

FAMILY UNIFICATION PROGRAM—FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Do you need to have a Memorandum of Understanding MOU?
Yes, the FUP NOFA now requires that all applications include a signed MOU. The 2001 FUP NOFA defined what needs to be in the MOU. A sample FUP NOFA can be obtained from the National Center on Housing and Child Welfare.
2. Does the PCWA have to refer all FUP eligible clients?
No, the PCWA determines which FUP eligible clients to refer. The PCWA can determine to refer only clients they believe will be successful on the program.
3. When a voucher is freed up, does the PHA need to accept another FUP referral from the PCWA?
Yes. According to the 2001 FUP NOFA, if FUP the PHA must replace any FUP client with a new FUP client referred by the PCWA for five years after receiving funding. Further, appropriations language states that a PHA must always keep a voucher dedicated to FUP “to the extent practicable.”
4. Does the PCWA need to keep a waiting list once the FUP vouchers are used?
No, the PCWA does not need to keep a waiting list. The PCWA should not keep a waiting list. It would hurt the program because it would keep clients from obtaining vouchers quickly. An important aspect of the program is to provide a client a FUP voucher the first day it is needed to prevent a child from coming into care, to return a child home or to assist a youth when s/he is ready to leave foster care.
5. Does the PCWA need to have an open case to refer a family?
No, the FUP NOFA only states that the family only has children in danger of being placed in care. It does not define what that means. It allows the PCWA to define this. To protect the integrity of the program, the PCWA should only refer families who have an open case because a child will not be placed without an open case. Perhaps more importantly, the PCWA will not be able to provide all the services they could if the case is not open. The PHA should negotiate in the MOU that the PCWA will only refer clients with an open case so that they can provide services.
6. Can the PCWA refer a family who is living with a family or a friend?
Living with a family or friend in a situation that is not permanent is not an eligible criterion for FUP. However, families who are living with a friend or family member are likely living in overcrowded housing which is an eligibility criterion.
7. Is it ever appropriate for a FUP voucher to be used for a client who wants to lease in place?
No, FUP vouchers are for clients living in inadequate housing. They therefore must be moving from their inadequate housing and therefore cannot lease in place.
8. Does reunification need to occur within 60 days of return home to be referred to the program?
No, the FUP NOFA has never defined how close to refer home a reunification family must be before being referred to FUP. However, the further away from the reunification date, the less sure the PCWA will be if the child will ever be returned home. Therefore, the PCWA should only refer reunification families 60-90 days before the children are returned home. This usually is about the time that the PCWA will allow the family to start unsupervised overnight visits. In fact, as long as reunification is possible, statutory language prevents a PHA from revoking ANY Section 8 voucher – even those that are not issued through FUP.
9. Does a young person have to be 18 years old to be referred for FUP?
To be eligible to be a head of the household for the HCV program, the person must be 18 years of age or emancipated.
10. Does the youth have to have left foster care to be referred to FUP?

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The youth has to have left foster care to receive assistance through the FUP HCV. However, the youth can be referred in time so that the PHA completes the application process before the youth leaves foster care. If the PCWA wants to refer a youth that has not yet left the foster care system, they should learn the amount of time that the HCV application process takes to determine when to refer the youth.

11. Does FUP clients need to meet all of the HCV criteria?
Yes, the FUP client becomes a regular HCV recipient after they are referred and therefore must meet all HCV eligibility criteria. Although the PHA must accept all referrals from the PCWA, they must determine if they meet the HCV criteria.
12. How does the PHA treat FUP clients differently than regular HCV clients?
The PHA cannot allow a client who does not meet eligibility criteria to participate in HCV. They also need to follow all HCV protocol including conducting a criminal background check, limiting the number of days the client can look for housing and inspecting the unit and recertifying the client every year. However, where the PHA can make exceptions or give special considerations, they should consider giving them to FUP clients.
13. Does the PHA need to accept all FUP referrals from the PCWA?
The PHA does need to accept all FUP referrals as eligible for FUP but they still then must determine if they meet HCV eligibility criteria. The PHA cannot assist anyone that does not meet HCV criteria.
14. Who in the PCWA can refer a client to the PHA for a FUP HCV?
The FUP NOFA does not define who can refer a client to the PHA. Therefore this should be explained in the MOU. The PCWA should designate a FUP Liaison who is trained on FUP, including the FUP eligibility criteria, to make all referrals to the PHA for a FUP voucher.
15. What services does the PCWA need to provide to the client?
The 2001 FUP NOFA clearly described the services that the PCWA needed to provide to youth clients. These are:
 - Basic life skills counseling which includes education on money management, house keeping, proper nutrition, meal preparation and how to access both physical and mental health care.
 - Tenant counseling which includes counseling on tenant’s rights and responsibilities.
 - Assistance, or referrals to programs that provide assistance, with security deposits and/or utility deposits.
 - Job preparation and attainment counseling
 - Education and career advancement counseling and services
 - Assessments and the development of individual case plans
 - Assurances to property managers that these services will be provided.

The 2001 FUP NOFA did not describe the services that the PCWA should provided FUP families. According to the FUP NOFA, the PCWA should provide the following services to all clients:

- Identify eligible clients
- Provide support services after the client leases the unit

The 2001 FUP NOFA also states that the MOU must state the assistance the PCWA will provide to FUP clients to locate housing. The PHA and the PCWA should spell out who is responsible for what services in the MOU.

16. Who can provide services to the FUP client after the case is closed?
The 2001 FUP NOFA states that the PCWA will provide services to youth referred to FUP for the length of the 18 month voucher. The 2001 FUP NOFA does not say how long a PCWA should keep the case open after the family locates housing. It does say that the PCWA must provide support services after the family locates housing. In most all cases, the PHA will still be serving the FUP family when PCWA closes the case. The PCWA can try to make arrangements with local community service providers that provide family counseling, vocational counseling,

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tutoring, mental health services and other services. The PCWA should also make sure that the family is receiving all entitlements to which they are eligible such as TANF, food stamps and health care.

17. How can the client obtain assistance with a security deposit, kitchen appliances or beds for the children?
 This can be one of the hardest services to obtain. Almost every client will need to pay a security deposit and since the amount of the rent is often higher than what the client would have paid if they did not receive a HCV, it probably will be at least \$500 in the rural areas and as much as \$2,000 or more in urban areas. Many property managers are deciding not to provide kitchen appliances. Some clients may have utility bills in their name when they are moving into the unit. A unit will not pass HQS if it does not have kitchen appliances or the utilities cannot be turned on.

The 2001 FUP NOFA does state that the PCWA will help the youth obtain assistance with the security deposit. If the PCWA has set up a program, they can use Chafee funding to pay for security deposits and other items needed to stabilize housing.

It becomes much harder for families and for clients when the PCWA has not set up a program to use their Chafee funding for this purpose. Some PCWAs do have their own programs. Others will need to look at other community resources. Some states use some of their TANF funding to set up programs that can pay for security deposits. If the family is homeless at the time they were housed, they may be able to find assistance from HUD funded homeless programs in the community. The PHA and PCWA should consider this problem when they write the MOU to find ways to help clients locate this assistance.

18. Do FUP clients need to recertify every year?
 Yes, FUP clients must follow the same rules that other HCV clients follow including recertifying for the program every year.
19. Does the PCWA need to designate a FUP Liaison?
 No, but the PCWA should designate a FUP Liaison who will help administer the program and be the main point of contact with the PHA. The PCWA FUP Liaison should have the following responsibilities:
- Educate PCWA workers of FUP
 - Review referrals from the PCWA to determine if they meet FUP eligibility criteria
 - Prioritize referrals from the PCWA to refer
 - Refer clients to the PHA for FUP
 - Record all FUP referrals in a database
 - Make sure that PCWA worker is helping FUP recipient locate a housing unit
 - Make sure that the PCWA worker is providing follow-up services after the family moves into their housing
 - Contact the PCWA when a PCWA case is closed
 - Meet with the PCWA FUP Liaison to discuss clients and services
20. Does the PHA need to designate a FUP Liaison?
 No, but the PHA should designate a FUP Liaison who will help administer the program and be the main point of contact with the PCWA. The PHA FUP Liaison should have the following responsibilities:
- Educate PHA workers of FUP
 - Accept referrals from the PCWA
 - Record all FUP referrals in a database
 - Make sure that the FUP referral receives the next intake application appointment

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- Make sure that the FUP application is expedited
- Make sure that the FUP recipient's unit inspection is expedited
- Contact the PCWA FUP Liaison when the client moves into their unit
- Contact the PCWA if any problems arise
- Contact the PCWA when a client is terminated from the program
- Meet with the PCWA FUP Liaison to discuss clients and services

21. Can the PHA take a HCV from a FUP referred family once the PCWA decides not to return their children?

No, at national trainings HUD has said that once the family receives a HCV they can only lose the HCV if they no longer meet the HCV eligibility criteria. However, if the client has not yet received the HCV from the PHA, the PCWA can withdraw the referral. For this reason, the PHA Liaison should always notify the PCWA liaison when they are ready to give a client a voucher partially to give them one last chance to withdraw the referral if the service goal has changed.