

Project Purpose

To address public health disparities among high special needs women, youth, and children experiencing homelessness at the Lotus House Women's Shelter in Miami-Dade.

Project Description

Reducing barriers to health provides significant reductions in homelessness, hospitalizations, increases housing stability, and improves wellbeing and mental health. This project ensured that the basic needs of program participants, such as shelter and access to health and mental health care, were met to foster independence and secure permanent housing. The priority focal population for this project were women, youth, and children 17+ years of age.

Working with many collaborative agencies and other community supporters and providers, participants benefited from the project via:

- 1) Improved access to health services via case management
- 2) Improved post-exit support
- 3) Improved access to preventive health education sessions and other educational materials and linkages
- 4) Improved economic stability via case management

Demographics, intake, and outcome data for the project were recorded in the county's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), The Children's Trust, Management Information System (SAMIS), the Federal Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS), and operate an in-house electronic health records (EHR) system utilizing a Medware MIS platform.

Goals

- 1) Improve Healthcare Access & Quality
- 2) Improve Economic Stability

Objectives and Strategies

The majority of women, youth, and children served at Lotus House have experienced vast amounts of trauma. Untreated, mental health issues resulting from trauma is one of the largest barriers to independence, oftentimes leading to chronic homelessness. Lotus House worked collaboratively to reduce barriers to health and improve the socio-economic determinants of health, as shown below:

- 1) Improve Healthcare Access and Quality Objectives:
 - I. 442 participants received health care education, helping to improve health access and outcomes.
 - II. 252 participants with a mental health need received a referral to a psych evaluation inclusive of appointment coordination and mental health registration packet completion.
 - III. 642 participants attended preventive health education sessions and referrals.
 - IV. 322 participants received COVID-19 education, testing, and/or vaccinations via collaborations with providers.
 - V. 1,592 participants received wrap around services via case management, health and wellness needs, and medication coordination.
- 2) Improve Economic Stability Objectives:
 - I. 277 participants exiting the shelter obtained employment or increased income through linkages provided by program teams.
 - II. 738 participants successfully exited to permanent housing outside the shelter system via linkages and referrals provided by program teams.

Activities

1. Enroll clients in new services and educate them on the importance of accessing health care to improve health outcomes.
2. Refer participants with a mental health need to receive a psych evaluation through one of our community health providers.
3. Link participants who exit shelter care to a health and/or mental health home to ensure that services continue post exit.
4. Provide at least three quarterly preventive health education sessions and referrals to participants.
5. Ensure participants have received COVID-19 education, testing, and/or vaccinations.
6. Provide participants with wrap-around services and health education.
7. Provide participants with wrap-around services for medication coordination.
8. Provide quarterly client educational notices including COVID-19 preparedness information, available resources at Lotus House, upcoming events, and other community activities.
9. Assist participants with obtaining employment or increased income through linkages and referrals, work training, education/employment, child care, and housing placement services on-site or external referrals.
10. Assist participants with successfully exiting to permanent housing outside the shelter system made possible by linkages and referrals.
11. Conduct at least one community health and wellness and food distribution event quarterly, benefiting low income and underserved residents of Overtown.



Success Stories

Guest M. arrived at Lotus House in October 2021 with one child. Prior to arriving at Lotus House, M. was living with her father until he kicked her out of the house. She spent about 4 months with friends until she gave birth to her child two weeks before arriving at Lotus House. During her time with us, her Resource Coordinator assisted in coordinating essential medical exams for her child and securing employment in the food service industry. In July 2022, M. exited the Lotus House program through a Rapid Re-Housing program with the assistance of her Housing and Resource Coordinators. "I want to thank all of you for your time, support, and encouragement. Without the guidance, motivation, and advice from you ladies (Lotus House staff), I would have definitely given up."

Guest F. arrived at Lotus House in August 2021 as a result of a domestic violence case which resulted in a permanent restraining order against her ex-husband. While at Lotus House, F. was actively seeking employment and participated in job training programs. F. was able to obtain employment and was provided with professional work attire to help support her new administrative position. With the support of her Resources and Housing Coordinators, F. exited the Lotus House program in September of 2022 to live independently. "My experience at Lotus House has been life changing. I learned a lot about myself...the staff helped me through some dark days and I will never forget their kindness and compassion."

