

Trustee Insights

POPULATION HEALTH



Meeting Homeless Patients' Social Needs

If patients do not have a safe and stable place to stay after a hospital visit, they are at high risk for complications that send them back to the hospital. That's why leaders at UR Medicine's Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, N.Y., teamed with a social service organization to create a short-stay residence for patients who have no home to go to after discharge.

"This is a transitional setting that allows these patients a little bit more time to recover from their hospitalization in a more supportive housing arrangement," says Kelly M. Luther, director of social work and patient/family services at University of Rochester Medical Center.

The 10-bedroom residence was formerly a group home served by DePaul, a nonprofit organization that provides affordable housing and

other social supports. More than 125 patients have been discharged to the residence since it opened in 2016; two-thirds of those have subsequently been placed in permanent housing.

The facility is staffed round-the-clock by DePaul staff members who assist with meals, transportation to appointments, house-keeping and laundry service, while working to arrange the stable housing and social supports the patients need. UR Medicine's home care agency provides services and therapies as needed.

The patients served by the program must be able to administer their own medication, feed themselves and need only minimal assistance, but they provide complex challenges. Many suffer from multiple medical conditions, mental illness and/or addiction. The average

length-of-stay at the residence is 53 days.

The program allows Strong Memorial to discharge homeless patients when they are medically ready, which frees up beds needed by other patients. The facility always has a waiting list, but expanding it to fully meet demand is not a realistic option.

"The housing experts have a lot that they have to manage in terms of the cohabitation and the complexity of achieving long-term housing," Luther says. "It's been important for us to start this project very small so that we can learn for our future needs and scale appropriately."