

SOUND *families*

REFLECTIONS & RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Ending Family Homelessness
Through Improved Systems and
Stronger Organizations

SOUND FAMILIES INITIATIVE
STEERING COMMITTEE

March 18, 2008

STEERING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Katie Hong

Deputy Director, Pacific Northwest Initiative,
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Adrienne Quinn

Director, City of Seattle, Office of Housing

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

David Bley

Director, Pacific Northwest Initiative, Bill &
Melinda Gates Foundation

Jami Bodonyi*

Research Manager, Northwest Institute for
Children and Families, University of Washington
School of Social Work

Paul Carlson

Regional Coordinator, Interagency Council on
Homelessness, Department of Housing and Urban
Development

Blake Chard

Deputy Secretary, Washington Department of
Social and Health Services

Bob Davis*

Executive Director, Housing Authority of
Snohomish County

Deanna Dawson

Executive Director, Snohomish County

Barbara Dingfield*

Partner, The Giving Practice, Philanthropy
Northwest

Will Graham

Assistant Director, Housing Division, State of
Washington Department of Community, Trade and
Economic Development

Kim Herman*

Executive Director, Washington State Housing
Finance Commission

Tom Hilyard*

Director, Pierce County Department of
Community Services

Dave Koenig*

Manager, City of Everett Planning and
Community Development

Betsy Lieberman*

Executive Director, Building Changes

Jackie MacLean

Director, King County Community and Human
Services Department

Doreen Marchione*

Executive Director Emeritus, Hopelink

Stephen Norman

Executive Director, King County
Housing Authority

Cynthia Parker

Senior Vice President, Seattle-Northwest
Securities Corporation

Ryan Petty

Director, City of Tacoma Community and
Economic Development Department

Alice Shobe

Director, Sound Families

Edwina Uehara

Dean, University of Washington School of
Social Work

Heyward Watson*

Executive Director, Impact Capital

David Wertheimer

Senior Program Officer, Pacific Northwest
Initiative, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Juli Wilkerson

Director, State of Washington Department of
Community, Trade and Economic Development

*Founding Committee Member

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in coordination with public sector partners from the Puget Sound region, Washington state, and the federal government, launched the Sound Families Initiative in 2000 with the ambitious goal of tripling the supply of transitional housing with support services for homeless families in Pierce, King, and Snohomish counties; three of the most densely populated counties in western Washington state. Starting with a \$40 million commitment from the foundation, Sound Families grew over seven years to include more than \$200 million in public and private funds.

To date, more than 1,500 families have been served by Sound Families. The majority—68 percent—went on to secure stable and permanent housing. Incomes rose significantly for almost half of these families, reliance on TANF dropped, and children's lives improved.

Sound Families also stimulated, encouraged, or even created many significant changes at the organizational and systems levels. Most notably, the local housing authorities obtained a waiver to allocate federal Section 8 rent subsidy to nearly all of the apartments funded by Sound Families.

Despite these achievements, family homelessness persists in our region; experts estimate that as many as 20,000 families experience homelessness each year in Washington state, and that number has remained steady in recent years. And while Sound Families was not designed to curb the overall rate of family homelessness, the lessons learned from the families who benefited from the Sound Families Initiative are important for the larger community to understand as we seek to better serve at-risk families in the Puget Sound area.

This report documents key organizational and systems level changes and accomplishments that facilitated the creation of nearly 1,500 new units of supportive housing, and offers candid reflections on what was learned along the way. Perhaps more importantly, the report also recommends a set of concrete action steps that can be taken as we continue our shared efforts toward ending family homelessness in Washington state.

Our recommended actions broadly cover two areas:

1. Improve and closely connect the individual service systems that help families overcome homelessness.

We learned that finding housing for homeless families is only one part of the solution; linking these families with the appropriate social services is critical to their long-term success. We also discovered that our current offering of services would better assist families if they were more tightly coordinated.

Our funding model reflected a “one size fits all” approach—we provided the same level of funding to programs regardless of the intensity or type of services required for their clients. Over time, we learned that both our funding and the level of services provided for families must become more flexible.

No two families are the same, and too often families struggle to adapt to the often limited services made accessible to them. Improved coordination across our service network will allow more families to receive the specialized help they need to readily recover from homelessness, find housing, and remain permanently housed.

Specifically, we see four key areas for improvement:

- First, an improved homelessness *prevention services* system is needed to keep those families on the edge of homelessness housed and appropriately linked with tailored services. Many of these prevention efforts are cost-effective and reduce stress on families and costs in multiple systems.
- Second, we must establish a *common, coordinated way for families to access homelessness services* so that providers can better link families quickly to the housing and service resources they need.
- Third, we should work together to create *effective models and best practices* for case managers so that families can move quickly into housing and effectively receive the services they need.
- Fourth, we should make stronger connections for those recovering from homelessness to *good jobs and increased economic opportunity*.

To be clear, we are not calling for the creation of new and separate systems dedicated exclusively to homeless families; rather, our goal is to make existing systems more accessible to and effective for families at risk of or recovering from homelessness.

These new tools will reduce family homelessness rates, shorten time spent in shelter, and increase the value of services provided.

2. Strengthen the capacity of nonprofit housing and service providers, housing authorities, and local and state funding systems.

We are very proud of the housing that we collectively funded, and the more than 1,500 families and 2,700 children who have been housed to date. We could not have funded this housing for even one of these families if it were not for the many nonprofit housing owners, private sector housers, service providers, government funders, and housing authorities working in partnership across our region.

Looking ahead, our partners must have the resources they need to sustain the new units created as well as contribute to creative solutions in the future. Housing developers, service providers, and public sector partners all need to boost their understanding of and response to the core issues that can result in family homelessness and increase their capacities to more reliably meet the needs of at-risk families in the Puget Sound region.

Our work surrounding family homelessness is nowhere near finished. As we document here the accomplishments we have made to date, we acknowledge that there is still a long road ahead of us. The Sound Families evaluation provides important lessons that can help guide us in our future work addressing family homelessness. By building on the progress achieved and making improvements in the areas where our systems have failed, we can sustain our shared investments. And in doing so, we will ensure that future investments are designed in a way that will finally end family homelessness in our region and beyond.

*The Sound Families Steering Committee
March 18, 2008*

INTRODUCTION

The Sound Families Initiative has been a true public-private partnership. We know this because we are the 24 people collectively known as the Sound Families Steering Committee. We represented our individual organizations—both public and private—and guided the Initiative behind the scenes since it was launched in 2000.

During most of the Initiative, we used our time together to design policy changes, identify ways to align our organizations and resources, reflect on our evaluation of family outcomes, and make funding recommendations to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Because this type of partnership was so new and dynamic, we did not take much time to document our accomplishments—especially from the Steering Committee’s perspective. Over the past several months we have taken some time to reflect on and document what we learned. We also felt it was important to offer recommendations on the next steps we should collectively take to end family homelessness in Washington state. Although the grant making work of the Sound Families Initiative has nearly come to an end, we know that we will continue our collaborative efforts and we hope to inspire others to join us.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

The Sound Families Initiative grew out of the late 1990s economic boom. The Puget Sound region was responding to unprecedented opportunities brought by the dot com industry. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation had recently been launched and was on its way to becoming the world’s largest foundation; local housing authorities had stable allocations of Section 8 rental subsidies; nonprofit housing and human services organizations were expanding and raising significantly more public and private resources; and our local and state governments had higher tax bases and were increasing commitments to civic projects such as new libraries and city and county administration buildings.

It was in this context that in 2000, three cities, three counties, the State of Washington, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding and declared their intent to work collaboratively to triple the supply of housing with support services for homeless families in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. The foundation allocated \$40 million toward the effort. The cities, counties, and state agreed to work collaboratively, streamline their processes, and promote partnerships between housing and services providers. The City of Seattle Office of Housing volunteered to serve as lead administrator of the Initiative and dozens of other essential partners, including seven housing authorities, joined together and ultimately met this ambitious goal.

The economic euphoria and sense of endless possibility did not last throughout the entire Initiative. In fact, we originally believed that 1,500 new units could be funded in three years—rather than the seven years it actually took. In ways we could not have predicted in 2000, the years of our work together saw dramatic changes to the economy and challenges to some essential funding resources—most notably reductions in federal Section 8 subsidies.

During the term of the Initiative we also saw the emergence of new opportunities that could not have been anticipated—most notably statewide efforts to create and implement 10-year plans to end homelessness. The state and all three counties adopted plans after Sound Families was underway. We also could not have anticipated the creation of new funding streams at the state and local levels targeting the needs of both individuals and families experiencing homelessness. State and local 2160 and 2163 funds became viable matching sources for services provided to families living in housing funded by Sound Families.

The first work of the Steering Committee was to define the desired outcomes of the Initiative. We established outcomes for **family, organization, and system** levels. Family outcomes were extensively tracked through the most comprehensive evaluation of family homelessness ever conducted in our state. In 2001, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation contracted with the University of Washington Northwest Institute for Children and Families (NICF) to conduct an independent evaluation of the outcomes achieved by the families served in supportive housing funded by Sound Families. Individual families were tracked in some cases for up to four years. NICF reported their findings annually and released additional reports on special topics used throughout the Initiative to evaluate our progress and strengthen our collective response. *The Final Findings Summary: A Closer Look at Families' Lives During and After Supportive Transitional Housing* prepared by the NICF in December 2007 summarizes their final family-level evaluation findings.¹

We realized we had, in fact, stimulated, encouraged, or even created many significant changes at the organizational and systems levels that had substantial impacts on both our ability to do the hard work of the Initiative and on the larger field as a whole.

The desired organization and system-level outcomes were established at the beginning of the Initiative but were not addressed in the rigorous data collection or monitoring process utilized to track the progress at the family level. Although the Steering Committee was tasked with and held responsible for activities at the organization and system levels, we moved quickly and documented little beyond what was contained in our regular meeting minutes as we evaluated and responded to changes in the environment, identified lessons learned through implementation, and described emerging opportunities.

As we looked back over seven years of shared effort to ensure the success of Sound Families, *we realized that we had, in fact, stimulated, encouraged, or even created many significant changes at the organizational and systems levels that had substantial impacts on both our ability to do the hard work of the Initiative and on the larger field as a whole.* This report is therefore intended to document our progress and challenges at the organization and system levels. It serves as an important companion to the University of Washington family-level evaluation materials.

¹Copies of this and other reports created by the Sound Families evaluation may be found at www.soundfamilies.org

SYSTEMS LEVEL RESULTS AND REFLECTIONS

The Steering Committee defined the following desired outcomes at the systems level:

1. Leverage resources in the housing and social service systems.
2. Sustain leveraged capital and operating resources beyond the conclusion of Sound Families involvement.
3. Develop new partnerships and collaborative relationships.
4. Improve cross-systems collaboration and integration.

We offer the following results and reflections on how well we met the desired outcomes:

- 1. As a result of Sound Families, there was a significant increase in the amount of deeply subsidized housing made available for homeless families.** Sound Families was successful in meeting its goal of tripling the supply of housing for homeless families in the three counties. However, we did not significantly increase the number of affordable housing units in the region because of the cost and complexity of creating new housing stock affordable to very low-income families. By the end of the Initiative, newly constructed low-income housing was costing \$200,000–\$300,000 per unit. Sound Families allocated up to \$20,000 per unit in capital funding, which was not sufficient to create significantly more new units than would have otherwise been created in our region with tax credits, State Housing Trust fund, local funding sources, etc. The diminishing value of our capital resource became clear when mid-way through the Initiative most grant recipients requested additional service funding in lieu of capital funding.
- 2. Sound Families grantees were very successful in securing other sources of capital funding and somewhat successful in leveraging services funding.** On the capital side, we estimate that Sound Families was matched by \$6–\$9 of additional funds per Sound Families dollar awarded. The funds leveraged include local, state, and federal resources as well as private financing and grant funding. On the service side, in 2007 our grantees reported spending an average of \$5,600 per unit per year on case management. Sound Families awarded \$1,500–\$3,000 a unit per year implying that our services funding leveraged \$1–\$3 per dollar awarded.
- 3. Sound Families was very successful in aligning housing-related systems which improved likelihood of “housing stability” for families completing transitional housing.** The Initiative helped to promote alignment of the housing system in two key areas: coordination of resources to produce more housing targeted for homeless families and aligning operating subsidy (Section 8) with designated homeless units. Through its administrative partner, the Seattle Office of Housing, the foundation was able to leverage established collaborative relationships with the state, counties, and housing authorities.

The Initiative helped to promote alignment of the housing system in two key areas: coordination of resources to produce more housing targeted for homeless families and aligning operating subsidy (Section 8) with designated homeless units.

When Sound Families was launched, promoting “housing stability” for homeless families was the stated goal. This goal was largely met in that 89 percent of families completing transitional housing programs obtained and maintained permanent housing. Of the families deemed “stably housed,” 69 percent of them had Section 8 or lived in public housing. *These outcomes can be directly attributed to new and creative housing policies and processes implemented by the housing authority partners who became key stakeholders in the Initiative.*

- 4. It was difficult to leverage funding from and/or align Sound Families resources with *non-housing systems*.** Sound Families had a goal to better understand and align the systems serving homeless families. As mentioned above, there was substantial success in aligning various housing systems; however, our progress did not extend too far beyond the housing systems.

In 2002 and 2003, the Steering Committee hired Cedar River Group to identify strategies to secure support services funding to provide match to Sound Families projects and other transitional housing in Washington state. They examined whether Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), benefits for low-income families while becoming employed or getting a better job, and Medicaid health insurance could be used to provide services linked to specific housing projects. They hoped to design a pilot project to reconfigure one or both of those funding streams to provide essential support services in transitional housing facilities. The goal of the initial work was to determine a non-legislative solution to align housing resources with service resources.

Ultimately it proved difficult to align these systems. A case was made to use a TANF bonus payment to seed a new source of supportive housing services funding. The state, however, decided to make other uses of these one-time federal funds. In addition, in part because of the rigorous reductions in welfare case loads required federally, the case for increasing the use of existing streams of categorical or discretionary funding associated with families recovering from homelessness never gained political momentum. At this point, the Steering Committee decided their best option was to pursue new sources of services funding for supportive housing. The end result ultimately became the Washington Families Fund, which achieved the goal of creating new public funding for supportive services but did not address the goal of “cross-system integrated funding.”

- 5. Washington Families Fund created a new funding source and provides more predictability in services funding.** Since 2005, the Washington Families Fund (WFF) has allocated over \$9 million for housing-based services throughout the state. They make five or 10-year grants to organizations providing housing-based services. The funding is a combination of state funding allocated by the Legislature and funds raised from private philanthropy. Thirteen of the 28 Washington Families Fund grant recipients were Sound Families grantees. These organizations received 52 percent of all the funds allocated to-date but unfortunately, despite its continued growth, this fund is unable to meet the total demand for ongoing services funding from Sound Families projects.

- 6. Early evaluation findings demonstrated the need to increase the opportunities for wage earners to connect with workforce development and increased economic opportunities.** When Sound Families was launched, the primary emphasis was on creating housing stability for families. Beginning in 2004 when the first UW evaluation findings were released, we began to see that while families were mostly successful in maintaining stable housing, they were only able to modestly increase their incomes. The subsequent evaluations demonstrated that even one to three years after leaving transitional housing most families were unable to increase their incomes beyond \$1000 per month—keeping them far from the desired goal of self-sufficiency.

7. Approximately 25 percent of families were not successful in the transitional housing programs because their needs were not adequately identified and/or appropriate housing options and service levels were not available. The 2006 UW report, *Early Exits: Lessons Learned from Families Asked to Leave Transitional Housing Programs*

showed that approximately one quarter of all families were asked to leave the transitional housing programs funded by Sound Families. This information led us to begin thinking about systems level issues or barriers the families encountered. It became clear that our current delivery system did not generally have the ability to differentiate specific family needs at an individual level. Our funding model was “one size fits all” in that it provided the same level of funding to programs regardless of the intensity or type

of services. Our homeless family systems are not coordinated, and are not able to consistently provide those families with greater needs more intensive levels of support or identify those families who could move more quickly towards stability with a more modest set of interventions. We have already begun to see new attempts to distinguish service levels in response to the UW report findings. In 2007, the Washington Families Fund initiated a new “high service level” funding category and program evaluation to begin moving toward implementation and analysis of a service system with increased capacity to differentiate family needs and match service intensities in a coordinated and individualized fashion.

It became clear that our current delivery system did not generally have the ability to differentiate specific family needs at an individual level.

KEY SYSTEMS LEVEL MILESTONES

2000	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation asks University of Washington School of Social Work to evaluate needs of families living in poverty in the Puget Sound region. They identified housing with support services for homeless families as a top need.
2000	The City of Seattle Office of Housing worked with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop the funding and collaboration model that ultimately became Sound Families. They offered to staff the 3-county Initiative once launched.
2000	Sound Families Initiative launched with memorandum of understanding signed by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; cities of Seattle, Everett, and Tacoma; State of Washington; and King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.
2001	Housing authorities commit 1,200 project-based vouchers to projects funded via Sound Families process. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federal waiver obtained through HUD to align Section 8 awards with Sound Families funding awards.• Guaranteed portable vouchers made available in the three counties, guaranteeing “permanent” housing option for families that complete transitional programs.• Guaranteed vouchers promote “transition-in-place” model whereby families remain in housing units when they graduate from service program.
2002	Washington State Housing Finance Commission implements tax-credit policy changes to eliminate requirement that a project must be 100 percent transitional housing in order to qualify for extra points. This helps entice organizations without a primary mission of serving homeless to include some homeless units in larger developments.
2003	Sound Families Steering Committee develops model that ultimately becomes the Washington Families Fund to help address need for long-term services funding in supportive-housing projects.
2004	State Legislature approves \$2 million start-up funding for the Washington Families Fund. Building Changes (formerly named AIDS Housing of Washington) is selected to administer the fund and they raise \$3 million in private funding to match state allocation.
2005	King County Housing Authority creates public housing wait list priority for families graduating from Sound Families funded programs. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 1 of every 3 public housing units that becomes available goes to graduates of a Sound Families program.
2005	Permanent supportive housing becomes an allowed use of Sound Families funding. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicants are encouraged to address local needs and funding guidelines are changed to allow either transitional or permanent (non-time-limited) supportive housing.
2006	State Legislature approves additional \$4 million for the Washington Families Fund.

2007 Sound Families becomes part of King County Coordinated Homeless Funders group to help align resources.

- Two organizations awarded Sound Families funding to address children’s needs, which compliments services funded through other local public sources.

2007–2008 Gov. Gregoire, House Speaker Chopp, and Senate Majority Leader Brown announce a coordinated housing and homeless plan that includes \$6 million additional investment for the Washington Families Fund. Legislation allocating \$6 million was approved by the Legislature in early 2008 and signed by the governor.

ORGANIZATION LEVEL RESULTS AND REFLECTIONS

The Steering Committee defined the following desired outcomes at the organization level:

1. Increase the number of service-enriched transitional housing units in Pierce, King, and Snohomish counties.
2. Increase capacity within organizations to meet the diverse needs of homeless families.
3. Leverage additional resources for strengthening and promoting growth of organizations, particularly operating support and service funds, to leave organizations in a stronger state than before Sound Families became involved.
4. Enhance the capacity of developers and service providers to create more transitional housing units.

We offer the following results and reflections on how well we met the desired outcomes:

1. Sound Families dramatically increased the number of housing units for homeless families in the tri-county region through policy changes and incentives to nonprofit partners

Prior to Sound Families being launched, transitional housing was primarily provided in developments that exclusively served homeless families by organizations whose primary mission was to serve the homeless. Given the aggressive goal of tripling the supply of housing for homeless families, it was clear early in the Initiative that tax-credit allocation criteria promoted the 100 percent model and small developments. In addition, there were not enough organizations with a homeless focus to produce the number of units sought. Four efforts significantly increased production of homeless units:

- A change to tax-credit allocation policy to allow points for projects that included a set-aside of homeless units;
- The Advanced Funding strategy enticed community development organizations to provide homeless units in future developments;
- The option to request “service reserve funding” in lieu of capital funding enticed homeless service providers to negotiate housing set asides for their clients because they could guarantee their services for a longer period; and
- Changing Sound Families policy to allow funding of permanent supportive housing units so that prospective grantees could stay aligned with local funding priority changes.

2. Organizational capacity issues were identified very early in the Initiative but there was no obvious partner to take on the issues identified.

The Steering Committee began discussing organizational capacity issues very early on in the Initiative. The UW School of Social Work reported their findings from early evaluations in 2002 and several times thereafter. There was no organization represented on the Steering Committee or elsewhere with the mission/purpose to address the organizational capacity issues being identified by the Initiative.

In response, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation allocated additional resources for three all-day conferences and several technical trainings administered by Sound Families staff or subcontractors. The evaluations from the trainings demonstrate a level of appreciation and learning; however, these efforts did not fit into a larger agenda to systematically support organizational capacity in our region.

In mid-2007 the foundation hired Building Changes and their subcontractors Melora Hiller and Lisa Gustavason to determine the organizational strengths and challenges faced by Sound Families grantees as a whole and to make recommendations for how the funding community could address the needs of individual organizations as well as develop systems to support capacity growth and supportive housing sustainability over time. The foundation recently awarded Building Changes \$1.3 million to begin addressing the recommendations in the report.

3. Sound Families has begun to evaluate the true costs of collaboration and has uncovered some promising practices; however, there is no systematic organizational support in this area.

The Sound Families funding model encouraged new partnerships and collaborations between housing owners, property managers, service providers, and housing authorities. Just over half the units we funded are operated by an organization that owns and operates the housing and provides the services. The other half is operated by organizations and private entities (housing owners and private property managers) working collaboratively through formal relationships.

Sound Families' active encouragement of new partnerships dramatically increased the need to understand and support collaboration. The reality of what it takes to form and sustain these partnerships evolved through the course of the Initiative with many of the emerging best practices being shared "organization-to-organization" rather than more systematically.

A prime example is memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between service providers and housing organizations. Beginning in 2005, based on feedback from early grantees, we began requiring MOUs as a condition of disbursement. Sample MOUs were shared between organizations, but many organizations started from scratch or worked through several amendments to their existing agreements as needed.

Sound Families' active encouragement of new partnerships dramatically increased the need to understand and support collaboration.

Several grantees also determined the "cost" of collaboration was too high and/or ineffective and ultimately decided to change their mission or take on areas of work previously accomplished with contractors. In some cases, Sound Families grantees provided case management when subcontractors failed to perform. In other cases, grantees more comprehensively evaluated their housing portfolios, staffing, and mission before providing case management services directly.

4. Lack of ongoing services funding makes long term stability of programs vulnerable.

One hundred percent of Sound Families grantees reported in mid-2007 that they intend to maintain the supportive housing units created into the future, yet 70 percent reported that their biggest barrier to success was a lack of funding for services after foundation money is expended. Fortunately, several new funding sources for housing-based services have emerged since Sound Families was created, including the Washington Families Fund, state and county-administered 2060 and 2163/1359 funding, and the King County Veterans and Human Services Levy. One concern is that many of the new funding sources limit their resources to funding "new" units making ongoing funding for existing units difficult to obtain.

5. More targeted and dependable training is needed for case managers.

In the 2006 and 2007 monitoring surveys, the Sound Families grantees rated "case managers with significant experience with homeless families" as their top program strength followed by "case managers with strong commitment." Our UW evaluations have also emphasized the essential role of experienced case managers and have noted that the outcomes of families are deeply influenced by the experience of the case managers. Yet, just 50 percent of all Sound Families grantees had more than one case manager

with more than two years of experience working with homeless families. Low wages and lack of adequate training and supervision appear to be significant causes of case manager turnover.

In the absence of any systems-wide resources targeted directly at supporting case managers, Sound Families did offer several free conferences and trainings targeted at case managers. While the individual trainings were generally deemed “timely” and were well attended, they will not address any future capacity and training needs.

6. The participatory evaluation design helped organizations strengthen internal evaluation systems and share reflections and lessoned learned.

The University of Washington evaluation was designed to support learning at all levels of the Sound Families Initiative. The participatory evaluation design allowed UW to share data as it was collected with housing operators, service providers, funders, and the homeless families enrolled in the study. This type of evaluation was new for many of the participating organizations and many were reluctant to participate at the beginning because they feared the findings would be used in less-than-supportive ways that might jeopardize funding for their efforts. The evaluation participants overcame their reluctance when they began benefitting from regular reports on their programs’ data that could be used to adjust or enhance their activities. Because there was no turnover in the UW evaluation staff for the entire Initiative, the evaluators also provided valuable longitudinal feedback to programs and families and helped inspire the organizations to reflect on the evaluation findings to stimulate implementation of program changes.

The participatory evaluation design was costly to implement because of the amount of feedback to participants and stakeholders included. However, we believe there will be a lasting benefit to the field because the Sound Families evaluation process helped promote a learning culture and a commitment to quality improvement. The Sound Families evaluation remains, to date, the most significant longitudinal study of its type on the impact of supportive transitional housing on families recovering from homelessness that has been completed in the United States.

The Sound Families grantees rated “case managers with significant experience with homeless families” as their top program strength.

KEY ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL MILESTONES

2000–2007	1,445 units funded by Sound Families in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties.
2001	Sound Families Conference: <i>Regional Challenges in Housing Homeless Families</i> . Focus was on introducing broader audience to supportive housing and related issues.
2002	Service Reserves Model implemented. Grantees could request service reserves in lieu of capital funds in order to increase annual services funding from \$1,500 to \$3,000 per unit and to extend the services funding beyond the fifth year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5.4 million in service reserves allocated to one-third of projects funded between 2002 and 2007.
2003	Sound Families Conference: <i>Comparing Notes: Lessons Learned about Planning and Developing Housing with Services for Homeless Families</i> . Focus was on sharing promising results from existing programs, public relations training, and financial stability training.
2003–2007	“Advanced Funding” awards and grant amendments allocated to high-capacity organizations capable of producing and operating units in a more predictable manner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly one-third of total funds awarded to six organizations through Advanced Funding process (445 units; nearly \$12 million in funding).
2004	Steering Committee worked with housing authorities and housing providers to implement “transition-in-place” model whereby families graduating from transitional housing programs could use their portable Section 8 rent voucher to remain in their unit or apartment complex.
2004	<i>The Sound Families Evaluation Preliminary Findings</i> report was released.
2005	UW Evaluation Report Released: <i>A Closer Look at Homeless Families’ Lives During and After Supportive Transitional Housing</i> .
2005	<i>Understanding the Impact of Homelessness on Children</i> one-day training session provided to case managers.
2005	<i>Underwriting Supportive Housing Applications</i> one-day training provided to city, county, state, and housing authority funding partners.
2006	UW Evaluation Report Released: <i>Early Exits: Lessons Learned from Families Asked to Leave Supportive Transitional Housing Programs</i> .
2006	<i>Introduction to Housing First</i> one-day training provided to case managers.
2006	Sound Families Conference: <i>Roofs, Rents, and Services: Public-Private Solutions for Family Homelessness</i> held. Focus was on understanding Sound Families “story” and accomplishments, introduction of national context around family homelessness, and supporting momentum for systems responses to funding.

2006	<i>The Role and Relationship of Property Managers and Case Managers in Supportive Housing</i> one-day training for property and case managers held.
2007	<i>A Portrait of Services to Homeless Families in the Puget Sound Region</i> report released. Report summarized self-reported data from all Sound Families grantees to capture overview of how programs were operating. Data included types and cost of services offered, experience of case managers, descriptions of facilities, and relationships between property managers and case managers.
2007	UW Evaluation Report Released: <i>Breaking the Cycle: Serving Homeless Children in Supportive Housing</i> .
2007	<i>Benefits Training: Improving Pathways to Employment</i> one-day training provided by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) staff for case managers.
2007	<i>Housing and Services in the Puget Sound Region</i> report released. This was follow-up to the 2006 "Portrait" report but focused on portion of previous statistics collected as well as new information on collaboration and program evolution.
2007	UW Evaluation Report Released: <i>Final Findings Summary: A Closer Look at Families' Lives During and After Supportive Transitional Housing</i> .
2008	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation allocated \$1.3 million to Building Changes to provide capacity grants to Sound Families grantees and to improve systems to sustain Section 8 commitments in supportive housing.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

We struggle when we hear people talk about the “end of” Sound Families. In as much as it represented the \$40 million dollars that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation allocated, Sound Families is coming to an end—nearly all the funding as been allocated at the point this report is being authored. However, the collaboration of the Sound Families partners will not and cannot end now if we are to end family homelessness in Washington state. As a matter of fact, the number and types of players has actually increased over time and must continue to grow in the future. The Washington Families Fund, an outgrowth of the Sound Families Initiative that provides supportive services funding linked to housing in communities across Washington state, has received a total of almost \$18 million of funds from the state and 18 private sector donors as of the date of this report. The foundation has announced a continuing commitment to ending family homelessness in our region and will launch a new initiative over the coming months to help continue to move our work forward.

In this context of continued activity and optimism that we can and will end family homelessness, we offer the following recommended actions to the organizations we represent as well as any person or organization that sees how they can contribute to these actions.

With the belief that additional *system changes* will be needed to end family homelessness in Washington state, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Focus new effort and resources on preventing families from becoming homeless

- Develop strategies to assist families before they become homeless, including primary prevention efforts that identify families most at risk of homelessness and sustain them in viable housing before they lose it.
- Support secondary prevention efforts to avoid recidivism into homelessness for families regaining stability.
- Although Sound Families did not focus on primary prevention of homelessness, there is an increasing body of evidence that suggests prevention efforts are both beneficial to family stability and well-being and generate significant cost savings across multiple systems.

2. Develop a coordinated-entry process with common screening and assessment tools

- Create a coordinated system that identifies family needs as early on as possible after a family makes initial contact and enables a coordinated and tailored response to each family. Families with greater needs must be able to easily access and obtain more intensive levels of support and families with fewer needs should be rapidly identified and provided with more modest interventions.
- Provide support to create common screening and assessment instruments utilized across systems and providers at all entry points to the system in order to facilitate consistent and effective triage of each family.

3. Develop standardized case management models and provide training and technical assistance to providers

- Define case management models that best serve families with various needs—with particular attention to mental health, drug/alcohol addiction, and employment training.
- Develop an information repository with best practices information and sample documents that is easily accessible by current grantees as well as others serving homeless families.

Develop strategies to assist families before they become homeless, including primary prevention efforts that identify families most at risk of homelessness and sustain them in viable housing before they lose it.

- Create best practice guidelines to help agencies create and maintain healthy partnerships and institutionalize them within agency practices.
- Provide regular trainings for grantees related to the very best case management models and special issues related to homeless families.

4. Support broader community efforts to end homelessness

- Advocate for an increase in the housing available for people moving out of Sound Families and other transitional housing units who need to find permanent housing. Include both short and long-term strategies, such as immediate access to shallow subsidies for families and a revolving loan fund for affordable housing developers.
- Assist Sound Families grantees to fully integrate their programs within the goals and strategies of their local county homeless continuum and 10-year plans.
- Develop and implement a program component to “follow” families when they wish to leave transitional housing but still need services (such as when they receive a Section 8 certificate before completing a specific transitional program).
- Support efforts to increase and sustain the Washington Families Fund and its proposed evaluation.

Create a coordinated system that identifies family needs as early as possible after a family makes initial contact and enables a coordinated and tailored response to each family.

5. Improve connections between housing and workforce development systems

- Make linkages that connect wage-earners in families recovering from homelessness to opportunities for economic stability and wage progression a cornerstone of the response to family homelessness.
- Help wage earners connect with workforce development and economic opportunities that can move them towards increased self-sufficiency including the use of existing employment training and job placement services and economic drivers such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, etc.
- Ensure that wage earners are able to access and connect easily to the ancillary benefits and services required to make workforce connections possible and effective, including child care, EITC, etc.

6. Use Sound Families evaluation results and systems learning to influence homeless family funding allocations and policies at the local, state, and federal levels

- Disseminate Sound Families data to underscore the basic equation that housing *plus* services lead to increased stability for families recovering from homelessness.
- Break down silos between different systems to create systems that make more sense to families and promote the delivery of coordinated and tailored housing and services.
- Utilize both aggregate data and individual case studies to bolster arguments for additional funding; keep the details of the human side of the story alive and well.
- Create a climate that reflects a willingness to make change happen in an environment of collaboration and shared accountability among relevant stakeholders.
- Continue to utilize key leaders and champions in the community who can bring and keep public and private sector funders and decision makers together and serve as both convener and catalyst in promoting systems change at the policy and practice levels.
- Ensure a continuing public-private funding partnership to end family homelessness over the long term.
- Disseminate findings and recommendations to key stakeholders at the federal level, where increases in resources for capital projects and housing subsidies will be essential to success over time.

Help wage earners connect with workforce development and economic opportunities that can move them towards increased self-sufficiency.

- Post findings on Internet Web sites that are easily accessible and will be quickly identified in Web searches related to affordable and supportive housing.
- Promote the development of an “endowed” system that can continue to function effectively after the philanthropic sector has moved on to new priorities or at times when larger economic stressors lead to significant public sector budget reductions.

7. Improve the capacity of state and local systems to monitor and manage the impact of significant fluctuations in the regional economy that impact the supply of affordable housing, access to support services, and family self-sufficiency.

- Identify and monitor the direct impact of periods of economic downturn on families struggling to obtain or maintain housing and the impact of these downturns on employment, entitlements, housing subsidies, and other supports critical to making the difference between success and failure for families in crisis.
- Identify and monitor the direct impact of periods of economic vitality on families struggling to obtain or maintain housing that make affordable housing for low-income families more difficult to obtain or sustain.
- Work with partners at the local, state, and federal levels to determine the most effective strategies and tactics to mitigate the impacts of fluctuations in the economy on prevention of and responses to family homelessness.

Break down silos between different systems to create systems that make more sense to families and promote the delivery of coordinated and tailored housing and services.

With an eye toward *sustaining the programs funded through the Sound Families Initiative*, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Provide direct support to grantee agencies to ensure program stability and effectiveness

- Provide funding to agencies to address specific capacity-building issues.
- Establish methods and programs to educate agencies to evaluate/assess their readiness to expand/increase capacity.
- Ensure ongoing access to standardized case management training that disseminates evidence-based practices and ongoing supervision that promotes skill development over time.
- Assist community-based agencies providing housing support and ancillary services to promote stability and increased retention among their direct service employees by achieving reasonable family-living wages for all staff.

Ensure the crucial partnerships among housing authorities, private sector affordable housing providers, and agencies offering supportive services that were stimulated by Sound Families are able to continue well into the future.

2. Initiate system-level improvements with public housing authority partners

- Ensure the crucial partnerships among housing authorities, private sector affordable housing providers, and agencies offering supportive services that were stimulated by Sound Families are able to continue well into the future.
- Stimulate creation of a system in which families stabilized in public housing and with access to increased economic opportunities and income are motivated to move into the private sector market, thereby creating new capacity within more deeply subsidized units operated by the housing authorities.

- Evaluate the needs and future role of the public housing authorities in maintaining existing Section 8 commitments, including defining the most effective ways to maintain productive relationships between housing authorities and their Section 8 partners in the private sector.
- Clarify roles and expectations for monitoring services to ensure a quality Section 8 investment.
- Provide training to PHA staff to enable them to evaluate supportive housing program viability.

3. Improve existing public funding systems:

- Help public funding partners and grantees determine which Sound Families projects should be retained as transitional housing and which should be shifted into different models (e.g. permanent supportive housing or general low-income housing).
- Advocate for government and other funders to establish contracts that cover the full cost of services provided, including infrastructure and administrative costs.
- Provide mechanisms to educate funders on the higher cost of serving homeless/high need families including adequate pay to attract and retain quality case management staff.
- Work with funders to increase consistency among reporting requirements with the goal of creating a consolidated reporting system with common outcomes.

APPENDIX 1

Organizations, Projects, and Total Units Funded by County

MULTIPLE COUNTIES

Archdiocesan Housing Authority
Advanced Funding 150

Intercommunity Mercy Housing
Advanced Funding 69

YWCA of Seattle - King County -
 Snohomish County
Advanced Funding 99

PIERCE COUNTY

Alesek Institute
Bridges Village 10

Helping Hand House
Bright Futures #1 15
Front Door Project, The 30
Rural Bright Futures 8

Intercommunity Mercy Housing
Eliza McCabe Townhomes 11
Hillside Gardens 7

Lakewood Area Shelter Association
Flett Meadows 14

Low Income Housing Institute
Sunset Meadow Family Housing 6

Metropolitan Development Council
Pacific Courtyard 23
Parkland Manor 20

Multi-Service Center
Fern Hill Terrace 3

Pierce County Housing Authority
Family Permanency Project 57

Tacoma Housing Authority
Hillside Terrace 4
Salishan Phase One & Two 20
Adams Square Family Center 11
Tyler Square 15

SNOHOMISH COUNTY

Everett Housing Authority
Timber Hill 10

Housing Authority of Snohomish County
Autumn Leaf 7
Edmonds Highlands 12
Fairview & East Terrace 21
First Steps 10
First Steps II 10
First Steps III 10

Housing Hope
Housing Hope Village Expansion 9
Maple Leaf Expansion 7
Maple Leaf Meadows 5
New Century House 6
Advanced Funding 76

Intercommunity Mercy Housing
Lincoln Way 15

Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI)
Meadowdale 15

Salvation Army
New Tomorrows 20

Snohomish County Center for
 Battered Women
Confidential Location 12

KING COUNTY

Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services <i>A Place of Our Own</i>	19	Low Income Housing Institute <i>Belltown View</i>	5
Archdiocesan Housing Authority <i>Katharine's Place</i>	10	<i>Cate Apartments</i>	15
Capitol Hill Housing <i>Pantages Apartments</i>	11	<i>Columbia Court</i>	13
<i>Advanced Funding</i>	30	<i>Denny Park</i>	8
Church Council of Greater Seattle <i>HomeStep</i>	12	<i>Martin Court</i>	13
Community Psychiatric Clinic <i>The Willows</i>	15	<i>Meadowbrook View</i>	15
Consejo Counseling & Referral Service <i>Villa Esperanza</i>	23	<i>Tyree Scott</i>	6
DASH (Downtown Action to Save Housing) <i>Liberty Square</i>	6	Multi-Service Center <i>Villa Capri</i>	9
<i>Pyramid Pointe Apartments</i>	17	Muslim Housing Services <i>MHS Transitional Housing Project</i>	11
Delridge Neighborhood Development Association <i>Croft Place</i>	7	Sea Mar Community Health Centers <i>Sea Mar Family Rental Project</i>	5
<i>One Community Commons</i>	7	Seattle Housing Authority <i>Alder Crest</i>	8
Family Services of King County <i>Hope Through Housing</i>	10	<i>High Point & Wisteria - SOAR</i>	30
<i>Project Permanency</i>	15	Shelter Resources Inc. <i>Lauren Heights LLC</i>	5
First Place School <i>Family Stabilization Program</i>	4	Solid Ground <i>Laurelwood Gardens Apartments</i>	10
Hearing, Speech, & Deafness Center <i>Views at Madison</i>	10	St. Andrew's Housing Group <i>280 Clark Apartments</i>	8
Hopelink <i>Alpine Ridge</i>	15	<i>Chalet Apartments</i>	4
<i>Avondale Park</i>	42	<i>Rose Crest at Talus</i>	10
<i>Duvall Family Housing</i>	6	St. Stephen Housing Association <i>City Park Townhomes</i>	12
Housing at the Crossroads <i>Kensington Square</i>	6	Valley Cities Counseling & Consultation <i>Pathways First</i>	14
Housing Resources Group <i>Genesee Housing</i>	6	Vine Maple Place <i>Vine Maple Gardens</i>	6
<i>Kingway Apartments</i>	16	Vision House <i>Children's Village</i>	11
<i>Advanced Funding</i>	21	<i>Vision House Phase II</i>	12
InterIm Community Development Association <i>Solace Program</i>	5	Way Back Inn <i>Highland Inn</i>	2
<i>Samaki Commons</i>	8	YWCA of Seattle - King County - Snohomish County <i>Passage Point</i>	65
King County Housing Authority <i>Enumclaw Project</i>	4	Habitat for Humanity of Seattle/ South King County <i>Roxbury Transitional Housing</i>	2
Kirkland Interfaith Transitions in Housing <i>Petter Court</i>	4		

APPENDIX 2

Web Site References

To obtain referenced evaluation reports or additional information on Sound Families:
www.soundfamilies.org

To obtain information on the Washington Families Fund: www.buildingchanges.org

SOUND FAMILIES PARTNERS

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:
www.gatesfoundation.org

Department of Housing and Urban Development:
www.hud.gov

State of Washington Department of Social
and Health Services:
www.dshs.wa.gov

State of Washington Department of Community,
Trade, and Economic Development:
www.cted.wa.gov

Washington State Housing Finance Commission:
www.wshfc.org

Snohomish County:
www.co.snohomish.wa.us

Housing Authority of Snohomish County:
www.hasco.org

City of Everett:
www.everettwa.org

Everett Housing Authority:
www.evha.org

King County Department of Community and
Human Services:
www.metrokc.gov/dchs/

King County Housing Authority:
www.kcha.org

City of Seattle Office of Housing:
www.seattle.gov/housing

Seattle Housing Authority:
www.seattlehousing.org

Pierce County Department of Community Services:
[www.co.pierce.wa.us/pc/abtus/ourorg/
comsvcs/comsvcs.htm](http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/pc/abtus/ourorg/comsvcs/comsvcs.htm)

Pierce County Housing Authority:
www.pchawa.org

City of Tacoma Department of Community
and Economic Development:
www.cityoftacoma.org/ced

Tacoma Housing Authority:
www.tacomahousing.org

Impact Capital:
www.impactcapital.org