

Memphis has the highest number of children in foster care in the state. Homelessness in Memphis is all too often a pathway to foster care, as more than 22 percent of all substantiated maltreatment cases cite housing as the primary concern. The Tennessee Department of Children's Services routinely struggles to find affordable housing for families.

Memphis has historically relied on the foster care system as an approach to protect children's safety and well-being; however, evidence has demonstrated that the separation of a family creates its own intense trauma often times greater than what a child would experience by remaining in the home.

In order to prevent families from unnecessarily dissolving and to prevent the lasting legacy of foster care and homelessness, Memphis Strong Families Initiative (MSFI) will connect the housing and child welfare systems with the goal of addressing a family's need for permanent, stable housing along with intensive customized services.

Overview of MSFI Demonstration

MSFI will connect 100 of Memphis' most vulnerable families to permanent, stable, affordable housing coupled with intensive wraparound services. Housing for families will be concentrated in 69 apartment and duplex housing units managed by Promise Development Corporation. An interdisciplinary team with representatives from all partners will work together to coordinate services. Service delivery to families will be guided by evidence-based models that specifically address trauma experienced by the adults and children while addressing other barriers impeding the achievement of family stability and self-sufficiency.

Family Selection Criteria

Income: Less than 30 percent of the Area Median Income by household size

Child welfare involvement: Families have a current substantiated abuse/neglect case, child in foster care (maximum of 90 days), services recommended post-assessment

Housing status: Presentation of homelessness (staying in a shelter, hotel paid by a 3rd party, transitional housing program, or unsheltered,) a score of 2 or higher on Housing Barrier Screen.

Multiple high needs: high scores on SDM and Housing Barrier Screen; at least one member of the household has a disability of long duration that could be improved with permanent housing including a mental illness or substance abuse disorder.

Supportive Services for Families and their Children: Comprehensive case management; Support to meet goals and close child welfare cases; Mental health care (on-site); Parenting curriculum (on-site); Employment and resume assistance (on-site); Community Events/Fairs (on-site); Knowledge Quest afterschool program (off-site partnership); STREETS Ministries Afterschool Program (off-site partnership).



MSFI Partner Organizations

TN Department of Children's Services
Alliance HealthCare Network
Promise Development Corporation
Christ CommunityHealthServices
LeBonheur Children's Hospital
LeBonheur Community Health and Wellbeing

KnowledgeQuest
Early Success Coalition
Shelby County Schools
Tennessee Urban Child Institute
University of Tennessee, Health Science Center
Metropolitan Inter-faith Association (MIFA)
Community Alliance for the Homeless

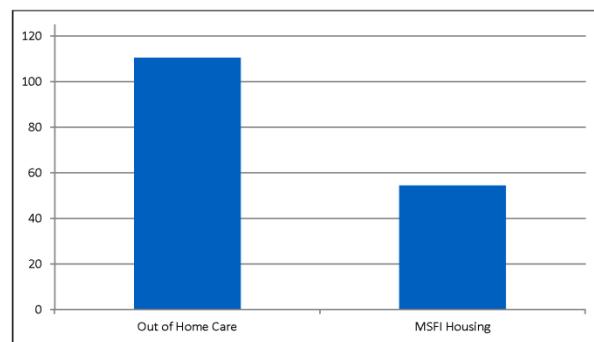
Local Evaluation

MSFI is part of a larger national demonstration designed to examine an intensive approach to serving families that come to the attention of the child welfare system because of problems with chronic or recurring homelessness and other serious, persistent issues such as mental illness, substance use and domestic violence. The MSFI portion of the demonstration is being evaluated by the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. The evaluation will examine changes in child maltreatment and improved safety, improved housing stability, child well-being and caregiver outcomes.

Current Snapshot



82 Families (212 children) housed to date



Cost per child per night (includes housing assistance & services)

Out of Home Care = \$108 (This figure is an average)

Cost per family per night

MSFI Housing = \$50

What is Supportive Housing?

Supportive housing is a 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 to help people who face the most complex challenges live with stability, autonomy and dignity. Supportive housing is affordable housing where service providers actively engage tenants in flexible, voluntary and comprehensive supports, and work with property and housing management to enhance tenant stability and ensure that housing remains a positive community asset for the long-term. MSFI is delivering supportive housing to families.

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. This initiative is testing an intensive approach to providing vulnerable families with safe, affordable housing with the other services and supports they need in order to stay housed. MSFI is part of this demonstration initiative.