

# Leveraging HMIS Data to Understand Program Impact and Improve Outcomes in Housing and Homelessness

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All Chicago



**Putting It All Together:**  
Uniting Data, Technology, and People



Leveraging HMIS Data to Understand Program Impact and Improve Outcomes in Housing and Homelessness

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## Purpose of Session

- **Case Study** – impact of temporary financial assistance on preventing homelessness in Chicago
- Key evaluation partners and roles
- Top tier evaluation – definition, requirements, value
- Evaluation findings
- Relevance to decision-making and outcomes



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# CONTEXT FOR THE EVALUATION

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# Homelessness in the U.S.





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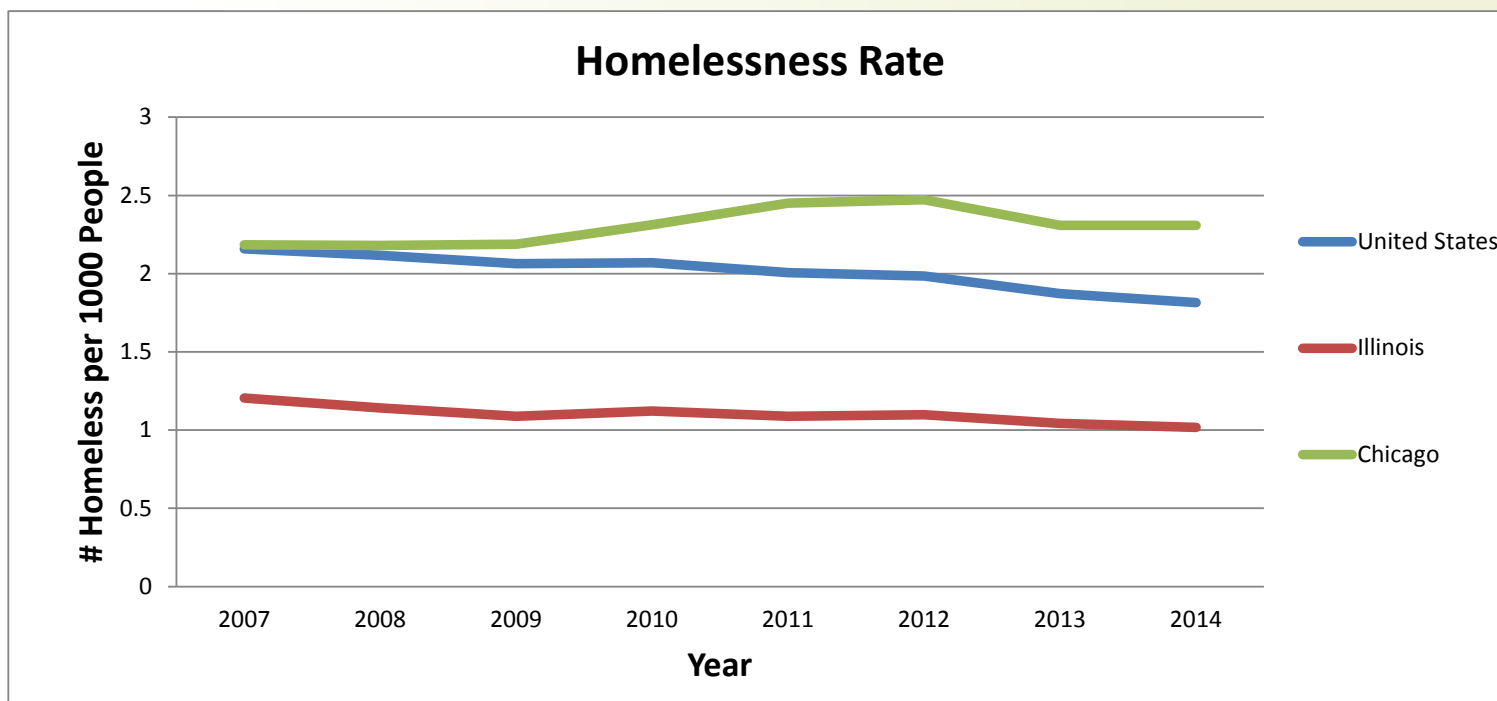
## Homelessness in the U.S.

- 2.3M experience homelessness per year
- 7.4M doubled-up in housing
- Many on brink of homelessness
- Negative outcomes



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# Homelessness: U.S., Chicago





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## How does homelessness happen?

*“Today, most households become homeless as a result of a financial crisis that prevents them from paying the rent, or a domestic conflict that results in one member being ejected or leaving with no resources or plan for housing.”*

--National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2014



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## One Solution: Prevention

- Call centers that provide temporary financial assistance
- Target those on the brink of homelessness





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## Need for Evidence

- 15M calls/year
- Covers 90% of U.S. population
- Little information about impact



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# EVALUATION PARTNERS

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## Evaluation Partners: Overview



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## Independent Evaluator



- LEO at Notre Dame (2012)
- Reducing poverty and improving lives through evidence-based programs and policies
- Top tier impact evaluations

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## Nonprofit Service Provider



- 150 programs, 1M people/year
- **Homelessness Prevention Call Center (HPCC)**
- Over 70,000 calls per year



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## Local HMIS Administrator



- Lead in 2012
- Closed system
  - Data issues
  - Rolled out new Consents and Notice



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# TOP TIER EVIDENCE



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## Definition

- RCT or quasi-experimental design
- Measures the causal impact on key outcomes
- Individual-level data





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# Types of Top Tier Impact Evaluations

- Retrospective
- Prospective



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## Why Top Tier Evidence?

- Cause-and-effect information
- Increasingly feasible – administrative data
  - Reduced costs
  - Time to evidence
  - Objective data – shelter entry



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# **HPCC EVALUATION OVERVIEW**



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## Program: Temporary Financial Assistance

- Chicago residents call 311
- Routed to HPCC



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## HPCC Intake Process

1. Demographic Information –  
All Callers

2. Screen for Eligibility

3. Connect Eligible Callers to Financial  
Assistance – *when funding is available*



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# Key for Study Design

## I. Excess Demand

- More eligible individuals than able to be served

## II. Measurable Outcome of Interest

- Shelter entry for up to 2 years after call



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## Two Groups for Comparison

Individuals in Two Groups the Same – Except for Program

1. Eligible callers, funds available (treatment)
2. Eligible callers, funds not available (control)

How Do We Know the Program is the *Only* Difference?

- **Random** availability of funds
- Test for other differences



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## Top Tier Research Design

- Retrospective
- Calls to HPCC 2010 to 2012 – multi-year
- 4,448 eligible callers
- 58% of callers referred for financial assistance





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# **LINKING DATA SETS TO DETERMINE OUTCOMES**



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## Two Data Sources

- **CCC/HPCC**
  - Demographic information
  - Both Treatment and Control groups
- **All Chicago**
  - Shelter entry



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### Pros:

- One system
- Followed the HUD data standards
- Similar workflow and ease of reporting
- All Chicago and HPCC relationship



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### Barriers:

- Different protocols around Privacy and Consents

### Solution:

- HMIS Notice
- Develop Data Sharing Agreements (DSA)
  - Unique ID's
  - Specific data set
- Required a Institutional Review Board (IRB)



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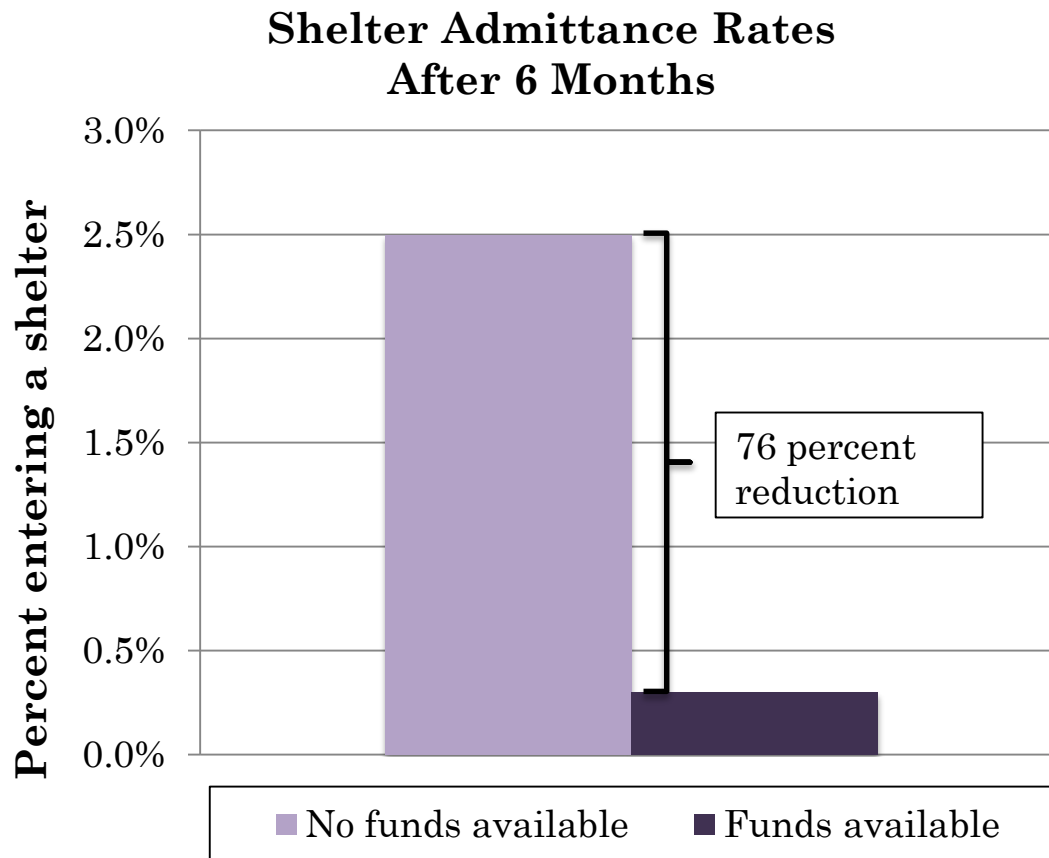
# **EVALUATION FINDINGS**



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# Shelter Entry: Full Sample

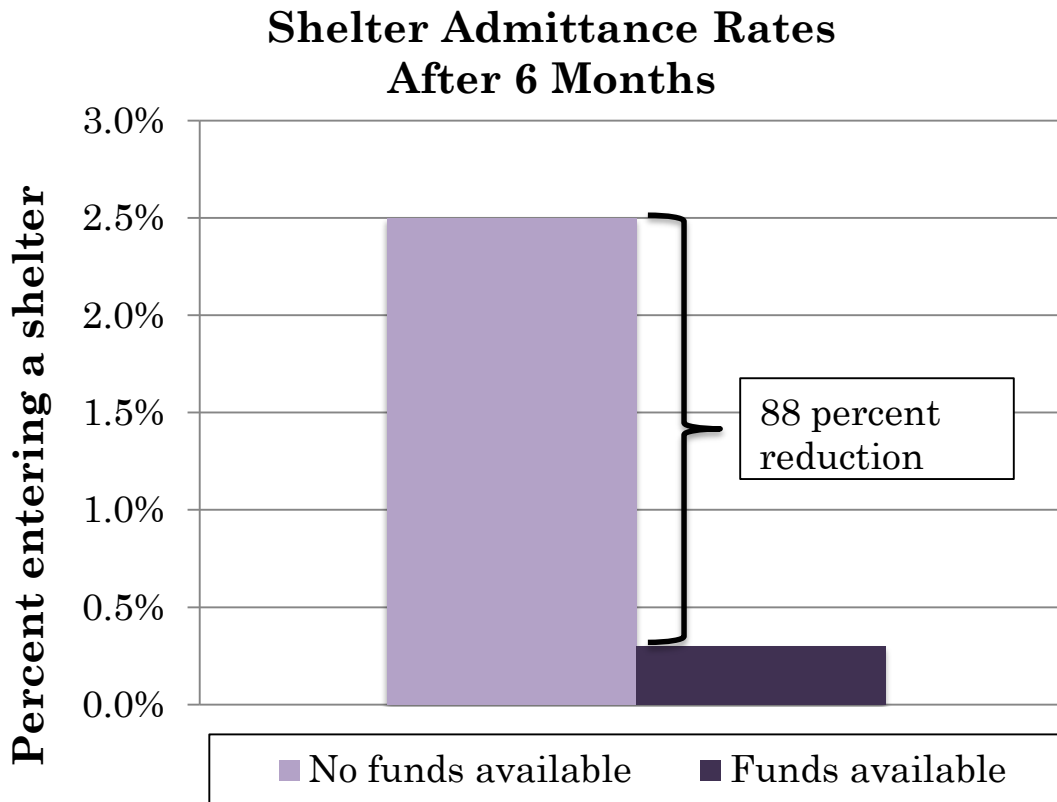




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# Shelter Entry: Very Low-Income

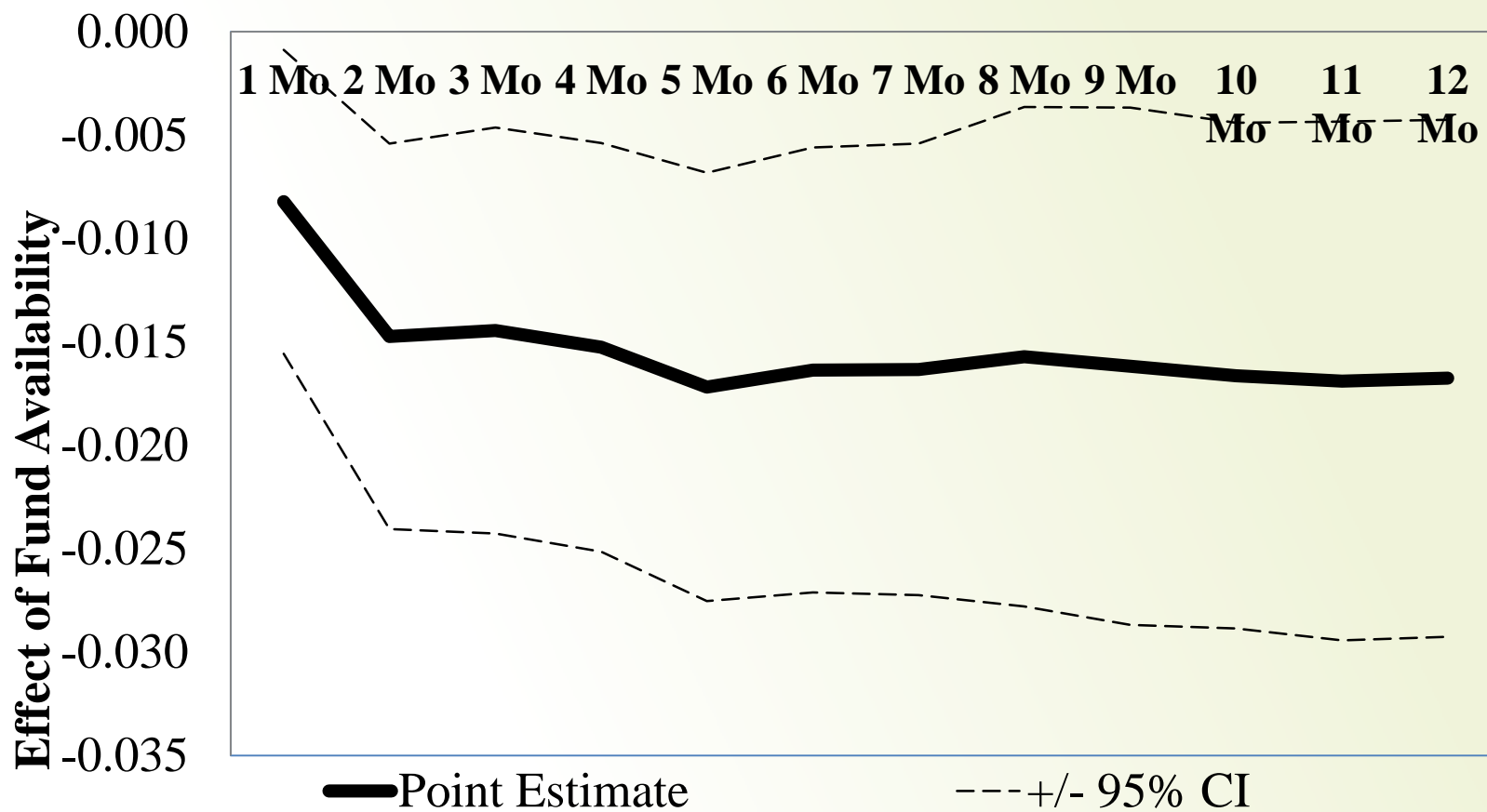




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# Impact Persists: 12 Months



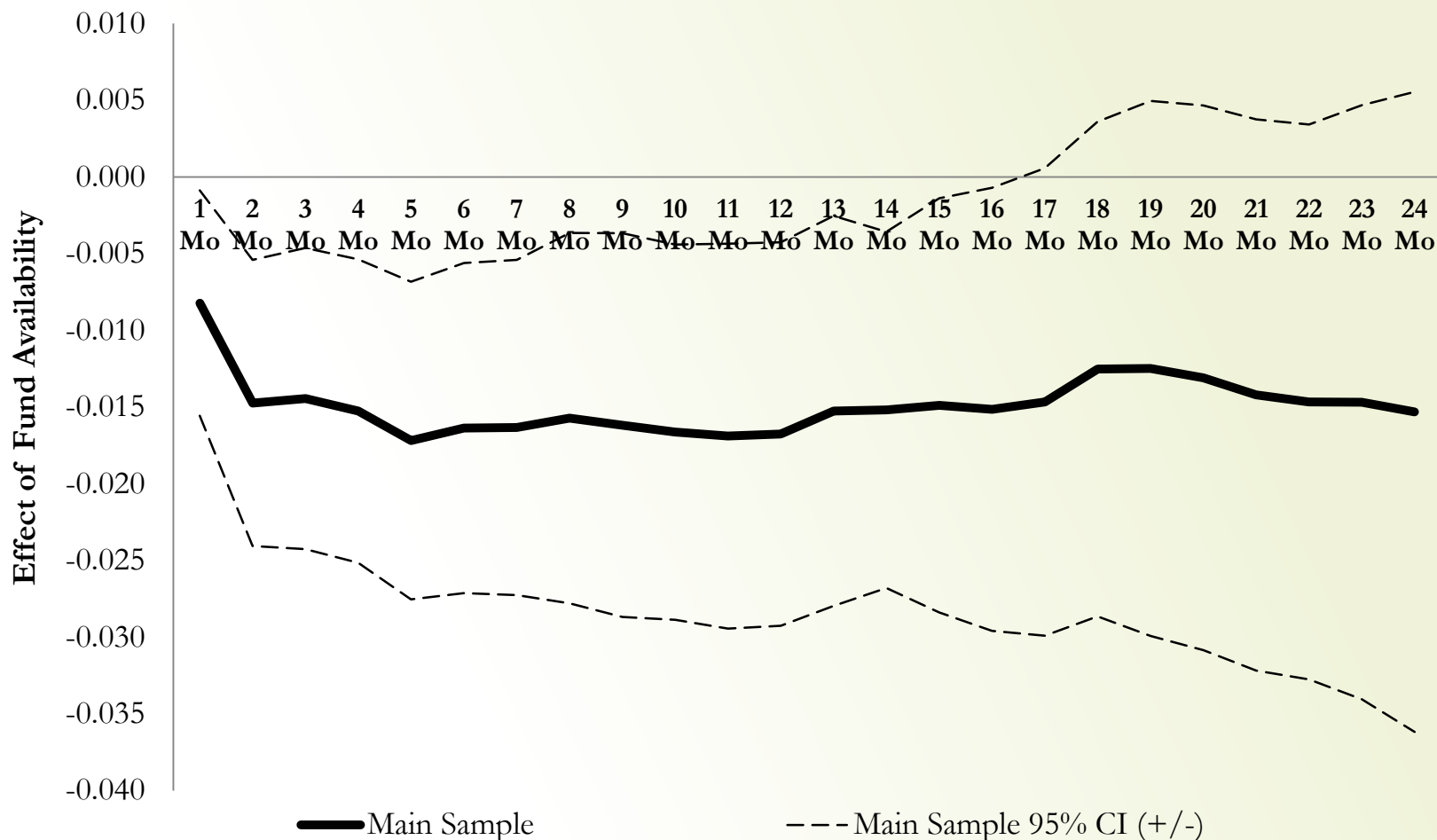




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# Impact Persists: 24 Months





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# Estimated Costs and Benefits

Cost of Preventing a Spell of Homelessness	Cost Savings from Preventing a Spell of Homelessness
Total Eligible Callers: \$10,300	Shelter Costs: \$2,400
<i>Very Low-Income: \$6,800</i>	Public Costs: \$5,100
	Social Costs mortality: \$13,000
	Total: \$20,500



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## Summary of Findings

- Access to financial assistance reduces likelihood of homelessness within 6 months by 76%
- Impact persists for at least 2 years
- Effect is even larger for very low-income
- Significant estimated cost savings



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# CONNECTING EVIDENCE TO DECISION-MAKING



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# Science: Certification, Mainstream



## ECONOMIC POLICY

### The impact of homelessness prevention programs on homelessness

William N. Evans,<sup>1,2,3</sup> James X. Sullivan,<sup>1,3\*</sup> Melanie Wallskog<sup>4</sup>

Despite the prevalence of temporary financial assistance programs for those facing imminent homelessness, there is little evidence of their impact. Using data from Chicago from 2010 to 2012 ( $n = 4448$ ), we demonstrate that the volatile nature of funding availability leads to good-as-random variation in the allocation of resources to individuals seeking assistance. To estimate impacts, we compare families that call when funds are available with those who call when they are not. We find that those calling when funding is available are 76% less likely to enter a homeless shelter. The per-person cost of averting homelessness through financial assistance is estimated as \$10,300 and would be much less with better targeting of benefits to lower-income callers. The estimated benefits, not including many health benefits, exceed \$20,000.



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## Active Information-Sharing

- CCC/HPCC
- Chicago – NPR
- National
  - Hill briefing
  - HUD
  - National Alliance to End Homelessness



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# Relevance to Decision-Making & Outcomes

Decision-Maker	Relevance	Outcomes
<b>Call Centers with Limited Resources</b>	Target very low-income among eligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing/homelessness</li> <li>• Costs</li> </ul>
<b>Practitioners and Policymakers</b>	Temporary financial assistance effective in preventing homelessness	<u>Other</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminal justice contact</li> <li>• Health</li> </ul>



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# Q&A

