

California Connected by 25

EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE HOUSING NEEDS OF TRANSITIONING FOSTER YOUTH

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Prepared for:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
The Walter S. Johnson Foundation
The Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California Connected by 25 Initiative is a collaborative effort of five foundations to improve the life prospects of youth transitioning out of foster care in California. Counties participating in CC25I aim to improve policies, programs and outcomes for transition-age foster youth in seven focus areas: K-12 Education; Employment/Job Training/Post-Secondary Education; Financial Competency and Asset Development; Housing; Independent Living Skills Programs; Personal/Social Asset Development; and Permanency. Four counties – Fresno, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Stanislaus Counties – are early implementers of the Initiative.

This report documents the Initiative's progress made by each of the early implementing counties in the area of Housing. These efforts to increase the likelihood that former foster youth will secure safe, appropriate long-term housing during early adulthood interact with several other CC25I focus areas. Efforts to expand the housing options for transitioning youth is building increasingly on the lifelong connections between youth and caring adults established through the permanency work that begins while youth are still in care. Furthermore, former foster youth who are safely and stably housed are far more likely to continue their education, maintain gainful employment and participate more fully in their communities as adults.

The Housing Challenges Faced by Transitioning Foster Youth

The link between having spent time in the foster care system and experiencing housing instability or homelessness in early adulthood is well documented. Studies from across the United States find that between 14 and 36 percent of former foster youth have spent some time being homeless within the first few years of leaving care and in California, 65 percent of youth who were emancipated from the foster care system have an "imminent housing need." Relative to their peers who have not been in care, former foster youth are more likely to experience multiple living arrangements, be unable to pay rent, or be evicted in early adulthood. Former foster youth face additional challenges in their quest to live independently, and without a family safety net, these challenges are often insurmountable. For example, skeptical landlords will not rent to youth without a credit history or an adult co-signer and the required move-in costs usually exceed available savings. Transitioning foster youth may not know how to negotiate relationships with landlords and roommates or how to budget finances so that an apartment can be maintained.

Despite the availability of federal funding through the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, fewer than half of former foster youth report having received some type of housing support through their local independent living program. Passage of the Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 could address some of this shortfall by providing federal funds for states that continue foster care payments through age 20, payments which could also be applied to transitional or supportive housing accommodations. The expansion of the Transitional Housing Placement-Plus (THP-Plus) program, which provides state funding to localities to develop housing options for former foster youth through age 24, has proven to be one of the most successful efforts to address the housing challenges faced by former youth in California. The number of THP-Plus funded transitional housing units available to former foster youth in California increased tenfold from 50 in 2003 to 500 in 2007, and then doubled to 1,000 units in 2008. Localities throughout California and the rest of the nation are expanding their transitional housing capacity for former foster youth through a variety of housing models, most with some type of integrated support services.

At the forefront of this work, CC25I counties are working to ensure that every foster youth who emancipates from the child welfare system has access to a variety of housing options that are supportive and flexible enough to meet the developmental needs of young adults. Through partnership with foster youth, caregivers, and community programs, as well as through full utilization of available housing funding streams, CC25I counties are increasing local housing capacity and expanding access to resources and opportunities for transitioning foster youth to experience independent living.

Key strategies utilized in the CC25I Housing focus area include outreach to and collaboration with other housing organizations and initiatives to develop local housing resources that meet the needs of transitioning youth; utilization of available funding (such as THP-Plus dollars) to increase transitional housing capacity; and development of host family models of transitional housing that build on efforts to establish permanency and lifelong connections for foster youth. The early implementing counties have been supported in these efforts by funding and technical assistance from a variety of sources including CC25I, the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project, and the Foster Youth Housing Initiative.

County Progress in Reaching CC25I Housing Objectives

Counties are still implementing new data tracking strategies that will allow ongoing assessment of the housing indicators identified by CC25I: the percentage of foster youth with a plan for where they will reside after they leave foster care; the percentage of former foster youth who have housing during the transitional period; the percentage of former foster youth who feel their housing is safe; the percentage of former foster youth in long-term housing; and the percentage of former foster youth who experienced a period of homelessness in the past year. However, CC25I counties have made substantial strides toward the intermediate goals of the Initiative as detailed below and in **Table 1.1**:

Goal: Expand housing and transitional housing capacity and resources available to transitioning foster youth.

Progress: THP-Plus funding to early implementing CC25I counties increased from \$837,000 in fiscal year 2006/07 to over \$6 million in fiscal year 2008/09 and the number of transitional beds funded in these counties increased from 31 to 231. In fiscal year 2007-2008, these four counties operated 263 units of transitional housing with THP-Plus support.

Goal: Develop a continuum of housing supports and link youth to the services that best meet their needs.

Progress: CC25I counties are partnering with other public agencies, housing organizations, and community service providers to develop and operate transitional housing units as well as provide case management and other support services that meet the varied needs of former foster youth.

Goal: Incorporate permanency and lifelong connections concepts into transitional housing models.

Progress: Early implementing CC25I counties are offering a variety of housing models, including host family units that build on permanency and lifelong connection efforts.

Though continued growth in THP-Plus funding is uncertain, counties are actively pursuing strategies that will facilitate further expansion of transitional housing units available to former foster youth in the future.

Table 1.1: Overview of THP-Plus Goals and Accomplishments, by County, 2006-2009

County	Planned Units (2006 proposal)	# Units THP+ Allocated 2006/2007	# Units Operating July 2006 – June 2007	# Units THP+ Allocated 2007/2008	# Units Operating July 2007 – June 2008	Planned Units (2008 proposal)	# Units THP+ Allocated 2008/2009
Fresno	10 host family units	0	0	20	20 host family units, served 8 youth (served 20 youth by August 2008)	75 host family and scattered site models	20
San Francisco	40-60 units, mixed model types	31	80 scattered site, single site and host family units, served 100 youth	111	127 scattered site, single site and host family units, served 140 youth	250 mixed model types	111
Santa Clara	50 units, mixed model types	0	57 scattered site, single-site and host family units, served 66 youth	80	96 scattered site, single site and host family units, served 135 youth	80 mixed model types	80
Stanislaus	Unspecified number of host family units	0	20 host family units, served 20 youth	20	20 host family units, served 29 youth	25 host family and scattered site units	20

Individual counties have also implemented additional strategies to support transitioning foster youth in planning for and securing stable housing post-emancipation:

Fresno County

- Is currently reaching out to the housing community (local renter associations, building developers, housing authorities and property management companies) to inform them of the housing needs of transitioning foster care and probation youth and encourage the collaborative development of scattered site housing resources.

San Francisco County

- Established the nonprofit “Friends of the SF ILSP” to raise additional funds for housing and educational support during the transitional period.
- Integrated the assessment of housing needs into all GOALS emancipation conference meetings for foster youth age 16 and up.

Santa Clara County

- Created a Transition Housing Liaison position, a former foster youth who case manages participants in the THP-Plus program and provides support services and referrals. An additional MSW position was later created to assist with this work.
- Utilized one-time CalWORKs funding creatively to provide housing assistance for transitioning foster youth, particularly parenting/pregnant youth or those at risk of homelessness.
- Is developing an assessment tool to monitor self-sufficiency skills among THP-Plus participants in order to better prepare youth for life after transitional housing has ended.

Stanislaus County

- Is developing an employment services component to be integrated with their transitional housing efforts to help transitioning foster youth find and keep employment, ensuring that they can afford stable housing in the future.

Key Lessons Learned

Host family and roommate dynamics can be a challenge. Misunderstandings and interpersonal dynamics among youth and adults in host family or shared housing models can escalate to the point of crisis. One strategy to prevent this type of crisis in host family settings is to require both host “parents” and the youth to attend the initial THP-Plus information meeting to bring all parties to consensus on the program’s housing agreement. Mediation support for youth and families could help mitigate crises in host family settings and other preventive strategies - such as regular mediation meetings, avoidance of shared bedrooms, and limits on the number of roommates allowed - could help reduce the likelihood of problems in other types of shared housing.

Case management for housing participants can be critical. Intensive case management is essential in supporting the successful participation of former foster youth in the THP-Plus program. CC25I counties employed a variety of strategies to enroll and case-manage local THP-Plus participants. Some utilized contracted service providers to case manage youth, others used ILP or Aftercare staff and one county hired a former foster youth to case-manage as the Transitional Housing Liaison.

Support services for housing participants, and for host families, are beneficial. Some CC25I counties have found it a challenge to ensure that youth receive the support services they need to remain stably housed. Coordination among housing providers, case managers, ILP staff and other service providers was key to ensuring that participating youth received the appropriate support services. Counties identified some particular supports needed among their THP-Plus participants, including mental health services and youth empowerment training, as well as expanded opportunities for youth participants and host family parents to engage in social activities.

Transitional housing participants can benefit from money management assistance. Most transitional housing requires youth to pay an increasing share of their rent over time to prepare them for the financial responsibilities of independent living in the future. Linking housing participants to financial asset development programs early on can prepare them for this transition by teaching budgeting skills and encouraging savings behavior through matched accounts. These efforts can also identify when youth require employment services to help secure and maintain work so both earnings and savings can increase over time.

Transitional housing must accommodate the needs of youth attending post-secondary education and training programs.

Transitional housing work requirements must be flexible to accommodate the limited capacity to work among former foster youth who are attending college or other post-secondary education and training programs. CC25I counties have found it necessary to reduce the number of work hours required or to waive the rent phase-in of THP-Plus participants who are attending educational programs on a full-time basis. In some cases, youth are encouraged to save a portion of their financial aid payment to promote asset development despite the absence of earnings. A continuing challenge in this area is reconciling the short-term nature of the THP-Plus program (youth can usually participate for a maximum of 24 months) with the needs of youth who are attending four-year colleges and may require housing assistance for a much longer period of time.

II. INTRODUCTION

Each year, nearly 25,000 youth age out or emancipate from the foster care system nationwide - over 4,000 of them in California alone - and are expected to live independently.¹ This usually occurs when a foster youth turns 18, though they may remain in care until age 19 if still completing their secondary education.^{2,3} Transitioning foster youth have limited or non-existent support from family and struggle with poverty, significant educational deficits, limited employment prospects, and, in many cases health and mental health problems. Finding safe and stable housing is a huge challenge for these youth. Failing to do so – living in unstable, unsupportive, or inappropriate settings or, at worst, becoming homeless – has serious ramifications for all other areas of life.

Counties participating in the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) are improving the housing outcomes of former foster youth by developing within their communities a variety of housing options that are supportive and flexible enough to meet the developmental needs of young adults. Local housing initiatives are collaborating with youth and caring adults, and fully utilizing available funding streams, to increase housing capacity for transition age foster youth. Wherever possible, the housing models utilized offer support services that sustain independent living and incorporate efforts to establish permanency and lifelong connections for each former foster youth.

2a. Homelessness and Risks of Homelessness among Former Foster Youth

The link between spending time in the foster care system and experiencing homelessness later in life is well documented in a number of studies. The earliest national study, from 1991, indicated that 25 percent of foster youth reported being homeless for at least a night within two and half to four years after leaving the system.⁴ Other estimates suggest that between nine percent and 39 percent of homeless adult populations surveyed throughout the United States have spent some time in the foster care system.⁵ Results from detailed local and regional studies, some as recent as 2005, show that securing safe and stable housing continues to be a major challenge for former foster care and probation youth:

- In Clark County (Las Vegas), Nevada, 36 percent of former foster youth reported that they had experienced homelessness⁶.
- In Wisconsin, 34 percent of foster youth had been homeless or lived in at least four different places 12 to 18 months after exiting the foster care system.⁷
- In Chicago a study of homeless youth found that 45 percent had been in foster care at some point.⁸
- A New York study found that one-third of youth discharged to their own care spent their first night homeless or in a shelter.⁸
- The Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth (Midwest Study) found that among 19 years olds no longer in care, 14 percent had been homeless in the (approximately) one year period since leaving care.⁹

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2006). *The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2005 Estimates as of September 2006. Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data submitted for the FY 2005, 10/1/04 through 9/30/05*. Available at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report13.htm.

² The THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project. (2008). *A Guide to Implementing the Host Family Model in THP-Plus: Providing Affordable Housing and Supportive Services to Youth Formerly in the Foster Care System*. Published by the John Burton Foundation.

³ Assembly Bill 12, currently under consideration in the legislature, would take advantage of the new federal legislation and funding discussed in Section 2a below to give youth the option of remaining in foster care until age 21. Although carrying the support of many legislators, the prospects for this legislation are uncertain, dependent on the outcome of the spending bills in the May 2009 special election and the health of the state budget generally.

⁴ Cook, R. (1991). *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth*. Rockville, MD: Westat Inc.

⁵ Roman, N.P. & Wolfe, N. (1995). *Web of failure: The Relationship between Foster Care and Homelessness*. Washington, DC: National Alliance to End Homelessness.

⁶ Reilly, T. (2003). Transitions from Care: Status and Outcomes of Youth Who Age out of Foster Care. *Child Welfare*, 82, 727-746.

⁷ Courtney, M., & Piliavin, I. (1998). *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: Outcomes 12 to 18 Months after Leaving Out-of-home Care*. Madison: University of Wisconsin.

⁸ Roman, N.P. & Wolfe, N. (1995). *Web of failure: The Relationship between Foster Care and Homelessness*. Washington, DC: National Alliance to End Homelessness.

⁹ Courtney, M., Terao, S. & Bost, N. (2005). *Executive Summary: Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 19*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

- In California, 65 percent of youth who emancipated from the State's foster care system in fiscal year 2000-2001 had an "imminent housing need."¹⁰
- A 2007 survey of youth who emancipated from San Francisco in 2005 and 2006 found that 11 percent were homeless or couch surfing¹¹

The Midwest Study also revealed that the housing instability these young adults experience is much greater than a nationally representative group of their peers who have not been in foster care. More than a third of those who were out of foster care by age 19 had changed their living arrangement at least two times since leaving the system, seven percent had been evicted (four times higher than the general U.S. population of 19 year olds), and 19 percent reported they did not have enough money to pay rent (twice as many as in the general population).¹² Two years later (at age 21), one-third of former foster youth had lived in at least three different living situations and 20 percent in four or more.¹³ By age 21, 18 percent had experienced homelessness since exiting care.

2b. Challenges to Housing Success for Transitioning Foster Youth

Securing and maintaining safe and stable housing is a challenge faced by many young people transitioning to adulthood, particularly in urban areas where affordable rental housing is scarce.¹⁴ In addition, the transition from adolescence to adulthood has lengthened in the past several decades, with young adults more slowly building the education and employment experience they need to ensure economic independence.¹⁵ As a result, nearly 45 percent of a nationally representative group of young adults in the United States still lived with a parent or other relative at the age of 21.¹⁶ Even at ages 23 to 27, nearly one quarter of adults in the nation still live with at least one parent, with higher rates among non-Hispanic Blacks and non-foreign born Hispanics.¹⁷ For those who do leave their parental home, 40 percent of American youth will move back home at least once during their late teens and twenties.¹⁸

The Midwest study found that former foster youth were much less likely than the general population of 21 year olds in the U.S. to live with biological parents (eight percent vs. 41 percent) and more likely to live with other relatives (17 percent vs. three percent) or with a spouse/partner/friend (13 percent vs. two percent). The foster-group sample resembled non-foster youth in terms of the share with their own place (44 percent vs. 47 percent respectively) but, the low numbers living with parents and kin, suggest that many former foster youth may be living independently of necessity rather than by choice, and experiencing hardship and instability in that situation.

Youth who must emancipate from foster care at age 18 or 19 and lack a family safety net are often confronted with stark choices that can result in homelessness, both temporary and long-term. Many youth face skeptical landlords

¹⁰ California Department of Social Services. (2002). *Report on the Survey of the Housing Needs of Emancipated Foster/Probation Youth*. Prepared by the Independent Living Program Policy Unit, Child and Youth Permanency Branch.

¹¹ San Francisco Human Services Agency. (Unpublished survey results). *Survey of Emancipated Youth – 2007*. February 28, 2008.

¹² Courtney, M., Terao, S. & Bost, N. (2005). *Executive Summary: Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 19*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

¹³ Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Cusick, G.R., Havlicek, J., Perez, A. & Keller, T. (2007). *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Age 21*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

¹⁴ U.S. Government Accounting Office (USGAO). (2007) *HHS Actions Would Help States Prepare Youth in the Foster Care System for Independent Living*. (GAO Publication No. GAO-07-1097T).

¹⁵ Arnett, J.J. (2000). Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55, 469-480.; Furstenberg, F. Jr., Rumbaut, R. & Settersten, R. (2005). On the Frontier of Adulthood: Emerging Themes and New Directions. In R. Settersten Jr., F. Furstenberg Jr., & R. Rumbaut (Eds.), *On the Frontier of Adulthood: Theory, Research and Public Policy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.; Goldscheider, F. & Goldscheider, C. (1999). *The Changing Transition to Adulthood: Leaving and Returning Home*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.; Osgood, D., Foster, E., Flanagan, C. & Ruth, G. (2005). Introduction: Why Focus on the Transition to Adulthood for Vulnerable Populations? In D. Wayne Osgood, E. Michael Foster, Constance Flanagan, & Gretchen Ruth (Eds.), *On Your Own without a Safety Net: The Transition to Adulthood for Vulnerable Population*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

¹⁶ As cited from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) in Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Cusick, G.R., Havlicek, J., Perez, A. & Keller, T. (2007). *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Age 21*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

¹⁷ Brown, B., Moore, K., & Bzostek, S. (2003). *A Portrait of Well-being in Early Adulthood*. A ChildTrends Report to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

¹⁸ Goldscheider, F. & Goldscheider, C. (1994). Leaving and Returning Home in 20th Century America. *Population Bulletin*, 48, 1-35.

who will not rent to youth without a credit history or an adult co-signer or guarantor.¹⁹ Even if a property owner is willing to rent to a young adult, former foster youth may have trouble securing the last month's rent and security deposit. Without previous independent living experience, transitioning foster youth may not know how to negotiate relationships with landlords and roommates, or how to budget finances so that an apartment can be maintained. Youth attending college and relying on dormitory housing may find themselves homeless during vacation and summer months.

III. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE HOUSING OUTCOMES OF TRANSITIONING FOSTER YOUTH

Safe and stable housing is one of the most essential needs of former foster youth. Without it, the pursuit of higher education, employment, overall well-being and community integration become near impossible goals. Recognition of its importance has motivated a great deal of legislative and programmatic action on behalf of former foster youth at the federal, state and local levels. This section provides a brief overview of some of the efforts in this area.

3a. The Federal Response to the Housing Needs of Foster Youth

At the federal level, legislation and funding have traditionally been directed at support programs that teach transitioning foster youth independent livings skills and facilitate educational goals. More recent years, however, have seen increased emphasis on providing housing support as well as efforts to extend the age through which foster care is funded.

Early Federal Legislation – The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, the first federal legislation and funding in this area, set aside \$45 million for the Independent Living Program (ILP) to support states in offering youth likely to remain in care until age 18 services that would help them transition to self-sufficient adulthood. By 1998, annual federal ILP spending had reached \$70 million and eligibility included all youth (not just those from welfare-eligible households) in foster care between ages 16 and 18, with a state option to provide aftercare supports through the age of 21 for former foster youth. Over time, federal legislation further increased expenditures and eligibility for ILP and also placed greater importance on the provision of transitional housing and post-secondary educational support in addition to imparting basic daily living skills.

In 1999, the Foster Care Independence Act (PL 106-169) renamed the federal program the “John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program” and doubled federal funding to \$140 million a year. It expanded eligibility for the program by giving states the option to provide ILP services to all foster care kids likely to remain in care until age 18 (no minimum age) and through the age of 21. In addition, states could use up to 30 percent of the federal grant to offer room and board subsidies for 18 to 20 year olds. In 2001, Public Law 107-133 authorized an additional \$60 million annually to fund education and training vouchers for foster youth pursuing higher education. Eligible youth can receive up to \$5,000 a year to apply to the costs related to attendance in a higher education or training program.

The Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Children Protection Act of 2003, a reauthorization of an earlier act, created the Transitional Living Program. This nationally competitive grants program funds up to \$40 million a year to local and state governments, as well as community-based organizations and tribal entities, to provide safe and stable living accommodations for homeless young people between ages 16 and 21, including foster youth or former foster youth in need of housing. Funded projects can receive up to \$200,000 a year for a five-year period. A number of

¹⁹ U.S. Government Accounting Office (USGAO). (2007) *HHS Actions Would Help States Prepare Youth in the Foster Care System for Independent Living*. (GAO Publication No. GAO-07-1097T).

other federal housing programs intended to assist homeless individuals with disabilities or individuals transitioning from homelessness may also fund supportive housing for which former foster youth may be eligible.²⁰

Current Legislative Landscape – Funding for the Chafee Program has remained at \$140 million a year for nearly a decade, despite a large and persistent gap between the number of youth eligible for and in need of transitional services and housing subsidies and the number of youth who receive them. In 1998, it was estimated that about 60 percent of foster youth eligible for ILP services nationwide were actually receiving them.²¹ In a 2004, U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) survey of state independent living coordinators, forty states reported serving 56,000 youth through ILP, or 44 percent of those eligible.²² In 2006, a follow up to that GAO survey found that a third of reporting state child welfare directors were serving less than half the eligible population of youth (while a third were serving three-quarters or more) and child welfare directors from 31 states reported dissatisfaction with the level of housing available to transitioning foster youth. The Midwest Study found that among current and former foster youth at age 19 just over a third (36 percent) had ever received some kind of housing service from a local ILP and only 23 percent reported ever having received an independent living subsidy. This pattern continued through the third wave of the Midwest Study, at age 21, when only 24 percent reported having received housing services from ILP since age 19.

Recent attempts to expand federal supports for foster youth during the transition to adulthood have taken a different approach. Rather than trying to further increase the federal funding available for ILP services, educational vouchers, and transitional housing, a more successful strategy has been to authorize the extension of federal funding for foster care up to age 21. A number of different legislative proposals over the past decade culminated in The Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (H.R. 6893), which was signed into law by President Bush on October 7, 2008 and will take effect in 2010. Among other things, H.R. 6893 creates a state option to extend the entitlement for foster care to youth through age 20, with the federal government matching a state's expenditures on the program. To qualify for support, youth must be working towards their high school diploma or similar credential; enrolled in a post-secondary educational, vocational or employment program; working at least 80 hours a month; or be incapable of doing any of the above activities due to a medical condition. For these older youth, H.R. 6893 expands the kind of placements or housing to which this funding can be applied, redefining "childcare institution" to also include "a supervised setting in which the individual is living independently, in accordance with such conditions as the Secretary shall establish in regulations,"²³ such as transitional or supportive housing options.

To date, only Vermont, the District of Columbia, and Illinois have state policies that allow foster youth to remain in care until age 21.²⁴ In Illinois, over half of foster youth now remain in care until their 21st birthday.²⁵ Because it contains data from a state which extends foster care coverage past age 18 (Illinois), the Midwest Study provides the earliest evidence that states who exercise this option for extended federal funding of foster care payments might help former foster youth achieve better outcomes in early adulthood.²⁶ Controlling for observed baseline characteristics, the study finds that at age 21 foster youth from Illinois are four times more likely to have ever attended college and three and a half times more likely to have completed one or more years of college than foster youth from Wisconsin or Iowa. The study also found that:

- Each additional year in care after the baseline interview (at age 17) was associated with a \$924 increase in annual earnings per youth.

²⁰ These include the Supportive Housing Program, the Shelter Plus Care Program and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS Program.

²¹ U.S. Government Accounting Office (USGAO). (1999b) *Foster Care: Effectiveness of Independent Living Services Unknown*. (GAO Publication No. HEHS-00-13).

²² U.S. Government Accounting Office (USGAO). (2007) *HHS Actions Would Help States Prepare Youth in the Foster Care System for Independent Living*. (GAO Publication No. GAO-07-1097T).

²³ From *Frequently Asked Questions: HR 6307 & Expanding Federal Funding for Youth in Foster Care to Age 21*, summary by the John Burton Foundation, available at: http://www.heysf.org/pdfs/070408/HR6307_FAQ.pdf.

²⁴ Vestal, C. (August 23, 2007). *States trying to extend foster-care benefits*. Stateline.org. Available at: <http://www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=234381>.

²⁵ Courtney, M., Dworsky, A. and Pollack, H. (2007). *When Should the State Cease Parenting? Evidence from the Midwest Study*. Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago: Issue Brief #115.

²⁶ Ibid.

- Being in care was associated with a 38 percent reduction in the likelihood of becoming pregnant between ages 17 and 19.
- Remaining in care past age 18 is positively associated with receiving independent living services, which assist foster youth during the transition to adulthood.

3b. The State Response to the Housing Needs of Foster Youth in California

In California, efforts by advocacy groups and policymakers have also resulted in state legislation and programmatic funding aimed to expand the supply of housing available to transitioning foster care youth and keep them stably housed during this period.

California Assembly Bill 1198: Creation of the THPP Program – The Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) was created in 1993 through Assembly Bill 1198. The program provides funding for counties to develop safe living environments for youth so that they can practice independent living skills prior to emancipation from the foster care system. THPP housing models include apartments, single-family dwellings, condominiums, college dormitories, and host family models.²⁷ Counties that participate in THPP provide supervised transitional housing in which youth can live alone or with roommates. They also receive support services that include residence visits, educational guidance, and employment counseling. Youth are eligible for the program if they are currently in foster care and between the ages of 16 and 18 years, and they can remain in the program for a maximum of 24 cumulative months. Each THPP participant completes a Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP), describing the goals agreed upon by youth and their caseworkers, and it is updated every six months. In the most recent fiscal year (2008-2009), the State allocated nearly \$3.5 million to fund 429 transitional beds in the 27 counties participating in THPP.²⁸

California Assembly Bills 427: Creation of STEP and the THP-Plus Programs – In 2001, California Assembly Bill 427 provided additional transitional housing support for former foster care youth by creating two programs. The Supportive Transitional Emancipation Program (STEP) allowed counties to provide monthly financial support to emancipated foster youth attending school or working toward the goals in their Transitional Independent Living Plans (TILP).²⁹ The Transitional Housing Placement-Plus (THP-Plus) Program established the Foster Youth Transitional Housing Fund to pay for housing vouchers or payments to providers offering emancipated foster youth housing for up to 24 cumulative months and through age 21.

California Assembly Bills 1119, 824 & 1808 – In 2001, the California Department of Social Services conducted a survey of the housing needs of the approximately 4,350 youth who emancipated from foster care in California in fiscal year 2000-2001.³⁰ The survey found that two-thirds of the youth surveyed were in need of safe and affordable housing at the time of emancipation and counties estimated that roughly 3,800 additional housing units were needed to address their needs. The types of housing options suggested by the counties surveyed included host-family housing, apartments or housing units, housing vouchers, dormitory housing, and boarding house units. The report summarizing the survey results offered a number of recommendations, including: consideration of a database of available housing resources for this population of young adults; development of multi-county and regional efforts to match youth with housing; coordinated planning and development of new housing; and the creation of linkages between transitional housing and the other services and programs needed by former foster/probation youth to succeed in school and employment.

²⁷ California Department of Social Services, Children and Family Services Division, Child and Youth Permanency Branch and Independent Living Program Policy Unit. *Transitional Housing Placement Program for Current Foster/Probation Youth*. Sacramento, CA. Available at: http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/res/pdf/THPP_Brochure.pdf.

²⁸ See All County Letter 08-62 dated December 23, 2008 available at: <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl08/08-62.pdf>.

²⁹ The THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project. (2007). *Effective Practices in THP-Plus: Providing Affordable Housing and Supportive Services to Youth Formerly in the foster Care and Juvenile Probation Systems. A Technical Assistance Document Developed by the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project*. The John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes. Available at: <http://www.thplusplus.org/publications.html>.

³⁰ For full details on the survey and its findings, please see: California Department of Social Services. (2002). *Report on the Survey of the Housing Needs of Emancipated Foster/Probation Youth*. Prepared by the Independent Living Program Policy Unit, Child and Youth Permanency Branch.

Partially in response to the findings of the Survey of Housing Needs for Emancipated Foster/Probation Youth, additional legislation was passed to expand housing opportunities for former foster youth in California. Assembly Bill 1119 of 2002 removed a key barrier to implementation of THP-Plus program by de-linking it from STEP which very few counties were accessing. In 2004, THP-Plus became an annual appropriation instead of a one-time allocation; in 2005, Assembly Bill 824 extended eligibility for THP-Plus through age 24; and in 2006, budget trailer Assembly Bill 1808 (Chapter 75) removed the 60 percent county match requirement making the program fully state-funded. Funding for the THP-Plus program has grown dramatically in recent years from \$1.3 million in fiscal year 2005/06³¹ to \$4.5 million in fiscal year 2006/07³² and to \$35.2 million for fiscal year 2007/08.³³ The THP-Plus program is discussed in greater detail in **Section 2c** (*Collaborative Housing Program and Policy Initiatives in California*).

Senate Bill 436 (SB 436): Pregnant & Parenting Foster Youth Housing – Senate Bill 436 provides a safety net and increases the amount of housing available for pregnant and parenting foster teens. Passed in 2005, the bill requires counties to include a description in their annual ILP report of currently available transitional housing resources in relation to the number of emancipating pregnant or parenting foster youth and to create a plan for meeting any unmet transitional housing needs of emancipating pregnant or parenting foster youth. The bill seeks to increase the use of existing Transitional Housing funds, by offering counties specific guidelines on using the funds to assist pregnant and parenting foster youth, and also requires that transitional housing programs established under Section 11403.2 of the Welfare and Institutions Code set aside a number of units for pregnant or parenting emancipated foster youth.

Proposition 1C – In November 2006, California voters approved the statewide ballot measure Proposition 1C, which establishes that the State will issue bonds totaling \$2.85 billion to fund housing programs over 30 years. The funding can be used support shelters and affordable housing for a variety of vulnerable populations (battered women, seniors, disabled, veterans, etc.), including a \$50 million set aside to develop housing for homeless and former foster youth.

3c. Collaborative Housing Program and Policy Initiatives in California

In collaboration with community services providers and public agencies, philanthropic organizations are also contributing significantly to the development of solutions that address the housing needs of former foster youth.

Foster Youth Housing Initiative – A collaboration of the William and Flora Hewlett, the James Irvine, the Charles and Helen Schwab and the Sobrato Family Foundations, the Foster Youth Housing Initiative (FYHI) aims to fill the current housing gap that exists for former foster care youth.³⁴ Since January 2006, the Initiative has provided over two million dollars to fund efforts to improve service provision, develop additional housing units and implement systems change to end homelessness among former foster youth in the San Francisco Bay area. Direct services funding has provided just over \$1.4 million to six community-based organizations (including First Place for Youth, Larkin Street Youth Center, and the Bill Wilson Center) that offer housing and support services to youth. Another \$350,000 was given to the Corporation for Supportive Housing to provide both technical assistance and capacity building grants (totaling \$200,000) to community organizations to facilitate the development of new housing units. To promote systems change, \$150,000 was granted to the John Burton Foundation for Children without Homes to implement the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project (discussed next). Finally, \$200,000 was dedicated to program management and evaluation. The Bay Area counties directly benefiting from this Initiative are Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, Santa Clara and San Mateo.

³¹ THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project. (2006). *THP-Plus Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2006-07*. Available at: <http://www.thplus.org/THP-PlusAnnualReport.pdf>.

³² See All County Letter 06-38 dated September 8, 2006 available at: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl06/pdf/06-38.pdf>.

³³ See All County Letter 07-38 dated October 18, 2007 available at: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl07/pdf/07-38.pdf>.

³⁴ Proposal to Evaluate the Foster Youth Housing Initiative. March 23, 2006. LaFrance Associates.

Over the two years of the Initiative, FYHI grantees provided housing for 586 former foster youth who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.³⁵ FYHI capacity building investments are expected to result in between 99 and 112 new housing units designated for former foster youth between 2009 and 2011.

Final survey data from nearly 200 youth participating in FYHI funded programs found that:

- The average housing tenure was 16 months, at the end of which 83 percent of participants had or were on the path to earn sufficient monthly income to afford stable housing.
- School enrollment increased from 65 percent to 70 percent, and average hours spent on school increased from four to 11 hours a week. Sixty-eight percent of youth with only a high school degree/GED or less increased their educational attainment.
- Average earnings increased from \$8.60 to \$10.88 an hour, while total income increased almost 50 percent.
- Youth accessed health and mental health services more often, reported decreased depression, and improved positive outlook since baseline. Among youth facing serious mental health challenges, providers reported that 61 percent were sufficiently connected with the mental health services they needed to maintain housing and well-being.
- The proportion of participants living with their own children increased from 51 percent to 90 percent, suggesting an increase in parental custody.
- Cost-benefit analysis of these results suggest that the cost per youth of the Initiative is paid off within 15 years through reduced criminal justice costs, homelessness and public assistance reliance, and increased income tax revenue. Over 40 years, the Initiative yields a net benefit per youth of \$90,000.

Other findings from the FYHI evaluation thus far have suggested that to ensure a housing program is effective for former foster youth, it should:

- Promote independent living and counter the “learned dependency” that can result from lengthy placement in foster care; in particular, it should offer youth choice among housing options, and choice of a roommate
- Be tailored to the needs of individual youth, especially parenting youth or those with mental health issues
- Offer supportive services easily accessible from where youth live
- Provide education/training for landlords of transitional or subsidized housing for former foster youth
- Create opportunities for successful youth to serve as role models and advocates for their peers

[The THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project](#) - The THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project³⁶ is a three-year collaboration between the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes, the California Department of Social Services, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing. State funding through the THP-Plus program increased three-fold between the 2005/06 and the 2006/07 fiscal years, while eliminating the requirement that counties provide a 60 percent funding match removed a huge barrier to the development of local programs. Because counties and housing providers were not immediately prepared to apply for funds or develop appropriate housing programs, the John Burton Foundation took on the challenge of coordinating technical assistance for the various stakeholders during this period of rapid program expansion.³⁷

Begun in October 2006, the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project has three outcome goals related to California’s THP-Plus program:

- Decreasing homelessness among foster youth by increasing access to THP-Plus funding and transitional housing opportunities (the measurable goal is to serve approximately 1,500 former foster youth by the 2008-2009 fiscal year);

³⁵ Latham, N., Boer Drake, E., Cuevas, R. and Sugano, E. (2008). *Foster Youth Housing Initiative: Final Evaluation Findings*. November 2008 Revised. La France Associates, LLC.

³⁶ For detailed information on the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project, please see: <http://www.thplus.org/>.

³⁷ Latham, N., Boer Drake, E., Cuevas, R. and Sugano, E. (2008). *Foster Youth Housing Initiative: Final Evaluation Findings*. November 2008 Revised. La France Associates, LLC.

- Establishing a network of THP-Plus practitioners and supporters who are informed and engaged in the policy making process; and
- Expanding the knowledge base of effective housing approaches for former foster youth.

The project's efforts in support of these goals include ongoing activities to refine the THP-Plus program development guidelines; provide training workshops, institutes, and other technical assistance for county agencies and housing providers; and develop educational resource publications and data tracking/monitoring tools to inform and evaluate THP-Plus programs.

By 2007, a year after the initiation of the Project, 46 counties had plans approved to utilize THP-Plus dollars to house former foster youth ages 18 to 24. The number of housing units (at any given moment in time) funded through THP-Plus increased tenfold from 50 in 2003 to 500 in 2007, and then doubled to 1,000 units in 2008.³⁸ County child welfare agencies use the funding to contract with local organizations that will develop and supervise local THP-Plus programs. County agencies have ultimate responsibility of oversight for the youth in these programs, so local child welfare or independent living program staff are often involved in screening program candidates, approving program placement and supervising program participants.³⁹

The housing programs that are funded through THP-Plus encompass a range of designs, partnerships, and associated service strategies in order to be age-appropriate, accommodate youths' varying needs and allow clients more freedom – with fewer and different rules – than apply to youth in foster care.⁴⁰ All local THP-Plus programs are required to provide 15 supportive services including mentoring, 24-hour crisis intervention, case management, food and necessity allowance, job readiness training, educational support and individual or group therapy.⁴¹ Also recommended for each program are additional services such as housing literacy curriculum, moving assistance, life skills training, transportation assistance and moving assistance. In addition, the THP-Plus program requires that participating youth must have completed or still be involved with the local independent living program and working toward goals of their Transitional Independent Living Plan. For providing housing and services, agencies are compensated at a THP-Plus rate set at no more than 70 percent of the average group home rate for a 16 to 18 year old in that county as of June 30, 2001.

³⁸ Lorentzen, B, Lemley, A., Kimberlin, S. and Byrnes, M. (2008). *Policy Brief: Outcomes for Former Foster Youth in California's THP-Plus Program: Are Youth in THP-Plus Faring Better?* John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes. Available at: <http://www.thplus.org/publications.html>.

³⁹ Powerpoint presentation prepared by Cynthia Guilford and Lyn Stueve, of the California Department of Social Services, ILP/Transitional Housing Unit, for the 2008 THP-Plus Institute held in Los Angeles on July 17, 2008.

⁴⁰ The THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project. (2008). *A Guide to Implementing the Host Family Model in THP-Plus: Providing Affordable Housing and Supportive Services to Youth Formerly in the Foster Care System*. Published by the John Burton Foundation. Available at: <http://www.thplus.org/publications.html>.

⁴¹ The THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project. (2007). *Effective Practices in THP-Plus: Providing Affordable Housing and Supportive Services to Youth Formerly in the foster Care and Juvenile Probation Systems. A Technical Assistance Document Developed by the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project*. The John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes. Available at: <http://www.thplus.org/publications.html>.

The John Burton Foundation completed a cross-sectional survey of over 450 THP-Plus participants in the spring of 2008.⁴² Respondents represented 34 of the 54 housing providers funded by THP-Plus throughout California, and had been housed by THP-Plus programs anywhere from one to 24 months. Similar to FHYI evaluation findings, the THP-Plus survey found improved work, education and other outcomes among program participants.

- Work participation increased from 53 percent at program entry to 63 percent at the time of survey.
- The majority (69 percent) of participants who increased their level of work participation also increased or maintained their participation in schooling.
- Among all participants, wages increased from an average of \$9.05 per hour at entry to an average of \$10.25 per hour when surveyed. The average increase among those in the program longer than six months was \$1.31 more per hour than among those in the program less than six months, and \$2.71 more per hour for those in the program longer than one year when compared with those in the program less than one year.
- Participants also reported (at survey) low levels of involvement in criminal justice activity (4 percent); higher levels of connection to a permanent connection (93 percent versus 84 percent at entry); and high levels of satisfaction with the program (92 percent rated the program as good or excellent).

These early results may have influenced the continued funding growth for THP-Plus in the 2008-2009 fiscal year – a bright spot amidst a landscape of budget constraints and program cutbacks in California. As **Table 3.1** indicates, the most recent general funds allocation provided nearly \$41 million to support 1,395 beds in 46 counties⁴³ and this level was preserved in the 2009-2010 California budget signed by Governor Schwarzenegger on February 20, 2009.⁴⁴

Table 3.1: California THP-Plus Funding Levels, by Fiscal Year⁴⁵

	Fiscal Year:		
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
California - Total Funding	\$4,496,000	\$35,223,000	\$40,878,000
California - Beds Funded	167	1,370	1,395
# Counties Participating Statewide	5	44	46

3d. Local Programmatic Responses

As noted above, public agencies and community-based organizations have developed a variety of housing models to increase the local housing capacity for transition-age foster youth and other vulnerable populations. This section briefly reviews some of the key concepts and housing models employed in this work, and provides some local examples of each type of program.

Supportive Housing Models – Supportive housing emerged as a strategy for preventing homelessness among a variety of vulnerable populations. By providing permanent housing units along with a set of support services, often quite extensive, supportive housing models are able to safely and stably house individuals with the most complex of needs including those with extremely low incomes, substance abuse issues, and persistent health challenges such as mental illness, physical disabilities or HIV/AIDS. Research has shown not only improved housing stability and reduced homelessness among supportive housing participants, but better health and employment outcomes and improved ability to treat mental illness and substance abuse issues.⁴⁶ The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) was one of the first organizations to apply the concept of supportive housing to vulnerable young adult populations in

⁴² For further information, please see: Lorentzen, B, Lemley, A., Kimberlin, S. and Byrnes, M. (2008). *Policy Brief: Outcomes for Former Foster Youth in California's THP-Plus Program: Are Youth in THP-Plus Faring Better?* John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes. Available at: <http://www.thpplus.org/publications.html>.

⁴³ See All County Letter 08-62 dated December 23, 2008 available at: <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl08/08-62.pdf>.

⁴⁴ THP-Plus News, Spring 2009 newsletter, available at: <http://www.thpplus.org/newsletters.html>.

⁴⁵ See All County Letter 06-38 dated September 8, 2006 available at: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl06/pdf/06-38.pdf>; All County Letter 07-38 dated October 18, 2007 available at: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl07/pdf/07-38.pdf>; and All County Letter 08-62 dated December 23, 2008 available at: <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl08/08-62.pdf>.

⁴⁶ For more information, please see: <http://www.csh.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=344&nodeID=81>.

the United States. After a CSH-sponsored trip to review housing models in the United Kingdom, New York City financed two supportive housing projects – Common Ground’s Christopher Residence and The Foyer and Lantern Group’s Schafer Hall – for young adults transitioning from the foster care system. CSH also advocated for new legislation, funding and initiatives to develop supportive housing units for both adults and transitioning youth in New York.⁴⁷

Single-Site Housing Models – Single-site housing is a project-based model in which the units of a single apartment building or complex are available to house transitioning youth (or other vulnerable young adult populations). Single-site housing can be a permanent housing opportunity, in which there is a direct lease between the housing provider (landlord) and the youth, or provide transitional housing (with the agency serving as intermediary) for a limited period of time, usually two years. Single-site housing enables efficient service delivery and opportunities for supportive relationships among residents with similar life experiences, but it is not very effective at integrating foster youth into the larger community.

An example of a transitional, single-site housing model is the Pathways program in Los Angeles, established by United Friends of the Children, an advocacy and program provision organization. Pathways offers an 18-month transitional housing experience in an environment that is enriched with an array of support services. These include educational mentoring and assistance, advocacy and counseling services, on-site mental health counseling, career development and guidance, independent living skills training and ongoing personal support.⁴⁸

A single-site housing model may offer permanent housing for its residents, particularly when they are dealing with long-term health or mental health issues. An example of this type of program is Ellis Street Apartments in San Francisco, a joint project of Larkin Street Youth Center and the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation. Ellis Street offers 24 private studio units for young adults who have been homeless; six of these units are set aside for individuals who are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.⁴⁹ Case management is available on site, but other supportive services are available at Larkin Street’s nearby service center.

Scattered-Site Housing Models – Scattered-site housing is a tenant-based model that places youth in buildings located throughout the community, in which no more than a certain percent of tenants are transitioning youth. While this model provides youth a more mainstream housing experience, it is more expensive to supervise and more difficult to provide easy access to support services for participants. A scattered-site housing model might be transitional in nature or, if tenants have the option to permanently take over the lease at the conclusion of their program term, it can help former foster youth achieve long-term housing stability. In many of the permanent scattered-site housing programs youth gradually assume a greater proportion of monthly rental and living expenses until they are fully self-sufficient. However, offering tenants the option to remain in their units does require a program to constantly replenish its stock of scattered-site units.

There are a number of successful scattered-site housing models currently in operation that serve transitioning foster youth. My First Place is a scattered-site housing program, developed by First Place for Youth in Oakland, which provides one or two bedroom apartments as well as intensive case management, advocacy, and support services.⁵⁰ Participants receive help with move-in costs, rent, food, self-reliance planning, health and mental needs, and assistance with employment and education. In 2007, 140 youth were housed through My First Place. Ninety percent of participating youth accepted the option to take over their lease or exited into other permanent housing. Eighty-three percent of eligible youth obtained employment, 77 percent enrolled in post-secondary education, and nearly all

⁴⁷ For more information on supportive housing efforts in New York, please see: <http://www.csh.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=4086&nodeID=89>.

⁴⁸ For more information, please see: http://www.unitedfriends.org/programs/prog_housing.html.

⁴⁹ For more information, please see: <http://www.larkinstreetyouth.org/programs/ellisstreet.php>.

⁵⁰ For more information, please see http://firstplaceforyouth.org/programs/first_place.

(97 percent) of residents who were mothers did not have another child while in the program.⁵¹ In San Francisco, Larkin Street operates the Larkin Extended Aftercare for Supported Emancipation program, a transitional scattered-site housing program that places youth in studio apartments. Support services such as counseling, employment training, referrals, and case management are also provided through Larkin Street Youth Services to ensure that they secure and retain stable housing beyond their participation in the program. Among youth completing Larkin Street's transitional housing programs, 76 percent exited to stable and independent housing.⁵²

Host-Family Housing Models – Host-family housing models provide housing in which an emancipating or former foster youth resides in the safe and stable household of a supportive family member, permanent connection or other caring adult. Youth in this type of housing have access to the formal support services offered by the child welfare agency or other contracted service provider, but may also gain a stronger sense of family and community belonging as they transition to adulthood. Growing utilization of the host-family model has coincided with increasing awareness of the importance of *permanency* within the life of current and former foster youth,⁵³ and greater integration of the concept within child welfare practice. Participation in a host-family program can engage former foster youth and their permanent connections in a formal relationship that reinforces their long-term commitment to one another. The host-family model is very cost-effective because it utilizes existing housing units. It is also more similar to what many non-foster youth experience during the transition to adulthood; young adults gain hands-on experience in the daily activities that comprise independent living (household maintenance, cooking, and budgeting) while still living at home. In the California THP-Plus program, a host family receives a stipend of \$500 per month to contribute to the costs of food, utilities and transportation associated with having a former foster youth join the household.⁵⁴

The Permanent Avenue Toward Home (PATH) program, also operated by First Place for Youth in Oakland, is an example of a host-family housing model. PATH pairs youth with a permanent, caring adult, chosen by the youth, who provides housing for the youth in their home. The adult commits to providing housing for up to two years or until the youth turns 25 years old, and both youth participants and host families receive case management and other support services directly from First Place for Youth. This dual level of case management support – for both youth participants and host families – has proven essential for supporting permanency efforts as well as for creating and maintaining successful housing situations.

IV. CC25I EFFORTS IN THE AREA OF HOUSING

Counties participating in CC25I aim to improve policies, programs, and outcomes for transition-age foster youth in seven focus areas: K-12 Education; Employment/Job Training/Post-Secondary Education; Financial Competency and Asset Development; Housing; Independent Living Skills Programs; Personal/Social Asset Development; and Permanency. The Housing objective of CC25I is to ensure that every foster youth who emancipates from the child welfare system has access to a variety of housing options that are supportive and flexible enough to meet the developmental needs of young adults. Through partnership with foster youth, caregivers, and community programs, as well as through full utilization of available housing funding streams, CC25I counties are increasing local housing capacity and expanding access to resources and opportunities for transitioning foster youth to experience independent living.

⁵¹ First Place for Youth. *2007 Annual Report*. Available at: http://firstplaceforyouth.org/news/story/2007_annual_report.

⁵² From *Larkin Street Metrics: 2008 Snapshot*, available at: <http://www.larkinstreetyouth.org/news/pdf/Larkin%20Street%20Metrics%202008%20Snapshot.pdf>.

⁵³ The THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project. (2008). *A Guide to Implementing the Host Family Model in THP-Plus: Providing Affordable Housing and Supportive Services to Youth Formerly in the Foster Care System*. The John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes. Available at: <http://www.thplus.org/publications.html>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

The Housing objectives of CC25I, which increase the likelihood that former foster youth will secure safe, appropriate long-term housing during early adulthood, clearly interact with efforts in other CC25I focus areas. Efforts to expand the housing options for transitioning youth is building increasingly on the lifelong connections between youth and caring adults established through the permanency work that begins while youth are still in care. Furthermore, young adults who are safely and stably housed are far more likely to continue their education, maintain gainful employment and participate more fully in their communities.

This section reviews the progress made thus far by the four early implementing CC25I Counties – Fresno, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Stanislaus – in advancing the CC25I logic model in the area of Housing. This section begins with a summary of the inputs, targeted goals and activities, and anticipated outcomes of the CC25I Housing logic model. This is followed by a summary of the main accomplishments of each county, as detailed in their interim reports, and the key lessons learned in each. The section concludes with the Housing activities and benchmarks planned by the counties in the near future.

4a. The CC25I Logic Model for Housing

Each county participating in CC25I has flexibility in developing the programs and services that will best respond to the housing needs of their local foster youth population. The CC25I Housing Logic Model presented here lends their efforts some unifying guidelines in terms of the overarching philosophy, desired impact and possible strategies.

Housing: Anticipated Outcomes – In the area of Housing, there are five ultimate outcomes that all CC25I counties are required to track among their foster youth:

1. The percentage of foster youth with a housing plan for where they will reside after they leave foster care
2. The percentage of former foster youth who have housing during the transitional period
3. The percentage of former foster youth who feel their housing situation is safe⁵⁵
4. The percentage of former foster youth in long-term housing
5. The percentage of former foster youth who experienced a period of homelessness in the past year⁵⁶

Housing: Goals and Activities – As part of CC25I, child welfare agencies are engaging in efforts to work with other public agencies and community partners to achieve the following goals:

- Expand housing and transitional housing capacity and resources available to transitioning foster youth.
- Develop a continuum of housing supports and link youth to the services that best meet their needs.
- Incorporate permanency and lifelong connections concepts into transitional housing models.

In order to achieve these goals, CC25I counties have identified the following activities in their initial proposals and in the updated benchmarks provided in their interim reports:

- Outreach to and partner with other housing organizations and initiatives to develop local housing resources that meet the needs of transitioning youth.
- Utilize more of the funds available through the California THP-Plus program funding to increase transitional housing capacity.
- Develop host family models of transitional housing that build on efforts to establish permanency and lifelong connections for foster youth.

⁵⁵ "Safe" is determined by the response to a five-point scale.

⁵⁶ "Homelessness" is defined as not having a place of one's own to live for at least one night. For example, living in a car or on the street, staying temporarily with a friend or at a shelter, etc.

Housing: Inputs – In addition to the flexible CC25I grant dollars, which counties can use to support strategies in any of the seven focus areas, participating counties have had access to several opportunities for technical assistance provided through CC25I support. In 2005, CC25I coordinated individual county technical assistance⁵⁷ on models for developing transitional and supportive housing programs for former foster youth. In February 2006, CC25I sponsored an all-county technical assistance workshop on how to apply for and spend THP-Plus funding. Staff from the California Department of Social Services and from counties already participating in THP-Plus shared advice and lessons learned with newly applying counties. The workshop focused primarily on how THP-Plus funding could be used to develop a host family model of transitional housing for foster youth. Presentations on developing successful and effective housing models for foster youth were also included in the spring 2007 General Convening attended by all CC25I counties. CC25I general convenings – offered once or twice a year – provide CC25I counties an ongoing opportunity to share with one another their latest challenges and accomplishments in each of the seven focus areas.

The state funded THP-Plus Program has become one of the most important sources for dollars to expand transitional housing capacity in CC25I counties. Although San Francisco County was initially the only CC25I early implementing county receiving THP-Plus funding, all four counties have, while participating in the CC25 Initiative, submitted THP-Plus proposals to develop and expand housing capacity for former foster youth.

As **Table 4.1** shows, THP-Plus funding to CC25I counties increased from \$837,000 in fiscal year 2006/07 to over \$6 million in fiscal year 2008/09 and the number of transitional beds funded increased from 31 to 231. In addition, all counties in California can participate in the annual THP-Plus Institute sponsored by the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project.⁵⁸ These institutes provide a wealth of information on how to develop and sustain effective, supportive housing programs that serve the needs of transitioning foster youth and allow counties the opportunities to share challenges and lessons learned. Further information on the accomplishments of CC25I counties related to the THP-Plus program is detailed in the next section.

Table 4.1: THP-Plus Funding Levels, by CC25I County and Fiscal Year⁵⁹

	Fiscal Year:		
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Fresno	\$0	\$665,400	\$619,200
San Francisco	\$837,000	\$3,131,000	\$2,913,300
Santa Clara	\$0	\$2,381,000	\$2,215,400
Stanislaus	\$0	\$288,300	\$350,000
CC25I Counties - Total Funding	\$837,000	\$6,465,700	\$6,097,900
CC25I Counties - Beds Funded	31	231	231

CC25I counties have also benefited from funds and technical assistance provided by other philanthropic community partners for transitional housing. In particular, the Foster Youth Housing Initiative (described in **Section 3c**, above), provided grants to two CC25I Counties, San Francisco and Santa Clara, for housing and support services in addition to technical assistance and capacity building.

4b. CC25I Housing Accomplishments

Among the four CC25I early implementing counties, Fresno, San Francisco, and Stanislaus Counties have been part of the Initiative since July 2005. Santa Clara County first joined CC25I in December 2005. To date, all four counties

⁵⁷ Technical assistance was provided by Amy Lemley, formerly of the First Place Fund for Youth and currently with the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes, and Liz Orlin of the Corporation for Supportive Housing.

⁵⁸ For more information on annual THP-Plus Institutes, please see: <http://www.thpplus.org/>.

⁵⁹ See All County Letter 06-38 dated September 8, 2006 available at: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl06/pdf/06-38.pdf>; All County Letter 07-38 dated October 18, 2007 available at: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl07/pdf/07-38.pdf>; and All County Letter 08-62 dated December 23, 2008 available at: <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl08/08-62.pdf>.

have completed interim reports through the end of their second or third years of CC25I funding and work. This section presents the accomplishments of the early implementing counties in the area of transitional housing as reported in their annual interim reports. Counties are still implementing the new data tracking strategies that will allow ongoing assessment of foster youth outcomes, designed to track the five ultimate CC25I Housing outcomes listed above (page 14). However, the progress made in accomplishing the goals and activities of the CC25I Housing Logic Model can provide an early indicator of whether counties are on track to achieve the anticipated outcomes.

Table 4.2 shows that the four counties vary considerably in terms of their population size, ethnic/race composition, geographic profiles and demographics. Their foster-care caseloads also vary. Fresno County, for example, has the largest number of youth five and under in care, while San Francisco, has a larger percentage in the transitional age range (16-18+). Challenging for some CC25I counties is the large number of youth that must be placed outside the county and, conversely in some counties, the large numbers of youth placed within county coming from elsewhere.

Table 4.2: CC25I County Profile⁶⁰

	Fresno	San Francisco	Santa Clara	Stanislaus	
Population	816,400	787,500	1.7 million	454,600	
% by Ethnicity	37 White 47 Hispanic 5 Black 9 Asian/PI 2 Other	45 White 14 Hispanic 7 Black 32 Asian/PI 3 Other	43 White 25 Hispanic 3 Black 27 Asian/PI 1 Other	52 White 38 Hispanic 2 Black 5 Asian/PI 3 Other	
Geographical Place Type	Rural	Urban	Urban/ Suburban	Rural	
Child Welfare(CW)-Supervised Foster Care Caseload, by Age & Out-of-County Placement (January 2008)					
	TOTAL	2,541	1,645	1,870	587
Age Breakdown of Children in Foster Care	0-5	735 (29%)	330 (20%)	619 (33%)	200 (34%)
	6-15	1,366 (54%)	855 (52%)	874 (47%)	281 (48%)
	16-17	379 (15%)	321 (20%)	316 (17%)	97 (17%)
	18+	61 (2%)	139 (8%)	61 (3%)	9 (2%)
% of the County's CW-Supervised Caseload Placed Out-of-county (1/2008)	11%	57%	32%	17%	
Additional Children Placed in County from Other Jurisdictions (1/2008)	406	100	152	504	

Initiation of or expansion of a THP-Plus program was the primary mechanism through which CC25I counties grew their capacity to provide transitional housing to emancipated foster youth. All counties moved quickly and enthusiastically to implement a host family model of transitional housing as part of their THP Plus programs, integrating their efforts at establishing permanency and lifelong connections for transitioning foster care youth with efforts to provide stable housing in the post-emancipation period. San Francisco County was one of the first implementers of the THP-Plus program while the other three counties developed THP-Plus programs after engaging in the CC25 Initiative. Santa Clara and Stanislaus Counties began implementing the program in FY 2006-2007 and Fresno County began implementing the program in FY 2007-2008. An overview of each county's THP-Plus accomplishments is presented in **Table 4.3**.

It should be noted that because some counties began housing youth in FY 2006-2007 prior to receiving a THP-Plus funding allocation, the State allowed the FY 2007-2008 allocations to be used to reimburse counties for housing expenditures in FY 2006-2007 as well as to fund new expenses in FY 2007-2008. In FY 2008-2009, to accommodate an increasing number of new counties applying for THP-Plus support, the State approved funding for

⁶⁰ Table sources include: *California Connected by 25: An Introduction to the Initiative* available at: http://www.f2f.ca.gov/res/CC25IIntro_Report.pdf and Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Ataie, Y., Winn, A., Blumberg, R., & Cuccaro-Alamin, S. (2008). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved [September 24, 2008], from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/ (for January 2008 point in time estimates).

returning counties at a level equal to the number of units approved of in the previous year (whether or not the number of youth to be served increased), and the actual funding allocation was 98.8 percent of the previous year's level.⁶¹

Table 4.3: Overview of THP-Plus Goals and Accomplishments, by County, 2006-2009

County	Planned Units (2006 proposal)	# Units THP+ Allocated 2006/2007	# Units Operating July 2006 – June 2007	# Units THP+ Allocated 2007/2008	# Units Operating July 2007 – June 2008	Planned Units (2008 proposal)	# Units THP+ Allocated 2008/2009
Fresno	10 host family units	0	0	20	20 host family units, served 8 youth (served 20 youth by August 2008)	75 host family and scattered site models	20
San Francisco	40-60 units, mixed model types	31	80 scattered site, single site and host family units, served 100 youth	111	127 scattered site, single site and host family units, served 140 youth	250 mixed model types	111
Santa Clara	50 units, mixed model types	0	57 scattered site, single-site and host family units, served 66 youth	80	96 scattered site, single site and host family units, served 135 youth	80 mixed model types	80
Stanislaus	Unspecified number of host family units	0	20 host family units, served 20 youth	20	20 host family units, served 29 youth	25 host family and scattered site units	20

The remainder of this section reviews the accomplishments of each CC25I early implementing county in the area of Housing. This includes a more detailed account of how counties used THP-Plus funding to expand housing capacity and implement host-family models of housing, as well as other efforts they undertook to develop a continuum of housing support and link transitioning foster youth to it.

Fresno County

The Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services received initial approval to develop a THP-Plus host family model of housing from the State in 2006, but funding was not allocated until FY 2007-2008, when the County was approved to provide 20 units of housing. Throughout 2007, the County worked to establish the program parameters, integrating the host family model of housing with ongoing efforts to establish permanency for transitioning youth, developing the training curriculum, and conducting outreach to resource families and other lifelong connections to encourage interest in the program.

In December 2007, letters were mailed to 35 prospective host families, and by early 2008 five youth had attended orientation and completed the application process. The program was at full capacity (20 youth) by August of 2008 and has remained at full capacity with a wait list of youth eager to participate. The Aspira Foster Family Agency is the current contractor overseeing implementation of the THP-Plus program in Fresno County and provides case management and other services to assist youth with school and employment issues, household maintenance, budgeting, etc. For FY 2008-2009, the County sought approval to serve up to 75 youth (30 host family units and 45 scattered site units), but funding was allocated for only 20 units.

San Francisco County

In its March 2006 THP-Plus proposal, the San Francisco County Human Services Agency's sought approval to serve up to 60 youth a year through the state-funded program, utilizing a variety of program types (master lease hotels, scattered site housing and mixed use/population housing) as well as the newly developed host family model.

⁶¹ All County Letter 08-62 dated December 23, 2008 available at: <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl08/08-62.pdf>.

Although San Francisco only received THP-Plus funding for up to 31 units, by the end of FY 2006-2007, the County funded and operated a total of 80 housing units (serving 100 youth) through the THP-Plus program. Ten of the 80 units were offered in host family settings through a contract with First Place for Youth established in March 2007.

In San Francisco County, former foster youth have expressed excitement at the opportunity to stay with their foster parents after emancipation, while at the same time working with a THP-Plus case manager on setting and attaining personal goals. Foster parents are also happy to be able to continue to support their foster youth by participating in the THP-Plus host family model.

- San Francisco County CC25 Interim Report, Year 2

In FY 2007-2008, the County was allocated THP-Plus funding for 111 units of various model types. An additional 12 host family units were developed through a contract with the Edgewood Center's Kinship Program, bringing the total of host family units to 22. At the conclusion of FY 2007-2008, the County had a total of 127 units in operation that served 140 youth. Allocated THP-Plus funding for San Francisco remained at 111 youth in FY 2008-2009, despite the County's 2008 proposal requesting approval to serve as many as 250 youth a year.

In addition to expanding local housing capacity for former foster youth, San Francisco County accomplished several other objectives in the area of transitional housing:

- A nonprofit organization, "Friends of the SF ILSP," was established to raise funds to provide foster youth financial assistance in addressing housing and educational needs. Founded in January 2006, the organization raised over \$20,000 in its first six months of operation and it continues to engage in philanthropic efforts in support of transitioning foster youth.
- Processes were established to integrate the assessment of housing needs into all GOALS emancipation conference meetings for foster youth age 16 and up. Today the GOALS facilitator works closely with Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP) staff and the THPP/THP-Plus coordinator to identify all housing options available to transitioning youth.
- The County created a Housing Options Resource Guide for use by child welfare staff, youth and caregivers.

Santa Clara County

The Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children's Services submitted its first proposal for THP-Plus funding in 2006, aiming to provide up to 50 units of housing in FY 2006-2007. The State approved the proposal, without an initial allocation of funding, and the County effectively established 57 housing units (and served 66 youth) throughout FY 2006-2007. In partnership with San Jose State University, the County offered emancipated foster youth housing in on-campus dormitories as of September 2006, and shared housing options were developed for foster youth participating in other post-secondary educational programs. The host family model began operating in February 2007.

In FY 2007-2008, the County sought and received approval and THP-Plus funding to provide 80 units of housing, and they were quickly able to fill all of these slots. In March 2008, the County reported that THP-Plus participants were distributed across housing models in the following way: 53 youth (66 percent) are being served through scattered site, nine (11 percent) by San Jose State dorm housing and 18 (23 percent) by host family model. By the end of FY 2007-2008, the County had 96 housing units operational through THP-Plus, and served a total of 135 youth.

Because surveys and assessments of foster youth at age 17 indicated a need for housing twice the level approved by the THP-Plus program, the County pushed for an additional 70 units (150 in total) in FY 2008-2009, though the final funding allocation remained at 80 units.

Santa Clara County accomplished several other objectives in the area of transitional housing:

- Through the County's CC25I collaborative efforts, linkages and referral processes were established with Foster Youth Housing Initiative providers. THP-Plus providers now work closely with child welfare staff to assess housing needs and identify appropriate options for emancipating foster youth. Overall efforts to provide housing services to youth have become collaborative rather than competitive.
- A portion of THP-Plus funding was used to hire a Transition Housing Liaison, a former foster youth, who case manages participants in the SJSU residence hall models. The Liaison provides regular support, referral to resources, and one-on-one budget planning and development. Calls regarding THP-Plus are directed to the Transitional Housing Liaison who assesses a youth's needs and refers them to the appropriate program and services. In October 2008, an independent contractor with an MSW was hired to provide case management services to youth in host family housing and to also maintain the waiting list for the THP-Plus program.
- Through a one-time arrangement approved by the County Board of Supervisors, CalWORKs funds were made available to provide housing assistance for transitioning foster youth. These funds have been used to provide a temporary housing stipend to support youth waiting for their THP-Plus slot to become available or those who are not eligible for THP-Plus services. The priority for this funding has been youth at risk of homelessness or parenting/pregnant youth. A total of 75 youth were assisted with housing for three to six months with a monthly stipend of \$500. Fifty-nine youth used the stipend to rent a room or shared apartment and sixteen used the stipend to live in San Jose State University dorms, prior to the start of THP-Plus.
- In September of 2008, the County completed on-site reviews for each THP-Plus agency provider. Reports issued to the providers made recommendations and requested THP-Plus plans from each provider. Plans from each agency have been submitted and are under review by the County.

Stanislaus County

The Stanislaus County Community Services Agency proposal to develop a host family model of transitional housing through the THP-Plus program was approved by the State in June 2006. Though funding for FY 2006-2007 was not initially allocated, Stanislaus County began implementing the "My Home" housing program in July 2006. The program served 20 participants in FY 2006-2007. For FY 2007-2008, Stanislaus County received a THP-Plus funding allocation for up to 20 units of housing through MY HOME. These 20 units served 29 youth over the course of FY 2007-2008 (07/01/07-6/30/08).

One of the earliest implementers of the host family model, Stanislaus County was invited to present on their My Home program at various conferences including the THP-Plus Web Seminar in April 2007, the 2007 and 2008 THP-Plus Institute, and the My Life Conference in Atlanta, Georgia in September 2007. Stanislaus County has also shared its model and lessons learned with other CC25I counties at general convenings and individual technical assistance sessions.

On being able to live with his former foster parent and lifelong connection through the THP-Plus program:

"It's great because you already have a relationship built with them, so you pretty much know what they expect. And they realize you are an adult now...choosing to be there when you could go off on your own. There are some stipulations, like you have to have a job, but you pretty much have the freedom to live your life as an adult."

- Former Foster Youth, Stanislaus County

For FY 2008-2009, the County proposed to continue the 20 host family units and develop an additional five or ten units using a scattered site model. The funding allocation for FY 2008-2009 was higher than in FY 2007-2008, but not enough to operate a total of 25 beds (20 host family units plus five scattered site units). Therefore the County plans to continue to operate a total of 20 housing units, three of which will utilize a scattered site housing model.

In addition to expanding housing capacity through use of the THP-Plus program, a CC25I benchmark for Stanislaus County was to develop an employment services component to be integrated with their transitional housing efforts. The County has contracted with a provider for six months in 2008, while an RFP is in process, and a new contractor will be selected in January 2009 to help transitioning foster youth find and keep employment.

4c. Observations & Lessons Learned

CC25I counties have faced several challenges in their efforts to expand local housing capacity and employ new strategies to meet the diverse housing needs of transitioning foster youth. Working in collaboration with other public agencies, local service providers and community stakeholders, county welfare agencies are making strides in developing strategies to address and overcome these challenges. One of the findings of the THP-Plus Annual Report for FY 2006-2007⁶² was that this type of collaboration increases community commitment to meeting the housing needs of transitioning foster youth. In addition, the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project, which arose in October 2006, as well as CC25I technical assistance opportunities, have provided shared guidance and learning across counties that were invaluable in the early design and implementation of local THP-Plus programs.

This section reviews some of the key observations and lessons learned in the area of Housing over the first three years of the Initiative.

Host family and roommate dynamics can be a challenge. One of the challenges that has emerged among youth in host family or shared housing models in multiple counties has been that misunderstandings and interpersonal dynamics can escalate to the point of crisis, even resulting in a youth having to move out. In Fresno County, program administrators observed that this often the case when only one of two host family “parents” attended the initial THP-Plus information meeting with the youth. This early meeting allows host family participants and youth to voice their concerns and expectations, and brings everyone to consensus around the program’s housing agreement. The lesson learned was that the initial THP-Plus meeting should be attended by the youth as well as all adult host family participants who will be providing housing to the youth. Santa Clara County administrators also felt that mediation support for youth and host families experiencing some conflicts could help prevent a situation from escalating to the crisis point, and that outlining formal guidelines could help host family housing providers establish boundaries. The THP-Plus Annual Report for 2006-2007 found similar challenges among roommates in shared housing and that preventive strategies - such as regular mediation meetings, avoiding shared bedrooms, and limiting the number of individuals in shared housing unit - could help reduce the likelihood of problems occurring.

Case management services for housing participants can be critical. One of the findings of the Foster Youth Housing Initiative⁶³ was that intensive case management was critical to successful implementation of housing programs for transitioning youth and that case managers had to be flexible, knowledgeable in dealing with youth, and capable of developing trusting relationships with youth. The THP-Plus Annual Report for 2006-2007 echoed this finding and added that coordination between case managers, the local Independent Living Program (ILP) and other service providers increased the effectiveness of the THP-Plus program.

CC25I counties employed a variety of strategies to recruit, enroll and case-manage youth in local THP-Plus programs. Fresno County initially relied on child welfare staff for these tasks but found increased program utilization once a contracted service provider (Aspira) took over these responsibilities. Stanislaus County uses their ILP Aftercare Worker to case manage youth in the My Home host family housing program but acknowledges that the

⁶² Available at: <http://www.thpplus.org/THP-PlusAnnualReport.pdf>.

⁶³ Latham, N., Boer Drake, E., Cuevas, R. and Sugano, E. (2008). *Foster Youth Housing Initiative: Final Evaluation Findings*. November 2008 Revised. La France Associates, LLC.

introduction of scattered site housing might require a contracted service provider to oversee case management. In San Francisco and Santa Clara, the community service providers contracted to provide THP-Plus single- and scattered-site units also provide the case management services. Santa Clara found it particularly important to create contracted positions, such as the Transitional Housing Liaison mentioned above, to case manage youth in housing not provided through community services providers (i.e. in host family units and San Jose State University dormitories). Whether or not case management was provided from within the child welfare agency or through a contracted service provider, it was clear in all CC25I counties that ILP and other child welfare staff continue to play a vital role in supporting transitioning youth and in maintaining the links between youth, housing provider and the child welfare agency.

Support services for housing participants, and for host families, are beneficial. Some CC25I counties have found it a challenge to ensure that youth receive the support services they need, particularly in the area of mental health. In Fresno County, several participating youth have displayed behavior that concerned their host parents and raised questions about their mental health. While the contracted case managers offer referrals to appropriate support services, youth do not always follow through on these options, and this can put their housing situation in jeopardy.

Fresno County has responded to this challenge by pursuing additional strategies to keep youth actively linked to both case management and the available support services they require. For youth with more serious mental health issues, the County is turning to the Genesis Family Center, a supportive housing program for transition age youth that includes mental health as a central part of the program. In addition, Aspira case managers have been trained in the “Why Try” model, which focuses on strategies for fostering youth empowerment. Youth are given a journal as an outlet for self-expression and it is used in weekly one-on-one meetings between youth and case managers. Youth are responding positively to their caseworkers and are requesting more opportunities to come together as a group for activities.

Host parents are also asking to be included in group activities with youth as well as to have some group activities developed just for them. Assessing the needs of youth in transitional housing programs, and actively linking youth to appropriate supportive services, are likely to continue to challenge all CC25I counties in the future.

Transitional housing participants can benefit from money management assistance. Most transitional housing programs incorporate a rent phase-in, requiring youth to pay an increasing share of their rent over time to prepare them for the responsibilities of independent living in the future. Some CC25I counties reported that many youth find themselves not ready to pay rent at the point when their own rent obligation starts, either because they are not yet earning income or because they have not budgeted appropriately. In response, the Aftercare Worker who case manages housing participants in Stanislaus County begins meeting with youth in advance to remind them that this financial responsibility is approaching. An Employment Services component was developed to assist THP-Plus participants with finding and maintaining employment and an effort is made to link THP-Plus participants with the local CC25I Financial Literacy/IDA program, through which youth learn budgeting skills and grow assets through a matched savings effort. Linking housing participants to financial asset development programs can also contribute to solving a challenge experienced in Fresno County where youth are spending too much of their THP-Plus stipend, rather than saving it or setting it aside for future rent payments.

Transitional housing must accommodate the needs of youth attending post-secondary education and training programs. While transitional housing is a vital resource in helping former foster youth to attend post-secondary education and training programs, its short-term nature and program requirements can also create additional challenges for youth. Transitional housing programs that last only 24 months are insufficient for youth pursuing a four-year college degree. The Bill Wilson Center in Santa Clara County, a contracted housing and ILP provider in which 62 percent of participating youth are attending college, noted that having funding from the Foster Youth

Housing Initiative in recent years has been instrumental in helping youth to remain stably housed till they finished college. But CC25I counties will continue to struggle with this issue and some, such as Santa Clara County, are already researching ways in which available funding can be used to move youth from one housing model to another (or from transitional to permanent housing) to ensure that their housing remains stable.

Another challenge that CC25I counties have been working through has been the conflict between the work requirements set by contracted housing providers, usually 25 hours or more each week (to encourage savings and ensure ability to pay rent in the future), and the amount of employment is feasible or ideal for foster youth attending college. In San Francisco County, the child welfare agency developed a strategy to overcome this challenge by working together with Larkin Street's LEASE program, which houses a large number of transitioning youth who attend City College of San Francisco. Community partners, including former foster youth, worked together to develop an academic accommodation policy that provides more flexibility in setting work and other program requirements for students attending college, as well as for youth with special needs. A written contract is now completed with participants in the LEASE program, stating that they can work fewer hours when in school full-time as long as they agree to set aside part of their financial aid as savings.

Stanislaus County also found it necessary to be flexible with the My Home program and has reduced the work requirement from 16 to 10 hours a week if youth are attending school. Other exceptions are made for youth with special circumstances, such as for those who are parenting small children. Stanislaus County also submitted a plan update to the California Department of Social Services proposing a new waiver system for THP-Plus participants, by which youth's mandatory contributions to monthly housing costs will be waived if a youth is attending a vocational training program, junior college or university.

These continuing efforts by CC25I counties to develop flexible program requirements will ensure both housing stability as well as success in post-secondary education and training programs among transitioning foster youth.

4d. Future CC25I Housing Objectives

In their third year of CC25I funding, the counties will continue to implement strategies that create a continuum of housing supports for transitioning foster youth and link youth to the resources that best meet their needs. There are a number of remaining challenges to be addressed in this work. Perhaps the most important is the continued integration of efforts to house transitioning foster youth with strategies to foster permanency, post-secondary education, training and employment programs and financial literacy/asset development programs among youth. More generally, counties will need to continue steadily building the cross-program linkages necessary to adapt transitional housing to the needs of former foster youth, particularly those with children of their own, mental health issues or other special needs.

This section provides a brief summary of each county's benchmarks for year three of CC25I implementation.

Fresno County

In Fresno County, the Department of Children and Family Services will outreach to the housing community to encourage collaborative development of housing resources for transition foster care and probation youth populations. Educating local renter associations, building developers, housing authorities and property management companies on the housing needs of these youth should contribute to the development of scattered site housing options. Fresno County is planning to use their community partnership board to assist with these efforts.

San Francisco County

The San Francisco County Human Services Agency plans to extend the newly created Housing Options Resource Guide to include housing options in surrounding counties, and will continue to work on developing requirements for employment and other protocols that are more suited to meet the needs of housing participants enrolled in post-secondary educational and training programs.

Santa Clara County

Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children's Services will continue to further develop linkages with community housing providers and develop new strategies to expand housing capacity. The County is developing an assessment tool to monitor self-sufficiency skills among THP-Plus participants, in order to better prepare youth for life after transitional housing has ended. Further assessments will continue through use of the Efforts to Outcome Database; THP-Plus providers are completing assessments with youth every six months to monitor self-sufficiency skills and housing stability. In addition, the County will concentrate their future efforts on further expanding transitional housing capacity among the THP-Plus housing models that are working best. Two remaining challenges they hope to address are 1) how to link available funding streams to move youth between the THP and THP-Plus programs, or from one housing model to another, so their housing remains stable throughout such transitions and 2) how to prepare youth who are on the THP-Plus wait list to ensure their future success in the program.

Stanislaus County

The Stanislaus County Community Services Agency will identify partners and resources in the housing community that can contribute to the collaborative development of both a scattered site model of housing as well as permanent housing options for emancipated foster care youth. City and County leaders will be actively involved in this process. The County will continue to enroll youth in THP-Plus, placing a greater emphasis on ensuring case management and the provision of wrap-around services to address the diverse needs of participants. Stanislaus County is also pursuing alternative funding to expand the housing capacity for transitioning foster youth. The Community Services Agency has collaborated with the County's Housing Authority in applying for HUD's Family Unification grant and an MOU was developed between the two agencies. The grant, if approved, will provide Section 8 housing vouchers to former foster youth for 18 months of transitional housing. The Housing Authority has agreed to provide Section 8 vouchers for permanent housing for former foster youth who are successful in Section 8 transitional housing.