

# CASE MANAGEMENT

## AT HOMELESS CHILDREN'S NETWORK

Findings from July 2024 to June 2025



HOMELESS CHILDREN'S  
NETWORK

This report was prepared by Indigo Cultural Center as part of an independent evaluation of the Case Management Program. The perspectives and interpretations presented here are those of the evaluators and are not intended to represent the official views of Homeless Children's Network.

Detailed information about Indigo Cultural Center, Homeless Children's Network, the Case Management program, and the literature guiding this report are available at the end of this report in the section, *Background and Context*.

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*HCN's Case Managers at HCN's Fillmore office.*

# Introduction

## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report was to evaluate the Case Management program at Homeless Children’s Network (HCN). HCN’s Case Management program provides culturally attuned services to marginalized families who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability, facing displacement, and/or experiencing trauma—including domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and/or systemic violence—via linkages to referrals and resources. This program adopts a holistic, trauma-informed, strength and resilience-based approach, focusing on emotional safety and empowerment as a means to facilitate clients’ growth and healing. HCN’s Case Management offers comprehensive services including housing-focused case management, building life skills, mental health, and routes to economic independence—all of which are crucial to building resilience and stability. Case Managers also provide resources and referrals for additional critical needs, such as support with accessing credit history; rental stability; legal support; social services; employment; addressing behavioral health issues that negatively impact housing stability; and access to permanently affordable housing, including applications for placement on appropriate wait lists.

### HCN’s Case Management Performance Objectives for the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year

HCN’s Case Management program achieved performance goals.

This year, the Case Management program:

| Objective  | Actual   | Status             |
|--|--|--------------------|
| Support 18 ESG Case Management Clients with housing needs. | Supported 33 ESG Case Management Clients with housing needs. | Objective Exceeded |

The Case Management program exceeded performance objectives by serving 33 households under the ESG Case Management Contract, providing case management to support housing, healing and resilience among youth and families in San Francisco.

*Detailed information about HCN’s Case Management program’s achievement of contracted performance metrics on page 4.*

## COLLABORATIVE PROCESS AND PARTICIPANTS

Together, with HCN, Indigo Cultural Center evaluated the impact of the Case Management program this year. In line with a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) rooted in racial equity, HCN's staff, including the HCN Case Management Leadership team, collaborated with the Indigo Cultural Center team on evaluation design, survey development, data collection, and the interpretation of quantitative and qualitative findings.

The current evaluation explores HCN's Case Management program in the 2024-2025 fiscal year. This evaluation includes the experiences, perceptions, and growth/change experienced by clients.

In addition, we explored Case Managers' own perceptions of what contributes to their ability to provide meaningful and effective support for clients. Specifically, this evaluation posed the following **research questions** to guide our exploration:

- What is the reach of HCN's Case Management services?
- What is the impact of HCN's Case Management Services?
- What supports the Case Managers' success?

Case Management clients participated in a survey between May and June of 2025. The survey was available both online and via paper in Spanish and English. A total of 19 clients participated in the survey. Clients included parents/caregivers, family members, and child-free individuals. Over half of the participants identified as Black (53%), followed by Latine (26%), white (11%) and multiracial (10%). In addition, the majority of participants identified as women (84%).

In addition to clients, the HCN Case Managers also participated in the evaluation by joining a focus group in May 2025. The HCN Case Management team includes four (4) Case Managers and a Clinical Service Specialist who supervises the team. Administrative data tracked by the HCN Case Management team is also included in this evaluation.



# Evaluation Findings

## WHAT IS THE REACH OF HCN'S CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES?

A key goal of the present evaluation is to describe the reach of HCN's Case Management Services in the 2024-2025 fiscal year. This year, the goal of HCN's Case Management program was to provide ESG Case Management services to at least 18 clients. ESG Case management refers to the provision of support services to individuals and families who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness through programs funded by the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program. These services are designed to help people regain stability in permanent housing. **HCN exceeded their objective and provided ESG Case Management to 33 clients this year.**

| HCN's Case Management Program Performance Objectives |            |            |           |
|--|------------|------------|-----------|
| Performance Objective                                | Goal       | Achieved   | % to Goal |
| Number of ESG Case Management Clients                | 18 clients | 33 clients | 183%      |

At the start of HCN's Case Management services, a service plan is co-created to identify the primary and secondary goals the client will be working towards with guidance and aid from their Case Managers throughout the process. The category of goals include a broad range of options and are presented in the list below. Across all clients this fiscal year, 283 primary and secondary goals were identified. The most commonly identified goal across all clients was housing, which made up about 30% of the goals identified this fiscal year.

- Housing
- Mental health support
- Substance Use
- Family support groups
- Employment
- Legal support
- Child care/afterschool programming
- Food resources
- Domestic violence support
- Senior support
- Healthcare

Though their primary objective was to provide ESG case management services, HCN's offering of multiple, integrated services expands the program's reach. These other programs—all provided by HCN— included HCN's Ma'at Program, General City-Wide Mental Health/EPST, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, Community Mental Health, Entre Nosotros, and Black Birthing Health Initiative. Because of these integrations, HCN was able to provide services to 87 total clients throughout the year (including those served under ESG). **Over 70% of the clients who participated in our survey reported participating in both HCN's Case Management and another HCN program or services. We learned from our focus group conversations with case managers that when case management services are integrated within HCN, the Case Managers can partner and collaborate with their fellow HCN therapists and staff members to provide wrap-around assistance for clients.** Additional information about the impact of client engagement with multiple HCN services and supports is explored in the sections below.

Across all clients served by HCN's Case Management, there is a pattern of continuous client engagement. Over 81% of HCN's Case Management clients were categorized as "long-term clients." In fact, on average, clients reported partnering with their Case Manager for one year, though some reported more than two years of working with the HCN Case Management program.

This sustained involvement is noteworthy given that client continued engagement is a common challenge faced by Case Managers and that time limits are placed on case management in many systems, making it a short-term, transitional service (e.g., those funded under Medicaid; services average around 3 to 6 months or up to 12 months for intensive services; Knox et al., 2022; Newcomer et al., 1997; Weightman et al., 2023). Thus, HCN's Case Management engagement of one year, two years, and longer marks a significant shift in client engagement. We explore factors that contribute to this continued engagement in the sections below.



## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF HCN'S CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES?

Together, HCN Case Managers and clients worked toward achieving their goals established in their co-created services plan through the identification of resources and support. Utilizing administrative data provided by HCN, we present the resources and support utilized by clients organized in four categories: essential basic needs, wellbeing, parenting, and professional development. The table below provides additional details on the specific supports utilized by clients.

- Over 71% of clients demonstrated a critical need of housing as it was named as the primary support utilized by clients in the basic needs category and across all categories examined. This basic need was frequently accompanied by clients also seeking food and financial resources.
- Clients also worked toward connecting with resources to enhance their wellbeing. Specifically, mental health services were the most identified wellbeing resource.
- For services that help parenting, clients primarily reported working toward child care resources and support that facilitated their understanding of child development.
- Though clients were less likely to seek resources for their professional development, about 40% of clients reported working toward employment services and assistance with their HCN Case Manager.

“

*I'm a single mother currently searching for a safe and affordable apartment for my daughter and me. It's been challenging to manage high rent and bills on my own, which is why I've been sharing living space with others. I'm hoping to find a place that fits within a reasonable budget, in a safe neighborhood, so my daughter can have a more stable environment. If there's any support or opportunity available through this network-whether it's affordable housing, rental assistance, or even connecting with someone trustworthy to share a space-it would truly make a difference for us.”*

-Case Management Client

”

| Percentage of Case Management clients Working Toward Utilizing Services and Supports            |              |
|---|--------------|
|   | % of clients |
| <b>Basic Needs</b> (clients utilized an average of 2.75 services in this category)              |              |
| Housing resources   | 71%          |
| Food resources  | 59%          |
| Financial resources   | 59%          |
| Healthcare Resources  | 35%          |
| Accessing public benefits   | 35%          |
| <b>Wellbeing</b> (clients utilized an average of 1.13 services in this category)                |              |
| Mental Health Services  | 41%          |
| Self-care resources   | 29%          |
| Peer networks or support groups   | 24%          |
| Services that helped you manage chronic conditions or disabilities                              | 12%          |
| <b>Parenting</b> (clients utilized an average of 1.31 services in this category)                |              |
| Childcare resources   | 41%          |
| Education about child development   | 41%          |
| Parenting resources   | 24%          |
| Custody-related support   | 18%          |
| <b>Professional Development</b> (clients utilized an average of 1.00 services in this category) |              |
| Employment  | 41%          |
| Legal support   | 24%          |
| Assistance in pursuing educational opportunities or degrees                                     | 18%          |
| Professional training   | 12%          |



By accessing these resources, and particularly when clients utilized multiple resources simultaneously, clients were able to make meaningful progress towards their goals. Specifically, among long-term clients who completed multiple check-ins throughout the year, **we found that 63% of clients reported not only making progress towards the goals they identified at the beginning of services, but also identifying additional new goals to contribute to their well-being and success.**

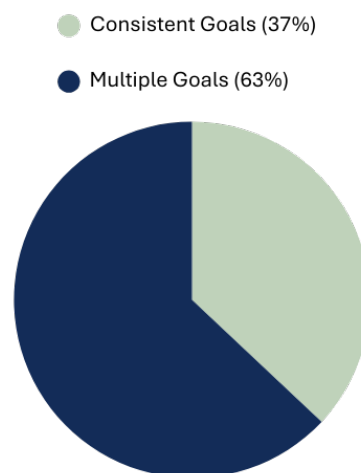
*A client shared, "[My Case Manager] makes himself available and truly listens, which makes a big difference in how comfortable and supported I feel. That sense of genuine connection and trust encourages me to stay engaged and committed to my goals."*

*Another client noted, "I adore this program and how it has not only uplifted my child and me but also the community. I trust my Case Manager. She has a good heart and keeps me on track with my goals."*

*A Case Manager offered, "[It's about] making sure that you schedule with them as many meetings as possible to fulfill their goals and stuff, and that's a concern for them, because they have to trust you to where they know that you are there for them. And that's what a lot of our clients are saying. And that nobody ever gets back to them. So for us to constantly going back to them and responding to their needs helps out a lot for them to trust us."*

Importantly, for the 37% of clients who worked toward the same goals throughout the 2024-2025 fiscal year, this does not mean that no progress was made. Instead, it is likely that the challenges faced by these clients required a longer offering of services or extenuating life circumstances limited their ability to shift situations. In addition, it is important to note that there has been a city-wide reduction in resources available in San Francisco. For instance, HCN was part of a Diaper Bank facilitated by the YMCA which provided diapers of all sizes and wipes for the families in our program. The YMCA discontinued the diaper bank due to loss of funding, resulting in HCN's clients no longer being able to access this resource.

### HCN Case Management Client Goal Progress and Attainment



The Case Managers explained that these types of reductions make it difficult to meet client needs quickly due to long wait times or limited availability of outside resources, including for shelter and housing placements, rental assistance, utilities, move-in costs and furnishings for new housing, transportation, and school supplies, among other needs.

Clients were extremely satisfied with HCN's Case Management services. In fact, we find that:



- Were satisfied with their Case Manager's ability to meet with them in person.
- Were satisfied with their Case Manager's ability to connect them with resources.



- Were satisfied with the frequency of contact their Case Manager maintained with them.
- Agreed that their case management services were helpful.
- Would refer a friend to HCN's Case Management.

## WHAT MADE CLIENT IMPACTS POSSIBLE?

We found that two key elements contributed to clients' reported impacts and satisfaction. This included the deep, trusting relationship between the Case Manager and the client and the way that HCN's Case Management services are connected to multiple and integrated services and resources. We provide more details about these two drivers of impact in the subsections below.

### Success Catalyst 1: Strong, Culturally Responsive Relationships are a Key Catalyst for Client Success

A key element that contributed to client success were the strong relationships the Case Managers shared with their clients that are culturally responsive, safe, trusting, reliable, and hopeful. These deep relationships are seen as a culture of care by the HCN Case Management Team. Indeed, we found that clients reported high levels of relationship quality with their Case Managers. Clients completed a shortened version of the Revised Working Alliance Inventory (Mallinckrodt & Tekie, 2015). **On average, clients reported a strong alliance with their Case Managers, an average report of 3.72 out of 4.00.**

One client shared, *"I don't have people, [my Case Manager] is MY PEOPLE!!! Perfect match!!!"*

Clients described their relationships with HCN Case Managers as **reliable, compassionate, safe, trusting, hopeful, patient, flexible, respectful of their culture and values, and empowering**—with every participant ‘strongly agreeing’ that these characteristics were present in their relationship with their Case Manager. These qualities were not only recognized by clients, but also echoed by Case Managers themselves, who emphasized the **importance of reliability through consistent, in-person contact, and compassion rooted in genuine care for client success.**

**A central driver of these strong bonds was cultural responsivity.** Every client reported that having a Case Manager who understood and respected their cultural background and lived experiences was important to their relationship and their success. This alignment fostered trust, reduced fear of judgment, and made it easier for clients to be open about their needs. Case Managers noted that shared perspectives, which were supported by HCN’s Afri-centric approach helped them provide services that were relevant, safe, and attuned to clients’ broader contexts, including community ties, systemic barriers, and historical trauma. For some, this meant acting as a cultural and linguistic bridge to ensure referrals and resources felt both accessible and safe.

A client shared,  
*“to me it’s important because sometimes as a Latina I feel discriminated and not listen to”.*

Another shared,  
*“The representation matters as it makes me feel more comfortable while navigating these difficult times in my life.”*

A Case Manager noted,  
*“For me to be able to provide services in [their native language] gives my client a sense that there is actually some help out there that they can reach out to, and that’s the role that I play when it comes to getting those clients connected to certain services. There is sometimes a fear factor of reaching out because of their ability to speak English. So I play that middle person.”*

These trusting relationships not only promoted engagement but also helped clients feel less isolated, with many viewing their Case Manager as part of their own community. The reassurance of having a consistent, trusted person to rely on encouraged long-term connection, with many clients remaining engaged for one or more years. **Clients repeatedly shared that the support they received was meaningful, relevant, and impactful—directly improving their stability, well-being, and connections to community resources.**



## Success Catalyst 2: The Connection with Multiple and Integrated Services Contributes to Client Success

Another key element that contributed to client success was that HCN's Case Management not only has established connections with multiple city-wide organizations, but also has an array of comprehensive services available within HCN. HCN has expertise in supporting clients with complex behavioral and social needs. HCN's integrated suite of programs offer clients mental health support, substance use treatment and recovery support, and support groups.

Clients repeatedly emphasized that the guidance and resources they received from Case Managers genuinely improved their lives, fostering resiliency and motivating them to remain engaged. Together, these external linkages and internal wrap-around supports strengthened trust, improved service relevance, and fostered the kind of sustained engagement that makes long-term progress possible.

Importantly, we learned that **impact was particularly amplified when clients accessed multiple HCN services in addition to case management**; these clients often remained connected for the longest periods (two years or more). Case Managers noted that multi-service engagement creates a wrap-around system of care, where staff can coordinate quickly, identify needs early, and provide referrals that feel both relevant and timely. HCN's Case Managers also engage in a 'whatever it takes' approach, working strategically to ensure clients receive the support necessary to thrive. Close collaboration between program staff helps sustain contact with harder-to-reach clients and ensures Case Managers have a more complete understanding of each client's circumstances, allowing them to adjust supports or approaches as needed. A case manager says,

*"I have a mother that I'm supporting and her kiddo is receiving therapy services from one of our [HCN] clinicians. We are always in collaboration with extra support. If there is something the clients in need of the clinician could be on the lookout, and, you know, vice versa."*

“

*Having a Case Manager who is part of the Ma'at program has made a significant difference in my life. It's reassuring and empowering to be supported by someone who understands and respects my cultural background, values, and lived experiences. The consistency of his weekly check-ins shows genuine care, and I appreciate that more than words can express. Being part of a community that is culturally sensitive and aware creates a sense of belonging. It's a space where I don't have to explain who I am or what I've been through, because the understanding is already there. That kind of support not only helps me navigate challenges, but also strengthens my confidence as a parent and individual.*

-Case Management Client


”

Another Case Manager described,

*“[When clients are using multiple HCN supports] it helps us to see how we could best support what their current situation, if we need to adjust how we approach our communication or our services with them, or maybe we should we just give them some grace? You know, sometimes that's just needed as well. So yeah, creating this like wraparound support”*

## WHAT SUPPORTS THE CASE MANAGERS' SUCCESS?


Finally, we explored the resources available to the HCN Case Managers that support their success in serving their clients. Case Managers only identified resources inside HCN as contributing to their provision of services. Specifically, the Case Managers identified three key areas that support their work: balanced case loads, workplace connections, and professional development opportunities.



**Balanced caseloads** were overwhelmingly voiced by the Case Managers as the primary mechanism that enabled them to continue providing supportive and effective case management services to their clients. The Case Managers further explained that HCN's balanced caseloads (with a maximum of 18 clients) prevented their sense of burnout and allowed them to deeply connect and care about their clients. The Case Managers spoke about this with conviction as many of them had negative previous professional experiences in other organizations. A national survey in 2023 found that the majority of Case Managers supporting clients experiencing homelessness managed between 40 and 75 active clients simultaneously (Moses, 2023).



**Workplace connections** were also highlighted by the Case Managers. The Case Managers highlighted the mentorship and supervision they received from Case Management leadership as deeply supportive and helpful. Specifically, that leaders in the program provided safe spaces for honest reflection and feedback about caseloads and diligently checked in on staff wellbeing—not just performance. In addition, the Case Managers highlighted **opportunities to connect with their fellow Case Managers and other HCN staff** as important to supporting their work. Specifically, spaces like in-person meetings and retreats where staff can come together were highlighted as ways to encourage staff connections. The HCN Case Managers noted that in these spaces the impact of their work is made visible and their sense of shared mission is enhanced.



**Professional development opportunities** provided by HCN were noted as motivating in the Case Managers' provision of services. The Case Managers described getting to engage in frequent and meaningful training opportunities offered every other month or more. These trainings supported the Case Managers to both understand therapeutic approaches and enhance how they engage with their clients. Beyond this, the Case Managers noted that HCN encourages their requests for additional training topics that would support their role.

# Implications

Findings from this study emphasize the importance of HCN's Case Management services in not only connecting clients with resources to support their basic needs particularly housing, as well as wellbeing, parenting, and professional development, but also in cultivating a sense of community and wrap-around support. Based on the findings from this study, there are several implications for both policy and practice.

First, we found that a key contributor to client success were the culturally attuned relationships shared by the client and their Case Manager. Important to that relationship was alignment in lived experiences, language, and culture. Thus, a key implication from this study is that more organizations providing case management services should actively value cultural and linguistic alignment with the community served and train staff beyond compliance to include healing-centered, identity-affirming, and anti-oppressive practices.

A secondary implication from these findings is that additional organizations should fund long-term Case Management services as a valid and necessary model. Policies should move away from rigid, time-limited service models and recognize that deep, sustained work is essential for supporting communities facing historical and ongoing oppression.

Findings from this study illuminate implications for continued funding. Case Managers reported that some high-need resources are not able to be provided through HCN's current funding sources, exacerbating the gap in resource attainment for marginalized populations. Participants in this evaluation expressed the need for expanded resources to support the following social needs: moving resources (e.g., U-Hauls); basic household appliances; furniture for new housing opportunities; security deposits for housing; diapers and wipes; transportation; and car maintenance and repairs. The team is exploring avenues which would allow the organization the ability to offer the resources to meet these needs.

Finally, the findings from this study highlight the intentional priority of staff wellbeing as a core program strategy in all Case Management service offerings. Findings in this report demonstrate that balanced caseloads, reflective supervision, and embedded learning opportunities are not extras, they are essential! Organizations should institutionalize these supports to retain skilled staff that can provide impactful Case Management services and develop high-quality, meaningful relationships with clients.

# Conclusion

HCN's Case Management model is unique when compared to other case management services in San Francisco and across the US. Instead of short-term, transitional supports, HCN's Case Management services are characterized by long-term engagement and hinge on trusting, culturally aligned relationships. This means that the program can be responsive to clients' complex needs—often starting with urgent challenges like housing instability, food insecurity, or other basic necessities and then transitioning to longer-term goals, none of which can be achieved on a fixed timeline. By walking alongside clients through these critical moments, HCN's Case Management services ultimately support clients in meeting their needs and achieving their goals. In addition, HCN's unique ability to provide multiple integrated supports within one organization reduces fragmentation and allows staff to coordinate care in a way that's responsive to each client's pace and needs. This internal wraparound approach honors the reality that healing isn't linear—it takes time, trust, and flexibility.



*Two of HCN's Case Managers and HCN's SUD Program Coordinator at the BBHI Open House.*



*Case Managers preparing backpacks for HCN's Back-to-School Drive.*



**Background and Context  
Supplementary  
Materials**

## **Literature Guiding this Evaluation Report**

Case management supports the coordination and optimization of a person's healthcare and psychosocial goals (Giardino & De Jesus; 2023) through person-centered advocacy (CMSA, 2024). Case management services have become a cornerstone in supporting clients living with complex physical, mental and/or social determinants of health, serving as a cost-effective health service that supports improved outcomes (CMSA, 2024). Case management benefits not only the individual in need of services, but the client's family/caregiver, reduces costs of healthcare utilization, and has a positive impact on health equity (CMSA, 2024). Community-based case management, a mobile model as opposed to an office-based model, offers the most holistic and person-centered approach to care (Lukersmith et al., 2016). Case management support encompasses several sectors including the health sector, social sector, correctional sector, vocational sector, and legal sector (Giardino & De Jesus; 2023); through personalized care plans and consistency, Case Managers support their clients in connecting to services.

Barriers to implementation of case management include the diversity and complexity of case management activities; the heterogeneity of clients' needs requires case managers to support clients in myriad ways, including advisor, negotiator, supporter and educator, which leads to Case Managers juggling multiple complex tasks across their caseload. Case Managers juggle these different roles, while remaining attuned to their clients' evolving needs, balancing the structure of organizational/programmatic approaches and frameworks, and avoiding exhaustion and burnout—a challenging combination (Joo & Huber, 2017). Establishing trust and strong interpersonal relationships with clients is integral to effective case management but also presents challenges; difficulties often arise if there is a misunderstanding due to clients' differing cultural values and/or linguistic backgrounds (Joo & Huber 2017), emphasizing the positive impact of cultural-matching in this work.

## Literature Guiding this Evaluation Report (continued)

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### Indigo Cultural Center

#### A Note About the Agency and People Conducting this Evaluation

Indigo Cultural Center (a predominantly BIPOC- staffed organization) is led by executive director Dr. Eva Marie Shivers, who identifies as a bi-racial African American, cisgender woman. The Institute of Child Development Research and Social Change at Indigo Cultural Center is an action-research firm that specializes in infant and early childhood research and evaluation conducted with an anti-racist lens. The Institute is led by director Dr. Jayley Janssen, who identifies as a white, cisgender woman. The evaluation of HCN's Entre Nosotros Program was led by Ronae Matriano, a Filipina woman and a small team that consisted of a Black multiracial woman, two Black bi-racial women, a Black woman, and a white woman.

Indigo Cultural Center's mission is to conduct rigorous policy-relevant research on mental health, education, and development by partnering with community agencies and public agencies that are dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth, and families in BIPOC communities. Since its inception, Indigo Cultural Center has employed the use of community-based participatory research in all our evaluations. What this means is that we use a collaborative model and working style that involves our clients – who we prefer to call 'partners' – in the planning, implementation, interpretation, and dissemination processes of evaluation. We recognize the strengths that our partners bring to each evaluation project, and we build on those assets by consulting with our partners initially and at key milestones throughout the project, integrating their input and knowledge into all aspects of the project, asking for feedback on a regular basis, and seeking consensus on key issues and outcomes.

#### Our Voice and Terminology used in this Report

Our evaluation team employs the use of feminist methodology and the use of first-person voice when writing reports (e.g., 'we', 'us'; Leggat-Cook, 2010; Mitchel, 2017). Throughout this report, we use the terms Black and African American interchangeably. We use LGBTQIA+ as an acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual" with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of our community. We use queer to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. We use gender rather than sex as an inclusive term that acknowledges that gender is socially and contextually constructed and is a multidimensional facet of identity.

### Homeless Children's Network

#### Homeless Children's Network History

HCN's trusted provider status among historically marginalized communities in San Francisco is built on 33 years of innovative, relationship-based, and culturally responsive approaches to program development, community outreach and engagement, service delivery, and evaluation. Our culturally responsive programs, citywide partnerships, and visionary leadership deliver services to 2,500+ community members annually at no cost to youth and their families. As a city leader in programming development and delivery, HCN is dedicated to advancing systemic equity and reaching the most underserved youth, families, and communities that remain overlooked and marginalized by many systems of support including mainstream philanthropic agencies. HCN offers programs and extensive services providing San Francisco's historically marginalized youth, families, adults, and communities with the tools, resources, and support needed to navigate complex systems and overcome challenges through collaborative efforts.

Three decades ago, leaders from six shelters recognized a critical gap in services for San Francisco families experiencing homelessness. These organizations provided emergency shelter, domestic violence assistance, and transitional housing, but because of their structure, they could only serve families for a short time. This limited period of care created a cycle of attachment and loss—youth and families would build relationships with staff, only to be uprooted again. This instability made it hard for families to remain open to accessing support. In 1992, the community came together to break this cycle. They founded HCN to provide SF families in crisis with a lasting source of connection and care. Over the next three decades, in close collaboration and communication with our community members, community stakeholders, and community partners, HCN has evolved into an organization that directly addresses inclusion, community empowerment, and systemic equity.

**What began as a network of six shelters has now grown to a vibrant hub of an HCN Collaborative of 60+ service agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs)** serving the hardest-to-reach youth and families, including those with experiences of or at risk for homelessness and violence. Our robust Collaborative network includes childcare and education centers; San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) schools; Primary Care; LGBTQIA+ services; substance use treatment; transitional and permanent supportive housing; Family Resource Centers; domestic violence and family shelters; foster care, and others. HCN is positioned in every San Francisco neighborhood and has worked with SFUSD providing onsite and mobile case management and mental health and wellness services for students and their families since 1997. We provide Educationally Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS) via an MOU and currently have HCN therapists onsite in 20+ SFUSD schools.

### Homeless Children's Network (continued)

#### Homeless Children's Network's Programming and Approaches

HCN welcomes and affirms everyone, while engaging an Afri-centric lens to address the historical legacy of intergenerational racism, inequity, and trauma. This approach embraces all historically marginalized communities based on community-defined evidence based practices, which include: affirmation of cultural inclusion, trauma- and love-informed practices, self-acceptance and resilience focuses, identification of clients' unique strengths and normalization of their experiences, reframing of mental health stigma, acknowledgement of a range of spiritual practices, family and community member integration into services, collective grief processing, fear without judgement, and addressing resource and basic-need access barriers.

The heart of our Afri-centric approach lies in holding space for cultural rhythm and nuance while creating a sense of home—a safe, culturally grounded space where people can fully express themselves and be seen without judgment. All of HCN's programs and services provide SF's most marginalized children, families, providers, and communities with the tools, resources, and support needed to navigate complex systems and overcome challenges through collaborative efforts. The seven cardinal values of HCN's Ma'at model are our core values: 1) Balance, 2) Order, 3) Righteousness, 4) Harmony, 5) Justice, 6) Truth, and 7) Reciprocity. Our approach is unapologetically culturally affirming, soul-inspiring, and grounded in a shared commitment to holistic wellness.

Over the past several years, there has been a call to decolonize the field of mental health. One important way to achieve this is by expanding the construct of wellness to include a more explicit focus on community mental health in historically marginalized and underserved communities, including in Black and Brown communities. It is increasingly important that we avoid reinforcing mainstream narratives that pathologize our communities by failing to recognize the broader systemic forces affecting the well-being of those who have experienced historical and ongoing marginalization and oppression. Community-based programs designed to promote healing, wellness, and positive mental health do not simply unfold in isolation. Homeless Children's Network's vision embodies emergent work that always reflects the time and space in which it is happening. Indeed, African and Pan-African philosophy encourages the tenets of Ubuntu - "I am what I am because of who we all are" - and teaches us that, universally, "all things have an impact on each other, and this interconnectedness and interplay is universal" (Marumo & Chakale, 2018).

### HCN's Case Management Program Description

Through HCN's Case Management program, HCN's Case Managers provide culturally competent support to marginalized families who are experiencing homelessness, facing displacement, and/or experiencing systemic trauma via linkages to referrals and resources. This program adopts a holistic, trauma-informed approach, focusing on emotional safety and empowerment as a means to support clients' growth and healing. Core services include housing-focused case management, building life skills, mental health, and routes to economic independence—all of which are crucial to building resilience and stability; case managers may provide resources and referrals to support additional critical needs, such as employment, education, legal support, access to food, and access to social services.

HCN provides Case Management to clients across our 15 programs and to community members who are only receiving case management programs for housing support. HCN's Ma'at Program, General EPSDT Program, Community Mental Health, Entre Nosotros Program, and BBHI Program have dedicated Case Managers. HCN has a housing-specific Case Management program, in which Case Managers specifically support families who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability. In addition, participants and clients in Amani workforce development program and our SUD programs may be referred to or access case management services for specific needs. Brighter Futures clients were provided case management until December 2024 when that program ended.

HCN's Case Management services are free, operating year-round with each client. HCN's mobile service model enables services to be delivered at HCN's offices, partner sites, such as shelters, community settings, or virtually, prioritizing the needs and comfortability of the client. Through HCN's network of partner agencies, clients can receive direct linkages to not only HCN's 15 programs but 60+ agencies in the HCN Collaborative across San Francisco, many of whom offer services and programs beyond our scope. This program is accessible without demographic restrictions, while prioritizing San Francisco's highest-need families.

HCN's Case Managers are culturally diverse and representative of the clients we serve, offering services in English and Spanish, enhancing trust, and ensuring effective communication and, subsequently, effective program engagement. Together, Case Managers and their clients establish a service plan to guide the duration of services. Regular check-ins allow Case Managers to directly observe and listen to clients' self-reports on progress while also maintaining a Client-centered, responsive environment that is in alignment with clients' evolving needs.

### Gratitude

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