Building Early Links for Learning
Promoting developmental friendliness and quality ECE enrollment for families staying in emergency housing
Early Childhood Education (ECE) participation among children in shelter

Collaboration between emergency housing & early childhood education providers

Developmental friendliness of housing programs
Focus on Family Shelters: Emergency Housing/Transitional Housing (EH/TH)

18 City-contracted providers

Spread out across the city, to some degree
Focus on Family Shelters: Emergency Housing/Transitional Housing (EH/TH)

18 City-contracted providers

Spread out across the city, to some degree
GOAL 1: Increase developmental friendliness of shelter environments
Developmentally Friendly Spaces

Health & Safety
Wellness & Development
Workforce Standards & Training
Programming
Food & Nutrition
We did this twice…

Self-Assessment “pre”

Self-Assessment “post”
What types of improvements were requested?

- **Safety**
  - Outlet covers
  - Cabinet Locks
  - Mirrors
- **Admin./Building**
  - Bulletin boards
  - Lamination
- **Infants:**
  - Tummy time
  - Breastfeeding
- **Toddlers/Preschool**
  - Furniture
  - Toys
Trainings Requested

- Effects of homelessness on child development
  - Events, trainings
- Adverse drug and allergic reactions
  - CHOP Homeless Health Initiative, Children’s Work Group
- Ongoing needs:
  - CPR, Certifications
  - Trauma informed care
Before
After
Before
After
More afters!!
Self-Assessment: Pre and Post

![Chart showing comparison between pre and post assessments across various categories such as Health & Safety, Wellness & Development, Workforce & Training, Programming, and Nutrition & Food.](chart.png)
Are families utilizing these purchases and improvements?

- All 14 sites – families utilize funded items “a lot”
- 11 out of 14 – families utilize items every day
- 13 out of 14 – the BELL Project had a positive impact on their environment
- “Project had a very positive, calming, and engaging effect.”
Examples:

• “Didn’t have 1st floor changing table before, so it’s used all the time now before and after meals.”

• “Safety door knobs and the new Bright Space door has given families more independence in their free time – enhanced autonomy while maintaining safety.”

• “Reassured the families that babies are important too.”
Examples:

• “This project helps set foundations for future learning for our young kids. It helped provide very important little moments between our moms and their kids, which can change the life trajectory for a child.”

• “A survey for parents would be helpful so they can directly say what they want and need, in addition to the self-assessment.”
Summary:

• High scores at initial self-assessments
• Implemented most requested improvements – families using them!
• Other BELL activities relevant to SA items
• Scores increased significantly in 4 areas
  • Health & Safety
  • Wellness & Development
  • Workforce & Training
  • Programming
How do EH/TH staff interpret items on the Self-Assessment?

• Language/policies specific to ECE:
  • sometimes confusing, and often misinterpreted
  • i.e. IDEA Part B and Part C

• EH/TH programs vary greatly:
  • resources available
  • types of supports available to families

• Recommendations for improving clarity

Sample:
• n = 20 housing providers
• Nationally representative

Method:
• Cognitive interviews

Shaw, S. (in preparation)
Families and Communities Engaging Support (FACES)

• Consider both staff and parent perspectives of community support and developmental friendliness

• Assess how parents perceive support from the shelter environments

Vrabic, S. (in preparation)
Participants and Measures

• Parents of 60 families with at least one child (age birth-5)
• 5 Philadelphia family shelters
• Assessments include:
  • Perceived support from shelter
  • Parenting stress
  • Parent depression symptoms
  • Recent family adversity/trauma
  • Child well-being

Vrabic, S. (in preparation)
Parent Perception of Community Support in Shelter

- 14 new items specific to emergency housing
  - Correspond to specific **Self-Assessment** items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Mostly</th>
<th>Completely</th>
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“I feel I have a voice among this community’s staff (e.g., case managers, social workers, etc.)”

“I feel this community supports the enrichment and growth of my child.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Items Parent Perspective</th>
<th>Self-Assessment Items Staff Perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I feel this community follows a schedule that supports my needs and goals as a parent.”</td>
<td>“We follow a schedule that allows infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to attend child care, Head Start, IDEA Part C early intervention or Part B preschool or other early care and learning programs.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I feel this community supports the enrichment and growth of my child.”</td>
<td>“We have onsite early childhood enrichment programming for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I feel I have a voice among this community’s staff (e.g., case managers, social workers, etc.)”</td>
<td>“We encourage and incorporate parent feedback regarding our facility’s policies towards the safety and development of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

- **No significant association** between parent perspectives and staff perspectives
  - Parents are considering different aspects of these items or perceiving environment differently
  - Underscores importance of incorporating parent perspective in assessments of shelter environments
Parents identified strengths as well as areas needing improvement:

**Highest scores:**
- Community and I are working toward a common goal.
- Community gives me opportunities for private time with my child.
- I feel my child is safe in this community.

**Lowest scores:**
- I feel listened to and respected when I talk about my problems.
- I feel I have a voice among this community’s staff (case managers, social workers, etc.).
- I feel this community puts my unique perspective first.
Parent perspective matters!!!

Perceived Support
Self-Assessment scores
Parenting Stress
Parent depression symptoms
Family adversity/trauma

Child Well-Being

**

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Summary:

• Parents have different and important perspective on shelter environments
• Parents feel their children are safe and that goals are shared
• BUT parents feel disempowered…
  ➢ Maintaining parent well-being can support resilience in children experiencing homelessness!
  ➢ Include parents in rule-making process, empower parents to support their autonomy and their own valued family routines.