# Healthcare for the Unhoused

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# Overview

- The Journey to Healthcare for the Unhoused

- Lessons Learned Along the Way

- There's Still More Work to do

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# An Unexpected Change

- A large FQHC closure in 2019
  - Multiple health centers throughout Grand Rapids serving over 19,000 patients
  - One site located in the heart of downtown
    - 3,300 patients, predominately unhoused



**Mel Trotter Ministries**
Men's homeless shelter

**Dégagé Heartside Landing**
Women's complex needs shelter

**[CLOSED]
Heartside Health Center**

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# An Unexpected Opportunity

- Catherines Health Center becomes an FQHC in 2020
  - Healthcare for the Homeless designation
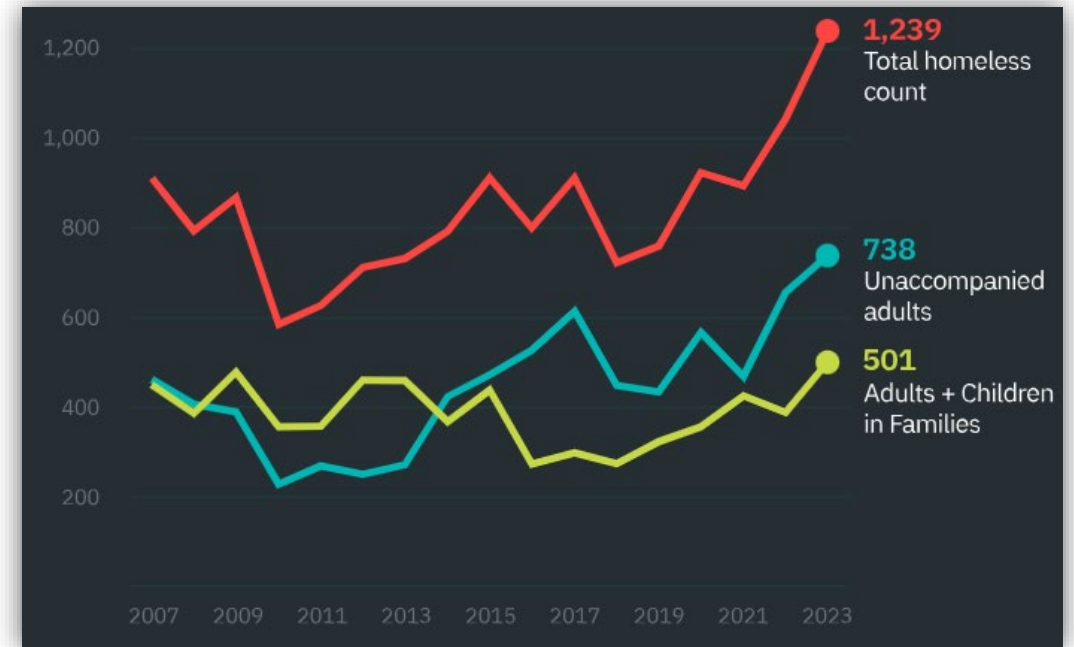- Started as a single site community health center for 1,083 patients

# Getting Started

- Where do we start?

- What resources exist in our community?

- What services will we provide?

- How do we make the work sustainable?

# The Need

- Kent County has the third highest rate of homelessness in the state (188 homeless per 100,000 people in 2023)

- 139 persons experiencing chronic homelessness (2023)



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# Identifying the Gaps

- Neighborhood association discussions
    - Still feeling the loss of the community clinic
    - Need for truly accessible healthcare for the unhoused

- Survey of the community conducted by a local university
    - Addiction, mental health, and lack of supportive resources for the unhoused

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# Getting Started

- Non-medical outreach at a community resource center for the unhoused
  - Building trust with patients AND community partners
- Meeting monthly with other organizations already providing outreach in our community
  - Leading with curiosity, avoiding duplication
- Intentional growth through complementary services that targeted unmet needs in our community

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# Crossroads Clinic

- **Primary care team**
  - Patient-centered scheduling
  - Point of care testing and laboratory services
- **Embedded in a community resource center**
  - Harm reduction supplies, hygiene and self-care, legal aid, housing assessments, warming center, hot meals, spiritual support



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# Crossroads Clinic: Impact

- **Refining our aim of outreach medicine**
  - Listen to patient feedback
  - Enhanced primary care and convenience care
- **Creating more opportunities for care**
  - May 2023 to July 2024 = 341 encounters, 149 unique patient
- **Partnerships**
  - Emergency room physicians informing ED care plans for the unhoused
  - Medical student clinical experiences

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# Street Medicine

- **Mobile primary care services**

- **Place-based outreach clinics**

- **Partnership with Homeless Outreach Team**
  - Social worker
  - Peer recovery coach
  - First responders

- **Four hours per week with two different teams**



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# Street Medicine: Impact

- **Services Delivered (Oct 2023- July 2024)**
  - Encounters: 104
  - Unique Patients: 76

- **Place-based services**
  - Downtown library
  - Transitional housing facility
  - Women's shelter

- **Recently expanded to a second partnership with housing and outreach specialists**

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# Mel Trotter Clinic

**Primary care with integrated psychiatry**
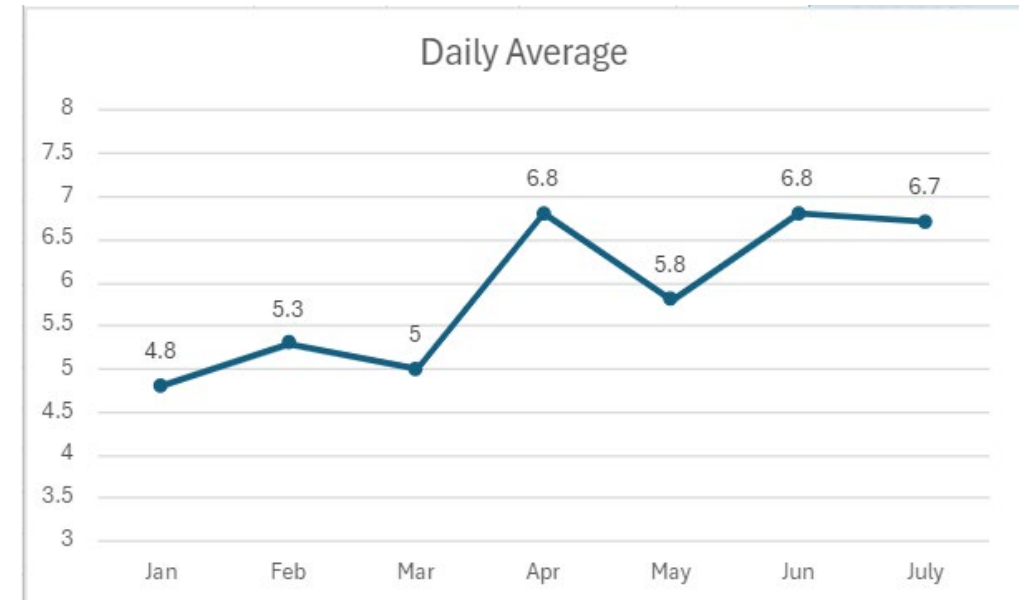
- Patient-centered scheduling

**Embedded in a homeless shelter**

- Partnership with nursing staff from shelter

# Mel Trotter Clinic: Impact

- **Medical services** (November 2023 – July 2024)
  - Encounters: 180
  - Unique Patients: 82

- **Creating opportunities and access to care**
  - Better engagement and adherence



Daily Average

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | July |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4.8 | 5.3 | 5 | 6.8 | 5.8 | 6.8 | 6.7 |

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# Degage Heartside Landing

- **Primary care team with integrated psychiatry**
  - Two days per month
- **Embedded in complex needs housing facility**
  - 25 residents – chronically homeless, prior unsuccessful supportive housing efforts
- **Case conferencing, social needs and medication adherence support**

# Degage- Heartside Landing: Impact

- **Services Delivered (February 2024 – July 2024)**
  - Encounters: 72
  - Unique Patients: 20 engaged as PCP
- **Patient centered housing with patient centered healthcare**
  - EMS activation significantly reduced
    - 2023 = 128 calls
    - 2024 (Q1 - Q2) = 11
  - 100% of residents have maintained housing

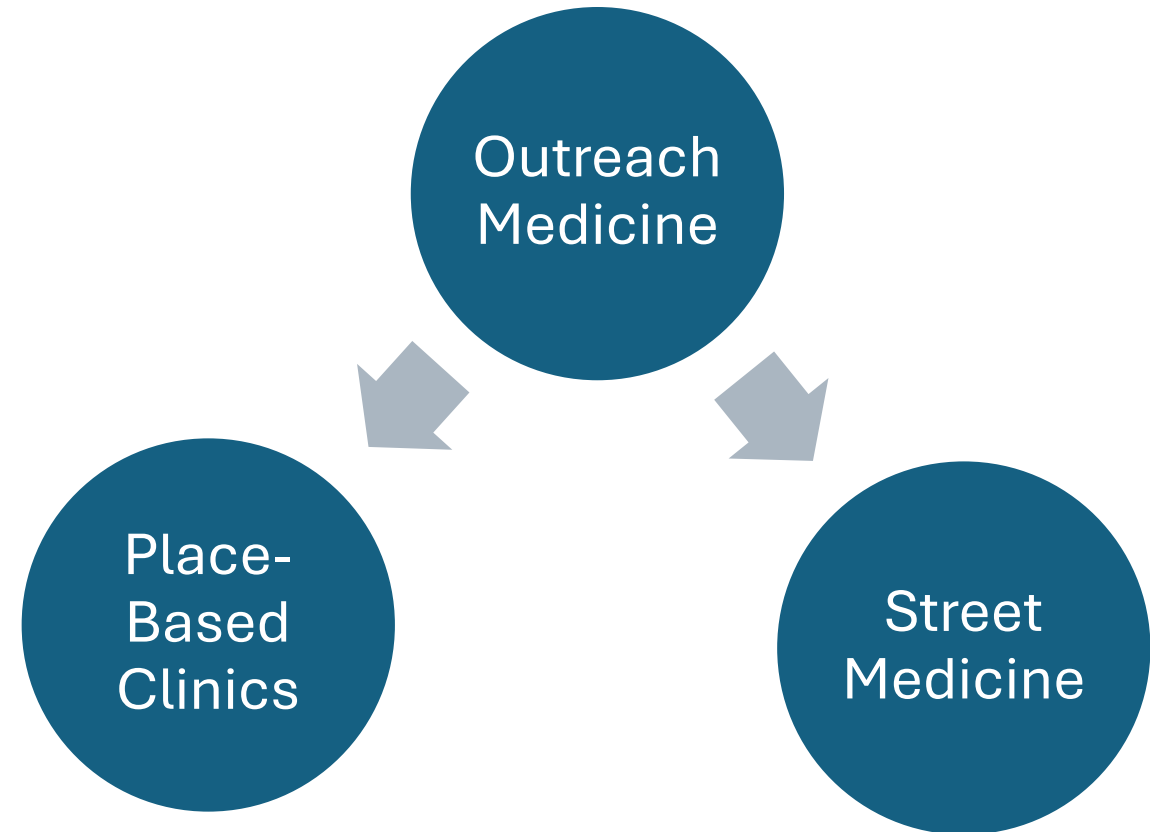Catherine's
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# Catherines Health Center

- Multi-Site Federally Qualified Health Center in West Michigan

- Enhanced Primary Care
  - Three integrated medical clinics
  - Dental clinic
  - School-based programs
  - Outreach medicine

- 5,171 patients in 2023 (1,083 in 2020)

- 30% of patients experiencing homelessness or housing instability



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# Outreach Medicine

- Place-Based Clinics: partnership to bring services to a familiar space for patients experiencing homelessness

- Street Medicine: the direct provision of healthcare to the unsheltered homeless where they live

Outreach Medicine

Place-Based Clinics

Street Medicine

# **Lessons Learned**

- Culture of Caring and Curiosity
  - Take the time to understand your patients
- Be Different
  - Healthcare for the unhoused is a specialty
- Collaboration and Partnerships
  - Complex needs require complex solutions

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# Culture of Caring and Curiosity

- Trauma informed care
  - Understanding the context in which our patients live

- Harm reduction principles
  - Meet the patient where they are at
  - Perfect is the enemy of good

- No missed opportunities
  - Trust and consistency is everything
  - Every interaction is impactful



BE KIND.
FOR EVERYONE YOU MEET IS FIGHTING A BATTLE YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT.

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# Be Different

- Patient designed care delivery model
  - Specialized services for the unhoused
  - Patient experience surveys, care plan adherence, service utilization
- Reconceptualizing the patient- provider dynamic
  - Meet the patient where they are
  - Emphasis on patient led visits
    - Forget what we *think* the patient should do

# Cross-sector Collaboration

- Streamline the system, dismantle the silos

- Develop a network to efficiently coordinate access to resources

- Prioritize and navigate the intersection of housing and healthcare

# Who can we partner with?

# Sustainability Efforts

- Partnerships to share in the work

- Pursue grant funding and/or philanthropy to help start your program

- Leverage reimbursement for services
  - Use CMS place of service code 27
  - FQHC: Add outreach sites and mobile care to scope of services (form 5c)

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# What's Next?

- Dedicated and fulltime team for outreach medicine
- Medical respite center for the unhoused
- Partnerships with large healthcare systems
- Partnerships with payers
- Cross-sector case conferencing – aligning resources for healthcare and housing

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# Questions?