

Costs of Supportive Housing for Homeless Families:

Findings from the High Needs Family Evaluation

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Overview of Presentation

- **Background of the WYFF High Needs Family Program**
- **Description of evaluation**
- **Overview of programs and population served**
- **Service receipt and cost findings**
- **Summary and implications for practice and policy**

Background of the WYFF High Needs Family Program

High Needs Family (HNF) Program

- Funded and designed by Building Changes
- 20 projects at 14 agencies
 - Services paired with over 200 units of permanent housing intended to serve families with high barriers to housing stability
- Variety of housing-site models
 - Urban scattered-site to rural multi-family buildings
- Variety of organizations and services
 - Large mental health agencies to local community action councils



HNF Program Model

Housing First

Primary focus on housing stability

Tenancy not dependent on service engagement



Services

Wide array of services available, but not required

Strengths-based, intensive case management (<10:1)

Harm reduction approach to substance use



Family Eligibility

Family Definition

- At least one adult age 18 or older
- At least one child under age 18

Multiple Episodes of Homelessness

Income Less Than 20% Area Median Income (AMI)

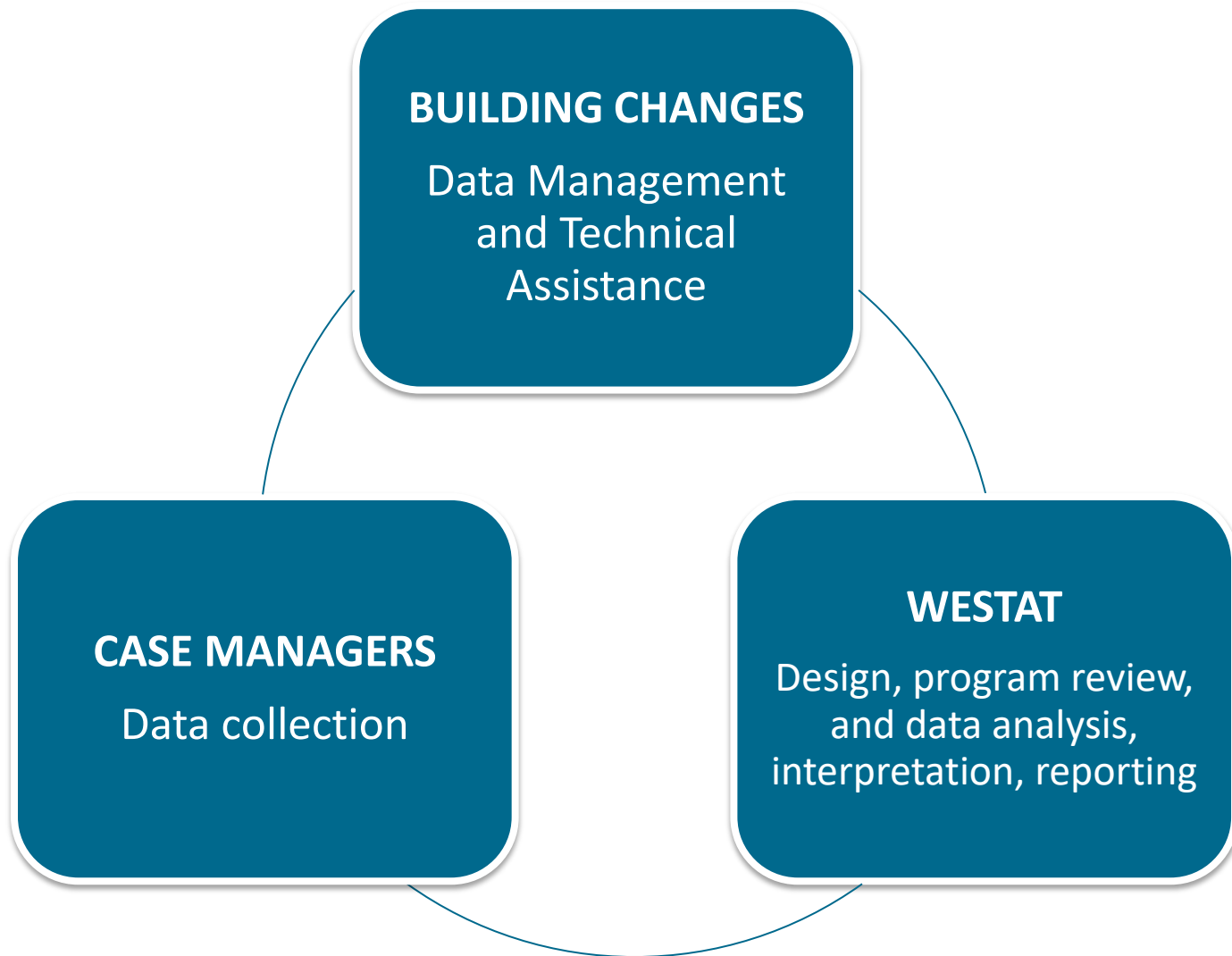


Service Needs and Housing Barriers

- serious and persistent mental illness
- chemical dependency
- domestic violence or other trauma
- HIV/AIDS or other chronic illness
- child protective service involvement
- criminal history

Description of the Evaluation

Multi-site Evaluation



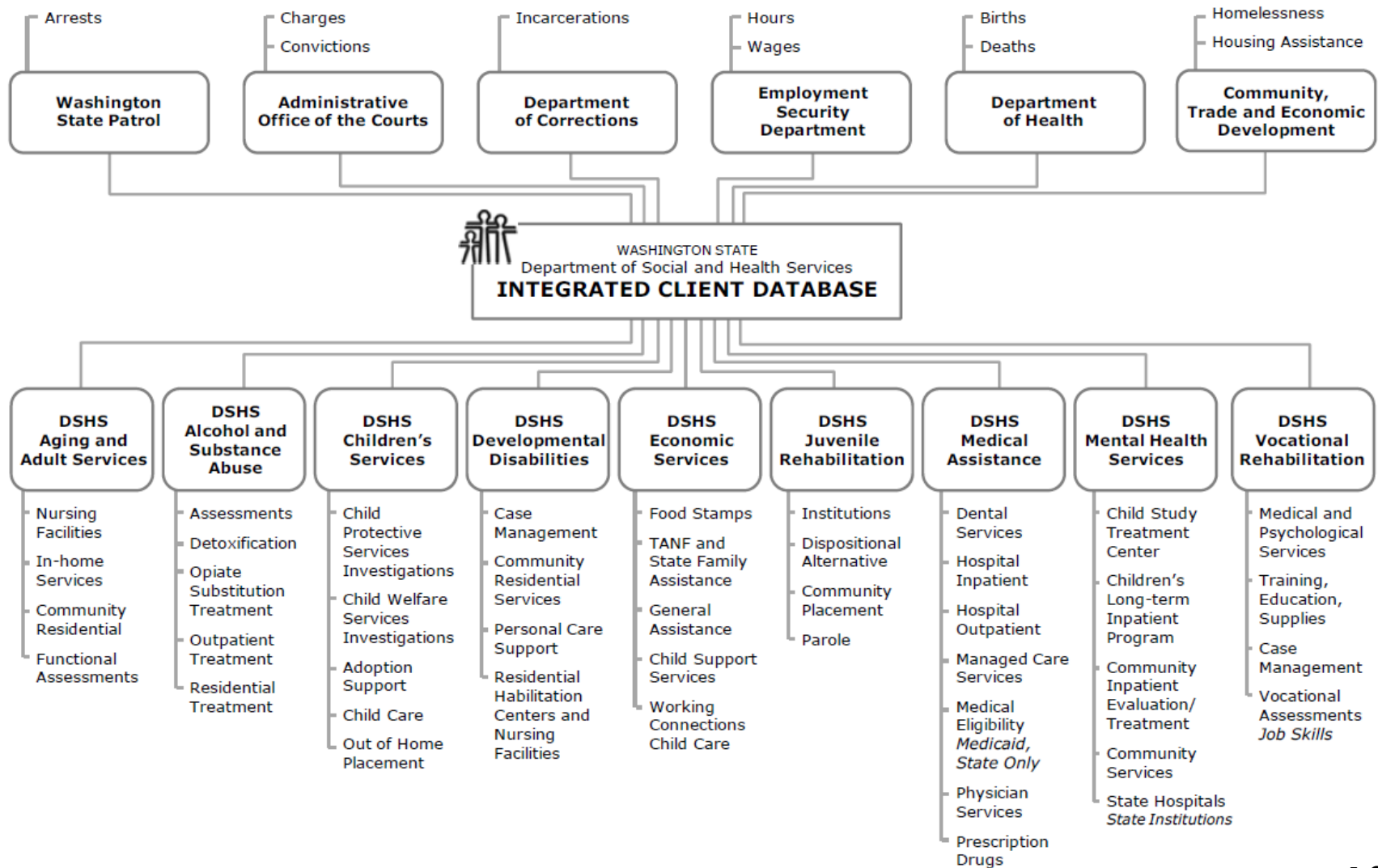
**19 programs participated in the evaluation*

Evaluation Design



- Longitudinal (self-report) assessment data to examine changes over time for families in the program
- Examination of program fidelity
- Expanded with administrative data from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services integrated client database (ICDB)

WA State DSHS Integrated Client Database



Research Questions

- How does access to services change overtime after families enter supportive housing? Do outcomes differ by program fidelity?
- Do families in supportive housing have more improved service use and outcomes than:
 - Families who enter shelter?
 - Families who have housing without supports?
- How do cost shift over time for families before and after entering supportive housing?
- How do these shifts compare to those for similar families entering emergency shelter and public housing?

Service Receipt and Cost Data

Financial benefits

*TANF, Basic Food, child care assistance,
child support enforcement*

Criminal justice

*Arrest, convictions, incarcerations,
juvenile justice involvement*

Alcohol and substance abuse services*

Inpatient & outpatient, detoxification

Child welfare

*Family focused services, foster care
placement*

Mental health services*

Inpatient & outpatient, evaluation

Case management

HNF costs, shelter costs, TH costs

Acute health care services

Inpatient admissions, ER visits

* Costs available for head of household only

Measures of Cost

Financial benefits

Individual-level per month costs

Alcohol and substance abuse services*

Individual-level per month costs

Mental health services*

Individual-level per month costs

Acute health care services

Estimated costs based on # of admissions and ER visits

Criminal justice

Estimated costs based on # of episodes of days

Child welfare

Individual-level per month costs

Case management

Estimated costs based on # of months in program/shelter/TH

* Costs available for head of household only

Overview of Programs and Population Served

Differences in Program Implementation

Target Population

Type of Housing

Availability of Services





Target Population

12 programs serve general population of families with needs

7 programs serve special populations

- Families involved in child welfare system (5 programs)
- Families that have a child separated (1 program)
- Families that have been chronically homeless and living in tents (1 program)

Type of Housing Assistance

| Program | Family Unification Program | Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (time –limited) | Tenant-Based Section 8 | Project-Based Section 8 |
|---------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
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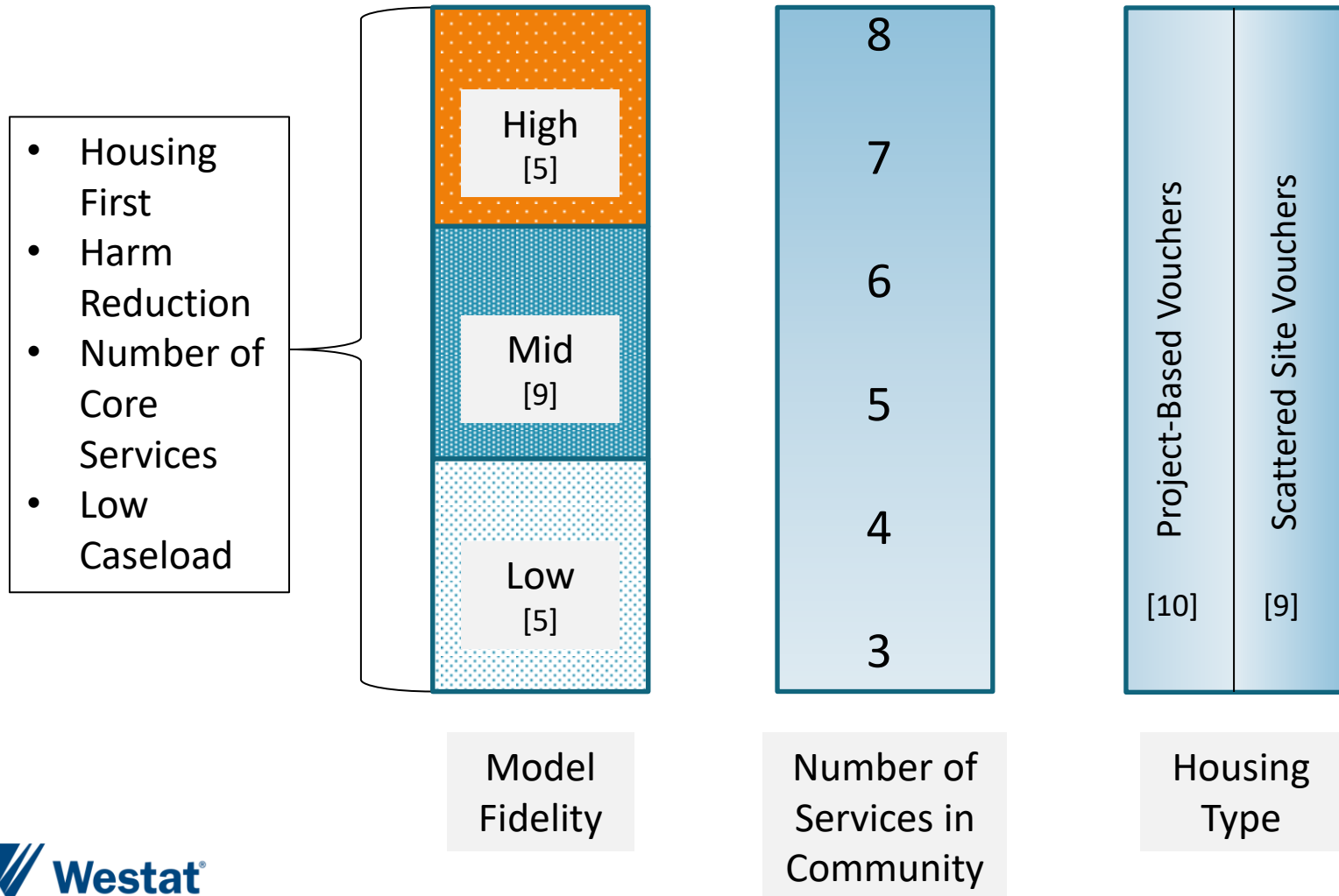
* Program 7 uses local Housing and Homelessness Assistance Act to pay families' rents

Variation in Availability of Services

- Requirement of services
- Frequency of contact with case manager
- Specialized professions on HNF staff
- Access to flexible funds
- Types of services available on-site
- Types of services available in community



Variations in High Needs Family Projects



Profile of HNF Families at Entry*

Use of rigorous screening tool resulted in screening in 385 homeless families with multiple housing barriers

HoH Profile

90% female, avg. 32 years old
69% W, 10% AA 10% L, 11% other

Family Composition

13% with another adult
2.3 children,
42% have at least one child away

Homeless History

91% homeless in past 2 years

Income, Employment, Education

\$512 avg. monthly income
12% currently employed
67% HS/GED or higher

Housing Barriers

73% have 3 or more barriers

61% have 1 or more MH indicators
22% positive SA 'screen'

23% report current physical or sexual abuse; 88% lifetime abuse

50% report a chronic medical condition

21% have a child living away due to CPS involvement

34% report past felony conviction

* Based on assessment data.

Service Receipt and Cost Findings

In the 12 months after entering housing (compared to the 12 months prior), families

- Increase access to TANF and Basic Food (SNAP)
- Decrease inpatient substance abuse treatment and increase outpatient substance abuse treatment
- Increase outpatient mental health services
- Experience comparable or higher rates of ER use for themselves and their children
- Have fewer arrests and convictions
- Experience reunification (among those with CPS separations)
- Increased access to case management

Program Findings



Higher fidelity relates to:

- Longer stays in housing
- Lower ER use for HoHs
- Lower rates of convictions

Families in project based vouchers have:

- Shorter stays in housing

Number of services in the community does not lead to differences in families' outcomes.

Highlights of Key Comparative Findings

HNF Families Compared to Families in Emergency Shelter have

- Increased access to mental health and substance abuse outpatient services
- Higher ER use for children
- Higher rates of family reunification
- Lower rates of criminal justice involvement
- Higher rates of TANF receipt

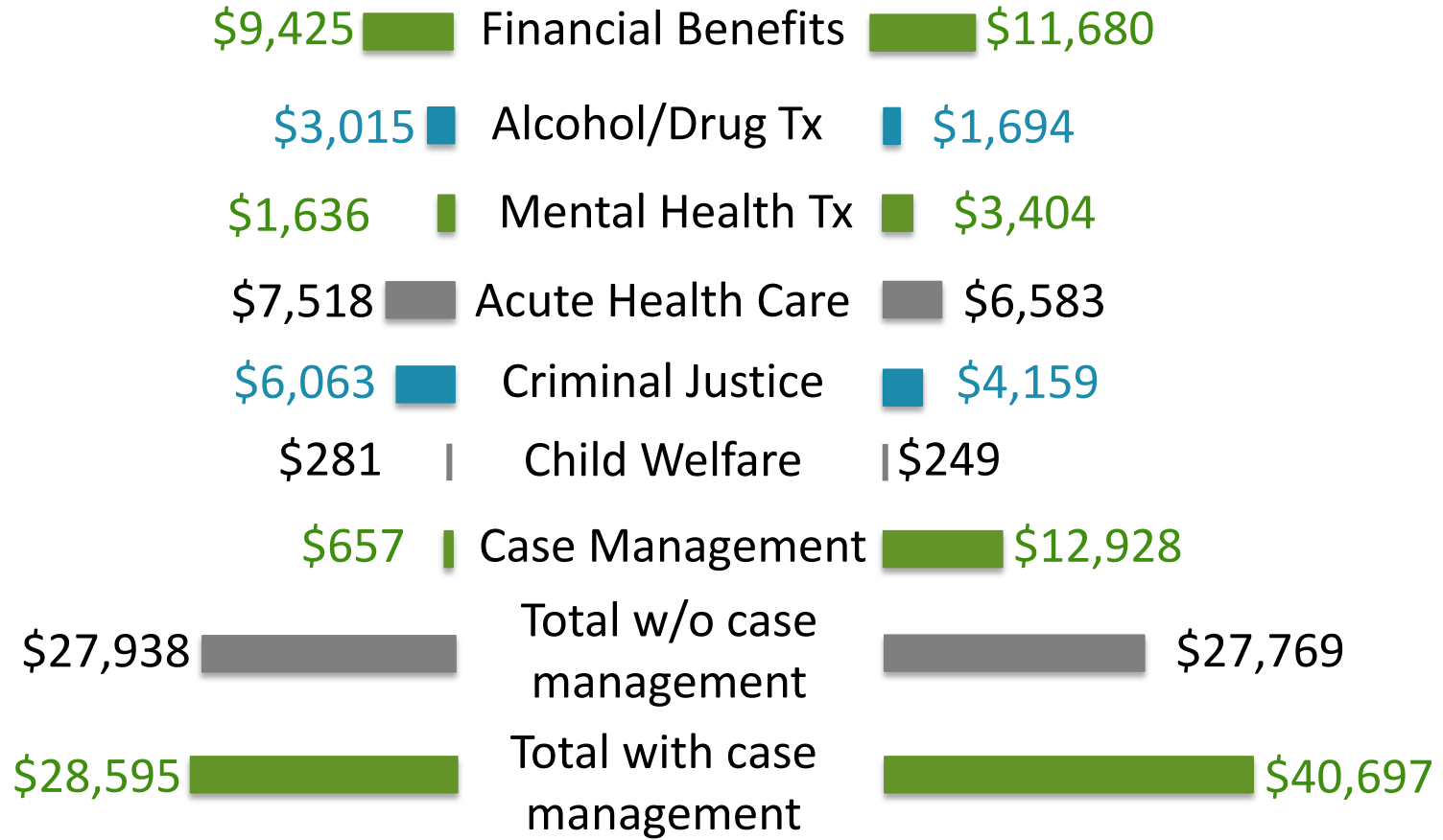
HNF Families Compared to Families in Public Housing have

- Increased access to mental health and substance abuse outpatient services
- Higher ER use for heads of household

Costs for HNF Families Over Time

Before entering housing

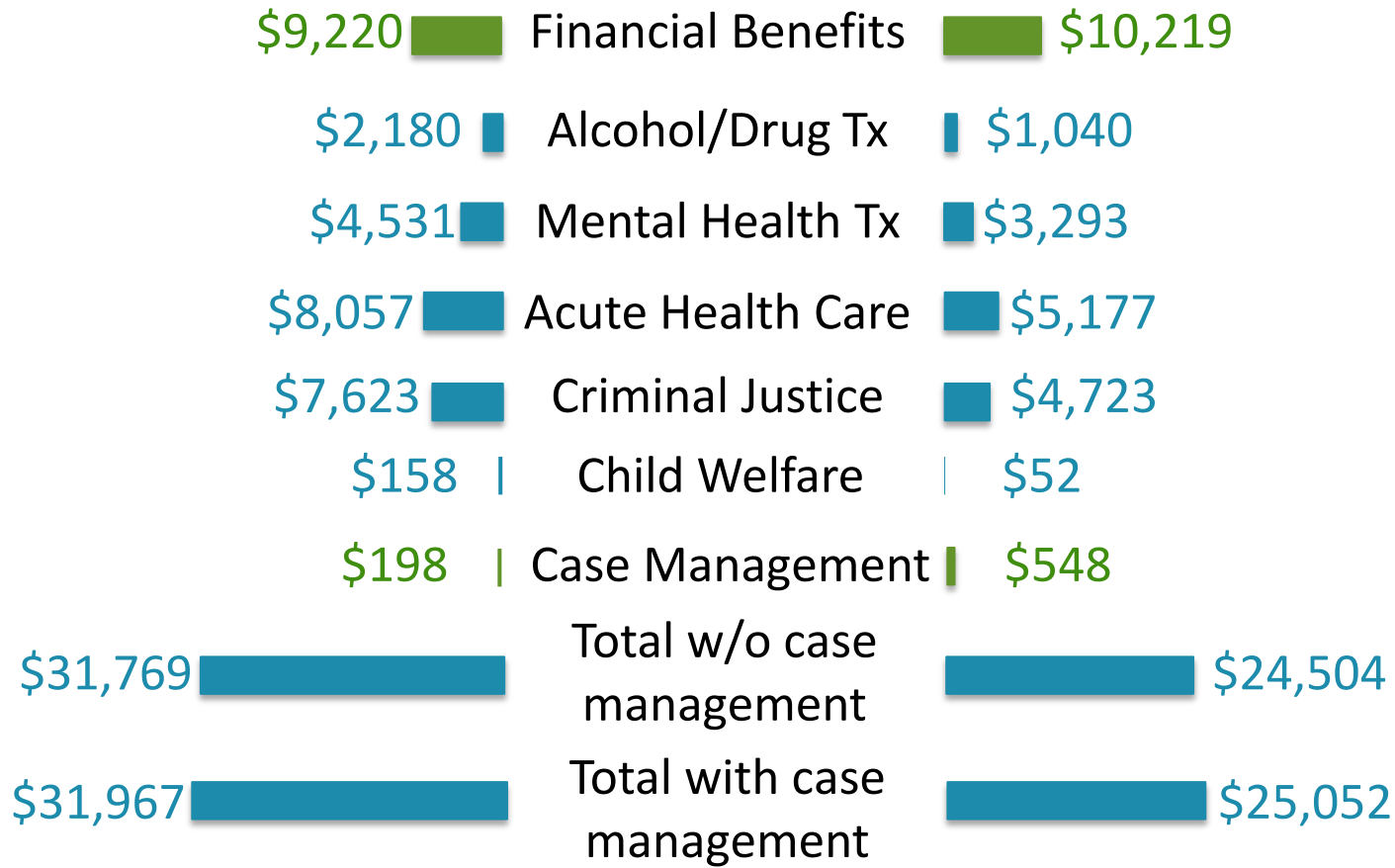
After entering housing



Costs for PH Families Over Time

Before entering housing

After entering housing



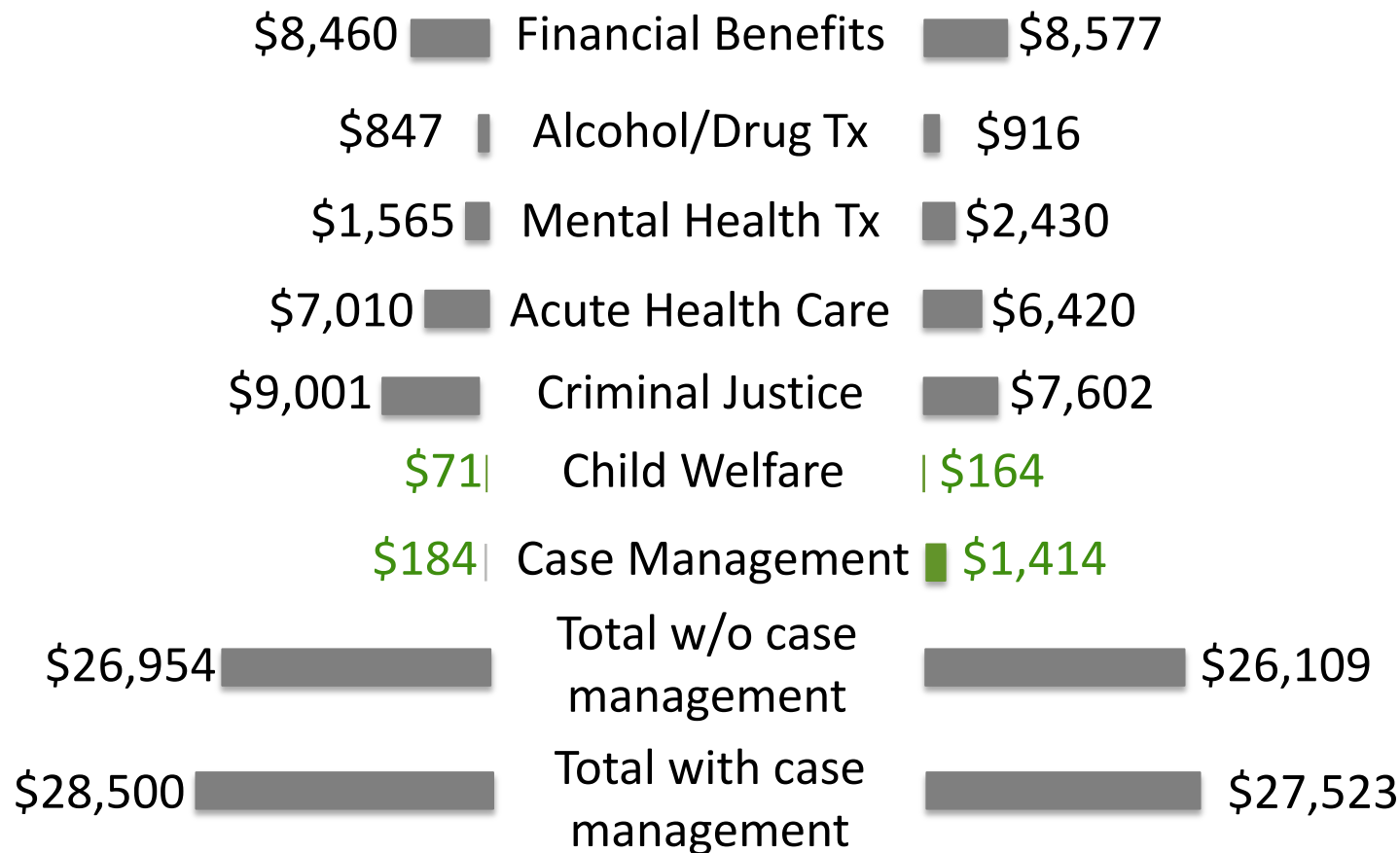
Differences in Change Over Time: HNF vs. PH

| Service/Cost Category | Increase or Decrease in Costs | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | HNF (N=309) | Public Housing (N=309) |
| Financial Benefits** | \$2,255 | \$999 |
| Alcohol/Drug Tx* | (\$935) | (\$2,880) |
| Mental Health Tx | (\$1,321) | (\$1,140) |
| Acute Health Care** | \$1,768 | (\$1,237) |
| Criminal Justice | (\$1,904) | (\$2,900) |
| Child Welfare | (\$32) | (\$106) |
| Case Management*** | \$12,271 | \$350 |
| Total w/o Case Management*** | (\$169) | (\$7,265) |
| Total with Case Management*** | \$12,102 | (\$6,915) |

Costs for Shelter Families Over Time

Before entering shelter

After entering shelter



Differences in Change Over Time: HNF vs. Shelter

| Service/Cost Category | Increase or Decrease in Costs | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| | HNF (N=250) | Shelter (N=250) |
| Financial Benefits*** | \$2,228 | \$117 |
| Alcohol/Drug Tx* | (\$356) | (\$589) |
| Mental Health Tx*** | (\$1,229) | \$69 |
| Acute Health Care* | \$1,834 | \$865 |
| Criminal Justice* | (\$1,540) | (\$1,399) |
| Child Welfare* | \$15 | \$92 |
| Case Management*** | \$12,323 | \$1,230 |
| Total w/o Case Management | (\$935) | (\$845) |
| Total with Case Management*** | \$13,276 | \$385 |

Summary and Implications

Summary

After entering supportive housing, HNF families experience increased access to a number of services, significantly more than families in shelter or housing without supports.

That access corresponds to

- increases in costs associated with financial benefits, mental health services, and case management; and
- decreases in substance abuse and criminal justice costs

Overall, the costs of serving families in supportive housing is comparable before and after entering housing except for case management.

Costs for families in supportive housing are comparable to costs for families in shelter (except for case management), but higher than for families in public housing

Implications

Supportive housing is especially useful in helping families with housing barriers access needed benefits and services and reunify with their children.

Supportive housing leads to significant costs shifts away from high cost, crisis care to lower cost, preventative services.

Housing itself leads to decreases in service costs for families, even without special services and provides better outcomes for families than shelter.