



ENDING BAY AREA
HOMELESSNESS:
A PIVOTAL OPPORTUNITY
FOR FUNDERS IN CHILD
DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION

Bay Area Foundation Advisory Group
to End Homelessness

JUNE 2004

“Ending Bay Area Homelessness: A Pivotal Opportunity for Funders in Child Development & Education” is a follow-up publication to “Ending Bay Area Homelessness: The Philanthropic Role,” published in November 2003 by the Bay Area Foundation Advisory Group to End Homelessness. Created in 2002, this group of local funders shares a concern about the growing problem of homelessness and an interest in increasing the philanthropic role in addressing and resolving the problem in our communities. “Ending Bay Area Homelessness: The Philanthropic Role” and “Ending Bay Area Homelessness: A Pivotal Opportunity for Children, Youth & Family and Education Funders” are part of an ongoing series of publications exploring the nexus between homelessness and other funding interests, with the intent of highlighting new research and real solutions that end homelessness, and exemplary programs with demonstrable results. All publications and more information about the Advisory Group are available online at www.homelessphilanthropy.org.

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Dear Colleague,

As trustees of two Bay Area foundations, we are familiar with the overwhelming needs among families and children in our communities. We also know the power of philanthropy and partnership to effect change when they are harnessed effectively.

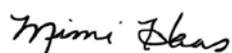
With this publication, we join forces in an important way — linking our foundations' interests in children and calling attention to the multiple threats to their well-being that result from homelessness. By focusing attention on the critical nexus between homelessness and healthy childhood development, we hope to improve the outcomes for vulnerable families and children.

There is a fundamental link between a child's development and the stability of his or her family's housing. We know how important constancy and steadiness are to the development of a healthy and happy child, particularly during the critical years of early childhood. We are also learning how homelessness can adversely affect a child's academic achievement, physical health and mental well-being. The consequences that can extend well into their adult years and affect their offspring as well.

Children are one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population — and certainly the most vulnerable. Homeless children are hungry and sick more than twice as often as other children. They have high rates of anxiety, depression and withdrawal. They experience developmental delays that hamper academic success at four times the rate of other children. Few of them attend preschool or early childhood education programs. Over half of them have never lived in their own home, and almost all have experienced repeated upheavals in the span of a single year.

Many opportunities exist for funders across the philanthropic spectrum to improve the lives of homeless families and the outcomes for children affected by homelessness. Homeless children need access to extra educational, health and mental health services. They need early intervention and a coordinated and comprehensive approach to early childhood education and school readiness. The stories told in this report make it clear that foundations active in early childhood development, education and health and youth services have a role to play and an opportunity to seize.

We hope that you will join us in building philanthropic partnerships that can cross bridges and see beyond perceived boundaries of programming and funding in order to ensure that homelessness does not become the defining characteristic for a generation of children.



Mimi L. Haas, President
The Miriam and Peter Haas Fund



Helen O'Neill Schwab, Trustee
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A Pivotal Opportunity for Funders in Child Development & Education

Introduction

Homelessness emerged as a significant social problem in the U.S. more than 20 years ago. Since then, the number of people experiencing homelessness nationwide has risen steadily to the present level of three to four million annually — many of them women and children. Although homelessness initially affected primarily single adults, an increase in extreme poverty, a lack of affordable housing and the growth in female-headed families have changed the face of homelessness. Families and children now comprise approximately 40% of the nation's homeless. Homeless children, by most accounts, are among the fastest growing segments of the homeless population.

Yet, despite this history, there is reason to hope that we can end homelessness. Much is now known about the causes and effects of family homelessness. Programs to provide safe and affordable housing have been developed and field-tested with promising results. Prevention and stabilizing support services have proven to be effective in helping people stay housed and providing vital assistance to homeless families with children. Plans to eradicate homelessness have been developed at local and national levels. Community-based coalitions, governments and foundations are poised for an unprecedented collaboration.

Foundations that address housing and homelessness and those whose primary interests are family and children face a pivotal opportunity: together these funders can contribute directly to ending homelessness. All that is needed is to make a critical link when developing funding strategies to improve children's lives — the link between childhood development, academic achievement, physical and mental health, and the quality and stability of families' housing.

Raising happy and healthy children who are able to achieve in school and succeed in life is a goal shared by funders in family support, education and housing alike. By linking the funding of children's, educational and family support services with efforts to create and maintain safe, affordable housing, funders with complementary interests can increase their effectiveness in improving children's lives. As the exemplary approaches described in this publication illustrate, the opportunities for such partnership abound. We hope that these case studies will inspire more children's and family funders to help end homelessness before it becomes the defining characteristic for a generation of America's children.

Overview: Family Homelessness & Philanthropy

With an increase in extreme poverty, the growth in female-headed families and a lack of affordable housing, homeless families — usually consisting of a young mother (many of whom were homeless themselves) with two children under the age of six — now comprise about 40% of the homeless population, up dramatically from 5% in 1980. It is estimated that in a typical year 900,000 to 1.4 million children are homeless, about 200,000 on any given night.¹ By most accounts, homeless children are among the fastest growing segments of the homeless population. A 1996 survey of 29 U.S. cities found that children accounted for 27% of the homeless population.² Unaccompanied minors represent between 4% and 8% of the total.

Family homelessness looks different than the more familiar face of homelessness — adults living alone on the streets or in the shelter system. Of children and youth identified as homeless by state departments of education, only 35% are housed in shelters, while 34% double-up with family or friends, and 23% reside in motels or other locations.³ These children, youth and families are often not recognized as homeless, and are denied access to important services and protections.

Extreme poverty and homelessness have devastating effects. Housing instability and its attendant problems have particularly harmful consequences for children — with outcomes that are likely to pose mounting societal costs for later generations. Homelessness influences every facet of a child's life and has the potential to inhibit the physical, emotional, cognitive, social and behavioral development of children.⁴

- Homeless children are hungry more than twice as often as other children, and two-thirds worry that they won't have enough to eat.⁵
- Homeless children are at high risk of developing health problems: they are sick twice as often, usually with greater severity, and are four times more likely to have asthma and low birth weight and need special care right after birth compared to children who are not homeless. Homeless children are also more vulnerable to environmental factors that negatively affect their health, such as malnutrition and lead poisoning.⁶
- As a result of the stresses of homelessness, children between the ages of 6 and 17 have very high rates of mental disorders compared to their peers. Almost half of children who are homeless have anxiety, depression or withdrawal, as compared to less than one in five other school-age children. Nearly one in three homeless children has at least one major mental disorder that interferes with daily activities, as compared to nearly one in five school-age children who are not homeless. And 36% of homeless children demonstrate delinquent or aggressive behavior, compared with 17% of other school-age children.⁷
- Homeless children experience developmental delays that hamper academic success at four times the rate of other children: they are four times more likely to have behavioral disorders, three times more likely to show signs of a learning disability, and eight times more likely to show signs of mental retardation, as compared with children in the general population.⁸ They suffer emotional and behavioral problems that affect learning at almost three times the rate of housed children and are twice as likely to repeat a grade. Few homeless children attend preschool or early childhood education.⁹
- Over half of all homeless children have never lived in their own home and have experienced repeated moves — 97% of homeless children move one to three times within a single year.¹⁰
- Homeless children are far more likely to be taken from their parents and placed in protective custody and the foster care system, which puts them at greater risk of becoming homeless as young adults, increases their likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system, and places them in a group whose suicide rate is among the highest in our society.

Homeless children need access to *extra* educational, health and mental health services. They need early intervention and a coordinated, comprehensive approach to early childhood education and school readiness. Without these and other supports, they face tremendous risks and daunting odds in all aspects of their lives.

The Role of Children, Youth & Family and Education Funders in Ending Homelessness

Many opportunities exist for funders across the philanthropic spectrum to collaborate and form partnerships that will vastly improve the lives of homeless families and the outcomes for children affected by homelessness. While the majority of children's and family support funders have viewed housing and homelessness initiatives as outside their missions, that outlook is changing. Linking childcare and early childhood development, education, health and youth services with programs to assist families to access and maintain affordable, stable housing is now considered a priority by many grant makers whose priority is to improve outcomes for at-risk and poor families and children.

Funders in education are increasingly coming to appreciate the direct link between housing instability and poor educational outcomes. Housing stability *is* an educational issue —affordable and safe housing with supportive services to assist families is essential to help homeless children achieve academically. Early childhood and family support funders are beginning to see that they can achieve significant and long-lasting impact among the most vulnerable populations by partnering with funders and programs focused on improving families' housing stability. Similarly, homeless funders who seek to prevent the next generation of homelessness are concentrating their efforts on the needs of homeless children and older youth involved in the foster care system. The effective solutions highlighted in this document demonstrate the impact of comprehensive solutions in which funders blend their expertise and achieve greater outcomes by integrating approaches in strategic coordination with one another.

Treasure Island Homeless Development Initiative: Enabling Success Through Community Integration

The Treasure Island Homeless Development Initiative (TIHDI) demonstrates the value of providing flexible funding as part of an overall strategy — in this case, to build relationships and consensus and establish communications channels that are vital to the successful integration of formerly homeless families into the larger community.

TIHDI is a collaborative of 20 community agencies implementing the homeless component of the Reuse Plan for the former Treasure Island Navy Base. The plan calls for nearly 400 housing units for low-income families and individuals. To date, over 165 formerly homeless families, many with mental health, substance abuse, and/or physical disabilities have been housed; these families include over 500 children, many of whom are school-aged.



TIHDI provides multiple resources to address the needs of formerly homeless families and other residents, including wrap-around programs and services for children and youth. Initiative members have also been instrumental in integrating the formerly homeless families into the broader Treasure Island community.

With the influx of large numbers of formerly homeless children into the local school, difficulties arose among the school, the police and parents. Additional programs and services brought to the school were not coordinated to maximize their effectiveness. School staff lacked preparation to deal with behavior and other issues that arose in working with formerly homeless students and parents. Community meetings identified the need for an effective process for contact among and between police, schools, housing and service providers, and families. The Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation provided funding to TIHDI to hire a school liaison/coordinator to build effective relationships among all concerned parties.

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The Coordinator then developed a communications protocol, which includes monthly meetings between school staff and the housing and services providers. She also surveyed parents who identified a need for a place where children can receive tutoring, parents can help their children with homework, and both parents and children have access to computers. The District now provides a Parent's room for these activities on school grounds. They have also approved a new collaborative effort to identify students who are reading below grade level and link them with an after-school/tutoring program and other TIHDI service providers.

Tri-Cities Homeless Coalition: A Whole-Child Approach to Promoting Positive Development

Tri-Cities Homeless Coalition's children's and family support programs, as well as their child-friendly buildings, are truly a collaborative public/private effort. The vision and seed money of private funders allowed the Coalition to develop and refine exemplary programs that subsequently attracted stable and long-term public funding to improve services and outcomes for homeless children and their families.

To promote positive development, Sunrise Village has dedicated space for children including private counseling areas, a children's library and play areas.

The Coalition began as a faith-based winter relief program in 1988. More than 15 years later, it provides a full spectrum of programs and services, from emergency shelter to permanent supportive housing, for homeless families, individuals, and former foster youth in Southern Alameda County.

Recognizing the special needs and vulnerability of homeless children and youth, and the potential to integrate services with the provision of safe and stable housing, four local foundations – Cisco Systems, Kaiser Permanente, Morris Stulsaf, and the Trio Foundations - provided funding for the Coalition to develop and implement programs for children and youth within its housing programs. Based upon the program's innovation and success, the Coalition has been able to secure ongoing public funding from Every Child Counts and First 5 Alameda County to continue the program.

Tri-Cities Homeless Coalition's Sunrise Village program provides transitional housing for homeless families and employs a full-time Children's Coordinator to identify and coordinate health, educational assistance, transportation, and recreation services for children and their families. The Children's Coordinator also provides support and skill-building

for parents around positive parenting, nutrition, employment and education, financial management, and advocating with schools and other systems. Through an innovative partnership with the Fremont Unified School District and McKinney-Vento Act funding, teachers tutor homeless children on-site, and shelter staff work with District Staff on educational achievement goals for the children living in the shelter.



To promote positive development, Sunrise Village has dedicated space for children including private counseling areas, a children's library and play areas. Space is also subcontracted on-site to a private sector childcare and child development center that serves children from both the neighborhood and the shelter.

Tenderloin Childcare Center: Meeting Developmental Needs of At-Risk Kids

Quality childcare is important for the healthy development of all children. For homeless children, it can make the difference between arriving in school ready-to-learn, or lagging behind one's peers for years. For homeless and low-income parents, childcare often provides the foundation on which to secure training and employment and build a healthier and more stable life. Coupled with affordable housing, quality childcare is a powerful antidote to the negative developmental, health and social impacts of homelessness.

The Miriam and Peter Haas Fund is a family foundation committed to helping low-income children and families access quality early childhood programs. The Fund recognized the special childcare needs of the children and families in the Tenderloin, a densely populated, very low-income neighborhood with a large number of at-risk families, many without stable homes.

TLC provides subsidized year-round childcare for 72 very low-income and homeless families from the neighborhood or from shelters in other parts of San Francisco.

The Fund joined with other private and public funders to support the Tenderloin Childcare Center (TLC), an enriched childcare and development program for at-risk and homeless children and families. A program of Compass Community Services, TLC provides subsidized year-round childcare for 72 very low-income and homeless families from the neighborhood or from shelters in other parts of San Francisco.

The Miriam and Peter Haas Fund and other private funders supplement the public funding and subsidies that TLC receives in order to and support child development and family support enrichments. This supplemental funding allows the Center to maintain a safe, culturally sensitive, child-centered environment in which at-risk and developmentally challenged children



can thrive. TLC provides two meals a day, a specialized early childhood curriculum designed to meet the specific physical, emotional and developmental needs of its families, and play therapy for the children. It also offers a broad array of support programs for parents, including a foster grandparent program, parent support and training, family therapy, referrals to housing, health, job training and other needed services, and assistance with enrolling children in kindergarten and accessing needed school-related services. This unique public-private partnership has resulted in an enriched program that delivers clear benefits to homeless and at-risk children including:

- 100% of the children have up-to-date immunizations and medical check-ups;
- Over 80% of the children are showing significant progress in attaining age-appropriate skills; and,
- 100% of the families have remained intact, even though many parents had previous interventions from Children's Protective Services and were at-risk for having their children placed in out-of-home care.

Project Hand in Hand: Educating Providers on the Benefits of Early Intervention

In the past, many homeless service and housing providers focused their efforts on removing the barriers to stability and self-sufficiency that confront homeless parents — and hoped that the benefits would “trickle down” to the children. Practitioners, researchers and policymakers now know, however, that early intervention with the children themselves is essential to minimize, perhaps even reverse, many of the life-altering effects of homelessness and poverty. This realization led San Francisco’s First Five Commission to fund Project Hand in Hand.



The Project is an innovative curriculum development and training program developed by a pediatrics researcher and clinician at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) in consultation with homeless service providers and other experts in the field. The project is built on the recognition that: a child’s development occurs primarily from birth to 5 years of age; the majority of homeless children fall in this age group; and housing and homeless services providers can have a powerful role in the lives of homeless children.

Project Hand in Hand is designed to increase homeless service providers’ knowledge and awareness about the harmful physical and developmental effects of homelessness on children and assist them in developing practical skills and strategies to mitigate these detrimental impacts.

Project Hand in Hand is designed to increase homeless service providers’ knowledge and awareness about the harmful physical and developmental effects of homelessness on children and assist them in developing practical skills and strategies to mitigate these detrimental impacts. The Project employs a three-pronged approach:

- (1) Training workshops for homeless services staff on childhood development and the damaging effects of poverty and homelessness on children;
- (2) Individual consultations to assist providers in developing and/or adapting their programs and facilities to promote healthy child development, specifically addressing the needs of homeless children; and,
- (3) A Train-the-Trainer component for community providers who will continue to impart professional development to new staff.

To date, Project Hand in Hand has trained more than 30 staff from 20 organizations, including participants from family and domestic violence shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, childcare programs, parent and family support programs, housing advocacy organizations, youth recreation centers and government agencies. This unique partnership blends the skills and resources of public and private funders, academics and practitioners, and health professionals and housing providers, and embodies the multi-disciplinary efforts needed to help break the cycle of homelessness.

It's All About the Kids: Stable Housing Improves Educational Outcomes

This program demonstrates the effect of housing stability on children's school performance and the power of practice-based research in developing exemplary services to meet an identified gap in services. In this case, such research led to an impressive multi-partner and multi-sector collaboration, resulting in model services in which the housing and school stability are linked and reinforced.

It's All About the Kids is an innovative public-private demonstration program that addresses the connection between housing instability and poor educational achievement. The project aims to improve educational attainment of low-income children whose housing instability places them at high risk of poor school outcomes. Families enrolled in the program receive Section 8 vouchers, relocation assistance, and ongoing counseling and support — in exchange for a pledge by parents to become more involved in their children's education, and improve their children's school attendance.

It's All About the Kids was informed by an earlier effort, the Kids Mobility Project, a research and community education effort initiated by local planners and researchers from educational and community organizations. The Kids Mobility Project published a study showing a strong relationship between housing mobility and low attendance rates, and low attendance rates and poor achievement. It concluded that housing instability must be addressed in order to improve academic achievement, and recommended that schools, community agencies and religious and philanthropic organizations collaborate and focus their efforts in three areas:

- Improving school attendance for all students, with particular attention to attendance issues related to families who move frequently or are homeless;
- Developing an increased supply of safe, quality, affordable housing; and,
- Strengthening family stability by connecting people to resources in their neighborhoods.

The It's All About the Kids partner organizations, providers and funders, developed clear roles and expectations in order to focus on what each does best.

The Minneapolis Public School District identifies highly mobile children and families from neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty and refers them to Lutheran Social Services.

Lutheran Social Services enrolls families, provides comprehensive case management and life skill training, and helps broker effective relationships between the Housing Authority's Section 8 program, the housing owner and the tenant.

The Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) provides 150 Section 8 vouchers annually, home inspections, and landlord outreach.

The Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Fund provides general operating support for the program.

The Family Housing Fund provides specific funding for ongoing coordination, planning, and program evaluation.

To date, the program has served 78 families with 280 children, most of them elementary school age. Nearly all parents had significant barriers to housing, including unemployment (50%), financial instability (77%) and recent homelessness (49%). The preliminary results of It's All About the Kids are quite promising:

- Program retention rates are high: 90% of the families completed tenant education and began their housing search. Of those families, 89% successfully moved into permanent housing and 10% are still within their four-month window to locate housing.
- Housing stability rates are also high: 96% of families who moved at least 12 months ago are still in the same housing, a significant improvement over their previous housing instability.
- School stability has greatly increased: Only 39% of children changed schools since their families moved, and only 18% have changed school for reasons other than a school closure or because the child appropriately graduated to a higher grade elsewhere. Furthermore of the children who changed schools, for any reason, the change was made at the beginning of the school year, thus improving educational stability and continuity.

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