



think of us

Driving Systems Change  
in Child Welfare

# Building Bridges to Success: Moving Forward for Tennessee's Children and Youth



think of **us**



think of US

# What area are we focused on today?

*(PREVENTION)*

A new way of  
supporting birth  
parents, children  
and youth



*(Kinship Care)*

A new normal that  
almost all children  
and youth live with  
someone they  
know



*(Older Youth)*

Young people who  
exit the system  
have the support  
to thrive



# Five Strategic Goals



SG1

**Create Proof Points  
for How the System  
Can Work**

*Create rigorous evidence  
that our models work  
better than traditional  
child welfare*



SG2

**Accelerate  
Implementation of  
What Works**

*Help jurisdictions move  
from pilots to statewide  
implementation  
reaching thousands*



SG3

**Make Bold Moves to  
Center Lived  
Experience, Data,  
Technology, and  
Innovation**

*Ensure lived experience  
leadership and  
continuously test new  
approaches*



SG4

**Radically  
Collaborate to  
Structurally Change  
the System**

*Partner with  
organizations and  
mobilize constituencies  
for systems change*

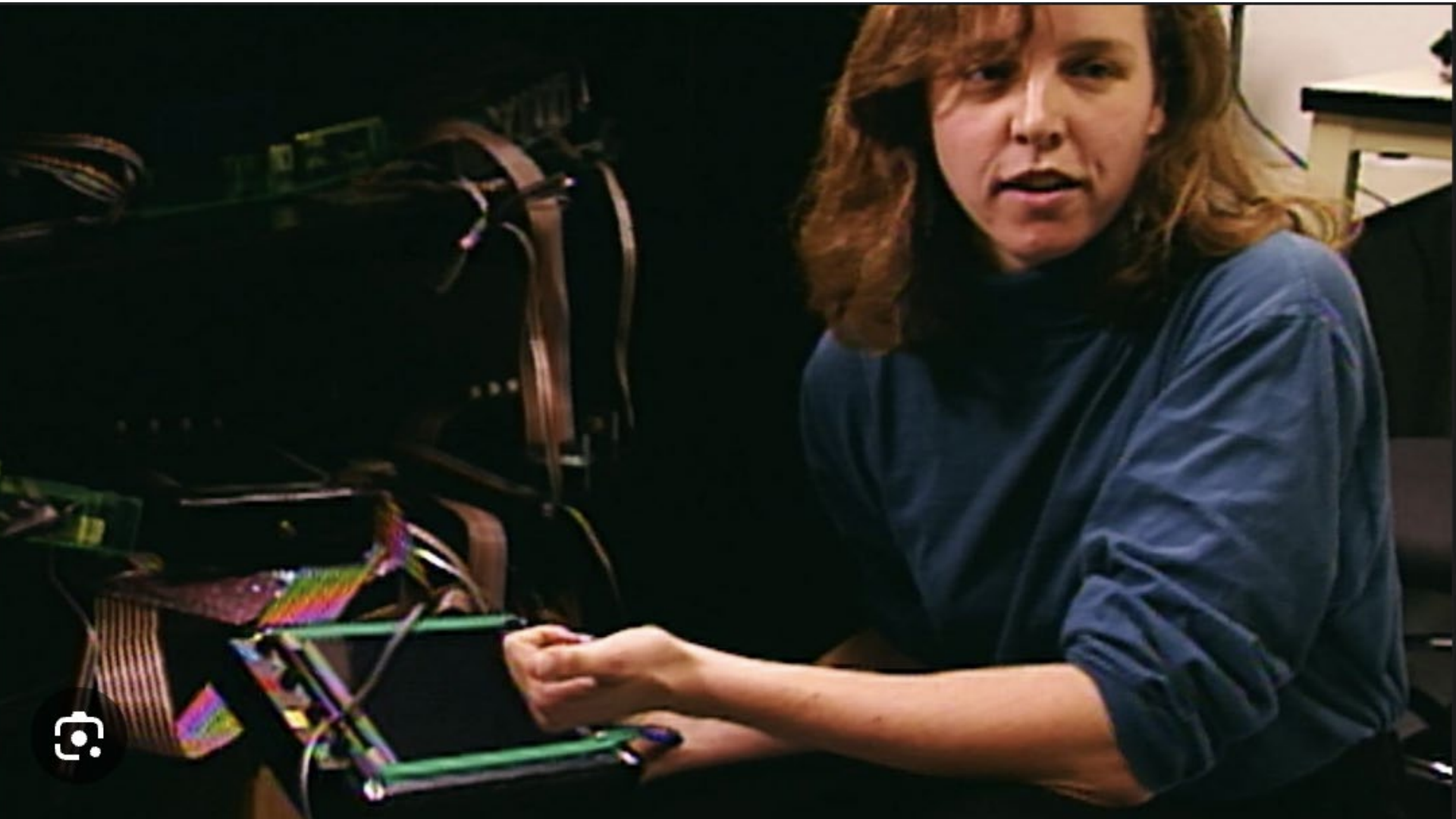


SG5

**Become a World-  
Class Place to Work**

*Build internal  
capabilities and  
resources to sustain  
and scale our impact*

***Our work is guided by 5 ambitious goals that define what success looks like for the organization over the next 3-5 years***



# Building Bridges to Success: Moving Forward for Tennessee's Children and Youth



To build bridges to success,  
we must become bridge builders.



# Being a **bridge builder** means you...



**Have clarity**  
in your aligned contribution.

**Have tools** to help  
solve the right problems.

**Have discernment**  
to find the **way forward**.

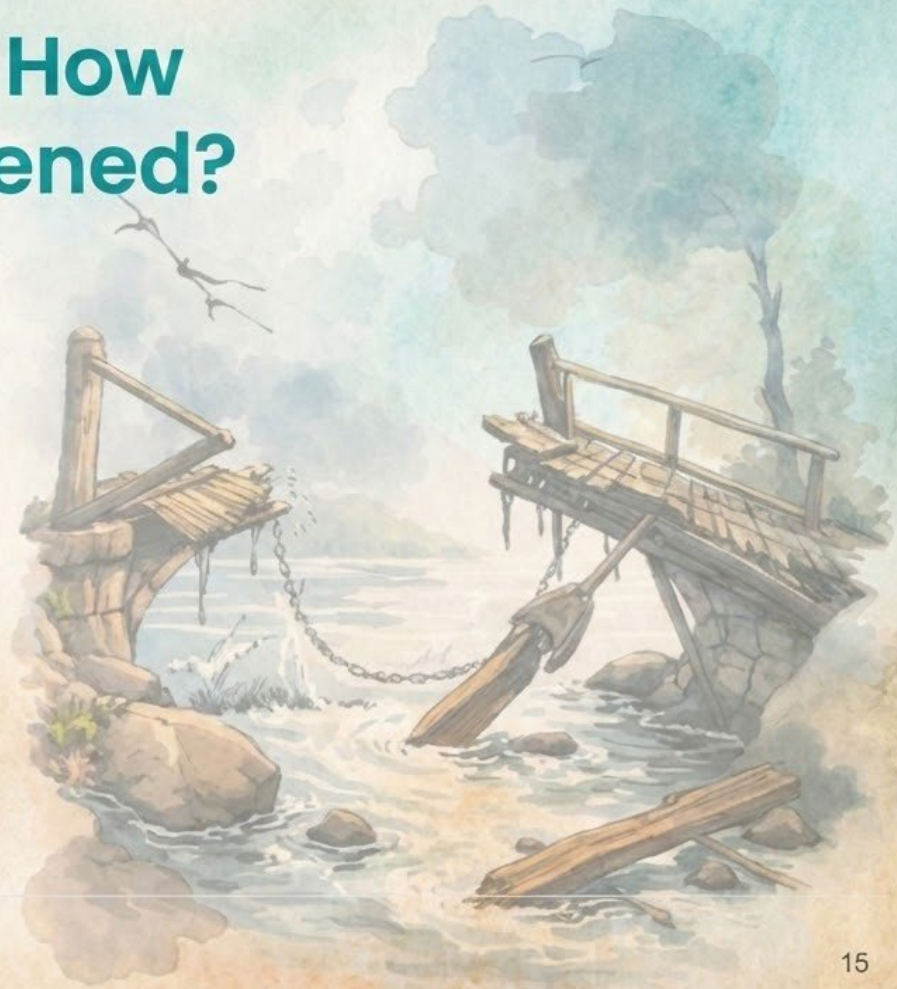


# I wish I was speaking from a place of **perfection**

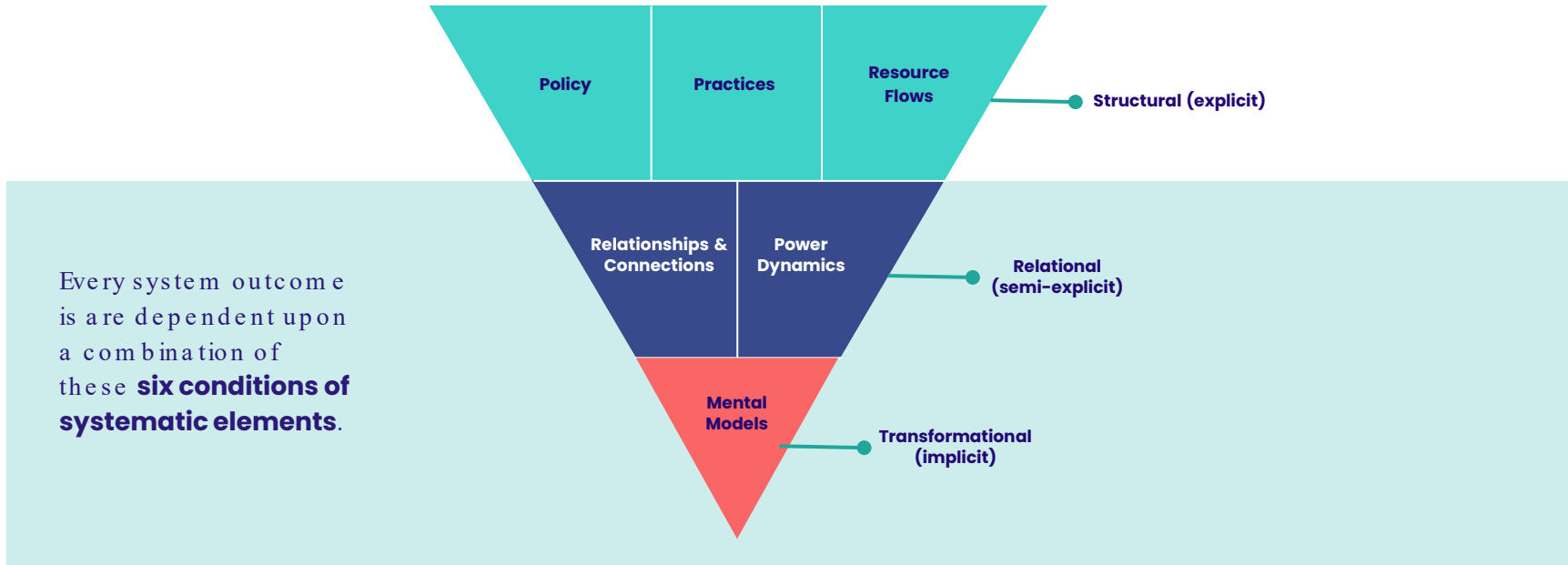
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# Who let this happen? How could this have happened?



# Bridge Building: Are all solving to the “right” problem...



# TOU Systems Design Method to meet the moment

## Diagnose

*TOU and partner organizations conduct assessment of existing work to identify needs and evaluate which module is the most appropriate entry point for a proposed intervention/partnership opportunity.*

### Understand + Define

#### IDENTIFY

*Surface pain points and opportunities for transformation in the system*

#### REFRAME

*Develop a differentiated and nuanced understanding of the pain point or opportunity*

### Design & Implement

#### SCOUT

*Leverage existing solutions (applying innovation and technology) OR co-create new ones*

#### IDEATE

*Determine the tools needed to address the pain point or opportunity considering the needs of impacted individuals*

### Codify

#### REPLICATE

*When applicable, scale solutions at the county, state, and/or federal level to drive sustainable impact*

#### UPGRADE

*When applicable, infuse solutions into the system's DNA through codified policy and shifts in mental models*

**STAY PROXIMATE & Center Lived Experience**

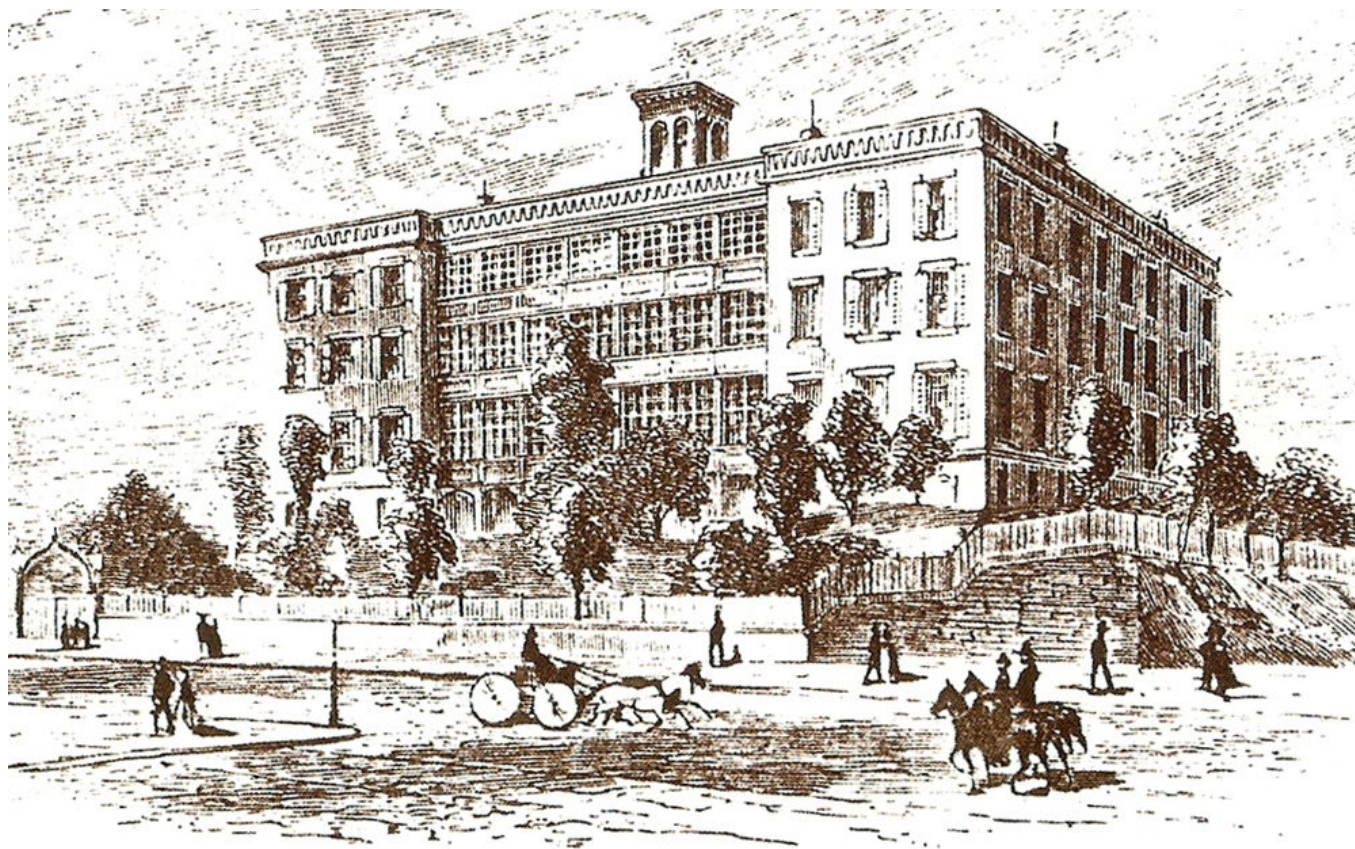
KEY



dotted line indicates that not all partnerships result in Codify – some solutions can be deployed as localized, targeted interventions that don't require scale or recoding public policy.









think of us



Handwritten notes on the leftmost sheet, organized into columns. Includes a header section with several lines of text.

Handwritten notes on the second sheet from the left, organized into columns. Includes a header section with several lines of text.

Handwritten notes on the third sheet from the left, organized into columns. Includes a header section with several lines of text.

Handwritten notes on the fourth sheet from the left, organized into columns. Includes a header section with several lines of text.




Handwritten notes on the fifth sheet from the left, organized into columns. Includes a header section with several lines of text.



“All I ever wanted was for a family but I was told I was too old so I was kept in a group home until I aged out. I wasn't given the necessary things or resources to survive once I got out and I got kicked out of my program for not being productive because I lost the will to live because I didn't know what to do with my life now that it was my own.”

(MP-LT-AZ-01)





— Jose M.   




—  Me


1<sup>st</sup>



— Tempest  



Work


— Swan 





— Kristy 

— Allen   8<sup>th</sup>

— Malysia  

— Asunte 



2<sup>nd</sup>

— Bong  

— Sage

This youth established a clear ranking (from first to fourth) of the different sub-groups of people in their life (in order: romantic partner, friends, co-workers, foster family).

Family  
Foster Family

—  Kim ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ 

4<sup>th</sup>

This youth's "favorite person in the world" happens to be a paid staff.

Family  
grandparents,  
Parents,  
siblings

My favorite  
person the  
world!  
My guidance.

Kyanna



Real  
Friends  
all 3 of  
them  
☺ ☺ ☺  
♀ ♀ ♂

Boy friend

people who  
care for me  
and who I can  
call or whenever  
for advice  
(like family)



SARAH (ILP)



The most prominent relationship this youth highlighted is the one with their ILP case manager.

COMMUNITY



Story. N  
WHITE  
95127

her family!

BSF

Lauren

(Friend)



DAD

MOM

little



(Family)

Brother

Sometimes, **mental models and cultural norms** are the biggest barriers on the path to success...

And it's **on us all** to overcome them.



Systemic  
Barriers



Status Quo  
Thinking



Stereotypes



What is your role in a **movement** to  
fight for **children and youth**?



# Clock & Cloud | Impact Models

**PROGRAM  
INNOVATOR**

**PROGRAM  
OPERATOR**

**PRACTICE  
SPREADER**

*aka*

**WIDESPREAD  
IMPACT**

**ECOSYSTEM CATALYST**

**CHANGE MANAGEMENT PARTNER**

**SOCIAL MOVEMENT BUILDER**



## Targeted Solutions

To address urgent,  
localized,  
time-bound needs

## Solutions at Scale

To address a  
widespread need in  
a sustained way

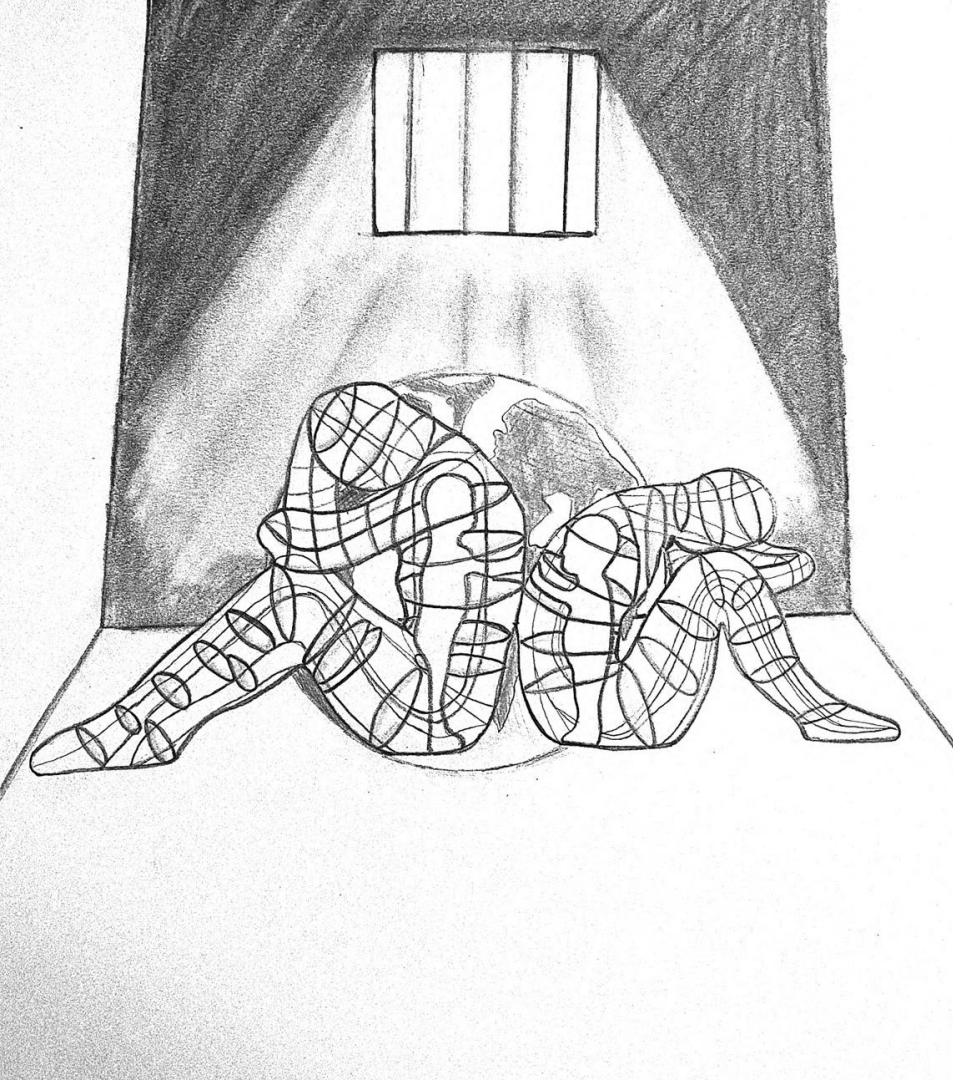
## Systemic Innovations

To disrupt a problematic  
pattern or amplify a  
positive one



## Systemic Transformation

To commit to improving  
the health of a system by  
affecting its web of  
underlying patterns



**“I think of what I drew as a piece that symbolizes us the kids in foster care feeling trapped. I do not want to fail in my life and I feel trapped in the fear of getting old. I also think it shows how the adults are turned on one another but there is these children inside them trying to get out. You see a almost prisoner-like setting because being in the system can feel like a prison or life sentence.”**

**(TF-ST-AZ-01)**

# Normal?

What is normal?

Is it a feeling?

Perhaps an emotion

Whatever it is

I will never know

Is it a prescription?

What aisle is it at the grocery store?

Is it something I can even afford

Wherever would I find it?

What does it smell like?

Can you touch it?

Perhaps it tastes good

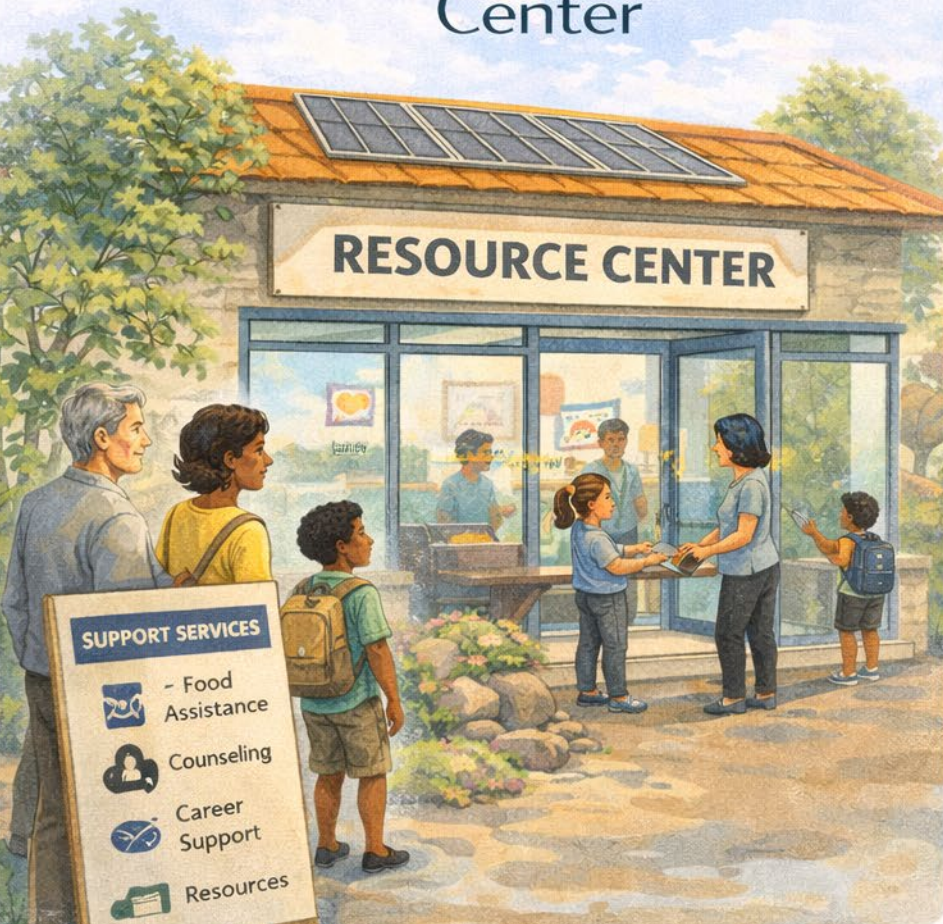
But how would I know if I found it?

What is normal?

**“I was an LGBTQ youth in placements  
that were not accepting. That’s why  
I wrote this poem.”**

**— Timothy Dennis**

# Non-profit Resource Center



# In-Home Services



# Pushing for Better Data and Oversight of Group Facilities

In April 2023, Sixto joined U.S. Sens. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), John Cornyn (R-TX), Tommy Tuberville (R-AL) and U.S. Reps. Ro Khanna (D-CA) and Buddy Carter (R-GA), along with Paris Hilton and other survivors of institutional abuse, for a news conference to uplift the introduction of the bipartisan Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act (SICAA).



**PBS NEWS** Menu Full Episodes Podcasts Newsletters

**PBS NEWS WEEKEND**

## Why children and teens in residential treatment centers are vulnerable to abuse

Jul 13, 2024 5:30 PM EDT

More From This Episode

Support Provided By: **THE GREAT AMERICAN**

# US Senate Finance Committee Hearings

JUNE 12, 2024

## Wyden Investigation Exposes Systemic Taxpayer-Funded Child Abuse and Neglect in Youth Residential Treatment Facilities

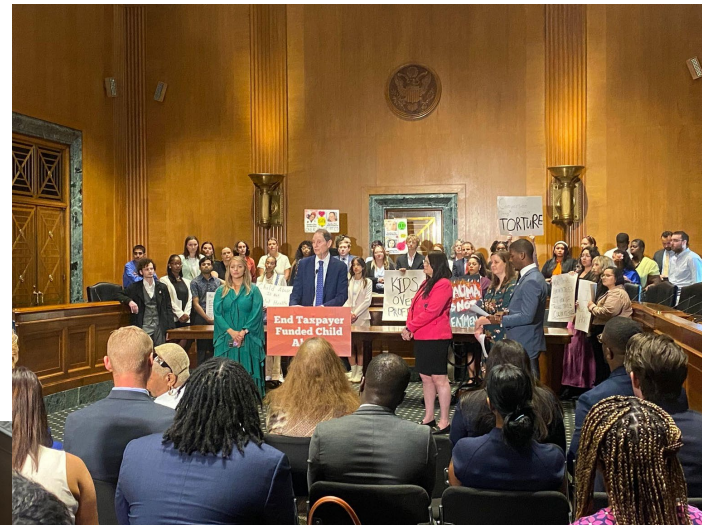
*Two-year investigation of four major companies reveals RTFs receive billions of dollars in federal funding - including Medicaid and child welfare dollars - and provide substandard care and subject kids to abuse and neglect Report calls for Congress, industry, federal government agencies, and states to raise standards for congregate care, strengthen*

### Related Files

- [rtf\\_report\\_warehouses\\_of\\_neglect1.pdf](#)
- [rtf\\_report\\_appendix\\_ii\\_exhibits\\_part1.pdf](#)
- [rtf\\_report\\_appendix\\_ii\\_exhibits\\_part21.pdf](#)
- [rtf\\_report\\_appendix\\_ii\\_exhibits\\_part31.pdf](#)
- [RTF Report\\_Appendix II\\_Exhibits\\_Part4-1.pdf](#)

### Recent News

- 06/13/24Wyden Urges Biden Administration to Investigate UnitedHealth Group Negligent Cybersecurity
- 06/13/24Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Markup of Treasury, U.S. Tax Court Nominations



Wyden, D-Ore., today released the findings of a two-year investigation into child abuse and neglect in youth residential treatment facilities. The report revealed that children in these facilities were often subjected to inappropriate restraints and seclusions.





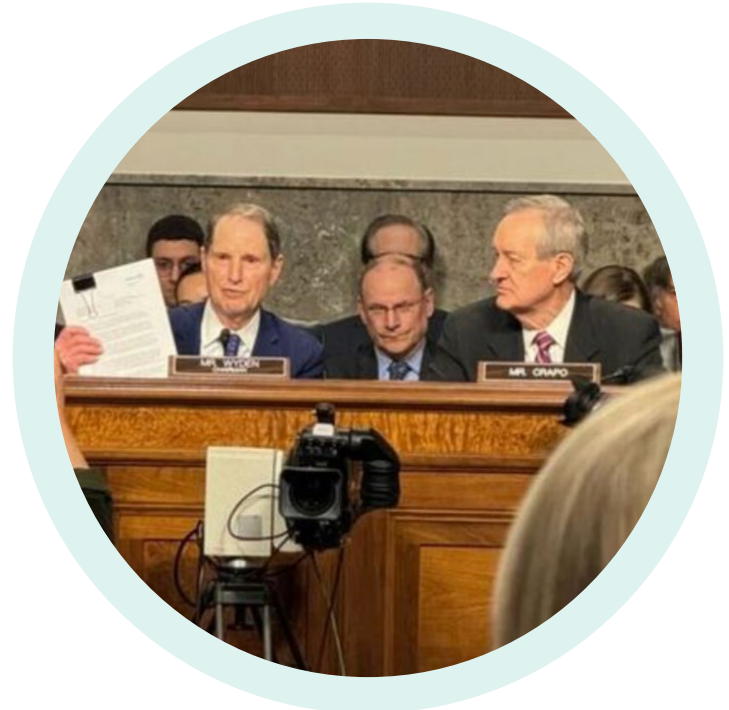
*"To the victims in the audience and around the country who suffered abuse and neglect in a residential treatment facility, your experience is entirely unacceptable. Facilities entrusted with caring for our most vulnerable youth should be held to the highest standards, and subject to routine, reliable oversight. Chronic patterns of failure must not go unnoticed or unaddressed."*

-  
Senator Mike Crapo, R - ID



*"I look out over the room and see the survivors and families...I've read a number of your accounts...I just want you to know that you have not made this trip, thousands of miles to Washington, D.C. just to hear us talk for a little bit and call it a day. You have laid out a blueprint for the kinds of changes that are necessary."*

-  
Senator Ron Wyden, D - OR



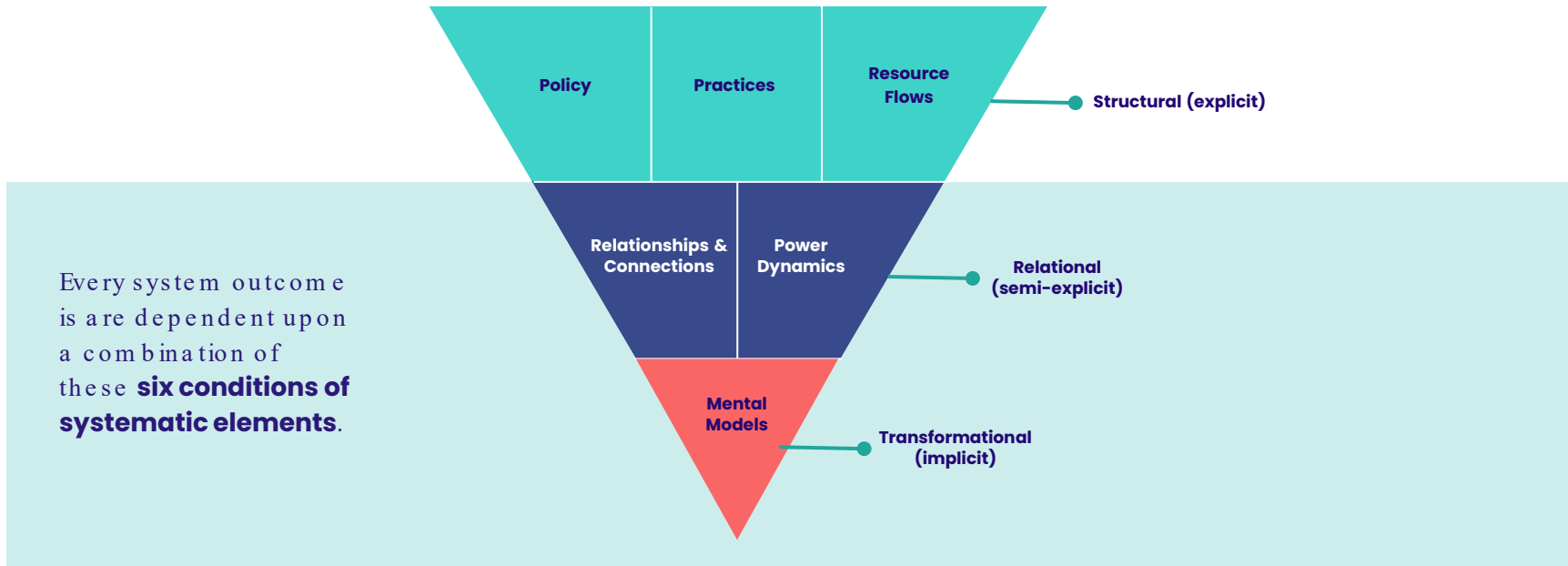
Senators Mike Crapo and Ron Wyden during the Senate Finance Committee hearing, submitting into record written testimonies collected by Think of Us that documented systematic abuses in residential treatment facilities.



MS HILTON

MR GEEN

# Bridge Building: Are all solving to the “right” problem...



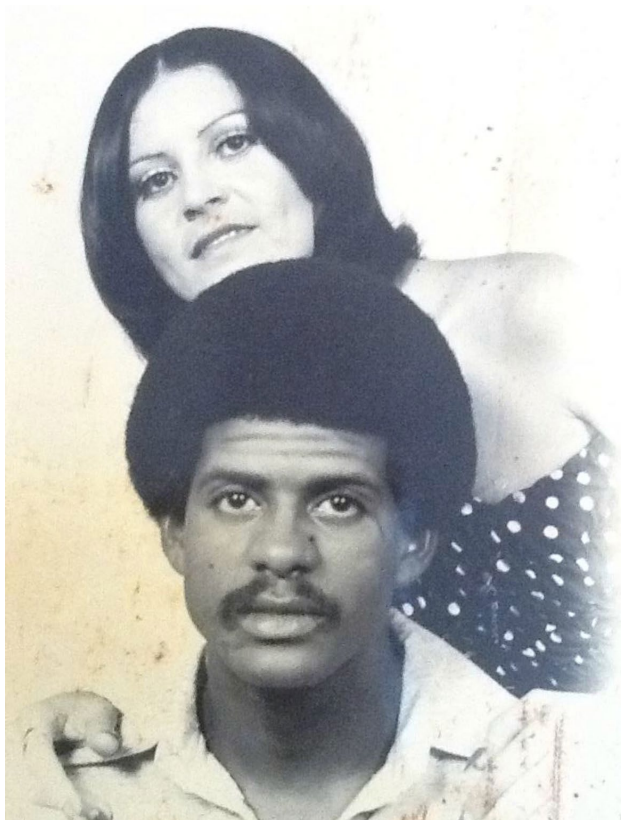
# Dig Deeper: Healing and Dealing With Trauma

- Foster youth are **2x more likely than Iraq war veterans** to experience PTSD
- **42.9%** had any mental-health diagnosis **vs. 13.5%** of other medicaid youth (2019)
- Behavior/conduct disorders: **≈4.5× other Medicaid youth**



## What if family is the answer? - kinship care

- **3x fewer** behavioral problems and disruptions
- **~49% lower odds of** anxiety/depression/behavior disorders for children raised by relatives.
- Compared to kinship care, youth in **traditional foster care were 1.7x more** likely to attempt suicide
- Higher education, employment engagement and more





SHIRO  
IARU

adidas

PS9

Hollywood

ADIE

**CASE PLANNING GOAL**

**Permanency Plan Goal:** Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

**Target Date:** 12/31/2012

**Progress/Barriers:** [REDACTED]

**Concurrent Goal:** N/A

**Progress/Barriers:** Indep. Living is the goal for this youth.

**Conditions of the Child That Influence the Permanency Goal:**

Sixto adamantly refused to be reunified with Mrs. Santiago. Sixto is working on living independently.

**Compelling Reason for Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement:**

Sixto refused reunification and adoption. No viable resources for transfer of guardianship. [REDACTED]

**PLACEMENT**

**Date of most recent removal from home:** 3/28/2008

we can order it now okay, perfect

# National Children's Bureau Convening on Kinship Care

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In partnership with Think of Us



AGENDA

## National Convening on Kinship Care

March 14, 2024

think of us

Driving Systems Change in Child Welfare

I support kinship care because...

*I grew up in kinship care & my family was able to take guardianship of myself + my siblings. I also am a kinship care provider so that the system did not have to get involved and raise my family.*

*it matters, my family matters, my culture matters*

National Convening on Kinship Care / March 14, 2024

I support kinship care because...

**I AM KIN!**

**FAMILIES BELONG TOGETHER.**

think of us

Driving Systems Change in Child Welfare



EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE



Thank You!  
sixto@thinkofus.org

