

2021-2022

Evaluation Plan for Saranam



Prepared By:

Melissa Binder, Ph.D (Team Lead)

Brisa Pena (Evaluation Lab Fellow)

Hallie Brown (Evaluation Lab Fellow)

1. Introduction

Since 2004, Saranam LLC has served unsheltered families in the City of Albuquerque by providing them with a home of their own, education, and intensive case management. By providing families with their basic needs, families can then focus on pursuing their goals in higher education and learning how to live independently. Saranam's 2-year, two-generational (2-Gen) approach seeks to end the cycle of homelessness and provide parents with academic, parenting, and soft-skills training. Saranam recently acquired a second location, which will double its current capacity of serving 20 families at a time.

Groups of 10 families are admitted into Saranam as a cohort, which creates an intentional system of community support as they each begin their journey out of homelessness. Additionally, Saranam uses the Housing First model, providing each family with a fully furnished apartment upon entry into the program.

In the first year, adults participate in 250 hours of classes taught and facilitated by Saranam staff that focus on life skills development. They also focus on academic coursework that will prepare them to participate in vocational or college-level academic coursework in the second year. Children are provided with educational support that enhances what they are learning in the classroom and with age-appropriate life skills training that integrates the curriculum used in the adult life skills courses.

This is the second year Saranam has partnered with the UNM Evaluation Lab program. During the first year in the program, Saranam worked to develop their logic model and to revise their alumni survey to reflect the four main outcomes of housing, education and employment, community, and resilience. This year, the UNM Team will evaluate administrative data to better understand interactions of distinct factors that may impact the success of Saranam's clients.

2. Purpose of Evaluation

This evaluation's goal is to explore correlations between client characteristics and program engagement, and the program's measures of success. Saranam plans to use the findings from this exploration to tailor the program to client needs.

Table 1 lists the client and program characteristics. Client characteristics include demographic and pre-program experiences related to homelessness. Program engagement include class attendance and class grades (from the program's first year), as well as other interventions facilitated by Saranam during the program.

Table 1. Available data for client and program characteristics

Pre-program client characteristics	Program engagement
Reasons for Homelessness (including substance abuse, domestic violence, not able to pay rent)	Class attendance
Length of most recent episode without shelter	Grades
Number of previous episodes without shelter	Housing
Current housing arrangement (including shelter, doubling up and in car)	Housing
Number and age(s) of parents	
Number and age(s) of children	

Saranam collects the following “Measures of Success.”

- Housing
- Education
- Employment
- Life Skills
- Major Barriers Addressed
- Parenting

The organization criteria for success of their clients upon exiting their two-year housing program consists of the client’s case manager evaluating if they have overcome the major barriers which caused the client to become homeless in the first place, as well as being housed upon exiting the program. “Success” is achieved by the client if they are housed upon exiting the program and completing an additional of three major barriers. Saranam uses a working document which evaluates the client’s success upon exiting the program, with questions such as in education “did the client obtained a GED or another form of certificate”, if a client of Saranam achieves an educational goal then it would count as a met measure of success. The evaluation working document used by the case workers in examining the exit clients measures of success is provided in Appendix B as Saranam Measures of Success.

Evaluation Questions:

The evaluation’s goal is to explore correlations within the administrative data on class attendance, class grades, reasons for homelessness, length of stay in the program, and achieved measures of success upon client exit. Saranam collects data on client’s reasons for homelessness using the following categories:

- Substance abuse
- Domestic violence
- Mental health
- Relationship/family
- Poor economy
- Addiction

The administrative data will be evaluated with respect to the following evaluation questions:

1. Do measures of success achieved at exit correlate with class attendance, class grades, length of stay in program, and reasons for homelessness?
2. Do certain combinations of reasons for homelessness have an impact on measures of success achieved by program participants?
3. How can Saranam make use of the qualitative data they collect?

3. Logic Model

The evaluation team from the previous year developed an organizational logic model for Saranam (Appendix A). Building off this work, this year’s evaluation is interested in understanding the outcomes identified in the logic model in relation to the measures of success used the program to evaluate clients at exit. Measures of success are evaluated upon a client’s exit and pinpoint their individual capacity to address the major barriers which caused homelessness in the first place, obtain life skills to improve their quality of life, and improve family ties. The table below identifies the outcomes from the logic model and how those outcomes are indicated through data collected on the measures of success:

Outcomes Identified in Logic Model	Measures of Success
Safe and stable household	Housing, Employment, Parenting
Skills and knowledge	Education, Life Skills, Parenting
Strong networks and homelessness awareness	Major Barriers Addressed, Employment, Life Skills
Problem managements and optimism	Major Barriers Addressed, Life Skills

4. Literature Review

Saranam uses the 2Gen approach, meaning the organization focuses on creating opportunities and addresses the needs of both adults and children so that families are able to pass wealth

from one generation to the next. Sometimes referred to as the whole family approach, the 2Gen approach has six key components:

1. Social capital, meaning families have and form connections that can support them overall
2. Early childhood education
3. K-12 education for dependent children
4. Post-secondary education and career pathways for adults
5. Financial stability and developing economic assets in the family unit
6. Health and well-being, providing access to healthcare for physical, mental and behavioral health (Ascend at the Aspen Institute, 2021).

The 2Gen approach has proven to be a successful and important intervention when implemented in different contexts. A similar intervention in College Park, Georgia proved to be successful across many categories. 76% of program participants had either completed their employment training or were making progress toward completion. At exit, 65% of program participants were either employed or in school at exit. This number increased when researchers followed up a year later, with 73% of those sampled indicating they were working or in school. Additionally, when sampling former program participants, researchers found that 75% of the sample was still in contact with program staff in the year after they finished the program. Lastly, young women who participated in the 2Gen program were better able to provide for their families by delaying future pregnancies. 84% of young women interviewed did not have another pregnancy within a year of exiting the program and 64% had no additional pregnancies four years later (Fisher, 2000).

In addition to the 2Gen approach, Saranam operates using the housing first model, meaning program participants are given housing as soon as they are enrolled in the services provided by Saranam. There are no preconditions to housing, rather housing is seen to support those experiencing homelessness address the root causes of their homelessness. To best understand and study housing first models, it is critical to have a trauma-informed philosophy and involve program participants in the data collection process, as well as create trust in the team collecting the data (Tran et al, 2021).

Housing first does have limitations. A 2021 study looked at the success of the housing first model with adults who had first experienced homelessness in childhood. The authors found an association between experiencing homelessness as a child and facing housing instability after entering a housing first program. Specifically:

... compared to participants who had first experienced homelessness at age 25 or older, participants who had first experienced homelessness under the age of 25 had half the odds of experiencing housing stability as an adult in HF over 24 months (Löfstrand and Juhila, 2021).

With that in mind, this model is still considered a best practice in the United States because most program participants are able to access housing sooner and stay in stable housing, provided by

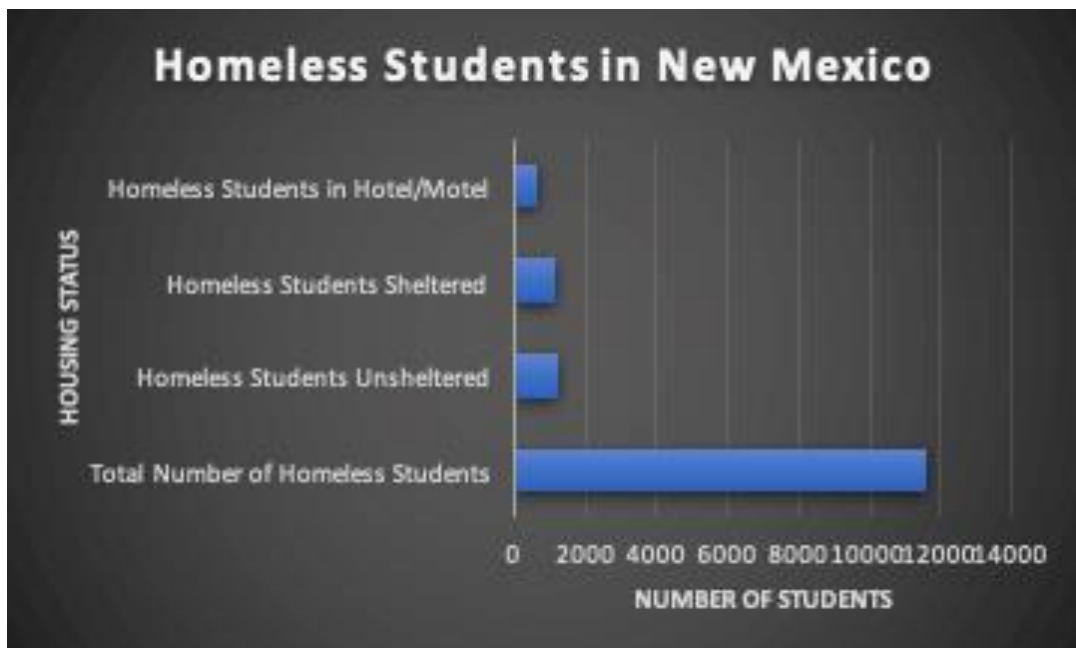
organization like Saranam, for a longer period (Löfstrand and Juhila, 2021). Additionally, the housing first model makes program participants more likely to access other support services provided by organizations like Saranam. The benefit of participating in these support programs cannot be understated. Program participants who access additional support services are more likely to attend school and job training programs, stay sober, avoid domestic violence, and spend less time hospitalized (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2016).

5. Context

It is important to consider data that looks at homelessness in family units and homeless students enrolled in schools, as these are two data points that represents the population that Saranam works with.

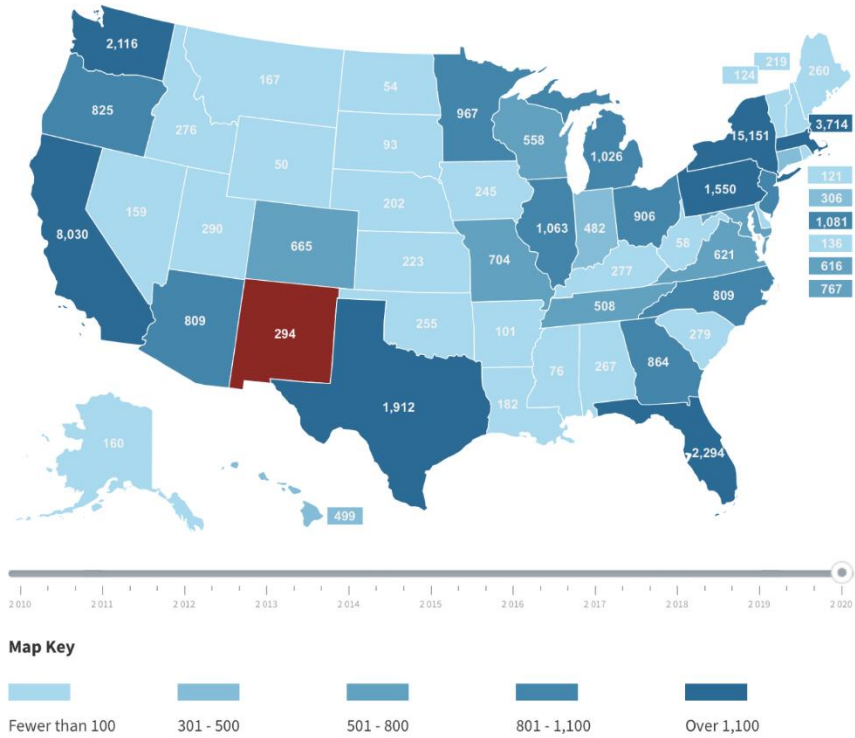
As of January 2020, New Mexico had 3,333 people experiencing homelessness on any given day. Of the 3,333 people, 264 of those people were in family units. Additionally, there were 11,574 homeless students in New Mexico for the 2019-2020 school year. Of those students, 1,244 of them are completely unsheltered and 1,150 of them are staying in shelters (US Interagency Council on Homelessness).

Figure 1: Homeless Students in New Mexico
Source: US Interagency Council on Homelessness



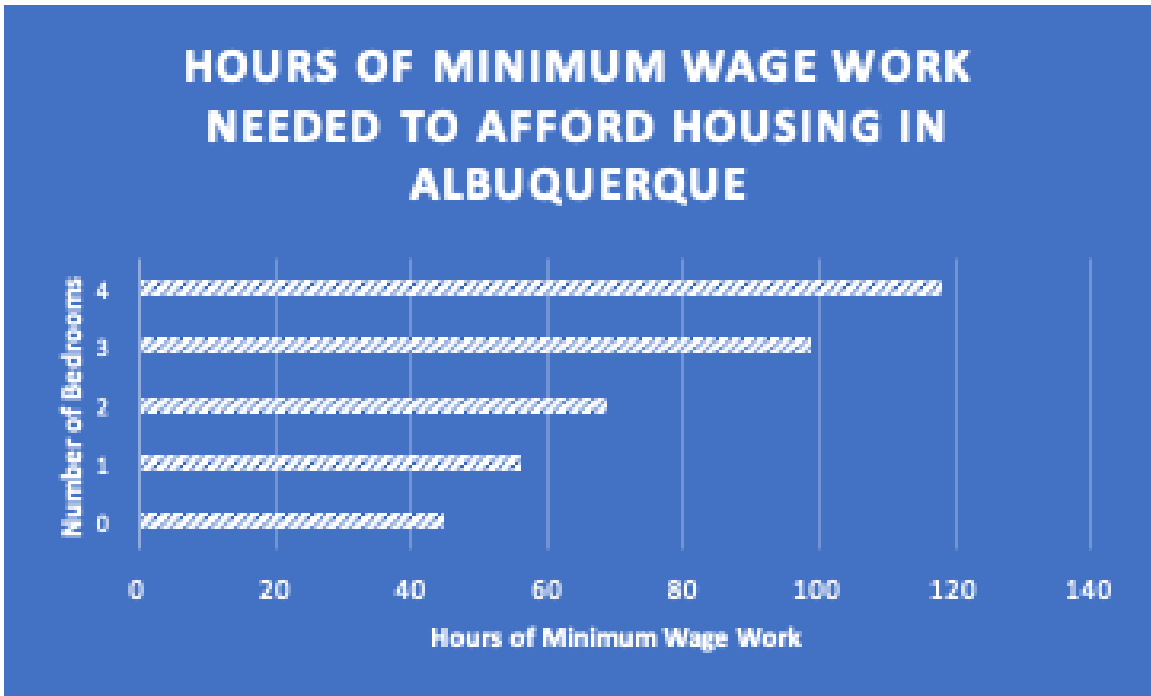
The image below shows the total number of families who experience homelessness in New Mexico. A total of 294 families experiences unsheltered conditions. (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness).

Figure 2: Homeless Families by State
 Source: US Interagency Council on Homelessness



Homelessness and affordable housing are inherently tied. 32% of New Mexico’s population are renters and the average renter earns \$14.37 an hour. In Albuquerque, the annual income needed to afford a two-bedroom house or apartment is \$37,600, meaning the average renter would have to work 2,617 hours to achieve that annual income. If you compare that with the minimum wage in Albuquerque, which is \$10.50, that means rent that is affordable a minimum wage is \$546 (National Low-Income Housing Coalition). Since March of 2020, rent has increased 31%, with the current median rent for a two bedroom at \$1,261 (Salviati, Chris, et al., 2021). Using the average hourly wage of renters in New Mexico (\$14.37), a full-time (40 hours a week) employee would gross \$2,299.20 a month, making a two-bedroom apartment 54% of their monthly income.

Figure 3: Hours of Work at Minimum Wage Needed to Afford Housing in Albuquerque
 Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition



6. Evaluation Team and Stakeholders

Melissa Binder *Team Lead:*

Dr. Binder has been a professor in the Department of Economics at the University of New Mexico since 1995. Her research and policy interest include labor market and educational equity, and among her publications are analyses of the motherhood wage gap, gender equity in faculty pay, and the socio-economic achievement gap in higher education. Dr. Binder founded the UNM evaluation lab, the goal of which is to train community evaluators and spread evaluation capacity to nonprofits throughout New Mexico.

Tracy Weaver *Executive Director:*

Saranam has benefitted from Tracy’s leadership and vision since its inception in 2004. Tracy Weaver oversees all program activities, strategy, fundraising, and the west side expansion project. Tracy Weaver has decades of experience working with homeless populations and is a Licensed Professional Counselor with a master’s degree in counseling psychology.

Jennifer Mullen *Director of Family Services:*

Jennifer helps Saranam families meet their goals and learn new strategies to manage daily challenges. Jennifer Mullen also ensures they have what they need for their households and education. During her career Jennifer Mullen has worked with adoptive families and counseled

emotionally disturbed adolescents. Jennifer Mullen has a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Pennsylvania and a master's in counseling from Webster University.

Ellen Shepherd *Director of Continuous Improvement:*

Ellen Shepherd tracks client data and Saranam's measures of success to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. Ellen Shepherd has a bachelor's in computer science, an MBA in information systems and more than twenty years of experience in software development, software testing, and project management.

Hallie Brown *M.A candidate, Public Policy*

Hallie grew up in Edgewood, New Mexico and graduated from UNM in 2018 with degrees in Sociology and International Studies. After graduation, Hallie served as a Community Health Specialist in The Gambia with the United States Peace Corps, where she worked on a wide variety of health and nutrition projects. After being evacuated from her Peace Corps service due to COVID-19, Hallie began to work for the Village of Tijeras as the Deputy Clerk in April 2020. In August of 2020, she was promoted to Clerk/Manager role, where she is responsible for overseeing 6 municipal departments, grant writing and administration, financial management of the municipal budget, and promoting transparency in local government. Outside of school and work, Hallie enjoys spending time outside and soaking up the natural beauty of New Mexico.

Brisa Rodriguez *M.A candidate, Public Policy*

Brisa grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico and graduated from the University of New Mexico in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Spanish, minoring in Women Studies. As an evaluation lab fellow Brisa is looking forward to conducting collaborative evaluation with community organizations which aid people with disadvantages have access to opportunities and resources, they otherwise would not have access to. Brisa's research explores marginalized communities of color, economic development and how economic policy affects low economic sections of society.

The Saranam Team of Tracy Weaver, Jennifer Mullen, and Ellen Shepherd have partnered with the Evaluation Team are the appropriate stakeholders for looking into the Measures of Success (MOS) data. As this year's focus on alumni data is correlated to the services provided by Saranam and the outcome measures through the exit success of clients in the program shown through the ability to remain housed, employed, gain life skills, education, major barriers, and parenting skills.

7. Evaluation Activities and Timeline

September 2021- UNM Team observes Tuesday evening family activities and begins to develop evaluation questions and categories with Saranam.

October 2021- Receive excel file with data sets from organization, including participant demographics, measures of success upon exiting the program, reasons for homelessness upon entering the program, and class attendance information.

November 2021- UNM Team presents statement of work to Saranam and adapts statement of work as needed. UNM Team evaluates data provided by Saranam and identifies any other data needed to complete the evaluation and drafts initial evaluation plan. UNM Team works on data compilation.

December 2021- UNM Team prepares a presentation on evaluation plan for Saranam, and finalizes the evaluation plan, determines which categories of data will be analyzed for correlations. UNM Team reviews data received for completeness. Saranam finalizes and provides data needed by UNM Team.

January 2022- Prior to data analysis, UNM Team extracts individual attendance records from multiple excel spreadsheet tabs; joins attendance, client characteristics, and MOS records. UNM Team will develop a methodological approach to data analysis.

February 2022- UNM Team analyzes data for correlations using Excel, Stata, and R programming language and creates visual representations of these correlations.

March 2021- Deliver final report to Saranam.

8. Work Cited

Cecilia Hansen Löffstrand, & Kirsi Juhila. (2021). Transforming Worker–Client Identities: From Shelters to Housing First. *Social Inclusion*, 9(3), 214–222. <https://doi-org.libproxy.unm.edu/10.17645/si.v9i3.4273>

Fact Sheet: Housing First. (2016, April). National Alliance to End Homelessness. <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/housing-first-fact-sheet.pdf>

Fisher L, Robert. *Towards Self-Sufficiency: Evaluating a Transitional Housing Program for Homeless Families*. *Policy studies journal*. Vol28, 2000

Housing is Out of Reach. (2021, July 12). National Low Income Housing Coalition. <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/new-mexico>

Salviati, C., Popov, I., Warnock, R., & Szini, L. (2021, November 2). *Apartment List National Rent Report*. Apartment List. <https://www.apartmentlist.com/research/national-rent-data>

Tran, A.-D., Brown, M., & Cummings, C. (2021). Participant Engagement Strategies in a Housing First Randomized Trial. *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*, 23(1), 339–348.

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). (2019). *Homeless in New Mexico Statistics 2019. Homeless Estimation by State | US Interagency Council on Homelessness*. <https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/nm/>.

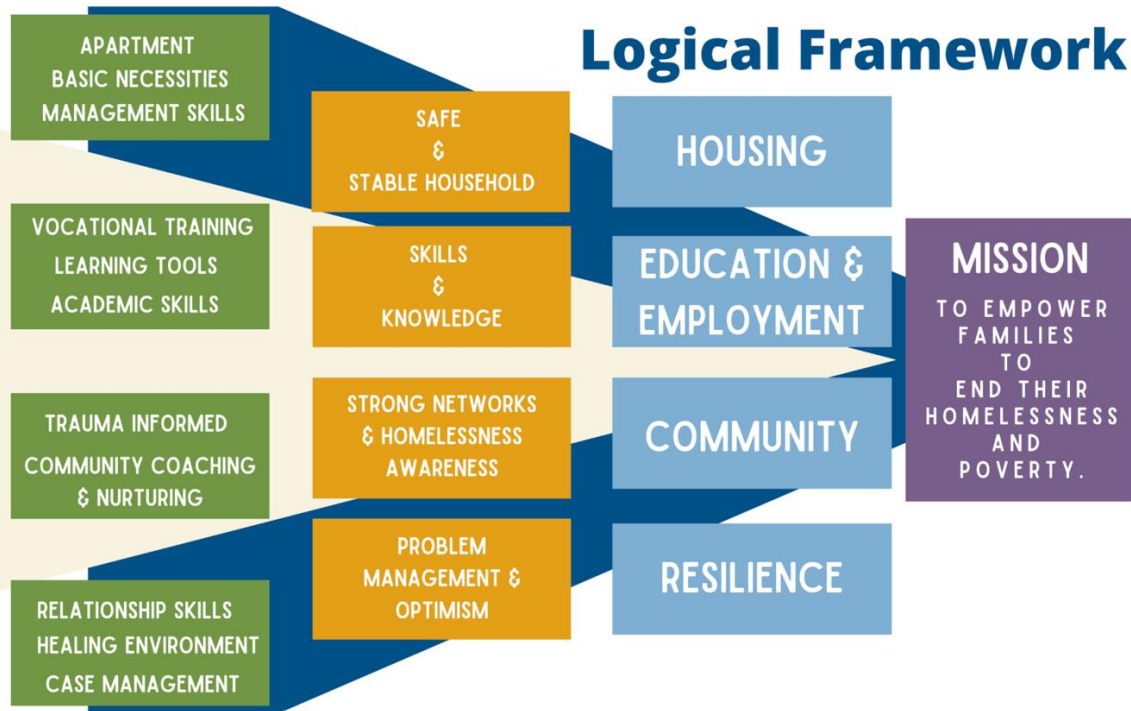
What is 2Gen? (2021, November 1). Ascend at the Aspen Institute.

<https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/two-generation/what-is-2gen/>

Writer, S. J. N. R. (2020, January 10). *NM's rise in homelessness highest in the nation.*

Albuquerque Journal. <https://www.abqjournal.com/1408348/nms-rise-in-homelessness-tops-nation-hud-reports-27-increase-in-one-year.html>

Appendix A: Logic Model



Appendix B: Measures of Success working document used to determine success.

[Saranam Measures of Success Working doc.pdf](#)

Saranam Measures of Success- working doc

#1+ 3 other measures

1. **Housing:** Housed on exit (see exit summary)
2. **Education** – client significantly improved ??? their academics
 - a. **Got GED**
 - b. **High School Diploma**
 - c. **Certificate**
 - d. **Degree**
 - e. **Improved a course placement on accuplacer???**
 - f. **Passed at least one class at outside institution???**
 - g. “some post secondary education”
3. **Employment:** employed on exit (want to begin keeping data on actual earnings pre-post, sustainability of employment?)
 - a. **Income**
 - b. **In vocation**
 - c. Plan
 - d. Temp/perm
 - e. PT/FT
 - f. Benefits/without
 - g.
4. **Life Skills Management:** Client and Staff identify top three needed life skills. improvements and client makes significant improvement in 2/3 life skills
5. **Major Barriers Addressed:** Staff identify 1-3 major barriers. 2/3 have significant improvement in or have been resolved. (OR SUBTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY?) (HOW CAN WE CHANGE THESE IF NOT IN LS?)
6. **Parenting/Children:** Client and Staff identify top three needed parenting skills. improvements and client makes significant improvement in 2/3 parenting skills
7. **Community** – social capital, network