THE STRATEGY TEAM LTD

REPORT TO <u>COMMUNITY SHELTER BOARD</u>:

FINAL ASSESSMENT OF CENTRAL OHIO'S STABLE FAMILIES PROGRAM

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Orie V. Kristel, Ph.D.
Alison M. Pfent, Ph.D.
Amanda L. Scott, Ph.D.

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I.   Executive Summary

For the past two and a half years, the Community Shelter Board (CSB) and its partners, Communities In Schools (CIS), Gladden Community House and Central Community House have implemented and evaluated the Stable Families Pilot Program (Stable Families), a homelessness prevention initiative. Stable Families' primary goals are twofold: to help families who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless <u>to remain in their homes or find stable housing</u> (and therefore not enter the family emergency shelter system); and <u>to promote school stability for children in enrolled families</u>. Considering these goals, Stable Families was designed to be a relatively short but intensive program, providing families with case management, supportive services, and cash assistance to help them maintain a stable housing situation.

Who did Stable Families serve?

Of the 1,083 families referred to Stable Families from April 7, 2008 through June 30, 2010, 677 (63%) were assessed and 575 (53%) were enrolled. Of those families who were enrolled into the program:

- 454 (79%) successfully completed the program by the end of this evaluation period;
- 71 (12%) remained enrolled in the program at the end of this evaluation period;
- 50 (9%) did not successfully complete the program.

Most of the enrolled families were: headed by a single adult (78%); African American (77%); female (94%). Many lacked a high school degree or equivalent (32%).

Has Stable Families been successful (at a program operations level)?

Stable Families has met most of the programmatic goals specified by its logic model (see Table ES-1), indicating it was implemented and has performed as intended. For example, over time:

- Referrals from expected sources (e.g., the YWCA's Family Center or YWCAFC, community / neighborhood centers, schools) increased, though there is likely room for improvement;
- An increasing number of enrolled families reported threats to housing stability that were appropriate for the program as it was designed. That is, the tenant screening and income barriers to housing stability reported by most heads of household were neither too minimal nor too extreme;
- Heads of household reported statistically significant increases in their ability to be self-sufficient regarding income, shelter, and childcare from program entry to six months after program exit;
- 91% of enrolled families did not become homeless during the service period;
- 98% of enrolled families received case management services (e.g., budgeting assistance, landlord/utilities relationship management and conflict resolution counseling), and 76% received some financial assistance (i.e., money for rent or utility costs) by the end of the reporting period. Focus groups and in-depth interviews with heads of household who had recently exited the program identified the financial assistance and case management services as the most helpful aspects of the program, in addition to the empathic character of the Stable Families caseworkers.
- Of the enrolled families that exited the program during the evaluation period, 90% did so successfully (i.e., exited to permanent housing). And among those families that exited the program successfully, 95% did not enter emergency shelter during a one year period following their program participation.
- Most school-age children of enrolled families did not experience a disruptive move before OR after program entry.

Table ES-1: Logic Model Goals
[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

Logic model goal	Not achieved	Achieved
Primary referral sources will be YWCAFC, Columbus City Schools, Gladden and Central Community Houses, others	☐	☑
Most enrolled families will have moderate tenant screening, personal, and income barriers to housing stability	☑	☐
Overall, most enrolled families will have moderate barriers to housing stability	☐	☑
Positive "Economic Self Sufficiency" change over time	☐	☑
Positive "Social-Emotional Self Sufficiency" change over time	☑	☐
Positive "Parenting Self Sufficiency" change over time	☐	☑
90% of enrolled families avoid homelessness during service period	☐	☑
Great majority of enrolled families exit to permanent housing	☐	☑
Housing affordability (rent/income) at program exit ≤ 50%	☐	☑
90% of families that successfully complete the program remain in stable housing (i.e., do not enter emergency shelter) one year following termination of services	☐	☑
Of the families served (with school-age children), 75% of dependent children will remain stable in school, defined as either "remaining in their school of origin" or "making a planned, supported transfer"	☐	☑

Has Stable Families been successful (at a system impact level)?

Regarding the program's impact on Franklin County's <u>emergency shelter system</u>, the actual proportions of referrals from the YWCA Family Center and Columbus City Schools did not begin to approach what was expected of the program until after June 30, 2009. That is, until approximately a year and half after program implementation, families experiencing housing instability were not being consistently diverted to the program by these referral sources. The most conservative projection of Stable Families' ability to stabilize families in their homes and therefore reduce demand for emergency shelter indicates that 3%-6% of families who may contact the YWCA Family Center in FY2011 could be diverted to and served successfully by this program. On a per diem basis, CSB's Stable Families costs (per household served) were almost 50% of CSB's family emergency shelter costs (per household served).

Regarding the program's impact on <u>student mobility</u>, the pilot program's logic model established an expected outcome that of all families served, 75% of school-age dependent children would remain stable in school. This outcome was met, considering that after participating in the Stable Families program, 75% of children who were enrolled in Columbus City Schools did not experience a disruptive move during the academic year. However, 81% of these children did not experience a disruptive move in an equivalent observation period *before* their families entered the program.

Conclusions

At the *programmatic* level, the Stable Families Pilot Program attained most of its logic model goals, which suggests its implementation was a successful one. And because the Stable Families intervention was more cost-effective on a per-diem basis than the intervention some of these families would have likely received if the program was not present (i.e., entering the emergency shelter system), and considering the fact that Stable Families leveraged over $10,000 in additional support for its families from other community resources, one could argue that the Stable Families Pilot Program delivered reasonably good outcomes in a cost-effective manner.

At the *emergency shelter system* level, however, the view becomes a good deal murkier. Due to the logistical issues that prevented CSB and its partners from applying an experimental approach to this evaluation, the case cannot be made that Stable Families' interventions produced outcomes that were superior to other interventions' outcomes. Furthermore, the lower-than-expected number of diversions to Stable Families from the YWCAFC greatly inhibits CSB's ability to assess whether or not the intervention had a significant effect on reducing demand for emergency shelter.

Considering these conclusions, can one recommend the continued implementation of the Stable Families program? From the evaluators' perspective, the answer to this question is a "conditional yes." That is, there may be ways to modify the implementation of this program in a way that allows CSB to:
1) Continue offering a homelessness prevention program that conceptually makes a great deal of sense;
2) Collect more information about the program's possible effects on the broader system of care in Franklin County; and
3) Limit its exposure to the risk of expending resources on a program that may or may not be adding unique value to the system.

Given the evaluation data collected thus far, CSB may wish to consider the following modifications:
- **More precisely target the population it wishes to serve.** For example, the enrollment requirement that families must face an imminent threat of homelessness could be more stringently defined as families in need of limited (<$1,000) short-term financial assistance and highly motivated to participate in focused case management, without which they would likely enter emergency shelter;
- **Limit the program's referral sources to those originally identified at program outset** (e.g., YWCAFC, community houses, perhaps schools);
- **Increase awareness of and strongly encourage the use of this diversion program** by staffers at these referral sources;
- **Significantly reduce the average length of time families are enrolled in the program** (e.g., from 90 days to 45 days);
- **Limit the program's non-financial assistance to those services associated with positive program outcomes** especially case management (e.g., landlord-tenant mediation), personal finance assistance (e.g., budgeting), and employment assistance, see Table 17.

Such modifications (along with others as appropriate) would likely lead to a more targeted implementation that in turn would provide CSB with more/better information regarding the program's effectiveness in reducing demand for emergency shelter.

II.   Relevant Program Information (Background and Overview)

The primary focus of Franklin County's Family Emergency Shelter System is to help families who have lost their homes make their way back to stable housing. Emergency shelter, however, is not the only option for families experiencing a housing crisis. As an organization leading efforts to prevent and eliminate homelessness in Central Ohio, the Community Shelter Board (CSB) sees great value in helping families who are at imminent risk of homelessness access community resources and services so their residential situation may stabilize.

To this end, CSB and its partners, Communities In Schools (CIS), Gladden Community House and Central Community House, are implementing the Stable Families Pilot Program (Stable Families) in Franklin County over a three year period. The primary mission of Stable Families is to help families who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless to remain in their homes or to find stable housing and not enter the family emergency shelter system. This project is funded by The Ohio Department of Development, the United Way of Central Ohio (UWCO), and the Franklin County Board of Commissioners.

In order to be eligible for enrollment into Stable Families, a household must contain at least one child under age 18, have a family income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty level,[1] and be at imminent risk of homelessness. Priority may be given to families team have a history of high residential moves (and associated student mobility) and families that have a history of involvement with Franklin County Children Services. As part of the pilot program, CSB contracted with The Strategy Team, Ltd. to provide a comprehensive evaluation of Stable Families. This report presents the evaluation data regarding the program for the period from April 7, 2008 to June 30, 2010.

III.   Implementing Stable Families

The Stable Families Program is implemented by CIS, through a contract with the Community Shelter Board. As of June 30, 2010, CIS employed nine staff members to administer the Stable Families program. This included one team leader, six case managers, one part-time person to administer intake, and one part-time person to enter data. Two case managers are stationed at each of the two CIS partner sites (Gladden Community House, Central Community House), one is stationed at Weinland Park Elementary School, and the sixth works as a floating case manager. Case managers work directly with families[2] to link them to community resources and provide other assistance to help manage their housing crisis and avoid becoming homeless. Typically, the case managers had between 15 and 18 family clients "active" at any one point in time, and 100% of case managers' time was dedicated to clients.

Stable Families' activity flow (April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010). From April 7, 2008 to June 30, 2010, a total of 1,083 families containing over 4,000 individuals[3] were referred to Stable Families. After being referred to the program, a number of outcomes were possible, the most important of which are shown in Figure 1. Of the 1,083 families referred to Stable Families, 677 (63%) were assessed for entry, 575 (53%) actually enrolled, and 454 (42%) successfully exited.[4] At the close of the evaluation period, 71

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[1] As of 11/16/2009, the family income requirement changed to "at or below 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI)."
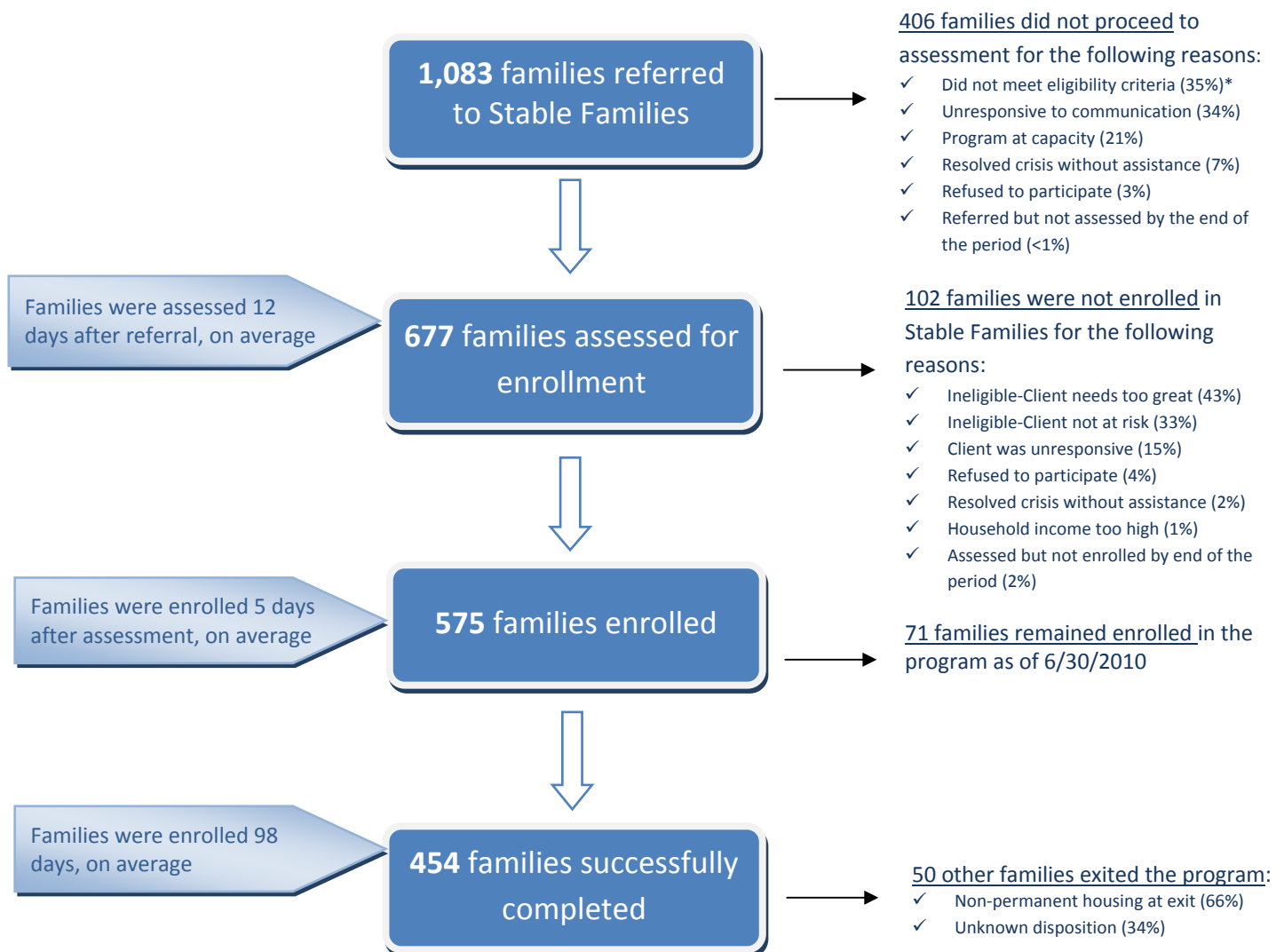[2] Throughout, the term "family" is used to refer to a household.
[3] This was estimated by multiplying 1,083 by 3.83, the average household size of the 575 families enrolled in Stable Families.
[4] "Successful exits" were defined as families that transitioned to a permanent (e.g., stable) housing situation. The average number of days these families were enrolled in the program was 98 (minimum=12, maximum=241, median=96).

families remained enrolled in the program. For more information about Stable Families' activity flow, see Table A1 in Appendix A.

Figure 1: Stable Families' Activity Flow
[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

1,083 families referred to Stable Families

406 families did not proceed to assessment for the following reasons:
- ✓ Did not meet eligibility criteria (35%)*
- ✓ Unresponsive to communication (34%)
- ✓ Program at capacity (21%)
- ✓ Resolved crisis without assistance (7%)
- ✓ Refused to participate (3%)
- ✓ Referred but not assessed by the end of the period (<1%)

Families were assessed 12 days after referral, on average

677 families assessed for enrollment

102 families were not enrolled in Stable Families for the following reasons:
- ✓ Ineligible-Client needs too great (43%)
- ✓ Ineligible-Client not at risk (33%)
- ✓ Client was unresponsive (15%)
- ✓ Refused to participate (4%)
- ✓ Resolved crisis without assistance (2%)
- ✓ Household income too high (1%)
- ✓ Assessed but not enrolled by end of the period (2%)

Families were enrolled 5 days after assessment, on average

575 families enrolled

71 families remained enrolled in the program as of 6/30/2010

Families were enrolled 98 days, on average

454 families successfully completed

50 other families exited the program:
- ✓ Non-permanent housing at exit (66%)
- ✓ Unknown disposition (34%)

Reasons included: income too high; no outstanding rent, eviction notice, or imminent risk of losing housing; no children; income too low for the program to be able to help the household in a reasonable time.

Primary referral sources. During program implementation, CIS partnered with a host of entities, including the Public Housing Authority (i.e., CMHA), Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services, local legal aid, alcohol, drug and mental health service providers, school districts, emergency shelters, property managers and landlords, city or neighborhood community centers/resource centers, immigrant services, local organizations that provide food and clothing, medical/health services, and education, life skills, or employment services. Many of these partners served as referral sources for families who need more help than that program could provide as well as resources for enrolled families who needed assistance in specific areas.

As shown in Figure 2, 23% of referrals during Period 5 (January 1 – June 30, 2010) came from a homeless assistance provider (i.e., YWCA Family Center, or YWCAFC), a proportion significantly higher than Period 4.[5] In actual numbers, the YWCAFC referred 67 families to Stable Families in Period 5, more than double the number of families referred in any previous evaluation period.[6] Also, community based social service centers (e.g. Gladden Community House, Central Community House) consistently referred a substantial proportion of families to the program, serving as one of the "top 3" referral sources in each evaluation period.[7] As specified in the logic model, the goal of primarily receiving referrals from community based social service centers, the YWCAFC, and Columbus City Schools has been met. For more information about Stable Families' referral sources, see Table A2 in Appendix A.

Figure 2: Most frequent referral sources to Stable Families
[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]
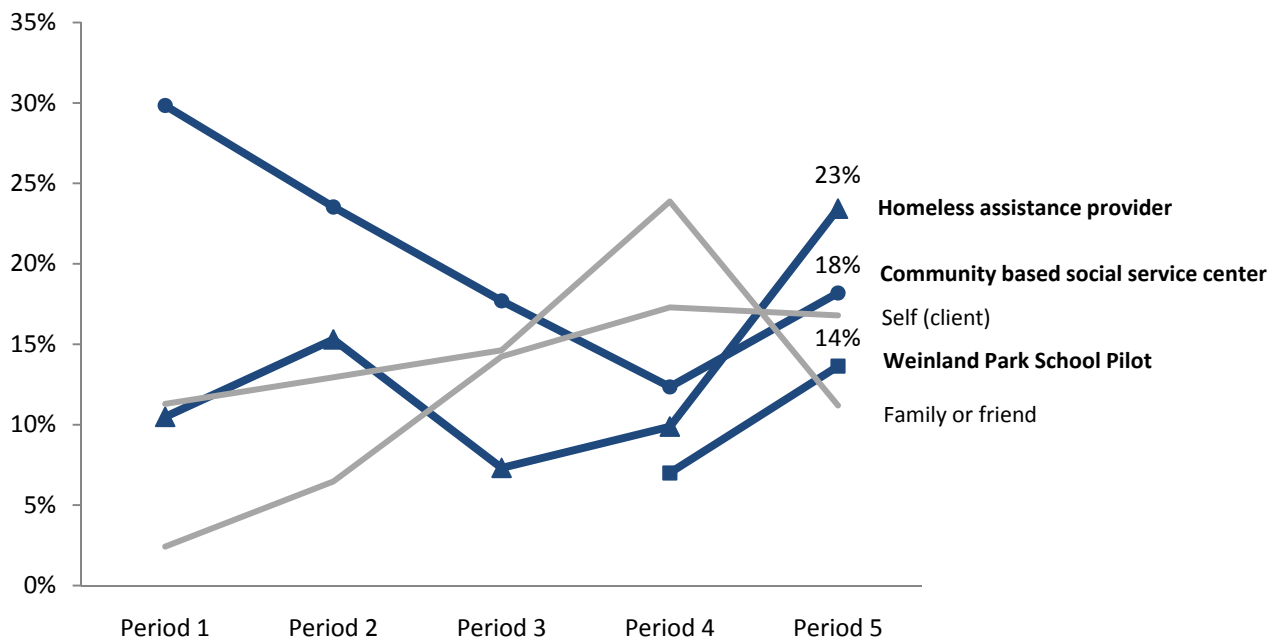
Focus on the Weinland Park Pilot Program. In October 2009, CIS stationed a case manager at Weinland Park Elementary School. This pilot expansion was possible through funding from JP Morgan Chase and The Columbus Foundation. The case manager has an office at the school where she can meet privately with families and has initiated (and maintained) connections with community organizations in the area. In Period 5, 14% of the referrals to Stable Families originated from this school, a significantly higher proportion than in Period 4.[8] As discussed later in the report, all of the families referred by the Weinland Park Pilot Program that exited the program by June 30, 2010 did so successfully.

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[5] Statistical significance refers to the outcome of a statistical test. If a difference or trend is statistically significant, it is unlikely to have occurred due to chance alone (i.e., $p<.05$). To test whether this difference was statistically significant, the following chi-square statistic was calculated: [evaluation period and referral source-homeless assistance provider, X^2=16.94, $p<.01$].
[6] Of course, not all of these families enrolled into the Stable Families program.
[7] Period 1 (FY2008) = 4/1/08-6/30/08;   Period 2 (FY2009.1) = 7/1/08-12/31/08; Period 3 (FY2009.2) = 1/1/09-6/30/09; Period 4 (FY2010.1) = 7/1/09-12/31/09; Period 5 (FY2010.2) = 1/1/10-6/30/10
[8] To test whether this difference was statistically significant, the following chi-square statistic was calculated: [evaluation period and referral source-Weinland Park School Pilot, X^2=6.12, $p<.05$].

IV.   Information About The Families Served

As part of the assessment and enrollment process, CIS staff collected a wealth of information about the families served by the program. This information includes basic demographic characteristics of the household and the individuals within it, along with information designed to help identify families who are most likely to benefit from the services Stable Families provides. CIS used several assessment tools to determine which families to enroll and how to best serve them:

- The "Barriers to Housing Stability Assessment" gauged the head of household's rental, credit and criminal history; chemical and mental health; domestic issues; and income, employment, and education. This assessment tool was administered before families entered the program.

- The "Self Sufficiency Matrix Assessment" documented the head of household's self-rated ability to provide for his or herself in three critical domains: economic, social-emotional and parenting. This tool was provided to the pilot grantees by the Ohio Department of Development and administered at program entry, exit, three months after exit, and six months after exit.

- CIS' "Stable Families Program Assessment" captured additional information of interest to this pilot, including families' top housing concerns. This tool was administered before entry into the program.

These three tools can be found in Appendix B.

A.   Demographic Characteristics of Individuals and Families

Cumulatively, who were the families that were enrolled into Stable Families?[9] As shown in Table 1, more than three-fourths (78%) of the households enrolled in Stable Families, were headed by a single parent, and three-fourths were headed by an African American (76%). Of those clients who were housed when entering Stable Families, 80% reported spending more than 35% of their monthly income on housing. Looking at this from a different perspective, the average housing cost burden – the percentage of monthly income spent on housing – among those housed at program entry was 66%.[10]

For a better understanding of the program implementation, CSB asked for comparative analyses of the households served during the same evaluation period by the YWCA Family Center, by the Weinland Park pilot, and by the Gladden Community House's own prevention program. The scope of these analyses included assessing if the "right" target population was served by the Stable Families, if a different implementation model would be more successful, and if there is a similar model that provides the same outcomes in a more efficient way.

Families served by Franklin County's front door to emergency shelter, the YWCA Family Center, during a similar observation period had the following demographics:

- 88% female, similar to Stable Families;
- 70% Black or African American, similar to Stable Families;
- 3% Hispanic, similar to Stable Families;
- 53% with a High School Diploma or GED, similar to Stable Families;
- $8,695 annual household income (zeros excluded), less than Stable Families ($14,400).

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[9] Note that for these demographic variables, there were no significant differences between the proportions of assessed families and enrolled families, so only those numbers and percentages corresponding to *enrolled* families are reported here.

[10] Responses of "$0", or no housing cost burden, were excluded from these calculations.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of enrolled families

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

	Cumulative (April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010)		Referred from YWCAFC (April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010)		Referred from Weinland Park Pilot (Oct 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010)	
Family Type	**(n=575)**		**(n=69)**		**(n=45)**	
Single parent with children	448	77.9%	58	84.1%	39	86.7%
Two adults, at least 1 parent, with children	111	19.3%	9	13.0%	4	8.9%
Grandparent(s) with grandchild(ren)	7	1.2%	0	0.0%	2	4.4%
Other	9	1.6%	2	2.9%	0	0.0%
Head of household - race	**(n=575)**		**(n=69)**		**(n=45)**	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3	0.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Black or African American	437	76.0%	60	87.0%	38	84.4%
White	135	23.5%	9	13.0%	7	15.6%
Head of household - ethnicity	**(n=573)**		**(n=69)**		**(n=45)**	
Hispanic	23	4.0%	3	4.3%	0	0.0%
Non-Hispanic	550	96.0%	66	95.7%	45	100.0%
Head of household - gender	**(n=575)**		**(n=69)**		**(n=45)**	
Female	539	93.7%	67	97.1%	43	95.6%
Male	36	6.3%	2	2.9%	2	4.4%
Head of household - educational attainment	**(n=574)**		**(n=69)**		**(n=44)**	
No high school diploma	184	32.1%	21	30.4%	15	34.1%
High school diploma or GED	280	48.8%	37	53.6%	23	52.3%
Post-secondary school	110	19.2%	11	15.9%	6	13.6%
Current living situation	**(n=566)**		**(n=68)**		**(n=45)**	
Room, house, or apartment w/o subsidy	367	64.8%	33	48.5%	19	42.2%
Room, house, or apartment with subsidy (nonproject-based)	52	9.2%	2	2.9%	19	42.2%
Room, house, or apartment with subsidy (project-based)	47	8.3%	5	7.4%	4	8.9%
Staying with family or friends	96	17.0%	27	39.7%	2	4.4%
Hotel or motel (non-homeless stay)	3	0.5%	1	1.5%	0	0.0%
Other	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	1	2.2%
Head of household - other characteristics	**(n=575)**		**(n=69)**		**(n=45)**	
Headed by veteran? (Yes)	6	1.0%	1	1.4%	1	2.2%
Involved in child protective services as youth? (Yes)	220	38.3%	25	36.2%	13	28.9%
Have disability of long duration? (Yes)	75	13.0%	9	13.0%	11	24.4%
Head of household - health self-assessment	**(n=552)**		**(n=64)**		**(n=45)**	
Excellent or Very Good	171	31.0%	22	34.4%	15	33.3%
Good	219	39.7%	27	42.2%	15	33.3%
Fair	135	24.5%	13	20.3%	13	28.9%
Poor	27	4.9%	2	3.1%	2	4.4%
Currently housed - percent of income spent on housing	**(n = 407)**		**(n=34)**		**(n=37)**	
35% or less	82	20.1%	8	23.5%	13	35.1%
36-50%	95	23.3%	10	29.4%	7	18.9%
51-65%	91	22.4%	5	14.7%	6	16.2%
66-80%	55	13.5%	4	11.8%	4	10.8%
More than 80%	84	20.6%	7	20.6%	7	18.9%
Currently housed - average housing cost burden	**(n=376)**		**(n=26)**		**(n=37)**	
	65.6%		67.2%		62.8%	
Average monthly income (all sources)	**(n = 503)**		**(n=62)**		**(n=37)**	
	$1,215		$1,105		$1,175	

The Strategy Team, Ltd.

Focus on YWCAFC and the Weinland Park Pilot Program. How did enrolled families referred by the YWCA Family Center and the Weinland Park Pilot differ, if at all, from the overall population of enrolled families? Among enrolled families referred by the YWCAFC, a higher proportion of heads of household were African American (87% vs. 76% of all enrolled families).[11] A higher proportion of enrolled families referred by the Weinland Park Pilot reported a head of household was suffering from a disability of long duration (24% vs. 13%).[12]

Also, these families' living situations were different. Those referred by the YWCAFC (49%) or Weinland Park Pilot (42%) were less likely to report living in a home without a subsidy.[13] A larger proportion of families referred by the YWCAFC reported they were staying with family or friends (40%),[14] and a larger proportion of families referred by the Weinland Park Pilot reported they were living in a subsidized home (51%).[15] Finally, a larger proportion of families referred by the Weinland Park Pilot reported spending less income on housing as compared to other enrolled families, which is likely due to the higher incidence of housing subsidies within this population.

Focus on Gladden Community House's Homelessness Prevention Program*.* The cumulative demographics of the families served by Stable Families are quite different from the demographics of those served by Gladden Community House's homelessness prevention program during a similar time period. Compared to the Gladden program, the Stable Families program served:

- More families with a Black or African-American head of household;
- More families with a female head of household;
- Larger size families.

For more information about these comparisons, see Appendix C.

B.   Reasons for the Current Housing Crisis

During the assessment process, CIS collected information regarding reasons for potential participants' current housing crisis as well as critical barriers to securing and maintaining a stable housing situation. What were the main reasons for the current housing crisis faced by households enrolled in Stable Families? Looking at primary and secondary reasons combined for housing crises across all five evaluation periods (April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010), three reasons were consistently reported. As shown in Figure 3, "Loss of income" was the most common reason in every evaluation period (mentioned by 63% of families enrolled since April, 2008).

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[11] To test whether this difference was statistically significant, the following chi-square statistic was calculated from expected frequencies based on the enrolled population: [referral source – YWCAFC and head of household – race, X^2=4.54, p<.05].

[12] To test whether this difference was statistically significant, the following chi-square statistic was calculated from expected frequencies based on the enrolled population: [referral source – Weinland Park and head of household – disability, X^2=5.21, p<.05].

[13] To test whether these differences were statistically significant, the following chi-square statistics were calculated from expected frequencies based on the enrolled population: [referral source – YWCAFC and living situation – without subsidy, X^2=7.89, p<.01] and [referral source – Weinland Park and living situation – without subsidy, X^2=10.06, p<.01].

[14] To test whether this difference was statistically significant, the following chi-square statistic was calculated from expected frequencies based on the enrolled population: [referral source – YWCAFC and living situation – family and friends, X^2=24.85, p<.01].

[15] To test whether this difference was statistically significant, the following chi-square statistic was calculated from expected frequencies based on the enrolled population: [referral source – Weinland Park and living situation – non-project with subsidy, X^2=58.74, p<.01].

"Loss of job" (36%) and "Rental eviction notice" (36%) composed the next two most common reasons throughout the tenure of the program. Finally, medical emergencies (12%), relationship problems (8%), and pregnancy (7%) were also mentioned as primary or secondary reasons for families' current crises. For more information about the primary and secondary reasons combined for families' housing crises, see Table A3 in Appendix A.

Figure 3: Primary and secondary reasons for housing crisis (enrolled families)

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]
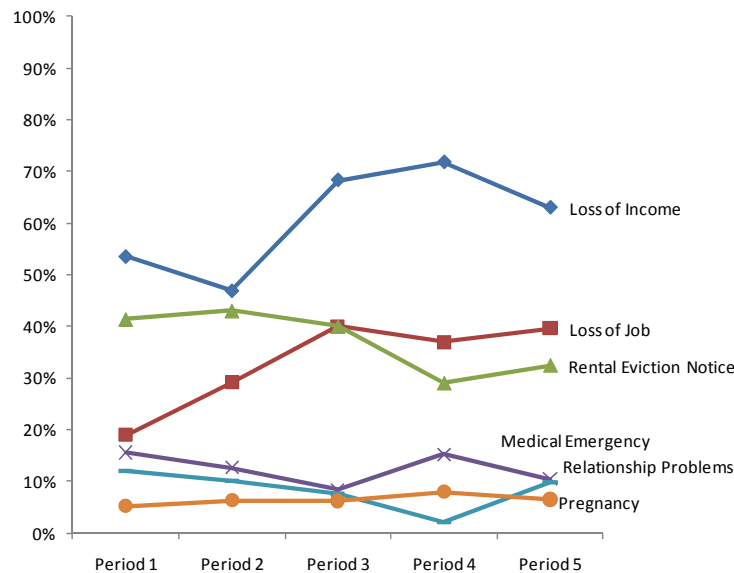
When looking at primary and secondary reasons <u>separately</u>, the same top three reasons emerge. "Loss of income" and "Loss of job" were each reported by 26% of all enrolled families as the primary reason for their housing crisis. As shown in Figure 3a, they were the two most frequent primary reasons in almost every evaluation period.

Figure 3a: Most frequent primary reasons for housing crisis (enrolled families)

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]
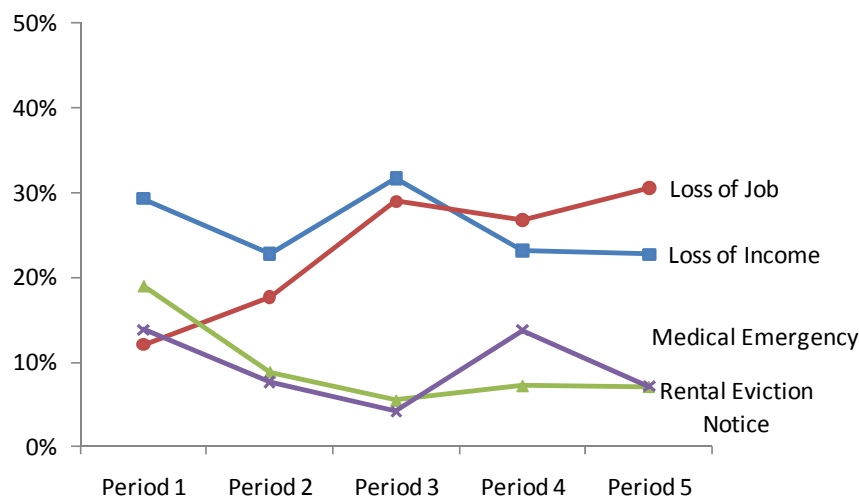
"Loss of income" was reported by 38% of all enrolled families as a secondary reason for their housing crisis, and a "Rental eviction notice" was reported by 28% of all enrolled families. These were clearly the two most common secondary reasons for families' housing crises (Figure 3b).

Figure 3b: Most frequent secondary reasons for housing crisis (enrolled families)
[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]
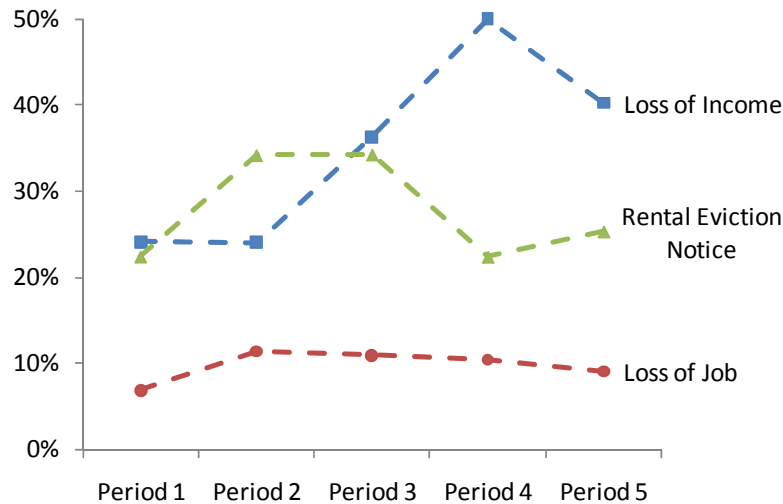
For the sake of comparison, families served by the YWCA Family Center during a similar observation period most frequently mentioned the following reasons for their housing crisis:

- Relationship problems (31%);
- Unable to pay rent/mortgage (19%);
- Unemployment (16%); and
- Evicted (9%).

Note the difference between those enrolled into Stable Families and those accessing the emergency shelter system in the incidence of housing crisis due to relationship problems. Perhaps those accessing the emergency shelter system, unlike those served by Stable Families, no longer have the social support necessary to remain in their homes.

Together, these patterns make sense, and illustrate a likely scenario for many families. First, families may lose their job, followed by a loss of income and then a loss of housing (reflected in the high number of families reporting a rental eviction notice as a secondary reason). For more information about the primary and secondary reasons for families' housing crises, see Tables A4 and A5 in Appendix A.

C.   Families' Housing Concerns

In addition to the data elements required by Ohio Department Of Development and CSB, CIS also identified each family's top three housing concerns, ranked in order of importance to the family. These data were collected via CIS' Stable Families Assessment tool and entered into an electronic database for analysis. These data were then coded by TST staff into the categories shown in Figure 4. The darker bars indicate the percentage of enrolled families who reported each issue as their number one housing concern. The majority of families (63%) indicated their number one concern was maintaining their housing, specifically issues such as affording rent or avoiding eviction.

The lighter bars in Figure 4 show the percentage of enrolled families indicating an issue as one of their top three housing concerns.[16] Not surprisingly, most families indicated that maintaining their housing was one of their top three housing concerns (80%). Over half of families reported "utility bills" as one of their top three housing concerns (54%). For more information about the housing concerns among those enrolled in Stable Families, see Table A6 in Appendix A.

Figure 4: Housing concerns (enrolled families)

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]
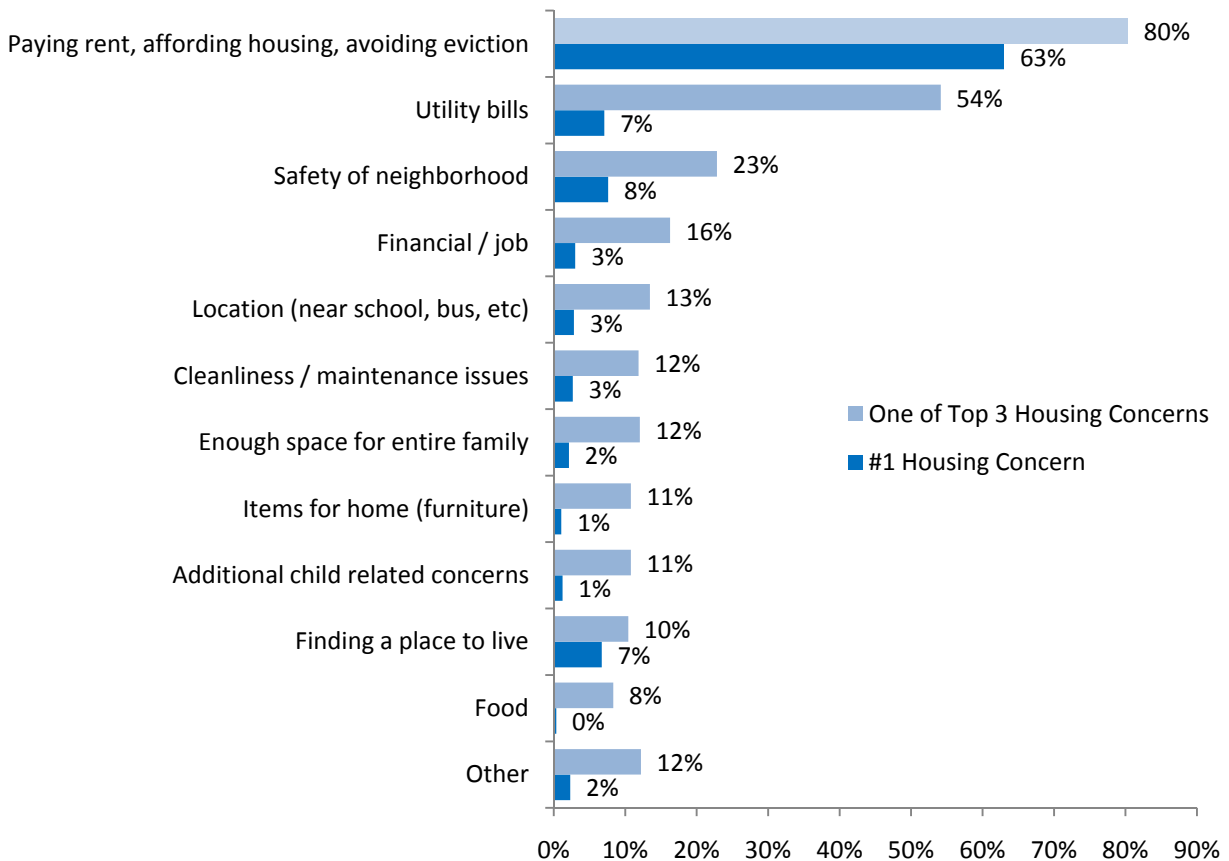
D.   Barriers to Housing Stability Assessment

The Barriers to Housing Stability Assessment was designed to help case managers focus on the unique needs facing families experiencing housing instability. CIS also used this tool to identify families that may have needs beyond what Stable Families could meet. The tool assesses families in three domains: tenant screening barriers, personal barriers and income barriers. For more information about how this instrument is used, see Appendix B. Perceived barriers to stable housing were recorded both at program entry and program exit.[17]

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[16] Note that because multiple responses were allowed to this question, the percentages will sum to >100%.

[17] CIS inadvertently entered exit data in the same fields as entry data through early 2009. As a result, exit barrier data overwrote entry barrier data for 56 individuals who both entered and exited Stable Families during period 2 and early in period 3. CSB referenced earlier data and compiled a new file with data entered at quarterly intervals. As a result, the final file likely includes entry data for some of the 56 individuals whose data was overwritten, but it is unclear how many. The following barriers to stable housing should be considered in light of this issue, which mainly affects data from Period 2.

Tenant screening barriers to stable housing*.* Tenant screening barriers are those that prohibit families from being able to pass the screening process required by potential landlords, including previous rental history, criminal history and credit history. Table 2 presents the number and percentage of enrolled families[18] facing each type of tenant screening barrier, from the start of the program in April, 2008 through June 30, 2010. More than half of the families enrolled in Stable Families reported having had at least one eviction (52%) or at least one eviction notice (74%), while nearly two-thirds of enrolled families reported having had at least one unpaid utility bill in the recent past (65%).

Table 2: Tenant screening barriers to stable housing (enrolled families)
[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

# of evictions or unlawful detainers	n=565	
0	269	47.6%
1	197	34.9%
2-3	85	15.0%
More than 3	14	2.5%
# of eviction notices	**n=566**	
0	147	26.0%
1	234	41.3%
2-3	162	28.6%
More than 3	23	4.1%
# of unpaid utility bills	**n=562**	
0	199	35.4%
1	167	29.7%
2-3	194	34.5%
More than 3	2	0.4%
Other screening barriers present	**n=566**	
Poor reference from landlords	250	44.2%
Lack of rental history	13	2.3%
Lack of credit history	115	20.3%
One or more misdemeanors	140	24.7%
Critical felony	26	4.6%
Other felony	43	7.6%
At least one tenant screening barrier	**545**	**96.3%**

Overall, 96.3% of households enrolled in Stable Families from April 7, 2008 to June 30, 2010 had at least one tenant screening barrier to housing stability. For more information about these tenant screening barriers, see Tables A7 and A8 in Appendix A.[19]

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[18] Because the proportion of assessed families and enrolled families reporting different barriers to stable housing are consistently similar, specific counts and percentages for assessed families are only reported in Appendix A.
[19] These tables present the number and percentage of families facing tenant screening barriers in each of the five evaluation periods as well as cumulatively.

Personal barriers to stable housing. The second category of housing barriers, "personal barriers," references those characteristics of heads of household that may prevent families from attaining stable housing situations. These barriers include chemical dependency, mental health, and domestic violence issues. Table 3 presents the number and percentage of enrolled families facing each type of personal barrier through June 30, 2010. Compared to the tenant screening barriers reviewed previously, the incidence of these personal barriers was much lower. However, some threats to housing stability were reported. For example, 14% of enrolled families reported that domestic violence contributed to their housing instability.

Table 3: Personal barriers to stable housing (enrolled families)
[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

Barriers	n=566	
Mental health resulted in housing loss	19	3.4%
Mental health currently affects housing	26	4.6%
Domestic violence resulted in housing loss	81	14.3%
Domestic violence currently affects housing	9	1.6%
Chemical use resulted in housing loss	24	4.2%
Chemical use currently affects housing	3	0.5%
At least one personal barrier	**121**	**21.4%**

Overall, between April 7, 2008 and June 30, 2010, 21% of the families enrolled into Stable Families had at least one personal barrier to housing stability. For more information about these personal barriers, see Tables A9 and A10 in Appendix A.[20]

Income barriers to stable housing. Income barriers include the cost of current housing, lack of income, and difficulties in finding and maintaining stable employment. Table 4 presents the cumulative number and percentage of enrolled families facing each type of income barrier.

Almost all (94%) enrolled families reported needing financial assistance for housing, and a large majority of enrolled households lacked a permanent housing subsidy (81%) or lacked steady, full-time employment (67%). Most enrolled families that were housed at program entry spent more than 35% of their monthly income on housing costs (80%).

Table 4: Income barriers to stable housing (enrolled families)
[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

Currently housed: Percent of income spent on housing	n=407	
35% or less	82	20.1%
36-50%	95	23.3%
51-65%	91	22.4%
66-80%	55	13.5%
More than 80%	84	20.6%

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[20] These tables present the number and percentage of families facing personal barriers in each of the five evaluation periods and cumulatively.

Table 4 (continued): Income barriers to stable housing (enrolled families)[21]

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

Not currently housed: Amount available to spend on housing	n=87	
$0-200	13	14.9%
$201-300	5	5.7%
$301-400	16	18.4%
$401-500	29	33.3%
$501-600	14	16.1%
$601-700	9	10.3%
$701-800	1	1.1%

Other indicators of income barriers	n=564	
Needs financial assistance for housing	528	93.6%
Lacks permanent housing subsidy	459	81.4%
Lacks steady, full-time employment	378	67.0%
Lacks HS diploma or GED	174	30.9%
Lack of reliable transportation	217	38.5%
Lacks affordable / reliable childcare	150	26.6%
Limited English proficiency	2	0.4%
At least one income barrier	**563**	**99.5%**

Overall, between April 7, 2008 and June 30, 2010, 99.5% of the families enrolled into Stable Families had at least one income barrier to housing stability. For more information about these income barriers, see Tables A11 and A12 in Appendix A.[22]

Summary effects of tenant screening, personal and income barriers. The Barriers to Housing Stability Assessment tool combined each of the specific indicators just reviewed into one summary rating for each type of housing barrier (tenant screening, personal, and income). This summary rating has a four point scale, ranging from "No effect" to "Major effect." Figure 6 presents the percentage of enrolled families that faced each kind of barrier and the extent to which it affected their ability to acquire and maintain housing.

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[21] The data in Table 4 references information collected by the Barriers to Housing Stability (income) tool. The data in Table 1 references information collected by CIS' tool. These two sets of information are not perfectly correlated – so there is some small difference (<4 percentage points) when one compares "lacks permanent housing subsidy" and "lacks HS diploma or GED."

[22] These tables present the number and percentage of families facing income barriers in each of the five evaluation periods and cumulatively.

Figure 6: Summary effect of barriers to stable housing (enrolled families)

[Period: April 7, 2008 to June 30, 2010]
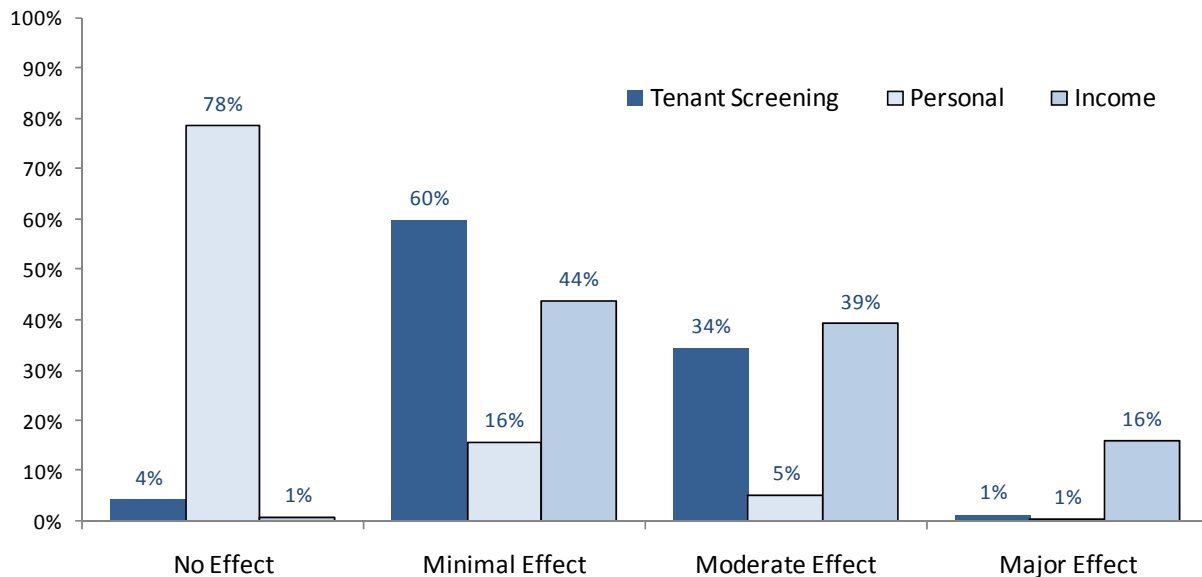
An overwhelming majority of families enrolled in the program had a tenant screening or income barrier that had at least a minimal effect on their housing stability. Almost all (94%) families faced tenant screening barriers that had a minimal or moderate effect on their ability to attain stable housing, and over half (55%) of families faced income barriers that had a moderate or major effect. Personal barriers were less impactful, having no effect on 78% of families. For more information about the summary effects of these barriers to stable housing, including period-by-period proportions among assessed and enrolled families, see Tables A13 and A14 in Appendix A.

Overall levels of barriers to stable housing. The final step of the Barriers to Housing Stability Assessment considers all three types of barriers: tenant screening, personal, and income. The level of difficulty families are likely to face when attempting to acquire and maintain stable housing is expressed via the following scale:

- Level 1: Zero to minimal barriers – able to obtain/maintain housing with no or minimal support.
- Level 2: Moderate barriers – able to obtain/maintain housing with moderate one-time or brief transitional supports.
- Level 3: Serious barriers – able to obtain/maintain housing with significant, intensive transitional supports.
- Level 4: Long-term barriers – able to obtain/maintain housing with significant, intensive transitional or ongoing supports.
- Level 5: Severe barriers – able to obtain/maintain housing with significant, intensive and ongoing supports.

The number and percentage of families facing each overall barrier level are presented in Table 5. The majority of families faced moderate barriers (70%) and no enrolled families faced long-term or severe barriers. These data are consistent with the program's aim.

**Table 5: Summary effects of barriers to stable housing (enrolled families)**

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

Overall barrier level	n=566	
Level 1: Zero to minimal barriers	146	25.8%
Level 2: Moderate barriers	398	70.3%
Level 3: Serious barriers	22	3.9%
Level 4: Long-term barriers	0	0.0%
Level 5: Severe barriers	0	0.0%

Figure 7 shows the overall level of barriers faced by enrolled families over time. The proportion of families classified as having moderate barriers increased significantly[23] between Periods 2 and 3, from 38% to 75%, and the proportion of families classified as having zero to minimal barriers decreased significantly[24] between Period 2 and 3, from 60% to 20%. From Period 3 (starting January 1, 2009) to the end of the current evaluation period (June 30, 2010) these proportions remained at a constant level, and the majority of families were classified as facing moderate barriers to acquire and maintain housing. This pattern suggests that after approximately a year of operation, the Stable Families program was enrolling and serving families who were reasonably well-matched to the types of support offered by the program.

Figure 7: Overall level of barriers to stable housing (enrolled families)

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

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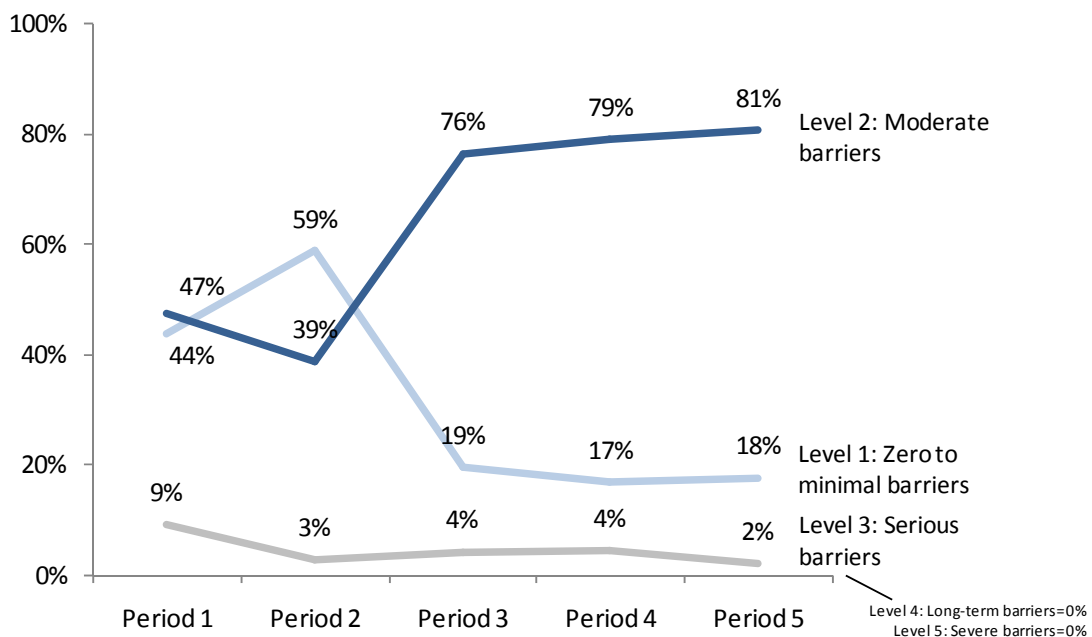
[23] To test whether the difference was statistically significant, the following chi-square statistic was calculated: [evaluation period and impact of income barrier-moderate, X^2=29.28, p<.01].
[24] To test whether the difference was statistically significant, the following chi-square statistic was calculated: [evaluation period and impact of income barrier-zero to minimal, X^2=34.69, p<.01].

For more information about the summary effects of these barriers to stable housing, including period-by-period proportions among assessed and enrolled families, see Tables A13 and A14 in Appendix A.

E.   Self Sufficiency Matrix Assessment

Finally, enrolled families completed a Self Sufficiency Matrix (SSM) assessment at program entry, program exit, three months post-exit, and six months post-exit. The SSM tool assesses each family on seventeen distinct self-sufficiency components. Previously, other researchers[25] have analyzed these seventeen components by grouping them into three composite scores: *Economic*; *Social-emotional*; and *Parenting*. This section begins in a similar manner, reviewing component and composite scores across multiple administrations of the SSM tool. We then go on to suggest an alternative data-driven way of grouping these items.[26]

Looking first at the *Economic* composite score and its component elements, statistically significant increases in self-rated ability to meet basic <u>income</u> and <u>shelter</u> needs were observed from program entry to six months post-exit. See Figure 8.

Figure 8: SSM – Economic Domain
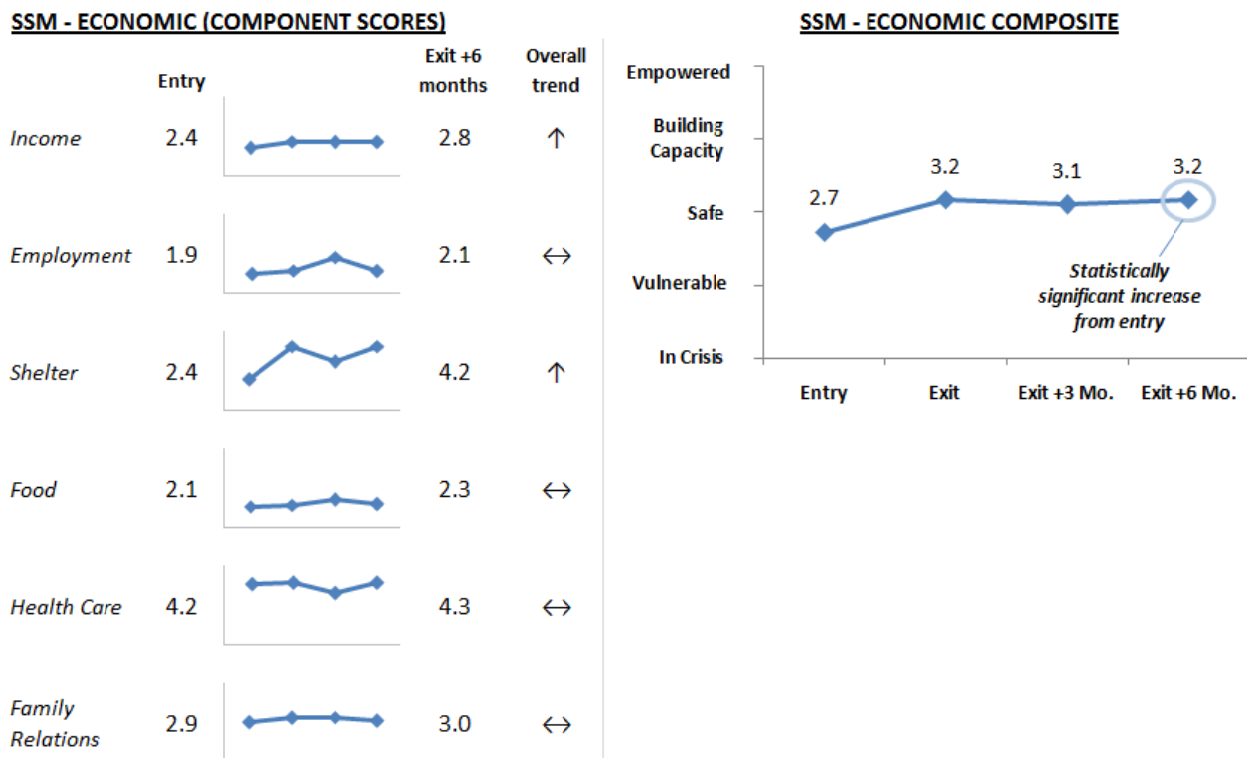
[26] SSM exit data were collected from 474 households that exited the program by the end of this evaluation period. 33 of these households did not successfully exit the program by establishing permanent housing (27 entered transitional housing and we "don't know" about 6 others). 13 households did not complete the SSM upon exiting, though are considered "successful" exits.

Overall, the increase in the average *Economic* composite score from program entry to exit – which can be reasonably attributed to the Stable Families program – was maintained for up to six months after program exit.[27]

Interestingly, a factor analysis[28] of responses to the seventeen SSM components reveals Stable Families' data do not naturally or clearly cluster into three distinct *Economic*, *Social Emotional*, or *Parenting* domains. Instead, a six-factor solution appears to fit the data better. In a six-factor solution, the first three factors "unpack" the *Economic* domain into three sub-composites: *Obtain safe shelter; Obtain income*; and *Obtain healthcare.* Looking at the first two of these sub-composites (see Figure 9)[29], one can see that while positive and statistically significant changes were recorded over time:

- Respondents' self-rated ability to *Obtain safe shelter* was significantly higher at program entry – nearly at "Building Capacity" levels – than respondents' self-rated ability to *Obtain income*. This suggests that when respondents entered the Stable Families program, they felt they were already reasonably self-sufficient in this regard – yet over time, they say, they learned to become even more self-sufficient.
- The rate of positive change from program entry to six months post-exit was greater for respondents' self-rated ability to *Obtain safe shelter* than it was for *Obtain income.* This suggests the Stable Families program may have had more of an effect on increasing participants' self-sufficiency in *Obtaining safe shelter* than for *Obtaining income*, which is expected given the program's primary focus*.*

Figure 9: SSM – Unpacking the Economic Domain Composite
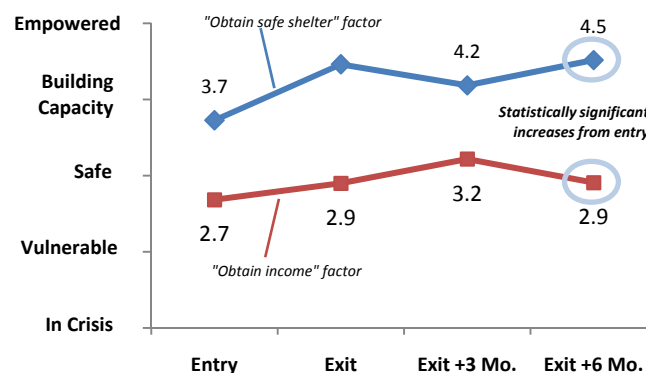
Looking next at the *Social-emotional* composite score and its component elements, statistically significant increases in self-rated ability to meet basic <u>safety</u> and <u>legal</u> needs were observed from program entry to six months post-exit. See Figure 10. Overall, there was no observed increase in the average *Social-emotional* composite score from program entry to six months post-exit.

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[27] This pattern was verified with a repeated measures analysis of variance: families maintained their increased levels of self-sufficiency even six months after exiting for the economic composite [F = 43.4, p < .05], social-emotional composite [F = 17.7, p < .05], and the parenting composite [F = 9.2, p < .05].

[28] Factor analysis is a statistical technique that attempts to understand how different sets of variables cluster together onto similar "factors" or underlying concepts. The factor analysis reported here used the maximum likelihood extraction method, direct oblimin rotation, and extracted factors with eigenvalues > 1.

[29] The third sub-composite, *Obtain healthcare*, was not observed to change over time and therefore is not discussed here.

Figure 10: SSM – Social-emotional Domain

SSM - SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL (COMPONENT SCORES)					SSM - SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPOSITE

	Entry		Exit +6 months	Overall trend
Adult Education	3.4		3.6	↔
Community Involvement	2.8		2.9	↔
Life Skills	3.1		3.2	↔
Mental Health	4.4		4.3	↔
Substance Abuse	4.9		4.9	↔
Safety	4.3		4.6	↑
Legal	4.6		4.8	↑

SSM - SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPOSITE

Empowered / Building Capacity / Safe / Vulnerable / In Crisis

3.9   4.1   4.2   4.0

Entry — Exit — Exit +3 Mo. — Exit +6 Mo.

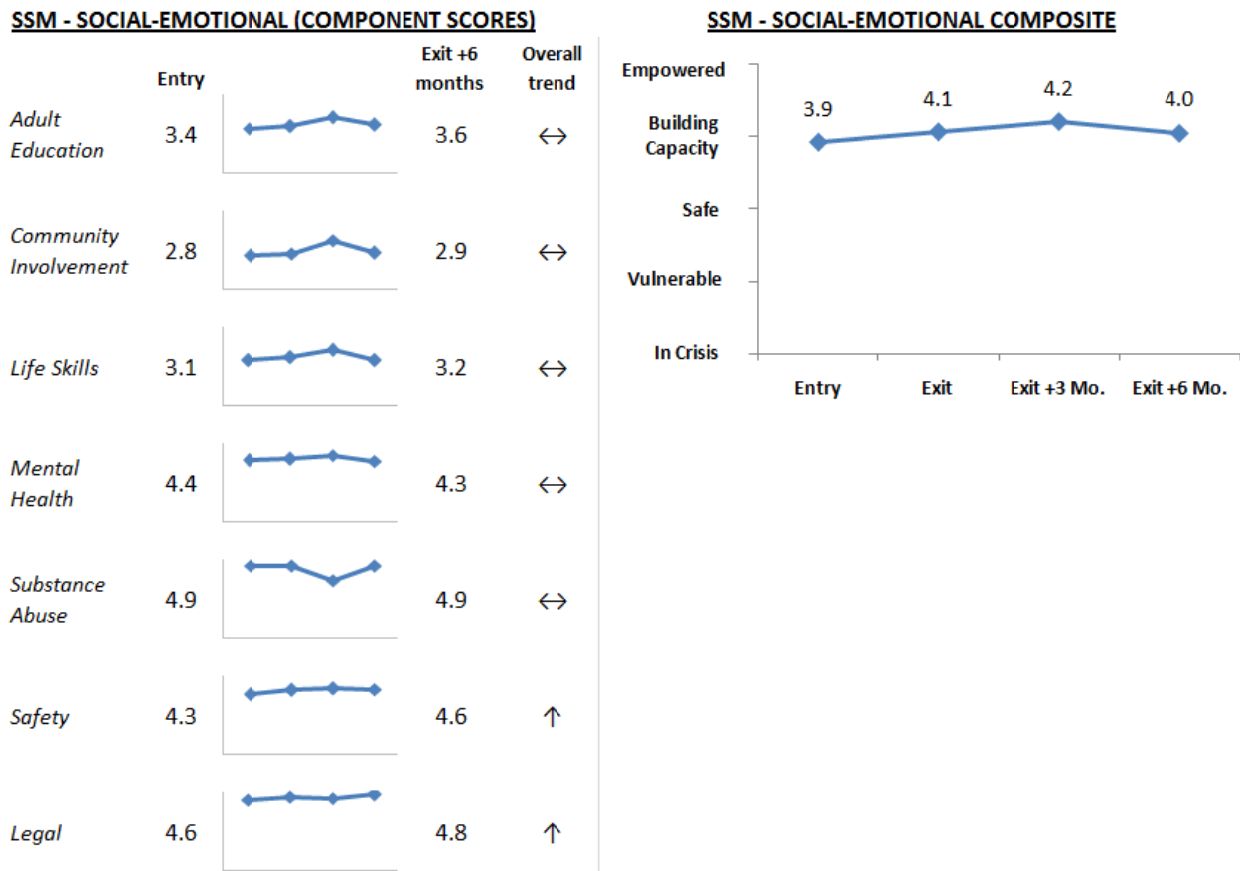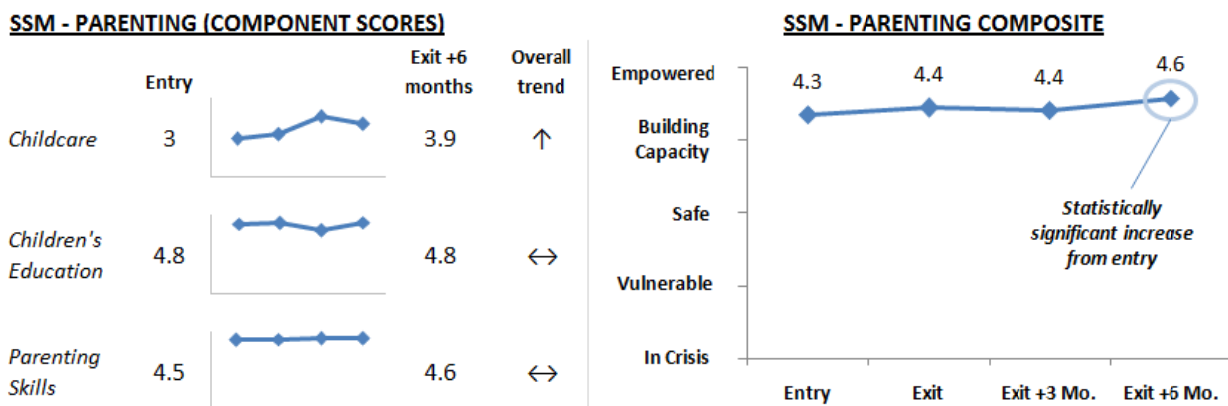Lastly, a review of the *Parenting* composite score and its component elements reveals a statistically significant increase in self-rated ability to meet basic <u>childcare</u> needs from program entry to six months post-exit. See Figure 11. Overall, the average *Parenting* composite score was observed to increase from program entry to six months post-exit.

Figure 11: SSM – Parenting Domain

SSM - PARENTING (COMPONENT SCORES)					SSM - PARENTING COMPOSITE

	Entry		Exit +6 months	Overall trend
Childcare	3		3.9	↑
Children's Education	4.8		4.8	↔
Parenting Skills	4.5		4.6	↔

SSM - PARENTING COMPOSITE

Empowered / Building Capacity / Safe / Vulnerable / In Crisis

4.3   4.4   4.4   4.6

Statistically significant increase from entry

Entry — Exit — Exit +3 Mo. — Exit +6 Mo.

Some of the SSM items measured during program entry were significantly associated with the length of time households were served by the Stable Families program. That is, when the number of days each household was served by Stable Families is regressed onto the seventeen SSM items, the following patterns are noted:

- **INCOME**: Each 1 unit increase in the SSM entry score (e.g., "vulnerable" vs. "safe" or "safe" vs. "building capacity") was significantly associated with a <u>9 day decrease</u> in the length of time households were served by Stable Families (this pattern approached statistical significance).
  - o In other words, families that entered with higher self-rated income self-sufficiency exited the program more quickly than families with lower self-rated income self-sufficiency.
- **CHILDCARE**: Each 1 unit increase in the SSM entry score (e.g., "vulnerable" vs. "safe" or "safe" vs. "building capacity") was significantly associated with a <u>5 day decrease</u> in the length of time households were served by Stable Families.
  - o In other words, families that entered with higher self-rated childcare self-sufficiency exited the program more quickly than families with lower self-rated childcare self-sufficiency.
- **ADULT EDUCATION**: Each 1 unit increase in the SSM entry score (e.g., "vulnerable" vs. "safe" or "safe" vs. "building capacity") was associated with a <u>4 day decrease</u> in the length of time households were served by Stable Families (this pattern approached statistical significance).

Focus on the Weinland Park Pilot Program. In Period 5, those households that were referred to Stable Families via the Weinland Park pilot extension provided responses to the SSM tool (at program entry) that were statistically similar to those households referred to Stable Families via other sources.

Many of the areas in which self-sufficiency gains were made (e.g., shelter, income) correspond to focus areas of the Stable Families program, either in the direct client assistance granted (e.g., money) or the case management provided by the social workers. The next section of the report, then, reviews the various modes of assistance provided to Stable Families participants.

V.   Services And Interventions Provided

Stable Families case managers help families resolve their immediate housing crisis by linking families to a wide range of supportive services, community supports, and direct client assistance. This section of the report focuses on the types and amounts of services and interventions provided to enrolled families.

Direct client assistance (DCA) from Stable Families. Table 6 breaks down the direct client assistance provided to enrolled households between April 7, 2008 and June 30, 2010. Assistance with rent was the most common form of direct client assistance provided, with 71% of enrolled households receiving these funds through the end of the evaluation period; this assistance comprised 88% of all DCA provided (considering both Stable Families and other sources). Utility assistance from Stable Families was the second most frequent type of DCA provided, with 16% of enrolled families receiving this type of help. Overall, 438 (or 76% of enrolled families) received some type of direct client assistance by the end of this evaluation period.

Table 6: Types and amounts of Direct Client Assistance
[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

	Total $ provided	# of families who received assistance (n=438)	% of enrolled families who received assistance (n = 575)	Avg. $ provided (per family)	# of times assistance was provided	Avg. $ provided (per assistance)
Overall						
	$420,897	**438**	**76%**	*$961*		
Assistance from Stable Families						
Overall	*$409,980*	**435**	**76%**	*$942*		
Rent	*$371,432*	409	71%	*$908*	436	*$852*
Utilities	*$36,918*	92	16%	*$401*	128	*$288*
Other	*$1,629*	10	2%	*$163*	10	*$163*
Assistance from Other Sources						
Overall	*$10,917*	**18**	**3%**	*$607*		
PRC	*$3,568*	6	1%	*$595*	6	*$595*
Other local funding	*$7,349*	14	2%	*$525*	14	*$525*

Other assistance (HPP services) provided by Stable Families. Of course, CIS and Stable Families did more than just provide enrolled families with direct client assistance. To document the full range of services provided to enrolled families, CIS caseworkers recorded all instances of case-related activity requiring more than 15 minutes of their professional time. Table 7 reviews these additional Homelessness Prevention Pilot (HPP) services, all of which were directly provided by CIS and Stable Families. As expected, the most frequent service provided by Stable Families was "Case / care management", with 98% of enrolled families receiving this by the end of this evaluation period. "Personal enrichment", "Transportation", and "Material goods" were also reported frequently.

Table 7: HPP services provided (by Stable Families) to enrolled families

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

	# of times assistance was provided	# of families who received assistance	Avg. # of times a family received assistance	% of enrolled families who received assistance (n = 575)
CASE MANAGEMENT				
Case/Care Management (unspecified)	5,167	566	9.1	98.4%
Personal Enrichment (unspecified)	1,217	221	5.5	38.4%
Personal Finances/Budget Counseling	88	80	1.1	13.9%
Organizational Budgeting Assistance	7	7	1.0	1.2%
EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE				
Employment (unspecified)	15	12	1.3	2.1%
Resume Preparation Assistance	9	7	1.3	1.2%
Job Search/Placement	6	6	1.0	1.0%
Job Search Resource Centers	2	2	1.0	0.3%
Job Finding Assistance	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Job Search Techniques	1	1	1.0	0.2%
HOUSING ASSISTANCE				
Landlord/Tenant Dispute Resolution	179	87	2.1	15.1%
Housing Search Assistance	16	12	1.3	2.1%
Housing Search and Information	20	17	1.2	3.0%
Landlord/Tenant Assistance	2	2	1.0	0.3%
Home Rental Listings	1	1	1.0	0.2%
UTILITY ASSISTANCE				
Utility Assistance	4	4	1.0	0.7%
Local Electric Utility Companies	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Utility Bill Payment Assistance	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Utility Bill Payment Plan Negotiation Assistance	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Utility Company Complaints	1	1	1.0	0.2%
CHILD/FAMILY CARE ASSISTANCE				
Day Care	4	4	1.0	0.7%
Children's Protective Services	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Child Support Assistance/Enforcement	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Family Support Centers/Outreach	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Child Care Subsidies	1	1	1.0	0.2%
MEDICAL/MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE				
Health Care	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Substance Abuse Services	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Physician Referrals	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Dental Care	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Medicaid Applications	1	1	1.0	0.2%

Table 7 (continued): HPP services provided (by Stable Families) to enrolled families

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

OTHER ASSISTANCE	# of times assistance was provided	# of families who received assistance	Avg. # of times a family received assistance	% of enrolled families who received assistance (n = 575)
Transportation	538	195	2.8	33.9%
Material Goods	274	162	1.7	28.2%
Basic Needs	297	76	3.9	13.2%
Advocacy	67	45	1.5	7.8%
Food	26	21	1.2	3.7%
Temporary Financial Assistance	14	13	1.1	2.3%
School Supplies	6	6	1.0	1.0%
Criminal Justice and Legal Services	6	5	1.2	0.9%
Consumer Assistance and Protection	5	5	1.0	0.9%
Outreach Programs	5	5	1.0	0.9%
Holiday Gifts/Toys	4	4	1.0	0.7%
Certificates/Forms Assistance	3	2	1.5	0.3%
Tickets/Reservations	2	2	1.0	0.3%
Birth Certificates	2	2	1.0	0.3%
Education	2	2	1.0	0.3%
WIC	2	1	2.0	0.2%
TANF Applications	2	2	1.0	0.3%
Reference/Information	2	2	1.0	0.3%
Mail Handling Organizations/Services	2	2	1.0	0.3%
Funeral Services	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Gift Card Donation Programs	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Thanksgiving Programs	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Benefits Assistance	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Computer and Related Technology Classes	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Copy Machines	1	1	1.0	0.2%
General Clothing Donation Programs	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Anger Management	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Automotive Repair	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Community Services	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Credit Reports	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Food Stamp Applications	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Holiday Donations	1	1	1.0	0.2%
Merchandise/Services Discount Cards	1	1	1.0	0.2%

Other assistance (non-HPP services) coordinated by Stable Families. In addition to the services provided directly by Stable Families, CIS also worked to help families receive assistance from other community organizations. As shown in Table 8, the most frequent service provided by other community resources was "Material Goods", with 45% of enrolled families receiving this service by the end of this evaluation period. "Food assistance" was also reported frequently.

Table 8: Non-HPP services provided (by the larger community) to enrolled families

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

	# of times assistance was provided	# of families who received assistance	Avg. # of times a family received assistance	% of enrolled families who received assistance (n = 575)
Material Goods	367	258	1.4	44.9%
Food Assistance	239	202	1.2	35.1%
Other (Financial Assistance, Utility Assistance, etc.)	115	70	1.6	12.2%
Employment (Job Search, Counseling)	46	35	1.3	6.1%
Housing Search and/or Placement Assistance	29	24	1.2	4.2%
Mental Health Services (Counseling, Treatment)	27	22	1.2	3.8%
Day Care (Child Care)	13	13	1.0	2.3%
Education (GED, Training, Literacy)	13	11	1.2	1.9%
Case Management (Case Planning, Treatment, Arranging)	10	10	1.0	1.7%
Criminal Justice/Legal (Legal Counsel)	8	8	1.0	1.4%
Consumer Assistance and Protection (Budgeting Assistance)	7	6	1.2	1.0%
Health Care (Health Screening, Education, Counseling)	5	5	1.0	0.9%
Personal Enrichment (Life Skills, Stress Management, etc.)	4	4	1.0	0.7%
Transportation	2	2	1.0	0.3%

Table 9 indicates the sources of these services provided by the community. Consistent with the fact that "material goods" was one of the most common services (either HPP or non-HPP) received by those enrolled in Stable Families, community sources such as Project Welcome Home and the Mid-Ohio Food Bank were most frequently mentioned as sources of these non-HPP services.

Table 9: Sources of non-HPP services

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

	# of times source provided assistance	# of families who received assistance	Avg. # of times a family received assistance	% of enrolled families who received assistance (n = 575)
Other (Project Welcome Home, Mid-Ohio Food Bank, etc.)	602	262	2.3	45.6%
Community-Based Social Service Center	152	102	1.5	17.7%
Self (Client)	42	34	1.2	5.9%
Church	29	22	1.3	3.8%
Job and Family Service Department (TANF office)	23	17	1.4	3.0%
School	13	11	1.2	1.9%
Non-PHA property owner or manager	7	6	1.2	1.0%
Legal Services	5	5	1.0	0.9%
Child Protective Services	5	5	1.0	0.9%
Homeless Assistance Provider	5	3	1.7	0.5%
Public Housing Authority	2	2	1.0	0.3%

VI.   Stable Families – Preventing Family Homelessness

The overarching goal of Stable Families is to prevent family homelessness. The pilot program's logic model established an expected outcome that of all families served, 90% would not become homeless during the time they were enrolled. This outcome was achieved, considering that by the end of evaluation period five, 91.3%[30] of all enrolled families either exited the program successfully, meaning they found permanent housing or were still engaged in the program.

As shown in Table 10, 90% of families who completed the program did so successfully. Of note, all families referred by the Weinland Park Pilot Program that had exited by June 30, 2010 had established stable housing. Families referred by other common referral sources successfully exited the program at rates hovering around the 90% average.

Table 10: Rate of successfully completing the Stable Families program, by referral source

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

Exits from Program	n=504	%
Total # of successful exits	454	90.1%
Exits from Program, By Top Referral Sources	**#**	**%**
Weinland Park School Pilot (n=34)	34	100.0%
Self (n=32)	29	90.6%
Community based social service center (n=79)	70	88.6%
Family or friend (n=107)	94	87.9%
Homeless Assistance Provider (n=48)	42	87.5%

Of those families who exited the program successfully, what were their housing situations upon exit? By definition, all families that successfully completed the program had secured permanent housing. As shown in Table 11, most families that successfully completed the program continued to live in Columbus, Ohio (97%), usually in a rental property (79%). Note that 19% of the families that successfully completed the program relocated to more affordable housing.

Housing affordability was calculated for families with employed heads of household at program exit by dividing the amount families paid for rent and utilities by the past 30 days income.[31] For these 232 families, housing affordability averaged 43%.

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[30] Of the 575 families enrolled at the end of Period 5, 525 exited the program successfully or remained in the program and 50 exited unsuccessfully. 91.3% = 525 (successful exits or remained in program) / 575 (all enrolled families).

[31] Past 30 days income was determined by adding earned income reported at program exit to non-earned income reported at program entry. When housing affordability is calculated with earned income reported at program exit only, the average is 54%.

Table 11: Households that successfully completed the Stable Families program

[Period: April 7, 2008 – June 30, 2010]

Exit Destination	n=454	%
Rental House / Apartment (no subsidy)	359	79.1%
Section 8	52	11.5%
Public Housing	38	8.4%
Other Subsidized Housing	5	1.1%
General Location of Exit Destination	n=454	%
Franklin County - Within Columbus	438	96.5%
Franklin County - Outside Columbus	14	3.1%
Outside Franklin County - Outside Columbus	1	0.2%
Don't Know / Not Reported	1	0.2%
Was Household Relocated to More Affordable Housing?	n=454	%
Yes	85	18.7%
No	367	80.8%
Don't Know / Not Reported	2	0.4%
Housing Affordability		
(Rent & Utilities / Income at Exit), n=232 employed at exit		42.6%

Through June 30, 2010, 50 families (or, 8.7% of enrolled families) exited the program unsuccessfully, meaning their household's destination at exit was temporary or unknown. Are there any family characteristics that predict *unsuccessful* exits from Stable Families?[32] Households that had been evicted in the year prior to entering the program were more likely to exit the program unsuccessfully, as were those that entered the program with more severe income barriers.[33] Gender, employment status, and age were also associated with type of exit such that male heads of household, unemployed heads of household, and younger heads of household were more likely to exit Stable Families unsuccessfully.

Cumulatively through June 30, 2010, 23 families who enrolled and exited the Stable Families program subsequently entered emergency shelter.[34] Twelve of these families had exited the program successfully, indicating a 2.6% rate of shelter entry after more than two years of program operations. And among the 179 families who exited the program successfully by 6/30/09 (and therefore could be observed for a year following termination of services), 9 of them - or 5% - subsequently entered emergency shelter. Overall, 95% remained in stable housing (i.e., did not enter emergency shelter) for one year following termination of services.

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[32] To determine what, if any, characteristics of families predict unsuccessful exits, a binary logistic regression was conducted that included the following variables: Personal barriers (summary), Tenant screening barriers (summary), Income barriers (summary), SSM-Economic composite, SSM-Social-Emotional composite, SSM-Parenting composite, Age, Gender, Employment status, and whether the household was evicted in the past 12 months.

[33] The **Evicted in past 12 months** variable was a statistically significant predictor of unsuccessful exits [$\beta = 1.4$, Wald stat = 16.2, $p < .01$], as was the **Gender (male)** variable [$\beta = 1.2$, Wald stat = 4.3, $p < .05$], **Unemployed** status [$\beta = .97$, Wald stat = 6.5, $p < .05$], the summary **Income barriers** variable [$\beta = .48$, Wald stat = 4, $p < .05$], and **Age** [$\beta = -.06$, Wald stat = 6.6, $p < .05$].

[34] One was a dependent at the time of her household's initial entry into and successful exit from Stable Families. This person is not counted as a recidivist because this person was not the primary recipient of CIS services.

A.   Estimates of Stable Families' Impact on the Emergency Shelter System

For a broader perspective on Stable Families' effectiveness as a homelessness prevention initiative, one can attempt to estimate the number of families who *could* become homeless and therefore enter the emergency shelter system in FY2011 if Stable Families was no longer operating. The first step in making such an estimate, of course, is to understand how demand for emergency shelter changed or remained constant during program operations. Using data provided by CSB [*System and Program Indicator Report; Diversion Program at the YWCA Family Center*] and data collected by TST earlier in this program evaluation [*Stable Families Supplemental Report 2 - Diversion Study*], the following graphic (Figure 12) shows semi-annual counts of family shelter contacts, admissions and diversions.

Although the number of family shelter contacts decreased markedly in Period 5, on an annual basis more families contacted emergency shelter and were admitted to shelter in FY10 than in FY09. The number of "deflected" families (i.e., those that contacted the YWCAFC and decided to stay in their current housing situation) decreased in Period 5, while the number of families diverted to Stable Families increased in Period 5. This latter pattern was likely due to CIS clarifying the program eligibility requirements with the YWCAFC's intake staff – prior to Period 4, intake staff mistakenly had more stringent diversion criteria than was required by the program.

Figure 12: Family Shelter System Activity
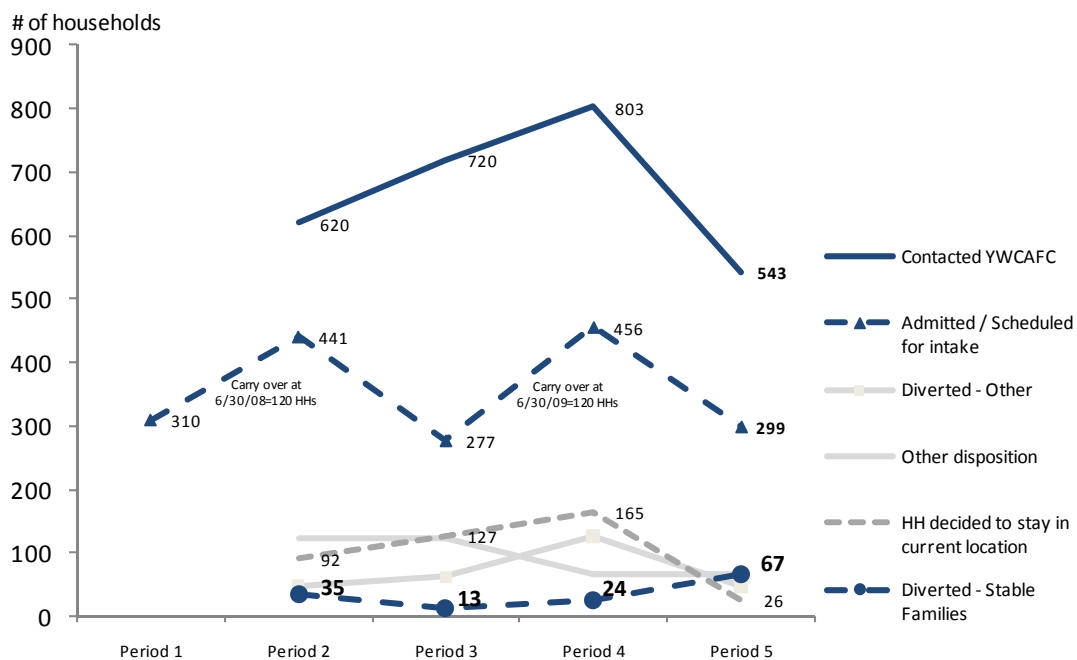
To estimate *overall demand* for shelter in FY2011, two primary data sources were reviewed: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2009 Annual Homeless Assessment Report, published in June 2010,[35] and CSB's FY2010 System & Program Level Indicator Report (Families System), which provided longitudinal data regarding the number of families served by the

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[35] See http://www.hudhre.info/documents/5thHomelessAssessmentReport.pdf

shelter system in Central Ohio. After consultation with CSB, a value of 755 families was identified as the overall projected demand for family emergency shelter in FY2011.

To estimate the *program's effectiveness* in helping stabilize households, a number of effectiveness measures were calculated, ranging from more conservative to more liberal. These effectiveness measures were derived from the most recent program evaluation data available for Stable Families. As shown in Table 12, the most liberal estimate of program impact suggests it could assist approximately 39% of the families who are projected to access the family emergency shelter system in FY2011. At the other end of the continuum, the most conservative estimate indicates the program could help approximately 3% of these families (i.e., 26 of the 755 families who are projected to attempt to access emergency shelter in FY2011). The researchers suspect that the percentage of families one could reasonably expect to be diverted from the emergency shelter system as a function of Stable Families' activities is between the 3% estimate (*Families who successfully completed the program and relocated to more affordable housing*) and the 6% estimate (*Families who were diverted by the YWCAFC and enrolled into Stable Families*). This argument, of course, goes beyond the available data and therefore is open to critique.

Table 12: Projected Effects on Central Ohio's Family Emergency Shelter System (FY2011)

	# of these families served in FY2010	% of all families enrolled in Stable Families in FY2010 (n=293)	% of projected system demand in FY2011 (n = 755)
Families who successfully completed the program and relocated to more affordable housing	26	9%	**3%**
Families who were diverted by the YWCAFC and enrolled into Stable Families	46	16%	**6%**
Families who entered the program with very low SSM_income assessment scores (i.e., 1 or 2)	152	52%	20%
Families who entered the program with very low SSM_shelter assessment scores (i.e., 1 or 2)	193	66%	26%
Families who successfully completed the program	211	72%	28%
Families who entered the program	293	100%	39%

More conservative

More Liberal
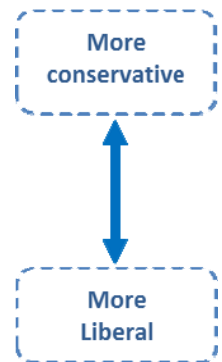
VII.   Stable Families – Affecting School Mobility

One of the primary goals of Stable Families is to reduce unplanned school mobility among the children of participating families. To track school mobility, TST worked with Columbus City Schools (CCS) to gather data regarding current and historical enrollment trends for all school age children in families enrolled in the program and in the school district.

A list of all individuals (ages 3-19) in families served by the program through June 30, 2010 (n=1,112) was provided to CCS for the purpose of obtaining data regarding school mobility, attendance and achievement. After matching this list to CCS' internal databases, CCS supplied an enrollment history (including moves, both disruptive and otherwise) for 642 children, from each child's first enrollment into CCS through June 2010.[36] After cleaning the data and identifying which moves were potentially disruptive (i.e., occurring during the months from September – May), the students' mobility patterns were reviewed.[37]

Did Stable Families affect school mobility rates? To answer this question, it was necessary to create school mobility variables for the periods before and after each household entered Stable Families. A conservative analytic approach was taken, beginning with the creation of a reasonable observation window into each student's mobility patterns. First, the total number of months from the date the household entered SF until the end of the current evaluation period (6/30/2010) was calculated for each student. This established an "upper boundary" for the length of time each student's mobility would be assessed. The reciprocal of this calculation was subtracted from the date the household entered SF, thereby identifying the "lower boundary." Only CCS enrollment data within this observation window were included for analysis. After cleaning and correcting the mobility data, they were then submitted to the analyses reviewed here.

For each child for whom data were available, the number of disruptive moves during the pre-SF observation window was divided by the number of years the student was enrolled in CCS within this observation window. An average of these rates was then computed. A similar procedure was followed for the post-SF period.[38] As shown in Table 13, pre SF-entry mobility – the average number of disruptive moves in a time period before the household entered Stable Families was .28 and post-SF entry mobility was .39. A paired-samples t-test comparing the 499 CCS students for whom mobility data were available for both a pre-SF entry and post-SF entry period indicated this increase approached statistical significance.[39]

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[36] Mobility analyses conducted through the end of the fifth evaluation period (June 30, 2010). Approximately 43 students' data were provided through the end of the fourth evaluation period (and thus current through February 28, 2010) but not during the current evaluation period. For these students, when no new data were provided, a conservative approach was taken, assuming these children were only enrolled through February 28, 2010.

[37] As a caveat, because this research design was non-experimental, other factors (beyond involvement with Stable Families) may affect changes in school mobility, which means any observed changes in school mobility should be interpreted cautiously.

[38] The maximum number of months a student's enrollment data was considered was 26, which is equal to the number of months from the first possible enrollment date to the end of the current school year (e.g., April 2008 through June 2010).

[39] To test whether this difference was statistically significant, the following t-test statistic was calculated: [pre-SF mobility rate and post-SF mobility rate, $t = -1.91$, $p = .06$.]. However, this pattern is not observed when an arguably more appropriate statistical analysis (negative binomial regression) is used. In this analysis, "number of moves" was the dependent variable, the "observation period" (either pre-SF or post-SF) was the independent/predictor variable, and the exposure variable was the "number of months in each observation period." No statistically significant relationship was observed.

Note that the pilot program's logic model established an expected outcome that of all families served, 75% of dependent children would remain stable in school. This outcome was met, considering that after participating in the Stable Families program, 75% of children who were enrolled in Columbus City Schools did not change schools. However, 81% of these children did not change schools within the observation window before their families entered the program.

Table 13: School mobility (# of disruptive moves), before and after families entered Stable Families

School Mobility (CCS district), *Before* Entering Stable Families (n=617)	#	%
No moves before entering SF	499	80.9%
1 move before entering SF	85	13.8%
2 moves before entering SF	20	3.2%
3 or more moves before entering SF	13	2.1%
Average moves per year before entering SF	0.28	

School Mobility (CCS district), *After* Entering Stable Families (n=557)	#	%
No moves after entering SF	419	75.2%
1 move after entering SF	104	18.7%
2 moves after entering SF	30	5.4%
3 or more moves after entering SF	4	0.7%
Average moves per year after entering SF	0.39	

There are at least four possible explanations for the slightly increased mobility rate observed here.

- The Stable Families program has been wholly ineffective in helping families keep their children enrolled in one school during the academic year; or
- The Stable Families program has been somewhat effective in helping families keep their children enrolled in one school during the academic year, but any program effectiveness was countered by powerful economic pressures affecting the region and nation over the past two years;
- By definition, those families accepted for enrollment into the program were facing a housing crisis. If this housing crisis was a more serious threat than anything previously experienced by the household, it stands to reason that housing mobility – and by extension, school mobility – could increase from the pre- to post-enrollment periods.
- The CCS mobility data do not indicate whether a change in school enrollment was "planned" or "unplanned", only whether or not a move happened. As such, these analyses consider *any* change in school enrollment during the traditional school year as a disruptive one, even if it was coordinated with community, school district, or CIS support / resources. It may be the case that there has been an increase in *planned* moves among households participating in Stable Families. In other words, our definition of a "disruptive move" may ignore meaningful variation in the extent to which a move was truly disruptive.

Some data exist that allow us to explore the latter explanation. If the child of an enrolled family was reported to caseworkers as having changed schools, caseworkers recorded the reason for the move as best they understood it. Of the 133 school changes experienced by children in families served by Stable

Families and reported to CIS, 48 (36%) resulted from a local housing move or relocation.[40] All 48 of these school changes were reportedly <u>planned</u> with the assistance of Stable Families caseworkers and/or other community resources, which in theory means these school changes were potentially less disruptive to the student and his/her academic performance than otherwise could have been.

Are there any family characteristics that predict *higher* school mobility rates after families entered Stable Families?[41] Children within households facing <u>less severe income barriers</u> had higher school mobility rates. Also, children with <u>less educated heads of household</u> had higher mobility rates than children with heads of household with a high school diploma or GED. [42]

Focus on the Weinland Park Pilot Program. CCS enrollment patterns of children of families referred through the Weinland Pilot Program were also examined. As shown in Table 14, mobility rates in the time period before the household entered Stable Families averaged .57, and post-SF mobility rates averaged .42. A paired-samples t-test comparing the 35 CCS students for whom mobility data were available for both a pre-SF entry and post-SF entry period indicated this decrease was not statistically significant. Note that since their families enrolled in Stable Families, 92% of the children in families enrolled via the Weinland Park Pilot have not changed schools.

Table 14: School mobility (# of disruptive moves), before and after families entered Stable Families via the Weinland Park Pilot Program

Weinland School Mobility (subset of CCS district), *Before* Entering Stable Families (n=49)	#	%
No moves before entering SF	40	81.6%
1 move before entering SF	8	16.3%
2 moves before entering SF	1	2.0%
Average moves per year before entering SF	0.57	

Weinland School Mobility (subset of CCS district), *After* Entering Stable Families (n=37)	#	%
No moves after entering SF	34	91.9%
1 move after entering SF	3	8.1%
2 moves after entering SF	0	0.0%
Average moves per year after entering SF	0.42	

School mobility and other educational variables. Residential stability should positively affect other educational indicators. For example, children who stay in the same school should attend school more

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[40] The other 85 school changes were driven by a parent's / student's desire for a better education, a natural progression from primary to elementary school, movement out of state, etc. Of these moves, 82 (96%) were reportedly planned.

[41] To determine what, if any, characteristics of families predict post-SF mobility rates, a multiple regression was conducted that included the following variables: Pre-SF mobility rates, Personal barriers (summary), Tenant screening barriers (summary), Income barriers (summary), SSM-Economic composite, SSM-Social-Emotional composite, SSM-Parenting composite, Age, employment status, education level, whether the household was evicted in the past 12 months, and days in the program.

[42] Income barriers (summary) was a statistically significant predictor of unsuccessful exits [b = -2.45, p <.05], as was education, coded as less than HS =0 and HS or more =1, [b = -2.11, p <.05]. With the exception of the pre-SF mobility rate control variable, none of the remaining variables was a statistically significant predictor of Post-SF mobility rates.

consistently and perform better as they are exposed to additional instructional time and attention from their teachers. Working with CCS, TST obtained historical data to look at the relationship between some of these educational variables and school mobility. Specifically, CCS provided the following information for each child who was a member of a household that entered Stable Families before June, 2010 and who was enrolled in CCS during the 2009-2010 school year:

- Attendance rate and number of unexcused absences;
- Achievement test data; and
- Behavioral incidents.

To examine the extent to which disruptive moves affect children's educational experiences, the total number of disruptive moves for each child during the pre and post-Stable Families observation windows was correlated with available information from the 2009-2010 school year. As shown in Table 15, the greater the number of disruptive moves, the greater the unexcused absence rate and the lower the attendance rate. Children who experienced more disruptive moves also scored lower on the OAT reading test, a statistically significant relationship. Of course, because these are correlational data, it is possible that other (unobserved and unmeasured) factors may affect the relationship between disruptive moves and the educational variables shown below.

Table 15: Correlations between number of total moves and other educational variables

Attendance	Correlation with # of moves (n=527)	Statistical Significance
Number of unexcused absences (2009-2010)	0.13	p < .01
Attendance rate (2009-2010)	-0.18	p < .01
Academic Achievement Tests (n=253)		
OAT Reading Scores (2010)	-0.14	p < .05
OAT Math Scores (2010)	-0.09	n.s.
Behavioral Incidents (n=527)		
Total Behavioral Incidents (2009-2010)	-0.01	n.s.

VIII.   Program Costs

From April 2008 through June 30, 2010, $1,178,987[43] was spent on the Stable Families program. Approximately 65% of this amount has paid for program implementation and case management costs and approximately 35% of this amount has provided direct client assistance to enrolled families (e.g., money to help clients pay rent and/or utilities). As shown in Table 16, the program's average case management cost (per family served) was $942; CSB's average intervention cost (per family served) was $2,050, which was less than CSB's average cost (per family served) for families served by Franklin County's emergency shelter system ($2,399).[44] On a per diem basis, CSB's average intervention cost (per family served) for the Stable Families program was $21, while its average intervention cost (per family served) for the emergency shelter system was nearly double this amount.

Table 16: Program costs
[April 7, 2008 –June 30, 2010]

Stable Families' Program Costs (4/08-6/30/10)	
CIS' case management costs *(i.e., salaries & wages of 6 SF case managers and 1 team leader)*	*$541,627*
CIS' other program costs *(i.e., administration and non-case management costs)*	*$227,380*
Sum of Direct Client Assistance (from Stable Families to 435 families)	*$409,980*
Case Managers	
Stable Families caseload *(i.e., enrolled families)*	575
FTE - case managers working the Stable Families caseload	6
Average # of 'active' clients per case manager *(at any one point in time)*	16.5
Sum of case management hours worked *(i.e., total hours worked by case managers)*	27,984
Average # of case management hours per family served *(i.e., sum of case management hours worked / caseload)*	48.7
Team Leader	
FTE - team leader	1
Sum of team leader hours worked *(i.e., total hours worked by team leader)*	4,664
Average # of team leader hours per family served *(i.e., sum of team leader hours worked / caseload)*	8.1
Total Costs	
Average cost per FTE hour *(i.e., CIS' case management costs / # of FTE hours worked)*	$16.59
Average case management cost per family served *(i.e., CIS' case management costs / caseload)*	$942
Average direct client assistance (from Stable Families) per family	$942
Average intervention cost per family served *(i.e., (CIS' case management costs + CIS' other program costs + Stable Families' DCA)/caseload)*	**$2,050**
Average intervention cost per family served PER DIEM	**$21**
Comparative System Costs (FY2010), n=755	
Average CSB cost per family served by Franklin County's emergency shelter system	**$2,399**
Average CSB cost per family served by Franklin County's emergency shelter system PER DIEM	**$41**
Average TOTAL cost per family served by Franklin County's emergency shelter system[45]	$5,719
Average TOTAL cost per family served by Franklin County's emergency shelter system PER DIEM	$97

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[43] Plus $10,917 in assistance from other sources.

[44] CIS' "case management costs" based on CSB's accounting records of salary and wages payments to CIS from program inception through 6/30/2010; "other program costs" represent the remaining payments.

[45] Includes CSB investments and other leverage funds.

IX.   Perceived Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities

Two qualitative research methods were employed to gather anecdotal feedback from clients' regarding Stable Families' strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with ten individuals (representing ten families) who had completed the Stable Families program before December 31, 2009. Second, a focus group was conducted with 11 individuals (representing nine families) who had completed the Stable Families program after December 31, 2009 <u>and</u> who had school-aged children living with them. More information about the methods used and results obtained can be found in *Supplemental Report 3 to Community Shelter Board: Focus Group and In-depth Interviews with Stable Families Program Participants*.

A.   Perceived Strengths

Participants reported it was **easy to access the program** and that both during and after the program, **caseworkers took the time to listen and empathize**.

Participants reported receiving significant **financial assistance** from Stable Families to help with priority threats to housing stability, such as unpaid rent or utilities that could lead to eviction. Participants also reported receiving many other types of assistance and supportive-service referrals. As one participant commented, *"Absolutely anything and everything I needed help with, she helped me."*

Participants reported **learning how to budget** and gaining **other financial skills** as well. Several individuals described planning what they needed to spend their money on and making smart choices about what their families <u>needed</u> to purchase, as opposed to what their families <u>wanted</u>.

Regarding program effectiveness, participants reported: **1) increased housing stability**, meaning that in many cases a housing relocation was unnecessary after Stable Families' intervention; **2) increased life-skills capabilities**, such as household budgeting, that would enable future housing stability; and **3) increased school stability** for their school-age children, resulting from the avoidance of unplanned housing relocations.

When asked what they would do if they found themselves in another housing crisis, **most felt they now had the ability to avoid another housing crisis**. Participants stressed they would utilize their new skills, and engage in more planning, forethought, prioritization and budgeting. When pressed, a few said they would communicate with their landlord earlier, or seek out help from community resources, including contacting Stable Families again. Since leaving Stable Families, most reported having no trouble remaining in their homes, and the few that have experienced a little trouble have been able to overcome it.[46] Selected excerpts from the focus group illustrate strategies participants would use if another housing crisis occurred:

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[46] Only one individual reported having a "major problem" remaining in her home since leaving the program. She is facing the same predicament that led her to first enroll in Stable Families: her current residence is being foreclosed upon. As a renter, she has been forced to leave.

- *I would downsize quicker. Before I had a cell phone, I had a car nub [?]. I had all these things and I didn't want to let all these things go. And, I think that if I would have let them go quicker, I would have had more money in my savings to last me a little longer. So, I just would have downsized quicker.*
- *Speaking up quicker...I should have taken action sooner.*
- *I would look over everything Ms. Miller taught me and then continue to do what I'm doing now. Keep putting money in the savings account for a rainy day. I never know what's going to happen.*
- *I'm going to call [a landlord], let's talk or something before this escalates. I have a hard thing of "No, I don't want to talk about it." I'm going to just start, you know, just trying to just get help before it gets too bad.*

B.   Perceived Weaknesses

None of the participants reported difficulties enrolling in Stable Families, although a few individuals mentioned having to wait until spots were available. A few initially felt uneasy about sharing details of their personal lives but caseworkers quickly made them feel at ease. Overall, most of the participants could not think of Stable Families' "least helpful" aspect and had difficulty thinking of things it could do better.

C.   Perceived Opportunities for Improvement

When pressed to think of ways to improve the program, the most frequently heard suggestion related to **extending the length of the program or the follow-up period**, **providing more money for rent**, and **making it easier to contact the caseworkers** (for example, one person said she would have liked her caseworker's cell phone number and another said the main line's voicemail was often full). Other suggestions for improvement included:

- Offering a small token or reward for completing budgeting and other tasks, to help motivate participants.
- Involving more community organizations, especially local businesses. The participant saw this as having two effects 1) increasing financial support for the program, and 2) opening up potential job opportunities for program participants (even if temporary).
- Providing assistance in navigating various systems and organizations in the community where support can be found. In addition to providing referrals, teach people how to skillfully work through and benefit from these resources.
- Giving participants some idea when Stable Families caseworkers will make their monthly follow up telephone calls, so program participants can have questions ready in advance.
- Two people mentioned they could have used additional money, and one person said information about baby resources (i.e. for baby clothes) would have helped. Another suggested the program help with transportation issues like car repair or provide access to bus passes or cab vouchers.

"Getting the word out" about the program was also mentioned a number of times. Suggestions from respondents included the following:

- Advertising to (1) reach more people in need and (2) get the attention of politicians who may have the ability to expand the program.
- Using the Internet (e.g., Facebook) as a means of outreach.
- Ensuring the local 211 service, run by HandsOn Central Ohio, was aware of Stable Families.
- Sending flyers about the program from local schools to children's homes.

D.   Overall Impressions of Stable Families

In general, all of the research participants were highly positive about the Stable Families program. As one focus group participant said, *"So they got me a place, and they paid the deposit and everything. They took me to MAPS* (Map Furniture Bank, now known as Furniture Bank of Central Ohio)*, I got furniture, I got the pantry things and everything. They really gave us everything. It was just like a new beginning. If I could do a commercial for them, I would."*[47]

Almost all research participants would strongly recommend the program to family and friends, and several already have. Participants appreciated the help the program provided and the dedication and support of the caseworkers. As one IDI participant put it, *"Not only do they help you, but it's someone to talk to. Even if they can't help with something, it's someone to listen. Sometimes that's what we need."*

Overall, the themes reported here are highly consistent with those discovered during Stable Families' first wave of qualitative research (April, 2009).

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[47] Note: The research participants may not represent all families served by the program, for a number of reasons. First, only those who completed the program were included, and those who disappeared, did not return phone calls or otherwise could not be reached were excluded. Therefore, it could be that people for whom the program works view it very highly, while others may not. Second, due to budget constraints Communities in Schools recruited the focus groups. Although they recruited from a list and protocol provided by The Strategy Team, it could be that those families who were most likely to answer calls from Communities in Schools were the ones most likely to be positive about the program. Finally, some who were recruited to participate did not actually do so. It could be that families who were most positive toward the program were the ones who were most likely to go to the effort of attending a focus group or completing the telephone interview.

X.   Most Effective Program Activities

Considering the significant amount of time, effort, and funds invested in this program over the past two years, Community Shelter Board may find it helpful to understand which of Stable Families' many activities and interventions were associated with the primary program outcomes discussed in this report. That is, which program activities and interventions appear to have been effective in yielding the program's desired outcomes, and which do not appear to have been effective?

Five desired program outcomes were submitted to analysis: successful exits[48] from the program; increased economic, social-emotional, and parenting self-sufficiency scores at program exit; and school mobility.[49] Using either binary logistic regression (predicting successful exits from the program; school mobility) or multiple linear regression (predicting self-sufficiency scores), each program outcome was regressed onto:

- A host of predictor/demographic variables, including the length of time each family was enrolled in the program;
- Frequency of Homelessness Prevention Pilot (HPP) services received by each family, for each of 11 service categories (e.g., # of times a client received case/care management);
- Frequency of non-HPP services received by each family, for the two highest-utilized service categories (i.e., Food Assistance, Material Goods Assistance);
- Amount of DCA-Rent Assistance received by each family; and
- Amount of DCA-Utilities Assistance received by each family.

Table 17 (next page) presents an overview of the findings from these five analyses. A number of interesting findings are immediately obvious:

- Consistent with both caseworker and client opinions, the amount of HPP-case/care management was associated with a number of desired program outcomes. For example, the more case management services a family received, the greater the odds of that family exiting successfully from the program, the higher the SSM-economic score at program exit, and the lower the odds of school mobility after program entry.
- The amount of DCA (rent) families received, and to a lesser extent DCA (utilities), was also strongly associated with desired program outcomes. For example, families that received higher amounts of DCA (rent) tended to have greater odds of exiting the program successfully and to report higher SSM-economic and SSM-social-emotional scores at program exit.
- Contrary to caseworker expectations, length of time enrolled in the program was not associated with desired program outcomes. This may be because those families that were enrolled longest in the program had more severe barriers to housing stability than did others, meaning (by definition) they were less able to remain in their housing situation.
- Families that received more HPP-transportation services or more HPP-food assistance tended not to experience the desired program outcomes, likely because families with such serious basic needs were most vulnerable to housing instability.

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[48] A family was classified as having exited unsuccessfully if it exited to temporary housing OR exited successfully but then re-entered the program later in the evaluation period.

[49] A family was said to have experienced school mobility if any school-age child in the household changed schools during the academic year.

Table 17: Overview of Stable Families' most effective program activities

	Program Outcomes				
	Odds of a Successful Exit from Program	Economic SSM Score at Program Exit	Social-Emotional SSM Score at Program Exit	Parenting SSM Score at Program Exit	School Mobility after Program Entry
Predictor Variables					
(More) Days in Program	−	−	−		−
(Older) Age	+	+	+	+	
Unemployed	−	−	−	−	−
Female	+		+	+	
(Greater) Income Barriers	−	−	−	−	+
(Greater) Tenant screening Barriers			−		
(Greater) Personal Barriers		−	−	−	−
(Higher) Pre-SF Mobility, included in mobility analysis only					−
Program Activities - HPP Services					
(More) Case Management	+	+		−	+
(More) Personal Enrichment		−	−		+
(More) Personal Finance Assistance		+			
(More) Employment Assistance			+		
(More) Housing Assistance					−
(More) Transportation			−	+	−
(More) Material Goods Assistance					
(More) Basic Needs	+				+
(More) Advocacy		+	−		
(More) Food Assistance	−	−			−
(More) Other					
Program Activities - Non-HPP Services					
(More) Food Assistance					−
(More) Material Goods Assistance			−		+
Program Activities - Direct Client Assistance					
(More) Rent $	+	+	+		
(More) Utilities $	+				

Statistically significant (p≤.10) relationships between predictors or program activity variables and program outcomes are marked by either a + or - sign.

+ The predictor or program activity was associated with a desired outcome, indicating program effectiveness (e.g., increased odds of successful program exit; reduced school mobility).

- The predictor or program activity was associated with an undesired outcome, indicating program ineffectiveness (e.g., decreased odds of successful program exit; increased school mobility).

XI.   Lessons Learned

This section of the report presents observations and "lessons learned" from the perspective of three distinct audiences familiar with Stable Families' implementation and outcomes - the evaluators, program staff, and Community Shelter Board.

A.   From the Evaluators
In addition to the results reported previously, the evaluators would like to add the following observations and recommendations for the reader's consideration.

Implement an experimental design to allow homelessness prevention experts and evaluators to draw stronger conclusions about the effects of a program such as Stable Families. For example, if families who were at risk of becoming homeless were randomly chosen to be diverted to Stable Families vs. another community resource(s), evaluators would be better positioned to determine the direct effect of Stable Families on the shelter system. The current research design only allows for correlational assessments of program success.

Consider a more data-driven approach to developing assessment tools. Although there were some instruments that had to be administered due to funder requirements, it is still worth noting that there may be some room for improvement in the tools used to assess families and assist caseworkers. For example, it appears that the subscales in the self-sufficiency matrix may not efficiently measure the attributes they were intended to.

Consider revising the program's logic model to take into account the baseline data collected from the program thus far. In some instances, the evaluative bar may not have been set high enough to assess programmatic success - in several instances, families appeared to meet the goals set for them to achieve by program exit *before they even enrolled in the program* (e.g., school mobility). Considering the data and experiences from this pilot program, it may be possible and appropriate to set more aggressive and / or finely calibrated goals.

The importance of maintaining clean administrative data records cannot be overstated. Data collected for program evaluation purposes must be entered into an electronic database in such a way that minimizes the risk of data processing errors and preserves the data for later extraction, thereby minimizing the time required for "data cleaning" later. Many more professional hours were spent cleaning and verifying data - particularly, school enrollment data - than one would reasonably expect for an evaluation of this scope.

Determining the impact of the program on school mobility is difficult but not impossible. The staff at CCS was very helpful in providing whatever data they could to inform the evaluation. However, given the relatively (and unexpectedly) low rate of disruptive moves during a pre-Stable Families enrollment observation period, determining program impact was especially difficult. We strongly recommend CSB consider a longer range study of the children enrolled in Stable Families, whose school data could presumably be tracked through graduation. EINs for most children enrolled in the program have been obtained, so future school records within the Columbus City Schools district should be available. This would allow a better measure of the

impact of the program on both school mobility and achievement factors. Additionally, further research is necessary to investigate the impact of planned vs. unplanned moves, as helping parents make well-reasoned, planned school changes was an important aspect of the case management services provided to parents, according to Stable Families program staff. Finally, with more resources and elapsed time, it would be helpful to explore the application of more sophisticated analytic techniques (e.g., propensity score matching) that could allow evaluators to draw stronger conclusions about the program's possible effects.

Providing timely program feedback is beneficial to both funders and program staff. In two instances in this project, group discussion of observed patterns (i.e., number of referrals from the YWCAFC and the incidence of families enrolling with minor, rather than moderate, barriers to housing stability) allowed program staff to redirect efforts and appropriately target program efforts. Providing feedback as quickly as possible should remain a priority of future evaluations.

B.   From Stable Families' Program Staff

The Stable Families program Team Leader (Julie Holston) was debriefed to learn what, if any, suggestions she and her caseworkers could offer regarding program strengths or opportunities for improvement.

Hire and appropriately train qualified case workers. Selecting case workers with experience working with families in crisis appears to have been an effective strategy. A background in social work is helpful, but neither necessary nor sufficient for hiring appropriate caseworkers. Rather, an awareness of the issues faced by families under stress is critical. The mediation training received by case workers was beneficial for families who learned how to negotiate and proactively solve problems with their landlords. Because the helpfulness of the caseworkers was identified by participating families as one of the most important program attributes, finding and retaining good staff is important.

Station a case worker in schools. During the early days of program implementation, the occasional visits to schools seemed to be forgotten quickly by administrators and teachers, thus resulting in fewer referrals from schools than originally hoped for. Learning from this experience, CIS developed and implemented a pilot program (i.e., the Weinland Park Pilot) that helped them establish a visible and consistent presence within a school. The apparent success of the Weinland Park Pilot (in terms of the families referred, successful exits, and school mobility) suggests that this could be a useful program format in the future.

Communicate with key referral sources regularly. Throughout the majority of the evaluation period, it appears that many families who were eligible for the Stable Families program and who sought help from the YWCA Family Center (i.e., those who were doubled up with family or friends) were <u>not</u> diverted to the program. Once YWCAFC front line staff members were made clear on who the program could help, and therefore who should be diverted, referrals increased.

Target motivated populations. Ideally, the program would admit families in need who are motivated to remain stable during and after the program. These families should benefit most from the long-term skills gained. To this end, it may be helpful to ask assessment questions that differentiate between the more and less motivated, as this was one of the key predictors of success from the standpoint of CIS staff. Less motivated families eventually have trouble keeping up with weekly case management meetings, for example, but this character is sometimes hard to predict from the start.

Focus on a single goal. Having two overarching programmatic goals (i.e., helping families find stable housing and promoting school stability) was challenging. Those engaged with the day-to-day workings of the program reported it was difficult to "wear two hats." Because homelessness prevention seemed to be a more primary objective, and families were having some success with this goal, the focus of the program may have shifted somewhat toward homelessness prevention.

Provide direct assistance. Enrolled families received up to $1,000 in DCA, and usually put these funds toward rent or utilities, providing much-needed relief. Homelessness prevention programs should continue to offer such assistance, along with helping families access other forms of assistance. Case workers reported that some families' needs exceeded the $1,000 limit. However, it is unclear how much, if any, additional assistance was necessary.

Extend the length of program. Initially, families were enrolled in the program for 3-6 months, which was eventually cut to 2-3 months to be able to provide assistance to more families. The longer period of time would allow families to gain more confidence and to be more likely to successfully exit the program, according to case workers. [Evaluator's note: With regard to this point, the evaluation data suggest that families did successfully maintain housing even in the presence of a shortened program service period.]

C.   From Community Shelter Board

Two senior-level staffers at Community Shelter Board (Dave Davis, Director of Programs and Planning; Erin Maus, Program Manager) provided an organizational perspective regarding the program's perceived strengths or weaknesses.

Providing case management along with direct financial assistance seemed to not only help stabilize the family but to also allow time to learn new ways of dealing with housing stability barriers. This gives a greater chance for the family to succeed in their next housing crisis. It is not apparent at this point if another model (i.e., one with less intensive case management) would offer similar benefits.

School mobility is a community problem. However, it does not appear to be as large of a problem as originally thought within the population served by the pilot program. As shown in the data, with the current population that was served, school mobility was already low for Stable Families households before entry to the program. This fact questions the validity of the target population for the pilot. The Weinland Park pilot that uses a school-centered model had a

too short of an implementation to draw the conclusion that this model would target, in a more effective way, the families with higher student mobility.

It is extremely difficult to project the impact that Stable Families had on the Family Emergency Shelter System. For example, recall that families experiencing housing instability were referred to Stable Families not only by the YWCAFC but also by community organizations, program participants, or landlords who had worked with the program and knew it could help. As was the case with those families who were directly diverted by the emergency shelter system (i.e., YWCAFC) to Stable Families, the non-YWCAFC referrals to Stable Families may have also had an (indirect) diversionary effect on the emergency shelter system.

As an improvement to the tool used for the pilot, we should consider a more professionally opinionated assessment tool. Many of the assessed criteria and outcomes are measured by clients' self-reports. Client may or may not identify with personal barriers such as mental health or drug abuse problems. Some personal barriers can significantly affect the overall housing stability of the family.

XII.   Conclusions

At the *programmatic* level, the Stable Families Pilot Program attained most of its logic model goals, which suggests its implementation was a successful one. And because the Stable Families intervention was more cost-effective on a per-diem basis than the intervention some of these families would have likely received if the program was not present (i.e., entering the emergency shelter system), and considering the fact that Stable Families leveraged over $10,000 in additional support for its families from other community resources, one could argue that the Stable Families Pilot Program delivered reasonably good outcomes in a cost-effective manner.

At the *emergency shelter system* level, however, the view becomes a good deal murkier. Due to the logistical issues that prevented CSB and its partners from applying an experimental approach to this evaluation, the case cannot be made that Stable Families' interventions produced outcomes that were superior to other interventions' outcomes. Furthermore, the lower-than-expected number of diversions to Stable Families from the YWCAFC greatly inhibits CSB's ability to assess whether or not the intervention had a significant effect on reducing demand for emergency shelter.

Considering these conclusions, can one recommend the continued implementation of the Stable Families program? From the evaluators' perspective, the answer to this question is a "conditional yes." That is, there may be ways to modify the implementation of this program in a way that allows CSB to:
1) Continue offering a homelessness prevention program that conceptually makes a great deal of sense;
2) Collect more information about the program's possible effects on the broader system of care in Franklin County; and
3) Limit its exposure to the risk of expending resources on a program that may or may not be adding unique value to the system.

Given the evaluation data collected thus far, CSB may wish to consider the following modifications:

- **More precisely target the population it wishes to serve.** For example, the enrollment requirement that families must face an imminent threat of homelessness could be more stringently defined as families in need of limited (<$1,000) short-term financial assistance and highly motivated to participate in focused case management, without which they would likely enter emergency shelter;
- **Limit the program's referral sources to those originally identified at program outset** (e.g., YWCAFC, community houses, perhaps schools);
- **Increase awareness of and strongly encourage the use of this diversion program** by staffers at these referral sources;
- **Significantly reduce the average length of time families are enrolled in the program** (e.g., from 90 days to 45 days);
- **Limit the program's non-financial assistance to those services associated with positive program outcomes** especially case management (e.g., landlord-tenant mediation), personal finance assistance (e.g., budgeting), and employment assistance, see Table 17.

Such modifications (along with others as appropriate) would likely lead to a more targeted implementation that in turn would provide CSB with more/better information regarding the program's effectiveness in reducing demand for emergency shelter.