

Gateway Housing

Mothers and Babies Success Program

(MBS)

Proposal for a Shelter and Community Based Service Program Pilot (Rev. 12/6/18)

Gateway Housing and its participating service providers propose piloting a specialized transitional housing service program model for homeless women who are pregnant or have babies up to three years old. The service model will implement strategies focused on improving pre and post-natal outcomes for mother and babies while setting them on a path toward health and stability.

Introduction – The multiple impacts of poverty on early child health are well documented, and can often set a newborn child on a lifelong course of disparities in health, wellness and other important outcomes. Parenting a newborn can be overwhelming in the best circumstances. For mothers in shelter, being pregnant and giving birth in the environment of a general population shelter adds to the stress of the situation. High, consistent levels of stress during pregnancy are proven to be related to premature birth and low birth weight. High levels of stress can also have negative effects on infant brain development, healthy attachment and achieving developmental milestones. By using evidence-based practices to provide a calm, safe, caring and enriched environment for homeless women who are pregnant or have babies, we hope and expect to mitigate some of these effects.

This planning grant request would be used to engage partner organizations in a process to identify and create consensus around basic model components of the program, which will likely include evidence based practices such as Doula Services, Parents as Teachers, Motivational Interviewing, and Trauma Informed Care. To help families achieve stability in housing after leaving shelter, the proposed program will adapt and utilize the Young Family Critical Time Intervention, a service previously piloted in Westchester County. In addition, Gateway Housing will create a fundable evaluation plan during this timeframe.

Model Background and Design: The Mothers, Babies Success program is based in part on a successful congregate transitional housing and aftercare services initiative that was implemented for three years in Westchester County, New York as the “Young Family CTI Model.” This initiative, funded by Westchester County and the New York State Office of Temporary Disability and Assistance (OTDA), offered evidence based and evidence informed services to young mothers and babies while they were homeless, followed with aftercare services that continued for nine months after those families exited shelter. Dr. Samuels, who led this original effort, will lead the NYC team and will consult with experts and academics in the field to modify and adapt the basic elements of the model and the evaluation to the New York City environment.

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It is expected that the pilot program will be most effectively implemented at smaller shelters that serve up to forty families. We are currently exploring implementing the model with three family shelter providers, two of whom have specific experience and focus on mothers and babies, although neither have implemented or evaluated a comprehensive specialized service model for this population. A third shelter provider, with extensive experience working with families affected by domestic violence, operates a small shelter and may also be part of this current project. In addition, the highly successful, largest provider of services for homeless families in Chicago, The Primo Center will contribute knowledge and assist with model specification related to home visiting services in shelter and high fidelity implementation of evidence based practices.

Timeline for Planning Grant:

Month 1: Engagement of partner organizations with a Collective Impact strategy

- Providers with small shelters
- NYC Department of Homeless Services
- NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- University-based child and maternal health experts
- Doula and other health services providers
- The Primo Center of Chicago
- Evidence based practices training organizations

Month 2: Model specification and buy-in

- A comprehensive written description of the model
- Development of a project budget highlighting costs above “normal” shelter funding
- Establish agreed upon criteria for the target population
- Engage an evaluation team
- Refine the logic model, include specific outputs and outcome measures

Month 3: Development of implementation & evaluation plan, obtain required funding