

Family Eviction and Housing Stability Convening

Children's Trust of Alachua County | Summary and Potential Next Steps | May 2026

The Children's Trust of Alachua County convened a focused group of community partners to discuss family eviction, youth homelessness, and housing instability affecting children, youth, and families in Alachua County. The session was facilitated by Frank Wells and Traci Blue of Bright Community Trust, with local eviction data presented by Anne Ray of the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies at the University of Florida.

The purpose of the convening was not to position the Children's Trust as a housing agency. Rather, the discussion focused on where housing instability directly affects children and families, where existing systems are falling short, and what recommendations the Children's Trust Board may wish to consider sharing with the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners and other community partners.

Core framing: CTAC can play a valuable role by elevating the child and family impacts of eviction, convening partners, supporting family-centered prevention strategies, and helping inform County-level recommendations without becoming the housing agency itself.

Key Findings and Points of Discussion

- **Prevention must happen before an eviction filing.** Participants emphasized that requiring a notice or court filing before assistance can be harmful because eviction records create long-term barriers to subsidized and private rental housing.
- **One-time rent assistance is often insufficient.** Families may need sustained stabilization, including case management, childcare, transportation, employment assistance, legal support, and flexible funds over several months or up to a year.
- **Wage insufficiency and the benefits cliff are central barriers.** Many families are working but cannot afford rent, childcare, transportation, and basic needs, while modest wage increases can cause loss of benefits before a family is truly stable.
- **The service system is difficult to navigate.** Families face multiple applications, duplicative paperwork, strict eligibility rules, document requirements, online forms, and limited support completing applications during crisis.
- **Case management and navigation capacity are inadequate.** Existing agencies are doing important work but are stretched thin; adding capacity requires supervision, training, data systems, and organizational infrastructure.
- **Rural families face added access barriers.** Transportation limitations make it harder to reach employment, childcare, schools, benefits, appointments, and providers.
- **Family Resource Centers are promising access points.** FRCs and community resource navigation sites are trusted, place-based front doors that could help with eviction prevention, benefits navigation, legal referrals, computer/application support, and coordinated family stabilization.
- **Legal support, tenant education, and landlord engagement are needed.** Participants discussed Know Your Rights clinics, legal aid partnerships, property manager education, and the need to engage landlords and the apartment association even where relationships may be challenging.
- **Housing stability should be framed as child well-being and economic development.** Eviction affects school attendance, child development, parental stress, workforce participation, and local economic stability.

Potential Next Steps and Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the discussion and may be refined by the Children's Trust Board before being shared with the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners.

- 1. Continue regular cross-sector convening on family housing stability.** Participants appeared to agree that the initial convening was valuable and that continued, structured dialogue would be fruitful. CTAC could consider engaging Bright Community Trust to facilitate a series of follow-up meetings, building on Bright's experience convening eviction prevention and housing stability stakeholders in other Florida communities. Topics could include rental assistance design, Family Resource Center integration, legal services, landlord engagement, youth homelessness, rural access, workforce and childcare connections, and data tracking.
- 2. Develop a coordinated family housing stability strategy.** CTAC and County partners could work toward a shared framework that clarifies roles across agencies and identifies how families should move through the system. This could include common screening, shared intake or referral protocols, warm handoffs, and clearer pathways among FRCs, legal aid, rental assistance providers, schools, homeless services, workforce partners, and public benefit programs.

3. Explore earlier and more flexible eviction prevention funding. County and community partners could consider assistance that can be triggered before formal eviction filing, such as by a three-day notice, documented financial instability, sudden income loss, benefit disruption, medical crisis, or other indicators of imminent housing instability. Flexible funds could also cover deposits, utility turn-ons, application fees, late fees, document replacement, and similar stabilization costs.

4. Strengthen Family Resource Centers as family housing stability access points. FRCs and community navigation sites could be supported as trusted front doors for families experiencing housing instability, with navigators trained in eviction prevention resources, benefits applications, legal referrals, school stability supports, and rental assistance screening. Computer lab and application assistance could reduce barriers to accessing help.

5. Invest in sustained case management for high-need families. A smaller number of families may benefit from longer-term, intensive case management paired with flexible supports for rent, childcare, transportation, employment training, legal assistance, and benefits navigation. This approach would prioritize durable stabilization rather than short-term crisis response.

6. Engage additional partners and use data plus family stories. Future convenings should include County and municipal leaders, schools, Santa Fe College, UF, major employers, workforce and economic development partners, landlords, legal services, transportation partners, and philanthropy. Local data should be paired with family stories to show both the scale of the issue and its direct impact on children and caregivers.

Conclusion

The convening confirmed that family eviction and youth homelessness in Alachua County require a coordinated, cross-sector response. CTAC's most immediate opportunity is to continue structured convening and help move the community from shared problem identification toward actionable recommendations with clear roles for CTAC, Alachua County, service providers, schools, legal partners, Family Resource Centers, philanthropy, landlords, and other stakeholders.