



Washington Families Fund High-Needs Families

The Washington Families Fund (WFF) High-Needs Families Model (HNF) is a permanent supportive housing program that helps homeless families who experience co-occurring disorders and multiple barriers to housing. These barriers include serious and persistent mental illness, chemical dependency, domestic violence, trauma from violence, HIV/AIDS or other chronic illness, child protective service involvement, and/or criminal history.

Our Grantmaking

Grantmaking for the HNF model began in 2008. Grant awards are for five years. Since 2008, WFF has funded 20 programs at 14 housing providers in 13 counties across Washington State. To date the high-needs families programs have served 360 families, including 400 adults and 750 children.

Evaluation

With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Building Changes has contracted Westat, a research organization to conduct a multi-year study of this model. The study is designed to better understand the needs of these families and their experiences in supportive housing. Also, the study will examine if the WFF families enrolled in HNF experience:

- Improved stability in housing, childcare, and education;
- Improved access to and use of needed community-based services and supports;
- Improved family stability and decreased involvement with child welfare
- Decreased use of high-cost crisis and institutional care.

Using data from DSHS on families with similar needs, but not receiving the same housing and supports, we also will be able to compare outcomes and costs and determine which housing models work best for families.

What we're learning*

Family Make Up:

Head of household: single, female, early thirties
67% have children under age 6
44% have at least one child living away

Economics and Employment:

9% were employed at baseline
15% have no income
86% have debt; median is \$4,080
64% receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
6% receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Health and Well-being:

60% have mental health indicators
88% have experienced physical or sexual violence

Housing Programs:

Housing partnerships are critical to stabilizing families
Access to services varies
Pros and cons to single-site and scattered site housing options

Final Evaluation Timeline:

Preliminary findings—December 2013
Final results—mid 2014

(Source: Washington Families High-Needs Program: Cross-Site Summary—Year 4 Evaluation Report. (2013). Prepared for Building Changes by Westat.)