Keeping Families Together
Connections that Support Family Success

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Objectives

1. Key Components of NJ’s Keeping Families Together Program

2. Cross-System Connections: Strategies and Key Considerations for facilitating NJ KFT

3. Lessons Learned and Successes
DCF Vision

To assist and empower NJ residents in being safe, healthy and connected.
BUILDING A 21st CENTURY CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

VISION: EVERYONE IN NJ IS SAFE, HEALTHY & CONNECTED

BUILT ON THE VALUES OF: EVIDENCE - FAMILY - COLLABORATION - EQUITY - INTEGRITY

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Who’s in the room?
Homeless/unstably housed caregivers and children are at high risk for poor outcomes including (1,2):

- Domestic violence
- Food insecurity
- Mental illness
- Substance use
- Chronic physical illness

- Unstably housed children more likely to be separated from family or experience out-of-home placement in foster care (3)

- Housing instability may heighten children’s risk for maltreatment (4,5)
Supportive Housing in Child Welfare

- Affordable housing plus supportive services

- Among at-risk adults, supportive housing (6,7):
  - Increases housing stability
  - Improves mental and physical health
  - Reduces substance use
  - Decreases costs to public services such as emergency rooms, shelters, and jails

- Minimal research on supportive housing among child welfare-involved families
NJ Keeping Families Together: Key Components

KerryAnne Henry, LSW
Office of Strategic Development
NJ Department of Children and Families
NJ Context

- **Department of Children and Families (DCF)**
  - First Cabinet-level Department devoted exclusively to serving and safeguarding children and families

- **Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P)**
  - Statewide child protection and child welfare agency

- **Office of Strategic Development (OSD)**
  - Aims to modernize the service array by applying the best available evidence and developing transformational solutions to address the needs of children, youth and families.
DCF is Comprised of the Following Divisions & Offices

- Central Office of Administration
- **Division of Child Protection and Permanency**
- Division of Children’s System of Care
- Division of Family and Community Partnerships
- Division on Women
- Office of Communications and Public Affairs
- Office of Education
- Office of Family Voice
- Office of Licensing
- Office of Monitoring
- Office of Resilience
- Office of Staff Health and Wellness
- Office of Strategic Development
- Office of Training and Professional Development
- The Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit
Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P)

46 Local Offices

9 Area Offices
Efforts to address housing issues among child welfare involved families are fragmented and often include:

- Rental assistance
- Motel payments
- Utility assistance
- Provision of security deposits or furniture
- Referral for FUP vouchers when and where available
For the most part, families hadn’t been in our system before BUT some families returned to CP&P Over and Over

- **Frequently Encountered Families** (FEF) are the small number of families that return to CP&P three or more times within a 12-month period.

- These families have multiple, complex needs and require a large number of resources.
What is NJ KFT?

NJ Keeping Families Together is a supportive housing model aimed at increasing housing stability, decreasing recidivism within the child welfare system, and improving caregiver and child wellbeing outcomes.

Housing
Affordable
Non-time-limited
Independent

Support Services
Flexible
Tenant-Centered
Voluntary
Bringing KFT to New Jersey

Committed to bring KFT model to NJ and was able to do so through a number of partnerships:

- Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)
- Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- Affordable housing developers
- Department of Community Affairs
- Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency
- Provider Agencies
- Child Protection & Permanency: Area and Local Offices
NJ KFT Program Timeline

Initial discussion about Supportive Housing in Child Welfare between DHS and DCF.

2007

ACYF Releases initial funds for KFT national demonstration.

2012

NJ KFT Pilot Initiated

2013

NJ KFT Internal Evaluation Launch

2014

Pilot grows from 10 to 173 families.

2015

NJ KFT External Evaluation Launched with Urban Institute and RWJ. Model Refinement Teams Launched.

2016

Pilot grows from 173 to 623 families.

2017

NJ KFT Training and Coaching begins.

2018

Program Manual Finalized.

2019

Evaluations Continue.

2020

NJ KFT Training Team Launch.

2021
Program Components

- **Targeted Identification of Families**
  - Must be experiencing homelessness or housing instability, have children at risk of out-of-home placement or in out-of-home placement with a case goal of reunification and be facing a number of other co-occurring challenges.

- **Supportive Housing**
  - Access to housing subsidies and housing vouchers
  - Access to an array of support services including case planning with a team of clinical and case management staff and coordination of services

- **Evaluation**
NJ KFT Program Component
Family Identification

- CP&P Local Office, in partnership with service provider

- Indicators of need:
  - CP&P involvement
  - Homelessness and/or housing instability
  - Persistent co-occurring challenges
What does CP&P Involvement mean?

- In-Home - One or more children at risk of out-of-home placement
  - OR
- Out-Of-Home - One or more children in out-of-home placement with a case goal of reunification; and the family is deemed ready for reunification with housing as the only remaining barrier.
How are we defining homelessness and housing instability?

One of the following criteria:

• Sleeping on the street, in cars, or in other places not meant for human habitation
• Homeless three or more times in the last 2 years
• Staying in a homeless shelter, transitional housing, or a residential treatment facility and will be homeless upon discharge
• Moved two or more times in the last 12 months
• Doubled up living with family/friends
• Unstably housed and imminently losing housing within five to seven days
What are co-occurring challenges?

AND Two of the following criteria:

- Primary caregiver has mental health diagnosis/disorder
- Primary caregiver has **substance use** disorder
- Child has mental or behavioral health challenges
- Child has developmental, learning, or physical disability
- Primary caregiver and/or child has a chronic medical condition
- History of or ongoing domestic violence
- Age of youngest child is under 6
- Primary caregiver has history of involvement with the child welfare system as a child/youth or other trauma history.
Partnership with NJ Dept. of Community Affairs and Housing Developers

Mix of Voucher/Unit Types
- Housing Choice
- State Rental Assistance
- LITC
- Single and Scatter sites
NJ KFT Program Component: Support Services

- Case Management
- Parenting Coaching/Life Skills
- Substance Use
- Mental Health
- Employment
- Transportation
- Concrete Support (limited financial services)
NJ KFT Overview

- Statewide – ALL COUNTIES
- 8 provider agencies
- Single-site and scattered-site housing
- Funding
  - Housing vouchers = DCA, DHS, & DCF
  - Supportive services = DCF
NJ KFT SUPPORTS over 600 families!
OVER 600 Families

OVER 1,500 Children
It may sound simple, but IT IS NOT!
NJ DCF: System Collaboration Strategies

Ready to Start

How things really work
There are different approaches

- **Letting “It” happen...**
  - Fund a program and hope for the best. No support for program planning, development and implementation. Monitoring and problem solving focused

- **Helping “It” happen...**
  - Fund a program and interested/motivated implementing agencies figure it out on their own.

- **Making “It” happen...**
  - Active use of strategies to support the adoption of the program
  - Active installation of supports for the implementation of the program
  - Implementation Teams are structured and accountable

Based on Hall & Hord (1987); Greenhalgh, Robert, MacFarlane, Bate, & Kyriakidou (2004); Fixsen, Blase, Duda, Naoom, & Van Dyke (2010)
NJ DCF: System Collaboration Strategies

- Implementation Science Framework

- Commitment to long term family success
  - Alignment of agency Policies and Practice with the Innovation
  - Sustainability planning from the start

- Reducing System Silos
  - Data Sharing
  - System transparency

- Incorporate System Timelines
NJ KFT Partnerships

Property Developers

Landlords

Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen

FAMILY Connections
Hope Lives Here!

CSH

Center for Family Services

RWJF

Turning Lives Around, Inc.

Department of Community Affairs

Ocean Mental Health Services
Building Better Tomorrows, One Life at a Time

Oaks Integrated Care

New Jersey Department of Children and Families

ACENDA

DHS

State of New Jersey
- Case Management
- Parenting Coaching/Life Skills
- Substance Use
- Mental Health
- Employment
- Transportation
- Concrete Support (limited financial services)
NJ KFT Lessons Learned

System Shifts from “Housing Ready” to “Housing First”

Cross-System Alignment (Policy and Practice)

Trust Reduces Complexity

Sustainability Planning
NJ KFT Successes

Flexibility for Families

Services under one roof

Strong Cross System Relationship

Promising Evaluation Findings
What parents think about KFT?

“The program has given me the opportunity to think about my hopes and dreams. Not having to think about where my children will sleep or whether we can get into the house when we get home, is freeing.”

(KFT Parent)
What was most useful about today’s discussion?
Closing and Next Steps

- Sustainable Supportive Housing Model
- Systems Integration
- Ongoing technical support and implementation
- Ongoing Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement
- Influencing a comprehensive continuum of Housing Services
- **NEW** NJ DCF Office Of Housing Announcement

Continuing to support NJ families in being safe, healthy and connected!
DCF continues to provide ongoing support for KFT. If you have questions, concerns or feedback, please connect with OSD.

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Questions?
thank you


