NEW MEXICO APPLESEED IS A NONPARTISAN, NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION WITH THE MISSION OF ENDING POVERTY THROUGH HIGH-IMPACT, SYSTEMIC CHANGE.

“It is no coincidence that in New Mexico, 72% of mothers and 47% of fathers of children in CYFD custody are homeless or have inadequate housing, or that 76% of mothers and 50% of fathers have inadequate financial resources or are unemployed.”

- New Mexico Appleseed, 2013
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Keeping Families Together
Preventing Foster Care, Homelessness and Repeat Maltreatment

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Keeping Families Together

Preventing Foster Care, Homelessness and Repeat Maltreatment

OVERVIEW
Each year, more than 5,000 children in New Mexico are abused or neglected. Keeping Families Together (KFT) is a new, evidence-based intervention for families in the child welfare system that is predicted to help prevent repeat child abuse among homeless families by alleviating conditions that contribute to abuse and neglect. It is also predicted to generate a public sector cost savings of approximately $10,000 per family. By providing Permanent Supportive Housing to homeless families with CYFD involvement, KFT leverages all of the support systems available to create conditions for success as parents, tenants, and members of the community.

Who Keeping Families Together (KFT) Families Are:
- Substantiated abuse and neglect case in the Children, Youth, and Families Department
- Mental health and/or substance abuse issues in one or more parents
- Homelessness or inadequate housing

What KFT Families Receive:

- Housing
  - Long-term affordable housing for as long as necessary to stabilize the family
  - Assistance with moving and furniture
  - Vouchers for rent, utilities, and security deposits
  - Housing case manager to work with landlords and assist with housing acquisition process

- Short-term crisis management
  - CYFD-required services to stabilize the family, address trauma, and ensure abuse and neglect stops in the short term

- Long-term support services on both the family and housing sides including
  - Treatment for mental health and substance abuse
  - Case management to connect families with services
  - Creation of a new social support system
  - Job training
  - Parenting support
  - Tenant skills development

Predicted Short-Term Results for KFT Families:
- 90% of families will be stably housed\(^1\)
- 64% of families will have no new allegations of abuse or neglect\(^2\)
- 61% of child welfare cases will be closed\(^3\)
- 100% of children in foster care with a goal of parental reunification will be returned to parents\(^4\)
- No additional children will be removed from their parents\(^5\)
Predicted Short-Term Cost Savings to Taxpayers:
- Approximately $500,000 in taxpayer savings in the first year
  - More families in stable housing
  - Fewer cases of repeat maltreatment
  - Fewer children in foster care

Predicted Long-Term Results for KFT Families:
- Children saved from foster care with decreased risk of generational cycle of abuse
- Children saved from foster care with decreased risk of homelessness
- Children saved from foster care with fewer trauma-related emotional issues

Predicted Long-Term Results for the Child Welfare System:
- Fewer families in the CYFD system due to less repeat maltreatment
- Fewer children placed in foster care due to appropriate intervention
- CYFD shifts resources from crisis management to early intervention and prevention

THE MOST VULNERABLE NEW MEXICAN CHILDREN: *Homeless, Impoverished, Neglected and Abused*

The tension between child safety and family preservation is never clearer than in the context of family homelessness. Significant data links parental homelessness to child abuse and neglect. Without an intervention that addresses the conditions that triggered the abuse and neglect—extreme poverty, lack of stable housing, and lack of social support—these families have little chance of ending the cycle of abuse and neglect.

What is Homelessness? What is Inadequate Housing?

It is not always obvious from the outside that a family is homeless. Federal laws recognize that people can be homeless even if they do not appear homeless or think of themselves as homeless. **You are considered homeless if you are:**

- Living in a car, abandoned building, campground, or public place;
- Living “doubled up” with friends or family because you cannot afford your own housing;
- Living in a shelter;
- Facing imminent eviction from your home;
- Leaving your home because of domestic violence or other danger; or
- Living in a motel.

People who have access to stable housing might still be **inadequately housed**, even if they are not homeless. Inadequate housing is housing that fails to meet basic health and safety standards. A house is inadequate if it has problems like

- Lack of plumbing or other sanitary waste disposal,
- Lack of heat, or
- Severe mold or vermin infestations.

THE LINK BETWEEN HOUSING AND CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT:

Extreme poverty, homelessness and child abuse are inextricably linked. Families who are unable to afford housing are at significantly greater risk of abusing and neglecting their children. Low-income children of homeless parents are four times as likely as low-income, housed children to become involved with the child welfare system. Homelessness and foster care are often linked in a self-perpetuating, multi-generational cycle: homeless families are more likely to have a child placed in foster care and less likely to get the child
back, and children who have been in foster care are more likely to be homeless
themselves later in life.\(^8\)

It is no coincidence that in New Mexico, 72% of mothers and 47% of fathers of children in
CYFD custody are homeless or have inadequate housing,\(^9\) or that 76% of mothers and
50% of fathers have inadequate financial resources or are unemployed.\(^10\) 73% of
substantiated reports made to CYFD fall into the category of “physical neglect,” a term that
includes inadequate or unstable housing.\(^11\) Homelessness and inadequate housing may
also contribute to physical abuse (roughly 25% of substantiated CYFD cases\(^12\)) by
increasing parents’ stress and depleting their emotional resources.\(^13\)

In New Mexico, we have both high levels of family homelessness and the resulting high
levels of child abuse and neglect. With over 16,000 homeless children in the state,\(^14\) New
Mexico ranks among the ten worst states in the country for child homelessness.\(^15\) At the
same time, New Mexico has up to 5,600 substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect
per year\(^16\) and 1,947 children in foster care,\(^17\) and is ranked second worst in the nation for
child abuse deaths.\(^18\)

Homeless families may be more likely than their stably housed counterparts to cycle back
into CYFD. “Repeat maltreatment,” or repeated involvement with the child welfare system,
is more likely to occur in families who are extremely poor, lack social supports, or have
multiple needs or problems, such as homelessness or inadequate housing.\(^19\) Because
CYFD does not have the tools to address family homelessness, children from homeless
families may be at increased risk of cycling in and out of the child welfare system.\(^20\)

New Mexico law requires CYFD to make reasonable efforts to keep children from entering
foster care and to reunify families whose children have been removed.\(^21\) (There are
exceptions to this requirement in cases of serious abuse.)\(^22\) This is consistent with
recognized best practices for child welfare agencies. Foster care is associated with
significant negative outcomes, including increased likelihood that children will grow up to
abuse substances, go to prison, or become homeless.\(^23\) Entering foster care even briefly
can frighten and traumatize children,\(^24\) and foster care placement increases the likelihood
that children will become juvenile delinquents or require emergency medical care.\(^25\)

It is worth noting that family homelessness not only increases the chance that a child will
be placed in foster care,\(^26\) but also creates a barrier to family reunification when children
have been placed either with family or in foster care.\(^27\) The Child Welfare League of
America estimates that 30% of all children in foster care could be reunited with their
families if safe, affordable housing were available.\(^28\)
Despite the clear need to address homelessness as a root cause of child abuse and neglect, CYFD has few tools with which to do so. Children and families cycle through CYFD with issues of repeat maltreatment because, in part, the system is designed for crisis management, not long-term stability. There are three critical gaps in the child welfare system that contribute to the cycle of repeat maltreatment in homeless families: first, the lack of long-term, stabilizing services for families; second, the lack of affordable housing; and third, the lack of resources to support families in any homes they are able to find.

**Lack of Long-Term Support Services:** In New Mexico, families facing substantiated allegations of child abuse and neglect work with CYFD caseworkers, but these services are short-term and limited in scope. Services are focused on crisis management surrounding children’s safety, not on stabilizing families in the long term to keep them from abusing and neglecting their children again. CYFD caseworkers have a heavy caseload and lack the resources to continue working with families long-term. As soon as a family’s abuse or neglect case is closed, CYFD caseworkers stop working with the family until the next reported episode of abuse and neglect. Research suggests that these short-term interventions are ineffective at preventing repeated interactions with the child welfare system.

**Lack of Affordable Housing:** Many families in poverty have no access to adequate, affordable long-term housing. In theory, the federal Family Unification Program (FUP) provides housing vouchers for families whose children would otherwise be placed in foster care due to lack of housing, and are generally used for youth aging out of foster care. However, these vouchers are only for children already in foster care or facing imminent removal, and there are fewer than 150 FUP vouchers available for families in the state of New Mexico. Similarly, other affordable housing programs, such as Section 8, may require families to wait for years before housing becomes available.

**Lack of Housing Support:** Families who find housing still may lack the support they need to be successful tenants. There are no systematic connections between affordable housing programs and the child welfare system. Families who need both housing and family services must attempt to navigate both systems (or be lucky enough to get a spot in one of the few existing supportive housing programs). Without case management, behavioral health services, or community support, the most vulnerable families will struggle even after they find housing.
SUCCESSFULLY ADDRESSING THE CO-OCCURRENCE OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND HOMELESSNESS

Evidence suggests that preventing repeated child abuse and neglect in homeless families requires long-term, comprehensive services beyond what CYFD can provide on its own. Instead, vulnerable families need ongoing services that address underlying issues, including housing and mental health problems.  

One way to provide these comprehensive services is through Permanent Supportive Housing, a proven solution to chronic homelessness and child abuse and neglect, which provides a best practice that can address all of these issues at once. These programs have been shown to be extremely successful for a variety of populations, including families and chronically homeless individuals. Permanent Supportive Housing programs provide individuals and families with stable housing plus relevant supportive services for as long as families need both. The underlying theory, now well proven, is that access to long-term housing is a non-negotiable requirement for family stability and recovery.

Participants in Permanent Supportive Housing programs receive a variety of interconnected services, generally including:

- **Housing**
  - Assistance finding and moving into an appropriate home
  - Funds for rent, utilities, and security deposits
  - Continued assistance for as long as the participant requires—housing is intended to be long-term, not transitional

- **Supportive Services**
  - Case management to ensure access to appropriate care
  - Physical and mental health care, including rehabilitation
  - Educational and job training programs
  - Other relevant services, such as parenting support and tenant skills training

Keeping Families Together, described more fully below, builds on the success of Permanent Supportive Housing interventions, both in and out of New Mexico, that have seen impressive results for individuals and families while saving public funds.

**Successful Supportive Housing Programs Targeting Child Welfare-Involved Homeless Families:**

- By the end of a similar *Keeping Families Together* pilot in New York, 61% of the families’ child welfare cases were closed, 36 and 90% of the families remained stably housed. 37
- A supportive housing program for families in Connecticut found that by the end of the program, 78% of families in the program had improved their housing situation, 73% had improved their access to health care, and unemployment among parents dropped 17%. 38
- A program for highly at-risk families in Sacramento kept 78% of children from returning to foster care. 39
Successful Permanent Supportive Housing Programs Targeting Homelessness in Adults:

• In New Mexico, Albuquerque Heading Home successfully uses a Housing First model with vulnerable homeless adults. Its studies have found that 85% of participants stay safely housed through the program or leave under successful circumstances, and participants report significant improvements in their health and quality of life.  

• In San Francisco, chronically homeless adults who entered permanent supportive housing showed a 56% decrease in emergency room visits and a 45% decrease in inpatient hospital admissions. 

• In a study of HIV-positive homeless adults in Chicago, participants who received permanent supportive housing were more likely than a control group (55% versus 34%) to be alive and have intact immune function one year after the start of the trial. 

• In a study of mentally ill, drug-addicted homeless adults in New York, participants who received permanent supportive housing were more than twice as likely as a comparison group to remain housed and to remain in methadone treatment after two years. 

Note: Several of these programs also found that Permanent Supportive Housing resulted in significant public cost savings from decreased consumption of expensive public resources like shelters, the criminal justice system, and emergency room medical care. We discuss these findings below.

KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER: SAVING CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND TAXPAYER DOLLARS

To end the cycle of abuse, we must address homelessness and extreme poverty, which lie at the root of abuse and neglect for many families. When we address the multiple problems that face vulnerable families, using tools such as Permanent Supportive Housing, we see remarkable outcomes: Families stay stably housed, rates of abuse and neglect drop, child welfare cases close, and children remain safely with their parents.

Keeping Families Together (KFT) provides CYFD with a robust and effective tool to help families in extreme poverty keep their children out of foster care and their family in a safe and healthy home. New Mexico Appleseed, in partnership with CYFD, multiple housing services providers, and other child welfare-focused nonprofits, proposes that the state of New Mexico fund a three-year pilot program to prevent foster care in homeless and inadequately housed families. The pilot would serve fifty families in Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Valencia County.

KFT changes the current fragmented system by merging and leveraging the resources of both the homelessness and child welfare systems. KFT provides families with Permanent Supportive Housing to address all of their barriers to housing and family stabilization. In KFT, families receive safe, stable housing and supportive services for as long as they need them.
The KFT pilot would be open to families who:

- are homeless or have inadequate housing,
- have at least one open child welfare case with substantiated abuse or neglect, and
- have mental health or substance abuse problems.

Families would be selected by local CYFD offices, which would be in the best position to identify families in serious need of both housing and support services. The KFT families would receive both short-term services to address immediate crises and long-term services to promote stability and security.

Housing Placement and Coordination: When families are accepted into the KFT pilot, they meet with a Housing Coordinator to complete necessary paperwork and start their housing search. The Housing Coordinator then communicates with landlords, helps families look for apartments, and checks that apartments are up to code. When families are ready to move in, they receive move-in assistance of up to $500, as well as furniture if necessary. After they move in, volunteers and community groups support the families in their new role as tenants.

Every family accepted into the KFT pilot receives a rent voucher equal to the fair market rent of the family’s new home minus 30% of the family’s monthly income. These vouchers are administered by local housing agencies at each program site. Families also receive money for security deposits and utilities. Any security deposits that are not forfeited will be refunded to the families if they move.

Short-Term Case Management and Services: To be eligible for the KFT pilot, families must have an open child abuse or neglect case with CYFD, so all families in the pilot will already have a CYFD case manager. The CYFD case manager works with the family to ensure that parents are able to care for their children. The case manager also connects the family to a Core Service Agency, which can provide a variety of vital services to the family, including treatment for substance abuse and mental health problems. CYFD provides focused, short-term care that focuses on ensuring children’s safety within the family. After the immediate child safety issues have been resolved, the CYFD case is
closed. At this point, the CYFD case manager will cease working with the family. Ideally, this will take no more than three months of intensive services.

CYFD and the Core Service Agencies are funded outside of the KFT budget. Short-term case management services are included in CYFD’s ordinary operating budget, and Medicaid covers behavioral health services for low-income families.

**Long-Term Case Management and Services:**

- **Family Stability:** KFT will also provide families with a long-term case manager through Albuquerque Heading Home. This long-term case manager works with the CYFD case manager and continues to assist the family after child abuse and neglect cases are closed. The case manager will meet with the families as often as necessary, assess the families’ needs on an ongoing basis, and work to ensure that families receive any assistance they need. This could include enrolling the families in health insurance plans, connecting family members with medical care and mental health care through Core Service Agencies, helping families find transportation to appointments, and enrolling families in public benefits programs such as SNAP (food stamps). KFT case managers will be families’ primary contact in the KFT program.

- **Housing Stability:** Families will also receive ongoing housing services to promote their long-term stability in their homes. The case manager and Housing Coordinator can help families obtain bus passes and food, and they may also connect families to SOAR specialists, who help homeless adults access public benefits. The Housing Coordinator will also match families with two types of supports, Home Teams and Peer-to-Peer programs. Home Teams are volunteers who commit one year of support to a newly housed family, creating a new social support system for the families as they transition into housing. The Peer-to-Peer program connects families to others in their community, providing luncheons and other opportunities for community engagement. These supports promote stability and ensure that families stay housed.

**PROGRAM BUDGET**

This program targets the most expensive and most likely to fail families in New Mexico. While it contains a high per-family price tag, the savings to the federal, state and local governments and nonprofits should be substantial. The price tag for letting children go into foster care and letting families stay homeless is significant. This savings comes in families staying out of emergency rooms, shelters and, of course, the child welfare system. Avoiding foster care should provide an immediate and dramatic cost savings.
Funding the pilot would cost $995,799 in the first year and less each subsequent year, for a total of $2,771,566. We estimate the costs of housing as follows:

### Table 1: Annual Supportive Housing Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Families</th>
<th>Monthly Rent</th>
<th>Annual Rent</th>
<th>Annual Utilities</th>
<th>Security Deposits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALBUQUERQUE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-bedroom</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>$780</td>
<td>$159,120</td>
<td>$13,260</td>
<td>$26,520</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-bedroom</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>$1,129</td>
<td>$108,384</td>
<td>$9,032</td>
<td>$18,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALENCIA COUNTY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-bedroom</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>$780</td>
<td>$74,880</td>
<td>$6,240</td>
<td>$12,480</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-bedroom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$1,129</td>
<td>$54,192</td>
<td>$4,516</td>
<td>$9,032</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAS CRUCES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-bedroom</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$633</td>
<td>$68,364</td>
<td>$5,697</td>
<td>$11,394</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-bedroom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$906</td>
<td>$43,488</td>
<td>$3,624</td>
<td>$7,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$508,428</strong></td>
<td><strong>$42,369</strong></td>
<td><strong>$84,738</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Full program costs are estimated below. All costs are based on conversations with the agencies that would actually be administering the program. Note that program costs drop in the second and third year, since move-in costs and security deposits are one-time expenses. The budget includes funding to admit new families to the program in the second year if up to 10 families leave the program.

### Table 2: Program Budget By Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Expense</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>3-Year Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>$508,428</td>
<td>$508,428</td>
<td>$508,428</td>
<td>$1,525,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>$42,369</td>
<td>$42,369</td>
<td>$42,369</td>
<td>$127,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security deposits</td>
<td>$84,738</td>
<td>$16,948</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$101,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move-in costs</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Coordinator</td>
<td>$54,000</td>
<td>$54,000</td>
<td>$54,000</td>
<td>$162,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-Term Case Management</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-Term Case Management</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Administration</td>
<td>$76,264</td>
<td>$68,129</td>
<td>$66,096</td>
<td>$210,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Management</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$165,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>$995,799</td>
<td>$899,874</td>
<td>$875,893</td>
<td>$2,771,566</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REDUCTION IN PUBLIC COST

By preventing foster care and homelessness, Keeping Families Together is likely to reduce families’ use of public services by approximately $500,000 in the first year of the pilot.

The Cost of Child Welfare:
New Mexico Appleseed estimates that caring for a child in foster care costs the state more than $20,000 for the first year of care. This figure is very conservative: it does not include the administrative costs incurred by the state, and even more significantly, it leaves out the short- and long-term social costs that may result from a child’s stay in foster care, including academic deficits, delinquency, and behavioral health problems.

By keeping children out of foster care and speeding up the reunification of families, the state of New Mexico can save these expenditures and help to promote children’s long-term well-being.

Table 3: Estimated Annual Costs of a Foster Care Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On-going Annual Costs</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Maintenance</td>
<td>$12,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidental expenses</td>
<td>$1,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacations</td>
<td>$450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Supervision/Respite Care</td>
<td>$600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Gifts</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Loss or Damage</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mileage</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total On-going Annual Costs</strong></td>
<td><strong>$14,590</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First year costs</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Referral</td>
<td>$914.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency case</td>
<td>$3,471.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Termination of parental rights case</td>
<td>$1,542.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total first year costs</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,928.25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Cost                                       | **$20,518.33** |

THE COST OF HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is extremely expensive for the public. A chronically homeless adult living in Albuquerque uses, on average, $24,000 in public services annually, including $3,000 for shelter stays, $4,400 in emergency room costs, and nearly $14,000 in behavioral health costs. Furthermore, the existing services for homeless adults are ill equipped to serve families with children. Most New Mexico homeless shelters do not serve families, and those that do are expensive to operate. Emergency shelter services in Albuquerque for a parent with children cost $140 per night, or $50,000 per family per year.

Additionally, family homelessness creates additional costs for the state in the form of foster care expenses. As discussed above, homeless families are more likely than housed families to have their children placed in foster care, and a lack of adequate housing creates a barrier to reunifying families after children have been removed.
The Difference
Data from the New York KFT pilot suggest that the program will dramatically reduce use of shelters and the foster care system. That program found that at the end of the pilot, 90% of families remained in supportive housing, 100% of children in foster care with a goal of reunification were returned to their families, 61% of open child welfare cases had closed, and 64% of families had no new substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect.53

It is immediately clear that in addition to yielding better results for KFT families, permanent supportive housing for families ($19,916 in the first year) is less costly than housing children in foster homes ($20,518 in the first year) or families in homeless shelters ($50,000 per year). The New York KFT pilot found that savings from reduced use of shelters and foster care alone, without considering other factors, offset 97% of the cost of the program.54 Other studies have found even more dramatic savings from reducing the need for foster care: the 150 families in the Serna Village program in Sacramento used less than $300,000 in foster care expenses after the intervention, compared with $1.3 million before.55

Stabilizing homeless adults and their families reduces other public spending as well. A cost study on the Albuquerque Heading Home Initiative found that providing Permanent Supportive Housing to homeless adults decreased public costs by more than 30%.56 The costs of housing and services were offset by a 36% decrease in the use of emergency rooms, an 84% decrease in inpatient medical costs, and a 64% decrease in incarceration costs.57

Table 4 shows the estimated average reduction in public expenditures for each family during the first year of the pilot.58

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Average Cost per Homeless Family With and Without KFT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Cost per Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health/Detox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cost per family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the first year of the entire 50-family pilot, the public costs and savings look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Public Costs With and Without KFT Pilot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Health/Detox</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 1 illustrates that supportive housing reduces the average public sector cost of serving these families by 28%, or $9,823 per family per year.

The picture is even more striking if we look at public expenditures on a single hypothetical family. Chart 2 below shows consumption of public services by a family of three that, were it not for supportive housing, would be separated, with the children in foster care and the mother homeless. A year in foster care for two children costs the public over $40,000, twice the cost of supportive housing.
We note briefly that there are some limitations to these projections. It is obviously difficult to predict public costs in advance, particularly when we are dealing with the intersection of two complex systems like housing and child welfare. Our model does not attempt to account for all costs—for example, we do not consider most health care expenditures or the costs of law enforcement involvement in the child welfare system. We also consider only immediate, concrete costs and benefits, even though common sense suggests that housing families and keeping kids out of foster care will have important long-term benefits for family stability and children’s outcomes later in life. Finally, we do not attempt to separate out federal, state, local, and tribal funding streams.

Data and Accountability: The three-year pilot of KFT will allow us to observe the actual costs and benefits of the program in the state of New Mexico. To that end, the pilot will be managed by a task force comprising representatives from the partner agencies involved in the pilot: CYFD, housing agencies, and nonprofit advocates. The representatives can meet regularly with each other and with researchers studying the effects of the pilot. By meeting together, the partner agencies can ensure that sites offer families similar services, that agencies statewide share resources and information effectively, and that agencies gather essential data about family characteristics and outcomes. With partner agencies accountable to each other and sharing their data collaboratively, the KFT pilot will produce valuable information about the costs and outcomes of Permanent Supportive Housing for families in New Mexico.

CONCLUSION
Keeping Families Together offers a new vision for how New Mexico can serve its most vulnerable families. Through this supportive housing model, we can do more for these families while reducing their consumption of expensive public services. We can provide stable housing to homeless families and give parents the tools they need to keep their children safe and out of foster care.
1. Projections are based on the results of the New York City Keeping Families Together pilot. In the New York pilot, 26 of 29 families, or 90%, stayed stably housed in supportive housing through the end of the pilot. Please note that we have data only for the duration of the pilot; long-term results have not yet been studied. Donna Tapper, Keeping Families Together: An evaluation of the implementation and outcomes of a pilot supportive housing model for families involved in the child welfare system iv (2010), available at http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Report_KFTFindingsreport.pdf. Therefore, we predict that 90% of our 50 families will remain housed.


14. National Center on Family Homelessness, America’s Youngest Outcasts 2010: New Mexico, available at http://www.homelesschildenamerica.org/pdfs/NM.pdf. This may underestimate the problem. Family and child homelessness are notoriously difficult to measure, since very few families seek out the kind of services either at school or in shelters that would result in their being counted in any database. Families who bounce from house to house or live in cars may not consider themselves homeless, and they may hide their homelessness from observers.


21 NMFS 1978, § 32A-4-22(C) (2009).
22 CYFD is not required to attempt to reunify families if it would be futile or if “aggravated circumstances” are present or attempts to reunify the family would be futile. NMFS 1978, § 32A-4-22(C) (2009). “Aggravated circumstances” include chronic abuse, sexual abuse, or cases where a parent has caused great bodily harm to the child, a sibling, or the child’s other parent. NMFS 1978, § 32A-4-2(C) (2009).
33 There are 100 vouchers available in Bernalillo County and 50 available in Doña Ana County, but some of the vouchers in Doña Ana County are used to assist young people transitioning out of foster care, rather than for families. New Mexico Behavioral Health Collaborative, New Mexico Supportive Housing Programs and Resources (May 2013), available at http://www.bhc.state.nm.us/pdf/NM%20Supportive%20Housing%20Resources_5.2013.pdf
34 Average wait times for Section 8 housing are 24 months in Gallup, 45 months in Bernalillo and Cuba, and up to 60 months in Bernalillo County. New Mexico Behavioral Health Collaborative, Section 8 Housing Vouchers Waiting Lists, Preferences and Programs for New Mexico Public Housing Authorities (July 2013), available at http://www.bhc.state.nm.us/pdf/NM%20Housing%20Auth%20-%20Sec%20%208%20Waiting%20ListsPref_%20%20July%20%202013.pdf.
40 Of 212 homeless adults housed through Albuquerque Heading Home, 23 (or 11%) left the program unsuccessfully due to eviction, incarceration, or other factors. 180 participants (85%) either remain in the program or left the program under successful circumstances. Paul Guerin & Alexandra Tonigan, City of Albuquerque Heading Home Initiative Cost Study Report Phase 1 12 (Sept. 2013), available at http://www.abqheadinghome.org/wp-content/uploads/CABQ_AHHCostStudy_FinalReport_v1.6-1.pdf.
42 Tia E. Martinez & Martha R. Burt, Impact of Permanent Supportive Housing on the Use of Acute Care Health Services by Homeless Adults, 57 Psychiatric Services 992, 995 (2006).
An increase in housing assistance has been linked to a decrease in child maltreatment. Joseph P. Ryan & John R. Schuerman, Matching Family Problems with Specific Family Preservation Services: A Study of Service Effectiveness, 26 Children and Youth Services Review 347, 364 (2004).

Cost estimates are based on having 25 families in Albuquerque, 13 in Las Cruces, and 12 in Valencia County.

Under federal law, 42 U.S.C. § 11302(a)(1), a family is homeless if it does not have “a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” Federal law recognizes as homeless families who live in cars, abandoned buildings, campgrounds, and other places not intended as regular sleeping accommodations; families who live in shelters; families who face imminent eviction; and families who are fleeing domestic violence or other dangers in their homes. 42 U.S.C. §11302(a)(2), (a)(3), (a)(5), (b). Children are considered homeless if their parents live in motels or “doubled up” with friends or family—that is, sharing housing because they cannot afford their own. 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)(B)(i). Because all of these housing situations contribute to stress and instability for vulnerable families, Keeping Families Together treats all of these families as homeless or inadequately housed, and therefore eligible for the pilot.

For many families, this would be a very small amount. Our model assumes that family income is less than $200 per month.


Conversation with executive director of S.A.F.E. House New Mexico.


Due to insufficient data about duration of foster care stays and likelihood that children will re-enter foster care, we are unable to predict public expenditures and savings in the second and third years. However, because family homeless shelters are so expensive and KFT reduces their use, we can predict that KFT will still reduce overall public expenditures in its second and third year.


Appendix A: Other Family Housing Programs

- **Keeping Families Together (New York):** In the Keeping Families Together pilot program in New York City, 61% of the families’ open child welfare cases closed over the course of the pilot. Of the children who were in foster care with a goal of reunification at the beginning of the pilot, 100% were reunited with their families, and none were subsequently removed. Subsequent reports of neglect or abuse were substantially reduced during each family’s tenure in supportive housing, with 64% of the families having no new substantiated allegations of abuse or neglect. No additional children were placed in foster care, and only two new cases were opened. Furthermore, school attendance among school-aged children increased, on average, by 25 days during the year after entering supportive housing. Cost savings from reduced use of shelters and foster care alone, without considering other factors, offset 97% of the cost of the program. The study did not attempt to take into account any other factors, such as short- or long-term savings from better health or education outcomes.

- **Supportive Housing for Families (Connecticut):** This program combined short-term housing with intensive supports, including ongoing case management, family support, and mentoring, for families who faced housing-related barriers to family unity or reunification. At the time they exited the program, 78% of families in the program had improved their housing situation, 73% had improved their access to health care, and unemployment among parents dropped 17%. The Serna Village short-term supportive housing program in Sacramento, California worked with a group of children who were highly at risk—71% of the children had previously been in foster or group home care. Of the children who had previously been in foster care, only 22% re-entered foster care after the intervention. (More than half of that group—12%—came from the minority of study participants who did not “graduate” from the program.) Researchers observed that before the Serna Village intervention, the 150 families

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in the study cost required $1.3 million in child welfare expenditures; after the intervention, the families used less than $300,000 total in foster care costs.\textsuperscript{10}

- **Strengthening At Risk and Homeless Young Mothers and Children Initiative (multiple locations):** The Initiative provided short-term supportive housing to homeless young mothers and their children. The Initiative found that its four sites were able to house families and provide supportive services for between $11,000 and $27,000 per family per year.\textsuperscript{11} By contrast, it estimated that traditional shelter, not including supportive services, would cost between $22,000 and $55,000 per family annually.\textsuperscript{12} The Initiative also reported positive preliminary outcome results in the areas of “improved mental health, increased monthly income, higher levels of education, and reduced parenting stress.”\textsuperscript{13} This program had no explicit nexus to foster care, as the families did not need to have an open child welfare case to participate, but it demonstrates that even in the absence of having children in the expensive foster care system, the savings produced by avoiding the use of shelters can be substantial.

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Appendix B: Further Reading

If you are interested in KFT, we encourage you to read the reports on the New York KFT pilot, as well as reports on existing supportive housing initiatives conducted by Albuquerque Heading Home. Copies of these reports are available upon request from New Mexico Appleseed.


**Keeping Families Together**
PREVENTING FOSTER CARE

**PROJECTED OUTCOMES:**
- **$10,000** per family savings to taxpayers
- **28%** less cost than foster care
- **72%** reduction in child abuse and neglect cases
  - Families experienced 46 indicated abuse and neglect cases in the three years before entering supportive housing and 13 cases in the ten to thirty-one months between move-in and the end of the pilot.
- **90%** decrease in homelessness
  - 26 of 29 families stayed in supportive housing, off the streets, and out of shelters.
- **61%** of open child welfare cases were closed by the end of the pilot
- **64%** of the families had no new indicated abuse or neglect cases after move-in
- **28%** increase in school attendance
  - Children one year after move-in attended school 84% of the time, an increase from 65.8% prior to move-in.

**KEEPPING FAMILIES TOGETHER TOOLKIT:**
- Job training
- Treatment for mental health and substance abuse
- Assistance navigating social services programs
- Support with moving and furnishing
- Parenting skills
- Negotiation and coordination with landlords
- Rent voucher equal to fair market rent minus 30% of family income
- Funds for security deposits
- Tenant skills
- Case management for housing and for family issues

Proposal: **$995,799** for **50** families in Las Cruces, Albuquerque and Valencia County for one year (less each subsequent year)