

**MEDIA ALERT
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**HUD AWARDS \$15 MILLION IN HOUSING SUBSIDIES TO REUNITE THOUSANDS
OF HOMELESS FAMILIES AND PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AMONG YOUTH
AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE AROUND the US**

*NCHCW APPLAUDS PHAs and CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES FOR BUILDING
CROSS-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS ON BEHALF OF VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS*

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded \$15 million to support partnerships between public housing authorities (PHAs) and local child welfare agencies across the country in order to reunite more than nearly 3,500 homeless children with their parents and provide affordable housing and support to 550 young people leaving foster care. Returning these children home from foster care will save an average of \$74 million in federal child welfare expenditures.

NCHCW applauds Sens. Murray and former Senator Christopher Bond along with their colleagues in the House who worked across party lines to make this prudent investment of public dollars. These desperately needed vouchers will prevent homelessness and eliminate unnecessary spending on out-of-home care.

The Family Unification Program or “FUP,” provides the child welfare system with the resources necessary to prevent family separation due to homelessness *and* prevent homelessness among aging-out youth. Eligible families include those who are in imminent danger of losing their children to foster care primarily due to housing problems and families who are unable to regain custody of their children primarily due to housing problems. Eligible youth include those who were in foster care anytime after the age of 16 who are currently between the ages of 18- 21 (have not reached their 22 birthday) and are homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

FUP is an invaluable resource for parents whose difficult struggle to make ends meet has resulted in family separation.

Foster care is an expensive alternative to affordable housing. The average cost of foster care for the children of one family is \$56,892. By contrast, it costs approximately \$13,193 to house one family and provide supportive services for one year. HUD’s investment in affordable housing will save more than \$101 million in foster care expenditures. Cost savings have also been associated with affordable housing and self-sufficiency services to young people leaving foster care. The average cost of FUP for youth is \$5,600 – a tenth of the cost of undesirable outcomes such as homelessness, incarceration, and residential treatment.

Many communities will also use FUP vouchers to support housing and economic success among youth leaving foster care. Each year, 29,000 young people “age out” of foster care – meaning that they reach the age and service limits of their state’s child welfare system without having found a family through adoption or reunification.

Without the ongoing supports enjoyed by their peers who were raised in family settings these young people face a number of unimaginable struggles not the least of which is homelessness. The homeless youth population is notoriously difficult to track but researchers estimate that approximately 25% to 50% of these young adults experience homelessness within a year of leaving the public system. Housing assistance coupled with educational and employment supports can mean the difference between homelessness and success for these young people.

This was the case for the extraordinarily industrious La Terra Cole from Colorado. “I was employed and enrolled in college full time when my emancipation date came up. My FUP voucher through Urban Peak (Denver, CO) allowed me to focus on maintaining my academic success without wondering where I would live,” according to Ms. Cole who praised the partner agencies who worked hand in hand to support her efforts. “The inspection the PHA did before I moved in to my apartment turned up issues I would not have known to look for. The case management support available through Urban Peak gave additional confidence to the landlords who might otherwise be weary of renting to someone my age.”

Ms. Cole graduated with honors and recently completed her first year of law school at the Columbus School of Law at the Catholic University of America. “The FUP voucher worked exactly as intended – it supplemented my own efforts to secure a stable, independent lifestyle for myself.”

FUP is administered through local level partnerships between public housing authorities and public child welfare agencies. PHAs administer FUP housing choice vouchers to families and youth who have been certified as eligible for FUP by the local public child welfare agency. An MOU between the two agencies guarantees that families and youth will receive supportive services from the child welfare agency.

“In these tough economic times, HUD has stepped up to the plate to make sure that partnerships are in place around the country to prevent families from losing their children to foster care due to substandard housing,” said Ruth White, Executive Director of NCHCW. “We applaud Secretary Donovan for once again leading the way across agency boundaries in an effort to give housing authorities and child welfare agencies what they need to keep children safe, prevent homelessness among aging out youth, and save money along the way.”

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The National Center for Housing & Child Welfare

The National Center for Housing and Child Welfare (www.nchcw.org) serves as a bridge between affordable housing and child welfare resources in order to ensure that children do not enter or linger needlessly in foster care due to affordable housing problems. NCHCW 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 and continues to advocate for investments in this important program.