

BACKGROUND

California extended foster care from age 18 to age 21 in 2012. While extended foster care has been effective for many, rates of homelessness among current and former foster youth remain high. Among youth *in foster care*, 13.6% experienced an episode of homelessness between age 17 and 19 and 18.9% experienced an episode between ages 19 and 21. Among former foster youth, the rate is even higher. Over 2017-18, of youth who entered California's transitional housing program for former foster youth (THP-Plus), 36% had experienced homelessness prior to entering the program, and 17% entered the program directly from homelessness.

PROBLEM

Non-Minor Dependents (NMDs) in foster care experience multiple placements. At age 21, the CalYOUTH Study found that only one in five youth were living in the same setting they were at age 19. A full 17.2% had moved five or more times in the last two years. This level of mobility poses serious challenges for youth. The most prevalent placement for older youth in foster care is the Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP), with more than four out of ten (41%) youth placed in a SILP as of October 1, 2018. The SILP requires youth to identify and secure housing without the assistance of their social worker.

Former foster youth also experience housing instability, yet many lack access to the only program available, THP-Plus. THP-Plus provides up to 24 or 36 months of safe, affordable housing and supportive services to approximately 1,600 former foster youth annually in 47 counties in California.

Many counties' THP-Plus budgets are insufficient to meet the local demand of former foster youth experiencing housing instability. Close to half of all THP-Plus programs (34) noted in a survey conducted in July 2018, that they had a waiting list at the end of the fiscal year. At least 369 to 465 eligible youth are unable to access stable housing and supportive services through THP-Plus.

Furthermore, narrow eligibility requirements exclude a small but vulnerable population of former foster youth from accessing THP-Plus. Currently, youth are eligible for THP-Plus if they are between the ages of 18 and 24 or 25 and were in foster care on or after their 18th birthday. Those who exit foster care prior to their 18th birthdays – even if 16 or 17 years old – have no access to housing or services if they experience homelessness as young adults.

THIS PROPOSAL

The current legislative proposal is intended to reduce the rate of homelessness among current and former foster youth by providing housing navigation assistance to youth while in foster care, broadening the eligibility of the THP-Plus program for former foster youth, and expanding the availability of THP-Plus in counties with great demand. This bill has three key provisions:

- **Establishes the Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP) Housing Navigation Program:** County child welfare agencies would be required to establish housing navigation services to assist youth in extended foster care who are transitioning into a new SILP and in need of support, with identifying and securing housing and stabilizing in that housing.
- **Expands access to THP-Plus:** Would augment existing THP-Plus Realignment Allocations by \$5 million, for counties to expand their THP-Plus programs to address unmet need.
- **Broadens the eligibility of the THP-Plus program for former foster youth:** Would modify THP-Plus eligibility so that youth, ages 18 to 24 or 25 who were in foster care or out-of-home probation on or after their 16th birthday would be eligible to participate in a THP-Plus program.