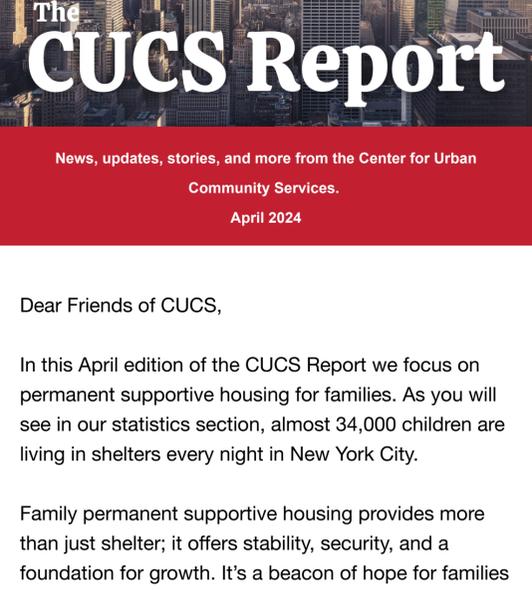


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News, updates, stories, and more from the Center for Urban Community Services.  
April 2024

Dear Friends of CUCS,

In this April edition of the CUCS Report we focus on permanent supportive housing for families. As you will see in our statistics section, almost 34,000 children are living in shelters every night in New York City.

Family permanent supportive housing provides more than just shelter; it offers stability, security, and a foundation for growth. It's a beacon of hope for families facing extreme adversity, providing with not just a place to live, but a community that supports their journey towards independence and self-sufficiency. In CUCS family permanent supportive housing, families can heal, thrive, and build futures together.

Each person in the family has unique needs and these sites offer support for everyone's needs to be addressed with dignity. Children need to be able to enjoy their childhood, and parents need to know they have a safe space to provide that for their families.

Homelessness isn't just a statistic or a problem for someone else to solve—it's a pressing issue that affects us all. When someone lacks stable housing, it impacts their health, safety, and overall well-being. But beyond the individual, homelessness also strains communities, contributing to increased crime rates, healthcare costs, and economic burdens. By caring about homelessness, we invest in the dignity and potential of every person, creating stronger, more compassionate communities for everyone.

We are grateful for your support of CUCS and your interest to be informed.

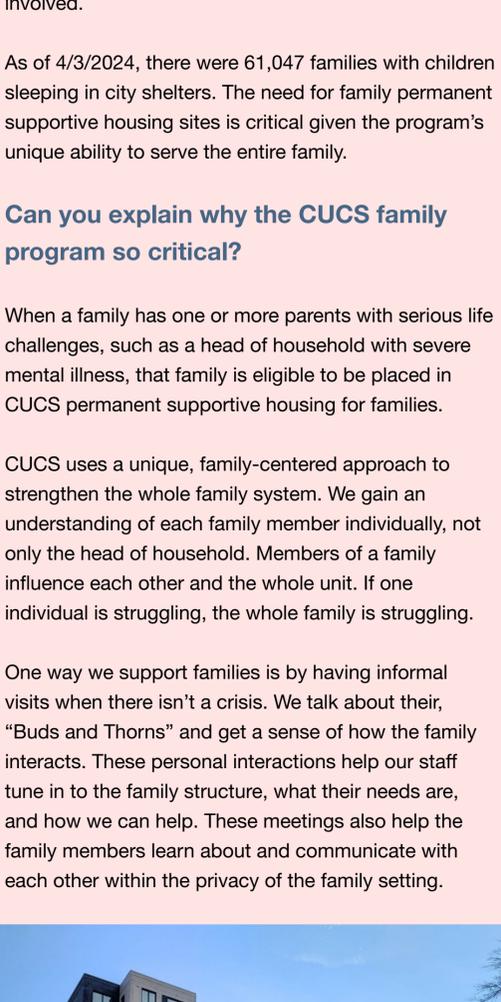
As always, we welcome your input and we would love to hear from you.

With deepest gratitude,

Rise Roth

Chief Development and Communications Officer

## Sustainable Solutions to Family Homelessness



Every night, thousands of families in New York City rely on the shelter system for a roof over their heads. But there are thousands more squeezing into cramped apartments or even sleeping on the streets because they have nowhere else to go. These families, each with their own stories, traumas, and struggles, share a common goal of safe and stable housing.

Family issues like domestic violence, health problems, mental illness, or addiction can all push a family to the brink of homelessness. There are also external factors, like job loss, lack of affordable housing, or scarce and unaffordable childcare options.



CUCS helps families struggling with homelessness get back on their feet - and stay on their feet, by providing permanent supportive housing with embedded case management, primary care, substance treatment, and psychiatric care. We provide customized care for each member of the family, regardless of their age or unique needs. That helps parents and children stay together and thrive together.

## Ask the Experts



**Featured Expert: Gabby Gomez**  
Program Director, Kingsbridge Family Permanent Supportive Housing Site

### What causes homelessness in a family?

We hear many different stories during intake, but family homelessness is most often caused by lack of affordable housing, a lack of resources, and often there are traumatic situations or triggering conditions involved.

As of 4/3/2024, there were 61,047 families with children sleeping in city shelters. The need for family permanent supportive housing sites is critical given the program's unique ability to serve the entire family.

### Can you explain why the CUCS family program so critical?

When a family has one or more parents with serious life challenges, such as a head of household with severe mental illness, that family is eligible to be placed in CUCS permanent supportive housing for families.

CUCS uses a unique, family-centered approach to strengthen the whole family system. We gain an understanding of each family member individually, not only the head of household. Members of a family influence each other and the whole unit. If one individual is struggling, the whole family is struggling.

One way we support families is by having informal visits when there isn't a crisis. We talk about their, "Buds and Thorns" and get a sense of how the family interacts. These personal interactions help our staff tune in to the family structure, what their needs are, and how we can help. These meetings also help the family members learn about and communicate with each other within the privacy of the family setting.



Kingsbridge Family Permanent Supportive Housing

### What are some of the biggest challenges in regards to family programs, and how do you address them?

When someone is in the shelter system for a long time, their dreams are stunted. They begin to focus on surviving day by day. That way of living becomes imprinted on them and it's hard to envision a life outside that. Changing that mindset is a huge challenge.

Once reaching permanent housing, that perception begins to change. Clients have an opportunity to rest and reassess, and their opinions and outlooks change. Sometimes goals change. The family dynamic changes. That transition can take years and it can be tough to adapt.

I remember working with one family with young kids. They had been placed in permanent supportive housing — their own home — but unconsciously the trauma of the shelter system held them back. One of the kids asked me for permission to use the bathroom. We had to help the child understand, this is your house now! I should be asking *you* for permission! That's an example of a major mindset transition for a child as well as an adult.



## Buds and Thorns

*Buds and Thorns* is an informal exercise in which clients reflect and share positive and negative experiences - what they are looking forward to and what challenges they face. CUCS staff listens and provides expert guidance. Here are some examples:

**Bud:** I am excited to have a job interview tomorrow!

*CUCS Staff:* How can we help you prepare for your big day?

**Thorn:** My daughter is nervous about her math homework and I'm not sure how to help.

*CUCS Staff:* Did you know that we offer tutoring services on site?



## Our Impact

CUCS programs are data-driven. We consistently track and measure our impact to ensure the highest quality of service possible.

**61,047**  
families sleep in city shelters each night in New York City.\*

\*As of 4/3/2024

**159**  
special needs families\* with histories of homelessness are served at CUCS family program supportive housing sites.

\*Families in which one or more parents have a serious life issue such as mental illness.

**93%**  
of families at Kingsbridge are single-parent families.

## Featured Quote

"One thing [former CUCS CEO] Tony Hannigan said a long time ago was, 'You need to be happy with the work you're doing. Would you be OK with your own family member living at the site you're providing services to?' That's always on my mind"

**Gabby Gomez**  
Program Director, Kingsbridge Family Permanent Supportive Housing Site



The first step to making a difference is getting informed and staying informed



Thank you for reading the CUCS Report. Our goal is to make sure New Yorkers are well-informed as we continue our work to help people rise from poverty, exit homelessness, and be healthy.

The CUCS Report is a publication of the Center for Urban Community Services.

Do you have questions about the CUCS Report, our services, facilities or programs? Contact: [devcom@cuscs.org](mailto:devcom@cuscs.org)



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