

Partners United for Supportive Housing in Cedar Rapids (PUSH-CR)

Lead Organization:

Four Oaks Family and Children's Services

Location:

Cedar Rapids, IA

Number of families to serve:

125 families

Family Selection Criteria

Income: Family income qualifies for a Housing Choice Voucher

Child Welfare Involvement: Families must be involved with the child welfare system

Housing Stability At the time of referral, PUSH-CR families will be homeless or at risk of homelessness, living in shelters, transitional housing, unstably housed, or fleeing from domestic violence

Multiple high needs: Families must have one or more serious conditions that impact day-to-day functioning and contribute to child welfare involvement and/or homelessness: physical/developmental disabilities; chronic health issues; mental health problems; substance abuse; criminal history; trauma or domestic violence history

Partner Organizations

Child Welfare

Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS)

Housing

Affordable Housing Network, Inc., (AHNI) Cedar Rapids Housing Services
Waypoint & Foundation 2

Shelters/Domestic Violence

Substance Abuse/Mental Health

Area Substance Abuse Council, Abbe Center for Community Mental Health
Horizons

Education

Cedar Rapids Public Schools, Kirkwood Community College

City and County Supports

Public Health, Civil Rights, Diversity Focus

Community Funders

Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, United Way

State and National Support

Iowa Children's Justice, University of Iowa, Leadership Circle,
Casey Family Programs, National Center on Family Homelessness

The Need

Iowa has one of the highest rates of out-of-home placements in the country at 12.7 children per 1,000 in the general population, while the national rate is 6.8 (Casey 2012). In 2011 Linn County (where Cedar Rapids is located) served more than 5,000 people, half of whom were children. The Center for the Study of Social Policy's (CSSP) *Institutional Analysis in Cedar Rapids 2011* report cited a culture of caution (excessive monitoring, coercion and intervention) and lack of clarity between child safety and risk of future harm. The report stated "even if assessments were properly performed, Linn County lacks basic services such as housing and transportation and a coordinated mental health service system" (CSSP 2011). A recent review of the referred and open DHS caseloads reveals an estimated 15 percent, or more than 500 families, have housing as a key barrier to child safety and permanency.

The Local Solution

PUSH-CR will be managed by Four Oaks, a nationally accredited nonprofit child welfare and behavioral health agency, on behalf of the initiative's key partners. The program will also be advised by an interagency board that includes key partners and over more than other collaborating organizations such as mental health and substance abuse agencies, a community foundation and the United Way, the City of Cedar Rapids Housing Services, research and advocacy groups (such as Casey Family Programs), a diversity organization and workforce development / training organizations and elected city officials.

Overview of PUSH-CR Supportive Housing Demonstration

PUSH-CR is a collaborative effort to implement Iowa's first supportive housing designed specifically for families who are at risk of or already involved with the child welfare system as a result of homelessness or housing crisis.

Through a coordinated, community-wide system that includes housing in safe and affordable environments, intensive service coordination and access to a full array of home and community-based services, families will be provided with a stable, healthy environment for their children while reducing their involvement with child welfare. PUSH-CR will utilize part of AHN's affordable housing capacity as a springboard to provide supportive housing tailored to the needs of each family. PUSH-CR will enable families to:

- * rapidly access safe, stable and appropriate housing
- * retain custody of their children and receive in-home services to avoid child welfare involvement
- * maintain child safety and family stability following a Department of Human Services assessment
- * achieve more timely reunification when children are placed temporarily in foster care
- * achieve higher levels of employment, financial stability and improved family functioning
- * achieve higher levels of family and child well-being

Housing will be scattered site in communities with schools, parks and other amenities for families. PUSH-CR families will pay 30 percent of their income for rent.

Evaluation

PUSH-CR is part of a larger national demonstration designed to test an intensive approach to serving families that come to the attention of the child welfare system because of recurring homelessness and other serious, persistent issues such as mental illness, chemical abuse and domestic violence. The PUSH-CR evaluation and cost study is being conducted by the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice, University of Iowa School of Social Work and National Center for Family Homelessness. The evaluation will examine if PUSH-CR families have fewer subsequent maltreatment reports, fewer placements and more expeditious reunification than comparable DHS families. It also will evaluate if PUSH-CR families demonstrate improved housing, family and child well-being, employment, education and financial stability.

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. Over the next five years grantees in five sites - Broward County, FL; Cedar Rapids, IA; Memphis, TN; San Francisco, CA; 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.

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.