

HHS COMMITTEE #1
July 22, 2019
Briefing

MEMORANDUM

July 17, 2019

TO: Health and Human Services Committee
FROM: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst
SUBJECT: Briefing: Foster Care *ny*
PURPOSE: Receive a briefing on Foster Care in Child Welfare Services

Expected Attendees:

- Raymond Crowell, Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Oscar Mensah, Social Services Officer and Deputy Chief, Children, Youth and Family Services, DHHS
- Lisa Merkin, Administrator, Child Welfare Services, DHHS
- Mykelle Richburg, Council Summer Fellow

HHS Presentation

The HHS Committee will receive an overview briefing on foster care and other out-of-home placements by Child Welfare Services. DHHS representatives will present on trends in out-of-home care, how the program recruits and supports foster parents, and how the program helps children transition out of services. The presentation slides are provided at ©1-11.

Some key points include:

- **Children in Out-of-Home Care:** In June 2019, there were 411 children in out-of-home care compared to 393 children in June 2015. Trend data is provided on ©3.
- **Out-of-Home Placements in FY19:** The largest percentage of out-of-home placements were in Foster Care and Treatment Foster Care (51%), Relative Care (26%), and Residential Placement (13%).
- **Demographics at Entry:**

- Black/African American youth are the largest demographic group represented in this population at 37%. The second largest group is the unknown race/ethnicity category at 34%. All other groups are at or below 13%.
- Females make up 63% of the population compared to 37% male.
- Children ages 1-5 had the largest number of children who entered care in the first three quarters of FY19. Ages 6-10 were represented at 19%, and children less than 1 year old made up 18% of the total.
- **Children Entering and Leaving Out-of-Home Care:** In FY19, 193 children left out-of-home care for the following reasons: Reunification (42%); custody/guardianship (19%), adoption finalization (16%), and emancipation (15%). The following table shows trend data for children entering and leaving foster care from FY17 to FY19:

	FY17	FY18	FY19
# entering foster care	162	184	193
# leaving foster care	151	172	203
Net difference	11	12	-10

- **Recruiting and Supporting Foster Parents:** Recruitment of foster parents and licensed provider homes in FY19 is on par with the level in FY18 and higher than FY17 numbers. See ©8-9. Supports to foster parents include Family Involvement Meetings, foster parent retention activities like family picnics, appreciation dinners, and other family activities, and stipends for the cost of care. See also ©7-8.
- **Transition Age Youth:** In Maryland, youth “age out” of foster care at age 21, compared to age 18 in other states. In FY19, CWS worked with 63 transitioning youth between the ages of 18-21. A large majority of these youth, approximately 79.4% were attending college or still in high school. Five youth were not in school or working, and one youth was unable to work due to a medically fragile condition.

The DHHS works with transition age youth on housing, health, education, employment finances, and family and friend support. The Department provides independent living classes and information about and access to support services.

Housing for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care

Summer fellow Mykelle Richburg will present to the Committee on her research on affordable housing solutions for youth transitioning out of foster care. In her July 16 memorandum on the topic (©12-14), Ms. Richburg highlights that youth aging out of foster care face a number of challenges in transitioning to adulthood and risk becoming homeless. Ms. Richburg will summarize County services for transitioning youth (see ©12) and housing and other support programs for transition-aged youth in other jurisdictions (see ©12-14).

She concludes:

Providing affordable housing solutions for youth transitioning out of foster care allows them to have stability and will reduce homelessness overall. Montgomery County should also create a database that tracks youth 6 months to 5 years after they have transitioned out of foster care. The database would monitor their housing stability, and if they became homeless once they left the system. After data is collected, Montgomery County should hire an outside evaluator to assess the transition program's effectiveness and see where there is a need for improvement.

Possible Discussion Questions

- What accounts for the difference in numbers for completed foster applications and new provider homes from FY17 to FY18 and FY19? What did the Department do to increase the number of completed foster parent applications and new licensed provider homes?
- Are there additional best practices that the CWS is interested in implementing to support foster families? Does the program provide ongoing training or mentoring services for foster parents? Are there any gaps in service for foster children or foster families?
- Would any of the housing or program models described by Ms. Richburg complement the County's current service array for transition-aged youth?
- Could CWS create a database that tracks youth who have aged out of foster? What would be challenges or resources needed to implement this data collection effort?



Marc Elrich
County Executive

Raymond L. Crowel, Psy.D.
Director

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Child Welfare Services

JoAnn Barnes
Chief, Children, Youth & Families

Lisa Merkin
CWS Administrator

Oscar Mensah, Ph.D.
Social Services Officer



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Child Welfare Services

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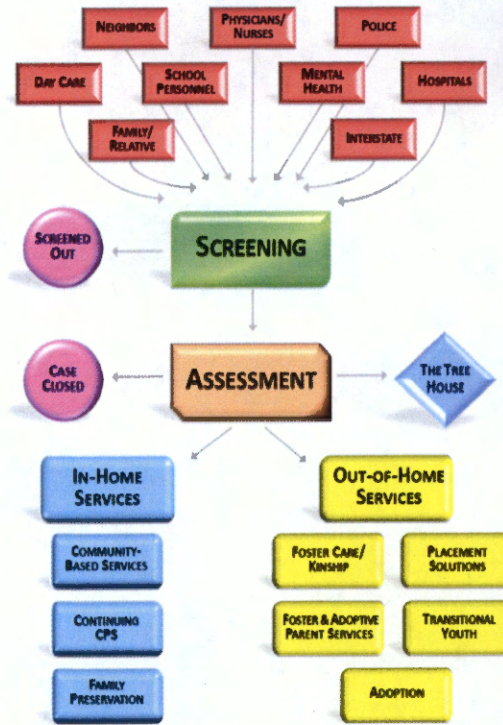
VISION

A future where children are safe, families are stable and communities are strong.

MISSION

To protect children, preserve families, strengthen communities, ensure permanency and well-being for every abused and neglected child in Montgomery County.

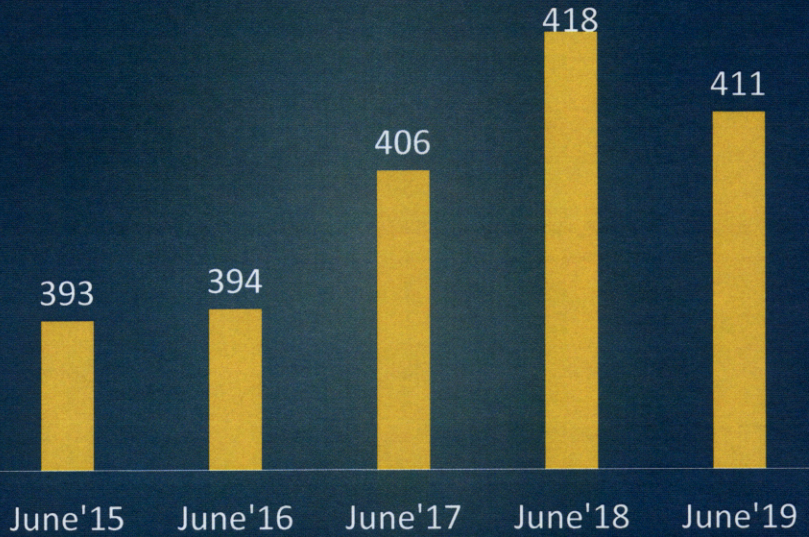
CHILD WELFARE CASE FLOW



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Children in Out-of-Home Care

5



Foster Care

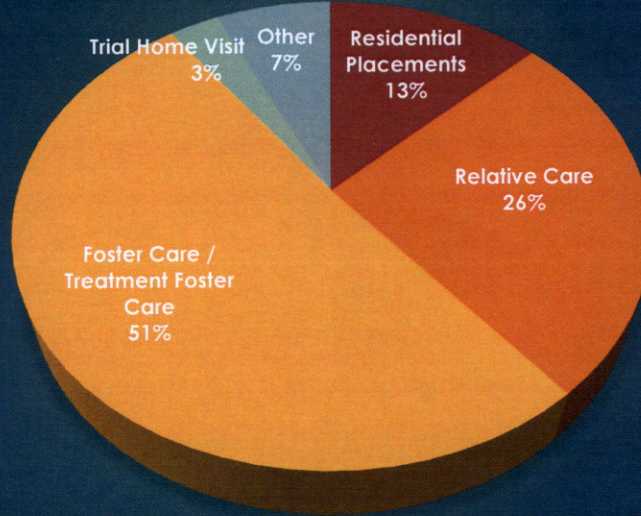
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Types of Out-of-Home Placements

- Kinship Homes
- Family Foster Homes
- Treatment Foster Homes
- Evaluation Units/Residential Group Homes
- Residential Treatment Facilities (RTC)

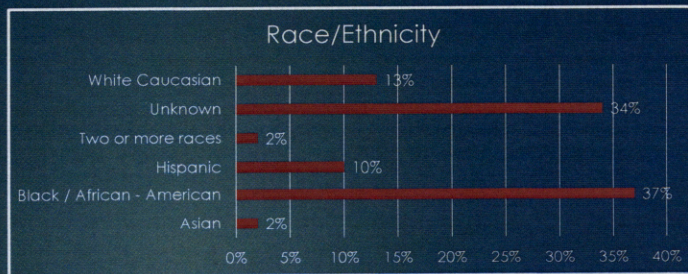
Out of Home Placement Type FY19

7

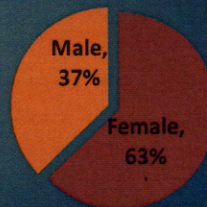


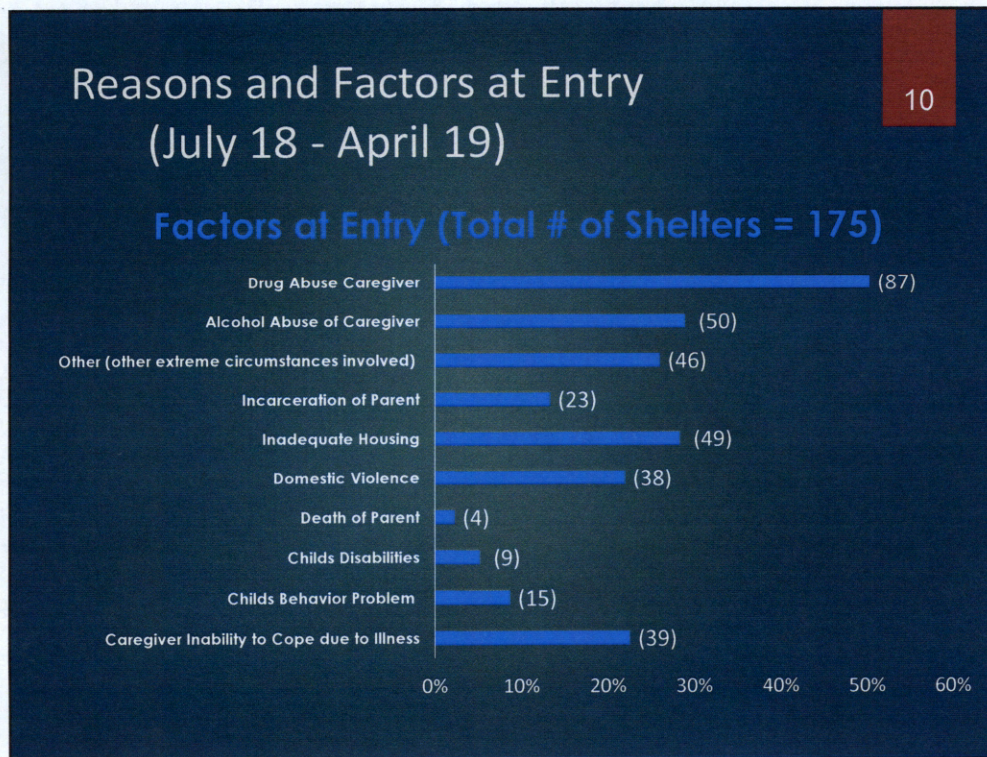
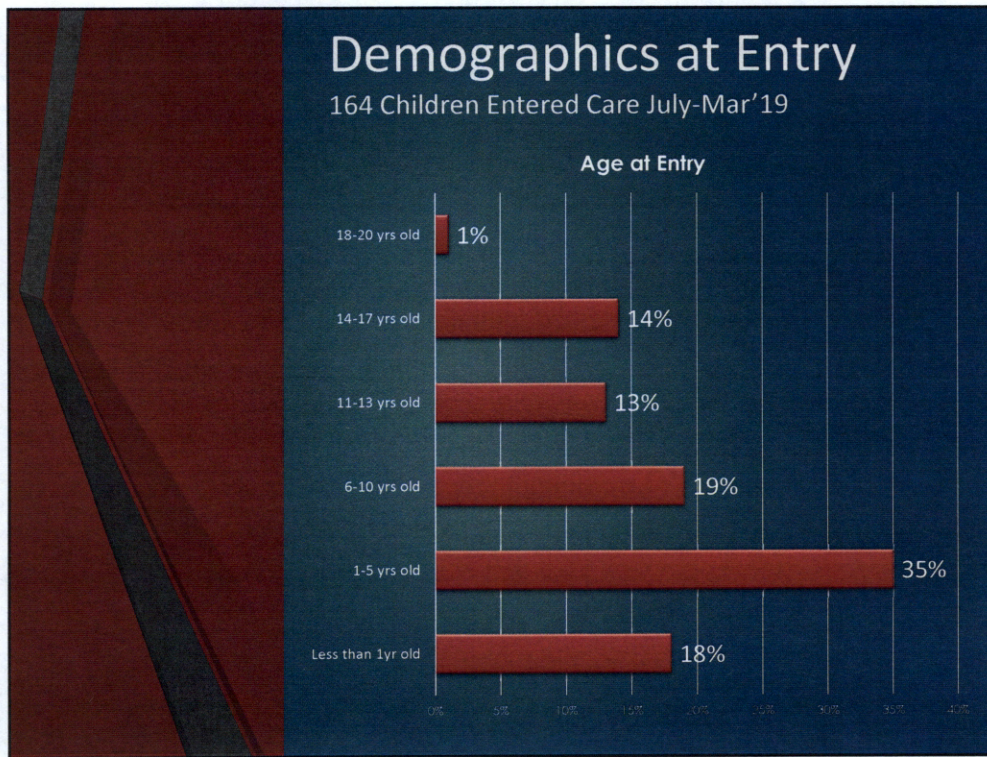
*Other: Hospital, College, Own Apartment, Independent Living Residential, Detention Center

Demographics at Entry



GENDER

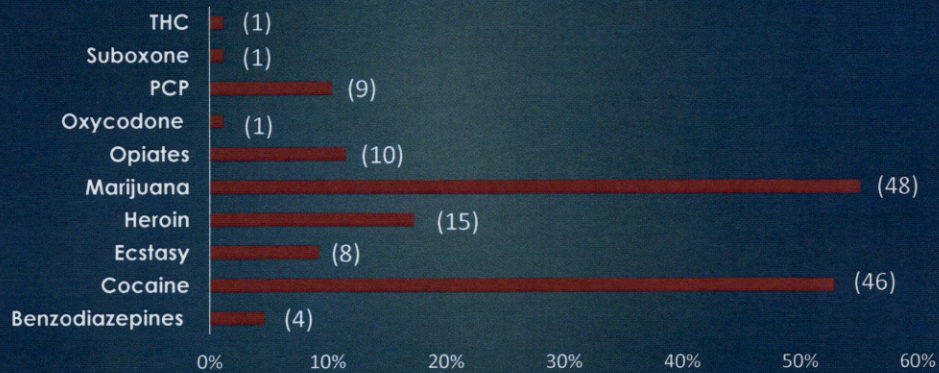




Reasons and Factors at Entry (July 18 - April 19)

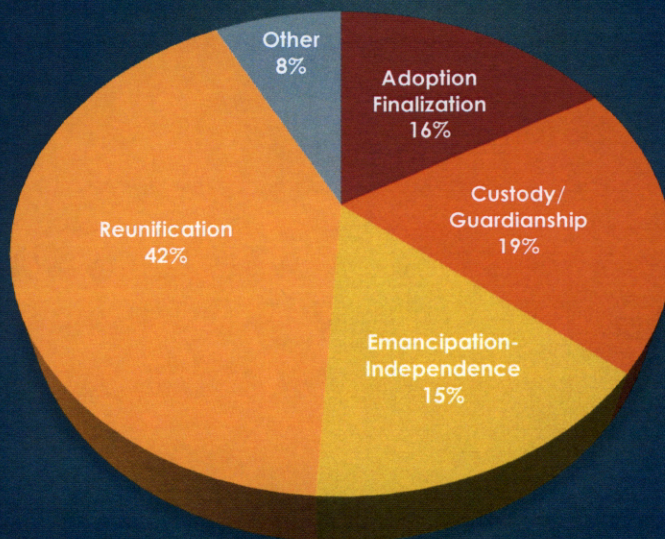
11

Drug Types (Total # of Shelters w/ Drug Abuse Factor = 87)



Children Leaving Out of Home Care FY19

12



Family Involvement Meetings (FIM)

13

Family Centered Practice Model:

Shared decision making and what's best and safest for a family

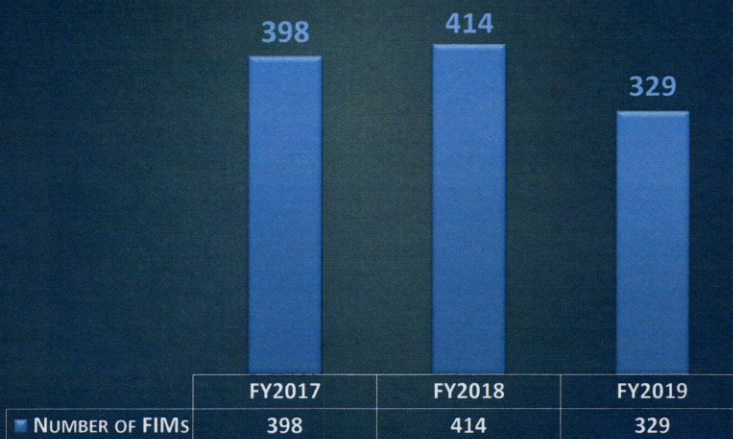
An FIM Must Be Held Whenever There Is a/an . . .

- Emergency Removal or Considered Removal
- Planned Placement Change
- Emergency Placement Change
- Change In Permanency Plan
- Youth Transitional Plan
 - ✓ Annually for youth 14-16 and every 180 days thereafter for ages 16-21
- Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA)

Family Involvement Meetings (FIM)

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**Number of FIMs Completed
(FY 2017 – FY 2019)**



Resource Provider Homes

15

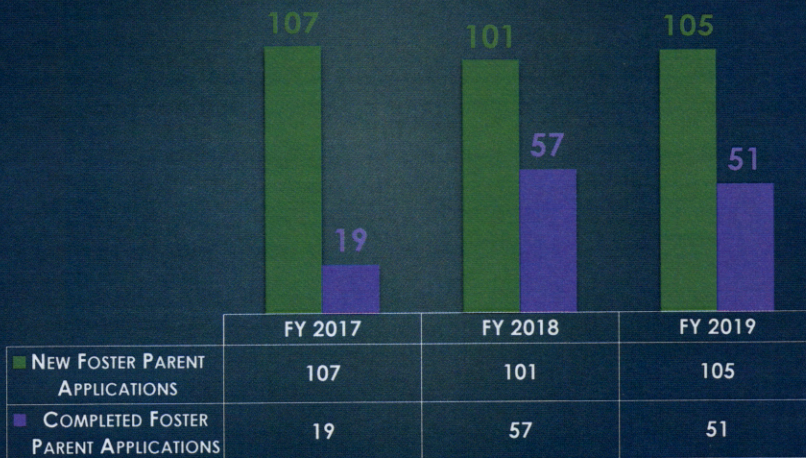
Recruitment and Retention

- Monthly Information Sessions
- Recruitment Events throughout the County:
(Festivals, Parades, Radio events)
- Foster Parent Retention Activities:
(Family Picnic, Appreciation Dinner, Fall Festival, Skating Party, Back-to-School Jam)
- Stipend for Cost of Care:
(Ages 0-11 = \$887 and 12 & over = \$902)

Resource Provider Homes

16

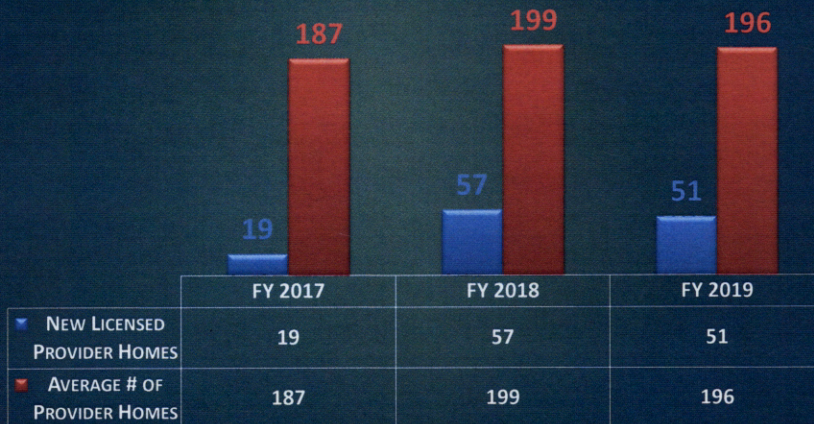
New vs. Completed Foster Parent Applications
(FY2017 – FY2019)



Resource Provider Homes

17

New Provider Homes & Average Number of Providers
(FY2017 – FY2019)



Transitioning Youth FY19

18

- ▶ Ages 18-21 = 63 Youth
- ▶ What are they doing? Where are they going?
 - 25 = Attending college
 - 25 = Still in High School (*17 in Special Education*)
 - 2 = Enrolled in Post-HS Vocational Training programs
 - 2 = Currently in GED programs
 - 3 = Graduated HS & have F/T Jobs
 - 1 = Unable to work due to medically fragile condition
 - 5 = Not in school or working (*2 graduated HS; 1 received certificate*)

Transitioning Youth

19

“Ready by 21” Goals

- HOUSING - Identifying a stable home; Establishing rental history
- HEALTH - Maintaining health ins; Advocating for medical/dental/MH needs
- EDUCATION – Attaining HS Diploma/GED; College/Trade School options; Financial Assistance; MCPS Foster Care Educational Data Platform
- EMPLOYMENT - Determining career interests; Establishing job history and good work ethics
- FINANCES - Creating a Budget; Establishing good credit; Opening bank accounts
- FAMILY & FRIENDS SUPPORT - Forming healthy adult relationships with family members, foster parents, peers & colleagues

Transitioning Youth

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- Independent Living Classes
- Learning Collaborative: Community stakeholders that build & streamline a network of services for all youth
- Post 21 Survey: How do youth succeed after age 21?
- Mobile Phone App: To assist youth in having readily available information about community resources

Moving Forward

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- Increased outreach to the Interfaith Community for resource/foster home recruitment (emergency homes, sibling groups, adolescents)
- Post 21 Support: Affordable housing for aging out youth, internship/vocational experiences

To: Vivian Yao and Lisa Merkin

From: Mykelle Richburg

Date: 7/17/19

Subject: Affordable housing solutions for youth transitioning out of foster care

Problem

Youth who age out of foster care face a variety of challenges during the transition to adulthood, one being housing stability. Once they leave the system, they make the abrupt transition to living independently without financial support. As a result, many of those who age out of foster care find themselves homeless or precariously housed¹. The Homeless During Transition to Adulthood report found that youth aging out of foster care are at high risk for becoming homeless during the transition to adulthood, with more than one in five becoming homeless after age 18.

Montgomery County

In FY19, there were **193** youth entries into foster care and **203** departures.

In FY18, there were **184** youth entries into foster care and **172** departures.

In FY17, there were **162** youth entries into foster care and **151** departures.

Below are programs that provide financial assistance, guidance, and support for youth transitioning out of foster care:

Programs for youth transitioning out of Montgomery County

- 4Montgomery Kids covers security deposits and furniture costs for youth ageing out of foster care
- The Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County (HOCMC), is supported by the Family Unification Program which provides rental assistance to families at risk of foster care placements due to lack of housing or who can be reunified if housing is secured. Currently, we have four youth that qualified for this program and have been issued a FUP certificate.²
- Ready by 21 provides older youth (Independent Living) financial support including: 1st month's rent, security deposits, and renter's insurance. Chafee funds help support this work.
- Transitioning Youth Learning Collaborative (LC). This LC was developed with the assistance of Casey Family Programs that brings a large number of professionals together, monthly, to collaborate on the needs of youth. While working with the Local

¹ In Maryland youth age out at 21, and in other states youth age out at 18.

² Previously, this program was supported by Freddie Mac which allowed the program to support 10 youth with rental assistance and case-management services after ageing out. The program was very successful, with all 10 youth maintaining stable housing 1 year after receiving the assistance

Collaboration Council, Child Welfare Services has been able to greatly increase the number of unique resources and referrals, specific to a youth's need, through the (LC).

Transitional housing programs in other jurisdictions

According to the 2017 Supporting Young People from Transitioning report, between 11 and 36 percent of young people who age out of foster care become homeless. In this report, many states identified that housing instability was a cause for homelessness and stated that it was a key area in need of improvement for transitioning youth. Below are examples of how different states address housing instability and homelessness for youth transitioning out of foster care.

- **Kansas:** Youthrive, a nonprofit organization that provides affordable housing and independent living placements for youth transitioning out of foster care through the Spero house.
- **California:** In California, youth transitioning out of foster care have the opportunity to participate in the Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THP-Plus) program. This program provides subsidized housing on a sliding scale for up to 36 months from age 18 to 24 while investing in educational advocacy and support, job readiness training and life skills training. The (THP-Plus) program has three housing models which include youth living with a host family, in an apartment or other type of housing owned or leased in a complex with other foster youth or in a remote site.
 - California also provides Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs) where youth can live on their own and receive their foster care stipend directly.
- **New York:** New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS), City University of New York (CUNY) and New York Foundling have created The Dorm Project. This program provides year-round housing with additional academic, financial, social and emotional support to any current or former foster youth ages 17 to 24 who is attending any CUNY institution.
- **Washington D.C.:** In Washington D.C., the Elizabeth Ministry is contracted by D.C.'s Child and Welfare Services and provides housing for mothers that are in the process of transitioning out of foster care. The Elizabeth Ministry has two apartments, The Talitha Kouom Cooperative Apartments, which consists of 27 units, each with a living room, 2 bedrooms, air conditioner, stove, refrigerator and dishwasher.
- **Illinois:** The Youth Housing Assistance program provides a partial housing stipend for housing and housing-related expenses for transitioning youth.

Intergenerational Housing Models

Generations of Hope provides a housing model for intergenerational youth transitioning out of foster care and senior citizens. Below are jurisdictions that have implemented this model:

- **Washington, D.C.:** Micasa's Genesis program is a small, intergenerational community in Washington, DC, consisting of 27 affordable apartments for seniors, for young families transitioning out of foster care, and for other families.
- **Florida:** New Life Village supports transitioning youth by providing program rich, below market housing to foster-adoptive and kinship families of children, many who have

survived abuse, neglect and trauma. Seniors living in the community serve as surrogate grandparents, volunteers, and tutors.

- **Washington:** Bridge Meadows builds intentional intergenerational living communities that bring youth formerly in foster care, their families, and elders together
- **Illinois:** Hope Meadows was designed to provide community support to families adopting children from foster care, as well as an opportunity for retirees (and near-retirees) to find meaning and purpose as neighbors, mentors, and “grandparents” in a supportive and nurturing environment.

The Treehouse community is an inter-generational neighborhood designed to support families.³ who are fostering and adopting children from the public foster care system foundation. Currently there are Treehouse communities Easthampton, Massachusetts, and others developing in Boston, Massachusetts and San Francisco, California.

Additional programs

- **Opportunity Passport:** Through the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Opportunity Passport aims to teach youth transitioning financial literacy by educating them on how to manage money and acquire assets. Opportunity Passport is a unique matched savings program that helps young people improve their financial capability when transitioning from foster care or navigating other youth-serving systems. Findings report that youth participants that purchased housing assets are 1.2 times more likely to have housing stability in comparison to their counterparts.
- **Chafee fund:** The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) offers assistance to help current and former foster care youth achieve self-sufficiency. Transitioning youth can receive a one-time stipend to cover startup costs or receive short-term ongoing support to assist with moving. Localities can also use Chafee funds in collaboration with Family Unification Program (FUP) Vouchers to assist with furniture and other household costs.

Conclusion

Youth in foster care make up a vulnerable population that is often forgotten about. Due to lack of housing and financial instability once they transition out of the system, they are likely to face homelessness. Providing affordable housing solutions for youth transitioning out of foster care allows them to have stability and will reduce homelessness overall. Montgomery County should also create a database that tracks youth 6 months to 5 years after they have transitioned out of foster care. The database would monitor their housing stability, and if they became homeless once they left the system. After data is collected, Montgomery County should hire an outside evaluator to assess the transition program’s effectiveness and see where there is a need for improvement.

³ The Treehouse community is a separate program from the Montgomery County Treehouse Childhouse Advocacy Center