

# Families Moving Forward (FMF)

## Lead Organization:

San Francisco Human Services Agency (SF HSA)

## Location:

San Francisco, CA

## Number of families to serve:

100 - 160 families

## Family Selection Criteria

*Child welfare involvement:* This is the first child welfare case for at least one child in the family

*Housing stability:* Family is homeless or at risk of homelessness. One or more children have been newly placed in foster care or are at high risk for out-of-home placement

*Multiple high needs:* the caregiver has multiple barriers to family functioning, such as domestic violence, mental illness, substance abuse and criminal history

## Partner Organizations

San Francisco Housing Authority

Homeless Prenatal Program

University of CA San Francisco Infant Parent Program

Department of Public Health, Community Behavioral Health Services

Public Consulting Group

The Riley Center/Positive Directions

HSA Workforce Development

Chapin Hall, University of Chicago

## The Need

The City and County of San Francisco are national leaders in innovative solutions to addressing homelessness, as demonstrated by a very strong local commitment to supportive housing development and the concept of housing first. The city's child welfare system however, is still challenged to respond effectively to the needs of homeless families who are at risk of having children placed in foster care. The extremely high costs of living make life in San Francisco extremely precarious for families. The number of homeless families in shelters, on the streets and doubled up in San Francisco continues to increase, forcing families to stay in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels. One report states that 16 percent of child welfare cases between 2011 and 2012 included a parent who, at one point in the case, was homeless. During this same time, there were 183 children living in SRO hotels where parents were reported for child maltreatment.

## The Local Solution

FMF aims to improve cross-system collaboration and coordination to meet the housing and service needs of families at risk of child removal. Key aspects of the program design include:

- \* Accelerated triage and assessment procedures to identify homeless families who are at high risk of having children removed
- \* San Francisco Human Services Agency rapid referral of identified families to receive housing subsidies and assistance in locating and securing supportive housing
- \* Establishment of multi-disciplinary service teams to help families not just maintain their housing, but also improve overall functioning and well-being
- \* Hands-on, fluid, intensive peer-based outreach and case management to ensure access to an array of health, behavioral health, employment, parenting and other services
- \* Expanded trauma-informed mental health services for children and parents
- \* A focus on increasing family income through Supplemental Security Income (SSI) advocacy and wage subsidies
- \* Cross-system training for staff from the housing and child welfare spheres

## Overview of FMF Supportive Housing Demonstration

FMF is creating 110 scattered site supportive housing opportunities for homeless families involved in the child welfare system by leveraging 100 Section 8/Family Unification Program vouchers and 10 supportive housing units funded by the City's Local Operating Subsidy Program, in addition to 50 shallow rental subsidies. FMF will combine these housing resources with support services and evidence based practices.

## Local Evaluation

FMF is part of a larger national demonstration designed to test an intensive approach to serving families to come to the attention of the child welfare system because of problems with chronic or recurring homelessness and other serious, persistent issues such as mental illness, chemical abuse, and domestic violence. The FMF evaluation and cost study is being conducted by SF HSA and Chapin Hall with assistance from Homeless Prenatal Program, UC San Francisco Infant Parent Program and the Department of Public Health. The local evaluation will examine if families have shorter periods and less intensive contact with child welfare; if families continue to experience stable housing; if families increase their income; and if families demonstrate improved well-being.

## ***What is Supportive Housing?***

Supportive housing is an innovative and proven solution to some of communities' toughest problems, serving as the scaffolding for the delivery of more effective and responsive services and public systems. It combines affordable housing with services that help people who face the most complex challenges to live with stability, autonomy and dignity. Supportive housing is affordable housing where supportive services providers actively engage tenants in flexible, voluntary and comprehensive services and work with property and housing management to support tenant stability and ensure that the housing remains a positive community asset for the long-term.

## ***What is "Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System?"***

An innovative public-private partnership among the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. The initiative is testing an intensive approach to providing vulnerable families with safe, affordable housing together with the other services and supports that they need in order to stay together. Grantees in five sites . Broward County, Fla.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Memphis, Tenn.; San Francisco; and the state of Connecticut will bring supportive housing to more than 500 families with children at risk of, or already in, foster care placement.

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# Child Welfare & Supportive Housing

RESOURCE CENTER

A joint effort of CSH and Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), the Resource Center provides and coordinates tailored one-on-one expertise and services to help meet the needs of grantees taking part in *Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families with Child Welfare*. In addition, the Resource Center encourages and supports peer learning among the five sites, building on local capacity and the experience of people working in the field.