

Youth Transitions Advisory Council



Annual Report

2023



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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-summaries1.html>



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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 2021 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 eleven 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 2023, 861 young people turned 18 years of age in state custody, somewhat bucking the trend of fewer youth aging out of custody each year as noted prior to the pandemic. The last few years have seen increasing numbers, but the total is still below pre-pandemic levels.

Of the 861 youth aging out, 736 were eligible for EFCS with 369 accepting the services, an uptake rate of 50 percent. A total of 691 youth were served by Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS) in FY 2022-23 with 635 adjudicated dependent/neglected, 11 unruly and 45 delinquent.

The average length of stay in EFCS was 266 days, down from 348 days in 2022. Half of youth exited after 163 days. Those who terminated voluntarily (self-termination) were the largest group losing services in FY 2022-23, followed by those who lost academic eligibility, in a reversal of last years' rankings.

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

Two scholarships are available to DCS youth, the federally funded Education and Training Voucher and the state-funded Bright Futures Scholarships. In FY 2023, 237 young people received these scholarships, a significant decrease from 2022.

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 and 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. Oasis Center provides training, technical assistance, and oversight of the TOP implementation effort. During FY 2023, 746 adolescents participated in TOP in these settings, a significant decrease from FY 2022. TOP 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 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. Last year, foster youth participating in TOP provided 7,573 hours of service to Tennessee communities – an increase from previous year despite the dramatic drop in the number of individuals participating.

Affordable housing remains an obstacle for transition age youth, but housing options have increased across the state through community partnerships and with government agencies such as Tennessee Housing and Development Agency (THDA), which provides additional information in this report about its Housing Trust Competitive Grants. Applicants for the competitive grants who set aside availability for former foster youth receive additional points. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development continues the Foster Youth to Independence “FYI” voucher program.

Youth Villages’ YVLifeSet 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 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 2023, YVLifeSet served about 459 youth daily. A total of 1,220 youth participated in the program. At 12-month follow-up, 92 percent were in school, had graduated or were working, 95 percent were living with family or independently and 95 percent experienced no trouble with the law.

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 express appreciation to the members of the General Assembly for the opportunity to improve the lives of these young people and for appropriating much needed funding to the Departments of Children’s Services, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and the Bureau of TennCare to assist these youth at this critical time in their lives. We hope you will find the resources necessary to continue to fund essential services so all Tennessee youth can reach their full potential.

2023 YOUTH TRANSITIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) **TennCare should change current practice and allow youth who age out of foster care to remain on TennCare Select** to allow for a seamless transition without disruptive changes in providers and other necessary medical services.
- 2) **Tennessee should waive tuition and fees at schools in the state higher education system for youth aging out and for youth in the child welfare system above the age of 16.** Youth in foster care or who exit foster care at older ages face challenges meeting their basic needs when attending 2- or 4-year post-secondary programs. Some may be ineligible for Pell Grants and other federal aid due to their placement status while in custody and Tennessee Promise does not cover tuition at 4-year university programs. Waiving tuition and fees for youth in foster care or aging out of state custody would provide more opportunities to access higher education for these youth, potentially freeing up funds for other necessary living expenses.
- 3) **As immigration status is essential to determining eligibility for certain services, it should be clearly established before a youth's 18th year and prior to leaving custody.** DCS should endeavor to make providers aware of when to ask questions about immigration status and how that status can impact timely service eligibility.
- 4) **Currently, youth who were undocumented upon being brought into foster care are granted special immigrant juvenile status while in care but are not permitted to receive ECFS. The Tennessee General Assembly should explore options to rectify this discrepancy** in treatment, including reclassification of these youth as qualified legal aliens.
- 5) 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. **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.** 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. Minor offenses on a young adult's juvenile record can present barriers to education, housing, employment or military service. The Youth Transitions Advisory Council shall organize a Legal Issues Task Force to assess youth legal needs and develop specific recommendations to improve youth outcomes.
- 6) Participation in higher education is a major pathway to success for youth who are or have been in state custody. **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

identify strategies to address issues experienced by these young adults. Assisting youth in maintaining academic eligibility is another major concern.

- 7) **Services provided in the Resource Centers for transitioning youth must reach underserved areas** too. 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. These services are needed in the more underserved areas of Tennessee. DCS and the Resource Centers should continue to explore the use of technology and other strategies to provide these core supports and services in underserved rural regions of the state.
- 8) Access to transportation is one of the most significant barriers for transitioning youth. Youth Villages has had donations of automobiles and some Resource Centers have used matching funds from Opportunity Passports to purchase automobiles. Some programs have offered bus passes to transitioning youth. Other creative strategies need to be identified. **The Youth Transitions Advisory Council shall organize a Transportation Task Force to identify specific needs and possible solutions** toward the goal of making more complete recommendations.
- 9) **A mechanism is needed for continuing judicial oversight for youth who were in custody in another state and are now in Tennessee and otherwise eligible for receipt of Extension of Foster Care Services.** This issue has been referred to the Administrative Office of the Court’s Court Improvement Project for discussion. This may require an amendment to state law.
- 10) The Youth Transitions Advisory Council is made up of many different private and state agencies and entities working with and supporting youth as they face a major life transition – aging out of the foster care or other child-focused system and moving into the responsibilities and expectations of adulthood. We recognize that these transitions can bring added barriers for certain segments of the youth population – those with disabilities, those in the LGBTQ+ community, those with behavioral health needs and those who are undocumented or have uncertain citizenship status. **The goal of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council is to be welcoming and inclusive to all youth**, and to always be particularly sensitive to the unique challenges that these youth face.
- 11) **Adolescents and transition age youth need more internship and mentorship opportunities** to enhance their interpersonal and career experiences prior to reaching adulthood.



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 2022 youth 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).

High School Diplomas from In-House School	130
HiSETs from In-House School	44
High School Diplomas from Wilder Youth Development Center	8
HiSETs from Wilder Youth Development Center	6
Total Secondary Graduates	188

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 2022. 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. This remains a pilot project that includes youth in DCS custody via Davidson County court commitment and any Extension of Foster Care young adults enrolled in an MNPS. It is hoped that intensified efforts to assist students with credit consolidation and recovery, IEP development and implementation, and ongoing tracking and support will increase improve outcomes.

The Tennessee Department of Education gathers data for students who were flagged with the FOS01-foster care student classification any time during the 2023 school year (including in an LEA that did not award the diploma). The department’s EIS Discoverer system listed 290 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 2023 fiscal or academic year was 552.

Young adults receiving Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS) who completed secondary education during state fiscal year 2022-23 included:

- High School: 84
- HiSet: 17

During FY 2023, 11 DCS scholarship recipients completed post-secondary education. The following represent the post-secondary programs completed:

EFCS	Non EFCS
Chattanooga State Community College	Austin Peay State University
Chattanooga State Community College - TCAT	University of Tennessee - Knoxville
Roane State Community College	
Northeast State Community College	
Tennessee College of Applied Technology @ Nashville	
Walters State Community College	
Tennessee College of Applied Technology @ Morristown	

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. Beginning the Fall 2022 semester the following TN post-secondary institutions have identified liaisons on campus to support youth and young adults with foster care experience.

- Chattanooga State Community College
- East Tennessee State University
- Jackson State Community College
- Middle Tennessee State University
- Nashville State Community College
- Pellissippi State Community College
- Southwest Community College
- University of Tennessee at Knoxville
- University of Tennessee at Martin
- University of Memphis
- Walter 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 those youth at that time and then when a sample of the youth who completed surveys 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 within 45 days of their 17th birthdays, October 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023. This is a partial year's submission and included the following data:

- Of 429 youth eligible to be surveyed, 302 participated in the NYTD 2023A Baseline survey;
- Non-participants included 99 reported as Unable to Locate/Invite, five reported as Incapacitated, 21 were reported as Runaway and two Declined;
- Among respondents, 95 percent reported having connections to an adult;
- Among respondents, four percent reported having children;
- Among respondents, 23 percent reported being homeless at some point in the past two years;
- Among respondents, 41 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 2023

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.
- Extension of Foster Care Services: 691 Individuals/704 EFCS Episodes.

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

EFCS Retention (Days in EFCS)

In FY 2023, the mean number of days in EFCS was 266, while the median was 163, which is down from last year, when the mean was 348 and the median was 218. This data is based on EFCS episodes that ended July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.

Region	Northwest	Southwest	Shelby	Davidson	Mid Cumberland	South Central
Mean Days	271	296	317	235	298	286
Median Days	229	232	299	153	129	159
Mode Days	291	0	0	0	1096	190
Region	Upper Cumberland	Northeast	Knox	East	Smoky Mountain	Tennessee Valley
Mean Days	328	166	186	289	227	295
Median Days	249	96	146	150	166	231
Mode Days	88	57	0	206	1	248
Statewide	Mean: 266		Median:163		Mode: 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.

Termination Reason (Statewide Total)	Davidson	East	Knox	Mid Cumberland	Northeast	Northwest
Academic Ineligibility (85)	7	2		3	10	5
Could not be located (11)				3	2	
Deceased (1)				1		
Entered Military Service Full Time (2)						
Moved Out of State (12)				4		
Not employed (9)				1		
Not engaged in an Employment Program (3)	1			1		
Risk to Self or Others (9)	2	2		1	1	
Self (87)	3	15	19	12	5	5
Social Security Benefit- No ILA (2)						
Successful Completion of Ed. Program (6)		2				
Transitioned to Adult Services (37)	2	3	2	7	2	4
Turned Age 21 (32)	2	1		9	1	
Unable to Locate (17)		5	1	4		
Total (313)	17	30	22	46	21	14
Termination Reason (Statewide Total)	Shelby	Smoky Mountain	South Central	Southwest	Tennessee Valley	Upper Cumberland
Academic Ineligibility (85)	11		14	3	12	18
Could not be located (11)	1		1	3	1	
Deceased (1)						
Entered Military Service Full Time (2)	2					
Moved Out of State (12)	1		2	1		4
Not employed (9)	1	4			3	
Not engaged in an Employment Program (3)					1	
Risk to Self or Others (9)	2				1	
Self (87)	3	14	3	4	3	1
Social Security Benefit- No ILA (2)				1	1	
Successful Completion of Ed. Program (6)		3			1	
Transitioned to Adult Services (37)	5	5	2		2	3
Turned Age 21 (32)	1	2	3	4	3	6
Unable to Locate (17)	1		2	1	2	1
Total (313)	28	28	27	17	30	33

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.

Youth Exiting State Custody with Post-Secondary Scholarship Assistance from DCS in FY 2023

The Department offers young adults who were in foster care or who are in foster care on their 18th 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 Administrator 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.

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 2023 and the type of educational institutions the students attended. There was a decrease in the number of scholarships provided during FY 2023. Research is needed to determine the reasons for continued decreases. Possible reasons include decreases in post-secondary enrollment due to the pandemic and the effect of TFACTS payment issues (as payments and their statuses provide the basis for the data).

Post-Secondary Institution Type	2022 ETV	2022 BF	2022 Total	2023 ETV	2023 BF	2023 Total
Tennessee 4-Year Universities with their own boards	54	11	65	45	19	64
Tennessee Community Colleges	155	33	188	105	22	127
Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology	34	5	39	19	3	22
University of Tennessee System	22	5	27	14	4	18
Private 4-Year Colleges	18	0	18	17	0	17
Non-State Technical Colleges	17	0	17	8	0	8
Total Individuals Awarded*	296	53	328	206	47	237

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 2023 by Adjudication, Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Region/County

Region	Youth Served
Davidson	48
East Tennessee	50
Knox	53
Mid Cumberland	115
Northeast	44
Northwest	26
Shelby	71
Smoky Mountain	72
South Central	59
Southwest	32
Tennessee Valley	62
Upper Cumberland	59
Total	691

Adjudication (at exit from DCS custody)	Youth Served
Dependent/Neglected	635
Unruly	11
Delinquent	45
Total	691

Gender	Youth Served
Female	378
Male	313
Total	691

Ethnicity/Hispanic Origin	Youth Served
Yes	56
No	614
Unknown	19
Declined	2
Total	691

Race	Youth Served
American Indian/Alaska Native alone	1
American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, White	1
Asian alone	5
Asian, Black/African American	1
Asian, White	5
Black/African American alone	172
Black/African American, Multi-Racial - One Race Unknown, White	1
Black/African American, White	26
Multi-Racial - One Race Unknown	1
Multi-Racial - One Race Unknown, White	9
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander alone	2
Parent Incapacitated/Child Not Age Appropriate	1
White alone	466
Total	691

Source: Tennessee Department of Childrens Services TFACTS

Independent Living Wraparound Services--Custodial Population

Service	Cost	Instances of Service	Youth Served*
Driver's Education	\$17,282	37	37
Educational Fees	\$541	3	2
Employment Start-Up Costs	\$129	1	1
Extra-Curricular Leadership Activity/Membership Fees	\$5,653	31	25
Good Grades Incentive	\$600	12	12
Graduation Package	\$36,260	114	80
Honor/Senior Class Trip	\$1,635	9	7
IL Class Stipend	\$400	8	8
Other Special Needs	\$3,655	19	16
Post-Secondary Housing Application Fee	\$315	2	2
Testing fees (HiSet, SAT, ACT)	\$282	9	2
Yearbooks	\$1,651	21	21
Youth Leadership Stipend	\$1,700	26	26
Total	\$70,103	292	239

Independent Living Wraparound Services--Extension of Foster Care Population

Service	Cost	Instances of Service	Youth Served*
Auto Insurance	\$5,995	12	12
Driver's Education	\$6,114	13	13
Extra-Curricular Leadership Activity/Membership Fees	\$2,201	8	8
Good Grades Incentive	\$60	1	1
Graduation Package	\$12,606	52	31
Honor/Senior Class Trip	\$125	1	1
Housing - Household Furnishings	\$2,586	8	6
HOUSING - Post-Secondary Housing Application Fee	\$100	1	1
Housing Start-up Cost	\$4,937	11	10
IL Class Stipend	\$50	1	1
Materials for Vocational Studies	\$68	1	1
Other Discretionary Aid - Other Special Needs	\$2,383	11	10
Post Secondary Application/Registration Fees	\$999	4	4
Transportation Aid - Vehicle Repairs	\$1,983	5	5
Transportation Grant	\$360	7	7
Yearbooks	\$542	6	6
Youth Leadership Stipend	\$1,000	11	11
Total	\$42,110.00	153	98

*Represents unduplicated clients; some youth received more than one type of service during FY 2023.

Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS

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

Reason	Number	Percent
Academic Ineligibility	62	17%
Could Not be Located	51	14%
Criminal Charges	6	2%
Did Not Meet Any Other EFCS Requirement	26	7%
Moved Out of State	32	9%
Refusal	101	28%
Risk to Self/Others	3	0.80%
Social Security Benefit	14	4%
Transitioned to Adult Services	16	4%
Uncertain	56	15%
Total	367	100%

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.

Extension of Foster Care Services Uptake, Total and by Region

During FY 2023, more youth aged out and were eligible for EFCS. Fifty percent of the total eligible population accepted EFCS, up from last year's 44 percent. Detailed breakdown of EFCS uptake by other factors is available upon request.

Region	Aged Out	Aged Out Eligible	Accepted EFCS	% EFCS Uptake
Davidson	81	62	24	39%
East Tennessee	40	36	22	61%
Knox	55	53	30	57%
Mid Cumberland	120	109	64	59%
Northeast	62	56	30	54%
Northwest	38	36	16	44%
Shelby	135	86	36	42%
Smoky Mountain	82	75	41	55%
South Central	73	67	33	49%
Southwest	40	35	16	46%
Tennessee Valley	77	66	30	45%
Upper Cumberland	58	55	27	49%
Total	861	736	369	50%

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

Young Adults Receiving Extension of Foster Care Services

EFC youth in foster home-type placements at some point during FY 2023: 220

EFC youth receiving the Independent Living Allowance during FY 2023: 350

EFCS Placement Service	Young Adults per Service
Contract Foster Care Extension of Foster Care	112
Graduated Rate Extension of Foster Care	11
Independent Living Assistance - Parenting	36
Independent Living Residential Extension of Foster Care	134
Level 2	11
Level 2 Congregate Care Extension of Foster Care	22
Level 2 Continuum Extension of Foster Care	5
Level 2 Continuum Special Needs	1
Level 2 Special Population - Education	1
Level 3 AS-ND PRTF - High Extension of Foster Care	1
Level 3 AS-ND PRTF - Mid Extension of Foster Care	5
Level 3 AS-ND RTC Extension of foster Care	1
Level 3 Continuum Special Needs Extension of Foster Care	7
Level 3 Extension of Foster Care	4
Level 3 SED-PRTF Extension of Foster Care	1
Level 4 Special Needs Extension of Foster Care	2
Regular Board Rate Extension of Foster Care (18-20)	92
Regular Rate Extension of Foster Care	303
Total Individuals Served	648

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-two young adults received EFCS who did not have a placement service during FY 2023.

- Had an EFCS episode during the Fiscal Year but no EFCS placement: 37
- EFCS episode ended on or after July 1, 2022 but the placement service ended on or before July 1, 2022. The last payment date was in the last fiscal year (ending June 30, 2021): 5
- A total of 132 EFCS placements for young adults had to be identified manually in TFACTS because they did not have placement service records in a status that would usually be picked up by the services report code. Many of these are affected by payment and invoicing issues. Excluding these services would have significantly underreported the placements provided.

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 2022-23.

Child and Family Team Meeting Type	Number of CFTMs Attended by IL Staff	Child and Family Team Meeting Type	Number of CFTMs Attended by IL Staff
Progress Review Custody	870	JJ/SS Planned Placement Stability	31
Discharge/Exit Custody	547	JJ – Permanency Plan Revision (Custody)	26
Transition to Adulthood	390	JJ/SS Unplanned Placement Stability	20
EFCS – Progress Review	347	Initial Permanency Plan Custody	19
SS – Permanency Plan Revision (Custody)	246	Placement Stability	15
Discharge/Exit Extension of Foster Care	162	Permanency (Adoption Only)	9
EFCS- Initial Extension of Foster Care	146	JJ – Release to Aftercare	7
Special Called	127	JJ – Initial Permanency Plan (Custody)	5
Extension of Foster Care Progress Review	97	JJ – Discharge from Probation/Aftercare	3
SS – Initial Permanency Plan (Custody)	91	JJ - Program Transfer	2
Permanency Plan Revision Custody	76	Perm Plan Revision	1
EFCS – Permanency Plan Revision	37	Progress Review Custody,	1
Initial Custody	36	YDC – Program Transfer	1
Total Child and Family Team Meetings Attended by IL Staff			3312

Additionally, Independent Living staff assisted with the development of 214 Independent Living Plans and 896 Transition Plans based on manual reporting.

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

- Court: 14
- DCS: 314
- Foster Parents: 7
- Provider Agency: 146
- Youth: 242
- Other: 74

Source: Independent Living Monthly Report

Youth-Involved Advocacy and Engagement Activities

The Office of Independent Living Central Office staff handled more than 100 Formstack inquiries submitted via the online transmission form and responded to a high number of phone and email referrals. Inquiries on services and resources were matched with local DCS and Central Office staff that connects the youth or person inquiring on the youth's behalf to resources and information in that youth's area of the state. Common resources connected include YV LifeSet, Opportunity Passport, EFCS re-establishments, Community Resource referrals, ETV/Bright Futures Scholarships and TennCare. There are also times when DCS connect former TN foster youth to services in other states if they no longer reside in the State of Tennessee.

Engaging youth in planning and decision-making regarding their own lives reaps critical benefits throughout the process of transitioning to adulthood. Along with the ongoing transition planning, normalcy and assisting youth in permanency and preparation for adulthoods, DCS and partners work towards creating many youth engagement activities. This section highlights activities involving youth during FY 2023. The most impactful reflection of 2023 and in collaboration with the Young Adult Advisory Council was the expansion of the Extension of Foster Care eligibility criteria. The expanded criteria include (1) be employed for at least 80 hours per month or (2) participate in a program that removes barriers to employment as ways to receive EFC services. This is a huge policy change win to remove barriers for young adults to receive EFC services while being in the workforce and remaining connected to supportive adults.

During FY2023 the Director of Independent Living, Youth Engagement Coordinator, and two Young Adult Advisory Council members attended the National Jim Casey Youth Opportunities conference in Phoenix, Arizona. The conference provided the opportunity for cross site learning on youth engagement strategies, Opportunity Passport programming, and innovative program initiatives. The young adults had the opportunity to share the challenges they faced when aging out of foster care into life as an adult. This was their opportunity to use their voices to help advocate for important changes for youth and young adults with foster care experience, which they are advocating for the increase of Tennessee's current Independent Living Allowance rate since the conference. Both members were also able to connect with other youth leaders from other states and learn more about their work.

The Office of Independent Living also launched a Foster Care Liaison Program at various post-secondary institutions comprised of community colleges and universities. Each identified campus has trained liaisons that serve as a knowledgeable source of support for former foster youth and a point of contact with the Department of Children's Services for service and support coordination. There is one Young Adult Advisory Council member that serves in the role of the Foster Care Liaison at East Tennessee State University who is pursuing her Master's degree in Social Work.

Under the federally funded PREP contracts Leadership Academy Camps has been a success. Coordinated by the Harmony Family Center, our most recent camp was held at the scenic Gratitude Ranch in Franklin, Tennessee, where youth participate in a spectrum of events around team building, IL skill development, sexual health and family planning, and fellowship with other foster youth. We are also still hosting IL camps at Camp Montvale in Maryville, TN. Activities include ropes courses, wall

climbing, equestrian therapy, swimming, hiking, preparing meals, and, of course, campfires and s'mores. DCS and Harmony have developed plans for continued day camps in FY 23 and FY 24 in East, Middle, and West TN.

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 through a Juvenile Justice Reform Act project. Seven hundred and forty-six (746) adolescents participated in TOP in these settings during FY 2023. High staff turnover and health-related challenges have made it difficult to maintain a consistent level of service for the youth we are serving. 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.

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. Although the number of youth participating last year was lower they provided 7,573 hours of service (a 4% increase) to Tennessee communities. Young people solicited donations for Ronald McDonald House, crocheted blankets and hats for babies in the NICU, assembled bags of hygiene items for homeless, groomed horses, made valentines for elderly in a nursing home, landscaped at a community mental health facility and made posters to raise awareness and increase knowledge on topics of anxiety, depression, eating disorders and autism. 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 2023, 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 (61) 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 FY24.

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 Young Adult Advisory Council members including additional non-members with lived foster care experience participated in a visit to the Tennessee State Capitol in May 2023. They had the opportunity to meet with Governor Lee, Commissioner Quin, and other key leaders to discuss the challenges they faced aging out of foster care. The group advocated for the increase of the current Independent Living Allowance rate, more foster homes specifically for older teens and young adults in foster care, expanding the age of eligibility for Extension of Foster Care and Youth Villages LifeSet, and to change the name of Extension of Foster Care. The group also received a tour of the Capitol and learned about its history.
- 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. There are plans to open a second home in Jackson, TN.
- 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. More than half of the available laptops were distributed during FY 2023.
- 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 both males and females
- Partnership for Children, Families, and Adults in Chattanooga, TN accepts males and females.
- 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 new 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.
- Improve work around LGBT population and immigrant populations.



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 **13,616** young adults in Tennessee (and **28,094** 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 other states**, with a success rate (defined as living independently or with family) of **85 percent at Discharge, and 92 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 2023

- LifeSet served about **459** youth daily
- **1,220** youth participated in the program
- At 12-month follow-up:
 - **95 percent living with family or independently**
 - **92 percent in school, graduated or working**
 - **95 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.



Project NOW!

History

The McNabb Center is a premier, not-for-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. As the Center celebrates 75 years of providing services to communities in East Tennessee, its mission remains clear and simple; “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 20 years of providing outreach services to youth in local schools and over 15 years of offering transitional living services for youth and young adults services aging out of foster care and residential treatment. Following a merger with Child & Family Tennessee in August 2013, Helen Ross McNabb Center assumed management of *Project NOW!*, including *Opportunity Passport* and *Sisters Saving Sisters*. In 2023 the Manhood 2.0 program was added to services to provide male health sexual education. The Manhood 2.0 and Sisters programs is planned to be renamed YouthNOW in 2023 after a survey was taken with young adults in our programming. Youth shared that they prefer a more gender neutral program name to encompass and support the LGBTQ community that we serve. The McNabb Center is accredited by CARF (Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities).

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 Resource Center provides financial education through *Opportunity Passport*, life skills, work projects, transitional living resources, programs of interest to youth, 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. *Project NOW!* Also provides sexual health and pregnancy information for girls through the YouthNOW program which was formally the *Manhood 2.0 and Sisters Saving Sisters Programs*. Financial literacy is provided within a 12 module course. The Jim Casey Foundation provides training for staff in guiding towards leadership opportunities for youth and financial assistance. Youth can complete forms for asset matches when they meet the saving criteria for an asset purchase.

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 our youth. 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, 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 as housing and support.

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,	
YWCA	Transitional Living Program (TLP) and Street Outreach	Panera Bread
Salvation Army		Chick-fil-a
Knox County Health Department	K-town Empowerment Network and K- town Coordinating Council	Knox County Schools
Emerald Youth Foundation		Village Behavioral Health
Papa John’s	Youth Villages Transitional Living Program	CCAHT Community Coalition
Firehouse	Goodwill Industries	Against Human Trafficking (Grow Free)

Successes

In July of 2018 the Resource Center moved into a space shared with the Runaway Shelter and Homeless Outreach. The facility also shares a building with the Great Starts program for at-risk mothers and children. The Katie Miller Residential Treatment Program shares the same campus and serves females ages 13-18. The new space offers opportunity to serve the youth that are in many of these other programs and also qualify for *Opportunity Passport* and *Sisters Saving Sisters*.

The McNabb Center *Project NOW!* underwent staff restructuring in 2023 and moved under new supervision. New case manager and a team leader positions were created to better support youth and provide oversight as well as boost outreach. New resources and program opportunities are being created to keep youth informed. A survey of current enrolled youth found that that the Facebook page used to send information was no longer an effective social media resource. Youth reported that Instagram would be a better utilized platform, so there has been a new page created by the case managers in the program.

A new curriculum for finances and sexual health education and healthy relationships is being purchased that will provide innovative education to youth in today's atmosphere. 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 youth mental health. This program will also provide more focus on and link youth to mental health treatment services community wide.

Community outreach continues to grow and has resulted in numerous workshops made available through various organizations and businesses. Financial literacy classes through *Opportunity Passport* as well as *Sisters Saving Sisters* and other life skills-related classes are held regularly. Active participation in the program continues to grow due to consistency and efforts to reach youth in a variety of ways. A relationship with several community partners has resulted in much-needed classes on personal safety, soft skills, career opportunities, character development, and healthy living with the help of CAC. The Center will continue its mission of providing financial education, leadership activities, sexual health, as well as life skills and asset purchase training and other programs that are of benefit and useful to youth. Additionally, we have set a goal to provide more outreach and enroll more youth than past years by providing a virtual class option and links sent through our Instagram social media platform.

Sisters Saving Sisters and Manhood 2.0 (becoming Youth NOW in 2023) has become a vital part of the *Project NOW!* Resource Center. *Sisters and Manhood* have addressed disease and pregnancy prevention, saying no to unwanted sex, birth control, healthy relationships, sexual responsibility, as well as information about community resources providing free or inexpensive sexual health resources. Through these programs young women engage in discussion of issues pertinent to their life experiences in an accepting non-judgmental environment and find ways to solve their problems and the issues they face. As a result of additional Jim Casey funding, *Project Now!* was able to provide sexual health classes for males (Manhood 2.0) and several successful classes were given to males this year in our male residential treatment center ages 13-18. A plan for 2024 includes reaching out to aftercare and community daycare providers to provide this education program if approved.

Youth 4 Youth has dissipated during Covid years of 2020-2022 once it became more of a support group for youth since the beginning of the Pandemic. It is a goal to begin the youth support group again once youth become engaged in classes and begin to form an understanding and trust with each other. ProjectNOW and YouthNOW have been participating in YAB Youth Action Board for bi-weekly meetings with youth. Surveys of enrolled youth and youth at YAB are the young adults that provided feedback for the YouthNOW name change and the Instagram platform change. 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 young adults that aged out of foster care and share resources together. The YAB group recently began planning a prom for youth and McNabb Center is engaged in the planning meetings for this.

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. The problem with doing virtual is they may not have w-fi where they live or they may be homeless so to combat this we have suggested a few options such as finding a McDonalds and using their free wi-fi or coming to class in person with the bus line and providing bus passes for youth. The virtual classes may help transportation issues and we will survey youth once this begins. Other options include youth being transported by foster parents and our case manager recording the class and ensuring youth answer 3 questions correctly if they view the recorded version in order to receive their incentive gift card for attending. Due to lateness we have enforced a cutoff of 15 min late policy for youth as well as youth that are not late to classes have expressed it being unfair for late youth to receive the same incentives that they have. The late youth receive a lower amount incentive than on time youth.

Next Steps

The case manager and team leader will continue to take advantage of speaking opportunities and attend virtual meetings that inform area organizations of these youth in transition and their needs and challenges. Partnerships with DCS IL specialists and Jim Casey resources are much utilized, and we will continue working together on a weekly basis and checking in often. Attendance of weekly YAB meetings are important to gain youth support and pass on information as well as refer new youth to programs. Area organizations both public and private should continually be educated on the services and goals of the Resource Center. The Center will continue to support youth 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. The Center is working with youth virtually and in person because of transportation needs, and we will take a survey in 2024 on the effectiveness of virtual programming. Meeting real world and life challenges (finishing high school, gender identity and homelessness) of youth in transition should be a priority as well as opportunities for youth leadership. Providing opportunities for in-person or virtual events that are cultural, community, art, or athletic remains a priority for youth to expand and stimulate their interest in the larger world. Collaboration between the

Resource Center and other providers will provide a stronger, larger base of programs and better understanding of services. Collaboration with local employers and a new bank to support youth is much needed and is a goal for 2024 as well.

Knoxville Resource Center	July 1, 2021- June 30, 2022	July1, 2022- June 30, 2023
Opportunity Passport		
Number of new youth enrolled	16	13
Number of Financial Literacy Classes offered	17	12
Number of Asset Specific Classes offered	13	0
Percent of youth with favorable post- test outcome	72%	No data
OPPS Surveys		
Percent of youth completing an October OPPS survey	84.60%	90%
Percent of youth completing an April OPPS survey	100%	No data
Community Partnership Boards		
Number of board meetings	3	3
Number of new door openers created	2	0
Life Skills Classes		
Number of life skills classes held	26	12
Total number of participants in life skills classes	33	13
Percent of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment	65%	No data
Youth Leadership & Engagement		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	7	0



Monroe Harding

Homes • Healing • Opportunities

History

Since 1893, Monroe Harding has been changing young people's lives. We step in as a family, providing resources for Homes, Healing, and Opportunities, to help young people succeed. In 2019, Monroe Harding adopted a Cause Statement to provide clarity to our work:

Monroe Harding's cause is to ensure that foster care youth and other vulnerable young people build a solid foundation of strengths that position them for success in adulthood.

Our programming is aimed at providing therapeutic care to move families beyond trauma, develop resilience and repair as individuals and promote reconciliation when possible. We seek to prevent youth from entering care and ensure that youth in care or exiting care have the resources they need to lead successful, independent lives. We are meeting this mission through four key programs: Foster Care, Supportive Housing, Education & Workforce Development, and Therapy and Healing. 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

The Resource Center has focused on quality performance since it began 16 years ago, providing many services to empower young adults aged 16-26 who are transitioning out of care as well as other vulnerable young people. The center supports young adults through The Opportunity Passport™ fiscal management classes, Works Wonders™ career readiness and employment engagement program, high school equivalency prep, post-secondary education planning, sexual health education and assistance with finding housing. The center also has an in-house thrift closet specifically for young adults. Our programs encourage personal stability and a healthy transition into adulthood.

Local Partnerships

Monroe Harding continues to partner with the DCS, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and US Bank. Through our workforce development program, Monroe Harding partners with several local businesses and business leaders such as Crossroads Pet Shop and Adopt, Eat Well Nashville, the Public Defender's Office and the National Museum of African American Music. They provide experiential learning opportunities, including internships and job shadows, to help prepare young adults for the workforce. Monroe Harding also collaborates with 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 meet the criteria to be in DCS custody.

Successes

Monroe Harding was able to serve 384 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. While we continue to offer cornerstone programs including financial literacy, career development, and education classes, we have added several new classes and services including monthly programming for justice involved youth, on-site groups and counseling sessions an on-site assistance obtaining resources such as SNAP, housing, and essential documents.

Additionally, the Works Wonders™ Career Readiness program, now in the fourth year provided paid internships in fields including social work, law, cosmetology, and healthcare while our education programs have helped 29 young adults earn diplomas and certificates. Monroe Harding awarded 14 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.

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.

Nashville Resource Center Report

Opportunity Passport™	Previous Year	Year to Date
Number of Financial Literacy Classes offered	12	3
Number of Asset Specific Classes offered	12	3
Percent of youth with favorable post- test outcome	90%	89%
OPPS Surveys		
(April & October only), percent of youth completing an OPPS survey	82%	NA
Community Partnership Boards		
Number of new door openers created	7	3
Life Skills Classes		
Total number of participants in life skills classes	171	30
Percent of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment	91%	92%
Youth Leadership & Engagement		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	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.

Accreditation and Memberships:

- Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children, Inc. (COA)
- United Way of Greater Chattanooga
- Alliance for Children and Families
- Tennessee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual
- Violence, Tennessee Conference on Social Welfare
- Tennessee Conference on Social Welfare
- Tennessee Alliance for Children and Families (TACF)

Mission Statement

Empowering People. Building Communities.

Vision Statement

Helping build a stronger, smarter, safer community.

Partnership Programs Impact

The Partnership FCA is one of Chattanooga’s oldest and largest human services non-profit organizations. Partnership FCA has over 20 programs that provide individuals and families with the tools and resources to build stability and create independence through stability services (which includes youth and young adult serving programs), deaf services, victim support services, and elder support.

Partnership programs focus on specific needs of the Greater Chattanooga community providing experienced social workers, counselors, and other highly trained professionals. Together, these 44 separate, but complimentary centers of services provide support to families and individuals who may have many related needs.

Updates

Over the past year we have been able to have funding to financially support our youth on a continuous basis. We recently purchased a brand-new home in Redbank Tennessee for the boys in our program.

Under the direction of the RCYC Youth Education Manager, all RCYC continues to provide financial literacy, sexual health education, and life skills classes virtually and in person. Monthly Link Up calendars are sent to all RCYC participants and community partners. In June we partnered with Chattanooga State and University of Tennessee at Chattanooga to provide 15 youth/YA with a college tour. The goal was to prepare the youth adults that are headed off to college in the fall as well as inspire the upcoming youth. We've also partnered with Chambliss to create an Aging Out Panel. This panel will serve as guidance to foster youth who are aging out of the system. Current EFC youth will answer questions related to aging out, turning 18 in the system, picking the best SIL program and more. The panel is in the planning phases and the first event is scheduled for Fall 2023.

We continued to provide the Camp Hope America experience to 41 youth. Camp Hope is a trauma informed camp model to bring healing and hope to youth and children. Camp HOPE America - Chattanooga was held in partnership with YMCA Camp Ocoee in August 2022. We provided the opportunity to attend the week of camp at no cost to 40 participants. Michelle Howard-Hamidi, Site Director for Camp HOPE Chattanooga, recruited volunteers, assessed children for camp readiness, and organized programming. The camp was facilitated in partnership with the Camp HOPE National Team and YMCA Camp Ocoee.

A large component of our mentorship programming is Pathways (RCYC). Volunteers who serve as camp counselors attend these events which foster building relationships and a strong mentorship program. Pathways events began in February 2020 which includes a weekly zoom meeting. Tablets have been provided to all participants to ensure they have accessibility. Monthly in-person events also began in February 2020 and are ongoing. These events provide an opportunity to build healthy relationships while encouraging resilience and confidence. These events include Challenge by Choice activities (canoeing, rock climbing, biking) as well as art, science, and music. Case management is provided to all participants with the goal of breaking the cycle of violence. Families are encouraged to attend select events and we provide support with resources and referrals to them as needed.

River City Youth Collective (RCYC)

The River City Youth Collective 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. The RCYC is a collective, a safe space where youth and young adults can find acceptance, support, and opportunities to learn and grow from and with one another. The RCYC is "for the youth, by the youth."

The Resource Center will still support the Sisters Saving Sisters sexual health education curriculum for girls and young women, but we have been in communication with the grant funders and have been approved to incorporate the new curriculum Love Notes. We are excited to provide relevant, updated, and interactive information on sexual health. The Resource Center continues to offer the Jim Casey Match program and Opportunity Passport financial literacy curriculum. This year we successfully matched 3 youth for their 1st car.

We have recently partnered with A Step Ahead Chattanooga which will further expand our youth’s knowledge on sexual health using materials from the Power through Choices curriculum. Additionally, sexual health programming for boys and young men has been added to the Center’s workshop catalog. As of fall 2023, male clients may also receive education through the manhood 2.0 curriculum. We also partnered with Chattanooga State Career services to provide a Friendsgiving Etiquette Dinner.

Partnerships

Partnerships in and around the Chattanooga area have enriched the experience of youth involved in the River City Youth Collective. The RCYC receives most referrals from the Independent Living Specialists in both Hamilton and Bradley counties. Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Chattanooga provides financial literacy education for youth participating in the Opportunity Passport curriculum and Tennessee Valley Federal Credit Union opens savings accounts for every youth.

More recently, RCYC has partnered with Chattanooga State Community College to bring the Sisters Saving Sisters (SHE) curriculum on campus twice a semester, allowing us to build a relationship with the students. Before the SHE class, we host a SHE Sisterhood Session at a local coffee shop to help break down barriers and build rapport with the women. At the sisterhood session we do icebreaker activities, team building and selfcare exercises. Our newly formed partnership with University of Tennessee at Chattanooga College of Business is going to be very beneficial to the Youth Leadership Board. They have great relationships with Companies that can provide door openers for our youth.

Referring Agencies

Tennessee Department of Children's Services	Youth Villages	Camp Hope
Chambliss Center for Children	Cleveland Academy	Omni Visions
		Rise Up Cooperative

Community Partners

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Educational Opportunity Center	Choices
Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Chattanooga	Unum
Tennessee Valley Federal Credit Union	EPB
American Job Center	A Step Ahead Chattanooga
	Co Lab
Chattanooga State Community College	Family Justice Center
	Vocational Rehab
Tennessee Westlyn University	Rise Up Cooperative
	LAUNCH Chattanooga
UTC College of Business	Hamilton County Health Dept
	43 Plummer
Walmart Supercenter	Young Ladies of Power
	Tennessee Coalition

Successes

- Brand New SIL site
- Main Office moved to Eastgate.
- New Grant—Expansion of PREP grant to include funding for Manhood 2.0 curriculum.
- 88.76% and 100% Opportunity Passport survey completion this past fiscal year
- Partnership with Chattanooga State Career Center for an Etiquette Friendsgiving Celebration.
- Partnership with Chattanooga State/ UTC 1st College Tour
- 1st Juneteenth Celebration with the youth
- Partnership with Chambliss to conduct Aging Out Panel for Youth/Young Adults
- New Partnership with Rise Up Cooperative to bring life skills classes our participants.

Challenges and Barriers

Youth engagement after the pandemic has been challenging. Fortunately, through having to adjust our programming to be mostly virtual, we have learned a lot about the way this population communicates. We recently added two social media platforms—Instagram and TikTok, to engage in positive social interaction with our youth. We have also developed great relationships with organizations.

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 also plans to redesign the Pathways transitional living program to include new housing options, and additional incentives for youth in the program. In October 2020, River City Youth Collective moved to a new location where staff and youth are housed in the same location.

RCYC Report	FY 2023
Number of new youth enrolled	23
Number of Financial Literacy Classes Offered	15
Number of Asset Specific Classes Offered	4
Percentage of youth completing October 2021 OPPS survey	88.76%
Percentage of youth completing April 2022 OPPS survey	100%
Number of board meetings	2
Number of new door openers created	5
Number of life skills classes held	40
Total number of participants in life skills classes	73

South Memphis Alliance, Inc.



History

South Memphis Alliance (SMA) opened its doors in 2000 to help organize neighborhood associations in the urban communities of South Memphis. Over time, SMA expanded services to serve youth in foster care and families in crisis. Despite growth, SMA holds fast to its core belief that civic engagement is the bedrock of strong communities, and that **strong communities promote stable families.**

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. ^[L]_[SEP]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

Educational Services

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

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) Community Advisory Board	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
Planned Parenthood of the Greater MidSouth	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	Ross Innovative Employment Solutions	BlueCross Blue Shield	GMFEC
Paragon Bank	Memphis Public Library	Sweet Cheeks Diaper Ministry	Mid-South Food Bank

Successes

- As part of our dream seekers program, SMA received \$101,750.00 in sponsorships, grants, and donations to assist our clients with supportive services. From June to September of 2023, funds were received. Within the next few months, we will also be able to assist our clients with utility and rental support from sponsorship through Coca-Cola.
- Our Opportunity Passport Dream Seekers had 100% survey completion for April 2023.

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

As part of our partnership with the Excel Center, four young people (between the ages of 19 and 25) received their high school diplomas through our workforce development program.

Memphis Resource Center Report	Previous Year	Year to Date
Opportunity Passport™		
Number of new youth enrolled	20	10
Number of Financial Literacy Classes offered	12	8
Number of Asset Specific Classes offered	12	8
Percent of youth with favorable post-test outcome	85%	85%
OPPS Surveys		
Percent of youth completing April/October OPPS survey	100%	Currently Surveying
Community Partnership Boards		
Number of board meetings	2	1
Number of new door openers created	2	1
Life Skills Classes		
Number of life skills classes held	10	6
Total number of participants in life skills classes	30	16
Percent of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post test	100%	100%
Youth Leadership & Engagement		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	5	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 FY2023 year include:

- The Healthy Transitions sites served a total of 115 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 Trauma Informed Supervisor training for supervisors of Certified Peer Support Specialists.
- In FY2023, The Healthy Transitions Program provided outreach to 270 Youth and young Adults, screened 100 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.
- In FY2023, Tennessee's Healthy Transitions Program was coined one of the model Healthy Transitions programs in the country. In June 2023, The TDMHSAS Healthy Transition Staff presented for SAMSHA's Annual Grantee Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland.
- TDMHSAS continued implementing the Certified Young Adult Peer Support (CYAPSS) program, launched in May 2021. In FY2023, 49 individuals completed the CYAPSS training, and 22 completed the full certification process, becoming certified CYAPSS.

These efforts support the sustainability of behavioral health services that are driven by, and that 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.

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, previously housed within Vanderbilt Center of Excellence 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 & Monroe counties. Service implementation will be carried out by the Helen Ross McNabb Center.

Team members from TDMHSAS regularly attend YTAC meetings to provide updates on progress toward goals. Some of the successes during FY 2023 year include:

- OnTrack TN teams served 232 youth and young adults experiencing a first episode of psychosis.
- The Ontrack Teams collectively reduced the number of clients hospitalized over time by 76% and reduced client severe illness by 76%.
- TDMHSAS, in collaboration with Vanderbilt's Statewide Trainer and Consultant, offered multiple training opportunities to OnTrack TN sites, including Multi-Family Group Therapy training to enhance family involvement in services; 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 FY2023 year include:

- The CHR-P team is fully staffed, has enrolled 2 young people in the program, and provided outreach to 112 people.
- The CHR-P team has provided workforce development for 342 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.