

Housing as a Child Welfare Intervention

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What is the link between homelessness and child welfare?

1. Homeless families have a history of child welfare involvement

18% of homeless children in NYC had received child welfare services over the 5 year period prior to shelter enrollment (Park, et al 2004)

2. Use of homeless services linked to increased risk child welfare involvement

38% of children in families in Philadelphia who used homeless services were later placed in custody of child welfare by age 6. Nearly 7 times rate other children. (Culhane, et al 2003)

3. Child welfare involved families face imminent homelessness

Nationally, families whose children were in out-of-home care reported:

- an **eviction** (26%)
- living in a **doubled-up situation** (42%)
- having **experienced homelessness** (29%)

(Courtney, et al, 2004)

How Housing Issues Impact Department of Human Services (DHS) Families

- **Children placed in foster care or kinship care due to homelessness and unsafe housing**
- **Delayed reunification of children in foster care and kinship care with their families due to lack of safe, affordable housing.**
- **Youth “aging out” of the foster care system between 18 and 21 without housing security.**

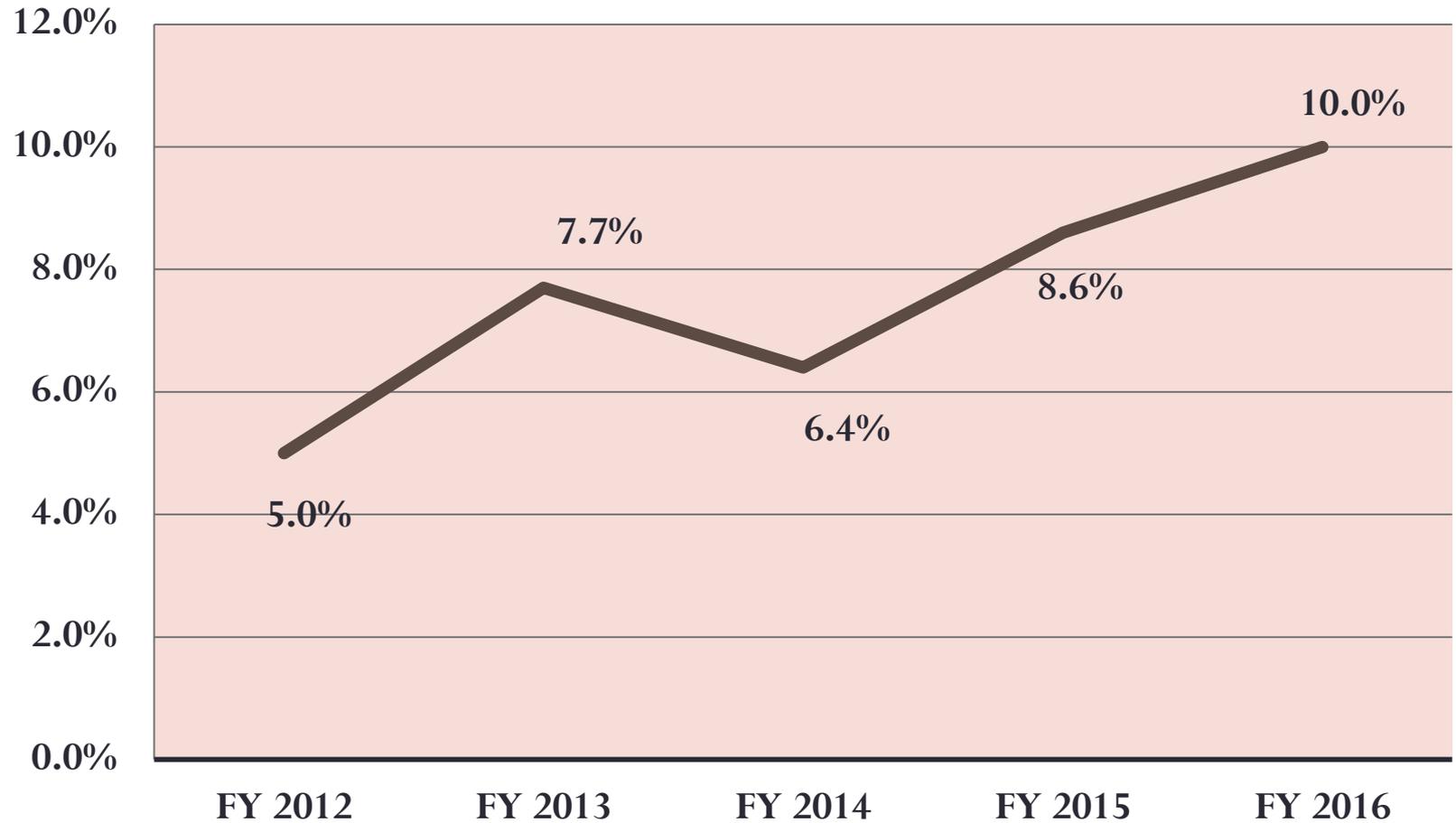
How Big is the Problem?

Removal Due to Inadequate Housing

- In Philadelphia, DHS reports that in FY16, inadequate housing was reported as the reason for removal of a child in 10 % of cases (317 cases)
 - This is a **162% increase from FY12 to FY16**
- Nationally, 16% of families who are being investigated for child maltreatment faced out-of-home placement due to housing (Fowler, et al., 2013).

Removal Due to Inadequate Housing

(Philadelphia PA)



How Big is the Problem?

Delayed Reunification

- In 40% of DHS Rapid Permanency Reviews (Pilots 1 & 2), housing was a factor delaying reunification (N=53 cases) (DHS, 2016)
- Nationally, 30% of families experienced delayed family reunification due to housing issues (Fowler, et al., 2013)

How Big is the Problem?

Youth Exiting Care Without Stable Housing

- In Philadelphia, over half of the youth with foster care histories named entrance into foster care as the beginning of their own homelessness (Chapin Hall draft report, 2017)
- Nationally, researchers estimate that for youth who age out of foster care:
 - 11-36% **become homeless**
 - 25-50% **experience unstable housing**, including:
 - “**couch surfing**”—temporarily staying at the homes of various friends and acquaintances—moving frequently within short periods of time
 - **having trouble paying rent**
 - facing **eviction** (Mathematica, May 2015)

Housing and Child Welfare Challenges

Housing Problems with Result in Out-of-Home Placement

- Homelessness
- Unsafe housing conditions
- Overcrowding
- Utility shut off
- Unstable housing/frequent moves
- Eviction
- Fleeing Domestic Violence
- No safe place to go because of adult clearances
- Housing and MH

Housing Problems Delaying Family Reunification

- Lack of Subsidized Housing
- Lack of affordable rental units
- Substandard housing
- History of utility arrears
- Overcrowding
- Rental Units:
 - No credit or bad credit
 - Criminal record
 - History of Eviction
- Need Repairs

Youth Aging Out of Foster Care into Housing Insecurity

- Lack of preparation to live independently
- Lack of employment education
- Lack of housing appropriate for youth exiting the system
- Lack of affordable rental units
- History of trauma
- History of running away from foster care
- Number of foster care placements

Housing as a Child Welfare Intervention:

Overall Goals

1. **Reduce** the number of children who are placed in care due to housing related issues.
2. **Increase** the number of timely family reunifications which otherwise would be delayed due to housing.
3. **Increase** the number of youth who exit care with stable housing.

DHS Resources

- Emergency funding for
 - first and last months' rent and security deposit
 - Move-in support (e.g. beds, refrigerator)
 - Utility arrears assistance
 - Repairs for owner occupied property
- DHS Housing unit
 - limited availability of housing units
 - challenging eligibility requirements

Strategies

- I. Expand housing options with the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services
- II. Make DHS policy changes to reduce barriers to housing
- III. Strengthen housing related services of DHS housing liaisons and case managers
- IV. Training of child welfare staff on best practices in providing housing assistance
- V. Enhance housing related data collection

Collaboration with the Office of Housing Services (OHS)

- Increase emergency housing to avoid a child's removal in cooperation with OHS (*in progress*)
- Expand rental support and case management diversionary services to prevent removal of children
- Establish rapid rehousing for families waiting for reunification
 - *Pilot of 16 to 20 families beginning in January 2018*
- Identify housing options for youth aging out of foster care

Challenges

- Different cultures – housing first vs. child welfare system
- Funding limited to literal homelessness – most families with open child welfare care are imminently homeless
- Limited federally funded housing options – need to look at private rental market solutions
- Affordable housing crisis and lack of safe affordable housing for homeless and child welfare involved families in Philadelphia.