

FAMILIES FOR FINANCE

A FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM FOR SHELTER GUESTS

Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Future Community-Driven Initiatives



Limited Self-Pay Literature

In seeking information on self-pay policies and programs to inform the FFF program development, CURA discovered there was limited scholarly literature on this phenomenon.

We see value in further exploring and understanding how self-pay shelter policies are implemented in the U.S.



Family-Driven Program Design

Our program design process was informed by the Equity in Action model¹ developed by Research in Action², an action research, community engagement, and racial equity consulting firm. The design of the FFF program was driven by impacted families through the FFEC Action Committee. By fostering an environment in which families with lived experience could design and develop a program for families in shelter, we believe the FFF model resonates more closely with the needs of families than it otherwise would have.

We encourage other entities seeking to develop effective programming to empower impacted individuals, families, and communities to drive the process.



Gap in Field Expertise Related to Financial Trauma

The design of the FFF program revealed that 1) traditional financial literacy programs do not address financial trauma despite its stated importance as a prerequisite to seeking financial empowerment and 2) there is a gap in the professional sector to lead and train in the field of financial trauma and empowerment.

We recommend that:

Financial trauma be embedded into financial literacy courses, particularly those aimed at communities of color facing systematic economic disempowerment, and

The human services sector should invest in professional development related to financial trauma because of its potential role in fostering sustainable economic stability.



Agility and Responsiveness to Program Participants

After the completion of the FFF pilot, PSP staff have modified the program to be more accessible to families by offering all program elements in an “a la carte” manner.

We believe programs working with families experiencing hardship should replicate this prioritization of flexibility and continuous effort to eliminate participation barriers.



Matched Savings

We recommend that other programs seeking to address poverty and/or to support housing stability consider implementing matched savings programs. PSP provided matching savings to families during and after the pilot was completed, the table below represents the impact this program element has had on families between November 2021 and December 2022.

November 2021-December 2022 Outcomes

24
savings accounts
opened

\$10,125
savings startup
funds

6
families reaching the
max. match (\$3000)

\$41,874
matched
funds

Impact of Benefits Cliff

In order to eliminate this barrier for families, we recommend that all local counties and social service providers build upon the momentum of the passage of Minnesota Family Investment Program six-month budgeting periods, Medical Assistance continuous eligibility for minor enrollees, and Housing Support Income modifications and seek additional opportunities to mitigate the impact of the benefits cliff.

**For more information about this project visit
cura.umn.edu/fff**

1 <https://z.umn.edu/8pcu>

2 <https://www.researchinaction.com/>