

# Family Unification Program (FUP) Vouchers

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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 40,000 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 2019, HUD issued  
\$20 million in funding for FUP. Congress  
appropriated \$25 million for FY2020, and  
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 (PHAs) 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 (FSS). Through the most recent NOFA,

HUD encourages PHAs to engage families in FSS  
as well.

## 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 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 to FY07, HUD used its rescission authority to avoid

funding FUP. Funding for FUP was re-established by the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development in 2009 and since then, FUP has received widespread support and a consistent investment of roughly \$20 million annually. In fact, Congress increased the funding for FUP in FY2020 to \$25 million along with language that synchronizes vouchers for youth with foster care emancipation in order to eliminate homelessness for youth leaving care. Vouchers for youth continue to be time-limited to three years, thus HUD incentivizes communities (particularly local child welfare agencies) to provide housing stability services to youth for the life of the voucher to help move youth towards self-sufficiency.

## FORECAST FOR 2020

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.

An important development in the evolution of FUP is an increasing interest in synchronizing FUP vouchers with emancipation in order to eliminate homelessness among youth leaving foster care. Congressional appropriators included language in the "FY2020 Appropriations Act" that allows \$10 million of the FUP funding to be awarded non-competitively so that a portion of the FUP vouchers can be issued "on demand" in such a manner that child welfare agencies can properly time the voucher request with a young adult's emancipation from foster care.

HUD also requires that the local Continuum of Care leader sign the FUP Memorandum of Understanding along with the PHA and PCWA directors. This is to ensure that young people who have been failed by the child welfare system and end up homeless are identified and referred by the local CoC. However, in 2020 the intent is to prevent foster care alumni from entering the homeless services sector overall.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

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 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 its [website](#) free of charge. The FUP tools offered on the HUD website are 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 should 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 \$32,458 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).