



# Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative: Memorandums of Understanding and Partnership Agreements

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> A tenant-based FYI voucher is assigned to an eligible youth and can transfer with the tenant as they move to a

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<sup>1</sup> 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-the-fostering-stable-housing-opportunities-amendments>

<sup>2</sup> 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>

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

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.

The purpose of this document is to describe the requirements for Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or other partnership agreements under the FYI Initiative and to provide a guide for best practices in developing these agreements.

## What are Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)?

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is an agreement between two or more parties outlined in a formal document. To apply for FYI vouchers through the competitive process, an MOU is required between a Public Housing Agency and a Public Child Welfare Agency. To apply for FYI vouchers through the noncompetitive process, the partnership agreement may be in the form of an MOU or letters of intent between the parties. The partnership agreement communicates the expectations of the parties involved as well as the mutually agreed upon goals. A sample MOU can be found in this guide as Appendix A and a link to the document is:

[https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/The\\_SAMPLE\\_FYI\\_MOU\\_Updated\\_5.2023.docx](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/The_SAMPLE_FYI_MOU_Updated_5.2023.docx)

## MOU Development

### Recommended Steps to Follow:

1. Thoroughly review the provided sample MOU.
2. List the names and titles of the parties that will be included in the MOU. It will be important to receive affirmation of the correct names, titles, and correct spelling of each.
3. Schedule time with pertinent Executive Director/s to obtain approval signature.

Regardless of the relationship with an existing or new partner, it is always important to build rapport and trust by showing genuine curiosity, empathy, and respect. If seeking to list a third party on the MOU with whom there have not been previous collaborations, it is valuable to anticipate and address any potential objections or concerns from such partners, including risks, costs, or resources. It is helpful to be flexible and open to feedback, suggestions, and compromises, while maintaining the core interests.

The following table outlines the varying role of partnerships to keep in mind while drafting the content of an MOU:

<b>Public Housing Authority (PHA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepts referrals from PCWA</li> <li>• Verifying HCV eligibility and wait list placement</li> <li>• Request FYI vouchers from HUD</li> <li>• Update administrative plans</li> <li>• Administer FYI vouchers for up to 36 months (or FSHO extension)</li> <li>• FYI voucher management</li> </ul>
<b>Public Child Welfare Agency (PCWA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and verify FYI eligibility</li> <li>• Develop a system for referral prioritization</li> <li>• Provide written certification to the PHA verifying eligibility</li> <li>• Provide or secure 36 months of supportive services</li> </ul>
<b>Continuum of Care (CoC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify potentially eligible youth through the Coordinated Entry system</li> <li>• Refer FYI-eligible youth to the PCWA</li> <li>• Provide any CoC-funded services that the FYI youth is eligible for</li> </ul>
<b>FYI-Eligible Youth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide perspectives and opinions on the FYI program and system</li> <li>• Assist in identifying FYI-eligible youth</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend and actively participate in FYI partnership</li> </ul>
<b>Third Party Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist in identifying FYI-eligible youth</li> <li>• Work with the PCWA and PHA to match FYI-eligible youth</li> <li>• Provide direct support services to youth</li> </ul>

**Monitor and Evaluate Existing Partnerships**

After partnerships have been launched, partners should develop a plan to monitor and evaluate the partnership performance and results on a regular basis. It is important to track and measure progress and achievements against predefined goals and metrics, as well as solicit and provide regular feedback, recognition, and support across partners. Partners should also identify and resolve any issues or challenges that might arise along the way and also look for opportunities to improve, innovate, or expand the partnership. There are many assessment and evaluation tools, such as a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

**Data utilization**

When forming a partnership, the PHA, PCWA and, when applicable, the 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 FYI Data topic guide.

**Liaisons**

The PHA and PCWA should, as a best practice, 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, 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.

**Special Considerations When Partnering with Youth**

When developing partnerships with FYI-eligible clients, it is important to keep in mind that they all have unique and individualized needs and experiences. When engaging youth, it is essential to view them not merely as beneficiaries of services, but as equal partners with those involved in making decisions that affect their lives. Doing so helps to cultivate trust because being in a partnership inherently means sharing information, having honest conversations, and respecting various experiences and opinions. It is important to set clear expectations about roles and decision-making. Doing all of this helps build young people’s self-esteem and supports the development of problem solving and leadership skills.

**Reflection question-** “In what ways can you listen to, and integrate opinions, experiences, and suggestions of youth within your work?”

Helping the youth prepare from the FYI program is an important task to complete. Youths must be provided with the information they want and need, should fully understand program information and be given enough time to consider what this information says so that they will be able to make informed decisions. Preparation requires time, effort, and patience from all those that are working with youth. It also involves building relationships and understanding an individual’s unique developmental needs that gets on a personal basis for each youth. To do this well, it is important to be flexible and open to practicing new skills and approaches.

**Reflection question-** “What skills and goals are you preparing your youth for?”

Youth need opportunities to be engaged and to partner with other youths. Youths and adults should consider how opportunities will further a young person’s development and specific goals, which in turn creates opportunities for youth to acquire skills and develop their leadership abilities.

**Reflection question-** “How do you identify opportunities to engage youth in planning for FYI?”

Support should be tailored to meet the unique needs of a young person. Also, support comes in different forms. It includes being physically present and available, providing emotional and material support.

**Reflection question-** “How do you identify the support youth need in order to be successful?”

Young people should have a significant voice in decisions that affect their lives. Doing so helps them build important skills and relationships as well as self-esteem. When youth are truly engaged, involved in decision-making, they are more likely to achieve a greater stake or to be more aware of the situation, the program, and their community. More information about establishing and maintaining youth partnerships can be found at <https://www.hudexchange.info/search/?km=10&ct=&dsp=&q=Fostering+Youth+to+Independence>

## FYI Program Rules and the MOU

HUD requires partnerships between PHAs and PCWAs before a PHA can request FYI voucher allocations. If applying for noncompetitive FYI funds, these partnerships must be memorialized in MOUs and/or letters of intent to be executed between the PHA and PCWA, and additional optional partners, such as CoCs, Tribal Community, etc. Programs should coordinate with the greater homelessness response system, including the local homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) and Coordinated Entry (CE) System, which is why CoCs are encouraged to be included in the partnership agreement. 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.

When applying for a competitive FYI funding opportunity, the FYI MOU must be newly executed after the NOFO was published and before submission. A newly developed MOU can cover prior FYI awards too as long as the single MOU meets all requirements of the NOFO. HUD only accepts one MOU per PHA applicant. A PCWA and/or CoC may be party to MOUs with multiple PHA applicants within their overlapping jurisdictions, however, consider a regional approach. An MOU may include other partners beyond required parties (public agencies, community partners, others providing services, etc.) At a minimum, the MOU must be signed by the chief executive/official representative of the PHA and PCWA Agency and position titles should be clearly identified. Partners are encouraged to develop the MOU collaboratively.

The following outlines the minimum requirements to be included in an MOU:

### 1. Introduction/Purpose and Program Goals.

- a. PHA and PCWA commitment to administering FYI, and, if applicable, CoC commitment to cooperate with PHA and PCWA.

- b. Goals and standards of success in administering FYI.
- c. Staff positions at PHA, PCWA and , if applicable, CoC to serve as FYI liaisons and associated responsibilities.

**2. Statement of cooperation with any federal FYI program evaluation efforts.**

**3. Definition of youth eligible to receive FYI assistance.**

- a. At least 18 years of age but not more than 24 years of age (have not reached their 25th birthday).
- b. Have 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.
- c. Homeless or at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older.

**4. An outline of self-sufficiency/supportive services to be provided to FYI youth up to 36 months must include:**

- a. Basic life-skills counseling.
- b. Counseling on compliance with program requirements.
- c. Providing assurances to owners of rental property as are reasonable and necessary.
- d. Job preparation and attainment counseling.
- e. Educational and career advancement counseling.
- f. Must include the names of each agency and/or business providing each service.

**5. Services to be provided to FYI eligible youth.**

- a. Assurance that the required services will be available to youth for at least 36months.
- b. Youth participation in the services is voluntary.
- c. List of the organization(s) that will provide each service.

**6. A description of PHA, PCWA, and, if applicable, third-party responsibilities.**

- a. Examples of optional third parties in your local community can include:
  - Continuum of Care (CoC)
  - local mental health clinics
  - case management services
  - food and clothing resources
  - Job Corps
  - Youth Corps
  - housing assistance programs
  - The Salvation Army and other faith-based organizations
  - local public transportation services
  - daily living providers
  - Goodwill
  - The Boys and Girls Club
  - The YMCA
  - The United Way
  - businesses for daily living (such as internet, electricity, or phone services)

For more information on partner roles and responsibilities, as well as developing and maintaining effective partnerships, please see the FYI Developing and Maintaining Effective Partnerships Topic Guide.

## Resources

- HUD Webpage for Foster Youth to Independence  
[https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/fyi](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/fyi)
- FYI Voucher Sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)  
[https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/The\\_SAMPLE\\_FYI\\_MOU\\_Updated\\_5.2023.docx](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/The_SAMPLE_FYI_MOU_Updated_5.2023.docx)
- Foster Youth to Independence Initiative Webinar Series:  
<https://www.hudexchange.info/news/foster-youth-to-independence-initiative-webinar-series1/>
- HUD Webpage for Family Unification Program  
[https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/family](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/family)
- Cross System Collaboration. Child Welfare Capacity Building Center for States.  
<https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cross-system-collaboration/>
- Housing and Child Welfare:  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/service-array/housing/>
- Services for Homeless and Runaway Youth:  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/youth/interventions/homeless-runaway/>
- ACF Two-Part Podcast on Housing and Child Welfare:  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-welfare-podcast-housings-part1>  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-welfare-podcast-housings-part2>

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## Appendix: Sample MOU for Multi-Agency FYI Collaborative

## **SAMPLE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING - FOSTER YOUTH TO INDEPENDENCE**

[\*\* This sample document demonstrates the partnership agreement requirements of Notice PIH 2023-04. \*\*]

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been created and entered into on [\*\* Insert execution date \*\*] by and between the following parties in relation to their request for assistance under the Foster Youth to Independence initiative and the requirements of Notice PIH 2023-04. [PHA Name and Address]

[PCWA Name and Address]

[Third-party Name and Address]

[\*\*Include only if the third-party will be a party to the agreement\*\*]

### I. Statement of Cooperation [\*\*Optional\*\*]

- A. Commitment to administering the program.
- B. Goals and standards of success in administering the program.
- C. Identification of staff position at the PHA, PCWA, and third-party partner who will serve as the lead FYI liaisons.

Lead FYI Liaison:

Name and title of PHA staff position:

Name and title of PCWA staff position:

Name and title of third-party partner staff position:

### II. Youth Eligibility [\*\*Required\*\*]

The population eligible to be assisted under this agreement are youth certified by the PCWA as meeting the following conditions:

1. Has attained at least 18 years and not more than 24 years of age (have not reached their 25th birthday);
2. 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
3. Is homeless or is at risk of becoming homeless as these terms are defined at 24 CFR 578.3 and 24 CFR 576.2, at age 16 or older.

Eligibility is not limited to single persons. For example, pregnant and/or parenting youth are eligible to receive assistance under this notice assuming they otherwise meet eligibility requirements.

### III. Supportive Services [\*\*Required\*\*]

[\*\*Insert name of supportive service provider(s)\*\*] will provide the following supportive services for a period of 36 months to youth assisted through this program. Youth will not be required to participate in these services as condition of receipt of the voucher.

- A. Basic life skills information/counseling on money management, use of credit, housekeeping, proper nutrition/meal preparation, and access to health care (e.g., doctors, medication, and mental and behavioral health services).



- B. Counseling on compliance with rental lease requirements and with HCV program participant requirements, including assistance/referrals for assistance on security deposits, utility hook-up fees, and utility deposits.
- C. Providing such assurances to owners of rental property as are reasonable and necessary to assist a FYI-eligible youth to rent a unit with a voucher.
- D. Job preparation and attainment counseling (where to look/how to apply, dress, grooming, relationships with supervisory personnel, etc.).
- E. Educational and career advancement counseling regarding attainment of general equivalency diploma (GED); attendance/financing of education at a technical school, trade school or college; including successful work ethic and attitude models.

[\*\*The MOU may include additional services beyond those listed above (A - E) \*\*]

IV. PHA Responsibilities [\*\*The following elements, listed in A.-C., are required\*\*]

The [\*\*Insert PHA name\*\*] will be responsible for the following activities:

- A. Upon receipt of a referral(s) from the PCWA of an eligible youth, compare the name(s) with youth already on the PHA's HCV waiting list. Any youth on the PHA's HCV waiting list that matches with the PCWA's referral must be assisted in order of their position on the waiting list in accordance with PHA admission policies. Any youth certified by the PCWA as eligible and not on the HCV waiting list must be placed on the waiting list (pending HCV eligibility determination). If the PHA has a closed HCV waiting list, it must reopen the waiting list and place on the waiting list a FYI applicant youth who is not currently on the PHA's HCV waiting list. The PHA may reopen the waiting list to accept an FYI eligible youth without opening the waiting list for other applicants.
- B. Document that youth are informed of their eligibility for supportive services and the duration of the availability of those services.
- C. Amend the administrative plan in accordance with applicable program regulations and requirements.<sup>i</sup>

V. PCWA Responsibilities [\*\*The following elements, listed in A.-D., are threshold requirements\*\*]

The [\*\*Insert PCWA name\*\*] will be responsible for the following activities:

- A. Have a system for identifying eligible youth within the agency's caseload and review referrals from the PHA and third-party partners.
- B. Have a system for prioritization of referrals to ensure that youth are prioritized for a FYI voucher based upon level of need and appropriateness of the intervention.
- C. Provide written certification to the PHA that a youth is eligible.
- D. Provide or secure a commitment for the provision of required supportive services.

VI. Third-Party Responsibilities [\*\*Include only if a third-party will be a party to the agreement\*\*]

The [\*\*Insert third-party name\*\*] will be responsible for the following activities:

- A. Integrate the prioritization and referral process for eligible youth into the third-party or CoC's coordinated entry process.
- B. Identify services to be provided using third party or CoC program funds to youth who qualify for third-party or CoC program assistance.
- C. Make referrals of eligible youth to the PCWA.

Signed By:

Executive Director, PHA

Executive Director, PCWA

Executive Director, PCWA contractor organization [\*\*If applicable\*\*]

Date

Date

Date

Executive Director, Third-Party [**\*\*If applicable\*\***]

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Date

<sup>i</sup> This includes the responsibility for the PHA to comply with the time limit for FYI vouchers, including any extension of this time limit that the youth is entitled to under the Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities (FSHO) amendments (Section 103 of Division Q of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Pub. L. 116-260)) and HUD's FSHO implementation notice published in the Federal Register on January 24, 2022 (87 FR 3570) or subsequent notice.