



# Washington State Diversion Study

A Study of Diversion Services for Families

December 2022

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Commissioned by:



Submitted by:



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY


This statewide study analyzes the impact of Diversion services on housing outcomes for families and to what extent and why those services are racially equitable. This mixed-methods study uses statistical analysis of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data and a series of in-depth qualitative interviews with families of color who utilized Diversion services and service providers to explore those questions. Summaries of the key findings are presented below.

### Summary Findings of Overarching Study Question #1: What is the impact of Diversion services on housing outcomes for families in Washington State? (See [Figure 1](#))

In this study, families who utilized Diversion services were **more likely** to have permanent housing at service exit compared to families who received services other than Diversion. These housing outcomes were the opposite for families who received housing services other than Diversion services (when analyzed together as a collection of services such as Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing, and Coordinated Entry). Other characteristics also explained exits to permanent housing. Specifically, families residing in urban counties, families with more protective factors (i.e., earned income, no mental health challenges, and no domestic violence), families living in a permanent housing situation prior to the start of housing services, and families residing in counties with higher vacancy rates were **more likely** to have permanent housing at service exit.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Households with unknown housing outcome data at service exit are not included in any analyses of housing outcomes. Families who utilized Diversion services were more likely to have unknown housing data at service exit. See pages 19-22 for additional details.



When examining returns to the homeless service system, there was no significant difference in this housing outcome comparing families who utilized Diversion services and families who received other housing services.

Families of color interviewed for this study who utilized Diversion services chose these services because they met their housing needs. In other words, families of color **exercised choice** in selecting Diversion services based on their housing needs. These families who chose Diversion services and had **positive experiences** with these services tended to have more protective factors such as earned income and a support network. While the overall experience of receiving Diversion services was positive for most families of color, some indicated that Diversion services alone were not sufficient to address the circumstances and barriers they faced and worried that they could not sustain housing.

**In conclusion, the impact of Diversion services for families who utilized Diversion services in this study was positive. These families were more likely to have permanent housing at service exit compared to families who received a collection of other housing services. Additionally, families who utilized Diversion services were no more likely than families who received other housing services to return to the homeless service system. Altogether, this evidence indicates that Diversion services are a worthwhile option adding to the spectrum of housing services available to various families across Washington State.**

Figure 1: Summary of Findings for Overarching Study Question #1

**Families of Color in the Study:**

*Chose to utilize Diversion services because Diversion services met their housing needs*

*Who had positive experiences with Diversion services had more protective factors*

*Who utilized Diversion services but needed more support worried that they could not sustain housing and would be evicted*

**All Families in the Study:**

- Who utilized Diversion services
- Who resided in urban counties
- Who had more protective factors (earned income, no mental health challenges, no domestic violence)
- Who started housing services in permanent housing
- Who resided in counties with higher vacancy rates

- Who utilized Diversion services

More likely to have **permanent housing** at service exit\*



No more or less likely to **return to the homeless service system**\*



\* Households with unknown housing data are not included in any analyses of housing outcomes. Results are in comparison to families who received other housing services.




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## Summary of Overarching Study Question #2: To what extent and why are Diversion services racially equitable? (See [Figure 2](#))

Families of color interviewed for this study opted in or out of Diversion services based on their own assessment of what would best meet their housing needs versus undergoing a formal assessment process that determined which services they could receive. These families reported varying experiences with Diversion services, but most reports were positive and reflected a trauma-informed and client-centered experience that helped families achieve a better sense of well-being and safety. In large part, families of color did not feel their race/ethnicity impacted their experiences with Diversion services. Nor did they feel shut out of other housing services; conversely, they reported feeling comfortable seeking additional housing support if needed.

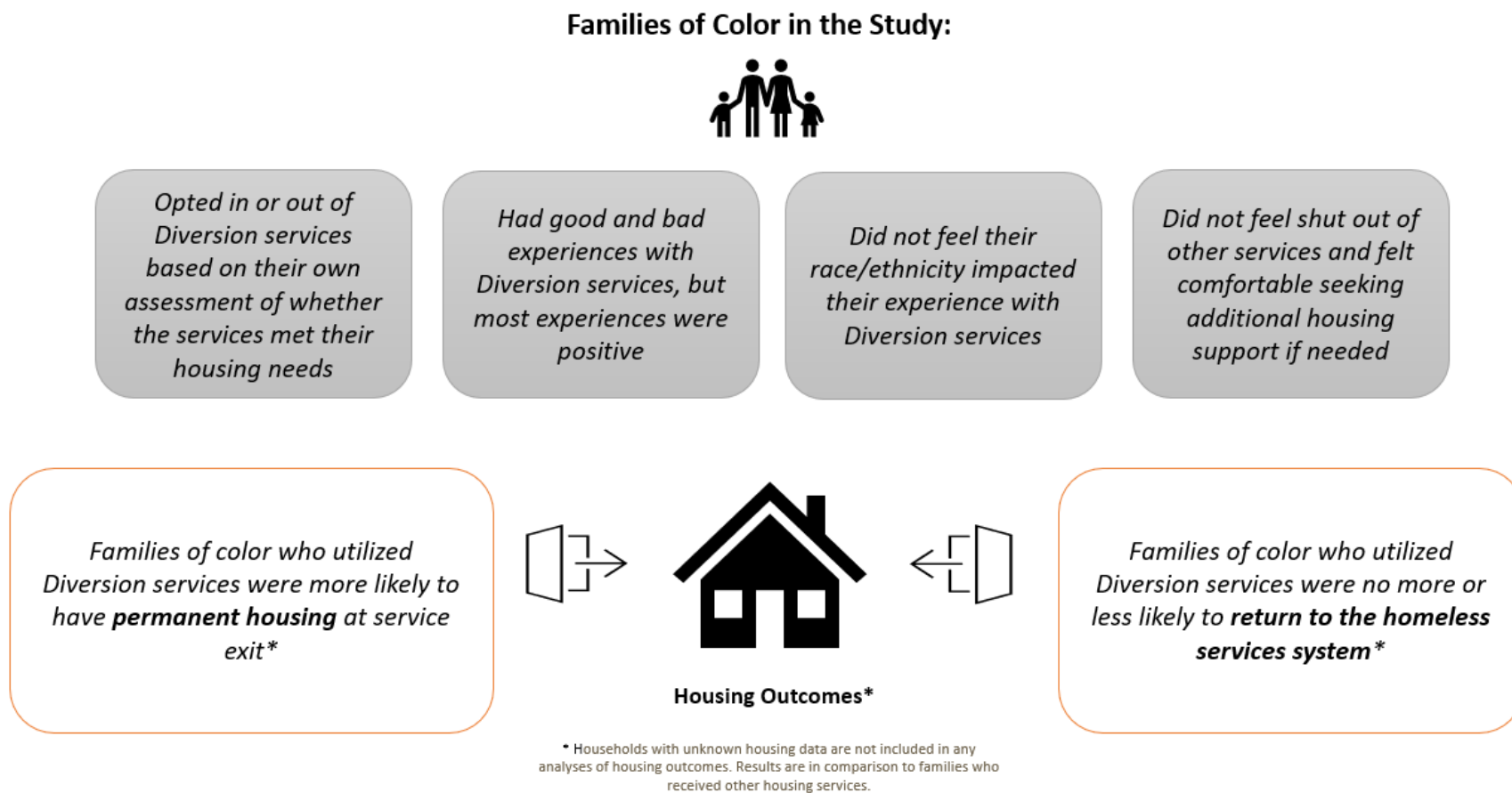
In analyses for this study that combined families who utilized Diversion services and families who received other housing services, race did not predict housing outcomes. In other words, no one racial group was more or less likely to have permanent housing at service exit for all families in the study. In analyses that separated families who utilized Diversion services from families who received other housing services, no one racial group was more or less likely to have permanent housing at service exit. However, in analyses that included *only families of color* (regardless of the housing service received), **families of color who utilized Diversion services were more likely to have permanent housing at service exit** compared to families of color who received other housing services. Furthermore, when return to the homeless service system was analyzed as a housing outcome, no one racial group was more or less likely to return (regardless of the housing service received).

**In conclusion, the trauma-informed and client-centered nature of the Diversion model facilitates a positive experience for families of color who may not have equitable access to traditional housing services. The increased likelihood of permanent housing at service exit with no greater likelihood of**



returning to the homeless service system for families of color who utilized Diversion services indicates that Diversion services are racially equitable.

Figure 2: Summary of Findings for Overarching Study Question #2



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## Introduction

Offering Diversion services is an approach that homelessness systems can use to help families experiencing homelessness quickly resolve a housing crisis. The approach uses problem-solving conversations and a combination of light-touch case management and one-time, flexible financial assistance (if needed) to help families experiencing homelessness obtain housing without further entering the homelessness response system.

Diversion services first emerged as an approach to prevent homelessness for people seeking entry into shelter through programs like the Stable Families Prevention Program in Columbus, Ohio. The initial prevention-focused approach was predicated on the idea that Diversion from shelter could reduce the number of families experiencing homelessness, reduce the demand for shelter beds, and reduce the size of program wait lists.<sup>2</sup>

Since 2014, Building Changes has worked with several counties, nonprofit service providers, and philanthropies across Washington State to develop and test an expanded model of Diversion that goes beyond shelter prevention to assist families who are already experiencing homelessness.<sup>3</sup> Through this work, a Diversion model emerged that is strengths-based, trauma-informed, and centers client choice.

This Diversion model is comprised of three core components:

- *Creative problem-solving conversations* in which trained staff work with families in a housing crisis. Staff share their knowledge of the system and help families identify realistic options from outside of conventional housing supports like shelter or rapid re-housing programs. These solutions are often based on families' own available resources and/or support networks.

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<sup>2</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. 2011. Closing the front door: Creating a successful diversion program for homeless families. Author: Washington DC. Retrieved from <http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/creating-a-successful-diversion-program.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of projects and lessons learned through this work, please see [https://buildingchanges.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2021\\_FHIBrief\\_Diversion.pdf](https://buildingchanges.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2021_FHIBrief_Diversion.pdf).

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- *Light case management* in which staff help families address barriers to housing. Examples include assistance with a housing search; mediation or conflict resolution services (e.g., with landlords); and connections to community resources like job search, credit services, or legal aid.
  - *Flexible funding* in which staff may access funds to provide a one-time offer of financial assistance to help a family obtain stable housing. Examples include move-in costs (e.g., first/last month's rent, security deposit), moving expenses, utility costs, housing debt reduction, and transportation costs.

This Diversion model is an additional tool that homelessness systems (and systems in other service sectors) can use to expand system capacity and help more families become stably housed quickly and safely. In addition to expanding the suite of options available to homelessness systems, the Diversion model may also help them become more racially equitable. For example, in Washington State (and across the nation), homelessness disproportionately impacts families of color and their communities.<sup>4</sup> In addition to this disproportionate impact, some assessment tools and processes used to inform the allocation of services have been shown to perpetuate system-level racial inequities.<sup>5</sup> Diversion services may help increase equity in the homelessness response system by increasing housing options for historically underserved populations.


This Diversion model has been pilot tested with encouraging results, with about half of families who utilize Diversion services obtaining stable housing following assistance.<sup>6</sup> While results have been promising, evaluations to date have only measured outcomes within Diversion programs and have not explicitly examined racial equity. Thus, this study aims to fill gaps in knowledge about Diversion

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<sup>4</sup> Building Changes. 2021. Lessons in family homelessness: Making homeless systems more equitable and effective. Author: Seattle, WA. Retrieved from [https://buildingchanges.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021\\_FHIBrief\\_RacialEquity.pdf](https://buildingchanges.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021_FHIBrief_RacialEquity.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Wilkey, C., Donegan, R., Yampolskaya, S., & Cannon, R. 2019. Coordinated Entry systems: Racial equity analysis of assessment data. C4 Innovations: Needham, MA. Retrieved from [https://c4innovates.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CES\\_Racial\\_Equity-Analysis\\_Oct112019.pdf](https://c4innovates.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CES_Racial_Equity-Analysis_Oct112019.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Building Changes. 2018. Homeless to housed in a hurry: Extending the use of Diversion to help families exit homelessness. Author: Seattle, WA. Retrieved from [https://buildingchanges.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/04/2018\\_DiversionOverview\\_FINAL.pdf](https://buildingchanges.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/04/2018_DiversionOverview_FINAL.pdf).



programs by examining the impact of Diversion services on housing outcomes across Washington compared to outcomes for other housing services and by examining whether and how Diversion programs promote equitable outcomes for families of color who experience homelessness.

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. First, a landscape scan based on interviews with staff from local governments and service providers presents context on the scope of Diversion services across the state. Next, we present details about the purposes and mixed-methods approach used in the study. The subsequent sections discuss findings on the impact of Diversion programs on housing outcomes, how families of color experience the process of being offered and receiving Diversion services, and the extent to which Diversion services are racially equitable. Finally, the appendices provide additional details about our methods, supplementary results, and research instruments.


## **The Landscape of Diversion Services for Families across Washington State**

### **Landscape Scan Purpose and Methods**

To inform the Washington State Diversion Study, a landscape scan was completed to understand the scope of Diversion services in each county, including the core practice components of those services. The landscape scan involved conducting interviews with county representatives. A total of 37 counties (out of 39) were represented in the landscape scan. With input from the Washington State Department of Commerce,<sup>7</sup> staff at Building Changes identified Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) Leads across all counties for inclusion in the landscape scan based on their knowledge about current Diversion services and the larger array of homeless crisis response services in their counties. A total of 34 county

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<sup>7</sup> All analyses and interpretations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Washington State Department of Commerce.



representatives were interviewed across the state, including 30 CHG Leads and four lead personnel from main Diversion service provider agencies.

We developed a semi-structured interview guide for the qualitative landscape scan interviews that incorporated input from staff at Building Changes and feedback from key staff from the Washington State Department of Commerce. The guide was designed to elicit information on, for example, whether counties offer Diversion services to families and, if so, at which point in the continuum of services; how long Diversion services have been implemented in the county and by whom; the core components of the Diversion services offered in each county; whether and how expectations for delivering Diversion services are documented; as well as whether and how Diversion providers in the county have been trained to provide Diversion services.

Landscape scan interviews were completed between July and September of 2020. It is important to note that responses from landscape scan interview participants captured the use of Diversion services across the state in the years immediately preceding the timeframe in which the interviews were completed (i.e., 2017-2020) and thus may not reflect the current status of Diversion services across the state. Diversion programs have expanded across the state over the past two years. For example, A Way Home Washington has supported Diversion services for youth and young adults in several communities through their Anchor Community Initiative,<sup>8</sup> and the Washington State Legislature provided funding for Diversion services administered via the Washington State Department of Commerce in both 2020 and 2021.<sup>9</sup>

Interviews were completed by phone or videoconference and lasted approximately 60 minutes. Most CHG Lead interviews were conducted by one member of the research team who took notes. With permission, each interview was audio

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<sup>8</sup> <https://awayhomewa.org/cdf-launch/>

<sup>9</sup> ESSB 6168, Chapter 357, Laws of 2020; ESSB 5092, Chapter 334, Laws of 2021



recorded; research team members reviewed audio to fill gaps in their notes when needed.


We conducted content analysis of data from interviews with CHG Leads. We transformed interview questions into variables and coded the data before exporting the dataset to SPSS version 28 software and producing descriptive statistics on each variable.

## Summary of Findings from the Landscape Scan

According to interviews with CHG Leads, there was a high level of awareness of the Diversion model, as well as informal and formal uptake of Diversion services, across the State at the time the landscape scan was completed. All counties included in the sample (100% or n=37) reported offering some components of Diversion services as part of their homeless crisis response system at some point in the preceding two years. For most, this entailed implementing some informal combination of the three Diversion model core practice components at varying levels of consistency. Importantly, relatively few counties described having a discrete Diversion program that had been formalized through documented policies and procedures, training on a specific Diversion model, and funding. For example, a majority of counties (87% or n=32) reported receiving training on a Diversion model and/or training on practices utilized in Diversion service delivery, such as motivational interviewing and trauma-informed care. However, fewer than half of counties (46% or n=17) received training from Building Changes on their Diversion model. Moreover, less than a third (31% or n=11) had documented policies and procedures on Diversion services.

CHG Leads described which of the three core components of Diversion services were being utilized in their counties and how they were being utilized. All counties (100% or n=37) indicated that providers employ two of the three core components of the Diversion model, including having creative problem-solving conversations and offering light case management to individuals through Diversion services. Counties described substantial variation, however, regarding the third core component of the Diversion model: flexible funding. Just over a quarter of counties (27% or n=10) had dedicated flex funds (as defined by the Diversion model) to offer






as part of Diversion services. Instead, a majority of counties (65% or n=24) said they used a combination of available financial resources, for example CHG funds, county recording fees (2163 funding), Weatherization, or Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) funds, to assist households when possible. A few counties (8% or n=3) reported having no funding to offer as part of Diversion services.

The distinction between having dedicated flex funds as part of Diversion services versus not having them is important. Counties that have true flexible funding can use it to pay move-in costs, utility bills, a car repair, or other costs to help families obtain housing. Counties without this type of funding are much more restricted. Although the landscape scan illustrated how resourceful counties can be in cobbling together different financial resources for families, such funding is typically more limited both in amount and in the ways it can be used to help families.

Diversion services can be offered at all points across the continuum of services. Every county (100% or n=37) reported utilizing some core components of the Diversion model with families at the “front door” when households first seek housing assistance. A majority (78% or n=29) also said they provide some components of Diversion services after a household has entered the system (e.g., to families who are in a shelter, on a

### Key Takeaways

- At the time of the landscape scan, counties were highly aware of Diversion services and demonstrated interest in and a level of buy-in to the philosophy of the model.
- A majority of counties offered an informal version of Diversion services, typically characterized by having creative problem-solving conversations and offering light case management services but lacking dedicated flex funds.
- Only about a quarter of counties had a discrete pool of flex funds dedicated to Diversion services. Typically, these were the same counties that had formalized Diversion programs with documented policies and procedures and consistent implementation, including training on Building Changes’ Diversion model directly from Building Changes.



waiting list, or approaching exit from a traditional housing program). Fewer than half of counties (41% or n=15) indicated that they offer Diversion services in the community before a household seeks help through the homeless crisis response system (e.g., through a field or street outreach team or via county 211 services).

As part of the landscape scan, CHG Leads were asked to describe challenges that providers face in their efforts to implement Diversion services that are consistent with Building Changes' Diversion model. Just over half of counties (51% or n=19) described themselves as demonstrating low to medium consistency in implementation. Such counties pointed to lack of training, resources, funding, formal policies and procedures, and communication among partner agencies as barriers to consistency. Regardless of how they rated themselves in terms of consistency, however, nearly every county cited lack of funding and resources as the number one challenge to consistent implementation of the Diversion model. Rural and island counties reported feeling especially removed from funding, resources, and training opportunities.

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## Study Purpose & Questions

The purpose of the Washington State Diversion Study is to examine the statewide impact of Diversion services, which is a set of practices designed to divert individuals and families from experiencing homelessness. The aims of the study are to understand whether Diversion services promote permanent housing at the end of a service enrollment and beyond and to understand the extent to which Diversion services are equitable for families of color who are disproportionately experiencing homelessness in the state of Washington.

Two overarching study questions reflect the study purpose:


- 1. What is the impact of Diversion services on housing outcomes for families in Washington State?**
- 2. To what extent and why are Diversion services racially equitable?**

Within these overarching study questions are analytic sub-questions that are answered with the data collected and analyzed for the study. These sub-questions are provided when study findings are presented.

## Study Approach & Methods

The integrity and rigor of this study are grounded in the approach taken and methods used to achieve the study purpose. We incorporated a participatory and equitable approach to the study by engaging key stakeholders in the study development process and production of deliverables, as well as by designing the study from the outset in service of equity. Staff members from Building Changes were instrumental in conceptualizing the study, starting with the study questions; service providers defined the service landscape to set the stage for the study; and families of color with lived experience helped determine what questions mattered in understanding the experience of utilizing Diversion services.

The study methods were employed to be consistent with the participatory and equitable approach. This mixed-methods study used quantitative and qualitative



data to complement each other in telling a story that values family voices, as well as provider experiences, in answering study questions.

## Design

In summary, the study employs a quasi-experimental design comparing families who utilized Diversion services and families who received housing services other than Diversion, not including street outreach, day shelter, and services categorized as “other”. Most of the study's data sources are cross-sectional in nature, providing a snapshot of the multi-faceted landscape of homeless services in Washington State. However, secondary data (i.e., administrative data from counties) allow us to examine the extent to which the same households re-appear in the homeless service system over time, giving this study a longitudinal lens that deepens our understanding of the impact of Diversion services on housing stability.


## Data Sources and Samples

Multiple data sources and samples make up the whole of this study. To answer the study questions, four data sources and corresponding samples were used:

1. *Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)*: HMIS is a statewide, administrative data system that contains client-level data on housing services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. This was the primary quantitative data source for the study and was entered by individual service providers within each county.
2. *The American Community Survey of the U.S. Census<sup>10</sup>*: The American Community Survey of the U.S. Census is a source for population and housing information in communities in the United States. This was the source for county-level vacancy rate data for the county-level analyses of this study.
3. *Interviews with families of color who utilized Diversion services*: Qualitative interviews with families of color who experienced Diversion services were specifically conducted for the study.

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<sup>10</sup> The study used vacancy rates based on an average of 2019, 2018, and 2017 five-year estimates.

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4. *Interviews with case managers at provider agencies that delivered Diversion services:* Qualitative interviews with case managers who served families enrolled in Diversion services also were conducted for the study.

Additional details about the samples and methods are below.

### *HMIS Data on Families (Households) Nested within Counties*


The study analyzed HMIS data provided by the Washington State Department of Commerce, which extracted HMIS data for the study period of July 1, 2017, through March 31, 2020. This study period captured the most current period of Diversion services utilized across the state during the timeframe of when the study was commissioned. The landscape scan described previously helped to identify the extent to which Diversion services that utilized the core principles of the practice model were provided to families across the state. From this scan, five counties<sup>11</sup> that had discrete Diversion programs (see [Appendix A1](#)) and the 2,283 families nested within these counties made up the “experimental” group, which is frequently referred to in this report as “families who utilized Diversion services.” Another 24 counties that did not have discrete Diversion programs (see [Appendix A1](#)) and the 11,593 families nested within these counties made up the “comparison” group, which is frequently referred to in this report as “comparison families” or “families who received other housing services” (i.e., Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing, and Coordinated Entry).<sup>12</sup> Because data were largely missing for the remaining 10 counties, these counties were not included in the HMIS analyses.

The *Study Sample* from HMIS included **13,876 families** (i.e., unique households with at least one adult and one minor) who received publicly-funded homeless services while residing in any of the 29 counties included in the HMIS sample. (Details of

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<sup>11</sup> One county did not have housing outcome data in HMIS and therefore was not included in housing outcome analyses; however, the county was still included in the study sample and in other analyses.

<sup>12</sup> The study compared counties in the “experimental group” to counties in the “comparison” group and did not conduct within county/group analyses to compare any housing programs per county.



how this sample was selected are provided in [Appendix A2](#).) Further, a total of 119 service providers served the clients in the study sample. They provided 427 programs that covered a full range of homeless services including Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Rapid Rehousing, and more.

Because data relevant to the study were not available for all families in HMIS, it was necessary to have *analytic sub-samples* for analyses that required a full data set. The selection of these sub-samples is explained in detail in [Appendix A3](#).


### *Data on County Level Characteristics*

There were multiple county characteristics (e.g., vacancy rate, cost burden, housing affordability) that were tested in the county-level analyses for this study (see [Appendix B4](#) for the data sources for these variables).

### *Interviews with Families of Color who Utilized Diversion Services*

Purposeful sampling was used to select all samples of qualitative interview participants for the study. Purposeful samples are not meant to be representative samples. Rather, they are intended to elicit information from respondents with a particular set of characteristics and/or experiences to illuminate specific questions of interest to a study.

The purpose of conducting interviews with families of color who utilized Diversion services was to understand how and why they utilized Diversion services and whether they perceived their experience to be positive or negative from both a process and outcome standpoint. Altogether, **44 families of color** (i.e., American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and/or multi-racial families) who utilized Diversion services between February 2020 and July 2021 (referred to in this report as “families of color who utilized Diversion services” or “family respondents”) participated in either a pilot family interview or a full study family interview as described in more detail below. It is important to note that families who were interviewed for this study did not receive Diversion services during the same period as families included



in the study sample from HMIS. Because families in the qualitative interview sample received services during the COVID-19 pandemic, their experiences may have been different from previous years because Diversion services during the pandemic may have been altered temporarily (e.g., there were limited in-person interactions between providers and families, greater availability of rental assistance, and a moratorium on evictions).

### **Pilot Family Interview Sample**

To receive input on what questions were most appropriate and meaningful to ask families of color who had utilized Diversion services, we pilot tested a draft interview guide with families of color who utilized Diversion services in Yakima County. A total of **eight families of color** who utilized Diversion services in Yakima County between the months of February 2020 and December 2020 participated in an interview. Details of the purposeful sampling criteria, recruitment procedures, and demographic characteristics for this sample are provided in [Appendix A4](#).

### **Full Study Family Interview Sample**

We conducted interviews with families of color who utilized Diversion services in counties identified during the landscape scan component of the study to implement Diversion programs consistent with the core principles of the practice model (referred to in this report as the “counties selected for qualitative interviews”). (See [Appendix A5](#) for the list of counties selected for qualitative interviews.) A total of **36 families of color** who received Diversion services in four counties<sup>13</sup> in the “experimental” group between the months of August 2020 through July 2021 provided informed consent and participated in an interview. Details of the purposeful sampling criteria, recruitment procedures, and demographic characteristics for this sample are provided in [Appendix A5](#).

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<sup>13</sup> Due to resource constraints, we interviewed families of color from four of the five counties identified in the “experimental” group. We did not conduct interviews in the county that did not have housing outcome data in HMIS.

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## *Interviews with Case Managers at Provider Agencies*

The purpose of conducting interviews with case managers was to understand how they engage and serve families of color in Diversion services, as well as their observations and explanations of how families of color experience Diversion services from both a process and outcome standpoint. We conducted interviews with case managers from provider agencies that offer Diversion services within each of the four counties selected for qualitative interviews. Altogether, **11 case managers** (referred to throughout this report as “case managers” or “case manager respondents”) from six provider agencies provided informed consent and participated in an interview. Details of the purposeful sampling criteria, recruitment procedures, and demographic characteristics for this sample are provided in [Appendix A6](#).


## Measures & Instruments

### *Housing Outcomes*

Two housing outcomes were measured for this study. The first measure is a shorter-term outcome that was recorded in HMIS at the end of the family’s service enrollment period within the study’s timeframe. A service enrollment period that resulted in **permanent housing** was defined as a positive housing outcome. Contrarily, a service enrollment period that resulted in **temporary housing** was defined as a negative outcome. (See [Appendix A7](#) for a complete list of housing destinations at service exit that constitute either permanent or temporary housing.)

It is important to note that **unknown housing** data were not included in any analyses of housing outcomes for this study. Unknown housing includes any housing data that was blank or missing or had any of the following inputted: “data not collected,” “I don’t know,” and “no exit interview completed.” Other analyses using the same outcome measure typically include unknown housing outcomes as temporary housing. Our analyses of households with unknown housing data strongly indicate that these households are significantly different from households whose housing outcome at service exit was officially recorded. Therefore, to minimize the risk of skewed results, we analyzed the cleanest set of data that does





not assume that missing data on housing outcome at service exit is equivalent to a poor housing outcome. The analysis to support this decision is explained below.

A binomial logistic regression analysis was conducted using the unknown housing analytic subsample (N=6,635; see [Appendix A3](#)) to understand the relationship between family/program characteristics and whether a family had destination data, or their destination data was unknown (see [Table 1](#)). The following variables were adjusted for in a logistic regression model for this subsample: race, ethnicity, gender, age, rural or urban county, earned income, disabling condition, mental health problem, domestic violence, prior living situation, and program (Diversion/housing services other than Diversion). These variables were included in this regression model using a data-driven approach and a series of regression analyses that identified the strongest predictors of housing outcomes.

The overall model was significant at the .01 level according to the model chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2=247.78$ ,  $df=18$ ). The McFadden  $R^2$  was .034, indicating that the model explains approximately 3.4% of the variability in the outcome.<sup>14</sup> Examining the classification table based on the model, 73.26% of the observations were correctly classified. The predictors in the model did a much better job of correctly classifying families with known destination data (73.34%) compared to families with unknown destination data (33.33%).


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<sup>14</sup> McFadden, D. L. 1974. Conditional logit analysis of qualitative choice behavior. In *Frontiers in Econometrics*, ed. P. Zarembka, 105–142. New York: Academic Press.

Table 1. Logistic regression results predicting likelihood of having unknown housing outcome data (N=6,635)

Variable	z	S.E.	Odds ratio	p-value	C.I. 95% (Lower - Upper)
Race (vs American Indian or Alaska Native)					
Asian	2.32	.84	2.32	0.02*	1.14 – 4.73
Black or African American	4.00	0.29	1.87	0.00*	1.38 – 2.54
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1.43	0.28	1.34	0.15	0.89 – 2.02
White	1.01	0.15	1.14	0.31	0.88 – 1.48
Multi-racial	-0.10	0.18	0.98	0.92	0.69 – 1.39
Hispanic/Latino (vs. non-Hispanic/non-Latino)	8.46	0.17	2.05	0.00*	1.73 – 2.42
Male (vs. Female)	-1.30	0.08	0.90	0.19	0.76 – 1.06
Age	-0.58	0.00	1.00	0.56	0.99 – 1.00
Urban (vs. rural)	-9.12	0.04	0.56	0.00*	0.49 – 0.63
Earned income (vs. no earned income)	2.58	0.07	1.17	0.01*	1.04 – 1.33
Disabling condition (vs. no disabling condition)	-1.39	0.07	0.90	0.16	0.78 – 1.04
Mental health problems (vs. no mental health problems)	1.46	0.08	1.11	0.15	0.96 – 1.29
Domestic violence survivor (vs. not a domestic violence survivor)	-0.66	0.06	0.96	0.51	0.85 – 1.09
Prior living situation (vs. unsheltered)					
Emergency shelter	-0.52	0.10	0.95	0.60	0.77 – 1.17
Institutional situation	-2.89	0.12	0.48	0.00*	0.29 – .079
Temporary housing situation	-4.82	0.05	0.68	0.00*	0.58 – 0.80
Permanent housing situation	-4.19	0.05	0.73	0.00*	0.63 – 0.85
Diversion (vs. other housing services)	3.74	0.10	1.34	0.00*	1.15 – 1.56

Note: We tested the model using different racial groups as the reference group. The results in the table are reflective of American Indian or Alaska Native households as the reference group. There were no differences in the regression results when other racial groups were identified as a reference group.



Families who utilized Diversion services were more likely to have unknown exit status. Other family characteristics in the regression model predicted unknown housing outcome data at service exit. The results are summarized below:

### **Predictors of Unknown Housing Outcome Data at Service Exit**

When adjusted for all variables in this regression model, the odds of having unknown housing outcome data at service data were higher for families with the following characteristics:

Families who...

- identified as Asian or Black/African American versus families who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native
- identified as Hispanic/Latino versus families who identified as Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino
- lived in rural counties versus urban counties
- had earned income versus no earned income
- resided in an unsheltered location prior to beginning services versus residing in an institutional situation, temporary housing, or permanent housing
- received Diversion services.

The second measure is returns to the homeless service system; a longer-term outcome that gets recorded in HMIS if a family re-enters the homeless service system after the initial service exit. It is important to note that for the purposes of this study, we measure returns to the system only for families who had permanent housing at service exit. Subsequent experiences in homelessness are only captured if households receive services in the state's homeless service system and data appear in HMIS.

### ***Interview Guides***

We developed semi-structured, open-ended interview guides for interviews with each sample in the qualitative component of the study. Each guide was developed

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in collaboration with various groups of study stakeholders, as described in [Appendix A8](#). Overall, the interviews were designed to elicit information about the experiences of families of color who received Diversion services, including their outcomes and overall satisfaction, as well as how families are engaged in and supported by providers. (See [Appendix A8](#) for a summary of content covered in the interview guide for each qualitative study sample; refer to [Appendix C](#) for full versions of all study interview guides.)


## Interview Data Collection Procedures

All interviews were conducted by at least one member of the evaluation team. In most cases, a second team member also was present to assist with recording, note taking, and to ask clarifying and probing questions as needed. After receiving informed consent from participants, interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guides developed for each sample that allowed interviewers to follow the respondent's lead and be supportive of elaboration and detail in responses. Interviewers tried to set a casual and comfortable tone and most interviews lasted no longer than an hour. All family interviews were conducted by phone, while all but one of the case managers joined the interview through video conference. All interviews were audio recorded, with permission, and transcribed for analysis. Family respondents received a \$50 gift card for their time and assistance.

## Data Analysis

### *Analysis of HMIS Data*

Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software, SPSS version 27 and STATA version 17. Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies and means) were used to primarily describe the characteristics of families and counties in the HMIS sample. Inferential statistics (e.g., regression analysis) were used to primarily test predictive models of housing outcomes. Specifically, binomial logistic regressions were run to examine which and to what extent family and program characteristics predict housing outcomes. To predict county characteristics (alongside family and program characteristics), a design-based method of clustering families within the counties of



residence was employed. The clustering approach was preferred because it appropriately assumes that families within counties share similar experiences with housing (or lack thereof) compared to families across other counties.

### *Analysis of Interview Data*

For pilot interviews with family respondents, we conducted content analysis of interview data to tabulate and narratively summarize data using an *a priori* coding structure organized by study questions.


For full study interviews with family and case manager respondents, we used thematic analysis and specific coding practices (i.e., open and axial coding) from the grounded theory approach to analyze interview data. To manage the large volume of qualitative data produced during these interviews, we utilized Dedoose (version 9.0.46), an online qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis software program. To begin the process of open coding, two members of the team separately reviewed a number of the same interview transcripts, scrutinizing the transcripts line by line and coding individual excerpts. These coders created and utilized both a set of *a priori* codes based on the study questions and sub questions that guided this study, as well as grounded codes that emerged from the data. After the initial set of transcripts was coded, the two coders reviewed the coded transcripts and identified areas of disagreement where one applied more, fewer, or different codes than the other. In these areas of discrepancy, the two coders discussed and reconciled differences until consensus was reached. This served as an important quality review process to reduce bias and increase the consistency of how codes would be applied across all family interview transcripts. A code dictionary was then developed for all coders to use. Consistency of code application by additional reviewers was ensured using the same method of review, discussion, and reconciliation of code applications. (For a full description of our approach to analyzing qualitative interview data, see [Appendix A9](#).)

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## Study Limitations

There are several limitations to keep in mind in reviewing the study findings:

- The characteristics of families, programs, and counties that were analyzed using HMIS and other data are limited to the data that are available. Other variables that are not measured in HMIS (e.g., other family/community resources and supports) could potentially also explain housing outcomes.
- There were missing data for key variables in HMIS (e.g., due to inconsistencies in data collection across counties and limitations to how Diversion programs are identified in HMIS). Therefore, the analytic sub-samples differed in some ways from the full sample.
- While our analytic sub-samples mostly reflect the larger study sample from HMIS data, variations in family characteristics like race and urban/rural residence warrant caution in generalizing to all families. Of note is the exclusion of families with missing housing outcome data at service exit when we statistically predict housing outcomes. These families with missing housing outcome data have different characteristics from families with housing outcome data (see [Appendix A3](#) for a detailed description).
- Families who utilized Diversion services have different characteristics, on average, from families who received other housing services. Because this study did not employ a causal design, its finding of differences in housing outcomes between Diversion services and other housing services is correlational. However, we were methodologically stringent in isolating the utilization of Diversion services from other housing services for the HMIS sample, and the mixed-methods design of the study strengthened any conclusions about the impact of Diversion services on housing outcomes.
- Qualitative interviews are typically conducted with small, purposeful samples that are not meant to be generalized but rather to understand specific contexts and experiences that can illuminate study questions in a way that other study methods cannot. Our purposeful sample of interview respondents well-represented the population of interest for the study – namely, families of color who had both positive and negative experiences with Diversion services, as well as families who were permanently housed



upon exiting Diversion services and those who were not housed. Notably, a smaller proportion of families in the qualitative interview sample had permanent housing at service exit compared to those in the HMIS sample.

- Those who self-selected to participate in an interview may have done so because they had certain protective factors or particularly positive experiences with Diversion services. For example, at the time of the interviews, respondents may have been experiencing relative stability in their housing compared to those who were unable to be contacted or who opted not to participate. Likewise, those who agreed to be interviewed may have had a relatively good relationship with their case managers compared to those who opted not to participate, and those who participated may have perceived the interview as an opportunity to provide positive feedback about their case manager.

## Study Findings for Overarching Study Question #1:

What is the impact of Diversion services on housing outcomes for families in Washington State?

### I. Which families are offered Diversion services?

To answer the first overarching study question, we initially describe (using qualitative data from the landscape scan and interviews with case managers and families) who is offered Diversion services. Based on interviews with CHG Leads from counties in this study that provided Diversion services to families, Diversion services are offered to every family seeking housing assistance so long as they fit the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition of literally or imminently homeless or if they are fleeing domestic violence.<sup>15</sup> Most case managers from the four counties selected for qualitative interviews confirmed that Diversion services are offered to everyone seeking housing assistance who qualifies.

To offer some context about the circumstances of families of color who were offered Diversion services, we asked family respondents to describe the reasons they sought help with their housing situation. The most frequently cited reasons for seeking services were job and/or family related, including a decrease in the number of hours

#### Key Takeaways

- Counties with Diversion programs reported that they universally offered Diversion services to qualified families seeking help with their housing needs.
- Families of color who utilized Diversion services sought help with their housing situations mostly due to a job and/or family related issue, and many were doubled-up and/or living in their car or on the street at the time they requested or were receiving Diversion services.

<sup>15</sup> <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HMIS-Data-Standards-Manual.pdf>



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a person was able to work (e.g., due to injury or illness), losing a job, fleeing domestic violence, and experiencing a family feud or divorce. Some respondents moved to Washington from another state, and a few were seeking help due to harassment by a landlord. At the time they sought or were receiving Diversion services, many family respondents were doubled-up and/or living in their car or on the street, some were in permanent housing (e.g., residing with an abusive partner or facing imminent eviction), and a few were in a shelter or staying in motels.

## II. What are the characteristics of families who utilize Diversion services?

To describe the characteristics of families who utilized Diversion services in the study, we draw from the HMIS data. Of those in the data set (N=13,876), 2,283 (16.5%) families (i.e., unique households) utilized Diversion services (i.e., enrolled in Diversion programs identified for the study using the landscape scan) and 11,953 (83.5%) families received housing services other than Diversion services. Families who utilized Diversion services did so while residing in one of five counties that make up the experimental group. Families who received other housing services resided outside of these five counties (for a full list see [Appendix A1](#)).

While we do not have HMIS data to indicate how many and what types of families were *offered* Diversion services in the HMIS sample, we can report how many and what types of families *utilized* Diversion services. Families within our analytic sub-samples who utilized Diversion services and families who received other housing services were different in several ways. These comparisons are shown in greater detail in [Appendix B1](#), and the starkest differences are highlighted below:

- The racial distribution for families who utilized Diversion services was more diverse compared to the racial distribution of comparison families. Among families who utilized Diversion services, 26.5% were Black or African American. In contrast, among comparison families, only 9.5% were Black or African American. This distribution was



reversed for White families: 58.9% of families who utilized Diversion services were White while 77.8% of comparison families were White.<sup>16</sup>


- The proportion of families with or without earned income was more evenly distributed among families who utilized Diversion services than comparison families. Among families who utilized Diversion services, 46.1% had earned income. In contrast, among comparison families, 26.4% had earned income. This distribution was reversed for families with no earned income: 53.9% of families who utilized Diversion services had no earned income while 73.6% of comparison families had no earned income.
- The proportion of families with or without health insurance was drastically different for families who utilized Diversion services than for comparison families. Among families who utilized Diversion services, 89.7% had health insurance. In contrast, among families who received other housing services, 59.6% had health

### Key Takeaways

- The racial distribution of families is more diverse among those who utilized Diversion services. Three times the proportion of Black or African American families utilized Diversion services compared to those of the same race who received other housing services.
- Families who utilized Diversion services have more protective factors than comparison families, although the housing situation of families who utilized Diversion services was equal if not more unstable than comparison families.
- Most families of color who utilized Diversion services have relatively more protective factors and fewer risk factors.

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<sup>16</sup> The racial distribution found in this study may appear different from other analyses on Diversion services due to the geographic distribution of families within the counties that constitute the “experimental group” and “comparison group.”



insurance. This distribution was reversed for families with no health insurance: 10.3% of families who utilized Diversion services had no health insurance while 40.4% of comparison families had no health insurance.

- Health-related characteristics for which data are available in the study indicate that families who utilized Diversion services had fewer health challenges compared to families who received other housing services. For example, among families who utilized Diversion services, 11.6% had a chronic health condition and 22.0% had mental health challenges. In contrast, among comparison families, 19.6% had a chronic health condition and 36.4% had mental health challenges.
- The living situations of families prior to starting Diversion services were not drastically different from comparison families. Among families who utilized Diversion services, 31.7% resided in permanent housing prior to starting services. Comparatively, 37.0% resided in permanent housing prior to starting services among comparison families. Further, a larger proportion of families were unsheltered (i.e., residing in a place not meant for habitation) (37.0%) among those who utilized Diversion services compared to 30.8% who were unsheltered among comparison families.

### **Characteristics of Families of Color who Utilize Diversion Services**

Qualitative interview data shed light on the characteristics of families of color who utilized Diversion services. Their characteristics were varied, and most presented with a mix of risk and protective factors at the time they sought services. Overall, these families had relatively more protective than risk factors.

Many family respondents reported having a social support network at the time they sought services – for example, a family member or friend who was able to lend them limited assistance such as a temporary place to stay, childcare, and/or a place to shower. Another characteristic of many families of color who utilized Diversion services was being motivated and comfortable working independently to address their housing needs. In addition, some family respondents possessed knowledge and awareness of services and how to navigate the system.

In terms of barriers experienced, all family respondents reported having insufficient or no income at the time they sought services. Additionally, some family respondents reported being in debt; having an eviction history and/or bad credit; lacking a social support network; fleeing from domestic violence; experiencing physical and/or mental health issues; lacking knowledge/understanding of how to navigate the homeless crisis response system; or being undocumented.

Not all family respondents divulged their history of utilizing housing services. Among those who did, there was a mix of families who were seeking housing services for the first time and those who had a history of using housing services. Some family respondents reported that a COVID-19 pandemic-related crisis factored into them seeking assistance with their housing. Such pandemic-related crises typically related to the loss of a job or reduction in work hours or, in some cases, to illness and/or lack of childcare.

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### III. What are the differences in housing outcomes based on family, program, and county characteristics?

#### *Permanent vs. Temporary Housing – Family & Program Characteristics*

Among the sample of families who utilized Diversion services and had known housing outcome at exit status (N=1,106), 87.3% exited to permanent housing compared to 71.3% of families who received services other than Diversion and had known housing outcomes at exit (N=3,561). (See [Appendix B3](#) for more detailed information comparing these families.) As explained previously, unknown housing outcomes are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome. Therefore, the percentage of families who exited to permanent housing may look higher than other analyses that include unknown housing outcomes.

Using HMIS data for an analytic sub-sample (N=4,667), we first examined family and program characteristics as potential predictors of housing outcomes. Overall, housing outcomes differed by family and program characteristics (see [Appendix B2](#) for more descriptive information on family characteristics).

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between family/program characteristics and housing outcomes (permanent or temporary housing; see [Table 2](#) below). The overall model was significant at the .01 level according to the model chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2=703.34$ ,  $df=18$ ). The Nagelkerke  $R^2$  was .207, indicating that the model explains approximately 21% of the variability in the outcome.<sup>17</sup> Examining the classification table based on the model, 74.9% of the observations are correctly classified. However, there was a noticeable difference between the classification of cases in the two outcomes. The predictors in the model did a much better job of correctly classifying those in permanent housing (95.7%) compared to temporary housing (12.0%).

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<sup>17</sup> Nagelkerke, N. J. D. 1991. A note on a general definition of the coefficient of determination. *Biometrika*, 78: 691-692.


Table 2. Logistic regression results predicting likelihood of permanent exit (N=4,667)

Variable	B	S.E.	Odds ratio	p-value	C.I. 95% (Lower -Upper)
Race (vs. American Indian or Alaska Native)					
Asian	0.46	0.53	1.58	0.39	0.56 – 4.46
Black or African American	0.02	0.19	1.02	0.93	0.70 – 1.48
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	-0.22	0.27	0.81	0.42	0.48 – 1.36
White	0.03	0.16	1.03	0.85	0.75 – 1.42
Multi-racial	0.21	0.23	1.24	0.36	0.79 – 1.93
Hispanic/Latino (vs. non-Hispanic/non-Latino)	0.05	0.09	1.05	0.57	0.88 – 1.27
Male (vs. Female)	-0.14	0.11	0.87	0.22	0.70 – 1.08
Age	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.40	0.99 – 01
Urban (vs. rural)	0.48	0.08	1.62	0.00*	1.39 – 1.89
Earned income (vs. no earned income)	0.23	0.08	1.26	0.00*	1.08 – 1.48
Disabling condition (vs. no disabling condition)	0.21	0.09	1.23	0.02*	1.03 – 1.48
Mental health problems (vs. no mental health problems)	-0.38	0.09	0.68	0.00*	0.57 – 0.82
Domestic violence survivor (vs. not a domestic violence survivor)	-0.38	0.08	0.69	0.00*	0.59 – 0.80
Prior living situation (vs. unsheltered)					
Emergency shelter	0.05	0.11	1.06	0.62	0.85 – 1.31
Institutional situation	1.12	0.43	3.06	0.01*	1.32 – 7.09
Temporary housing situation	0.15	0.09	1.16	0.10	0.97 – 1.39
Permanent housing situation	2.00	0.12	7.39	0.00*	5.82 – 9.40
Diversion (vs. other housing services)	0.97	0.11	2.65	0.00*	2.12 – 3.31

Note: We tested the model using different racial groups as the reference group. The results in the table are reflective of American Indian or Alaska Native households as the reference group. There were no differences in the regression results when other racial groups were identified as a reference group. Further, households with unknown housing outcome data are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome; therefore, these results may appear different from results of other analyses conducted for Diversion services.

\* Statistically significant at .05 level

Based on the results of the logistic regression, the odds of having permanent housing at exit were **2.65 times higher** for families who utilized Diversion



services than for comparison families. Other family characteristics that predicted permanent housing at exit are presented below:


### **Family/Program Characteristics as Predictors of Permanent Housing at Exit**

When adjusted for all variables in this regression model, the odds of having permanent housing at service exit was higher for families with the following characteristics:

Families who...

- utilized Diversion services versus other housing services
- lived in urban counties versus rural counties
- had earned income versus no earned income
- had disabling conditions versus without disabling conditions
- had no mental health challenge versus with mental health challenges
- had no domestic violence versus with domestic violence
- resided in an institutional or permanent situation prior to starting services versus emergency shelter.

Interviews with both families of color who utilized Diversion services and case managers suggest that when families present with certain characteristics or circumstances (i.e., more protective factors), Diversion services are more likely to meet their needs. Families with more protective factors reportedly have more positive experiences with Diversion services, including being permanently housed at service exit. Nearly all case manager respondents indicated that families who are employed or have some form of earned income are more likely to have their needs met through Diversion services due to a stronger likelihood that families with earned income will be able to sustain their rent payments. Case managers commonly noted that being proactive and comfortable working independently also are factors that help families achieve their Diversion program goals. Moreover, case manager respondents observed that families who have identified a clear solution to



their housing needs (e.g., they have housing lined up or have secured a Section 8 voucher) when they enroll in Diversion services tend to fare better in terms of being permanently housed at service exit. This was evident in interviews with families of color as well. Many family respondents who described themselves as being self-motivated and independent, including those who had housing options lined up when they sought Diversion services, reported positive experiences and outcomes.

When asked what circumstances are observed to be barriers to successful Diversion outcomes for families of color, case managers reported unemployment and insufficient earned income at the top of the list followed by debt (including, but not limited to, back rent). Moreover, case manager respondents said that having an eviction history and bad credit, having a short or no rental history, as well as not having a co-signer for a rental application are common barriers that Diversion services may not be able to address. Consistent with case manager observations, family respondents who reported having a negative experience with Diversion services often described facing these types of financial barriers. It is important to note, however, that some family respondents who faced these circumstances and barriers reported having a positive experience with Diversion services, even if they were unable to achieve their housing goals.

Some families of color face non-financial barriers that require more support than Diversion services can provide. For instance, case manager respondents observed that families living with physical or mental health conditions may not have a good experience with Diversion. Several case managers also noted that families who generally confront a large number of barriers, have a history of using housing services, or who are unfamiliar with or face other barriers navigating the housing system often find that Diversion services do not meet their needs. Other circumstances case managers observed include



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network impoverishment<sup>18</sup> (i.e., lack of flexible economic capital among one's network), as well as a family's desire or need for more intensive assistance from case managers. In some cases, these barriers existed for family respondents who reported having a negative experience with Diversion services, including not being housed after receiving services.

### *Permanent vs. Temporary Housing – County Characteristics*

After examining family and program characteristics, we then examined whether county characteristics predicted housing stability. Housing outcomes also differed by county characteristics (see [Appendix B4](#) for a list of county characteristics). Like the analysis above, unknown housing outcomes are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome.

Using a cluster logistic regression for the same analytic sub-sample (N=4,667), we tested several county characteristics such as vacancy rates and housing affordability as potential predictors of housing outcomes (permanent or temporary housing) at the county level (see [Table 3](#) below). The overall model was significant at the .01 level according to the model chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2=1,240.15$ ,  $df=19$ ). The McFadden  $R^2$  was 0.144, indicating that the model explains approximately 14% of the variability in the outcome. Examining the classification table based on the model, 75.25% of the observations are correctly classified. However, there is a noticeable difference between the classification of cases in the two outcomes. The predictors did a better job of correctly classifying those who exit to permanent housing (77.45%) compared to those who exit to temporary housing (50.90%).

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<sup>18</sup> Olivet, J., Dones, M., Richard, M., Wilkey, C., Yampolskaya, S., Beit-Arie, M., & Joseph, L. (2018). SPARC (Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities) (Phase One Study Findings). Center for Social Innovation. <https://c4innovates.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SPARC-Phase-1-Findings-March-2018.pdf>

Table 3. Logistic regression results predicting likelihood of permanent exit, adjusting for vacancy rates (N=4,667)

Variable	z	S.E.	Odds ratio	p-value	C.I. 95% (Lower -Upper)
Race (vs American Indian or Alaska Native)					
Asian	0.90	0.64	1.48	0.37	0.63 – 3.47
Black or African American	-0.30	0.29	0.91	0.76	0.49 – 1.70
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	-0.84	0.27	0.74	0.40	0.36 – 1.49
White	-0.36	0.17	0.93	0.72	0.65 – 1.35
Multi-racial	0.26	0.31	1.08	0.79	0.62 – 1.88
Hispanic/Latino (vs. non-Hispanic/non-Latino)	0.69	0.12	1.08	0.49	0.87 – 1.34
Male (vs. female)	-0.97	0.11	0.89	0.33	0.70 – 1.13
Age	0.93	0.00	1.00	0.35	0.99 – 1.00
Urban (vs. rural)	2.18	0.48	1.80	0.03*	1.06 – 3.04
Earned income (vs. no earned income)	2.33	0.13	1.27	0.02*	1.03 – 1.56
Disabling condition (vs. no disabling condition)	1.23	0.14	1.16	0.22	0.92 – 1.47
Mental health problems (vs. no mental health problems)	-3.49	0.06	0.75	0.00*	0.64 – 0.88
Domestic violence survivor (vs. not a domestic violence survivor)	-3.02	0.08	0.70	0.00*	0.56 – 0.88
Prior living situation (vs. unsheltered)					
Emergency shelter	-0.08	0.10	0.99	0.93	0.82 – 1.20
Institutional situation	2.24	1.67	3.21	0.03*	1.16 – 8.92
Temporary housing situation	0.29	0.18	1.05	0.77	0.75 – 1.48
Permanent housing situation	5.97	2.36	7.15	0.00*	3.75 – 13.65
Diversion (vs. other housing services)	2.81	1.29	3.16	0.01*	1.42 – 7.05
Vacancy Rate	2.21	0.10	1.20	0.03*	1.02 – 1.42

Note: We tested the model using different racial groups as the reference group. The results in the table are reflective of American Indian or Alaska Native households as the reference group. There were no differences in the regression results when other racial groups were identified as a reference group. Further, households with unknown housing outcome data are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome; therefore, these results may appear different from results of other analyses conducted for Diversion services.

\* Statistically significant at .05 level



These findings are like those in which only family and program characteristics were tested. That is, families who utilized Diversion services, and had more protective factors, were more likely to have permanent housing at service exit. Additionally, families residing in counties with higher vacancy rates were more likely to have permanent housing at service exit. This finding is not surprising, as more availability of housing is expected to support greater housing permanency. However, what is surprising is that the counties that provided Diversion services in the study sample had, on average, lower vacancy rates. Counties in the study sample that did not provide Diversion services (n=24) had a mean vacancy rate of 4.6 (standard deviation of 1.93), whereas counties that provided Diversion services (n=5) had a mean vacancy rate of 3.2 (standard deviation of .66). Despite residing in counties that had less availability of housing, families who utilized Diversion services nonetheless had a better housing outcome at service exit after controlling for other factors. Specifically, the odds of having permanent housing at service exit were **1.2 times higher** for families who resided within counties with higher vacancy rates than for families who resided within counties with lower vacancy rates. The family, program, and county characteristics that predicted permanent housing at exit are presented below:



### **Family, Program, and County Characteristics as Predictors of Permanent Housing at Exit**

When adjusted for county characteristics, as well as family and program characteristics in this regression model, the odds of having permanent housing at service exit was higher for families with the following characteristics:

Families who...

- lived in counties with higher vacancy rates
- utilized Diversion services versus those who received other housing services
- lived in urban counties versus rural counties
- had earned income versus no earned income
- had no mental health challenge versus with mental health challenges
- had no domestic violence versus with domestic violence
- resided in an institutional or permanent situation prior to starting services versus living in an unsheltered situation.

### **Return to the Homeless Service System**

While a desirable housing outcome is permanent housing at service exit, even more desirable is sustained, permanent housing after exit from the homeless service system. This is often evaluated through examining returns to the homeless service system. For this study, a return to the system is defined as enrolling in any program captured in HMIS 15 or more days after a successful exit (i.e., permanent housing at service exit).<sup>19</sup> We examined the number of households that returned to the system within one year of a successful exit to permanent housing (see [Table 4](#) below). Note that this analysis includes families who utilized Diversion services but returned to the

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<sup>19</sup> HUD defines returns to the system as enrolling in any program 14 or more days after a service exit to permanent housing (<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/System-Performance-Measures-HMIS-Programming-Specifications.pdf>).

homeless service system for Diversion or any other housing service. Moreover, only households in our study that had at least one year of data after service exit were included in this analysis.

- Among the 8,575 families who met the selection criteria for this analysis, **1,347 families (15.7%) returned to the system** within one year of their successful exit.
- Among the 1,317 families who met the selection criteria for this analysis and exited *a Diversion service*, **193 families (14.7%) returned to the system** within one year of their successful exit.
- Among the 7,258 families who met the selection criteria for this analysis and exited *a service other than Diversion*, **1,154 families (15.9%) returned to the system** within one year of their successful exit.

Table 4. Return to homeless service system

Sub-population	Exited any service	Exited a Diversion service	Exited a service other than Diversion
<b>Sub-population N</b>	8,575	1,317	7,258
<b>Total who returned</b>	1,347	193	1,154
<b>Percent</b>	15.7%	14.7%	15.9%

A logistic regression analysis was conducted with an analytic sub-sample (N=5,222) to investigate the relationship between family/program characteristics and returns to the homeless service system (see [Appendix B5](#) for logistic regression results). The overall model was not significant at the .01 level according to the model chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2=32.98$ ,  $df=18$ ). Therefore, utilizing Diversion services or receiving other housing services did not significantly predict returns to the system. However, there were notable proportional differences across racial groups for families who returned to the system. These differences were evident for families who utilized Diversion services as well as those who received other housing services (see

Table 5 below). For families who utilized Diversion services, the largest proportional difference in returns was evident between Multi-racial (15.1%) and White (7%) racial groups. For families who received other housing services, the largest proportional difference in returns was evident between Multi-racial (12.2%) and American Indian or Alaska Native (6.2%) racial groups.

**Table 5. Race of families who returned to the homeless service system after a successful exit (from Diversion services [N=967] and from other housing services [N=4,255])**

Variable	Total	Returned	% Returned	Did not return	% Did not return
<b>Families who Utilized Diversion Services (N=967)</b>					
<b>Race</b>	<b>967</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>866</b>	<b>89.6%</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	18	Supp.	Supp.	Supp.	Supp.
Asian	18	Supp.	Supp.	Supp.	Supp.
Black or African American	397	55	13.9%	342	86.1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	66	6	9.1%	60	90.9
White	415	29	7.0%	386	93.0%
Multi-racial	53	8	15.1%	45	84.9%
<b>Families who Received Other Housing Services (N=4,255)</b>					
<b>Race</b>	<b>4,255</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>3,795</b>	<b>89.2%</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	162	10	6.2%	152	93.8%
Asian	97	11	11.3%	86	88.7%
Black or African American	1,203	139	11.6%	1,069	88.4%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	145	11	7.6%	134	92.4%
White	2,411	260	10.8%	2,151	89.2%
Multi-racial	237	29	12.2%	208	87.8%

Note: Data are suppressed when the total is less than 10 households and are indicated with "Supp."



### Key Takeaways

- Families who utilized Diversion services as well as families who had more protective factors (i.e., earned income, no mental health challenges, no domestic violence, more stable housing prior to the start of service) were more likely to have permanent housing at service exit.
- Families of color who had positive experiences and outcomes with Diversion services had more protective factors and often had identified potential housing solutions when they enrolled in a Diversion program. In contrast, family respondents who had negative Diversion experiences and outcomes were those who faced greater financial barriers (e.g., eviction history, debt, and poor credit) and non-financial barriers (e.g., physical and mental health challenges and history of using housing services).
- Families residing in counties with higher vacancy rates were more likely to have permanent housing at service exit. However, counties that provided Diversion services in this study had, on average, lower vacancy rates. Despite the challenge of less available housing at the county level, families who utilized Diversion services were still more likely to have permanent housing at service exit compared to families who utilized other housing services.

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## Study Findings for Overarching Study Question #2:

To what extent and why are Diversion services racially equitable?

### I. What array of services, including Diversion, are families of color offered?

To examine the study question about racial equity, we began with asking families of color what types of housing services were offered to them and what services they ultimately utilized. While family respondents could not recall every detail of services offered, they frequently described being offered a choice between Diversion services or other housing services to help meet their housing needs. This included the opportunity to apply for traditional housing services (e.g., Emergency Shelter, Rapid Rehousing, Transitional Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing), which in some cases had long waiting lists and potentially no guarantee their families would receive any help.

Some family respondents described utilizing Diversion services *in combination with* other housing assistance. This may mean enrollment in multiple housing programs or services within the same agency that was providing the family with Diversion services, or it could mean receiving Diversion services along with housing services from a different service provider. In the latter case, it commonly meant that the Diversion provider agency would pay move-in expenses (deposit, first and/or last month's rent) while another agency offered ongoing rental assistance. Sometimes it meant that Diversion services were used in combination with a Section 8 voucher. In one instance, the family respondent was approved for a Section 8 voucher while enrolled in a Diversion program and used Diversion services to cover application fees and deposit. Another respondent worked with a case manager to find an apartment through Diversion services while waiting to be accepted into Rapid Rehousing.



To a much smaller but still notable extent, some family respondents recalled that Diversion services were the only services they were offered or for which they qualified.

Interviews with case managers were consistent with the accounts of families of color who utilized Diversion services. Almost all case managers reported that Diversion services are offered along with other housing services from their agency according to the services for which a family qualifies. As mentioned above, these other housing services include traditional housing programs that often have long wait lists.

Consistent with family respondents, case managers also reported that Diversion services are sometimes offered or used in combination with other housing assistance from a different service provider. For example, the Diversion provider agency might provide a family who utilized Diversion services with move-in costs, while a second agency paid off rent arrears or supplied ongoing rental assistance. These resourceful partnerships help Diversion provider agencies fill gaps in services while increasing a family's chances of securing and sustaining housing.

### Key Takeaways

- Diversion was not the only housing program or service offered to families of color seeking help from the homeless crisis response system. In some cases, it was the only *immediate* assistance available or was the only service for which they qualified. Family respondents were offered Diversion services as well as other housing services according to their eligibility.
- Families of color are sometimes offered Diversion services in combination with other housing services. This was perceived as a useful and often necessary strategy for sustainability.
- Family choice in the process of selecting from among housing services was emphasized by both family and case manager respondents.

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Regardless of the array of services that families of color who utilize Diversion services are offered, the majority of family and case manager respondents emphasized that families have the final choice as to which housing service(s) they want to pursue. Additionally, some case managers stated they ensure their clients not only know they have a choice but feel comfortable with their choice.


## II. Why and how do families of color utilize Diversion services?

*a. Why do families of color opt to receive Diversion services or not? Do families of color utilize Diversion services because they are shut out of other services they would prefer?*

As described previously, most families of color who utilized Diversion services said they were offered service options other than, or in combination with, Diversion services. When asked why they opted to enroll in Diversion services versus traditional housing programs, most family respondents said they were clear about what type of assistance would best help their family. Most of these families said they simply found Diversion services to be the best match for their needs (see [Figure 3](#) for quotes from family and case manager respondents that exemplify this theme).

Some family respondents opted to enroll in Diversion services because it felt like their only option. These families were either told they did not qualify for or did not remember being offered other housing services. Notably, several family respondents who were only offered Diversion services did not perceive the lack of options negatively, because the assistance provided through the Diversion program was a good fit and met their needs.

Some family respondents stated they *preferred* a Diversion program over alternative options, including emergency shelter and other programs (e.g., Rapid Rehousing). A prominent reason family respondents gave for preferring Diversion services over other housing options was because the Diversion program offered the fastest solution to their housing needs other



than going to an emergency shelter. (Emergency shelter was not a desirable option for many families for a variety of reasons, including not wanting their children exposed to a shelter environment). A few family respondents explained that enrollment in a Diversion program was their preferred option because of their desire to be self-sufficient versus relying on longer-term support from the system. Among family respondents who expressed this view, it was often their first experience needing or seeking housing assistance.

Figure 3: Diversion Services Met the Needs of Families




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Overall, families of color who utilized Diversion services did not report feeling like they were shut out of other services they would prefer. Again, most family respondents reported choosing Diversion because they knew what they needed, and they had confidence that Diversion services would meet those needs. The reality, of course, is that housing resources are limited. Families who might prefer (or require) more substantial or longer-term financial assistance with their housing are likely to find long wait lists for those services. Therefore, some families might “choose” Diversion services versus languishing on those wait lists; these are the families who may, in effect, be shut out of preferred services. Some families in our study experienced and expressed wanting or needing more assistance with their housing while enrolled in a Diversion program. More frequently than not, these family respondents described that the additional help they needed was longer-term rental assistance (see [Figure 4](#) for quotes from family and case manager respondents that exemplify this theme).

### **Single Fathers of Color Feel More Shut Out of Community Services**


Interviews provided some indication that single fathers of color may be more likely than single mothers of color to feel as if they are shut out of services they need or desire. A few of the single fathers of color we interviewed reported seeking services in the community and finding that some programs offered services for single mothers but turned away single fathers. These single fathers of color reported that, in their experience, services that cater specifically to single fathers are lacking in the community. One case manager spoke specifically to this challenge. She reported that the single fathers of color she works with “often” tell her that things are more difficult for them – from lack of services for single fathers to finding work or finding someone who will rent to them. She added that this seemed to be the case “especially if you’re a black man.” This case manager stated, “I don’t hear that from single parent women of color; I just hear that from the men.”



Feedback from case managers aligned with information from families of color who utilized Diversion services regarding why families typically decide to enroll in a Diversion program. Most case managers reported that the families they serve typically choose Diversion services because they know what they want, and Diversion services fit their needs.

Figure 4: Need for Greater Support





Of course, not all families of color who are offered Diversion services choose to enroll in those services. Some families of color exercise their choice to opt out of receiving Diversion services. As presented in more detail below, case manager respondents reported spending time understanding their clients' circumstances and problem-solving with their clients to achieve the best solution(s) to meet their needs. This includes having realistic discussions about whether and how Diversion services can and cannot help meet their needs.

Nearly all case manager respondents observed that the families they serve generally make understandable decisions about opting in to or opting out of receiving Diversion services based on their circumstances. For example, when families recognize that even if they receive move-in assistance through a Diversion program they still will not be able to sustain rent payments without longer-term rental assistance, most opt not to enroll in the program. According to case manager respondents, the most common reasons that families of color decide not to enroll in Diversion programs include the desire or need for greater financial assistance and/or the desire or need for more support services. The latter might include the need for more mental health support and/or assistance with paperwork and navigating the system. Moreover, case managers explained that timing is sometimes not right for a family to choose Diversion services for reasons such as not having a job at the moment or experiencing a family emergency that requires family time and/or finances. Lastly, a few case manager respondents expounded that some families who opt not to receive Diversion services are traumatized and exhausted and may be feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and even defeated because they have been searching diligently but cannot find housing (see [Figure 5](#) for quotes from family and case managers respondents that exemplify this theme).





### Key Takeaways

- Most families of color had the option to choose Diversion services or pursue a different housing program. A few families were not presented with or were not eligible for other housing program options.
- Often, families of color who utilized Diversion services opted into the program because they knew what they needed, and Diversion services met their needs.
- Overall, families of color did not feel they were shut out of housing services they would prefer.
- Families of color who need greater financial support or who experience several other barriers that require more intensive services are more likely to opt out of receiving Diversion services, according to case managers.
- Families of color who utilized Diversion services sometimes did so because, even though they felt they needed more assistance than Diversion services could provide, they preferred Diversion services to their other option(s) that typically include long wait lists to receive services.

Figure 5: Reasons Families of Color Opt Out of Diversion Services




### *b. How do families of color utilize Diversion services?*

Families of color who utilized Diversion services described doing so in many ways to help meet the needs of their families. The “light case management” component of the Diversion program model offered a range of support and assistance to families. Family respondents most commonly described that their case managers communicated and advocated on their behalf with former, current, and prospective landlords. Although it is the role of clients enrolled in a Diversion program to find their own housing solution, family respondents reported that their case managers often provided lists of available rental properties and units to assist in the search for housing. Some family respondents found the lists helpful and utilized them; others did not utilize them, because they did not like the locations or types of properties on the list or because the list was not different from housing options the family found on their own. Some family respondents said they used Diversion services by having their case manager review and/or help to fill out rental applications. A few family respondents explicitly mentioned problem-solving, goal-setting, and developing plans as specific ways they worked with their case managers. Case manager respondents unanimously described that problem-solving and goal setting with families, along with developing plans to meet those goals, were key tools used in providing Diversion services to families.

#### **Key Takeaways**

- Case managers provided a range of support through light case management and problem solving, which commonly involves advocacy and communication with landlords as well as providing referrals to other non-financial services.
- Financial assistance was utilized frequently by families of color. It typically covered move-in costs and was used less often for housing application fees, debt payment, and local transportation.




Many family respondents also said they used other non-financial support offered through their Diversion program to obtain food, housing essentials (including furniture), health and hygiene products, clothing, and school supplies for children. These resources were sometimes provided directly by the Diversion provider agency. At other times, family respondents obtained these resources through referrals from their case manager to other provider agencies in the community.

Families of color who utilized Diversion services most frequently described using financial assistance from the program to cover move-in costs (deposit, first and/or last month's rent). Less commonly, family respondents described utilizing Diversion financial assistance to pay for housing application fees, debt (including back rent), and local transportation costs.

*c. Do families of color have a positive or negative experience with Diversion processes?*

Most families of color who utilized Diversion services reported having a positive experience, which we attribute to the client-centered and trauma-informed orientation of the Diversion program model. Client-centered services put individuals and families in charge of making decisions that impact their lives. The role of the case manager with a client-centered orientation is to listen to what a family needs and support them to meet their goals. Trauma-informed services are client-centered, prioritizing client choice and decision-making. Further, case managers who are trauma-informed understand that their clients have experienced trauma, which can impact their beliefs, behaviors, and decisions. Such case managers endeavor to see and treat clients as individuals, not as labels, and to work collaboratively and develop trust with their clients.


Family and case manager respondents provided ample evidence that Diversion services are being delivered using such a client-centered and trauma-informed approach. This approach was characterized by family



respondents as having “empathetic,” “genuine,” “collaborative,” “resourceful,” and “supportive” case managers who were consistent communicators and advocates whom families could rely on and trust. According to most family respondents, case managers consistently communicated, returned phone calls, and followed through on things they said they would do, thus establishing a level of trust between the family member and the case manager. Notably, clients and providers were still able to form a connection and build trust despite Diversion services being delivered virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many family respondents described being thankful that case managers provided them with the time they needed to talk about their experiences and needs without feeling rushed. Families of color who utilized Diversion services were given space to tell their stories and identify potential solutions that would work best for them. Overall, they reported being fully informed about what their options entailed and allowed to choose freely among those options.

Most family respondents described their case managers as being genuine, expressing concern for the well-being of families, and doing all they could to ensure successful outcomes for families. According to family respondents, their case managers provided housing lists, advocated with landlords, provided additional resources (e.g., furniture, clothes), and consistently problem-solved with families throughout the process. Overall, families of color who utilized Diversion services felt they mattered. They did not feel like “just another number.” Most reported having genuine connections with their case managers. Many family respondents explained that their case managers were empathetic to their situation of experiencing homelessness, which they said differed from their interactions with some other service providers.

In describing their approach to successfully engaging families in Diversion services, case manager respondents evidenced their use of client-centered and trauma-informed practices. Through the examples they provided of specific actions they take when working with families who receive Diversion services, case managers described their practices of listening to families and




giving them options; being respectful and nonjudgmental of families' needs, stories, and life circumstances; engaging in honest conversations and collaborative decision-making with families; and ensuring consistent communication and follow-through. The word cloud presented in [Figure 6](#) illustrates language families of color used mainly to describe the attributes and actions of their case managers. Words and phrases that appear larger were used more frequently by family respondents, while words and phrases that appear smaller were used less frequently.



Figure 6: Case Manager Attributes & Actions





Overall, families of color who utilized Diversion services were satisfied with the process. Family respondents typically characterized the Diversion process as transparent, quick, and easy. They were happy with the amount of time it took from beginning the Diversion process to being housed, with many reporting that timelines exceeded their expectations.

While most family respondents had an overall positive experience with Diversion services, a few reported having an overall negative experience with Diversion services. Family respondents who had an overall negative experience with Diversion services typically described interactions with case managers who they felt lacked empathy, did not listen or communicate effectively, did not establish trust by either following up or following through on what they said they would do, and/or who treated the relationship as transactional (see [Figure 7](#) for quotes from family respondents that exemplify this theme).


### Key Takeaways

- A majority of families of color who utilized Diversion services had positive experiences with Diversion services, including their relationship with their case managers who were perceived to be empathetic to families' experiences of homelessness.
- There is ample evidence that Diversion services are being delivered using a client-centered and trauma-informed approach. The positive experiences reported by most family respondents can be attributed to the client-centered and trauma-informed orientation of the Diversion program model.
- Families of color who utilized Diversion services reported that race/ethnicity did not play a role in their experience with Diversion services.



Figure 7: Positive and Negative Experiences with Diversion Services





Families of color are commonly impacted by institutional racism and discrimination that influence the need for, and the receipt of, social services including services in the homeless crisis response system.<sup>20</sup> We asked families of color who utilized Diversion services whether they thought their race or ethnicity made a difference, either positively or negatively, in how they were treated when seeking or receiving Diversion services. Family respondents did not think that race/ethnicity played a role in their experience receiving services from Diversion program providers. Instead, family respondents frequently described case managers who were empathetic to their experience(s) of homelessness and who went above and beyond to ensure the well-being of their clients, regardless of race/ethnicity (see [Figure 8](#) for quotes from family respondents that exemplify this theme). The perception of family respondents that race/ethnicity had no effect on their experience with Diversion services may be attributable to the program model's client-centered and trauma-informed orientation. From the perspective of case manager respondents, the Diversion program model helps to ensure families of color who receive Diversion services have a more positive experience because applying for and receiving these services is designed to be a less invasive and traumatic process for families than going through Coordinated Entry.

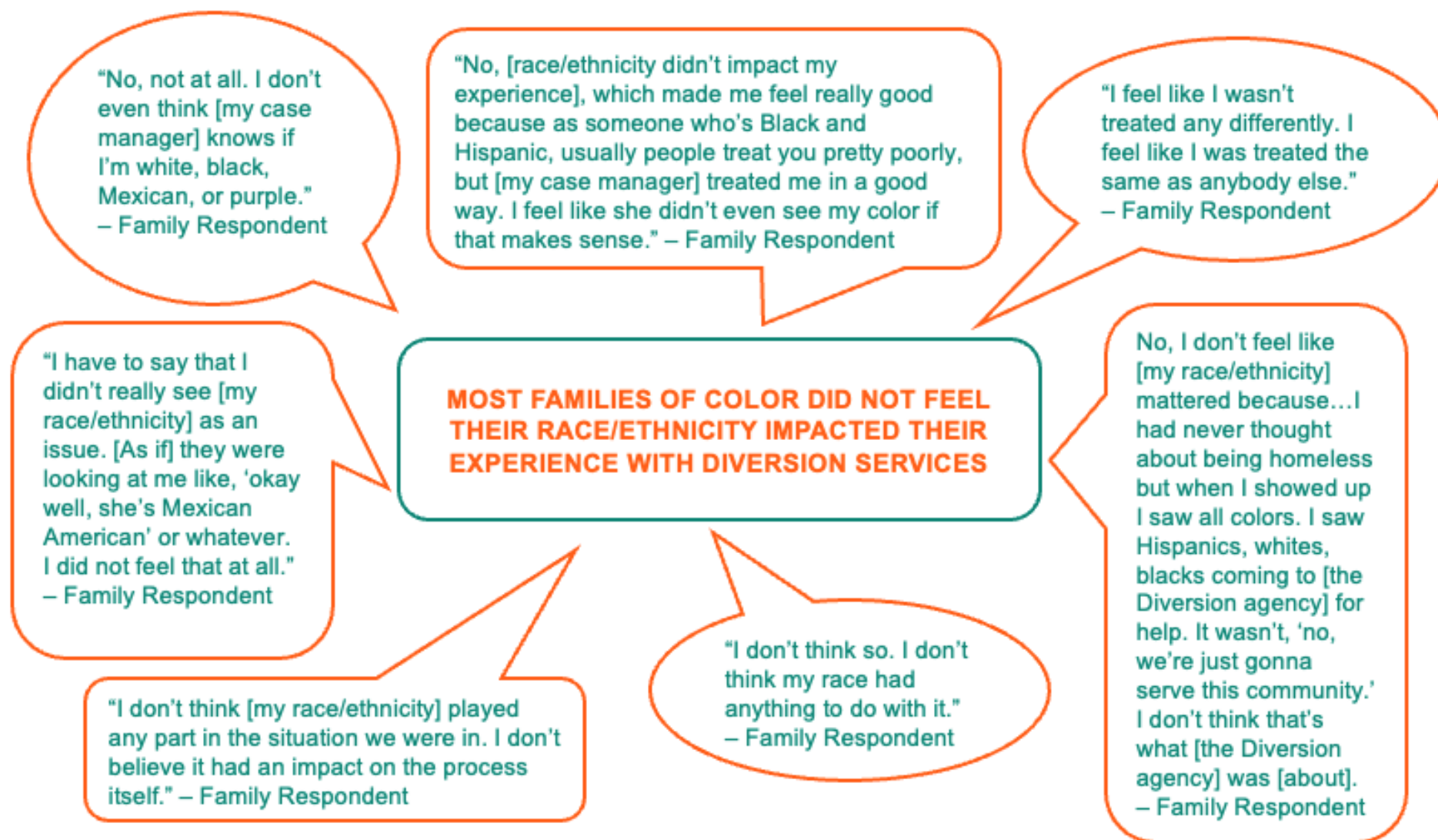
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<sup>20</sup> Olivet, J., Dones, M., Richard, M., Wilkey, C., Yampolskaya, S., Beit-Arie, M., & Joseph, L. (2018). *SPARC (Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities)* (Phase One Study Findings). Center for Social Innovation. <https://c4innovates.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SPARC-Phase-1-Findings-March-2018.pdf>

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Figure 8: Perceptions of Treatment Based on Race and Ethnicity



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*d. Were Diversion services helpful or not? Does Diversion meet expectations?*

All but a few of the families of color who utilized Diversion services characterized those services as being helpful in meeting their needs. Most family respondents secured permanent housing as a result of receiving Diversion services.

Family respondents who were housed through Diversion services had been in their housing for between one to 12 months at the time they were interviewed and many expressed confidence in their ability to maintain their housing in the longer term. Not surprisingly, these family respondents reported that along with permanent housing came improved mental well-being for them and their children. They commonly described experiencing less anxiety and were appreciative of securing a better (i.e., “clean”, “comfortable,” and “safe”) living situation for their children (see [Figure 9](#) for quotes from family respondents exemplifying this theme).

Case manager respondents also reported that most families enrolled in a Diversion program are permanently housed. Moreover, most case managers contended that Diversion services are helpful in setting clients on a path toward being able to sustain stable housing, because the services can help clients overcome barriers such as repairing their credit and scrubbing evictions from their records. Beyond that, most case manager respondents perceived Diversion services to be helpful because the program is an “empowerment model” that helps clients solve problems, set goals, and execute a plan to work and progress toward goals that can be both housing and non-housing related.

Figure 9: Diversion Program Outcomes




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### **The Potential Impact of COVID-19**


All family respondents sought and received Diversion services during the COVID-19 pandemic. A few reported that a COVID-19-related factor contributed to their need for housing services. Based on interview data from family and case manager respondents, it is difficult to discern the overall impact the pandemic may have had on the ability of Diversion services to help permanently house families. On the one hand, family and case manager respondents suggested that families who had previously been housed and were experiencing a relatively short-term loss of or reduction in income due to the shutdown may have been well-served by the short-term assistance offered through Diversion programs. This, combined with the increased availability of rental assistance as a result of pandemic relief programs, may have increased the likelihood that families would exit to permanent housing. On the other hand, family and case manager respondents suggested that the moratorium on evictions during that period in the pandemic meant there was little turnover in the rental market. This lack of turnover put a squeeze on an already tight housing market and increased the stringency of requirements to qualify for what little housing was available in these communities.

Case manager respondents unanimously agreed that Diversion services are helpful for families of color because they help fill gaps in housing services. First, case managers explained that there simply are not enough traditional housing services available in communities to meet the needs of families. Second, case managers observed that Diversion services are available to families who might not qualify for traditional housing programs because, for example, a family does not meet income eligibility requirements or because





they are undocumented. Last, case managers expounded that the client-centered and trauma-informed orientation and the “empowerment” philosophy of the Diversion program model are intentionally different from the way other housing services traditionally have been provided. Specifically, case manager respondents described Diversion services as being more “relational,” “flexible,” and “less institutionalized” than traditional housing services. They observed this to be a good fit for all families experiencing the trauma of housing instability but particularly for families of color who are often faced with discrimination when seeking and receiving services in the community (see [Figure 10](#) for quotes from family and case manager respondents that exemplify this theme).



Among family respondents who were not successfully housed through Diversion, who had complaints about some Diversion processes, and/or who desired more support from their Diversion program, many still reported that Diversion services were helpful and/or met their expectations – perhaps for many of the same reasons as described by providers above. For some family respondents, Diversion services were able to help them address many but not all barriers to housing in 30-60 days. Diversion services may, for example, have been able to pay a family's debt but not to overcome the lack of affordable housing in a school district a child had attended for years. Families of color who utilized Diversion services did not fault the Diversion program for larger systemic issues like lack of affordable housing in communities. Nor did most family respondents fault Diversion programs for the limited financial assistance they could provide.

In fact, family respondents frequently acknowledged that many people in their communities need help and that resources are limited. They voiced their opinion and understanding that it was important for Diversion programs to help as many families as possible, and at the same time they expressed gratitude for whatever assistance they personally were able to receive through a Diversion program.


### Key Takeaways

- Most families of color who utilized Diversion services were permanently housed and reported improvements in well-being.
- Most families of color found Diversion services helpful. Families did not have to be housed to find Diversion services helpful.
- Diversion programs are perceived to fill gaps in housing services in ways that benefit all families, and families of color in particular.



Figure 10: Diversion Programs Fill a Gap in Housing Services






A few family respondents (some of whom had been housed, but not through Diversion services) explained that they did not find Diversion services to be helpful and/or that Diversion services did not meet their expectations. In such cases, there appeared to be miscommunications between the family and the case manager about what the Diversion program could really offer or how it worked, the family perceived Diversion services ultimately to be unhelpful because ongoing rental assistance was not included, and/or the case manager was unable to relocate a person fleeing domestic violence to a different state. Some family respondents with unmet expectations attributed their disappointment and dissatisfaction to the difficulties of the housing market (e.g., rental unit availability, qualification criteria, wait times, etc.) and not necessarily to any shortcomings of Diversion services.

### III. To what extent and why do Diversion services deter families of color from seeking further housing services?

While some family respondents believed they would be eligible for housing services in the future, if needed, others were uncertain if they would be eligible mainly due to confusion about whether support received through a Diversion program can only be accessed one time. A few family respondents were certain they would not be eligible because they no longer have children under 18 in the home or because they are undocumented. Despite the uncertainty that some family respondents had around service eligibility, the majority of family respondents, and particularly those reporting positive relationships with their case managers, said they would feel comfortable asking for additional housing assistance in the future if necessary. In fact, several family respondents stated that they had already reached out – either to their Diversion program case manager or to a different community agency – for additional housing support during or after their enrollment in Diversion services. This included a few family respondents who had exited their Diversion program with permanent housing but felt unstable or had doubts about keeping up with their monthly rent payments. Altogether, this indicates that families of color who utilize Diversion services are not deterred



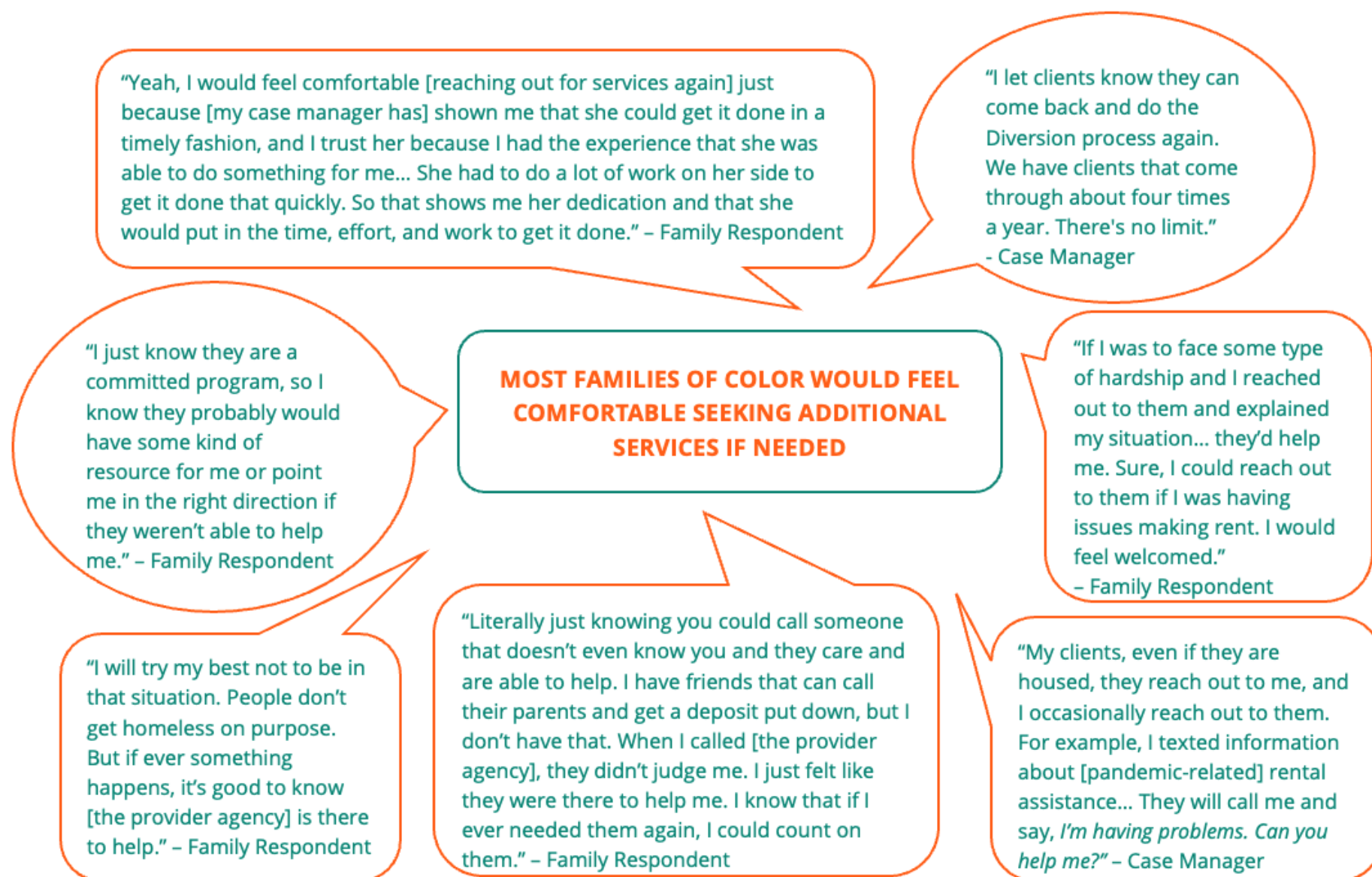
from seeking additional help to meet their housing needs (see [Figure 11](#) for quotes from family and case manager respondents that exemplify this theme).

Despite the fact that some family respondents expressed confusion about their eligibility to receive future housing services, most case manager respondents reported that they have conversations with clients inviting them to reach out for additional assistance if they need help with their housing situation after they have received Diversion services. Case managers described multiple instances where families have reached back out to them directly for help or returned to the agency seeking more assistance. According to case managers, sometimes these families seek to once again be enrolled in a Diversion program and sometimes they return to seek services through Coordinated Entry. Case manager respondents reported that when families return for help after exiting a Diversion program, they commonly are looking for ongoing rental assistance.

### Key Takeaways

- There was little evidence to suggest that receiving Diversion services deters families of color from seeking further housing services (be they Diversion services or traditional housing programs).
- Families of color who utilized Diversion services were somewhat uncertain about their eligibility to receive additional housing services. However, they reported having a high degree of comfort to reach back out to providers for help if needed.

Figure 11: Seeking Future Services



#### IV. What are the differences in housing outcomes for families of color who do and do not utilize Diversion services?

In our statistical models to analyze which program, family, and county characteristics predict exits to permanent housing, race is not significant (when all other variables in the statistical models are considered). In other words, no racial group appears to fare better or worse in terms of this housing outcome, but families who utilize Diversion services – regardless of race – fare better in terms of this housing outcome compared to families who receive other housing services.<sup>21</sup> As previously presented, the odds of having permanent housing at service exit were **2.65 times higher** for families who utilized Diversion services compared to families who received other housing services (see [Table 2](#)). Further, among only families of color, the odds of having permanent housing at service exit were **3.55 times** higher for families of color who utilized Diversion services compared to families of color who received other housing services (see [Table 6](#) for logistic regression results).


A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between family/program characteristics and housing outcomes (permanent

##### Key Takeaways

- When only families of color were analyzed, families of color who utilized Diversion services were more likely to have permanent housing at service exit than families of color who received other housing services.
- When all families (i.e., families of color and White families) were analyzed, no racial group was more or less likely to have permanent housing at service exit or return to the homeless service system (regardless of whether they utilized Diversion services or received other housing services).

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<sup>21</sup> Housing services other than Diversion are analyzed as a collection of services in this study. Individual types of such housing services may have outcomes that differ from findings that combine these services. Note that outcomes can vary dramatically by type of services ranging from being on the Coordinated Entry list (and thus having relatively low housing rates) to receiving Permanent Supportive Housing (in which housing rates are found to be particularly high).



or temporary housing) for families of color only. The overall model was significant at the .01 level according to the model chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2=216.96$ ,  $df=17$ ). The Nagelkerke  $R^2$  was .232, indicating that the model explains approximately 23% of the variability in the outcome. Examining the classification table based on the model, 78.6% of the observations were correctly classified. However, there was a noticeable difference between the classification of cases in the two outcomes. The predictors in the model did a much better job of correctly classifying those in permanent housing (95.0%) compared to temporary housing (22.0%).

Table 6. Logistic regression results predicting likelihood of permanent exit among families of color (N=1,316)

Variable	B	S.E.	Odds ratio	p-value	C.I. 95% (Lower - Upper)
Race (vs American Indian or Alaska Native)					
Asian	0.39	0.54	1.47	0.47	0.51 – 4.22
Black or African American	-0.12	0.21	0.89	0.57	0.59 – 1.33
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	-0.38	0.28	0.68	0.18	0.39 – 1.19
Multi-racial	0.20	0.24	1.23	0.38	0.77 – 1.95
Hispanic/Latino (vs. non-Hispanic/non-Latino)	-0.27	0.25	0.76	0.27	0.47 – 1.24
Male (vs. Female)	-0.57	0.21	0.57	0.01*	0.37 - 0.86
Age	-0.01	0.01	0.99	0.49	0.98 – 1.01
Urban (vs. rural)	0.38	0.18	1.46	0.03*	1.04 – 2.06
Earned income (vs. no earned income)	0.27	0.16	1.30	0.10	0.95 – 1.80
Disabling condition (vs. no disabling condition)	0.33	0.19	1.39	0.09	0.95 – 2.02
Mental health problems (vs. no mental health problems)	-0.57	0.18	0.56	0.00*	0.39 - 0.81
Domestic violence survivor (vs. not a domestic violence survivor)	-0.63	0.16	0.53	0.00*	0.39 - 0.73
Prior living situation (vs. unsheltered)					
Emergency shelter	-0.28	0.21	0.75	0.19	0.50 – 1.15
Institutional situation	1.23	1.13	3.42	0.28	0.37 – 31.36
Temporary housing situation	0.10	0.19	1.10	0.61	0.76 – 1.59
Permanent housing situation	1.82	0.27	6.15	0.00*	3.63 – 10.43
Diversion (vs. other housing services)	1.27	0.19	3.55	0.00*	2.43 – 5.20

Note: We tested the model using different racial groups as the reference group. The results in the table are reflective of American Indian or Alaska Native households as the reference group. There were no differences in the regression results when other racial groups were identified as a reference group. Further, households with unknown housing outcome data are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome; therefore, these results may appear different from results of other analyses conducted for Diversion services.

\* Statistically significant at .05 level



The housing outcome of “permanent vs. temporary” for families of color who utilized Diversion services compared to families of color who received other housing services is presented in Table 7 below. Descriptively speaking, 514 families of color (88.5%) who utilized Diversion services exited to permanent housing compared to 506 families of color (68.8%) who received other housing services. This is nearly a 20 percentage point difference in favor of Diversion services.

**Table 7. Housing outcomes by program among families of color (N=1,316)**

Program	Total	Temporary housing outcome	% Temporary housing outcome	Permanent Housing outcome	% Permanent housing outcome
Diversion	581	67	11.5%	514	88.5%
Other housing services	735	229	31.2%	506	68.8%

Note: Households with unknown housing outcome data are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome; therefore, these results may appear different from results of other analyses conducted for Diversion services.

When we conducted inferential statistics and separately analyzed all families who utilized Diversion services and all families who received other housing services, no racial group was more or less likely to have permanent housing at service exit. (See [Table 8](#) and [Table 9](#) for descriptive statistics only). The overall model was not significant at the .01 level according to the model chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2=8.224$ ,  $df=5$ ).



Table 8. Race of families of color who utilized Diversion services by housing outcome (N=1,106)


Category	Total	Permanent housing	% Permanent housing	Temporary housing	% Temporary housing
<b>Total</b>	<b>1106</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>87.3%</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>12.7%</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	supp.	supp.	supp.	supp.	supp.
Asian	15	15	100.0%	0	0.0%
Black or African American	422	371	87.9%	51	12.1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	79	71	89.9%	8	10.1%
Multi Racial	41	35	85.4%	6	14.6%
<b>Families of Color (subtotal)</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>88.5%</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>11.5%</b>
White	525	452	86.1%	73	13.9%

Note: Households with unknown housing outcome data are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome; therefore, these results may appear different from results of other analyses conducted for Diversion services. Also, data are suppressed when the total is less than 10 households and are indicated with "Supp."

Table 9. Race of families of color who received other housing services by housing outcome (N=3,561)

Category	Total	Permanent housing	% Permanent housing	Temporary housing	% Temporary housing
<b>Total</b>	<b>3561</b>	<b>2539</b>	<b>71.3%</b>	<b>1022</b>	<b>28.7%</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	192	125	65.1%	67	34.9%
Asian	supp.	supp.	supp.	supp.	supp.
Black or African American	272	188	69.1%	84	30.9%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	69	45	65.2%	24	34.8%
Multi Racial	172	123	71.5%	49	28.5%
<b>Families of Color (subtotal)</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>68.8%</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>31.2%</b>
White	2826	2033	71.9%	793	28.1%

Note: Households with unknown housing outcome data are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome; therefore, these results may appear different from results of other analyses conducted for Diversion services. Also, data are suppressed when the total is less than 10 households and are indicated with "Supp."



When “returns to the homeless service system” is the outcome measure, the findings are similar. It is important to note that these analyses only tested race as a predictor variable and were based on different analytic sub-samples (see [Appendix A3](#) for more details on analytic sub-samples). Because the overall models were not significant at the .01 level according to the model chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2=12.23$ ,  $df=5$  for families who utilized Diversion services;  $\chi^2=7.117$ ,  $df=5$  for families who received other housing services), race was not a significant predictor of returns. In other words, no racial group fared better or worse with respect to this housing outcome regardless of the type of housing services received (see Tables [B5-2](#) and [B5-3](#) for logistic regression results).

In conclusion, the impact of Diversion services for families who utilized Diversion services in this study was positive. These families were more likely to have permanent housing at service exit compared to families who received other housing services. Additionally, families who utilized Diversion services were no more likely than families who received other housing services to return to the homeless service system. Altogether, this evidence indicates that Diversion services are a worthwhile option adding to the spectrum of housing services available to various families across Washington State. Study findings also suggest that the trauma-informed and client-centered nature of the Diversion model facilitates a positive experience for families of color who may not have equitable access to traditional housing services. The increased likelihood of permanent housing at service exit with no greater likelihood of returning to the homeless service system for families of color who utilized Diversion services indicates that Diversion services are racially equitable.

## APPENDIX A - Methods

### *A1. Counties Included in Analysis of HMIS Data*

The following tables (A1-1 and [A1-2](#)) list the counties and number of families served in the two study groups:<sup>22</sup>

Table A1-1. Families who utilized Diversion services

Experimental Group	
County	Families/Households
Clark	525
Cowlitz	445
King	606
Pierce	361
Spokane	346
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,283</b>

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<sup>22</sup> Note: Households from Cowlitz did not have outcome data and were dropped from some portions of analysis.


Table A1-2. Families who received other housing services

Comparison Group			
County and Families/Households		County and Families/Households	
Asotin	41	Mason	676
Benton	1,214	Okanogan	247
Columbia	14	Pacific	21
Ferry	33	San Juan	44
Franklin	41	Skagit	771
Garfield	12	Skamania	13
Grant	207	Snohomish	4,004
Grays Harbor	231	Stevens	88
Island	479	Wahkiakum	18
Kitsap	1,424	Walla Walla	398
Klickitat	55	Whatcom	870
Lincoln	33	Yakima	659
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>11,593</b>	

Note that the following counties are not included in the comparison group: Adams, Chelan, Clallam, Douglas, Jefferson, Kittitas, Lewis, Pend Oreille, Thurston, Whitman

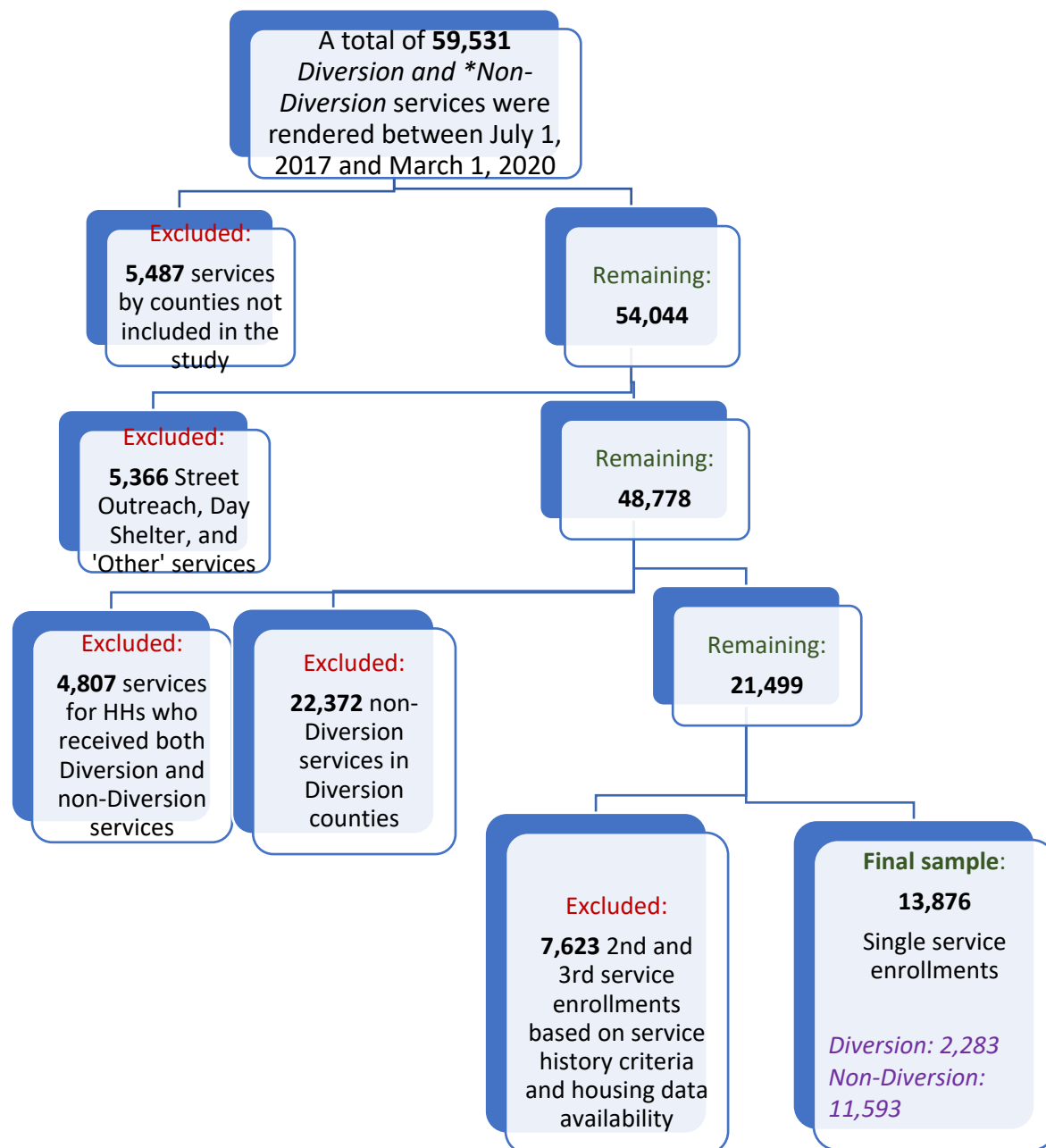
## A2. Study Sample: HMIS Data


A total of 59,531 head of household service enrollments in HMIS during the study period (July 1, 2017, through March 31, 2020) were provided. Each of these service enrollments included an enrollment date and represented a service track provided by a single program and provider. Several heads of households had more than one service enrollment during the study period due to multiple experiences of homelessness, the need for multiple service providers to collaborate on behalf of the family (e.g., shelter services provided in conjunction with Diversion services), and/or due to concurrent enrollments in one or more project types. From here, several steps, detailed below, were taken to select the final study sample (see [Figure A2-1](#)):

- 
1. Services by counties that were not included in the study based on the landscape scan results were excluded.
  2. Service enrollments with the following three service types were excluded from the study sample because the outcomes and intent of these service types differ from other housing services provided to people experiencing homelessness: Day Shelter, Street Outreach, and Other.
  3. Heads of households who received Diversion services and other housing services during the study period were excluded from the study sample, leaving only heads of households who utilized only Diversion services or only other housing services during the enrollment period in which housing outcome data were available. This was an important step to ensure findings about Diversion services would not be confounded by the fact that families had exposure to multiple housing services. However, for analyses on returns to the homeless service system, the sample differed by including families who utilized both Diversion services and other housing services within the study period. See below for more details on this analytic sub-sample.
  4. For the five counties in the "experimental" group that provided Diversion services, families who did not receive Diversion services were excluded from the study sample. Again, this was to ensure the study sample contained households that only received Diversion and was separate from those that only received housing services other than Diversion services.
  5. For heads of households with more than one housing service in the study period, the earliest service enrollment was included. This rule was necessary for the study's measurement of "returns to the homeless services system." Ensuring the longest period between service enrollment and the end of the study period allowed us to examine how long it took for some households to seek housing services from the first enrollment of the study period. There was an exception to this rule, however. If the earliest service enrollment lacked housing outcome data, the next earliest service enrollment with housing outcome data was selected.

## Figure A2-1. Final Study Sample Selection

*\*The term 'non-Diversion' in the flow chart below is used here purely as a way to distinguish the service from Diversion, which differs from how these services are labeled in the rest of the report. Note that "Diversion services" refer to enrollment in a Diversion program and should not be confused with "Services Only" in HMIS.*






Based on these selection criteria, the final study sample for our analyses using HMIS data included **13,876** unique families/households who received publicly funded services to address experiences of homelessness while residing in any of the 29 Washington State counties included in the analyses. Of these families, a total of 2,283 utilized Diversion services, and 11,593 received housing services other than Diversion services.

### *A3. Analytic Sub-samples*

In addition to the study sample, three analytic sub-samples were included in the analysis of HMIS data. The three analytic sub-sample sizes differ because each analytic sub-sample has different criteria for inclusion and to be included in a regression analysis, the household must have data available in every tested variable. Below are brief descriptions of the three analytic sub-samples for analyses that included three different independent variables:

1. **Housing Outcome - Permanent vs. Temporary:** An analytic sub-sample was used to test predictors of housing outcome (i.e., permanent or temporary) at service exit. Examples of permanent housing placements include rental with or without a housing voucher and owning a home. Examples of temporary housing placements include a place not meant for habitation (e.g., street or car) or emergency shelter. (See [Appendix A7](#) for a complete list of housing placements at destination and corresponding outcome values). Of the 13,876 families in the study sample, housing outcome data were available for 9,225. The following variables were adjusted for in a logistic regression model for this sub-sample: race, ethnicity, gender, age, rural or urban county, earned income, disabling condition, mental health problem, domestic violence, prior living situation, and program (Diversion/housing services other than Diversion). Based on the availability of data for all the tested variables noted among the 9,225 service enrollments with housing data, a total of 4,667 service enrollments (i.e., unique households) had complete data for every variable above and therefore were included in the regression analysis sub-sample.
2. **Returns to Homeless Service System Analytic Sub-sample:** As explained previously, a different sample was generated for analyses conducted on



returns to the homeless service system. This analytic sub-sample was used to examine the rates of returns to the homeless service system within the study period for families who exited to a permanent living situation and to test predictors of returns. In order to generate this sample, we started with the original 59,531 service enrollments in HMIS during the study period (July 1, 2017, through March 31, 2020). Of these service enrollments, 8,575 met the selection criteria for the analysis on rates of returns, and 5,222 met the selection criteria for the logistic regression analysis to examine predictors of returns to the homeless service system. In order to be included in these analyses, families must have exited to permanent housing in one of the counties included in the study. In addition, for the logistic regression analysis, families must have had data on all the key variables (i.e., potential predictors) in the regression model. To determine if a family returned to the homeless service system, we referenced subsequent service enrollments in cases where families had multiple enrollments besides the initial enrollment. These subsequent service enrollments were extracted from the original service enrollments and matched to the corresponding enrollment in which the family achieved permanent housing at exit. Furthermore, to calculate the proportion of families who returned, only families who returned within 12 months of exit to permanent housing and had at least 12 months of post-exit data in the study were included in the analysis.

3. **Unknown Housing Outcomes:** An analytic sub-sample was used to test predictors of missing data for housing outcomes. Because a sizable number of families had unknown housing outcomes at service exit, we examined whether program and family characteristics predicted missing data on housing outcomes. Of the 13,876 families in the study sample, a total of 6,365 families were included in this analytic sub-sample. Of these 6,365 households, 4,667 had housing outcome data and data for all tested variables in the regression model, and 1,688 had data for all tested variables but not housing outcome data. The following variables were adjusted for in a logistic regression model for this subsample: race, ethnicity, gender, age, rural or urban county, earned income, disabling condition, mental health problem, domestic violence, prior living situation, and program



(Diversion/housing services other than Diversion). As noted above, these variables were included in this regression model using a data-driven approach and a series of regression analyses that identified the strongest predictors of housing outcome.

Tables A3-1 and [A3-2](#) below list the housing characteristics of families who utilized Diversion services and families who received other housing services with unknown destination data.

**Table A3-1. Characteristics of families who utilized Diversion services with known and unknown destination data (N=1,436)**

Variable	Total	Known destination	% of total	Unknown destination	% of total
<b>Race</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>77.0%</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>23.0%</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	42	24	57.1%	18	42.9%
Asian	15	15	100.0%	0	0.0%
Black or African American	482	422	87.6%	60	12.4%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	106	79	74.5%	27	25.5%
White	744	525	70.6%	219	29.4%
Multi-racial	47	41	87.2%	6	12.8%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>77.0%</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>23.0%</b>
Hispanic/Latino	1295	992	76.6%	303	23.4%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	141	114	80.9%	27	19.1%
<b>Gender</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>77.0%</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>23.0%</b>
Female	1,232	945	76.7%	287	23.3%
Male	204	161	78.9%	43	21.1%
<b>County designation</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>77.0%</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>23.0%</b>
Urban	1,201	914	76.1%	287	23.9%
Rural	235	192	81.7%	43	18.3%
<b>Earned income</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>77.0%</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>23.0%</b>
Yes	683	595	87.1%	88	12.9%
No	753	511	67.9%	242	32.1%

(continued on next page)

Table A3-1. Continued

Variable	Total	Known destination	% of total	Unknown destination	% of total
<b>Disabling condition</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>77.0%</b>	330	<b>23.0%</b>
Yes	414	315	76.1%	99	23.9%
No	1022	791	77.4%	231	22.6%
<b>Mental health problems</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>77.0%</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>23.0%</b>
Yes	330	261	79.1%	69	20.9%
No	1106	845	76.4%	261	23.6%
<b>Domestic violence survivor</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>77.0%</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>23.0%</b>
Yes	619	473	76.4%	146	23.6%
No	817	633	77.5%	184	22.5%
<b>Prior living situation</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>77.0%</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>23.0%</b>
Unsheltered	699	541	77.4%	158	22.6%
Emergency shelter	86	69	80.2%	17	19.8%
Institutional situation	16	9	56.3%	7	43.8%
Temporary housing situation	295	205	69.5%	90	30.5%
Permanent housing situation	340	282	82.9%	58	17.1%

Table A3-2. Characteristics of families who received other housing services with known and unknown destination data (N=4,929)

Variable	Total	Known destination	% of total	Unknown destination	% of total
<b>Race</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>3,561</b>	<b>72.2%</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>27.8%</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	266	192	72.2%	74	27.8%
Asian	41	30	73.2%	11	26.8%
Black or African American	390	272	69.7%	118	30.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	96	69	71.9%	27	28.1%
White	3,872	2,826	73.0%	1,046	27.0%
Multi-racial	264	172	65.2%	92	34.8%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>3,873</b>	<b>2,691</b>	<b>72.2%</b>	<b>1,182</b>	<b>27.8%</b>
Hispanic/Latino	1,056	870	69.5%	186	30.5%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	4,929	3,561	82.4%	1,368	17.6%

(continued on next page)


Table A3-2. Continued

Variable	Total	Known destination	% of total	Unknown destination	% of total
<b>Gender</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>3,561</b>	<b>72.2%</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>27.8%</b>
Female	4,159	3,018	72.6%	1,141	27.4%
Male	770	543	70.5%	227	29.5%
<b>County designation</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>3,561</b>	<b>72.2%</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>27.8%</b>
Urban	2,740	1,849	67.5%	891	32.5%
Rural	2,189	1,712	78.2%	477	21.8%
<b>Earned income</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>3,561</b>	<b>72.2%</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>27.8%</b>
Yes	2,067	1,481	71.6%	586	28.4%
No	2,862	2,080	72.7%	782	27.3%
<b>Disabling condition</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>3,561</b>	<b>72.2%</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>27.8%</b>
Yes	2,117	1,488	70.3%	629	29.7%
No	2,812	2,073	73.7%	739	26.3%
<b>Mental health problems</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>3,561</b>	<b>72.2%</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>27.8%</b>
Yes	1,910	1,362	71.3%	548	28.7%
No	3,019	2,199	72.8%	820	27.2%
<b>Domestic violence survivor</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>3,561</b>	<b>72.2%</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>27.8%</b>
Yes	2,244	1,604	71.5%	640	28.5%
No	2,685	1,957	72.9%	728	27.1%
<b>Prior living situation</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>3,561</b>	<b>72.2%</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>27.8%</b>
Unsheltered	1,489	1,144	76.8%	345	23.2%
Emergency shelter	616	471	76.5%	145	23.5%
Institutional situation	53	32	60.4%	21	39.6%
Temporary housing situation	1130	784	69.4%	346	30.6%
Permanent housing situation	1641	1130	68.9%	511	31.1%

#### A4. Pilot Family Interviews

##### Purposeful Sampling Criteria

Our purposeful sampling criteria required that families in the pilot interview sample be families of color who received Diversion services in Yakima County. Yakima County was selected, because Yakima Neighborhood Health Services (YNHS) received a Diversion grant from Building Changes in 2019. Our criteria specified that we wanted a mix of families of color who were



successfully housed through a Diversion program and those who were not, as well as families who experienced challenges during the process of receiving Diversion services regardless of whether they were housed. Initially, our criteria also specified we wanted to include families of color who exited the program between September 2020 and December 2020, because we anticipated we would get a higher response rate if we targeted families who had recently completed a Diversion program. In order to reach the desired number of families for participation in the pilot sample, however, we expanded this timeframe to include families who had been enrolled in and exited the program as early as February 2020.

### **Recruitment Procedures**

In December 2020, the Senior Manager of Grantmaking and Capacity Building at Building Changes sent an email to key leadership at YNHS introducing the evaluation team. We followed up with the key leadership at YNHS and scheduled an introductory video conference meeting in January 2021 where we presented our sampling criteria for the pilot interviews and discussed our recruitment and engagement strategies. We asked YNHS to identify and recruit up to 10 families of color who met the criteria. YNHS case managers reached out directly to families and sent the names and contact information of family members who consented to participate to the evaluation team using secure transfer methods. We called these family members to schedule interview times, referencing their specific case manager and the location where they received Diversion services, as well as informing them that they would receive a \$50 gift card for completing an interview. Once scheduled, we followed-up with each family member twice (the day before and one hour prior to each interview) to remind them of the interview.

## Sample Participant Demographics


A total of **eight families of color** who received Diversion services in Yakima County between the months of February and December 2020 participated in a pilot interview. Pilot interviews took place between February and March 2021.

- Family respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino, Black/African American, or Native American/American Indian.
- A majority of respondents were female.
- Respondents ranged in age between 25 to 44 years old.
- A majority of family respondents reported having one to two children.
- Respondents had mixed educational backgrounds ranging from having no high school diploma to having a high school diploma and some college education.
- At the time of the interview, the majority of respondents were employed for wages or were looking for work.
- At the time of the interview, a majority of respondents reported an annual income between \$12,000 to \$34,999.

## *A5. Full Study Family Interviews*

### **Purposeful Sampling Criteria**

Our purposeful sampling criteria required that families in the full study family interview sample be families of color. Our criteria also specified we wanted to include a mix of families of color who were successfully housed through a Diversion program and those who were not, as well as families of color who experienced challenges during the process of receiving Diversion services regardless of whether they were housed. Initially, our criteria stipulated that families should have exited the program between January 2021 and May 2021, because we anticipated we would get a higher response rate if we targeted families who had recently completed a Diversion program. In order to reach the desired number of families for participation in the study, however, we expanded this timeframe to include families who had been enrolled in and exited the program as early as August 2020. In the last weeks of the recruitment period, we also expanded our criteria to include



families who were currently enrolled in, but nearing their exit from, Diversion services at the time of the interview.

## **Recruitment Procedures**

Between March and April 2021, the Senior Manager of Grantmaking and Capacity Building at Building Changes sent emails to key leadership at lead Diversion provider agencies in each of the four counties selected for qualitative interviews introducing our team. We followed up with the key leadership at each agency and scheduled an introductory video conference meeting between April and May 2021 where we presented our sampling criteria for the full study family interviews and discussed our recruitment and engagement strategies with them. We initially asked each agency to identify and recruit 12-16 families of color that fit the sampling criteria.

Case Managers and Outreach Specialists at each agency reached out directly to families and sent the names and contact information of family members who agreed to participate in an interview to the evaluation team using secure transfer methods. We called these family members to schedule interview times, referencing their specific case manager and the location where they received Diversion services, as well as informing them that they would receive a \$50 gift card for completing an interview. Once scheduled, we followed-up with each family member twice (the day before and one hour prior to each interview) to remind them of the interview.

Table A5-1 below provides a breakdown of recruitment and completed interview numbers by county.


Table A5-1. Recruitment and completed interview numbers by county

	Clark	King	Pierce	Spokane	TOTAL
Diversion provider agencies per county	1	1	3	1	6
Families identified & contacted by Diversion provider agencies	22	106	72	58	258
Families who agreed to be contacted by the evaluation team	10	24	18	21	73
Completed family interviews	7	12	6	11	36

### Sample Participant Demographics

A total of **36 families of color** who received Diversion services in one of the four counties selected for qualitative interviews between the months of August 2020 through July 2021 participated in an interview. Interviews took place between May and August 2021.

- Fifteen (15) family respondents identified as Black or African American; seven identified as Hispanic or Latino; six identified as mixed race; and the remaining respondents identified as Native American or American Indian or Indigenous, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Caucasian or White (respondents who identified as Caucasian or White either also identified as Hispanic or Latino or had children who identified as mixed race).
- There were 28 female respondents and eight male respondents in the sample.
- Respondents ranged in age between 19 to 77 years old (older adult family members in the sample were caring for grandchildren or disabled adult children).
- Sixteen (16) family respondents reported having one to two children under the age of 18 in the house; eight respondents reported having three to four children; five respondents reported having one child; and five respondents reported having five to six children. Seven respondents reported having no children. Families that reported



having no children were sometimes families with a disabled adult dependent or grandchild, or families that were pregnant at the time of Diversion services but since miscarried.

- Thirteen (13) respondents had some college education but no diploma; eight respondents were high school graduates or completed the GED; six respondents completed a vocational training or associates degree; the remaining respondents completed a bachelor's degree or higher, completed some grade school education up until the eighth grade, or completed some high school education but no diploma.
- At the time of the interview, 20 respondents were employed for wages; six respondents were out of work and not looking for work; and the remaining respondents were either looking for work, self-employed, students, or unable to work.
- At the time of the interview, 15 respondents reported an annual income between \$20,000 and \$34,999; 12 respondents reported an income between \$35,000 and \$49,999; the remaining respondents reported either an income of less than \$12,000 or between \$50,000 to \$99,999.

## *A6. Interviews with Case Managers at Provider Agencies*


### **Purposeful Sampling Criteria**

Case managers at lead Diversion service provider agencies in the four counties selected for qualitative interviews were targeted for interviews. Our purposeful sampling criteria required that case managers in the sample regularly provide Diversion services to families of color. Among these case managers, we endeavored to select those within each agency who had the longest tenures providing Diversion services. In addition, our purposeful sampling criteria stipulated that we wanted to include a mix of case managers who identified as people of color and those who identified as white.

### **Recruitment Procedures**

In June and July 2021, our contact person at each Diversion provider agency identified three case managers who fit the sampling criteria and sent introductory emails to them, copying a member of our evaluation team. We sent a follow-up email to the identified case managers inviting them to





participate in an interview by signing up for a date and time through a SignUpGenius link. Once signed up, our team sent a confirmation email and calendar invite to each case manager and sent a reminder email the day before each interview.

### Sample Participant Demographics

A total of **11 case managers from** five provider agencies participated in an interview in July 2021.

- Case manager respondents identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American, Caucasian or White, Hispanic or Latino, or multiracial.
- The majority of case manager respondents were female.
- The number of years that case managers had been providing Diversion services ranged from three months to 4.5 years with an average of 1.5 years.
- The number of years that case managers had worked in the Homeless Crisis Response System ranged from three months to eight years with an average of 2.5 years.

### *A7. Housing Outcomes*

#### Housing Outcomes

Table [A7-1](#) below lists the housing destination at exit and housing outcome values for the housing outcome (permanent versus temporary) measured in this study.

**Table A7-1. Housing Destination at Exit and Outcome Value**

<b>Housing Destination at Exit</b>	<b>Outcome Value</b>
Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher, or RHY-funded Host Home shelter	Temporary
Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility	Temporary
Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher	Temporary
Jail, prison, or juvenile detention facility	Temporary
Moved from one HOPWA funded project to HOPWA TH	Temporary
Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bus/train/subway station/airport or anywhere outside)	Temporary
Residential project or halfway house with no homeless criteria	Temporary
Safe Haven	Temporary
Staying or living with family, temporary tenure (e.g. room, apartment, or house)	Temporary
Staying or living with friends, temporary tenure (e.g. room, apartment, or house)	Temporary
Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center	Temporary
Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth)	Temporary
Moved from one HOPWA funded project to HOPWA PH	Permanent
Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	Permanent
Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy	Permanent
Permanent housing (other than RRH) for formerly homeless persons	Permanent
Rental by client in a public housing unit	Permanent
Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	Permanent
Rental by client, with GPD TIP housing subsidy	Permanent
Rental by client, with HCV voucher (tenant or project based)	Permanent
Rental by client, with other ongoing housing subsidy	Permanent
Rental by client, with RRH or equivalent subsidy	Permanent
Rental by client, with VASH housing subsidy	Permanent
Staying or living with family, permanent tenure	Permanent
Staying or living with friends, permanent tenure	Permanent

## *A8. Interview Guides*

We developed semi-structured, open-ended interview guides for interviews with each sample in the qualitative component of the study. The interview guides were designed so that respondents within an interview sample were asked the same basic set of questions to increase comparability and facilitate cross-case analysis. Yet the semi-structured nature of the guides allowed the interviewer flexibility to customize the sequencing, as well as the direction and depth of probing, for each individual interview respondent. Each guide was developed in collaboration with various groups of study stakeholders, as described below. (See [Appendix C](#) for all study interview guides.)

### **Interview Guide for Families of Color Who Utilized Diversion Services**

We developed a draft interview guide for families of color who utilized Diversion services with input from staff at Building Changes and service provider representatives at one agency. Families of color with experience utilizing Diversion services provided input into the guide during pilot testing. Family respondents in the pilot interview sample were asked to provide feedback on whether the questions were clear and made sense; which questions were the most important to ask; whether there were questions they did not like or that were difficult to answer; whether any questions made them uncomfortable; whether any important questions were missing; and what questions they would ask families if they had the chance.

The interview guide was revised and finalized based on feedback from the pilot sample. The final interview guide for families of color who utilized Diversion services included questions about the situation that prompted them to seek housing services; reasons for opting to utilize Diversion services; the Diversion process and what services they received; whether they felt shut out of services they would prefer; how they experienced the services, including their relationship with their case manager and whether they experienced racism in receiving Diversion services; challenges and barriers; outcomes; overall satisfaction with Diversion services; and demographic questions.

## Interview Guide for Case Managers at Provider Agencies


We developed the interview guide for case managers with input from staff at Building Changes. The interview guide included questions about how families are initially introduced to and engaged in Diversion services, as well as the array of housing services offered; how families typically respond to being offered Diversion services; observed characteristics and/or circumstances of those who opt to receive Diversion services and those who opt out; strategies for successfully engaging families and supporting them to reach their goals; common challenges in engaging and supporting families who receive Diversion; and opinions about whether and why Diversion services are a good or bad option for families of color.

### *A9. Qualitative Data Analysis*

#### **Analysis of Interview Data**

We conducted a content analysis of pilot interview data from family respondents. We developed an *a priori* coding structure organized by study question and sub question and used it to create a matrix in Microsoft Excel. Three coders reviewed pilot interview transcripts. Coders created a row in the matrix for each transcript they reviewed and populated notes for that transcript under each study question and sub question in the matrix to indicate at a high level whether or how a family respondent answered the question. Questions that yielded similar information were collapsed. Responses for each question were then tabulated and a brief narrative summary of responses was created.

Because the purpose of pilot interviews with family respondents was different from the purpose of the full study interviews, we approached the analyses differently. The foundation for the qualitative analysis of data from full study interviews with family respondents was thematic analysis, a conventional method in qualitative research that involves reading transcripts to identify ideas and to categorize meaningful patterns in the data. We also borrowed specific coding practices – open and axial coding – from the grounded theory approach to analysis. Thematic analysis falls short of developing theoretical hypotheses, which is the convention in grounded theory analysis. Rather, thematic analysis produces a description and




interpretation of individual subjective experiences and oftentimes is more fitting in the context of program evaluation.

To begin the process of open coding, two members of the team separately reviewed a number of the same interview transcripts, scrutinizing the transcripts line by line and coding individual excerpts. These coders utilized both a set of *a priori* codes based on the study questions and sub questions that guided this study, as well as grounded codes that emerged from the data. After the initial set of transcripts was initially coded, the two coders reviewed the coded transcripts and identified areas of disagreement where one applied more, fewer, or different codes than the other. In these areas of discrepancy, the two coders discussed and reconciled differences until consensus was reached. This served as an important quality review process to reduce bias and increase the consistency of how codes would be applied across all family interview transcripts.

Next, the two coders developed a code dictionary that provided a definition of each “parent” code along with “examples” and a description, if needed, about when the code should not be applied. The code dictionary was shared with a third coder who was trained to use it using a similar process of coding two transcripts and meeting with another coder who coded the same two transcripts to come to consensus on code application. All parent codes were programmed into Dedoose, an online qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis software, and the “examples” were programmed as “child” codes in Dedoose. From here, the remaining transcripts were assigned across the three coders who continued to code transcripts in Dedoose. For quality assurance, a subset of these remaining transcripts was coded by one coder, reviewed by a second coder, and discussed if consensus was needed on specific code applications. Altogether, one-third of family interview transcripts were reviewed and agreed to have consistency by at least two coders.

As the coders continued the open coding process, they grouped concepts into categories, clarified dimensions of categories, and identified overlaps and patterns. Coded excerpts were clustered into themes answering the study questions and appropriate ordering was determined for presentation in the report.



We undertook the same process as described above to analyze case manager interview data; however, there were two coders as opposed to three. Approximately one quarter of case manager interview transcripts were reviewed and agreed to have consistency by two coders.

## APPENDIX B – Tables & Charts

### *B1. Characteristics of Families who Utilized Diversion Services (Study Sample)*

Tables B1-1 and [B1-2](#) below display characteristics of families who utilized Diversion services and families who received other housing services within the study sample.

**Table B1-1. Characteristics of study sample (N=13,876)**

Variable	Total	%	Diversion	% of Diversion	Other housing services	% of other housing services
<b>Race</b>	<b>12,657</b>		<b>2,076</b>		<b>10,581</b>	
American Indian or Alaska Native	557	4.4%	71	3.4%	486	4.6%
Asian	148	1.2%	21	1.0%	127	1.2%
Black or African American	1,558	12.3%	551	26.5%	1,007	9.5%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	395	3.1%	130	6.3%	265	2.5%
White	9,452	74.7%	1,223	58.9%	8,229	77.8%
Multi-racial	547	4.3%	80	3.9%	467	4.4%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>13,876</b>		<b>2,283</b>		<b>11,593</b>	
Hispanic/Latino	2,687	19.4%	284	12.4%	2,403	20.7%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	11,189	80.6%	1,999	87.6%	9,190	79.3%
<b>Gender</b>	<b>13,706</b>		<b>2,267</b>		<b>11,439</b>	
Female	11,319	82.6%	1,935	85.4%	9,384	82.0%
Male	2,387	17.4%	332	14.6%	2,055	18.0%
<b>County designation</b>	<b>13,876</b>		<b>2,283</b>		<b>11,593</b>	
Urban	9,004	64.9%	1,492	65.4%	7,512	64.8%
Rural	4,872	35.1%	791	34.6%	4,081	35.2%
<b>Household size</b>	<b>13,876</b>		<b>2,283</b>		<b>11,593</b>	
Small (1-2)	4,596	33.1%	850	37.2%	3,746	32.3%
Medium (3-5)	8,456	60.9%	1,308	57.3%	7,148	61.7%
Large (6 or more)	824	5.9%	125	5.5%	699	6.0%
<b>Earned income</b>	<b>10,714</b>		<b>1,749</b>		<b>8,965</b>	
Yes	3,175	29.6%	806	46.1%	2,369	26.4%
No	7,539	70.4%	943	53.9%	6,596	73.6%

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Table B1-1. Continued

Variable	Total	% of Total	Diversion	% of Diversion	Other housing services	% of other housing services
<b>Health Insurance</b>	<b>12,766</b>		<b>1,811</b>		<b>10,955</b>	
Yes	8,157	63.9%	1,625	89.7%	6,532	59.6%
No	4,609	36.1%	186	10.3%	4,423	40.4%
<b>Disabling condition</b>	<b>12,631</b>		<b>2,263</b>		<b>10,368</b>	
Yes	4,591	36.3%	642	28.4%	3,949	38.1%
No	8,040	63.7%	1,621	71.6%	6,419	61.9%
<b>Developmental disability</b>	<b>9,226</b>		<b>1,771</b>		<b>7,455</b>	
Yes	593	6.4%	54	3.0%	539	7.2%
No	8,633	93.6%	1,717	97.0%	6,916	92.8%
<b>Chronic Health Condition</b>	<b>9,239</b>		<b>1,774</b>		<b>7,465</b>	
Yes	1,667	18.0%	205	11.6%	1,462	19.6%
No	7,572	82.0%	1,569	88.4%	6,003	80.4%
<b>Mental health problems</b>	<b>9,205</b>		<b>1,772</b>		<b>7,433</b>	
Yes	3,095	33.6%	390	22.0%	2,705	36.4%
No	6,110	66.4%	1,382	78.0%	4,728	63.6%
<b>Substance Abuse</b>	<b>9,195</b>		<b>1,775</b>		<b>7,420</b>	
Alcohol abuse	158	1.7%	11	0.6%	147	2.0%
Drug abuse	572	6.2%	54	3.0%	518	7.0%
Both alcohol and drug abuse	306	3.3%	19	1.1%	287	3.9%
No	8,159	88.7%	1,691	95.3%	6,468	87.2%
<b>Domestic violence survivor</b>	<b>9,458</b>		<b>1,767</b>		<b>7,691</b>	
Yes	4,399	46.5%	777	44.0%	3,622	47.1%
No	5,059	53.5%	990	56.0%	4,069	52.9%
<b>Prior living situation</b>	<b>13,602</b>		<b>2,254</b>		<b>11,348</b>	
Unsheltered	4,332	31.8%	833	37.0%	3,499	30.8%
Emergency shelter	1,267	9.3%	116	5.1%	1,151	10.1%
Institutional situation	121	0.9%	23	1.0%	98	0.9%
Temporary housing situation	2,965	21.8%	568	25.2%	2,397	21.1%
Permanent housing situation	4,917	36.1%	714	31.7%	4,203	37.0%

Note: Households with unknown housing outcome data are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome; therefore, these results may appear different from results of other analyses conducted for Diversion services.



Table B1-2. Age of heads of households in study sample (N=13,853)

Statistic	Families who utilized Diversion services (N=2,277)	Families who received other housing services (N=11,576)
Mean	33.5 years	34.3 years
Standard Deviation	8.6	9.1
Median	32.0	33.0
Range	17-73	16-86

## *B2. Characteristics of Families who Utilized Diversion Services (Analytic Sub-Sample)*

Tables [B2-1](#) and [B2-2](#) below display characteristics of families who utilized Diversion services and families who received other housing services within the analytic subsample.

Table B2-1. Characteristics of analytic subsample for housing outcome  
(N=4,667)

Variable	Total	% of total	Diversion	% of Diversion	Other housing services	% of other housing services
<b>Race</b>	<b>4,667</b>		<b>1,106</b>		<b>3,561</b>	
American Indian or Alaska Native	216	4.6%	24	2.2%	192	5.4%
Asian	45	1.0%	15	1.4%	30	0.8%
Black or African American	694	14.9%	422	38.2%	272	7.6%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	148	3.2%	79	7.1%	69	1.9%
White	3,351	71.8%	525	47.5%	2,826	79.4%
Multi-racial	213	4.6%	41	3.7%	172	4.8%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>4,667</b>		<b>1,106</b>		<b>3,561</b>	
Hispanic/Latino	984	21.1%	114	10.3%	870	24.4%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	3,683	78.9%	992	89.7%	2,961	75.6%
<b>Gender</b>	<b>4,667</b>		<b>1,106</b>		<b>3,561</b>	
Female	3,963	84.9%	945	85.4%	3,018	84.8%
Male	704	15.1%	161	14.6%	543	15.2%
<b>County designation</b>	<b>4,667</b>		<b>1,106</b>		<b>3,561</b>	
Urban	2,763	59.2%	914	82.6%	1,849	51.9%
Rural	1,904	40.8%	192	17.4%	1,712	48.1%
<b>Household size</b>	<b>4,667</b>		<b>1,106</b>		<b>3,561</b>	
Small (0-1)	1,543	33.1%	411	37.2%	1,132	31.8%
Medium (2-4)	2,823	60.5%	628	56.8%	2,195	61.6%
Large (5 or more)	301	6.4%	67	6.1%	234	6.6%
<b>Earned income</b>	<b>4,667</b>		<b>1,106</b>		<b>3,561</b>	
Yes	2,076	44.5%	595	53.8%	1,481	41.6%
No	2,591	55.5%	511	46.2%	2,080	58.4%
<b>Health Insurance</b>	<b>4,643</b>		<b>1,102</b>		<b>3,541</b>	
Yes	4,077	87.8%	1,003	91.0%	3,074	86.8%
No	566	12.2%	99	9.0%	467	13.2%

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Table B2-1. Continued

Variable	Total	% of total	Diversion	% of Diversion	Other housing services	% of other housing services
<b>Disabling condition</b>	<b>4,667</b>		<b>1,106</b>		<b>3,561</b>	
Yes	1,803	38.6%	315	28.5%	1,488	41.8%
No	2,864	61.4%	791	71.5%	2,073	58.2%
<b>Developmental disability</b>	<b>4,650</b>		<b>1,102</b>		<b>3,548</b>	
Yes	324	7.0%	35	3.2%	289	8.1%
No	4,326	93.0%	1,067	96.8%	3,259	91.9%
<b>Chronic Health Condition</b>	<b>4,651</b>		<b>1,103</b>		<b>3,548</b>	
Yes	907	19.5%	144	13.1%	763	21.5%
No	3,744	80.5%	959	86.9%	2,785	78.5%
<b>Mental health problems</b>	<b>4,667</b>		<b>1,106</b>		<b>3,561</b>	
Yes	1,623	34.8%	261	23.6%	1,362	38.2%
No	3,044	65.2%	845	76.4%	2,199	61.8%
<b>Substance Abuse</b>	<b>4,642</b>		<b>1,104</b>		<b>3,538</b>	
Alcohol abuse	80	1.7%	8	0.7%	72	2.0%
Drug abuse	268	5.8%	33	3.0%	235	6.6%
Both alcohol and drug abuse	122	2.6%	11	1.0%	111	3.1%
No	4,172	89.9%	1,052	95.3%	3,120	88.2%
<b>Domestic violence survivor</b>	<b>4,667</b>		<b>1,106</b>		<b>3,561</b>	
Yes	2,077	44.5%	473	42.8%	1,604	45.0%
No	2,590	55.5%	633	57.2%	1,957	55.0%
<b>Prior living situation</b>	<b>4,667</b>		<b>1,106</b>		<b>3,561</b>	
Unsheltered	1,685	36.1%	541	48.9%	1,144	32.1%
Emergency shelter	540	11.6%	69	6.2%	471	13.2%
Institutional situation	41	0.9%	9	0.8%	32	0.9%
Temporary housing situation	989	21.2%	205	18.5%	784	22.0%
Permanent housing situation	1,412	30.3%	282	25.5%	1,130	31.7%

Note: Households with unknown housing outcome data are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome; therefore, these results may appear different from results of other analyses conducted for Diversion services.

Table B2-2. Age of heads of households for analytic subsample for housing outcome (N=4,667)

Statistic	Families who utilized Diversion services (N=1,106)	Families who received other housing services (N=3,561)
Mean	33.6 years	34.2 years
Standard Deviation	8.5	9.0
Median	33.0	33.0
Range	17-69	17-81

### B3. Family/Program Characteristics and Housing Outcomes

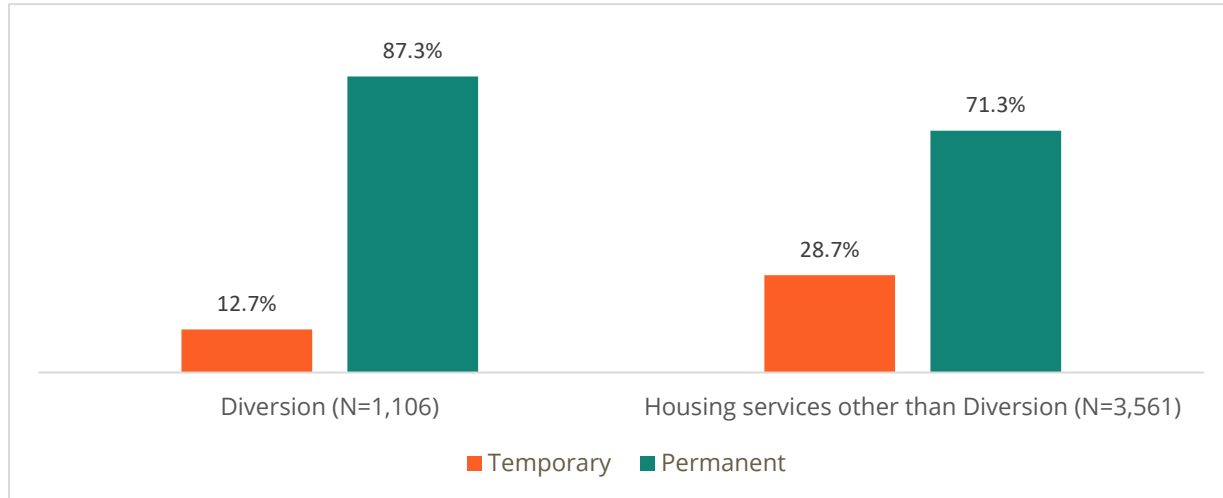
The housing outcome of “permanent vs. temporary” for families who utilized Diversion services compared to families who received other housing services is presented in Table B3-1 and [Figure B3-1](#). It is important to note again that unknown housing outcomes are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome. Therefore, these results may appear different from results of other analyses conducted for Diversion services. The housing outcome of “permanent vs. temporary vs. unknown” for families who utilized Diversion services compared to families who received other housing services is presented in [Table B3-2](#) and [Figure B3-2](#).

Table B3-1. Housing outcomes by program among families with known exit status (N=4,667)

Program	Total	# Temporary	% Temporary	# Permanent	% Permanent
Diversion	1,106	140	12.7%	966	87.3%
Other housing services	3,561	1,022	28.7%	2,539	71.3%

Note: Households with unknown housing outcome data are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome; therefore, these results may appear different from results of other analyses conducted for Diversion services.

Figure B3-1. Housing outcomes by program (Diversion vs Other housing services)

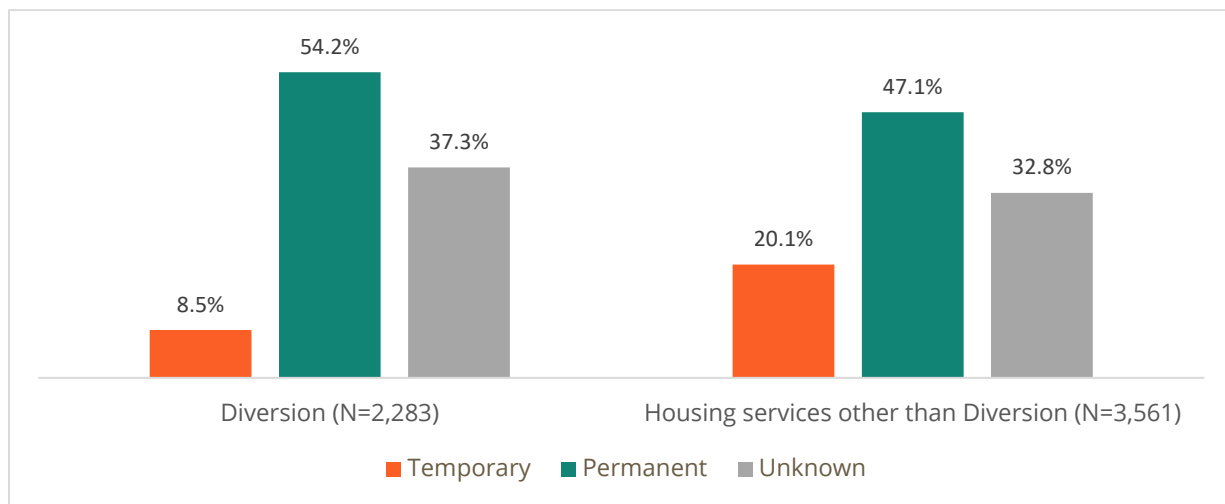


Note: Households with unknown housing outcome data are not included in this analysis as a temporary housing outcome; therefore, these results may appear different from results of other analyses conducted for Diversion services.

Table B3-2. Housing outcomes for study sample by program (N=13,876)

Program	Total	# Temp- orary	% Temp- orary	# Perm- anent	% Perm- anent	# Unknown	% Unknown
Diversion	2,283	195	8.5%	1,237	54.2%	851	37.3%
Other housing services	11,593	2,328	20.1%	5,465	47.1%	3800	32.8%

Figure B3-2. Housing outcomes by program (Diversion vs other housing services) including unknown outcomes



#### *B4. County Characteristics and Housing Outcomes*

Housing outcomes also differed by county characteristics. Using a cluster logistic regression for the same analytic sub-sample (N=4,667), we tested the following characteristics as potential predictors of housing outcomes at the county level (see [Table B4-1](#) for sources):

- **Vacancy Rates:** Rates used in the study were taken from the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census and included 5-year estimates from 2019. The rate for each county is reported as a percentage of rental units available.
- **Cost Burdened Renter Households:** HUD defines a cost burdened household as one that pays 30% or more of gross income on rent. In this study, the percentage of the population in each county that was cost burdened was used.
- **Housing Affordability - based on Median Renter Income:** For this study, counties were identified as having affordable housing if the median annual income was higher than the median annual rental cost for a 1-bedroom apartment.
- **Housing Affordability - based on 30% of Area Median Income (AMI):** For this study, counties were identified as having affordable housing for people living in extreme poverty if the 30% of AMI was higher than the median annual rental cost for a 1-bedroom apartment.
- **Affordable Housing Units Available:** Reported here are the number of Housing units available in the county through federal programs (e.g., Section 515 Rural rental Housing).
- **Trained in Diversion and Funded by Building Changes:** Certain Washington counties received training on and funding for Diversion.
- **Rural vs. Urban:** Washington State Department of Health Urban versus Rural county designations.

Table B4-1. Sources for County-Level Variables

Variable(s)	Source
Housing Affordability variables ( <i>Cost Burdened Renter Households, Housing Affordability - based on Median Renter Income and on Area Median Income (AMI), Affordable Housing Units Available</i> )	Affordable Housing Online is an affordable housing resource portal that also aggregates housing data for different communities, including county-level data. This was the data source for housing affordability variables for the county-level analyses.
Rural versus Urban	The Washington State Department of Health was the source for determining rural and urban classifications for Washington State counties.
Vacancy Rates	The American Community Survey of the U.S. Census is a source for population and housing information in communities in the United States. This was the source for county-level vacancy rate data for the county-level analyses of this study.
Trained in Diversion and Funded by Building Changes	Building Changes provided information to the research team of counties they had trained in the Diversion model and had funded

### *B5. Return to the Homeless Service System: Regression Analysis*

Tables [B5-1](#), [B5-2](#), and [B5-3](#) present the logistic regression results for testing predictors of returns to the homeless service system. The omnibus tests for these statistical models were not significant at the .01 level. Therefore, any individual predictor variable with p-values less than .05 should be interpreted with caution.



Table B5-1. Logistic regression results predicting likelihood of return to the homeless service system after successful exit (N=5,222)

Variable	B	S.E.	Odds ratio	p-value	C.I. 95% (Lower - Upper)
Race (vs American Indian or Alaska Native)					
Asian	0.44	0.43	1.55	0.31	0.67 – 3.6
Black or African American	0.65	0.31	1.91	0.04	1.04 – 3.54
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.20	0.40	1.22	0.62	0.56 – 2.64
White	0.44	0.31	1.56	0.15	0.85 – 2.83
Multi-racial	0.69	0.35	1.99	0.05	1.00 – 3.94
Hispanic/Latino (vs. non-Hispanic/non-Latino)	0.09	0.13	1.10	0.47	0.85 – 1.41
Male (vs female)	-0.17	0.13	0.84	0.19	0.65 – 1.09
Age	-0.01	0.01	0.99	0.03	0.98 – 1.00
Urban (vs. rural)	-0.01	0.12	0.99	0.94	0.79 – 1.25
Earned income (vs. no earned income)	0.04	0.09	1.04	0.65	0.87 – 1.26
Disabling condition (vs. no disabling condition)	0.13	0.12	1.14	0.28	0.90 – 1.43
Mental health problems (vs. no mental health problems)	-0.20	0.12	0.82	0.12	0.64 – 1.05
Domestic violence survivor (vs. not a domestic violence survivor)	-0.02	0.01	0.98	0.23	0.96 – 1.01
Prior living situation (vs. unsheltered)					
Emergency shelter	-0.07	0.15	0.93	0.64	0.69 – 1.26
Institutional situation	-1.42	1.02	0.24	0.16	0.03 – 1.79
Temporary housing situation	-0.03	0.14	0.97	0.84	0.74 – 1.28
Permanent housing situation	0.21	0.11	1.23	0.06	0.99 – 1.52
Diversion (vs. other housing services)	-0.06	0.12	0.94	0.59	0.74 – 1.19

Note: We tested the model using different racial groups as the reference group. The results in the table are reflective of American Indian or Alaska Native households as the reference group. There were no differences in the regression results when other racial groups were identified as a reference group.

Table B5-2. Logistic regression results predicting likelihood of return to homeless service system among families of color who utilized Diversion services (N=967)

Variable	B	S.E.	Odds ratio Exp(B)	p-value	C.I. 95% (Lower - Upper)
<b>Race (vs White)</b>					
American Indian or Alaska Native	.51	.77	1.66	.51	0.37 – 7.59
Asian	-.25	1.05	.78	.82	0.10 – 6.09
Black or African American	.76	.24	2.14	.00	1.33 – 3.43
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	.29	.47	1.33	.54	0.53 – 3.34
Multi-racial	.86	.43	2.37	.05	1.02 – 5.49

Note: We tested the model using different racial groups as the reference group. The results in the table are reflective of White households as the reference group. There were no differences in the regression results when other racial groups were identified as a reference group.

Table B5-3. Logistic regression results predicting likelihood of return to homeless service system among families of color who received other housing services (N=4,255)

Variable	B	S.E.	Odds ratio Exp(B)	p-value	C.I. 95% (Lower - Upper)
<b>Race (vs American Indian or Alaska Native)</b>					
Asian	.67	.46	1.94	.15	0.79 – 4.76
Black or African American	.69	.34	1.99	.04	1.02 – 3.86
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	.22	.45	1.25	.62	0.51 – 3.03
White	.61	.33	1.84	.07	0.96 – 3.53
Multi-racial	.75	.38	2.12	.05	1.00 – 4.48

Note: We tested the model using different racial groups as the reference group. The results in the table are reflective of American Indian or Alaska Native households as the reference group. There were no differences in the regression results when other racial groups were identified as a reference group.

# APPENDIX C – Interview Guides & Demographic Questionnaire

## *C1. Interview Guide for Full Study Family Interviews*

### **Families of Color Semi-Structured Interview Guide**

Washington State Diversion Study

#### **Situation that prompted seeking housing services**

1. Please describe the housing situation that led up to you seeking housing assistance from [XYZ agency]?
2. What housing services were you looking for? Did you have something specific in mind?

#### **Reasons for utilizing Diversion services**

3. Think back to when you first went to [XYZ agency] for assistance with your housing needs. First, you went through an intake process to ensure you qualified for services. Then, you were connected with a staff member to help you with your housing needs. Do you remember the first conversation you had with [your case manager]? What did the conversation entail and what housing options were discussed?
4. Were there specific housing options or services that you wanted that you were not offered or that you were told you could not receive? If so, what did you want or need that you did not receive?

#### **The Diversion process and services received**

5. Ultimately, [XYZ agency] enrolled you in [Diversion or housing assistance program] and you received assistance that was designed to be short term. How did you and the agency staff land on [Diversion or XYZ services] as housing assistance for you?
6. Who do you feel was in charge of identifying the types of support or assistance that would be most likely to help your family?
  - a. How would you describe your experience [or relationship] with your case manager?
  - b. **If the respondent describes a supportive, respectful, and/or trusting relationship with case manager ask:** What specific things did your case manager do to make you feel supported and/or respected when you were working with her/him?

- c. Please describe any additional services besides housing services that your [case manager] connected you to during this time period.
    - i. Did your [case manager] help advocate on your behalf (e.g., advocacy with a landlord)?
  - d. Please describe what the [Diversion or housing assistance] experience was like for you. For example, did you find the process to be helpful or challenging? Please explain.
6. How long did the process of working with your case manager last (i.e., for how many months did you work with [your case manager])?
7. What challenges or barriers did you experience during the housing assistance process?
9. Was there any point during the process where you felt like Diversion services were not going to be able to help you? Please explain.
  - a. If so, how did you and your case manager address this, if at all?

### **Diversion Outcomes**

10. Are you still homeless or experiencing housing instability?

#### **No PATHWAY**

- a. If the services helped you find housing, do you still have that housing? Please explain.
- b. How long have you been in your housing?
- c. How comfortable or confident do you feel, if at all, that you will be able to maintain this housing?
- d. Since receiving Diversion services have you needed or used other housing assistance?
  - i. If so, please describe which services were needed (and from which agency) and whether you were able to get help.
    - a. How did receiving services at [XYZ agency] compare to the place you were able to find services?

#### **Yes PATHWAY**

- e. If the services did not help you find housing, did you seek other help? Why or why not?
  - f. If you sought help, where did you go?
    - i. Please explain whether you received additional help and from whom.
11. How would you describe how you and your family are doing now versus before you received services from [XYZ agency]?



### **Final perceptions and overall satisfaction with Diversion**

12. When you look back on your overall experience with Diversion services [or services at XYZ agency], how would you describe how the experience went? Please explain.

13. How well do you feel like the staff you interacted with at XYZ agency understood what it was like for you to face homelessness or housing instability?

14. Earlier in the interview you identified as [race/ethnicity], do you feel like this impacted your experiences in any way (e.g., how you were treated)? If so, how?

15. If you need help with your housing in the future, do you think you would be eligible or allowed to receive more services from [XYZ agency] or another county agency? Why or why not?

16. Was there anything we didn't ask today that you think would be important for us to know so that we could truly understand your experience with Diversion services? If so, please share any additional information at this time.

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO TALK WITH US TODAY! THE  
INFORMATION YOU PROVIDED WAS VERY HELPFUL.**

## *C2. Demographic Questionnaire for Full Study Family Interview Participants*

### **Demographic Information for Family Interview Participants**

#### Washington State Diversion Study

1) Please specify your gender.

\_\_\_\_ Male

\_\_\_\_ Female

\_\_\_\_ Transgender Male

\_\_\_\_ Transgender Female

\_\_\_\_ Non-Binary

\_\_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_\_ Prefer Not to Answer

2) Please specify your ethnicity.

\_\_\_\_ Black or African American

\_\_\_\_ Hispanic or Latino

\_\_\_\_ Native American or American Indian/Alaskan Native

\_\_\_\_ Asian/Asian American

\_\_\_\_ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

\_\_\_\_ Multi-Racial

\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

3) What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

4) How many children under the age of 18 do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

5) What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.


\_\_\_\_ Nursery school to 8<sup>th</sup> grade

\_\_\_\_ Some high school, no diploma

\_\_\_\_ High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)

\_\_\_\_ Some college credit, no degree

\_\_\_\_ Trade/technical/vocational training

- 
- \_\_\_ Associate degree
  - \_\_\_ Bachelor's degree
  - \_\_\_ Master's degree
  - \_\_\_ Professional degree
  - \_\_\_ Doctorate degree

6) Employment Status: Are you currently...?

- \_\_\_ Employed for wages
- \_\_\_ Self-employed
- \_\_\_ Out of work and looking for work
- \_\_\_ Out of work but not currently looking for work
- \_\_\_ A homemaker
- \_\_\_ A student
- \_\_\_ Military
- \_\_\_ Retired
- \_\_\_ Unable to work

7) Household Income:

- \_\_\_ Less than \$12,000
- \_\_\_ \$12,000 - \$19,999
- \_\_\_ 20,000 - \$34,999
- \_\_\_ \$35,000 - \$49,999
- \_\_\_ \$50,000 - \$74, 999
- \_\_\_ \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \_\_\_ over \$100,000

### *C3. Interview Guide for Case Manager Interviews*

#### **Diversion Provider Semi-Structured Interview Guide**

##### Washington State Diversion Study

#### **Demographic Information**

1. How long have you been working in the homeless crisis response system all together?
2. How long have you been providing Diversion services as a case manager at [XYZ agency]?
3. How do you identify in terms of gender?  
☐ Male  
☐ Female  
☐ Transgender Male  
☐ Transgender Female  
☐ Non-Binary  
☐ Other  
☐ Prefer Not to Answer
4. How do you identify in terms of your ethnicity?  
☐ Black or African American  
☐ Hispanic or Latino  
☐ Native American or American Indian/Alaskan Native  
☐ Asian/Asian American  
☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander  
☐ Multi-Racial  
☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_


#### **Initial Engagement of Families into Diversion Services**


1. We understand that the pandemic has had an impact both upon the need for housing services and the resources available to assist people in need. We'll talk about that in a bit. For now, we'd like you to concentrate on what the typical processes were for offering and providing Diversion services before the pandemic.


Please describe what happens when a family is first introduced to your agency's Diversion services.


- a. How is a family introduced to Diversion services?
  - i. Is a family introduced to Diversion services as an option **in a larger array of housing services** from which they can choose or may be



- 
- eligible (e.g., Rapid Rehousing, Transitional Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing)?
1. Are those programs always offered to families up front along with Diversion?
  - ii. When, if ever, is it the case that families are offered Diversion **instead of** more traditional housing programs?
- b. During that initial interface, what makes you decide to offer Diversion services to a family?
- i. Is it universal? That is, do you offer Diversion services to all families?
  - ii. Are there certain circumstances a family presents with or characteristics that you observe to be a good fit for Diversion (i.e., that make you think Diversion will work well for a family)? Please explain?
  - iii. Under what circumstances, if any, might you *not* offer Diversion services to a family (circumstances where you think Diversion is not a good fit for families)?
    1. Please provide example(s) of when you think Diversion is not a good fit for families who are eligible.
- c. What are families told they will receive as part of Diversion services versus what they would receive if they opt for traditional housing programs?
- i. Based on what you know about the options available to families in need of support, to what extent do you use your experience and/or “clinical judgment” to steer a family in the direction of, or away from, Diversion services.
- d. What role does family choice play in Diversion (e.g., can families opt to pursue Diversion or do staff make a determination)?
- i. How is family choice framed in the conversation?
  - ii. It’s a stressful and overwhelming time for families when they come to you for help. How do you know if families clearly understand their options?
    1. What actions do you take to help families understand their options?
2. Our understanding is that the pandemic created a greater need for housing services and at the same time, it created more and/or different resources to address housing needs. For example, moratorium on evictions, landlords being willing to work with tenants, greater accessibility of financial/rental assistance.
- a. Based on your observation/experience, what, if anything, has changed about the Diversion process or services due to the pandemic? How do

- 
- you think client experiences with the Diversion process or services might have changed, if at all?
3. In your experience, how do families typically respond to being offered Diversion services (and in particular the creative problem-solving conversation where they are asked to consider the resources at their disposal)?
    - a. Are families typically specific and clear about what they want and need to address their housing situation? To what extent does Diversion align or not with what they want?
      - i. How often is it the case, if at all, that families utilize Diversion because they are shut out of other services they would prefer?
        1. Is this the same or different for families of color?
    - b. Roughly speaking, what is the approximate percentage of families who agree to try Diversion services vs. the percentage of families who opt not to receive these services?
      - i. Have you observed any patterns about the characteristics/differences of families who say yes to Diversion and those who say no? (started in permanent housing, earned income, social supports, behavioral health conditions, race/ethnicity)
      - ii. In your experience, how does this percentage differ between families of color compared to white families, if at all?
        1. If there is a difference, why do you think this is the case?
    - c. When families opt-out of Diversion services, what are some of the reasons they give for not wanting to enroll in Diversion?
      - i. Are the reasons families of color opt-out of receiving Diversion services generally the same as or different from white families? Please explain.
  4. For you as a case manager, what have been the most effective ways or strategies to *successfully* engage families in Diversion services?
    - a. What is your practice – what specific things do you do when you are working with a family to support them to be as successful as possible?
    - b. Do you find that different strategies work better for different families based on their characteristics or circumstances? Please explain.
    - c. Have you observed any patterns about the characteristics and/or circumstances (e.g., started in permanent housing, earned income, social supports, behavioral health conditions, race/ethnicity) of families who remain engaged in and complete services versus those who do not?

- 
5. What have you found to be the most common *challenges* in successfully engaging and supporting families in Diversion services?
    - a. Have you found any patterns or differences based on race/ethnicity or other characteristics?
    - b. What is your practice for addressing or overcoming these challenges – have you found anything that works well?
  6. What does success look like for families who receive Diversion (i.e., what have you observed to be a typical successful outcome)?
    - a. Please describe a typical success case.
      - i. We're trying to understand for whom Diversion may and may not be a good fit. Do families who have successful outcomes when they receive Diversion (based on how you describe success) typically share some characteristics or circumstances in common?
  7. How would you describe an unfavorable Diversion outcome?
    - a. Can you describe a typical case in which a family has an unfavorable Diversion outcome?
    - b. Again, we're trying to understand for whom Diversion may and may not be a good fit. Do families who have unfavorable outcomes (based on how you describe them) after receiving Diversion share some common characteristics or circumstances?
  8. Context: According to the data we've analyzed from WA State, about 25% of families who receive Diversion services return to seek additional help with their housing needs. Are you aware of whether families you've served through Diversion returned needing housing services? Please explain.
    - a. If so, under what conditions / why have you seen families return?
  9. We analyzed Diversion program data from HMIS, which show that families who receive Diversion services in your county have good outcomes relative to other counties in the state that don't offer Diversion. What are some of the best practices specific to your Diversion program in your county that might account for that?
  10. Based on your overall experience, please explain why you think having Diversion as part of the service array is a good or a bad thing for families, and particularly for families of color?



11. Is there anything we didn't ask you today that you think is important for us to know about your experience implementing Diversion services?