



Solid Ground Year Three

A Process Evaluation of Solid Ground, a Family Homelessness Prevention Program Piloted by New Economics for Women in Van Nuys, California 91405

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Executive Summary

A. Solid Ground

The Solid Ground homelessness prevention pilot was started in 2018, with a goal of serving families in Van Nuys, California (zip code 91405) who may be at risk of homelessness but who do not qualify for the homelessness prevention services provided by the Los Angeles County homelessness services sector.¹ The pilot is administered by New Economics for Women (NEW), a nonprofit that administers a FamilySource Center. FamilySource Centers are located in high-need areas and are designed to assist low to moderate-income families with a continuum of services, including financial counseling and referrals to community resources. While Solid Ground was originally conceived as a two-year pilot, it was extended and NEW continues to operate it. The Solid Ground Program, which was previously administered by the Housing Department, now falls under the purview of The Community Investment for Families Department (CIFD) and since 2021, they have created seven additional Solid Ground homelessness prevention programs at FamilySource Centers throughout Los Angeles.

Solid Ground offers two programs: “Full Solid Ground” and “Brief Solid Ground.” To qualify for Full Solid Ground, a family must be imminently at-risk of becoming homeless **and** score

¹ Homelessness prevention programs for families in the homelessness services sectors are administered by Family Solutions Centers. Staff at Family Solution Centers such as LA Family Housing screen families with the Coordinated Entry System for Families Screening Tool. In order to qualify for traditional Measure H prevention services in Los Angeles County, the family must:

- Meet the definition of a family.
- Be at or below 50% area median income.
- Be imminently at-risk of homelessness (will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence within 30 days AND have no subsequent residence identified AND lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing).

Families who are imminently at-risk and meet the initial eligibility criteria are scored with a targeting tool, the “Prevention Targeting Tool” (PTT)[#] and assigned to service groups based on their score:

- If they score less than score <21, then the family is eligible for light touch services
- If they score more than 21, ≤score the family is eligible for prevention services

“Light touch” services include referral and linkage to other services in another program within the CES area. Prior to Solid Ground, families with less severe housing issues and who scored less than <21 were not eligible for traditional prevention services. In an effort to address these issues in SPA 2, Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl invested \$300,000 in discretionary funding in Solid Ground. Solid Ground has three primary objectives:

- to make homelessness prevention services available to a wider range of families at-risk of homelessness;
- to precisely allocate financial assistance as a homelessness prevention service to only the at-risk families who would, without it, become homeless; and
- to reach at-risk families in a specific geographic region by conducting targeted outreach of the program’s services.

a 16 or more on the Prevention Targeting Tool (PTT). To qualify for Brief Solid Ground, a family could score 16 or more on the PTT **or** be imminently at risk of homelessness.

Brief Solid Ground consists of one appointment with Solid Ground staff that may include: brief case management services; mediation and/or landlord dispute resolution services; referrals to mainstream benefits and/or other community resources; referral and linkage to legal services; and limited financial assistance (*e.g.*, transportation and grocery cards).

Full Solid Ground includes *six months* of all of the services available to Brief Solid Ground participants, in addition to direct financial support such as rental assistance (though not all Full Solid Ground participants receive financial assistance).

B. Key Findings

Year Three of the Solid Ground pilot program began on October 1, 2020 and ended on September 30, 2021. The goal of CPL's Year Three report is to document:

- program activities during Year Three of the Solid Ground pilot,
- participant demographics, household composition, and prior homelessness services enrollments as observed in the Homelessness Management Information System data (HMIS) of the 71 Brief Solid Ground and 34 Full Solid Ground participants who enrolled during Year Three,
 - financial assistance, other assistance, and services that Year Three Brief and Full Solid Ground enrollees received, and
 - income, employment, and living situation for enrollees at enrollment for both Brief and Full Solid Ground participants and for the 34 Full Solid Ground participants, at exit.

Below, we summarize these metrics and also compare how metrics varied in Years One, Two, and Three of the pilot.

Outreach and enrollment: NEW conducted 67 outreach sessions in Year One, 57 outreach sessions in Year Two, and 61 outreach sessions in Year Three. In Year One, Solid Ground met its goal of enrolling 30 Full and 50 Brief participants. In Year Two, program staff aimed to enroll 30 Full and 50 Brief participants, but because of the barriers to outreach, intake, and eligibility raised by the pandemic, staff were only able to enroll 14 Full participants and 66 Brief participants. In Year Three, Solid Ground enrolled 34 Full and 71 Brief participants. The Solid Ground pilot largely served Latina-led families during its first three years of operation.

Services provided: In Year Three, analysis of HMIS data shows that during Full enrollments, 49% of households received rental assistance or arrears with an average value of \$2,865. In Years One and Two, 45% and 43% of households received rental assistance, respectively. In Years One and Two, the average values were \$1,647 and \$1,384, respectively.

In Years One, Two, and Three, Brief participants usually received food and drink assistance in the form of grocery cards. In Year Three, 20% of Brief participants received other material goods and 10% received baby supplies. In Years One and Two, 26% and 65% of participants received other material goods, respectively. In Years One, Two, and Three, Solid Ground offered Brief and Full participants food and drink items like grocery cards at high rates.

In Year Three, Brief participants had an average of \$123 in financial assistance and Full participants had an average of \$1,989 in financial assistance, a notably higher amount than Full participants received during previous years. In Years One and Two, Brief participants had an average of \$96 and \$118 in financial assistance, respectively. In Years One and Two, Full participants had an average of \$823 and \$774 in financial assistance, respectively.

Participant housing status: In Year Three, 99% of participants reported living in a market rate rental when they entered and exited Solid Ground.

In Year One, nearly 40% of households reported living in a market rate rental when they entered and exited Solid Ground. Another 37% of households relocated from living doubled-up with family to a market rate rental during Solid Ground.

In Year Two, nearly all households (95%) reported living in a market rate rental when they entered and exited Solid Ground.

Of the 105 households enrolled in Year Three and captured in the HMIS, just one has subsequently enrolled in an HMIS project within 12 months of Solid Ground enrollment. Similarly, in Years One and Two, no Solid Ground participants subsequently enrolled in an HMIS project within 6 months. This suggests that none of the Brief or Full Solid Ground participants in Years One and Two have become homeless in the short-term period following Solid Ground, and that only one Year Three household became homeless.

Employment, income, insurance, and benefits:

In Year Three, we observed improvements in Full households' employment, earned income, and total income, as well as very small improvements in benefits receipt and insurance. At program entry, 28 households (82%) reported earned income (*e.g.*, employment income), and that number rose to 31 households (91%) at program exit. There was an increase of \$761 in average monthly earned income among all Full households (average of \$1,506 in monthly earned income at program entry and \$2,271 at program exit), and a similar increase in average total monthly income (inclusive of benefits) from \$1,826 to \$2,537. Overall, we observed one additional household receive benefits and insurance.

In Year One, there were signs of Full participant household improvements in employment, earned income, and total income, though these findings were based only on 17 Full participant households. At program entry, six households (35%) reported earned

income (*e.g.*, employment income), and at exit the number increased to 8 (47%). These employment changes helped drive average household earned income among those with earned income from \$1,369 to \$1,680. We observed similar changes in total income, which consists of earned income and benefit income. At entry, 13 (76%) households reported income from any source, and this increased by one at program exit. More impressively, average total household income among households with income grew from \$1,093 to \$1,765. Taken together, these Year One results suggested a positive change in employment and benefits take-up, but they may not generalize to other households and the association between Solid Ground and these outcomes cannot be considered causal without further data collection and analysis.

In Year Two (the year the pandemic began), within Full enrollments, there were no overall changes in employment, and average earned income remained about the same for Full participant households. We observed a little change in total income, which consisted of earned income and benefit income. We observed a small increase in benefit utilization and insurance coverage. Based on only 10 households, these mixed results may not generalize to other households, and the association between Solid Ground and these outcomes cannot be considered causal without further data collection and analysis.

Prior Homelessness: It is unclear what portion of the families who participated in Solid Ground in Years One, Two, and Three were at-risk of homelessness, particularly in the short term. Households enrolled in Solid Ground exhibited remarkably low rates of prior homelessness. In Year Three, only two households had any prior HMIS contact in the five years before enrollment in Solid Ground. Only two participant households in Year One and two participant households in Year Two had any prior HMIS contact in the five years before enrollment in Solid Ground.

C. Recommendations

In the course of our process evaluation and interviews with program staff, CPL learned about a number of challenges and notable successes with Solid Ground. We summarize these observations below in policy recommendations. Although the below recommendations are based on the first three years of operation of the Solid Ground pilot in Van Nuys, these recommendations can be applied to Solid Ground programs at other FamilySource Centers as well as homelessness prevention programs in Los Angeles generally:

Maintain flexible screening criteria to ensure that lack of formal eviction notices does not pose a barrier to program participation (*e.g.*, in the event of eviction moratoria or if a family is doubled up).

- **Create and maintain a strong relationship with a legal service provider** to assist participants with critical issues such as understanding and exercising housing rights, addressing housing condition issues, and resolving debt and credit issues.

- **Create and maintain relationships with landlords** in order to make homelessness prevention programs more effective (*e.g.*, educating landlords about the legal requirement to accept rental assistance checks from third parties, encouraging referrals from landlords, engaging landlords in mediation).
- **Be flexible in services and assistance offered** to address evolving economic and legal landscapes and diverse participant needs.
- **Collect uniform and universal participant data** on unemployment, food security, and unpaid rent to inform future policy planning.
- **Implement eligibility criteria that target assistance to people who would become homeless without it**, for example: income less than or equal to 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI), imminent risk of losing housing (though not tied to a formal eviction proceeding), sufficient score on the updated [Prevention Targeting Tool](#).

1. Introduction

A. Homelessness in Los Angeles County

On any given night, nearly 70,000 people experience homelessness in Los Angeles County.² Although record numbers of people experiencing homelessness have been placed into housing and other services in Los Angeles, inflows have outpaced exits to permanent housing. The homeless population increased by 4% between 2021 and 2022. Between 2018 and 2020, Los Angeles County experienced a much steeper increase of 26%.³ Because of this consistent increase in homelessness, it is critical that the City and County of Los Angeles and their research partners understand the causes of inflows into homelessness, understand who is at highest risk of homelessness, and develop and test prevention strategies.

B. What we know about homelessness prevention

Nationally, programs designed to prevent homelessness are relatively new, so there is scarce evidence to inform policy design. However, studies of two prevention programs in Chicago and New York provided insight and inspiration for Solid Ground. We know from the literature that homelessness prevention programs should be both *effective* and *efficient*.⁴ *Effective* programs prevent people at-risk of homelessness from becoming homeless. *Efficient* programs target individuals and families who are at high risk of homelessness, *i.e.*, those who would become homeless without prevention assistance, rather than those who could resolve a housing crisis without assistance. The Chicago and New York studies demonstrate the effectiveness of homelessness prevention programs in those cities, but the studies also underscore the need to ensure that prevention programs are efficient, *i.e.*, target the highest risk families.

A prevention program in Chicago provided one-time cash assistance to families who called a hotline and self-identified as being at-risk of homelessness. Callers who demonstrated a minimum level of financial self-sufficiency and were experiencing an eligible crisis were eligible for one-time financial assistance up to \$1,500. An evaluation of the program found that in the six months following the call, one-time financial assistance reduced shelter entry by 76% for program recipients compared to a comparable control group who were eligible but happened to call on a day when funds were not available. While the program succeeded at reducing shelter entry, homelessness remained a rare outcome among both individuals who received cash assistance (treatment group) and

² LAHSA Releases 2022 Greater Los Angeles Homeless County Results (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.lahsa.org/news?article=895-lahsa-releases-2022-great-los-angeles-homeless-count-results-release>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Shinn, M. & Cohen, R. (Jan. 2019). "Homelessness Prevention: A Review of the Literature." Center for Evidence-Based Solutions to Homelessness. Retrieved from http://www.evidenceonhomelessness.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Homelessness_Prevention_Literature_Synthesis.pdf.

individuals who did not receive cash assistance (control group). 99.5% of the individuals in the treatment group never entered shelter, but 98% of the control group also never entered a shelter despite the fact that they were eligible for, but did not receive, financial assistance. While this finding demonstrates that the vast majority of eligible callers were able to resolve their housing crisis by themselves, the prevention program was still cost effective because cost savings to the shelter system exceeded the cost of running the program. However, study authors noted that the program would be more efficient and cost beneficial if it were more effectively targeted to higher-risk callers.⁵

A study in New York offers insight into how prevention services may be more effectively targeted to enhance their efficiency. The Homebase prevention program offers a variety of homelessness prevention services in community-based settings, including cash assistance, benefits counseling, case management, legal assistance, job placement, and other services. Shinn *et al.* (2013) developed and evaluated a screening model for families in New York City who applied to the Homebase program, though service providers could override the tool and exercise their own judgment. This model used demographic, employment, education, housing, disability, criminal justice history, domestic violence history data and other administrative data to predict risk of shelter entry for individuals who applied to Homebase.

An evaluation of Homebase found that during a 27-month follow-up period, Homebase reduced the average length of shelter stays by an estimated 22.6 nights when compared to a control group. The average number of nights in a shelter for all Homebase participants (including those with no nights in a shelter) was 9.6 nights and the average number of nights in a shelter for all individuals in the control group (including those with no nights in a shelter) was 32.2 nights. In addition, Homebase reduced the percentage of families who spent at least one night in a shelter from 14.5% to 8.0%.⁶ Like the Chicago prevention program, the Homebase program was cost effective even though it had relatively modest effects. The evaluators of Homebase did, however, conclude that the program would have been even more effective had it been more efficiently targeted. Shinn *et al.* compared the families that the model identified as being at the greatest risk of homelessness with the families that Homebase program staff judged to be eligible for the program. As compared to program staff judgment, the Shinn *et al.* model had substantially higher precision (*i.e.*, correctly predicting shelter entry) at the same level of false alarms (*i.e.*, family that did not enter shelters in the absence of prevention services).⁷ Greer *et al.* created a similar model to target individuals for Homebase. Greer *et al.* found that their

⁵ Evans, W. N., Sullivan, J. X., & Wallskog, M. (2016). The impact of homelessness prevention programs on homelessness. *Science*, 353(6300), 694-699.

⁶ Rolston, H., Geyer, J., Locke, G., Metraux, S., & Treglia, D. (2013). Evaluation of Homebase community prevention program. *Final Report, Abt Associates Inc., June, 6, 2013.*

⁷ Shinn, M., Greer, A. L., Bainbridge, J., Kwon, J., & Zuiderveen, S. (2013). Efficient targeting of homelessness prevention services for families. *American journal of public health*, 103(S2), S324-S330.

model increased correct predictions by 77% (the model correctly predicted over 90% of shelter entry) and reduced missed cases of future homelessness by 85%.⁸

Both the Chicago and the New York programs demonstrate that short-term, relatively modest cash assistance and other temporary services can prevent homelessness and reduce inflows by keeping individuals and families out of the emergency shelter system. That said, both programs also demonstrate the difficulty of efficiently targeting prevention programs.

C. Traditional CES Homelessness Prevention in Los Angeles County and Solid Ground

As detailed below, stakeholders within Los Angeles County launched homeless prevention initiatives in order to stem homelessness inflows. These initiatives include a Countywide prevention program that the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) administers through its Coordinated Entry System (CES). CES is an integrated network of organizations that serve the homeless community in Los Angeles County. Solid Ground is a prevention program that is separate from the broader Countywide prevention program administered through the CES. Solid Ground aims to serve families with less severe housing issues who are not eligible for CES homelessness prevention services.

i. Traditional CES Homelessness Prevention and Problem-Solving Services in Los Angeles County

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (“the Board”) launched the Homeless Initiative on August 17, 2015, to combat the homeless crisis in the County. The initial objective of the Homeless Initiative was to develop and present recommended strategies to address the homelessness crisis to the Board. Two of the Homeless Initiative’s recommended strategies relate to homelessness prevention: Strategy A1 includes homeless prevention programs for families and Strategy A5 includes homeless prevention programs for individuals. Currently, homelessness prevention in Los Angeles County is largely funded by Los Angeles County’s Measure H tax revenue.

In order to implement prevention under Strategies A1 and A5, LAHSA contracts with homeless services providers in its CES to deliver short-term assistance to low-income individuals and families who are imminently at-risk of homelessness. Common forms of prevention assistance are short-term financial assistance; housing-conflict resolution and mediation with landlords and/or property managers; housing stabilization planning; legal assistance, and/or planning for exit from the program. As a short-term intervention, prevention services can be provided for up to six months. The goal of prevention is to

⁸ Greer, A. L., Shinn, M., Kwon, J., & Zuiderveen, S. (2016). Targeting services to individuals most likely to enter shelter: Evaluating the efficiency of homelessness prevention. *Social Service Review*, 90(1), 130-155.

secure permanent housing placement through assisted self-resolution of a housing crisis where the participant remains in their current housing or, if needed, re-location.

LAHSA administers family homelessness prevention services through Family Solution Centers within the CES. Family Solution Centers were originally established to connect individuals and families who are already homeless to shelters, permanent housing, and other assistance and services.

Staff at Family Solution Centers screen families to determine whether they qualify for CES homelessness prevention services. Under CES homelessness prevention eligibility criteria, families must be at or below 50% area median income, score 21 or more on the Prevention Targeting Tool (PTT),⁹ and be imminently at-risk of becoming homeless. According to LAHSA policy, families are *imminently* at-risk of homelessness if they will lose their primary nighttime residence within 30 days AND have no subsequent residence identified AND lack the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

Families who are not imminently at-risk of homelessness are not eligible for prevention services, and therefore are not scored with the PTT. These ineligible families may instead be provided with problem-solving services (formerly referred to as “diversion”). The goal of problem-solving is to stabilize a participant’s current (or new) housing arrangement (either where the participant is currently located, or an alternate, safe and stable housing arrangement) and remove the immediate need for additional homeless services including emergency shelter, rapid re-housing, or transitional housing.¹⁰ During the problem-solving conversation, staff use guided conversation to help individuals and families identify connections within their own networks and outside the homeless system that can assist them in stabilizing their housing situation. For example, an individual who is being evicted might have a relative who could provide them with housing.

ii. **Solid Ground**

The Solid Ground homelessness prevention pilot aims to serve families in the 91405 zip code (Van Nuys, California) whose less severe housing issues make them ineligible for CES homelessness prevention services. Prior to Solid Ground, families with less severe housing issues were not eligible for CES homelessness prevention. Furthermore, Family Solution Centers within the CES only serve eligible families who proactively seek prevention services. In an effort to address these issues in Service Planning Area 2, Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl invested \$300,000 in discretionary funding in Solid Ground. Solid Ground has three primary objectives:

⁹ The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) uses three questionnaires – specific to families, adult individuals, and transition-age youth - to determine eligibility for prevention services. The Family Prevention Targeting Tool is available here: <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=1438-form-1438-ces-for-families-homelessness-prevention-targeting-tool.pdf>.

¹⁰ LAHSA, CES for Families Operations Manual 2017-2018, version 2.0 (last updated Oct. 23, 2017).

- to make homelessness prevention services available to a wider range of families at-risk of homelessness;
- to precisely allocate financial assistance as a homelessness prevention service to only the at-risk families who would, without it, become homeless; and
- to reach at-risk families in a specific geographic region by conducting targeted outreach of the program's services.

The Solid Ground pilot is administered by New Economics for Women (NEW), a FamilySource Center. FamilySource Centers are located in high-need areas and provide a continuum of services designed to assist low to moderate-income families, *e.g.*, financial counseling and referrals to community resources. While FamilySource Centers serve *low and moderate-income families*, Family Solution Centers – which administer traditional CES homelessness prevention – typically serve families *experiencing homelessness*.

Solid Ground eligibility requirements are less stringent than those for CES homelessness prevention. To qualify for Full Solid Ground, a family must be imminently at-risk of becoming homeless AND score a 16 or more on the PTT. To qualify for Brief Solid Ground, a family could EITHER score 16 or more on the PTT or be imminently at risk of homelessness.¹¹

Brief Solid Ground consists of *one day* of services that may include: brief case management services; mediation and/or landlord dispute resolution services; referrals to mainstream benefits and/or other community resources; referral and linkage to legal services; and limited financial assistance (*e.g.*, transportation and grocery cards). Full Solid Ground includes *six months* of all of the services available to Brief Solid Ground participants, in addition to direct financial assistance such as rental assistance (though not all Full Solid Ground participants receive financial assistance).

Originally conceived as a two-year pilot beginning in 2018 and ending in 2020, NEW continues to operate Solid Ground in Van Nuys. In addition, the City of Los Angeles has started Solid Ground homelessness prevention programs at seven additional FamilySource Centers throughout Los Angeles.¹²

CES homelessness prevention and Solid Ground are similar in that common forms of assistance offered under both programs include rental assistance, utility arrears, housing-conflict resolution and mediation with landlords and/or property managers, legal assistance, and housing stabilization planning. In addition, both the Solid Ground pilot in Van Nuys and CES homelessness prevention offer services for up to 6 months. However, financial assistance offered under CES homelessness prevention is between \$1,000 and

¹¹ Eligibility criteria for Brief and Full Solid Ground changed after Year One in order to target higher risk families. See Table 3.3 in CPL's Year One Report for details on these eligibility changes.

¹² Los Angeles Community Investment for Families Department, "Solid Ground Homeless Prevention Program (HPP)", at <https://communityinvestmentforfamilies.org/solid-ground-homeless-prevention-program-hpp>.

\$5,000 on average and financial assistance offered under the Solid Ground pilot is less than \$1,000 on average.

iii. **California Policy Lab's Evaluation of Solid Ground**

This report includes findings and recommendations specific to the Solid Ground pilot in Van Nuys implemented by NEW. Solid Ground has been operating for over three years, and CPL completed reports, including this report, at the end of Years One through Three of the Solid Ground pilot:

- Year One: participants enrolled from September 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019¹³
- Year Two: participants enrolled from October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020
- Year Three: participants enrolled from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021

This report includes process metrics for Year Three of the Solid Ground pilot including:

- program activities during Year Three of the Solid Ground pilot (*e.g.*, outreach sessions, in-referrals),
- participant demographics, household composition, and prior HMIS homelessness for the 71 Brief Solid Ground and 34 Full Solid Ground participants who enrolled during Year Three,
- financial assistance, other assistance, and services that Year Three Brief and Full Solid Ground enrollees received, and
- income, employment, and living situation for enrollees at enrollment for both Brief and Full Solid Ground participants and for the 34 Full Solid Ground participants, at exit.

In the *Conclusion* section, we also briefly compare how metrics varied in Years One, Two, and Three of the pilot.

As part of this evaluation, CPL also conducted interviews with program staff to examine best practices, program challenges, and potential program improvements. In the *Recommendations* section below, we summarize lessons learned during the first three years of the Solid Ground pilot.

Prior to the Solid Ground pilot launch in 2018, CPL designed an impact evaluation to estimate the program's causal impact on housing stability, financial stability, employment, and other outcomes one, two, and three years after program implementation. The impact evaluation, as designed, relied on survey data collected from program participants and a comparison group of individuals who did not enroll in the program. As further detailed in the Years One and Two reports, the Covid pandemic and other challenges prevented

¹³ Year One of the program was 13 months long, but Year Two and Year Three of the program were 12 months long.

program staff from collecting survey data from a sufficient number of participants and the intended comparison group. Thus, CPL pivoted to a process evaluation.

2. Methodology and Data Sources

Evaluation methodology and data sources in Year Three were identical to those used in Years One and Two and are described below.

A. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

The HMIS is a web-based application designed to collect information on the characteristics and service needs of recipients of homelessness or homelessness prevention services. The system allows agency users and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) to use collected information for reporting and decision-making. Using the following HMIS data domains, CPL generated descriptive summary statistics for program participants: household composition, participant demographics, project characteristics, income and benefits, living situation at enrollment, destination at exit, services received, and financial assistance or monetary value of services. Descriptive summary statistics can be found in *Sections 3.D, 3.F, and 3.H* below.

B. NEW Internal Tracking Spreadsheet

NEW maintains an internal spreadsheet that tracks outreach and referrals. NEW tracks enrollments (name, date of enrollment, Brief or Full program participant, HMIS/Clarity ID, and consent to be surveyed) and exits on a separate internal spreadsheet. CPL generated descriptive summary statistics on outreach, referrals, enrollment, and exits based on the internal tracking spreadsheet, which can be found in *Sections 3.A, 3.B, and 3.I* below.

C. Interviews with NEW Staff

CPL interviewed NEW staff responsible for administering Solid Ground at the end of Year Three to better understand how the Solid Ground process functioned in Year Three and more broadly during the first three years of program operation (see *Sections 3.C, 3.E, 3.G, and 3.J*).

In the Year One and Year Two reports, we included summary statistics of the baseline surveys completed by Solid Ground Brief and Full Participants. In Year Three, no Full Participants completed surveys, so this report does not include survey summary statistics.

3. Results

A. Outreach

In Year One, NEW conducted 67 outreach sessions at local organizations in order to encourage referrals to the Solid Ground Program. NEW continued this strategy at the start of Year Two. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, outreach in Year Two from April 2020 until June 2020 consisted of phone calls and emails to community organizations that NEW previously connected with in order to inform them that Solid Ground program was still operating and providing services. In July 2020, NEW recommenced in-person outreach. NEW conducted 57 outreach sessions in Year Two.

NEW conducted 61 in-person outreach sessions in Year Three. In Year Three, the vast majority of outreach was conducted at housing rights/affordable housing organizations. Throughout Year Three, Solid Ground staff also conducted direct tenant outreach to let families know about the Solid Ground program and spoke to landlords at apartment complexes to let them know that if a tenant family fell behind on rent, the landlord should refer them to Solid Ground. In addition, Solid Ground staff distributed Solid Ground program information at food pantries, schools, local businesses such as coin laundries, and government agencies such as the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Table 3.1 lists the total outreach sessions conducted in Year Three (from October 2020 until September 2021), by month. Table 3.2 includes total outreach sessions conducted from October 1, 2020 until September 30, 2021, by category of targeted third-party organization.

Table 3.1. Outreach sessions conducted in Year Three, by month

October 2020	12
November 2020	11
December 2020	0
January 2021	2
February 2021	11
March 2021	0
April 2021	5
May 2021	10
June 2021	4
July 2021	1
August 2021	5
September 2021	0
Total	61

Table 3.2. Total outreach sessions conducted in Year Three, by category of targeted third-party organization

Los Angeles Unified School District/Education Organizations	4
Affordable Housing/Housing Rights Organization	43
Healthcare Organizations	2
Food/Clothing Providers	2
Churches	1
Street Outreach Sessions	1
LA County Department of Social Services	0
LA County Department of Motor Vehicles	1
FamilySource Center	0
Neighborhood Grocery/Restaurant	0
Job Fair/Employment Support	0
Other Nonprofit	2
Courthouse/Legal Self Help Center	0
Local Businesses	1
Motels	4

B. In-Referrals

In Year Three, NEW tracked in-referral sources and successes each month. As reflected in Table 3.3 below, NEW received a total of 105 successful referrals (*i.e.*, the participant who was referred from the referral source listed enrolled in the program) and 59 unsuccessful referrals. In Year One and Two, FamilySource Centers were the primary source of referrals and “word of mouth” from past participants was the second most common source of referrals. However, in Year Three, “word of mouth” became the primary

source of referrals with 35 successful and 11 unsuccessful referrals, which suggests former participants' continued satisfaction with the Solid Ground program. In Year Three, FamilySource Centers were the second most common source of referrals with 26 successful and 17 unsuccessful referrals.

Table 3.3. Year Three in-referrals, by month and category of in-referral source organization

	All Referrals		Family Source Centers		Word of Mouth		Food Pantries		LAUSD		Street Outreach		Community Event		Other	
	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X
Oct 2020	18	11	3	1	8	0	0	3	0	0	3	3	1	4	3	0
Nov 2020	7	7	2	1	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Dec 2020	3	3	0	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jan 2021	9	7	1	3	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Feb 2021	8	2	1	0	2	2	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Mar 2021	9	4	0	1	8	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apr 2021	3	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
May 2021	8	5	3	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
June 2021	9	7	4	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	4	2	1	0	0	1
Jul 2021	7	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0
Aug 2021	17	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	8	0	0	0	5	0
Sept 2021	7	4	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total	105	59	26	17	35	11	6	8	1	0	25	8	2	4	10	6
<p>Notes: ✓ indicates that the referral was successful (<i>i.e.</i>, the participant who was referred from the referral source listed enrolled in the program) and X indicates that the referral was not successful. The “Word of Mouth” column includes referrals made by current or former participants.</p>																

C. Program Staff Commentary on Outreach and Enrollments

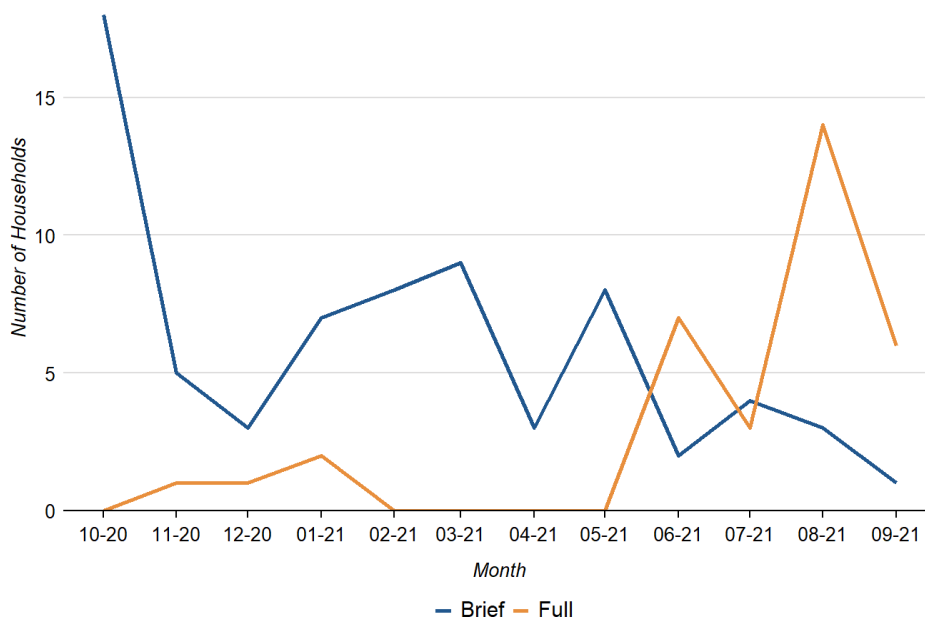
At the end of Year Three, staff reported that because the Solid Ground pilot is located within a FamilySource Center, the FamilySource Center system has provided a lot of referrals to Solid Ground and staff have not had to do as many outreach sessions in order to meet their enrollment targets. In addition, because the Solid Ground pilot has been operating for over three years, staff have developed relationships with landlords and landlords are referring their tenants to Solid Ground. Staff noted that they would like to develop a relationship with the Los Angeles County Department of Social Services (DPSS) because DPSS could be a valuable source for future in-referrals.

D. Enrollments (HMIS)

For Year Three, the HMIS data fully captured all 34 Full Solid Ground program enrollments and all 71 Brief enrollments. In Year Three, Solid Ground households included 223 children and 401 total family members according to the HMIS.

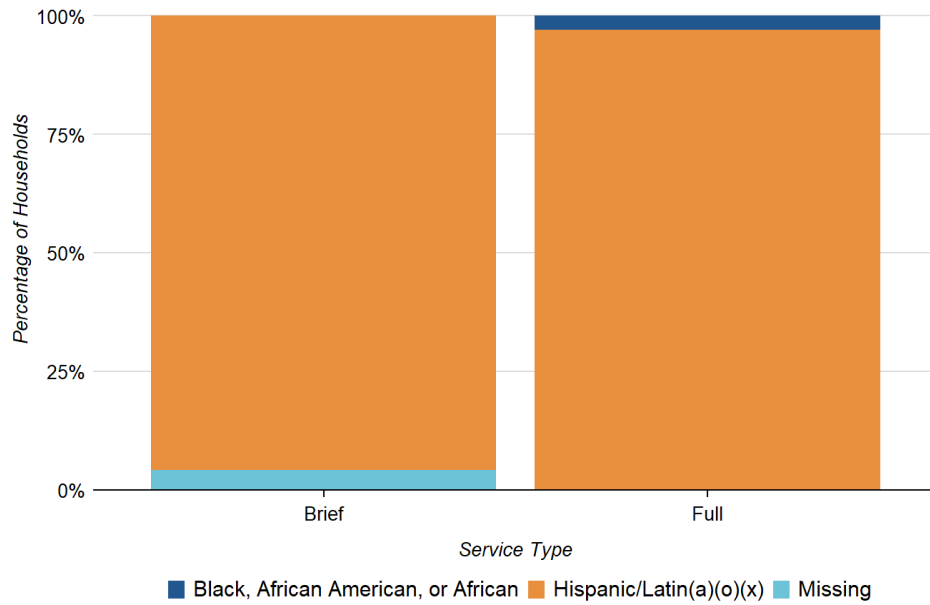
During Year 3, both Full and Brief program enrollments varied considerably by month. While we see the largest number of Brief enrollments in October, Full enrollments peak much later in the program year in August (Figure 3.1). For several late-winter and spring months, there were no new Full enrollments.

Figure 3.1. Year Three Enrollments, by month



Solid Ground served almost entirely Latinx-headed households in both Brief and Full enrollments (Figure 3.2). Overall, the program served 101 households with a Latinx head, one household with a Black head, and three households without racial or ethnic information in the HMIS.

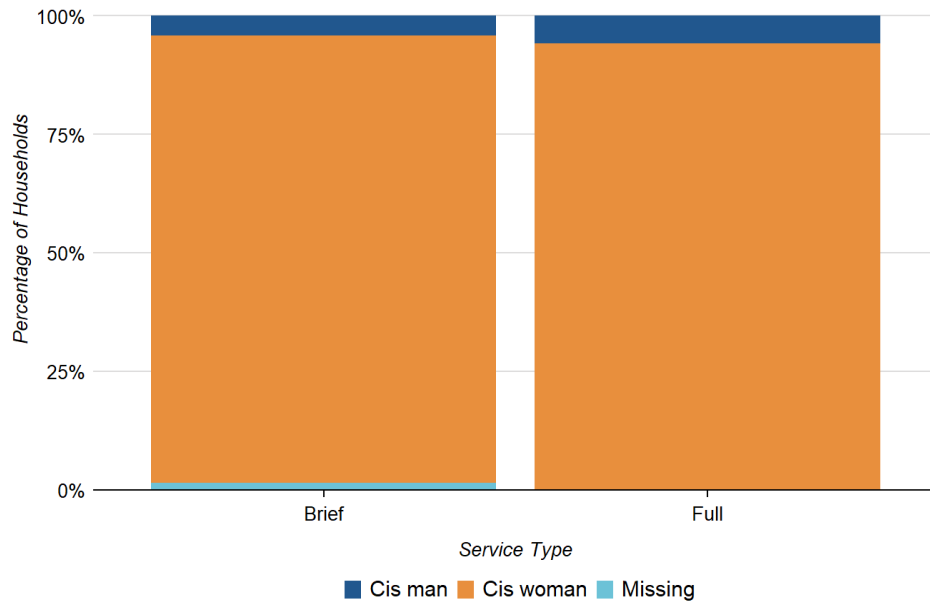
Figure 3.2. Households by Race/Ethnicity and Service Type



Note: This figure describes the race/ethnicity of the Head of Household.

Solid Ground served mostly female-headed households in both Brief and Full enrollments (Figure 3.3). Five male-headed households participated compared to 99 female-headed households and one household without gender information in the HMIS.

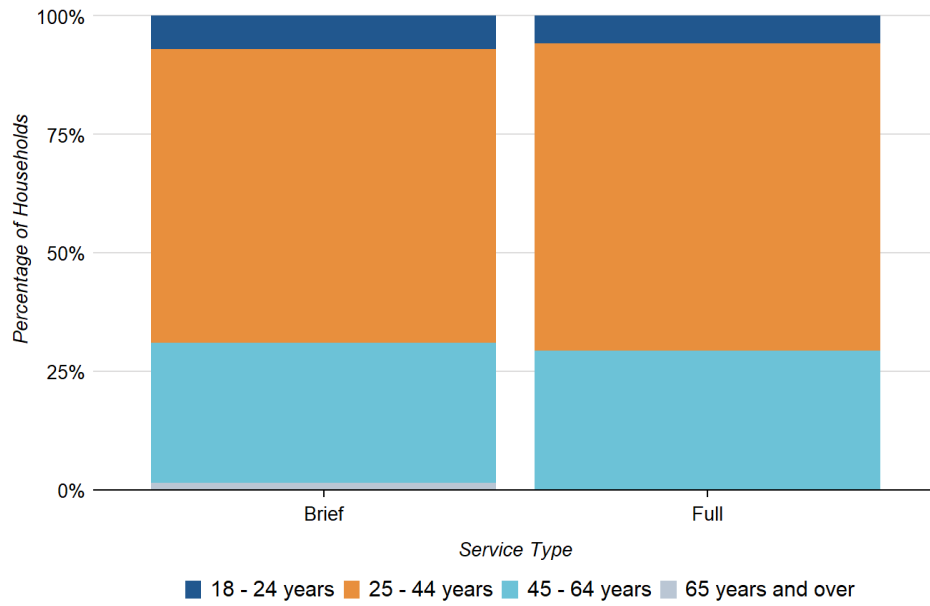
Figure 3.3. Households by Gender and Service Type



Note: This figure describes the Gender of the Head of Household

In Year Three, household heads were typically between the ages of 25 and 44 years, with a median age of 41. Older households (those aged 45-64) and younger households (those aged 18-24) were slightly less likely to receive Full (versus Brief) Solid Ground services. Medium-aged households (those aged 25-44) made up the bulk of both Full and Brief households (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4. Households by Age Category and Service Type



Note: This figure describes the age of the Head of Household.

Solid Ground served families that contained 4 members on average (Table 3.4). Typical family size was identical between Full and Brief enrollments.

Table 3.4. Typical Family Size

SERVICE TYPE	MEDIAN FAMILY SIZE	MEAN FAMILY SIZE
Brief	4	4
Full	4	4

At the time of their enrollment, nearly all (99%) of Solid Ground households lived in their own apartment or house without noted subsidy or assistance (Table 3.5). A single household was temporarily living with friends (*i.e.*, doubled-up).

Table 3.5. Solid Ground Household Living Situations at Enrollment

LIVING SITUATION	NUMBER	PCT.	CUMULATIVE PCT.
Permanently in own housing	104	99%	99%
Temporarily w/friends	1	1%	100%

Compared to CES homelessness prevention participants,¹⁴ Solid Ground participants in Year Three were substantially more likely to be living in their own housing without noted subsidy or assistance (99% versus 72%) (Table 3.5 and 3.6). Solid Ground participants were less likely than CES homelessness prevention participants to be in a doubled-up situation (1% versus 7%). CES homelessness prevention participants also reported living in hotels/motels, shelters, and places not meant for human habitation (*e.g.*, on the streets). These different living situations are suggestive of Solid Ground households' lower homelessness risk.

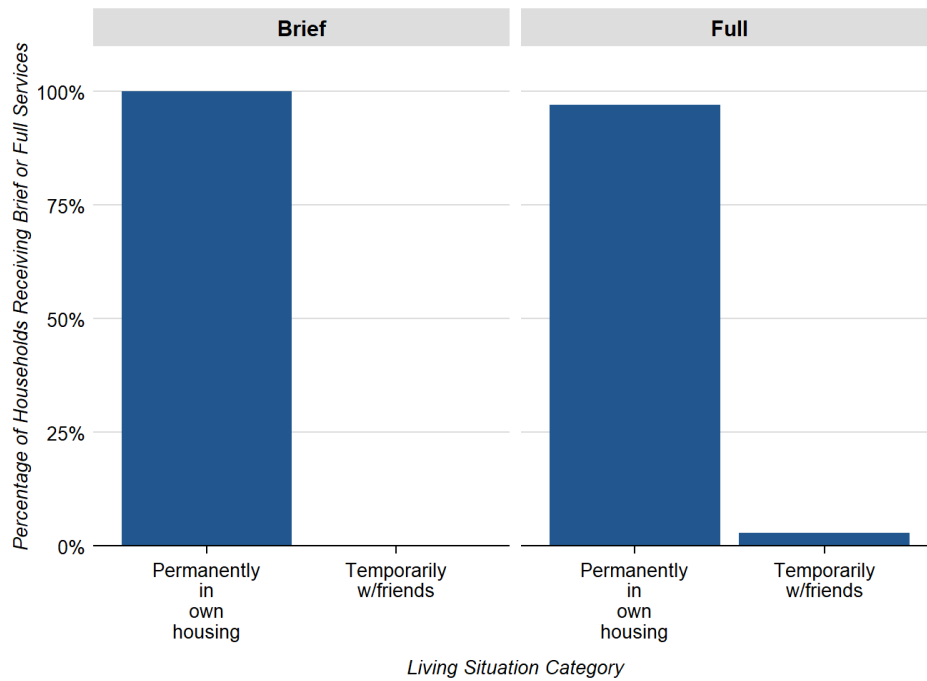
¹⁴ These comparison prevention programs are mainstream CES programs including A1 and A5 prevention. Strategy A1 is homeless prevention programs for families and Strategy A5 is homeless prevention programs for individuals.

Table 3.6. CES Homelessness Prevention Household Living Situations at Enrollment

LIVING SITUATION	NUMBER	PCT.	CUMULATIVE PCT.
Permanently in own housing	346	72%	72%
Permanently in own housing (w/subsidy or other assistance)	75	16%	88%
Temporarily w/family	19	4%	92%
Temporarily w/friends	14	3%	95%
Hotel/motel	6	1%	96%
Transitional housing	6	1%	97%
Streets or other place not meant for habitation	5	1%	98%
Shelter	4	1%	99%
Institution	2	0%	100%
Not collected	2	0%	100%

Dividing Solid Ground living situations by Full versus Brief services shows nearly identical living situations for households receiving Full and Brief services in Year Three (Figure 3.5). The single Solid Ground household living temporarily with friends received Full services.

Figure 3.5. Household Living Situations at Enrollment by Service Type



Households enrolled in Solid Ground in Year Three had very low rates of prior homelessness (Table 3.7) as measured by prior HMIS services. Only two households had any prior HMIS contact in the five years before enrollment. Perhaps surprisingly, the households with prior HMIS contact all enrolled in Brief services. These households' prior HMIS contact involved enrollment in HMIS housing programs (3% of Brief participants), as well as one household that had enrolled in an Interim Housing or Street Outreach program (1% of Brief participants).

Table 3.7. Solid Ground Households' HMIS Contact in Prior Five Years

SERVICE TYPE	PCT. ALL HMIS	PCT. INTERIM HOUSING OR STREET OUTREACH	
		PCT. INTERIM HOUSING	PCT. STREET OUTREACH
Brief	3%	1%	3%
Full	0%	0%	0%

^a Note: Households can belong to multiple categories.

Comparing these rates of prior HMIS contact to households enrolled in CES homelessness prevention programs underscores the potential homelessness risk differences in Solid Ground and CES homelessness prevention participants (Tables 3.7,

3.8). CES homelessness prevention households were around 19 times more likely than Year Three Solid Ground participants to have HMIS contact in the prior five years.

Table 3.8. CES homelessness Prevention Households’ HMIS Contact in Prior Five Years

PCT. ALL HMIS	PCT. INTERIM HOUSING OR STREET OUTREACH	PCT. HOUSING
36%	19%	18%

E. Program Staff Commentary on Enrollment

A major barrier to enrollment in Year Two was the fact that because of the eviction moratoria related to the Covid-19 pandemic, families behind on rent did not receive eviction notices or other notices that could provide proof of imminent risk of homelessness. Thus, they could not qualify for Full Solid Ground. To address this barrier, NEW began to serve families that were three months behind on rent and developed flexible ways of verifying rental arrears, such as contacting landlords to request rent ledgers. Thus, lack of eviction notices or other legal notices did not pose a barrier to enrollment in Year Three.

F. Financial Assistance and Services Received (HMIS)

In Year Three, Solid Ground enrollments involved a mix of recorded services (Table 3.9 and 3.10). Regardless of Full or Brief services, HMIS data reflects that almost all participants with recorded services received grocery cards. Brief enrollments were characterized by even higher levels of grocery cards (89%) and other helpful items such as miscellaneous material goods (20%) and baby supplies (10%) (Table 3.9). Additionally, 30% of Brief participants with recorded services received referrals for other services.

59% of Full participants with recorded services received rental assistance, rental arrears, or security deposits (Table 3.10).¹⁵ As with Brief participants, Solid Ground offered Full participants helpful items like grocery cards and baby supplies. The majority of full participants with recorded services also received referrals (64%), credit counseling and financial literacy (62%), life skills (62%), and utility arrears (62%).

The services described above often involved documented financial assistance to households (*e.g.*, grocery cards) or landlords (*e.g.*, rental assistance). In Brief enrollments,

¹⁵Multiple members of a household could receive services, so the analysis of services in Tables 3.9 and 3.10 uses participants as the denominator. In the following paragraph’s analysis focused on financial assistance and rental assistance, households are the denominator. Therefore, these rates are slightly different.

Solid Ground expended an average of \$123 per household and all households had financial assistance records. During Full enrollments, Solid Ground expended much greater amounts per household—an average of \$1,989 per household and all households had financial assistance records. 49% of Full program households received some form of rental assistance, and the average amount expended per household with rental assistance was \$2,865.

Table 3.9. Services Received During Brief Enrollments

SERVICE	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	PCT. OF PARTICIPANTS
Grocery Cards	71	89%
Referral Made	24	30%
Material Goods	16	20%
Baby Supplies	8	10%
Other	6	8%
Credit Counseling and Financial Literacy	2	2%

Table 3.10. Services Received During Full Enrollments

SERVICE	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	PCT. OF PARTICIPANTS
Other	28	72%
Grocery Cards	27	69%
Referral Made	25	64%
Credit Counseling and Financial Literacy	24	62%
Life Skills	24	62%
Utility Arrears	24	62%
Landlord Mediation	19	49%
Rental Arrears	11	28%
Rental Assistance	11	28%
Education	5	13%
Utility Payments	4	10%
Baby Supplies	3	8%
Housing Search and Placement	2	5%
Utility Deposit	2	5%
Security Deposit	1	3%

Enrollments for Full services typically lasted about six months (or 183 days) and as expected, Brief enrollments all occurred within a single day.

Table 3.11. Household Median Enrollment Duration and Service Days by Service Type

SERVICE TYPE	MEDIAN ENROLLMENT DURATION IN DAYS
Brief	0
Full	183

G. Program Staff Commentary on Financial Assistance and Services Received

As in Year Two, rental assistance was an urgent need for families in Year Three. While rents in Van Nuys continue to increase, the pandemic has left many families in the community underemployed or unemployed. Staff observed that the pandemic has particularly affected day laborers who work in the cash economy and seasonal workers. Although staff had difficulty providing rental assistance in Year Two because families behind on rent did not have eviction notices or other legal notices, they did not face similar difficulty in Year Three because the program loosened criteria for providing rental assistance (*i.e.*, a landlord’s rent ledger could be used to verify rental arrears of three or more months).

Nonetheless, an ongoing challenge related to rent is that landlords in the community are starting to require that tenants have a bank account, a good credit report, and evidence of savings equal to three months of rent. For families who need to relocate, these requirements have made finding a new home difficult.

As in Years One and Two, Solid Ground staff reported that their relationship with Inner City Law Center, a legal services provider, was crucial. Solid Ground staff noted that an important part of providing effective warm hand-offs to their partner legal services provider was ensuring that Solid Ground staff stayed up-to-date on changes in eviction moratoria, tenant rights, and basic legal information. In addition, as in Year Two, participants asked Solid Ground staff for information about the eviction moratoria and about more general housing rights issues. Solid Ground helped many families avoid illegal evictions through mediations and legal referrals.

In addition, Solid Ground has been able to provide effective landlord mediation, sometimes resulting in \$3,000 to \$4,000 of arrears being taken off rental arrears balances. Being able to handle landlord mediation within the Solid Ground program has precluded the need for legal services, which helps ease some of the inundation that the legal service provider is currently experiencing.

Staff also reported that in Year Three, they received financial coaching training. As a result of this training, staff feel better able to empower families with budgeting skills to avoid falling back into rental arrears. In Year Two, budgeting and savings goals were lower priorities for families because the severe economic hardships imposed by the pandemic meant that families were more focused on basic necessities like food. However, budgeting and savings became a program focus again in Year Three.

H. Outcomes at Exit and After Exit from Solid Ground (HMIS)

Living Situation at Exit

At program exit, 99% of Solid Ground households were permanently in their own housing without noted subsidy or assistance (Table 3.12). A single household that had enrolled in Full services was living in a homeless shelter.

Table 3.12. Household Living Situations at Exit

DESTINATION	NUMBER	PCT.	CUMULATIVE PCT.
Permanently in own housing	104	99%	99%
Shelter	1	1%	100%

Combining living situation at enrollment and destination at exit, we see very little change in living situations (Table 3.13). 98% of households had the same living situation at entry and exit. Unsurprisingly, every Brief household has the same living situation at enrollment and program exit. We observe two living situation changes for Full households: one household went from a doubled-up situation to permanently living in their own housing without noted subsidy or assistance; another household went from permanently living in their own housing without noted subsidy or assistance to a homeless shelter.

Table 3.13. Living Situation Pathways by Service Type

Prior Living Situation	Destination	Number	Pct.	Cumulative Pct.
Brief				
Permanently in own housing	Permanently in own housing	71	100%	100%
Full				
Permanently in own housing	Permanently in own housing	32	94%	94%
Permanently in own housing	Shelter	1	3%	97%
Temporarily w/friends	Permanently in own housing	1	3%	100%

Of the 105 Solid Ground households enrolled in Year Three, one experienced homelessness (as recorded in the HMIS) in the 12-months following their enrollment in Solid Ground (Table 3.14). Encouragingly that household also enrolled in an HMIS Housing program (*e.g.*, Rapid Re-Housing) within 12-months, suggesting functional referrals from Solid Ground and within the larger services system.

Overall, the extremely low rate of HMIS-recorded homelessness during a 12-month outcome period is impressive, but it also likely reflects the low-risk profile of Solid Ground participants. Without a credible causal design (*e.g.*, a randomized trial with treatment and control groups to compare), we cannot say Solid Ground services causally prevent homelessness.

Table 3.14. Household HMIS Homelessness in 12 Months After Solid Ground

PCT. ALL HMIS	PCT. INTERIM HOUSING OR STREET OUTREACH	PCT. HOUSING
1%	1%	1%

^a Note: Households can belong to multiple categories.

Other Outcomes

For the group of 34 households that participated in Full Solid Ground during Year Three, we observed improvements in households’ employment and earnings. At program entry, 28 households (82%) reported earned income (*e.g.*, employment income), and that number rises to 31 households (91%) at program exit. These households’ new earnings contribute to an increase of \$761 in average monthly earned income among all Full households (average of \$1,506 in monthly earned income at program entry and \$2,271 at program exit). Similarly, we observe an increase in average total monthly income (inclusive of benefits) from \$1,826 to \$2,537.

We observe a small increase in benefit utilization and insurance among Full households. At program entry, 21 households (62%) reported some benefit receipt. At program exit, an additional household indicated they received some benefit. 33 households (97%) reported having insurance at the time of their program enrollment, and that number also increased by one household.

I. Reasons for Full Program Exits in Year One

As detailed in the Years One and Two reports, participants in Full Solid Ground remain in the program for six months, unless NEW is unable to contact the participant or the participant moved out of the service area (91405). If either of the latter two conditions occur, then the participant exits the program prior to six months of enrollment. In Year Three, participants were also exited early if the participant chose to exit the program before the six months were completed. According to NEW’s internal tracking spreadsheet, of the 34 Full Solid Ground participants who enrolled during Year Three, five exited the program after participating for the full six months and one voluntarily exited early.

According to Solid Ground staff, program exits were lower in Year Three because the Covid-19 pandemic eviction moratoria impacted enrollments in Year Two (only 14 Full Solid Ground enrollments out of 30 available slots). Families behind on rent did not receive eviction notices or other notices that could provide proof of imminent risk of homelessness in Year Two. Thus, they could not qualify for the Solid Ground program. Solid Ground enrollments increased in June 2021 when staff received a guidance memo from LAHSA

indicating that they should serve families who were 3 months or more behind on rent and those late enrollments translated into future exits in Year Four.

Table 3.15. Year Three Exits (October 2020 – September 2021), by Month

	Reached 6 months	Unable to Contact	Moved out of service area	Voluntary exit
Oct 2020	1	0	0	1
Nov 2020	0	0	0	0
Dec 2020	0	0	0	0
Jan 2021	0	0	0	0
Feb 2021	0	0	0	0
Mar 2021	0	0	0	0
Apr 2021	0	0	0	0
May 2021	1	0	0	0
Jun 2021	1	0	0	0
Jul 2021	2	0	0	0
Aug 2021	0	0	0	0
Sep 2021	0	0	0	0
Total	5	0	0	1

J. Program Staff Commentary on Outcomes and Exits

Anecdotally, staff reported that almost all families in Year Three maintained housing and some increased income and created a savings plan. Based on their observations, family outcomes in the realms of housing, income, savings, and basic necessities like food were better in Year Three as compared to Year Two.

4. Conclusion

Year Three of the Solid Ground pilot program began on October 1, 2020 and ended on September 30, 2021. The goal of CPL’s Year Three report is to document:

- program activities during Year Three of the Solid Ground pilot,
- participant demographics, household composition, and prior homelessness services enrollments as observed in the Homelessness Management Information System

data (HMIS) of the 71 Brief Solid Ground and 34 Full Solid Ground participants who enrolled during Year Three,

- financial assistance, other assistance, and services that Year Three Brief and Full Solid Ground enrollees received, and
- income, employment, and living situation for enrollees at enrollment for both Brief and Full Solid Ground participants and for the 34 Full Solid Ground participants, at exit.

Below, we summarize these metrics and also compare how metrics varied in Years One, Two, and Three of the pilot.

Outreach and enrollment:

NEW conducted 67 outreach sessions in Year One, 57 outreach sessions in Year Two, and 61 outreach sessions in Year Three. In Year One, the two most common types of third-party organizations that were targeted for outreach were schools and education-related organizations and housing rights/affordable housing organizations. In Year Two, street outreach and food and clothing providers were the most commonly recorded categories of outreach. In Year Three, the vast majority of outreach was conducted at housing rights/affordable housing organizations.

In Year One, Solid Ground met its goal of enrolling 30 Full and 50 Brief participants. In Year Two, program staff aimed to enroll 30 Full and 50 Brief participants, but because of the barriers to outreach, intake, and eligibility raised by the pandemic, staff were only able to enroll 14 Full participants and 66 Brief participants. In Year Three, Solid Ground enrolled 34 Full and 71 Brief participants.

According to HMIS data, in Year Three, the program served a total of 223 children and 401 total family members. In Year Three, families enrolled in Solid Ground contained four members on average. The Solid Ground pilot largely served Latina-led families during its first three years of operation.

Services provided: In Year Three, analysis of HMIS data shows that during Full enrollments, 49% of households received rental assistance or arrears with an average value of \$2,865. In Years One and Two, 45% and 43% of households received rental assistance, respectively. In Years One and Two, the average values were \$1,647 and \$1,384, respectively.

In Years One, Two, and Three, Brief participants usually received food and drink assistance in the form of grocery cards. In Year Three, 20% of Brief participants received other material goods and 10% received baby supplies. In Years One and Two, 26% and 65% of participants received other material goods, respectively. (The higher rate of other material goods received in Year Two may reflect the fact that severe economic hardships during the pandemic meant that families needed help with basic needs or could relate to

changes in HMIS data entry practices). In Years One, Two, and Three, Solid Ground offered Brief and Full participants food and drink items like grocery cards at high rates.

In Year Three, Brief participants had an average of \$123 in financial assistance and Full participants had an average of \$1,989 in financial assistance, a notably higher amount than Full participants received during previous years. In Years One and Two, Brief participants had an average of \$96 and \$118 in financial assistance, respectively. In Years One and Two, Full participants had an average of \$823 and \$774 in financial assistance, respectively.

Participant housing status: In Year Three, 99% of participants reported living in a market rate rental when they entered and exited Solid Ground.¹⁶

In Year One, nearly 40% of households reported living in a market rate rental when they entered and exited Solid Ground. Another 37% of households relocated from living doubled-up with family to a market rate rental during Solid Ground.

In Year Two, nearly all households (95%) reported living in a market rate rental when they entered and exited Solid Ground.

Of the 105 households enrolled in Year Three and captured in the HMIS, just one has subsequently enrolled in an HMIS project within 12 months of Solid Ground enrollment. Similarly, in Years One and Two, no Solid Ground participants subsequently enrolled in an HMIS project within 6 months.¹⁷ This suggests that none of the Brief or Full Solid Ground participants in Years One and Two have become homeless in the short-term period following Solid Ground, and that only one Year Three household became homeless.

Employment, income, insurance, and benefits:

In Year Three, we observed improvements in Full households' employment, earned income, and total income, as well as very small improvements in benefits receipt and insurance. At program entry, 28 households (82%) reported earned income (*e.g.*, employment income), and that number rose to 31 households (91%) at program exit. There was an increase of \$761 in average monthly earned income among all Full households (average of \$1,506 in monthly earned income at program entry and \$2,271 at program exit), and a similar increase in average total monthly income (inclusive of benefits) from \$1,826 to \$2,537. Overall, we observed one additional household receive benefits and insurance.

In Year One, there were signs of Full participant household improvements in employment, earned income, and total income, though these findings were based only on

¹⁶ In Year Three, we see higher rates of participants living in their own housing without noted subsidy or assistance. This may be due to differences in data collection or reflect real differences in participants served.

¹⁷ Due to timing of data delivery and analysis, in Years One and Two, we could only use a 6-month outcome window.

17 Full participant households. At program entry, six households (35%) reported earned income (*e.g.*, employment income), and at exit the number increased to 8 (47%). These employment changes helped drive average household earned income among those with earned income from \$1,369 to \$1,680. We observed similar changes in total income, which consists of earned income and benefit income. At entry, 13 (76%) households reported income from any source, and this increased by one at program exit. More impressively, average total household income among households with income grew from \$1,093 to \$1,765. Taken together, these Year One results suggested a positive change in employment and benefits take-up, but they may not generalize to other households and the association between Solid Ground and these outcomes cannot be considered causal without further data collection and analysis.

In Year Two (the year the pandemic began), within Full enrollments, there were no overall changes in employment, and average earned income remained about the same for Full participant households. We observed little change in total income, which consisted of earned income and benefit income. We observed a small increase in benefit utilization and insurance coverage. Based on only 10 households, these mixed results may not generalize to other households, and the association between Solid Ground and these outcomes cannot be considered causal without further data collection and analysis.

Prior Homelessness: Households enrolled in Solid Ground exhibited remarkably low rates of prior homelessness. In Year Three, only two households had any prior HMIS contact in the five years before enrollment in Solid Ground. Only two participant households in Year One and two participant households in Year Two had any prior HMIS contact in the five years before enrollment in Solid Ground.

Risk of future homelessness: While Solid Ground was designed to prevent homelessness, we were unable to determine what portion of participants in Years One, Two, and Three were at-risk for homelessness, particularly in the short term.

Based on HMIS data, it appears that very few households had prior histories of homelessness, which is an important risk factor for future homelessness. To provide additional context, we compared prior rates of homelessness for Solid Ground participants to participants who received services from the CES.

Comparing these rates of prior homelessness to households enrolled in CES homelessness prevention underscores the risk differences in Solid Ground and CES homelessness prevention participants. In Year One, CES homelessness prevention participants were around 14 times more likely to have experienced homelessness prior to enrollment in prevention. In Year Two, CES homelessness prevention participants were around 11 times more likely to have experienced homelessness prior to enrollment in prevention. In Year Three, CES homelessness prevention participants were around 19 times more likely to have experienced homelessness prior to enrollment in prevention. And while lack of subsequent enrollments in homelessness services could be an indicator of

program success, it may also be an indicator the program was not enrolling households at high risk of homelessness.

5. Recommendations

Below, we summarize lessons learned during the first three years of the Solid Ground pilot. Although these recommendations are based on information from the Solid Ground pilot in Van Nuys, these recommendations can be applied to Solid Ground programs at other FamilySource Centers as well as homelessness prevention programs in Los Angeles generally.

A. Maintain Flexibility in Screening Criteria

Because the program requires proof of imminent risk of homelessness, the eviction moratoria related to the Covid-19 pandemic became a major barrier to enrollment in Year Two of the Solid Ground pilot. Families behind on rent did not receive eviction notices or other notices that could provide proof of imminent risk of homelessness and thus could not qualify for the Full Solid Ground program. To address this barrier, NEW began to serve families that were three months behind on rent and developed flexible ways of verifying rental arrears, such as contacting landlords to request rent ledgers to verify rental arrears of 3 or more months. Thus, lack of eviction notices or other legal notices did not pose a barrier to enrollment in Year Three.

Even in the absence of eviction moratoria, families who are doubled up might not receive eviction notices or other notices that can provide proof of imminent risk of homelessness. Maintaining flexible screening criteria will ensure that lack of formal eviction notices does not pose a barrier to program participation.

B. Create and Maintain a Strong Relationship with a Legal Service Provider

After each of the first three years of the Solid Ground pilot, program staff emphasized how important their connection to Inner City Law Center was. Inner City Law Center assisted participants in addressing housing condition issues as well as debt and credit issues in Year One and provided participants with information about eviction moratoria and housing rights generally in Years Two and Three. Solid Ground staff noted that it is also important for homelessness prevention program staff to stay current on laws and programs related to housing rights in order to make efficient and appropriate legal referrals.

C. Create and Maintain Relationships with Landlords

Communicating with and creating and maintaining relationships with landlords can make homelessness prevention programs more effective. During Year One, Solid Ground

staff had to educate landlords who were hesitant to accept rental assistance checks from third parties, despite a legal requirement under Assembly Bill 2219 (codified as an amendment to Civil Code § 1947.3) that they do so. In Year Three, Solid Ground staff reported that because they had built relationships with landlords, landlords began referring their tenants to Solid Ground. In all years of the program, staff reported that landlord mediation was an important program component.

D. Flexibility in Services and Assistance Offered

In Year One, Solid Ground participants often need help with more “upstream” issues such as debt and credit issues rather than with eviction cases. Solid Ground participants in Year One were less likely to have issues like three-day notices or eviction cases, and more likely to have questions about how to address housing conditions. However, in Year Two, legal advice related to eviction moratoria as well as help with basic necessities like food became high priority needs because of the severe economic hardships imposed by the pandemic. In Year Three, budgeting and savings became a program focus as participants' economic conditions improved. Solid Ground staff were able to meet changing participant needs during the first three years of the pilot by maintaining flexibility in services and assistance offered.

E. Uniform and Universal Collection of Participant Data

Collection of uniform and universal data across homelessness prevention programs will allow service providers and policymakers to plan for evolving needs of families at-risk of homelessness. As noted in the Year One report, housing retention is a useful metric to track internally. Although HMIS data allowed us to see housing situations at entry and exit, we could only infer housing retention from HMIS data (e.g., in Year One, almost 40% of households reported living in a market rate rental at enrollment and exit and this is evidence in favor of retention). Internally tracking housing retention would allow prevention providers to determine whether housing stability planning is effective. In addition, as noted in our Year Two report, participant data on unemployment, food security, and unpaid rent is a critical component of this planning process. Unfortunately, administrative data in these areas is currently very limited. Uniform and universal collection of participant data on unemployment, food security, and unpaid rent would greatly benefit future policy planning.

F. Efficient Targeting and Risk of Homelessness

It is unclear what portion of the families who participated in Solid Ground in Years One, Two, and Three were at-risk of homelessness, particularly in the short term. Households enrolled in Solid Ground in Years One, Two, and Three exhibited remarkably low rates of prior homelessness and only one household in Year Three experienced homelessness subsequent to Solid Ground enrollment. Although it may signal prevention program success that such a small number of Solid Ground participants subsequently

experienced homelessness, it may also suggest that the families enrolled in Solid Ground were not at high risk of homelessness before their enrollment.

One of the biggest challenges with homelessness prevention is making sure that assistance is going to people who would become homeless without it. To better achieve this goal, we recommend that Solid Ground and other homelessness prevention programs consider implementing the following eligibility criteria:

- Restrict eligibility to households who have income at 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI) or lower. While there is no rigorous research to support a specific income threshold, past studies have found that using an 80% AMI threshold results in a program largely serving people who are not at risk of homelessness. We recommend a maximum threshold of 30% AMI for targeting cash assistance for homelessness prevention. The impact of implementing more restrictive eligibility requirements should be studied in a rigorous evaluation to determine if the new requirements help to better achieve the program goals.
- Being at imminent risk of losing housing, though not tied to a formal eviction proceeding.
- In addition, if program funding is restricted, the use of a screening tool, such as the [Prevention Targeting Tool](#), may be another way to ensure that finite resources are targeted to the households at the highest risk of homelessness.