Providing Affordable Housing and Supportive Services to Youth Transitioning from California’s Foster Care and Juvenile Probation Systems

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A REPORT BY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On behalf of John Burton Advocates for Youth, we are pleased to share the 2017-18 Annual Report for the Transitional Housing Placement Plus Foster Care (THP+FC) and Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THP-Plus) programs. This report highlights the achievements and challenges of the programs in helping youth in the foster care and juvenile probation systems make a safe, supported transition to adulthood and provides practice and policy recommendations.

The number of youth in extended foster care who are placed in THP+FC continues to grow, with 1,916 youth placed in THP+FC as of July 1, 2018. The THP-Plus program has also seen an increase in the number of youth accessing the program with 1,411 participating in THP-Plus as of June 30, 2018.

Together, THP+FC and THP-Plus have tremendous potential to improve the lives of vulnerable young adults in California. The purpose of this report is to ensure that this potential is fully realized. It includes a number of findings that suggest there are areas where California can build and strengthen its practice. These include:

- Increasing access to THP-Plus, particularly in Los Angeles
- Addressing homelessness among youth who achieve permanence between age 16 and 18, and are therefore not eligible for any housing assistance
- Providing housing navigation assistance between placements for current foster youth to reduce their experience of homelessness
- Integrating sexual and reproductive health education and resources into THP+FC to prevent unintended pregnancy
- Increasing support for youth attending college to prevent their loss of financial aid due to failure to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements
- Reducing poverty among youth in both programs by helping them access California’s Earned Income Tax Credit, which was newly expanded to non-parents age 18 to 24
- Re-tooling THP+FC and THP-Plus to promote college enrollment, retention and completion of a certificate/license, transfer or degree
- Tracking and analyzing involuntary exits to better understand why one in three youth in both programs exit the programs in this manner

We invite you to read about these findings, discuss them with your community and identify ways that you can address these and other issues identified in the report. We all play a role in the success of current and former foster youth, whether an elected official, nonprofit housing provider, caregiver, legal advocate, child welfare administrator, dependency attorney, Court Appointed Special Advocate or judge. Together, we each have the opportunity to strengthen California’s collective practice to better serve transition-age youth.
REPORT METHODOLOGY

Information for the 2017-18 THP+FC & THP-Plus Annual Report was drawn from a number of different sources. John Burton Advocates for Youth conducted a survey of all nonprofit organizations or county agencies that held a THP+FC license and/or operated a THP-Plus program during Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-18. There was a 97 percent response rate among THP+FC providers and a 100 percent response rate among THP-Plus providers.

Data was also drawn from the THP+FC and THP-Plus Participant Tracking Systems, which are online databases that collect demographic and outcome data about youth in these programs. The data included in the report was provided by running two different types of reports in each system. First, entrance-to-exit progress reports were run that included youth who exited a THP+FC program and youth who exited a THP-Plus program over FY 2017-18. These reports included 803 THP+FC participants and 603 THP-Plus participants. Second, entrance snapshot reports were run that included all youth who entered a THP+FC program and all youth who entered a THP-Plus program over FY 2017-18. These reports included 1,044 THP+FC participants and 584 THP-Plus participants. Data on 56 percent of THP+FC participants statewide and 54 percent of THP-Plus participants statewide are captured in the Participant Tracking Systems.

Additional information about THP+FC placements was drawn from the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, which provides customizable information on California’s entire child welfare system. Information was also derived from the June 2018 Child Welfare Services & Adult Protective Services Realignment Report which provides a summary of outcome and expenditure data that allows for monitoring of changes over time that may have occurred as a result of the 2011 Realignment of the child welfare services and adult protective services systems. Finally, an individual interview was conducted with the young adult who was profiled in the report.

1 California Child Welfare Indicators Project. http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/
FINDINGS

THP+FC

As of 2018, the Transitional Housing Placement Plus Foster Care (THP+FC) program is in its sixth year of implementation. It is a placement option created in 2010 by the California Fostering Connections to Success Act (Assembly Bill 12) and first implemented in 2012. THP+FC provides safe, affordable housing and supportive services to Non-Minor Dependents (NMDs) aged 18 to 21 and is a Title IV-E reimbursable foster care placement where youth are provided court oversight and child welfare supervision.

In the last fiscal year, changes were made to THP+FC with the adoption of Senate Bill 612 (Mitchell). SB 12 requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to adopt regulations to govern the placement; authorizes THP+FC providers to cosign leases with non-minor dependents (NMDs); authorizes CDSS to grant exceptions to the requirement that program managers hold a master’s degree; and authorizes a certified family home or resource family of a Foster Family Agency (FFA) to be concurrently certified as a host family, if the home is certified by the same organization licensed to operate as a THP+FC provider and FFA.

As of July 1, 2018, there were 68 licensed THP+FC providers. Of this total, 59 providers were operating 139 programs in 50 counties. Following are key findings about THP+FC during FY 2017-18.

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3 Assembly Bill 12 (Beall, Bass) was signed into law September 30, 2010 and took effect beginning January 1, 2012. http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/09-10/bill/asm/ab_0001-0050/ab_12_bill_20100930_chaptered.pdf

4 Senate Bill 612 (Mitchell) was signed into law October 12, 2017 and took effect beginning January 1, 2018. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB612
The number of youth placed in THP+FC continues to increase.

The number of NMDs placed in THP+FC has increased considerably since fall of 2012, when the placement became available to youth participating in extended foster care. As shown in Figure 1, between 2013 and 2014, the number of youth placed in THP+FC more than tripled from 310 to 993. Since 2014, there has been a steady increase at an average of 231 youth each year. As of July 1, 2018, the number of NMDs placed in THP+FC has increased to 1,916, a 12 percent increase from 2017 when there were 1,707 youth placed in THP+FC. Between 2016 and 2018, twenty counties increased their number of THP+FC providers, and nine counties decreased their number of THP+FC providers.

FIGURE 1

NUMBER OF NON-MINOR DEPENDENTS PLaced IN THP+FC AS OF JULY 1, 2018

Data was retrieved from the California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP), [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/) using point-in-time data on July 1 of each corresponding year.
The proportion of non-minor dependents placed in THP+FC continues to increase. As shown in Figure 2, in addition to an increase in the number of NMDs placed in THP+FC, the proportion of NMDs who are placed in THP+FC as compared to other placements has also grown. Nearly one in four NMDs (23%) were placed in THP+FC as of July 1, 2018, a figure that has increased from 21 percent the year prior, and from four percent in 2013. The increase in the proportion of NMDs placed in THP+FC was not a result of a decrease in the proportion of NMDs in any other one placement, but rather very modest decreases across multiple placements.

Figure 2

**PROPORTION OF NON-MINOR DEPENDENTS (NMDs) PLACED IN THP+FC**

![Bar graph showing the proportion of NMDs placed in THP+FC from 2013 to 2018.]

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*Data was retrieved from the California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP), [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/) using point-in-time data on July 1 of each corresponding year. Slight changes in numbers from those reported in previous reports are due to changes in the CCWIP system.*
The demographic profile of youth in THP+FC remains largely unchanged. As shown in Figure 3, THP+FC participants are more likely to be female than male (56% vs. 44%). As of July 1, 2018, ethnic/racial demographics have shifted slightly from the year prior with slightly less White participants and more Black and Latino participants. In 2018, about two in five participants were Latino.

The proportion of youth supervised by the juvenile probation system decreased slightly from the previous year from 18 to 16 percent, however, it remains higher than what it was in 2013 when it was 13 percent.

**FIGURE 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THP+FC PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS AS OF JULY 1ST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2013</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervised by Juvenile Probation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THP-Plus) program was created by the California State Legislature in 2001 in response to the alarming rate of homelessness among former foster youth. The program was first implemented in 2005 and provides safe, affordable housing and supportive services to former foster and probation youth, ages 18 to 24 for up to 24 months. In counties that have opted into the THP-Plus extension established by SB 1252, youth enrolled in school can access THP-Plus for up to 36 months and up to age 25. As of July 1, 2018, there were 54 THP-Plus providers operating 75 programs in 47 counties. Following are the major findings for FY 2017-18.

**The total number of youth served increased for the first time since FY 2008-09.** Over the course of FY 2017-18, THP-Plus served a total of 1,946 youth, a 15 percent increase from FY 2015-16 (1,695) after five consecutive years of decreases. (Figure 4)

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**FIGURE 4**

THP-PLUS YOUTH SERVED AND HOUSING CAPACITY

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As shown in Figure 4, THP-Plus bed capacity remained relatively unchanged from previous years, with just a four percent increase from FY 2015-16, reaching 1,411 as of June 30, 2018. The bed capacity is the total number of beds that counties contract with their non-profit service providers to operate, or in some cases that counties operate themselves. It is the maximum number of youth that can be served across the state at a moment in time, if all beds are filled.

Since FY 2015-16, there has been an increase in the number of THP-Plus programs in three counties: Alameda, San Diego, and San Mateo. There was also a decrease in programs in four counties: Calaveras, El Dorado, Orange, and Yuba, one of which no longer has a THP-Plus program (Calaveras). In FY 2017-18, 47 counties operated at least one THP-Plus program; 11 counties do not have a THP-Plus program.

Providers in 25 counties reported an increase in the number of youth they served through their THP-Plus program since FY 2015-16, with ten of those counties experiencing an increase of ten or more youth. Providers in 17 counties reported a decrease in the number of youth they served, with four of those counties experiencing a decrease of ten or more youth.
Statewide spending on THP-Plus over FY 2016-17 increased $2.7 million since FY 2014-15.

As illustrated by Figure 5, the amount that counties are collectively spending on THP-Plus has increased by 11 percent ($2.7 million), from a low of $25.6 million in FY 2014-15 to $28.3 million in FY 2016-17, the latest available data. This increase in spending follows a three-year reduction where counties’ spending collectively dropped by 21 percent between FY 2011-12 and FY 2014-15, immediately following 2011 Realignment and the implementation of extended foster care in California.

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8 Assembly Bill 118 (Chapter 40, Statutes of 2011) and Assembly Bill 16 (Chapter 13, Statutes of 2011), realigned the California Department of Social Services’ funding for Adoption Services, Foster Care, Child Welfare Services, and Adult Protective Services, and programs from the state to local governments and redirects specified tax revenues to fund this effort.

The average monthly rate paid per youth by counties to THP-Plus providers increased slightly from FY 2015-16.\textsuperscript{10} As indicated in Figure 6, the average rate counties paid THP-Plus providers per youth per month to operate their programs increased slightly from FY 2015-16. During FY 2017-18, the average monthly THP-Plus rate was $2,540 for a single-site housing model, $2,403 for a scattered-site model, and $2,120 for a host family model, which are one, four, and 23 percent increases, respectively, from the most recently available data, in FY 2015-16.

There continues to be variability in the rates paid across counties. Single-site rates range from a high of $4,005 in Orange County to $1,500 in Sacramento and Sutter Counties. Scattered-site rates and host family rates range from $3,841 in Napa County to $500 in Ventura.\textsuperscript{11} Over FY 2017-18, providers in 12 counties reported that their THP-Plus rate had increased since the previous fiscal year.

\textbf{FIGURE 6}

\textbf{THP-PLUS RATES}

\textsuperscript{10} Data for 2016-17 was not collected so comparisons will be made with 2016-17 data.

\textsuperscript{11} Average rates were calculated using a weighted average based on each THP-Plus program’s contracted THP-Plus bed capacity and reported monthly THP-Plus rate per youth.
More than half of the counties with THP-Plus programs opted into the THP-Plus extension, allowing youth enrolled in school to remain in the program for an additional year.

As of October 2018, twenty-seven counties have opted into providing a third-year THP-Plus extension made available by Senate Bill 1252 (Torres). Youth in THP-Plus programs in these counties can remain in the program for an additional 12 months and up to age 25 if they are enrolled in school. Six new counties have opted into the THP-Plus extension in FY 2017-18: Kings, Nevada, Plumas, San Bernardino, San Joaquin and Tulare.

The proportion of THP-Plus participants who are female and over age 21 continues to increase.

As shown in Figure 7, historically, there has been more young women than men participating in THP-Plus programs. However, in FY 2017-18 the percentage of young women participating reached a high of 64 percent, with young men making up just 36 percent of THP-Plus participants. This is a significant change from the year prior when the proportion of males to females was 56 to 44 percent.

Also illustrated in Figure 7, the population of older youth also reached a high in FY 2017-18, with 93 percent of participants being 21 to 24 years old, and just seven percent being 18 to 20 years old. Since the implementation of extended foster care in 2012, the proportion of 21- to 24-year-olds participating in THP-Plus has steadily increased.

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12 Senate Bill 1252 (Torres) which went into effect on January 1, 2015, authorizes counties to expand the length of time a youth enrolled in school may participate in THP-Plus from 24 to 36 months, provided that the youth is under age 25. THP-Plus participants who are eligible for extended services must meet basic eligibility requirements for THP-Plus and must either be completing secondary education (high school) or a program leading to an equivalent credential or enrolled in an institution that provides post-secondary education, including vocational education from an accredited institution. See All County Information Notice I-40-15 (2015) for more information: [http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acin/2015/I-40_15.pdf](http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acin/2015/I-40_15.pdf)

13 As reported by the California Department of Social Services on October 9, 2018. A complete list of counties that have opted into the THP-Plus extension can be found here: [http://www.jbaforyouth.org/thp-plus-extension/](http://www.jbaforyouth.org/thp-plus-extension/)
The proportion of youth supervised by the juvenile probation system remains low and has decreased by more than half over the last six years.

Of youth that entered a THP-Plus program in FY 2017-18, six percent were previously supervised by the juvenile probation system, consistent with FY 2016-17. However, the percentage of probation youth has decreased by more than half over the last six years from 15 percent in FY 2011-12 to six percent in FY 2017-18. (Figure 7)

### Figure 7

**THP-PLUS PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS AT ENTRANCE TO THE PROGRAM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age: 18–20</strong></td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age: 21–24</strong></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LGBTQ</strong></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asian/ Pacific Islander</strong></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native American</strong></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multiracial or other</strong></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ILP-eligible</strong></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Housing

The remote-site/scattered-site housing model is the most prevalent housing model in both THP+FC and THP-Plus. As shown in Figure 8, the housing model known as remote-site in THP+FC and scattered-site in THP-Plus accounted for nearly three-quarters (72% in THP+FC and 71% in THP-Plus) of the state’s transitional housing beds over FY 2017-18. The second most common housing model was the single-site model, which accounted for 26 percent of THP+FC beds and 17 percent of THP-Plus beds; followed by the host family model (2% in THP+FC and 12% in THP-Plus).

Youth experienced homelessness immediately prior to entering both programs. Of youth who exited THP+FC over FY 2017-18, a full 12 percent entered the program from an emergency housing setting, including an emergency shelter, homeless, or other unstable housing. This figure is even higher for youth in THP-Plus, with one in five entering directly from homelessness.

More youth in THP+FC exited to THP-Plus over FY 2017-18 than the previous year. Of youth who exited a THP+FC program over FY 2017-18, they most commonly transitioned into a living setting with a relative/other person in stable housing, rent-free (22%). The second most common living setting youth transitioned to from THP+FC was a THP-Plus program (18%). This is an increase from FY 2016-17, when the percentage of youth exiting to THP-Plus was 13 percent.
More youth entered THP-Plus from homelessness than THP+FC, but a similar level exited to emergency housing. Seven percent of youth in THP+FC and six percent in THP-Plus exited to an emergency shelter, homelessness, or other unstable housing. This is a significant decrease when compared to the proportion of these cohorts that entered THP+FC and THP-Plus from an emergency shelter, homelessness, or other unstable housing (12% and 20%, respectively). (Figure 9)
Approximately 3 out of 10 youth exited THP+FC and THP-Plus programs on an involuntary basis. As shown in Figure 10, of youth who exited a THP+FC program over FY 2017-18, thirty-two percent of youth exited on an involuntary basis. This is essentially unchanged from FY 2016-17 when 33 percent of youth were being involuntarily discharged. THP-Plus had a more significant decrease in the rate of involuntary exit, from 36 percent over FY 2016-17 to 27 percent over FY 2017-18. An involuntary discharge is an exit based on program non-compliance. Involuntary exits can take the form of legal evictions, however the vast majority do not. Over FY 2017-18, three percent of involuntary exits in THP+FC resulted in legal evictions, and just two percent in THP-Plus.

**FIGURE 10**

**YOUTH EXITS FROM THP+FC & THP-PLUS DURING FY 2017–18**

- **THP+FC**
  - 68% Voluntary Exits
  - 32% Involuntary Discharges

- **THP-PLUS**
  - 73% Voluntary Exits
  - 27% Involuntary Discharges
The average program length increased for THP-Plus participants and decreased for THP+FC participants since FY 2016-17. As shown in Figure 11, of youth who exited a THP+FC program over FY 2017-18, the average length of stay was 12.54 months. This is a six percent decrease from the cohort who exited THP+FC over FY 2016-17 with an average length of stay of 13.4 months. Of youth who exited a THP-Plus program over FY 2017-18, the average length of stay was 15.63 months, a 19 percent increase from the cohort who exited THP-Plus over FY 2016-17 with an average length of stay of 13.1 months.

The increase in average length of stay for THP-Plus participants may be partially attributed to an increase in the number of counties that have opted into the THP-Plus extension established by SB 1252, from 21 counties as of June 2017 to 27 counties as of October 2018. The increase in average length of stay for THP-Plus participants may also be partially due to a modest decrease in the average rate of involuntary discharge from the THP-Plus program.
Education & Employment

The majority of youth in both programs entered with a high school diploma. As shown in Figure 12, of youth who exited a THP+FC program over FY 2017-18, seventy-three percent of youth had completed high school or received their General Education Diploma (GED)/High School Equivalency Certificate when they entered the program. In THP-Plus, this figure is slightly higher, with 83 percent of participants having entered the program with this academic credential or higher.

The percentage of youth with a high school diploma increased in THP+FC, less in THP-Plus.

Also illustrated in Figure 12, at exit from both programs, the percentage of youth with a high school diploma or higher increased, with more significant gains in THP+FC. Among youth in THP+FC, this percentage rose from 73 to 83 percent, and for THP-Plus participants, from 83 to 84 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATIONAL STATUS</th>
<th>THP+FC</th>
<th>THP-Plus</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrance</td>
<td>Exit</td>
<td>Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth has not earned their high school diploma, GED or high school equivalent or higher</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth has earned their high school diploma, GED or high school equivalent or higher</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth in both programs are enrolling in college, but largely disenrolling prior to program completion.

At entrance to THP+FC, three percent of youth reported that their current educational status was that they had dropped out of college, a figure that shoots up to 20 percent upon exit from the program. In THP-Plus, 11 percent of youth reported at entrance that their current educational status was that they had dropped out of college, a figure that increased to 16 percent at program exit.
Providers estimated that one in five college students in their programs lost their financial aid due to failure to make Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). THP-Plus providers reported that of the 527 college-attending program participants, 20 percent (104 youth) lost their financial aid because they did not meet SAP. Likewise, THP+FC providers reported there were 918 youth in their programs who were college students, of which 20 percent (185) lost their financial aid due to failure to maintain SAP. It is important to note that this is likely an under-reporting, as some providers are unaware when youth in their programs lose their financial aid.

There was limited college achievement between entrance and exit in THP-Plus and THP+FC.

As illustrated in Figure 14, in THP-Plus, there was limited college achievement between the time participants entered and exited the program. At entrance to the THP-Plus, 19 percent of youth were enrolled in a two-year college and three percent in a four-year college or university. Additionally, one percent entered THP-Plus already having achieved an associate degree. Combined, this totals 23 percent of youth entering THP-Plus either holding an associate degree or enrolled in a two- or four-year college. At exit from the program, while the percentage of youth that were attending a two-year college decreased by two percentage points, the percentage that received an associate degree only increased from one to two percent and the percentage of participants attending a four-year college or university increased from three to four percent. In addition, at exit, one percent reported having received a bachelor’s degree. Combined, this totals 24 percent of youth in THP-Plus exiting either enrolled in college or having achieved a degree.

As also shown in Figure 13, in THP+FC, 26 percent of youth were attending college upon entrance and while one percent received an associate degree upon exit, only 24 percent were still attending college upon exit.
Employment continues to be an area where both THP+FC and THP-Plus participants make gains between entrance and exit. Youth who exited a THP+FC program over FY 2017-18 experienced an increase in their rate of employment, from 38 percent at entrance to 44 percent at exit. Youth who exited a THP-Plus program over FY 2017-18 experienced an increase in their rate of employment, from 50 percent at entrance to 57 percent at exit. (Figure 14)

The percentage of employed youth who were working full-time also increased in both programs between entrance to and exit from the program: in THP+FC from eight percent to 19 percent, and in THP-Plus from 24 to 33 percent.

THP+FC and THP-Plus participants experienced an increase in monthly income between entrance and exit, with more gains seen in THP Plus.

Youth who exited a THP-Plus program over FY 2017-18 on average experienced a 23 percent increase in their monthly income from entrance to exit, from $1,118 to $1,381 per month which equates to an annual salary of $13,416 to $16,572 per year. Youth who exited a THP-FC program over FY 2017-18 on average experienced a five percent increase in their monthly income from entrance to exit, from $1,051 to $1,108 per month ($12,612 to $13,296 per year).

While gains in income and employment are encouraging, it is important to note that these annual incomes are just above the Federal Poverty Lines for 2018 which are $12,140 for one-person and $16,460 for two-person households. Additionally, these annual incomes include any stipend or allowance a program provides to youth to cover basic necessities, which will no longer remain once youth exit the program.

Examining wages alone, of the 44 percent of youth employed at exit from THP+FC and the 57 percent of youth employed at exit from THP-Plus, their average hourly wage was $11.94 and $13.13, respectively, with the majority of employed youth working part-time (81% in THP+FC and 67% in THP-Plus).
Almost all youth in THP-Plus were enrolled in health insurance upon exit from the program.

Of youth who exited a THP-Plus program over FY 2017-18, almost all youth (98%) reported being enrolled in health insurance upon exit from the program. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act\textsuperscript{14} provides former foster youth free health insurance until the age of 26. In California, youth under age 26 are eligible for Medi-Cal benefits if they were in foster care in any state at age 18 or older. The coverage includes medical care, vision exams, substance abuse treatment, mental health services and counseling, and dental care. All youth participating in THP+FC are automatically covered by Medi-Cal because they are dependents of the child welfare or juvenile probation systems.

There was an increase of youth accessing public benefits upon exit from the program for THP+FC and THP-Plus participants.

Of youth who exited a THP-FC program over FY 2017-18, five percent of participants were accessing public benefits at entrance. This increased to 21 percent upon exit. For THP-Plus, the percentage of youth accessing public benefits increased from 29 percent at entrance to 34 percent at exit.

\textsuperscript{14} HR 3590, 111th Cong. (2010)
A significant number of youth became parents while they were participating in THP+FC and THP-Plus programs. Of youth who exited a THP+FC program over FY 2017-18, the proportion who were custodial parents increased from four percent at entrance to 15 percent upon exit from the program. Of youth who exited a THP-Plus program in FY 2017-18, eighteen percent were custodial parents upon entrance to the program, and upon exit, this figure jumped to 26 percent.

This trend is illuminated when examining the gender-specific data displayed in Figure 15. Of young women who exited a THP+FC program over FY 2017-18, the proportion who were custodial mothers increased from six percent at entrance to 23 percent upon exit from the program. In THP-Plus, the proportion of custodial mothers increased from 28 percent at entrance to 39 percent at exit.
Over FY 2017-18, more than one in five youth in THP+FC and more than one in three youth in THP-Plus experienced homelessness prior to entering the program. Twenty-one percent of youth who entered THP+FC (Figure 16) and 36 percent of youth who entered THP-Plus (Figure 17) over FY 2017-18 had experienced homelessness prior to entering the program. Further, nine percent of those who entered THP+FC and 17 percent of those who entered THP-Plus, did so directly from homelessness or other unstable housing. This is a slight decrease from the past year for THP+FC and the past three years for THP-Plus.

![Figure 16: Youth Who Entered THP+FC During Fiscal Year](image)

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15 Homelessness or other unstable housing is defined in the Participant Tracking Systems as “emergency shelter, homelessness, or other unstable housing (i.e. street, car, couch-surfing, etc.).”
Both programs are inaccessible for a substantial number of youth, particularly in Los Angeles County.

THP-Plus and THP+FC providers were asked if they maintain waiting lists. Of the state’s 75 THP-Plus providers, 60 programs reported that they maintain a waiting list and 30 had youth on their waiting list. Those 30 programs reported that 417 youth were waiting to be housed, as of June 30, 2018.

Providers in certain counties reported a far greater demand than others. Butte, Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, San Diego and Santa Clara Counties each had programs with waiting lists of over 20 youth.

The county with the greatest discrepancy between the number of THP-Plus-eligible youth and the amount of realigned THP-Plus funding is Los Angeles. Over FY 2017-18, a total of 535 eighteen-year-olds made a final exit from foster care or out-of-home probation, and 874 NMDs exited extended foster care, totaling 1,409 youth becoming eligible for THP-Plus over the last fiscal year. This is nearly one-third (31%) of the state’s 4,584 youth who became eligible for THP-Plus over FY 2017-18. However, the
county’s annual THP-Plus allocation is $2,165,106, just six percent of the state’s $34,928,000 realigned THP-Plus budget.

There were also youth waiting for housing in THP+FC. Of the state’s 68 THP+FC providers, 20 reported that they currently have a waiting list. Those programs reported that 208 youth were waiting to be housed in THP+FC, as of June 30, 2018.

Youth who achieved permanency between 16 and 18 are seeking housing support, but unable to access THP-Plus.
THP-Plus providers reported that former foster youth in need of housing attempted to access THP-Plus that were not eligible under current eligibility criteria, which require youth to have been in foster care on their 18th birthday. Providers reported that 36 of their 75 THP-Plus programs had denied youth entrance because they exited foster care to adoption, guardianship or reunification after age 16, but before age 18, making them ineligible. When asked how many youth were denied admission due to this eligibility criteria, providers reported that this prevented 104 youth from being housed. Overall, this trend took place in 47 percent (22 counties) of the counties in the state with THP-Plus programs.
THP+FC & THP-PLUS ANNUAL REPORT

POLICY & PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

THP-Plus should be expanded to address unmet need, notably in Los Angeles County.

Close to half of all THP-Plus programs (34) noted that they had a waiting list at the end of the fiscal year; ten providers had waiting lists of 20 youth or more. Two providers reported a waiting list of more than 45 youth. As of June 30, 2018, an estimated 417 eligible youth were in need of THP-Plus, eligible to participate and yet were unable to access the program. Several counties report being at capacity and would like to be able to serve more youth. As of June 30, 2018, THP-Plus programs in California were at 94 percent capacity, and there were only 88 vacancies across the 47 counties with THP-Plus programs. Los Angeles County has nearly one-third (31%) of the state’s THP-Plus-eligible population, yet the county’s annual THP-Plus allocation is just six percent of the state’s realigned THP-Plus budget.

This high level of demand indicates a need for more THP-Plus. This could be accomplished in two ways, either through a budget augmentation or a reallocation of the existing $34.9 million annual THP-Plus budget. Through a budget augmentation, additional funding would be dedicated in the state budget to meet the growing housing needs of former foster youth across the state. Through a reallocation of current funding, the California Department of Social Services would reallocate the THP-Plus’s current $34.9 million budget to better match demand with supply. This option merits consideration given that 11 counties receive a combined THP-Plus allocation of $1.5 million despite not operating a THP-Plus program. Both approaches have merit and should be considered as strategies to address homelessness among California’s former foster youth.

Eligibility for THP-Plus should be changed to align with other transition-age youth programs.

Currently, youth are eligible for THP-Plus if they were in foster care (or out-of-home placement supervised by juvenile probation) on or after their 18th birthday. Half of THP-Plus providers reported denying access to THP-Plus to a youth because they were not in foster care at age 18, of which 104 youth had achieved permanence as an older teenager, between the ages of 16 and 18. Eligibility for the THP-Plus program should be modified to align with that of the Independent Living Program, the Chafee Education and Training Voucher, the Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Services (CAFYES)/NextUp program, priority enrollment for foster youth on college campuses, the extended Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program and the extended Adoptions Assistance Program. All of these programs’ eligibility requires youth to have been in foster care on or after their 16th birthday, as opposed to their 18th birthday.
The THP-Plus rate must grow with inflation to maintain providers and ensure access statewide.

While 12 of the 47 counties that implement THP-Plus increased their monthly THP-Plus rate, the majority did not. As the report notes, THP-Plus rates have largely remained unchanged since FY 2009-10. Since that time, the cost of living has increased 18.8 percent in California. The falling value of the THP-Plus rate strains the ability of providers to secure housing and provide the necessary services. Unlike THP+FC rates which are foster care rates set at the state-level and receive an annual Cost-of-Living Adjustment according the California Necessities Index, THP-Plus rates are set at the county-level and are not required to be adjusted annually to account for increases in cost of living. When compared to the statewide THP+FC rates for FY 2017-18, the average THP-Plus rate was $669 less for the single-site rate, $806 less for the scattered-site rate, and $433 less for the host family rate.16

Youth require assistance locating and securing housing.

Over one in three youth experienced homelessness between foster care and THP-Plus; one in five entered the program directly from homelessness. For THP+FC, more than one in five youth experienced homelessness between foster care and THP+FC, and one in ten entered directly from homelessness. Additionally, six percent of THP-Plus participants and seven percent of THP+FC participants who exited between FY 2017-18, exited into unstable housing. This indicates that capacity building and policies should be considered to improve navigation between placements and after, especially for THP+FC participants who are eligible for THP-Plus. Less than one in five youth (18%) transitioned into a THP-Plus program after leaving a THP+FC placement.

California requires more THP+FC placements for youth in extended foster care, particularly in certain parts of the state.

As of June 30, 2018, an estimated 208 youth were on waiting lists for THP+FC placements. Given this, California needs more THP+FC placements, particularly for young parents, youth with disabilities and others who require the more intensive supervision and support provided by THP+FC.

Statewide, 23 percent of youth are placed in THP+FC. A total of 23 counties have a lower percentage of youth placed in THP+FC, notably Los Angeles (14%), Orange (15%) and San Bernardino (17%). This lower rate of utilization may indicate a need for additional THP+FC capacity.

16 For FY 2017-18, THP+FC rates were set at $3,209 for the single- and remote-site models and $2,553 for the host family model. See California Department of Social Services’ All County Letter 17-75 (2017): http://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/ACL/2017/17-75.pdf?ver=2017-07-13-114757-097
Access to sexual and reproductive health services is critical, particularly for youth in THP+FC.

As the report notes, the percentage of young women who are custodial parents skyrocketed between entrance and exit, from six percent to 23 percent. Prior research indicates that as much as 60 percent of pregnancies among foster youth may be unintended due to a lack of access to reproductive health services. Given this experience, it is critical that THP+FC providers proactively educate program participants about their reproductive and sexual health and integrate this information into regular case manager meetings and training topics.

Youth require additional support to prevent them from losing financial aid due to failure to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP).

It is estimated that one in five college students lost financial aid in both THP+FC and THP-Plus programs due to failure to meet SAP requirements. Without financial aid, most current and former foster youth -- whom do not have parental financial contribution -- have no financial means to pay for college. SAP requirements for foster youth should be reconsidered in order to reduce the many barriers that exist for current and former foster youth pursuing a college education. This includes policy changes, such as removing or modifying the SAP requirement on the Chafee Education and Training Voucher as well as practice changes such as educating youth about the financial aid process and SAP requirements, supporting youth in enrolling in a course load that meets their readiness level, engaging with youth throughout the semester to identify problem areas in their courses before it's too late, and assisting youth in filing an appeal if they lose financial aid.

THP+FC and THP-Plus programs must be retooled to promote college enrollment, retention and completion.

With close to three out of four youth entering THP+FC and more than four out of five youth entering THP-Plus with a high school diploma, programs must be prepared to help youth matriculate into college. Yet, only 23 percent of youth in THP+FC and 24 percent in THP-Plus are enrolled in college or have completed a degree when they exit the program. Training should be provided to THP+FC case managers on financial aid, available campus support programs and other key post-secondary education-related topics. Additionally, full implementation of Senate Bill 12 (2017) is necessary to ensure that at age 16, an adult is identified in a youth's case plan to assist them with their financial aid and college application.

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California’s newly expanded Earned Income Tax Credit is an important resource for current and former foster youth to access. At entrance into a THP+FC or THP-Plus program, youth are making an annual salary of $12,600 and $13,416 respectively, just above the Federal Poverty Line. California adopted a state Earned Income Tax credit (EITC) in 2015 to reduce poverty by increasing the after-tax income of low-income individuals and families. In the California State Budget, the CalEITC was expanded to include transition-aged youth, ages 18 to 24 who are not parents. Prior to the policy change, individuals under age 24 were not eligible for the CalEITC unless they were parents. Policies should prioritize future education and outreach around the CalEITC program, as it has now been expanded with wider eligibility and higher Income limits.

THP-Plus services should shift to meet the unique needs of young families.

The proportions of female youth and older youth (age 21 to 24) participating in THP-Plus have increased significantly. Based on data from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood (CalYOUTH) Study19 indicating that at least one in three females in foster care have their first child by age 21, providers and counties should prepare for a possible increase in parenting youth based on this demographic shift. As such, considerable efforts must be made on the policy and practice level to ensure access to family-oriented resources and support, such as CalFresh, the Earned Income Tax Credit and access to home visitation programs.

Practice and policy changes are required to reduce involuntary exits and increase length of stay.

While the length of stay in THP-Plus has increased, youth are still prematurely exiting both THP+FC and THP-Plus programs as opposed to taking advantage of the full program duration. Youth are spending an average of 12.54 months in THP+FC and 15.63 months in THP-Plus, when they have the opportunity of accessing THP+FC for the three years they are participating in extended foster care, and THP-Plus for two to three years depending on whether their county has opted into the THP-Plus extension for youth in school. Providers and counties should examine their rate of involuntary discharge, as this practice leads to premature exits. Providers and counties should also analyze the factors generally associated with shorter lengths-of-stay in order to make programmatic changes that might support longer stays.

YOUTH PROFILE: ASHLEY STONE

Ashley grew up in Anaheim, California and entered the foster care system six months shy of 18. Although she was placed into care in the middle of her last year of high school, her natural aptitude in academics allowed her to excel and graduate on time.

However, having the resources to continue to postsecondary education was difficult. She did not have the adult support she needed nor the financial resources to afford college. Between moving placements and a period of homelessness, Ashley did not believe continuing her education was possible and dismissed the idea of it ever being in her future.

Luckily with extended foster care, her social worker recommended New Alternatives, a THP+FC program in Orange County where she was provided support and encouragement to continue her education. Because of the accountability placed on her and support with navigating tasks like applying for financial aid and developing independent living skills, Ashley found a new sense of confidence that she truly could obtain her life goals. With the help of her THP+FC case manager, she was able to access resources and the financial aid necessary to continue her post-secondary education. Once she started working towards an associate degree at Santa Ana College, she fell in love with it.

College life did not come without obstacles. Ashley initially struggled with balancing her academics along with her work and life obligations. Ashley was put on academic probation after failing to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), and when a family death occurred, it was too many stressors all at once. Ashley lost her financial aid after failing to improve her grades, which is one component of maintaining SAP. “Foster youth oftentimes are dealing with instability along with no financial support from their family,” said Ashley. “So, to lose your financial aid is really disheartening,” she added, as this experience caused her to slip back to the mindset that obtaining a college degree wasn’t for her.

Luckily, participating in New Alternatives’ THP+FC program helped keep her on track to meet the educational goals she set for herself. Ashley was provided assistance with applying for an appeal to regain her financial aid, and she was connected to support programs both on and off campus to help ensure that she had the resources to continue through her educational career. Without the post-secondary educational support she received from New Alternatives, Ashley believes she would have never gone to college, and would have ended up working low-paying jobs to make ends meet. Her case manager at New Alternatives was there consistently to help meet her needs and enable her to be successful in college.

Today, she is on her last semester to finish her associate degree, and will be transferring to UC Riverside in January to complete a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology. Ashley’s love for education has led her to work towards a profession where she can motivate others in school. She plans to go to graduate school and hopes to become a professor or teacher one day.

New Alternatives has THP+FC and THP-Plus programs in Orange and San Diego Counties. The New Alternatives’ programs in both counties participate in Beyond the Safety Net, a two-year initiative led by John Burton Advocates for Youth to increase transitional housing providers’ capacities to support youth in post-secondary education.
THP+FC & THP-PLUS HISTORY

2001 AB 427 establishes THP-Plus.
2002 THP-Plus is de-linked from STEP.
2003 3 counties implement THP-Plus.
2004 THP-Plus changed to an annual allocation.
2005 Eligibility extended to age 24, and 5 counties implement THP-Plus.
2006 60% county share of cost removed, and 16 counties implement THP-Plus.
2007 39 counties implement THP-Plus.
2008 THP-Plus Participant Tracking System is launched.
2009 50 counties implement THP-Plus, and it serves over 2,000 youth for the first time over FY 2008-09. $5 million budget reduction to THP-Plus for FY 2009-10.
2010 THP-Plus budget reduced slightly to $35.4 million for FY 2010-11.
2011 51 counties implement THP-Plus during FY 2010-11, THP-Plus changes to a county-funded program under the Governor’s 2011 Realignment of Child Welfare Services.
2012 Extended Foster Care is implemented. THP+FC licensing and rate structure is established. THP-Plus is still serving over 2,000 youth annually in 50 counties.
2013 THP+FC serves its first 305 youth over FY 2012-13, with 273 youth in the program as of 7/1/13. Some counties begin to make THP-Plus capacity reductions and the number of youth served annually drops to just above 2,000.
2014 THP+FC continues to grow with 1,031 youth in the program as of 7/1/14, while THP-Plus is on a decline. SB 1252 passes, allowing youth enrolled in school to participate in THP-Plus for 36 months and up to age 25, at counties’ option.
2015 THP+FC serves over 2,400 youth over FY 2014-15, with 1,436 youth in the program as of 7/1/15. THP-Plus continues on a decline, serving 1,696 youth. The THP+FC Participant Tracking System is launched.
2016 19 counties implement the THP-Plus extension established by SB 1252. THP+FC serves over 3,000 youth over FY 2015-16, while the number of youth served by THP-Plus remains stagnant.
2017 21 counties implement the THP-Plus extension. The moment-in-time number of youth placed in THP+FC reaches 1,661 as of April 1, 2017.
2018 27 counties implement the THP-Plus extension. The moment-in-time number of youth placed in THP+FC reaches 1,916 as of July 1, 2018.

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