

# Research in Brief

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## Integrated Housing Support Services for Out-of-Home Care Leavers

**Sang-Jung Lee**

Associate Research Fellow, KIHASA

### Introduction

There are a total of 30,000 children in out-of-home care, of whom 2,600 leave the system every year upon turning 18. Once out of the material and emotional care of the out-of-home care system, most of these care leavers, unsupported by their own families, get exposed to various risks, including maladaptation, poverty, early marriage, homelessness, crime, and unemployment. To help out-of-home care leavers succeed in transitioning to community life requires getting them prepared while still in care for self-reliance and providing them with adequate post-care support for self-reliance.

A survey conducted in 2016 of care leavers found that the difficulties out-of-home care leavers most often encountered were economic hardship (31.1 percent) and housing problems (21.2 percent). The services they needed most were support for living costs (41.1 percent) and support for housing (36.3 percent).

Existing housing support programs (such as Jeonse Rental Housing and Purchased Rental Housing) and financial assistance schemes (such as Child Development Account and Self-Reliance Account) have been viewed as too provider-centered—piecemeal and fragmented—and therefore insufficient to meet the needs of the intended target group. It has been often argued that self-reliance support for care leavers should be accompanied with psycho-emotional support and long-term housing and financial support.

The government has implemented in July 2019 a pilot project on integrated housing support for out-of-home care leavers. This brief examines the integrated housing support program and users' satisfaction with it, and draws implications for policy improvement.



## Integrated housing support

Integrated housing support has its basis in Article 38 and Article 48 of the Child Welfare Act. The responsible agencies include the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the National Center for the Rights of the Child, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, the Korea Land and Housing Corporation (LH), and local government bodies.

The integrated housing support program provides 2 years of out-of-care housing support to young people leaving out-of-home care (a deposit of KRW 1 million, utilities and other maintenance expenses are the occupant's responsibility). The program provides care leavers a home environment improvement allowance of KRW 500,000 and a monthly support of KRW 200,000 for case management expenses, which can be used for education or for getting oneself enrolled in a certificate course.

The program also aims to help care leavers build, with the help of integrated case managers, a foundation for later socioeconomic and psychological self-reliance. The integrated housing support program is targeted to those within 5 years after having been aged out of out-of-home care who are living or will be living in the areas of housing provision.

An integrated case manager has more than 2 years of work experience as a self-reliance support specialist (or an equivalent position) at a residential child care facility. There is one integrated case manager for every 30 care leavers. Integrated case managers manage their clients' housing conditions and handle cases concerning the extension or termination of housing support services. An integrated case manager is expected to visit her clients on a regular basis, provide them with consulting services and information about jobs and schools, check out their living conditions, and see to it that they have the services they need.



## A survey of users of the integrated housing support program

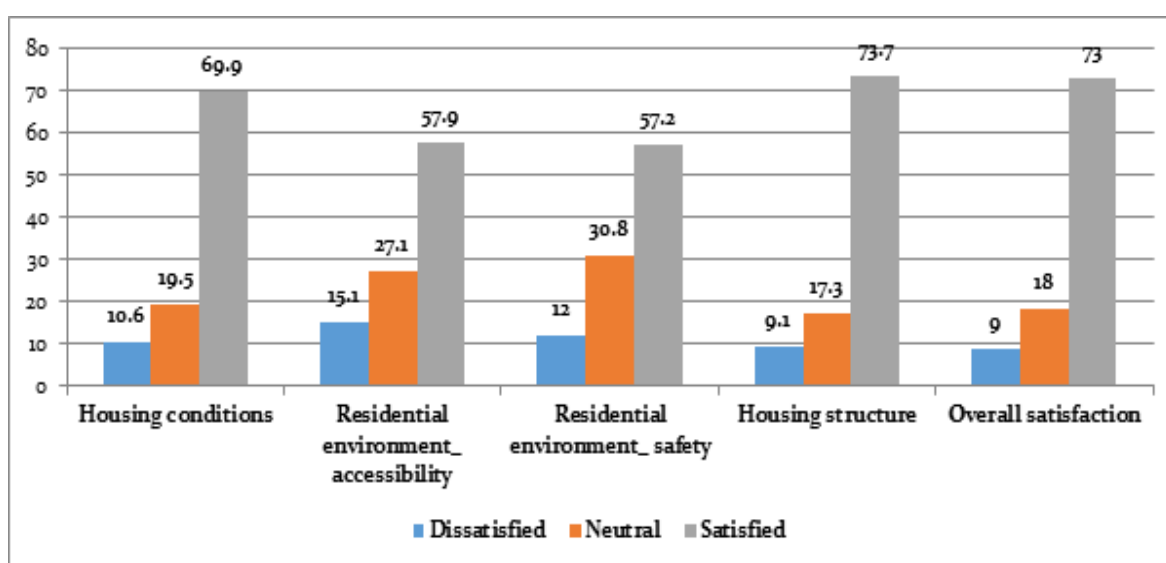
We conducted a survey in November 2019 of users of integrated housing support services. Of a total of 180 individuals who were given the questionnaire, 133 (74 percent) responded. The respondents were on average 22.7 years old and 53.4 percent female. They had stayed 11.5 years on average in out-of-home care, with 51.1 percent having been aged out of the system. One in three respondents (33.1 percent) had experienced staying at temporary accommodation. The respondents gave a high score of 3.9 (out of a possible 5) for their housing conditions, general residential environment, and housing structure. The overall satisfaction rate was over 70 percent. Meanwhile, both "accessibility" and "safety" received a relatively low score of 3.6. Relatively large shares of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with accessibility (15.1 percent) and safety (12 percent).

[Table 1] Out-of-Home Care leavers' satisfaction with housing conditions and residential environment

	Housing conditions	Residential environment_ accessibility	Residential environment_ safety	Housing structure	General satisfaction
Average	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.9	3.9
Standard deviation	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.0	0.9
No. of cases	133				

Source: Sang-Jung Lee et al. (2019). Self-reliance Allowance and Integrated Housing Support Services for Out-of-Home Care Leavers. P. 141.

[Figure 1] Out-of-Home Care leavers' satisfaction with housing conditions and residential environment



Source: Sang-Jung Lee et al. (2019). Self-reliance Allowance and Integrated Housing Support Services for Out-of-Home Care Leavers. P. 141.

Of the respondents, 107 said they wished to extend their housing contract; 8 in ten respondents said they would still be wanting to continue living in their current residence after the initial contract of 2 years. The respondents cited “low housing costs” (74.1 percent), easy access to public transportation (18.5 percent), convenience facilities (13.9 percent), and proximity to work, school, etc. (13.0 percent) as reasons for wanting to extend their housing contracts.

**[Table 2] Reasons for wanting or not wanting to extend the housing contract**

	Extension (n=1017)		No extension (n=26)	
	No. of cases	%	No. of cases	%
Air-conditioning, soundproof, etc.	12	11.1	7	26.9
Distance from work, school, etc.	13	13.0	8	30.8
Easy access to subway, bus, etc.	20	18.5	3	11.5
Easy access to markets, marts, hospitals, etc.	15	13.9	3	11.5
Distance from friends and family	8	7.4	1	3.8
Safety	10	9.3	3	11.5
Housing costs (deposit, utilities, etc.)	80	74.1	-	-
Pursuing a new employment opportunity or further schooling elsewhere	-	-	7	26.9
Other	5	4.6	7	26.9

Source: Sang-Jung Lee et al. (2019). Self-reliance Allowance and Integrated Housing Support Services for Out-of-Home Care Leavers. P. 142.

As many as 97 percent of the respondents said integrated case managers were helpful; 73.3 percent thought they needed at least 2 years of assistance from their integrated case managers. The types of help that the respondents wanted from their integrated case managers were information about self-reliance services or benefits (73.7 percent), consultation on problems associated with self-reliance (45.1 percent), and issues with housing conditions (33.8 percent).

## Concluding remarks

Housing instability leads to a repeated oscillation between being at-risk and being out-of-risk. In this situation, it is hard to expect self-reliance support to produce its intended impact on its young clients' academic performance, employment and career path. In this regard, it is necessary to classify out-of-home care leavers as a housing-vulnerable group, so as to provide them with stable housing. As the outcome of the above-mentioned survey suggests, the integrated housing support program needs to be expanded and provide housing to out-of-home care leavers (young people living in one-person households who are socially active with school and work) in safe environments with convenient access to public transportation. Also, considering the likely increases in users of integrated housing support services, the number of integrated case managers should be increased and the number of cases each manager takes on needs to be adjusted accordingly.