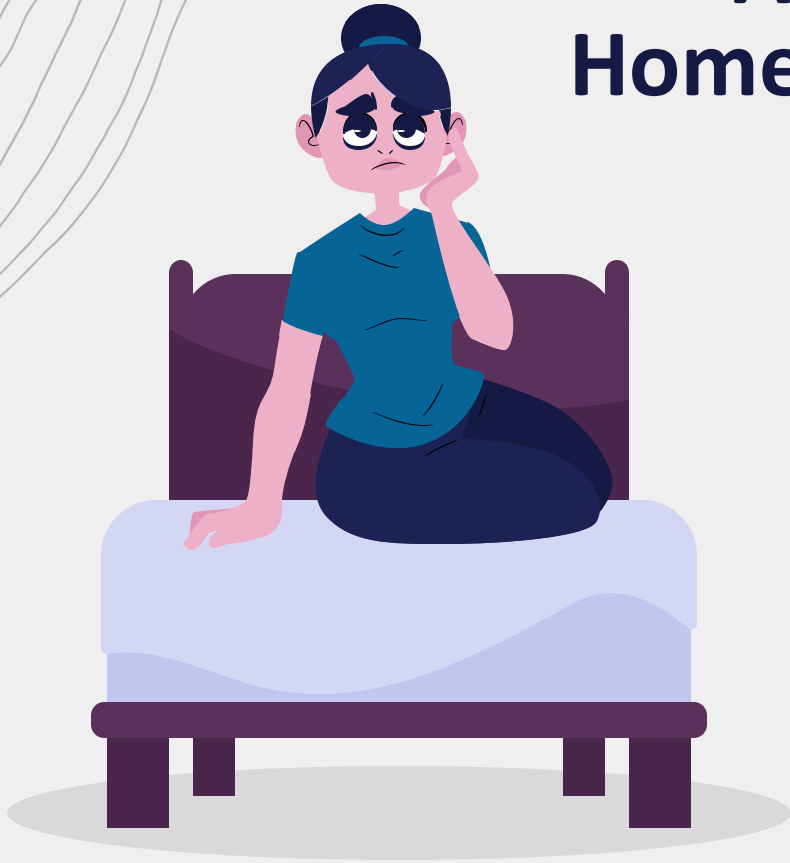


A Crisis at the Crossroads: Homelessness, Schizophrenia, and Substance Abuse



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Defining Vulnerability and Tailoring Health Interventions

Definition of "Vulnerable Population":

refers to groups at higher risk for poor health outcomes due to barriers in accessing healthcare, economic disadvantages, or social stigmatization. These populations often experience marginalization, limited resources, and difficulty in maintaining physical and mental well-being.

Homeless individuals with schizophrenia and substance use disorders represent a highly vulnerable group. Homelessness compounds the challenges of managing mental illness and addiction, leading to poor health outcomes, social isolation, and difficulty accessing healthcare. Their co-occurring conditions often result in fragmented care and high levels of stigma.

(Ayano et al., 2019; De Groot et al., 2019)



Breakdown of Characteristics



Homelessness: Living without stable housing leads to constant displacement, lack of safety, and poor access to basic needs such as food, hygiene, and healthcare. Homeless individuals are often marginalized and face social isolation, further worsening their health outcomes.

Schizophrenia: A severe mental disorder characterized by distorted thinking, hallucinations, delusions, and impaired cognitive functioning. Schizophrenia affects an individual's ability to make decisions, engage in social relationships, or adhere to treatment plans, especially when combined with homelessness.

Substance Use Disorders (SUD): Many homeless individuals with schizophrenia also suffer from substance abuse as a way of self-medicating to cope with the distressing symptoms of their mental illness. However, substance use exacerbates mental health problems and creates additional health risks, such as overdose, infections, and chronic diseases (e.g., liver damage).

(Ayano et al., 2019; De Groot et al., 2019; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2022; National Institute of Mental Health, 2024; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, 2023)

Health Domain Characterization

The vulnerable population of homeless individuals with schizophrenia and substance abuse is characterized by:

- **Mental Health Domain:** Severe impact from schizophrenia and substance use.
- **Healthcare Access Domain:** Significant barriers to obtaining consistent, integrated care.
- **Physical Health Domain:** Chronic conditions like respiratory infections, cardiovascular diseases, liver issues (e.g., hepatitis), and a higher risk for infectious diseases (TB, HIV) due to poor living conditions and needle sharing.
- **Social Health Domain:** Social isolation worsens mental health, while stigma and discrimination make it harder to access care, employment, and increase legal risks.



(Bareis et al., 2024)

Applying the Gelberg-Anderson Behavioral Model

(Gelberg et al., 2000; Oser et al., 2016)

Predisposing Factors

- **Demographics:** Mostly young, minority males facing social stigma.
- **Health Beliefs:** Mistrust of healthcare and stigma around mental illness discourage seeking care.
- **Mental Health History:** Family history of mental illness and trauma.

Enabling Factors

- **Lack of Resources:** Homeless individuals often lack insurance, income, and social support.
- **Fragmented Services:** Disconnected mental health, substance abuse, and housing services complicate care.
- **Service Availability:** Limited access to specialized dual-diagnosis treatment and geographical barriers.

Need Factors

- **Perceived Need:** Low awareness of their mental health needs due to self-medication with substances.
- **Actual Need:** Severe schizophrenia symptoms, exacerbated by substance use, require consistent treatment, but homelessness prevents stable care.

Social determinants of health (SDOH)

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are non-medical factors that affect health outcomes such as the environment in which people live, work and age. These factors include economic, social and environmental conditions that shape a person's well being.



SDOH Impacting Homeless Individuals with Schizophrenia and Substance Abuse



Societal problems:

Stigma and discrimination: these individuals often face stigma limiting access to healthcare housing and social support

Lack of mental health services: Many communities lack proper mental health infrastructures, leaving gaps in treatment and rehabilitation.

Social economic status:

Poverty: living in poverty this population struggles to afford basic needs like food, health and health care

Unemployment: Stigma and mental health issues make stable employment difficult trapping many in a cycle of poverty.

Basic needs:

Housing insecurity: homelessness prevents access to stable health care proper hygiene and medication management worsening their condition

Lack of health care access: Without insurance many rely on emergency care which doesn't address long term needs.

Environment:

Unsafe Living Conditions: unsafe living conditions homeless individuals are often exposed to violent crime and unsanitary conditions worsening their mental and physical health

Environmental Stressors: extreme weather pollution in crowded spaces increased their health risk and stress levels.

Self-Help Resources

Managing Emotions, Building Resilience, Mindfulness, Parenting, and Family Support

NAMI North Texas

- **Website:** namitexas.org
- **Resources:** Offers support groups and educational resources focused on managing emotions related to schizophrenia.

The Mental Health Association of Greater Dallas

- **Website:** mhagreaterdallas.org
- **Resources:** Provides emotional support resources and coping strategies for individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

The Resilience Center

- **Website:** theresiliencecenter.org
- **Resources:** Offers workshops focused on building resilience through skill development and emotional management.

Community Organization

- Mental Health Association of Greater Dallas

Visit and Interview:

- Schedule a visit to the Mental Health Association of Greater Dallas at mhagreaterdallas.org
Prepare to interview staff about their services and programs for individual with Schizophrenia

Resources Provided

- **Crisis Intervention Services:** Immediate assistance for those in crisis
- **Support Groups:** Regular meeting for individuals dealing with mental health issues, including schizophrenia.
- **Housing Assistance:** Referrals and resources for finding stable housing.
- **Workshops and education:** Programs focused on skill-building and resilience

Additional Support

- **Health Services:** More comprehensive services that integrate physical and mental health care
- **Employment Programs:** Job training and placement services tailored for individuals with mental health challenges
- **Family Support Services:** More structured support programs for families of those with schizophrenia.

Peer Support

Community Support Groups for Client and Family

NAMI Family Support Group

Website: namintexas.org

Focus: Provides peer-led support for families of individuals with Schizophrenia.

Contact: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) for more information on meeting time and locations.

Schizophrenia Support Group (Mental Health Association of Greater Dallas)

Contact: Check the website for meeting Schedules

Focus: offer as safe space for individuals living with schizophrenia to share experiences and coping strategies.

Other Resources and Services Offered:

Emotional Support: Through shares experiences in support groups.

Educational Resources: Information on managing schizophrenia

Coping Strategies: Practical techniques shared in group setting.

Services Information:

NAMI North Texas;

Phone: 1-800-950-NAMI

Website: <https://www.nami.org/about-mental-illness/mental-health-conditions/schizophrenia/>

[Email:info@namintx.org](mailto:info@namintx.org)

Enrollment Dates: Ongoing, check local chapter for specific meeting schedules.

Professional Support

- Dallas Behavioral Healthcare Hospital
 - Inpatient Services
 - Inpatient treatment program participants receive 24/7 monitoring and medication management services.
 - Outpatient Services
 - Partial hospitalization program
 - Intensive outpatient programs
 - Contact Information
 - Website: <https://www.dallasbehavioral.com/>
 - Assessment & Intake: 972.982.0900
 - Referral Clinicians: (972)-982-0897



Social Services: The Bridge

www.bridgehrc.org

Emergency night shelter

Houses 250 per night

Transitional Housing

Dormitory style

150 guests

Must have been participating in program for 30 consecutive days

Actively seeking permanent housing opportunities

Recovery

One to one case management

Peer support services



Social Services



ADDRESS

1717 Jeffries Street
Dallas, TX 75226

PHONE (214) 428-4242

FAX (214) 428-8158

HOMELESSNESS WITHIN OUR COMMUNITIES

4,471

individuals in need of shelter on any given night
in Dallas, on average

725%

increase of Dallas' unsheltered homeless
population over the last 10 years

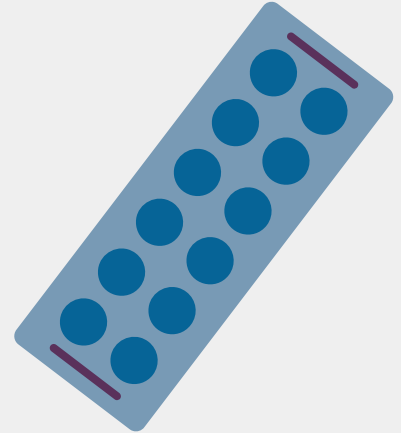
55%

increase of homeless encampments in Dallas in
2020 compared to 2019



Having Suicidal Thoughts?

- Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Call/Text 988
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255



While many challenges face the homeless community, schizophrenia and substance abuse are not insurmountable obstacles.

Vulnerability of Homeless Individuals:

Homelessness exacerbates mental health issues, creating barriers to healthcare, safety, and stability. However, targeted interventions can break the cycle.

Schizophrenia and Substance Use:

These co-occurring conditions complicate treatment, but they are manageable through comprehensive care that addresses both mental illness and addiction simultaneously.

Key Challenges:

Mental Health:

Severe symptoms like hallucinations and impaired cognitive function are compounded by homelessness.

Substance Use:

Many individuals self-medicate, but substance use worsens health outcomes and increases risks.

Supportive Interventions:

Integrated Care:

Coordinated mental health, substance abuse, and housing services are essential for lasting recovery.

Community Resources:

Peer support, housing assistance, and health services can stabilize individuals, helping them manage their conditions.

Social Support:

Programs like NAMI North Texas and Mental Health America offer peer-led groups and resilience-building workshops.

"I say, 'We shall overcome.' I use that all the time. We shall overcome all the bad notions people have, the preconceived notions."

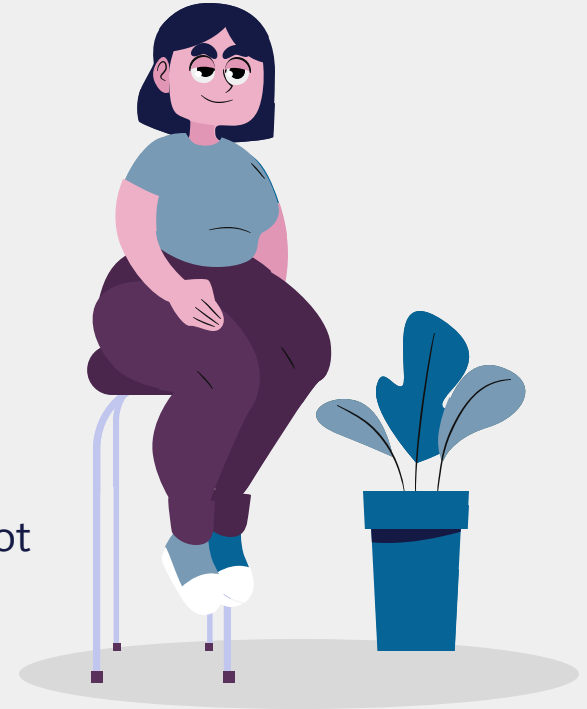
~ *Brian Wilson, former member of Beach Boys, interview with Ability Magazine*

"I have schizophrenia. My eyes do see. My ears do hear. I am still me, so let's be clear. My memory may fade, my walk may slow, but I am me inside. Don't let me go."

~ *Unknown, youthdynamics.org*

"Schizophrenia may affect how we perceive reality, but it cannot diminish the power of our imagination and the strength of our spirit."

~ *Dr. Rameez Shaikh*



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