

A Cross Systems Approach to Family Homelessness and Housing Instability

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Family Homelessness

- Families: growing segment of homeless population
- Safe, affordable housing operates as a foundation for ensuring family stability and child well being
- Homelessness and housing instability have profound effects on child development
 - Trauma, instability; acute and chronic
 - Related family problems
 - Early neurocognitive development
- Multidetermined challenges require multicomponent interventions
- Public systems that touch families should promote stability and well being

Vision

- CT children grow up in safe, stable homes with access to high quality early education and care
- Vulnerable families have access to responsive, friendly systems of support that honor their unique assets and needs
- Crisis is an opportunity to develop new family capacities to respond to future adversity
- CT communities offer a range of ways for families to develop social and material capital in service of well being and self sufficiency

Why housing and well being?

- Family economics
 - Facilitate or pose barrier to stability and well being
 - Predict **housing status**, which is linked with child health, educational attainment, and child welfare involvement
- Poverty is a significant and robust contributor to
 - the achievement gap, and
 - disparate child and family outcomes across education, health, and well being.
- Housing can serve as a platform for other interventions...
- Early childhood education and care as an opportunity

Underlying Assumptions

Prevention: The amount spent on a family today in through SH services will divert the costs of more expensive services and outcomes later in life...

Is the **cost per family** in (prevention) supportive housing programs less than the cost of the available alternative options for families (i.e., interventions to shore up vulnerability, respond to crisis)?

Limited resources create tension between need to respond to family homelessness and engage in proactive and preventive solutions.

Housing and child well being



- Housing as an intervention
 - Moral/ethical obligation – right to shelter?
 - Maslow’s hierarchy of needs
- Challenges
 - Piecemeal nature of policy and practice
 - Collaboration across systems and services
 - Short term costs of intervention
 - Diverse array of family assets and risks
- Work underway in CT: Systems change initiatives
 - Study of housing as a platform for child well being
 - Department of Children and Families (DCF);
The Connection, Inc. (TCI), University of CT



Intervention – What is needed?

- Screening for housing (in)stability and crisis
 - Early childhood providers uniquely qualified to identify needs: economic, housing, developmental, behavioral
 - Need efficient formal and informal capacity to assess family strengths and needs
- Prompt recognition and intervention for **homelessness**
 - Opportunity to assess and shore up families
 - Very limited resources
- Cross systems approach
 - Child and family support providers across systems
 - Unite resources within and across communities

Multicomponent Screening

- Risks and Assets for Family Triage (RAFT)
 - Tool envisioned and commissioned by DCF, TCI
 - Rapid screener for family strengths and needs
- Development and testing – TCI
 - UConn validation study with >800 families in CT
 - Adapted from theory, tools from other municipalities
 - 5-10 minutes completion time, family encounter, case manager
- Psychometrics
 - Reliability
 - Factor analysis
 - Predictive validity

Sample RAFT Items

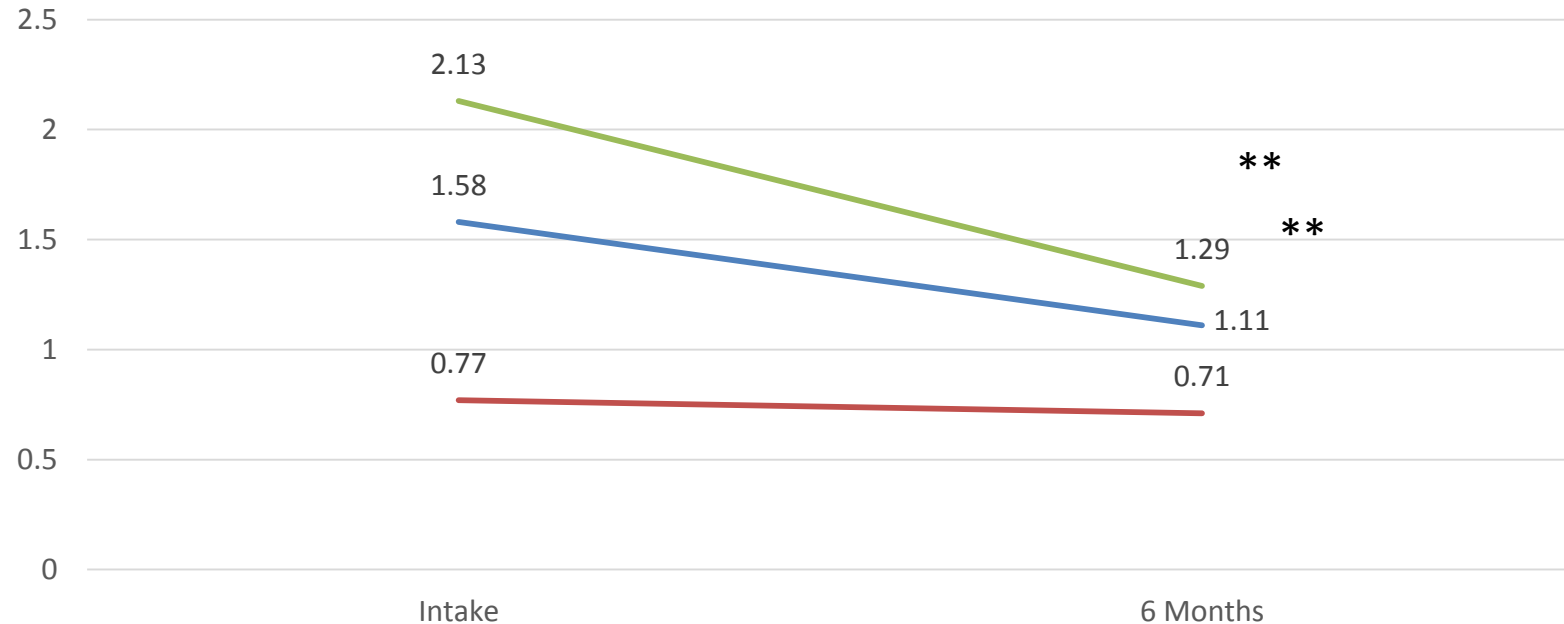
Factor	Status Assessment (with illustrative examples)					#
	0 Not a barrier	1 Mild barrier	2 Moderate barrier	3 Significant barrier	4 Severe barrier	
PART A (THIS SIDE OF PAGE)						
1 Current Housing	Safe, adequate, unsubsidized housing	Safe, adequate subsidized housing	Stable, barely adequate; or costs unsustainable (>30% of income)	Transitional, temporary or substandard housing; or eviction notice	Undomiciled; shelter; homeless or threatened with eviction	
8 Mental Health (MH) Parent	MH symptoms absent or rare; good or superior functioning across areas; no more than "everyday" problems or concerns	Symptoms are expected response to stressors; impairment in function is not longstanding/chronic	Mild symptoms that are transient or episodic; mild to moderate functional impairment, some chronic problems	Recurrent MH symptoms affect behavior, but no danger; persistent or chronic problems, but functional episodically	Poses danger to self or others; suicidal ideation; MH is challenge to ADLs, care of self/others, work	
25 Parenting	Parenting skills are well developed and effectively used for the most part	Parenting skills are adequate with some lapses of concern	Some effective parenting, but overwhelmed or tentative at times	Parenting skills are minimally effective and/or parenting stress is high	Few parenting skills, concerns about or recent history of abuse/neglect	

Factor Analysis - RAFT

Parent Assets		Family Health		Family Resources	
Item	Loading	Item	Loading	Item	Loading
Self Advocacy	.786	Education & Development	.703	Current Housing	.611
Change Effort	.748	Mental Health (F)	.595	Housing Condition	.564
Parenting	.709	Family Health	.533	Housing History	.505
Life Skills	.560	Physical Health (P)	.503	Mobility	.479
Mental Health (P)	.427	School Attendance	.448	Current Income	.391
Meal Prep	.408			Income Mgmt	.361
Highest Employment	.381			Social Network	.307
Substance Use	.318				
Community Inv.	.308				

Predictive validity

- 6-month intervals
- Scores on 2 of the 3 subscales down, reflecting lower risk, as expected



— Parent Assets — Family Health — Family Resources

** indicates $p < .01$

Quick Risks and Assets for Family Triage (QRAFT)

	0 Asset/Not a barrier	1 Mild barrier	2 Moderate barrier	3 Significant barrier	4 Severe barrier
1 Current Housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe, adequate, unsubsidized housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe, adequate, subsidized housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable, barely adequate; or costs unsustainable (>30% of income)	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional, temporary or unsafe housing; exiting residential, hospital or institution; eviction notice	<input type="checkbox"/> Undomiciled (living on street, in car); shelter; homeless; property condemned
2 Housing Condition	<input type="checkbox"/> Housing is safe and adequate for family needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe, but future uncertain or threatened, or other barrier	<input type="checkbox"/> Marginally safe home, but maintenance needed, or stability unlikely, or neighborhood unsafe	<input type="checkbox"/> Potential for threat or harm; safety planning essential; unsustainable housing for any reason	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe; immediate danger/risk; CPS call; needs urgent safety planning; or chronic, severe problems
3 Housing History	<input type="checkbox"/> No significant history of housing problems before current episode	<input type="checkbox"/> Family factors pose barrier (e.g., family size, prior damage, instability, disability, language, income)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 explainable eviction; head of household <18; no rental history; evictions/judgments in the past	<input type="checkbox"/> Chronic housing instability, for example, multiple shelter placements; 3 or more moves in the past year	<input type="checkbox"/> Two or more shelter stays; multiple episodes of being undomiciled; chronic homelessness; history of living on the street.

QRAFT Outcomes (Pilot)

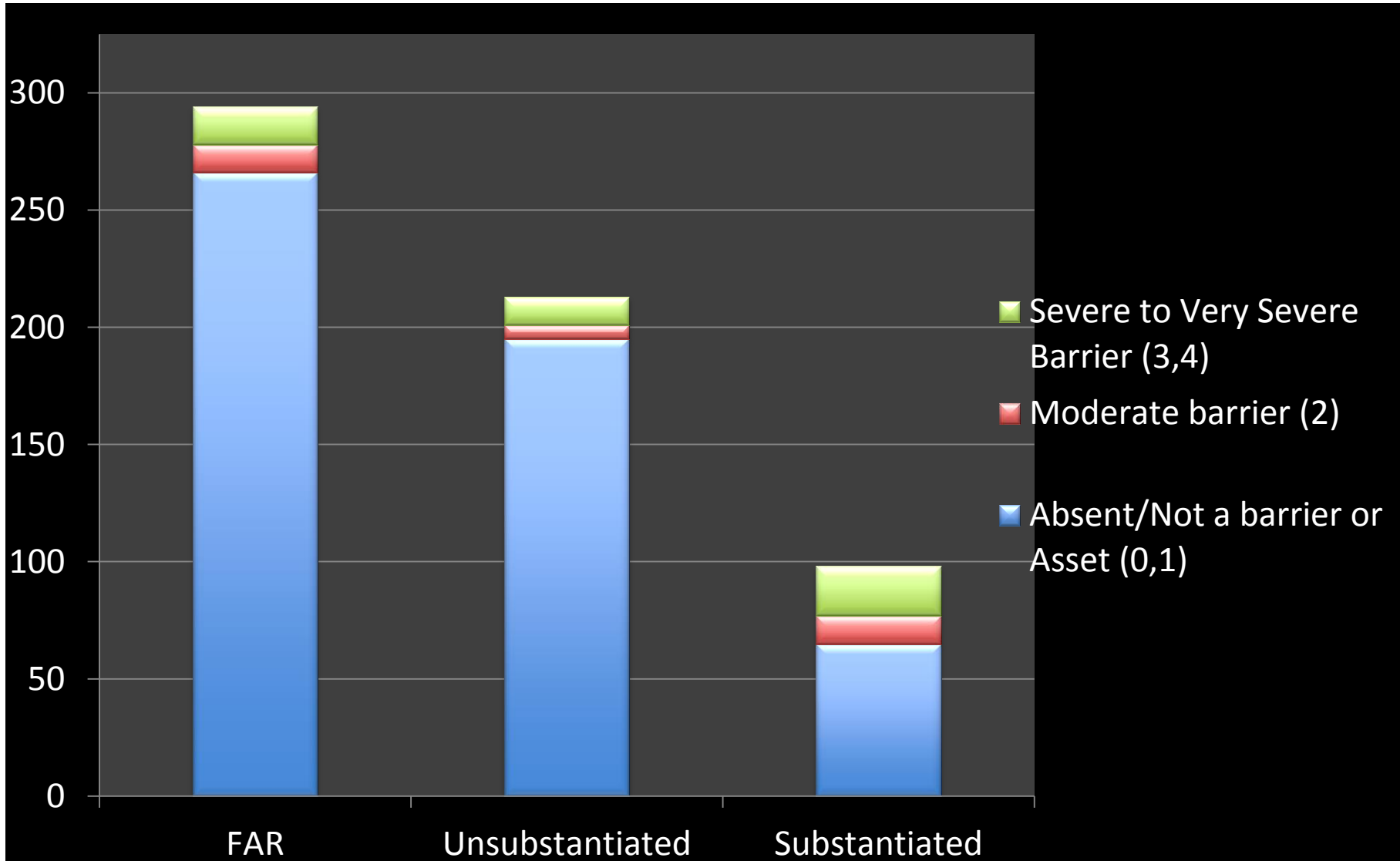
All new families (cases) in DCF Region 3 screened with the Quick Risks and Assets for Family Triage (QRAFT)

- N=616 families, 3 months
- 56 (9.1%) scored high on at least one housing item

Among 98 substantiated cases

- 21% housing crisis
- 33.6% unsustainable, significant, or severe housing challenges

Housing Status by Case Decision



RAFT and QRAFT Implications

Summary

- RAFT: Broad, reliable screening tool that relates to family functioning and progress
- QRAFT: Housing history & status are significantly related to DCF conclusions regarding cases and how they are assigned for further follow up.

Implications

- Systems and policy: quick screen can work to apply housing lens early; tool with low burden and important shift in practice – prompt identification!
- Informs statewide understanding of housing concerns (and resource needs) and ability to link over time with referral and intervention data

Next Steps

- Adopt QRAFT within project expansion, statewide
- Connect with referral and case data across time
- Use RAFT and QRAFT to differentiate family needs within and across service systems

Conclusions and offerings

- Reaching for the vision requires...
 - Effective, efficient methods for appraising family assets and needs (front line and other staff) **across systems**
 - If needs are identified...are supports available?
- Homeless systems
 - Need quick, reliable means to screen family needs across a range of domains
 - Limited resources and time windows
- Early Childhood systems
 - Nature of relationships offers important opportunity
 - Capacity to adopt screening tools for family
 - Potential to differentiate supports and enable prompt referral across systems

Questions?

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Thank you.

