

Focus on the Facts

The Data You Need to Make the Case for THP-Plus

“There isn’t a need in our county now that we have extended foster care.”

- While extended foster care is valuable, it is not adequate to assist those youth who will likely require assistance after age 21, namely parenting youth and youth with disabilities. Only THP-Plus offers services to these two groups.
- Currently in California, there are an estimated 1,000 parenting youth in foster care. According to a 2013 study by Dr. Emily Hornstein, the children of these parenting foster youth are three to four times more likely to suffer maltreatment. THP-Plus is a vital resource for these young, vulnerable parents to prevent maltreatment and the public cost associated with it.¹
- A 2012 report by the federal Children’s Bureau found that the rate of disability among youth in the foster care system is three times the rate of youth in the general population, with 11 percent experiencing a serious physical or mental disability. This raises special challenges for older youth in foster care, who are employed at half the rate of former foster youth without disabilities, according to a 2012 study.² Like young mothers, these individuals require additional support to ensure a safe, supported transition into young adulthood.³
- THP-Plus is also necessary to assist youth who are not eligible for extended foster care. According to a 2009 study conducted by the Urban Institute in Los Angeles County, 34.6 percent of youth will not be eligible for extended foster care due to their inability to work, attend school or meet disability criteria which exempt them from school or work requirements.⁴ Like parenting youth and youth with disabilities, these youth will require THP-Plus.

“The budget is tight. We’d love to do it, but we can’t afford it.”

- Funding for THP-Plus is not tied to the county General Fund. Under 2011 Realignment, it is tied to the California Sales and Use Tax and can only be used for child welfare purposes. The California Sales and Use Tax has been forecasted to increase 7 percent in Fiscal Year 2014-15.⁵
- THP-Plus saves counties money. THP-Plus has demonstrated successful outcomes that increase youths’ economic self-sufficiency, thereby decreasing their utilization of public benefits. These outcomes include increasing the rate of high school graduation, the rate of employment and the monthly income for youth between exit and entrance.⁶

“I understand helping youth to age 21, but to age 24? They are adults and further supporting them fosters dependency.”

- Supporting youth to age 24 is consistent with social norms in the U.S. as parental support of adult children has become increasingly common over the last 30 years.
- In 2013, a full 36 percent of 18 to 31 year-olds live with their parents, while 34 percent of 18 to 24 year-olds receive direct, regular financial assistance from their parents.⁷

“There are programs for adults to serve these young adults, such as the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act funding or Section 8 housing vouchers.”

- Programs for homeless youth and homeless adults are woefully underfunded and will not address the needs of youth who are unable to access THP-Plus. For example, while THP-Plus is funded at \$34.5 million per year, the entire population of homeless youth is \$43 million.
- Funding for the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act’s Transitional Housing Program has remained flat over the last five years. In Fiscal year 2011, it turned away over 8,000 homeless youth due to a lack of funding.⁸
- HUD’s Section 8 housing voucher program will not address the needs of former foster youth unable to access THP-Plus. For example, in 2011, the Oakland Housing Authority opened its Section 8 waiting list for five days and received 100,000 applications for housing, 10,000 of which were made it to the waiting list and 650 individuals who were awarded a voucher.⁹ This experience is consistent across California and the country.

“So you’re saying THP-Plus is an option for youth who don’t want to participate in extended foster care? If they don’t want to participate, then that’s their problem. We are offering them a high quality option.”

- Many youth would *like* to participate in extended foster care, but are ineligible because they do not meet one of the five eligibility criteria.
- According to a 2009 study conducted by the Urban Institute in Los Angeles County, 34.6 percent of youth will not be eligible for extended foster care due to their work status, school status or inability to meet disability criteria which exempt them from school or work requirements.¹⁰
- Based on this estimate, 2,097 youth will age out of foster care each year without any transitional assistance. THP-Plus provides an essential safety net for these former foster youth who are not eligible for extended foster care.

“We’re just recovering from the recession; now is not a good time to expand the program.”

- Both the California Department of Finance and the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) forecast that the Sales and Use Tax will increase in Fiscal Year 2014-15. According to the LAO, 2011 Realignment funding will increase 7 percent next fiscal year.
- While the economy is recovering unemployment among transition-age youth continues at record levels. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor, the unemployment rate for youth age 18 to 24 remains at 16.3 percent while the national rate has steadily decreased to 7.0 percent.¹¹

“Why are we rewarding juvenile delinquents with affordable housing and supportive services? This money should go towards abused and neglected kids.”

- Failing to adequately support youth who exit the delinquency system has very real economic consequences due to their high utilization of public services, particularly county jail.
- According to a 2010 study of youth exiting the juvenile probation system, roughly half had a jail stay (47.6%) within four years and spent an average of 147.9 days in jail, costing the county \$25,486.¹²
- THP-Plus has been shown to reduce the rate of criminal justice involvement among participants. By age 21, 7 percent of THP-Plus participants receive an adult criminal conviction, as compared to 24 percent of former foster youth not participating in THP-Plus.¹³

“There isn’t a need in our county; current beds are going unused.”

- Traditionally, 1 in 3 youth entered THP-Plus directly from foster care. With the passage of Assembly Bill 12, this figure has decreased 55 percent, as youth have largely elected to participate in extended foster care, as evidenced by the 150 percent increase in the number of 18 to 20 year-olds since 2012.
- These youth will begin to “age out” of extended foster care in January of 2015, at which time the demand for THP-Plus will increase significantly, particularly for parenting youth and youth with disabilities, who commonly require assistance after age 21.
- During this interim period, there remains a large number of youth, both eligible and in need of THP-Plus. As of July 1, 2013, 1,351 youth are being served by the program,¹⁴ leaving 2,775 eligible homeless former foster youth without any assistance.
- Many of these youth are over age 21, have a history of homelessness and are not familiar with THP-Plus. New approaches are currently being deployed to identify and recruit older, more disconnected former foster youth to participate in THP-Plus.

Databases

For data on THP-Plus participants: *The THP-Plus Participant Tracking System*

A database managed by the John Burton Foundation and available to certified THP-Plus providers and county THP-Plus representatives. Contains demographic and outcomes data on 60% of the state’s THP-Plus population. Users can access reports on how their program compares to the rest of the state, as well as entrance to exit progress and individual data. www.thpplus.org for more information, www.thpplusdata.org for registered users

For data on foster and probation youth: *Child Welfare Services Case Management System (California Child Welfare Indicators Project)*

A collaborative venture between the University of California at Berkeley and the California Department of Social Services. The project is housed in the School of Social Welfare, and provides policymakers, child welfare workers, researchers, and the public with direct access to customizable information on California’s entire child welfare system.

http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/

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(<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/prevenres/focus/focus.pdf>).

¹ Hornstein, 2013.

² Kimberlin, 2012.

³ Children’s Bureau, 2012.

⁴ Pergamit & Johnson, 2009.

⁵ The 2014-15 Budget: California’s Fiscal Outlook, California Legislative Analyst’s Office.

⁶ The John Burton Foundation, 2013.

⁷ Parker, 2012.

⁸ National Alliance to End Homelessness.

⁹ http://www.insidebayarea.com/ci_17060183.

¹⁰ Pergamit & Johnson, 2009.

¹¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013.

¹² Culhane, 2001.

¹³ Kimberlin, 2012.

¹⁴ John Burton Foundation, 2013.