

# Housing 360: Patterns of Program Participation and Outcomes

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## INTRODUCTION

In June 2009, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced funding for the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP), under Title XII of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Congress designated \$1.5 billion for communities to provide financial assistance and services to either prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless, or to help those who were experiencing homelessness to be quickly re-housed and stabilized (HPRP, 2009). The City of Austin received \$3,062,820 to implement its HPRP effort, known locally as Housing 360. Services began in December 2009 and concluded in December 2011. A total of 2,517 clients were served by three sub-grantees: Caritas of Austin; Austin Tenants' Council; and LifeWorks Youth and Family Alliance (Homelessness, 2013).

In 2013, the City of Austin contracted with the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources at The University of Texas at Austin's Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs to conduct an evaluation of the Housing 360 program to better understand its participants and outcomes. The City was specifically interested in identifying any patterns in the use of other public services by program participants, as well as labor market outcomes. Findings from the evaluation will be used by the City to further refine its investments in social services intended to help stabilize disadvantaged families in Austin.

### **Federal Guidelines for the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program**

The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) was intended to "provide temporary financial assistance and housing relocation and stabilization services to individuals and families who are homeless or would be homeless *but for* this assistance" (Notice, 2009, p. 6). HPRP funds could only be used for financial assistance (including rent or utility payments and up to six months of arrears, moving costs, security deposits, and storage fees), case management, housing relocation and inspection, and legal services such as tenant-landlord mediation. Services were available for up to 18 months, dependent on the participant being re-certified for eligibility every three months.

HUD established three minimum criteria for participant eligibility: 1) an initial consultation with a case manager; 2) household at or below 50 percent of Area Median

Income<sup>1</sup>; and 3) that the participant be either homeless or at risk of losing housing, and have no appropriate housing options and lack the financial resources and support networks needed to obtain/retain housing (Notice, p. 23).

### ***Homelessness Prevention Eligibility***

For the Homelessness Prevention portion of the program, risk factors for homelessness were defined to include a number of conditions. Individuals who met the minimum criteria detailed above also had to meet at least one of the following conditions to qualify for homelessness prevention services:

- Eviction within two weeks from a private dwelling
- Discharge within two weeks from a public institution in which the person has been a resident for more than 180 days
- Residency in housing that has been condemned by housing officials
- Sudden and significant loss of income
- Sudden and significant increase in utility costs
- Mental health and substance abuse issues
- Physical disabilities and other chronic health issues
- Severe housing cost burden (greater than 50 percent of income)
- Homeless in last 12 months
- Young head of household (under 25 with children or pregnant)
- Current or past involvement with child welfare, including foster care
- Pending foreclosure of rental housing
- Extremely low income (less than 30% of Area Median Income)
- High overcrowding in current residence
- Past institutional care
- Recent traumatic life event or recent health crisis
- Credit problems that preclude obtaining housing
- Significant amount of medical debt (Notice, p. 25).

### ***Rapid Re-Housing Eligibility***

Eligibility for rapid re-housing services was based on meeting the minimum criteria detailed above and one of the following criteria for homelessness:

- Sleeping in an emergency shelter
- Sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation

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<sup>1</sup> In Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, HUD's Median Family Income Documentation System estimated the median family income in Travis County, Texas at \$73,300. The median rose to \$73,800 in FY2010, then to \$74,900 in FY2011. More information at: <http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html>.



- Staying in a public institution for up to 180 days but was in another emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to institutionalization
- Graduating from or timing out of a transitional housing program
- Victim of domestic violence (Notice, p. 26).

### **The City of Austin's Housing 360 HPRP Program**

The City of Austin's Housing 360 HPRP program was administered by three community-based organizations.<sup>2</sup> The City contracted with Caritas of Austin to provide outreach and intake specialists for Housing 360. These individuals worked with the faith-based community, select Austin Independent School District campuses, HIV/AIDS service providers, and other homeless-serving organizations to identify individuals who may have qualified for Housing 360 assistance. Caritas was also responsible for providing housing locator and inspection services for Housing 360, with the locator serving as a liaison between clients and potential landlords. The City contracted with LifeWorks to be the fiscal agent for the financial assistance component of Housing 360. LifeWorks was primarily responsible for processing and tracking payments to landlords and utility companies. Finally, the City contracted with the Austin Tenants' Council to provide mediation for tenant-landlord disputes and legal assistance with administrative court proceedings. The City fully expended the Recovery Act-funded \$3.06 million HPRP grant by December 31, 2011.

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<sup>2</sup> This section drawn from "Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program." City of Austin. Available: <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/homelessness-prevention-and-rapid-re-housing-program-hprp>. Last accessed: 08.20.2013.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the evaluation was to better understand the participants in, and outcomes from, the city of Austin's Housing 360 project. Unstable housing can impact whether or not a person can obtain and retain employment, which in turn can determine eligibility for other public services. Through public service usage data and labor market records, researchers sought to fill in the context around an individual's entry into, and exit from, Housing 360 participation. Researchers then worked to identify any patterns or relationships that may be important to consider in developing or modifying services for homeless individuals and those at-risk of becoming homeless.

Key questions guiding this research include:

1. What is the current state of available data on Housing 360 participants?
2. What is the extent of participants' use of other public services (TANF, SNAP, UI, job training, housing) and are there any discernible patterns in relation to demographics, housing status, and outcomes?
3. What are the labor market outcomes for participants and how do those outcomes compare to the participants' labor market histories?
4. What components of Housing 360 in Austin appeared to make a difference for participants?
5. What is the feasibility of scaling up this approach to include the larger set of homelessness prevention programs supported by the City of Austin and Travis County, including Best Single Source Plus?

### Data Sources

The evaluation incorporates data from multiple sources. To answer the first three research questions, researchers collected individual-level participation records from four agencies, as detailed below.

- **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data** obtained from the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) and the City of Austin. ECHO is the HUD Lead Agency for the Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care. Three datasets from the Housing 360 program were provided for analysis:
  - Entry/Exit data - This dataset contained the entry and exit dates for each service time period (individuals may have had more than one service time period) as well as demographic information. This dataset contained all individuals served through the Housing 360 program, including each member of the household.

- Financial Services data – This dataset contained information about each financial service, such as rental assistance and utility payments, that each household received.
- Non-Financial Services data – This dataset contained information about each non-financial service, such as case management, that each household received.

It should be noted that the HMIS system does not include data on program participants who were served by a domestic violence services provider, so these individuals/families are not included in any analyses.

- **Texas Workforce Commission data**, including data on workforce program participation, Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records, and UI claims files. UI wage records are reported on a quarterly basis, while UI claims files are reported weekly.
- **Texas Health and Human Services Commission data**, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participation records. Participation in these public benefit programs is reported monthly.
- **Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) data**, including Housing Choice Voucher/Section 8 program participation data and public housing resident records.

The data collected to answer the last two questions included interviews with key staff at LifeWorks, Caritas, and the City of Austin who were involved in the Housing 360 program. In addition, researchers analyzed program documents, reports, and other materials.

### **Analytic Approach**

Evaluators first explored the data available for Housing 360 participants to determine what information could be obtained and reported with confidence. One requirement for connection with other data sources was a valid Social Security number. Evaluators then calculated outcomes, including the number and share receiving public services, the number and share employed, wages earned among those employed, the number and share meeting the monetary eligibility standards for UI benefits<sup>3</sup>, the number and share in Section 8/public housing, and other outcomes.

Evaluators also sought to identify which project components appeared to be associated with improved outcomes for participants through interviews with provider staff and an analysis

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<sup>3</sup> This is a proxy measure for employment stability as individuals must have sufficient employment and earnings in four of the five quarters prior to filing a UI claim to be considered monetarily eligible for benefits.

of patterns of participation and outcomes. Finally, evaluators considered the feasibility of using this evaluation approach to examine other homelessness prevention programs supported by the City of Austin and Travis County.

## **Data Challenges**

As with all datasets designed for administrative rather than research purposes, the HMIS data had its share of problems and presented researchers with some difficulties in conducting the analyses. Some of the data issues encountered were:

- The Financial Services dataset, which reportedly contained each service only once per head of household, actually contained duplicate services. It appears that information about participants' households was merged with the service data, which resulted in duplicate services for participants who were assigned more than one household ID number. Researchers unduplicated the Financial Services dataset by the "Service ID" field, keeping only the service record that was associated with the participant's most recent family ID. Of 4,589 service records, 1,260 were duplicates and removed from analyses.
- HMIS reportedly changed the way household membership was tracked during the time that services for the Housing 360 program were being entered. This resulted in three different fields that tracked household identification. The newest field for household ID is no longer populated for households with only one member (single adult participants). This caused complications for tracking the number of households served, the number of clients served, and with linking the two. Researchers worked around this problem by using the most recent household ID field, if it was populated, and creating a dummy household ID number, using the client ID number, for those who did not have a household ID.
- Near the end of the evaluation, it was determined that the housing status provided in the Entry/Exit dataset did not contain accurate data during the time the participant was enrolled in Housing 360 – it likely reflected current data if the participant continued with other services tracked in HMIS. It is not known if other demographic information, such as age and household type, is accurate as of the participant's time in Housing 360.
- The primary outcome of the Housing 360 program, housing status at exit, could not be determined from the available data. During the first year of the program, program staff members were instructed by HUD not to update the housing status at exit; thus, housing status for first year participants only reflects their status as of program entry. In year two of the program, some participants who were being served near the end of grant funding were closed out of the Housing 360 program and transferred to other programs prior to completing their service plan; thus the housing status in these participants' records reflects their status at the time of

transfer, not at program end.

Despite these data concerns, researchers were able to produce some meaningful outputs and outcomes using the data that was available.

## **SUB-CONTRACTOR IMPLEMENTATION REFLECTIONS AND FEEDBACK**

In order to gather information to answer research questions 4 and 5, concerning which components of Housing 360 appeared to make a difference for participants and the feasibility of scaling up the study, researchers met with staff from the two main Housing 360 subcontractors—Caritas and LifeWorks. Findings from those interviews are documented in this section.

### **Caritas of Austin**

Founded in 1964 to connect people experiencing poverty and homelessness with public services, Caritas of Austin provides a continuum of services from emergency assistance and safety net programs to resources that prepare individuals for self-sufficiency.<sup>4</sup> Caritas received two sub-contracts from the City of Austin to provide Housing 360 services. In response to a Request for Applications, Caritas was awarded \$480,000 over a two-year period to provide community outreach, intake, and case management for the Housing 360 program. The City also expanded its existing pilot contract to Caritas for the Rapid Re-Housing Project with a two-year \$240,000 subcontract for Housing 360. Caritas used those funds to hire a housing locator to act as a liaison between Housing 360 clients and landlords. Caritas also provided housing inspections to determine if housing options met federal guidelines.<sup>5</sup>

Caritas felt that the goals established by HUD for HPRP aligned well with the agency's goals. Its history of working with the homeless had demonstrated the difficulty of finding appropriate housing after a period of homelessness. The agency's desire to help those at-risk of losing their housing aligned well with HUD's emphasis on prevention. "The design was something we'd dreamed of," a Caritas staffer reported. The timeline for service (up to 18 months), the targeted outreach, the focus on addressing arrears (with no set limit of support per family), the housing locator, and the service flexibility within basic parameters all helped to make the Housing 360 program a success. Importantly, Housing 360 provided the basic design for community's current housing program, which is funded through a mix of funds from the City

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.caritasofaustin.org/about>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/homelessness-prevention-and-rapid-re-housing-program-hprp>

of Austin, Travis County, and private organizations.

Caritas staff acknowledged challenges posed by the political environment and pressure to establish the program quickly given that the Recovery Act funds were time-limited. Frequent changes to rules and regulations required considerable oversight and were difficult to implement. HUD expected grantees to show results quickly, and that pressure flowed from the City to its subcontractors. Housing 360 provided an opportunity for Caritas to connect more strongly with the City's Health and Human Services staff, who took on a more active oversight role than in typical city contracts. The program also helped Caritas to strengthen connections with LifeWorks. These strong relationships have continued in the post-grant period.

Initially, Caritas had three outreach and intake specialists but added two more as the grant progressed. Each specialist had an average caseload of 20-25 families at a time. Caritas staff conducted targeted outreach with specific community organizations to identify individuals and families who might benefit from the Housing 360 program. They worked with Austin ISD's Project HELP for homeless students, as well as with family resource centers at high-poverty schools. Specialists also conducted outreach at all of the City-funded HIV/AIDS community centers, all of the local homeless shelters, with faith-based organizations, and the Austin Tenant's Council to identify possible clients.

It should be noted that Caritas identified this targeted outreach as one of the successes for Austin's Housing 360 program. It enabled Caritas to find people in their own communities before they lost important connections to "home." The agency has incorporated this intentional outreach model into more of its programming since the end of Housing 360.

There were numerous referrals to Housing 360, so case managers focused resources on those clients and families who could be helped within the parameters of the program. Some households at risk of homelessness simply needed to catch up on a few missed payments and learn to better manage their finances to be back on an even financial footing. Others had too great a need (more than six months of rent/utility arrears) or else no viable plan to become stably housed within 18 months. Staff members at Caritas emphasized that while every case was different, the City's requirement that households receive a maximum of six months of assistance affected how participants were selected.

Financial Assistance Services were a significant component of the program. Caritas staff indicated that being able to pay a security deposit and first month's rent for the rapid rehousing component was extremely important. Many participants also benefited from arrears payments, which allowed them to settle rent/utility debts. There was no established maximum payment per household, which in some cases totaled thousands of dollars. These Housing 360 financial supports were noted by Caritas staff as critical to the program's success in getting people stably housed.

Another component of Housing 360 allowed Caritas to hire a *housing locator* to help participants find appropriate long-term housing. Caritas staff described the housing locator as an "immeasurable" success of the HPRP effort in Austin. The locator was a resource for the outreach team, someone to turn to for support and help in finding housing options. The agency had very limited experience using a dedicated housing locator before the Housing 360 program, relying instead on their case managers to perform that function in addition to their many other duties. The locator uses a family's income and rental history to find appropriate housing. The locator is able to nurture relationships with landlords and develop a go-to list for clients with various challenges. This was especially important since the housing market in Austin has so few affordable rental vacancies. Caritas found that having a staff member dedicated to housing location brought a new dimension to its work by connecting clients with landlords who are willing to give them a second chance. The agency has found the resources needed to continue to fund housing locator staff in the post-grant period.

As the Housing 360 program grew, the need for quality data increased and a strong homeless management information system (HMIS) became critical. Caritas felt that it was an important lesson to learn, and the agency modified its data collection and usage as a result. Sharing data across providers helped to demonstrate the quality of services being provided across the community and was an important outcome of Housing 360 that continues to benefit the City and homeless-serving organizations today.



## **LifeWorks Youth and Family Alliance**

The mission of LifeWorks Youth and Family Alliance<sup>6</sup> is to transition “youth and families from crisis to safety and success” (Agency Services Overview, 2013). Through counseling, youth development services, education and workforce programs, and housing and homelessness services, LifeWorks focuses on helping its clients achieve self-sufficiency. The agency’s strong financial standing with the City on a number of contracts and grants helped in its selection as the fiscal agent for the Housing 360 program.

LifeWorks set a goal for quickly processing payments for Housing 360 within three to five days of a request. Because Housing 360 clients were in an emergency situation, rapid payment processing was important for helping families get into stable housing. LifeWorks required sufficient and proper documentation from case managers prior to issuing payments to ensure that rules and regulations were strictly followed. This business perspective was important for properly managing Housing 360 funds.

A half-time staff person was hired by LifeWorks to process Housing 360 payments, which were issued on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There was one manager and one back-up staff person, as well, to handle heavy workload periods and provide oversight. LifeWorks set up a ledger to generate reports from its accounting system to check the data in HUD’s HMIS database and provide additional information to the City. Essentially, LifeWorks’ expenditures provided the check and balance needed for the HMIS data entry. This division between financial management and case management was viewed by LifeWorks staff as a strong component of the Housing 360 program design. Since Housing 360 ended in 2011, LifeWorks has been able to provide similar financial agent functions for other projects and entities.

## **Summary**

The information on how the Housing 360 program was implemented, and how each subcontractor has used its Housing 360 experience to shape program offerings since the end of the HPRP program, provide important context for understanding which components and services appeared to make a difference for participants. The next sections will take a closer look at who participated in Housing 360.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.lifeworksaustin.org/about.html>

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS AND PATTERNS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

The analysis presented here focuses on participants identified as heads of household in the Housing 360 data obtained from the City of Austin and ECHO. The first section provides a profile of these participants. The next section details the Housing 360 services these heads of household received, including financial and non-financial assistance.

### Demographics of Participants

Table 1, below, presents information on heads of household by program entry year. Roughly two-thirds of households were headed by a female participant. More than half were between 30 and 49 years old. Approximately 47% of those served were black, 43% were white, and 30% were identified as Hispanic. Forty-five percent of households served were single parent households, 29% were individuals, and 14% were couples with children. Approximately 28% of household heads in the Housing 360 program reported a disabling condition, and about 5% were veterans. At entry into the program, the majority of households (76%) were imminently in danger of losing their housing, while much smaller percentages were in unstable housing or literally homeless, as defined by HUD. Percentages across both program years were roughly equivalent with the exception of housing status at program entry, where more were imminently losing housing or were literally homeless in the second program year.

**Table 1. Demographics of Head of Household<sup>1</sup> by Year of Housing 360 Program Entry**

	Program Year 2010 (Dec.2009- Sep.2010)	Program Year 2011 <sup>2</sup> (Oct.2010- Sep.2011)	All Program Years <sup>3</sup> (Dec.2009- Nov.2011)
N=	409	413	<b>792<sup>4</sup></b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	27.9%	30.5%	<b>29.4%</b>
Female	69.2%	68.8%	<b>68.7%</b>
Unknown	2.9%	0.7%	<b>1.9%</b>
<b>Age Group</b>			
16-19 years	0.5%	1.2%	<b>0.9%</b>
20-29 years	19.1%	21.3%	<b>20.2%</b>
30-39 years	32.5%	28.6%	<b>30.8%</b>
40-49 years	26.9%	28.1%	<b>27.4%</b>

	<b>Program Year 2010</b> (Dec.2009- Sep.2010)	<b>Program Year 2011<sup>2</sup></b> (Oct.2010- Sep.2011)	<b>All Program Years<sup>3</sup></b> (Dec.2009- Nov.2011)
N=	409	413	<b>792<sup>4</sup></b>
50-59 years	15.6%	15.7%	<b>15.5%</b>
60-69 years	4.2%	4.4%	<b>4.2%</b>
unknown age	0.0%	0.5%	<b>0.3%</b>
<b>Race</b>			
White	41.3%	43.3%	<b>42.6%</b>
Black	46.0%	48.4%	<b>46.7%</b>
Asian	0.2%	0.5%	<b>0.4%</b>
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2.2%	1.2%	<b>1.6%</b>
Other	2.9%	0.5%	<b>1.8%</b>
Unknown	7.3%	6.1%	<b>6.9%</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic	30.3%	29.5%	<b>30.2%</b>
Non-Hispanic	65.5%	69.7%	<b>67.3%</b>
Unknown	4.2%	0.7%	<b>2.5%</b>
<b>Household Type</b>			
Individual	31.1%	27.4%	<b>29.2%</b>
Single Parent	44.3%	44.8%	<b>44.7%</b>
Couple with no children	5.6%	4.8%	<b>5.3%</b>
Couple with children	12.5%	16.2%	<b>14.3%</b>
Other	6.6%	6.8%	<b>6.6%</b>
<b>Housing Status at Program Entry</b>			
Unstably housed	13.2%	6.8%	<b>10.1%</b>
Imminently losing housing	73.1%	79.5%	<b>76.2%</b>
Literally homeless	10.8%	12.4%	<b>11.5%</b>
Unknown <sup>5</sup>	2.9%	1.3%	<b>2.2%</b>
<b>Other Descriptors</b>			
Has a disabling condition	27.9%	29.3%	<b>28.2%</b>
Is a veteran	4.2%	5.1%	<b>4.8%</b>

Source: Housing 360 program data.

<sup>1</sup> Includes only individuals who were determined to be heads of households in the 'Financial Services' dataset, excluding those with questionable ages (2 individuals).

<sup>2</sup> Two clients began services in the 2012 program year but are reported in the 2011 program year.

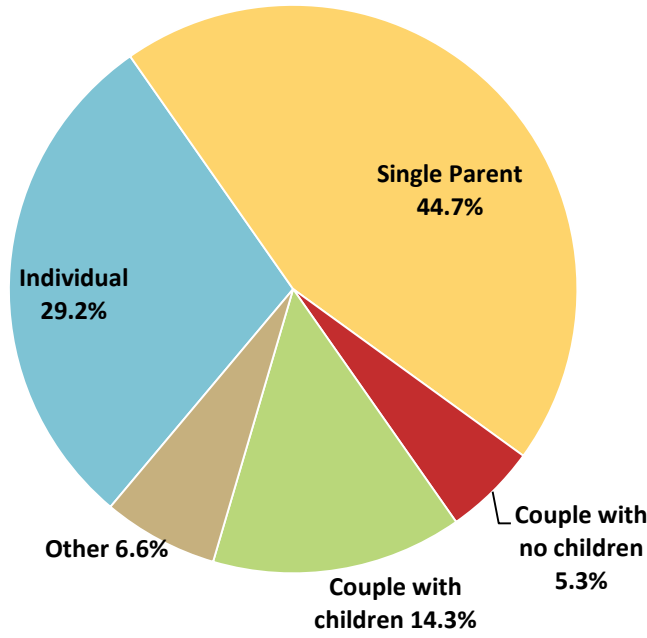
<sup>3</sup> Clients served between October and November 2011 were counted in Program Year 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Some clients were served in both program years, therefore the number of individuals served in each year sums to more than the total number served in all years.

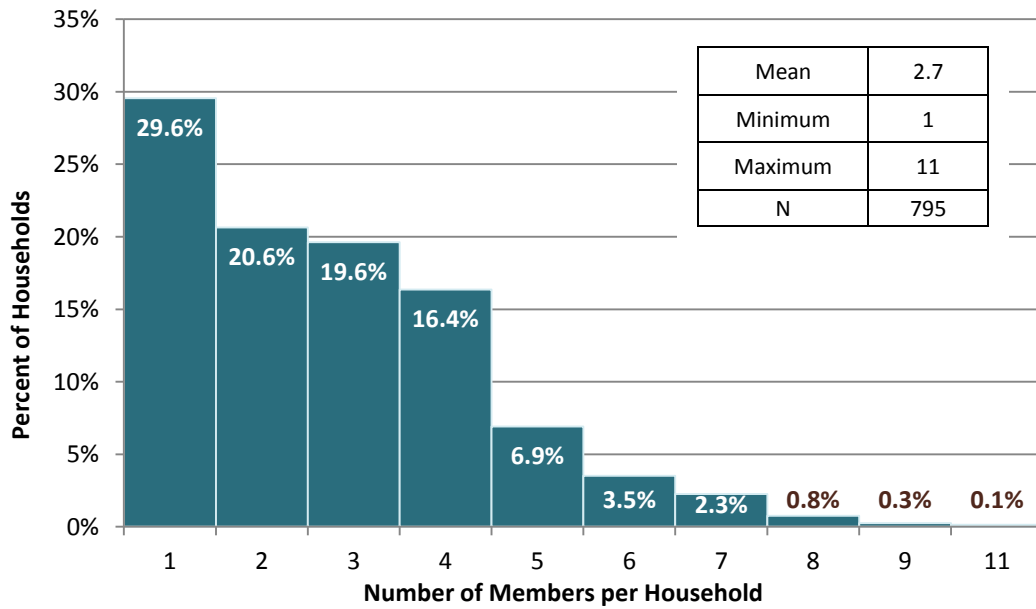
<sup>5</sup> Includes individuals coded as "stably housed" at entry. Since program eligibility precluded being stably housed, these records were coded as unknown.

Figure 1 provides a graphical representation of household type, while Figure 2 details the number of members in each household served. While there are 792 clients included in the demographic analyses in Table 1 and Figure 1, there are 795 households in Figure 2 due to the fact that three clients were in more than one household during the program period.

**Figure 1. Household Type in Housing 360 by Head of Household**



**Figure 2. Number of Members per Household in Housing 360**



## Housing 360 Services

As described earlier, HPRP grant funds could only be used for a defined set of services, including financial assistance, legal services, housing location, and case management. Tables 2 and 3 provide details on the types of services each household in the Housing 360 program received. It is important to note that participants could, and often did, receive more than one service.

Table 2 examines the number and share of households receiving non-financial assistance. Case management was the most common non-financial service, followed by housing search and placement. Very few outreach and engagement or legal services were recorded due to HUD documentation instructions.

**Table 2. Number and Percent of Heads of Households who Received Housing 360 Non-Financial Assistance by Year of Service**

Service Type <sup>4</sup>	Program Year 2010 N=395 <sup>1</sup>		Program Year 2011 <sup>2</sup> N=501 <sup>1</sup>		All Program Years <sup>3</sup> N=792 <sup>1</sup>	
	#HH	Percent	#HH	Percent	#HH	Percent
Case management	319	80.8%	213	42.5%	512	64.6%
Housing search and placement	64	16.2%	114	22.8%	173	21.8%
Outreach and engagement	11	2.8%	0	0.0%	11	1.4%
Legal services	2	0.5%	1	0.2%	3	0.4%
<b>Total Households that Received Non-Financial Services</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>81.8%</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>44.7%</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>65.8%</b>

Source: Housing 360 program data.

<sup>1</sup> N represents the total number of households that received a financial service.

<sup>2</sup> Services provided in the 2012 program year are reported with the 2011 program year.

<sup>3</sup> Some households were served in both program years, therefore the number of households served in each year sums to more than the total number served in all years.

<sup>4</sup> A household may have received more than one service type.

Table 3 details the types of financial assistance households in the Housing 360 program received. The most common financial assistance across both program years (86%) was rental assistance, including current assistance and arrears payments. The majority of participants (63%) also received utility assistance, including current assistance and arrears payments. Security and utility deposits were paid for a smaller share of participants (between 15 and 19%). Few participants received help with moving costs or hotel/motel vouchers.

**Table 3. Number and Percent of Heads of Households who Received Housing 360 Financial Assistance by Year of Service**

Service Type <sup>4</sup>	Program Year 2010 N=395 <sup>1</sup>		Program Year 2011 <sup>2</sup> N=501 <sup>1</sup>		All Program Years <sup>3</sup> N=792 <sup>1</sup>	
	#HH	Percent	#HH	Percent	#HH	Percent
Rental assistance	331	83.8%	431	86.0%	682	<b>86.1%</b>
Utility payments	212	53.7%	323	64.5%	496	<b>62.6%</b>
Security deposits	48	12.2%	104	20.8%	152	<b>19.2%</b>
Utility deposits	45	11.4%	76	15.2%	120	<b>15.2%</b>
Moving cost assistance	13	3.3%	27	5.4%	40	<b>5.1%</b>
Motel & hotel vouchers	11	2.8%	12	2.4%	23	<b>2.9%</b>
Unidentified service <sup>5</sup>	49	12.4%	6	1.2%	54	<b>6.8%</b>

Source: Housing 360 program data.

<sup>1</sup> N represents the total number of households that received a financial service.

<sup>2</sup> Services provided in the 2012 program year are reported with the 2011 program year.

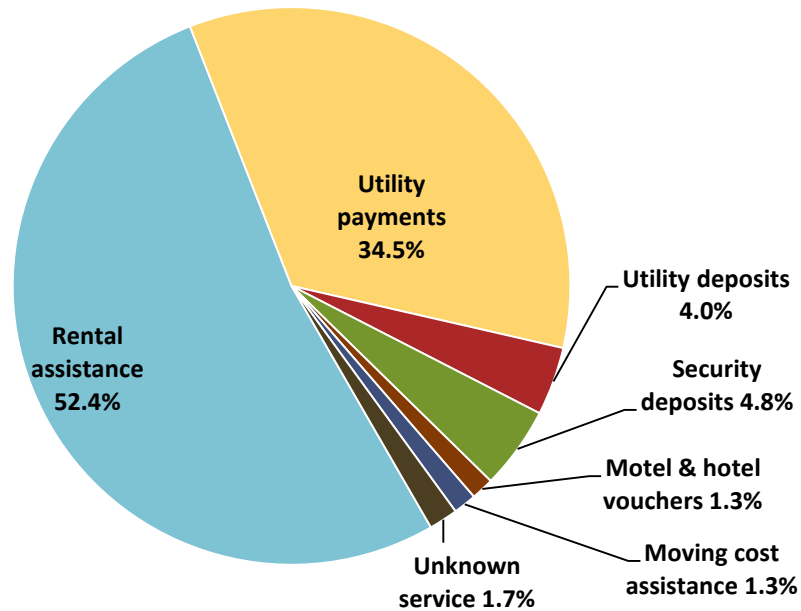
<sup>3</sup> Some households were served in both program years, therefore the number of household served in each year sums to more than the total number served in all years.

<sup>4</sup> A household may have received more than one service type.

<sup>5</sup> Service type was blank.

Figure 3 and Table 4 present another view of financial assistance services under the Housing 360 program. Across both program years, 3,279 financial service transactions were recorded. Of those services, just over half (52%) were rental assistance and about one-third were utility payments (35%).

**Figure 3. Type of Housing 360 Financial Assistance Services Provided**



**Table 4. Number and Percent of Housing 360 Financial Assistance Services Provided to Heads of Households by Year of Service**

Service Type	Program Year 2010		Program Year 2011 <sup>1</sup>		All Program Years	
	Service Count	Percent	Service Count	Percent	Service Count	Percent
Rental assistance	686	53.6%	1,032	51.7%	1,718	52.4%
Utility payments	413	32.2%	719	36.0%	1,132	34.5%
Utility deposits	52	4.1%	78	3.9%	130	4.0%
Security deposits	52	4.1%	105	5.3%	157	4.8%
Motel & hotel vouchers	16	1.2%	27	1.4%	43	1.3%
Moving cost assistance	13	1.0%	31	1.6%	44	1.3%
Unidentified service <sup>2</sup>	49	3.8%	6	0.3%	55	1.7%
<b>Total Financial Services Provided</b>	<b>1,281</b>		<b>1,998</b>		<b>3,279</b>	

Source: Housing 360 program data.

<sup>1</sup>Services provided in the 2012 program year are reported with the 2011 program year.

<sup>2</sup>Service type was blank.

The range of Housing 360 financial assistance payments is presented in Table 5. The average (mean) rental assistance payment was \$736, with a minimum of \$22 and a maximum of \$6,700. Utility payments ranged from \$4 to \$2,448 with an average payment of \$255.

**Table 5. Minimum, Maximum, and Mean Amount of Housing 360 Financial Assistance Provided by Type of Financial Assistance by Year of Service**

Service Type	Program Year 2010			Program Year 2011 <sup>1</sup>			All Program Years		
	Min	Max	Mean	Min	Max	Mean	Min	Max	Mean
Rental assistance	\$22	\$6,700	<b>\$715</b>	\$30	\$6,000	<b>\$749</b>	\$22	\$6,700	<b>\$736</b>
Utility payments	\$13	\$2,448	<b>\$293</b>	\$4	\$2,160	<b>\$234</b>	\$4	\$2,448	<b>\$255</b>
Utility deposits	\$20	\$400	<b>\$165</b>	\$8	\$1,469	<b>\$202</b>	\$8	\$1,469	<b>\$187</b>
Security deposits	\$50	\$1,500	<b>\$352</b>	\$50	\$2,300	<b>\$513</b>	\$50	\$2,300	<b>\$460</b>
Motel & hotel vouchers	\$42	\$1,369	<b>\$409</b>	\$30	\$875	<b>\$260</b>	\$30	\$1,369	<b>\$315</b>
Moving cost assistance	\$71	\$2,710	<b>\$487</b>	\$13	\$791	<b>\$173</b>	\$13	\$2,710	<b>\$266</b>

Source: Housing 360 program data.

<sup>1</sup>Services provided in the 2012 program year are reported with the 2011 program year.

Figure 4 provides a slightly different look at the financial assistance provided through Housing 360. The box-and-whisker plots display the minimum and maximum payments (the whiskers), as well as the lower and upper quartiles (the box) and the median payment (the bar inside the box).

**Figure 4. Amount of Housing 360 Financial Assistance Provided by Type of Financial Assistance**

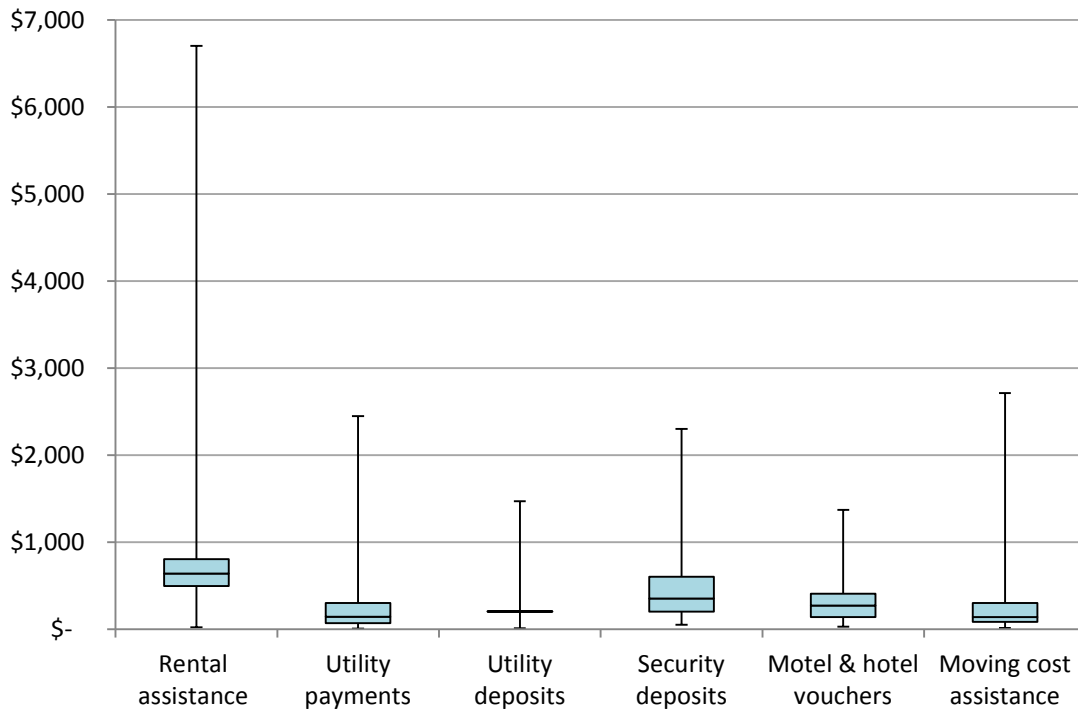
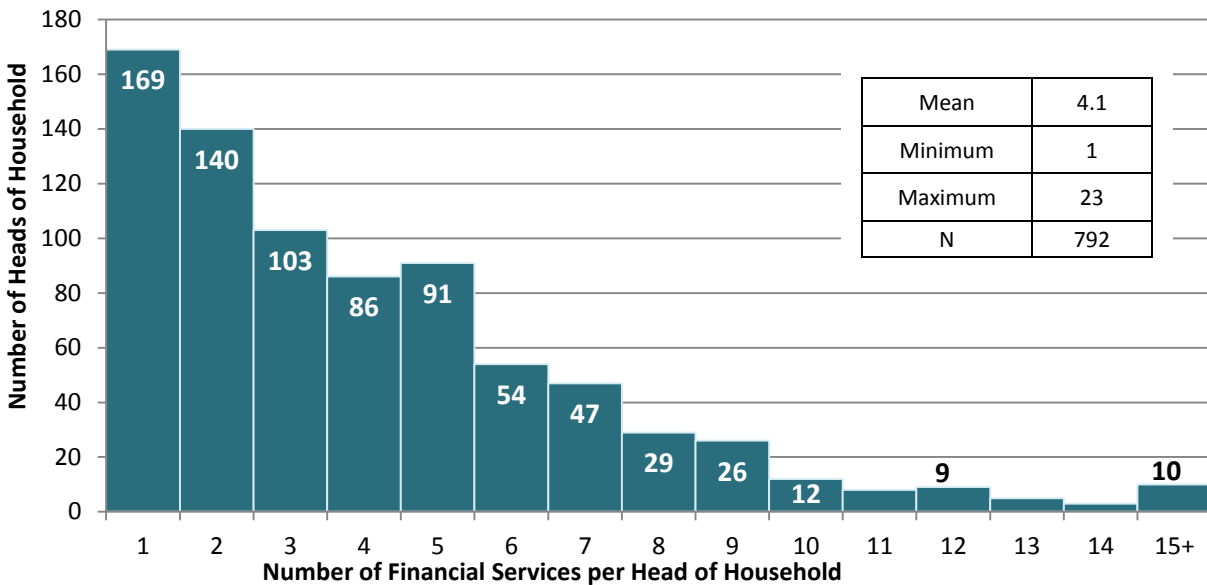




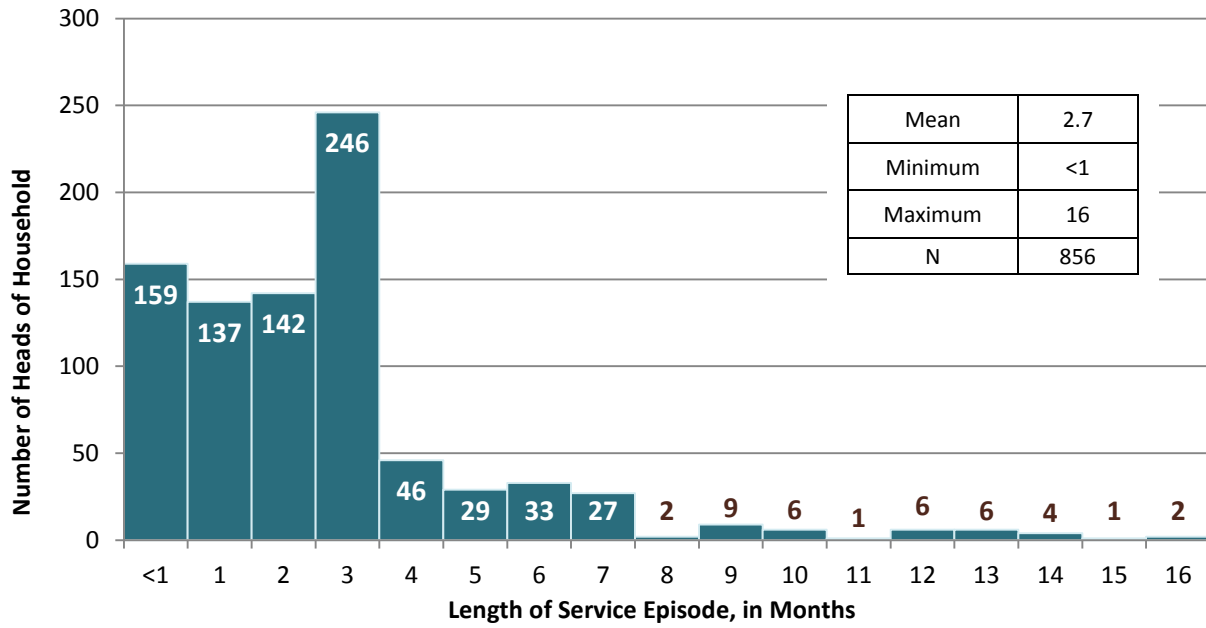
Figure 5 details the number of Housing 360 financial assistance services each household received. The most common outcome was for a household to receive just one financial service during their Housing 360 participation. On average, households received four financial services. Ten households received more than 15 financial services, with the maximum number received at 23.

**Figure 5. Number of Housing 360 Financial Assistance Services Provided per Head of Household**



Because the Housing 360 program served families in crisis, most participants received services over a short period of time. As Figure 6 shows, the average length of service was shorter than three months, with some service episodes lasting less than one month. A small share of households received long-term services lasting up to 16 months.

**Figure 6. Length of Service Episode per Head of Household**



NOTE: An individual may have had more than one service episode.

## OUTCOME FINDINGS

To better understand the context households were in during their Housing 360 participation, researchers examined administrative data sources to identify patterns of employment, earnings, and public benefit receipt before, during, and after participation in the program. The outcomes of that analysis are presented in this section.

Outcome results are presented for all heads of household for whom a Social Security number was provided, which was nearly all participants (789 of 792). These outcomes were analyzed for each HPRP service provided, but no significant differences in the outcomes were noted. Additionally, researchers hoped to produce these outcomes for participants' housing status at exit. However, due to changes in the way data was collected during the program, an accurate housing status at program completion was not available.<sup>7</sup>

Table 6 presents four labor market measures: quarterly employment; average quarterly earnings of those employed; eligibility for UI benefits based on meeting monetary eligibility requirements (a proxy measure for employment stability); and claims filed for UI benefits. In the four quarters prior to entering the Housing 360 program, just over half of the heads of household were employed (51.5%) earning an average \$3,813 per quarter. Only 7% met the monetary eligibility standard for UI benefits (sufficient earnings in the first four of the last five calendar quarters), and only 5% filed a claim for UI benefits over that period.

In the quarter service began, the employment rate dropped slightly (to 50%), and average quarterly earnings declined by \$542. There was also a drop in the share who met the monetary eligibility standards for UI benefits. In the first quarter following entry into the Housing 360 program, the employment rate rose to 52.3%, and earnings rebounded slightly to \$3,675. The share filing a claim for UI benefits dropped to 2.8%.

Looking across four quarters following entry into the program, half of the heads of household were employed and earning an average \$3,993 per quarter. Roughly 6% had

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<sup>7</sup> During the first year of the program, Housing 360 was instructed by HUD to not overwrite the entry housing status at exit so the status at program completion is not known. During the second year of the program, some participants were exited prior to program completion due to the end of grant funding and were transferred to other programs, thus participants' final housing status is not known. The third program year has reliable housing status at exit, however, too few participants were exited in the third year for outcomes to be analyzed.

maintained employment for a sufficient length of time to meet the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits, and approximately 4% filed a claim for UI benefits during the post-entry period.

**Table 6. Quarterly Employment and UI Benefits Data for Housing 360 Heads of Households**

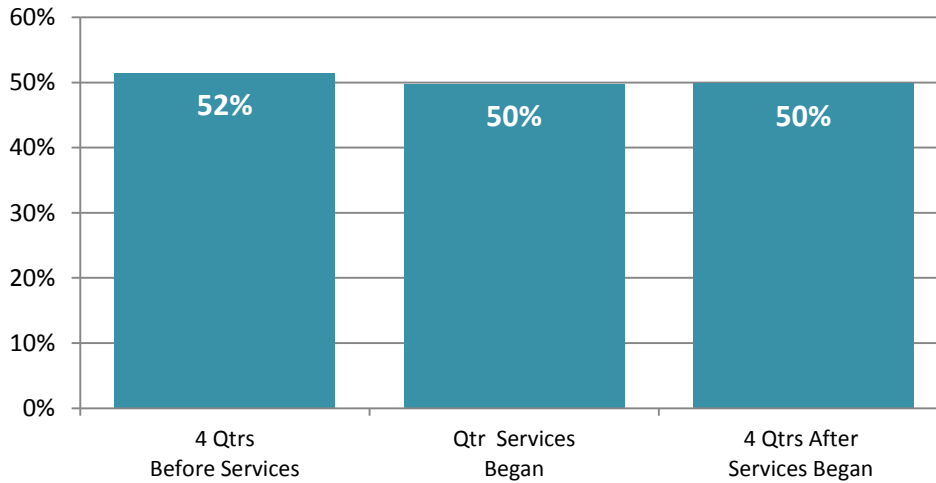
<b>Outcome measure</b>	<b>4 Qtrs Before Service</b>	<b>Qtr Service Began</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr After Service Began</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr After Service Began</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr After Service Began</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service Began</b>	<b>All 4 Qtrs After Service Began</b>
<b>All Program Years (N=789)</b>							
Quarterly Employment	51.5%	49.8%	52.3%	50.1%	47.4%	47.8%	49.9%
Average Quarterly Earnings	\$3,813	\$3,271	\$3,675	\$4,068	\$4,264	\$4,344	\$3,993
Eligible for UI Benefits	7.2%	6.0%	6.2%	4.7%	6.1%	6.6%	5.7%
Filed UI Claim	5.2%	5.2%	2.8%	3.0%	5.1%	5.2%	3.6%
<b>Program Year 2010 (N=409)</b>							
Quarterly Employment	53.2%	48.4%	53.3%	49.6%	47.2%	48.7%	50.0%
Average Quarterly Earnings	\$3,844	\$3,272	\$3,653	\$4,169	\$4,438	\$4,433	\$4,071
Eligible for UI Benefits	8.0%	6.9%	7.8%	5.1%	7.1%	7.6%	6.7%
Filed UI Claim	6.0%	5.9%	2.4%	2.0%	5.4%	5.6%	3.3%
<b>Program Year 2011<sup>1</sup> (N=381)</b>							
Quarterly Employment	49.5%	51.3%	51.3%	50.5%	47.6%	46.8%	49.8%
Average Quarterly Earnings	\$3,777	\$3,271	\$3,699	\$3,961	\$4,078	\$4,246	\$3,908
Eligible for UI Benefits	6.3%	5.0%	4.5%	4.2%	5.0%	5.5%	4.6%
Filed UI Claim	4.3%	4.5%	3.2%	4.2%	4.7%	4.7%	4.0%

Source: Housing 360 program data; Texas Workforce Commission Unemployment Insurance records.

<sup>1</sup>Two individuals began in the 2012 program year but are reported in the 2011 program year.

Figures 7-9 provide a graphical representation of the data in Table 6, spanning from four quarters prior to starting Housing 360 services to four quarters after Housing 360 entry. As shown, employment rates remained largely the same, around 50%.

**Figure 7. Percent of Housing 360 Heads of Household Employed**



Although Figure 7 shows very little change in employment rates over time, Figure 8 clearly shows a drop in quarterly earnings that may have precipitated entry into the Housing 360 program.

**Figure 8. Average Quarterly Earnings of Housing 360 Heads of Household who were Employed**

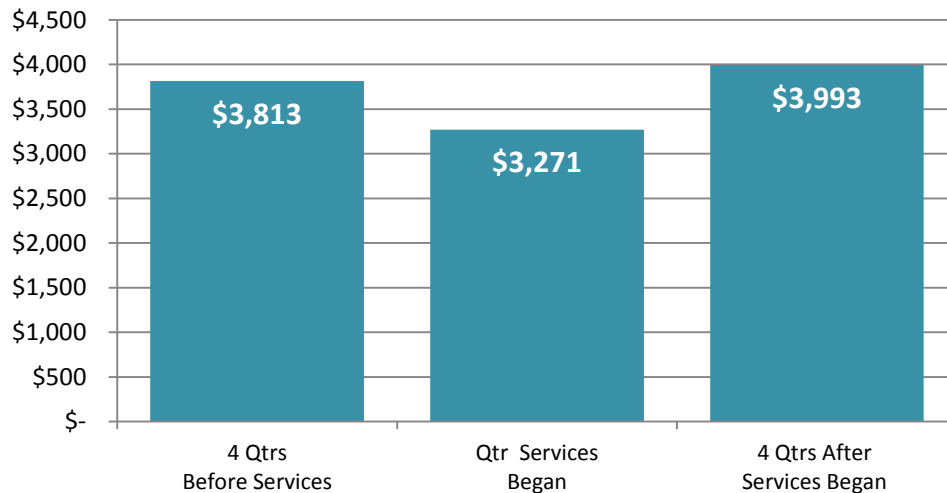


Figure 9 illustrates a decline in the share of participants with sufficient employment and earnings histories to meet the monetary eligibility standards for UI benefits over the period examined. The share of participants who filed a claim for UI benefits also declined over time. These findings could be an indication that some participants experienced a loss of steady employment about the time they began accessing program services.

**Figure 9. Percent of Housing 360 Heads of Household who Qualified for UI Benefits and Percent that Filed a UI Claim**

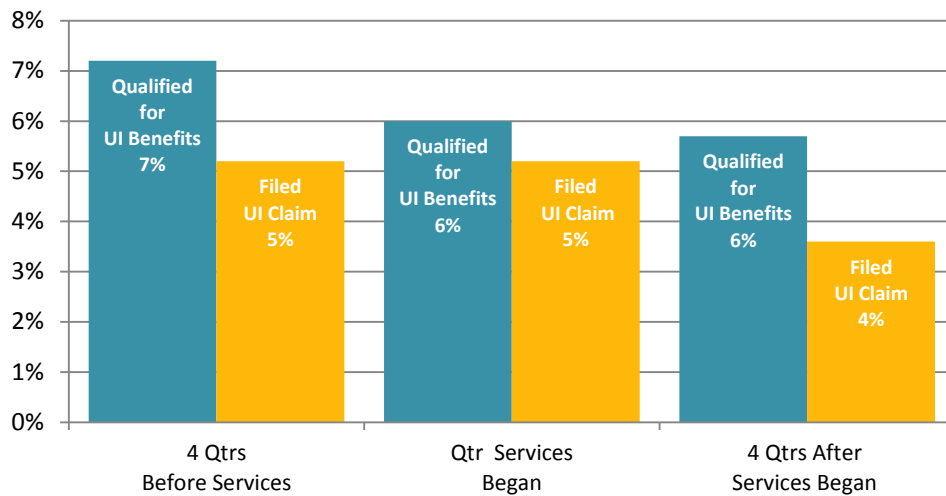


Table 7 presents information on public benefit receipt in the six months before and after entry into the Housing 360 program. These benefits include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) welfare payments, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food stamp benefits, and Section 8 housing. Approximately half or more of the heads of household in the Housing 360 program received SNAP benefits in the time period examined. Between two and five percent of households received TANF benefits over this time period, and between four and six percent were in Section 8 housing.

**Table 7. Monthly TANF, SNAP, and Section 8 Receipt Among Housing 360 Heads of Households**

Months Before and After Start of Service (Month=0)													
Outcome measure	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6
<b>All Program Years (n=789)</b>													
% with TANF	3.3%	3.2%	2.8%	2.4%	2.4%	2.7%	2.9%	2.9%	3.4%	3.9%	4.3%	4.6%	4.8%
% with SNAP	49.1%	50.3%	52.1%	52.1%	54.9%	54.9%	57.7%	58.8%	60.2%	58.1%	59.1%	56.8%	55.1%
% with Section 8	4.9%	4.7%	4.7%	4.7%	4.4%	4.7%	4.6%	4.6%	4.4%	5.2%	5.5%	5.3%	5.3%
<b>Program Year 2010 (n=409)</b>													
% with TANF	2.7%	3.2%	2.4%	2.0%	2.2%	2.7%	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%	3.7%	3.9%	4.2%	4.4%
% with SNAP	49.6%	51.3%	53.6%	54.0%	54.5%	56.5%	57.2%	59.2%	60.2%	58.9%	61.4%	57.2%	54.0%
% with Section 8	6.1%	5.6%	5.6%	5.6%	5.4%	5.4%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.4%	5.1%	4.9%
<b>Program Year 2011<sup>1</sup> (n=380)</b>													
% with TANF	4.0%	3.2%	3.2%	2.9%	2.6%	2.6%	2.9%	2.9%	4.0%	4.2%	4.7%	5.0%	5.3%
% with SNAP	48.4%	49.2%	50.5%	50.0%	55.3%	53.2%	58.2%	58.4%	60.3%	57.1%	56.6%	56.3%	56.3%
% with Section 8	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%	3.4%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	3.7%	5.3%	5.5%	5.5%	5.8%

Source: Housing 360 program records; Texas Department of Health and Human Services program records; Housing Authority of the City of Austin program records.

<sup>1</sup>Services may have continued in months +1 through +6.

Figures 10-12 illustrate the share of household heads who received public benefits in the six months before and six months after entering the Housing 360 program. TANF receipt (Figure 10) shows a downward trend in the months leading up to Housing 360 entry and a growth trend in the months following Housing 360 entry.

**Figure 10. Percent of Housing 360 Households Receiving TANF Benefits**

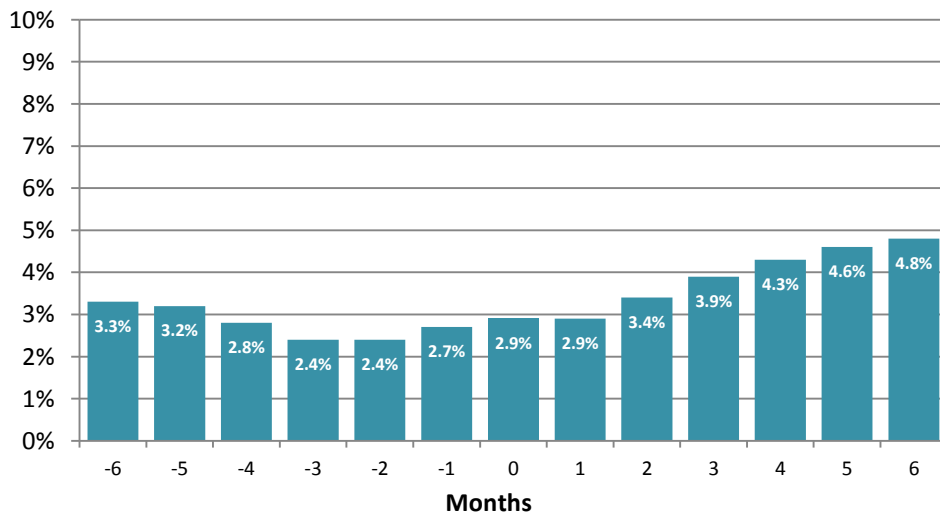
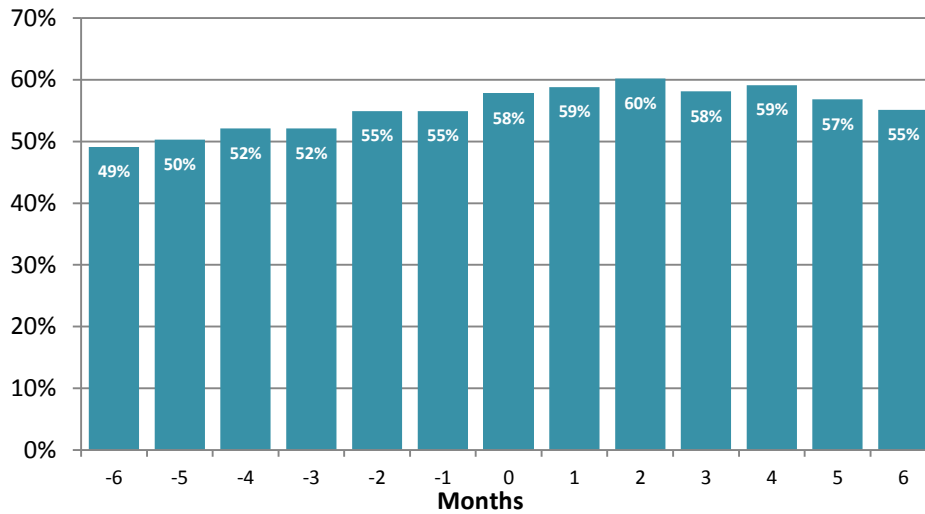


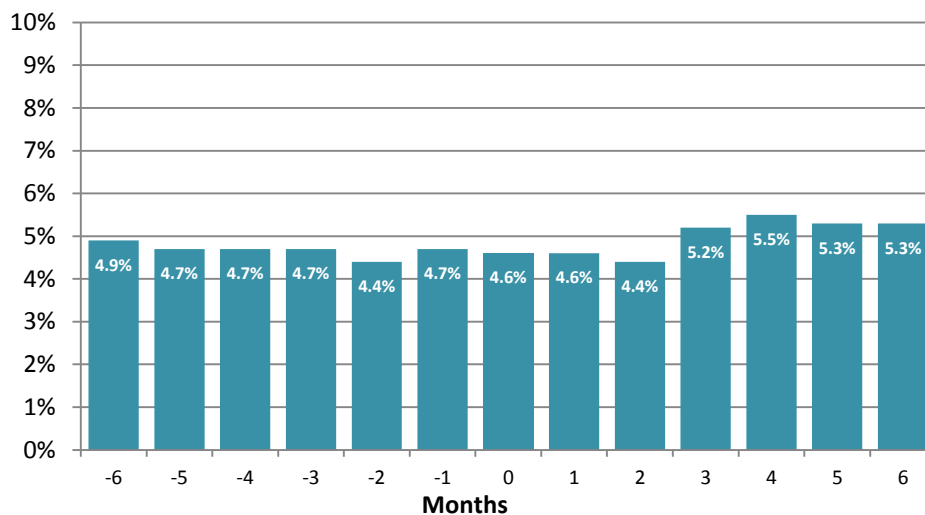
Figure 11 shows that the share receiving SNAP benefits grew in the months leading up to HPRP entry, and then continued to climb for a few months following entry before showing a slight decline.

**Figure 11. Percent of Housing 360 Households Receiving SNAP Benefits**



In Figure 12, the share of Housing 360 households in Section 8 housing is illustrated. In general, the share of households in Section 8 housing has been slightly greater in the post-program entry period than in the pre-program period.

**Figure 12. Percent of Housing 360 Households in Section 8 Housing**





These results – greater shares of participants accessing TANF, SNAP and Section 8 housing – indicate that some Housing 360 participants were accessing multiple sources of assistance about the same time. Given the available data, it is not known if more participants accessed social services on their own during a time of financial crisis or if case management services, either those through Housing 360 or another source, could have aided in their seeking services.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DATA STANDARDS

The challenges faced in the current analyses, outlined earlier in this report, provide a starting point for recommendations for improving data collection systems for use in evaluations. Based on these, the Ray Marshall Center puts forth the following recommendations for data management.

First, data systems must contain the ability to persistently identify an individual. Consistent with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's *Universal HMIS Data Elements*, the data used for Housing 360 contained fields for Social Security number, a unique personal identification number, and a household identification number. However, the use of these fields was altered during the program making it difficult to identify individuals and the household(s) to which they belonged. Methods for identifying individuals and households, once established, should be modified sparingly and with caution. If fields are to be modified, data for previously served individuals should be updated to the new identification method in order to ensure these individuals can be accurately tracked over time.

As with client identifiers, changes to any data collection field should be made with prudence and thoroughly documented. It should be documented what fields were changed, the date the change took effect, a description of the change and why the change occurred. If possible, older records should be updated to be accurate in the new method of tracking the data.

Data, especially information containing client status or outcome, should be fixed as of a particular date (not overwritten with each client interaction). When data, such as a client's housing status, is overwritten, it is then impossible to report client status changes across time.

When tracking services provided to households, a method for identifying the head-of-household should be used consistently. If the data system does not capture household or head-of-household information for individuals who live alone, this information should be documented.

These recommendations should be taken into account along with the HMIS Guides provided by HUD.

## CONCLUSIONS

The City of Austin's Housing 360 program was funded through the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) under Title XII of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Housing 360 appears to have been largely successful, though data limitations and the lack of a comparison group prevent more rigorous assessment. Available data indicate that the financial assistance provided to households helped many in the Austin community find or retain adequate housing in the short-term. Analysis of longer-term housing stability was unfortunately hindered by the lack of consistent or available data. However, conversations with homeless-serving organizations in the community who were involved with Housing 360 show that program components and approaches have been incorporated into their standard service models since the end of the Housing 360 program in 2011.

In a *Community Success Story* prepared for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Austin reported that "HPRP spurred a transformation of social services provision by bringing together new and existing homelessness prevention and homeless assistance services into one system.... Housing 360 marked the first occasion when prevention, homeless assistance, and housing location services were provided as part of one program...A result of Housing 360 design and scope is its influence on how Austin will fund social services in the future...Austin is using the Housing 360 model to create a more comprehensive continuum of care within one funded program, and aims to promote such integration in the remainder of its community services" (Austin, n.d.).

The City of Austin has indeed made this change, having implemented several comprehensive workforce, education, and housing initiatives within the last fiscal year. The intent of these programs is to better meet the needs of disadvantaged residents by more effectively linking and connecting services and partner organizations around the needs of families. According to City and provider staff, the lessons learned from Housing 360 played an important role in this transformation.

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