

2015

Partnering for Family Success



In partnership with Cuyahoga County and the Division of Children and Family Services, FrontLine Service has created a Partnering for Family Success (PFS) program to decrease the time that children of homeless women spend in out-of-home placement (foster care). The program model channels government resources toward social programs that can effectively provide results for the clients who are the most in need. The initial pilot for the PFS program launched in October 2014, and served 18 clients who were already receiving services from FrontLine Service and 11 new clients. The official program launch in January 2015 added approximately ten more clients for a total of 39 families currently receiving services. Although only in the initial phases, the PFS program has already started to positively impact the lives of clients, like Jennifer*.

Only 28 years old, Jennifer had experienced incredibly challenging events throughout her life, suffering from a lifetime of abuse and trauma. Late one night in 2011, Jennifer and her boyfriend got into an argument in front of her six children. The neighbors heard raised voices and screams and called the police. When the squad cars arrived, Jennifer spoke to the officers and worked to convince them that everything was alright. After they left and she returned to the house, her enraged boyfriend lunged out and stabbed Jennifer with a knife in front of the children. In order to escape the abusive situation where she was trapped, Jennifer abandoned her house and fled. All six of her children were sent to live with their paternal grandmother.

Jennifer was homeless for two years, living on and off with family and friends. The shelter where Jennifer stayed linked her to FrontLine's Children Who Witness Violence program, where she began to work with a case manager to develop a strategy to reunite her with her children. Due to issues with transportation, Jennifer was unable to complete the program. In October 2014, Jennifer was identified as a potential candidate for the new PFS pilot. Her assigned case manager, Samoine Carter, initially struggled to convince Jennifer to participate, and had difficulty setting up a meeting with her. However, once the initial contact was made, Jennifer was very interested in the program and began discussing housing solutions and taking classes on parenting and domestic violence.



Carter linked Jennifer to the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority, so that she could find a place of her own. Like many who have experienced homelessness, Jennifer struggled with being able to afford furnishings for her new home. FrontLine staff worked to find her furniture and beds for her children. After three months of being in the PFS program, Jennifer was successfully reunited with her children. Her goals now include maintaining and building a home with her children, maintaining stable employment at her housekeeping job, and reconnecting with her community once again.

While the children are excited to be living with their mother again, there will be a process of transition that will include family counseling sessions, a treatment plan, and intensive work with program staff to ensure the success of the reunification. Her case manager will continue to work with Jennifer on parenting skills and coping with the adjustment, while a trauma therapist will be providing trauma therapy to the entire family.

Given the nature of the population served, the PFS program staff faces significant challenges in engaging clients. Jennifer was highly motivated to work toward stable housing and reunification with her children, most mothers are not as engaged. Many mothers with a history of trauma and possibly many failed attempts to achieve housing and reunification with their children, feel ambivalent and untrusting of the staff and do not believe a new program could succeed where others have failed. FrontLine has a unique history and tenacious spirit of actively reaching out, not giving up, building trust and engaging individuals who are the most difficult and most resistant to conventional services. The PFS staff work diligently to gain the trust of the clients that do choose to participate and work to help each participant find the right path to reunification and housing stability.

"I think this is a population that often gets stigmatized in society and get judged for the choices they make...Being able to go in and form these relationships [with clients] is really powerful," said Ashley Hovancsek, Program Manager for the PFS program. "With everyone on the same page, the program can be really transformational."



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