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Enhancing the Continuum of Care for Former Foster Youth and Those Exiting DCFS Care

According to the 2024 Point in Time Count of unhoused individuals in Los Angeles County (County), on any given night there are 3,718 transition-age youth experiencing homelessness. Among chronically homeless youth, 36% report having been in foster care. A recent [California Policy Lab report](#) found that over 1,000 youth age out of the Los Angeles County foster care system each year, with nearly 1 in 4 youth formerly in foster care report having been homeless at some point between the ages 21 and 23.

Youth who are unhoused face extreme vulnerability. A recent study by RAND entitled [“Understanding the Needs of Transition Aged Youth Navigating the Foster Care and Housing Systems in Los Angeles County”](#) highlighted these challenges which include mental health and wellness, an average monthly income of \$450, along with low rates of educational attainment and justice involvement.

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As we have previously noted, the County's Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) created the Supportive Housing Division (SHD) in 2021, recognizing the need to provide specialized housing support for foster youth in and exiting care. SHD works with various community-based organizations, the County's Chief Executive Office Homeless Initiative (CEO-HI), the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), the Department of Health Services' Housing for Health, and local development and public housing authorities to ensure foster youth have access to housing options and resources.

Due to the continued need for guaranteed immediate shelter for youth, who on the date of their emancipation from County jurisdiction are without immediate housing resources, DCFS has worked with several community-based organizations to set up three emergency housing options for young people whose housing plans fall through due to unforeseen disruptions before their exit from the system. These programs have become an essential resource to youth whose housing plans falls through too close to their exit date to establish a new plan, or who were unable to establish a plan for immediate shelter prior to exiting care. These programs are examples of the innovative efforts needed as we examine the housing supports and services needs for young people exiting DCFS care. In addition, SHD oversees programs including the Transitional Housing Placement Program for Nonminor Dependents (THPP-NMD), Transitional Housing Program Plus (THP-Plus), Independent Living Program Transitional Housing Program (ILP-THP), and other emergency housing programs.

Despite these programs, critical gaps remain in supports for young people who have exited DCFS care and find themselves unhoused or facing homelessness. Once a young person has exited the child welfare system, DCFS' jurisdiction typically ends according to

the California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 450 - WIC § 450. As they age out and become eligible for mainstream County resources, there is a need to better integrate the services offered by departments such as Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Health Services (DHS), Department of Public Health- Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (DPH-SAPC), and Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), as well as the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) administered programs to ensure they are meeting youth where they are, and bringing resources catered more effectively to youth, taking into account lived experience and the unique challenges that unhoused former foster youth face. The County should be more intentional in its efforts to support these young people as they emerge into adulthood and equip them with the supports needed to successfully achieve independence and stability.

Based on feedback from homeless service providers there is a need for an increase in transitional and permanent housing resources for youth who have recently aged out of foster care. Given the level of vulnerability of youth who become homeless and spend even one night unsheltered, and the high rate of inflow from foster care into the homeless services system, it is imperative we build out a continuum of services, for those in DCFS care and former foster youth between the ages of 21-26, to prevent these young people from falling into homelessness.

There have been multiple efforts to coordinate and collaborate around supporting transition-age youth facing housing insecurity. One of those tables, One Roof, was a national initiative designed to serve as a collaborative bringing together policy makers, government agencies, housing authorities and community organizations to best leverage systems of care to improve housing outcomes. On July 25, 2023, the Los Angeles County

Board of Supervisors (Board) created the Prevention and Promotion Systems Governing Committee (PPSGC) to improve cross-departmental and cross-sector collaboration, coordination, and strategic investments into the infrastructure, resources, supports and opportunities that prevent negative outcomes and promote holistic well-being. The three focus areas for the PPSGC are Child Welfare and Family Well-being, Behavioral Health, and Housing and Homelessness. Since the needs of former foster youth intersect with all three focus areas, the PPSGC is uniquely positioned to lead on this as part of a reimagined One Roof table with the goal of promoting housing stability and improving outcomes for former foster youth and foster youth exiting DCFS care.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in collaboration with the Prevention and Promotion Coordination Implementation Team (PPCIT), the Chief Executive Office Homeless Initiative (CEO-HI) and with other County departments including the Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, Department of Public and Social Services, Justice Care and Opportunities Department, Department of Consumer and Business Affairs, Department of Economic Opportunity, Department of Youth Development, LA County Library, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority and Los Angeles County Development Authority to provide a report back in writing in 180 days on the following:

1. An assessment of the bed capacity needed and utilization rates of existing resources for all interim and permanent housing resources, including emergency housing, for young people exiting care up to age 21;

2. An assessment of the bed capacity needed and utilization rates of existing resources for all interim and permanent housing resources, including emergency housing, for former foster youth ages 21-26;
3. In collaboration with the PPCIT, an assessment of existing programs to identify which programs can be better aligned to serve young people exiting care and those that have exited care, as well as recommendations for shifting resources to both better meet the needs and desires of young people exiting the foster care system and those who have already exited foster care;
4. Work to identify and designate sustainable funding for guaranteed same-day access and wraparound supportive services (including meals, basic needs resources, and onsite case management, mental health supports, transportation, and education and employment services) for youth aging out of foster care; including CalAIM community supports and enhanced care management; and the strategies to implement and maximize these resources;
5. The housing supports and services for current DCFS involved youth, former DCFS youth, and young people not impacted or involved with the DCFS system, reporting back to the Board on the continuum of resources and housing options. This work should include engagement with youth with lived experience; and
6. An assessment by Service Planning Area of the rate of exits from foster care and the need for same-day housing placements for young people exiting foster care or falling out of their transition plans.

WE, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board instruct the Prevention and Promotion Services Governing Committee (PPSGC), with support from CEO-HI and the Center for Strategic Partnerships to:

1. In collaboration with other County departments and partners including but not limited to the Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, Department of Public and Social Services, Office of Probation, Justice Care and Opportunities Department, Department of Consumer and Business Affairs, Department of Economic Opportunity, Department of Youth Development, LA County Library and Los Angeles County Development Authority engage stakeholders to develop additional strategies and efficiencies to support the TAY population and regularly report on those efforts at PPSGC.
2. In coordination with the Departments of Children and Family Services and Probation recommend improvements to transition and exit planning for young people exiting these systems, to enable young people to access safe and secure housing, including immediate access to alternative resources in the event of a disruption to a young person's plan, before their exit.
3. Explore the feasibility of prioritizing former foster youth ages 21+ who are facing housing insecurity and need housing supports and services for the Coordinated Entry System, including young people who have recently exited care but whose housing plans fell through after exit, in a report back in writing in 180 days. This report back should include strategies and recommendations to ensure the

County can build out an adequate and supportive infrastructure for young people who have exited care, particularly those between the ages of 21-26.

4. Submit written report backs to the Board in writing in 180 days and then bi-annually on the progress of this group and with opportunities for additional funding or challenges to the collective effort of preventing foster youth homelessness in LA County.

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