

## Best and Promising Practices

### Housing Opportunities and Services (HOST) Demonstration

#### Summary Overview

The Housing Opportunities and Services Together (HOST) Demonstration is an effort to test strategies that use housing as a platform for services to improve the life chances of vulnerable youth and adults.

The demonstration project grew out of Urban Institute research on government-driven attempts to help improve the lives of families living in the most distressed public housing in the United States. These attempts have typically focused on dismantling dangerous, unsafe housing, replacing it with new, mixed-income housing, and relocating many residents with vouchers. Continued research shows that troubles related to economic hardship, underemployment, low education, fear, violence, substance abuse, inequality, and discrimination still challenge families even when their housing quality and safety improves.

The HOST Demonstration began in December 2010 and is currently implemented in Chicago, IL; Baltimore, MD; Portland, OR; and Washington, DC. For more information visit the Urban Institute's web page:

<http://www.urban.org/projects/host/index.cfm>.

#### Core HOST Model Elements

- Strength-based, personalized approach to working with families, staff to household ratio of 1:30 or lower.
- Wrap around services that include employment, mental health, literacy, financial planning, education and behavioral programming among others. High level of coordination among staff and providers.
- Targeted approach to services using data to serve each family appropriately.
- Two generation or whole family approach.

#### The HOST Sites

The HOST Demonstration is currently implemented in three sites: Chicago, IL; Portland, OR; and Washington, DC. Both Chicago and Portland are in their final year of implementation; Washington in its second. Additional sites in Baltimore and Pittsburgh are in a planning phase, and sites in California, Puerto Rico, New York, and Boston have expressed interest. We are in the process of building a HOST Network to disseminate our model and lessons as broadly as possible, while creating a learning network of agencies, organizations, developers and others who can share their practical experience in building and implementing supportive models for low income residents. (see HOST website).



### Chicago, IL

The HOST Demonstration serves 230 mostly African American families in public housing development, Altgeld Gardens. Families in Altgeld Gardens were eligible for the HOST Demonstration if they were out of compliance with the Chicago Housing Authority's employment requirements. HOST families work with case managers from UCAN, an organization supporting vulnerable children and families in Chicago for nearly 150 years. The ratio of case managers to households in Chicago is 1:23.

### Portland, OR

HOST in Portland serves 136 extremely multicultural populations of families living in New Columbia and Tamarack Apartments, and Humboldt Gardens. In order to serve the diverse population of African, Middle Eastern, and Latino immigrants, the Portland HOST team offers culturally specific programs designed to help youth achieve in school, and support adults in their workplace. Families in both developments were eligible for HOST if they fell between 0 and 30 percent of median family income. The ratio of case managers to households in Portland is 1:30.

### Washington, DC

The HOST Demonstration in Washington, DC targeted 160 households with children between the ages of 9 and 18 in public housing development, Benning Terrace. The development's service provider, East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, provides intensive case management and clinical mental health services to youth and adults. Promoting Adolescent Sexual Safety (PASS) is a community-based participatory research model that will target 300 youth in effort to decrease teen pregnancy, risky sexual behavior, and sexual assault or coercion. The ratio of case managers to households in Washington, DC is 1:30.

## Evaluation / Real-time feedback

HOST is built on the findings from the Chicago Family Case Management Demonstration (see Best Practices overview on "Hard to House"). The HOST Demonstration includes an intentional dual-generation or whole family approach, where programming and services for the whole family are integrated. The Urban Institute HOST research team conducts continuous data collection to evaluate and provide feedback to HOST sites. The following are types of data collected throughout the demonstration:

- **Baseline Survey:** A phone or in-person survey was conducted with heads of households and a focal youth in each HOST family. The survey asked questions about their neighborhood cohesion, public benefits, family relationships, housing history and stability, employment, education, physical and mental health, risky behavior, and services they participate in. This data was used as a baseline to learn about HOST sites prior to delivering services.
- **Program data:** administrative case management data on engagement, lease violations, employment, and number of residents enrolled in HOST. This data is delivered monthly.
- **Administrative interviews:** Urban Institute researchers conduct quarterly administrative interviews with key stakeholders and line staff involved in the HOST Demonstration. The purpose of these interviews is to gather data on the progress of service provision in each HOST site, and for Urban Institute researchers to provide formative feedback to individual sites so that service delivery can be improved and/or changed to reflect residents' needs.
- **Resident focus groups:** Urban Institute researchers conduct yearly focus group discussions with residents. The purpose of these focus groups is to gather information from residents in the HOST Demonstration and learn why they and their family members are or are not engaging in HOST services and/or with their HOST case manager. The data gathered during these focus groups was aggregated and reported back to HOST service providers as feedback for better service delivery.
- **In depth one-on-one resident interviews:** Urban Institute researchers conduct in depth one-on-one resident interviews with adults and youth who have completed two years in the HOST Demonstration to learn about families' lives, their communities, and about how HOST has or has not influenced any change in their lives since participating in HOST.
- **Data walk:** Urban Institute researchers conducted "Data Walk" events to present information from the baseline survey and monthly program data in graphic posters and presented it to HOST residents and line staff for feedback and analysis.

## Coordination

Key stakeholders, line staff, and the Urban Institute research team conduct monthly phone calls and in person meetings with each HOST site to coordinate services and remain updated on progress made. Urban provides real-time feedback so that the sites can modify and improve their service approach and programs.

Line staff in each site also meet regularly to remain up to date on families involved in the demonstration, share information, and strategies about how to move forward. This logistical coordination is paired with collaboration and alignment between the services provided to youth and adults. (See upcoming UI publication on dual-generation approaches.

## Funding

HOST has various funding sources. The following foundations and government organizations contribute to HOST's research and service delivery in various capacities:

- Open Society Foundations
- Annie E. Casey Foundation

- Kresge Foundation
- Paul G. Allen Family Foundation
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- National Institutes of Health
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Additionally, each site brings in-kind, foundation, government and private resources to supplement funding for both services and evaluation.

## Early Findings

While the HOST outcomes evaluation is not yet finalized, there are a number of lessons that can be gleaned from our years of both quantitative and qualitative information collection. There have also been several key early policy implications:

### Findings/Lessons:

- HOST staff report that the dual generation approach helps engagement and participation levels, and helps them serve a larger number of people with less resources/time.
- Residents report feeling supported and better able to work on and achieve their goals
- Improvements in employment rates
- Stable rent collection and fewer lease violations

### Policy Implications:

- Housing authorities and developers incorporating components of HOST into their larger institutional approaches to supporting high-need residents.
- HUD and other government agencies incorporating lessons into their policies/programs
- Offshoot initiatives from the HOST demonstration include new work on issues such as food insecurity, sexual health and safety, and early childhood interventions.