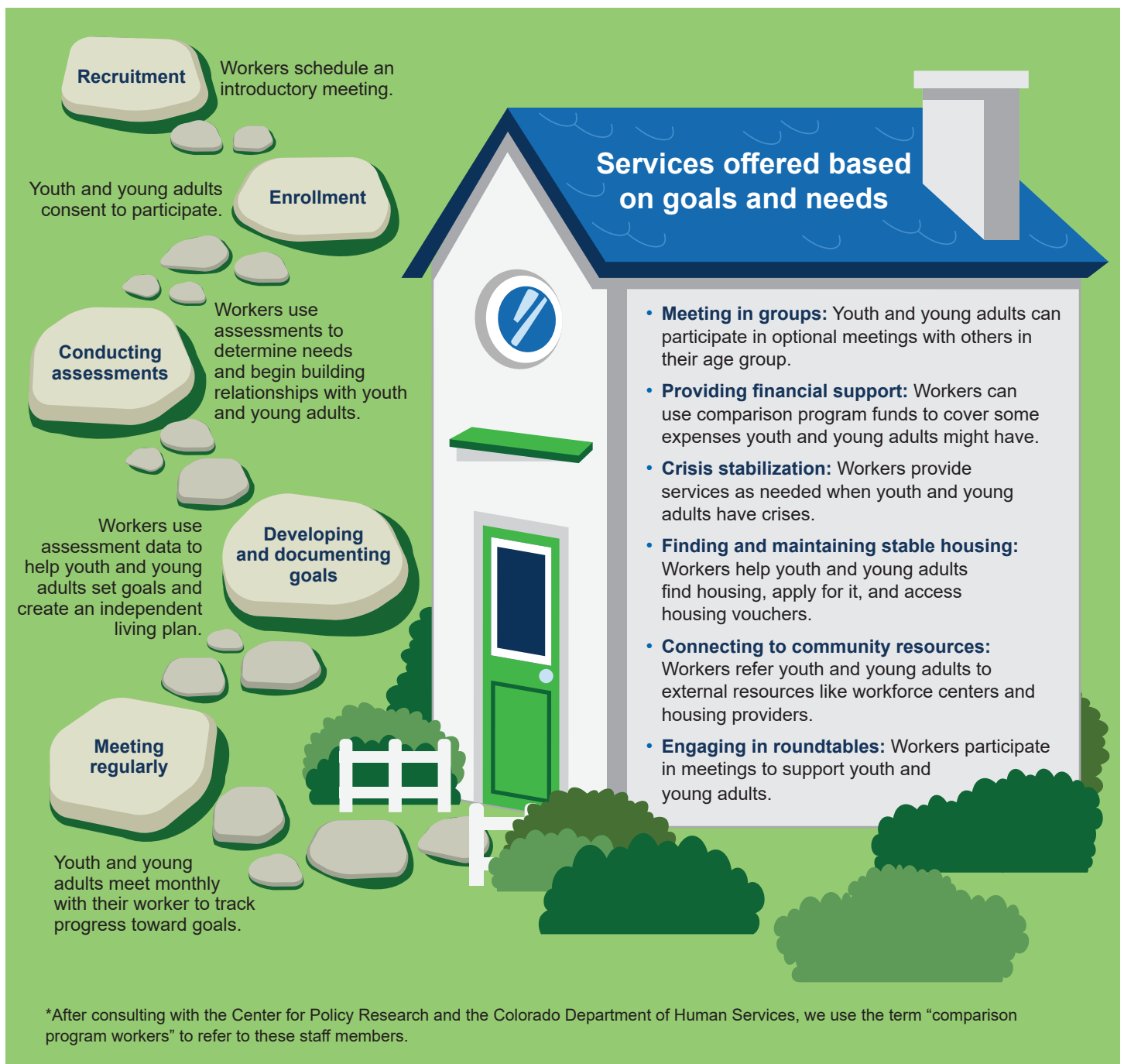


# Youth At-Risk of Homelessness

## Participants' Experience with Comparison Services

Comparison program workers\* provide business-as-usual (comparison) services to youth and young adults who have been in foster care at age 14 or older. After confirming the youth and young adults are eligible for comparison program services, the workers assess them to gauge their needs and begin building a relationship with them. Based on initial assessments, workers help youth and young adults define goals and develop an independent living plan. To track progress toward those goals, youth and young adults have monthly contact with their workers via a one-on-one meeting, group meeting, phone call, or text.



**Youth at Risk of Homelessness (YARH) overview:** To expand the evidence base on interventions to prevent homelessness among youth and young adults who have been involved in the child welfare system, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched the Youth At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH) multiphase grant program. ACF is now in the third phase of YARH (or YARH-3) and is conducting a rigorous summative evaluation of a policy-relevant, comprehensive service model developed and refined during the first two phases of YARH. The summative evaluation conducted under YARH-3 will examine the effect of Colorado's Pathways to Success comprehensive service model (Pathways) and business-as-usual services provided by counties in Colorado through Chafee funding (comparison).<sup>1</sup> In the Pathways model, case managers called Navigators engage with youth and young adults in a coach-like way to build a supportive relationship that encourages them to act as their own advocates. The infographic on the preceding page shows how youth and young adults are recruited and enrolled into the comparison program and the services they are offered.

**Comparison:** Comparison programs in Colorado do not train their workers to be Navigators. Instead, comparison program workers continue to provide business-as-usual services for youth and young adults who have been in foster care at age 14 or older. The activities for youth and young adults who participate in comparison services involve:

- **Recruitment:** Once youth and young adults are identified and screened as eligible for comparison program services, comparison program workers contact them and schedule an introductory meeting.
- **Enrollment:** After discussing comparison services, youth and young adults can consent to participate. Occasionally, workers prioritize them for enrollment based on certain factors, such as age, needs, and risk factors.
- **Conducting assessments:** Once a youth or young adult agrees to participate, the worker completes an initial assessment with them to begin building a relationship.
- **Developing and documenting goals in an independent living plan:** Workers use the data from the assessment to help youth and young adults develop the Roadmap to Success (the Colorado independent living plan) and establish their goals.
- **Meeting regularly:** To track progress toward goals, comparison program workers meet with youth and young adults monthly. Workers are required to contact them at least once a month.

#### **Additional comparison services offered based on goals and needs:**

- **Meeting in groups:** Youth and young adults participate in optional group meetings with others in their age group. Topics for these meetings range from cooking to preparing for a job interview.
- **Providing financial support:** Comparison program workers provide a wide range of financial assistance to youth and young adults, including housing application fees, rent, and funding for vehicle purchases.
- **Crisis stabilization:** Workers respond to and manage crises as part of their ongoing engagement with youth and young adults. Often, workers are the primary contacts for those youth and young adults, who reach out to their workers during emergency situations.
- **Finding and maintaining stable housing:** Comparison program workers support youth and young adults in finding and applying for housing. They also work with local housing authorities to obtain housing vouchers, such as through the Family Unification Program and Foster Youth to Independence initiative.
- **Connecting to community resources:** Workers help youth and young adults connect with community services and resources, such as furniture providers, food banks, and health care providers.
- **Engaging in roundtables:** To support youth and young adults, comparison program workers participate in various meetings, such as general staffing meetings, permanency roundtables, family engagement meetings, and individual education plan meetings.

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**Youth and young adults do not graduate from or complete the comparison program services. They may continue to receive services until they choose to stop actively participating or are no longer eligible due to age.**

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<sup>1</sup> The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (the Chafee program) is a federal program that provides funding to support youth and young adults in or formerly in foster care in their transition to adulthood. For more information, please see: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/grant-funding/john-h-chafee-foster-care-independence-program>.