



FIRST PLACE FOR YOUTH

More is Possible

January 5, 2024 – 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.**



Transitional Housing Programs

Young adults with experience in foster care

Transitional Housing Program for Nonminor Dependents—**THP-NMD**

- Age 18-21
- *Current* child welfare involvement
- Federal match funding

Transitional Housing Program-Plus—**THP-Plus**

- Up to age 25 (or 36 months)
- *Former* child welfare involvement

Transitional Housing Program—**THP**

- To expand & sustain THP-Plus programs
- More flexible eligibility criteria



2023 BY THE NUMBERS

1660

Youth served by First Place for Youth and network partners in California, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New York & Ohio.

545

My First Place™ program participants in California gained housing, education and employment coaching, as well as comprehensive case-management support.

Youth entering our program have been in foster care in the custody of the state for an average of nearly eight years, with placements in at least six different foster homes, and have changed schools many times.

THE YOUTH AT ENTRY*



40% Are not stably housed



49% Are not in school



64% Are unemployed



13% Have children



40% Have been involved with the justice system

MY FIRST PLACE™ PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

in California



92% Exited the program into stable housing***



85% Were enrolled in a high school diploma or GED program***



78% Of eligible youth enrolled in post-secondary education



86% Obtained employment or realized a wage increase



96% Maintained family size



98% Avoided arrest



90%

of youth in My First Place rated the program as Good or Excellent after 12 months in program.

* Snapshot of our youth entering the My First Place Program in FY2023. ** Youth who were in program after 180 days in FY2023. *** Youth who exited the program after 12+ months

My First Place™

Housing, Case Management, Education,
Employment and Healthy Living

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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.



Instrumental
Relationships



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.

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

- Youth 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





Scattered-Site Housing

Benefits & Challenges

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



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Questions?

