



# Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative: Waiting List Basics

## 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. 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. 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>2</sup> A 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.

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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-thefostering-stable-housing-opportunities-amendments>

<sup>2</sup> All FYI vouchers can be project-based except FYI TPVs awarded under Notice PIH 2019-20.

## Overview

FYI is part of the HCV program and therefore must follow HCV waiting list requirements, yet there are specific FYI programmatic differences, as well as population specific requirements and needs to manage. This FYI Waiting List Topic Guide will help PHAs, PCWAs, CoCs, and other cross-system leaders learn about FYI referral and waiting list procedures consistent with federal requirements and programmatic intent, including strategies for developing, opening, and managing their HCV waiting list for FYI eligible youth, aligning HCV waiting list preferences with the FYI referral and application process, FYI waiting list public notice requirements, and related operational strategies.

## Referral and Waiting List Process

The PCWA is the entity responsible for establishing and implementing a system to identify FYI eligible youth within the agency's caseload and to review potentially eligible youth identified by the PHA and CoC.

### Youth Prioritization

Eligibility requirements for FYI eligible youth include the ability for certain foster youth to be referred up to 90 days prior to exit from the child welfare system. The PCWA is encouraged to establish and implement a system to identify FYI eligible youth not currently in their caseload, in cooperation with the CoC, including integrating a prioritization and referral process for FYI eligible youth into the local CoC coordinated entry process.

### Referral Sequence

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.<sup>3</sup> 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. Under the non-competitive program, PHAs may request as little as one voucher or up to a maximum of 50 vouchers in a Federal fiscal year (i.e., October 1-September 30).<sup>4</sup>

In both competitive and non-competitive FYI, the PCWA makes a FYI referral by providing a written certification to the PHA that a youth qualifies as a FYI eligible youth, based upon the FYI criteria. The PHA must accept youth certified by the PCWA as eligible for the FYI. The PHA confirms eligibility for HCV. The PHA, upon receipt of a referral(s), compares 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 once determined

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<sup>3</sup> For more information, see the 2022 Foster Youth to Independence Competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity: [https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/SPM/documents/FR-6600-N-41\\_Foster\\_Youth\\_to\\_Independence\\_FYI\\_Competitive\\_NOFOv2.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/SPM/documents/FR-6600-N-41_Foster_Youth_to_Independence_FYI_Competitive_NOFOv2.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Notice PIH 2023-04 states that “ ... Each PHA is limited to an initial maximum award of 25 FYI non-competitive vouchers in a federal fiscal year.” Further, “PHAs that have been awarded the initial maximum cap of 25 FYI non-competitive vouchers in the federal fiscal year beginning October 1st through September 30th of that year, that have validated VMS data to reflect the PHA has achieved at least ninety percent utilization of vouchers reported under the Foster Youth to Independence – Leasing/MTW - Foster Youth to Independence - Leasing field may request up to an additional 25 vouchers.”

eligible for HCV assistance. All FYI admissions must come from the PHA's waiting list. PHAs typically maintain one single waiting list for all HCV housing assistance.

If the PHA has closed their HCV waiting list, it must reopen the waiting list and place on the waiting list any referred FYI applicant youth not currently on the PHA's HCV waiting list. The PHA may keep open or reopen the waiting list only to accept referrals from the PCWA of an FYI applicant youth without opening the HCV waiting list for other applicants. The PHA selects from the waiting list according to criteria in its Administrative Plan, and then issues and administers FYI vouchers in accordance with applicable HUD program regulations and requirements.

## FYI Administrative Requirements

### Administrative Plan

- The PHA amends their Administrative Plan, as applicable, with FYI programmatic information and eligibility criteria, in accordance with applicable program regulations and requirements.
- This should include the required FYI admission policies and may include adjustments to other PHA policies not required by HUD that may create barriers or hardships to FYI participants.

*“Spokane Housing Authority actually eliminated criminal screening except for the HUD required offenses like lifetime sex offender registration and manufacturing methamphetamines. We want to make sure that we are not the reason someone is screened out of housing that is needed to provide stability.”* Pamela Parr, Executive Director, Spokane (WA) Housing Authority

### Preferences

- The PHA may choose to adopt preferences for making housing assistance available to those with certain characteristics, based on local housing needs and priorities. These preferences factor into the way the list of applicants is sorted based on the preference(s) they qualify for, thereby allowing an applicant who qualifies for a preference to move ahead of other applicants on the HCV wait list. When a voucher becomes available, the list of applicants is sorted and the top name is selected according to factors outlined in the PHA Administrative Plan, including by preferences met.<sup>5</sup>
- PHA HCV waiting list preferences apply in the selection of FYI applicants for a FYI voucher, but only in relation to other FYI applicants on the HCV waiting list. For example, if the PHA has a residency preference and FYI applicant A qualifies for that preference, but FYI applicant B does not, then FYI applicant A must be selected first from the HCV waiting list when a FYI voucher becomes available. The PHA must select a FYI applicant for a FYI voucher (when a FYI voucher is available) even if the next person on the waiting list for a regular HCV qualifies for a preference that the FYI applicant does not.
- Changing HCV preferences requires a formal change to the PHA Administrative Plan.

### Public Notification

- The PHA must follow public notice requirements for opening of the HCV waiting list as set forth by HUD. Many PHAs keep the HCV waiting list open indefinitely only for special purpose HCV programs. The PHA may keep the list open only for FYI referrals received directly from the PCWA, while closing the list to other applicants. A PHA can also choose to open the list only for FYI

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<sup>5</sup> For more information, see: [eCFR :: 24 CFR 982.207 -- Waiting list: Local preferences in admission to program.](#)

vouchers during a specific period when a FYI voucher becomes available, although this may add to the administrative burden for the PHA.<sup>6</sup>

- Any time a PHA opens their waiting list, public notification is required. In accordance with HUD requirements, a PHA can post notice that includes information about FYI eligibility and the PCWA as the sole entity to make referrals to the PHA. The notification should also include easy to understand information on eligible populations, who to contact if a youth believes that they may be eligible, and dates the list will be open, if applicable. The notice must be posted in a local newspaper of general circulation, and also by minority media and other suitable means. The notice must comply with HUD Fair Housing requirements.
- When a PHA receives a new award of FYI vouchers, when voucher utilization is low, or when a number of vouchers are anticipated to turnover, notification and outreach beyond the PCWA may be beneficial. This includes outreach to the CoC and other entities connected with potentially FYI eligible youth.

### Waiting List Management

- FYI vouchers can only be issued to youth selected from the PHA HCV waiting list. The PHA verifies preference qualifications as well as HCV eligibility, conducts a briefing on the HCV program, and issues a voucher to the youth.
- A PHA may deny assistance to youth for certain limited reasons, as described in the HCV program regulations. (24 CFR 982.552-553) PHAs have the ability to consider a range of individual circumstances and have review and hearing processes in place to appeal denial decisions.

### Operational Strategies

HCV and FYI requirements should be met while also ensuring programmatic intent; therefore, policies and practices should be aligned with youth needs as well as the realities of PCWA processes.

In order to meet the intent and maximize the benefits of FYI vouchers, PHAs and their partners should consider FYI vouchers as an important discharge resource. To make timely referrals, PCWAs are encouraged to continually screen for housing needs. The PCWA should be able to consistently track youth who will be aging out of foster care and would be eligible for an FYI voucher. In the competitive program, PCWAs wait to prioritize and refer such youth until the PHA notifies them of vouchers becoming available. The PCWA and CoC should prioritize potential referrals to match each known voucher opening with the youth most appropriate and in need at that time. In the non-competitive program, PCWAs refer youths first, before the PHA applies for FYI vouchers. In both programs, being aware of the clients' housing needs maximizes the opportunity for FYI vouchers to support positive housing and child welfare outcomes. PCWAs should consider using PCWA data and case worker information to help in identification and prioritization. CoC's have expertise in referral and prioritization systems and can be useful partners in developing processes and factors that meet FYI requirements and intent.

### FYI and Youth Outcomes

The FYI voucher's primary goal is to support a youth in finding a positive pathway in their transition from foster care to adulthood. To ensure that scarce housing resources are matched to youth that will benefit most, it is recommended that the PHA and PCWA have regular communication and clear processes in place

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<sup>6</sup> For more information, see: [24 CFR § 982.206 Waiting list: Opening and closing; public notice - Code of Federal Regulations \(ecfr.io\)](#)

to alert of anticipated FYI voucher openings. PCWAs should be cognizant of FYI voucher availability when conducting discharge planning and actively partner with the PHA on FYI voucher availability prior to their transition out of foster care.

The PCWA, often in partnership with the CoC, can identify the youth that currently fit the eligibility requirements for whom an FYI voucher will reduce their risk of facing negative outcomes. For FYI eligible youth, delays in accessing housing can increase risks for victimization and other crises that can significantly disrupt a young person's already challenging transition to adulthood.

## Determining Eligibility

One important aspect of PHA waiting list management for FYI is to determine if any youth aged 18 through 24 on its HCV waiting list may qualify for FYI, and then refer such applicants to the PCWA for further eligibility screening. This should occur both initially after an award of new vouchers, and at least monthly when there are FYI vouchers available. Guidance for this process includes:

- A PHA can adapt their waiting list application questions to identify youth that may be FYI eligible.
- A PHA can send notification to applicants on their current wait list to request updated and additional information that will help identify potentially FYI eligible youth.
- The PHA can explore data sharing opportunities with the PCWA and CoC to determine which youth already on the PHA waiting list are potentially eligible. The PHA, PCWA and/or CoC partners can include specific language in their applicant releases of information/informed consent forms that will allow for data sharing/matching across agencies for the purpose of identifying those potentially eligible for FYI or other housing resources. The PHA can create a system within the HCV waiting list to flag applicants as potentially FYI eligible.
- The CoC may offer expertise or support to identify youth that may be FYI eligible and connect them to PCWA for potential referral. The CoC may be especially helpful in identifying FYI eligible youth who are no longer on PCWA caseload.

## Voucher Turnover

Except for FYI Tenant Protection Vouchers (TPVs), PHAs must continue to use FYI vouchers for new FYI eligible youth upon turnover of the vouchers as youth exit the program.<sup>7</sup> A PHA cannot reassign someone already leased up on a regular HCV to a FYI voucher, as they would not meet FYI eligibility criteria since they are not homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. A PHA may create an HCV preference in their Administrative Plan for FYI youth reaching the end of their 36 months (or FSHO-extended limit, discussed above) and who will have a lack of adequate housing as a result of their termination from the program, or other similar category. This strategy will help ensure that youth are able to maintain stable housing after they reach the end of their FYI assistance.

## Portability

Youth who are issued FYI vouchers may have opportunities to live outside of the PHA jurisdiction with their FYI voucher through a process known portability. FYI vouchers can be ported to another PHA/jurisdiction as outlined in the PHA's Administrative Plan.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Note that FYI TPVs must continue to meet the requirements of Notice PIH 2019-20. These FYI TPVs "sunset" when a youth leaves the program and cannot be reissued.

<sup>8</sup> For more information, see:

[https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/HCV\\_Guidebook\\_Moves\\_and\\_Portability.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/HCV_Guidebook_Moves_and_Portability.pdf)

PHAs with neighboring or overlapping jurisdictions may consider entering into agreements that allow FYI participants to use their voucher across both PHA jurisdictions without a need for vouchers to be ported to the other PHA. This may be especially useful when there are multiple PHAs within the geography served by one PCWA (i.e., county PCWA with multiple PHAs, etc.).

#### FYI Partnership Waiting List Tips

- PHA and PCWA jointly develop a referral checklist, referral/ certification form.
- PHA FYI liaison can manage/expedite internal PHA processes and coordinate with other partners.
- FYI partners work simultaneously to gather needed documentation and verifications to avoid delays. Identify options for where youth may store documents for safekeeping.
- Review PHA and partner processes to streamline and reduce time between referral and voucher issuance.
- Review PHA Administrative Plan and remove non-mandatory denial criteria for HCV applicants as well as any other barriers to timely access to housing and racial equity.

## 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)
- 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)
- Family Unification Program (FUP): Waiting List Basics Topic Guide (forthcoming)
- Notice PIH 2023-04, Foster Youth to Independence Initiative  
<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/OCHCO/documents/2023-04pihn.pdf>
- Federal Register: Implementation of the Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendments  
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/01/24/2022-01285/implementation-of-the-fostering-stable-housing-opportunities-amendments#:~:text=The%20Fostering%20Stable%20Housing%20Opportunities%20%28FSHO%29%20amendments%2C%20enacted,Housing%20Act%20of%201937%20%2842%20U.S.C.%201437f%20%28x%29%29>
- Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Competitive NOFO for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022  
[https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/SPM/documents/FR-6600-N-41\\_Foster\\_Youth\\_to\\_Independence\\_FYI\\_Competitive\\_NOFOv2.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/SPM/documents/FR-6600-N-41_Foster_Youth_to_Independence_FYI_Competitive_NOFOv2.pdf)
- Summary of Changes in FYI Non-Competitive  
[https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/Summary\\_of\\_Changes\\_in\\_FYI\\_Non-Competitive\\_updated\\_9.24.2021.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/Summary_of_Changes_in_FYI_Non-Competitive_updated_9.24.2021.pdf)
- Notice PIH 2019-20, Tenant Protection Vouchers for Foster Youth to Independence Initiative.  
<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/OCHCO/documents/19-20pihn.pdf>
- Notice PIH 2020-28, Foster Youth to Independence Initiative  
<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/pih2020-28.pdf>

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