



# Ending homelessness for former foster youth **HUD-FASH PROPOSAL**

*Foster Alumni Supportive Housing program*

**Updated February 2016**

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**THE COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY** serves the community by helping people access affordable housing. By working with collaborative partners, they develop, renovate and maintain housing, promote neighborhood revitalization; and assist residents in accessing needed social services.

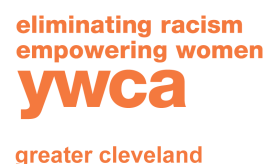
**ACTION OHIO** is dedicated to improving outcomes for current and former foster youth. Their mission is to bring together the voices of youth, alumni and allies, in order to create lasting change and generate hope for current and former foster youth, based on access to resources, ally support and alumni expertise.

**LIGHTHOUSE YOUTH SERVICES** is a multiservice agency providing social services to children, youth and families in southeastern Ohio. Their services include Cincinnati's only 24 hour a day/7 days per week shelter for unaccompanied youth 10-17 years old and Transitional Living Program—providing housing for homeless young people 18 through 24 years old.

**THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN FIRST** serves as a lead collaborative to address issues affecting children and families, including healthy citizens, success for young adults, stable families, positive living for special populations, safe and supportive neighborhoods and economic self-sufficiency.

**OVERCOMING HURDLES IN OHIO YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD** is a statewide organization of young people (aged 14-24) who have experienced foster care. The OHIO YAB's mission is to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that effect all youth who have or will experience out of home care.

**YWCA CLEVELAND** is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. Their youth services include Independence Place, which provides permanent supportive housing for homeless young adults, ages 18-24, many of whom have aged out of foster care.



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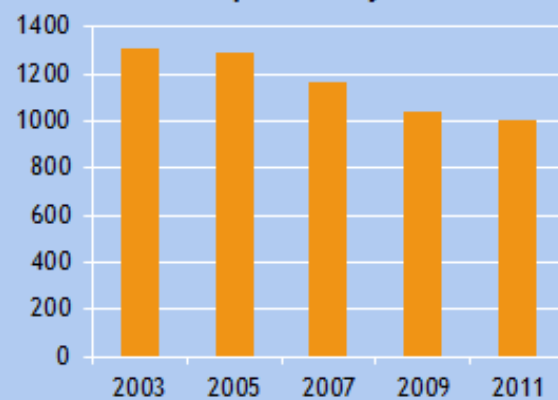
### Young Adults Aging out of Foster Care in Ohio



Ohio Foster Youth  
Emancipations By Year

2011: 1,005  
2009: 1,042  
2007: 1,169  
2005: 1,287  
2003: 1,306

Estimated amount  
of 18, 19 and 20 year  
olds in Ohio who  
emancipated out  
of care at 18: **3,000**



## Introduction

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### HUD-FASH

This proposal is based on an existing successful program, the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program, which combines Housing Choice Vouchers and rental assistance for homeless Veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. These services are provided to participating Veterans at VA medical centers and community-based outreach clinics.

HUD-FASH would be a program designed to serve the homeless foster care alumni through a Housing First approach that combines a housing choice voucher rental assistance with case management and clinical services where needed. The primary goal of this program is to prevent homelessness for this vulnerable population, and to lay the foundation for future housing stability. A key component of the program will be case management service, designed to improve the alumni's ability to achieve and maintain stable housing in the future.

### A Preventative Youth-Serving System

When it comes to housing, the traditional system of care is directed toward serving an adult, rather than youth population. This is evidenced by (a.) housing prioritization for the most chronically homeless and/or disabled, (b.) shortened stays in subsidized housing with an expectation of prompt self-sufficiency, and (c.) an expectation of permanency upon program exit measured by housing destination and returns to homelessness.

An adult-focused system does not reflect the time, effort and guidance that young adults need to attain a GED, certification and/or post-secondary education, in order to build a stable future. Statistics demonstrate that youth who spend their childhood in stable, healthy families often return home several times during young adulthood when they face challenges in attaining employment and financial security.

Former foster youth lack ongoing parental support during this time of transition into young adulthood. Their foster care experience has not adequately prepared them with opportunities for self-sufficiency skill building, and guidance towards life skills preparation.

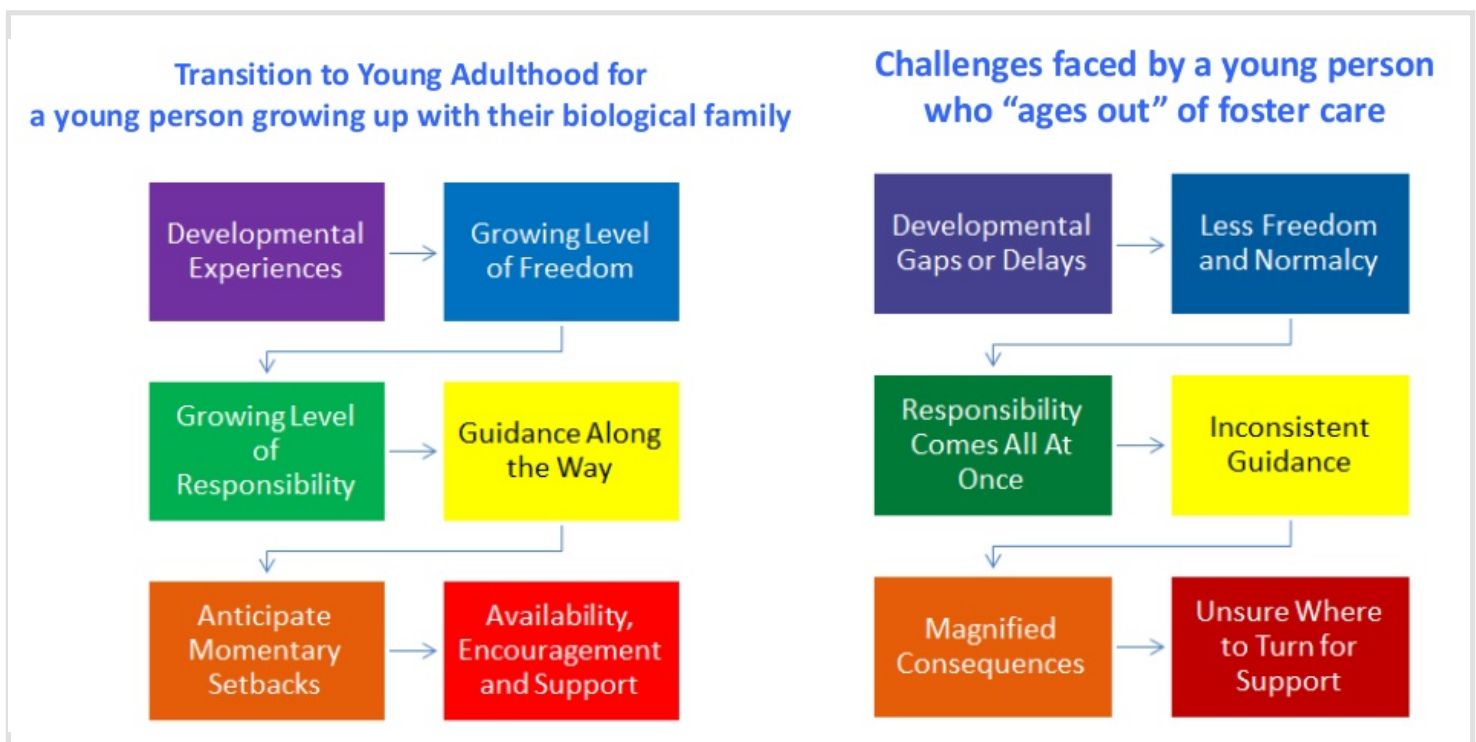
*We believe that opportunities to improve outcomes for foster care alumni exist between ages 18-26 years old (and beyond), and we are determined to improve those outcomes.*

## The Foster Care Alumni Population

When young people age out of the foster care system without being connected with permanent family, they are left alone and unsure of the next step in their lives. Prior to their transition from foster care to adulthood, the child welfare system has served “in loco parentis” in their lives.

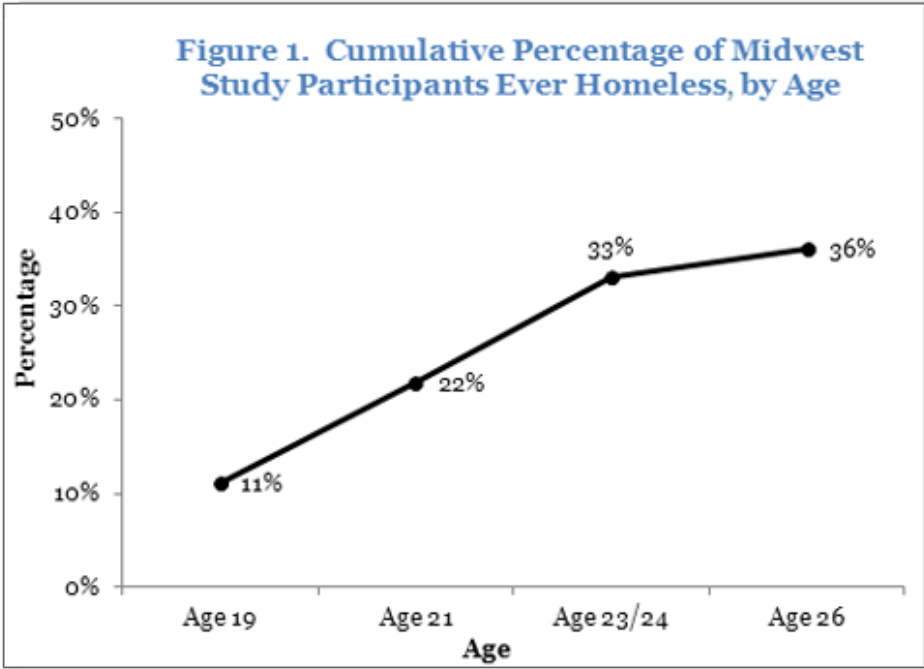
Unlike the average young adult, who is likely to continue to receive ongoing assistance from their parents for a number of years, including a place to live, college tuition, transportation, financial assistance and emotional guidance, alumni of the foster care system are forced to navigate the adult world on their own.

Moreover, because of the instability of the foster care experience, the vast majority of young people enter into young adulthood with significant educational barriers, legal histories, unresolved trauma, and limited work experience – all which take time to resolve to make a successful transition to adulthood. Without support in moving from a youth system of care to a successful future, it is all too easy for foster care alumni to become disconnected – at great cost to themselves, and to society at large.



## The Foster Care to Homeless Pipeline

Youth who age out of foster care face a number of challenges during the transition to adulthood – but their greatest challenge might be achieving housing stability. Chapin Hall’s Midwest research study demonstrates that by age 26, 36% of former foster youth experience homelessness.



Housing instability undermines the potential of former foster youth to pursue post-secondary education and employment at a livable wage. It is detrimental to their physical and emotional health. Homelessness increases their vulnerability to crime and substance addiction.

casey family programs

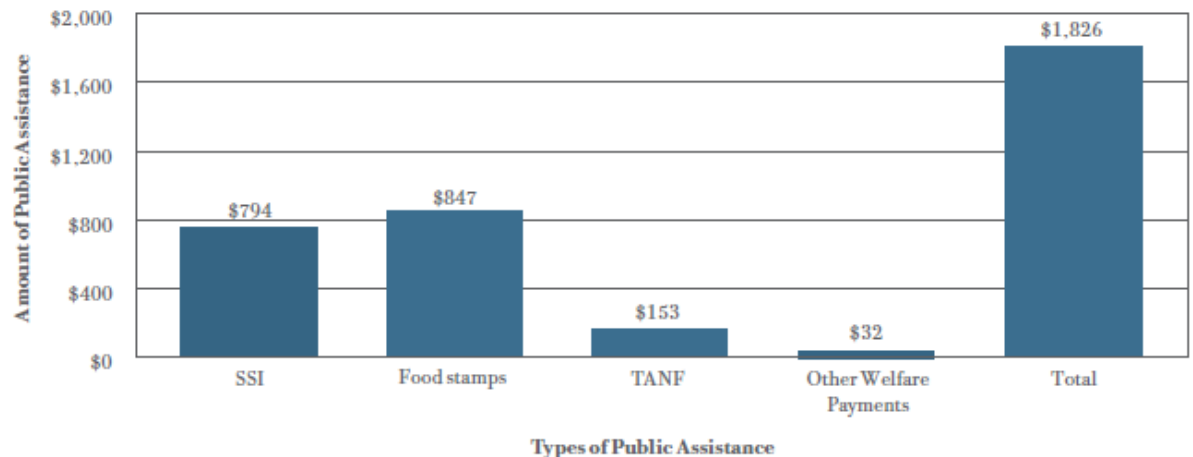
### Comparison of Young Adult Outcomes

	Former Foster Youth	General Population
Currently Employed	48%	76%
Median Earnings	\$8,000	\$18,300
Have a Bank Account	< 50%	85%
Have Health Insurance	57%	78%

### Foster care alumni without support:

- One in five will become homeless after age 18
- One in four will experience PTSD
- Only half will be employed at age 24
- Less than 3% will earn a college degree
- 71% of young women will be pregnant by age 21

The chart below illustrates the average level of public assistance received by struggling foster care alumni, according to the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, conducted by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.



### Foster care alumni with support:

Investing in emancipating foster youth is a financially wise decision, because it is cost-effective to establish programs for homeless youth between the ages of 18-26 years old.

Stable permanent housing results in stable employment and self-sufficiency. With the appropriate level of support, information and resources, foster care alumni can be empowered to attain educational achievement and vocational training, and become future leaders and tax-paying citizens.

Without investment, the cycle of will continue: 1 in 4 chronically homeless adults is a former foster child.



## Foster Care Alumni and Veterans: Similarities and Differences

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### What They Share:

- Both foster care alumni and war veterans have been entrusted to the government when it comes to their care.
- For veterans, citizens feel a sense of responsibility, because these individuals have protected the country. In terms of foster youth, the government took on the role as parent when they assumed temporary or permanent custody of the child.
- Both foster care alumni and war veterans experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Former foster children are almost twice as likely to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as U.S. war veterans, according to a study released Wednesday by the Harvard Medical School (HMS), the University of Michigan and Casey Family Programs.
- For veterans, post-traumatic stress disorder is the result of serving on the battlefield. For foster care youth, that war took place during their childhood, within their households, and at the hands of those that they most needed to be able to trust.

### How They Differ:

- Challenges that former foster youth face make it difficult to succeed in an adult system without more time, stability, and a specialized system of care.
- The issues of possibly being young parents present youth with very real challenges.
- Homeless young adults differ from the adult homeless population, because they have unique developmental needs. Provision of specialized services has the potential to engage and empower transitional youth in acquiring stable housing.
- For a young adult, the odds of being turned away at a shelter because there is not enough room available are very high. If they are able to stay for a night, being a young person in a homeless shelter filled with families and single adults, youth can feel out of place and are often unwelcome.
- Because of their lack of savvy and life experience, homeless youth are vulnerable to recruitment by gangs, exposure to drugs and sexual exploitation by adults. When youth couch-surf at someone's house or apartment, the situation might prove to be unsafe. The host might develop unsavory motives. Domestic violence might occur.

## HUD-FASH

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### **Program Proposal**

The HUD-Foster Alumni Supportive Housing (HUD-FASH) program would serve the most vulnerable homeless foster care alumni through a Housing First approach that would combine housing choice voucher rental assistance with case management and clinical services.

The primary goal of this program would be to prevent homelessness for this vulnerable population. A key component of the program is the case management services. These services will be designed to improve the alumni's ability for self-sufficiency while living in a safe and affordable housing of his or her choosing.

Foster care alumni participants in the HUD-FASH program will be assigned a case manager. Together they will develop a youth supportive housing plan that identifies housing needs and sets self-sufficiency goals that will require active participation by the alumni. This plan should reflect each alumni's barriers, needs and goals. The alumni and case manager will review and revise the plan on a regular basis based on goals achieved and identified needs. It is important that the alumni participate in this process as a means of achieving self-sufficiency.

## Program Eligibility and Services

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### Eligibility

To be eligible for the program, youth must meet the following requirements:

- **Between ages 18-26 years old.** In states that have implemented the provisions of the 2008 Fostering Connections Act to extend foster care services to age 21, the population of ages 21-26 years old will be prioritized.
- **Have firsthand experience of being in the custody of child welfare,** as documented by Ohio's Statewide Automated Child Welfare System (SACWIS).
- **Lack a fixed, regular nighttime residence.** This includes identifying as his or her primary residence a shelter, transitional or temporary housing facility, or public/private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation.\*
- **Require case management services** in order to obtain and sustain independent community housing.

*\*Former foster youth who are "couch-surfing;" staying temporarily at the residences of others because they have no personal residence, will be considered eligible.*

### Services

Services will include, but not be limited to:

- Disability Management
- Educational Guidance
- Employment Supports
- Income Assistance
- Life Skills Preparation
- Money Management
- Mental Health or Substance Abuse Treatment Services

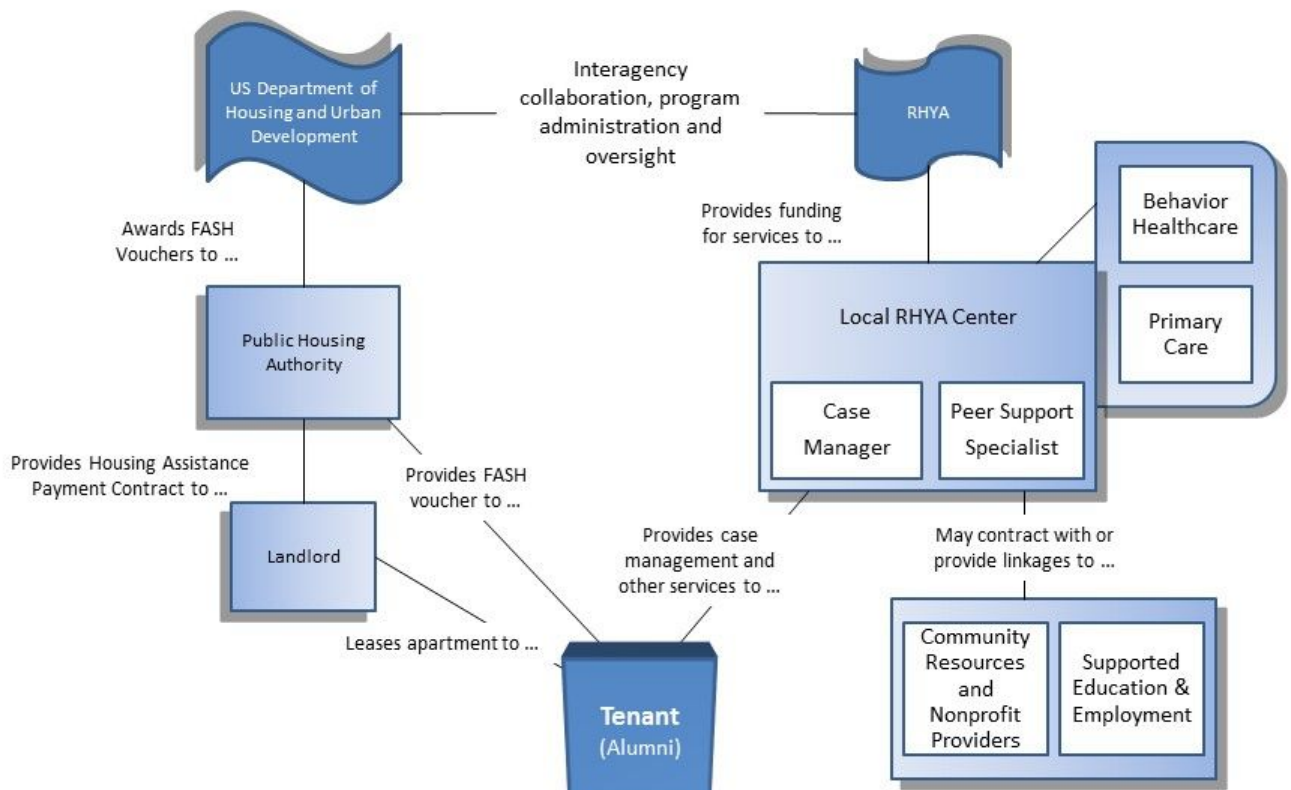
These services are based on identified barriers and needs as outlined by the Ohio Benefit Bank's Youth and Young Adults in Transition Universal Plan. Youth "aging out" of the Ohio foster care system will be able to use this form to outline their goals for education, employment, career, and housing, while maintaining access to vital information such as birth certificate, Social Security card and medical documentation.

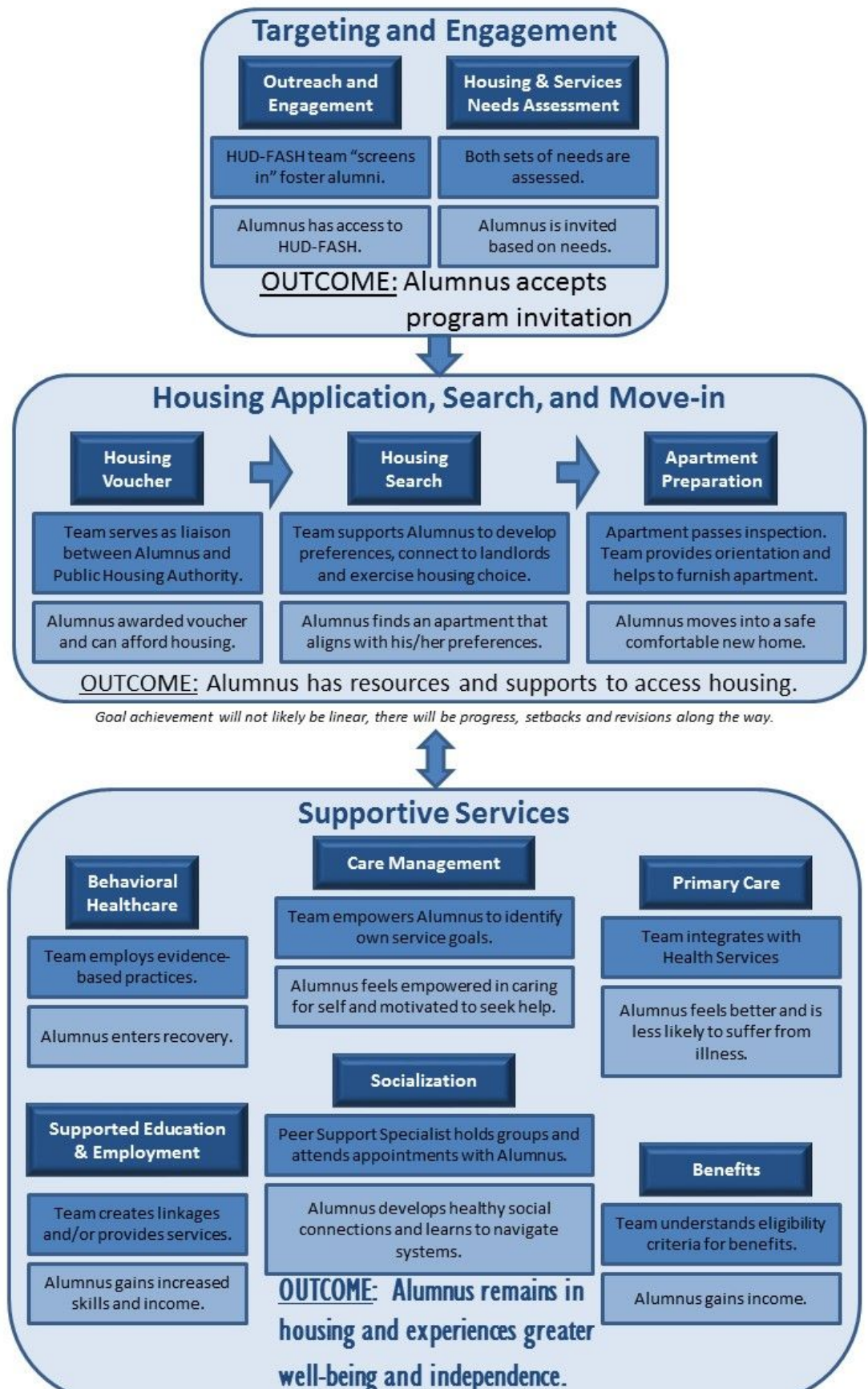
## Program Structure

Case management services will inform, prepare and empower former foster youth to build a more successful future. The HUD-FASH case manager will help the alumnus locate and secure housing, educate them regarding tenancy contracts and plan the move. The structure of the program will include peer support and accountability. Skills training, clinical assessments, driver's education, advocacy and linkages to other community supports and service providers may also be provided.

Case management services are intended to be available for the alumni after being housed to provide them with community connections and vocational services. The time needed for these services will be based on the individualized needs of the alumni being served. The goal is for participants to graduate from the program with an Individual Development Account (IDA) for the purpose of future housing stability.

### HUD-FASH Program Structure





## Ohio Pilot Proposal

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### Why Pilot HUD-FASH in Ohio?

#### NUMBER OF YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE IN FY2012

	State	County	# Youth Aging Out of Care during FY12
1	California	Los Angeles	1,216
2	New York	New York	819
3	Illinois	Cook	576
4	Arizona	Maricopa	463
5	Michigan	Wayne	317
6	Maryland	Baltimore City	291
7	Ohio	Franklin	228
8	Ohio	Cuyahoga	219
24	Ohio	Hamilton	141

source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Children's Bureau

#### 1. DEMONSTRATED LEVEL OF NEED:

- Ohio has three of the top counties in the nation in terms of numbers of “aging out” youth
- Over a thousand young people emancipate of the Ohio foster care system each year at age 18, and face the adult world without support
- Ohio has not yet extended foster care until age 21
- Ohio ranks 50th in the nation in state supported child welfare funding

## **2. STATEWIDE AND COUNTY SUPPORT:**

- Ohio has a proven track record nationally for HUD-VASH utilization
- Lighthouse Youth Services is a nationally recognized model for runaway and homeless youth supportive services at Lighthouse Youth Services that provides a system of tiered housing for transitional youth ages 18 - 24 years old.
- YWCA Cleveland is currently working to address the needs of some of the 200 teens who age out of foster care annually in Cuyahoga County through the Independence Place program, which pairs housing with career coaching and comprehensive services
- The Ohio Benefit Bank offers an online life plan assessment tool for emancipating foster youth that includes an electronic records repository

## **3. NATIONAL OPPORTUNITY:**

- *Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* is the nation's first comprehensive strategy aimed at preventing and ending homelessness, with the goal of serving as a roadmap for federal departments, as well as local and state partners in the public and private sector to address this critical issue
- In the effort to End Youth Homelessness by 2020, it is vitally important to proactively address the needs of young people "aging out" of the foster care and juvenile justice systems who are at high risk of experiencing homelessness
- This initiative is a preventative measure against chronic homelessness. Over 30% of chronically homeless adults report having prior experience in foster care as youth. Ohio would be a demonstration pilot in positively impacting those numbers.



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