

RAPID HOUSING

Keeping Families Safely Together and Helping Older Foster Youth

The Rapid Housing program, administered by the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), prevents homelessness and keeps families safely together by providing financial assistance to pay security deposits and the first several months rent.

The assistance is available to families when a child is at risk of coming into foster care or the barrier to reunification of child in foster care with his parent is due to inadequate housing. Rapid Housing also helps prevent youth aging out of foster care from becoming homeless by helping youth transition to their own housing. The program provides this help for a very small price – about \$5,000 per family or \$4000 for youth.

- **Protects children and families.** Rapid Housing has helped hundreds of children reunify with their birth families quickly or stay out of foster care altogether. Inadequate housing does not make a parent unfit, and so should never justify separating children from their parents, yet every year, CFSA removes some children for inadequate housing,¹ and our clients are frequently prevented from reunifying with parents until parents obtain new housing.
- **Need is great.** We estimate that Rapid Housing helps approximately 150 families and 110 emancipating youth each year.
- **Essential for older foster youth.** Emancipating youth are at a high risk for homelessness, and Rapid Housing helps youth make a successful transition to independence.
- **Pays for itself.** Every dollar spent saves the District more than four dollars² in foster care costs.

¹ Government of the District of Columbia, Child and Family Services Agency, Implementing the Adoption and Safe Families Amendment Act of 2000 in the District of Columbia (2009 Annual Public Report), at 31, http://cfsa.dc.gov/cfsa/frames.asp?doc=/cfsa/lib/cfsa/reports_and_assessments/2009_apr_final.pdf.

² The proposed FY 2011 budget for child placement activity, teen services activity, out of home and permanency, and “in home and permanency II” (which includes “foster care services”) includes \$79,955,000, \$2,321,000, \$2,614,000, and \$4,510,000 in local funds, respectively, for a total of \$89,400,000. CFSA Proposed Budget, Schedule 30-PBB. With about 2100 children in foster care, CFSA will spend an average of \$42,571 for each child in foster care. This estimate is conservative because we have not included many other costs associated with foster care both within CFSA’s budget and other agencies’ budgets. We assume based on historical trends that families receive 60% of the funds and youth 40%. We also assume foster care costs for six (6) months in our estimate.