FIRST PLACE FOR YOUTH

More is Possible

April 7, 2023 – Child Welfare Policy Roundtable
Our Mission & Vision

The mission of First Place for Youth is to help foster youth build the skills they need to make a successful transition to self-sufficiency.

We envision a world in which involvement in the foster care system does not limit a young person’s opportunities to thrive in adulthood.
Transitioning Housing Program

Young adults with experience in foster care

Transitioning Housing Program for Nonminor Dependents—**THP-NMD**
- Age 18-21
- *Current* child welfare involvement
- Federal match funding

Transitioning Housing Program-Plus—**THP-Plus**
- Up to age 25 (or 36 months)
- *Former* child welfare involvement

Transitioning Housing Program—**THP**
- To expand & sustain THP-Plus programs
- More flexible eligibility criteria
1. **Safe, Stable Housing**
Scattered-site apartments are conveniently located with access to public transportation, community colleges and work opportunities.

2. **Intensive Case Management**
Youth Advocates help young people set goals to develop self-esteem, move toward greater independence and remove barriers to education and employment.

3. **Education and Employment**
Education and Employment Specialists shape pathways to finish high school, enroll in post-secondary education, and secure sustainable living-wage employment.

4. **Healthy Living Skills**
Youth Advocates help youth balance physical, mental, and emotional health, from financial literacy to personal well-being to parenting skills using 1:1 support, workshops and referrals to other community providers.
My First Place™
Core Components

Practice Philosophy
Positive Youth Development
Trauma-informed approach
Harm-reduction
Cultural humility and responsiveness

Housing is the 1st intervention

Key Focal Areas and Outcomes
Education
Employment
Stable housing
Healthy living

Intensive Case Management

Phased Service Approach
Engagement
Skill-building
Transition to Independence

Skills & Competency Development

Team-based Approach
Staff Supervision and Coaching
Team-Based Staffing Model

Upon entering the My First Place program, all youth are matched with three First Place staff who work together as a team:

**Youth Advocates**, typically master’s level social workers, meet one-on-one with youth each week with to help them develop independent living skills and address barriers to education and employment. Topics covered include boundaries, healthy relationships, budgeting, and therapeutic support.

**Education & Employment Specialists** meet with youth biweekly to identify and pursue educational and employment opportunities. We encourage linked learning opportunities with career and marketable certifications when possible.

**Housing Specialists** partner with youth to provide guidance on developing housing management skills and serve as liaisons with property owners as needed. They also coordinate move-ins and move-outs, support maintenance requests, and conduct routine housing inspections.
Transitional Housing

HOUSING IS THE FIRST INTERVENTION: A safe place to call home is a stabilizing factor, enabling young people to focus on education and employment goals, build community, and establish a foundation for long-term success.

- Youth in receive **rent-free housing** for the duration of their time in program.

- **Scattered-site** housing model:
  - **Provider leases** apartments in the community from private landlords
  - Youth are **shielded from risk** of eviction
  - **Accessible** to public transportation, grocery store(s), education & employment opportunities, etc.
  - Units pass **HUD's Inspection Checklist**

- Non-parenting young adults share a two-bedroom apartment with a fellow participant

- Pregnant or parenting young adults live in a one-bedroom unit without a roommate

- Youth are encouraged to develop independent living skills while having access to **24/7 on-call support** from their team
Snapshot of My First Place Outcomes: California FY2022

91% Youth attaining stable housing on exit
Of youth in the MFP program more than one year, 176 out of 201 exited to stable housing

544 Youth Served

86% Pursuing High School Diploma / GED
80 of 93 youth who hadn’t yet graduated from high school were actively pursuing graduation, obtained a high school diploma or GED certificate*

80% Obtained Employment
449 out of 526 youth found jobs or increased their wages after 30 days or more in program

97% Avoided Arrest
511 of 526 youth avoided arrest after 30 days or more in the program

81% Enrolled in post-secondary education
338 of 419 college-eligible youth enrolled in post-secondary education

97% Maintained family size
510 out of 526 youth avoided having children after 30 days or more in the program
BENEFITS

• Apartments integrated into the community
• Allows for frequent moves/relocations—change in employment/education; roommate compatibility/conflict; shifting neighborhood risk factors, etc.
• Flexibility for expansion/contraction

CHALLENGES:

• Renting market-rate units> vulnerable to rising rental costs; rates don’t always keep pace
• Low housing stock of appropriate, reasonably priced units
• Landlords reluctant to rent to our programs/populations (biases and discrimination)
• No site control—landlords have less tolerance & patience for housing violations/challenging behaviors
Policy Advocacy: Addressing challenges to meet ongoing needs

- Budgetary action & contract negotiation to align payment rates with housing costs
- Creation of new housing stock dedicated to youth with experience in foster care
- Opportunities for increased site control at provider level (building ownership)
Questions?