

CITY OF DAVIS
2003-2004 CDBG/HOME APPLICANT QUESTIONS WITH RESPONSES

Name of Organization: Woodland Youth Services

Project Title: Emancipation Program and Transitional Living Program

There has been a fundamental change at Woodland Youth Services—from crisis shelter for children to “more intensive services...(for) troubled foster children in the 12 to 18 age group.” What was the reason for this change? What now happens to children displaced from their families who need immediate shelter?

Woodland Youth Services still acts as an emergency shelter for children ages 6-18. However, because of cost restraints, Yolo County has elected to cancel their agreement to retain 8 beds a month at WYS for emergency placements. This means WYS no longer receives \$12,000 a month in County funds.

Younger children are easier to place into foster families in both emergency and long-term situations. WYS has seen that older, more difficult to place teens tend to stay longer than 30 days in the shelter home—often as long as 90 days, 180 days or even longer. With WYS classification as a shelter home rather than an emergency shelter, Yolo County is able to share the cost of the foster care rate of pay with State and Federal agencies. If WYS stayed an emergency shelter, after 30 days, the County would be required to fund the entire foster care rate of pay itself.

Additionally, we can better serve these long-term teens by enrolling them in our Emancipation Program. Most of the youth who come to WYS have been removed from many different group home settings because of their behavior. After feeding, clothing and providing shelter for them (the group home responsibility), WYS will provide these teens with stability, education, goal setting, life skills training and finally transition and emancipation from the system (the Emancipation Program responsibility). They leave our care with a good foundation for a successful future.

One example of a child we need to spend some extensive time with is 17 years old, has an IQ of 70 (which is just high enough to disqualify him for disability income), is in the 1 percentile of social skills, and is very destructive. He has broken his bed, kicked electrical wires into the wall and hit his head on the wall so many times that it has crumbled. He will be emancipating in less than one year. We currently are attempting to have him reclassified as 3632—severely emotionally disabled, so he can receive State funding. We have stabilized his medications, and have seen a significant reduction in his destructive behavior. Our goal for him is to bring him from failed functioning to stable functioning. Through the WYS Emancipation Program and the Transition Home, he will be as self-sufficient as he can by the time he leaves our care. Other examples, however, include former clients who are now nurses' aids, a manager of a restaurant, a beauty shop owner, etc. Through emancipation activities such as helping with behavior modification, arranging and paying for community college classes, buying uniforms, job training and assisting them in finding suitable housing, we brought them up to a fully independent status.

If 70% of the youth you served were from Yolo County, where were the rest from and how was their referral to WYS arranged?

The State is mandated to try to place foster children in their County of origin. Yolo County foster youth are WYS priority. Sometimes, a child's parent or parents move from one County to another (many of our children's families are nomadic for various reasons), the child's County of origin also moves. In the best interest of the long-term children, we believe that providing continuity of care is more important than following a parent to another County. Often, that child's aunts, uncles, siblings, grandparents and friends are in the original County of origin. If a child's parent moves, we are required to log that child as from Sacramento, Solano, Yuba, or another County.

We've known some of the children currently residing at WYS for over 10 years, but because of parental decisions, we have had the children for a month here and two months there—sometimes seeing a child ten or more times for short stays over the course of years. This type of unpredictability is not beneficial for a child who already has behavioral, educational, emotional or mental problems and a long history of abandonments.

How would WYS interface with State independent living and transitional housing placement programs?

According to Robin Brown, County ILP Coordinator, there is no transitional housing program for foster youth in Yolo County at this time. Ms. Brown runs weekly Independent Living Program classes and all eligible WYS youth attend. In fact, 90% of the current County ILP class is made up of WYS residents, even though there are 45 eligible foster care youth in Yolo County.

Many of the children at WYS are developmentally disabled or have severe emotional problems and the County ILP program is taught at a higher level than these children can comprehend. Our Emancipation Program supplements the County program; funding for the Emancipation Coordinator means we can teach one-on-one skills with these difficult-to-serve youth.

Would the residents have income from the State? If so, how much support would they receive?

Generally, residents do not receive any funding from the State. If the child can be classified as severely emotionally disabled or developmentally disabled they would receive approximately \$600 per month. Most of the children at WYS are just above the line to be classified as such.

Has WYS coordinated this program with the County Independent Living Program Coordinator?

Yes, WYS and Robin Brown, the County ILP Coordinator, have talked about the need for transitional living for teens emancipating from foster care. Currently, the only housing option for youth with little or no money would be a homeless shelter, and we believe the environment and people at a homeless shelter would not be desirable for emancipating foster kids who are so vulnerable to negative outside influences and attention.

Are the duties of the emancipation staff different from the duties they have been performing for these youths in the past?

Yes. The Emancipation Program at WYS is not a Group Home function. The staff who run the group home perform basic parental supervision: feeding the children; making sure they get to school on time and do their homework; watching their hygiene; helping them with their relationships, etc. The Emancipation staff prepare the children for life on their own: they set goals for their education such as obtaining a GED or a diploma and securing financial aid for college; help the child acquire an ID card; they arrange grocery shopping with a nutritionist to teach the children how to make sound food choices and then teach them how to cook it; they help with the child's personal finance such as opening a savings account, living on a budget and paying bills; they help the youth with job skills, finding a job and appropriate dress and grooming. Emancipation staff also teach woodworking, home repair, car repair, and landscape maintenance sessions.

What is the average age of the youths at Crossroads House and Shelter House at the present time? How would that change in the future?

The average age of youths at WYS is currently 15.5. We do not anticipate a significant change in the age of our clients, as there is always a need for older teens in foster care, especially teens that are difficult to place. There are

currently 45 children in foster care in Yolo county age 16 and above. All these children would be eligible to participate in the WYS transitional living program.

The program is to serve all of Yolo County, yet your request from Davis is for more than half the amount of the entire project. Please explain.

Currently, 60 percent of the children at WYS are from Davis. We are requesting 54 percent of our project funding from Davis. In the past, we have has as few as 40 percent of our children from Davis and as many as 70 percent.

How secure is your funding from other sources, and what happens if not all of it materializes?

Since the Transition Home is a new project, we are unsure of our funding, but we are pursuing funding from Federal and corporate sources as well. If we do not receive all the funding we are requesting for the programs, we will cut back on services and space. However, there is an acute need in Yolo County for some sort of transitional housing for foster youth—the fastest growing homeless population is youth emancipating from foster care. Also, in addition to emancipating foster youth, the Yolo County Mental Health office has expressed interest in a transitional living arrangement for some of their 18-21 year old clients.

How many clients will be in the Transitional program at any one time? How will they be housed?

We are requesting funding for two to four clients in a two-bedroom apartment. We will utilize the space and resources to the maximum benefit of the 45 eligible foster youth in Yolo County.

Once we get the program up and running, our goal is to obtain permanent housing. With 18 years of experience in providing shelter services to youth, the management at WYS will use their knowledge and connections with other successful transition homes throughout the state to manage a thriving and needed transition home in Yolo County.