



Child Welfare & Supportive Housing

RESOURCE CENTER

Lead Organization: Four Oaks Family and Children's Services

Community Partners: Four Oaks Family and Children's Services and its key partners, the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS), the City of Cedar Rapids Housing, the Affordable Housing Network, Inc., (AHNI), Jane Boyd Community House, and the University of Iowa along with 26 other community organizations, built a shared vision to stably house and provide intensive services to homeless families with young children at risk for foster care placement.

PUSH-CR Overview: PUSH-CR offers housing assistance, intensive case management, and extensive services to families in the child welfare system experiencing homelessness and at high risk of having children removed. The five-year program (October 2012 - September 2017) is funded by a federal grant and is being rigorously evaluated locally, by the University of Iowa, and nationally, by the Urban Institute. The program aims to improve outcomes for some of the highest-need Cedar Rapids families in the child welfare system.

PUSH-CR and AHNI work closely to ensure families basic needs are met immediately and are housed within 14 days of program enrollment. PUSH-CR staff assures intensive services to support parents, build their capacity to care for their children, and prevent the need for foster care placement.

Promising Results for Families: PUSH-CR has housed over 100 families, including 124 adults and 212 children. The average age of the mostly single-headed households is 27, and 50% of the children are aged 3 and younger. Thus far, 83% of the families have remained stably housed with supports.

PUSH-CR is indicating promising results for homeless families that include stable housing, increased numbers of children staying in the family home or returning from foster care, increased financial stability, strengthened parent/child bonds and improved school attendance and performance.

PUSH-CR 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 (affordable units + 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. 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.

Family Success Story: When introduced to supportive housing, families like Chelsey's can begin the process of healing.

Chelsey, age 21, was randomized into PUSH-CR in November 2013. At her first Family Team Meeting, all agreed residential treatment was the optimum choice. She moved into the Heart of Iowa with her two children, ages 2 and 3. Upon graduation from Heart of Iowa, Chelsey's family moved into PUSH-CR supportive housing. Her Service Coordinator helped her set up an apartment with new beds and community-donated household items.



Supportive housing requires building a trusting relationship between the service coordinator and the family. The PUSH-CR Service Coordinator established a multi-agency team for Chelsey to address issues resulting from mental health instability and substance use. Families like Chelsey's, with mental health challenges, report progress toward recovery once stabilized in supportive housing. Chelsey has a strong relationship with her doctors and providers. She worked through a tremendous amount of trauma history with success. With help from her service coordinator, Chelsey also was released from probation.

Chelsey has developed connections to her community and has built a strong social support network. She accessed support through the Family Support program and continues to work with Waypoint Day Services. Chelsey and her PUSH contact worked through many issues. Chelsey was engaged, open and honest and took some tough steps that needed to be taken.

Stable housing can strengthen parenting and support early childhood development. Chelsey participated in several evidenced-based interventions to improve her parenting skills, strengthen the parent/child bond and improve overall family functioning. She participated in Parents As Teachers, Strengthening Families and Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). The children participated in play therapy and the family continues to engage in programming through Iowa State Education Consortium. Her eldest is now a kindergartener and loves school. The youngest attends daycare and is doing well.

Chelsey increased her income by obtaining benefits and now employment. She graduated from PATHS Career Development Program to jumpstart her job search. She completed her forklift certificate with Kirkwood Community College and has full-time employment.

Success is not a linear path and Chelsey will agree that her road was not easy. She has worked hard for what she has accomplished! With the help of a housing voucher, Chelsey and her children have been stably housed in safe and affordable housing for over 12 months. Her Child Welfare case with the Department of Human Services is closed and Chelsey and her two young children enjoy a strong family bond. She wants to continue to provide a healthy, happy safe home for her children to grow. Chelsey wants to give her children a bright future; she is a real go-getter and there is nothing that will stop her.