



THP-PLUS/THP-PLUS FOSTER CARE

ANNUAL REPORT & POLICY BRIEF

FISCAL YEAR 2012-13



**The John Burton Foundation
for Children Without Homes**

INTRODUCTION

In the last seven years, the State of California has made significant strides towards reducing homelessness among youth transitioning from the foster care system. This effort began in earnest in 2006, when California expanded the state budget of the Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THP-Plus) Program, which provides 24 months of affordable housing and support services to former foster and probation youth ages 18-24. Since the program's inception in 2001 THP-Plus has provided affordable housing and supportive services to 13,514 otherwise homeless youth.

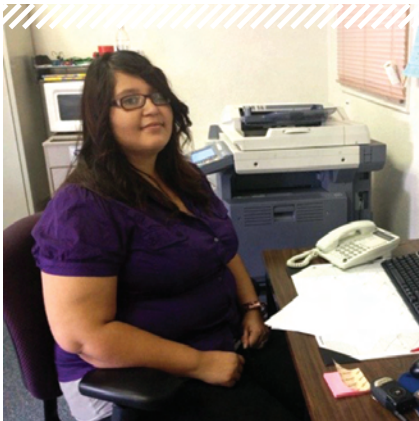
In 2010, California made a second significant step forward when it adopted Assembly Bill 12, the California Fostering Connections to Success Act, which extended foster care to age 21. In turn, a new placement option was created, THP-Plus Foster Care (THP+FC) modeled closely after THP-Plus, but with the advantage of being a foster care placement eligible for federal reimbursement. As of July 1, 2013 a total of 273 youth, ages 18 to 21 were accessing this placement, a figure that is expected to rise as the number of licensed providers grows statewide.

This brings us to the current annual report, which provides timely information on the status of both of these vital programs for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012–13,

including information about:

- > the total number of youth served by THP-Plus and THP+FC;
- > how youth in THP-Plus are faring in the areas of education, employment, and economic security;
- > the total number of non-profit providers that offer THP-Plus and THP+FC, by program type and county;
- > how the population of youth served by THP-Plus has changed with the introduction of THP+FC; and
- > how 2011 Realignment is affecting the provision of THP-Plus.

When taken together, this information highlights the important transition that is occurring in how California serves its transition-age youth. Questions are currently being asked about the role of THP-Plus given the implementation of THP+FC. Will it remain a valuable part of the continuum of care for youth transitioning from foster care or will it slowly be replaced by THP+FC, due in part to the financial incentive created by 2011 Realignment? These and many other questions are the topic of the FY 2012–13 THP-Plus/THP+FC Annual Report.



“I never in a million years thought I was going to have a great job especially in a field I considered my career.”

—SYLVIA V., IMPERIAL COUNTY THP-PLUS GRADUATE

REPORT METHODOLOGY

Information for the THP-Plus/THP+FC Annual Report was drawn from four primary sources. First, the John Burton Foundation conducted a survey of all non-profit organizations that operated a THP-Plus program or held a THP+FC license during Fiscal Year (FY) 2012-13. Second, the THP-Plus Participant Tracking System provided demographic and outcomes data on THP-Plus

participants over FY 2012-13. Third, the California Child Welfare Indicators Project provided information about the number of non-minor dependents placed in THP+FC for periods prior to July 1, 2013. Finally, the report drew from a number of All County Letters and County Fiscal Letters issued by the California Department of Social Services about implementation of 2011 Realignment.

A STATEWIDE LOOK AT THP-PLUS

THE PROGRAM

The Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THP-Plus) Program was established in 2001 by the California State Legislature in response to alarming rates of homelessness among former foster and probation youth, who were exiting foster care at 18 with no support or safety net. Policy changes that occurred between 2002 and 2006 restructured the program's funding, removing obstacles to implementation. By 2007 THP-Plus programs existed in a majority of California's counties. To date, THP-Plus has supported over 13,000 youth exiting the foster care and probation systems by providing stable housing and services such as education assistance, counseling, employment support and training, and mental health services. Following are the major findings from the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012–13 provider and county survey.

The number of counties implementing THP-Plus remained unchanged, as did the number of providers.

In FY 2012–13, THP-Plus programs existed in fifty counties, a figure that remained unchanged from the prior fiscal year (Figure 1). The eight counties without operational THP-Plus programs were Alpine, Amador, Colusa, Modoc, Mono, San Benito, Sierra, and Siskiyou. Likewise, the number of non-profit providers operating THP-Plus remained consistent: there were 57 nonprofit providers collectively operating 81 different programs across the state (Figure 2). These figures reflect the fact that a number of providers operate THP-Plus in multiple counties.

FIGURE 1: GROWTH IN COUNTIES WITH THP-PLUS PROGRAMS

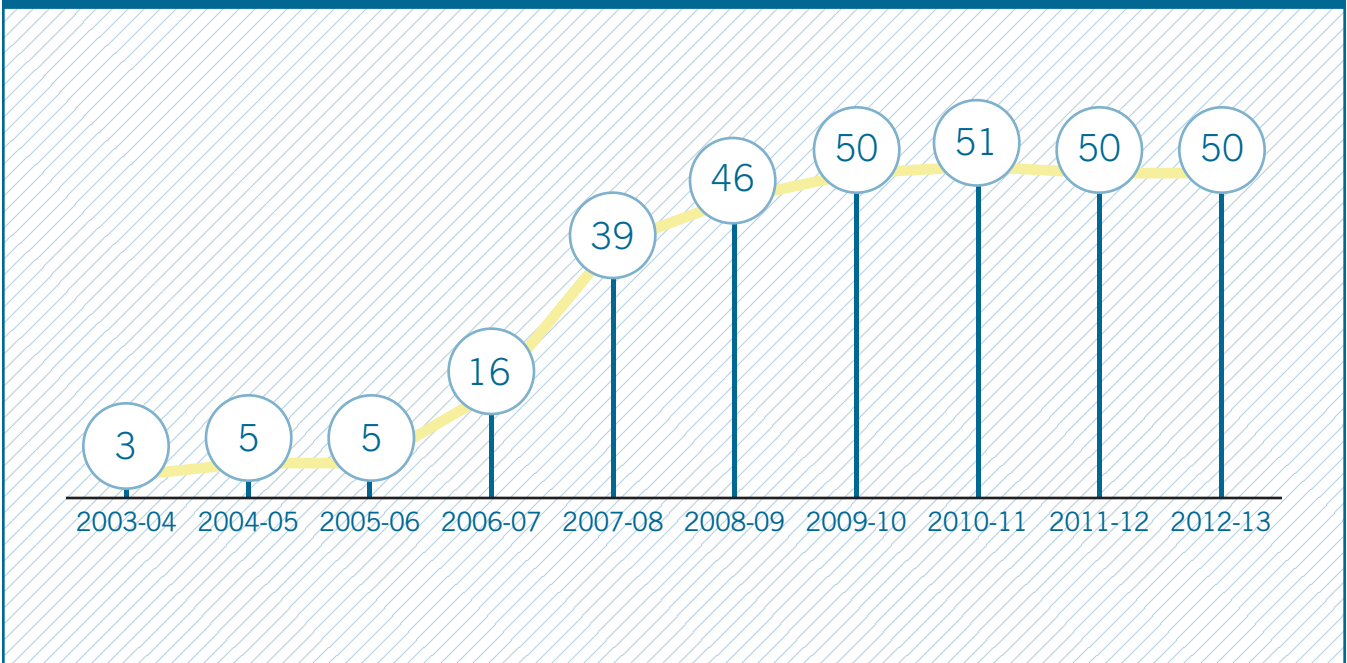
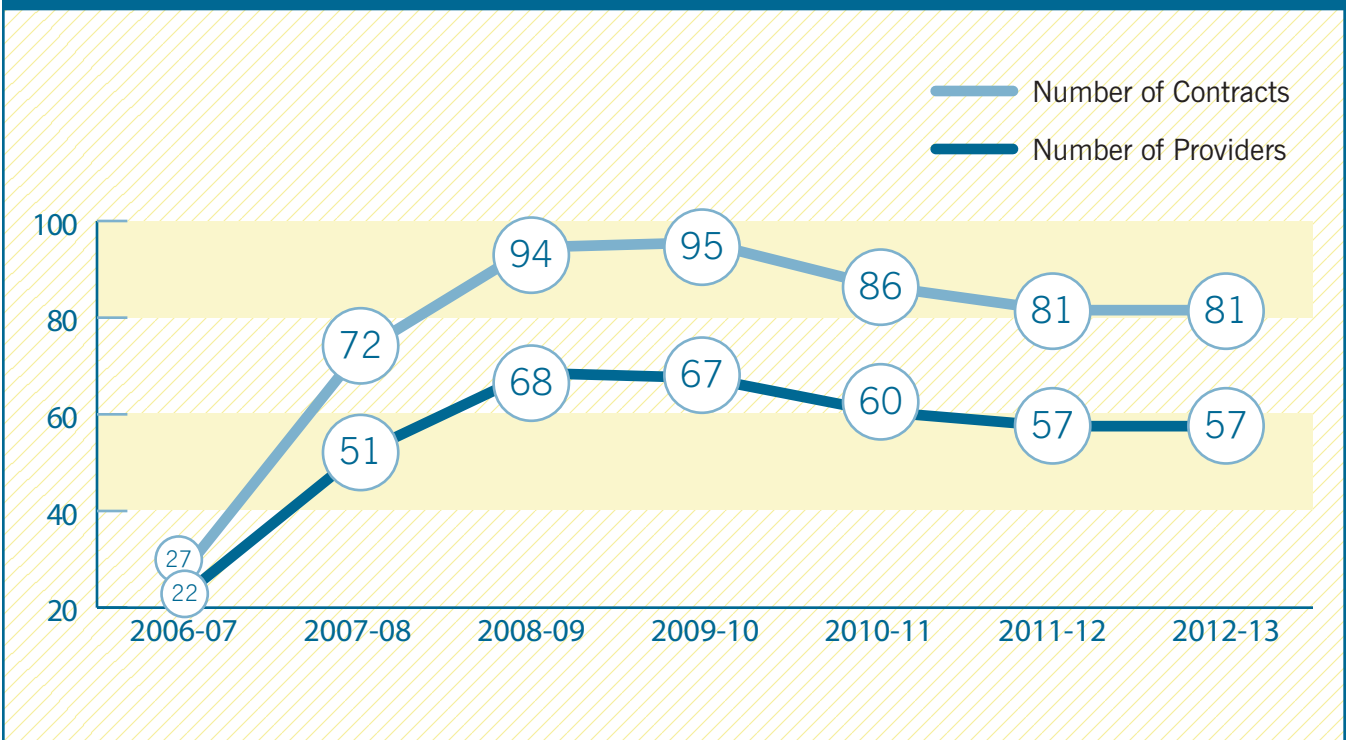


FIGURE 2: THP-PLUS PROVIDER & PROGRAM GROWTH

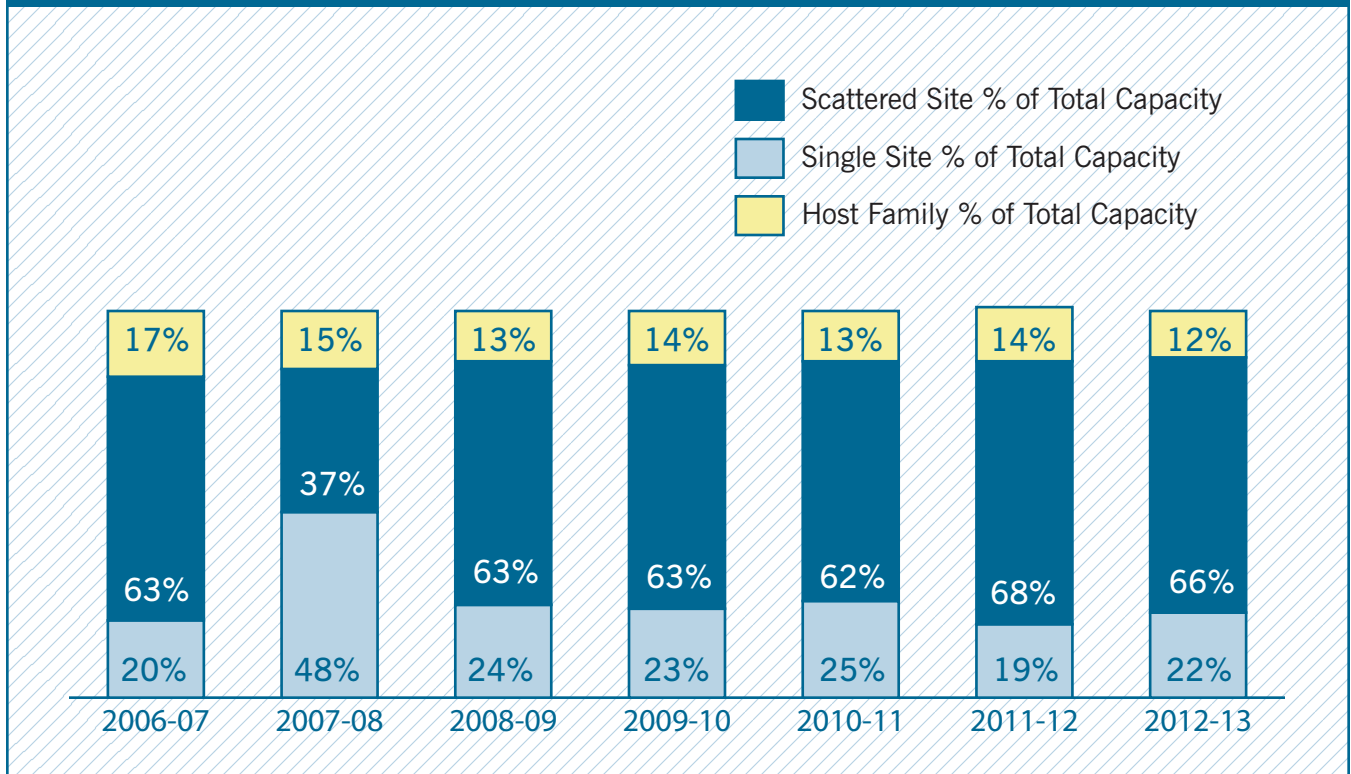


Scattered site remains the most prevalent program model for THP-Plus.

THP-Plus has three housing models: The single site model consists of one apartment building or complex, owned or leased by the service provider, where all program participants live. The scattered site model consists of leased apartments in various locations throughout the community, often in small clusters. The host family model differs significantly from the first two models. The participant resides with their previous foster family, other caring adult(s) with which they are acquainted, or a family identified by the service provider.

In FY 2012–13, the scattered site model accounted for 66 percent, a majority of the statewide THP-Plus capacity. The single site model accounted for 22 percent of the housing capacity and the host family model accounted for 12 percent of the housing capacity. Since FY 2008–09, the scattered site housing model has by far been the most prevalent model in THP-Plus (Figure 3). This can be largely attributed to the challenges in finding host families and in purchasing or leasing an entire building as a single site. However, in communities with a higher cost of living, the challenges are often identifying landlords that will rent to young people in THP-Plus and finding individual units that are affordable based on the county’s monthly THP-Plus rate.

FIGURE 3: HOUSING CAPACITY BY HOUSING MODEL AT FISCAL YEAR END



Rates paid to providers decreased in Fiscal Year 2012-13.

In FY 2012–13, the average monthly rates per youth paid to a THP-Plus provider were \$2,570 for youth living in the single site model, \$2,235 for youth living in the scattered site model and \$1,810 for a youth living in the host family model.

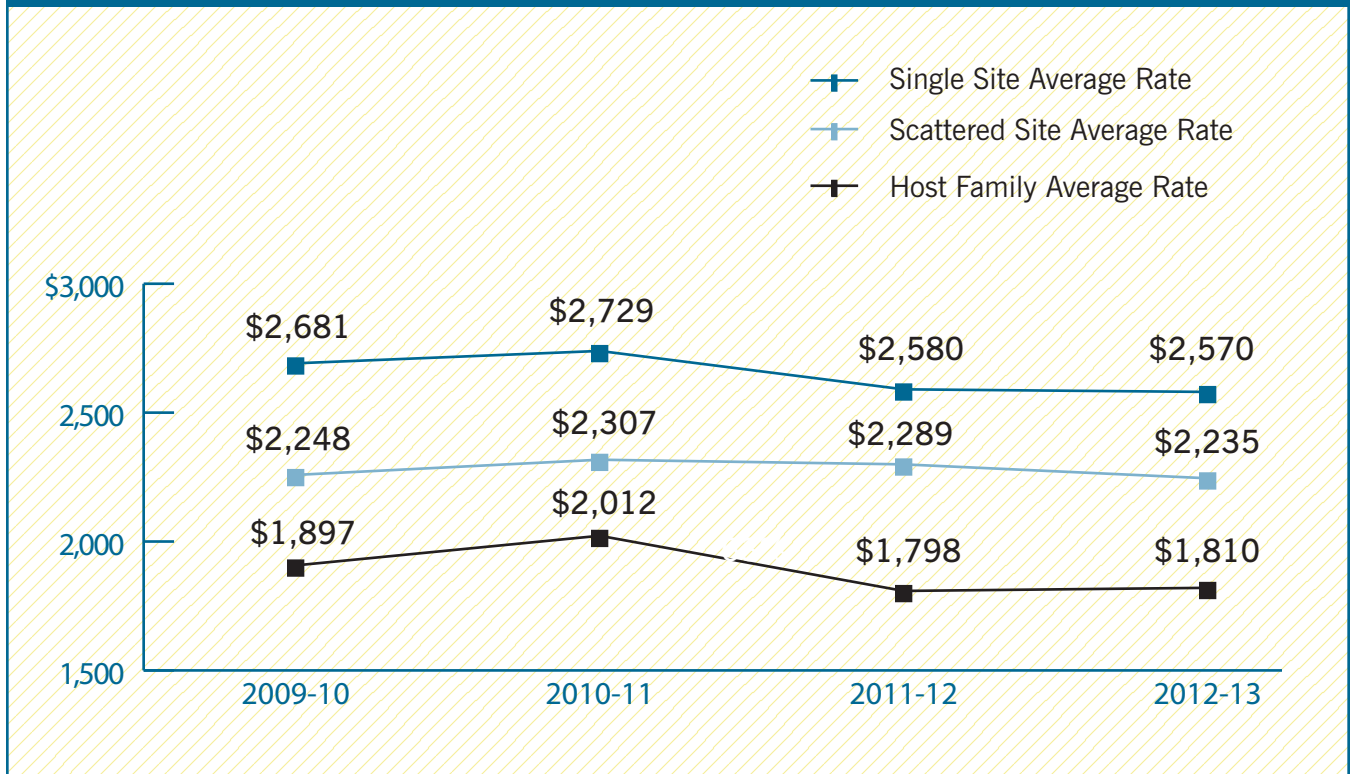
As figure 4 illustrates, these rates have, for the most part, declined over the past three years. The model that has experienced the most significant rate reduction is the host family model, although not during the most recent fiscal year. From FY 2010–11 to 2011–12 the average monthly rate for the host family model experienced its most significant reduction of 11%. The other two housing models’ rate reductions have been more modest, but overall these

“In my county we have a single mom living in one of our THP-Plus apartments. She is going to school and working and seems to be thriving having this extra support.”

—CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES PROGRAM
MANAGER, NEVADA COUNTY

reductions are attributable to a variety of possible explanations, including the implementation of 2011 Realignment, which is explored at greater length in the policy discussion of the report.

FIGURE 4: AVERAGE THP-PLUS RATE PER YOUTH PER MONTH



THE PARTICIPANTS

The number of youth served by THP-Plus remained relatively stable.

The number of youth served by THP-Plus has remained fairly consistent over the last four years, with only a slight decline. (Figure 5)

Likewise, the “moment-in-time” capacity of the program has remained stable. This figure is the total

number of beds that counties operate or contract with nonprofit providers to operate and is smaller than the number of youth served over 12 months due to turnover in the program. At the end of the 2012–13 fiscal year, the statewide THP-Plus capacity was 1,351 beds, down 13 percent from a high of 1,550 in FY 2010–11 and down from 1,386 in FY 2011–12 (Figure 6). These reductions reflect the small, but consistent budget reductions that the program experienced in each of the three fiscal years.

FIGURE 5: YOUTH SERVED OVER 12-MONTH PERIOD

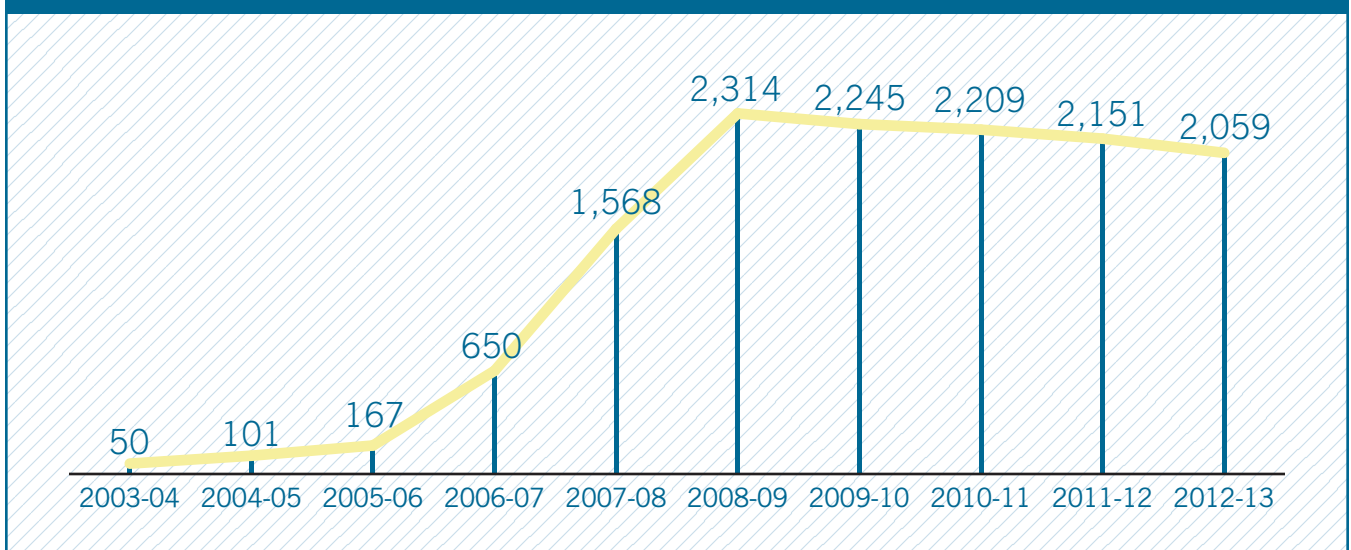
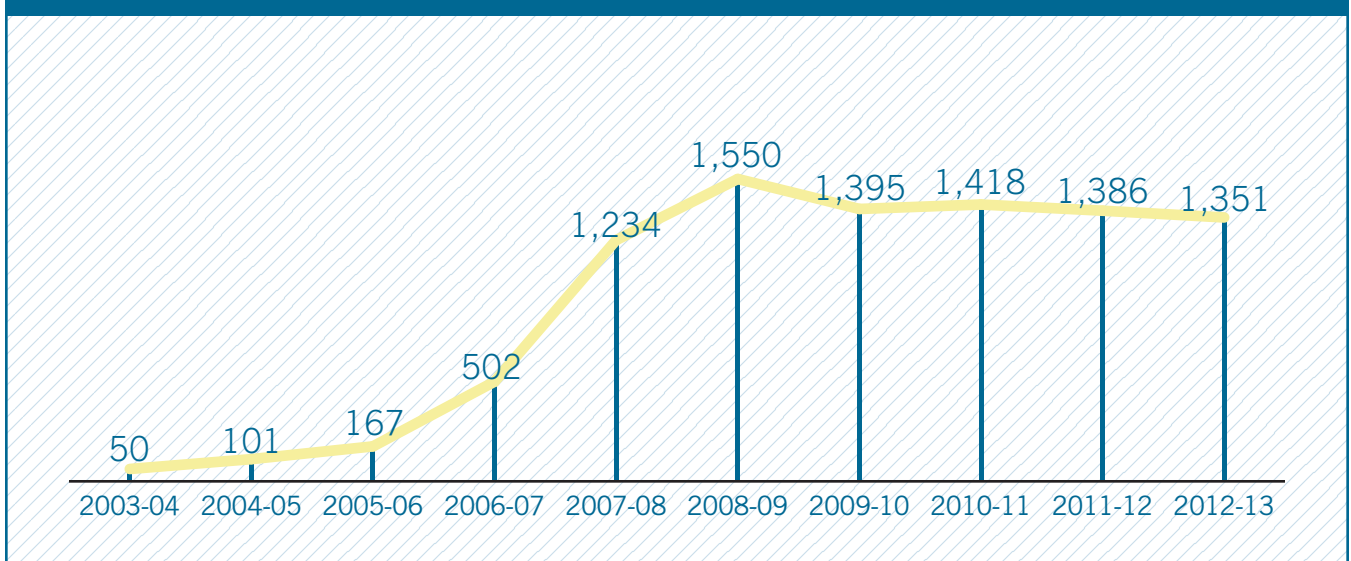


FIGURE 6: STATEWIDE HOUSING CAPACITY AS OF FISCAL YEAR END



THP-Plus continues to serve a large number of parenting youth.

In an effort to determine whether the implementation of extended foster care affected the number of custodial mothers served in THP-Plus, data from the THP-Plus Participant Tracking System was analyzed during the previous two full calendar years. During the calendar year of 2011 (January 1st to December 31st), 32 percent of the young women who exited a THP-Plus program had one or more child in their custody. During the calendar year of 2012, the first year extended foster care was available, a total of 40 percent of the young women who exited a THP-Plus program had one or more child in their custody, a 25 percent increase from the year prior.

While most demographic factors remain unchanged, the average age of THP-Plus participants increased dramatically.

On average, the percentage of youth from each ethnic group remained unchanged from FY 2011–12 to FY 2012–13, as did the percentage who reported they were gay or lesbian, male or female or referred from the foster care or juvenile probation systems. (Figure 7)

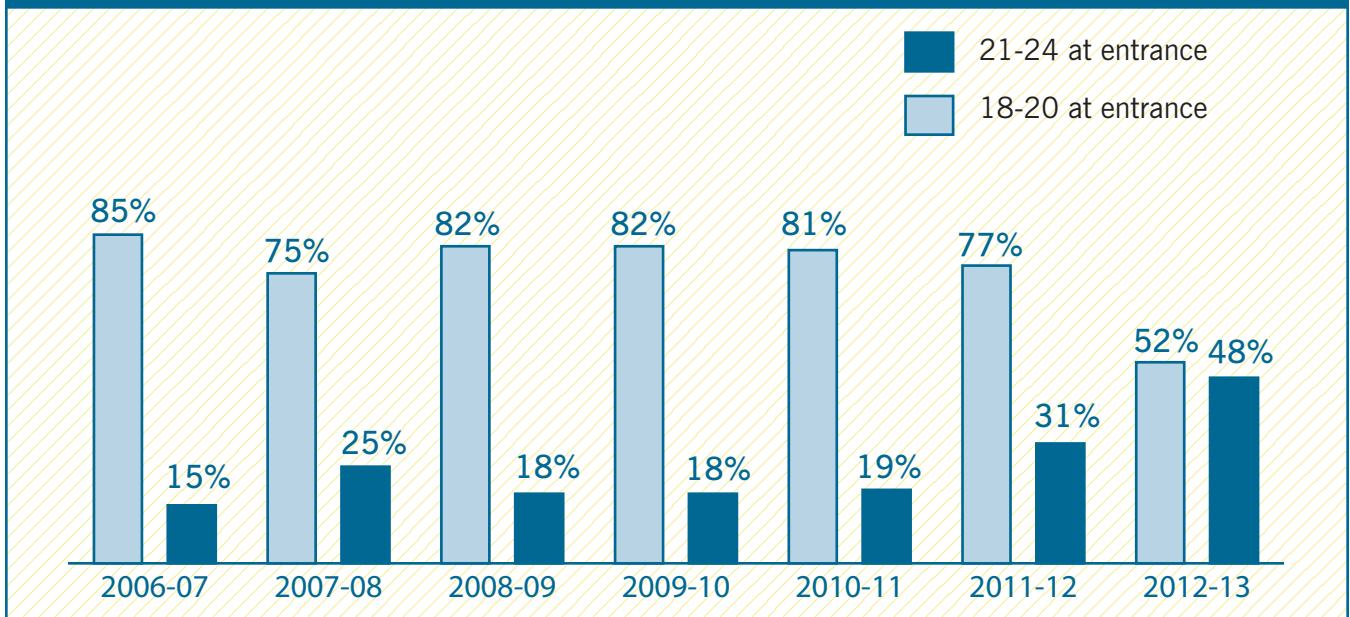
While many factors remained unchanged, there was a considerable shift in the average age of participants. Since FY 2006–07, an average of 80 percent of THP-Plus participants have been 18 to 20 years old; an average of 20 percent have been 21 to 24 years-old. This changed considerably during FY 2012–13, with the percentage of 18 to 20 year-olds decreasing by 32 percent and the percentage of 21 to 24 year-olds increasing by 55 percent (Figure 8). This considerable change in the average age of THP-Plus participants likely reflects the fact that youth are electing to participate in extended foster care, enabling older youth, ages 21 to 24, who continue to experience homelessness, to participate in the program.

FIGURE 7: PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS AT ENTRANCE TO THP-PLUS

	2011-12	2012-13
Male	42%	42%
Female	58%	58%
Age 18–20	77%	52%
Age 21–24	31%	48%
Self-identified LGBT*	7%	8%
Black	33%	35%
White	28%	26%
Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Multi-racial, or Other	39%	37%
Hispanic	39%	38%
ILP-eligible probation ward as minor	15%	11%
	Jan-Dec 2011	Jan-Dec 2012
Custodial mothers	32%	40%

* lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender

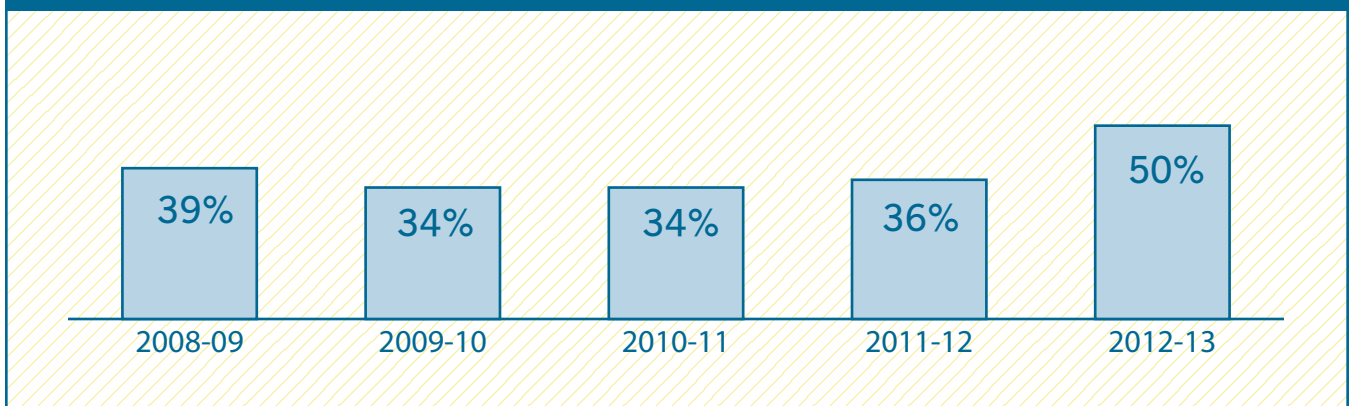
FIGURE 8: PARTICIPANT AGE AT ENTRANCE TO THP-PLUS



More THP-Plus participants are experiencing homelessness prior to THP-Plus.

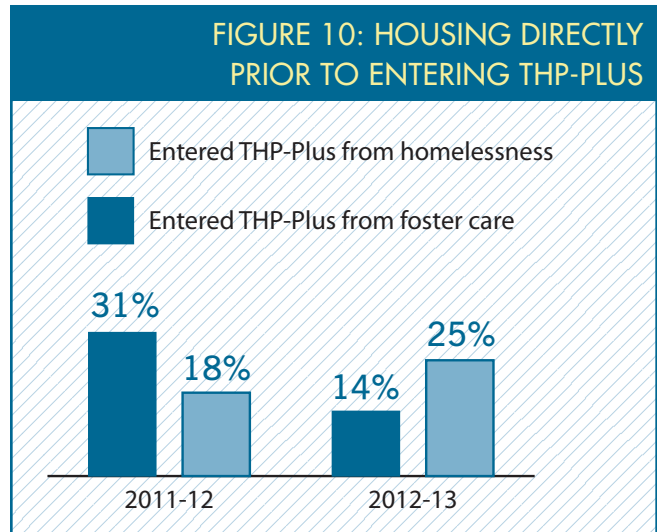
During FY 2012–13, a full 50 percent of THP-Plus participants reported having experienced homelessness prior to entering the program, the highest level ever reported (Figure 9). This is a 39 percent increase in reported homelessness among youth entering the program from the prior fiscal year. This finding is likely closely related to the significant increase in the age of the average THP-Plus participant.

FIGURE 9: EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS BETWEEN FOSTER CARE AND THP-PLUS



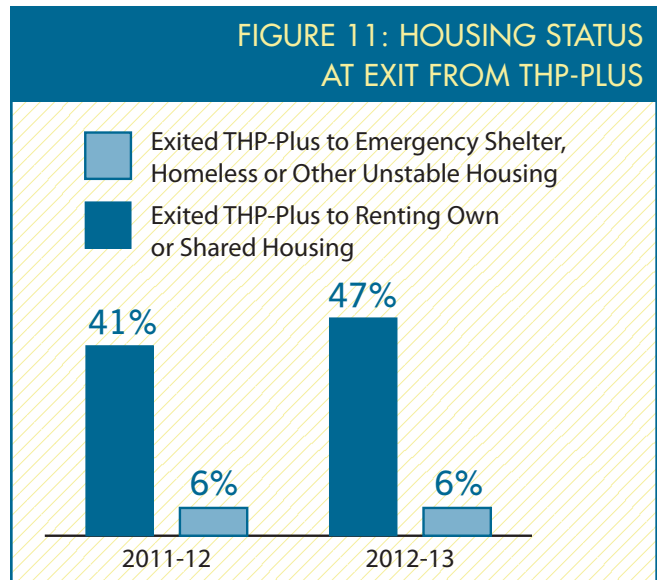
Youth entering THP-Plus directly from homelessness has increased, while youth entering directly from foster care has decreased.

The percentage of youth entering THP-Plus directly from homelessness increased from 18 to 25 percent from FY 2011–12 to 2012–13. This is distinct from the percentage of youth who reported that they have ever experienced homelessness prior to entering THP-Plus, which was 50 percent. At the same time, the percentage of youth entering THP-Plus directly from foster care decreased by 54 percent, from 31 percent in FY 2011–12 to 14 percent in FY 2012–13. (Figure 10)



The number of youth exiting THP-Plus into housing where they pay rent has increased, and the number exiting into homelessness remains very low.

The percentage of youth exiting THP-Plus into the category “renting own or shared housing” increased from 41 to 47 percent from FY 2011–12 to 2012–13. The percentage of youth exiting THP-Plus into the category “emergency shelter, homeless, or other unstable housing” remains at 6 percent, same as the year prior. (Figure 11)



THP-Plus has continued to help participants make gains in education and employment.

THP-Plus offered tangible benefits to youth in the areas of education and employment during FY 2012–13. The number of youth who had earned their high school diploma, GED or high school equivalency grew by 11 percent from the time they entered THP-Plus to the time they exited the program (73% at entrance and 81% at exit). Gains in the area of employment were even stronger, with the percentage of youth working part- or full-time increasing 35 percent during their participation in THP-Plus (34% at entrance and 46% at exit). This increased employment had a measurable impact on earned monthly income. During FY 2012–13, THP-Plus participants’ average non-zero monthly earnings increased 15 percent from \$767.18 to \$884.81. (Figure 12)

FIGURE 12: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

	Entrance	Exit
Earned a high school diploma, GED or equivalency	73%	81%
Employed (part- or full-time)	34%	46%
Average non-zero monthly earnings	\$767.18	\$884.81

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Bernardo Reyna, Imperial County THP-Plus Graduate

Bernardo Reyna was raised in Calexico, CA, a small city in Imperial County that sits right at the Mexican border. At age 9, Bernardo was removed from his home and placed in foster care along with his three sisters and younger brother. Most of the siblings were split up, however Bernardo and his younger brother were able to remain together in a foster home.

At age 12, Bernardo began participating in the Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program (IVROP), with which he remained connected for years to come. After graduating from Calexico High School with a strong grade point average he enrolled in Imperial Valley College. Once Bernardo “aged out” of the foster care system at 18, his foster mother asked him to move out, and Bernardo found himself homeless. He was able to stay with his oldest sister temporarily, but she had a family of her own and he knew he needed to find another place to live.

Bernardo shared his dilemma with Luis Torres, a staff at IVROP who suggested he apply to IVROP’s THP-Plus program. When Bernardo entered THP-Plus he didn’t have money for textbooks and wasn’t working. THP-Plus helped Bernardo gain work experience and ultimately get a job. While in the program, he was able to save enough money to purchase his first car so he could get to school and work. Luis accompanied Bernardo in his search for a car, and taught him the skills he would need to car shop.



Bernardo with certificate at Fire Academy Graduation Ceremony in May, 2013

This was just one of the many things Bernardo learned. “THP-Plus taught me about cooking, health, time management...they taught me how to be responsible, how to make the right choices, how to be independent.”

When Bernardo entered THP-Plus at age 18, his goals were to get a job, finish school and decide on a career. He is now 21, and has graduated from Imperial Valley College’s Fire Academy and put in applications with all the local fire departments. He is currently waiting to hear back, and in the meantime is working full-time at the local office supplies store. He has enrolled for fall in the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program at the local community college. Bernardo sees his siblings on a weekly basis.



Bernardo working at Office Supplies.

THP-PLUS IN THE ERA OF 2011 REALIGNMENT

In July 2011, the California State Legislature adopted a fiscal policy known as “realignment,” which directed a percentage of the state sales and use tax, along with a portion of the Vehicle License Fee, to counties. The purpose of this funding was to perform certain functions that were formerly performed at the state level or that were a shared responsibility.

This policy change had a direct effect on THP-Plus. Prior to 2011 Realignment, each year the California Department of Social Services determined the need for THP-Plus based on estimates provided by county child welfare agencies and then issued a funding allocation based on the need and available resources. 2011 Realignment changed this process by eliminating the annual state allocation and instead issuing a one-time permanent allocation to all 58 counties. Additionally, 2011 Realignment provided counties with the option to reduce or even eliminate THP-Plus in their county without losing THP-Plus funding, provided that the funding is used to support other child welfare-related services.

State law requires that if a county intends to eliminate or significantly reduce the level of its THP-Plus program by 10 percent in any one year or by a

cumulative 25 percent over the previous three years, the decision must be affirmed in open session by a vote of its local Board of Supervisors.¹ This allows for public input, including that of youth potentially affected by the reduction to THP-Plus.

The table on the next page (Figure 13) includes the “baseline” level of funding provided to counties for THP-Plus, along with a breakdown of how that annual funding translates to monthly rates per youth and bed capacity.

The statewide data on THP-Plus indicates that the reduction in service level has been insignificant, just 2.5 percent from the prior fiscal year, down from 1,386 to 1,351. However, a closer look at individual counties’ service levels in comparison to their realignment baseline suggests that this reduction is not evenly distributed among the 50 counties implementing the program. Instead, some counties are reducing their service levels more than others, even surpassing the 10 percent threshold mandating a vote of the county board of supervisors.

This analysis, together with interviews with both representatives from county agencies and THP-Plus providers led to a series of conclusions about 2011 Realignment and THP-Plus:

“Over this past fiscal year 100% of our THP-Plus graduates report living independently by either paying rent (78%, with one owning their own home) or living in other stable housing (22%).”

—CHRISTINA NICHOLSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
WHOLE PERSON LEARNING, EL DORADO AND PLACER COUNTIES

[1] Government Code section 30026.5(f), as adopted in SB 1020 (Chapter 40, Statutes of 2012) and stated in All County Letter No. 12-44.

FIGURE 13: REALIGNMENT SERVICE LEVEL BASELINE

County	THP-Plus Funding Realigned to Counties	Realignment Service Level Baseline (beds)	Realignment Service Level Baseline (per youth monthly rate)	County	THP-Plus Funding Realigned to Counties	Realignment Service Level Baseline (beds)	Realignment Service Level Baseline (per youth monthly rate)
Alameda	\$2,897,614	123	\$1,963	Plumas	\$61,280	2	\$2,617
Alpine	\$67,344	2	\$2,806	Riverside	\$866,043	33	\$2,175
Amador	\$67,344	2	\$2,806	Sacramento	\$1,984,843	65	\$2,529
Butte	\$323,580	13	\$2,125	San Benito	\$67,344	2	\$2,806
Calaveras	\$104,190	3	\$2,965	San Bernardino	\$1,052,386	30	\$2,898
Colusa	\$48,622	2	\$2,076	San Diego	\$4,831,711	140	\$2,885
Contra Costa	\$1,089,309	41	\$2,214	San Francisco	\$2,474,795	92	\$2,248
Del Norte	\$374,846	9	\$3,555	San Joaquin	\$539,866	17	\$2,711
El Dorado	\$304,283	9	\$2,886	San Luis Obispo	\$421,298	10	\$3,597
Fresno	\$522,346	17	\$2,623	San Mateo	\$1,476,186	49	\$2,521
Glenn	\$207,278	5	\$3,539	Santa Barbara	\$331,036	9	\$3,140
Humboldt	\$173,650	5	\$2,965	Santa Clara	\$2,086,413	65	\$2,658
Imperial	\$99,969	3	\$2,846	Santa Cruz	\$472,410	17	\$2,372
Inyo	\$121,554	5	\$2,076	Shasta	\$194,488	10	\$1,669
Kern	\$825,481	41	\$1,678	Sierra	\$67,344	2	\$2,806
Kings	\$72,160	3	\$2,054	Siskiyou	\$197,036	5	\$3,364
Lake	\$250,055	9	\$2,372	Solano	\$962,670	25	\$3,161
Lassen	\$138,919	4	\$2,965	Sonoma	\$376,268	13	\$2,471
Los Angeles	\$2,165,106	82	\$2,200	Stanislaus	\$327,303	17	\$1,644
Madera	\$145,629	4	\$3,109	Sutter	\$260,474	9	\$2,471
Marin	\$283,683	8	\$3,019	Tehama	\$355,430	10	\$3,035
Mariposa	\$178,485	5	\$3,047	Trinity	\$270,656	7	\$3,301
Mendocino	\$277,839	10	\$2,372	Tulare	\$215,680	9	\$2,046
Merced	\$244,141	9	\$2,316	Tuolumne	\$105,316	5	\$1,798
Modoc	\$82,859	2	\$3,538	Ventura	\$65,987	5	\$1,127
Mono	\$67,344	2	\$2,806	Yolo	\$162,128	5	\$2,768
Monterey	\$410,701	15	\$2,338	Yuba	\$318,413	10	\$2,718
Napa	\$444,744	10	\$3,797	TOTALS:	\$34,928,000	1,186	
Nevada	\$144,763	5	\$2,471				
Orange	\$1,698,256	65	\$2,164				
Placer	\$551,102	17	\$2,768				

Although 2011 Realignment creates a powerful financial incentive to reduce or eliminate THP-Plus, the program continues to serve over 2,000 youth annually.

Even counties with a high level of support for THP-Plus acknowledged that realignment creates a strong financial incentive to eliminate THP-Plus because it allows counties to keep allocated THP-Plus funding and use it for purposes that could potentially be matched with federal funding, thereby expanding local funding. Despite this sentiment, 50 out of 58 counties continue to provide THP-Plus services to over 2,000 youth per year.

A perception exists among some that THP-Plus is no longer necessary because of the implementation of extended foster care.

While there is generally strong support for THP-Plus, some county administrators raised the question as to whether THP-Plus was necessary given the implementation of extended foster care, particularly THP+FC. When asked to provide additional information, many based this opinion on the perception that the number of youth who are ineligible for extended foster care is negligible and that there is not a considerable need for ongoing housing support for foster youth after age 21. When the needs of special subpopulations are raised, including parenting youth or youth with disabilities, interviewees generally agreed that they may need support after age 21.

The state reporting process on 2011 Realignment is not a timely method to inform local stakeholders about county-level changes.

The California Department of Social Services has developed a quarterly report on 2011 Realignment, in an effort to understand its impact statewide as well on programs over which counties were given new discretion, such as THP-Plus. However, information

“THP-Plus has been a big influence on me. If it weren’t for this program I wouldn’t have achieved the things I did.”

—BERNARDO R., IMPERIAL COUNTY
THP-PLUS GRADUATE

about service-level reductions would be included in the report after the reductions had occurred, making it an impractical tool for informing local stakeholders who have an interest in advocating for service levels.

Lack of knowledge about the requirement in state law to reduce THP-Plus service levels is common amongst both county representatives and providers.

In the course of conducting the analysis, the John Burton Foundation asked both providers and county administrators about requirements in state law to reduce the THP-Plus service level. Many were unaware of the requirements, including counties that appeared to have reduced their service levels beyond the 10 percent threshold.

Providers report confusion about 2011 Realignment and a lack of understanding about how to advocate for the continuation of their programs at the county level.

Although two years has passed since 2011 Realignment was implemented, it remains a confusing topic for most providers and many report that they don’t really understand its implications. Additionally, providers report that they do not feel well-prepared to advocate for the continuation of their program if their county proposes service level reductions in THP-Plus, due to a lack of knowledge about the policy-making process and concerns that any advocacy efforts may threaten other contracts that the organization has with the county.

THP+FC IN FISCAL YEAR 2012–13

FINALLY OFF AND RUNNING

Fiscal Year 2012–13 marked the first year of implementation of THP-Plus Foster Care (THP+FC), a new placement option created through passage of Assembly Bill 12, the California Fostering Connections to Success Act. Like THP-Plus, THP+FC provides participants with safe, affordable housing and supportive services. However, unlike THP-Plus, it is a Title IV-E reimbursable foster care placement where youth are provided court oversight and child welfare supervision. Provided are the major findings from the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012-13 provider and county survey and analysis of FY 2012-13 data from the THP-Plus Participant Tracking System. (Figure 14)

The number of youth in THP+FC is growing, but remains small.

As of June 30, 2013, 273 non-minor dependents were placed in THP+FC. This figure has grown steadily from October 24, 2012, when the first THP+FC provider was licensed. As of January 1, 2013, 134 nonminor dependents had been placed in THP+FC, a figure that rose to 161 nonminor dependents as of April 1, 2013. (Figure 15)

FIGURE 14: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THP-PLUS AND THP+FC

	THP-Plus	THP+FC
Age of Eligible Participants	18 to 24	18 to 21
Time Limit	24 months	None
Six Month Court Review Hearings Conducted	No	Yes
Monthly Child Welfare Visits Held	No	Yes
Provider Required to Provide Supportive Services	Yes	Yes
Process for Approval	Approved by Counties	Licensed by State
Service Models*	Single site, scattered site, host home	Single site, remote site, host home
Monthly Rate Paid to Provider	Varies by county	Single site: \$2,797 Remote site: \$2,797 Host home: \$2,225

*Note that THP-Plus and THP+FC housing models differ slightly in design and name:

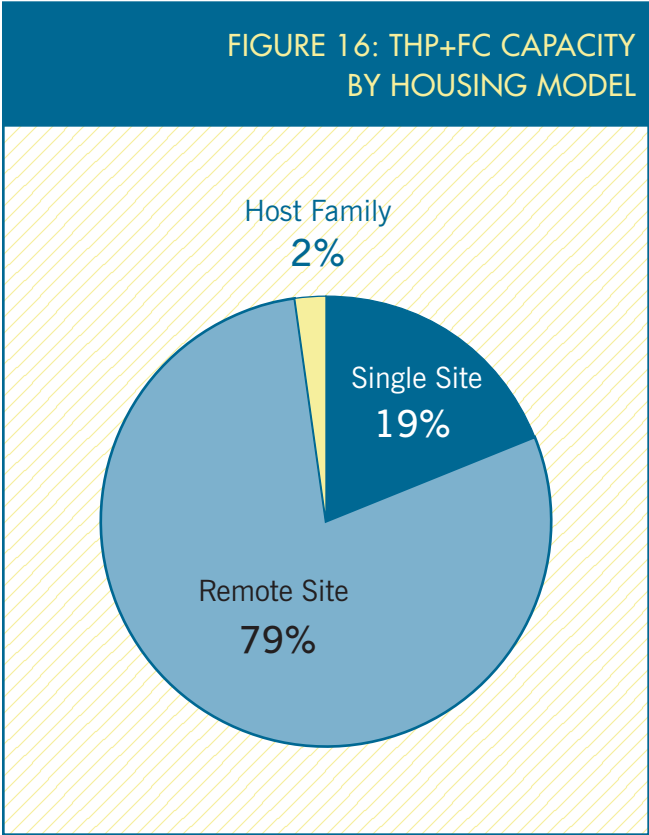
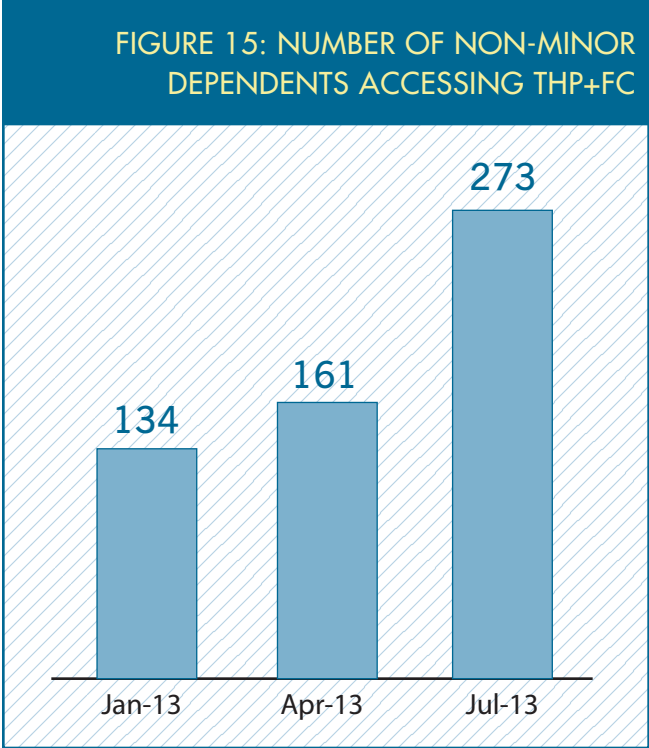
1. The THP-Plus single site housing model does not require staff to reside on site, whereas the THP+FC single site housing model does require staff to reside on site.
2. Although the name differs, the scattered site model in THP-Plus has the same design as the remote site model in THP+FC.

Youth with higher needs are accessing THP+FC.

Of the 273 youth in placement in THP+FC on June 30, 2013, forty (15%) were parents who had custody of one or more child. A total of 91 youth (33%) were either under transition jurisdiction as former wards of the court or under delinquency supervision, commonly referred to as “602 status.” Based on data from the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, THP+FC is serving a disproportionate number of young women: as of April 1, 2013 a full 61 percent of participants were female. The ethnicity of THP+FC participants varies from that of the general population of children and youth in foster care, with a greater proportion of participants being African American (33% in THP+FC vs. 23% in foster care generally) and a much smaller percentage being Latino (34% in THP+FC vs. 49% in foster care generally).

Like THP-Plus, remote site (known as scattered site in THP-Plus) is the most prevalent program model.

Of the total number of non-minor dependents in placement on June 30, 2013, most youth were placed in the remote site model of THP+FC, where youth live in individual rental units leased by the THP+FC provider within a larger housing development. Of the total number of youth placed in THP+FC, 241 (79%) were placed in the remote site model of THP+FC. The second most prevalent model of THP+FC was the single site model, in which all of the rental units are located centrally and a staff member resides on site. Of the total number of nonminor dependents in placement in THP+FC, 58 (19%) were placed in the single site model. The remainder of youth in THP+FC were placed in the host family model of THP+FC, which closely resembles a foster family home. (Figure 16)





“THP-Plus taught me how to save money.”

—TONY V., SANTA CRUZ COMMUNITY COUNSELING
CENTER THP-PLUS PARTICIPANT

The number of THP+FC providers grew steadily over FY 2012–13.

Nonprofit organizations were surveyed about their THP+FC programs, and were asked about their status as of June 30, 2013. At that moment in time, a total of 25 nonprofit organizations had applied for and received a license to operate a THP+FC program from the California Community Care Licensing Division of the California Department of Social Services. Of this total, 16 providers (62%) had served one or more youth during the fiscal year. The remaining 9 licensed providers were either awaiting a referral from a placing county or finalizing program elements. Of the 25 licensed THP+FC providers, 19 (76%) either currently or formerly operated a THP-Plus program.

Unlike THP-Plus, THP+FC does not currently have the capacity to track outcomes in the different areas of their life, such as education, employment, health and criminal justice involvement. Toward this end, the John Burton Foundation asked survey participants whether they would elect to use a voluntary online database similar to the one used to track youth-level outcomes for THP-Plus and found that slightly less than 2 out of 3 (63%) would elect to use such a system if made available.

THP+FC providers are present in most, but not all counties with a large number of non-minor dependents.

Based on the annual report survey results, there were licensed THP+FC programs in 21 of California's 58 counties on June 30, 2013. Eight of these counties had multiple providers operating in their county, while 13 counties had one program that operated in their county. As of June 30, 2013, THP+FC providers operated in 7 of the 10 counties with the greatest number of nonminor dependents in placement: Los Angeles, Alameda, San Diego, San Francisco, Riverside, Orange and Sonoma. The three counties with a high number of nonminor dependents that did not have a THP+FC program operational are Sacramento, San Joaquin and San Bernardino Counties.

CONCLUSIONS

THP-Plus is serving older, increasingly higher-needs youth.

The population served by THP-Plus in fiscal year 2012–13 were different in many ways and arguably of a higher-need than those served in previous years. They were older, more likely to have experienced homelessness prior to entering THP-Plus and more likely to have entered THP-Plus directly from homelessness than ever before. The data suggests that prior to the availability of THP+FC, the majority of THP-Plus housing slots were filled with the easiest to reach youth—those who came directly from foster care with a referral from their social worker or other child welfare staff. With the implementation of extended foster care, these youth are electing to remain in foster care, opening up THP-Plus to a higher-needs population, consisting of youth who could greatly benefit from support beyond their 21st birthdays.

Serving older youth has other implications as well, such as beginning to serve a higher number of parenting former foster youth. According to a Chapin Hall study, by age 21, 56 percent of women who were in foster care will have at least one child, as compared to 24 percent of the same-age population.² As THP-Plus begins to serve a larger portion of 21–24 year olds who have exited the foster care system, the program will continue to see a higher presence of young parents.

Youth in THP-Plus continue to make measurable gains.

Since its inception, THP-Plus has been a program that has helped youth make measurable gains. The most significant gain has been made historically in the area of employment and this proves true for FY 2012–13. More modest improvements have been made in the area of education, which given the change in profile of the average THP-Plus participant, is encouraging.

There are indications that there may be a reduction in THP-Plus in the near future.

The THP-Plus community is early in its understanding and response to 2011 Realignment. While we are beginning to identify the effects of realignment on THP-Plus, the findings are early and general. However, based on sentiments expressed by both counties and providers, it is evident that over the next several years the THP-Plus statewide capacity may decrease as the availability of THP+FC becomes more widespread and some counties opt to use some or all of their THP-Plus funding for federally reimbursable activities.

Steady growth in THP+FC is positive, but the program remains far below needed capacity.

In less than 12 months, THP+FC has grown to serve 273 non-minor dependents. This is an accomplishment, particularly given the complex and time-intensive requirements of licensure for both counties and providers. Despite this growth, THP+FC was serving a very small fraction of non-minor dependents in foster care in California as of June 30, 2013, just five percent of the total. Equally troubling is the lack of THP+FC providers in three counties with high numbers of non-minor dependents. Both of these findings indicate the need for continuing implementation of this program.

THP+FC is serving high-needs youth in foster care.

Survey findings indicate that THP+FC is indeed serving the population of youth envisioned when the placement was created in Assembly Bill 12. These include parenting youth (15%) as well as youth from the juvenile probations system (33%), both of which likely benefit from the high level of supportive services provided by THP+FC, as compared to some of the other placement options for non-minor dependents.

[2] Courtney, M., et al. "Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21". Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago (2007).

IMPLICATIONS FOR THP-PLUS AND THP+FC

As a state, California has made great strides toward improving the supports that exist for transition-age youth currently or formerly part of the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. The establishment of a statewide transitional housing program, and the extension of foster care to age 21 are just two examples. Being a state with a high population of homeless youth, programs and policies that further the agenda of supporting youth in their transition to adulthood must remain a priority.

As the effects of the 2011 Realignment of Child Welfare Services set in, communities will have to make decisions about local priorities. Counties now have an increased role and responsibility in determining what is available to youth in need of housing and services in their community. In counties where homelessness, lack of job stability and low educational attainment exist as challenges for youth as they exit the foster care and juvenile probation systems, maintaining the availability of THP-Plus for those who have exited the system, and THP+FC for those participating in extended foster care has proven to be essential.

The findings included in the annual report have important policy implications in the year ahead. For THP-Plus, they highlight the importance of conducting county-level advocacy to ensure the funds allocated to THP-Plus continue to be used to implement it instead of being diverted to a different child-welfare related use.

Second, ongoing education must occur at the local level to inform both providers and county decision-makers about the process that is legally required to reduce THP-Plus capacity. Finally, efforts must continue to establish a state-level rate for THP-Plus. A consistent state-wide rate will ensure that THP-Plus remains a comprehensive, robust program.

The main priority for THP+FC is to continue to increase the number of THP+FC providers and referrals from county child welfare agencies. As of July 1, 2013, there were just 273 youth statewide placed in THP+FC. While this is promising start, it represents less than 5 percent of youth age 18 to 21. There is a serious need for this supportive housing model among youth, particularly parenting youth, and the work ahead in Fiscal Year 2013–14 is to ensure that it is available for those youth in need.

Based on findings from FY 2012–13 data, these two programs are working hand in hand, and together are managing to reach a broader spectrum of youth in need than either program could do on its own. Counties that implement THP-Plus and THP+FC will likely see a reduction in youth homelessness in their communities in the years to come.

“THP-Plus has been a big influence on me. If it weren’t for this program I wouldn’t have achieved the things I did.”

—BERNARDO R., IMPERIAL COUNTY THP-PLUS GRADUATE

TIMELINE

- 2001** AB 427 establishes THP-Plus.
- 2002** THP-Plus de-linked from STEP.
- 2003** Three counties implement THP-Plus.
- 2004** THP-Plus changed to an annual allocation.
- 2005** Eligibility extended to age 24. Five counties implement THP-Plus.
- 2006** 60% county share of cost removed. Sixteen counties implement THP-Plus.
- 2007** THP-Plus moves toward statewide implementation. 39 counties implement THP-Plus.
- 2008** THP-Plus Participant Tracking System is launched.
- 2009** 50 counties implement THP-Plus and it serves more than 2,000 youth for the first time ever over FY 2008–9. \$5 million budget reduction to THP-Plus for FY 2009–10.
- 2010** THP-Plus budget reduced slightly to \$35.4 million for FY 2010–11.
- 2011** 51 counties implement THP-Plus during FY 2010–11. THP-Plus changes to a county-funded program under the Governor’s 2011 Realignment of Child Welfare Services.
- 2012** Extended foster care is implemented. THP-Plus Foster Care licensing and rate structure established. THP-Plus still serving over 2,000 youth annually in 50 counties.
- 2013** THP+FC serves its first 273 non-minor dependents during FY 2012–13. Some counties begin to make THP-Plus capacity reductions and the number of youth served drops to just above 2,000.

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"It is very hard to accomplish all these life skills alone when aging out, nowhere to go, not knowing what to do for a living, what the next steps are. I wouldn't be where I am today without the THP-Plus program."

—IMPERIAL COUNTY THP-PLUS GRADUATE



THP-Plus

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