

Caring for Families. Improving Lives. Leading Change.

**Presentation to Council of Governments  
Human Services Policy Committee  
June 25, 2021  
Kelly Sweeney McShane, CEO**

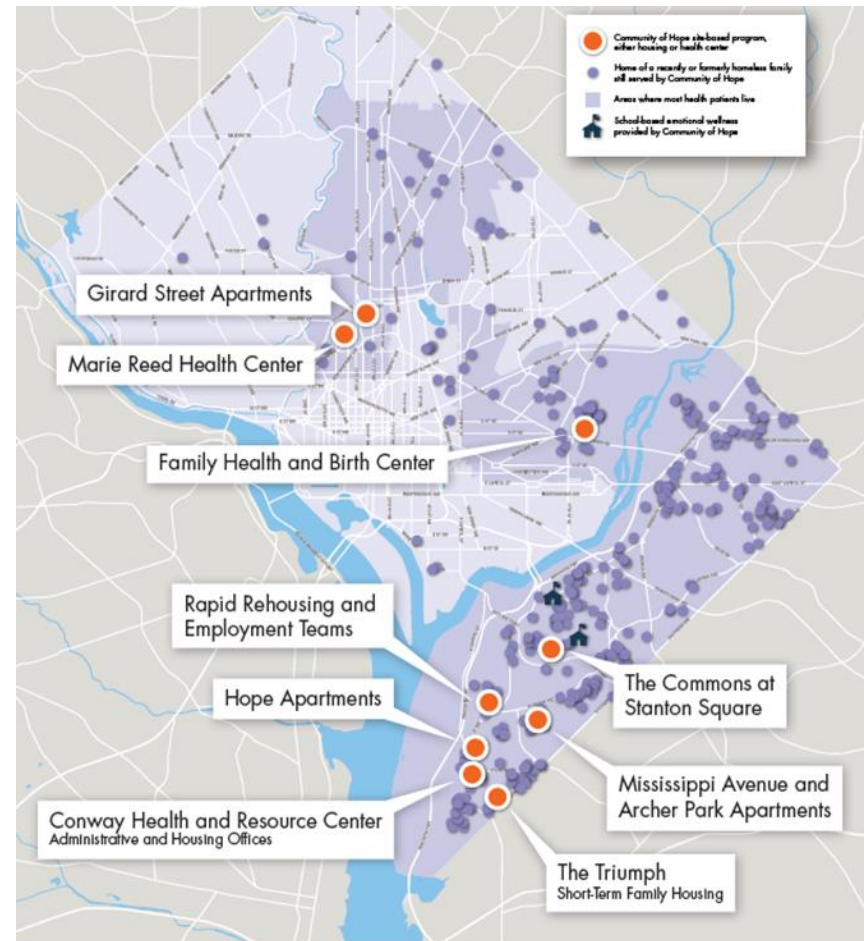
# Outline

- Overview on Community of Hope
- Mental health needs of families experiencing homelessness
- Community of Hope's response to mental health needs
- Impact of pandemic



# Community of Hope

- Mission is to improve health and end family homelessness to make Washington, DC more equitable.
- Served 1,142 families experiencing homelessness in DC in 2020.
- Provided more than 40,900 medical, dental, and behavioral health services to about 11,271 patients in 2020.



# Community of Hope programs

- Homelessness Prevention Program
- Short-term Family Housing
- Rapid Rehousing
- Permanent Supportive Housing



# Mental Health Needs of Families

The experience of homelessness is in and of itself traumatizing

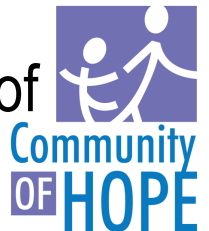
Complex trauma

Children's mental health needs – developmental delays, exposure to trauma, depression, anxiety



# Community of Hope Response

- Trauma informed care approach
  - Takes into account an understanding of trauma in all aspects of service delivery and places priority on the person's safety, choice, and control
  - Training for staff – upon hire, ongoing, and for supervisors
  - Motivational interviewing
- Emotional wellness services
  - Expanding services in our health centers, 35% increase in 2020
  - More via telehealth
  - Integrated therapist initiative
- Support for children
- Stable housing, connection to jobs and resources, a sense of hope



# Trauma Informed Case Management

- **Strengths-Based:** research shows that individuals have the ability to be resilient if they have enough protective factors.
- **Non-Judgmental:** Normalize the client's thoughts, feelings, and reactions.
- During **assessment**, discuss WHY you are asking for sensitive information- explain your role.
- **Case planning:** Break goals into small, attainable steps. Clients who are living in poverty and/or have experienced trauma may have trouble slowing down their thought process, or thinking beyond the here & now.



# Pandemic Implications



## Three back-to-back traumas

- original homeless episode
- + pandemic isolation
- + worry about second episode of housing insecurity

## Increase in Unusual Incident Reports overall in 2020

- About half are related to violence
- Seeing an increase in reports of domestic violence

## Impact on children


- Schools provided mental health support before
- Challenges with virtual school

## Impact on staff

- Own stressors with children at home
- Anxiety in returning to home visits







When asked to describe this past year, many children say that they're "over it". I'm concerned that children don't have much to look forward to. They've been sitting in their homes for the past 15 months, and there are very few in-person camps or resources for this summer. You know the phrase "sick and tired of being sick and tired?" I think that kind of embodies the vibe.

When most people think of depression, we picture tears and sadness. However, I think depression looks really different for a lot of our youth. They're irritable and they aren't interested in doing anything. I think many of our kids are depressed without realizing that they're depressed.

- Janet Campbell, Youth Specialist





“I love being a mom!  
When I’m in sad  
situations, they [my  
children] help me. To see  
their little faces is a  
blessing.”

– Diamond Wilson,  
mother of five

<https://www.communityofhopecdc.org/light-end-tunnel>



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