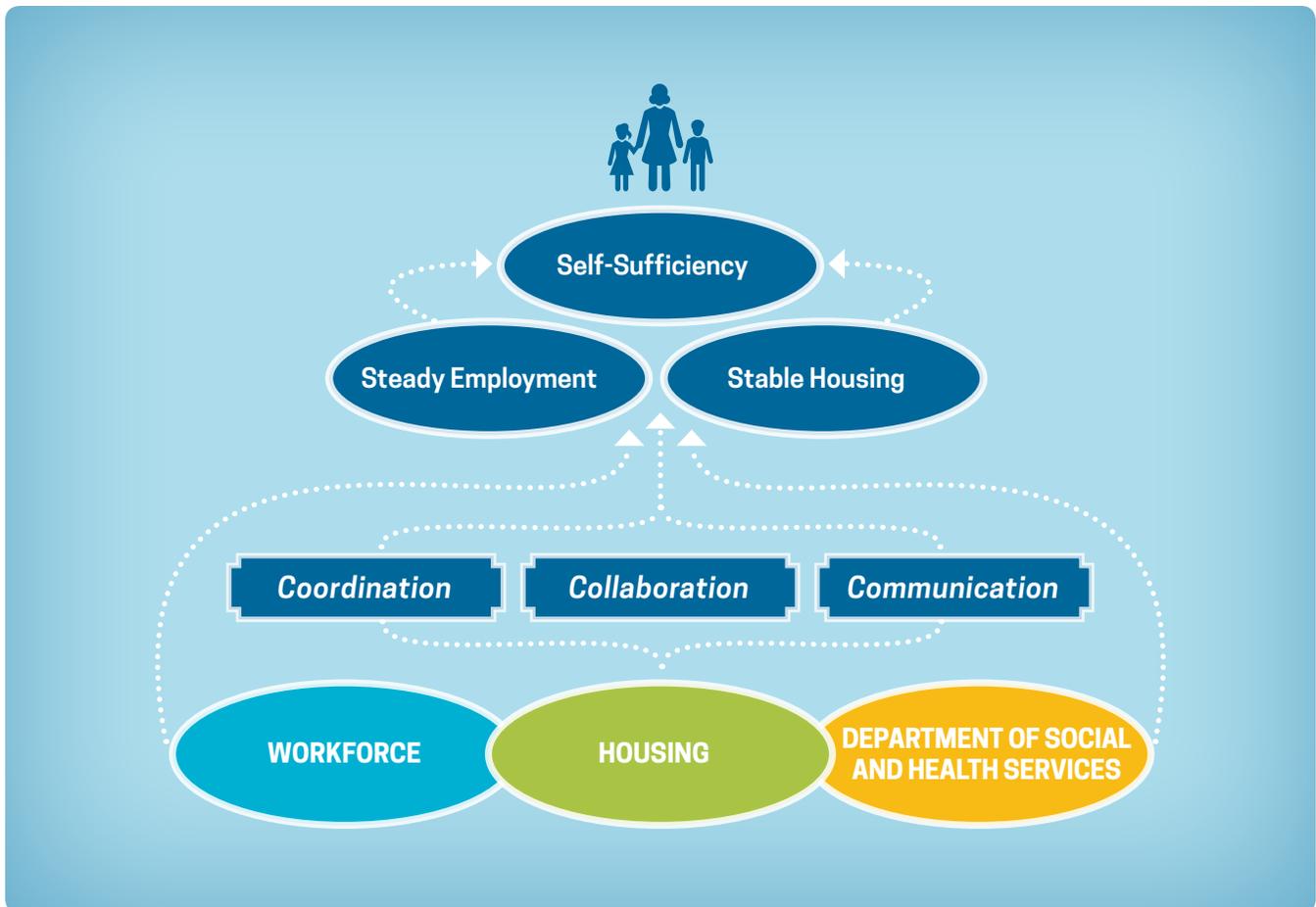




Housing and Employment Navigator



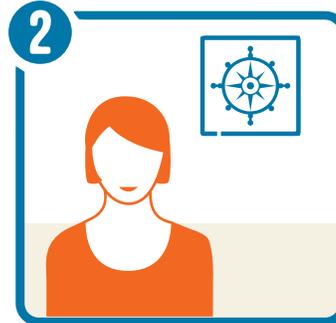
The Housing and Employment Navigator model was a federally funded, five-year workforce innovation project tested in the state of Washington. The model demonstrated the impacts of:

- **Pairing proven workforce development strategies with effective housing interventions** to improve service access and employment outcomes for families experiencing homelessness.
- **Assigning a Navigator to work one-on-one with the head of a homeless family** to assess individual circumstances and address specific barriers to employment within the household.
- **Utilizing a cross-systems team approach** among workforce, housing and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) for engaging and assisting homeless families with the resources and services they need to secure steady employment and stable housing.

Building Relationships. Making Connections.



Family is referred to workforce **Navigator** by local **Housing** provider



Navigator works one-on-one with head of **Family**



Cross-System Partnership

Navigator convenes a **Team** with expert knowledge of the various systems to assist **Family** with employment, housing and social services

While working together as a team, each system focuses on areas it knows best:

- Workforce: employment preparation; job search, placement and retention
- Housing: housing search, placement and retention
- DSHS: accessing eligible public assistance



Coordination Collaboration Communication

Team members communicate with each other regularly to ensure ongoing coordination of services

- Check in regularly with family to assess progress
- Helps family solve problems as they arise
- Coach family to navigate systems successfully on its own

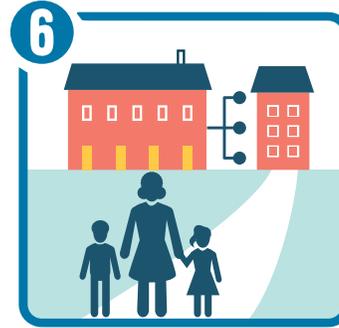
Goals: System Impacts

- Reduces system complexities
- Improves service access for homeless families
- Increases coordination between multiple systems serving homeless families
- Leverages external resources
- Achieves cross-systems outcome goals of full employment, stable housing and reduced reliance on public benefits

Making Connections. Building Relationships.



5 *Team works together with Family to address and resolve barriers to employment*



6 *Team connects Family to community services not offered by core partners, if needed*

Examples of: Employment Barriers and Community Connections

Barrier: Lack of skills training →

- **Connection:** Vocational training
- **Connection:** Certification programs
- **Connection:** On-the-job training

Barrier: No high-school diploma or GED →

- **Connection:** Education system

Barrier: No postsecondary education →

- **Connection:** College system

Barrier: Parental obligations →

- **Connection:** Child-care services

Barrier: Mental or physical health issues →

- **Connection:** Health-care system

Barrier: Legal issues →

- **Connection:** Legal aid services



Examples of: Short-Term Flex Fund Assistance

Team accesses short-term flex funds to assist Family

- Work and interview clothes
- Bus tokens
- Rental assistance
- Gas money
- Hygiene products
- Tuition and school books
- Education/vocational training

Goals: Family Impacts

- For unemployed: Obtain a job with skill and wage advancement opportunities
- For already employed: Increase skills and earned income
- Retain job for at least six months
- Secure stable housing
- Achieve financial stability and self-sufficiency
- Increase ability to navigate systems on their own



Results of more than 40 interviews with project participants illustrate the **roles** and **qualities** of a Navigator.

Roles of a Navigator

- Acts as a coach
- Works closely with the family
- Connects to a wide range of resources
- Finds employment training and educational opportunities
- Assists with housing search
- Helps families negotiate the complex DSHS system

Acts as a coach for the family's success

“The Navigator didn't hold my hand. We did it together.”

Works closely with the family to address barriers to employment and housing

“ (My Navigator) made me feel confident in what I was doing. He taught me how to approach things and figure out how things work. He helped with setting up my internship and helped prepare me. I felt like I got somewhere with him.”

Connects to a wide range of resources to support a family's employment, educational, financial and housing needs

“ What has been helpful most of all is that (a Navigator) can reach resources I would not find on my own and (is able) to make connections to the right people to get help for me.”

Finds employment training and educational opportunities to support the pursuit of career interests

“ We explored what I should and could do. We did a lot of assessments. The results were that I liked to work with my hands, which led me to (a) Manufacturing Academy. (The Navigator) helped with enrollment and helped with getting scholarships.”

The findings presented on pages 4-7 are drawn from a project evaluation conducted by **Marc Bolan Consulting: Housing and Employment Navigator Program Evaluation**, June 2017, Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Fund Grant Contract #IF-23252-12-60-A-53.



Assists with housing search and communicates with existing housing providers about concerns

“ I had a fight with another resident. I didn’t make a good choice. (My Navigator) talked with the housing provider, explained that I did mess up and convinced her to give me a chance. She managed to help me from getting kicked out (of my housing).”

Helps negotiate the complex DSHS system of rules and regulations

“ My Navigator called people and pushed buttons and then someone got in contact with me from DSHS and said, ‘We have benefits for you.’”

Qualities of a Navigator

- Ready to respond
- Willing to go above and beyond
- Able to speak candidly

Ready to respond in a non-judgmental way

“ It is nice to have someone who understands me and my needs and doesn’t push me into doing something that I am uncomfortable with.”

Willing to go above and beyond to find the right solutions

“ (My Navigator) calls to check in and will always leave a message and ask how things are going and if I am in need of anything. He has gone out of his way to help me. If he couldn’t help me with something, he would always find the person or resources that could.”

Able to speak candidly about issues

“ (My Navigator was) upfront ... said things just as they are, didn’t beat around the bush.”



Time of a Navigator

Over the course of the project, Navigators logged **activity sessions**, which are defined as each separate period of time the Navigator worked on behalf of the participant family, either directly or indirectly.

Direct contacts with families could occur either one-on-one with the Navigator or with the Team, and were either in person, over the phone or delivered electronically. Indirect contacts occurred when a Navigator was working with others to connect the family to resources.

Most Common Subject Areas Covered in Activity Sessions

Percentage of families receiving at least one Navigator session covering listed subject area:

Career Planning	88.7%	Enrollment in Education/Training	45.8%
Job Search Assistance	68.9%	Job Retention/Support	45.8%
Household Budgeting	48.6%	Housing	41.5%

More time to address employment barriers and career goals

Navigators were able to serve project participants for longer periods of time than what is customary for those seeking services. The extra time meant the Navigator and the Team could better address an individual’s specific barriers to employment while also prioritizing career planning.

“Trust increased over time. With that time, we were able to understand the real true problems, the real true issues they need help with.”—Navigator



Tools of a Navigator

Short-term financial assistance, in the form of flex funds, proved critical to family success. Navigators used the flexible dollars to respond quickly to a family’s most urgent barriers to obtaining steady employment and stable housing.

- **3 OF EVERY 4** project participants received some level of financial assistance
- **\$1,992***: Amount spent per family, among those receiving flex funds

**Aggregate total for each family, based on Workforce Development Council financial records data*

Most Common Uses of Flex Funds

Percentage of families receiving listed flex fund, among those that received financial assistance:

Work and interview clothes	41.3%	Hygiene products	23.7%
Bus tokens	29.4%	Tuition and school books	19.8%
Rental assistance	28.5%	Education/vocational training	18.1%
Gas money	26.3%		

“(Flex fund assistance) made a huge difference. We wouldn’t have had successful outcomes without it. (Families) would have ended up on the street.”—Housing provider

Team meetings increase effectiveness and efficiency

Team meetings clarified and reinforced the different roles of the various systems—for the system partners and for the families being served.

“When you sit with a team, resources come at the table and (you) don’t have to research or wait.”—DSHS partner

Full System Partner List by Region

Pierce County

Workforce:

WorkForce Central

Housing:

Catholic Community Services / Phoenix Housing Network

Helping Hand House

Mercy Housing Northwest

Tacoma Housing Authority

Tacoma Rescue Mission

Exodus Housing

Living Access Support Alliance (LASA)

Metropolitan Development Council (MDC)

Salvation Army

Shared Housing Services

Share and Care House

Sound Outreach

DSHS:

Puyallup and Lakewood Community Services Offices (CSOs)

Whatcom, Skagit and Island Counties

Workforce:

Northwest Workforce Council

Housing:

Northwest Youth Services

Community Action of Skagit County

Lydia Place

Opportunity Council

Anacortes Family Services Center

Friendship House

DSHS:

Bellingham, Mt. Vernon and Oak Harbor CSOs

Yakima County

Workforce:

South Central Workforce Council

Housing:

Northwest Community Action Center

Triumph Treatment

Yakima Housing Authority

Yakima Neighborhood Health Services

Yakima YWCA

DSHS:

Yakima CSO

Project Partners

U.S. Department of Labor / Workforce Innovation Fund

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This document was prepared by Building Changes on behalf of the three regional Workforce Development Councils.