



# Housing in Action

Preventing and ending family homelessness



United Way  
of Dane County

## THE GOAL: Prevent and End Homelessness for Families

**IT IS CLEAR** that separate even from extreme poverty, homelessness and lack of stable housing present a formidable set of challenges to an already extremely vulnerable group of children. **United Way believes that it is possible and that we must end homelessness.** Through a set of research and data-driven strategies designed to build on families' strengths to find and retain stable housing, together with our partners, we are ending homelessness for families in Dane County.

### THERE IS STILL WORK TO DO

In 2015, **993 homeless children** lived in emergency shelter and motels.

**Over 22,000 low income families** can't afford their housing and 12,000 are paying over 50% of their income in rent.

**1 in 5 Dane County children** are food insecure.

**6,400 children** live in families with income below half the federal poverty line (\$12,060 for a family of 4).

**1 in 6 children in Dane County live in poverty.**

That means in a classroom of 24 children, 4 come to school unsure if they'll have dinner that night, or have a place to do their homework after school, or a bed in which to sleep.



# HOUSING: THE SOLUTION FOR FAMILY HOMELESSNESS



## Eviction Prevention

Supports families to stay in their homes.

## Landlord/Tenant Connections

A trusted relationship with landlords who make apartments available for families.



## Financial Coaching

Builds money management skills and confidence toward client-centered goals.



## HOUSING FIRST

Housing provides a home base from which all other things are possible – we have **80% success** at keeping families stably housed.

## Access to Food

Food pantries, FoodShare, school breakfast and lunch, WIC and other programs keep families nourished while freeing up money for rent and other crucial expenses.



## Professional Development

for case managers keeps them up to date on best practices.

## Case Management

Builds on family strengths and connects parents and children to community resources and school.



## KEY STRATEGIES

### #1 Housing First

Housing First works by helping families find housing, pay for housing and stay in housing with the support of case management. Since 2008, our efforts have ended homelessness for more than 1,100 families.

### #2 Eviction Prevention and Quality Case Management

Housing case managers combine best practices in social work with new effective approaches including harm reduction and motivational interviewing to help families maintain stable housing.

### #3 Landlord/Tenant Connections

Proactive collaboration with Dane County landlords working through a Housing Locator increases the likelihood that families are successful in finding and maintaining housing.

### #4 Financial Coaching

A nationally recognized strategy, financial coaching builds on the families' desire to set and achieve both small and large financial goals and increases money management skills.

### #5 Access to Healthy Food

Food resources act as a subsidy freeing up funds in family budgets for rent. Households in Dane County are visiting food pantries at twice the rate of only five years ago, making this resource a vital part of a family's ability to stay fed and housed.

### #6 Leveraging Resources and Influencing Policy

Increasing collaboration between our community partners as well as with the City and County brings the opportunity to build on each of our strengths to improve the homeless services system. To that end we actively engage with our partners in systems change work.

SUCCESS RATE:  
**80%**

Our success rate with families mirrors the national research on Housing First confirming that this approach **has an 80% success rate, and is twice as effective at ending homelessness at half the cost.**



*United Way volunteers help  
prepare apartments for  
Housing First*

## Why it matters

- The school year for homeless children is often marked by interruptions and delays, affecting their academic success. Homeless children are twice as likely to have a learning disability, repeat a grade, or be suspended from school.
- Homeless children are twice as likely to experience hunger as their non-homeless peers, affecting their ability to learn.
- Homelessness is linked to poor physical health for children including low birth weight, malnutrition, ear infections, exposure to environmental toxins, and chronic illness (e.g. asthma).
- More than 90% of sheltered and low-income mothers have experienced physical and sexual assault over their lifespan. Fleeing violence is the most prevalent reason given for families seeking emergency shelter in Dane County.
- A quarter of homeless children have witnessed violence and 22% have been separated from their families. Exposure to violence can cause a number of psychosocial difficulties for children both emotionally (depression, anxiety, withdrawal) and behaviorally (aggression, acting out), reducing their ability to be emotionally or mentally present for learning.



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Research-based strategies to decrease the number of homeless families in Dane County are highlighted in our **Housing in Action Mobilization Plan**.

Full mobilization plans are available at [www.unitedwaydanecounty.org/mobilization-plans](http://www.unitedwaydanecounty.org/mobilization-plans).

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Continue the conversation with us

