

HOST HOME SURVEY

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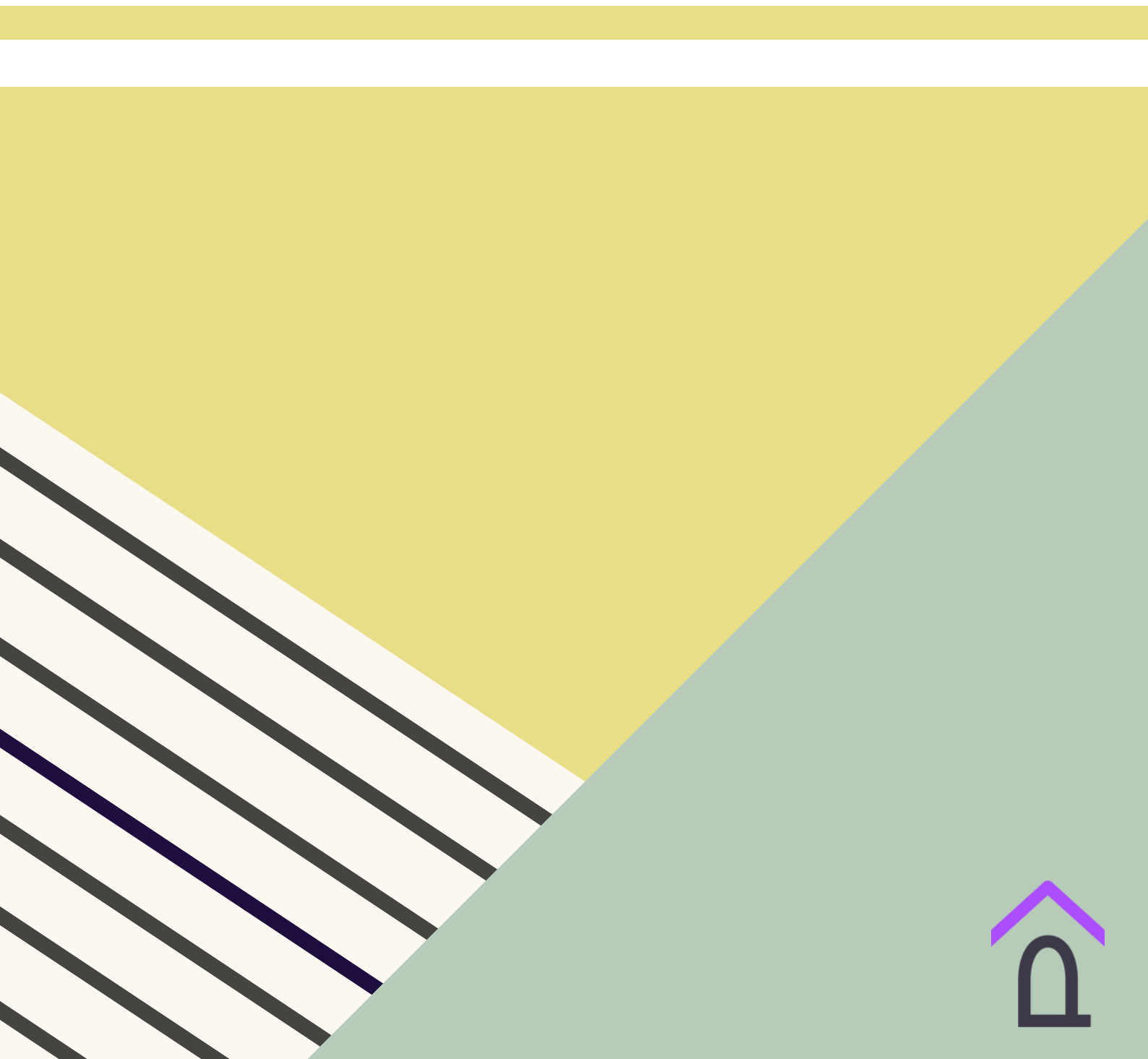
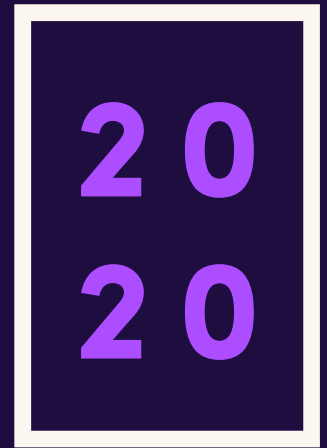


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OVERVIEW

ABOUT FREEDOM FORWARD, LAUNCHPADS, AND THE HOST HOME SURVEY

Freedom Forward is working to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of youth in San Francisco by transforming the systems that too often contribute to their exploitation. Many young people impacted by exploitation have had experiences with the foster care system, and the transition to adulthood (including periods of homelessness all too common after foster care) can create even greater vulnerability to exploitation. Freedom Forward is therefore focused in several of its programs on the intersection of housing and foster care. One such program is Launchpads, which allows young adults in extended foster care to use an online rental platform to rent low-cost living space in the homes of vetted community members. While developing Launchpads, we contacted a number of similar host home programs around the country, knowing that their experiences, common practices, and pitfalls ought to inform our work.

In 2020, we sent our survey to 49 host home providers across the United States. Of those, we received 26 responses. The vast majority served youth, though there were several others that specialized in other populations, such as individuals exiting incarceration. Their responses revealed common strategies and challenges, and prompted us to look for patterns. (For example, is there a correlation between size of housing stipend and ability to recruit hosts? What are the most common reasons for terminating a hosting relationship?) This report outlines some of our findings.



REPORT ORGANIZATION

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This report includes the following sections:

Descriptive program information: This section offers descriptive information about the host home programs that responded to the survey, including where the programs are located, what populations and age groups they serve, and whether they offer housing stipends to hosts.

Common practices: This section outlines common practices among the responding programs, including the types of support they provide to help their participants succeed.

Challenges and risk mitigation: This section outlines the challenges faced by the programs during implementation, as well as the ways that the programs have attempted to mitigate these risks.

Limitations: This sections explains why we cannot draw broader conclusions than we've attempted to on the basis of this survey.

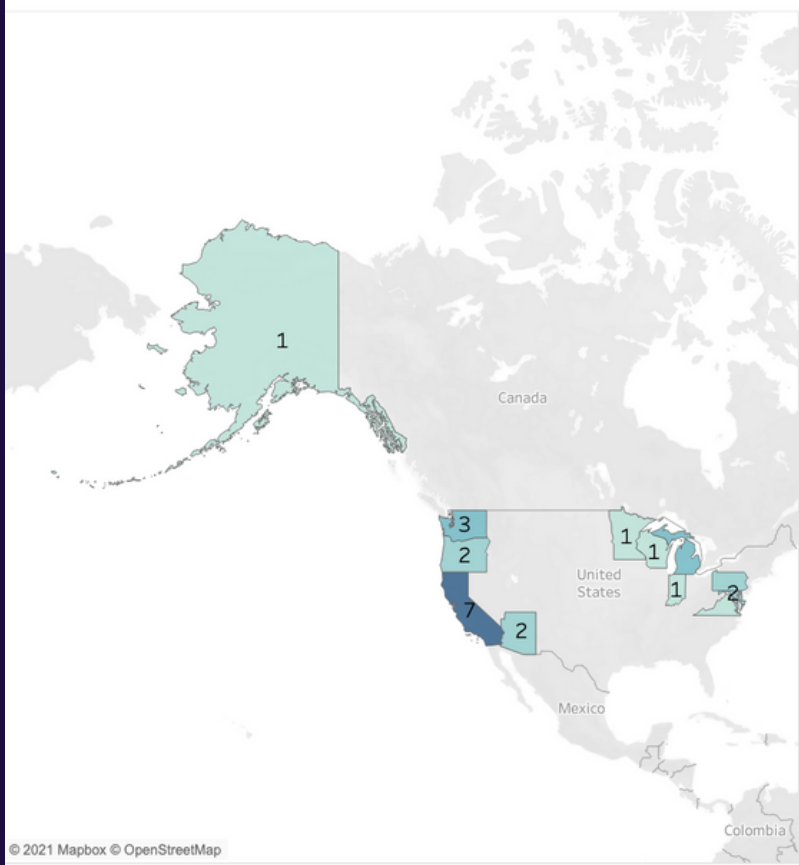
Conclusion: This section outlines areas of research we'd like to explore further, as we continue to work toward an understanding of best practices for host home programs.



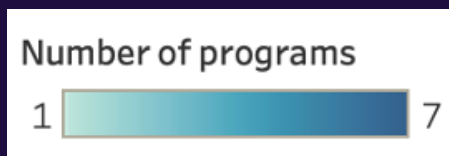
DESCRIPTIVE PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Locations

Locations of program respondents



State	# of programs
California	7
Washington	3
Michigan	3
Pennsylvania	2
Arizona	2
Maryland	2
Oregon	2
Alaska	1
Virginia	1
Indiana	1
Minnesota	1
Wisconsin	1
Total	26



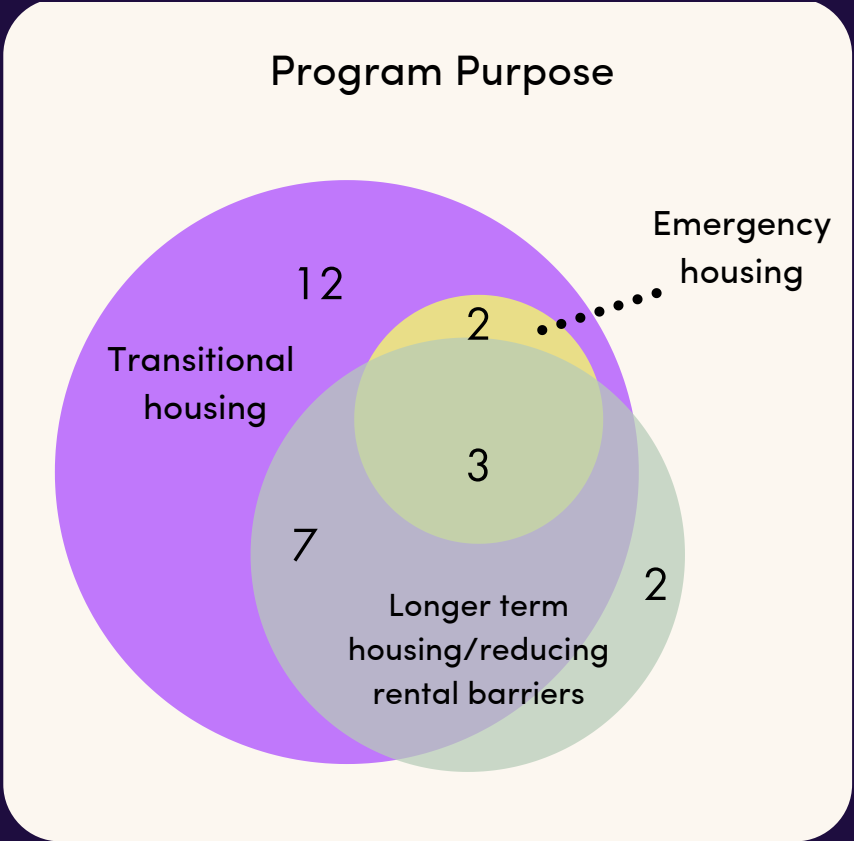
The programs we sent the survey to were located in 23 states, and several states had more than one program. 24 percent of all programs surveyed were located in California, 10% were in Washington, 8 percent were in Michigan, and 6 percent were in Oregon (figures rounded).

This geographic spread was of course reflected in those programs that responded to the survey. The majority of respondents were located in western or mid-western states: 27% of the respondents were located in California, 12% were in Washington, and 12% were in Michigan. These respondent locations are specified in the table above.



Programs participating in the survey served a number of purposes. Some aimed to house people for several months, while others aimed for a longer period.

Transitional housing was the most commonly reported purpose; however, many programs reported serving more than one purpose. For example, 7 programs offered transitional housing and supported people in finding longer-term housing. The Venn diagram to the right shows the type of housing host homes programs aimed to provide.



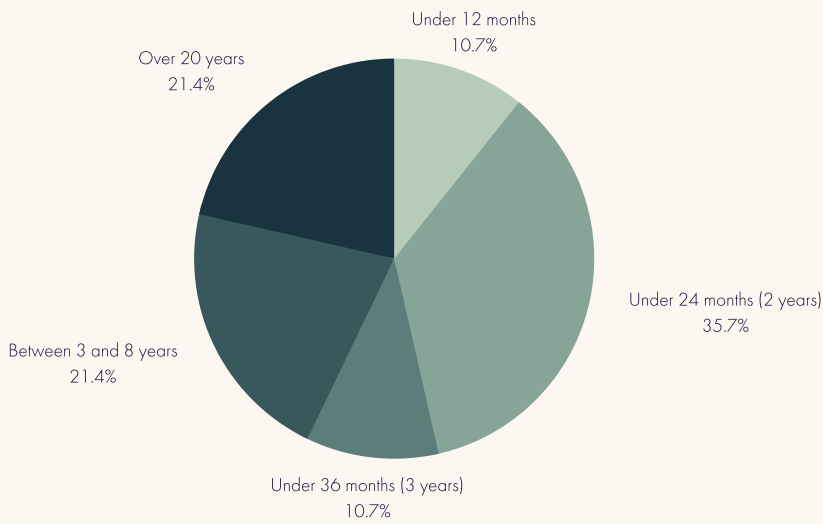
Populations supported by host home program respondents

Focus population	# of programs
LGBTQIA+ youth	20
Transition-aged youth (18-24)	18
Foster youth 18 or older	9
Foster youth under 18	7
Formerly incarcerated individuals	6
Asylum seekers	5

Youth were the most commonly supported population among survey respondents. Among the programs supporting youth, there were a variety of different populations of interest (e.g., any youth experiencing homeless, or LGBTQ+ youth, or foster youth). Additionally, several programs served older individuals.

The table to the left shows the number of programs who reported focusing on a specific population. Programs could check all applicable populations. They served an average of 2.4 different populations and a median of 2 different populations. Other populations that were served included pregnant and parenting youth; housing-insecure minors, and all people (ages 18-99) seeking shared housing.





AGE OF PROGRAMS

The programs varied greatly in age. The oldest program began in 1981, while the newest was just 3 months old at the time of its response. 62% of the programs (16 programs) were under 3 years old. The pie chart to the left groups the programs by approximate age.

SIZE OF HOUSING STIPEND

Among the programs surveyed, stipends for hosts ranged from \$0 to \$1050. Programs offered an average hosting stipend of \$330 per month and a median hosting stipend of \$300 per month. It is important to note that programs reported their stipends in a variety of different ways, from nightly stipends to monthly stipends. We used whatever data was provided to extrapolate a monthly rate. However, programs who reported nightly stipends were more likely to provide emergency housing, rendering their monthly rates less meaningful. (For example, a program that pays \$35 per night may only expect to serve a particular client for a week.) With that caveat in mind, the table to the right shows the effective monthly host stipends reported by survey respondents.

Effective monthly stipend	# of programs
No response	3
\$0	4
\$100	1
\$150	1
\$200	2
\$250	1
\$300	3
\$375	1
\$400	3
\$420	1
\$500	4
\$750	1
\$1,050	1
Total	26



NUMBER OF HOSTING RELATIONSHIPS FACILITATED ANNUALLY

While developing Launchpads, we wondered how many hosting relationships other programs were able to regularly facilitate. Among the programs who reported matches, respondents reported an average of 18 relationships and a median of 10 relationships. See the table below.

These numbers are likely to be greatly impacted by the type of housing provided. For example, an emergency housing provider can theoretically facilitate multiple hosting relationships involving the same host, while a program offering longer-term housing can probably facilitate only one relationship per host over a significant time period.

# of hosting relationships	# of programs
No response	7
1	1
2	2
4	1
5	1
10	9
15	1
25	1
40	1
50	1
100	1
Total	26

# of paid staff	# of programs
No response	2
1	5
1.25	1
2	9
3	1
4	2
5	2
6	2
7	1
9	1
Total	26

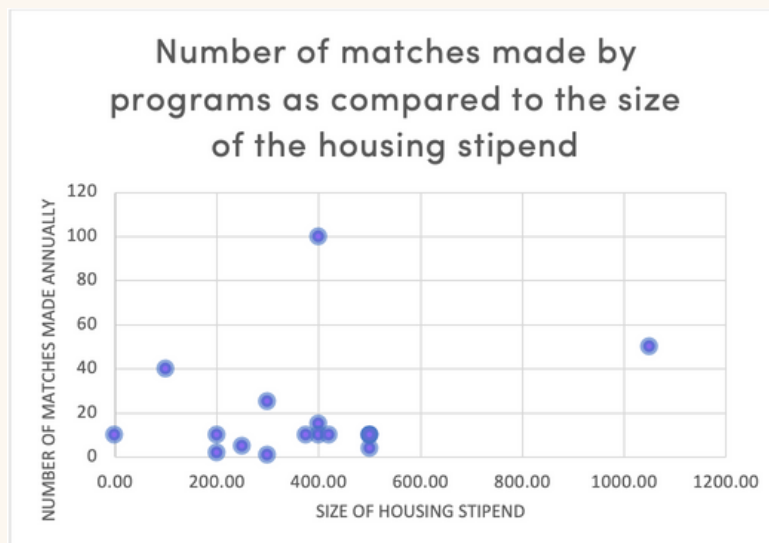
NUMBER OF PAID STAFF

As a whole, programs reported relatively low staffing numbers, with an average of approximately 3 staff and a median of 2 staff. See the table above. We believe that respondents may have had different interpretations of this question, so results should be interpreted with caution.

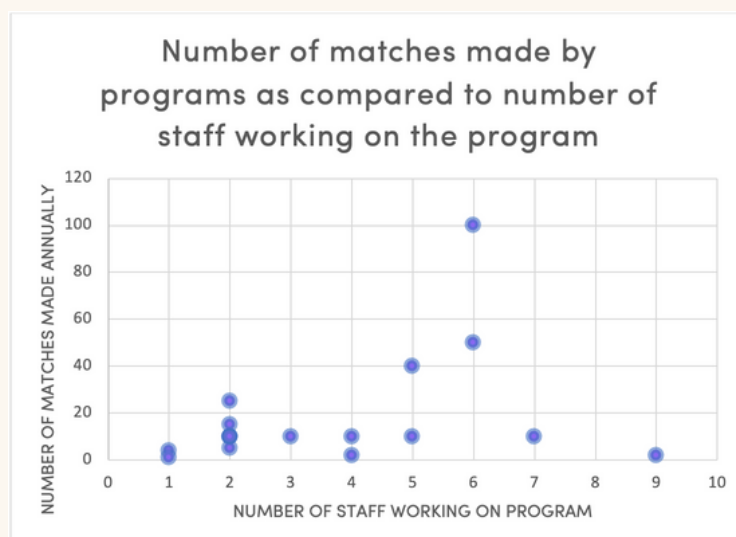


CORRELATIONS BETWEEN VARIABLES

We wanted to understand the possible correlations between the variables reported by survey participants. For example, we were curious whether programs with more staff facilitated more matches, so we analyzed the data to see whether there was a correlation between the number of paid staff on a program and the number of hosting relationships facilitated. Similarly, we wondered whether programs offering larger stipends as incentives to hosts facilitated more matches, so we examined whether there was a correlation between stipend size and hosting relationships. But our analyses found neither of those correlations, suggesting that stipend size and number of staff played at most a minimal role in programs' ability to recruit hosts. That said, our sample contained only 26 programs, and some were excluded from these analyses because they hadn't fully responded to the relevant questions. Furthermore, many of these programs are new and had made fewer than 10 matches at the time of the survey. More information is needed before we can confidently make a claim about any associations between stipend size, staff size, and ability to recruit hosts. See the data for yourself, below.



n=17



n=18



COMMON PRACTICES AMONG HOST HOME PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW

We asked respondents what they were doing to recruit, vet, train, and support program participants and hosts. This section outlines some common practices we learned about.

Two caveats: 1) We do not attempt to comment on the efficacy of any of these practices, as we don't have the necessary information to draw such conclusions. 2) Survey respondents were not required to respond to all questions, so in some cases we do not have responses from all programs.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Host home programs cannot exist without hosts, so successful host recruitment is crucial. All programs reported using multiple strategies to attract hosts, on average utilizing 7 or 8 different strategies at once. The table below shows how programs attempted to recruit people who might be interested in hosting.

Recruitment strategy	# of programs utilizing
Newsletters	25
Social Media	25
Partners sharing informational newsletters	24
Tabling at events	22
Virtual events	21
Info Session	19
In-person events	19
Online advertising	18

VETTING HOSTS & PARTICIPANTS

Once hosts have been recruited, they must be vetted to protect program participants from unsafe living conditions; similarly, some vetting of program participants can help hosts feel safe and ensure that participants are set up for success in a program that can meet their needs. Across the programs we surveyed, every respondent had systems in place for vetting both hosts and program participants—typically using more rigorous procedures for vetting hosts. The tables on the next page show the methods used.



VETTING PROGRAM HOSTS

Vetting strategy	# of programs utilizing
Application	26
Interviews	25
Reference checks	23
Background check (private company)	16
Background check (FBI/DOJ)	14
Background check (both private company and FBI and DOJ)	5

VETTING PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Vetting strategy	# of programs utilizing
Application	22
Interviews	22
Referrals from trusted sources	19
Background check (private company)	7
Reference checks	5
Background check (FBI/DOJ)	4

SUPPORT SERVICES

Many programs offer additional services to program participants to enhance their overall success. The table below shows the various supportive services offered by the respondents.

Program support	# of programs providing
Case management	25
Conflict resolution support	25
Financial coaching	19
Support paying for basic needs	19
Funds for activities that hosts and youth can do together	19



TRAINING

The programs we surveyed varied widely in terms of the length of any required training and in terms of the training content itself. Training for hosts was much more common than training for program participants: While 23 of 26 responding programs required hosts to go through some form of training, only 7 required participants to go through training as well. At the upper end, programs required hosts to go through 40 hours of training; on the lower end, programs did not require any training of hosts. The tables below show the number of training hours respondent programs required for hosts and program participants.

HOST TRAINING HOURS

Hours of training	# of programs
Unknown	5
0	3
1 to 5	6
6 to 10	5
11 to 15	5
16-30	1
40	1
Total	26

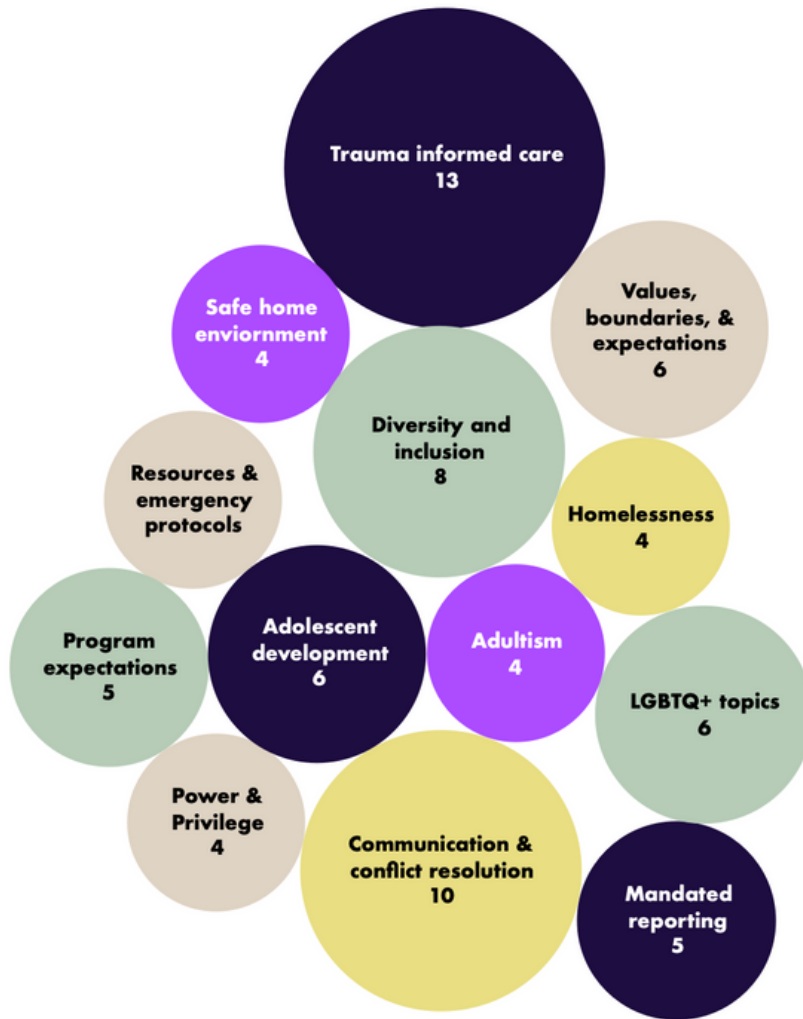
PARTICIPANT TRAINING HOURS

Hours of training	# of programs
Unknown	1
0	20
3	3
6	1
16	1
Total	26

Though the content of the trainings also varied, there were some common themes among the topics covered. The graphic on the next page displays the most common topics and the number of programs that covered them.



Number of host trainings covering a given topic



Host training topics covered by 2 or fewer programs included:

- Safe sleep for babies
- HIV/AIDS 101
- Program history
- Harm reduction
- Informed consent
- Working with support staff (e.g., case manager or social worker)
- Reentry populations
- Parole conditions
- Self-care
- Credit/money management
- CPR and First Aid
- Safety/crisis intervention
- Mental health

These responses may be open to multiple interpretations, as programs may have referred to the same or similar topics with different labels.

The 7 programs training youth participants covered the following topics:

- Program expectations
- How to live in and participate in the host home environment
- Allowable and unallowable activities
- Maintaining positive relationships
- Nonviolent communication
- Harm reduction
- LGBTQ+ 101
- Job readiness
- Housing counseling
- Financial literacy
- Technology advancement
- Life skills
- Mental health resources
- Adultism
- Informed consent



REAL WORLD CHALLENGES AND RISK MITIGATION

OVERVIEW

Host home programs inevitably come with some risks, from home damage to violence. To better understand what the risks were and how to manage them, we asked programs to outline the areas where problems had arisen, and to detail the strategies they used to prevent and address them.

REAL WORLD CHALLENGES

Although all host home programs hope that the hosting relationships they facilitate will be successful, inevitably some of the relationships end earlier than planned. One of the questions our survey posed was “Which of these reasons applied to why housing matches were unsuccessful? (Check all that apply.)” We hope the responses to this question can help new or developing programs prepare for likely challenges.

We’ve categorized the experiences of the 12 programs who had made 10 or more matches at the time of the survey and who responded fully to this question.* Those 12 ranged from having matched 12 pairs to having matched 1500 pairs, with a median of 25 matches. All of the organizations reported having terminated at least one hosting relationship.

We asked organizations to categorize relationships according to the following:

- 1) Relationships that lasted as long as or longer than the period of time initially anticipated, or in which participants found other housing prior to the end of the anticipated housing period (“Successful matches”)
- 2) Relationships that the organization had to terminate earlier than anticipated (“Unsuccessful matches”)
- 3) Relationships that were ongoing at the time of the survey

*Of the surveyed programs, 21 of 26 respondents were at a late enough stage that they’d made some number of matches, while 5 still had not made their first match. 15 of the 21 who’d made matches had made over 10 matches, while the other 7 had made fewer than 10 matches. Among the 15 that had made over 10 matches, 3 did not respond fully to the questions we posed. Because of this, the analysis presented here looks exclusively at the 12 organizations who had facilitated over 10 hosting relationships and who had fully responded to the survey questions.



Looking solely at relationships that had already run their full course (i.e., excluding any relationships that were ongoing at the time of the survey), we found that the 12 programs we analyzed reported an 82% average success rate and an 86% median success rate among their matches. The corollary to these numbers is that approximately 14% (median) to 18% (average) of the relationships ended early.

The table below demonstrates the reasons these 12 programs cited for ending hosting relationships earlier than intended.

	# of programs reporting
Violence between participants	0
Host was violent with participant	0
Participant was violent with host	1
Theft in home	4
Major damage to home	2
Mental health issue related to participant	8
Mental health issue related to host	2
Poor communication or interpersonal conflict	10
Participant substance abuse issue	5
Host substance abuse issue	0

When looking at this table, it is important to consider the number of programs who did not report a specific problem. For example, while a single program reported that a participant was violent with a host, 11 of the 12 did NOT report this as a problem. This demonstrates that in many cases, the risks programs were (understandably) most concerned about did not actually occur once the program began. The most commonly cited issues included interpersonal conflict and participants' mental health issues.



To be clear, the numbers on the previous table represent the number of programs who reported a specific reason for terminating a relationship, not the number of relationships that were terminated for any of those reasons. Our survey did not ask how many relationship terminations each program attributed to a given reason. If, for example, a program reported that they terminated 10 relationships and that the reasons were interpersonal conflict and theft, we could not say how many of the 10 were attributable to conflict and how many to theft.

Other reasons cited for ending relationships early included:

- Location of home created difficulty for participant to get to and from their place of employment; and
- Participant and host beliefs about safety needs were not aligned.

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING RISKS

All programs try and mitigate the risks they anticipate. The table below outlines common strategies that were reported.

Risk mitigation strategy	# of programs applying
24-hour support	16
Back-up homes	13
Robust insurance plan	12
Emergency funds to address damage	10

Other strategies that respondents reported included:

- On-call support, volunteer-led peer supports, and volunteer-led youth supports;
- Liability waivers, program agreements, host residence communal agreements, case management, and household meetings;
- Extensive training of staff and hosts;
- Risk management and contingency plans; and
- Robust policies, procedures, and protocols.



LIMITATIONS

LIMITATIONS

While the data collected from this survey can offer valuable insights, there are always limitations when it comes to interpreting survey data. Here are some of the limitations in ours:

- **Non-representative sample:** Though we sent the survey to many programs, we did not reach out to every host home program in the country. We only contacted those with a web presence that allowed us to find them with relative ease. Furthermore, the 26 programs who chose to respond may not be representative of even all 49 we reached out to. For example, it may be that only the most successful programs chose to respond to our survey.
- **Subjectivity:** Surveys are subject to interpretation. While we did our best to write clear questions, it is possible, even likely, that different programs interpreted some of our questions differently.
- **Short histories:** Many programs were relatively new, and it's likely that we would learn something different from programs who have been operating for longer.
- **Variety of populations and purposes:** The programs that responded to the survey served a number of different purposes, from providing emergency housing to providing long-term rentals. They also served different populations (e.g., older adults vs. youth). There are limits to what can be concluded when comparing programs with different goals and client populations.
- **Self-reported data:** All the information we received was reported by the host home programs themselves, a methodology that can elicit incomplete, biased, or otherwise inaccurate responses.

While there are limitations to the conclusions we can draw from this survey, we hope that by presenting the data, new programs will be better equipped to:

- Set realistic program goals;
- Seek out the programs in their state who are most likely to face similar legal and bureaucratic challenges, and who may have useful advice;
- Build on the ideas of programs that have come before; and
- Contextualize their own program among other similar programs.



CONCLUSION

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This report is intended to offer insight into what host home programs across the country have been doing to support program participants and hosts. We hope it will be useful to others looking to develop or promote similar programs in their own locales.

There is still much more to explore. When we designed the survey, we aimed for a length that could be completed relatively quickly by program staff. This meant that we left some of our questions unasked. In addition, many of the programs that responded to the survey were still nascent at the time of their responses. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the many housing crises across the country and the rising interest in the concept of host homes. We know these programs will have even more to share once they have been operating for longer. Given all this, we hope to circulate an updated survey in the future. Some of the additional topics we are curious to explore include:

- Success of program participants, disaggregated by demographic information (e.g., race, age, job status, school status);
- Conversion rate over the course of the host recruitment process (e.g., how many people see advertising, go through vetting process, and ultimately become hosts?);
- Host characteristics that programs deem important to the success of hosting relationships;
- Reasons that programs reject prospective hosts;
- Success of program participants following their exit from host homes programs; and
- Impact of the local economy/housing market on the long-term success of program participants.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all host homes programs who participated in the survey! You are doing incredibly hard, important work, and we are so grateful to be learning from and with you.

