



# The Family Unification Program (FUP): Preventing Homelessness for Families Engaged with Child Welfare

# Children from families with housing problems are:



- More likely to be investigated by Child Protective Services (Yordy, 2025)
- More likely to be placed in out-of-home care (Yordy, 2025)
- Longer stayers in foster care (Yordy, 2025)

# Key Observations

- Child welfare removals due to inadequate housing dropped by 33% during COVID-era Housing Assistance (WI DCF)
- Poverty is an underlying driver of homelessness and CPS involvement (WI DCF)
  - Racial disparities create higher CPS exposure risk



A 2025 study found that maltreatment of children dropped by 32% for families that had stable housing (Agarwal, 2025)

# Housing Matters

HUD's FUP voucher links housing resources to child welfare agencies to improve family functioning, prevent family homelessness, safely reduce the need for out-of-home placement, and ensure that each young person who ages out foster care is able to access safe, decent, permanent housing.





**Overview:  
Housing Vouchers for Households Engaged with Child  
Protective Services**

# Family Unification Program



- FUP is a HUD housing program for families and youth that have engagement with the child welfare system.
  - Families must have an active case with a PCWA
  - Youth must have aged out at 16+ and be under the age of 24
- Collaboration between Public Housing Authorities and Public Child Welfare Agencies is a requirement of the program – ensuring low barrier, affordable housing access with supportive services.
  - This collaborative effort strengthens and stabilizes families and youth.
  - Local programs, create an MOU which provides guidance on the type of support that must be offered to participants.
    - It is the responsibility of the referral agency to provide supportive service (directly or through partnerships).



# The Federal Government Has Recognized the Unique Housing Needs of Households Engaged in the Child Welfare System

<b>Family Unification Program (FUP)</b>	<b>Both Provide</b>	<b>Foster Youth to Independence (FYI)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enacted in 1992.</li><li>• Began as a federal effort to address housing needs of child welfare involved families.</li><li>• Expanded to include former foster youth transitioning to independent living.</li></ul>	<p>HCVs to PHAs in partnership with PCWAs who ensure that Supportive services will be provided, as needed or required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Launched in 2019.</li><li>• Specifically serves transition-age former foster youth.</li><li>• Vouchers available through competitive NOFA and on an “on demand” basis.</li><li>• New exemptions have been announced making it easier for PHAs to secure.</li></ul>

# FUP Voucher Eligibility & Administration



## Families

- A family may be eligible if the household is involved with child welfare services AND one of the following applies:
  - Children are at imminent risk of removal due to lack of adequate housing.
  - Children cannot reunify with the family due to housing instability.
  - These vouchers have no maximum time limit as long as a family remains otherwise eligible

## Youth

- Youth may be eligible if they:
    - Are between 18-24 years old
    - Left foster care, or will leave care, at age 16 or older
    - Are experiencing homelessness or risk of homelessness
- These voucher lasts for 36 months with a possible 24-month extension

# HUD Requirements for Local Administration

## *Core Administrative Requirements*

**PHAs & PCWA must create and maintain a well defined MOU outlining roles, eligibility verification and services provided.**

- HAA implements responsive process that quickly identifies eligible households and refers them to PHA
- Establish standards for success
- Minimum case management
- Maintain FUP data
- Qualifiers for termination (voluntary & involuntary)

# HUD Requirements for Local Administration

## *Core Administrative Requirements*

### **Supportive services must be offered**

- Requirement varies per household needs & household type

### **An approval committee must be established to evaluate applicants**

- **Prevention & Early Intervention**
  - ✓ Youth Justice (YJ)
  - ✓ Independent Living (IL)
  - ✓ Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Housing Access & Affordability

### **Establish a Method for Verification of Eligibility**

- Child welfare involvement
- Housing status



# HUD Requirements for Local Administration

## *Core Administrative Requirements*

### **PHAs must have the capacity to fulfill minimum voucher terms**

- Subject to:
  - Income & program requirements
  - Funding constraints
  - Shortfall coverage

### **PHAs must track and manage utilization**

- HAA is now tracking as well

# HUD Requirements for Local Administration

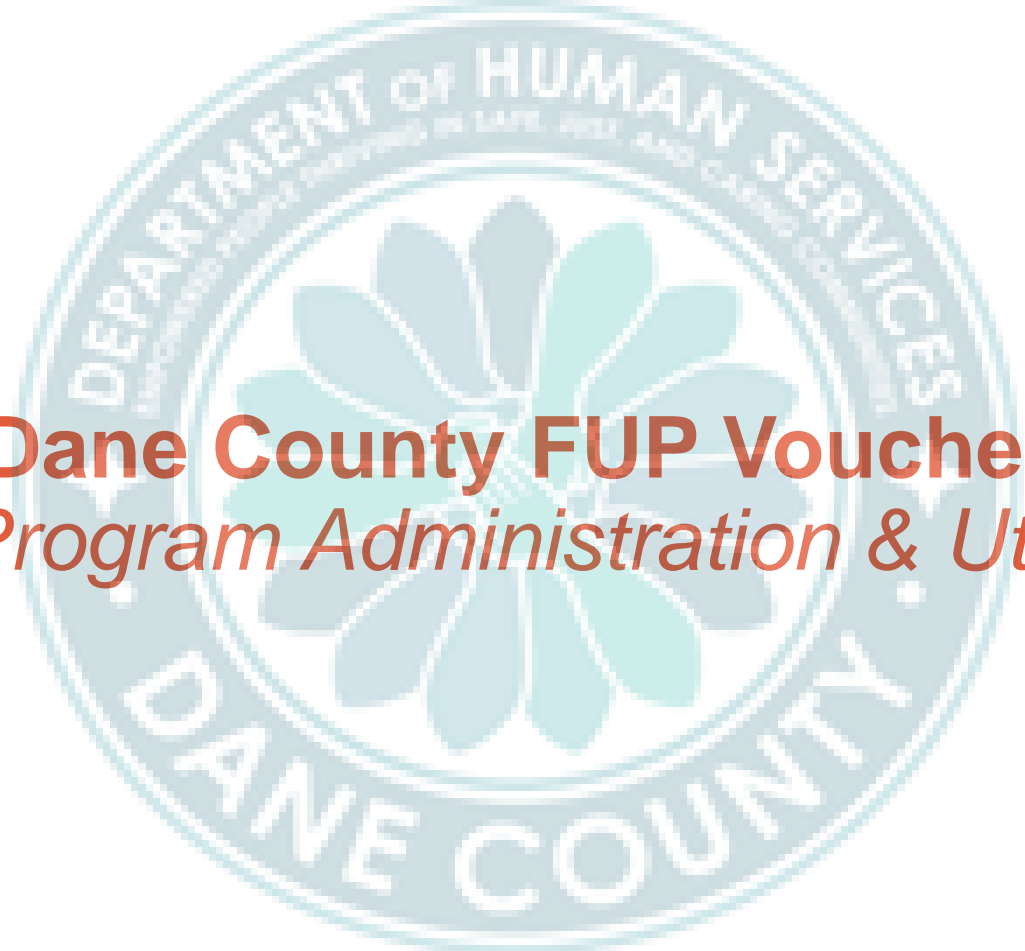
## *Core Administrative Requirements*

**Fair Housing Laws must be followed**

**Monthly Reporting via Voucher Management System (VMS)**

- PHAs enter this information and it gets captured in [HUD Voucher Database](#)



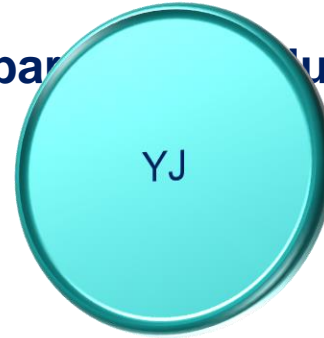


**Dane County FUP Voucher**  
*Local Program Administration & Utilization*

# Local Program Administration

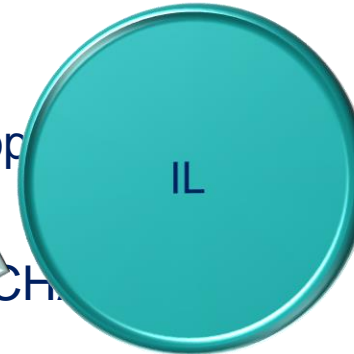
## Dane County Department of Human Services (DCDHS)

- HAA
- PEI



## Home Authorities

- CDA Madison Community Development
- County of ...



## Partnerships

- Community Agencies
  - Provide contact the County for guidance on verifying eligibility



# Local Program Administration



*FUP vouchers are available county-wide between DCHA & CDA*

**The PHAs maintain specific utilization rates of vouchers consistent with their capacity to manage the on-going processing of the vouchers.**

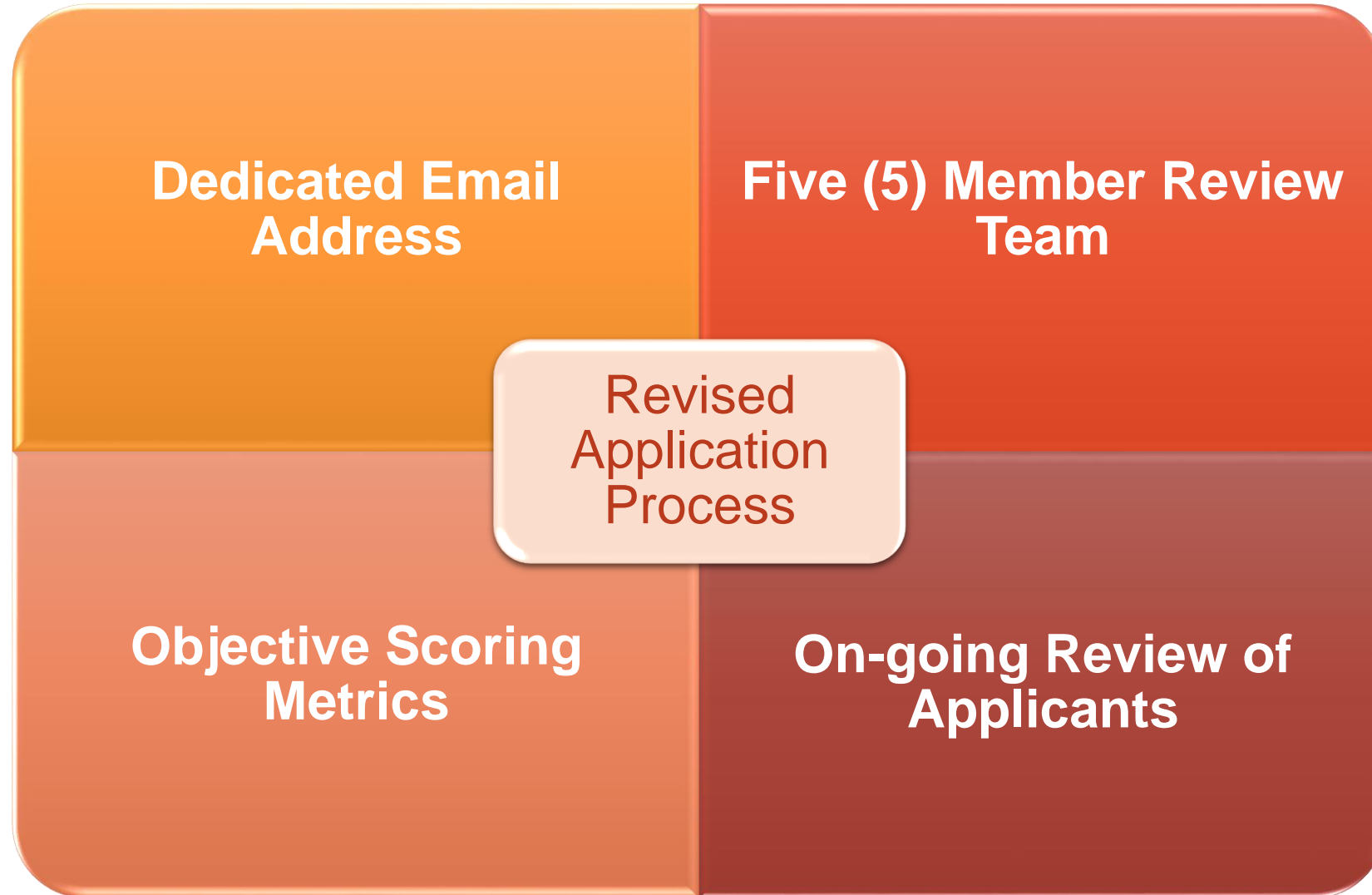
- There are multiple HCV available within the community
  - PHAs manage the administrative components
  - Labor heavy (application review, intake, on-boarding, porting, landlord relationships, payment distributions, budgeting, Federal reporting, client engagement, move-on strategies, etc)
  - Previously, the allocation of FYI vouchers were dependent on a systems utilization of FUP vouchers.

**In 2023, the program transitioned under the administration of HAA.**

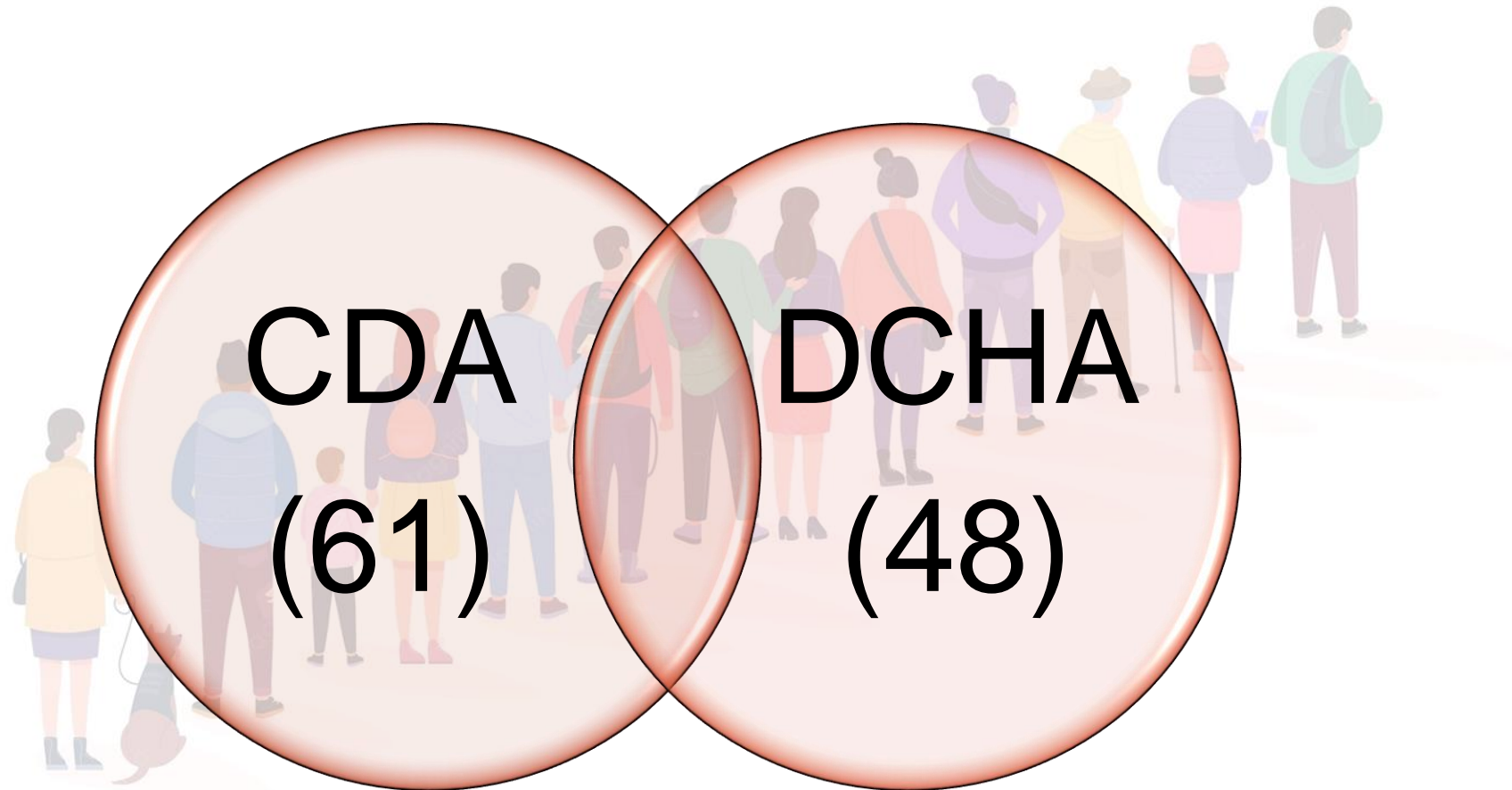
- Goals:
  1. Strengthen partnership between external partners, child welfare divisions and PHAs
  2. Compliance review
  3. Implemented change models around processes, documentation and tracking
  4. Advocated for higher utilization and a “move-on approach” to increase the availability of vouchers

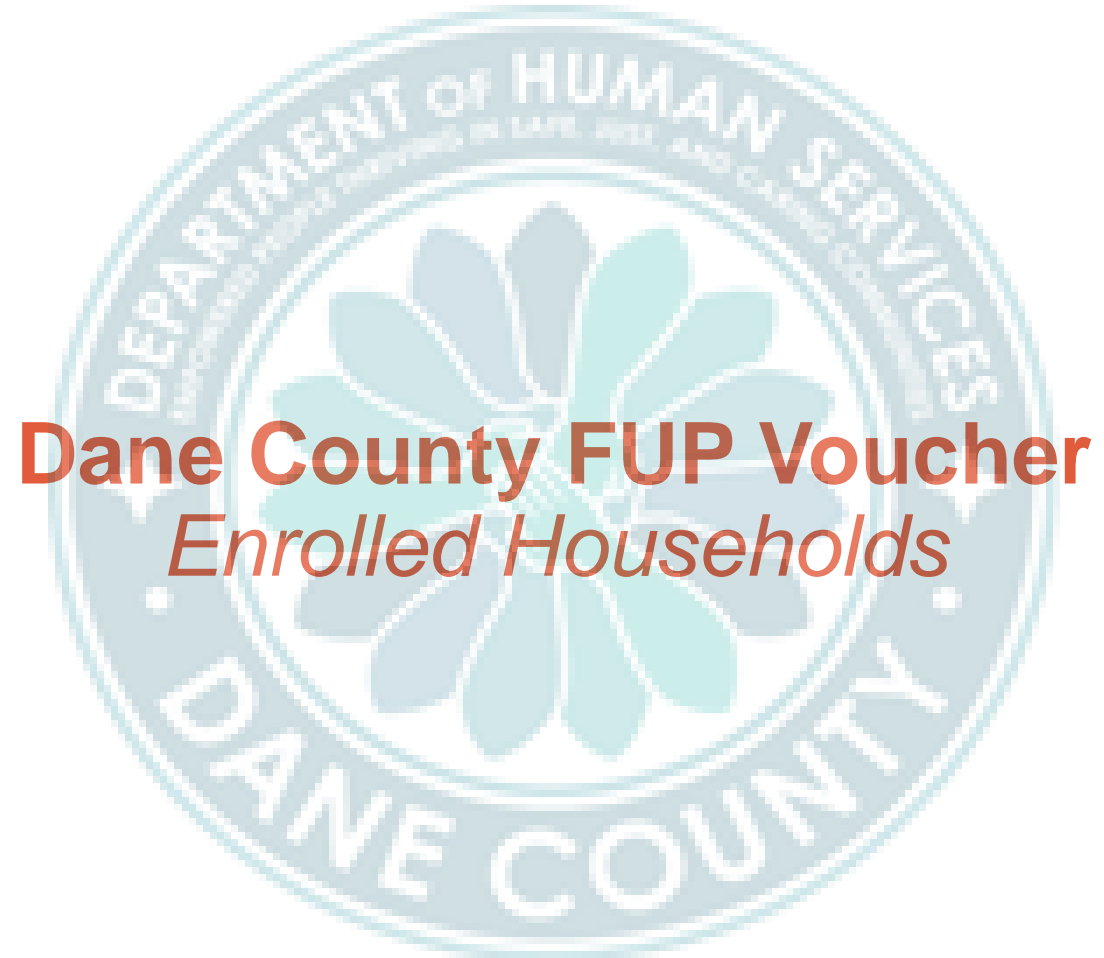


# Local Program Administration



# Local Program Utilization





**Dane County FUP Voucher**  
*Enrolled Households*

# Household Expectations

- **Households are an active party of the local MOU for services**
  - Outlines what minimum services each participant is eligible to receive
- **Coordinated services are available and encouraged to help facilitate stability**
  - Low barrier screening criteria
  - FoodShare Employment & Training (FSET)
  - Joining Forces for Families (JFF)
  - W-2
  - Childcare assistance
  - SNAP benefits
  - Economic Assistance and Work Services (EAWS)
  - FSS
  - Eviction prevention resources
- **Housing Exit Planning**

# Payment Standards

Households are required to pay 30% of their income towards the total cost of rent and utilities. Below are the maximum monthly living costs that a PHA can authorize for a unit.

Unit Size	Monthly Allowance
Efficiency	\$1,268
1	\$1,482
2	\$1,694
3	\$2,236
4	\$2,509
5	\$2,885
6	\$3,262

These maximums change annually, subject to market conditions.

The logo of the Dane County Department of Human Services is a circular seal. It features a central stylized flower with multiple petals. The outer ring of the seal contains the text "DEPARTMENT of HUMAN SERVICES" at the top and "DANE COUNTY" at the bottom. There are also two stars on either side of the central flower.

# **Dane County FUP Voucher** *Questions*

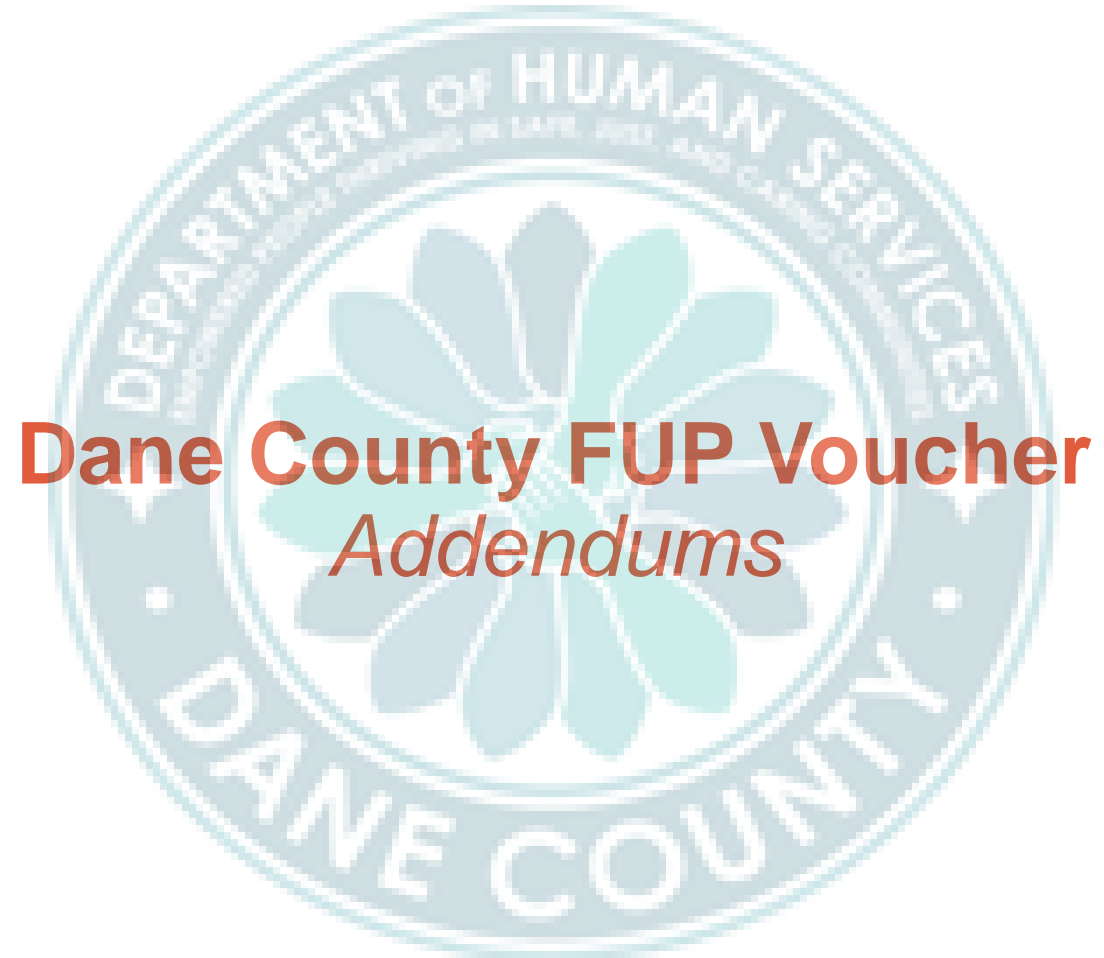
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Program Manager

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The seal of the Department of Human Services, Dane County, is a circular emblem. It features a central stylized flower with multiple petals in shades of teal and blue. The outer ring of the seal contains the text "DEPARTMENT of HUMAN SERVICES" at the top and "DANE COUNTY" at the bottom, separated by two small white stars on the left and right sides. The seal is rendered in a light blue, semi-transparent style.

**Dane County FUP Voucher**  
*Contact Information*



**Dane County FUP Voucher**  
*Addendums*



# Program FAQs



## Family Unification Program (FUP)

### FAQ

#### 1. What is a FUP voucher?

The Family Unification Program (FUP) provides Housing Choice Vouchers to:

- Prevent children from entering foster care due to inadequate housing
- Help families reunify when lack of housing is the primary barrier
- Support eligible youth aging out of foster care who are at risk of homelessness

FUP is a limited, specialized resource intended for households with significant housing instability tied to child welfare involvement.

#### 2. Who is eligible for a FUP referral?

**Families** that active have child welfare involvement

A family may be eligible if the household is involved with child welfare services,  
AND one of the following applies:

- Children are at risk of removal due to lack of adequate housing.
- Children cannot reunify with the family due to housing instability.

*Key requirement: Housing must be a primary factor in the child welfare case.*

**Youth** (Aging Out of Foster Care)

Youth may be eligible if they:

- Are at least 18 years old and not more than 24 years old
- Left foster care, or will leave care, at age 16 or older
- Are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness



## Family Unification Program (FUP)

### FAQ

#### **3. What does “lack of adequate housing” mean?**

This typically includes:

- Homelessness (shelter, street, doubled-up temporarily)
- Living in unsafe or overcrowded conditions
- Housing that is unaffordable and at risk of loss
- Housing that does not meet basic habitability standards

It does not include:

- Situations where housing is stable but not preferred
- Financial hardship without a direct risk to housing stability

#### **4. Who Can Make a Referral?**

Dane County case & social workers who work with eligible households may complete the application for referral into the program.

#### **5. When should I make a referral?**

A referral is appropriate when housing instability is clearly documented AND resolving the housing issue would:

- Prevent child removal, OR
- Allow for reunification, OR
- Prevent homelessness for an eligible youth

Strong referrals include:

- Clear connection between housing and case plan goals
- Documentation of current living situation
- Explanation of why other housing options/resources are insufficient



## Family Unification Program (FUP)

### FAQ

#### **6. When is a referral NOT appropriate?**

Avoid referring when:

- Housing is not the primary issue in the case
- The household has safe, stable housing (not at imminent risk of losing housing)
- Other barriers (e.g., behavioral, legal, or safety concerns) are the main reason for removal or non-reunification
- The household is unwilling to engage in services or housing stabilization

#### **7. Does a referral guarantee a voucher?**

No. A referral does not guarantee acceptance into the FUP program.

FUP vouchers are:

- Limited in number
- Highly competitive
- Prioritized based on level of need and risk

Households are reviewed and selected based on:

- Severity of housing instability
- Immediacy of risk (removal, homelessness, aging out)
- Vulnerability factors
- Program capacity and available vouchers

Keep in mind, that approval for a voucher does not guarantee acceptance through the housing authority's rental application process.

## Family Unification Program (FUP)

### FAQ

#### **8. How are referrals prioritized?**

While prioritization may vary by jurisdiction, higher priority is generally given to:

- Families facing imminent child removal due to homelessness
- Families ready for reunification except for the lack of stable housing
- Youth with no safe housing options upon exit from care
- Households with multiple vulnerability factors (e.g., disability, DV, chronic homelessness)

#### **9. What happens after a referral is submitted?**

Referral is reviewed for eligibility and completeness by Housing Access and Affordability staff.

The household may be:

- Approved for the program (if capacity allows)
- Placed on a waitlist
- Not selected

If selected:

The household will be contacted for intake and eligibility verification. The household must then complete a formal application through either the City of Madison Community Development Authority (CDA) or the Dane County Housing Authority (DCHA), as applicable.

Participation in services may be required. Those services are determined by the assigned case worker.

#### **10. What is the role of the case worker?**

Case workers play a critical role by:

- Identifying eligible households early
- Clearly documenting housing-related barriers and submitted a strong narrative application
- Supporting the household's engagement in the process, including 12 months of continued case management support
- Coordinating with housing and service providers



## Family Unification Program (FUP)

### FAQ

#### **11. What should be included in a strong referral?**

- Current housing status (specific and detailed)
- Child welfare status (risk of removal or reunification plan)
- Explanation of how housing is the primary barrier
- Income and household composition
- Any urgency factors (timelines, court dates, discharge dates)

Please provide complete information and leave no questions unanswered. The review committee may not have access to additional context about the applicant's circumstances.

#### **12. Are supportive services required?**

Yes, most FUP participants are expected to:

- Engage in case management or supportive services
- Work toward housing stability and self-sufficiency goals

The case worker that will provide those services must be identified at the time of application. Your department should have a contingency plan to ensure continuity of care in the absence of an assigned case worker.



## Family Unification Program (FUP)

### FAQ

#### 13. How long does a voucher holder have to find housing?

After the applicant is approved by the housing authority. They are required to attend a voucher briefing – on that day they will receive a voucher that expires within 60 days.

The paperwork for the proposed unit needs to be submitted before the voucher expires. The unit does not need to be inspected, nor does the voucher holder need to be moved in by that date. Only the *Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA)* form and proposed lease need to be submitted by the voucher's expiration date.

Each voucher holder is also eligible to request two, 30 day extensions for their voucher.

For example: someone could attend a briefing and receive a voucher on 5/1/2026 making the voucher eligible to be used between 5/1/2026-6/30/2026.

The RFTA/proposed lease for the desired unit would need to be submitted by 6/30/2026. The proposed lease start date could be for 7/1, 7/15, 8/1 or really another date in the near future.

#### 14. How long can a recipient utilize a FUP voucher?

- Youth Vouchers

As long as the household remains income eligible, the participant may continue to use the voucher for up to thirty-six (36) months.

- Family Vouchers

As long as the household remains income eligible, there is no time limit for recipients of a family FUP voucher.



## Family Unification Program (FUP)

### FAQ

#### **15. What additional resources exist for families that do not qualify?**

Unfortunately, the FUP voucher is a limited resource and applicants are not guaranteed a voucher. You are encouraged to explore other programs in the community. Below is a listing of local resources.

This list is not meant to be comprehensive and does not guarantee household eligibility or program availability.

#### ***Affordable Housing Listings***

<https://www.danecountyhomeless.org/housingresourcevacancylists>

#### ***Housing Navigation Services***

<https://www.danecountyhomeless.org/housingnavigrationservices>

#### ***Outreach Services***

<https://www.danecountyhomeless.org/get-help/outreach-services>

#### ***Adults Fleeing Domestic Violence***

<https://www.danecountyhomeless.org/fleeingdomesticviolence>

#### ***Youth & Young Adults***

<https://www.danecountyhomeless.org/youth>

#### ***Medicaid 1915i***

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/16Zh0BGsWMJIQAULSLD7JoW7NZxSSpNJS0C7dpLsX-P4/edit?gid=0#gid=0>

# Common Abbreviations

- Department of Housing & Urban Development (**HUD**)
- Family Unification Program (**FUP**)
- Division of Housing Access & Affordability (**HAA**)
- Dane County Housing Authority (**DCHA**)
- City of Madison Community Development Authority (**CDA**)
- Independent Living (**IL**)
- Prevention & Early Intervention (**PEI**)
- Children, Youth & Families (**CYF**)
- Child Protective Services (**CPS**)
- Department of Children & Family Services (**DCF**)
- Public Housing Authorities (**PHAs**)
- Public Child Welfare Agencies (**PCWAs**)
- Housing Choice Voucher (**HCV**)