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## **Program that Assists Homeless Patients Discharged from Hospitals Shows Humanistic and Cost-Effective Value to Community**

National Health Foundation program provides transitional housing and aftercare services that helps hundreds and saves millions of dollars annually

LOS ANGELES, Calif. – June 1, 2015 – Hundreds of homeless patients discharged from Los Angeles area hospitals are annually receiving vital transitional housing and aftercare services through a creative and award-winning “recuperative care” program spearheaded by the National Health Foundation (NHF), a Los Angeles-based non-profit organization dedicated to improving and enhancing the healthcare of the underserved by developing and supporting innovative programs. Since assuming complete control of the program’s overall management and on-site staffing and operations a year ago on June 1, 2014, the NHF “Pathway Recuperative Care” (PRC) program has served over 500 patients from 60 participating hospitals, saved the hospitals nearly \$5 million collectively, and found temporary or permanent housing for nearly 50% of the patients leaving the recuperative care program.

Recuperative care provides hospitals with a discharge option for homeless patients who are no longer sick enough to require continued hospitalization, but who are still too ill to be released onto the streets or placed in a traditional shelter. Participating hospitals can send the homeless patients to a recuperative care center – where they receive basic clothing, meals, and shelter – to recover in a safe and clean setting, receive medical oversight, obtain support in attending follow up appointments, and connect with supportive services and longer term housing. NHF President and CEO Kelly Bruno said, “This type of program allows patients to recuperate and receive treatment for their lingering non-major illnesses, which reduces the probability of relapse and costly re-hospitalization.”

The NHF PRC program operates at two locations, one in Mid-City LA, the other in the San Gabriel Valley within La Puente. There, patients are housed at motels in rented double-occupancy rooms, a unique and innovative “pod model,” in contrast to the more common “shelter model,” in which patients live as a group in a large open shared space.

“The program was a life saver for me,” said “Hank,” who arrived at the Mid-City facility after being hospitalized for various ailments, including a severe kidney infection. “I had nothing, but they cared for me.” During his two week stay, PRC staff helped Hank obtain an identification card, medical insurance, medications, and longer term housing. Just as important, said Hank, “the staff restored my faith in people and gave me hope and the will to live.”

Hundreds of individuals like Hank have benefited from the pod model. Under the NHF program, patients stay an average of 10 days, and less than 20% of the patients are re-admitted to a hospital within 90 days of discharge from the PRC program. The daily fee per patient that

hospitals pay is over 10 times less expensive than the typical \$2,000 to \$3,000 daily in-patient cost that hospitals incur when homeless patients stay with them.

Dignity Health California Hospital Medical Center in downtown Los Angeles is one of the 60 participating hospitals. "We are an enthusiastic and active partner in the National Health Foundation program," said Margaret R. Peterson, PhD, president of California Hospital. "The PRC program is a unique resource for providing compassionate care to the homeless. The service is high quality, economical, and, most importantly, improves the quality of life for our patients by decreasing the possibility of readmission."

In Los Angeles County, approximately 6,000 homeless patients are admitted to hospitals each year, and many hospitals have typically kept many patients twice as long as medically necessary (i.e., four extra days) because there was an insufficient availability of appropriate discharge facilities.

The shortage of appropriate discharge facilities has been long standing, and NHF has been actively involved in the search for solutions for many years. Specifically, in 2007, NHF was part of a collaborative effort involving the Hospital Association of Southern California, government agencies, and non-profit organizations. The collaboration formed partly in response to alleged homeless dumping incidents that were widely reported by the media at that time. NHF completed a needs assessment of related services and participated in a two-year demonstration project from 2008 to 2010 that aimed to increase the number of recuperative care beds in the County.

NHF started its own recuperative care program in 2010, in partnership with an on-site operator, and the program received the James Irvine Foundation's 2014 Leadership Award, which recognizes Californians who are effectively addressing some of the state's most critical challenges. The partnership ended in May of 2014, and on June 1, 2014, NHF assumed sole control of the program's on-site staffing and operations and the program's overall management. The program is financially self-sustaining.

Bruno remarked, "In response to the lingering issue of homelessness in the County and the ongoing and increased demand from hospitals, we are continuing our efforts to help bridge this gap in healthcare. For example, we are expanding our outreach to hospitals to make them more aware of the programmatic and cost-effective value of our recuperative care program, now named the Pathway Recuperative Care (PRC) program." Bruno added that part of this includes the development of enhanced communications materials and resources, including an updated website, which can be accessed via the following link: <http://pathwayrecupcare.com/>

"We are going to continue to be a positive force in this area," Bruno said. "We have ideas, including plans to provide some bridge housing services. We seek complementary resources and are open to new partnerships. My team and I are also accessible resources to the homeless, other service providers, the media, and the public."

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#### **About the National Health Foundation**

The National Health Foundation (NHF) has a vision that every individual, regardless of who they are or where they live, can achieve the highest level of health through a comprehensive and compassionate system of care. The NHF ([www.NationalHealthFoundation.org](http://www.NationalHealthFoundation.org)) is an independent, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public charity dedicated to improving and enhancing the healthcare of the underserved by developing and supporting innovative programs that (1) can become independently viable, (2) provide systemic solutions to gaps in healthcare access and delivery, and (3) have the potential to be replicated nationally.