

Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers: The Role of the Board of Supervisors

1. What is the Foster Youth to Independence Housing Voucher Program?

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program provides a type of housing choice voucher for young people who are leaving or have left foster care. These vouchers were developed to improve housing security for youth aging out of foster care. FYI was designed by young people who were in foster care and experienced homelessness after aging out. These vouchers can be requested by Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) when they collaborate with local child welfare agencies or probation departments. The PHA will provide the voucher and the child welfare agency provides or arranges for support services for the young person. These support services are voluntary. FYI vouchers last for three years, but can be extended for two additional years if the young adult is participating in the [Family Self Sufficiency Program](#) (FSS) or similar programs. These are programs that support employment, education, and incentivize saving.

2. Who is eligible for an FYI voucher?

Eligible youth (including probation supervised foster youth) meet the following criteria.

- a. Are 18 through 24 years of age (have not reached their 25th birthday), and
- b. Have left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, and
- c. Are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless when they were age 16 or older.

3. How does the FYI program benefit young people?

Stable housing is crucial for young people to successfully transition to adulthood. Without stable housing, young adults face significant challenges to meet their education and employment goals. But, young people aging out of foster care face many barriers to securing safe and affordable housing, including their age and lack of family support, which many young adults rely on for their first apartment. The FYI program can be a critical stepping stone for young adults as they move from foster care into the adult world.

4. What is the role of a Board of Supervisors in helping young adults secure stable housing by accessing FYI vouchers?

The County Board of Supervisors can play a powerful role in the effective implementation of FYI. Like City Councils, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) for each county are acutely aware of the housing crisis in the state and are desperately looking for resources and solutions to the lack of affordable and stable housing. They have a vested interest in the county child welfare and probation department collaborating with the public housing authorities in their county so that they can increase their supply of housing vouchers, including FYI vouchers, to increase the tools they have to help their residents find housing stability.

The Board of Supervisors sets priorities for the county, oversees most county departments and programs, and annually approves their budgets; supervises county officers and employees; controls county property; and

appropriates and spends money on programs that meet county residents' needs. Given this broad authority, BOS can take the following actions to bring FYI vouchers to their counties and to improve the chances that youth in their county will find housing security when they leave foster care:

- BOS can hold a hearing on the housing needs and outcomes of youth leaving the foster care system and learn more about the FYI program.
- BOS can identify eliminating homeless and housing insecurity for foster youth leaving the child welfare system and juvenile justice system as a county priority.
- BOS can ask the child welfare agency, probation department, and Public Housing Authority(ies) to report on the status of access to FYI vouchers for youth in the county and request collaboration.
- BOS can allocate funds from its budget for things like landlord incentives, hiring a FYI program coordinator, or providing additional resources for young people.
- BOS can aid in developing housing units for young people by:
 - recommending that the eligible entities in the county apply for [Homekey funds](#) for projects for youth leaving foster care.
 - allocating county property for development or rehabilitation into housing units for youth leaving foster care.
- BOS can leverage their role in the community to engage community organizations to provide services to young people receiving FYI vouchers and to recruit landlords in the community to rent to young people.

For more information on FYI, see [here](#).