



# 2024 Youth Transitions Advisory Council Annual Report



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**Meeting Summaries are Available on the TCCY Website**

<https://www.tn.gov/tccy/programs0/ytac/tccy-ytac-youth-transitions-advisory-council-meeting->



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- Ginger Harris, Youth Engagement Coordinator, Office of Independent Living, Department of Children's Services.
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TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON  
**CHILDREN & YOUTH**

## OVERVIEW

In accordance with T.C.A. 37-2-601 – 37-2-606 the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth is pleased to provide the 2024 Annual Report of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council. The Youth Transitions Advisory Council brings dedicated advocates together from across the state who are developing and implementing new strategies to meet the challenges of engaging former foster youth and other young adults as they make the critical transition from adolescence to adulthood. This report outlines the work of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council as the members continue to develop strategies to assist these young adults as they prepare for success in the lives ahead of them. Included in this report are seven recommendations for continued improvement in providing services for former foster youth and other young people facing challenges in their daily lives.

The choices we make and the goals we set regarding education, career and interpersonal relationships shape the opportunities and outcomes available to us later in life. As we all know from experiences with the young adults in our lives, and as a growing body of research confirms, the human brain continues to grow and develop well past the age of 18. Brain executive functions such as good judgment and understanding the consequences of our actions are among the last to develop, often in the mid-twenties. Additional research shows that trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) affect the outcomes of many of young people.

For former foster youth, the challenge of that transition is even greater because they often lack the important emotional and financial support nurturing parents provide their adult children. Prior to the advent of extension of foster care services, former foster youth often were left to fend for themselves upon aging out of state custody. Estranged from their families, lacking adequate education and social skills, many of these young people found themselves in dire circumstances, unable to meet their daily needs, continue their education, compete for jobs, find suitable housing, or access adequate health or mental health care services. Many former foster youth experience homelessness, unplanned pregnancies or have encounters with the criminal justice system because they aged out of custody without the proper tools to face the challenges of modern life most adults experience today.

Extension of foster care services allows these youth the opportunity to complete or continue their education with access to health care, housing assistance and other supports to help them succeed in life, while at the same time playing an important role in achieving the goals Tennessee has set for

improving graduation rates, increasing educational attainment, building stronger families, and creating safer communities.

Youth with special healthcare needs, behavioral health, and substance abuse issues face many of the same barriers to success as they transition from child- to adult-serving systems. Young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have additional challenges. Services funded by the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and TennCare play an important role in meeting the needs of these young people.

In FY 2024, 854 young people turned 18 years of age in state custody, just seven fewer than the previous year, and following the recent trend of fewer youth aging out of custody from the previous year. There was an increase of youth aging out from 2021-2022, but the total is still below pre-pandemic levels.

Of the 854 youth aging out, 711 were eligible for EFCS with 408 accepting the services, an uptake rate of 57 percent. A total of 847 youth were served by Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS) in FY 2023-24 with 779 adjudicated dependent/neglected, 21 unruly and 47 delinquent. All of these figures are increases from FY 2022-23.

	Total Aged Out	Total Aged Out Eligible for EFCS	Eligible Population Accepting EFCS	Percent Accepting EFCS
<b>FY 2008-09</b>	1,209			
<b>FY 2009-10</b>	1,162			
<b>FY 2010-11</b>	1,131	813	163	20%
<b>FY 2011-12</b>	1,084	748	201	27%
<b>FY 2012-13</b>	1,017	768	301	39%
<b>FY 2013-14</b>	984	779	312	40%
<b>FY 2014-15</b>	932	731	353	48%
<b>FY 2015-16</b>	996	815	388	48%
<b>FY 2016-17</b>	935	793	349	44%
<b>FY 2017-18</b>	961	790	367	46%
<b>FY 2018-19</b>	876	741	332	41%
<b>FY 2019-20</b>	876	755	338	45%
<b>FY 2020-21</b>	717	626	335	54%
<b>FY 2021-22</b>	801	680	297	44%
<b>FY 2022-23</b>	861	736	369	50%
<b>FY 2023-24</b>	854	711	408	57%

The average length of stay in EFCS was 280 days, slightly higher than 266 days in 2023. The median length of stay in EFCS was 186 days, up from 163 in 2023. Those who terminated voluntarily (self-termination) were the largest group losing services in FY 2023-24, followed by those who lost academic eligibility, in a reversal of last years' rankings.

Two scholarships are available to DCS youth, the federally funded Education and Training Voucher and the state-funded Bright Futures Scholarships. In FY 2024, 211 young people received these scholarships, a slight decrease from 2023.

To improve Authentic Youth Engagement, DCS created a statewide Leadership Board called the Young Adult Leadership Council that serves as the foundation for all youth engagement work throughout the state. The council consists of current and former EFC young adults from across the State of Tennessee. The Office of Independent Living coordinated with the DCS Young Adult Advisory Council to



implement the provisions of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act. The Office of Independent Living continues to coordinate four grand regional Youth 4 Youth Board meetings (2 in Grand East) in collaboration with community-based partners. Meeting topics and activities vary from region to region, but all offer a variety of informational presentations by professionals, team building events, public service opportunities, focus group and discussion topics, skill and knowledge training, college tours and fellowship with other foster youth.

The Department of Children's Services through Oasis Center continues to administer the federal Personal Responsibility Education Program to support the implementation of Wyman's Teen Outreach Program (TOP), an evidence-based Social Emotional Learning model, in selected Level II and III residential treatment centers, Metro Nashville Juvenile Detention Center and in Upper East TN communities/schools through a Juvenile Justice Reform Act project. Seven hundred and eighty-one (781) adolescents participated in TOP in these settings during FY 2024. High staff turnover continues to be an issue at several sites. By prioritizing the health and well-being of both staff and youth while also implementing innovative solutions, we are continuing to support and encourage the use of TOP programming within each agency we serve. Currently we have 3 sites that we know of that were affected by Hurricane Helene. Two weeks out, some sites do not have electricity or running water yet. TOP supports Social Emotional Learning and takes a broad youth development approach to the prevention of pregnancy and other risky behaviors by engaging youth in curriculum-guided discussion groups as well as youth-driven community service-learning projects. TOP provides important opportunities for youth to participate in "normalized" activities, consistent with the federal mandate that youth in custody have access to developmentally normative experiences as much as possible. TOP nurtures the key factors research identifies as protective from risk and adversity, including social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, sense of purpose, high expectations and opportunities for participation. TOP service-learning activities are particularly powerful vehicles for enhancing protective factors and building social and emotional skills. Youth in care provided over 7100 hours of service (a slight decrease) to Tennessee communities. Young people donated Socks and Tops to a school in their community, donated games for St. James church youth group game nights, sorted and put together toys for Toys for Kids, stocked a food pantry, groomed horses, read books to children, made cards for cops to thank them for their service to the community and prepared food for the homeless. In TOP, youth plan as well as carry out their service-learning projects, practicing skills like planning, decision-making, budgeting, teamwork, etc.

The primary support service offered to young adults who exit EFCS is Youth Villages' YVLifeSet program, designed to assist young adults between the ages of 17 and 22 who are transitioning from child welfare and juvenile justice services to adulthood to learn the skills needed to live successfully. YVLifeSet specialists carry a small average caseload of 8-10 and have multiple contacts weekly with each young person to engage on a high level. Focal areas of YVLifeSet include permanency, education, employment, housing (through natural supports), basic independent living skills and engagement. The program uses evidence-based interventions and best practices in the following areas: trauma, pregnant/parenting youth, substance abuse issues, physical and mental health, domestic violence, financial literacy and basic independent living skills. In FY 2024, YVLifeSet served a total of 1,224 youth, with 4 more participating in the program than in FY 2023. At a 12-month follow-up, 93% were

living with family or independently; 91% were either in school, had graduated, or were working; and 93% were not considered to be in legal trouble.

DCS, along with community partners, provide Resource Centers for the youth in EFC, including Monroe Harding, Memphis' Dream Seekers (South Memphis Alliance), Knoxville Project Now (The McNabb Center) and River City Youth Collective in Chattanooga (The Partnership for Families, Children and Adults). Each Resource Center, though truly unique to their region, provides a set of core services to assist youth: The Opportunity Passport™ financial management classes, high school equivalency prep, post-secondary education planning, sexual health education and assistance with finding housing and employment. Resource Centers are also supported by numerous community partners through programming, internships, part-time employment and other supports. Each Resource Center shares information in this report describing the services they provide.

The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services currently implements three initiatives addressing the needs of transition age youth: Tennessee Healthy Transitions, First Episode Psychosis and Tennessee Clinical High Risk for Psychosis.

The Tennessee Healthy Transitions: Improving Life Trajectories (HT-ILT) Initiative is a five-year, \$5 million discretionary grant awarded to the TDMHSAS by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in March 2019. The purpose of the Tennessee HT-ILT is to assist Tennessee youth and young adults aged 16 to 25 with or at risk of developing a serious mental health condition and/or co-occurring disorder to improve their health and wellness, lead self-directed lives and reach their full potential.

In the FY 2014 appropriation, Congress allocated additional funds to SAMHSA to support “evidence-based programs that address the needs of individuals with early serious mental illness, including psychotic disorders.” States were required to set aside five percent of their Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) allocation to support this evidence-based program. TDMHSAS' proposal approved by SAMHSA included provisions for a First Episode Psychosis (FEP) treatment program to implement in a seven-county area in the northwest corner of Tennessee using a Coordinated Specialty Care model. The program, titled OnTrackTN, serves youth and young adults between the ages of 15 and 30 who are experiencing psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations, unusual thoughts or beliefs or disorganized thinking, with symptoms present for more than a week but less than 24 months. Congress increased the set-aside again in 2016 and 2018 allowing expansion of OnTrackTN to northwest Tennessee, Davidson, Hamilton, Knox and Shelby counties.

The Tennessee Clinical High Risk for Psychosis Initiative (CHR-P) is a five-year \$1.6 million discretionary grant awarded to the TDMHSAS by SAMHSA in October 2019. The purpose of the CHR-P Initiative is to assist Shelby County, Tennessee youth and young adults ages 12 to 25 who are at clinical high risk for developing psychosis to improve symptomatic and behavioral functioning, delay or prevent the onset of psychosis and minimize the duration of untreated psychosis so they can resume age-appropriate social, academic, and/or vocational activities.

The Youth Transitions Advisory Council and the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth would

like to thank the members of the General Assembly for their commitment to enhancing the lives of young people. We are grateful for the crucial funding allocated to the Departments of Children's Services, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and the Bureau of TennCare, which is vital for supporting these youth during this critical period in their lives. We hope you will continue to secure the resources needed to fund essential services, ensuring that all Tennessee youth can reach their full potential.



## 2024 YOUTH TRANSITIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) **Tennessee should consider contracting with an established mentorship agency to create programs that increase positive adult connections for foster youth transitioning into adulthood.** A supportive adult connection is the best indicator for youth to have a successful transition into adulthood. Adolescents and transition age youth need more mentorship opportunities to enhance their interpersonal relationships prior to reaching adulthood. While there are some mentorship programs within Tennessee, there remains a need for a statewide mentorship program that can consistently provide this population with supportive adult connections.
- 2) **Tennessee should consider developing emergency housing options for foster youth who are transitioning into adulthood.** While there are housing resources for former foster youth, the need to increase emergency housing remains. Foster alumni often struggle with financial insecurity and employment opportunities during their transition into adulthood. This likely impacts their housing situation, as nearly a third of foster youth experience homelessness within 12 months of exiting care. By the time foster alumni have reached the age of 26, between 31% and 46% will have experienced homelessness. Due to this population's high risk for experiencing homelessness and the need to access vital services such as job training, educational resources, and counseling.
- 3) Currently, TennCare primarily utilizes US Mail to communicate with youth. In order to reduce barriers for transitioning youth to maintain insurance, **Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and TennCare should consider additional methods of communication to notify youth who are aging out of foster care** to allow for a seamless transition without disruptive changes in providers and other necessary medical services.
- 4) **Tennessee should consider creating additional Resource Centers within rural Tennessee communities.** As described in Tennessee Code Annotated 37-2-603, Resource Centers that currently exist in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville provide a "one-stop shop" for foster youth and former foster youth. When assistance with continuing education, financial literacy, job search and life skills are provided in one place, it helps youth stay engaged and ensures that more of their needs are met. Resource Centers expanded to virtual capabilities because of the pandemic, however some youth learn better in person and some experience distractions when participating in a virtual space. Additionally, not all services provided by the Resource Centers can be administered virtually.
- 5) **The Tennessee Bar Association and Access to Justice should establish a pro bono legal services program geared toward 18-24-year-olds who need assistance.** Transitioning youth throughout the state need assistance resolving legal issues, including housing, such as leases and evictions; family legal issues, such as child custody or divorce; and potential criminal activities. Minor offenses on a young adult's juvenile record can present barriers to education, housing, employment, or military service. Successful models implemented in Tennessee include the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland, which provides attorneys to address legal issues for transitioning youth, and the Knoxville Leadership Foundation which assists youth who have been in custody to pursue expungement of misdemeanor charges acquired before the age of 18.
- 6) **The Youth Transitions Advisory Council needs active participation by representatives of Tennessee's higher education system** – i.e. Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Tennessee Board of Regents, University of Tennessee and the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association - to promote better understanding and 6 identify strategies to address issues experienced by these young adults. Assisting youth in maintaining academic eligibility is another major concern.

Participation in higher education is a major pathway to success for youth who are or have been in state custody.

7) Current resources are often not enough to cover the total cost of attending a 4-year post-secondary program. **Tennessee should consider policy changes and additional resources to mitigate these issues for youth in foster care or exiting foster care after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.**

## **Department of Children's Services**

### **DATA ON YOUTH TRANSITIONING FROM FOSTER CARE**

#### **Strategies To Access and Track Effectiveness of Extension of Foster Care Services and Resource Center Operations**

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) provides the John H. Chafee Foster Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood through the Office of Independent Living Program (IL) which also monitors and implements the provisions of Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS). As a part of the federal mandate, IL is charged with building a network of appropriate supports and services for youth transitioning out of care and for those who are likely to remain in care. The primary objectives of Tennessee's service network include:

- helping to ensure youth build connections with caring adults.
- developing youth to be productive individuals within their communities.
- assisting youth with acquisition and maintenance of gainful employment.
- supporting youth through their achievement of educational/vocational goals; and
- providing opportunities for financial assistance and skill development for DCS youth and exiting young adults.

Any youth, including those of Native American heritage, who have been or were in the custody of DCS and who meet eligibility criteria as outlined in policy, can request and access IL services.

The Department's goal is to provide each young person in foster care, age 14 or older, with supports, services, experiences, and opportunities that are individualized, based on the strengths, and needs of each individual youth, that are important to healthy adolescent development, and to help the youth successfully transition to adulthood. Strengths and needs of a 14-year-old who is four years from legal independence are generally different from those of a 17-year-old who is facing the imminent assumption of adult rights and responsibilities. The planning and provided services for these youth must be tailored on that basis.

DCS uses Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood funds to staff 16 Independent Living Program Specialists (ILPS), within each region of the state. The DCS ILPS work directly and collaboratively with Family Service Workers (FSW), foster parents, contracted providers, youth, and the public. They are responsible for local program coordination, service delivery, community

resource development and ongoing consultation to agency staff, foster parents, and youth. Although the primary function of the ILPS is to provide support and technical assistance to staff and resource adults, they also provide direct services and support to youth and young adults through life skills training classes, processing of the Independent Living Allowance, assistance with securing financial aid (FAFSA), the federal Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) and other scholarship applications, and support and coordination of local statewide youth leadership boards and other leadership activities.

Ongoing program purposes for the Office of Independent Living include:

- Help youth likely to age out of foster care successfully transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency by providing supportive services.
- Help youth likely to age out of foster care receive the education, training, and services necessary to obtain gainful employment.
- Help youth likely to age out of foster care prepare for and enter post-secondary training and educational institutions.
- Provide personal and emotional support to youth aging out of foster care through mentorship opportunities and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults.
- Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age to complement their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure that program participants recognize and accept their personal responsibility for preparing for and then making the transition into adulthood.
- Provide leadership opportunities for youth in care to advocate for system changes and improvements, build a network of peer support and bring youth voice and authentic engagement to entities that create and implement youth-centered programming.

The Department of Children’s Services continues to be committed to data-driven decision making. DCS continued to measure specific variables over the past fiscal year, which is reflected in this report.

## Educational Outcomes for Youth in Custody and Extension of Foster Care

DCS continues to promote educational opportunities for youth in custody and those who leave custody at an older age. Graduation data is for FY 2024 youth

High School Diplomas from In-House Schools	139
HiSet from In-House Schools	8
High School Diplomas from Wilder Youth Development Center	5
HiSet from Wilder Youth Development Center	1
Total Secondary Graduates	153

in DCS custody who received a high school diploma from the in-house provider agency schools, or a high school diploma or HiSET from Wilder Youth Development Center. Data is collected by the DCS Office of Education, as these programs fall under DCS as the Local Education Agency (LEA).

The collaborative between the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), the Department of Children's Services' (DCS) Central Office staff and Davidson County Regional staff entitled Project Wrap Around continued during FY 2024. Goals include increasing timely high school graduation rates, matriculation, retention rates, and attainment of post-secondary certificates or degrees among foster care youth aged 14 to 21.

The Tennessee Department of Education gathers data for students who were flagged with the FOS01-foster care student classification any time during the 2024 school year (including in an LEA that did not award the diploma). The department’s EIS Discoverer system listed 471 graduates statewide, including students who earned:

- a regular diploma,
- a regular diploma with foreign language waiver, or
- a regular diploma with foreign language and fine arts waiver.

Based on the available data, the total number of students in DCS custody who completed their secondary education during the 2024 fiscal or academic year was 624.

Young adults receiving Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS) who completed secondary education during state fiscal year 2023-24 included:

- High School: 129
- HiSet: 22

During FY 2024, 11 DCS scholarship recipients completed post-secondary education. The following represent the post-secondary programs completed:

EFCS	Non EFCS
Austin's Beauty School	East Tennessee State University
Chattanooga State Community College	Southwest State Community College
East Tennessee State University	
Paul Mitchell-The School	
Roane State Community College	
Southwest State Community College	
Tennessee College of Applied Technology-Dickson	
Tennessee School of Beauty	

In an effort to increase retention and graduation rates among youth and young adults with foster care experience pursuing their post-secondary education, DCS worked collaboratively with the Tennessee Board of Regents, Higher Education Commission and public institutions of higher education to develop a Foster Care Liaison Program on campus. This is also in response to Senate Bill 722 which was signed into law. Since the 2022 launch of foster care liaisons on 11 Tennessee college campuses, this initiative has expanded to having established liaison at the following institutions:

- Chattanooga State Community College
- Cleveland State Community College
- Columbia State Community College
- Dyersburg State Community College
- East Tennessee State University
- Jackson State Community College
- Jackson State Community College
- Middle Tennessee State University
- Motlow State Community College
- Nashville State Community College
- Northeast State Community College
- Pellissippi State Community College
- Roane State Community College
- Southwest Tennessee Community College
- University of Memphis
- University of Tennessee at Knoxville
- University of Tennessee at Martin
- Volunteer State Community College
- Walters State Community College

Both Youth Development Centers (YDCs) and providers of in-house schools provide a full high school curriculum that leads to a regular high school diploma. Opportunities for credit recovery, self-paced learning and mastery learning are also made available. In instances where students leave the YDC or an in-house school prior to completing graduation requirements, there are 15 Education Specialists across the state (at least one in each DCS region) who help students transition back into public schools or into adult education programs to finish their course work and earn a regular high school diploma. DCS staff, providers of in-house schools and public schools are trained to consult these Education Specialists to assist in the transition process.

Students who are educated in provider in-house schools or a YDC who are significantly behind in credits and are at least 17 years old are provided the opportunity to earn a High School Equivalency Diploma by passing an exam called HiSET. The decision to allow a student this option for obtaining a high school credential is made by the Child and Family Team (CFT). A High School Equivalency Exam Recommendation form (formerly referred to as a waiver) is submitted for students who are approved by the CFT. Wilder, the last remaining YDC, can prepare and administer the HiSET to their students on-site. Currently, students in most provider in-house schools must be transported off site to take the exam; however, the DCS Education Division and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development continue to work together to develop on-site HiSET testing programs at provider schools. Duncan Academy, Wayne Academy at Mountain View, Natchez Trace Youth Academy, New Heights Academy,

Magnolia Learning Center, River Academy, Valley Academy, Wayne Academy in Wayne County, and Wayne Academy in Davidson County have now completed the necessary requirements to become HiSET computer-based test centers, and at least four other provider in-house schools are working toward this. Our hope is that this will allow a significant number of students to leave custody with the opportunity to pursue a post-secondary education, enroll in vocational training programs or enter the workforce.

The Office of Independent Living (IL) is focused on ensuring education goals remain a major focus in transition planning. Both IL and Education encourage young people to advocate for their education to be successful in their future educational endeavors and get involved in school programs, including Tennessee Promise, that help support their educational well-being.

### **National Youth in Transition Database**

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) collects information on youth in foster care (via a survey) who are 17 years of age, including sex, race, ethnicity, date of birth, and foster care status. It also collects information about the outcomes of a sample of those youth when they turn ages 19 and 21.

DCS utilizes the NYTD to help understand the circumstances of our transition aged youth. The most recent NYTD submission contains data for youth in foster care who were surveyed during the six month period they turned 21 years of age, October 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024. This submission included the following data:

- Of 115 youth eligible to be surveyed, 67 participated in the NYTD 2024B Baseline survey;
- Non-participants included 37 reported as Unable to Locate/Invite, 1 reported as Incapacitated, 5 reported as incarcerated, 3 as deceased, and 1 Declined;
- Among respondents, 93 percent reported having connections to an adult;
- Among respondents, 22 percent reported having children;
- Among respondents, 31 percent reported being homeless at some point in the past two years;
- Among respondents, 38 percent reported incarceration at some point in the past two years.



# **INDEPENDENT LIVING & EXTENSION OF FOSTER CARE DATA**

## **EFC Criteria Expansion Project**

Tennessee's EFCS program successfully expanded the eligibility criteria during FY 2023 as outlined in the Fostering Connections guidelines. The eligibility criteria now includes:

- Completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential; or
- Enrolled in an institution that provides post-secondary or vocational education; or
- Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment; or
- Employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- Incapable of working or enrolling in an approved academic program due to a medical condition, including a developmental or intellectual condition.

During FY 2021 the education and employment criteria for Extension of Foster Care was waived due to the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act legislation being passed. As a result, the Office of Independent Living and Youth Villages staff made efforts to re-engage youth that were disconnected from services. Re-establishments of youth into EFCS began in January 2021 utilizing the flexibilities in the law.

In addition to re-establishments, preventing aging out measures were taken as well. Youth that turned 18 were given the option to enroll in EFCS with the education criteria waived. These efforts led to more than 150 additional young adults enrolling into the program. This period was used as a small test of change and an EFC expansion proposal was submitted in September 2021.

In January 2022 funding for the EFC expansion was included in Governor Bill Lee's budget. The bill was approved by the state House and Senate and ultimately signed by Governor Lee, which led to full implementation in January 2023.

## **Strategies for Maintaining Accurate Numbers of Young Adults Served by Extension of Foster Care**

In addition to using TFACTS data, Independent Living Program Specialists maintain data that demonstrates overall provision of EFCS via monthly reports that are submitted to central office. This report includes certain identifying information on the clients and dates of service. The monthly reports are compiled upon the conclusion of each fiscal year to produce each year's data. Data reported for youth in custody are derived from TFACTS system records. Data related to IL staff participation in CFTMs, and training provided by such staff, is tracked manually.

## Services Available to Youth in State Custody and Those Who Receive EFCS

- Post-Secondary Application Fees
- Testing Fees (SAT, ACT, GED)
- Tutoring
- Educational fees
- Independent Living Class Stipend (to Support Life Skills Instruction)
- Graduation Package
- Yearbooks
- Membership/Activity Fees for Extracurricular or Leadership Activities
- Senior Event-Related Transportation
- Honor/Senior Class Trip (School Related Activity)
- Housing Application/Fees for Post Custody
- Materials/Uniforms for Vocational Studies
- Completion of Job Readiness Training
- Job Start-Up Costs
- Driver's Education Class Fees
- Driver's Testing Fees
- Car Insurance
- Transportation Grant
- Car Repairs
- Housing Related Fees
- Tools/Equipment (Technical/Vocational Programs)
- Other Special Needs Unique to Youth Services
- Child Care Assistance
- Youth Leadership Stipend
- Independent Living Allowance
- Educational and Training Voucher (Scholarship)
- YVLifeSet
- Placement Services
- Household Furnishings
- Bright Futures (State Funded) Scholarship
- Opportunity Passport™ (per the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative) - Provided via the
- Resource Centers
- Case Management

## Young Adults Receiving Services and Length of Stay in EFCS during FY 2024

TN DCS provides youth aging out of state custody services through multiple sources. This is based on their eligibility, and services are provided by DCS as well as through DCS contracts with private providers and community agencies.

- YVLifeSet served 1,224 youth in FY 2023, including 717 youth who were DCS grant-funded at some point during the fiscal year and 507 youth who were not DCS grant-funding at any point during the fiscal year and received private funding only. Youth funded through DCS grants may receive private funding during the same fiscal year, but not simultaneously with the grant.

LifeSet served 1060 youth in FY24 as follows:

- 743 youth were DCS grant-funded at some point during FY24.
- 317 youth did not receive DCS grant-funding at any point during FY24. These received private funding only.

Please note: Youth included in the DCS grant-funded count may have received both types of funding at different points during FY24, but not simultaneously. These counts do not include youth that were dual enrolled in both LifeSet and EFC.

- Extension of Foster Care Services: 847 Individuals/863 EFCS Episodes.

*Sources: Grantee Reports, Independent Living Monthly Report, Independent Living Scholarship Report*

## EFCS Retention (Days in EFCS)

In FY 2024, the mean number of days in EFCS was 280, while the median was 186, which is up from last year, when the mean was 266 and the median was 163. This data is based on EFCS episodes that ended July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

Region	Mean (Days)	Median (Days)	Mode (Days)
Northwest	157	112	0
Southwest	249	230	0
Shelby	392	299	1095
Davidson	305	218	116
Mid Cumberland	334	210	1096
South Central	210	173	0
Upper Cumberland	261	187	61
Northeast	256	119	87
Knox	304	183	184
East	333	185	1095
Smoky Mtn	267	210	1095
TN Valley	286	138	1096
Total (Days)	280	186	0

## Program Exits

The most common reasons for exiting EFCS continue to be the young adult simply choosing not to continue and loss of academic eligibility.

The primary support service offered to young adults who exit EFCS is YVLifeSet. YVLifeSet continues working with the youth after EFCS ends and can assist youth to re-establish EFCS depending on the reason for exiting.

Youth who exit to adult services that have an established SSI qualification could receive mental health and behavioral health services in coordination with the state's Medicaid Waiver program, TennCare, or services through the state's Employment and Community First/Project Transitions program.

Termination Reason	Total
Academic Ineligibility	56
Could not be located	40
Criminal Charges/Incarcerated	6
Entered Military Service Full Time	5
Moved out of state	27
Not employed	41
Not engaged in an Employment Program	9
Risk to Self/Others	3
Self	67
Social Security Benefit (No ILA)	3
Transitioned to Adult Services	39
Turned Age 21	52
Total	348

Termination Reason	Davidson	East	Knox	Mid Cumberland	Northeast	Northwest
Academic Ineligibility	6	2	2	13	5	3
Could not be located	7	3	2	7	2	2
Criminal Charges/Incarcerated				4	1	
Entered Military Service Full Time	1			1		
Moved out of state	2	2	1	4	1	2
Not employed		7		6	4	2
Not engaged in an Employment						
Risk to Self/Others	1					
Self	3	5	8	9	2	2
Social Security Benefit (No ILA)				1		
Transitioned to Adult Services	4	4	4	2	6	1
Turned Age 21	5	5	5	10	4	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>
Termination Reason	Shelby	Smoky Mtn.	South Central	Southwest	TN Valley	Upper Cumberland
Academic Ineligibility	5	4	2	5	6	3
Could not be located		1	6	3	3	4
Criminal Charges/Incarcerated	1					
Entered Military Service Full Time	1				1	1
Moved out of state	3	4	2		3	3
Not employed	7	7	3	2	1	2
Not engaged in an Employment	5	2		1		1
Risk to Self/Others				1	1	
Self	2	11	6	4	9	6
Social Security Benefit (No ILA)					1	1
Transitioned to Adult Services	4	4	6	2	1	1
Turned Age 21	7	4	1	1	6	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>25</b>

### Youth Exiting State Custody with Post-Secondary Scholarship Assistance from DCS in FY 2024

The Department offers young adults who were in foster care or who are in foster care on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday the opportunity to continue to receive a variety of supports and services beyond age 18 to help them successfully transition to adulthood. The Department of Children's Services is the sole administrator of Education and Training Vouchers in Tennessee. The Office of Independent Living has a Scholarship Coordinator who manages the ETV funds available as well as a state funded scholarship called Bright Futures. Scholarship applicants are required to provide documentation of total cost of attendance and the financial aid package for the programs they are enrolled in to the Scholarship Coordinator, who reviews this information and establishes ETV awards accordingly. During FY 2024, DCS expanded the maximum age of eligibility of both the ETV and Bright Futures Scholarships to 26.

DCS provides a scholarship each semester or term as long as the student continues to meet eligibility requirements and maintains academic progress. The program will continue looking at ways to maximize the impact of funding and involve communities and individual colleges and universities in providing increased opportunities for this population. Data is currently being reviewed to help determine reasons for fluctuations in ETV awards to inform strategies for maximizing utilization. The Bright Futures State

Funded Scholarship awarded through the Governor’s Office will continue in the coming year with \$500,000 allocated by the state legislature.

The following represents the unduplicated number of individual students who received a scholarship, of each type, from DCS during FY 2024 and the type of educational institutions the students attended. There was a decrease in the number of scholarships provided during FY 2024. Research is needed to determine the reasons for continued decreases. One possible reason may be youth having the opportunity to work or enroll in employment programs to receive EFCS.

Post-Secondary Institution	2023			2024		
	ETV	BF	Total	ETV	BF	Total
<b>Tennessee 4-Year University (own boards)</b>	45	19	64	49	17	66
<b>Tennessee Community Colleges</b>	105	22	127	76	14	90
<b>Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology</b>	19	3	22	22	2	24
<b>University of Tennessee System</b>	14	4	18	17	4	21
<b>Private 4-Year Colleges</b>	17	0	17	15	0	15
<b>Non-State Technical Colleges</b>	8	0	8	11	0	11
<b>Total Individuals Awarded</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>211</b>

*Source: Independent Living Scholarship Report*

Scholarship data is reported based on payments in a valid status of processing, and not just awards.

\*The totals vary because each school category represents individual students who were awarded for each, but the same students may have attended more than one school during the fiscal year. Some students were awarded ETV and Bright Futures during the fiscal year but in different semesters. Those students are unduplicated in the grand totals.

**Number of EFCS Young Adults Served in FY 2024 by Adjudication, Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Region/County**

<b>Adjudication (at exit from DCS custody)</b>	<b>Youth Served</b>
<b>Delinquent</b>	47
<b>Dependent/ Neglect</b>	779
<b>Unruly</b>	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>847</b>

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Youth Served</b>
<b>Female</b>	455
<b>Male</b>	392
<b>Total</b>	<b>847</b>

<b>Region</b>	<b>Youth Served</b>
<b>Davidson Region</b>	70
<b>East Tennessee Region</b>	48
<b>Knox Region</b>	59
<b>Mid Cumberland Region</b>	148
<b>Northeast Region</b>	72
<b>Northwest Region</b>	28
<b>Shelby Region</b>	86
<b>Smoky Mountain Region</b>	81
<b>South Central Region</b>	66
<b>Southwest Region</b>	36
<b>TN Valley Region</b>	85
<b>Upper Cumberland Region</b>	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>847</b>

<b>Ethnicity/ Hispanic Origin</b>	<b>Youth Served</b>
<b>Declined</b>	1
<b>No</b>	750
<b>Unknown</b>	24
<b>Yes</b>	72
<b>Total</b>	<b>847</b>

<b>Race</b>	<b>Youth Served</b>
<b>American Indian/Alaska Native</b>	2
<b>American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, White</b>	1
<b>Asian</b>	4
<b>Asian, Black/African American</b>	1
<b>Asian, White</b>	5
<b>Black/African American</b>	231
<b>Black/African American, Multi-Racial - One Race Unknown, White</b>	4
<b>Black/African American, White</b>	31
<b>Declined</b>	1
<b>Multi-Racial - One Race Unknown, White</b>	7
<b>Race Unknown</b>	3
<b>White</b>	557
<b>Total</b>	<b>847</b>

*Source: Tennessee Department of Childrens Services TFACTS*

### Independent Living Wraparound Services—Custodial Population

Service	Cost	Instances of Service	Youth Served*
Driver's Education	\$30,346	55	55
Educational Fees	\$1,272	2	2
Extra-Curricular Leadership Activity/Membership Fees	\$7,779	30	29
Good Grades Incentive	\$1,880	23	23
Graduation Package	\$28,934	71	69
Honor/Senior Class Trip	\$1,165	3	3
IL Class Stipend	\$1,600	32	32
Other Special Needs	\$4,197	21	21
Post Secondary Application/Registration Fees	\$2,703	4	4
Post-Secondary Housing Application Fee	\$200	2	2
Yearbooks	\$1,738	16	16
Youth Leadership Stipend	\$2,200	36	36
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$84,014.15</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>246</b>

### Independent Living Wraparound Services--Extension of Foster Care Population

Service	Cost	Instances of Service	Youth Served*
Auto Insurance	\$8,406	16	16
Child Care Assistance	\$250	2	1
Driver's Education	\$7,923	15	15
Educational Fees	\$994	2	2
Extra-Curricular Leadership Activity/Membership Fees	\$1,162	8	8
Good Grades Incentive	\$350	5	5
Graduation Package	\$13,849	52	41
Household Furnishings	\$7,227	14	14
Housing Start-up Cost	\$19,679	29	24
IL Class Stipend	\$250	5	5
Other Special Needs	\$3,163	15	13
Post Secondary Application/Registration Fees	\$325	3	3
Testing fees (GED, SAT, ACT)	\$285	3	3
Transportation Grant	\$2,380	41	19
Vehicle Repairs	\$2,397	4	4
Yearbooks	\$856	10	10
Youth Leadership Stipend	\$1,400	25	23
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$70,895.63</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>152</b>

*\*Represents unduplicated clients; some youth received more than one type of service during FY 2024.*

*Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS*



## Youth Declining Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS) and the Reasons Given

The Youth Engagement Lead continues to develop strategies to connect with aged-out youth who did not accept or are unable to continue services. The main reasons young people give for not accepting EFCS continue to be a desire to work instead of continuing education goals, did not want to be involved with DCS and could not be located. The Office of Independent Living also collected the reasons why youth did not accept EFCS, which reflected the above top reasons.

Reason	Number
<b>Refusal</b>	87
<b>Could Not be Located</b>	47
<b>Academic Ineligibility</b>	41
<b>Uncertain</b>	33
<b>Moved Out of State</b>	28
<b>Not employed (completed secondary education)</b>	26
<b>Did Not Meet Any Other EFCS Requirement</b>	10
<b>Social Security Benefit (No ILA)</b>	10
<b>Transitioned to Adult Services</b>	8
<b>Criminal Charges/Incarcerated</b>	6
<b>Excess Countable Resources</b>	3
<b>Entered Military Service Full Time</b>	2
<b>Not engaged in an Employment Program (completed secondary education)</b>	1
<b>Risk to Self/Others</b>	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>

## Extension of Foster Care Services Uptake, Total and by Region

During FY 2024, more youth aged out and were eligible for EFCS. Fifty-seven percent of the total eligible population accepted EFCS, up from last year's 50 percent. Detailed breakdown of EFCS uptake by other factors is available upon request.

Region	Aged Out	Aged Out Eligible	Accepted EFCS	% EFCS Uptake
<b>Davidson</b>	89	60	39	65%
<b>East Tennessee</b>	41	40	23	58%
<b>Knox</b>	44	40	19	48%
<b>Mid Cumberland</b>	120	101	67	66%
<b>Northeast</b>	86	80	45	56%
<b>Northwest</b>	34	30	13	43%
<b>Shelby</b>	109	68	31	46%
<b>Smoky Mountain</b>	69	59	38	64%
<b>South Central</b>	81	72	32	44%
<b>Southwest</b>	32	28	18	64%
<b>TN Valley</b>	86	71	48	68%
<b>Upper Cumberland</b>	63	62	35	56%
<b>Total</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>57%</b>

Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS and Independent Living Monthly Report

## Young Adults Receiving Extension of Foster Care Services

**A total of 802 youth receiving EFCS were in placements and/or received an Independent Living Allowance during FY24.**

EFC youth in foster home-type placements at some point during FY 2024: 260

EFC youth receiving the Independent Living Allowance during FY 2024: 443

<b>EFCS Placement Service</b>	<b>Young Adults Per Service</b>
<b>Contract Foster Care Extension of Foster Care</b>	128
<b>Graduated Rate Extension of Foster Care</b>	5
<b>Independent Living Assistance - Parenting</b>	49
<b>Independent Living Residential Extension of Foster Care</b>	164
<b>Level 2 Extension of Foster Care</b>	1
<b>Level 2 Congregate Care Extension of Foster Care</b>	58
<b>Level 2 Continuum Extension of Foster Care</b>	8
<b>Level 3 AS-ND PRTF - Mid Extension of Foster Care</b>	1
<b>Level 3 AS-ND RTC Extension of foster Care</b>	2
<b>Level 3 Continuum Extension of Foster Care</b>	4
<b>Level 3 Continuum Special Needs Extension of Foster Care</b>	6
<b>Level 3 Enhanced (Formerly A&amp;D) Extension of Foster Care</b>	3
<b>Level 3 Enhanced Sex Offender Treatment Extension of Foster Care</b>	2
<b>Level 3 Extension of Foster Care</b>	6
<b>Level 3 SED-PRTF Extension of foster Care</b>	3
<b>Level 4 Special Needs Extension of Foster Care</b>	6
<b>Regular Board Rate Extension of Foster Care (18-20)</b>	120
<b>Regular Rate Extension of Foster Care</b>	411
<b>Total Individuals Served</b>	<b>802</b>

Some young adults received more than one type of service and/or were in more than one type of placement during the fiscal year.

**Forty-five young adults received EFCS who did not have a placement service, or verified payment for such a service, during FY 2024.**

- Had an EFCS episode during the Fiscal Year but no EFCS placement: 36
- EFCS episode ended on or after July 1, 2023 but the placement service ended on or before July 1, 2023. Or, the last payment date was in the last fiscal year (ending June 30, 2023): 6

- Placement during the fiscal year wasn't paid for by DCS (example: in-patient hospitalization): 1
- Placement was completed but payments did not generate: 2

*Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS*

### Child and Family Team Meetings

The Department continues to focus on training efforts, increased outreach to young people; youth engagement to improve practice, increase services (paid and non-paid life skills development); increase housing opportunities and overcoming barriers to serving special populations.

Participation by Office of Independent Living staff in Child and Family Team meetings to provide information on independent living services, Extension of Foster Care Services and to assist with the development of Independent Living and Transition Plans is also a focus.

Office of Independent Living staff participated in thousands of Child and Family Team Meetings during State Fiscal Year 2023-24.

Additionally, Independent Living staff assisted with the development of 139 Independent Living Plans and 787 Transition Plans based on manual reporting.

Child and Family Team Meeting Type	Number of CFTMs Attended by IL Staff
Progress Review Custody	1,079
Discharge/Exit Custody	556
EFCS – Progress Review	423
Transition to Adulthood	377
SS – Permanency Plan Revision (Custody)	368
EFCS- Initial Extension of Foster Care	170
Discharge/Exit Extension of Foster Care	162
Special Called	158
SS – Initial Permanency Plan (Custody)	94
JJ/SS Planned Placement Stability	55
EFCS – Permanency Plan Revision	38
JJ/SS Unplanned Placement Stability	28
Initial Custody	25
JJ – Permanency Plan Revision (Custody)	19
Permanency (Adoption Only)	17
JJ – Initial Permanency Plan (Custody)	12
Plan Revision (IPP)	11
JJ – Release to Aftercare	10
JJ – Discharge from Probation/Aftercare	4
Placement Stability	2
FSW - Progress Review of Non-Custody	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,609</b>

The Office of Independent Living trained participants in several related agencies or groups, as follows.

- DCS: 351
- Youth: 285
- Provider Agency: 96
- Other: 13

*Source: Independent Living Monthly Report*

## Youth-Involved Advocacy and Engagement Activities

The Office of Independent Living Central Office staff addressed over 100 inquiries submitted via the Formstack online transmission form and responded to a significant volume of phone and email referrals. These inquiries regarding services and resources were matched with local Department of Children's Services (DCS) and Central Office personnel, who connected the youth or their representatives to pertinent resources and information within their respective areas of Tennessee. Commonly provided resources included YV LifeSet, Opportunity Passport, EFCS re-establishments, community resource referrals, ETV/Bright Futures Scholarships, and TennCare. In certain instances, DCS also facilitated connections for former Tennessee foster youth seeking services in other states after relocating.

Engaging youth in planning and decision-making about their lives yields invaluable benefits during their transition to adulthood. In addition to ongoing transition planning, normalcy, and support for youth achieving permanency, DCS and its partners strive to create various engagement activities for youth. This section highlights such activities from Fiscal Year 2024, particularly focusing on the Project NOW program in Knoxville, TN, which is making significant strides with youth and young adults.

A noteworthy success story is that of a 21-year-old woman who sought assistance from Project NOW just two weeks before Christmas after a year without updates on her situation. Having previously faced deep mistrust towards service providers due to past trauma within the foster care system, reaching out for help was a considerable step for her. Despite expressing a desire to avoid medication, she was reassured that the center did not prescribe or force medication upon anyone. This young woman, who identified as street-savvy and hardworking, found herself homeless once again. Although she had received support from Project NOW after aging out of foster care, mental health challenges had hindered her ability to maintain housing and services, leading to her disappearance from the system. Tragically, she reported experiences of trafficking and other adversities during her time away.

After these hardships, she expressed a desire for stable housing. Upon reaching out to the center's case manager for Street Outreach Homeless Youth, she was connected to the Project NOW/Youth NOW Case Manager. They facilitated her transportation to obtain her driver's license, secured her vital records, and set up a bank account at TVA Credit Union in Knoxville, where staff were particularly understanding and supportive. The center collaborated with a local church housing connection that provides a 12-month residence for women, complete with case management services and structured rules, conveniently located on a bus line. Fortunately, she moved into this housing just before Christmas, paying \$50 per week for accommodation that includes access to a kitchen, living room, and shared bedroom, ensuring her safety and stability—significantly improving her circumstances as she had previously paid \$500 per week for hotel rooms and couches in unsafe neighborhoods.

Shortly thereafter, she secured full-time employment at a coffee shop, and the center provided her with a bus pass for transportation. Additionally, she enrolled in a local college for the spring semester. This young woman is now set up for success, attending classes as her schedule permits while maintaining contact with the Project NOW and Street Outreach case managers, who offer ongoing support. On challenging days, she reaches out to her case manager for encouragement and practical financial advice. Recently, she received another bus pass to facilitate her attendance at classes when not working, and the staff eagerly anticipates her participation. The transformation in her demeanor is evident; she now exhibits a spark of hope that was absent when she first contacted Project NOW.

We would also like to highlight Project Instar, which is engaged in meaningful youth advocacy. This group, comprised of 4-6 young adults who have aged out of the system, shares their experiences to

foster a supportive environment for youth still navigating the foster care system. These young adults serve as experts in the room, helping to build self-confidence and instill a sense of pride among the participants. Primarily focusing on 17-year-olds preparing for the transition out of foster care, Project Instar recognizes the need for support during this critical time. On November 30, 2023, they hosted a panel for youth in foster care, providing an invaluable opportunity for attendees to receive encouragement and guidance from those who have successfully transitioned into adulthood.

On August 26, we celebrated the official launch of Every Child TN! This diverse coalition comprises organizations, faith-based groups, advocates, and agencies across the state, united by a shared mission: to mobilize all Tennesseans in support of children, youth, and families navigating the foster care journey. Every individual can make a meaningful impact, regardless of the scale of their contributions, and together, we can ensure that every child in Tennessee has access to a safe and nurturing home.

### IL Leadership Camps

The Office of Independent Living and Harmony Family Center hosted Glam Camp at Montvale in Maryville, TN, on June 7, 2024. This event is an extension of the Independent Living camps offered throughout the year. This year's Glam Camp featured an Alice in Wonderland theme for young women residing at the Katie Miller Group Home. The agenda included activities focused on manners, yoga, a fancy hat art project, healthy relationships, a tea party, manicures, and a skincare/makeup class. The young ladies thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

The Office of Independent Living collaborated with Austin Peay State University to organize an overnight camp for teenagers in the custody of the Department of Children's Services (DCS). This event featured engaging activities, including a campus tour, a scavenger hunt, and career exploration sessions that incorporated a career assessment. Participants enjoyed an overnight stay in the campus dormitories, supervised by DCS Independent Living staff. Additionally, there was a question-and-answer session with a current young adult in the Extension of Foster Care (EFC) program who is attending APSU. The event concluded with Austin Peay State University offering each participant a \$1,000 dorm credit should they decide to enroll at the university.

### Graduation Celebrations

In July, the Office of Independent Living and multiple community partners organized three significant regional graduation ceremonies for our foster youth and young adults who completed their secondary and post-secondary education the 2023-2024 academic year. With over 150 graduates in attendance, the events featured recognition ceremonies, inspiring keynote speakers, and numerous booths providing information on post-secondary education, employment opportunities, and essential resources, including the Department of Safety's mobile state ID unit. These ceremonies were a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our graduates' accomplishments and offer support for their future endeavors.

### Oasis Center-Teen Outreach Program

The Department of Children's Services through Oasis Center continues to administer the federal Personal Responsibility Education Program to support the implementation of Wyman's Teen Outreach Program (TOP), an evidence-based Social Emotional Learning model, in selected Level II and III residential treatment centers, Metro Nashville Juvenile Detention Center and in Upper East TN communities/schools through a Juvenile Justice Reform Act project. Seven hundred and eighty-one (781) adolescents participated in TOP in these settings during FY 2024. High staff turnover

continues to be an issue at several sites. By prioritizing the health and well-being of both staff and youth while also implementing innovative solutions, we are continuing to support and encourage the use of TOP programming within each agency we serve. Currently we have 3 sites that we know of that were affected by Hurricane Helene. Two weeks out, some sites do not have electricity or running water yet.

TOP supports Social Emotional Learning and takes a broad youth development approach to the prevention of pregnancy and other risky behaviors by engaging youth in curriculum-guided discussion groups as well as youth-driven community service-learning projects.

TOP provides important opportunities for youth to participate in “normalized” activities, consistent with the federal mandate that youth in custody have access to developmentally normative experiences as much as possible. TOP nurtures the key factors research identifies as protective from risk and adversity, including social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, sense of purpose, high expectations and opportunities for participation.

TOP service-learning activities are particularly powerful vehicles for enhancing protective factors and building social and emotional skills. Youth in care provided over 7100 hours of service (a slight decrease) to Tennessee communities. Young people donated Socks and Tops to a school in their community, donated games for St. James church youth group game nights, sorted and put together toys for Toys for Kids, stocked a food pantry, groomed horses, read books to children, made cards for cops to thank them for their service to the community and prepared food for the homeless. In TOP, youth plan as well as carry out their service-learning projects, practicing skills like planning, decision-making, budgeting, teamwork, etc.

Oasis Center provides training, technical assistance and oversight of the TOP implementation initiative. In FY 2024, TOP was implemented at twenty-five (25) locations across the state. Due to continued Covid precautions and flare-ups in some agencies, Oasis staff continued to limit on-site observation and coaching. However, sixty-one (37) staff from implementing agencies participated in TOP Facilitator Training, gaining skills in effective youth engagement and high-quality group facilitation. We anticipate that in-person training and more consistent site visits will increase during FY25. Feedback from youth workers continues to be very positive on the training they receive and the impact it has on the youth in their care.

### **New Resources, Services and Other Interesting Updates**

- The Office of Independent Living partnered with the Department of Safety and Homeland Security to revise policy and protocols to align with new legislation passed that waived the cost of the driver’s license, permit, and photo ID for youth in foster care.
- Omni Visions has expanded their Supervised Independent Living programs by opening a male home in Memphis, TN and a female home in Jackson, TN. These new programs are the first in West TN in over a decade. During FY 2024 they expanded their program to a second home in Jackson, TN for females.
- The Education and Training Voucher Scholarship and the Bright Futures Scholarship is now available for eligible young adults up to the age of 26.
- The Office of Independent Living has received increased requests from community partners to

support youth aging out of foster care, and staff has met with several partners to discuss.

- In effort to improve Authentic Youth Engagement, DCS created a statewide Leadership Board entitled Young Adult Advisory Council that serves as the foundation for all youth engagement work throughout the state. The council participates in speaking engagements and meetings to share their foster care experience and offer input on policy and practice improvement. They are also instrumental in participating on foster parent panels for new foster parents. The council consists of current and former Extension of Foster Care young adults from across the State of Tennessee. DCS is currently in the process of recruiting new members for the council.
- The Office of Independent Living continues to distribute laptops to eligible youth in foster care or receiving EFCS utilizing a portion of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act funding. Priority populations include youth/young adults who had a recent or upcoming secondary high school or HiSET graduation, youth/young adults who are entering a post-secondary program, and any youth in a foster care placement age 14 or older with a verified need for a laptop. An additional batch of laptops are planned to be requested for youth in need.
- The Office of Independent Living has worked collaboratively with the TN Board of Regents, the TN Higher Education Commission, and public institutions of higher education to develop a Foster Care Liaison Program on campus in response to the passing of Senate Bill 722. The pilot program has established foster care liaisons on select post-secondary institutions in Tennessee in an effort to increase retention and graduation rates among youth and young adults with foster care experience pursuing their post-secondary education.

### **Supervised Independent Living Residential placement options for EFCS young adults**

- Free Will Baptist Family Ministries in Greeneville, TN accept males.
- Holston Homes for Children in Greeneville, TN accepts males.
- Partnership for Children, Families, and Adults in Chattanooga, TN accepts males.
- Chambliss Center for Children in Chattanooga, TN accepts both males and females.
- Monroe Harding in Nashville, TN accepts both males and females.
- Omni Visions in Nashville, TN, Jackson, TN, and Memphis, TN accepts both males and females.
- TN Children's Homes in Clarksville, TN accepts both males and females.
- Wayne's Halfway House in Waynesboro, TN accepts males.



## Opportunities

- To increase housing options for youth transitioning out of foster care, eligible housing authorities across the state should partner with DCS to offer HUD's Foster Youth to Independence Housing Voucher Program.
- While there are some excellent services for some of the state's more complex youth, there are fewer developmentally appropriate services available for those young adults with a borderline IQ or certain mental health diagnoses. In some instances, youth have needs that are going unaddressed due to gaps in the array of services and housing.
- DCS continues to strive toward increasing employment opportunities for youth in care. Employment Opportunities for adolescents are necessary to assure economic self-sufficiency and generate self-esteem.
- Integrate preparation for adulthood with improved, quality Transition Planning to include the use of peer support young adults who are current or former Extension of Foster Care participants.



## Youth Villages LifeSet

Youth Villages' LifeSet program is designed to assist young adults between the ages of 17 and 22, who are transitioning from child welfare and juvenile justice services to adulthood, in learning the skills needed to live successfully. A successful transition includes maintaining safe and stable housing, participating in an educational/vocational program, developing life skills necessary to become a productive citizen and remaining free from legal involvement. LifeSet specialists (directly providing the services to the young adults) carry a small average caseload of 8-10 and have multiple contacts (via phone or face-to-face) weekly with each young person in order to engage on a high level. The program is based on a multiple systems approach meaning services are aimed not only at the individual but at all the areas (systems) that may affect the youth (e.g. community, peer group, family, and school/work).

Young adults in the LifeSet program are assigned a specialist responsible for aiding youth in every step of the transition process. Specialists are responsible for teaching skills and lessons associated with the focal areas and will ensure that young adults can access community resources such as medical attention, housing, and financial support, if necessary. Specialists are available to the young adults 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They also make a minimum of one face-to-face contact per week with the young adult. The number of sessions can be increased based on individual needs.

The focal areas of LifeSet include permanency, education, employment, housing (through natural supports), basic independent living skills, and engagement. To support youth in their transition to adulthood, the program uses evidence-based interventions and best practices with regards to the following areas: trauma, pregnant/parenting youth, substance abuse issues, physical and mental health, domestic violence, financial literacy and basic independent living skills.

Since the program was created in 1999, it has helped **14,270** young adults in Tennessee (and **31,181** nationwide) build independent and successful lives for themselves. Youth Villages began providing LifeSet services in Tennessee over 20 years ago and has effectively replicated the program in numerous locations. Today, through direct services and partnerships, LifeSet serves **2,180** young adults daily in Tennessee and **twenty-two other states and the District of Columbia**, with a success rate (defined as living independently or with family) of **85 percent at Discharge, and 89 percent at 12-month follow-up**.

### Partnership with DCS

For more than 20 years, Youth Villages has been providing comprehensive services to young adults aging out of care and other at-risk youth in Tennessee through its YVLifeSet program. In 2007, the Tennessee Department of Children's Services partnered with the Day Foundation and Youth Villages to

reach more youth across the state. That public/private partnership was expanded in 2013 when Youth Villages stepped forward and offered to match dollar-for-dollar state funding for services. Youth Villages offered to contribute \$3 million in private dollars if the state would match those private dollars with \$3 million to provide comprehensive services for young people aging out of foster care. This continued partnership provides the opportunity for every youth aging out of care in Tennessee to receive services. In 2019, Youth Villages began providing the case management portion for Tennessee's youth who have chosen to accept Extension of Foster Care Services.

### **Tennessee LifeSet Data FY 2024**

- LifeSet served about **574** youth daily
- **1,316** youth participated in the program
- At 12-month follow-up:
  - **93 percent living with family or independently**
  - **91 percent in school, graduated or working**
  - **93 percent had no trouble with the law**

### ***Clinical Trial***

*From October 2010 to October 2012, Youth Villages' LifeSet Program participated in an independent, random assignment evaluation conducted by MDRC, a non-profit, non-partisan research and policy group that specializes in this type of evaluation. MDRC has an outstanding reputation in the field for methodological rigor and for translation of evaluative findings to policymakers. Dr. Mark Courtney, a researcher with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, led the study as principal investigator. The study, which took place in Tennessee, included more than 1,300 youth, making it the largest random assignment evaluation of this type of program for young adults in this critical transition phase.*

*The evaluation examined the difference that Youth Villages' LifeSet program makes for youth aging out of care – its impacts on a range of outcomes, including education, employment, mental health, and financial security. One-Year [Impact Findings](#) from the evaluation were released in 2015, and show that participation in the LifeSet program boosted earnings by 17 percent, increased housing stability and economic well-being (including a 22 percent decrease in the likelihood of experiencing homelessness), and improved some of the primary outcomes related to health and safety (including improvements in mental health and a decrease in intimate partner violence). The program was found to be equally effective across different subgroups of youth, including youth with and without histories of juvenile justice custody, as well as urban and rural youth.*



## **Helen Ross McNabb Center's Project NOW!**

### **History**

The McNabb Center is a premier, non-profit provider of behavioral health services in East Tennessee. Since 1948, the Center has provided quality and compassionate care to children, adults and families experiencing mental illness, addiction and social challenges. The mission statement of our organization is “Improving the lives of the people we serve and well mind, well-being”.

The McNabb Center has over 75 years of experience working with runaway, homeless and at-risk youth, over 25 years of providing outreach services to youth in local schools and over 20 years of offering transitional living services for youth and young adults services aging out of foster care and residential treatment. The McNabb Center is accredited by CARF (Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities). Following a merger with Child & Family Tennessee in August 2013, The McNabb Center assumed administration of the Opportunity Passport Program named *Project NOW* as well as the PREP Program (originally named Sisters/Manhood) renamed to *Youth Now* in 2024. In 2024, both programs were completely restructured with a new location, additional staff, new materials and most notably a fresh social media space to engage youth more effectively.

### **Core Services**

*Project NOW* (Navigating Opportunities that Work) is one of the many programs operating under the umbrella of the McNabb Center. Over the past year, *Project NOW* has provided Resource Center services to youth in the Grand East Division of the State (including Knox, Blount, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Sevier, Anderson, Campbell, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Union, Roane, and Scott counties). The McNabb Center refers to all youth and young adults served as clients. The Resource Center provides financial education through *Opportunity Passport* in the Project Now program. Also included are groups and individual counseling in life skills, work projects and transitional living resources. Additional topics of programming include resource linkage, opportunities with local business and industry and post high-school information, as well as study skills and opportunities for the youth to give back to the community. These programs have close partnerships with local provider agencies, banking agencies and businesses that create opportunities for employment. Financial literacy is provided within a 12 module course through the *Jim Casey Foundation*. The Foundation provides training for staff in guiding towards leadership opportunities for youth and financial assistance. An additional program advantage is that youth and young adults (YYA) can complete forms for asset matches when they meet the saving criteria for an asset purchase and after completing all financial modules. Clients can also benefit from the *Youth Now* program which is housed in the same Resource Center as Project Now. Youth Now provides sexual health and pregnancy information for youth and

young adults ages 14-24 utilizing the Love Notes curriculum which was newly purchased and approved in 2024. The Prep program was formally the *Manhood 2.0* and *Sisters Saving Sisters Programs*.

*Project NOW* works hand in hand with the Department of Children’s Services. DCS provides the majority of program referrals as well as Youth Villages, foster parents, and foster youth themselves who are introduced to the program through other McNabb Center programs and through peer referrals. Other community and private entities also refer youth to this program. Several organizations have provided services through training programs and information sessions for a positive experience for youth in the program. Case managers from Project Now and Youth Now travel to the McNabb Residential and Foster Care programs to complete classes for youth ages 14-18 on site. Additional classes are held on site at the resource center either virtually or in person with an average two classes per week being offered. The program has partnered with several local Knoxville banks and employers over the years. For adult education options the program has partnered with Knoxville Center for Applied Technology to help youth with HISET/GED and further education. The program has also partnered with the Health Department to help youth obtain vital records and the local DMV for state IDs. Community collaborations include: Grow Free Tennessee (CCAHT), ICAM (Integrated Community Agency Meeting), YAB Youth Advocacy Board, CAC Community Action Coalition, Youth Villages LifeSet Program, KARM, Serenity House, Hope House, House of Compassion, Bryants Bridge, Fig Tree, several local churches, Panera Bread, the Knoxville Leadership Foundation and the Knoxville Homeless Coalition; all providing interagency support to transitioning youth. The Job Corps and Knox Works Programs have become a resource for many of the youth aging out and needing postsecondary training as well.

## Local Partnerships

Department of Children’s Services (Knox County, Smoky Mtn and East TN)	Subway	Knox County CASA
	Omni Visions	Knox Works
Knox County Juvenile Court	Tennessee College of Applied Technology	Food City
Knox Area Compassion Coalition	Knoxville Police Department	KARM (Knoxville Area Rescue Mission)
YMCA Knoxville	Tennessee Housing Development Authority	Job Corps
First Tennessee Bank	Knoxville Homeless Coalition	Youth Transitions Advisory Council of Knoxville
TVA Credit Union	The McNabb Center’s Runaway Shelter,	Panera Bread
YWCA	Transitional Living Program (TLP)	Chick-fil-a
Salvation Army	and Street Outreach	Knox County Schools
Knox County Health Department	K-town Empowerment Network and	Village Behavioral Health
Emerald Youth Foundation	K- town Coordinating Council	CCAHT Community Coalition
Papa John’s	Youth Villages Transitional Living Program	Against Human Trafficking (Grow Free)
Firehouse	Goodwill Industries	

## Successes

In January 2024 the resource center moved to a new space in convenient downtown Knoxville on the city bus line! There are 4 different programs located in the resource center that include Project Now (Opportunity Passport ages 14-25 youth in foster care or aging out), Youth Now (PREP ages 14-25 youth in foster care of aging out), Host Homes (Safe Place-Runaway youth under 18), Street Outreach (SOP-Homeless youth ages 18-21).

The McNabb Center *Project NOW* underwent staff restructuring in 2024 with the addition of a new team leader position over the resource center programs. An additional Youth Now case manager position was also created as both the Project Now and Youth Now programs have grown considerable and are serving more clients than ever. A wonderful announcement that we have is that the current team leader moved into this position from the Project Now case manager position and will be bringing innovative ideas for the youth at the resource center. A new Instagram page was established in 2023 and it has been very successful as it keeps youth and young adults engaged with the program and program staff. A new curriculum Love Notes was purchased and implemented in 2024 for sexual health education and healthy relationships which will provides relevant and innovative education to youth in today's world. This will include social media safety, which has been found to be highly problematic for young adults and youth in today's society, leading to many issues in mental health.

Youth Circle was created in 2023 as a leadership meeting for YYA youth and young adults within the resource center that are striving to make change and become effective leaders. They meet on average once per month and new trust has been established as they get to know one another and complete youth lead activities together. Project Now and Youth Now staff continue to participate in the local (YAB) Youth Action Board where young adults meet together to make changes in their community. Several Project Now and Youth Now young adults have been on the board and also have referred new enrollees to the programs. Program staff consult them often on important ideas and changes that need to take place and value their opinions. YAB takes place at the CAC Community Action Coalition and encompasses a young adult president as well as several young adults that have aged out of foster care and share resources together.

### **Challenges and Barriers**

The Knoxville-based Resource Center has its own unique population, differing some from other centers throughout the state. Youth referred to *Project NOW* are from rural areas, homeless youth, and youth in foster homes. Transportation to the Center is an issue for youth who do not drive and many are spread across east Tennessee over 50 miles from Knoxville. We have recently been able to install a new wifi option for youth and young adults to utilize in the center on their phones and this has helped with in person engagement as they enjoy being linked to their technology. Additionally, the programs offer a hybrid in person an virtual options throughout the month so youth have more opportunities to participate. Class participation seems to continue to be a challenging area for our programs and we have offered several extra bonus reward classes with increased incentives to continue to engage youth as well as serving food.

### **Next Steps**

The team leader and case managers will continue to look for and engage in new partnerships while also deepening the relationships with current partners. Local organizations both public and private should continually be educated on the services and goals of the Resource Center and outreach is a priority. The Center will continue to support all young adults and youth aging out of foster care in acquiring life skills, completing requirements for a high school diploma and in selecting post-secondary training that best meets their needs and career goals. Continued collaboration with local employers and continuing banking relationships are a goal for 2024 as well as to increased program awareness with DCS workers and other providers. Our goals is to support our current clients and to engage more youth and young adults than ever in the 2025 year.

<b>Knoxville Resource Center</b>	<b>July 1, 2022- June 30, 2023</b>	<b>July 1, 2023- June 30, 2024</b>
<b>Opportunity Passport/Project Now/Knoxville</b>		
<b>Number of new youth enrolled</b>	13	19
<b>Number of Financial Literacy Classes offered</b>	12	40
<b>Number of Asset Specific Classes offered</b>	0	2
<b>Percent of youth with favorable post- test outcome</b>	No data	No data
<b>OPPS Surveys</b>		
<b>Percent of youth completing an OPPS survey (April &amp; October only)</b>	90%	88%
<b>Community Partnership Boards</b>		
<b>Number of board meetings</b>	3	3
<b>Number of new door openers created</b>	0	9
<b>Life Skills Classes</b>		
<b>Number of life skills classes held</b>	12	12
<b>Total number of participants in life skills classes</b>	13	9
<b>Percent of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment</b>	No data	No data
<b>Youth Leadership &amp; Engagement</b>		
<b>Number of youth leadership activities offered</b>	0	6





**Monroe Harding**

Homes • Healing • Opportunities

## **Monroe Harding Youth Connections**

### **History**

Since 1893, Monroe Harding has been changing young people's lives. We step in as a family, providing resources for Homes, Healing, and Opportunity that are vital to helping young people succeed. Today, through our foster families and our Supportive Housing programs we provide safe, loving and supportive homes. Our Resource Center is for young people aging out of care, a place where they can find encouragement through academic support, financial literacy, workforce development and learn the life skills that young adults need to succeed. Monroe Harding is the only agency in Middle Tennessee providing a comprehensive continuum of services for current and former foster youth from birth to age 26.

### **Monroe Harding Core Services**

For the past 17 years, the Resource Center has been dedicated to delivering high-quality services aimed at empowering young adults aged 16-26 transitioning out of care, along with other vulnerable youth. The center offers a range of support, including financial management through The Opportunity Passport™, career readiness and job engagement via Works Wonders™, high school equivalency preparation, post-secondary education planning, sexual health education, and housing assistance. Additionally, the center features an in-house thrift closet exclusively for young adults. Our programs promote personal stability and foster a smooth, healthy transition into adulthood.

### **Local Partnerships**

Monroe Harding continues to collaborate with the Department of Children's Services (DCS), the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, and US Bank. Through its workforce development program, Monroe Harding partners with local businesses and leaders such as Crossroads Pet Shop and Adopt, Eat Well Nashville, the Public Defender's Office, and the National Museum of African American Music. These partnerships offer young adults valuable experiential learning opportunities, including internships and job shadows, to help them prepare for the workforce. Additionally, Monroe Harding works with organizations like Oasis Center, Martha O'Bryan Center, Goodwill Career Solutions, Youth Villages, Mental Health Cooperative, Omni Visions, and the Community Advisory Board to provide services to young adults who do not qualify for DCS custody.

### **Successes**

Monroe Harding was able to serve 396 unique individuals last year. Many of these clients participated in more than one program. Offering classes in-person, virtually, and in hybrid formats has allowed us to reach more participants than ever before. We continue to offer cornerstone programs including financial literacy, career development, education classes, monthly programming for justice involved youth, on-site groups and counseling sessions and on-site assistance obtaining resources such as SNAP, housing, and essential documents.

Additionally, the Works Wonders™ Career Readiness program, now in the fifth year provided paid internships in fields including social work, law, cosmetology, and healthcare while our education programs have helped 20 young adults earn diplomas and certificates. Monroe Harding awarded 10 scholarships totaling \$10,000. The participants were able to use their scholarship money for tuition, rent, transportation, or needed supplies for their post-secondary training. Students enrolled at several different higher education institutions including Trevecca University, Nashville State Community College, TCAT, Austin Peay and MTSU.

This year, the Resource Center has offered several networking and learning events for young adults including a job fair specifically for young adults, a resource fair for participants to learn about services and opportunities, and an employment technology simulation. Monroe Harding also started a new social enterprise designed to provide learning and employment opportunities for young adults.

### **Challenges and Barriers**

Many young adults who contact Monroe Harding for services continue to lack support systems to assist them with navigating the challenging period of transitioning to adulthood. They are often unemployed, lack transportation, are dealing with current and past abuse (emotional, physical, and sexual), have had insufficient future planning and are sometimes homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. Many of these issues make it difficult for the young adults to remain focused on completing the goals that they have set for themselves. Monroe Harding has resources in place to assist with these challenges. We continue to offer barrier assistance in the form of providing transportation either by a staff member or providing bus passes and/or gas cards, paid internships, assistance with accessing mental health resources, and assistance with needed supplies and equipment for employment.

<b>Nashville Resource Center Report</b>	<b>Previous Year</b>	<b>Year to Date</b>
<b>Opportunity Passport™</b>		
<b>Number of new youth enrolled</b>	25	8
<b>Number of Financial Literacy Classes offered</b>	12	3
<b>Number of Asset Specific Classes offered</b>	12	3
<b>Percent of youth with favorable post- test outcome</b>	93%	94%
<b>OPPS Surveys</b>		
<b>Percent of youth completing an OPPS survey (April &amp; October only)</b>	89.5%	N/A
<b>Community Partnership Boards</b>		
<b>Number of board meetings</b>	0	0
<b>Number of new door openers created</b>	7	3
<b>Life Skills Classes</b>		
<b>Number of life skills classes held</b>	12	3
<b>Total number of participants in life skills classes</b>	98	38
<b>Percent of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment</b>	91%	92%
<b>Youth Leadership &amp; Engagement</b>		
<b>Number of youth leadership activities offered</b>	6	3



## River City Youth Collective

### History

The Partnership for Families, Children and Adults has been serving the Tennessee Valley community for 140 years through professional counseling, crisis intervention, and prevention services. It began with the 1877 establishment of the Ladies Aid Society, which later became the Florence Crittenton Home. Under the direction of United Way, The Florence Crittenton Service, Family Service Agency, and Travelers Aid Society merged into Community Services of Greater Chattanooga, Inc. in 1973. In 1981, the agency assumed the name Family and Children's Services of Chattanooga, Inc., and in 2003 became the Partnership for Families, Children and Adults. Today, the Partnership has grown to become the region's largest and most comprehensive human services agency serving 19 counties in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama.

The River City Youth Collective (RCYC) is one program that is included in services offered through Partnership. RCYC officially began in 2018 and believes all people have the right to live stable, healthy lives. RCYC is committed to supporting youth and young adults in their transition from adolescence to independence. RCYC is a collective, safe space where youth and young adults can find acceptance, support, and opportunities to learn and grow from and with one another.

### Core Services

The Resource Center supports the Love Notes and Manhood 2.0 sexual health education and relationship management curriculum for young women and men. The Resource Center continues to offer the Opportunity Passport financial literacy curriculum and the Jim Casey Match Program. We also provide door openers for our youth to connect with various agencies in the community, Youth Leadership and Engagement Opportunities, and Life Skill Classes.

### Community Partners

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga	Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Chattanooga
Tennessee Valley Federal Credit Union	American Job Center
Chattanooga State Community College	A Step Ahead Chattanooga
Choices	Unum
EPB	Co Lab
Family Justice Center	Vocational Rehabilitation
Rise Up Cooperative	Hamilton County Health Department

LAUNCH Chattanooga	43 Plummer
Tennessee Coalition	United Way
Chambliss Center for Children	Community Advisory Board

## Successes

- Made 3 matches in July 2024 with the MATCH Program, totaling 6,000 dollars in savings for youth involved
- Saw an Increase in Manhood 2.0 participation
- 86% of survey completion in October 2023 and 76% Opportunity Passport survey completion in April 2024
- Aging Out Panel for Youth/Young Adults held in February 2024

## Challenges and Barriers

Communication continues to be a barrier with youth, as there is a struggle with the maintenance of numbers and emails. Transportation also is a barrier with class participation and attendance as some youth lack the ability to transport themselves due to not having licensure and/or do not own a vehicle and must rely on others. Consistent involvement has also been a barrier as participation has waxed and waned. This ultimately has impacted class attendance and youth engagement.

## Next Steps

In the new fiscal year, RCYC will build relationships with community partners to strengthen the community partnership board and continue to develop new Door Opener opportunities. RCYC plans to tailor classes and events offered to better suit the needs of the demographic they are serving and to enhance feedback from active program participants. RCYC also plans to increase the direct one-to-one contact and relations with participants.

<b>RCYC Report</b>	<b>FY 2024</b>
Number of new youth enrolled	30
Number of Financial Literacy Classes Offered	3
Number of Asset Specific Classes Offered	3
Percentage of youth completing October 2023 OPPS survey	86%
Percentage of youth completing April 2024 OPPS survey	76%
Number of new door openers created	3
Number of Life Skill Classes Held	9
<b>Total Number of Participants in Life Skill Classes</b>	<b>25</b>



## South Memphis Alliance, Inc.

### South Memphis Alliance, Inc.

#### History

Since opening its doors in 2000, South Memphis Alliance (SMA) has been dedicated to organizing neighborhood associations in South Memphis's urban communities. Over the years, SMA has expanded its services to serve youth in foster care and families in crisis, always grounded in the belief that civic engagement is the bedrock of strong communities. By fostering civic responsibility, SMA continues to promote stable families and stronger communities.

SMA work focuses largely on four core initiatives:

**Dream Seekers Initiative** works with young people in foster care and transitioning from foster care.

**Hope Chest** includes comprehensive sex education, as well as supports services for pregnant and parenting teens that are or were in foster care.

**Community Action Panel** is composed of community leaders from over a dozen South Memphis civic groups, and neighborhood associations.

**Social Suds Resource Center (SSRC)**, Located inside a neighborhood Laundromat provides a plethora of social services to patrons of the Laundromat. SMA is one of the most unique community-based agencies in the City of Memphis. Our close connection with urban residents creates a level of trust and interaction rarely seen between an agency and members of the community. SMA is one of the most unique community-based agencies in the City of Memphis. Our close connection with urban residents creates a level of trust and interaction rarely seen between an agency and members of the community.

#### Emergency Services

- Assistance with Food vouchers, (MIFA) (Cathedral of Faith and Mid-South Food Bank)
- Bus passes
- Assistance with Clothing/Uniform vouchers, (MIFA) (Cathedral of Faith)
- Assistance with housing option location
- Gas Cards (Will Work) Program
- Assistance with diapers, formula, feminine hygiene and hygiene products, (Midsouth Food Bank-Bare Needs Diaper Bank)

## Educational Services

- Intensive life skills for foster youth
- HIV/AIDS education and testing
- Financial Education
- Goal Setting
- Teen pregnancy and parenting supports
- Career Assessments

## Local Partnerships

Tennessee Department of Children Services	Meritan Inc.	Just City, Criminal Justice Services	Metropolitan Inter Faith Association (MIFA)
Southern College of Optometry	Shelby County Office of Childhood and Youth	First Tennessee Bank	Center for Employment Opportunities
Excel Center	Grizzlies Foundation	State of Tennessee (Shelby County)	Shelby County Juvenile Court
Cummins, Inc	CD Council	Urban Child Institute	RISE Memphis
United Way of the Mid-South	Memphis Public Library	BLDG Memphis	The Grizzlies Foundation
Shelby County Community Advisory	The Assisi Foundation	CONCORDE Career College	Hope House
Omni Visions	Memphis Artists for Change	Lemoyne Owen College	St. Jude Research Hospital
Porter Leath	Shelby County Health Department	Community Alliance for the Homeless	Hope Credit Union
Amerigroup	Kailey Haynes Foundation	Cathedral of Faith	GMFEC
Paragon Bank	The Women's Foundation of Greater	Sweet Cheeks Diaper Ministry	Mid-South Food Bank

## Successes

- As part of our dream seekers program, SMA received \$22,000 in sponsorships, grants, and donations to assist our clients with supportive services. From July to September of 2024, funds were received. Within those months, we were also able to assist our clients with school supplies and utility support from sponsorship through The Women's Foundation of Greater Memphis and Trezvant Manor.
- Our Opportunity Passport Dream Seekers had 91% survey completion for October 2023. We are anticipating 100% for April 2024.

## Challenges and Barriers

- Housing shortages consistently impede engagement. As a result of their lack of housing, young people move multiple times a year. Often, they cannot connect with needed resources because their addresses and phone numbers change frequently.
- For the population served by SMA, transportation is a barrier. Despite providing bus passes to participants, the public transportation system in the area is insufficient. As part of our Will Work program, dream seekers are also offered a gas card. As a result of an overwhelming transportation demand, quantities are, however, limited.
- Furthermore, youth who enroll in the program at satellite sites often find it harder to participate in group activities due to on-going transportation issues.

## Next Steps

- As young people transition out of care, SMA continues to seek innovative housing options. To help our Dream Seekers find emergency housing, SMA has partnered with the Community Alliance for The Homeless.
- Sponsorship for IDA matches stipends/incentives and rental and utility assistance among top priorities currently.

## Success Story

At SMA, we are committed to supporting and empowering young people on their journey toward success. Today, we are proud to highlight the incredible achievements of three young women who have overcome obstacles and taken bold steps to secure brighter futures for themselves and their families.

**T.B.** has earned her Hi-Set (High School Equivalency Diploma) and is now enrolled at Goule's Hair and Nail Academy. Alongside her studies, she is working hard to support her children, demonstrating both resilience and determination in pursuing her goals.

**B.M.** has not only earned her Hi-Set diploma but also received her CNA certification through our workforce development program, Will-Work. She is now employed in her chosen field and continues to aim higher by currently pursuing a certification in medical billing and coding.

**A.A.** graduated from our Dream Seekers program in July 2024 and has already accomplished significant milestones, including earning her driver's license and completing her CNA certification through the Will-Work program. A.A. is now making a meaningful impact as an employee at an In-Home Health Care Agency.

These young women exemplify the spirit of perseverance and dedication, and we are honored to have played a role in their journeys. Their success stories inspire us all to continue working toward breaking down barriers and creating opportunities for every young person in our community.



<b>Memphis Resources Center Report</b>	<b>Previous Year</b>	<b>Year to Date</b>
<b>Opportunity Passport</b>		
Number of new youth enrolled	20	10
Number of financial literacy classes offered	8	4
Number of financial literacy classes offered	85%	85%
<b>OPPS Survey</b>		
Percent of youth completing April/October OPPS survey	91%	We will be surveying in October
<b>Community Partnership Boards</b>		
Number of board meetings	4	3
Number of new door openers created	3	3
<b>Lifeskills classes</b>		
Number of Lifeskills classes held	7	8
Total number of participants in Lifeskills classes	30	40
Percentage of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post test	100%	100%
<b>Youth leadership engagement</b>		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	4	4
Number of asset specific classes offered	8	4



## **Tennessee Healthy Transitions Initiative**

The Tennessee Healthy Transitions: Improving Life Trajectories (HT-ILT) Initiative is a five-year \$5 million discretionary grant awarded to the TDMHSAS by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in March 2019. The purpose of the Tennessee Healthy Transitions Initiative is to assist Tennessee youth and young adults ages 16- 25 with a serious mental health condition or co-occurring disorders, with a particular focus on co-occurring mental health and intellectual and development disabilities, in maximizing their potential to assume adult roles and responsibilities and lead full and productive lives. HT-ILT

will provide targeted and innovative awareness, outreach, and specialized treatment and recovery support services in the following new local sites:

*Local Site 1* is located in Davidson County in Middle Tennessee and is being implemented by Mental Health Cooperative. *Local Site 2* is located in Greene County in Northeast Tennessee and is being implemented by Frontier Health. Both sites have begun providing services this year.

Services and supports include the following: outreach; care coordination utilizing the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model; Supported Employment and Education using the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Model; and peer support services.

### **Additional partners and services include:**

- Tennessee Voices (TV) assists with statewide public awareness activities and consultation to the local sites on social media marketing and development of local Young Adult Leadership Councils.
- In collaboration with Mental Health Cooperative, TV will employ a Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist who will be embedded within the Davidson County mobile crisis system to provide short-term peer support services and linkage and referral to youth/young adults who have contact with the mobile crisis system. This position has been hired, is receiving preliminary training, and will begin providing services in the coming months.
- TDMHSAS houses the Lead Evaluator, who coordinates evaluation activities.
- Team members from TDMHSAS attend and are active participants at Youth Transitions Advisory Council (YTAC) meetings, providing updates on progress toward grant goals at each Council meeting.

**Some of the successes during the FY2024 year include:**

- The Healthy Transitions sites served a total of 122 youth and young adults.
- In collaboration with Tennessee Voices, the TDMHSAS Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) has met at least monthly and has participated in ongoing activities such as mental health awareness, providing feedback on social media outreach for TDMHSAS' youth/young adult programs, and engaging in social media campaigns around self-care.
- TDMHSAS continues to coordinate and expand utilization of the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model, an evidence-informed approach for effectively engaging and working with youth and young adults.
- TDMHSAS coordinated and provided multiple training opportunities to staff at Healthy Transitions sites, including Silver Linings Advocacy Academy training to enhance youth/young adult voice and involvement in services; The Trauma-Informed Youth Engagement Series training to provide trauma-informed engagement tools and techniques needed to effectively work with youth; and a Youth & Young Adult Outreach training.
- In FY2024, The Healthy Transitions Program provided outreach to 542 Youth and young Adults, screened 174 Youth and young adults for mental health concerns, referred 72 Youth & Young Adults not eligible for the program to other mental health services, and created four policies and partnerships with other community health providers.
- TDMHSAS continued implementing the Certified Young Adult Peer Support (CYAPSS) program, launched in May 2021. In FY2024, 15 individuals completed the CYAPSS training, and 10 completed the full certification process, becoming certified CYAPSS.
- TDMHSAS also launched its first Young Adult Peer Supervisor training and trained 12 supervisors to supervise CYAPSS effectively.

These efforts support the sustainability of behavioral health services that are driven by and meet the unique needs of youth and young adults, expand the young adult workforce through the Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist program, and infuse youth and young adult voices at both the local and state levels.

- TDMHSAS hosted its first State Transition Team (STT) meeting, which is a group of organizations and individuals from both state and local levels that will work together to prioritize system improvements to the child and adult mental health systems and other relevant child and adult system partners, who provide support to Y/YA with Serious Emotional Disturbance/Serious Mental Illness or co-occurring Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD).

## **Tennessee First Episode Psychosis Initiative (FEPI)**

In the FY 2014 appropriation, Congress allocated additional funds to SAMHSA to support “evidence-based programs that address the needs of individuals with early serious mental illness, including psychotic disorders.” States were required to set aside five percent of their Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) allocation to support this evidence-based program. The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) began planning for the implementation of the five percent set-aside to address early intervention programming as soon as the 2014 budget legislation passed. The proposal approved by SAMHSA included provisions for a First Episode Psychosis (FEP) treatment program focusing on a rural area of Tennessee using a Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) model. The proposal provided a beginning budget, staffing and implementation model designed to be flexible in the face of the challenges of implementing an urban program in a rural area. With innovations focusing on the use of technology and a one-provider arrangement, the proposal was approved, and implementation began within 30 days following approval.

The program, titled OnTrack TN and modeled after OnTrack NY, serves youth and young adults between the ages of 15-30 who are experiencing symptoms of psychosis, such as hallucinations, unusual thoughts or beliefs, or disorganized thinking, with symptoms present for more than a week but less than 24 months. In the months following the approval of the proposal, TDMHSAS contracted with Carey Counseling Center, Inc. (Carey) to implement the program in a seven-county area in the northwest corner of Tennessee. The counties in the service area are Lake, Obion, Weakley, Benton, Carroll, Gibson, and Henry.

In the spring of 2016, Congress increased the set-aside in the State Mental Health Block Grant program from 5 to 10 percent for first-episode programs. TDMHSAS submitted a proposal to expand the First Episode Psychosis Initiative (FEPI) through the 10 percent set-aside, which was approved by SAMHSA. The proposal identified the following two priorities: (1) Expand the OnTrack TN program to two additional sites in Tennessee, and (2) Create a statewide FEPI Learning Collaborative consisting of, at minimum, all three OnTrack TN sites.

In May 2016, TDMHSAS released an Announcement of Funding requesting proposals to implement OnTrack TN in two counties within Davidson, Hamilton, and Shelby. A review panel scored the proposals, and contracts were awarded to Mental Health Cooperative, Inc. in Davidson County and Alliance Healthcare Services in Shelby County. In FY19, TDMHSAS partnered with Helen Ross McNabb to implement an OnTrack TN team in Knox County.

As a result of the 2018 federal appropriations, there was an increase in the SAMHSA Mental Health Block Grant which resulted in additional funds being available through the 10 percent set-aside. Because of this increase, TDMHSAS released an additional Announcement of Funding in September 2019 requesting proposals to implement OnTrack TN in Hamilton County. A review panel scored the proposals, and a contract was awarded to Helen Ross McNabb. All programs

were trained in the OnTrack NY model. Additionally, the increase in funds was used to bring on a Statewide Youth/Young Adult Best Practices Trainer and Consultant through the Vanderbilt Center of Excellence. This position provides support and training to the OnTrack TN sites and will provide fidelity checks to ensure fidelity to the OnTrack model.

At the end of FY2021, additional funding was made available for the OnTrack TN program through COVID and ARPA funds. As a result, TDMHSAS released an Announcement of Funding in June 2021 requesting proposals to implement OnTrack TN in Rutherford, Anderson, and Montgomery counties. A review panel scored the proposals, and in August 2021 (FY2022), awards were made to: Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System in Rutherford County; Ridgeview Psychiatric Hospital and Center, Inc. in Anderson County; and Mental Health Cooperative (MHC) in Montgomery County. Contracts began in November 2021.

At the end of FY2022, additional funding was made available for the OnTrack TN programs through ARPA and the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. TDMHSAS contracted with Park Center to house the Statewide Youth and Young Adult Best Practices Trainer/Consultant to provide training, coaching, technical assistance, consultation, and fidelity monitoring on best practices (e.g., OnTrack) to current and new youth and young adult programs funded by the State, with a special emphasis on early psychosis programming (OnTrack TN and the Clinical High Risk for Psychosis program). Funding was also used to expand FEPI service coverage areas to Loudon & and Monroe counties. Service implementation will be carried out by the Helen Ross McNabb Center.

Team members from TDMSHAS regularly attend YTAC meetings to provide updates on progress toward goals. Some of the successes during FY 2024 year include:

- OnTrack TN teams served 247 youth and young adults experiencing a first episode of psychosis.
- The Ontrack Teams collectively improved participant symptoms; 82% of participants had improvement in symptoms over time, and 71% of participants had improvement in symptoms over time.
- TDMHSAS, in collaboration with Park Center's Statewide Trainer and Consultant, offered multiple training opportunities to OnTrack TN sites, including A 3-day Onboarding and implementation of the OnTrack model for new staff and Silver Linings Advocacy Academy training to enhance youth/young adult voice and involvement in services.

These efforts support the sustainability of behavioral health services in Tennessee that meet the unique needs of youth and young adults experiencing a first episode of psychosis. Services provided by OnTrack TN teams focus on helping these youth and young adults work toward recovery and meeting personal goals.

## **Tennessee Clinical High Risk for Psychosis Initiative**

The Tennessee Clinical High Risk for Psychosis Initiative began as a four-year \$1.6 million discretionary grant awarded to the TDMHSAS by SAMHSA in September 2018. Services for this grant ended September 29, 2022, with evaluation activities continuing through January 2023 by a No-Cost Extension awarded by SAMHSA to TDMHSAS. The 2018-2022 CHR-P Initiative had one service delivery site in Shelby County that was implemented by CMI Healthcare Services. Services and supports were designed based on the OnTrack model and included care coordination utilizing the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model, Supported Employment and Education utilizing the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Model, family peer support and young adult peer support services. Centerstone Research Institute continues to provide evaluation of the CHR-P Initiative. In FY 2022, TDMHSAS applied for a second four-year, \$1.6 million discretionary Clinical High Risk for Psychosis grant (CHR-P 2.0) by SAMHSA. TDMHSAS was awarded the CHR-P 2.0 grant in September 2022 and will begin implementation in FY2023.

The purpose of the Clinical High Risk for Psychosis (CHR-P) Initiative is to assist Shelby County, Tennessee youth and young adults ages 12 to 25 who are at clinical high risk for developing psychosis to improve symptomatic and behavioral functioning; delay or prevent the onset of psychosis; and minimize the duration of untreated psychosis; enabling them to resume age-appropriate social, academic, and/or vocational activities. This goal will be accomplished through development of a stepped-model of care that ensures easy access to evidence-based services and supports for youth, young adults, and their families.

In FY2023, CHR-P 2.0 has one service delivery site in Shelby County implemented by Alliance Healthcare Services who also implements the OnTrack TN program in Shelby County. Services and supports are based on the OnTrack model and will include care coordination utilizing the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model, Supported Employment and Education utilizing the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Model, family peer support and young adult peer support services. TDMHSAS will provide program evaluation of the CHR-P 2.0 grant.

### **Some of the successes during FY2024 year include:**

- The CHR-P team is fully staffed, has screened 116 young people, and provided outreach to 409 people.
- The CHR-P team has provided workforce development for 157 people in the mental health and related workforce trained in mental-health-related practices/activities consistent with the goals of the grant to prevent and treat early psychosis.

These efforts support the sustainability of behavioral health services in Tennessee that meet the unique needs of youth and young adults at clinical high risk of developing psychosis. Services provided by the CHR-P team focus on helping these youth and young adults work toward recovery and meet personal goals.