NCHCW works simultaneously at the policy, program, and practice levels to ensure that families are never separated due to inadequate housing and that all young adults have access to safe, decent, permanent housing as a platform to move towards economic independence.

Nothing that we do absolves ourselves, child welfare professionals, or the wider community from the responsibility to ensure that all youth have permanent connections to meaningful people in their lives.
What is the scope of the problem for youth?

One in five youth who have transitioned out of foster care report experiencing homelessness between ages 17 and 19, and over one in four (29%) report being homeless from 19 to 21. Among American Indian and Alaska Native young adults, the figure jumps to almost half (43%) for ages 19 to 21 (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2022).

19,130 children aged out of the U.S. foster care system, and a majority left without the emotional and financial support necessary to succeed in life that other children can receive within a family. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau, 2022)

LEGISLATION FFTA SUPPORTS:

Increasing Access to Foster Care Through 21 Act

- Provides a financial incentive to states to take up the option to extend care by removing Title IV-E income eligibility requirements for youth ages 18-21, which currently tie a young person’s eligibility for services to the income of their often-estranged parents or legal guardians, thereby ensuring states receive the federal match for their costs.

- Provides that by opting to extend care through age 21, youth who voluntarily leave care at 18 would have the ability to re-enter care should they need to.

- Ensures categorical eligibility for extended care for youth ages 18 through 21.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at Exit</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 Years</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Years</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Years</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Years</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Years</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Years</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Years</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1,433</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time in Care</th>
<th>Months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is the scope of the problem for families?

AFCARS only tells part of the story. There we only learn how many children were removed due to “inadequate housing.” Approximately 11%.

This does not tell us how many children cannot return to their families due to a housing barrier. This could be as high as 30 percent, nationally.

But I’m going to share with you why I don’t think aggregating numbers matters.
The legislative story of how youth ended homelessness for their “brothers and sisters in care”

- Regulatory Strategy
- Appropriations Strategy
- Authorizing Strategy
*FYI is simply an “on demand” distribution mechanism for HUD’s longstanding Family Unification Program Housing Choice Vouchers

*While FYI was designed by and for youth, their advocacy has created opportunities and agility in voucher distribution for families as well!
HUD’s Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI) provides universal, predictable, and synchronized access to a five-year Housing Choice Voucher, post-emancipation.
Regulatory Strategy

FYI is a “Secretarial Initiative” designed by youth with NCHCW and implemented by Dr. Ben Carson and the HUD Office of PIH in 2019. The Secretary used his existing authority to distribute FUP Housing Choice Vouchers “on demand.”
FYI was designed and delivered to HUD by youth from ACTION Ohio and NCHCW on March 4, 2019. HUD implemented FYI on July 26, 2019. Since then, more than 4,740 youth have accessed safe, decent, affordable housing in 286 communities in all but one state in the US. FYI synchronizes the best services that child welfare agencies have to offer with the best resources that Public Housing Authorities have to offer, to close the gaps through which youth fall into homelessness and human trafficking.
MICHELLE DANIELS, CHARLES D. ELDRIDGE, RYAN E. JONES and the Office of Public and Indian Housing Foster Youth to Independence team

Created an innovative program offering housing assistance and social services to young people aging out of foster care to prevent them from becoming homeless and to provide an opportunity for self-sufficiency.
This is the NCHCW/ACTION Ohio Team meeting with Adrianne Todman who is now the HUD Acting Secretary back in 2021 when she was CEO of NAHRO (of which NCHCW is a member organization)
Appropriations Strategy

- The Role of Appropriators
  - Funding (of course)
  - Bill Language
  - Committee Report Language
- In the FY2024 bill, we had seven requests
- All of them were granted – but you must read the fine print
Sen. Collins (ME)
Sen. Murray (WA)

- If you visit her office, and you are so inclined, please express your appreciation to her staff for listening directly to the youth and alumni.

- Her appropriations staff, Jason Woolwine in particular, requested input, talked it through, and included all of it.

- Sen. Murray has championed FUP for more than 25 years.
More gratitude

- Immediately upon finding our requests in the bill language that was signed into law – we wrote to thank the “four corners”
- ** a word about what this means for families...

March 8, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
United States Senate Committee on
Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Grainger, Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair
United States Senate Committee on
Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

Dear Senators Murray, Collins, Grainger, and DeLauro,

On behalf of ACTION Ohio, the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare, and the nearly 55,000 current and former foster youth who comprise the Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities (FSHO) Coalition we write to extend our deepest appreciation to all of you for using the tools available through the Appropriations Act to reduce the cost and ease the distribution of Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers aimed at improving the economic security of youth aging out of foster care.

Communities throughout the US can now more easily synchronize FUP Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) with emancipation to eliminate the yawning gaps through which nearly 2,500 foster youth fall into homelessness and human trafficking each year. Your appropriations staff are to be commended for listening directly to foster youth and voucher recipients to compose the language included within the agreed upon FY2024 Appropriations Act. These improvements to HUD’s role in the program will create the conditions necessary to end homelessness for the nearly 25% of emancipated foster youth who exit foster care only to enter the adult shelter system annually.

We are especially grateful to Jason Woolwine of Vice Chair Collins’s staff. Jason meets regularly with the youth authors of HUD’s Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI) & FSHO, voucher recipients, youth who have successfully participated in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS), and PHA leaders. Jason and his Appropriations committee colleagues in the Senate and the House synthesized the hard-won youth experience, PHA feedback, HUD PD&R-funded research, and the comments collected...
Authorizing Strategy

- The Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendments Act codifies the FYI Secretarial Initiative
- Reps Dean, Turner, Bass, and Waters (of course)
FSHO extends the runway to economic success

- FSHO extends the runway to independence for all youth who are interested in more time to prepare. FSHO offers participants in FUP (who received their vouchers after December 27, 2020, the day the President signed FSHO into law) the opportunity to earn an additional two years of housing assistance if they choose to do so. Options to extend FUP include, working, attending school (9 months out of the year), or enrolling in HUD’s Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS).

- FSHO offers generous exemptions for the purpose of extending assistance. Youth who are parenting a child younger than age six or caring for a person who needs special attention (referred to as an “incapacitated person”) can extend their voucher without meeting any requirements. Youth who have a medical condition can also avoid going to work or school. Finally, youth who are battling and addiction that prevents them from working or going to school are eligible for an additional two years of assistance.

- One way that youth can extend FUP to a total of five years is to enroll in HUD’s Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS). FSS is a 30-year-old program that rewards work & asset-building. FHSO closes the racial wealth gap. Children of color are disproportionately represented in foster care compared to white children – and shockingly that disproportionality increases as youth move towards adulthood in the system because fewer BIPOC youth finding any kind of permanency before aging out. As a result, 75% of youth leaving foster care as adults are BIPOC youth. FSHO aims FSS at youth leaving foster care because this tactic achieves racial equity in the distribution of HUD resources without running afoul of HUD’s fair housing parameters.
Myja’s Law. Myja’s Home.

The nuclear option for FYI
QUESTIONS

• Ruth White, MSSA
• National Center for Housing & Child Welfare
• rwhite@nchcw.org
• 301-699-0151
• www.nchcw.org
San Diego, Los Angeles, Riverside & San Bernardino Counties | www.WaldenFamily.org

sueevans@waldenfamily.org
Thanks to a Homekey grant, Walden was able to purchase four homes in Riverside City to help transitional age foster youth providing crucial resources, training and a supportive living environment.
Walden provides case management, trainings and housing for transitional age youth 18 -25 years throughout Southern California. Walden supports foster youth to reach their potential towards becoming self-sufficient and productive members of their community.
My Whys
FFTA Nebraska Successes

- Jointly achieved 17% child welfare rate increase
- 2022 conference scholarship
- Added 2 FFTA members (Current 19)
- Expanded community partnerships
FFTA Nebraska
Successes (Continued)

• Coordinated a meetings volunteer activity as a chapter
• Continued Provider Council expansion
• DHHS attended 100% of chapter
Nebraska Provider Council

- FFTA
- CAFCON
- NeAHSC
- The Alliance

- Started in 2021 out of post Covid and privitization work
Child Welfare Day

• 2023 and 2024
• Coordinated effort between the Provider Council Associations
• Sponsored by Senator Mike McDonnell.
• Joint impact
2023 Advocate of the Year

- Youth Normalcy
- Sibling Connection
- Inspirational Leadership
- Kinship expansion
- Community Partnerships
- Lived experience
- Share the stories!
• #Fuel
• #Inspiration
• Find our “Hows”?
My Hows
Thank you FFTA for the support, partnership and recognition!

Saving Children, Healing Families®