

East Side Housing Program evaluation summary

Results for the 2010-11 school year

The East Side Housing Trust Fund program takes a community-wide approach to increasing housing stability. A venture of the East Side Family Center (ESFC) of Neighborhood House, the program works to demonstrate that neighborhoods, foundations, landlords, schools, businesses, government, private investors, and non-profit developers and service organizations can work together to create family and neighborhood stability and vitality.

Program staff help families find and maintain decent, safe, and affordable housing. The program also administers a Housing Trust Fund program providing rental subsidies. In addition to housing services, case management staff provide resources and referrals for a variety of issues that pose challenges to clients' self-reliance, including employment, income, mental health, transportation, child care, education, and other concerns. The program's Life Skills classes also provide training aimed at strengthening families and providing tools for stabilizing their housing situation.

Research methods

The housing program participates in an independent evaluation conducted by Wilder Research. The evaluation assesses program implementation, participant satisfaction, and program and participant outcomes. Information used in the evaluation comes from program records, client telephone interviews conducted by Wilder Research, client self-reliance assessments completed by the case manager, student academic and attendance data, and Saint Paul Public Schools' student stability data. Additionally, interviews with exiting families were conducted, to capture the impact of the program on their families.

Key findings in 2010-11 school year

The housing program met or exceeded most goals established for the 2010-11 school year. Following are key findings from the 2010-11 school year.

Client outcomes

- Seventy-two percent of clients improved or maintained high levels of self-reliance related to income between their first and most recent assessment, exceeding the goal of 50 percent.
- More than half of clients (56%) improved or maintained high levels of job retention and stability as of their most recent assessment.
- Two-thirds of eligible children were enrolled in some kind of pre-school program as of the most recent assessment. This exceeded the program goal of enrollment of 50 percent of children in formal early childhood programming.
- Children participating in the program at John A. Johnson were reading at a higher level at the end of the 2010-11 school year, exceeding the goal of 75 percent of students improving their academic performance.
- Children participating in the program continue to struggle with attendance. Attendance of children declined during the 2010-11 school year. The program goal was not achieved.
- The student stability rate of 86 percent in 2009-10 (the most recent school year available) declined slightly from the previous two years.

Client satisfaction

These results reflect Housing Trust Fund recipients who participated in telephone interviews conducted by Wilder Research.

- Almost all respondents rated their overall satisfaction with the services provided as "good" or "outstanding."

continued

- All reported that their housing situation had improved since they first sought help from the program, and all felt that services or referrals from program helped them improve their situation.
- All indicated they were better prepared to solve a housing problem in the future because of the services or referrals they received from the program.
- Almost all also indicated things had improved for them or their families in other ways besides housing because of the help they received from the program.

Client impact

Two families who have been involved in the housing program for the past five years agreed to share their families' stories.

- The clients noted that program staff provided support, empowering them to reach out for support, to advocate for themselves and their families, and to trust themselves and their decisions.
- With the support of program staff, one client had the courage to end an abusive relationship, and learned to trust and give her children more freedom.
- Both clients felt had a greater understanding of tenant rights and responsibilities, and felt that the program gave them the skills to more successfully navigate relationships with current and future landlords.
- Both clients were looking toward the future, of attaining full-time employment, increased education, home ownership, and continued health and mental health stability.

Issues for consideration

Results also provide insights that staff can use to inform future services. The following are issues staff may want to consider.

- Although satisfaction interview ratings were high overall, staff can consider whether there are ways to strengthen service-delivery areas where a couple of participants provided lower ratings.
- Despite a number of improvements, clients continued to face barriers to self-reliance. Specifically, income, employment, child support, tenant/landlord relationships, and social support continue to be ongoing challenges for many clients.
- While academic achievement of children enrolled in the housing program did improve, attendance declined during the 2010-11 school year. Program staff should explore barriers to children attending school on a regular basis and should work with families to ensure that children have the opportunity to attend school.
- After increasing during the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years, the student stability rate decreased slightly in 2009-10. It remains important to assess stability over time, to identify any upward or downward trends.

“The program gave us a sense of stability. They taught me organization, setting and meeting goals, and accomplishing those goals. These skills made life much easier for me and my family.”

“[The program] helped by having someone there to help when I needed it. I never really had that before.”

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For more information

This summary presents highlights of the *East Side Housing Program evaluation report*. For more information about this report, contact Amy Leite at Wilder Research, 651-280-2661.

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