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.
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 used 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.

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.

Stable and healthy housing promotes positive outcomes across many domains

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

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“Eviction is a cause, not just a condition, of poverty.”
Matthew Desmond Evicted

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.