

## *Success Beyond 18:*

### EXTENDING FOSTER CARE BEYOND 18:

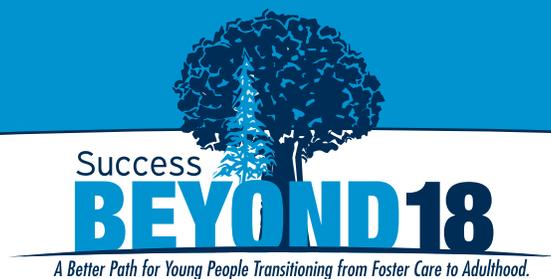
#### Housing Options for Young Adults

Issue Brief by Katherine Gaughen

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## INTRODUCTION

*Success Beyond 18* is a national campaign that advances policies and practices addressing the unique developmental needs of young people transitioning from foster care. These policies and practices are designed to provide young people leaving care with the same building blocks for success in family, work and adult life that are available to their peers in intact families.

The policies and practices promoted by *Success Beyond 18* are based on the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative's decade of work, the ideas and perspectives shared by young people who have experienced foster care firsthand, and the lessons that research and science teach us about what is best for young people. These policies and practices are organized around three overlapping and interrelated areas of focus:

- » Providing developmentally appropriate supports and services for young people transitioning from foster care to adulthood through extension of care to at least age 21;
- » Ensuring that young people have a meaningful voice in all aspects of decision making about their lives and futures, including case planning and court proceedings; and
- » Creating systems with quality oversight and accountability to ensure that young people in foster care are receiving developmentally appropriate supports and services that lead to positive life outcomes.

Ensuring that young adults transitioning from foster care have access to supportive, developmentally appropriate, and affordable housing options is especially critical given the high incidence of homelessness that these young people experience. The Midwest Study of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth found that by age 23 or 24, almost 30 percent of the young people in the study reported that they had been homeless for at least one night since exiting foster care. Nearly as many reported that, since exiting foster care, they had couch surfed (defined as "moving from one temporary housing arrangement provided by friends, family, or strangers to another"). Altogether, nearly 40 percent of young people in the study had been homeless or couch surfed since exiting foster care.<sup>1</sup>

This issue brief details the array of housing options that states can consider as they plan to extend foster care beyond the age of 18. Designed well, housing options can support the development of permanent relationships with caring adults and provide opportunities for acquiring life skills, advanced education, and employment opportunities. Effective housing options can also provide important incentives for young people to choose to remain in care.

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<sup>1</sup> Dworsky, A. & Courtney, M. E. (2010). *Assessing the Impact of Extending Care beyond Age 18 on Homelessness: Emerging Findings from the Midwest Study*. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.



Feedback from young adult leaders from the Jim Casey Initiative sites around the country has informed this brief. These young people are encouraged by the extension of foster care supports related to housing, education, employment, health and mental health and the opportunity to build “social capital” as young people ages 18 to 21 transition from foster care to adult independence. They believe that if “done right,” extended supports and services will lead to improved outcomes for young people transitioning from foster care.

This brief outlines requirements and opportunities related to housing options for young adults under the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (FCA), provides examples of model housing options for young people in extended foster care, and discusses important considerations for state and local leaders as they design and implement placement options.

## Requirements and Opportunities Under the Law

FCA allows states to receive reimbursement under Title IV-E for young people up to age 21, who meet specific eligibility criteria and are placed in allowable settings. Housing options for young people over the age of 18 can include traditional licensed placements such as foster homes and childcare institutions, as well as a new category of eligible placements called “supervised settings in which the individual is living independently.”

Federal guidance encourages states to consider and create developmentally appropriate living arrangements for young adults.<sup>2</sup> While existing regulatory provisions for licensing, background checks and safety considerations apply to foster family homes and congregate care settings for young people over the age of 18, federal guidance was intentionally broad and flexible to allow states to determine what types of living arrangements are considered a supervised setting, as well as the parameters for supervision of placement. Federal guidance also allows child welfare agencies to make foster care maintenance payments directly to young people in the form of living stipends.

## Considerations In Designing Housing Options

While extending foster care beyond the age of 18 is an important step to improving outcomes for older youth, to fully realize the opportunity presented by FCA, the living arrangements available to those young people must be developmentally appropriate for this new population. Further, states must strive to design living options that meet the needs of all young people transitioning to adulthood, including those who may continue to require intensive supports and services beyond age 18. In designing housing options for older youth, state leaders should consider how these settings support brain development during emerging adulthood years, enhance young people’s social capital, and then take into account the interests and desires of young people themselves.

**Support Brain Development.** A growing body of scientific evidence shows that adolescence and emerging adulthood are periods of gradual and continuing brain development. Neuroscience makes clear that support during the cognitive, social, and emotional development processes of adolescence can lead to a healthy and constructive adulthood. Because older youth and young adults in foster care are primed to develop strengths that will benefit them throughout their lives, it is critical that their living arrangements reflect **positive youth development** concepts that encourage the formation of caring relationships, set high expectations for young people that are

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Administration on Children, Youth and Families; Children’s Bureau. (2010). Program instruction ACYF-CB-PI-10-11. Washington, DC. Retrieved March, 20, 2013 from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/policy/pi/2010/pi1011.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/2010/pi1011.htm)



clearly communicated, allow young people to make their own decisions and learn from their mistakes, and provide meaningful opportunities for young people to lead and contribute to their larger community.<sup>3</sup>

**Enhance Social Capital.** Social capital can be described as the value that is created by investing in relationships with others through processes of trust and reciprocity.<sup>4</sup> Young people build social capital in the context of four communities: family, school, neighborhood, and peers.<sup>5,6</sup> Too often, young people in foster care are separated from their parents, family members, school, neighborhood, and friends, losing the positive connections that they once had with their social network. In designing housing options for young people through age 21, state leaders should consider how those living arrangements can support the building and maintenance of social capital, both in terms of positive peer and adult relationships and proximity to their existing social networks.<sup>7</sup>

Importantly, placement settings for older youth should also support efforts toward permanency. If child welfare agencies extend foster care beyond the age of 18 without continuing to build social capital through a focus on permanency, they simply postpone young people's exit from foster care to a disconnected young adulthood. State leaders should consider what types of housing options afford opportunities for young people to continue positive relationships in their lives, as well as to develop new, healthy relationships with caring adults.

**Engage Young People in Placement Design Decisions.** To ensure that housing options meet the unique needs of this young adult population, it is critical to engage young people who have experienced foster care when considering and designing the array of housing options that will be made available. State or local youth leadership boards or foster care alumni associations are often good groups to connect with around these conversations.

For example, as Nebraska policy makers considered extending foster care, they actively engaged over 100 young people who were currently in or had been discharged from the state's foster care system and asked them to complete surveys regarding program design options for extended services and supports to age 21. State leaders distributed the survey in nine jurisdictions across the state and convened follow-up focus groups. Among other questions, young people were asked what housing situations should be included in extended foster care. Interestingly, there was little consensus among young people about the types of placement settings that should be available to young adults, leading state leaders to conclude that "leaving housing options as broad as possible may best meet the needs of young adults."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. (2011). Foster Care to 21: Doing It Right. St. Louis, MO. Retrieved March 20, 2013 from <http://jimcaseyyouth.org/issue-brief—foster-care-21-doing-it-right>.

<sup>4</sup> Coleman, J. (1990). Foundations of social theory. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Ferguson, K.M. (2006). Social capital and children's well-being: A critical synthesis of the international social capital literature. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 15, 2-18.

<sup>6</sup> Henderson, A.T., & Berla, N. (1994). A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

<sup>7</sup> Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. (2011). Social Capital: Building Quality Networks for Young People in Foster Care. St. Louis, MO.

<sup>8</sup> Nebraska Appleseed (2012). Bridging the Gap: Supporting Youth in Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood. Retrieved March 20, 2013 from <http://neappleseed.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/Bridging-the-Gap-Supporting-Youth-in-the-Transition-From-Foster-Care-to-Adulthood1.pdf>



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*While we are aiming to provide safe, reliable housing options for young people in extended foster care, we also want to do it in a way that maximizes their opportunities to become more independent. Perhaps one way to stay aligned with said goal is to view the oversight authority as a resource and tool for young people to reach out to themselves, when they feel it is appropriate, and to make sure that young people's interests are being protected by clearly defining the roles of those in authoritative positions.*

Josh Grubb, Jim Casey Initiative Young Fellow

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## Housing Options for Older Youth

FCA affords child welfare agencies the opportunity to creatively develop a continuum of developmentally appropriate housing options that meet the needs of all young people, bolster social capital, and reflect young people's own desires for safe and supportive housing arrangements. Placements that meet the federal criteria for being reimbursable under Title IV-E for older youth include:

- » Guardianship and Kinship Care
- » Family Foster Homes
- » Supervised Independent Living Settings, such as:
  - Supervised Apartments
  - Semi-supervised Apartments
  - Scattered Site Housing
  - Host Homes
  - College Dormitories
  - Direct Stipends
- » Congregate Care Settings
- » Housing Options for Pregnant and Parenting Youth

**Guardianship and Kinship Care.** Allowing young people to remain or be placed in guardianship or kinship care settings, and exploring relatives who may consider becoming kinship care providers is an important housing option for many young people. Kinship care can provide important connections to an extended family network, supporting the development of young people's social capital.

FCA also created a new option for states to receive federal reimbursement for guardianship and adoption assistance payments. States that extend their foster care program beyond age 18 and have a guardianship and/or adoption assistance program must also extend eligibility for those programs to young people who enter those permanency arrangements at age 16 or older. With these new incentives in place, kinship and adoptive placements can be an important pathway to permanence for many older youth.

**Family Foster Homes.** Traditional family foster homes or treatment family foster homes are another important housing option for young people in extended foster care. Allowing older youth to remain in or transition to family-based foster homes helps them build social capital in traditional community settings. Older youth should be supported in having a role in selecting a foster home that is a good fit for them. Allowing young people



authentic input in their living situation is not only developmentally appropriate and what many young people at this age experience, but also protects against the possibility of placement disruption.

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*By giving them a choice in selecting a foster home  
that is a good fit for them, older youth will no longer feel ‘stuck’ in their  
foster home or like there’s a better option out there for them.*

Samanthya Amann, Jim Casey Initiative Young Fellow

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For example, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families allows young people ages 14 and older to be placed in “special study foster homes.”<sup>9</sup> The Department licenses special study foster parents to provide foster care to specific young people, such as coaches, teachers, mentors, and peers’ parents. A young person may live in a special study foster home for up to 90 days as long as a satisfactory home visit is conducted, a basic assessment of the family is completed, and the special study foster parent and any adult living within the household have not been convicted of a crime. After 90 days, the special study foster parent is subject to licensure by the Department. Special study foster homes support a young person’s voice regarding where they feel comfortable living and allow them to make important connections with caring adults of their choosing.

As any parent can attest, parenting during the years in which a young person transitions to adulthood can be challenging. In order to prepare foster parents to support the healthy development of teens and young adults during this important developmental period, many states offer advanced training focused on how to prepare young people for adulthood.

- » ***The Foster Parent Training Collection: Independent Living Resources.***<sup>10</sup> These curricula were designed to train foster parents to prepare youth for independent living. The program recognizes the important role of foster parents as part of the transition team and as the primary support system for youth. The two-hour sessions can be combined or delivered in a series format.
- » ***First Voice.***<sup>11</sup> The First Voice training model for foster parents and caseworkers was designed to promote the involvement of youth in planning independent living services. The training program includes three modules: Leading, a one-day session for supervisors of caseworkers to obtain their support; Listening, a one-day session for caseworkers and foster parents about collaborating with youth; and Learning Together, a three-day curriculum for youth group leaders.
- » ***PRIDE Advanced and Specialized Training: Teens in Care – Supporting Attachment.***<sup>12</sup> This module addresses the knowledge and skills foster parents need to promote attachment and build positive relationships with the teens in care by providing a basis for understanding how trauma and loss affect the young person.
- » ***PRIDE Advanced and Specialized Training: Preparing Youth for Successful Adulthood.***<sup>13</sup> This training provides caregivers with the knowledge and skills necessary to assist youth with their healthy transition into adulthood by focusing on the importance of stable, consistent, and healthy relationships in helping youth learn life skills.

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<sup>9</sup> State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families. (2006). Special Study Foster Homes 42-4-1. Hartford, CT. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from <http://www.dir.ct.gov/dcf/policy/adoles42/42-4-1.html>

<sup>10</sup> Independent Living Resources (2002). The Foster Parent Training Collection. Durham, NC. Retrieved March 13, 2013 from <http://www.ilrinc.com>

<sup>11</sup> University of South Carolina College of Social Work Center for Child and Family Services (2004). First Voice. Retrieved March 13, 2013 from <http://ccfs.sc.edu/services/training/division-projects/77-first-voice.html>

<sup>12</sup> Child Welfare League of America (2007). PRIDE Advanced and Specialized Training: Teens in Care – Supporting Attachment. Washington, DC. Retrieved March 13, 2013 from <http://www.cwla.org/programs/trieschman/pride.htm>. [adoles42/42-4-1.html](http://www.cwla.org/pubs/pubdetails.asp?PUBID=1071)

<sup>13</sup> Child Welfare League of America (2007). PRIDE Advanced and Specialized Training: Preparing Youth for Successful Adulthood. Washington, DC. Retrieved March 13, 2013 from <http://www.cwla.org/pubs/pubdetails.asp?PUBID=1071>



Developing and implementing a shared living agreement is often useful for young people approaching age 18 who want to remain in a family foster care or kinship home. Just as parents might negotiate new rules and expectations once their teenager graduates from high school, a foster parent or guardian might make adjustments and adaptations for a young person living in their care. A shared living agreement provides guidelines regarding topics such as communication and household rules, responsibilities and expectations. For example, as a minor, the young person in foster care may have had a strict curfew. As the young person reaches the age of majority, he or she enters a new stage of development in which he or she is beginning to take on additional responsibilities. A shared living agreement can be a useful way to support the acquisition of independence, with specifications such as a new negotiated curfew, and new protocols regarding how the young person can communicate with their caregiver. California has given counties the option to implement shared living agreements between young people and caregivers using a standardized template developed by the state.<sup>14</sup>

**Supervised Independent Living Settings.** FCA created a new placement category for youth over age 18 for which states can receive Title IV-E reimbursement—supervised independent living settings. Federal guidance expresses a clear intent to provide states with broad flexibility related to supervised independent living settings. Federal guidance does not require these settings to be licensed, does not specify the types of placements that qualify as supervised settings, and does not define what supervision must entail. As such, states have significant latitude to creatively design innovative supervised settings that are responsive to the needs of young people transitioning to adulthood. Supervised apartments, semi-supervised apartments, scattered site housing, host homes, and college dormitories are among the many options that states have implemented.

As state leaders design the array of placement settings that will be available to older youth, it is important to consider the need for a continuum of housing options from those that are very supportive (24-hour on-site staff) to those that provide a high degree of independence (direct stipends). No different than young people who live with their families of origin, many young people in foster care still require and can benefit from safe and supportive adults who provide close guidance and supervision at age 18 and beyond. As young people develop more maturity and master new skills, it is important for child welfare systems to have a placement array that can meet the changing needs as young people seek greater autonomy. In line with positive youth development concepts, the continuum of placements should not only set high expectations for young people, but also allow them to experience healthy risk-taking opportunities, allowing young people to learn from their mistakes without the risk of losing services and with ample support from trained and caring adults.

As states design supervised independent living settings, it is also important to consider roommate options. Some states, such as Rhode Island, offer roommate socials, during which young people in foster care connect with their peers and foster care alumni as they determine their living situations. Some young people may prefer to live with peers who have not experienced foster care. Allowing young people, themselves, to determine the best roommate situation is an important opportunity for young people to exercise independence, autonomy, and decision-making skills.

- » **Supervised Apartments**—In supervised apartment settings, young people live in an apartment building, condominium, or other shared housing space where there is 24-hour on-site supervision. One or more adult employees of the housing provider often reside in the building. Supervised apartment settings are ideal for young people who are ready to test their independence, but still require the support of a responsible adult as they learn time and money management, cooking, cleaning, and other skills of daily living. In supervised apartment settings, foster care maintenance payments are generally made to the provider, who in turn works with the young person to devise a budget for food and household items that the young person manages.
- » **Semi-supervised Apartments**—In semi-supervised apartment settings, young people who are ready for more independence live in a shared housing space where there is limited on-site supervision during defined office hours. Staff members are usually available 24 hours a day for emergencies. Semi-supervised apart-

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<sup>14</sup> California Welfare and Institutional Code § 16501.1 (c)(1); All County Letter 11-77. Retrieved April 1, 2013 from <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl/2011/11-77.pdf>



ments are a good “next step” for young people who have been successful in supervised apartment settings. Foster care maintenance payments are typically made directly to the housing provider, who in turn works with the young person to devise a budget for food and household items that the young person manages.

- » **Scattered Site Housing**—In a scattered site housing model, a young person lives independently or with one or two other young people in foster care. Staff members do not live in the building or maintain regular on-site hours, but they proactively check in with the young person multiple times per week and are available 24 hours a day to handle emergencies. Scattered site housing provides a high degree of independence for young people and as such, young people should demonstrate competence with regard to time management, budgeting and other life skills prior to moving into such settings. If there are areas in which a young person requires additional support, a plan should be put in place to help the young person acquire those skills prior to placing them in scattered site housing. In scattered site housing models, foster care maintenance payments are generally made directly to the housing provider. The provider, in turn, works with the young person to devise a budget for food and household items that the young person self manages.
- » **Host Homes**—Based on a model long used by agencies serving adults with developmental disabilities, a host home is a placement where the young person lives with a caring adult who provides basic board and care and serves as a mentor and supporter, while allowing the young person to maintain a high degree of autonomy. Host homes are similar to family foster homes, except the host is not necessarily a licensed foster parent and does not usually have to go through the process of having the home licensed. A host home provider can be a former resource parent, teacher, coach, relative, or church member, with whom the youth has a positive relationship, providing an important opportunity to enhance social capital. Generally, the young person receives provider-based supportive services through a case manager. Host home living arrangements provide an opportunity for a youth to develop skills prior to living on their own and are especially important in rural areas where apartment buildings or other shared housing space are scarce.

In some states, such as California, host homes are used for young people over age 18 who remain in foster care. Payments are made directly to the provider. In other states, such as Indiana, host homes are also used as young people transition from care. In those cases, young people negotiate rent with host home providers and pay them directly.

- » **College Dormitories**—A college dormitory is typically a residence hall consisting of sleeping quarters and shared bathrooms for large numbers of students. In general, college dorms, or other designated university housing, should not require pre-approval as a placement setting, since they are already approved for safety standards. College dorms provide robust opportunities for young people to enhance their social capital as they form relationships with a diverse group of peers outside of foster care. States including California, Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, and New York, allow young people to reside in college dorms as a supervised independent living setting.

For young people living in college dorms, it is important to have a plan for move-in and move-out day, as well as a plan for where they will live when school is not in session, if the dorms are closed. Being one of the few young people on campus without parents can be especially challenging for young adults in foster care on move-in and move-out day, so identifying a caring adult to assist on those days can be particularly helpful in easing the transition to college life.

The Midwest study found that by age twenty-four, 26 percent of young people who had aged out of the foster care system had attended at least one year of college, but only 6 percent had graduated with a two- or four-year degree.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Lee, J., & Raap, M. (2009). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 23 and 24. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

To help address the challenges of negotiating college life, Western Michigan University inaugurated its John Seita Scholars Program in 2007.<sup>16</sup> Through the program, John Seita scholars have comfortable apartments on campus, and a hall is kept open over holiday breaks for dorm residents who need a place to stay. Daily hot meals, community activities, and outings are all part of the program.

The program uses a mix of trained student leaders and surrogate parents, called “campus coaches.” The program’s students are expected to live on campus, keep their grades up, and check in regularly with their campus coaches, either in person or by text message. The coaches are paid to monitor such things as academic performance and behavior, and they provide support as needed. In addition to the campus coaches, the Michigan Department of Human Services has placed an employee in the Seita office to coordinate state grant monies and to act as an in-house caseworker for students who are still in the foster care system.

States that allow young people to reside in college dormitories as a part of extended foster care should consider replicating this model by providing on-site support at state universities and community colleges with a high concentration of young people who are in or are transitioning from foster care.

- » **Direct Stipends**—Federal guidance encourages states to recognize every young adult’s need for independence and to be innovative in creating opportunities for young people to develop appropriate decision-making skills. Providing direct stipends to young people can be an important way to test their skills at budgeting and managing money while they still have a support system in place to provide guidance and help them learn from missteps. In states that offer it, a direct stipend is often the final step in a continuum of supports and services that helps young people develop financial skills and ultimately allows them to put their knowledge into action. Many states utilize a standardized screening tool to help identify young people who are ready to manage their own foster care maintenance payment.

States including California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia have implemented maintenance payments directly to young adults. Several more are working on making direct stipends an option for young adults.<sup>17</sup>

## The California Continuum of Care

In addition to allowing young people age 18 to 21 to remain in kinship care, foster care, or congregate care in limited circumstances, California has a range of supervised independent living placements available to young people: the Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP), the Transitional Housing Placement-Plus-Foster Care (THP+FC), Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP), and the Transitional Housing Program Plus (THP-Plus).<sup>18</sup> This continuum of care allows young people in California to gradually gain independence in supportive settings designed to meet their needs.

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<sup>16</sup> Troop, D. For Former Foster Kids, Campus is their ‘Home for the Holidays’. The Chronicle of Higher Education. Kalamazoo, MI. January 8, 2012. Retrieved April 1, 2013 from <http://chronicle.com/article/Colleges-Help-Alumni-of-Foster/130239/>

<sup>17</sup> Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (2013). A Guide to Support the Implementation of Foster Care Beyond Age 18. St. Louis, MO.

<sup>18</sup> California Welfare and Institutional Code § 16501.1 (c)(1); All County Letter 12-44. Retrieved March 24, 2013 from <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl/2012/12-44.pdf>

## **The California Continuum of Care** *continued*

The THPP, THP+FC and SILP are for current foster youth, while THP-Plus is for former foster youth. The THPP serves young people ages 16 and 17, and THP+FC and SILP serve young people ages 18 and up to 21.

### *Transitional Housing Placement Program and Transitional Housing Placement-Plus-Foster Care*

THPP and THP+FC are programs offered by licensed transitional housing placement providers. They provide a safe living environment for their specified age groups, allowing young people to practice the skills needed to live independently upon exiting the foster care system in a developmentally appropriate setting. In addition to providing supervised transitional housing, the programs also provide supportive services based on a young person's transitional living plan. THPP and THP+FC are more structured than Supervised Independent Living Placements.

Licensed transitional housing placement providers may offer up to three housing models for young people: Single Site Housing, Remote Site Housing (THP+FC only), and Host Family Homes:

- » Single Site Housing is a placement where a young person lives in an apartment, single-family dwelling, or condominium rented or leased by the THPP or THP+FC provider, in which one or more adult employees of the provider reside and provide supervision.
- » A Remote Site is a single housing unit where the young person lives independently from provider's staff, which does not live in the same building. This may include apartments, single-family dwellings, or condominiums rented or leased by the THP+FC provider in various locations, not necessarily near each other.
- » The Host Family model is a placement where the young person lives with a caring adult who has been selected and approved by the transitional housing placement provider. The young person receives provider-based supportive services, and it is expected the host family will provide basic board and care.

### *Supervised Independent Living Placement*

A SILP is a supervised setting as specified in a young person's transition plan. This may include apartment living, room and board arrangements, college dorms, and shared roommate settings. A young person placed in a SILP may directly receive the foster care maintenance payment. The payment for a young person living in a SILP is the equal to the basic foster care rate for 15- to 21-year-olds, and a parenting young person can receive an infant supplement. Young people in SILP settings have face-to-face visits from their caseworkers at least once per month.

### *Transitional Housing Program-Plus*

THP-Plus is an optional, county-certified, provider-based transitional housing placement option for young people ages 18 to 24 who exited foster care at or after age 18. Young people in this program are not eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement. The program's goal is to provide a safe living environment, for up to 24 months, while assisting the young person in developing the life skills necessary to be successful living independently. The program provides supervised transitional living housing and supportive services based on a transition plan.

## Indiana Connected By 25: Permanent Supportive Housing for Young People

Indiana Connected By 25's mission is to ensure that young people transitioning from foster care are educated, housed, financially stable, employed, and connected to a support system by age 25. To address chronic homelessness among young people leaving foster care, Connected By 25 has created the Willard Park Permanent Supportive Housing Program in Marion County, Indiana through a partnership with the Riley Area Community Development Corporation and Newport Indiana, LLC. Currently the program has 44 units consisting of new single-family homes in the Willard Park area. While not originally conceived as placement settings under an extended foster care program, Willard Park remains a useful model of partnership between child welfare agencies and housing authorities.

To be accepted into the program, youth must be over 18, be below 50 percent annual median income (AMI), have been in foster care after age 14, and have experienced homelessness. Willard Park program participants' children and partners are welcome to live in the home or apartment. Willard Park program residents have their rent and utilities paid (minus cable and phone) by way of vouchers supplemented by the Indiana Housing and Community Development Corporation. Unless their income changes, Willard Park program participants can stay in their homes as long as they like.

Residents have access to Connected By 25's other programs and a wide range of outside services such as Midtown Mental Health Center, Family and Social Services, Dress for Success, WorkOne, and Planned Parenthood among others. The Willard Park program also has a resource/drop-in center. The center includes a job search lab with online access to job listings, leads, job fairs, and training seminars. Young adults can also use the center's computers to create resumes and complete online applications, as well as the telephone, copiers and fax machines in their job search. The computer lab also helps young adults meet educational goals, including preparing for high school equivalency testing and planning for postsecondary education or training.

**Congregate Care Settings.** Under FCA, congregate care settings, such as group homes and residential placements are another allowable housing option for young people in extended foster care. However, **research has demonstrated that congregate care settings generally do not produce good outcomes for older youth and are not a setting that helps young people achieve permanency.** Given that states have great flexibility in designing new placement settings to better meet the developmental needs of older youth, the use of congregate care settings should be strictly limited to situations in which remaining in a congregate care setting after age 18 advances the well-being of the young adult. For example, in California, the passage of Assembly Bill 12 allowed group home placements only up to age 19 in order to prevent a young person from having to change schools as a result of a placement move. After the youth graduates from high school or an equivalent program (i.e., GED) or turns age 19, continuation in a group home is prohibited unless it is necessary due to a medical condition.<sup>19</sup>

**Housing Options for Pregnant or Parenting Youth.** Given high rates of parenthood among young women and men with foster care experience,<sup>20</sup> state leaders should consider designing housing options that provide support for young women during pregnancy as well as for young families. The environment in which a young parent raises his/her child is important for the young person's development, the infant's development, and the formation of a strong and healthy parenting relationship. Given that this population of young parents is not homogenous,

<sup>19</sup> California Welfare and Institutional Code § 16501.1 (c)(1); All County Letter 11-77. Retrieved March 24, 2013 from <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl/2011/11-77.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Brown, A., Cary, C., Love, K. & Vorhies, V. (2011) Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 26. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

child welfare agencies should design a range of placement settings to meet their needs. Placement settings may include helping young people return home to their family of origin, live with a relative or other adult with whom they have a strong attachment, be placed in a foster home that is specially trained to help young mothers and fathers become successful parents, or be placed in a supervised independent living placement where new parents and babies can be together.<sup>21</sup>

Child welfare agencies must cover the foster care maintenance costs for minor children who are not in foster care and who reside with their parents in an extended foster care placement setting. The child for whom the maintenance costs are covered is also categorically eligible for the Medicaid program in the state where the parent and child reside.

Shared Family Care (SFC) is one model for serving adolescent parents in foster care and their children in which the entire family is temporarily placed in the home of a family trained to mentor and support young parents.<sup>22</sup> SFC promotes the safety of children while preventing family separation. Key elements of this model include:

- » Mentor families who are carefully screened and who receive extensive training in child safety and welfare issues, child development, parenting, adult communication, conflict resolution, and community resources.
- » Careful matching between mentor and participant families, a rights and responsibilities agreement, an individualized service plan developed jointly by the participant and mentor families, a case manager, a child welfare worker, and anyone else involved with the participant family.
- » Services including teaching and mentoring parental and living skills, clinical treatment and counseling, and helping parents establish positive connections with community resources.

## Considerations for Implementation

In designing and implementing new housing options for young people in foster care, state leaders should take into account the following considerations:

- » **Engage partners, including young people, early in the planning process.** Bringing a range of both internal and external partners to the table early in the placement design process is critical to ensuring comprehensive services, facilitating quick start-up, and avoiding duplication of services. Young people, including alumni of foster care and those getting ready to transition from foster care, can provide especially useful insights into the housing options that would best support them as they transition to independence. Internal partners to consider involving include representatives from the state's management information system, fiscal office, and contracts office. External partners that are important to engage include private providers, the courts, mental health services, the housing authority, workforce supports, the department of education, community colleges and universities, and trade schools.
- » **Consider the provider pool.** A range of supportive housing options is imperative to allow young people to gradually gain greater independence. It is also important that young people do not have to make significant moves in order to realize that independence. Contracting with a single organization to provide an array of housing options in a given community minimizes disruptions in establishing social networks, getting to know new case managers, and acclimating to provider-specific sets of rules. Child welfare agencies may need to deliberately design strategies to support providers in expanding their service array, including funding or contributing to start-up costs for new programs. Allowing young people to make smooth transitions between placement settings while gradually obtaining greater independence supports their successful transition to adulthood.

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<sup>21</sup> Center for the Study of Social Policy. *Pregnant and Parenting Youth in Foster Care Part I: A Guide to Service Improvements*. Washington, DC. Retrieved on April 1, 2013 from <http://www.cssp.org/publications/child-welfare/pregnant-and-parenting-youth/Pregnant-and-Parenting-Youth-in-Foster-Care-Service-Recommendations-Guide.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> National Abandoned Infants' Assistance Resource Center. Retrieved on April 1, 2013 from <http://aia.berkeley.edu/child-safety-well-being/shared-family-care/>

- » **Identify locations that enhance social capital.** Young people's proximity to available educational and employment opportunities is important, not only to enhance social capital, but also to assist them as they move towards self-sufficiency. If access to public transportation is not available, it is important to provide other means of transportation that will allow young people to travel to and from school, work, and social commitments as needed.
- » **Plan sustainable housing options for young people leaving foster care.** To successfully transition out of the foster care system, young people need safe, stable, and affordable housing that builds on the social capital that they have established. Such housing is vital to help young people who have left care to maintain steady employment, access health care, pursue higher education, and, in some instances, care for their children. Through partnerships with local housing authorities, child welfare leaders can gain access to federal housing resources, including the Family Unification Program, Section 8 set asides, and public housing that may allow young people to leave foster care without requiring a change in their living arrangements. Establishing these partnerships can ensure that young people have a place to live as they prepare to transition out of the foster care system.<sup>23</sup>
- » **Be willing to come back to the table.** Implementing extended foster care is a continuous process that will require policies to be updated based on experience and continually improved over time. Plan in advance to bring internal and external partners back to the table at regular intervals to discuss lessons learned and make adjustments as necessary.
- » **Understand the limits of the Title IV-E program.** FCA does not allow Title IV-E reimbursement for young people who live with their biological parents. Although many young people have a strong desire to return to their family of origin, if a young person chooses to return to the home of their biological parent, states would not be able to receive federal reimbursement for any housing support should they choose to provide it, but could use state funding. It is important that child welfare agencies support young people in safely reconnecting with their family of origin, while being clear about allowable housing options. Child welfare agencies also need to consider whether they will provide financial support for young people in Supervised Independent Living Programs who choose to live with significant others.
- » **Plan for start-up support.** In many cases, drawing down Title IV-E reimbursement to fund placement options for young people ages 18 and older frees federal Chafee and state dollars that child welfare agencies were previously using to pay for housing supports. Among other things, state dollars can be used to support start-up costs for new placement options..

FCA provides an important opportunity to creatively design a continuum of housing options for older youth that are developmentally appropriate, build social capital, and support permanent relationships, all of which help to ensure better outcomes for young people. By providing an array of housing options from kinship care through supervised independent living programs and allowing young people to lead decisions about what setting is the best fit for them, child welfare agencies put young people on the path to successfully transition to adulthood.

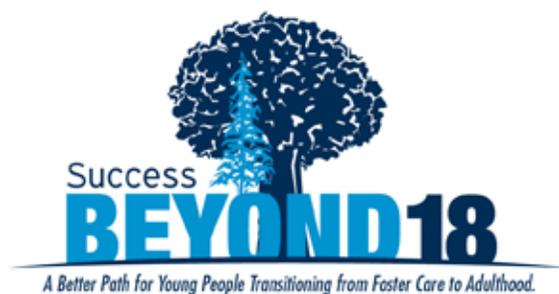
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<sup>23</sup> Torrico, R. & Bhat, S. (2009). Connected by 25: Financing Housing Supports for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care. The Finance Project. Washington, DC. Retrieved on April 2, 2013 from <http://www.financeproject.org/publications/FinancingHousingSupport.pdf>



## About the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

The mission of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative is to ensure that young people—primarily those between the ages of 14 and 25—make successful transitions from foster care to adulthood. We do this by working nationally, in states, and locally to improve policies and practices, promote youth engagement, apply evaluation and research, and create community partnerships. Our work creates opportunities for young people to achieve positive outcomes in permanence, education, employment, housing, health, financial capability, and social capital.



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