Evidence-Based Practices for Serving Runaway and Homeless Youth

2011 National Conference on Ending Homelessness

July 13 - 15, 2011

LARKIN STREET

YOUTH SERVICES

Current Environment

- Focus on programs to be evidence based and demonstrate effectiveness

- Social impact bonds – England model where investors earn profits based on program success

- Pay for Success Initiative - $100 million earmarked in President Obama's 2012 budget

Special Considerations

"Studies of [runaway and homeless youth] programs have not been based on rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental research designs. This is due in part because the needs of homeless youth are so urgent that assignment to a control group, an important methodological tool in research evaluation raises significant ethical concerns"

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). Promising strategies to end youth homelessness. Report to Congress. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

What's the goal for providers?

- The lure of the Gold Standard
- Range of ways to demonstrate program effectiveness
- Perceptions in the field and among evaluators
- The role of "practice based evidence"
- Replication considerations

Larkin Street - Then

- Data used primarily for grant reporting
- No standardization of data collection
- Several different data management systems
- Focused on outputs rather than outcomes
- Data collected in response to funder needs

The Journey

- Developed data collection systems
  - ◆ What is it you want to know?
  - ◆ What is it that you want to tell others?
  - ◆ What is the best way to gather that information?

The Journey

- Developed data management systems
  - What do you want to get out of the system – analysis, reporting, interaction with other systems?
  - How easy is it to get the information you want?
  - What resources do you have to implement and maintain?

The Journey

- Developed reporting systems
  - Who needs information?
  - Who is responsible for reporting functions?
  - What is the best reporting format based on audience?

The Journey

- Developed ongoing program evaluation plan
  - New use of program data
  - Internally rather than externally focused

Larkin Street - Now

- Data systems:
  - One main data management system
  - Data collection standardized across programs
  - Investment in resources
- Data collected in response to agency's needs

Larkin Street - Now

- Data uses:
  - Reporting – funders and internal
  - Outcomes measurement
  - Support for programmatic goal setting
  - Support for dissemination activities

Report Examples

- Monthly program manager reports
- Monthly grant management reports
- Quarterly reporting on program evaluations
- Quarterly strategic plan reports
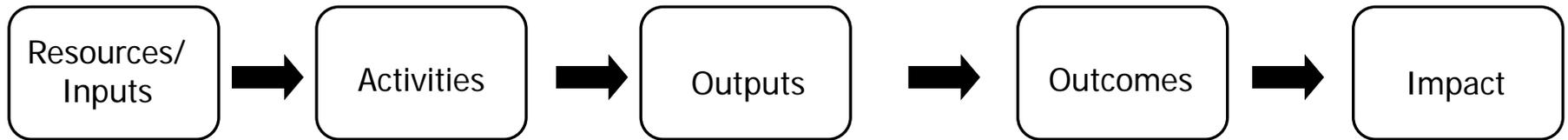 - Individual program contribution to organizational performance
- Annual program reports

Larkin Street - Now

- Program Evaluation
  - Developed logic models and outcomes measurements for each program
  - Provides a platform for discussions of program successes and challenges
  - Can guide program development

Program Logic Model

Planned Activities   **Intended Results**

| Resources/Inimputs | → | Activities | → | Outputs | → | Outcomes | → | Impact |

Resources/Inputs

Staff

ATI site

Household supplies

Program supplies

Training

Safe living environment – physically and emotionally

Volunteers

Activities

Housing

Case management

Life skills sessions

Individual Counseling

Substance use sessions

Employment services

Linkage to education services

Outputs

30 youth housed

4,927 housing nights

540 case management sessions provided

1,560 life skills sessions provided

6,240 individual counseling sessions conducted

80% of youth will be engaged in employment related activities

75% of youth will be linked to education services

Outcomes

75% of youth transition to stable housing

70% of youth will be employed

70% of youth will advance educationally

Impact

Youth develop the life skills necessary to become emotionally and financially stable and independent

Becoming more evaluation focused

- Building blocks
  - Participant profile
  - Participation patterns
  - Participant outcomes

Resource: Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

Becoming more evaluation focused

- Investment in resources
  - Systems and staff
- Do you have solid data collection and management processes?
- Are you a learning organization?

Larkin Street's Theory of Change

The mission of Larkin Street Youth Services is to create a continuum of services that inspires youth to move beyond the street. We will nurture potential, promote dignity, and support bold steps by all.

Larkin creates a **continuum of care** that addresses unmet needs of homeless youth and supports these youth in becoming **self-sufficient**

Continuum of care raises hope, optimism and self-esteem of youth by…

Reaching out and making homeless youth aware of services

Addressing immediate needs by meeting youth where they are

Creating a stable living situation and supportive environment

Increasing life skills and connecting youth with employment and education

Continuum of care is refined through collaboration across programs and access to evaluation data

Larkin Street **disseminates best practices** and **informs thought leaders**

Direct impact

Homeless youth (ages 12-24) in SF Bay Area develop self-sufficiency and live independently

Indirect impact

Organizations employ best practices for serving homeless youth

Policymakers and thought leaders are informed about policies for homeless youth

Practices & policies support needs of homeless youth

Ultimate social goal

Homeless youth will have the opportunity to reach their full potential

Lessons Learned

- Shift in agency culture
- Quality is as important as quantity
- Staff buy-in at all levels – don't underestimate
- Communicate - feedback loop is essential
- Demonstrate the value
- It takes time
- Requires ongoing attention

Successes

- Solid data collection, management, and reporting systems
- Improved outcomes reporting
- Informs program management
- Improved data driven decision making
- Improved ability to tell our story
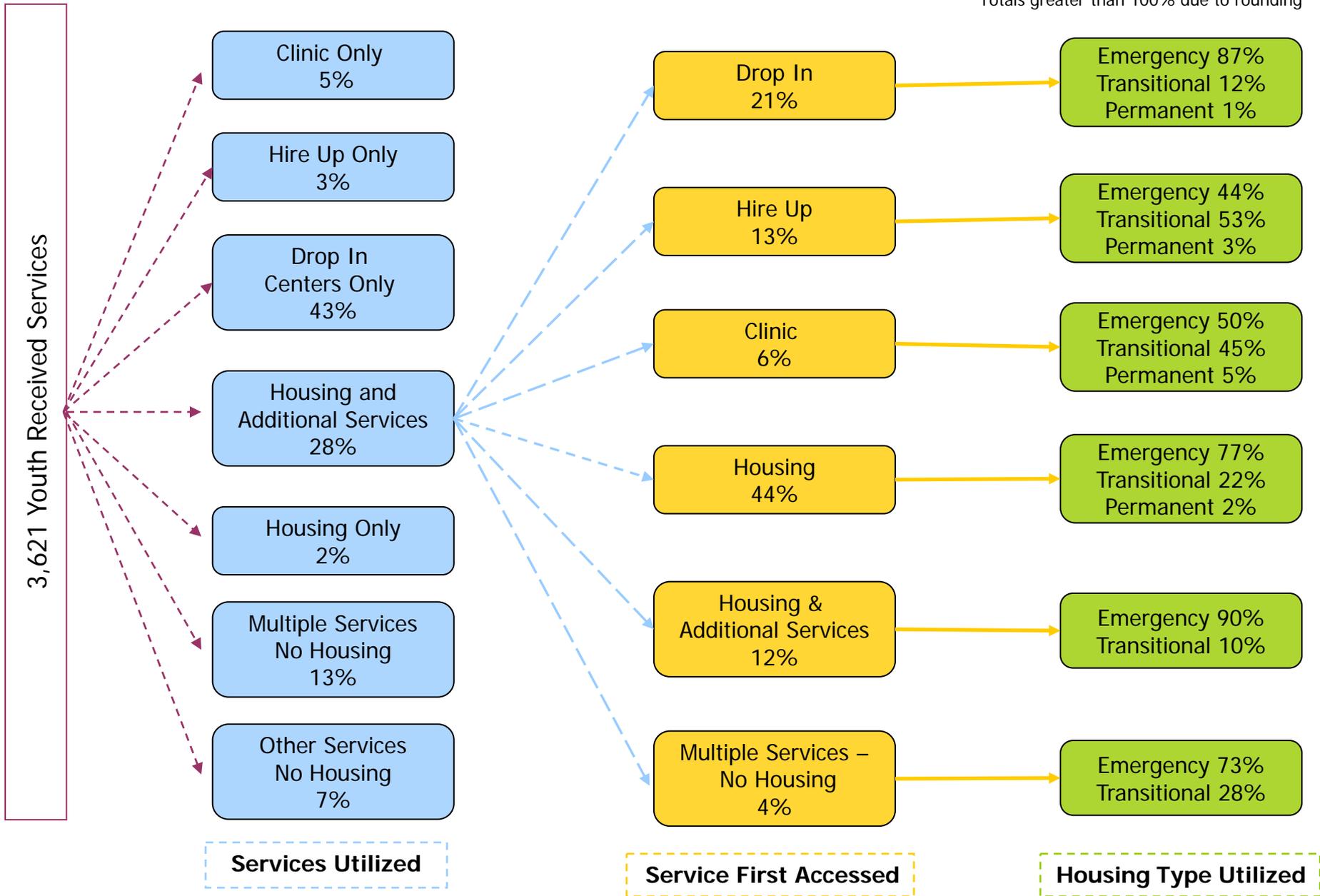
Extending Impact

- Publications
- Conferences
- Community presentations
- Policy and advocacy
- Training and technical assistance

Next Steps

- Implementation of client management system
- Next level data analysis
- Further codification of program model

Larkin Street Youth Services – Program Utilization Pattern

*Totals greater than 100% due to rounding

3,621 Youth Received Services

Services Utilized

- Clinic Only 5%
- Hire Up Only 3%
- Drop In Centers Only 43%
- Housing and Additional Services 28%
- Housing Only 2%
- Multiple Services No Housing 13%
- Other Services No Housing 7%

Service First Accessed

- Drop In 21%
- Hire Up 13%
- Clinic 6%
- Housing 44%
- Housing & Additional Services 12%
- Multiple Services – No Housing 4%

Housing Type Utilized

- Drop In → Emergency 87% / Transitional 12% / Permanent 1%
- Hire Up → Emergency 44% / Transitional 53% / Permanent 3%
- Clinic → Emergency 50% / Transitional 45% / Permanent 5%
- Housing → Emergency 77% / Transitional 22% / Permanent 2%
- Housing & Additional Services → Emergency 90% / Transitional 10%
- Multiple Services – No Housing → Emergency 73% / Transitional 28%

Final Thoughts

- Broad definition of evidence based practice which recognizes the value in practice-based evidence

- Range of ways to demonstrate a model is proven effective

- Documentation of program model

- Focus on continuous monitoring and evaluation

- Acknowledgement of the increase in cost to provide services

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