

CAMEO HOUSE EVALUATION



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Introduction

Cameo House is a residential program in San Francisco for women and children, operated by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJCJ) and funded by the San Francisco Adult Probation Department (APD) as a part of San Francisco's implementation of AB109 (the Public Safety Realignment Act of 2011). Cameo House offers justice-involved women a place to live with their children to serve out their jail sentences and/or transition back to the community without risk of homelessness. In theory, Cameo House can serve up to 11 women and 22 children at a time. It is one of the only residential options for justice-involved women with children over the age of 3 in San Francisco. The program was designed and is run by women with lived experience in the criminal justice system. A small staff support program participants in achieving individualized goals, such as gaining or retaining custody of their children, getting sober and maintaining sobriety, enrolling in educational or vocational programs, finding employment, and establishing stable housing.

This evaluation of Cameo House was commissioned by CJCJ in order to 1) capture and document key achievements, 2) understand barriers to implementation, and 3) cultivate continuous program improvement. The evaluation relies upon several data sources:

- Program tracking data from the summer of 2018 through the summer of 2020
- Program Satisfaction Survey data from 2019
- Interviews with CJCJ staff (3), APD staff (2), and Cameo House Participants (4)

This evaluation is broken down into five sections: 1) Program Overview, 2) Overview of Participants, 3) Program Achievements and Strengths, 4) Barriers and Areas for Growth, and 5) Recommendations.

Program Overview

Cameo House has been managed by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJCJ) since 2012. Fundamental to Cameo House is the recognition that people who have lived through challenges similar to those of participants are uniquely suited to support participants toward successful outcomes. Cameo House provides women and their children a safe place to live, as well as a number of structured program components and expectations.

Cameo House Origins

In 2011, the California Assembly passed AB109, designed to divert people convicted of certain felonies from the Department of Corrections (state prison) and place them under the authority of local counties. AB109 allocated funds to counties to pay for the increased jail population and to fund and/or develop community-based alternatives to jail, including rehabilitation and reentry programs. Around this time, Cameo House, which had been operated by the Northern California Service League (NCSL), was taken over by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJCJ). Under NCSL, Cameo House had been funded by the San Francisco Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Human Services Agency (HSA), and essentially served as a homeless shelter for women and children. CJCJ's expertise in criminal justice and the establishment of AB109, however, created an opportunity for Cameo House to become an alternative sentencing and residential rehabilitation program. CJCJ approached the San Francisco Adult Probation Department's (APD's) Chief Probation Officer at the time, pointing out that there were no other residential programs designed to support justice-involved women and their children. APD recognized the merits of this idea and responded by funding Cameo House under AB109.

Initially, Cameo House followed a traditional clinical model, relying on national experts to consult on how to best serve the new justice-involved clientele and their children. Cameo House had retained the staff from its days as a homeless shelter, and enlisted a new director who had the requisite graduate degrees, but whose personal experiences did not resemble those of Cameo House residents. The program struggled to find its new identity, the director quit after less than a year, and APD began to apply a high level of scrutiny in program oversight. This moment in Cameo House history set up a dynamic that continues to affect the relationship between APD and Cameo House to this day.

Frustrated by these early transitional challenges, in 2015 CJCJ moved Cameo House in a different direction by hiring a new director. Shirley Lamarr was a former Delancey Street program participant, mentor, and leader. She was ready to enter retirement, but CJCJ entreated her to take on restructuring Cameo House as a concluding career achievement. She herself had lived through substance abuse, criminal offending, incarceration, and recovery (Dekker, 2015), and carried that lived experience into revamping the entire Cameo House program. Ms. Lamar brought in new staff and worked to reshape the relationship with APD to increase trust and loosen their strict approach to program oversight.

The value of lived experience has increasingly been gaining recognition – practitioners and academics alike are acknowledging that people with lived experience in the criminal justice system offer an unparalleled brand of wisdom in supporting those currently involved (Lopez-Humphreys, 2019; Reingle Gonzales, Rana, et al, 2019). CJCJ and Cameo House are deeply committed to this approach in favor of those designed by academic “experts” who are less likely to have first-hand knowledge of the challenges participants face.

After running the program for a couple of years, Ms. Lamarr recruited and was succeeded by Rebecca Jackson, also a veteran of Delancey Street. Ms. Jackson has continued in the leadership style established by Lamarr, grounded in her own lived experience in the criminal justice system as well as the tenets of peer coaching and leadership.

SHIRLEY LAMARR & REBECCA JACKSON



After a childhood truncated by teen pregnancy and domestic violence, Shirley Lamarr embarked upon a self-proclaimed "journey of drug addiction, violence and crime." In 1988, she joined the Delancey Street community, got clean, and learned how to use her own experience to support others. The co-founder of the Choices program, and the founder of Mz. Shirlez Transitional Housing Centre, she dedicated the second half of her life to helping people end the cycle of addiction and crime, an expertise that she later lent to Cameo House. Her story is told in *Not Without Scars: The Story of Shirley LaMarr* by Jim Dekker, published in 2015 by CreateSpace Independent.



First arrested at 17, Rebecca Jackson spent over 15 years in and out of county jails until finally landing in state prison in 2004. When she was offered the opportunity to go to Delancey Street Foundation in lieu of prison, she took it. For 12 years, under the tutelage of strong women mentors at Delancey, Rebecca learned skills and embraced a dedication to help others. Since 2017, Rebecca has been the Director of CJCJ's Cameo House, applying the hard-fought wisdom of her years to help keep families together, and help women achieve their potential.

Partnership with Adult Probation Department

The San Francisco Adult Probation Department (APD) funds the operation of Cameo House, covering the costs of staffing, maintenance of the residence, program expenses and supplies, and residents' living expenses. Cameo House occupies a timeworn 11-bedroom home in a rapidly-gentrifying neighborhood. Because the number of residents varies, the contract with APD is structured for cost reimbursement rather than a fixed sum. For each contract period, CJCJ submits a bid and estimated budget which details how CJCJ will spend APD funds to meet the shared goals of supporting system-involved women and their children. APD approves the bid and estimated budget when it renews CJCJ's contract.

The arrangement between CJCJ and APD for the operation of Cameo House includes an expectation that Cameo House accommodate no less than 7 women who are on probation in San Francisco. In order to facilitate this requirement, APD is expected to refer prospective program participants to Cameo House, and Cameo House uses eligibility criteria to screen participants into the program.

Program Structure

Cameo House is designed as a 12-24 month residential program. Women live there full-time with their children, as custody arrangements allow (e.g., some women have full custody, while others may only have biweekly overnight visits, etc.). Upon arrival at Cameo House, all women go through an Initial Transition Phase – for the first 30 days they may have no visitors, and for the first two weeks they may not have cell phones. Throughout their time in the program, program participants are limited in the personal belongings they may keep at the house, including computers which must be approved by Cameo House staff. Program participants are expected to perform household chores, including dinner preparation, which rotates among participants – participants and children eat dinner family style Monday through Thursday, with more flexibility on weekend nights.

During the day, many of the women go to work. Participants are supported to find work or to enroll in school or vocational programs, depending on their personal goals and where they are in life (e.g., a mother with a new infant may not be interested in full-time employment for several months). Mornings are spent getting ready for work and, for women with children in residence, preparing children for school – each woman prepares breakfast for herself and her children independently with food purchased by Cameo House. Monday through Thursday the women are expected to be home by 5pm, so women are encouraged to find work with regular daytime hours. On weekdays evenings Cameo House offers programming from 6pm to 7pm, including parenting classes, trauma/safe coping, anger management, addiction recovery, and parenting classes – these are mandatory for all of the women at Cameo House. After 10pm, Cameo House observes quiet hours.

Children living at Cameo House also receive various supports. Cameo House staff recognize that each child has their own needs based on their age, history, and individual resiliencies and challenges. By creating supervised mother-and-child activities, Cameo House staff observe dynamics and determine what sort of family support is appropriate. Many of the children need primary care, and case managers facilitate access to that. Cameo House often helps women apply for the Children's Council through which they can access free or low-cost childcare for toddlers and preschool age children. Often children have experienced trauma, are coping with the forced separation from their mothers, have fears about Child Protective Services (CPS) involvement, or are managing other anxieties. Cameo House helps connect children to therapeutic services, extra-curricular activities, and enrollment in school and after school programs. Cameo House staff also ensure that children have transportation to services and

activities, and purchases and maintains an array of toys, games, art supplies, toddler beds, and other materials necessary to create a developmentally-appropriate environment for children. Cameo House has built its back yard into a safe and welcoming play space for children of varying ages.

Overview of Participants

Many of the women who live at Cameo House are facing multiple challenges. The majority are women of color who have faced systemic racism that pervades American culture, educational institutions, employment practices, and the juvenile and criminal justice systems; many have faced homelessness; most have survived trauma and abuse; and some suffer from depression. For many of the women, these complex and overlapping struggles result in depression, posttraumatic stress symptoms, and unsafe coping, including self-harm, abusive/destructive relationships, and substance use/abuse.

Struggles with addiction are very common among Cameo House participants. Cameo House’s first obligation is to ensure the safety of the women and children living there, so there is an expectation that all residents staying clean and sober and not bring any alcohol or substances into the house – women are asked to submit to drug testing as a condition of program participation.

All adult participants are justice-involved women (the children who live full-time or part-time at Cameo House are currently not recognized as participants under the APD contract). Most Cameo House residents (63%) have children. A majority of participants identify as Black/African American and most are in their twenties or early thirties (73%).

The figures below were drawn from records of women living at Cameo House from June 2018 through August 2020 and show the racial and ethnic breakdown and age of these 41 residents.

Race/Ethnicity	#	%
Black	23	56%
White	8	20%
Latina/x	7	17%
Other/Unknown	3	7%
Grand Total	41	100%

Age	#	%
Under 25	14	34%
25-32	16	39%
33-41	11	27%
Total	41	100%

The following length of stay figures show an overall average length of stay of 154 days (22 weeks; or 5 months). Notably, women with children tend to have a longer average length of stay than women without children (208 days vs. 60 days). It is also worth noting that participant age and length of stay are positively correlated (Pearsons R = .33; p<.05), meaning that, very generally speaking, younger participants have a tendency to leave the program earlier, while older participants tend to stay longer.

Length of Stay (LOS)	#	%
Under four months	11	71%
Seven months or more	12	29%
Total	41	100%

Program Achievements & Strengths

The program tracks a number of outcomes for the women who live at Cameo House, such as progress toward employment, educational goals, stable housing, custody, and substance abuse reduction. An analysis of these data points to substantive program achievements. This section presents data which show a high percentage of participants experiencing one or more major program goals and majorities

reporting satisfaction with important program aspects. This section also includes testimony from participants which illustrates the depths of these impacts, and statements from APD staff which point to Cameo House’s essential role in the community.

Cameo House Program Outcomes

Cameo House staff maintain frequent daily contact with participants and keep notes on each woman’s progress toward her goals. Staff provide hands-on support as women move through court processes, enroll in educational programs, apply for jobs, etc. Additionally, Cameo House staff regularly conduct drug tests to help motivate women to stay clean and to ensure that the house is a safe environment for the women and children who live there. As such, Cameo House staff have comprehensive records of how residents are doing in multiple areas of their lives. For this evaluation, Cameo House staff compiled and provided to the external evaluator a participant dataset that includes the outcomes listed in the table below.

Many women enter Cameo House with multiple needs – all are in need of stable housing and expected to successfully graduate from the program, most enter with substance abuse issues, and all are seeking either employment or education opportunities (or both). Additionally, for some, a key aim is to resolve custody issues or establish reunification with their children.

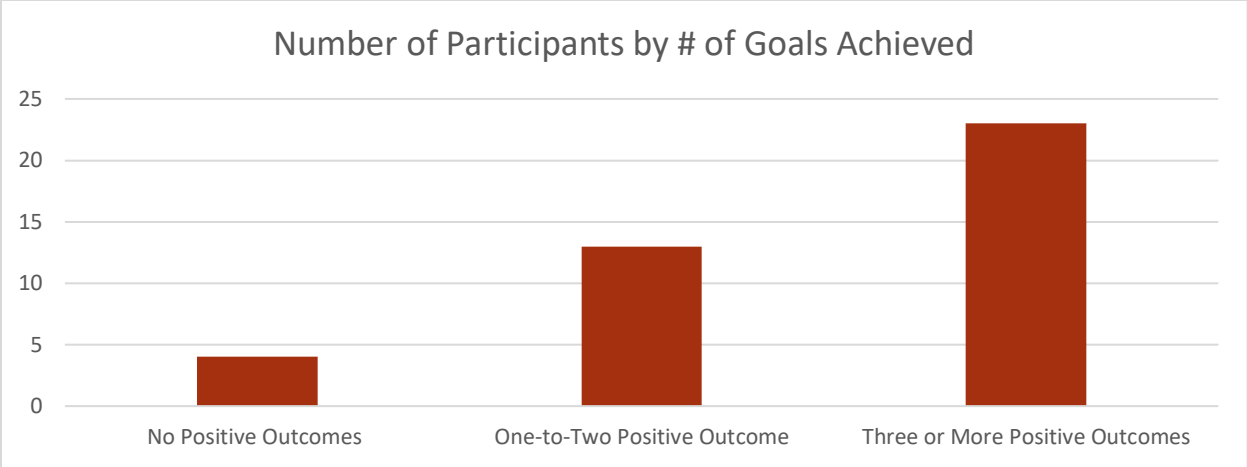
Outcomes for Former Cameo House Residents (2018-20)	# of Participants Achieving Outcome	# of Participants Aiming for Outcome	Percent Achieved
Substance abuse reduction	26	26	100%
Enrollment in education program	21	36	58%
Obtaining stable housing	18	36	50%
Employment	18	36	50%
Custody	6	14	43%
Successful program graduation	12	36	33%

The adjacent table and the graph below represent data from 36 participants entering Cameo House June 2018 or after and exiting by August, 2020 (active participants are excluded as they are still working toward outcomes). The number of

participants whose individualized goals included that particular outcome is listed along with the number that achieved the goal and the percentage (# achieved/# aiming for goal).

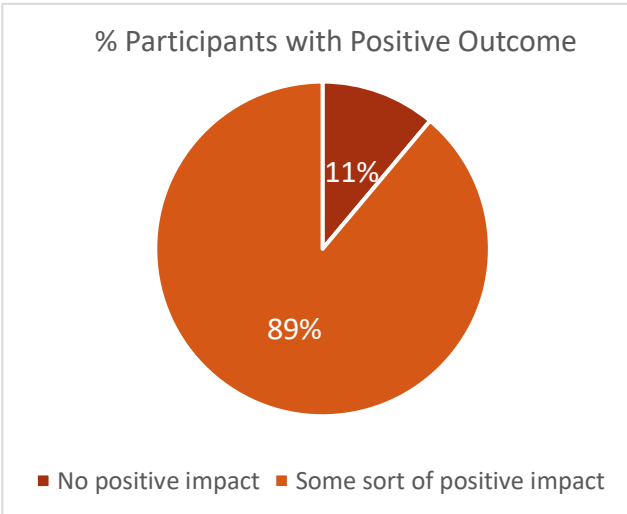
These data show that many women achieve a range of goals at Cameo House. A majority of women entering Cameo House are struggling with addiction (26 out of 36, or 72%), all of whom showed measurable reductions in substance use during their time at Cameo House. While the aim of the program is to achieve abstinence, staff and participants both acknowledge that relapse is common in addiction recovery, and that participants are given multiple chances if they test positive for drugs, as called for under the city’s harm reduction policies and CJJ practice.

Some women are able to accomplish multiple goals at Cameo House. The table below shows the number of participants according to the number of goals they achieved (from zero to six).



Only four (11%) of the 36 women in the dataset have no positive outcomes on record – the vast majority (89%) have at least one positive outcome (among the following: Positive Program Exit + Custody Outcome + Education Engagement + Housing Placement + Substance Use Reduction). Notably, a majority (53%) have three or more positive outcomes.

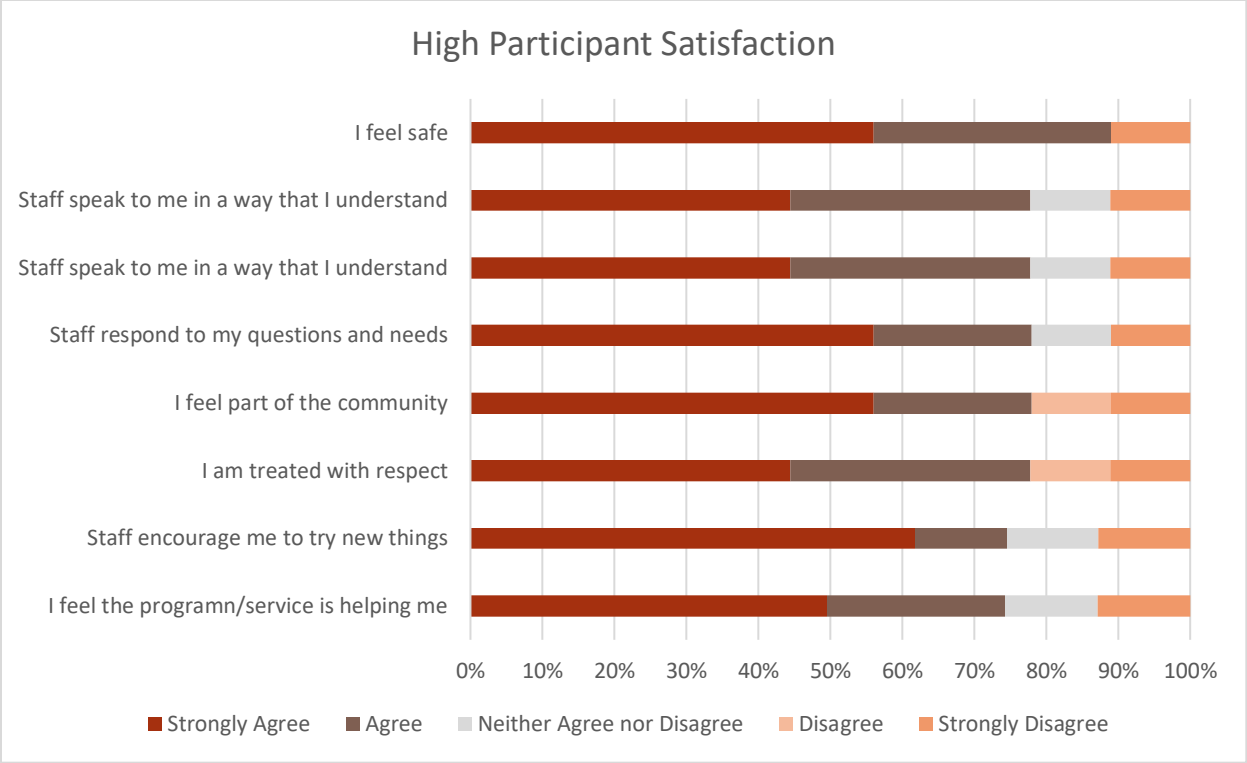
Again, it is worth noting that women with children show a higher average number of goals achieved (or positive outcomes) as compared with women without children – this finding is statistically significant (ANOVA shows $p < .005$).



Kids/No Kids	Average # Goals Achieved
No Kids (n=13)	1.3
Kids (n=23)	2.9
Total (n=36)	2.3

Participant Satisfaction

Results from a satisfaction survey show that, on multiple measures, significant majorities of Cameo House participants show high levels of satisfaction. The satisfaction survey is administered to all women in residence at a single point in time. It is not designed as a pre-post so it cannot be used to note improvements or changes in participants’ needs, strengths, or circumstances. No identifiers are collected, so participants’ responses are anonymous, which is believed to increase candor in participant satisfaction surveys (Rapaport, 1985). As the graph below shows, majorities of respondents indicate positive impressions of staff communication, as well as a sense of community and respect.



It is worth noting that participants are especially likely to indicate that they feel *safe* at Cameo House. This is key, as safety is recognized as a primary aspect of any trauma-informed program. The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) lists *safety* as its first principle of a trauma-informed approach (SAMHSA, 2014), defining the Safety Principle as follows: “Throughout the organization, staff and the people they serve, whether children or adults, feel physically and psychologically safe; the physical setting is safe and interpersonal interactions promote a sense of safety. Understanding safety as defined by those served is a high priority” (SAMHSA, 2014: p.11). This program achievement demonstrates that Cameo House aligns well with this important principle.

Participant Views on Cameo House Impact

Participants who were interviewed for this evaluation emphasize specific aspects of Cameo House that make the experience there valuable. Again, feeling *safe* at Cameo House stands out, with a recognition that their sense of safety is connected to the expectation of sobriety at Cameo House. Participants also appreciate the support that their children get at Cameo House and the ways that the program helps them achieve self-sufficiency. For some women, coming to Cameo House is nothing short of transformative.

Safety: Every woman interviewed for this evaluation drew attention to the feeling that Cameo House is safe, for themselves and for their children. Most of the women interviewed brought up their sense of safety at Cameo House even before being asked.

“I feel 100% safe there. My kids are safe there...There’s expectations, and they take the measures they need to take to make sure it’s a safe place.” – Cameo House Participant

“I felt safe there...it’s a safe place.” – Cameo House Participant

Cameo House staff also name safety as the top priority.

“The first thing we want to offer is safety and security. Housing, safety and security. These are the first things that a person needs...We have a space and length [of stay] that allows a participant to have safety and security, food and housing. That’s our first goal.”

– Cameo House Staff

Substance-Free: Hand-in-hand with the focus on safety, the women interviewed underscore the importance of Cameo House as a sober space. They are particularly emphatic that the absence of substance use at Cameo House helps to keep the children there safe.

“One thing that I do appreciate about Cameo House is they don’t tolerate drug use...That’s important because there are kids in the house. There are people who can’t be on drugs and don’t want to be around drugs...That’s what I wanted to do is stay clean, and I appreciate that. It was really important to me.”

– Cameo House Participant

“I know some people at places where people are still getting high...That’s not good...You can’t have people getting high where babies are living.”

– Cameo House Participant

Focus on Kids: Participants appreciate the ways that Cameo House supports their children, as well as their ability to be together as families.

“The number one thing is that they support families. I grew up in and out of the system, with a mother and father in and out of jail. I see that the system is set up to separate families and Cameo House is not that at all. They will fight 100% to keep families together and to help you be with your children. That’s different from the other programs out there.”

– Cameo House Participant

“For Cameo House, it’s about the kids there. Kids come first. They love us too, but the kids come first. My kids are always fed. It’s comfortable for my child, its’ [their] home.”

– Cameo House Participant

“We were mothers. They gave us that space to be a parent, the privacy to be a parent.”

– Cameo House Participant

Support toward Self-Sufficiency: The women recognize that if they are going to be successful back out in the community they need help to become independent, and that an overly restrictive program that infantilizes them will not accomplish that. They appreciate that Cameo House treats them as adults, and strikes a balance between offering support and preparing them for self-sufficiency.

“I had to find a program where I could have my baby...One [house that was recommended] was too programmed. I needed to learn now to live not how to program...At Cameo House I’m learning how to live.”

– Cameo House Participant

“They gave me an opportunity to see what I can do for myself. Not so much babying. That isn’t Cameo. They do really watch over their participants and make sure everybody is doing what they’re supposed to, but we were treated like adults.”

– Cameo House Participant

“Anyone can give you a referral. But when you’re thinking, ‘I don’t know if I can do this,’ they stepped in and said, ‘you’re totally equipped. You can do this.’...[They] helped me find this job.”

– Cameo House Participant

Transformative: The women believe that being at Cameo House helps them change their paths, and that without this opportunity they would likely be in a different place.

“I think it made all the difference. I feel like I wouldn’t be where I am right now if it wasn’t for Cameo House. A lot has to do with myself, but they gave me a place to do that...I feel like they gave me space to find myself in a way. They gave me a chance to get it together myself in different areas in my person.”

– Cameo House Participant

*“Cameo House totally made a difference in my life. 100%. I wouldn’t have my kids right now if it wasn’t for Cameo House. Huge...The biggest part of the whole thing is the staff. They are like my family. I come home after a long day’s work and tell them how I’m feeling. They care. They give a sh*t. They see you as a person.”*

– Cameo House Participant

Adult Probation Perspective on the Value of Cameo House as a Partner

The San Francisco Adult Probation Department (APD), the funder of the program, is an important partner. In addition to providing funding, APD relies on Cameo House as part of its network of community placements which reduces incarceration and provides participants with a safe and more positive environment. Interviews with Cameo House and APD reveal quite a few areas of values alignment, as well as various ways that APD appreciates the role that Cameo House plays in the community and in San Francisco’s justice system.

Adult Probation personnel underscore the importance of Cameo House as a sober living space, which is something Cameo House staff identify, as well, as a key program element. Again, the emphasis on sobriety is coupled with the presence of children.

“That’s something [Cameo House] is great about – you can’t be on drugs in the house. There are children there.”

– Adult Probation

“I think CJCJ does a good job trying to mitigate people not using drugs...Cameo House has its own [drug testing] criteria which make sense to us...I think we have a lot of common goals.”

– Adult Probation

“We have children here, so we have a lot of expectations...You can’t have people here who are high when there are babies living here. We need to keep them safe.”

– Cameo House Staff

Cameo House staff and APD alike stress that Cameo House is special and unique in what it can do for women with children.

“I’m excited that Cameo House exists...There are no other reentry programs that will let you have a child. When women get incarcerated, they tend to be the primary caregiver, and when they get out they are supposed to go back to those roles, but we don’t have a way to support them, other than Cameo House.”

– Adult Probation

“There are places you can go and quickly stop using, but there aren’t a lot of places where you can get what you need to—everything you need—to get on your feet. We are it when it comes to taking children. Some take pregnant women or infants, but we are it for women with children.”

– Cameo House Staff

These areas of shared values and vision provide a strong foundation for a positive partnership between APD and Cameo House. Nevertheless, interview data also reveal some areas of growth.

Barriers & Areas for Growth

Low Probation Referrals

Cameo House is funded by the APD, which, in turn, is expected to refer potential participants to the program. This inquiry found, however, that the majority of referrals are generated by CJCJ staff in collaboration with other city criminal justice agencies, such as, the District Attorney's office, the Public Defender, the courts, and the Sheriff's Department.

CJCJ staff express some frustration with the lack of referrals from APD, though they also take pride in their strong network of support they have developed throughout the San Francisco criminal justice community. They feel that APD has a fiduciary responsibility to identify and refer women who would benefit from Cameo House, especially in cases where a woman's jail-time could be reduced or avoided altogether. To compensate for the dearth of referrals from probation, the Cameo House director must spend a substantial amount of time building and maintaining a network of referral sources through relationships with other criminal justice agencies in San Francisco. While this has helped the program to maintain a workable participant load, it also pulls on the program's bandwidth, as this extensive outreach is not actually built into the staffing or program model.

APD acknowledges the low number of referrals from probation. APD attributes its low referral rate in part to the small numbers of pregnant or parenting women in the San Francisco jail, in part to the program's reputation among potential participants, and in part to reluctance among Probation Officers. Below is an exploration of these three potential program referral barriers.

Low Numbers of Women in Jail

It is true that San Francisco has one of the lowest incarceration rates for women as compared to other California counties (BSCC, 2020), but that does not mean there are no women in jail or on probation in the county. Since 2016 the San Francisco County Jail population has hovered consistently between 1250 and 1300. It dropped precipitously to 750 or so in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and women generally comprise 9% to 12% of that total (BSCC, 2020). Even with the Covid-19-related releases, in September 2020, according to APD, there were 72 women in the San Francisco jail, and 140 women on active probation. While the lower numbers of women in San Francisco's jails might make it more challenging than it would be in other counties, the numbers cited by APD represent a pool from which to generate sufficient referrals to the program.

The Cameo House Director notes that criminal justice practices in San Francisco influence the number of women in jail, and perhaps even those who may be referred to Cameo House, but that, nevertheless, there are women who are currently in jail who could benefit from being placed in Cameo House instead:

"One reason Probation is not making [a lot of] referrals is because they stopped putting these jail sentences to people experiencing addiction. So probation participants are not being mandated to program. They are being released...The probation department has loosened up, so now the alternative to incarceration is less of a need. The whole city has taken a harm reduction approach. But the jail is still filled with women who could be here because they are facing time."

– Cameo House Staff

APD interviewees also point out that San Francisco's harm reduction approach to substance abuse removes the "leverage" that might get women into the program.

"Harm reduction doesn't get people clean...We need a wide range of treatment options, not only harm reduction."

– Adult Probation

This APD interviewee went on to suggest that for many addicts, treatment programs are only appealing because they are perceived as "better than jail." The potential for resistance from participants who are mandated into a structured program, however, complicates this notion.

Reluctance among Potential Participants

The individuals interviewed from APD believe that justice-involved women hear about Cameo House from other women, and that the reviews emphasize the restricted and structured nature of the program, which deter them from pursuing it as an option. One APD representative offered the following anecdote:

"There's a woman in one of [the APD-funded rental subsidy] programs, but she got pregnant. She doesn't meet eligibility for rental subsidy. And I was like, 'Let's get you into Cameo.' And she said 'No, they have too many rules.' She's about to be homeless with a baby. She had had a friend who had gone [to Cameo House] and told her about the rules."

—Adult Probation

The APD interviewees made it clear that they understood and approved of the structure of Cameo House programming, but that in San Francisco there are other, less-structured options for justice-involved women which may appeal more to potential Cameo House participants.

"People don't want to go to a structured program...if you have an option between an SRO room or a structured program, the SRO program is always what they'll opt for...San Francisco is a difficult place to do a structured program."

– Adult Probation

Cameo House staff understand how the structure of the program may affect referrals from the Probation department, as illustrated in this quote from the Cameo House Director:

"Why would a participant accept a referral to a long-term, highly structured program when they can go to a 90-day program? If I were a PO and I could say you can go over here for 90 days and satisfy your treatment requirement. So Cameo House is less appealing because it's more of a commitment."

– Cameo House Staff

Cameo House's program exit data suggest that, indeed, many of the women who arrive at Cameo House may struggle with the structure of the program. As shown above, not all women stay in the program for the full program period.

Women who are successful in the program attribute the resistance among some of the other women in the program to persistent addiction issues, immaturity, and overall lack of readiness to change.

*"The more mature women see it as a place to grow...[The women who leave the program,] that's not because of the program. It's because they're not ready. A lot of the youngsters they don't give a sh*t. How many of them have left and then they're on the run and then they get arrested again?...If you're ready [Cameo House] can be a place that helps make that happen for you. You can't make anybody be ready."*

– Cameo House Participant

“If you really want to stay clean it’s your own choice. So basically I’m not surprised [that some women leave]. Not a lot of people are used to that structure at all.”

– Cameo House Participant

“When you’re in jail and they give you an offer to get out, they think ‘I want to get out,’ but they really aren’t ready. If you’re not ready, it’s not going to work. It’s the person has to be ready. All the girls that left it was because of substance abuse.”

– Cameo House Participant

APD personnel also hold the belief that women have to be “ready to change” for the program to be successful.

“People who are going to be interested in the [Cameo House] program are going to be those who are ready to make changes in their lives.”

– Adult Probation

The Cameo House Director points out that for many of the women who do not stay in the program, it’s because they feel they are there involuntarily.

“If the PO says you need to go to Cameo House or jail, they come in already resistant. They hate us. They don’t want to be here because they’ve been told they don’t have a choice...They mostly pop out early in their stay because they already had no plans of staying. They came because they were told they had to.”

– Cameo House Staff

So rather than seeing an increase in participants referred as a mandate, Cameo House imagines that they would see more success if they had greater access to participants who are *looking for* a community-based setting where they can receive help to live independently. The Director puts it this way:

“If we had the ability to accept more people who are asking for the help, and we put forward our expectations, then we remind them that they’re here because they want to do this... We don’t want people to be here because probation told them they have to be here. Those are people who don’t want to be here.”

– Cameo House Staff

Probation Officer Perceptions

Another potential reason for low referrals from Probation may be that probation officers are not advocating for the program. APD interviewees have the impression that probation officers may sometimes hear negative things from participants and as a consequence don’t refer others to Cameo House. The APD representatives made it clear that they are not faulting Cameo House or CJJ for this.

“I don’t think CJJ did anything wrong...But participants used to complain about the program, didn’t want to do the blackout [during the Initial Transition Period]...Every program has challenges...There’s always two sides to the story and if participants don’t get their way, we hear that side.”

– Adult Probation

According to their contract, APD should be regularly referring prospective Cameo House participants. But in reality, Probation makes very few referrals. Program referrals are generated primarily by Cameo House staff themselves, through their extensive networks within the city’s criminal justice system, such as the courts, the District Attorney, the Public Defender’s Office, and the Sheriff Department.

APD recognizes the outreach efforts that the Cameo House Director performs, and offers a concrete suggestion for helping to bridge the gap that prevents probation officers from referring more women to Cameo House:

“I think [the Cameo House Director] does a great job doing outreach. But I think it would be kind of cool, not for [APD], but for [Cameo House]—we have a couple of POs that oversee women caseloads. It would be helpful if Rebecca had...a focus group with core Probation Officers and the director of the center from UCSF (Citywide) case managers, and trouble-shoot why the low enrollments...’Can we talk about why we’re not getting a ton of referrals with those guys?’ And they can reflect back to them, ‘This is what we are hearing.’ Then we could continue to do different outreach.”

—Adult Probation

The APD representatives feel this bridge-building approach could help improve referrers’ impressions of Cameo House and increase referrals. The soundness of this suggestion notwithstanding, it does not recognize APD’s obligation regarding program referrals, and squarely places the burden for populating the program on Cameo House itself.

Fiscal Relationship Tensions

There exists a tension point in the partnership between Cameo House and APD around financial reimbursements and program monitoring. Cameo House and CJCJ staff have differing perspectives from those of APD personnel as to the nature of this tension, although both do acknowledge it exists.

Cameo House and CJCJ feel that that APD excessively scrutinizes program expenditures, especially when compared to other city agencies with whom CJCJ has partnered. CJCJ estimates that the level of scrutiny is “ten-to-twenty times” that of other city agencies that fund CJCJ programming. CJCJ states that APD requires receipts for every expenditure, including expenditures that were already approved in the bid that forms the foundation for the contract. They further maintain that if receipts are a few cents off from the total reimbursement request, APD requires a complete revision and resubmission of the invoice. They report that the level of scrutiny is akin to what other agencies would do in an audit, rather than routine monthly reimbursement submissions. They further note that APD routinely denies reasonable expenses, and requires pre-approval for expenditures that are within the agreed-upon terms laid out in the contract. CJCJ is bound to wait for pre-approval on any expense in excess of \$500, even if it represents an immediate need required to maintain safety and basic habitability of the house (e.g., fire sprinklers, broken windows and doors, washing machine repair/replacement). CJCJ feels micro-managed by APD at times, with APD intervening on matters outside of a funder’s concern (e.g., the color paint they may use on the walls, minor expenditures such as a meal bought for a child on a court day).

CJCJ personnel further report that APD’s restrictive reimbursement approach results in Cameo House not being able to bill for the full amount to which they are theoretically entitled:

“Typically we leave money on the table. In a typical year, we are funded for something close to \$700,000, but they reject some of our billables, so we often have like \$50,000 that we cannot recoup.”

— CJCJ Personnel

Another key complaint is that APD severely and problematically restricts the wages that CJCJ is allowed to pay Cameo House staff. APD has pushed back on what CJCJ has proposed to pay Cameo House staff, calling it “inappropriate,” and has set the starting wage for staff at \$17/hour (just \$1.41 over minimum wage, and \$8 less than what similar positions command within San Francisco). CJCJ feels that the low

pay sends a message to Cameo House staff, who are almost entirely of women of color, that their work is not important or valuable. It makes it very difficult for CJCJ to recruit and retain staff who often cannot afford to live within the city limits and struggle with a long commute for a low-wage job. Current APD restrictions on what CJCJ is allowed to pay Cameo House staff also don't reflect fair compensation for additional expertise (e.g., being able to provide services in multiple languages).

From CJCJ's perspective, these practices exceed those of other city funders in terms of mistrust and surveillance, and engender frictions in the partnership.

APD interviewees, on the other hand, indicate that monthly invoices from Cameo House are not consistently on time. In interviews APD personnel express an understanding for the struggles of operating a nonprofit in San Francisco, and say that they would also like to ease monitoring of invoices and expenditures. They believe that many of the fiduciary tensions would go away if invoices from Cameo House were more consistently timely – they state that if they received invoices on a monthly basis they would be far less likely to apply the same level of scrutiny in their monitoring practices.

In response, CJCJ notes that APD asks for the billing to be completed earlier than any other city department, giving CJCJ 15 days where other agencies give over a month. Given banking cycles, this creates a challenge in terms of reconciling against bank statements and interferes with the best practice of closing books before invoicing. CJCJ does acknowledge that there have been invoices that they have submitted out of sync with the schedule, but they maintain that these delays most often happen as a result of disagreements about the specifics of the invoice.

Finally, CJCJ feels that the fact that the program is residential and that the is real property involved should translate into a recognition of depreciation, which could be built into the program's indirect rate.

The Executive Director of CJCJ states the problem could be solved if APD adopted the kind of oversight practices used by other city agencies. He feels that the resources that expended in APD's excessive oversight could be better invested in expanding program services and raising staff salaries.

Recognizing Children as Participants

Cameo House is primarily an alternative sentencing program and a home for mothers with children. But the concept of the "participant" at Cameo House is limited to the adults in residence. APD notes repeatedly that Cameo House has a high "cost-per-participant," which they cite as "more expensive than a licensed treatment program." When it is pointed out to them that this equation does not account for the expense of housing, feeding, clothing, and mitigating risks for the dependent children living there, they acknowledged that including children would reduce the cost-per-participant. Yet the APD budgets do not include child-related costs, which accounts for a substantial proportion of program costs.

CJCJ reports that they are only able to ask for reimbursement based on the number of women in the program, irrespective of whether or how many children they support. The reimbursement of only adult participants unintentionally creates a disincentive for Cameo House to accept women with multiple children – a house full of women with no children at all would be the most cost-effective scenario for Cameo House under the current APD reimbursement model. Cameo House data show that the program, in fact, never exercises any such bias in the selection of residents, but this sort of disincentive should not be built into the program structure. If Cameo House's purpose is to serve the long-term interests of justice-involved women and their children, but children are excluded from expenditures, program

accountability, and measuring program accomplishments, then there is a disconnect between program goals and contractual terms.

Insufficient Staffing and Budget

There are some data points suggesting that Cameo House is under-funded. Cameo House wages are below the current San Francisco market rate, and the program budget is meager for what it provides. Participant interviews and survey results demonstrate a need for more case management staff. Additionally, it is likely that the current program capacity overestimates the number of participants that the program can reasonably serve.

Low Wages and Budget

As discussed earlier, pay restrictions imposed by APD make it difficult for CJCJ to recruit and retain Cameo House staff, which may have an impact on program quality. Increasing the pay for existing positions could signal Cameo House staff that they are valued and ensure they can afford to live within a reasonable distance from their work, which could reduce turnover, improving program stability and staff-participant connections. It is important to point out that Cameo House staff are almost all people of color or who come from communities represented by the program participants. Their contributions should be valued at the same level as comparable employees in similar roles in other city programs.

Furthermore, Cameo House operates on a very small budget. Allocations for Cameo House are far less than costs associated with housing and supporting the same number of women and children using other public resources. An itemization of various aspects of Cameo House is estimated below. This estimate assumes 11 women and 15 children in residence for one year, compared to the cost of relying upon public resources such as county jail, the foster care system, and publicly-funded case management.

Support	Other Public Resources	Cameo House's 2019-20 budget
One year of food and bed for 11 women	\$1,003,750 ¹	
One year of food and bed for 15 children	\$198,000 ²	
One year of case management for 11 women and 15 children	\$50,700 ³	
	\$1,252,450.00	\$700,000

The difference in cost is \$552,450, which is 79% more than Cameo House's total allowed budget for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. In other words, the annual Cameo House budget could be increased by 70% and still represent savings from the alternative. Moreover, this cost differential does not take into account improved program participant outcomes that are associated with avoiding jail, parent-child reunification, and prosocial peer connections that Cameo House provides. It also does not include costs associated with helping families maintain a high quality of life, which correlates to improved program outcomes (Hamilton, 2019) – for Cameo House such costs might include professional clothing for

¹ This estimate reflects one year of jail bed days at the rate of \$250/day X 365 days X 11 women. The \$250 is based on a California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) analysis published in 2018: https://www.bscc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Avg_Cost_II_18.pdf. Given the age of the report, it may well under-estimate the daily cost.

² This estimate reflects one year of foster care at \$1,100 per child per month (assumes no special needs) X 12 months X 15 children. The \$1,100 is based on an SF Chronicle article dated February 27, 2020 (<https://www.sfchronicle.com/local-politics/article/Want-to-be-a-parent-SF-aims-to-recruit-100-15087446.php>).

³ This estimate reflects one year of case management supports with each child and adult in residence (total 26) receiving 1.5 hours per week of case management jobs for 52 weeks, at the rate of \$25/hour. The \$25/hour is based on an analysis of the hourly rate for case manager jobs posted in San Francisco in 2020.

residents, hygiene and beauty supplies, developmentally appropriate toys and educational materials for children, etc.

Need for More Staff

Participants who were interviewed indicate that the house would function more effectively with more staff, and participant survey findings reflect a similar need.

One participant articulates what she sees as the potential improvements that additional staff could provide:

“I feel like Cameo House should get more direct connections and hand-off to satellite resources for women who are ready to transition out, like have another layer of support, to have a transitional in a way. It should have more resources than it has. I’m not necessarily faulting them because it has to do with funding. I feel like if they had the funding they would help women transition better. That would be great. Maybe better trained staff in a sense, or more staff...maybe like three more. Maybe a specific parenting counselor, and two more case managers who handle the caseloads. The case managers and parenting counselors should have more resources.”

– Cameo House Participant

Additional funding, which could allow for an expanded staff and improved staff retention, which could in turn ensure better program experiences for the women and children at Cameo House.

Revisiting the Residential Capacity Estimate

Finally, there may be cause to review the current on-paper conceptualization of Cameo House’s capacity. Independent interviews reveal that both the Cameo House Director and APD personnel recognize that the current contract over-estimates how many women and children can realistically and comfortably live in the house at once.

“On our paperwork it says we can accommodate 11 women and 22 children. In reality that’s not true. In some rooms, a woman and two kids—there isn’t enough space. In reality, 11 women and 15 kids is probably our maximum, so total 26.”

– Cameo House Staff

“Thirty-three might be too many people in the house, but that’s what the scope is for.”

– Adult Probation

Recommendations

Findings from this evaluation point to a number recommendations to improve Cameo House’s impact and capacity. The recommendations listed below center around 3 themes: 1) Some small steps could improve the partnership between Cameo House and Probation and help maximize the program’s capacity to serve its target community; 2) Findings from this evaluation suggests the need for greater budget flexibility and increased financial support; and 3) A set of evaluation tools that more closely measure the impact that Cameo House intends to have on women and children would improve the program’s capacity to highlight its accomplishments and continuously improve its outcomes.

1) Improving Partnership with Probation:

Findings from this evaluation point to several ideas that could help ameliorate the APD-CJCJ relationship:

- APD could recognize that Cameo House is working toward the best interests of the women and children it serves, and ease its scrutiny of CJCJ invoices. CJCJ feels that APD staff spend an inordinate amount of time reviewing invoices and denying payments for legitimate participant expenses and that these practices generate an adversarial relationship that undermines Cameo House staff morale. A more trusting fiduciary relationship could emerge if APD approved expenses using an approach more consistent with that of other city funding agencies.
- For CJCJ's part, they may want to review internal processes for submitting invoices to APD in a timely manner. They may also want to advocate for later invoice submission deadlines to align with the best practice of reconciling expenses with bank statements prior to invoicing.
- CJCJ could push for a re-formulation of cost-per-participant and reflects a more realistic program capacity (no more than 11 women and 15 children).
- APD should immediately recognize children as program participants. The current structure where CJCJ is only reimbursed for the women in residence inadvertently creates a disincentive to accept women with children in the program. Such a disincentive undermines the stated purpose of Cameo House.
- Cameo House might also follow APD's suggestion to hold a focus group or discussion group with probation officers and Citywide case managers, sharing positive participant stories, publicizing program strengths, and trouble-shooting low referrals. Although, if they decide to do this, it is important that APD understand that outreach is in fact part of APD's commitment to CJCJ and is not written in as a CJCJ responsibility.

2) Allowing for Budgetary Flexibility:

Below are additional recommendations which are also key to the APD-CJCJ relationship, and essential to the functioning of Cameo House, related to funding and financial arrangements.

- CJCJ could request increased funding from APD in order to facilitate the program reaching its goals more effectively. Increased funding could allow for market level salaries which would reduce turnover and improve staff recruitment. The current reimbursement model has effectively restricted Cameo House's ability to acquire and retain adequate staffing. This is especially important given the representation from communities of color among Cameo House staff, and San Francisco's problematic white-non-white wage gap (Knight, 2019). APD may not want to contribute to this problem. More funds could also enable the hiring of additional case managers, a childcare provider, perhaps even a cook. More case managers could provide participants with the connections to community support (including transitional assistance) that participants indicate they would like.
- APD could employ more flexibility in how it reimburses Cameo House expenses. APD could acknowledge that Cameo House understands what it takes to operate a residential program and allow them more autonomy in budgeting and making purchases.

3. Adopting New Evaluation Tools:

Currently, Cameo House administers an anonymous point-in-time satisfaction questionnaire to participants as a part of APD quality monitoring. APD also looks at program numbers such as the quantity of adult participants from San Francisco living at the house compared to program capacity and cost-per-participant. These measures provide APD and CJCJ some sense of how Cameo House is serving participants and the community, but they miss most of the impact that Cameo House may be having. A set of tools customized for Cameo House's goals would help the program to both mark its impact and identify areas for continuous improvement. It is recommended that Cameo House adopt the following additional tools:

- A pre-post (or retrospective pre-post) tool for adult participants that includes questions about program impact along all of the areas that Cameo House aims to serve women (e.g., improvements in safety, life skills, goal-setting, emotional self-regulation, help-seeking, substance use, optimism, sense of power in their lives, etc.). This tool can also ask women to provide narrative descriptions of the ways that Cameo House has helped them, as well as ways they feel the program could improve.
- A tool for women with children that measures the extent to which they feel being at Cameo House has helped their children and supported them as parents (e.g., helped them to ensure their children's safety, improved their relationships with their children, developed their parenting skills, provided for their children's needs, etc.). This could help Cameo House to underscore its multi-generational impact and help funders recognize Cameo House children.

These tools need not be validated or proprietary instruments. Although there are some validated tools that might be appropriate (e.g., SPIn-W, developed by Orbis Partners (Millson, et al., 2010), WNRA, developed by the University of Cincinnati, and the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix (Cummins & Brown, 2019)), which CJCJ and Cameo House could explore, these validated tools may be more extensive and lengthy than what the program needs. The program could simply customize its own tools for this purpose in order to ensure that it is capturing areas of growth (and need) that the current tools are missing.

Conclusion

The value of a program like Cameo House cannot be overestimated. Maternal incarceration can be devastating and its ripple effects enduring. Research shows that having one's mother incarcerated is a significant stressor to children (Turney & Wildeman, 2017) and can have substantial negative effects on children's emotional states and self-regulation (Aiello & McCorkel, 2017). Longitudinal research also shows that the adult children of women who have suffered incarceration have a significantly increased likelihood of criminal justice involvement themselves (Muftic, Bouffard, & Armstrong, 2015). Policies, practices, and programs that provide women alternatives to incarceration and allow them to live with their children confer social benefits that exceed their face-value. Programs that help women get on their feet to live independently are particularly valuable, especially as justice-involvement can foster a sense of disempowerment and dependency (Carter & Marcum, 2017).

This evaluation finds Cameo House to be a program that offers justice-involved women a unique opportunity. The vast majority of Cameo House participants, including many who do not stay the intended length of stay of 12 months, achieve positive outcomes. These positive impacts include reduced substance use, employment, enrollment in education programs, custody of dependent children, housing, and successful completion of the program. Input from program participants paints a picture of

a transformative program that enables women to live independently and avoid future justice-involvement.

The evaluation also finds that APD holds the program in high esteem, and is committed to supporting it. The APD personnel who were interviewed see Cameo House as essential to the array of community programs offering alternatives to incarceration and reentry services. Despite positive feelings about Cameo House expressed by APD, Probation referrals to the program are low and CJJ's senior management express concerns about the approach APD takes in overseeing the program.

Information gathered for this evaluation suggest that the procedures for contracted monitoring employed by APD are unnecessarily onerous and have the unintended effect of undermining the effectiveness of the program. APD staff spend a lot of time fastidiously scrutinizing minor and contractually pre-approved program expenditures at a great cost to the city. Since contracted nonprofit agencies are required to conduct a yearly independent audit and are subject to yearly city agency audit, much of this oversight may be redundant and unnecessary.

In addition, APD currently forbids the program from claiming the resident's children as budgetary expenses. This is incongruous with the mutually-recognized purpose of the program: to allow justice-involved women to remain with their children while under court jurisdiction. The lack of flexibility in the budget and APD's insistence on setting salary limits also inhibit the Cameo House from recruiting and retaining adequate staff.

The evaluation finds that, for the women who stick with the program, Cameo House represents safety and opportunity, but program length-of-stay and exit data reflect that a large proportion of women leave the program early. While some of this may be expected as the participants Cameo House serves are often struggling with multiple stressors, including substance abuse, Cameo House could consider making some adjustments in an effort to address program attrition – increased funding and budgetary flexibility from APD would help make this happen.

Finally, Cameo House clearly has a positive and powerful impact on the lives of the women and children who live there, but currently does not have a systematic way to measure all of the ways that the program is making a difference. Adopting new evaluation tools and practices could help the program to measure and broadcast the transformative impact of the program and to generate more community and funder support.

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