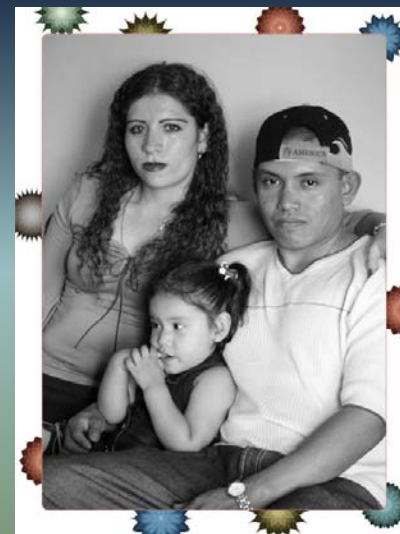
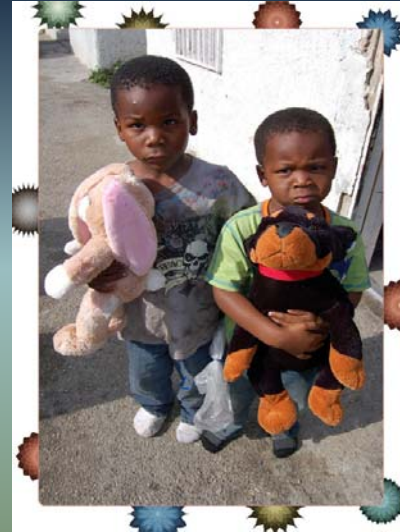
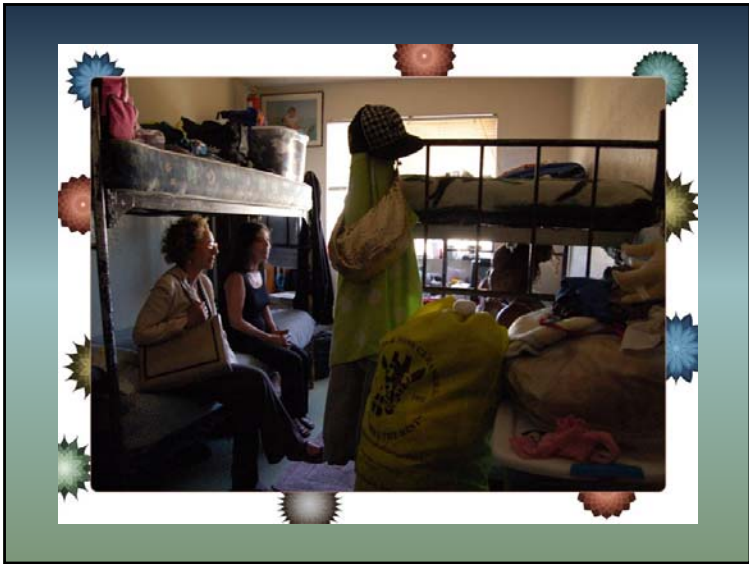


Program Strategies to Improve Housing Stability for Vulnerable Families



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Barriers:

- high cost of housing;
- poor credit;
- eviction histories;
- unemployment;
- lack of funds for deposit;
- discrimination.

**Housing First
For Homeless Families
(Rapid Re-housing)**

The Housing First Approach:

- moves homeless families into permanent rental housing *as quickly as possible*, with the services traditionally provided in transitional housing instead provided *after* relocation into permanent rental housing;
- provides housing that is not time-limited;
- primarily provides social services following the move into permanent housing;
- is not contingent on compliance with services. Instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement and there are services and supports made available that may be necessary to help them do so successfully.

Three Premises of Housing First:

- Permanent housing should be the central goal of our work with people experiencing homelessness.
- By providing permanent housing assistance immediately and up front, we can significantly reduce or eliminate the time people spend in homelessness.
- Homeless families are more responsive to service interventions from a permanent housing base.

Key Components of Housing First:

- crisis intervention and emergency stabilization;
- screening and assessment for housing and service needs;
- assistance moving into permanent housing;
- home-based case management (time-limited and transitional or long term).

Step 1: Crisis Intervention and Short-term Stabilization

Provide emergency shelter services and short-term transitional housing geared to special needs such as domestic violence, substance abuse treatment, etc.

Step 2: Screening & Needs Assessments

Conduct services & housing “needs assessments” to develop Plan of Action that includes both short and long-term goals, with concrete steps.

This can occur immediately or after the family has their emergency service needs met.

A Housing Relocation Plan Should Include the Following:

- family characteristics, including number of family members, gender, age, and special needs;
- what the family can afford for rent, based on income and expenses;
- neighborhoods preferred by the family;
- barriers to relocating the family (could include legal advocacy);
- a plan for the family to physically move their belongings (or pay for removing belongings from storage);
- any financial resources family may have to pay for move-in costs.

Step 3: Assistance Moving Into Permanent Housing:

- landlord/tenant education;
- advocacy for rent subsidies;
- transportation and coaching to meet potential property owners;
- referral to specific owners willing to rent to homeless families;
- assistance in overcoming bad credit, no credit, or eviction histories etc.;
- assistance in obtaining move-in funds;
- follow up to ensure stable relationship with property owner.

Resources For Subsidized or Below-market Rate Rental Housing

- Housing Authorities (City and County);
- Community Development Departments;
- Non-profit Housing Developers;
- Housing and Urban Development (HUD);
- State Departments of Housing and Community Development;
- Rental housing in the community at-large.

“Marketing” the Program

- “Marketing” the program is one of the best tools to use in developing a pool of landlords and management companies who are willing to work with participants in a *housing first* program.
- Housing specialists should have brochure on Housing First program and services provided to tenants.

Step 4: Provision of Home-based Case Management:

- provides intensive services during the first 90 days, but can vary depending on individual need;
- intensifies during crises;
- provides information and referral to community resources as needed;
- may include longer-term case management for vulnerable and at-risk families.

Client Retention Strategies in a Voluntary Setting

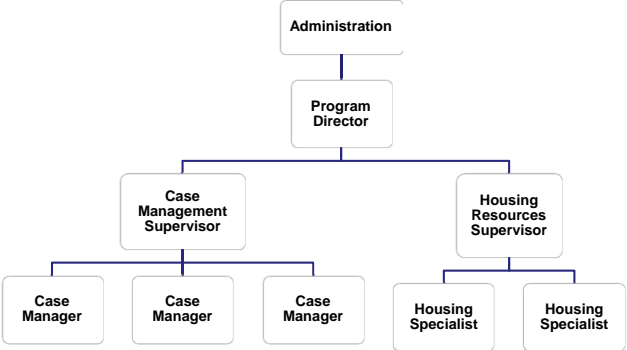
- Phone regularly during the initial days and weeks, to provide moral support and to help alleviate feelings of isolation and fear.
- Follow through on initial case plan commitments made by the case manager, i.e. to provide welfare or legal advocacy, child care resources, or other commitments that are made.
- Experience has shown that formerly homeless families are most at risk for another episode of homelessness during the first 90 days in permanent housing.

Strategies For Housing Retention include:

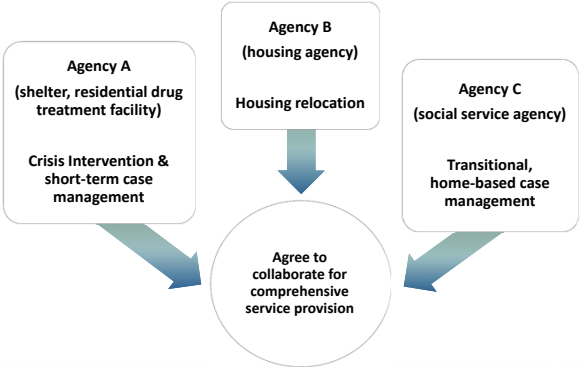
- constant communication and teamwork between case managers and “housers”;
- rapid response to landlord concerns;
- periodic check-ins with landlords;
- working on budgeting and money management with clients;
- ensuring, when possible, that family does not lose their housing during a crisis (i.e. parent in recovery experiences relapse and returns to treatment);
- access to “rent-to-prevent eviction” funds and other special funds during participant’s transition to stability.

Questions

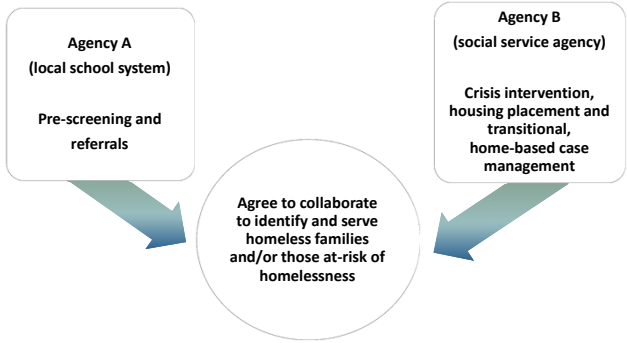
A Sample Basic Model



A Sample Collaborative Model



Alternative Collaborative Model



What Child & Family Service Agencies Can Do:

- **conduct a housing stability assessment;**
- **share data;**
- **partner with housing-oriented organizations;**
- **hire case managers trained on housing stability.**

Developing Risk Profiles

- **Risk increases for families who:**
 - are doubled-up;
 - have moved twice or more in the past year;
 - have a young child;
 - have previously been homeless;
 - have previously been evicted from public or assisted housing;
 - have experienced DV in past 30 days;
 - experience severe and persistent mental illness;
 - have a history of non-compliance (e.g., missed appointments with caseworkers).

Additional Risk Factors Identified by Research:

- **formal eviction within two weeks from a private dwelling;**
- **informal eviction from housing provided by family or friends;**
- **institutional discharge within two weeks for a person who has been a resident for more than six months;**
- **residency in condemned housing;**
- **sudden and significant loss of income;**
- **sudden and significant increase in utility costs;**

Additional Risk Factors (Cont'd)

- **substance abuse issues;**
- **physical disabilities and other chronic health issues;**
- **payment of more than 50% of income for rent;**
- **current or past involvement with child welfare;**
- **pending foreclosure of rental housing;**
- **credit problems that preclude obtaining housing;**
- **significant medical debt.**

A Note About Risk Factors

- Because service needs and the intensity of those needs change over time, regular assessment and monitoring are critical.
- While there are common indicators of risk across communities, not all indicators are universal or generalizable.
- Being “doubled up,” for instance, is often a precursor to homelessness for many families; however, doubling up is a common housing arrangement in many immigrant communities and is not necessarily an indication of housing instability.

Questions

Examples of Housing Stability Screening Tools for Child & Family Service Agencies

Examples of questions that should be asked of head of household about housing, in addition to “current address” or “who else lives in the household?”:

WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION?

- Own housing/homeowner
- Rent apartment or house on own
- Shared housing, including doubled up (NOT temporary basis)
- Couch surfing (i.e., moving from one place to another; doubled up)
- Living in motel/hotel (through own funds)
- Living in motel/hotel (through emergency shelter voucher)
- Homeless shelter, streets, or other place not meant for habitation
- Other

In the past 6 months, have you experienced any of the following housing problems? *If you have had multiple housing issues during this time, use as many lines as needed.*

- Fell behind on rent or utilities
- Paid more than 50% of income in rent
- Experienced unsafe housing conditions
- Got evicted (formal eviction or “informal love eviction”)
- Had to move 2 or more times
- Experienced homelessness and couldn’t afford permanent housing
- Other housing problems

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QUESTIONS FOR AGENCY STAFF: Pertaining *generally* to clients **WHO ARE UNSTABLY HOUSED** (e.g., unaffordable rent, moving frequently, etc.), what are the types of housing resources or direct assistance that the agency *struggles most to provide*?

- Financial assistance with back rent and/or utilities
- Legal assistance to prevent eviction
- Help resolving roommate/shared housing conflicts
- Help negotiating or advocating with current landlord (e.g., for more time to pay rent, lower rent, more time to move out, etc.)
- Help resolving conflicts or disputes with neighbors/other tenants
- Help relocating to alternative permanent housing that is affordable
- Help finding move-in assistance for new rental housing (security deposits, utility deposits)

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QUESTIONS FOR AGENCY STAFF: For clients **WHO ARE HOMELESS**, what are the types of housing resources/assistance that the agency *struggles most to provide*?

- Help finding homeless shelter
- Help paying off or otherwise resolving rental debt/arrears from *previous* rental units (i.e., such debt is a barrier to renting a new apartment or house)
- Long-term Rental subsidy programs (Section 8, Shelter Plus Care, etc.)
- Short-term Rental subsidy programs
- Help searching for permanent housing that is affordable
- Advocacy to convince prospective landlords to lease to client in spite of rental barriers (e.g., past evictions, poor credit, low income, etc.)
- Help accessing move-in assistance (security deposits, utility deposits)
- Help negotiating rental contracts or leases
- Help completing rental applications
- Help paying application fees (e.g., credit check fees)

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QUESTIONS FOR AGENCY STAFF: What prevents you from having more success in resolving the housing problems of its clients?

- Lack of time
- Lack of *knowledge* of available resources (financial assistance, legal services, etc.)
- Lack of *access* to available resources (e.g., I know about Section 8 but waiting lists are endless)
- Lack of competency doing rental housing search and placement/landlord outreach (e.g., not knowing where to find rental listings or how to convince landlords to overlook past rental, credit, and/or criminal problems of clients)
- Lack of knowledge of local rental market (i.e., not knowing where affordable housing can be found; not knowing neighborhoods or cities well enough)
- Lack of relationships with housing providers, whether non-profit affordable housing operators/developers or private landlords
- Not being able to bill for housing-related services

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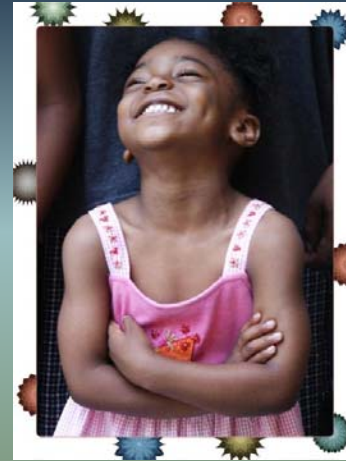
Questions

"If the family doesn't know where they will live or is at risk of losing their housing, they cannot focus on mental health issues. Basic needs must be met before secondary needs can be; this is rule number one for survival. All too often, housing problems limit our ability to accomplish goals and objectives since the family fluctuates in and out of crisis mode when housing is in jeopardy."

In a report released in December 2011, the National Center on Family Homelessness reported that:

- child homelessness is up 33% in 3 years;
- one in 45 children in the USA — 1.6 million children — were living on the street, in homeless shelters or motels, or doubled up with other families last year.





Partnering for Change

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