

HOUSING SOLUTIONS FOR CHILD WELFARE

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

June 2009

Housing Matters

- Housing affects families at each point in the
- Children from families with housing problems are:
 - More likely to be investigated by CPS (Culhane et al, 2004)
 - More likely to be placed in out-of-home care (Courtney et al, 2004)
 - Longer stayers in foster care (Jones, 1998)
- Housing poses a challenge for which cw workers are uniquely ill-equipped (English, 2005)
- Foster care is an expensive alternative to housing

What can child welfare do about housing?

- Instead of feeling that “CPS is not a housing agency”... acknowledge the difficulty that the lack of housing tools contributes to the life of child welfare workers
- Consider the advantage that cw workers have over homeless shelter workers in *preventing* family homelessness
- TRAIN cw workers on housing issues, resources
- Partner with housers to provide housing tools to cw workers–

Housing Resources

- ARRA HPRP
- HOME
- LIHTC
- Community Action Programs (also received ARRA)
- City and State housing funds
- Private Landlords
- Public Housing Authorities – Section 8 and PH
- Family Unification Program

What is The Family Unification Program (FUP)?

- FUP is a housing program for families and aging-out youth in the child welfare system. At minimum, FUP provides Section 8 vouchers to child welfare families.
- FUP is a collaboration between Housing Authorities and Child Welfare Agencies.
- FUP is a program designed to strengthen and stabilize child welfare families.

Program Goals

- To increase the housing resources of child welfare families to prevent the separation of children from their parents because of inadequate housing
- To ease the transition to adulthood for youth aging out of foster care
- To facilitate and expedite access to housing and supportive services through agency collaboration

What are the Benefits of FUP?

- For PHAs: increased ability to serve clientele, more Section 8 vouchers
- For CWAs: expanded access to housing solutions for families, caseworkers
- For families: affordable housing, stability, reunification, exit from the child welfare system
- For the community: it is the preferred and most cost-effective alternative to foster care

Establishing a FUP

- Begin to ask questions regarding the housing needs in your community; consult CWA direct service workers.
- Map out current housing resources.
- Document the need for FUP in your community.
- Approach your partner (PHA, CWA) to exchange ideas, observations, and plans.

Establishing a FUP (cont.)

- Dedicate Section 8 subsidies to FUP
 - ▣ determine a reasonable number of vouchers to set aside for the program
 - set a local preference or
 - apply to HUD for FUP vouchers through the FUP NOFA (next FUP NOFA due out in late 2009)

Build the Partnership

- Gain an understanding of the mission and limitations of your partner agency
- Lay out and agree upon the responsibilities of each partner agency
- Specify the type and duration of services to be provided to FUP families upon lease-up
- Write a detailed Memorandum of Understanding

Elements of an Effective Partnership

- Appoint liaisons
- Reliable communication
- Regular meetings
- Patience
- Cross training
- Staff support
- Invite in additional partners
- Seek additional funding for services
- Solicit feedback from program participants

Frequently Asked Questions

- What if a family has a criminal record, history of drug and alcohol abuse, or owes money to the PHA?
- Can a family's voucher be taken away if they fail to comply with FUP?
- What records are we supposed to keep?
- Why do CWAs close cases so soon after families move in to their permanent housing?

What Services are Needed to Support FUP Families?

- Service needs are determined on a case by case basis
- HUD and CWLA suggest at least 60-90 days of follow-up services
- Most common services:
 - on-going case management
 - family counseling, parenting classes
 - drug and alcohol treatment
 - budgeting

Building in Services to Support FUP Youth

- Train CWA staff on housing resources
- Build solid relationships with IL programs – ensure that IL staff are addressing housing issues early
- Chafee dollars for one time housing costs
- Family Self Sufficiency Program
- Other area non-profits and supportive housing providers
- Continuum of Care Funding
- Other

What Services are Needed to Support FUP Families?

- Service needs are determined on a case by case basis
- HUD and CWLA suggest at least 60-90 days of follow-up services
- Most common services:
 - on-going case management
 - family counseling, parenting classes
 - drug and alcohol treatment
 - budgeting

Model Programs

- State of Illinois
- Connections, Inc.
New Haven, CT
- Suffolk County, NY
- Prince George's
County, MD
- State of Arkansas

Contact information

- Ruth White, MSSA
Executive Director
National Center for Housing and Child Welfare
6711 Queens Chapel Rd
University Park, MD 20782
(301) 699-0151
rwhite@nchcw.org
www.nchcw.org