



# Strengthening the Social Safety Net

Wake Forest School of Medicine, Division of FaithHealth Grand Rounds

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*April 28, 2021*

# Strengthening the Social Safety Net

Life barriers & opportunities for people with limited resources



Social and economic needs of health system *employees*



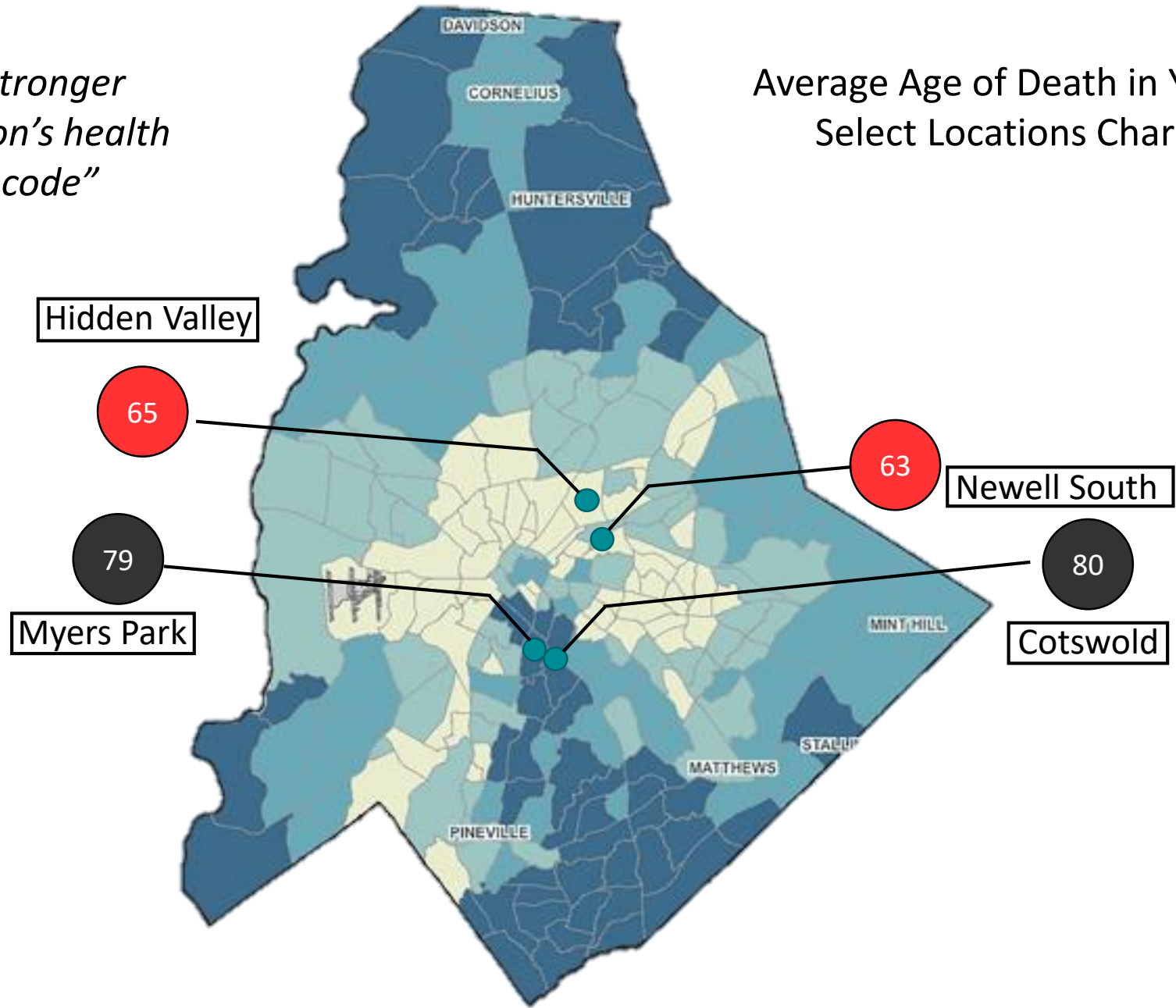
Build partnerships beyond hospital walls to improve community

Life barriers & opportunities for people with limited resources



*“a zip code is a stronger predictor of a person’s health than a genetic code”*

Average Age of Death in Years (2019)  
Select Locations Charlotte, NC



When we treat poor patients, we face not just one ailment, but two: the illness itself, and the economic fragility that underlines it.

**“All scientific evidence indicates that health and disease are almost universally the result of social causes . . . most hospitals and physician offices are repair shops, trying to correct the damage from what are known as the social determinants of health.”**

(Donald Berwick, Health Reformer, JAMA, July 21, 2020)

# Housing has a Direct and Cascading Affect on Health and Wellbeing Over the Life Course

## 1. Conditions Within the Home

- Lead poisoning
  - Impaired brain and nervous system development
  - Lower intelligence and reading disabilities
- Substandard housing
  - Respiratory conditions from water leaks, poor ventilation, and pest infestation
  - Asthma is the most common chronic disease among children

## 2. Neighborhood Conditions

- Physical characteristics
  - Physical inactivity - *unsafe places* due to crime, violence, or pollution
  - Diminished nutrition – limited access to *grocery stores*
  - *Social Isolation – limited contact with others*
  - Low income – *few* employment opportunities

## 3. Housing Affordability

- Affordable housing
  - Disproportionate spending on housing -  $\geq 30$  percent of household income
  - Forego basic needs - basic needs including nutrition and health care
  - 71.2% of those in lowest income quartile spend  $\geq 30$  percent on housing

# Poor Nutrition From Lack of Grocery Stores and Disproportionate Spending on Housing

## Deficiency of Nutrients and Mental Development

**35 percent**

About 35 percent of all Mecklenburg households with **children** are **food insecure** – nearly double the **national average**

Micronutrient	Deficiency manifestations
Iodine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor somatic and central nervous system growth, sluggishness, inactivity, lethargy, poor concentration, impaired cognition and incoordination.</li><li>• Sequel leading to minimal brain function to a syndrome of severe intellectual disability.</li><li>• Global loss of 10–15 intellectual quotient</li></ul>
Iron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listlessness, apathy, lack of vigor and enthusiasm, lower scores on motor development and cognitive tests and poor school grades-</li><li>• Less myelinization and altered neurotransmitter function</li></ul>
Zinc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lethargy, decreased visual memory, impaired cognitive development and neuropsychological problems</li></ul>
Selenium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Depression, low mood, low energy level, anxiety and stress</li></ul>
Choline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor memory and mental functioning</li></ul>
DHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Short memory span, poor ability for discrimination, aggression, hostility, learning disability, dyslexia? attention deficit disorder</li></ul>

"There is a magic window during pregnancy...It's a time when the desire to be a good mother and raise a healthy, happy child creates motivation to overcome incredible obstacles including poverty, instability or abuse with the help of a well-trained nurse."

David Olds, Ph.D.  
Founder, Nurse-Family Partnership



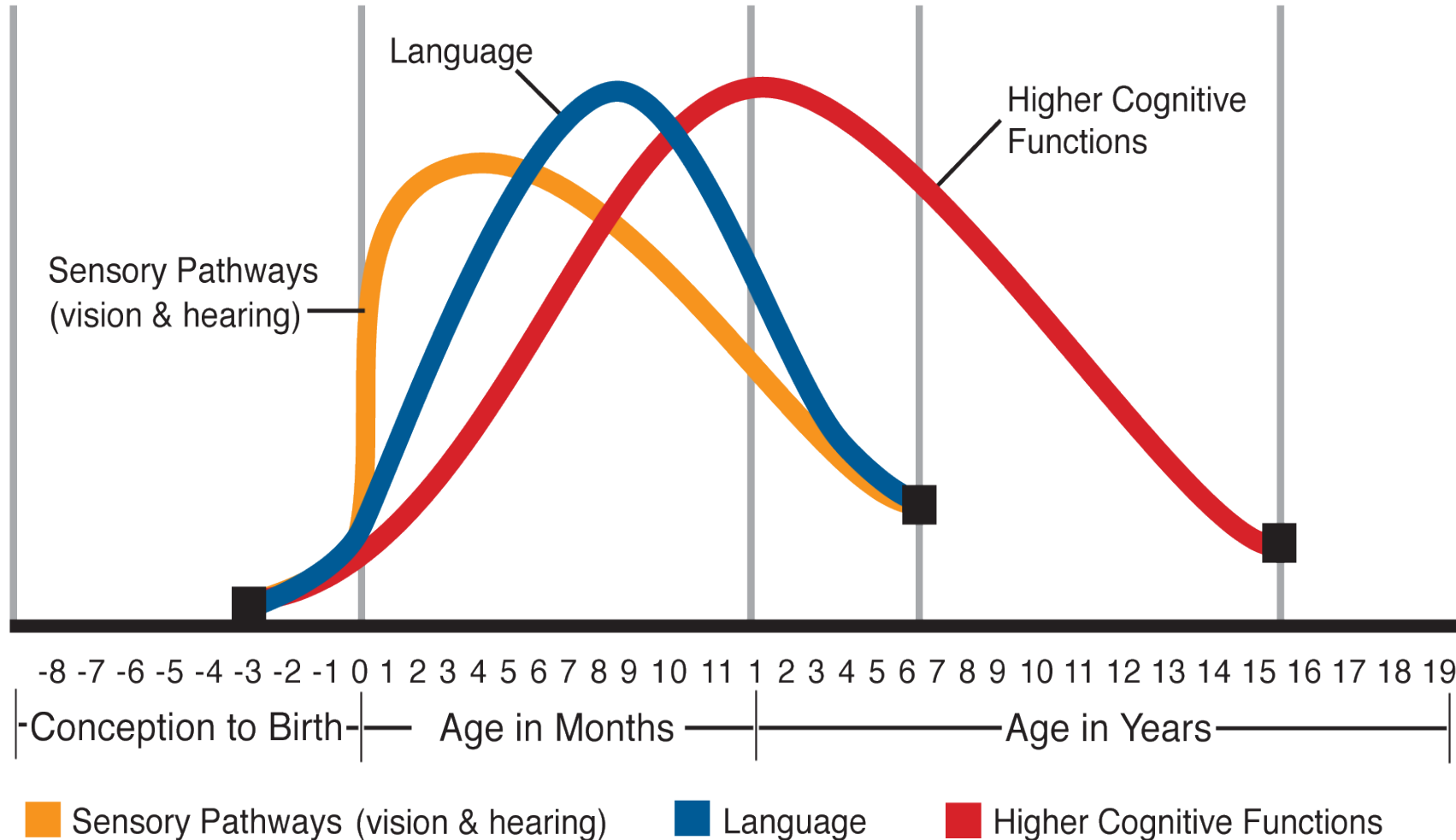


**The brain is  
one of the  
only organs  
not fully  
developed at  
birth.**

**90% of critical brain  
development  
happens in the first  
five years of life.**



# Early Intervention is the KEY



Graph Source: C.A. Nelson (2000)

# Strengthening the Social Safety Net

Social and economic needs of health system *employees*



# Results of Teammate Wellbeing Survey Final Numbers

Indicated Need **325**  
Total Responses **490** =66%

## FOOD



**53%** Worry about food running out with no money to buy more  
**28%** Ran out of food

## UTILITIES



**10%** Unable to get utilities (heat, electricity)

## LEARNING



**20%** Concerned about school aged children (preK-12th grade) learning needs

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT



**26%** Aware of AH Career Development Center\* (error in Paper Surveys)  
**52%** Experience social barriers to pursuing additional degrees, certifications

## TRANSPORTATION



**15%** Lack of transportation kept you from daily living

## INTERNET



**30%** Lack access to computer and internet needs

## HOUSING



**7%** Stayed outside, in a car, tent, shelter, hotel or someone else's home  
**31%** Worried about losing your housing

## MENTAL WELL-BEING



**34%** Experience a 2-week period where you felt down, lonely, depressed or hopeless  
**23%** Able to access mental health services, when needed

## TEAMMATE SURVEY RESULTS

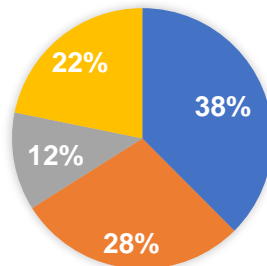


### Top 5 Zip Codes Represented

- 28208\*
- 28216\*
- 28215
- 28205\*
- 28213

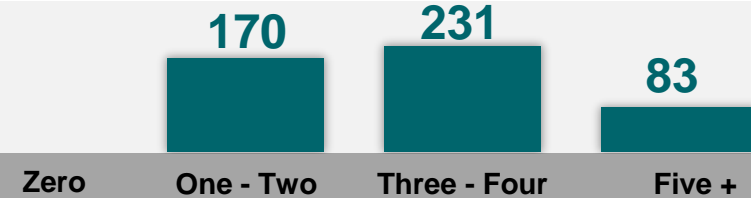
\*Indicates Charlotte crescent

### HOUSEHOLD INCOME



■ Under \$30,000    ■ \$30,000-\$49,999  
■ \$50,000+    ■ Chose not to answer

### # in HOUSEHOLD



### TOTAL DEPENDANTS

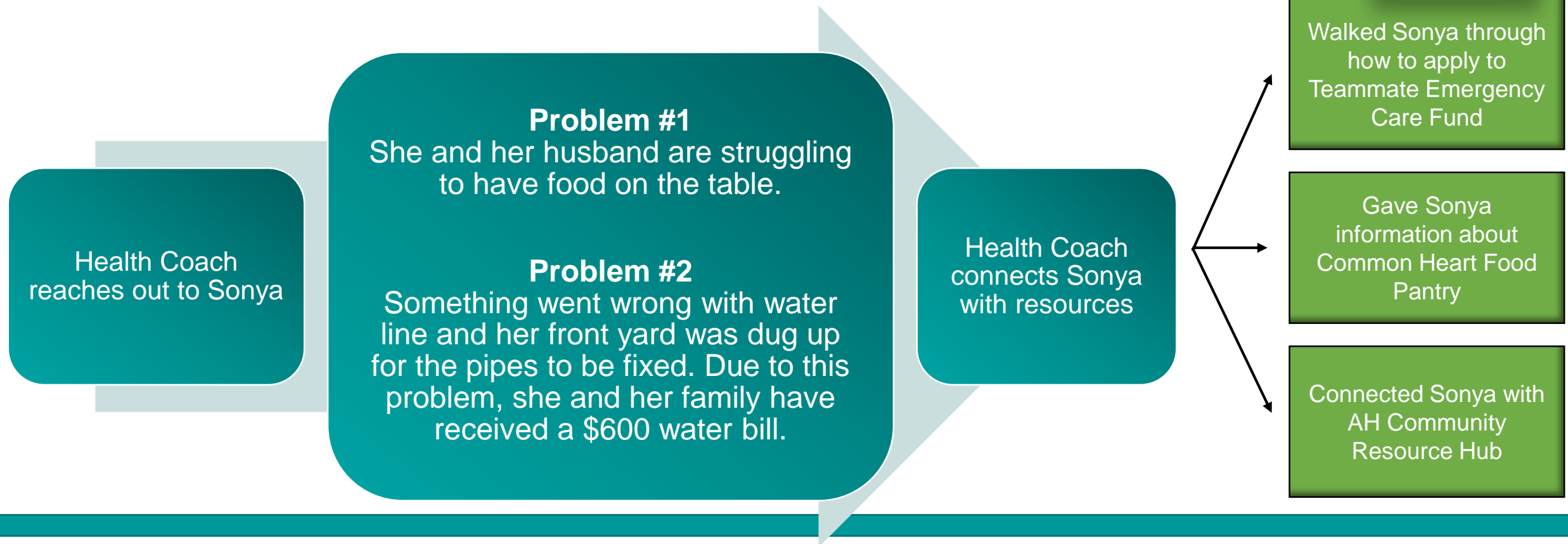


Some teammates have needs that can be solved more immediately and more easily.

# Teammate SDOH Intervention: **Sonya**

## Coaching Notes

- Sonya is an EVS lead, work has been very busy and stressful, especially since she just started working 3rd shift
- She and her husband have three teenage boys who eat “A LOT” and who are at home for school during COVID



Other teammates have complex social needs that require ongoing coaching and case management.

# Teammate SDOH Intervention: Sarah

## Coaching Notes

- Sarah has been out of work for 2 months due to COVID. She is behind on bills.
- She is currently working with HOPE Federal program for housing and also applied for additional federal services. She received \$1000 through Atrium Health Teammate Care Fund. She wants to work more hours.

Health Coach reaches out to Sarah

### Problem #1

- She is still struggling with bills. She's been having to pay late fees. She is only able to cover utilities right now.

### Problem #2

- She may get evicted. Her focus is trying to catch up on rent so the eviction can be reversed. She finds herself having to make decisions between two necessities.

### Problem #3

- She is also still trying to pay her son's college tuition.

### Problem #4

- She has an elderly uncle with early stages of dementia living with her.

Health Coach connects Sarah with resources

Sarah expressed frustration and sadness because she has never been through this before. She was very grateful for the call.

## Resolutions

Gave Housing and Utility assistance info over the phone

Encouraged Sarah to apply for AH HOPE Housing

Encouraged Sarah to take Utility Assistance (and apply utility money to pay rent)

Coached Sarah to contact her leader for additional hours

# Coaching Support: Referrals

**The Community Resource Hub** has been *the* essential tool to help our teammates find solutions within reach. In addition, the referrals below were shared with teammates in need.



## Finances (22%)

Teammate  
Emergency Fund



## Food (13%)

- Loaves and Fishes
- Feed My Lamb
- New Life Baptist Food Pantry
- Crisis Center Food Pantry
- Mobile Market
- Reeder Memorial Baptist Church Food Pantry
- Common Heart Food Pantry



## Housing (8%)

- HOPE Housing
- Crisis Assistance Ministry
- Anson Crisis Ministry
- Clover Area Assistance Center



## Medical / Mental Health (7%)

- Atrium Health: Billing Services, Scheduling, etc.
- HR Benefits (PTO, HSA)
- EAP
- FMLA
- Dependent Back-Up Care



## Transportation (1%)

- Public Transportation (Bus Schedule)



## Utility/ Internet Access (2%)

- AT&T
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

# Predictive analytics to identify teammates at social risk

- Key indicator: # of pay periods a full-time teammate earns less than \$500
- Increased social risk is associated with a 6x increase in Call Outs
- Teammates earning less than \$500 in three or more pay periods over one year
  - Indicates that **there may be as many as 1,372 teammates at risk**
  - Helps define **an early warning indicator** for teammates who could be at-risk
- Rolling out soon in Charlotte and by end of 2021 across Atrium's enterprise:
  - 25 question survey to all teammates on their work anniversary
  - Includes a social needs question: During the last 12 months, have your essential needs been met?

Call Outs are high in this group. 23% have had at least one call out shift in the last 90 days.



*Source: Strategic Workforce Planning, using Atrium Health teammate data*

» Effective interventions could reduce callouts, increase productivity and improve engagement



# Beyond hospital walls...to improve community

In big ways...

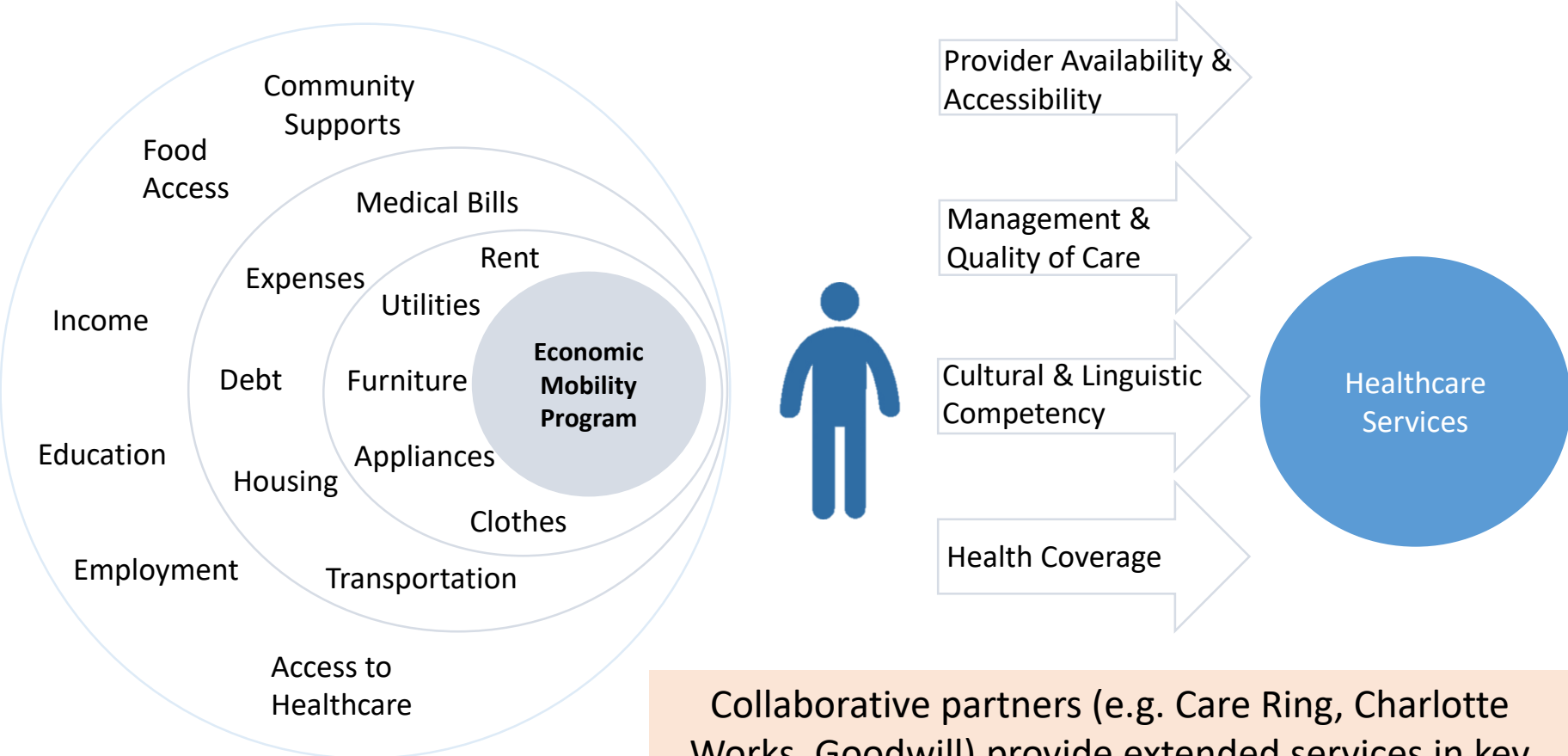
- NOAH
- Essential needs
- People experiencing homelessness

But every little step forward matters

- One example:
  - This afternoon, new partnership with Feeding Charlotte



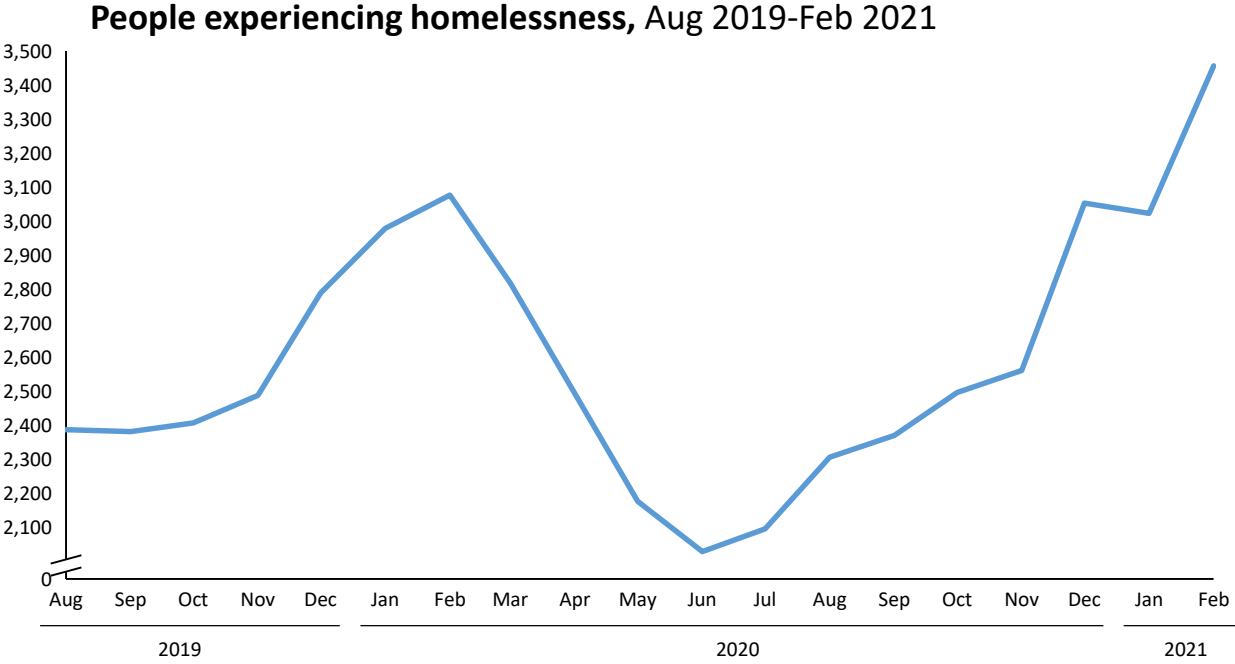
# Essential Needs: 250 Teammates dedicated 1:1 assistance



Collaborative partners (e.g. Care Ring, Charlotte Works, Goodwill) provide extended services in key areas beyond 90 days



# Charlotte-Mecklenburg County



# 3,456

People experiencing homelessness

# +434

in last month

# +381

In last year

# 331

Average total days to access permanent housing

# 10,535

Households most at risk of eviction due to COVID-19 (as of Sept. 2020)

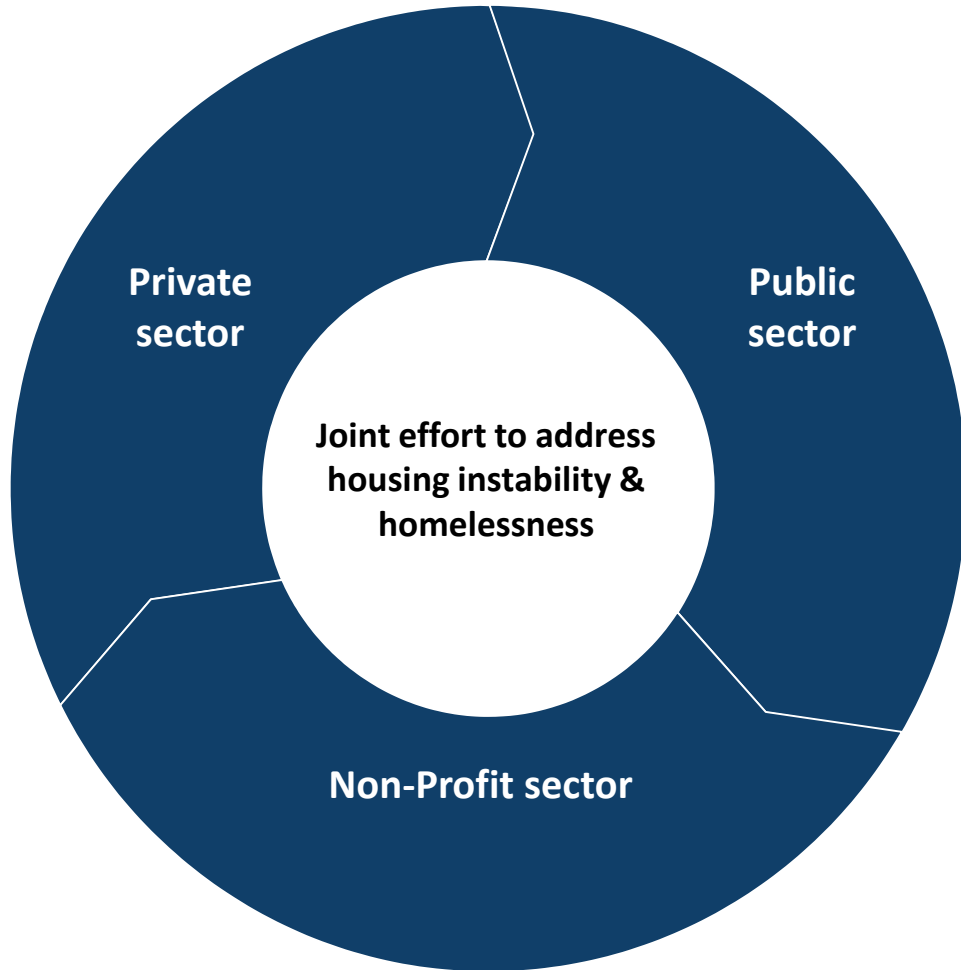
# 81k+

Renter households paying >30% of income for housing

Source: mecklenburghousingdata.org, as of 2/28/2021



# 2025 Homelessness Strategy



## Goal:

**To make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring**

*Help Charlotte-Mecklenburg become a national leader in addressing housing instability and homelessness in the next five years, by offering aligned strategies, unified goals, and clear funding pathways*



**Atrium** Health



**FEEDING  
CHARLOTTE**





Questions

and

Thank  
You!

