

HOMES Initiative Update

June 2017

Background

A stable, healthy, and affordable home provides a foundation for well-being and prosperity for children, families, and communities. Stable housing can positively affect a broad spectrum of outcomes for children and families, including academic performance, physical, and mental health. The Housing Opportunities Made to Enhance Stability (HOMES) Initiative began when Children's Community Health Navigators and Well-Being programs both identified housing as a needed resource and driver of well-being outcomes in the populations they served.

"Stable housing is a foundation for family stability, not merely a reflection of it."
Cunningham, 2014

Discovery Phase

Threats to housing stability are complex and enduring challenges that require innovative solutions that cross system boundaries as dynamically as the consequences. To guide our innovation efforts, Children's Institute for Child and Family Well-Being (ICFW) team has applied a design process that focuses on developing insights, piloting solutions, and rapid cycle evaluation. The HOMES Initiative has complete the discovery phase of this process, which has included the following activities:

Literature Review

Child Welfare & Housing
Impact of housing on child health
Policy solutions centered on child health & housing

Data Analysis

Child Welfare-Well-Being Navigator program needs
Resident Survey Results
Census & affordable housing

Expert Interviews

Chapin Hall
Medical providers
Legal Action of WI
Community Advocates
Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee
Milwaukee County Health & Human Services

Family Feedback

Resident housing survey (2016)
Community Café (2016)
Café follow-up session (2016)

Prevalence of Housing Instability

Housing stability is a common challenge for residents of the Partner Neighborhoods and parents involved with the child welfare system. Threats to stable and healthy housing are complex and the drivers are intertwined with systemic and interpersonal factors. Families struggling with instability often face a constellation of challenges, further complicating effective interventions. Additionally, accessing the correct housing related services can be difficult, adding to the stress of the situation, which can compromise a parents' self-control, focus, and ability to plan (Shonkof, 2014).

81%

Of parents with children entering foster care reported current or historical housing instability*

60%

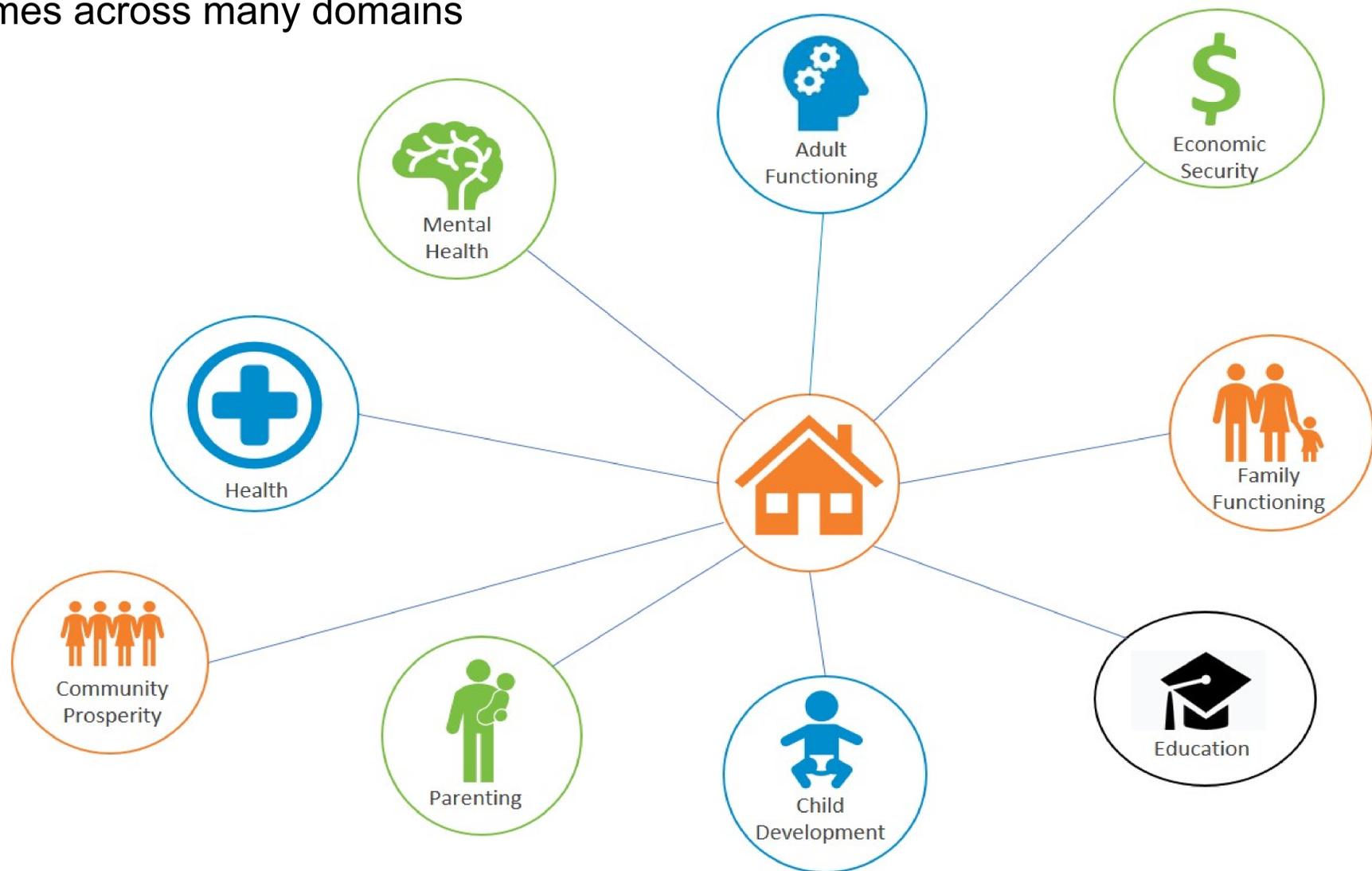
Of Partner Neighborhood residents struggle with affordable housing, paying more than 30% of their income towards housing

Initiative Vision

Increase awareness of the impact of housing instability on the health and well-being of children, making housing instability a children's health issue. Create evidence based program approaches to address housing needs of families in our programs.



Stable and healthy housing promotes positive outcomes across many domains



#1

Housing resources is the most requested service for the Community Health Navigator program for the last three years. Housing resources provided address:

Landlord-Tenant Disputes
Mold
Infestations
Lead

Eviction
Homelessness
House Fires

Insights gained

Instability impacts several domains of well-being, including physical health, parenting, mental health, and development and plays a central role in health and well-being outcomes for children.

Providing services or connection to other resources is very difficult, and ultimately ineffective, when a family cannot maintain a safe and healthy residence.

From a medical perspective, families who are experiencing housing instability are more likely to have difficulty with follow-up instructions and with getting to follow-up appointments

The extent of the housing instability problem for Community Services programs is unclear, as there is no consistent or wide-ranging screening for this issue.

'Housing' is a generic term often use to describe a wide range of challenges for a family. In the Community Health Navigator program, 'housing resources' could refer to addressing homelessness, eviction, infestations, mold, lead pipes, house fires, or landlord/tenant disputes.

Next Steps

The HOMES Initiative team is working collaboratively with agencies already involved in housing programs and advocacy to raise awareness of the connection between child health and housing. These efforts will support the development of cross-systems pilot projects that connect families to housing solutions efficiently, reducing stress, and effectively, supporting health and well-being outcomes.

**"Eviction is a cause, not just a condition, of poverty."
Matthew Desmond
Evicted**

Leaders of housing related programs in Milwaukee are interested in partnering with us in a wide range of activities, from communications/messaging to program development and other formal partnerships.

Residents from the partner neighborhoods routinely face uncertainty on housing related issues, and expressed a desire for support navigating the complex housing system.

Collaboration across systems is required to positively influence population health and well-being outcomes. Housing is a complex issue, with drivers at systems and interpersonal levels impacting stability. Effective responses to this challenge cannot be done in isolation, as collaborations between housing, health, legal, and child welfare systems are efforts that show the most promise.