

Early Childhood Development at Simpson Housing

Grant Type: *Capacity-building grant*

Grant Amount: *\$30,000 over 2 years*

Organization: *Sauer Children's Renew Foundation*



What was the objective of your grant or initiative?

Transitional housing programs for families are very focused on the needs of the adult in order to stabilize the family. They often have programs for school-aged children but not for the 0- to 4-year-olds, frequently stating that the youngest children are the domain of the parent. However, children's development does not wait for the family to be stable.

Our objective was to provide the support the children and parents needed to make sure that each child was on track developmentally through the family's crisis.

What was your approach?

This transitional housing program came to us with the idea. We funded a consultant to train the family advocates (caseworkers), who have the trust of the parent, on the developmental stages and needs of 0- to 4-year-old children.

That approach changed the way the family advocates (caseworkers) did their work and shined a light on the youngest children. We could have added an early childhood specialist to the staff, but by making early childhood education the responsibility of the family advocates, the entire organization realized it needed to serve the needs of every human being in their facility. The chaos and instability of homelessness does not just affect the adults.

What were the outsized results?

The family advocates now believe they are there to serve every member of the family—

and not just the adults. Children are screened for developmental disabilities and hooked into services early, and placed into preschools that meet the needs of each child and the family.

This grant helped this organization see that they needed to serve every human being in their facility, no matter how small. By doing so, it helped the family as a whole and strengthened the organization's relationship with the family.

This initiative was successful because the front-line staff could see the importance of this work and were willing to take on the extra responsibility. The organization was ready to make this change, and embedding early childhood knowledge in the people with whom parents already had a relationship and trusted caused the project to take off quickly and made it sustainable. They told us that never had such a small grant had such a large impact on their organization.

