

## **Spotlight: Marin Youth Home (MY Home)**

Launched in late 2015, Marin Youth Home (MY Home) is a partnership between the Marin Probation Department and Seneca Family of Agencies establishing the first local Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC)<sup>1</sup> home in the county dedicated to serving youth with delinquency system involvement. ISFC provides intensive therapeutic services in a foster family home setting and acts as a supportive alternative to congregate care. Using an ISFC placement for [probation-involved youth who need out-of-home placements](#) fits within statewide reforms, such as Continuum of Care Reform (CCR), that push to increase the numbers of youth in family-like settings and reduce congregate care.

Currently there are two MY Home locations, each with two beds, with one home serving boys and one home serving girls for a maximum stay of six months. Mental health services are integrated in the MY Homes. In its first 18 months, MY Home graduated five probation youth through the program.

Youth placed in MY Home are under the care of specially-trained foster parents, not program staff directly employed by Seneca. Youth participate in education, employment, or other life skills activities, and are also required to abide by program curfews and complete household chores. All MY Home foster parents receive training in special education as part of their recruitment and onboarding so they know what to do if the youth placed with them has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or exhibits an undiagnosed [disability](#) that may require an IEP assessment. Additional support for youth comes from a case manager, probation staff including a Re-entry Coordinator, and access to educational, vocational and treatment programs.

Upon entry into the MY Home program, youth complete a transitional living plan outlining next steps anticipated after the program is completed. The plan focuses on helping the youth move to independent living. After their six-month placement ends at MY Home, exit options depend on a youth's circumstances and age. Youth preparing their departure out of MY Home can utilize the county's [Wraparound Program](#) contract to receive whatever supports they need to transition to independence or to help integrate into another placement or housing option. Though the focus is on older adolescents, the program has placed younger youth at MY Home as a short-term placement while working to license or approve a non-ISFC foster parent (e.g., a relative or non-related extended family member who is in the process of completing Resource Family Approval).

Part of MY Home's success is attributable to the close collaboration between partners. The Marin County Probation Department and Seneca Family of Agencies partner closely to implement the program with the additional support of the County Mental Health Department to help set up appropriate service contracts. The director of MY Home meets quarterly with the Chief Probation Officer while more regular Family Team Meetings take place with probation officers monthly. Seneca takes the lead in providing permanency services, assisting with reunification to a parent or identifying another caring adult in the young person's life. The program includes some informal partnerships for referrals within the school system, community colleges, and community-based organizations that help

youth find jobs. MY Home also provides updates to the County Child Welfare Agency on a regular basis, providing a general overview of the program and a count of how many beds are available.

Another success factor has been Seneca's ability to recruit foster parents to work specifically with older probation youth. In Marin, foster families have been recruited from people who are already working in the field of foster care in some capacity and want to become "professional parents." For example, the current MY Home foster parents are employees of Seneca Family of Agencies but are employed in a different division. This is unique to the MY Home partnership as other, smaller provider agencies are unlikely to consider allowing staff to be foster parents because it adds an additional layer of complexity. This works in Marin because Seneca Family of Agencies is big enough to allow people working in one division to be foster parents in the MY Home program without having any conflicts overseeing their staff.

There are four main funding streams that support MY Home. Mental health services to eligible youth are funded by [Medi-Cal EPSDT](#). Because it is a foster care placement, funding is also provided by [federal Title IV-E](#) or [state AFDC-FC](#). State funded [Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support \(FPRRS\)](#) funding is used for outreach and advertising to recruit foster parents, help with respite needs and appreciation bonuses for foster parents, and more. Finally, the Marin County Probation Department allocates \$25,000 each year from the [Youthful Offender Block Grant \(YOBG\)](#) to cover the cost of empty beds so the program can continue to run when not at full capacity. YOBG funds also support mental health services for youth who do not qualify for Medi-Cal. Through the combination of these funding streams, MY Home families continue to receive consistent financial support even as the number of youth in the program ebbs and flows. MY Home families also get an additional housing stipend beyond the state ISFC rate to help cover the high cost of housing in the area, if necessary.

### More Information

Marin Youth Home (MY Home) Presentation at CPOC's First Annual Continuum of Care Reform Conference (June 12, 2017): <https://www.cpoc.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/7-session-2-2-my-home-presentationcpoc-6.8-1r.pdf>.

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly known as Intensive Treatment Foster Care. See California Department of Social Services, All-County Letter 11-71: Phase II Implementation of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) Home-Based Family Care (HBFC) and Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP) Rates Structure and Conversion Process from the Old Rate Structure to the New Rate Structure (Jan. 31, 2017), at 2, available at <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2017/17-11.pdf>.