

Best Practices:

**Strategies for Serving Young
Homeless Children Birth to Age Six**

Homes for the Homeless

The Visible Child Inaugural Conference


Minneapolis, MN

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Presenter:

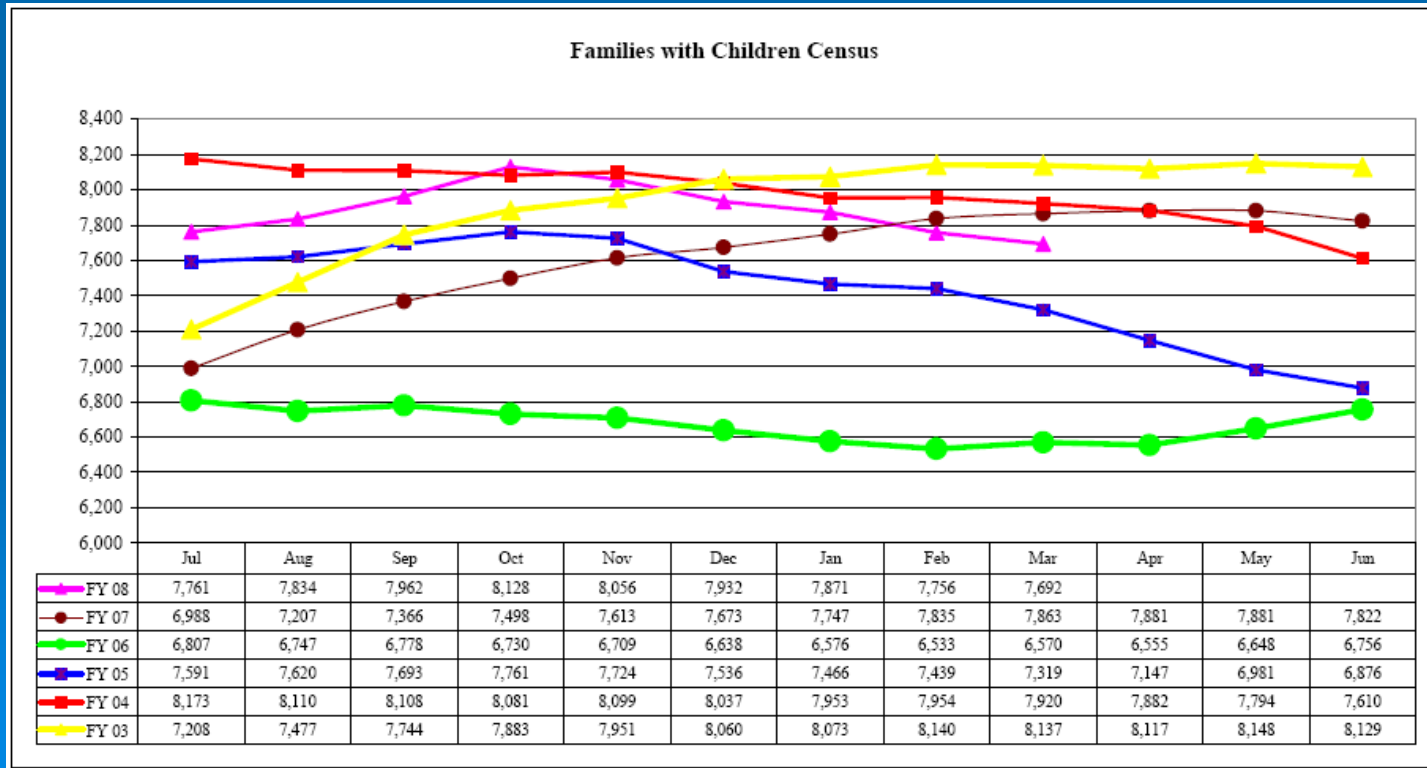
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Agenda

- Homelessness in New York City
 - HFH Family Crisis Nursery
 - Transition to Family Support Center
 - Family Support Center Results
 - Next Steps
 - Q&A
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Homelessness in NYC

- 7,655 homeless families with children (10,402 parents and 14,628 children)



Homeless Family Services in NYC

- NYC Dept of Homeless Services PATH Center serves approx. 80 families per day
- Eligibility Investigation
- 10, 371 units (transitional housing, hotels, cluster sites)
- Average length of stay: 351 days
- Various rental voucher and public housing programs

Homeless Parents

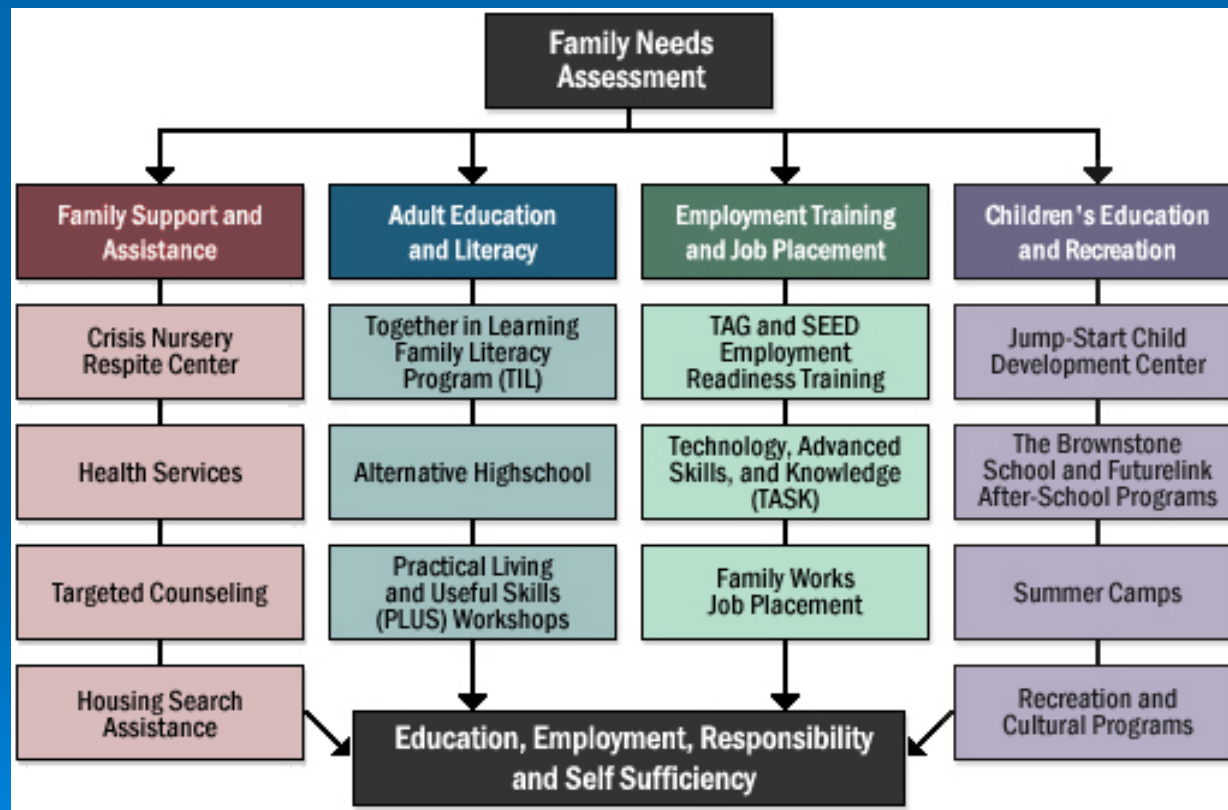
- The median age of a homeless parent is 26
- 90% of homeless children are from single-parent, female-headed households
- 49% of homeless parents have three or more children
- 74% of homeless parents are currently unemployed
- 49% of homeless parents did not graduate from high school
- 60% of homeless parents have experienced domestic violence
- 30% of homeless parents were in foster care as children

Homeless Children

- There are over one million homeless children in America on any given day
- The average age of a homeless child is 6
- 55% have transferred schools during the last year
- 20% repeat a grade in school
- 77% score below grade level in math and 62% score below grade level in reading
- 56% of homeless children have no primary care physician
- 14% of homeless school children have been taunted for being homeless

American Family Inn Model

Homes for the Homeless



Child Abuse and Neglect


- Nearly 3.3 million cases of child abuse and neglect were reported nationally in 2006, concerning approximately 6 million children (*Child Maltreatment 2006*, Department of Health and Human Services)
- An estimated 905,000 children were victims of abuse or neglect in 2006 (*Child Maltreatment 2006*, Department of Health and Human Services)
- One child in every 80 suffers from abuse or neglect (based on above figure divided by population figure of 73.7 million children in the U.S. in 2006, from Childstats.gov)
- Nationally, more than 513,000 children were in the foster care system in 2005 (*Child Welfare League of America*)
- In New York City in FY07:
 - 64,190 cases of abuse and neglect were reported affecting 91,999 children (New York City Administration for Children's Services)
 - 16,815 children were in foster care placements (NYC Administration for Children's Services)
 - 30% of homeless parents were in foster care as children (Institute for Children and Poverty)
 - 35% of these parents have an open child welfare case or a child in foster care (ICP)

Risk Factors for Child Abuse

- Risk factors include any combination of five factors:
 - Single parent
 - Living in poverty
 - Parents have limited English skills
 - Parents have less than a high school education
 - Parents are not employed

Source: National Center for Children in Poverty. New York Early Childhood Profile, May 2007.

Crisis Nursery Goals

- To provide respite care for families in crisis
 - To increase child safety
 - To reduce stress in families' lives
 - To help parents improve their parenting skills
 - To strengthen families and keep them together
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Crisis Nursery Services

- Temporary child care for children from infant to 6 years old whose parents are coping with family emergencies or high-stress situations
- Operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Serves homeless and low-income families in New York City
- May be used for up to 72 consecutive hours, for a maximum of 30 days per year
- Provides comfortable environment for children
- Provides aftercare and support for parents to allow families to stay together
- Operates in accordance with city and state regulations

HFH Family Crisis Nursery

- Started in 1997 at the Prospect Family Inn, later expanded to two other locations in Queens and Manhattan
- Has served over 1,800 families, including over 2,000 children
- Prevented hundreds of foster care placements and new ACS cases
- In 2005, served 150 families, including 250 children

Crisis Nursery Results

Objective	Measurement	Result
60% will improve parenting skills	Pre- and post-surveys; Aftercare observations and assessments	80% of parents demonstrate improved disciplining techniques
60% will experience reduced stress	Aftercare assessment surveys	60% of parents feel reduced stress as a result of crisis care
75% of the families with open child welfare cases will remain together	Aftercare surveys	100% of families with open child welfare cases remain together

Transformation to PFSC

- Strengths-based approach to improving the protective factors in families to prevent child abuse and neglect
- Services are not limited to homeless families, as there are many high-need families in the community, some of whom may be more prepared to receive parenting services once they move out of the shelter
- Help families work their way up the pyramid of needs, relieving stress about basic needs so that parenting and education become more of a priority

Protective Factors

- **Nurturing and attachment**—The importance of early bonding, as well as nurturing throughout childhood. Building a close bond helps parents better understand, respond to, and communicate with their children.
- **Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development**—Information about what to anticipate as children develop and strategies for effective parenting. Parents learn what to look for at each age and how to help their children reach their full potential.
- **Parental resilience**—How parents' ability to cope and problem solve affects their ability to deal effectively with everyday stress or a major crisis. Recognizing the signs of stress and knowing what to do about it can help parents build their capacity to cope.


Source: Promoting Healthy Families in Your Community: 2008 Resource Packet, Child Welfare Information Gateway, Children's Bureau, FRIENDS National Resource Center For Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, 2008.

Protective Factors

- **Social connections**—Identifying ways to help parents expand their social networks to build a broader base of parenting support. Parents with an extensive network of family, friends, and neighbors have better support in times of need.
- **Concrete supports for parents**—Finding out what basic resources are available in the community and how to access them to address family-specific needs. Caregivers with access to financial, housing, and other concrete resources that help them meet their basic needs can better attend to their role as parents.

Source: Promoting Healthy Families in Your Community: 2008 Resource Packet, Child Welfare Information Gateway, Children's Bureau, FRIENDS National Resource Center For Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, 2008.

Family Support Services

- Follow-up visits and service plan
 - Peer support groups
 - Parenting education workshops
 - Life skills education
 - Family social activities
 - Information and referrals
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PFSC Referral Partners

- On site services:
 - Child care, child health care, substance abuse counseling
- Off site referrals:
 - Mental and physical health care
 - Child care
 - Domestic violence and legal services
 - Preventative agencies
 - Job training and employment services
 - Public assistance and housing services
 - Food and clothing pantries

Outreach Efforts

- Service Providers: child welfare agencies, child care providers, early childhood educators, health care providers, homeless services, DV agencies, preventative agencies, early intervention, criminal justice/housing court, churches, schools
- Families: brochures in Spanish and English, radio PSA's, word of mouth, 24-hr hotline (212-222-KIDS)
- Community events: street and health fairs
- Community partnerships: SPA and CFI

Staffing and Staff Development

- PFSC Staff:
 - Director
 - Assistant Director
 - Family Support Coordinator
 - Child Care Workers, FT & PT
- Staff Trainings: mandated reporting, DV, sexual abuse, crisis intervention, substance abuse, child development, early intervention, CPR & first aid, SIDS & shaken baby detection, preventing infectious diseases, etc.

PFSC Results

- Since September 07, served 31 families with 42 children; over 50 families and professionals served over the hotline in 2007
- Single mothers living in the Bronx
- First follow-up reports happening right now

Evaluation Efforts

- **Funder** (NYS Office of Children and Family Services, Children and Family Trust Fund) **requires reporting of impacts, not just families served**
- **Case record and intake provides initial picture**
- **Six-month and 12-month follow ups ascertain impact of initial contact and additional need for services, as well as opportunity to reach out to families**
- **Surveys done to gauge impact of parenting workshops, support groups, other events**

Next Steps

- Outreach, outreach, outreach
- Improve parenting education component
- Focus on families who are ready to receive services
- Create community advisory group
- Utilize volunteer efforts and donations

Thank you - Questions?

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