

ENSURE FOSTER YOUTH HAVE A SAFE PLACE TO STAY

The Legislature must invest in the full continuum of foster care placements to ensure children and young adults are safe, they are not sleeping in offices, and they do not experience homelessness after aging out of care. This includes:

1. **EMERGENCY SHELTERS**

Emergency shelters temporarily care for youth in transition between living arrangements. This means they serve some of the highest-needs youth in the system, after other placements break down. Shelters provide critical services, including crisis intervention, assessment, and stabilization. Shelters taking CPS placements across the state are woefully underfunded. Many report regularly turning away youth they could otherwise serve because they cannot afford to hire the needed staff to meet the high needs of these youth safely. **Emergency shelters were not included in the rate increases last session.**

2. **COMMUNITY BASED CARE & CHILD PLACING AGENCIES**

The transformation of foster care brought about by the legislature last session provides an opportunity to dramatically improve outcomes for children and families. However, additional services and a new operational structure need to be well funded; particularly as Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCC) expand around the state and take on the complex work of case management.

3. **SUPERVISED INDEPENDENT LIVING (SIL)**

SIL is for youth aged 18 to 21 in extended foster care and is responsible for ensuring youth can live within their financial means, connecting them to a caring adult, and helping the youth transition to a safe and stable home when they turn 21. Despite these critical responsibilities, **basic rates for SIL have never seen an increase.** As a result, there is a shortage of SIL placements because providers that would like to operate a SIL program cannot afford to do so. There are currently only 13 SIL locations around the state with no SIL contracts in Regions 4 (Tyler), 9 (Midland) or 10 (El Paso). Areas of the state such as Houston, Dallas and Austin have waiting lists with 20-40 youth; some of whom are living in shelters waiting for room to open up.

Recommendation:

Invest in rate increases for the continuum of placements providing safe places for youth to live during transitions.

- Emergency Shelter rates should be increased to \$168.50/day - the amount included in House and Senate Budget bills last session until it was removed in conference committee.
- Ensure appropriate funding for community based care to provide resources for the transformation of the foster care to be successful.
- Increase rates for supervised independent living to reduce wait lists and make sure SIL is available for transitioning youth.

THEIR FUTURE IS OUR BUSINESS.