



Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative: Developing and Maintaining Effective Partnerships to Serve Youth

Introduction to FYI

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative makes Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) assistance available to Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) in partnership with Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWAs). Under FYI, PHAs provide housing assistance on behalf of: Youth at least 18 years and not more than 24 years of age (have not reached their 25th birthday) who left foster care, 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 are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older. FYI vouchers cannot exclude eligible youth with children or who are pregnant, consistent with the nondiscrimination requirements of the Fair Housing Act.

As required by statute, an FYI voucher issued to such a youth may only be used to provide housing assistance for the youth for a maximum of 36 months.¹ In addition to providing up to 36 months of rental assistance, youth must be provided supportive services to assist the young person on their path to self-sufficiency.

PHAs administer FYI in partnership with PCWAs who are responsible for identifying youth and certifying that they meet the FYI eligibility criteria listed above and referring them to the PHA for determination of eligibility for HCV assistance.² HUD awards FYI vouchers to PHAs through competitive and non-competitive processes. Under the FYI competitive program, a referral of a youth to FYI is triggered when the PHA notifies the PCWA of voucher availability. PCWAs must provide referral(s) for the available vouchers within 30 working days of being notified by the PHA of voucher availability. PCWAs and PHAs should be communicating regularly about the availability of FYI vouchers. In the non-competitive program, the PCWA will make the referral of a youth to the PHA first. The PHA will then apply to HUD for the voucher(s) and HUD will review applications in the order received. The application process requires specific partnerships and roles, as documented in a formal partnership agreement between a PHA and PCWA. The PHA is also encouraged to partner with the local Continuum of Care (CoC) to help identify eligible youth not in the PCWA's caseload. Youth use the FYI vouchers to lease decent, safe, and sanitary housing in local communities. PHAs may provide FYI as tenant-based and/or project-based housing voucher assistance.³ A

¹ The Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities (FSHO) amendments (Section 103 of Division Q of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Pub. L. 116-260)) provides FYI youth with an extension of the 36-month time limit for up to an additional 24 months if they meet certain requirements. FSHO applies to FYI youth who first leased or leases a unit after the date of enactment of FSHO, December 27, 2020. HUD published an FSHO implementation notice in the Federal Register on January 24, 2022 (87 FR 3570).

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/01/24/2022-01285/implementation-of-thefostering-stable-housing-opportunities-amendments>

² Notice PIH 2023-04 provides more details on the roles and responsibilities of the PCWAs. Notice PIH 2023-04 is accessible at the following link: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/2023PIH04.pdf>

³ All FYI vouchers can be project-based except FYI TPVs awarded under Notice PIH 2019-20.

tenant-based FYI voucher is assigned to an eligible youth and can transfer with the tenant as they move to a qualified housing unit. A project-based FYI voucher is committed to units within specific housing developments to serve eligible households that move into the units with project-based vouchers.

FYI Partnerships

This FYI Partnerships Topic Guide will help PHAs, PCWAs, CoCs, and other cross-system leaders learn about strategies for developing and enhancing partnerships to implement housing and services for youth with child welfare histories utilizing FYI. HUD requires a formal partnership agreement (typically a memorandum of understanding (MOU)) to be executed between the PHA and PCWA.⁴ HUD also strongly encourages the partnership agreement to include the CoC and any additional partners to provide additional supportive services. Identifying FYI-eligible youth requires connections, expertise, and collaboration across multiple agencies. Once identified, FYI youth often face needs beyond what any one agency alone can support. While housing stability is a key component to economic mobility, FYI youth must also be offered an array of supportive services to support their path to self-sufficiency, although youth do not have to take part in supportive services as a condition of their voucher. Pairing FYI housing assistance with appropriate support and services provided through community partnerships can lead to positive outcomes.

Partner Roles and Responsibilities

Public Child Welfare Agency (PCWA)	Public Housing Authority (PHA)	Continuum of Care (CoC) *Highly Encouraged
<p>REQUIRED ACTIVITY: Identify eligible youth and verify eligible child welfare history. <u>Tip:</u> When the PCWA is identifying youth still involved in the child welfare system for a referral, it may consider the youth’s child welfare permanency goals. The PHA and CoC may also identify potential youth that are not currently connected to the PCWA, but the PCWA must verify FYI eligibility and refer to the PHA once verified.</p> <p>REQUIRED ACTIVITY: Include in the partnerships agreement a system of prioritization for referral to the PHA based on the youth’s level of need and the appropriateness of the intervention. <u>Tip:</u> For communities where the need is greater than awarded/available FYI vouchers per PHA, it will be important to create a prioritization policy.</p> <p>REQUIRED ACTIVITY:</p>	<p>REQUIRED ACTIVITY: Accept referrals from PCWA and verify eligibility for HCV.</p> <p>REQUIRED ACTIVITY: Conduct all other processes relating to voucher issuance.</p> <p>REQUIRED ACTIVITY: Administer FYI for eligible youth. FYI assistance is only provided for up to 36 months (or FSHO-extended limit, discussed above). <u>Tip:</u> FYI vouchers are time limited to 36 months (or FSHO-extended limit, discussed above). PHAs must reissue FYI vouchers to another FYI eligible youth upon turnover (except for FYI-TPVs issued under Notice PIH 2019-20 which</p>	<p>ENCOURAGED ACTIVITY: Utilize coordinated entry to identify youth with child welfare history that may be disconnected from the PCWA. Connect the youth to the PCWA for verification of FYI eligibility and referral to PHA for FYI. <u>Tip:</u> Utilizing coordinated entry to identify potential FYI-eligible young people does not require that a community use the same eligibility and prioritization for FYI that is used for CoC-funded projects.</p> <p>ENCOURAGED ACTIVITY: Work with the PCWA and PHA to match eligible youth to services. <u>Tip:</u> Youth who are eligible for both FYI and CoC-funded projects may be able to access both resources through this partnership.</p> <p>ENCOURAGED ACTIVITY: Integrate FYI into the community’s plan to prevent and end youth homelessness. <u>Tip:</u> Some CoCs are pursuing or currently receiving funding for Youth Homeless Demonstration Projects (YHDP). YHDP communities must have established a Youth</p>

⁴ For the FYI Competitive program, HUD requires the partnership agreement to be in the form of an MOU. For the FYI Non-Competitive program, HUD allows the partnership agreement to be in the form of an MOU or letters of intent.

Public Child Welfare Agency (PCWA)	Public Housing Authority (PHA)	Continuum of Care (CoC) *Highly Encouraged
<p>Refer an eligible youth to the PHA. In the referral, provide a written certification to the PHA verifying that the youth meets FYI eligibility requirements.</p> <p><u>Tip:</u> Although the amount of information the PCWA is required to include in the referral to the PHA is minimal, it is encouraged that PCWAs include information that is relevant to determining eligibility under PHA policy, such as criminal background, as subject to privacy laws.</p> <p>REQUIRED ACTIVITY:</p> <p>Provide or secure supportive services for youth for at least 36 months.</p> <p><u>Tip:</u> The PCWA and PHA can utilize community partners to help provide the required supportive services.</p>	<p>sunset when youth transition off the vouchers).</p> <p>REQUIRED ACTIVITY:</p> <p>Update administrative plan. <u>Tip:</u> Some PHAs may consider creating a preference in their regular HCV program for youth whose FYI assistance is expiring and will lack adequate housing because of their termination from the program.</p>	<p>Action Board (YAB) of youth who have experienced homelessness in the CoC. The YAB can be a valuable partner in planning and implementation.</p>

Additional partnerships enhance access and coordination of community-based support services, data sharing and evaluation, inclusion of people with lived experience and expertise, funding support, and connection with LGBTQ+ and culturally responsive community organizations. Examples of other mainstream systems include K-12 and adult basic education, higher education, job training and placement programs, healthcare, violence intervention, criminal justice, food and basic needs, transportation, and parks and recreation. Some creative FYI partnerships have included ones with internet service providers, real estate agencies, care maintenance programs, and faith communities.

Formalizing the Partnership

HUD requires a PHA and a PCWA to enter into a formal partnership agreement before a PHA can request FYI voucher allocations from HUD. HUD makes FYI available in two ways:

1. Non-Competitive: PHAs may request assistance on a rolling basis under [Notice PIH 2023-04 \(or successor notice\)](#). See the notice for an explanation of eligibility and application requirements.
 - PHAs may submit a request using the [FYI Application Request Form](#) (only PHAs may submit a request). *Google Chrome is the best platform to use this form.*
 - HUD has made available the following training and guidance on the FYI Non-Competitive process:
 - [Walkthrough Presentation of the FYI Form](#), March 17, 2023.
 - [Slide Deck of Walkthrough Presentation](#).
 - [Overview of Notice PIH 2023-04](#), PowerPoint slides, March 14, 2023
2. Competitive: PHAs can apply for FYI vouchers through a national competition in response to a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) published by HUD.

There are many detailed requirements for what must be specifically addressed in the partnership agreement, and other factors that HUD has encouraged through recent Notices and NOFOs that can be incorporated into the partnership agreement. Please see the FYI MOUs and Partnership Agreements Topic Guide for more information about the components that should be included in an FYI partnership agreement.

Creating and Operationalizing the Partnership

It is important to not only create initial FYI cross-system partnerships but to maintain, grow, and leverage them for continued work together to benefit youth and communities. Partners should focus on developing a shared commitment to collaboration not only for application purposes but also for ongoing implementation and operations.

Connecting with the Child Welfare System – A PHA should reach out to the local PCWA and share information about an anticipated FYI application to ensure the partner is aware of the opportunity. Find contact information for local and county child welfare agencies [here](#). While the federal government provides baseline policy, guidance, and some resources, states are responsible for operationalizing child welfare services delivery in their jurisdiction. Each state public child welfare system is structured differently, with most falling into two categories:

- State-Administered - Most PCWAs are set up within state administered structures. In this model, the state government establishes a centralized administrative structure to both oversee and provide child welfare services to all regions across their state.
- State-Supervised, County-Administered - A small number of states have established child welfare systems in which the state government provides oversight to the county governments within that state, each of which operates a county-specific PCWA.

Connecting with the Public Housing Authority – PCWAs interested in exploring FYI may want to reach out to their state or local PHA. Find contact information for state and local PHAs [here](#). By and large, the role of PHAs is to provide rental assistance and affordable public housing for families and individuals with low incomes. The need for such assistance far outweighs the available resources in most cases and PHAs are often faced with competing needs to serve different populations. PHAs usually want new housing voucher allocations and have an interest in ensuring that their limited vouchers are utilized effectively. PHAs are much more receptive to housing youth with complex histories and needs when other systems and service providers are willing to partner with them to help ensure youth have access to the services and supports that they need to maintain housing long term.

Connecting with the Homelessness Response System – The CoC is the entity responsible for finding solutions for households that are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. They oversee the local homeless response system, including a local Coordinated Entry process to identify, assess, prioritize, and match individuals and families with housing and services based on their need and eligibility. An FYI partnership can add to the array of resources in the homeless response system and youth identified by the PCWA or PHA may be connected to other housing or services in the homeless response system that better meet their needs. Such a partnership ensures that youth experiencing homelessness or other forms of housing instability are connected to the resources that best meet their needs. Find contact information for local CoCs [here](#).

Incorporating Youth Perspectives and Needs – Many CoCs have seen great success in effectively addressing the needs of youth experiencing homelessness in their communities through the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) initiative. A key component of YHDP is the implementation of a Youth Action Board made up of youth and young adults with lived experience and expertise of homelessness who provide leadership and guidance in partnership with other key stakeholders. Youth leadership in the FYI partnership not only ensures that youth needs are centered but also helps youth being served develop self-advocacy skills.

Using Data to Understand the Issue in Your Local Area – When forming the partnership, the PHA, PCWA, and CoC will want to utilize and share data to better understand the housing and service needs of youth with child welfare histories in the local community. Use data to monitor outcomes and inform continuous improvements. See the FYI Data Topic Guide for more information on potential metrics and data sources.

Additional Collaborative Opportunities to Help Youth Thrive – The FYI cross-system partnership may be leveraged over time to implement further youth-focused initiatives including applying for future HUD funding opportunities for the [Foster Youth to Independence Initiative \(FYI\)](#), [Family Unification Program \(FUP\)](#), and/or [Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program \(YHDP\)](#), as well as other federal, state, or local funding opportunities.

Designating Liaisons - The PHA, PCWA, and CoC should each designate a staff member to serve as lead FYI liaison for their agency. These designated staff serve as the main points of contact from one entity to the other and support real-time information sharing and nimbler responses while continuing to support partnerships and relationship building. Ensure that these liaisons have available time and resources to meaningfully engage in the partnership. Some FYI programs have created opportunities for staff to co-locate at one another's agencies.

Facilitating Partner Meetings - Partners should meet regularly, with ongoing partnership meetings occurring at least quarterly. FYI partners are encouraged to consider a multi-tier meeting structure to support their partnerships, such as the following example:

- Leadership oversight – senior leaders meet to share updates, hear from FYI liaisons about any progress and any barriers, and work to clear roadblocks, champion systems and policy changes, and resource allocations. Suggested schedule: quarterly to semiannually
- Operations – FYI liaisons and other key programmatic partners discuss strategies and troubleshoot obstacles to referrals, applications, housing search, utilization, turnover, and ongoing resident needs. Partners may monitor data dashboards, and work to streamline processes. Suggested schedule: semimonthly to monthly
- Direct care coordination – Providers of direct services working with an individual youth join with the youth to coordinate delivery of services and support across agencies in alignment with the goals and needs of the youth. Suggested schedule: quarterly to annually

FYI Partnership Tips

Collaboration

- Engage PHA and PCWA senior leadership to jointly assess and develop shared priorities, interests, and collective capacity and remove barriers.
- Operationalize and collaboratively develop policies and processes with designated staff and liaisons from across all partner agencies.

- Jointly address systemic racial inequity and disparities.

Cross-training

- Avoid sector jargon and acronyms.
- Provide training about agency goals, mandates, and programs.
- Acknowledge shared experience of resource and capacity limitations.
- Honor experience and expertise of each partner.

Data-sharing

- Explore and develop commitment to data sharing/integration.

Relationship-building

- Include additional public and community agencies in FYI MOU to expand the array of support and to reduce unnecessary duplication.
- Engage new community and nonprofit partners to increase equitable access to FYI and provide culturally responsive support to youth.
- Meaningfully include youth voices.
- Engage with private philanthropy.
- Review the MOU or partnership agreement at least annually and update as needed.

Partnership Strategies

Working collaboratively across systems can be challenging due to differences in mission, mandates, funding, and language. PHAs and partners have faced a number of historical challenges related to housing youth with histories of child welfare involvement, including limited availability of supportive services, especially for needs beyond those provided by PCWAs; inability to find affordable units and landlords; and challenges getting the vouchers to youth with the highest need in a timely manner.

To overcome these challenges, communities are increasingly embracing homeless prevention efforts paired with supportive services and finding great success. Such success requires creative partnerships and realignment of services and funding to meet the needs of youth in the community. Use an initial implementation of FYI to demonstrate the value to other potential partners. Effective FYI cross-system partnerships can result in a shared realization of new efficiencies, systems changes, adjustments to processes and policies, and elimination of barriers for the benefit of youth, communities, and systems.

FYI Partnership Example: Kitsap County

In 2021, Kitsap County Department of Human Services' Housing and Homelessness Division, received an Emergency Solutions Grant - CARES Act (ESG-CV) allocation from the Washington Department of Commerce that required 10 percent to be spent toward addressing youth homelessness. After sharing the need to spend this money at a community meeting, the manager received a call from the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to tell her about FYI. DCYF had partnered with two other PHAs and was eager to develop additional partnerships across the state. The only challenge was the need to fund supportive services.

The Kitsap County manager quickly brought together several key stakeholders to develop a strategy for utilizing available resources to ensure that homeless youth with child welfare histories could achieve housing stability.

Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is the Public Child Welfare Agency (PCWA) for the State of Washington and oversees eight FYI partnerships across the state, including the one in Kitsap County.

Bremerton Housing Authority (BHA) is the housing authority serving the City of Bremerton, Kitsap County, and Mason County. BHA applied for and received an allocation of 25 FYI vouchers in the 2022 Competitive NOFO. They administer the FYI vouchers according to HUD requirements.

Kitsap County oversees several housing and homelessness programs funded with federal, state, and local dollars. They contributed part of their ESG-CV allocation toward FYI services. The County also leveraged their relationship with Kitsap Community Resources to provide move-in assistance for FYI youth.

Olive Crest had a long-standing contract with DCYF to provide foster care and independent living skills services to foster youth. Using ESG-CV, Kitsap County contracted with Olive Crest to identify FYI-eligible youth and provide housing navigation and case management to FYI youth.

Kitsap Community Resources (KCR) serves as an entry point to the homeless response system in Kitsap County, which is part of the Washington Balance of State CoC. Using State Consolidated Homeless Grants, Kitsap County contracts with KCR to provide rental assistance for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Through this contract, KCR was able to provide first and last months' rent and deposit for FYI youth.

Coffee Oasis provides job training and youth development opportunities for youth and young adults. They also serve as the main access point to the homeless response system for youth in Kitsap County. In that role, they may identify eligible youth who are not currently in communication with Olive Crest.

WorkSource of Washington and **Olympic Educational Service District 114** are contracted by the State to provide job training and placement services to residents of Kitsap County.

Based in a Collective Impact model, Kitsap County serves as the backbone agency, convening a diverse set of partners around a shared vision and measuring progress. As required by funding, BHA, DCYF, Kitsap County, and Olive Crest have a signed MOU, but all partners meet monthly to discuss program implementation, successes, and challenges.

As a result of this partnership, Kitsap County had the highest rate of FYI housing placement in the state. They credit their community's success to the combination of Olive Crest's expertise working with foster youth and the availability of move-in assistance from KCR, in addition to the FYI vouchers from BHA and the strong leadership from Kitsap County. Subsequently, DCYF and the Department of Commerce advocated to the state legislature for an allocation of funding for supportive services for FYI and similar initiatives. Beginning in 2023, FYI services in Kitsap County will have an ongoing source of funding from the Department of Commerce.

Resources

- HUD Webpage for Foster Youth to Independence
https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/fyi
- HUD Webpage for Family Unification Program
https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/family
- Family Unification Program: Maintaining Effective Cross-System Partnerships (forthcoming)
- Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving the Goal of Ending Family Homelessness. (2018). United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH).
<https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/criteria-andbenchmarks-for-ending-youth-homelessness/>
- Building Partnerships to Support Stable Housing for Child Welfare-Involved Families and Youth. (2019). Child Welfare Information Gateway.
https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/bulletins_housing.pdf
- Efforts by child welfare agencies, local communities, and federal agencies to end family and youth homelessness. (2017). United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/policy-guidance/im-17-03>
- Youth Action Board (YAB) Pathways to Leadership (2021). United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.
<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Youth-Action-Board-Pathways-to-Leadership.pdf>

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Appendix: Sample Agenda for Multi-Agency FYI Collaborative

Purpose/Objectives

- Coordination between FYI partner entities, determine roles/responsibilities
- Alignment of supportive services needs and plans
- Understand progress, barriers and changing family or youth circumstances
- Coordinate, problem solve, avoid duplication of effort

Sample Agenda

- Roll call/ and team check-in or ice breaker exercise [7-10 min]
- Review purpose statement and group agreements [3 min]
- Review FYI Data Dashboard [5-10 min]
- Review FYI tenant household caseload [45-60 min]

- Status reports - open action items from prior meeting
 - Updates and coordination on youth household members including strengths-focused discussion of successes, goals, and support needs; group problem solving, and/or determine new action steps
- Partner cross-training - rotating [10-15 min]
- Closing [5-10 min]
- Celebrate milestones and collective accomplishments together
 - Review of action Items - Define what needs to be accomplished, the steps and resources needed, lead staff/agency, partner roles, if any, and expected timeline
 - Announcements