

Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers: The Role of City Council

1. What is the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) 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 City Council in helping young adults secure stable housing by accessing FYI vouchers?

City Councils can play a powerful role in implementing FYI programs and eliminating barriers that currently may exist to accessing vouchers across the state. Many cities in California 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. The FYI Voucher Program is an extremely valuable resource they may not be aware of and have a vested interest in their cities having access to vouchers.

Here are some actions that City Councils can take to bring FYI vouchers to their cities and to improve the chances

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that youth in their cities will find housing security when they leave foster care:

- City Council can hold a hearing on the housing needs of youth leaving the foster care system and learn more about the FYI program.
- The City Council can ask the child welfare agency and probation department to report on the housing status and outcomes of youth aging out of these systems as a way to better understand the need for access to FYI vouchers.
- To the degree that the City Council plays a role in overseeing governmental agencies within the City, it can ask those agencies—such as the child welfare agency, probation department, and Public Housing Authority—to report on the status of access to FYI vouchers for youth in the city and request collaboration.
- If implementation of the FYI program would be aided by raising revenue for things like landlord incentives, hiring a program coordinator, or providing additional resources for young people, City Council can raise revenues through taxes, fees, assessments, and debt financing.
- The City Council can aid in developing housing units for young people by recommending that the eligible entities in the City apply for [Homekey funds](#) for projects for youth leaving foster care.
- City Council 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](#).