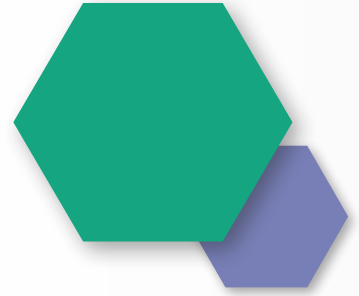


ADDRESSING YOUR PATIENTS' SOCIAL NEEDS FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

The environment in which we live, work and play can have an effect on our physical and mental health, and well-being. Living in places with limited access to quality jobs and schools, as well as healthy foods and safe spaces to exercise can increase the risk of depression and limit the ability to manage chronic diseases.



Addressing patients' social needs and linking them to appropriate resources is an important and critical new step for health care providers and the care team. Incorporating these conversations into your workflow may be challenging at first. However, addressing your patients' social needs can improve their treatment adherence, and mental and physical health outcomes. **The steps below can help you create a standardized approach to meeting your patients' needs.**

Step 1: PREPARE

- Collect information on community resources relevant to your patient population. Talk to local community-based organizations to understand what resources are available. Create a list of resources you feel comfortable referring patients to. Make sure the list includes mental health and substance use services, as well as the following resources. Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **depression** for service providers and contact information.

Financial assistance programs	Earned Income Tax Services (EITS), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
Food assistance programs	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Emergency Food Assistance Program
Housing and homeless services	New York City (NYC) Department of Homeless Services
Immigrant support services	Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Resource and Referral Guide
Social supports services	Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence Resource Directory
Youth and family services	Nurse-Family Partnership, LGBTQ Youth Empowerment Group
Free fitness classes	Shape Up NYC
Healthy eating resources	Farmers Markets, Health Bucks

ACCESS NYC can also help patients find assistance with food, finances, housing, employment and more. Visit access.nyc.gov for more information.



Step 2: ASSESS

- Ask your patients direct questions about their individual circumstances, including their employment, education and housing status, and social needs, such as child care options and legal advice.
- Use this information and your community resource list to recommend services.

Step 3: SEARCH and REFER

- Work with patients to find appropriate resources in their neighborhoods that address their specific needs. Use your community resource list as a starting point (see [Step 1: Prepare](#)).
- Use the Health Information Tool for Empowerment (hitesite.org), an online resource directory run by the Greater New York Hospital Association, for information on free and low-cost social services.

Step 4: LINK

- Create a workflow with your clinical staff to:
 - Help patients fill out forms and make appointments as needed.
 - Coordinate referrals to legal aides, social workers, employment counselors and others.
 - Assist your patients in navigating and advocating for community services.
 - Create a space in your practice (e.g., a bulletin board) for community members to share information regarding local events, activities and community meetings that promote healthy behaviors and social supports.

Step 5: FOLLOW UP

- Follow up with patients to track whether referrals were successful and that patients received the appropriate support and services.