

Learning Activity: Walk Through the System

Description of Activity:	A worksheet that guides students to find accessible resources for patients experiencing homelessness upon discharge from hospital.					
Keywords:	Resources, discharge planning, social determinants					
Type of activity	☒ Didactic ☐ Simulation ☒ Clinical	Recommendation on when to introduce into curriculum?	☐ Early ☒ Mid ☐ End	Suggested Course:	☐ Health Promotion /Assessment/ Fundamentals ☐ Acute care ☒ Chronic care ☐ Pharmacology	☒ Population/ Community health ☐ Leadership ☐ Other:
Competency addressed:	☒ 1. Provide respectful, compassionate, person-centered care for people experiencing homelessness (PEH) 2. Evaluate clients for social determinants of health needs, including housing status and related aspects of safety, access to food, social support and other relevant domains X 3. Collaborate with client and appropriate Interprofessional community members to optimize health in PEH 4. Advocate for improved health for PEH					
Learning Activity:	Purpose: This activity is designed to help you understand the challenges individuals experiencing homelessness may face after hospital discharge and to explore how nurses can connect patients with accessible and realistic resources that support health, safety, and continuity of care. Directions: 1. Select a scenario from the list below (or you may choose to address a scenario from your clinical experiences). 2. Complete all worksheet questions using the information provided in the scenario. 3. Explore local community resources that may support the patient's identified needs after discharge. 4. For each resource, describe: - o What service it provides and why it would be appropriate for this patient. - o Is it accessible for a patient without a car, phone, or access to the internet? - o Are there any indications that it is culturally sensitive to people experiencing homelessness? Trauma informed, walk in visits available? Peer support or other services? - o Describe how it could improve the patient's health outcomes? 5. Develop a brief discharge plan that incorporates healthcare follow-up, community resources, and strategies to address barriers related to housing instability and social determinants of health. 6. Complete the reflection questions at the end of the worksheet. 7. Be prepared to discuss your findings with classmates during the debrief or optional group discussion activity.					

Scenario 1:
Walk Through the System Worksheet
Substance Use Disorder & Homelessness

Student Name:

Date:

Course:

Assigned Scenario: Jamison, 24 years old

Patient Profile

Read the scenario below and answer the questions that follow.

Jamison is a 24-year-old male patient experiencing homelessness who presents to the ED after being found disoriented and dehydrated in a public park during extreme heat. He reports a history of bipolar disorder and alcohol use disorder. Jamison has not taken his psychiatric medications for several months and states that he often goes days without eating full meals. He occasionally stays with friends but most often sleeps in his car or outdoors.

1. After immediate health concerns are met in the ED, how can we help set this patient up for success before the patient can be discharged from the ED?
2. What social determinants of health are affecting this patient?
3. What risks could worsen the patient's condition after discharge?

Community Resources

Research local resources available in your community and list them below. Address access for someone who is potentially unhoused and doesn't have access to a phone. We have provided the first 4 resource types for you. Based on your scenario, add any additional resources.

Type of Resource	Organization Name	Services Provided
Shelter		
Food Assistance		
Mental Health Services		
Harm Reduction/Recovery		

Reflection**Short Answer Questions**

1. What barriers do you anticipate being difficult for your patient to overcome?
2. What role does stigma play in healthcare outcomes?
3. What nursing actions could improve continuity of care for this patient?
4. What surprised you most while completing this activity?
5. How might this experience influence your future nursing practice?

Advocacy

Imagine you are part of a hospital improvement team and answer the following questions.

1. What is one policy change that could improve outcomes for patients experiencing homelessness and SUD?
2. What could nurses advocate for at the hospital or community level?

Scenario 2:**Walk Through the System Worksheet**

Substance Use Disorder & Homelessness

Student Name:

Date:

Course:

Assigned Scenario: Bryce, 38 years old

Patient Profile

Read the scenario below and answer the questions that follow.

Bryce is a 38-year-old male patient experiencing homelessness who presents to your ED with cellulitis, opioid withdrawal symptoms, and poorly controlled hypertension. Bryce reports daily fentanyl use and he has no primary care provider. He does not eat consistent meals, and he is sleeping outdoors.

1. After immediate health concerns are met in the ED, how can we help set this patient up for success before the patient can be discharged from the ED?
2. What social determinants of health are affecting this patient?
3. What risks could worsen the patient's condition after discharge?

Community Resources

Research local resources available in your community and list them below. Address access for someone who is potentially unhoused and doesn't have access to a phone. We have provided the first 4 resource types for you. Based on your scenario, add any additional resources.

Type of Resource	Organization Name	Services Provided
Shelter		
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Reflection

Short Answer Questions

1. What barriers do you anticipate being difficult for your patient to overcome?
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Advocacy

Imagine you are part of a hospital improvement team and answer the following questions.

1. What is one policy change that could improve outcomes for patients experiencing homelessness and SUD?
2. What could nurses advocate for at the hospital or community level?

Scenario 3: Walk Through the System Worksheet

Student Name:

Date:

Course:

Assigned Scenario: Laura, 56 years old

Patient Profile

Read the scenario below and answer the questions that follow.

Laura is a 56-year-old female patient experiencing homelessness who is being discharged from the medical-surgical floor after treatment for a COPD exacerbation and pneumonia. During her hospitalization, she required oxygen, breathing treatments, IV antibiotics, and blood sugar management for worsening shortness of breath, a productive cough, and fatigue. She has a history of type 2 diabetes and COPD but reports that her medications were stolen two weeks before admission.

	Laura smokes cigarettes daily and stays in a temporary shelter when space is available. She has missed several follow-up appointments because she does not have reliable transportation or a phone. 1. After immediate health concerns are met on the floor, how can we help set this patient up for success before the patient can be discharged? 2. What social determinants of health are affecting this patient's ability to manage her health? 3. What risks could worsen the patient's condition after discharge, and what resources or referrals may help reduce those risks? Community Resources Research local resources available in your community and list them below. Address access for someone who is potentially unhoused and doesn't have access to a phone. We have provided the first 4 resource types for you. Based on your scenario, add any additional resources. <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Type of Resource</th> <th>Organization Name</th> <th>Services Provided</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Shelter</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Food Assistance</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mental Health Services</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Harm Reduction/Recovery</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Reflection Short Answer Questions 1. What barriers do you anticipate being difficult for your patient to overcome? 2. What role does stigma play in healthcare outcomes? 3. What nursing actions could improve continuity of care for this patient? 4. What surprised you most while completing this activity? 5. How might this experience influence your future nursing practice? Advocacy Imagine you are part of a hospital improvement team and answer the following questions. 1. What is one policy change that could improve outcomes for patients experiencing homelessness and SUD? 2. What could nurses advocate for at the hospital or community level?			Type of Resource	Organization Name	Services Provided	Shelter			Food Assistance			Mental Health Services			Harm Reduction/Recovery		
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Time Required:	2 hours																	
Preparation of the student:	Read assigned articles, explore inclusive local resources, complete worksheet, and participate in class discussion.																	
Assessment	Formative: Completed worksheet and Resource plan	Summative: Discussion rubric	Potential Assessment Strategies: Self-assessment or bias reflection															

Resources:	<u>Healing with Dignity</u> Explains how housing instability affects recovery after hospitalization and highlights medical respite programs as a resource for safe discharge planning. Farland, A. (2025, May 13). <i>Healing with dignity: Recuperative care at CCC</i>. Central City Concern. https://centralityconcern.org/blog/healing-with-dignity-recuperative-care-at-ccc/ <u>Caring for a homeless adult with a chronic disease</u> Describes barriers individuals experiencing homelessness face when managing chronic illnesses. American Nurses Association. (2023, October 9). <i>Caring for a homeless adult with a chronic disease</i>. American Nurse. https://www.myamericannurse.com/caring-for-a-homeless-adult-with-a-chronic-disease/ <u>Supporting Homeless Patients in the Emergency Room</u> Examines how healthcare teams connect patients experiencing homelessness with community resources and support services. Pelham, V. (2025, November 20). <i>Supporting homeless patients in the emergency room: Cedars-sinai</i>. Cedars. https://www.cedars-sinai.org/stories-and-insights/healthy-living/supporting-homeless-patients-in-er <u>When and How Should Clinicians View Discharge Planning as Part of a Patient's Care Continuum?</u> Discusses discharge planning as an ongoing process that addresses both medical and social needs. Ward, M. (2023, December). <i>When and how should clinicians view discharge planning as part of a patient's care continuum?</i> <i>journal of ethics</i> <i>American Medical Association</i>. AMA Journal of Ethics. https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/when-and-how-should-clinicians-view-discharge-planning-part-patients-care-continuum/2023-12
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