**Washington Families Fund
Systems Initiative Evaluation:
2012 Interim Report**

IV: The Role of the Counties: Promising Practices

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Overview

The Washington Families Fund (WFF) Systems Initiative is a $60 million comprehensive systems change intervention aimed at ending family homelessness. Implemented in three counties in the Puget Sound region of Washington State (King, Pierce, and Snohomish), the Initiative is guided by a theory of change that builds on proven and best practices as well as emerging new concepts from a number of communities across the United States. The Initiative, created over the course of several years by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), was approved in October 2007 and officially launched in 2009. Building Changes, a local nonprofit organization with a long history of working on homelessness issues at local, state, and federal levels that was designated in 2004 by the state to oversee a public and private pool of funds for statewide supportive housing programs, was selected by BMGF in 2009 as the intermediary to operate the Initiative. The three communities were funded to conduct a three-stage planning process, culminating at the end of 2010 in five-year implementation plans that are currently being put into action[1].

Westat, a national research firm with extensive background in the evaluation of program and system-level interventions for homeless families, has been commissioned to conduct a longitudinal evaluation of both the implementation and outcomes of the Initiative. This first set of coordinated reports documents both the baseline status of the systems for homeless families in each of the counties prior to the Initiative and the implementation of the Initiative in its first two years after the launch (2009–2011). The reports are intended to provide a foundation of understanding of the Initiative and to provide formative feedback to BMGF, Building Changes, and stakeholders in the Initiative counties.

The eight brief reports, all under the title, *Washington Families Fund Systems Initiative Evaluation 2012 Interim Report*, are available on BuildingChanges.org. They include the following:

Executive Summary
Summary of Key Baseline and Early Implementation Findings
    I.   The Role of Funder
    II.   The Role of the Intermediary
    III.   The Role of the Evaluation
    IV.   The Role of the Counties: Promising Practices
    V.   Interagency Collaboration and Data-Driven Decision Making
    VI.   Advocacy

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[1] Due to changes in the economic climate since the strategy was initially approved in 2007 and the length of time it took for the Initiative to unfold, BMGF has decided to extend the timeframe of the Initiative for an additional three years to allow for economic recovery.

Three sets of appendices include additional description and analysis of the implementation of the Initiative in each of the Initiative counties (Appendices I A-C); the role of selected organizations in the system and in the Initiative (Appendices II A-G); and the list of key informants for Westat's site visits in summer 2009 and February 2011 (Appendix III).

This report provides a summary of the implementation of the three county Initiatives in the first "focus area" of the Theory of Change: the five pillars of promising practices. The report begins with a brief summary of the overall status of each county, followed by a more detailed summary of the implementation of each pillar.
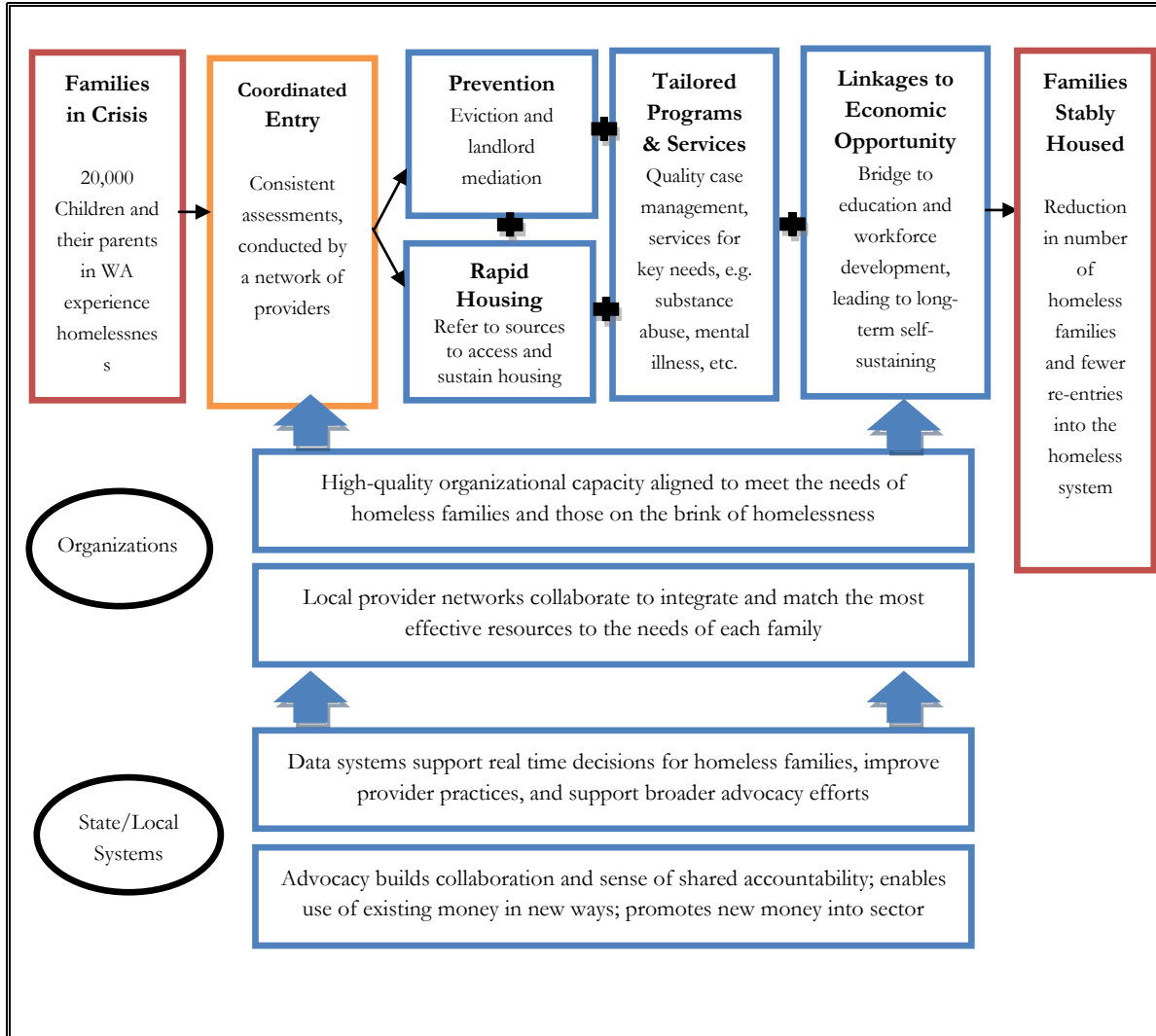
Brief Overview of the Washington Families Fund Systems Initiative

Theory of Change

As outlined in Figure IV-1, the WFF Systems Initiative Theory of Change outlines five pillars of activity, based on research and best practices that are believed to be key system delivery components to reducing and ultimately ending family homelessness:

- **Coordinated Entry**: Implementation of a common way for families to access homeless services and for providers to quickly link families to the resources they need;

- **Prevention**: Keeping families who are at risk of homelessness housed and linked with the right services;

- **Rapid Housing**: Moving families rapidly into permanent housing, whenever possible;

- **Tailored Services**: Getting families the right services at the right level—and at the right time—for each family; and

- **Economic Opportunities**: Creating stronger connections to family wage jobs for the recently homeless.

Figure IV-1. Washington Families Fund Systems Initiative Theory of Action

Families in Crisis	Coordinated Entry	Prevention	Tailored Programs & Services	Linkages to Economic Opportunity	Families Stably Housed
20,000 Children and their parents in WA experience homelessness	Consistent assessments, conducted by a network of providers	Eviction and landlord mediation / Rapid Housing: Refer to sources to access and sustain housing	Quality case management, services for key needs, e.g. substance abuse, mental illness, etc.	Bridge to education and workforce development, leading to long-term self-sustaining	Reduction in number of homeless families and fewer re-entries into the homeless system

Organizations

High-quality organizational capacity aligned to meet the needs of homeless families and those on the brink of homelessness

Local provider networks collaborate to integrate and match the most effective resources to the needs of each family

State/Local Systems

Data systems support real time decisions for homeless families, improve provider practices, and support broader advocacy efforts

Advocacy builds collaboration and sense of shared accountability; enables use of existing money in new ways; promotes new money into sector

Each county chooses a lead agency in charge of both the planning process and the allocation of funding for the initiative. Within King County Government the Department of Community and Human Services leads the Initiative, *Moving Forward*. This department hosts the regional staffing for the Committee to End Homelessness, serves as the countywide lead on homelessness and housing programs, and manages mental health and drug and alcohol services, employment, domestic violence, and youth programs.

In Pierce County, the Department of Community Connections leads the initiative, *Outside In: A Plan to End Family Homelessness*. In 2009, the Department of Community Services and Department of Human Services worked together to develop the plan for the WFF Systems Initiative. In 2010, the Homeless Programs Administrator from the Department of Human Services was appointed the county lead for the Initiative by the County Executive and the

Department of Human Services and the Department of Community Services were merged to form the Department of Community Connections. As a result of this merger, the Homeless Programs Administrator became the manager of a new division, Mental Health and Homeless, and continues to lead the Initiative.

In Snohomish County, the Department of Human Services chose the Workforce Development Council of Snohomish County (WDCSC) as the lead fiscal agent, in charge of the *Investing In Families* Initiative because it had expertise as a convener and because it was believed that they could play a pivotal role in getting families connected to job training and employment.

County Planning Process
All three counties were provided up to $200,000 to support a three-phase planning process that culminated in a tailored approach to addressing the five pillars (as well as the other three Focus Areas of the Theory of Change). This planning process included (1) a Landscape Assessment Phase that involved a cross-departmental analysis of each county's existing resources and systems for addressing the needs of homeless families; (2) a Strategy Development Phase that led to the outline of specific strategies for addressing gaps and problems in the systems, with particular focus on the five pillars; and (3) an Implementation Planning Phase that outlined the timelines, responsibilities, and desired outcomes for the strategies in the Strategic Plan. Each phase resulted in a product (Landscape Assessment, Strategic Plan, and Implementation Plan) that was vetted by both BMGF and Building Changes and needed to be approved before continuing to the next planning phase.

During this planning phase, BMGF and Building Changes provided supports to guide the process. This included actively participating in planning committee meetings in each of the Initiative counties, as well as holding monthly meetings with each of the county leads to provide guidance in the development of their plans. Building Changes staff also offered technical assistance support to each of the counties during their planning process. Finally, BMGF sponsored trips in which the county leads and other stakeholders at the state level visited communities outside of Washington to learn how they developed and implemented programs associated with the five pillars.

In October 2010, Pierce County had its final Implementation Plan approved, and shortly afterwards in November, the plans for King and Snohomish Counties were approved. With the plans approved, each county became eligible for system infrastructure support from BMGF and System Innovation Grants (SIG) from Building Changes. BMGF's infrastructure grants are meant to support the one-time expenditures necessary for the early stages of implementation of the county plans. There no requirements for the counties to match these infrastructure funds with other public resources. The SIG grants, administered by Building Changes, are intended to support targeted investments to providers to support the implementation of the pillars. Throughout the span of the Initiative, Building Changes will receive $30 million from BMGF to

re-grant as SIGs. In order to receive these funds, each SIG dollar must be matched with $2.50 of public funds.

Table IV-1 displays the status of each of the pillars in the three counties as of February 2012. As the table shows, in their implementation plans, the three counties all placed more initial attention on coordinated entry/ centralized intake than any of the other pillars. The goal of coordinated entry in all three counties is to streamline the process of accessing housing and services for families and to better match families according to their needs. Pierce County's centralized intake system for homeless families and individuals, Access Point for Housing (AP4H), was launched on January 31, 2011. Snohomish County launched its Investing In Families pilot project in July 2011. In King County, the coordinated entry and assessment plan was scheduled to be launched by April 2012.

Table IV-1. Status of the Implementation by County as of February 2012

County	Coordinated Entry	Prevention	Rapid Housing	Tailored Services	Economic Opportunities
King	○	○	--	--	--
Pierce	●	●/--	○	--	--
Snohomish	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉

Legend
● Full system implementation
◉ Pilot/partial implementation
○ Ready to launch
 -- Under development

As indicated in Table IV-1, King County is preparing to launch prevention activity in tandem with its coordinated entry system, with a focus on diversion and targeting families most at risk for homelessness. Also, King County, with its housing stabilization approach, is undertaking a number of development activities in preparation for rolling out reforms that touch upon rapid housing, tailored services, and economic opportunities, but in a staged approach.

Pierce County initially incorporated prevention assistance as part of its centralized intake system; however, the system experienced unanticipated high demand for prevention services, and the county now plans for AP4H staff to no longer conduct assessments, but instead to refer at-risk families to community providers. For rapid housing, Pierce County is developing a catalog

of affordable housing options and implementing a landlord liaison program. Finally, programs for tailored services and economic opportunity are under development.

Snohomish County is implementing all pillars with a pilot sample of 75 families, though with less emphasis on rapid housing than the other pillars.

The following sections describe how each county is approaching each pillar and its status as of February 2012. The sections also provide a brief description of the baseline status of each county in the pillar area to provide an understanding of the nature of the changes that have occurred since 2009. Following the accounts of the activity in the five pillars are descriptions of the extent to which county stakeholders, at the time of the February 2011 site visit, were aware of the approaches being considered or in place in each county, the degree to which they accepted the direction of the change, and the degree to which they had participated in the planning and were participating in its implementation.

Pillar 1: Coordinated Entry

Background and Baseline Status

Coordinated entry refers to a common or coordinated point of entry into a system and involves a common assessment to identify a family's needs and housing barriers in order to match families to the most appropriate services and housing available. In Pierce County, this process is referred to as centralized intake. The concept behind centralizing or coordinating intake decisions is that it will lead to families entering the most appropriate services more quickly (NAEH, 2011). Several communities across the country have developed coordinated entry models, some centralizing their intake in one location— either physically or virtually— where the same staff administers the assessment to all who request services.

As Table IV-2 describes, in both King and Pierce, there was no "system" of entry prior to the Initiative. In both counties, families in need of shelter or housing called 211 or went directly to a shelter provider. In Pierce, there also was a shelter availability line that families could call to see where there might be a vacancy. In both systems, when families called 211 (or the shelter availability line), they were provided a listing of organizations to contact. In both systems, stakeholders that we interviewed cited the problems with the 211 or telephone systems: information from the lines was only as good as the data the agencies provided, and the systems were not always up-to-date because shelters had limited capacity to call the 211 agency with updates. Families with whom we spoke in focus groups in 2009 cited that they either had to make several calls to find housing, ask friends for help, or ask their Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) case managers where they could seek help. The burden in each county was placed on families to navigate housing systems with multiple uncoordinated points of entry, necessitating many calls to check in with multiple providers and, for those providers that had wait lists, to check in regularly to see if a slot had opened.

In addition, there was no matching of shelter to needs. There was no common intake process among housing providers and no centralized information on the eligibility criteria for the different providers. Unfortunately, this meant that families often spent considerable time, effort, and at times, expense, to search for housing for which they were not qualified.

The baseline situation in Snohomish County differed from King and Pierce Counties, but had its own share of difficulties. At the time of the site visit in 2009, Snohomish County operated a coordinated entry system for families called Coordinated Case Management (CCM). CCM was developed in 2007 in response to a need for a single entry point for homeless families. It was housed at Volunteers of America in Everett, and was operated by two case managers. Families who called 211 or contacted participating providers directly were referred to CCM. When they called CCM, they were administered a brief screening tool to determine the types of housing for which they were eligible. At that time, families could specify that they were looking for emergency shelter, transitional housing, or both. Once intake was complete, families were placed on a computerized wait list for housing. Families were expected to call CCM at least once a month to maintain their position on the wait list. CCM case managers would routinely clean the list of families who were no longer calling in. Providers with available housing slots would reference the CCM data management system to identify families who met their program's eligibility criteria.

The goal of the CCM system was to create a more direct pathway to housing. However, noted both in Snohomish County's Landscape Assessment and during interviews with providers and families in the system, there were not enough shelter and transitional housing units to take people off of the wait list in a reasonable amount of time. Under the CCM system, families often waited between six and nine months to receive housing. Moreover, families did not receive needed services while they were on the wait list because there was no system in place or funding available to assess families and give them referrals.

System Initiative Design

Of the five pillars, this one is the only one fully implemented or ready to launch across the three counties. The counties all placed more initial attention to this pillar than the other four pillars, but in response to different baseline conditions. As Table IV-2 outlines, each of the counties has hired a non-profit organization to lead and manage the coordinated entry process.

King County. In King County, the coordinated entry and assessment model, to be launched by April 2012, is led by Catholic Community Services of King County (CCS). Families calling into 211 will receive an appointment for an in-person assessment and an email or text message reminder of the appointment. Five Assessment Specialists (all of whom will be bilingual) will be co-located throughout the county with 8-9 different agencies serving families. In addition to the assessment specialists, CCS has a program director, an immigrant/refugee family coordinator,

and two additional staff—one who will deal more with agencies (i.e., keeping track of units and availability) and one coordinator working on the client side (appointment changes, doing checks on how families are triaged on the matching level of services, double checking assessments for continuity, making sure assessments are being done well, etc.). All staff will be trained in conducting assessments to fill in as needed. The assessment tool will be strengths-based. There will also be a tool to match a family's needs to the housing that is available (i.e., emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, service-enriched housing, rapid housing). Safe Harbors, the county's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) system, is developing a customized module that will capture data from the entire process, including the 211 interaction, setting the appointment with the Assessment Specialist, and including the data from the assessment. In addition, the system will have data from the agencies on resources available as well as information on the agency's eligibility criteria and other key factors.

Pierce County. Pierce County's first centralized entry system for both homeless families and individuals, Access Point for Housing (AP4H), was launched on January 31, 2011. Associated Ministries operates the system. The original design was for a Centralized Intake Assessment and Tracking (CIAT) system that assesses and matches those in need of prevention or housing to the provider that best fits their circumstances. Because initial demand for prevention services outstripped the supply, the system has been streamlined to focus just on those families needing housing, with prevention cases referred to existing providers. A single telephone number is used to reach the AP4H, and an initial telephone screening is completed to determine the family's needs. If eligible, each family is offered a face-to-face comprehensive intake assessment within two business days of the phone screening. The main location for AP4H is based at Associated Ministries' office in Tacoma, Washington and four AP4H satellite offices, based at local shelters and food banks, are operating in rural areas of the county. Each assessment is entered into the HMIS database in real time, and AP4H intake staff conduct a real-time search for open housing units and to match clients to programs based off the agency profiles. Services beyond housing and prevention that are assessed as needing attention will be pointed out to the receiving agency to ensure those services are provided or brokered for the family.

Snohomish County. The pilot project launched in July 2011 as planned, and its prior system, CCM, was dissolved in December 2010. In June, Catholic Community Services Western Washington (CCSWW) received a SIG grant to implement the coordinated entry system and a separate SIG grant to establish a flexible fund for families participating in the pilot project. The pilot project is being operated out of both an urban (Everett) and a rural location (Monroe). Three positions are running the system: A Coordinated Intake Specialist administers the screening and assessment tools that categorizes families into high, medium, and low need and triages them into one of three paths; a Housing Specialist assists with locating housing, and a Navigator develops a self-sufficiency plan with families and brokers needed services. All three positions are co-located in Everett, but the staff also spends a few days each week in Monroe. An additional Coordinated Intake center is also slated to open in Everett in early 2012. The county identified and entered into memoranda of understanding (MOU) with the organizations

that would refer a specific number of families to the pilot project. The county deliberately chose organizations that serve diverse groups of families, including those with low, medium, and high needs. As of December 2011, 75 families had been referred to coordinated entry, triaged into one of three paths, and served by the Housing Specialist and the Navigator, if necessary. Data are entered into a ClientTrack, Snohomish County's HMIS data system. This data can be accessed by any of the providers. During this time, the Housing Authority of Snohomish County (HASCO) was awarded 50 FUP vouchers. The Investing in Families Strategic Advisory Coordinating Committee agreed that the 50 FUP voucher recipients also could be enrolled through the IIF Coordinated Intake Process and be served by the Navigator.

Table IV-2. Pillar 1: Coordinated Entry

King	Pierce	Snohomish
Baseline Status		
No Coordination - Families call 211 or go to shelter - Families calling 211 are referred to providers and given a list of organizations to call - No coordinated intake or assessment (all shelter specific) - No systemic matching of shelter - Families move between shelters after 90day limit - No role for HMIS	No Coordination - Families call 211 or shelter availability line, or contact shelter directly - Families calling 211 or shelter availability line are referred to providers and given a list of organizations to call - No coordinated intake or assessment (all shelter specific) - No role for HMIS	Coordinated Case Management (CCM) - Operated by 2 case managers - Families referred to CCM by 211 and shelters - Brief screening conducted, family request type of housing (ES, TH), and put on computerized wait list - Families call in at least 1x a month to keep on wait list - Providers with available housing would reference CCM to identify families with matching eligibility criteria

Table IV-2. Pillar 1: Coordinated Entry (continued)

King	Pierce	Snohomish
System Initiative Design		
Coordinated Entry and Assessment - CCS operates the process - All families call 211 and referred to 1 of 8 locations to meet with an assessment specialist in the county - Assessment specialist conducts a uniform assessment and matches family to array of housing options available - HMIS is used to capture data from entire process and help to manage the C-E process	Access Point for Housing - AM operates the process - All families call a number - Families undergo 15 minute screening interview and in-person assessment at one of 5 offices - Based on assessment, family is referred to housing program with availability that matches needs - HMIS is used to capture data from entire process and help to manage the C-E process	Coordinated Entry and Assessment - Pilot - CCSWW operates the process - MOUs with specific agencies outline how many families can be referred during the 3-month pilot period - A Coordinated Intake Specialist, a Navigator, and a Housing Resource Specialist are co-located - The CI specialist administers uniform screening and determines level of need (low, medium, high). The family may then be served by the Housing Resource Specialist and/or Navigator, as needed
Status		
Scheduled To Launch - April 2012 - In phases	Implemented - January 31, 2011	Pilot Implemented - July 2011 - 75 families referred and triaged as of 12/2011 - 50 FUP vouchers awarded in 2011 also administered through CI and served by Housing Specialist and Navigator

Challenges

Being the first "out the door," Pierce County's AP4H system has experienced the most challenges to date that have helped guide or confirm the course of the other two counties. Unfortunately, the contract for Associated Ministries, the lead organization operating AP4H, only provided for two months for planning and startup before full implementation, which did not provide sufficient time to get all key system components in place before AP4H was launched. For example, AP4H's central operations were based in the agency's main office in Tacoma, Washington. However, the space was not sufficiently configured to receive clients for screenings and intake appointments (e.g., a small lobby without seating space for a number of

people). In addition, a week before the program launch, Associated Ministries had hired, but had not been able to fully train many of the intake and assessment staff. Other missing component that were not in place prior to AP4H's implementation were the satellite offices to screen and conduct intake assessments for families in rural areas of the County. Finally, the intake and assessment tool for centralized intake was not finalized as of implementation. The tool was largely based on the intake assessment used in the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) awarded to each of the counties in 2009 for three years with ARRA funds.

Not having these components in place hindered AP4H from effectively responding to prevention and housing assistance requests. This challenge was compounded by AP4H receiving an unanticipated high volume of calls, almost four times the number of households projected. As a result of this, AP4H experienced a backlog of voicemails, and families did not undergo an intake assessment or receive the planned prevention or housing referral within the next 24 hours. Also, shelter and transitional housing providers reported having empty beds or housing slots while waiting for AP4H referrals.

Mid-course corrections to the system have now been made in Pierce County in response to these challenges. These included discontinuing screening and assessment of needs for prevention services, bringing on additional AP4H staff to conduct intake and assessments, and having HMIS fully in place to collect data that ultimately helped inform these changes. The county leads report that by September 2011, eight months after the launch of AP4H, the system was able to readily conduct screenings and assessments and make immediate referrals to housing providers.

Pillar 2: Prevention

Background and Baseline Status

Homeless prevention programs aim to reduce the number of households entering the homeless assistance system, thus reducing the costs to the homeless assistance and other systems. Their main purpose is to avoid a disruptive and costly homelessness episode for households. Communities implementing these programs target households that they believe would become homeless without the receipt of assistance and, in turn, would be stable in permanent housing after receiving assistance. Homelessness prevention can include financial assistance to pay back rent or utilities, short-term rental assistance until rent can be paid independently, case management and legal assistance to remain in current housing, and assistance to obtain new housing without entering a shelter.

Prevention has figured prominently in King and Snohomish County's ten-year plans, but prior to the Initiative, it represented a small amount of the total homeless-related funding in each site and noted as insufficient to meet the need and demand. Although a range of assistance was

available in each of the three counties, the programs were typically small, uncoordinated, and offered one-time financial assistance such as short-term rental subsidies, eviction prevention, transportation assistance, utility assistance, and other types of one-time assistance. For example, in Snohomish County the amount of money available for short-term rental assistance was limited and was often gone within the first few days of the month. Moreover, there was limited legal assistance for families to mediate tenant-landlord conflicts, prevent evictions, or assist with foreclosures. A number of the homeless parents who participated in the focus groups during the site visits indicated they had received prevention services before becoming homeless; nevertheless, they noted it required a great deal of effort to piece together enough resources to be beneficial and, even then, they only managed to delay eviction or losing their housing for an additional month or two.

Across the counties, prevention funding has been provided without additional services (such as case management) accompanying them and generally has eligibility criteria that exclude homeless families (e.g., proof of employment). There were a couple of key exceptions, such as the Landlord Liaison Program in King County, that provided more ongoing assistance and were targeted to homeless families. The Landlord Liaison Project, operated by the YWCA, provides services to reduce barriers to accessing housing and to screening for those with credit problems; provides funds for eviction prevention; and builds relationships with landlords to have a pool of landlords ready to house the families who have been previously denied housing.

In all of the counties, prevention services were not coordinated among agencies and there was no system for accessing and/or administering those services. For example, in Pierce County, while some organizations in the community (i.e., schools, utility companies, DSHS case workers, and food banks), may interact with the same families in need of prevention services, there were no mechanisms in place to offer a coordinated response to the needs of at-risk families. Similarly, in Snohomish County, a network of seven Family Support Centers located throughout the county often served as the first point of contact for many families seeking prevention and early intervention services, but there was no system in place to identify families who might be in need of prevention services. According to the county's Landscape Assessment, the system at baseline did not intervene early enough or aggressively enough to serve families who were at risk of homelessness, the public school system was underutilized as a first line of defense against homelessness for vulnerable families, and families requiring prevention services did not have access to case management.

Finally, none of the counties had data to support an understanding of the need for, or effectiveness of, prevention services. Families were not formally enrolled into services with a housing provider, and thus not entered into HMIS. In addition, since the limited prevention funds were disbursed on a first-come, first serve basis, the counties did not have a solid understanding of the level of need in the community.

One of the requirements for use of HPRP funds, however, was that program activity needed to be documented in local HMIS systems helping to facilitate the counties' collection of data to support an understanding of the need and effectiveness of prevention assistance.

System Initiative Design

King County. King County plans to incorporate a prevention/diversion focus as part of the coordinated entry process, and to focus more squarely and deeply on prevention in Phase 2 of its implementation. However, a Phase 1 prevention effort involves collaborating with the City of Seattle on a project they initiated in the fall of 2011. The project provides funding (based on investments from several sources, including the Building Changes SIG grant) to organizations to assist low-income families and individuals at risk of homelessness. The funds, awarded through an RFP process, will provide for temporary financial assistance and housing relocation and stabilization services, including landlord negotiations, housing stability case management, financial empowerment services and budgeting, and security and/or utility deposits. The project also provides an opportunity to partner with Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). Through this project, homeless prevention programming will be integrated into ECEAP programs to identify young families who are homeless so that they can be stabilized and housed. This program also will be infused with additional funding through a Living Cities grant that will include financial empowerment. The county has provided some infrastructure funding to expand the Living Cities dollars so that the financial empowerment activity can be extended to all of King County.

Pierce County. As noted under Coordinated Entry, Pierce County's original plans for prevention included having it as part of the County's first centralized intake system that was launched at the end of January 2011. Associated Ministries initially proposed that once at-risk families are determined eligible for prevention services, they would then be routed to an in-house prevention specialist for services. Families would then be immediately offered shallow rent subsidies. If needed, families also would be offered a graduated subsidy plan to extend the rental assistance and would include case management services to help connect them to services available in the county and re-gain housing stability. However, the centralization of prevention services encountered many of the same challenges as centralized intake (detailed in the Pillar 1 section).

The largest challenge was the unanticipated high demand for prevention services. With $335,000 of funding, Associated Ministries projected serving up to 250 to 300 at-risk families with three months of financial and case management assistance. However, within four months, Associated Ministries had expended all of its prevention dollars and could no longer serve at-risk families. Once funds were expended by Associated Ministries, AP4H discontinued conducting intake assessments on at-risk families, but referred them to other prevention providers in the community. Moving forward, the county plans for AP4H to continue taking calls for prevention assistance, but no will longer conduct a full screening or match at-risk families to the most

appropriate prevention resource. Instead, AP4H staff will refer at-risk families to the community providers who have prevention assistance. This process is similar to the one that was in place at baseline. The only difference is that families can now be referred to organizations with prevention resources from both AP4H and 211.

Snohomish County. The *Investing in Families* Implementation plan lays out two objectives for prevention: (1) to develop an early warning, outreach, and diversion system for families and youth who are at risk of homelessness, and (2) to use best practices research to develop a menu of diversion/prevention services to include, but not be limited to, mediation, information, referral, coaching, family strengthening, and access to financial assistance and supportive services.

Table IV-3. Pillar 2: Prevention

King	Pierce	Snohomish
Baseline Status		
Uncoordinated, Typically One-Time Assistance - Represents less than 5% of homeless funding - Families called 211 or individual agencies - Typically one-time financial assistance to families meeting criteria that generally excludes homeless families - Program includes short-term rental subsidies, eviction prevention, transportation subsidies, assistance with moving expenses, access to tool to reduce barriers to housing - Typically no additional assistance (such as case management)—exceptions are Landlord Liaison Program and HPRP (ending 12/11) - HMIS involved with HPRP	Uncoordinated, Typically One-Time Assistance - Limited funds - One-time assistance per year for single month of rent or utilities payment - Typically no additional assistance (such as case management or other services) - Families called 211 or individual agencies - No role for HMIS - HPRP was time-limited exception allowing agencies to provide more than a single month of financial assistance, and offer case management services	Uncoordinated, Limited Assistance - Limited funds - Range of assistance available, including emergency rental assistance; tenant-landlord mediation; eviction prevention; assistance with utility deposits, security deposits, etc.; home repair services; and weatherization. - No coordinated identification process - No additional service assistance provided (such as case management or referrals to other services) - Not included in HMIS

Table IV-3. Pillar 2: Prevention (continued)

King	Pierce	Snohomish
System Initiative Design		
Focus on Flexible, Expanded Resources Targeted to Stabilization - Shelter diversion incorporated where possible in C-E to focus on families who can be assisted where they are or moved to RRH - Prevention plans under development and slated for Phase 2 of the Initiative - Current focus on prevention involved with city of Seattle's ECAP initiative and Living Cities	Focus on More Coordination - Initial pairing of prevention for at-risk families with centralized intake system discontinued due to inability to meet unanticipated high demand - HMIS data collected on all efforts and will be able to inform redevelopment	Early Warning System with Range of Diversion/Prevention Services - Early warning system includes a system in which partners will be trained to use a brief screening tool to identify families with housing instability - Pilot project included referrals from organizations that serve at risk families - Investments in conflict mediation and legal assistance to prevent or stop evictions
Status		
Diversion - Ready to launch April 2012 Prevention - Under development and slated for Phase 2	Prevention as part of Coordinated Entry - Implemented January 31, 2011 - Discontinued in May 2011 - Centralized intake now refers requests to existing providers and no longer conducts assessments - Prevention plans under redevelopment	Early Warning, Outreach, Diversion - Under development – screening tool being drafted; unclear about status with agencies that would conduct early warning system; - Agencies identified who can provide prevention services

As part of the early warning system, the county leads included referral partners in the *Investing in Families* Pilot Project organizations that serve low-income families who are at risk of homelessness in the future, such as WorkSource Snohomish County, Everett Public Schools, and Head Start. These families are referred to the Coordinated Intake Specialist, who administers a one-page screening tool to determine their level of need. If families do not have immediate housing needs, they are provided with prevention services, such as one-time rental assistance and bus passes. The plan is that when *Investing in Families* rolls out across the county, organizations that serve families at risk of homelessness will use the one-page screening tool to determine the level of need of their clients and be able to make appropriate referrals.

As part of the pilot project, Volunteers of America was awarded a SIG grant from Building Changes to provide prevention services. It also received an SIG grant to fund a dispute

resolution center so that tenants and landlords who are experiencing conflict can work to resolve those conflicts before they escalate to eviction. An additional SIG grant was awarded to Snohomish County Legal Services for a team of two legal advocates who represent families by filing briefs, preventing eviction notices from being filed, and putting a stop to eviction notices that have already been filed so that the family can stay in their housing.

Challenges

The primary challenges that all three counties face in implementing the prevention pillar center on the lack of understanding of which families will benefit most from prevention assistance. In King and Snohomish counties there is no good concept of the demand for prevention services as there are no data systems in place to collect this information. Pierce learned early in the launch of AP4H that the demand for prevention assistance is high. They received almost four times the number of calls projected, the majority of which were for prevention services rather than housing assistance. However, even with this high demand for service, Pierce County does not have a clear understanding of which families resources should be targeted. Currently, within all three counties, there are insufficient resources to address the expected need, and they are faced with the challenge of targeting what resources there are to the appropriate families.

Pillar 3: Rapid Housing

Background and Baseline Status

Rapid housing programs provide temporary financial assistance and services to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless and help those who are experiencing homelessness to be quickly re-housed and stabilized. The funds under these programs are intended to target individuals and families who would be homeless but for this assistance. Rapid housing programs can provide for short-term or medium-term rental assistance and a variety of types of housing relocation and stabilization services, including such activities as mediation, credit counseling, security or utility deposits, utility payments, moving cost assistance, and case management (NAEH, 2009).

In 2009 and even through 2011, the concept of rapid housing was relatively new in all but King County, and few programs were in place across the three counties. HPRP had been recently introduced, but there were few other resources available to move families into housing or to support them while they transitioned into permanent housing. (In King County, Journey Home, Stable Families, and the Landlord Liaison Project were notable exceptions.) Even for the transitional housing that was developed as part of the Sound Families Initiative, there had been a cliff of services; the contracts for housing were longer than the contracts for services, and a number of programs were faced with the prospects of operating the housing without services.

In addition, few programs have specialized staff that focus on housing search and reducing tenant screening barriers to help families locate housing. There also are limited resources and

programs that support landlord recruitment, including incentives and on-going support/assistance. The Landlord Liaison Project, again, stands out as an exception.

At baseline all of the counties also had a similar focus on the continuum of housing: that is, families generally moved from shelter to transitional housing before moving to permanent housing. In King County, for example, once families entered shelter, the perception was that they tended to stay in the system longer than single individuals (up to the maximum allowed length) and may cycle through again to another shelter and then often move into transitional housing programs prior to obtaining permanent housing. Few families moved directly from a homeless situation to housing and even more rarely from shelter into permanent housing. Because HMIS data were not available at this time in any of the three counties, all understanding of family movement through the system is based on key informant reports, but the unanimous view is that families move through the continuum before getting into more permanent housing.

Several factors across and within the counties perpetuated this continuum and prevented movement directly into housing. First, a primary challenge to rapid housing noted in all three counties was the lack of affordable housing and the lack of housing subsidies to increase access to market-rate housing. For example, in Pierce County, it was estimated that there was a need for 30,000 units of affordable housing for all low-income populations. However, the county's housing inventory count indicated there were 16,515 total units of affordable housing available for both individuals and families. The Pierce County Housing Authority (PCHA) and Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) owned and operated 11,012 (67%) of these affordable housing units. The remaining units were created through multiple public funding sources that target homeownership, domestic violence victims, and special needs housing. The county also had market rate housing stock available, but this was largely unaffordable for the homeless family population. The Washington Center for Real Estate Research conducted an Apartment Market Survey (2009), and found that in 2009 the average fair market rent for a 2-bedroom apartment was $804 with an average vacancy rate of 6.1 percent. Assuming a 30 percent contribution of income towards rent, a family would need an annual income of $32,160, and an hourly wage of $15.47, to afford a two-bedroom apartment in Pierce County.

Similarly, in Snohomish County, it was noted that the county was not always in accordance with Washington State's Growth Management Act, passed in 1990, which ensured that affordable housing was included in every jurisdiction's comprehensive development plans. The Landscape Assessment noted that the shortage of affordable housing units and housing subsidies was particularly marked in rural areas of Snohomish County, and that the lack of affordable housing acted as a deterrent to families at every point in the housing continuum, resulting in some families re-entering shelter or experiencing recurring homelessness.

In addition to the lack of affordable housing stock, throughout the three counties there was a lack of housing subsidies to increase the affordability of market rate housing and to prevent

transitional housing from getting backed up. In some instances, families may need to cycle through multiple transitional housing programs if Section 8 resources are not available. Those interviewed by us spoke of the need for additional and more flexible rental and financial assistance dollars.

Table IV-4. Pillar 3: Rapid Housing

King	Pierce	Snohomish
Baseline Status		
No Triage System - Families stay in shelter and TH system longer than individuals and cycle among shelters - Limited affordable housing does not allow for back door - Families typically move from shelter to TH before housing - Focus of providers on preparing families to be "housing ready" - Follow-up services rarely provided - Limited services for housing search, tenant screening barriers, and landlord recruitment	Limited Housing Availability, Rely on Transitional Housing - Shortage of affordable housing, with demand outstripping supply - General belief that current system with transitional housing was adequate to meet housing needs of families - Widespread belief in the system that the focus should be on economic opportunities to help families afford market-rate housing and not on altering current continuum of care path - Existing resources include HPRP which is the County's first implementation of a rapid housing model	Limited Housing Availability, Long Wait List - CCM system led to long wait list instead of direct path to housing due to limited resources - Section 8 resources were largely unavailable - Provider reluctance to move away from traditional continuum of care

Table IV-4. Pillar 3: Rapid Housing (continued)

King	Pierce	Snohomish
System Initiative Design		
Housing Stabilization and Systems Transformation - Team member hired at county level to move the system from housing readiness to housing stabilization approach - Focus on aligning case management practices to focus on housing stability (as well as aligning tailored services (Pillar 4) and linkage to economic and educational opportunities (Pillar 5)	Housing Locator System and Landlord Liaison - Housing locator and Landlord Liaison project, closely modeled after programs in King and Spokane counties - Housing locator is a website that catalogs available public and private affordable housing. - With this system developed, MDC will recruit 250 property owners/landlords to participate, and will offer tenant education, landlord/tenant outreach, and have risk pool of funds to incentivize landlords - THA piloting a prevention, rapid housing, and tailored services program for up to 50 families with a child in an elementary school.	Housing Stabilization - System for accessing and addressing housing stability through Housing Specialist
Status		
Under Development/Scheduled to Launch - Conducted survey of community readiness, preparing providers for realignment, developing toolkit to transition to approach, conducting a funding analysis to see flexibility in funding - Will work with first cohort of organizations in summer of 2012	Ready to Launch	Under Development - Assessment tool to determine housing needs - Hired Housing Specialist to serve as landlord liaison

In King County, the Ten Year Plan identified that an on-going monthly housing subsidy is the single most critical need for housing support. The plan estimated that only five percent of families will succeed without a subsidy; 15 percent will need a subsidy for up to two years; 20 percent will need subsidy for up to five years; and 60 percent will need a subsidy for more than five years. It is not clear what the basis for these estimates were; data that are now emerging nationally from the HPRP program indicate that programs have had success helping the majority of families exit to permanent homes (with and without subsidies). However, there is relatively little understanding of how families fare 12 months after program exit.

A third factor that has perpetuated a continuum of housing in the three counties has been the resources available for transitional housing, in part due to the Sound Families Initiative. The Sound Families Initiative, implemented by BMGF from 2000 to 2007 in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties, increased the stock of transitional housing in each of the three counties. Although the Sound Families Initiative officially ended in 2007, some new transitional housing units were still coming on line in the counties due to pre-commitments Sound Families made before wrap-up and because the development pipeline is so long. There has been more emphasis on the ability to transition in place in King County; the two housing authorities (KCHA and SHA) have helped to provide Section 8 vouchers for some of these programs to allow this to happen. Funding for transitional housing through state sources such as the Transitional Housing, Operating and Rent (THOR) program also continues to put focus on the continuum.

Finally, in all three counties there was a philosophical tension between supporting the existing continuum of care and having rapid housing. In King County, providers interviewed noted that "there always will be a need for shelter" and there likely will never be enough affordable housing. Providers expressed the difficulty in leaving the shelter emphasis because there isn't enough affordable housing available. In Pierce County, the overall sentiment was that community organizations providing services for homeless families were doing a good job in housing families. Interviewees substantiated this belief with data from the annual Point-In-Time counts that found only a few families experiencing street homelessness, and the majority of families living in transitional housing arrangements. Overall, interviewees noted that the conventional continuum of care process was sufficiently housing homeless families, and the system needed to focus on economic opportunity activities to help families afford market-rate housing upon program completion. In Snohomish County, at the time of the site visit in 2009, there was a reluctance to move away from the traditional continuum of care approach towards a housing first approach. Providers repeatedly mentioned that the process of moving from emergency shelter through transitional housing to permanent supportive housing was both beneficial and necessary to connect families with the supportive services they needed to maintain permanent housing.

Providers argued that Snohomish County needed more service-enriched housing programs with services onsite to provide stable long-term housing. Providers said they understood the importance of a housing first model, but many believed there were other needs that have to be

addressed before permanent housing is in place. County leaders indicated that this reluctance to embrace a new service model by the primary providers serving families presented a barrier to establishing a successful rapid housing agenda.

System Initiative Design

King County. King County's approach to rapid housing weaves together several of the pillars— rapid housing, tailored services, economic opportunities, and, to some extent, shelter diversion —into a Housing Stabilization approach. The plans called for a systems transformation approach, aligning emergency shelter and transitional housing programs into some form of interim housing without strict time limits (as with past 90-day shelter limits) but to also align case management practices to focus on the urgent need to shorten families' length of stay in shelter and place families in permanent housing, and then to focus on housing stability. (Alignment of case management practices and the focus on tailoring services is described under both tailored services and economic opportunities).

The approach is viewed as a system change process, in which the county will attempt to align the system (i.e., how families move through the system) and have the funding streams support the realignment (e.g., support shelter/transitional housing together). To guide the process, they have conducted a survey of providers to assess their readiness for change, brought in speakers to examine different models for the housing (i.e., Grand Rapids, Columbus, Chicago), met with providers to discuss realignment, and are in the process of developing a toolkit to help agencies assess their capacity and plan for change. The county team is conducting an analysis of features of the different funding sources (with Building Changes) as well as working on ways to deal with the funding, structural, and attitudinal barriers in the system and in the organizations.

The plan is to move to housing stabilization in June 2012. The county lead will work with a first cohort of agencies, and the next cohort would start six months after that. All currently county-funded providers have contractually agreed to cooperate and collaborate with the family homeless Initiative process, and the county is working with the Seattle and the suburban cities to include some similar agreement in their upcoming RFPs. Plans are to use a peer learning group model to help programs going through this transition to meet and connect with one another.

Pierce County. As of February 2012, Pierce County has launched rapid housing activities that are closely modeled after programs in King and Spokane counties. In January 2012, the non-profit agency Metropolitan Development Corporation (MDC) received a one-year award from Pierce County and Building Changes to implement the county's housing locator and Landlord Liaison Project. The MDC will recruit 250 property managers or landlords to participate in a housing locator system that catalogs available public and private housing in the county. MDC also plans to offer tenant education classes twice a week to help improve clients' understanding of their

rights and responsibilities and provide a certificate of completion to be given to landlords. The program also plans to actively conduct outreach with tenants and landlords, and maintain a risk pool of funds to incentivize landlords to rent to homeless families. In addition, the county launched another rapid housing program in the spring of 2011 with Tacoma Housing Authority. The housing authority received a three-year award from Pierce County and Building Changes to implement a pilot that provides families with prevention, rapid housing and tailored services, and offers Section 8 housing vouchers to up to 50 families that have a child enrolled in McCarver Elementary School.

Snohomish County. Using the pilot, Snohomish County has begun to work towards its plan to develop a system for accessing and addressing housing stability, including engaging private sector landlords to provide housing to families at risk of homelessness. Prior to our February 2011 site visit, the county had used infrastructure funds to hire the Housing Consortium to develop a Landlord Liaison Project. However, after launching the *Investing in Families* Pilot Project the county decided a standalone Landlord Liaison Project was not sustainable. Rather, the county has decided to have the Housing Resource Specialist serve as a landlord liaison, performing outreach to landlords and working to develop and nurture relationships with them. The county leads plan to preserve this position of a housing locator/landlord liaison as the pilot expands countywide such that any of the participating provider agencies could reach out to the housing locator to help match families with appropriate housing units. As of October 2011, 29 (63%) of the first 46 families in the pilot project who needed assistance with housing received some type of housing. Nearly half (44%) received some type of permanent housing and only 23% were placed in an emergency shelter or motel. The county leads also are working with the Housing Consortium to explore options for web-based housing locator applications that might facilitate accessing housing for any provider in the system.

Challenges

Each of the counties is facing a key challenge of moving from a continuum of care approach to one that prioritizes rapid housing. This challenges are rooted, in part, in the legacy of the Sound Families Initiative which created a stock of transitional housing linked to supportive services in the three counties; fostered a public-private collaboration involving regional housing authorities; local, state, and federal government agencies; and local non-profit organizations to align funding to support these units; and encouraged providers to think of transitional housing as a "best practice" for serving homeless families. While it provided a valuable resource that did not exist before 2000, Sound Families also fostered a philosophical posture that suggested most families needed this intensity of services and housing before moving into permanent housing.

If the counties are to move away from the one-size-fits-all approach of the existing continuum of care to a model that balances achievable levels of affordable housing development with alternative rapid housing approaches, they are faced with the task of determining how much

transitional housing is actually needed in the community, what funding streams are available, and how much flexibility exists in current funding streams. King County is starting to consider this approach in its plans for establishing an interim housing model. Moreover, moving from a continuum of care mentality to one that focuses on the urgency of permanent housing will require organizations and individuals within the systems to change their philosophical orientations, and will likely require the counties to conduct extensive technical assistance with their provider community.

Pillar 4: Tailored Services

Background and Baseline Status

Tailored services encompass quality case management and services that address families' key needs (e.g., substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence, and child care). They include housing-related services (e.g., eviction prevention, housing locating, and landlord advocacy) that help families retain or quickly acquire housing; quality case management and specialized services, such as chemical dependency and mental health services; and services that provide access to education, training, workforce development supports and services in other mainstream systems. Essentially, tailored services provide each family with the necessary services at the time in which the family needs those services (BMGF website).

At baseline, all three counties lacked an organized system of services for homeless families. Different homeless providers provided different services, there was no common protocol or definition for case management, and there was a concern that families could be served by multiple case management systems, resulting in repeated assessments or service plans that were not well-aligned with one another. One interviewee in Pierce County described case management as a "fuzzy concept" that may have completely different meanings across agencies. In King County, for example, this lack of consistency has led to a continued call for more attention to building skills and consistency among case managers. In 2007, a Committee to End Homelessness (CEH) Workgroup in King County explored options to enhance case management training in core competencies. This Case Management Standards Workgroup identified 12 core competencies in which case managers need to be skilled and knowledgeable if they are to be effective in helping people obtain and maintain housing. The plan, which had not yet been put into place, was to begin working more closely with local educators to support the inclusion of these standards in local certificate and degree training programs, as well as create a low-cost and accessible brown bag training series to share knowledge and local best practices as it relates to these core competencies.

In addition, all three counties lacked formal agreements between homeless and mainstream service providers. The Snohomish County Landscape Assessment noted that policies and practices of different service systems frequently conflicted or were redundant, slowing the pace of many families to become self-sufficient. Similarly, in Pierce County, the majority of providers

believed that they offer tailored services, but recognized that the lack of formal partnerships or memorandums of agreement inhibited their ability to closely coordinate with one another in serving homeless families.

Additionally, many providers in Snohomish County noted that they did not know if families were following up with the services to which they had been referred. The data systems that tracked the services families received were "closed" systems; that is, providers were not able to access assessment information gathered by other organizations or services received by them. This often reportedly led to families receiving only a portion of the services they needed. As one provider noted, "There's no guarantee that one person will get all the pieces they need. Just because they're getting one service, there's no guarantee that they are getting others, because the system is so disjointed." Finally, people whom we interviewed pointed out the need for tighter integration between case management, service receipt, and economic opportunities so that families could move more quickly towards self-sufficiency.

Services noted as particularly difficult to access for families in one or more counties include mental health services for adults in both King and Snohomish counties, as well as substance abuse services, such as in-patient chemical dependency treatment for a family in which the child is not removed from the home; detoxification services; subsidized child care; more physical health services; dental care; and services focused on education and employment. In addition, as noted in the Snohomish County Landscape Assessment, most services were not available until a family becomes homeless and they often end when a family secures permanent housing. To address this issue, the providers argued that Snohomish County needed more service-enriched housing programs with services onsite to facilitate stable long-term housing.

The concept of tailored services was recognized in the counties but not always in practice. In 2008, CEH in King County held a series of stakeholder meetings on the need for tailored services, including a focus on trying to "graduate" households to self-sufficiency. Feedback was received on logistics and ideas for providing timely and effective assessment processes, providing fluid and responsive services that can expand/contract with client need, and focusing on graduating households from services. In 2009, the majority of housing providers in Pierce County reported their services were tailored to the needs of families, but as noted, it was unclear as to what specific services were offered to families and the extent to which they were provided. Agencies did not have a standard protocol for determining what services needed to be provided and how these services should be delivered. Also, the majority of programs did not have formal agreements in place to coordinate service provision among agencies.

System Initiative Design

King County. King County is working on tailored services as part of the Housing Stabilization approach. The plans call for reconfiguring case management practices, developing a model assessment tool for case managers, realigning program requirements to support housing

stability case management, and exploring opportunities to coordinate housing and employment services funding at the system level. The focus is to align case management practices so that they are focused on housing placement and stability and to tailor service programs to be flexible and responsive to the needs and priorities of families. The toolkit under development is the major activity that will guide these activities. The county also plans on incorporating some professional development in the toolkit and offering web-based and class-based programs with infrastructure funding. Moreover, the coordinated entry process will focus on matching families with providers who offer appropriate levels of services to address their needs, especially regarding domestic violence, mental health, chemical dependency, and permanent supportive housing disability resources. In addition, the county leads are also trying to connect to mainstream services and providing training to foster a peer networking community.

Table IV-5. Pillar 4: Tailored Services

King	Pierce	Snohomish
Baseline Status		
No System of Services - Differ by provider and fragmented across providers - Perception is that they are typically embedded in the system of homeless services and less coordinated for families - Case management typically tied to shelter/housing, and varies across providers - Lack of some key services for families, such as mental health services	Provider-driven, Uncoordinated - Most housing agencies report providing tailored services; about a third report offering the same services to all families - Most common tailored service is case management but definition varies - Services directly provided often include housing search assistance, assistance in applying for benefits, budgeting classes, food assistance and clothing - Other services referred offsite without formal arrangements	Disorganized and Insufficient to meet demand - Reported insufficient availability of some services (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, employment) - Services particularly difficult to access for certain groups, such as families on the CCM wait list and those in permanent housing - Many families were reportedly served by multiple case management systems resulting in repeated assessments or service plans not well-aligned with one another. - Policies and practices of different service systems frequently conflicted or were redundant - Lack of information on whether families receive the services to which they had been referred. Providers could not access data in closed systems

Table IV-5. Pillar 4: Tailored Services (continued)

King	Pierce	Snohomish
System Initiative Design		

Housing Stabilization and System Transformation
- Housing-focused, strengths-based services; transforming organizations in this manner
- Professional development for homeless housing programs
- Peer networking as a way to support the change process
- Career Connections to work with housing case managers
	Tailored Services
	- Matching families with housing or prevention organizations that specialize in their unique needs
	   o Using HMIS
	- Ensuring organizations are tailoring their services to the needs of clients;
	   o County and Building Changes conducting technical consultations with each agency to help them use CIA data and develop a customized approach to serving families
	- Ensuring families are not only referred, but assisted through the entire process of seeking and receiving services
		Tailored Services
		- Develop systems and processes for
		   o accessing and addressing families' service needs, using the Snohomish County Self-Sufficiency Matrix
		   o making referrals to an appropriate generalist/specialist
		   o flexible fund to procure these services
		   o creating a family self-sufficiency plan and for continued, coordinated case management,
		   o Identify one entity to provide family counseling and law services for families

Status		
Partial Implementation - Career Connections has received SIG funding to work with the housing case managers to do training and additional funding to work with programs on job placement, employment, and education	Partial Implementation - Enhancements to the HMIS system and integrated housing program profiles completed in April 2011 to aid the system in matching families to providers - Staff member, hired in December 2010, has worked with housing programs on organizational assessments; all to be completed by March 2012 - Organizational assessments will guide development of a technical assistance plan and peer learning opportunities on a tailored service approach	Partial Implementation - Extensive assessment tool developed that aligns with Snohomish County Self-Sufficiency Matrix - Navigator works with families to develop a self-sufficiency plan and helps them to access the services - Flexible fund to be used by the Navigator to help access needed services. - Funds to provide mental health and legal services to families Under Development - A plan to align mental health, chemical dependency, and parenting services

Pierce County. Pierce County has initiated several of the activities outlined in the Strategic and Implementation plans related to tailored services, although the work is behind the timeline outlined in the plans. Enhancements to the HMIS systems have been completed and include profiles for each organization participating in AP4H. AP4H staff use these profiles to match families to providers that have available housing. A new county staff member, hired in December 2010, is working with Building Changes staff and meeting with local housing providers to prepare them for implementation of tailored services. Organizational assessments are developed to document the services currently provided by the program or via community partnerships, program eligibility requirements, and decision making processes associated with types and levels of services offered to families. The county plans to use these organizational assessments to develop a technical assistance plan that will assist organizations in incorporating a tailored services program model.

Snohomish County. Snohomish County has performed activities that align with its plan to develop a system for accessing and addressing families' service needs using the Snohomish County Self-Sufficiency Matrix, and to develop a process for making referrals to an appropriate generalist or specialist Navigator based on those needs. As part of the coordinated entry process, the Navigator administers a detailed assessment tool to each family to identify service needs and determine its position on the Snohomish County Self-Sufficiency Matrix. After completing the assessment, the Navigator works with families to develop a self-sufficiency plan and helps them to access the services they need to work towards achieving the plan. Building Changes funded a SIG grant to WDCSC to provide for a flexible fund to be used by the Navigator to help access needed services. The YWCA also received a SIG grant to provide mental health services to families, including mental health counseling for parents, family and couple counseling, children's therapy, and support groups and life skills classes. Within the first year of the Pilot Project, the county leads convened multiple work groups to discuss maximizing the web of services for families who need to access mainstream services. The county plans to conduct more alignment of mental health, chemical dependency, and parenting services.

Challenges

The movement to tailored services requires more than changing funding streams. Much of the change that needs to take place in the coming years will require providers and case managers to transform their organizations and how they deliver services.

This process is likely going to require technical assistance from Building Changes, the county leads, and perhaps other organizations in order to determine what services are provided by each organization in the system, how they are provided, and how they can best be utilized to serve families in an efficient and effective manner. Building Changes staff has begun working with King County to develop a curriculum for housing providers to prepare its staff for tailored services and with Pierce County in developing an organizational assessment of each housing provider and to develop a plan for each agency to implement a tailored services approach.

Pillar 5: Economic Opportunities

Background and Baseline Status

Economic opportunities involve providing a strong bridge to workforce development systems and progression to long-term, self-sustaining income for homeless families. Increasing economic opportunity for homeless families involves connecting them with education, training, and, eventually, living wage jobs that help families to maintain housing stability and achieve self-sufficiency (BMGF website).

At baseline the major homeless service providers for families across the three counties were already providing education and employment services that included money management, fixing credit, developing resumes, job searching, and interviewing skills. The YWCA in Snohomish County, for example, operated a specialized program called the Displaced Homemaker Program which provided employment services to women, usually 40 years old or older. Those services included resume writing assistance, support groups, interview training, working wardrobe and job search assistance. Housing Hope offered a similar class to low-income residents of Snohomish County called the College of Hope. The College of Hope provided general life skills classes, including creating a budget and understanding credit, as well as more specialized employment-focused classes, such as resume writing and interviewing skills. There were also mainstream providers of services, education, and training to help adults obtain employment. However, the traditional education and employment providers were not systematically linked with the homeless and housing programs, and there were no specific mechanisms to ensure these agencies were serving homeless clients. Without this coordination between housing providers and education and workforce development agencies, there was a key gap in helping homeless families maintain housing stability once they complete housing programs. With this approach to employment and education, homeless providers may develop key programs tailored to their clients' needs, but they have little potential or capacity to be taken to scale. In addition, the lack of coordination between these systems has resulted in a duplication of the services as well as the development of data systems (HMIS and SKIES) that are not compatible with one another.

The lack of coordination between homeless and mainstream education and workforce development agencies may be due to several factors. Some individuals interviewed in King County suggested that there needs to be more receptivity on the part of the homeless and housing providers to embrace workforce development; others suggested that the traditional workforce development services have been geared to serving those easier to employ. In addition, institutional and benefit requirements and regulations made it difficult for families to obtain the education and employment training they may want and need. For example, for families on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), DSHS will pay for only certain types of educational programs. As stated by one mother in a family focus group during the 2009 site

visit, "I'm in school for phlebotomy, for a nine-month program. I'm getting retrained. DSHS doesn't approve of a Masters' degree because it's longer than 12 months". Similarly, TANF's WorkFirst has many regulations and case managers may interpret these regulations variably. Some key informants suggest that some case managers may stress jobs over training for families and that working itself may serve as a barrier to getting ahead.

System Initiative Design

King County. King County is working on economic services as part of the Housing Stabilization approach. The plan outlines a set of activities designed to maximize linkages to economic and educational opportunities to increase financial security, including tools that will increase client and provider understanding of the economic opportunities available, training opportunities for Housing Stabilization staff and for employment staff, an employment focus as part of the housing stability action plan, and opportunities to coordinate housing and employment services funding at the system level in order to provide packaged resources to families experiencing homelessness. Career Connections has received SIG funding to work with the housing case managers to do training, much like a housing navigator approach, as well as some additional funding to work with programs on job placement, employment, and education.

Table IV-6. Pillar 5: Economic Opportunity

King	Pierce	Snohomish
Baseline Status		
Lack of Access to Employment and Education Leading to Self-Sufficiency - Many providers have employment services, such as access to job banks, computers - Traditional education and employment providers not linked with housing and homeless providers - Requirements and regulations are barriers to training	Disconnection between Education and Employment Services and Homeless Service System - No specific mechanisms to ensure education and employment agencies were serving homeless clients - Connection is believed to be key gap in helping homeless families maintain housing stability once they complete housing programs	Disconnection Between Shelter and Housing Providers and WDCSC - Wide range of services for economic opportunities available to homeless families - Services were offered through shelter and housing providers or through the WDCSC - Little coordination between these two systems

Table IV-6. Pillar 5: Economic Opportunity (continued)

King	Pierce	Snohomish
System Initiative Design		
Housing Stabilization - Part of support services plan for housing stability. Designed to maximize linkages to economic and educational opportunities to increase financial security, including tools for understanding, cross-training, preparing clients and assisting with supports; exploring expanded opportunities; expanding support in accessing mainstream system benefits and tax credits; exploring opportunities to coordinate housing and employment services	Engaging Systems to Provide Economic and Education Navigation Services for Homeless Families - Create/enhance intensive employment and education navigation services - Build cross-system partnerships between homeless housing/services and workforce development providers - Develop a cadre of employers receptive to working with the target population - Provide capacity-building training and technical assistance to agencies - Evaluate the effectiveness of employment and education programs and incorporate learning into program improvements	Developing Unified Outcomes-Based System for Employment and Education - System is to be knowledgeable in and responsive to the obstacles and needs of families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, utilize U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funds to provide allied health care training to families in the pilot project and to families receiving TANF, and utilize public and private funds to support the expansion and launch of social enterprises
Status		
Partial Implementation - Career Connections - Systems efforts put on hold	Under Development - Engaging organizations into the Initiative, including Workforce Central, in developing education and employment-related questions to AP4H's intake and assessment process; a local workforce development provider, WWEE, in developing housing programming - Workforce Central initiated a pilot program with PCHA and four non-profit housing providers to coordinate an employment navigator housing agencies to provide career assessment, job training and placement services.	Pilot/Partial Implementation - Edmonds Community College (ECC) is Creating Access to Careers in Healthcare (CATCH) training program for 18 families in the pilot project who are homeless or at risk of homelessness - Two Employment Navigators with an expertise in housing have been hired to achieve two critical outcomes: (1) unsubsidized employment leading to wage progression to living wage jobs and (2) stable, secure and sustainable housing

Pierce County. According to the Implementation plan, the county's primary focus in the early years of the Initiative is to engage education and workforce development agencies in the homeless service system. In doing so, the county has pilot programs in place that focus on improving economic opportunities for homeless families. WWEE, a local workforce development provider, has started to provide transitional housing and rental assistance services to homeless families. WWEE helps to house families and connects them with education and employment opportunities to support housing stability. The Pierce County Housing Authority and four nonprofit housing providers are piloting a program to collaborate with Workforce Central, the local WIA agency, to provide services to homeless families in the county. As part of this program an Employment Navigator from Workforce Central coordinates with the housing agencies to provide career assessment, goal setting, job training, and placement services for their families. Workforce Central also helped develop questions on education and employment-related topics associated with AP4H's intake and assessment process.

Snohomish County. Funding has been gathered from multiple funding streams to help the county move forward with plans (e.g., develop and implement a unified, outcomes-based system for employment and education that is responsive to homeless families) to increase homeless families' access to economic opportunities. Everett Community College collaborates with two housing providers to run the "Property Works" program, which provides training and paid internships in property management or building maintenance to families residing in transitional housing. Edmonds Community College provides the Creating Access to Careers in Healthcare training program for families participating in *Investing in Families*. Families participating in this program enroll in a certificate program for health care professions (i.e., Phlebotomy Technician, EKG Technician, Monitor Technician, Nursing Assistant, Restorative Aide) and can receive support services (e.g., career counseling) from the college. In March 2012 YWCA will be certified as a WorkSource connection site in Snohomish County. YWCA staff has been trained on all of the necessary tools needed to provide some services onsite and refer some families to the WorkSource center. They have received a SIG grant to hire two Employment Navigators, who have expertise in housing to work with families to achieve two critical outcomes: (1) unsubsidized employment leading to wage progression to living wage jobs and (2) stable, secure, and sustainable housing.

Challenges

The challenges the counties face in increasing links to economic opportunities are threefold. First, providers need to begin addressing education and employment needs earlier in the process of serving families, rather than waiting for their other service needs to stabilize. This requires a shift in the mentality away from a lengthy continuum of care, and towards the rapid treatment of families.

Second, providers must engage with mainstream education and employment providers, such as the WorkFirst and WDCs, in order to take advantage of their ability to offer a broad range of services to a large and diverse population. If they are unable to collaborate with these mainstream providers, they are unlikely to be able to meet the demands of the communities. Although a number of housing providers offer education and employment services these programs are generally small and cannot be rolled out countywide.

Finally, the economic climate presents significant challenges for connecting families with economic opportunities. In Washington State, the impact of the recession has been dramatic over the course of the Initiative's implementation. The State unemployment rate, for example, almost doubled from the time the Initiative Strategy was approved (4.6% in October 2007) to 8.8 percent in March 2009 when the MOU for the Initiative was signed. Moreover, this rate has stayed at this level or higher up through January 2012 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007–2012). Additionally, local, state, and federal budgets are strained and mainstream services are facing budget cuts.

Progress Toward Outcomes (as of February 2011)

The Initiative requires the three counties to change how they currently operate. Much of the change that needs to take place in the coming years will require key changes in the attitudes and behavior of a range of actors in the system, including case managers and program directors as well as funders and others. Moving from a continuum of care mentality to one that focuses on the urgency of permanent housing and self-sufficiency will first require organizations and individuals within the systems to change their philosophical orientations. Moreover, the Initiative is requiring the three counties to implement new practices, many of which were not considered before. Considering these factors, we expect it will take a number of years for the counties to achieve the intended outcomes. At this stage in the Initiative, progress towards achieving outcomes is assessed as the extent to which the key partners involved understand and are aware of what is being planned, are increasingly accepting of the changes, and are participating as needed and expected. We assessed these outcomes during its February 2011 site visits to the counties and will do so again in the spring/summer 2012 visit.

King County

Awareness. The range of people we interviewed during the February 2011 visit were generally aware of the Initiative and the planning process. However, despite the involvement of many of these individuals in the planning process, they continued to have a number of open questions about each of the pillars. For the most part, individuals with whom we spoke—even those who had been involved in weekly working subgroup planning particular pillars, such as coordinating entry —had lost touch with the specifics of the plans and did not know what the current thinking was on implementation. For example, with respect to coordinated entry, agencies

wondered whether they would still be able to take in any families on their own, such as immigrant families, and what would happen to families who experience domestic violence.

Providers and others in the system had a number of questions about shelter diversion. Participants in a provider focus group questioned whether some types of shelter diversion (e.g., remaining doubled up on a short-term basis) would be realistic and successful for many families. Other questions raised included how services would be prioritized and targeted appropriately, especially based on the HPRP experience and whether the focus would be on people who are down and out with nothing" or "on people who haven't gotten that far yet."

Several interviewed wondered what the different housing options would be, what the length of stay would be, and what transitional housing would look like in the new system. Regarding case management, one respondent noted the struggles families have after two years of case management in transitional housing, and wondered how much case management can be expected to turn the tides.

With respect to tailored services and economic opportunities, plans were not yet in place or developed at the time of the site visit, so there was no assessment of awareness of these activities. Several interviewed did mention a few challenges the Initiative might face as it tackles the economic opportunities pillar, however, such as whether clients would be ready for the employment piece, the language barriers many families face in trying to obtain employment, and the perception that the work around economic opportunity is already being done in shelters and transitional housing as part of traditional wrap-around services and there may be no need for additional emphasis.

Acceptance and Participation. Without exception, the key informants we interviewed saw a need for coordinated entry and assessment. Most interviewed in the system also were looking forward to the change, and several noted the advantage of families not having to go to several agencies for support. Concerns were raised about implementation and logistics. For example, a few providers raised concerns about the volume of families in need and the depth of their problems. One provider noted that based on her knowledge of the number of families turned away at shelters, what would the numbers of families in need of prevention or diversion look like, and what would be the capacity need to be to handle that? One provider raised concerns related to how families ask for help, and whether those families that were comfortable with less formal ways of connecting to resources would be able to navigate a more formal central system. Others were concerned about the logistics of getting people to access the entry points and the lack of transportation as well as issues of access for immigrant refugees and those with limited English skills. Therefore, at the time of our visit, providers were ready for a change, but there continued to be questions concerning what the change would mean for their organizations and clients. (Since that time, King County has conducted a number of activities to inform and engage the community.)

There were no data collected on acceptance of the other impending changes during the site visit (as plans for housing stabilization were not yet communicated), but the agencies have since reportedly contractually agreed to any realignment in the system. However, several King County stakeholders questioned the plausibility of housing individuals without increased availability of housing stock.

They noted a belief that rapid housing assumes a vacant supply of housing, which does not exist, (and, from the Foundation's perspective, may or may not be a requirement of the rapid housing approach).

Pierce County

Awareness. Data regarding the high volume of calls suggests that families were aware of how and where to seek assistance for both shelter and prevention. Providers also were aware of the new system, and they reported telling any families who contacted them for housing to first seek assistance through AP4H. Nevertheless, there was some confusion about how the system should operate. This is most likely because even though the county and Associated Ministries conducted several training sessions with provider agencies, there were inconsistencies among the staff attending. Also, the county and Associated Ministries' staff reported that they recognized that trainings occurring during the planning and initial implementation phase, and at times mid-course corrections were needed.

Acceptance/Participation. Overall, stakeholders at the time reported a spirit of collaboration in working together and with the county for the Initiative. The following is a summary of the reported acceptance and buy-in from providers and other stakeholders for each pillar activity in Pierce County.

In terms of coordinated entry, providers across the board reported that the county made a concerted effort to develop a system with their input. However, several providers, especially those in rural areas of the county, did not think there was a need for coordinated entry. They felt the new system would add an extra unnecessary layer in a family's search for housing assistance since they could generally find resources for them in a short period of time. Interviews with other stakeholders in the community resulted in mixed reviews. The majority stakeholders felt there was a need for coordinated entry, and many saw great potential for coordinated entry. However, some stakeholders felt that the county was over-emphasizing this pillar instead of economic opportunity. In particular, representatives from public housing authorities and workforce development agencies voiced concern about the relevance of the assessment without the incorporation of questions related to service needs, particularly in the areas of employment and education. In general, they were concerned that the new AP4H system would fulfill the county's tracking needs with its ability to track and report how many families are in need of prevention or housing assistance, but would fall short in connecting families to the services they need to achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

System change efforts focused on prevention and economic opportunity were met with considerable support by the majority of stakeholders interviewed. Several interviewees noted these pillars represented a significant paradigm shift for serving homeless families, and could have the largest impact on ending family homelessness. Providers were especially supportive of the prevention activity, noting that prior prevention assistance most likely caught families when it was too late (i.e. requirements that families needed an eviction notice), and that families needed more than just financial assistance. However, while providers were supportive of additional resources for prevention activities in the community, a few were apprehensive about Associated Ministries delivering these services since the agency did not have prior experience with offering this assistance.

In terms of economic opportunity, housing providers, in particular, viewed education and employment as the critical link to housing stability for families. In fact, one of the local housing authorities reported that the primary challenge in Pierce County is not the lack of available housing, but that families' lack the employment-related skills and history to attain market-rate housing. Moreover, interviews with local employment agencies revealed enthusiasm about the Initiative providing opportunities for collaboration with housing providers. These collaborations will help employment agencies develop a better understanding of how to provide services for homeless families, a population that has largely been neglected in their current service offerings. It should be noted that while providers overall were enthusiastic about economic opportunity activities, a few voiced concern that the Initiative may fall short, especially in the current economic climate, and not place families into living wage jobs to support their entrance into market-rate housing.

In terms of rapid housing, it is unclear whether the community will be responsive to rapid housing efforts that will need to occur with this pillar. The overall sentiment is that rapid housing is not a high priority pillar for homeless families in the county. In fact, the county's Implementation plan does not have details for how this pillar will be implemented. Also, according to interviews, the general belief is that the organizations providing services to families who experience homelessness are currently doing a good job housing them in shelter or transitional housing units. During interviews, numerous stakeholders thought the Initiative should place more emphasis, and therefore funding, on having well-functioning prevention and economic opportunity programs that will help alleviate the housing challenges at-risk and homeless families encounter.

Finally, in terms of tailored services, the county plans to incorporate tailored service requirements in their providers' contract renewals in 2012, to allow them to subsequently monitor providers' performance against these requirements. The county leads believe that providers are not fully aware of this change, and they anticipate negative reactions from providers once the process is in place.

Snohomish County

The county indicated the selection of WDCSC as the lead fiscal agent was rooted in a commitment to all five pillars, rather than regarding the initiative as a homelessness program. Moreover, they wanted to "send a strong message that moving families to self-sufficiency whenever possible was [the] top priority." Together, WDCSC and the county launched *Investing in Families* through a community planning process involving housing and service providers and other relevant groups and attempting to come to a consensus on the direction of the Initiative. Throughout this process, providers in Snohomish County expressed frustration with the Initiative. The frustration stemmed from several early decisions or actions, including how the Gates Foundation initially announced the project by not providing details on the restrictions; the Initiatives focus on families to the exclusion of single adults and youth; and the county's choice of WDCSC as the lead agent rather than a provider who solely focused on homelessness. This frustration resulted in some providers withdrawing from the planning process and publically criticizing the Initiative. While the input from providers did produce many useful ideas, WDCSC (with support from the county) determined they would have to be more directive if the project was to move forward.

Awareness. As of February 2011, the providers felt that they were not as involved in the development of the Implementation Plan as they were in the earlier two phases. Moreover, they did not seem to understand that the coordinated entry system that was being tested in the pilot project would not be rolled out countywide. It seems that many believe that if the process is successful, more Navigators will be hired as coordinated entry roles out countywide despite the communication efforts of the county leads.

Although some providers were aware of efforts to include prevention and diversion activities in the pilot project and to enroll families who were at risk of homelessness, none were aware of specific prevention plans. There were limited prevention resources available in the county and awareness of prevention resources varied across the providers. Similarly, most providers seemed unaware of how economic opportunities and tailored services would be implemented in the pilot project and whether any of the families they served would be included in those efforts. Representatives from community behavioral health departments and the public school districts, however, seemed very eager to be involved in the Initiative and to collaborate with housing providers to better identify and serve families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, but none spoke of specific involvement thus far.

Acceptance/Participation. As of February 2011, the pilot project had not officially launched so none of the providers were directly participating in the project. The providers seemed supportive of the Initiative generally, but almost all said that they had too many unanswered questions to know for sure how things were going to play out. They were also frustrated by how long it was taking for the plan to take effect ("2 ½ years of planning is a heck of a long time").

The frustration was compounded by the plan for a pilot study that would only serve 50–100 families the first year. While they said they understood the rationale for the pilot study, there was still disappointment that so few of their families will be served by it.

There was some skepticism raised about the potential success of the Initiative without additional funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for permanent vouchers. It was noted from at least one interviewee it would have been preferable to have BMGF providing continued financial support for the wrap-around services associated with the Sound Families units. One provider admitted he was unsure of how the pilot project would address rapid housing but he expressed concern that families in the pilot project would be given priority in housing over families who had been waiting longer in order to achieve the goals laid out in the Implementation Plan.

Providers expressed enthusiasm about developing new tailored services programs, but they were unsure of what kinds of programs would be funded or when that funding would begin.

There was a great deal of enthusiasm for collaborations between housing providers, the local community colleges, and WorkFirst and WorkSource offices on projects that would increase the economic opportunities available to families in the housing programs, although these efforts had not yet been integrated into the Initiative. Providers were unclear whether and how they would be involved in the Initiative.

Summary

After engaging in an 18 month planning process to develop a tailored approach to addressing the five pillars, *each of the counties has begun or is about to launch activities in one or more of the pillars*. In January 2011, Pierce County launched their centralized intake system, Access Point for Housing (AP4H), were redeveloping their prevention strategy, had rapid housing ready to launch, and were engaged in activities to address the other two pillars. Snohomish County launched its *Investing In Families* pilot project in July 2011, implementing all pillars with a pilot sample of 75 families. In King County, the coordinated entry and assessment plan and their plans for shelter diversion were scheduled to be launched by April 2012, and activities were in place in developing the housing stabilization process that would include attention to rapid housing, tailored services, and economic opportunities.