



# Visitation Homes: Collaboration in Community

## Student Interns

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## Academic Preceptors

Maria Hervada-Page, MSS, Thomas Jefferson University, Sidney Kimmel Medical College  
Amanda Lyons, OTD, MS, OTR/L, Thomas Jefferson University, College of Rehabilitation Sciences, Occupational Therapy

## Community Preceptors

Zakiyyah Harris, Visitation Homes  
Shawna Murray, Visitation Homes

## COMMUNITY PARTNER

[Visitation Homes in Kensington](#) provides permanent supportive housing and case management services to families who have experienced homelessness. Families reside in apartments and receive supportive services to support their transition to independent living and self-sufficiency. Visitation Homes strives to meet their residents' needs through a holistic approach and helps them move towards developing stability and self-sufficiency, while honoring the dignity of each family (Catholic Social Services Philadelphia, 2021).

## BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

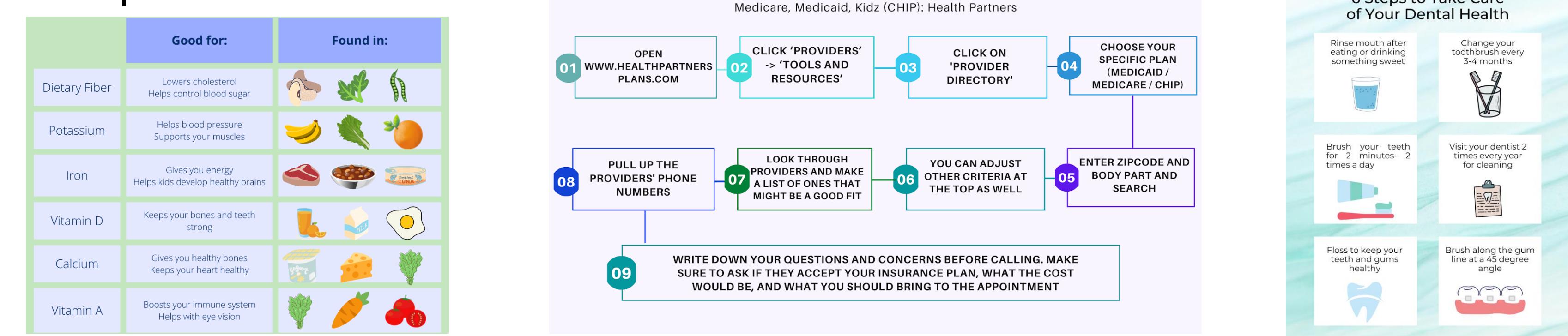
During the point-in-time count in January 2021, 4,302 people were identified as experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia. Racial disparities are evident as Black/African American individuals represent 78% of people in housing crisis and assistance programs, yet they represent 42% of the city's population in 2021. Of the 4,302 people experiencing homelessness, 3,602 people were in emergency or transitional housing, which signifies a need for continuous permanent supportive housing services in Philadelphia. Data has shown that there is an 85-97% success rate of permanent housing programs preventing a return to homelessness in Philadelphia. The city partners with non-profit organizations, such as Visitation Homes, to provide permanent supportive housing programs that offer case management and independent living skill development to support residents to lead a life of self-sufficiency and stability (City of Philadelphia, Office of Homeless Services, 2021; Catholic Social Services Philadelphia, 2021).

## TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

- Planned and hosted three health education sessions focused on nutrition, cardiovascular health, oral health, and smoking cessation for the residents. The sessions included interactive activities and discussions.
- Researched and designed education materials regarding health care system navigation and health practices.
- Worked with the community preceptors to assist with administrative work and provide support to assess community needs and resources as well as grant opportunities.
- Planned and led a summer camp for the children at Visitation Homes for the first two weeks of the internship. Camp activities included crafts, reading, games, and outdoor activities.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS/CHALLENGES/JOYS

- The health education sessions engaged informative discussions with residents about their lived experiences with the health care system as well as their own accomplishments and challenges with caring for their health
- Hosting a summer camp for kids allowed the BTG interns to get to know the families and provide fun and interactive activities for the children to occupy their time when there was no school or summer camp in session
- BTG interns learned how to create accessible, trauma-informed, and collaborative educational sessions, considering everyone's unique lived experiences



## REFLECTION

"My time with BTG and Visitation Homes has not only been productive but meaningful, intriguing and impactful. It was a learning experience as I had a chance to connect with community members and get to know their perspectives. I got to observe both challenges and strengths that formerly homeless families living in Kensington have, and the ways in which macro social forces affect each family. The BTG sessions have helped me contextualize my fieldwork and connect it back to my academic background of social work while also learning more about health and healthcare from other interns. I am grateful for the BTG experience, the people I have met through it, and the ongoing motivation to fight social and health inequities I have found here."

- Hazel Moffatt

"I am thankful for my time at *Visitation Homes*, for the people I have met, and for the stories I have had the honor to learn from. Through my experiences here, I have learned to collaborate and learn from communities first before taking any steps to plan programs. I am leaving this experience more inspired, informed, and eager to join the efforts of the many amazing people who work to address barriers of injustice and inequity by bringing support and dedicated commitment to communities."

- Sara Mathai

### References:

City of Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services (2021). *FY2021 data snapshot*. City of Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services. <http://philadelphiagovernment.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/FY2021-Data-Snapshot.pdf>

Catholic Social Services Philadelphia (2021). Visitation Home. Catholic Social Services Philadelphia. <https://cssphiladelphia.org/services/visitation-homes/>