

Families Moving Forward

San Francisco, CA

Lead Organization: The San Francisco Human Service Agency

Partners: San Francisco Human Services Agency, San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, Homeless Prenatal Program, the San Francisco Public Housing Authority, the Infant Parent Program, and the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

Background of Families Moving Forward Initiative and Services: Launched in October 2013, Families Moving Forward (FMF) offers housing, intensive case management, and extensive services to homeless families entering the child welfare system that have recently had or are at high risk of having children removed. The five-year program is funded by a \$4 million federal grant and is being evaluated to inform the design of future models nationwide.

The program aims to interrupt downward spirals for some of the highest-need families in the San Francisco child welfare system. In the past, over half of homeless children investigated for maltreatment in San Francisco were placed in foster care, compared to 13% of non-homeless children. Additional risk factors such as domestic violence, mental illness, or substance abuse increase the likelihood of placement to over 80%. The housing and intensive services available through FMF allow these vulnerable families to better protect and care for their children.

FMF is working with the San Francisco Housing Authority to house families using Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers and the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to provide permanent supportive housing through San Francisco's Local Operating Subsidy Program. The Homeless Prenatal Program has partnered to provide the supportive services and to do the housing search, stabilization and retention. The Infant Parent Program and the San Francisco Department of Public Health provide mental health support.

Progress: By the end of the 2017, FMF will have housed 60 families, the majority with FUP vouchers. Families are housed in San Francisco and throughout the East Bay. A small number of families are housed in San Francisco's permanent supportive housing.

Innovative Practices: Making FMF succeed in Bay Area housing markets has required:

- 1) "Holloway House", a communal living facility that keeps participants off the streets and out of shelters and hotels as they look for housing. This provides the stability to allow them to focus on the housing search.
- 2) The Homeless Prenatal Program can pay up to two months' rent for families for a unit where they intend to use their FUP voucher. This helps hold the unit until the FUP paperwork and porting process can be completed.

- 3) Homeless Prenatal Program's housing specialists and housing broker, who help with everything from initial paperwork through lease signing.

FMF is meeting its most important goal of providing vitally needed housing to vulnerable families. As one participant described the experience at Holloway House "it's like you can breathe... You can sleep right. You can shower every day. You can eat some food. My experience is like a dream." In addition the program is fostering interagency partnerships and systems change. Elements of FMF will be permanently embedded into San Francisco's wider system of care.

In addition, FMF

- Developed an early screening tool that helps child welfare investigators systematically apply San Francisco's definition of homelessness at the outset of a child welfare case. This triggers a housing-related response as part of a comprehensive case plan.
- Worked closely with the SFHA to lower FUP voucher eligibility criteria to the federal minimum. This speeds the housing process because many FMF families have criminal histories or other challenges which would otherwise necessitate an appeal.
- Integrates three main evidence-based practices: Motivational Interviewing, Solution-Based Casework, and Safety Organized Practice.

Evaluation and Promising Results for Families: FMF is being rigorously evaluated by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago using a randomized controlled trial design. Major outcomes results will be available next year but early findings include:

- Higher levels of family functioning, particularly once a lease is signed.
- Re-reports of maltreatment may be less likely to occur.

Five grantees representing over 65 public and private collaborations are part of the national [Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System](#) and are implementing family supportive housing in their communities. Visit the [Child Welfare and Supportive Housing Resource Center](#) online for more detailed information about the local demonstrations. The Resource Center provides expert technical assistance to the five sites and is managed by [CSH](#). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children, & Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, and four national foundations developed the \$35 million public-private partnership designed to demonstrate the effectiveness of supportive housing for child welfare-involved families. Collaborating and funding foundations include the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#), [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#), [Casey Family Programs](#), and [Edna McConnell Clark Foundation](#).