

Institute for
Child and Family
Well-Being



Children's
Wisconsin



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

Stable housing provides a foundation for health, 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, employment, physical, and mental health. Threats to stable and healthy housing are complex and intertwined with systemic and interpersonal factors.

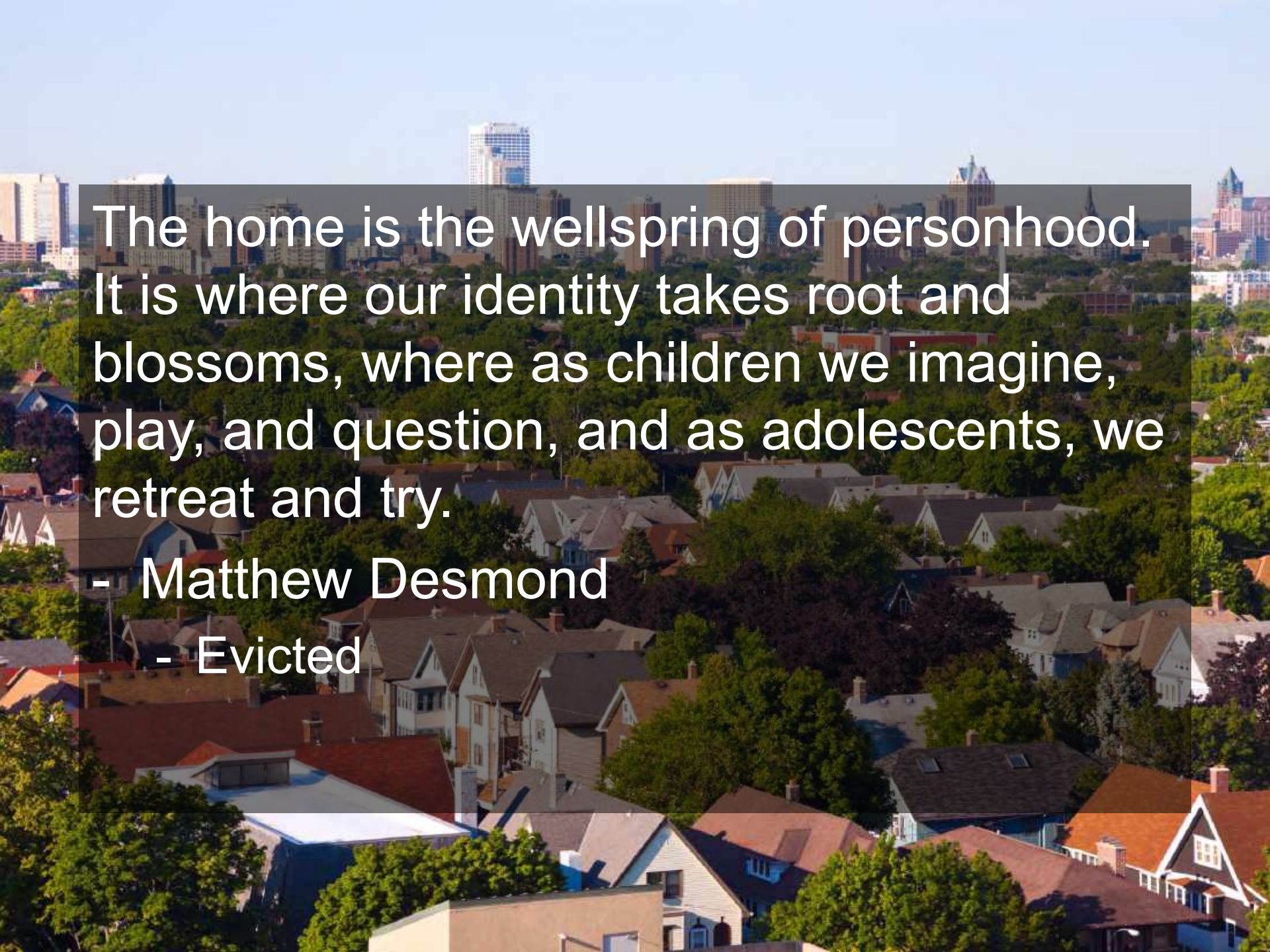
Families experiencing housing instability face increased risk of their children being involved in the [child welfare system](#). [81% of families](#) with children entering care identified recent histories of housing instability, including crowding, homelessness, and evictions. Housing instability is also linked to [delays in reunification](#); and foster care placement is also [connected to youth homelessness](#).

If families experiencing housing instability are at greater risk of child maltreatment and placement into foster care, how can we take a systems approach to support families coping with housing instability, before getting involved in the child welfare system? [Housing Opportunities Made to Enhance Stability](#) (HOMES) is a systems change initiative focused on building new relationships, sharing ideas and knowledge, and starting new collaborations between housing and child welfare partners in the community. Housing as a Pathway to Prevent Child Maltreatment is a training ICFW Co-Director Gabriel McGaughey has delivered where participants learn about how brain science, strategic communication, systems change approaches, and design thinking have been used to connect child welfare, health, and housing in efforts to support child well-being.

Housing as a pathway to prevent maltreatment



1/8/2020

An aerial photograph of a city neighborhood. The foreground is filled with a dense residential area, showing numerous houses with various roof colors (red, grey, brown) and green trees interspersed among them. In the background, a city skyline is visible under a clear blue sky, featuring several tall buildings, including a prominent blue glass skyscraper. A semi-transparent dark grey rectangular box is overlaid on the middle of the image, containing white text.

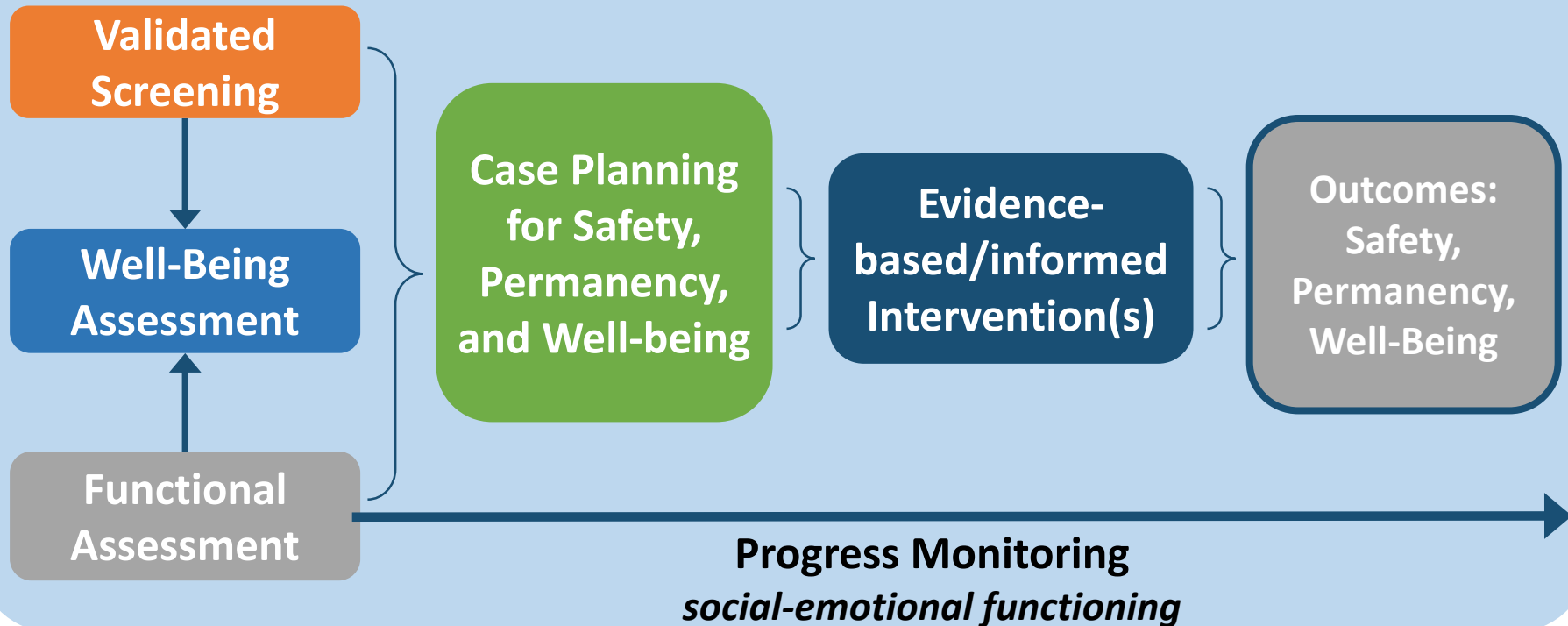
The home is the wellspring of personhood.
It is where our identity takes root and
blossoms, where as children we imagine,
play, and question, and as adolescents, we
retreat and try.

- Matthew Desmond

- Evicted

Well-Being in Child Welfare

A systems approach to improving child well-being

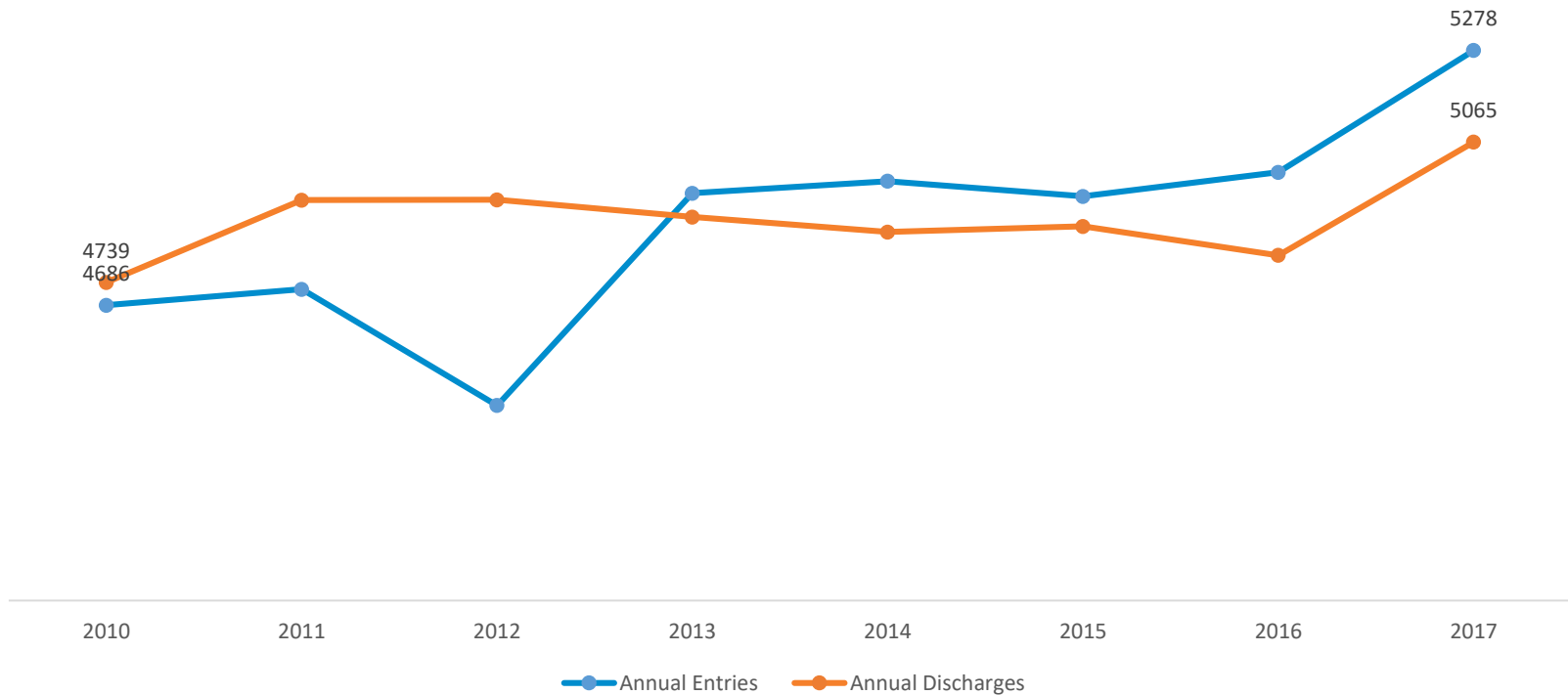


Assessing Well-Being in Child Welfare



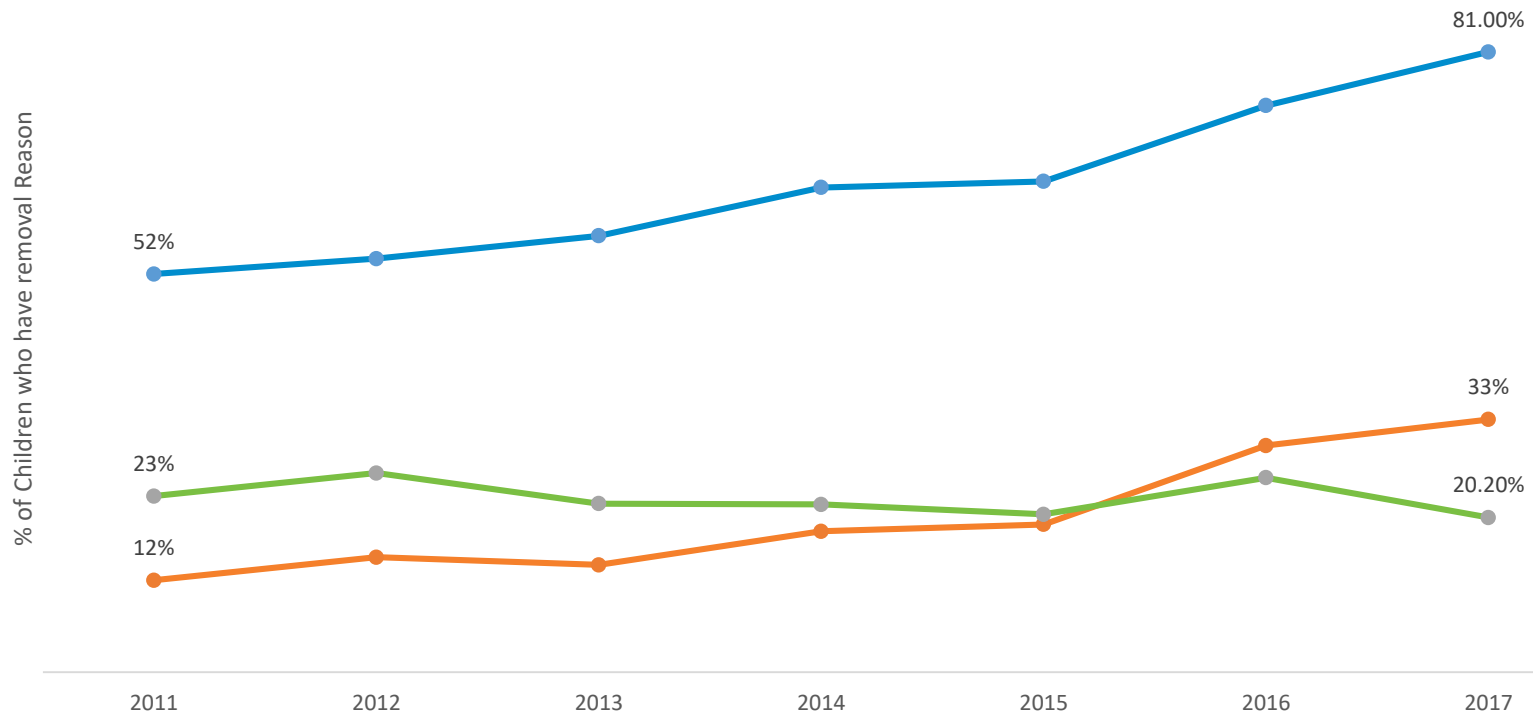
Increases in the foster care population

Wisconsin OHC Entries and Exits: 2010-2017



Most children removed for neglect

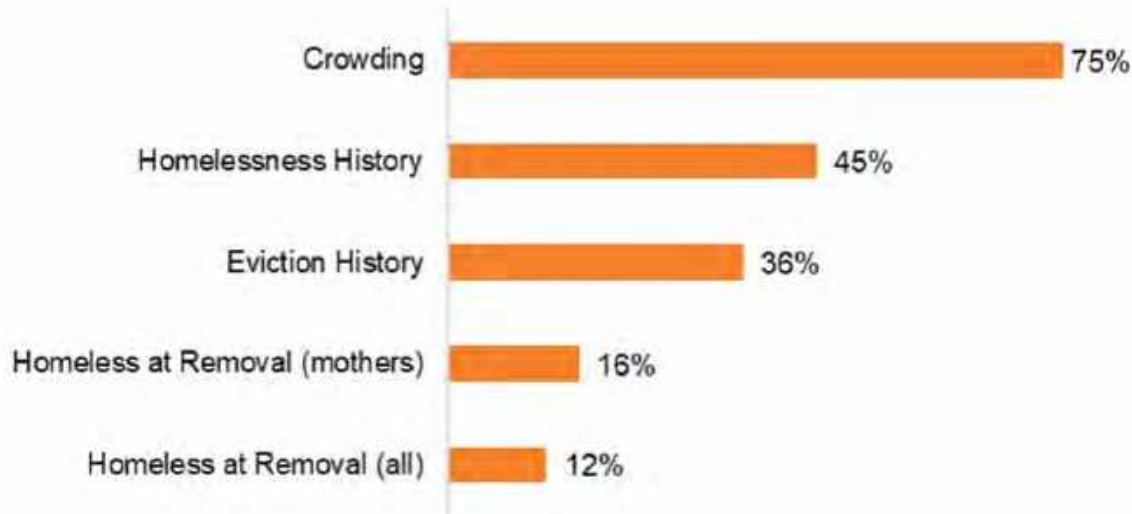
Most common 3 Wisconsin removal reasons



Housing Instability in Child Welfare

81% of parents with children entering foster care report historical or current housing instability*

Prevalence of Housing Instability in Child Welfare



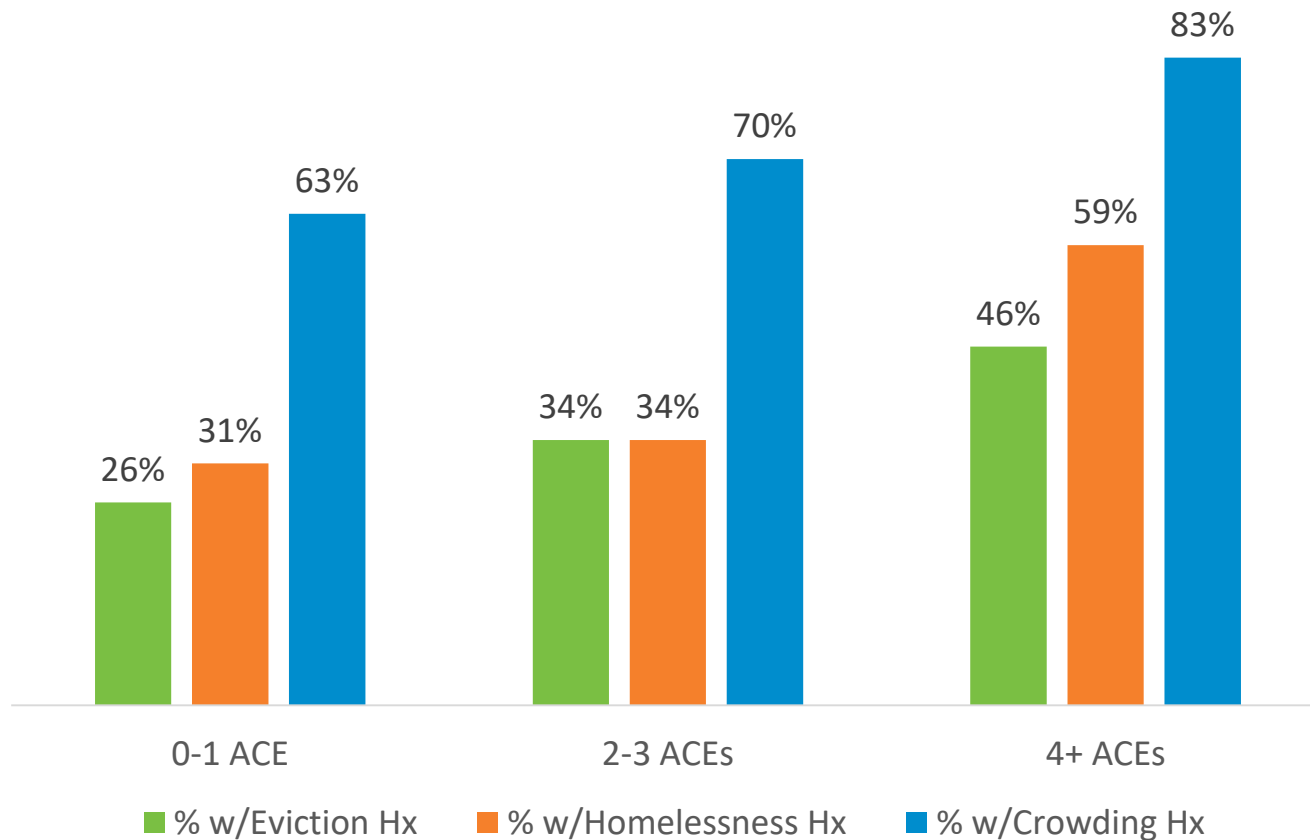
The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

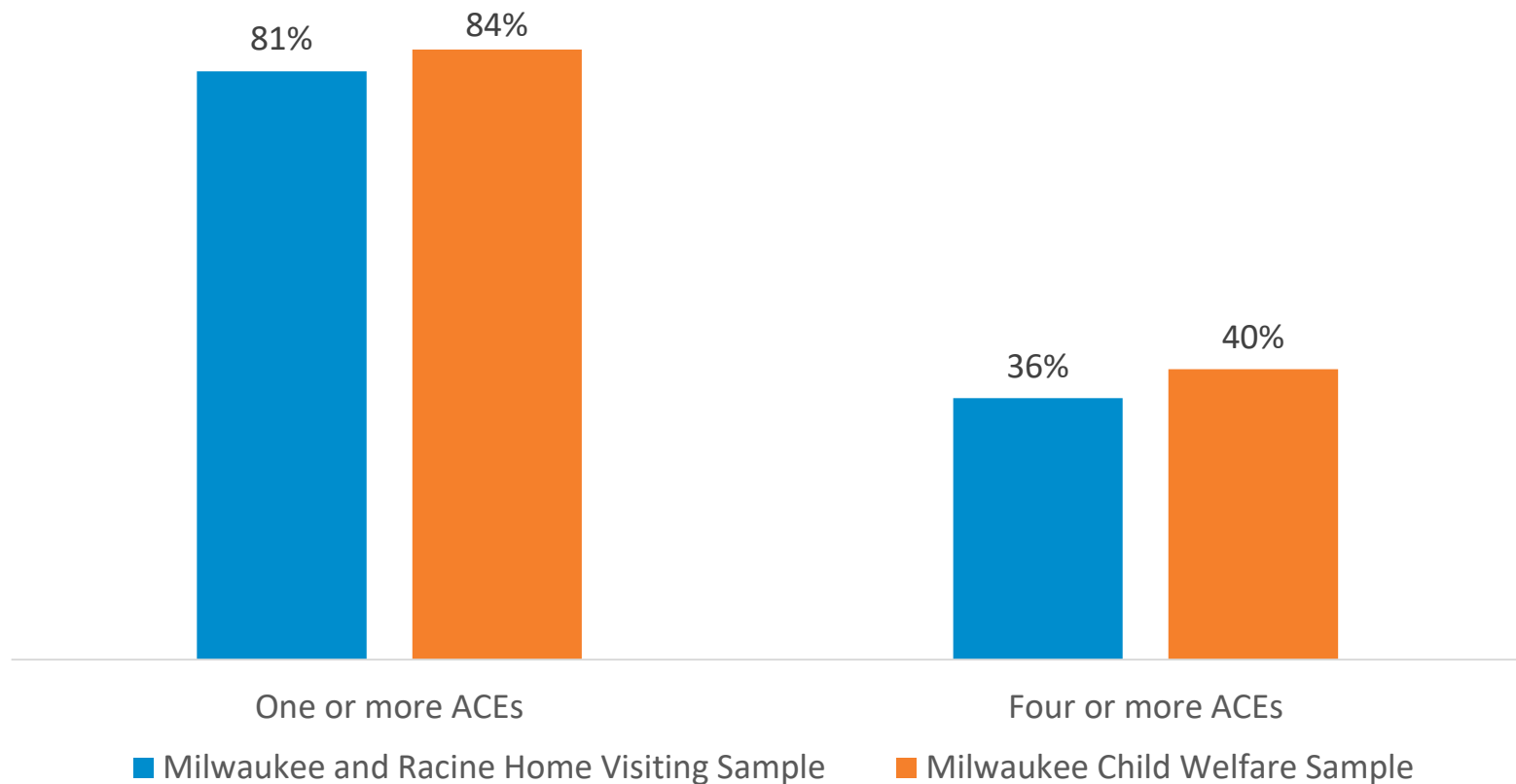


Ellis, W., Dietz, W. (2017) A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience (BCR) Model. *Academic Pediatrics*. 17 (2017) pp. S86-S93. DOI information: 10.1016/j.acap.2016.12.011

ACEs & Housing Instability in Child Welfare



Parent ACEs: Home Visiting & Child Welfare

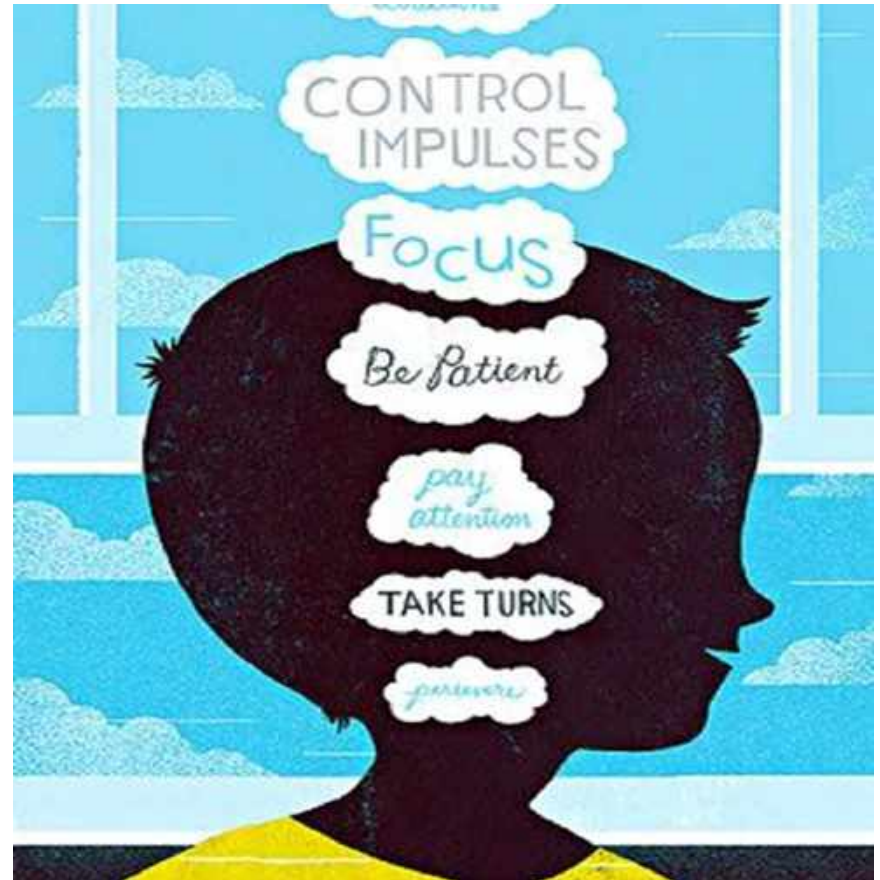


Mersky, Unpublished, 2016

Executive Functioning

Refers to coordination of multiple types and streams of information in order to arrive at the more effective course of action, including prioritizing tasks, goals, and information. Executive functioning is a skill developed through practice, using age appropriate experiences.

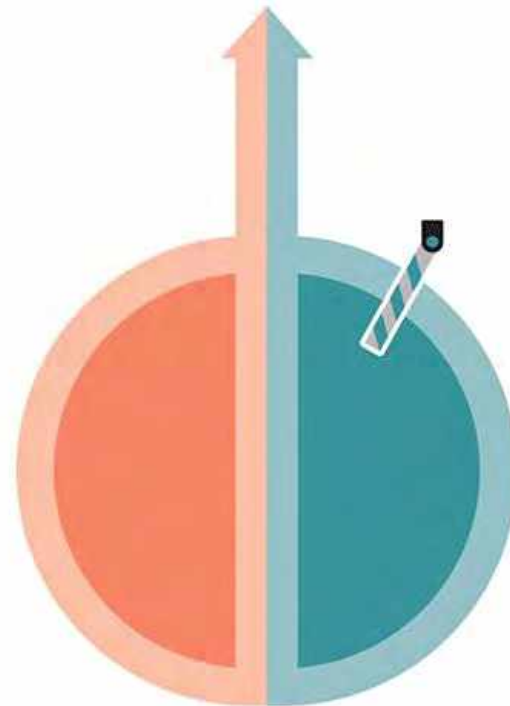
- **Working memory:** The capacity to hold and manipulate information in our heads over short periods of time
- **Mental flexibility:** The ability to adjust to changed demands, priorities, or perspectives
- **Inhibitory control:** The ability to resist impulsive behavior




ACEs, stress, and Executive Functioning

The response to stress in adulthood is based on the foundation of early childhood experiences.

Adversity in childhood undercuts bandwidth and impairs executive functioning, resulting in more automatic responses to stress.

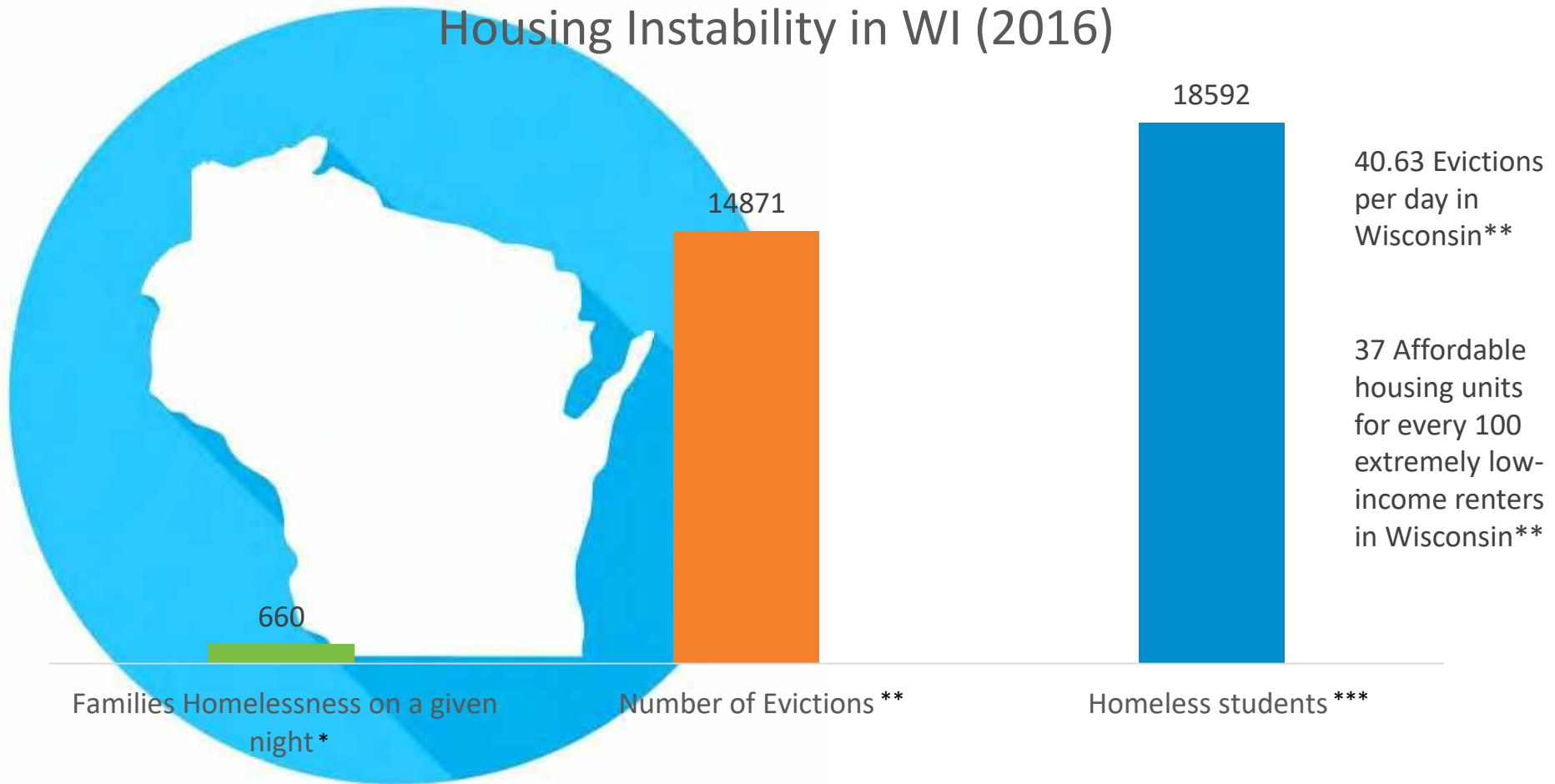




“Stable housing is a foundation for family stability, not merely a reflection of it.”

Cunningham, 2014

Housing Instability in WI (2016)



Source:

* [Community point-in-time counts](#) conducted on a given night in January 2018, as reported by Continuums of Care to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**This research uses data from The Eviction Lab at Princeton University, a project directed by Matthew Desmond and designed by Ashley Gromis, Lavar Edmonds, James Hendrickson, Katie Krywokuski, Lillian Leung, and Adam Porton. The Eviction Lab is funded by the JPB, Gates, and Ford Foundations as well as the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. More information is found at evictionlab.org.

***Children and youth who experienced homelessness at any point during the 2016-2017 school year, as reported by public schools to the U.S. Department of Education

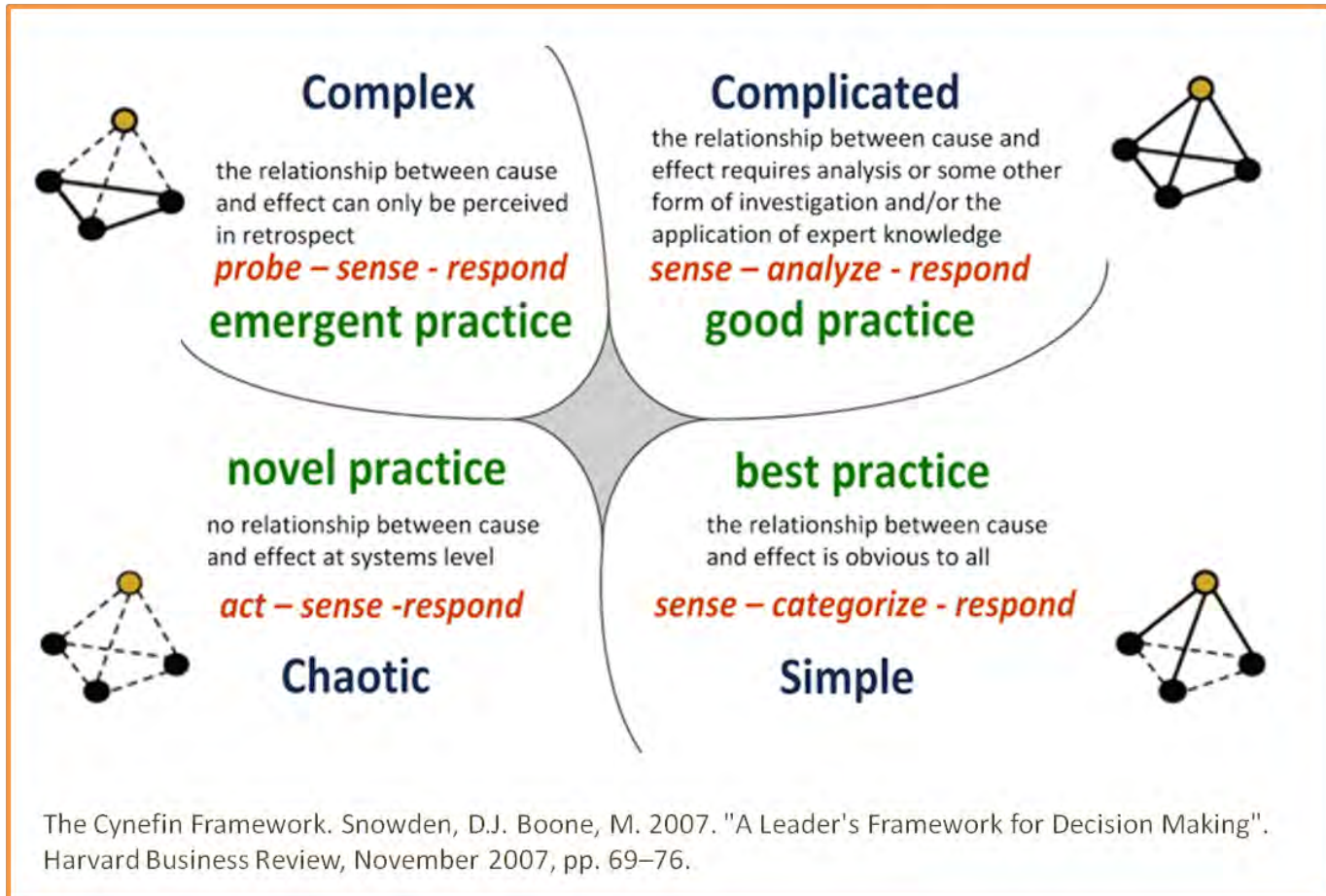
**** National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2019 Annual Report, <https://reports.nlihc.org/gap>

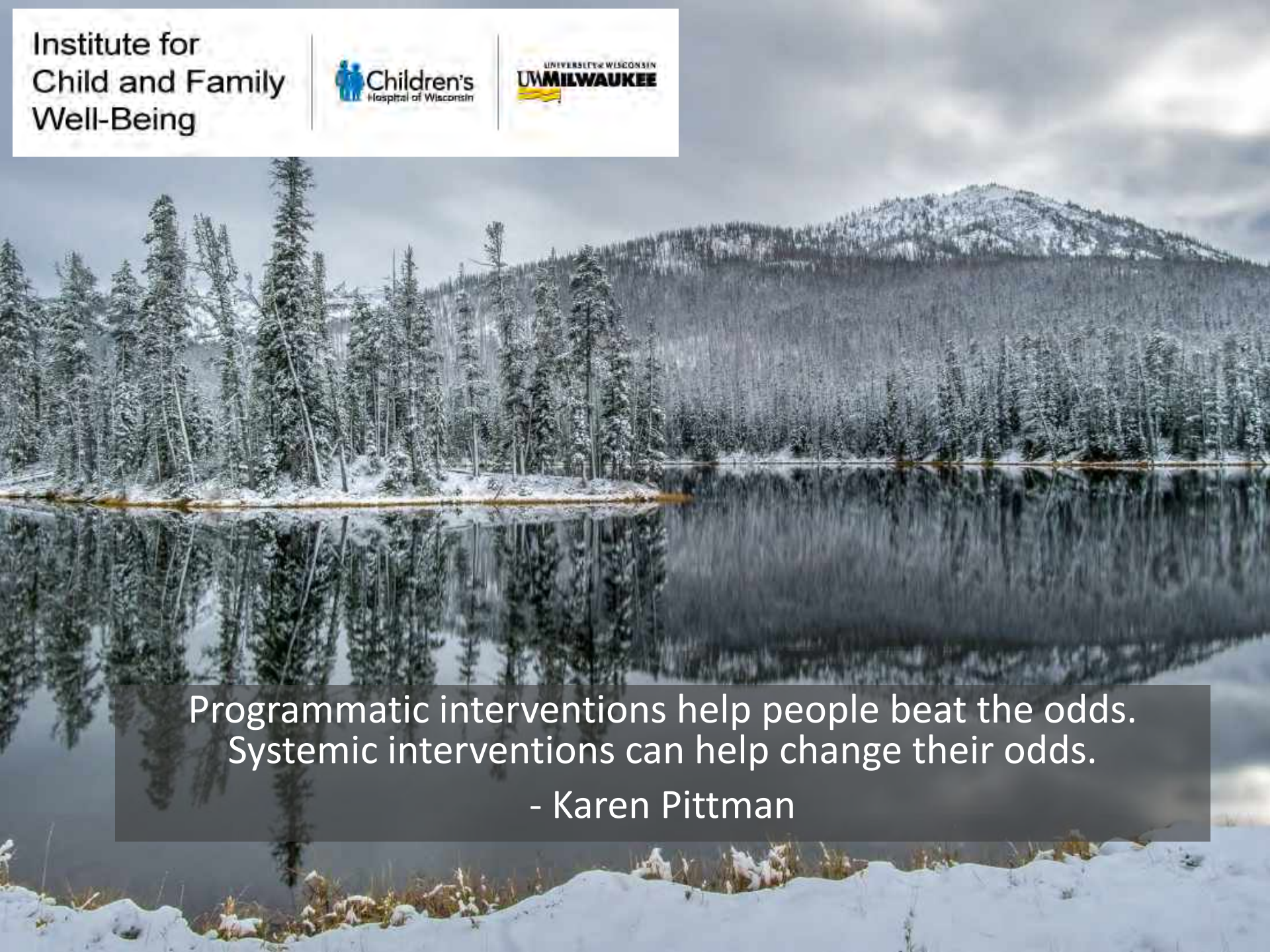
What threatens housing stability?

1. Tenant Landlord disputes
2. Mold
3. Infestations
4. Lead (paint/pipes)
5. Eviction
6. Homelessness
7. Crowding
8. House fire
9. Lack of affordable housing



Understanding the problem



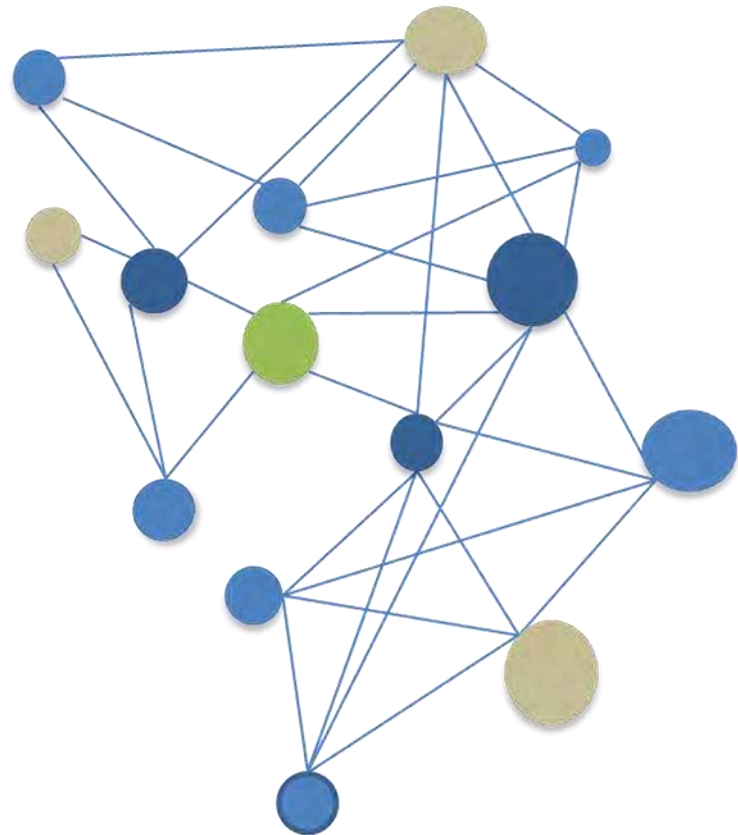


Programmatic interventions help people beat the odds.
Systemic interventions can help change their odds.

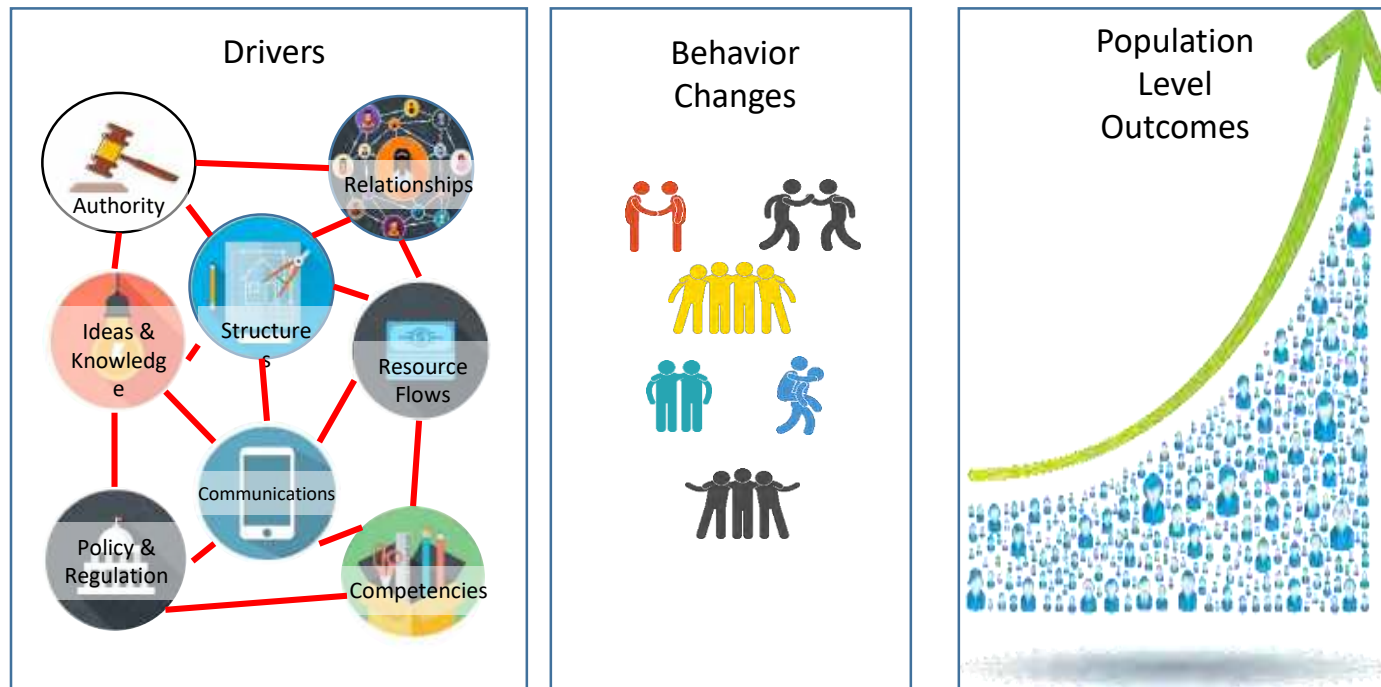
- Karen Pittman

Systems definition

A system is a configuration of interacting, interdependent parts that are connected through a web of relationships, forming a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts (Holland, 1998)



Systemic Interventions



Drivers of Systems Change



The ability to make decisions that will affect others (employers have the power to hire/fire employees for example), provides **authority** over other system actors to influence behaviors.



Readiness for change does not occur until enough people in enough constituencies achieve consensus to prevail over the dissenters. The process of achieving consensus and swaying dissenter opinions takes both time and serious educational and persuasive effort.



Policies and regulations set by government, employers, or other funding sources influence the actors within a system. Governments may require certain behavior to receive services or benefits, while employers may require certain trainings or activities to initiate or maintain employment.



The availability of **resources** can have an important influence on the actions of individuals and institutions in the system. Incentives are a particularly important form of resource flow: rewards and sanctions for certain actions.



A system is not just a collection of individuals, but includes how they interact with each other and their environment. In the systems view, the "objects" of study are networks of **relationships**.



Systemic **structure** is concerned with key interrelationships not between people, but between key variables (population, resources), that influence behavior over time.



Information is generated from data, research, and belief and is **communicated** through formal and informal networks. Informal networks may also communicate signals that compete with the formal signals, and may even hold greater influence on system actors.



Institutional **competencies** may vary widely, the competence among actors to perform these functions well, sometimes called "*best practice*," and the competence to improve their performance can affect the behaviors of others. *Norms* can be reflected in how 'cultural competent' the organization, for example, and be difficult to change

Brainstorming Activity: How might we...?

- How might we statements are a tool for prescribing what *should* happen in your world tomorrow.
- Questions that help us generate ideas.



INSPIRATION

In this phase, you'll learn how to better understand people. You'll observe their lives, hear their hopes and desires, and get smart on your challenge.



IDEATION

Here you'll make sense of everything that you've heard, generate tons of ideas, identify opportunities for design, and test and refine your solutions.

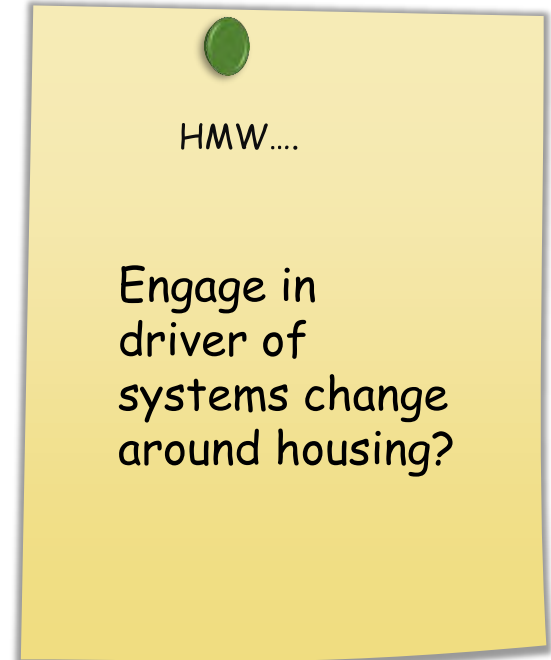


IMPLEMENTATION

Now is your chance to bring your solution to life. You'll figure out how to get your idea to market and how to maximize its impact in the world.

Brainstorming Activity: How might we...?

- Draft quick, short ideas on a sticky note individually
- HMW...
 - Engage in driver of systems change around housing?



Housing Opportunities Made to Enhance Stability

Starting in 2016, the HOMES Initiative vision was to increase **awareness** of the impact of housing instability on the **health and well-being of children**, making housing instability a children's health issue. **Collaboratively create evidence informed solutions** that address housing needs of families in our programs.



HOMES Strategies



Influence leaderships
Raise awareness



Identify best available evidence
based practice and policies in the
child welfare and children's hospital
systems.



Advocate for policy changes to
support changes in resource
flows



Identify and obtain funding for
new housing focused initiatives



Create relationship with existing actors in
the housing system to inform activities,
create collaborative projects, and/or jointly
advocate for policy changes.



Develop/adopt programs or practices that
change practice on how we identify barriers
to housing stability and work with families
to resolve those barriers



Make housing a child health issue, advance
possible solutions, and garner support for
implementing solutions.



Create best practices around assessing for
housing instability, create norms around how
housing instability impact executive
functioning, and advance housing first
principles.

HOMES Activities



Authority

Influence leaderships
Raise awareness



Ideas &
Knowledge

ICFW Issue Brief
Literature Review
Data analysis



Policy &
Regulation

Family Unification Program
Medicaid Policy Advocacy
Legal Aide Funding Advocacy



Resource
Flows

Family Unification
Program
Medicaid Policy
Advocacy



Relationships

Build a network
Expert Interviews
Collaborative projects



Structures

New programs:
Mobility Mentoring
Medical-Legal Partnerships
Healing Starts...



Communications

Strategic Framing (CiM): Housing is a
child health issue
Issue Brief
Infographics
Community Cafés



Competencies

Brain Architecture Game
Trainings
Strategic Framing
Human Centered Design
Strategic Learning

Tool: Build a network

“There is no collaboration without trust”

- Expert Interviews
 - Human Centered Design
 - Listened, took on their ideas
- Attending open community meetings

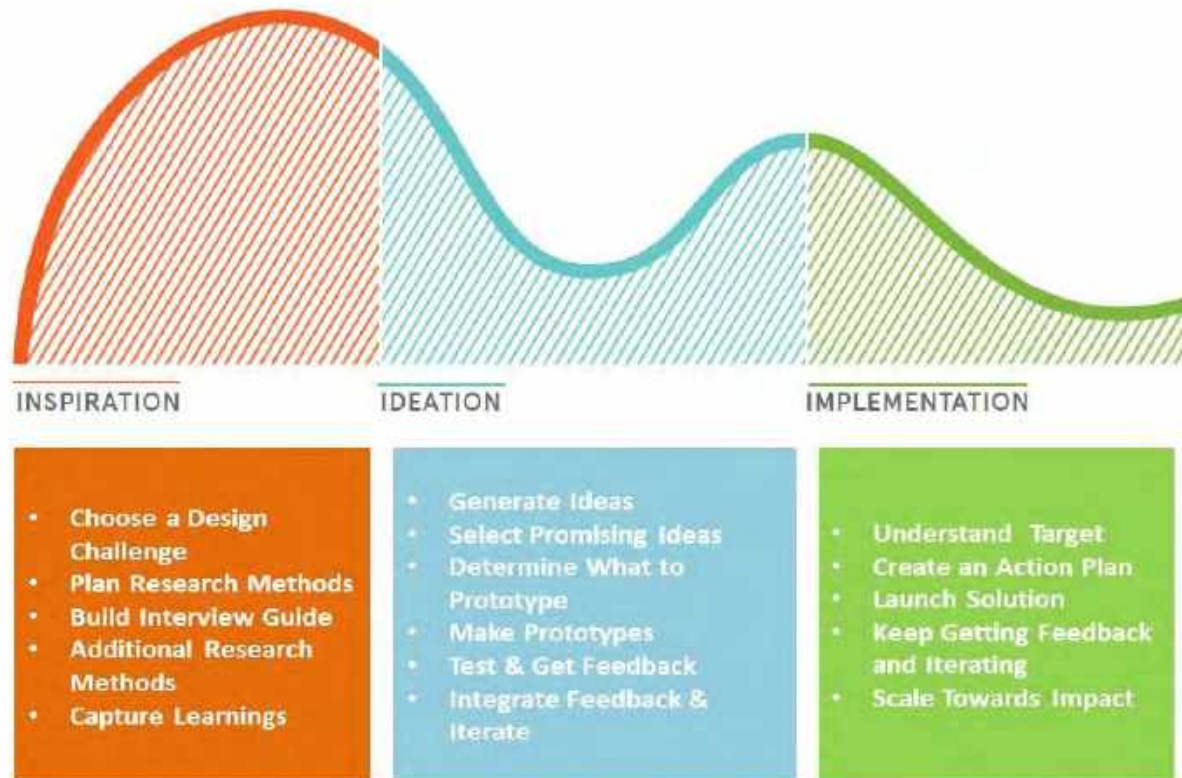


Lessons Learned: Social Impact Network

- Content Vs Context Experts
 - Content: Policy makers, researchers, program staff
 - Context: People with lived experience
- Engage to learn, not to tell them what to do or what's important.
- Define how you would measure strength of your network.



Tool: Human-Centered Design



Lessons Learned: Human Centered Design

- Strict adherence to EBIs may steer us away from address problems the families want us to work on.
- Listening to people with lived/living experiences can be more efficient
- Test small, fail small



Tools: Strategic Communication

- Framing the goal places your aspirations front and center
 - Housing as a child health issue: The Open Children Model*
- Challenges current thinking and forces for resistance
 - Too big of a challenge
 - Not related to our work
 - Would take too much time
 - Would cost too much money



Lessons Learned: Strategic Communication

- Housing-focused partners were interested in the child-health implications and explicitly making that connection
- Health systems struggle with housing as a social determinate of health
- Norms around who 'deserves' housing is still a challenge.



Tools: Data

Measurement is not judgement

- Defines scope of the problem
- Connect various publicly available datasets
- Insert context from your program
- Engage the community on data connections
 - Community Café
 - Data Walk



Lessons Learned: Use data

- Place matters
 - compare data available geographically
- Connects dots across systems
- Collect data on strengths
- The community wants to hear more about data than we anticipated



Tools: Strategic Learning

Strategic Learning creates institutional memory, supports just-in-time iteration, and clarifies hypotheses about your work

- **Before and After Action Reviews**
 - clarify desired results, plan for anticipated challenges, and reflect on what actually occurred to identify potential ways to improve the next time.
 - can be used for everything from major events and meetings—including our staff retreats—to phone calls or writing assignments.



Lessons Learned: Actively Learn

- Learning is an outcome that should be tracked, summarized, and leverage to inform next steps
- Housing is a complex challenge and you'll have to adapt your strategy routinely.
 - Get rapid feedback
 - Use After Action Reviews to reflect on what works and what doesn't
 - Consider focusing on a subsystem of housing



Building Knowledge for Action

Data

- Has Definition
Relevance
Timeframe

Information

- Assumptions
Patterns & Trends
Context

Knowledge

- Insights
Narrative
Brings meaning
Compels action
(Wulczyn)

Adapted from : *The DAMA Guide to the Data Management Body of Knowledge*
https://cdn.ttgtmedia.com/searchDataManagement/downloads/A_taste_of_DAMA_DMBOK.pdf

The brief version...

- Human Centered Design: For engaging people to address problems without clear solutions.
- Build Relationships: Effective collaboration requires trust
- Strategic Communication: How you frame an issue will influence people's first reaction and mindset
- Strategic Learning: Learning is an outcome, especially if you do it deliberately to increase organizational capacity
- Data: Measurement is not judgement, but it can be an important step towards knowledge as well as a tool for engaging others.

The great part about complex problems is that you can start anywhere.

Thank you!

Gabriel McGaughey, MSSW

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www.uwm.edu/icfw