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- The HOST demonstration aims to improve the life chances of residents in public and mixed-income housing.
- HOST sites are collaborating to design, implement, and evaluate an innovative whole-family model.
- Year 2 will incorporate lessons from the first two sites and add another two sites.

HOST Year 2: Implementation and Expansion

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Housing Opportunity and Services Together (HOST), launched by the Urban Institute with the support of the Open Society Foundations in December 2010, is an innovative approach to coordinating services and programs for adults and youth in public and mixed-income housing. HOST's core case management component helps parents in low-income neighborhoods confront their key barriers to self-sufficiency—poor physical and mental health, addictions, low literacy and educational attainment, and historically weak connections to the labor force—while simultaneously integrating services for children and youth.

In HOST's second year, the first two HOST sites—Chicago and Portland, Oregon—began implementing their whole-family or dual-generation HOST models. The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) contracts two organizations, UCAN and Project Match, to serve 230 mostly African American families at Altgeld Gardens, a large, isolated public housing development on the south side of Chicago. In Portland, Home Forward—previously known as the Housing Authority of Portland—directly provides intensive adult case management services and outsources the youth component to an independent team of licensed social workers; this site serves 136 families of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds at the New Columbia Apartments, Tamarack Apartments,

and Humboldt Gardens mixed-income developments.

A second set of sites in Washington, DC, and Brooklyn, New York, has undertaken intensive planning to launch HOST in their own communities. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has partnered with the Brownsville Partnership, a community development collaborative convened by Community Solutions, to serve 250 families in Brownsville, Brooklyn, which has the largest concentration of public housing in the country. And in Washington, DC, the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) is focusing on 140 households with youth between the ages of 9 and 18 at Benning Terrace, a public housing development in Southeast DC which, like many DCHA

Since its launch in 2011, HOST has revealed just how challenging it can be for agencies that traditionally focus on real estate and property management to provide social services.

Table 1. Overview of HOST Demonstration Sites

PARTNER	SITE LOCATION	TARGET POPULATION	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	ADULT SERVICE PROVIDER	RATIO OF CASE MANAGERS TO HOUSEHOLDS	YOUTH SERVICE PROVIDER	SITE-SPECIFIC YOUTH PROGRAM FOCUS
Chicago, IL (Chicago Housing Authority)	Altgeld Gardens	Households out of compliance with CHA employment requirements	230	UCAN	1:23	UCAN/ Project Match	Pathways to Rewards, TM an incentive based, goal-setting curriculum; special targeting around failing grades and truancy
Portland, OR (Home Forward)	New Columbia, Tamarack Apartments, Humboldt Gardens	Households enrolled in the Opportunity Housing Initiative, a Family Self-Sufficiency program	136	Home Forward	1:30	JDP Youth Services	Individualized action planning and school-based intervention for youth enrolled in grades K–6
Washington, DC (DC Housing Authority)	Benning Terrace	Households with youth between 9 and 18 years old	140	East River Family Strengthening Collaborative	1:30 or lower	TBD	Sexual health and safety programming for youth 9–18
New York City (NYC Housing Authority)	Brownsville	Households with more than 3 months rental delinquency, incomes under \$15,000, no earned income, and youth ages 10–17	250	Community Solutions	TBD	SCO Family Services Center for Court Innovation	Criminal justice and family services

developments, struggles with high rates of unemployment, teen pregnancy, and HIV.

This brief describes lessons learned from implementation and planning efforts during HOST's second year. Practitioners and policymakers will find practical insights on building place-based supportive environments for low-income populations, as well as a road map for the future of HOST.

The First Year of Implementation: Lessons Learned from Chicago and Portland

In the first year of HOST implementation, both Chicago and Portland gained insight

into using housing as an effective platform for dual-generation case management strategies.

Adapt Engagement Strategies to Better Connect with HOST Families

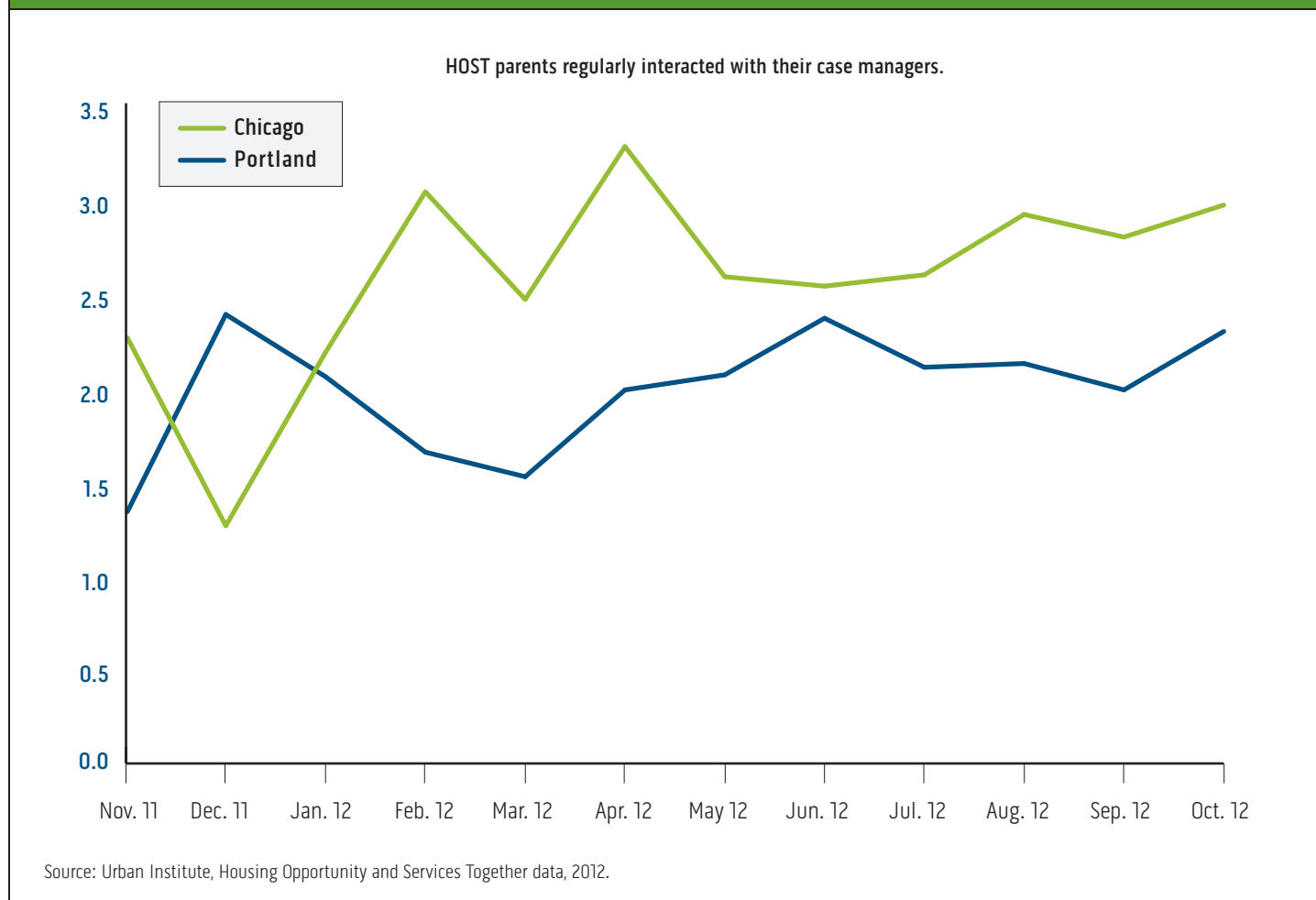
The evaluation of HOST's predecessor, the Chicago Family Case Management Demonstration, found that for adult public housing residents, having more frequent interaction with case managers¹ yielded significant gains in employment and mental and physical health (Popkin et al. 2013). HOST's core case management components build on this experience, aiming to create strong relationships between case managers

and adult residents that enable goal setting, problem solving, and concrete progress toward goals.

The first step is for case managers and resident parents to connect. HOST case managers track their number of two-way interactions with parents each month—whether by phone, in person, or any other method. Case managers in both sites consistently averaged more than one interaction per client per month over the first year and, by midyear, averaged twice a month or more (figure 1).

CHA requires all “work-able” Altgeld residents who are not working at least part time to

Figure 1. Average Number of Interactions between HOST Case Managers and Parents per Month, Year 1



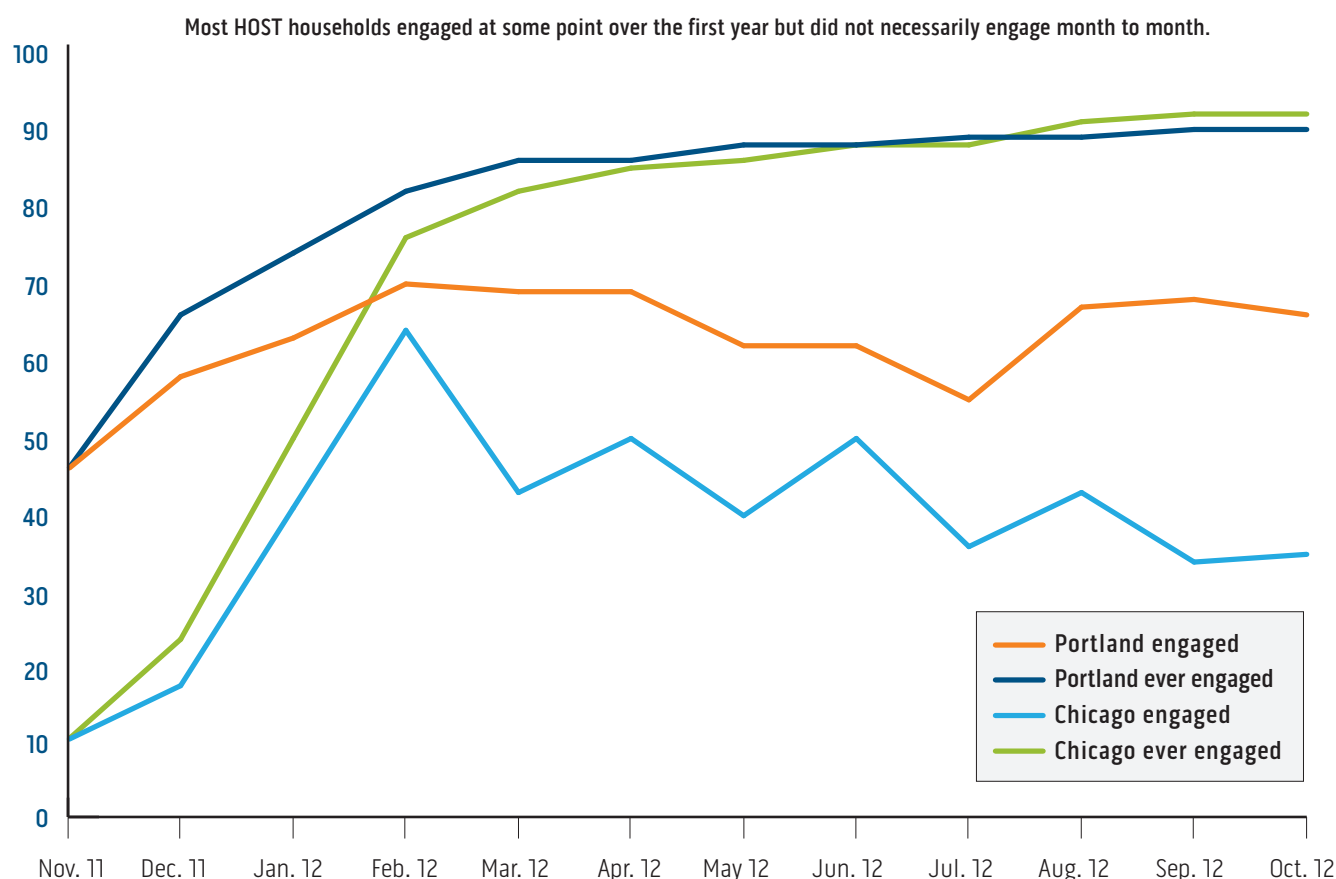
enroll in an educational, vocational, or job-training program for at least 20 hours a week to maintain their housing. UCAN, as an on-site social service provider under contract with CHA, helps residents meet that goal. Similarly, participants in Home Forward's Family Self-Sufficiency/Opportunity Housing Initiative are required to set goals toward economic self-sufficiency to stay in their housing; residents of one of the two mixed-income properties must remain compliant with the program to stay in their housing. First-year HOST participants' level of contact eclipsed that of participants in both programs.²

The Chicago and Portland sites fine-tuned their outreach strategies over time. Both sites began by leaving flyers at residents' doors, and then switched to mailing letters and visiting families in their homes. Some case managers started contacting clients by phone or text message to check in about job interviews, parent-teacher conferences, and the like; to send reminders about activities or events; or to set up in-person meetings. Case managers at both sites have reported that their new outreach strategies have started to bring in not only HOST parents, but their live-in partners and young adult children as

well, multiplying the number of people served by the whole-family model.

During focus groups with the Urban Institute research team, parents in both sites requested clear information about HOST services and the schedule of upcoming events, in order to better prioritize HOST activities and navigate scheduling conflicts. The Portland team responded by providing clients with a calendar of scheduled events several months in advance. Both sites held relaunch events to mark the second year of HOST, to reenergize engaged families, and to introduce HOST services to other families.

Figure 2. Average Percentage of HOST Households Engaged with Case Managers per Month, Year 1



Source: Urban Institute, Housing Opportunity and Services Together data, 2012.

UCAN case managers also noted that their quarterly celebrations of youth achievements helped engage parents who might not otherwise have gotten involved. These events often included food and entertainment (e.g., a drill team, a magician, storytelling), a cake decorated with families' pictures, and a photographer. Since the first event, attendance has grown steadily from about 20 families to nearly 80. Youth who achieved their own self-declared goals (such as steady school attendance or improved grades) found these recognition events highly motivational.

Ultimately, case managers want to connect with HOST parents to assess barriers, set goals, identify resource needs, and track progress. The Urban Institute asked case managers to record engagement with their HOST households on a monthly basis (figure 2). Sites tailored the types of goals they track to their particular HOST model and to the individual needs of HOST parents. Distinct from "interactions" as shown in figure 1 above, "engagement" refers to any two-way communication between HOST parents and case managers specifically focused on a personal goal or objective.

Because Home Forward used HOST to expand an existing Family Self-Sufficiency program that required active consent from participants, some Portland families, particularly those in Humboldt Gardens, were already substantively engaged with their case managers. In contrast, Chicago focused on unemployed heads of household, many of whom were not yet engaged in services or case management. As a result, engagement rates were initially much higher in Portland than in Chicago. However, within five months, the sites reached parity in the percentage of HOST households that engaged with case

managers about their goals; both engaged about 90 percent of households by the end of the first year. Such high rates of meaningful engagement are an early marker of success (Parilla and Theodos 2010).

However, not all HOST households engaged every month with case managers about their goals. In Chicago, monthly household engagement started around 10 percent in November 2011 then spiked to 63 percent in February 2012, when UCAN finalized their list of families and began seeking their consent to participate. Engagement declined to about 30 percent by October 2012, as engaging residents not compliant with the work requirement and parents who gained employment or enrolled in school became difficult. In Portland, monthly engagement tended to be more consistent, usually hovering between 50 and 70 percent. Home Forward case managers also noted that engagement with HOST parents fell slightly in summer and around the year-end holidays.

Adjust Staffing to Double Down on Intensive Services

Both Chicago and Portland started HOST implementation with an idea of the demand for services, but each had to make staffing adjustments in the first year. For example, UCAN started with one full-time mental health clinician and several case managers, each serving 23 households; they did not expect enough demand to justify a second, part-time clinical staff member. However, as engagement intensified, families' interest in clinical services grew. In response, UCAN tapped on-site clinical resources through their existing provider contract with CHA to supplement HOST demand.

Because HOST families in Portland have, relative to Chicago families, high rates of employment and shorter histories in subsidized housing, many appeared less vulnerable than those in Altgeld Gardens (Urban Institute forthcoming). Initial Home Forward

caseloads were thus larger than UCAN's, at 40 families for each case manager; case managers thought they could easily spend more time with high-need clients and, on balance, address all families' needs effectively. However, focus group participants said they needed and wanted more intensive support. Home Forward responded by contracting with a culturally specific practitioner for help working with African families and hiring a new case manager to pull both "hard-to-serve" and more independent households from existing staff caseloads. These changes lowered HOST caseloads to around 30:1.

Home Forward staff have uncovered the same unmet demand for clinical mental health services as UCAN staff in Chicago. The better Home Forward case managers know the HOST families, the more families disclose deeply personal issues that require a trained clinician's attention. Home Forward had not initially budgeted for mental health services, but staff now plan to reallocate grant monies to contract additional clinicians.

Both sites also struggled with staffing their youth services. In Chicago, the large number of HOST children immediately exceeded the capacity of Project Match's small staff. To resolve this issue, Project Match contracted UCAN case managers to implement HOST, with guidance from Project Match staff who designed and coordinated the programming. Portland's youth team brought more clinical staff on board (particularly a Spanish-speaking clinician), better defined staff roles, and hired an administrative staffer for logistical support.

Coordinate a Whole-Family Service Model

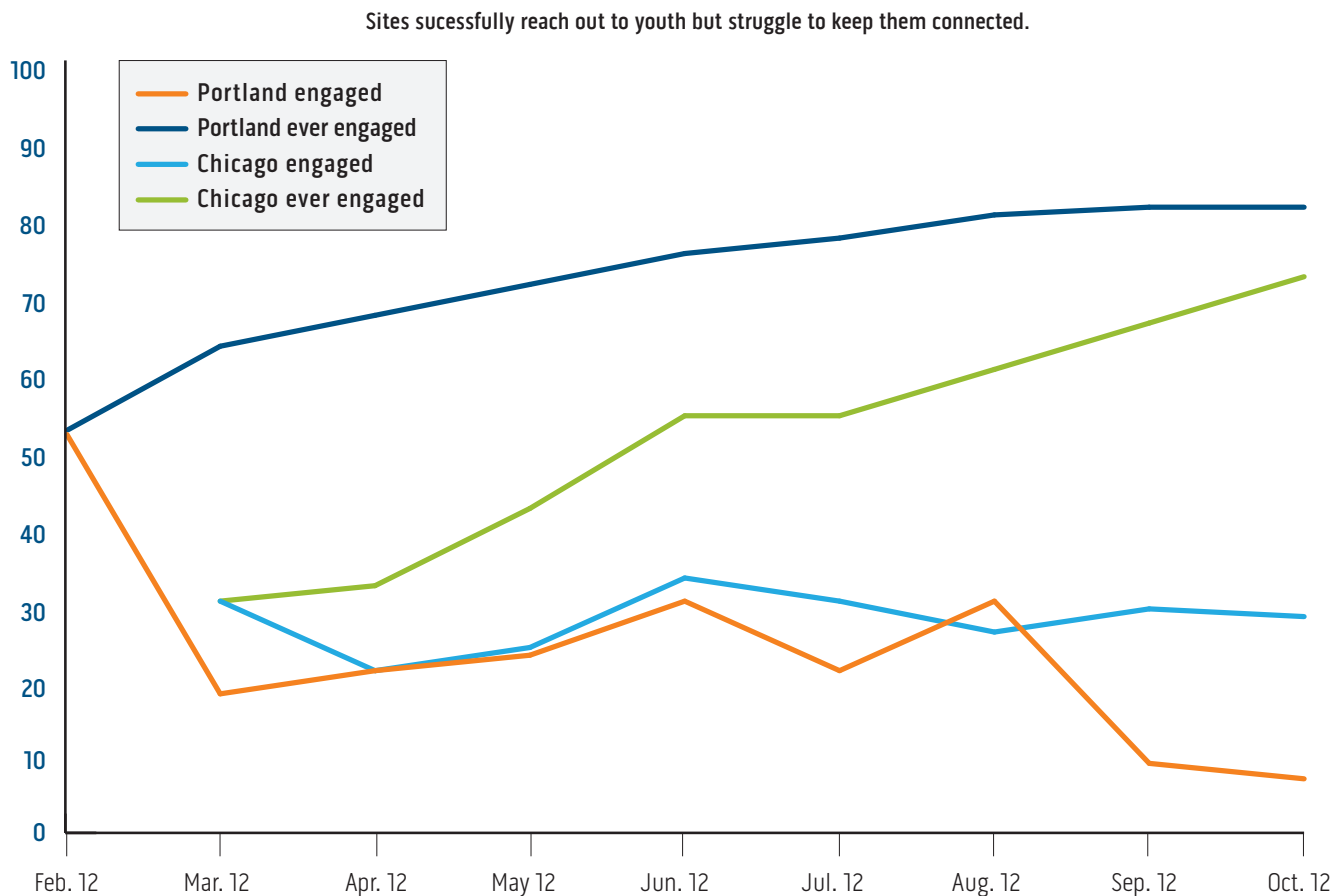
Prior to the demonstration, neither site had ever attempted to implement a dual-generation service model. HOST requires a demanding level of coordination among team members, even for high-performing organizations like the partners in Portland and Chicago. Over the first year, both sites developed processes and procedures to help ensure

quality communication and consistent work with families. In Chicago, UCAN initially had some difficulty implementing Project Match's ambitious plan for systematically scoring youths' progress. To promote understanding of each other's roles, responsibilities, processes, constraints, and goals, the Urban Institute and CHA instituted biweekly calls between Project Match and UCAN. In addition, Project Match and UCAN managers began meeting and talking more regularly. These calls and meetings, in addition to quarterly site visits, have helped improve communication and coordination between the two Chicago service providers.

The Chicago management team designed a system for all team members to regularly review cases and communicate.³ At all-day interdisciplinary team meetings, case managers individually present cases to the clinical and supervisory team once a month. Generally, the group reviews nine family cases each week, each taking approximately 45 minutes. The interdisciplinary team reviews each family's service plan about twice a year. UCAN is considering whether to use a similar format to include families in their own case management strategies.

The Portland team has also improved coordination between programs and services. Because Portland spread HOST across three mixed-income communities, they focused on building internal cohesiveness and communication within site teams during the first year. Promoting a lead case manager from Humboldt Gardens, co-locating staff offices, and holding regular meetings and trainings helped integrate each site's different teams and processes. However, the core case management team and the youth team continued to work largely in isolation. Core case managers often found themselves working with older youth while the youth team ran its programs in parallel, sometimes struggling to connect with families for in-depth assessments of children's and youth's needs. To promote a more integrated

Figure 3. Average Percentage of HOST Youth Engaged with Case Managers per Month, Year 1



Source: Urban Institute, Housing Opportunity and Services Together data, 2012.

approach, Home Forward began convening “all-hands-on-deck” meetings every two weeks, where case managers and the whole youth team would discuss interactions with families and troubleshoot cases in a process somewhat akin to UCAN’s interdisciplinary team.

Target, Tailor, and Intensify Youth Services

Engaging directly with children and youth added a layer of complexity for practitioners. Youth services were new to both sites, and the sheer number of children and youth eligible for HOST services also posed a significant chal-

lenge—more than 350 young people in Portland and more than 500 in Chicago on the HOST caseload. At Altgeld, the large number of multibedroom units account for these large numbers. In Portland, the large proportion of immigrant families quickly multiplies the number of children and youth to serve.

Despite these daunting numbers, the youth teams in both sites were remarkably successful in their outreach efforts. From the data each site tracked on youth activities, we found that 81 percent of Altgeld children and youth participating in HOST had set at least

one goal in Project Match’s Pathways to Rewards program, and the Portland team had engaged directly with 72 percent of young people living at the New Columbia, Tamarack, and Humboldt HOST developments by the end of year one (figure 3). As with parents, however, keeping children and youth engaged month to month has been a challenge. Most months, less than a third connect with youth programming.

In response to the difficulty of meaningfully engaging so many children and youth, both sites have explored more deliberate

targeting strategies. From the beginning, Project Match had planned to assess all HOST children, assign them to an enrichment group or an at-risk group based on in-school and out-of-school behaviors, and tailor a Pathways to Rewards program to meet each group's unique needs. In practice, UCAN and Project Match spent most of the first year refining the system of collecting report cards and fine-tuning the rewards system. However, in November 2012, the Chicago youth team began tailoring their interventions to youth with Ds and Fs or high truancy. In light of the time it takes to collect and analyze report cards, accomplishing this task promptly is no small undertaking. Chicago's first attempt culminated in a group meeting in January 2013 for high-risk youth and their parents that yielded insights into the children's issues and practical solutions. Encouraged by the event, staff will continue to refine their targeting and tailor interventions for these youth.

Portland also started out the first year wanting to tailor youth supports by performing in-home assessments with all families. However, the youth team, half of which are clinical social workers, had difficulty gaining access to families in their homes while providing a wide variety of low-intensity activities for all children. Halfway through the first year, focus groups with youth and parents revealed that this diffuse approach was not making significant inroads with young people. The youth team narrowed its target population to children enrolled in kindergarten through 6th grade and refocused its youth assessment around schools and academic performance. Now, each child in this target group is assigned a youth case manager, whose case-loads are 30:1.

This youth case manager meets monthly with parents, the HOST case manager, and the child to design an action plan that will help the child meet his or her goals. The youth case manager also visits each child at least once a week, either during class or after

school, and actively engages with teachers and other school staff on behalf of the child. To keep track of each child's progress, teachers and students fill out a monthly assessment of academic standing and behavior that the youth case manager shares with parents at the monthly meetings to help tailor the level of support and type of resources offered. The youth team continues to offer boys and girls groups, but has better integrated them with the work of the youth case managers.

The Second Year: Expanding HOST to New York and Washington, DC

After HOST launched in November 2011, both the DCHA and the NYCHA indicated interest in participating, in order to develop innovative strategies that bring effective services to vulnerable residents.

Planning during HOST's second year had some advantages. Lessons from the Chicago and Portland sites helped new sites clearly define the level of intensity for core case management and expectations for the youth component, funders and policymakers widely recognized the HOST demonstration, and the new HOST sites were able to use the original two sites as mentors.

Both second-year HOST sites underwent much the same planning process as the first two sites to adapt the central model to their communities. They assessed the needs of potential HOST families, walked through a logic model process, designed outreach and targeting strategies, and identified key partners for implementation. This section highlights some factors that have shaped the DCHA and NYCHA HOST models, to be launched in spring and fall 2013, respectively.

Decide Who to Serve

NYCHA and DCHA faced different challenges deciding on their target populations. Brownsville is home to the largest concentration of public housing in the country. The sheer vastness and density of its public hous-

ing, as well as the overwhelming concentration of poverty in the surrounding area, makes implementing an effective place-based strategy difficult. HOST partners purposefully concentrated on serving target-population families who cluster together in three specific developments. Within these developments, the partners identified 10–17 year old children as the youth cohort most in need of the HOST intervention. Next, the New York group determined criteria of vulnerability, gleaned from NYCHA administrative data, which flagged families most in need of HOST services. These criteria included rent delinquency and either no or low employment incomes reported by the families.

In Washington, DC, the focus on addressing sexual health shaped conversations about the HOST target population. DC has the highest rate of HIV in the western hemisphere (DC Department of Health 2012), and the Benning Terrace area has some of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the country.⁴ DCHA began by wanting to focus on early intervention with girls ages 9–13. However, this strategy evolved over the course of the planning year. DCHA decided that, to successfully move outcomes for the girls, HOST must also work with boys on sexual health and safety. DCHA also found they should expand the age range to include older teens, in order to identify changes in outcomes as youth mature and to serve enough households to make the demonstration robust. At one point, DCHA also considered including children younger than 9, but decided against it because parents may have been uncomfortable with sexual education for younger children; additional capacity would also be needed to design and implement a separate age-appropriate intervention. In the end, using data from its property management database, DCHA chose to target 140 households at Benning Terrace, all with children from 9 to 18.

Build Trust in HOST Communities

All four sites have in common a long history of chronic disadvantage—violence and deprivation and deeply entrenched feelings of isolation. Territorial boundaries divide the neighborhoods. For example, Brownsville and Benning Terrace residents have high-quality recreation centers close by, but do not use them because they are considered to be in other communities. For HOST to be successful, on-site providers must help participants overcome such issues and actively build a sense of community cohesion and collective efficacy.

Building community in Brownsville and Benning Terrace is no small challenge. NYCHA has addressed this issue head on with its decision to strategically target within a large cluster of seven Brownsville developments. In addition, HOST partners will work with trained Brownsville community members to reach out to and engage directly with resident families.

The DC partners are taking community engagement a step further. With grants from the National Institutes of Health and the Kellogg Foundation, the Urban Institute, in partnership with DCHA and the University of California at San Diego, is using a community-based participatory research approach to involve Benning Terrace residents in shaping the DC HOST demonstration. Under this framework, the Urban Institute has hired the president of the Benning Terrace resident council as a part-time employee who will engage the community in all phases of data collection, program design, and evaluation. Both youth and adult residents will be asked to participate in a community advisory board that will guide the needs assessment and program development. The goal is to develop a program that improves adolescent sexual health and safety outcomes, and that is both sustainable within the community and replicable in similar communities.

Choose Partners and Build Capacity

As the first year of implementation in Chicago and Portland has demonstrated, running a dual-generation model like HOST demands high capacity. Like CHA, both NYCHA and DCHA have chosen to partner with nonprofit organizations rather than directly provide services. NYCHA is currently transitioning from a small in-house social services department to a zone model focused on partnering with community agencies to better coordinate services and leverage external resources. DCHA has long recognized its residents' high level of need, but has not had the resources to provide its many properties with on-site case management.

To choose their partners, both DCHA and NYCHA began a formal bidding process by creating a request for proposals and distributing it to case management service providers. A wide array of service agencies with significant capacity, historical presence in the community, and expertise providing services on issues such as juvenile delinquency, adult employment programs, and mental health, responded in New York. The process made it relatively easy to identify potential HOST partners for Brownsville. At the end of 2012, NYCHA selected the Brownsville Partnership, a collaboration of Community Solutions, SCO Family of Services, and the Center for Court Innovation—organizations with widely recognized expertise in housing stability, youth and family development, and justice system reform, respectively.

The partner selection process proved more difficult in Washington, DC. Even though DC is home to many large-scale nonprofits, they tend to focus on national policy and practice; local social service providers are often small and under-resourced. Despite these obstacles, organizations like the Alliance of Concerned Men, the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, Benning Terrace Youth Opportunity/Benning Soldiers, and the East River Family Strengthening Collaborative have played an

invaluable role in Benning Terrace since the 1990s, when they helped broker peace between opposing gangs. DCHA reached out to these organizations and others to find the best fit for the intensive case management and youth programming that is the hallmark of HOST, and recently selected ERFSC as the service provider.

Early Lessons Learned

Reflecting on HOST's second year, there is much cause for optimism. Both youth and adults are engaging at unprecedented levels in Portland and Chicago, and practitioners are reporting anecdotal evidence of fewer lease violations, higher employment rates, increased volunteering, greater youth involvement in school and extracurricular activities, and even efforts by families to save for a home or start a business.

On the federal policy level, HOST is already demonstrating the viability of using housing as a platform for serving the most vulnerable residents of public and mixed-income housing. Similar to other supportive housing models, HOST's whole-family model reaches residents whose housing stability is tenuous due to rent delinquency, lack of employment, or other issues, and provides them with services to address those challenges. Since its launch in 2011, HOST has revealed just how challenging it can be for agencies that traditionally focus on real estate and property management to provide social services. Nevertheless, this new role for housing agencies has triggered national interest from public housing authorities, private developers, and federal policymakers who feel that place-based services are critical to ensure the long-term success of both residents and the properties that house them.

Further, HOST has helped articulate the nuances and difficulties of providing supportive services through a dual-generation or whole-family approach. While many dual-generation programs focus primarily on a

parent and a single youth within an area such as health care or education (Ascend 2013), HOST aims to serve the entire household in a comprehensive approach that includes each individual's strengths, goals, and needs. The whole-family approach requires much more communication among staff, services, and family members. While these mechanisms are highly demanding, they are transformative. HOST sites are already experiencing gains implementing the holistic HOST model.

Next Steps

As all four sites begin the demonstration, we expect that the HOST model will continue to evolve. In addition to the midcourse adjust-

ments we saw in Chicago and Portland during the first implementation year, some sites are considering expanding HOST to more explicitly address involvement with the criminal justice system and to provide early childhood interventions.

Throughout the next year, all four sites will support each other through relationships forged at formative cross-site meetings. This learning community helps sites think creatively about outreach and engagement as well as find solutions for problems that arise. The Urban Institute will be there to capture these developments as part of our formative evaluation.

In 2013, the Urban Institute will field the baseline survey of parents and youth in the New York and DC sites, continue to gather program data on site activities, regularly visit on-site staff, and conduct in-depth interviews with a sample of HOST families at every site. The Urban Institute may also construct a comparison group in at least one site using available administrative data. We will continue to share what we learn from our research with policymakers, federal and local government agencies, practitioners, academics, and housing and social services advocates to help shape future dual-generation models like HOST. ■

Notes

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1. All case managers' caseloads were lowered, allowing them to more frequently and regularly (once a week by phone or in person) meet with their clients.
2. According to Planmatics and Abt's 2011 evaluation of a nationally representative sample of 99 Family Self-Sufficiency programs, 11 percent of case managers met with residents annually, 5 percent biannually, 25 percent quarterly, 9 percent every other month, 37 percent monthly, and 8 percent two or three times a month.
3. Team members involved in the Chicago HOST demonstration include case managers and supervisors, job specialists, Project Match program designers, clinical staff, and health coordinators.

4. In 2007, 19 percent of births in Ward 7, where Benning Terrace is located, were to teen mothers, as compared to 12 percent in Washington, DC, and 10 percent nationally (DC Department of Health 2012; NeighborhoodInfo DC 2013).

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Housing Opportunity and Services Together Demonstration

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