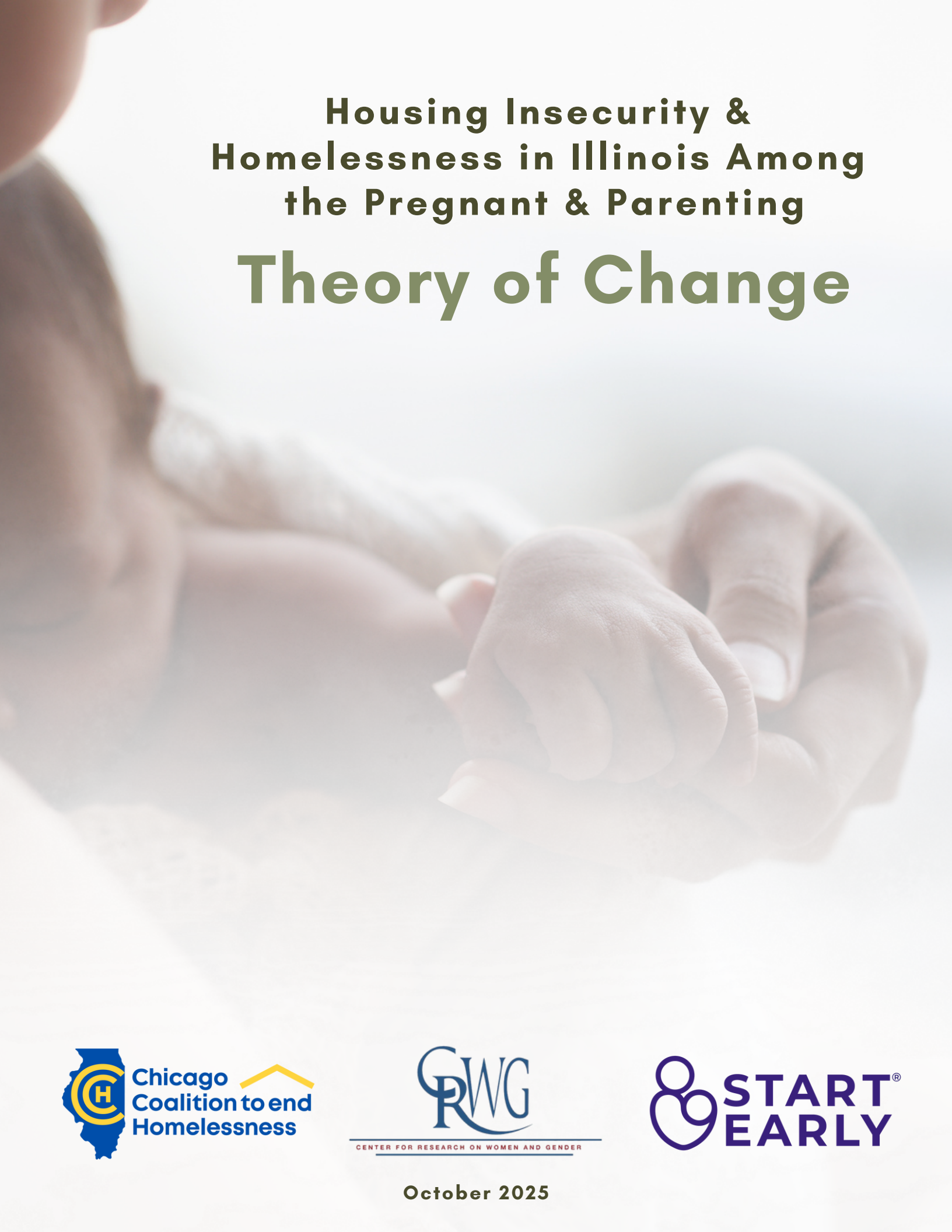




# **Housing Insecurity & Homelessness in Illinois Among the Pregnant & Parenting Theory of Change**



**October 2025**



# ABOUT

## Understanding the Theory of Change

Housing insecurity among pregnant individuals and families with young children is a critical challenge that significantly impacts early childhood development and family wellbeing. When families lack stable housing during pregnancy and early childhood, it affects their access to health care, nutrition and other essential services that support healthy development (Glass-Riveros, Craemer, Sayah, Baumann, Geller, 2024).

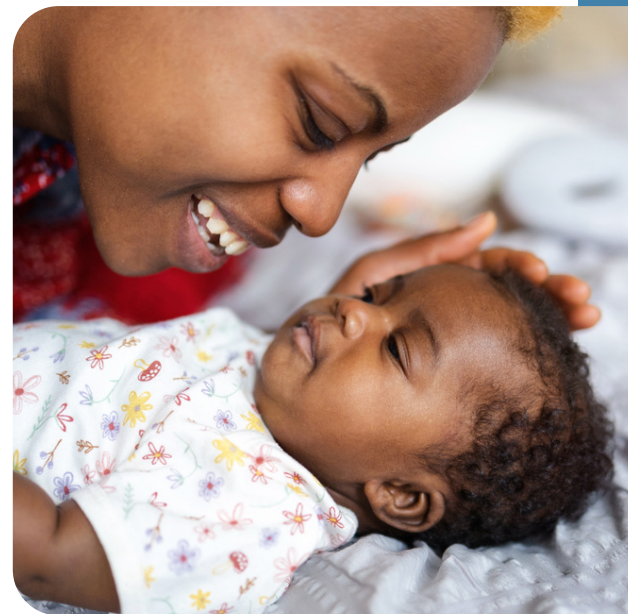
**A Theory of Change is a comprehensive framework that outlines how and why a desired change is expected to happen within a particular context.**

It maps out the relationships between initiatives, outcomes and long-term goals, serving as a roadmap for achieving systemic change (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004). This document presents a Theory of Change for addressing housing insecurity among pregnant and parenting families with children under age 3 in Illinois. The framework is built on three foundational elements.

- 1. Funding Resources**
- 2. Policies**
- 3. Data & Research**

These elements support integrated family-centered services while acknowledging that systemic change requires both practical solutions and fundamental shifts in how we understand and approach homelessness and housing insecurity. Rather than following a linear path, this Theory of Change operates as a continuous improvement process that adapts to changing needs and circumstances while maintaining focus on the ultimate vision of safe, secure and sustainable housing for all families in this population.

This document is dynamic and iterative, designed to evolve as our leadership team gathers insights through ongoing studies of housing insecurity among pregnant and parenting families in Illinois. The framework presented here will be refined and adjusted based on research findings, stakeholder input and emerging best practices.





# OUR VISION

This initiative aims to ensure **safe**, **secure** and **affordable** housing for all pregnant and parenting people and families with children under age 3 in Illinois, regardless of circumstance. Such that all housing is:

- Located in their **desired community**
- Aligned with their family's **specific needs**
- **Sustainable** in the long-term





# THE FOUNDATION

## For Achieving Sustainable Housing

Three key, interconnected factors form **the foundation** for achieving sustainable housing solutions.

**Funding & Resources:** Coordinated and adequate funding streams across federal, state, local and community levels

**Policies:** Federal, state and local policies that are informed by lived experiences and research

**Data & Research:** Comprehensive data infrastructure that enables tracking and understanding of the target population

These elements can work together to create a continuously improving system that prioritizes housing security for pregnant and parenting families.

**Funding & Resources**

**Policies**

**Data & Research**





## Funding & Resources

The foundation requires consistent and adequate federal, state, local and community funding streams that are coordinated and simplified for both families and providers to access. The funding should have less restrictive eligibility requirements and be regularly updated based on the needs of families facing housing insecurity. This foundation adapts to political and external environments while maintaining focus on housing security for pregnant and parenting families.

Effective funding streams and resources must be:

- Sustainable and sufficient to meet housing needs for pregnant and parenting families
- Streamlined and coordinated for efficient access by families and service providers
- Structured with flexible eligibility requirements
- Regularly evaluation and adjusted based on evolving community needs



## Policies

Federal, state and local policies must be shaped by both the voices of families with lived experiences of housing insecurity and evidence from research and data. Systems leaders, advocates and community leaders work collaboratively with providers and those facing housing insecurity to develop policies that create sustainable housing systems and support.

Policy development requires:

- Direct input from families with lived experiences of housing insecurity
- Integration of research findings and empirical data



## Data & Research

A robust data and research infrastructure is essential for informed decision-making and identifying service gaps. This includes:

- Consistent, reliable cross-sector data collection
- A comprehensive statewide data infrastructure spanning multiple sectors
- Dedicated research funding to evaluate program effectiveness, identifying gaps, success and areas for improvement

**These foundational elements enable the construction of an integrated, family-centered support system that creates pathways to sustainable housing and future stability.**



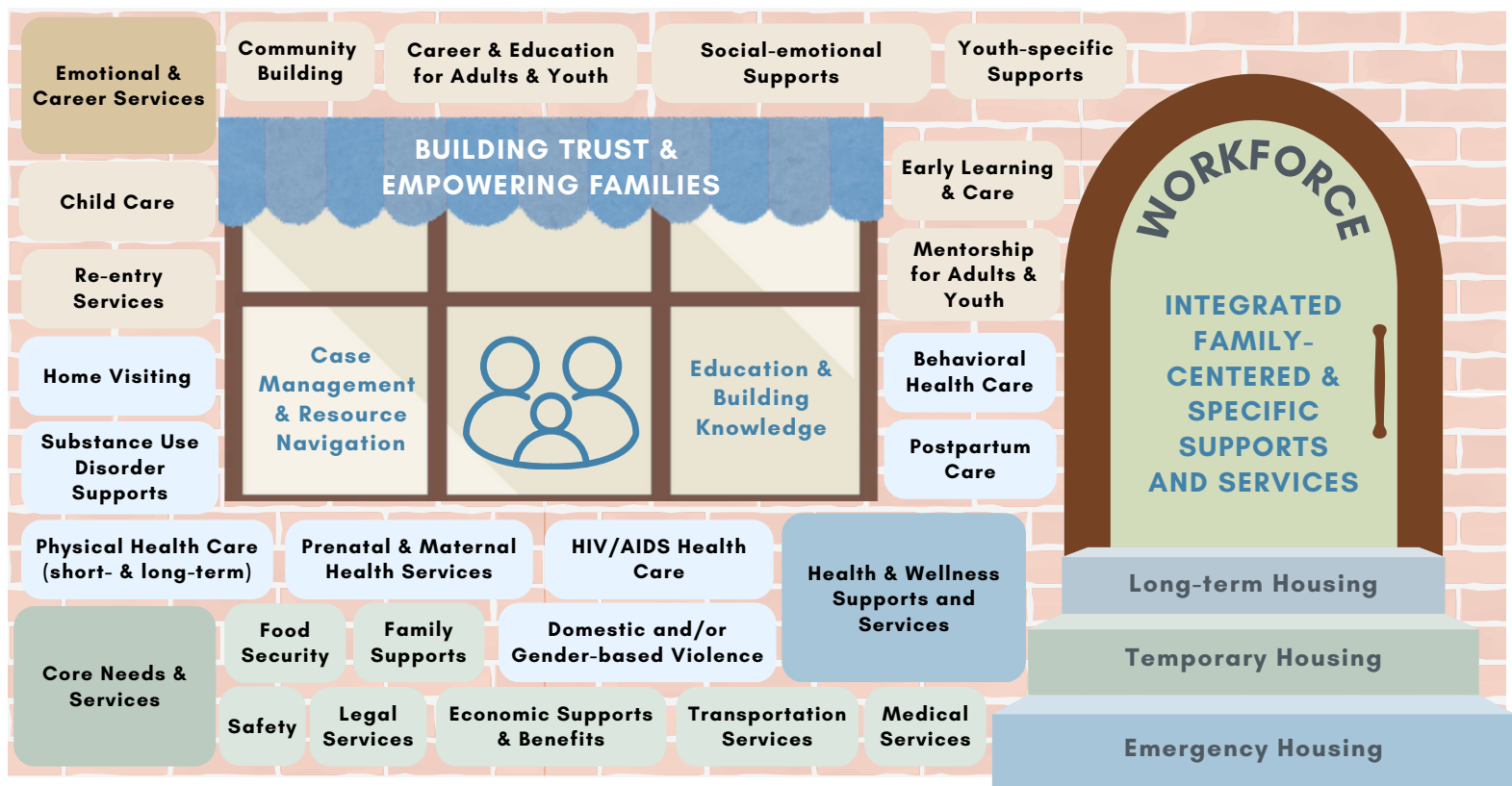
# BUILDING THE HOUSE

## INTEGRATED FAMILY-CENTERED & SPECIFIC SUPPORT AND SERVICES

The approach recognizes that pregnant and parenting families facing housing insecurity have complex needs that require comprehensive, integrated family-centered supports and services. Services include assistance with core needs and services, health and wellness supports and services and educational and workforce development services. Today, a statewide portal helps track families and determine resource eligibility, while trained staff help families navigate from emergency to long-term housing situations.

Recognizing the complex needs of pregnant and parenting families facing housing insecurity, our approach integrates comprehensive support services, including:

- Addressing social determinants of health including safety, nutrition, transportation, medical care and wellness services
- Supporting families' transition from emergency to temporary and long-term housing
- Building trust and empowering families and service providers
- Equipping the workforce with necessary skills, specialized training and resources
- Maintaining a centralized statewide portal for tracking family data and resource coordination and eligibility





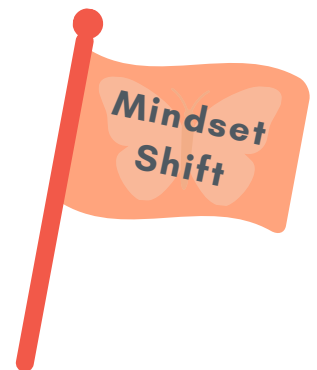
## MINDSET CHANGE

The initiative seeks to transform how decision-makers at the systems level understand and approach homelessness. This includes recognizing that homelessness is complex and doesn't have a single definition. The approach emphasizes trusting families to know their needs and focuses on creating pathways to long-term affordable housing, wellness and generational wealth.

Success requires transforming how decision-makers conceptualize and address housing insecurity.

This transformation includes:

- Recognition that housing insecurity manifests differently across populations
- Adoption of flexible, responsive approaches
- Centering family expertise in decision-making
- Focus on creating pathways to long-term stability and generational wealth



## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This Theory of Change operates as a continuous improvement process rather than a linear progression. It adapts to political climates, environmental factors and community needs. An advisory board from across Illinois sectors will develop and implement ongoing initiatives to achieve the vision.

Implementation requires:

- Ongoing assessment and adaptation
- Responsiveness to political and environmental changes
- Regular stakeholder engagement
- Integration of emerging best practices
- Strategic planning across sectors to achieve our vision

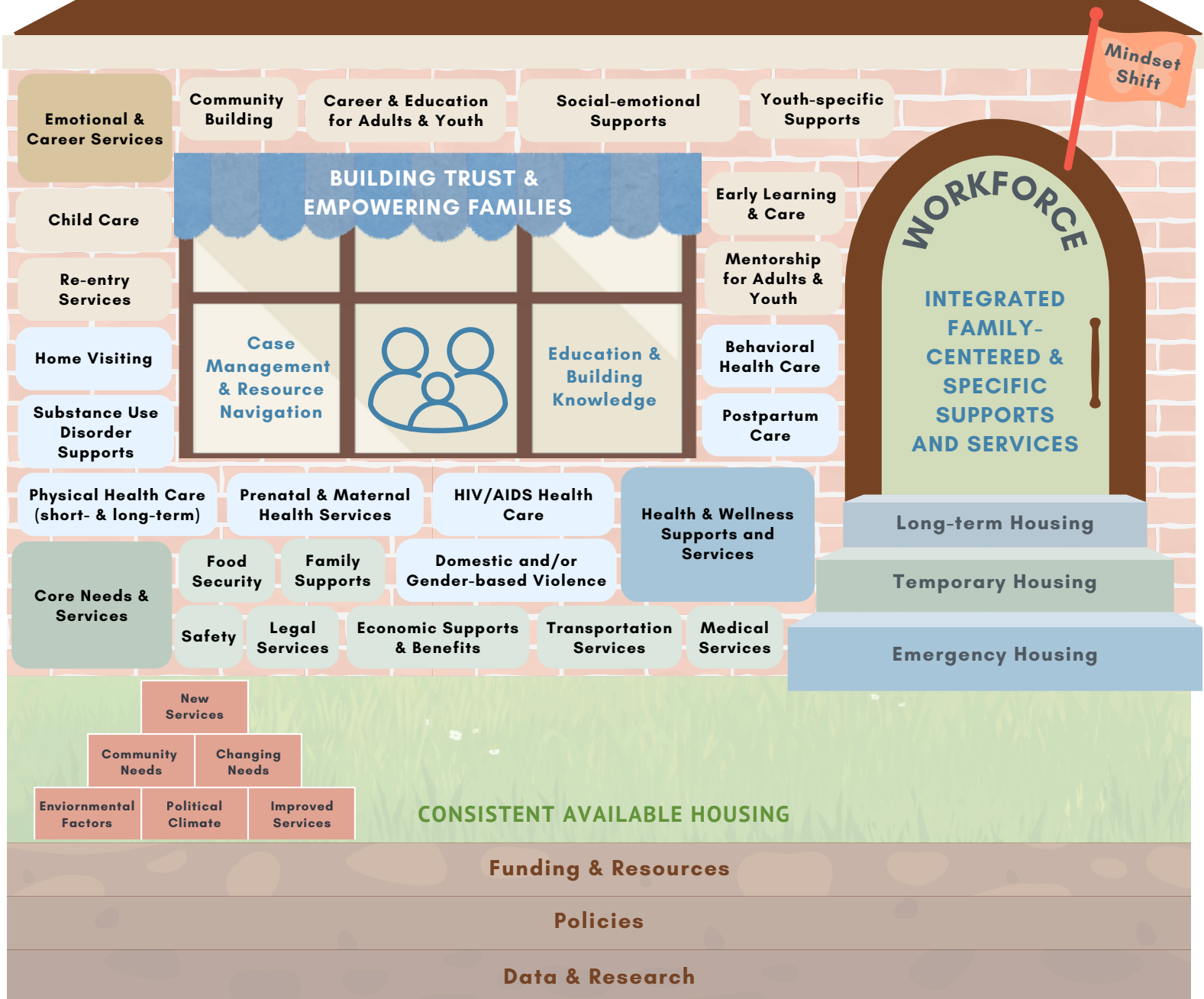




# WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE

## OUR VISION:

SAFE, SECURE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL  
PREGNANT AND PARENTING PEOPLE AND FAMILIES WITH  
CHILDREN UNDER AGE 3 IN ILLINOIS



## References

Glass-Riveros E., Craemer K., Sayah L., Baumann K., Geller S. (2024), Pregnant and parenting while homeless: The Intersection of Maternal Health and Housing Insecurity. Report.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2004). Theory of change: A practical tool for action, results and learning. Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/resources/theory-of-change>

