



**Supplemental Report 1 to Community Shelter Board:
Evaluation of Central Ohio's Stable Families Program
(Diversion Study)**

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I. Executive Summary

The Community Shelter Board (CSB) and its partners, Communities In Schools (CIS), Gladden Community House and Central Community House, are implementing the Stable Families Pilot Program (Stable Families) in Franklin County over the next three years. The primary mission of Stable Families is to help families at imminent risk of becoming homeless to remain in their homes or to find stable housing and not enter the family emergency shelter system.

The YWCA Family Center serves as the main gateway for entrance into the family emergency shelter system. As such, they are a primary point for linking families who need assistance to programs that can provide it. Tracking families' contact with the YWCA Family Center and their subsequent contacts, if applicable, is one way to measure the impact of Stable Families on the family shelter system as a whole.

Using data from the YWCA Family Center (YWCAFC), The Strategy Team, Ltd. performed analyses to answer the following key questions for the period of interest (May, 2008 – October, 2008):

- What were the characteristics of families who contacted the YWCA Family Center and were they diverted to Stable Families or other community resources?
- Were families diverted to Stable Families more or less likely to contact the YWCA Family Center again?
- How many families who were referred to Stable Families from other sources contacted the YWCA Family Center at a later date seeking assistance?
- What (if anything) predicts re-contacting the YWCAFC?

Summary of results

82 families were diverted from the YWCAFC to a community resource at their first or only contact, and 43% of these families were diverted to Stable Families.

- Of the 35 families diverted to Stable Families:
 - 12 families enrolled in the program, only 1 of these families re-contacted the YWCAFC.
 - In total, 4 of the 35 families diverted to Stable Families (11.4%) contacted the YWCAFC a second time.
- Of the 47 families diverted to other community resources, 4.3% contacted the YWCAFC a second time.
- Families were more likely to be diverted to Stable Families than other resources early on in this period (i.e. from May – August) as opposed to later (e.g. September – October). This finding may explain why a larger proportion of families who were diverted to Stable Families contacted the YWCAFC again during this period.

At this time, the only statistically significant predictors of shelter re-contact are the following:

- Families who called earlier in the field period were more likely to contact the YWCAFC more than once; and
- Families with a head of household who was unemployed at any time during the period were more likely to contact the YWCAFC more than once.

II. Background and Overview

A. Overview of program

The Community Shelter Board (CSB) and its partners, Communities In Schools (CIS), Gladden Community House and Central Community House, are implementing the Stable Families Pilot Program (Stable Families) in Franklin County over the next three years. The primary mission of Stable Families is to help families who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless to remain in their homes or to find stable housing and not enter the family emergency shelter system.

The YWCA Family Center (YWCAFC) serves as the main gateway for entrance into the family emergency shelter system. As such, they are a primary point for linking families who need assistance to programs that can provide it. Tracking families' contact with the YWCA Family Center and their subsequent contacts, if applicable, is one way to measure the impact of Stable Families on the family shelter system as a whole.

To this end, Community Shelter Board contracted with The Strategy Team, Ltd. to implement an additional study to supplement the ongoing evaluation of Stable Families, investigating whether 1) any families diverted to Stable Families from the YWCA Family Center contacted the center again at any point following their initial diversion; and 2) any families who were referred to Stable Families from other sources contacted the YWCA Family Center at any point following their referral to the program; and 3) any demographic variables are associated with / predictive of subsequent contacts.

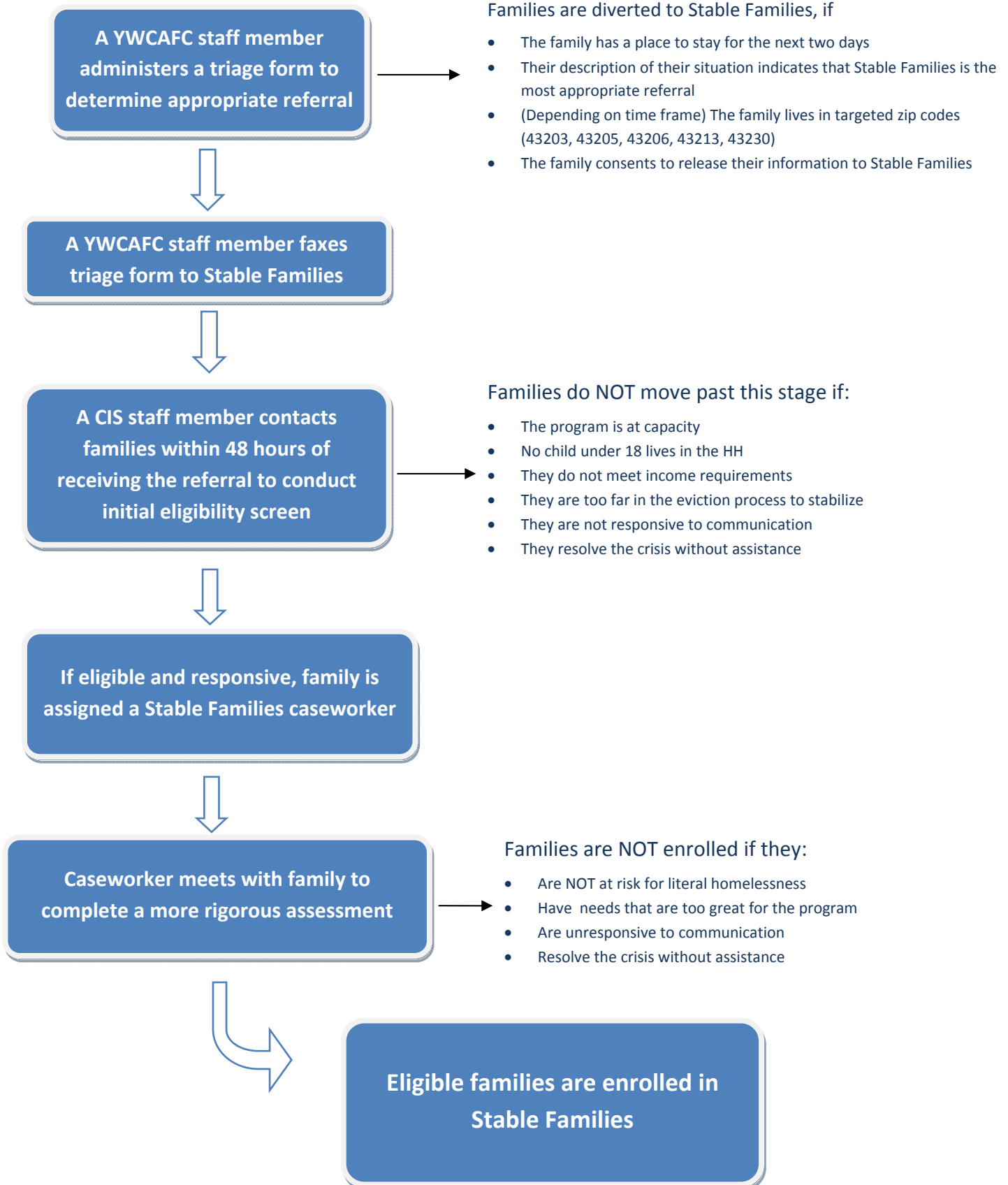
B. Referral Process

Because the program requires coordination of multiple agencies, the referral process is not necessarily as straightforward as one might expect, and understanding this referral process can provide a context for the findings reported here. This process starts when a family contacts the YWCAFC seeking assistance. During this initial phone call a YWCAFC staff member completes a triage form with the family, and forwards this form to CIS if they are appropriate candidates for the program (as indicated by their area of residence, ability to house themselves for at least 48 hours and their consent to release their contact information to CIS).

Within 48 hours, a CIS staff member contacts the family to administer a screening and eligibility interview by phone to see if they meet the most basic requirements for participation, including income, family composition and housing requirements. Families that qualify according to this initial screening are assigned a caseworker who meets with the family to conduct an in depth assessment of the family's situation. Families that are good candidates for this highly targeted program (i.e. their housing situation or income is stable enough that short term assistance will be beneficial, they are willing to participate in a case management intensive program and they do not have mental health, criminal or psychological needs that are too great for the program) are enrolled in Stable Families. Please see Figure 1 for a graphical depiction of the process, as well as points where families may enter or leave the process.

Figure 1: Path from initial contact to admission for YWCAFC referrals

Once a family contacts the YWCAFC for assistance...



C. Data sources

This report utilizes data from the YWCA Family Center for the first six months of Stable Families program implementation (i.e. from May 2008 – October 2008). Data consist of fields that uniquely identify heads of households, including names and social security numbers, some demographic data (e.g. gender, race, number of children in various age groups); and then a contact history, including date of contact(s) during the month and dispositions (referral and if so to what source, remaining doubled up, etc.). Columbus Service Point data regarding Stable Families screening, assessment and entry for this time period were provided by Community Shelter Board.

III. Results

The main focus of data analysis was on looking at families who sought assistance from the YWCA Family Center during the period of interest. We begin with a demographic overview, presented for all individuals who contacted the YWCA Family Center and separately for those who were diverted to Stable Families at some point.

A. What were the characteristics of families who contacted the YWCA Family Center and where were they diverted?

A total of 620 families contacted the YWCAFC from May 1 to October 31, 2008¹. 16 of these families reported having no children under 18 and were excluded from all analyses, leaving a total of 604 families.

Most families (69.2%) who contacted the YWCAFC were headed by a single adult and contained an average of 2.1 children. Over 90% of people who contacted the center were female, and most were unemployed (72.8%). Over two-thirds of heads of households were African-American (72.5%) and 24.5% were white.

¹ This represents an unduplicated count of families, considering multiple contacts both within and across months during the period.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of families contacting the YWCA Family Center

Family Type	Number (n=601)	Percentage
<i>Single adult with children</i>	416	69.2%
<i>More than one adult with children</i>	185	30.8%
Household Size	(n=601)	
<i>Two persons</i>	162	27.0%
<i>Three persons</i>	203	33.8%
<i>Four persons</i>	134	22.2%
<i>Five persons</i>	59	9.8%
<i>Six or more persons</i>	43	7.2%
Employment Status ²	(n=595)	
<i>Employed</i>	173	29.1%
<i>Unemployed</i>	433	72.8%
Race of Head of Household	(n=600)	
<i>Black or African American</i>	435	72.5%
<i>White</i>	147	24.5%
<i>Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander</i>	12	2.0%
<i>American Indian / Alaskan Native</i>	5	0.8%
<i>Asian</i>	1	0.2%
Gender of Head of Household	(n=604)	
<i>Female</i>	550	91.1%
<i>Male</i>	54	8.9%

Gender and race composition varies by household type. For example, a larger proportion of *single* adult households were headed by females (95.0%, compared to 82.2% for households with more than one adult), and African-Americans (78.3% compared to 59.5% in households with more than one adult). A smaller proportion of single adult households were white (19.1% compared to 36.8% of households with more than one adult). These differences are statistically significant.³

Table 2 (next page) presents an overview of the demographic characteristics of those who contacted the YWCA Family Center, broken down by how their situations were resolved – whether they were admitted to the family shelter, diverted to Stable Families, etc.

² 11 heads of households that returned to the YWCAFC reported being both unemployed and employed at separate visits, thus the total number will sum to greater than 595.

³ Statistical significance refers to the outcome of a statistical test. If a difference or trend is statistically significant, it is unlikely to have occurred due to chance alone. These three statistically significant differences were tested with binary logistic regression.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of families contacting the YWCAFC, by action taken at initial contact.

	Diverted to Stable Families	Diverted to Other Resource	Admitted to YWCAFC	Remained in Housing Situation ⁴	Other ⁵
Family Type	(n=35)	(n=47)	(n=273)	(n = 92)	(n = 154)
Single adult with children	77.1%	87.2%	65.6%	67.4%	69.5%
More than one adult with children	22.9%	12.8%	34.4%	32.6%	30.5%
Household Size	(n=35)	(n=47)	(n=273)	(n = 92)	(n = 154)
Two persons	28.6%	27.7%	27.5%	30.4%	23.4%
Three persons	31.4%	31.9%	34.4%	27.2%	37.7%
Four persons	22.9%	31.9%	22.0%	15.2%	24.0%
Five persons	11.4%	2.1%	7.3%	20.7%	9.7%
Six or more persons	5.7%	6.4%	8.8%	6.5%	5.2%
Employment Status	(n=35)	(n=47)	(n=272)	(n = 91)	(n = 150)
Employed	42.9%	21.3%	27.9%	25.3%	30.0%
Unemployed	57.1%	78.7%	72.1%	74.7%	70.0%
Race of Head of Household	(n=35)	(n=47)	(n=273)	(n = 92)	(n = 153)
Black or African American	82.9%	72.3%	72.9%	72.8%	69.3%
White	17.1%	23.4%	24.2%	25.0%	26.8%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	-	2.1%	2.2%	1.1%	2.6%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	-	2.1%	0.3%	1.1%	1.3%
Asian	-	-	0.3%	-	-
Gender of Head of Household	(n=35)	(n=47)	(n=273)	(n = 92)	(n = 157)
Female	88.6%	85.1%	89.8%	87.0%	98.1%
Male	11.4%	14.9%	10.3%	13.0%	1.9%

Although no significant differences were observed, some trends are worth noting regarding the characteristics of families diverted to Stable Families, compared to other families. For example, a larger proportion of families with more than one adult were diverted to Stable Families rather than other community resources (23% and 13%, respectively). However, the proportion of families with more than one adult was smaller than the proportion admitted to the YWCAFC (34%).

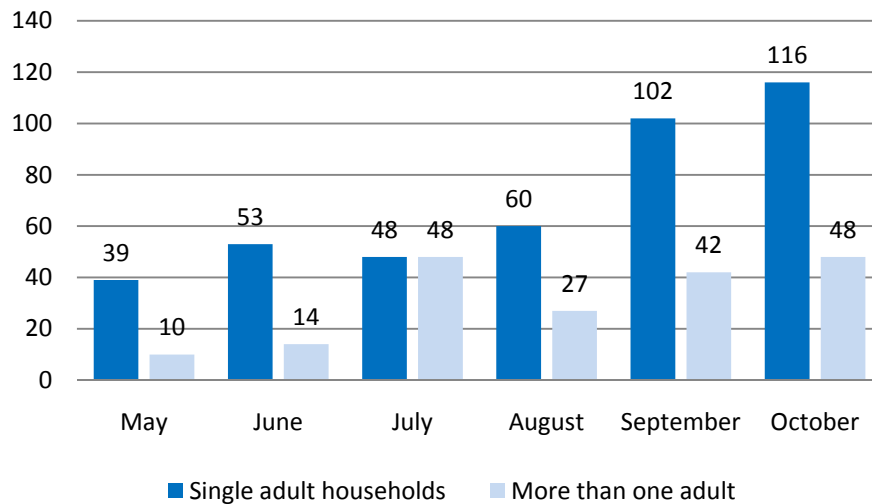
Families with employed heads of households (43%) made up a larger proportion of families diverted to Stable Families than those diverted to other resources (21%) or admitted to the shelter (28%). Similarly, more families diverted to Stable Families had African-American heads of households (83%) compared to families diverted to other resources (72%) or admitted to the shelter (73%).

⁴ It is unclear what situation these families remained in and what (if any) referrals they received.

⁵ The “other” category includes families who called the Y and could not be admitted because they were not eligible, families who were granted an intake interview or admittance to the shelter and did not show up, and families who did not complete the initial telephone call (hung up, refused to provide information, etc).

The number of families that contacted the YWCAFC increased steadily from May through October of 2008. The total number of families seeking assistance per month more than tripled, from 49 families in May to 164 families in October. As shown in Figure 2, both the number of single adult families and families with more than one adult increased significantly during this period.⁶

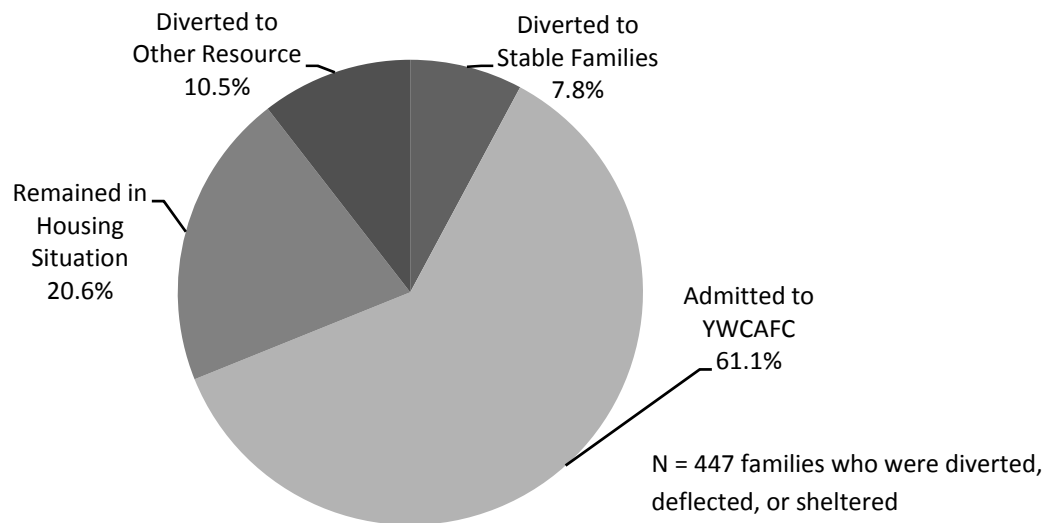
Figure 2: Trends in the number and type of families contacting YWCAFC



Of the 604 families that contacted the YWCAFC for assistance during this period, 138 families did not show up for intake or refused services, 11 families were ineligible or denied entry by the Y, and no data were available for 8 additional families. This left 447 families for analyses. Of these, a total of 82 were referred to a community resource to help prevent them from becoming homeless. Specifically, 35 families (or 7.8% of all families who contacted the YWCAFC) were diverted to Stable Families and 47 families (or 10.5%) were referred to a more appropriate community resource such as CHOICES, New Beginnings, or others. Note that 20.6% of families contacting the YWCAFC during this period were “deflected”⁷ back to their current housing situation. See Figure 3 on the following page.

⁶ As determined by linear trend analyses. This may not be surprising as September and October tend to be periods where high shelter demand is observed.

⁷ No direct assistance was offered to deflected families. It is unclear what (if any) referrals were made available to them.

Figure 3: Action Taken at Initial Contact (May – Oct 2008)

What impact did diversion to Stable Families (or to other programs) have on the likelihood of re-contacting the YWCAFC? Before turning to this question, a few caveats are in order.

First, because families were diverted to different community resources based on specific characteristics of their situation (e.g. a family with domestic violence issues might be referred to CHOICES, whereas a family who did not have such issues could be referred to Stable Families), any differences observed between those diverted to Stable Families and those diverted elsewhere could be explained by the pre-existing difference that led to their referral, rather than any difference in effectiveness between the programs.

The initial design for this study was a quasi-experimental design, whereby all families would complete the Stable Families screening questions and only those in targeted zip codes would actually be diverted. The plan for data analysis involved comparing families who were diverted to Stable Families with families who were diverted to other community resources because of their zip code. However, in order to fill the program to capacity, CIS began accepting families from outside the targeted zip codes, which means there is no good comparison group to which we can compare families diverted to Stable Families.

Additionally, we are fairly early in the program period and (as this report will demonstrate) the number of families who have actually re-contacted the YWCAFC after diversion is relatively low. This low number of families limits the type of data analysis we can perform and also reduces our chance of detecting any meaningful differences that are present.

Finally, with a program such as Stable Families, it may even be unclear what re-contact to the YWCAFC means. In focus groups and in-depth interviews performed as part of the evaluation of Stable Families, we have learned that many families are highly positive about their experience with the program. Some families may re-contact the YWCAFC again because the first referral they received was such a good experience for them. And, on the other hand, some families who do not re-contact the YWCAFC may

not do so because they are aware there are policies in place that prohibit families from re-entering the shelter within specific time frames. With these facts in mind, we now turn to an exploration of re-contact rates among families diverted to Stable Families and other community resources.

B. Were families who were diverted to Stable Families more or less likely to contact the YWCA Family Center again?

To test the impact of Stable Families on later contacts, we compared the proportion of families who contacted the YWCAFC a second time after being referred to Stable Families to the proportions who contacted the YWCAFC after being referred to another community resource, being admitted to shelter, remaining in current housing, and all other families.⁸ We also looked at the proportion of families who contacted the YWCAFC after being referred to Stable Families from a different source.

Although a higher proportion of families referred to Stable Families by the YWCAFC contacted the YWCAFC again (11.4% compared to 4.3% of families diverted to other community resources, 3.3% of those admitted, 5.7% of other families, and 5.6% of families who were referred to Stable Families from a different source), this difference is not statistically significant⁹ for the period from May – October 2008. See Table 3.

Table 3: Families who contacted the YWCAFC more than once, by action taken at initial contact

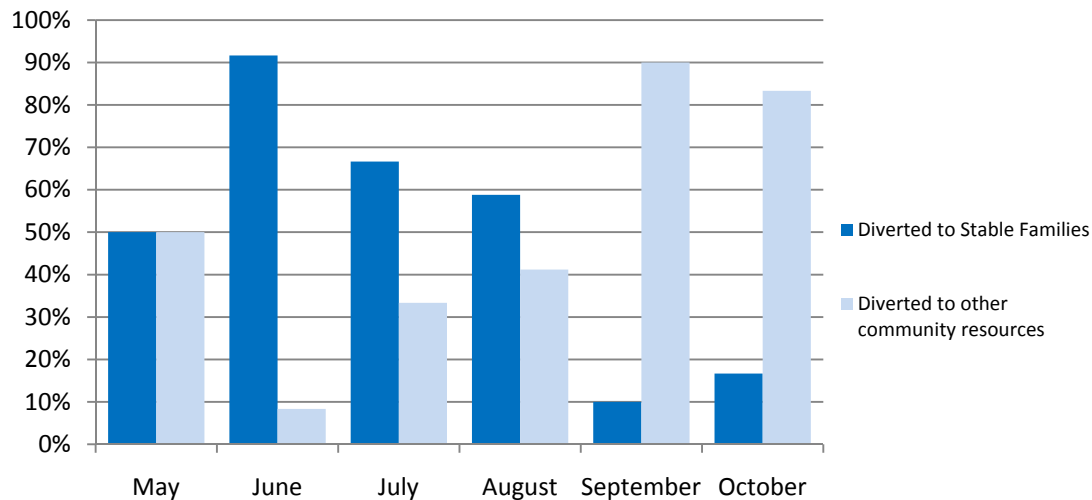
Resolution of families' initial contact to the YWCAFC	Contacted YWCAFC More Than Once			
	Yes (n=36)		No (n=568)	
	n	%	n	%
<i>YWCAFC Diverted to Stable Families (n=35)</i>	4	11.4%	31	88.6%
<i>YWCAFC Diverted to Other Community Resource (n=47)</i>	2	4.3%	45	95.7%
<i>Admitted to YWCAFC (n=273)</i>	9	3.3%	264	96.7%
<i>Remained in Current Housing (n=92)</i>	12	13.0%	80	87.0%
<i>Other (n=157)</i>	9	5.7%	148	94.3%
<i>Other Organization Referred to Stable Families (n=108)</i>	6	5.6%	102	94.4%

⁸ Note that these data may be imprecise due to a particular self-selection bias: Families with prior experience with the YWCA Family Center may be less likely to contact it a second time in a 90-day period if they know about its re-admittance policies.

⁹ As determined by binary logistic regression.

Why might families diverted to Stable Families be more likely to contact the YWCAFC at a later date? It appears that during the earlier part of the period a larger proportion of families were referred to Stable Families compared to other community resources. In the period from May to August, 2008, 68.2% of families in need were referred to Stable Families (30 of 44), while in September and October, 2008, only 13.2% of families in need were referred to Stable Families (5 of 38). Figure 4 shows the percentage of diverted families who were referred to Stable Families versus the percentage who were referred to other community resources.

Figure 4: Percent of families diverted by YWCAFC to Stable Families and other community resources (n=82)



Discussions with CIS indicate that beginning in July and continuing through September and October, the program was essentially closed to new referrals, first because the program was at capacity and later because CIS was working from a waitlist that accumulated during that closed period. This explains why the proportion of referrals to CIS was so much higher in the earlier time periods. The earlier a family contacted the YWCAFC, the more time they had to get into a situation where they need additional assistance. This could explain the slightly higher rates of re-contact for families enrolled in Stable Families – in fact, the data suggest that families who contact the YWCAFC twice during the evaluation period are likely to do so within two months of the first period.¹⁰ The month families first called the YWCAFC is a statistically significant predictor¹¹ of later contact, with families who called earlier in the period being more likely to return than families who first called later in the period.

¹⁰ Because families who were diverted in the later months of this evaluation period had less time in the study period to re-contact the YWCAFC as compared to families who were diverted in the early months of the evaluation period, analyses that control for elapsed time will occur when additional data becomes available for Supplemental Report 2.

¹¹ As determined by binary logistic regression.

Additionally, only about 1/3 of families referred to Stable Families actually enrolled. Of the 12 families who did enroll in Stable Families, just 1 eventually contacted the YWCAFC later in the period.¹² Twenty-three families were referred to Stable Families but did not enroll for one of the following reasons:

- 5 families did not meet basic eligibility criteria and were not assessed.
- 3 families were not assessed because Stable Families was at capacity.
- 2 families were not eligible because they were not at risk of literal homelessness.
- 5 families were unresponsive to communication.
- 7 families were not listed in the CIS referrals database.
- 1 family was listed in the CIS referrals but listing did not include eligibility or assessment data.

Note that future reports, with more available data to permit statistical controls for time of entry, may shed light on this pattern and what may be driving it.

C. How many families who were referred to Stable Families from other sources contacted the YWCA Family Center at a later date seeking assistance?

We also looked at families who were referred to Stable Families from sources other than the YWCAFC, to see if any of them contacted the YWCAFC at a later date seeking assistance. In total, 108¹³ families were referred by other sources. Six of these families (5.6%) contacted Stable Families from the April – December 2008 period *and* the YWCAFC during the May – October 2008 period. Five of these families enrolled in Stable Families in this period. Three of these families (60% of enrolled families, or 50% of families who contacted Stable Families) contacted the YWCA Family Center during their enrollment in the program.

Compared to the data presented above, this suggests that families who enrolled in Stable Families after being referred by the YWCAFC were less likely to call back seeking assistance than if they were referred by another source. Of course, with the numbers being as small as they are, any conclusions must be made with caution.

D. What (if anything) predicts re-contacting the YWCA Family Center?

Overall, 36 of the 604 families who contacted the YWCAFC between May and October, 2008, did so more than once (6.0%). As stated previously, the earlier in this period families first called YWCAFC, the more likely they were to call again in the period. Are there any characteristics of families that were associated with re-contacting the YWCAFC?

Families were more likely to re-contact the YWCAFC when the head of household was unemployed. That is, a higher percentage of people who were unemployed contacted the YWCAFC more than once compared with people who were employed. This difference is statistically significant.¹⁴

¹² One additional family enrolled in Stable Families after being referred during their second call of the period.

¹³ This figure excludes 16 families enrolled in Stable Families who were missing data for the referral source.

¹⁴ As determined by binary logistic regression.

Table 4: Employment status and contacts to the YWCAFC

Employment Status	n	Contacted YWCAFC More Than Once	
		Yes (n=36)	No (n=559)
<i>Unemployed at some point¹⁵</i>	433	7.6%	92.4%
<i>Employed</i>	162	1.9%	98.1%

Gender and race of the head of household did not predict contacting the shelter more than once, nor did the number of children or overall household size. Single adult households were more likely to re-contact (6.7%) than households with more than one adult (4.3%), but this difference was not statistically significant.

Note that the number of families who were referred to Stable Families and other community resources is too small at this point to allow us to predict re-contact rates separately for these individuals. As more time elapses, future reports may allow us to investigate this further.

IV. Conclusion

Between May and October 2008, a total of 82 families were diverted to another community resource from the YWCAFC at their first or only contact. 43% of all diverted families were referred to Stable Families. Just over 11% of families who were referred to Stable Families contacted the YWCAFC more than once during the period of interest, compared to 4.3% of families who were referred to other community resources. It is unclear why the rate of re-contact is higher for households referred to Stable Families, but one potential explanation is that higher proportions of households were referred to Stable Families earlier in the period, as compared to later in the period. These families simply had more time to contact the YWCAFC again after their referral.

With such a small number of families contacting the YWCAFC more than once, analyzing the drivers of re-contact is still in its preliminary stages. Analyses to date suggest, not surprisingly, that families who contact the YWCAFC earlier in the field period were more likely to contact the YWCAFC more than once during the period. Further, families with a head of household who was unemployed at any time during the period are more likely to contact the YWCAFC more than once. Numbers were insufficient to permit separate analyses of families who contacted the YWCAFC more than once after referral to Stable Families and other community resources. In subsequent evaluation periods, higher numbers of families may increase our statistical power and allow us to draw stronger conclusions about what predicts subsequent contacts to the YWCAFC after initial referral, along with the relative efficacy of Stable Families, compared to other community resources.

¹⁵ Some respondents reported employment at one point and unemployment at another point. We coded all respondents who were unemployed during either contact to the YWCAFC as unemployed for this analysis.