



Toolkit to Promote the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program in California

This toolkit includes documents that we hope will aid advocates to help young people access FYI vouchers and support stakeholders to build their FYI programs and spread the word about the availability of vouchers. There are three types of documents: (1) Fact Sheets for various stakeholders; (2) Template documents to refer young people for FYI vouchers, and (3) A Template request to ask your county child welfare agency for information about its FYI program. Below is more information about how you can use these documents.

1. Introductory Fact Sheets for Key Stakeholders

What are these documents?

There are short fact sheets developed for each of the following stakeholders:

- a. [FYI for Advocates](#)
- b. [FYI for Child Welfare Agencies \(CWAs\) & Probation Departments](#)
- c. [FYI for Landlords](#)
- d. [FYI for Housing Authorities \(PHAs\)](#)
- e. [FYI for Young People](#)
- f. [FYI for Judges](#)
- g. [FYI for City Council](#)
- h. [FYI for Board of Supervisors](#)

These one-page fact sheets provide an introduction to the FYI program for various key stakeholders and explains how each stakeholder can help facilitate the FYI program.

How can you use these documents?

We recommend that you use these fact sheets as you need them based on the stakeholder groups you are working with to introduce them to the FYI program and to enlist them as partners. For example, attorneys and case workers can share the youth one-pagers with their clients. Advocates seeking to recruit landlords to take FYI vouchers can use the landlord one-pager to initiate a meeting and conversation. In addition, we encourage you to edit these resources to suit your role and needs.

You can find more detailed information about the FYI program [here](#).

For more information, contact: info@ylc.org.

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Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers: The Role of Advocates

1. What is the Foster Youth to Independence Housing Voucher Program?

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program provides a type of housing choice voucher for young people who are leaving or have left foster care. These vouchers were developed to improve housing security for youth aging out of foster care. FYI was designed by young people who were in foster care and experienced homelessness after aging out. These vouchers can be requested by Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) when they collaborate with local child welfare agencies of probation departments. The PHA will provide the voucher and the child welfare agency provides or arranges for support services for the young person. These support services are voluntary. FYI vouchers last for three years, but can be extended for two additional years if the young adult is participating in the [Family Self Sufficiency Program](#) (FSS) or similar programs. These are programs that support employment, education, and incentivize saving.

2. Who is eligible for an FYI voucher?

Eligible youth (including probation supervised foster youth) meet the following criteria.

- Are 18 through 24 years of age (have not reached their 25th birthday), and
- Have left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, and
- Are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless when they were age 16 or older.

3. How does the FYI Program benefit young people?

Stable housing is crucial for young people to successfully transition to adulthood. Without stable housing, young adults face significant challenges to meet their education and employment goals. But young people aging out of foster care face many barriers to securing safe and affordable housing, including their age and lack of family support, which many young adults rely on for their first apartment. The FYI program can be a critical stepping stone for young adults as they move from foster care into the adult world.

4. What is the role of advocates in helping young adults secure stable housing by accessing FYI vouchers?

Advocates can play a critical role in helping young people access FYI vouchers by taking the following actions:

- If the young person is still in foster care, ask the child welfare agency to refer the youth to the FYI program as part of the transition planning process. The referral to the PHA can be made as early as 90 days before leaving foster care. Ask the court to order the referral at the review hearing if it has not been done and that a status report be provided to the court about the referral.
- Assist young people who have already aged out make a request that the child welfare agency refer them to the PHA for an FYI voucher. Here is a link to a [template](#) you can use.

5. What should an advocate do if their county is not accessing FYI vouchers?

If the child welfare agency has not yet connected with local PHAs so that they can distribute FYI housing vouchers or you are confronting other barriers with your advocacy, you can connect with the CA FYI Advocacy Group to help you make these connections. Please email Madeleine Wykstra at mwykstra@ylc.org.

Advocates should be aware that many PHAs may not be familiar with the FYI/FUP programs.

Advocates should also be prepared to coordinate with the relevant child welfare agency.

For more information on FYI, see [here](#).



The Foster Youth to Independence Housing Voucher Program: The Role of the Child Welfare Agency and the Probation Department

1. What is the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program?

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program provides a type of housing choice voucher for young people who are leaving or have left foster care. These vouchers were developed to improve housing security for youth aging out of foster care. In fact, the FYI program was the idea of young people across the country who created the Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Coalition (FSHO). Their advocacy, led by ACTION Ohio and the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare, led to the FYI program becoming law and ensuring that housing vouchers can be provided “on demand” for young adults with experience in foster care to improve their transition to adulthood.

These vouchers can be requested by Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) when they collaborate with local child welfare agencies. The PHA will provide the voucher and the child welfare agency provides or arranges for support services for the young person. These support services are voluntary. FYI vouchers last for three years, but can be extended for two additional years if the young adult is participating in the [Family Self Sufficiency Program](#) (FSS) or similar programs. These are programs that support employment, other activities, and assist with savings.

2. Who is eligible for an FYI voucher?

Young adults are eligible for an FYI voucher if meet the following criteria:

- Are 18 through 24 years of age (have not reached their 25th birthday), and
- Have left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, and
- Are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless when they were age 16 or older.

Eligible youth include probation supervised foster youth who meet the above criteria.

3. How do FYI vouchers benefit young people?

Stable housing is crucial for young people to successfully transition to adulthood. Without stable housing, young adults face significant challenges to meet their education and employment goals and will have a hard time developing a good transition plan. But young people aging out of foster care face many barriers to securing safe and affordable housing, including their age and lack of family support. The FYI program is a critical stepping stone for young adults as they move from foster care into the adult world. It can help stabilize their housing situation so they can focus on work, school, saving money, and meeting their goals.

4. What is the role of Child Welfare Agencies and Probation Departments in helping young adults secure stable housing by accessing FYI vouchers?

Child welfare agencies and probation departments are the critical and valued partners of the PHAs that make it possible for our communities to access FYI vouchers. If you are an agency director, we urge you to establish partnerships with any of the PHAs in your county. Here is a [list](#) of all the PHAs in California. You can partner by doing an MOU or a letter of intent. If you are

facing barriers to making connections with the PHAs in your county, please email Madeleine Wykstra at mwykstra@ylc.org to reach the FYI Advocacy Group.

Your role is to make referrals of eligible youth to the PHA and provide or offer support services to the young person. The child welfare agency can also elect to designate other agencies to make an FYI referral. A great idea is to develop a tickler system to alert the agency to the 90 mark prior to discharge to prompt a referral for FYI. In terms of service provision, you can simply connect young people with existing community services and leverage your existing ties to community-based organizations. There are many community-based organizations that are eager to work with child welfare agencies and probation departments to help provide support services.

If you are a caseworker or probation officer, you should be informing young people of the availability of the FYI program and making referrals as soon as you identify—or get a request from—eligible young. You should refer youth who are still in foster care as part of the transition planning process. You can make referrals at least 90 days before discharge. Providing youth friendly materials and identifying a clear point of contact will help young people accessing the program and will help ensure that you get the information you need to make referrals.

The FYI application process can take some time, so it is especially important for caseworkers and probation officers to help the young person through the process. FYI is one option among many. Other options include, but are not limited to: Transitional Housing Program Plus (THP-Plus), Chafee room and board, as well as State & Federally Funded Homelessness Response, which may be facilitated through your community's [Homeless Continuum of Care](#).

You can find more detailed information about the FYI program [here](#).

Foster Youth to Independence Housing Vouchers: The Role of Landlords

1. What is Foster Youth to Independence Housing Voucher Program?

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program provides a type of housing choice voucher for young people who are leaving or have left foster care. These vouchers were developed to improve housing security for youth aging out of foster care and are an excellent resource for our communities to support young people who face unique barriers to housing security when they leave foster care.

These vouchers can be requested by Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) when they collaborate with local child welfare agencies to support young people. The PHA will provide the voucher and the child welfare agency provides or arranges for support services for the young person to help the young adult as they continue to meet their goals. These types of vouchers last for three years, but can be extended for two additional years if the young adult is participating in the [Family Self Sufficiency Program](#) (FSS).

2. Who is eligible for FYI vouchers?

Young adults who are under age 25 and were in foster care are eligible for the FYI program. Stable housing is crucial for young people to achieve independence and to successfully transition into adulthood. Without stable housing, young adults face significant challenges to meet their education and employment goals. In particular, young people aging out of foster care face many barriers to securing safe and affordable housing, including a lack of family support. The FYI program can be a lifeline and critical stepping stone for these young adults as they work towards independence and move from foster care into the adult world.

3. How does the FYI program benefit landlords?

Landlords who take housing choice vouchers, including FYI vouchers, can expect to get consistent rent. They will get their rent no matter whether the young adult experiences changes like those related to employment. Young adults in the FYI program will also have access to community supports and services. Your county PHA or homeless prevention agencies may also provide financial and other incentives to landlords who take Housing Choice Vouchers, including FYI.

4. How can landlords help young people secure stable housing with FYI vouchers?

By accepting FYI vouchers and renting to young adults leaving foster care, landlords can make a critical difference in the lives of young people who may not have the family and other support that many young people rely on as they begin adulthood. You can become an ally for young adults leaving foster care by partnering with your local child welfare agency, Independent Living Program, and community-based agencies so that they know you will take FYI vouchers and so that you have the support of those who work with young adults leaving foster care. There are many partners who want to work with you and make your participation in the FYI program as easy as possible.

You can find more detailed information about the FYI program [here](#).

Fostering Youth to Independence Vouchers: The Role of Public Housing Authorities

1. What is the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Voucher Program?

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program provides housing choice vouchers (HCVs) for young people who are leaving or have left foster care. These vouchers were developed to improve housing security for youth aging out of foster care and are an excellent resource for our communities to support young people. Their advocacy, led by ACTION Ohio and the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare, led to the FYI program becoming law and ensuring that housing vouchers can be provided “on demand” for young adults with experience in foster care to improve their transition to adulthood.

These vouchers can be requested by Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) when they collaborate with local child welfare agencies or juvenile probation departments to support young people. The PHA will provide the voucher and the child welfare agency provides or arranges for support services for the young person. These types of vouchers last for three years, but can be extended for two additional years if the young adult is participating in the [Family Self Sufficiency Program](#) (FSS).

2. Who is Eligible for an FYI Voucher?

The FYI program provides housing vouchers for young people with experience in foster care, including probation-supervised foster youth. Eligible young adults meet the following criteria:

- 18 through 24 years of age (have not reached their 25th birthday), and
- Have left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, and
- Are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless when they were age 16 or older.

3. How Does FYI Benefit Young People?

Stable housing is crucial for young people to successfully transition into adulthood. Without stable housing, young adults face significant challenges to meet their education and employment goals. But young people aging out of foster care face many barriers to securing safe and affordable housing, including their age and lack of family support, which most young adults rely on for their first apartment. The FYI program can be a lifeline and critical stepping stone for young adults as they move from foster care into the adult world.

4. What is the Role of PHAs in Helping Young Adults Secure Stable Housing by Distributing FYI Vouchers?

PHAs are a critical partner in making FYI vouchers available to young people in our communities. Any PHA capable of administering HCVs are eligible to request FYI vouchers. Once the PHA partners with the Public Child Welfare Agency (PCWA), it is able to request FYI vouchers for young people following the PCWA’s referral of an eligible young adult. Once the PHA verifies the young person’s HCV eligibility, it will simply email HUD and request an FYI voucher. PHAs can provide or connect the individual with any of their services or programs, but it is the PCWA that is responsible for arranging or providing any support services.



PHAs can partner with as many PCWAs as they want. PHAs can request up to 50 FYI vouchers a year. They can request up to 25 and then ask for another 25 vouchers per year as long as they meet certain requirements related to voucher utilization, which have been expanded pursuant to a [recent notice from HUD](#). PHA's may request additional vouchers even if they do not meet the required utilization rates in certain exceptional circumstances, which includes when a voucher has been issued, but a unit has not yet been leased up.

You can find more detailed information about the FYI program [here](#).

Foster Youth to Independence Housing Vouchers: What Young People Need to Know

1. What is the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Housing Voucher Program?

The FYI Program provides a type of housing voucher for young people who are leaving or have left foster care. A housing voucher pays for a portion of your rent: usually a voucher holder pays 30% of their income in rent or is asked to pay some minimum amount of rent. The voucher covers the remaining portion of your rent. You can use the voucher to rent an apartment in the community that you select in the area covered by the Housing Authority.

In the FYI program, the child welfare agency (or for probation-supervised foster youth, the juvenile probation department) refers you to the local housing authority for a voucher and offers you supportive services, then the housing authority gives you the voucher. While the child welfare agency refers you for a voucher, this is not a foster care program; the voucher belongs to you. You can stay in the FYI program for three years, with the opportunity for two more years if you participate in the [Family Self Sufficiency Program](#) or a similar program. These are programs that help you save money while you maintain stable housing.

2. Who is eligible for FYI?

You may be eligible for FYI if you answer yes to all of the following:

- Are you currently, or were you previously, in foster care?
- Are you currently between ages 18 and 25?
- Since you turned 16, have you ever been or are you now homeless or at risk of losing your housing?

3. How does FYI benefit young people?

An FYI voucher helps you stay housed so you can focus on work, school, planning and meeting goals for your future. When you are in the FYI program, you can choose to be connected with support services to help you maintain your housing and meet your goals. Examples of these **optional** support services include: 1. help with employment or school, 2. getting connected with mental health services, 3. financial management support

4. How can I get an FYI voucher?

Ask your social worker, probation officer, or your Independent Living Program (ILP) Worker (if you have one) to refer you to the housing authority for a FYI voucher. If you don't have a current caseworker, you can contact your prior social worker or probation officer, or your county's ILP coordinator; a statewide list available [here](#). The child welfare agency will confirm your eligibility and then can make the referral.

Once your application is submitted to the housing authority, the housing authority will ask you to complete forms to determine your eligibility for the voucher. This includes asking you about your income and how many people you live with, for example. Once the housing authority determines you are eligible, they can email HUD (the Department of Housing and Urban Development) and ask them to distribute a voucher that the housing authority will give to you.

The timeline for this process can vary. It is important to know that some counties have been slower to get their FYI programs up and running. If you have asked your caseworker, ILP worker and/or dependency attorney or juvenile defender (if you have one) to make a referral



but nothing has happened, you will likely need help from a legal aid attorney. Here is a [website](#) where you can find your local legal aid attorneys.

You can find more detailed information about the FYI program [here](#).

Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers: The Role of Judges

1. What is the Foster Youth to Independence Housing Voucher Program?

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program provides a type of housing choice voucher for young people who are leaving or have left foster care. These vouchers were developed to improve housing security for youth aging out of foster care. FYI was designed by young people who were in foster care and experienced homelessness after aging out. These vouchers can be requested by Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) when they collaborate with local child welfare agencies of probation departments. The PHA will provide the voucher and the child welfare agency provides or arranges for support services for the young person. These support services are voluntary. FYI vouchers last for three years, but can be extended for two additional years if the young adult is participating in the [Family Self Sufficiency Program](#) (FSS) or similar programs. These are programs that support employment, education, and incentivize saving.

2. Who is eligible for an FYI voucher?

Eligible youth (including probation supervised foster youth) meet the following criteria.

- Are 18 through 24 years of age (have not reached their 25th birthday), and
- Have left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, and
- Are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless when they were age 16 or older.

3. How does the FYI program benefit young people?

Stable housing is crucial for young people to successfully transition to adulthood. Without stable housing, young adults face significant challenges to meet their education and employment goals. But young people aging out of foster care face many barriers to securing safe and affordable housing, including their age and lack of family support, which many young adults rely on for their first apartment. The FYI program can be a critical stepping stone for young adults as they move from foster care into the adult world.

4. What is the role of judges in helping young adults secure stable housing by accessing FYI vouchers?

Judges can help ensure that young people in their community access FYI vouchers as part of their role in overseeing the transition planning process and as a key child welfare leader who can bring important stakeholders together.

In individual cases, judges should:

- Oversee the transition planning process, which begins at age 16, at permanency review hearings and ensure that the plan contains a thoughtful and concrete plan for housing that includes a consideration of all options such as FYI.
- Order that a referral to the Housing Authority(ies) in the county for an FYI voucher be made at least 90 days before the youth discharges from foster care and ask for frequent updates on the status of the referral.
- Order that the child welfare agency assist the youth in completing any applications required by the Housing Authority.
- Refuse to discharge the youth's case (if the youth is in agreement) in accordance with the law if the youth does not have an adequate housing plan and the child welfare agency has



- not made a referral for an FYI voucher or assisted the youth in moving forward with a referral; request frequent updates on the status of the referral.

If the county child welfare agency or probation department has not yet implemented the FYI program, judges should:

- Require the county child welfare agency and probation department to report to the court on a quarterly basis the number of young people who leave both systems who are homeless or are housing insecure.
- Convene a meeting between the child welfare agency and probation department and Housing Authorities located in the county to facilitate collaboration to implement FYI.
- Use the leadership role of the court to encourage the involvement of community-based agencies that can provide and connect young people with voluntary support services.

You can find more detailed information about the FYI program [here](#).

Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers: The Role of City Council

1. What is the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) housing voucher program?

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3. How does the FYI program benefit young people?

Stable housing is crucial for young people to successfully transition to adulthood. Without stable housing, young adults face significant challenges to meet their education and employment goals. But young people aging out of foster care face many barriers to securing safe and affordable housing, including their age and lack of family support, which many young adults rely on for their first apartment. The FYI program can be a critical stepping stone for young adults as they move from foster care into the adult world.

4. What is the role of a City Council in helping young adults secure stable housing by accessing FYI vouchers?

City Councils can play a powerful role in implementing FYI programs and eliminating barriers that currently may exist to accessing vouchers across the state. Many cities in California are acutely aware of the housing crisis in the state and are desperately looking for resources and solutions to the lack of affordable and stable housing. The FYI Voucher Program is an extremely valuable resource they may not be aware of and have a vested interest in their cities having access to vouchers.

Here are some actions that City Councils can take to bring FYI vouchers to their cities and to improve the chances that youth in their cities will find housing security when they leave foster care:

- City Council can hold a hearing on the housing needs of youth leaving the foster care system and learn more about the FYI program.



- City Council can ask the child welfare agency and probation department to report on the housing status and outcomes of youth aging out of these systems as a way to better understand the need for access to FYI vouchers.
- City Council can ask how Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program Funds that are allocated for transition aged youth are being used to support FYI voucher holders.
- To the degree that the City Council plays a role in overseeing governmental agencies within the City, it can ask those agencies—such as the child welfare agency, probation department, and Public Housing Authority—to report on the status of access to FYI vouchers for youth in the city and request that they collaborate to request FYI vouchers.
- If implementation of the FYI program would be aided by raising revenue for things like landlord incentives, hiring a program coordinator, or providing additional resources for young people, City Council can raise revenues through taxes, fees, assessments, and debt financing.
- City Council can aid in developing housing units for young people by recommending that the eligible entities in the City apply for [Homekey funds](#) for projects for youth leaving foster care and encourage the investment of other available funds to develop housing units that can be rented to young people with vouchers. .
- City Council can leverage their role in the community to engage community organizations to provide services to young people receiving FYI vouchers and to recruit landlords in the community to rent to young people.

You can find more detailed information about the FYI program [here](#).

Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers: The Role of the Board of Supervisors

1. What is the Foster Youth to Independence Housing Voucher Program?

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program provides a type of housing choice voucher for young people who are leaving or have left foster care. These vouchers were developed to improve housing security for youth aging out of foster care. FYI was designed by young people who were in foster care and experienced homelessness after aging out. These vouchers can be requested by Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) when they collaborate with local child welfare agencies or probation departments. The PHA will provide the voucher and the child welfare agency provides or arranges for support services for the young person. These support services are voluntary. FYI vouchers last for three years, but can be extended for two additional years if the young adult is participating in the [Family Self Sufficiency Program](#) (FSS) or similar programs. These are programs that support employment, education, and incentivize saving.

2. Who is eligible for an FYI voucher?

Eligible youth (including probation supervised foster youth) meet the following criteria.

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- Have left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, and
- Are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless when they were age 16 or older.

3. How does the FYI program benefit young people?

Stable housing is crucial for young people to successfully transition to adulthood. Without stable housing, young adults face significant challenges to meet their education and employment goals. But, young people aging out of foster care face many barriers to securing safe and affordable housing, including their age and lack of family support, which many young adults rely on for their first apartment. The FYI program can be a critical stepping stone for young adults as they move from foster care into the adult world.

4. What is the role of a Board of Supervisors in helping young adults secure stable housing by accessing FYI vouchers?

The County Board of Supervisors can play a powerful role in the effective implementation of FYI. Like City Councils, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) for each county are acutely aware of the housing crisis in the state and are desperately looking for resources and solutions to the lack of affordable and stable housing. They have a vested interest in the county child welfare and probation department collaborating with the public housing authorities in their county so that they can increase their supply of housing vouchers, including FYI vouchers, to increase the tools they have to help their residents find housing stability.

The Board of Supervisors sets priorities for the county, oversees most county departments and programs, and annually approves their budgets; supervises county officers and employees; controls county property; and appropriates and spends money on programs that meet county residents' needs. Given this broad authority, BOS can take the following actions to bring FYI vouchers to their counties and to improve the chances that youth in their county will find housing security when they leave foster care:

- BOS can hold a hearing on the housing needs and outcomes of youth leaving the foster care system and learn more about the FYI program.



- BOS can identify eliminating homeless and housing insecurity for foster youth leaving the child welfare system and juvenile justice system as a county priority.
- BOS can ask the child welfare agency, probation department, and Public Housing Authority(ies) to report on the status of access to FYI vouchers for youth in the county and request collaboration for the purpose of requesting vouchers from HUD.
- BOS can ask how Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program Funds that are allocated for transition aged youth are being used to support FYI voucher holders.
- BOS can allocate funds from its budget for things like landlord incentives, hiring a FYI program coordinator, or providing additional resources for young people.
- BOS can aid in developing housing units for young people by:
 - recommending that the eligible entities in the county apply for [Homekey funds](#) for projects for youth leaving foster care.
 - allocating county property for development or rehabilitation into housing units for youth leaving foster care.
 - allocating other available funds for the development of housing units that can be used for FYI voucher holders.
- BOS can leverage their role in the community to engage community organizations to provide services to young people receiving FYI vouchers and to recruit landlords in the community to rent to young people.

You can find more detailed information about the FYI program [here](#).

