

# Connecticut Housing and Child Welfare Project Intensive Supportive Housing for Families (ISHF)



The Connection



UConn

Chapin Hall  
at the University of Chicago

## Lead Organization:

State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF)

**Location:** State of Connecticut

## Number of Families to Serve:

50+ Intensive Supportive Housing for Families (ISHF) treatment families 50 + Supportive Housing for Families (SHF) treatment families

100+ DCF Business as Usual (BAU) comparison families

## Family Selection Criteria:

*Hardship:* Low income (HUD Guidelines), lack of financial resources, and receiving/eligible for public assistance.

*Child welfare involvement:* Open child welfare case resulting from substantiated report of abuse/neglect, within a specified timeframe (early in child welfare involvement so housing needs are considered promptly).

*Family Characteristics:* Functional needs (mental health, substance abuse, trauma and other behavioral health concerns) apparent in parent(s) and child(ren).

*Housing instability:* Housing crisis (homelessness) or highly precarious and unsustainable living situation: emergency shelter; transitional housing; living in a hotel or motel; inpatient at an institution, residential treatment center, or hospital with discharge pending and no stable housing; imminent housing loss; unsafe housing; chronic housing instability (3+ moves in year); fleeing domestic violence.

## Partner Organizations

Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF)

The Connection, Inc. (TCI)

University of Connecticut (UConn)

Chapin Hall, University of Chicago

Connecticut Department of Housing (DOH)

## The Need

Families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population, comprising one third of the country's homeless. There is an association between duration of shelter stay and child welfare involvement; of children who stayed in a shelter an average of 90 days or more, 40 percent became child-welfare involved as compared to just 10 percent of children who had shelter stays of 90 days or less.

Lack of access to housing places children at risk for diminished health, education, and developmental outcomes; increases the likelihood of foster placement; is associated with higher service utilization; and delays family reunification.

## The Local Solution

The Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Department of Housing collaborates with state partners, community agencies, and service providers to deliver a two-tiered triage procedure including access to stable housing, trauma-focused assessment, interdisciplinary team-based support and access to empirically supported interventions for family members. Long-term outcomes include: reduced child welfare system contacts, maltreatment, removal, and foster care placement; and increased family housing stability and parental employment.

## Overview of the CT Demonstration

Clients are randomly assigned to Business as Usual, SHF, or ISHF. ISHF clients have priority access to evidence-based interventions for parenting (Triple P), Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT) and other mental health challenges, and substance abuse. Interventions are provided for health, housing, and employment preparedness. The CT project has obtained 50+ Rental Assistance Vouchers through state support. The ISHF condition includes the following core features:

- Intensive case management, priority access to evidence-based interventions and vocational services
- Triage and assessment into team-based services that engage parents as full members
- Interdisciplinary family teaming including the parent, case manager, and community support providers

## Local Evaluation

The CT Project is part of a larger national demonstration designed to test an intensive approach to serving families that come to the attention of the child welfare system because of chronic or recurring homelessness and other serious, persistent issues such as mental illness, chemical abuse, and domestic violence. UConn researchers are conducting a project evaluation (process, outcome, and cost components) to compare outcomes across the three conditions: (1) the existing SHF model, (2) the new, enhanced ISHF model, and (3) a BAU comparison group. A comprehensive evaluation plan ensures model fidelity and accountability of activities and outcomes, specifies plans for data collection and analysis linked to objectives, includes formative and summative elements assessing the quality, sustainability, and effectiveness (and cost-effectiveness) of activities, and addresses dissemination to a diverse constituency to support replication of effective elements.

### *What is Supportive Housing?*

Supportive housing is an innovative and proven solution to some of communities' toughest problems, serving as the scaffolding for the delivery of more effective and responsive services and public systems. It combines affordable housing with services that help people who face the most complex challenges to live with stability, autonomy and dignity. Supportive housing is affordable housing where supportive services providers actively engage tenants in flexible, voluntary and comprehensive services and work with property and housing management to support tenant stability and ensure that the housing remains a positive community asset for the long-term.

### *What is Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System?*

An innovative public-private partnership among the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. The initiative is testing an intensive approach to providing vulnerable families with safe, affordable housing together with the other services and supports that they need in order to stay together. Over the next five years grantees in five sites – Broward County, Fla.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Memphis, Tenn.; San Francisco; and the state of Connecticut will bring supportive housing to more than 500 families with children at risk of, or already in, foster care placement.

An effort staffed by CSH and formerly the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), the Resource Center provides and coordinates tailored one-on-one expertise and services to help meet the needs of grantees taking part in Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families with Child Welfare. In addition, the Resource Center encourages and supports peer learning among the five sites, building on local capacity and the experience of people working in the field.

**Child Welfare &  
Supportive Housing**  
RESOURCE CENTER