

Promoting Family & Child Centeredness and Quality In Supportive Housing Programs and Service Plans

Supportive housing creates housing stability and a platform for healthy outcomes for vulnerable families. (CSH, 2011) A subset of families experiencing homelessness and housing instability face a complex set of challenges that include entrenched poverty, child welfare involvement, behavioral health, domestic violence, and trauma histories. This instability can impact their housing, parental functioning and their children's development. Supportive housing provides a platform for adult healing, family strengthening and a healthier life course for the children and youth. (Center for Study of Social Policy; CSH, 2016) Family supportive housing can be a two-generation approach where essential services for children of all ages and parents are provided during a stressful yet promising time in their lives. Supportive housing plays a critical role in the safety and the physical, socio-emotional, and intellectual development of children. To ensure that supportive housing programs are offering and connecting families to the services that will best meet their individualized needs it is important for supportive housing providers to regularly assess the needs of all family members in the household. Then using the information gathered through on-going assessments to build an environment that is both developmentally appropriate to the needs of children and responsive to the unique needs and pressures of parents.

Assessments to Promote Quality in Services and Housing

Quality supportive housing providers utilize a variety of tools that assess the strengths and needs of both parents and children to help them design a set of targeted supports that will engage each member of the family and improve their lives. Accurate, timely and regular assessments offer a roadmap for case managers to work with tenants and their families in order to develop individualized service plans that address their specific needs and promote family/child centeredness approach of working together.

Below is a list of assessments that evaluate child development and parental functioning that include specific measures to help providers understand the impact of trauma and domestic violence on the whole family. While most of the assessments are geared toward the individualized family needs, the first two assessments on the list examine the quality of the supportive housing model across multiple domains that are tailored to the needs of families.

Self-Assessment for Supportive Housing Serving Families

CSH's Dimensions of Quality consist of five dimensions: Tenant Centered, Accessible, Coordinated, Integrated and Sustainable. This self-assessment is geared toward ensuring the quality of the services provided within supportive housing and focuses on key practices that elevate families with children within this quality framework and in each of the four primary components of a quality supportive housing program, Project Design and Administration, Property and Housing Management, Supportive Services and Community. [Welcome Home: Design and Practice Guidance for Supportive Housing for Families with Children](#), Page 35

Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tool for Family Supportive Housing

The Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tool for Family Supportive Housing, developed in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, is specifically designed to help supportive services, property management staff and key partners, to create environments and supportive services that are safe and developmentally appropriate for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. [This tool, includes recommendations and information on how the physical spaces, programming, supportive services, policies and procedures, and staff can support early childhood safety and development.](#)

Child Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)

“The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) is a multi-purpose tool developed for children’s services to support decision making, including level of care and service planning, to facilitate quality improvement initiatives, and to allow for the monitoring of outcomes of services.” [Click here to access CANS.](#)

Child Adolescent Needs & Strengths Trauma Comprehensive Manual

“The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Trauma Comprehensive is a unique trauma-focused assessment strategy and multi-purpose tool that is comprehensive yet flexible. It is designed to integrate all the information gathered about the child and family in one place, (i.e., other measures, interviews, observations, etc.). It can be used to track client progress over time and it also acts as a helpful “translational” tool for service and treatment planning and family engagement.” [Click here to access it.](#)

Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)

“The ASQ-3 is a series of 21 parent-completed questionnaires designed to screen the developmental performance of children in the areas of communication, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, problem solving, and personal-social skills. The age-appropriate questionnaire is completed by the parent or caregiver.” [Click here to access ASQ-3.](#)

Child Behavior Checklist

The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) screening tool can be used to assist staff in make decisions regarding referrals for children have demonstrated behavioral and mental problems. CBCL assessments are designed to be completed by someone close to the child, like the primary caregiver.

Adult Needs and Strengths (ANS)

“The Adult Needs and Strengths Assessment (ANSA) is a multi-purpose tool developed for adult’s behavioral health services to support decision making, including level of care and service planning, to facilitate quality improvement initiatives, and to allow for the monitoring of outcomes of services.” [Click here to access it.](#)

Hurt-Insult-Threaten-Scream Screening Tool (HITS)

The Hurt-Insult-Threaten-Scream (HITS) five question screening tool is used to assess intimate partner violence. It can be self-reported or staff administered and can be used to help tenants create safe homes for themselves and their children.

Conclusion

Working in partnership with families is critical to tenant centered supportive housing and a strategy to empower parents to be the best caregivers they are able to. Utilizing family, children and supportive housing specific assessments can guide a quality service plan, to build trust with families and ultimately change the trajectory of vulnerable children and families.

To learn more about how you can help end homelessness among child welfare involved families, visit www.1rooffamilies.org.

To access resources to implement supportive housing for child welfare involved families, visit www.csh.org/childwelfaresupportivehousingresourcecenter.

