



Washington Families Fund High-Needs Families Evaluation Update

Overview

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.

Evaluation

A multi-year study* of the HNF model is being conducted by Westat, a national research organization. The study is designed to better understand the needs of these families and their experiences in supportive housing.¹ Also, the study examines if the WFF families enrolled in HNF experience:

- Decreases in homelessness and increases in housing stability;
- Increases in education attainment;
- Increases in employment and monthly income; and decreases in debt;
- Increases number of families reunified;
- Increases in access to healthcare and improvements to overall health;
- Improvements behavioral health status and decreases trauma exposure;
- Decreases in the use of high-cost crisis and institutional care.

What's Next

Analysis using data from DSHS will provide us with greater understanding of how these changes compare with families with similar needs, but not receiving the same housing and supports.

By mid-2014, we also will be able to compare outcomes and costs and determine what types of families succeeded in different housing models.

Preliminary Results²

For the first time we are able to see the impact of the HNF model. We are examining how families have changed over time by comparing experiences at program entry to experiences at 12 months.

At program entry: HNF programs serve families with multiple housing barriers and service needs (more than in other programs), including:

- Significant history of homelessness and instability
- High rates of child separation
- Low levels of educational attainment and employment
- High rates of health and behavioral health issues

At 12 months: Families who stay in a housing program and receive appropriate services for at least one year experience improvements in:

- Residential stability
- Family reunification
- Employment and income
- Alcohol and/or drug use/abuse

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¹ Westat Research. (2013). Washington Families High-Needs Program: Cross-Site Summary—Year 4 Evaluation Report. Unpublished.

² Ibid.