



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 18, 2025

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**BETHLEHEM HAVEN OF PITTSBURGH MEDICAL RESPITE CENTER  
BECOMES FIRST IN COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA &  
ONE OF THE FIRST 15 IN THE U.S. TO ACHIEVE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESPITE CARE (NIMRC) CERTIFICATION**

**PITTSBURGH (March 18, 2025)** – [Bethlehem Haven of Pittsburgh](#) Medical Respite Center, a part of [Pittsburgh Mercy's](#) award-winning homeless services continuum and family of care since 2016, on March 10 became the first medical respite center in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and one of the first 15 such centers in the U.S. to achieve [National Institute for Medical Respite Care \(NIMRC\) certification](#) as an integrated clinical care model.

The [National Health Care for the Homeless Council](#) (NHCHC) created the National Institute for Medical Respite Care (NIMRC) five years ago to expand and advance medical respite care in the U.S. Through the voluntary certification process, medical respite center professionals nationwide come together to create quality and consistency of care standards, guiding principles for medical respite care, and enhance and share best practices.

Medical respite care, also known as recuperative care, is post-acute, short-term medical care for persons who are experiencing homelessness or unstably housed and too ill or frail to recover from an illness or injury on the streets or in a shelter environment, but do not require hospital-level care. Medical respite care allows individuals the opportunity to rest and recover in a safe, healing environment and continued access to necessary medical care – such as IV antibiotics, wound care, treatment for substance use disorder, and physical therapy – as well as wrap-around supportive services. Guests are seen by [Pittsburgh Mercy Family Health Center's care team](#) or by their own health care provider. Bethlehem Haven care managers and social workers help guests coordinate medical and behavioral health appointments and access support services, such as linkages to housing, employment, benefits, transportation, and other services. Guests also have access to on-site laundry and computers.

“Bethlehem Haven’s Medical Respite Center plays a vital role in closing a critical gap in Pittsburgh’s health care continuum,” said [Dr. Jack Todd Wahrenberger](#), chief medical officer at Pittsburgh Mercy. “For the past nine years, we have provided a safe, supportive environment where individuals experiencing homelessness can rest and recover after hospital stays. “By bridging the transition from hospital to community, we help some of the highest-need, most at-risk individuals regain stability and access the care they deserve,” added Dr. Wahrenberger.

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## Bethlehem Haven Medical Respite Center achieves NIMRC certification

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“At Bethlehem Haven’s Medical Respite, we remain dedicated to addressing the complex needs of our community’s most vulnerable members,” said [Michael Turk](#), vice president of Community & Wellness Services at Pittsburgh Mercy. “This NIMRC certification demonstrates our ongoing commitment to meet high standards of essential care and promote healing support to our patients on their journey to stability and well-being.”

“There are still many health care providers in the greater Pittsburgh region who have never even heard of ‘medical respite,’” stated [Janice Carlini](#), supervisor of the Medical Respite Center at Bethlehem Haven. “If they know the name Bethlehem Haven, they most likely think ‘women’s shelter.’ National certification of our Medical Respite Center will bring a new level of understanding and acceptance to this rare type of care for those who are experiencing homelessness or are unstably housed. NIMRC certification will also give us access to like-minded individuals and organizations for collaboration, connection to resources, and potentially pursue additional funding streams to support this essential level of care for the most vulnerable. Opportunities like these naturally increase our ability to achieve our mission of being a compassionate, transforming healing presence within our communities and provide greater levels of support to those we serve,” Carlini added.

After identifying the need for a post-hospital alternative care option for persons experiencing homelessness, Bethlehem Haven partnered with Allegheny Health Network (AHN) Center for Inclusion Health and Wood Street Commons to pilot a 10-bed Medical Respite Care program in 2016. Based on increased need and the initial success of the pilot program, leaders from Bethlehem Haven and Pittsburgh Mercy invited AHN, Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS), UPMC Health Plan, and UPMC Mercy to partner to create a larger, community-based medical respite center for medically fragile individuals who are experiencing homelessness and individuals who are unstably housed.

Bethlehem Haven opened its 21-bed Medical Respite Center at 905 Watson Street in Uptown in June of 2018. It was the first medical respite center in Western Pennsylvania and is one of only three in Pennsylvania. The Center accepts individuals who are referred by UPMC, AHN, Highmark, [Pittsburgh Mercy’s Operation Safety Net](#) and other street medicine and outreach teams. It serves approximately 175 people annually. The average length of stay is 30 days.

NIMRC intentionally recruited a geographically and organizationally diverse sample of medical respite center programs to participate in the inaugural round of certification. This ensured that medical respite programs of different sizes, structures, financial resources, geographic regions, and clinical capacity were all represented. The medical respite centers in the U.S. to be certified by NIMRC in the inaugural round are:

- Bethlehem Haven of Pittsburgh Medical Respite Center, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- Center for Respite Care in Cincinnati, Ohio
- Circle the City Medical Respite in Phoenix, Ariz.
- Colorado Coalition for the Homeless Recuperative Care Program in Denver, Colo.
- Harbor Care Foundation – Recuperative Care in Mission Hills, Calif.
- Hope Has a Home in Washington, DC
- I.M. Sulzbacher Medical Respite in Jacksonville, Fla.
- Interfaith Community Services – Turk Recuperative Care Program in Escondido, Calif.

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- Poverello Center Medical Respite Program in Missoula, Mont.
- RecoveryWorks Medical Respite Program in Lakewood, Colo.
- Salvation Army Respite Centers in Eastern Mich.
- Shasta Community HOPE Medical Respite Program, operated by Shasta Community Health Center and Pathways to Housing in Redding, Calif.
- ShelterCare Medical Recuperation in Eugene, Ore.
- The Boulevard in Chicago, Ill.
- The Gathering Inn Medical Respite Program in Roseville, Calif.

Other medical respite centers in the U.S. will be eligible to apply for voluntary NIMRC certification starting April 1, 2025.

### ***About Bethlehem Haven***

[Bethlehem Haven](#), part of the [Pittsburgh Mercy](#) Family of Care and its award-winning homeless services continuum since 2016, has provided shelter and supportive services to thousands of individuals experiencing homelessness for more than four decades. Every person who lives at Bethlehem Haven is linked to supportive services, personalized for their individual needs. Bethlehem Haven's mission is to provide a continuum of care for individuals that leads toward self-sufficiency. The founding values of hospitality, compassion, integrity, and empowerment are at the heart of everything Bethlehem Haven does, even as it has expanded its offerings. To learn more about Bethlehem Haven or to donate in support of its important work in the community, please visit at [bethlehemhaven.org](http://bethlehemhaven.org). Follow Bethlehem Haven on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

### ***About Pittsburgh Mercy***

[Pittsburgh Mercy](#) is one of the largest community health and social service providers and employers in Southwestern Pennsylvania. We offer help – and hope – to 17,000 of our community's most vulnerable in 60+ locations:

- People who have complex behavioral and physical health challenges.
- People who have intellectual and developmental disabilities
- People who are experiencing homelessness
- People who need wrap-around services to live safe, healthy, and well in the community.

We are the largest Integrated Community Wellness Center (ICWC) in Pennsylvania and the only one in Southwestern Pennsylvania. We are a five-time awardee of Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Certified Community Behavioral Health Center (CCBHC) expansion grants. Together, Pittsburgh Mercy and Bethlehem Haven have more than 70 years of experience in serving persons who are experiencing homelessness. Pittsburgh Mercy is a member of [Trinity Health](#), serving in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy. Our mission is to be a compassionate and transforming, healing presence within our communities. To learn more about Pittsburgh Mercy or to donate in support of its important work in the community, please visit [www.pittsburghmercy.org](http://www.pittsburghmercy.org). Follow Pittsburgh Mercy on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [X](#).

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