California Health Care and Homelessness Learning Community: Request for Applications

Key Information

| Purpose | The California Health Care and Homelessness Learning Community is a 12-month learning opportunity for California-based health care organizations committed to improving health care for people experiencing homelessness. The learning community is led by the Center for Health Care Strategies with support from the California Health Care Foundation. |
| RFA Release Date | September 2, 2020 |
| Informational Webinar for Potential Applicants | September 11, 2020 from 10:00-11:00am PST *This webinar will be recorded for those who cannot attend. |
| Letter of Intent to Apply Due | September 16, 2020 |
| Applications Due | September 25, 2020 |
| Notification of Selection (estimated) | October 9, 2020 |
| Project Period | October 2020 – September 2021 |
| Learning Community Kick-Off Webinar | October 29, 2020 from 11:00am - 12:00pm PST *Please save the date |
| Eligibility | California-based health care organizations working to improve the way health care is provided to people experiencing homelessness in the state. Eligible applicants must provide direct health care services to people experiencing homelessness or support organizations that provide health care to this population. For additional information, see Eligibility Criteria. |
| CHCS Contacts | Meryl Schulman, Senior Program Officer, mschulman@chcs.org; and Matthew Ralls, Program Officer, mralls@chcs.org |

Purpose

With support from the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF), the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) is launching a learning community for California-based health care stakeholders committed to improving how health care is provided to people experiencing homelessness. The learning community will:

- **Support a shared platform** for participants throughout California to learn from each other, stay current on activities and approaches being tested and implemented, and foster opportunities to support the scale and spread of promising practices;

- **Identify collaboration and information-sharing opportunities** at the local, regional, and statewide level;
- **Educate participants** regarding policy levers and opportunities to address the health care needs of individuals experiencing homelessness under the *California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal* (CalAIM) initiative and other state and national auspices;

- **Connect California stakeholders** to relevant innovations and experts elsewhere in the country to help accelerate the spread and uptake of promising approaches; and

- **Identify high-priority areas for the field**, including policymakers and philanthropy, to focus on in subsequent years to meaningfully meet the health care needs of this population, as well as key opportunities and levers for doing so.

### Background

Individuals experiencing homelessness suffer from [poorer health](#), have [significantly lower life expectancy rates](#) than the general population, and have less access to needed preventive, primary, behavioral health, and specialty health care services. These factors have only been exacerbated by the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has created additional barriers for individuals experiencing homelessness in managing their health and accessing health care services. It has also strained the safety net health care system that typically serves this population, further impeding access to quality health care services.

At the same time, California, which already has the largest number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the nation, has seen its rates of homelessness [drastically increase](#) in recent years. The state’s total population of individuals experiencing homelessness is now more than 151,000, which accounts for over a quarter of all people experiencing homelessness in the country. There is [concern](#) that the end of federal and state eviction moratoriums and expanded unemployment insurance will lead to a new population of people experiencing homelessness as the effects of pandemic continue to reverberate.

As California reckons with how to provide effective, high-quality health care to individuals experiencing homelessness amid the COVID-19 pandemic and an uncertain state budget environment, the *California Health Care and Homelessness Learning Community* offers an opportunity for interested stakeholders to exchange best and emerging practices related to caring for this population. It will also provide a valuable opportunity to inform state-level discourse regarding how to focus efforts in this area moving forward.

This learning community is supported by the California Health Care Foundation and led by the Center for Health Care Strategies.

### Project Activities

Participating organizations will have the opportunity to discuss, share, and learn about innovative and effective approaches to supporting the health care needs of people experiencing homelessness. Teams will consist of a core group of up to four members (with other colleagues, including individuals with lived experience of homelessness, added to relevant conversations as appropriate), and the expected time commitment is one to two hours per month.

Over 12 months, participants will engage in:

- **Monthly learning opportunities** such as group discussions, webinars, and affinity groups with peers and local partners;

- **Two virtual site visits** highlighting innovative approaches to care for people experiencing homelessness;

- **Resource sharing** of relevant articles, materials, and tools through an online portal; and

- **Conversations with local and national experts** working at the intersection of health care and homelessness to inform and advance participants’ organizational efforts.
Examples of the kinds of topics to be explored include:

- Approaches to developing and sustaining medical respite/recuperative care;
- Emerging practices and approaches to meeting the physical and behavioral health needs of this population in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, including across traditional clinical care delivery and community-based settings;
- Policy opportunities to advance and sustain health care efforts targeted toward this population; and
- Data-sharing strategies across homeless and health care services.

CHCS will disseminate lessons from this project to its national audience of over 15,500 Medicaid and health and social safety net stakeholders through various communication products (e.g., blog posts, briefs, national webinars, etc.). These products will highlight participating organizations’ efforts, distilling key lessons from the learning community and emerging best practices in the field.

**Eligibility Criteria**

California-based health care organizations working to improve the way health care is provided to people experiencing homelessness are eligible to apply for participation in the learning community. Eligible applicants must either provide direct health care services to people experiencing homelessness or support organizations that provide health care for this population. Examples of organizations that may consider applying for participation include, but are not limited to:

- Health and hospital systems;
- Federally qualified health centers or other clinics (including consortia and coalitions);
- Community mental health centers;
- Organizations that provide medical respite/recuperative care;
- Local government agencies that provide health care services;
- Medicaid managed care plans; and
- Associations or similar organizations for providers that care for people experiencing homelessness.

If you have questions about your organization’s eligibility for participation in this learning community, please reach out to Meryl Schulman at the Center for Health Care Strategies at mschulman@chcs.org.

**Selection Criteria and Process**

Ten organizations will be competitively selected for participation in the learning community based on the following criteria:

- Compelling statement of interest for participation in the initiative that clearly states both what the organization can contribute to the learning community and how it imagines participating in it will be useful to informing its own work;
- Experience and current approach to providing innovative and high-quality health care to people experiencing homelessness;
- Extent to which the voices of people with lived experience inform organizational efforts and care delivery;
- Vision for improving the way health care is provided to people experiencing homelessness at the organizational, county, and/or state levels;
- Strength and composition of core team participating in the learning community; and
- Support from senior leadership for core team to participate in learning community activities.
How to Apply

Applicants must submit a nonbinding Letter of Intent to Apply by September 16, 2020. All applications and supporting materials must be received by September 25, 2020. Please complete the application form and email it with supporting materials to Meryl Schulman at mschulman@chcs.org with the following subject: “[Insert Your Organization’s Name] Application for California Health Care and Homelessness Learning Community.” Additional directions for submitting an application can be found on the application form.

About the Center for Health Care Strategies
The Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) is a nonprofit policy center dedicated to improving the health of low-income Americans. CHCS works with state and federal agencies, health plans, providers, and community-based organizations to advance innovative and cost-effective models for organizing, financing, and delivering health care services. Its work focuses on: (1) advancing delivery system and payment reform; (2) integrating services for people with complex needs; and (3) building Medicaid and cross-sector leadership capacity to support high-quality, cost-effective care. For more information, visit www.chcs.org.

About the California Health Care Foundation
The California Health Care Foundation (CHCF) is dedicated to advancing meaningful, measurable improvements in the way the health care delivery system provides care to the people of California, particularly those with low incomes and those whose needs are not well served by the status quo. CHCF works to ensure that people have access to the care they need, when they need it, at a price they can afford. For more information, visit www.chcf.org.