



Pilot Study | Housing and Early Childhood

Conducted by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago in Partnership with The Connection, Inc. (TCI) and ABCD

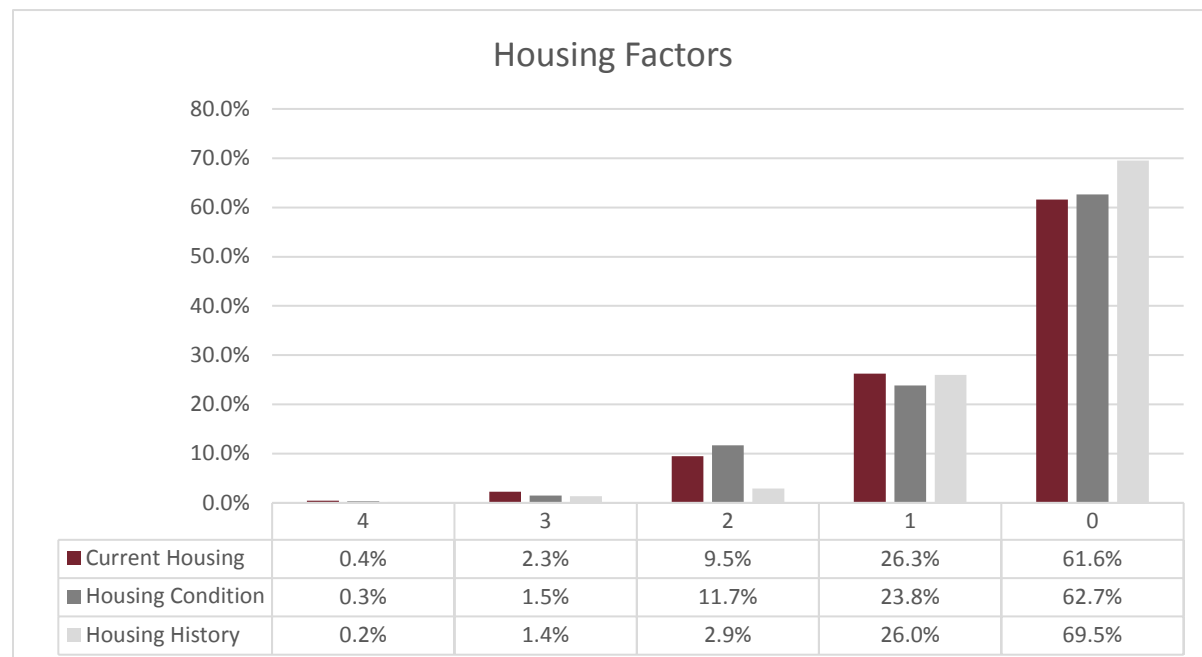
ABCD Family Workers used the *Quick Risks and Assets for Family Triage-Early Childhood (QRAFT-EC)*, a screening tool, to assess housing conditions and other critical contributors to child well-being among 922 families. Housing and family characteristics are rated on a scale of 0 (asset/not a barrier) to 4 (severe barrier).

- Average household income ~ \$17,000 per year (19% of families had no income).
- 8% of primary caregivers held a bachelor's degree or higher
- 57% of families met income eligibility (30% of area median income) for a housing voucher and an additional 30% of families were eligible at the 50% median income level.
- There are typically long waits for housing vouchers and few housing options even with voucher in hand.

We examined 4 research questions (RQs).

1. RQ1: What is the prevalence of barriers to family well-being among families whose young children are enrolled in ABCD early childhood programs?

- 3.5% of families had a significant or severe barrier on any of the three housing factors (versus 9.1% of clients in TCI's child welfare population).
- Families who met the significant to severe threshold for housing risk reported substantially lower income on average (\$4,445.54) in comparison to families not facing housing risk (\$17,644.10).



2.

3. RQ2: Does the experience of significant to severe housing challenges relate to other family characteristics?

Yes.¹ We find substantial differences in physical health (parent), income management, social networks, parenting, and Head Start attendance. Housing challenges frequently co-occur with other barriers to child well-being.

4. RQ3: How did family caseworkers utilize the QRAFT-EC? What is the perceived burden and utility of use?

- Easy or very easy to use, approximately 5 minutes to complete
- Focuses worker attention on basic family needs that are critical for healthy development.
- Community housing stock is insufficient to meet the needs of many enrolled families.

5. RQ4: What are common challenges that case managers and families face in the pursuit of housing and related supports toward family self sufficiency and well-being? What does an ideal set of supports look like?

- Several factors contribute to housing instability in Bridgeport, including limited employment opportunities, an expensive housing market, and limited availability of social assistance.
- Barriers to receiving assistance from service agencies are:
 - Structural: Requirements of programs challenging to both conform to and document due to complex and changing family circumstances.
 - Social: Families accumulate unhelpful experiences with both public and private sector providers, leading to reluctance.
- Family caseworkers found it difficult to discuss service allocation because of the tension between addressing crisis needs versus the prevention of a crisis.



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¹ We compared two subgroups: (1) the majority of families with housing as an asset, mild barrier, or moderate barrier to well-being (N=890) and (2) families in which housing is a significant to severe barrier (N=32, 3 or 4 on any housing item).