



BRINGING FAMILIES HOME: \$10 MILLION TO IMPROVE FAMILY STABILITY AND DECREASE FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT

HOMELESSNESS AND FOSTER CARE

Data reveal a significant correlation between family homelessness and foster care placement:

- Almost half of children in foster care have a birth parent with a history of history of homelessness¹ and
- As many as 30% of children in foster care could be reunited with families if the family had access to a safe place to live, demonstrating homelessness is a barrier to family reunification.²

While homeless families are at greater risk of losing children to foster care, children of homeless families experience significant stress: homeless children have three times the rate of emotional disorders and are four times more likely to experience developmental delay than housed children.³ Similarly, among young adults who have experienced foster care, 25% become homeless, and frequently repeat a cycle of foster care placement among their children.⁴

BRINGING FAMILIES HOME

“Bringing Families Home,” a \$10 million budget item, would match county dollars to end homelessness among child-welfare-involved families. Focused resources spurring county investment would advance collaboration between child welfare and housing systems and end the cycle of foster care and homelessness for hundreds.

Through a competitive process, the Department of Social Services would select three to five counties to participate. Homeless families receiving either family maintenance or reunification services would be eligible. Funding would create liaisons to refer families to homeless systems, to assess the family’s housing needs, to evaluate program outcomes, and to provide housing interventions. Following national models,⁵ Bringing Families Home would—

- Assess a homeless family’s needs and develop a plan to meet those needs;
- Use housing navigators to help families locate safe, affordable apartments;
- For families experiencing short periods of homelessness with minimal barriers to housing stabilities, provide “rapid re-housing;” and

¹ C. Zlotnick, D. Kronstadt, L. Klee. “Foster Care Children & Family Homelessness.” *Am. J. Public Health*. 88:1368-1370. 1998.

² Y.A. Doerre, Y.A. et al. (1996). *Home Sweet Home*. Washington, DC: Children's Welfare League of America Press.

³ National Child Traumatic Stress Network. *Facts on Trauma and Homeless Children*. 2005. Bassuk, EL et al. “The characteristics and needs of sheltered homeless and low-income housed mothers.” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 276(8): 640-646 (1996).

⁴ R. Cook. *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth*. Rockville, MD: Westat, Inc. 1991. M. Courtney & I. Piliavin, *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: Outcomes 12 to 18 Months after Leaving Out-of-Home Care*. Madison: University of Wisconsin. 1998. T. Reilly. “Transitions from Care: Status and Outcomes of Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care.” *Child Welfare*, 82, 727-746. 2003.

⁵ J. Khadduri & B. Kaul. *Permanent Housing for Homeless Families: A Review of Opportunities and Impediments*. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/homelessness/improving-data08/apc.htm>. 2008.

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- For families experiencing long-term or repeated episodes of homelessness or significant barriers to housing stability, offer “supportive housing.”

Moving families into stable housing prevents foster care placement, allows families with a child in foster care to reunite more quickly, and significantly reduces a family’s return to the child welfare system.⁶

SOLUTIONS WORK

Supportive Housing: The “Keeping Families Together” initiative identified child welfare-involved parents with substance use disorders and long histories of homelessness, and placed these families in supportive housing, affordable housing with services promoting housing stability. An independent study revealed—⁷

- Over 61% of the families’ child welfare cases resolved favorably within 10 months;
- All children who had been removed from their families reunited without recurrence of maltreatment; and
- Compared to a control group of child welfare-involved families who remained in shelters, families placed in supportive housing reduced their *actual and potential use of foster care services by an average of 187 days over two years.*

Rapid Re-Housing: Studies show rapid re-housing—medium-term rental subsidies or other housing assistance to get families who do not have significant barriers to housing stability into housing they can afford—works to reduce homelessness among families. Studies show—

- 85-90% of families receiving rapid re-housing assistance stabilize in permanent housing, with a single-digit rate of recidivism into homelessness, at an average cost of \$3,904 per family;⁸
- *Families receiving rapid re-housing assistance are 4.7 times less likely to return to homelessness than families living in shelter,*⁹ and 2.8 times more likely to stay permanently housed than other families with a history of homelessness.¹⁰

IMPACT ON CALIFORNIA

Homeless Californians incur significantly higher incarceration and health care costs than Californians living in poverty who are housed. Study after study demonstrates that housing solutions work to end cycles of homelessness, incarceration, and high hospital utilization, and that housing solutions are less costly than homelessness.¹¹ Bringing Families Home would not only end homelessness, but cycles of hopelessness among child-welfare-involved families and their children, cycles that can last for generations.

⁶ M. Courtney, S. McMurtry, & A. Zinn. “Housing Problems Experienced by Recipients of Child Welfare Services.” *Child Welfare*, 83, 389–392. 2004.

⁷ D. Tapper. “Keeping Families Together: An Evaluation of the Implementation & Outcomes of a Pilot Supportive Housing Model for Families Involved in the Child Welfare System.” http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Report_KFTFindingsreport.pdf. 2010.

⁸ National Alliance to End Homelessness. “Rapid Re-Housing Outcomes, Community Examples, & Evaluation.” http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/rapidrehousing1_Dec_2012. T. Byrne. “Homelessness Prevention & Rapid Rehousing for Veteran Families: Housing Outcomes of Veterans Exiting the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program.” *National Alliance to End Homelessness Annual Conference*. July 22, 2013.

⁹ J. Rodriguez. “Homelessness Recurrence in Georgia.” *State Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless*. <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/housing/specialneeds/programs/downloads/HomelessnessRecurrenceInGeorgia.pdf>. 2013.

¹⁰ J.V. Taylor & K. Pratt-Roebuck. “Evaluating Philadelphia’s Rapid Re-Housing Impacts on Housing Stability & Income.” *The Cloudburst Group*. 2013.

¹¹ Larimer ME, Malone DK, et al. “Health Care and Public Service Use and Costs Before and After Provision of Housing for Chronically Homeless Persons with Severe Alcohol Problems.” *Journal Amer Med Assoc*. 301(13):1349-57. 2009. David Buchanon, Romina Kee. “The Health Impact of Supportive Housing for HIV-Positive Homeless Patients: A Randomized Controlled Trial.” *Journal Am. Medical Assoc*. (June. 2009) 99;6; David Buchanan, Romina Kee, Lisa Sadowski, et. al. “Effect of a Housing & Case Management Program on Emergency Department visits and Hospitalizations Among Chronically Ill Homeless Adults: A Randomized Controlled Trial.” *Am. Journal Public Health*. (May 2009) 301;17. Culhane, Dennies, et al., “Public Service Reductions Associated with Placement of Homeless Persons with Severe Mental Illness in Supportive Housing.” *Housing Policy Debate*, Vol. 13, Issue 1. Fannie Mae Foundation. 2002.

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