

FINAL EVALUATION FINDINGS

FYHI



FOSTER YOUTH HOUSING INITIATIVE:

Improving Outcomes of Foster Youth Through Direct Services,
Capacity Building and Systems Change

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Foster Youth Housing Initiative (FYHI) was a two-year initiative during 2006-2008 to help former foster youth in five Bay Area counties obtain and maintain permanent housing. FYHI was funded by a collaboration of foundations, which included The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation and the Sobrato Family Foundation.

The objectives of the initiative were:

To provide transitional and permanent housing options for at least 150 former foster youth;

To support former foster youth transition services which promote educational, economic and career development;

To increase the supply of permanent, affordable housing for former foster youth by at least 40 units;

To promote policy, funding and systems changes which assist former foster youth in obtaining and maintaining housing;

To increase the level of public and philanthropic resources supporting services for Bay Area youth.

FYHI was the kind of initiative we hope for, but rarely see — one that addresses the immediate needs of the community by expanding the service capacity of high-quality nonprofit organizations and also successfully advocates for increased public investment for the long-term.

Amy Lemley, Policy Director,
John Burton Foundation

FYHI worked to achieve these objectives by conducting work in three areas: direct services, capacity building and systems change. In the area of direct services, FYHI expanded the service capacity of six Bay Area nonprofit organizations to make an immediate impact in the lives of hundreds of otherwise homeless former foster youth. In the area of capacity building, FYHI provided technical assistance and training to develop permanent and supportive housing. In the area of systems change, FYHI expanded public investment in housing for former foster youth. This report includes an overview of each area of investment and an outline of major accomplishments.

DIRECT SERVICES

In the area of direct services, FYHI provided financial support to six Bay Area nonprofit organizations over the two-year period of 2006 to 2008. In doing so, FYHI sought to immediately address the housing needs of Bay Area former foster youth by expanding the housing capacity of organizations to serve them. The organizations that received direct services funding included:

Bill Wilson's Center to Connect to Permanent Housing Program,

Santa Clara County

Center for Venture Philanthropy's Fostering the Future Initiative,

San Mateo County

First Place's Supported Housing Program,

Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

Fred Finch Youth Center's Coolidge Court Next Step Program,

Alameda County

Larkin Street Youth Center's LEASE Program,

San Francisco County

Tri-City Homeless Coalition's Project Independence,

Alameda County

With the support provided by FYHI, these six organizations provided safe, affordable housing and supportive services to 586 former foster youth, surpassing FYHI's goal of assisting 150 youth. Provided in the table at right is a demographic summary of youth who participated in FYHI programs, followed by summaries of the outcomes. Surveys were conducted at initial program enrollment, at 6-months and at the end of the program to evaluate youth outcomes in educational attainment, employment, income, life skills, behavioral health and community integration (*see figure 1, right*).

figure 1
**Demographics & Background
of FYHI Youth**

Sex

Female **71%**

Male **29%**

Race

African American **61%**

Hispanic **13%**

White **13%**

Multiracial **7%**

Asian/Asian Pacific Islander **4%**

Other **3%**

Average Age 19 years

Average Duration in FYHI Program 16 months

Foster Care History

Median Age at Entry **5.5 years**

Median Years in Foster Care **6.0 years**

Median No. of Placements **3 placements**

Additional Information

% who are Parents **33%**

% with Mental Health Diagnosis **15%**

% with Learning Disability **11%**

% with Probation Officer Upon **8%**

Entering the Program

% with Physical Disability **3%**

**EDUCATION OUTCOME: INCREASED
ENGAGEMENT & ENROLLMENT**

FYHI youth made measurable gains in the area of education, the most significant being the number of hours youth spent in school each week. This figure nearly tripled, from 3.8 hours per week at baseline to 11.0 hours at the time of final data collection (see Figure 2, below).

Gains were also made in the area of school enrollment. When first interviewed, 65% of youth reported enrollment in an educational program, including high school, a General Equivalency Degree (GED) program, community college or a four-year institution of higher education. At the time of final data collection, the percentage of youth enrolled increased 8%, so that 70% of all FYHI youth were enrolled in school (see Figure 3, below). Important gains were also made by youth who were not enrolled in any school at baseline. Of these, 40% enrolled in a community college by the time of final data collection and 53% enrolled in any type of school.

**EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME:
INCREASED WAGES, COMPETENCIES &
AVERAGE INCOME**

FYHI youth also made measurable gains in the category of employment in three areas: hourly wage, competencies and total income. Working youth's average wage increased 27% from \$8.60 per hour to \$10.88 per hour from baseline to final data collection (see Figure 4, below). Youth also showed significant progress in their employment competencies, which were measured using the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment. Based on this assessment, FYHI youth increased their employment competencies by 14% (see Figure 5, below right).

A final area of improvement was average monthly income, which increased 44% from \$706 at baseline to \$1,013 at final data collection (see Figure 6, below right). The area in which FYHI did not achieve a measurable improvement in employment outcomes was the overall rate of employment; the baseline rate of 46% of employment for FYHI youth did not change.

Funding through the FYHI allowed Larkin Street to serve former
We greatly appreciated the opportunity to provide housing and sup

figure 2
**Average Number of Hours Spent
in School Per Week**

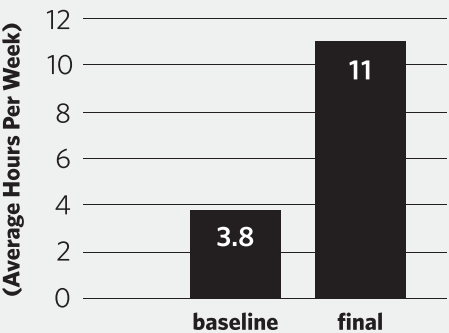


figure 3
Rate of School Enrollment

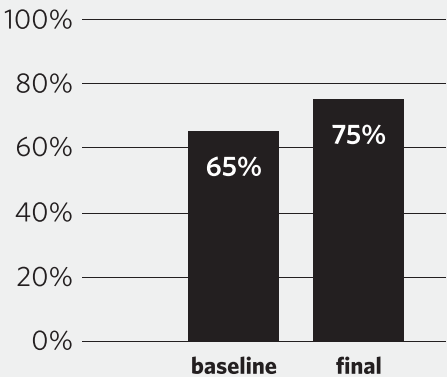
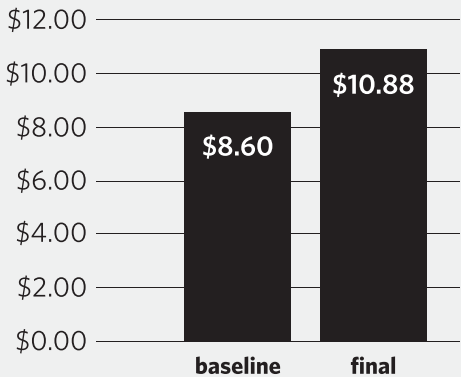


figure 4
Increase in Hourly Wages



HEALTH OUTCOME: INCREASED ACCESS, IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH & SUSTAINED PARENTING

FYHI participants demonstrated increased attention to overall health and an improvement in mental health. First, 19% of youth who were in the program for at least six months reported an increase in their utilization of health-care services. This finding was especially true for parenting youth and “disconnected youth,” the latter defined as youth who were not working or attending school. Among parents, 25% increased their utilization of health services during the study period. Among disconnected youth, 40% increased their access of health care and 33% reported that they received regular medical check-ups. Second, FYHI youth also reported significant gains in the area of mental health, citing a 10% decrease in depression and a 5% increase in a more positive overall outlook on life.

A final important area of improvement among FYHI youth was an increase in the percentage of parenting youth with physical custody of their child. At baseline, 51% of parenting youth reported that they had custody of their child, a figure which increased to 90% at final data collection.

foster youth who may have “otherwise fallen through the cracks.”
supportive services to these youth.

Toby Eastman, MSW,
Chief of Programs Larkin Street Youth Services

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

LaFrance Associates, who measured FYHI participants’ outcomes (summarized above), also conducted a cost-benefit analysis comparing the direct-service outcomes of FYHI youth to the general population of former foster youth, using criminal justice, housing, public assistance and tax revenue data. The analysis showed that FYHI youth who remained in the program for at least 12 months had better outcomes than the general population of former foster youth.

The analysis also showed that the original investment in assisting one youth is recouped within 10 to 15 years, and over 40 years the net benefit to the public sector for assisting one youth is almost \$90,000. This result is comparable to other cost-benefit analyses, including a June 2009 study conducted by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

figure 5
Increase in Employment Competency

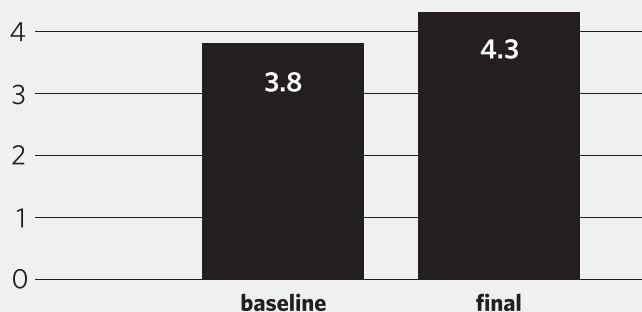
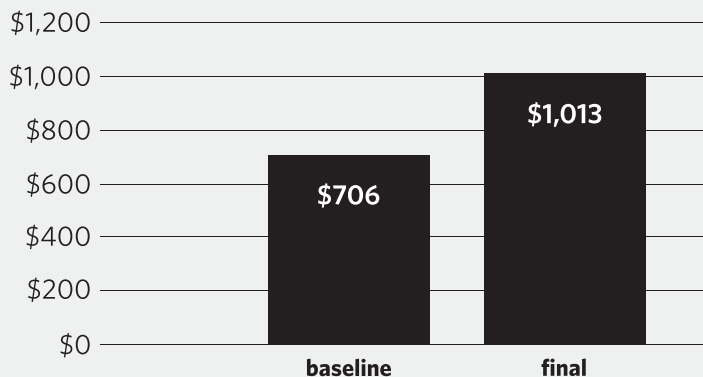


figure 6
Increase in Average Monthly Income



CAPACITY BUILDING

In addition to addressing the immediate needs of homeless former foster youth through direct-service grants, FYHI worked to increase the supply of permanent, affordable housing available to them. FYHI worked towards this goal by granting \$350,000 to the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), an organization that provides technical assistance and financial support to nonprofit groups for the purpose of developing permanent, supportive housing. CSH re-granted \$200,000 of this funding to nine Bay Area organizations, summarized below. Their projects were designed to develop housing units for former foster youth and to build housing development capacity for the grantees.

As a result of the FYHI investment, 21 housing units for former foster youth were developed during the two-year initiative. An additional 99 to 112 units will be developed by 2011.

Affordable Housing Associates & Fred Finch
Alameda County
15 Units

Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center
San Francisco County
8-10 Units

Bill Wilson Center
Santa Clara County
20-25 Units

Booker T. Washington Community Center
San Francisco County
12 Units

Greater New Beginnings Youth Services
Alameda County
24 Units

Lutheran Social Services
Contra Costa County
10 Units

Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition
San Mateo County
5-6 Units

Tri-City Homeless Coalition
Alameda County
15-20 Units

Unity Care
Santa Clara County
11 Units

The capacity-building component of FYHI was a real success. Non-profit service providers learned about housing development, while housing developers learned about the housing needs of foster youth. And we far exceeded our goals for the number of housing units created!

Anne Cory, Director,
Northern California Programs,
Corporation for Supportive Housing

The Foster Youth Housing Initiative provided a bridge to program stability. Without FYHI, it is unlikely we would be serving the 66 transition-aged youth and their children we are serving today.

Louis Chicoine, Executive Director,
Abode Services (Formerly Tri-City Homeless Coalition)

SYSTEMS CHANGE

In addition to making an immediate impact on the lives of former foster youth through direct services and capacity building, FYHI invested in improving the public system responsible for assisting youth as they make the transition from the foster-care system. The John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes was the recipient of the FYHI \$150,000 systems-change grant, which it used to support its THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project. The THP-Plus Project is a collaboration of the John Burton Foundation, the California Department of Social Services and the Corporation for Supportive Housing, which works to reduce youth homelessness by expanding THP-Plus, a transitional housing program funded by the State of California.

Provided below is a summary of FYHI accomplishments in the area of systems change:

The THP-Plus budget increased from \$5M in 2006-07 to \$40.8M in 2008-09. The number of counties implementing THP-Plus increased 820%, from 5 in 2005-06 to 46 in 2008-09 (see Figure 7, below). The number of participating youth increased by 550%, from 200 to 1300 participants (see Figure 8, below).

figure 7
**Growth in the Number of Counties
Implementing THP-PLUS**

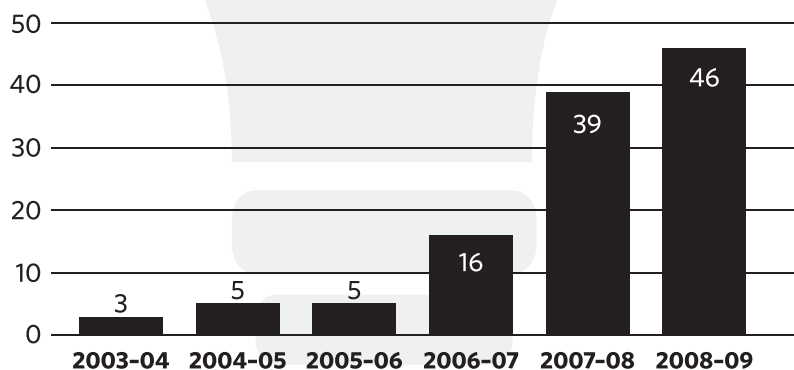
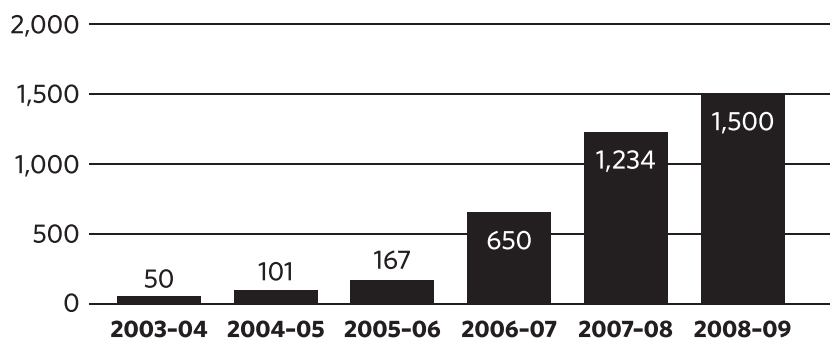


figure 8
**Growth in the Number of Youth
Served by THP-PLUS**



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