

Fall 2009

Second Edition

Welcome to *THP-Plus News*, a periodic newsletter of the Statewide Implementation Project. The Project is a partnership between the John Burton Foundation, the California Department of Social Services, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing. Our goal is to expand access to THP-Plus, California's only housing program for former foster youth. THP-Plus provides former foster youth with affordable housing and a rich array of supportive services, including job training, educational advocacy, mentoring, and case management.

To submit a question to a practitioner or to comment on the newsletter, e-mail simone@johnburtonfoundation.org

Visit the website at
<http://www.thplus.org/>



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THP-Plus News

Expanding Housing Options for Youth in Transition

New Policy Report Sheds Light on the Needs of Former Foster Youth Entering THP-Plus

In July, the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes released its latest policy brief about youth in California's Transitional Housing Placement Program (THP-Plus.) Data for this policy brief was drawn from the THP-Plus Participant Tracking System, an online database developed by the John Burton Foundation, in consultation with our nonprofit and public agency partners. The Participant Tracking System became operational on July 1, 2008 and now tracks information on over 1,000 THP-Plus participants.

According to THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project Manager Michele Byrnes, the policy brief shed important light on the needs of youth as they enter THP-Plus. "For the first time, we have a clear picture of the needs of youth as they enter the program," said Byrnes. "With this, we can design programs that better meet their needs and also more accurately measure the difference the program is making."

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Homeless Youth Providers Awarded Stimulus Funding

Homeless youth providers across California took advantage of additional funding available through the economic stimulus package this summer. The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) was created by Congress as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, commonly known as the economic stimulus package. Nationally, \$1.5 billion was allocated to the program, with \$189 million directed to California. \$144.5 million was allocated to 79 jurisdictions based on a federal formula developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and \$44.5 million was distributed through the California Department of Housing and Community Development. HPRP funding can be used to provide temporary financial assistance and services to help people gain housing stability. Its intent is to serve people who are currently homeless or would be homeless without this assistance who can remain stably housed after the temporary assistance ends.

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CWDA Launches THP-Plus Committee to Promote Long-Term Planning and Program Continuity

CWDA has launched a new standing committee to address policy and practice issues specific to THP-Plus. Like other committees within CWDA, the new THP-Plus committee will work identify issues and work collaboratively with the various stakeholders involved in the program, including the California Department of Social Services and providers.

According to Michele Byrnes, the reason for developing a standing committee within CWDA was to ensure that issues pertaining to THP-Plus are addressed after the conclusion of the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project. "The project has been in operation for three years, and we have funding for two additional years," said Byrnes. "It is our hope, however, that THP-Plus is a permanent program. It was important to identify how the issues that arise in the program will be addressed in the long-term."

According to Byrnes, some issues to be addressed within the CWDA THP-Plus committee in the next quarter include the upcoming allocation of the Fiscal Year 09-10 budget and the transfer of the THP-Plus Participant Tracking System to the California Department of Social Services.

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THP-Plus Budget Maintained at \$35.8 Million:

Timely Submission of Claims and Invoices Key to Preventing Additional Cuts

On October 19, 2009, the California Department of Social Services announced that the THP-Plus budget will be reduced by an additional \$169,000, bringing the total budget to \$35.7 million for the 2009-10 fiscal year. This was one of the many cuts made to programs as a result of the \$80 million reduction to Child Welfare Services.

On top of the \$5 million cut in the legislature's June budget, this cut worries us all. However, there are reasonable ways for counties and providers to manage this reduction in their budgets. On November 19th, the John Burton Foundation conducted a web seminar focused on alternative strategies to managing cuts to THP-Plus without freezing program intakes or discharging youth early from the program. Freezing intakes will likely lead to under spending, under claiming, and further cuts to the budget.

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"New Policy Report" continued from page 1

The brief included a number of surprising findings. Among those, it found that 39% of youth report experiencing an episode of homelessness prior to entering THP-Plus, with 19% of youth entering THP-Plus directly from homelessness. According to John Burton Foundation Policy Director Amy Lemley, this has important implications for the program. "This high level of homelessness prior to entering THP-Plus suggests that we need to begin transition-planning earlier, so that youth can make a safe, supported transition into THP-Plus," said Lemley.

Additional findings of interest include the fact that 17% of youth entering THP-Plus had prior involvement with the juvenile probation system and that over one-third of youth enter THP-Plus neither working nor attending school.

To learn more about the findings from the report, you can download it from the THP-Plus website at www.thplusplus.org or listen to a recording of a web seminar about the findings, which was held on Wednesday, September 2nd. The recording and a copy of the presentation are available at <http://thplusplus.org/past.html>.

According to Byrnes, information like this is vital to the long-term health of the program. "It underscores the tremendous difficulties that youth exiting foster care continue to experience," said Byrnes. "It also provides important information for both policy makers and practitioners about who is entering THP-Plus and challenges us to think creatively about how we can best meet their needs."

"Homeless Youth Providers" continued from page 1

In an effort to raise awareness about this funding source and to ensure that funds were directed toward homeless youth, the John Burton Foundation and the California Coalition for Youth provided a series of web trainings and individual technical assistance to homeless youth providers and THP-Plus providers across California. A number of homeless youth providers recognized the HPRP funding as a unique opportunity to access federal resources to serve homeless youth ages 18 to 24, including homeless former foster youth.

A number of homeless youth providers received funding through their local jurisdictions and/or the state. Kings County United Way, which received technical assistance from the John Burton Foundation and the California Coalition for Youth, was awarded \$1.2 million in HPRP funding through HCD. Several THP-Plus providers, including First Place for Youth, also received HPRP funding. This THP-Plus provider with contracts in Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, and Solano Counties received a collaborative award with Covenant House and the East Oakland Community Project through the City of Oakland to provide housing and eviction prevention services for homeless youth ages 18 to 24.

Another successful applicant was Aspiranet, which operates THP-Plus programs in Fresno, Madera, Merced, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, and Tulare counties. According to Jeannie Imelio, Aspiranet's Central Valley Regional Director, an award from the city and county of Fresno provided just the help they needed to expand their services. "This funding will allow us to expand our services to youth that have graduated from THP-Plus, youth who do not meet current qualifications because they left care prior to emancipation and youth who we are unable to currently serve due to our limited slots."

"CWDA Launches" continued from page 1

The committee is chaired by Nick Honey, Director of Family, Youth and Children's Services Division in Sonoma County. The committee meets every other month throughout California and meetings are open to the general public. If you are interested in attending the CWDA THP-Plus meeting or receiving a copy of the agenda, notify Michele Byrnes at michele@johnburtonfoundation.org.

"THP-Plus Budget" continued from page 1

The Governor's proposed budget will be released in January 2010. Many budget experts are predicting that the 2010-2011 budget will be as challenging as the 2009-2010 budget and that additional cuts are possible. The best way to prevent a third cut to THP-Plus is to ensure that the program is fully expended each month. Previous under-spending contributed to the existing cut to the THP-Plus budget. It is imperative that counties file timely monthly claims to the California Department of Social Services, and that providers make this possible by submitting timely monthly invoices to their counties. We must act responsibly in order to preserve these important services for our youth. If the program appears under spent when the Governor is developing his budget, it is very likely that THP-Plus will face another budget reduction.

For additional information or assistance on managing the cut to your budget, please visit thplusplus.org, and download our recent November 19th web seminar, "Managing the Cut to THP-Plus: Getting the Most Out of Your Allocation." For more information about THP-Plus budget, download our October 26th web seminar on the THP-Plus Annual Report and the THP-Plus Budget.