



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager *SHH*

From: David Gray, Homeless Strategy Officer *DG*

Date: July 17, 2026

Subject: **Foster Youth Transition to Housing Stability - Staff Response (Resolution No. 20260507-025)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a final response to [Resolution No. 20260507-025](#), directing the City Manager to identify opportunities to strengthen housing stability for transition-age youth with foster care experience. Specifically, the resolution directs the City Manager to develop targeted housing interventions, expand support for nonprofit and community-based providers, strengthen transition planning and care coordination, establish or expand flexible emergency assistance, improve cross-system collaboration, track outcomes and report on City-funded investments, and advocate for stronger statewide support for youth aging out of foster care.

Background

In January 2025, Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations (HSO) and LifeWorks, an Austin nonprofit organization dedicated to ending youth homelessness, convened a broad coalition of partners to address the foster-care-to-homelessness pipeline in Austin. Participants included representatives from Travis County, the State of Texas, community-based organizations, philanthropic partners, affordable housing developers, public housing authorities, advocacy organizations, and academic institutions.

The task force was supported by HR&A Advisors and Good River Partners, national organizations with expertise in developing financially sustainable strategies to increase the construction, preservation, and conversion of housing for young people impacted by the child welfare system. The task force published its October 2025 report, [Dismantling the Foster Care to Homeless Pipeline in Austin](#), which outlines a ten-point action plan to ensure youth aging out of foster care have access to stable housing, supportive services, and long-term opportunities for success.

Targeted Housing Interventions

City Council's direction to develop targeted housing interventions is consistent with the task force's recommendation to significantly expand housing opportunities for youth with foster care experience through a combination of affordable housing development, rental assistance,

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supportive housing, and enhanced utilization of the federal Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) voucher program. The report recognizes that no single housing intervention will meet the needs of all transition-age youth and instead recommends creating a continuum of housing options that can respond to varying levels of need.

The City currently supports a range of housing interventions through investments in homelessness prevention, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, and affordable housing development.

In addition, the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) administers FYI vouchers that provide rental assistance for eligible youth exiting foster care. Social service funds from HSO support case management for many of these youth. In fact, the funds have been a critical factor for increasing the number of FYI vouchers available locally, from approximately 40 to more than 120 over the past five years. Austin is now one of the largest FYI voucher programs in Texas. HSO will continue working with Austin Housing, HACA, affordable housing developers, and community partners to identify opportunities to expand housing options that align with the task force's recommendations and address the unique needs of former foster youth.

Support for Nonprofit and Community-Based Providers

The task force identified community-based organizations as essential partners in helping youth successfully transition from foster care to independent adulthood. Beyond providing housing, these organizations offer case management, workforce development, education support, health services, and other resources that improve long-term housing stability. HSO's existing network of partners and providers delivers many of these services through homelessness prevention and housing stability programs. HSO will continue evaluating opportunities through future funding efforts and contract renewals to strengthen services for transition-age youth while coordinating investments with philanthropic organizations, other government agencies, and additional funding partners when feasible.

Strengthen Transition Navigation and Care Coordination

The task force identified improved transition planning and cross-system navigation as one of its highest priorities, recognizing that youth often encounter fragmented systems as they move from foster care into adulthood. The task force's report recommends strengthening referral pathways, coordinating discharge planning, and ensuring youth remain connected to housing, education, health care, workforce, and behavioral health resources during this transition. HSO will continue collaborating with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), Travis County, LifeWorks, ECHO, public housing authorities, and other community partners to strengthen coordination for youth at risk of homelessness. This work includes improving referrals into the homelessness response system, expanding housing navigation, and identifying opportunities to better align supportive services across systems.

Flexible Emergency Assistance

The task force recognized that relatively small financial barriers often place youth exiting foster care at immediate risk of homelessness. Consistent with City Council's direction, the report recommends flexible financial assistance that can address security deposits, rent gaps, transportation, utility costs, and unexpected expenses before they result in housing instability. HSO currently has a joint agreement between El Buen Samaritano, LifeWorks, and Sunrise Homeless Navigation Center to administer homelessness prevention resources that provide

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flexible financial assistance for households experiencing housing instability, including youth exiting the foster care system. As future funding opportunities become available, HSO will evaluate opportunities to strengthen prevention resources for transition-age youth while coordinating with existing community programs to maximize available funding.

Improve Cross-System Coordination

A central finding of the task force was that preventing youth homelessness requires sustained collaboration across multiple public systems rather than isolated programmatic responses. The report recommends establishing long-term partnerships among local governments, child welfare agencies, housing providers, educational institutions, philanthropy, and nonprofit organizations to improve service coordination and reduce gaps during critical transition periods. The task force itself represents a significant step toward achieving this recommendation by bringing together partners that historically operated independently. HSO will continue participating in this collaborative effort to advance implementation of the task force recommendations, coordinate investments where appropriate, identify emerging needs, and strengthen regional planning.

Performance Measurement and Accountability

The task force emphasized the importance of using shared data and measurable outcomes to evaluate progress and inform future investments. Specifically, the task force's report recommends improving data sharing, establishing common performance measures, and regularly monitoring housing outcomes for youth with foster care experience. HSO currently incorporates performance measures into contracts supporting homelessness services and will continue working with providers and regional partners to identify opportunities for enhanced reporting related to transition-age youth, consistent with applicable privacy requirements and available data systems. Improved performance measures will support continuous improvement while increasing transparency regarding City-funded investments.

State Advocacy

City Council's directive to advocate for stronger statewide support closely aligns with the task force's recommendations to expand access to housing resources and supportive services for youth exiting foster care. While local governments play an important role in preventing youth homelessness, many of the most significant policies and funding opportunities exist at the state and federal levels.

Austin Government Relations (AGR) and HSO have been actively engaged in advancing these recommendations through the City's legislative advocacy efforts. AGR hosted a legislative staff briefing at the State Capitol in November 2025, highlighting FYI opportunities to all legislative staff and opening the door for engagement with legislative offices from across the state. In June 2026, AGR worked with staff from the Texas House Intergovernmental Affairs Committee on an interim charge hearing examining how the FYI voucher program can more effectively disrupt the foster-care-to-homelessness pipeline. The City's written testimony highlighted the success of the FYI program in Central Texas and emphasized that supportive services, rather than the availability of housing vouchers, remain the primary barrier to expanding the program statewide.

Consistent with the task force's recommendations, the City's legislative priorities include expanding state funding for supportive services for youth who are experiencing homelessness, at imminent risk of homelessness, or participating in the FYI voucher program. The City also supports

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incorporating information about FYI vouchers into the state's Preparation for Adult Living curriculum, strengthening transition planning to ensure housing resources are identified well before youth exit foster care, and investing in a statewide system to track the demand for, deployment of, and utilization of FYI vouchers.

In addition to its state advocacy efforts, AGR and HSO have worked closely with federal partners to strengthen implementation of the FYI voucher program. The City departments maintain regular coordination with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Southwest Regional Administrator Ashlea Quiñonez and have participated in a Foster Youth Roundtable convened by HUD in San Antonio, as well as a national Foster Youth Housing Summit in Washington, D.C., hosted by HR&A Advisors. These engagements have provided opportunities to share Austin's experience, identify best practices from across the country, and collaborate with federal agencies, public housing authorities, and local governments to expand housing opportunities for youth transitioning from foster care.

HSO will continue partnering with AGR, federal agencies, regional stakeholders, public housing authorities, and national organizations to advance bipartisan policies and investments that strengthen housing stability for youth aging out of foster care. This includes continuing the City's leadership in expanding access to FYI vouchers, increasing capacity for supportive services, and improving long-term outcomes for transition-age youth.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact David Gray, Director of Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations at David.Gray@austintexas.gov.

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