

# THP-PLUS ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2006-07



**DEVELOPED BY THE THP-PLUS STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT,  
A PARTNERSHIP OF THE JOHN BURTON FOUNDATION,  
THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES,  
AND THE CORPORATION FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

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# OVERVIEW OF THE THP-PLUS STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT

**This annual report is a product of the Transitional Housing Placement-Plus (THP-Plus) Statewide Implementation Project**, a collaboration between the John Burton Foundation, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, and the California Department of Social Services. CDSS has the responsibility for oversight and administration of THP-Plus. Corporation for Supportive Housing's participation supports the development of housing expertise among THP-Plus providers. The goal of the Project is to reduce homelessness among former foster youth and ILP-eligible probation youth\* by expanding access to THP-Plus, the only fully state-funded housing program specifically targeting this growing population. In order to achieve this goal, the Project is facilitating the development and expansion of THP-Plus programs in counties across California.

The project consists of efforts at the state, county, and local levels to promote the development, management, oversight, and evaluation of THP-Plus. These activities include:

- Refinement of THP-Plus program development guidelines
- Training and technical assistance for THP-Plus providers and county agencies
- Development of monitoring and evaluation policies

Through these activities, the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project is working toward three important outcomes:

\* For the purposes of this document, "ILP-eligible probation youth" refers to youth who were living under the supervision of the juvenile probation system and living in out-of-home placement on their 16th birthdays and are/were eligible for ILP services until age 21.

**Decreased homelessness among former foster and ILP-eligible probation youth.** The Project is working to increase statewide capacity to serve at least 1,000 homeless former foster and ILP-eligible probation youth by fiscal year 2008-2009. At this service level, approximately one in four eligible young adults ages 18 to 24 in need of housing will be able to access the program.

**Established network of THP-Plus practitioners and supporters.** The Project is developing an organized coalition of nonprofit organizations, county administrators, young adults, foster care providers, THP-Plus providers, families of origin, and others who are informed and engaged in the policy-setting process as it relates to housing for former foster and probation youth. The development of this coalition is vital to ensure ongoing public funding of THP-Plus and the creation of programs that embody youth development principles.

**Expanded knowledge of effective housing approaches for former foster and probation youth.** The Project places a high priority on the quality of housing and supportive services, not simply the quantity of them. Toward that end, the Project is expanding the knowledge base among practitioners and supporters about the housing and service needs of homeless former foster and probation youth and effective practices to meet those needs. This information will be used to strengthen programs and program oversight by counties and the state. It will be disseminated through annual publications documenting the status of THP-Plus statewide.

For more information about the Project, please contact one of the following Project representatives:

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## INTRODUCTION BRIEF HISTORY OF THP-PLUS

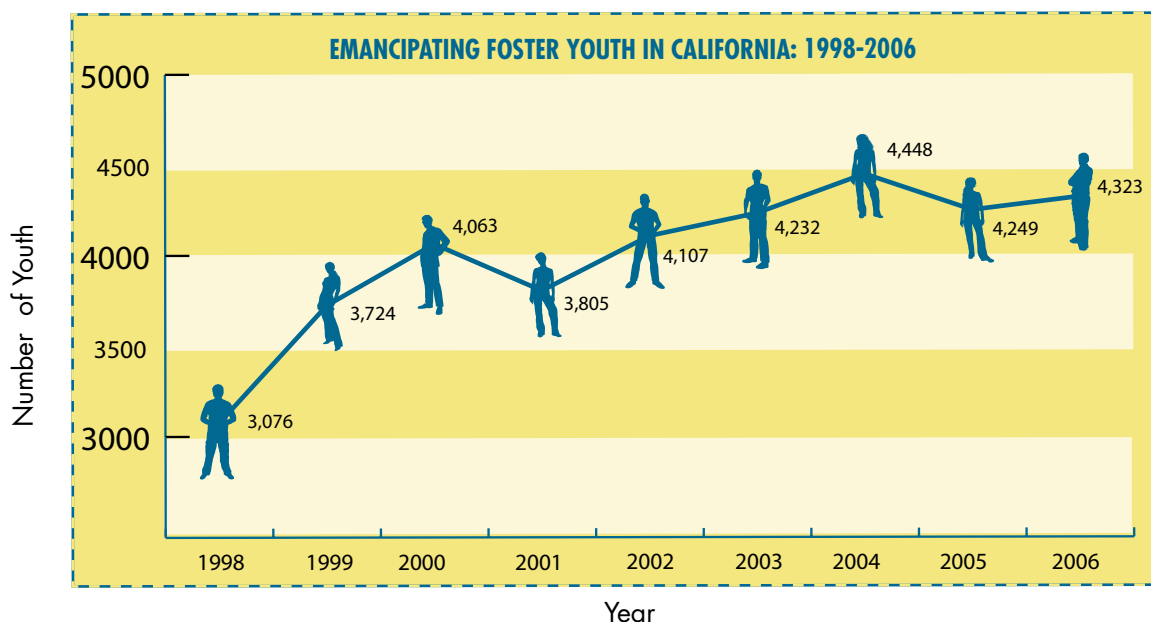
The transition from adolescence to independent adulthood is a challenging period. Although legal adulthood begins at age 18, most young adults rely on their parents and families for significant support and guidance well into their twenties or beyond. Whether families pay for college tuition, provide a home to live in, or help repair the consequences of a poor decision, they serve as a vital safety net and launching pad for most young men and women entering adulthood.

Young people in foster care, however, often don't have this support when they transition to adulthood. Foster youth have been removed from their biological families, most frequently due to neglect or abuse. Those removed from their families in adolescence, and unfortunately many who enter foster care at younger ages, may live in the foster care system until they turn 18. At age 18, they become legal adults and "emancipate" or "age out" of the system, and must find a way to support themselves on their own.

Both nationally and in California, the number of youth who "age out" of foster care is at an historic high. According to the Pew Charitable Trusts' Kids Are Waiting Campaign, 25,000 youth aged out of foster care in the United States in 2005, up 41 percent since 1998. Here in California, the growth has matched national trends. According to the University of California at Berkeley's Center for Social Services Research, more than 4,300 young people aged out of foster care in California in 2006, representing an increase of 40 percent since 1998.

This rapid growth in the number of youth aging out of foster care is of particular concern given the challenges they face in their transition to adulthood. A 2001 California Department of Social Services survey of county welfare directors found that 65% of youth aging out of foster care in California had an imminent need for safe and stable housing. Moreover, according to research conducted by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, youth who left foster care at age 18 were nearly three times more likely than their peers in the general population to be out of work and school. They were twice as likely to be unable to pay their rent and were four times as likely to be evicted. Nearly half of the young women had been pregnant at least once by age 19. Within less than two years of leaving foster care, significant numbers had been incarcerated and one in seven had experienced homelessness.

To address the needs of this vulnerable and growing population, the California State Legislature created the Transitional Housing Placement-Plus (THP-Plus) program in 2001. THP-Plus aims to reduce homelessness and improve outcomes for former foster and probation youth ages 18 to 24. The program helps these young people make a successful transition to independent adulthood by providing up to 24 months of affordable housing, coupled with comprehensive supportive services.



As one THP-Plus county coordinator commented,

**If you don't have a roof over your head, you can't even think about going to school or work. Housing is the foundation for everything else. Providing these young people with housing, and supporting them with services, allows them to focus on all the things they need to do to be successful.**

– Linda Canan, Napa County Child Welfare Services

Although this state-funded program was established in 2001, fiscal year (FY) 2006-07 marked the first year that the program was implemented widely throughout California.

**2001**

Assembly Bill 427 established THP-Plus, California's first investment towards ending homelessness for former foster and ILP-eligible probation youth.

**2002**

Assembly Bill 1119 de-linked THP-Plus from the Supportive Transitional Emancipation Program (STEP), removing a key barrier to implementation.

**2004**

THP-Plus was changed from a one-time allocation to an annual appropriation.

**2005**

Assembly Bill 824 extended the THP-Plus age limit from 21 up to 24.

**2006**

Senate Bill 1808 removed the 60% county match requirement, making the program fully state-funded, removing another key barrier to implementation.

**2007**

THP-Plus moves toward full statewide implementation, with 44 counties planning to implement THP-Plus in the 2007-08 fiscal year.

## When young people leave foster care, they need continued support.

-Nenita Dean, Stanislaus County  
Community Services Agency

I'm thankful for the program.  
It came around at a time when  
me and my daughter needed it most.

-THP-Plus participant, San Francisco

## SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As this report describes, FY 2006-07 was an important one for the THP-Plus program. Key accomplishments included:

- A total of 650 youth participated in THP-Plus, compared to less than 200 participants in FY 2005-06.
- 16 counties implemented THP-Plus, compared to five in FY 2005-06.
- By the end of FY 2006-07, 44 counties had plans approved by the California Department of Social Services to implement THP-Plus, compared to 16 in FY 2005-06.
- \$4.8 million was allocated to THP-Plus, a three-fold increase from the \$1.3 million allocated in FY 2005-06.
- More than 90 percent of THP-Plus participants surveyed rated their overall satisfaction with the program as "excellent" or "good."
- Programs that tracked and compiled detailed data on participant outcomes reported notable success in the percentage of participants obtaining employment, maintaining stable housing, and enrolling in higher education.

## NEED FOR THP-PLUS

Across the state, counties report high demand for the THP-Plus program among former foster and ILP-eligible probation youth. More than 600 young adults participated in THP-Plus in 16 counties in FY 2006-07. In smaller counties, some coordinators reported that demand for THP-Plus ebbs and flows, depending on the particular needs of the young adults they serve each year. However, several county coordinators – particularly in large counties – stated that they would need to double their bed capacity to meet the full need for THP-Plus. More than one county coordinator stated that "young people are knocking down our doors to access this program." The total need for supportive housing for former foster and ILP-eligible probation youth is estimated at approximately 5,000 beds throughout the state.

**I can imagine how hard life would be without such an awesome back-up. Thank you.**

**-THP-Plus participant, Santa Cruz County**

## **A NOTE ON THE REPORT METHODOLOGY**

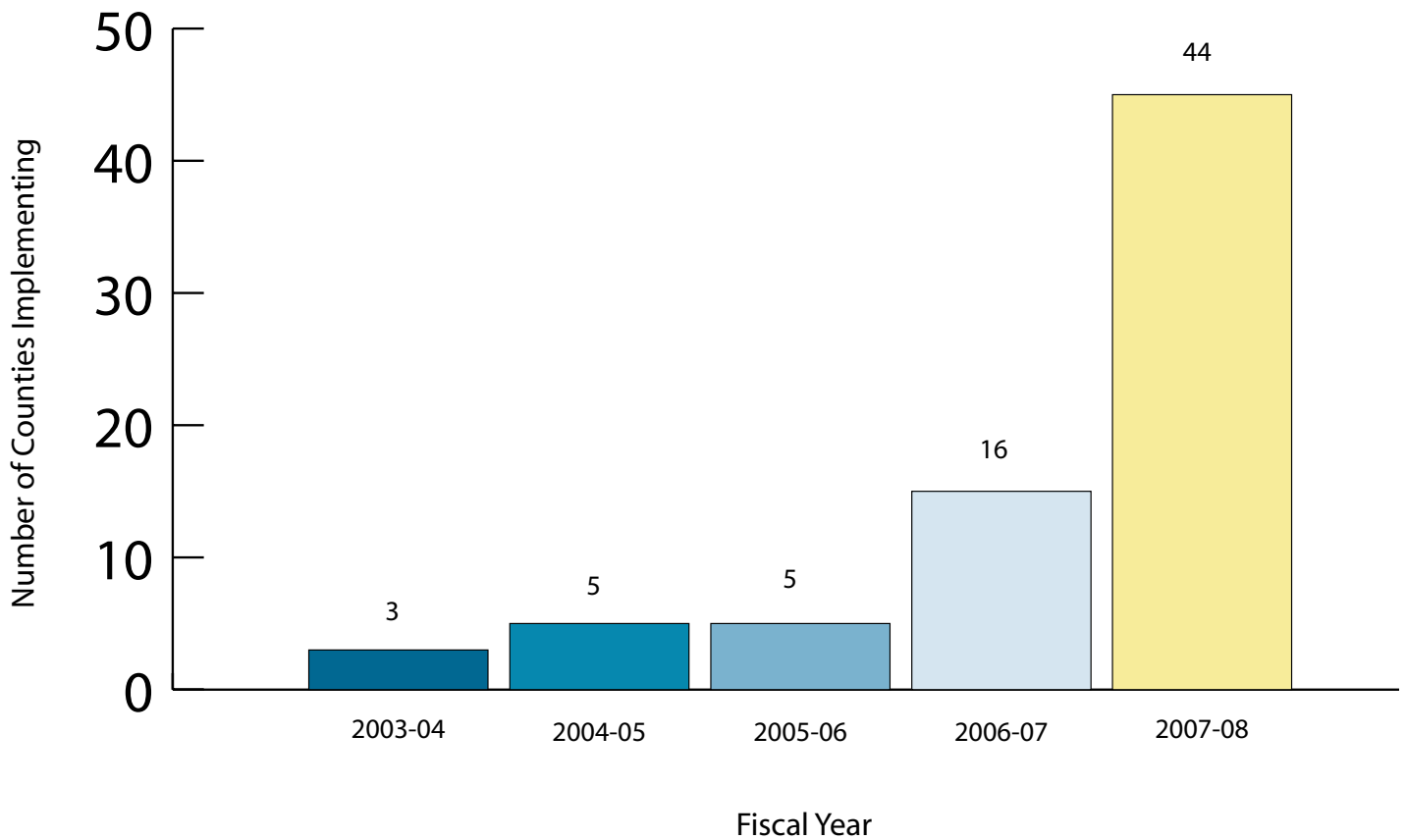
Information for this report was compiled through written surveys and phone interviews with county coordinators and community-based THP-Plus providers from the 16 California counties that fully implemented THP-Plus programs during FY 2006-07. All 16 county THP-Plus coordinators provided data for this report. A total of 10 county THP-Plus coordinators completed written surveys and phone interviews, two participated in phone interviews only, and four completed written surveys only. Of the 22 community-based providers who provided contracted THP-Plus services for counties in FY 2006-07, nine completed written surveys and phone interviews, three returned written surveys only, and 10 did not respond or were not identified as providers until too late to obtain information for this report. In addition, three counties operate some or all of their THP-Plus programs directly, so their county coordinators provided service and operations information through written surveys and phone interviews. Participant satisfaction surveys were also collected from more than 170 young people taking part in THP-Plus; more detail about this survey sample follows later in this report. Further qualitative information from THP-Plus participants, providers, and administrators was gathered from panel discussions and workshop presentations at the day-long THP-Plus Institute held in July 2007.

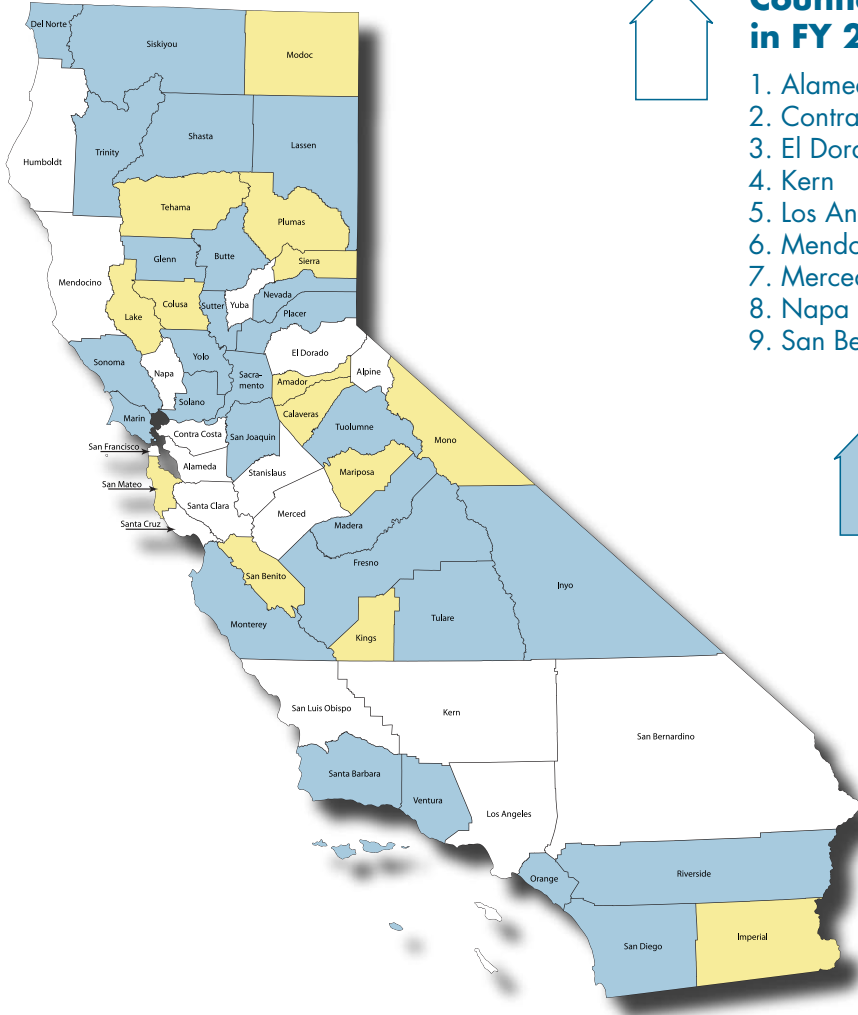
The figures and information in the text, tables, and graphics that follow are based on the self-reported information obtained as described above. Efforts were made to cross-check information obtained from counties with that from providers and with data previously compiled by the John Burton Foundation and the California Department of Social Services in order to maximize accuracy and completeness, but this data still has some significant limitations. Please note that the state-level data tracking system for THP-Plus is currently being improved and expanded upon by CDSS, in collaboration with the John Burton Foundation. At the county level, data management systems used and information collected by different providers during FY 2006-07 varied across the state. In some cases, particularly with respect to participant demographic information, data we requested for this report was not specifically tracked by certain counties or providers. When specific data was not available, county coordinators and provider staff gave estimated numbers based on their knowledge of their local THP-Plus programs and participants. Furthermore, at the time we were finalizing this report in mid-August 2007, a proposed budget augmentation for FY 2006-07 expenditures was still pending as part of the not-yet-approved state budget for FY 2007-08, complicating efforts to obtain final fiscal year financial data for the program.

## THP-PLUS SERVICES IN FISCAL YEAR 2006-07

Though THP-Plus was created in California in 2001, the program was not implemented until FY 2003-04 and has only recently started to be implemented statewide. This growth was made possible by the removal of a 60 percent local share of cost in 2006, which dramatically increased the participation of counties throughout the state.

**Number of Counties Implementing THP-Plus**





**Counties participating in THP-Plus in FY 2006-07**

- 1. Alameda
- 2. Contra Costa
- 3. El Dorado
- 4. Kern
- 5. Los Angeles
- 6. Mendocino
- 7. Merced
- 8. Napa
- 9. San Bernardino
- 10. San Diego
- 11. San Francisco
- 12. San Luis Obispo
- 13. San Mateo
- 14. Santa Clara
- 15. Santa Cruz
- 16. Stanislaus



**Counties planning to implement THP-Plus in FY 2007-08 (as of June 30, 2007)**

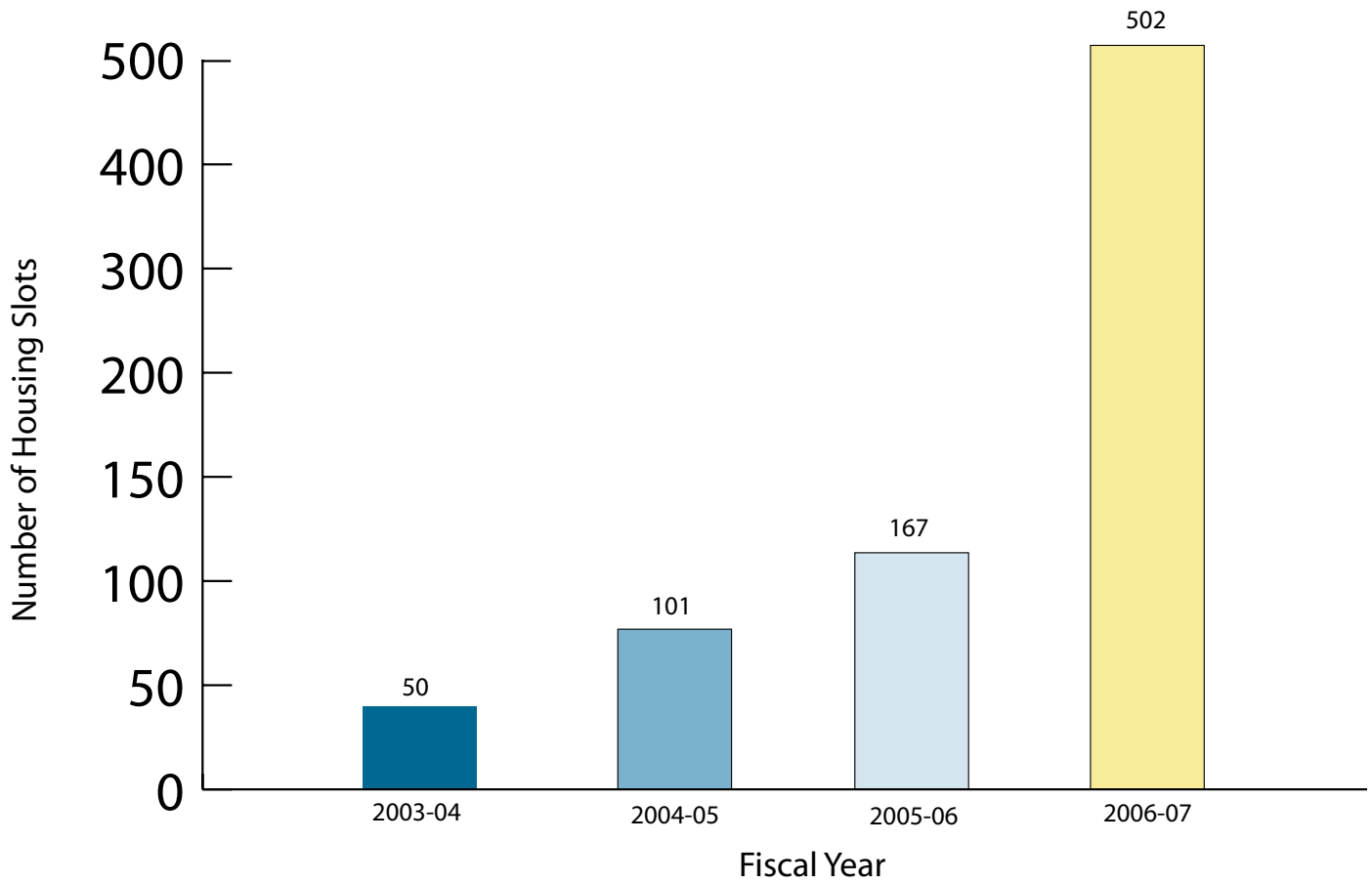
- 1. Butte
- 2. Del Norte
- 3. Fresno
- 4. Glenn
- 5. Humboldt
- 6. Inyo
- 7. Lassen
- 8. Madera
- 9. Marin
- 10. Monterey
- 11. Nevada
- 12. Orange
- 13. Placer
- 14. Plumas
- 15. Riverside
- 16. Sacramento
- 17. San Joaquin
- 18. Santa Barbara
- 19. Shasta
- 20. Siskiyou
- 21. Solano
- 22. Sonoma
- 23. Sutter
- 24. Trinity
- 25. Tulare
- 26. Tuolumne
- 27. Ventura
- 28. Yolo



**Counties not yet participating**

- 1. Alpine
- 2. Amador
- 3. Calaveras
- 4. Colusa
- 5. Imperial
- 6. Kings
- 7. Lake
- 8. Mariposa
- 9. Modoc
- 10. Mono
- 11. San Benito
- 12. Sierra
- 13. Tehama
- 14. Yuba

## TOTAL HOUSING CAPACITY

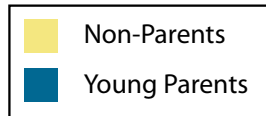
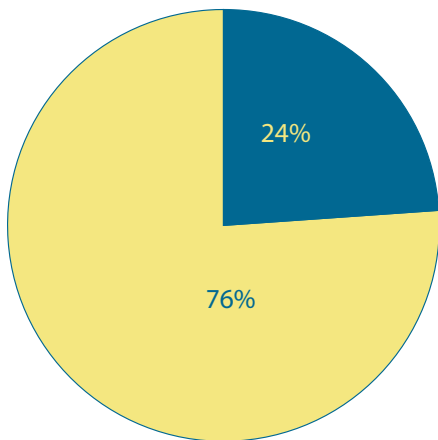


Note that some housing slots were used by more than one young person during the fiscal year, due to participant turnover.

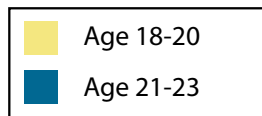
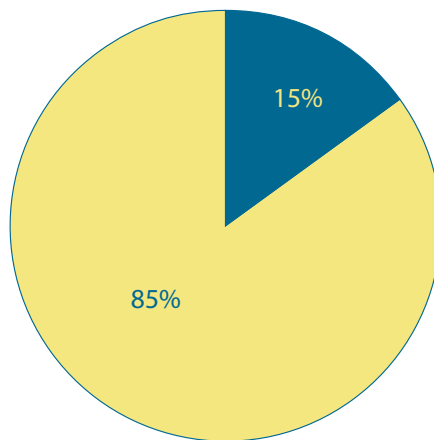
## CHARACTERISTICS OF THP-PLUS PARTICIPANTS

In fiscal year 2006-07, the THP-Plus program served a total of 650 former foster and ILP-eligible probation youth throughout the state. Within the general population of young people participating in THP-Plus, there are diverse subgroups of participants, including young adults who are parents; young people formerly involved in the juvenile justice system; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) individuals; young people of color; and young adults who are immigrants, among others. In general, the vast majority of THP-Plus participants are former foster youth, with much smaller numbers of eligible former probation youth who were in out-of-home placements as minors. Most THP-Plus participants are less than 21 years old, but a substantial number are older than 21. A significant percentage of participants are young parents, raising their own children while they are making the transition to adulthood themselves.

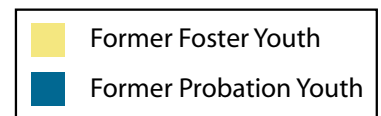
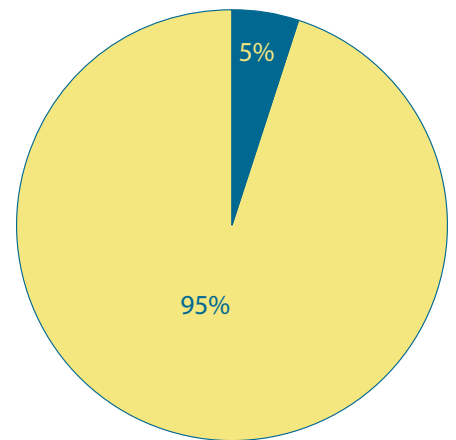
**Young Parents in THP-Plus**  
(Collected from County and Provider Surveys)



**Age Distribution of THP-Plus Participants**  
(Collected from Youth Surveys)



**Former Foster Care vs. Probation Youth in THP-Plus**  
(Collected from County and Provider Surveys)

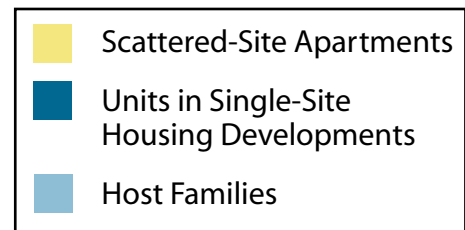
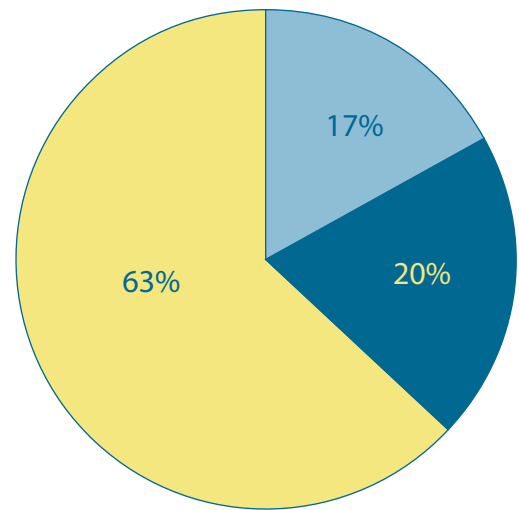


## THP-PLUS MODELS

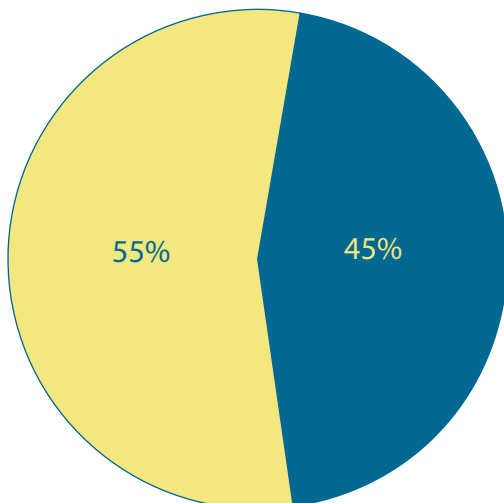
There are three housing models that are used in the implementation of THP-Plus: the scattered-site model, the single-site model, and the host family model. The scattered-site model consists of individual rental units that are leased within larger rental properties scattered throughout the community, where participants live either alone or with a roommate. The single-site model consists of a single property that is either owned or rented by the THP-Plus provider, where all of the housing units or bedrooms in the property are used for THP-Plus. In the host family model, a young person lives in a family setting with one or more adults with whom they have a long-term, caring, committed relationship. Providers for each of the three models must be certified by the county and must provide THP-Plus participants with a minimum of 15 specified supportive services.

In FY 2006-07, the most frequently implemented THP-Plus model was the scattered-site model, followed by the single-site model and the host family model. THP-Plus programs also varied in terms of whether the housing was designed to be permanent (meaning the participant could remain in the same housing unit and take over the lease at the end of his or her participation in THP-Plus) or transitional (meaning the participant had to find new housing at the end of the THP-Plus program).

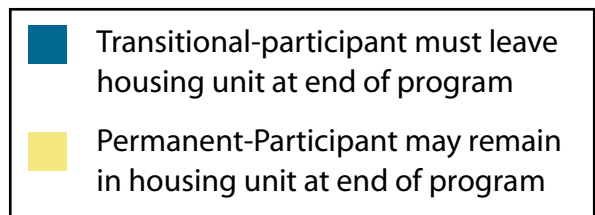
**THP-Plus Program Models**  
(# of beds: 502)



**THP-Plus Housing Models**  
(# of beds: 502)



Housing Type (excludes host family model)



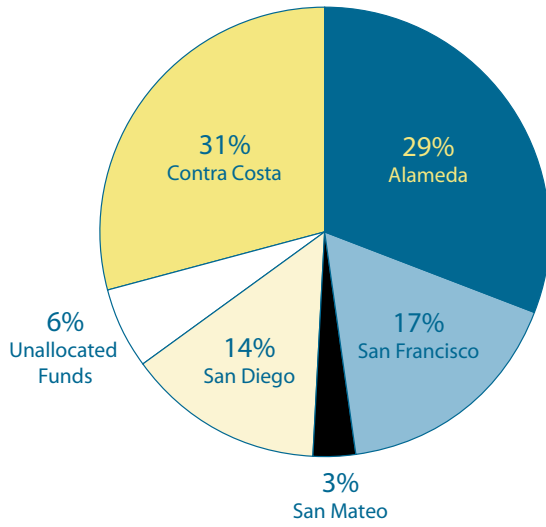
## COUNTIES IMPLEMENTING THP-PLUS IN FY 2006-07

	Alameda	Contra Costa	El Dorado	Kern	Los Angeles	Mendocino	Merced	Napa	San Bernardino
First Year of THP-Plus Implementation	2003	2003	2007	2006	2007	2007	2007	2006	2007
FY 2006-07 Funding Allocation	\$1,368,000*	\$1,440,000	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total Housing Capacity FY 2006-07	80	31	10	42	15	4	7	12	11
Total # Young Adults Served in FY 2006-07	155	47	11	50	15	4	7	14	11
THP-Plus Program Models	Scattered-site, Single-site, Host family	Scattered-site, Single-site	Scattered-site	Scattered-site, Host family	Single-site	Scattered-site	Scattered-site	Scattered-site	Scattered-site

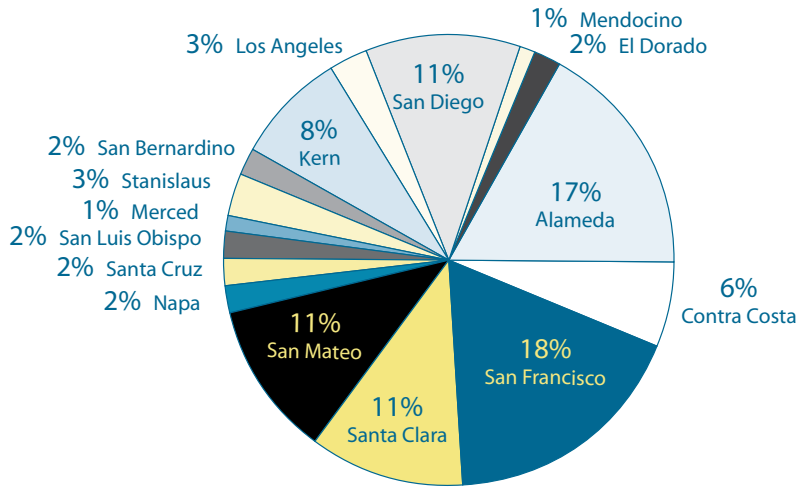
	San Diego	San Francisco	San Luis Obispo	San Mateo	Santa Clara	Santa Cruz	Stanislaus	Unallocated Funds **	State Overall
First Year of THP-Plus Implementation	2006	2003	2007	2006	2007	2007	2006	-	2003 (Initial counties)
FY 2006-07 Funding Allocation	\$690,720	\$837,000*	*	\$160,056	*	*	*	\$312,396	\$4.8* million
Total Housing Capacity FY 2006-07	56	87	8	55	57	10	16	-	502 beds
Total # Young Adults Served in FY 2006-07	68	100	9	62	66	10	21	-	650 young adults
THP-Plus Program Models	Scattered-site, Single-site	Scattered-site, Host family	Scattered-site, Single-site	Scattered-site, Single-site, Host family	Scattered-site, Single-site, Host family	Scattered-site	Host family	-	Scattered-site, Single-site, Host family

\* These counties did not receive a county THP-Plus allocation for FY 2006-07, but used THP-Plus unallocated funds (available on a first-come, first-served basis) or temporary local funding (in anticipation of state reimbursement through THP-Plus funding augmentation) to begin implementation. Similarly, some counties that received allocations also used temporary local funding (in anticipation of state reimbursement) to increase the number of THP-Plus slots.

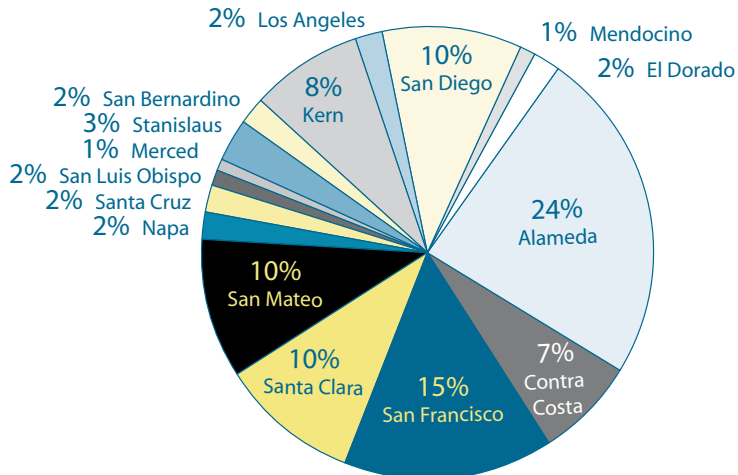
\*\* Available to counties on a first-come, first-served basis.



**THP-Plus FY 2006-07  
Initial Allocation Distribution**  
(\$4.8 million)



**FY 2006-07 End of Year  
Housing Capacity**  
(# of beds: 502)



**FY 2006-07 Total  
Young Adults Served**  
(# of Youth: 650)

## PERSPECTIVES OF THP-PLUS PARTICIPANTS

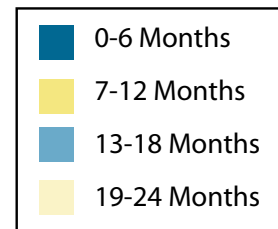
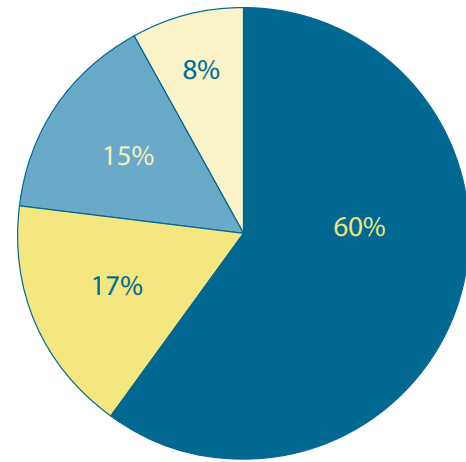
An important measure of the success of THP-Plus is the satisfaction of the young adults who participate in the program. For this report, 173 THP-Plus participants from 12 programs in nine counties completed a participant satisfaction survey in which they were asked to rate their satisfaction with a variety of THP-Plus program components. Survey respondents were also asked which aspects of THP-Plus they found most beneficial and which aspects they would like to see improved.

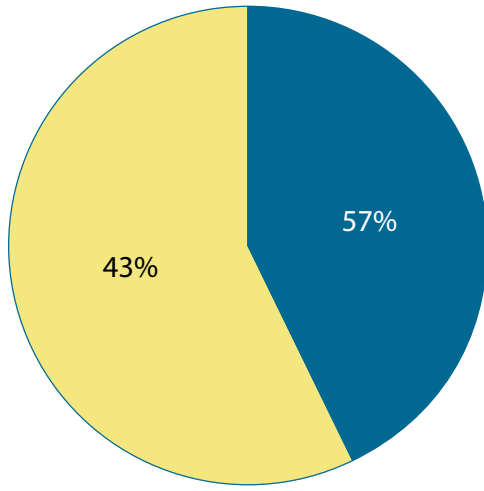
### CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANT SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The young people surveyed represented the breadth of THP-Plus programs and participants, including young men and women from Northern and Southern California, 18- to 23-year-olds, and participants from a variety of THP-Plus housing models. In some ways, the young people who responded to the survey were different than the THP-Plus participant population overall. Specifically, most respondents were from larger counties, most were from Northern California, and most were residents of single-site THP-Plus programs.

The charts here and on the next page provide more detailed information on the profile of survey respondents.

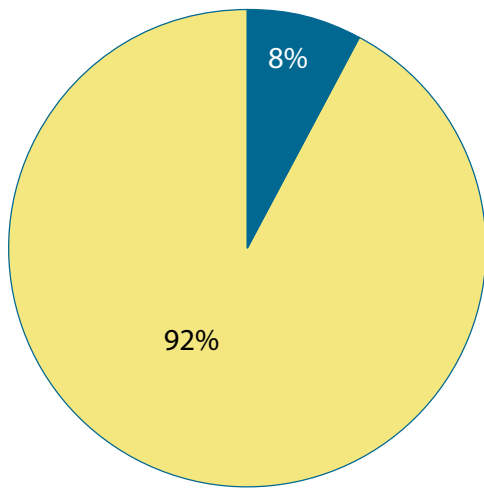
**Survey Respondents' Length of Time in THP-Plus Program**





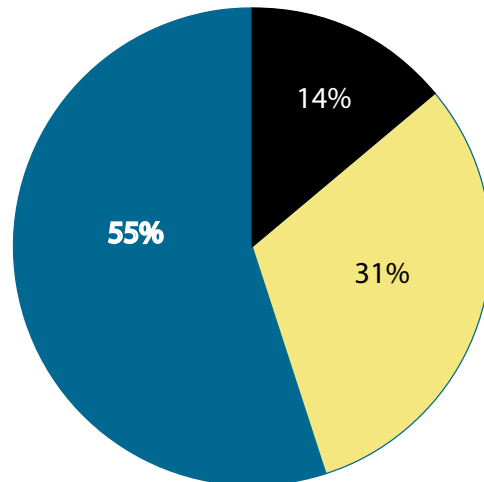
**Do You Share Your Housing Unit with One or More Other People?**

- Own Housing Unit
- Shared Housing Unit



**Do You Share a Bedroom with One or More Other People?**

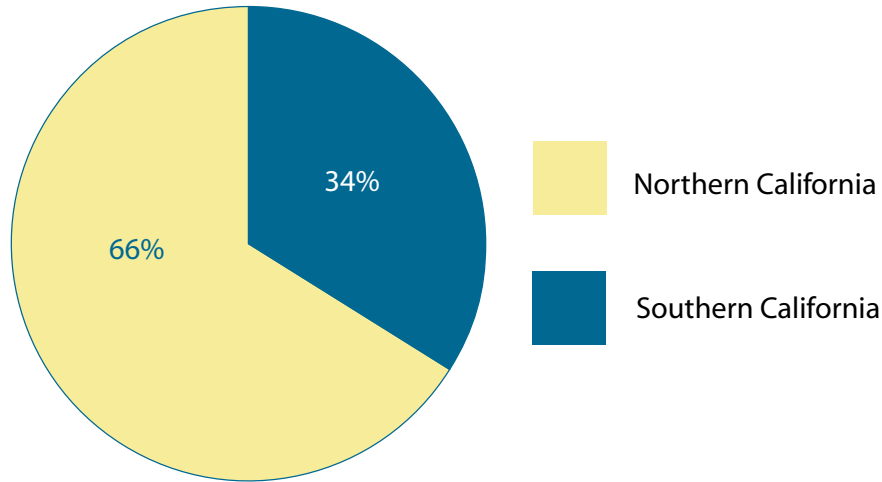
- Own Bedroom
- Shared Bedroom



**THP-Plus Housing Model of Survey Respondents**

- Scattered Site
- Single-Site
- Host Family

### Geographical Distribution of Survey Respondents



## RESPONSES FROM THP-PLUS PARTICIPANTS:

### WHAT WORKS WELL IN YOUR THP-PLUS PROGRAM?

- Being able to meet with my social worker and get advice about work, school, etc. (Alameda)
- The savings account. (Los Angeles)
- The comfort of having a place to live and the affordable rent. (Alameda)
- Support in getting on track for things like employment, financial aid, education, living skills, and housing. (San Francisco)
- The program gives me a chance to think about my future without worrying about my housing needs. (Stanislaus)
- I like the independence. I like being able to achieve my goals on my terms. I like the trust. (Los Angeles)

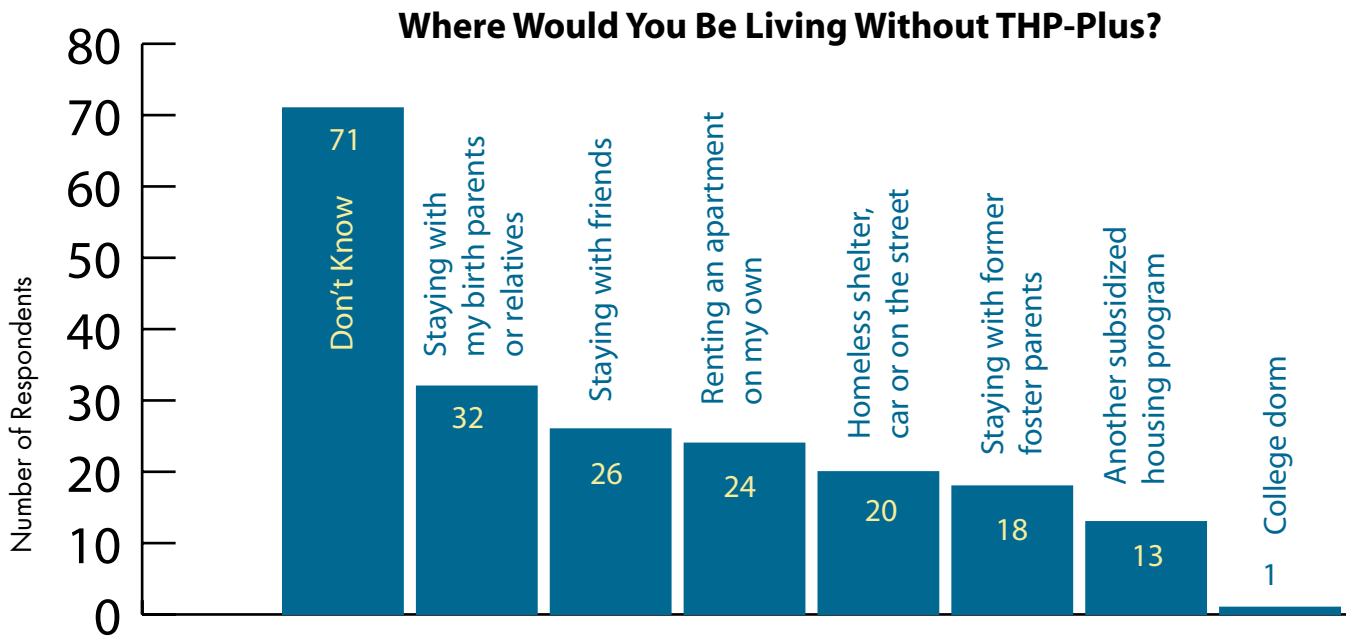
### WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

- Longer time in the program. (San Francisco)
- Not having to hold a job as well as go to school (one or the other would be better). (Los Angeles)
- More affordable apartments to transition into *after* the subsidy ends. (Alameda)

## SURVEY RESULTS

Overall, the survey respondents reported a positive experience in THP-Plus. Of the 136 young people who answered all sections of the survey, more than 84 percent rated the safety, quality, and location of their THP-Plus housing as “excellent” or “good.” Of the supportive services that were rated, all received “excellent” or “good” ratings from over 80 percent of respondents. In terms of total satisfaction with THP-Plus, 93 percent of respondents rated the program overall as “excellent” or “good.” Detailed survey responses are provided in the charts that follow.

Survey respondents also indicated where they would be living without THP-Plus and provided feedback on the strengths and areas in need of improvement in their THP-Plus programs.



Note: some respondents selected more than one answer

Survey Respondents' Rating of THP-Plus Housing		
Rating Scale	Average Rating	Housing Characteristics
Excellent – 4.00		
	3.43	Safety
	3.33	Quality
	3.29	Location
Good – 3.00		
Fair – 2.00		
Poor – 1.00		

Survey Respondents' Rating of THP-Plus Supportive Services		
Rating Scale	Average Rating	Supportive Service
Excellent – 4.00		
	3.51	Case management services
	3.35	Practical support (such as food, furniture, transportation, etc.)
	3.31	Other life skills training
	3.29	Educational support
	3.25	Emotional support, counseling, or therapy
	3.25	Mentoring or building relationships with caring adults
	3.22	Assistance with securing public benefits (TANF, GA, Food Stamps, SSI, MediCal, subsidized child care, etc.)
	3.18	Savings account (IDA, emancipation fund, etc.)
	3.18	Supporting relationships with family members
	3.16	Employment support or job training
	3.14	Training in tenants' rights and managing an apartment
Good – 3.00		
Fair – 2.00		
Poor – 1.00		

## PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The impact of the THP-Plus program is perhaps reflected best in the personal stories of the individual young people who have participated in the program. Profiles of a few of these participants are included here, as examples of the THP-Plus program experience at the individual level.

### Star

From the age of three, Star lived in a kinship foster care placement with her grandmother, but by the time she was a teenager, it wasn't a supportive living situation. At age 18, Star moved out, taking nothing with her but her purse. At the time she was enrolled in college and working. She started moving from house to house, receiving no help from her family. Moving around so much was very stressful, and eventually she stopped going to school, quit her job, and tried to escape from the pain of being alone through alcohol and smoking. For two and a half years she lived with an ex-boyfriend in a dangerous neighborhood. Finally she decided that this was not what she needed in her life. She started looking for a program that would provide housing and support, and found the My First Place program, a THP-Plus program in Alameda County operated by First Place for Youth. Star likes the scattered-site model of the My First Place program, because "it's a chance to meet new people and make new relationships, from kids to adults." She also appreciates the advice and assistance she gets from her Youth Advocate. Star comments, "I'm just thankful because I didn't have this assistance growing up. I had to learn on my own on the streets, so I made a lot of bad decisions. I just hope that other youth who are out there and feel like they don't have anywhere to go will find this program, too." She plans to take full advantage of her THP-Plus program by going back to school and working on her career.

**THP-Plus is a very helpful program for those who really want help in learning about how to live on their own.**

**-THP-Plus participant,  
Los Angeles County**



## Jeremiah

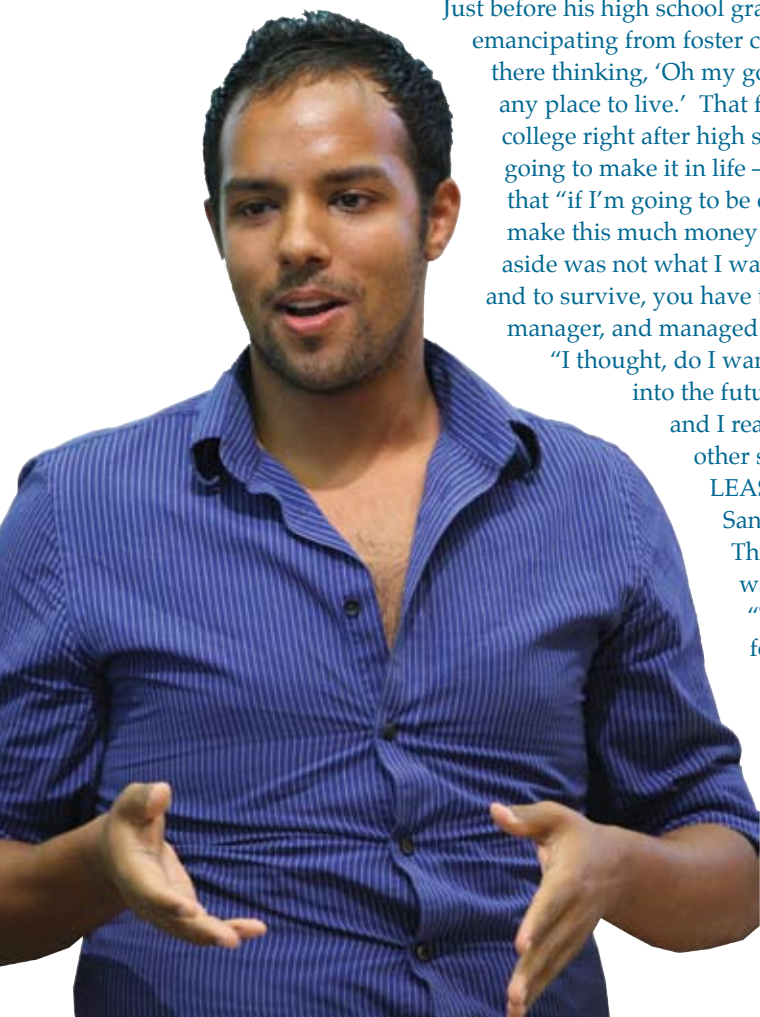
Jeremiah is a former foster youth living in Stanislaus County. Through the My Home THP-Plus program, operated by Stanislaus County Community Services Agency, he lives with a former foster parent, with whom he had lived for three years as a minor in foster care. Jeremiah notes that this host family model of THP-Plus, where young adults live in the homes of adults with whom they've established a "lifelong connection," is very different from foster care. He explains, "A big difference is that you choose who you're living with – you're not just stuck someplace whether you like it or not. It's different because you're an adult now, so you're in this program because you choose to be in this program." He appreciates living with his former foster parent, commenting that "it's great, because you already have a relationship built with them, so you pretty much know what they expect... And they realize that you're an adult now – they have more respect because you're choosing to be there, when you could go off on your own." Most of all, Jeremiah values the independence he's gained through his THP-Plus program, explaining, "You decide what you do – there are some stipulations, like you have to have a job, but you pretty much have freedom to live your life as an adult."



## Tyrone

Just before his high school graduation, Tyrone was informed by his social worker that he would be emancipating from foster care in August, on his 18th birthday. He explains, "I remember sitting there thinking, 'Oh my gosh, I have finals this week and in two months I'm not going to have any place to live.' That feeling was really traumatizing." Tyrone had always planned to go to college right after high school; he says, "I grew up knowing that school was the only way I was going to make it in life – I needed an education to get a good job." However, he soon realized that "if I'm going to be on my own and pay rent, that means that I have to get a job. I have to make this much money to survive – how am I going to do it?" He notes that "putting school aside was not what I wanted to do, but when you're in that situation, you have to survive, and to survive, you have to work." He found a job at a coffee shop, was soon promoted to store manager, and managed to make ends meet for a while. Then he had a moment of realization:

"I thought, do I want to live the rest of my life being a store manager? And I was looking into the future, looking at the other store managers and seeing what that was like, and I realized, no, I want to go back to school." Without a housing subsidy and other support, Tyrone couldn't afford to go back to school, so he entered the LEASE program, a THP-Plus program run by Larkin Street Youth Services in San Francisco. Now, he says, "I go to school full-time and I work part-time. That works for me – that's the path I want to be on." He's now well on his way toward a college degree. About his THP-Plus program, Tyrone says, "Throughout foster care, you get tired of people labeling you – you're a foster youth, you're an at-risk youth, etc. I like the fact that now I feel like I'm living in the real world with other people. I have my own apartment and my own responsibilities. It gives me that feeling that I'm really on my own."



## THP-PLUS PROGRAM OUTCOMES IN FY 2006-07

The most important assessment of the success of THP-Plus is the measurable effect it has on the lives of participants in areas such as education, jobs, permanent relationships, and housing. Simply put, are former foster and probation youth who participate in THP-Plus better off than those who don't?

### ENHANCEMENT OF THE STATEWIDE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Currently, counties that participate in THP-Plus are required to collect data about their programs to submit at the close of the fiscal year in an annual report to the California Department of Social Services. According to county administrators interviewed for this report, the THP-Plus programs in operation in FY 2006-7 collected program and participant information through a variety of different methods, including individual case files, periodic reports, or, in a few cases, through computerized data collection systems.

The THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project is currently in the process of expanding and improving the state-level evaluation framework for THP-Plus, in order to facilitate collection of consistent and more detailed information from THP-Plus providers across the state. In further developing the evaluation framework, the Project will collect input from county administrators and THP-Plus providers statewide, in an effort to ensure that THP-Plus evaluation processes are user-friendly and compatible with existing data collection efforts. Once implemented, this enhanced framework will enable county administrators, THP-Plus providers, and other program stakeholders to more comprehensively evaluate the program's impact in areas such as education, employment, permanent relationships, and housing stability.

**In the process of becoming independent, sometimes young adults learn by failing. By having access to THP-Plus resources and support, young adults learn they can pick themselves up. It's really a safety net for these young people.**

-Gia Alarie, San Diego Child Welfare Services

### OUTCOMES OF INDIVIDUAL THP-PLUS PROGRAMS

Currently, the measured outcomes of individual THP-Plus programs provide the best available description of the impact of THP-Plus. To understand the significance of these program outcomes, it is helpful to consider those of the average young adult who has aged out of the foster care system. A recent University of Chicago study of former foster youth (*The Midwest Evaluation of the Functioning of Former Foster Youth*, by Mark Courtney and Amy Dworsky) found that, at age 19:

- About one in seven former foster youth had experienced an episode of homelessness since leaving foster care.
- Only 40 percent were employed, compared to 58 percent of same-aged youth in the general population.
- Nearly 20 percent had spent at least one night in a jail, prison, or other correctional facility since leaving foster care.
- Less than 12 percent were enrolled in a two- or four-year college, compared to 57 percent in the general population.

The following page presents outcome data from three different THP-Plus programs. These programs were selected because they provided THP-Plus housing and services during the entire fiscal year and because they track and compile more comprehensive participant-level outcome information than is required under the current state evaluation system. Each of the THP-Plus programs highlighted here collects slightly different information about the progress of its participants, so information cannot necessarily be combined across programs. Nonetheless, the strong outcomes reported by all three programs demonstrate that young people served by these THP-Plus programs are developing important skills and assets that will help them achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

## PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES FOR SELECTED THP-PLUS PROGRAMS IN FY 2006-07

First Place for Youth: <i>My First Place program</i>	
Counties Served	Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco
# of participants in FY 2006/07	140 (plus 39 children of participants)
% of participants who took over THP-Plus lease or moved to other permanent housing at program exit	90%
% of exits from the program that were voluntary	97%
% of eligible participants who obtained employment	83%
% of eligible participants who enrolled in post-secondary education or vocational training	77%
% of young parents who retained custody of their children	100%
% of young mothers with no subsequent birth while in program	97%
% of participants who secured health care while in program	100%
# of hours of supportive services provided	12,012

Tri-City Homeless Coalition: <i>Project Independence program</i>	
County Served	Alameda
# of young adult participants in FY 2006-07	42 (plus 11 children of participants)
% of participants experiencing homelessness	0%
% of participants incarcerated	0%
% of participants employed	43% employed plus 32% in active & supported job search
% of participants enrolled in educational programs (high school or equivalency, community college, or four-year college)	60%
% of young mothers with no subsequent birth while in program	100%
% of participants enrolled in extended MediCal up to age 21	100%

Larkin Street Youth Services: <i>LEASE program</i>	
County Served	San Francisco
# of young adult participants in FY 2006-07	61
% of participants who remained housed or transitioned into another stable housing option after one year	92%
% of participants who obtained employment within six months of entering the program	98%
% of participants who increased their income within one year of entering the program	81%
% of participants in services for at least one year who identified GED, high school equivalency, or high school diploma as a goal and obtained that goal before exiting the program	61%
% of participants in services for at least one year who identified post-secondary education as a goal and enrolled before exiting program	94%

**Much of our success came from the fact that we were able to integrate THP-Plus into a much broader community effort around the needs of transition-age youth. Having a work group opened up to the community really helped.**

**-Frank Motta, Santa Clara County Social Services Agency**

## PERSPECTIVES OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS

THP-Plus is a relatively new state program, so administration processes and best practices were under active development during FY 2006-07. Several counties began implementing THP-Plus for the first time during this fiscal year, and encountered a number of start-up challenges, as expected with any new program. Multiple county coordinators reported that *A Guide to Implementing THP-Plus*, published by the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project, was very helpful in outlining the steps for program start-up. Several individuals mentioned that sharing of best practices around the provider certification process and fiscal tracking in CalWIN or other county accounting systems would be very helpful.

Other key **LESSONS LEARNED** by counties implementing THP-Plus in FY 2006-07 included:

- **Community Involvement:** Several counties convened THP-Plus working groups of county staff, service providers, ILP staff, and in some cases representatives from probation, mental health, housing, and current or former foster and ILP-eligible probation youth. Others integrated discussions about THP-Plus into existing community-wide planning efforts around meeting the needs of foster youth or transition-age youth. Both approaches resulted in increased community partnership and investment in THP-Plus.
- **Streamlining Certification:** By modifying the Request for Proposals for new providers to include all information needed for THP-Plus certification, some counties succeeded in reducing the time and effort required to certify contractors. Counties found similar success for approving new host families by streamlining the process into a single orientation meeting followed by a home visit.
- **Adjusting Rates:** Several counties found that their original monthly payment rates needed to be modified upward or downward in subsequent contracts to better reflect the actual local costs of housing and service provision while maximizing the number of beds funded. Some counties set different rates for different THP-Plus program models, and others increased rates for populations with greater service needs, such as young parents. In general, counties reported that rates at or below their maximum allowed rate were sufficient to provide THP-Plus housing and services for all populations.
- **Diversity of Housing Models:** Some county representatives cited the benefits of funding a variety of different THP-Plus housing models, while maintaining flexibility to shift the number of funded bed slots among models, in order to match THP-Plus beds with participants' individual needs and preferences.

We would like to have evaluation data that would show us how we're doing, especially long-term.

-Gia Alarie, San Diego County  
Child Welfare Services

It's been very challenging to budget because the allocation has been a moving target... A smoother and more predictable funding stream would make planning much easier. We know that we really need the funds.

- THP-Plus County Coordinator

## CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

by implementing counties included:

- **Budget Uncertainty:** The number one administrative challenge identified by county THP-Plus coordinators was uncertainty about the program budget at the state level. Across the state, county coordinators noted that mid-year changes in proposed funding and delayed legislative approval of funding made it extremely difficult to plan for and implement the THP-Plus program, even as local need for the program was very high. Several counties were forced to delay or scale-back implementation or rely on temporary emergency funding from county reserves to address program cash-flow problems. More timely and predictable funding allocations would significantly improve counties' ability to implement THP-Plus.
- **Evaluation:** Many counties were interested in examining comprehensive individual and aggregate outcome information for their THP-Plus programs, but most extensive evaluation efforts were in the early stages of development. Most county coordinators supported the idea of an enhanced statewide evaluation framework for THP-Plus, and several smaller counties, in particular, stated that expanded statewide data and sharing of best practices for evaluation would help them assess their programs. County coordinators emphasized the importance of integrating THP-Plus evaluation with other evaluation requirements and systems, and cautioned that increased evaluation could add to county administrative costs, which are not specifically funded by THP-Plus.
- **Regional Coordination:** Many young people are living in out-of-county foster care placements when they age out of care, and others choose to relocate in order to access education or employment opportunities or to move closer to family or friends. As a result, some young people need to access THP-Plus programs outside of their former county of dependency, making inter-county coordination necessary. Several coordinators called on county administrators to take the lead in negotiating regional coordination around THP-Plus rates, provider standards, and referral processes.
- **Monitoring Guidelines:** Several county coordinators requested more sharing of best practices around processes and requirements for ongoing monitoring of THP-Plus providers, particularly regarding program site visits and soliciting participant feedback.

**A lot of foster parents and providers still don't know about the program. We need to get the information out there, especially for youth who aren't accessing ILP - we do see those young people in THP-Plus, but usually after they've become homeless.**

**-Toby Eastman, Larkin Street Youth Services**

## PERSPECTIVES OF THP-PLUS PROVIDERS

Across California, local service providers implemented THP-Plus using a variety of different program models and service strategies in FY 2006-07. The vast majority of THP-Plus participants were former foster youth, and most referrals of program participants came through ILP programs. Foster youth who had not participated in ILP services were not referred as frequently. Probation youth who were in out-of-home placements as minors and are/were eligible for ILP services are also eligible to access THP-Plus, but few of them utilized the program in FY 2006-07. Improved coordination among probation departments, child welfare staff, and THP-Plus providers is needed to ensure access for these young adults.

THP-Plus providers identified a number of key **LESSONS LEARNED** in FY 2006-07:

- **Service Provision Strategies:** Most providers emphasized individualized one-on-one case management and provision of services at participants' housing or at other convenient locations chosen by participants as essential. Close coordination with ILP services and other community service providers also helped maximize effectiveness in many THP-Plus programs.
- **Special Populations:** Providers found that services needed to be customized for populations with special needs. Young parents, for example, were best served with smaller caseloads. For substance-using participants, most providers adopted a harm reduction service model. Young people with developmental or learning disabilities were identified as an emerging THP-Plus population for whom new service strategies may need to be developed.
- **Roommate Conflicts:** Managing conflicts among THP-Plus participants in shared housing was a significant program challenge. Successful programs used proactive and preventive approaches, such as regular roommate mediation meetings. Roommate conflicts were minimized by avoiding shared bedrooms and limiting the number of participants sharing a single housing unit, usually to a maximum of two individuals in a two-bedroom unit.
- **Learning from Experienced Providers:** Several THP-Plus providers who launched programs in FY 2006-07 reported that information from more experienced providers was invaluable, enabling them to set up new programs without "reinventing the wheel."

**Parenting youth require more time from the service coordinator, because it's not just about them – it's about their children too.**

**-Marybeth McCarthy, TriCity Homeless Coalition**

## **ELIGIBILITY UP TO AGE 24**

Though eligibility for some programs for former foster youth, such as ILP and extended MediCal, ends at age 21 in California, young people are eligible to access THP-Plus up to age 24. Nearly all THP-Plus county coordinators and service providers strongly supported this extended age eligibility. As one provider noted,

**A lot of foster youth disappear when they turn 18 – they want nothing to do with the system. But then they come back a few years later, when they realize they need some help to make it on their own.**

**-Susan Paradise, Santa Cruz Community Counseling Center**

Several providers noted that relatively fewer young adults older than age 21 access THP-Plus, but “for those who need that support, it’s really important.” Some don’t learn about the program until they are older, and many THP-Plus coordinators and providers noted that different young people mature at different rates, so some are not ready to benefit from the program until age 22 or 23. Moreover, most young adults in the general population aren’t required to be completely independent before age 24. As one coordinator summarized, allowing former foster and probation youth to access THP-Plus up to age 24 “keeps the window open for just the right amount of time.”

Providers also noted several ongoing THP-Plus

## **PROGRAM CHALLENGES:**

- **Recognizing Participants as Adults:** Many THP-Plus providers and administrators are most experienced with providing services to minors through the foster care system. As one county coordinator noted, “These are the same kids, but now they’re adults – and that changes everything.” Recognizing THP-Plus participants as adults, with adult responsibilities and legal rights, was noted as critical for effective service provision and is required for compliance with program regulations and fair housing laws.
- **Housing Management Issues:** Managing relationships with landlords, understanding and abiding by fair housing laws, and maintaining a clear separation between property management functions and program/case management functions were all identified as significant ongoing challenges in implementing THP-Plus programs.
- **Transition to Permanent Housing:** Many THP-Plus programs use transitional housing units, where young people must move out of the housing at the end of their THP-Plus participation. Finding affordable permanent housing for these young adults when they exit THP-Plus can be extremely challenging, particularly in areas where housing costs are high.

**It's important to break completely from the mind-set of serving minors.**

**-Deanne Pearn, First Place for Youth**

**We're thrilled with how it's going. As we've reached out, we've found that the community has been really supportive in wanting to help meet the needs of these young people.**

**-Tina Stevens, El Dorado County Department of Human Services**

## **CONCLUSION: THP-PLUS IN THE FUTURE**

Serving a total of 650 young adults, with high participant satisfaction and positive program outcomes, California's THP-Plus program made significant progress in FY 2006-07. Building on this success, at least 28 additional counties are hoping to launch THP-Plus programs in the next fiscal year, bringing the expected total number of young adults served to more than 1,200 annually. At this level, THP-Plus will be able to reach nearly one in four youth aging out of foster care in California, beginning to address the needs of a significant number of our former foster and ILP-eligible probation youth.

Significant challenges still remain, including seeking greater budget stability at the state level, coordinating services regionally, and enhancing evaluation processes. Even with the program expansion expected this fiscal year, many young people in need of supportive housing will still be unable to access THP-Plus due to program capacity limitations. Furthermore, young people aging out of the foster care and probation systems face other challenges that are beyond the scope of THP-Plus, such as the need for continuing medical insurance, high-quality mental health services, and long-term affordable housing.

Though we still have a long way to go to address all of the needs of California's former foster and probation youth, the THP-Plus program is making a significant difference in the lives of hundreds of young men and women across the state. As one THP-Plus county representative commented,

**Before, youth would leave the foster care system and that would be it – they'd end up on the street or who knows where. Now we have the type of program that can help them be successful.**

**– Frank Motta, Santa Clara County Social Services Agency**

THP-Plus provides a vital resource for former foster and ILP-eligible probation youth who are transitioning to adulthood, reflecting California's commitment to enabling these young people to succeed over the long-term. In the months and years ahead, this program will not only serve as a critical support for individual young men and women, but may also serve as a model for meeting the needs of former foster and probation youth across the country.

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THP-PLUS STATEWIDE  
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