



Human Services

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San Bernardino County HSP Collaborative

Overview: The Housing Support Program (HSP) is a collaborative effort to fill a gap in services available to homeless Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) customers.

Challenge: TANF customers experience a range of situations that present barriers to maintaining housing which prevents a parent's ability to obtain/maintain employment in order to become self-sufficient, thus negatively impacting children's well-being and educational success. San Bernardino County is committed to ending homelessness; however, the need for housing services continues to surpass the available resources due to high rental costs and low income. Prior to HSP, only the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Homeless Assistance (HA) program was specifically available to TANF families. The CalWORKs HA program is limited to a single incidence of homelessness in a 12-month period. While this program is a great start to addressing homelessness and is beneficial on a short-term basis, it does not address the "root cause" of homelessness, and families often find themselves back on the streets after a period of time because the barriers that existed prior to housing the family have not been addressed. The Transitional Assistance Department (TAD) identified a need for intensive case management services that would include counseling regarding housing options, family budgeting, and other life skills in addition to subsidized assistance, in order to end chronic homelessness for TANF families, as none of these services are available through the CalWORKs HA program.

Innovative Solution: The HSP collaborative encompasses a partnership with TAD, Behavioral Health, Housing Authority, and Knowledge and Education for Your Success (KEYS) (a subcontracted agency with Housing Authority). Once identified as homeless, the family is referred to a TAD HA Worker who interviews the family and completes a Homeless Screening Guide. The results of the Homeless Screening Guide determines the most effective approach to address and cure the family's homeless situation, within the same day, and serve as the referral to HSP. Upon receipt of the Homeless Screening Guide (in person or via e-mail), the KEYS Housing Navigator (Navigator) interviews the family and completes an Individualized Service Plan, the same day or within 24 hours, to identify a family's strengths and barriers to determine the fastest and most efficient way to permanently house the family and maintain housing stability. Navigators provide evidence-based housing stabilization services following the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing guidelines. A model developed by KEYS for the Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) Program, based on national best practice for quickly transitioning homeless households into permanent housing, was adopted due to proven results in San Bernardino County. That model includes the following services: 1) Case Management; 2) Financial assistance with credit

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checks, move-in costs, and/or subsidized rent or utility payments; 3) Assistance with locating/securing housing; 4) Filling out housing applications; 5) Budgeting classes; 6) Employment referrals; and 7) Mediation with landlords. Family members identified in the Service Plan as experiencing mental illness, substance abuse or other issues are referred to Behavioral Health's Life Skills program, based on a recommendation from the Navigator. The Life Skills program is an education program, offered as part of the case management services, where Behavioral Health case managers act in the role of facilitators. The intent is to provide and/or assist the TANF family with basic job and life skills by increasing awareness about important skills, such as managing a family budget and skills to reduce personal and/or life stressors that may be interfering with obtaining/maintaining housing. HSP services are based on the individual family's needs and are not a "one size fits all" approach. Since its inception in January 2015, HSP has undergone policy and procedural changes in order to fine-tune the referral process and better address the families' needs. One example was a change to increase case management services to prevent homeless recidivism. The following HSP best practices remain in place: 1) Leveraging partnerships and resources to provide an array of services; 2) Data sharing through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS); 3) Co-location of Navigators throughout the county TAD offices; 4) Co-location of Behavioral Health case managers throughout the county TAD offices; and 5) Open and consistent communication via once-monthly conference calls to share information and resolve any issues at the line-staff and management levels.

Originality: The success of the San Bernardino HSP collaborative has had other counties requesting our policies and procedures for implementation and representatives from TAD, Housing Authority, and KEYS have presented our HSP model for the California Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) and State of California.

Cost Effectiveness: The HSP collaborative began with an allocation from the TANF and General Funds. The cost of implementing and maintaining the HSP collaborative in San Bernardino is minimal due to leveraging existing: 1) County staff in both Transitional Assistance and Behavioral Health; 2) Contracts with Behavioral Health for Life Skills and use of HMIS; 3) Rapid rehousing model and vendor experienced in housing families in San Bernardino County; 4) Technology; and 5) Training material for staff developed and delivered by a support division as a routine function, at no additional cost.

Results: HSP has successfully reduced homelessness of TANF families in San Bernardino County. Since inception in 2015, results achieved include but are not limited to: 1) Processing in excess of 2,500 referrals; 2) Permanently housing 644 families; 3) Cost savings of over \$4,000,000 by leveraging existing resources; and 4) Promoting a shared vision with co-location of partner staff. The partnerships developed for the implementation of HSP have continued to grow and strengthen over time due to the open communication that exists between partner line and management staff. HSP continues to develop as a program designed to effectively end recidivism in homelessness and meet the needs of homeless TANF families.

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