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Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity
Department for Children and Families
Agency of Human Services
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FAMILY SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROJECT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2014

The Vermont State Office of Economic Opportunity, Family Supportive Housing grant funds are used to reduce the incidence and duration of homelessness. This report covers the results in the first 12-months of coordinated efforts in three Agency of Human Services' districts. This is the abridged version of the full report available online.

Release date: 11.5.14

Executive Summary

WHO WE ARE AND HOW MUCH ARE WE DOING?

The Family Supportive Housing Demonstration (FSH) Project was implemented in the first year by the Winston Prouty Center for Child Development; the Homeless Prevention Center (formerly known as Rutland County Housing Coalition); and the Committee on Temporary Shelter and HowardCenter partnership. The Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families developed the project to reduce child homelessness in Vermont. FSH helps families who are homeless move into affordable housing and provides up to 24 months of case management and service coordination during a family's transition to permanent housing.

The Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) provided oversight and technical assistance to the three grantees. The Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity provided financial empowerment training and technical assistance to the pilots. Lynn Management Consulting contracts with OEO to support evaluation activities.

Each grantee hired one or more service coordinators. These service coordinators worked directly with the family. The number of families each service coordinator worked with ranged from 8 to the maximum of 15. The needs of families vary and affect the type of services coordinated. In the first year, the number of families receiving services and housing was expected to range from 60 to 75.

- 48 families enrolled in year one and received a variety of services based on their needs.
- 36 of these 48 families were also placed in permanent housing.
- 12 of the 48 were not yet placed in permanent housing but receiving services.

Families had been homeless for an average of 141 days prior to moving into permanent housing.

The recruitment and referral process overall was effective in finding some of the most vulnerable families. The characteristics of families enrolled in the program include:

- 88 children and 60 adults.
- 85% (41/48) of families are participating in the Reach Up program.
- 35% (17/48) of families have an open case with the Department for Children and Families, Family Services.
- 32 % (19/60) of adults entered FSH in recovery of substance abuse treatment. The number of adults reporting active substance use or seeking treatment will be collected in year two.
- 75% (45/60) of adults entered FSH unemployed and 25 % (15/60) of adults entered employed.

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HOW WELL ARE WE DOING IT?

Most families (90 -91%) participated in regular case management at 3, 6 and 12 months. Families could enroll at any point in the 12-month period. Of the 36 families in the program, 34 reached the 3-month enrollment interval, 21 reached the 6-month and one reached 1-year¹. Two of the 36 families had not yet reached their 3-month enrollment interval.

STRENGTHS

- Housing Stability² -
 - 76% (26/34) remained stably housed at 3-months
 - 86 % (18/21) remained stably housed at 6-months and
 - It should be noted that the definition of stably housed is general. For example, one family may be in the same permanent housing while another may move into a new house during the interval but at the time of the report, they are in a house.
- Tenant Responsibility- In permanent housing:
 - 68% (23/34) of families were current with rent at 3-months
 - 81%(17/21) of families were current with rent at 6-months
 - 56% (19/34) of families had no breach of lease at 3-months
 - 76% (16/21) of families had no breach of lease at 6- months
- Tenant Engagement – Case Management:
 - 91% (31/34) of families regularly participated in case management and program meetings at 3-months
 - 90% (19/21) of families regularly participated in case management and program meetings at 6-months
- Family Health and Wellness – Sobriety:
 - 64% (9/14) of adults in recovery maintained their sobriety at 3-months
 - 88% (7/8) of adults in recovery maintained their sobriety at 6-months
 - We will collect active substance use and being referred to treatment or recovery in year two.
- Employment – for adults entering the program employed:
 - 67% (10/15) of adults remained employed at 3-months
 - 88% (7/8) of adults remained employed at 6-months.

¹ Families may be counted more than one time reaching the 3-month enrollment in one reporting period and the 6-month interval in the subsequent reporting period.

² One additional family has successfully reached the 1-year interval in the program but is not included in the strengths above because of the small statistical sample size.

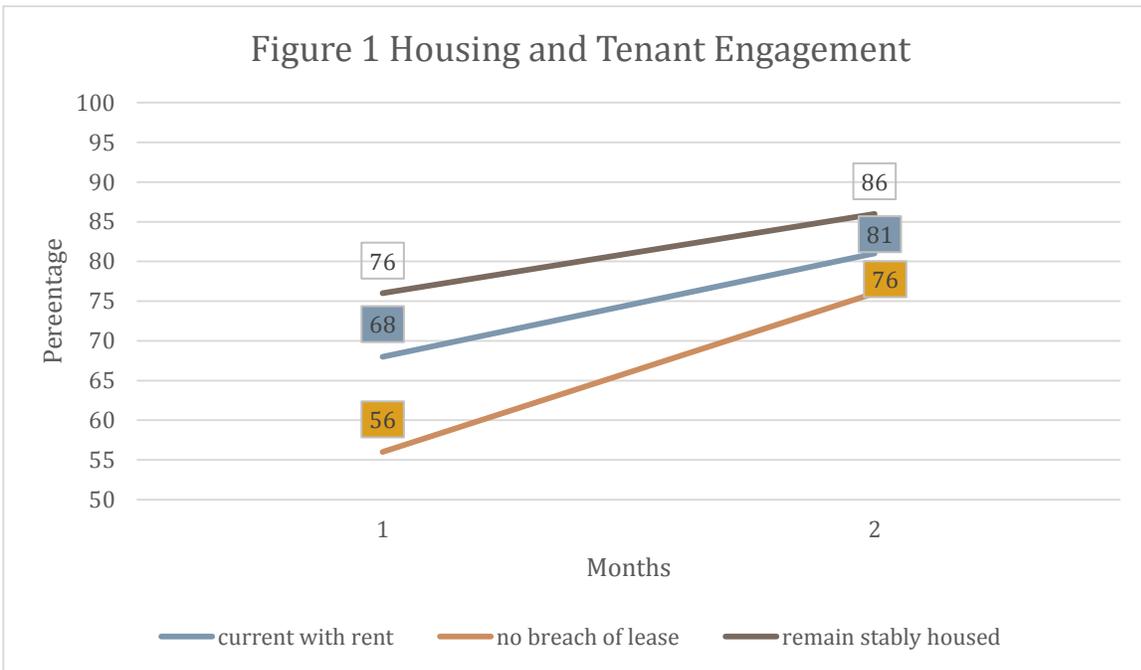
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OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE

- Enrollment – 80% (48/60) of families enrolled during the first year.
- Housing Stability – 75% (36/48) of families had permanent housing while 25% (12/48) of families are seeking housing.
- Financial Empowerment – Steps were taken towards saving³.
- Resolution of Open Cases – 6% (1/17) of open cases were resolved while 16/17 remained open.
- Family Health and Wellness- approximately 57% of children had up-to-date well child visits at recommended intervals while 43% of children did not have up-to-date well-child visits.
- Employment – 20% of adults who entered the program unemployed were employed at 3-months.

IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?

Families that have permanent housing, showed a change in housing stability indicators from the 3-month to 6-month intervals in the program. For example, Figure 1 shows 76% of families reached their 6-month post-enrollment interval with no breach of lease compared to 56 % of families that reached their 3-month post-enrollment interval with no breach of lease.



Families are receiving intensive case management. For example, adults in recovery maintaining sobriety improved for those that reached the 6-month interval in the program: 88% maintained sobriety at 6-

³ Steps to pay off debt, review credit and be ready to save occurred later in the first year.

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months compared to 64% at 3-months. This was the case for adults that entered the program employed and remained employed: 88% of the adults remained employed at 6-months compared to 67% at 3-months.

An indicator that intensive case management is working came out of the interviews with participants for the six-month evaluation. Generally the interviewed participants said compared to other case management services, the FSH program service coordinators were helpful and supportive. They could describe how it was different and better than prior experiences with case management services.

Grantees have increased collaboration with local partners. The partners work together to address challenges facing families in the program such as placing families in permanent housing.

The partnership between the State and the four FSH grantees which included the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity has also benefited. The partnership used a collaborative problem solving process to maximize resources and support grantees with common challenges. The monthly Community of Practice sessions are the venue for this type of work. An example of how the partnership discovered and addressed the problem of finding affordable, safe housing is detailed in the full report, recorded at the September 26, 2014 Community of Practice in-person all-day meeting.

LOOKING AHEAD

The FSH Program partners will continue to build on the strengths of what works and share this with the two new grantees in the Hartford and St. Johnsbury, Agency of Human Services (AHS) districts. Tools to share include the interview questions when a family applies to the program; the application forms; and outreach materials. Other steps underway to help grantees improve outcomes for families are:

1. Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity has set up an internet site to share financial resources and will meet on-site to train new grantees and provide technical assistance regarding the financial assistance program to all grantees.
2. The quarterly report on indicators will be revised. The current report does not capture some critical information about all the work that may be occurring. For example, families become engaged, find housing and may leave the program or come back into the program after leaving for a while. Tracking retention and the nuances of family engagement add context to the outcomes. The quarterly report did not capture people coming into the program who are actively using substances or start using substances in the first year but will be added for the second year of the project. Adding questions to the narrative to capture the reasons an indicator may be lagging is another change. This includes challenges for families unable to locate housing because of the market.
3. Explore ideas such as bundling subsidy and establishing housing production set-aside targets through forums such as the Joint Committee on Tax Credits and Vermont Council on Homelessness to create housing stock that is affordable and accessible to participant families.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our deep appreciation to the FSH directors and service coordinators and their partners for participating in the evaluation process. We also want to acknowledge the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity for their training and technical assistance efforts related to the financial empowerment efforts with families. State funds allocated to the OEO for fiscal year ending June 30, 2014 supported the first year of the Family Supportive Housing Program and this annual evaluation.

