

## **Family Unification Program and Fostering Youth to Independence**

### ***Template Letters***

#### Purpose of Tools

Assisting young adults in securing affordable housing continues to be a challenging task. The tools listed below can be used as one strategy among many to help your clients access affordable housing. Please note that these strategies aim to increase your county's use of FUP and FYI vouchers and likely will not result in immediate housing for your clients.

Family Unification Program (FUP) and Fostering Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers are a type of housing choice voucher that youth who are in or have exited foster care, and are under the age of 25 can access. While not all Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) have FUP vouchers, almost all PHAs are eligible to request FYI vouchers as long as they are collaborating with the county child welfare agency. There are several PHAs in Alameda County and two PHAs in Contra Costa. PHAs in both counties have FUP vouchers and all of the PHAs in the two counties are eligible to request FYI vouchers.

The tools included in this packet (and linked below) are template letters to support individual clients and systemic advocacy related to a county's use of FYI and FUP vouchers. The first two letters ask the child welfare agency to refer a client for FUP and FYI vouchers, respectively. The third letter should be directed at child welfare agency leadership to ask them to provide information on their efforts to work with the local PHAs and request FYI vouchers. We recommend using both of these strategies - individual client referrals and systemic inquiry - as a way to put pressure on the child welfare agency to take action to use housing resources that are available and are not being maximized for eligible young people.

#### Table of Contents

1. [Referral letter for FYI from Civil Legal Aid attorney](#)
2. [Referral letter for FUP from Civil Legal Aid attorney](#)
3. [Information gathering letter on existing FYI program](#)



832 Folsom Street, Suite 700  
San Francisco, CA 94107  
Phone: 415-543-3379  
Fax: 415-956-9022  
www.ylc.org

*Instructions for use: the following is a template that includes all relevant law. However, all of the areas in highlighted yellow require editing to include the relevant factual information. The template should be filled out accordingly prior to use.*

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

Dear [Child Welfare Administrator] and [ILP Coordinator]:

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 Independent Living services, behavioral health services or supports, workforce services, etc.]

[If your client is still in foster care and aging out, add: I am requesting that the transition plan for my client include making a referral for a FYI voucher and any other housing assistance that they are eligible for and that I be invited to the next transition planning meeting to discuss housing supports for my client.]

[If your client is out of foster care, but under 21 and therefore eligible for Chafee services add: I am requesting that a case plan for Chafee services be developed for my client and that a referral for a FYI voucher and any other housing assistance that they are eligible for be included in that plan and that a planning meeting be convened to discuss this referral and housing supports for my client.]

[If your client is out of foster care and between the ages of 21 and 24 and 364 days add: I am requesting that a service plan be developed for my client and that a referral for a FYI voucher and any other housing assistance that they are eligible for be included in that plan and that a planning meeting be convened to discuss this referral and housing supports for my client.]

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 a 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,

cc: [Youth's attorney if in foster care or recently discharged]



832 Folsom Street, Suite 700  
San Francisco, CA 94107  
Phone: 415-543-3379  
Fax: 415-956-9022  
www.ylc.org

*Instructions for use: the following is a template that includes all relevant law. However, all of the areas in highlighted yellow require editing to include the relevant factual information. The template should be filled out accordingly prior to use.*

## **REQUEST TO THE CHILD WELFARE AGENCY TO MAKE A REFERRAL FOR A FUP PROGRAM VOUCHER TO THE PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY**

Dear [Child Welfare Administrator] and [ILP Coordinator]:

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

My client is eligible for the FUP 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 Independent Living services, behavioral health services or supports, workforce services, etc].

[If your client is still in foster care and aging out, add: I am requesting that the transition plan for my client include making a referral for a FUP voucher and any other housing assistance that they are eligible for and that I be invited to the next transition planning meeting to discuss housing supports for my client.]

If your client is out of foster care, but under 21 and therefore eligible for Chafee services add: I am requesting that a case plan for Chafee services be developed for my client and that a referral for a FUP voucher and any other housing assistance that they are eligible for be included in that plan and that a planning meeting be convened to discuss this referral and housing supports for my client.]

[If your client is out of foster care and between the ages of 21 and 24 and 364 days add: I am requesting that a service plan be developed for my client and that a referral for a FUP voucher and any other housing assistance that they are eligible for be included in that plan and that a planning meeting be convened to discuss this referral and housing supports for my client.]

Because my client is eligible for a FUP voucher I am asking that you refer my client for one from [a list of the county PHAs that have them].

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,

cc: [Youth's attorney if in foster care or recently in foster care]

*Instructions for use: the following is a template that includes all relevant law. However, all of the areas in highlighted yellow require editing to include the relevant factual information. The template should be filled out accordingly prior to use.*

Dear [County CWA],

Finding safe, stable, and affordable housing is one of the biggest challenges for youth who are transitioning out of, or have already left, foster care. Housing stability has become even more challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic and with an unprecedented rise in rent and other housing prices.

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program provides an incredible opportunity to support young people in finding and maintaining housing. FYI is a federal housing voucher program that is available to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) that collaborate with child welfare agencies. These vouchers are intended to support young people who have either already transitioned out of foster care and are homeless or as a support for youth who are currently planning their transition out of foster care.

The PHAs in your county [list PHAs in the county] are eligible to draw down FYI vouchers once [county CWA] develops a partnership with them. This partnership can be as simple as a letter of intent or a memorandum of understanding. HUD has issued a guidance letter that lays out what this partnership requires - the letter can be found [here](#).

The FYI program consists of both the housing voucher itself and supportive services, provided *or arranged by* the child welfare agency. HUD has clarified that this requirement can be satisfied by either: (i) the child welfare agency providing services directly OR (ii) connecting the young person with services in the community. For example, if a youth is receiving services through the workforce investment board or the mental health system, this will satisfy the program's service requirement.

We work with young people in [name of county] who are in need of housing and qualify for FYI vouchers. Unfortunately, as far as we are aware these eligible young people have not been able to access FYI vouchers. We are writing to inquire as to whether you have developed a partnership with any of the PHAs listed above and your process for referring youth for FYI vouchers.

We look forward to working with you to further our shared goal of providing safe, stable, and affordable housing to [name of county]'s vulnerable young people, and we are available to answer any questions and to collaboratively address any challenges to making the promises of this housing program a reality.

Cc: California Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman  
[Youth's dependency attorney, if in foster care or recently exited]