



**2020–21
STATEWIDE
ANALYSIS OF**

Supportive Housing for Former Foster Youth in California



JOHN BURTON
Advocates
for Youth

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REPORT METHODOLOGY

Information for the 2020–21 Statewide Analysis of Supportive Housing for Former Foster Youth in California was drawn from online surveys and interviews conducted via telephone. John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) conducted a survey of county child welfare agencies between August and September 2021, gathering information about Transitional Housing Program (THP) funding, as well as information about Family Unification Program (FUP) and Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers. There was a 71% response rate among child welfare agencies, which collectively receive 95% of the statewide THP budget and partner with 92% of the state’s Public Housing Authorities that have FUP and/or FYI vouchers.

To ascertain information about the Transitional Housing Program–Plus (THP–Plus), JBAY conducted a survey between September and October 2021 of all nonprofit organizations or county agencies that operated a THP–Plus program during FY 2020–21. There was a 92% response rate among THP–Plus providers, who collectively provide 97% of the state’s THP–Plus housing slots. Additional information was solicited from county child welfare agencies to ensure complete data was provided for numbers of youth served.



FINDINGS

HOW MUCH SUPPORTIVE HOUSING DOES CALIFORNIA HAVE FOR FORMER FOSTER YOUTH, AND HOW MUCH DO WE NEED?

California is home to the largest foster care population in the nation, with approximately 60,000 children and youth in foster care on any given day. As of July 1, 2021, 17% of these youth are between the ages of 18 and 21, the upper age limit for foster care in California.¹ This also includes youth who are supervised by the juvenile probation system with court-ordered out-of-home placement.



Due to the temporary extension of the extended foster care program, a statewide response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a record number of youth will leave the system in 2021 after reaching age 21. The 2020-21 and 2021-22 state budgets included funding to allow youth who turned 21 on or after January 27, 2020, to remain in foster care until December 31, 2021.

This phenomenon raises important questions: What housing resources are available to assist this cohort of young people transitioning out of care and into stable housing? Are there enough? Are there resources we aren't making full use of? To answer these questions, it is necessary to understand the complete landscape of supportive housing options for former foster youth.

This report is an effort to understand this housing landscape by analyzing the capacity and unmet need of California's housing programs serving former foster youth: the Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP-Plus), the Transitional Housing Program (THP), and two federal programs that provide specialized Housing Choice Vouchers to youth who have left foster care, the Family Unification Program (FUP) and the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative.²

¹ *CCWIP reports*. Retrieved October 25, 2021 from University of California at Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project website: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu>

² The term "foster youth" is inclusive of youth who are supervised by their county's juvenile probation department and who have a court order for out-of-home placement. These youth are considered "foster youth" for purposes of eligibility for a number of resources, including housing programs.

What is the current statewide capacity of supportive housing for former foster youth?

California has the capacity to provide supportive housing to 2,179 youth between ages 18 to 24 at any given time. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2020–21, a total of 1,309 youth could be served by THP–Plus at a moment in time, across 47 of California’s 58 counties. As of June 30, 2021, there were 870 specialized Housing Choice Vouchers for former foster youth across 35 counties.

How much additional supportive housing is necessary to meet the need, and how many youth are currently waiting for housing?

California requires the capacity to serve at least 1,249 more former foster youth. County child welfare administrators were asked to estimate how many former foster youth require supportive housing but are not able to access it due to a lack of capacity. Together, they estimated a total unmet need of 1,249 youth.³ Need was the greatest in Los Angeles County, where capacity is required to serve an estimated 400 additional youth to meet the need.

A total of 763 youth are on waiting lists for THP–Plus or a specialized Housing Choice Voucher. As of June 30, 2021, 473 youth were on a waiting list for a THP–Plus program and 290 were on a waiting list for a specialized Housing Choice Voucher for former foster youth. Santa Clara, Los Angeles, and Kern Counties had the longest waiting lists when combining those waiting for THP–Plus and voucher programs.



The remainder of this report provides an in-depth look at each of the programs providing supportive housing for former foster youth, examines obstacles to maximizing existing resources, and provides recommendations for how California can continue to expand its supportive housing capacity for this population.

³ This data was retrieved from an online survey administered by John Burton Advocates for Youth to all county child welfare agencies in August 2021 and from an online survey administered to all THP–Plus providers in September 2021. JBAY first referred to county administrators’ responses, and for counties where no survey was completed, referred to providers’ responses to establish a complete, unduplicated count.

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM-PLUS (THP-PLUS)

The Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP-Plus) was created by the California State Legislature in 2001 in response to the alarming rate of homelessness among former foster youth. By 2009, after a series of policy changes to the program, THP-Plus was implemented statewide, with at least one program in 50 of California's 58 counties. Currently, there are THP-Plus programs in 47 counties.

Eligible Population

Youth eligible for THP-Plus are ages 18 to 24 and were in foster care or out-of-home probation placement on or after their 18th birthday. In counties that have opted into the THP-Plus extension established by Senate Bill 1252, youth enrolled in school can access THP-Plus up to age 25.⁴

Youth in THP-Plus are required to be working toward the goals outlined in their Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP).⁵ There are no hard and fast work or education requirements to participate in the THP-Plus program, although TILPs often include goals related to work and school.

What the Program Provides

THP-Plus provides affordable housing and supportive services for up to 24 months. In counties that have opted into the THP-Plus extension established by Senate Bill 1252, youth enrolled in school can access THP-Plus for up to 36 months.

How the Program Is Funded and Administered

Formerly a state-funded program, THP-Plus was included in Governor Brown's 2011 Realignment of Child Welfare Services and has been a county-funded program since 2011. Each county receives a specified annual allocation from the statewide \$34.9 million THP-Plus budget which they administer locally.⁶ Most county child welfare agencies administer THP-Plus by contracting with nonprofit organizations; few child welfare agencies in smaller counties operate the program directly.

Statewide Housing Capacity

In FY 2020–21, California had the capacity to serve 1,309 youth in THP-Plus at a moment in time. Figure 1 shows the total "capacity" of the program, 1,309; it is the total number of housing slots that THP-Plus providers were collectively contracting with county child welfare agencies to provide or that child welfare agencies provided directly at a moment in time. This is a 3% increase from the year prior, when there were 1,271 THP-Plus housing slots.

Fifty-four organizations were collectively operating 75 THP-Plus programs. Some organizations have THP-Plus contracts with and operate the program in more than one county, while others operate the program in only one county. As shown in Figure 1, in total there were 54 organizations with THP-Plus programs in FY 2020–21, and 75 contracted programs across the state. The organization with the largest number of THP-Plus programs has THP-Plus contracts with and operates the program in eight different counties. Just eight of the organizations that provide THP-Plus, collectively serve about half (52%) of the youth in THP-Plus.

4 Senate Bill 1252 (Torres), Chapter 774 (2014).

5 Welfare & Institutions Code 11401(2)(a)

6 County Fiscal Letter 11/12–18, page 25 (2011)

The majority (81%) of California’s counties had THP-Plus programs in FY 2020–21. As shown in Figure 1, a total of 47 of California’s 58 counties had THP-Plus programs in FY 2020–21. The counties without programs are smaller, rural counties with very small foster care populations.

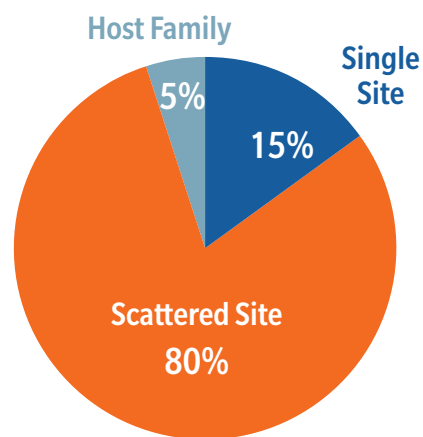
Figure 1: THP-Plus at a Glance⁷

Contracted THP-Plus housing capacity (number of youth that can be served at a moment in time)	1,309
Number of Organizations Providing THP-Plus	54
Number of THP-Plus Programs	75
Number of Counties with THP-Plus Programs	47

The majority (80%) of the state’s THP-Plus housing capacity utilized a “scattered site” model. With the scattered site housing model, the THP-Plus provider leases apartments in various locations throughout the community, often in small clusters. As shown in Figure 2, the scattered site model accounts for 80% of the state’s THP-Plus housing capacity. The second-most common housing model (15%) is the single site model, which refers to one apartment building, complex or home, owned or leased by the THP-Plus provider, where all of the program participants live. The host family model is nearly unused, accounting for just 5% of THP-Plus housing slots. This model refers to an arrangement where caring, supportive adult(s) host the youth in their home, providing room and board. In all three housing models, the THP-Plus provider offers comprehensive supportive services to the youth participant.



Figure 2: THP-Plus Housing by Housing Model⁸



⁷ This data was retrieved from an online survey administered by John Burton Advocates for Youth to all THP-Plus providers in September 2021.

⁸ Ibid.

Program Demand

A total of 473 youth were on a waiting list for THP-Plus as of June 30, 2021, with the list expected to grow by January 2022. As of June 30, 2021, there were 473 youth statewide on a waiting list for THP-Plus.⁹ Providers in Kern, Santa Clara, and Alameda Counties reported the longest waiting lists. It is estimated that while they wait for housing, 18% of these youth are experiencing homelessness, residing in a shelter or other unstable housing (street, car, couch-surfing, etc.).¹⁰ According to THP-Plus providers and county administrators, THP-Plus waiting lists are not as high as they have been in recent years, due to the temporary extension of the extended foster care program. The cohort of 21-year-olds who would normally have exited care during the fourth quarter of 2019–20 and the entire duration of 2020–21 instead remained in care. Therefore, there was a decrease in youth leaving care and attempting to access THP-Plus. Concerns were expressed about the large influx of youth who will likely attempt to access THP-Plus once they exit extended foster care at the end of 2021.

Special Topics in THP-Plus

How has the monthly rate paid to providers to operate the THP-Plus program changed over time?

The average monthly rates paid per youth by counties to THP-Plus providers has changed very little over time. Figure 3 shows the average THP-Plus rate that counties pay providers per youth per month to operate a THP-Plus program, or in the case of the five counties that operate their programs directly, the monthly cost per youth per month. THP-Plus rates are set at the county level and are not required to be adjusted annually to account for increases in cost of living. The average rate for the most common housing model—scattered site—has grown 4% in the past ten years. During that same period, the average cost of a two-bedroom apartment in California increased 44% according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Fair Market Rent index. From year to year, respondents to JBAY’s survey have consistently stressed the concern that the cost of housing has outpaced the growth in the THP-Plus rate in some counties, meaning there is not enough funding provided to cover the cost of operating the program.

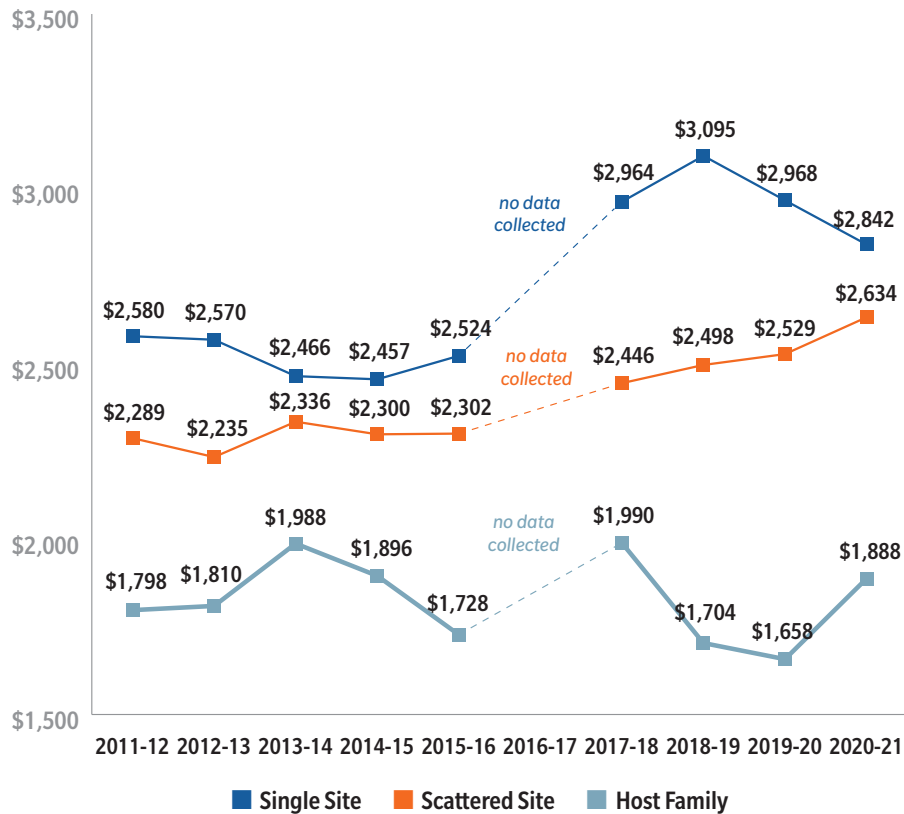
In response to this concern, in 2021 the THP-Plus Housing Supplement Program was established with the passage of Assembly Bill 153.¹¹ The supplement will be available to the counties with the highest housing costs. The program will be administered by the California Department of Housing and Community Development, with the first allocation planned for roll-out in early 2022.

9 Ibid.

10 Data was retrieved from the THP-Plus Participant Tracking System by running a report for youth who entered THP-Plus during FY 2020–21. A total of 18% of youth who entered THP-Plus during FY 2020–21 did so directly from homelessness, a shelter, or other unstable housing (street, car, couch-surfing, etc.).

11 Assembly Bill 53 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 86 (2021).

Figure 3: THP-Plus Average Rates Per Youth Per Month¹²



THP-Plus rates continue to vary considerably across the state. There continues to be variability in the rates paid across counties. There is no rate setting methodology currently tied to the program; the rate is set at the county level, negotiated between the THP-Plus provider and county agency. For counties with contracted providers, single site rates range from a high of \$4,005 in Orange County to \$1,650 in Shasta and Trinity Counties. Scattered site rates for counties with contracted providers range from \$4,459 in Marin County to \$1,538 in Kern County. Five counties offer a higher rate for custodial parents: Nevada, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Shasta, and Trinity. For a list of THP-Plus rates by county, see Appendix A.



¹² Data was retrieved from an online survey administered by John Burton Advocates for Youth to all THP-Plus providers annually in July-September.

Has the SB 1252 extension for youth in school been a useful tool for THP-Plus providers in assisting youth across various domains?

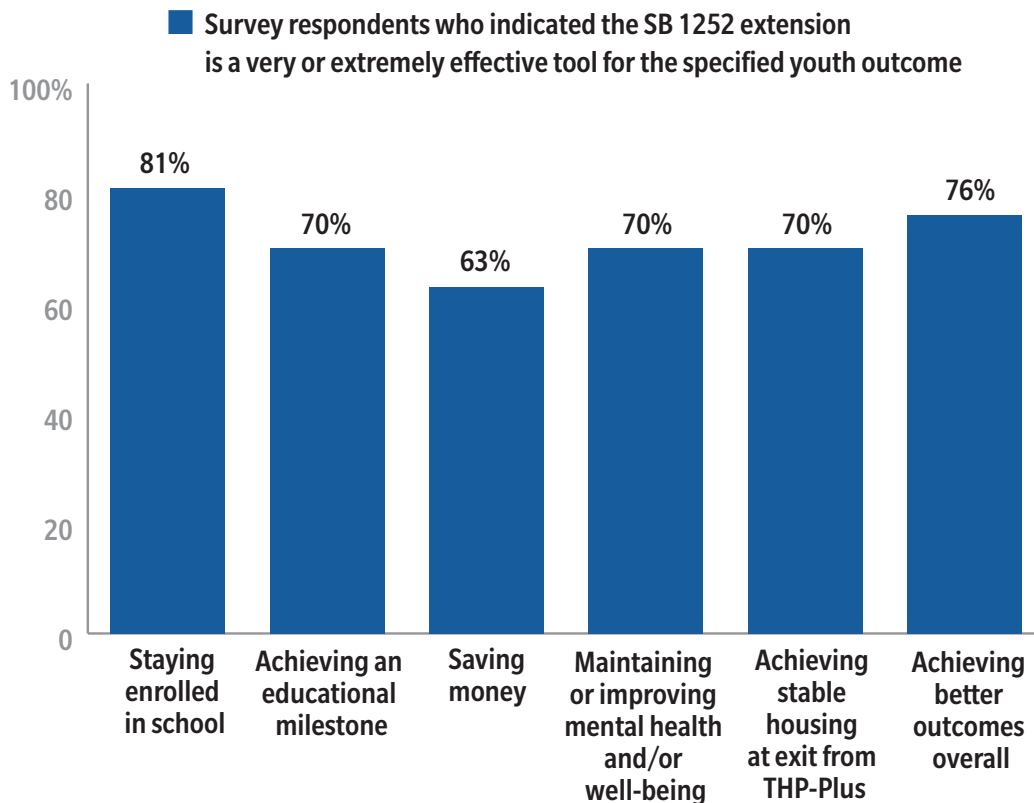
At least seven in 10 THP-Plus providers rate the SB 1252 extension as very or extremely effective across several youth outcomes, with the highest percentage for “staying enrolled in school.” To date, 27 counties offer the SB 1252 extension, which allows youth who are enrolled in school to remain in THP-Plus for up to 36 months instead of 24, and up to age 25 instead of 24. These 27 counties collectively serve 71% of youth in THP-Plus. Providers were asked to rate the effectiveness of the SB 1252 extension on a number of different youth outcomes, including staying enrolled in school, achieving an educational milestone, achieving an educational milestone, saving money, maintaining or improving mental health and/or well-being, achieving stable housing at exit from THP-Plus, and achieving better outcomes overall.

saving money, maintaining or improving mental health and/or well-being, achieving stable housing at exit from THP-Plus, and achieving better outcomes overall. As shown in Figure 4, between 63% and 81% of providers rated the SB 1252 extension as a “very effective” or “extremely effective” tool assisting youth with achieving these outcomes, with the highest percentage (81% of providers) for “staying enrolled in school.”

“The standard for THP-Plus should be 36 months instead of 24 months. That extra year significantly increases emotional intelligence, emotion regulations, and self-sufficiency.”

-THP-PLUS PROVIDER

Figure 4: Effectiveness of SB 1252 THP-Plus Extension on Youth Outcomes as Reported by Providers¹³



¹³ This data was retrieved from an online survey administered by John Burton Advocates for Youth to all THP-Plus providers in September 2021.

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM (THP)

In the 2019–20 state budget, a new program was established to address homelessness among former foster youth: the Transitional Housing Program (THP). The establishment of THP was prompted by the need for additional THP-Plus funding. Because THP-Plus was realigned to the counties, there was no avenue to increase statewide investment in the program and therefore required a new funding stream to expand the state’s capacity to provide supportive transitional housing to former foster youth.

Eligible Population

Youth eligible to be served with THP funding are 18 to 25 years old. Young adults formerly in the foster care and/or probation systems are priority populations to be served with THP funding.

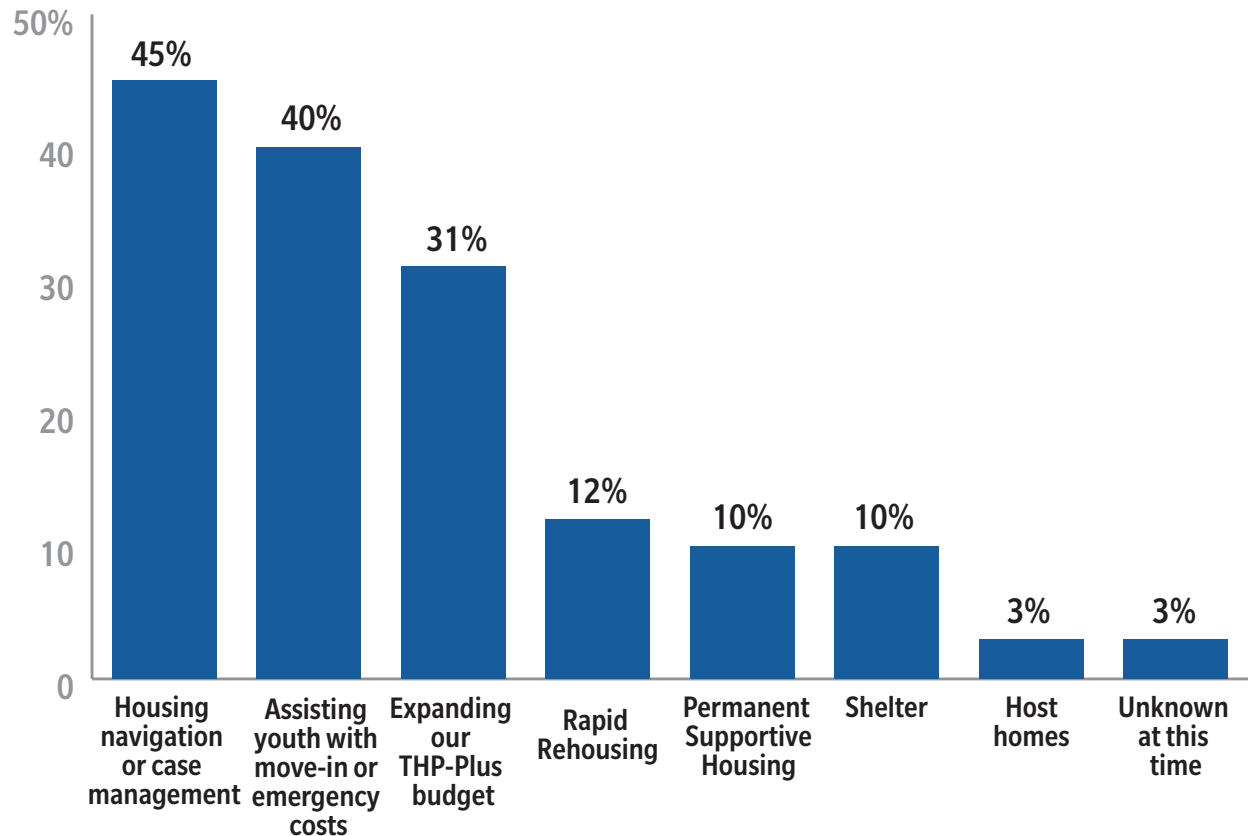


What the Program Provides

THP has no set program model; instead, it is highly flexible funding that county child welfare agencies can use to expand existing programs or establish new programs based on local housing and service needs. The funding must be used to assist young adults with securing and maintaining housing. Figure 5 illustrates how county child welfare agencies are using THP funding.

Respondents from 31% of counties indicated that their child welfare agency was using or intended to use their THP allocation to expand their THP-Plus budget. While this is not the majority of counties, they collectively receive the majority (67%) of the statewide THP budget. Forty-five percent of counties were using or intend to use the funding to provide housing navigation or case management. Four in 10 counties (40%) were using or intend to use the funding to assist youth with move-in or emergency costs associated with establishing or maintaining housing stability (i.e., security deposits, move-in expenses, utility payments, furnishing, etc.) Less common uses were to provide host homes, Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing, and shelter. Three percent of counties did not yet have plans in place for this funding; some counties had not yet received their first disbursement as of the time the survey was administered.

Figure 5: Use of Transitional Housing Program Funding by County Child Welfare Agencies¹⁴



How the Program Is Funded and Administered

THP is administered by the California Department of Housing and Community Development to county child welfare agencies. THP was initially funded with an annual allocation of \$8 million that was set to suspend at the end of 2021. This suspension was removed through legislation in 2021, making the \$8 million budget an annual, ongoing investment. THP funding is allocated using a formula-funded methodology based on the proportion of transition-age foster youth and homeless unaccompanied youth in each county.¹⁵

The first round (2019–20) of THP funding was allocated in March 2020, with the second round (2020–21) allocated in July 2020. Subject to delays partially related to administering COVID-19 relief funds, the execution of standard agreements and subsequent disbursement of funds was still occurring in some counties as of September 2021 when county child welfare administrators responded to JBAY’s survey. The third round (2021–22) is in the process of rolling out as of the writing of this report.

¹⁴ This data was retrieved from an online survey administered by John Burton Advocates for Youth to all county child welfare agencies in August 2021.

¹⁵ THP Allocations by county can be found here: https://www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/active-funding/thp/docs/thp_list_of_awardees.pdf

To date, nearly 100% of the THP funding has been accepted by counties. As shown in Figure 6, a total of 56 counties received a THP allocation; Alpine and Sierra did not. Of these 56 counties, 48 accepted their funding for Round 2, which is the most recent round to be administered. These 48 counties collectively account for 99% (\$7,959,200) of the \$8 million THP budget. The eight counties that did not accept their funding had extremely small allocations, ranging from \$800 to \$12,800, and likewise, have extremely small foster youth and homeless youth populations.¹⁶

Figure 6: THP at a Glance¹⁷

Number of New Housing Slots Created by THP	223
Number of Counties Allocated THP Funding for Rounds 1 and 2	56
Number of Counties That Accepted Their Round 2 THP Allocations	48

Statewide Housing Capacity

Funding from the Transitional Housing Program created housing for an additional 223 youth. Respondents from 17 counties indicated that their child welfare agency was using or intended to use their THP allocation to create new housing. In total, this new funding created housing for an additional 223 youth. While the majority of these housing slots were created within the THP-Plus program, much of this housing capacity was not yet established by June 30, 2021, and therefore is not reflected in the FY 2020-21 THP-Plus housing capacity. For counties that reported new housing was created, numbers of new youth that could be served ranged from 3 to 27, with the exception of Los Angeles County where the highest number of new slots (100) is anticipated.



16 Counties that did not accept their Round 2 THP allocation: Colusa, Inyo, Lake, Modoc, Mono, Plumas, San Benito, and Trinity.

17 This data was retrieved from an online survey administered by John Burton Advocates for Youth to all THP-Plus providers in September 2021.

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT FAMILY UNIFICATION PROGRAM (FUP) AND FOSTER YOUTH TO INDEPENDENCE (FYI) VOUCHERS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers two Housing Choice Voucher programs for transition-age former foster youth: The Family Unification Program (FUP) and the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative. Both programs provide Housing Choice Vouchers, commonly known as “Section 8” vouchers, to Public Housing Authorities in partnership with Public Child Welfare Agencies who provide supportive services.

Enacted in 1992, FUP began as a federal effort to better address the housing needs of families in contact with child welfare agencies, with vouchers provided to both families and transition-age former foster youth. FYI was launched in 2019, specifically targeting transition-age former foster youth.

Eligible Population

Youth eligible for FUP and FYI vouchers are ages 18 to 25, left foster care at age 16 or older or will leave foster care within 90 days, and are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

What the Programs Provide

FUP and FYI vouchers provide up to 36 months of housing assistance via a Housing Choice Voucher coupled with supportive services. With FUP the services are offered for at least 18 months, and with FYI the services are offered for the full 36 months of the voucher. The services, which are required by HUD, include housing navigation (assistance with locating housing, rental lease agreements, and move-in stabilization) as well as ongoing supportive services once in housing, such as life skills counseling, education, job support, and case management.

How the Programs Are Funded and Administered

FUP and FYI are administered by HUD to Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in partnership with Public Child Welfare Agencies, which in California are county agencies. The child welfare agency is responsible for referring eligible youth to the PHA and for providing the supportive services. The PHA provides the voucher. In order for a PHA to apply for these vouchers, the PHA must first enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the child welfare agency that specifies each party’s role. In some cases, the local homeless Continuum of Care is a third party to this MOU and administers the vouchers on behalf of the PHA through the local Coordinated Entry System. In California, most youth are referred to FYI or FUP through the county child welfare agency directly to the PHA.

FUP vouchers are awarded competitively by HUD through a public Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) process. FYI vouchers are awarded through two processes:

1. A competitive NOFA process, like FUP; and
2. A non-competitive process where vouchers may be requested “on demand” by PHAs on a rolling basis as eligible youth are identified.

Statewide Voucher Capacity

California Public Housing Authorities administer at least 870 vouchers for former foster youth.

As shown in Figure 7, California’s Public Housing Authorities administer at least 632 FUP and 238 FYI vouchers, totaling 870 vouchers. Given California’s diversity in size, there is great variation in the number of vouchers PHAs across the state have, ranging from one voucher to 95.

About half of California’s Public Housing Authorities administer FUP and/or FYI vouchers for former foster youth. A total of 41 of California’s 97 PHAs administer FUP vouchers for former foster youth, and 15 administer FYI vouchers. Together, a total of 50 PHAs administer either FUP or FYI or both. This is 52% of California’s 97 PHAs. (Figure 7)

Six in 10 counties in California partner with at least one Public Housing Authority to administer FUP and/or FYI vouchers for former foster youth. A total of 31 of California’s counties partner with at least one PHA administering FUP vouchers, and 15 counties partner with a PHA administering FYI vouchers. A total of 35 counties partner with at least one PHA administering either FUP or FYI or both. This is 60% of California’s 58 counties. (Figure 7)



Figure 7: FUP and FYI at a Glance¹⁸

	FUP	FYI	Total
Number of Vouchers for Former Foster Youth in California	632	238	870
Number of Public Housing Authorities Administering Vouchers	41	15	50 have vouchers from one or both programs
Number of Counties Partnering with Public Housing Authorities Administering Vouchers	31	15	35 have vouchers from one or both programs

Program Demand

A total of 290 youth were on a waiting list for a FUP or FYI voucher as of June 30, 2021. As of June 30, 2021, at least 290 youth were on a waiting list for a FUP or FYI voucher. The number of youth waiting specifically for FUP or for FYI is unknown, as the numbers were reported in combination.

¹⁸ This data was retrieved from an online survey administered by John Burton Advocates for Youth to all county child welfare agencies in August 2021.

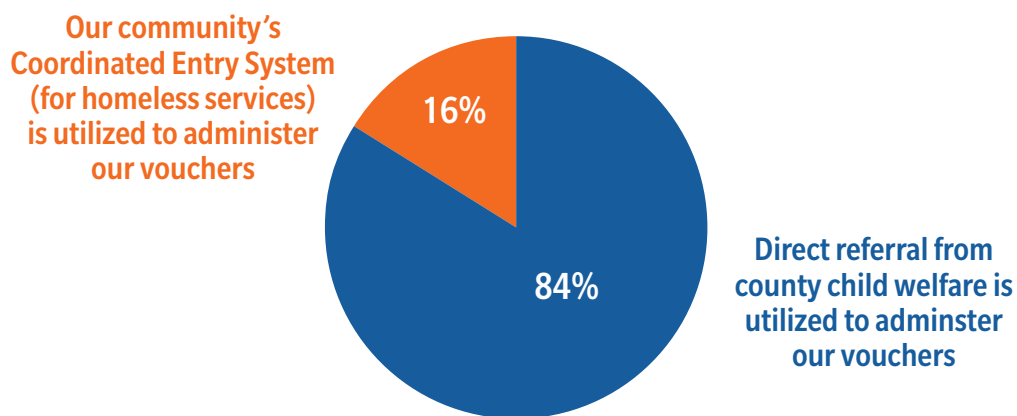
Special Topics in FUP and FYI

How are youth referred to or matched with vouchers?

The majority of Public Housing Authorities administering FUP and/or FYI vouchers match eligible youth with vouchers through direct referrals from the child welfare agency. As shown in Figure 8, of counties partnering with PHAs administering FUP and/or FYI vouchers, the majority (84%) of respondents reported that their PHA's vouchers are administered through direct referral from the county child welfare agency. In about one-quarter (16%) of counties, the homeless Coordinated Entry System is utilized to administer vouchers. In some cases, county respondents indicated that a combination of both strategies are utilized to administer vouchers.

Two respondents from large counties indicated that using the Coordinated Entry System to administer vouchers often resulted in eligible youth being unintentionally screened out of receiving a voucher due to failure to score high enough on the coordinated entry assessment tool. In some cases this has led to vouchers going unused, while eligible youth remain on a waiting list.

Figure 8: Administration of FUP and FYI Vouchers¹⁹



More than one in five counties use their vouchers to serve a special population. Of counties partnering with PHAs administering FUP and/or FYI vouchers, more than one in five (22%) reported that their PHA's vouchers are utilized or prioritized for a special population of former foster youth. One county specified this population to be parenting youth.

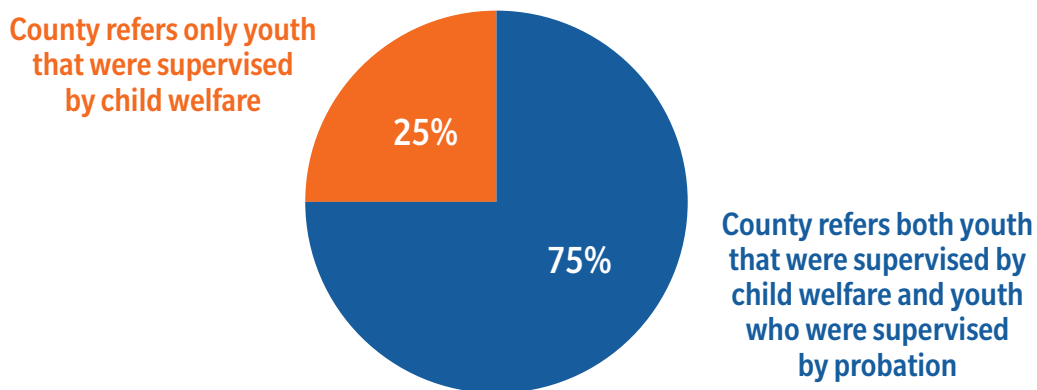
¹⁹ Data was retrieved from an online survey administered by John Burton Advocates for Youth to all county child welfare agencies in August 2021.

Are youth formerly probation-supervised referred to FUP and/or FYI vouchers as well?

Three-quarters of counties partnering with Public Housing Authorities administering FUP and/or FYI vouchers refer both former foster and probation youth for vouchers, however one-quarter refer only former foster youth. In California, youth who are supervised by the juvenile probation department but who have a court order for out-of-home placement are eligible for the same resources and programs as foster youth supervised by the county child welfare agency, including FUP and FYI vouchers. As shown in Figure 9, of counties partnering with PHAs administering FUP and/or FYI vouchers, three-quarters (75%) refer youth for FUP and/or FYI vouchers who were supervised by the child welfare agency as well as youth who were supervised by the probation department. One-quarter (25%) refer only youth who were supervised by child welfare for vouchers.



Figure 9: Population Served with FUP and FYI Vouchers²⁰

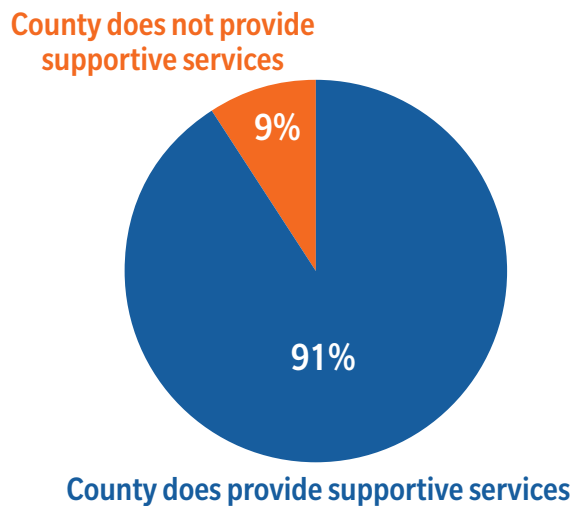


²⁰ Ibid.

What types of services are provided with FUP and FYI, and how are they provided?

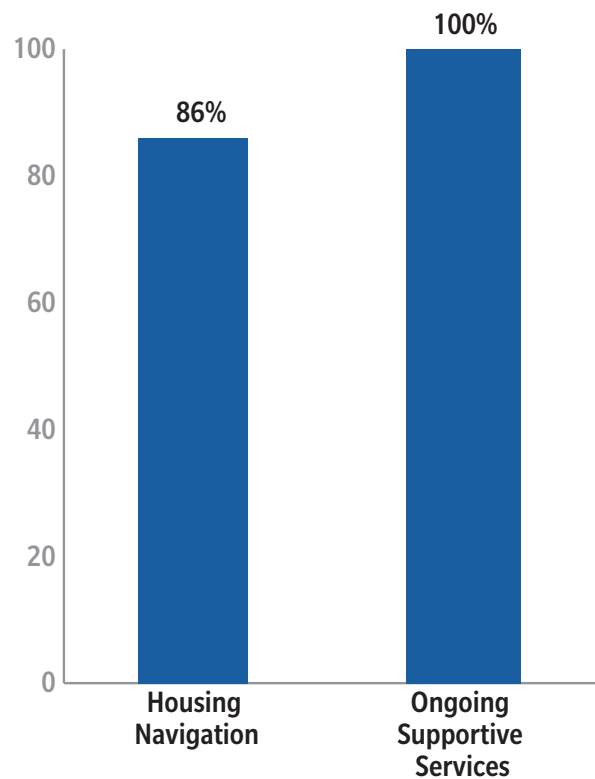
Most counties partnering with Public Housing Authorities administering FUP and/or FYI vouchers provide supportive services. Of counties partnering with PHAs administering FUP and/or FYI vouchers, 91% provide supportive services to youth with vouchers. Nine percent do not provide services. (Figure 10)

Figure 10: Whether or Not County Child Welfare Agencies Provide Services to Youth With FUP and FYI Vouchers²¹



Of counties that provide supportive services to youth with FUP and/or FYI vouchers, most provide housing navigation and all offer ongoing services to youth once in housing. Of counties providing supportive services to youth with FUP and/or FYI vouchers, 86% provide assistance with locating housing, rental lease agreements, and move-in stabilization (i.e. housing navigation); and 100% provide ongoing supportive services once in housing, such as life skills counseling, education and job support, and case management. (Figure 11)

Figure 11: Types of Services Administered by County Child Welfare Agencies to Youth with FUP and FYI Vouchers²²

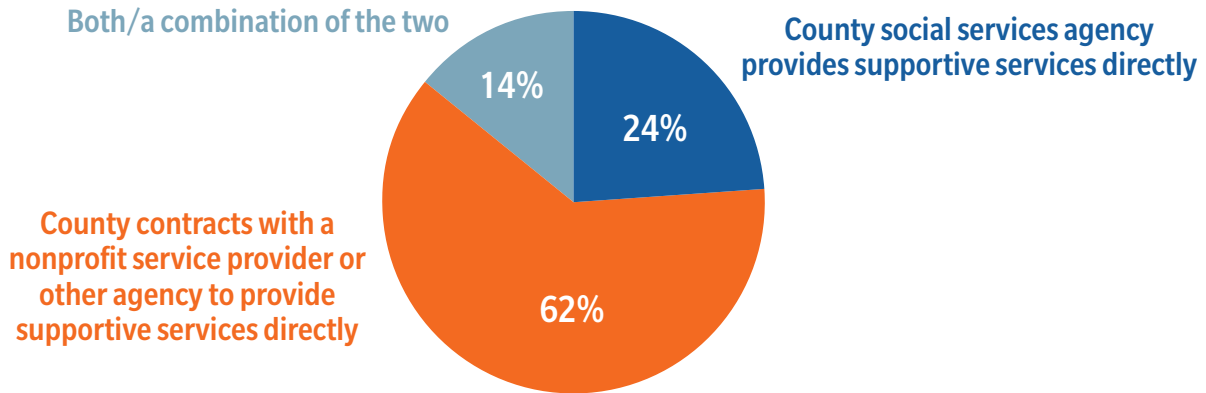


²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

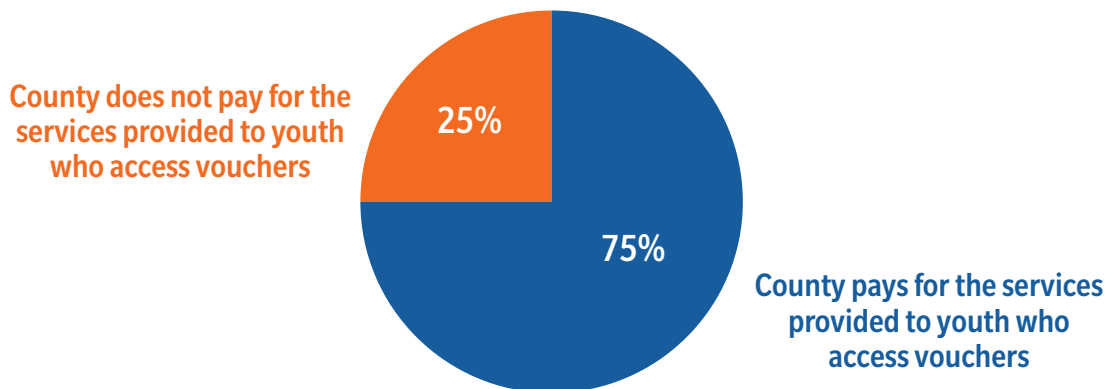
The majority of counties provide supportive services for FUP/FYI through contract. As shown in Figure 12, of counties partnering with PHAs administering FUP and/or FYI vouchers and that provide supportive services to youth with vouchers, 62% are doing so by contracting with a nonprofit service provider or other county agency to provide the services. Nearly one-quarter (24%) of counties are providing the supportive services directly, and 14% are utilizing a combination of these two strategies.

Figure 12: Method of Provision of Supportive Services to Youth with FUP and FYI Vouchers²³



Three-quarters of counties that contract out for the services provided to youth with vouchers are paying for those services. As shown in Figure 13, of the counties that contract out for the services provided to youth with FUP and/or FYI vouchers, three-quarters (75%) pay for those services. One-quarter (25%) do not pay for the services. Reportedly, in these cases the services are usually funded by the agency or organization providing them, or in some cases, folded into an existing county contract without the addition of new funding.

Figure 13: Whether Contracting Counties Pay for Services for Youth With FUP and FYI Vouchers²⁴



²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

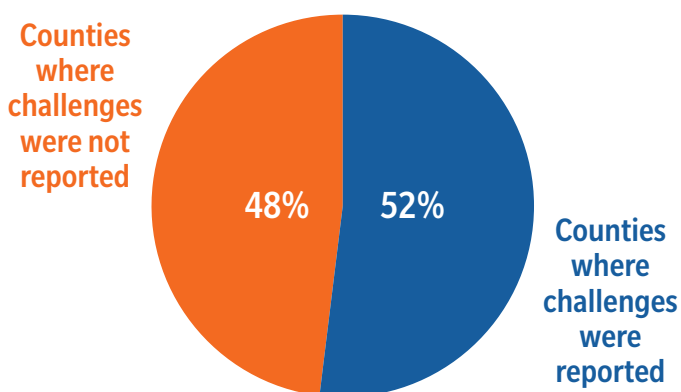
What obstacles exist for counties to make full use of FUP and FYI vouchers?

Youth in just over half of the counties report challenges securing housing using FUP and/or FYI vouchers. As shown in Figure 14, of the counties partnering with PHAs administering FUP and/or FYI vouchers, slightly more than half (52%) of respondents indicated that there are instances when youth are unable to secure housing with their FUP and/or FYI voucher. The other 48% indicated that this was not an issue in their county. It was reported that in some counties it takes six to nine months to secure housing with a voucher, due to a challenging and competitive housing market. Several respondents noted that landlords often are resistant to accept tenants who are transition-age former foster youth and/or who are renting with a Housing Choice Voucher.

“Due to the cost of housing and low vacancy rate, some youth who have FUP have a hard time finding units.”

—COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Figure 14: Counties Where There Are Challenges Securing Housing with FUP and/or FYI Vouchers²⁵



County administrators stated that **dedicated funding for supportive services is necessary to ensure FUP and FYI vouchers result in stable housing.** In interviews and via open-ended responses in the survey, county administrators voiced concerns about barriers to FUP and FYI vouchers resulting in stable housing for youth. The most significant barrier described was the lack of dedicated federal, state, or county funding for the supportive services required to be provided to youth with FUP and FYI vouchers. Some counties do not access these vouchers at all, or they access fewer vouchers than they need simply because they know they cannot offer the required and necessary supportive services without dedicated funding. Respondents reported that these services—particularly housing navigation—are critical to youth securing housing with a voucher.

The estimated annual cost of providing services to youth with FUP and/or FYI vouchers is \$750 per youth per month, totaling \$8.7 million statewide, based on the state’s current voucher count. The state has just launched a \$4 million pilot program to fund these services using federal funding which must be expended by September 30, 2022.²⁶ While this pilot does not offer a permanent solution, it is an opportunity for counties to enhance their current services for youth with vouchers.

“We have a lot of FUP vouchers. The issue is we don’t have enough funding for housing navigation and housing case management...Since we can’t provide this, we are not able to provide as many FUP vouchers.”

—COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

²⁵ Data was retrieved from an online survey administered by John Burton Advocates for Youth to all county child welfare agencies in August 2021.


²⁶ California Department of Social Services. All County Information Notice I-88-21 (2021).

POLICY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE GOVERNMENT

 **Extend the participation duration of the Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP-Plus) to 36 months and the upper age limit to 25.**

The SB 1252 extension for youth enrolled in school has been popular among counties and effective for youth. To date, 27 counties who collectively serve 71% of the youth in THP-Plus offer the extension. When asked to rate the effectiveness of the SB 1252 extension on a number of different youth outcomes, the majority of providers indicated that the SB 1252 extension was a “very effective” or “extremely effective” tool across all domains, which included staying enrolled in school, achieving an educational milestone, saving money, maintaining or improving mental health and/or well-being, achieving stable housing at exit from THP-Plus, and achieving better outcomes overall. Extending the length of the THP-Plus program is consistent with best practice in the homelessness field which has moved away from the use of interim housing and prioritizes longer-term housing as much as possible. Extending the upper age limit to 25 would align THP-Plus with the Transitional Housing Program (THP), which is now a primary funding source for the county-funded THP-Plus program.

 **Increase funding for the Transitional Housing Program (THP) budget by \$11 million in order to ensure that the THP-Plus program duration and age expansion do not lead to an increase in the number of youth on waiting lists.**


While lengthening the time of transitional housing is in line with best practice, it can have an impact on program accessibility. By allowing youth to remain in their housing for an additional year, less housing is available to youth trying to enter the program. To ensure the policy change proposed in the previous recommendation wouldn’t lengthen THP-Plus waiting lists, additional housing capacity should be added to the program by increasing funding for THP, which is state funding that can be used for the realigned THP-Plus program. About half (53%) of the youth who exited THP-Plus during FY 2020–21 reached the program’s time limit of 24 months and/or upper age limit of 24.²⁷ Approximately \$11 million is required to fund housing for this amount of young people annually.

²⁷ This data was retrieved from the THP-Plus Participant Tracking System by running reports for youth who exited THP-Plus during FY 2020–21.

 **Establish designated funding for supportive services for youth with Family Unification Program (FUP) and/or Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers.**

While the FUP and FYI programs offer an opportunity to leverage federal funding to provide supportive, subsidized housing for former foster youth, county administrators report obstacles to utilizing this resource. The most significant barrier described was the lack of dedicated federal, state, or county funding for the supportive services required to be provided to youth with FUP and FYI vouchers. Some counties do not access these vouchers at all, or they access fewer than they need simply because they know they cannot offer the required and necessary supportive services without dedicated funding. The state has recognized this barrier and launched a pilot program to fund these services. The pilot's funding must be expended by September 30, 2022.

California's Housing Navigators Program (HNP) presents a more permanent opportunity to address this issue by providing youth who receive vouchers with housing navigation and other supportive services. Some counties are using their HNP funding to provide housing navigation to youth with FUP and FYI vouchers, however once a youth turns age 22, they are no longer eligible to be served with HNP funding as the program's eligibility only spans from age 18 through 21. By expanding the age eligibility to align with the FUP and FYI programs, counties could leverage this state funding and take full advantage of these federal voucher programs. Currently HNP is prioritized for youth ages 18 through 21 in foster care. Approximately \$8.7 million is required to expand the program so that it can continue to serve its current priority population as well as meet the needs of former foster youth in FUP and FYI.

 **Expand the eligible population for the Bringing Families Home program to include transition-age former foster youth with and without dependents.**

Statewide, county administrators and service providers estimate that an additional 1,249 supportive transitional housing slots and/or vouchers for former foster youth are necessary to meet the need. As of June 30, 2021, the waiting list across existing programs for former foster youth has mounted to 763. County administrators and services providers indicate a need for flexible local resources that allow communities to employ a range of interventions.

Bringing Families Home was established in 2016 and is administered by the California Department of Social Services to reduce the number of families in the child welfare system experiencing or at risk of homelessness, increase the number of families reunifying, and prevent foster care placement by deploying a range of flexible local resources. Across 2021-22 and 2022-23 a total of \$185 million was invested in the state budget to expand the program. This investment is considerable, given the program's previous allocations of \$10 million and \$25 million, and presents an opportunity to address the sizable unmet housing need for youth exiting foster care. This expansion would mirror that of the federal Family Unification Program, which serves both child welfare-involved families as well as transition-age former foster youth who may or may not have dependents of their own.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL JURISDICTIONS AND COMMUNITY-BASED PROVIDERS


Partner with Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) to apply for HUD’s on-demand FYI vouchers as a resource for former foster youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The FYI voucher program has two types of vouchers—“competitive” vouchers administered by HUD to PHAs via a competitive process and “on-demand” (non-competitive) vouchers administered on a rolling basis as PHAs identify eligible youth in need. County child welfare agencies identify eligible youth and refer them to their partnering PHA, which submits a request to HUD for the voucher. County child welfare agencies can establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with any PHA administering Housing Choice Vouchers to partner on the FYI program. Vouchers can be requested in increments as small as one, and PHAs can generally access up to 25 on-demand FYI vouchers per year. Counties with larger populations should consider partnering with multiple PHAs.

Apply for Homekey funding to serve youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.


With an estimated statewide need of 3,428 supportive housing slots and/or vouchers for former foster youth and an existing capacity of just 2,179, ambitious strategies are required to meet the need. A total of \$2.75 billion is available over FY 2021–22 and FY 2022–23 through Homekey, a grant program which aims to sustain and rapidly expand housing for persons experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Eight percent of this funding (\$220 million) is reserved for projects serving youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Eligible applicants are counties, cities, Public Housing Authorities, and Tribal entities, which can partner with non-public entities such as housing developers and service providers.

Homekey provides a unique opportunity to develop more housing stock for youth, and to address the challenges identified by providers regarding landlords unwilling to rent to transition-age foster youth through a voucher or master lease for transitional housing. Eligible public entities can apply for this funding to own housing, or to purchase housing and transfer to a provider. By eliminating a third-party, private market landlord, a major obstacle to housing current and former foster youth is addressed. Public entities should apply for Homekey funding to support projects to establish housing for youth, either as stand-alone youth-focused projects or as part of larger Homekey projects where a certain number of housing units are designated for youth.

 **Utilize funding from the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program to improve the homeless Coordinated Entry System for youth.**

In 16% of counties that partner with PHAs administering FUP and/or FYI vouchers, the homeless Coordinated Entry System is utilized to administer these vouchers. Some respondents indicated that using the Coordinated Entry System to administer vouchers often resulted in eligible youth being unintentionally screened out of receiving a voucher due to failure to score high enough on the coordinated entry assessment tool. In some cases this has led to vouchers going unused while eligible youth remain on a waiting list. This issue is not unique to voucher programs—stakeholders from across the state acknowledge that the Coordinated Entry System, while necessary and well-intended, often results in youth being screened out of services. This is partly due to the system being designed to serve chronically homeless adults.

In recognition of this, through the passage of Assembly Bill 175 the California State Legislature made improving local Coordinated Entry Systems for youth an eligible use of HHAP funding. HHAP is funded with \$2 billion over FY 2021–22 and FY 2022–23, and local jurisdictions must use at least 10% of this funding (\$200 million) to address homelessness among youth. Continuums of Care, counties, and cities receiving HHAP funding may use their initial Round 3 HHAP allocation to create a youth-specific Coordinated Entry System or youth-specific access point, or to improve the assessment tool to ensure that it contemplates the specific needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

 **Assist youth with applying for rental assistance through California’s COVID-19 Rent Relief Program.**

The federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program, called the COVID-19 Rent Relief Program in California, can be used to pay “unpaid or future rent or utilities.” Providers and county administrators expressed concerns about youth identifying housing in several counties with very high housing costs. Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth employment rates, and an average wage barely meeting California’s minimum wage, this resource presents a timely opportunity for youth to access relief funds. This program has not been widely marketed or utilized for transition-age youth and applying can be an onerous and confusing process. Community-based providers, county child welfare agencies, caregivers, and other adult supporters can play an important role in both connecting youth to this resource and assisting them with applying for it.

APPENDIX A

QUICK GLANCE KEY: HOUSING RESOURCES FOR FORMER FOSTER YOUTH & OUT-OF-HOME CARE PROBATION YOUTH

PROGRAM	ELIGIBLE YOUTH	SERVICES & DURATION PROVIDED	LOCATE SERVICES & MORE INFORMATION
Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP-Plus)	Former foster youth & out-of-home care probation youth ages 18 to 24 (up to age 25 in counties that have opted into the THP-Plus extension for youth in school)	Provides affordable housing and supportive services for up to 24 months (up to 36 months in counties that have opted into the THP-Plus extension for youth in school)	Find a program: jbay.org/resources/thp-plus-provider-roster
Family Unification Program (FUP) Vouchers	Youth ages 18 to 25 who left foster care at age 16 or older, or who will leave foster care within 90 days, and are homeless or at risk of homelessness	Up to 36 months of subsidized housing and at least 18 months of supportive services	Public Housing Authorities that administer FUP, by county: jbay.org/resources/pha-ca
Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Vouchers	Youth ages 18 to 24 who have left foster care or will leave within 90 days, and are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless (includes out-of-home care probation youth)	Up to 36 months of subsidized housing and supportive services	Public Housing Authorities that administer FYI, by county: jbay.org/resources/pha-ca
State & Federally Funded Homelessness Response	People are assessed through the local Coordinated Entry System	Varies; may include but is not limited to shelter, transitional housing, Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing, prevention services	Locate your community's Homeless Continuum of Care: jbay.org/resources/coc-roster Find youth providers currently funded by the state: jbay.org/resources/heap-roster
Permanent Affordable Housing	Eligibility varies and is usually tied to income and sometimes special population status	Whether services are provided, and type of services, varies across developments; generally no time limit on housing	No centralized entry/application process; waiting lists for housing developments open periodically. Identify affordable housing by county using this directory: www.hcd.ca.gov/about/contact/affordable-housing-rental-directory/index.shtml

This list covers what is standard across most of the state. Youth should also inquire locally with their county child welfare agency or local service providers about any housing resources unique to their county that might be available.

APPENDIX B

WAITING LIST SIZE FOR THP-PLUS AND FUP/FYI BY COUNTY

COUNTY	NUMBER OF YOUTH ON THP-PLUS WAITING LIST AS OF 6/30/21	NUMBER OF YOUTH ON FUP AND/OR FYI WAITING LIST AS OF 6/30/21	TOTAL
Alameda	33	5	38
Alpine	No Program	No Program	0
Amador	No Program	No Program	0
Butte	18	No Program	18
Calaveras	No Program	No Program	0
Colusa	No Program	No Program	0
Contra Costa	0	Unknown	0
Del Norte	No Program	Unknown	0
El Dorado	3	Unknown	3
Fresno	12	0	12
Glenn	0	No Program	0
Humboldt	0	0	0
Imperial	0	No Program	0
Inyo	0	0	0
Kern	111	0	111
Kings	0	Unknown	0
Lake	No Program	No Program	0
Lassen	0	0	0
Los Angeles	21	100	121
Madera	0	Unknown	0
Marin	4	0	4
Mariposa	0	No Program	0
Mendocino	0	Unknown	0
Merced	0	0	0
Modoc	No Program	No Program	0
Mono	No Program	No Program	0
Monterey	2	Unknown	2
Napa	0	Unknown	0
Nevada	2	No Program	2

Orange	6	20	26
Placer	10	0	10
Plumas	1	0	1
Riverside	20	5	25
Sacramento	0	25	25
San Benito	No Program	No Program	0
San Bernardino	15	Unknown	15
San Diego	31	0	31
San Francisco	15	0	15
San Joaquin	22	0	22
San Luis Obispo	2	3	5
San Mateo	0	0	0
Santa Barbara	0	30	30
Santa Clara	82	100	182
Santa Cruz	18	0	18
Shasta	6	Unknown	6
Sierra	No Program	No Program	0
Siskiyou	No Program	No Program	0
Solano	0	Unknown	0
Sonoma	10	0	10
Stanislaus	10	0	10
Sutter	0	Unknown	0
Tehama	12	No Program	12
Trinity	2	No Program	2
Tulare	3	No Program	3
Tuolumne	0	No Program	0
Ventura	0	0	0
Yolo	2	2	4
Yuba	0	No Program	0

No Program = No THP-Plus program or FUP/FYI vouchers

Unknown = No survey response or the person who completed the survey was unsure of the waiting list number

APPENDIX C

REPORTED THP-PLUS RATES BY COUNTY

SINGLE SITE	
COUNTY	REPORTED THP-PLUS RATE PER YOUTH PER MONTH
Alameda	\$3,001
Contra Costa	\$2,737
Lassen	\$2,847
Mariposa	\$1,550
Mendocino	\$2,800
Monterey	\$3,125
Orange	\$4,005
Sacramento	\$2,642
San Diego	\$2,981
San Francisco	\$2,373
San Mateo	\$2,882
Shasta	\$1,650
Trinity	\$1,650

SCATTERED SITE	
COUNTY	REPORTED THP-PLUS RATE PER YOUTH PER MONTH
Alameda	\$3,603
Butte	\$1,857
Contra Costa	\$2,908
El Dorado	\$2,688
Fresno	\$2,679
Glenn	\$3,580
Humboldt	\$1,882
Imperial	\$2,879
Kern	\$1,538
Kings	\$2,418
Lassen	\$2,847
Los Angeles	\$2,200
Madera	\$2,576
Marin	\$4,459
Mariposa	\$1,550
Merced	\$2,553
Napa	\$3,841
Nevada	\$1,563
Orange	\$3,090
Placer	\$2,794
Plumas	\$2,400
Riverside	\$2,300
Sacramento	\$2,642
San Bernardino	\$2,581
San Diego	\$2,816

San Francisco	\$2,548
San Joaquin	\$2,491
San Luis Obispo	\$3,639
San Mateo	\$3,146
Santa Barbara	\$3,750
Santa Clara	\$2,400
Santa Cruz	\$3,028
Shasta	\$1,650
Solano	\$3,603
Sonoma	\$2,686
Stanislaus	\$2,725
Sutter	\$2,500
Tehama	\$3,006
Tulare	\$2,324
Yolo	\$1,375
Yuba	\$2,948

HOST FAMILY	
COUNTY	REPORTED THP-PLUS RATE PER YOUTH PER MONTH
Alameda	\$1,700
Merced	\$2,554
Monterey	\$500
Napa	\$3,841
Riverside	\$2,300
San Francisco	\$2,022
San Mateo	\$3,146
Ventura	\$1,037



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