

Overview of FYI and FUP Housing Choice Vouchers

A Fact Sheet Prepared by Youth Law Center

On December 31, 2021, a record number of youth in California’s foster care system exited from extended foster care following the expiration of the COVID-19 age out moratorium.¹ These transition-age youth—young people who may be in college, living on their own for the first time, starting new jobs, and developing and testing their independent living skills—are particularly vulnerable to homelessness and require specific attention and support.² Connections to housing and other supportive services are critical to their well-being; however, accessing affordable housing or transitional housing through the THP-Plus program³ can be extremely difficult. This overview resource discusses two additional housing support options that may help these young adults as they transition beyond extended foster care.

What is a Housing Choice Voucher?

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program (commonly referred to as “Section 8”) is the federal government’s major housing support program that provides very low-income families and individuals financial support to afford housing. The voucher pays for all or part of an individual’s or family’s rent. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers the HCV program in conjunction with local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs).

What are FYI and FUP?

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative and Family Unification Program (FUP) are HCV programs available to Public Housing Authorities that work in partnership with Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWAs). Both FYI and FUP are intended to support former foster youth as they transition from foster care and can be used for youth as they age out as well as for young people who have aged out and become homeless. There are two parts to these programs:

- the housing voucher (provided by the PHA) and
- the supportive services (provided or arranged by the PCWA).

¹ For resources on transition planning for young people exiting foster care, see [Transition Planning Checklist for Young People Exiting Extended Foster Care in California](#).

² The CalYOUTH study notes that foster youth experience homelessness at a disproportionately higher rate [varying between 11% to 38% depending on the study](#). While youth exiting foster care have a higher rate of subsequent homelessness than their peers, there is some evidence youth who remain in foster care until 21 (instead of exiting at 18) [have lower rates of subsequent homelessness](#). From the [CalYOUTH memo](#): “Each additional year a youth spent in extended care reduced the estimated odds of homelessness by about 33%.”

³ For more about THP-Plus (transitional housing for former foster youth ages 18-24, or 25 in some counties), see Youth Law Center’s Fact Sheet: [THP-Plus](#) and Youth Law Center’s Advocacy Guide: [Preventing Involuntary Exits from THP-Plus](#).

Any Public Housing Authority capable of administering Section 8 vouchers - which is most PHAs - can apply to HUD for FUP or FYI vouchers. While PHAs apply for FYI or FUP vouchers, to be eligible to receive those vouchers, there must be a partnership in place between the PHA and PCWA.⁴

The role of the Public Child Welfare Agency is to refer young people to the PHA after verifying their eligibility, and to provide or arrange for support services. Different than most housing choice vouchers, FYI and FUP are time limited. Both FYI and FUP provide up to 36 months of rental assistance and supportive services to assist the young person on their path to self-sufficiency. Young people do not have to receive support services to be part of the program, but these services can help eligible former foster youth to maintain the housing provided through the voucher. Available services may include engaging property owners, cultivating an inventory of available units, assisting with new furniture, helping set up utilities, and more.

Who is Eligible for FYI and FUP?

FYI and FUP⁵ eligibility are almost identical. Eligible youth must meet the three eligibility requirements:

1. Be least 18 years and not more than 24 years of age (have not reached their 25th birthday)⁶,
2. have left foster care⁷, or will leave foster care within 90 days, in accordance with a transition plan described in Section 475(5)(H) of the Social Security Act, and
3. homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older.

According to [a survey by John Burton Advocates for Youth](#), 22% of counties said their FYI or FUP vouchers are prioritized for specified populations of foster youth, such as parenting youth.

The Difference Between FYI and FUP

While FUP vouchers can be used for families and young people who are leaving or have left foster care, FYI vouchers can only be used for young people who are in or have left foster care.

⁴ This partnership can take the form of a letter of intent or a memorandum of understanding. PCWAs must provide or arrange for services, but can do so in many ways and can arrange for services on an individual basis. For example, arranging for services through Medi-Cal, a workforce program or Chafee is sufficient.

⁵ Families are also eligible for FUP vouchers if their children are at risk of child welfare system involvement due to housing or if reunification could occur if housing was available. This resource focuses on FUP and FYI vouchers for young people.

⁶ A youth must be no more than 24 years old at the time of PCWA certification as FYI-eligible and also at the time of Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract execution. However, so long as the youth meets these criteria, the youth can use the voucher beyond the age of 25.

⁷ This includes probation supervised foster youth as well.

FUP and FYI vouchers are distributed differently. To date, FUP vouchers have been issued to Public Housing Authorities as part of a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) when vouchers are available.⁸ PHAs with FUP vouchers can award them to eligible young people and families. FYI vouchers come from a separate pool of vouchers called the Tenant Protection Vouchers and can be issued upon request for any number of young people, not to exceed 50 per PHA. **As long as the PCWA and PHA are willing to collaborate, any PHA in California administering House Choice Vouchers can request FYI vouchers on demand for eligible youth from HUD.**

How Does a Youth Apply for FYI or FUP?

Young people should ask their child welfare or Independent Living worker to refer them for a FUP or FYI voucher if appropriate. The Public Child Welfare Agency makes the referral to the PHA for FUP or FYI. The PCWA is responsible for certifying that the youth is eligible based on their foster care system history and the PHA must determine eligibility for the voucher.

Once the application is submitted to the PHA and the youth is determined eligible, two things can occur. If the PHA has FUP vouchers, it can distribute that voucher to the youth. The PHA can also request a FYI voucher from HUD and HUD dispenses the voucher on demand to the PHA. Once the youth is able to find housing, the PHA administers the FYI voucher to the landlord on behalf of the youth. It can be difficult for a young person to find appropriate housing, especially in some parts of California. The PCWA should assist with housing navigation throughout this process. This process should also be integrated with the greater local homelessness response, including collaboration with the local Continuum of Care (CoC) and the coordinated entry system.

The youth should be offered supportive services during their time in the FUP or FYI program.⁹ In California, funding available to provide these services include CHAFEE Emergency Covid Funding through the FYI Funding Pilot Program, [Homeless Housing Assistance, and Prevention \(HHAP\)](#), [California Emergency Solutions and Housing \(CESH\)](#), Continuum of Care (CoC) funding, and others.

How Did the Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities (FSHO) Act Impact FYI Vouchers?

FSHO, passed in December of 2020, made the FYI program federal law rather than a HUD initiative. FSHO also provides young people with FYI vouchers the opportunity to extend the

⁸ You can see which PHAs have received FUP vouchers here: https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/FUP_Awards_All%20Years_PDF.pdf.

⁹ The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is administering a Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Funding Pilot Program until September 30, 2022 providing \$4 million of CHAFEE Emergency Covid Funding to help counties and IV-E tribes provide supportive services for youth with FYI vouchers. For more information, see [All-County Information Notice \(ACIN\) I-88-21](#).

voucher by two additional years if they enroll in [HUD's Family Self Sufficiency Program](#) (FSS) or a similar program.

Additional Resources:

- HUD's FYI Website: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/fyi
- HUD's FUP Website: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/family
- HUD's FYI FAQ: [https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/FYI_FAQs_Version_VMS_Reporting_&_Amended_Notice_Update_9.29.2021_%20\(002\).pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/FYI_FAQs_Version_VMS_Reporting_&_Amended_Notice_Update_9.29.2021_%20(002).pdf)
- HUD's FYI Email Address: FYI@hud.gov
- The National Center for Housing and Child Welfare: <https://www.nchcw.org/fyi>
- John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) Roster of Public Housing Authorities: <https://jbay.org/resources/pha-ca/>
- FYI Referral Letter CA Attorneys: <https://www.ylc.org/resource/fyi-referral-letter-ca-attorneys/>



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REQUEST TO THE CHILD WELFARE AGENCY TO MAKE A REFERRAL FOR AN FYI PROGRAM VOUCHER TO THE PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY

Dear [Child Welfare Administrator]:

I am the attorney for [name of young person]. I am requesting that you make a referral to the local housing authority for a Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program Voucher for my client for the reasons described below.

My client is eligible for the FYI program. My client is age [enter client's current age, which must be between 18 and 24 and 364 days]; [will age out of foster care or has aged out, depending on the facts of your case]; and [is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless depending on your case]. My client is receiving the following support services [describe any support services your client is receiving, including any Chafee IL services, behavioral health services or supports, workforce services, etc].

Per PIH Notice 2021-26, Public Housing Authorities (PHA) that administer Housing Choice Vouchers may request FYI vouchers for eligible young people like my client as long as they are collaborating with the child welfare agency and that the child welfare agency is able to document the provision of services for the young person. The child welfare agency does not need to provide the services themselves. As mentioned above, my client is receiving supportive services that are sufficient to meet HUD's requirement for supportive services. The PHA can request vouchers in increments as small as one at a time, making it possible for [NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY] to request one voucher for my client.

Because my client is eligible for an FYI voucher, I am happy to work with you to prepare the request to the PHA for an FYI voucher.

Please contact me within 7 business days to let me know your response to my request. I am happy to meet and talk further about how we can work together to support [client's name] in making a safe and stable transition to adulthood.

Sincerely,