



Evaluation of Oakland Housing Authority's Sponsor-Based Housing Assistance Program

October 1, 2014

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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary..... 5

2. Background 9
 Exhibit 2.1- Who are the SBHAP service providers and funding partners.....10

3. Methodology 12
 Exhibit 3.1 - How many clients did the SBHAP serve?.....12
 3.1 Qualitative Data12
 3.2 Quantitative Data.....13

4 SBHAP Implementation 14
 4.1 What is the programs logic model?14
 4.2 What are best practices for housing challenging populations.....15
 4.3 How does the program work compared to best practices to housing first.....16

5 SBHAP Outcomes 18
 5.1 Is the program reaching people at high risk of long periods of homelessness or becoming homeless?18
 Exhibit 5.1 - Who were the clients served by the SBHAP?19
 Exhibit 5.2 - What kinds of barriers to housing do SBHAP clients face?22
 5.2 Are clients being placed in appropriate housing quickly?22
 Exhibit 5.3 - How quickly are SBHAP clients served?23
 5.3 Is the program delivering appropriate services that foster housing stability?23
 5.4 How long do clients stay in SBHAP-supported housing.....24
 Exhibit 5.4- How long do clients stay in SBHAP funded units?24
 5.5 What has been the overall success of achieving housing stability for the initial 125 clients served?26
 Exhibit 5.5 – Where do SBHAP clients go when they leave the program?.....26
 Exhibit 5.6 – Did clients leaving the program attain stable housing?.....27
 5.6 Will clients be able to maintain stable housing after leaving SBHAP?28
 Exhibit 5.7 – Did SBHAP clients increase their income?29

6 SBHAP Costs 31
 Exhibit 6.1 – How much did it cost to provide housing and services to SBHAP clients?32
 Exhibit 6.2 – How much does it cost to serve similar OHA residents?32

7 Implications of the SBHAP Evaluation findings..... 33
 7.1 SBHAP role in the community effort to end homelessness.....33
 7.2 SBHAP structure and funding model34
 7.3 Recommendations36
 Exhibit 7.1 – Were the current performance goals met?38

1. Executive Summary

The Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) commissioned program evaluators and experts on homelessness at Abt Associates to conduct an evaluation of the Sponsor-Based Housing Assistance Program (SBHAP), a pilot program under which OHA contracts with the City of Oakland (the City) to provide housing subsidies and related case management to high-risk people who would be unlikely to pass eligibility tests for OHA’s Housing Choice Voucher and public housing programs. SBHAP uses a “housing first” model, in which people are placed into private market rental housing as quickly as possible so that they can improve other aspects of their lives from a platform of stable housing. The evaluation focused on the first groups of people served by SBHAP, homeless people in encampments (both with and without diagnoses of severe mental illness), adults returning from incarceration at San Quentin, and youth involved with the criminal justice system. Partner organizations are contacted by the City to administer SBHAP for these populations, including identifying people for the program, helping them find and move into housing, providing ongoing case management, and (for the encampment population with severe mental illness) providing some mental health services. The evaluation team collected and analyzed data for 125 clients who entered the SBHAP from June 1, 2010 to June 30, 2012.

The evaluation found that SBHAP implements the housing first model successfully through competent organizations with extensive experience serving the target population groups. On the whole, the selection of people for the program is reaching those with highest needs and greatest risk of long-term homelessness or becoming homeless. Placement in housing is fairly rapid, but has slowed a bit over time. Case management is tailored to individual needs, respectful of clients, and designed to address clients’ barriers to stable housing.

However, there is some difference of perspective among the service providers regarding the logic model for the SBHAP. By the time interviews were conducted for this study, the non-profit providers largely envisioned the SBHAP as a permanent supportive housing program rather than the pilot temporary rental assistance subsidy program that OHA intended to fund. OHA was able to fund this program on a pilot basis because it has authority to experiment with non-traditional housing assistance as a participant in HUD’s Moving to Work Demonstration MTW authority is not permanent, but instead must be renegotiated periodically between HUD and the housing authority. OHA’s two initial lead collaborators of the program have since retired and were not interviewed to give their perspective on the initial agreement regarding the logic model.

Evaluation Snapshot - Enrollment	
How long did it take to enroll clients?	Average time to enrollment 37 days in first year, 50 in second.
Were there barriers or delays in enrolling clients?	Early on establishing relationships with landlords delayed the process. Later delays in processing applications, namely getting HQS inspections caused most delays.

Sources: Exhibit 4.3 (pg. 21)

Section 4.3.2 (pg. 20)

This subsequent misconception greatly influenced the way in which some of the SBHAP providers implemented the program. In basic terms, the providers implemented what would be considered a very successful permanent supportive housing program, particularly for the clients coming from the encampments. However, since OHA does not view SBHAP as a permanent housing program model, the logic model for the program needs to be clarified and defined explicitly within the language of the contract. The evaluation team recommends that the logic model be specified distinctly for each of the different population groups served to ensure that there is no disconnect between the program’s implementation and its standards of success.

The program is moderately successful at transitioning clients off of SBHAP subsidy to stable housing situations. Most clients are still in SBHAP funded units and would largely be considered stable and successful by the service providers. Among clients who have exited the program, 60 percent moved to stable housing situations, either their own housing or living with friends or family. However, when these exits took place they were largely due to negative events in the clients’ relationship with service providers, such as eviction.

Given their older age, high rates of disability, and typical long periods of homelessness, permanent

Evaluation Snapshot - Outcomes	
How many clients graduated?	48 of the first 125 clients served have left the program
How many clients transitioned to stable permanent housing?	29 of those 48 (60 %) have exited to housing deemed stable and permanent, i.e. living on their own or with friends or family.
What happened to clients who did not leave to stable housing?	77 of the first 125 clients are still in SBHAP supported units. Of those that left housing the most common unstable destination was jail (15%) or to homelessness (12%)

Source: Exhibit 5.1 (pg. 24)

supportive housing is a more appropriate program model for the encampment population going forward. Permanent supportive housing represents a longer term commitment than what is currently expected by OHA given to the temporary nature of its funding flexibility under the MTW demonstration, and this paper presents some possible alternatives to pursue. In contrast, housing subsidies provided to the adult and youth reentry populations should be explicitly defined in the contract as short-term, with an expected exit typically to a stable but unsubsidized situation and with growth in income from employment given more emphasis in case management,

access to resources, and performance metrics.

The evaluation team makes the following recommendations:

- OHA should continue the program through a contract with the City, but with some increased and altered expectations defined through either explicit memoranda of understanding or modified language in the existing contract.
- OHA should consider setting aside (creating a “limited preference for”) a very small number of Housing Choice Vouchers to serve as “graduation” housing for encampment clients who have

been stabilized in SBHAP-supported housing and can show mitigating circumstances for past behavior that would otherwise make them ineligible for the voucher program.

- A provision of the contract between OHA and the City should require the City to connect the adult reentry population with workforce development resources, either through direct funding or through best efforts to gain priority access for SBHAP reentry clients.
- The performance metrics for the encampment populations should emphasize access to benefits income rather than an expectation of employment growth.
- The performance metrics for the reentry populations should emphasize growth in employment income, but without an expectation that those clients can gain enough income to pay no more than 30 percent of income for housing they rent on their own as housing cost burdens that are slightly higher may still be consistent with maintaining stable housing.
- For all client groups, the performance metrics should include the stability of the housing situation at program exit. OHA and the program partners should also be encouraged to continue tracking clients after they leave SBHAP supported units.
- For all client groups, the performance metrics should explicitly state whether remaining in a SBHAP funded unit qualifies as remaining stably housed for the purposes of reporting.
- All SBHAP partners should participate in the development and implementation of a centralized intake system in Alameda County to identify people who are chronically homeless or at risk of having long-term episodes of homelessness.
- The City and Alameda County should be encouraged to commit additional funds to support a modest number of Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team slots for potential SBHAP clients in encampments who cannot be served now because of their inability or unwillingness to engage with the case management process.
- The provider serving the youth reentry population should be encouraged, or perhaps required, to apply a screening protocol that identifies youth with the highest risk of becoming homeless.
- OHA should transfer to partner organizations responsibility for carrying out the initial housing quality (HQS) inspections at SBHAP housing unless prohibited by its regulatory guidelines.
- All providers of SBHAP housing subsidies should be required to track lease-up speed—the number of days from program intake to the move-in to housing.

SBHAP Evaluation Headlines	
What worked?	What didn't work?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified vulnerable populations at risk of or experiencing homelessness. • Quickly housed vulnerable clients after outreach. • Wrap around services and case management foster housing stability during stay. • Clients have access to range of resources to address housing barriers related to mental health, substance abuse, and employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers Abode, LifeLong, and VOA implemented a program more consistent with the Permanent Supportive Housing model. • Providers Abode, LifeLong, and VOA perceive staying in SBHAP housing a stable outcome. • Very few clients graduated from the program by sufficiently increasing income to live independently.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most clients exit to a stable housing situation. • Nearly all clients had some increase in income during their stay. • First Place for Youth maintained fidelity to the temporary rental assistance approach emphasized by OHA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most clients exited the program due to some kind of negative circumstance related to their housing. • Very few options exist for clients who could be transitioned out of SBHAP housing, but who will be unable to afford unsubsidized housing.
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2. Background on the Oakland Sponsor-based Housing Assistance Program and Evaluation

Abt Associates was contracted by the Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) to conduct an evaluation of their Sponsor-based Housing Assistance Program (SBHAP). The program is a partnership with local non-profits, designed to provide housing and supportive services to vulnerable individuals who traditionally have not been able to access housing authority resources.

The evaluation is intended to answer the overarching questions:

- Is the program working?
- How is the program contributing to the strategy for ending homelessness in Alameda County?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the current SBHAP structure and funding model?

To address these questions, the study team examined outcomes for the individuals who enrolled during the first two years of the program.

The Abt study team for the SBHAP evaluation includes Dr. Jill Khadduri, Project Director, Brooke Spellman, Project Quality Advisor, and Galen Savidge-Wilkins.

The Sponsor-based Housing Assistance Program

In June 2010, the Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) partnered with the City of Oakland’s Department of Human Services (the City) to create a program to provide housing and supportive services to individuals who traditionally have not been able to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher and public housing programs administered by the housing authority. The program was designed to serve three subgroups of vulnerable populations: individuals living in street homeless encampments, adults being discharged from the San Quentin State Prison, and youth with recent contact with the criminal justice system.

During the first contract year, OHA and the City agreed to fund housing and supportive services for 90 clients. This group was to include 40 individuals living in street homeless encampments, 40 reentering adults from the San Quentin State Prison, and 10 youth who had recent contact with the criminal justice system. During the second contract year, the program was expanded to include additional funding from the Alameda County Behavioral HealthCare Services for 20 slots for individuals in street homeless encampments who are living with major mental illnesses, for a total of 110 SBHAP slots.

The SBHAP partnership and funding model is that the program leverages housing subsidies funded by OHA and administered together with services provided by non-profit service providers that are either funded directly or coordinated by the City. Some service providers manage master leases entered into

with private landlords and subleased by program participants, while others recruit landlords but permit the lease to be between the participant and the owner of the housing.

The organizations through which housing and services are provided to this original cohort of SBHAP clients are:

- **Abode Services:** *Supported by a subcontract from the City using funding from OHA, Abode provides housing services and subsidies to SBHAP clients coming from homeless encampments and reentry adults. Abode has extensive experience providing housing linked to services for low-income individuals and people experiencing homelessness throughout the Bay Area: permanent supportive housing, rental subsidies, and other housing options.*
- **LifeLong Medical Care:** *LifeLong case managers support the SBHAP clients from homeless encampments. The City provides funds for case management for 40 encampment clients, and Alameda County provides funds for case management for the 20 clients with serious mental illness. The City also funds Operation Dignity to support LifeLong's initial outreach and targeting efforts that identify potential clients living on the streets and in encampments. LifeLong provides health and social services to underserved populations, including seniors, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness. LifeLong offers services to permanent supportive housing recipients and other vulnerable people throughout the East Bay and has an extensive network of primary care centers.*
- **Volunteers of America of Northern California and Northern Nevada:** *VOA provides case management and employment services to the SBHAP reentry adult clients. The case managers are funded by the City. VOA operates the Project Choice program that provides intensive support and counseling pre- and post-release for individuals exiting the prison system.*
- **First Place for Youth:** *Supported by a subcontract from the City using funding from OHA, First Place provides housing services and subsidies to youth ages 18 to 24 who have had recent contact with the criminal justice system. First Place for Youth also provides case management to these SBHAP clients, funded by the State of California. First Place is a housing and supportive services provider focusing on transition-aged youth and specializing in at-risk youth and Bay Area youth aging out of foster care.*

A basic representation of the funding relationship is shown in Exhibit 2.1. Further analysis of the cost of serving clients is presented in Section 6 of this report.

Exhibit 2.1: Who are the SBHAP service providers and funding partners?

	Encampments	Encampments (MH)	Reentry	Youth
Housing Provider	Abode			First Place
Housing Funder	Oakland Housing Authority*			
Services Provider	LifeLong		VOA	First Place
Services Funder	City of Oakland**	Alameda County**	City of Oakland**	State of California****

**Including housing specialists at Abode and First Place*

*** Including City funded outreach support provided by Operation Dignity*

****Includes City Measure Y funds for vocational case manager and work program*

*****Includes State funding for case managers and wraparound services*

Source: Oakland Housing Authority – Agreement with the City of Oakland for the Provision of Funds for Rental Subsidy Assistance 2011-2012.

3. Methodology

To assess whether the SBHAP is working, the extent to which the program plays a role in regional efforts to end homelessness, and the advantages and disadvantages of the current funding model, the study approach used both qualitative and quantitative data to address the research questions, including:

- Phone and in-person interviews with SBHAP stakeholders, including OHA, City of Oakland, and provider staff.
- Review of internal program documents and budgets.
- A client focus group with recipients of SBHAP subsidies.
- Analysis of program level data on characteristics and outcomes for clients who enrolled between June 1, 2010 and June 30, 2012.

The sample of clients who enrolled in the first two program years consists of 125 people. The distribution of the 125 clients across the four population types is shown in Exhibit 3.1. In some cases, this exceeds the goal specified in the contract between OHA and the City, because turnover slots were allocated to new clients.

Exhibit 3.1: How many clients did the SBHAP serve?

	Encampments	Encampments (MH)	Reentry	Youth	SBHAP Total
Clients Served	41	21	44	19	125
Contract Goal	40	20	40	10	110

Source: Client-level data from Abode and First Place program years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012.

3.1 Qualitative Data

At the beginning of the evaluation, the study team conducted phone interviews with 17 primary SBHAP stakeholders. The interviews were designed to explore the design and planning underlying the program model, the services delivered to clients, and the relationship between the funders and the service providers. In addition to gaining an important understanding of how the program was implemented in practice, these interviews gave the study team the opportunity to discuss the availability of program data and the ways in which data were used for reporting or monitoring.

The study team conducted a second round of interviews during in-person meetings with program leadership and with direct service providers. These interviews focused both on describing program experiences and on understanding internal program documents and data. In some cases, the study team followed up with additional questions by telephone.

The following stakeholders were interviewed as a part of the study process.

- Eric Johnson, Executive Director, Oakland Housing Authority
- Janet Rice, Deputy Executive Director, Oakland Housing Authority
- Susan Shelton, Gladys Moore, and Kerry Abbott, City of Oakland
- Michelle Hasan, Oakland Housing Authority
- Vivian Wan and Stacey Murphy, Abode leadership
- Esteban Allard-Valdivieso, Abode housing specialist
- Marty Lynch and Brenda Goldstein, LifeLong leadership
- Makeda Ama, LifeLong case manager
- Gary Flores, VOA leadership
- Jesse Graham, VOA case manager
- Sam Cobbs and Christy Saxton, First Place for Youth leadership
- Elaine de Coligny, EveryOne Home Alameda County

In addition to these structured interviews, the study team attended a monthly partners meeting organized by the City and held a focus group with four clients receiving services from LifeLong and Abode.

3.2 Quantitative Data

The quantitative data focused on two key sources: 1) internal client-level tracking data provided to the study team by Abode and First Place for Youth, and 2) data summaries reported to the Alameda County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) by Abode and First Place for Youth. The internal client-level data from providers' individual tracking systems and case management notes contained a wealth of information on clients' experiences and outcomes. The HMIS Summary Reports provided client demographic data and other characteristics collected from clients when they entered the program and updated at exit, when applicable.

In addition to data on subsidy recipients, the study team also examined budget documentation in order to gain an understanding of the SBHAP's costs. The City provided monthly and annual reports on actual housing subsidy expenditures drawn from OHA funding as well as annual budgets showing other funding amounts used to support clients in the SBHAP partnership.

4. SBHAP Implementation

In discussing their experiences with SBHAP, stakeholders universally expressed the view that the program was successfully serving clients. In addition, the Oakland PATH Rehousing Initiative, the City's overarching program encompassing the SBHAP, has been highlighted as successful and innovative by the US Interagency Council on Homelessness. By commissioning this evaluation, OHA asked the study team to go further in assessing program success, addressing what worked, what didn't, what services clients received, whether clients successfully left the program, and if not what happened. Doing that required an in-depth understanding of what the program was designed to accomplish, how it was implemented, and how the program model was perceived by providers and executed for discreet subgroups.

4.1 What is the program's logic model?

The SBHAP is based on a "housing first" approach in which placement in housing is meant to happen quickly, without a lengthy transitional period, and services provided during and after the housing placement are used to help the client remain in the housing.

However, The SBHAP does not have an explicitly defined logic model written into any contractual document. Rather, the program has relied on established provider approaches, early and ongoing design discussions with provider partners, and outcome metrics defined through the contract between OHA and the City to shape the overall mission of the program, to provide temporary rental subsidies that help individuals that are otherwise ineligible for housing authority support transition to stable permanent housing.

At the program's inception, the City and provider network negotiated the parameters of SBHAP with OHA staff. The funders and providers also agreed to a system of monthly reporting on specific metrics that are aligned with the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness (EveryOne Home) activities. During the first two program years, the following metrics and performance targets were in place.

Of the 125 individuals that received SBHAP support:

- 95% of all persons who enter the program remain housed for greater than six months.
- 85% of those who obtain permanent housing will maintain it for more than one year.
- 65% of those who obtain permanent housing will maintain it for more than three years.
- 20% of all adults exiting SBHAP have employment as a source of income at exit.
- 30% of adults who entered SBHAP with no income will have income at exit.

Along with the requirement for serving people who would not otherwise have access to OHA resources, these outcome metrics seemed to create an implicit logic model that encouraged providers to offer permanent housing—that is, housing with an undefined length of stay—and supportive housing—that is, housing for people who need fairly intensive services to obtain and maintain stable housing. However

OHA never intended the program to provide indefinite assistance, as its status as a participant in HUD's MTW demonstration and the associated flexibility in using funds outside the standard regulations of the Housing Choice Voucher and public housing programs is time limited and based on a contract with HUD that is renegotiated periodically and not of indefinite duration. The ability to use of MTW funding for pilot projects also is subject to the availability of discretionary funds in the housing authority's budget, which is why OHA provides SBHAP funding under annual contracts with the City.

In practice, "remaining housed" has been defined by providers and in program reporting from the City as continuing to receive SBHAP rent subsidies. The expectations for employment under these metrics are modest. Thus, the monitoring metrics that are used reflect a perception on the part of the providers at the outset of the program that SBHAP was intended to be permanent supportive housing for these vulnerable populations.¹ No clarification was sought by providers from OHA.

One of the providers, First Place for Youth, interprets the current outcome metrics more in line with OHA's view of the program's goals. First Place expects its clients to transition after two years from the housing provided by SBHAP to another housing situation that is stable, but in which the client is not the primary or sole lease holder. However, First Place was unable to meet the metric of maintaining housing for more than three years laid out in the contract, because tracking was not done after the participant left the program. In contrast, Abode and its partners LifeLong and VOA subscribe to a goal of permanent – that is, not time limited – housing in which the client is living independently and, given weak expectations for income growth, continues to need some sort of rent subsidy.²

Finally, there are some complications inherent in applying a "housing first" approach to re-entry and juvenile offender populations that are not homeless in the literal sense of being in shelters or on the street and whose exit from prison or other involvement with the criminal justice system has an inherently "transitional" character.

4.2 What are best practices for housing challenging populations who are homeless or at high risk of becoming homeless?

Communities across the country are in the process of developing best practices based on empirical evidence and provider experience. Most agree that there is not a single solution for all subpopulations, and that the most relevant practices will depend on the population being targeted. Unfortunately, research on the effects of specific practices for different subpopulations is limited. Permanent supportive housing has certainly emerged as an evidence-based practice for individuals with chronic disabilities who have been homeless for extensive periods, but evidence is not yet available about the

¹ The concept of permanent supportive housing is broader than the specific HUD Permanent Supportive Housing program, also known as Shelter Plus Care. Shelter Plus Care clients must have a disability and must be homeless (on the street, in emergency shelter, or in transitional housing) before entering the program.

² For the purposes of the community's official HMIS, the subsidies administered by Abode are considered Permanent Supportive Housing, while those administered by First Place are considered Rapid Re-Housing which is defined as time limited housing support for up to 24 months.

relative effectiveness of time-limited rapid re-housing approaches for serving various population groups.³

Some of the evidence-based and promising practices relevant to the SBHAP are:

- Regardless of whether the program is intended to provide permanent supportive housing or a transition to another stable housing situation, a housing first program should not limit enrollment to individuals perceived as most likely to succeed. Clients with substantial barriers to housing stability have succeeded in maintaining housing.
- A housing first model focuses on moving people directly into permanent housing as quickly as possible. Housing first is based on the understanding that clients with housing stability are better able to address their other issues and to gain whatever employment and benefit income is feasible for them.
- Clients with barriers to housing stability should be supported through appropriate levels of case management, which may phase down over time. An assessment tool can be useful for tailoring services to client needs. The case management should focus on linking clients to the services they need and on helping with issues that related to tenancy.
- If the rent subsidy is to be temporary, the program should provide an exit strategy focused on helping clients gain as much income as possible before program exit and on a transition to either other subsidized housing or affordable self-paid housing. Affordability need not mean strict adherence to a standard of paying no more than 30 percent of income for rent, as many low-income people remain stably housed despite having higher housing cost burdens.

The providers selected by the SBHAP appear to be well suited to delivering the housing and support services implied by these best practices. The next section of the report (Section 4.3) examines in more detail whether the program is choosing the neediest clients, proving services tailored to client needs, placing clients in housing quickly, and achieving short-term housing stability for the initial cohort of 125 clients.

4.3 How does the program work compared to best practices for housing first?

To understand the issues inherent in applying a universal set of monitoring standards a program that serves different sub-populations through providers specializing in providing services to those groups, it is helpful to examine further each individual provider's approach to delivering services.

- Abode Services, in its capacity as housing service provider, works to quickly house clients in private market housing using the subsidy funds provided by OHA. Abode is committed to the housing first approach and uses proactive engagement with landlords to succeed in placing clients who might otherwise be rejected as tenants because of apparent barriers to housing stability such as criminal histories, mental illness, or long periods of homelessness. Abode seeks

³ The Family Options Study, a random assignment evaluation conducted by Abt Associates for the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, is testing the effectiveness of short-term rental assistance compared to other approaches for families who have been in emergency shelters for at least seven days. Alameda County and OHA are participating in that study.

to maintain clients in SBHAP-supported housing as long as possible. When SBHAP clients need to leave a housing unit because of conflicts with landlords or neighbors, Abode helps them remain in the program by finding a different housing unit.

- LifeLong Medical Care, with outreach support from Operation Dignity, identifies individuals living in encampments believed to require a housing subsidy tied to ongoing case management in order to maintain housing stability. LifeLong case management continues throughout the client's use of SBHAP rent subsidies and is focused on helping people formerly living in encampments who typically have a variety of chronic health, substance abuse, and mental health needs stabilize their lives.
- Volunteers of America (VOA), identifies reentering prisoners who need a placement in permanent housing. Most clients live first in a group setting--parolee housing--before being placed into permanent housing supported by a SBHAP subsidy. VOA usually starts working with prisoners during the incarceration period and provides case management while they live in parolee housing and are working on transitioning into permanent housing. Once placed into permanent housing with a SBHAP subsidy, VOA continues to provide case management tailored to the needs of former prisoners that is focused on preventing recidivism and increasing earnings.
- First Place for Youth targets a population of youth who recently have been incarcerated or otherwise involved with the criminal justice system, using a shorter-term approach to achieving housing stability. Many of those determined to need a housing placement are neither homeless nor incarcerated. (Seven of the initial 19 youth served by the program were living with friends, and 3 were living with family.) The duration of the SBHAP subsidy is, in practice, limited to two years. Services are designed to transition clients to other stable housing arrangements. Given the young ages of First Place clients and the high cost of housing in the Bay Area, First Place expects clients exiting the program to live with other people rather than alone in self-paid, market-rate housing. If the young person does not intend to live with relatives, First Place tries to set up a roommate arrangement, or shared housing in which more than one person's income is available to pay the rent.

Overall, the SBHAP's service delivery approach is consistent with fostering housing stability and increasing income through rapid placement in housing and intensive case management. However, a mismatch is evident between the OHA's goals for the program as short-term rental assistance, the current performance metrics, and the program models in practice. Namely, providers serving clients from the homeless encampments and clients released from San Quentin are following a permanent supportive housing model. This runs counter to the goal of moving clients to other stable housing situations.

In an effort to support the original intent of the program as a pilot temporary housing assistance program and to help provide permanent supportive housing, OHA has worked with other partners to develop affordable housing with units that can be made available to SBHAP program participants who need a permanent housing placement. OHA has also provided information to help participants identify other affordable housing opportunities.

5. SBHAP Outcomes

The next sections answer four specific questions about the implementation of the SBHAP implied by the program's implicit logic model and by best practices for serving vulnerable populations who are homeless or at high risk of become homeless and two key overarching questions that explore what worked, what didn't, and what happened to the SBHAP clients:

Implementation Questions

- Is the program reaching the neediest households? How does selection for the program work? Who is being screened out?
- Are clients being placed in housing quickly? Does the housing appear to be appropriate?
- Is the program delivering appropriate services—tailored to client needs, geared toward increasing housing stability, and respectful of clients?
- How long are clients remaining in SBHAP-supported housing? Does the program appear to be achieving housing stability in the short-term?

Program Achievements

- What has been the overall success of achieving housing stability for the initial 125 clients served?
- Were clients able to maintain stable housing after leaving SBHAP?

5.1 Is the program reaching people at high risk of long periods of homelessness or becoming homeless?

One of the emerging best practices of the housing first approach is that it should not screen out people with the greatest needs for assistance. This section begins by showing some basic demographic characteristics of each of the four populations served during the first two years of the SBHAP: encampment, encampment with serious mental illness, adult prison reentry, and youth clients. These varying characteristics may be important both for the screening criteria of the program and for the program's objectives for serving different client groups. The section then discusses whether the screening criteria required by OHA's regulatory and policy restrictions serve to deny the program to people who need it and then discusses whether the processes used by the providers to select people for the program appear to be reaching people with great risk of long periods of homelessness or falling into homelessness.

Demographic Characteristics of People Served by SBHA

Exhibit 4.1 shows the gender, race, and age distribution of clients entering the SBHAP in 2010 and 2011, as well as whether they have children and their veteran status.

Exhibit 5.1: Who was served by the SBHAP? Demographic Characteristics of Clients

	Encampments	Encampments (MH)	Reentry	Youth	SBHAP Total
Gender					
Male	29	71%	17	81%	44
Female	12	29%	4	19%	0
Race					
Caucasian	2	5%	2	10%	3
African American	36	88%	18	86%	36
Asian PI	0	0%	0	0%	1
Other/Multiple	3	7%	1	5%	4
Latino (Ethnicity)	1	2%	1	5%	3
Age					
18-24	4	10%	0	0%	8
25-34	4	10%	2	10%	31
35-44	8	20%	2	10%	5
44-54	16	39%	10	48%	0
55-61	8	20%	6	29%	0
62+	1	2%	1	5%	0
With Children at Intake					
Yes	0	0%	0	0%	1
Veterans Status					
Yes	7	17%	3	14%	4
Total Adult Clients	41	33%	21	17%	44

Source: HMIS Summary Report Data from Abode and First Place

Across all four population groups, most clients were male (81 percent). The only group fairly evenly split between men and women were youth involved with the criminal justice system, among whom 42 percent were female. Almost no one entered the housing program accompanied by children. The program’s services are not focused on needs related to children such as family reunification or the development and education of young children. None of the interviews discussed barriers to finding housing placements suitable for children.

Most of the encampment population is between the ages of 35 and 61, and a substantial majority of those both with and without severe mental illness is 45 or older. In contrast, most reentering prisoners are between ages 25 and 34, and by definition, all youth are 24 or younger. Most clients are African-American, with only the youth population including substantial numbers identifying as Latino or as other or multiple races.

Effect of OHA Screening

The contract between OHA and the City specifies that OHA will screen clients for the following eligibility criteria:

- No member of the household is subject to a lifetime registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program.
- No member of the household currently owes rent or other amounts to the Oakland Housing Authority in connection with Section 8 or public housing assistance without a repayment plan.

- No member of the household has ever been convicted of drug-related criminal activity for the production or manufacture of methamphetamine on the premises of federally assisted housing.
- Applicant is a legal resident or citizen of the United States.

So while OHA’s regulatory and policy based screening criteria that excludes a household with members with evidence of recent criminal activity are not applied to SBHAP clients, some screening criteria might still exclude people most in need of a housing first intervention. However, across the board no provider reported any difficulty with these eligibility rules. Possibly, case management work with potential clients means that the providers “pre-screen” their clients for ability to pass the OHA screens. One of the people interviewed for the study pointed out that, as these populations are largely African-American and thus U.S. citizens, the screen for citizenship or legal status is less likely to be a barrier than if the populations were heavily Latino or Asian immigrants.

Effects of Provider Outreach and Selection

The contract between OHA and the City identifies the populations to be selected for the SBHAP as follows:

Applicant is homeless and referred through outreach to encampments; of Reentry Provider’s Project Choice clients who have recently exited the criminal justice system; or First Place for Youth clients exiting juvenile probation.

The provider responsible for referral of clients from each subgroup included an outreach protocol to identify those most in need, and providers sought to select clients that most needed housing support because of barriers to achieving housing stability and who also could complete the processes needed to start receiving SBHAP support. All of the providers selected people for SBHAP based on their willingness to work with the provider to take the steps necessary to secure the subsidy. Thus, clients were effectively screened out based on their unwillingness or inability to engage with the case management process. Exhibit 4.2 shows the results of those selection processes for whether people with barriers to housing stability were selected, with barriers defined as where people lived immediately prior to entering the SBHAP, whether they had serious disabling conditions such as mental illness, substance abuse, or a physical disability, and whether they had any income at the time of program entry.

Encampment Clients

The selection process for encampment clients is heavily influenced by the established practices of Operation Dignity, an organization contracted by the City that works with LifeLong to identify people in encampments to be served by SBHA. Operation Dignity had extensive experience conducting street outreach and providing services to people living in encampments around the city prior to the implementation of the SBHAP. Outreach workers from Operation Dignity act as the direct referral source for LifeLong case managers, sending clients who have been living on the streets and targeting individuals who have had multiple barriers to housing.

The providers working with the encampment population described their selection process as focusing on which of Operation Dignity’s encampment clients were prepared to begin the process of using the SBHAP. Broadly speaking, this meant people who were interested in engaging with the case management process, prioritizing people who could complete the eligibility process, and identifying people who expressed an interest in permanent housing. Selecting people able to engage with case management and complete the processes of qualifying for and using SBHAP assistance means that some people in encampments and likely many with significant barriers to housing stability, could not be selected for the program. Nonetheless, the client characteristics shown on Exhibit 4.2 show that those who were enrolled from encampments had very high rates of disabilities, even among those not served by the program slots focused on mental health, with 73 percent having some disability⁴ and 39 percent with two or more. A very high portion of encampment clients reported some income from either employment or benefits at the initial program intake, but only 10 percent of clients entered housing with any earned income compared to 45 percent reporting income from SSI or SSDI (not shown on exhibit).⁵

Program staff at Abode and LifeLong expressed an interest in being able to utilize a community-wide coordinated intake system to identify potential clients most in need of permanent supportive housing.

Adult Reentry Clients

The adult reentry clients’ relationship with VOA generally starts before their release from San Quentin. The decision to start the process of enrolling the client in housing happens after the client spends a few months in parole housing, but there are many steps within the pre and post-release process that case managers use to determine who is an appropriate fit for the program. VOA data indicate that 95 percent of the reentry clients were homeless, considering “parole housing” to be the equivalent of a transitional housing facility or homeless shelter. Most do not have disabling conditions, and 57 percent have some income at the time of program intake. The VOA strongly prioritizes clients determined by case management to be ready for housing. While this is not consistent with housing first best practices, VOA staff said that they did not want to select clients with a high probability of violating parole—for example, failing a drug test or not showing up for a court date--or re-offending and exiting the program to jail or prison.

Youth Clients

The selection process for the youth reentry population is distinct from the other two populations targeted by SBHAP in the first two years in that it incorporates more of an element of self-selection. Clients are generally identified from among youth who either present at First Place’s downtown office looking for housing or who contact the office through the regional 2-1-1. They are not formally referred from the juvenile justice system. Exhibit 4.2 shows that 53 percent enter the program from a housed situation, and 32 percent from an institutional setting. Most (84 percent) have no disabling conditions, and more than half (53 percent) have some income, almost always from employment rather than

⁴ For the purposes of this analysis we use the HMIS definition which recognizes mental illness, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, chronic health condition, HIV/AIDs, developmental disability, and physical disability as disabling conditions.

⁵ See Exhibit 5.3, which is based is based on client-level data from Abode and shows sources of income when they client moved into SBHA housing. Exhibit 4.2 is based on HMIS Summary Report data and shows income at program intake.

benefits. First Place staff expressed some concern with being asked to focus on a youth population that had been involved with the criminal justice system and were not simply at risk based on other indicators.

Exhibit 5.2: What Kinds of Barriers to Housing do SBHAP Clients Face?

	Encampments	Encampments (MH)	Reentry	Youth	SBHAP Total					
Prior Residence										
Housed	0	0%	0	0%	2	5%	10	53%	12	10%
Homeless	41	100%	21	100%	42	95%	3	16%	107	86%
Institutional	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	6	32%	6	5%
Chronic Condition(s)										
0	11	27%	2	10%	37	84%	16	84%	66	53%
1	14	34%	8	38%	3	7%	0	0%	25	20%
2+	16	39%	11	52%	4	9%	3	16%	34	27%
Any Income at Program Entry										
No	9	22%	0	0%	19	43%	9	47%	37	30%
Yes	32	78%	21	100%	25	57%	10	53%	88	70%
Total Clients	41	33%	21	17%	44	35%	19	15%	125	100%

Source: HMIS Summary Report Data from Abode and First Place

5.2 Are clients being placed in appropriate housing quickly?

To understand how well the program is adhering to the housing first model of rapid placement into housing, the study team gathered as much information as possible about the process of housing placement and the factors that may delay a move into permanent housing. Providers uniformly said that screening for eligibility by OHA was very quick but slowed a bit over time. Initially, OHA review took as little as two days at its fastest point during the program’s start-up; by the end of the second year, OHA review took an average of two weeks. OHA dedicated staff and resources to responding quickly to provider requests for eligibility review and for Housing Quality Standard (HQS) inspections.

No provider could recall a scenario where a client had gone through an intake with program staff and then failed to receive an OHA subsidy, and both client-level and HMIS data only contain clients that attained housing. Front line provider staff worked with clients to ensure eligibility could be verified and to find units that could pass an HQS inspection. This likely reflects a selection process designed to find clients within these vulnerable populations who are ready to engage in the case management process and to cooperate with the process of housing placement. Outreach to landlords and the active involvement of Abode and First Place’s housing specialists in the housing search process means that what would be thought of as the “lease up” rate in a Housing Choice Voucher program is 100 percent for the SBHAP. Abode clients sign a lease directly with the owner, whereas First Place has a lease with the owner of the rental housing and a subleasing agreement with the client.

The speed with which clients attained housing following the completion of program intake is tracked by Abode but not by First Place for Youth. Exhibit 4.3 shows the average number of days elapsed from an encampment client’s program intake—that is, the date when the information needed for screening is collected by the provider - to when the client moves into a permanent housing unit. This time period

does not include the process of identifying and engaging clients before their enrollment into the SBHAP and the entry of intake information into the HMIS.

The average period of placement grew from 37 days for people who enrolled in the first program year to 50 days for people who enrolled later. The difference across the first two years of program operations supports statements from all providers that the speed with which clients moved to housing slowed over time. Housing specialists noted some initial difficulty in finding landlords that would accept the subsidy, mostly noting concerns over housing formerly homeless or reentry tenants. However, both First Place, which holds master leases for its clients, and Abode whose clients sign their own leases, emphasized that finding willing landlords became significantly easier as time went on. Universally, providers indicated in their interviews that the HQS process administered by OHA is a key driver of the longer lag times in the second program year and said that completing the HQS inspection has continued to take longer than it did during the first year of program operations. OHA staff indicate that the longer lag times were largely due to the units not being up to standards, landlords not completing required repairs following an initial visit, and delays in completing criminal background checks during this time.

Exhibit 5.3: How quickly are SBHAP Clients Served? Number of Days from Intake to Housing Placement for Clients Served by Abode

	Encampments	Encampments (MH)	Reentry	Youth	SBHAP Total
Avg Intake to Housing Time (Days)					
Entered 6/1/2010-6/30/2011	41	22	40	-	36.9
Entered 7/1/2011-6/30/2012	50	45	53	-	50.3

Source: Abode Client Level Data

The units rented under the SBHAP are said to be spread throughout the City of Oakland. According to case managers and housing specialists, the clients often played a significant role in determining the right location. Along with basic affordability concerns, case managers considered factors such as neighborhood characteristics and access to services. Often a client’s personal history with a neighborhood was also taken into account. Front line staff described housing search designed to avoid gang-affiliated neighborhoods or places that could trigger issues with drugs.

5.3 Is the program delivering appropriate services that foster housing stability?

The primary motivation for the choice of provider organizations was their extensive experience serving the target populations, and the service models utilized by the program’s partner agencies appear to be effectively designed. All providers use a case management-driven model in which personal relationships with clients inform the approach to service provision. The main service provided by SBHAP is case management, with some mental health services provided by Abode to encampment clients with diagnoses of severe mental illness. Case managers refer clients to support services available both elsewhere in the provider organizations—for example, LifeLong health services and VOA support groups—and services available in the community to which SBHAP clients do not have access based on their participation in the SBHAP. Though each provider has its own philosophical approach to working its particular client group, service provision varies significantly based on individual client needs.

Services appear to be respectful of clients. For example, the client focus group revealed the perceptions of some individuals formerly living in encampments. All had been homeless for a period of years, two men for over two decades. Across the board, these clients indicated that they were grateful to have access to the subsidy, they valued the autonomy the program gave them, and that their personal relationship with their case manager was instrumental to their success in the program. They emphasized trust and respect as hallmarks of their case management relationships. This was echoed in conversations with front line staff, who emphasized the commitment of their clients to the process as more important in fostering success than any one service or referral.

The extent to which these services can create an environment where most clients will be able to maintain stable housing without a subsidy upon leaving the SBHAP is not clear. Because the OHA intends support to be time limited, services aimed at increasing income both in the immediate and long term are vital to ensuring future housing stability of SBHAP clients.

- Case management for encampment clients focuses on increased benefits income rather than employment, and no SBHAP residents who came from encampments participate in any formal employment services. Given their high average age, fragmented or non-existent work histories, and persistent issues with substance abuse and mental health, encampment clients would likely require substantially more intensive employment services than what is offered to see even modest improvements in employment.
- Reentry clients have access to both internal and external resources through the VOA with employment oriented case management and referrals to other vocational services providers with established program models. This approach links clients directly with an in-house program that builds work experience early on and offers the kinds of supportive services that are critical to serving clients that have barriers to employment.
- First Place emphasizes a mixed approach through frequent meetings with on staff employment and education specialists that supplement the efforts of case management. This approach is especially important for a transitional aged youth cohort that likely has little or no work experience.

5.4 How long are clients remaining in SBHAP-supported housing?

Regardless of whether the SBHAP is implemented as permanent supportive housing by providers or shorter-term housing assistance using a housing first model as is OHA's intent, a successful program should provide stable housing over some period of time. Very rapid program exits would be an indication that the housing placement was not successful.

Abode staff pointed out that remaining in the SBHAP and remaining in the same housing unit should not be considered the same thing. Case managers sometimes help a client to move to a different apartment subsidized by SBHAP, because of unresolvable problems between the client and the landlord or between the client and neighbors. (Providers do not consider the SBHAP subsidy "portable" in the same way that Housing Choice Vouchers are portable and do not expect clients to request to move with the subsidy simply because of client preference.)

Exhibit 4.4 shows the lengths of stay in SBHAP-funded housing for the initial cohort of 125 SBHAP clients. The top panel of the exhibit shows the number and percentage for each client group who had

and had not exited as of April 30, 2014, near the end of Year 4 of the SBHAP. The next panel shows the percentage of exiters who left during each program year. The percentage “never exiting” as of year 4 is roughly equivalent to how providers have tracked the performance metric in the contract between OHA and the City defined as “maintained permanent housing for at least three years.” The bottom panel shows average lengths of stay for all clients who exited and for clients exiting during each program year.

The exhibit shows that very few clients left during Program Year 1 and that the only three who did were youth served by First Place. First Place staff pointed out that the youth population is inherently mobile and that such mobility is not necessarily negative. So overall the program seems to have achieved short-term stabilization in housing for most clients. It’s important to clarify that though “stable housing” from the standpoint of OHA’s goals for the program may mean clients are no longer receiving SBHAP subsidies, from the perspective of service providers, clients living in their own subsidized apartments while receiving services are considered stable. (Section 5 will examine the issue of housing stability from the standpoint of where clients went upon program exit.)

By the end of Year 4, the differences in the implicit logic models of the Abode and First Place programs are apparent. None of the youth clients who enrolled in the first two program years remained in the program by the end of year 4, and only one stayed into Year 4. In contrast, only 9 of the 41 encampment clients had left by the end of Year 4, as had only 4 of the 21 encampment clients with severe mental illness. The prison reentry population was less stable, but 27 of the 44 reentry adults were still in SBHAP supported units.

Exhibit 5.4: How long do clients stay in SBHAP funded units?

	Encampments		Encampments (MH)		Reentry		Youth		SBHAP Total	
Clients Leaving Housing										
Ever Exited SBHAP	9	22%	4	19%	17	39%	18	95%	48	38%
Never Exited SBHAP	31	76%	16	76%	27	61%	0	0%	74	59%
Deceased	1	2%	1	5%	0	0%	1	5%	3	2%
Total	41	100%	21	100%	44	100%	19	100%	125	100%
Exits by Program Year*										
Exited 6/1/2010-6/30/2011	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	17%	3	6%
Exited 7/1/2011-6/30/2012	3	33%	0	0%	6	35%	8	44%	17	35%
Exited 7/1/2012-6/30/2013	2	22%	3	75%	4	24%	6	33%	15	31%
Exited 7/1/2013-4/30/2014	4	44%	1	25%	7	41%	1	6%	13	27%
Average Length of Stay for Exiters (months)										
Exited 6/1/2010-6/30/2011	-		-		-		6.4		6.4	
Exited 7/1/2011-6/30/2012	14.4		-		5.6		7.6		8.5	
Exited 7/1/2012-6/30/2013	10.7		8.7		12.9		15.2		12.5	
Exited 7/1/2013-4/30/2014	39.8		25.1		23.7		24.2		29.4	
All Exited Clients	34.6		26.6		26.5		11.1		26.8	

* Does not include deceased clients

Source: Client Level Data from Abode and First Place

This section turns to the outcomes achieved by the 125 clients who entered the SBHAP during the first two years of the program’s operation. Section 5.5 looks at housing stability. Section 5.6 looks at income and income increases.

5.5 What has been the overall success of achieving housing stability for the initial 125 clients served?

This section asks a broader question about housing stability, not simply focusing on how long clients remained in the SBHAP , but instead at whether exits from the program were to stable or unstable housing situations. A broader view of housing stability may be appropriate to encourage providers to shift their approach from permanent supportive housing to a temporary housing subsidy focused on stabilizing clients who then move on.

Exhibit 5.5 focuses on the 48 clients of 125 who entered the program during Program Year 2010 and 2011 and had left by April 30, 2014 and shows the housing destinations at exit (top panel) and the reasons for the exit as recorded by the providers (bottom panel).

Exhibit 5.5: Where do SBHAP clients go when they leave the program?

	Encampments	Encampments (MH)	Reentry	Youth	SBHAP Total					
Destination										
Deceased	1	-	1	-	0	-	1	-	3	-
Housing w/ Subsidy	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	11%	2	4%
Housing w/o Subsidy	5	56%	1	25%	7	41%	1	6%	14	29%
Jail/Prison Shelter	0	0%	1	25%	6	35%	0	0%	7	15%
Transitional Housing	1	11%	0	0%	0	0%	3	17%	4	8%
Friends or Family, Permanent	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	11%	2	4%
Friends or Family, Unstable	3	33%	0	0%	2	12%	8	44%	13	27%
Unknown/Disappeared	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	11%	2	4%
Unknown/Disappeared	0	0%	2	50%	2	12%	0	0%	4	8%
Reason										
Deceased	1	-	1	-	0	-	1	-	3	-
Criminal activity	0	0%	1	25%	7	41%	2	11%	10	21%
Disagreement with rules	3	33%	0	0%	1	6%	6	33%	10	21%
Disappeared	0	0%	2	50%	2	12%	0	0%	4	8%
Graduated	1	11%	0	0%	0	0%	2	11%	3	6%
Left for housing opportunity	3	33%	0	0%	1	6%	3	17%	7	15%
Needs could not be met	1	11%	0	0%	0	0%	4	22%	5	10%
Non-payment of rent	1	11%	1	25%	6	35%	0	0%	8	17%
Unknown	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	6%	1	2%
Total Exited Clients	9	100%	4	100%	17	100%	18	100%	48	100%

Source: Client Level Data from Abode and First Place

Exhibit 5.6 provides a summary assessment of whether the circumstances of the exit were positive or negative-- based on client-level data and study team conversations with program staff. A negative exit reflects a client’s problems cooperating with the program rules or the service approach, nonpayment of rent, criminal recidivism, or abandoning the SBHAP-subsidized unit. The third panel shows whether the destination at exit was to a stable or unstable housing situation, based on the information in Exhibit 5.1. Using the detailed exit information, stable housing situations were classified as the client’s own housing, with or without subsidy, or a permanent situation living with family or friends. Unstable housing

situations were determined to be those where the client exited to jail, shelter, transitional housing, or simply disappeared.

Exhibit 5.6: Did clients leaving the SBHAP find stable housing? Classifications of Exits by Study Team and Provider Staff

	Encampments	Encampments (MH)	Reentry	Youth	SBHAPTotal					
Exiters										
Exited 6/1/2010-4/30/2014	9	22%	4	19%	17	39%	18	95%	48	38%
Exit Type										
Positive	4	44%	0	0%	1	6%	3	17%	8	17%
Negative	5	56%	4	100%	16	94%	15	83%	40	83%
Deceased	1	-	1	-	0	-	1	-	3	6%
Destination										
Stable	8	89%	1	25%	9	53%	11	61%	29	60%
Unstable	1	11%	3	75%	8	47%	7	39%	19	40%

Source: Client-level data from Abode and First Place

Using program data to gauge the OHA goal of transitioning clients from SBHAP to another stable housing situation shows some mixed results. Among encampment clients, all but one of the nine exiters (89 percent) exited to some form of stable housing (five to unsubsidized housing and three to permanent arrangements with friends or family), despite the fact that program staff considered only four of the nine to have had positive exits. The situation is different for the clients in mental-health-targeted program slots, with 3 of 4 exiters going to unstable housing situations: two disappeared, one was incarcerated, and one went to unsubsidized rental housing. Even the exit to rental housing was considered negative by program staff, because the client left SBHAP because of failure to pay his share of the rent.

Among adult reentry clients, all but one of the 17 clients who left the program was exited from SBHAP for some kind of negative issue, but 9 of the 17 (56 percent) clients exited to an apparently stable housing situation, 7 to unsubsidized rental housing and 2 to a stable situation with friends or family. Recidivism caused 7 of the exits, with jail or prison the destination at exit for 6 clients. (Program staff pointed out that a recidivism rate of 14 percent among the total reentry population served is below the state-wide recidivism rate.)

Among the youth population served by First Place, 61 percent are considered by program staff to have gone to stable housing situations. Of the 18 exiters, 7 left to unstable housing situations, 5 went to a homeless situation including a shelter or transitional housing facility, while 2 left to situations with friends or family that case management considered unstable. The 2 who went to a transitional housing program are considered to have exited to unstable housing since transitional housing is temporary. Eight youth clients went to stable situations with friends or family. None went to an unknown destination. In contrast, 15 of the 18 exiters (72 percent) exited for what staff considers negative reasons: disagreement with program rules, criminal activity, and in one case a reason given as “unknown.”

Because providers do not track individual clients consistently after intake, there is no way to fully explore housing stability of these clients over a longer period than the destination right after program exit.

According to providers, clients currently receiving SBHAP subsidies have largely either been deemed ineligible for other housing subsidy programs or faced prohibitively long waiting lists. Across providers the general sentiment was that market rent in the Bay Area is out of reach for even stable successful clients. Providers offered anecdotal evidence of attempts to enter clients into senior housing or dedicated affordable units, but waitlists were often years long. The only instance in which a provider was able to transfer a client to permanent supportive housing involved a problematic exit in which a client was evicted and only became eligible for a Shelter Plus Care voucher after a stay in an emergency shelter. First Place is the only provider to successfully exit clients from the original SBHAP to other subsidized units, sending two clients to other subsidized housing and two to a different transitional housing program.

5.6 Will clients be able to maintain stable housing after leaving SBHAP?

Using provider data to look at clients' income outcomes does not yield a clear picture of the potential for SBHAP clients to remain stably housed. All providers implementing SBHAP expressed doubt about whether their target populations would be able to afford self-paid housing in the Bay Area. Exhibit 5.3 presents client income amounts and sources at program entry and at exit for the 125 clients who enrolled during the first two years of the SBHAP. There are important differences related to changes in income for the four different subgroups, but there are also differences in the client characteristics that may help to explain these differences. For instance, most adult reentry clients are between 25 and 34, while most encampment clients are 45 or older and also have high rates of disability (Exhibit 4.1). These differences may affect the potential for changes to both earned and unearned income for each.

Exhibit 5.7: Did SBHAP clients increase their income?

	Encampments	Encampments (MH)	Reentry	Youth	SBHAP Total
Increased Income During Stay					
None	0	0%	0	0%	0
Earned	8	20%	2	10%	37
Benefits*	33	80%	19	90%	7
					16%
					7
					37%
					66
					53%
Income at Entry					
None	7	17%	0	0%	12
Earned	6	15%	2	10%	26
Benefits	28	68%	19	90%	6
					14%
					4
					21%
					57
					46%
Income at Entry (Monthly)					
Greater than \$1,000	2	5%	0	0%	2
Less than \$1,000	30	73%	21	100%	30
None	9	22%	0	0%	12
					27%
					12
					63%
					33
					26%
Increased Income from Zero					
Earned	3	7%	0	0%	11
Benefits	6	15%	0	0%	1
					2%
					-
					-
					14
					11%
					7
					6%
Increase Occurred Within 1 year					
Yes	7	17%	0	0%	8
No	2	5%	0	0%	4
					18%
					-
					-
					15
					12%
					6
					5%
Income Among Exiters					
None	0	0%	0	0%	0
Earned	2	22%	0	0%	14
Benefits*	7	78%	4	100%	3
					17%
					10
					53%
					24
					50%

*Abode data include only cash benefits, First Place data include only non-cash benefits

Source: Client Level Data and Report Data from Abode and First Place

More than two-thirds (68 percent) of the encampment population without diagnosed severe mental illness entered the program with some benefits income such as SSI, SSDI, or General Assistance, and 80 percent were able to either start receiving benefits income or increase the amount they received (see Exhibit 5.3, which shows that 6 clients who entered the program with no income started to receive benefits). Among the 9 clients who left the program, 7 left with benefits income and two with earnings. Eight clients gained or increased earnings during the program stay, but only two of the 9 exiters left with earnings.

The SBHAP seems to have succeeded in connecting the encampment population with severe mental illness to the benefits income for which they are eligible, with 90 percent (19 of 21) increasing benefits income during their program stay. Only two clients had earnings at entry, the same two increased their earnings, and none of the four exiters left with earnings.

For clients being served in permanent supportive housing, benefits income can be valuable sources of support and can defray some program costs for providers, but they would likely not cover the cost of market rate housing units.

In contrast, more than half (59 percent) of the adult reentry population entered the SBHAP with earnings from employment, 25 percent entered with zero income and gained earnings during the program stay, and more than three quarters of the 17 exiters (78 percent) left with some earned income. However, program staff emphasized that the intermittent, mostly low wage jobs held by reentry clients would likely not consistently foster housing stability.

Almost two-thirds of youth served by First Place (63 percent) reported no source of income at program entry. Many were able to increase their income during the SBHAP stay. A few youth entered the program with some earnings, and by program exit 8 of the 18 youth served by the program (all of whom had exited by Year 4) had some earnings, and 4 had some non-cash benefits. Because First Place tracked income differently than Abode, the study team was only able to note changes in income from earnings and from non-cash benefits like MediCal or SNAP. Only seven of the exiting youth clients had reported income from earnings.

6. SBHAP Costs

This section examines the costs of the SBHAP. Program costs are reported in several ways:

- **Full SBHAP partnership costs.** This is the total cost for all partners of the SBHAP, including costs for housing and for the case management services that are an essential part of the SBHAP, with two exceptions: these costs do not include the outreach services funded by the City of Oakland through Operation Dignity, nor do they include any state funding for First Place for Youth case managers or related services. Total costs do include some expenditures beyond case management staff that are dedicated to SBHAP clients and included in program budgets: clinical supervision, administration, and program operations costs. Operations costs include a range of program costs such as transportation for case management, building space, and some direct client assistance. In some cases, the cases the funding comes from external sources such as Alameda County’s support for the mental health services case manager at LifeLong for the mental-health-focused SBHAP slots. These external sources are combined to reflect a full measure of outside support. They do not include services provided by other organizations to which case managers refer clients and that are not included in the program budgets of SBHAP providers.
- **Total housing costs supported by OHA funding.** The subset of “Full SBHAP costs” associated with the housing component of the SBHAP. The housing costs include direct housing assistance and the housing specialists supported by OHA funds at Abode and First Place, as well as some provider administrative costs.
- **Total direct housing assistance costs.** The subset of housing costs that represent direct housing assistance to SBHAP participants. Direct housing assistance costs include monthly rental assistance (the equivalent of Housing Choice Voucher housing assistance payments, or HAP) and payments made by the SBHAP for security deposits, utilities turn-ons, and repairs need to help housing units pass an HQS inspection.
- **Total Rent subsidy costs.** This is HAP costs only.

The sources of information used for this analysis of SBHAP costs are:

- Monthly funding draws from OHA, which were used to estimate the rent subsidies
- Annual program budgets from Abode, First Place for Youth, and the City of Oakland, which were used to estimate other costs.
- For comparison purposes, information on HAP payments for selected Housing Choice Voucher users from OHA’s Leased Housing Department.

Exhibit 6.1 shows costs both as total monthly costs for all clients served and as a cost per client per month, shown separately for Abode Services and First Place for Youth and then, in the last two columns, for all of the first 125 participants in the program. As shown in the exhibit, Total OHA Funding is a subset of Full Partnership Funding; All Housing Assistance is a subset of Total OHA Funding; and Rent Subsidy is a subset of All Housing Assistance (since some of the housing assistance went to other housing expenses such as security deposits.) The average cost per client per month is based on total costs divided by the cumulative length of stay in housing for clients to capture the total number of months during which services were delivered. The full partnership cost of providing housing and services to the first 125 clients in the SBHAP was an average of \$1,282 per client per month. OHA funding provided 73 percent of that total cost, or \$942 per client per month. Since OHA provided some funding for services, housing assistance costs are somewhat lower, \$819 per month. Rental assistance costs comprised the highest proportion of total costs of the full partnership, 56 percent.

Exhibit 6.1 How much did it cost all funders to provide housing and services to SBHAP clients?

	Abode Services				First Place for Youth				All SBHAP			
	Program Spending: June 2010 - June 2012	Average Monthly Cost Per Client	Program Spending: June 2010 - June 2012	Average Monthly Cost Per Client	Program Spending: June 2010 - June 2012	Average Monthly Cost Per Client	Program Spending: June 2010 - June 2012	Average Monthly Cost Per Client				
Full Partnership*	\$1,637,163	100%	\$1,317	100%	\$136,529	100%	\$970	100%	\$1,773,692	100%	\$1,282	100%
Total OHA Funding	\$1,173,605	72%	\$944	72%	\$136,529	100%	\$970	100%	\$1,303,170	73%	\$942	73%
All Housing Assistance**	\$1,019,855	62%	\$821	62%	\$112,890	83%	\$802	83%	\$1,132,744	64%	\$819	64%
Rent Subsidy	\$902,785	55%	\$726	55%	\$87,652	64%	\$623	64%	\$990,437	56%	\$716	56%

* Includes all leveraged funding from the City, State, County, and partner organizations

**Includes rent, deposits, repairs, administration, and housing specialist staff

Source: Abode, First Place, and City of Oakland Monthly and Annual Budget Documents

Exhibit 6.2 shows average monthly HAP costs for selected participants in OHA’s Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program who are roughly similar to SBHAP clients and served during the same period of time as the costs examined for the SBHAP. Costs are shown both for single-persons households with disabilities and single-person households without disabilities, because of the different sources of income people with and without disabilities are likely to have. Overall, the average monthly SBHAP rent subsidy per client of \$716 per month is very similar to the voucher HAP payments per household. Monthly costs for First Place for Youth clients are somewhat lower than costs for Abode clients. This reflects the fact that a few First Place clients share housing and, although their income is very low, having roommates sometimes allows for their share of the rent to be lower. At \$726 per client per month, Abode rent subsidies also are somewhat lower than rent subsidies for voucher users. SBHAP may be renting somewhat lower cost housing units than the HCV program. They are not likely to have higher incomes.

Exhibit 6.2: How much does it cost to serve similar OHA residents? Monthly Cost of OHA’s Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program

	Recipients - Fiscal Year 2011	Recipients - Fiscal Year 2012
Single, Non-Elderly, Nondisabled Persons	\$760	\$917
Single, Non-Elderly, Disabled Persons	\$846	\$694

Source: OHA Office of Leased Housing Data

7. Implications of the SBHAP Evaluation Findings

The following section outlines the major implications of Abt Associates’ evaluation of the SBHAP. First we discuss the role the SBHAP plays in the larger community effort to end homelessness. Second we discuss the way SBHAP is funded and overseen, and how that impacts the services that are delivered to clients. Finally, we lay out our recommendations to strengthen the SBHAP.

7.1 SBHAP Role in the Community Effort to End Homelessness

The study team talked with key stakeholders to assess the role that SBHAP plays in the overall strategy for ending homelessness in Alameda County and concluded that SBHAP is a relatively small but important supplement to other city, county, and Continuum of Care-based programs in the East Bay. The housing subsidy is service-enriched and targeted to vulnerable groups that might not access other EveryOne Home resources, with the exception of crisis services such as emergency shelter.

The encampment populations are notoriously hard to serve, and the program appears to be successful in ending their homelessness. Reaching directly into encampments, SBHAP serves a subset of homeless people who, in many cases, have been homeless for long periods and often have had unsuccessful experiences with mainstream services in the past. By serving as an immediate point of contact for reentry adult and youth populations, the program serves as an important resource at a time when these clients would otherwise be at high risk of slipping into homelessness.

It is clear that SBHAP offers an important subset of resources within the larger regional effort to end homelessness. . The combination of resources allows the providers to directly support a housing stability that is not explicitly time limited. However, if the client has more persistent barriers to stable housing or no longer needs intensive services, there are few if any resources to connect them to. Program staff for encampment and reentry clients, in particular, insisted that, without some form of longer-term housing subsidy, many exiting clients were still at high risk of becoming homeless.

Continuing Housing Subsidies for SBHAP Graduates

Ending homelessness in Alameda County implies preventing people who have been homeless for long periods of time from becoming homeless again. Stakeholders expressed concerns that encampment populations are at particularly high risk of repeated episodes of homelessness.

One potential fit for clients who have achieved some housing stability, but might still have persistent barriers to housing would be CoC Program-funded permanent supportive housing programs. However, these programs still require a case management funding commitment, are only available for people with disabilities, and providers have indicated that a housed SBHAP client may not be eligible to transfer into these projects because he does not qualify as homeless based on his living in his own apartment.

Another possibility would be a set-aside of a small number of vouchers (in HUD program terminology, a “limited” preference) from OHA’s Housing Choice voucher program for graduates of SBHA. Once stabilized in housing and with case manager documentation of progress towards goals, a client could be considered by OHA to have “mitigating circumstances” that make him eligible for mainstream housing assistance despite a recent criminal history or a negative history as a renter. Case management by the SBHAP providers could continue, at a lower level of frequency than during the SBHAP period, but could still be available if and when tenancy issues arose.

However, OHA staff has expressed some concerns about the fairness of set-asides for populations with special needs when other households have spent a long time on waiting lists for assisted housing. Like other large housing authorities, OHA faces a difficult trade-off between devoting resources to special needs populations that need housing immediately and serving its long waiting lists for assisted housing.

7.2 SBHAP Structure and Funding Model

In addition to the program model, the study team examined whether the current structure of SBHAP administration and funding seems appropriate. Under the current funding arrangement, OHA contracts with the City of Oakland, which then marries OHA funds with other sources and subcontracts with the direct service partners of the SBHAP. Thus, the City’s role can be understood in several ways: as a services funder, as the primary monitoring entity, and as potential resource clearinghouse for services funded by Alameda County and the State of California that would be targeted to SBHAP clients.

Whether the SBHAP is viewed by providers as permanent supportive housing or as a temporary subsidy using a housing first approach, the City is an important potential partner. Because the housing assistance is temporary under the OHA mission, the case management and services either funded by or coordinated through the City are important for helping clients maintain housing stability and gain income as they either move to other housing or have their level of housing subsidy change. If elements of the program are operated as de facto permanent supportive housing, then the City could play an even more important role in supporting and monitoring providers that are targeting the most vulnerable clients.

The evaluation team considered whether OHA should pursue the option of contracting directly with Abode and First Place for Youth rather than contracting with the City. Direct contracts or memoranda of understanding with providers are fairly common among housing authorities attempting to serve people experiencing homelessness. Direct contracts or MOUs with providers raise no additional issues about applying HUD program rules that do not already apply to OHA funds that flow through the City.

There are advantages and disadvantages to the City continuing to be the primary way through which OHA funding reaches

Assessment of the City as the conduit for SBHAP Funding	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary strength of the current structure is that the City and County contribute 27% of the total cost of all services provided to SBHAP clients. • City administration and oversight could facilitate access to other City funding sources, namely the Oakland Workforce Investment Board and CalWorks services. • City coordinated partners meetings could provide valuable opportunities to address policy constraints or funding opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City and County funding of case management positions is not guaranteed. • Providers indicate that the City has frequently not fully communicated programmatic issues to OHA. • Reliance on the City to conduct monitoring and oversee implementation has likely lead to a misapplication of the original SBHAP mission. • Providers indicate that the partners meeting as it is currently structured does not sufficiently focus on policy or funding.

If OHA determines that the current funding structure should remain intact the City’s current role could be expanded, in partnership with the County, to better support the SBHAP. For example:

- The City and County could expand their individual resource commitments to support an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team model for encampment clients. ACT teams generally function with 10 to 15 clients per team member and utilize with a range of different specializations including dedicated mental health or employment case managers, whereas LifeLong currently has two general case managers for 40 encampment clients and one for 20 encampment clients with severe mental illness. An ACT approach could involve reducing LifeLong’s caseloads or could involve contracting with a different existing provider to serve a sub-set of high needs clients. An advantage of building the ACT approach into the service model for the encampment population is that it could make it possible for SBHAP to reach clients currently screened out of the program because they cannot or will not engage with the case management process.
- The City and County could take steps to strengthen the referral process or ensure priority access to workforce development resources for reentry and youth clients. OHA could require providers and the City to explicitly include memoranda of understanding with employment services providers, or require other sub-grantees focused on workforce development in the contract’s scope of work. This would be particularly important for reentry clients, for whom roommates or return-to-family are less likely than for youth and who would need to gain the income needed for self-paid housing if the housing subsidy is temporary.
- The City could make more use of the monthly partners’ meeting to go beyond “case conferencing” for individual clients to deal even more than at present with systemic issues such as gaining access to resources needed by the SBHAP target populations. Two critical issues of

access should take precedence; ensuring priority access to affordable housing programs that have waiting lists for clients that may be ready to step down services, and ensuring that programs designed to provide permanent supportive housing do not consider SBHAP clients ineligible based on their present living situation.

7.3 Recommendations

The context in which OHA contracted with Abt Associates to evaluate the SBHAP is that the SBHAP contract between OHA and the City of Oakland has recently been renewed. OHA would like to make some decisions about the direction of the SBHAP pilot, including terms of a possible new contract. Therefore, the evaluation team believes it appropriate to conclude this report with some fairly specific recommendations, understanding that the Abt team may have a limited view with respect to the full picture of information pertinent to OHA's impending contracting decision.

Recommendation 1: The assessment of the evaluation team is that, overall, the SBHAP is well-implemented by competent providers with extensive experience serving the target client populations. While the full potential of the City to provide access to resources needed by SBHAP clients may not have been reached, the City's role as funder is sufficiently important that the rental subsidy funds should continue to flow through the City as long as the City is able to commit general fund resources and secure County funding. If the program continues to operate through the City the contract should reflect some increased and altered expectations, particularly with regard to funding commitments, as reflected in the rest of these recommendations. The SBHAP could also operate through direct contractual relationships with providers without any significant negative impact on the overall efficacy of the program provided that sufficient funding is maintained. Any direct contracts or MOUs with providers should contain the following principle elements:

- A clear scope of work that articulates the goals for clients served by the specific provider. This should be tailored to each provider based on both the expectations for the client population and the
- A matching funds provision that lays out the expectation that receipt of OHA funds is contingent on securing resources from other external sources. This can be structured such that external funding sources will pay for the services and staff currently supported by City funding, or as a supplement to City resources if that funding stream remains in place.
- Detailed monitoring expectations that lay out what information providers must track, and for how long they are required to track it.
- Specific reporting requirements that match both the providers' role in the program and the populations being served.

Recommendation 2: The SBHAP's logic model should be clarified. The evaluation team's recommendation is that a logic model should be defined for each SBHAP target population separately, with an appropriate program design and resources specifically identified and made available for each client group. The performance metrics and other communications about program goals and expectations should reflect the following program approaches for the four client groups that were targeted in the first two years of the SBHAP and that are the focus of this evaluation:

- For the encampment clients, both those with and those without serious mental illness, SBHAP should be contractually defined as permanent supportive housing. OHA should consider setting aside (in HCV terminology, create a “limited preference” for) a small number of HCV units to serve as “graduation” housing for encampment clients who have been stabilized in SBHAP-supported housing and can show mitigating circumstances for any past behavior that would make them ineligible for Oakland’s HCV program. Many large housing authorities, including those with long or closed wait lists provide modest set-asides of HCV units as part of community efforts to end homelessness.⁶ A contract or memorandum of understanding—which could be a direct relationship with Abode, rather than going through the City—should make it clear that case management will continue to be available to support these clients at levels they need following SBHAP graduation. The SBHAP slots freed up by these graduating clients could then be used for other people still living in encampments.
- For the adult reentry and youth populations, SBHAP should be contractually defined as a temporary housing subsidy from which clients move to self-paid housing or to shared housing with family, friends, or roommates. For these populations, as well, OHA should consider mitigating circumstances when applying the screening criteria of the HCV and public housing programs, but there would be no set-aside of vouchers.
- A provision of the contract between OHA and the City should require the City to connect the adult reentry population with workforce development resources, either through direct funding or through best efforts to gain priority access for SBHAP adult reentry clients.

Recommendation 3: The performance metrics applied to each population should reflect differing expectations about 1) the duration of SBHAP subsidy; 2) access to benefits income; 3) potential for employment and earnings growth; and 4) other goals appropriate to the population (e.g., criminal recidivism for the adult and youth reentry groups). For all population groups OHA should explicitly define whether remaining in a SBHAP unit qualifies as stable housing.

Exhibit 7.1 is a replication of the current performance report for SBHA, applied to the initial cohort of 125 SBHAP clients.

The high rates of retaining SBHAP housing for the encampment populations show that the program is functioning successfully as permanent supportive housing for these clients. This is not necessarily inconsistent with the fact that SBHAP is a pilot program since permanent in this case only implies that there is no pre-set exit date. However, exiting clients are very unlikely to have employment income, given their age and disabilities, and that should be reflected in performance metric targets. Conversely, the expectation that SBHAP connect encampment clients to benefits income should be high.

Current reentry clients also fared well in meeting the targets for remaining in SBHAP housing. However, if the program is defined as providing temporary housing stabilization for these clients going forward,

⁶ Lauren Dunton, Meghan Henry, Eliza Kean, and Jill Khadduri, *Study of PHA Efforts to Serve People Experiencing Homelessness*. Abt Associates, 2014. http://www.huduser.org/portal/publications/homeless/pha_homelessness.html

the targets should be reduced and should focus only on a one or two-year period. Similarly, the goals for income should be redesigned to reflect an expectation that clients leave the program with enough income to make some substantial contribution to rent and supportive services should be redesigned to enable that to happen. The expectation should not be that reentry clients gain enough income to afford housing in the East Bay area at no more than 30 percent of income, but that these men have enough income to make them attractive as roommates or family members contributing to housing expenses.

Exhibit 7.1 Were the current performance goals met? Initial SBHAP Cohort of 125 Clients

Line	Outcomes Reached		Encampments	Mental Health (BHCS)	Re-entry Adult	Re-entry Youth
14	A. At least 80% of all people obtain permanent housing	Number in case management year to date	41	21	44	19
15		Number placed into permanent housing year to date	41	21	44	19
16		Percent placed into permanent housing year to date	100%	100%	100%	100%
17	B. 95% maintain permanent housing for at least 6 months	Total households who entered program more than 6 mnths prior to last date of reporting period who are either currently in program or exited during reporting period	41	21	44	19
18		Number who remained in housing for at least 6 months	41	21	40	15
19		Percent remaining in PH more than 6 months	100%	100%	91%	79%
20	C. 85% maintain permanent housing for at least 12 months	Total households who entered program more than 12 mnths prior to last date of reporting period who are either currently in program or exited during reporting period	41	21	44	19
21		Number who remained in housing for at least 12 months	39	18	37	6
22		Percent remaining in PH more than 12 months	95%	86%	84%	32%
23	D. 65% maintain permanent housing for at least 3 years	Total households who entered program more than 3 yrs prior to last date of reporting period who are either currently in program or exited during reporting period	25	1	10	0
24		Number who remained in housing for at least 3 years	20	0	7	0
25		Percent remaining in PH more than 3 years	80%	0%	70%	0%
26	E. 20% of all adults exiting have employment as a source of income	Total number of client exits this period	9	4	18	19
27		Number of clients exiting w/employment income:	1	0	11	8
28		Percent exiting with employment income:	11%	0%	61%	42%
29	F. 30% of adults who entered with no income will have an income at exit	Number of client exits who entered with no income	1	0	12	9
30		Number of those who now have income	0	0	12	7
31		Percent of exits with no income that increased income	0%	0%	100%	78%

Source: Client- level and HMIS Summary Report data from Abode and First Place

For both adult and youth reentry populations, a performance metric related to reduced criminal recidivism should be added. The levels of recidivism experienced by the first cohort of clients could be used to set targets reflecting expected improvement over time.

Recommendation 4: For all client groups, performance metrics should include the stability of the housing situation: 1) immediately following program exit and 2) over some longer period of time such as two years. The program data already collected by the SBHAP providers would make it possible to define, and set targets for, the stability of the housing situation to which the clients exit. Tracking over a longer period of time implies post-exit follow-up that can be costly and probably is not built into current program budgets, but should be if the intent is to monitor housing stability after a client leaves SBHAP

funded housing. A lower-cost, but less satisfactory, alternative would be to use the Alameda County HMIS to track the extent to which SBHAP clients enter emergency shelters or transitional housing programs over some period of time following exit from the SBHAP. This would involve signing a data use agreement with the Alameda County Continuum of Care – EveryoneHome to query the database or a separate agreement with EveryoneHome to generate a basic annual report in order to verify whether exited SBHAP clients had subsequently become homeless.

The next group of recommendations reflects the evaluation team’s view on how the SBHAP can be improved in order to better reflect best practices for a housing first approach. Recommendations 5, 6, and 7 relate to serving the neediest people. Recommendations 8 and 9 relate to accessing housing quickly.

Recommendation 5: As Alameda County implements a centralized intake system to identify people who are chronically homeless or at risk of having long-term episodes of homelessness, SBHAP should participate in that system. Indeed, SBHAP partners should be encouraged to serve on work groups developing the details of that system.

Recommendation 6: The City and County should be encouraged to fund a modest number of ACT team slots for potential SBHAP clients in encampments who cannot be served now because of their inability or unwillingness to engage with the case management process.

Recommendation 7: First Place for Youth should be encouraged, or perhaps required, to apply a screening protocol that identifies youth with the highest risk of becoming homeless.

Recommendation 8: OHA should give Abode and First Place for Youth the responsibility for carrying out initial housing quality (HQS) inspections at SBHAP housing to reduce the burden on OHA staff and return housing placement times to the shorter periods experienced in the first program year. Provider staff has participated in HQS training, already conducts all re-inspections with HUD and OHA approval, and should be ready to assume that role.

Recommendation 9: All providers should be required to track lease-up speed. Currently Abode does and First Place for Youth does not. OHA should consider creating a performance metric based on the number of days between referral of a client to the SBHAP and the clients move-in to SBHAP-supported housing.