

# **WorkFirst:**

## Specialized Employment Services for Barriers Free Engagement

CSH Eastern Region Supportive Housing Conference  
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**Presented by IMPACT/WorkFirst of Pine Street Inn**

*Laurie Rose*



**Pine Street Inn**  
Ending Homelessness

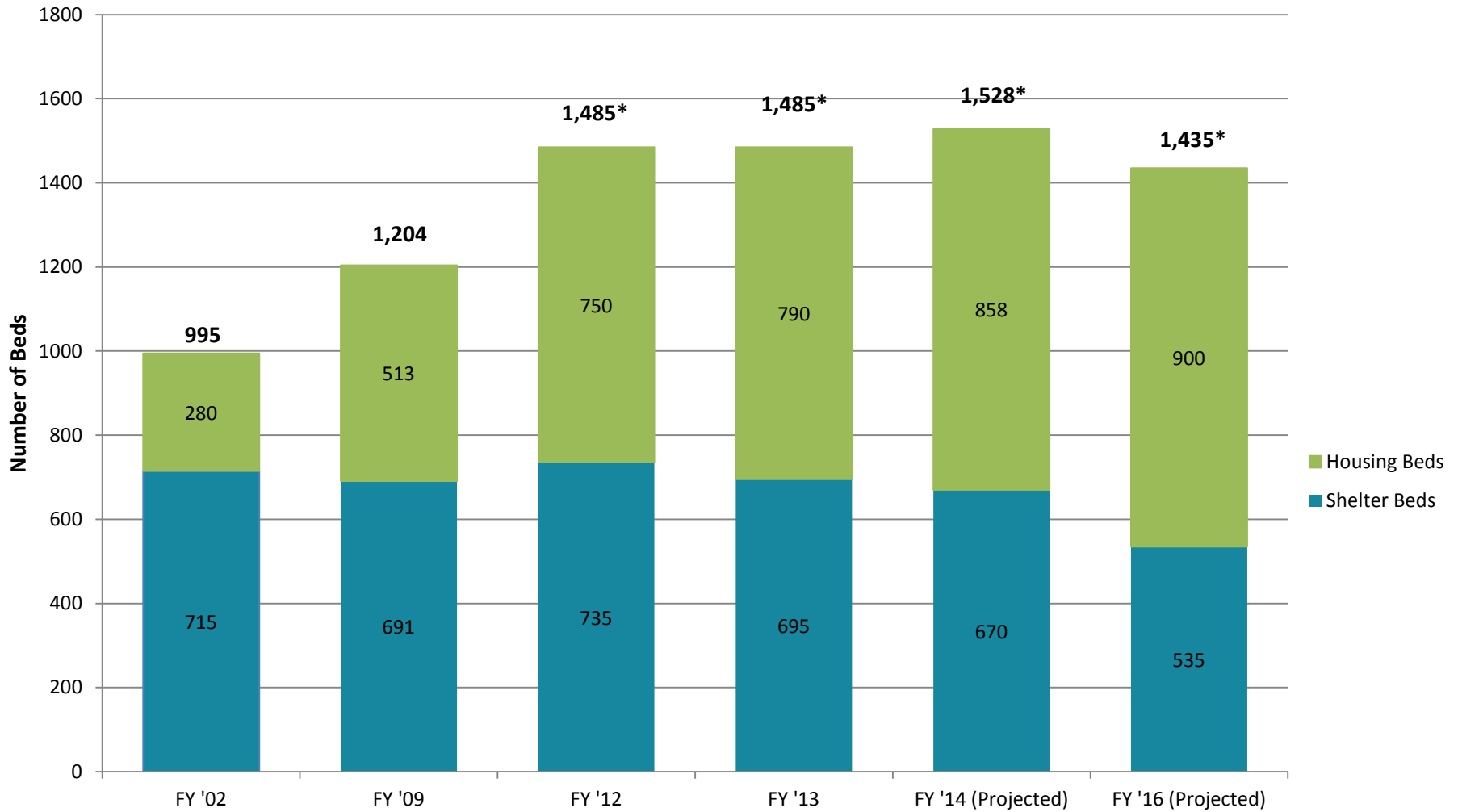
# Overview of Pine Street Inn

**Our Mission:** To be a community of respect and hope for each guest we serve; to be a resource through which neighbors and friends can help to meet the basic needs of others; and to serve as a national leader in the fight to end homelessness.

- Serve men and women who are **homeless or formerly homeless** through street outreach, emergency shelter, substance abuse treatment, job training and job placement and permanent supportive housing
- Serve **1,600+ men and women each day and 11,000+ annually**



# Shift from Shelter Beds to Permanent Housing



% Permanent Housing	<b>28%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>63%</b>
% Shelter Beds	<b>72%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>37%</b>

# PSI's Workforce Development Programs

## IMPACT Employment Services Programs:

- **Impact Services** – employment services for homeless clients
- **WorkFirst** – employment services for formerly homeless clients residing in supported permanent housing
- **IMPACT Retention** – post placement services for employed clients

## Training Programs:

- Cafeteria Operations
- Food Preparation
- Building Maintenance and Woodworking
- Housekeeping

## Social Enterprises:

- *iCater*
- *Boston HandyWorks*

# WorkFirst Demonstration Grant

**WorkFirst was a 3-year demonstration project launched in November, 2009 to increase housing retention and income among 140 formerly homeless clients using a Vocational Stages of Change model and Individualized Placement Support principles.**

## **WorkFirst Was Created to:**

- Evaluate the impact of early access to specialized employment services on employment placement and housing retention rates

## **Project Goal:**

- Promote self-sufficiency and housing stability for formerly homeless adults through the early introduction of employment services
- Promote the integration of employment services within housing first models regionally and nationally

## **WorkFirst Approach:**

- Parallel to the “Housing First” model



# WorkFirst Demonstration Grant

## Background Research

- Given the opportunity, homeless people can and want to work, including those who are chronically homeless.
- Quickly finding a job helps homeless people afford housing, and helps them to stay housed.
- Providing rapid access to jobs is more effective than requiring participation in pre-employment readiness services.
- Employment offered at the earliest stages of engagement helps people who are homeless develop trust, motivation and hope.

*-- Recognizing Work as a Priority in Preventing or Ending Homelessness, Gary Shaheen and John Rio, "Journal of Primary Prevention," June 2007*



# WorkFirst Core Principles

1. Competitive employment is the goal
2. “Job readiness” not required
3. Job search starts after a client expresses interest in work
4. Degree of participation is defined by clients
5. Barriers and resource needs as opportunities for engagement
6. *Assessing clients and their motivation to work is not done to screen individuals out, or to look for highly motivated clients as a condition for enrollment or services, but to understand what the next step for the individual should be.*



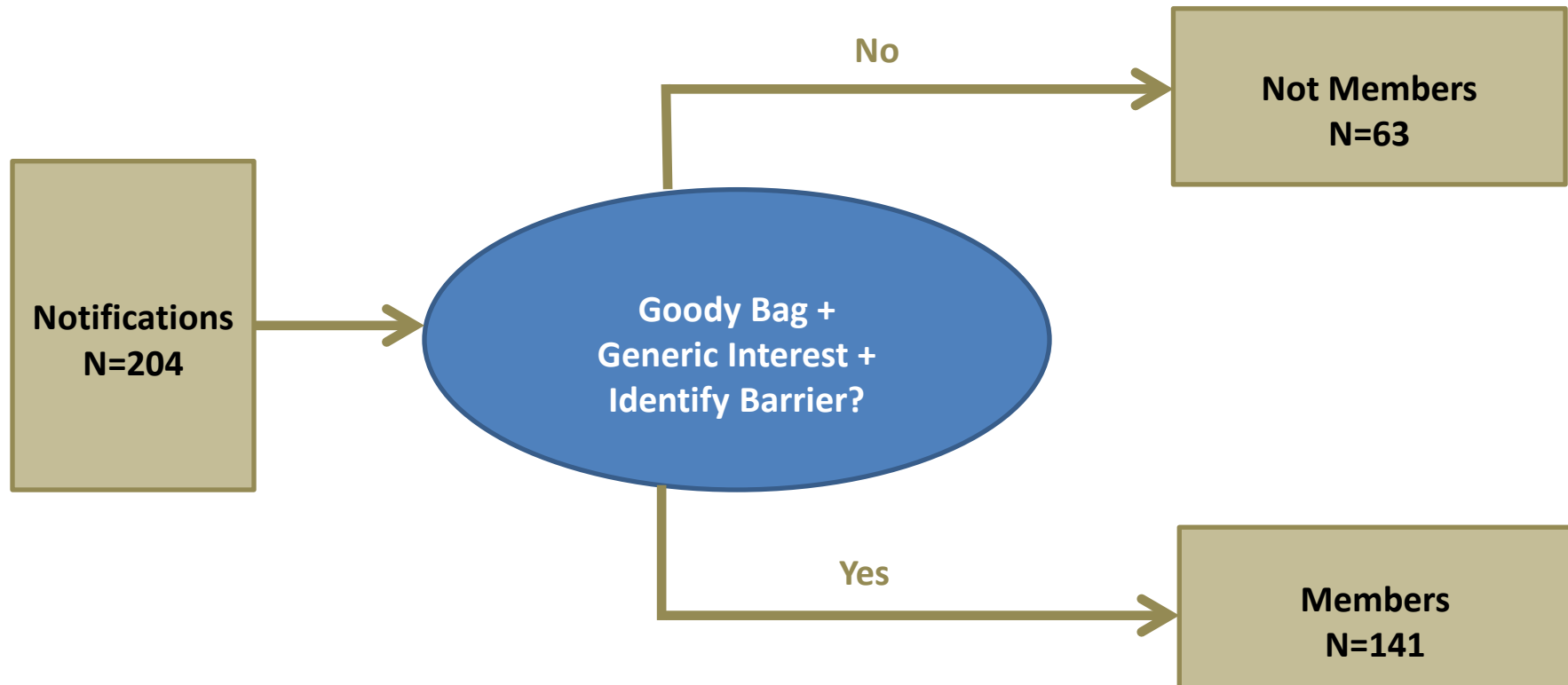
# WorkFirst Services Model and Vocational Stages of Change

## Ongoing Assessment of Vocational Stages of Change

<b>PRE-CONTEMPLATION</b>	Resistant to work discussions; getting job not on the radar; anxious about employment; projects unemployment as necessary for working on recovery-does not see benefits of working to improved health; may state they can work whenever they want to.
<b>CONTEMPLATION</b>	Considers employment as a possibility; will talk with staff about working, may ask about implications of employment.
<b>PREPARATION</b>	Taking stock of oneself to plan for pursuing a job; makes vocational plan; gathers information; expresses concerns; seeks solutions to potential problems; enters training or educational programs to prepare for employment; considers risks of substance use linked to working and develops response plan.
<b>ACTION</b>	Exits training to enter employment; working competitively for an employer.
<b>MAINTENANCE &amp; RELAPSE PREVENTION</b>	Uses available supportive services to stay employed; considers next job as career move; considers additional training needed to get more satisfying job; uses earned income legitimately; learns skills to respond to trigger events or moments.



# Access and Engagement

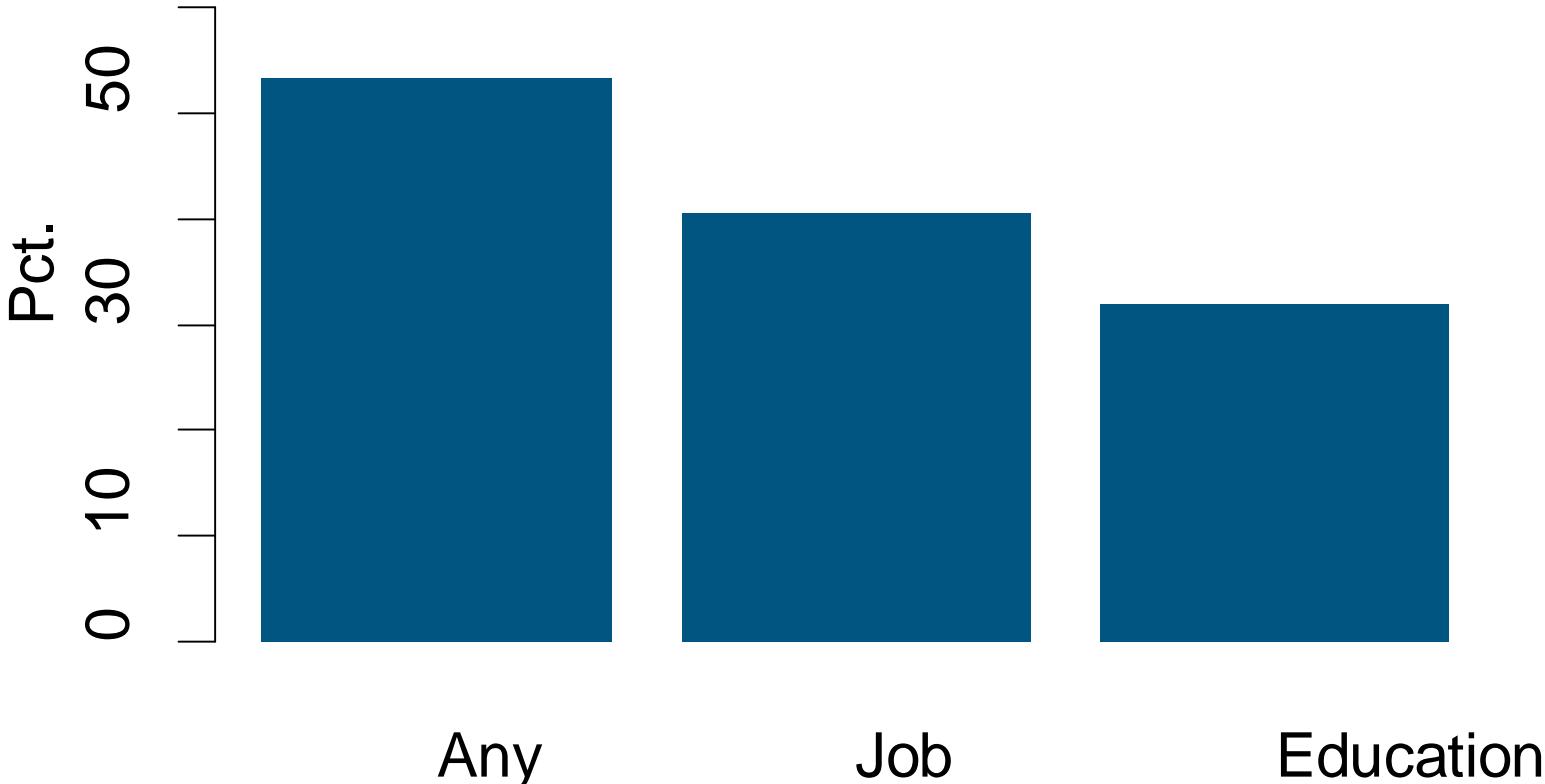


# Population Served

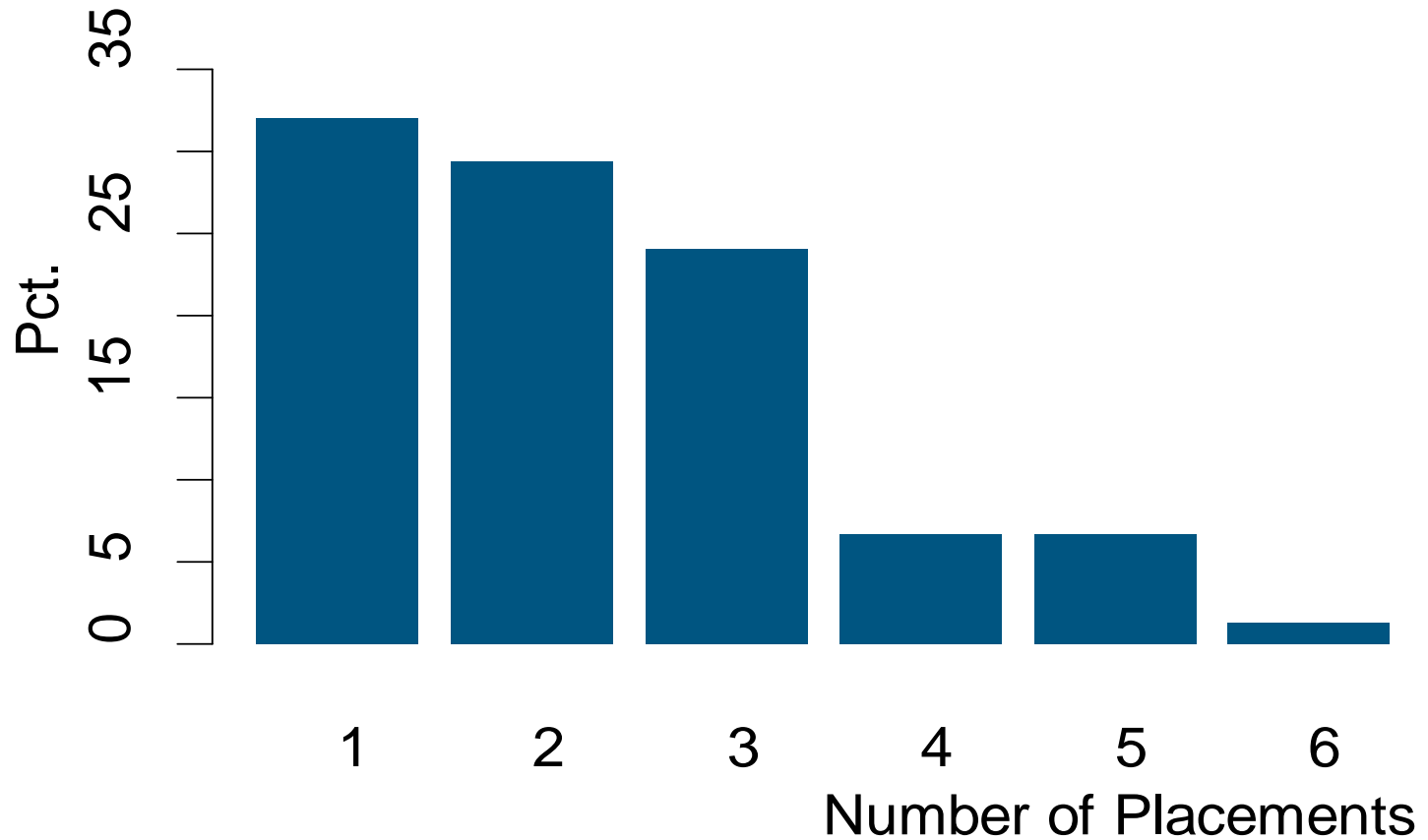
- Predominantly male (75%)
- Middle-aged (median 46, range 20-66)
- Racially/ethnically diverse
- Significant homeless histories
  - 75% 2 years +, 43% 5 years +
- 55% report mental health problem
- 49% report substance abuse problem
- 25% had no High School Diploma
- 25% had some Post Secondary Education



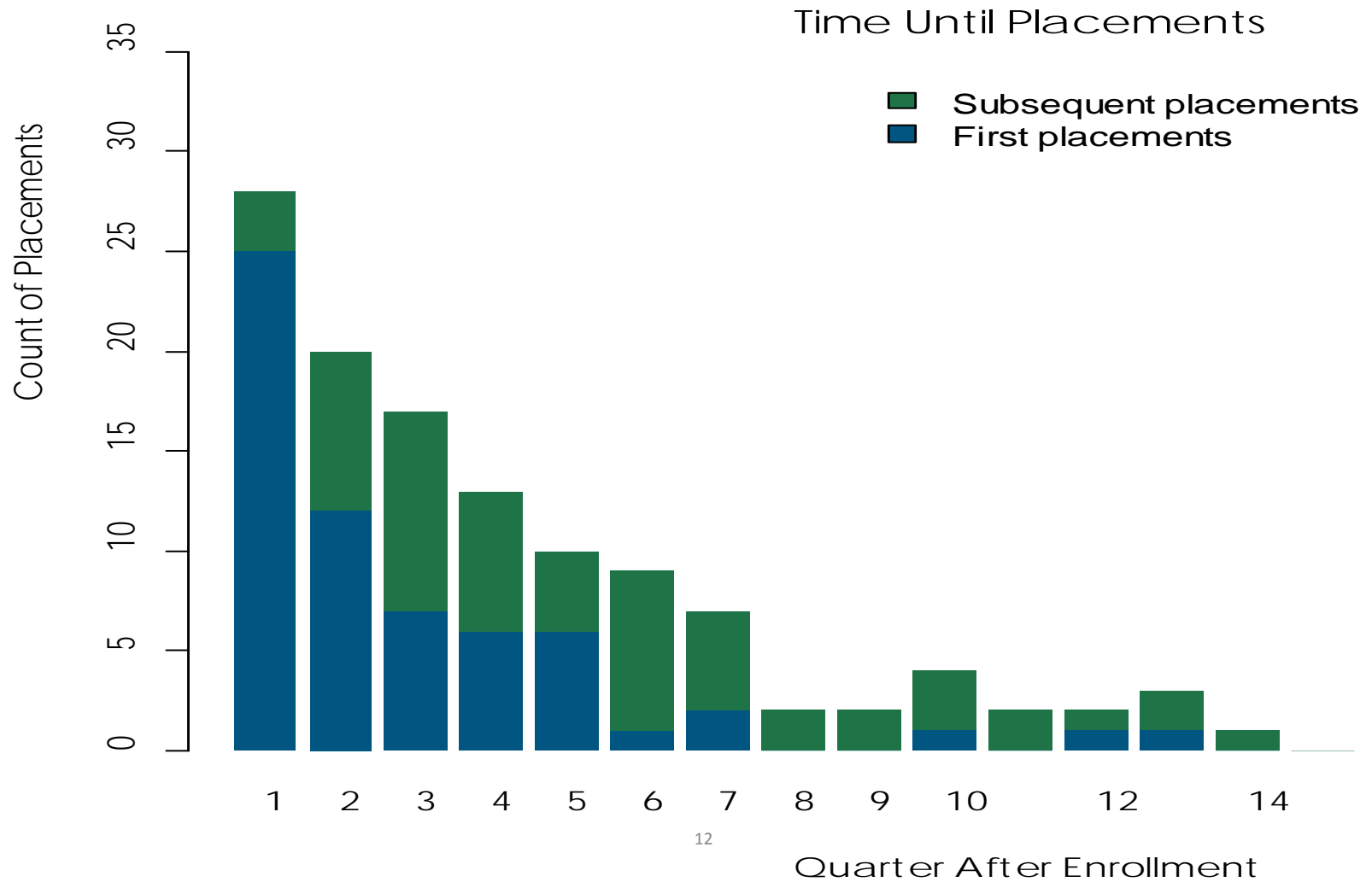
# Pct. of Participants with Placements



# Number of Placements (for those with Placements)

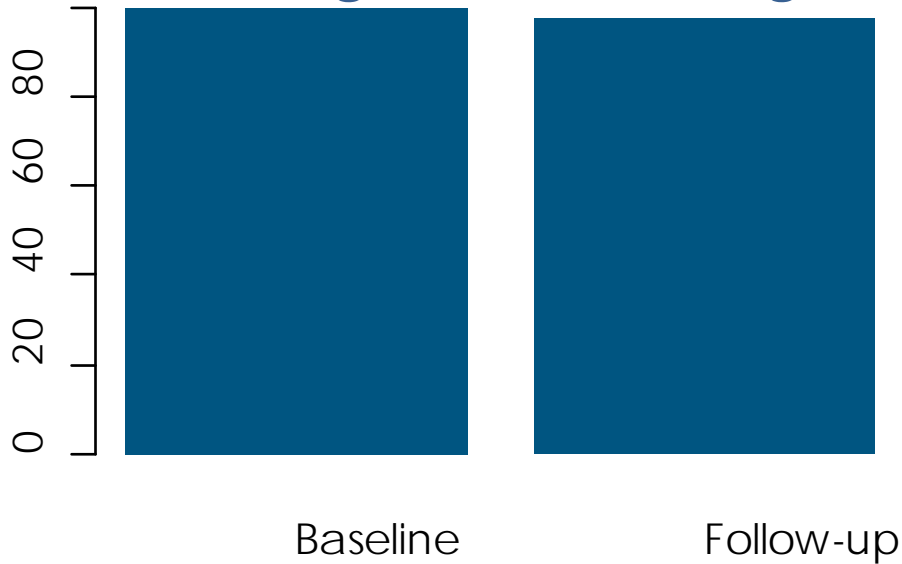


# Job Placements Over Time



# Housing Stability & Rent

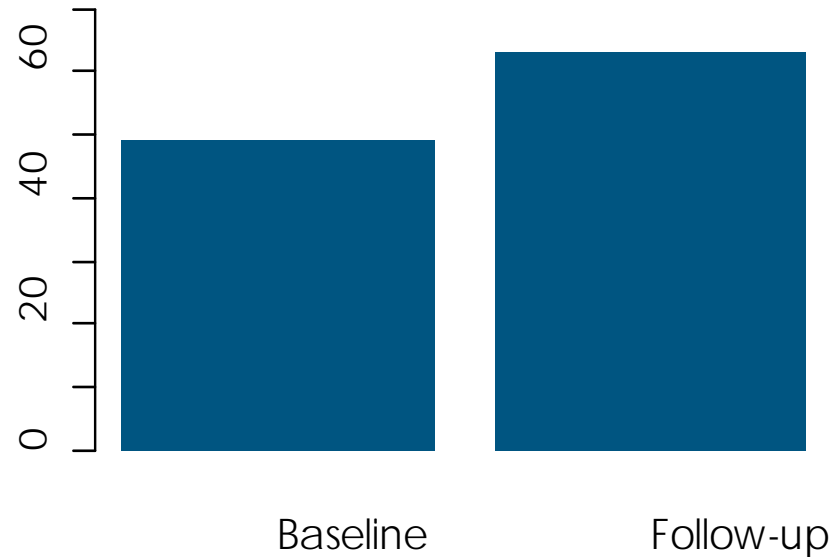
## Living in Own Housing



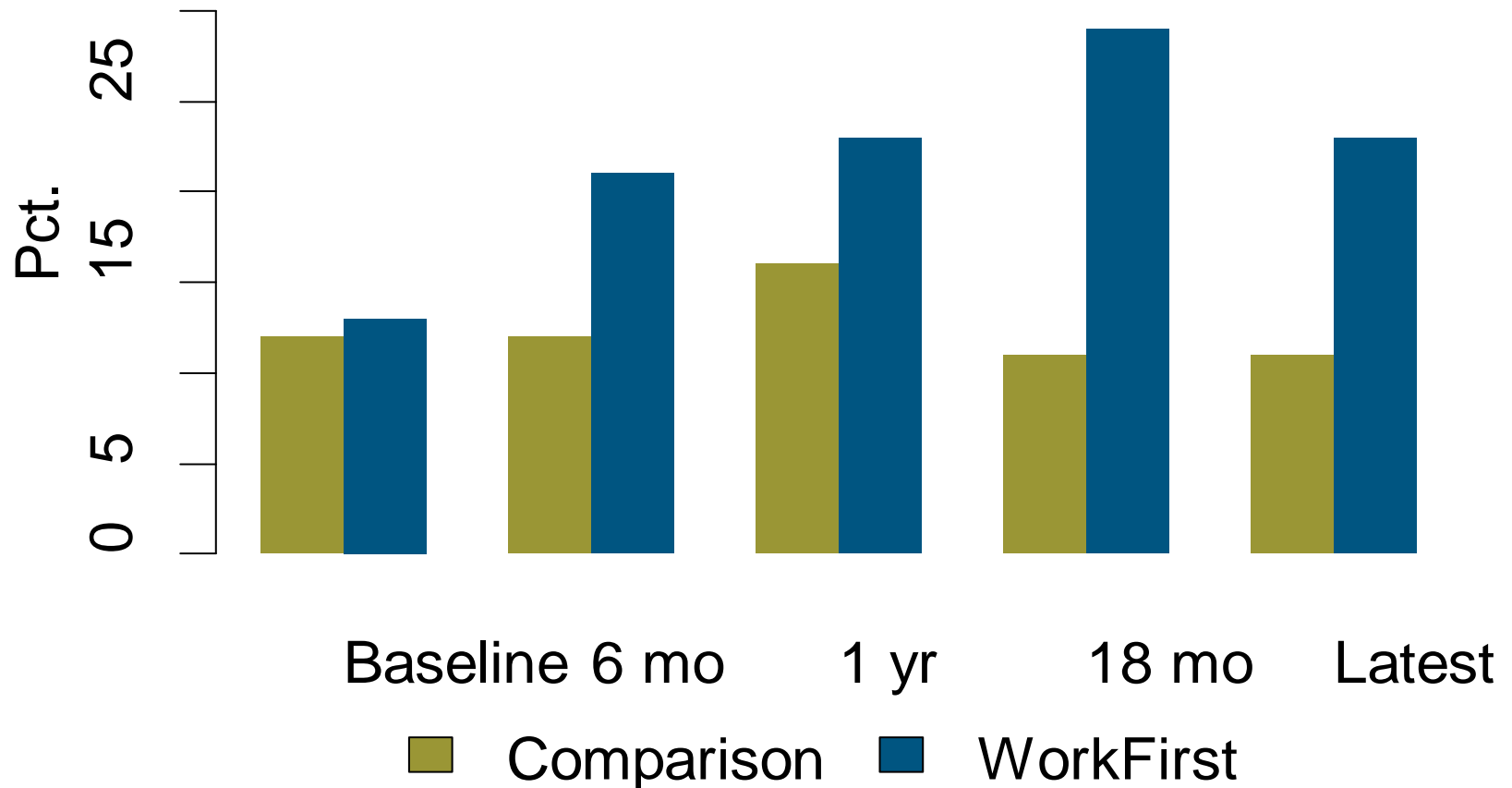
97% housed at latest follow-up.

Percent contributing to rent increased from 49% to 63%.

## Contributing to Rent



# Employment in WF & Comparison Group



Note: Samples different at different time points.

# Program participants feedback

*Clients' views of the program were overwhelmingly positive. They appreciated the attitude and flexibility of both the counselors and the program.*

- **Strengths:**

- *Counselors treated clients with respect*
- *Flexibility and availability of the staff*
- *Provision of employment and supportive services that clients felt were effective*

- **Challenges:**

- *Physical space felt noisy and hectic on occasion*
- *Resources for the program were limited (only 2 staff members, limitations on transportation passes)*
- *One clients wished for more structure in the program's services*





# Our Conclusions

- Providing employment services immediately to clients at the time they are housed is an effective strategy.
- Contextualizing the employment services within Housing First model calls for disregard of the traditional “job readiness” concepts.
- No evidence that focusing on employment was harmful to housing stability.
- Multiple placements are the rule and not the exception
- To be successful, this model requires flexibility, a non-judgmental attitude, and tangible resources.
- *And, importantly, collaboration with Housing Staff is essential in providing employment services*



# Today...

- We continue to provide employment services to housed clients, regardless of their length of stay in housing.
- As a result of the demonstration grant learnings we use the same approach in working with sheltered and street homeless.
- There is an ongoing interest among providers about the WorkFirst model; we are getting inquiries from other agencies.
- We work very closely with housing case workers to support job placement and job and housing retention.





WorkFirst  
Toolkit

Specialized Employment Services for  
Providers Helping Men and Women  
Successfully Transition from Homelessness

## Contact Information

***For more information and to receive a free copy of the WorkFirst Toolkit please contact***

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