Targeting & Preventing Homelessness

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Lauren Donnelly
Andrew Greer
Emily Harris-Shears
Efficiency in NYC: Targeting Services to Families and Individuals Most Likely to Benefit

Relevance to Providers and Other Practitioners

Conclusions and Contributions
EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

Effectiveness
- the ability of a program to reduce rates of homelessness among people who would otherwise experience it
- Requires selecting suitable comparison groups

Efficiency
- the ability of a targeting model to direct services to those who would benefit most from such services
- requires
  1) identifying risk
  2) directing services
Targeting services to prevent homelessness is difficult:

- Numbers of shelter entrants are small & even people with many risk factors of shelter entry avoid going to shelter
- Many targeting models are used, but few are based on data
- The following models are based on data
- New York City offers community-based homelessness prevention services: HomeBase
DATA

- City database of 10,220 childless adults and 11,105 families
  - Applied for services Sept 2004 - Dec 2010

- Intake workers interviewed applicants about program eligibility and risk factors

- City provided administrative data on shelter entry over at least the next 2 years
1: Which risk factors contribute to shelter entry?

2: Is it possible to develop a short screening survey to target services?

3: How does the efficiency for empirical models compare with decisions made by service providers in the absence of such models?
## WHICH RISK FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO SHELTER ENTRY?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Significant Risk Factors Families</th>
<th>Significant Risk Factors Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
<td>Lower age, Pregnancy, Child under 2</td>
<td>Lower age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Capital</strong></td>
<td>Receiving public assistance, no HS, Unemployed</td>
<td>Receiving public assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
<td>Not leaseholder, Eviction threat, Higher mobility</td>
<td>Higher arrears, Verbal eviction threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal Discord</strong></td>
<td>Conflict with landlord, leaseholder, or household</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Childhood Experiences</strong></td>
<td>Involvement with protective services, Disruptive childhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shelter History</strong></td>
<td>Reintegrating into community, Shelter application (3 months), Reports previous shelter stay</td>
<td>Reintegrating into community, Shelter application (3 months), Previous shelter stay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
QUICK SCREENING SURVEY FAMILIES

1 point
- Pregnancy
- Child under 2
- No high school/GED
- Not currently employed
- Not leaseholder
- Reintegrating into community

2 points
- Receiving public assistance (PA)
- Protective services
- Evicted or asked to leave by landlord or leaseholder
- Applying for shelter in last 3 months

3 points
- Reports previous shelter as an adult

Age
- 1 pt: 23 - 28;
- 2 pts: ≤22

Moves last year
- 1 pt: 1-3 moves;
- 2 pts: 4+ moves

Disruptive experiences in childhood
- 1 pt: 1-2 experiences;
- 2 pts: 3+ experiences

Conflict (Discord with landlord, leaseholder, or household)
- 1 pt: Moderate (4 – 5.59);
- 2 pts: Severe (5.6 – 9)
QUICK SCREENING SURVEY SINGLES

- 1 point
  - Community reintegration
  - Receiving public assistance

- 2 points
  - Verbal eviction threat
  - Applying for shelter in last 3 months

- 6 points
  - Previous shelter stay

- Age
  - 29-32 years: 1 point
  - 28 or under: 2 points

- Arrears
  - $5000-$8000: 1 point
  - $8000 or greater: 2 points
# EFFICIENCY OF SCREENING MODEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Prediction</th>
<th>Actual Outcome Present</th>
<th>Actual Outcome Absent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present</strong></td>
<td>(A) Correctly Predicted</td>
<td>(B) False Alarms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hits</td>
<td>Type I error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Absent</strong></td>
<td>(C) Misses</td>
<td>(D) Correctly Predicted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type II error</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## HIT RATES

<table>
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<td>Absent</td>
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<td>(D) Correctly Predicted Negative</td>
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</table>

Hit Rate = \( \frac{A}{A+C} \)
# FALSE-ALARM RATES

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<td></td>
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False-Alarm Rate = \( \frac{B}{B+D} \)
EFFICIENCY OF CURRENT DECISIONS AND DATA-INFORMED MODELS

- Current Decisions: Adults - 51%
- Full Model: Adults - 95%
- Screener: Adults - 91%
- Current Decisions: Families - 43%
- Full Model: Families - 36%
- Screener: Families - 34%
EFFICIENCY OF CURRENT DECISIONS AND DATA-INFORMED MODELS

Current Decisions: Adults
Current Decisions: Families
Full Model: Adults
Full Model: Families
Screener: Adults
Screener: Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Current Decisions (%)</th>
<th>Full Model (%)</th>
<th>Screener (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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</table>
Aside from high arrears, homelessness risk factors for single adults are a subset of those for families.

By using a screening survey and targeting the same proportion of people as currently served, the hit rates would increase drastically, and the false-alarm rates would drop.

Although the geographies and community-level factors differ, analyses in another location (Alameda County) suggest somewhat parallel findings.
Use and evaluate data-driven models to increase efficiency

Encourage intake workers to collect data thoroughly and override with explanations

Publicize results so that everyone can share best practices

Examine the extent to which risk models can be generalized across sites
THANK YOU
Housing Court-Based Homelessness Prevention

Lauren Donnelly, Supervisor Housing Help Program
The Legal Aid Society
National Alliance To End Homelessness
July 2014
A Community In Crisis

- HHP targets some of the most vulnerable communities in NYC
- HHP assists more than 1650 low income families every year
- Currently we service 8 zip codes across Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx.
- All 8 zip codes selected have high rates of shelter entry in NYC
- All 8 zip codes have some of the highest rates of unemployment in NYC
- All 8 Zip codes have some of the highest rent burdens in NYC
Most families who are evicted and enter shelter are unable to obtain help before homelessness is imminent.

Over 95% of landlords are represented by an attorney in Housing Court, while over 90% of tenants are not. This tenant disadvantage contributes to eviction because:

- tenants lack an understanding of the law, legal notices, proceedings and defenses;
- are intimidated by the legal process; and/or
- are unable to effectively negotiate with the landlord’s attorney.
The Housing Help Program (HHP) was developed to prevent homelessness by providing legal and social services directly from the courthouse.

The initial pilot was funded by the United Way.
What makes HHP Unique?

- The program is based in Housing Court
- HHP cases are heard by two judges who are dedicated to the program.
- Staffed by lawyers, paralegals, and social workers
- HHP is subject to rigorous evaluation
Early Intervention Model

- Provides services from the moment the tenant appears in Housing Court and is automatically referred to HHP when they first come to court.

- All tenants facing eviction meet with HHP staff

- HHP tenants have access to a broad spectrum of social services during and after the case
Serving the Neediest Better

- HHP targets resources to serve more vulnerable families.
- HHP allocates its resources to ensure that virtually all are served.
- Unlike HHP, traditional legal services organizations lack the paralegal, social worker and attorney resources to assist in all cases.
- HHP paralegals and attorneys provide hands-on assistance to tenants through every step of their case. Cases are constantly monitored through final resolution with full representation available when needed.
Comprehensive Range of Services

- **Legal Services: Brief and Full**
  - 70% Receive Brief Legal Services
    - Provided when tenant is unlikely to need full representation
    - Paralegals walk the tenants through the process
  - Remaining 30% Receive Full Legal Services

- **Short-Term Social Service**
  - Help tenants apply for public assistance and restore and retain housing subsidies
  - Provide financial counseling

- **Long-Term Social Services**
  - Tenants needing longer-term assistance are referred to NYC’s community-based homelessness prevention program, Homebase
Community-Based Social Services

Homebase works collaboratively with HHP staff, offering such services as:

- Short-term emergency funding
- Assistance with obtaining employment, public benefits and accessing other social service.
- Relocation as last resort
Evaluating the Program

- Evaluate the program based on the rate of program participants who avoid shelter
- Used traditional family anti-eviction legal services as a control group
  - Available in all neighborhoods
  - Emphasis on full legal services
  - Most services provided in community offices
  - Traditional model takes a triage approach rather than focusing on long-term homelessness prevention
Shelter Entry Rates

- 1-Year: 2.9%
- 2-Years: 5.1%
- 3-Years: 7.6%

Legend: HHP (Blue) and FALS (Yellow)
Interpreting the Results

- HHP associated with reduced hazard of shelter entry
- Our results may understate program efficacy
  - FALS is subject to two counts of selection bias
  - Comparing HHP to a pre-existing program
- Success due to many unique program features
- Further research required
Road to Replication

- Can be adopted by localities
  - Needs a willing Housing Court partner
  - Requires a legal and social service team
  - Can be tailored to each community’s needs
The Seedco report can be found online at:

Shelter Diversion

Emily Harris-Shears
Catholic Community Services of King County
Overview

- Pilot launched in January 2014
- Accessed through King County’s Coordinated Entry System, Family Housing Connection
- 613 unsheltered families
- 288 shelter units
- One-time support, time limited
Pilot Partners

- Neighborhood House
- Wellspring Family Services
- InterIm Community Development Association
- Solid Ground
- Catholic Community Services
Diversion Eligibility

- Families staying in places not meant for human habitation at the time of their appointment with Family Housing Connection
Access

- Families staying in places not meant for human habitation schedule an appointment through 2-1-1
- Meet with Housing Specialist, within two weeks of call to 2-1-1
- Discuss housing needs and options
- Share reality of shelter availability
- Explore diversion:
  - Families who can end their experience of homelessness with 1-2 meetings and up to $250 work with Family Housing Connection Staff
  - Families who need more support (up to 30 days) or more than $250 are referred to pilot partners
Diversion Approach

• Start with assumption that every family has potential to end their homelessness with limited support in real-time

• Open-ended conversation about family’s current experience of homelessness

• Utilize Motivational Interviewing and Active Listening techniques

• Listening for solutions the family’s used in the past

• Listening for resources and support the family may already have access to
Diversion Approach

1. Introduce process:
   ▫ Emphasize the role the family plays, want to hear from them regarding the experience
   ▫ Support the family in making a choice that will serve their immediate housing needs
   ▫ Share reality of shelter availability

2. Listen:
   ▫ Active/empathic listening
   ▫ Repeat back to ensure you’re hearing correctly
   ▫ Validate their experience

3. Explore
   ▫ Ask questions to identify strengths
Diversion Approach

Listening for:

- Previous rental history
- Current/recent employment history
Exploring Options

- Re-establishing lease terms with a previous/recent landlord
- Identifying a viable doubled-up situation
- Finding a roommate or other household to share the rent
- Providing one-time assistance to help a family move-in to their own place
- Relocating to another city/state where a stable housing solution is more viable and able to stay a minimum of 30 days
Exploring Options

• Family drives what’s feasible and realistic for their experience
• Work with the family to reality and safety test their solutions
  ▫ How long can they stay?
  ▫ Do they feel safe there?
  ▫ How will they pay for their housing after the first month?
  ▫ What does maintaining housing look like for them?
Assistance Provided

- Mediation with a family member or friend
- Mediation or negotiation with a previous or potential landlord
- Help the family brainstorm creative, alternate solutions to shelter
- Assist with housing search
- Connect the family with resources such as child care, employment and other mainstream resources that may assist them in obtaining housing
Flexible Funding

- Not all diversion solutions require funds
- Funds are available to support families if the only/main barrier to ending homelessness is financial
  - Move-in Costs
  - Landlord Fees
  - Certifications/License Fees
  - Rent Arrears/Debt
  - Fees for birth certificates, ID’s, etc.
  - Work/Education Costs
  - Transportation; gas cards, bus tickets
  - Grocery Cards
  - Utility Deposits/Arrears
  - Background/Credit Checks
Outcomes

Facilitated by Wellspring Family Services, InterIM Community Development Association, Neighborhood House, Solid Ground

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>307 Number of families referred from placement roster to partner agency for Diversion Services</th>
<th>101 Families are engaged in Diversion as an alternative to shelter – diversion in progress</th>
<th>47 Families successfully diverted from shelter</th>
<th>159 Families unable to be diverted (continue on the placement roster for available shelter resource)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Outcomes

## Diversion from Front Door at Family Housing Connection:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>373</th>
<th>124</th>
<th>218</th>
<th>31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of families eligible for Diversion Services at FHC</td>
<td>Families have engaged in diversion as an alternative to shelter</td>
<td>Families were unable to be diverted</td>
<td>Families were referred to diversion partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Jan. 15 – July 25, 2014)
Outcomes

Diversion from Front Door at Family Housing Connection:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Families have engaged in diversion as an alternative to shelter</th>
<th>47 Families successfully diverted</th>
<th>77 Families in progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Jan. 15 – July 25, 2014)
Early Learning

- Many families have untapped resources:
  - Family/Friends
  - Employment opportunities
  - Section 8 vouchers
- Messaging shift for families and providers
- Families share feeling empowered by guiding solutions
- Housing Debt/ Rental History Play a Large Role
- Balancing outcomes and the fluidity of housing/homelessness
Culture Shift

• Reframing what the homeless housing system can do
• Build on the excitement and momentum from families
• Identify leveraging opportunities for other systems change
Opportunities for Learning

• Learning Circle:
  ▫ Collaborative learning
  ▫ Sharing strategies
  ▫ Openly share frustration/concern → find solutions

• Work Group:
  ▫ Funders and Partner Leadership
Shelter Diversion Pilot Funders

- City of Seattle, Human Services Department
- Building Changes

In Partnership with Committee to End Homelessness Family Homelessness Initiative