

Pottstown Hospital

2025 HAP Achievement Award Living the Vision Award

Street Psychiatry: Expanding Behavioral Health Access and Services to Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

The Goal

Homeless individuals experience higher rates of chronic illness, mental health conditions, and substance use. In 2021, the hospital launched Street Medicine to deliver primary care, wound care, and care coordination to unsheltered patients. A 2023 review found most visits related to medication refills, wound care, and behavioral health, with a clear patient need for expanded psychiatric services.

The Intervention

Launched in Spring 2023, Street Psychiatry builds on the hospital's Street Medicine program to provide free, street-based psychiatric care for individuals experiencing homelessness. Modeled after Assertive Community Treatment, it offers psychiatric evaluations, medication management, and integrated care alongside primary health services. Staffed by psychiatrists and residents, the team operates weekly with community partners, beginning with a morning debrief, followed by clinic hours at a local CBO, and street rounds to reach those unable to travel. Visits are documented in the EMR for coordinated care, and a team-based safety plan ensures provider support throughout.





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Results

In 2024, Street Psychiatry saw 229 encounters from 121 unique patients, up from 129 in 2023, and accounted for 23 percent of all street-based health visits. Behavioral health became the second most common patient need, showing increased demand and the program's growing impact. The program also trained four psychiatry residents, building expertise in caring for individuals experiencing homelessness.