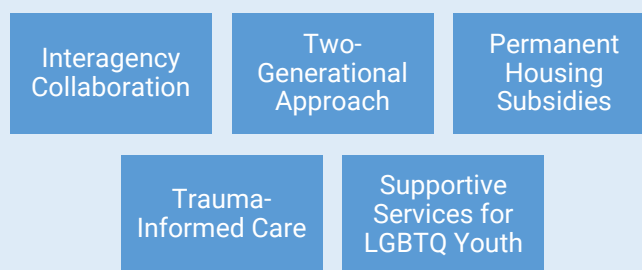


Part 4: Evidence Based Strategies to Address Children and Youth Homelessness & Housing Instability

This is Part 4 in a five-part integrated data report exploring the connections and gaps in services used by children and youth currently or previously experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability. Part 4 explores research-informed interventions that can help address child and youth homelessness. For more background on the integrated data report, read Part 1.

Evidence-Based Strategies



Interagency Collaboration

What it is: Interagency collaboration is the process by which agencies from different sectors come together to interdependently problem-solve, share resources, and make joint decisions that will improve systems that serve children and families.ⁱ

Why it's important: Collaboration across systems increases system efficiency and improves client access to the services that help them attain family and housing stability.

Examples: Programs such as Keeping Families Together have found a way to address both housing and supportive service needs through interagency collaboration. Families who were eligible for the program (i.e. had been homeless for at least one year and had a child abuse or neglect case open with the local Child Protective Services) received permanent housing subsidies, case management, and service coordination. To achieve this, housing and child service agencies worked collaboratively to recruit families, increase communication between agencies, and build capacity by identifying new partnerships or providing needed training to staff and social workers.ⁱⁱ Results from the New York City pilot program (2007-2010) found that child maltreatment incidences decreased after families enrolled in the intervention (2.1 average incidences in the 3 years prior to the intervention and 0.6 average incidences during the 3 year intervention). Furthermore, families receiving the intervention were more stably housed after three years than families with similar backgrounds who were not in the intervention.ⁱⁱⁱ

Two-Generational Approach

What it is: The two-generational approach is an intervention aimed at providing both the parent(s) and the child with the support and resources they need to thrive. The Annie E. Casey Foundation identifies three key components to this two-generational approach: equipping parents with resources to secure jobs that can support their families and achieve financial stability; providing children with access to quality educational experiences; and providing parents with opportunities to build healthy relationships with their children and the tools to be advocates for them.^{iv}

Why it's important: Previous literature suggests a strong connection between a child's well-being (social-emotional, physical, and economic) and their family's well-being and stability.^v By addressing the needs of the whole family, the two-generation approach helps families build economic and housing stability that can be passed down from one generation to the next.

Examples: Preschool enrichment programs that include family engagement are an example of a two-generational approach. Programs such as Early Head Start have been found in longitudinal studies to reduce family separation and substantiated reports of child abuse. As a result of improved parenting and early child development, children enrolled in Early Head Start were found to have lower rates of violent arrests and substance use and higher rates of high school completion and college attendance.^{vi,vii} Two-generational approaches such as Early Head Start help to keep families together and drive economic opportunity for future generations in order to break the cycle of poverty.

Permanent Housing Subsidies

What it is: Permanent housing subsidies are government sponsored assistance designed to alleviate housing costs and provide a pathway to stable housing for low income individuals and families. Some subsidy programs, such as Housing Choice Vouchers, provide only housing. Other programs, such as rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing, can include both subsidized housing and other supportive services. Subsidy programs can be short-term (3 to 24 months) or long-term (more than 24 months).

Why it's important: Permanent housing provides families with housing stability, which improves children's well-being and long-term success.^{viii,ix}

Examples: In the Family Options Study, a national housing study investigating the impact of various housing programs on families experiencing homelessness, Gubits and colleagues (2015) found that Housing Choice Vouchers (a long-term subsidy program) were the most effective housing program at reducing housing instability and improving well-being.^x Families who were prioritized to receive Housing Choice Vouchers experienced significantly fewer nights homeless; reported higher rates of food security and lower levels of parent psychological stress and domestic violence; and had fewer child behavior problems and school switches after three years compared to families who were not prioritized into any permanent housing program.

Trauma-Informed Care

What it is: Trauma-informed care is an agency-wide strategy for working with vulnerable populations that by recognizing the pervasiveness of trauma; learning the impact and symptoms of trauma; incorporating knowledge about trauma into policies and client practices; and actively seeking not to re-traumatize the client. Trauma-informed care, if implemented effectively, can result in a shift in organizational culture to prevent re-traumatization.^{xi}

Why it's important: A disproportionate number of households experiencing homelessness have a history of abuse, neglect, and/or other trauma.^{xii,xiii} By using trauma-informed approaches, service providers can reduce re-traumatization and help vulnerable parents and children recover and build resiliency.

Examples: The Buncombe County School District and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have led North Carolina in efforts to transform community institutions into trauma-informed environments. School reforms have been implemented at all 23 elementary and intermediate schools and include mental health supports, teacher self-care and training, and improved techniques for student discipline and performance. DHHS reforms include utilization of trauma-informed best practices in child welfare case management.^{xiv} At the local level, a community-wide initiative led by the National Council for Behavior Health has begun the process of helping organizations, including CMS, transition to trauma-informed practices.

Supportive Services for LGBTQ Youth

What it is: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth are overrepresented among the youth population experiencing homelessness.^{xv} LGBTQ youth may be forced from home due to disclosure or discovery of their LGBTQ status and may be less likely to seek services due to stigma or fear. Interventions that target specific risk factors for LGBTQ homelessness include parent-child mediation and use of inclusive and affirming language in housing, healthcare, and other service systems.^{xvi}

Why it's important: LGBTQ youth may face additional barriers such as stigma and fear when seeking housing and other services. Intentional, targeted approaches are needed to address barriers and prevent homelessness.

Examples: In 2015, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) named Safe and Supported as one of two pilot programs for its LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Prevention Initiative. Safe and Supported uses a Host Home program to connect youth who are experiencing homelessness with volunteers that provide temporary housing and social support. The program also provides education and technical assistance to help service agencies create LGBTQ-friendly policies.^{xvii} Locally, [Time Out Youth](#) provides temporary housing, counseling, education, and other services for LGBTQ youth in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

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