

San Francisco Family Homeless System
and Coordinated Entry Project

Analysis of Family Homeless System Data

Commissioned by the San Francisco Human Services Agency



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Executive Summary

Focus Strategies has conducted a structured data analysis designed to assess the performance of the existing system for assisting homeless families in San Francisco and inform recommendations for system re-design, including the development of coordinated entry. To conduct this analysis, we collected de-identified client data from the City's HMIS system, as well as from databases managed by key family shelter and service providers. Our findings relate to both data system and data quality issues, as well as family homeless system performance.

Data System and Data Quality Issues:

In San Francisco, there are a number of programs serving homeless families that do not participate in the HMIS system, or that upload partial data to the system from their individual agency databases. Many of these agencies have sophisticated data capacity and can generate analysis of client data at the program-level. However, the absence of a single, shared database that stores information on all families served in the City makes it very challenging to analyze performance at the overall system level, or even at the program-type level (e.g. shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing). Since some programs that represent key components of the current system do not enter any client level data into HMIS (e.g. the First Friendship Shelter), and other key program data is maintained in separate agency databases, it is not possible to develop an unduplicated picture of the families served in the system and their outcomes. Most critically, it is virtually impossible to assess the degree to which families across the system are exiting from shelter and service programs into permanent housing and whether they subsequently return to homelessness.

Another challenge is presented by the quality of the data in the HMIS system. Focus Strategies found a high rate of missing data, particularly in the areas of program entries and exits. Without accurate information about when families enter and exit programs, where they come from and where they go, assessing what the system is accomplishing and making adjustments to achieve better results is very difficult.

System Performance:

Although the data quality issues noted above made it challenging to conduct an assessment of the family homeless system, our analysis revealed some valuable information about how well the system is performing. As a general matter, the data reveals a system that is struggling to effectively assist families to move quickly from homelessness into housing. There seems to be a significant problem with "throughput" – families are becoming stuck on waiting lists or in shelter and not moving quickly into housing. While this reflects San Francisco's challenging rental market to some degree, better results could be achieved by transforming the existing collection of programs into a systematic homeless crisis response. Key findings from the performance analysis include:

- Data from the Connecting Point Waiting List show that many families who are placed on the waiting list for shelter do not receive a referral. Of the 1,157 families who were placed on the list between January 1, 2015 and March 31, 2016, 279 (24%) received a referral to shelter or

housing and 468 (40%) were removed from the list, mostly for failure to maintain contact.¹ Families who are unsheltered at the time they are placed on the list do not have any higher rate of accessing shelter than those who are doubled-up or living in a rental unit, meaning the system is not ensuring those with the most acute housing needs are prioritized. Among households who are prioritized, the most common reason is having been waiting on the list for five months or longer, which means they are able to stay in touch with Compass on a weekly basis for at least five months.

- The system is serving significant numbers of families who are doubled-up or have their own rentals. Nearly 60% of families who entered the Connecting Point list during the time period we analyzed were entering from these types of situations. Many of these households could likely be assisted with shelter diversion, preventing entry into shelter and freeing up shelter capacity for those with nowhere to go. Shelters, transitional housing, and rapid re-housing are also serving significant numbers of doubled-up and housed families.
- Families on the Connecting Point list and in long-term shelters do not receive priority access to other housing interventions (transitional or rapid re-housing), which was evident in the data. Length of stay in long-term shelter is relatively high and the rate of exit to permanent housing is low. Transitional housing and rapid re-housing programs that were analyzed accept many families from a range of referral sources, including many not on the Connecting Point list or staying in shelter.
- Using the available data, we found average length of stay in transitional housing (339 days) and rapid re-housing programs (556 days) are more than three times our recommended length for a high-functioning system. The length of rapid rehousing programs, in particular, far exceeds not only our recommended length but the length of nearly all programs we are familiar with. The rate of exit to permanent housing from these programs is also below what is necessary to significantly reduce the number of families experiencing homelessness in San Francisco. Both of these measures, however, are difficult to assess due to the data quality issues we identified; data provided by programs to H.S.A. staff suggest rate of exit to permanent housing may be higher than what we found in our analysis.

¹ The remaining families were neither removed nor exited to a shelter/housing; most are still on the list.

I. Data Analysis Goals

The San Francisco Human Service Agency has engaged Focus Strategies to conduct an analysis of the family homelessness system and make recommendations for system redesign, including the design and implementation of coordinated entry. As part of this project, Focus Strategies has conducted a structured data analysis designed to inform our recommendations for system-wide shifts.

The providers and programs serving homeless families in San Francisco currently use a number of different data systems, making it difficult to fully understand the characteristics of the families being served, how they move through the system, and their housing outcomes. In designing this data analysis, our goals were to:

1. Create an inventory of the existing data systems, including which programs use which systems and what data elements are collected.
2. Assess the quality of the data in each system.
3. Develop an understanding of system and program performance in the family system using the main HEARTH² metrics and data available in HMIS and other comparable databases, to the extent possible. Identify limitations of the data systems and what changes will be needed for San Francisco to be able to measure system performance.
4. Understand the results being achieved by Connecting Point to the extent possible, given the lack of integration of Connecting Point and HMIS, (e.g. who/how many families are served, how many enter shelter and their characteristics, and any other performance measures).

II. Data Sources and Methodology

Focus Strategies has conducted the following information gathering and data analysis:

- Reviewed documents describing the existing system for homeless families in San Francisco.
- Reviewed documents describing and assessing the existing data collection and analysis systems, including:
 - *The HMIS Desk Guide*, used by the Human Services Agency;
 - The September 2015 report by Third Sector Capital Partners on Pay For Success (PFS) Feasibility;
 - Bayes Impact presentation on data on San Francisco's homeless families.
- Held conversations with staff from the Human Services Agency to develop an understanding of the existing data systems that are currently in use in San Francisco to collect and track data on homeless families.
- Held individual conversations with the main providers of shelter, housing, and services for homeless families in San Francisco to understand what data systems are used, what data is collected, and how data is used. This included conversations with: Compass Family Services,

² The HEARTH (Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing) Act of 2009 established a list of measures that the department of Housing and Urban Development uses to measure system performance.

Hamilton Family Center, Catholic Charities, Homeless Prenatal Program, Providence Foundation, and Raphael House.

- Requested and received extracts of de-identified client data from the providers listed above, with the exception of Providence Foundation which does not maintain client level data.
- Requested and received extracted data from H.S.A.'s HMIS system for the subset of programs that primarily serve families. Data covered two years: calendar 2014 and 2015.

A list of programs that provided data for this analysis (either from HMIS or their own database) is provided in Appendix A.

III. Results

Since San Francisco currently does not have a single integrated data system with complete data on all families, we conducted several discrete data analyses. The results are presented in three main sections:

1. Analysis of the Connecting Point waiting list;
2. Analysis of referral sources for the emergency shelter, transitional housing and rapid re-housing programs operated by Compass, Hamilton Family Center, and Catholic Charities;
3. Overall performance of the family homeless system, including shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing.

A. Connecting Point Wait List

Focus Strategies received an extract of data from Compass Family Services that reflects information about families who had been placed on the waitlist for long-term family shelters during the fifteen-month period from January 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016. The data system used by Compass to manage Connecting Point has undergone a recent conversion to Salesforce, which has impacted data in terms of data translation and new data elements collected. Data was extracted from Salesforce and provided to us in an Excel workbook with the following worksheets: Demographics, Denials, and Housing at Intake and Exit. Focus Strategies conducted an analysis of the demographics of the waitlist population, their living situation at the time they were assessed for the waitlist, and the circumstance of their exit or removal from the waitlist.

1. Demographic Characteristics

The data set received from Compass included information on 1,157 households.³ This data reflects all families who entered the waiting list over a 15-month period from January 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016. It

³ The data set we received did not consistently include numbers of people in each household, but we estimate these 1,157 households represent about 2,500 to 3,000 people.

is not a point in time count of families on the wait list.⁴ The tables below provide descriptions of the waitlist population, including age, race, household size, and priority status.

Age of Head of Household

Although the majority of the heads of households fall into the 25-59 age range, there is a significant proportion of young adult-headed households (17%) and potentially a handful of minor heads of households.⁵

Age		
	#	% of Total
<18	6	1%
18-24	198	17%
25-59	844	73%
60+	11	1%
Missing	98	8%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,157</i>	

Race of Head of Household

The table on the next page presents the race of the heads of household on the waiting list. Of the total number of heads of household, the data show that 38% are Black or African American, 15% are White, 9% American Indian or Alaska Native, 5% Asian and 3% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. However, race is not recorded for 30% of the population. Compass staff report that they believe most of these families are Hispanic/Latino. Since the race categories are aligned with the U.S. Census/federal categories for race, Hispanic/Latino is not one of the available choices for race. A separate Ethnicity category allows respondents to choose between Hispanic/Latino and non-Hispanic Latino. However, in the waiting list data set, the ethnicity data was largely incomplete, thus we were unable to analyze the number of households who report being Hispanic/Latino. We presume the 30% “missing/unknown” data may be a reasonable proxy for the percentage of Hispanic/Latino households on the waiting list, though this group could also include households who identify with other races and/or multiple races.

⁴ Data provided by Compass to the San Francisco Human Services Agency indicated that as of May 11, 2016 there were 232 families active on the list.

⁵ H.S.A. has a policy to only serve pregnant or parenting minors in family homeless programs if they are legally emancipated. There likely were not 6 emancipated minors on the Waiting List in this period, so there could be a data quality issue with the data on age of head of household.

Race		
	#	% of Total
American Indian or Alaskan Native	108	9%
Asian (not Pacific Islander)	60	5%
Black or African American	439	38%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	36	3%
White	169	15%
Missing/Unknown	345	30%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1157</i>	<i>100%</i>

Household Size

The next table summarizes the data provided for size of the households on the waitlist. Almost two-thirds of the households are comprised of two or three members.⁶

Household Size		
	#	% of Total
1	122	11%
2	355	31%
3	342	30%
4	189	16%
5	96	8%
6	31	3%
7	11	1%
8	7	1%
9	4	<1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,157</i>	

Priority Status

The data showed that 254 (22%) of the households on the waitlist had received a priority status, meaning they should be considered first when shelter placement options become available. The table below indicates the rationale for each of the household's priority status. The most common reason for

⁶ Given that the waiting list should only include families with children (household size greater than 1), we consulted with Compass Family Services staff regarding the 122 single person households. It was determined that approximately 40% of these were pregnant women and the remainder were likely data entry issues (i.e., the additional household members were not recorded in the database).

prioritization is having been on the waitlist for 5 or more months (36%). Being 8+ months pregnant is the second most common (18%)⁷, followed closely by reasons related to an adult’s mental health (17%).

Priority Status		
	#	% of Total
5 Months Pregnant and High Risk	17	7%
5+ Months on Waitlist	91	36%
8+ Months Pregnant	45	18%
Adult Health	27	11%
Adult Mental Health	44	17%
Child Health	24	9%
Child Mental Health	6	2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>254</i>	

2. Living Situation at Time of Assessment for Waitlist

The table below provides detailed information on where the households were staying at the time of their presentation to Compass Family Services. Almost 50% of households were living with friends and/or family and almost 25% were in an emergency shelter. Less than 10% of households were unsheltered. We must note that households tend to move around while they are waiting for a referral (e.g. moving from family/friends to short-term shelter, to a vehicle and then back to family/friends), thus their living situation at time of assessment may not be the same as their living situation when they receive a referral.

Living Situation at Time of Assessment for Waitlist ⁸		
	#	% of total
Emergency shelter	194	23%
Friends/Family	398	48%
Transitional housing	23	3%
Institution	11	1%
Unsheltered	76	9%
Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher	42	5%
Rental by client	72	9%
Other	6	1%
Missing	4	<1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>826</i>	

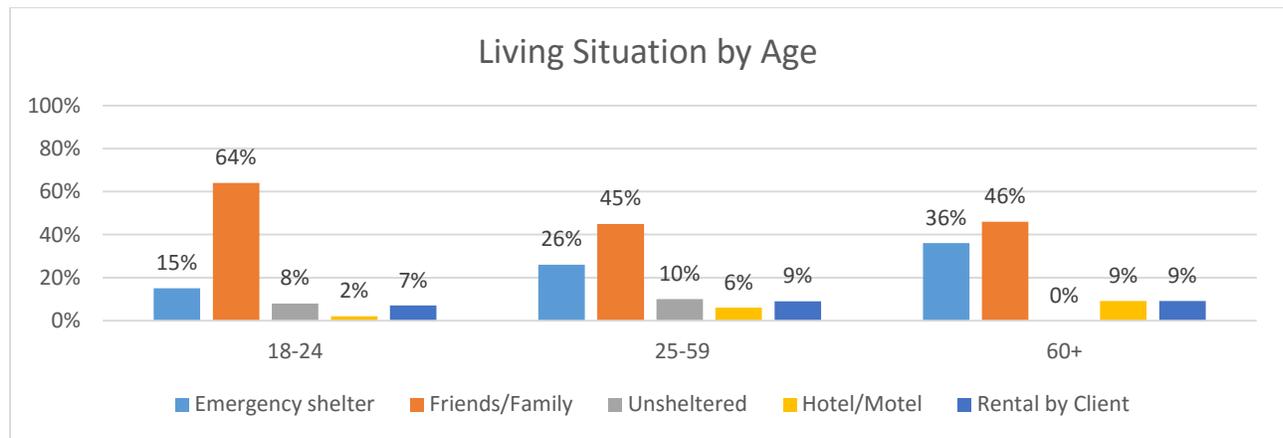
⁷ Data showed that 208 women were pregnant at the time they were placed on the waitlist. Because 62 women were prioritized due to high risk or late stage pregnancy, 30% of pregnant women were prioritized for shelter.

⁸ Institution: Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center and Hospital (non-psychiatric); Other: Other and Transitional Housing.

Next, we linked living situation data with households included on the demographics tab to explore the characteristics of the people coming from the following living situations: emergency shelter, friends/family, unsheltered, hotel/motel, rental by clients. We did not analyze the other categories as there was not a sufficient number of people to create a meaningful analysis. The findings are provided below.

Living Situation and Age

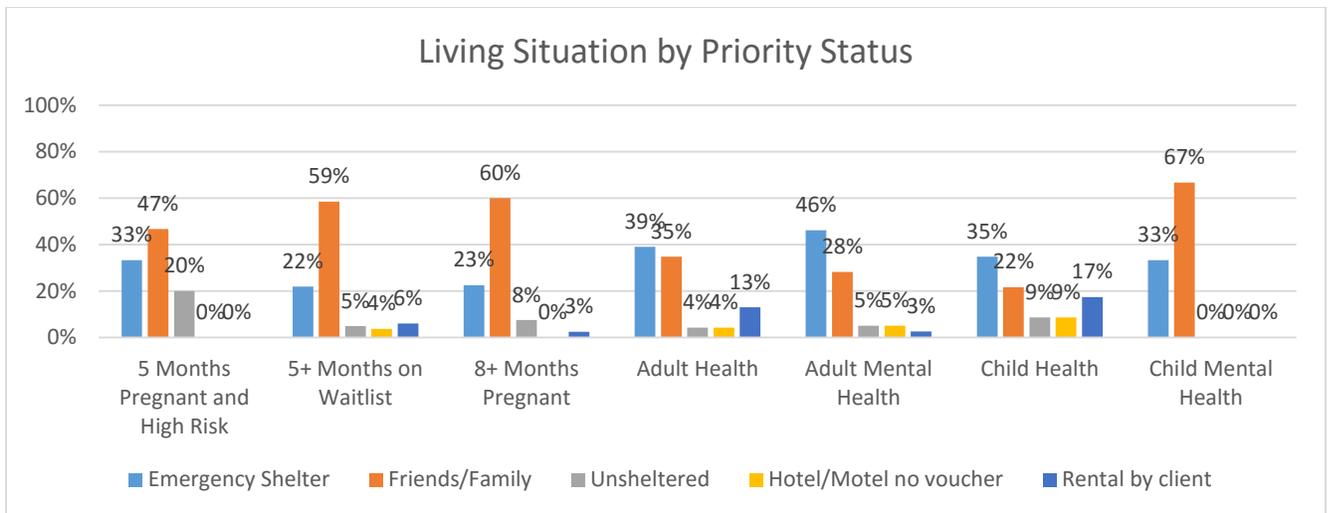
The graph below provides data on the prior living situation of households in each of the age groups.⁹ Although each age group has a similar distribution, key differences exist, including that older adults are more likely to have been in shelter (36%) than unsheltered (0%). Additionally, Transition Age Youth (TAY) are much more likely to have been living with friends/family (64%) than adults or older adults (45% and 46%, respectively).



Living Situation and Priority Status

The graph on the next page provides data on the living situation of households by priority status. The data indicate that those who are prioritized based on pregnancy, time on the waitlist, or a challenge with the mental health of a child, are most likely to be living with friends and/or family when initially assessed. Conversely, those prioritized based on health needs of adults or children, or the mental health of an adult are more likely to be living in shelter. Prioritization based on physical health of adult or child is also related to living in a rental situation. For the most part, being unsheltered is not a characteristic of those represented in the priority status categories.

⁹ The sums within categories may not equal 100% because transitional housing, institutional and other categories are not reflected for simplicity of presentation.



3. Removal from the Waitlist

This next section examines the circumstances under which households are removed from the waitlist. Compass Family Services records removals based on two primary dimensions:

- (1) Exiting the list, which entails leaving to a known destination – typically, a referral to long-term shelter, transitional housing or other housing program. Therefore, the living situation at the time of “exit” of the waitlist is equivalent to the “exit destination.”
- (2) Denial of service – being removed from the waitlist due to a variety of reasons, including those related to compliance, including losing contact, and administrative issues. No exit destination is recorded for these households.¹⁰

The table on the next page provides detail on the number of households who exited, were denied service, or currently remain on the waitlist.¹¹ The data indicate that of the 1,157 households reflected on the waitlist, 40% have been denied service, 24% have exited, and 35% remained active, as of March 31, 2016.

¹⁰ Families removed from the list can get back on, so some of those who are denied can come back and have an exit.

¹¹ Because there was some duplication across households who had both an exit and denial, we created distinct groups based on the following criteria: A Denial with No Exit = denial; An Exit (with or without denial) = exit; Neither denial nor exit = current.

Waitlist Status			
	#	% of All	
Exited (Living Situation at Exit/Exit Destination)	279	24%	% of Exited
<i>Emergency shelter</i>	145	13%	52%
<i>Transitional housing</i>	12	1%	4%
<i>Friends/Family</i>	16	1%	6%
<i>Unsheltered</i>	4	<1%	1%
<i>Rental by Client</i>	66	6%	24%
<i>Other</i>	9	1%	3%
<i>Missing</i>	27	2%	10%
Denial of Service (Reason)	468	40%	% of Denied
<i>Client refused/No-show shelter</i>	6	1%	1%
<i>Have not maintained weekly contact</i>	407	35%	87%
<i>Not eligible for shelter</i>	51	4%	11%
<i>Requested removal from waiting list</i>	3	<1%	<1%
<i>Denial Missing</i>	1	<1%	<1%
Not Exited or Denied	410	35%	
Total	1,157		

The data show that of those denied serviced, close 90% are denied for not maintaining weekly contact with Compass Family Services, a requirement to remain active on the waitlist.

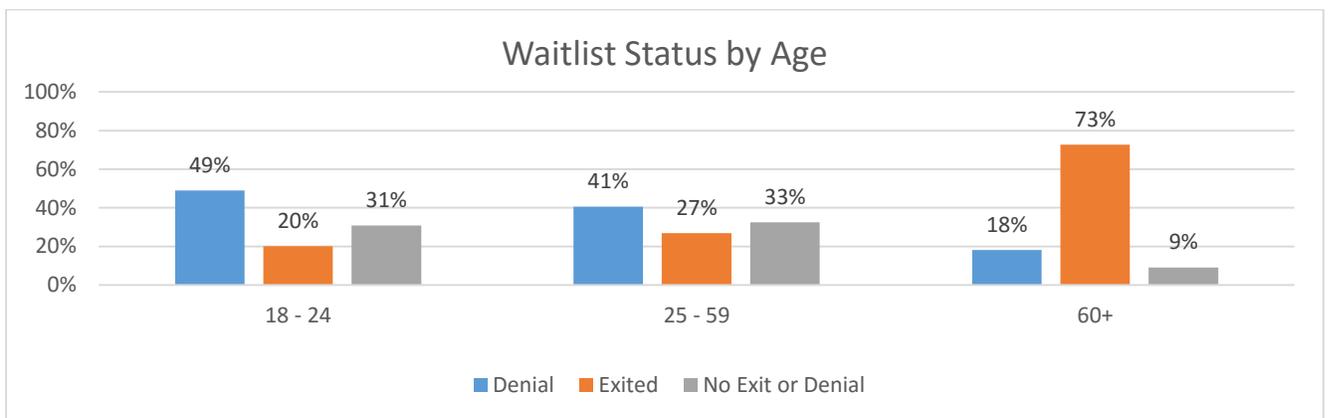
Of those who exit the list with a destination, over 50% exit to an Emergency Shelter, which is the purpose of the Connecting Point list and therefore not surprising. However, those who exit to shelter represented only 13% of those who entered the list during the analysis period. The table below shows the specific shelters that families enter when they leave the waiting list. About 25% of households exit the list and enter rental housing, either on their own or with rental subsidies (this represents 6% of all who are placed on the list.)

Destinations for Families Entering Shelter from CP List	
Facility	%
St. Joseph's Family Center	8%
Raphael House	10%
Compass Family Shelter	16%
Hamilton Family Emergency Center	<1%
Hamilton Family Residence	13%
STAR Community Home	8%

Focus Strategies explored whether families who exit from the waiting list to a known destination (either by referral to shelter or other housing programs) have different characteristics than families who are denied service or are current on the list. Findings are provided below.

Waitlist Status and Age

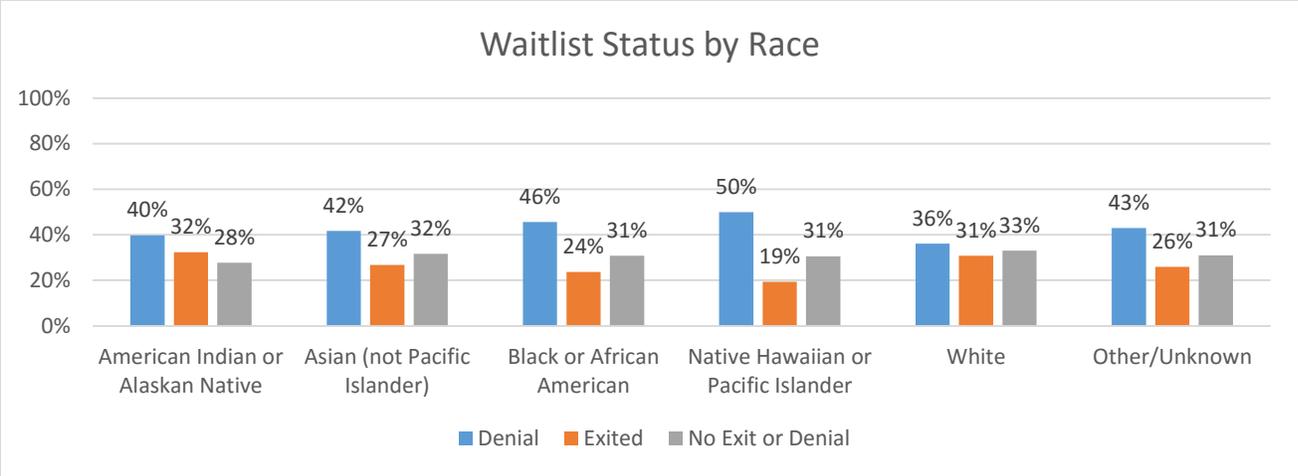
The graph below illustrates the age distribution by whether households are exited, denied, or currently on the waitlist. Older adults are far more likely to have been exited than any other age group (73% vs. 20% of TAY and 27% of adults). Conversely, TAY is the group most likely to have been denied service (49%), although the adult age category is not far behind (41%). TAY are somewhat less likely to have been exited than adults (20% vs. 27%, respectively).



Waitlist Status and Race

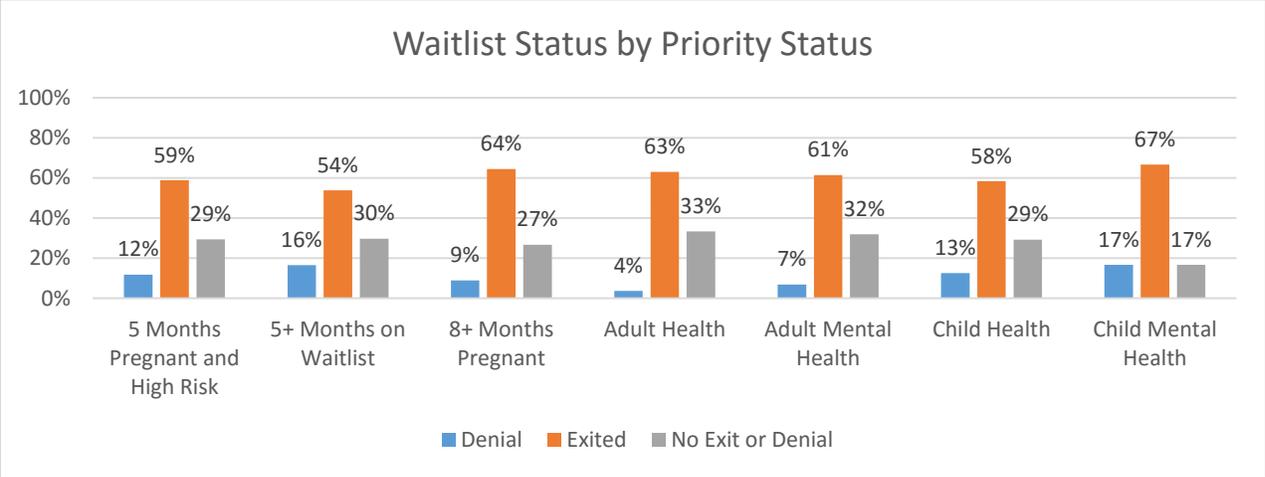
The graph on the next page illustrates the race distribution by whether households are exited, denied or current on the waitlist. Those who identify as White are less likely to have been denied (36%) than those who are Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders (50%), Black (46%), Asian (42%) or American Indian (40%). All racial groups are equally likely to be current on the waitlist.¹²

¹² As noted on page 3, the federal categories for Race do not include Latino/Hispanic. Based on conversations with Compass staff, we believe most of the families identified as "other" races in this data set are Latino/Hispanic.



Waitlist Status and Priority Status

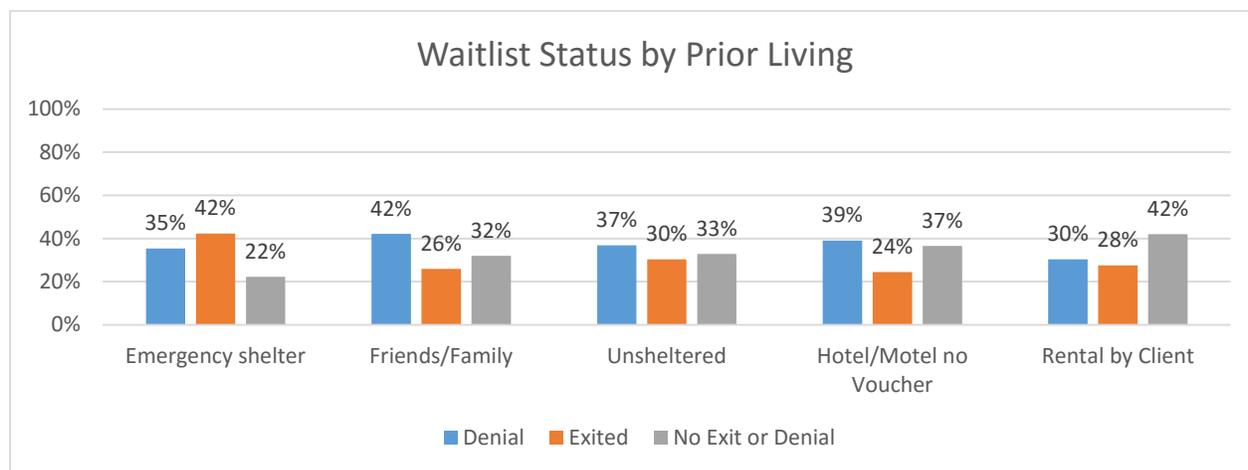
The graph below illustrates the priority status distribution of whether households are exited, denied, or current on the waitlist. In contrast to the previous data presented, between 54% and 67% of those households with priority status are exited from the waitlist; between 4% and 17% have been denied service. More than 50% of households in each of the priority status situations are exited, rather than denied. Those who have been on the waitlist for five or more months, as well as households with children experiencing mental health issues are more likely to be denied than other priority groups. As a general matter, these results are consistent with what we would expect – households with priority status should have a higher likelihood of receiving a shelter or housing referral.



Waitlist Status and Prior Living

The graph on the next page illustrates the priority status distribution by where clients were living when they were placed on the waitlist, using the same categories detailed in the previous section. Some interesting observations were made about the patterns seen here. First, those who were living in an

emergency shelter are the only group with a higher rate of exit compared to their rate of being denied service. Families entering the list from other living situations (unsheltered, family/friends, hotel/motel, rental) were all more likely to be denied than to have an exit. Unsheltered people did not have any higher likelihood of being placed in shelter or housing than those living in their own rental or living with family and friends, which is consistent with current Connecting Point policy (which does not prioritize unsheltered families for assistance).



B. Referral Sources for Family Shelter, Transitional and Rapid Re-Housing

In addition to looking at the Connecting Point waiting list data, Focus Strategies also examined the extent to which the Connecting Point list was documented as a referral source for other programs in the system. To conduct this analysis, we used data sets collected from Compass Family Services, Hamilton Family Center and Catholic Charities. We used these data sets because these three organizations consistently document a source of referral for intake. Results are summarized by organization and program.

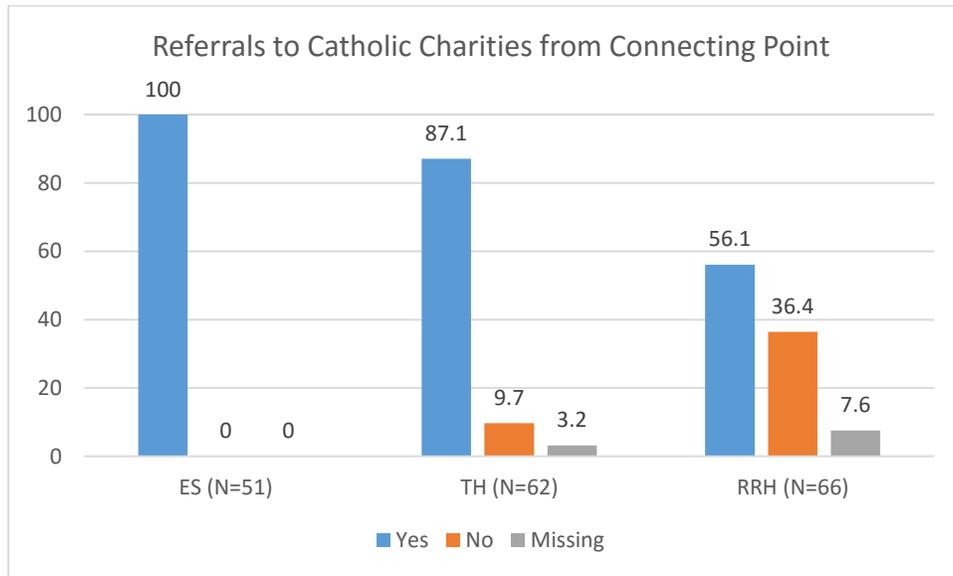
Compass Family Services

The Compass Family Shelter is an emergency shelter run by the same organization responsible for maintaining the Connecting Point waiting list. Data showed that all 358 records at the shelter were referred from the waitlist.

Catholic Charities

Catholic Charities provided information for 3 programs: St. Joseph’s Family Center (an Emergency Shelter with 51 records), Star Community Home (a Transitional Housing program with 62 records), and SF Home Program (a rapid rehousing program with 66 records). The next graph illustrates that the proportion of records with referrals from the Connecting Point waitlist differ somewhat by program, but are overall what may be expected. Specifically, all households entering Emergency Shelter are referred

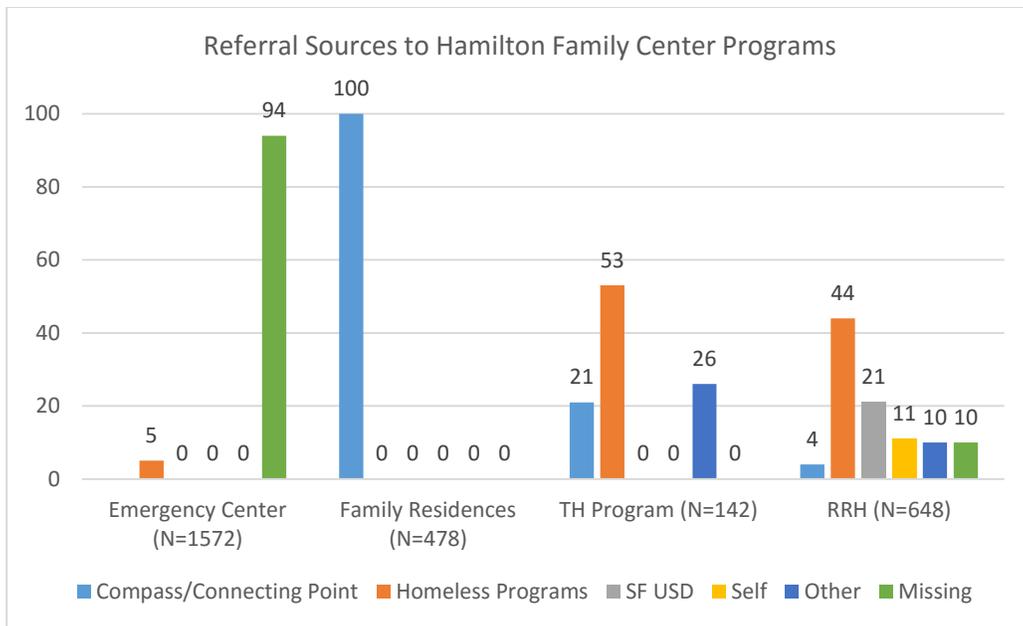
from the waitlist (as required by City policy) with lower numbers for transitional housing and rapid rehousing (87% and 56%, respectively).



Hamilton Family Center

Hamilton Family Center provided information for four programs: the Hamilton Emergency Center (an emergency shelter with 1,572 records), the Hamilton Family Residences (a long-term shelter with 478 records), the Transitional Housing Program (142 records), and First Avenues (a rapid rehousing program with 648 records). The specific data element Hamilton Family Center provided was “incoming referral source,” which had multiple possible response options. Focus Strategies collapsed the data into the categories shown in the next graph, including referrals from: Compass/Connecting Point, other homeless programs¹³, the SF Unified School District, self-referral, other (includes service programs not restricted to homeless people, e.g., The Riley Center, The Glide Foundation), and “missing.”

¹³ Hamilton Family Emergence Center, Homeless Prenatal Program



Again, the data show that referral source differs by program, both in terms of actual source and in terms of whether the program expectation is that the referral source is recorded. Specifically, there is no expectation at the Emergency Center that referral source is recorded, hence most data are missing for that project. Conversely, all referrals for the Family Residences are from Compass/Connecting Point. Regarding the Transitional Housing program, about half of households are referred from other homeless programs, and about one-quarter from Compass/Connecting Point and one-quarter from other non-homeless service programs. The rapid rehousing program show the most varied referral sources – from Compass/Connecting Point, other homeless programs, the SF Unified School District, self-referrals, and other non-homeless service programs.

C. Family System Performance Data

As part of our approach to helping communities assess and improve their homeless crisis response, Focus Strategies typically requests data from a Continuum of Care (CoC’s) HMIS to conduct system and program level performance analysis. We use a set of measures that are based on the HEARTH Act measures and HUD’s system level performance measures, published in 2014. The analysis of system and program performance is conducted using our System-Wide Analytics and Projection (SWAP) suite of tools.

Conducting performance analysis for San Francisco’s homeless system is challenging as programs participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) at a relatively low rate (i.e., many programs don’t enter data into HMIS, or upload data from their own data systems). The quality of the data in the HMIS is also inconsistent. To overcome these obstacles, Focus Strategies requested data from a subset of providers of housing, shelter, and services for families who maintain their own databases (some of whom also upload or enter data into HMIS), in addition to the CoC’s HMIS. The data we collected covered two calendar years, 2014 and 2015.

1. Performance Measures

Below is an overview and explanation of each of the performance measures addressed in this analysis:

- **Utilization Rate** measures whether existing bed capacity is being maximized, and can help identify programs with high barriers to entry. Maximizing the use of available bed capacity is essential to ensuring that system resources are being put to their best use and that as many homeless people are being served as possible in the existing inventory.
- **Length of Stay** measures how quickly programs are helping households exit homelessness, and can be considered in relation to the rate of exit to permanent housing and rate of return to homelessness.
- **Rate of Exit to Permanent Housing** is a measure that allows programs to think about how best to increase the rate at which homeless people exit programs into housing. This is one of the most important ways a community can reduce homelessness.
- **Household Entries: Prior Living Situation** measures the effectiveness of program targeting. To maximize the use of available resources and speed the movement of households from homelessness to housing, systems need to prioritize beds for those with the most acute housing needs (unsheltered or living in shelters), while diverting many of those who are still housed or who could remain so safely (either staying with family or friends or living in their own unit). Considering data on the prior living situation of households when they enter programs allows communities to understand the degree to which each program is serving people with the most acute housing situations.

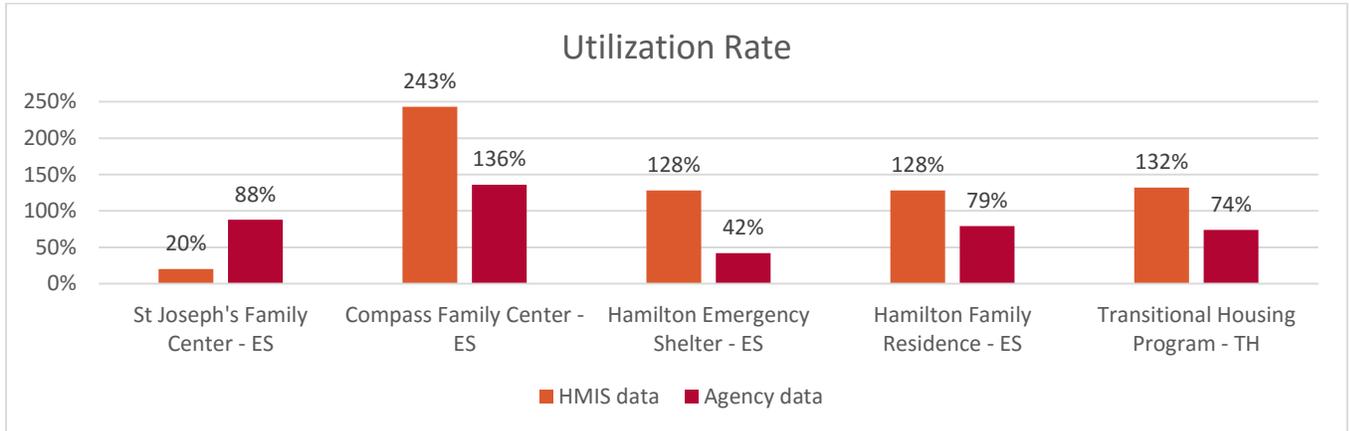
Our typical analysis includes **Rate of Return to Homelessness**, which measures whether people who exited the system to permanent housing return to a homeless program within 12 months. This measure identifies whether programs are helping people into housing placements that “stick.” Assessing this measure can help alleviate concerns that serving higher needs clients and helping them exit to housing more quickly could result in unstable housing placements. Due to limitations in available data, Focus Strategies was unable to assess this measure for San Francisco’s family homeless system.

2. Data Quality: Agency-Provided Data vs HMIS

To conduct the performance analysis, Focus Strategies made some decisions about whether to use HNIS data or agency-provided data for those programs that upload their agency data to HMIS. Two agencies that provided data from their internal systems, Compass Family Services and Hamilton Family Center, also had data reflected in the HMIS. Specific performance domains using agency-provided data were

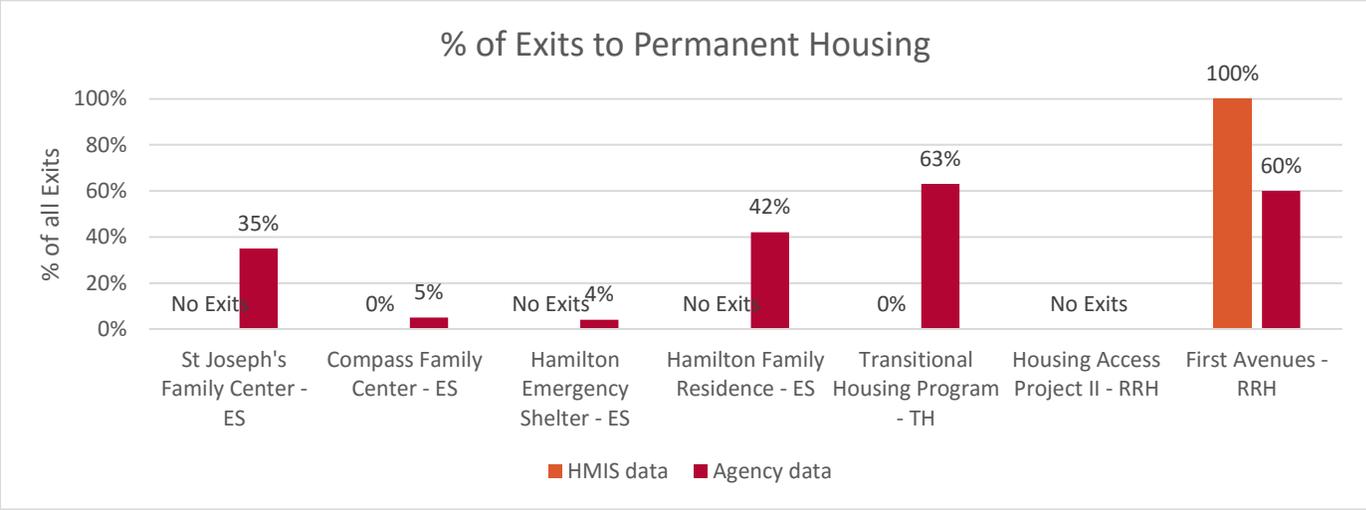
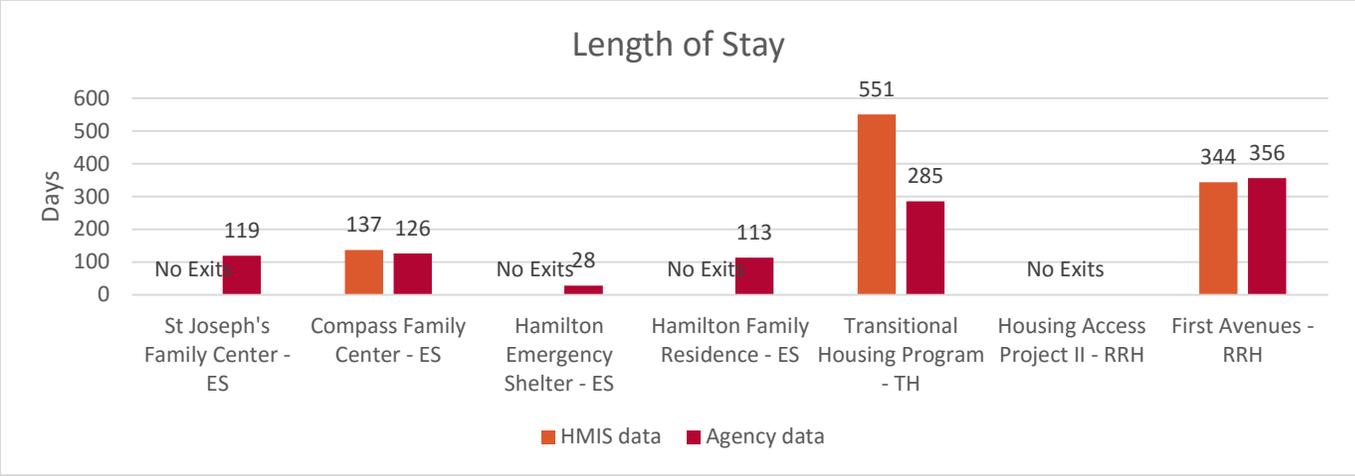
compared to their HMIS data. We conclude from this analysis that the agency-provided data is preferable over the HMIS data to use in the family system performance analysis.¹⁴

Utilization rate differs drastically depending on whether HMIS or agency data are taken into account. With only one exception (St Joseph’s Family Center), all HMIS utilization rates are well over 100%. This result typically occurs when program exits are not recorded, causing the appearance that more households are being served in the program than there is capacity to house them. This suspicion is confirmed when information presented in the next two graphs is also taken into account.



Specifically, the Length of Stay and Permanent Housing Exit rates show that most of the programs have no recorded exits associated with them in HMIS. The finding of no recorded exits supports over-utilization of capacity shown by HMIS data in the first graph. Without exit information, the key performance measures of Length of Stay and Permanent Housing Exit rates cannot be calculated. The finding suggests that the data transfer from agency to HMIS does not successfully capture exit information. Based on these findings, Focus Strategies used the Agency data, where it was available, in the system performance analysis, rather than the HMIS data.

¹⁴ Appendix A lists all projects in the performance analysis, indicates whether data was available from an internal source, HMIS, or both, and which data source was used in the performance analysis.



3. San Francisco Family System Performance by Project Type

This section presents the results of our analysis of system performance using the data sources described above. A comprehensive list of programs included in the analysis is provided in Appendix A. Below is a summary of the number of households in each program type in the analysis year – January to December 2015.

Project Type	# Households Served
Emergency Shelter	489
Transitional Housing	161
Rapid Re Housing	254
Permanent Supportive Housing	754
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,658</i>

Focus Strategies typically makes recommendations to jurisdictions regarding optimal performance targets for each of the measures presented in this analysis. These targets are based on HUD guidance, data from other communities, and our own experience evaluating what performance is needed to generate an effective system flow.¹⁵ The table below presents suggested targets for each measure, organized by project type. These targets represent ideal performance for a system with strong “throughput” of households from homelessness to housing; actual lengths of stay and exit rates to permanent housing may be higher in locations with challenging rental markets. Following the table, we discuss how the San Francisco programs are performing in relation to identified targets.

Performance Targets				
Project Type	Utilization Rate	Length of Stay	Exit Rate to PH	Entries From Homelessness
Emergency Shelter ¹⁶	95%	30 days	50 % (S) / 80 % (F)	85% unsheltered
Transitional Housing	95%	90-180 days	80 %	10% unsheltered, 85% ES
Rapid Rehousing	NA	120 days	85 %	10% unsheltered, 85% ES
PSH	95%	NA	NA	10% unsheltered, 85% ES

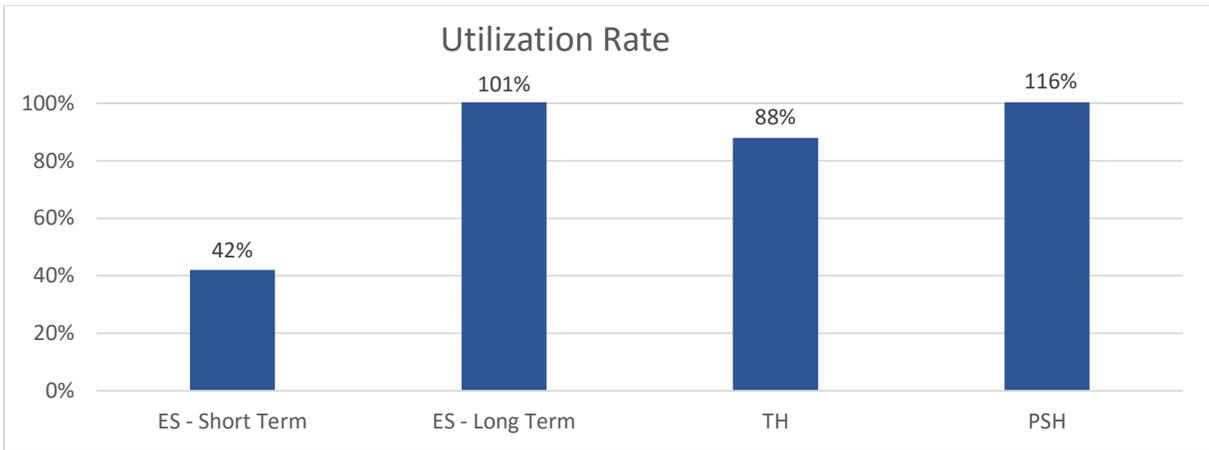
Using data from the sources identified in Appendix A, the graphs below illustrate project type performance in San Francisco’s family homeless system for Utilization Rate, Length of Stay, Exits to Permanent Housing, and Prior Living Situation.

Utilization Rate

Based on available data, both short-term emergency shelter and transitional housing appear to be underutilized, while permanent supportive housing appears to be over-utilized. However, as previously noted, exit data does not appear to be consistently recorded in HMIS, which can make utilization seem higher than it is in reality.

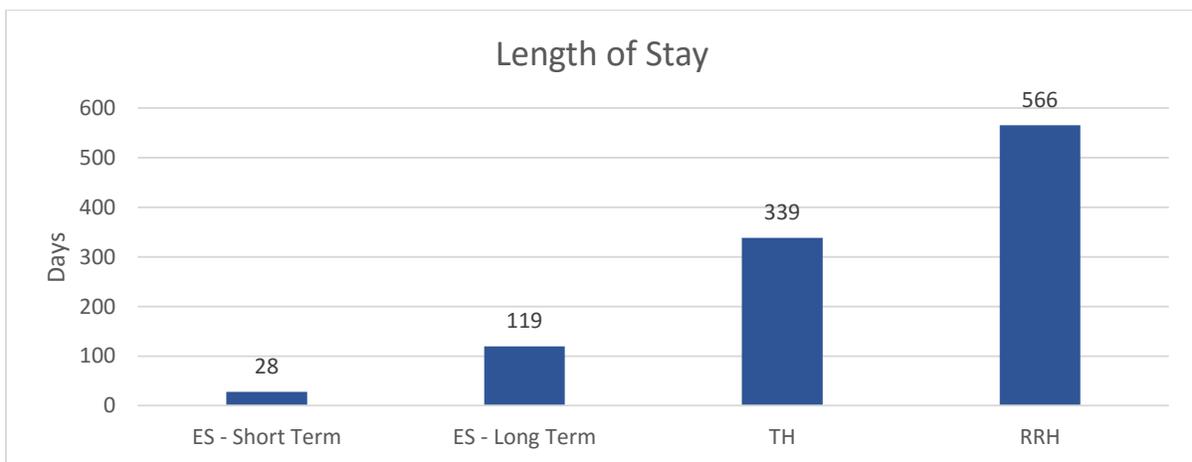
¹⁵Length of Stay: HUD has not set a specific performance benchmark for length of stay in programs; but the preamble to the HEARTH Act sets a goal that no one is homeless for longer than 30 days; the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) has adopted a performance benchmark for RRH that clients secure housing within 30 days of program enrollment. Exit Rate to PH: The 2015 HUD CoC NOFA set a benchmark of 80% rate of exit to permanent housing from all CoC-funded TH and RRH; NAEH has set a benchmark of 80% for RRH.

¹⁶ This project type represents the short-term ES presented in this section. Focus Strategies does not have suggested targets for long-term ES projects.



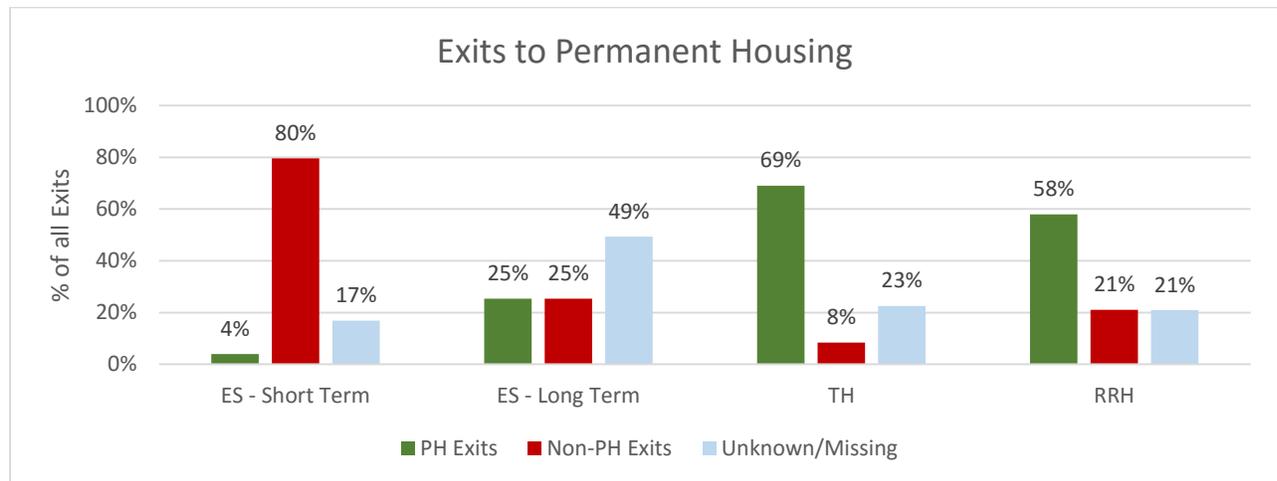
Length of Stay

Length of Stay for each of the project types is presented in the next graph. Length of stay for short-term ES is within the recommended target. The average length of stay for long-term emergency shelter is 119 days, which is not surprising, given these programs generally allow stays of up to six months. However, 119 day average length of stay is well above the recommended target for shelter; it appears that these programs tend to function more like transitional housing, an intervention that should be reserved only for limited uses, not the primary intervention for families. Length of stay for transitional housing is nearly twice as long as recommended, while Rapid Rehousing is almost five times as long as recommended. While San Francisco's rental market is extremely challenging, these lengths of stay are far above where they should be to have an effective system. These numbers suggest programs may not fully embrace a Housing First approach and that strategies to help clients quickly exit from shelter (e.g. RRH linked to shelter) are not being fully deployed.



Exit to Permanent Housing

Likewise, Exit Rate to Permanent Housing for each of the project types is lower than the recommended targets of 80% for shelter/transitional housing and 85% for rapid re-housing. While, again, the challenging rental market will impose difficulties in meeting these targets, there is still significant room for improvement. The data also show about 20% or higher rate of unknown/missing exit destinations. While this is lower than in many data sets we have reviewed, it is still an important data quality issue that should be addressed to develop a system-level understanding of whether homeless system interventions are meeting their objective of helping people secure permanent housing. We also note that the rate of exit from long-term shelter presented here is lower than what is reported by the shelter programs to H.S.A. as part of the regular contract monitoring process, again suggesting that data quality issues are limiting the usefulness of performance measurement.



Prior Living Situation

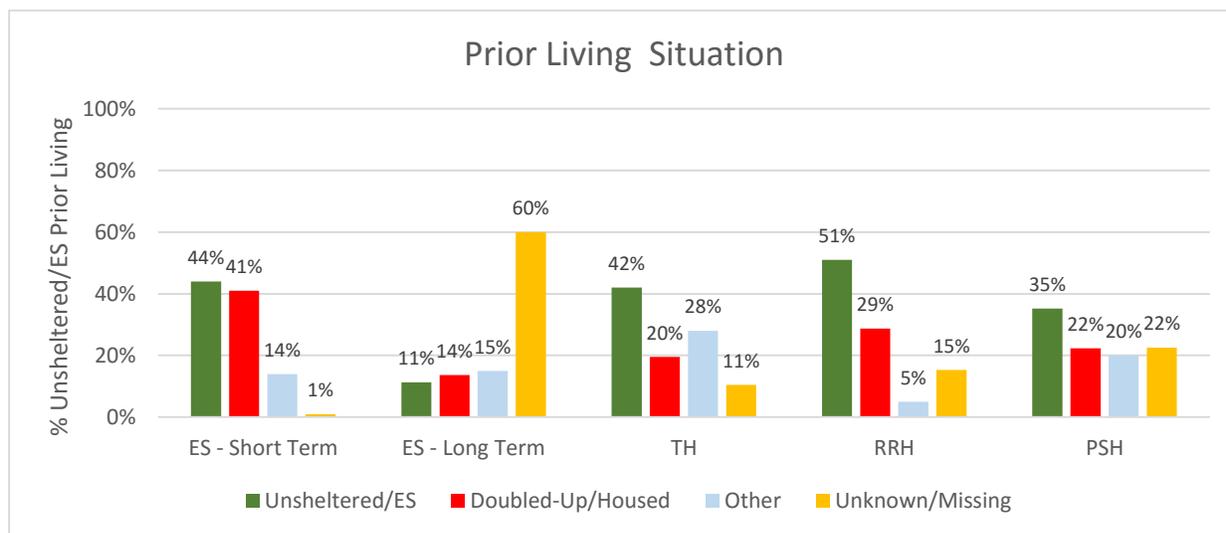
The final graph breaks down prior living situation of households entering each program type. High performing systems have high rates of entry from unsheltered locations and from emergency shelter, as these are generally households with the most acute housing needs. Those who are doubled up or at-risk are often able to be diverted from entering the homeless system.

The table below compares the proportion of households in San Francisco who enter each type of project who are unsheltered or living in shelter; doubled-up or housed (staying with friends and family, own rental, subsidized housing, transitional housing),¹⁷ living in other situations (e.g. institutions) or for whom prior living situation is unknown or missing. Given the large numbers of households in San Francisco who are in shelter or waiting to access shelter, we would expect to see other program types (TH, RRH, PSH) accepting large numbers of households from shelter. However, there are significant

¹⁷ See Appendix B for further detail of the “Doubled-Up/Housed” category.

numbers of households coming from other locations, particularly from doubled-up and rental housing situations. Appendix B provides some additional detail on the “doubled-up/housed” households in this table.

Also, the amount of unknown/missing data on prior living situation (especially for long-term emergency shelter and Permanent Supportive Housing) is extremely large. In fact, if all households who are currently “unknown/missing” were coded as either unsheltered or coming from shelter, the project types would all approach the performance targets we recommend. This exemplifies a data quality issue that doubles as a performance issue.



IV. Conclusion

The data analysis reveals a great need for a more complete and powerful data system to support system-level performance assessment and planning for improvement. Limited participation by family shelter and housing providers in San Francisco’s HMIS, as well as the lack of a central data system shared among all family providers means that the City maintains limited ability to understand which families are being served, what their housing issues are, what interventions they receive, and their outcomes.

Available data reveals that the system may not be very effective at quickly assisting homeless families to secure shelter and housing. Only a small subset of families who enter the Connecting Point waiting list ever receive a referral to shelter. Many who enter shelter are not effectively linked to transitional and rapid re-housing programs. Even taking into consideration the extremely challenging housing market conditions in the City, program lengths of stay are high and rates of exit to permanent housing are low. This analysis indicates that there is room for significant improvement in order to increase the number of families served and housed across the system.

Appendix A: Project Data Sources¹⁸

Project Type	Project Name	HMIS data	Agency data
ES	St. Joseph's Family Center	Yes	Yes
ES	Compass Family Center	Yes	Yes
ES	Hamilton Family Emergency Shelter	Yes	Yes
ES	Hamilton Family Residence	Yes	Yes
TH	STAR Community Home	No	Yes
TH	Clara House	Yes	No
TH	Harbor House	Yes	No
TH	Transitional Housing Program	Yes	Yes
PSH	Hazel Betsey	Yes	No
PSH	Treasure Island Phase I	Yes	No
PSH	Treasure Island Phase II	Yes	No
PSH	Arnett Watson Apartments	Yes	No
PSH	Senator Hotel	Yes	No
PSH	Iroquois Hotel	Yes	No
PSH	Dudley Apartments	Yes	No
PSH	Bayview Hill Gardens	Yes	No
PSH	Franciscan Towers	Yes	No
PSH	New Franciscan Towers	Yes	No
PSH	Cortland Ave Apartments	Yes	No
PSH	26th St. Apartments	Yes	No
PSH	Monterey Boulevard Apartments	Yes	No
PSH	Positive Match/Rita da Cascia	Yes	No
PSH	Rubicon Villages	Yes	No
PSH	Scattered Sites	Yes	No
PSH	Island Bay Homes I & II	Yes	No
PSH	Island Bay Homes III	Yes	No
PSH	S+C Tenant-Based Rental Assistance	Yes	No
PSH	Canon Barcus Community House	Yes	No
PSH	10th & Mission Family Hsng.	Yes	No
PSH	Juan Pifarre Plaza	Yes	No
PSH	Rich Sorro Commons	Yes	No
PSH	RSHF (Families Moving Forward)	No	Yes
RRH	SF Home	No	Yes
RRH	Housing Access Project II	Yes	Yes
RRH	First Avenues	Yes	Yes

¹⁸Highlighted cells indicate the data sources for the performance analysis.

Appendix B: Detail for “Doubled-Up/Housed” Prior to Entering Programs

The tables below present an additional breakdown of the data on Prior Living Situation previously presented. Of families entering shelter and transitional housing who are in doubled up or housed situations, the majority live with family and friends. This is also consistent with the Connecting Point Waiting List data. It is interesting to note that a significant number of people are entering RRH from their own subsidized rental units. Further exploration of this finding may be warranted.

