The Effectiveness of Supporting Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System: Findings from a CT Study
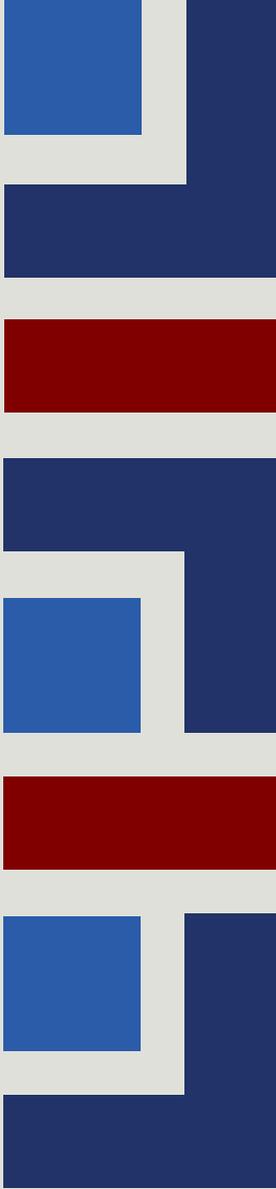
Anne F. Farrell, Ph.D.
Director of Research
Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
afarrell@chapinhall.org 203.240.3610
Preston Britner, UConn; Kate Parr, UConn; Melissa Kull, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

Housing and Child Well Being

- Safe, stable housing: determinant of child and family well-being.
- Individuals born into poverty experience very little control over housing options, quality, stability
- Housing/homelessness is linked with child welfare involvement
  - caseworker judgments of risk and well being
  - foster care placements; delayed reunification
- Housing instability & homelessness are linked to disparate outcomes across systems and
- Housing, education policy (formal and de facto) – drivers of inequity

Families experiencing homelessness are heterogeneous
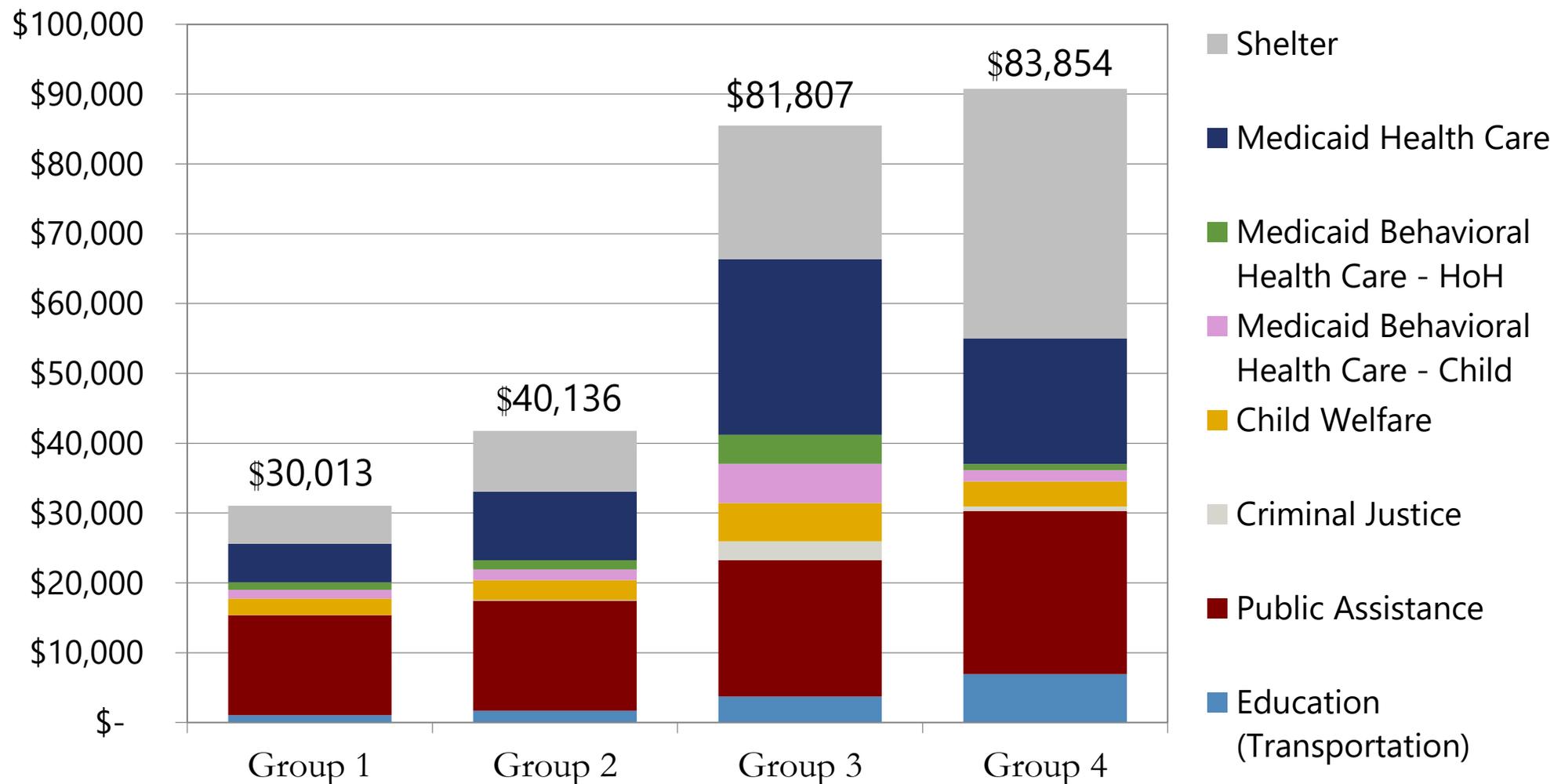
Supportive Housing for Families (SHF)

Connecticut's Statewide Model (began C. 1998)

- Family preservation: Prevent foster care placement, avert family separation

- Family Reunification: Prepare for return from care, reduce length/cost of out-of-home care

- Target families with housing risks (homeless; inadequate or unstable housing); most parents have mental health and/or substance use issues, and children display an array of risks/needs.
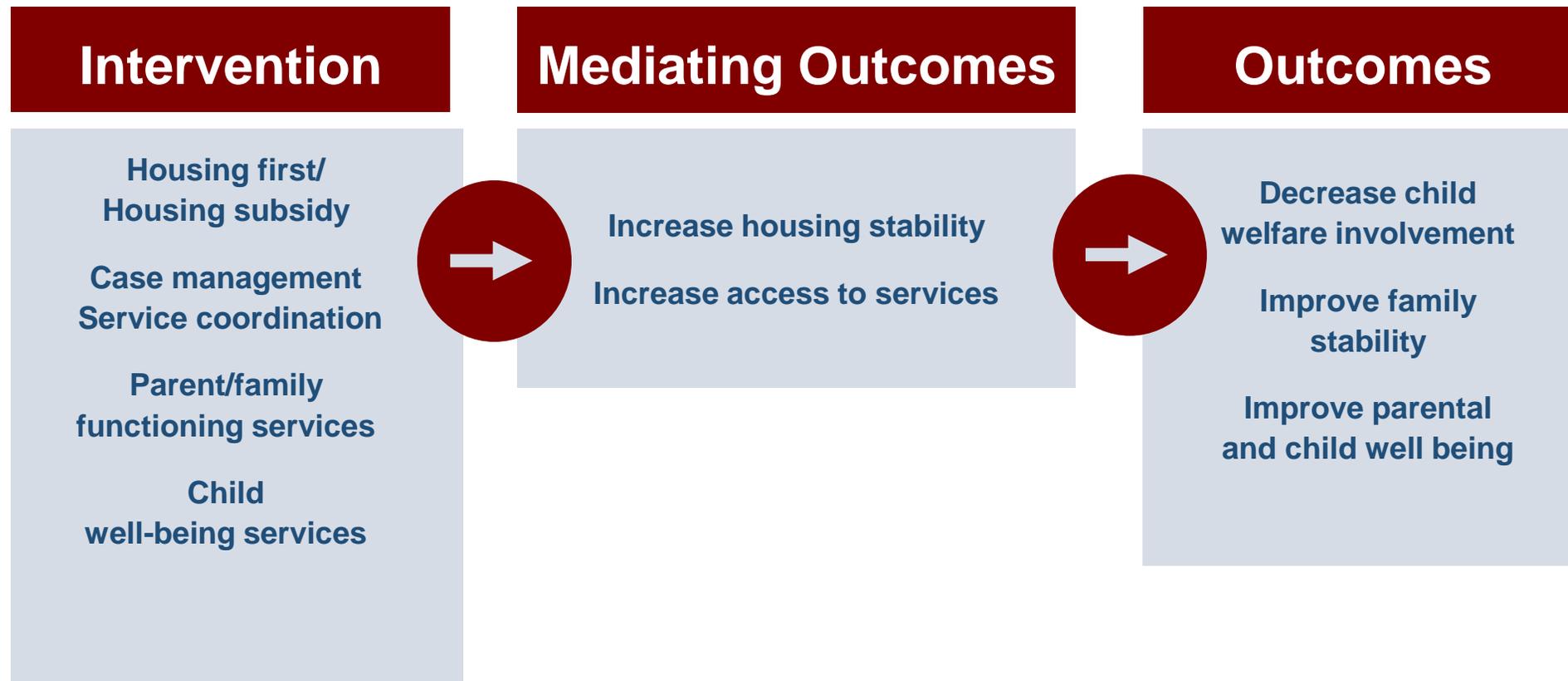
The 20+ Year Partnership

- The Department of Children and Families (DCF) funds the program, refers clients, coordinates with the service provider.

- The Connection, Inc. (TCI) is the service hub, providing providing clinical assessment, housing searches, temporary subsidies, and intensive case management.

- Permanent housing vouchers are dedicated from the CT Department of Housing.

- Evaluators (Chapin Hall, UConn) study program (implementation/process, outcomes, and).

The Connection   CHAPIN HALL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO   UCONN UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT   DCF CONNECTICUT

SHF – Logic & Questions

- **Logic**: Hierarchy of needs; address basics before higher order needs.
- **Housing as a platform** for other interventions: case management; trauma, substance abuse tx; parenting; ed/vocational support.
- **Promise:** By 2013, CT had a 10+ year history of supportive housing for families in the child welfare system, with research showing promise.
- **Questions:**
  1. Can we fully (experimentally) demonstrate effectiveness? Will success be maintained?
  2. What are the essential components of effectiveness?
  3. Can cost savings accrue within and across systems?

The Connection · CHAPIN HALL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO · UCONN UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT · DCF CONNECTICUT

Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing Demonstration

Intervention

Housing first/
Housing subsidy

Case management
Service coordination

Parent/family
functioning services

Child
well-being services

Mediating Outcomes

Increase housing stability

Increase access to services

Outcomes

Decrease child
welfare involvement

Improve family
stability

Improve parental
and child well being

5 Demonstration Sites

CA **San Francisco, CA**
San Francisco Human Services Agency
Families Moving Forward

IA **Cedar Rapids, IA**
Four Oaks Family and Children's Services
Partners United for Supportive Housing

TN **Memphis, TN**
Community Alliance for the Homeless
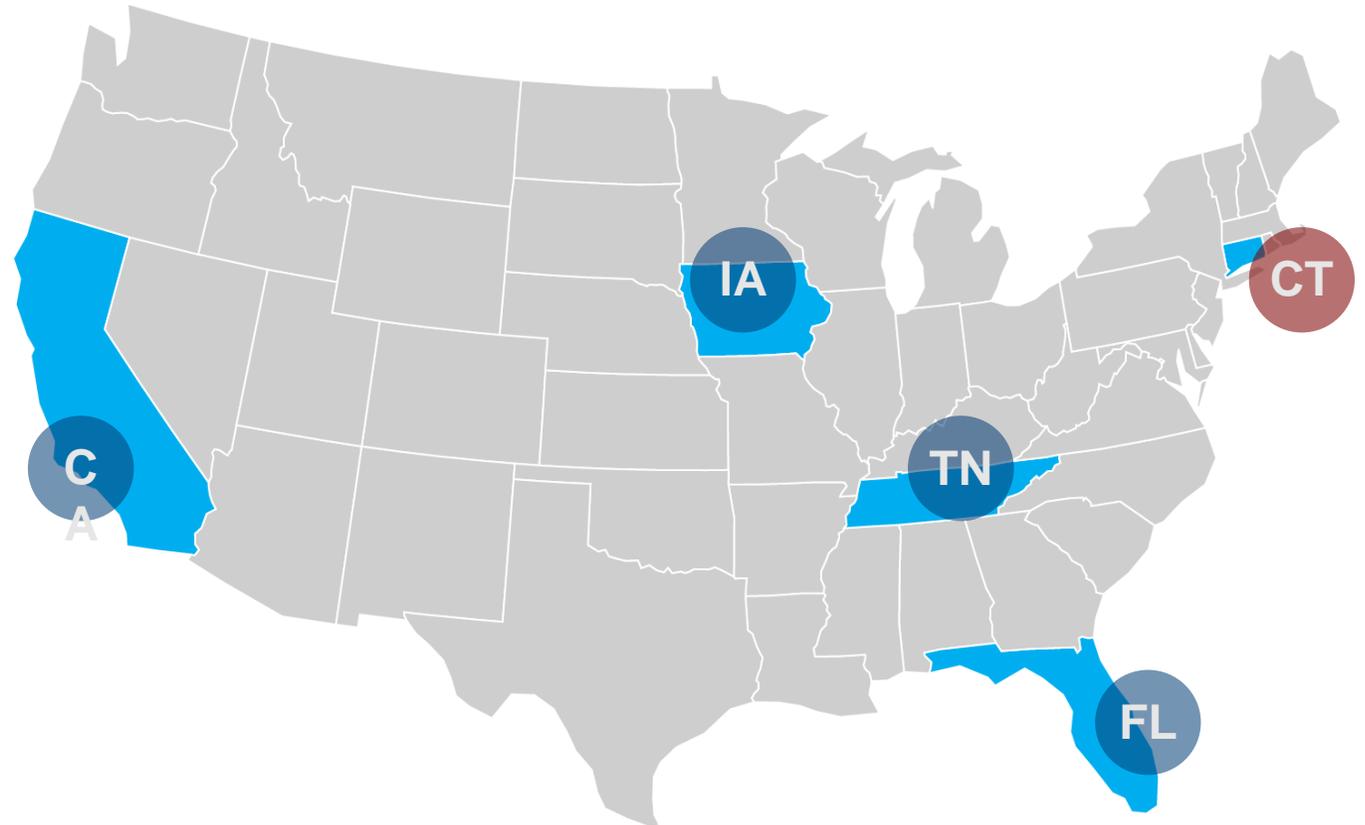**Memphis Strong Families Initiative**

CT **State of Connecticut**
Department of Children and Families
Intensive Supportive Housing for Families

CT **Broward County, FL**
Kids in Distress, Inc.
HEART Alliance

Demonstration Study: Intensive Supportive Housing Evaluation Comparison Groups

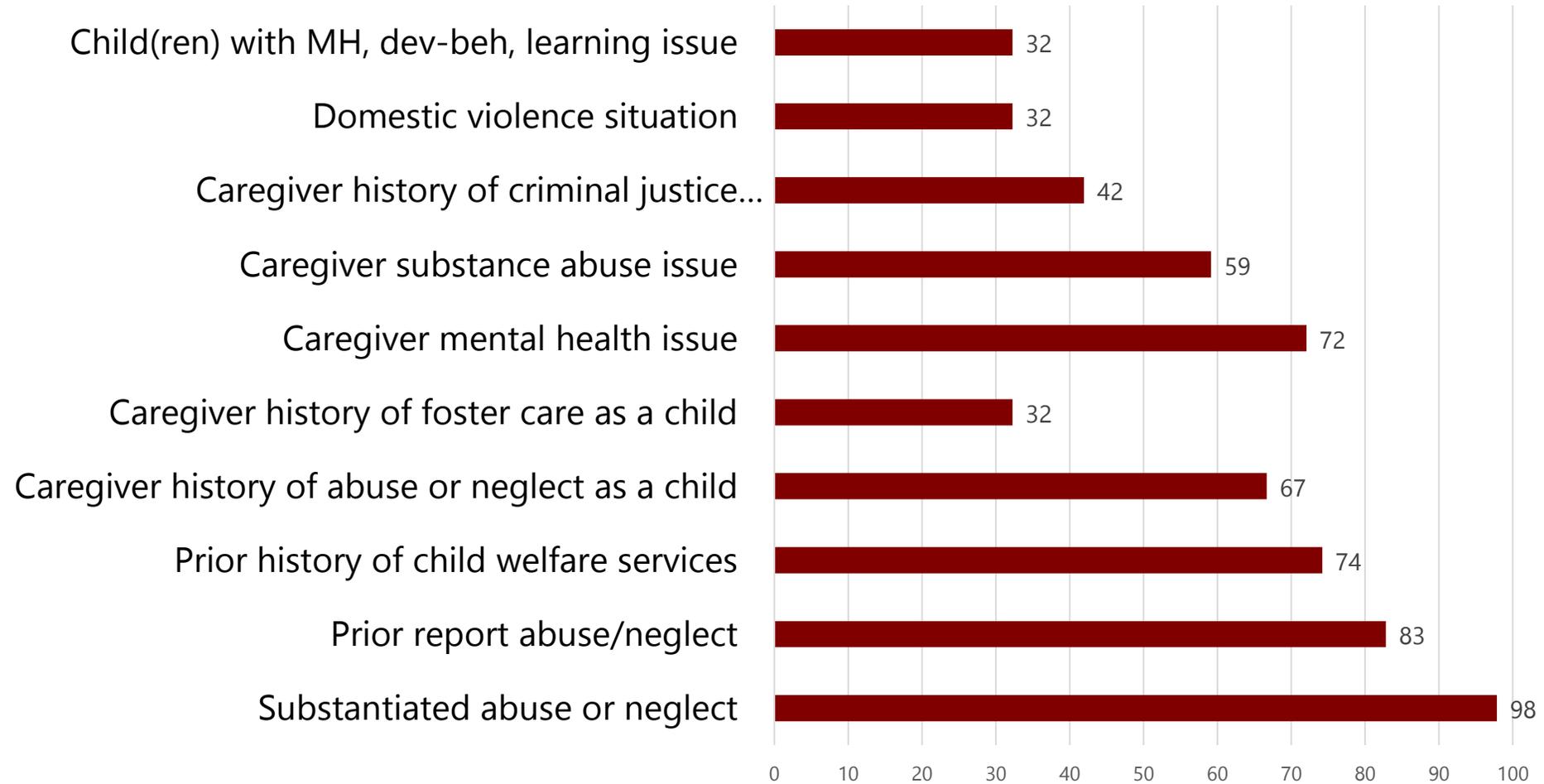| DCF Business as Usual (BAU)	Project SHF	Intensive SHF
• Community Services • Intensive Family Preservation Services • Foster Care	• Housing assistance • Case Management	• Housing assistance • Intensive case management • Vocational Specialist • Family Teaming

Randomized controlled trial with 3 arms (n_{Tot}=205, $n_{children}$=418)

- Business as usual (BAU), $n = 104$
- Supportive Housing for Families (SHF), $n = 50$
- Intensive Supportive Housing for Families (ISHF), $n = 50$

CT Research Questions

Objective	Research Question	Performance Measure/Indicator	Data Source	Agency
Improved child welfare outcomes	**Primary**: Do clients who receive supportive housing services (SHF and ISHF interventions combined) have better child welfare outcomes compared to those in the BAU? **Secondary:** Are there differential effects by level of intervention (ISHF/PSHF)?	Family reunification Child removal New child maltreatment incidents Cases closed and re-opened	DCF database (LINK)	DCF
Improved housing stability	**Primary**: Do clients who receive SH demonstrate improved housing stability compared to those in the BAU intervention? **Secondary:** Are there differential effects by level of intervention for ISHF and PSHF?	Shelter stay	HMIS	CT Coordinated Access Network (Continuum of Care; CCEH)
		Leased up Number of moves Quality of living situation Homeless spells Eviction	Urban Institute Survey LINK CAMIS	Urban TCI DCF

CT Sample (% of families)

Child(ren) with MH, dev-beh, learning issue — 32
Domestic violence situation — 32
Caregiver history of criminal justice… — 42
Caregiver substance abuse issue — 59
Caregiver mental health issue — 72
Caregiver history of foster care as a child — 32
Caregiver history of abuse or neglect as a child — 67
Prior history of child welfare services — 74
Prior report abuse/neglect — 83
Substantiated abuse or neglect — 98

The Connection · CHAPIN HALL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO · UCONN UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT · DCF CONNECTICUT

CT Findings

Findings

- Process/implementation study: 4/5 elements of contrast effective
- Significant differences between treatment and control groups, from 12 months (12, 18, 24 months)
- Collapsed the two intervention groups as first analytic set
- Results mostly hold when SHF/ISHF are tested separately
- The costs of BAU and PSHF were roughly equivalent, with clear differences in outcome

Observations

- High rates of prior maltreatment, placement, etc.
- Targeting was effective
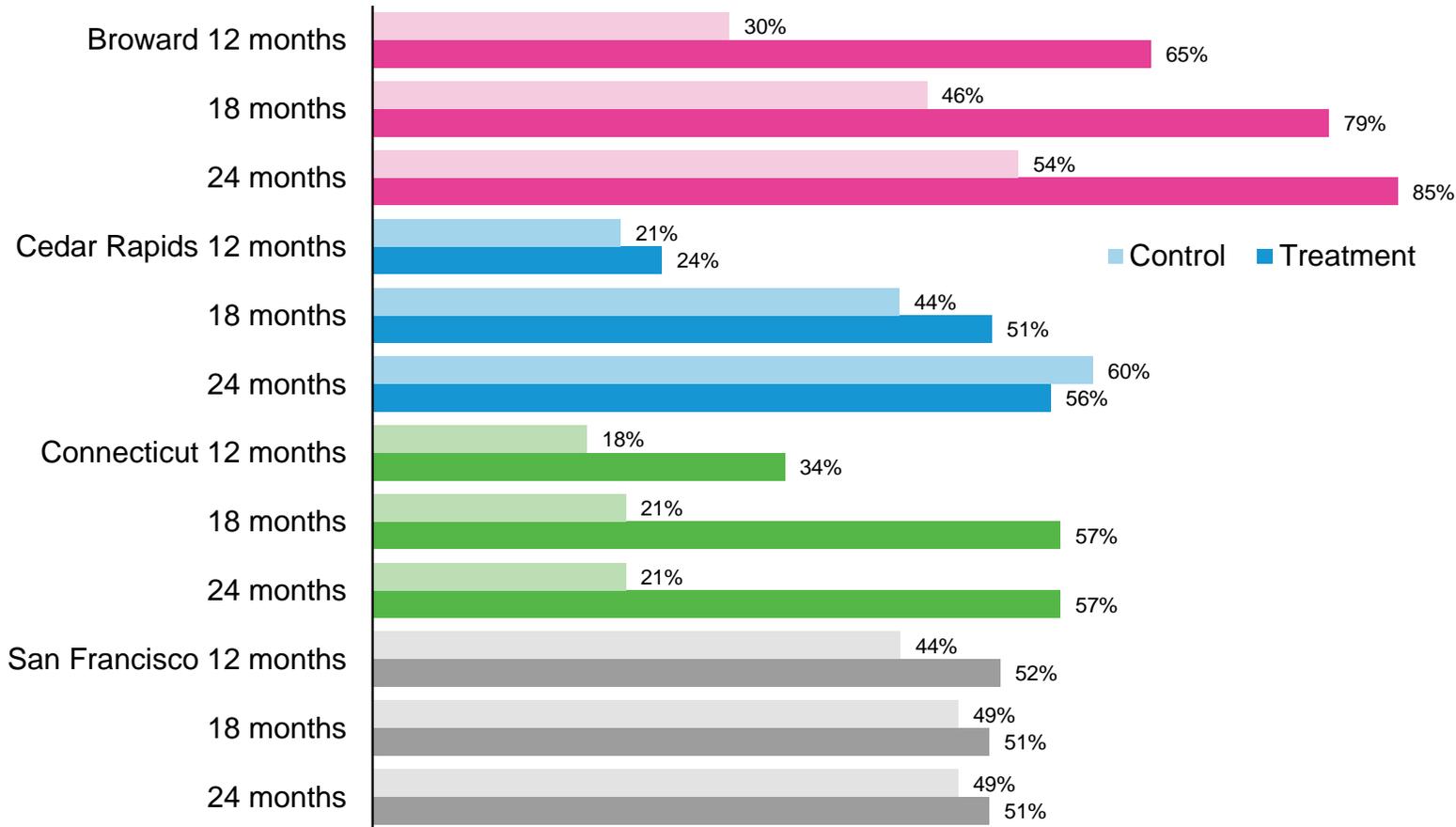- Low base rates for preservation/reunification in the regions (control group)

CT FINDINGS

Child is removed from family
- 40% **BAU** $59K
- 3% **PSHF** $48K
- 21% **ISHF** $56K
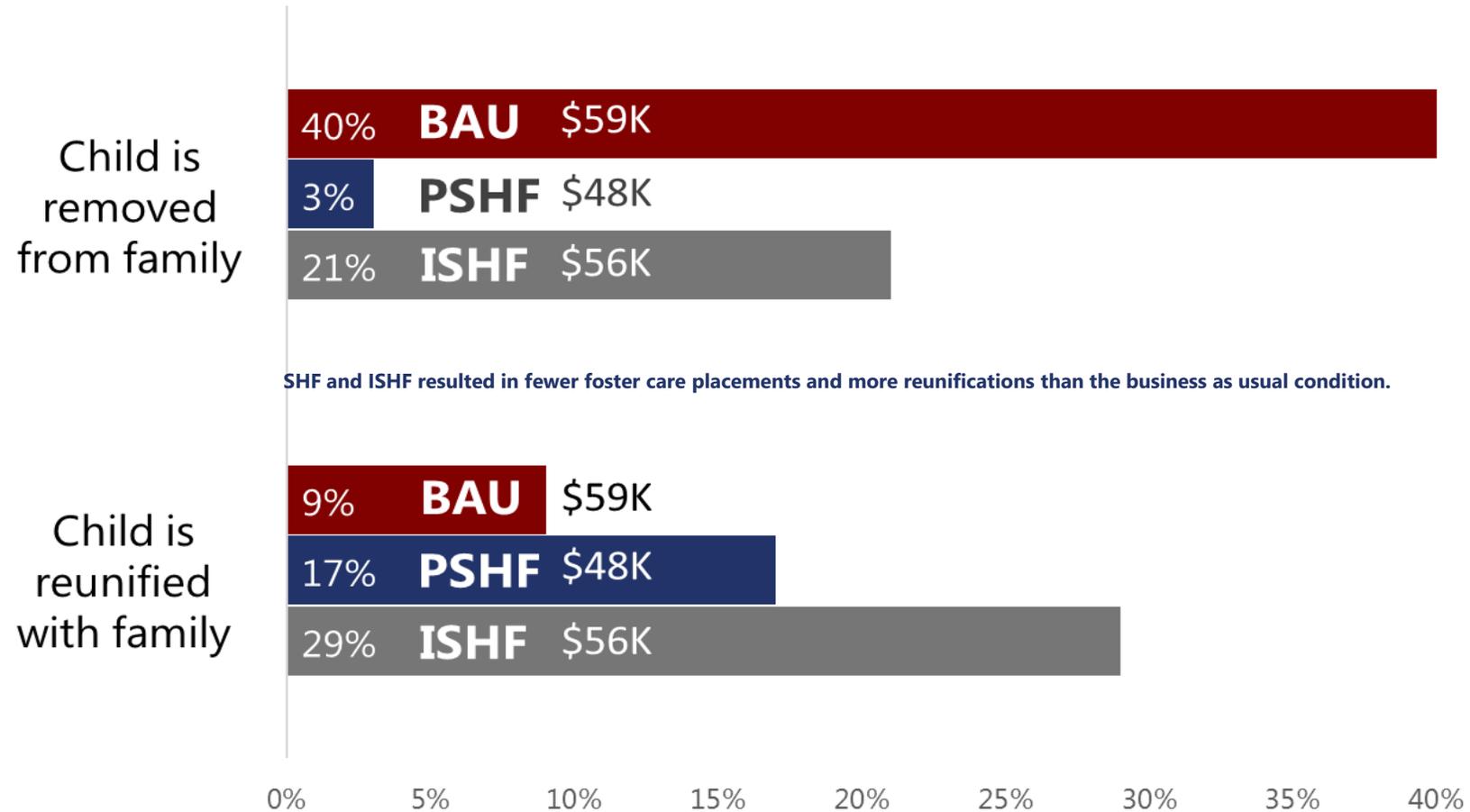
SHF and ISHF resulted in fewer foster care placements and more reunifications than the business as usual condition.

Child is reunified with family
- 9% **BAU** $59K
- 17% **PSHF** $48K
- 29% **ISHF** $56K

Figure: Percent of child removals and family reunifications by intervention group, with median costs, for 24 months

Farrell, A. F., Britner, P. A., Kull, M. A., Struzinski, D. L., Somaroo-Rodriguez, S. K., Parr, K., Westberg, L., Cronin, B., & Humphrey, C. (2018, December). *Final Report: Connecticut's Intensive Supportive Housing for Families Program.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Differences in Removals by Site
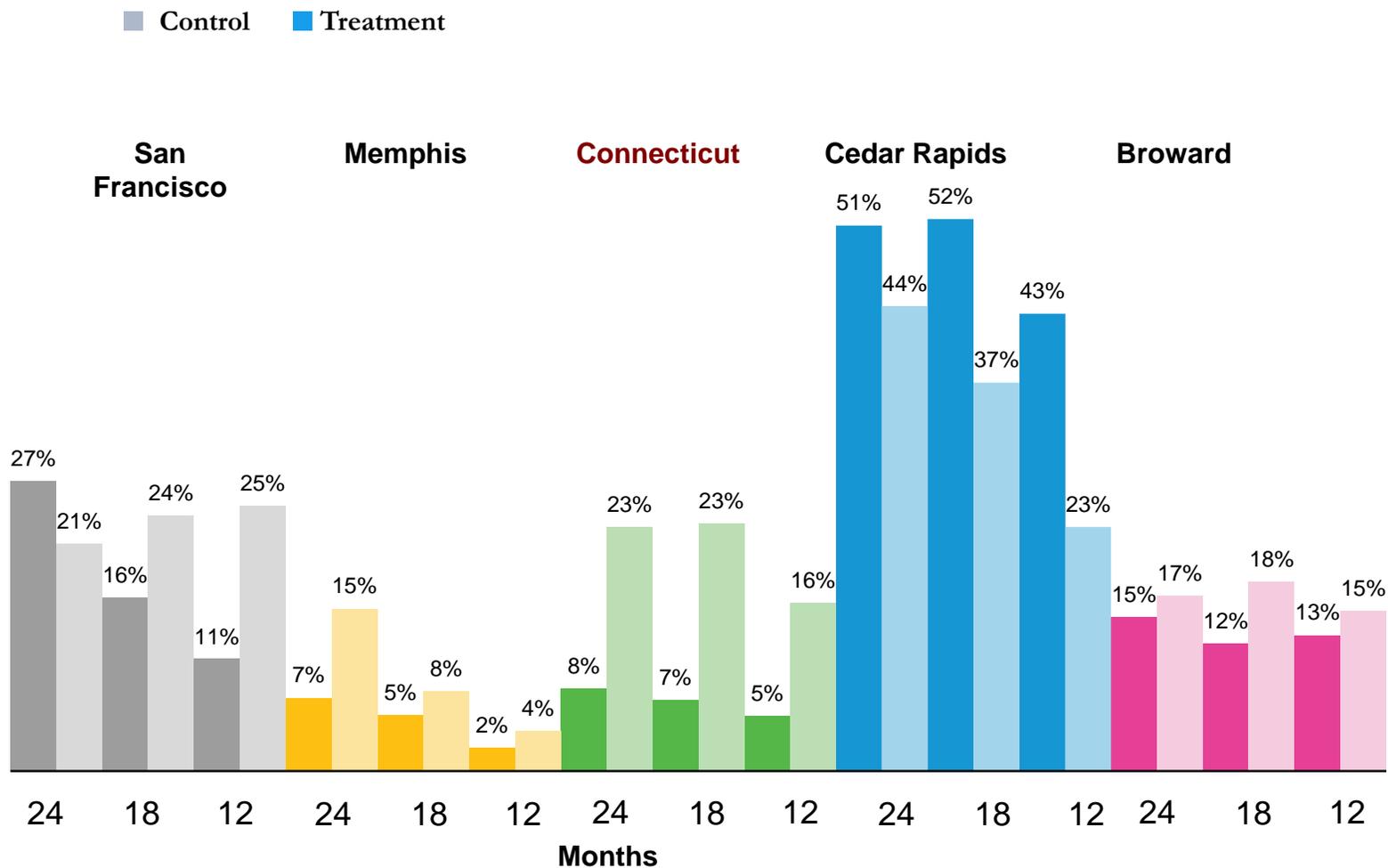
Impacts

San Francisco
12 months: -14.5%**
18 months: -7.8%†
24 months: 5.9%

Memphis
12 months: -1.6%†
18 months: -2.2 %
24 months: -8.3%†

Connecticut
12 months: -10.6%*
18 months: -16.5%***
24 months: -15.2%**

Cedar Rapids
12 months: 20.1%**
18 months: 15.5%†
24 months: 7.6%

Broward
12 months: -2.2%
18 months: -5.9%†
24 months: -2.0%

Conclusions and next steps

- National model emerging from CT; from observational study to RCT
- Clear evidence of effectiveness of Supportive Housing.
- Superior outcomes at similar cost to business as usual
- Higher "dosage" of case management produces marginal benefit
- Housing screening tool critical to identify housing concerns early in child welfare involvement → target resources promptly
- Submit to *Families First Clearinghouse*
- Additional cross-systems follow-up: child welfare, educational, vocational, wage outcomes, child/family health and well-being
- Incorporate lessons into DCF practice: screening, SH model, modifications
- Instructive on:
  - Prompt identification and intervention (screening); practice elements (family empowerment)
  - Importance of housing as platform in families at the "deep end" of services
  - Use of program and administrative data to examine program effectiveness

Thank you
Questions and Discussion

- Thanks to our state and community partners, Urban Institute.
- Thank you for the opportunity to share this work.

- Questions and Discussion

- Contact information
    afarrell@chapinhall.org
    203.240.3610