

ISHF (Intensive Supportive Housing for Families) CT Collaborative for Housing and Child Welfare

State of Connecticut

Lead Organization: State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF)

Partners: The Connection, Inc.; University of Connecticut; Chapin Hall; Connecticut Department of Housing

Background

Families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population, comprising one third of the country's homeless. There is an association between duration of shelter stay and child welfare involvement. Of children who stayed in a shelter an average of 90 days or more, 40 percent became child welfare-involved as compared to just 10 percent of children who had shelter stays of 90 days or less. Lack of access to housing places children at risk for diminished health, education, and developmental outcomes; increases the likelihood of foster placement; and is associated with higher service utilization and delays in family reunification.

Overview of ISHF Initiative and Services

The Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) collaborates with state partners, community agencies, and service providers to deliver a two-tiered triage procedure including access to supportive housing, trauma-focused assessment, interdisciplinary team-based support, and empirically supported interventions for family members. Long-term outcomes include reduced child welfare system contacts, maltreatment, removal, and foster care placements, and increased family housing stability and parental employment.

ISHF clients have access to evidence-based interventions for parenting (Triple P), Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT) and other mental health services, substance use treatments, healthcare, housing, and employment/vocational services. ISHF has obtained 50 Rental Assistance Vouchers through the State of Connecticut. ISHF includes the following core features:

- Triage and assessment, team-based services, engaging parents as full members
- Interdisciplinary family teaming includes the parent/family, case manager, and representatives from the family's natural supports and service providers
- Fidelity, client engagement, and satisfaction measures ensure families' access to interventions, teaming and housing assistance, and consistency with the implementation plan



Alisha¹ is a veteran of the U.S. Army and the mother of seven children, five of whom currently reside with her. She had trouble sustaining housing since she first became a mother at age 17. She bounced around from various shelters and programs for 15 years until finally finding an apartment, which was vermin infested and located in a high crime community. Despite working three jobs, she was unable to afford a safer, more stable home. After entering ISHF, she moved into a single family home where there is room for the whole family as well as a backyard for her children to play in and enjoy. Her housing subsidy enabled her to cut back on one of her jobs to spend more time taking care of her family. She is now interested in going back to school and starting her own business. Additionally, she's become a voice for ISHF, participating in family panels, telling her story, and advocating for more supportive housing services for other Connecticut families.

¹ This is a pseudonym and stock photo.

Why ISHF is Working

- **Interagency Collaboration:** Representatives from agencies ranging from child welfare to counseling and housing services developed a collaborative model of service engagement that empowers clients to be active partners in achieving their goals.
- **Early Screening for Housing Needs:** Universal use of a housing screening upon entry into child welfare ensures that efforts to “shore up” vulnerable families with child welfare involvement will occur in safe, stable homes.
- **Vocational Supports:** Vocational assessment and support enables identification of training needs, promotes skill development, enables job search and maintenance, and has additional positive effects on education for both the parent(s) and children.

Promising Results for Families - Intermediate Project Findings as of August 2016

Outcome	ISHF	
	N	%
Families Successfully Housed	44	88%
Children Reunified or Preserved at Discharge	11 / 16	69%
Received Job Training	35	70%
Completed Resume	33	66%
Obtained New Employment	23	46%
Enrolled in School/College	9	18%
Additional maltreatment substantiation (yes/no)	Yes: 7	14%
	No: 43	86%
Average time to DCF Case Closure	9.2 months	
Average Length of Stay	17.3 months	

Evaluation Results

ISHF is part of a larger national demonstration ([Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System](#)) designed to test supportive housing (housing subsidies + access to services) for families who have come to the attention of the child welfare system because of chronic or recurring homelessness and other serious, persistent issues such as mental illness, chemical abuse, and domestic violence. The University of Connecticut and Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago are conducting an evaluation which includes process, outcomes, and costs studies.

Promising findings to date:

- Clients report feeling supported and empowered, leading to better outcomes such as housing stability, personal well-being, independence, and connection to supportive services in the community.
- Trends indicate that family functioning improves across several domains including environment, parental capabilities, family interactions, family safety, child well-being, social and community life, self-sufficiency, and family health.
- Families are experiencing fewer barriers and worries around housing and transportation.
- Clients demonstrate gains in vocational engagement and employment.

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 \(ACF\)](#), Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), 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 \(RWJF\)](#), [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#), [Casey Family Programs](#), and [Edna McConnell Clark Foundation](#). In addition, [The Urban Institute](#) is conducting a national evaluation that links the five sites.