

Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Voucher Program: Best Practices for Stakeholders

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide insight to stakeholders in California on successful practices to implement the FYI and FUP programs, especially for jurisdictions that have recently begun the implementation of these voucher programs. It has been developed with the collaboration of advocates and experts in California and across the country.

1. Use Chafee Funds Strategically

- The support services that must be offered to young people as part of the FYI program are the same types of services that are funded through the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood.
- All county child welfare agencies have independent living programs (ILPs) that provide Chafee-funded services. Counties can leverage those services, and this funding stream, to meet the service requirement rather than developing something new.
- Counties can use Chafee funds strategically to recruit landlords and provide other services that help youth with FYI vouchers get and stay housed. Finding units can be challenging and investing in this expertise has paid off.
- Chafee funds can also be used to develop drop-in centers or service hubs that can benefit youth with FYI vouchers, as well as all Chafee-eligible youth. For example, the [412 Center](#) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania provides an array of support services for young people ages 16 to 23 who have left foster care. Youth with FYI vouchers can access these services as needed, as could other young people in the community.

2. Leverage and Partner with Existing Programs to Meet the Service Requirement

- The FYI program requires child welfare agencies to provide *or arrange for* supportive services to young people who participate in the program. Existing programs in the community can help meet the service requirement in multiple ways:
 - [Ways for Life Wraparound Youth Services in Brevard County, Florida](#), serves youth leaving foster care and provides them assistance in finding and maintaining

housing. The organization is located in the same building as the county Public Housing Authority (PHA) and has developed a collaboration with the PHA.

- The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has expanded the services provided at [Family Advocacy Centers](#) to include services for young people under age 30 who were in foster care. Family Advocacy Centers provide tailored support to foster care alumni, as well as a range of services available to families. This is an excellent way to leverage an array of funds that are used to serve the community and provide access to young people with FYI vouchers.
- Child welfare agencies can establish formal connections with programs that are funded and already serving transition aged youth, like Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs (WIOA).
- Child welfare agencies can also establish contacts and a referral process with community organizations who are funded to serve young people in areas like employment, food, and mental health supports.

3. Leverage Housing Navigation and Maintenance Funds Strategically

- All counties have access to and should leverage their Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program (HNMP) Funds to support young people in the FYI program.
- These funds were increased to \$13.7 million in FY 2022-23 year. This increase was intended to support the FYI program's growth in California by providing a funding stream for supportive services.
- HNMP funds have been allocated to nearly all counties, but many counties have not yet claimed their 2022-23 funds.
- HNMP funds can be used for:
 - transitory services like move-in costs and security deposit;
 - housing navigation to help youth locate housing units;
 - recruiting and supporting landlords, including landlord incentives;
 - providing ongoing supportive services like case management; and
 - education/employment support, budgeting and other independent living skills.

4. Build Connections to the Housing Community and Leverage Existing Funds to Increase the Number of Landlords who will Accept FYI Vouchers

- Landlords are critical stakeholders for successful FYI implementation.
- Partner with realtors and landlord associations to leverage their networks to encourage landlords to accept FYI vouchers.

- Partner with programs that are effective in working with landlords to reserve units for individuals with subsidies or housing vouchers:
 - [LeaseUp](#) Los Angeles provides support to landlords in exchange for reserving rental units for individuals with housing subsidies and vouchers. The program has been successful in helping individuals with vouchers find and secure units quickly.
 - The child welfare agency and PHA in Orange County partner with the United Way, which conducts landlord recruitment.
 - YLC has an [FYI fact sheet tailored to landlords](#) that can be used for educational purposes.
- Partner with housing navigators that have a proven track record of finding and maintaining housing for housing insecure individuals.
- As mentioned above, counties can use their Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program funds for recruiting landlords and funding other supports to landlords, like a larger security deposit or a mitigation fund in the event of damages.

5. **Effective Practices for Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWAs):**

- Develop a point of contact or unit within the PCWA to administer the program and coordinate with the PHA and community organizations.
 - Several jurisdictions, including the state of Illinois and the county of Los Angeles, have successfully formed Housing units within their Child Welfare Agencies that administer the FYI voucher and other housing programs. These units serve as the main point of contact for young people, stakeholders, and the PHAs.
- Partner with community-based agencies that have housing expertise to administer the program. For example, Alameda County's child welfare agency administers the program in partnership with the organization Beyond Emancipation, which has expertise in housing and in working with transition age youth.

6. **Effective Practices for Public Housing Authorities (PHAs)**

- Develop a point of contact or unit within the PHA to administer the program and coordinate with the child welfare agency, young people, and community organizations.
- Provide assistance to young people to complete the Housing Choice Voucher application and connect them to the Family Self Sufficiency Program when they are eligible.

For more information on FYI, check out the recent notice from HUD, [PIH 2023-04](#), issued March 15, 2023. There is also an [FYI FAQ](#) from HUD, last revised on September 29, 2021.