

## H.E.A.R.T Alliance for Sustainable Families



**Lead Organization:** Kids in Distress, Inc. (KID, Inc.)

**Location:** Broward County, Florida

**Number of Families to Serve:** 50 families

**Family Selection Criteria:**

*Income:* 30 percent of Area Median Income

*Child Welfare Involvement:* Verified maltreatment; children at imminent risk of removal or have been removed; two or more child protection investigations involving the family; two or more child protection investigations with verified findings; legal sufficiency for judicial involvement; judicial involvement; family with children in foster care with a permanency goal or reunification for whom the lack of permanent housing is one of the remaining obstacles to reunification.

*Housing Status:* Homeless; Living in: places not meant for habitation; emergency shelters; transitional housing; residential treatment center without stable housing; facing imminent eviction from housing within 5 – 7 days; having 3 or more moves in 12 months; fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence.

*Multiple High Needs:* At least two of the following characteristics: primary caregiver has mental health, drug or alcohol problem; child has mental health or behavioral health problem, a developmental, learning or physical disability; and the family has two of the following characteristics: two or more domestic violence incidents in past year; primary caregiver has chronic health condition; age of youngest child is under two years; four or more children in the household; primary caregiver has criminal arrest history; household has previously received child protective services; primary caregiver has their own history of abuse or neglect as a child.

FOCUS	PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	ROLE
Largest county youth & family services provider	KID, Inc.	ACYF grantee/project lead & clinical case management services
Lead child welfare agency	ChildNet	Referrals, triage & housing coordinator
Lead child protection agency	Broward Sheriff's Office	Referrals & triage
Public housing agencies	5 Public Housing Authorities	Administer 50 Housing Choice Vouchers & dedicated housing liaison
Family emergency shelter	HOPE South Florida	Transitional and emergency shelter
Economic self-sufficiency	Urban League of Broward County	Employment, income, fiscal literacy
Legal	Legal Aid of Broward County	Legal counsel & eviction prevention
Health care	Broward Health	Health access, education & screening
Behavioral health services	Broward Addiction Recovery Center	Substance abuse & mental health care
Domestic violence services	Women in Distress	Domestic violence prevention
Local HUD Continuum of Care (CoC)	Broward County Homeless Initiative	Coordinate local homeless services, policies, data, planning
HEART evaluation	Barry University	Process/outcome evaluation/cost study
Project-specific consultation	Group Victory, LLC	Support for project planning, implementation & sustainability

**The Need:** On any given day in Broward County, Florida, there are approximately 289 homeless families comprised of 414 homeless children. Furthermore, there are over 2,000 children in the local child welfare system. Children and families face these systems along with distressful housing, employment and economic challenges. In addition, at-risk children and families are frequently coping with co-occurring stressors such as trauma, mental health disorders, substance abuse and domestic violence.

**The Local Solution:** KID is committed to strengthening vulnerable families in Broward County, to decreasing child abuse and neglect and to ensuring child well-being. KID shares this mission with more than 15 community partners and organizations representing an innovative system of care. HEART is designed to reduce homelessness and child welfare contacts while increasing healthy parenting, family emotional coping, family employment, financial management and housing stability through a robust array of integrated services. The HEART collaborative offers a wealth of child and family human service experience in program planning, development, implementation and management in Broward County. This oversight is coupled with a rigorous process, implementation and outcome evaluation that will measure HEART success and drive project decision-making and quality improvement.

**Overview of the HEART Demonstration**

HEART represents 50 scattered-site units with permanent rental subsidies (Housing Choice Vouchers) provided by five Broward County public housing authorities. HEART provides direct supportive services including evidence-based interventions, clinical case management and coordinates multiple other supportive services.

The service model focuses on:

- Strengthening families by providing family and parenting skills training and positive parenting
- Supporting healthy babies and children by providing prenatal and enhanced child health care
- Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to help families build relationships, trust, protection and empowerment
- Promoting economic self-sufficiency, employment advancement, financial literacy, income enhancement, household budgeting and financial management coaching through Center for Working Families.

Services coordinated or provided to the HEART families will be in the form of:

- |                                      |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| * Domestic violence prevention       | * Legal services                      |
| * Enhanced triage                    | * Life skills training                |
| * Employment assistance              | * Parenting                           |
| * Financial services                 | * Physical and behavioral health care |
| * Household management skills        | * Substance abuse treatment           |
| * Intensive clinical case management | * Trauma-informed therapy             |

**Local Evaluation**

HEART is one of five sites in a national demonstration designed to test an intensive approach to housing by supporting families who have come to the attention of the child welfare system because of chronic or recurring homelessness and other serious, persistent issues such as mental illness, substance abuse, and domestic violence. The HEART evaluation and cost study is conducted by Barry University and studies the impact of HEART on families and children. In addition, the evaluation looks at reduction in contacts with the child welfare system and increase in psychological function. The HEART local evaluation utilizes a true experimental design with randomized treatment and control groups.