

FAMILY SHELTER PARTNERSHIP

Presenters:

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CT Early Childhood Cabinet

The Lyceum, Hartford, CT

Thursday, April 30, 2015



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AGENDA

Overview of Families with Young Children
Experiencing Homelessness

Overview of Statewide Head Start-Family Shelter
Partnerships

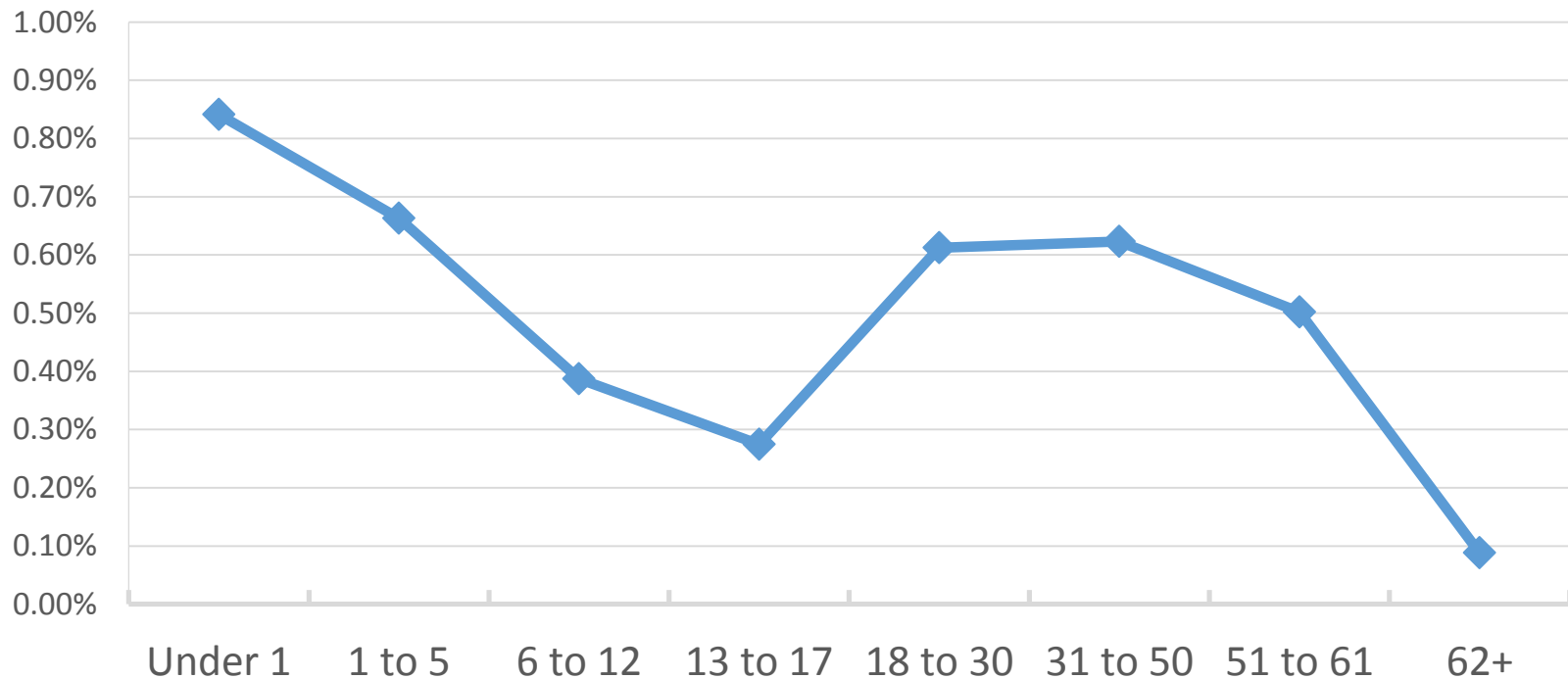
Hartford/East Hartford Family Shelter Partnership



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Annual Percentage Rates of Shelter Use By Age (National)



Source: 2012 AHAR (HUD, 2012) and Census Data



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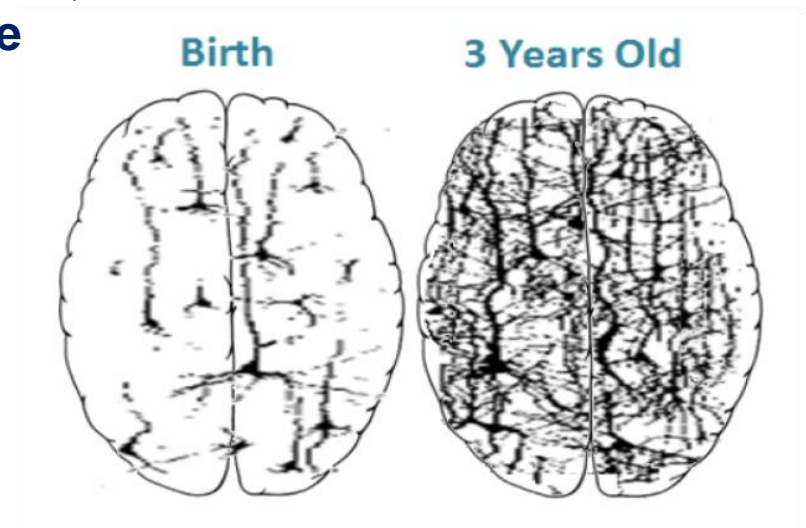


The New Face of Homelessness



Why The First Five Years Matter

- Birth to Five is a time of unparalleled growth!
- During early childhood, the brain strengthens the connections that are being used, while pruning away those that are unengaged
- The most critical developmental skills learned at this early age are social emotional skills



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Impact on Young Children of Homelessness and/or Unstable Housing*

- Poverty
- Physical health
- Developmental status
- Mental health/behavior problems
- Educational outcomes
- Mobility

*Impact of (sheltered) homelessness on children studied in four domains since mid 80s.



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Impact on Young Children of Homelessness and/or Unstable Housing*

- More than half of all children in shelter programs are age five or under.
- Homeless children have lower birth weights and experience higher levels of childhood illness.
- Mental health problems among children are also prevalent.
- Mothers experiencing homelessness have a higher rate of depression, severe traumatized history and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- These issues can make bonding with and caring for children more challenging for parents experiencing homelessness.



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Impact on Young Children of Homelessness and/or Unstable Housing*

- Children in these circumstances are at the far end of a “continuum of risk.”
- Research has shown that trauma and extreme stress in childhood can lead to detrimental changes in brain structure and function.
- Stress is cumulative and mitigating factors are critical




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Recent Federal Efforts

Building Partnerships to Address Family Homelessness



Building Partnerships to Address Family Homelessness

Head Start and Early Head Start programs help families experiencing homelessness move to a more stable situation by providing comprehensive supports and a healthy environment for early childhood development and by building strong partnerships with other service providers. This promising practice resource focuses on the way Head Start and Early Head Start grantees are effectively using partnerships to serve homeless children and how other service providers can build relationships with their local Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Evidence from partnerships around the country has shown that these reciprocal relationships help foster an environment of healthy development for young children experiencing homelessness and help move families out of homelessness.

This resource will:

- Provide background information on Head Start and Early Head Start programs;
- Share highlights of how strong partnerships have addressed family homelessness;
- Offer resources to encourage Head Start grantees and housing service providers to work together to expand services for children experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness; and
- Present resources to help providers connect families to other services they may need.

The comprehensive services provided by Head Start and Early Head Start programs are well suited to address family homelessness. Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide a range of health, mental health, educational, and other social service supports in order to counteract the negative impacts that homelessness has on early childhood health and development. Head Start and Early Head Start programs also connect families experiencing homelessness with a host of other services they may need to help them move out of homelessness and into permanent housing. In 2007, the passage of the [Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act](#) identified homeless children as categorically eligible for Early Head Start/Head Start services and provided priority enrollment to Head Start and Early Head Start programs. While Head Start and Early Head


Start programs had already been serving families experiencing homelessness, many responded to the legislation and built strong partnerships with other social service providers in order to be more effective at addressing family homelessness.¹ In 2012-2013 alone, Head Start served 46,900 families experiencing homelessness and assisted 15,696 families in finding safe, stable housing.

Family homelessness affects over 1.6 million children without adequate shelter at some point throughout the year.² The 2013 Department of


¹The percentage of families experiencing homelessness that were enrolled in Head Start rose by an average of 70.4% from 2009-2011, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009-11 Head Start Program Information Report: Family Information Report: Multi-Year Report—State Level.

²Messiah, Ellen L., Cristina Murphy, Natalie Thompson Gouge, Rachael K. Kenney, and Corey Anne Beach. *Shelter & Survival*.

Promising Practices for Children Experiencing Homelessness: A Look at Two States



Promising Practices for Children Experiencing Homelessness: A Look at Two States



Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development
Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
June 2014



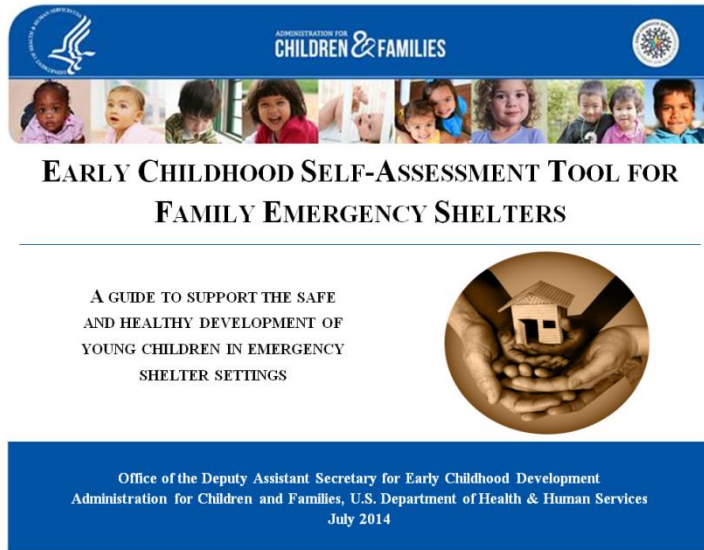
Summary ACF Recommendations

- Prioritize access to services for homeless families
- Provide “grace periods” that give homeless families sufficient opportunity to gather required documentation
- Coordinate with homeless education state coordinators and local liaisons
- Work with homeless coalitions to ensure that the unique needs of young children are well represented



New Federal Resource

Early Childhood Self Assessment for Family Shelters



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

**EARLY CHILDHOOD SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR
FAMILY EMERGENCY SHELTERS**

A GUIDE TO SUPPORT THE SAFE
AND HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT OF
YOUNG CHILDREN IN EMERGENCY
SHELTER SETTINGS

Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development
Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
July 2014

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Low Resource Requirements Some Resource Requirements Substantial Resource Requirements

SECTION C: WORKFORCE STANDARDS & TRAINING

What have we done so far?	Accomplished	Improving	Needs Action	Notes	Next Steps
C1: We train our staff on the effects of homelessness on the development of young children and on how they can support the healthy development of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers					
C2: We train our staff to recognize and respond to adverse drug and allergic reactions					
C3: We train our staff on recognizing domestic violence and the process for referring families to community-based services and hotlines					
C4: We train our staff in trauma-informed care ¹²					
C5: We have at least one staff who is trained in CPR/First Aid for adults, infants, toddlers, and preschoolers present at all times					
C6: We run background checks on all of our staff to ensure they pass all child abuse clearances					
C7: We have staff who address the needs of homeless infants, toddlers, preschoolers					

¹² Please see this [Trauma-Informed Organizational Toolkit for Homeless Services](#) for more information on implementing trauma-informed care in emergency shelter settings from the National Center on Family Homelessness and the Homelessness Resource Center



Head Start: A Perfect Match for Homeless Families

- Head Start provides comprehensive services that homeless children may not otherwise receive
- The Head Start focuses on entire family means parents receive assistance in reaching their goals – it's “2-Gen”
- Community partnerships put Head Start in an excellent position to work with all agencies serving homeless families
- Head Start programs are required to identify and prioritize homeless children for enrollment; allow homeless children to enroll while required paperwork is obtained; and coordinate with McKinney-Vento liaisons and community agencies



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Head Start: Program Information Report

Homelessness Statistics		
Category	2006-2007	2012-2013 (2013-2014)
# of homeless families	27,033	46,800 (45,168)
# of homeless children	30,479	50,992 (48,853)
# of families that found housing	16,379	15,696 (14,734)



Why Partner?

- Families in homeless service programs are among the most vulnerable
 - Early learning programs can help housing programs meet the needs of young children
 - Parents are under inordinate stress
 - Children are at a critical developmental life stage – time that cannot be recaptured
- Homeless service providers have expertise in housing resources in the community and how to help intervene with housing crises



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Serving Young Children Experiencing Homelessness:

CT's Head Start-Family Shelter Partnership Project



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Results: PROJECT GOALS

Increase Head Start Enrollment

Child-proof Family Shelters

Develop and Sustain Partnerships



ORGANIZING STRATEGIES

- Small Grants
- Head Start-Family Shelter Teams
- Technical assistance, team building and cross-sector training
- Structured team work



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TOOLS & WORK PLANS

Child-proofing Action Plan

Enhancement Purchase List

Progress Reporting

Head Start Enrollment

Activities, accomplishments and barriers



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Guided Reflection

Head Start-Family Shelter Self-Assessment

- Physical Environment
- Policies on Young Children and Families
- Qualified Workforce
- Programming
- **Funding**
- **Tracking and Evaluation**
- **Building Awareness**
- “Other”



Project Design

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Self-assessment •Action plan •Purchase list 	Stipend	Progress Report
beginning	X	X	
middle	X	X	X
end	X	X	X



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Picture of Change: From this.....



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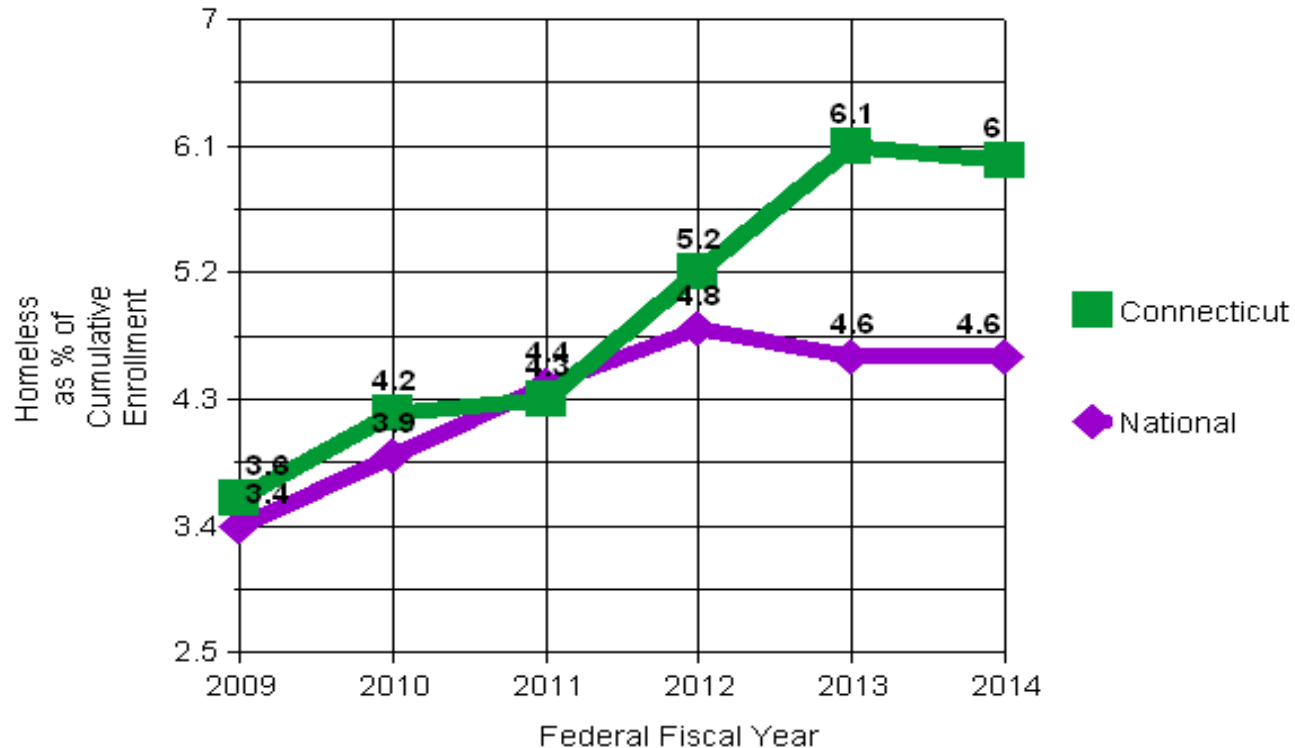


.....to this



Children in Head Start

Children Experiencing Homelessness as a Percent of All Children Served During the Federal Fiscal Year



Head Start PIR 2009-2014



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Head Start-Family Shelter Partnership in East Hartford, CT



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CRT, Inc., Hartford

- Community Renewal Team is a large Community Action Agency based in Hartford CT.
- CRT's Early Care and Education educates more than 1,400 infants, toddlers and preschoolers (Head Start and School Readiness) in six communities + two delegates.
- CRT also operates the East Hartford Family Shelter, with 24 beds for women and children. In 2014, 23 children stayed in the Shelter with their parents.



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Shelter Partnership Small Grant

- An opportunity to improve conditions for children at the Family Shelter in several ways:
 - ✓ Expedite enrollment of children into Head Start
 - ✓ Provide a more home-like environment to decrease mother and child distress
 - ✓ Increase availability of developmentally-appropriate toys and books
 - ✓ Expedite comprehensive services to families



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Goals and Actions

GOAL #1: Increase Coordination Between ECE and Shelter Services

GOAL #2: Assist Families to Meet Goals through Steps to Success (STS) Holistic Case Management

GOAL #3: Create A Safe And Healthy Home Environment For Shelter families

GOAL #4: Facilitate Expedited Emergency Access to Services



Goal #1

Shelter and Head Start staff identified ways to coordinate efforts:

- Assign a specific Head Start Enrollment Specialist to oversee outreach and enrollment for Shelter families.
- Streamline the referral process for immediate enrollment of a child into Head Start.
- Expedite support services to homeless families.



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Goal #1

Service agreements with existing ECE partners are being expanded to include services at the Shelter. This includes WIC, Birth to 3 and Department of Children and Families (DCF)

- An MOU with each partner is being developed for specific shelter family supports
- WIC partnership to include on-site referrals to WIC office



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Goal #1

Raise awareness of the Homeless Liaison, who works for the East Hartford Public Schools under the McKinney-Vento Act:

- Parent workshops on supports provided by the liaison
- Place literature and contact info throughout the Shelter



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Goal #1

To ensure smooth working relationships across programs:

- Partners and CRT staff from Head Start and the Shelter met to coordinate tasks and responsibilities
- Set up ongoing Head Start and Shelter staff meetings for the duration of the project



Goal #1

As part of setting and meeting their goals, families are referred to CRT's programs and services especially Head Start, as appropriate.

Referrals are also made to community partners such as WIC, Birth to 3, the East Hartford Homeless Liaison, etc.

Case conferencing between ECE and Shelter staff allows for a concentration of knowledge and resources. This assists the families in crisis while they stay in the Shelter and as they transition back to community housing.



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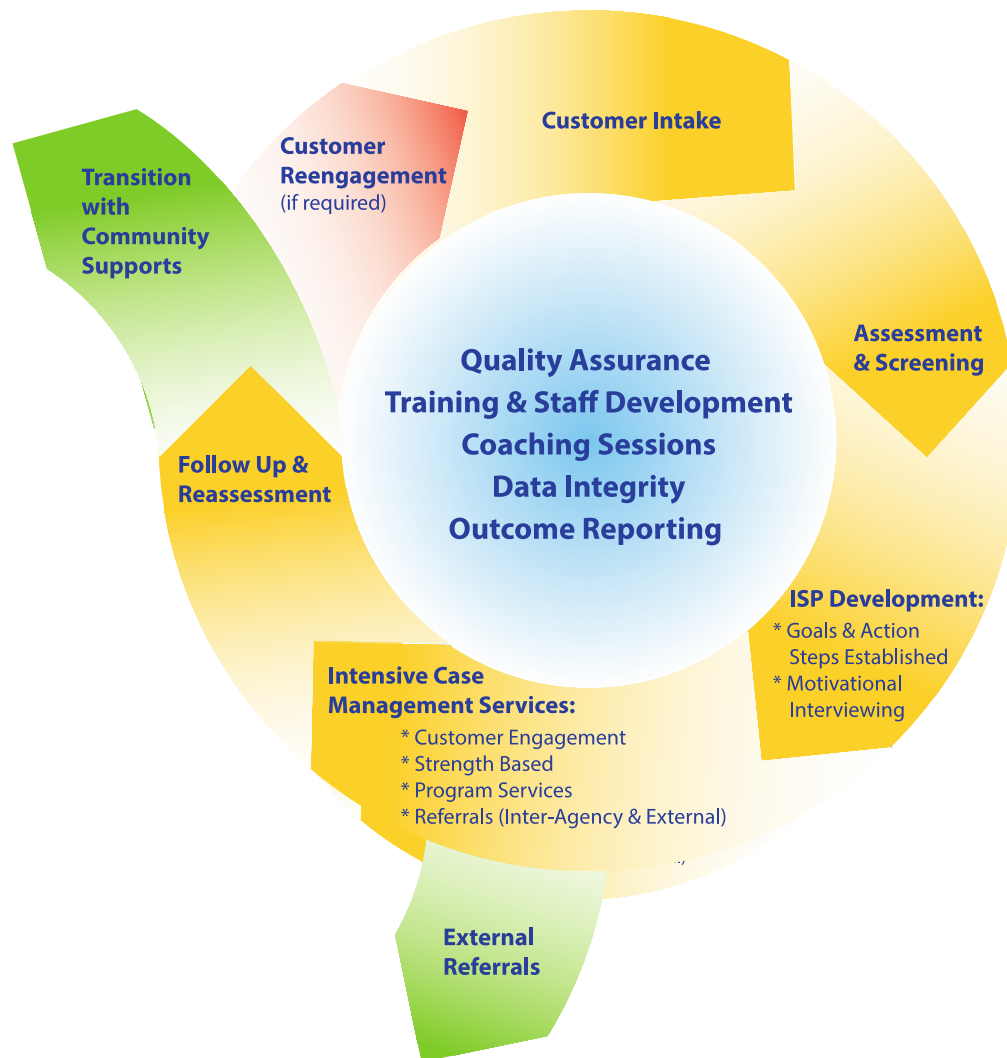


Goal # 2 - Steps to Success



Steps to Success (Family Partnerships System) is a holistic service delivery approach developed by CRT to help families and their children who require a concentration of services, interventions and programs to achieve economic stability and a secure future.





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Goal #3

The Head Start Director identified Hartford Area Habitat for Humanity as a promising new partner in this project.

CRT/Habitat for Humanity Collaboration Outcomes:

- East Hartford facility was assessed by Habitat to identify site needs, facility improvements and possible furniture and equipment donations.
- Habitat and a volunteer interior designer is creating a home-like environment through furniture, wall décor, rugs, etc.



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Goal #3



Work Plan for Shelter Make-over

- Interior Designer assessed site layout.
- Renovation plans were developed.
- Furniture needs were determined.
- Vendors committed to refurbish donated furniture.
- CRT's Youth Build program removed old carpet and painted walls.



Goal #3

- Families enrolled in Head Start will receive home visits in the Shelter, with services for infants, toddlers or preschoolers
- A space that supports privacy has been identified within the Shelter for staff and families to meet during their home visit.



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Goal #3

Training for Parents and Staff will be provided to ensure the Shelter is a safe and healthy place while families are in need of services.

Additionally, parents will receive training on parenting and other Child Development, Health and Nutrition topics.



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Goal #3

CRT ECE staff will work with Shelter staff to revise Emergency Response Plans to include:

- Guidance for natural disasters
- Accounting for children at all times.
- Checking and replacing Shelter smoke detectors.
- Providing for hearing impaired clients.



Goal #3

ECE created a handbook in English and Spanish, which will be given to each new family with children upon arrival:

Your Shelter Home ***What You and Your Child Can Expect***

The information includes:

- Health and Safety at the Shelter
- Early Childhood Education and Enrolling a Child in Head Start.
- Basic Needs Resources
- Community Resources and Supports



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Goal #4

On arrival at the Shelter, families will receive an infant, toddler or preschool “Parent Pack” filled with the following:

- Information on maintaining children’s immunization records
- “Your Shelter Home Handbook” with client feedback form
- Safe sleep information to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Travel size lotion and hygiene wash, toothpaste, shampoo, baby soap and toothbrush
- Diapers/wipes if needed



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Goal #4

CRT ECE will supply the Shelter with diapers and formula on an emergency basis

Shelter staff will call the Head Start hotline and CRT Enrollment Specialist will make the delivery



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Department of Children and Families Partnership



Workshops for families:

- Special Act 14-22
- Dangers of co-sleeping and shaken baby syndrome and the importance of safe sleep and back to sleep
- Rights when working with DCF
- Fatherhood initiatives



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Department of Children and Families Partnership



Educational issues/educational neglect

- What services are available
- Partnering with schools (out-posting workers)

Mental Health

- Removing the myths
- Services

Substance Abuse

- Impact on children
- Family Based Recovery (FBR) and Building Stronger Families (BSF)



Department of Children and Families Partnership

Connecting families to community resources:

- Nurturing Families
- Care Coordination
- Community Support for Families
- HUSKY-intensive case management
- Emergency Mobile Crisis
- 211 Infoline
- DCF Voluntary Services
- Other

Sharing online resources:

- Ctparenting.com ~ DCF Website (www.ct.gov/dcf) ~ OEC website (www.ct.gov/oec)



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GOALS ACHIEVED!

Increased Head Start/ECE enrollment

Child-proofing shelters is all areas of self-assessment

Partnerships developed and sustained



Thank you.

Questions? Comments?

