Appendix H: Discussion Guide for Implementation Study Interviews: Public Child Welfare Agency FUP Management (Interview, Second Site Visit)

This information is being collected to inform the evaluation of the Family Unification Program (FUP) being conducted by a research team at the Urban Institute, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and Child Trends. This information will be used to inform the US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (HHS ACF) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to improve the administration of the FUP program. All the information you provide will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

If you have questions or concerns about the study, please contact:

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If you agree to participate in this study and feel that your rights have been violated or that you have
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Discussion Guide for Implementation Study Interviews with Public Child Welfare Agency FUP Management (Interview, Second Site Visit)

Second Site Visit (6-9 months after implementation)

Background

- What is your position at the agency?

- Is FUP the only program you work on?

Child Welfare Services Flow

Please describe the child welfare services case flow before the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Please describe how reports of abuse and neglect come into your system. How would a child or family come to the attention of your agency?

- How many reports do you receive each year? What proportion (or number) of reports are investigated?

- What is the process for responding to reports? (e.g., emergency response, court intervention, voluntary versus involuntary involvement, etc.).

- What are the possible outcomes of an investigation and the court's disposition? (e.g., case opened with services (child remains at home); Case not open, but family receives services)

- Is the court involved in the process? If so, when does the court become involved and when?

- How do you decide which families remain in the system (i.e., have an open case), but remain intact ("preservation families"), and under which conditions a child is removed from the home ("reunification families")?

- Please describe the reunification process (e.g. what does the court do, what does the public child welfare agency do, does reunification need to occur within a particular timeframe etc.).

- What types of services do "preservation families" receive?

- o Are there any other housing resources available through child welfare other than FUP?

- What types of services do "reunification families" receive?

  - o Are there any other housing resources available through child welfare other than FUP?

- Please describe how things have changed since the COVID-19 pandemic.

  - o *Probes: Have there been changes to the number of reports of abuse and neglect the agency receives? Has it changed how often you meet with clients? And how you meet with clients? Has it changed the services offered to clients?*

    - Are these changes permanent or temporary?

FUP Voucher Distribution

- Our records indicate your plan was to distribute vouchers as follows:

  [From information collected to create the evaluation plan, relate plan regarding serving families and youth, allocations of vouchers across families and youth, allocation of vouchers across family types, allocation of vouchers as tenant-based or project-based, allocation of vouchers across partners.]

  - o Has any of this plan changed? If so, what is the current plan?

  - o Why did you change the plan?

Eligibility, Referral Process, and Screening

- Our records indicate your eligibility guidelines are as follows:

  [From information collected to create the evaluation plan]

  - o Has any of these guidelines changed? If so, what are the current guidelines?

  - o Why did you change the guidelines?

- Our records indicate your identification and referral process is as follows:

[From information collected to create the evaluation plan]

- o Before COVID-19, had any of this process changed? If so, what was the process before COVID-19?

- o Why did you change the process?

- o Have you changed the process at all since COVID-19? If so, how?

    - ▪ *Probe: Have you stopped requiring signatures? Have you discovered new ways of identifying families?*
  - o Are these changes permanent or temporary?

Program Model

- • Thinking about how things worked before COVID-19: Please describe how households move through the program.

  - o What types of assistance are provided with the housing application and voucher process? (e.g. gathering documentation, filling out the form)

  - o What types of assistance are provided with the housing search, if any?

  - o After the FUP household signs a lease, do they receive any services from the PHA? If so, please describe.

  - o Do they receive any services from the PCWA? If so, please describe.

  - o Do they receive any services from the local continuum of care? If so, please describe.

  - o Do they receive any services from other community providers? If so, please describe.

  - o Are any of these services specifically given to FUP families or are they what all reunifying families receive?

  - o How long does the program plan to provide services to families? Do they need to keep the case open to provide the services? How often are the cases kept open just to continue providing services?

- o Have any families refused services?

    - ▪ If so, how many families have refused? Why have they refused?

- o Have any of the services or assistance available to families changed since COVID-19?

    - ▪ Has it changed how often or how service providers meet with families?

    - ▪ Are additional services now available? Are some services no longer available?

    - o Are these changes permanent or temporary?

Data Systems

- What type of data system do you use to record data for the FUP program?

- What types of information do you track?

- Who is responsible for entering/tracking the information?

- How do you use the information you collect?

- Has your data system changed since beginning implementation of the FUP program?

Partnership with Public Housing Agency/Other Providers

- Please describe the structure of your partnership with the public housing agency and the continuum of care (CoC).

    - o What part of the FUP program is the responsibility of the public child welfare agency?

    - o What part of the FUP program is the responsibility of the PHA?

    - o What part of the FUP program is the responsibility of the CoC?

    - o Please describe the way the FUP program is coordinated with the public housing agency and the continuum of care.

- How often do agency officials meet to review whether the program is operating as desired and meeting its goals?

- How often do the liaisons or program managers meet?

- Do you jointly discuss the eligibility of specific families before they are referred?

- Do you jointly discuss the status of families' applications, housing search, and leasing up after referral?

- Do you jointly discuss the status of housed families in terms of maintaining their housing?

- Do you coordinate data systems?

- Does the PCWA provide training to PHA or CoC staff on child welfare families and their special circumstances as a result of being involved in child welfare (e.g. their child may not be with them when they move into housing)?

- Does the PHA provide training to the PCWA on voucher eligibility and housing requirements?

- Does the CoC provide training to the PCWA on coordinated entry? On homelessness services?

o How would you characterize the strength of your relationship with the PHA? Why?

- *Probe: Are there clear roles and responsibilities? Is there a sense of common mission? Are processes tailored to work effectively, or are they built as work-arounds to existing processes? Is there trust between the agencies? Has the partnership led to other joint ventures?*

o How would you characterize the strength of your relationship with the CoC? Why?

- *Probe: Are there clear roles and responsibilities? Is there a sense of common mission? Are processes tailored to work effectively, or are they built as work-arounds to existing processes? Is there trust between the agencies? Has the partnership led to other joint ventures?*

- Are there other partners in the FUP program? If so, please describe how the FUP program is coordinated with them, including [as laid out above] (a) frequency of meetings/reviews of the program among agency officials, (b) frequency of meetings between liaisons or program managers, (c) joint discussion of the status of families, and (d) coordination of data systems)

Community Context

- Thinking about before COVID-19: How has the local housing market affected your ability to house families with a FUP voucher?

  - Has this changed at all during COVID-19? If so how?

- Thinking about before COVID-19: Please describe the social services landscape. How widely available are other social services?

  - Has this changed at all during COVID-19? If so how?

- Thinking about before COVID-19: How widely available are housing assistance programs? E.g. public housing? Section 8 vouchers? State funded vouchers?

  o How widely available are these programs for child welfare involved families?

  o Has this changed at all during COVID-19? If so how?

Implementation Challenges and Supports

We'd like to hear how implementing the FUP program has gone.

- How have caseworkers done identifying FUP-eligible families?

  o Do they refer mainly eligible families or are there ineligible families referred?

  o How well do caseworkers understand the eligibility criteria?

- - Are there particular criteria they struggle with *(probe: housing instability, time to reunification, housing need for preservation families)?*

- Have you encountered any other challenges implementing the FUP program?

    - o Have you had any challenges adhering to the numbers of vouchers for specific groups such as families and youth or types of families?

    - o Have you had any challenges screening families to meet the PHA voucher eligibility requirements?

    - o Have you had any challenges helping families during the application or voucher issuance process?

    - o Have you had any challenges helping families get a lease?

    - o Have you had challenges with matching the families' need for housing with the time to make a referral, obtain a voucher, and find housing?

- Have you had challenges providing services to families because you couldn't keep their case open long enough?Have you had challenges working with the PHA due to:

    - o Poor communication?

    - o Difficulty getting in touch with the right person?

    - o Difficulty getting problems resolved?

    - o Lack of data sharing?

    - o Unwillingness to be flexible in their application requirements?

    - o They don't provide the services you thought they would?

- How have you overcome those challenges?

- Have any factors been particularly helpful in implementing the program?

Big Picture and Reflecting

- How does housing make a difference for these families?

- If you had the opportunity, what would you do to change or improve the FUP program?

    o *Probe for additional services, eligibility/screening criteria, length of services*

- Do you think FUP achieve its goals? Are you able to keep families together and/or get families reunited with FUP?

Closing

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

Is there anything that I did not ask about that you think I should know about the FUP program or your experience with FUP families?

Do you have any final questions for me about the study, or about the research team?