Family Stability Program Overview*

This overview has been updated to reflect new site location criteria focusing on school partnerships, page 2 (11/12/2020).

PROGRAM PURPOSE & SUMMARY

The United Way of Central Maryland (UWCM) Family Stability Program helps families at risk of losing their housing to regain self-sufficiency so that they can stay in their homes and so that their children can avoid a disruptive school transfer. Program outcomes are achieved through a combination of flexible financial assistance and case management, as well as linkages of clients to other community resources. Services are provided to families who reside in a defined geographic area that has been determined to be especially in need or important to UWCM's strategic goals for the region. Referrals to the program can come from a variety of sources, including schools, service providers, 211, or even word of mouth.

The program model is inspired by the work of the Siemer Institute, which provides funding and technical assistance to a network of United Ways and other partners across the country.

The UWCM Family Stability Program (FSP) provides funding to partner organizations to implement the model in their local area(s), but in some cases UWCM provides the case management services directly, as is the case in the Poppleton and Brooklyn programs.

The FSP is funded through a combination of donations from UWCM donors as well as foundation and government grants.

PROGRAM HISTORY

The FSP was launched in 2012 in Baltimore City with seed funding from the Siemer Institute. Since that time, the program has grown to a peak of 16 sites across the six counties that comprise UWCM's footprint: Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County, Harford County, and Howard County.

Beginning in FY15, representatives from among the funded partner organizations were convened to form the Family Stability Collaborative. Even since then, this Collaborative has been an opportunity for staff to meet to share best practices and participate in joint trainings.

At the end of FY20, a Return on Investment study showed that the FSP has a return on investment of roughly 4:1, meaning that for every $1 invested in the program, $4 is saved in costs to the social service system by helping the family avoid homelessness.

FUNDED PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

United Way provides funding and support to a number of program partners to implement the FSP model in various program sites across Central Maryland. These funded partners organizations share UWCM's commitment to supporting the stability and self-sufficiency of vulnerable families. Each partner organization receives grant funding for a case manager to implement the program model to a caseload of families for an agreed upon amount of time, usually one fiscal year, and to a target geographic area such as one or more zip codes or schools or even an entire county.

A program site may be located at a single location or may occupy several locations for the convenience of the families and the case manager. Examples of program site locations include:

- Inside a school, such as when the case manager has an office location in the school where they can meet with families

- In a community center or neighborhood facility, such as a church or rec center

- Inside the premises of partner institution, such as a college or university building

- In the home office of the partner organization itself

- Programs should establish a program location within the geographic service area that is easy to access by clients.

[Over the past several years, United Way has identified that operating out of a school or establishing a partnership that allows for case managers to meet with clients at a school, is a best practice. While this is not required, we recommend that applicants include, where possible, information regarding their relationship with at least one school within their service area.

Also, please note that following grant award notifications and prior to execution of the grant contracts, United Way will request that applicants demonstrate that have established a partnership with a least one school in support implementation of the Family Stability Program.]*

*This language was added on 11/12/2020

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible for the program, families **must**:

- Have at least one school-aged child (note: school-aged includes pre-K and Head Start)
- Meet the specific geographic requirements of the program (i.e. zip code, school zone, etc.)
- Have incomes below the ALICE threshold for their community
- Be substantially behind on bills related to housing, such as rent, mortgage, or utilities
- Be willing to participate in case management
- Demonstrate a desire and potential to achieve self-sufficiency with the help of program services

Exceptions to the above eligibility criteria may be made on a case-by-case basis and require UWCM approval, but such exceptions should be rare and may not constitute more than 10% of the caseload.

CASE MANAGEMENT MODEL

Programs sites are expected to serve at least 30 new entrant households per 12-month grant period. The length and intensity of services will depend on each family's unique needs. Referrals to the program can come from a variety of sources, to be determined specifically by the funded partner organization in consultation with UWCM. Once a referral is made, the case manager will make an initial assessment to confirm program eligibility, and if all eligibility criteria are met, the case manager will conduct an intake assessment to determine the strengths and needs of the family.

All client intake assessments are conducted using the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix (ASSM). The ASSM is an independently validated data tool that is used by hundreds of programs across the country. The ASSM measures stability and self-sufficiency across 19 domains, such as housing, food, children's education, income, and employment. This tool simultaneously serves as an engagement tool (allowing the case manager to get to know the family and understand different aspects of their lives) as well as a benchmark for measuring a family's progress during their involvement with the program. In addition to the information collected through the SSM, programs are also asked to track the hourly wages and credit scores of adults in the program.

Based on the family's goals and priorities, as well as their immediate needs, the case manager works with the family to create a Family Goal Plan that functions as the basis for the services the family receives. The case manager will have a diverse set of families in their caseload, each with different levels of needs and different intensities of case management services to be delivered. For this reason, the caseload is divided into three tiers.

Tier 1: Light-touch intervention; case management for 1-3 months; household is behind on bills but may not be facing imminent loss of housing; household is not in need of direct financial assistance; examples may include families who need help with financial planning or applying for benefits.

Tier 2: Mid-range intervention; case management for 3-6 months; household is behind on bills, and loss of housing is likely without assistance; household may need financial assistance up to $650; examples include families who have experienced a momentary lapse in employment or benefits and are struggling to catch up or stay afloat.

Tier 3: Intensive intervention; case management for 6-9 months; household is substantially behind on bills, and eviction or utility shutoff is imminent; financial assistance needs up to $1,350; examples include families who have lost income for multiple months.

In order to help families move towards self-sufficiency, the case manager offers a range of services to support the families stability and self-sufficiency, including: applying for benefits or employment, workforce development activities, budgeting, financial capabilities building, assistance accessing banking or other financial products, services tailored to meet children's unique education needs, and so on.

Case managers are expected to utilize best practices from the Social Work profession, such as Trauma Informed Case, Person-Centered Services, and Motivational Interviewing. Programs are encouraged to adopt a 2Gen (two generation) approach to services, seeking to provide for the needs of

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children, parents, and the family as a whole instead of focusing exclusively on the needs of the head of household.

Partner organizations are required to participate in the Family Stability Collaborative, which meets quarterly. This forum is a place in which Family Stability Program providers meet to share ideas and best practices, as well as to receive important program updates or participate in shared trainings.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Listed below are the core FSI performance measures, with target outcomes:

- Number of new program entrant families served (target = 30)
- Number of families served that had a successful outcome by not becoming homeless during the service period (target = 85% of families served)
- Number of families served that remained stable in housing six months following the conclusion of the services (target = 75% of families served)
- Number of families served that remained stable in housing one year following the conclusion of the services (target = 75% of families served)
- Number of school aged children served that remained stable in school as evidenced by remaining in their school of origin (target = 75% of school-aged children served)
- Number of school aged children served that made a planned, supported transfer in school (target = 10% of school-aged children served)
- Number of school aged children served that had a disruptive move to another school, other than their school of origin (target = 15% or less of school-aged children served)
- Number of families with an increase in income (target = 50%)

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Partner organizations are required to provide quarterly reports on program expenditures, client enrollments, and SSM scores in UWCM's data tracking system, CommunityForce. Partner organizations are also expected to provide end-of-the-year data in CommunityForce. At this point, UWCM does not collect any personally identifiable client-level information and, as such all information listed in CommunityForce must be de-identified. Please note that UWCM is working to identify a new client-management system will allow us to collect deeper client level information from our partners. We will share information with funded partners as it becomes available.

Funded partner organizations are required to participate in or coordinate with the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) of their local Continuum of Care so that enrollments can be tracked, referrals to and from the program can be made, and the program can be integrated into the jurisdiction's overall strategy for addressing housing and homelessness.

Funded partner organizations are also expected to implement a Client Satisfaction Survey, which is designed by UWCM and passed on to client to complete anonymously.