

**The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher at Five Years:
Lessons in Developing Stable Housing and Self-Sufficiency
For Homeless Youth and Youth Exiting Foster Care**

Common Ground Community
Good Shepherd Services

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The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher at Five Years

Introduction

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is a transitional housing program for youth aging out of foster care and youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Launched in 2004 as partnership between Common Ground Community and Good Shepherd Services, the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has served 165 young people between the ages of 18-25, providing up to two years of transitional housing in conjunction with a rigorous, developmentally-appropriate program designed to prepare young people for self-sufficiency upon discharge.

Based on a British model successful in reducing youth homelessness, the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher was launched to test model viability in the U.S. and help address the growing problem of homelessness after foster care in New York City. Young adults who age out of the foster care system are at extremely high risk for homelessness. Nationally, between 20 to 25 percent of the 25,000 who leave care every year experience at least one instance of homelessness.¹ In New York City, roughly 1,200 young people leave care annually with no adult support.²

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is designed as a 40-unit independent residence housed within Common Ground's Christopher Residence, a 207-unit permanent supportive housing complex for low-income and formerly homeless adults. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has a separate entrance, common space, offices and facilities. Good Shepherd Services is tenant to Common Ground and runs the Foyer program.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher partnership between Common Ground and Good Shepherd Services marries expertise in housing development and management with deep practice knowledge in youth development. It provides an innovative model for communities addressing the problem of youth homelessness. This report documents the first five years of the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher and aims to offer an honest assessment of successes and challenges as well as lessons learned that may be helpful to others serving this population. Common Ground and Good Shepherd Services gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation in funding this documentation process.

Philosophy and Practice

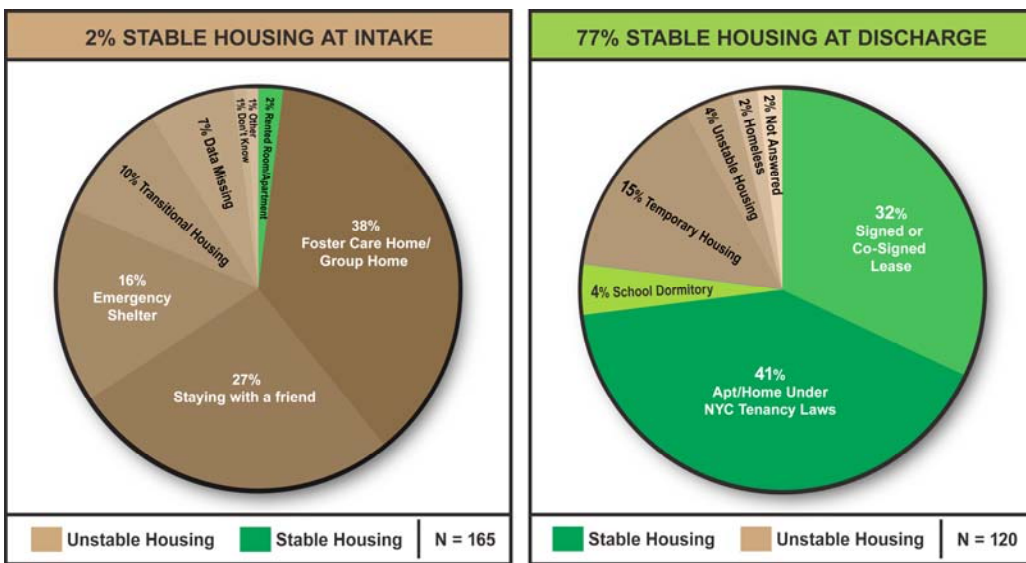
Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher was launched with the belief that no young person is ready to be fully independent at 18, and young people with no adult support have vastly diminished chances for sustaining stable housing and financial independence. Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher program participants have faced enormous challenges: 34 percent have a history of foster care and 46 percent are runaway or homeless; 21 percent have diagnosed mental illness.

At the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher, these young people have the opportunity to practice living on their own – learning to take care of themselves and developing the

skills to become fully self-sufficient. They live in a community of peers. They see each other go to school and to work. They share successes, suffer setback and learn to stay on track. Community living is a hallmark of the U.K. Foyer model, which emphasizes a mixture of low-, medium- and high-needs residents in community.

Program requirements are rigorous: Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher residents must be employed at least 20 hours a week, be in school or vocational training, meet with case managers twice a month, participate in community life-skills development workshops and pay a monthly “program fee” roughly equivalent to 30 percent of their income. Upon leaving the Foyer, they are expected to have secured stable housing and be employed to meet their financial needs and avoid reliance on public assistance.

The First Five Years



The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has achieved strong outcomes in its first five years: 77 percent of young people have secured stable housing upon leaving the program and 75 percent are employed. The economic crisis has had a significant impact on employment for youth and employment rates were much higher prior to 2008.

Longitudinal outcomes data is being built. While this population is difficult to track and the program has not yet achieved aimed-for response rates, 84 percent of respondents are in stable housing one year post discharge and 91 percent are employed.

Key successes in the first five years include:

- Successful implementation of the U.K. Foyer model and endorsement in 2006 by the U.K. Foyer Federation
- Achievement of almost 100% public funding
- Development of strong practice culture for transitioning youth at risk of homelessness to self-sufficiency

- Implementation of a successful workforce development model designed to prepare young people for lifetime employment
- Development of an innovative, youth-development focused, cross-population peer mentoring model that leverages the different experiences of youth who have experienced street homelessness and youth who have been in foster care to help both overcome barriers that inhibit long-term self-sufficiency
- Implementation of a model for practicing paying rent and developing a habit of saving money

Key challenges in the first five years include:

- Lack of dedicated funding stream for this population and absence of a significant public sponsor for the program
- Support from six separate funding streams that have divergent requirements and serve different populations
- Lack of flexibility in funding that inhibits cost efficiency and makes it difficult to create the low-, medium-, and high-needs community that is the hallmark of the U.K. Foyer model
- An unexpectedly high proportion of young people with mental health challenges who are not well suited to independent living and increase overall program costs
- Cumbersome and time-consuming management of data for multiple funding streams with diverse reporting requirements
- Significant challenges tracking young people post-discharge

Costs

Transitioning young people to stable housing and financial self-sufficiency in two years requires a service-intensive model. It currently costs approximately \$114 a day to house and support a young person at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher. The program is short-term, and the costs represent significant long-term savings when compared to costs associated with young people who do not successfully transition and become incarcerated (\$238 per day) or homeless (\$56 per night in a shelter without supports). Many Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher program graduates have broken a multi-generational cycle of dependence on public assistance. Their experience in the program positions them for independence, improves the lives of their future children and helps strengthen their communities.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has accomplished a great deal in its first five years. The program has successfully implemented the U.K. model and developed several program innovations for replication. It has provided a sound transition for 120 young people who have completed the program, and is building data to demonstrate long term positive outcomes and help deepen understanding of what young people need to become successful, stable adults.

At the same time, the difficulties of funding programs for this population cannot be overstated. Lack of dedicated stream and lack of flexibility in available funding undermines effective service delivery and impedes cost efficiency. One of the biggest lessons in implementation of the Foyer model is the need for flexible funding to achieve the model's full effectiveness. At this time, the program juggles many, divergent funding streams and performs a constant balancing act around funding mix and service delivery to meet the needs of young people with a great range of challenges. Still, at five years, the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is firmly committed to the Foyer model and believes this approach should be replicated in other locations as one of many solutions to preventing and addressing youth homelessness.

A key finding of the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher's first five years is the benefit of peer mentoring in a community combining young people who have experienced street homelessness and young people who have aged out of foster care and are at risk of homelessness. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher was launched with a particular emphasis on combining these populations – even though representatives of British Foyers warned that this would create a concentration of high-needs individuals that might undermine the benefits of a traditional Foyer community of low-, medium- and high-needs residents. The basic premise of this mixed-needs community is that stronger residents who hold jobs, finish school and become self sufficient provide leadership and a model for residents who are struggling to make the transition.

Funding a mixed-needs community with public funding streams for youth is almost impossible as current U.S. funding largely supports high-needs youth. However, the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has found that the benefits of peer mentoring can be leveraged even within a largely high-needs community.

During the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher's first five years, youth who have grown up in foster care have emerged as the highest-needs program participants. They are overwhelmingly under-prepared for independent living and, in most cases, must be taught basic self-care and life-management skills. Additionally, they must be reoriented from a system of entitlements that they have become acculturated to and believe will be available indefinitely.

By contrast, homeless and runaway youth have been the strongest in the program. These young people provide leadership for the foster care leavers and offer a critical reality check to the presumption of continued entitlements. At the same time, however, young people who have experience street homelessness tend to be highly independent and resist help. Young people who have grown up in foster care are able to teach homeless youth learn to ask for help and access programs that offer them key supports that can make the difference in achieving sustained self-sufficiency when they leave the Foyer.

This cross-population peer-mentoring has been central in the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher's development and success. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher will continue to study this mentoring model and work to better understand how to calibrate a program community to realize its fullest benefits. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher

aims to develop this and other findings to strengthen the growing body of knowledge around successfully transitioning youth to adulthood.

When the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher was launched in 2004 the needs of this population were beginning to be recognized. Now, the 18-to-25-year range is increasingly understood as an important developmental stage in which young people who have experienced great challenges can be positioned for lifetime employment and self-sufficiency instead of reliance of public assistance and chronic risk of homelessness.

Programs across the country are exploring new housing models and best practices to address the problem of youth homelessness. However, this national conversation requires Federal participation and a national policy on youth is needed to elevate public understanding of this issue and underscore the benefits and cost savings of addressing the needs of these young people so they can lead productive, independent lives.

This report aims to provide perspectives to facilitate this conversation. A general overview of lessons learned is offered in the final section – Section V. The history of the development of the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher, financing of the building and lessons on use of space and partnership development can be found in Section I. The program and practice lessons on working with this population are described in Section II. Funding and costs for the program are outlined in Section III. A review of current data is presented in section IV.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher welcomes questions and dialogue with other programs, public systems, housing developers, advocacy groups and young people. It is vital for all stakeholders to work together to address the complex issues of this population and solve the problem of youth homelessness and homelessness after foster care.

Part I History: Developing and Launching the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher 1999-2003

Introduction: The Problem of Homelessness After Foster Care

Young adults who age out of the foster care system are at high risk for homelessness. Nationally, between 20 to 25 percent of the 25,000 young adults who leave care every year experience at least one instance of homelessness.³ In New York City, roughly 1,200 young people leave care annually with no adult support.⁴ Informal observations in the New York City shelter system estimate that 30 percent of all shelter clients have a foster care background.

Identification of this problem in the late 1990's led New York City stakeholders to begin exploring approaches to prevent homelessness in the post foster care population. Over the last ten years, the Foyer model has been one of several approaches tested. Currently, the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is the largest housing-based model for preventing homelessness in post foster care youth in New York City.

The Foyer Model

The Foyer model is a British adaptation of a French system of youth hostel-type accommodations that historically provided young people away from home with affordable housing. In the early 1990's, the U.K. developed the model to address a growing problem of youth homelessness. The model is flexible and Foyers in the U.K. vary depending on local need. Some are large dorm-like residences connected to a University, other are scatter site. Key attributes of the U.K. Foyer model include:

- Development of a community of low-, medium- and high-needs residents
- Housing plus education, employment and personal development
- A formal agreement or "Action Plan" between the Foyer and residents
- Focus on preventing youth homelessness
- Time-limited stay

Bringing the Foyer Model to New York City

New York City's former deputy commissioner of Housing Preservation and Development, Jerilyn Perrine, is widely credited as having introduced the idea of using a Foyer model to address the needs of foster care leavers vulnerable for homelessness. Perrine visited the Belfast Foyer run by the Simon Community in Belfast, Ireland and brought the model to the attention of a group of New York City housing, child welfare and homeless services stakeholders who formed an informal committee to explore the utility of a Foyer approach in New York City.

Representatives of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), Department of Homeless Services (DHS), Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), and several service providers and nonprofits including

Common Ground and Good Shepherd Services explored critical questions around the feasibility of the model. Central to the discussions was the question of how a Foyer would be funded. Stakeholders envisioned a program with a single funding source, driven by the model and not by the requirements of an existing funding stream. As they discussed a single source of funding, ACS emerged as a sponsor for the program and there was much discussion of how funding could be procured within ACS' RFP system and how the program fit into ACS' mission.

Rosanne Haggerty, President of Common Ground Community, and Sister Paulette LoMonaco, Executive Director of Good Shepherd Services had discussed their shared concern about the high rates of homelessness for young people who aged out of foster care. Haggerty had been monitoring the rise in youth homelessness and the connection between homelessness and foster care through Common Ground's work developing and managing housing for low income and formerly homeless adults in New York City. At Good Shepherd Services, a leading New York foster care and youth development provider, LoMonaco was distressed by the growing number of young people aging out of foster care without the skills necessary to live independently.

Perrine's endorsement of the Foyer model impressed Haggerty who traveled to Ireland to see the Belfast Foyer. Common Ground's mission to end homelessness includes a research focus on developing evidence-based models and Haggerty was interested in replicating a model with proven success. After visiting the Belfast Foyer, Haggerty shared Perrine's enthusiasm. Formal discussions commenced between Common Ground and Good Shepherd Services about partnering in a New York City Foyer.

In 2000, Haggerty, LoMonaco and representatives of HPD, ACS, CSH and the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget toured Foyers in England and Ireland to explore approaches and to develop buy-in and commitment from a broad range of stakeholders.⁵ While the New York Foyer was envisioned as hewing closely to the core aspects of the U.K. model, Common Ground and Good Shepherd were interested in developing a focus on serving young people who were already homeless and foster care leavers at risk for homelessness. Representatives of U.K. Foyers expressed concern about serving a large number of youth aging out of foster care. The U.K. Foyer model places strong emphasis on creating a community with mixed levels of need. Young people aging out of foster care are generally identified as high needs and U.K. Foyers warned of challenges associated with a concentration of high-needs residents.

Developing and Financing the Foyer Residence

Common Ground, with extensive experience financing residential buildings for low income and formerly homeless adults, developed the financing for the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher and managed the design and rehabilitation of the residence. The financing of the Christopher/Foyer residence highlights the need to develop creative funding strategies to create housing for this population. Financing of Foyers will be different in every location, but details of financing the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher are provided here to offer general lessons to other communities.

Four notable aspects of Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher financing include:

- Embedding a Foyer program in a larger low income housing complex
- Emphasis on public funding
- Emphasis on replication of the U.K. transitional and developmental model
- Importance of government support

Foyer Program Housed in Larger Complex

An important innovation in developing the Foyer residence was to house the program in a larger housing complex for low income and formerly homeless adults. In 2000, when the McBurney YMCA came on the market, the building was considered too large for a Foyer pilot program. But Haggerty identified the possibility of dividing the space to create an autonomous Foyer within a larger complex and was intrigued by the potential economies of scale achieved by sharing security and maintenance costs across both residences. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher ultimately comprised 15,000 square feet and 40 units of housing within the 77,000-foot, 207-unit Christopher Residence.

Programmatic Goals Shaped Financing

Critical project goals shaped the financing of the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher and the Christopher residence in which it is housed:

- the goal of replicating two key aspects of the U.K. Foyer model – the transitional nature of the program and the developmental nature of the program obligating young people living at the Foyer to participate in available support services
- a goal of financing the project with public funds so it could be replicated

The Foyer model, as a transitional program, initially seemed to disqualify the project from New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development SRO loan program which supports permanent housing. However, embedding the program allowed Common Ground to access this capital to finance the permanent side of the building and scale financing for the Foyer portion of the residence.

The model's emphasis on participation in a program similarly seemed to restrict funding through Low Income Housing Tax Credits as residents in buildings financed with tax credits must hold leases and – under rent stabilization – cannot be obligated to meet with a social worker or participate in a program. In trying to find ways to use tax credit equity, the partners discussed the possibility of having program participants to hold leases. Good Shepherd was reluctant to take on a landlord role and both partners feared New York City's strong tenant rights laws would make it hard to evict program participants, undermining the model's emphasis on time-limited stay.

Discussion of potential lease arrangements led Common Ground and Good Shepherd to develop the idea of creating rent-like payments or a "program fee" as a way for program

participants to practice paying rent. This program fee would be deposited into an escrow account established for each resident and would be returned to the young people as “savings” when they completed the program. The program fee/savings would be an important jump start to independence, providing money for a deposit on an apartment and/or first month’s rent.

Development of the program fee highlighted the tenant-like status of program participants and Haggerty realized that the whole program itself could be viewed as a tenant of the building. The program also met the IRS definition of a qualifying “community service facility” and therefore could be financed with tax credit equity.

A Friend in Government

HPD financed more than half of the permanent housing portion of the Christopher Residence through its SRO loan program. But, as transitional housing, the Foyer section of the building was not eligible for this program. However, HPD, with its long-standing interest in the Foyer was able to pledge \$3 Million in unallocated funds to the project. This support played a key role in securing the necessary financing and launching the project. It should be noted that New York City is somewhat unique in having a housing development agency with the resources to make such large loans. However, the importance of HPD or any other sponsor in government cannot be overstated in the development of a program like the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher.

Financing

Financing for the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher residence and permanent supportive housing at Common Ground’s Christopher Residence

Development Sources & Amounts:

o NYC HPD Preservation and Development Loan*	\$17,032,808
o NYS Homeless Housing and Assistance Corporation*	\$ 5,469, 414
o Low Income Tax Credit Equity	\$ 6,400,000
o Federal Home Loan Bank Loan*	\$ 1,000,000

Total Cost: \$29,902,222 (\$9,000,000 acquisition, \$20,902,222 development)

* Non-amortizing, non-interest bearing loans

Planning the Residence: Lessons in Use of Space

Construction of the Christopher Residence began in 2002. Design and the use of space was developed based on observations of Foyers in the U.K. Following are key concepts that guided planning and observations on how the space has been used in the program’s first five years.

Forty-Unit Residence: Forty units was chosen as an appropriate number for testing model replication. Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher staff believes more than 40 units would be difficult to manage given the relatively unstructured program environment, the needs of the population, and the prevalence of mental health issues in the community.

Cost efficiencies of housing the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher program in a larger housing complex are still being studied. Observations include higher costs associated with turnover due to the transitional nature of the program – requiring more frequent repainting and reappointment of the units – and a higher degree of wear and tear than in adult supportive housing.

Atmosphere of the Residence: The atmosphere at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is geared to be a cross between a college dorm and an apartment building – a place where young people can live in community and test boundaries, but where the rules and restrictions of adult housing are understood and enforced. Emphasis has been placed on creating a living environment that is recognizably different from mandated residential environments young people who had grown up in foster care had experienced. For example, program participants have their own mailboxes and mailbox keys with responsibility for checking their mail and responding to all correspondence. This is designed to enhance a successful next step to independent living.

Time-limited residency is signaled with minimal amenities. While young people can decorate their rooms as they wish, hallways and common spaces are designed to look like an apartment building. Residents are not permitted to have visitors in their rooms and no visitors are permitted to stay overnight. These restrictions were developed to encourage young people to move on from the Foyer to their own apartments.

Separation of Youth and Adults/Maintenance of Boundaries: Building design included separation of Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher youth from adults living in the Christopher Residence including separate entrances, laundry rooms and computer/library facilities. Separation of populations was based on studies recommending separation of youth from adults with mental illness and supported Good Shepherd’s concerns about the vulnerability of young people with a history of physical/sexual abuse.

During the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher’s first five years, Good Shepherd Services and Common Ground have developed different perspectives on separating youth and adult populations. Good Shepherd maintains a necessity for strict separation, while Common Ground believes there is potential benefit and learning opportunities in mixing the populations. Good Shepherd and Common Ground are united in their caution around breach of boundaries. Any breach of boundaries on the part of any staff in either residence results in immediate termination.

Mix of Congregate and Private Spaces: Young adults need private spaces to develop a sense of self, and public spaces to be with peers and develop a sense of community. Both kinds of space were carefully developed at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher. Private spaces (bedrooms) were planned as small and common spaces (living rooms and gathering places) as large. Each residential floor was designed to offer “singles”

(studio/efficiency apartments) and “quads” (four bedrooms with a shared living room, kitchen and bathrooms.) Shared kitchens in the quads have refrigerators and every bedroom also has its own refrigerator with a lock. Private refrigerators are deemed important in addressing resident issues around ownership and availability of food.

When the space was designed, it was assumed that the residents would prefer singles and, if assigned to a quad when they entered the Foyer, would want to move into a single as soon as one became available. It has been found that many young people prefer to live together and do not want to move into singles.

Common Spaces at the Front of the Building: Based on experience in U.K. Foyers, the main common space at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is at the front of the residence. Young people like to see what’s happening and who is coming in and out of the building. A community kitchen was placed adjacent to the main common space and is used as a gathering place and for young people to cook together.

Common spaces are well used. Guests of Foyer residents are only permitted in common spaces and are not permitted to use elevators or enter residents’ rooms. Residents tend to congregate in the common room and kitchen at night. Because of the high turnover, durable materials are recommended for kitchen spaces.

A Computer Room and Library: Computer resources are considered vital. However, residents who have been in foster care often have their own laptops provided by programs that offer laptops to this population. When there is a large number post foster care participants in the program, computer facilities are underused. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher computer room is housed in the basement and staff note difficulties in supervising this space.

Location of Staff and Management Offices: Staff offices on each floor have been a successful feature in Common Ground’s adult residential buildings and were incorporated into the design of the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher. Offices are placed near elevators and have glass windows or doors so staff can see resident coming and going, making it harder for residents to avoid case managers. Having management offices separated from case management offices has been noted to be an effective way to orient residents to the different functions of these staff positions.

Developing the Partnership

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher partnership is governed by an Operating Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding. These documents are essentially a standard lease and an outline of program goals and protocols for meeting fiduciary responsibilities. Over the first five years of the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher, issues have surfaced that were not adequately anticipated in the original partnership documents and agreements have been revised to be more clear and effective.

Following are the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher partners’ recommendations for key aspects of partnership to be addressed in partnership agreements. These recommendations

are by no means comprehensive but are intended to highlight critical aspects of developing a partnership that will provide the strongest possible support to the program.

Articulate a Common Vision: Prior to launching the program, partners should develop a statement of common vision for the program. In addition to this shared vision, detailed discussion about both organizations' goals for the program is essential. The vision and goals should be reviewed periodically and any changes in organizational mission – for partners or for the program – should be clearly articulated.

Establish Clear Channels of Communication: Routine communication is vital to keep everyone abreast of changes and developments in the program. Channels of communication should be established between the program director and the manager of the building in which a program is housed. Communication at the executive level of the partnership is also critical to help direct key policy decisions for the program. Assigning communications roles to mid-level staff in each organization facilitates partnership communication about routine program matters that do not need to be addressed at the executive level.

Other key areas for communication include regular communications between partners' development departments and research and/or evaluation functions. Clear guidelines should be established about how the program is presented to media, funders and any other third parties. Transparency should also be maintained about funding. Any potential conflicts in funding sources being developed by either partner should be addressed.

Clarify the Real Estate Relationship: There is opportunity for many types of partnerships between housing developers/managers and social service providers. In the first five years of the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher, Common Ground and Good Shepherd Services have largely operated with a landlord/tenant relationship. Different parameters for the relationship are being explored to better leverage the strengths of the partnering organizations. It is useful to clearly define the legal relationship, as well as expectations for the relationship, at the outset. In addition, opportunity should be created to revisit and, potentially, redefine the relationship as the program develops.

Clarify Goals for Evaluation and Data Management: Evaluation of the program and development of data should be discussed prior to launching the program and a timetable and expectations about data should be reviewed periodically.

Define Roles and Relationships on Program/Building Operational Issues: Roles and relationships should be defined around issues where building and program operations intersect. One important area to clarify is protocols around case management and security. At the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher, case managers are on site to work with program participants. Security staff is on site to manage access control and share information with emergency response personnel. In the event of a physical altercation, case managers contact security and security calls 911.

Ensure All Parties Have Appropriate Insurance: Ensure all parties have appropriate insurance so everyone is protected in the event of unanticipated problems.

Develop Understanding and Protocols Around Partnership Dissolution: Programs like the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher are launched with serious, long-term purpose. But the many challenges facing these programs and the uncertainty of funding make it necessary to plan for potential closing of the program and dissolution of the partnership. Because vulnerable young people's lives are affected, formal agreement and understanding on necessary steps in this eventuality should be included in any partnership agreement.

Launching the Program

In 2002, as the rehabilitation of the Foyer residence was being completed and the program was getting ready to open its doors, ACS suffered budget cuts and was unable to fund the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher program as planned. The agency has continued to support the program through its supported independent living (SILP) contracts. Stakeholders in the project rallied to pull together funding including a \$200,000 demonstration grant from DHS. Additionally, and critically, Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) successfully lobbied Albany to direct state TANF funds to finance programs for young people who were homeless or aging out of foster care and at risk of homelessness.⁶

DSH and CSH efforts were essential in getting the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher program off the ground. This vital support underscores the importance of stakeholder and government support, particularly for youth programs that do not have an obvious public sponsor. For other jurisdictions exploring a Foyer model or other housing/programming for youth at risk of homelessness, it is important to note that in the five years between the exploratory stages of bringing a Foyer to New York and the opening of the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher the changes in political administration meant key individuals in government who had played a role in bringing the Foyer model to New York City changed jobs. This resulted in a loss of important connections to public system buy-in and financing. A key lesson in the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher's first five years is the importance of securing institutional sponsorship and the need to maintain ongoing support after the initial efforts of launching a program.

Part II The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher Program – 2004-2009

Introduction

During its first five years, the program at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has been shaped by three key influences: the U.K. model, Good Shepherd Services' strengths-based youth development philosophy, and an emerging national theory of practice for transitioning youth to adulthood. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has faithfully replicated the key aspects of the U.K. model and in 2006 was officially endorsed by the U.K. Foyer Federation. Key program components will be described in detail in this section to provide insight for communities interested in this model.

It is important to note that funding streams for the program with divergent requirements have created significant challenges in sustaining model integrity. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has maintained the program's original goals and program requirements despite these challenges, but aspects of the program are being reviewed in light of the increasing numbers of young people with mental health issues in the program. This document details the program model as it has been implemented in its first five years and, where appropriate, indicates challenges faced and changes being considered.

Philosophy

The program model and development of practice at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is based on three core principles:

- A supported transition in which young people can practice independent living
- A developmentally-appropriate environment to build a sense of competence
- A community of peers and caring adults with emphasis on peer mentoring

Supported Transition and Practice for Independent Living

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher assumes no young person is developmentally ready to be fully self sufficient between the ages of 18 to 21 and young people with no family supports have vastly diminished chances for successful independence. In New York City, youth who have been in foster care have priority status for Section 8 vouchers, but many are not capable of independent living, fail to keep up with their rent and lose this benefit – which they cannot access a second time. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher provides a chance for young people to practice independent living in a supported environment, practice paying rent in the form of a “program fee,” take risks, learn from their mistakes and develop feelings of competence that will translate to successful independence after leaving the program.

A Developmentally-Appropriate Environment

Service delivery has been shaped to provide a strategic balance of support and high expectations that encourage young people in transition to do things for themselves.

Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher residents are told “we will not find jobs for you and we will not find housing for you but we will help you learn how to do these things yourself.”

The balance of on-site versus off-site supports has similarly been calibrated to be developmentally appropriate. On-site case management provides support in attaining employment, linking to education and vocational training. However, there are no medical or mental health services provided (a part time nurse is made available to residents supported by funding streams that require this service.) Residents buy all their own supplies and prepare their own food.

Expectations of program participants include no guests in their rooms and zero tolerance for fighting, drug sales or weapons possession. Discharge from the program is rare. In most cases staff is able to work out problems or initiate a 30-day planned discharge.

Fostering Community and Peer Mentoring

Development of supportive community of adults and young people is a cornerstone of the Foyer model. Residents live among peers who share goals. They see each other go to work and school. They test boundaries, suffer failures and achieve successes. Importantly, they are not alone. Those who are successfully making the transition to adulthood help along others who are struggling to take responsibility. The development of people skills that results is an intangible but critical preparation for successful adult life.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher was developed with an emphasis on creating a community combining young people with a history of foster care with those who had experienced street homelessness. This mix provides critical opportunities for peer mentoring. Young people who have grown up in the foster care system often have unrealistic expectations that entitlements will be available indefinitely. Their peers who have experienced homelessness provide an important reality check. As both move forward together in their Foyer experience, formerly homeless youth encourage foster care leavers to take responsibility for themselves. At the same time, young people who have experienced homelessness tend to be highly independent and reluctant to ask for help. Their peers who have been in foster care have fewer inhibitions about asking for help are able to encourage them to seek help when they need it.

Program Components

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher program is rigorous. Residents must:

- Complete an application process
- Develop and follow an “Action Plan” to achieve self-sufficiency
- Pay a “Program Fee”
- Work 20 hrs a week
- Be enrolled in school or vocational program
- Develop and execute a plan to secure stable housing

- Attend four life skills workshops every month
- Meet with a case manager twice a month

Upon completing the program, alumni are expected to have secured stable housing and be self-sufficient, with income to meet their needs.

Intake/Application Process

Intake at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher was designed as a rigorous application process to attract residents who were stable and had the potential to become self-sufficient in the program's two-year limit. Applicants are required to undergo an interview process and provide documentation, including a reference, a resume and a letter of intent.

Youth in general – and youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness – initially present as having fewer needs than they actually require. Over time, staff at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has learned to recognize signs of vulnerability for homelessness and better anticipate needs of young people accepted into the program. Uniformly, these young people have histories of significant trauma but are resilient and able to manage the demands of the program.

An attrition rate of 20 percent is anticipated. Those who choose to leave the program report its demands were too rigorous, or that they did not wish to be part of a program or community. Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher staff has found that in about 70 percent of cases, a young person who gets past six months at the Foyer will complete the program successfully.

The original intake process remained unchanged during the programs first two years, but new funding streams have introduced divergent intake processes. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has worked to meet the requirements of these funders, while also maintaining the original intake process for a portion of its residents.

Action Plan

Each young person's path to self-sufficiency is guided by a personalized "Action Plan" developed and continuously revised by the young person and his or her case manager. The Action Plan is a centerpiece of the Foyer program model. It must be youth-driven and flexible, accommodating incremental progress and age-appropriate change in plans.

Upon arrival at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher an initial 30-day Action Plan is developed. During the initial 30-day period, residents meet weekly with case managers as they look for jobs, choose an education/vocational path and participate in Housing 101, a mandatory workshop designed to orient them to the issues of finding housing in anticipation of discharge.

After the initial 30 days, the young person's permanent Action Plan is developed. Four indicators are tracked to measure participant Action Plan progress: Employment;

Education; Payment of program fees; and Workshop attendance. Monthly data is provided to case managers and used in case management to help the young person evaluate his or her own performance and compare performance to Action Plan goals.

Program Fee

Residents at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher pay a monthly “Program Fee” as practice in paying rent and saving money. Program fees are determined by income -- generally 30 percent of earnings. Fees are deposited into an umbrella account established by the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher. Participants cannot access this account while they are in the program, but at time of discharge the accrued program fees are turned over to residents as “savings.”

The program fee as practice in paying rent is a critical component of the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher model. Young people struggling to transition to adulthood have a hard time internalizing adult financial responsibilities and the opportunity to practice, fail, and try again builds an important foundation in the path to self-sufficiency. Program fee savings are recorded in the Action Plan and reviewed regularly in case management where emotional issues associated with paying rent and taking financial responsibility can be explored. Seeing savings accrue over time has a tremendous impact on the young people’s confidence. Upon departure from the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher, the program fee savings become real money that goes towards a security deposit or first month’s rent – a jump start that vastly improves a young person’s chances.

Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher staff note challenges in drawing clear lines between the program as a “landlord” and as a “service provider.” This distinction is being developed to enforce this requirement and increase program fee payment rates to ensure this essential life skill is developed. It is also noted that the economic downturn has had a significant effect on employment for program participants and program fee payment rates have decreased in tandem.

Employment Development

While the U.K. Foyer model stresses both employment and education in the development of financial self-sufficiency, the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has developed an emphasis on employment. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher views young people ages 18-25 as occupying a critical window of opportunity to be absorbed into the workforce for lifetime employment. The program stresses paid employment over training programs or unpaid internships, though each resident’s employment path is individually tailored and there are no rigid rules and assumptions.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher’s approach to employment has been developed in collaboration with the Columbia University Workplace Center and includes implementation of the Young Adult Work Opportunities for Rewarding Careers (YAWORC) model, including the following four program components:

- Individual Work Assessment
- Career Club
- Labor Market Development
- “Vocationalizing the Environment”

The Individual Work Assessment is administered when young people enter the program and is designed to help staff better understand their work experience, aspirations and challenges. The assessment includes a screening for mental health issues.

Career Club is a peer-driven workshop offered multiple evenings a month in which residents problem solve and share resources related to employment. Workshop leaders introduce discussion around workplace-related skills including: how to read a pay stub, fill out a time sheet, write a resume, and develop interview skills. Participants also discuss the responsibilities of being employed, managing conflict on the job and appropriate workplace behavior.

Labor Market Development: Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher staff approaches local businesses that have entry-level positions appropriate for young people to understand their staffing needs, turnover rates and employment requirements. Program participants must go to these businesses and apply on their own, but the development of relationships enables staff to make recommendations and suggest potential employment fits with greater accuracy.

Initial Labor Market Development efforts revealed that the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is a low-volume pipeline and could not supply as many applicants as businesses were interested in. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is reviewing this approach and working to scale it for the program.

“*Vocationalizing the Environment*” emphasizes the engagement of all staff members in helping young people learn to find jobs. The approach emphasizes use of vocationally-related posters, announcements and information throughout the residence to create an assumption of employment and an atmosphere focused on work. Career Club reinforces this emphasis on employment in a peer-driven atmosphere and leverages peer influence in promoting an assumption of employment. As a result, young people do not fear or avoid the “employment counselor” but understand that everyone in the community is supporting their efforts to become employed and stay employed.

Staff routinely emphasizes the connection between employment, savings and self-sufficiency. Young people need to hear this connection made again and again in order to internalize it. Case managers address emotional issues around employment including the ways in which young people’s conflicts with adult relationships surface in the context of employment. When difficulties arise, young people often view quitting their jobs as the only recourse. Case managers and independent living counselors (ILC) work to help young people develop more constructive means to resolving conflict. While case managers explore deeper emotional issues around work, ILC’s are on hand when young people return from work and are frustrated. ILC’s and case managers work together to give each resident support specific to their needs.

It is developmentally appropriate for young people transitioning to adulthood to experience frequent changes in employment. They leave jobs or get fired as they test their interests and learn to be in the workforce. In the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher's first two years, program participants were reluctant to tell staff when they had left or lost a job, fearing they would 'get in trouble.' Staff worked hard to convey that switching jobs is normal and part of being new in the workforce. Young people now regularly report changes in their employment status.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher's emphasis on workforce development has remained constant with increasing incidents of mental health challenges in the community. The program is committed to encouraging all young people in residence towards the same goals of lifelong employment. However, necessary adjustments are anticipated to incorporate employment for residents with mental health challenges.

Finally, it should be noted that the economic crisis has brought increased competition for entry-level service jobs from older job seekers who are perceived as harder working and more reliable than young people. Residents at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher have lost jobs or had hours cut back and the program is working to align its message around employment in the current economy.

Education

When the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher first opened, equal emphasis was placed on education and employment as program requirements. However, over the course of the first five years, the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has observed deficits in the population that make school a significant challenge for many young people. In addition, the program's need to develop financial self-sufficiency in two years has shifted the initial dual education/employment focus to stress employment and career development. The value of education continues to be underscored, but focuses on education's role in securing higher salaries, long-term earning potential and career satisfaction.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is working to incorporate education into the popular Career Club workshop. This will underscore the relationship between education and employment and will offer greater opportunity for peers to offer support and resources around education. Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher residents have needed a great deal of assistance navigating the education system including: learning to apply to programs; use financial aid wisely; withdraw properly from courses they will not be completing; understand that remedial courses (to which many are directed) will not count towards a GED or college credits.

The program celebrates educational and vocational milestones – including GED or certification attainment, completion of training programs, and college acceptance – with a dinner every spring. The dinner includes staff and residents, underscoring the importance of everyone's ongoing efforts toward educational attainment.

Securing Stable Housing

Living independently for the first time is an overwhelming proposition for any young person. Residents at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher are encouraged to think strategically about securing stable housing from the moment they enter the program. In most cases it takes the full two years of the program to prepare mentally, emotionally and financially for discharge. Uniformly, the young people have enormous fears about being on their own and residents with experience in foster care need additional staff guidance in understanding that housing will not be provided for them after the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher emphasizes routine, positive engagement with this process through case management and ILC counseling, peer support and regularly-offered housing workshops.

Housing 101 is a mandatory workshop is part of every resident's 30-day action plan. All housing options are discussed including market-rate apartments, shared apartments, lottery apartments, and permanent supportive housing. NYCHA and Section 8 applications are completed in the first 30 days for residents who have been in foster care.

Housing 201 meets monthly and covers a variety of practical topics related to housing: realistic budgeting; what portion of income should be allocated to rent; neighborhoods to target; how to conduct a housing search; how to read an advertisement and a lease. Residents also engage in group projects such as developing data on average rent paid by Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher alumni and average rents in various neighborhoods.

Housing 301 meets monthly for residents who are within six months of leaving the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher and is facilitated by alumni who return to reflect on their experience of living independently. In the final six months, anxieties about moving out run high, particularly among residents who have been in foster care. Discussion of these anxieties in a group environment is critical. Peers are often able to help each other make connections between the anxiety of discharge and negative behaviors.

Housing 301 also covers practical tasks such as notifying the post office of a change of address and helping residents focus on who their supports will be once they leave the program. It is particularly important to help young people understand that one person cannot be relied on for all supports and that they should actively connect with their network and understand what roles various people play in their lives.

Life Skills Development

Education, employment and savings are tangible outcomes of residence at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher. But development of life skills, people skills, communication and mediation skills are considered critical to successfully negotiating adult responsibilities. Program participants develop these skills through workshops, leadership programs and optional mentoring programs. Workshop participation is considered an essential part of living in the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher community. Workshops' explicit function is developing skills to be a successful adult, but facilitators place emphasis on strengthening bonds between residents and encouraging young people to contribute to the community and take leadership roles.

Workshops

Residents must attend four life skills workshops a month. Topics include: cooking, hygiene, household management, time management, first aid, substance abuse, chemical dependency and effects on the family, STD's and family planning, Gentleman's Forum, Sister Circle, Sam & Phil (local bankers discuss finance and current events), rest and relaxation techniques, game night, scrapbooking and Taebo.

Workshops are strategically planned to balance relevance and fun. Residents who have been in foster care often expect workshops to be a form of entertainment and resist their educational purpose. Staff are trained to anticipate this and it has been found that the younger independent living counselors are often most able to capturing teachable moments for residents. Advertising is critical to workshop attendance. Bright colors and youth-friendly slogans dramatically increase resident interest in workshops.

Foyer Council and Leadership Council

The Foyer Council and Leadership Council reinforce young people's voice in the community and create opportunities for residents to shape their own experience. The Foyer Council is composed of residents in good standing who are employed, current with their program fees and meeting with case managers and independent living counselors. Changes in the program, funding, resident mix and staffing are openly discussed. Clarity and openness about staffing changes is particularly important for young people who have experienced lack of consistency and reliability in their relationships with adults.

Community Meetings and Discussion of Program Data in the Community

Monthly community meetings are open to all residents and provide a forum for celebration of achievements and milestones as well as discussion of community issues such as staffing changes, inappropriate behaviors and substance abuse. In the fourth year of the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher program, staff initiated a program in which the community reviews monthly data on the four key indicators tracked for program participants: employment, educational/vocational participation, program fee payment and workshop participation. The young people are asked to quantitatively assess "how well are we doing" and set goals for community improvement. Residents work in groups to discuss how to improve performance for the community. Discussion of community progress gives each resident the opportunity to compare their own progress based on these indicators. Often the comparison is internalized more effectively among peers than when it is heard from an adult.

Mentoring

Residents at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher can ask for mentors or mentorship may be suggested by case managers. Participation in the mentoring program is optional. Young people who express interest in mentors most often want to connect with adults in fields they are interested in, or are looking for support around issues of sexual identity.

Mentors have played significant roles for Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher program participants and supportive relationships are sustained long after leaving the program.

Case Management

Residents must meet with case managers twice a month to review Action Plans and performance indicators, to celebrate achievements and set new goals. Case managers focus on specific tasks the young people need to accomplish – finding a GED program, applying for a job, filling a prescription (often deeply challenging for young people taking psychotropic drugs or HIV medications and for youth who have been in foster care and have had prescriptions filled for them through their agencies). Case managers strategize about how tasks can be accomplished, discuss what to expect and are available to debrief and regroup after the young person has completed the task.

Case management at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher assumes a high degree of motivation for program participants and is not well suited to residents with mental health issues. In the programs first year, staff with experience in mandated residential settings needed to be trained to provide more loosely-structured support and not “do too much” for residents but instead focus on offering information and indicating confidence.

As funding streams have changed, bringing young people with significant mental health issues into the program, case management has needed to adjust to become more hands on. Case managers now manage some residents’ medication and accompany them to medical appointments on an as-needed basis – a practice that runs counter to the model’s core philosophy. The adjustment has been confusing for case managers and program participants alike. The program is in constant discussion on necessary programmatic shifts based on the needs of the young people in the Foyer community and the current mix of challenges – especially mental health issues and substance abuse.

Finally, Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher staff has been part of a Good Shepherd Services’ initiative to incorporate Sanctuary Leadership Development in all of its residential settings. The Sanctuary model works to educate and support staff and residents alike in creating a trauma-informed environment. Development of the Sanctuary model in the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is expected to provide critical support to staff in working with residents with mental health issues. It is also anticipated to provide a powerful tool for young people to understand and contextualize their own experience with trauma and mental health issues in their families, and de-stigmatize mental health issues in general – a frequent source of shame and conflict for residents.

Staffing Model

Young people at the Foyer are supported by two categories of staff – case managers and independent living counselors (ILCs). Case managers meet twice a month with residents assigned to their caseload. ILCs, generally close in age to residents, provide support from individuals the young people can relate to. Case Managers and ILC’s are on site in overlapping shifts to ensure 24-hour coverage. Case managers work one day per weekend each month.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher staffing model has a high staff/resident ratio, reflecting the intensive, holistic nature of the program. Emphasis is placed on consistent adult presence to maintain a calm and safe environment with the goal of allowing young people to experience this environment so they have a better chance of replicating it when they leave the Foyer.

The Case Manager/ILC model is considered critical in developing supportive, trust-based relationships with the young people. However, there are challenges in managing and staffing the ILC position. Because of this proximity in age between residents and ILC's and because residents are at a developmental stage where they are testing boundaries, breach of boundaries can be an issue. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has strictly maintained a zero tolerance policy around breach of boundaries and stresses the importance of boundary maintenance as part of the young people's education about how to keep themselves safe.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher's first year evaluation found that residents with higher needs gravitated to ILCs and those with lower service needs to case managers. This finding underscored the strong need for support in the ILC position. ILC's are now supervised by the Program Director or Program Coordinator to offer perspective from the highest level of management. Also, overlapping shifts have been create so that ILC's interact more frequently with case managers and ensure that no one ILC is ever alone in the residence during busy evening and night hours.

Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher staff:

- *Program Director*: Responsible for the development, planning, administration and supervision of the Foyer
- *Program Coordinator*: Supervision of staff and life skills program. Responsible for safety, security and maintenance of Foyer program space
- *Social Work/Aftercare Supervisor*: Responsible for facilitating and supervising intake and after-care services
- *Case Managers (3)*: Responsible for counseling, case management, referrals and advocacy services for residents
- *Resource Case Manger*: Responsible for coordination of mentoring as well as housing resource development
- *Independent Living Counselors (5)*: Responsible for preparing residents to live independently upon discharge
- *Administrative Assistant*: Responsible for office management, documentation, reporting and data collection/entry
- *Nurse* – 8 hrs a week. Requirement of SILP and RHY funding

Life Post Foyer

The goal of the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is for young people to leave the program having secured stable housing – market-rate housing, subsidized housing, supportive

housing or campus housing. The program has tried to steer participants away from sublets where they have no lease and are at greater risk of losing housing.

A small percent of graduates meet the income requirements to become part of New York City's Rental Assistance Program (RAP) for which they must participate in services for three years. When RAP reaches its maximum, the program stops taking applications so Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher graduates must both qualify and be lucky in the timing of their application. Young people who have been in foster care are currently given preference for Section 8 or NYCHA vouchers for leased apartments. There have been indications a pilot program is in formation offering Section 8 vouchers for RHY youth however the status of this program is unclear. A few graduates have secured market rate apartments, moved into Mitchell Lama buildings, or gotten an apartment through NYC housing lotteries – these alumni are, however, exceptions.

Program graduates generally do not move into permanent supportive housing. One graduate lives in a Common Ground building. Staff reports some young people perceive these options as stigmatizing at a time in their lives when they are focused on escaping the stigmatization they feel from having been in foster care. However, as the program evolves and includes participants with more mental health challenges, permanent supportive housing is viewed as a realistic and positive option and is being increasingly discussed with program participants.

Aftercare

Aftercare has grown in tandem with expansion in the alumni population. Alumni use the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher as an ongoing resource for emotional support, letters of reference for education and employment, and linkage to legal services. With the growth of the alumni population, this function has become more complex. There is no dedicated aftercare staff position and all staff participates in aftercare.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is in the process of developing a more strategic approach to aftercare. Aftercare supports the investment made in the young people and can help them to stay on track: It is sometimes the only way to keep in touch with graduates and assess their progress. Staff has suggested monthly workshops for alumni to help maintain employment, keep education on their radar, check in on the support network they are developing and keep contact information current. The challenges of collecting longitudinal outcomes data on participants may also be facilitated by a more strategic approach to aftercare.

Part III Funding and Costs For the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher

Introduction

Funding programs for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is enormously challenging. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher was launched with the goal of being 100 percent publicly funded. In its fifth year, the program has achieved this goal. However, the program underscores this goal is ambitious and notes it has had to rely on private funding to cover shortfall and finance special projects.

Lack of availability and lack of flexibility in funding have been key issues in sustaining the Foyer program model. At this time, there is no dedicated funding stream for youth at risk of homelessness. Funds are only available for youth once they are homeless and these programs are under-funded. Support for youth aging out of foster care only covers young people up to age 21.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is currently supported by six separate funding streams. Two of these funding streams offer relative flexibility. However the other four have rigid requirements and serve different populations – some for younger youth, some for youth with mental health issues. Management of these divergent funding streams, required funder meetings and data reporting requirements are cumbersome and time consuming for program management. Additionally, lack of flexibility in funding has added costs to the program and compromised model integrity.

History of Funding

Early development efforts to test the Foyer model in New York City envisioned sole-source funding so that the program could be model-driven rather than funder-driven. New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) emerged as the program's sponsor in early conversations. However, due to budget cuts in 2002, the agency was not able to sponsor the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher – though it continues to support the program through its Supported Independent Living Program (SILP).

When ACS was not able to fund the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher, project stakeholders rallied to pull together funding, including a \$200,000 demonstration grant from New York City's Department of Homeless Services (DHS.) In addition, the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) successfully lobbied to direct New York State TANF funds to finance programs supporting young people who were homeless or aging out of foster care and at risk of homelessness. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher program was launched with sponsorship from DHS, TANF, ACS's SILP program and New York City's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through its Supportive Housing /Transitional Housing Program.

The flexibility offered by the initial DHS demonstration grant and TANF funds enabled the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher to faithfully replicate the U.K. model. However, after the demonstration funding ended, DHS and TANF funding levels decreased, though both continue to support the program. In 2005, new funding was secured from New York

City Department of Youth and Community Development through its Runaway and Homeless Youth Services (RHY) and from New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene as part of the City's NYNY III Agreement.⁷

Current Funding Sources

- **New York City's Department of Homeless Services (DHS)**
- **New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS)**
- **New York State TANF Block Grant (TANF)**
- **New York City's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**
- **New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (RHY)**
- **New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYNY III)**

Challenges of Funding

While TANF, HUD and DHS funding offer the kind of flexibility necessary to serve a community of mixed populations, SILP, RHY and NYNYIII contracts are not ideally aligned for the Foyer emphasis on independent living, community development and cross-population mentoring.

SILP Requirements Add Costs and Staff Management of Resident's Lives

Young people covered by SILP funding are ideal candidates for the program, but SILP requirements – including permanency hearings, court dates and extensive case record documentation result in heavy staff management of resident's lives and increases staffing costs. In addition, a complex intake process requiring ACS and Family Court approval slows the filling of vacancies and results in funding shortfall.

RHY Funding Requirements are Rigid

The RHY funding stream includes several requirements at odds with the Foyer model, including housing young people on dedicated RHY floors and providing separate staffing and programming. RHY residents must have daily room inspections and are subject to stringent restrictions on what can be kept in their rooms – including a restriction on any kind of knife which makes it difficult for young people to cook for themselves. RHY inspectors discourage mixing of youth in this funding stream with other residents. This funding stream also supports a younger population generally not ready for independent living.

NYNYIII Funding Increases Prevalence of Mental Health Challenges

Young people supported by NYNYIII contracts have a markedly higher incidence of significant mental health issues. Intake procedures require a clinically-trained staff person. Many young people supported by this funding stream encounter challenges fulfilling program requirements.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has successfully absorbed SILP and RHY requirements into its operations. However, the mental health issues for NYNYIII participants are a greater challenge. In 2009, the program reduced its number of NYNYIII contracts. The program is studying the proportion of young people with mental health issues the program can sustain without compromising core aspects of the model.

Program Budget and Costs

Funding streams are in constant flux. Budget and Income as of June 2009.

Program Budget

Public Income

Rent	\$ 381,000	DHS	\$ 96,000
Salaries	\$ 696,000	TANF/OTDA	\$132,000
Tax/Fringe	\$ 175,000	ACS **	\$ 314,000
Other Program Costs	\$ 236,000	HUD	\$ 414,000
Indirect Expenses*	\$179,000	DYCD/RHY	\$ 400,000
		DOHMH/NYNYIII	\$ 308,000
Total Costs	\$ 1,667,000	Total Public Income	\$ 1,664,000

* Administrative oversight, fiscal oversight, program evaluation and planning

** When all eight SILP beds are filled

Transitioning young people to stable housing and financial self-sufficiency in two years requires a service-intensive model. It currently costs approximately \$114 a day to house and support a young person at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher. This short-term investment represents significant long term savings as compared to costs associated with young people who do not successfully transition and become incarcerated (\$238 per day) or homeless (\$56 per night in a shelter without supports). Many Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher graduates have broken a multi-generational cycle of dependence on public assistance. Their experience at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher positions them for independence, improve the lives of their children, and help strengthen their families and communities.

Conclusions

The challenges of finding programs to prevent youth homelessness are enormous. Funding is scarce and subject to change. Management of many different funding streams is cumbersome, time consuming and divergent requirements inhibit cost efficiency and compromise model integrity. However, cobbling together funding is the current reality and the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher must and will continue to juggle many funding streams.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has found that with each new funding stream added, there comes a period of adjustment as the program absorbs new requirements and participants with new challenges – increased mental health challenges, increased substance abuse challenges or, simply, younger participants with a set of needs previously not addressed at the Foyer. These changes are often initially overwhelming, but over time become less onerous.

Currently, the greatest challenge is lack of flexibility in funding. At five years, the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has a well-developed model and a clear understanding of what makes the model work. However without the flexibility to implement the model uniformly across populations attached to different funding streams it has been extremely difficult to deepen learnings that will improve the model and achieve outcomes the program was launched to realize.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is studying ways to increase funding from sources that offer greater flexibility, including TANF and HUD. However, it is clear that without Federal funding for this population, this program, and others, will not be able to achieve cost efficiencies and realize the full potential of the model.

Part IV: Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher Data

Introduction

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher collects copious data on its program participants including: intake data, data for funder reporting requirements, monthly progress data, exit data and outcomes data post discharge. Management of this large volume of data is challenging and the program is still in the process of optimizing its data platform so that data can be more effectively deployed to manage the program and demonstrate the model's effectiveness.

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has developed an effective system for measuring program participant progress while at the Foyer. Data is used with young people to help them understand program expectations and internalize progress. It is used with case managers to assist supervision and indicate areas for staff improvement. Data is also presented monthly to the program community and participants are asked to assess "How Well Are We Doing."

Tracking alumni and developing longitudinal outcomes data has been challenging due to the difficulties of tracking a population that is mobile: Addresses and cell phone numbers change frequently and young people do not reliably respond to survey requests.

When the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher opened its doors, Good Shepherd Services was just beginning to implement an organization-wide data management system. In its first five years, the Foyer underwent a time-consuming, iterative process to develop indicators and orient staff to a data management culture, while also gathering copious data for its many funding streams with different data requirements. These efforts resulted in a system that was too complex and required streamlining. In its fifth year, the program began a Logic Model process that will further focus its data management efforts and emphasize outcomes data.

Who the Program Serves: Intake Data

Special Needs or Characteristics	N=112*
Runaway/Homeless	46%
Aging out of Foster Care	34%
Mental Illness	21%
Victim of Sexual Abuse	9%
Victim of Domestic Violence	6%
Ex-Offender	5%
Youth Subject to Charges	2%
Drug Abuse	4%
Developmental Disability	3%
Physical Disability	2%
Life-Threatening Illness	2%
Alcohol Abuse	1%
*data available 5/05-present	

Demographics at Intake:		N=165
Education and Employment Status		
Gender	Male	45%
	Female	54%
	Transgender	1%
Age		
	18 to 20	48%
	21-23	52%
Race		
	Black/African American	59%
	Latino/a	27%
	Interracial	5%
	Other	10%
Educational Attainment		
	High School Diploma	36%
	GED	15%
	Less than 12 th grade	29%
Enrolled in School		58%
Employed		66%
Insurance	Provided by Medicaid	71%
	Provided by Employer	3%

Program participants are largely African American and Latino/a. The program has served a slightly higher percent of young women (55%) and has been generally equally divided between younger youth (18-20) and older youth (21-23). About 50 percent of participants have entered the program with a High School Diploma or GED.

The young people served have encountered enormous challenges. 34 percent have a history of foster care, 46 percent are runaways or homeless at intake. Most are unwilling to fully disclose their histories. Sexual abuse data (9%) represents self-reported abuse, actual abuse rates are strongly believed to be higher. Mental health data (21%) represents diagnosed mental illness only. Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher staff estimates current participants exhibiting mental health issues to be about 68 percent of the community. In the program's first five years, substance abuse has not been prevalent among program participants. Substance abuse rates are increasing, though this cannot yet be quantified.

How Progress is Measured While at the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher: Monthly Progress Data

Monthly data is collected and a monthly dashboard is created to understand current participant progress. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher tracks four indicators to measure participant progress:

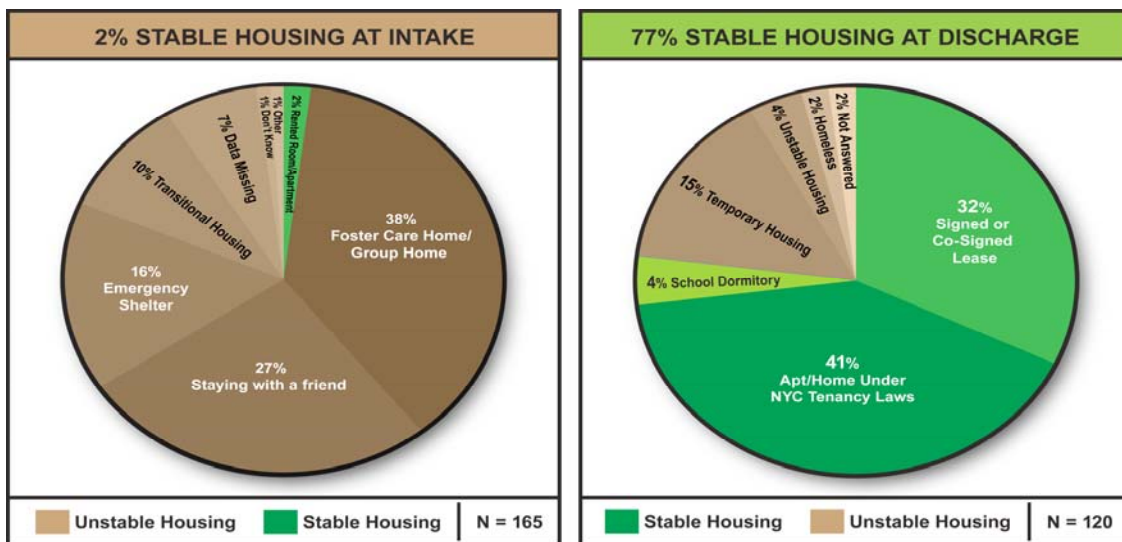
- Employment;

- Education status;
- Payment of program fees;
- Workshop attendance.

Monthly data is collected and analyzed for each program participant and is reviewed with the young people during case management. Data is broken out by caseload so program management can understand staff effectiveness. Monthly data is also aggregated for the entire program community and is discussed in community meetings. The young adults are asked to quantitatively assess “how well are we doing” and set goals for community improvement. Sub-committees examine external factors that impact each indicator and brainstorm about public relations campaigns and motivational tools to help individuals and the community improve in each area.

Monthly data has been a powerful tool for motivating young people. Most program participants have not been exposed to data and it has both been found to be an effective, depersonalized language and a means to underscore the program’s high expectations. The young people sometimes internalize progress assessments better when they are heard in the context of peers and not communicated by an adult/case manager.

Outcomes at Exit: Discharge Data



Exit data on housing at discharge indicates that of 120 program graduates, 77 percent had secured stable housing at time of discharge.

Reliable data for employment at discharge is only available for 8/2007-7/2009. In this time period, of the 52 young people who left the program, 75 percent were employed at discharge, with an additional 23 percent having been employed but terminated prior to discharge. Employment patterns for this population are very fluid. Young people transition in and out of jobs as they learn to be in the workforce.

EMPLOYMENT PRIOR TO DISCHARGE					
Data for Clients discharged from Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher 8.1.07-7.31.09					
	# of Clients Employed for at least 3 continuous months at the time of discharge	# of Clients Employed, at the time of discharge, but for less than 3 continuous months	# of Clients whose last Employment terminated prior to discharge	# of Clients who have no employment records in ETO	Total # of Clients
TOTAL	28	11	12	1	52
%	53.8%	21.2%	23.1%	1.9%	

Employment levels at discharge have been significantly lower during 2008 and 2009 due to the economic crisis. Youth are among the first to lose their jobs or have hours cut. While many program participants are employed at intake, earned income levels are low. Earned income levels at exit show significant improvement. The program has data to support this. However, due to missing data, income improvement at discharge cannot be reliably quantified at this time.

Life Post Foyer: Longitudinal Outcomes Data

Tracking program participants once they leave the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has been difficult. Young people in this population are mobile, their phone numbers change frequently and program staff must contact each participant many times before receiving a response – if any response is given. The program originally began tracking alumni one year post discharge. However, it was found that this was too long to be out of touch and in March 2008 the program began tracking alumni beginning at three months post discharge in an effort to maintain better contact and improve response rates

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher now gathers alumni data at three-months and twelve-months post discharge. Twelve-month survey data is based on responses from all program participants who have exited the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher with a positive discharge and have been out of the program for at least one year. As noted, it has been extremely difficult to get young people to respond to survey requests and response rates are low.

Twelve Month Survey Data		
N= 120 32 Respondents 26% Response Rate		
	Percent	Number of Respondents
Stable Housing	84%	27
Employed	91%	29
Medical Coverage	94%	30
In School	56%	18

Degree/Certificate earned since leaving program	28%	9
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Progress notes are kept on all alumni. Although progress notes are not part of a formal survey process it is noted that of the 81 alumni (68% of total alumni) who contacted the program since discharge: 80 percent reported they were in stable housing; 69 percent reported they were employed; 62 percent reported they had medical coverage; and 31 percent reported being in school.

Three Month Survey Data Beginning March 2008 N=39 27 Respondents 69 % Response Rate		
	Percent	Number of Respondents
Stable Housing	96%	26
Employed	95%	25
Medical Coverage	81%	26
In School	41%	11
Degree/Certificate earned since leaving program	1%	5

Three-month survey data includes the 39 young people who were discharged as of March 2008 and who have been out of the Foyer for at least three months. 27 young people completed the survey for a response rate of 69 percent. The improved response rate for 3-month surveys has led the program to discuss implementation of a 6-month survey in addition to the 3-month and 12-month survey to maintain contact with alumni and increase overall response rates.

Conclusions

The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher is committed to becoming a data-driven organization. Lessons learned from the data management process include the importance of having a data platform in place before opening the program and identifying the key indicators to measure and demonstrate participant progress and program success. Also important is adequately training staff to understand the importance of data and develop program-wide buy-in on collection and use of data.

An additional lesson is the need to develop flexible indicators so that progress can be measured and demonstrated for participants with a range of capacities. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher uses strict criteria in recording data. However, mental health challenges in the program community result in outcomes looking quite different from one young person to another. More flexible indicators would take into account the different capacities of young people to be self sufficient while also reflecting the positive impact of the program.

Finally, the challenges of keeping in touch with young people in this population and at this developmental stage are not to be underestimated. The Chelsea Foyer at the

Christopher currently has one staff member with part-time responsibility for tracking alumni. Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher graduates return to the Foyer for a range of supports and the program is studying development of a more comprehensive and strategic aftercare program as a means to support alumni outcomes, maintain contact and facilitate tracking. Other tracking options are being explored including contacting alumni via Facebook or subsidizing alumni cell phone service for one year post discharge.

Part V: Lessons Learned

Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher Development Lessons

1. Financing transitional housing for youth at risk of homelessness requires creativity.
 - Embedding the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher in Common Ground’s Christopher Residence facilitated access to public funding for the permanent residence and made financing a smaller, transitional Foyer residence achievable
 - Embedding the Foyer in the Christopher allowed for the development of a small program community ideally sized for a high-needs youth population
 - The transitional Foyer program incurs higher maintenance costs than the lower-turnover, permanent supportive housing units at the Christopher
2. Broad stakeholder commitment and government buy-in is essential.
 - This population has a wide range of needs: Stakeholders should include: child welfare systems, homeless service systems, youth workforce development organizing, affordable housing providers, and advocacy groups
 - The development cycle for housing programs can be several years and stakeholder commitment should be sustained during development and through changes in government administrations
 - Program successes and milestones should be shared with stakeholders to encourage continued support and engagement
3. Be sensitive to young people’s developmental needs in planning residential space.
 - Common spaces are more heavily used if they are at the front of the building. Young people like to see what is happening and who is coming in and out
 - Residents generally congregate in common spaces at night
 - Very durable materials are recommended for common kitchen space
 - Computer rooms should be located where they can be monitored: Computer resources are not heavily used by young people who have been in foster care and have had laptops provided to them
 - More young people prefer to live in “quads” than expected. A combination of shared private space “quads” and individual private space or “singles” is ideal
 - Staff offices on each floor facilitate case manager interaction with residents; separate offices for program management helps orient residents to the different functions of these staff positions
 - Time-limited residency can be signaled with minimal amenities and restrictions on visitors in residents’ rooms
 - Skills for independent living can be developed by giving each resident his or her own mailbox and key
 - A personal refrigerator in each bedroom is extremely effective in addressing residents’ issues around ownership and availability of food

4. Project partners should establish clear expectations and channels of communication.
 - Develop a statement of common vision for the program
 - Clarify larger organizational goals each partner has for the program
 - Establish channels of communication at several levels: between program and building management; at the executive level; and between mid-level staff at both organizations. Regular communication between development and research departments is recommended
 - Clarify the Real Estate relationship between partners
 - Develop guidelines on external communication to funders, media and other third parties
 - Establish clear understanding about how and when to evaluate the program
 - Maintain transparency about all public funding sources secured and being developed
 - Develop protocols around case management and security
 - Ensure all parties have appropriate insurance
 - Develop formal agreement on steps for partnership dissolution should lack of funding or other challenges make this necessary

Foyer Program Implementation Lessons

5. Funding is challenging.
 - 100 percent public funding is ambitious. The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher has periodically required private funds to cover shortfall
 - There is no dedicated funding stream for youth at risk of homelessness: Funds are only available for youth once they are homeless. Funding for youth aging out of care is inadequate, covering youth up to age 21 only, and there is scant funding for homeless youth
 - Divergent funder requirements and populations served under different funding streams challenge program integrity and cost efficiency
 - HUD and TANF offer the most flexible funding necessary for serving a mixed population
 - Programs should be prepared to develop broad-based, creative strategies to fund development of residences and sustain programs
6. Data management should be approached strategically.
 - A data management platform should be in place prior to launching the program
 - Staff needs to be trained and oriented to the importance of data
 - Flexible indicators need to be developed accommodate variability in outcomes
 - Waiting one year to track alumni post discharge is too long to be out of touch
 - The program now begins tracking alumni three months post discharge

- Challenges in tracking alumni should be anticipated. This population is mobile, cell phone numbers change frequently and young people do not check in regularly. Tracking efforts should be strategically developed
7. The hallmark Foyer low-, medium- and high-needs community is hard to achieve.
- U.S. funding emphasizes support for extremely high-needs youth
 - The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher's commitment to foster care leavers and youth at risk for homelessness has resulted in a community of predominantly high-needs residents
 - Low- and medium-needs Foyer candidates often opt for the independence of a SILP or Section 8 apartment, even though many would be better served by a supportive environment
 - The benefits of peer mentoring can be leveraged even in a community composed predominantly of high-needs residents
8. Foyer model implementation for the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher's chosen populations has resulted in a more staff-intensive model and an emphasis on workforce development.
- The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher's program population of post-foster care youth and formerly homeless youth has required a more intensive staffing model
 - Goals to achieve financial self-sufficiency upon discharge has resulted in a programmatic emphasis on employment and workforce development
 - As the Foyer model is replicated in other locations, the mix of residents and funding can determine the staffing model needed and available
9. The Foyer model is best suited to young people who are able to live semi-independently and want to participate in a rigorous program.
- Young people with serious mental health challenges are not effectively served by the relatively unstructured Foyer environment
 - Foster care leavers often resist participation in a program after discharge
 - The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher expects roughly 20 percent attrition. Young People who complete six months are likely to attain successful discharge

Key Practice Lessons Working With Post-Foster Care and Homeless Youth

10. Anticipate high levels of need in all program participants.
- This population has many challenges including diagnosed and undiagnosed mental health issues, history of trauma, literacy deficits, behavioral issues and an intense need for responsible adult support
 - The young people generally present as having few needs. Surfacing critical issues takes time, attention and training

- Uneven, non-linear progress is to be anticipated at this developmental stage
11. Peer mentoring between residents with a history of foster care and residents with a history of street homelessness is effective in helping young people overcome assumptions that keep them from successfully transitioning to adulthood.
- Young people who have grown up in foster care often have unrealistic expectations that entitlements will be available indefinitely. Their peers who have experienced homelessness provide an important reality check
 - Young people who have experienced homelessness tend to be highly independent and reluctant to ask for help. Their peers who have been in foster care have fewer inhibitions and encourage them to seek help when needed
 - The importance of peer influence in this age group cannot be overstated
12. Create a developmentally-appropriate atmosphere balancing structure and freedom.
- Require employment. Young people 18-25 occupy a critical window of opportunity to be absorbed into the workforce for lifetime employment
 - Support education as critical to career development and increased earnings
 - Clarify that the program will not “find” jobs or housing for participants but will “teach” participants to do these things for themselves
 - Anticipate developmentally appropriate pushback
 - Anticipate incremental, non-linear progress and frequent employment changes
 - Emphasize the importance of practicing life challenges and taking risks
13. Share individual and community progress data with program participants.
- Data provides a depersonalized language to communicate expectations
 - Presenting data in community promotes dialogue about goals
 - Young people often internalize progress assessments better when they are discussed between peers and not solely communicated by an adult/case manager

¹ National Alliance to End Homelessness

² Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher

³ National Alliance to End Homelessness

⁴ Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher

⁵ Foyers visited included the E15 Foyer in East London, “Weavers Field” in Hayes, Middlesex and the Belfast Foyer operated by Simon Community in Belfast, Ireland.

All Foyers visited were different, reflecting the flexibility in the model. The group was most impressed with Foyers with a clear sense of purpose and structure where expectations were clearly communicated and young people held accountable for their actions. Observations about successful approaches included: a balance of independence and structure for residents; a contract between the young people and the Foyer; the development of a community; and strong ties to a college or employer that could expand opportunities and services to residents.

⁶ See Corporation for Supportive Housing Publication: Using TANF Funds to Finance Essential Services in a Supportive Housing Program for Homeless Families and Young Adults, Nov. 2001, Doreen Straaka and Constance Temple.

⁷ The NYNYIII agreement is a coalition of 12 city and state agencies contributing capital, operating services and social services to create 9,000 units of supportive housing in NYC by 2015. 200 units were created for youth aging out of foster care. NYNYII were expected to be excellent candidates for the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher. However, the young people supported by these contracts have been found to have significant mental health challenges ill-suited to the Foyer’s relatively unstructured environment and these young people struggle to meet the program’s rigorous requirements.⁷

It is worth noting that as the Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher program was being developed, the New York City Housing Authority began to give youth aging out of foster care preferential status for Section 8 vouchers. Many young people identified for the NYNYIII program opted for Section 8 instead, shifting the population covered by NYNYIII to foster care leavers who had been living in residential treatment centers outside New York City, in extremely structured programs tailored for mental illness and behavioral issues.