



Evaluation of the Front Door Rapid Rehousing Program

Final Report

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Executive Summary

In 2014, the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation and St. Vincent de Paul contracted with Abt Associates to conduct an evaluation of the Front Door program – a rapid rehousing program in Baltimore, MD. The aim of the evaluation was to both examine how the program was designed and implemented and the effect of program through client outcomes. The research questions that guided the evaluation were:

1. Does the Front Door program improve housing stability among families?
2. Do families improve income or employment and move toward self-sufficiency?
3. Do Front Door families experience improvements in child educational outcomes and food security?

An implementation study component examined how the program was designed and modified over time. Program staff were interviewed to understand and document the program elements and solicit feedback on implementation and subsequent actions taken to address any challenges identified by program staff. Through focus groups, the study team collected participant feedback on the program. Referral partners and other stakeholders were also interviewed to collect information on their experiences with the program, including what they considered to be successes and challenges.

The client outcomes study examined whether families improved in the areas of housing stability, employment and income, and family well-being. Program data on metrics related to these areas were collected at entry and program exit, and additional data were collected from families and their landlords through a follow-up survey conducted six months after exiting the program. Additional information on returns to homelessness was obtained from Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Of the approximately 150 families served by the Front Door program between July 2014 and September 2016, 108 agreed to participate in an evaluation of the program, and 52 families were reached for the follow-up survey.

Front Door Program Design

The Front Door program provided families experiencing homelessness in Baltimore, MD with short-term rental assistance and supportive services. St. Vincent de Paul designed the program based on recent research on rapid rehousing and identified best practices that indicated that short-term rental assistance – at least to start – was associated with similar rates of returns to homelessness as longer term assistance.¹ By providing families with shorter lengths of assistance, St. Vincent de Paul could serve more families in crisis. However, the program designers understood that very short-term assistance would not be enough for some families. The “progressive engagement” model adopted by St. Vincent de Paul provides all families with the same amount of assistance initially, and then tailors additional assistance to the needs of each family.

Families were referred to the program, primarily, by emergency shelters which determined eligibility. Eligible families were put in contact with the housing coordinator who immediately began the housing search and transition process. Housing choice was fundamental to the program design. Providing families with options and putting them in charge of decision-making set the tone for the remainder of the program – one that emphasized family empowerment. Once a family found an appropriate housing unit, they entered into a lease agreement directly with the landlord.

¹ Finkel, et al. 2016. Evaluation of Rapid Rehousing for Homeless Families Demonstration, Department of Housing and Urban Development. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/RRHD-PartII-Outcomes.pdf>

The Front Door program provided all families with a standard initial package of assistance: security deposit, the full first month of rent, and 75 percent of the unit’s rent for two additional months. Additional assistance – both rental assistance and other types of financial assistance, such as furniture provision, utility payments, and move-in costs – were determined based on individual client need.

Case management and workforce development services were a key component of the program. Families met at least monthly with their case manager, and often more frequently than that during the initial stages of the program. Additionally, all families were offered workforce development services, which included resume assistance, job preparedness services, and linkages to employment programs.

Another key feature of the program was a built-in flexibility for program improvement. Throughout the 2014 to 2016 program period, Front Door leadership responded to feedback from program participants and other stakeholders by modifying program processes that could be clearer or more efficient.

How Families Used the Program

On average, families received rent assistance for about five months. (see Exhibit E-1), with two thirds receiving between four and six months of rental assistance. Families received, on average, about \$2,900 in rent assistance in total. The median contract rent for families participating in the program was \$850, which is higher than the median contract rent in Baltimore during the same time period (\$824).²

Exhibit E-1. Average Amount of Assistance by Household

	Number of Households Receiving Assistance	Average Amount Received per Household
Utility payments	18	\$946.61
Security Deposits	108	\$1,091.26
Median Rent Amount	108	\$850
Average Rent Amount	108	\$876.69
Total Rent Assistance	108	\$2,923.87
Furniture Purchase	105	\$1,476.07
Other Assistance	39	\$108.00
Average Number of Months of Rent Assistance	108	4.8
Average Number of Months of Program Enrollment	108	6.2

In addition to rental assistance, families received financial support to cover other housing related costs. Security deposit payments, provided to all families in the program, were routinely higher than rent payments. This was due to participating landlords frequently requiring security deposits that exceeded the amount of one month of rent. Families also received other assistance, such as utility payments, furniture, and move-in assistance.

Many families received case management or workforce development services beyond the time that rental assistance ended. The average length of time that families received program services was just more than six months.

² Reflects the average median contract rents for 2014 (\$812), 2015 (\$808), and 2016 (\$852). American Community Survey data.

More than half (54 percent) of the 52 families for whom information was available indicated that they participated in workforce development services. Families most likely to have participated in these services were those that had temporary, part-time, or seasonal employment. Families referred to Front Door directly from shelters had a higher participation rate in workforce development services than those referred from non-shelter locations, such as outreach teams, Department of Social Services, or self-referral (47 percent compared to 36 percent).

Key Findings

A typical family served by the program, and among the 108 study families, was single parent household, headed by an African American woman between the ages of 25 and 34 (average age of 32), with two children. Of the 268 children in the 108 study families, two-thirds were school-aged children.

Does the Front Door program improve housing stability among families?

Three measures of housing stability were used to explore housing stability changes among families: housing situation, housing affordability, and returns to homelessness. The study team collected information on housing situation and housing affordability at exit and six months after exit. Through the use of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, returns to homelessness (evidenced by enrollment in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program) within 12 months of exiting the program is also reported.

The study team attempted to contact each study family six months after rental assistance ended, and was able to reach 52 of the 108 families. To complement this effort, the study team also conducted outreach to landlords who provided information on whether those families in the study, but not reached for follow-up, were still in the unit six months after rental assistance ended.

- Of those families, 51 percent (or 36 families) were living in the same unit six months after leaving the Front Door program. Presumably, these families were able to take over and sustain the rent of the unit on their own or with another form of housing assistance.
- Of those whose specific living situation was known through the follow up survey, 73 percent (or 38 families) were living in some form of permanent housing. Permanent housing situations include the Front Door unit without additional assistance, another permanent housing situation without assistance, and another permanent housing situation with assistance.
- Housing affordability was an issue for most families in the study. At exit, 97 percent of families were cost burdened, paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent, and 76 percent of families were severely cost burdened, paying more than 50 percent of their income on rent. Of those reached for a follow-up survey, 92 percent were cost burdened, and 50 percent were severely cost burdened.
- Of all families, six percent (or six families) returned to homelessness within six months, and seven families (seven percent) returned within one year.

Families with housing situations that appeared more stable six months after exiting the program received less assistance than those with evidence of instability. This likely points to case managers accurately implementing the progressive engagement model, in which clients with lower levels of need are provided fewer months of rental assistance.

During focus groups with families, landlords were consistently cited as a reason families chose or were unable to stay in the Front Door assisted unit, as well as the reason for moving (or potentially moving) frequently.

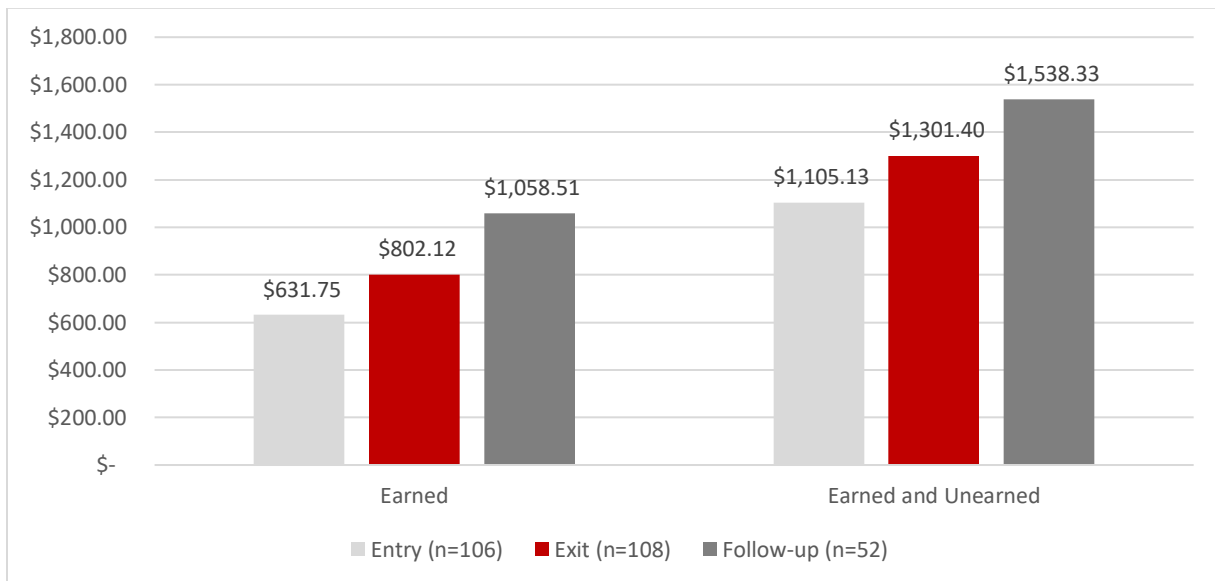
Do families improve income or employment and move toward self-sufficiency?

Just under half of the 108 study families were unemployed at program entry, with 11 percent reporting no job and no income of any kind (including non-earned income, such as Social Security Disability Income or Supplemental Security Income). Average total income of families entering the program was about \$1,100 per month, and the average earned income was \$630 per month.

Between program entry and program exit, 59 percent of the study families improved their income. More than two-thirds either improved their income or maintained income adequate to meet their basic needs (per their assessment score at exit). The average earned income for families at entry was \$632 compared to \$802 at exit. Income continued to improve between program exit and six months later to an average income of over \$1,000 per month (see Exhibit E-2).

Employment status also improved between entry and exit, with 64 percent of families improving their employment status. Some moved from being unemployed to employed (46 percent) and some from being employed only part-time to being employed full-time (18 percent).

Exhibit E-2. Change in Income: Entry, Exit, and Follow-up



Do Front Door families experience improvements in child educational outcomes and food security?

Families entered the program with strong assessment scores in the area of family well-being. Family well-being metrics were measured by the Arizona Self Sufficiency Matrix (AZ SSM), an assessment tool administered at program entry, and every three months until the family stopped receiving housing assistance. Between entry and exit, families improved across areas related to food security, child care access, child education engagement, and transportation access. After exit, however, families reported challenges accessing adequate child care and reliable transportation. In addition, families that participated in focus groups reported vulnerability in the area of food security that was not reflected in the way data on

this measure were collected. Despite income gains for many, families in the program remained poor and often had to make choices between housing, child care, and other basic necessities. These choices may have been reflected in the increased percentage of families that reported difficulties accessing adequate child care after exiting the program or access to reliable transportation.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the evaluation, the study team makes the following recommendations:

Consider additional, shallower subsidies for longer periods of time for families struggling with housing stability. Many families reported living in severely unaffordable housing, paying over 50 percent of their income toward their rent. Of families interviewed at follow up, nearly 9 in 10 reported that they would benefit from additional assistance. Obtaining full-time employment, while considered an improvement, can also mean needing child care when families previously did not. For families that struggled with the transition to full rent, providing families with a small amount of additional rental assistance for a transition period might enable them to further strengthen income gains, and ease the burden during the transition.

Further develop landlord outreach and engagement. Baltimore's rental vacancy rate should allow the program to identify and develop relationships with landlords that will maintain higher quality units and not demand security deposits that exceed the equivalent of one month of rent. In addition, when a family is exiting the unit, the program should consider including in this process a client review of the landlord. This would provide the program with information about the landlords with which they may not want to continue to engage.

Training for referral partners on how to set reasonable expectations and program staff on explaining the progressive engagement model. Because of the short-term nature of this program, it is critical that families choose to enroll with full understanding of what to expect in terms of assistance. While the program moves them out of shelter and into their own unit, they must take over the full contract rent in relatively short order. Families should be given full information so that they can make a decision (if they are prioritized for this program) as to whether it is reasonable for them to maintain the full rent after a few months. Program participants may also feel less confusion and uncertainty about the depth and length of program support if program staff have a consistent way to discuss the progressive engagement approach and decisions about each family's assistance package over time.

Provide families with deeper workforce development services, focusing on career paths. The income gains reported in this study are very promising. However, not all families were successful in obtaining employment or increasing incomes to the point that they could take on greater rent obligations. Families reported an interest in linkages to jobs and employers, and many had hoped the workforce services would help them focus on and develop a career path. St. Vincent de Paul is about to launch a new employment navigator program that will be available to all families in rapid rehousing, and which will (at a minimum) take a long step toward addressing this recommendation. Providing families in the program and those having exited the program with deeper services in this area could contribute to gains in income and employment, leading to greater housing stability.

1. Introduction

The following report is an evaluation of St. Vincent de Paul’s Front Door program, which provides rapid rehousing assistance to families experiencing homelessness in Baltimore, MD. Families experiencing homelessness were offered short-term rental assistance coupled with case management and workforce development services. The rental assistance was used to move families quickly out of homelessness and the case management and workforce development services were designed to help families improve income and maintain the housing after the rental assistance ended.

This following evaluation documents the design and implementation of the program, and examines the characteristics, experiences, and outcomes of families served by the program.

1.1 Background

St. Vincent de Paul has been serving families experiencing homelessness in the Baltimore area with critical services since 1977. Services currently provided include emergency shelter, a day resource program, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, voucher-based permanent housing, workforce development services, and emergency assistance. In 2010, it implemented its first rapid rehousing program. Families served by emergency shelter moved into permanent housing quickly, and were provided with 12 months of rental assistance and supportive services. However, the small but growing evidence base supporting rapid rehousing as a critical intervention showed that shorter term programs and longer term programs often produce similar outcomes. In 2014, the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation granted St. Vincent de Paul \$1.3 million to create a new model of rapid rehousing that was shorter in length and more dynamic. The program adopted a “progressive engagement” model, in which all families received the same amount of assistance initially, but additional assistance was determine based on client need.

1.1.1 Rapid Rehousing

Rapid rehousing programs provide temporary rental assistance to people experiencing homelessness while providing supportive services.³ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released guidance on how to best design rapid rehousing programs in 2012.⁴ This guidance identifies three core components: housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and case management and services. However, while guidance was issued on the primary components, local rapid rehousing programs are able to design each component to meet their own needs.

A progressive engagement model tailors the level of assistance (length and depth) to the needs of each household, and modifies the amount of assistance over time as the needs of the household change. Households may need just a small amount of assistance to solve an immediate crisis, they may require extended rental assistance, or need other types of cash assistance such as payment of utility deposits, arrears, or security deposits. In addition to financial assistance, programs can use a progressive engagement model with case management and other services. Households served by rapid rehousing may

³ Department of Housing and Urban Development, “What Is Rapid Rehousing?” <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Rapid-Re-Housing-Brief.pdf>

⁴ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2014. <https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/webinar-core-principles-of-housing-first-and-rapid-re-housing>

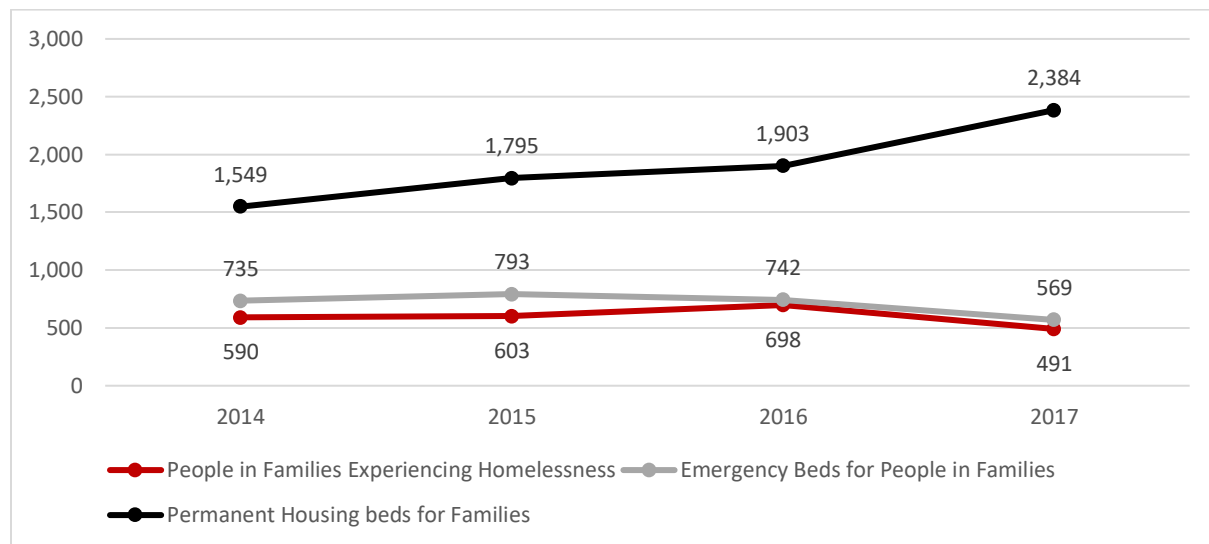
need intensive case management at the start, and less over time or, in the event of a job loss or other life event, may need to increase case management and other services over time.

Progressive engagement’s flexible approach to both financial assistance and supportive services aims to provide the right level of assistance based on need. Resources for homeless assistance are finite, and communities and programs are consistently trying to do more with less. Progressive engagement aims to provide “just enough” assistance, so that the family’s immediate housing crisis is solved in order to avoid returns to homelessness, but that additional resources are available to serve more families in crisis.

1.1.2 Community Context

There were 2,567 people experiencing homelessness in Baltimore on a single night in January 2014. Of those, 23 percent (or 590 people) were people in families with children. Between 2014 and 2016, homelessness increased among people in families, but declined in the year after the study period (2016 – 2017). Local efforts to address family homelessness have increased. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), there were 735 emergency beds (emergency shelter or transitional housing) in Baltimore in 2014. At the same time, there were 1,549 permanent housing for formerly homeless people in families with children. This inventory increased to 1,903 by 2016 and then to 2,384 in 2017 indicating an increased investment in permanent housing options for families in Baltimore.⁵

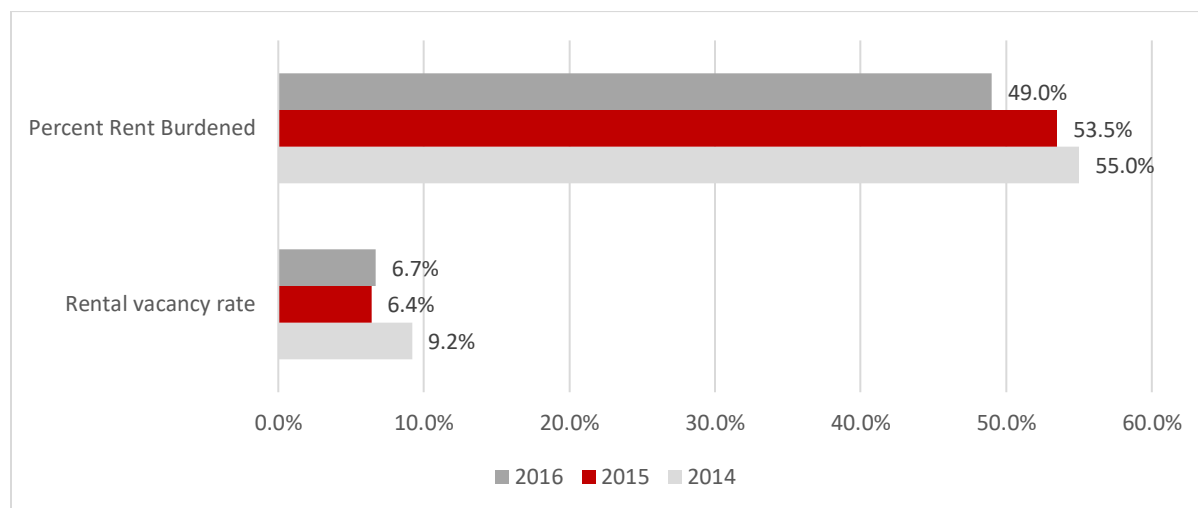
Exhibit 1-1. People in Families Experiencing Homelessness at a Point-in-Time and Housing Inventory



Baltimore does not have a tight rental market. In 2014, over nine percent of units on the rental market in Baltimore were vacant. This declined to just under seven percent by the end of the study period. While the market had available units, many households still could not afford them. In 2014, 55 percent of renters were cost burdened, paying more than 30 percent of their income toward their housing costs.

⁵ Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2017. Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, Part 1. <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5639/2017-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us/>

Exhibit 1-2. Housing Market Features in Baltimore, MD 2014-2016⁶



1.2 Overview of Evaluation Questions and Approach

The evaluation approach was designed and modified as the Front Door program was being developed. This approach allowed for flexibility in both the program design and the evaluation design, which proved invaluable to both efforts. However, the key components of the evaluation remained stable throughout the study period. There are two main components to this evaluation of Front Door program: an *implementation analysis* and a *client outcomes evaluation*. Together, these components were designed to answer the guiding research questions:

1. Does the Front Door program improve housing stability among families?
2. Do families improve income and/or employment and move toward self-sufficiency?
3. Do Front Door families experience improvements in child educational outcomes and food security?

In addition, Abt was asked to look at the program costs associated with the Front Door program. These costs are examined alongside client characteristics and outcomes.

1.2.1 Implementation Analysis

The implementation analysis examined how the Front Door program was designed and implemented, challenges of implementation, program modifications, and how implementation of the model may have been affected by both internal and external factors. This analysis was informed by interviews with local stakeholders and key partners that form the program’s referral network, focus groups with clients, and other program materials. Several dimensions of the program were examined, including: program structure, services offered and utilized, program policies and rules, program costs, and program outcomes.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 1-year estimates 2014-2016; American Community Survey

Data Sources

- *Monthly Meetings with Program Staff:* Abt held meetings with SVDP staff bi-weekly during program design and initial implementation. Beginning in the fall 2015, Abt and SVDP met monthly to discuss family enrollments, housing move-ins, housing exits, and program challenges and solutions.
- *Key Stakeholder Interviews:* The Abt team interviewed program staff, referral partners, and other local stakeholders beginning in March 2016. These surveys were conducted to inform the implementation analysis, and to identify ways in which Front Door RRH interacts with the rest of the homeless system and how familiar stakeholders were of the RRH program, and to document their perspectives on the program. Overall, 13 individuals were interviewed, representing the following organizations: St. Vincent de Paul, Sarah's Hope, Salvation Army, Baltimore Outreach, 211, United Way, the City of Baltimore, and a partner landlord.
- *Client Focus Groups:* Focus groups were conducted with current and former clients of the Front Door program. In total, the research team conducted 7 focus groups with 38 program participants (representing 35 percent of all study families). These focus groups were critical to the implementation analysis over the course of the study. Initially, only two focus groups were to be conducted. The results of the first round of focus groups provided essential information that was used by SVDP to modify their program in real time. Due to the rich and useful information provided by clients in the first round, SVDP, the Weinberg Foundation, and the study team all agreed that additional focus groups would be valuable and could lead to further program improvement.
- *Financial Data:* The study team also collected documentation of all financial payments made to clients over the course of the study period to assess program costs. The financial information included amount of rental assistance paid to landlords, number of rental payments made to landlords, and amount of client assistance (such as furniture, utility payments, and moving costs) paid on behalf of clients.

1.2.2 Outcomes Evaluation

The outcomes evaluation component examined whether client characteristics such as employment, income, housing stability, and family well-being changed over the course of the study period. In particular, the study examined whether families improved in the areas of housing stability – meaning fewer moves and returns to homelessness – and income and employment. Additional outcomes domains examined include child education and food security. Outcome domains were examined alongside program design components such as length of assistance received and services used during the program, SPDAT scores, and AZ SSM scores. Of the approximately 150 families that enrolled between July 2014 and September 2016, 108 consented to participate in the study.

Data Sources

- *Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) Data:* There were two essential parts of HMIS data used for this evaluation: Extract of key demographic data elements for families enrolled in the Front Door program at program entry and an extract of families returning to shelter in Baltimore City within 18 months of program exit.
- *Exit Surveys:* All families were surveyed upon exiting the program. Exit surveys were conducted by program staff, and largely aligned with HMIS data elements. Surveys were designed to capture this information due to the delays in navigating to a new HMIS in Baltimore during the study period.
- *Family VI-SPDAT:* SVDP used the Family Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Data Assessment Tool (SPDAT) to assess whether a client is eligible for enrollment in the Front Door

program. This tool collected information on five domains: history of housing and homelessness, risks, wellness, family unit, and socialization and daily functions. A composite score across these domains was used to determine which intervention is likely best for each family. Families that scored on the low end of a range are provided no intervention, families that scored in the middle range are referred to RRH, and families that scored on the high end of the range are referred to PSH. The study team collected these scores on all clients in the study.

- *Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix Data (SSM)*: Families enrolled in the program were administered the Arizona self-sufficiency matrix assessment tool every three months beginning at program entry. The AZ SSM measures the self-sufficiency across 10 different domains, including: housing stability, employment, income, food security, child care, children’s education, mental health, and substance use. These data were recorded by program staff and used toward the outcomes study.
- *Follow-up Surveys*: Client-level data from follow-up surveys were conducted six months after a client exited the program. There were 52 heads of family households that the study team was able to reach. Follow-up surveys asked questions aligning with the HMIS and exit survey data, tracking employment, income, and housing stability across the three timeframes. In addition, follow up surveys included questions similar to the SSM on child educational outcomes, food security, child care, and transportation.
- *Landlord Outreach*: For clients that could not be reached for a follow-up survey, staff reached out Front Door unit landlords. Landlords shared if the family was still in the unit or if they had moved, and if they moved the date the move occurred. This outreach provided limited follow-up information for an additional 18 families.

1.3 Front Door Program Design

The Front Door program was a short-term rapid rehousing program that uses a “progressive engagement” approach to serving families. Progressive engagement is a strategy where all families enrolled in the program are provided the same amount of assistance, followed by assistance that is tailored to the needs of each client. Families that needed help after that initial amount were provided it one month at a time. The program was designed to serve 65 families per year-- 53 families referred from one of three family shelters per year and 12 per year that were referred from other sources.

Client Eligibility, Referral, and Enrollment

Front Door’s family shelter referral partners were Booth House Shelter, Christ Lutheran Shelter, and Sarah’s Hope Shelter. The 12 families per year that came from non-shelter locations were referred by 2-1-1, outreach workers, Department of Social Services (DSS), self-referral, and other, non-shelter locations. Families that were referred from other sources often had issues that presented challenges to staying in shelter, such as health issues, traumatic experiences, or large family size. These families were placed in hotels during the housing search period.

Clients were determined eligible for the Front Door program through use of the Family Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT). The SPDAT examines the level of vulnerability of the family, and provides a guide as to the level of assistance required. The domains examined by the tool are:

- History of housing and homelessness;
- Risks, such as exposure to violence, interactions with other systems, and legal issues;
- Socialization and daily functions, such as employment, presence of income, and performance of basic daily functions;
- Wellness, such as physical health, mental health, and substance use; and

- Family unit which assesses child school enrollment, family composition, and interaction with family and child protective services.

The tool was administered by the referring shelter case manager. The SPDAT serves as guide, providing an indication of the right level of housing assistance, but does not assess the service needs of a family. Families that scored zero through five were recommended for no intervention, assuming that homelessness for these families would be short and solved by the family. Families that scored a 6 through an 11 were recommended for rapid rehousing, and families with scores higher than an 11 were recommended for permanent supportive housing (PSH). Families that were found eligible and that expressed interest in the program were referred to a single housing coordinator at the Front Door program, who conducted intake with and enrolled the family in the program.

The housing coordinator served as the family’s case manager from the time they were referred through move-in. After referral, the housing coordinator conducted intake, during which information on income and employment, existing arrearages, and other debts and barriers to housing were collected. During intake, the coordinator also administered the AZ SSM tool, which was used to determine a baseline against which progress would be measured.

Housing Search and Transition

Families were provided at least three housing options with reasonable rents and, when possible, met their preferences in terms of size and geography. Families referred from an emergency shelter stayed in the shelter while they searched for a unit. Families that were referred from other places were placed in a hotel while they searched for housing. During the housing search, the housing coordinator goes with the family to each unit, toured the unit, inspected housing quality, and discussed the details of the program with the landlord. The lease was ultimately between the landlord and the client, and if the client was interested this paperwork was initiated with the landlord with help from the housing coordinator, where necessary. The housing coordinator then helped the client identify furniture needs and coordinated the move into the unit.

Housing and Services

The program was designed to provide families with a financial assistance package up to \$2,500. This package included: security deposit, utility deposit, arrearages, furniture, and moving costs. In addition, families were guaranteed three months of rental assistance, and paid no rent in the first month, and only 25 percent of the rent for the second and third months. Once the family was in housing, the housing coordinator transitioned the family to another Front Door case manager with whom they would continue working. The Front Door case manager would help the family develop an Individual Service Plan, and identify support services needed. After the third month, case managers met with families each month to identify progress made on these individual service plans, and to determine whether the families need additional assistance.

Front Door clients were provided intensive case management from program enrollment through to program exit. The amount of case management was determined based on the needs of the family, ranging from multiple times per week to a minimum of once per month. Clients are provided a maximum of nine months of assistance

Month	Percent of Rent Paid by Program
Month 1	100%
Month 2	75%
Month 3	75%
<i>Client needs assessed midway through month 3. If client needs additional assistance:</i>	
Month 4	Rent assistance determined by case managers on a case by case basis for Months 4 and 5
Month 5	
<i>Client needs assessed midway through month 5. Needs are determined on a month to month basis until assistance ends.</i>	

and case management. If assistance ended before nine months, clients were able to still access case management until the nine month point was reached. Case management staff were also accessible to clients after the nine month period ended when clients needed additional assistance.

Workforce development was a key component of the Front Door program. There was a workforce development specialist on staff to work with Front Door families and help them remove barriers to employment. Workforce development services offered to families included: resume assistance, employment resource program for people experiencing unemployment, job preparedness, linkages to employment programs, and internships or skill building programs. All families were offered this service.

2. Baseline Characteristics of Front Door Families

This chapter describes the demographic characteristics, income and employment characteristics, and indicators of family well-being of the 108 study families that consented to participate in the evaluation. Study participants are the heads of the families served by the Front Door program. The baseline data on the demographic characteristics and income characteristics of study families were based on HMIS data collected at the time of program entry. This chapter also includes the information collected through assessment tools administered during the enrollment period – the Family SPDAT and the AZ SSM. These tools are used to support the description of baseline characteristics of study families.

Demographic Characteristics

The study included 108 families participating in the Front Door program, and 403 people in those families (see Exhibit 2-1). A typical study family was headed by an African American woman between the ages of 25 and 34, with 2 children. Heads of households had an average age of about 32; only 16 percent of families were headed by a parent under the age of 25 (parenting youth). More than half of household heads were between the ages of 25 and 34, and more than 80 percent were between the ages of 25 and 50. Of the 268 children in study families, two-thirds were school-aged children.

Exhibit 2-1. Demographic Characteristics of Front Door Families

	Number	Percent of Total
Households	108	-----
People in Households	403	-----
Children < 18	268	100%
School-aged Children (5-18)	175	65.3%
Age of HoH	108	
18 to 24	17	15.7%
25 to 34	55	50.9%
35 to 44	25	23.1%
45 to 54	11	10.2%
Gender of HoH	108	
Female	101	93.5%
Male	7	6.5%
Race of HoH	108	
Black or African American	100	92.6%
White	4	3.7%
Multi-Racial	4	3.7%
Ethnicity of HoH	108	
Hispanic/Latino	0	0%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	107	99.1%
Don't Know	1	0.9%

Nearly all (93 percent) of heads of Front Door households were women and just under seven percent were men. There were 18 families that reported a partner or spouse, and the remaining 90 were single-parent headed households.

At program entry, about 24 percent of households reported the presence of another adult in the household, (including the 15 percent that reported living with a spouse or partner). More than one-third (39 percent)

of families were considered large, with three or more children (see Exhibit 2-2). A few households were extremely large, with more than six or more kids.

Exhibit 2-2 Family Composition at Entry

Household Size and Composition	108	100%
One adult, one or two children	48	44%
One adult, 3 children or more	34	31%
More than one adult, one or two children	15	14%
More than one adult, 3 children or more	9	8%
Adult(s) only*	2	2%
* These 2 families were composed of a mother and her adult son.		

Housing Stability at Entry

Three quarters of families were homeless at entry, accessing the program directly from emergency shelter. The remaining quarter were referred from other locations, some homeless, and provided a hotel or motel voucher in order to divert the family from shelter before being placed in permanent housing through Front Door. The family SPDAT screens for long-term or frequent episodes of homelessness at entry. Just over 40 percent of heads of family households reported that they either had spent two or more years homeless or had four or more episodes of homelessness.

The AZ SSM assesses issues that often act as barriers to housing for families, such as legal issues, substance use, presence of disability, and mental health. Overall, Front Door families faced few barriers to housing other than income and employment. Nearly all families (93 percent) reported no active criminal justice involvement or no felony criminal history, which can act as a barrier for people accessing housing. Three families reported having current tickets or warrants, current charges pending, or noncompliance with parole/probation. Four families reported having completed or being in compliance with probation or parole. No families reported having problems with substance use in the past six months. Just more than 25 percent of families reported mental health issues that have some effect on daily functioning. However, no heads of family household reported being a danger to themselves or others. Nearly 75 percent reported no mental health issues or reported suffering from just mild symptoms that are likely due to life stressors, such as homelessness. Only two families reported disabilities with acute or chronic symptoms.

Income and Employment at Entry

Heads of households were asked about their employment status and sufficiency of their current income (both earned and unearned cash benefits) at the time they entered the program. Nearly half of families (49 percent) reported no job at baseline. About 11 percent of families reported both no job and no income. Two families (or two percent) reported that they had sufficient income and permanent employment. These families were enrolled during the first six months of the program, and one of those two did had a score that fell below the RRH threshold. Most families had some amount of income, and more than half had some level of employment (see Exhibit 2-3).

Exhibit 2-3. AZ SSM Scores on Employment and Income Status at Program Entry

	No Income	Inadequate Income and/or spontaneous or inappropriate spending	Can meet basic needs with subsidy	Can meet basic needs and manage debt without assistance	Income is sufficient, well managed; has discretionary income and is able to save	Total
No job	11 (10.8%)	26 (25.5%)	11 (10.8%)	2 (2.0%)	0 (0.0%)	50 (49.0%)
Temporary; part-time or seasonal; inadequate pay, no benefits	0 (0.0%)	9 (8.8%)	5 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	14 (13.7%)
Employed full time; inadequate pay; few or no benefits	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.0%)	18 (17.6%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	21 (20.6%)
Employed full time with adequate pay and benefits	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)	6 (5.9%)	6 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%)	13 (12.7%)
Maintains permanent employment with adequate income and benefits	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	2 (2.0%)	4 (3.9%)
Total	11 (10.8%)	40 (37.3%)	41 (40.2%)	10 (9.8%)	2 (2.0%)	102 (100.0%)

Source: AZ SSM scores on income and employment measures for Front Door study participants at program entry

Just under half of the families entering the Front Door program reported earning some income from a job. Average monthly earnings of those 50 families was \$630 during the month prior to entry. When accounting for earned and other cash benefits (such as Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance), the average and median household income at program entry was about \$1,100.

Exhibit 2-4. Income at Entry

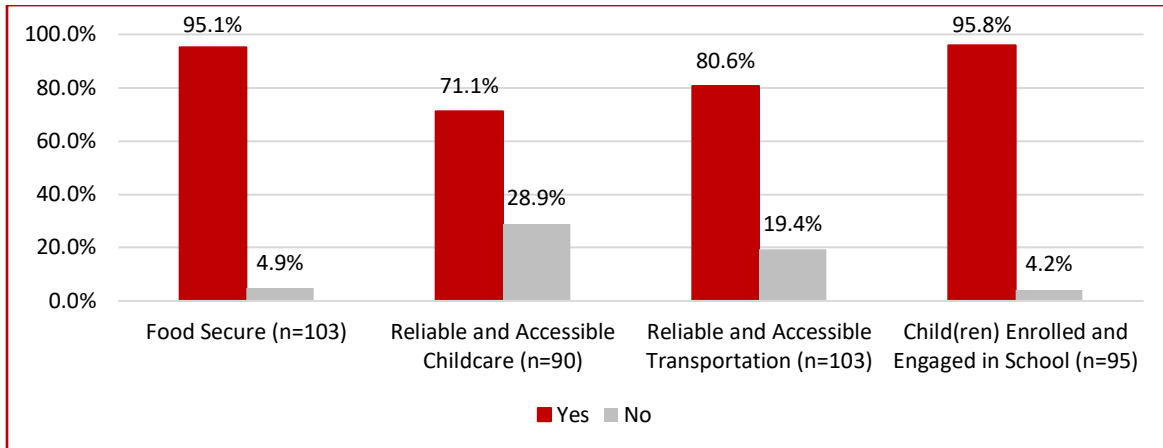
Income and Employment Measures	N	Average	Median
Monthly household income, entry (all sources)	91	\$ 1,105.13	\$ 1,089.00
Monthly household income, entry (earned income)	50	\$ 631.75	\$ 0
Arizona SSM score: Income	104	2.54	3

Data Source: HMIS, AZ SSM

Indicators of Family Well-Being

Most families entered the program with strong scores in metrics related to well-being. Three percent of families entered the program reporting food insecurity. Nearly 79 percent of families entered the program with access to food stamps. An additional 18 percent had no issues with food security and were able to meet their own basic needs without assistance.

Exhibit 2-5. Family Well-Being Characteristics at Program Entry



Additional characteristics assessed through the AZ SSM that contribute to a baseline understanding of family well-being were access to child care, transportation, and child school engagement. As shown in Exhibit 2-5, Child care and transportation access presented challenges for more families than food security or enrollment or engagement in school. However, a majority of families do not report having issues in any of these four areas.

3. Implementation Analysis

The following chapter examines the implementation of the Front Door program. A number of information sources were used to support this analysis. Focus groups with families and stakeholder interviews were critical to the examination of the program. Other data sources such as assessment scores, length of assistance, and financial assistance contribute to this analysis.

3.1 Eligibility Determination and Referral

Families in the Front Door program were determined eligible through by the Family Service Prioritization Data Assessment Tool (SPDAT). Throughout the evaluation period, the method for administering the Family SPDAT was modified. Initially, Front Door case managers administered the SPDAT after shelter providers administered a screening tool (Baltimore Data Assessment Tool) to identify people who were *likely* eligible for RRH. If families screened as likely eligible, they were referred to the Front Door program where the Front Door case managers administered the SPDAT. However, throughout the first six months, staff often found that families identified by shelter staff were not eligible for RRH after administering the SPDAT. SPDAT scores from families enrolled in the first six months were lower than those in later periods, indicating that the initial set of 21 families had fewer barriers to housing than those enrolled later in the program. In fact, the average SPDAT score of the families enrolled in the first six months was lower than the base score to be recommended to RRH (see Exhibit 3-1). However, it is difficult to determine if families had fewer barriers or if families, as Front Door staff suspect, were reluctant to reveal this information at the first meeting. In response, Front Door staff and referral partners together decided to have emergency shelter case managers administer the full SPDATs to families, which resulted in higher SPDAT scores. This eliminated the two-step eligibility determination and program partners agreed that the case managers from the referring shelter were better positioned to help families respond to the SPDAT tool accurately.

Exhibit 3-1 Family SPDAT Scores by Move-In Date

Move-in Date Range	SPDAT Conducted By:	Number of Study Families	Average SPDAT Score
7/2014-- 12/2014	Front Door Case Manager	21	5.8
1/2015 – 6/2015	Referral Shelter Case Manager	27	8.0
7/2015 – 12/2015	Referral Shelter Case Manager	21	7.1
1/2016 -- 6/2016	Referral Shelter Case Manager	22	6.7
7/2016 -- 12/2016	Referral Shelter Case Manager	17	6.9

Variations in scoring were most pronounced in the risk, socialization and daily function, and family unit domains of the SPDAT. The domains of history of homelessness and wellness showed little variance based on the tool administrator.

While SVDP recommended referral shelters administer the tool to all families, there was no universal approach to which families received the SPDAT across partners. Sarah’s Hope, the SVDP family shelter, reported that everyone in the shelter was administered a SPDAT within the first or second meeting with their case manager. Other referral partners, however, reported that they rely more on the judgment of their own case managers as to whether the client would be successful in Front Door RRH prior to

administering the tool. For these partners, clients would have to “show promise of sustainability” after assistance ends and an ability to quickly increase their income in order to be referred to Front Door RRH.

Families that participated in focus groups noted a lack of understanding around why some families were referred to meet with the Front Door staff and why others were not. Some families reported that they felt “lucky” because there were many families in the shelter that were interested in the program, and it wasn’t made clear to all families why some were referred to meet with the Front Door case managers and others were not.

Interviews with most stakeholders revealed that referral partners found the eligibility determination process relatively simple overall. One stakeholder mentioned finding the process cumbersome and wished there was better communication from St. Vincent de Paul, in its capacity as the referring organization and in communicating with families about expectations.

The confusion associated with the referral process was in part due to staff turnover and heavy caseloads. Initially, Front Door case managers, after receiving a referral, would meet the family at the shelter and begin the intake process. However, this often took longer than desired. Receiving this feedback, and understanding a need for a more streamlined process, SVDP modified their original design and had the housing coordinator act as primary case manager to families identified for the RRH program.

3.2 Access and Enrollment

Once a family was determined eligible for the program, they were referred to Front Door. Initially, families would work with both the housing coordinator to identify appropriate housing and a Front Door case manager to conduct intake and identify client needs. However, this approach – having case managers work with families prior to being housed, while receiving assistance, and after they stopped receiving assistance – resulted in heavy caseloads. In addition, families were then working with three different people: the shelter case manager to meet immediate needs, the housing coordinator, and the Front Door case manager. To ease the burden for both families and Front Door staff, Front Door modified the approach to have families work with the housing coordinator until placed in their housing unit. At that point, the housing coordinator helped the family transition to working with the Front Door case manager.

Families that participated in focus groups reported a quick enrollment process. The average amount of time that passed between families hearing about the program and meeting with SVDP to conduct an assessment was one week. The time between assessment and finding out they were accepted into the program was similarly very short; in some cases, it happened on the same day. All families reported being very satisfied with the enrollment process.

Initially, there were mixed reports of whether families understood the length and/or amount of housing assistance they were going to receive at the time of acceptance into the program. While families generally understood that it was short-term rental assistance, many of the families that participated in earlier focus groups did not learn about the details of the program until they had already enrolled and located a unit. During the early focus groups, some respondents reported that they were told they were going to receive six months right when they enrolled, while others understood the stepped-down structure of housing assistance. This discrepancy was likely due to varying staff communication. Using the feedback gathered from these early focus groups, Front Door leadership worked with case managers to ensure that the program structure was explained at the time of the first meeting with families, and that expectations were more clearly set. Focus groups conducted later in the evaluation period revealed far less confusion about the length and depth of assistance. In fact, families in later focus groups more often reported that they expected to receive fewer months of assistance than was actually available to them, indicating that staff

either better understood or were more comfortable describing the progressive engagement approach adopted by Front Door.

3.3 Housing Search and Transition

Housing choice was a fundamental component of the Front Door program throughout the study period. Families were provided at least three unit options during the housing search period. During focus groups, families reported very high satisfaction with housing search assistance, and reported that the housing case manager was very skilled at negotiating with landlords, often securing a lower rent than was initially listed. When developing the list of units, the program took into account a number of factors including unit size and desired neighborhood. While housing availability in Baltimore was not a significant challenge, families reported having to choose between the unit's quality and the neighborhood of choice. Baltimore did not have a tight rental market, and at the start of the program more than nine percent of rental units were vacant (see Exhibit 1-2).

Focus group respondents varied on how they made their decision, some prioritizing the quality of the housing unit and some prioritizing the neighborhood due to proximity to schools, social network, and work. Focus groups conducted in early 2015 revealed higher neighborhood satisfaction than those conducted later in the study period. A contributing factor, noted by participants, was an increase in crime across the city associated with the 2015 riots.

Landlords presented challenges to both the program and to families. While the housing coordinator developed good working relationships with landlords, landlords often requested high security deposits on top of first month's rent to enter into a lease with the Front Door families. This consumed more resources than expected, especially early on in the program. The median amount paid toward a security deposit was \$1,000 while the median contract rent was \$850. This was in line with median contract rents in Baltimore city during that time --\$812 in 2014 rising to \$852 in 2016⁷.

In focus groups, some respondents reported issues with the landlord not fixing things quickly or not having the unit ready at the agreed upon move-in date. It was noted that program staff worked with families and landlords to get issues resolved quickly. Some respondents were frustrated by the application fees, excess security deposits, and other costs that landlords impose that reduced the overall amount families could use toward housing transition costs. Related to other transition costs, families reported overall satisfaction with furniture provision and furniture delivery.

3.4 Housing and Service Receipt

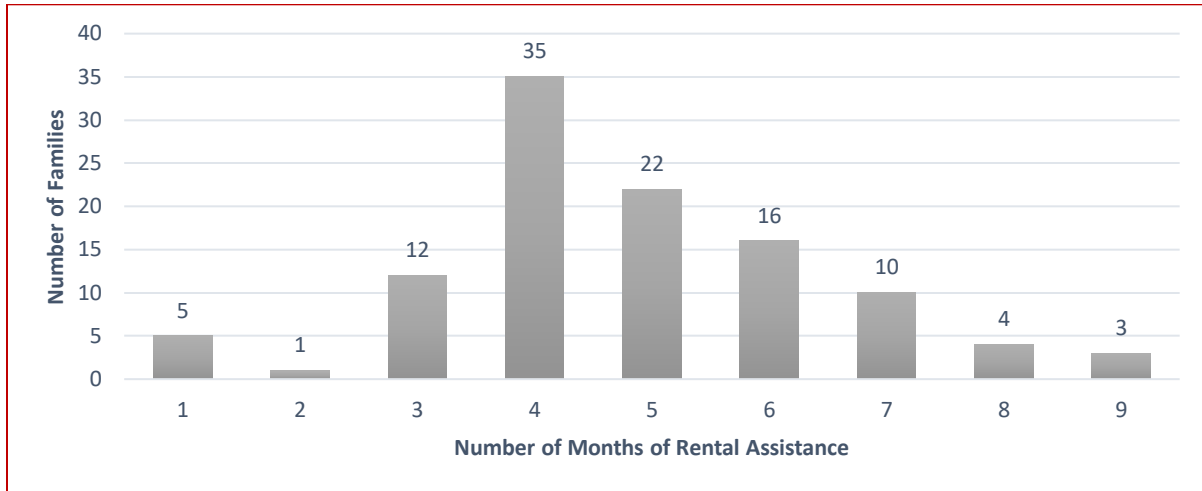
Housing

Families were guaranteed three months of rental assistance, after which case managers determined the amount of assistance families continued to need. The average number of months that families in the study received rental assistance was 4.8 months. Two-thirds of study families received between four and six months of assistance (see Exhibit 3-2). Data based on housing entry date and housing exit date from SVDP (and not financial records showing rental payments) indicate slightly longer lengths of stay - 5.1 months. When examining the length of assistance by referral source, families coming from non-shelter locations-- having not accessed emergency shelter -- had longer lengths of stay by nearly one month. More than half of families (58 percent) were reported as "in the program" for longer than they received

⁷ Average of the median contract rent in Baltimore in 2014 (\$812), 2015 (\$808), and 2016 (\$852). U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey data

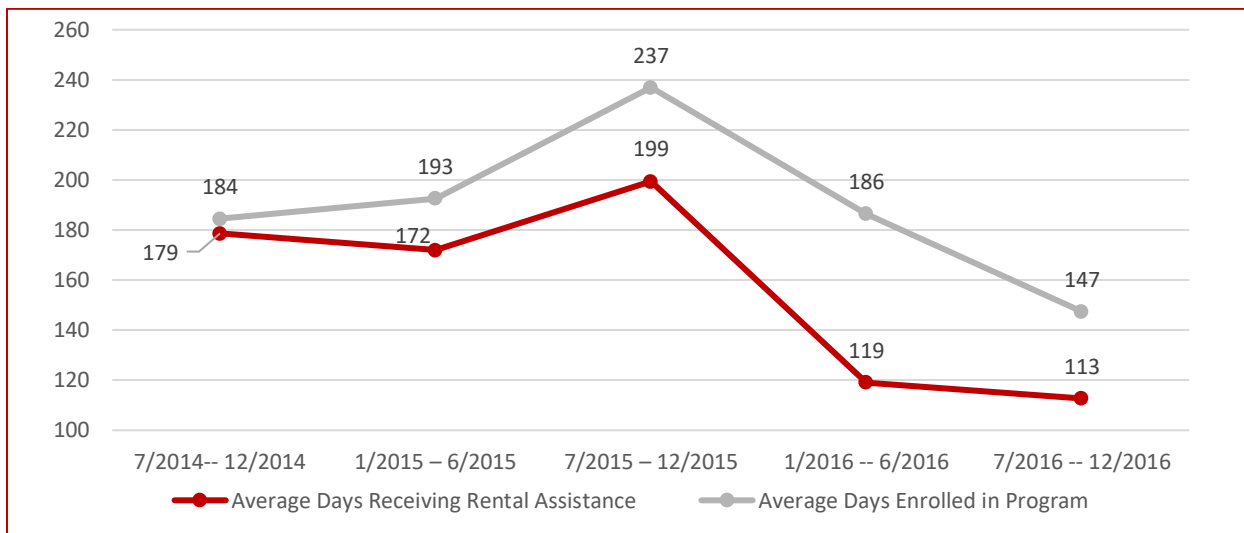
housing assistance. The average length of program service receipt was just more than six months. This could show that families continued receiving case management services after housing assistance ended.

Exhibit 3-2. Number of Months of Rental Assistance (n=108)⁸



During the first six months of the program, the average number of days families spent in housing and the average number of days they were in the program were similar (179 in housing and 184 in the program). During that period, 76 percent of families were *not* in the program longer than they were in housing, compared to only 12 percent in the last six months of the program (see Exhibit 3-3).

Exhibit 3-3 Days in Housing and Program by Enrollment Period



This change in length of program participation outside of housing is likely the result of two things: (1) a change in how families were exited from the HMIS and (2) an increased emphasis on case management and other services available to families after housing assistance ended. During initial stages of the Front Door program, Baltimore City was in the process of navigating to a new HMIS and developing processes

⁸ SVDP Financial Records

for how to enter and exit families into HMIS. However, there was also less emphasis placed on aftercare services. During the initial follow-up surveys, former clients were asked about whether they accessed Front Door services after housing assistance ended, and most were not aware that was an option for them. Given this information, Front Door case managers clarified with current and former clients that they were able to continue receiving case management services even if they were no longer receiving housing assistance.

The median monthly contract rent per household was \$850 per month. The share of rent that the program paid then stepped down for each household. As a part of the financial assistance package, families also received help with other costs such as utility payments, furniture purchases, and security deposits. All clients received security deposit and rental assistance. The average total amount given to households for rent assistance over the course of the program was just under \$3,000. One-time costs, such as furniture and security deposits, were also paid on behalf of clients, with an average cost per household of approximately \$1,500 and \$1,100, respectively. The average total amount of assistance per household was about \$5,467.

Exhibit 3-4 Financial Assistance Type

Financial Assistance Component	Number of Households Receiving Assistance	Average Amount Received per Household	Median Amount Received per household
Utility payments	18	\$946.61	\$822.46
Security Deposits	108	\$1,091.26	\$999.50
Contract Rent Assistance	108	\$876.69	\$850.00
Cumulative Rent Assistance	108	\$2,923.87	\$2,806.25
Furniture Purchase	105	\$1,476.07	\$1,450.00
Other	39	\$108.00	\$50.00
<i>Source: SVDP Financial Records</i>			

Housing satisfaction among families that participated in focus groups varied. Families participating in early focus groups reported overall satisfaction with the housing they had secured through the program. Some expressed concerns about the neighborhood, either the geographic location of the unit (east side of the city versus west side) or the safety of the neighborhood. Families from one side of Baltimore often preferred to remain on that side, closer to their own support network. Many families reported concerns around the increased violence in their neighborhood. One family indicated that they wished to be nearer to a “family block,” with other children and families.

Respondents that were in housing units for longer periods of time much more often expressed concern with landlords than the families new to the program. One respondent reported that the unit needed major repairs and the landlord was not being responsive, another lived in the unit for a month and a half with inadequate plumbing. Two respondents were having disagreements with the landlord to a point that they

were planning to move once the lease was up. In one unit, the water (which was included in the rent) was shut off twice for failure to pay the bill. Respondents also noted problems with rats, mice, or roaches.

Of families with school-aged children, all thought that living near their children’s schools was important, and attempted to make housing choices around school location. Five total focus group participants (out of 38) moved out of their original school enrollment area. Three of the five families who moved out of the existing district were able to access transportation provided through the city so that the child could remain in the same school for the remainder of the year.

Neighborhood violence and crime were of considerable concern to later focus groups. A number reported shootings right outside their buildings. A few reported open drug use in the building, and unsafe or illegal activities by the property manager. Most respondents reported that they likely wouldn’t stay in the unit after their lease was up, often due to landlord or neighborhood issues.

Service Receipt

While recommended for all participants, 54 percent of families with whom follow up surveys were conducted participated in workforce development services. Families referred directly from shelters had a higher participation rate in these services than those referred from non-shelter locations (47 percent compared to 36 percent). All family heads were administered the AZ SSM, which includes a measure on employment status. Families that participated in the follow up survey were asked if they accessed workforce development services. As shown in Exhibit 3-5, more than half of families that were reached for follow up were unemployed at program entry. However, these families were not the most likely to access workforce development services. The group most likely to access these services were those that had temporary or seasonal jobs (86 percent).

Exhibit 3-5. Access of Workforce Development Services by Employment Status at Entry

AZ Self-Sufficiency Measure	Total Follow-up (n=50)	Number used Workforce Services	Percent used Workforce services
No Job	23	12	52.2%
Temporary, part-time or seasonal; inadequate pay, no benefits	7	6	85.7%
Employed full time; inadequate pay; few or no benefits;	14	6	42.9%
Employed full time with adequate pay and benefits	3	2	66.7%
Maintains permanent employment with adequate income and benefits	3	1	33.3%
Total	50	27	54.0%
<i>Note: Data on this measure missing for 3 families.</i>			

Most focus group participants had not accessed workforce development services beyond resume assistance from the workforce development case manager. One contributing factor to not receiving these services was schedule. Many of the focus group respondents that did not utilize the workforce services already had employment and, while they were interested in moving to more lucrative or stable employment, could not access the services due to work schedules. Participants who had recently enrolled

in the program at the time the focus group was conducted indicated interest in workforce development, and were hopeful that it would help them develop a path to a longer-term career. Some were not aware of the service at all. Staff turnover in the workforce development specialist position was high. Between 2014 and 2017, three people held that position.

Families were asked about which services they believed would be the most helpful in maintaining stability. The two resource gaps reported by families were daycare and food. In finding a full-time job, respondents reported additional burden in finding daycare that was appropriate, affordable, and that allowed them to work the hours they needed to work. Daycare was of particular concern to families who relied on temporary work.

Food security was the top concern among families in the focus group who were nearing exit or post-exit. Respondents that secured employment that exceeded the maximum allowable income had lost food stamp benefits. At that point, food costs took up a larger share of their income than they were anticipating. While Front Door staff, in a few cases, linked families to benefits providing free groceries, these were one-time or time-limited solutions.

Nearly all (88 percent) families reached for follow-up surveys indicated that they could use additional help to maintain their housing. There was no variation based on date of enrollment in the program, referral source, or AZ SSM employment score.

Focus group participants were asked whether they had any concerns about the program ending. The primary concern about the program ending was not being able to pay the full rent, and having to go back to the shelter. Respondents noted that once you move into a new place, it's hard to save money. All the new, necessary household items add up in terms of cost.

Stakeholder Feedback

Local stakeholders reported that Front Door RRH is best for families that need more than just mainstream benefits, but less than transitional or permanent supportive housing. When asked about how they were striking this balance of needed services, the majority of stakeholders identified existing gaps they perceived in administering the right services for clients in the program.

Stakeholders believed more employment opportunities are needed that pair housing with job training and childcare. Other needs mentioned include: more long-term vouchers, more PSH, a better network of landlords, and a need to expedite benefits and provide greater immediate cash assistance to help keep people housed.

Several stakeholders shared that they appreciate the “one-stop” feel of the Front Door program rather than past programs that have referred clients out to several different locations to meet all of their service needs.

Some involved with referrals shared that they would tell clients to go to a family shelter in order to get into Front Door RRH. Overall, stakeholders shared that there is a need for an increased number of rapid re-housing programs in order for all who need the service to be able to access and enroll in it.

3.5 Program Challenges

The Front Door program encountered a few challenges during program implementation. This section organizes and describes these challenges in two areas: internal challenges and external challenges.

Internal Challenges

The first Front Door program operated by SVDP between 2010 and 2014 was a longer term model, with more intensive wrap around services. This program was regarded as successful, and Front Door staff were comfortable with the one-year length of assistance. Moving to a shorter, dynamic model of assistance presented some challenges to staff early in its implementation. Staff had concerns about whether they were “setting families up to fail,” and whether the families targeted for rapid rehousing had income sufficient to meet their needs once the short-term rental assistance ended. An internal challenge was having true buy-in from all Front Door staff. Staff turnover was also a challenge for the Front Door program. There was nearly full turnover in case management staff between 2014 and the end of 2016. In addition, the Front Door program director position and workforce development specialist position turned over multiple times. Key personnel, such as St. Vincent de Paul leadership, the housing coordinator, and the director of homeless services remained in place, however. These staff were critical to ensuring that the program transitioned smoothly and with limited interruptions to families.

External Challenges

The program was designed based on certain assumptions of the homeless assistance system. First, the program assumed that a coordinated referral process, using a single screening tool, would exist in Baltimore early in the study period. However, that did not come to fruition. During the first six months of the program, referral partners attempted to use the not-yet-implemented screening tool to identify families. That did not prove to be a successful means of identifying families that met the eligibility requirements of Front Door. A related external challenge was the interruption of a functioning HMIS in Baltimore due to navigating to another vendor. An additional external challenge was the closure of the Homeless Emergency Environmental Services Unit (HEESU) early in the study period, which contributed to a disruption in the referral process. HEESU was meant to be a primary referral partner, referring families that were at immediate risk of homelessness or families for which shelter stays were particularly challenging. The Front Door program adjusted to this change, and was able to receive referrals from other sources

4. Outcomes for Study Families

The research questions guiding this study explore whether families stabilize in housing, improve income and education, and improve in indicators of family well-being. For the families participating in this study, we found that:

- Just over half of families (51 percent or 36 families) for whom we had data on housing mobility were living in the same unit six months after leaving the Front Door program. These families were able to take over and sustain the rent of the unit on their own or with another form of housing assistance.
- Of those with known living situations at six months after exit, 73 percent (or 38 families) were living in permanent housing. Permanent housing includes the Front Door unit without additional assistance, another permanent housing situation without assistance, and another permanent housing situation with assistance.
- Of all families, six percent (or six families) returned to homelessness within six months, and seven families (seven percent) returned within one year.
- 59 percent of Front Door families improved income between entry and exit. More than two-thirds improved their income or maintained adequate income. The average household earned income for families at entry was \$632 compared to \$802 at exit. Income continued to improve between program exit and six months later.
- Employment status also improved between entry and exit, with 64 percent of families improving their employment status. Some moved from being unemployed to employed (46 percent) and some from being employed only part-time to being employed full-time (18 percent).
- Most families came into the Front Door program with assessment scores indicating strong family well-being. Between entry and exit families reliably improved in areas related to food security, child care access, child education engagement, and transportation access. However, families in the program often have to make choices between housing, child care, and other basic necessities. After exit, families faced challenges accessing adequate child care and reliable transportation. In addition, families that participated in focus groups reported vulnerability in the area of food security that was not reflected in the way data on this measure were collected.
- Families with more stable housing situations received less assistance than those with evidence of instability. This likely points to case managers accurately implementing the progressive engagement model.

The study team looked at a few ways to measure housing stability – whether families stayed in the Front Door unit six months after exit and whether families were in any permanent housing situation at six months after exit. These housing situations were considered “stably housed” at the time of follow-up. Families that left the unit – not including families that left the Front Door unit for another permanent housing situation – or for which there was evidence of subsequent homelessness, were not considered stably housed. These housing situations are used to provide deeper understanding of changes in other areas of self-sufficiency.

4.1 Housing Stability

A primary goal of the Front Door rapid rehousing program was improving housing stability for families through access and maintenance of permanent housing. Housing stability can be difficult to measure. Program designers had hoped that families would stay in the housing unit that they moved into as part of the Front Door program through the 12 month term of the lease, and perhaps beyond. However, moving out of the initial Front Door unit alone is not necessarily a sign of housing instability, as there are understandable reasons a family would move to a different unit. For example, given the frequently noted concerns about difficult landlords and housing quality, families may choose to move to a better unit. Exhibit 4-1 shows what is known about families living situations six months after exiting the program.

Exhibit 4-1 Housing Location of Study Families at 6 Months

Location	N	Percent
Total families in study	108	100%
Families in Front Door unit at 6 months (based on follow-up survey response)	26	24.1%
Families in Front Door unit at 6 months (based on other verification)	10	9.3%
Families in other permanent housing at 6 months (based on follow up survey response)	12	11.1%
Families not in permanent housing at 6 months and not homeless (based on follow up survey response)	8	7.4%
Families homeless at 6 months (based on follow-up survey)	6	5.6%
Families not in Front Door unit, location unknown	8	7.4%
Families for which no information is known	38	35.2%

For the purposes of this study, families remaining in the unit at six months after program exit or that are permanently housed in another situation are considered to be stably housed. Housing stability is explored using a few different dimensions: housing situation, housing affordability, and evidence of subsequent homelessness.

4.1.1 Housing Situation

Given the short-term nature of the Front Door RRH program design, the first desired outcome related to housing stability is whether the family is able to take over the full rent of the unit at the time the assistance ends. Nearly all families were still in the Front Door unit at program exit, meaning the unit in which they were housed in the Front Door program, at the time that assistance ended. Of the few families that reported leaving their Front Door unit, two reported moving in with family, two moved to a different unit without assistance, and one moved into a transitional housing program.

The number of families remaining in their Front Door unit at least six months after the assistance ends was determined through follow-up surveys and landlord outreach. The study team was able to conduct follow up surveys with 52⁹ families. For those the team were unable to reach, program staff called landlords to ask whether the family was still in the unit or had moved. Landlord outreach yielded information about another 18 families. Of the 70 families reached either for follow up surveys or found through landlord outreach:

⁹ 1 additional family was reached for follow up preferred not to answer many of the questions. This family is excluded from analysis for much of the report.

- Just more than half (36 families) were still in the program unit six months following program exit.
- Of the remaining 34 families not in the same unit, 26 families (76 percent) provided information in the follow up survey about their location. Of these 26,:
 - 12 families were in a different rental unit, most often without any rental assistance.
 - 8 families were staying in a temporary location, most often with friends or family on a temporary basis.
 - 6 families were in a homeless location, most often emergency shelter.

Follow-up survey respondents who were not in the same unit were asked why they left. Not all families provided a reason. Of those that did, nine families (or 41 percent) reported that they could not afford the rent and seven families (32 percent) reported challenges with the landlord (see Exhibit 4-2).

Exhibit 4-2 Reason for Leaving Front Door Unit (6 months)

	N	Percent
Could not afford the rent	9	40.9%
Client does not like the landlord/has had difficulty with the landlord	7	31.8%
Eviction	2	9.1%
Unit was unsafe	2	9.1%
Client found better housing somewhere else	1	4.5%
Received other assistance with housing (public housing, other) that requires client moves	1	4.5%
Total	22	100.0%

Front Door Unit vs. Not in Front Door Unit at 6 months

Families that were not in Front Door unit six months after program exit received more rent assistance than those still in the unit after six months. Families that moved, on average, received 5.5 months of rental assistance, totaling an average of \$3,407 in rental assistance per household over the that period. Families that were in the same unit received an average of 4.4 months, totaling an average of \$2,693 in rental assistance. Since the program used a progressive engagement approach – increasing assistance based on client needs --this suggests families with higher needs were more likely to leave their Front Door unit.

In Any Permanent Housing Unit vs. Not in Permanent Housing Unit

The study team examined whether the family was in any permanent housing situation six months after exiting the program. For those with known locations at follow-up, 73 percent (38 of 52 families) were in permanent housing six months after exit. Similar to those in the Front Door unit, families in any permanent housing had lower total amounts and fewer months of rental assistance on average.

Exhibit 4-3 Follow-up Housing Situation by Financial Assistance

	All Study	Of Those with Known Front Door Unit Status (n=71)		Of Those with Known Housing Locations (n=52)		
	Total	Front Door Unit	Not in Front Door Unit	Any Permanent Housing Unit	Not in Permanent Housing Unit	Returned to Homelessness within 6 months
N	108	36	34	38	14	6
Program Characteristics						
Amount of Rent Assistance (average)	\$2,923.87	\$2,693.58	\$3,406.95	\$3,118.49	\$3,353.22	\$3,442.39
Number of Months of Rent Assistance (average)	4.8	4.4	5.5	4.9	5.6	6.0
Amount of Total Financial Assistance (average)	\$5,646.97	\$5,378.55	\$6,359.78	\$5,924.88	\$6,204.08	\$6,620.73

4.1.2 Housing Affordability

Critical to whether the family can maintain a housing unit is whether it is affordable to them. Housing is affordable when it consumes less than 30 percent of the families' income. This information was captured at the time of program exit and six months after program exit. Both surveys asked families about their household income. The follow up survey asked families for both the amount of rent they contribute monthly for the housing they were living in at the time of the survey and the total rent of that unit. That information was used along with household income data to determine whether their housing was affordable.

Exhibit 4-4 shows the average and median rent burden at exit for the 101 families with exit data and six months later for the 52 families that completed the follow-up survey. The median rent burden, based on contract rent amounts, for families at the time that RRH rental assistance ended was 67 percent. While it is possible that some families transitioned to some other form of subsidy, we assume that contract rent is a reasonable proxy for the amount families would be expected to pay on their own at the time of program exit. For families included in the follow-up survey, the contract rent burden six months after exit was significantly lower than measured for all families at the end of the program. When considering only the portion of the rent the family was expected to pay, the median rent burden for these 52 families was 43 percent of income. Families' rent share for those who completed the follow-up survey may be lower because they secured additional subsidies, moved to lower priced units, or moved in with others. Their lower contract rent burden likely reflects higher household incomes, in addition to the lower contract rents for some of the families who moved.

Exhibit 4-4. Average and Median Rent Burden at Exit and 6 Months

	N	Average Rent Burden	Median Rent Burden
Contract rent as percent of total HH income, at program exit*	101	86%	67%
Family rent contributions as percent of total HH income, 6 months after exit	36	45%	43%
Contract rent as percent of total HH income, 6 months after exit	36	67%	52%
*Excludes 7 families that were missing this information at exit and 16 families that completed the follow up survey, but did not provide sufficient information to determine rent burden.			

Regardless, the median contract rents reported for families reveals that families would be unable to take on the full burden of paying their rent without taking on an excessive rental burden. Housing affordability was an issue for nearly all families both at exit and six months later. Only three percent of families exiting the program were living in affordable housing (see Exhibit 4-5).

Exhibit 4-5. Housing Affordability for Families at Exit and 6 Months

Families' Rent Burden	At exit (n = 101)		At follow-up (n = 36)	
	#	%	#	%
Less than 30%	3	3.0%	3	8.3%
30-50%	21	20.8%	15	41.7%
More than 50%	77	76.2%	18	50.0%
Note: Missing rent or income information for 7 families at exit and 16 families at follow-up				

4.1.3 Returns to Homelessness

Evidence of subsequent episodes of homelessness was determined using three data sources: housing destination at program exit determined through the exit survey; housing situation six months after exiting the program determined through follow-up surveys; and HMIS data identifying families that returned to a homeless location in Baltimore. Of families that experienced homelessness within one year, one family exited directly to a homeless situation (transitional housing). Six families were experiencing homelessness at the time of the follow up survey, and two were determined homeless through HMIS data.

Exhibit 4-6. Evidence of Subsequent Homelessness

Front Door Families in Study	108	100%
Within 6 months	6	5.6%
Within 12 months	7	6.5%

All seven families with a subsequent episode of homelessness within one year conducted a follow-up survey. Two of the seven indicated that they left the Front Door unit because it was unaffordable; and one had issues with their landlord. The other families either were not homeless at the time of the follow up survey (1), or did not provide a reason for leaving the Front Door unit (3).

Rates of returns to homelessness for Front Door families is lower than those found in some national studies of rapid rehousing, and exceeds the performance measure benchmark set by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (15 percent).¹⁰ The Evaluation of the Rapid Rehousing Demonstration found that approximately 10 percent of families returned within one year, compared with 7 percent of Front Door families.¹¹

There were 10 families with known returns to homelessness after exiting the program (as determined by the exit and follow-up surveys and HMIS information from city shelters). However, at the time of analysis, families in the study had been out of the program for varying lengths of time beyond their exit date. Nine of families had been out of the program for 18 months or more and represent 17 percent of all families that were at least 18 months beyond exiting the housing (54 families) as of September, 1, 2017. One additional family was identified as homeless through HMIS data more than 18 months after exiting the program.

4.2 Income and Employment

Many families in the Front Door program increased household income and gained or improved their employment situation over the course of the program. Observing income and employment at entry, during the program, at exit, and at follow up illustrated the families’ move towards self-sufficiency.

On average, monthly household income (from all sources) rose about 10 percent (or \$156.36) from entry to exit, and by \$316.74 from entry to follow up (for the subset of families for which follow up data are available). At entry, 44 percent of families had monthly incomes below \$1,000. That percent fell to 35 percent of families at program exit, and fell further to 28 percent for the families contacted six months after leaving the program. The percentage of families with incomes over \$2,000 per month showed a corresponding increase: at entry, just 11 percent of families brought home income in this range; the percentage rose to 18 percent at exit, and to 34 percent at follow-up (see Exhibit 4-7).

Exhibit 4-7. Household Income for Front Door Families

	Entry (HMIS)		Exit (survey)		Follow-Up (survey)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Monthly Household Income						
None	15	14%	7	6%	5	10%
Under \$500	5	5%	4	4%	1	2%
\$500 to \$999	27	25%	27	25%	8	15%
\$1000 to \$1499	33	31%	29	27%	12	23%
\$1500 to \$1999	14	13%	22	20%	8	15%
\$2000 or more	12	11%	19	18%	18	35%

The follow-up survey results, while only available for a subset of families, provide some additional context. Families that left their Front Door unit had higher average monthly income at exit (both total and

¹⁰ National Alliance to End Homelessness, Rapid Rehousing Performance Benchmarks and Program Standards. 2016. <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/rapid-re-housing-performance-benchmarks-and-program-standards/>

¹¹ Department of Housing and Urban Development, Rapid Rehousing Demonstration Evaluation. 2014. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/rapid-rehousing-program.html>

earned) than those that remained in their Front Door unit (but lower rates of full time employment, see Exhibit 4-8).

Exhibit 4-8 Income and Employment Status at Exit by Housing Status

	All Study	Of Those with Known Front Door Unit Status (n=70)		Of Those with Known Housing Locations (n=52)		
	Total	Front Door Unit	Not in Front Door Unit	Any Permanent Housing Unit	Not in Permanent Housing Unit	Returned to Homelessness within 6 months
N	108	36	34	38	14	6
Income and Employment Characteristics						
Total HH Income at Exit (average)	\$1,301.40	\$1,258.23	\$1,363.70	\$1,463.37	\$1,008.64	\$1,044.17
Total HH Income at Exit (earned) (average)	\$802.12	\$757.76	\$886.38	\$943.95	\$625.71	\$743.33
Yes, full-time employment (exit)	38%	43%	35%	43%	29%	33%
Not employed (exit)	47%	46%	47%	43%	43%	33%
Total Not Employed or Underemployed (exit)	62%	57%	65%	57%	71%	67%

Despite the previously reported findings on excessive rent burdens, many more families reported that their incomes were sufficient to meet their needs at exit compared to entry, as measured by AZ SSM scores. While only 12 families (12 percent) scored in the two highest categories at entry, 45 families (48 percent) scored into these categories when exiting the program, as shown in Exhibit 4-9. The median family increased this score by one SSM category from entry to exit. The tool measures adequacy of income to meet basic household needs. Between entry and exit, nearly half (44 families) either maintained adequate income or achieved income suitable to meet their own basic needs (see Exhibit 4-9). Just over half did not achieve adequate income as determined by the AZ SSM.

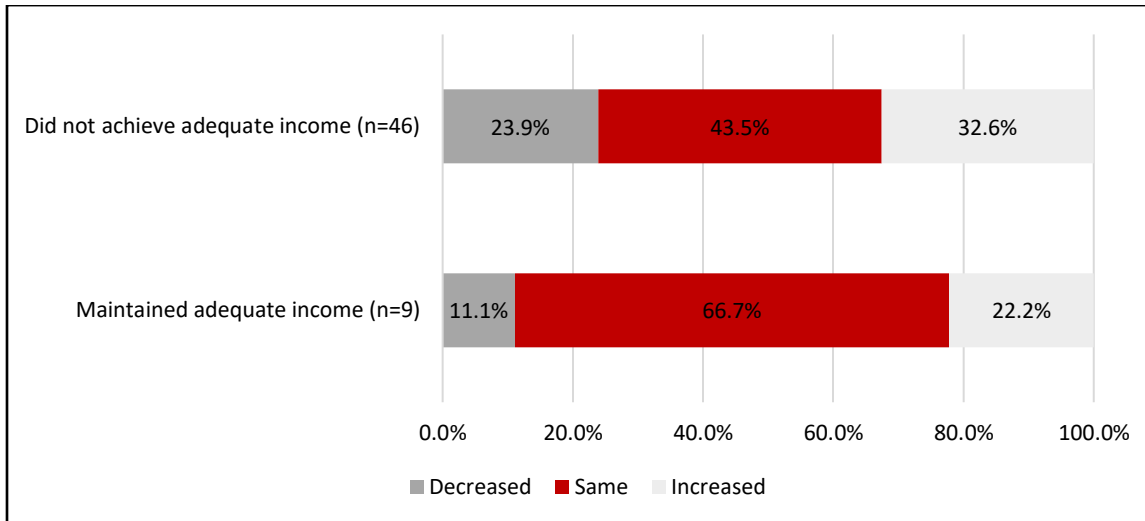
Exhibit 4-9. Income Achievement between Entry and Exit

Income changes - entry to exit	N	%
Maintained adequate income	9	9.9% %
Achieved adequate income	35	38.5% %
Did not achieve adequate income	46	50.6%
Income fell to inadequate level	1	1.1%
Total	91	100%

Note: AZ SSM scores at entry and exit were missing for 17 study participants

However, when examining whether households that did not achieve adequate income improved their income at all (for example, moving from “no income” to “inadequate income”), one-third showed improvements. Exhibit 4-10 shows the percentage of families that increased their income, stayed in the same income category, or decreased.

Exhibit 4-10. Improvements in Income between Entry and Exit



The AZ SSM scores categorizes employment as well as income. Over half (51 percent) of families reported not having a job when they entered the Front Door program. This percentage fell to 36 percent of families when exiting the program. The percentage of families in full-time employment with adequate pay rose from just 13 percent at entry, to 34 percent at exit.

Exhibit 4-11. Employment Status for Front Door Families at Entry and Exit

		Exit				Total
		No job	Part-time job	Full-time job, insufficient income	Full-time job, sufficient income	
Entry	No job	22 (25.0%)	6 (6.8%)	6 (6.8%)	11 (12.5%)	45 (51.1%)
	Part-time job	5 (5.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.3%)	4 (4.5%)	11 (12.5%)
	Full-time job insufficient income	4 (4.6%)	4 (4.6%)	6 (6.8%)	3 (3.4%)	17 (19.3%)
	Full-time job, sufficient income	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.3%)	12 (13.6%)	15 (17.1%)
	Total	32 (36.4%)	10 (11.4%)	16 (18.2%)	30 (34.1%)	88 (100.0%)

Improvements in earned income and employment explain the observed increases in income overall. At entry most families did not have any earned income (53 percent) (see Exhibit 4-12). This fell to 44 percent at exit and further fell to 38 percent for six months after families exited the program. The amount of earned income followed an opposite trend. At entry, the median family had \$0 of earned income; at exit the median family had \$580 in earned income; and, at follow-up, the median family brought home \$875 in earned income. The share of families receiving non-cash benefits remained steady around 80 percent (83 percent at entry, 88 percent at exit, and 80 percent at follow-up).

Exhibit 4-12 Changes in Earned and Unearned Income

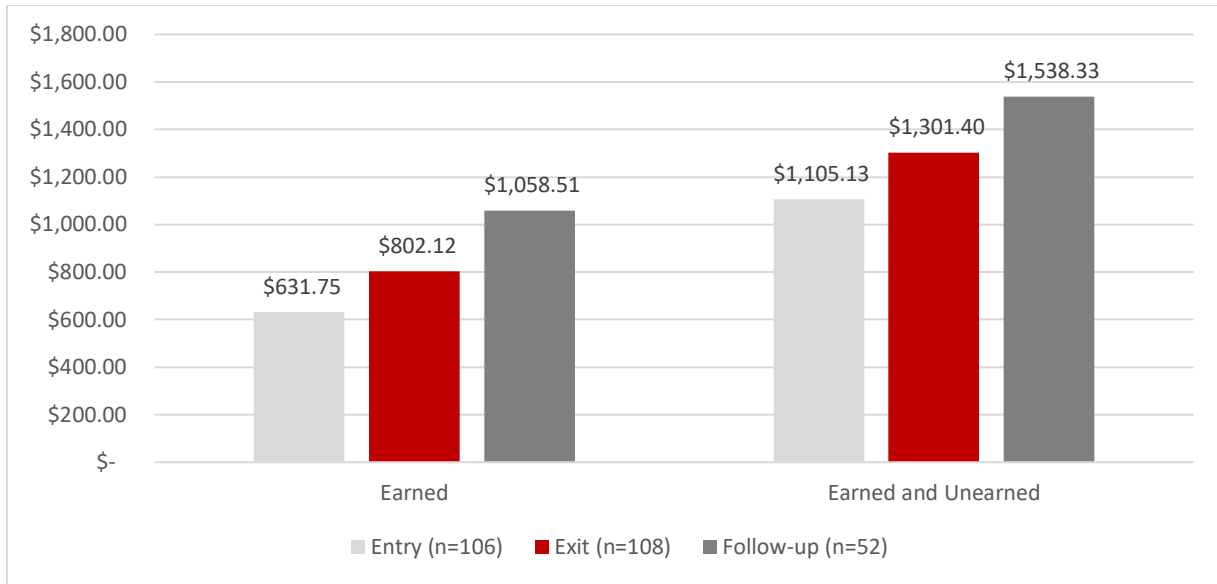


Exhibit 4-13 shows the number of families that increased their income by \$100 or more. Of those for whom we have income information, 57 percent increased their income between exit and follow-up. Another 30 percent maintain their income within \$100, and 13 percent (or 7 families) experienced declines in income.

Exhibit 4-13. Changes in Income between Exit and Follow-up

	N	%
Increased by \$100 or more	30	57.7%
Stayed the same (+/- \$100)	15	28.8%
Decreased by \$100 or more	7	13.5%
Total	52	100%

Note: Data missing for 56 families that did not conduct a follow-up survey.

4.3 Family Composition and Well-Being

Between program entry and exit, families reliably improved across multiple dimensions of family well-being. However, between exit and six months after exit, families did not improve across dimensions.

Household Composition

A potential indicator of family well-being and stability is whether household composition changed as a result of permanent housing. Few of the 108 families experienced composition changes between entering the program and exiting (seven families or seven percent). Two of those changes were children rejoining the household. Families contacted for follow-up surveys reported more changes. Nine families (or 17 percent) experienced any change in household composition between exiting the program and six months later. Three respondents (six percent) reported having children leave the household in that time. The remaining changes included a child joining the household (one family), spouse or partner leaving the household (two families), spouse or partner joining the household (one family), or some other change

(two families). Family composition changes were examined by housing situation – in permanent housing compared to not in permanent housing; Front Door unit compared to not in Front Door unit; and returned to homelessness compared to did not return to homelessness -- at six months and whether or not families returned to homelessness. There appeared no variation based on housing situation or recidivism.

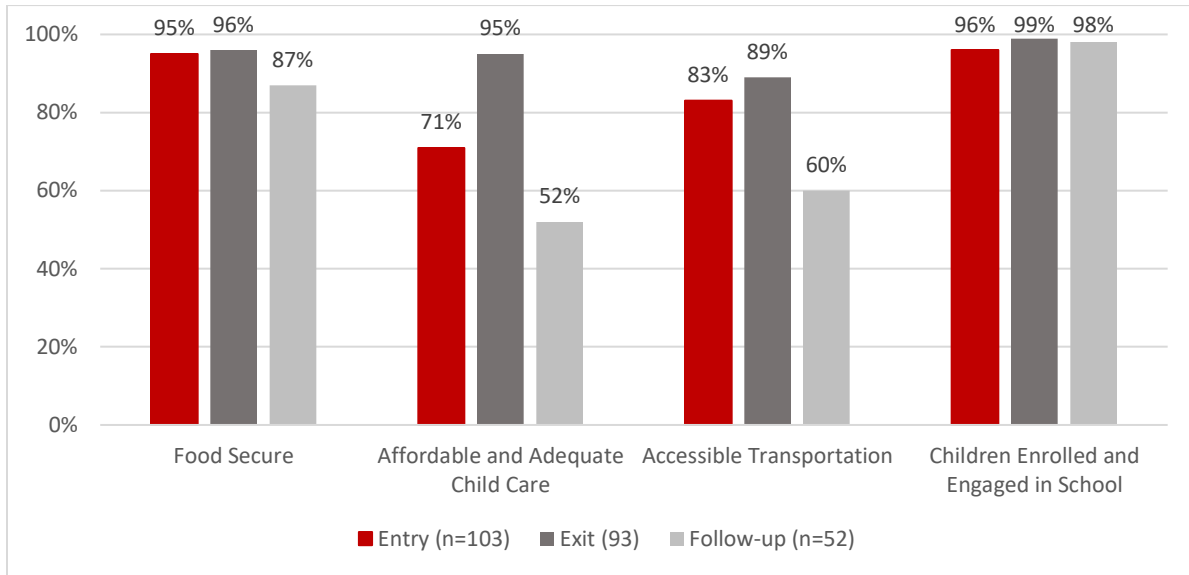
Exhibit 4-14. Changes in Household Composition

	Entry to Exit (n=108)	Exit to Follow- Up (n=52)
Child that was not living with the client when the program started is living with client now	2	1
A spouse or partner left the household	2	2
Other change	1	2
Some other person moved into the household	1	0
Some other person left the household	1	0
Child that was living with client when the program started is not living with client now	0	3
A spouse or partner joined the household	0	1
Number of families with any changes*	7	9
<i>*Note: Some families experienced more than one change.</i>		

Food Security

Most study participants had access to food stamps. Few reported any food insecurity at entry, and no families reported lack of access to food at follow up. However, 13 percent of families indicated that they did not have food stamps, but did need occasional assistance (compared to two percent on entry and three percent at exit). This could be due to a decrease in other benefits as employment and income increased, creating gaps in household resources available to meet other basic needs. Examining changes in food security between exit and six months later by housing situation reveals no differences by stability of housing situation.

Exhibit 4-15. Indicators of Family Well-Being



Note: Follow-up survey questions aligned with the AZ SSM, but were inexact.

Access to Affordable Child Care

Access to affordable, quality child care is often critical to securing employment and increasing income. Program staff measured access to child care through the AZ SSM at entry and every three months until families exited the program. At entry, 29 percent of families reported that affordable childcare was either unavailable or limited. By program exit, only four percent reported challenges accessing child care. However, data show that families contacted for follow up surveys may have increased challenges accessing affordable child care. Just under half of the follow-up survey families indicated that affordable child care was either unavailable or limited. This increase could be due to a few factors, including children being ineligible for subsidized child care due to increased income or housing costs consuming more of the household’s resources.

Examining changes in access to child care by housing status, there were differences based on housing stability at follow-up. Families that were in permanent housing at six months had fewer challenges with access to affordable child care than those not in permanent housing (29 percent compared to 37 percent). Families in the Front Door units also reported fewer difficulties accessing child care compared to families no longer in the Front Door unit (24 percent compared to 37 percent).

Access to Transportation

Reliable transportation can be a barrier to employment for families experiencing or having experienced homelessness. Transportation access was measured in the AZ SSM at entry and various points through the program. The number of families reporting difficulties with reliable transportation declined between entry and exit, from 19 percent to 11 percent. Between program exit and follow-up, the number of families that reported these challenges increased to 40 percent. More than one-quarter (27 percent) reported that transportation was available, but was unreliable, unpredictable, or unaffordable. An additional 13 percent reported that transportation is available and reliable, but limited or inconvenient.

Survey respondents that were in the Front Door unit at the time of follow-up were less likely to report issues with transportation than families that moved (32 percent compared to 48 percent). That gap closes when examining changes by families in any permanent housing (38 percent compared to 42 percent).

Child School Enrollment and Engagement

Program staff collected information on whether school-aged children were enrolled and engaged in school. The follow-up survey asked heads of family households a series of questions about the children’s school engagement, aligning with categories of the tool used by program staff. In addition, the follow-up survey asked respondents whether any children have missed school or were suspended or expelled from school. At program entry, three families reported having school-aged children not enrolled in school. No families at exit or follow-up reported children not attending school.

Exhibit 4-16. Child Outcomes at Follow-up

	Total	In Permanent Housing	Front Door Unit	Returned to Homelessness within 6 months
Children missed 8 days or more in the past 6 months	12	6	3	3
Children missed 5 days in a row	5	2	1	1
Children Suspension/Expulsion	7	5	2	1
Total families with school age children	45	34	24	6

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Front Door rapid rehousing program serves families in crisis, providing permanent housing and supportive services quickly in order to reduce the trauma associated with homeless. Families that enter shelter represent the poorest families, lacking the income necessary to avoid homelessness. In a short amount of time, Front Door program staff helped families obtain housing, move them into permanent housing, and provided them with financial assistance and services in order to maintain that unit. Of the 108 families enrolled in the study, 48 (44 percent) were verified as still being in permanent housing six months after they exited the Front Door program, 36 of whom remained in the Front Door unit. . Considering many families entered the program without employment or income, the fact that 44 percent were maintaining housing in such a short period of time is notable. The clear improvement in income and employment among these families in the same time period is one of the most encouraging results. However, these families are still poor. While rapid rehousing is a promising housing model for families in crisis, it is not designed to solve poverty. While families improved in income and employment, they often showed additional challenges in other areas, such as access to affordable children, access to reliable transportation, and food security.

5.1 Recommendations

The following section provides some recommendations to consider for future program improvements.

- ***Consider additional, shallower subsidies for longer periods of time for families struggling with housing stability.***

Many families reported living in severely unaffordable housing, paying over 50 percent (in some cases over 80 percent) of their income toward their rent. Of families interviewed at follow up, 89 percent reported that they would benefit from additional assistance. Obtaining full-time employment, while considered an improvement, can also mean needing child care when families previously did not. Providing families with a small amount of additional rental assistance for a transition period might enable them to further strengthen income gains, ease the burden during the transition, and provide case managers the opportunity to stay in contact with families, getting a better sense for longer term housing stability and family well-being.

- ***Further develop landlord outreach and engagement.***

While families overwhelmingly were pleased with the work of the housing coordinator, many families still reported issues with landlords. The study team recommends broadening the landlord outreach strategy, possibly partnering with other permanent housing providers to develop (or access) a bank of approved landlords. Given Baltimore's rental vacancy rate, the program should be in a position to choose landlords that will maintain higher quality units and not demand security deposits that exceed the equivalent of one month of rent. In addition, when a family is exiting the unit, the program should consider including in this process a client review of the landlord. This would both provide the program with information about which landlords they may not want to continue to engage with, as well as a measure of the family's housing stability.

➤ ***Training for referral partners on how to set reasonable expectations and program staff on explaining the progressive engagement model.***

Because of the short-term nature of this program, it is critical that families choose to enroll with full understanding of what to expect in terms of assistance. While the program moves them out of shelter and into their own unit, they must take over the full contract rent in relatively short order. Families should be given full information so that they can make a decision (if one is available to them) as to whether it is reasonable for them to maintain the full rent after a few months. Program participants may also feel less confusion and uncertainty about the depth and length of program support if program staff had a consistent way to discuss the progressive engagement approach and decisions about each family's assistance package over time.

➤ ***Provide families with deeper workforce development services, focusing on career paths.***

The income gains reported in this study are extremely encouraging. However, not all families were successful in obtaining employment or increasing incomes to the point that they could take on greater rent obligations. While many families accessed the workforce development services offered through Front Door, many participants in focus groups indicated that it often amounted to resume assistance. Families reported an interest in linkages to jobs and employers. Focus group participants noted that they had hoped the workforce services would help them focus on and develop a career path. St. Vincent de Paul is about to launch a new employment navigator program that will be available to all families in rapid rehousing, and which will (at a minimum) take a long step toward addressing this recommendation. Providing families in the program and those having exited the program with deeper services in this area could contribute to gains in income and employment, leading to greater housing stability.

Appendix A: Data Limitations

This analysis employed a variety of data sources in order to gather as much information as possible about the families in the Front Door program. Some of the data sources included data for all families, and others provided data for a subset of families. We combined data from the various sources only for those families who consented to participate in this study (108) into one dataset for analysis. Exhibit A-1 lists each data source, the time period for which it provided data and the number of families for which data was missing.

Exhibit A-1. List of Data Sources

Data Source	Time Period	N Missing
HMIS	Program entry	0
SPDAT	Program entry	2
Arizona - entry	Program entry	4
Arizona - interim	3 months into program	57
Arizona – exit	Program exit	15
Financials	During program	0
Exit Survey	Program exit	0
Follow-Up Survey	6 months after program exit	56
Landlord Survey	6 months after program exit	59
HMIS - returns	Anytime from exit to Sept 2017	101

Within each dataset the information was mostly complete for all families, with a few missing values throughout. We present information about missing values and calculated statistics based on the families for which we had data. Missing values present the greatest limitation for the follow-up time period. Very few families were missing entry information, but roughly half of the families lack follow-up information.

The HMIS returns data are particularly limited. This data, which provides information about if a family returned to a homeless shelter, only draws from shelters within the city limits of Baltimore. We do not know if families returned to other shelters in the area.

Another limitation is that data was collected by many different staff, who may have thought differently about the questions. The Arizona SSM and SPDAT scores may be particularly affected by this method of data collection. These scores rely on the person administering the instrument to determine which category best describes the family’s situation. For example, the AZ-SSM child care category “5” reads “able to select quality childcare of choice” whereas category “4” reads “reliable, affordable childcare is available, no need for subsidies.” It is possible that different people administering this instrument interpreted these categories differently, resulting in small changes in AZ-SSM scores.

Appendix B: Financial Assistance Provided to Front Door Study Participants by Housing Stability Category

	All Front Door Families		Families in Permanent Housing (6 months)		Families in Front Door Unit (6 months)		Families Returned to Homelessness (6 months)	
	#	Average	#	Average	#	Average	#	Average
Financial Assistance Component								
Utility payments	18	\$946.61	5	\$973.57	3	\$837.12	4	\$744.63
Security Deposits	108	\$1,091.26	38	\$1,168.07	36	\$1,083.03	6	\$1,370.83
Maximum Monthly Rent Assistance	108	\$876.69	38	\$922.69	36	\$846.33	6	\$851.83
Total Rent Assistance	108	\$2,923.87	38	\$3,118.49	36	\$2,693.58	6	\$3,442.39
Furniture Purchase	105	\$1,476.07	36	\$1,566.31	34	\$1,581.95	6	\$1,192.41
Other Assistance	39	\$108.00	12	\$83.44	17	\$80.71	2	\$356.04

Appendix C: Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix (AZ SSM) Descriptive Scores for Front Door Study Participants by Housing Stability

	All Front Door Families		Families in Permanent Housing (6 months)		Families in Front Door Unit (6 months)		Families Returned to Homelessness (6 months)	
	N	Median	N	Median	N	Median	N	Median
Entry Arizona SSM								
AZ Total	72	67	25	68	25	68	6	69
AZ Housing	104	1	38	1	35	1	6	2
AZ Income	104	3	38	3	35	3	6	3
AZ Employment	102	2	37	2	35	2	6	3
AZ Child Care	90	4	30	4	31	4	6	4
AZ Child Education	95	5	36	5	32	5	6	5
AZ Food	103	2	38	2	34	3	6	2
AZ Mobility	104	4	38	4	35	4	6	5
In Program Arizona SSM								
AZ Total	37	76	13	75	13	75	1	73
AZ Housing	51	4	18	4	15	5	1	4
AZ Income	51	3	18	3	15	3	1	2
AZ Employment	51	2	18	3	15	2	1	2
AZ Child Care	43	4	14	4	14	4	1	5
AZ Child Education	49	5	18	5	15	5	1	5
AZ Food	51	3	18	3	15	3	1	2
AZ Mobility	51	4	18	4	15	4	1	4
Exit Arizona SSM Scores								
AZ Total	69	78	27	79	27	78	2	68
AZ Housing	93	5	34	5	32	5	5	4
AZ Income	93	3	34	4	32	4	5	2
AZ Employment	92	3	34	3	32	3	5	2

	All Front Door Families		Families in Permanent Housing (6 months)		Families in Front Door Unit (6 months)		Families Returned to Homelessness (6 months)	
AZ Child Care	81	5	29	5	28	5	4	5
AZ Child Education	88	5	34	5	31	5	5	5
AZ Food	93	3	34	3	32	3	5	2
AZ Mobility	93	4	34	4	32	5	5	3

Appendix D: Family Service Prioritization Data Assessment Tool Scores by Housing Stability

	All Front Door Families		Families in Permanent Housing (6 months)		Families in Front Door Unit (6 months)		Families Returned to Homelessness (6 months)	
	N	Median	N	Median	N	Median	N	Median
Entry SPDAT Scores								
SPDAT Total	106	7	37	7	35	7	6	6
SPDAT Housing	106	0	37	0	35	0	6	1

Appendix E: Income and Employment Characteristics by Housing Stability

	All Front Door Families		Families in Permanent Housing (6 months)		Families in Front Door Unit (6 months)		Families Returned to Homelessness (6 months)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Monthly Household Income at Entry								
None	15	14%	3	8%	2	6%	2	33%
Under \$500	5	5%	3	8%	3	9%	0	0%
\$500 to \$999	27	25%	8	22%	9	26%	0	0%
\$1000 to \$1499	33	31%	11	30%	10	29%	2	33%
\$1500 to \$1999	14	13%	6	16%	6	17%	1	17%
\$2000 or more	12	11%	6	16%	5	14%	1	17%
Earned Income at Entry								
Yes	50	47%	19	51%	18	51%	3	50%
No	56	53%	18	49%	17	49%	3	50%
Non-Cash Benefits at Entry								
Yes	88	83%	32	86%	29	83%	6	100%
No	18	17%	5	14%	6	17%	0	0%
Monthly Household Income at Exit								
None	7	6%	1	3%	3	8%	1	17%
Under \$500	4	4%	2	5%	2	6%	1	17%
\$500 to \$999	27	25%	6	16%	7	19%	1	17%
\$1000 to \$1499	29	27%	13	34%	11	31%	1	17%
\$1500 to \$1999	22	20%	7	18%	7	19%	1	17%
\$2000 or more	19	18%	9	24%	6	17%	1	17%
Earned Income at Exit								
Yes	60	56%	23	61%	19	53%	3	50%
No	48	44%	15	39%	17	47%	3	50%
Non-Cash Benefits at Exit								
Yes	95	88%	33	87%	31	86%	5	83%
No	13	12%	5	13%	5	14%	1	17%
Monthly Household Income at Follow-up								
None	5	10%	4	11%	2	8%	0	0%
Under \$500	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

	All Front Door Families		Families in Permanent Housing (6 months)		Families in Front Door Unit (6 months)		Families Returned to Homelessness (6 months)	
\$500 to \$999	8	15%	4	11%	3	12%	3	50%
\$1000 to \$1499	12	23%	9	24%	8	31%	2	33%
\$1500 to \$1999	8	15%	8	21%	6	23%	0	0%
\$2000 or more	18	35%	13	34%	7	27%	1	17%
Earned Income at Follow-up								
Yes	32	62%	24	63%	16	62%	2	33%
No	20	38%	14	37%	10	38%	4	67%
Non-Cash Benefits at Follow-up								
Yes	37	80%	26	79%	15	71%	4	80%
No	9	20%	7	21%	6	29%	1	20%