

A NEW PATH HOME: MEDICAL RESPITE

Unhoused people are 3-6 times more likely to have serious health conditions—and yet following hospitalization, they are often discharged to the streets. Louisville should **fund medical respite programs** to give unhoused patients the time they need to fully recover.



PROBLEM

Homelessness dramatically increases your risk of a serious health condition—and sleeping outdoors or in congregate emergency shelter settings can make those conditions even worse. In fact, unhoused people frequently go to emergency rooms seeking treatment. But following a hospital stay, hospital staff struggle to find safe, appropriate exit strategies for unhoused people—especially since we lack enough shelter or supportive housing. Unfortunately, this means **people who are severely ill are frequently discharged to the streets or shelters** with no access to the medical attention they need. This makes it very difficult for these Louisvillians to recover, and complications can land them back in the hospital, where the cycle continues. Fortunately, Louisville has an existing medical respite program provided by Family Health Centers Phoenix which supports unhoused patients during recovery, but they are frequently at capacity with no space for new patients.

SOLUTION

Medical respite programs offer a supportive environment for people experiencing homelessness to recover during a stay that may last from two weeks to 90 days. Such programs offer hospitals an alternative to either keeping unhoused patients longer than medically necessary or discharging them to the streets or to shelters, which often require people to vacate during the day and aren't equipped to support their recovery.

Our city should fund 45 medical respite beds (30 new, and 15 existing) for unhoused people with ongoing medical needs, leveraging state and federal funding as well as Medicaid reimbursement. Working with Norton/UofL and Family Health Centers, these respite beds should be co-located with integrated services for housing referrals; with 24-hour nursing care support; and with integrated dual-diagnosis treatment, offering local mental health stabilization and detox options, as well as referrals to other existing services.

RESULT

Patients have time to fully recover, reducing health crises for hundreds of people.