

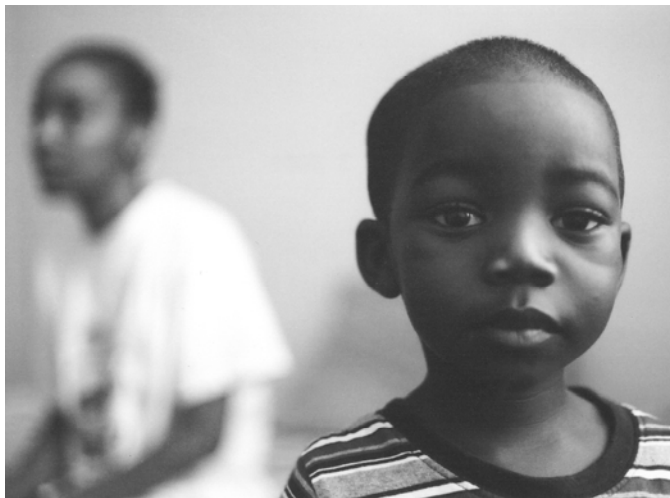
# Beyond Shelter



## The Skid Row Families Demonstration Project

### Year One Report Abstract

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## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

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Over the past few years, Los Angeles County has experienced an increase in family homelessness. Comprised primarily of single female-headed households with dependent children, the vast majority of adults in homeless families are also CalWORKs clients whose primary source of income is cash aid and Food Stamps. Although job loss, domestic violence, substance abuse or other crisis may precipitate a homeless episode, the primary cause is the lack of affordable housing. Without access to affordable housing or rent subsidies, many CalWORKs families are at high risk for homelessness.

Once homeless, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for many families to move back into permanent housing on their own. The problem has been exacerbated over the past few years by Welfare Reform (time limits and sanctions) and difficulty accessing Section 8 rent subsidies. As a result, a subgroup of families who lose their housing are remaining homeless for extended periods of time or are experiencing multiple episodes of homelessness and ongoing housing instability.

Further demoralizing families are crisis intervention and emergency shelter services that often recycle them through the system without positive outcomes, i.e. without movement into permanent housing, in the end. Without rental subsidies, many families continue to recycle through the existing “continuum of care” for months and often years at a time, an experience that contributes to their feelings of hopelessness and despair.

The increase in homeless families seeking shelter at Skid Row missions can be attributed primarily to the fact that emergency shelters and transitional housing programs throughout L.A. County cannot accommodate the numbers of families in need. With many shelters allowing families to remain for longer periods of time, long waiting lists for entry, and increasingly stringent entry requirements, thousands of homeless families cannot get into shelter. Additionally, programs providing shelter through hotel vouchers to specific target populations are also overloaded and often run out of vouchers during the year.

Families encountered in the Skid Row area have often experienced multiple episodes of homelessness over a period of years. They appear to exhibit greater signs of emotional distress than homeless families served in other regions of L.A. County. Parents display symptoms of depression, substance abuse, and problems of memory and cognition. Many are experiencing current domestic violence and/or current child maltreatment or have histories of those issues. It is suspected that a significant number of parents have undiagnosed or untreated mental health problems, including dual disorders. Family dynamics are often unstable and support from extended family or other social support systems has been exhausted. Children display physical and developmental disabilities and/or delays, and mental and emotional problems, all of which are closely intertwined with their parents’ circumstances and deeply affect their current and future health and well-being.

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## THE RESPONSE: THE SKID ROW FAMILIES DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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The Skid Row Families Demonstration Project is intended to illustrate the social and economic benefits of coordinating existing services and systems in innovative ways to end family homelessness, particularly for a subgroup of families who cycle in and out of homelessness, who often have multiple unmet special needs, and who tend to be isolated and alienated from social service systems and family support. The Project is a demonstration of the premise that a “high tolerance” program focused on engagement, crisis intervention, permanent housing, and voluntary, home-based services is indispensable to achieving improved outcomes among this often alienated, hard-to-serve population. It is expected that “lessons learned” from the Demonstration Project will help to impact both public policy and practice in Skid Row and L.A. County at-large.

This abstract summarizes information contained in the Year One Report on the collaboration between Beyond Shelter, a California nonprofit agency, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), the L.A. County Departments of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Public Social Services (DPSS), Mental Health (DMH), Health Services (DHS), Public Health (DPH), and the Chief Executive Office (CEO), to operate the Skid Row Families Demonstration Project.

**Program Description:** The Skid Row Families Demonstration Project at Beyond Shelter is comprised of three distinct yet overlapping program components: (1) Project enrollment into *Phase I – the Crisis Intervention Program*, which includes emergency and crisis intervention services and temporary housing, (2) *Phase II – the Housing First Program*, which includes case management and assistance in obtaining permanent housing primarily through Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers available through HACLA; and (3) *Phase III – Home-Based Case Management and Program Graduation*, which consists of the provision of individualized case management to help families stabilize and the formal termination of services after 12 months in permanent housing.

Due to the diversity of special needs and strengths among the target population, it was anticipated that families participating in the Demonstration Project would progress through the various program components in an individualized manner. Although efforts were made in the original program design to process families through the two program components as quickly as possible, a variety of outside factors and extenuating circumstances prevented the majority of families from moving quickly through the various steps required for a successful move into permanent, affordable housing.

Some of these factors included (1) the fact that the majority of participating families could not be placed, as had been planned, into existing emergency shelter and transitional housing programs in L.A. County; the overcrowded shelter system forced Beyond Shelter to devote more time and money towards directly developing, providing, and managing alternative temporary housing options for families; and (2) difficulty accessing vital

documents for many participant families required to determine eligibility for the Section 8 Program, causing delays in the Section 8 application process.

As a result of these and other challenges and their impact on the project budget, enrollment was limited to 300 families rather than 500 families, as originally designed.

## DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATING FAMILIES

All families enrolled in the Demonstration Project were screened and assessed by the Skid Row Assessment Team (SRAT – comprised of DPSS, DCFS, DMH, and DPH), either prior to referral to Beyond Shelter for enrollment or, among “walk-ins,” after referral to the SRAT from Beyond Shelter. Once referred to Beyond Shelter, families underwent an extensive intake, screening, and assessment process. This process yielded a wealth of information on the histories and needs of these families.

The majority of families in the Demonstration Project sought shelter in Skid Row as a “last resort,” after utilizing emergency shelter services in other parts of L.A. City or County, or being denied access to services and resources because the homeless families system has reached capacity, or after exhausting CalWORKs homeless assistance and other L.A. County programs without a resolution to their homeless state.

**TABLE 1. Select Characteristics of Families at Intake and Enrollment**

Characteristic	Percent	Number
<b>Race/Ethnicity (N=293)</b>		
African-American	69.6	204
Hispanic/Latino	20.5	60
Caucasian	4.1	12
Biracial	2.4	7
Native American	1.7	5
Other	1.0	3
Asian Pacific Islander	0.7	2
<b>Family Type (N=252)</b>		
Single-Parent	85.7	216
Average (Mean) Age, Head of Household (N=254)		34.71 years (sd=9.27)
Average (Mean) Number of Children (N=287)		2.06 (sd=1.22)
On CalWORKs (N=295)	76.6	226

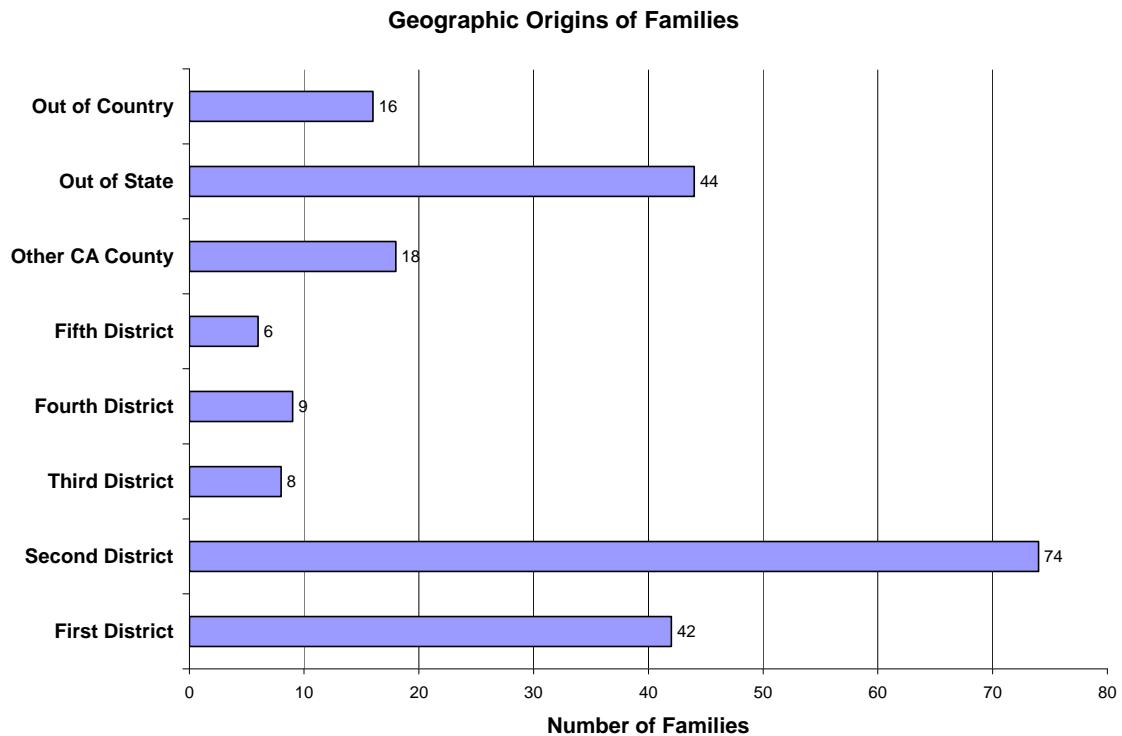
The Demonstration Project is serving households that share many of the same demographic characteristics as homeless families generally. Enrolled families are predominantly single-parent, female-headed households, the majority of whom are dependent on CalWORKs. The typical family has two children in the parent’s custody, with a third child either not in the custody or independent of the parent. Racial minorities are most prevalent, with over 90% of families being African American or Latino and just 4% Caucasian.

At the time they were enrolled in the Demonstration Project, approximately 60% of families had been homeless less than 6 months, with 48% of all households reporting episodes lasting 3 months or less. Over a quarter of families were homeless anywhere from 6 months up to one year. Almost 15% of families had experienced homelessness for more than 1 year.

## Where Participating Families Came From

In order to better understand where families enrolled in the Demonstration Project had been living before coming into the Skid Row area, a review was made of previous residency.

**Figure 1.**



In the Demonstration Project sample (218 of 300 families), 19% of families originated from the First District, 34% from the Second District, 4% from the Third and Fourth Districts, and 3% from the Fifth District. In addition, 8% of families came from a California city outside of Los Angeles County, 20% came from a city outside of the state, and 7% were from another country.

The Demonstration Project data suggest that while some homeless families may sooner or later migrate to the Skid Row area for assistance, those families become homeless in and originate from other parts of Los Angeles County or parts outside of the County. Among families who resided in and became homeless in Los Angeles County, the majority of those cases were concentrated in the First and Second Supervisorial Districts.

## Families' Housing Histories Are Highly Unstable

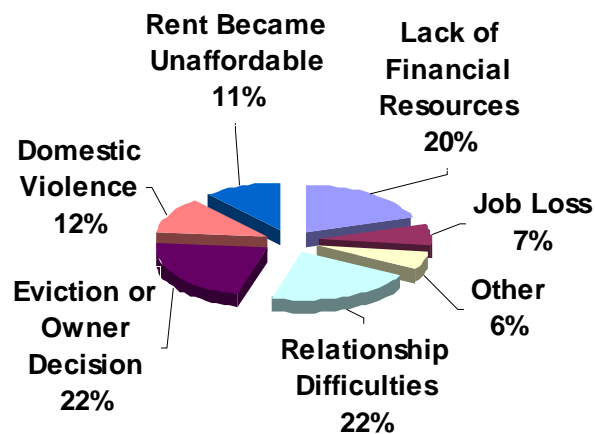
The lives of participant families leading up to and at the time of referral could be best described as highly unstable. This instability manifested itself prior to contact with Beyond Shelter in numerous ways, including frequent moves, recurrent homelessness, and relationship difficulties with friends and relatives.

Less than 60% of adults had lived in any one apartment or house with their children for more than 2 years. More than one quarter of families had never lived at the same address for more than 12 months, with about 15% of families never having lived at one address continuously beyond 6 months.

Given the prevalence of housing disruptions in the lives of these families, it is not surprising that 47% of parents (n=139) reported one or more prior episodes of homelessness with their children. Of these multiply homeless families, 61% had one previous homeless episode, while 24% had 2-3 prior episodes.

**Figure 2.**

### Causes of Homelessness (N=264)



Families cited a range of factors that led them to become homeless, but the principal causes were economic in nature. Eighteen percent of families experienced financial crises, including rent increases, job loss, and unexpected reductions in household income (e.g., public benefits cut or reduced; roommate moved out) that led to their housing loss.

Twenty two percent of families reported reasons related to being asked to leave their residences, including evictions or lease terminations, buildings being sold or converted to condominiums, or the friend or relative with whom they were staying was evicted or asked to leave. Another 20% could not locate affordable housing and cited a lack of financial resources as the cause of their homelessness.

Relationship difficulties accounted for 22% of homelessness, as families wore out their welcome with friends, relatives, and roommates due most often to interpersonal conflicts but also due to the financial strain that they posed to the leaseholder or homeowner. It was common for these families to “hop” from one relative’s or friend’s place to another until they finally ran out of options and ended up literally homeless.

Domestic violence caused 12% of families to become homeless. Reviews of Intake records, however, showed that a significant yet unknown number of heads-of-household who cited another reason for their current episode of homelessness had experienced past domestic violence, which precipitated and often caused prior homeless episodes. Nearly 4 in 10 heads-of-household (n=115) reported past victimization.

### **Many Families Possess Characteristics That Often Make It Difficult To Access Emergency Shelter Services**

A significant number of families have special needs and/or compositions that are typical of households who are commonly denied access to emergency shelters and transitional housing programs.

In particular, nearly 30% of families have four or more children, 23% have at least one family member with a mental or physical disability, 19% have one or more teenage boys, 14% have two parents, and almost 7% are headed by single fathers.

These families might not have had alternative emergency shelter options if not for the intervention of the Skid Row Assessment Team and their referral of the families to Beyond Shelter for immediate relocation out of Skid Row and into temporary housing, including motels. The Demonstration Project, therefore, appears to be serving a significant number of households that are typically underserved or are considered hard-to-serve by the homeless services system.

### **Family Profiles Include Common Barriers to Permanent Housing**

Most families in the Demonstration Project possess one or more housing barriers that are common to low-income and homeless families generally.

Nearly one quarter of families have been evicted from a prior rental unit. Most families have spotty rental resumes, because of these evictions and/or their histories of frequent moves and limited leasing experience.

Almost 30% of families have four or more children. Larger families with limited incomes typically have greater difficulty locating housing that is both sufficient for their needs and affordable, because larger rental units generally are more expensive.

Nearly one in ten heads-of-household has a felony record. Felony convictions disqualify low-income families from participation in most Section 8 programs and from some subsidized housing projects.

The greatest barrier affecting all families enrolled in the Demonstration Project is their meager monthly incomes. The average income (combined earned and unearned income, cash aid, and food stamps, where applicable) for all families was just over \$750 at Intake, while the average income of families on welfare was \$743. Given that these totals are inclusive of food stamp allocations, at least for households that receive that public benefit, the actual disposable income which most families have available to them to pay for housing (and other non-food related items) is even lower than the observed average.

Individually and collectively, these barriers place participating families at a competitive disadvantage in the rental housing market. These households must compete for limited housing opportunities with other low-income and moderate-income households who have better credit, rental, and/or legal records. These barriers would also seem to explain why many families have experienced multiple episodes of housing instability and homelessness prior to coming into contact with Beyond Shelter.

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# **PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION & OUTCOMES**

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## **PHASE I: THE CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM**

Upon referral to Beyond Shelter and enrollment into the Demonstration Project, families were immediately referred to the *Crisis Intervention Program*, which provided immediate and temporary short-term housing through hotel vouchers, placement in emergency shelters in the community at-large, or other temporary housing options (including master-leased apartments<sup>1</sup>). Within 48 hours of enrollment, each family was assigned a Crisis Case Manager who was responsible for the family's health and well-being for approximately 30-60 days. In the majority of cases, the Crisis Case Manager met with each family within the first week of enrollment for further screening and assessment. At those meetings, each family was assessed for High, Medium or Low Intensity Service Needs, as addressed in the Service Needs Typology for Homeless Families<sup>2</sup>.

The protocol called for Crisis Case Managers to have contact with high-intensity clients on a weekly basis, either by phone or in person, and every two weeks for moderate or low-intensity clients. In some cases, however, parents would not follow through on referrals or scheduled appointments with the case manager and contact would not occur. In other cases, because so many families had active crises in need of immediate attention, many families were seen on a weekly basis regardless of the level of need identified in the initial assessment. Meetings with heads-of-household occurred either at the family's temporary place of residence or at Beyond Shelter's offices until a particular situation had been stabilized.

### **Stabilizing in Motels and Master-Leased Apartments**

Because families have remained in motels and master-leased apartments for a much longer period of time than originally anticipated, many of their crisis needs have been addressed during that time. Families who previously felt alienated and were resistant to offers of assistance and support have often become more responsive. Many families who previously resisted working with their assigned case manager have now become

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<sup>1</sup> A master-leased apartment is one in which a third party, in this case Beyond Shelter, is the leaseholder, rather than the household occupying the unit. In the Demonstration Project, Beyond Shelter has held the leases on all such units (utilizing them as "emergency shelter") and the families have been considered "guests," who have signed and been bound by short-term housing agreements with the agency that stipulated their responsibilities with regard to physical maintenance, financial liability for damages, drug use, violence, and overnight visitors.

<sup>2</sup> Beyond Shelter's Institute for Research, Training, and Technical Assistance developed the typology, which is a matrix organized by categories of need or risk factors (e.g., substance abuse, homelessness history, age of head-of-household, etc.) and intensity levels, low, moderate, and high. The typology is intended to give a holistic picture of the needs and strengths of individual families and to shape the case management process accordingly. Refer to the appendices to view the typology and accompanying form.

“engaged” in the process, which will continue as they move into permanent housing and begin rebuilding their lives.

## **Families Who Remained Unstable or Difficult-to-Serve**

As a “high tolerance” program targeting families who are typically refused services by other homeless programs, or themselves refuse to participate in services, dysfunctional behavior and/or noncompliance with program requirements, while delaying a family’s progress, did not necessarily result in immediate termination of services. Unfortunately, some participant families not only failed to respond to case management interventions and support, but also exhibited new problems and behaviors that have impacted the housing-search phase of the program once their Section 8 voucher was issued.

Some families have remained in a constant state of crisis, resisting efforts to help them resolve the multiple issues that prevent movement towards improved stability in their daily lives. For other families, new crises or problems have become apparent, which were not previously identified. Crisis case management has continued in the majority of those cases, until the crisis situation has been either temporarily stabilized or resolved. Once families are temporarily stabilized, Crisis Case Managers referred the case to Phase II of the Demonstration Project, the Housing First Program at Beyond Shelter.

Participant families who remained in the Crisis Intervention phase for a longer period of time did so for a variety of reasons. These reasons included: families disappearing from motels for some time and then re-appearing; participants missing appointments, refusing to provide requested documents after enrollment, or providing false information; a small number of participants were incarcerated after enrollment, while others had children detained by DCFS; current and ongoing domestic violence situations that had to be resolved prior to transferring the family to the Housing First Program; drug relapse in which the parent refused referrals for intervention and treatment; and participants refusing to work with Housing Specialists to identify permanent housing units. Although families were not terminated from the program in most of these instances, delays often occurred in the process leading to permanent housing.

As a “high tolerance” program, the Demonstration Project has tried to provide a longer period of time in temporary housing for such families, while additional efforts to resolve the situation have been implemented. In the end, some of these families have been terminated from the program or have lost custody of their children and are therefore no longer eligible to participate. Other families have eventually responded to case management interventions and have been assisted in moving forward in the program.

## **PHASE II: THE HOUSING FIRST PROGRAM**

By the end of the first year, all families enrolled in the Demonstration Project and still participating in the program had been referred to, and enrolled in, the Housing First Program for assistance in moving into permanent housing.

Once families are enrolled into the Housing First Program, they work closely with their Housing First Case Manager to develop an individualized Family Action Plan, with the level of Service Needs Intensity and a family’s “special needs” helping to shape the plan. Goals and objectives are primarily short-term in the beginning, and are modified as specific tasks are accomplished and thresholds are reached.

Housing placement activities at Beyond Shelter are provided by Housing Specialists, who also assist with processing of applications for HACLA’s Section 8 vouchers and “shallow rent” subsidies (i.e., one year, relatively small subsidies). Once families have a housing subsidy, Housing Specialists assigned to each family assist them with housing search, lease negotiation, and assistance in overcoming bad credit, eviction histories, and discrimination based on ethnicity, income source, gender, and homelessness.

### **Permanent Housing Outcomes**

Altogether, a total of 74 families moved into permanent housing during Year One of the Demonstration Project (through December 31, 2007). Permanent housing includes private-market housing utilizing a Section 8 voucher, subsidized housing owned and operated by nonprofit landlords, subsidized housing with “shallow rent subsidies” for one year, Fair Market Rent, and one situation involving shared housing with a relative.

Families were assisted in moving into neighborhoods throughout the City of Los Angeles, in most cases with families choosing to relocate from inner-city areas. The choice for many families is to relocate away from areas where gang activity is more prevalent, or to move to a neighborhood where their children can continue to attend the same school without interruption.

In December 2007, the majority of families who had been issued a voucher but were not yet in permanent housing were in various stages of active housing search, housing inspection, and/or lease negotiation.

#### **Permanent Housing Outcomes – Year One\***

Families moved into permanent housing	74	25%
Families who received a Section 8 voucher	134	45%
Families waiting for Section 8 issuance	30	10%
Families in active housing search (including unit inspection and lease negotiation)	87	29%
Families in shallow rent subsidy program (ineligible for Section 8)	4	0.1%
Families in subsidized rental housing in the community at-large	5	0.2%

\*Table totals are greater than 300 because the categories are not mutually exclusive: the 134 families who received a Section 8 voucher includes most of the 74 families who moved into permanent housing.

A small number of families have refused to work with Housing Specialists or have missed appointments to seek housing or interview with landlords. Some families have refused every apartment they have been shown. Although families have been given strict deadlines for compliance, at the end of the first contract year, a few families were in the process of being terminated for non-compliance with housing search deadlines.

### **PHASE III: HOME-BASED CASE MANAGEMENT, AFTER THE MOVE, AND PROGRAM GRADUATION**

Housing First Case Managers assist each family in enrolling their children in school and becoming acquainted with their new neighborhood. Families are then provided home-based case management for six full months after the move into permanent housing, to help them improve their coping skills, become reoriented to stable living patterns, and establish links with community-based resources and services. The frequency and duration of home visits depends upon the family's level of service need. All case management is voluntary, however, after a family is moved into permanent housing and thus requires the family's willingness to participate.

At the conclusion of Year One of the Demonstration Project, the majority of families in permanent housing have resided in their own rental unit for approximately three months and most are beginning to stabilize. While a few families have faced challenges that could impact continued housing stability, all families have benefited from ongoing case management and the structure this has provided in their lives. The Housing First Case Manager has guided each family through various difficulties, including interpersonal problems with landlords and neighbors, problems enrolling children in school, problems with utilities, and advocacy with DPSS on a variety of issues. The major issues confronting families, however, have typically involved money management and effective communication with outside agencies with whom they might be working.

### **Follow-Up and "Graduation"**

Families enrolled in the Housing First Program that are placed in permanent housing receive six months of follow-up phone contact for monitoring and crisis intervention by the Housing First Case Manager, after the six-month case management program has been completed. Approximately 75% of families receive monthly phone contact to monitor their continued transition to stability. Follow-up focuses on timely payment of rent, participation in employment programs, money management issues, additional assistance from Beyond Shelter through referrals for services/resources, and the provision of crisis intervention services. At twelve months in permanent housing, families "graduate" from the program, with all formal services coming to an end.

## **Evaluation of Family Outcomes**

The Demonstration Project includes an evaluation component that is tracking the progress of families after they have moved into permanent housing. Beyond Shelter is using an adapted version of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's Program Logic Model for Homeless Mothers and Children for the program evaluation. This logic model posits short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes for high-risk homeless families. Given the time-limited nature of home-based case management services in the Demonstration Project (6 months), the evaluation is focusing only on short-term and intermediate outcomes.

Housing First Case Managers are administering assessment tools to heads-of-household at approximately one, three, and six months in permanent housing. Through the administration of these tools at multiple points in time, the evaluation design is expected to enable Beyond Shelter to measure incremental gains the families are making as they stabilize in permanent housing and begin to rebuild their lives. Outcome areas to be reported on at the end of Year Two of the Demonstration Project include, but are not limited to: residential stability, adequacy of family resources, employment, new or recurrent domestic violence, criminal justice system involvement, and children's school enrollment and stability.

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## LESSONS LEARNED/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW PROGRAM DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

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1. Assessment of family needs, particularly for families with high-intensity service needs, is an ongoing process, not a one-time event, due in part to family apprehension about negative program ramifications from personal disclosure. Beyond Shelter often learned new details about family problems in the weeks and months after families were enrolled in the Demonstration Project. Levels of need and support determined at initial assessment often had to be adjusted based on new information. Program implementation and case planning, therefore, must be flexible and responsive to information and needs as they arise.
2. Smaller caseloads of 10-15 families per case manager, rather than the current ratio of 1:25, are recommended for any program serving a similar homeless family population with high intensity service needs. If the program model is replicated, other recommended staffing protocols include one Supervising Social Worker per five case managers, one Children's Services Specialist per 50 families, and one Psychiatric Social Worker per 50 families.
3. The development of trust and rapport between heads-of-household and case managers is essential to being able to successfully serve high-risk homeless families. In instances where this process is hindered by personal experiences of traumatization and past difficulties in maintaining both formal and informal relationships, the head-of-household may appear "unmotivated," "resistant," or "defiant." Repeated non-threatening attempts to engage the head-of-household eventually can result in greater levels of participation and changed attitudes from parents.
4. There is a need for "high tolerance" homeless programs for a subgroup of harder-to-serve homeless families. Such "high tolerance" programs have been successfully developed for chronically homeless individuals (e.g., safe havens, The Community Model). A comparable yet distinct model is sorely needed for this subgroup of families, who might otherwise be denied entry to or terminated from conventional programs.
5. Many homeless families harbor great fears – of failure, of new or increased responsibility, of living on one's own, of moving to new communities. Programs serving these families must be cognizant of and responsive to this psychological phenomenon.
6. Future public and nonprofit collaborations serving homeless families, regardless of the catchment area, should include at a minimum: agency commitments of more active involvement and interaction in program design and implementation. For example, the Demonstration Project would have benefited greatly from ongoing collaboration between DPSS Homeless Case Managers in Skid Row and

Beyond Shelter Crisis Case Managers to address specific families' emergency needs (including access to vital documents) during the first 30-45 days.

7. A major responsibility of the L.A. County Department of Public Social Services should be assistance in the procurement of vital documents for homeless families, many of whom must rely on public transportation, do not have childcare and must therefore travel with their children, and are often so depressed and overwhelmed by their situation that they are unable to easily maneuver the various steps required of them by government agencies. Such assistance is essential to facilitate and expedite, to the extent possible, the eligibility determination for Section 8 rental assistance.
8. Program budgets for future demonstration or pilot projects must be sufficient in size to accommodate lengthy emergency shelter placements (minimum of 6-8 months) in motels and elsewhere (e.g., apartments master-leased as short-term housing), while Section 8 applications are being processed. As long as L.A. County continues to experience a crisis in family homelessness, the emergency shelter system will not have adequate capacity to meet demand from new or expanded projects and funds will need to be available to provide for alternative emergency shelter options.
9. Hotel stays longer than 30 days should only be used as a "last resort" for most families and alternative, temporary housing options should be developed. Strict controls on motels should also be required in order to ensure the quality and safety of motels utilized as emergency shelter.
10. Because the capacity of the current emergency shelter system has reached a limit, the use of master-leased apartments to serve as "emergency shelter" should be considered. Policy makers and local Continuum of Care officials should consider shifting or reallocating funds presently used for hotel vouchers to this purpose. The use of non-traditional monies, such as from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, city or county general funds, private foundations, and local affordable housing trust funds, should also be explored.
11. A master-leasing program in which apartments in the community at-large are used as "emergency shelter" should be adequately staffed and managed, and must include furnishings. Cost-effectiveness can be improved through quick "turn-over" in families, with a crew being available immediately to prepare units for the next family.
12. Steps should be taken to expedite the Section 8 process as much as possible in order to reduce shelter stays, costs associated with those stays, and the impact of homelessness on families with children. Such steps would include increased staffing at local housing authorities to administer Section 8 Homeless Set-Aside Programs, streamlining the unit inspections process to reduce the need for

multiple inspections, and co-locating housing authority staff at offices of service providers.

13. Rent subsidies are indispensable to ending and preventing family homelessness. HACLA's commitment to the Skid Row Families Demonstration Project has been critical because without rental subsidies nearly all of these families would not be able to successfully transition to permanent housing. Where conventional subsidy programs impose narrow eligibility criteria (e.g., no criminal convictions), alternative subsidy programs with flexible eligibility guidelines must be accessed or created in order to ensure that families are able to receive this vital assistance.
14. Due to the relationship between homelessness and many other issues, including child protection, substance abuse, and domestic violence, policy makers should promote and incentivize collaboration between homeless and mainstream systems in order to effectively and holistically address the crisis intervention, permanent housing, and longer-term service needs of homeless families.
15. Home-based case management for a subgroup of homeless families with multiple problems and histories of homelessness should be provided for a minimum of one full year after families are assisted in relocating into permanent, rental housing, and sometimes longer, when resources and services in the community do not exist in order to address a specific family's special needs.
16. The continued operation of government-funded emergency shelter programs, including the 120-day LAHSA-funded program for CalWORKs participants, should be evaluated for permanent housing outcomes and include the addition of case management and permanent housing assistance. Without these additional components, the majority of such programs simply "recycle" homeless families at a high cost, both financially to the public and private sectors and personally for families.