

HUD to Issue \$20 Million in New Housing Resources for Child Welfare Families and Aging-out Youth

This fall, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will invite public housing authorities nationwide to apply for \$20 million in new Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers for the Family Unification Program (FUP). FUP provides homeless and precariously housed families involved with the child welfare system with affordable housing and supportive services in order to safely reunite them with their children. FUP vouchers are also available to ease the transition to adulthood for youth age 18 or older who left foster care after the age of 16 and are at risk of homelessness.

How does FUP work?

HUD's Family Unification Program (FUP) is administered through local level partnerships between public housing authorities and public child welfare agencies. Public housing authorities administer the Section 8 vouchers to families and youth who have been certified as eligible for FUP by the child welfare agency. The child welfare agency assists clients in gathering the necessary Section 8 paperwork, finding housing, and provides aftercare services to help the household obtain and maintain safe, stable and permanent housing.

How does our community apply for new FUP vouchers?

As early as mid-September 2008, HUD will issue a notice of funding availability (NOFA) inviting public housing authorities (PHAs) to apply for up to 100 Section 8 vouchers for FUP. In order to apply for this funding, a PHA must have a signed memorandum of understanding with the local child welfare agency documenting that these systems will work in partnership to support FUP families and youth. Child welfare administrators interested in FUP should reach out to their counterpart at the public housing authority soon. Once HUD issues the NOFA, PHAs will only have thirty days to submit an application.

Why should we apply for FUP?

Families and aging-out youth in the child welfare system face enormous economic challenges. Child welfare agencies go to great lengths to remediate these issues and as a result, the majority of children reunite safely and successfully with their parents. However, homeless and precariously housed parents who have overcome great personal struggles with the help of the child welfare system all too often remain separated from their children because they lack a safe place to raise them. Keeping these children in foster care rather than providing affordable housing solutions is a costly practice. On average, it costs nearly \$50,000 per family for children to enter foster care. By contrast, it costs just over \$15,000 annually to house one family and provide supportive services to support their stability in housing.

How can I get more information about FUP?

For more information about how to apply for and implement the Family Unification Program in your community please visit the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare at www.nchcw.org. The National Center for Housing and Child Welfare (NCHCW) was created in May 2008 to serve as a bridge between affordable housing resources and the child welfare system on behalf of vulnerable families and youth and professional staff and advocates with whom they work. The Center is dedicated to building the partnerships necessary to ensure that children do not enter or linger needlessly in foster care as a consequence of their parents' inability to afford safe, decent, permanent housing. Our work also aims to ensure that each young person who ages out of the foster care system has a solid plan for housing stability. NCHCW worked with Congress to secure this \$20 million in new funding for the Family Unification Program.