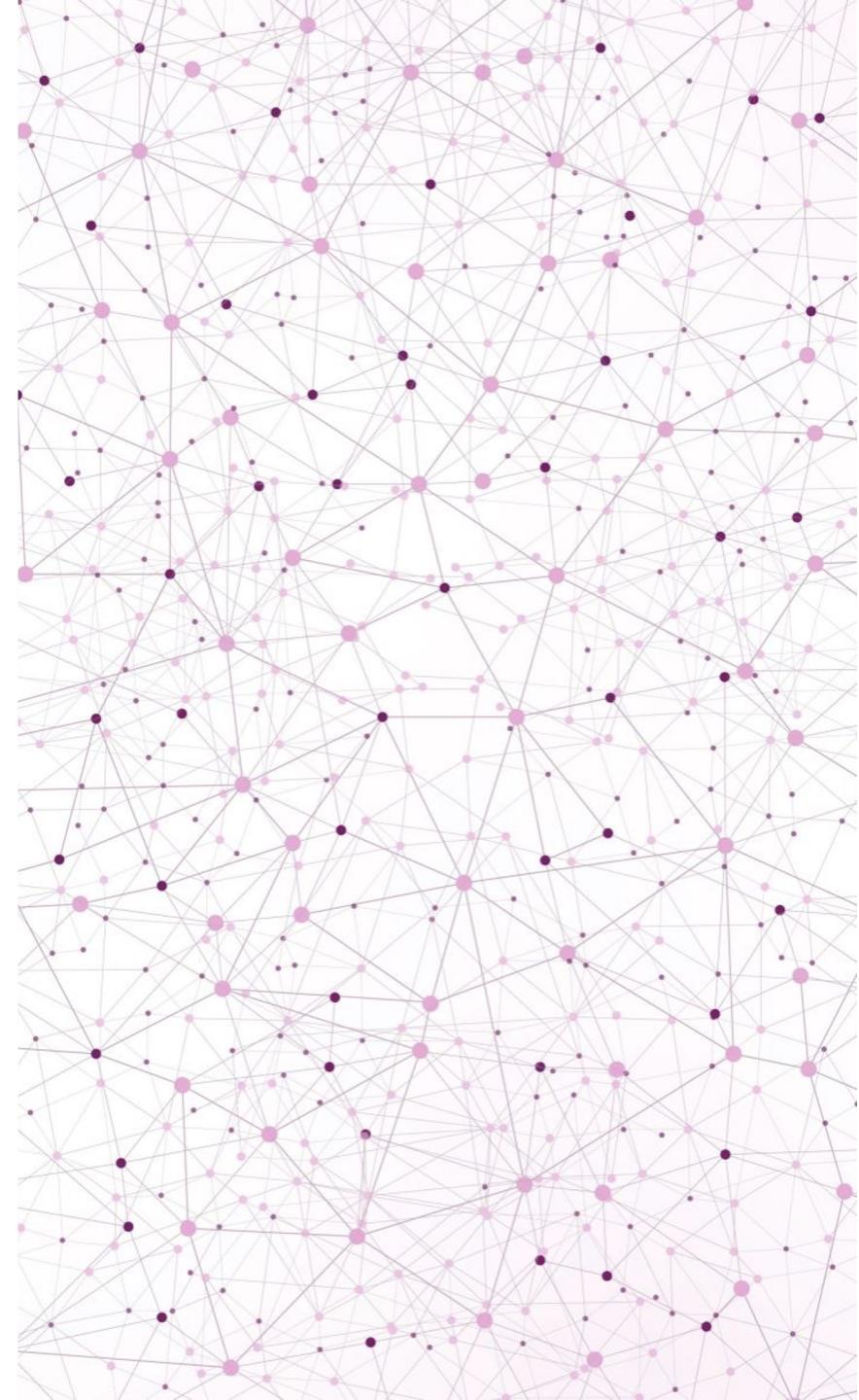


Compassionate Care for the Unhoused

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Objectives

- Define Unhoused populations
- Learn who is at risk for becoming unhoused
- Understand how to support and care for the unhoused population

“Look
Mama, I
made it!”

I've been an IBCLC for 6 years but have been helping parents in this capacity for the past 11 years.

I have a private practice and work in a local hospital on the mother baby unit. I also do virtual consults for a breastfeeding center.

I have a wonderful husband, 4 kiddos one of which has lots of fur ☺

Why “unhoused”?

- According to the Oxford Languages unhoused is defined as a person for whom is without accommodations or shelter.
 - From Unhoused.org: "*The label of “homeless” has derogatory connotations. It implies that one is “less than”, and it undermines self-esteem and progressive change.*"
 - "*The use of the term “Unhoused”, instead, has a profound personal impact upon those in insecure housing situations. It implies that there is a moral and social assumption that everyone should be housed in the first place.*"

Words matter.....



Over the years we have changed our language because certain words have negative connotations. Some words were created to make sure you know your "place" within the community, within the family, and with that person.



Words can make you feel less than, incompetent, belittled, unimportant, etc even if that was not intended by the speaker.

Who is at risk?

- When helping certain populations it is important to know who is at risk for certain situations. This will help you to understand what kind of care and accommodations they will need.
- From the CDC the most at risk populations are families that have children. This population makes up about 30% of the unhoused.



Statistics by Race

39.8% persons are black

48% persons are white

13% persons are Hispanic

2.8% persons are native

Statistics by gender and job

61% are men and boys

20% are kids

40% are male veterans

8% are women veterans

Statistics by health

- 25% of unhoused people have mental illness
- 38% suffer alcohol use
- 26% suffer drug addition/use

Statistics by housing



30% of affordable house is available to those with extremely low income.



25% of renters have extremely low income

Supporting the Unhoused

1

Leave your biases at the door

2

Understand that their situation for being unhoused is a need-to-know basis. You do not need to know everything in order to help them.

3

Listen more than talking

4

Help support programs that support unhoused families

Leave your biases at the door

- Bias is the tendency, inclination, and prejudice toward or against something or someone. Biases are often based on stereotypes rather than actual knowledge. Bias can lead to rash decisions or discriminatory practices

Leave biases at the door

- Experience derogatory and prejudice from other people daily. Especially when seeking assistance
- Society looks down on the unhoused because we assume that they are in this situation because of situations that they could have controlled.
- Looking down on someone prevents full spectrum care

What you “need-to- know” info



It is not always important to know someone's "life story" or full history to help them.



Just get the information necessary to give them the help they are seeking at the time.



Re-hashing certain events/ situations can be triggering and may create feelings of shame.



Sometimes not probing can lead to feelings of more comfort and willingness to share more

Listen more then talking

When helping anyone its important to use your "listening ears"

When helping people we tend to "react" instead of "responding"

When reacting we lose the ability hear vital things that can help with offering assistance.

Listening more then talking

Body language speaks louder than words

If possible, avoid charting/documenting fully while working with the families. Eye contact is important.

Appearing annoyed, rush, waiting to speak, or hurried can be off putting and encourage the other party to shut down

Standing with arms crossed can look intimidating and can be off putting especially with children

Supporting Programs for the Unhoused

- Several programs around the U.S that support the unhoused and unhoused families in many different capacities
- There are many different government and grassroots efforts
- If not able to help people directly supporting other efforts helps to keep the programs in place and make them more sustainable. "Low hanging fruit"

Supporting programs for the unhoused

- Virginia Homeless Solutions Program (VHSP)
 - funding source that supports the development and implementation of localized emergency crisis response systems with housing-focused, coordinated community-based activities.
- Housing Families First Program
 - Not for profit organization that has 3 programs that are aimed at helping families find emergency shelter, support for getting permanent shelter, and support for families that are using hotel/ motels and “couch surfing” as shelter find permanent housing.
- Virginia Supportive Housing
 - A social worker, Donna Hufnagle, is providing boots on the ground efforts to help the unhoused find affordable and permanent housing while also providing wrap around services.

Unhoused families with children

- Unhoused because being unhoused is safer than living in previous environment
- Recent unexpected unemployment
- No family support
- Unaffordable housing options where they live
- Eviction due to raising rental fees

Unhoused families with children

- Typically, parent is identifying as mother and with children
- may have feelings of shame because of not able to provide stability for children
- Worried about asking for assistance as it may lead to children being taken away/ CPS being involved

Unhoused families with children

- Providing resources that are easy to utilize and will provide unbiased help
- The more support these families have the more successful they will be.
- Important that the families feel supported and taken care of which helps them participate in programs to completion

Let's sum it up...

- Unhoused families face several different barriers when seeking support and assistance.
- Understanding the at-risk population helps to focus care
- Know that bias can affect the type of care and the quality of care given
- Supporting grassroots and government efforts can help keep programs going longer where more people can be helped.

Thank you!

- I would like to thank the New Mexico Task Force for inviting me to speak it has been an honor.
 - I would love to thank you all for attending my presentation
 - Please feel free to email me if you have any questions for me and anything that has been presented in this presentation
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