

Texas Leads the Nation in Foster Youth Housing Initiatives

Over the past four years, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) has established itself as a national leader in supporting Transitional Age Youth (TAY) through the implementation of a housing program with an emphasis on the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) voucher program and related initiatives. The state's comprehensive approach serves as a model for others aiming to empower foster youth transitioning to independence.

Key Accomplishments:

- **Robust FYI Partnerships and Voucher Allocation:** Texas has secured nearly 50 FYI partnerships across the state, resulting in approximately five hundred (500) effective vouchers. This extensive network ensures that a considerable number of TAY have access to stable housing.
- **Statewide Program Development:** DFPS is finalizing plans for a comprehensive statewide FYI program, aiming for uniform support and resources for eligible youth across Texas.
- **Innovative Workflow Initiatives:** The Voucher Workflow Mapping Initiative has been created and launched to streamline the voucher application and distribution process, enhancing efficiency and accessibility for both staff and youth.
- **YES4TAY Program Development:** DFPS is working with state partners at HHS developing the YES4TAY program to provide intensive case management services, further supporting housing stability and self-sufficiency among TAY.
- **Enhanced Communication and Training:** The housing website has been updated with tailored information and videos for TAY, staff, and Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). Additionally, DFPS has produced promotional materials and conducted regional and statewide presentations to raise awareness and educate stakeholders about the housing program.
- **Comprehensive Housing Plan and Policy Implementation:** In July 2024, DFPS implemented a new Housing Plan policy, formalizing strategies to support TAY in securing stable housing as they transition to independence. This policy underscores the agency's commitment to structured and effective housing solutions.
- **Youth Engagement Housing Video Project:** DFPS has launched the Youth Engagement Housing Video Project, featuring testimonials and stories from TAY to highlight housing challenges and successes, fostering peer support and awareness.
- **"Get Connected. Get Real. Get Housed." Awareness Campaign:** This campaign aims to inform TAY about available housing resources, encouraging them to engage with support services and take initiative-taking steps toward securing stable housing.
- **Resource Accessibility:** The Successful Transition to Adulthood Resource Tool (SMART) is being created as a centralized, TAY-specific resource database for Texas, providing streamlined access to essential resources for youth transitioning out of foster care.
- **Support for Community-Based Care (CBC):** DFPS Housing Program has actively supported the transition to CBC by providing materials, resources, training, technical assistance, outreach, relationship building, and supportive services to Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCCs). This support has been instrumental in implementing effective housing programs, exploring diverse housing options, developing comprehensive housing plans, and clearly defining roles and responsibilities across various regions.
- **National Recognition:** DFPS's Housing Program has garnered national media attention highlighting its success and has served as a benchmark for other states.

National Context:

The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative, launched by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 2019, aims to provide Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) assistance to youth aged 18-24 transitioning out of foster care. As of July 2022, the program has expanded to 185 participating Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) nationwide. In this national landscape, Texas's

achievements stand out. The state's nearly 50 FYI partnerships and approximately five hundred (500) effective vouchers represent a significant contribution to the program's overall reach. This extensive network not only underscores Texas's commitment but also sets a high standard for other states to emulate.

Looking Ahead:

DFPS Housing Program remains dedicated to continuous improvement and innovation in supporting TAY. By finalizing a comprehensive statewide FYI program, developing intensive case management services through our existing Transition Centers and community partners, new initiatives like YES4TAY, and enhancing resource accessibility with tools like SMART, Texas is poised to further solidify its leadership role. The collective efforts of State Office Transitional Living Services team, DFPS staff, SSCC partners, community partners, PHAs, and HUD have been instrumental in these accomplishments. Together, they have help create and organized, transparent, and robust support system that empowers foster youth to transition successfully into independent adulthood.

As Texas continues to lead by example, it serves as a beacon for other states striving to develop and implement effective housing programs for foster youth. The state's comprehensive and organized approach offers valuable insights and strategies that can be adapted and replicated nationwide, ultimately contributing to the well-being and success of foster youth across the country.

For more information visit [DFPS Housing Program](#).