

Housing Assistance for Youth Who Have Aged Out of Foster Care: The Role of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program



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**HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR YOUTH WHO
HAVE AGED OUT OF FOSTER CARE:
THE ROLE OF THE CHAFEE FOSTER CARE
INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM**

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Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), contracted with the Urban Institute to examine strategies in place to assist youth in foster care with housing after they have aged out of foster care, with a particular focus on efforts funded through the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.

Each year the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program provides \$140 million for independent living services to assist youth as they age out of foster care and enter adulthood. Under this formula grant program, states are provided allocations and allowed to use up to 30 percent of program funds for room and board for youth ages 18 to 21 who have left care. This report focuses primarily on how states spend their Chafee funding to provide housing support for youth and concentrates on the states that, according to the plans they filed with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), indicated they would spend the maximum 30 percent on room and board. We focus on these states because we were interested in the housing assistance models supported by states under the Chafee program, and reasoned that those states spending little of their funding for this purpose were unlikely to have model programs funded through this source. A complementary study funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is identifying housing programs for this population funded through other means.

To give a sense of how much support states might provide for each youth using Chafee funds, consider that given the number of youth who aged out of foster care in the states studied and the amount of funding available, each state could provide housing assistance of \$452 per year per youth, or \$38 per month per youth. Given that not all youth require housing support, or may not require the funds available through the Chafee program, this dollar estimate represents a lower bound. But put another way, to support youth at only \$300 per month, the available funding would support approximately one-eighth of currently eligible youth in these states.

In order to gather information on how states use Chafee funds to address youths' housing needs, we examined published documents, web pages, and other sources of information during the spring and summer of 2011 and contacted key state informants, primarily state Independent Living Coordinators (who administer the Chafee program in their states and coordinate their state's efforts regarding transition planning and services for older youth in foster care), to fill in any missing information. It is important to point out that this report provides detail on housing assistance and services to youth formerly in foster care in only one-third of the states. We emphasize that these states may not represent the United States as a whole, but reflect only those that chose to use the maximum amount of their Chafee allocation on housing. Although they provide rich information about Chafee room and board assistance, conclusions cannot be drawn about support to youth aging out of foster care in other

states. Dworsky and Havlicek (2009) provide details of some other housing programs across many states.

For the states that planned to use approximately 30 percent of the Chafee allotment for room and board assistance, this report addresses how they use Chafee funds and other federal and state resources to package and provide housing assistance until age 21 to youth formerly in foster care.

States typically use Chafee Room and Board funds to provide three basic types of support: rental start-up costs, ongoing support, and emergency uses.

Of the 17 states examined, nearly all used their Chafee room and board funds for one or more of three basic types of support: start-up costs, ongoing support, and emergency uses. States vary somewhat in what they will cover with Chafee funding, but in general the funding covers security deposits, utility hook-ups, household goods, and other start-up expenses. Those providing monthly rental assistance do so for a limited period, usually one year. Several states gradually reduce the amount of rent they'll cover and require the youth to pick up an increasing share of the rent over time.

A small number of states use Chafee funds in other ways.

We found a few states that use their Chafee funds in other ways. Kentucky formed a partnership with the state housing agency. The child welfare agency funds short-term rental vouchers and uses the housing authority's existing expertise and infrastructure for managing a voucher program. The program functions like a short-term Section 8 voucher program. Delaware contracts out to two Transitional Living Programs. New Mexico also contracts with five community organizations to provide Transitional Living Programs using the Runaway and Homeless Youth services model, in which youth live either in group homes or their own apartments and are provided a range of services such as life skills training, financial literacy instruction, and education and employment services.

Child welfare agencies also draw on other Federal programs to support housing for youth who have aged out of care.

Each state receives from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services an allocation for Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) which cover the costs of attendance at post-secondary institutions, including room and board costs, for youth who age out of foster care. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Family Unification Program (FUP) requires public housing agencies to team with child welfare agencies to compete for housing choice vouchers that can be used for certain child welfare families and for youth ages 18 to 21 who aged out of foster care. These vouchers are available only in some communities and, when used for this youth population, are good for 18 months. Some states use their Chafee funds in conjunction with the FUP program. For example, New Mexico uses Chafee funding to cover the security deposit.

Some states have developed programs of their own.

California's Transitional Housing Program Plus (THP+) is a state-funded program available in nearly all counties. The program provides transitional housing and services for up to 24 months for youth ages 18 to 24. North Carolina and Texas have provided opportunities for youth formerly in foster care who

continue with their schooling. North Carolina's NC Reach covers the cost of attendance, including housing, for up to four years at North Carolina public institutions of higher education. Chafee funding may be used to cover summer months when the youth is not enrolled. Texas now requires state colleges and universities to assist or, if funds are available, to pay for housing during the summer and winter breaks for youth formerly in foster care. These institutions may also utilize existing dorm facilities to house these youth. Michigan covers the other end of the "needs" spectrum, youth who become homeless after leaving care, by contracting with Transitional Living Programs to allocate a specific number of slots for youth aging out of care. These efforts are funded primarily using state (rather than federal) funds and typically are limited to youth who were in foster care in the state providing the assistance.

To allocate limited resources, programs tend to be time-limited and/or available only to youth who meet certain eligibility criteria.

Since most Chafee housing support lasts only a short time, youth need a job or other support, such as ETVs or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), soon after aging out of foster care. Most states limit support to youth in school or working, with an emphasis on the youth being able to pay the full rent after the assistance ceases. This philosophy limits Chafee support primarily to youth who will most likely make a successful transition out of care and provides them the initial funding they need due to lack of savings. Under this philosophy, youth who are not in school or working will find it difficult to take advantage of this support. Youth generally seek other resources such as the Basic Center Program (temporary shelters) and the Transitional Living Programs provided as part of the Runaway and Homeless Youth system.

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 may change the housing landscape for youth who turn 18 in foster care.

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 allows states to use federal funds to keep youth in foster care until age 21, if the youth meets certain conditions such as being in school or working. As more states adopt the provisions of the new law, much of the housing landscape will change for youth who turn 18 in foster care. Under this Act, youth who remain in care past age 18 will receive housing support partially covered by federal funds, which will potentially free up Chafee resources. Chafee funding has typically been supporting youth eligible to stay in care under this Act.

Independent Living Coordinators identified desirable features of a housing program.

Few Independent Living Coordinators could identify programs in their state that they would consider "model" or innovative. However, some discussed desirable features in a model housing program. Certain themes emerged, namely providing youth supportive services or case management as well as education, job training, and life skills; providing sustained housing; and having program flexibility and responsiveness to youths' needs. Taken together, these themes characterize some (though not necessarily all) desirable features identified by state officials regularly serving the population of older youth in foster care. No single program we heard about contained all of these features.

State officials listed supportive services and case management as important elements of housing programs for this population. Officials mentioned supports around education, job training, and other life skills. In addition to supportive case management services, model programs might provide longer-term housing options. State officials felt it important to enable youth to sustain their housing after aging out of foster care. Independent Living Coordinators saw flexible use of funds and capacity to coordinate with other agencies as important. In particular, they cited flexibility to provide different types of housing depending on a youth's needs and maturity as desirable. Officials also saw a program's responsiveness to the social and emotional needs of older youth in foster care, through means such as mentoring programs, as important.

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), contracted with the Urban Institute to examine strategies in place to assist youth in foster care with housing after they have aged out of foster care. The study focuses on room and board provisions made available through the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP or “the Chafee program”), which since 1999 has given states the option to use up to 30 percent of federal Chafee program dollars on housing for eligible youth. We reviewed financial reports submitted by each state to the Administration for Children and Families to identify the 20 states that planned to spend the maximum allowable amount to provide housing support in 2010. We focus on these states because we were interested in the housing assistance models supported by states under the Chafee program, and reasoned that those states spending little of their funding for this purpose were unlikely to have model programs funded through this source. A complimentary study funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is seeking out housing programs for this population funded through other means.

During the spring and summer of 2011, Urban Institute staff gathered published information from reports and websites and spoke directly with state administrators and staff (primarily state Independent Living (IL) Coordinators who lead programs and services for youth currently and formerly in foster care) about how they use Chafee program funds to support room and board for youth. This report focuses on the housing provisions and describes the different ways states that spend the maximum-allowed amount use those dollars. Readers should be aware that the report does not provide a comprehensive examination of all housing resources available to youth after aging out of care, even within the states covered in this study. Dworsky and Havlicek (2009) provide details of some other housing programs across many states.

Background

In 2010, nearly 28,000 youth left the foster care system to live on their own as legal adults (McCoy-Roth, DeVooght, and Fletcher 2011). Youth who have “aged out” of foster care often have unstable or precarious housing and many will experience periods of homelessness (Courtney, et al. 2007). Under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 states may access federal support to assist youth with housing after they have left care until age 21. This “room and board” provision requires that youth have left foster care and are currently between ages 18 and 21. States can spend up to 30 percent of their Chafee program dollars on housing. Beyond those criteria, the law is fairly flexible. For instance, the statute does not define “room and board” and allows states to develop their own definition.

To date, little is known about how states define and implement the room and board provisions. Although the legislation requires states to submit a plan and indicate the proportion of the state’s funding that will go toward room and board, states do not systematically collect specific details about

services, implementation, and other funding sources for housing. This report describes how some states use their allocation. Because we are interested in how states use Chafee room and board provisions when the funds represent a sizeable share of total Chafee spending, we selected for this study states that filed plans to use the maximum allowable amount on housing in fiscal year 2010. This report addresses three main questions for the states that planned to use approximately 30 percent of the Chafee allotment for housing:

- What Chafee-funded housing assistance do states provide to youth formerly in foster care ages 18 to 21?
- What additional funding sources, if any, do states use to facilitate or enhance housing support funded by the Chafee program?
- What other housing assistance do child welfare agencies provide for youth formerly in foster care ages 18 to 21 that are not funded by the Chafee program?

Chafee Room and Board Funds

The Chafee program provides \$140 million in mandatory funding each year to states. Each state's Chafee allocation is based on the size of its foster care population (Fernandes 2008) and may choose to spend their allocations on a range of activities supporting youth in foster care transition to adulthood. Among the 20 states and Puerto Rico that planned to spend 30 percent of their Chafee allocation for housing assistance and services in 2010,¹ the amount set aside for housing assistance ranged from \$150,000 in Delaware to over \$6 million in California. States not using funds for this purpose spend their Chafee program allocations on other services for youth in foster care.

We obtained information from 17 of the 20 states from public documents, from the Child and Family Services Plans states submitted to ACF, and from conversations with state officials.² Our conversations were tailored to each state based on the information we had from other sources. We held these conversations in order to clarify program details that were not available from the materials reviewed. In total, if the 17 states in the study used their entire 30 percent allocation, our study states anticipated spending \$20.7 million on housing in FY 2010 (see Table 1). To give a sense of how much support this might provide for each youth, consider that in these 17 states, 15,254 youth aged out of care in FY2009. If a similar number of youth aged out in each of the previous two years, and all youth are younger than 21, that would translate into \$452 per year per youth, or \$38 per month per youth. Given that not all youth require housing support, or may not require the funds available through Chafee, this dollar estimate represents a lower bound. Put another way, to support youth at only \$300 per month, the available funding would support approximately one-eighth of currently eligible youth in these states.

¹ In our conversations with states, Montana and Minnesota noted that the 30% was an outside estimate. These states planned to spend less than 30% of their Chafee allocation on housing.

² Two states did not respond to requests for information and a third provided written responses to some questions.

This estimate confirms what we heard repeatedly from states – that the funding is not enough to stably house all youth ages 18-21 who have aged out of foster care. Instead, this estimate illustrates a key constraint states must consider as they design programs and services to meet the needs of youth.

TABLE 1. Study States

State	Funds Planned for Room and Board Costs, FY 2010	Number of Youth Emancipating Age 18-20, FY 2009
Arizona	\$787,149	607
California	\$6,112,686	5,067
Delaware	\$150,000	102
Florida	\$2,120,323	1,456
Illinois	\$1,431,618	443
Indiana	\$914,627	122
Kansas	\$533,318	465
Kentucky	\$607,634	904
Michigan	\$1,675,314	1,112
Minnesota	\$543,371	666
Montana	\$150,000	54
New Mexico	\$194,877	104
North Carolina	\$870,793	460
Ohio	\$1,368,562	1,431
Tennessee	\$623,300	580
Texas	\$2,423,858	1,497
Utah	\$200,000	184
Total	\$20,707,430	15,254

Notes: Dollar amounts come from states' Child and Family Services Plan for FY 2010 submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Number of emancipating youth comes from authors' tabulations of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

Number of Youth Served

Data on the number of youth served through Chafee housing funds are not readily available and only a few states track this information systematically; although, the number of youth each year receiving Chafee housing funds is likely commensurate with state child welfare population size. For example, in Arizona 56 youth and in Utah 64 youth were served last year compared to an estimated 1,700 youth in Florida.³ Although lacking specific numbers, most child welfare officials estimate a low percentage of eligible youth get served, generally less than 50 percent of youth who age out of foster care.

In This Report

³ Arizona also uses a portion of its Chafee funding to support the subsidy for youth who continue to stay in care after turning 18. Those youth are not counted here.

The remainder of the report provides details about states' housing programs for this population. We first describe how states use Chafee room and board funding, focusing on common and some less common uses of Chafee funds. We then report about available child welfare housing programs not funded through Chafee, and how states provide housing support to youth who remain in care past age 18 (and are not eligible for Chafee room and board funds while still in care). Because more youth are expected to stay in care past age 18 with the passage of the Fostering Connections to Success and Adoptions Act of 2008, we briefly discuss subsidized independent living programs for older youth still in care. This section is followed by a discussion of how states differ in their philosophy and design of the Chafee funded programs, its implications for outreach to youth, and what Independent Living Coordinators consider to be desirable characteristics of housing programs. We summarize and discuss implications of Chafee room and board provisions in the final section. Quotes presented in this report are based on notes and may not be exact.

It is important to point out that this report provides detail on housing assistance and services to youth formerly in foster care in only one-third of the states. We emphasize that these states may not represent the United States as a whole, but reflect only those that chose to use the maximum amount of their Chafee allocation on housing. While they provide rich information about Chafee room and board assistance, conclusions cannot be drawn about support to youth aging out of foster care in other states.

How States Use Chafee Room and Board Funds

The decisions states made about how to allocate the federal funding throughout their states and the number of youth they reported serving reflect funding constraints. States made different decisions and allocate their Chafee room and board funds in different ways.

Allocation within States

Allocated to regions or counties based on the size of their foster youth population: Some states divide their funding equally according to the number of youth in care across regions or counties. States vary in how strictly the regions or counties must make do with their initial allocations. For example, in Utah the funds are distributed based on population in the region, but if one county expends their Chafee allocation before the end of the year, funds can be transferred from another county in a “more fluid” way.

Allocated to regions, counties, or contractors based on a formal request to the state: Some states allocate funds to regions, counties, or contractors based on their request for funding, rather than a population count. Sometimes these requests come directly from youth with regions or counties covering youths' housing expenses, then seeking their own reimbursement from the state. In other states the requests may come through a formal application by the region, county, or contractor. For example, Minnesota has a formal application to determine its distribution. Local contracted nonprofits

must submit an application requesting Chafee room and board funds. This application includes an estimate of the number of youth in care and the number expected to age out, the amount of funds requested and the amount spent in the previous year. In Ohio, the county Chafee allocation requires a local match.

Allocated to youth directly based on their requested need: Some states allocate funds to individual youth directly based on need. For example in Arizona the child welfare staff explained, “When a youth requests funds, we don’t dole out in an area. We are a state run agency. Those requests come directly to staff at the state office and they issue the funds.” Contract staff work directly with youth to develop a service plan, and the service plan outlines the individual need, with youth being paid directly for items covered under the Arizona definition of room and board (which can include basic food, clothing and shelter).

States that use the maximum allowable amount on housing assistance tend to use the federal money in similar ways, primarily to provide monetary rental assistance directly to a landlord or to youths themselves to live in scattered site apartments or other qualifying housing units. Non-monetary assistance includes housing-related services such as help finding an apartment, filling out a housing application, or developing a budget. The types of housing units youth were eligible for were also similar, typically either shared or unshared scattered site apartments. A smaller number of states used their Chafee funds in less common ways such as partnering with other providers or contributing Chafee funding to existing housing programs.

Youth Eligibility for Chafee Room and Board Funds

Youth who age out of foster care are eligible for Chafee room and board funds between their 18th and 21st birthdays. Youth do not have to request Chafee funds at their exit from care, but can generally request assistance any time prior to their 21st birthday. However, depending on the status of a state or county budget, funds may not be available to youth.

States can specify how long youth had to have been in care in order to be eligible for housing assistance. Typically a youth needs to have been in care at age 14. In Florida youth must have been in care for at least 6 months to be eligible.

Youth already receiving housing from the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program or any other program are ineligible for Chafee housing in some states. In many states, youth may be required to participate in after care services or agree to meet regularly with a case manager, counselor, mentor, or community service worker. The extent of after care services varies from basic independent living skills to intensive mental health counseling. Case managers typically work out a transition plan with the youth and meet with them regularly to strategize about how to implement the plan. In Texas, for example, the case manager “...works with the youth to develop a plan for transition to self-sufficiency after assistance ends. The case manager must develop strategies to help the youth take on more

responsibility and increase problem-solving skills so that the youth learns to advocate for himself or herself when he or she experiences crises in the future.” In Utah, the case managers “...check up on the youth, that they are not violating their lease agreement and make sure that they participate and manage their money so they won’t get into debt, what parents would do with kids on their own.”

Income Test and/or Needs Assessment

States may have an income test (e.g. in Kansas youth cannot earn more than \$1,500 a month) or a needs assessment. In Michigan, a needs assessment requires that the youth show why they need Chafee funds and how they will pay rent. Typically the needs assessment considers the sources of income the youth has, a budget and a list of the youth’s needs or request. For example, the needs assessment in Illinois verifies that a youth has enough income to maintain an apartment:

The youth do not have to be employed but they do need to show how they will pay rent and utilities on a monthly basis; such as if they are on SSI [Supplemental security Income] or they have a girlfriend who works. They tell us how they are going to afford rent each month.

Similarly youth in Utah have to develop a plan moving forward but are not required to have income before getting Chafee assistance.

In order for them to continue to receive the Chafee money, they have to have a plan to be on their feet. If the youth are homeless and have nowhere to stay, we can help them. We will not turn a youth away, but they have to get a plan to get on their feet.

In general, most states use their Chafee room and board resources to help youth who will be in a position to maintain their living situation after the support ends, thus the use of income or needs assessments. Unlike states with income requirements or states that require the youth to demonstrate an ability to pay the rent, Kentucky’s Chafee funding for room and board is made available only to homeless youth.⁴

School Enrollment and/or Employment

Two common eligibility criteria are enrollment in school and/or employment. Typically states have a process by which they verify these criteria either at an initial eligibility determination or routinely over time. Youth often meet with their case worker to approve a budget, or submit grades or letters of admission. For example, in Kansas verification of employment and schooling and determining eligibility for Chafee funds involves several steps.

They have to have met with an IL worker to develop an education or employment plan...They need to be enrolled in an education program that has at least one goal identified and they need to provide documentation of attendance and grades earned. If they do not plan on pursuing

⁴ Kentucky is unique in that they offer their Chafee housing assistance exclusively to youth who are homeless. Other states have programs to help homeless youth, some funded through Chafee; however none of the other states covered in this study dedicate their Chafee funds to this population of youth.

their education, then they need to have an employment plan that needs to include their resume, a job search plan, a budget, and some kind of information that indicates their job search efforts. They need to keep a weekly log showing that they have looked and or applied for at least 5 positions.

Common Uses of Chafee Funds

Monetary Assistance

The monetary assistance states provide to youth generally covers start-up costs, short-term ongoing support, and/or emergencies. Although some states offer just one of these types of supports, other states have all three available to youth.

Start-Up Assistance. Chafee funds for start-up costs are generally expected to be a one-time payment and are made available to youth when they first move into a new apartment or dorm. Start-up costs usually cover items like furnishings, deposits, first month's rent, utilities hook up or installation fees, appliances, and application fees.

- Youth Discretion: Some states leave it up to the youth to make responsible choices on how to spend the money and others set strict parameters for what the funds cover. In Kentucky the Chafee funds are spent only on rent and utilities whereas in Michigan the child welfare staff explain that funds are spent on, "...furniture, kitchen stuff, towels and pots and pans. I don't think we have an exhaustive list. Something they request we would look at and see if it is appropriate." New Mexico sets aside \$1,500 per youth for start-up funds. "Some use it for utilities or their first trip to Wal-Mart or Target to buy household supplies like linens, pots and pans, that type of thing."
- Amounts Vary: The amount of start-up funds available to youth varies considerably by state, ranging from \$500 in New Mexico and Texas to \$2,000 in Utah. In Indiana, Chafee IL service providers must submit the request for funding and show receipts for reimbursement. In several states there is no pre-set amount available per youth. In these states youth generally must submit a request for funding and submit receipts. Although start-up funds are usually a one-time payment, some states set a certain limit for start-up funds each year after emancipation. For example, although New Mexico provides youth up to \$1,500, youth can only access \$500 per year up to age 21. The IL Coordinator explained that the total amount available for start-up is distributed evenly across three years so that youth don't use it all in one year.
- May be Used with Other Programs: States may explicitly use the Chafee start-up funds in conjunction with another program. For example, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Family Unification Program (FUP)⁵ provides housing choice vouchers to youth aging out of foster care. Chafee funds may be used to help the youth buy furniture and other household supplies.

⁵ The Family Unification Program is described in more detail later in this report.

Ongoing Assistance. The second type of support identified is ongoing monthly rental assistance. States structure ongoing support in different ways. States differ in the dollar amount of monthly support although \$250-\$400 is typical, at least initially. States also differ on whether there is a per person or annual dollar cap, whether there is a time limit, and whether the support is the same amount every month or is reduced over time.

- **Tradeoff between Ongoing and Start-up Payments:** Generally states with higher one-time start-up payments have lower monthly ongoing assistance payments and vice-versa; states with higher ongoing payments have lower amounts available for start-up. States may limit the amount of Chafee housing assistance with an annual or per person dollar amount cap. For example in Indiana youth can spend no more than \$3,000 (though exceptions may be made in extreme circumstances). Other states restrict the monthly stipend by time; for example allowing youth to receive monthly rental assistance every month for six months or for a year.
- **Youth Need and Income:** States typically base the dollar amount of assistance on youth need or income. For example in Tennessee youth receive a per diem of at most \$13.28 a day. The per diem rate is calculated based on a youth's budget and can be flexible month to month.
- **"Step-Down" Payment Approach:** Several states use a step-down approach to provide ongoing housing support with Chafee funds. Three examples in Kansas, Indiana, and Illinois illustrate variations in the design of a step-down approach. In Kansas, youth can receive \$300 every month for the first 6 months. Every three months after that the youth receive a smaller proportion of the \$300 until they are receiving 50 percent of the \$300, or \$150 a month. At that point, the youth continues to receive \$150 a month until the age of 21. In Indiana, rather than decreasing the proportion of the stipend, Chafee funds are used to pay a decreasing proportion of the month's rent. Chafee funds cover 100 percent of the rent for the first two months. Every subsequent month, Chafee funds cover 25 percent less of the rent while the youth makes up the difference. By six months, the youth takes on 100 percent of the rent. In Illinois, youth pay a larger proportion of their income on rent and the state makes up the difference or pays \$250, whichever is less. For the first six months youth pay 30 percent of their initial income towards rent and 50 percent for the next six months. The youth's share of the rent is based on his or her income at the time the housing support is first received. If a youth's income increases over time, the amount of the youth's rent continues to be based on that initial income. Consequently, while the portion of rent increases, the actual dollar amount could represent a similar or even smaller total share of the youth's higher income.

Emergency Assistance. States also use Chafee housing assistance for youth in emergency or crisis situations. In general emergency assistance is expected to be a one-time payment for a temporary or extenuating situation. Most states that use Chafee room and board for emergency assistance do not set a dollar amount cap. Child welfare staff described several types of emergency situations.

- Preventing Homelessness: Chafee housing can be used to prevent homelessness. For example, in North Carolina, “...we will help them maintain whatever housing they’ve found, keep the youth from becoming homeless....We have used housing [Chafee housing assistance] to put a youth in a hotel who had something coming up, but to avoid being literally on the street.”
- Bridging Temporary Gap in Housing Resources: Staff often described situations where they saw the funds as filling in a gap in employment or schooling. Staff in Indiana provided an example, “Now we have a youth that maybe loses their job and has a child and something is going on with the child and all their savings are depleted and they are not going to make the rent. We fill in the gap until the youth is able to get a cushion set up.”

Non-Monetary Housing Assistance

In addition to monetary assistance, about one-third of the states included in this review provide supportive housing-related services. Case workers, independent living specialists, contractors, or other agencies may help a youth find an apartment and sign a lease. In addition, many child welfare independent living programs help youth learn money management or create a budget. Youth may be required to accept these services to be eligible to receive money for housing. Illinois’s services illustrate the range of what states provide in addition to money. In Illinois, youth get help looking for housing, tenant counseling, budget counseling, a life skills assessment, and shopping skills. Child welfare offices may also reach out to landlords to facilitate the transaction between landlords and youth. In Indiana the Chafee IL service provider talks to landlords about the unique needs of youth formerly in foster care.

Qualifying Housing Units

In most states youth find their own apartment unit or house and roommates. In some states the child welfare office or a contracted provider owns scattered site apartments or small apartment complexes partially or fully funded by Chafee that youth apply to live in (See description of other uses of Chafee funds in next section). A few states inspect a unit before releasing Chafee funds. In North Carolina they explain,

We help the youth find a safe place particularly if it’s their first time out, with working utilities, clean water, and a safe community... If a youth finds a place, but they [IL workers] know it’s not safe and in a community ravished with crime, then they work with the youth to find an alternative. We are not supporting them and putting them in a bad place. There is an ethical obligation to ensure [their safety] but we want to respect the youth.

Some states prohibit certain living arrangements or prohibit having roommates while others do not. In Arizona it is typical for the youth to live with others: “In that age group they tend to live with roommates or a girlfriend or boyfriend. They can live on their own but I believe that is a small percentage of the youth. If a youth does live with roommates the youth will pay for their share of the living expenses which should be split in equal portions with any roommates.” On the other hand, youth in Kentucky cannot live with a roommate and in Tennessee a roommate or girlfriend’s income may decrease their per diem amount, thus creating a disincentive to share living quarters.

Less Common Uses of Chafee Funds

Although most states have programs like those described above, some states use their Chafee room and board funds in other ways. These states typically work with other local agencies and service providers to develop more formal housing options for youth formerly in foster care. One advantage of this approach we heard is that other agencies and service providers sometimes have greater flexibility and discretion than a child welfare agency might.

Kentucky: Partnership with the Kentucky Housing Corporation

Kentucky is unique among the 17 states in our study because it contracts services to the Kentucky Housing Corporation. Eligible youth apply for a six month voucher that covers rent and utilities. Youth receive the application from their regional Independent Living Coordinator who forwards the application to a housing specialist with the Kentucky Housing Corporation. Unlike most programs we heard about, youth must be homeless and less than 20 ½ years old to be eligible. Further, youth are not required to be employed or going to school at the time they apply for housing; however, the goal is that they will be able to sustain an apartment after six months. Youth who are working, on disability, or SSI have to report the income and are required to pay 30 percent to the landlord. Although the Housing Corporation will pay the landlord directly, youth may receive \$1,100 to cover start-up expenses.

Kentucky's program was started in 2010 and its success in helping homeless youth maintain housing is yet to be determined. The program's capacity to support youth after 6 months is even less certain. Currently, the program does not have a special arrangement with Section 8 or other housing programs that would transition youth to other housing support that could last beyond six months. Another limitation of the Kentucky model that the IL Coordinator hopes to address is a lack of supportive and case management services.

Delaware: Partnership with Two Transitional Housing Programs

Like other states, Delaware offers rental/security deposit assistance to youth that attain their own rental units. However, Delaware principally allocates its room and board housing assistance to two transitional housing programs in two counties. One of the transitional housing programs supports youth living in assigned row houses. Youth have their own rooms but share common areas. The Chafee room and board component, which pays a portion of the daily housing rate, is combined with other funding sources that sustain the program's diverse services. The second program is described as a cottage setting where youth have their own rooms and similarly share common areas. This program is considered a graduated system in that successful youth may move from the cottage into an apartment setting as long as they maintain employment or stay in school and follow program rules. Delaware also has a short-term host home arrangement program. This program is available to youth when they are transitioning into a more permanent housing setting or are going to move into college dormitories. The assistance involves developing an agreement with a former foster parent willing to have the youth in

their home for up to 4 months. For this arrangement, youth must have a clear plan outlining the timeframe they anticipate moving into permanent housing.

New Mexico and Minnesota: Partnerships with Multiple Providers

Both New Mexico and Minnesota allocate Chafee room and board funds to multiple providers. New Mexico has contracts with five community providers to run Transitional Living Programs (TLP) throughout the state. Each program is individualized and determines its own rules and requirements in keeping with Chafee room and board parameters. Each program provides clustered housing supervised by staff. The programs do not exclusively serve youth formerly in foster care, but are based on the Transitional Living Program Runaway and Homeless Youth model. The Chafee room and board funds are blended and provide “a very small percent of their total budget” to ensure some available space for youth who have aged out of foster care. New Mexico’s programs are funded through multiple sources including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and include different service models in accordance with the federal TLP program. Although New Mexico’s programs all may have school or work requirements, some include counseling or community service work, while others may not. These programs have no income or financial requirement.

Minnesota allocates its Chafee funding (not just room and board) to the counties, tribes, and an array of non-profit agencies statewide. Counties and providers are required to report their spending and the state calculates the proportion of resources that went to housing. Unlike most of the states that spent close to 30 percent of their Chafee funds on room and board, Minnesota spent closer to 10 percent. This difference is because Minnesota has a different process that includes allocating funds based on counties’, providers’, and tribes’ projected expenses, which are calculated at the end of the year. At the end of each year the state then calculates the true proportion of their Chafee allocation that went to room and board. In Minnesota, 60 percent of the total funds that went to contractors come from the state and 40 percent from Chafee. “That makes it hard to separate out that money and almost all of them get strictly housing money from another source and they also go to their local PHA [public housing authority] for assistance.” Housing in Minnesota is therefore not necessarily funded by Chafee; housing may be funded by HUD, or both HUD and Chafee. Minnesota has regional differences in housing and service availability. Generally the metro areas have large transition programs run by community development agencies. Services are much different in rural Minnesota, which does not have large community development agencies but relies on private landlords’ willingness to rent to youth.

Child Welfare Housing Programs Not Using Chafee Room and Board Funds

Child welfare agencies may make use of a variety of federal, state and local resources to provide housing for youth who have aged out of foster care. Many of these resources are available to homeless individuals and families and are not child welfare programs. These programs serve various populations of young adults and youth formerly in foster care may be among them. Youth formerly in care may find

their way to these programs after emancipating from care. For example, the TLP funded by the U.S. Family and Youth Service Bureau serves runaway and homeless youth ages 16-21. In FY 2010, approximately 19 percent of the youth who entered the TLP were formerly in foster care.⁶ Torrico and Bhat (2009) identified a broad set of programs as potential funding sources for housing former foster youth, although most do not target youth.

In this section we describe several programs within child welfare agencies specifically targeted at youth who age out of foster care, but do not utilize Chafee funds. The list is not exhaustive as it only includes programs in the 17 states covered in this study. Nor does this list include myriad nonprofits that may serve youth who age out of foster care, but are not directly connected to the child welfare agency, such as Lighthouse Youth Services in Ohio (Kroner and Mares 2009).

The programs discussed in this section include two federally-funded programs and several state-funded programs. In addition, we briefly describe the subsidized independent living programs available to youth who remain in foster care past age 18. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 gives states the option to support youth in foster care until their 21st birthdays using federal funds made available through Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (Title IV-E funds).⁷ As more states take up the Fostering Connections option, youth currently eligible for Chafee services will become eligible for housing support using these alternative funds.

Federally-Funded Housing Support Programs

Two federal programs that include housing support are the Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program administered by HHS and HUD's Family Unification Program (FUP). All states receive an allocation under the ETV program; in FY 2010 the total funding was approximately \$44 million. FUP is a HUD program which serves several types of child welfare involved families as well as youth aging out of foster care. To access the program, child welfare agencies must partner with a public housing agency to compete for a limited number of grants. Although the program is national, it is not available in all communities. The grants are awarded to the public housing agencies.

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

The ETV program provides financial assistance for post-secondary training and education to youth who have aged out of foster care (or who have left foster care after age 16 for kinship guardianship or adoption). States have the option of providing ETVs to students until the age of 23. The vouchers may be for up to \$5,000 or the total cost of attendance, whichever is less. Cost of attendance includes room and board expenses. ETVs only cover youth while enrolled in an authorized institution of higher

⁶ Authors' tabulation from USDHHS (2011). These youth had experience in foster care, but did not necessarily age out of care.

⁷ Title IV-E of the Social Security Act provides the availability of federal funds for foster care.

education. Several states use Chafee funding to cover housing for ETV recipients during summer months when youth are not enrolled and thus not covered by their ETV.

Family Unification Program (FUP)

FUP is a HUD program that provides a pool of housing choice vouchers and supportive services to families involved in the child welfare system and experiencing housing problems, as well as to youth ages 18-21 that have aged out of foster care. The local public housing agency administers the program in collaboration with the child welfare agency. While nearly 250 communities have received funds, the program is small, with approximately 41,000 vouchers awarded since the program's inception. After a long period from 2002 to 2007 with no new FUP vouchers, Congress awarded \$55 million dollars to HUD for the program in 2008, 2009, and 2010; the equivalent of approximately 7,000 new FUP vouchers.

Although vouchers for families are permanent, those for youth formerly in foster care expire in 18 months. Most of the IL Coordinators we spoke with feel the 18 month restriction is too limiting. Some were hesitant to make much use of these vouchers for many of the youth they serve because they did not feel the time period was adequate to provide a solid transition out of foster care. Some public housing authorities are not keen to use FUP vouchers for youth either. They feel the potential problems with youth tenants could jeopardize the housing authority's relationship with landlords.

Some agencies that did make use of FUP vouchers for youth did so as part of a broader strategy using the 18 month period as a bridge to another program. In several cases, the FUP provided the time necessary for the youth to clear the regular Section 8 waitlist. Some states give priority on the Section 8 waitlist to youth who have aged-out of foster care, either immediately upon emancipation or at the termination of their FUP voucher.

The FUP requires that vouchers for youth be accompanied by services. These services are generally provided as part of the state's Chafee services for transition age youth. Chafee room and board funds are also used for start-up costs such as acquiring furniture.

State-Funded Housing-Support Programs

California's Transitional Housing Program for Emancipated Foster/Probation Youth (THP-Plus)

The California Department of Social Services uses state funds for the Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP+), which began in 2002 to provide housing assistance to youth formerly in foster care between ages 18 and 21. THP+ is available in 53 of California's 58 counties. Youth who are between ages 18 and 21 and have aged out of foster care are eligible for THP+. Youth do not need to be in school or working to be eligible. However, youth do need to apply for the program and some counties maintain a waiting list. Youth do not need to apply for THP+ immediately upon leaving care. They are permitted to leave care at age 18 and still apply for services at ages 19 and 20. Youth living in a county without THP+ become eligible if they move into a county with the program.

THP+ is used to support a variety of housing options including single-site, scattered site, and host homes. The counties contract with a housing provider. Youth are allowed to stay in THP+ for 2 years and generally increase their share of the rent over that time frame; that is, rent assistance is stepped down over time.

Michigan's use of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Transitional Living Program

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) makes use of the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB)'s Transitional Living Program to serve youth who age out of foster care. As noted above, many youth formerly in foster care who become homeless find their way to a TLP; however, Michigan has an explicit agreement with the TLPs for youth who age out of care. Contracts with TLP providers currently require 25 percent of the slots be reserved for youth aging out of foster care. New contracts are being issued with higher percentages required, increasing over time to 50 percent of the slots. TLPs exist throughout the state.

A youth can access a TLP as early as two months prior to leaving care. Youth can reside in a TLP for 18 months and can request an additional 3 months. The slots are intended for youth who are expected to be homeless after their case is closed. Michigan's DHS is working with landlords in five counties to get reduced rents for youth who have gone through the Transitional Living Program.

TLPs provide site based residential facilities and help youth learn the skills to move progressively to independence. Their objective is getting youth into school and providing medical attention as well as teaching youth to prepare meals and other life skills. TLPs provide case management, life skills training, and many additional supportive services; for example if the youth is in crisis they provide crisis counseling. They also help youth learn to navigate community services.

Michigan: Local Partnerships

In several counties, the Michigan Department of Human Services has teamed with local business partners and faith based organizations to provide housing and other supports for youth aging out of foster care. In Genesee County, DHS has joined with the Flint based nonprofit Operation Unification Incorporated to provide permanent housing and other support to young people and families in transition from foster care to independence. The pilot program includes a tenant training workshop, as well as credit counseling, financial budgeting, parenting classes, and child care. Each youth is paired with a mentor who provides life skills and additional guidance. The program places young people in single family homes and duplexes throughout Flint and surrounding communities with rents of \$375 per month.⁸ After seven years, the program provides the youth with an opportunity for home ownership if rent has been continually paid on time.

⁸ Youth are able to reduce the rent in most cases by sharing a home. Some efficiency units are available for \$250 per month.

In Wayne County, DHS is partnering with Robbie's Place to provide transitional living and help young people learn to rehab homes in partnership with the Phoenix group, a group of builders within the county. A similar program operates in Kent County where DHS has partnered with Seeds of Promise, an organization seeking to improve a neighborhood in Grand Rapids. The youth live in transitional housing while renovating homes. Some of the homes have been vacant for a while. After restoring the property, youth can move in. The program places emphasis on involving youth in landlord-tenant training and encouraging landlords to rent to youth and charge an affordable rent. DHS is working with two additional counties to expand the program.

North Carolina: NC Reach

NC Reach is a state-funded scholarship available for up to four years for youth going to any of the 74 North Carolina public colleges, universities, or community colleges. Youth must have been adopted from North Carolina Division of Social Services foster care after age 12 or aged out of North Carolina foster care at age 18 to be eligible for the program. Students are eligible until their 26th birthday. The scholarship pays up to the full cost of attendance for fall, spring and summer terms after other public funds and scholarships have been applied. Chafee funds may be used to provide housing for youth not enrolled during the summer.

Tennessee: Youth Villages

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services contracts out to Youth Villages, a national private non-profit organization, to provide community based housing assistance and services for some youth formerly in foster care. In Tennessee, Youth Villages is financially supported by a combination of Chafee funds, state general funds and private support. Youth Villages provides a range of services to vulnerable children and their families, youth in foster care, former foster care youth, and at risk youth who have never been in foster care. Youth formerly in foster care who opt not to receive after care services from the state can access services, such as case management and wrap around services, from Youth Villages. Housing assistance through Youth Villages is available on a shorter time frame than state assistance and has fewer eligibility criteria. A requirement for the Tennessee Department of Children's Services Chafee funded housing stipend is that youth be enrolled in school, though they are not required to be working. In contrast, Youth Villages targets youth formerly in foster care with more needs and focuses on helping those youth find employment or enrolling in an educational program. Youth Villages has locations throughout Tennessee as well as in six other states.

Texas: Housing Assistance between College Terms

Recently, the Texas legislature passed a bill requiring Texas institutions of higher education to provide housing between academic terms (including summer and winter breaks) for youth who aged out of foster care. If funds are available, the institution can either provide a stipend to cover the costs of temporary housing, provide temporary housing directly to the student, or provide a list of local housing resources. The law went into effect September 1, 2011.

Subsidized Independent Living Programs for Youth Who Remain In Care Past Age 18

Most youth exit foster care by age 18, but nearly every state allows older youth to remain in care until a maximum age between 19 and 21 under certain conditions (e.g., while enrolled in school, or if the youth have qualifying medical conditions) (see Appendix D, Table D1). Although these youth are not eligible for Chafee room and board funds, most states in the study that permit youth to remain in care beyond age 19 also provide subsidized independent living (sometimes called supervised independent living).

Generally, subsidized independent living includes regular (often monthly) support to youth to help cover rent and other living expenses. In Illinois, youth in subsidized independent living are responsible for an increasing share of the rent over time. Arizona's youth can use a monthly subsidy toward expenses such as food, clothing, personal care items and transportation costs, in addition to rent. Subsidized independent living services include case management and other supports. Youth may live on their own, with family members, roommates, or foster parents. Although youth may receive some assistance locating housing from staff, we were told that most youth identify the housing themselves.

States often require or strongly encourage youth to be in school or working in order to receive the housing support. In Utah youth sign a contract agreeing to remain in school and/or maintain part time or full time work. Youth in Utah's program are expected to demonstrate sufficient independence and maturity. "There is nothing set up for the youth." He or she must locate an appropriate place to live. If the youth lives with a roommate, that person must pass a background check. For youth in Arizona to receive support for housing while participating in the subsidized Independent living program they must be participating on a full-time basis in an approved educational, employment, vocational, treatment or other program as outlined in the youth's case plan. The young adult should maintain satisfactory progress as defined in the case plan and/or specific education or training program. Other states described some flexibility with the requirements and would make determinations on a case-by-case basis in the event that a youth has difficulty finding a job.

More and more states are extending (or considering extending) the length of time youth may remain in care, which has implications for housing. Under the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, states may use Title IV-E funds to support youth who stay in foster care until they turn 21, as long as they meet certain educational and employment requirements. As of January 2012, ten states have federally approved Title IV-E plans that extend foster care beyond age 18 (Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Oregon, Texas, and Washington). Other states have enacted or are in the process of taking the option to serve older youth through The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (McCoy-Roth, et al. 2011). To qualify for the Title IV-E maintenance payments, youth in foster care must be in a licensed or "supervised independent living" setting (Public Law 110-351 Sect. 201 (b)). According to the legislation, a supervised independent living setting may be defined broadly and can include diverse housing

arrangements such as host homes, dormitories, shared apartments, or independent apartments where the youth may be supervised by an agency worker.

Philosophy and Design of Programs

In 2010, only 20 states planned to use the full 30 percent of their Chafee allocation allowed for room and board; fifteen states and the District of Columbia did not plan to use any of their allocation for this purpose. Yet many of the IL Coordinators we spoke with felt the allotment was too small to provide housing support that would help all youth who needed housing after aging out of care. As a result they felt they needed to limit who was eligible and how much youth could receive.

Our money is dispersed so thinly that nobody has enough Chafee money to support these kids over time, not with Chafee anyway. It's the fund they tap for initial expenses, damage deposits, and household goods; it's just not enough so the county can only spend the allocation on one kid for two months. The kid has to have a job or scholarship, some other housing money source because Chafee money isn't enough.

States generally intend to help all youth secure some form of housing, but the limit on Chafee funds means that for the youth to gain room and board support, the youth has to be able to provide their own housing soon after aging out of care. Thus the Chafee funds could provide the initial start-up costs that the youth could not cover or might provide several months of rent while the youth saves some money. In order to be ready to take over the rent, youth typically must already have income of some sort, from a job, SSI, or educational support. Generally states require youth to work with a case manager to identify their living costs, develop a budget, and show how they will be able to meet expenses over time. The child welfare agency does not want to set youths up for failure.

They [case workers] don't put a kid in housing unless the kid can afford to stay there. They know better than to put in a payment for a damage deposit and to find an apartment if the kids don't have any way to sustain themselves.

Most states couple their Chafee housing support with other IL services. In many cases youth must be involved in the state's after care program or work with an IL specialist. Through this mechanism, youth work on learning life skills necessary for maintaining their housing, dealing with roommates, etc. As noted, these life skills usually include making a budget. States view the budgeting exercise as both a learning experience and a necessity since the youth will have to take over the rent.

One interesting distinction in how states implement their programs is that some states provide funds directly to youth while others make payments to landlords. States that provide the funds to the youth feel money management is part of learning life skills while states that pay landlords directly feel that ensuring the money goes toward the intended purposes is a more important priority. Related to this distinction is whether the state provides the youth specific room and board support or provides a

stipend. In the latter case, youth receive a monthly amount and are responsible for spending decisions. Whether they receive a stipend or a specific amount for room and board payments, youth who receive money directly generally have to show receipts. If youth can't account for how they spent the money or if they fail to provide receipts, they are unlikely to receive continuing support.

...the preference is that the money goes to the youth. They are responsible. It is a litmus test. If the youth doesn't get us a receipt and they make another request, that's part of what we would look at, whether it's for housing or whatever. We provided the stipend before, did you hold up your end?

A couple of states do not provide money directly to youth partly because state officials worry about potential tax implications for the youth. However, Tennessee makes use of the tax consequences to provide financial literacy skills. Tennessee provides a monthly payment using direct deposit. Each youth has to take financial literacy with an IL specialist. The IL specialist helps the youth complete the paperwork to allow direct deposit. Youth receive IRS form 1099 (which reports various types of non-wage income) and receive help filling out tax returns. Tennessee runs a training course for youth that covers receiving allowances and financial management skills.

How Youth Find Out About Available Chafee Housing Support

Youth first find out about the availability of Chafee room and board support from their case manager. Generally this occurs during the transition planning process. In some states transition planning begins as early as age 14 while other states focus on the 90 days before emancipation. At or before discharge, youth usually receive a packet of information about resources available to them. Several states placed an emphasis on providing the information through transition specialists or as part of life skills training. Many states also provide information at annual statewide or regional conferences for transition age youth. These conferences, however, do not tend to attract a large number of youth. One IL Coordinator reported that only 10 percent of 14-21 year olds came to the conference in 2010.

Many youth leave care thinking they have a stable living arrangement to go to, frequently with relatives. However, these arrangements don't always last and a youth can find him/herself needing housing. Most IL programs make efforts to get information to these youth. In many cases this involves handing out pamphlets or brochures in places where youth formerly in foster care frequent. For example, Arizona gives out pamphlets at community colleges and at behavioral health organizations. California sends flyers to caregivers and group homes. Indiana puts a brochure in libraries, in homeless shelters or anywhere older youth may frequent. Utah provides information to various community partners while Illinois provides postcards to the local continuum of care, the local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals, meets with homeless shelter providers to make them aware of their Chafee housing assistance program for former foster youth, and sends a postcard to every youth who ages out of care prior to turning 20.5 to make sure they know

about the Youth Housing Assistance program . Kentucky uses Facebook to get out information while Michigan puts the information on their Youth in Transition website.

Desirable Housing Program Features

We sought to identify any housing programs or services in the states included in this study – either using or not using Chafee funding – that are especially innovative, successful, or in other ways model programs. Although we discussed with state officials particular programs that were unique to their jurisdictions, our informants often liked programs for similar reasons. Some also discussed what they would consider ideal programs – when they did not have a specific model to discuss. Below we highlight common themes several people expressed. Taken together, these themes characterize some (though not necessarily all) desirable features identified by state officials regularly serving the population of older youth in foster care. No single program we heard about contained all of these features.

Case Management and Training

State officials listed supportive services and case management as important elements of housing programs for this population. Some programs include formal one-on-one case management services. One program in Michigan is considering introducing live-in, on-site “life coaches” who are youth who had formerly been in foster care. The life coaches would be an informal resource for youth living in supervised apartment settings. One official felt youth in her state could benefit from better case management after they leave foster care. “I would want them to have more resources to get quality case management after they exit out of foster care. Our office is not funded to provide services and that would spread pretty thin to have our state fund supporting youth to [age] 21.”

Officials also mentioned supports around education, job training, and other life skills. In particular, one official particularly liked a program that emphasized education and training. “So if [youth formerly in foster care] haven’t graduated from high school then that would be their primary focus...They do receive one-on-one case management, also life skills training provided by the provider and assistance in enrolling in college and the financial aid process.”

Sustained Housing

In addition to supportive case management services, model programs might provide longer term housing options. State officials felt that enabling older youth in foster care to sustain their housing was important. One person wanted to be able to provide permanent housing vouchers from the state public housing authority or give youth priority on the Section 8 waiting list. Others recommended providing youth with housing help (e.g., help locating homes and other resources) up to two years after they have left care, particularly in states where youth stay in care until age 21. As an official in Illinois stated, “Unfortunately the big concern with this [the Chafee room and board] program is so many of our youth are closing on their 21st birthday.” As a result many youth are unable to take advantage of the Chafee room and board funds once they leave care. The official implied that even after 21 youth may still need the support.

Program Flexibility and Responsiveness

Two additional issues that more than one official raised concern program flexibility and responsiveness to youths' needs. Describing one model program, an official emphasized its flexible use of funds and capacity to coordinate with other agencies. When asked what makes the program a good model, she responded, "I think part of it is the flexibility to use funding and coordinate with other agencies because they are not as bureaucratically structured in that sense and have more capability to determine shorter term goals and outcome needs." A second person commented on a private agency's flexibility to provide different types of housing. Depending on a youth's needs and maturity, a private program could offer housing that was more structured, or housing that fostered greater independence. Another program described as a potential model houses youth in a building that has a 24 hour staff person in the lobby. From the official's perspective, this program responds to youth's needs by minimizing the risk they will be evicted due to friends and relatives moving in with them.

Some of the comments we heard concerned a program's responsiveness to the social and emotional needs of older youth in foster care. One example, described above, involves having youth formerly in foster care serve as life coaches to other youth. The official emphasized the life coach's potential ability to uniquely understand what the older youth in foster care may be experiencing and the type of housing help they need. Another official described a housing program that includes a mentoring component. For this official, connecting youth with caring adults who volunteered their time was important. "The youth know that [the mentors] are there because they want to be, and not because they are paid to be." In addition to the mentors, the program succeeds (according to the official) because the program managers are very committed to the youth.

Conclusion

Each year the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act provides \$140 million for independent living services for youth aging out of foster care. States receive allocations and can use up to 30 percent of their allocation for room and board for youth ages 18 to 21 who aged out of foster care. This report has focused primarily on how states spend their Chafee funding to provide housing support for youth who age out of foster care. The report focused on the states that, according to the plans they filed with the Administration for Children and Families, indicated they planned to spend the full 30 percent of their Chafee allocation allowed on room and board. Recognizing that most states do not plan to spend the full 30 percent is important and nothing in this report addresses the reasons why. These states may have access to other housing resources, allowing the child welfare agency to allocate most or all of its Chafee funds to other transitional services.

Of the 17 states examined, nearly all used their Chafee room and board funds for one or more of three basic types of support: start-up costs, ongoing support, and emergency uses. States vary somewhat in what they will cover with Chafee funding, but in general the funding covers security deposits, utility

hook-ups, household goods, and other start-up expenses. Those states providing monthly rental assistance do so for a limited period, usually one year, and several states gradually reduce the amount of rent they'll cover and require the youth to pick up an increasing share of the rent over time.

We found a few states that use their Chafee funds in other ways. Kentucky formed a partnership with the state housing agency. The child welfare agency funds short-term rental vouchers and uses the housing authority's existing expertise and infrastructure for managing a voucher program. The program functions like a short-term Section 8 voucher program. Delaware contracts out to two Transitional Living Programs. New Mexico also contracts with five community organizations to provide Transitional Living Programs using the Runaway and Homeless Youth services model.

We also identified other housing programs with direct child welfare agency involvement (as opposed to helping youth get into other available housing programs). Two federal programs, the ETV and FUP programs, assist in providing housing support for youth formerly in foster care.

Each state receives an allocation for ETVs which cover the costs of attendance at post-secondary institutions, including room and board costs. HUD's FUP requires public housing agencies to team with child welfare agencies to compete for housing choice vouchers that can be used for certain child welfare families and for youth ages 18 to 21 who aged out of foster care. These vouchers are available only in some communities and, when used for this youth population, are good for 18 months. Some states use their Chafee funds in conjunction with the FUP program. For example, New Mexico uses Chafee funding to cover the security deposit. Many IL Coordinators find the 18 month limit too short for this transitioning population. In New Mexico, youth sign up for Section 8 housing support when they first receive their FUP voucher with the hope that a Section 8 voucher will be available when their FUP voucher expires.

Some states have developed other programs of their own. California's THP+ is a state-funded program available in nearly all counties. The program provides transitional housing and services for up to 24 months for youth ages 18 to 24. North Carolina and Texas have provided opportunities for youth formerly in foster care who continue with their schooling. North Carolina's NC Reach covers the cost of attendance, including housing, for up to four years at North Carolina public institutions of higher education. Chafee funding may be used to cover summer months when the youth is not enrolled. Texas now requires state colleges and universities to assist or if funds are available to pay for housing during the summer and winter breaks for youth formerly in foster care. These institutions may also utilize existing dorm facilities to house these youth. Michigan covers the other end of the "needs" spectrum, youth who become homeless after leaving care, by contracting with Transitional Living Programs to allocate a specific number of slots for youth aging out of care.

Most Independent Living Coordinators felt that Chafee funding was too small to adequately provide for housing support for a youth transitioning from being in foster care to living independently. As a result, most states institute eligibility criteria that require the youth to be in a position to take over the rent

when the Chafee support runs out. Most support lasts only a short time, so the youth needs a job or other support (e.g., ETVs or SSI) soon after emancipation.

Most states limit support to youth in school or working. This philosophy limits Chafee support primarily to youth who will most likely make a successful transition out of care and provides them the initial funding they might need due to lack of savings. Youth who are not in school or working will find taking advantage of this support difficult. Although child welfare agencies generally will try to help a youth avoid homelessness, the funds provide only a small amount of support. Youth generally sought other resources such as the Basic Center Program shelters and the Transitional Living Programs in the Runaway and Homeless Youth system. Thus Chafee funds typically do not support those most in need of housing assistance.

With the passing of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, much of the housing landscape will change for youth who turn 18 in foster care. Under this act, youth who remain in care past age 18 will receive housing support using Title IV-E funds, potentially freeing up Chafee resources. To remain in care under The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, a youth must be enrolled in school, working, in a training program, or unable to engage in any of these activities due to a medical condition. With the exception of the last category, Chafee funding has been supporting those eligible to stay in care under this Act.

In Illinois, where youth could stay in care until age 21 with no restrictions (prior to the state adopting The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008), a high percentage chose to stay in care (Courtney and Dworsky 2006, Courtney, et al. 2007). Approximately 78 percent of youth who were in school or working at age 19 remained in care; about 62 percent of those in school or working at age 20 were still in care (Pergamit and Johnson 2009). If other states have similar experiences, Chafee funding can be used to help a much smaller number of youth who are not in school or working and thus not eligible to remain in care, but need the most help (some youth in school and working will choose not to remain in care and may still benefit from housing support).

Independent Living Coordinators identified a need for longer term housing options. Dworsky and Courtney (2010) show that in Illinois, where youth could stay in care until age 21, fewer youth were homeless between ages 18 and 21 compared with youth in Iowa and Wisconsin where foster care terminated at age 18. However, by ages 23 and 24, youth in Illinois were no less likely than youth in Iowa or Wisconsin to have ever been homeless. This implies considering housing models that prioritize long-term housing options for these youth may be necessary. In the homelessness field, the current paradigm promotes “housing first”; that is, providing permanent and stable housing rather than emergency or transitional housing. This model is based on the belief that people are more responsive to services when in their own house (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2006). The current level of support for youth aging out of foster care typically provides transitional services while only supporting short-term, transitional housing. Short-term support characterizes programs using Chafee funds as well

as other support such as FUP, which provides a voucher to youth for only 18 months; similarly, youth can generally only stay in TLPs for 18 months.

The proportion of young adults living with their parents has risen in recent years with nearly half of all 20-24 year olds and roughly one in seven 25-34 year olds living with parents (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). This housing arrangement is rarely an option for most youth who have aged out of foster care (and may not be a healthy situation given that they had been removed from their parents initially). Although permanent supported housing may not be a desirable policy direction for youth aging out of foster care, less transitory housing provided with greater support may be necessary. In particular, the time spent supporting youth transitioning out of foster care may need to be extended beyond age 21.

Furthermore, the housing options available to youth leaving foster care may need to be expanded to reflect the diverse needs of these youth. We found few programs that provided housing and related services to specific populations such as pregnant and parenting youth, youth with criminal justice involvement, or youth with high levels of mental health needs.

Finally, we note that programs using Chafee funds for housing support have not been evaluated. The Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs, sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families, did not find a site with a housing program that could be evaluated and was willing to participate in an evaluation (Courtney, et al. 2008). Most IL programs do not collect any data that allow for an assessment of program impact. Virtually all the IL Coordinators in this study view the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) as providing this type of information in the future. However, the NYTD will collect a limited amount of data. This limitation will not support an estimation of impacts. An experimental design will be necessary to understand if the housing support makes a difference in these youths' lives.⁹

⁹ Youth Villages in Tennessee has engaged in internal evaluation and is currently undergoing an experimental design evaluation.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Data Sources and Study Methodology

We first reviewed the plans each state submitted to the Administration for Children and Families to identify states that planned to use the maximum housing allowance in FY 2010. Twenty states anticipated spending approximately 30 percent of their allocation on room and board.¹⁰ Table D2 in Appendix D presents a complete list of all the states and their planned room and board expenditures, percent allocation to room and board in 2010, and the number of youth who emancipated from care in 2009.

We next reviewed websites from national and state agencies and organizations to better understand how states define room and board (e.g., NRCYD website 2010, Dworsky & Havlicek 2009) and to identify other housing supports available to youth in these states. Appendix B provides a full list of sources.

Published documents did not include all the information we needed to fully understand states' housing supports and services; for example missing information included eligibility criteria, other sources of funding, and details about how federal funds are allocated across the state and among programs, services, and youth. Also, material we found on each state was not always complete or current. After collecting as much information as we could find, we created detailed summaries of the information we had for each state and identified categories where more information was needed. We customized a set of questions for each state based on these summaries. Appendix C provides a list of potential topics covered. Specific questions varied for each state depending on the amount and types of information available from other sources and the remaining information gaps for each state.

Discussions with state administrators and staff. We approached all 20 states planning to use 30 percent of their Chafee allocation for housing room and board and held discussions with staff in 17 of the 20 states. Using the customized set of questions for each state, we contacted the state's Independent Living (IL) Coordinator, who is the program lead for services to youth currently and formerly in foster care, and scheduled a time to talk by telephone. In most cases our discussions were with the state's Independent Living Coordinator, sometimes joined by staff most familiar with Chafee housing provisions. In total we talked with 24 child welfare staff across the 17 study states including 15 Independent Living Coordinators, 2 housing specialists and 7 other child welfare agency staff. All discussions were conducted between July 6th, 2011 and September 7th, 2011. Most discussions lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours. Urban Institute researchers took detailed notes during the telephone conversations. The discussions were not audio recorded; so quotes as written may not be exact.

¹⁰ This number includes Utah which had planned to spend 27 percent of their allocation on room and board.

APPENDIX B: State Sources

General Sources

Casey Family Programs. 2007. *State Child Welfare Policy Database Data by State*. National Foster Care Coalition. Available at http://www.childwelfarepolicy.org/maps/state?id=2&subtopic_id=50

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State Specific Sources

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APPENDIX C: Potential Topics

Potential informants: Independent Living Coordinators and other administrators and staff of child welfare agencies

1. Housing assistance and services for youth ages 18-21 funded by Chafee

- How Chafee funding is used to support housing assistance for youth formerly in foster care
- Eligibility criteria, if any
- Available services/assistance
- How the program or services operate
- Number of youth participating
- How Chafee funds for housing assistance are allocated across the state

2. Other sources of funding for housing assistance and services combined with Chafee funds

- How states combine funding from other sources to support housing assistance and services funded by Chafee

3. Other housing assistance and services not funded by Chafee that child welfare agencies provide for youth ages 18-21 who have aged out of care

- Housing assistance or services not funded by Chafee provided by the child welfare agency to youth formerly in foster care
- Eligibility criteria, if any
- Available services/assistance
- How the program/service operates
- Number of youth participating
- Programs for youth formerly in foster care who are pregnant or parenting
- Use of Family Unification Program vouchers for youth formerly in foster care

4. Model programs

- Housing assistance or services that stand out as a model to be potentially implemented in other states

5. Subsidized Independent Living Programs

- Use of subsidized independent living as an option for youth who remain in foster care past the age of 18
- Types of subsidized independent living options available
- Number of youth participating in subsidized independent living

APPENDIX D: Tables

TABLE D1: State Age-Out Policies

State	Maximum Age ¹	Brief Description ²
Arizona	21	Youth may remain in care to age 21 under a voluntary agreement. Youth who leave care at age 18 or older may return to care at any time before their 21st birthday.
California	18	Youth can stay in care past their 18 th birthday if they intend to graduate from high school before their 19 th birthday.
Delaware	19	Youth can stay in care past their age 18 th birthday if they work towards completion of their high school education in the year they turn 19. Youth may stay in care for the entire school year if they are working on their high school completion and 6 months if they are working on their GED. Youth with a special education classification may also be eligible to remain in care through the school year that they turn 19 to further their educational achievement.
Florida	18	Young adults may request an extension of jurisdiction until age 19 so that the youth can complete high school. The Court may also retain jurisdiction beyond the child's 18 th birthday under special circumstances determined by the court (e.g. extended jurisdiction for youth who are awaiting decision on their immigration status). The jurisdiction terminates upon the final decision by the federal authorities or when the young adult turns 22, whichever is earlier.
Illinois	21	Section 2-31 of the Juvenile Court Act (705 ILCS 405/2-31) allows the Department to leave a youth's case open until age 21 when the court determines that it is in a youth's best interest to do so. A large percentage of youth stay in care past 18.
Indiana	21	Youth who are in high school and making a concerted effort to graduate may be maintained in care by the courts beyond age 18. Youth who are waiting for adult services, such as disability services, may also stay in care past 18.
Kansas	21	Youth need a transition plan. Any youth who wants to stay in care beyond their 18 th birthday needs to have a court approved transition plan that demonstrates the need to stay in care. Youth have always been able to stay in care until age 21, however very few stay in care past age 18.
Kentucky	21	Youth may stay in care until 21 as long as it is approved by the court. Currently about 40% of youth are staying in care
Michigan	21	At each county's discretion, youth may continue foster care payments if they have reached age 19 and are still in a school or training program. Michigan's law to extended care to age 21 was signed in November, 2011.
Minnesota	21	In 2010 the legislation changed and clarified that youth may stay in care until age 21 as long as they meet the criteria established under the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008
Montana	19	It is not common for youth to stay in care past 18 and must be approved. Youth in care beyond age 18 typically choose to stay in care to complete high school which they must do prior to their 19th birthday.
Nebraska	21	Youth are not officially in foster care past 18 but may sign a voluntary agreement and then continue receiving the same care and opportunities as though they were in foster care. They must be enrolled in an authorized school/education program (for secondary or equivalent training) or be completing a high school diploma or GED and making satisfactory progress. They may not run away.

New Mexico	18	Beyond 18, youth can continue to receive services but are not in foster care. The court can maintain jurisdiction to monitor their progress to age 19; however, this is voluntary on the youth's part.
North Carolina	18	Youth may sign a voluntary contractual agreement for residential services (CARS) upon their 18th birthday. The extended care does not involve the court. The youth must be continuing education (high school or post-secondary) or be engaged in a vocational training program. This service is available for any youth that had been in legal custody for some time prior to, but not necessarily on, their 18 th birthday.
Ohio	18	Youth may stay in care until age 19 to finish high school, or for certain medical reasons.
Tennessee	21	Most youth age out at 18, although they can accept voluntary custody, services, limited case management with post-secondary or for some finishing high school up to age 21
Texas	22	Youth may stay in foster care after turning 18 up until they turn 21 by signing a voluntary extended foster care agreement. Remaining in foster care allows the youth to either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finish high school (up to the month of their 22nd birthday) or a GED program; • attend college or other post-secondary educational or vocational activities; • obtain employment or enhance work related skills and knowledge through employment readiness activities; and • If applicable, eligibility may be established for youth that are incapable of performing the activities described above due to a documented medical condition. With the passage of state legislation regarding trial independence, beginning 9/28/11, the state's Return to Care program (begun in September 2007) became the Return for Extended Foster Care program. Youth in the legal custody of DFPS when they turned 18 may return from a trial independence period to start or resume extended foster care. Youth can also return after the trial independence period has ended, but only state funds can be used for this.
Utah	21	Youth may remain in jurisdiction until age 21 if they are completing high school and have plans to live in the community. The court decides who may remain in jurisdiction.

Notes: ¹Maximum age refers to the maximum age that youth may stay in care; ² The brief descriptions include information from official documentation, and/or conversations with knowledgeable staff about the process.

TABLE D2: States' Chafee Allocation Planned For Room and Board Costs FY 2010

State	Fiscal Year 2010		Fiscal Year 2009
	Funds Planned for Room and Board Costs	Percent of Funds Devoted to Room and Board Costs	Number of Youth Emancipating Age 18-20
Alabama	\$0	0%	213
Alaska	\$0	0%	48
Arizona	\$787,149	30%	607
Arkansas	\$145,414	15%	287
California	\$6,112,686	30%	5,067
Colorado	\$70,000	3%	536
Connecticut	\$0	0%	451
Delaware	\$150,000	30%	102
District of Columbia	\$0	0%	33

Florida	\$2,120,323	30%	1,456
Georgia	\$0	0%	699
Hawaii	\$0	0%	137
Idaho	\$47,513	9%	107
Illinois	\$1,431,618	30%	443
Indiana	\$914,627	30%	122
Iowa	\$120,000	5%	486
Kansas	\$533,318	30%	465
Kentucky	\$607,634	30%	904
Louisiana	\$14,700	1%	293
Maine	\$0	0%	158
Maryland	\$858,971	30%	793
Massachusetts	\$150,000	5%	1,074
Michigan	\$1,675,314	30%	1,112
Minnesota	\$543,371	30%	666
Mississippi	\$0	0%	75
Missouri	\$38,925	1%	64
Montana	\$150,000	30%	54
Nebraska	\$472,514	30%	326
Nevada	\$0	0%	265
New Hampshire	\$35,000	7%	59
New Jersey	\$420,000	17%	360
New Mexico	\$194,877	30%	104
New York	\$0	0%	730
North Carolina	\$870,793	30%	460
North Dakota	\$50,000	10%	95
Ohio	\$1,368,562	30%	1,431
Oklahoma	\$168,694	5%	484
Oregon	\$250,000	10%	208
Pennsylvania	\$0	0%	811
Rhode Island	\$0	0%	137
South Carolina	\$412,354	30%	348
South Dakota	\$500,000	0%	71
Tennessee	\$623,300	30%	580
Texas	\$2,423,858	30%	1,497
Utah	\$200,000	27%	184
Vermont	\$0	0%	87
Virginia	\$0	0%	1,011
Washington	\$0	0%	215
West Virginia	\$175,000	16%	67
Wisconsin	\$99,811	5%	479
Wyoming	\$25,000	5%	41

Puerto Rico	\$523,505	30%	10
Total	\$25,284,831		26,512

Notes: Dollar amounts come from states' Child and Family Services Plan for FY 2010 submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Number of emancipating youth comes from authors' tabulations of AFCARS.