

# Family Unification Program Child Welfare and Housing Study

Urban Institute

Devlin Hanson, Mary Cunningham and Mike  
Pergamit



# Introduction

- A strong body of evidence documents the link between inadequate housing and family involvement in the child welfare system.
- The goal of this project is to determine whether the Family Unification Program which provides housing vouchers to child welfare involved families:
  1. Reduces involvement in the child welfare system
  2. Reduces overall systems burden
  3. Reduces days in homeless shelter
  4. Results in net cost savings



# Family Unification Program (FUP)

- Small pool of permanent housing vouchers, which provide a deep housing subsidy to help families rent apartments in the private market.
- Administered jointly by local housing authority and child welfare agencies
- Eligible households
  - Families with open child welfare cases where the children still reside with the parent (Preservation families)
  - Families with open child welfare cases where the children are in care (Reunification families)
  - Youth aged out of foster care (18-21 years old)



# Child Welfare and Housing Study

Examine FUP implementation, impact, and cost in four sites:

1. Salt Lake County, UT
2. San Diego, CA
3. Seattle, WA
4. Portland, OR



# FUP Models

	Portland	San Diego	Salt Lake County	Seattle
Referral Process	<p>Reviewed by Child Welfare Committee</p> <p>Certified by Child Welfare FUP Liaison</p> <p>Housing Pre-Screen</p>	<p>Reviewed by Child Welfare FUP Liaison for Open Case &amp; Zip code</p>	<p>Reviewed by Child Welfare FUP Liaison for Open Case</p>	<p>Reviewed by Child Welfare FUP Liaison for Open Case, Reunification within 90 days, and Housing Instability</p>
Additional Services	<p>60 families receive at least 12 months of case management from local providers</p> <p>23 families receive case management from CW or other community service provider</p> <p>HC provides information on resources and help with paperwork</p>	<p>CW provides case management as long as the case is open</p> <p>HC informs families of resources for housing search and helps with application and paperwork</p>	<p>CW provides 6 months of case management after they receive a voucher</p> <p>HC provides information on resources and help with paperwork</p>	<p>Reunification families receive 6 months of case management from the referring case workers</p> <p>Preservation families receive 12 months of case management from DPH public nurses.</p> <p>HC provides information on resources and help with paperwork</p>

# Methodology

- Quasi-experimental analysis, using either the waitlist or propensity score matched comparison group

	Portland	San Diego	Salt Lake County	Seattle
Comparison Group	Waitlist or Propensity Score Matched	Waitlist	Waitlist or Propensity Score Matched	Propensity Score Matched



# Preliminary Results for San Diego

- Received housing data, referral data and child welfare data from San Diego
- Present preliminary results:
  - Who are the families referred to FUP?
    - Demographics
    - Housing Stability
    - Child Welfare Involvement
  - What are their housing outcomes?



# Who gets referred to FUP: *Demographics*

The majority of families referred to FUP are:

- Single mothers (75%)
- In their late twenties or older (72%)
- Hispanic (30%) or African American (46%)
- With multiple children (73%)
- Have at least one child under 6 (82%)
  - many have at least one child under 1 years old (43%)





# Who gets referred to FUP: *Child Welfare Involvement*

The majority of families referred to FUP:

- Have not had a prior removal of a child (83%)
- Are reunification families with at least one child in care (56%)
  - many (35%) have more than one child in care.

The majority of children in care:

- Have spent >300 days in care at the time of referral
- Are in care for general neglect or absence (69%)
- Are in a Relative's Home (38%), in a Foster Family Home (27%), or on a trial home visit (17%)



# Who gets referred to FUP: *Housing*

At the time of referral, all FUP families lacked adequate housing and:

- 36% were homeless
- 28% had been displaced by domestic violence
- 9% were living in dilapidated housing
- 41% were living in overcrowded housing

Housing Flags:

- 9% had a violent criminal history
- 37% had a history of drug activity, most of those had completed or enrolled in treatment (95%)



# Leasing Up

- Of the 145 families referred to the housing authority in San Diego, only 106 (73%) leased up with their vouchers.
- Of the 39 (27%) who did not lease up
  - 36% did not show up for intake
  - 15% failed to provide documentation
  - 21% were ineligible referrals
  - 13% other/unknown
  - 15% were issued vouchers but did not lease up in time



# Lost Vouchers

- Of the 106 families that leased up 19 (18%) have since lost their vouchers
  - On average about 465 days after lease up
- Of those who lost vouchers:
  - 42% violated their lease (e.g. criminal activity, unauthorized person)
  - 32% failed to recertify
  - 26% other/unknown



# Housing Payments

	All Families	Families Still Leased Up	
	Lease Up	Lease Up	Latest
Number	101	82	82
Average Number in Household	3.61	3.57	4.35
Average Share Paid by Housing Commission	0.82	0.82	0.73
Average Rent	\$1435	\$1451	\$1431
Average Amount Paid by Families	\$183	\$184	\$246



# Policy Implications

- Only 73% of those referred to the Housing Commission leased up
  - They do not complete the application process
- Housing search assistance needed (e.g., transportation to intake, filling out PHA paperwork, searching for units, filling out applications, paying security deposits).
- Additional resources for supportive services after case closed (provided by a community service provider, not child welfare system).



# What's Next?

- Child welfare outcomes:
  - Does FUP increase the probability of case closure and reunification?
  - Does FUP decrease the time until case closure and reunification?
  - Does FUP decrease re-referrals and subsequent removals?



# Questions?

[dhanson@urban.org](mailto:dhanson@urban.org)

