

## **BRIDGING THE**

## **TRANSPORTATION GAP**

**MAY 2018**



## ***Bridging the transportation gap in healthcare with cab drivers***

No-shows or late pickups that lead to cancelled healthcare appointments. Poor driving. Rude treatment. For people with complex health and social needs who can't access a car or public transit, unreliable and unsafe non-emergency medical transportation is more than a hassle — it can put their health at risk. When transportation services fail to show up, patients can't make it to their doctor's appointments and access other vital services like chemotherapy and dialysis. Chronic conditions worsen, patients become isolated, and many patients end up seeking emergency care instead at high rates.

Thankfully, cab drivers like Freddy Rodriguez have helped bridge the transportation gap for many of our patients and community partners. As a driver for Five Star Cab Service for five years, he's consistently come through to give our patients non-emergency rides to their appointments with healthcare and social service providers and help patients in our Housing First program move into their new apartments. But it's not just his driving that's made him a valued community resource. It's his attentiveness, kindness, and patience with our patients and community partners that's made him a beloved member of the Camden Coalition family.

"He's gone above and beyond what's expected when it comes to many of our Housing First patients. Once with a patient in subacute rehab, we called Freddy at the last minute when another transportation service didn't show up. He said to me, 'Okay, I'm with someone else, but I'll be there.' But before that, he actually went into the shelter in Glassboro, gathered her stuff, put it into his van, and then went to subacute rehab to take her to her new apartment. She always ran out of oxygen, but he always had an

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extra tank for her in the back of the van. He said, 'Ms. Bumpers, I have your tank.' He had a soft spot for her."

"I remember working with him before Housing First started. We picked up a patient at a subacute rehab facility in Cherry Hill to tour a long-term care facility, and Freddy waited outside while I toured the facility with a patient, and then we drove to an appointment. For many patients, touring a long-term care facility can be an emotionally draining experience, and Freddy handled the situation with sensitivity. Freddy just handles things with grace. He has a calming energy, which goes a long way with our patients."

### **This is also healthcare**

While we need a long-term solution to improve transportation for patients with complex needs, Laura said that cab drivers and independent drivers like Freddy play a key role to bridge those gaps in the meantime.

"This is also healthcare. I don't think people realize that. Transportation is literally a key cog in the wheel of healthcare. The word 'provider' is more inclusive than people may initially think. In many ways, Freddy is a healthcare provider. He certainly facilitates access to care."

After five years of working with our staff, patients, and community partners, Freddy has decided to work independently as a cab driver and explore new career opportunities. On a bright Friday morning in late March, he stopped by the Coalition's office to say his goodbyes to our care team.

"I'll tell you a story about how I started here — with this gentleman, his leg was cut. It was raining, and I asked him if I could help him down the stairs, but he said no. The poor man fell down the stairs. I let him know, 'I'm going to help you out.' I wanted for him to feel like I'm family. I picked him up and helped him into the van. I felt like I was taking my own family to the hospital. It's been a real pleasure working with everybody ever since."

## ***About the Camden Coalition***

The Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers is a citywide coalition of over 25 hospitals, primary care providers, and community organizations working together to deliver better health care to vulnerable citizens in Camden, NJ. Founded by Dr. Jeffrey Brenner in 2002, the Coalition knits together a fragmented health care system for patients with complex needs and repeated, ineffective and expensive hospitalizations, using smart data and holistic, multi-disciplinary team care. We believe if we can deliver better care at lower cost here in Camden, it can be done for everyone, everywhere in America.

*This brief was written by **Amy Yuen**, Staff Writer at the Camden Coalition.*