



FURTHER TOGETHER: Stories of Systems Change

Building a Housing System that is More Supportive for Youth and Families

When his five children entered foster care, Mr. V worked hard to complete his case plan, address safety concerns, and bring his children home. But when the time came, he struggled to find an affordable home in L.A.'s tight rental market that was large enough for the whole family. Incidents and debts from his past initially made him ineligible for public housing units. However, One Roof Los Angeles partners Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the L.A. County Development Authority (LACDA) were able to work together to identify an affordable unit and resolve eligibility barriers so that Mr. V could bring all his children back home, together.

Families impacted by the child welfare system are highly vulnerable to housing insecurity and homelessness. Likewise, housing instability increases parental stress and exposes families to more safety concerns. Once children enter foster care, housing instability can delay the reunification of families like Mr. V's, increasing both the trauma of separation and the burden on County systems.

Most child welfare caseworkers lack the time, knowledge, and expertise to help families access limited housing resources. As a result, families are left largely on their own to navigate increasingly overburdened housing systems and address the conditions that destabilized their housing in the first place, all while working to meet the specific requirements of their DCFS case plan.

Within L.A. County, there existed an urgent need to improve access to housing among child welfare-involved families. DCFS turned to the Center for Strategic Partnerships to help find like-minded partners and develop innovative ways to increase housing resources and stability for the children and families DCFS serves.

SOLUTION: **One Roof Los Angeles**

One Roof Los Angeles fosters collaboration across County departments to create a more accessible and supportive housing system for families and transition-age youth impacted by DCFS. With the Center's support, DCFS has recently created a Supportive Housing Division that works with other agency partners to reduce the number of child welfare-involved families and youth entering homelessness, rapidly support those who are currently homeless, and streamline homeless prevention services.

One Roof L.A. was born out of a 2018 nationwide initiative of the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH). The Center for Strategic Partnerships played a key role in bringing L.A. partners to the table, including DCFS, LACDA, and the Homeless Initiative within the County's Chief Executive Office, and securing initial funding for backbone support from the California Community Foundation and First 5 LA.



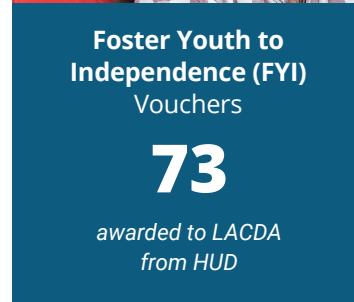
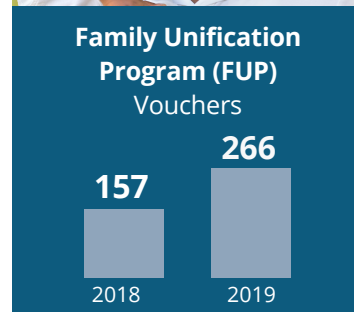
The Center’s ability to add bandwidth has been critical to One Roof’s success. DCFS staff and leadership were able to remain focused on serving current clients, while Center team member Lisa Watson and her staff at Watson Consulting Group (WCG) researched best practices, spoke to other jurisdictions, surveyed County caseworkers, assessed the landscape of L.A. County housing programs, and assisted County leadership in the development of strategic plans. WCG also facilitated monthly collaborative meetings where specialists in the fields of child welfare, housing, and homelessness built relationships and developed shared language and understanding.

The Center for Strategic Partnerships, with funding from additional philanthropic partners, continues to walk alongside DCFS and its partners at every step, providing staffing and technical assistance and supporting County leadership in their ongoing journey toward systems change.

IMPACT

One Roof L.A. is changing the housing landscape in L.A. County by bringing a Housing First mindset to DCFS, fostering a culture of collaboration among historically siloed agencies, and generating more affordable housing options, greater access to those options, and more robust support services to help keep families and youth stably housed.

- One Roof L.A. partners, including DCFS, have worked to implement the Keeping Families Together approach—a national, evidence-based program model that aligns resources to provide supportive housing to child welfare-impacted families at highest risk of homelessness.
- Two grants provide additional funds that enable DCFS to identify families with open child welfare cases who are experiencing homelessness in order to promote access to rapid rehousing and support the family’s capacity to retain custody of their children.
- One Roof L.A. has secured additional Family Unification Program (FUP) and Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Housing Choice vouchers from the federal government, increasing the number of child welfare-impacted families and youth in L.A. who receive long-term rental assistance.
- Families who receive housing vouchers from DCFS now have immediate access to housing navigation services through the Department of Health Services (DHS), helping families identify eligible units in the neighborhood of their choice.
- DHS also provides ongoing intensive case management services to help families build and maintain the supports they need (including financial literacy, benefits navigation, and employment) to maintain stable housing.
- Thanks to new priority scoring methods that have emerged from One Roof workgroup discussions, the needs of families impacted by child welfare are now better recognized across L.A. County housing and homeless services departments. This has resulted in greater access across the board for families engaged in child welfare.
- The Center created a guidebook and training to promote a Housing First approach as best practice to all of DCFS’ 5,000+ child welfare case workers.



“As a result of our work with the Center, we are identifying more partner agencies that can provide housing assistance. We’re at the same table, and they are sharing resources we might not be aware of. This is what I always hoped would happen as a result of this collaborative. The community is reaching out now because they’re comfortable with DCFS, and they see that we all share the same goal of getting these families housed.”

— Gail Winston, Division Chief, Supportive Housing Division, DCFS

NEW SUPPORTIVE HOUSING DIVISION

One Roof also helped DCFS to stand up a new Supportive Housing Division, the first in the country to consolidate housing services for child welfare-impacted families and transition-age youth. The Division, led by agency veteran Gail Winston, enables DCFS to standardize and scale up best practices for reducing housing vulnerability and homelessness among both populations.

Specialized caseworkers in the Division refer DCFS clients experiencing housing instability to resources and provide leadership and support to the County’s more than 5,000 child welfare case workers. The Center has deployed the WCG team to work in close collaboration with DCFS to articulate strategic goals that increased DCFS’s capacity to establish public-private partnerships, understand and pursue funding opportunities, and measure success. New partnerships emerged between the Supportive Housing Division and local housing agencies. As a result, child welfare-impacted families now receive first priority when a public housing unit becomes available in some parts of the County.

“Our message is, ‘We want to help get you into housing, and wrap these services around you, to help you get into a better state of mind. This will benefit your child.’ After all, we are the Department of Children *and Family Services*,” says Division Chief V. Gail Winston. “We want to help the whole family. If we help the whole family unit, the children will fare better.”



L.A. IS THE FIRST IN THE COUNTRY TO **CONSOLIDATE HOUSING SERVICES FOR FAMILIES AND YOUTH.**

Housing programs for **impacted families**

Housing programs for **transition-age youth**



The new division will help reduce housing vulnerability and homelessness among families & transition-age youth by:

- Helping clients access critical housing resources
- Providing leadership and resources to DCFS case workers
- Enabling DCFS to standardize and scale up best practices



“Ensuring that every young person exiting foster care has a stable place to live is essential for their economic thriving. We are beginning to understand that developing and securing housing resources for these youth cannot be the responsibility of any one system. Real solutions are going to require multiple government agencies, private foundations, and nonprofit partners to work together, think about this problem in a new way, and look at resources differently. One Roof is creating that opportunity.”

— **Angela LoBue**, Senior Program Officer, Foster Youth, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

INITIATIVE PARTNERS

Center Team Members

- Lisa Watson
- Zaneta Smith
- Irene Marsh-Elmer

County Partners

- L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services
- L.A. County CEO Homeless Initiative
- L.A. Homeless Services Authority
- L.A. County Development Authority
- Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles
- L.A. County Department of Health Services
- L.A. County Department of Public Social Services

Private and Community Partners

- California Community Foundation
- Carl and Roberta Deutsch Foundation
- Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- Corporation for Supportive Housing
- First 5 LA
- Reissa Foundation
- Rose Hills Foundation
- Specialty Family Foundation

THE ROAD AHEAD

Spurred by the recent “housing cliff” created by COVID extensions expiring, coalition partners have turned their attention in earnest to the needs of transition-age foster youth. As youth age out of foster care in Los Angeles, they enter into homelessness at an alarming rate, indicating that youth are not receiving the resources they need to achieve housing stability and wellness.

Building on the coalition’s success in increasing housing resources and access for families, One Roof L.A. is engaged in a bold new initiative to ensure every youth exiting foster care has a stable housing plan and to provide transitional housing for those who do not. The approach involves partners working together to strengthen cross- system understanding and collaboration, identify and secure more affordable housing resources, and improve access to housing and other supportive resources for transition-age youth.

Learn more about how your organization can become part of the housing solution for child welfare-impacted youth and families in Los Angeles! Reach out to the Center for Strategic Partnerships at csp@ceo.lacounty.gov for more information.

Today, all of Mr. V’s children—including one daughter who had been hospitalized for mental health issues—have come home, and they are beginning a new life together as a family.



- CENTER CORE FUNDERS -

As of August 2022

Private-sector funders

Annenberg Foundation	Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
Ballmer Group	LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment
Blue Shield of California Foundation	The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
David Bohnett Foundation	Pritzker Foster Care Initiative
California Community Foundation	Reissa Foundation
The California Endowment	The Rose Hills Foundation
Casey Family Programs	Specialty Family Foundation
Cedars-Sinai	United Way of Greater Los Angeles
The Carol and James Collins Foundation	Weingart Foundation
The Carl & Roberta Deutsch Foundation	Wells Fargo
The Fineshriber Family Foundation	
First 5 LA	

Public-sector funders

Department of Arts and Culture
 Department of Children and Family Services
 Department of Consumer and Business Affairs
 Department of Economic Opportunity
 Department of Health Services
 Department of Mental Health
 Department of Public Health
 Department of Public Social Services
 Probation Department
 Department of Youth Development

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