THE PROBLEM

Many Connecticut families face significant challenges maintaining their housing. The Connecticut United Way’s 2018 “ALICE” (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) report found that 40% of Connecticut households struggle to afford basic household necessities. For some, the State’s high cost of living is too much to bear, leaving them homeless. According to the most recent Point-in-Time Count, 370 families – representing 436 adults and 676 children – were experiencing homelessness in Connecticut on the night of January 23, 2018.

Homeless families face a mountain of obstacles preventing them from securing stable employment, and from navigating the systems that offer the supportive services and career development opportunities they so desperately need.

40% OF CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS STRUGGLE TO AFFORD BASIC LIVING EXPENCES

OVER 1,100 CONNECTICUT PARENTS & CHILDREN IN FAMILIES MAY EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS ON ANY GIVEN NIGHT

FINDING AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE
ACCESSING TRANSPORTATION
OBTAINING MARKETABLE SKILLS & EXPERIENCE
NAVIGATING COMPLICATED SERVICE SYSTEMS
THE SOLUTION

Secure Jobs (SJ) Connecticut was designed to increase the income of homeless families by connecting them to the education, training, and supports they needed to secure and maintain stable employment. SJ sought to accomplish this by better integrating and coordinating the efforts of housing agencies and the public workforce system to effectively serve families participating in the Connecticut Rapid Re-Housing Program (CTRRP).

The Melville Charitable Trust, in partnership with 25 private funders and the Department of Housing, awarded grants to implement SJ in four regions across Connecticut: Northwest (Waterbury/Torrington region), Southwest (Fairfield County), North Central (Greater Hartford), and South Central (Greater New Haven).

Client navigators acted as a single point-of-contact between multiple agencies, helping to coordinate care among partners and facilitate access to training and supportive services.

Regions engaged partners and connected with state agencies and local community resources to support families and problem-solve barriers to employment.

Flexible funds addressed client barriers to employment and provided an array of supportive services, including transportation, childcare, and training.

Housing and workforce staff, as well as staff from other family-serving agencies, held case conferences to communicate about clients, share client information, and coordinate services.
PARTICIPANTS

During the pilot, Secure Jobs enrolled 245 clients, representing 230 households with a total of 422 children. 78% of clients were people of color, and 87% of households were female-headed. Approximately 45% of children were under the age of 6.

All clients received case management, with most receiving employment services (95%), flexible funds (77%), and financial literacy & benefits counseling (67%). Slightly less than half (48%) received training.

While clients reported a host of challenges at enrollment, they also showed great promise. SJ staff stood ready to assist clients with whatever challenges they presented, and help clients shine a light on their greatest strengths.

**STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES REPORTED BY SECURE JOBS CLIENTS AT ENROLLMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>CHALLENGES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYED AT ENROLLMENT</td>
<td>MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYED WITHIN PAST YEAR</td>
<td>DISABILITY</td>
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<td>HS DIPLOMA OR HIGHER</td>
<td>CRIMINAL JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>41%</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>76%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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“Find the best in people. Focus on their strengths and not their weaknesses. When you focus on weaknesses, you forget the strengths. Focusing on their strengths changes their mentality about how the system works. It feels like you’re pointing fingers if you focus on barriers. Tell them what they’re good at - they don’t hear that very often.”

- SJ Case Manager
OUTCOMES

Throughout the pilot period, Secure Jobs (1) increased coordination between housing and workforce agencies, (2) built connections with state agencies and local community resources, (3) used flex funds to help clients overcome barriers to employment, and (4) provided crucial client navigation services.

Client-level outcomes are promising. As of Fall 2018, most clients had either successfully completed the program or were still participating. Of the clients who enrolled in Years 1 and 2, most had either secured a new job or advanced to a better job. And for clients who were enrolled in SJ for over 2 years, 85% had not returned to shelter.

For clients who got new or better jobs, average monthly earned income went from $462 at enrollment to $1,647 at job placement. While clients benefited from higher pay, many had incomes that were still well below the household survival budget (HSB), even for the smallest of families.

1 Clients successfully completing SJ secured jobs and/or supports to sustain their housing.
LOOKING AHEAD

SJ Connecticut engaged in a comprehensive, third-party evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the strategies implemented, identify best practices, and shed a light on areas where room for improvement exists. The evaluator used a collaborative approach to synthesize the following recommendations based on extensive analysis of client data and numerous interviews, focus groups, and reflection sessions with SJ clients, staff, leaders, and other stakeholders:

- **Allow flexibility in time limits** for housing assistance through extensions or waivers for clients enrolled in job training programs.
- **Utilize best practices** (e.g., streamline enrollment processes, offer American Job Center (AJC) orientations in shelters) to accelerate the provision of employment services that help clients advance to higher-wage jobs.
- AJCs should consider permanently offering higher-touch services to higher-need populations, such as more intensive case management and AJC navigation, referrals to employment services that offer more navigation, and more direct connections to employers.
- Increase the availability of flex funds across service systems.
- Increase the use of person-centered practices to boost client engagement.
- Advocate for state policies that improve the quality of low-skill jobs (e.g., increase minimum wage, regulate schedules).
- Increase the quantity of affordable housing options through increased funding and subsidies.

“Since I became a participant my life has changed for the better. Not only has it changed my life, it also changed my kids’ life. When I felt like giving up, it pushed me even harder to achieve what goal I had.”

- SJ Client

SPECIAL THANKS TO SJ FUNDERS:

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**COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF EASTERN CT**
**COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF NORTHWEST CT**
**COMMUNITY FUND OF DARIEN**
**CONNECTICUT COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING**
**DIME BANK FOUNDATION**
**DOMINION**
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**HARTFORD FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC GIVING**
**ION BANK**
**LIBERTY BANK FOUNDATION**
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**UNITED WAY OF GREATER WATERBURY**
**UNITED WAY OF WESTERN CONNECTICUT**
**WEBSTER BANK**