2016 ANNUAL REPORT

COORDINATED ACCESS TO HOUSING AND SHELTER

A PARTNERSHIP OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES, RAMSEY COUNTY, UNITED WAY 2-1-1, & WOODLAND HILLS CHURCH

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Coordinated Access to Housing and Shelter
2016 Annual Report

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I.   Introduction

We are excited to share Heading Home Ramsey's (HHR)[1] Coordinated Access to Housing and Shelter (CAHS) third annual report. CAHS is a system created to increase the efficiency and improve the outcomes of families experiencing homelessness within HHR's boundaries.

After providing an Executive Summary, this report offers additional detail on the following facets of CAHS:
  – An overview of the major data sources used to support this analysis.
  – A brief discussion of the demand for, and supply of, emergency shelter and supportive housing for families experiencing homelessness within the Ramsey County Continuum of Care (CoC).
  – A brief overview of how the CAHS system works in terms of community context and process flow.
  – An overview of CAHS key performance indicators, some of which are required by HEARTH Act[2] regulations.
  – An examination of CAHS trends in terms of family and family member demographics.
  – A high-level review of the movement of families through the various programs within the CAHS system.
  – A short discussion of anticipated changes to the CAHS system (both mandated and ideal).
  – A consideration of upcoming data collection and analysis improvements.
  – A few examples of opportunities for sustained advocacy on behalf of children and families experiencing homelessness.

This report provides an overview of the 2016 processes involved in and families served by the CAHS system.

For those readers interested in learning more about the traits and challenges of single adults and youth experiencing homelessness and the systems designed to help them in Twin Cities' CoCs, Catholic Charities can provide other publications.

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[1] HHR is Ramsey County's Continuum of Care. A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a local planning and funding body, accountable to state and federal governments, for identifying the regional needs of singles and families who are experiencing homelessness, and for identifying, coordinating, and funding the services and solutions needed to prevent and end homelessness. CoCs vary in size from cities (New York City and Los Angeles) to counties (Hennepin and Ramsey) to a collection of counties (our local Suburban Metro Area CoC or "SMAC") to an entire state (Montana). Minnesota has 10 CoCs across the state: three in the Metropolitan Council's seven-county region and seven in Greater Minnesota.

[2] Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009

II.　Executive Summary

By analyzing both external data (including data from the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development, or "HUD," and the U.S Census Bureau) and internal data (2016 HHR HMIS and spreadsheet data), three key CAHS themes emerged: successes, opportunities, and sub-populations.

A.　Successes

1.　**HHR and CAHS have seen success in decreasing the number of people experiencing homelessness in families.** According to federal counts, the number of people experiencing homelessness in family groups in Ramsey County has declined by 30% since CAHS began operations.　Between 2015 and 2016, the CAHS system observed an 11% decrease in the number of first-time homeless families.

2.　**CAHS has been successful in connecting families experiencing homelessness with supportive housing, particularly the most vulnerable families.**
    a.　Participation in the CAHS system resulted in more than 200 families moving into supportive housing. An additional 34 families exited the Supportive Housing Referral Program to enter permanent housing that they arranged for themselves.
    b.　Between 2015 and 2016, there was a 22% reduction in the mean length of time homeless among families seeking permanent supportive housing. Constraints in the local rental market contributed to the increases in time spent homeless among the less vulnerable families.
    c.　The Supportive Housing Referral Program is successful in connecting families with housing they can afford.[3] More than half (57%) of the families exiting the CAHS Supportive Housing Referral Program moved into rental housing that was affordable based on their monthly income.
    d.　CAHS Housing Assessors work with families outside HHR's emergency shelter programs. One out of every five (20%) families completing a Housing Assessment was unsheltered, doubled up, or staying in another situation other than emergency shelter, transitional housing, or domestic violence center.

3.　**CAHS Diversion is a highly successful program.** Of the 103 families referred to the Diversion Team, 69% were placed in market-rate housing and an additional 17% were placed in subsidized housing. Once diverted, CAHS families do not tend to re-enter the CAHS system. In 2016, only 2% of CAHS Diversion families later entered shelter. Since 2014, the cost to divert a family from shelter entry has remained about one quarter of the cost to serve a family for one month in a HHR emergency shelter.

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[3] According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), housing is "affordable" when it requires no more than 30% of a household's income.　If households pay more than that, they are considered "cost burdened."

B. Opportunities

1. **There are not enough emergency shelter beds to meet demand. This results in prolonged housing instability and homelessness for many families.** The majority (73%) of families added to the Shelter Waitlist during the first nine months of 2016 were removed without having entered an emergency shelter. Almost half (49%) of the families placed onto the Shelter Waitlist were removed due to their failure to comply with the Shelter Waitlist call-in policy (which was implemented in response to the scarcity of shelter beds). Almost one in five (18%) families who were added to the Shelter Waitlist during the first nine months of 2016 appeared on the Shelter Waitlist two or more times during that period. The families that ultimately do enter shelter wait for two to three weeks or more before there is an opening for them. Even the most vulnerable families tended to wait about two weeks before entering shelter.

2. **CAHS Diversion Program's long-term outcomes would be improved by emphasizing housing affordability.** The CAHS Diversion Program is designed to prioritize assisting families with moving into market-rate housing. Given this and the current Ramsey County rental market, it is unfortunate but not surprising that 43% of the CAHS Diversion households exited to rental housing that required the family to pay more than 50% of their monthly income on housing, thus making these families severely housing cost burdened. In fact, 15% of the Diversion families moved into rental housing where the cost of living there required at least 80% of their monthly income. Families with only 20% of their already low income available for food, health care, transportation, debt reduction, etc., face formidable barriers in exiting poverty.

3. **The key opportunity to improve Housing Referral outcomes lies in the community's will to create more affordable housing opportunities.** In 2016, some families working with housing service providers were unable to obtain scattered-site housing before their subsidy expired. This has become a more common occurrence among very low-income households in areas like Ramsey County and the City of St Paul, where there are low vacancy rates in affordable rental housing and many landlords appear to have biases against renting to households using housing subsidies.

C. Six Sub-Populations Merit Individualized Programmatic and CoC Attention

1. **Racial disparities in the experience of homelessness continue to be a feature of HHR's family homelessness system.** African Americans and mixed race people are five times more likely to be found among the family members completing a CAHS Shelter Screen than they are to be found in the general population of Ramsey County (based on U.S. Census estimates). Whites are in the opposite proportion, meaning White people appear among the family members completing a CAHS Shelter Screen about one fifth as often as would be expected given their presence in the Ramsey County population at large.

2. **Doubled-up and unsheltered families are a large proportion of the households entering the CAHS system.** Over half (61%) of families completing a Shelter Screen were doubled up (staying with family or friends) the night before completing the Shelter Screen. An additional 17% of the Shelter Screens were completed with unsheltered families, whose

living situations the night prior included sleeping in tents, cars, skyways, light rail trains, buses, abandoned buildings, and other situations unfit for human habitation.

3. **Youth-headed families experiencing homelessness are common (although less likely to be served through CAHS Diversion).** Families led by parenting youth (18-25 years old) make up almost a third (30%) of the families that completed a Housing Assessment.

4. **Families with the youngest (infants and preschoolers) and most vulnerable children are most likely to be found in the emergency shelter and the Supportive Housing Referral Programs.** The youngest children (infants under a year old) were least likely to be found among CAHS Diversion families.

5. **Families served throughout the CAHS system are likely to have disabilities of long duration.** Almost half (45%) of the families served in CAHS's Supportive Housing Referral Programs had such a disability.

6. **Families served throughout the CAHS system are likely to be survivors of domestic violence (with many currently fleeing their abusers).** Two-thirds (65%) of the adults completing Housing Assessments were domestic violence survivors, among whom over half (58%) were currently actively fleeing their abusers.

III.   About CAHS Data

The CAHS data presented in this annual report come from two primary sources.

First, the Heading Home Ramsey (HHR) Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is part of Minnesota's statewide effort to obtain accurate and reliable information about families and individuals experiencing homelessness who are being served in a portfolio of programs within Ramsey County. HMIS is the data source for information about families who:
– Enter HHR's CAHS system by completing a Shelter Screen and being added to the Shelter Waitlist,
– Are targeted for Diversion, a program designed to assist eligible families in avoiding shelter entry,
– Have entered the Family Service Center (FSC), one of HHR's two emergency shelters for families,[4]
– Have completed a Housing Assessment that identifies family vulnerabilities, needs, and barriers. This assessment is used to identify which of the three specific Supportive Housing programs is best suited to meet the family's needs, and
– Have exited any of the above CAHS programs.

Second, two spreadsheets provide access to important information that is currently not entered into HMIS.[5] These spreadsheets are the data source for information about families who are on the following lists:
– The Shelter Waitlist, a Ramsey County Shelter Team roster containing the names and selected traits of families who have completed a Shelter Screen, the dates the family entered and exited the Shelter Waitlist, and the family's destination upon exiting the Shelter Waitlist.
– The Housing Priority List, a CAHS tool containing three prioritized rosters, one for each Supportive Housing option. The Housing Priority List contains data regarding selected family traits, the dates they entered and exited the Housing Priority List, and their housing destination upon exiting. This tool is populated once the family has completed the Housing Assessment.

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[4] The Catholic Charities CAHS Team has access to Family Service Center (FSC) data because it is a Catholic Charities program.
[5] See section IX.B.2 for further discussion about integrating this spreadsheet data into HMIS.

IV. Supply of and Demand for Emergency Shelter and Supportive Housing for Families

Emergency shelter for families provides a safe, temporary place to stay while dedicated staff assist with initial Housing Assessment, immediate housing placement, and linkage to other services. In Ramsey County—as in most CoCs across the country—it is harder to get into family shelter than it is to enter singles' shelter due to additional restrictive criteria and the relative scarcity of family shelter beds.

Supportive housing is an evidence-based intervention that combines affordable housing financial assistance with wrap-around supportive services. There are three types of supportive housing interventions offered in the CAHS system: rapid re-housing (RRH), transitional housing (TH), and permanent supportive housing (PSH).

– Rapid re-housing (RRH) is a time-limited intervention designed to help families quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. Rapid re-housing assistance is offered without preconditions regarding employment, criminal record, sobriety, or previous rental history. The resources and services provided by RRH are typically tailored to the unique needs of each household, although all RRH services provide housing search assistance, rent assistance, and case management.

– Transitional housing (TH) refers to a supportive—yet also time-limited—type of accommodation meant to bridge the gap from homelessness to permanent housing by offering structure, supervision, support (for addictions and mental health, for instance), life skills, and in some cases, education and training. TH programs can be site-based (located in one facility) or scattered site (housing that is throughout the community). By design, this type of housing intervention does not last more than 24 months.

– Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is housing linked with supportive services that helps residents maintain housing without built-in time limitations. Permanent supportive housing is targeted to persons with significant barriers to self-sufficiency and can be site-based or scattered site.

A. Measuring Demand for Emergency Shelter

One approach to measuring demand for emergency shelter is to count the number of people experiencing homelessness in families. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandates that an annual unduplicated Point in Time (PIT) count of homeless populations take place during the last week of January in every Continuum of Care (CoC) across the country.

As Exhibit 1 shows, HHR's level of family homelessness was relatively stable prior to the Great Recession and peaked shortly thereafter. CAHS considers the low number of people counted as homeless in families in 2012 as an anomaly due to measurement challenges that year.

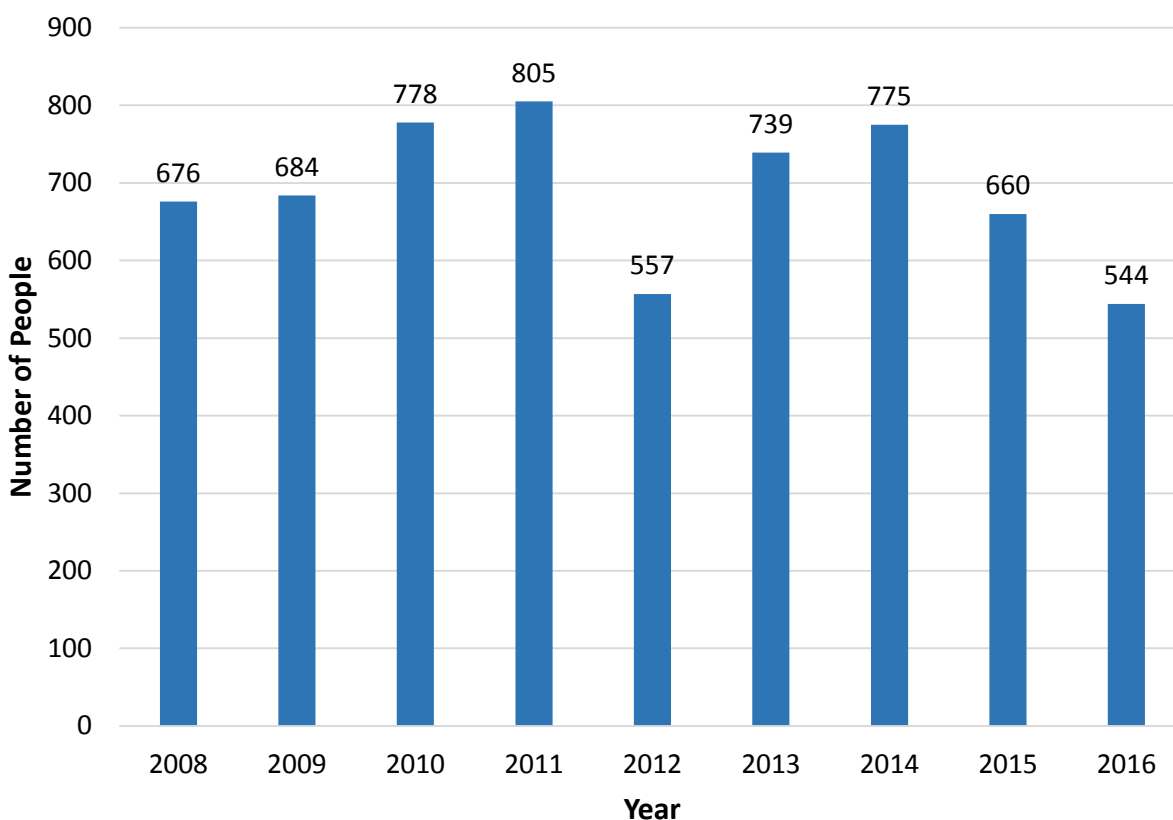1. *The number of people counted as homeless in families in Ramsey County CoC, 2007 to 2016[6]*

Exhibit 1 also shows that Heading Home Ramsey's PIT count of people experiencing homelessness in family groups has decreased steadily (dropping 30%) since CAHS first opened its doors on January 1, 2014.

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[6] Data source: 2007 to 2016 HUD PIT Count

B. Measuring the Supply of Emergency Shelter

The supply of Ramsey County family shelter beds has been constant at 105 beds since before CAHS began in 2014. These 105 beds typically accommodate an average of 30 families at any given time.

C. Measuring the Supply of and Demand for Supportive Housing

Exhibit 2 uses two CAHS metrics as indicators for the supply of and demand for supportive housing. Once families have entered shelter, CAHS Housing Assessors meet with them and perform a lengthy Housing Assessment. Once families have been assessed and placed on the Housing Priority List that is appropriate for them, the CAHS Team then matches the family with an incoming housing opening sent by one of the community housing service providers. Exhibit 2 uses the count of Housing Assessments completed as an indicator of the demand for supportive housing and the number of housing openings received as an indicator of the supply of supportive housing.

2. *Demand for and supply of supportive housing for families in Ramsey County, 2014-2016[7]*

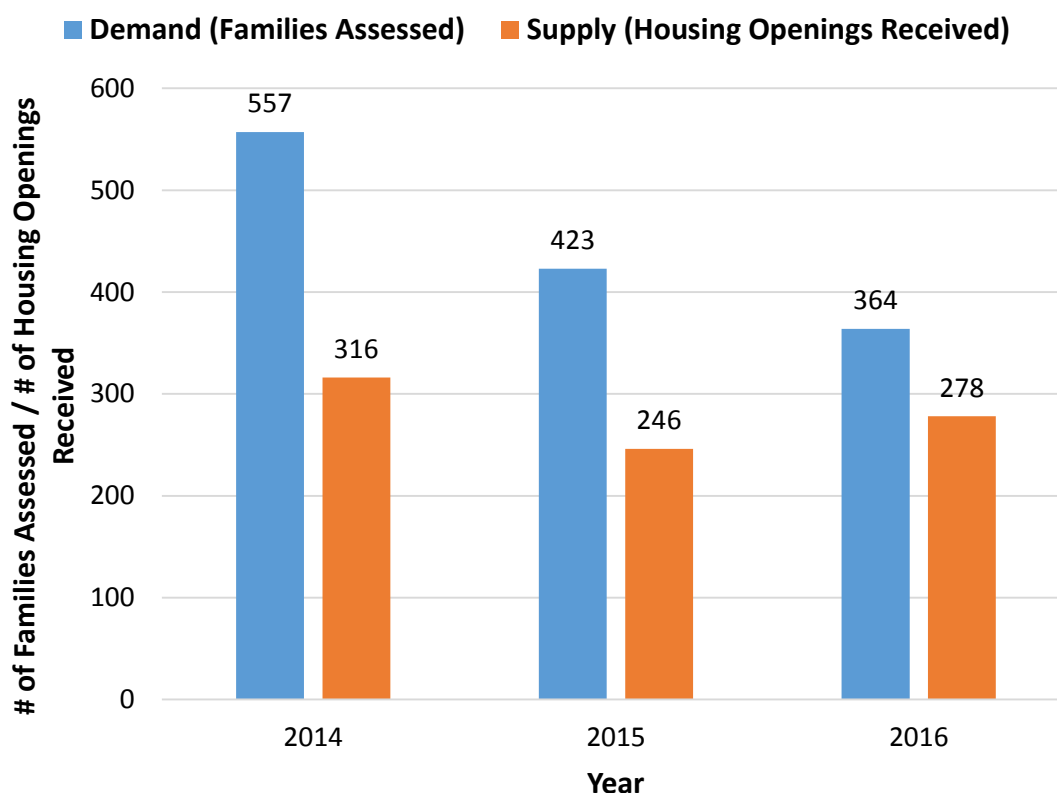Exhibit 2 appears to show that demand for supportive housing has decreased since 2014. A number of forces could account for the apparent decrease. Primary among them is that, with time, CAHS staff have improved their ability to screen families for basic eligibility before conducting Housing Assessments. Reflecting this increased efficiency, CAHS data now include

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[7] Data source: CAHS Housing Priority List

fewer families that would later (post-assessment) prove to be ineligible for supportive housing. In addition, several counties adjacent to Ramsey County have begun their own coordinated entry systems for families experiencing homelessness. As a result, CAHS has observed that fewer families are moving into Ramsey County to seek supportive housing.

In summary, there is more demand for emergency shelter and supportive housing than HHR has the capacity to meet.

V.   How Does CAHS Work?

A. The CAHS Ecosystem

The CAHS ecosystem is client-centered and designed by Heading Home Ramsey (HHR) to leverage resources (e.g., staff, funding, and housing opportunities) provided by the wider community to achieve housing stability for families experiencing homelessness.

The CAHS staff, the Ramsey County Financial Assistance Services staff, and the Ramsey County Shelter Team are co-located at Woodland Hills Church in Maplewood, which ensures that families able to avoid the shelter system are connected to CAHS Diversion, and those unable to be diverted are placed on the Shelter Waitlist and then into shelter. Once a family is in shelter, the Ramsey County Shelter Team connects the family with a CAHS Housing Assessor who helps guide each family through the process of coordinated entry and housing referral. CAHS itself is staffed by Housing Assessment and Diversion Team members, as well as the program managers overseeing these activities, all of whom are employees of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

CAHS does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it relies on strong partnerships with other community entities—such as the local school system, police, social service providers, and housing providers—to ensure that the needs of families are being identified and met. Governing the activities of CAHS is an HHR subcommittee called Coordinated Entry for Everyone or CEE, which is made up of a diverse group of stakeholders including housing and prevention providers, population-specific agencies, public school systems, and people who have formerly experienced homelessness.

CAHS also brings its expertise to the statewide effort to implement coordinated entry, which is led by Minnesota's Interagency Council on Homelessness and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA), which is the source of CAHS's Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) funding.

Local and regional efforts to implement coordinated entry were initiated by mandates from HUD requiring each community to create and maintain a coordinated entry system to assist households experiencing homelessness. While work was spurred by a HUD mandate, it was the earnest collaboration among local community partners and organizations that resulted in the first successful implementation of a coordinated entry system in Minnesota—HHR's CAHS.

B. Movement through the CAHS System: Assessment, Prioritization, and Connection

Low-income families often need assistance in resolving a homelessness crisis. CAHS is a networked system of programs leading families from homelessness and housing instability to **assessment** for their housing needs, **prioritization** for housing resources appropriate to those needs, and **connection** to service providers who specialize in placing families in those types of housing.

Exhibit 3 presents the CAHS system in a greatly simplified model. The most typical initial point of contact for Ramsey County families experiencing homelessness (visualized in the red circle in the upper left) is through a phone call to 211, the United Way's "First Call for Help" (represented by the black box to the right of the red circle). The staff at 211 pre-screens families and refers qualified families to the Ramsey County Shelter Team's secure website. Shelter Team staff make callbacks and further explore the housing stability needs of each family.

3. *Simplified CAHS process flow[8]*
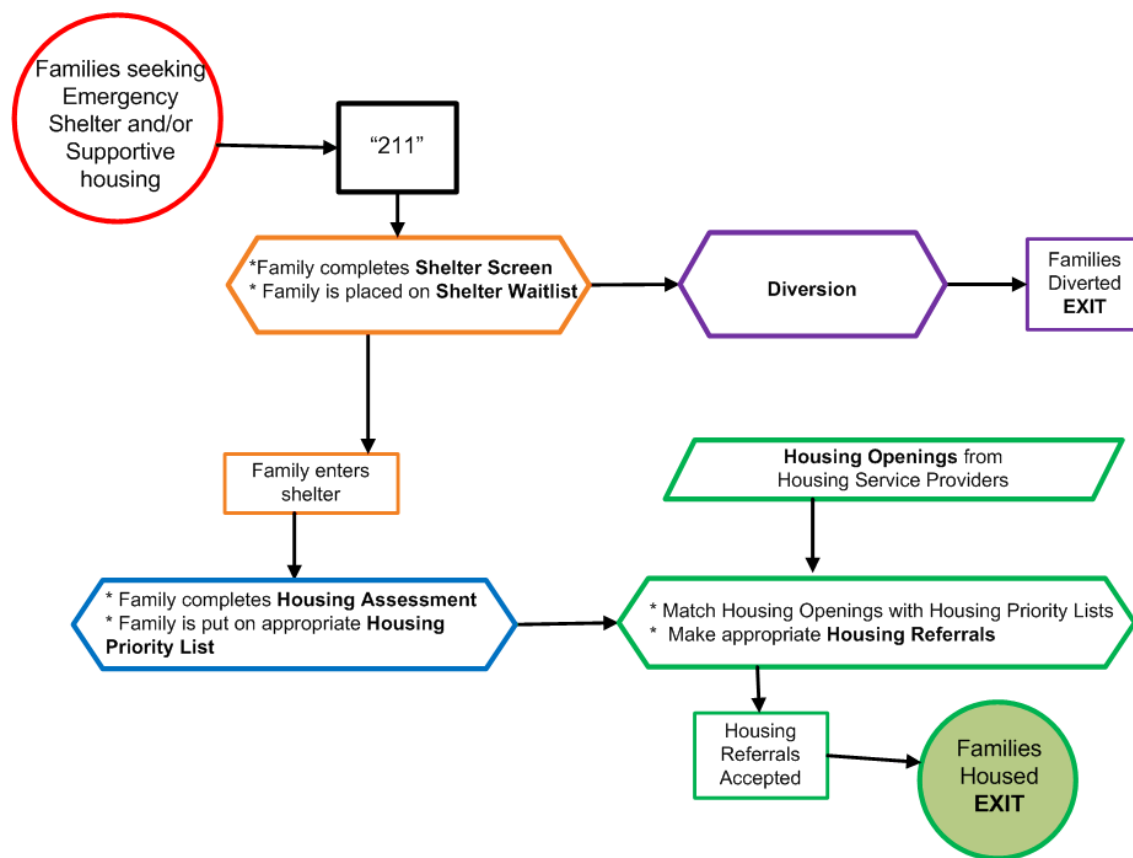
The orange hexagon directly below 211 represents the program where the families qualified to enter shelter come to Woodland Hills Church to complete a Shelter Screen (an assessment that is entered into HMIS). At that time, the family is also added to the Shelter Waitlist. Families on the Shelter Waitlist are required to call into the Shelter Team's voicemail every Monday and to leave

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[8] Data source: HMIS, Ramsey County Shelter Team, and CAHS

a message stating their continued interest in entering shelter. If a family fails to call on two Mondays, they are removed from the Shelter Waitlist and will need to contact the Shelter Team if shelter is still needed.

The purple hexagon to the right of the Shelter Screen/Shelter Waitlist phase represents the CAHS Diversion Program. The Diversion Team works with the Ramsey County Shelter Team to identify families on the Shelter Waitlist who have the resources and skills needed to be successfully diverted from shelter entry.

As shelter beds become available, the next appropriate family is contacted and told that they can enter shelter that day, as represented in the orange rectangle labelled "Family enters shelter."

As seen in the blue hexagon below/after "Family enters shelter," once in shelter the adults in the family meet with a CAHS Housing Assessor, who works with them to complete a comprehensive Housing Assessment. The Housing Assessment includes completing a Vulnerability Index Family Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, or VI-FSPDAT, which is an instrument for identifying the severity of a family's barriers and vulnerabilities. This tool is described in detail in the next section. Based on the VI-FSPDAT score, each family is placed on one of the three supportive Housing Priority Lists: rapid re-housing, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing.

While the families are in shelter, CAHS staff receive notices regarding new housing openings among the various community housing service providers. CAHS staff match those openings with the next eligible family on the appropriate Housing Priority List. The family then works directly with the housing service provider to complete their enrollment in the specific Supportive Housing Program. Once a family is housed, they are exited from the CAHS system. This phase of CAHS's work is represented in the various green shapes at the lower right of Exhibit 3.

VI.   CAHS Key Performance Indicators

The CAHS system collects key performance indicators for the purposes of improving client outcomes, assisting HHR with resource allocation decisions, and communicating with funders (which include federal, state, and local public and private funding sources). These key performance indicators include:
1. Prioritizing the most vulnerable families.
2. Reducing the number of families who experience homelessness, particularly those experiencing long-term homelessness or homelessness for the first time.
3. Reducing the length of time a family is homeless.
4. Reducing the number of housed families returning to homelessness.
5. Increasing the number of families placed in affordable and appropriate housing.
6. Identifying and tracking racial inequities in housing stability.

A. Prioritize the Most Vulnerable Families

CAHS housing prioritization involves assessing families for their level of vulnerability. In alignment with the state's effort, HHR uses a vulnerability assessment tool designed for families with minor children that is called the Vulnerability Index Family Service Prioritization Decision

Assistance Tool, or VI-SPDAT, to obtain a vulnerability score for every family assessed. This tool quickly assesses the health and social needs of a family experiencing homelessness and identifies the most appropriate supports and housing interventions for that family.

Families are assessed using the VI-FSPDAT after completing a supplemental questionnaire with their CAHS Housing Assessor. Based on their VI-FSPDAT score and information gleaned from the supplemental questionnaire, families are assigned to one of four levels of housing intervention:

- Permanent supportive housing (PSH), a resource-intensive intervention for the most vulnerable families, or
- Time-limited supportive housing, either a rapid re-housing (RRH) or transitional housing (TH) intervention, where the final housing assignment for families with moderate needs reflects whether or not the family is also experiencing a life transition, or
- No intervention. This is rare, since very few families enter shelter who do not actually need a housing intervention.

Exhibit 4 presents the distribution of families by relevant VI-FSPDAT score intervals and shows that only 1% of the families receiving Housing Assessments had so few barriers that they did not qualify for any supportive housing intervention. The bulk of families (61%) were assessed to have sufficient barriers that they needed time-limited financial and service supports. The remaining 38% of families assessed had sufficient barriers and vulnerabilities that they qualified for permanent supportive housing.

4. *Number of family households assessed in each VI-FSPDAT score interval, 2016l[9]*

Vulnerability Score Interval and housing intervention	Total families
VI-FSPDAT = 0-3 Refer to community partners, no additional housing intervention	3
VI-FSPDAT = 4-8 Time-limited supports with moderate intensity	215
VI-FSPDAT = 9+ Long-term housing with high service intensity	136
Total	354

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[9] Data source: CAHS Housing Priority List

B. Reduce the Number of Families Experiencing Homelessness

CAHS works to reduce the number of families experiencing homelessness, particularly long-term homelessness and first-time homelessness. CAHS's best estimate of the number of homeless people is determined by examining the number of families completing a Shelter Screen as they request shelter entry, shown in Exhibit 5.

5. *Number of families entering the CAHS system in 2015 vs 2016[10]*

Year	Number of families completing a Shelter Screen	Number of long-term homeless families[11]	Number of first-time homeless families[12]
2015	701	128	122
2016	700	118	109

Exhibit 5 indicates that, while the total number of families completing the Shelter Screen was essentially unchanged between 2015 and 2016, the number of long-term homeless (LTH) requesting shelter entry decreased by 8% and the number of first-time homeless families decreased by 11%. Although data from two points in time do not constitute a reliable trend, it is good news that the 2016 numbers are lower than the 2015 numbers for both the most vulnerable families (those that are long-term homeless) and families that are newly homeless.

In addition, as Exhibit 6 shows, in 2016, 73% of supportive housing referrals resulted in families moving into supportive housing, a 5% point increase over the previous year.

6. *Number of families moving from housing referral to housed, 2015 and 2016[13]*

Year	Number of CAHS referrals to housing openings made	Number of CAHS families housed in supportive housing
2015	315	215
2016	299	218

Please note that the number housed can be higher than the number referred in any given year based on the number of families at various stages in the referral and housing pipeline at the beginning of the year.

C. Reduce the Length of Time a Family Remains Homeless

Every CoC's family homelessness system aims to reduce the average (mean) length of time families spend experiencing homelessness. Each CoC makes its own decision as to how they will measure length of time homeless. HHR has chosen a client-centric approach, which highlights the family's experience of homelessness by measuring from the date of the family's first contact

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[10] Data source: HMIS

[11] According to Minnesota's definition of LTH, people (individuals and families) who are doubled up for less than a year in any single place, without ever being on a lease, can use that time to qualify for LTH.

[12] No previous client-reported homeless history

[13] Data source: CAHS Housing Priority List and HMIS

with CAHS (known as their "priority date") to the date the family moves into their own housing.[14]

As mentioned earlier, CAHS keeps three distinct Housing Priority Lists for families based on their VI-FSPDAT scores. On occasion, families opt to pursue a less resource-intensive housing option. In that case, families are counted on the Housing Priority List of their choice. Families are ranked on the Housing Priority List according to their priority date.

Exhibit 7 indicates that CAHS was most successful in reducing the mean time spent homeless among the most vulnerable families. The most vulnerable families, those eligible for permanent supportive housing (PSH), evidenced a 22% reduction in the mean length of time homeless between 2015 and 2016.

7. *Mean number of days homeless among families that were housed in 2016 by housing type referred, 2015 and 2016[15]*

Housing type[16]	Mean number of days homeless		2015-2016 change in length of time homeless	2016 % of eligible households that were housed
	2015	2016		
Rapid re-housing	80	115	+ 43%	52%
Transitional housing	99	117	+18%	54%
Permanent supportive housing	144	113	-22%	59%

In contrast, Exhibit 7 shows that the least vulnerable families (those eligible for RRH) had a 43% increase in mean time homeless. The slightly more vulnerable families (those eligible for TH) had an 18% increase in mean time homeless.

The differences between the three groups of families in terms of average days spent homeless is only partially explained by CAHS's focus on housing the most vulnerable households. Additional factors related to the increased times homeless for scattered site programs, such as RRH and some TH programs, include Ramsey County's low vacancy rate for affordable rental housing and the related practice reportedly common among local landlords to prefer to rent to households that are not using government subsidies.

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[14] Some CoCs begin their measurement of length of time homeless from the family's first contact with the homeless system. Others start the clock once the family is in shelter. Still others begin to measure length of time homeless from the time housing staff first begin working with the family. The HEARTH Act performance goal is to have families spend an average (mean) of fewer than 20 days homeless or to see at least an annual 10% reduction in the average length of time homeless.

[15] Data source: CAHS Housing Priority List

[16] Housing referrals are typically based on vulnerability level, as measured by VI-SPDAT. However, some families choose to seek a lower level of service intensity and thus are entered on that Housing Priority List.

D. Reduce Re-entry into Homelessness

HUD requires CoCs to report on the degree to which people who exit homelessness to a permanent housing destination subsequently return to homelessness. Re-entry rates for families and individuals are difficult to assess without an open HMIS system.[17]

However, CAHS is able to estimate the number of clients who have entered the CAHS system's "front door" more than once. While this is not the same as tracking the number of families known to have achieved permanent housing who then return to homelessness, this data source does offer an indication of the number of families who repeatedly turn to HHR for assistance in gaining entry to emergency shelter and a connection to housing.

Working with data from the Ramsey County Shelter Team's Shelter Waitlist, Exhibit 8 presents re-entry estimates by indicating the number of families that re-appeared on the Shelter Waitlist during the first nine months of 2016. During this time, 532 Shelter Screens were conducted with 431 unique households.

8. *Number of families who have entered the Shelter Waitlist by number of times entered during first nine months of 2016 (January 1 through September 30, 2016)[18]*

Number of times a family completed a Shelter Screen[19]	Number of families who completed this number of Shelter Screens
1	354
2	60
3	12
4	4
5	1
Missing	1

Exhibit 8 shows that 18% of the families who entered the Shelter Waitlist during this time did so two or more times. Since this data was not available in previous years, no trend can be reported.

E. Move More Families into Affordable Housing

Moving families from experiencing homelessness to being stably housed requires consideration of housing affordability. For any household, HUD defines housing as "affordable" when a household spends no more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Exhibit 9 shows the affordability of the housing that families entered when they left the CAHS system.

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[17] Due to more immediate priorities, the development work required to make Minnesota's HMIS into an open system has not yet occurred.

[18] Data source: Ramsey County Shelter Waitlist

[19] Individual families are identified through their unique Ramsey County case ID number.

Exhibit 9 demonstrates that more than half (57%) of the families exiting the CAHS system through the Supportive Housing Referral Program moved into housing that required 30% or less of their monthly income.

9. *Percent of income spent on rental housing at time of exit from CAHS system, 2016*[20]

Percent of income spent on rental housing	Diversion	Housing Referral
30% or less of income	16%	57%
31 to 50% of income	29%	4%
51 to 65% of income	16%	1%
66% to 80% of income	12%	3%
More than 80% of income	15%	2%
Not housed at exit	1%	26%
Not paying rent	12%	5%
Missing	0	2%
Total	101	367

In 2015, according to the Census Bureau, 25% of Ramsey County renters were "severely cost-burdened," i.e., paying more than half of their monthly income on their rental housing costs. As shown in Exhibit 9, in 2016, only 6% of the families exiting CAHS through the Supportive Housing Referral Program moved into housing that required more than half of their monthly income.

In contrast, CAHS Diversion is designed to prioritize assisting families with moving into market-rate housing. Given this and the current Ramsey County rental market, it is unfortunate but not surprising that Exhibit 9 also shows that 43% of the CAHS Diversion households exited to rental housing that required the family to pay more than 50% of their monthly income on housing.

Although Exhibit 9 indicates that the majority of families exiting the Supportive Housing Referral Program exited to permanent housing, it is important to note that one out of every four (26%) of these families did not have any housing arranged at program exit.

## F. Identify and Track Racial Inequities in Housing Stability

Racial disproportionality among people experiencing homelessness in a family group in Ramsey County during 2016 is visualized in Exhibit 10, which contrasts the distribution by race of the general population of Ramsey County with the distribution by race of family members in each of the various programs in the CAHS system.

As Exhibit 10 shows, African Americans and mixed race people are five times as likely to be found among the family members completing a CAHS Shelter Screen than they are to be found in the general population of Ramsey County. Exhibit 10 also shows that White people are in the opposite proportion, meaning that they appear among the family members completing a Shelter Screen about one fifth as much as would be expected given their presence in the Ramsey County

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[20] Data source: HMIS

population at large. Asian people are also disproportionately unlikely to appear among the family members completing a CAHS Shelter Screen, representing only 3% of those screened while constituting 13% of the Ramsey County general population.

10. *Relative presence of people by race in the general population and in each CAHS program, 2016[21]*
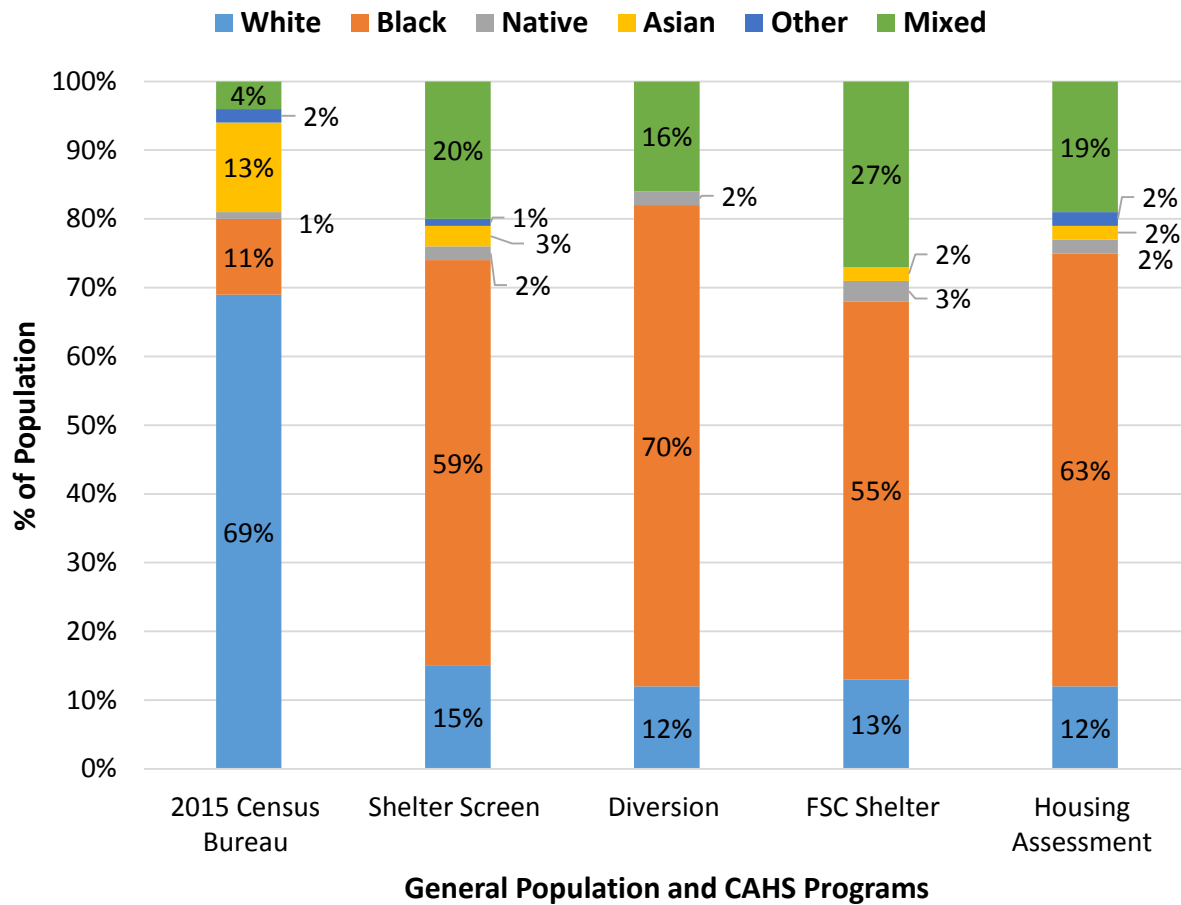
# VII.	Who Are the Families Being Served Through CAHS?

Certain demographic and biographic characteristics of families, children, and heads of households are associated with more challenges in entering one of the programs in the CAHS system.

## A.	Age of Head of Household

Exhibit 11 shows that families led by parenting youth (18-25 years old) represent almost one out of every five (19%) families that received a Shelter Screen and 22% of the families that completed Housing Assessments.

11. Distribution of adults in each CAHS program by age, 2016[22]
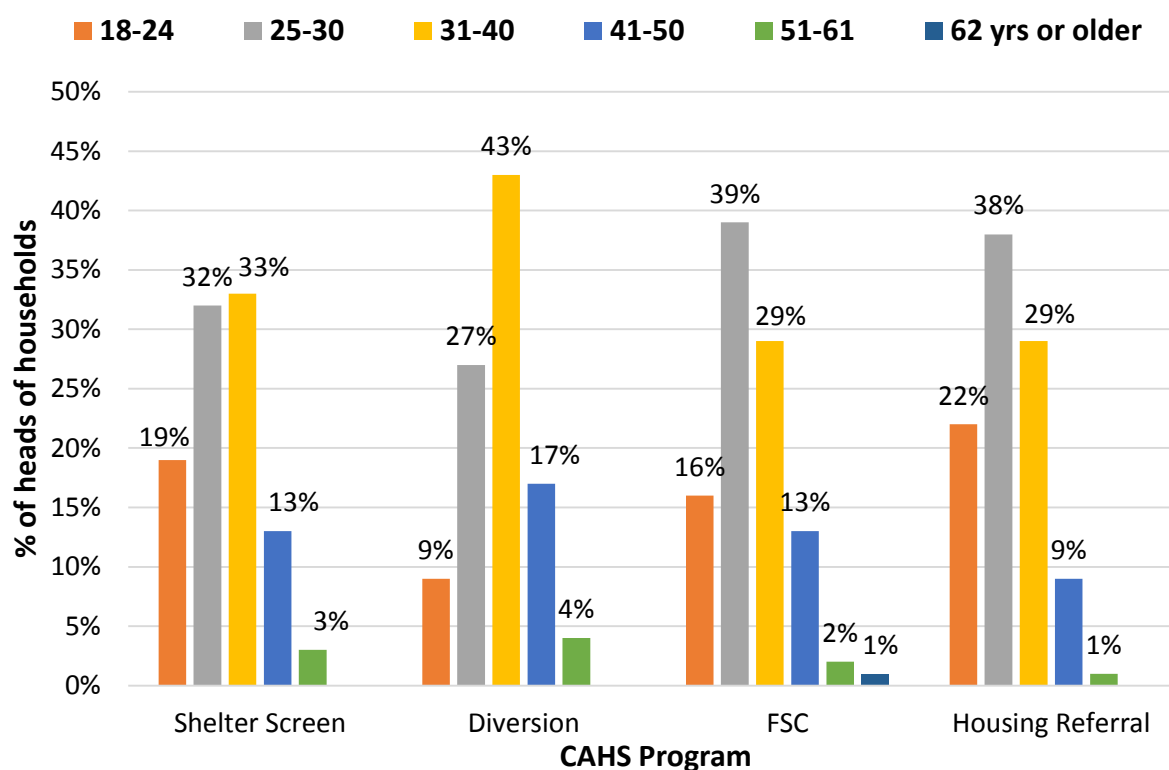
However, families led by parenting youth are the cohort least likely to be found among the families engaged by CAHS Diversion.

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[22] Data source: HMIS

B. Age of Children in 2016

Children who are younger than five years old require full-day childcare in order for parents to engage in education and/or employment. Because of this, families experiencing homelessness with infants and preschool-age children have an additional barrier to resolving their crisis of homelessness. The data presented in Exhibit 12 support this observation through showing that the families served in the CAHS Diversion program were more likely to have school-age children (70% of Diversion children were school-age) than families represented in the other three CAHS programs (53% of the children entering emergency shelter and Supportive Housing Referral Programs and 56% of children in families who completed a Shelter Screen were school-age).

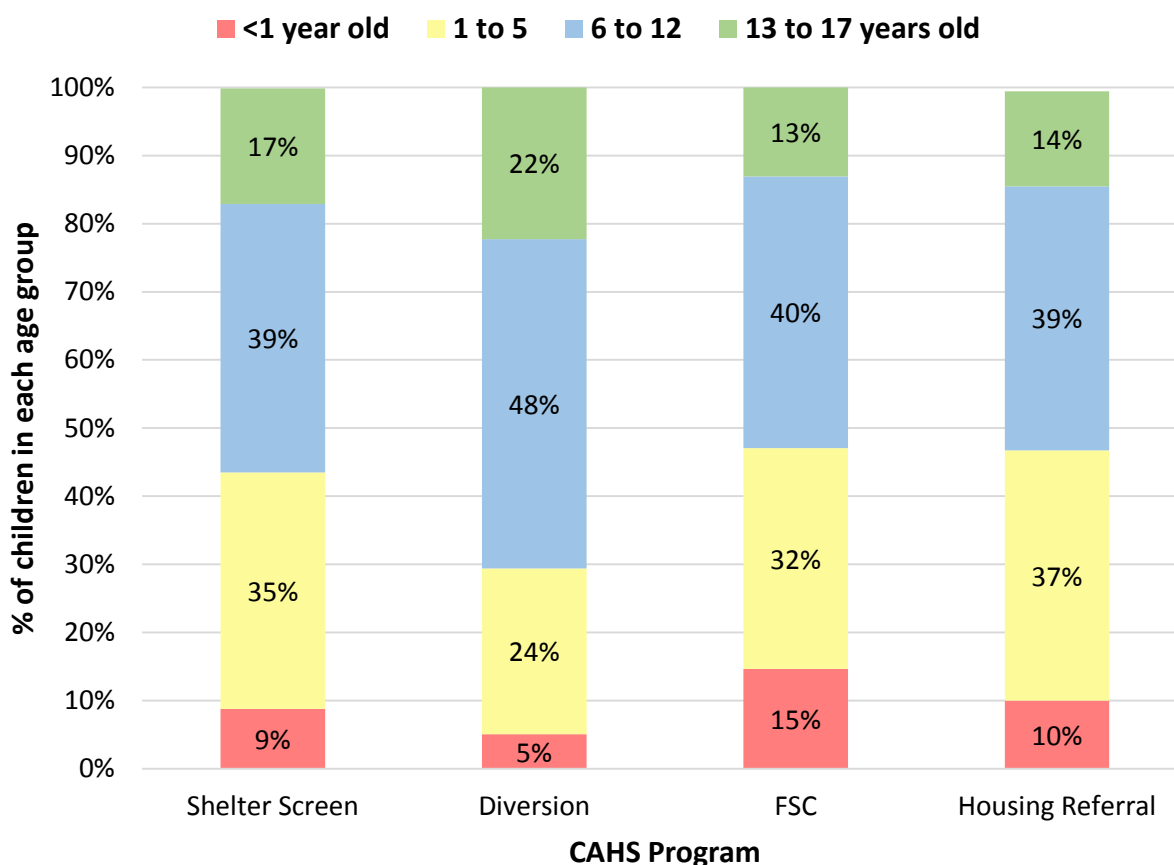*12. Distribution of children by age in each CAHS program, 2016[23]*

Exhibit 12 also shows that the very youngest children (infants under the age of one) were most likely to be found among the families staying at the FSC emergency shelter. More than one out of every seven children (15%) at FSC were infants under the age of one.

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[23] Data source: HMIS

C. Household Composition

Not surprisingly, families led by single mothers represent the majority of families served in the various CAHS programs (between 65% and 82% of all families were led by single mothers).[24] The second most common family formation is a family with children led by an adult couple. One-fourth (25%) of the families served at the Family Service Center were families of this type.[25] Single fathers and pregnant women without older children represented very small percentages of the families served.

D. Disability

Among families experiencing homelessness, there is often a parent who is disabled. At least three out of every ten adults served in each of the CAHS system's programs in 2016 had a disability of long duration. More than one out of every three adults (36%) served at the Family Service Center had a disability of long duration, while almost half (45%) of the families served in the Housing Referral program of CAHS had this type of disability.[26] While the HMIS data available did not specify disability type, anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of disabled parents were suffering from a mental health disability.

E. Domestic Violence Survivor Status

Surviving domestic violence is a common characteristic among the families experiencing homelessness in Ramsey County. Families served in CAHS Diversion, the Family Service Center, and the Supportive Housing Referral Programs of CAHS were routinely queried about whether adult members of the families were survivors of domestic violence.

13. Percentage of CAHS adults who are domestic violence survivors and percentage of those who are currently fleeing abusers, 2016[27]

	Diversion	FSC	Housing Referral
Total number of adults	132	157	514
Yes, adult is a DV survivor	43%	45%	65%
If yes, % currently fleeing abusers	12%	23%	58%

Exhibit 13 illustrates that among the families served in CAHS Diversion, 43% of the adults were survivors of domestic violence, of which 12% were currently actively fleeing their abusers. Almost half (45%) of the adults living in the Family Service Center were survivors of domestic violence, among whom almost one in four (23%) were currently fleeing their abusers. Two-thirds (65%) of the adults in families receiving Housing Assessments were domestic violence survivors, among whom over half (58%) were currently actively fleeing their abusers.

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[24] Data source: HMIS
[25] The large share of two parent households at this emergency shelter is unlikely to be common across HHR shelters due to differing eligibility requirements.
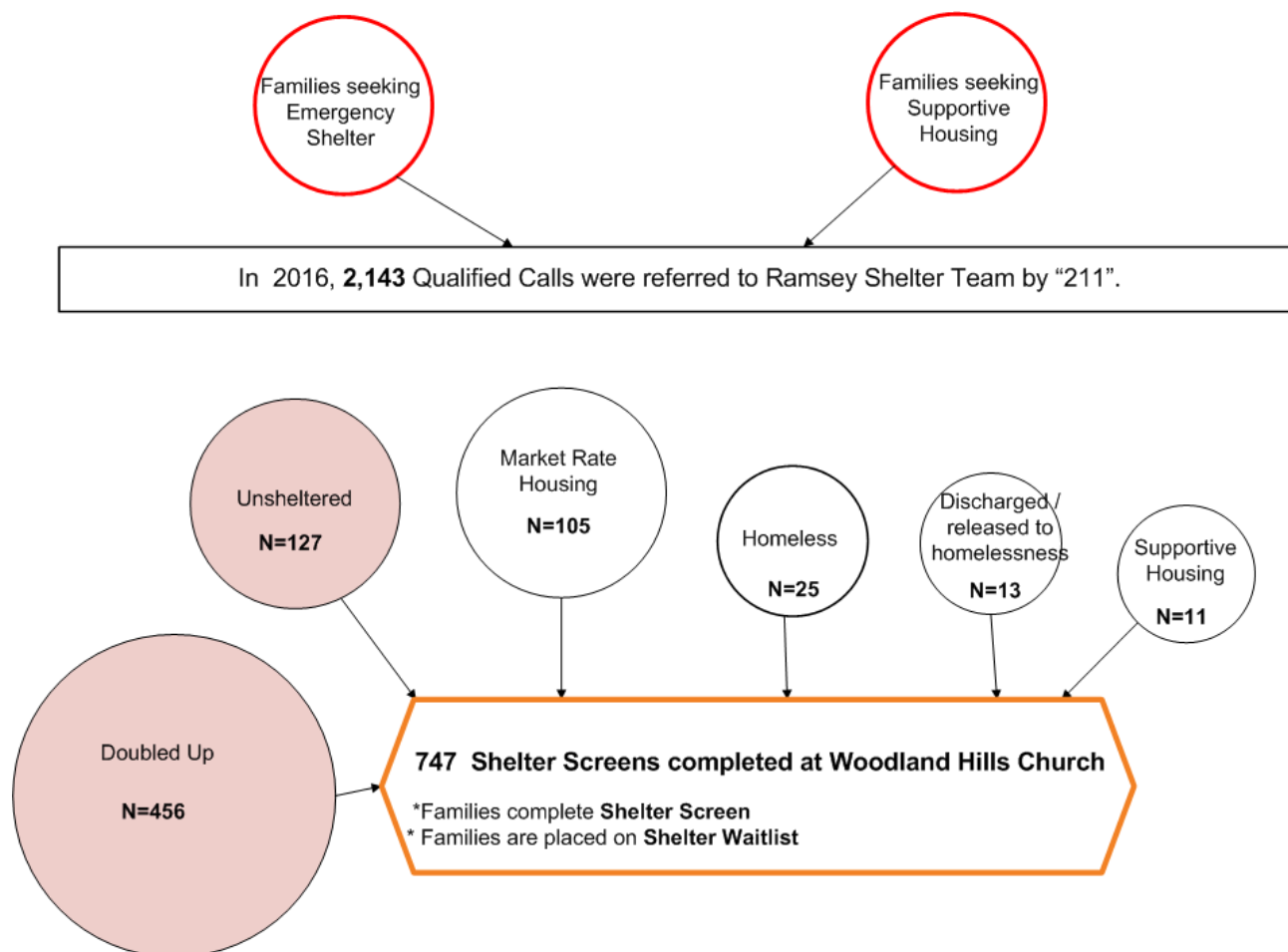[26] Data source: HMIS
[27] Data source: HMIS

VIII. Movement of Families through the Various Programs within the CAHS System

Exhibit 3 on page 10 presented a high-level view of the CAHS system beginning with families experiencing homelessness entering the CAHS system and closing with those families ultimately being connected with housing. This section provides a more detailed analysis as to where the clients are coming from as they enter each program of the CAHS system (where they spent the night before entering that program) and their destinations upon leaving the CAHS program.

A. Getting onto the Shelter Waitlist

Exhibit 14 uses HMIS and United Way 211 data to depict the steps involved in getting onto the Shelter Waitlist and the variety of locations where families had stayed the night previous to completing a Shelter Screen.

14. Steps and locations prior to getting onto the Ramsey County Shelter Waitlist, 2016[28]

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[28] Data source: HMIS and United Way 211

As Exhibit 14 illustrates, among the 747 Shelter Screens completed during 2016, only 14% represented families who were losing their market-rate housing. Over half (61%) of the Shelter Screens were completed with families who were doubled up or staying with family or friends the night before their Shelter Screen. An additional 17% of the screens were completed with families who were unsheltered. This includes sleeping in tents, cars, skyways, abandoned buildings, and other situations unfit for human habitation.

B. From the Shelter Waitlist to Diversion

Shelter is a service-heavy and costly intervention best suited for families with the highest barriers and fewest resources and supports. Shelter is also disruptive to families by adding complexity, stress, and confusion to an already overloaded household. CAHS Diversion seeks to work with families waiting on the Shelter Waitlist who have the resources, skills, and social supports needed to resolve their housing crisis without entering emergency shelter. CAHS Diversion's goal is to avoid service-intensive interventions when a lighter touch can be effective in homelessness resolution.

The national best-practice standard for diversion programs is to combine the services of prevention programs (such as rental or deposit assistance) with the more individualized and intensive supports found in a rapid re-housing program (such as housing search, moving support, and/or short-term case management). However, CAHS Diversion has had considerable success with an approach that emphasizes prevention of a unique crisis event (such as preventing eviction or advocating for an earlier move-in date for a client) by providing additional monetary assistance.

CAHS Diversion is one of the most successful and cost-effective programs within the CAHS system. As shown in Exhibit 15, among the 103 families referred to the Diversion Team, 71 were placed in market-rate housing and an additional 18 were placed in subsidized housing. This is an 86% success rate in terms of connecting families with stable housing.

Once diverted, CAHS families do not tend to re-enter the CAHS system. In 2016, only 2% of CAHS Diversion families later entered shelter.

15. Costs avoided through Diversion, 2014-2016[29]

	Costs associated with Ramsey County reimbursement rate[30] for a 30-day stay for a family of 4:	Cost of diversion per household of any size
2014	$3,456 @ 28.80/bed/night at Family Service Center	$687
2015	$3,515 @ 29.29/bed/night at Family Service Center	$796
2016	$3,515 @ 29.29/bed/night at Family Service Center	$887

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[29] Data source: CAHS and Ramsey County
[30] The cost for a 30-day stay in shelter presented in this exhibit represents only the Ramsey County reimbursement rate for shelter stays and does not take into account the significant additional costs it takes to run a shelter.

CAHS Diversion saves taxpayer money. Exhibit 16 shows that since 2014, Diversion's per-family cost (for a family of any size and for an extended period of time) has remained about one quarter of the cost per family for a month-long stay for a family of four in an HHR emergency shelter.

16. Families served by CAHS Diversion are likely to become housed, 2016[31]
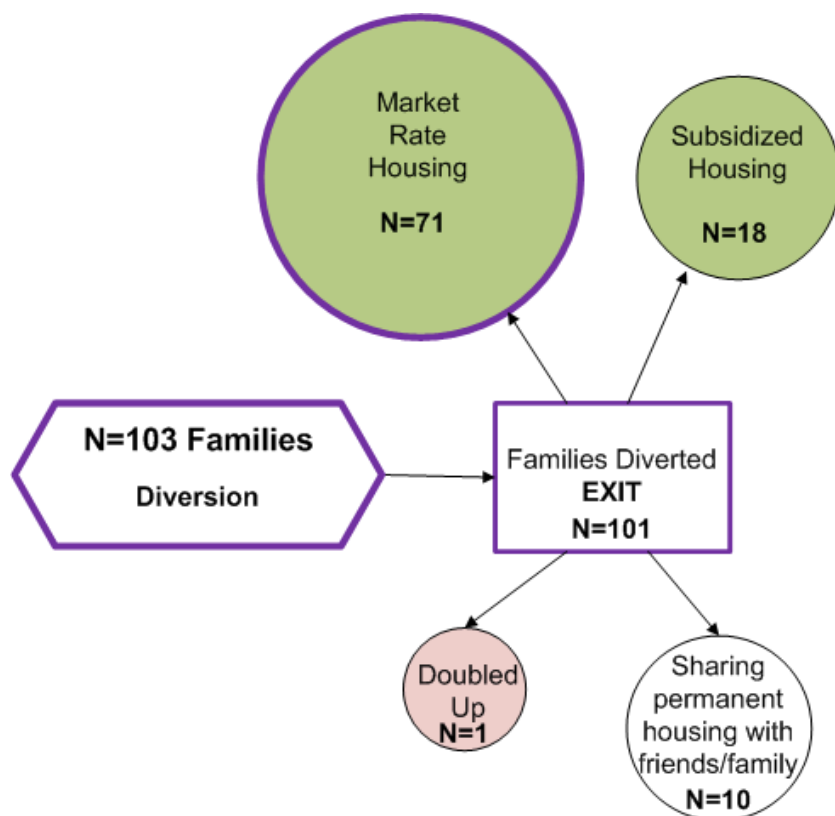
CAHS Diversion's success in placing families in market-rate permanent housing is at least partly due to the fact that the Shelter Team and Diversion Team collaborate to identify the Shelter Waitlist families who have higher levels of material resources, personal maturity, and family configurations that point to higher likelihood of successful diversion. For instance:
  – More than one of every three Diversion families (38%) had monthly incomes greater than $1,600. In contrast, the same proportion of families in both the Shelter Screen and Supportive Housing Referral Programs had incomes between $401 and $800 per month.[32]
  – CAHS Diversion families tended to have more of their income derived from wages. Half of the Diversion families (50%) were receiving income earned through employment. In contrast, only 26% of the families added to the Shelter Waitlist and 32% of the families completing Housing Assessments earned at least some of their income through employment.[33]

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[31] Data source: HMIS
[32] Data source: HMIS
[33] Data source: HMIS

– In comparison with other programs within the CAHS system, families engaged in CAHS Diversion services were also more likely to be headed by an older parent (25 years old or older) and have school-age children rather than infants.

C. From the Shelter Waitlist into Shelter

Among the Shelter Waitlist families that did not receive Diversion services, several other potential outcomes exist, as Exhibit 17 shows, including entering shelter.

17. Movement off the Shelter Waitlist, January through September 2016[34]
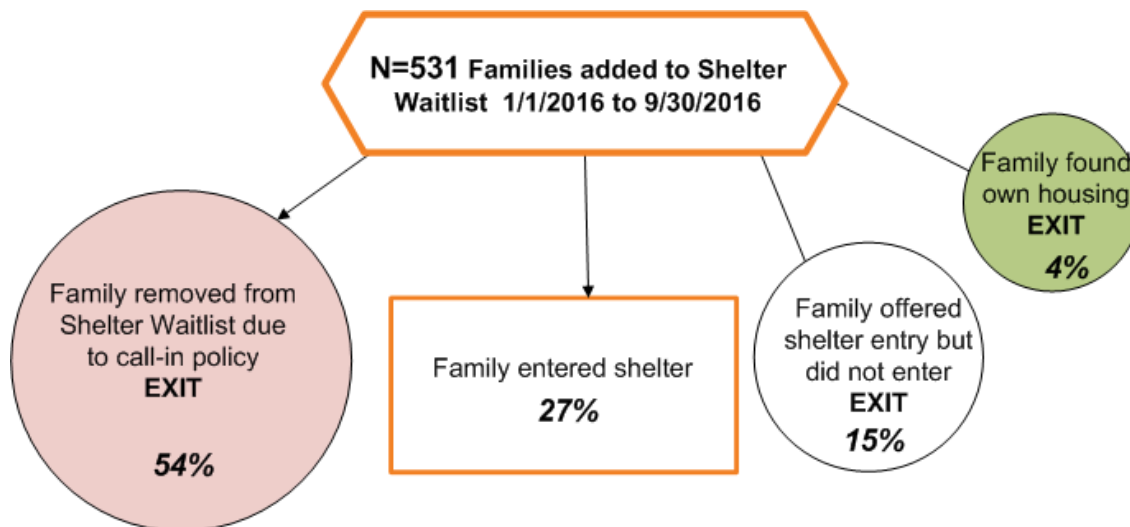
As Exhibit 17 shows, among the 489 unique families who entered the Ramsey County Shelter Waitlist 531 times between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2016, slightly more than one in four (27%) subsequently entered an emergency shelter.

Among the 73% of families who did not enter shelter:
– 15% were offered shelter but did not enter.
– 4% resolved their crisis by finding their own housing.
– 1% was still on the Shelter Waitlist.
– 53% of client intakes ended with the family becoming disqualified and removed from the Shelter Waitlist.

Almost half (49%) of the families entered onto the Shelter Waitlist were removed due to their failure to comply with the Shelter Waitlist call-in policy.[35]

The average family waited almost 3 weeks (about 20 days) before they exited the Shelter Waitlist, either by entering shelter, resolving their own crisis, or by failing to call in according to Waitlist policy.

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[34] Data source: Ramsey County Shelter Waitlist for the first nine months of 2016
[35] If the family fails to call and leave a message on the Shelter Waitlist voicemail on two Mondays (not necessarily sequentially), the family is removed from the waitlist.

The Shelter Waitlist is organized according to a prioritization system that places primacy on the families that are known to be most vulnerable. This system is effective in shortening the wait for the families in greatest crisis.
- The highest priority families, those brought or referred to the Shelter Team by police, hospital staff, or child protection staff, had the shortest average wait time (about two weeks or 14.7 days).
- The next most vulnerable families, those who were referred to the Shelter Team by social workers, clergy, or other professionals due to staying in unsheltered situations (such as staying in vehicles, skyways, tents, etc.) waited an average of 16 days before they entered shelter or were removed from the Shelter Waitlist for another reason.

D. Getting on a Housing Priority List

Exhibit 18 shows that 76% (350) of the families that completed Housing Assessments and were entered on a Housing Priority List were staying in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or domestic violence shelter at the time of their assessment. Of the remaining 88 families, the majority (76) were living in either doubled-up or unsheltered situations.

18. Family location at the time of completing Housing Assessments and being added to the appropriate Housing Priority List, 2016[36]
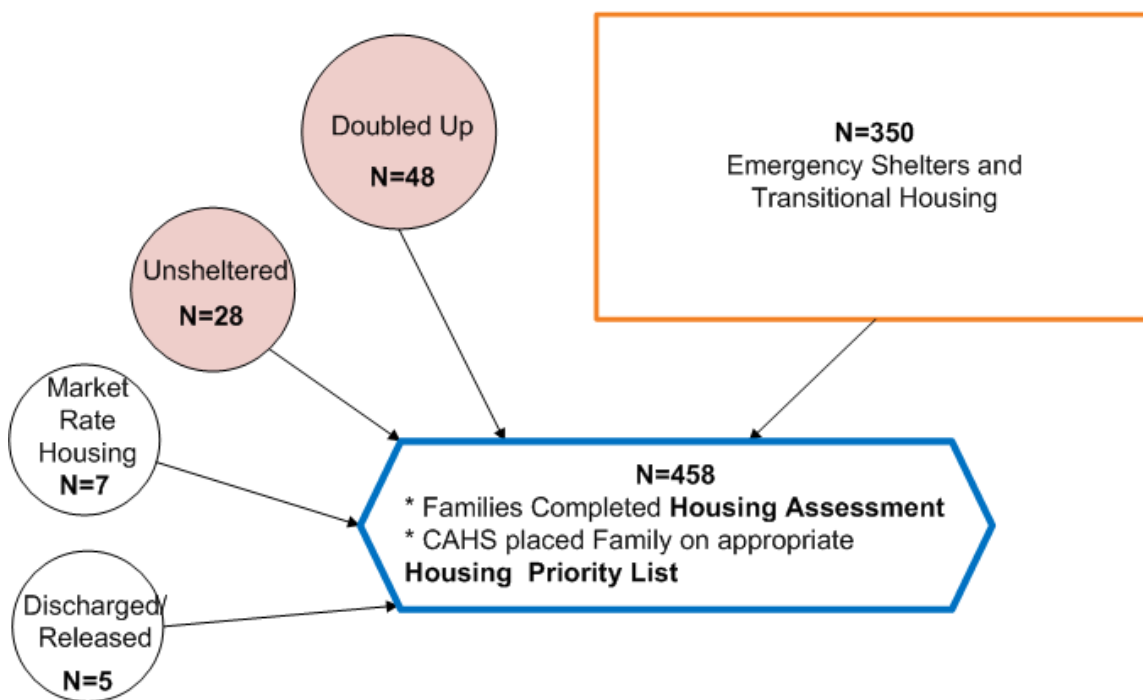

E. From Housing Priority List to Program Exit

Exhibit 19 uses the CAHS Housing Priority List data to illustrate the variety of destinations to which CAHS families exited when they left the CAHS system.[37] During 2016, 215 families exited the CAHS system to enter supportive housing that had been arranged through CAHS and a community housing service provider.

The families that did not successfully connect with supportive housing during 2016 had a number of different trajectories. Exhibit 19 shows that of the 141 families that exited the Housing Priority List without being matched to housing by CAHS, 24% (34) left to enter housing they had arranged themselves. Over half (81) of all the families that exited CAHS without being assisted in entering housing left for unknown destinations.

19. Destinations upon exiting the Housing Priority Lists and the CAHS system, 2016[38]

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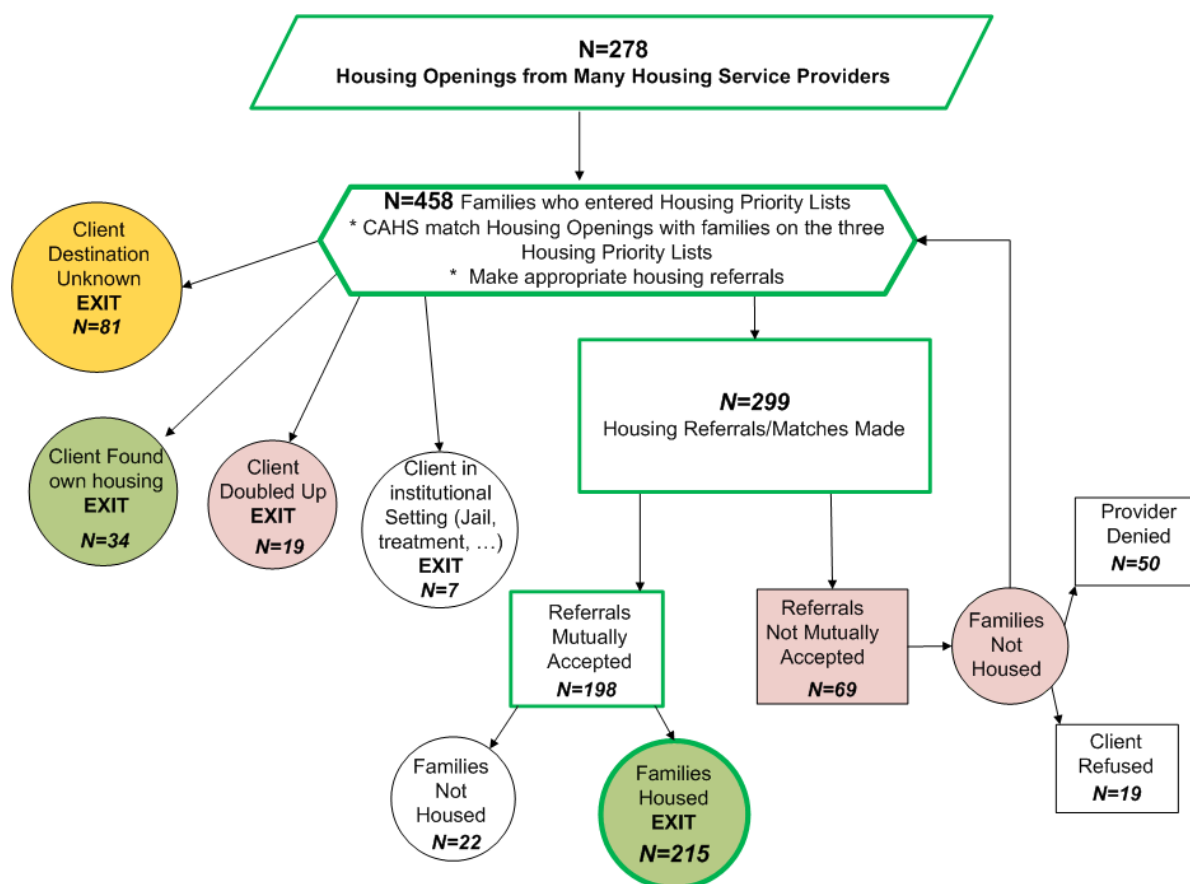
[37] Please note that the various numbers provided (for the 2016 CAHS volume of openings reported, referrals made, and families housed or not housed) will not square due to the numbers of each of these already in the Housing Referral system on January 1, 2016 and the number of referrals still unresolved on December 31, 2016.

[38] Data source: CAHS Housing Priority List

As Exhibit 19 shows, 69 housing referrals were not mutually accepted (so the families were not housed) due to the following reasons:
- In 36 cases, the housing service provider refused a family based on that family's perceived or real ineligibility for the specific housing program.
- In 16 cases, the housing service providers refused a family due to the provider's inability to contact the family.
- In 19 cases, the family declined the referral due to a range of issues (such as housing location being too close to the parent's abuser). In 17 cases, the housing referral was accepted by both family and housing service provider, but the family was refused by the landlord (such as the St. Paul Public Housing Authority or a private landlord).
- In five cases, the housing referral was accepted by both family and housing service provider but the family's subsidy expired before the family could locate housing. This is common in areas like Ramsey County and the city of St Paul, which have both low vacancy rates and many landlords with active biases against renting to households using housing subsidies.

IX.   Looking Ahead: Upcoming Changes in the Current Climate

A.   Local Governance Changes

In the past year, a subcommittee of Heading Home Ramsey has been designated as the entity overseeing CAHS, as well as the youth and singles coordinated entry systems that are in development. This subcommittee, known as Coordinated Entry for Everyone (CEE), is made up of a diverse group of stakeholders, including housing and homeless prevention providers, population specific agencies, the public school system, and people who formerly experienced homelessness. This group is tasked with careful oversight and evaluation of various coordinated entry activities to ensure that all coordinated entry systems in Ramsey County (including CAHS) are meeting the needs of the community. Within CEE, work groups have formed that include Advocacy, Training/Marketing, Policy, and Data and Evaluation. This momentum has allowed for progress in aligning the community with state and federal expectations and has created priorities for tasks within each subcommittee, ensuring continued progress.

B.   Federal Policy Changes

HUD has released new requirements[39] that identify additional coordinated entry features to be implemented by January 23, 2018. This makes the coming year an important action year for Ramsey County and CAHS. Highlighted in the HUD notice is language that changes the scope of access for survivors of domestic violence, stating that households fleeing domestic violence, even if currently on a lease or doubled up, are automatically eligible for Supportive Housing Programs requiring HUD homeless status. Programs will also be required to accept self-certification of fleeing domestic violence as eligibly HUD homeless, which is a significant departure from previous guidance that detailed specific limitations around self-certification by clients.

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[39] CPD-17-01 Notice Establishing Additional Requirements for a Continuum of Care Centralized or Coordinated Assessment System

The HUD notice also emphasizes the need to incorporate prevention services in the CoC's coordinated entry system as a crucial component in the homeless response portfolio. While it is not yet clear how this improved coordination will be implemented, the issue is already under consideration among state-funded prevention programs, such as the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP).

X.　Opportunities to Improve Family Outcomes

A.　Lowering Barriers to Housing and the Role of Funders

For the foreseeable future, there will continue to be more demand for supportive housing than there is supply. On top of this capacity constraint, families experiencing homelessness face barriers to housing stability that are embedded in both the local housing market and in funder requirements. For example, families that receive a referral to a housing program are sometimes denied entry due to losing their HUD homeless status or being unable to find a landlord willing to work with them before their subsidy expires.

Some programs and funders require that the parent(s) of the families that are housed participate in parenting, life skills, or therapy groups. These requirements can also present barriers to success for parents of families experiencing homelessness who may need to devote time to formal education or work and may feel disrespect due to the conflation of their parenting skills and their housing status.

Lack of required documentation continues to be the single biggest hurdle for a family seeking a housing referral. Documentation requirements vary by housing program and funder and may include state-issued IDs, proof of income, Social Security cards, birth certificates, chemical treatment exit paperwork or a Rule 25 chemical use assessment, disability documentation, and homeless status documentation. The time and energy it takes to apply for and collect documentation, especially when a family is in crisis or facing safety concerns, is a huge barrier for families who would likely be better equipped to obtain documentation after they are safely housed.

HHR's CEE committee (which includes CAHS staff) has successfully eased some of the documentation burden placed on families. Several project-based voucher programs will now accept Social Security numbers verified by Ramsey County rather than insisting on actual Social Security cards. This was done by engaging and educating both St. Paul Public Housing Authority and the Metropolitan Council's Metro Housing Rental Assistance program on the difficulties families often have in hanging onto or obtaining new Social Security cards.

Continuing to closely partner with funding entities is key to HHR's success in improving housing stability outcomes through lowering or eliminating eligibility requirements for families in need of housing.

B. Improve Data Collection and Coordination Capabilities

Improvements in data collection targets and tools would result in better decision-making at both program and CoC levels. Two examples of needed improvements follow:

1. **Doubled-up populations**: Regional program and policy developers have not yet completed a thorough analysis of the magnitude and flow of the doubled-up population as it exists outside of the shelter system. An accurate data-driven understanding of how families and individuals flow between being housed, doubled up, and homeless will provide crucial information to funders and policy makers. CAHS data clearly show that doubled-up families seek housing permanency. Local school districts can contribute to this discussion through an analysis of student mobility, tracking changes of address and time in shelter. HHR has an opportunity to create innovative solutions based on data that provides a more accurate picture of the fluidity of housing instability as a cycle of homelessness, doubled up, and precariously housed.

2. **Tools and technology needs**: The local HMIS administrator's role has transferred to Institute for Community Alliances (ICA), and progress is being made toward creating an open HMIS system. ICA is also working to make the various forms of the VI-SPDAT available in HMIS. Locally, Ramsey County will develop a HMIS-based supplemental questionnaire that aligns both the singles and family eligibility criteria into one assessment.

   In addition, both the Shelter Waitlist and the Housing Priority Lists should be hosted within HMIS, discontinuing the reliance on spreadsheets. Once this effort is successful, the CAHS system will have almost all of the data necessary in HMIS, and ultimately will be able to monitor data validity and reliability and improve the relevance of the data collected. All of these efforts will contribute to improved HMIS functionality and efficiency and can be leveraged to improve client outcomes. While it has been a long road, ICA and Ramsey County are on track to have some of these functions available in HMIS within the year.

   Progress has also been made in regards to an open data-sharing platform that will help identify gaps in the system and areas of strength.

C. Opportunities for Advocacy

There are still miles to go in creating a system that adequately responds to homelessness as it exists in the Ramsey County community. At the federal level, supportive housing programs are not intended to serve families doubled up with relatives and/or friends, regardless of the tenuous nature of those brief stays and the likelihood that the stay is putting two households at risk of homelessness.

There is also the question of capacity. How can CEE and CAHS better advocate for the creation of more affordable housing (both subsidized and not subsidized), and how can we connect our clients to a wider array of affordable housing options, in an intentional and effective way?

For these and other reasons, continuing to expand the conversation and include more of the right voices at the table is critical.