

TRANSCRIPT:

Housing & Policy

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Q: Who administers housing programs?

So, in the United States, housing programs are administered essentially at every level of government. At the federal level, HUD – Housing and Urban Development – and the Treasury Department run and administer several housing programs. At the state level, there are state housing finance agencies that finance programs. And then at the local level, there are public housing authorities, as well as local continuums of care, so there are really several agencies across levels of government.

Q: What are the different types of housing programs?

So there are a very wide array of housing programs in this country and some that are based at the state or city level. I think I will focus on three or four of the key ones. First, in terms of developing affordable and supportive housing, there is the low-income housing tax credit program that is administered by the Treasury Department, which is really responsible for financing the lion's share of development in this country. In terms of rental assistance, so providing assistance to help cover rent, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has the section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, which covers rental assistance for very low income and low-income individuals. And then for people experiencing homelessness and families experiencing homelessness, there is the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants, which is also administered by HUD. So those are three of the key programs. There's certainly a lot of state-funded, rental housing trust programs and other programs, but those are I think the three major ones.

Q: In what ways does Medicaid support housing and health integration?

So, the connection between housing and health is enormous. At UnitedHealthcare, you know we kind of say “housing is health care” and they are inextricably linked and I think there are studies across 20-25 years and across communities all across the country that demonstrate that when individuals and

families live in safe, decent, stable housing, it has a significant impact on improving their health outcomes and also helps to reduce health care costs, especially inappropriate use of emergency departments and inpatient hospitalizations. So, I think when you think about health care and the ability to live a healthy life, housing is sort of the foundation for that.

Q: What is the connection between housing and health?

In 2015, CMS issued guidance allowing states, if they chose to through 1115 and other waivers, to pay for quote-unquote “tenancy supports,” which is a whole array of services I kind of call the glue of services that are needed to connect people to housing and keep them in stable housing. So, I think that is a really key area for supporting and paying for health and housing integration. I would also say there are a whole host of kind of behavioral health and other services that Medicaid pays for that also help stabilize people in their housing.

Q: What policies support housing and health integration efforts?

So, I think there's a number of things that housing agencies, as well as Medicaid plans, can do along that front and partnership with housing agencies. First is, with the public housing agencies, every year they have to do an annual administrative plan and the extent to which public housing agencies are providing preferences or set-asides of units for people experiencing complex and acute health care conditions, I think is one really critical way that we can target and align resources from the housing and health care perspective. Another is local public housing authorities partnering with health plans like ours at UnitedHealthcare and doing data matching to understand our shared population and then looking for ways that we can design and implement population health and other interventions to support their residents and our members.