Fatherhood Research & Practice Network

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Full Report: Exploring Systems Change: Adoption, Implementation, and Consequences of the Inclusion of Fathers as Residents in Family Homeless Shelters[i]

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Executive Summary

Fathers can make important contributions to the improved health and well-being of children, specifically in the areas of social, emotional, and cognitive growth (Ball & Moselle, 2007). Often, homeless shelter policies prohibit fathers from entering shelters with their families resulting in the separation of mothers, fathers, and children. There is a dearth of literature about father involvement in the lives of their children who reside in homeless shelters.

This study examines the adoption, implementation, and consequences of a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, policy shift from excluding fathers as residents in family emergency shelters to including fathers as residents in family emergency shelters. The study focuses on five general areas related to the policy change: motivation for system change, preparation for system change, short-term system change, long-term system change, and commitment to system change. This study explores this change through the eyes of three stakeholder groups: the City of Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services Staff (which oversees publicly funded shelter services), shelter staff, and parents (mothers and fathers) residing in family shelters.

One hundred twenty-seven people participated in this study. The research team conducted individual interviews with Office of Homeless Services Staff (n=13) and facilitated focus groups with shelter staff (n=20) representing nine out of the 10 family emergency shelters and with shelter parents (n=94) representing 10 out of the 10 family emergency shelters. Participants were queried about all aspects of the nondiscrimination policy: its origins, roll-out, implementation, positive outcomes, and negative outcomes. All transcripts were audiotaped and transcribed. The data were analyzed using standard qualitative data analysis techniques.

Philadelphia has been a national leader in providing services to people experiencing homelessness. Three developments gave rise to the father inclusion initiative in the Office of Homeless Services. The first was an organic movement of local leaders focusing on fathers experiencing homelessness. The second was support for greater father inclusion in shelter services by agency staff. The third was the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2016 grant requirement to demonstrate nondiscrimination across several protected classes, including sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Office of Homeless Services made the bold decision to require that each family emergency shelter would be required to admit fathers as residents. Three shelters with individual rooms for families had been admitting fathers as residents for many years prior to the policy shift. Two shelters—both of which have the physical structure to support families with two parents (i.e., individual rooms with doors)—made the transition to include fathers relatively easily following the policy shift. Four shelters—all of which have communal living spaces—found the transition to include fathers more challenging. One shelter—that has communal living space—has not yet made the transition. This report explores the process through which these changes occurred.

Both shelter staff and parents in the shelters report benefits and drawbacks to having fathers residing in family emergency shelters. While keeping families together strengthens families, living in a shelter alters some family dynamics, which can present new challenges. Recommendations for direct service, advocacy/training, research, and policy are presented.

Background

According to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2018), 552,830 people experienced homelessness on one night in January 2018. Among this number were 180,413 people who constituted 56,342 families with children. The average family size was 3.2 people, and 60% of families had children. African Americans were disproportionately represented among families experiencing homelessness. Although the number of these families declined slightly (by 3%) between 2017 and 2018, there is still much work to do to meet the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness's (2019) goal of ending homelessness among families with children and making homelessness "a rare, brief, and one-time experience" (p. 7).

The vast majority (91%) of families with children who experience homelessness are sheltered (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2018). Shelters vary in the types of services they provide to families. Some provide a temporary place to sleep with limited food; other shelters offer a whole array of adjunctive case management, medical, mental health, substance abuse, employment, apartment-hunting, and wellness services. Historically, family shelters have focused on providing services to women and children.

Fathers sometimes find that they are not permitted to stay in family shelters (Barrett-Rivera, Lindstrom, & Kerewsky, 2013). In these cases, one of two things typically happen—both of which break up families. In two-parent households with one mother and one father, the mother and children can reside together in the family shelter and the father can stay in a single men's shelter. In single-parent households with one father and in two-parent households with two fathers, the family cannot stay together in a shelter. The family can stay together on the streets, doubled-up with another family, or in a hotel, or the family can break up to obtain shelter. The father(s) can enter a single men's shelter, and the children can enter the child welfare system.

When two-parent households with one mother and one father are broken up due to shelter policies, fathers must work hard to overcome the barriers imposed by shelter policies that make it difficult for fathers to remain connected to their families. For example, some shelter policies stipulate that fathers cannot reside in a shelter or even come within two blocks of a shelter. Such rules challenge fathers' values and decrease fathers' self-esteem. Children may not understand why their fathers are not welcome at a shelter. Historically, African American fathers have been separated from their families, and this homeless system-driven separation further compounds their historical trauma and negatively affects their parenting (Johnson, 2010). In one study of family homelessness (Hudson, 2017), fathers participated in their children's health care, education, and recreation and served as role models despite the challenges of limited finances, strict shelter rules/regulations against father visitation, and transportation hardships that negatively impacted fathers' ability to regularly visit their children. These fathers reported that their parenting was motivated either by faith in God or the mothers of their children.

When fathers are permitted to reside in family shelters, they often find that the services do not meet their needs (Barrett-Rivera et al., 2013; Rogers & Rogers, 2019). For instance, fathers may not be aware of what system-wide services are available to them (Rogers & Rogers, 2019). Shelters may not facilitate parenting classes designed for fathers who may be new to the role of primary caretaker (Barrett-Rivera et al., 2013). A shelter may hold mother–daughter classes, but not father–daughter classes or parent–child classes (Barrett-Rivera et al., 2013). And, as a result of gendered expectations, fathers often feel extra pressure to provide economically for the family (Barret-Rivera et al., 2013; Rogers & Rogers, 2019). This added stress and systemic bias, if not addressed, can weigh heavily on fathers.

Keeping fathers in their children's lives is beneficial to child health and well-being. Children whose fathers (or father figures) are involved with them in positive ways score higher than others on measures of social, emotional, and cognitive growth (Cabrera et al., 2000; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004a; Garfield & Chung, 2006; Lamb, 2004; Linn et al., 2015; Revell, 2015). They are also less likely than others to drop out of school, use drugs, engage in risky behaviors,

become involved in the criminal justice system, and become young parents themselves (Allen & Daly, 2007; Booth & Crouter, 1998; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Wertheimer et al., 2003). When fathers contribute financially to the household, the entire family prospers.

Context for the Study

The Philadelphia Metropolitan Area has one of the highest poverty rates in the U.S., with 25% of its residents living below the federal poverty line in 2018 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). According to the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services (OHS) (2019), 5,735 people in Philadelphia experienced homelessness on one night in January 2019. This number includes 1,983 people who compose 663 families with children. The majority (64%) of these families were in emergency shelters, and the balance were in transitional shelters. Like other cities, Philadelphia has a growing homeless population. In 2018, Philadelphia ranked 13th in the number of people (5,788) who were homeless across all Continua of Care in the nation, and it ranked 14th with its per capita rate (37 per 10,000) of homelessness (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2018). Yet, Philadelphia had an 11% decrease in number of family households experiencing homelessness between 2018 to 2019 (Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services, 2019).

Families who are homeless enter the Philadelphia homeless services system through a centralized intake process. They are then directed to one of 10 publicly funded family emergency shelters that operate in Philadelphia. Three of these shelters have a long (15+ year) history of admitting fathers as residents. Historically, if a family included an adolescent or adult man and space was not available in one of these three shelters, the family would face a difficult choice: remain together outside of the shelter system or break up and enter the shelter system.

For many years in Philadelphia, local leaders have publicly recognized the role of fathers in families. The Annual Father's Day Rally Committee—founded in 1987—promotes "positive action and interaction among individuals" to organize and advocate for systemic policy changes that will support fathers. The Strong Families Commission—founded in 2011—put out a call for action for all people, organizations, and communities to advocate for and promote the inclusion of fathers across the state. More recently, leaders have noticed the need to highlight fathers who are experiencing homelessness. For instance, in 2017, the Philadelphia Foundation endorsed and funded On the Table in Philly, "a forum designed to elevate civic conversation, foster new relationships, and create a unifying experience." Several of these forums focused on fathers, including fathers in homeless shelters. In 2018, the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Homeless Health Initiative focused its annual Day of Dialogue on fathers experiencing homelessness. In 2019, Duquesne University's McGinley-Rice Symposium explored families and men experiencing homelessness.

Philadelphia has been a national leader in providing services to people experiencing homelessness. Three developments gave rise to the father inclusion initiative in the Office of Homeless Services. The first was an organic movement of local leaders focusing on fathers experiencing homelessness. The second was support for greater father inclusion in shelter services by agency staff. The third one was the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2016 grant requirement to demonstrate nondiscrimination across several protected classes, including sexual orientation and gender identity.

In 2016 and 2017, the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services began developing a new nondiscrimination policy. In November 2017, the Philadelphia Continuum of Care Board adopted the new policy, planning for it to be effective on January 23, 2018 (Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services, 2017). This new policy prohibits discrimination against persons requiring shelter based on 15 protected classes: race, ethnicity, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status, age, source of income, familial status, and domestic or sexual violence victim status. This ensures that all people are afforded equal opportunities, as stipulated in the Fair Housing Act, the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, HUD's Equal Access Rule, and Philadelphia's Fair Practices Ordinance. The policy states that "providers may not exclude potential participants based on their sex"

(Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services, 2017, p. 1). In other words, each family emergency shelter would be required to admit fathers as residents. The Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services started encouraging the seven family shelters that did not admit fathers as residents to alter their policies to admit them.

Since the Philadelphia Office of Supportive Housing made this policy change, six additional shelters have altered their policies to include fathers with families admitted to shelters. To date, nine out of the 10 family emergency shelters permit fathers to reside in their facilities. The purpose of this study is to explore why and how this change occurred and to identify the benefits and challenges of shifting policy from father exclusion to father inclusion in family emergency shelters.

Figure 1. Nondiscrimination Policy Posted at all Family Emergency Shelters

Theoretical Framework

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory explains how new ideas spread among groups of people. Rogers (1971) classifies people by how early they adopt a new idea. "Innovators" are the first 2.5% of a population to adopt a new idea. They have financial resources, take risks, and are eager to try new ideas. "Early adopters," the next 13.5% of the population to adopt a new idea, are integrated into local social systems, often hold leadership positions, and have a history of successfully using new ideas. They often influence others to adopt new ideas. "Early majority" adopters, the next 34% of a population to adopt a new idea, deliberate longer before embracing new ideas. They typically do not hold leadership positions, but they interact often with their peers—which exposes them to new ideas. "Late majority" adopters are the next 34% of the population to adopt a new idea. They are more skeptical of new ideas, must clearly see the benefit of the new idea before embracing it, and may finally adopt the new idea out of peer pressure. "Laggards," the final 16% of the population to adopt a new idea, are more isolated than others, are often suspicious of new ideas and innovators, and often adopt ideas when they become obsolete. To diffuse a new idea through a population most efficiently, one could target the idea to known innovators and early adopters. The new idea, if strong and supported by people in leadership positions and change agents, could be adopted successfully by the population (Rogers, 1962).

Many disciplines have applied the concept of diffusion to subjects ranging from technology to social movements (Givan, Soule, & Roberts, 2010; Rogers, 1995). For this study, we apply the concept to the adoption of a new Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services policy requiring all family emergency shelters to admit fathers. Rogers (1962) stipulates that the "change agent"—in this case, the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services—plays a pivotal role in influencing the innovation adoption decisions. The rate of adoption is influenced by several factors including, but not limited to, perceived attributes of innovations (in this case, father inclusion), communication channels, and the extent of change agents' promotion efforts (Wonglimpiyarat & Yuberk, 2005). Rogers's model further describes that innovations are adopted based upon a five-stage model including knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Based on the timing of each family shelter's adoption of the father inclusion policy, we classified the 10 Philadelphia family emergency shelters as early adopter shelters (n=3), late adopter shelters (n=5), and laggard shelters (n=2). The research team explored the factors influencing shelter adoption (or non-adoption) of the father inclusion policy.

Research Questions

The research questions focused on five general areas related to the adoption of the fatherhood inclusion policy: motivation for system change, preparation for system change, short-term system change, long-term system change, and commitment to system change. These research questions were explored through the viewpoints of multiple stakeholders including staff from the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services, shelter staff, and parents (mothers and fathers) residing in shelters.

Motivation for System Change:

- What prompted the development and implementation of the new nondiscrimination policy?

Preparation for System Change:

- How did the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services prepare shelters to include fathers as residents in family emergency shelter settings?
- How did or how are shelters preparing to include fathers as residents in family emergency shelter?
- What do shelter providers need to prepare to include and engage fathers as residents in family emergency shelter settings?

Short-term System Change:

- What are the challenges of having fathers as residents in family emergency shelter settings?
- What are the benefits of having fathers as residents in family emergency shelter settings?

Long-term System Change:

- How does shelter living affect the dynamics of family relationships?

Commitment to Change:

- What is the level of commitment to the change process?

Methods

Ethics

This study was approved by the Temple University Institutional Review Board and the City of Philadelphia, Department of Public Health Institutional Review Board. Temple University also signed a data license agreement with the City of Philadelphia for this research study. Study data were collected between May and November 2019.

Recruitment of Study Participants

Three groups of study participants were recruited for this study: staff at the Office of Homeless Services (the City of Philadelphia's office that oversees all publicly funded shelter services), staff at the 10 Philadelphia emergency family shelters that serve families, and families residing in these same 10 Philadelphia emergency shelters that serve families. Two shelters that serve families who are survivors of domestic violence were excluded from this study because they serve a more focused population.

Staff at Office of Homeless Services (OHS)—The co-investigator identified three OHS staff members who were knowledgeable about the family emergency shelters and the nondiscrimination policy. She contacted these OHS staff members via email and phone calls to schedule interviews. The research team used a snowball sampling strategy by asking, at the end of each interview, if there were other OHS staff who could add to the study findings. This strategy resulted in a total of 13 OHS staff interviews.

Staff at 10 Family Emergency Shelters—The research team ran three focus groups with shelter staff. The first focus group was for shelters who admitted fathers as shelter residents prior to the nondiscrimination policy creation. The second focus group was for shelters who began admitting fathers as shelter residents soon after the nondiscrimination policy creation. (We also conducted one interview with a staff member who could not attend the focus group due to a last-minute emergency.) The third focus group was for shelters who have just recently begun admitting fathers as shelter residents or have decided not to admit fathers as shelter residents. The co-investigator identified the director of each family shelter. A research assistant emailed each director and requested that two shelter staff members—a shelter leader and a front-line worker—attend the appropriate focus group. When needed, the co-investigator followed up with emails, texts, or phone calls to ensure adequate representation. This approach resulted in nine out of 10 family shelters (n=20) being represented by shelter staff across the three focus groups and one interview. This included three out of the three early adopter shelters (n=7), four out of the five late adopter shelters (n=8), and two out of the two laggard shelters (n=5).

Parents at 10 Family Emergency Shelters—A total of 10 focus groups were run (one at each of the 10 family shelters). The director of each family emergency shelter identified a staff person with whom the research team would work to organize the focus group. A research assistant worked with each shelter through email to schedule a time for each focus group—if possible, when children were in school or when a child-supervised activity was occurring at the shelter. A maximum of 10 parents were permitted to participate in the focus group at each shelter. The research team sought a diversity of mothers and fathers in the focus groups. This method resulted in a total of 94 focus group participants across the 10 focus groups. This included three out of the three early adopter shelters (n=29), five out of the five late adopter shelters (n=48), and two out of the two laggard shelters (n=17).

The voices of a total of 127 study participants were transcribed across OHS interviews, shelter staff focus groups, and shelter parent focus groups through a total of 597 pages.

Procedure[ii]

Interviews were scheduled at a time and place convenient for the participants. Interviews were conducted by the principal investigator, co-investigator, or both. The research team carefully matched each interviewer and interviewee, ensuring that the interviewer and interviewee did not have strong preexisting relationships. The principal investigator and co-investigator conducted three interviews together: the first interview of the study as well as interviews with two higher-level staff members. This decision was made to ensure that both investigators were consistently interviewing participants using a similar methodological approach.

Focus groups were facilitated by two members of the research team. Because racial dynamics could affect the data collected, the research team arranged that—for each focus group—one facilitator was African American and one facilitator was Caucasian. This model was employed to ensure that families felt free to share openly on all topics, including topics related to race during the focus groups. Additionally, the research team carefully matched each pair of facilitators with each group of participants, carefully avoiding any close relationships between any facilitator and any participant. Again, the research team did not want any preexisting relationships to influence data collection. For the focus groups with the parents in the shelters, the research team requested that staff not attend, hopefully, to enhance the honesty of the participants.

All interviews and focus groups were audiotaped and transcribed. All names were replaced with participant-selected pseudonyms. Family participants were paid $35 in cash for focus group participation. The City Institutional Review Board disallowed any payment for OHS staff interviews or shelter staff focus groups.

Measurement

Operationalization of early adopters, late adopters, and laggards. Shelters were classified into one of three groups (early adopters, late adopters, or laggards) regarding the timing of their inclusion of fathers as residents. Early adopter shelters (n=3) permitted fathers to reside in their shelters prior to the Office of Homeless Services requiring all family emergency shelters to admit fathers as shelter residents. Late adopter shelters (n=5) changed their policy from excluding fathers to including fathers as residents within eight months of the Office of Homeless Services policy change. Laggard shelters (n=2) had not yet or were very late in enacting a policy change to include fathers as residents in their shelters.

Each stakeholder group was asked a slightly different set of questions. All interview and focus group questions were semi-structured. This balance of structure and flexibility permitted the research team to gather data focused on specific a priori questions as well as learn new information that was important to the participants and was pertinent to the research project. Brief general summaries of the semi-structured interview/focus group questions are provided below.

Interview Questions for Staff at Office of Homeless Services. Staff were queried about the origins of and motivations for the policy change; how they developed, prepared for, and disseminated the policy change; how they supported shelters through the change process; and any challenges they had seen during the transition.

Focus Group Questions for Staff at Family Emergency Shelters. The research team asked staff working in early adopter shelters when and why they decided to include fathers, how they prepared for the transition, how intended and unintended consequences played out, how they included fathers in their current work, and recommendations for shelters embarking on this transition. The research team also asked staff for their thoughts about the nondiscrimination policy: when they first learned about it, how it was communicated, reasons for the policy change, and any training or support they received. Staff working in the late adopter shelters were asked the same questions about the nondiscrimination policy. They were also asked questions regarding their original rationale for excluding fathers, why they were changing their policy now, how they prepared for the transition, any challenges that occurred

during the transition, and any benefits they have seen from the inclusion of fathers in their shelters. The research team asked staff working in the laggard shelters the same questions as the staff working in the late adopter shelters. These staff were also asked about their concerns and reasons for delaying the transition as well as about how their leadership teams made decisions to change or (not change) their father inclusion policies.

Focus Group Questions for Parents at Family Emergency Shelters. Parents residing in the shelters were queried about how much they want fathers involved in their lives, the ways in which fathers are involved in their lives, how shelter policies facilitate or inhibit father involvement, and any communal benefits or drawbacks they see from having fathers in (or out of) the shelter.

Terminology. Please note that OHS staff, shelter staff, and shelter parents often refer to the nondiscrimination policy as the equal access policy. The research team suspects these terms are sometimes used interchangeably because HUD's 2016 Equal Access Rule added gender identity as a protected class for nondiscrimination.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using the constant comparison method. This approach begins with basic descriptive coding within and then across interviews/focus groups. Descriptive coding becomes the basis for analytical coding from which core themes are identified. As the core themes become more robust, more in-depth categorical and theoretical explanations are developed. The principal investigator and co-investigator read all 27 transcripts (13 OHS, 3 staff focus groups, 1 shelter staff Interview, and 10 parent focus groups), and at least one of the research assistants read each of the 27 transcripts. In other words, at least three of the four research team members read each of the 27 transcripts. Each research team member developed themes independently. Subsequently, the research team met to discuss the themes identified and reach a consensus on the primary themes that are presented in this report.

Results

Study Participants

Staff at the Office of Homeless Services. The sample (n=13) included an almost even number of staff from different races/ethnicities (7 African American, 5 Caucasian, and 1 Latinx) and genders (7 female and 6 male). Length of employment at the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services ranged from 6 months to 17 years.

Staff at 10 Family Emergency Shelters. Two of the three early adopter shelters were represented in the focus group. This included six shelter staff, most of whom were people of color (5 African American and 1 Caucasian), but with an even gender distribution (3 male and 3 female). The research team conducted an individual interview with the director of the third early adopter shelter (an African American male) because a last-minute emergency prevented him from attending the focus group. Four of the five late adopter" shelters were represented in the focus group. Eight shelter staff participated. Most were people of color (5 African American and 3 Caucasian) and female (6 female and 2 male). Two of the two laggard shelters were represented in the focus group. This included five shelter staff who were primarily of color (3 African American and 2 Caucasian) and all female.

Parents at 10 Family Emergency Shelters. All ten family emergency shelters were represented in the focus groups. This included 94 participants. Participants were overwhelmingly people of color (80 African American, 8 Latinx, 4 Caucasian, 1 East Asian, and 1 Other), and approximately three-quarters of participants were female (71 female and 23 male). As can be seen in Table 1, this same demographic pattern held for families in the early adopter focus groups. Although the same general pattern occurred for families in four of the five late adopter groups, there was one anomaly. The fifth focus group was comprised of 7 males and 3 females. Laggard focus group participants were overwhelmingly people of color and 100% female.

Table 1. Characteristics of Parent Focus Group Participants

Shelter Number	Innovation Stage	# of Participants	Participants' Race	Participants' Gender
1	Early Adopter	9	7 African American 1 Latinx 1 East Asian	6 Females 3 Males
2	Early Adopter	10	9 African American 1 Caucasian	7 Females 3 Males
8	Early Adopter	10	8 African American 2 Latinx	8 Females 2 Males
3	Late Adopter	10	9 African American 1 Latinx	8 Females 2 Males
4	Late Adopter	10	10 African American	3 Females 7 Males
5	Late Adopter	10	8 African American 1 Caucasian 1 Other	7 Females 3 Males
6	Late Adopter	8	6 African American 2 Latinx	6 Females 2 Males
7	Late Adopter	10	9 African American 1 Caucasian	9 Females 1 Male
9	Laggard	9	7 African American 1 Caucasian 1 Latinx	9 Females 0 Males
10	Laggard	8	7 African American 1 Latinx	8 Females 0 Males
TOTAL		94	80 African American 8 Latinx 4 Caucasian 1 East Asian 1 Other	71 Females 23 Males

Physical Structure of Family Emergency Shelters

OHS staff, shelter staff, and parents in shelter described the physical structure, layout, and capacity of the family emergency shelters. As can be seen in Table 2, the three early adopter shelters have private rooms for families. Two of the late adopter shelters have private rooms for families, and three of the late adopter shelters have only communal living areas. Both of the laggard shelters have only communal living areas. The layout of the shelters appeared to affect the ease with which shelters could adapt to the nondiscrimination policy.

Table 2. Physical Structure of Family Emergency Shelters

Family Shelter	Building Structure	Family Arrangement & Set-Up
1 (Early Adopter)	Large building on a sprawling campus. Three floors: a basement, first floor, and a second floor where families reside. Every client's room has a window.	Serves 65 families with approximately 55 children. They have 185 beds. Every family has its own room. A unisex bathroom is on each floor. They have showers located in a large ladies' room. There are smaller bathrooms in which to wash your hands. The shelter has cameras on-site in the shelter.
2 (Early Adopter)	A large brick structured building connected to a social service agency. Living quarters are on the second and third floor, and there is a men's floor.	Serves 41 families. Every family has its own room. There is a ladies and a men's room on each floor. Has served all configurations of families since earlier than 1994. The shelter has cameras on-site in the shelter.
3 (Early Adopter)	A very large residential-looking facility located next to another family serving agency—a partner agency that holds 35 beds for women and small children.	Serves between 60–75 families of all compositions and includes somewhere between 170–230 individuals. Building is located next door to a large field. Every family has its own room (of different sizes based upon family size). When necessary, a shared space will be made available to house an overflow of families. The shelter has cameras on-site in the shelter.
4 (Late Adopter)	A three-story, brick structure connected to a church.	Serves 30 families—one bathroom on 1st floor, two bathrooms on the 2nd and 3rd floor, one men's bathroom designated on each floor. Families are initially placed in the basement—overflow communal living space—until they can be moved to a room upstairs. Typically, two families are placed in each room upstairs.
5 (Late Adopter)	A large, two-to-three-story, L-shaped building located off of side streets.	Serves 64 families with approximately 20 fathers. Individual rooms and communal showers. Every two rooms share a bathroom and sink. The shelter has cameras on-site in the shelter.
6 (Late Adopter)	A huge brick building located on a main business street connected to a parking lot and encompassing a playground area.	Serves 23 families in regular program, two to four families served in overflow cots in selected areas of the shelter. Communal bathrooms. Every family has its own room. The shelter has cameras on-site in the shelter.
7 (Late Adopter)	A series of connected row homes across four buildings.	Serves an average of 18–20 families. Two rooms on the second floor of each building, a common area, and one bathroom. The shelter has cameras on-site in the shelter.
8 (Late Adopter)	100 year-old brick two-story building.	Serves 35–36 families, with a total capacity of 90 beds. Two bathrooms on each floor. Large room set up cubicle-style, separated by curtains in the front and behind each cubicle, with families in each cubicle–front and behind.
9 (Laggard)	A large, three-story brick building that spans an entire city block.	Serves between 15 and 25 families depending on the number of children and has a total of 56 beds. Communal living, shared eating and two large bathrooms shared by all. The shelter has cameras on-site in the shelter.
10 (Laggard)	A large, two-story brick building that spans almost an entire city block, including a playground attached to the building.	Serves approximately 35 families, with a total of 100 beds. There are 12 shared sleeping areas and nine shared bathrooms. There is a dorm that houses 20 people and contains two of the nine bathrooms. One bathroom has a tub, and older male children and adult males are assigned. The shelter has cameras on-site in the shelter.

Primary Findings

Motivation for System Change: What prompted the development and implementation of the new nondiscrimination policy?

In 2018, the City of Philadelphia was awarded $37 million from the federal government to provide services to people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless (City of Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services, 2018). A majority of these dollars were awarded through a national competition (through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) for Continuum of Care dollars. In 2016, HUD adjusted the scoring system to strongly reward applicants who could provide evidence that they complied with HUD's nondiscrimination policy. This was the primary motivation for the Philadelphia Office of Homeless developing its nondiscrimination policy.

Simultaneously, multiple complaints—that focused on men having difficulty accessing the family shelter system—were filed through the OHS complaint hotline. Two OHS staff (who were male and African American) were involved in reviewing these complaints. Their review of these complaints led them to conclude that the family emergency shelter system was systematically discriminating against fathers, most of whom were African American. These two OHS staff began to communicate about and advocate for father inclusion in the family emergency shelter system. OHS then invited one of these staff to draft and develop the nondiscrimination policy.

OHS staff deliberated about various approaches to nondiscrimination across all 15 protected classes, including sex/gender. Some cities require that every family that includes a father be placed in a family emergency shelter somewhere in the city's shelter system. In this approach, some family emergency shelters can serve only mothers with children, provided that all families with fathers are served. OHS decided to make a bolder move. They decided to require that every family emergency shelter admit fathers as residents.

> *"I think that it started with, there was the impetus to do it. And so, I think there was the drive to comply, because you had to have an equal access policy to get the points for the [Notice of Funding Availability] that was submitted to HUD." (Interview #9—OHS staff)*

> *"I think with Philly being a sanctuary city, with LGBTQ rights being so important, and inclusion, this administration has had a real emphasis on diversity and inclusion of all kinds. Then I think all those things dovetailed, so the equal access policy. Would we have come up with an equal access policy absent the HUD mandate? I don't know. I think everybody thought that the system was basically fair, so I think this was really confirming … there was a growing awareness that we needed to have an explicit policy of inclusion." (Interview #9—OHS staff)*

> *"It's been fraught, because at the end of the day it's not only about gender, it's also about race, because of who we serve in our system. That has been really serious for all of us to grapple with, and to wear, and acknowledge that we've been a part of that, for a long time." (Interview #5—OHS staff)*

> *"'Is someone having a housing crisis?' That should be really what's guiding us to assist people, because that's what we're here for. Secondly, the equal access rule from HUD has given the compliance teeth that lets us push, that lets us write the policy, that lets us say, 'HUD said we have to do it, and all that.'" (Interview #5—OHS staff)*

Preparation for System Change: How did the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services prepare shelters to include fathers as residents in family emergency shelter settings?

Several OHS staff informed providers about the nondiscrimination policy. They disseminated emails and memoranda to providers, informing them about this new policy change. They told providers about the policy shift at monthly provider meetings. And they visited late adopter and laggard shelters to meet with shelter leadership. During these meetings, OHS presented the rationale for the policy change, described the details of the policy, and discussed how

the shelters could implement the policy. OHS staff also requested that a nondiscrimination poster be hanged in every shelter. Some OHS staff focused more broadly on inclusion across all categories of nondiscrimination. When shelters expressed concerns about key elements of the nondiscrimination policy, such as father inclusion, other staff focused their efforts on understanding the shelters' concerns and problem-solving with them.

"... so it began with a conversation at a provider meeting, and I made the announcement that we no longer could discriminate against families due to fathers being in the family, and then I asked for plans from each shelter as far as rolling out this change in their facilities…. But it wasn't just me. There were other voices. At the time, the director of the Continuum of Care … was holding meetings to discuss nondiscrimination and strategies to implement inclusion, so it was great that there was support other than just me making this ask. There was an agency-wide understanding that we had to move in this direction." (Interview #13—OHS staff)

"It's more effective for the Office of Homeless Services to actually come to community meetings and articulate the policy change to participants because at emergency housing they don't believe the staff, the emergency housing staff. It's a big provider network, so there's a lot of miscommunication." (Interview #3—OHS staff)

Although OHS staff are eager to see the nondiscrimination policy implemented quickly throughout the entire shelter system, they appreciate the enormous amount of change they are requesting that providers make. One OHS staff member describes issues around communication and the intricacies of placing families—regardless of whether a father is part of the family—and how the nondiscrimination policy adds an additional complication to the family placement process.

"Oh, we've asked people to make huge changes that results in them being challenged to work with some of the people with the most challenges there are…. Which is why, I feel like, when you're asking people to change, you've got to be patient and you've got to respect them…. They're the ones who are figuring it out. They're the ones who have to help their staff." (Interview #5—OHS staff)

"There's so many factors involved when you're trying to place a family. It's not just, 'We have a homeless family and we have five beds.' It's, 'Are the beds bunked?' Because we don't place children in beds that, if you're under six years old, according to … It's trying to be thoughtful about what does a space look like, who's in the space as well, is it someone who is okay with one, being in the same room with another family or not, whether it's a father or not, but we're just … It's trying to be thoughtful about the needs of the family that currently occupies the space, and the needs of the family that needs emergency shelter…." (Interview #13—OHS staff)

Even though resources are limited, OHS staff are attempting to support shelters in various ways, including trying to assist the shelters who request smaller amounts of funding to implement the nondiscrimination policy.

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"I always strongly felt that OHS had a strong responsibility to be supportive of when we make a major change like this. So, what we did is certain shelters requested extra staff or security to help defuse situations where violence may occur, whether it's domestic or towards staff or other residents. We feel strongly that the health and safety of the shelter communities are of the utmost importance, regardless of who we're serving. We've supported requests for extra security or even, at times, extra staffing, so they can be more accommodating to families of any composition." (Interview #13—OHS staff)

When asked what they need to make the transition smoother, staff at OHS mentioned funding to increase shelter space, train front-line staff, and modify the computer-based intake system. Some staff argued that all families should live in private rooms—not congregate living spaces—to enhance family well-being and longer-term outcomes. Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development did not offer funding for shelters to modify the physical structure of the shelters.

> *"We need funding. We don't have enough space. We had to make changes in our computer system. Resources needed.... Training of a provider staff." (Interview #2—OHS staff)*

> *"My thing is we were not able to support the shelters, at least financially, to change the structure of their programs to change, say, places with shared spaces into places where there's private rooms for families. But again, so much of this comes down to money and being able to fund programs that really are trauma-informed and able to accommodate people safely and with a sense of privacy the families deserve, frankly." (Interview #13—OHS staff)*

OHS staff created a training that includes a presentation about the requirements of the nondiscrimination policy. This is followed by multiple scenarios with a discussion of how the policy applies to each scenario and what this means for each shelter. The plan is for the mandatory training to be released after OHS staff finalize the process for tracking compliance and noncompliance with the nondiscrimination policy. OHS staff plan to integrate into the training corrective action plans and consequences for serious or continuing noncompliance with the nondiscrimination policy.

> *"We haven't rolled out the training to providers as of yet because one of the challenges again, when I first got here was that, so we have this training developed but there's not a policy for ... there needed to be a re-work policy for filing a complaint based on this training, and also there needed to be a repercussion as well" (Interview #9—OHS staff)*

OHS staff appear to be pleased that the system is changing. Nine out of the 10 family emergency shelters now admit men as family residents, which is a considerable change. When reflecting on the change process, the staff do acknowledge that it has been imperfect. OHS was not able to anticipate all of the challenges that would occur. They (and shelter staff) problem-solved and adapted throughout the change process.

> *"...staff just feel like it's just a constant rollercoaster of we feel like we're just implementing this and now it's like the whole analogy or whatever of building the ship as you're sailing it or building the plane as you're flying it.... If only OHS or whoever it is could just really think through, what is the change; what is the new policy; what are all of the components of it; what is the release schedule for actually rolling it out and warning people along the way?" (Interview #3—OHS staff)*

When asked about the roll-out of the nondiscrimination policy, staff working in the early adopter family emergency shelters (who have a long history of admitting men as shelter residents) reported participating in the True Colors Challenge. For this challenge, shelters competed for the highest rate of staff completion of an asynchronous, web-based training program about working with people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Several of the shelter staff found the training useful and described competing for a pizza party as fun. At the same time, some shelter staff viewed the True Colors Challenge as an example of OHS favoring some protected classes in the nondiscrimination policy over others.

> *"I thought the training was informative. It let you see a different perspective. I mean, some things were just natural. I mean, you treat everyone fair and just with everything. I mean, it comes naturally. But I think it kind of gave me some insight on different things as far as when ... when someone identifies with a certain group, for you to be more knowledgeable of them in that type of that." (Ante—early adopter shelter staff)*

"We did the True Colors Challenge too, but I want to talk about the policy. I don't think it was rolled out very … communicated very well, effectively. I hope, but I think it was done very strategically so that they can push agenda … excuse me, OHS can push agendas that they feel as though are important, instead of really holding the whole Equal Access Policy…. So one of the things that they were really strong on, which I don't disagree, was making sure men are included in all of the shelters. That has been their biggest push from this policy that came out. However, in the Equal Access Policy, something like wheelchair accessibility is not 100% in every shelter." (Emily—early adopter shelter staff)

Staff working in the late adopter family emergency shelters—who began admitting fathers within 18 months of the nondiscrimination policy announcement—recalled the roll-out of the policy in different ways. Some staff remember having multiple conversations with OHS staff to prepare and plan for the change. OHS worked with shelter staff to brainstorm solutions for shelters who had congregate living spaces. There was some disagreement in the group regarding whether shelters were originally encouraged or mandated to comply with the nondiscrimination policy.

"I had had several conversations, a warmup from someone who is a director over at OHS, to just start bracing me for this. So, I had just an individual staff member over there was talking to me. Then once it was time, they had just asked, 'Can we have a meeting with the residents still?' They were asking when we would be prepared, not mandating, but asking if we would be willing. And if so, when. And we jumped on it right away. It was January of 2018." (Sarah—late adopter shelter staff)

"We have shared rooms. The only thing that divides one family from another family is a curtain. So, there were huge concerns about the families that we hear having a male in the front, or a male in the back, being able to go through the rooms, and not having that privacy…. We had a meeting concerning that, and we, oh, sure, agreed that, what they would start doing is informing the people when they came over to this particular shelter that, you are in agreement with sharing a room with a male-headed household." (Milo—late adopter shelter staff)

"Well, they may have said it as a suggestion, but I heard it as a directive." (Amber — late adopter shelter staff)

Staff working at laggard shelters—who have just recently begun admitting fathers as residents or who still do not admit fathers as residents—recalled discussions with OHS staff. Shelter staff reported that OHS staff came to their shelters to see the physical building structure and to hear their concerns. Only some staff remembered trainings. And all shelter staff remember the nondiscrimination policy as a mandate.

"It was never presented as an option to us either. It was always a mandate, and we were also told that because we also have congregate living that we would be given some additional resources or assistance around how we might make that transition. Those things never … well in my opinion I don't feel like we got the additional resources needed to incorporate fathers because so many of the women here have dealt with trauma." (Nafisa—laggard shelter staff)

"Well, I don't recall being a part of any training related to incorporating men into the facility. I remember a lot of meetings saying that, 'This is happening. We have other providers who are already doing this. You can talk to them to see what they're doing' and they came out a couple of weeks ago to look at all of the spaces and how they were set up and had a similar conversation as they did with you, that, 'This is what's happening, this is what the expectation is,' but that was it. We did not have a formal training." (Nafisa—laggard shelter staff)

Several staff members working at a laggard shelter expressed concerns arising from the inclusion of fathers as residents in shelters. These concerns included being able to provide safe care for all shelter residents as well as being able to provide the same quality care and services, given the additional challenges and lack of additional resources.

"Just even when you think about training and getting your staff ready for this major change, that was not incorporated either from what I understand. I think the expectation is still to operate at the same level of quality with the same level of funding for the past 15 years, is something that our board and our leadership is very concerned with. So now I have to come with the major change, but then you're not bringing any additional money to the table, to me threatens the ability for shelters to operate, because then you begin to think about, 'Can we do this? Is this feasible?'" (Queen—laggard shelter staff)

Another staff member working at a laggard shelter intimated that the policy shift has strained the relationship between his/her/their shelter's leadership and OHS staff.

"In our meeting with OHS, part of what was very difficult to navigate and the conversation became difficult was that they … we were explicitly told that we were discriminating against black men and that we were sending a message that black men are dangerous by not allowing them in our congregate living and that is certainly not our thought, position or experience. And it's not about our perspective of feeling like that is going to be the case, it's more a perspective of respecting the experience of the majority of the residents we serve who are women with a history of trauma." (Kathy—laggard shelter staff)

According to OHS staff, the plan was for intake staff to inform parents who were entering the family emergency shelter system that they may be placed at a shelter where fathers were residents. With that information, families could decide whether or not they wanted to accept the shelter placement. This information was sometimes, but not always, communicated effectively to families.

"Your experience. It all depends on the people you deal with at the city intake site; whatever you want to call it. It all depends on who you deal with." (Jacks—father)

"… during the intake at [name of intake site], I spent the night at the [name of shelter] just me and my children, then their dad was going to wait over at [the Office of Homeless Services] with me, and she asked my status, my relationship with their father, and if I had any other place to go because shelter that night wasn't guaranteed. I told her he was experiencing homelessness as well as myself and I was not informed that we could go in as a family or he was not invited if I wanted to include him in my family transitioning into any shelter." (Anna—mother)

"They told us to be expecting of like gay couples or…. They told us to expect everything…. They told us that … Because we didn't want to be separated. So, we were willing to deal with anything and they told us, 'Then expect everything.'" (Shanelle—mother)

Preparation for System Change: How did or how are shelters preparing to include fathers as residents in family emergency shelter settings?

Staff working at some of the late adopter shelters visited and sought consultation from the staff working at the early adopter shelters. They reported wanting to learn about their shelter policies and procedures as well as common issues that arise with the inclusion of fathers. Several of the late adopter shelters then held multiple staff meetings to work through their concerns, address their biases, and prepare the staff for the transition. These shelters also held meetings with residents to inform and prepare them for the change. Shelter staff also reported changing the language on their forms to be more inclusive. Staff working at the laggard shelters (including the one that now admits fathers as residents) reported no information-sharing and no preparation for the policy change.

"I can't recall the name of the shelters, but we have had some shelters come and meet with us to find out how we do things. A lot of the concerns were around the bathrooms, 'How do you all make it work with the bathrooms?' And some of the fear was having men on the grounds, because historically shelters … normally, for the most part, we

take on women, right? A lot of times we have women fleeing domestic violence, things like that. And then we have you bringing men in here, not saying that the men are the abusers, but it might be perceived as a safer environment if it was just all women." (Ante—early adopter shelter staff)

"We had a meeting with our staff, because I needed their input, because they're the ones who have to deal with these situations. So, I wanted, number one, everyone to feel secure and confident in their position. As I stated earlier, I was concerned about probable violence. But that was maybe my stereotypical … because most of the people who are running around here killing folks are not women. We had a meeting with the participants as well. I had to meet with them, and they were like, 'I heard grunts and groans.' Oh, no! This is a woman facility. So, I said, actually, this is a place for families. So, I said, I had to let them know, males are family members as well, as you all know." (Amber—late adopter shelter staff)

"We currently don't have any males enrolled, however on the night that the first male was enrolled. We got a phone call around four o'clock and they said, 'We don't have any … female headed households, but we do have this male and his wife and we need to send them to you now, and you have to take them….' I felt forced to take them. We felt forced to take them. Actually, the program's director came down to ensure that we made space to take the family…. they came that night. I think it was traumatic for both the staff and the participants, because our expectation was that we would continue to have conversations about how we can do this and not have a negative impact on the people who worked or lived here." (Nafisa—laggard shelter staff)

Preparation for System Change: What do shelter providers need to prepare to include and engage fathers as residents in family emergency shelter settings?

When asked about recommendations for transitioning shelters, staff working at early adopter shelters discussed the size and use of bathrooms, enforcing dress codes, and ensuring that fathers are placed in rooms, not in communal living spaces. They also discussed guidelines around the way people speak with one another.

"…there's a different way of security. There's a different way of requirements or dress changes. You don't have to make the announcement, but we have to start enforcing some of the rules of dress and utilization of the restrooms. Where sometimes mothers will be running in the morning and they were going into the men's room when there's no men on the floor. So, there's a whole lot of dynamics they have to shift when a male comes onto the unit, that we don't kind of make them know why they're doing it. We just make it, 'Here's some adjustments that we need for you to do. Just use the women's bathroom.'" (David—early adopter shelter staff)

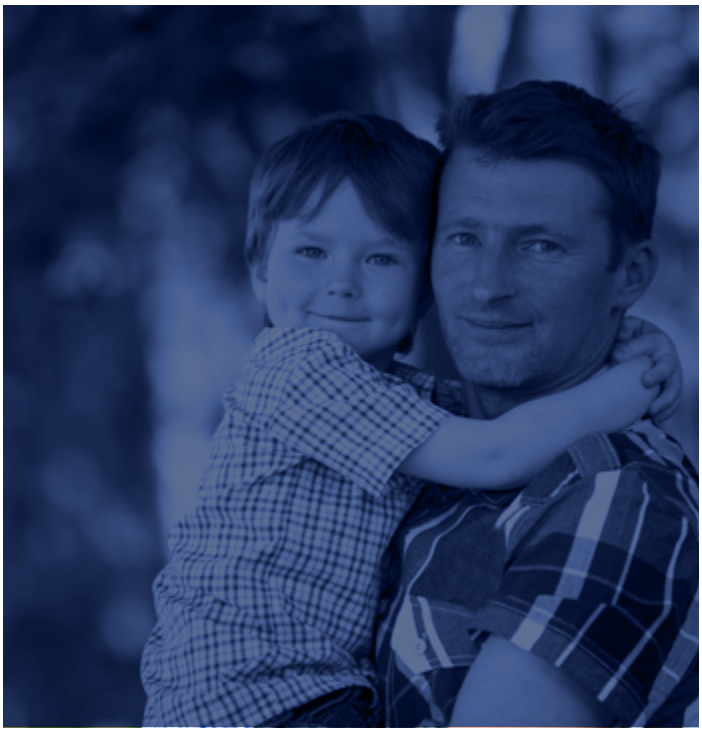
"Anytime we have an open room shelter, men cannot go in that place. They're not allowed in the open room shelter. So, the open bay area, where the 15 people I can put, I would not put a male in there if I had more than one family. They would have to find other places to stay until they made it into their room." (David— early adopter shelter staff)

"I kind of have a law about how you talk around your children as well as how you talk to your children. That there's a rule in this house of what we don't do in this house. And it's very hard to instill in them because of their environment and what they used to. They're extremely used to profanity. I mean, that's their language. I don't go for it. And so, I usually have my door opened, especially right here, it's like a perfect … I can hear him yelling and I can tell when they're about to go there. And then sometimes I go there, I just come out and I sit, and they say, 'Hey, …how you doing?' or I'll hear them and they all start profanity and I'll stick my head. And they say, 'Oh sorry.' I said, 'No, don't say sorry to me, say you're sorry to your child because that's who you disrespected.'" (David—early adopter shelter staff)

Staff at one of the early adopter shelters discussed how important it is to preempt problems by helping keep families focused on their family. These staff also explained how they make fathers feel welcome in the shelter.

"So be mindful of your relationships because your relationship can distract you from your children. And your children are the reason why you're here, that qualifies you to be here. So, let's focus on the here…. I'm being very honest with you, because it's hard for us to police things because our rooms are tight. You can run to the next room just like that, nobody knows. We don't have that type of staffing nor the technology to even identify it. So, we have to do some of this on just what we are trusting that we're teaching and encouraging." (David—early adopter shelter staff)

"Also push more of, 'What are you going to do next as being the head of your household?' Because of the family dynamics of what society looks at the absence of men in the household and why we have this absence of men in households, 'what are your next steps when you get to your house? How are you building your relationship with your spouse?'" (David—early adopter shelter staff)



Staff working at late adopter shelters were asked what else they needed to make the transition smoother—from excluding fathers to including fathers. To provide an increased sense of safety for staff and residents, multiple late adopter shelter staff reported wanting either a security guard on the premises or additional shelter staff working each shift. One shelter is currently investigating best practices for handling domestic violence situations when both partners are on the premises. Multiple shelters discussed the need to renovate and expand the size of bathrooms.

"My main concern was, looking at the violence that's happening in the city. Most of the families are young. And my concern was about, the probability of weapons coming on site. Maybe that's a stereotype, but that was a concern, a genuine concern. We asked for funding for security. My thing is, I'm thinking that, all the other sites have security. Not just the cameras, but a live person to make sure, especially if you're asking for men to come into the facility. Not that all men are bad. We do background checks on our staff, but we don't know the background checks of the parents, period." (Amber—late adopter shelter staff)

"Well, I have an opposite feeling about security. I would not want security here. Because, if you had a man or a woman, they cannot touch anyone. The last time, when I got knocked out, the security guard actually stayed at his desk, by his desk, because he's not allowed to touch anyone. They're not supposed to. My staff grabbed the person. My own staff grabbed the person away from me. That man could not do a thing…. We got extra staff." (Milo—late adopter shelter staff)

"We were looking for some technical assistance or best practice around DV. We were very good at figuring out services for people experiencing domestic violence when the abuse was external. And then, what we did for someone when they were internal, and how we can keep someone safe here. We didn't have policies and procedures around, on what happens when both people are inside our building…. We also came up against, well, the transfer policy is, right now, very loose. The responsibility is on the provider." (Sarah—late adopter shelter staff)

Short-Term System Change: What are the challenges of having fathers as residents in family emergency shelter settings?

The primary challenge that OHS staff identified when implementing this shift in policy was the physical structures of some of the shelters. Three of the five late adopter shelters and both laggard shelters have communal living space and lack individual rooms. In many cases, this setup makes it difficult for families to feel safe and to have privacy. A secondary challenge identified by OHS staff was a concern about violence or the potential for violence or disruption to other families. Additionally, some shelters receive supplemental funding from agencies that prohibit males (13 years or older) to share living space with some female-headed households.

> *"... So people understood it, it was just the challenges of the structures of some of the facilities was the major point, and also, again, what does it look like for staff, what does it look like if there's a violent incident?" (Interview #13—OHS staff)*

> *"Or the families placed together, but the father shows up at 11 p.m. and he's been drinking. How do you handle it? Well, he's a father. He's part of the family. How do we handle it when people are using.... Well, in a low barrier system and it's about a housing crisis, you let them in as long as they're not destructive and you deal with it the next day. It's been a challenge. We have awesome providers though. You know? They know. They get it. This has been systematic discrimination, exclusion that harms families and communities." (Interview #5—OHS staff)*

> *"Some of the challenges we have had is when we have whole intact families and then you have a child or a particular boy that may be of age 13 or 14 and then there's individual providers that have their own policies. A lot of that comes down to whether they're getting dual funding in some of these sites. Some of these sites are receiving Department of Human Services (DHS) funding that prohibits certain males or aged kids to be in some of these same locations." (Interview #7—OHS staff)*

Shelter staff working at early adopter shelters reported that most of the services provided to families are geared toward mothers. These staff are trying to find ways to provide shelter services that include fathers. This group of staff also identified the following as challenges: addressing issues of violence in shelter, ensuring that everyone has access to a bathroom, and including fathers in shelter services while remaining sensitive to women who are survivors of trauma.

> *"I think when kids are involved we try and keep the focus on what is in the best interest in the child when we're talking to two parents. So, most of the time they work that out, unless it's some type of violence that happens, which it does happen. And then the person that was the aggressor is asked to leave immediately." (Emily—early adopter shelter staff)*

> *"So we had a community meeting and some of the fathers spoke out and they made some good points. And they were saying that everything is geared towards the mother, the woman. One father, he was with his son's mother the longest and things happened and he ended up moving into the shelter with his son. But he said he wouldn't know what to do, the resources are not really geared toward the father is pretty much what he was getting at." (Ante—early adopter shelter staff)*

Staff working at late adopter shelters focused primarily on relationships when identifying the challenges of including fathers as residents in family emergency shelters. They reported struggling with how to work with couples who bicker passionately and then make up quickly, how to manage couples who have a jealous or overprotective partner, and how to assist couples in navigating their sexual intimacy in a communal living setting. They also raised the issue of conflicts of interest in service provision.

> *"Something that I see a little bit differently, because I work the overnights. I would say, I deal with a lot more relationship squabbles in the middle of the night than I have before. Examples. I get, one party always comes*

down to the front desk, and they're having an argument. One might accuse one of hitting or putting their hands on them. But then I try to separate the situation until the morning. I send out my stuff. But then, by the time the morning comes, they're ready to get back together, and it never happened. It just makes me look like, why did you even come to me if this is going to be the end result?" (Mike—late adopter shelter staff)

"Some intimacy issues, because you can hear everything. Yes. We've had condoms found in showers." (Sarah—late adopter shelter staff)

"We also have a therapist on board, and I think it can get complicated with, when both parents want to see the same therapist. So who goes outside for services." (Sarah—late adopter shelter staff)

When asked about the challenges of including fathers as residents in family emergency shelters, staff at laggard shelters identified the same two issues that staff working at the early adopter shelters identified: ensuring adequate bathroom space and ensuring that everyone—including women who have survived domestic violence perpetrated by men—feel safe in the shelter. This group of staff also identified the conundrum of being mandated to admit fathers as residents at the shelter and, at the same time, desiring the ability to support client autonomy and self-determination when (typically traumatized) women report that they do not want to share space with males.

"I mean the bathroom is probably the first one that comes to mind: sharing shower and privacy space with not being dressed or people being around strangers. The other one is that the vast majority of families who are housed at our organization have a history of PTSD or domestic violence or things along those lines, sort of trauma in general and so asking them to share a space with men that they don't know or have any relationship with at any time is challenging." (Kathy—laggard shelter staff)

"If we were to think about effectively incorporating males into the facility as well as intact families then that means that that would limit the amount of families that we're expected to house, because every family is not going to feel comfortable staying in a room with a male which means that we have to put them in a room that would normally take, maybe two or three families, now this family is in a room by themselves so we can't put anybody else in that room. But the expectation is still that we incorporate these people into the facility, but we still have to take the same amount of people." (Nafisa—laggard shelter staff)

Parents living in all shelters expressed concerns about feeling safe with fathers residing in the shelters—safety for children (particularly daughters) and safety for women (particular those with histories of abuse). One parent identified the issue of conflict stemming from parents using dissimilar parenting styles in the shelter. Although one would think this would apply to families of all compositions, the parent raised it specifically in the context of "alpha males." Fathers reported wanting equal access to bathrooms (i.e., not having to wait until all women and children are finished using the bathrooms). At the same time, they suggested that two-parent (mother–father couple) families should have priority for their own room with a door. And one father expressed hope that shelters could provide more father-focused services in the near future.

"I just think that they need different facilities for the fathers. Because some … like Miss M was saying that she has daughters, so she got to think about that and live with that since she's here and be aware of… she have to be alert around kid now. She don't want to sit by the bathroom while another man in there. I think you changing like that, a different policy for the men. And I guess try to do a background on the men that's coming into the facility now." (Nini—mother)

"Too many alpha males in one place does not work. What I mean by that is … Some males raise kids differently than … I may raise my child, or my children, different from the way, say Mr. Hank raised his kid, or John, or R. Kelly, Franklin,

you know. It all depends on how you raise your child. I may not agree with the way he raises his, because I was brought up a different way. My methods may not work for them, or they may not like my methods. So, you know, you will come against some people that may not like your methods, as I said." (Demuree—father)

"As adults when we do come into an environment like this, we agree to all the rules and regulations, so when it comes to men, I just see the shelter system has to accommodate them a little bit much better, when it's time for shower time, let's give our men their individual bathrooms where they can…. A man shouldn't have to wait for all the women to take a shower and then ding, ding, ding at 10:30 when the lights off, now they're allowed to go in … Now in regards to the rooms, I think if you're going to have men and their family together, let's accommodate them with a door. We shouldn't get jealous about a door …" (Crystal—mother)

At the time of the focus groups, no fathers were placed at either laggard shelter. In each laggard shelter parent focus group the conversation evolved from fathers should not live in the same shelter to fathers would need to live on a separate floor to fathers could live on the same floor, but in their own room. The mothers were much more comfortable with dual-parent (meaning one mother and one father) families living at the shelter than single father-headed families living at the shelter. One mother in one of the focus groups had her 17-year-old male child living with her at the shelter; the mothers felt safe because he was "part of a family" (which translates into "*with a mother*").

"I don't see a problem with it as long as there's boundaries, there's different floors. The men be- You know what I mean? I wouldn't feel comfortable with men being around in the same room or even the same floor as my daughter where she's taking a shower. I think it would benefit everyone more if it was sectioned off." (Bella—mother)

"Well, I should hope that since [a father, mother, and children] came here. Since they came in as a family that they stay as a family. Then there wouldn't be a problem because he came in with his girlfriend and his children." (French Twist—mother)

"I feel like [a mother with an older adolescent male child is] not an issue because they're with their mother and they're still children. That's just how I feel about it. And, I mean, they're with their families." (Gloria Yellowbird—mother)

When asked what would need to happen if fathers were to be integrated into the shelter, the parents at laggard shelters had several ideas. If a family included a father, the family would need to be placed in a room (not in a common area). Hopefully, every room would have a door that locks. Ideally, families would have their own bathrooms. Mothers should not have to share bathrooms with other families' fathers. The mothers said that clear rules (and accountability for breaking the rules) would be imperative. Additionally, hiring male security or male staff and training all staff would be necessary.

"… I could say, I wouldn't mind some men, or some men, you never know what might happen. As long as we have locks on the doors, we could be safe, but I don't know. I don't really think women and men should mix. Maybe a certain person, I think they should interview… some of them. We all should be interviewed because you don't know what nobody's background is. It's women doing it too. I don't know. At the same time, it's so unfair because you never know what somebody's going through." (Coco—mother)

"Just like they put rules in place for us when we first come here they would have to put rules in place for the males. They would have to just upfront, 'Look at these papers, read it, sign it,' make sure they understand everything, know their boundaries. And if you don't follow the rules then you get written up or kicked out." (Gloria Yellowbird—mother)

"But right now even though it's just females and their children I would feel more comfortable if it was male security here. I would feel if it was a mixture of males and female security I would feel very comfortable here." (Gloria Yellowbird—mother)

Interestingly, one of the parent focus groups in a laggard shelter raised the issue of background checks for every adult entering a family shelter. This group showed great compassion toward fathers who require housing and services. They tried to balance their compassion with their own personal safety and that of their children.

"There's a lot of homeless out here. You have a lot of families who was living with their spouse. Now whatever situation happened, now they're homeless. If that's going to happen with the males being in the shelter, I think what OHS needs to do is... basically confirm and do some background checks on the men." (Plus Size—mother)

"... I want to keep eyes on my children at all times. They don't do no background checks on these men. If you bring a man in, I understand. He's a human being just like me. He has rights just like I do, but just be mindful when y'all open the shelter to these people. Be mindful of the mental health state of mind of the children and the parent. Be mindful of the substance abuse, the physical, emotional abuse because like I said, I've been molested. My son's been molested." (Skittles—mother)

Short-Term System Change: What are the benefits of having fathers as residents in family emergency shelter settings?

As more family emergency shelters began admitting fathers as residents, the shelters started hiring more male shelter staff. This shift in hiring (from primarily female to a mix of female and male) has increased the diversity of the shelter staff. According to OHS staff, the presence of strong, male shelter staff members has motivated father residents to seek employment, treatment, and other services.

"It's also diversified the staffing, which I think is a positive thing as well." (Interview #13—OHS staff)

"Where we have seen a male shelter staff who's been a strong role model, we have seen positive feedback from the male residents in that shelter. We've been able to see where when a father has been heard about a particular need and we see that need met, we can see a beneficial effect for the family. We can see the father being more encouraged to maybe job seek or be further involved with drug and alcohol treatment, as an example. So just the smallest bit of encouragement has been effective from my standpoint." (Interview #9—OHS staff)

Some staff working at early adopter shelters reported that the presence of fathers alters the shelter dynamics in a positive manner. Overall, the shelters become calmer, and shelter staff and shelter parents tend to be more cooperative and less recalcitrant. (Note how this perspective contrasts starkly with some of the late adopter shelter staff opinions presented earlier in this report.) The early adopter shelters also reported that keeping families intact through an episode of homelessness maintains family bonds and increases family stability. Additionally, the family's prosperity is increased when two incomes (rather than one) supports the family.

"I told the shelters, 'You're going to love the men more than you love the women.' I always found that they add ... Some of them kind of act a little bit better when there is a man walking around, whether that's staff or a resident. I always enjoy them. The men really don't get into verbal altercations or physical altercations really. I would say non-existent. Maybe within their family, yes, there are some domestic violence issues, but that's anywhere in Philadelphia; it's not excluded from the homeless population. But there's not ... They're very helpful and I think they add a calmness to the community sometimes for the women." (Emily—early adopter shelter staff)

"So, when you're trying to help a family move out, income plays a big part, right? So, you have a family, an intact family, sometimes you'll have two incomes. It'll make it easier to try to help that family move out into their own housing. I think that's one benefit. Of course, the obvious is you're keeping the family together. I mean, why break a family up situation worse, let's keep the family together. To me, I think that's the larger benefit right there." (Ante—early adopter shelter staff)

Staff working at late adopter shelters acknowledged that the shelter staff and shelter families (including fathers) had some difficulty adjusting to admitting fathers as family emergency shelter residents. However, now that multiple fathers reside at the shelter, the fathers connect and support one another. Additionally, the fathers spend time with their children and assist them with their daily activities.

"There's more men here now. So, when they come in, another man come in and he sees other men here, so I guess it takes a lot of the pressure off of him. But when we first opened up and first starting taking men, I think at first we only had like two men. So, the first two men that came in it was difficult. But now, since we have other men here, so when the men come through the door now with their family it's kind of more easy … It takes a lot of weight off their shoulders. Most of the men I see, they meet each other, they talk and stuff like that." (Steve—early adopter shelter staff)

"Oh my God, they are so, whoo! They bring them down to breakfast. They bring them to lunch they take them outside, they sing. Guess what they don't do? Curse their kids out. Okay? They do not curse their kids out." (Lisa—late adopter shelter staff)

Staff working at the laggard shelters provided a theoretical response to this question. This group wants children to grow up with their fathers in their lives because it can lead to better child outcomes. However, these staff do not want to keep parents in intact, unhealthy relationships because this can lead to worse childhood outcomes. When parents are in healthy relationships, these staff strongly support families staying together. These staff also worry about how the inclusion of fathers will impact mothers living in shelters.

"I think one of the benefits of involving the fathers in the system would be … I think it would be a good thing if this situation where they're living wouldn't be conflict for the families, for the parents, for the mothers. I think that fathers would be a good idea so the kids would get to grow up as a family, with the father. Sometimes having a strong male role model makes a difference in the kids' life, male and female." (Tara—laggard shelter staff)

"The problem that we face is not whether or not we believe males should be included, because we absolutely believe they should be and we support that, is the impact that it has on the people who live in the shelter and that's always been our perspective. How is incorporating males living in this facility going to impact the women that live here." (Nafisa—laggard shelter staff)

Shelter parents reported multiple benefits to having fathers as shelter residents. Fathers who reside in the shelter can support, teach, and love their children; they can also serve as role models for families who do not have a father living in the shelter. The fathers who are in two-parent families can also support and love their partners.

"So, I think it's real beneficial to have both. Because you learn to be a man from your father and you learn the sensitivity and caring side from your mom. If you don't have both sides equally, you're just not … I feel like it's a little imbalance. That's how I feel." (Jack—father)

"I think having the men in the shelter is a wonderful thing. I'm a single mom, I have 11-year-old son, and he doesn't have a lot of male role models to look up to." (Linda—mother)

"Having the males here, to me, it's some type of security for us." (April—mother)

"Honestly, if it hadn't been for me being here with a bunch of females, and them raising their kids, honestly made me a better parent, being truthful. I sit and watch them. It's not like, I don't pay attention to everybody's movements, but every day I see y'all take care of y'all kids, and it makes me want to be better for myself. Honestly, for real, because that's why I treat my daughter the way I treat y'all." (John—father)

Long-Term System Change: How does shelter living affect the dynamics of family relationships?

Staff working at early adopter shelters identified a policy that can affect fathers negatively. The routine practice of listing the mother as the head of household can undermine the father's voice in intact families. Staff also mentioned that the stigma of shelters may prevent fathers from entering shelter with their family. And, it can be difficult for mothers and fathers to find personal space to calm down after a family argument.

"So, one thing I noticed, so when you have an intact family come in, for some reason the mother is always listed as the head of the household. And I noticed one of the drawbacks here is when they have those family problems and things aren't working out, the mother has the voice to say so, 'I don't feel comfortable having him here no more.' He doesn't really have much leverage in that situation." (Ante—early adopter shelter staff)

"…. And the mother and father, they'll get in arguments. I mean, you're living in a room this size and you're calling this home. That's one thing I try to really instill in our staff. You got to remember, when you argue with your spouse, she goes one way and you go another way. Here, can't do that. You go get some air, here, you can't do that. And that's the whole thing about being mindful, of that when they do have some arguments, we have areas that we call our sanctuary room and places." (David—early adopter shelter staff)

Staff working at late adopter shelters appear to share and expand on the routine practice of listing the mother as the head of household. Some men find that the practice makes men feel impotent or insignificant. Additionally, some couples encountered tension in relationships while at the shelter.

"But I think, I do feel like there's been a few fathers who feel demasculated [sic] by … If that's a word, by this arrangement." (Sarah—late adopter shelter staff)

Shelter parents also pointed to a policy that can make things more difficult for families. Additionally, they identified several ways in which shelter living affects families over time. Living in close proximity with other adult men and women can heighten preexisting relationship insecurities. Family members may find it difficult to relax or behave freely at any time, knowing that staff could walk in at any given moment to check on families. Because staff are responsible for ensuring that the shelter runs smoothly, shelter staff can come across as autocratic. They sometimes interfere with parents' parenting strategies. When shelter residents are noncompliant, some staff may speak disrespectfully to parents (or children). Children who see their parents disrespected (or treated like children) may be surprised or confused. This can lead to conflict.

"It's like the kids always with you and the kids now which you might have an hour alone just to chill and talk. You got to worry about somebody popping in the room, room checking like, dang, I can be dressing. I could be doing whatever, you don't know but you don't get that." (Murk—mother)

"I feel like as a whole we make our own little communities. I have a few people in here who we can count on each other for little things here and there, and I think that's as much as the community we get 'cause far as the staff

I would say being in the shelter system, relating this to your last question, they kind of kill the family dynamics of coming into a shelter. It's like you can't talk to your kids a certain way. You can't discipline your kids a certain way. They tell you when to eat, sleep, and put your kids to bed. They tell you when your kids are allowed and aren't allowed…. We had to sign our kids in and out to even go and stay at a relative's house. They are controlling over what we do with our children or how we come about. There can be people in here that are Muslim or that come from a certain household that their kids are used to and they change all of that. It's like no consideration and no caring for how we choose to raise our children." (Anna—mother)

"Then you've got your kids like … even with your kids, people holler at you, do this, do that. Don't people understand kids get traumatized by stuff like that. What you think won't hurt them, will hurt them. You don't keep hollering at them or telling their mom what to do….I have to keep instilling that in my child like, 'Mom, you're letting these people talk to you any type of way.' I get it, you're tired and that's the part adults don't get. You see them hollering at your mom, so your kids jump in because they're a parent. But don't blame it on the parent because this is where you pick and choose to say something to me while my kids is with me." (Purple—mother)

"This shelter will do one thing to a family. It'll do one or the other. It'll either make a couple strong, or it'll break you up." (Kiki—mother)

What is the level of commitment to the change process?

Overall, OHS staff are firmly committed to implementing the nondiscrimination policy throughout all family emergency shelters. At the same time, some of the staff wonder if OHS's bold approach happened too quickly**.**

"And the city's perspective has been, we've been 100% clear. We're not going back. We're not going to exclude people." (Interview #9—OHS staff)

"If we made a commitment and the policy is that by project, not by system…. This is hard. It's like, 'How far do we push it, because as I said, there's no other community that I know of that has asked every single shelter to do this….' I mean, go Google San Francisco, New York. They have female-male headed household shelters. So, I'm like, 'Are we pushing too far? And too hard?' It's a balance. Those are internally the conversations where we're working really hard to hear one another, and to both advocate for providers, but also live in the reality of the way we've operated our system and the way we've made a commitment not to." (Interview #5OSH staff)

Staff working at early adopter shelters—who have been admitting fathers as residents for years—are steadfast in their commitment to continue admitting families of all compositions going forward.

"It's all families. It should have always been all families." (Emily—early adopter shelter staff)

"It's odd because we walked into it. In 1994, that's what it was. So, I don't know who made a speech, or I don't know who did what, but when I started in 1994 it was a shelter that provided housing to all families. Whether that was same sex family head of household, men, women, whatever. So, it was always that way." (Bootsy—early adopter shelter staff)

Now that staff have invested time, energy, and resources into the policy change, staff working at late adopter shelters appear to be committed to continuing to admit fathers as family emergency shelter residents. These staff admit that the shift was easier for some shelters (those with individual rooms for families) and more difficult for other shelters (those with communal living space). However, staff commented on how impressed they were with each shelter's dedication to work through the challenges to meet the end goal of including fathers as residents.

"We accept everybody. So, there was no question there, because it was already our practice. But we had been taking fathers and two parent households in our overflow beds from the spring." (Sarah—late adopter shelter staff)

"We did the same thing. Once we decided, well, this is it. Now that OHS is making the commitment we did the same thing." (Milo—late adopter shelter staff)

"Most people were really on board, and they were excited about it. Then I was really impressed with people that actually had reservations, really wanted to talk through them. So, they came and we discussed things, and just worked through each of the individual issues. Working with the residents that were currently there was a very different story, that took more time." (Sarah—late adopter shelter staff)

Staff working at laggard shelters are theoretically supportive of the commitment to include fathers in the work they do with families. Their objections focus on the details of the implementation of the policy.

"And like I say I'm 100% for father and male inclusion 100%. All the research shows how children do better, educationally, emotionally, I mean all the research is there and that's been a big part of what... why organization said we wanted to be a major role model around father inclusion. But I think you have to be methodical and systematic in how you proceed." (Queen—laggard shelter staff)

"I think it would be mutually beneficial for everyone involved, providers, fathers, intact families, women and children, if a segment of the system is accessible and that you are concentrating resources in that place where there's housing available for intact families, there's housing available for male headed households, there's programming that's inclusive of their needs and responsive to their needs, specifically, where now because it's on a system wide level and no additional resources whatsoever have been dedicated to it, there's nothing in place and there's nothing available to make that a reality and it's much harder to do on a large scale, so why not do it in a small way that responds to... from as far as I can see from the information and data available, is a fairly limited demand." (Kathy—laggard shelter staff)

Parents in late adopter shelters reported two divergent viewpoints about fathers residing in family emergency shelters. Most parents reported compassion for fathers, stating that they should be permitted to live with their families in family emergency shelters. However, a smaller group of parents stated that fathers should not be permitted to stay with their families in family emergency shelters. This latter quote appears to be steeped in traditional gender roles.

"Like everyone needs a place to live. People going to do ... everybody's circumstances is different. Everybody's situation is different. We never know what someone's going through. I'd rather someone to be into a shelter than to be homeless on the street." (Keisha—mother)

"Back in the day, men was supposed to be the providers, so I feel like if you have to find shelter with your kids, no man should be allowed because he's supposed to provide." (Dream—mother)

Discussion

All shelters—early adopter, late adopter, and laggard—share a belief in the fact that fathers, in most cases, are important to their families. The early adopter shelters, which all have private rooms for families, have held this belief for years and, therefore, made a commitment to father inclusion decades ago. The late adopter shelters believe in father inclusion, too, and the two that had private rooms for families made the transition relatively easily. The three late adopter shelters that lacked private rooms and relied heavily on communal living space encountered more difficulty. Yet, two elements were important in making the transition for all late adopter shelters. First, the partnership between OHS and the late adopter shelters was critical. OHS listened to shelter concerns, problem-solved with shelters, and provided some resources to assist in the transition (e.g., funding for hiring male shelter staff). Second, some late adopter shelters sought consultation from early adopter shelters regarding how they make things work. Although the laggard shelters appreciate the importance of fathers in the lives of children, they had more difficulty making the transition. According to one of the laggard shelters, OHS "forced" the shelter to admit a father as a resident one night, and the shelter was completely unprepared for the admission. However, the shelter has since admitted fathers as residents. The other laggard shelter has a staunch philosophical disagreement with the policy of requiring all family emergency shelters to admit fathers. They argue that the policy prevents mothers with children who want to avoid men (because of a history of abuse, rape, or trauma) from feeling safe in any family emergency shelter. They believe the policy creates systemic discrimination against these women and their children. This laggard shelter has applied for a waiver/exception to the requirement of admitting men as residents in their shelter.

The Role of Communication

This policy change required an enormous amount of communication. OHS received communication from HUD and had to interpret HUD guidelines. OHS had to communicate with centralized intake staff, and centralized intake staff had to communicate with families seeking shelter. OHS had to communicate with shelter leaders, shelter leaders had to communicate with shelter staff, and shelter staff had to communicate with shelter residents. In some cases, OHS communicated with residents in family emergency shelters as well. For clear communication to occur, the transmitter of information must send a clear message to the receiver, and the receiver must clearly understand the message. The receiver's lens, beliefs, and biases can impact the receiver's understanding of the transmitter's message (Falkheimer, 2014). Furthermore, the relationship between the transmitter and receiver, including level of trust (or lack thereof), can affect the receiver's interpretation of the message (Falkheimer, 2014; Jia, Cheng, & Hale, 2017). Finally, the receiver must remember the message accurately to communicate it correctly to the next party. As would occur in any large, complex system, some communication challenges emerged along the way.

Philadelphia is a pioneer in implementing the nondiscrimination policy in this manner—integrating fathers as residents into all family emergency shelters. They did not have a model to follow; therefore, they engaged with providers in creative problem-solving and adaptation to make the required systems changes. Given that OHS, shelter staff, and parents were learning along the way, it was impossible to begin and end the implementation of the policy shift with one clear, consistent, immutable communication plan.

OHS planned for staff working in centralized intake to communicate to families entering the family shelter system that they may be placed at a shelter that has a father as a resident. Because the research team did not interview centralized intake staff, the research team cannot evaluate the effectiveness of the communication between OHS staff and centralized intake staff. However, some of the parents reported being told this information, and other parents reported not being told this information. It is possible that the message was communicated inconsistently to parents. It is also possible that the parents, in the frustrating and emotional process of seeking shelter, did not remember receiving that message.

OHS reported communicating to shelter administrators in myriad ways: via emails, memoranda, provider meetings, smaller shelter team meetings at OHS, phone calls, and some shelter visits. Shelter staff articulated different understandings of the origin and rationale for the policy change. And, there was much disagreement regarding whether the policy was a recommendation or a mandate. It is possible that each of these elements was communicated clearly from OHS to shelter administrators, but the focus group participants may not have been the original receivers of the information. It is also possible that some of the information (e.g., origin and rationale for the policy change) was not communicated or was communicated only once or twice. And it is likely that some elements of the message (e.g., whether the policy change was a recommendation or a mandate) were modified during the communication of the change process. For instance, shelters who adopted the policy change early in the process (in late 2017 or early 2018) perceived the policy change as a recommendation, and shelters who were slower to adopt the policy change (and required more pressure from OHS to make the change) perceived the policy as a mandate. It is also possible that shelters who requested additional resources to comply with the policy change may have understood the recommendation or mandate differently.

The ways in which shelter administrators communicated the message they received from OHS to their shelter staff is interesting to consider. All late adopter shelters reported that their administrators shared the policy change with their staff. Shelter administrators answered staff questions, and they encouraged staff to be open and honest about their questions and reservations about the policy change and its consequences. With OHS support and some creative problem-solving, these shelters were then able to work through their primary concerns. The one laggard shelter that felt "forced" to make the policy change did not report having such discussion. However, the laggard shelter that applied for the waiver/exception seemed to have clear internal shelter communication about opposing the policy change.

The Role of Attitudes

Another question to consider is how shelter administrator/staff attitudes about the policy change may affect other shelter staff and shelter parent attitudes about the policy change. With these data, we cannot assess the former, but we can consider the latter. The shelter parents at the laggard shelter that felt "forced" to admit fathers appeared to be compassionate and accepting of father inclusion in the shelter. They brainstormed what would need to occur for them to feel safe in the setting with fathers on the same floor of the shelter. This shelter's staff has been working diligently to include nonresidential fathers in the lives of children in the shelter. Perhaps the staff attitudes are affecting the shelter parent attitudes. In contrast, the shelter parents at the laggard shelter that applied for the waiver/exception to admit fathers as shelter residents appeared to be less accepting. The focus

group facilitators had to work much harder to get the shelter parents to have a productive discussion regarding what would increase their sense of safety in a shelter environment that included fathers. Perhaps the staff attitudes are affecting the shelter parent attitudes. Yet, an alternative explanation is that the shelter staff know the shelter parents well and are advocating on their behalf.

Learning from the Early Adopter Shelters

Some of the late adopter shelters sought consultation from some of the early adopter shelters to help them anticipate changes they would need to make to run an integrated (father-inclusive) shelter smoothly. The early adopter shelters have been admitting fathers as residents for many years, and they have an enormous amount of wisdom to share. The early adopter staff focus group suggests that early adopter staff are experienced and skilled and view father inclusion primarily as a shelter benefit. The late adopter shelters and one laggard shelter have been admitting fathers as residents for a shorter period of time. They still appear to be learning about the challenges and adapting to address those challenges. Perhaps these shelters who are newer to integrating fathers as residents in their shelters would benefit from longer-term, structured consultation and training from the early adopter shelters.

One of the early adopter shelters shared what appeared to be an unusual approach to family emergency shelter living. Instead of focusing on meeting the family's basic subsistence needs until the family can secure permanent housing, this shelter emphasizes promoting positive family dynamics. The shelter leadership stresses that parents can enter the shelter because their children "qualify them" to enter a family shelter. The shelter staff focuses on positive parent engagement with children, parents focusing on their relationship with their spouse/partner (if applicable), and helping fathers claim their role in the family. The research team cannot assess the effectiveness of this approach at this particular shelter, but we do think it deserves further consideration. The literature indicates that the negative effects of homelessness on children can be diminished through positive early parent–child relationships (Shonkoff, 2011). And, the literature recommends that shelters encourage and support families in their development of positive parent–child relationships while in shelter (Perlman et al., 2014). If the approach is successful, many questions would arise about its implementation. Family emergency shelters are often understaffed or staffed with lay staff, focus on addressing crises, and are unable to assist with more than basic subsistence needs. Many highly trained staff would need to be hired to add this dual focus to the family emergency shelter system. Another approach could include training and mentoring lay staff so they can better serve families.

Family Dynamics

The shift to admitting fathers as residents at all family emergency shelters appears to have impacted family dynamics. Implicit bias against fathers was reflected in the shelter staff and mothers' comments as well as in the fathers' descriptions of their behavioral interactions with staff. For example, some fathers spoke about how shelter staff "talked to them in disrespectful ways," including in front of their children and the children's mothers. Some of these fathers were openly vocal in admonishing this disrespectful behavior. These fathers may have experienced gender role strain while attempting to maintain their control and position as both fathers and men. Parents who try to exert their own power are often seen as disrespectful and possibly threatening (Temple & Diamond-Berry, 2010). This perception of disrespect—from staff, mothers, and fathers—may demonstrate the need for cultural competence (i.e., gender/sex) training for shelter staff (Garrett-Akinsanya, 2014). The gender of the staff person speaking with fathers may also have played a part in how these communications were transmitted and received. Some of the mothers in focus groups voiced a favoritism towards acceptance of fathers who entered shelter with a wife/female partner and expressed less acceptance of fathers who entered shelter without a wife/female partner—despite articulating that everyone experiencing homelessness deserves a place to stay. Some mothers

voiced disdain with some of the fathers accusing them of not being able to care for their families, resulting in the families' experience of homelessness. Several parents also noted that families of different faiths, such as the Muslim faith, should have their family needs considered while they are in shelter.

Two-Headed Households versus Single-Headed Households

All parties (OHS staff, shelter staff, and shelter parents) seemed to agree that, ideally, each family—regardless of whether it included a father—should be in their own room with a door and a lock. There were no monies to alter the physical structure of the facilities, so shelters adapted by moving families that included fathers into small rooms and moving families that did not include fathers into congregate living spaces. Sometimes curtains were hung to offer some privacy between families. When the research team asked the laggard shelter parents about including fathers as residents in the shelters, the mothers made a clear distinction between two-parent households (with one mother and one father) and single-headed households (with one father). The mothers felt much more comfortable living on the same floor of the same shelter with two-parent households. They held much more suspicion and distrust of single-parent, father-led households. Some parents pointed out that some mothers are equally as threatening or untrustworthy as some fathers, but the parents who were suspicious of single-headed households held firm in their belief. The history of trauma many mothers bring to the shelters may lead to this effort at self-protection, self-preservation, and unintentional bias against fathers. However, we must also remember that many fathers also bring histories of trauma into the shelter with them. Within each focus group with the laggard shelter parents, the research team saw movement toward greater acceptance of fathers. A series of open, nonjudgmental discussions might be able to move some of these mothers towards even greater understanding of, acceptance of, and ability to live with single-headed, father-led families.

Racism in the Shelter System

Although this policy change overtly focuses on gender/sex (father inclusion), it implicitly focuses on race. African Americans are overrepresented in the United States homeless population (U.S. Department of HUD, 2018). This injustice is the result of structural racism that has excluded African Americans from equal access to housing, community supports, and opportunities for economic mobility (Jones, 2016). Given that racism is pervasive and operates simultaneously on multiple levels—including the interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels—it is difficult to entertain a discussion of homelessness that does not include race as well (Speight, 2007).

The ways that OHS staff think about the policy shift varies and is enlightening. One perspective is that people who have worked in the Philadelphia homelessness services system over the years have always tried to do their best to make good decisions for families. Now the thinking has evolved, and fathers are (thankfully) being included as residents in family emergency shelters. Another perspective may be a bit more startling. In discussions of the homeless services system, several OHS staff used the words "bias," "inequality," "blatant discrimination," "blatant racism," "systematic discrimination, and "exclusion." In this viewpoint, the homeless services system—like many large social services systems—has unconsciously engaged in systemic discrimination against African American fathers for years, and OHS staff have been *unintentionally* complicit in this discrimination. The research team suspects that it is this diversity of thinking within OHS—being well-intentioned, self-reflective, and accountable—that permits Philadelphia OHS to be a national leader in homeless services provision.

Shelter staff and parents also raised issues around discrimination. Both groups spoke about a fear of fathers being violent in the shelters. This could be considered internalized racism or the acceptance, by marginalized racial groups, of negative stereotypes about themselves (Carter, 2007). Taking this a step further, it is like harboring a belief in systemic violence that directly targets African American fathers as perpetrators. While this is a possibility, it is also

worth considering the notion of how the race of staff may positively or negatively impact the fathers served. For example, some fathers reported a pattern of disrespect from staff; yet, these fathers also shared that an African American male staff leader sought to instill a sense of value, purpose, and worthiness of African American fathers in his shelter. This demonstrates hope about the roles that same-race shelter staff and authority can play in supporting or diminishing the belief that African American fathers have in themselves.

There has been limited study of the implications of the intersection of race and homelessness (Jones, 2016). Therefore, discussion of these intersections is needed as part of any strategic plan of development that addresses homelessness from both a direct service and policy perspective (Jones, 2016).

Application of the Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory is well suited for understanding this systems policy change. The theory seeks to understand the timing and rate of adoption of change innovation through communication. OHS is the innovator in this process and used both mass communication and interpersonal communication channels to move the policy change forward. They sent emails and memos to providers about the new policy of nondiscrimination and provided shelters with a poster about the nondiscrimination policy to display at all shelter sites. They opened discussions about the nondiscrimination policy at monthly provider meetings. Additionally, they visited some shelters to present and discuss the policy change with shelter leadership and staff.

This policy change has been in process since 2016–2017, making timing an important part of the process. Early messages from OHS to shelters about the imminence of this policy change encouraged shelters to consider how they would make this change at their respective shelters. Some shelter leadership perceived OHS communication as preparatory advice and encouraging the change, while other shelter leaders perceived communication from OHS as a mandate to change their policy of inclusion. The timing of when shelters both heard and received this message from OHS may have impacted how they heard the message (i.e., as an encouragement or as a mandate). As mentioned earlier, late adopter shelters that had individual rooms for families required little to no persuasion to make this change, were speedier to decide to implement the change, and more quickly confirmed their plan to make this change. Late adopter shelters that did not have private rooms for families were more concerned about issues of safety and privacy and were appropriately slower to accept this change in policy/innovation. The laggard shelters landed along these same lines. Their stated issues and hesitance in adopting the change appeared to be steeped in their concerns regarding congregate living spaces, lack of privacy and safety, and questions about the revictimization of mothers who were survivors of domestic violence. As the Diffusion of Innovations Theory promulgates, shelters perceiving relative advantage and compatibility with this change/innovation were more likely to adopt the policy. If OHS could have provided funding for renovations of space in congregate living shelters, all late adopter and laggard shelters might have adopted this innovation/change more readily. More formalized training and mentorship might have aided late adopter and laggard shelters in their shift as well.

Recommendations

This study's results lead to several practical recommendations for serving mothers, fathers, and children residing in shelters. Additional opportunities are offered for policymakers and researchers.

Direct service

- As fathers are admitted to family emergency shelters, the shelters need to find ways to become more "family friendly." This includes hiring more male staff (particularly African American male staff) to reflect the demographics of the shelter residents. Staff need to be trained to work with fathers in ways that fathers

experience as supportive, respectful, and productive. Shelters need to strategically prepare families for entry into family shelters by sharing common rules and emphasizing the need to focus on their families. Shelters should also adapt programming to be more inclusive of fathers within their families in order to meet the total needs of the family.

- Shelters should consider acknowledging parents as stakeholders, possibly creating parent advisory boards to solicit ongoing relevant input and recommendations. Both mothers and fathers appreciated the opportunity to participate in the focus groups and have their voices heard. At the end of the parent focus groups, parents requested future opportunities to share their thoughts and opinions. This speaks to a need for all family voices to be heard on a regular basis.

Advocacy/Training

- Shelter staff across all shelters (early adopter, late adopter, and laggard shelters) should be encouraged to support one another, exchange information, improve problem solving, and enhance advocacy. Early adopter shelters have experience and knowledge to share with late adopter and laggard shelters. Late adopter shelters that are structured with community living spaces have experience and knowledge to share with each other and with laggard shelters. Some sharing of information occurred organically, but a more formalized system could be more inclusive and have greater impact.
- OHS and shelter administrators should seek opportunities to build partnerships among city government, institutions, and community nonprofits to find solutions for problems encountered in implementing the nondiscrimination policy. This might include partnering with agencies (e.g., Habitat for Humanity) that could possibly conduct building renovations.
- Because fathers have been recently integrated into six family emergency shelters that have historically served women and children only, OHS and shelter staff would likely benefit from cultural competency training. This training should be designed to decrease biases and increase knowledge about and comfort with serving (particularly African American) fathers. Additionally, training staff to work more effectively with families could help staff support families better as they reside in family emergency shelters. Longer-term, trainings focused on other protected classes of people (e.g., people with disabilities, people of non-Christian faiths, etc.) could be beneficial. Providing trainings that are responsive to real-time needs (perhaps identified through the OHS complaint hotline) might be most beneficial.

Research

- Future research areas could include studying this inclusion/integration process over time, exploring the experiences of married or partnered couples in family shelter settings with single families, exploring the children's perceptions and experiences of having their fathers included in the shelters, and exploring the types of services and methods of service delivery that best address the needs of men (in addition to women).

Policy

- OHS should consider monitoring the integration of other protected classes of individuals in shelter settings. Participants raised concerns about the integration of people with disabilities, people who identify as LGBTQI, and people of non-Christian faiths. Additionally, policy leaders should consider the role of race in the experience of homelessness.

Study Strengths and Limitations

Strengths. The study sought perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups—OHS staff, shelter staff, and parents (mothers and fathers). Qualitative methods permitted the research team to ask key questions, yet also to be open to new information that participants thought was important. OHS leadership supported this work by not requiring access to the raw transcript data; this afforded participants greater freedom to be honest in their responses. The research team was diverse in terms of race, age, and research/practice experience.

Limitations. Unfortunately, no males were part of the research team; such representation might have added an important perspective to the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes. The study has limited generalizability to other cities, considering population size, urbanicity, poverty rate, racial composition, and homeless services system capabilities.

The research team attempted to limit bias as much as possible. To combat social desirability bias, the research team instructed participants at the beginning of the interviews and focus groups that the interviewers/facilitators hoped they would be honest and feel comfortable sharing their genuine thoughts. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, the research team attempted to make participants feel comfortable in order to share honestly. The research team was vigilant about the potential for confirmation bias; however, even with the best of intentions, any research process embeds bias, posing a potential study limitation.

Conclusions

Philadelphia has continued to demonstrate its leadership role in serving those experiencing homelessness. OHS's bold action of developing and implementing a nondiscrimination policy that fully integrates fathers into all family emergency shelters shows evidence of this continued leadership. Their desire to share their process and progress with others will make a tremendous contribution to the field. Acknowledging that homelessness does not affect all races equally is an important declaration and a precursor to seeking solutions to address issues surrounding family homelessness that require discussion and problem-solving within a racial equity lens (Olivet et al., 2018).

This study explored the process of making system change in Philadelphia with respect to the adoption and implementation of new policy requiring the inclusion of fathers as residents in family emergency shelters. OHS and all family shelters—early adopters, late adopters, and laggards—acknowledged being part of a service system that is inherently biased against fathers; yet, they simultaneously believed in the positive value fathers can contribute to their families during this housing crisis. Shelters that had building setups that allowed for private rooms for individual families were quicker to adopt this policy of father inclusion, while shelters in buildings with congregate living spaces encountered more difficulty in adopting this policy change. The most substantial concerns around implementing this policy change focused on safety and privacy issues. Communication was a challenge in this endeavor. However, change occurred in a period of approximately 24 months and the Philadelphia OHS now has nine out of its 10 family shelters admitting fathers as shelter residents. All stakeholders plan to continue to work to make the shelters more father-inclusive and "family centric" beyond just fathers living in the shelters. The ultimate goal is to decrease system biases and barriers that hinder advancing the overall quality of families' experiences in the homeless shelter system.

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[ii] This research study collected an enormous amount of qualitative data. The data collection and data analysis processes are heavily influenced by the lens of the research team members. Each team member's worldview, personal and professional experiences, and intersectionalities influence how he/she/they interact in the data collection process and synthesize, integrate, and understand the data that were collected.

The research team, composed of the principal investigator, co-investigator, and two research assistants, was diverse in some important ways. The principal investigator and one research assistant self-identified as Caucasian, and the co-investigator and one research assistant self-identified as African American. The team members' age spanned decades: 20s, 40s, 50s, and 60s. All team members, trained in social work and public health, were sensitive to issues related to power and privilege, race, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

The diversity of this research team is a great strength. Somewhat akin to triangulation, when a research team–comprised of members who are diverse in multiple ways—can reach consensus in qualitative analyses, the validity of the findings is strengthened. A shared understanding of the meaning of the data–among people who view the data through disparate lenses—provides the findings and conclusions with increased credibility.