



Foster Youth to Independence Initiative: Implementation and Evolution



DISCLAIMER

The contents of this report are the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or the U.S. Government.

Foster Youth to Independence Initiative: Implementation and Evolution

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Policy Development and Research

Prepared by:

Mindy Ault
Katina Norwood

May 2024

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank all the individuals who shared their time and their experiences with the FYI Initiative for this report. Thank you especially to the dedicated PHA and PCWA staff who helped us understand how FYI is being experienced at the community level and HUD staff who provided essential insight on the evolution of FYI and the voucher issuance process.

We would also like to thank Program Evaluation Division Director Carol Star and Supervisory Social Science Analyst Anne Fletcher for their guidance and constant support.

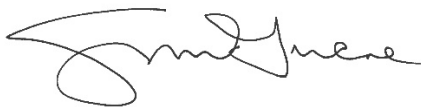
Foreword

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative was established in 2019 to provide Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) assistance to youth with a history of foster care involvement and who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Similar to the Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers for youth, the FYI Initiative carries a 36-month limit on assistance and requires a partnership between the issuing PHA and the local public child welfare agency (PCWA). The PCWA refers potentially eligible youth who have been involved in the foster care system to the program and is responsible for providing or securing the provision of supportive services for participating youth during the term of their program participation. A distinguishing feature of the FYI Initiative compared to FUP vouchers is that HUD provides the FYI vouchers on demand and in response to PHA requests. Once youth are identified by PCWAs and referred to their partnering PHAs, the PHAs screen for HCV eligibility and then request vouchers directly from HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH).

The program has grown rapidly since its introduction, with the number of PHAs administering FYI vouchers increasing from 9 in March 2020 to 185 in July 2022. Over time, FYI has evolved to add a competitive allocation component in addition to the on-demand vouchers, and the eligibility criteria for PHAs wishing to participate have broadened to include any PHA with an annual contributions contract for Housing Choice Vouchers.

This report, researched and written by staff from HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research, examines the implementation and operation of FYI through interviews with staff members at several PHAs, their partnering PCWAs, and staff at HUD who have been involved with the program from its inception. The report found enthusiastic support for FYI from nearly all interviewees, with collaboration with partner agencies identified as a key strength of the program. Some PHAs identified challenges associated with obtaining documentation for youth applicants, funding moving expenses, and incentivizing landlords to participate in the program. The study also explores how local factors can affect PHA preferences for using FYI or FUP to address the housing needs of youth with experience in the foster care system.



Solomon Greene
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Contents

LIST OF EXHIBITS.....	V
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	VI
INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND	1
RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	9
METHODOLOGY	9
FINDINGS.....	14
CONCLUSIONS.....	26
APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN FYI NONCOMPETITIVE.....	29
APPENDIX B: PHA INTERVIEW GUIDE	32
APPENDIX C: PCWA INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	35
REFERENCES	36

List of Exhibits

Exhibit 1: Comparison of Program Features, FUP for Youth Versus FYI Initiative	4
Exhibit 2: Number of PHAs Administering FYI Vouchers over Time	6
Exhibit 3: Timeline of FYI Developments and Interviews Conducted	7
Exhibit 4: HUD PIH Voucher Process	8
Exhibit 5: Data Sources Used for Research Questions	10
Exhibit 6: Overview of PHA Characteristics	11
Exhibit 7: Locations of Sites Selected for Interviews	12
Exhibit 8: HUD Interview Subjects	13
Exhibit 9: Effective FYI Vouchers, March 2020–July 2022	22
Exhibit 10: FYI Participants by Gender, December 2021	22
Exhibit 11: FYI Participants by Race and Ethnicity, December 2021	23
Exhibit 12: Average Household Income, FYI Households	23
Exhibit 13: Average HUD Assistance Payment for FYI Vouchers	24
Exhibit 14: Referrals Received From PCWAs	24
Exhibit 15: Percentage of Referrals Determined Eligible for FYI	25
Exhibit 16: Percentage of Eligible Youth Who Received Vouchers.....	25

Executive Summary

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was launched in July 2019 to provide housing vouchers for youth who had aged out of foster care and were experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. HUD created the program with input from advocates and former foster youth. The program was designed to enable HUD to provide a rapid response to the need for vouchers on a case-by-case basis for public housing agencies (PHAs) that were not administering the Family Unification Program (FUP). FYI is similar to FUP for youth in that vouchers are granted to youth transitioning from foster care, are time limited, and have a requirement that voluntary supportive services be offered by, or arranged for, a partnering public child welfare agency (PCWA) with which the PHA would have an established memorandum of understanding (MOU) or letter of intent. Unlike FUP, however, FYI did not initially include an allocation of vouchers through a competitive process but instead used a process whereby PHAs apply directly to HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) Housing Voucher Management and Operations Division (HVMOD). HUD's Housing Voucher Financial Management Division (HVFMD) then processes each FYI voucher individually to speed the process of voucher issuance for youth in need.

Initially, FYI vouchers were issued as tenant protection vouchers (TPVs), which necessitated that they be provided as on-demand vouchers rather than allocations. In addition, only PHAs that did not have an allocation of FUP vouchers could request FYI vouchers. Over time, FYI has evolved to add a competitive allocation component in addition to the on-demand vouchers, and the eligibility criteria for PHAs wishing to participate have broadened to include any PHA with an annual contributions contract (ACC) for housing choice vouchers (HCVs)—not just those without an allocation of FUP vouchers.

For this report, the authors interviewed staff at seven participating PHAs, their partnering PCWAs, and HUD staff who have been involved with FYI since its inception to determine (1) how HUD headquarters (HQ), PHA, and PCWA staff experienced the implementation of FYI; (2) whether the voucher issuance process was working as intended; and (3) to the extent it could be determined, how FYI compared with FUP for youth with regard to administrative impact.

Key Findings

Key findings from the data collection include the following.

- **Nearly everyone interviewed for this report was enthusiastic about FYI.** Administrative processes and the need for prioritization among potentially eligible youth seem to vary according to agency size, but overall, the initiative has been well received by the agencies interviewed and considered a success.
- Although many PHA and PCWA staff pointed out the lack of funding for move-in costs and the difficulty in finding landlords willing to rent to youth, **some agencies are successfully identifying sources of funds for moving expenses and for landlord incentives** to mitigate those challenges.
- HUD HQ (HVMOD and the Office of Field Operations [OFO]) and PHAs cited **collaboration with partner agencies as both a benefit and a key strength of FYI**, at both local and federal levels.

- As of the time of data collection (August through October 2021), **several PCWAs interviewed were not marketing FYI to youth** beyond having caseworkers mention the program to youth on their caseloads who were nearing transition age. The use of a marketing strategy—beyond reliance on individual caseworkers to inform one youth at a time—targeted to older youth in foster care would likely reach a broader swath of potentially eligible youth, thereby enabling the initiative to help more youth in need of assistance.
- The PHAs that were interviewed reported that **most referrals from their partnering PCWAs are found eligible for FYI and that most of those referrals have resulted in youth receiving vouchers.**
- **HVMOD staff said they consider their processing time for FYI vouchers to be timely, but at least two PHAs said that is not the case**—especially when issues arise with an application or when PHA staff have questions.
- Both PHA and PCWA staff mentioned several times the significant challenge of **difficulty in obtaining documentation—for example, birth certificates and Social Security cards—for youth applicants. Criminal records on background checks of applicants** were also cited as a major barrier to eligibility.
- **Differences in local rules and requirements imposed by the PHA often drive a community's preference for one program over another (FYI versus FUP).** For example, at one site, more extensive eligibility and prioritization criteria for FUP vouchers make FUP more difficult for the referring PCWA and youth applicants to navigate than FYI. At another site, PCWA staff noted that the PHA assists youth applicants with obtaining their documentation for the FUP application, while the PCWA is responsible for that task for FYI, resulting in FUP being preferred over FYI for referrals in light of constrained PCWA resources. For at least one site, in Florida, state-specific conditions—notably, guidance around the PESS program¹—make FUP more beneficial than FYI to former foster youth.

¹ The Independent Living Postsecondary Education Services and Support (PESS) program provides a monthly stipend for eligible former foster youth in Florida “to secure housing, utilities, and assist with cost of living while attending a Florida Bright Futures-eligible postsecondary educational institution” (Florida Department of Children and Families, 2019).

Introduction

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative was established in 2019 to provide Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) assistance to youth with a history of foster care involvement and who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness. The first awards were issued in July 2019 to youth who had aged out of the foster care system and were at risk of experiencing homelessness. The program enables public housing agencies (PHAs) to issue housing vouchers to youth who would be eligible for the Family Unification Program (FUP). Like FUP for youth, the FYI initiative has a 36-month limit on assistance² and requires a partnership between the issuing PHA and the local public child welfare agency (PCWA), which refers potentially eligible youth who have been in the foster care system. In addition to referring youth for vouchers, the PCWA is required to “provide or secure a commitment of supportive services for participating youth to assist the youth in achieving self-sufficiency”³ for 36 months, although participation in voluntary supportive services is not required of voucher recipients. Through interviews with a small sample of administering sites and HUD staff, this report seeks to explore how those involved experienced implementation of the FYI initiative on the ground.

The authors undertook this study to understand the implementation of a first-of-its-kind, on-demand voucher program for youth; to document the voucher request-to-issuance process from start to finish; and to gain feedback from a sample of participating sites on the administrative impacts of FYI. Conducting qualitative interviews with PHAs and PCWAs in the summer and fall of 2021 allowed for feedback based on about 2 years of FYI in practice, thereby providing a broader perspective than would have been possible at an earlier point but still close enough to program implementation for interviewees to have a good recollection of that experience.

Background

Foster care is a temporary care arrangement funded by states for children who cannot remain in their homes. Children in foster care may live with licensed foster families, with relatives, or in group facilities. According to data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2022), about one-half of all children in foster care are reunited with their families; roughly one-fourth get adopted; and about 20,000 youth each year leave foster care at emancipation, or when they age out of care at age 18. Although many states offer extended foster care for youth ages 18 through 21 to help them make the transition to adulthood, this option is largely underutilized (Rosenberg and Abbott, 2019).

This section includes a review of selected literature on the need for housing assistance for former foster youth and describes programs that exist to help meet that need, including the FYI initiative. The subsection on FYI describes the evolution of the initiative and provides a timeline of program modifications.

Literature Review

² The Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act (FSHO), enacted by Congress in December 2020, provides an extension of FUP and FYI assistance for up to 24 months for youth who meet eligibility requirements. HUD implemented FHSO via Federal Register Notice published on January 24, 2022 (87 FR 3570).

³ PIH Notice 2019–20 (HA) Subject: Tenant Protection Vouchers for Foster Youth to Independence Initiative.

Several studies cover the importance of providing stable housing and supportive services for youth leaving foster care. Some of the more influential studies are summarized here.

The transition to adulthood presents unique difficulties for former foster youth because they have fewer supports and resources than non-foster youth to help guide them to adulthood (Okpych et al., 2018). Foster youth may feel underprepared as they enter adulthood (Courtney, Terao, and Bost, 2004) and may have anxieties about the impending loss of their support networks once they leave the child welfare system (Cunningham and Diversi, 2013).

Foster care involvement may contribute to adverse self-sufficiency outcomes for youth. Using mixed methods to study a sample of 659 former child-welfare-involved youth, Pecora et al. (2006) found that one-third of participants had household incomes at or below the federal poverty level. Foster youth also experience a higher likelihood of mental health and substance use disorders (Courtney and Charles, 2015), and mental health concerns may persist well after youth leave foster care (White et al., 2011). Through interviews with former foster youth in Michigan, White et al. (2015) observed that former foster youth had significantly worse mental health outcomes compared with the general population. Foster youth may also experience higher rates of criminal justice system involvement (Courtney et al., 2004), and foster youth of color may experience disproportionate incarceration rates (Watt and Kim, 2019). Justice system involvement is of specific concern because youth of color are overrepresented in child welfare systems, including foster care (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020; Cénat et al., 2021; Puzanchera et al., 2022). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning youth are also at higher risk of placement in foster care (Baams, Wilson, and Russell, 2019; Dettlaff et al., 2018; Fish et al., 2019).

Former foster youth have poorer housing outcomes compared with their non-foster-involved peers. Using 12 rounds of National Longitudinal Survey of Youth data, Berzin, Rhodes, and Curtis (2011) found that previous involvement with the foster care system was linked to higher housing instability, including homelessness. The Voices of Youth Count study determined that being removed from their homes contributed to former foster youths' experiencing homelessness (Morton et al., 2018) and concluded that intersectionality could compound youth vulnerability so that youth with multiple marginalized identities experience an increased risk of becoming housing insecure. The National Foster Youth Institute indicates that nearly a quarter of foster youth will experience homelessness within 4 years of aging out of foster care⁴; Pecora et al. (2006) found that 22.2 percent of former foster youth experience homelessness within 1 year of leaving foster care; and the risk of homelessness seems to increase as time passes after youths' emancipation (Courtney et al., 2010; Dworsky, Napolitano, and Courtney, 2013). Former foster youth are also highly susceptible to experiencing chronic homelessness, which can contribute to many adverse outcomes, such as mental health issues, vulnerability to physical and sexual violence, criminal justice system involvement (Fowler, Toro, and Miles, 2009), and poor educational and employment outcomes (Rosenberg and Kim, 2017). Former foster youth of color also have a higher likelihood of becoming unstably housed or experiencing homelessness compared with other former foster youth (Fowler et al., 2017).

Supportive services that target foster youth may improve youths' transition to adulthood, and the intensity of services may lead to better outcomes over time (Barnow et al., 2015). Supportive housing programming that targets transition-age foster youth may help such youth attain housing stability and may produce positive health effects (Lim, Singh, and Gwynn, 2017). In a randomized experimental

⁴ View the National Foster Youth Institute website for more details: <https://nfyi.org/issues/homelessness/>

evaluation of the Youth Villages Transitional Living program, Valentine, Skemer, and Courtney (2015) studied the impact of supportive services on 1,322 former foster or justice-system-involved youth ages 18 to 24. At 1- and 2-year followups from program enrollment, participants reported increased earnings, decreased homelessness, and improved health outcomes from baseline (Skemer and Valentine, 2016; Valentine, Skemer, and Courtney, 2015).

Housing Resources for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood

Some housing assistance is available to youth aging out of foster care via federal funding granted through the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Congressional Research Service, 2021). Chafee funds are provided to states through a formula grant, and states may apply up to 30 percent of the funds to room and board for former foster youth ages 18 to 21 years or to 23 years in states that extend foster care to age 21. Chafee funds are also used, in part, to pay for extended foster care services (Pergamit, McDaniel, and Hawkins, 2012).

Family Unification Program

In 1990, Congress authorized the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to implement the Family Unification Program (FUP), which provides housing choice vouchers (HCVs) for child-welfare-system-involved families. In 2000, FUP eligibility was expanded to include transition-age foster youth.⁵ Similar to the regular HCV program, a FUP voucher administered to a *family* provides non-time-limited assistance for as long as the family remains eligible. By contrast, a FUP voucher offered to a *youth aging out of foster care* has an initial term limit of 36 months; however, the Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities (FSHO) amendments, enacted by Congress in December 2020 and implemented by HUD guidance in January 2022, provides an extension of FUP—and FYI—assistance for up to an additional 24 months for youth who meet eligibility requirements.⁶ PHAs administering FUP are required to partner with PCWAs, whose role is to identify and refer eligible participants. Starting with HUD’s 2017-through-2018 FUP Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), HUD established the requirement that PHAs also partner with a local Continuum of Care (CoC) to help identify eligible youth. In a HUD-sponsored study, Dion et al. (2014) designed a survey and fielded it to 195 PHAs administering FUP vouchers. The study determined that although FUP vouchers are potential resources for former foster youth, they were being underused in that capacity, as most vouchers were issued to families instead of youth. Currently, 296 PHAs have FUP allocations; only 134 of them—less than one-half—were administering FUP vouchers to youth as of December 2021.

In 2016, HUD implemented a demonstration that combined two existing HUD programs to increase housing opportunities for former foster youth and provide support to achieve self-sufficiency.⁷ The

⁵ See Family Unification Program (FUP) at https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/family.

⁶ To be eligible for the FSHO voucher extension, a youth must have first leased up with their FUP or FYI voucher after December 27, 2020, and be participating in a Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program or, if the youth is unable to enroll in an FSS program, the youth must have engaged in education, workforce development, or employment activities for at least 9 months of the 12-month period preceding the extension. FUP/FYI youth are also able to receive an extension of their voucher assistance if they are responsible for the care of a dependent child younger than age 6 or an incapacitated person; regularly and actively participating in a drug addiction or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program; or incapable of complying with the requirement to participate in an FSS program or engage in education, workforce development, or employment activities, as applicable, due to a documented medical condition. See *Federal Register* publication at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/01/24/2022-01285/implementation-of-the-fostering-stable-housing-opportunities-amendments>.

⁷ See Notice PIH 2016-01: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/PIH2016-01.PDF>.

Family Unification Program–Family Self-Sufficiency (FUP–FSS) Demonstration combines FUP housing assistance with FSS voluntary supportive services, including educational services. Participating PHAs had to have existing FUP and FSS programs and MOUs with their partnering PCWAs. The FSS program assists HCV participants—most commonly families with children—in obtaining employment-related services to promote economic independence. Because the FSS program was designed for families, the FUP–FSS Demonstration led to participating PHAs’ finding ways to tailor the program to the specific needs of youth aging out of the foster care system. Youth participating in FUP–FSS are eligible to have their FUP vouchers extended for the period of their participation to match the length of their FSS contracts—typically 5 years—with the potential to receive extensions of up to an additional 2 years for good cause. After implementation, HUD sponsored an evaluation study (Solari et al., 2022) to examine the short-term effectiveness of FUP–FSS among participating PHAs. The study observed findings similar to those of Dion et al. (2014): PHAs tend to allocate the majority of their FUP vouchers to families instead of youth, although PHAs that have received more-recent FUP awards have higher rates of use by youth. The study identified that program success might be influenced by PHA and PCWA collaboration, with agencies that met more regularly reporting more-positive relationships, whereas agencies with more-strained relationships had less communication. PHAs referred to certain challenges in adapting FSS programming—originally intended for families—to meet the specific needs of former foster youth; however, PHAs indicated that adapting to meet those needs led to more-successful youth engagement.

Foster Youth to Independence Initiative

HUD launched the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative in July 2019 to provide targeted housing assistance for former foster youth in communities that did not have FUP in place to meet that need. The initiative was unique in two ways: first, the program’s creation was a response to and involved significant input from advocates for former foster youth—most significantly, the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare. Second, the hallmark feature of the program at its inception was the rapid-response model to meet the need for housing for youth at high risk of experiencing homelessness upon their exit from foster care. Like FUP, FYI provides housing vouchers for eligible former foster youth through PHAs that partner primarily with PCWAs and, optionally, with their local CoCs. CoCs are regional or local planning bodies that coordinate services for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. CoCs are not mandatory partners for FYI, but their involvement in the partnership can be useful in identifying potentially eligible youth who are experiencing homelessness.

Like FUP vouchers for youth, FYI vouchers are time-limited to 36 months, unless the youth meets the requirements to receive an extension of their voucher assistance under FSHO. In contrast to FUP, FYI lets PHAs make on-demand voucher requests directly to HUD HQ based on individual youths’ needs. That on-demand feature of FYI vouchers was a part of the program design specifically requested by former foster youth to provide housing vouchers in a way that would be “predictable, universal, and synchronized with need” (NCHCW, 2022). See exhibit 1 for the similarities and differences between FYI and FUP for former foster youth.

Exhibit 1: Comparison of Program Features, FUP for Youth Versus FYI Initiative

Program Feature	FUP for Youth	FYI Initiative
Initial term limit of 36 months ¹	✓	✓

Program Feature	FUP for Youth	FYI Initiative
Voucher holders participating in FSS program are eligible to have their voucher term extended to match their FSS contract period (usually 5 to 7 years total)	✓	
Administering PHAs required to partner with PCWAs	✓	✓
PHAs required to partner with CoCs	✓	
PHAs optionally partner with local social service organizations	✓	✓
PHAs make on-demand voucher requests directly to HUD for individual youth		✓ ²
Vouchers issued to PHAs in an allocation, awarded through a competitive NOFO	✓	✓ ³
Option for PHAs to request up to an additional 25 vouchers if they demonstrate at least a 90-percent voucher utilization rate in a fiscal year		✓

CoCs = Continuums of Care. FSS = Family Self-Sufficiency. FUP = Family Unification Program. FYI = Foster Youth to Independence. HUD = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. NOFO = Notice of Funding Opportunity. PCWA = public child welfare agency. PHA = public housing agency.

¹The Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities amendments, implemented by HUD guidance in 2022, provide an extension of both FUP and FYI assistance for up to an additional 24 months for youth who meet eligibility requirements.

²For FYI vouchers issued noncompetitively—that is, not issued under a competitive NOFO.

³This does not apply to FYI vouchers issued noncompetitively—that is, not as allocations under a NOFO.

Sources: 2019 Family Unification Program Notice of Funding Availability FR-6300-N-41:

https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/2019_FUP_NOFA.pdf; Notice PIH 2021-26:

<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/OCHCO/documents/2021-26pihn.pdf>

Initially, HUD allocated tenant protection vouchers (TPVs) for former foster youth ages 18 to 24 who would qualify for FUP. FYI TPVs have a sunset provision—meaning, once the voucher term ends or a youth leaves the program, the funding for that voucher sunsets, or reverts to HUD, and cannot be reissued as a new voucher to another youth. To be eligible for FYI TPVs, PHAs were required to have ACCs for HCVs in place and could not already be administering FUP. Each eligible PHA could apply for a maximum of 25 vouchers per fiscal year on a noncompetitive, rolling basis. In October 2020, HUD issued notice PIH 2020-28, which allowed PHAs to request up to an additional 25 vouchers if they demonstrated at least a 90-percent FYI voucher utilization rate in a fiscal year. The notice also made PHAs with high FUP utilization rates eligible to apply for FYI vouchers and marked the change from TPVs to regular HCVs for FYI, thereby making use of funds appropriated specifically for FYI. The notice also (1) expanded the availability of FYI vouchers, (2) better protected youth privacy by not requiring that PHAs include youths’ personally identifying information in their FYI applications to HUD HQ, (3) safeguarded awarded vouchers for the fiscal year in the event of underutilization and (4) established specific programmatic funding streams and voucher allocations.⁸

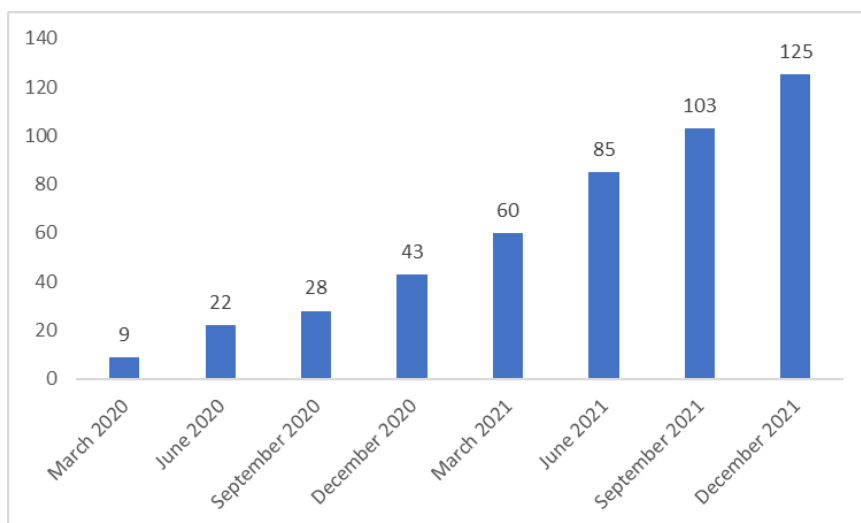
⁸ View appendix A to find documentation summarizing the changes.

FYI vouchers funded with FUP funding—those issued after the October 2020 notice—do not have the sunset provision that the FYI TPVs did and must be reissued to new FYI participants after a youth’s voucher assistance has expired.

In September 2021, HUD issued notice PIH 2021-26 as an amendment to notice PIH 2020-28, which detailed adjustments to eligibility requirements for PHAs currently administering FUP or FYI vouchers.

The uptake of PHAs issuing FYI vouchers has increased swiftly and steadily—from 9 agencies in March 2020 to 125 agencies in December 2021 (exhibit 2).

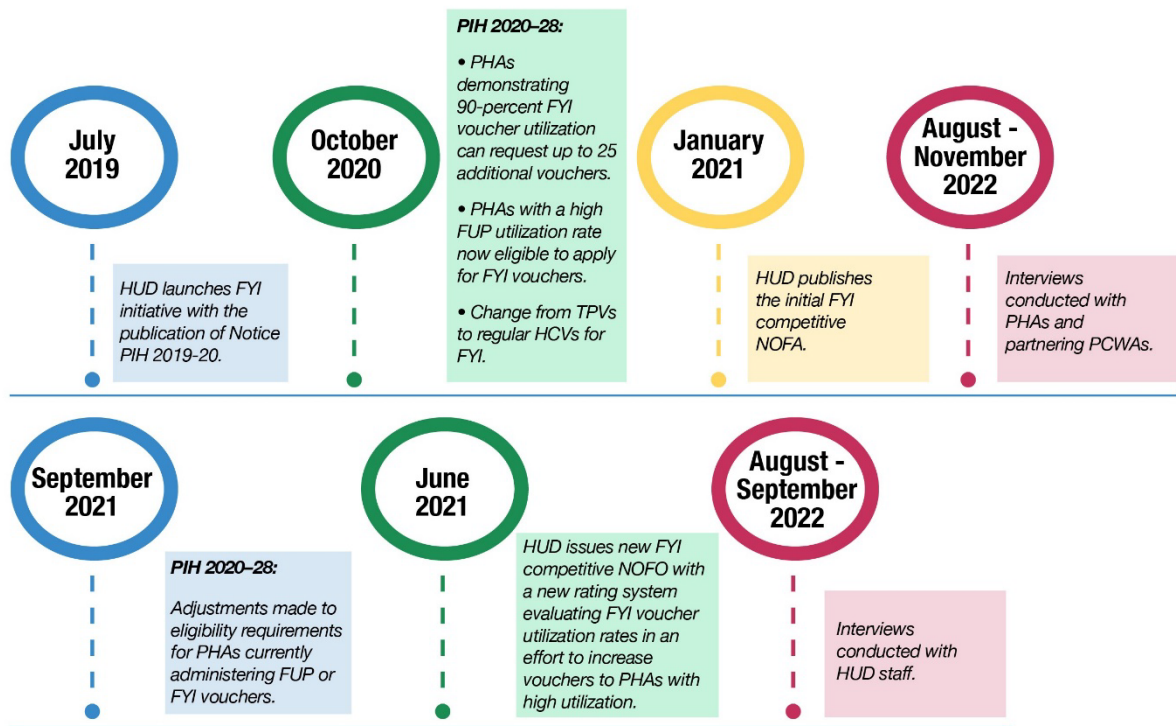
Exhibit 2: Number of PHAs Administering FYI Vouchers Over Time



Source: HUD Public and Indian Housing (PIH) Information Center (PIC) data

In January 2021, in response to a congressional mandate, HUD issued an FYI competitive Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) that provided an additional path for PHAs to apply for FYI vouchers to supplement resources already obtained through the noncompetitive process. The 2021 FYI Competitive NOFA awarded vouchers based on a PHA’s HCV program size and demonstrated need, although the maximum allocation of vouchers awarded to a PHA could not exceed \$1.2 million. In June 2022, HUD issued its new FYI Competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), which included a new rating system that evaluates FYI voucher utilization rates to increase voucher allocations to PHAs with high FYI utilization. Competitively issued FYI vouchers do not have the sunset provision that noncompetitive FYI TPVs did. Exhibit 3 shows a timeline of FYI program developments and where, in that timeline, interviews with PHAs, PCWAs, and HUD staff were conducted for this report.

Exhibit 3: Timeline of FYI Developments and Interviews Conducted

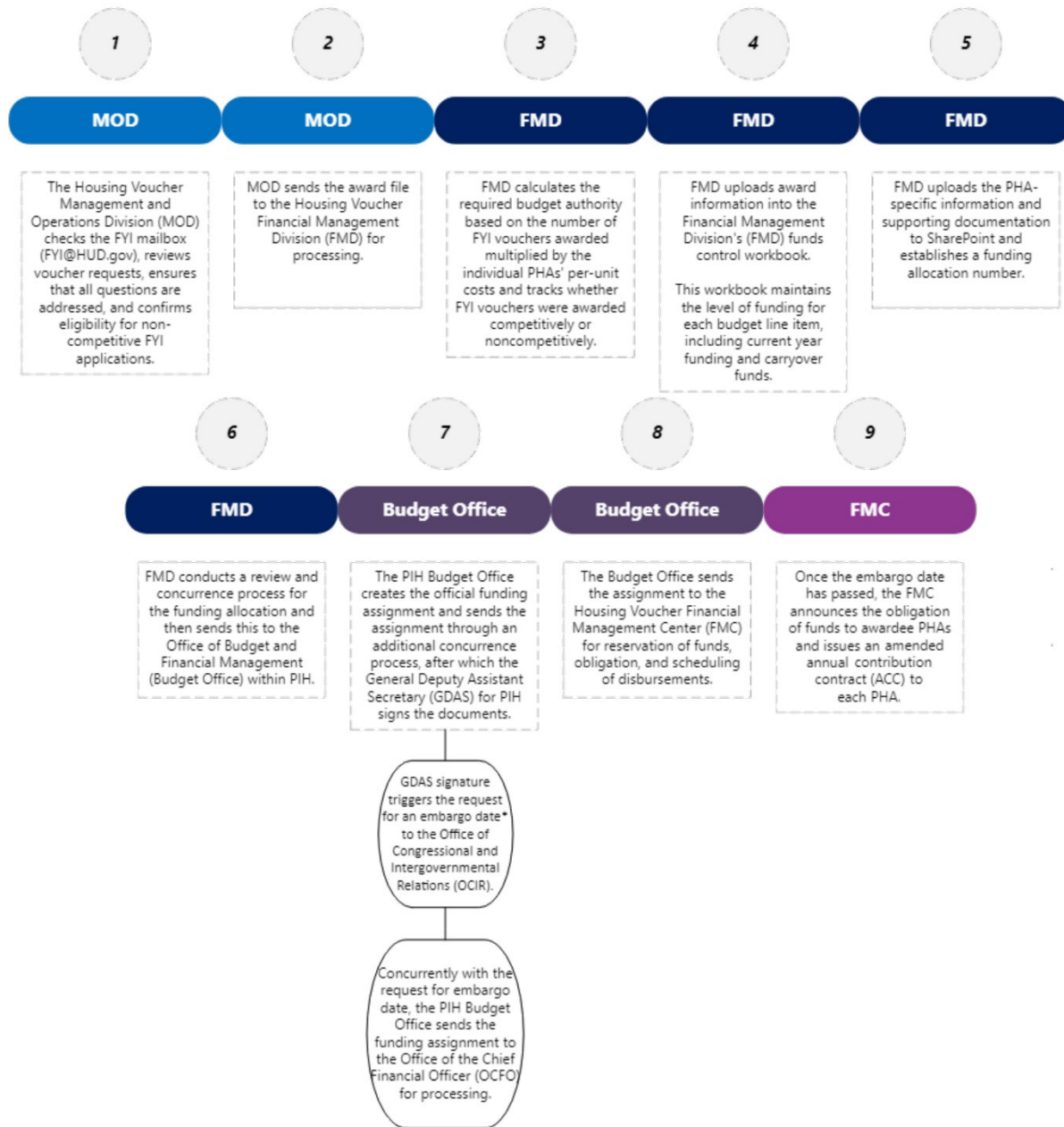


FUP = Family Unification Program. FYI = Foster Youth to Independence. HCV = housing choice voucher. NOFO = notice of funding opportunity. PCWA = public child welfare agency. PHA = public housing authority. PIH = HUD Public and Indian Housing. TPV = tenant protection voucher.

Sources: HUD Archives: News Releases. 2019. “HUD Launches Initiative to Prevent and End Homelessness among Young People Aging out of Foster Care.” <https://archives.hud.gov/news/2019/pr19-111.cfm>; Notice PIH 2020-28: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/pih2020-28.pdf>; Notice PIH 2021-26: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/OCHCO/documents/2021-26pihn.pdf>; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. “FYI Vouchers for the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative.” https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/fyi

One of the defining features of FYI is its shifting of much of the administrative function in the processing of new noncompetitive vouchers from the PHA to HUD HQ. Requests for individual noncompetitive FYI vouchers are sent from PHAs via email to a specific mailbox accessed by HVMOD staff in the PIH office. HVMOD staff review the information in the email, confirm eligibility, and then send the award request to the HVFMD for review and funding. The process usually takes about 12 to 15 business days from receipt of the voucher request from the PHA to the obligation of funds for the voucher according to HUD staff and is described in full in exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4: HUD PIH Non-Competitive Voucher Process



FYI = Foster Youth to Independence. PHA = public housing authority. PIH = HUD Public and Indian Housing.

*For any additional awards of special purpose vouchers—including FYI vouchers—that HUD makes to PHAs, Congress must be notified before awarding funding because these are separate appropriations. The embargo period is about 3 or 4 business days and represents the time frame between when OCIR submits the funding information to appropriators in congressional offices and when approval is granted for the awards.

Source: HVFMD staff

Research Questions

The FYI initiative, with its on-demand voucher issuance model, represents a major innovation in rapid assistance to a population with an urgent need for swift help. In evaluating the implementation of FYI, this report seeks to understand how the unique features of the program have impacted the participating agencies—the PHAs and the PCWAs that administer the program locally as well as the staff in the Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) that administer that program on behalf of HUD—and how the features have borne out in practice.

Key research questions for this evaluation are as follows.

1. **How has the implementation of the FYI initiative been experienced from the perspectives of the PHAs, their partnering PCWAs, and the program office at HUD Headquarters**, in terms of—
 - Challenges experienced.
 - Actions taken to overcome challenges.
 - What is working well and why.
 - What can be improved.

2. **What does a diagram of the voucher request-to-issuance process look like, including problems and successes in the FYI program design?**
 - How well is this system working for the PHAs? for the partnering PCWAs? for PIH HQ? for the youth participants?
 - What does the voucher issuance process look like after the PCWA makes a referral?
 - How does the administrative burden on PHAs, PCWAs, and HUD HQ compare between FYI and FUP?
 - What is the impact of the competitive versus the noncompetitive mechanism—the NOFA process versus the PIH notice process—on the administrative burden for PHAs?

3. **What is the initiative’s ability to reach the target population relative to the standard Family Unification Program?**
 - Do most youths referred to the PHA for an FYI voucher meet eligibility requirements? If not, what are the most common obstacles to their eligibility?
 - How many of the participating PCWAs also partner with PHAs that administer FUP, and how does FYI compare with FUP in terms of both the referral process and the overall program experience for youth participants?

Methodology

To answer the research questions, the authors reviewed published program documents associated with the FYI initiative; conducted semi-structured interviews via videoconference with staff administering the program at PHAs and at their partnering PCWAs as well as HUD staff; and analyzed available HUD administrative data on FYI voucher issuance and lease up. Data sources for each research question are shown in exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5: Data Sources Used for Research Questions

Research Question	Source of Data				
	PHA Interview	PCWA Interview	HUD HQ Interview	HUD Field Office Interview	HUD PIC Data
How has the implementation of the FYI Initiative been experienced from the perspective of the program office at HUD Headquarters, and from the PHAs and their partnering PCWAs?	✓	✓	✓	✓	
What does a diagram of the voucher request-to-issuance process look like, including problems as well as successes in the FYI program design?	✓	✓	✓	✓	
What is the initiative's ability to reach the target population relative to the standard Family Unification Program?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

FYI = Foster Youth to Independence. HQ = Headquarters. PCWA = public child welfare agency. PHA = public housing authority. PIC = PIH Information Center. PIH = HUD Public and Indian Housing.

Site Selection

Site selection for the videoconference interviews with PHA and partnering PCWA staff was conducted with the goal of building a small but diverse sample in terms of geography and PHA attributes (specifically, whether the PHA had a FUP allocation or was participating in the Moving to Work [MTW] Demonstration).⁹ Ideally, selected PHAs would have more than five FYI vouchers leased up. In July 2021, HUD PIC data showed 62 PHAs with FYI vouchers. Those 62 PHAs were first assessed for the following characteristics:

- Number of FYI vouchers issued.
- MTW status.
- Whether the PHA had a FUP allocation.
- Geographical diversity.

After that step, the sites were selected intentionally. The initial goal for site selection was to interview a sample of PHAs that would include at least one MTW agency with a FUP allocation, one MTW agency without a FUP allocation, at least one non-MTW agency with a FUP allocation, and one non-MTW agency without a FUP allocation. However, at the time of site selection, only two PHAs with FYI vouchers were MTW agencies, and neither of them had FUP allocations. Of the FYI PHAs with FUP allocations, only one—the Wichita Housing Authority in Kansas¹⁰—had more than one FYI voucher. Seven sites were ultimately selected, as detailed in exhibit 6. Exhibit 7 shows the geography of the selected sites.

⁹ HUD's Moving to Work is a demonstration program that gives participating PHAs the flexibility (1) to design and test innovative, location-specific strategies for helping voucher holders find employment and become self-sufficient and (2) increase housing choices for low-income families. See <https://www.hud.gov/mtw> for more information.

¹⁰ According to PIH data at the time of site selection, Wichita had a pre-2008 allocation of 29 FUP vouchers; however, during the interview with the PHA, staff indicated they did not have a FUP allocation and that they had a small number of FUP vouchers but that the vouchers had most likely been absorbed from a different PHA.

Exhibit 6: Overview of PHA Characteristics

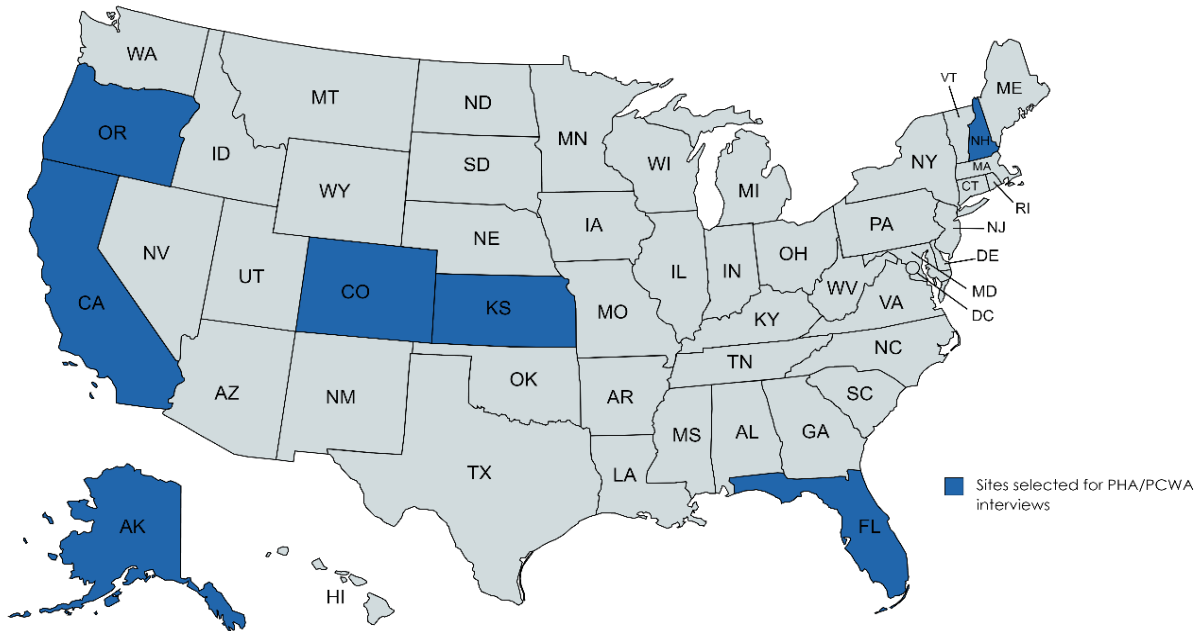
PHA	Agency Name	FUP	MTW	CoC Collaboration	Partnering PCWA
AK901	Alaska Housing Finance Corporation		Yes		State of Alaska Office of Children's Services
OR001	Housing Authority of Clackamas County			Yes	Northwest Family Services
FL116	Dania Beach Housing Authority				ChildNet
CO072	Jefferson County Housing Authority/Foothills Regional Housing				Jefferson County Department of Human Services
NH010	Keene Housing		Yes	Yes	New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
CA093	Housing Authority of the City of Santa Ana			Yes	Transitional Planning Services Program (TPSP), County of Orange Social Services Agency
KS004	Wichita Housing Authority	**			Kansas Department for Children and Families

***Wichita has some FUP vouchers in place, but those vouchers were absorbed from a different PHA; they have taken over three PHAs in the past 3 years. Wichita does not have a FUP allocation.*

CoC = Continuum of Care. FUP = Family Unification Program. MTW = Moving to Work. PCWA = public child welfare agency. PHA = public housing authority.

Source: PIH and interview data

Exhibit 7: Locations of Sites Selected for Interviews



Created with mapchart.net

PCWA = public child welfare agency. PHA = public housing agency.
Source: Created by authors with mapchart.net

Qualitative Data Collection

Researchers conducted semi-structured interviews via videoconference with PHA and PCWA staff between August and November 2021. Interviews with PHA staff were about 1 hour long and focused on the implementation, participants, and administration of FYI. PCWA interviews were about 30 minutes long and focused on administration and programmatic practices.¹¹ For both PHAs and PCWAs, one to three staff from each agency participated. For PHAs, staff interviewed were typically in administrative roles involved with FYI; for PCWAs, staff interviewed were in a range of roles—from administrative to direct practice—but all were directly involved with FYI. Qualitative data from these interviews were coded and analyzed using a sorting method in Microsoft Excel.

Interviews with HUD staff were about 1 hour long and were conducted in August and September 2022. Researchers interviewed staff in HUD’s PIH Housing Voucher offices and the Office of Field Operations (OFO) to learn about the development of FYI and how the voucher issuance process looks within HUD. The individuals interviewed are listed in exhibit 8; they were identified by PIH leadership and staff as having significant roles in developing, implementing, or administering the FYI initiative. Interviews with staff at HUD HQ in the Housing Voucher Management Operations Division and the Housing Voucher Financial Management Division focused on the voucher issuance process and its associated challenges

¹¹ Interview protocols are included as appendixes B and C.

and solutions. Interviews with field office staff focused on the implementation and evolution of FYI from the perspective of HUD staff working closely with participating PHAs.

Exhibit 8: HUD Interview Subjects

Name	Title	Department/Division
Ryan Jones	Director, Housing Voucher Management and Operations Division (HVMOD)	HVMOD
Michelle Daniels	Housing Program Specialist	HVMOD
Miguel Fontanez	Director, Housing Voucher Financial Management Division (HVFMD)	HVFMD
Yasandra Deya	Financial Analyst	HVFMD
Rodolfo (Rudy) Garcia	Financial Analyst	HVFMD
Charles Eldridge	Program Analyst	OFO
Monica Hawkins	Director of Public Housing	Philadelphia Field Office
Joyce Hoeing	Portfolio Management Specialist	St. Louis Field Office
Lorraine Walls	Director of Public Housing	Houston Field Office
Tirmira Robinson	Program Analyst	OFO
Celia Carpentier	Senior Housing Program Specialist	HVMOD

HVMOD = Housing Voucher Management and Operations Division. OFO = Office of Field Operations.

Source: Staff interviews

Administrative Data Analysis

HUD PIH Information Center (PIC) data were extracted at 3-month intervals from March 2020 through December 2021¹² and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. PIC data draw from HUD Forms 50058 and

¹² December 2021 was the last date for which PIC data were available due to an interruption in the Policy and Research Information Server contract, which provides for processing of these data.

50058MTW, which PHAs use for reporting household information on housing program participants that is collected at (1) program entry, (2) recertifications, and (3) program exit. This report uses PIC data to note the number of PHAs administering FYI vouchers, demographic characteristics of FYI participants, and average household incomes and HUD assistance payments (HAPs) for FYI vouchers over time.

Findings

FYI Implementation Feedback

To answer the research question, *How has implementation of the FYI initiative been experienced from the perspectives of the PHAs, their partnering PCWAs, and the program office at HUD Headquarters?* the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with staff at seven sites administering FYI and with a selection of HUD staff who work on FYI or were involved with the inception and implementation of the program.

PHAs

Six of the seven PHAs interviewed first learned of the FYI initiative through the original PIH notice in July 2019. Staff from one agency indicated that they were made aware of FYI through their partnering PCWA, which also partners with other PHAs on housing for foster youth. Five of the PHAs interviewed reported that they were the ones to initiate the community conversation about FYI. The PCWA reported being the initiator at two sites; however, the PHA was the one to decide to apply and participate in FYI at all seven sites.

The experience of applying for FYI varied from site to site. Three PHAs reported that the email process is straightforward and works well. Two agencies indicated that the HUD HQ application-processing time is too slow (typically, 12 to 15 business days, according to HVFMD staff)—particularly when issues or questions require some back-and-forth correspondence.

Of the seven PHAs interviewed, five are currently administering mainstream, Non-Elderly Disabled (NED), and HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) programs; one has Shelter + Care vouchers; and three have TPVs. Three agencies said their experiences administering other special purpose vouchers made them more amenable to applying for FYI.

Only two PHAs did not have existing partnerships with their partnering PCWAs before the FYI initiative. Of the five sites that had relationships in place, three were actively collaborating on established housing programs. Only two agencies indicated that other community partners were not involved in their FYI

Program Innovation

Dania Beach Property with Dedicated Units for Youth and Onsite Services

Using a program administered by HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development, Dania Beach Housing Authority in Florida is currently expanding a 34-unit property to have 100 units, of which 30 will be allocated specifically to youth transitioning out of foster care. The agency is partnering with its PCWA partner from FYI and with a local court-appointed special advocates agency. Red Rocks Community College will provide tutoring services for youth residents, and Stride Health will have a physical presence at the property for health care and referrals on site.

programs. Staff from the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Ana in California described a partnership with their PCWA, Continuum of Care (CoC), United Way, and the Orangewood Foundation, which provides foster and community youth services. They indicated they also recently partnered with the City of Santa Ana, which allocated more than \$600,000 to support a landlord incentive program specifically for FYI youth. In Oregon, the Housing Authority of Clackamas County partners with Northwest Family Services and DevNW to provide services for FYI youth, and the Dania Beach Housing Authority partners with the Fort Lauderdale Independence, Training & Education (FLITE) Center, an organization devoted specifically to providing supportive services for former foster youth.

Three PHAs—the Housing Authority of Clackamas County (Oregon), Keene Housing (New Hampshire), and the Housing Authority of Santa Ana (California) reported active partnerships with their CoCs for FYI. Staff at one agency noted that they opted to include their CoC to boost the chances of having their FYI application approved, adding that having the MOU between the three parties (PHA, PCWA, and CoC) demonstrated the site’s commitment to the goals of the program by having supports in place. Two agencies partnering with a CoC reported that the CoC’s role is minimal and consists primarily of making referrals to the PCWA when appropriate. By contrast, Clackamas County noted that its CoC has been an active partner by proposing ideas and solutions for programmatic challenges and starting a youth council to ensure youths’ voices are heard. Two of the PHAs not partnering with CoCs indicated that they decided to exclude the CoC largely on the basis of improved efficiency without that extra layer.

Three agencies indicated that before beginning FYI, they had applied unsuccessfully for FUP vouchers under a NOFA. Of the agencies that had not applied for FUP vouchers, one said its reason for not pursuing FUP was due to capacity limitations, adding that it would have to be larger in order to “learn all the different programs and nuances and be able to administer them successfully.” Three agencies said they anticipate applying for FUP vouchers in the future on the basis of their experience administering FYI; of the remaining four, two reported they did not expect to apply for FUP vouchers, and two said it would be a possibility. Five PHAs reported that they are considering developing other programs to assist former foster youth.

Challenges

PHAs reported some implementation challenges with FYI, including (1) difficulty in coordinating with their partnering PCWAs to get youths’ documentation, (2) HUD delays in processing vouchers, and (3) difficulty in making sure that youth did not decline services. Six of the seven PHAs indicated that HUD guidance was adequate in their implementations of FYI. One agency staff member reported that initially, they found HUD guidance confusing, but it improved in the second round (the competitive NOFO).

Ongoing challenges PHAs reported included—

Program Innovation

Santa Ana Landlord Incentives

The Housing Authority of the City of Santa Ana cited its landlord incentive program as a key factor in the successes of its FYI participants. The housing authority works with a program called Welcome Home OC, which is funded through the Orange County United Way and which provides financial incentives for landlords as well as furniture items, and support and stabilization services for tenants. Santa Ana reported having leased up more than 315 households with various types of vouchers, including at least 14 FYI vouchers at the time of the interview.

- Difficulty in obtaining required documentation for youth, such as birth certificates and Social Security cards (three agencies).
- Youths' lack of experience with living independently (three agencies).
- Keeping youth engaged with voluntary services (two agencies).
- Finding landlords willing to rent to youth (two agencies).
- The effects of trauma on youths' ability to achieve stability in early adulthood (two agencies).
- The time limit on assistance.¹³

What Is Working Well

When asked what is working well in the initiative, most PHAs cited good relationships with their partnering PCWAs, and two agencies mentioned strong collaborations with other partner organizations. Staff at Keene Housing said their MTW status gives them the flexibility to effectively extend the length of assistance for FYI youth by giving them preference for MTW vouchers.¹⁴ Keene Housing also has a step subsidy program that lets participants start out paying 20 percent of their gross income instead of 30 percent of adjusted income, and the subsidy steps down over time.

(Our) MTW status ... has helped streamline the actual program itself, as well as gives foster youth after they time out after 36 months a preference for an MTW housing choice voucher to continue assistance on the private market if they're eligible.

—Keene Housing

Opportunities for Improvement

Five agencies are taking a proactive approach to the challenge of finding landlords to rent to former foster youth, utilizing outreach to property owners and real estate agencies, landlord mediation when problems arise, and incentives for landlords who will rent to youth. Clackamas County has a program called Rent Well that provides training to participants in overcoming rental barriers, such as poor or lack of rental or credit history, and guarantees financial compensation for landlords if an FYI youth tenant breaks the lease¹⁵. Similarly, Keene Housing grants financial incentives to landlords who agree to rent to former foster youth.

Regarding suggested improvements from PHAs, two agencies recommended that the voucher term be extended. Other suggestions include a reduction in redundancies in the process of requesting vouchers from HUD; increased flexibility in choosing a partner agency by, for instance, permitting a primary partnership with a social service agency instead of limiting the choice of primary partner to the PCWA; conducting a briefing or webinar for real estate agents and landlords so they can understand the payment standards; and offering more flexibility with required documentation for youth, such as waivers for some documents or flexibility to let youth apply for FYI vouchers with verification that they

¹³ At the time of data collection, Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities had not yet been enacted, so the 36-month voucher term limit for FYI had no extension provision.

¹⁴ Non-MTW PHAs also have the option to adopt a preference for HCVs for FYI youth whose voucher terms have expired.

¹⁵ There are a number of reasons why an FYI youth tenant might break the lease, such as if the youth requires institutional care for an extended period; if a youth finds that they do not do well living alone and needs to leave that placement for a larger unit to share with a roommate; if a youth is incarcerated; or if a youth decides to leave the area for a job or to be closer to their support network.

have requested their documents from the issuing agencies, such as the Social Security Administration and the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

I think I would take the whole name thing away and do more similar to what they do with VASH or mainstream, where you just have a letter of support from whoever the service provider or whoever your partner is going to be ... It seems like once a quarter I get an email from HUD with a whole list of names of all the names that I've sent them, and they keep asking me for the same data over and over again, and that's a little frustrating ... to keep having to report on 63 names for referrals I've received so far, telling them the same data that I told them the last time.

—PHA Staff

Staff at one agency said they like the email process—instead of using the grants module—for requesting vouchers. Two PHAs indicated they would like to receive additional funding from HUD for move-in costs, such as utility hook-up fees and deposits, and voluntary supportive services for youth.

PCWAs

Four of the seven PCWAs interviewed reported existing relationships with their partnering PHAs before embarking on the FYI initiative.¹⁶ Three PCWAs indicated they were the ones to initiate the community conversation about FYI; three PCWAs said the PHA initiated the conversation; and one said its CoC had started talks. At all but three sites, the PCWAs' responses to the question of who initiated the conversation about applying for FYI vouchers was the same as the PHAs' answers.

Challenges

The challenge PCWA staff most commonly cited with regard to implementing FYI was difficulty obtaining documentation for youth, with one agency noting that “a lot of the paperwork gets lost, and the youth don't understand how important it is.” Another PCWA observed that “youth from foster care... haven't been trained in how to maintain important documents, and [that lack of training] creates a big challenge for them.” Lack of follow-through on the part of youth was

¹⁶ In Keene, New Hampshire, the PCWA reported no existing relationship with the PHA, but the PHA reported that although no memorandum of understanding was in place, the two agencies had worked together and had some clients in common.

Program Innovation

Escrow Accounts and a Thrift Store Just for Youth in Jefferson County, Colorado

The Jefferson County Housing Authority in Colorado offers an escrow account to FYI youth that provides a matching deposit for every rent payment a youth makes. The account is privately funded through one of the county's court-appointed special advocates organizations, and each participant can access the funds in their account upon graduation from FYI.

The Jefferson County Housing Authority also owns a property with a small house on it that the agency has turned into a thrift store for youth transitioning from foster care. People in the community donate furniture, household items, and nonperishable foods, and youth can shop for items for their new housing.

another challenge indicated by three of the PCWAs. According to one agency, the effects of past trauma make youth “more likely to just give up and not use the voucher because the process [of applying for FYI] is just too challenging. Coping skills are ... not strengths of theirs.”

Another challenge cited was that some youth may not pass background checks¹⁷ because of criminal records or sex offender status. A third challenge was difficulty finding housing placements and landlords willing to rent to youth, and a fourth was a lack of funding for move-in costs. Two agencies indicated that providing case management services is itself a significant challenge. The Transitional Planning Services Program within the County of Orange Social Services Agency, which partners with the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Ana in California, has obtained grants to fund an independent-living program, and some of the funding pays for case management for FYI youth. The agency has also obtained funding from the California Department of Housing and Community Development for two housing navigators.

What Is Working Well

Six PCWAs reported a reduction in the overall number of youth experiencing homelessness and an increasing number of youth from their caseloads achieving stability through their participation in FYI.¹⁸ Other successes cited include—

- Youth being able to participate in and focus on school and work activities (three agencies).
- Youth successfully parenting their children (two agencies).
- Increased safety for youth participants (one agency).

I worked with two youth [a couple]. The girlfriend was pregnant, and they were strongly ready to give up the baby for adoption, but they just couldn't do it. They'd been homeless for [about] 3 years, and we were able to get them stable housing at the end of July, and the baby was born in September, and they decided to keep the baby. Now it's been a year, and they've worked with another agency that helped them. [The service agency] would take the baby for them when the parents were feeling overwhelmed, and kind of care for the baby. Then the mom and dad could take the baby back when they were ready, and that was really helpful for them, especially right when the baby was born. It gave them the extra supports they needed.

—Northwest Family Services, Clackamas County, Oregon

¹⁷ PHAs have some discretion to deny admission to an HCV applicant on the basis of a criminal record. Such discretion is limited by, and must be exercised consistent with, fair housing and HCV program rules, which requires consideration of the nature of the offenses, how long ago the offenses occurred, evidence of rehabilitation, and other mitigating factors. Many landlords also require criminal background checks, however, and may have more stringent policies about whether they will rent to individuals with previous criminal records, though these policies also must be consistent with the Fair Housing Act and HCV program requirements.

¹⁸ Foster youth who have aged out of care are removed from the PCWAs' caseloads, so the observation of more youth achieving stability is based on PCWA staff impressions rather than direct, documentable observation.

Opportunities for Improvement

Three PCWAs suggested that HUD add funds for supportive services, case management, or move-in costs. Other suggestions included easing restrictions based on criminal records and requirements for documentation and making voluntary supportive services mandatory for FYI participants.

HUD Headquarters

Challenges

HVMOD staff said the manual processing of voucher requests is very time consuming; however, they are creating an electronic intake form that PHAs will use to request FYI vouchers that will replace the current email process. Staff in HVMOD indicated that, upon implementing FYI, no mechanism was in place for tracking sunseting FYI TPVs, or, later, whether vouchers are noncompetitive or issued under a competitive allocation. They were able to create SharePoint tools to track the vouchers subject to sunset provisions, and they developed a workaround for tracking special purpose vouchers—including FYI vouchers—separately from other housing choice vouchers (HCVs).

Monica Hawkins, director of public housing in the HUD Philadelphia field office, noted that another challenge for many PHAs has been in the form of competing priorities, such as other special purpose vouchers and emergency housing voucher (EHV) lease up. In addition to their FYI vouchers, participating PHAs had to ensure that they were successfully administering their regular HCVs, emergency housing vouchers (EHVs), and any other special purpose vouchers.

What Is Working Well

HVMOD staff cited their ability to process voucher requests “in a timely fashion, in the timeframe that we established,¹⁹ in a way that communities can plan for” and their success in engaging federal partners at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families as examples of what is working well from their perspective. Charles Eldridge, a program analyst in the Office of Field Operations (OFO) who served as a field coordinator for FYI from its rollout, also cited the partnership with HHS as a point of success. Eldridge indicated that having “the commitment from our field office team and senior leadership at headquarters as well” has been a real benefit. Director Hawkins, who is also the FYI point of contact for HUD Region III, discussed the importance of getting input from former foster youth in designing FYI, noting that the suggestion for having services along with the housing voucher came directly from former foster youth. HVMOD staff noted that their process for getting the vouchers to the funding phase is working well, enabling them to get vouchers approved as quickly as possible.

Our HHS partners were critical in this process because of the importance of wraparound services. Without these, there was a higher chance for failure ... [FYI] was built on local partnerships, and HHS was instrumental.

—Charles Eldridge, Office of Field Operations

¹⁹ According to HVMOD staff, the turnaround time from PHA request to the obligation of funds for the voucher is generally 12 to 15 business days.

Impact of the Competitive NOFA

In January 2021, at the direction of Congress, PIH issued the NOFA for competitive FYI vouchers while maintaining the noncompetitive FYI vouchers. The competitive vouchers have the same rules and requirements as the original noncompetitive vouchers; the difference is that, with the competitive NOFA, eligible PHAs can apply for allocations of FYI vouchers instead of applying for them individually through HUD HQ, or PHAs can choose to have both competitive and noncompetitive vouchers at the same time. In the simplest terms, the administrative work of processing vouchers for youth shifts from HUD HQ to the PHAs with the competitive vouchers. It also requires that PHAs go through the NOFA process to access the funding for those vouchers. Although HVMOD staff do not have to process individual applications for vouchers for competitive FYI, they do have the added work of designing, clearing, and announcing the NOFA and then ranking all PHA applications. On the plus side, however, Ryan Jones, HVMOD director, noted that “given the limitation of funds available, there are communities whose need is greater than the noncompetitive notices have allowed for. [The competitive NOFA] allows those communities access to additional vouchers.” PHAs can administer both competitive and noncompetitive vouchers. In September 2021, 18 PHAs received competitive FYI voucher awards; two of those agencies had been issued noncompetitive FYI vouchers before the competitive award, and 14 also had FUP allocations. The average award size was 64 vouchers.

For HVMOD, the process for funding competitive FYI vouchers is also different from the noncompetitive ones—and less labor-intensive. Funding requests for the competitive FYI vouchers arrive in a batch instead of one by one, as with the noncompetitive vouchers, and they are funded separately.

The Voucher Request-to-Issuance Process

PHAs

For most of the PHAs interviewed, FYI adds to an existing universe of programs that target youths experiencing homelessness. Two agencies said they did not have specific programs for youth before administering FYI, but the other five were already focusing on youth homelessness as a growing problem in their communities with youth-specific housing programs.

In addition to required supportive services from the PCWA, PHAs described their partnerships as including such services as parenting classes, personal finance classes, transportation services, and job skills and placement services. Only two agencies reported offering no additional services to FYI youth.

Administrative Burden

Four of the seven PHAs reported minimal administrative impacts in setting up and administering FYI. The effects reported by the other three PHAs include more-intensive caseloads, a strain on personnel, and the need to create specialized processes for tracking voucher usage and landlord payments for FYI. Speaking about FYI’s impact on caseloads, one PHA staff member stated, “We have a lot more phone calls, a lot more landlord mediation than the other programs.... [FYI youth are] not used to navigating, so the occupancy specialist spends a little more time with them.”

PCWAs

Identification and Prioritization of Potentially Eligible Youth

All seven of the interviewed PCWAs indicated that their primary—if not their sole—means of identifying potential participants for FYI is the child welfare caseworkers reaching out to youth on their caseloads who are about to age out of foster care. Two agencies reported getting self-referrals from youth who had heard about FYI through word of mouth. Staff at one agency indicated they receive referrals from case managers or parole officers in the justice system, and another indicated they receive referrals from partnering service organizations.

Individual PCWAs use different criteria for prioritizing youth for referral to FYI. Two agencies said they prioritize youth who are at the highest risk of experiencing homelessness; staff at the Housing Authority of Santa Ana indicated that they have started using the transitional-age Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT). Staff at the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation said they prioritize older youth,²⁰ noting that other programs are available in their area to help those who are younger. Other PCWAs prioritize youth with no income or those unlikely to be eligible for after-care services. Northwest Family Services in Clackamas County, Oregon, indicated it has a wait list for youth to be referred for FYI, and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services noted that it has not had to prioritize because all potentially eligible youth are referred for FYI.

Three PCWAs said they market FYI to youth who may qualify to participate. The state of Alaska Office of Children’s Services uses social media for outreach in addition to phone calls and emails. Four agencies indicated that although they do not market directly to youth, they publicize the initiative to community service agencies that work with foster youth in transition.

FYI’s Ability to Reach the Target Population Relative to FUP

Voucher Utilization and Participant Demographics²¹

Issuance of FYI vouchers to youth increased steadily from March 2020 (the first date for which there is usage data in PIC) through the end of 2021 and then very rapidly during 2022, after the awards of 1,055 new competitive vouchers in late 2021, as shown in exhibit 9. As of July 2022, 3,378 effective FYI awards had been made to 258 PHAs,²² and 185 PHAs were administering FYI vouchers. Eighteen of those PHAs (7.5 percent) had competitive FYI awards, and 46 (19.2 percent) were administering both FYI and FUP. The FYI utilization rate (the average number over a calendar year of a PHA’s vouchers in use as a percentage of vouchers awarded) in July 2022 was 33.6 percent. One hundred eight PHAs (45 percent) had FYI utilization rates of more than 50 percent; 26 PHAs (10.8 percent) had FYI utilization rates of 100 percent or more.²³ At that same time, 296 PHAs had FUP awards, with an overall FUP utilization rate of 78.2 percent.

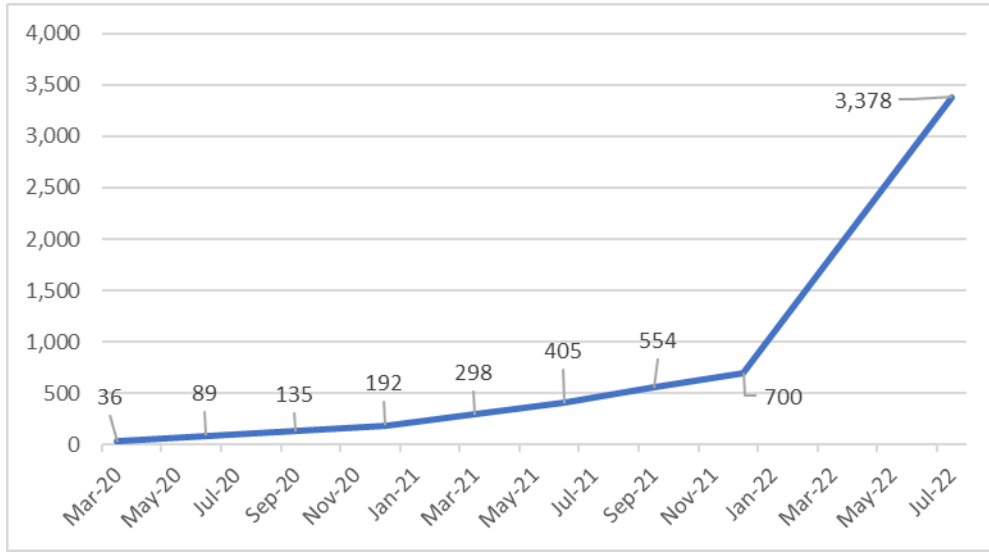
²⁰ The Age Discrimination Act applies to all HUD-assisted programs and activities, including when individual projects consider potential prioritization based on age. The Fair Housing Act also applies to all HUD-assisted programs and activities, and prohibits discrimination based on family status. The statute and HUD regulations do provide for exceptions that are applied on a case-by-case basis. HUD has not evaluated the prioritization processes of individual projects.

²¹ Participant demographics are extracted from data captured on HUD Form 50058 and therefore reflect the response categories included on the form, including response categories for race, ethnicity, and gender.

²² This includes recaptured FYI vouchers.

²³ PIH data showed one PHA with one FYI award but 2 unit months leased (UMLs), resulting in a 200-percent use rate.

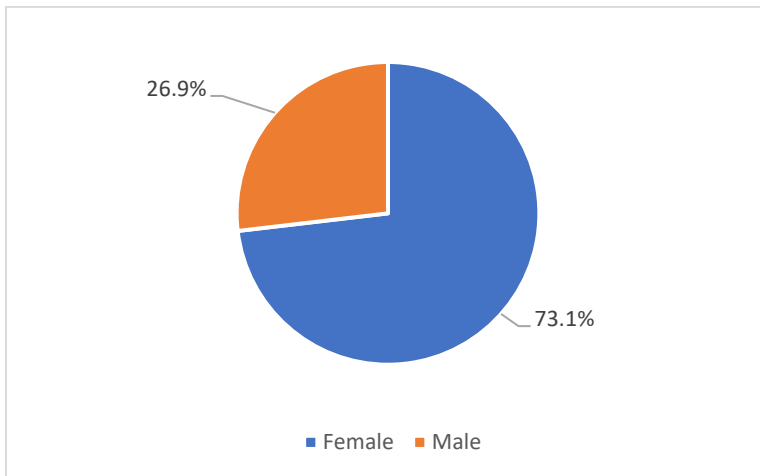
Exhibit 9: Effective FYI Vouchers, March 2020–July 2022



Note: Effective vouchers are those for which the PHA has funding, although they may not yet be leased with a participant.
Source: HUD PIC and Voucher Management System data

In December 2021, the average age for FYI voucher holders was 21.5 years, and nearly three-quarters of participants were female (exhibit 10); 192 FYI voucher holders (27.4 percent) had children of their own.

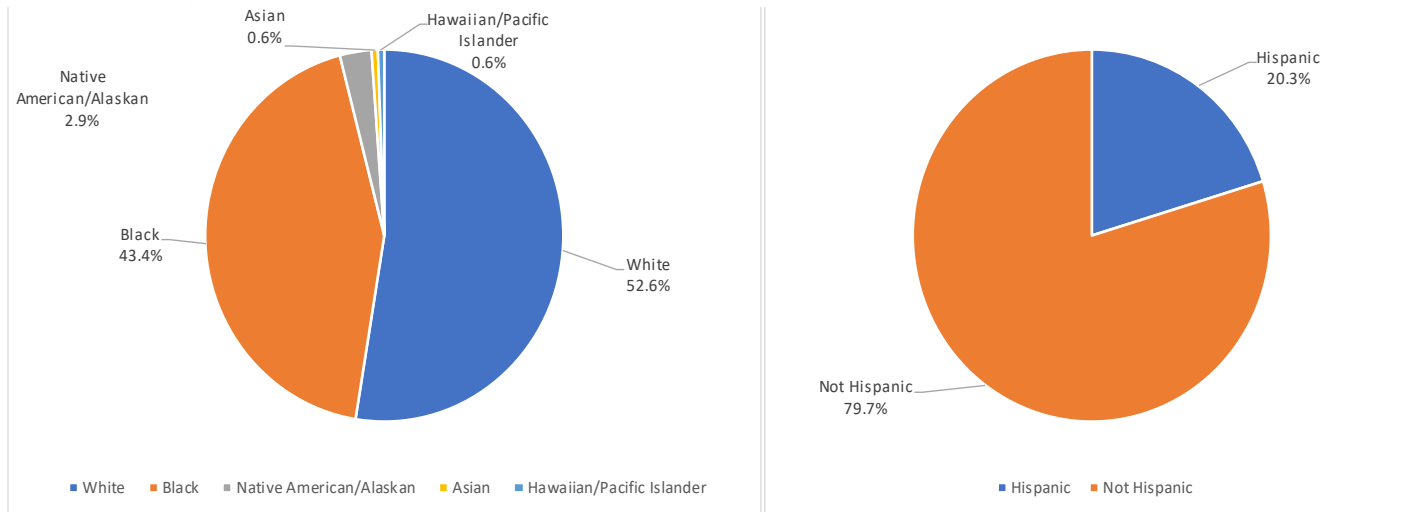
Exhibit 10: FYI Participants by Gender, December 2021



Source: HUD PIC data, December 2021

More than one-half of all voucher holders were White; 43 percent were Black; 3 percent were Native American/Alaskan; and less than 1 percent each were Asian or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. About 20 percent of participants were of Hispanic ethnicity (exhibit 11).

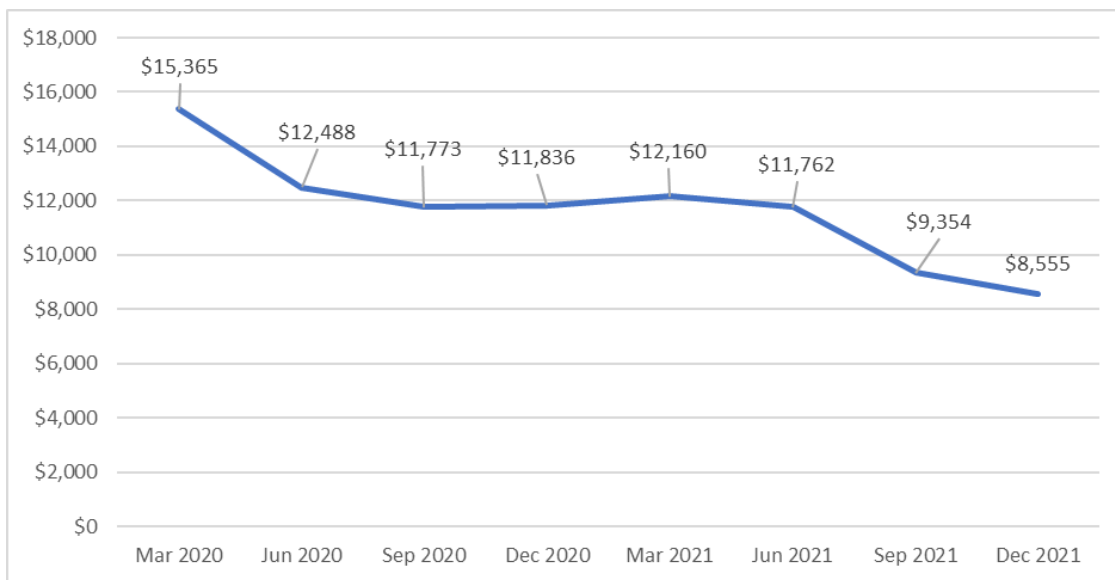
Exhibit 11: FYI Participants by Race and Ethnicity, December 2021



Source: HUD PIC data, December 2021

During 2020 and 2021, the average household income of FYI households declined by 44 percent, with the most-precipitous decreases occurring from March through June 2020 and again from June through September 2021, as shown in exhibit 12. Those time periods were heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, however, so the trend should not be understood as indicative of program effects under normal conditions.

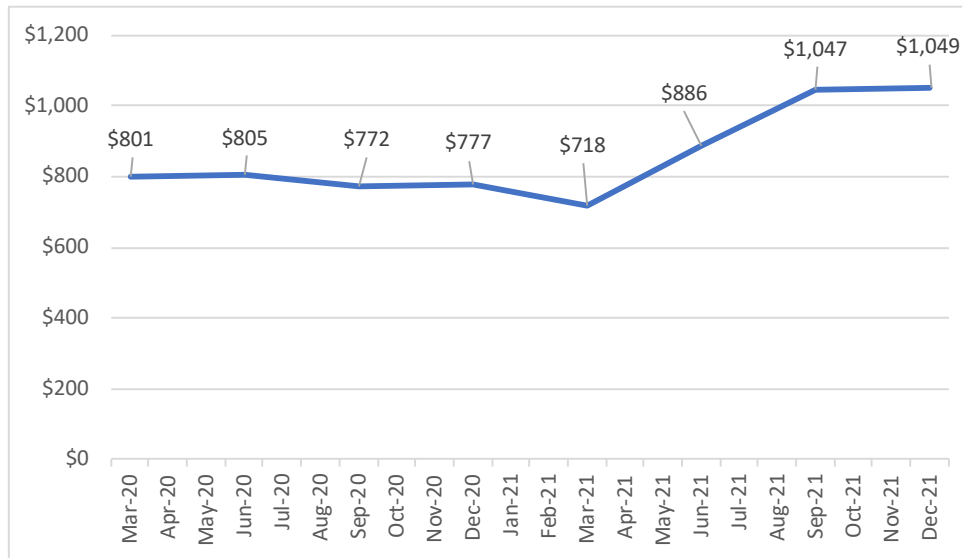
Exhibit 12: Average Household Income, FYI Households



Source: HUD PIC data

The average HUD assistance payment (HAP) for FYI vouchers rose sharply during 2021, consistent with rising rents in housing markets across the nation (exhibit 13).

Exhibit 13: Average HUD Assistance Payment for FYI Vouchers



Source: HUD PIC data

PHAs

Five PHAs of the seven interviewed indicated that youth participants were not previously on the waiting list for HCVs before applying for FYI vouchers. The two other agencies reported only a few names of FYI applicants on their wait lists. As of October 2021, three PHAs had received more than 50 referrals from their partner PCWAs; three had received 25 to 50 referrals; and 1 had received fewer than 25 referrals (exhibit 14).

Exhibit 14: Referrals Received from PCWAs

PHA	Number of Referrals		
	<25	25-50	>50
Alaska Housing Finance Corporation			1
Housing Authority of Clackamas County		1	
Dania Beach Housing Authority			1
Jefferson County Housing Authority		1	
Keene Housing	1		
Housing Authority of the City of Santa Ana			1
Wichita Housing Authority		1	
Total:	1	3	3

**As of August-October 2021.*

Source: PHA interviews

Four agencies reported that 75 to 100 percent of the referrals they received were determined to be eligible for FYI vouchers; one reported about 32 percent; and three did not know (exhibit 15).

Exhibit 15: Percentage of Referrals Determined Eligible for FYI

PHA	Percentage of Referrals Determined Eligible		
	25%-50%	75%-100%	Unknown
Alaska Housing Finance Corporation			1
Housing Authority of Clackamas County		1	
Dania Beach Housing Authority			1
Jefferson County Housing Authority		1	
Keene Housing	1		
Housing Authority of the City of Santa Ana			1
Wichita Housing Authority		1	
Total:	1	3	3

**As of August-October 2021.*

Source: PHA interviews

Three PHAs reported that 75 to 100 percent of eligible youth were approved and received vouchers; two agencies reported 25 to 50 percent and 50 to 75 percent, respectively (exhibit 16).

Exhibit 16: Percentage of Eligible Youth that Received Vouchers

PHA	Percentage of Referrals Determined Eligible		
	25%-50%	50%-75%	75%-100%
Alaska Housing Finance Corporation		1	
Housing Authority of Clackamas County		1	
Dania Beach Housing Authority	1		
Jefferson County Housing Authority			1
Keene Housing			1
Housing Authority of the City of Santa Ana			1
Wichita Housing Authority	1		
Total:	2	2	3

**As of August-October 2021.*

Source: PHA interviews

The most common obstacles to eligibility that PHAs reported were youth having criminal records and difficulty obtaining required documentation (two agencies each). Two agencies reported that their partnering PCWAs refer only youth who will meet eligibility requirements.²⁴

None of the interviewed PHAs have target numbers of youth they would like to serve with FYI. Six agencies indicated that their goal is to serve the maximum possible number, utilizing 100 percent of

²⁴ PCWAs must use care when making eligibility determinations—particularly on issues such as criminal record, which require a case-by-case consideration.

their voucher allotments; one agency said it lets its partnering PCWA decide the number of youth it would serve and refer.

PCWAs

FYI versus FUP

Of the seven PCWAs interviewed, four agencies partner with other PHAs administering FUP. Staff at the Transitional Planning Services Program at the County of Orange Social Services Agency in California reported that they find FUP easier to administer than FYI because, with FUP, the PHA assists youth in gathering their documentation, whereas the PCWA is responsible for helping youth obtain documentation for FYI. Two agencies observed that a benefit to FUP is that the voucher term can be extended up to 5 years if youth participate in an FSS program.

By contrast, staff at the Jefferson County Department of Human Services in Colorado indicated they have “struggled with FUP vouchers because [the program has] so many restrictions” and noted that prioritization criteria for FUP at their partnering PHA—specifically those based on applicants’ mental health status—make applying for a FUP voucher a more competitive process for youth than with FYI.²⁵ ChildNet, the PCWA that partners with the Dania Beach Housing Authority in Florida, noted that with FYI, youth applying for vouchers through the Dania Beach Housing Authority must choose between participating in FYI and participating in the Independent Living Postsecondary Education Services and Support (PESS) program. PESS provides a monthly stipend for eligible former foster youth in Florida “to secure housing, utilities, and assist with cost of living while attending a Florida Bright Futures-eligible postsecondary educational institution,”²⁶ but receipt of the benefit makes them ineligible for FYI from the Dania Beach Housing Authority. However, youth at that site who are participating in FUP can receive FUP housing vouchers and still receive PESS benefits.

Limitations

Site selection in 2021 was constrained due to a limited number (18 percent) of PHAs issuing more than 10 FYI vouchers; 38 percent of participating PHAs in July 2021 each had only one active FYI voucher. HUD PIC data, extracted at 3-month intervals, became unavailable after the December 2021 extract due to an interruption in the Policy and Research Information Server contract, which provides for the processing of the data. Additionally, PIC data originate with the 50058, 50058-MTW, or 50058-MTW Expansion form completed by PHA staff and is known to have reliability issues due to inconsistencies in data entry.

Conclusions

Key Findings

Key findings from this data collection are as follows.

²⁵ HUD program requirements are essentially the same for FYI and FUP; HUD does not have prioritization criteria for FUP that differ from those for FYI.

²⁶ For more about PESS, see <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/child-family/independent-living/youth-young-adults/postsecondary-education-services-and>

- **Nearly everyone interviewed for this report was enthusiastic about FYI.** Administrative processes and the need for prioritization among potentially eligible youth seem to vary according to agency size, but overall, the initiative has been well received by the agencies interviewed and is considered a success.
- Although many PHA and PCWA staff pointed out the lack of funding for move-in costs and difficulty in finding landlords willing to rent to youth, **some agencies are successfully identifying sources of funds for moving expenses and for landlord incentives** to mitigate those challenges.
- HUD HQ (HVMOD and OFO) and PHAs cited **collaboration with partner agencies as both a benefit and a key strength of FYI**, at both federal and local levels.
- As of the time of data collection (August through October 2021), **several of the interviewed PCWAs were not marketing FYI to youth** beyond having caseworkers mention the program to youth on their caseloads who were nearing transition age.
- For the interviewed PHAs, **most referrals from their partnering PCWAs are found eligible for FYI—in some cases due to PCWAs pre-screening youth for eligibility before referring them to the PHA—and most of those eligible youth receive vouchers.**
- **HVMOD staff said they consider their processing time for FYI vouchers to be timely, but at least two PHAs said that is not the case**—especially when issues arise with an application or when PHA staff have questions. Twelve to 15 business days is a long time to wait for a voucher when a youth is at risk of experiencing homelessness. However, with the different levels of review and approvals in different offices that are required for voucher issuance, HUD-level processing time is unlikely to be shortened.
- Both PHA and PCWA staff mentioned several times the significant challenge of **difficulty in obtaining documentation for youth applicants. Criminal records on applicants' background checks** were also cited as a major barrier to eligibility.

One potential remedy for the issue of youth who do not have required documentation in hand would be for PHAs to accept proof of request for documents as a temporary verification in order to process provisional voucher applications while applicants are awaiting receipt of their documents from various agencies.

Landlord incentives may mitigate the issue of criminal records.

- **Differences in rules and requirements between FYI and FUP at the PHA level result in definitive preferences for one program over another for many agencies**, and for at least one site, in Florida, state-specific conditions—notably, guidance around the PESS program—make FUP more beneficial than FYI for former foster youth.

The introduction of the competitively allocated FYI vouchers, which function almost identically to FUP vouchers for youth (exhibit 1), and the necessity of applying for two separate sets of vouchers for former foster youth may be overly burdensome for PHAs that administer both programs. Streamlining the two programs to allow a single application would likely reduce the

administrative impact on these PHAs. However, the on-demand element for FYI and the ability for smaller PHAs that do not have the capacity for a FUP to still be able to access special purpose vouchers for former foster youth are reasons to maintain the two discrete programs, at least for the noncompetitive FYI vouchers.

Considerations for Further Research

This report aimed to study the implementation of the FYI initiative at the PHA, PCWA, and HUD HQ levels and provide a snapshot of a small selection of partnerships at selected sites around the country. Site selection in 2021 was constrained due to a limited number (18 percent) of PHAs, that were issuing more than 10 FYI vouchers (38 percent of participating PHAs in July 2021 had only one active FYI voucher). The PIH HCV Data Dashboard showed that, as of July 2022, 240 PHAs had effective FYI awards, and 42 percent of them were administering more than 10 vouchers. Recommendations for future research are as follows.

- Employ a significantly larger sample size now that there is a larger population of participating sites.
- Study how FYI programs work in communities with different housing market conditions.
- Collect qualitative data from youth participants to gain their perspectives on FYI.
- Evaluate the outcomes of the FYI Initiative on the long-term housing stability and self-sufficiency of participating youth.

Appendix A: Summary of Changes in FYI Noncompetitive

The following chart highlights changes to the Foster Youth to Independence initiative for the provision of noncompetitive vouchers.

Subject	PIH Notice 2019-20	PIH Notice 2020-28	PIH Notice 2021-26
Source of funding	TPV-appropriated funds under the 2019 act.	Up to \$10 million of FUP-appropriated funds under the 2020 act.	Up to \$10 million of FUP-appropriated funds under the 2021 act.
Name of vouchers	FYI TPVs.	FYI vouchers.	No change from Notice PIH 2020-28.
PHA eligibility	PHAs with ACCs for HCVs that do not administer FUP.	All PHAs with ACCs for HCVs. Either does not currently administer FUP vouchers or has a FUP utilization of 90 percent or greater.	All PHAs with ACCs for HCVs. For PHAs that administer FUP or FYI awarded under a prior federal fiscal year: 1. When the PHA has a validated VMS utilization of at least 90 percent at the time of the request, as reported under the FUP VMS field. 2. When the PHA has a combined FYI or FUP (as applicable) size of no more than 5 vouchers: The PHA may request FYI vouchers if the validated VMS data reflect an at-least-50-percent utilization under the FUP VMS field.
Maximum award	25 vouchers in a fiscal year.	25 vouchers in a fiscal year, with the right to request additional vouchers with a 90-percent-or-greater FYI utilization.	25 vouchers in a fiscal year, with the right to request additional vouchers with at least 90-percent utilization of its FUP or FYI vouchers.
Submission requirement	Name of youth must be included in request.	A code for, alias for, initials of, or full name of the youth must be included in the request.	No change from Notice PIH 2020-28.

Subject	PIH Notice 2019-20	PIH Notice 2020-28	PIH Notice 2021-26
Submission requirement	Instructions for completion of Form HUD-52515, now expired.	Instructions for completion of Form HUD-52515, with an expiration date of July 31, 2022.	No change from Notice PIH 2020-28.
Youth failure to use voucher	Should a youth fail to use the voucher, the PHA must notify HUD, and HUD will reduce the PHA's HCV assistance to account for removal of the FYI TPV assistance from the PHA's HCV baseline inventory.	Should a youth fail to use the voucher, the PHA may issue the voucher to another eligible youth if one has been identified. If another eligible youth is not available, the PHA must notify HUD, and HUD will reduce the PHA's HCV assistance to account for removal of the FYI assistance from the PHA's HCV baseline.	Should a youth fail to use the voucher, the PHA may issue the voucher to another eligible youth if one has been identified. If another eligible youth is not available, the PHA must notify HUD before the end of the calendar year, and HUD will reduce the PHA's HCV assistance to account for removal of the FYI assistance from the PHA's HCV baseline. No change from Notice PIH 2020-28, only restating requirements.
Turnover	When the youth exits the program, HUD will reduce the PHA's HCV assistance to account for removal of the assistance from the PHA's HCV baseline inventory.	PHAs must continue to use FYI vouchers awarded under this notice for eligible youth upon turnover. If another eligible youth is not available, the PHA must notify HUD, and HUD will reduce the PHA's HCV assistance to account for removal of the FYI assistance from the PHA's HCV baseline. HUD will monitor the utilization of vouchers awarded through this notice annually, and any unused voucher assistance that is no longer needed will be recaptured and reallocated as authorized under the 2020 act.	PHAs must continue to use FYI vouchers awarded under this notice for eligible youth upon turnover. If another eligible youth is not available, the PHA must notify HUD before the end of the calendar year, and HUD will reduce the PHA's HCV assistance to account for removal of the FYI assistance from the PHA's HCV baseline. Notification should be sent to both FYI@hud.gov and the PHA's respective Financial Management Center financial analyst. HUD will monitor the utilization of vouchers

Subject	PIH Notice 2019-20	PIH Notice 2020-28	PIH Notice 2021-26
			awarded through this notice annually, and any unused voucher assistance that is no longer needed will be recaptured and reallocated as authorized under the 2021 act.

ACC = annual contributions contract. FUP = Family Unification Program. FYI = Foster Youth to Independence. HCV = housing choice voucher. PHA = public housing agency. PIH = Public and Indian Housing. TPV = tenant protection voucher. VMS = Voucher Management System.

Source: PIH publication "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

Appendix B: PHA Interview Guide

My name is _____, and I'm a social science analyst in the Program Evaluation Division with HUD. We're scheduled to do an interview today to talk about __[PHA]__'s experience with the Foster Youth to Independence, or FYI, Initiative. The purpose is to collect information that will help HUD understand how the rollout of FYI across a sample of PHAs has gone and also to learn how this initiative might be improved and how we can learn from this experience for new programs in the future.

I want to first thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I understand that your time is valuable, so I appreciate that you've taken the time to share your insights. I expect this interview will take about an hour. I also want to point out that your participation in this study is voluntary, and that choosing to participate or not will in no way affect your interactions with HUD or with any other federal agencies. We're interested in your honest feedback, so the nature of your answers will also not affect your interactions with HUD in any way.

You may choose to skip any questions you don't want to answer, and you may stop participating in the interview at any time. With your permission, I will audio record the interview in order to have an accurate record of your responses so that I don't have to pause for longer than necessary between questions in order to take notes. __*(Receive verbal assent.)*__ I may contact you after the interview via email to request clarification.

Do you have any questions about the study or about the interview before we get started?

FYI Initiative

1. How did you first come to learn about FYI?
2. Who initiated the community conversation?
3. Who ultimately made the decision to apply and participate in the initiative? Which stakeholder(s)?
4. What was the experience of applying for the assistance like? What were some challenges in applying for the assistance? What was straightforward?
5. Does this PHA have experience administering other special purpose voucher programs (e.g., non-elderly disabled, etc.)? If so, did this make you more or less likely to take on FYI?
6. Did you have an existing relationship with the PCWA or CoC that you're partnering with for FYI?
7. What other partners are at the table for this initiative? How have those partnerships been working?
8. What are some of the challenges you've faced in implementing this initiative, and how have you addressed them?
9. Was HUD guidance adequate in your implementation of FYI?

- a. Prompt: Was the application process for vouchers clear? How do you feel the process works?
10. What is working well in the initiative? Why?
11. What are some of the challenges?
12. What are some of the solutions your agency and/or partners have developed? Do you feel that these problem solving efforts were sufficiently supported? What would you recommend for future participants in terms of these particular challenges and/or solutions?
13. Given that CoCs were optional parties, what drove the decision to include or exclude them?
14. If you are collaborating with the CoC, what does that collaboration look like?
15. Has your community previously applied unsuccessfully for FUP vouchers under a NOFA?
16. If you have not previously applied for FUP vouchers, why not? And why FYI now?
 - a. Prompt: What's changed to precipitate this?
17. Based on your experience with FYI, do you anticipate applying for assistance under a future FUP NOFA?
18. Is this PHA considering developing other programs to assist this population (former foster youth)?

Participants

19. Were any of the youth participants on the PHA's waiting list for vouchers (prior to applying for an FYI voucher)?
20. How many referrals have you had from the PCWA since you started participating in FYI (estimate)?
21. Of the referrals you've received from the PCWA, how many were determined to be eligible for a voucher?
22. How many of the eligible youth were then approved and subsequently received a voucher?
23. What are the most common obstacles to eligibility that you see among referred youth?
24. What is your target number of youth to serve with this initiative?

Program

25. How does the FYI Initiative fit into the overall universe of homeless youth programs for your agency?

26. In addition to the required supportive services from the PCWA, what, if any, additional services are being provided to youth participants?
 - a. Prompt: financial counseling, job search assistance, education / vocation training, childcare assistance, transportation assistance, long-term housing planning, case management, etc.
 - b. If additional services are being provided to youth participants, which agencies are providing these services?
27. What are the administrative impacts of setting up and carrying out FYI?
28. How has this initiative impacted PHA operations (costs, staffing, etc.)?
29. If your agency has an existing FUP, what has it been like administering both programs?
 - a. How do they compare to one another from an administrative perspective?
 - b. Is one program faster than the other in issuing a voucher from the time of referral from the PCWA?
30. Would you like to hear from other PHAs administering FYI, and if so, what would be the preferred method for this?
 - a. Prompt: Webinar / in-person conference
31. What are some improvements that HUD should consider if we do this type of initiative again in the future?
32. Any other thoughts you have to share with us so we can better design and support programs like this going forward?

Appendix C: PCWA Interview Guide

My name is _____, and I'm a social science analyst in the Program Evaluation Division with HUD. We're scheduled to do an interview today to talk about __[PCWA]'__s experience with the Foster Youth to Independence, or FYI, Initiative. The purpose is to collect information that will help HUD understand how the rollout of FYI has gone across a sample of PHAs and their partnering child welfare agencies and also to learn how this initiative might be improved and how we can learn from this experience for new programs in the future.

I want to first thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I understand that your time is valuable, so I appreciate that you've taken the time to share your insights. I expect this interview will take less than an hour. I also want to point out that your participation in this study is voluntary, and that choosing to participate or not will in no way affect your interactions with any federal agencies.

You may choose to skip any questions you don't want to answer, and you may stop participating in the interview at any time. With your permission, I will audio record the interview in order to have an accurate record of your responses so that I don't have to pause for longer than necessary between questions in order to take notes. __*(Receive verbal assent.)*__ I may contact you after the interview via email to request clarification.

1. Did you have an existing relationship with the PHA with whom you're partnering for FYI?
2. Who initiated the community conversation?
3. How do you identify potential participants for FYI?
4. How does your agency prioritize youth for FYI?
5. Do you market or promote the initiative to potentially eligible youth? If so, how?
6. What challenges have you experienced in the implementation of this initiative?
7. What kind of successes have you seen with FYI?
8. Does your agency also work with PHAs that operate the Family Unification Program (FUP), and if so, how does FYI compare to FUP in terms of the referral process?
9. How do the two programs compare, in your opinion, in terms of overall program quality?
10. Any other thoughts you have to share with us so we can better design and support programs like this going forward?

References

- Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center. 2022. "Children Exiting Foster Care by Exit Reason in the United States." <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/line/6277-children-exiting-foster-care-by-exitreason?loc=1&loct=1#1/any/false/574,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867/asc/2631,2636,2632,2633,2630,2629,2635,2634/13050>.
- . April 13, 2020. "Black Children Continue to Be Disproportionately Represented in Foster Care." <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/updates/show/264-us-foster-care-population-by-race-and-ethnicity>
- Baams, Laura, Bianca D.M. Wilson, and Stephen T. Russell. 2019. "LGBTQ Youth in Unstable Housing and Foster Care," *Pediatrics* 143 (3): e20174211.
- Barnow, Burt S., Amy Buck, Kirk O'Brien, Peter Pecora, Mei Ling Ellis, and Eric Steiner. 2015. "Effective Services for Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for Children and Alumni of Foster Care Service: Correlates and Educational and Employment Outcomes," *Child & Family Social Work* 20 (2): 159–170.
- Berzin, Stephanie Cosner, Alison M. Rhodes, and Marah A. Curtis. 2011. "Housing Experiences of Former Foster Youth: How Do They Fare in Comparison to Other Youth?" *Children and Youth Services Review* 33 (11): 2119–2126.
- Cénat, Jude Mary, Sara-Emilie McIntee, Joana N. Mukunzi, and Pari-Gole Noorishad. 2021. "Overrepresentation of Black Children in the Child Welfare System: A Systematic Review to Understand and Better Act," *Children and Youth Services Review* 120: 105714.
- Congressional Research Service. 2021. "John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood." <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11070>.
- Courtney, Mark E., Amy Dworsky, JoAnn S. Lee, and Melissa Raap. 2010. *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Ages 23 and 24*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
- Courtney, Mark E., and Parjarita Charles. 2015. *Mental Health and Substance Use Problems and Service Utilization by Transition-Age Foster Youth: Early Findings from CalYOUTH*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
- Courtney, Mark E., Sherri Terao, and Noel Bost. 2004. *Conditions of Youth Preparing to Leave State Care*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
- Cunningham, Miranda J., and Marcelo Diversi. 2013. "Aging Out: Youths' Perspectives on Foster Care and the Transition to Independence," *Qualitative Social Work* 12 (5): 587–602.
- Dettlaff, Alan J., Micki Washburn, Lynley Christian Carr, and Alicia Nikki Vogel. 2018. "Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Youth Within in Welfare: Prevalence, Risk and Outcomes," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 80: 183–193.

Dion, M. Robin, Rebecca Kleinman, Jackie Kauff, and Amy Dworsky. 2014. *The Family Unification Program: A Housing Resource for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care*. Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Dworsky, Amy, Laura Napolitano, and Mark Courtney. 2013. "Homelessness During the Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood," *American Journal of Public Health* 103 (S2): S318–S323.

Fish, Jessica N., Laura Baams, Armeda Stevenson Wojciak, and Stephen T. Russell. 2019. "Are Sexual Minority Youth Overrepresented in Foster Care, Child Welfare, and Out-of-Home Placement? Findings From Nationally Representative Data," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 89: 203–211.

Florida Department of Children and Families. 2019. "Independent Living: Postsecondary Education Services and Support (PESS)." MyFLFamilies.com. <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/independent-living/postsecondary-education-services.shtml>.

Fowler, Patrick J., Katherine E. Marcal, Jinjin Zhang, Orin Day, and John Landsverk. 2017. "Homelessness and Aging Out of Foster Care: A National Comparison of Child Welfare–Involved Adolescents," *Children and Youth Services Review* 77: 27–33.

Fowler, Patrick J., Paul A. Toro, and Bart W. Miles. 2009. "Pathways to and From Homelessness and Associated Psychosocial Outcomes Among Adolescents Leaving the Foster Care System," *American Journal of Public Health* 99 (8): 1453–1458.

Lim, Sungwoo, Tejinder P. Singh, and R. Charon Gwynn. 2017. "Impact of a Supportive Housing Program on Housing Stability and Sexually Transmitted Infections Among Young Adults in New York City Who Were Aging Out of Foster Care," *American Journal of Epidemiology* 186 (3): 297–304.

Morton, Matthew, Amy Dworsky, Gina Miranda Samuels, and Sonali Patel. 2018. *Voices of Youth Count Comprehensive Report: Youth Homelessness in America*. Prepared by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/Voices-of-Youth-Report.pdf>.

National Center for Housing and Child Welfare (NCHCW). 2022. "Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI)." <https://www.nchcw.org/accessing-housing>.

Okpych, Nathanael J., Keunhye Park, Huiling Feng, Adrianna Torres-García, and Mark E. Courtney. 2018. *Memo From CalYOUTH: Differences in Social Support at Age 19 by Extended Foster Care Status and Placement Type*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Pecora, Peter J., Ronald C. Kessler, Kirk O'Brien, Catherine Roller White, Jason Williams, Eva Hiripi, Diana English, James White, and Mary Anne Herrick. 2006. "Educational and Employment Outcomes of Adults Formerly Placed in Foster Care: Results From the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study," *Children and Youth Services Review* 28 (12): 1459–1481.

Pergamit, Michael R., Marla McDaniel, and Amelia Hawkins. 2012. *Housing Assistance for Youth Who Have Aged Out of Foster Care: The Role of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Puzzanchera, C., M. Taylor, W. Kang, and J. Smith. 2022. Disproportionality Rates for Children of Color in Foster Care Dashboard (2010–2020). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. https://www.ncjj.org/AFCARS/Disproportionality_Dashboard.asp?selDisplay=2.

Rosenberg, Rachel, and Samuel Abbott. 2019. “Supporting Older Youth Beyond Age 18: Examining Data and Trends in Extended Foster Care.” Bethesda, MD: ChildTrends. <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/supporting-older-youth-beyond-age-18-examining-data-and-trends-in-extended-foster-care>.

Rosenberg, Rachel, and Youngmi Kim. 2017. “Aging Out of Foster Care: Homelessness, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment,” *Journal of Public Child Welfare* 12 (1): 99–115.

Skemer, Melanie, and Erin Jacobs Valentine. 2016. *Striving for Independence: Two-Year Impact Findings From the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation*. New York, NY: MDRC.

Solari, Claudia D., Mike Pergamit, Mark Treskon, Mica O’Brien, Amy Rogin, Matthew Gerken, Annelise Loveless, Martena Reed, and Amy Dworsky. 2022. *Family Unification Program—Family Self-Sufficiency (FUP-FSS) Demonstration Evaluation*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research.

Valentine, Erin Jacobs, Melanie Skemer, and Mark E. Courtney. 2015. *Becoming Adults: One-Year Impact Findings From the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation*. New York, NY: MDRC.

Watt, Toni, and Seoyoun Kim. 2019. “Race/Ethnicity and Foster Youth Outcomes: An Examination of Disproportionality Using the National Youth in Transition Database,” *Children and Youth Services Review* 102: 251–258.

White, Catherine Roller, Anne H. Gallegos, Kirk O’Brien, Susan Weisberg, Peter J. Pecora, and Rebecca Medina. 2011. “The Relationship Between Homelessness and Mental Health Among Alumni of Foster Care: Results From the Casey Young Adult Survey,” *Journal of Public Child Welfare* 5 (4): 369–389.

White, Catherine Roller, Kirk O’Brien, Peter J. Pecora, and Anne Buher. 2015. “Mental Health and Educational Outcomes for Youth Transitioning From Foster Care in Michigan,” *Families in Society* 96 (1): 17–24.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Policy Development and Research
Washington, DC 20410-6000



September 2024