



BOSTON HEALTH CARE *for*  
the HOMELESS PROGRAM

# COMPASSIONATE CARE: LESSONS LEARNED FROM PATIENTS

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# TALKING POINTS

- Expressing compassion
- Exploring the effect of illnesses on patients and their loved ones
- Establishing hope and trust
- Striving to understand patients' emotional needs
- Encouraging others to be their best selves



# BACKGROUND



Over the past 22 years, I have had the privilege to care for many homeless women and men

These women and men have deeply touched my soul and changed my life

I am thankful that they have trusted me enough to care for their medical needs

People are people, and all of our patients have the same needs, wants and desires



BOSTON HEALTH CARE  
for  
the HOMELESS PROGRAM

**Mission:**  
To provide the highest quality healthcare for homeless men women and children in the greater Boston area.

[www.bhchp.org](http://www.bhchp.org)

## Medicine Where It Matters

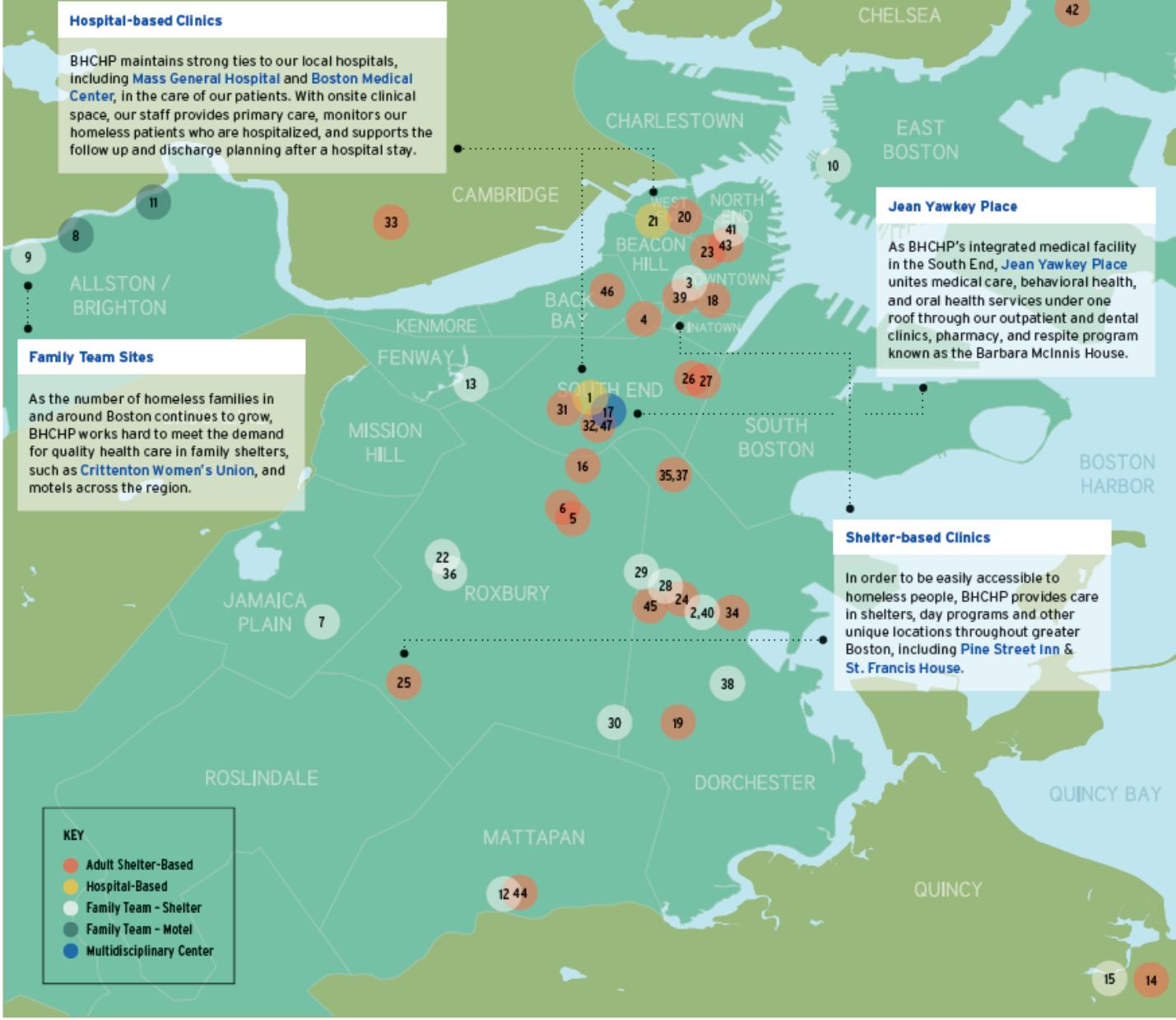


**Hospital-based Clinics**  
BHCHP maintains strong ties to our local hospitals, including [Mass General Hospital](#) and [Boston Medical Center](#), in the care of our patients. With onsite clinical space, our staff provides primary care, monitors our homeless patients who are hospitalized, and supports the follow up and discharge planning after a hospital stay.

**Family Team Sites**  
As the number of homeless families in and around Boston continues to grow, BHCHP works hard to meet the demand for quality health care in family shelters, such as [Crittenton Women's Union](#), and motels across the region.

**KEY**

- Adult Shelter-Based
- Hospital-Based
- Family Team - Shelter
- Family Team - Motel
- Multidisciplinary Center



- 1 Boston Medical Center
- 2 Bridge Home
- 3 Bridge Over Troubled Waters
- 4 Cardinal Medeiros Center
- 5 Casa Esperanza Men's Program
- 6 Casa Esperanza Women's Program
- 7 Casa Nueva Vida
- 8 Charles River Hotel
- 9 Crittenton Women's Union
- 10 Crossroads Family Shelter
- 11 Days Hotel
- 12 Entre Familia
- 13 Families in Transition
- 14 Father Bill's Place
- 15 Friends of the Unborn
- 16 Hope House
- 17 Jean Yawkey Place
- 18 Kingston House
- 19 Kit Clark Adult Day Health
- 20 Lindemann Mental Health Center
- 21 Massachusetts General Hospital
- 22 Nazareth Residence
- 23 New England Center For Homeless Veterans
- 24 Pilgrim Shelter
- 25 Pine Street Inn at Shattuck
- 26 Pine Street Inn Men's Clinic
- 27 Pine Street Inn Women's Clinic
- 28 Portis Family House
- 29 Project Hope
- 30 ReVision House
- 31 Rosie's Place
- 32 Safe Harbor
- 33 Salvation Army
- 34 Shepherd House
- 35 SOAR
- 36 Sojourner House
- 37 Southampton Street Shelter
- 38 St. Ambrose
- 39 St. Francis House
- 40 St. Mary's Center for Women & Children
- 41 Temporary Home for Women and Children
- 42 The Eighth Pole at Suffolk Downs
- 43 The Night Center
- 44 Transitions
- 45 Women's Hope
- 46 Women's Lunch Place
- 47 Woods Mullen Shelter

### Not shown:

- Alleyways, park benches, under bridges
- Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (*Boston*)
- Colonial Traveler (*Saugus*)
- Finex House (*undisclosed location*)
- Holiday Inn (*Brockton*)
- Home Suites Inn (*Waltham*)
- New England Motor Court (*Malden*)
- Paul Sullivan Housing (*varied*)
- Super 8 Hotel (*Brockton*)
- Town Line Inn (*Malden*)

# ROLES ACROSS BHCHP'S SETTINGS

## Street Team

The Street Team provides primary care to homeless men and women who, for a variety of reasons, would not come into shelter

## McInnis House

Inpatient facility that provides 24 hour medical care for our homeless patients who are too sick for shelter but not sick enough for the hospital

**Services:** IV therapy; complicated wound care; suboxone initiation; medication management; a safe place when patients are undergoing radiation and chemotherapy; palliative and end of life care and many other medical education and interventions





COMPASSION IS FOUNDATIONAL

# The Great Challenge: To always treat each patient with compassion



The landscape of health care is ever changing

Health care professionals are asked to stretch in so many ways

Staff resources are limited

The workload is heavy

There is pressure to provide the highest quality inpatient/outpatient care

The real heart of being a health care professional lies in being an advocate and a presence for those who are in a very vulnerable and powerless place in their lives.

- Compassion is a profound awareness of another's suffering and the desire to alleviate the suffering.
- But the gift of compassion comes with a price.
- Compassion comes when we reflect on our own life experiences, especially our suffering and our pain.





THE GIFT OF COMPASSION

# EXPRESSING COMPASSION

- ✓ Being honest about our own vulnerabilities and feelings
- ✓ Taking time to speak with patients and their loved ones
- ✓ Encouraging patients and their loved ones to speak about their feelings and losses
- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Acknowledge when you don't know what a person is going through, but see that it is difficult



- ✓ Ask patients what might be helpful to them during a tough time
  - This can help guide a patient to be reflective

# EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF ILLNESS ON PATIENTS



- Guarantee that there is no judgement
- Discuss what a person can expect
- Allow time for a person to disclose their situation
- When a person has shame and guilt this can take a longer period of time

# ESTABLISHING HOPE AND TRUST

- ✓ Be Honest
- ✓ Patients who have limited capacity to trust do not tolerate insincerity or phoniness
- ✓ Be consistent
  - If you say your going to do something, then do it!
  - NEVER promise something that cannot be provided
- ✓ Advocate for the patient
- ✓ Let the patient know that you:
  - Believe in them
  - Care for them
  - Will fight for them



# UNDERSTANDING PATIENT'S EMOTIONAL NEEDS



## To connect

- Ask patients about their wishes
- Don't just see your patient ... Visit with the person
- Reach out and lift the person up
- Share something uplifting

# JUAN

Pancreatic Cancer

No one ever came to visit him

Juan was a very proud man and had a hard time trusting his caregivers or allowing them to do anything for him

For many of our dying patients, one of their biggest fears is that they will die alone, so we make sure that never happens

In Juan's final days, there was a constant stream of caregivers and patients visiting him, including a patient who played cards with him until the very end

I will never forget the outpouring of love and kindness for Juan, who had lived so much of his life alone.



# KERVIN



End stage metastatic prostate cancer

Spent time reading his bible and working on poems

- The first line of one poem stated that his favorite encounters are when someone shares something uplifting with him.

# ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO BE THEIR BEST SELVES

Our patients provide us with the experience to become excellent health care providers by offering us:

- Opportunities to grow in compassion and patience
- Moments to strengthen our confidence when we need to advocate for what is right
- The desire to keep on learning and broadening our education.



# JACK

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**“THE BEST EXERCISE  
OF THE HUMAN  
HEART IS REACHING  
DOWN AND PICKING  
SOMEONE ELSE  
UP....”**

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