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What is the link between homelessness and child welfare?

1. **Homeless families have a history of child welfare involvement**
   
   18% of homeless children in NYC had received child welfare services over the 5 year period prior to shelter enrollment (Park, et al 2004)

2. **Use of homeless services linked to increased risk child welfare involvement**
   
   38% of children in families in Philadelphia who used homeless services were later placed in custody of child welfare by age 6. Nearly 7 times rate other children. (Culhane, et al 2003)

3. **Child welfare involved families face imminent homelessness**
   
   Nationally, families whose children were in out-of-home care reported:
   - an **eviction** (26%)
   - living in a **doubled-up situation** (42%)
   - having **experienced homelessness** (29%)
   (Courtney, et al, 2004)
How Housing Issues Impact Department of Human Services (DHS) Families

- Children placed in foster care or kinship care due to homelessness and unsafe housing.

- Delayed reunification of children in foster care and kinship care with their families due to lack of safe, affordable housing.

- Youth “aging out” of the foster care system between 18 and 21 without housing security.
How Big is the Problem?

Removal Due to Inadequate Housing

- In Philadelphia, DHS reports that in FY16, inadequate housing was reported as the reason for removal of a child in 10% of cases (317 cases)
  - This is a **162% increase from FY12 to FY16**

- Nationally, 16% of families who are being investigated for child maltreatment faced out-of-home placement due to housing (Fowler, et al., 2013).
Removal Due to Inadequate Housing

(Philadelphia PA)

FY 2012: 5.0%
FY 2013: 6.4%
FY 2014: 7.7%
FY 2015: 8.6%
FY 2016: 10.0%

DHS, 2017
How Big is the Problem?

Delayed Reunification

- In 40% of DHS Rapid Permanency Reviews (Pilots 1 & 2), housing was a factor delaying reunification (N=53 cases) (DHS, 2016)

- Nationally, 30% of families experienced delayed family reunification due to housing issues (Fowler, et al., 2013)
How Big is the Problem?
Youth Exiting Care Without Stable Housing

• In Philadelphia, over half of the youth with foster care histories named entrance into foster care as the beginning of their own homelessness (Chapin Hall draft report, 2017)

• Nationally, researchers estimate that for youth who age out of foster care:
  • 11-36% become homeless
  • 25-50% experience unstable housing, including:
    • “couch surfing”—temporarily staying at the homes of various friends and acquaintances—moving frequently within short periods of time
    • having trouble paying rent
    • facing eviction (Mathematica, May 2015)
Housing and Child Welfare Challenges

**Housing Problems with Result in Out-of-Home Placement**
- Homelessness
- Unsafe housing conditions
- Overcrowding
- Utility shut off
- Unstable housing/frequent moves
- Eviction
- Fleeing Domestic Violence
- No safe place to go because of adult clearances
- Housing and MH

**Housing Problems Delaying Family Reunification**
- Lack of Subsidized Housing
- Lack of affordable rental units
- Substandard housing
- History of utility arrears
- Overcrowding
- Rental Units:
  - No credit or bad credit
  - Criminal record
  - History of Eviction
- Need Repairs

**Youth Aging Out of Foster Care into Housing Insecurity**
- Lack of preparation to live independently
- Lack of employment education
- Lack of housing appropriate for youth exiting the system
- History of trauma
- History of running away from foster care
- Number of foster care placements
Housing as a Child Welfare Intervention: Overall Goals

1. **Reduce** the number of children who are placed in care due to housing related issues.

2. **Increase** the number of timely family reunifications which otherwise would be delayed due to housing.

3. **Increase** the number of youth who exit care with stable housing.
DHS Resources

- Emergency funding for
  - first and last months’ rent and security deposit
  - Move-in support (e.g. beds, refrigerator)
  - Utility arrears assistance
  - Repairs for owner occupied property

- DHS Housing unit
  - limited availability of housing units
  - challenging eligibility requirements
Strategies

I. Expand housing options with the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services
II. Make DHS policy changes to reduce barriers to housing
III. Strengthen housing related services of DHS housing liaisons and case managers
IV. Training of child welfare staff on best practices in providing housing assistance
V. Enhance housing related data collection
Collaboration with the Office of Housing Services (OHS)

- Increase emergency housing to avoid a child’s removal in cooperation with OHS (in progress)
- Expand rental support and case management diversionary services to prevent removal of children
- Establish rapid rehousing for families waiting for reunification
  - Pilot of 16 to 20 families beginning in January 2018
- Identify housing options for youth aging out of foster care
Challenges

- Different cultures – housing first vs. child welfare system
- Funding limited to literal homelessness – most families with open child welfare care are imminently homeless
- Limited federally funded housing options – need to look at private rental market solutions
- Affordable housing crisis and lack of safe affordable housing for homeless and child welfare involved families in Philadelphia.