

Recommendations to better meet the health care and social needs of unhoused populations

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Policy action is needed to better meet the unique health challenges of persons experiencing homelessness and housing instability, says the

American College of Physicians (ACP) in a new policy paper [published](#) in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. The paper underscores the need to address the underlying drivers of homelessness and makes recommendations about better meeting the health care needs of unhoused populations.

ACP says that stable housing is essential to an individual's well-being and goes on to say that policy efforts must prioritize safe and [affordable housing](#) for all, and policymakers must adequately fund programs that seek to meet the health care and shelter needs of unhoused individuals. ACP recommends that efforts to address homelessness should be part of a sufficiently funded national strategy and accompanied by additional research into the causes of homelessness and the needs of unhoused populations.

The paper also makes recommendations about providing health care services to unhoused populations and urges Medicare and Medicaid to implement demonstration projects that provide housing supports and targeted medical services to those who are unhoused or are at risk of becoming unhoused. ACP also says that physicians and other health professionals should be knowledgeable about screening patients for homelessness and treating unhoused patients, and that this should be incorporated into all levels of medical education.

The paper asserts that laws and regulations should decriminalize an individual undertaking life-sustaining activities, like camping, scavenging, or sleeping, in public. Finally, the report recommends research into approaches to provide accessible and appropriate health care services to unhoused populations, and that public and private payers should pay for providing services to those individuals.

More information: Meeting the Health and Social Needs of America's Unhoused and Housing-Unstable Populations: A Position Paper From

the American College of Physicians, *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2024).
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