

Rebuilding Lives Updated Strategy Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio

Systems Data Match – HMIS & Franklin County Childrens Services

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Prepared for:

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Introduction

What follows are results from a data match in which persons staying in shelters or placed in permanent supportive housing, through records collected by a homeless management information system (HMIS) coordinated by the Community Shelter Board (CSB) in Columbus, Ohio, is matched with records from the local public child welfare agency, Franklin County Children's Services (FCCS). This data match, a possible prototype for subsequent data matches between these two systems, assesses the extent to which these systems serve the same individuals and families and the need for further study and interventions targeting persons who use services from both systems.

Key Findings

Table 1 - *Single Adults in the Shelter System*

Single Women	N	%
Total women with first shelter entry in 2004-2005	1618	100
Total sheltered women with matches in FCCS case records	627	38.8
Sheltered women associated with a discrete FCCS case:		
All discrete FCCS cases	426	26.3
FCCS case opened and closed prior to shelter entry	326	20.1
FCCS case open at shelter entry	82	5.1
FCCS case opened during shelter stay	18	1.1
Single Men		
Total men with first shelter entry in 2004-2005	4348	100
Total sheltered men with matches in FCCS case records	557	12.8
Sheltered men associated with a discrete FCCS case:		
All discrete FCCS cases	234	5.4
FCCS case opened and closed prior to shelter entry	217	5.0
FCCS case open at shelter entry	13	0.3
FCCS case opened during shelter stay	4	0.1

Highlights from this table include:

- the difference in FCCS involvement between males and females. This is presumably because women are more likely to be involved with cases focusing on their biological children than men.
- For the women, at least one quarter of them, 26.3%, and as many as 38.8% were involved in some respect in an FCCS case (see limitations section). Even considering the lower proportion, and that all of them may not have been involved in a parental capacity, this is striking finding, considering that many of the single women can be assumed not to have children.
- Most of the cases among both genders occurred prior to shelter entry, as one might expect. Looking at the women, however, about 6% of the

group had cases that overlapped with or commenced during the shelter stay. This means, in the former dynamic, that their shelter entrance coincided with having to deal with FCCS cases for children where they did not have physical custody. For the men, the corresponding proportion was negligible.

The results indicate that a substantial overlap between the two systems exists, and that there is a significant gender difference in the extent of FCCS involvement – past and present – among adults who come to homeless shelters without their children. However, as is explained in the methodology section, some significant limitations must be kept in mind when interpreting these results, limitations that preclude using the rates shown here as anything but approximations of the actual rates of overlap between the two systems.

Nonetheless, the intersection is extensive enough to warrant further consideration of how these two systems interact.

Table 2 - *Families in the Shelter System*

	Total		In Home Supervision		Out of Home Placement	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total family members with first shelter entry in 2004-2005	3,454	100				
Total sheltered family members with matches in FCCS case records	1,247	36.1				
Sheltered family members associated with a discrete FCCS case:						
All discrete FCCS cases	691	20.0	437	12.7	254	7.4
FCCS case opened and closed prior to shelter entry	441	12.8	263	7.6	178	5.2
FCCS case open at shelter entry	145	4.2	100	2.9	45	1.3
FCCS case opened during shelter stay	105	3.0	74	2.1	31	0.9

note: There are 1103 families entering the shelter in 2004-05, or 3.1 persons per family. Percentages of family members, reported in this table, may not correspond directly to percentages of family units.

Key findings include:

- The range for any FCCS involvement for families, between 20.0% and 36.1%, is lower than comparable results for single women. This range is also consistent, although not directly comparable, with findings of child welfare involvement by families in the NYC and Philadelphia shelter systems.
- Most of the FCCS involvement occurred and ended prior to the families shelter stay. Only 3.0% of family members were involved with a case opened during their shelter stay. This fails to support the existence of a

strong “fishbowl effect” where increased visibility in shelters leads to an increased likelihood of FCCS involvement.

- Among the 7.2% of persons in families where FCCS cases were either active (4.2%) or opened (3.0%) while the family was in shelter, the role of housing as a mitigating circumstance to this FCCS involvement should be further researched.
- Of the 691 FCCS cases identified, 437 (63.2%) of the cases were for supervision, and the remaining third involved an out-of-home placement such as foster care or group homes.

As with the single adults, and as is explained in the methodology section, some significant limitations must be kept in mind when interpreting these results, limitations that preclude using the rates shown here as anything but approximations of the actual rates of overlap between the two systems. Particular to sheltered families is the qualification that the percentages in the table reflect the proportion of total family members (i.e., not family households) that had current or past histories of FCCS involvement.

Persons formerly homeless and placed into Rebuilding Lives-sponsored permanent supportive housing (RL-PSH)

Single Women	N	%
Total women with RL-PSH placement in 2004-2005	202	100%
Total women placed in RL-PSH with matches in FCCS case records	70	34.7%
Women with RL-PSH placement associated with a discrete FCCS case:		
All discrete FCCS cases	65	32.2%
FCCS case opened and closed prior to RL-PSH entry	52	25.7%
FCCS case open at RL-PSH entry	12	5.9%
FCCS case opened during RL-PSH stay	1	0.5%
Single Men	N	%
Total men with RL-PSH placement in 2004-2005	343	100%
Total men placed in RL-PSH with matches in FCCS case records	39	11.4%
Men with RL-PSH placement associated with a discrete FCCS case:		
All discrete FCCS cases	18	5.2%
FCCS case opened and closed prior to RL-PSH entry	13	3.8%
FCCS case open at RL-PSH entry	5	1.5%
FCCS case opened during RL-PSH stay	0	0%

The RL-PSH findings are very similar to the single adult shelter findings, with women having much higher rates of use than men placed into this housing.

The data isn’t precise enough to offer much in the way of conclusions as to how this group, whose background can be assumed to be similar to the sheltered single adults,

differs from their sheltered counterparts. Another way to say this is that if RL-PSH placement were to be a proxy for long-term homelessness, these findings would fail to support (but would not rule out) that FCCS involvement occurred more frequently among this subgroup of the homeless population.

Adults with FCCS Case as a child

2004 & 2005	Total	Child Welfare (CW) Supervision Only	Out of Home Placement		Any FCCS Case
			Did not age out of care	Aged out of care	
Female - In shelter w/ children	502	41.4%	9.6%	5.0%	56.0%
Male - In shelter w/ children	102	9.8%	2.0%	2.9%	14.7%
Female - In shelter unaccompanied	382	27.2%	8.1%	11.5%	46.9%
Male - In shelter unaccompanied	659	8.6%	6.2%	7.9%	22.8%
Female - In PSH unaccompanied	26	38.5%	11.5%	7.7%	57.7%
Male - In PSH unaccompanied	23	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	13.0%

This analysis looked at adults whose first stays in the shelter system (family and single) occurred in 2004 or 2005, or who were placed in Rebuilding Lives sponsored permanent supportive housing (RL-PSH) and the extent to which they had records from FCCS when they were adolescents. This analysis is limited to persons with dates of birth after 1976 (making them all under age 30) because FCCS records only go back to 1990, and thus older adults would have limited or no opportunity for their FCCS records to be included in this study.

The rates of FCCS involvement here for adults when they were children is extremely high for all of the subpopulations examined:

- over half of adult women in shelter with families (56.0%) and in RL-PSH (57.7%) had records of FCCS cases when they were children, as did a slightly smaller proportion (46.9%) of single women;
- men had lower rates of FCCS involvement as children when compared to women, but their rates were still high: 22.8% for single men, 14.7% for men in shelter with families, and 13.0% for men in RL-PSH;
- except for men accompanying families in shelters and men placed in RL-PSH, the proportions of each subpopulation that had an FCCS record of out-of-home care ranged from 12% to 19%.
- more men in RL-PSH and in single adult shelters had records of out-of-home placements than had records of in-home supervision services;

The most readily comparable study to this one was undertaken by Park, Metraux & Culhane that matched records of young adults in shelter in New York City, with results written up in a 2004 article in *Children & Youth Services Review*. The findings from this match are consistent with the results from Park et al., and both of them show much higher rates of child welfare involvement as children among the women studied, as compared to men. As a rule of thumb, overall rates of child welfare involvement were higher in this (Columbus) study, while rates of out-of-home placement were higher among the NYC study population.

Recommendations

This data match between HMIS and FCCS was an initial attempt at identifying the degree to which persons in shelters were involved with an active child welfare case either before or during their shelter stay. Despite limitations which preclude precise assessments of the extent of such involvement, the findings indicate that there is a considerable amount of overlap between the two systems.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that:

- 1) further assessments, either through more precise data matching or through surveys, examine:
 - a. the extent to which single adults, and particularly women, in shelter have children who are in custody either through the child welfare system or through less formal placement with relatives or friends; and
 - b. whether housing assistance, with support services when necessary, could facilitate reunification.
- 2) families who are in shelter and who have active child welfare cases are identified and assessments are made on:
 - a. the extent to which lack of stable housing has contributed to the FCCS involvement; and
 - b. placing priority on providing housing assistance with supportive services in cases where stable housing facilitates the reunification of these families.
- 3) resources, including housing assistance, be made available to youth who "age out" of the child welfare system and are identified to be at risk for homelessness.
- 4) characteristics of adults with FCCS involvement as a child who enter shelter and/or RL-PSH, as compared to adults who have FCCS involvement as a child and do not enter shelter or RL-PSH.

Methodology

An automated administrative database of client records was provided to FCCS to match with their administrative database in accordance with procedures outlined in a data sharing agreement between FCCS and CSB and as approved by the institutional review board at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia.

The HMIS database contained all households – families and single adults – whose first homeless shelter stay was either in 2004 or 2005, and all persons placed in permanent supportive housing under the auspices of Rebuilding Lives in 2004 and 2005. The FCCS database contained records of persons involved in cases that were under the supervision of FCCS. This includes cases both where in-home supervision services were provided and those where one or more children were placed out of the home (e.g., into foster or group homes). FCCS records date from 1990 to 2005.

HMIS and FCCS records were matched based on common social security numbers and FCCS staff then aggregated the results in a table whose format was provided for them by CSB consultant. Dr. Steve Metraux then reformatted the aggregated tables and, in consultation with FCCS staff, produced this report which summarizes the findings. The data were broken down by year – 2004 and 2005. These yearly results are provided in the appendix following this section.

Limitations

In interpreting these results, it is important to be aware of the limitations inherent to this data:

- 1) The HMIS and FCCS records were matched based only on common social security number. While the matches found under such a criterion would be very likely to be valid, in the absence of using other identifiers the match will miss persons who have either misrepresented their SSN or had it incorrectly entered into either of the two databases. FCCS staff reports that several other procedures employed in this matching process miss potential matches, while reducing the likelihood of reporting false matches.
- 2) A number of matches between datasets could not be associated with a particular FCCS case that included discrete opening and closing dates. The details of these matches are otherwise unclear. For each analysis, this number is reported as the “total number of matches,” but the time sequence between FCCS services use and shelter use could not be determined.
- 3) For those persons associated with a case that could be identified as occurring either before or during the use of shelter, the match did not distinguish between persons who were actually in the family receiving supervision and “collateral

persons” otherwise involved with the family for whom the case was opened. This lack of distinction means that persons included as matches can include extended family members, perpetrators of abuse, involved neighbors, and others somehow involved in the case. So while most persons matched can be assumed to be immediate family members in the case, for an unspecified number this is not so.

- 4) For sheltered family households, it was not possible to match by families, only by individual household members. The data was thus reported back as matched individuals, not families. Thus if there was an FCCS case on a family in the HMIS dataset containing three persons, then all three persons would be reported to have had an FCCS case. Assuming that an FCCS-involved family had, on average, the same number of household members as a non FCCS-involved family, the percentages reported (using persons as a denominator) should be transferable to proportions that would be found with family as the unit of analysis.
- 5) Splitting FCCS cases into “in-home supervision” (where no out-of-home placement occurred) and “out-of-home placement” was originally intended but unworkable on a large scale with the FCCS database. Making such a distinction would require hand sorting, which was done by FCCS staff for the family households only.

It is important to keep in mind that, as a result of these limitations, these analyses only give an approximate idea of the overlap between systems. In this it has some value, as does its function as a prototype that can be refined and modified in future data matches between the two systems that would then yield more precise results.

Context

In addition to the cautions related to the data itself there is also a necessary caution related to the research design. The focus in this report is on the homeless population, and the homeless population is examined, retrospectively, for the extent to which this population had prior or current FCCS involvement. The value of using a retrospective design for this research is that it provides a relatively quick method for preliminary investigation of the overlap in the populations served by both systems.

However, it should be recognized that the results reported in this study are taken from the perspective of the homeless population. This means that the proportions noted in this study are based on using the size of the homeless population as the denominator. These results should, therefore, not be interpreted as rates of homelessness among persons or families with prior FCCS involvement. Again, and more specifically, this study does not infer that a significant proportion of FCCS clients become homeless after their cases are closed. The rate of homelessness among past or present FCCS clients is

unknown. There is a much larger number of FCCS clients compared to those served by homeless shelters, and there is no evidence based on these data that the vast majority of FCCS clients have ever had housing problems leading to homelessness, either during or after FCCS services.

That being said, the limitations of retrospective design do not obviate the importance of the overlap of homeless persons with open or opening FCCS cases during shelter episodes. As resources become available it would be valuable to complement this research with a longitudinal research design that follows youth from FCCS prospectively through their lives to provide further understanding of their needs and guide service improvements.

Appendix – Data broken down by year: 2004 and 2005

FCCS–CSB Match: Single Women – first shelter entry in 2004	N	%
Total number	854	100
Total number of matches	332	38.9
Total number associated with a discrete FCCS case	219	25.6
FCCS case opened and closed prior to shelter entry	165	19.3
FCCS case open at shelter entry	41	4.8
FCCS case opened during shelter stay	13	1.5
FCCS–CSB Match: Single Women – first shelter entry in 2005	N	%
Total number	764	100
Total number of matches	295	38.6
Total number associated with a discrete FCCS case	207	27.1
FCCS case opened and closed prior to shelter entry	161	21.1
FCCS case open at shelter entry	41	5.4
FCCS case opened during shelter stay	5	0.7
FCCS–CSB Match: Single Men – first shelter entry in 2004	N	%
Total number	2417	100
Total number of matches	262	10.8
Total number associated with a discrete FCCS case	126	5.2
FCCS case opened and closed prior to shelter entry	121	5.0
FCCS case open at shelter entry	2	0.1
FCCS case opened during shelter stay	3	0.1
FCCS–CSB Match: Single Men – first shelter entry in 2005	N	%
Total number	1931	100
Total number of matches	295	15.3
Total number associated with a discrete FCCS case	108	5.6
FCCS case opened and closed prior to shelter entry	96	5.0
FCCS case open at shelter entry	11	0.6
FCCS case opened during shelter stay	1	0.1

	Total		In Home Supervision		Out of Home Placement	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
FCCS–CSB Match: Families – 1st shelter entry in 2004						
Total number	1,708	100				
Total number of matches	672	39.3				
Total number associated with a discrete FCCS case	345	20.2	223	13.1	122	7.1
FCCS case opened and closed prior to shelter entry	228	13.3	143	8.4	85	5.0
FCCS case open at shelter entry	48	2.8	27	1.6	21	1.2
FCCS case opened during shelter stay	69	4.0	53	3.1	16	0.9
FCCS–CSB Match: Families – 1st shelter entry in 2005						
Total number	1,746	100				
Total number of matches	575	32.9				
Total number associated with a discrete FCCS case	346	19.8	214	12.3	132	7.6
FCCS case opened and closed prior to shelter entry	213	12.2	120	6.9	93	5.3
FCCS case open at shelter entry	97	5.6	73	4.2	24	1.4
FCCS case opened during shelter stay	36	2.1	21	1.2	15	0.9

note: There are 1103 families entering the shelter in 2004-05, or 3.1 persons per family.

FCCS–CSB Match: Single Women – RL-PSH placement in 2004	N	%
Total number	121	100
Total number of matches	42	34.7
Total number associated with a discrete FCCS case	39	32.2
FCCS case opened and closed prior to RL-PSH placement	31	25.6
FCCS case open at RL-PSH placement	7	5.8
FCCS case opened during RL-PSH placement	1	0.8
FCCS–CSB Match: Single Women – RL-PSH placement in 2005	N	%
Total number	81	100
Total number of matches	28	34.6
Total number associated with a discrete FCCS case	26	32.1
FCCS case opened and closed prior to RL-PSH placement	21	25.9
FCCS case open at RL-PSH placement	5	6.2
FCCS case opened during RL-PSH placement	0	0

FCCS–CSB Match: Single Men – RL-PSH placement in 2004	N	%
Total number	206	100
Total number of matches	21	10.2
Total number associated with a discrete FCCS case	12	5.8
FCCS case opened and closed prior to RL-PSH placement	8	3.9
FCCS case open at RL-PSH placement	4	1.9
FCCS case opened during RL-PSH placement	0	0
FCCS–CSB Match: Single Men – RL-PSH placement in 2005	N	%
Total number	137	100
Total number of matches	18	13.1
Total number associated with a discrete FCCS case	6	4.4
FCCS case opened and closed prior to RL-PSH placement	5	3.6
FCCS case open at RL-PSH placement	1	0.7
FCCS case opened during RL-PSH placement	0	0

Note: FCCS automated records go back to 1990. All adults in PSH or Shelter with birthdates during/after 1976 will be included in this match. This means that all persons will have at least 4 years (age 14-18) to have FCCS involvement.

Adults with FCCS Case as a child 2004	Total	CW Supervision Only	CW Out of Home Placement		Any FCCS Case
			Did not age out of care	Aged out of care	
Female - In shelter w/ children	240	50.0%	11.3%	5.4%	66.7%
Male - In shelter w/ children	45	17.8%	4.4%	2.2%	24.4%
Female - In shelter unaccompanied	179	27.4%	10.1%	12.3%	49.7%
Male - In shelter unaccompanied	342	9.1%	7.0%	7.6%	23.7%
Female - In PSH unaccompanied	17	41.2%	17.6%	11.8%	70.6%
Male - In PSH unaccompanied	12	8.3%	8.3%	0%	16.7%

Adults with FCCS Case as a child 2005	Total	CW Supervision Only	CW Out of Home Placement		Any FCCS Case
			Did not age out of care	Aged out of care	
Female - In shelter w/ children	262	33.6%	8.0%	4.6%	46.2%
Male - In shelter w/ children	57	3.5%	0%	3.5%	7.0%
Female - In shelter unaccompanied	203	27.1%	6.4%	10.8%	44.3%
Male - In shelter unaccompanied	317	8.2%	5.4%	8.2%	21.8%
Female - In PSH unaccompanied	9	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%
Male - In PSH unaccompanied	11	0%	0%	9.1%	9.1%