



What Interventions Work Best for Homeless Families? Impacts and Cost Estimates from the Family Options Study

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Family homelessness in U.S.

- 150,000 homeless families each year
- Many families in shelter have young children
- Federal goal: end family homelessness by 2020



Today's presentation

- High points of Family Options study
- Lessons learned

- For more info, HUDUser: Family Options
(U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development)



Comparing Housing and Service Interventions for Families



Long-term housing subsidies (SUB):

Typically Housing Choice Vouchers that hold rent to 30% of income



Rapid re-housing (CBRR): Temporary rental subsidies with some housing-related services



Project-based transitional housing (PBTH):

Supervised housing with intensive services and case management



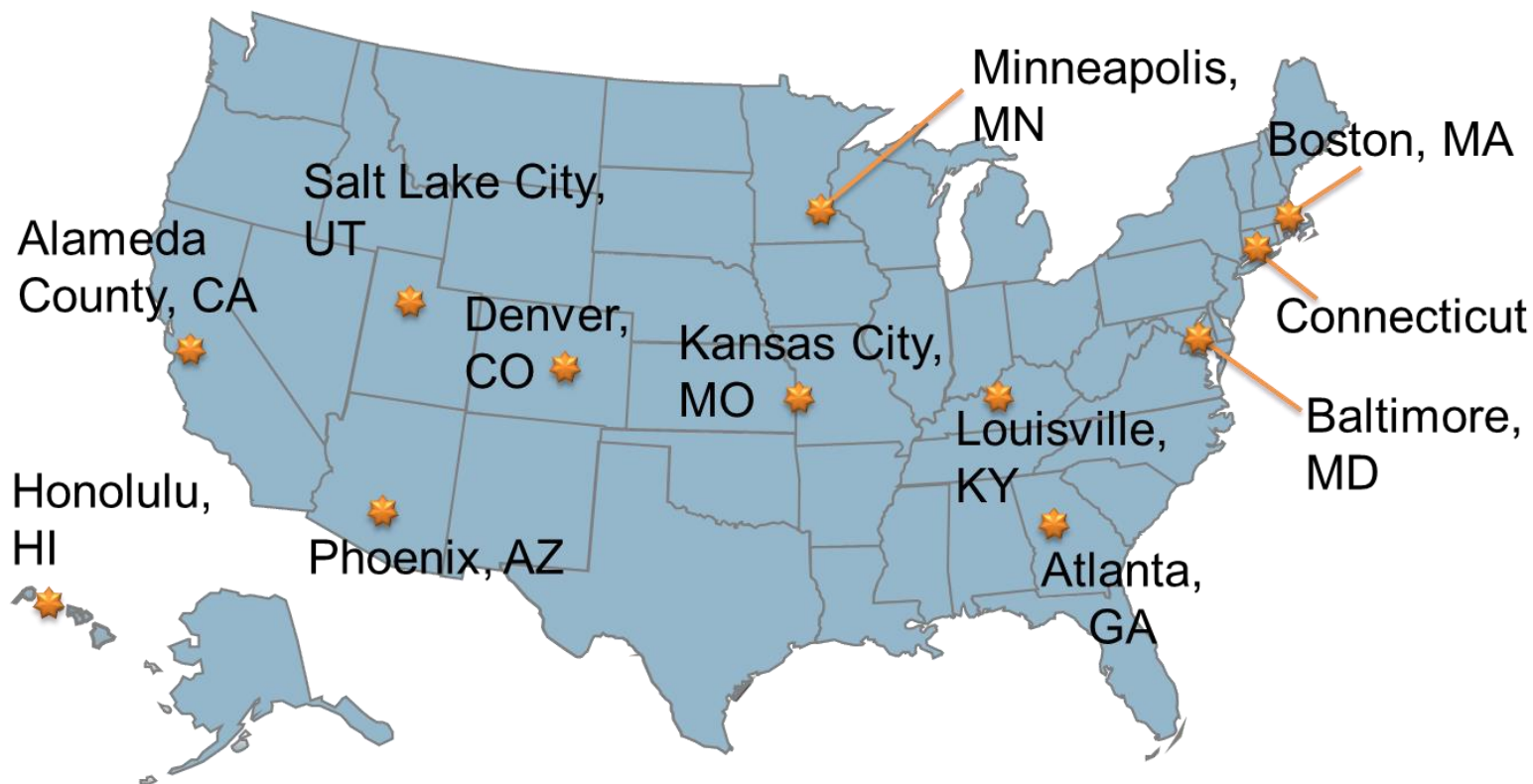
Usual care (UC): Shelter and whatever mix of services families can access



12 communities participated

- 2,282 families
5,397 children

- 148 programs





Study families

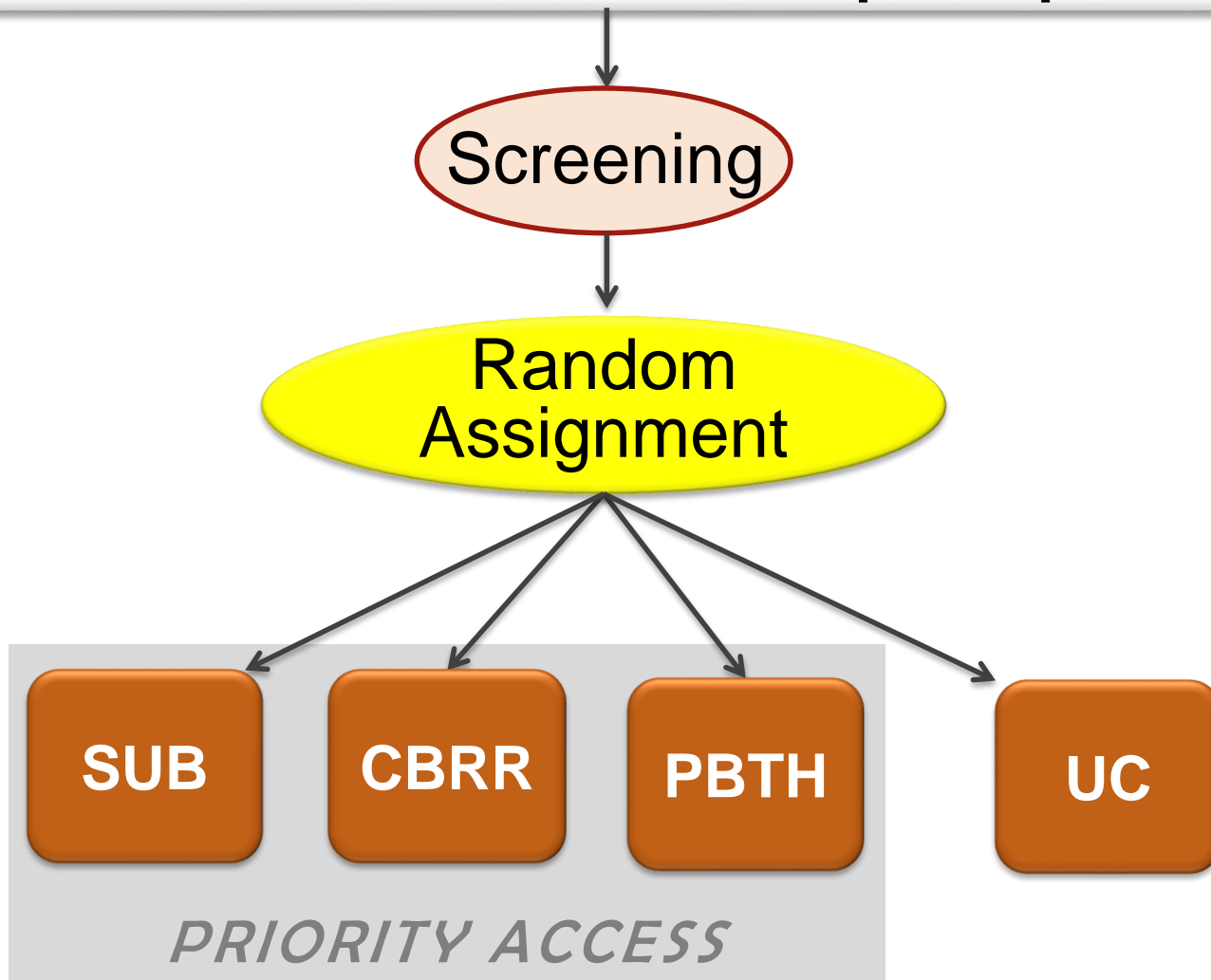


- Typical family: 29 year old woman with 1-2 children
- \$7,400 median annual household income
- 30% with psychological distress or PTSD symptoms
- 63% had a prior episode of homelessness
- 24% separated from a child at baseline
- Spouses/partners:
 - 27% had spouse or partner in shelter
 - 10% had spouse or partner NOT in shelter, sometimes because of shelter rules



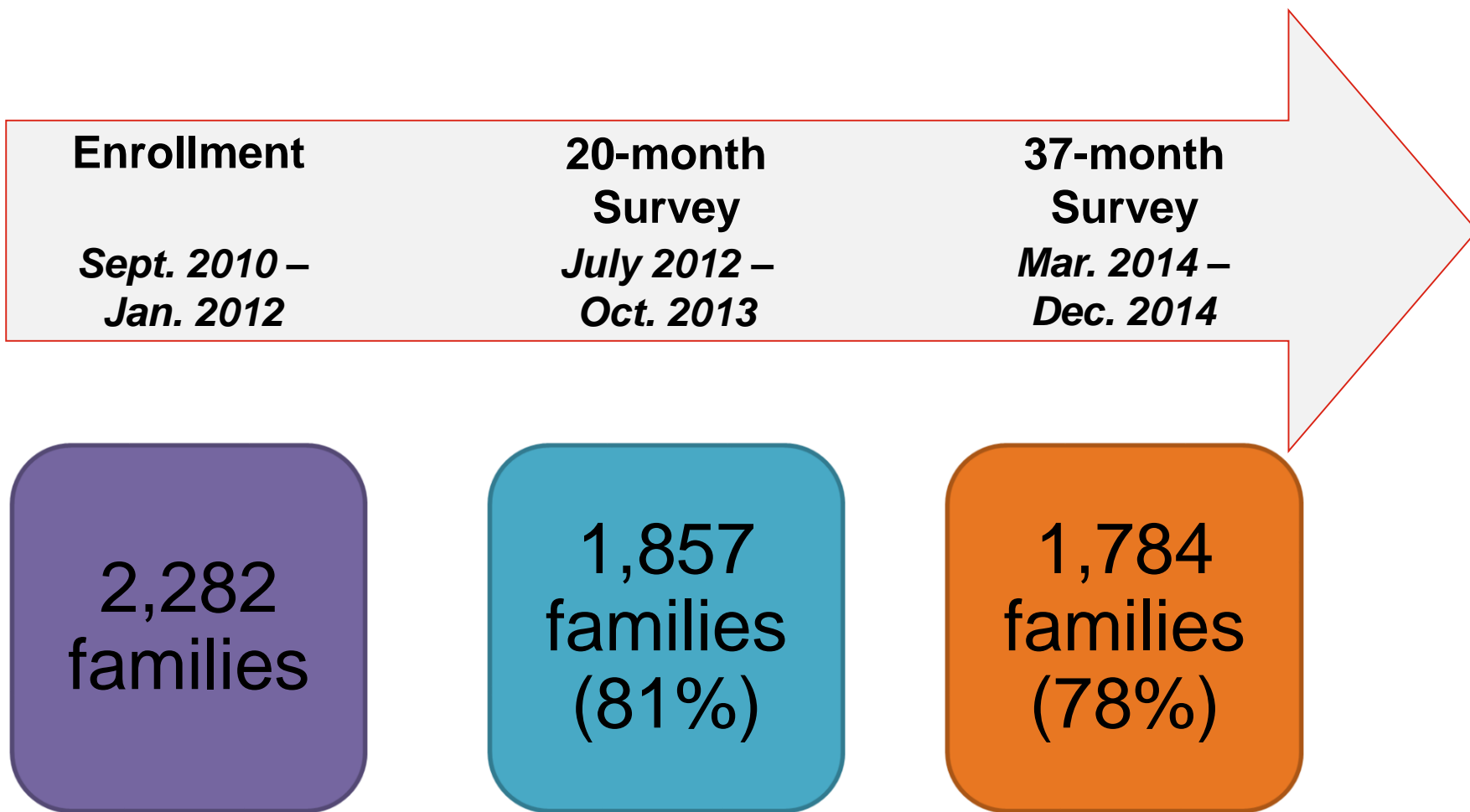
Study design

Families in shelter who consent to participate in study



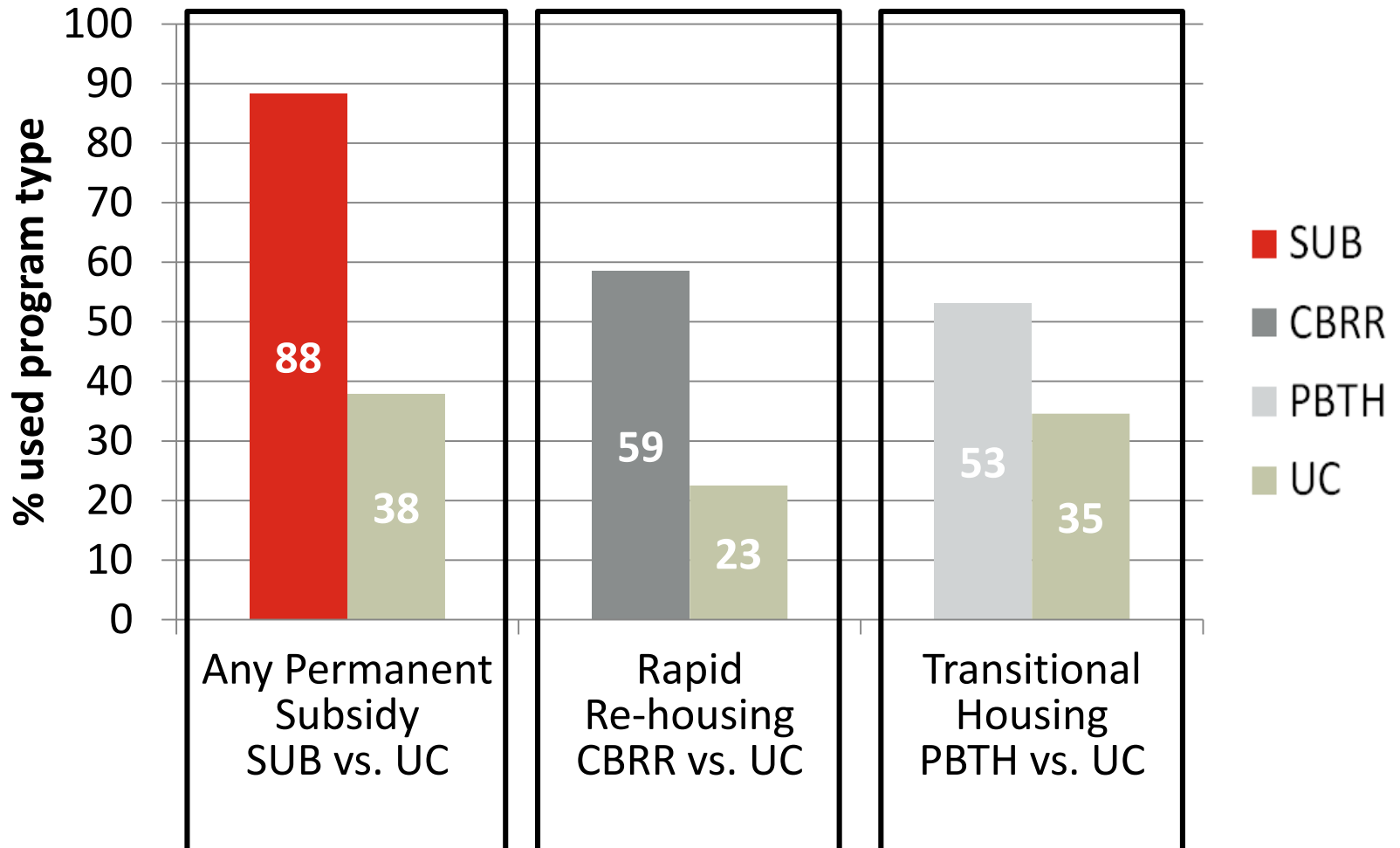


Study timeline and sample



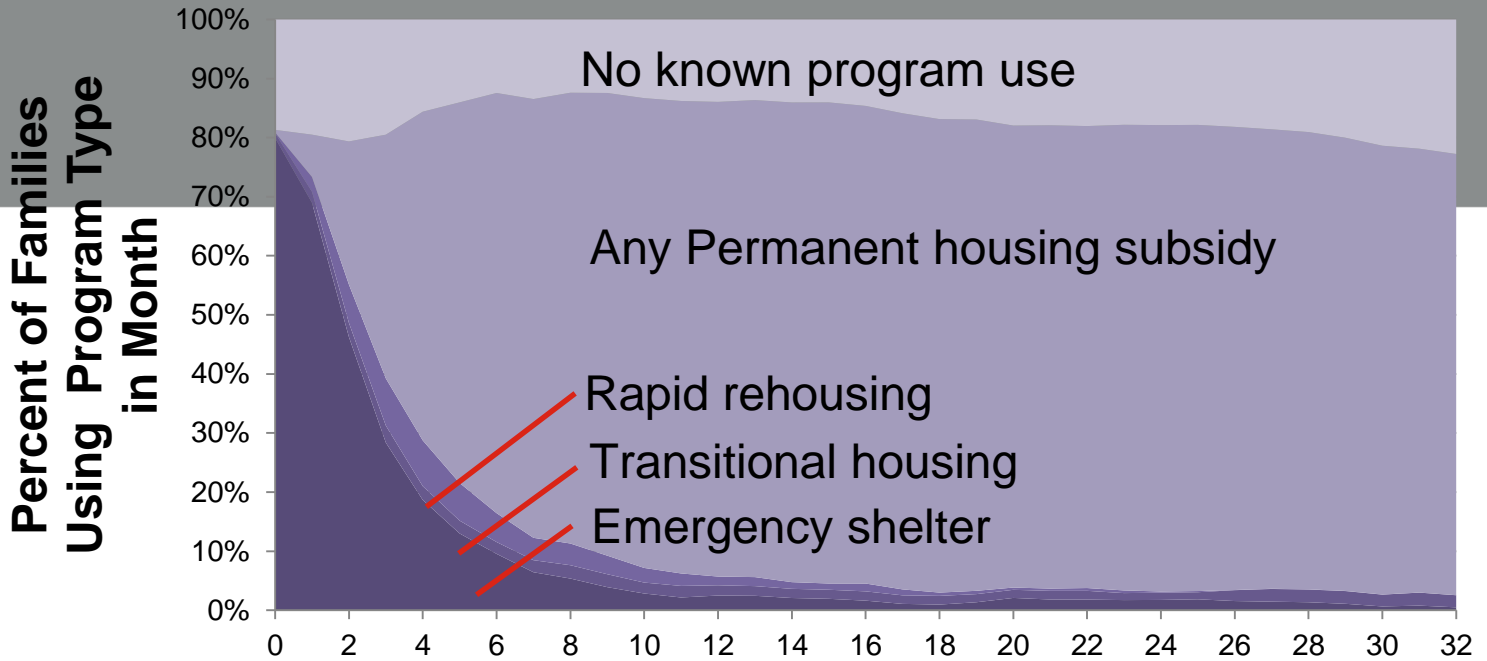


Which interventions were most attractive to participants?

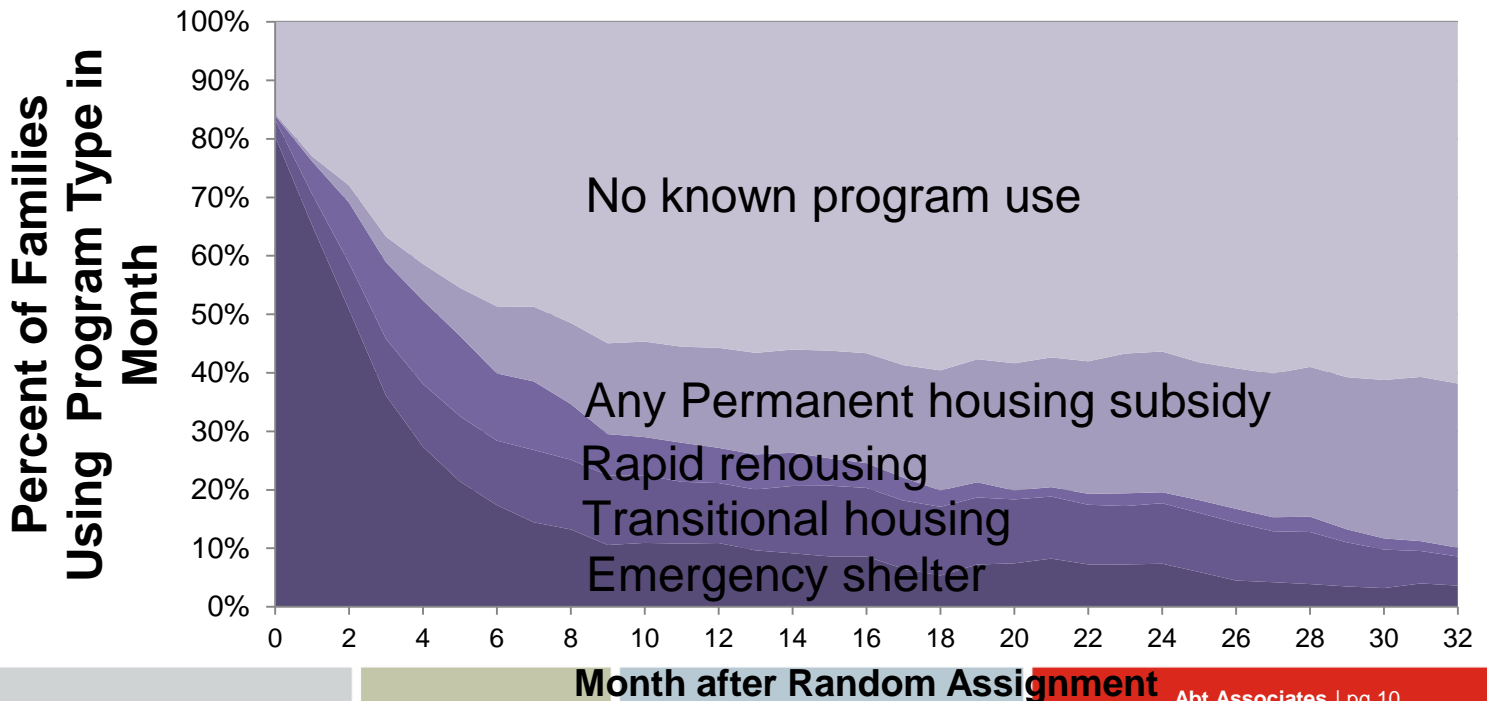




Long-Term Subsidy (SUB)



Usual Care (UC)





Outcomes in five domains

1

Housing stability

2

Family preservation

3

Adult well-being

4

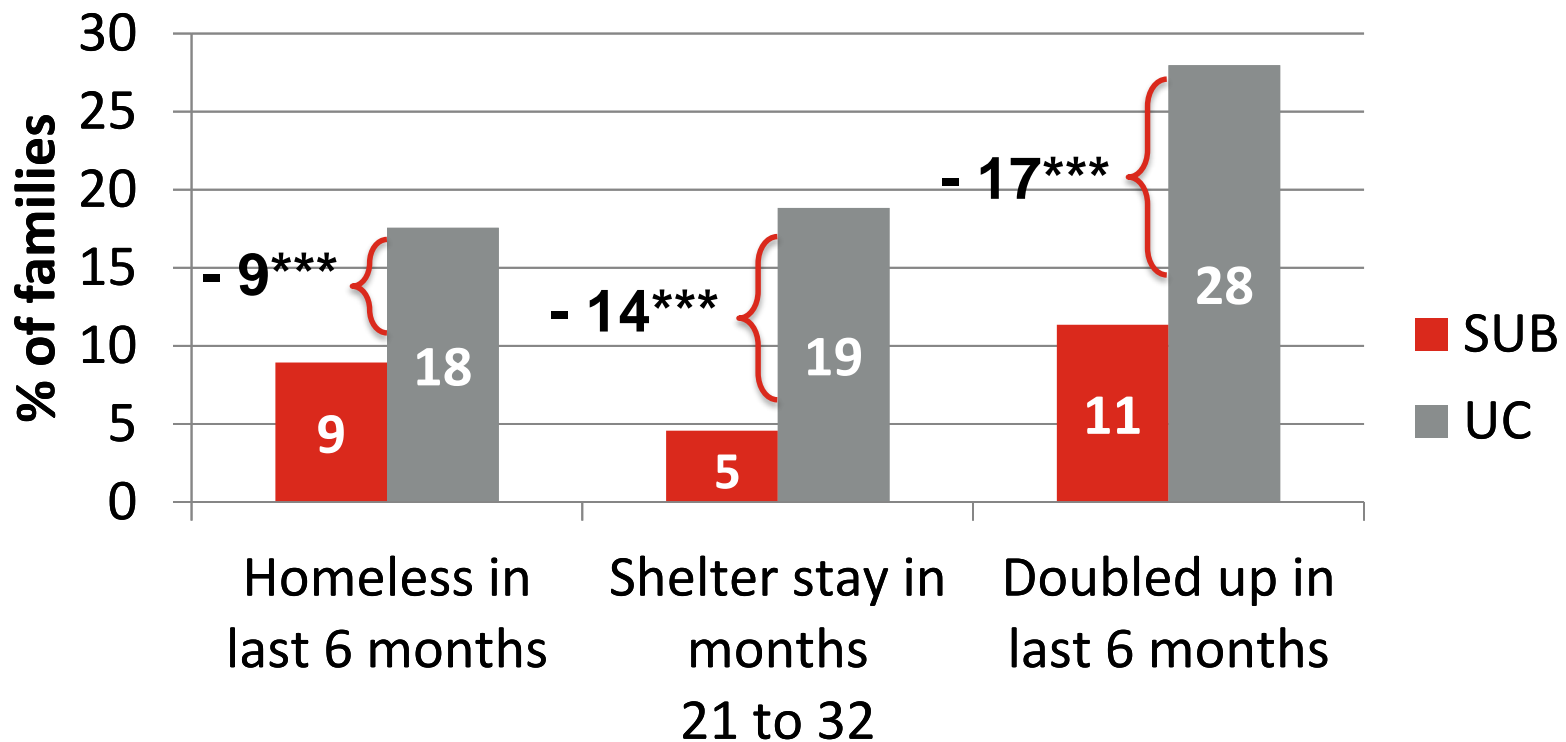
Child well-being

5

Self-sufficiency



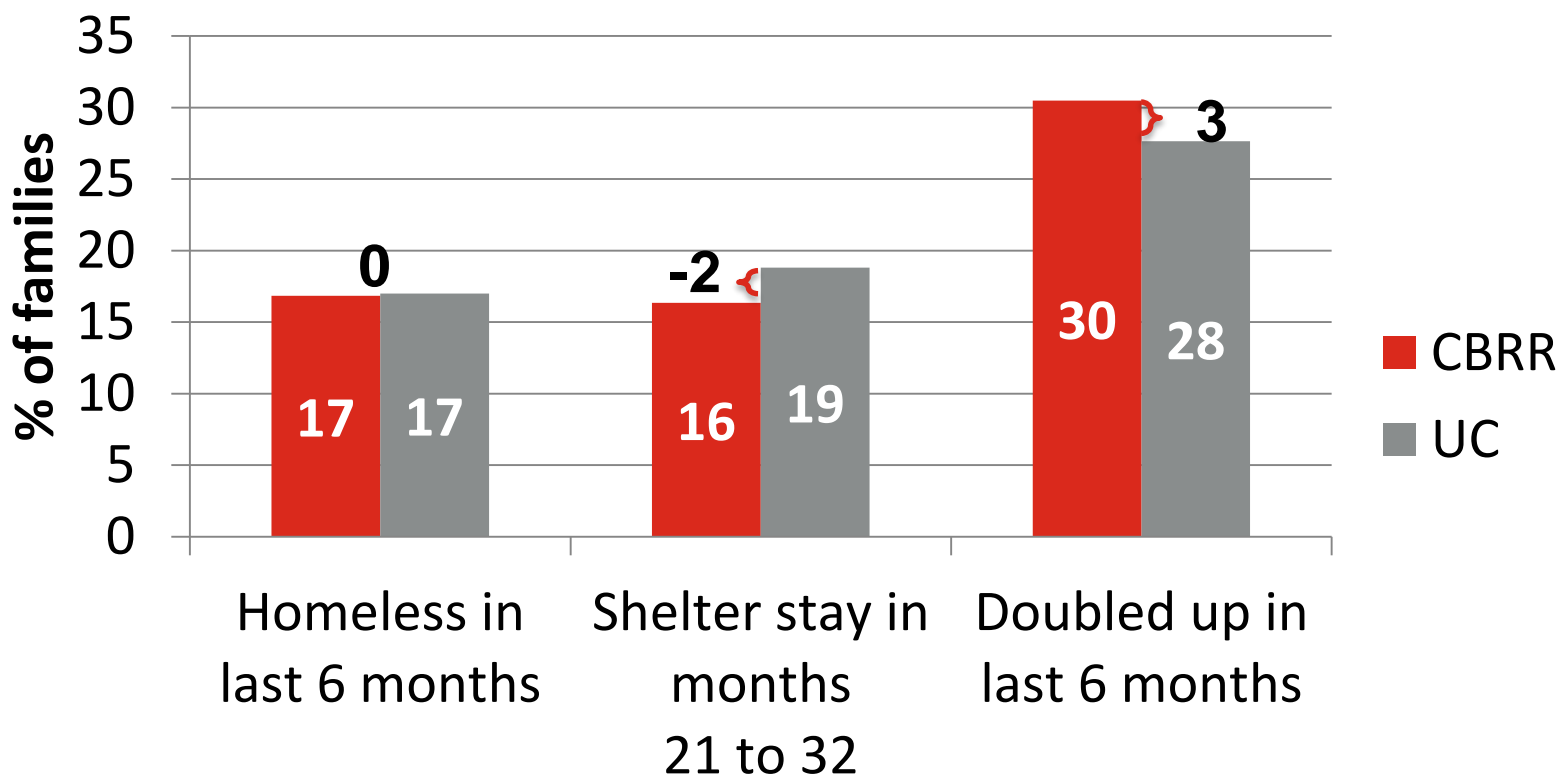
Did access to a long-term housing subsidy (SUB) lead to less housing instability?



*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01



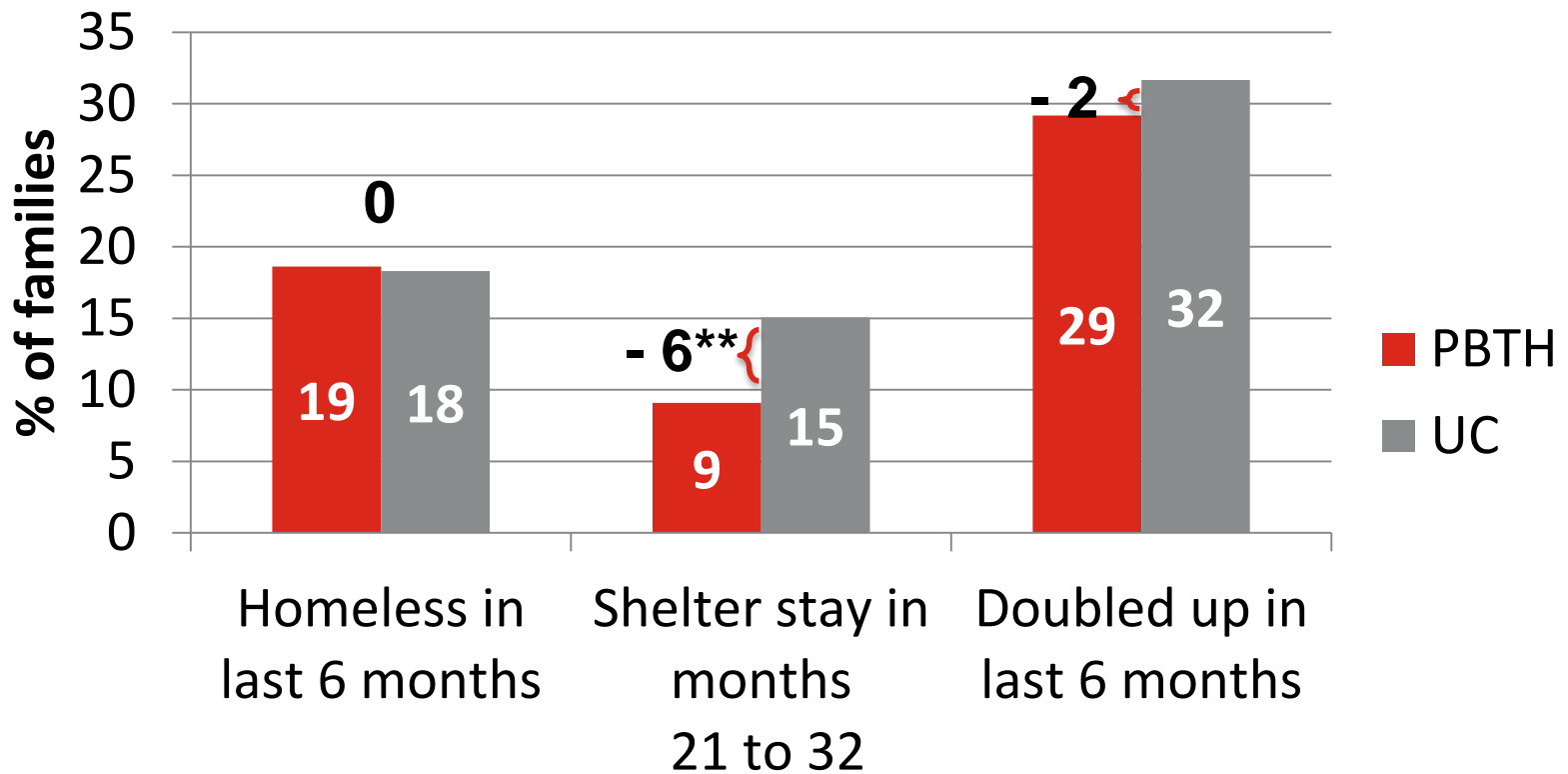
Did access to rapid re-housing (CBRR) lead to less housing instability?



*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01



Did access to transitional housing (PBTH) lead to less housing instability?



*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01



Summary of housing stability impacts

- 39% of usual care (UC) families had either been in shelter or reported being homeless or doubled up recently (down from half at 20 months)
- Long-term subsidies (SUB) reduced homelessness by half and shelter stays and doubling up by more than half
- Transitional housing (PBTH) had modest effects on shelter use
- Rapid re-housing (CBRR) had no effects
- Similar results at 20 months



What effect did access to programs have on whether families stay together?

- New or ongoing separations in past 6 months in usual care (UC) families:
 - 17% from child
 - 38% from partner with family in shelter (reduced sample)
- At 20 months, long-term subsidies (SUB) reduced child separations by two fifths
- At 37 months long-term subsidies (SUB) *increased* partner separations by two fifths
- Rapid re-housing (CBRR) and transitional housing (PBTH) had no impacts on family preservation



What effect did access to programs have on the well-being of adults?

- One in nine usual care (UC) adults reported alcohol dependence or drug abuse. One in ten reported intimate partner violence in the past 6 months. A third reported fair or poor health.
- Long-term subsidies (SUB) reduced intimate partner violence by a third and reduced psychological distress at both time points
- At 20 months, long-term subsidies (SUB) additionally reduced substance dependence by almost a third
- Rapid re-housing (CBRR) and transitional housing (PBTH) had no impacts on these measures
- No intervention affected physical health



What effect did access to programs have on the well-being of children?

- Usual care (UC) children attended 2.1 schools in three years, were absent 1.1 days per month, and had elevated behavior problems
- Long-term subsidies (SUB) reduced school mobility (full period), absences (20 months) and behavior problems (37 months)
- Rapid re-housing (CBRR) reduced school absences at (20 months) and behavior problems (37 months)
- Transitional housing (PBTH) had no impacts on these outcomes
- No intervention affected child health



What effect did access to programs have on self-sufficiency?

- 37% of usual care (UC) families worked for pay in the week before the follow-up survey, almost half were food insecure, and median income was \$12,099 (all improvements from 20 months)
- Long-term subsidies (SUB) reduced work effort by 6 percentage points at 20 months and between the survey waves
- Long-term subsidies (SUB) increased food security by 10 percentage points (both times)
- Rapid re-housing (CBRR) increased food security and incomes (20 months)
- Transitional housing (PBTH) had no effect



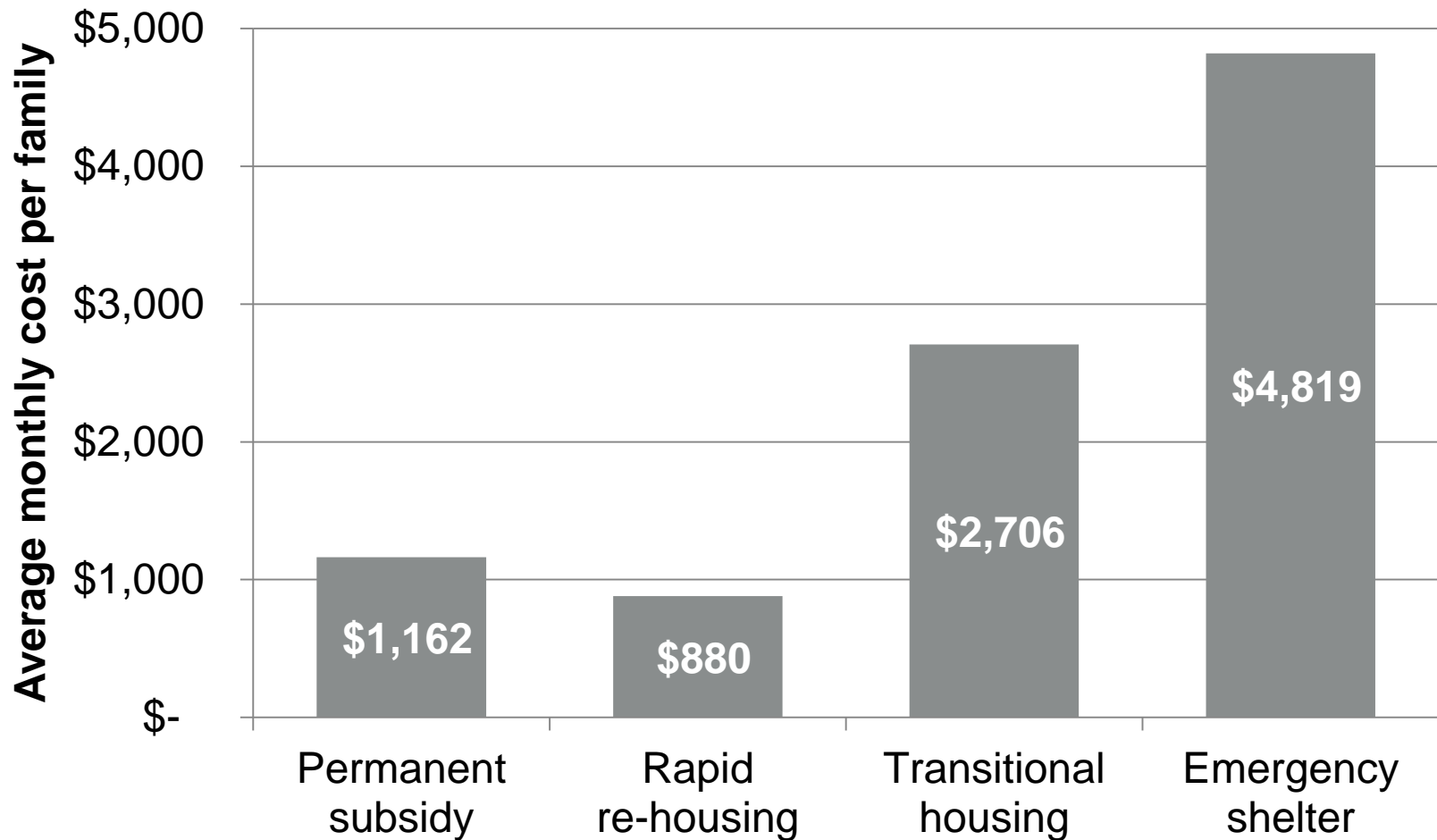
Summary of 20- & 37-Month Impact Results

Outcomes	SUB vs. UC		CBRR vs. UC		PBTH vs. UC											
	20 mos.	37 mos.	20 mos.	37 mos.	20 mos.	37 mos.										
Housing stability	+	+	+							+	+			+		
Family preservation	+			•												
Adult well-being		+	+	+												
Child well-being	+	+			+							+				
Self-sufficiency	-	+			+	+										

- + : beneficial effect
- : detrimental effect
- : ambiguous effect



Per family monthly program costs





Lessons about usual care (UC)--no special offer

- Families spent on average 3 months in emergency shelter following random assignment
- They participated in homeless and housing assistance programs at fairly high rates with total cost of about \$41,000
- Many were still not faring well 37 months after study enrollment



Lessons about project-based transitional housing (PBTH)

- Screened out many families; relatively low take-up
- Reduced stays in shelter compared to usual care (UC) during period when some families remained in transitional housing (PBTH), but few benefits in other domains
- No benefits for psychosocial outcomes or self-sufficiency at either time
- Total costs were slightly higher than for usual care (UC)



Lessons about rapid re-housing (CBRR)

- Relatively low take up
- No improvements in preventing subsequent homelessness or improving housing stability
- Scattered effects: income and food security (20 months only), school absences (20 months), child behavior problems (37 months)
- Lowest cost of the programs studied

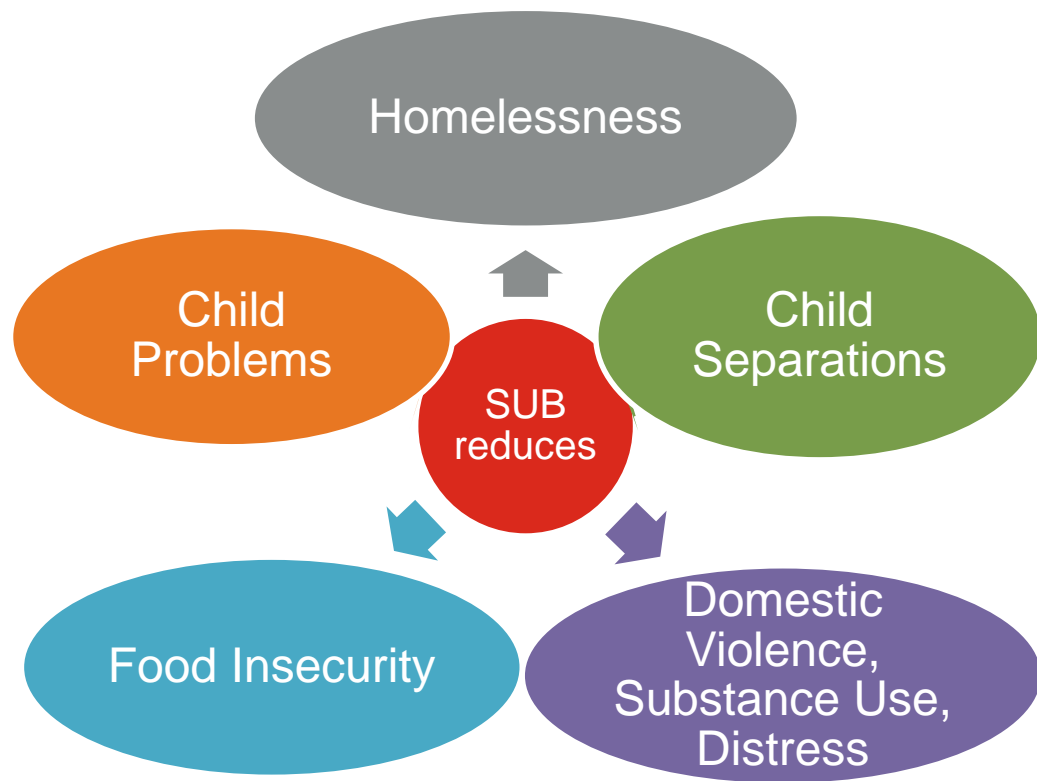


Lessons about long-term subsidies (SUB): not-so-surprising lessons

- Notable improvements in housing stability compared to rapid re-housing (CBRR), transitional housing (PBTH), and usual care (UC)
- Reduced labor market engagement, but without an impact on overall cash income



Lessons about long-term subsidies (SUB): surprising lessons



- Few families ineligible
- High take-up, maintenance
- Radiating impacts