

2016-2017 Evaluation Plan for CLNkids



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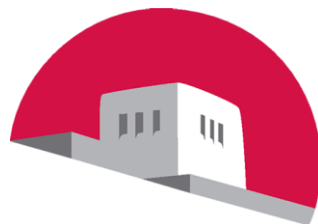


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1. Introduction

CLNkids is non-profit organization based in Albuquerque, New Mexico that provides early childhood education services for homeless children under the age of six. Through a combination of early childhood education and parent support services, the organization helps to lift families out of homelessness. CLNkids has returned for the second year of the evaluation lab to continue to develop client tracking, outcome measure processes, and internal evaluation capacity.

The 2016-2017 CLNkids Evaluation Team is composed of two research fellows, Matt Crockett and Gavin Leach, a mentor from the UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER), Julian Baca, and CLNkids' retiring Executive Director Angela Merkert and incoming Executive Director, Tammy Hanks.

Matt will graduate from UNM in December 2016 with a BA in economics, after which he plans to pursue doctoral studies in economics. He has returned for this year's evaluation after working as a research fellow with CLNkids in the first iteration of the Evaluation Lab.

Gavin is a doctoral student in Organization, Information, and Learning Sciences at UNM. He received BA in marketing from the Anderson School of Management, an MA from the Communication and Journalism Department and has six years of experience in the real estate industry. Currently, he is a part-time instructor in the Communication and Journalism Department and is a part of the community engagement team at UNM. His research interests include organizational communication, instructional design and professional evaluation.

At BBER, Julian Baca assists clients in local and state government and in the private and non-profit sectors with their data analysis and economic research needs. Julian's projects have included an assessment of the public school capital outlay process, and an economic impact study for small business lending and locally targeted equity investment activities in New Mexico.

2. Context

CLNkids serves homeless families with young children. While the circumstances surrounding each family are unique, there are underlying community conditions in New Mexico that make the work of CLNkids especially pertinent. In particular, CLNkids aims to lessen the burden of poverty and homelessness experienced by single mothers.

US Census data reports that 33% of New Mexican children under the age of six live in poverty, more than 8 percentage points higher than the national average¹. Unfortunately, this poverty percentage increases at various city and community levels. According to New Mexico Community Data Collaborative (NMCDC) for 2016, between 39-58 % of children living in the south valley of Albuquerque are below the federal poverty line (see Figure 1).

One contributing factor to this high percentage of poverty is the number of births to unmarried mothers. The percentage of all births in the Albuquerque metro area to unmarried mothers is 70 – 86 % (see Figure 2). The ill effects of poverty and single parent households can be linked with homelessness².

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) provides data concerning homeless children in the U.S. According to AIR New Mexico ranks 46th in the country for child homelessness. This ranking is based on a composite score that includes the total number of homeless children, child well-being (early health problems, food security and educational proficiency reading and math), risks for child homelessness and the state's policy and planning for housing.

Another challenge faced by these disadvantaged communities is a lack of childcare. Many of the participants in the CLNkids program are single mothers who struggle to balance the demands of employment while providing effective day care. Further complicating this situation is the limited amount of space for children in highly rated facilities. The New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) provides a 5-star rating system for day care facilities based on quality of care, education and children to provider ratios. Figure 3 illustrates a ratio of the total capacity at CYFD licensed facilities services to the number of children under the age of six living in the area³. The blue star illustrates the percentage for four or five star facilities to children in the area. This means that the total capacity of day care facilities for parts of south Albuquerque covers only 30 % of the total number of children residing in that area. Moreover, only 8 % of the children in this same area have access to four or five star rated day care facilities. These numbers demonstrate the need for the services that organizations such as CLNkids provide. In each illustration, CLNkids is centrally located within these impacted areas as shown with the gold star designation.

¹ Source: 2015 American Fact Finder – US Census Bureau - <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

² Source: 2017 Housing and Urban Development (HUD Exchange website – Section 3 Homeless Families with Children

³ Source: New Mexico Community Data Collaborative - <http://nmcdc.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>

Figure 1: Percentage of children living below the federal Poverty level in small areas of Albuquerque

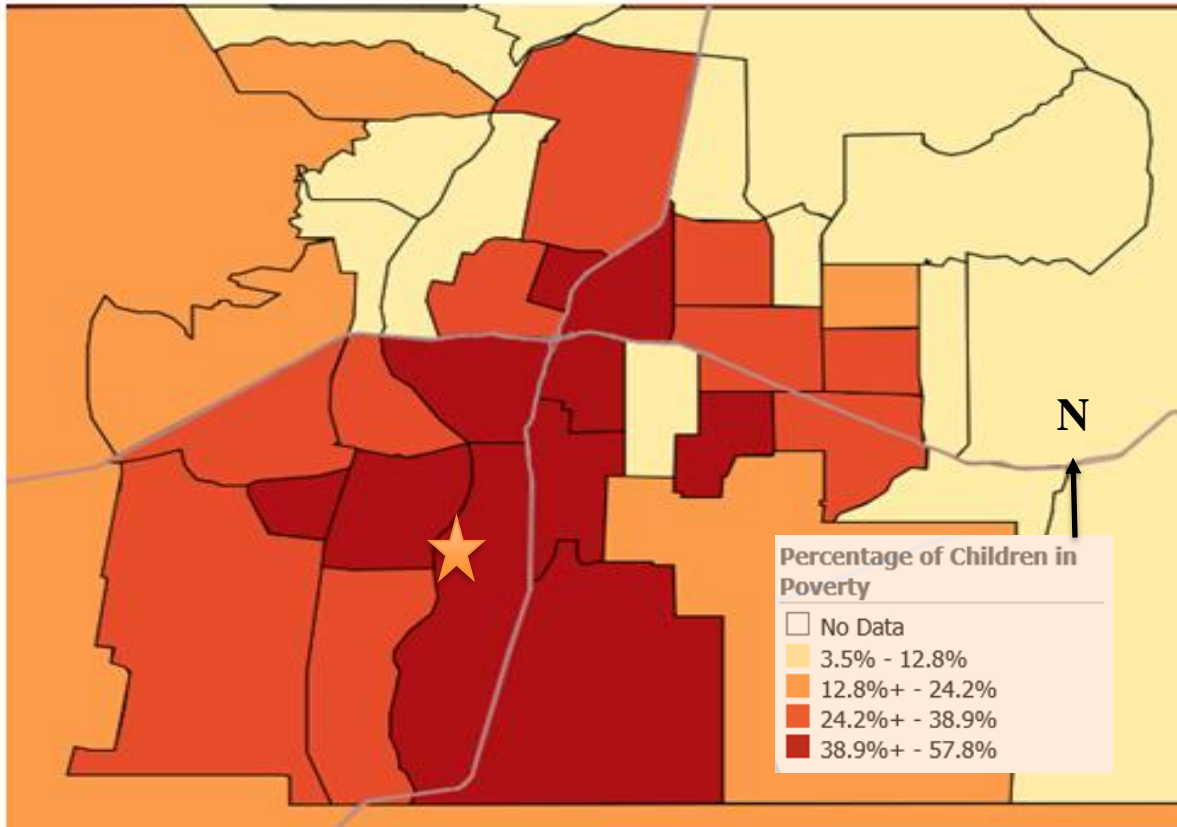


Figure 2: Percentage of births to unmarried mothers in small areas of Albuquerque

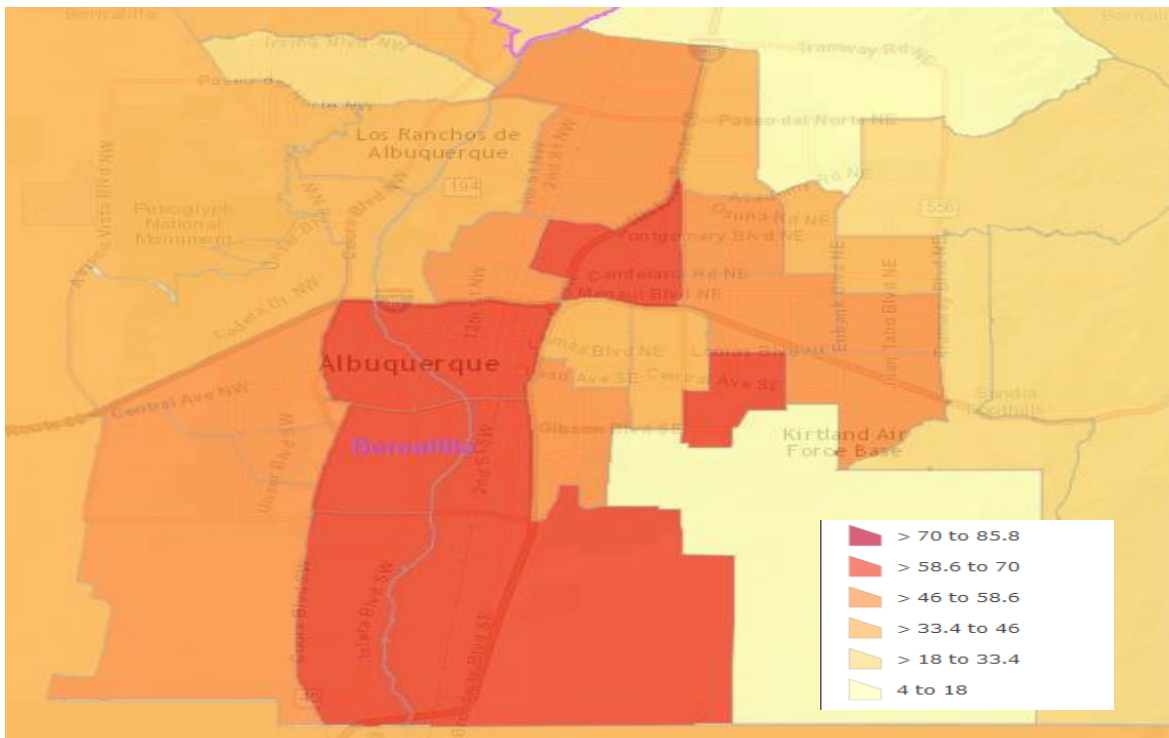
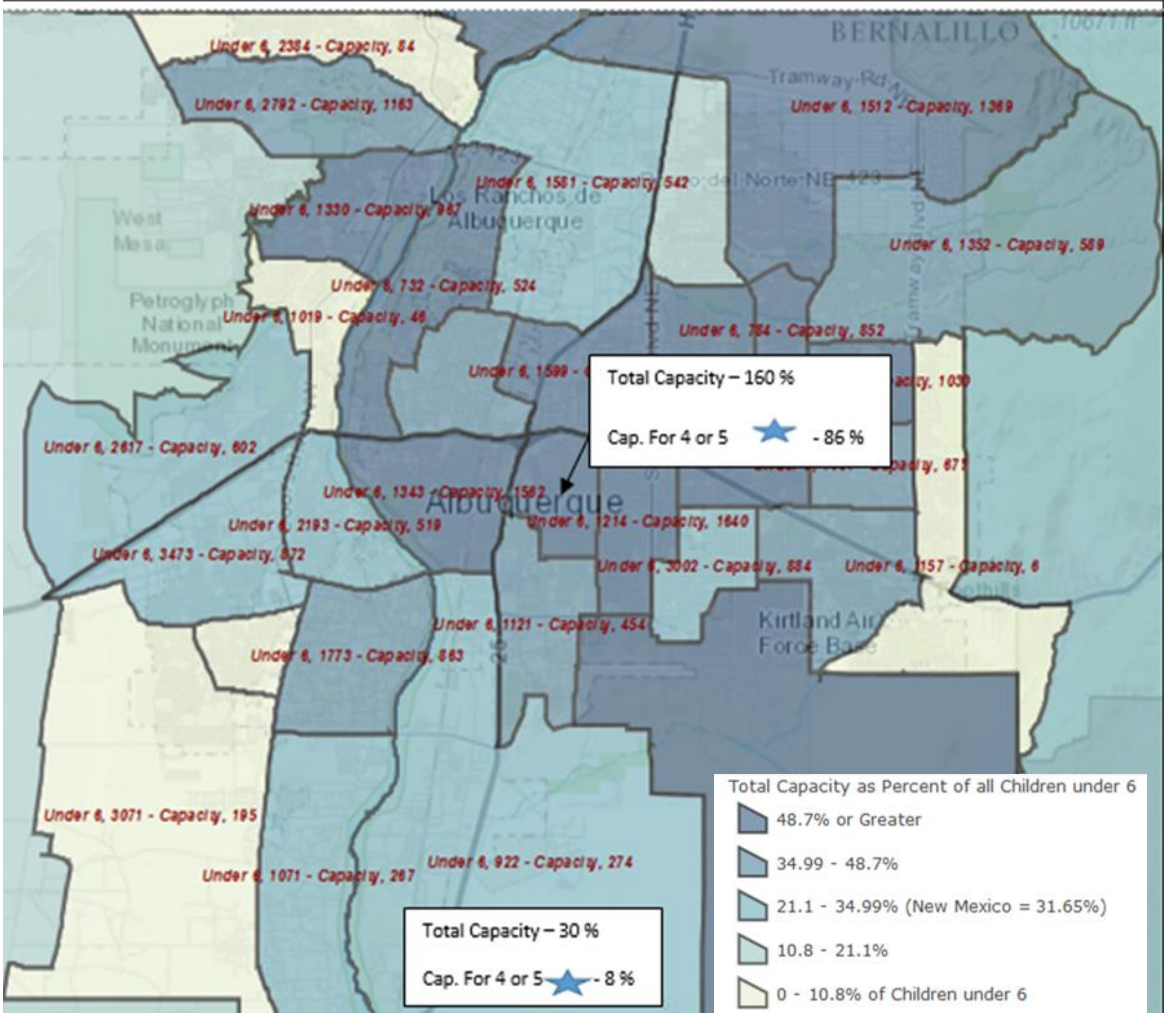


Figure 3: Ratio of places in licensed daycare facilities to number of children under age 6 in small areas of Albuquerque



3. Logic Model

The first step in this year's evaluation of CLNkids was to develop an organizational logic model. In September, the evaluation team met with CLNkids' executive director, data systems coordinator, case managers, and teachers to outline a first draft of the logic model. Constructing a logic model gave both the organization and the evaluation team an opportunity to understand the organization's workflow from start to finish. The logic model, presented below, will be used as a reference throughout the evaluation to keep work focused on the processes that are most vital to CLNkids.

A unique aspect of CLNkids' logic model is the split between children and parents. By separating the workflow into two separate yet collaborative processes, the logic model illustrates how children and parents develop essential life skills as they progress through the program in order to become a more stable and resilient family unit. These life skills include aspects of mental health, physical health, social skills, and general everyday skills that allow the family to better manage the ill effects of homelessness.

One of the most cited works on early childhood initiatives is based on the Perry Preschool experiment. Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Savelyev and Yavitz (2010), describe the long-term benefits of early childhood interventions (ECI) at the Perry Preschool Program in southeast Michigan. This study presents a compelling case of the positive impact that ECI's can have on children living in at risk environments. Those receiving the interventions were more likely to achieve higher levels of education, achieve higher incomes and commit fewer crimes. Two key elements in this program was investigating the impact of a one-year program and the weekly home visits (pg. 2). These two elements connect with the some of the educational program and social service initiatives provide by CLNkids. CLNkids is a nationally accredited facility by the National Association for the Education of Children (NAEYC) and has achieved a 5-star rating from the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) of New Mexico.

These findings support some of the activities stated in the short-term outcomes category of CLNkids' logic model. Connecting the findings of Heckman, et al. (2010) with the services of CLNkids provide a credible argument for the positive impact that early childhood interventions can have both in early childhood and into adulthood. Moreover, some of CLN Kids' core competencies (such as literacy and language development and individual and group play therapy) align with the concepts discussed in Heckman, et al. (2010).

Another important research article to consider is the discussion surrounding the Chicago Child-Parent Center (CPC) Program written by Reynolds, Temple, Robertson and Mann (2001). Similar to the work done at the Perry Preschool, all eligible children in CPC were randomly assigned to a treatment and control group.

The control group was placed in a participant alternative early childhood intervention program with similar services. When comparing the two groups the children in CPC had a higher rate of high school graduation, more secondary education, lower rates dropping out of high school and lower numbers of juvenile and violent arrests. This study is important to consider because of its focus on participants who live in inner city communities and “with high concentrations of neighborhood and family poverty” (pg. 2340).

Additionally, one of the foundational principles of CLNkids is their efforts in helping participants find housing. Obtaining stable housing is one of the long-term outcomes relating to the CLNkids logic model. The Department of Housing and Urban Development has created an initiative called the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program to provide financial assistance to community nonprofits in their efforts to “quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families”⁴. According to the research done by the CoC (2014) approximately 65 % of Albuquerque’s population that struggles with stable housing (those living in emergency, transitional housing or unsheltered) are households with at least one adult and one child. This statistic demonstrates the need for organizations such as CLNkids and the housing assistance that they provide. Locating and obtaining stable housing was a large component of our logic model discussion concerning long-term outcomes.

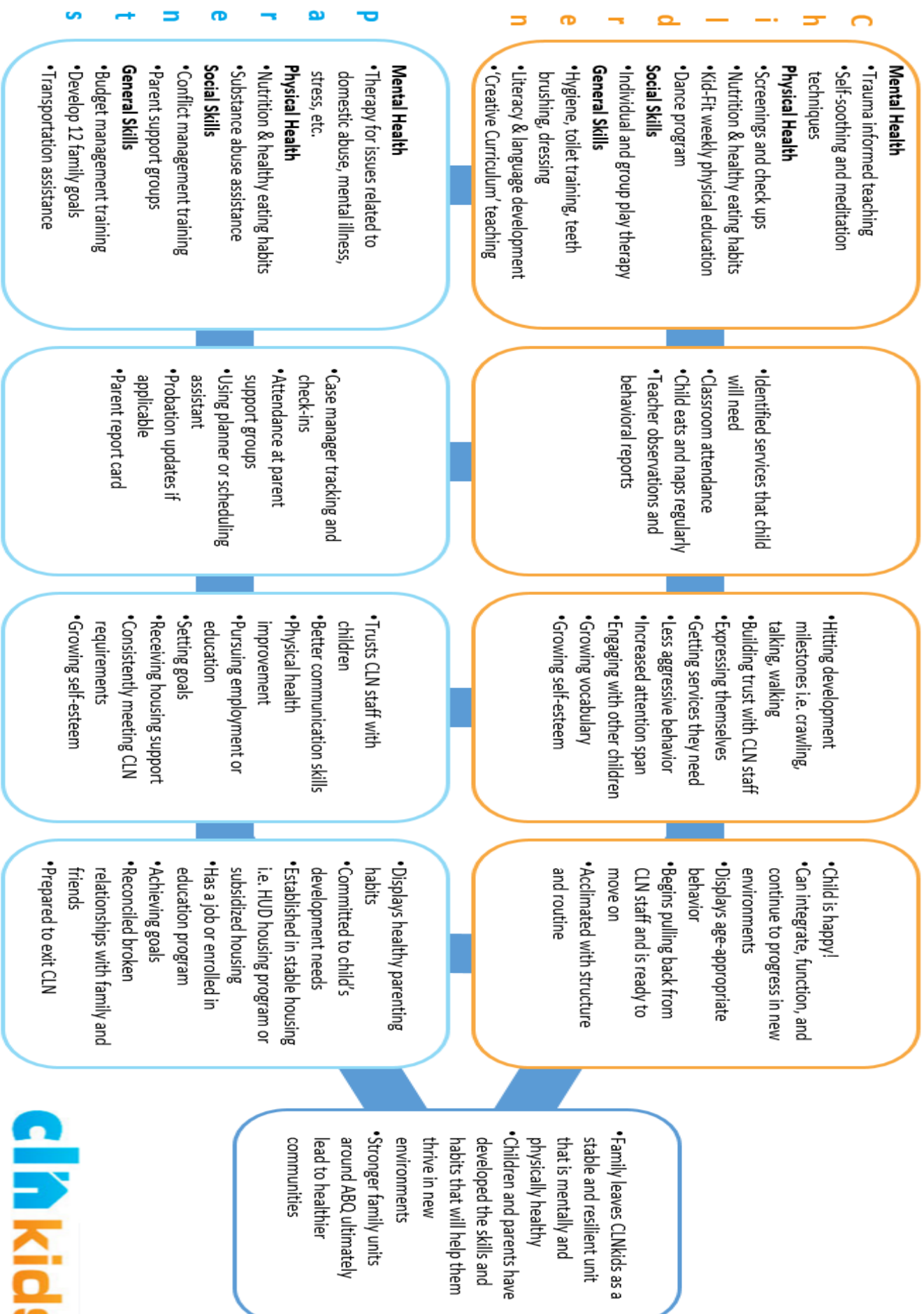
In 2014, The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) described the various characteristics associated with homeless. The following information is from the HUD Exchange website (HMIS 2007–2014; ACS 2006, 2012, 2013). Americans live in urban areas who struggle to obtain stable housing are “more likely to be in a minority group”. The percentage of women within this population increased by 2 % from 2007 to 2014. In addition to these concerns, “most sheltered adults in families with children were women and of all sheltered homeless children in families (314,877 children), 50.5 % were under the age of six”.

According to the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness (NMCEH) for 2015, 35 % of individuals in need of stable housing were females. However, 63 % of those females were adult victims of domestic violence. The NMCEH reports that 80 % of the female population state that domestic violence is the main cause of their first time homelessness. Sadly, many of these females experienced have been in foster care or homeless as a child. CLNkids is there to help break this cycle of homelessness.

These figures make for a compelling case for the need for services that CLNkids provides. The logic model (short and long-term outcomes) demonstrate the mission of CLNkids to serve this community of need. The data shows CLNkids is an important social service for minority mothers who are in need of supportive childcare and stable housing.

⁴ Source: Mission statement of CoC - <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/>

CLNKids Logic Model



4. Evaluation Plan

For the 2016-2017 Evaluation Lab, the evaluation team is working to expand upon the activities from last year's evaluation by helping to implement the recommendations from the previous evaluation, developing an organizational logic model, and assessing aspects of CLNkids' client intake process that were not addressed in the previous evaluation.

Last year's activities centered on an assessment of the organization's data collection, input, and analysis processes. The evaluation focused on answering the following three questions:

1. How can CLNkids use existing data to better measure client outcomes?
2. How can CLNkids' data be visually represented in a way that substantively conveys their work both internally to staff and the Board of Directors and externally to funders, the public, and the media?
3. How can CLNkids improve the data collection process in order to collect useful data and make it easier for clients and staff to share information about families' needs and progress?

After receiving the organization's client data, an analysis carried out to understand how the data set was constructed, what it consisted of, and what could be used to measure client outcomes. It quickly became clear that CLNkids' data set lacked the continuity and standardization necessary to measure all but a few basic client outcomes, such as time spent in the program or the housing arrangements upon leaving the program. Thus, the evaluation team concluded that in order to build a more robust and meaningful data set, the organization would need to refine their client entry and exit surveys, work more closely with clients to help them fill out important sections of the forms, and develop a brief progress survey for clients to fill out at specified increments. The recommendations used as a starting point for this year's evaluation that will ultimately work to refine CLNkids' data collection and analysis processes.

In addition to last year's recommendations, this evaluation will draw from insights gained while developing the logic model. After working through the logic model, it became clear that quantitatively tracking the progress of parents is particularly challenging for CLNkids. The case managers that work with parents rely on a combination of experience and qualitative observations to track the progress of their clients. While this type of tracking is essential to the case manager's work, it is difficult to convey to the organization's funding agencies and the local community. Thus, the evaluation team will focus more on tracking and quantifying the parents' progress through the program. The next step in the evaluation is thoroughly assess all of CLNkids' client intake and exit surveys, progress reports, and any other forms that are used to collect data on parents and children. Last year's evaluation team

carried out a brief assessment of the forms, but a more thorough assessment is necessary in order to identify the specific sections of the forms that are problematic.

After assessing CLNkids' data collection forms, the evaluation team will meet with CLNkids staff to discuss updates to the client intake and exit forms. There is considerable overlap between these forms and the Promise and HMIS forms required by CLNkids' sponsors. We will investigate the data collection options that CLNkids has relating to tracking the progress made by their clients. Presently the team has discussed two options. One is to remove areas of overlap from CLNkids' forms and making the forms more accessible to clients. The other is to create a more simplified, user-friendly form that contains all the essential data. CLNkids would be able to collect all the necessary data and then have staff transcribe the information into the required forms. Both efforts aim at simplifying the data input process while increasing their accuracy.

The evaluation team can then suggest revisions to the client progress report to reflect a client's progress toward achieving their goal of stable housing. What 12 goals? The current client progress report is quarterly form that filled out by case managers. Considering that most of CLNkids' clients enrolled in the program for an average of 4 to 6 months, a quarterly progress report is not frequent enough to capture incremental progress. However, CLNkids staff believe that it would be too difficult to fill out the form on a more frequent basis, such as every one to two months. Therefore, the evaluation team will develop a very short form in line with the draft form that was included in last year's evaluation.

CLNkids collects a great deal of qualitative data, which they use to tailor services to the client's needs. Unfortunately, it is difficult to aggregate and analyze qualitative data, thus limiting the organization's ability to track clients. This evaluation will collect quantitative data for tracking client progress and standardized qualitative data that will allow the organization to compare clients. The question that we would like to answer is to decide what the best process would be to track the progress made by CLNkids participants relating to their housing status.

Finally, the evaluation team will work to integrate changes to physical data collection and input processes into the organization. CLNkids is considering investing in the 'Procare Child Care Software', a tool used to manage databases and maintain child records. The software will allow CLNkids to address many of the recommendations from the previous evaluation by streamlining the organization's data management system. Thus, the final phase of the evaluation will be to assess how the 'Procare Child Care Software' can address the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. We will base our assessment on our meetings with CLNkids staff to ensure that we are addressing larger organizational concerns and not just those related to data management. For example, the data collection system must not impose an undue burden on staff. The evaluation team's goal is to identify ways to identify and simplify specific processes that hinder quality data collection.

The evaluation team will work to answer the following three questions that summarize the evaluation plan presented above, as well as any additional questions that may arise:

1. How can CLNkids refine and streamline their data collection processes in order to allow for meaningful and efficient data collection?
2. How will the Procure Child Care Management Software make data input and tracking more efficient?
3. In what ways can CLNkids utilize qualitative and quantitative data to substantiate their work both internally and externally?

5. Timeline

August 2016 – Evaluation Team and Organization Meetings

September 2016 – Logic Model Meetings and 1st Draft of Logic Model

October 2016 – Logic model development and validation; preliminary discussion on current year's evaluation activities; present first draft of evaluation plan.

November 2016 – Meet with CLNkids Executive Director to discuss and refine evaluation plan.

December 2016 – Collect tracking reports, forms, and data collection tools currently used for child and parent progress; finalize 2016-2017 evaluation plan.

January 2016 – Assess and cross reference tracking reports, forms, and data collection tools currently used for child and parent tracking.

February 2016 – Finalize form assessment; work with case managers, therapist, and teachers to develop new data collection and reporting processes.

March 2017 – 1st draft of evaluation report.

April 2017 – Revised evaluation report.

May 2017 – Final report.

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Appendix A - Additional questions

1. How can CLNkids refine their data collection processes in order to allow for robust data collection?
2. Where is there overlap in client intake forms?
3. Which data fields do clients consistently not fill out? Do these fields need to report to HUD or HMIS? Can they be removed from the forms?
4. Which outside surveys or questionnaires can CLNkids implement to better measure client outcomes?
5. How can client progress reports more closely reflect a client's progress on their twelve goals?
6. How will improving CLNkids' data collection and analysis processes fit into the organizational logic model?

Appendix B - Literature Review

Heckman, J. J., Moon, S. H., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P., & Yavitz, A. (2010). A new cost-benefit and rate of return analysis for the Perry Preschool Program: A summary (No. w16180). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Savelyev and Yavitz (2010) describe the long-term benefits of early childhood interventions (ECI) at the Perry Preschool Program in southeast Michigan. This study presents a compelling case relating to the positive impact that ECI can have on children living in at risk environments. Specifically, this study examined the effect that a two-year ECI would have on disadvantaged children age 3 who had low IQ scores and socioeconomic status. Children were randomly assigned to participate in the programs determined by a toss of a coin. The program included weekly home visits coupled with a 2.5-hour preschool program. The curriculum involved a series of reflective learning activities that support the child's cognitive and socio-emotional development.

Follow up interviews were conducted when the study participants were 15, 19, 27 and 40 years old. The main focus of these interviews was to explore whether children in the program experienced better outcomes with respect to "life-cycle trajectories including schooling, economic activity, marital life, child rearing and incarceration" (Heckman, et al. ,2010; pg.2), compared with children in the control group. Heckman and his co-authors found that program participants did better than the control group in many dimensions. They moved through grade level more quickly, achieved higher levels of education, committed fewer crimes and depended less on social services such as welfare and food stamp programs.

Heckman and his co-authors describe the significant impact (increased cognitive skills, and IQ scores) can be increased within one year of intervention. Based on a series of measurements including income, education and criminal record the authors come to this conclusion by interviewing the original participants to measure the effectiveness of the program. Although the positive long-term outcome was positive the cognitive gains (higher IQ's and standardized test scores) faded over time. This tells us that although the cognitive impact of these program decreases over time that one year of early childhood intervention has a large positive impact on adulthood.

This study offers an encouraging perspective on the positive impact that early childhood invention program can have on adulthood. A connection between the Perry Preschool Program and CLNkids can be made because CLNkids offers many of the same services (nutrition programs, group play therapy, and literacy & language development).

Barnett, W. S. (2011). Effectiveness of early educational intervention. *Science*, 333(6045), 975-978.

Barnett (2011) describes the potential impact that early childhood interventions can have on long-term adult development. Barnett (2011) compares the Perry Preschool Programs, the Abecedarian study and early Head Start programs to understand the differences in early childhood intervention effectiveness. This review takes a critical approach to initiatives set forth early educational intervention.

Barnett (2011) evaluates the effectiveness of each approach. Barnett (2011) illustrates the specific programs that result in a positive impact to the transition from early childhood to adulthood. Barnett's evaluation states that direct instruction, and classroom experiences can be some of the most effective early educational interventions for encouraging positive adult outcomes. Although this findings are encouraging for organizations such as CLNkids, more research is needed to make any definitive claims.

Similar results were found in other areas (North Carolina and Jamaica). This connection with other areas may increase the reliability of early educational programs and initiatives. Moreover, Barnett (2011) illustrates the positive impact that ECI's on education and financial achievement and the cognitive and social-emotional benefits.

There are three similarities between the programs Barnett studied and the services offered by CLNkids. First, CLNkids monitors the child's development milestones (crawling, walking and talking). Second, CLNkids reports on the child's ability to interact positively with other children in the program. Third, CLNkids measures the increase in the child's self-efficacy (growing vocabulary and self-esteem).

Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2001). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest: A 15-year follow-up of low-income children in public schools. *Jama*, 285(18), 2339-2346.

Reynolds, Temple, Robertson and Mann (2001) explored the socioeconomic impact of a Child-Parent Center (CPC) had on urban low-income children in Chicago, Illinois. Participants at the CPC were compared with a similar early childhood curriculum. When comparing the two groups the children in CPC had a higher rate of high school graduation, more secondary education, lower rates dropping out of high school and lower numbers of juvenile and violent arrests. This study is important to consider because of its focus on participants who live in inner city communities and "with high concentrations of neighborhood and family poverty" (pg. 2340). This study's findings are similar to existing literature that programs such as the CPC and the Perry Preschool program improve participant's levels of education and lifelong income while decreasing incarceration rates and reliance on social services. (Barnett, 2011; Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Savelyev and Yavitz, 2001).

This study presents another compelling case for the potential positive impact that an early childhood education program can have on disadvantaged youth. Reynolds et al. (2001) concludes their argument by stating that one of the most effective strategies for improving education and social outcomes is through early childhood education initiatives. This conclusion aligns with the services provided by CLNkids as it relates to their childhood development programs such as play therapy, early childhood curriculum and childcare facilities for low-income individuals.