

# Vouchers: Family Unification Program

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By Ruth White, Executive Director,  
National Center for Housing and Child  
Welfare

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Public  
and Indian Housing (PIH)

**Year Started:** 1990

**Number of Persons/Households Served:**

Nearly 35,000 households currently hold  
Housing Choice Vouchers through the Family  
Unification Program (FUP)

**Population Targeted:** Homeless or precariously  
housed families in danger of losing children  
to foster care or that are unable to regain  
custody primarily due to housing problems  
and youth aging out of foster care who are at  
risk of homelessness

**Funding:** In November 2018, HUD issued \$30  
million in funding for FUP; this included  
\$10 million appropriated in FY17 and \$20  
million appropriated in FY18. Additionally,  
FUP remains an eligible use of HUD's Tenant  
Protection Fund.

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the  
*Housing Choice Voucher Program*, *Tenant Protection  
Vouchers*, and *HUD-Funded Service Coordination  
Programs* sections of this guide.

**H**UD's FUP is a federal housing program  
aimed at keeping homeless families together  
and safe and preventing homelessness  
among young adults (as old as 24) who have  
spent time in foster care after the age of 16. HUD  
provides FUP Housing Choice Vouchers to Public  
Housing Authorities who must work in partnership  
with public child welfare agencies in order to  
select eligible participants for the program. These  
vouchers can be used to prevent children from  
entering foster care, to reunite foster children with  
their parents, and to help ease the transition to  
adulthood for older former foster youth. In 2016,  
Congress initiated an extensive program to allow  
PHAs to couple FUP youth vouchers with HUD's  
Family Self Sufficiency Program.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

FUP was signed into law in 1990 by President  
George H. W. Bush. The program was created as  
a part of the Tenant Protection Fund within the  
"Cranston-Gonzalez Affordable Housing Act of  
1990." FUP is designed to address the housing-  
related needs of children in the foster care  
system. According to HHS, more than 27,000  
children enter foster care each year because  
their families lack access to safe, decent, and  
affordable housing. FUP is also a valuable  
housing resource to many of the 25,000 youth  
who age out of foster care each year, nearly a  
quarter of whom experience homelessness  
within a year of leaving the system. Despite the  
obvious impact of America's affordable housing  
crisis on foster children, child welfare workers  
seldom have access to the housing resources or  
supportive services necessary to prevent and  
end homelessness among vulnerable families  
and youth. FUP is one of the few cross-systems  
partnerships that communities can draw upon  
to keep families together and safe and ease the  
transition to adulthood for young adults.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

FUP is administered at the local level through a  
partnership between public housing agencies  
(PHAs) and public child welfare agencies. PHAs  
interested in administering FUP Vouchers must  
sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU)  
with their partner agency in order to apply to HUD  
in response to a Notice of Funding Availability.  
FUP Vouchers are awarded through a competitive  
process. Depending on the size of the PHA,  
communities can receive a maximum of 100, 50,  
or 25 vouchers. Communities are encouraged to  
apply only for the number of vouchers that can be  
leased up quickly, meaning that both families and  
youth have been identified and landlords have  
been recruited for the program.

PHAs receiving an allocation of FUP Vouchers  
then administer vouchers to families and youth

who have been certified as eligible for FUP by the local public child welfare agency. The most recent HUD announcement regarding FUP emphasizes the importance of ensuring that families in the homeless assistance system that are involved with child welfare are aware of available FUP Vouchers. In an effort to ensure that these families are included in FUP, HUD required the local Continuum of Care (CoC) leader to sign the FUP MOU and encourages the participating FUP partners to meet regularly with the local CoC groups.

FUP Vouchers work in the same way as a typical Housing Choice Voucher and are subject to the same eligibility rules. The child welfare agency is required to help FUP clients gather the necessary Section 8 paperwork, find suitable housing, and to maintain their housing through aftercare services. If a child welfare agency elects to refer a young person aging out of foster care with a FUP Voucher, the child welfare agency must offer educational and training vouchers, independent living programs, counseling, and employment assistance. The housing subsidies available to youth under this program are limited to 36 months. FUP youth who participate in HUD's Family Self-Sufficiency Program may keep their voucher for up to five years.

Eligible families include those who are in imminent danger of losing their children to foster care primarily due to housing problems, and those who are unable to regain custody of their children primarily due to housing problems. Eligible youth include those who were in foster care any time after the age of 14 and are currently between the ages of 14 and 24 (have not reached their 25th birthday) and are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Unlike families, youth can only participate in FUP for 36 months.

## FUNDING

Each year between 1992 and 2001, HUD awarded an average of 3,560 FUP Vouchers to public housing agencies. Unfortunately, from FY02 through FY07, HUD used its rescission authority to avoid funding FUP, even though

the Housing Choice Voucher Program's Tenant Protection Fund, out of which FUP is funded, had carryover funds ranging from \$18 million to \$170 million. Thanks to the efforts of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, \$80 million in new funding was awarded for new FUP Vouchers in FY08 and FY18. Despite the continuing availability of Tenant Protection Fund Vouchers for FUP, HUD has failed to issue new vouchers for FUP for the past decade from this account. Advocates must encourage the House to include the \$20 million in the FY19 appropriations act and continue urge HUD to tap the Tenant Protection Fund to expand the reach of FUP.

## FORECAST FOR 2019

There is growing interagency support for FUP at the federal level in Congress and within the Administration. Leadership in authorizing and appropriations committees have expressed a high level of confidence and support for FUP and it is likely that FUP will continue to receive steady funding as well as serve as a blueprint for similar interagency housing collaboration. PHAs and nonprofit partners are working to implement the changes included in HOTMA that allow for the project-basing of FUP Vouchers in order to increase the number of units of affordable housing available for both families and youth. HUD encourages PHAs interested in project-basing FUP Vouchers to consider an appropriate balance between family units and units for youth leaving foster care.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Throughout the years, it has become clear that the most successful FUP partnerships require cross-training, single points of contact (liaisons) within each partner agency, and ongoing communication. HUD requires that FUP sites have regular communication, liaisons, and other elements to support their partnership and provide case management and other supportive services to FUP households. FUP sites must include ongoing, intensive case management provided by the local child welfare agency or

through a contract funded by the child welfare system. HUD underscores the importance of child welfare partners taking part in landlord recruitment, housing training for frontline staff, and emphasizes regular communication with the PHA point of contact. Finally, HUD encourages PHAs to enroll FUP households in the FSS program because this adds an extra layer of supportive services and helps ensure that FUP households will successfully maintain permanent housing and reduce the amount of subsidy paid by the government over time.

HUD offers the tools and training necessary to implement and operate a FUP partnership on their [website](#) free of charge. The FUP tools offered on the HUD website is an excellent formula for all community partnerships designed to share resources and information in an effort to prevent and end family and youth homelessness. PHAs administering FUP nationwide demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to at-risk populations and the ability to match existing services to Section 8

vouchers in order to successfully serve hard-to-house families and youth leaving foster care.

## **WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS**

Advocates help legislators understand that housing is a vital tool for promoting family unification, easing the transition to adulthood for foster youth, and achieving significant cost savings. Advocates can inform their elected officials that when a FUP Voucher is used to reunify a family and subsidizes a two-bedroom unit, the community saves an average of \$32,500 per family in annual foster care costs. Furthermore, supportive housing for young adults is a tenth of the cost of more restrictive placements like juvenile justice or residential treatment. This cost-benefit information is an excellent way to help legislators understand the importance of new funding for the FUP.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

National Center for Housing & Child Welfare,  
301-699-0151, [www.nchcw.org](http://www.nchcw.org)