

Each year approximately 1,300 New York youth age out of foster care.ⁱ As many as one-third of youth who age out of foster care experience homelessness, and many more experience unstable housing arrangements.

The Housing Subsidy is Important for Foster Youth and Families

When youth age out of foster care they are on their own. They lack the family supports many of their peers may rely on to assist them during transition periods. Youth who age out of foster care are a vulnerable population in need of support, including housing assistance, in order to have a stable living environment. Without a stable home and resources to make it on their own, foster youth who age out of care are at high risk for homelessness and housing insecurity.

The Housing Subsidy Can Be Strengthened to Provide Housing Stability for Youth in Foster Care

Currently, youth and families involved in the child welfare system may receive a housing subsidy of up to \$300 per month, if it will stabilize their housing. This amount has not changed since 1988. However, the cost of housing is substantially higher:

Average Cost of Rent:

- The average one bed-room in New York City costs \$3,100.ⁱⁱ
- The median monthly gross residential rent in New York State is \$1,117 per household.ⁱⁱⁱ

Not only is the current subsidy allowance inadequate to ensure youth and families can afford housing, particularly given skyrocketing housing costs, other limitations prevent youth from using the housing subsidy. At present, the subsidy is only available to youth until they reach age 21. However, because New York has extended foster care until age 21, this means that youth aging out of the system are unable to avail themselves of the benefit. Furthermore, restrictions make it difficult for youth to receive the subsidy while living with a roommate. For many young people, living with roommates is both a practical, financial decision, as well as a means of finding important social supports.

RECOMMENDATION FOR 2016-2017

- Support Assembly bill A7756 (Hevesi). The bill would amend the social services law as follows:
 - Increase the monthly housing subsidy allowance to \$600 (from \$300).
 - Increase the upper age limit eligibility from 21 to 24 so that youth who age out of foster care at 21 can avail themselves out of the subsidy program for up to 3 years.
 - Allow flexibility so that youth may have roommates.

It is time for New York to strengthen its housing subsidy program so that more youth and families may find stability and independence through housing.

ⁱ Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies. January 2014. *Keeping Foster Youth off the Streets: Improving Housing Outcomes for Youth that Age Out of Care in New York City*.

ⁱⁱ Zumper National Rent Report. August 2015.

ⁱⁱⁱ US Census Bureau. 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates. *Selected Housing Characteristics*.