

YHDP Partnerships: Utilizing Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) and Family Unification Program (FUP) Vouchers

YHDP Partnerships

There are multiple federal programs that are designed to meet the needs of youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Communities are encouraged to look for opportunities to braid these funding streams together and develop coordinated systems. One of these programs, the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) is designed to decrease youth homelessness with a focus on building strong partnerships between the many systems youth may engage with.

Several YHDP communities have created additional housing pathways by developing partnerships between the Continuums of Care (CoC), the Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWA), and Public Housing Authorities (PHA) to utilize Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) - specifically Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) and Family Unification Program (FUP).

YHDP

YHDP is a United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) initiative designed to reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness. The goal of the YHDP is to support selected communities, including rural, suburban, and urban areas across the United States, in the development and implementation of a coordinated community approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness. Communities access the funding through a competitive application process and since the 2016 federal fiscal year, HUD has funded 110 communities to do this work. HUD's investment is more than \$440 million in this initiative.

YHDP focuses on the coordination of a community's approach to youth homelessness, such as developing and sustaining functional partnerships across sectors, including the public child welfare system. It is estimated that approximately 29% of youth experiencing homelessness

have spent time in the foster care system¹. Chapin Hall's 2017 Voices of Youth Count, is an in-depth report that outlines the pathways from foster care to homelessness, including aging out of the child welfare system, reunifying with parents or family, and adoption. While reunification and adoption are often viewed as successful outcomes from child welfare, these youth often encounter homelessness as they navigate adulthood.

How can YHDP connect with other youth programs such as FYI and FUP?

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program is the federal government's major program for assisting households in need with housing in the private market. HCVs are administered locally by Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) and provide program participants with a choice in where they want to live. A household that is issued a voucher is responsible for finding suitable housing where the owner agrees to rent under the HCV program.

As a means to ensure that youth with a history of foster care involvement have access to housing, Congress created youth-dedicated vouchers to support young adults and young adult families who have exited the child welfare system, in securing stable housing - the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) program and the Family Unification Program (FUP). Both FYI and FUP programs require strong partnerships between PHAs and Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWAs).

Foster Youth to Independence (FYI)

With this targeted allocation of HCVs, HUD invests in local, cross-system collaborative efforts to prevent and end homelessness for youth with a current or prior history of child welfare involvement. Vouchers are made available through both competitive and non-competitive processes, with specific information outlined at [HUD.gov](https://www.hud.gov).

FYI vouchers provide housing assistance for the youth for a maximum of 36 months² and the voucher must be paired with supportive services, funded through partnerships, to assist the

¹ Voices of Youth Count - [Pathways from Foster Care to Youth Homelessness](#) - Finding 1

² The Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities (FSHO) amendments (Section 103 of Division Q of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Pub. L. 116-260)) provides FYI/FUP youth an extension of the 36-month time limit for up to an additional 24 months if they meet certain requirements. FSHO applies to FYI/FUP youth who first leased or

young person on their path to self-sufficiency. The FYI program does not include funding for supportive services and community partnerships are critical to ensure necessary and appropriate services are available for a minimum of 36 months, as required by the FYI program.

In order to be eligible for FYI, a youth must:

- be at least 18 years and not more than 24 years of age;
- 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; and
- be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older.

Family Unification Program (FUP)

With this targeted allocation, HCVs are provided to two populations:

1. Non-time limited vouchers are available for Families for whom the lack of adequate housing is a primary factor in:
 - a. The imminent placement of the family's child or children in out-of-home care, or
 - b. The delay in the discharge of the child or children to the family from out-of-home care.
2. 36-month vouchers³ are available to eligible youth between the ages of 18-24 who 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, and are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older.

Like the FYI program, FUP does not provide funding for services but does require that supportive services be provided to youth households. Community partnerships are necessary to meet this requirement.

leases a unit after the date of enactment of FSHO, i.e., December 27, 2020. HUD published an FSHO implementation notice in the Federal Register on January 24, 2022 (87 FR 3570).

³ See footnote #2.

Leveraging YHDP with FYI and FUP

Several communities in the YHDP program have partnered with PHAs and PCWAs to assist in identifying youth that are eligible for a FUP/FYI voucher as well as creating projects that leverage housing assistance from the FUP/FYI voucher and services paid for through YHDP funds. These partnerships expand the number of resources available for youth in the community while ensuring that youth have the supportive services needed to obtain and maintain housing paid for through the voucher.

- **Identifying youth:** The FUP/FYI program requires that eligible households be certified by the PCWA. Identification of youth with prior foster care involvement can be a challenge because PCWAs may not be aware of youth who are eligible for the voucher and who are not currently on their caseload. A community's coordinated entry process, including by-name lists, can assist in identifying youth with prior foster care experience through its assessment process and intentional partnerships between the Coordinated Entry system and the PCWA can help assist youth through the referral process.
- **Housing youth:** Youth in YHDP communities continually identify the need for supportive services as critical to obtaining and maintaining housing. In addition to case management, many youth cite the need for assistance with locating and leasing a unit; life skills; and services to connect to employment or education opportunities. While the FUP/FYI voucher provides monthly housing assistance where the youth will generally only pay 30% of their adjusted income towards rent, these vouchers do not provide funding for security deposits, moving expenses, or household start-up expenses.

Challenges in pairing these resources:

- Leveraging YHDP and FUP/FYI vouchers **requires working across at least three distinct systems**- the CoC, the PCWA, and the PHA. In order to make these partnerships successful, each organization should have a point person who takes responsibility for the success of the program and can make the referral process as seamless as possible for the youth.
- **Navigating different eligibility criteria across programs**- The FUP/FYI voucher can be used for youth experiencing or at-risk of homelessness, while YHDP funds may only be used for youth experiencing homelessness. This is an important distinction because it means that youth can only access YHDP services before they lease up with an FUP/FYI

voucher. These eligibility criteria should be discussed and well understood to ensure that the community is planning for youth who are currently aging out of foster care but are not experiencing homelessness, as well as youth who are disconnected from foster care but are experiencing homelessness.

- **Acknowledging that it can be a lengthy process** for a young person to move from the homelessness response system into an FYI or FUP voucher. All partners should work together to make this process as seamless as possible for the youth, including warm hand-offs between partners and providing consistent supportive services. Additionally, transparency in the process, including documentation and regular updates on status, can help make the process less stressful for the young person.

Community Example: Hennepin County

When Hennepin County, MN, a round 5 YHDP community, was developing their local Coordinated Community Plan, they identified that at least 21% of youth and young adult heads of households reported previous foster care experience. The community prioritized an increase in housing options for this population and decided to use YHDP funds to provide the required supportive services to youth and young adults eligible for FYI and FUP vouchers. This intentional partnership between the resource streams has improved the partnership between the CoC and the local PHAs, increased housing resources available to youth and young adults, and made the process more streamlined for participants.

Through a local competition, two service providers were identified to apply for YHDP Rapid Rehousing (RRH) projects. These YHDP RRH projects funded supportive services, with housing resources being provided by FYI and FUP vouchers through the local PHAs. These projects have been operating in Hennepin County since October 2022 and there has been a lot of learning in the community. Overall, Hennepin County representatives say that the projects are working - both FYI/FUP RRH projects are consistently serving eligible youth and young adults, and through partnerships with the PHAs they have been able to streamline processes to make intake easier on the youth. However, the process from start to finish can be long and takes more staff time and oversight than expected.

The Hennepin County process of matching YHDP Services with FYI/FUP is outlined below with some lessons learned along the way. The Hennepin County process is administered by one of their Planning Analysts and in the chart below, they are referenced as the Hennepin County (HC) FYI Coordinator. The FYI Coordinator does not engage directly with young people in the program but maintains an overview of the entire program, tracking the progress and current

YHDP PARTNERSHIPS: UTILIZING FOSTER YOUTH TO INDEPENDENCE (FYI) AND FAMILY UNIFICATION PROGRAM (FUP) VOUCHERS

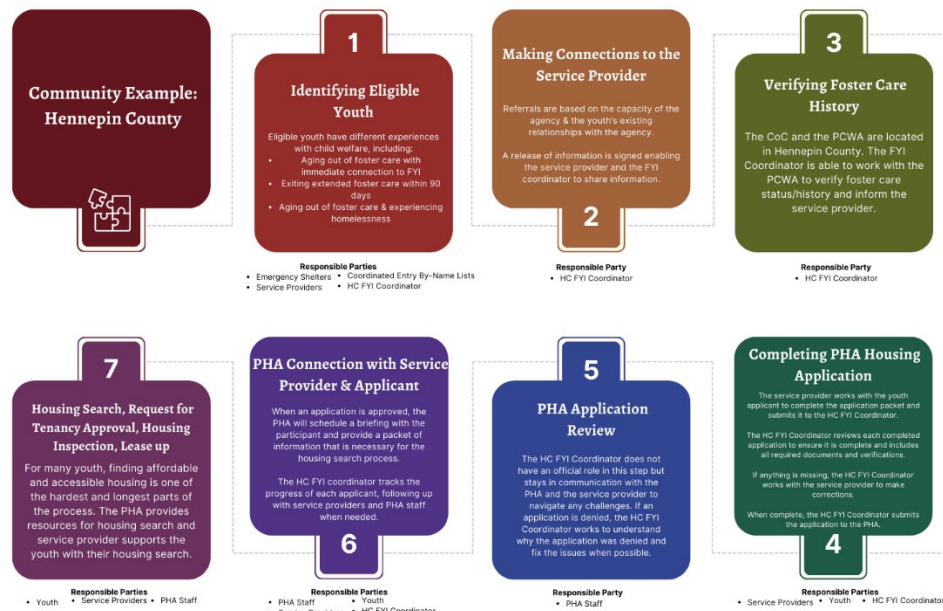
status of each youth referred. This role has proven instrumental in ensuring that no one falls through the cracks of a lengthy process from referral to housing.

Step	Who is Involved	Process/Notes
1. Identifying Eligible Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emergency Shelters ● Service Providers ● Coordinated Entry By-Name Lists ● HC FYI Coordinator 	<p>Eligible youth have different experiences with child welfare, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aging out of foster care with immediate connection to FYI ● Exiting extended foster care within 90 days ● Aging out of foster care & experiencing homelessness
2. Making Connections to the Service Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HC FYI Coordinator 	<p>Referrals are based on the capacity of the agency & the youth's existing relationships with the agency.</p> <p>A release of information is signed enabling the service provider and the FYI coordinator to share information.</p>
3. Verifying Foster Care History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HC FYI Coordinator 	<p>The CoC and the PCWA are located in Hennepin County. The FYI Coordinator is able to work with the PCWA to verify foster care status/history and inform the service provider.</p>
4. Completing PHA Housing Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Youth ● Service Provider ● HC FYI Coordinator 	<p>The service provider works with the youth applicant to complete the application packet and submits it to the HC FYI Coordinator.</p> <p>The HC FYI Coordinator reviews each completed application to ensure it is complete and includes all required documents and verifications.</p> <p>If anything is missing, the HC FYI Coordinator works with the service provider to make</p>

YHDP PARTNERSHIPS: UTILIZING FOSTER YOUTH TO INDEPENDENCE (FYI) AND FAMILY UNIFICATION PROGRAM (FUP) VOUCHERS

		<p>corrections.</p> <p>When the application is complete, including both child welfare and homeless verifications, it is submitted to the PHA.</p>
5. PHA Application Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PHA Staff 	<p>The HC FYI Coordinator does not have an official role in this step but stays in communication with the PHA and the service provider to navigate any challenges. If an application is denied, the HC FYI Coordinator works to understand why the application was denied and fix the issues when possible.</p>
6. PHA Connection with Service Provider & Applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PHA Staff ● Service Provider ● Youth ● HC FYI Coordinator 	<p>When an application is approved, the PHA will schedule a briefing with the participant and provide a packet of information that is necessary for the housing search process.</p> <p>The HC FYI coordinator tracks the progress of each applicant, following up with service providers and PHA staff when needed.</p>
8. Housing Search, Request for Tenancy Approval, Housing Inspection, Lease up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Youth ● Service Provider ● PHA 	<p>For many youth, finding affordable and accessible housing is one of the hardest and longest parts of the process. The PHA provides resources for housing search and service provider supports the youth with their housing search.</p>

YHDP PARTNERSHIPS: UTILIZING FOSTER YOUTH TO INDEPENDENCE (FYI) AND FAMILY UNIFICATION PROGRAM (FUP) VOUCHERS



Highlights in Hennepin County:

1. Identifying a staff person at Hennepin County, who develops and maintains relationships with all partners has increased the success of the projects. Specifically, the FYI Coordinator is directly involved with the homelessness response system, is connected to the coordinated entry system, and can directly verify child welfare experience with the PCWA.
2. Negotiating a common application with 4 separate PHAs, streamlining application requirements for youth and easing the administrative burden for support staff.
3. Negotiating the leniency of some barriers to entry and increasing how quickly youth can access housing. Example: Hennepin County partners with the social security office which can provide proof of social security numbers before physical cards are available.
4. Landlords are more willing to rent to young people with no rental history because of the service package that accompanies the FYI/FUP housing vouchers.
5. The FYI Coordinator ensures that Hennepin County Housing Stability, Child Welfare, and Social Security Offices are all working towards the same goals. This coordination amongst Hennepin County services improves the partnership with the PHA.

Community Example: Suburban Cook County

The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County has been braiding FYI/FUP and YHDP since they received YHDP funds in round 3 of the demonstration program. The Alliance to End Homelessness has a Young Adult Project Manager on staff, who has developed and nurtured the critical relationships between the CoC, the PCWA, and the PHA. The Young Adult Project Manager position, housed at the CoC, is critical to maintaining the relationships between these organizations and keeping the partnerships aligned. Below is a brief outline of the Cook County process.

Step	Responsible Party	Process/Notes
1. Identifying Eligible Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CoC System Navigators ● Young Adult Project Manager 	<p>The System Navigators are the main points of entry for youth accessing the system and they gather child welfare information at intake. This information is entered into HMIS.</p> <p>The Young Adult Program Manager pulls a transition-age youth list from HMIS and screens for child welfare involvement.</p>
2. Verifying Foster Care History & Homeless Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Young Adult Project Manager 	<p>The Young Adult Project Manager verifies and documents homeless status.</p> <p>The Young Adult Project Manager meets regularly with the PCWA liaison to determine if youth have the child welfare experience to meet the eligibility criteria.</p>
3. Connecting with Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Young Adult Project Manager ● Service Providers 	<p>The Young Adult Project Manager meets with case management staff to review paperwork and assign case management to youth who will move through the process.</p> <p>Housing matches are only made when Case Management services can be offered.</p>

YHDP PARTNERSHIPS: UTILIZING FOSTER YOUTH TO INDEPENDENCE (FYI) AND FAMILY UNIFICATION PROGRAM (FUP) VOUCHERS

4. Making the Referral from the Homeless Services System to the PCWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Young Adult Project Manager 	<p>The Young Adult Project Manager officially refers eligible youth to the PCWA.</p> <p>The PCWA moves the referral to the PHA.</p>
5. Moving from Application to Move-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PHA Staff ● Service Providers ● Young Adult Project Manager 	<p>The PHA works directly with the youth to complete the voucher application and move through the steps of the application process and briefing.</p> <p>Service providers support the youth in completing the application.</p> <p>The Young Adult Project Manager tracks where youth are in the process.</p>
6. Supporting Youth Through the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Young Adult Project Manager ● Other YHDP/CoC Projects 	<p>Youth who continue to experience homelessness while working on securing their housing voucher can stay connected to and receive case management services through the Navigation team. Some youth also access the Joint TH/RRH YHDP project for short/medium-term housing while they wait to move into housing with the FYI/FUP voucher.</p>

YHDP PARTNERSHIPS: UTILIZING FOSTER YOUTH TO INDEPENDENCE (FYI) AND FAMILY UNIFICATION PROGRAM (FUP) VOUCHERS



Advice from Cook County, IL:

1. Recognize that each partner is situated within a bureaucracy. Each partner has a role to play in the partnership and each needs to figure out how to make progress within their own system.
2. Develop true relationships and partnerships across systems and take responsibility when your system has created a barrier to progress.
3. Operationalize Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between partners and be clear/honest in these MOUs.
 - a. Don't commit to more than you can offer and be willing to renegotiate as progress is made;
 - b. Establish regular communication strategies; and
 - c. Outline who is responsible for each stage of the process
4. Be solution-oriented. Be clear about what you are trying to accomplish and figure out ways to get there.
5. Older adult partners in the work must share accountability and responsibility with youth enrolled in the programs.
6. Understand that some young people have had deep harm caused by the child welfare system and may be hesitant to participate in a program that requires a PCWA

partnership. Enter into all work and conversations with a trauma-informed lens and involve each young person in all conversations regarding their housing.

Resources

<https://voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/missed-opportunities-pathways-from-foster-care-to-youth-homelessness-in-america/>

YHDP - <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/yhdp/>

HCV - https://www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8

FYI -

[https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/fyi#:~:text=The%20Foster%20Youth%20to%20Independence%20\(FYI\)%20initiative%20makes%20Housing%20Choice,Child%20Welfare%20Agencies%20\(PCWAs](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/fyi#:~:text=The%20Foster%20Youth%20to%20Independence%20(FYI)%20initiative%20makes%20Housing%20Choice,Child%20Welfare%20Agencies%20(PCWAs)

FUP- https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/family