

Skills, Tools, and Strategies for Working in the Case Management, Community Health Worker, or Peer Roles in Medical Respite Programs

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Medical respite care¹ is acute and post-acute medical care for people experiencing homelessness who are too ill or frail to recover from a physical illness or injury on the streets, but who are not ill enough to be in a hospital. [Medical respite programs](#) are a critical component of the health care and housing continuum and provide opportunity for healing and recovery for those experiencing homelessness.

A [central aspect of medical respite care is providing care coordination](#). Underlying the care coordination process is the need to build relationships and trust with clients using a strengths-based approach to identify and work towards the clients' goals. Much of the care coordination process in medical respite is overseen and implemented by Case Managers (CM), Community Health Workers (CHW), and Peers.

This document provides recommended skills, tools, and strategies for CMs, CHWs, and Peers to be successful in their roles and address consumer needs.²



Care coordination deliberately organizes consumer care activities and sharing of information among all of the participants concerned with a consumer's care (including the consumer themselves) to achieve safer and more effective care.



Case managers coordinate services; considers financial resources and benefits; advocates for essential services; advises the client, family, or caregiver; monitors the use of resources; and manages client wellness and autonomy ([CCMC, 2021](#)).



Community health workers are frontline public health workers who are trusted members of and/or have an unusually close understanding of the community served ([APHA, 2021](#)).



Peer supports are individuals who have common life experiences with the people they are serving and have a unique capacity to help each other based on a shared affiliation and a deep understanding of particular experiences ([SAMHSA, 2015](#)).

For more in-depth information on Case Managers, Community Health Workers, and Peers in medical respite care, please view our online course: <https://nimrc-nhchc.talentlms.com/>

¹ The terms medical respite care and recuperative care are used to describe the same service.

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Skills, Tools, and Strategies for Case Managers, Community Health Workers, and Peers

Start with the consumer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify their goals and hopes for their time in the medical respite program. <input type="checkbox"/> Involve the consumer in decision-making and provide options whenever possible.
Have empathy for the consumers you're working with.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You may or may not share some of their experiences. Either way, you must recognize that everyone's story and situation is unique. <input type="checkbox"/> Recognize and be aware of the different barriers that the consumers are facing.
Begin by developing trust.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Highlight the person's skills and the things they have accomplished. <input type="checkbox"/> Help the person to explore themselves, including things that they like to do (not just their health and medical needs). <input type="checkbox"/> Find opportunities for small success that can be built upon to help the consumer gain confidence and independence.
Communicate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with the consumer updates about their plan. <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with your team, work together, and support each other. <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with organizations/agencies/providers who will be providing on-going care to improve transition process.
Be flexible and a problem-solver.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be willing to explore all possible options. <input type="checkbox"/> Be creative and willing to think outside the box. <input type="checkbox"/> Be ready for things to change – unexpected situations can come up quickly. It's important to be responsive and flexible to address the needs of the consumers and support the team. <input type="checkbox"/> Be non-judgmental. The care plan belongs to the consumer and they may not make the decisions you would in certain circumstances but they are entitled to those decisions.
Build your knowledge of community resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Never be afraid to ask questions and learn about something. <input type="checkbox"/> Always be curious – about the consumers and what is available in the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Make connections with community resources and providers and get to know who is in your community. <input type="checkbox"/> Learn with your consumers. Walking through a process with them validates its complexity and gives you a chance to learn something that might help other consumers.
Be organized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Keep a calendar for yourself and for your consumers. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep a central list of resources that can be accessed by the team and allow everyone to contribute to the list. <input type="checkbox"/> Take notes when in the field with consumers to ensure documentation is detailed. This helps team members know the most important information and can track changes during the consumers' stay. <input type="checkbox"/> Have good organizational skills – this might be having a central place with consumer information for the team, or your own list of things to accomplish with each of your consumers. Develop checklists to assure you do not miss steps.