



What is Sure Steps?

Sure Steps was established in 2017 by YFS Ltd in collaboration with Logan Together, and funded by the Department of Housing and Public Works. The program utilises a family coaching approach to engage and work with families living in public housing who have a child under the age of eight and are experiencing tenancy difficulties. Family coaches encourage parents to identify goals to give their child the best possible start in life, and help parents take steps to pursue these goals.



Family coaching

Sure Steps was established to test new ways of working with highly vulnerable families, with the aim of disrupting the inter-generational cycle of poverty, trauma and disadvantage.

Family coaching is an emerging approach with demonstrated effectiveness.

Family coaching:

- is whole of family focused, parent-led, strengths-based and solutions-focused
- is based on building relationships and skills as the foundation for change
- recognises that change is a non-linear process
- draws on different tools and techniques to suit families' needs and readiness for change
- requires coaches to adopt different roles in support of families
- requires programs and funders to enable flexible, individualised support.

Family goals

Goal setting is a key technique for supporting families to make changes.

125 family goals were recorded, which cut across multiple life domains and related to different family members.

Goals most commonly related to tenancy issues, engagement in early learning, access to counselling and managing money.

The majority of goals were at least partly achieved. Goals that were not achieved were due to changes in priorities or circumstances.

69% GOALS MOSTLY OR FULLY ACHIEVED

21% GOALS PARTLY ACHIEVED

10% GOALS SLIGHTLY OR NOT ACHIEVED



Program evaluation

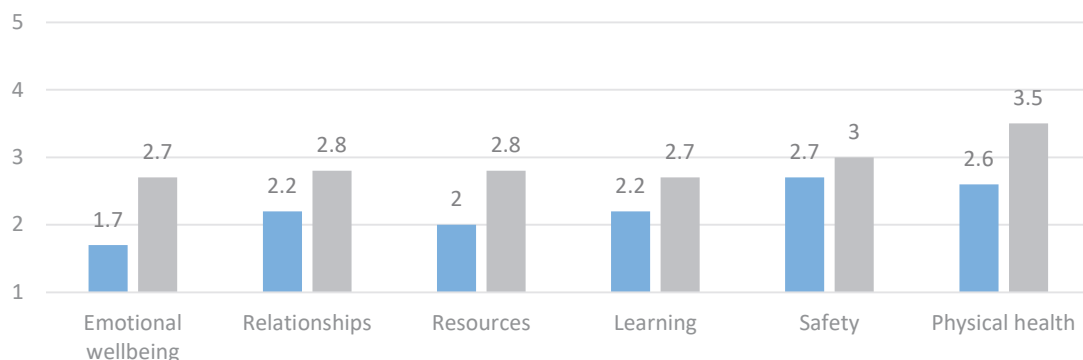
The 2019 evaluation focused on program implementation, outcomes and learnings. A mixed method approach was adopted which included:

- interviews with staff, participating parents and stakeholders
- review of program data from 1 July 2018 - 30 September 2019.

Changing the trajectory for vulnerable families

Client Outcomes – Tuning Into Little Ones Wheel

A 32% improvement in overall family wellbeing was recorded using the Tune Into Little Ones Wheel, a tool that assesses family wellbeing across six domains using a five point scale from difficulty to strength. Average ratings increased from 2.2 out of 5 to a final score of 2.9 out of 5.



Notably, families stated that without assistance from Sure Steps, they would be worse off than when they started. This indicates that Sure Steps has helped to establish a positive trajectory from what would otherwise have been negative.

Parent voices

Clients appreciated the support provided by Sure Steps and described feeling happier, more confident, more independent, less stressed and more hopeful.

"Very meaningful for someone to listen and help you"

"I'm in the driver's seat but I still need them in the passenger seat"

"[Sure Steps] helps me get my life on track so I can see what my future holds for myself and my kids"

Challenges

Common experiences include:

- **Crisis and complexity** – including near universal experience of domestic and family violence, and widespread experiences of police involvement, homelessness, mental health, child safety involvement, substance abuse and trauma.
- **Service system barriers** - many families needed services were either non-existent or so hard to access that they may as well not exist.¹

Key strengths of the program model

- the **flexibility** to tailor the approach to suit families and move at their pace and discretion
- the ability to **understand complexity** and work across the service system
- **collaboration** with the Logan Housing Service Centre
- effective **engagement strategies**, including:
 - extended engagement period
 - a non-judgmental and empathetic approach
 - putting parents in the driver's seat
 - being reliable and responsive to family's needs
 - being trauma-informed
 - operating with flexibility – on the family's terms.

Key considerations going forward

Informal connections – High levels of social isolation were reported. Relationships are essential to the human experience. They provide a sense of connection and belonging, an opportunity to learn and grow and a source of support in difficult times. There is a need for a more intentional focus on building informal social connections and capital, beyond service referrals.

Service closure - Long support periods mean only a small number of Sure Steps families have completed service. Closure processes need to be explored in more detail, particularly:

- how to recognise signs a family is ready to close
- ways to skill parents and support them to feel comfortable to discuss closure
- what referral pathways exist for families a step up or step down from the service if they need a different type or level of support.



For more information contact communications@yfs.org.au

¹ More information is available at: [Sure Steps Families Accessing Service Systems Project](#)