

MORE HELP FOR OUR KIDS:

MOTHERS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

SPEAK OUT



DECEMBER 2017

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The report was researched and written by Deeda Seed, Jessica Roadman and Bill Tibbitts.

Infographics designed by Erica Podegracz.

Finally, many thanks to the seventy-seven courageous mothers who took the time to talk with us about their lives.

About Crossroads Urban Center

Crossroads Urban Center is a grassroots, 501(c)(3) organization located in Salt Lake City. Established in 1966, Crossroads has been distributing food through its emergency food pantries, clothing and household essentials from its thrift store, and providing other emergency assistance to Utahns in need since its inception. Alongside direct services, Crossroads recognizes the absolute necessity of addressing systemic causes of homelessness and economic struggle. To do this, Crossroads organizes community groups that connect citizens and policy-makers to create systems and structures that support people in their fight to escape poverty. For more information or to support Crossroads:



(801) 364-7765



www.crossroadsurbancenter.org

Summary

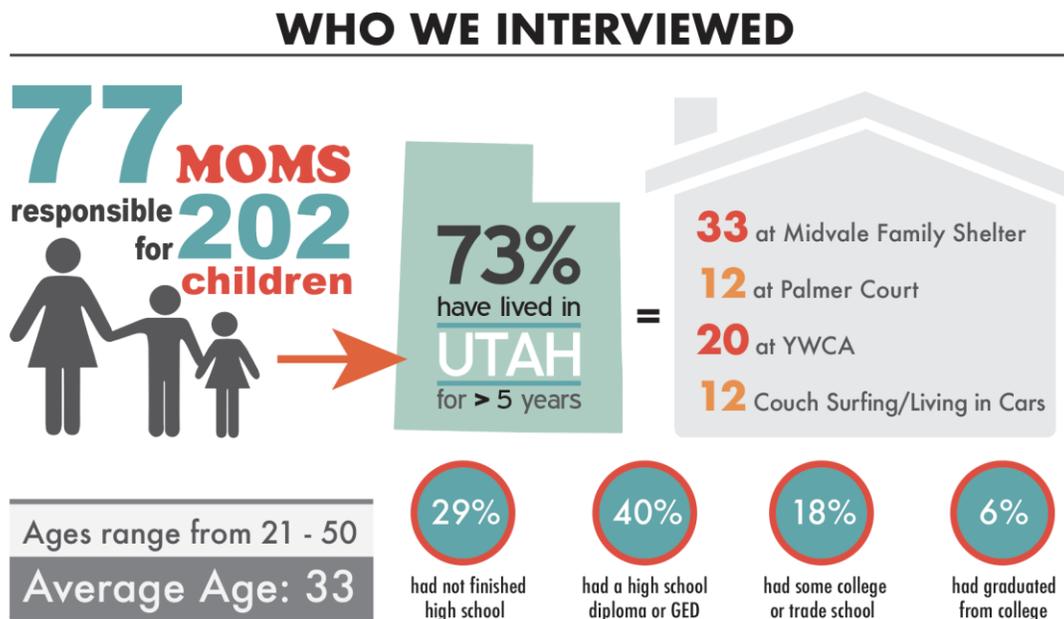
With funding from the United Methodist Women, Crossroads Urban Center conducted a survey of 77 mothers who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. We also conducted three focus group sessions with smaller groups of mothers in order to explore issues in more depth. The goal of the survey and focus groups was to better understand the challenges these mothers face, what has been helpful for them, and what would be of benefit in the future.

These issues are critical, not just for the mothers we interviewed, but also for their children, for as we know, the fate of homeless children is tied to the fate of their parents.

Who we talked with:

We interviewed mothers at Crossroads Urban Center's Downtown Food Pantry, the Midvale Family Shelter, the YWCA Shelter, and the Permanent Supportive Housing complex, Palmer Court, using a survey with open and closed ended questions. While we are summarizing some of what we found in order to understand the kinds of barriers these mothers face, every circumstance is unique, and it is important to have help available that is flexible.

We interviewed 77 mothers who, between them, are responsible for 202 children.



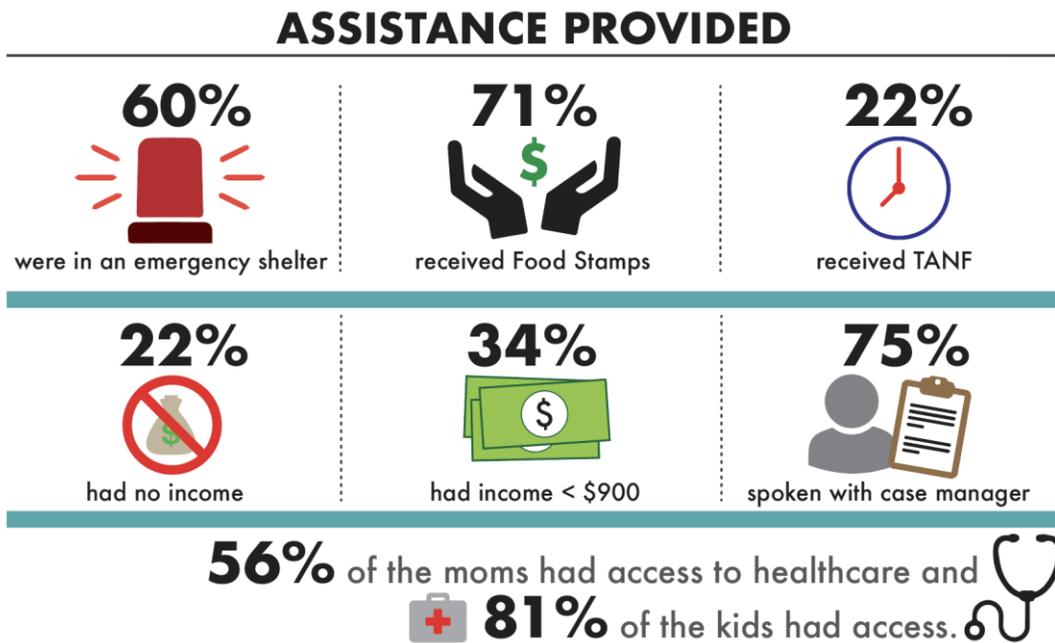
Families become homeless after a crisis

91% of the mothers we interviewed had experienced a crisis (such as job loss, domestic violence, a health crisis, or some combination of things) that left them homeless.

66% had experienced domestic violence. Recovering from domestic violence is not easy. Utah is fortunate to have service providers, such as the YWCA of Utah, who provide specialized services to mothers made homeless through domestic violence. Despite their efforts, the YWCA is only able to meet a small portion of the need, and, as we outline in our report, lack of financial and housing assistance exacerbates already terrible situations for everyone.

79% said it was hard to find an apartment they could afford. Utah is facing a low-income affordable housing crisis. Recent data from a Cushman & Wakefield report shows a rental vacancy rate of 2.6%, which is the lowest the research organization has found in Utah in 16 years.¹ The result is a market in which home ownership is unrealistic for many and rents are reaching record highs, with the average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment of \$990 per month. The availability of housing renting for \$800 or less has decreased by over 25%. The lack of truly affordable housing is increasing homelessness in Utah.

What help homeless families and those at risk of homelessness had:



Emergency shelter and food stamps are critical sources of support for the mothers we interviewed, but there were significant unmet needs in terms of access to low-income housing, childcare, a living wage, transportation, health care and education and job training.

¹ Cushman & Wakefield, *Apartment Market Report: Greater Salt Lake Area*, Summer 2017. www.cushmanwakefield.com

What homeless families and those at risk of homelessness need:

WHERE MORE ASSISTANCE IS NEEDED



Recommendations

1. Establish another family shelter with onsite childcare.

Currently there is one shelter for families in Salt Lake County, with space for 300 people. It is filled beyond capacity, with the overflow families being sheltered in motels. Using motel rooms as shelter is expensive and difficult. As there is no end in sight to our low-income housing crisis, this pressing need for shelter will persist. To address this, our community needs to establish another family shelter, following the model developed in Midvale, with the addition of onsite childcare.

2. Build another Permanent Supportive Housing development for families.

Being homeless is traumatic and stressful, being homeless and a parent, even more so. Permanent Supportive Housing is one form of affordable housing that has been very helpful for families working to stabilize their lives and recover from the trauma of homelessness. Rents are set at 30% of income and case managers are onsite to help parents. However, many challenges arise when families are placed alongside individuals who do not have children. We urge our community to build more Permanent Supportive Housing complexes specifically for families with children.

3. Provide better access to childcare for homeless parents and those at risk of homelessness.

Eighty-five percent of the moms we interviewed with children under the age of 12 did not have access to childcare. They described the difficulties this added to the job finding process. If we are serious about wanting to help families increase their income through work, we need to help them with affordable childcare. Childcare assistance should be available to moms **looking** for work, and to those who are in education and job training, as well as those who are employed, and should be available to accommodate the non-traditional hours and shift work that is required by the jobs these moms are able to obtain.

The Housing Crisis

THE HOUSING CRISIS



The driving force behind the plight of the mothers we interviewed is that they do not have the income to match the increasingly high rents in urban Utah.

From 2005-2015, Utah lost 12,482 housing units available to rent for \$800 or less per month. Average housing costs, or “Fair Market Rent” for a 2-bedroom apartment in the Salt Lake City Metro area is \$990 per month² and 54% of the mothers we interviewed had less than \$900 per month in income (22% of these moms had NO income). Without commensurate income, the mothers we interviewed and their children are all suffering immensely in this housing crisis.

The Midvale Family Shelter

We interviewed 33 moms at the Midvale Family Shelter, which is operated by The Road Home. The shelter serves homeless families with children, and has onsite case management. The case managers were described as very helpful. The mothers we interviewed expressed gratitude for the safety and security provided by having a place for their families to sleep.

At the same time, they described how hard it was to be in the overcrowded shelter. Even with supportive staff and case managers, the shelter is a very stressful place to be. It is located in a fairly remote industrial neighborhood, next to active railroad tracks, and is always at its maximum capacity of 300 people. Isolation and close quarters increase tension levels of already stressed parents and children.

In 2016, the homeless shelter in Midvale was converted from a seasonal overflow shelter into a year-round family shelter. After the Road Home was required to relocate any families living in the family portion of the downtown shelter in July 2017, the demand on Midvale worsened.

In order to meet the need, and to ensure children are not sleeping on the street, the Road Home provides vouchers for motels to some of the families at the Midvale Shelter. At the

² State of Utah, *Comprehensive Report on Homelessness*, October 2017.

end of October 2017, 66 families were in motels, with a projected increase to 80 in November 2017.

While motel vouchers are helping to provide shelter, this high-cost alternative results in psychological and sometimes physical damage to children and families. Often, the motels that will accept lower-than-market payments are those which offer few, if any, security measures. As a result, seriously dangerous behavior, including violence and crime related to drugs, occurs at these low-cost motels, which creates an unsafe environment for the young children in homeless families.³

Additionally, families are moved when their room might be occupied by a motel customer. This bouncing from place to place is experienced by the family alone, with minimal support. The lack of autonomy and the isolation of living in a motel compound other difficulties of raising a family in homelessness, and can create extreme psycho-emotional obstacles.⁴

Aside from the effects on the individuals themselves, the motel-voucher option is the least cost-effective solution for our community.⁵ Our homeless service providers have been spending as much as \$4,400 per night on motels for families - a cost that is only expected to increase as the low-income housing crisis continues. In contrast, the cost for hosting someone at the shelter is \$17.50 per night, which amounts to \$60 per night for the shelter's average family size of 3.5 people. It appears, from the data available to us, that about \$500,000 in state funding for this motel program is scheduled to expire in 2019 should the Legislature fail to act to make it ongoing.

Despite attempts to incorporate support systems, case management in a motel context includes the challenge of greater distances and difficulty scheduling appointments.

It was clear from our interviews with moms at the Midvale shelter that the Road Home case managers are viewed as a beneficial connection to resources and are critical in navigating bureaucratic application processes. Unfortunately, the help case managers have to offer in terms of housing assistance, childcare assistance, transportation assistance, healthcare and income assistance, is limited by the inadequate quantity of these resources within our broader community. More often than not, case managers are carrying case loads that are too high, meaning some people receive insufficient attention.

In terms of housing assistance, all of the public support programs, with the exception of Rapid Rehousing, have waiting lists that are several years long or are not accepting new applicants at all. If a mom is lucky enough to get a Section 8 housing voucher, the likelihood of her being able to use it is low as our expensive and constrained housing market inhibits the ability to find an apartment that meets rental guidelines.

“I couldn’t find anywhere that didn’t have a huge deposit and it was just so expensive that it would have been all of my check and my kid, literally, we would have ended up back on the street” (J).

³ Thomas, Kristie A. and Marvin So, *“Lost in Limbo: An Exploratory Study of Homeless Mothers’ Experiences and Needs at Emergency Assistance Hotels”*, Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services, Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, 2016.

⁴ Ibid and Bhattacharyya, Suman, *“Homeless Hotels in New York: Who Benefits from the Industry’s Side Business?”* CUNY Academic Works, 2016.

⁵ Ibid.

Rapid Rehousing (RRH)

The main form of help available to the homeless moms we interviewed in emergency shelters is Rapid Rehousing, a program designed to help families get into housing quickly.

Thirty-five percent of these moms were either in the Rapid Rehousing program, or waiting to be approved. From their perspective it was helpful, although the focus groups at Palmer Court indicated problems with long-term sustainability of the program. Many were placed in the Rapid Rehousing program, but when the help ended after three months, did not have the income to continue paying rent, and were evicted. There also seemed to be miscommunication between the recipient moms and program administrators about the terms of the program, which led to confusion.

“I had Rapid Rehousing when it first started and they told me - they guaranteed the whole group (...) it was the second group that they sent out and they guaranteed us a year, so I only got a 1-bedroom apartment because I knew after that year that’s what I could afford for me and my two girls. They cut me after three months and I was like, what happened to the year that you guys said? I would not have even taken this program because now (...) [there is] this eviction on my credit” (H).

The moms we interviewed described that even when they found an apartment they could afford, it was difficult to obtain. Many landlords and property managers require some combination of a deposit and/or first and last month’s rent. Landlords frequently require a non-refundable rental application fee that can cost from \$25-\$45. Sixty-four percent of the moms we interviewed reported being asked for a rental application fee, and they all reported it created an additional financial burden - although some did indicate that Rapid Rehousing paid these fees.

Many moms struggled with a record of eviction - almost half (48%) reported that they had been evicted at some point - usually because they could not pay rent. Several mothers we interviewed reported questionable evictions, which occurred due to bad faith by property managers and landlords. Tenants in Utah have few rights, and the low-income housing shortage has made low-income tenants even more vulnerable to bad or greedy landlords.

Almost half - 42% - of the moms we interviewed had not received any assistance with housing, which demonstrates how much greater the need for help is than the available assistance.

Only 23% of the mothers we interviewed had housing assistance in the form of Permanent Supportive Housing or transitional housing at the YWCA.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is an effective, helpful way to provide shelter and support in the form of stability and case management to very vulnerable people. Families are eligible for PSH when they are chronically homeless and have a disability. In Salt Lake City, Palmer Court provides PSH to 46 families and 155 single individuals.

The mothers we interviewed at Palmer Court were unanimous in describing it as a place that provided stability, which is allowing them to be better parents.

“I know for a fact my kid’s going to have a place to stay. I’m not going to have to worry about us being on the streets and us having, you know, because when I was on the streets I didn’t sleep at all because I was too worried about someone messing with her. Not only are you sleep deprived and being a mom, your kid having to eat out of a can is not ok” (J).

We interviewed several moms at the Midvale Shelter, who expressed hope that they would be accepted into Palmer Court, but space is limited.

It makes sense to expand the availability of PSH for chronically homeless families in our community. Not only does PSH provide stability to families, recent research conducted by the RAND Corporation shows that it may save tax dollars. RAND conducted research in Los Angeles County showing that for every dollar invested in PSH, the government saved \$1.20 in healthcare and other social service costs.⁶ They report these savings are among the largest ever found for a housing program for individuals experiencing homelessness. Why? Because these people who were in stable housing used fewer emergency room visits and other expensive forms of crisis assistance.

YWCA of Utah

The YWCA of Utah provides 181 beds of emergency shelter through the Women In Jeopardy Shelter Program for women and children fleeing unsafe situations. Services include advocacy, case management, safety planning, support groups and life skills classes. The YWCA also operates the Kathleen Robison Huntsman Apartments. This is transitional housing for women with dependent children in their care and is available for up to 2 years through a partnership with the Salt Lake City Housing Authority. Eligibility prioritizes women who have experienced intimate partner violence within the last year, qualify under the federal definition of homeless, and are eligible for the services through the Housing Authority. Services include advocacy, case management, safety planning, support groups, Life Skills Classes and economic advocacy related to job readiness and financial empowerment. The 20 women we interviewed at the YWCA expressed gratitude for the services provided there, but there are many more who need help, as 66% of all of the mothers we interviewed reported that they had experienced domestic violence.

Recommendations:

Develop more low-income housing.

Utah is experiencing a severe housing shortage with a vacancy rate of 2.6% - the lowest ever reported⁷ and the supply of low-income housing has decreased dramatically. As a result, economically vulnerable families are falling into homelessness and have significant difficulty reestablishing stability. The solution is to prioritize the development of low-income housing using all of the tools available.

⁶ Harvey, Melody, Brian Briscoombe and Matt Cefalu, “*Evaluation of Housing for Health Permanent Supportive Housing Program*”, RAND Corporation,, December 5, 2017.

⁷ Cushman & Wakefield, *Apartment Market Report: Greater Salt Lake Area*, Summer 2017. www.cushmanwakefield.com

“Since I see so many buildings being built - apartments - why doesn’t the state have, put down, saying you’re building this apartment, why don’t we put single moms there? Instead of having everybody say, hey, this is available let’s start putting anybody whoever can afford this down on the list. Why can’t we just say, hey, this section is just for single moms ” (A).

Establish another family shelter with onsite childcare.

To more effectively address homeless families’ overwhelming need for shelter, we should establish another family shelter, following the model developed in Midvale, with the addition of onsite childcare.

Build another Permanent Supportive Housing development for families.

Permanent Supportive Housing is one form of affordable housing that has been very helpful for families working to stabilize their lives and recover from the trauma of homelessness, and research is showing it is cost effective. We need to develop more of it.

If another family shelter is not opened and more Permanent Supportive Housing is not built, all funding for the motel program should be made ongoing, to ensure enough emergency shelter for families.

Policy makers should explore ways to lessen the burden of other barriers to housing such as rental application fees and landlord tenant laws that skew to benefit landlords.

Income: How Do You Live on Nothing?

Without adequate income, the mothers we interviewed are not able to afford housing.

The economy in Utah is strong, with the unemployment rate at 3.3% (as of October 2017 according the Bureau of Labor Statistics) and a median income of \$75,400.⁸ But that prosperity is not shared by everyone, and families headed by women are more likely to face economic insecurity, with a poverty rate of 35% in 2016.⁹ The 2017 federal poverty level is \$20,420 for a three-person household (or about \$1,700 per month).

Working women in Utah also face special challenges. In 2016, Utah women earned just 70 cents for every dollar earned by a male - the second-worst wage gap in the nation.¹⁰

With this and other systemic barriers, as well as an hourly minimum wage that has remained stagnant at \$7.25 since 2009, it is unsurprising that so many Utah moms face poverty.

⁸ <http://slco.org/housing-community-development/income-guidelines/>

⁹ <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

¹⁰ National Women’s Law Center, *Wage Gap State Rankings: 2016* nwlc.org

COST OF LIVING IN UTAH



Hourly Wages	1 Adult	1 Adult/1 Child	1 Adult/2 Children
Living Wage	\$11.09	\$22.96	\$29.22
Poverty Wage	\$5.00	\$7.00	\$9.00
Minimum Wage	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25

(www.livingwage.mit.edu)

35% THE **POVERTY** RATE FOR **UTAH** FAMILIES

HEADED BY **WOMEN** WITH KIDS <18



Our survey yielded results reflecting this reality. Twenty-two percent of the mothers we interviewed reported not having any income. Of the 30% who had jobs, all were hourly employees, with sporadic part-time hours.

These moms face barriers preventing them from earning higher wages. Almost 30% did not have a high school diploma and 40% had only a high school diploma or GED. This limits the jobs available to them.

In our interviews and focus group conversations, we learned that the jobs available to these moms are often night or swing shifts. It is hard for them to take these jobs because childcare is often not available outside of regular daytime work hours. Lack of affordable childcare, and childcare available outside of 9-5 work hours is a significant barrier to employment, education, and job training.

According to the MIT Living Wage calculator, the cost of childcare for two children in Salt Lake City is \$944 per month.¹¹ That means, in an average month, a person working 40 hours per week would be required to dedicate \$5.55 of their hourly wage just to childcare.

Seventy-eight percent of the mothers we interviewed also talked about their lack of access to transportation (a monthly transit pass costs \$87.50 per person in Utah) and 77% hadn't been told by the Department of Workforce Services about education and job training programs.

Few Moms are Using Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF)

In 1996 Congress enacted "welfare reform," in part by eliminating Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), a program that provided cash assistance to eligible families for as long as they needed help and were caretakers of children under 18. AFDC was replaced with Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF). Money for the program now comes to the state in a lump sum (block grant) and states have broad flexibility to use the funding in a

¹¹ <http://livingwage.mit.edu/states/49>

wide variety of ways. The program also comes with a lifetime limit - caretakers of children are only allowed 36 months of assistance.

Only 20% of the 77 moms who participated in our survey receive this form of financial assistance. This number is consistent with national trends. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that nationally in 2015, just 23 out of every 100 eligible families with children received TANF benefits, down from 68 out of 100 families receiving TANF in 1996.¹²

The average amount of TANF funds received by a single parent with two children in Utah in July 2017 was \$498 - an income that would leave the family at 29.8% of the Federal Poverty Level. Put another way, these families receive an income of \$5,976 per year.¹³ This TANF assistance has not been increased by the state since 2010 and in the years since 1996 the value of the TANF monthly benefit has declined by 23.3%. The TANF grant for a family of three is just 50% of the Fair Market Rent of \$990.¹⁴

Recommendation:

Utah should increase the TANF benefit to help mothers stabilize their lives.

The Childcare Crisis

Only 15% of mothers we interviewed with kids needing childcare had that help.

Utah also faces a statewide childcare shortage. According to data reported in the *Deseret News*, more than 152,000 young children need daily care in Utah, yet the state has only 41,444 spaces for families to qualify for some childcare funding.¹⁵

The same data shows that Center-based infant care in Utah costs between \$7,000 to more than \$9,000 a year. The cost for a year of childcare can be more than an average year of college.¹⁶

For the mothers we interviewed, access to childcare is a substantial problem. In order to receive the limited assistance available, you have to already be working. Every mother we interviewed with young children discussed the near-impossibility of finding a job without having secure childcare.

Another challenge moms described was the lack of childcare during the hours they are asked to work.

“It’s hard to work nights because she don’t have childcare for those nights you know. Or even if she tries to do a swing shift, she still has to be here early to pick up her kid” (H).

¹² Floyd, Ife, *TANF Cash Benefits Have Fallen by More Than 20 Percent in Most States and Continue to Erode*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, October 13, 2017.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Israelsen-Hartley, Sara, “How Utah’s Child Care Shortage Impacts the Gender Wage Gap”, *Deseret News*, November 22, 2017.

¹⁶ Ibid.

“This is actually a huge dilemma for me - on working or extending my school hours, because he’s in early Head Start here, but he gets out at 2:30, so I’m limited to do (...) certain hours (...) that’s why I work at DI because nowhere else is going to use me for only four hours per day” (T).

Recommendation:

Homeless mothers and those at risk of homelessness need greater access to affordable childcare, as well as pickup and drop-off childcare, and childcare for those who work hours other than 8 am-6 pm.

Education & Job Training is Missing

Almost 30% of the mothers we interviewed had not graduated from high school, and another 40% only had a high school diploma or GED - yet only 23% of the mothers we interviewed said they were informed about education and job training during application for public assistance programs.

Unfortunately, the information they were provided was limited to being told “go find work” or given “a list of jobs” or sent “to a single mom’s conference,” none of which actually led to them securing a job.

Statewide data from the Department of Workforce Services show a similar situation - with only 5% (94) families of 1,966 homeless families receiving services in 2016 being referred to adult education or job training.

Recommendation:

Utah should provide better opportunities for education and job training to mothers like those we interviewed, in order to help them increase their income.

Transportation – Struggling to Get Around

All of the moms struggled with lack of access to transportation, although the few that had cars had increased mobility (but also the burden of paying for gas). Seventy-eight percent of the mothers we interviewed did not have regular access to transportation. They described how this made it more difficult to complete the tasks they needed to improve their economic security, like look for housing, a job, childcare, and even to apply for help with various service providers. Transportation is a particularly difficult problem at the Midvale Family Shelter because of its somewhat remote location.

Recommendation:

Utah should provide better access to transportation, perhaps by providing low-income or homeless families with free transit passes. This would enable them to do many more of the tasks they need to do to improve their economic security more efficiently.

Other critical forms of help:

Food

Everyone needs to eat to live. Children need nutritious food to grow.

Seventy-one percent of the mothers we interviewed were receiving food stamps (now called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or “SNAP”) to help feed their families. They were all grateful for the help and talked about how they did not know what they would do without it as it allowed them to pay all of their bills and provide nutritious food for their children.

Food pantries were also described as an important source of help that filled the gap when the limited amount received in food stamps ran out. In addition, the mothers interviewed talked about how most food pantries were “non-judgmental” and good places to get information about other forms of help.

Recommendation:

The food stamp program (SNAP) provides critical help to vulnerable families. Without adequate nutrition, children suffer, experience negative health and developmental consequences, and do poorly in school. Eligibility should not be further restricted.

Healthcare (Medicaid)

Forty-four percent of the mothers we interviewed did not have access to healthcare, while 81% of the children did. The reasons included, “I have not applied” and being ineligible for benefits because they would not provide information about the father of their child (for various reasons).

Recommendation:

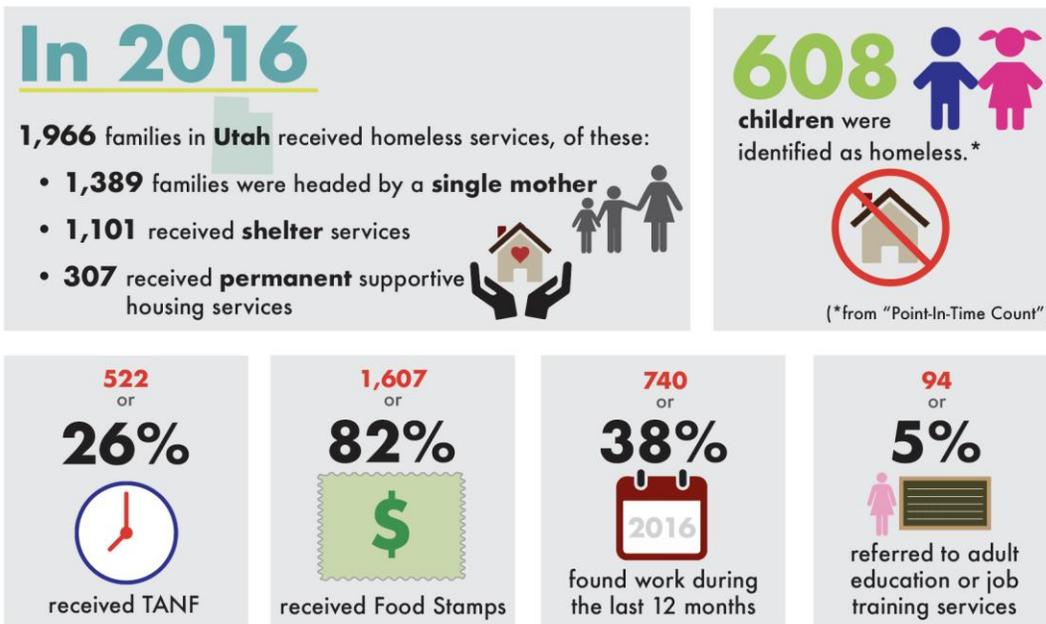
Better access to healthcare for low-income adults and children.

Supporting Data from DWS

The data we collected in our survey tracks with what is shown in the Department of Workforces Services (DWS) data on homeless families, collected through the “Point-In-Time Count” and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). However, DWS staff members note that the HMIS data “may not reflect all homeless services rendered to families since HMIS covers approximately 80% of homeless service provider programs. Specifically, all domestic violence providers are exempted from participating in HMIS.” Of note are the low numbers of mothers receiving TANF and referral to education and job training.

HOMELESS SERVICES RECEIVED BY FAMILIES *

*data from the Department of Workforce Services



All Recommendations

1. Establish another family shelter with onsite childcare.

To more effectively address homeless families' overwhelming need for shelter, we should establish another family shelter, following the model developed in Midvale, with the addition of onsite childcare.

2. Build another Permanent Supportive Housing development for families.

Permanent Supportive Housing is one form of affordable housing that has been very helpful for families working to stabilize their lives and recover from the trauma of homelessness, and research is showing it is cost-effective. We need to develop more of it.

3. Provide better access to childcare for homeless parents and those at risk of homelessness.

Eighty-five percent of the moms we interviewed with kids under the age of 12 did not have access to childcare. Childcare assistance should be available to moms **looking** for work, those who are in education and job training, as well as those who are employed, and should be available to accommodate the non-traditional hours and shift work that is required by the jobs these moms obtain.

4. Increase development of low-income housing.

Development of low-income housing needs to be prioritized in communities throughout Utah. For example, action being taken by Salt Lake City should be replicated in other places.

5. Explore ways to lessen the burden of other barriers to housing such as rental application fees and landlord tenant laws that skew to benefit landlords.

6. Increase the Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) benefit and provide better access to education and job training and childcare.

The TANF benefit - which has not been increased in seven years, could be a much more helpful tool as mothers work to achieve economic security for their families. The monthly benefit should be expanded to better reflect the housing costs low-income mothers face.

Homeless mothers and those at risk of homelessness need greater access to affordable childcare, as well as pick-up and drop-off childcare, and childcare for those who work hours other than 8 am-6 pm. Perhaps TANF funds could be used to pay for this.

Finally, TANF could offer more help in terms of providing education and job training to low-income mothers. Every mother we interviewed talked about wanting and needing a job that would increase her income.

7. Better access to transportation.

Utah should provide better access to transportation for homeless families as they work to become more economically secure - perhaps by providing low-income or homeless families with free transit passes.

8. Better access to healthcare for adults and children.

Keep what works, and make it better:

9. Homeless Service Providers.

Utah is fortunate to have a group of extremely dedicated, thoughtful and professional homeless service providers. We saw that in every setting in which we conducted interviews. In conversations with service providers we heard about the high level of coordination among them, developed over years working together. It is clear that these dedicated people are consistently looking for ways to be more effective and helpful, in spite of being constrained by a low-income housing crisis and shrinking social safety net programs.

There are many helpful programs and working to improve these, as our service provider community is doing, will make them even better.

10. Rapid Rehousing.

Rapid Rehousing was viewed as being helpful by most of the mothers we interviewed. Those that did not find it helpful had been evicted, in some cases, they said, because they misunderstood what their responsibility was and/or did not have the income to pay rent after the Rapid Rehousing assistance ended. The service providers are aware of the problems with Rapid Rehousing and are working on improvements which will hopefully resolve some of these problems.

11. Food Stamps provide important help.

The Food Stamp program (SNAP), provides critical help to vulnerable families. Without adequate nutrition, children suffer, experience negative health and developmental consequences, and do poorly in school. Eligibility should not be further restricted. The future of our state and country depend on the success of these children, which begins with the support we provide to their mothers.