

Youth Transitions Advisory Council



Annual Report

2021



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MEETING SUMMARIES ARE AVAILABLE OF 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.

For good or bad, 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.

The year 2020 was a significant challenge for everyone, including young adults. While 2021 has seen its own share of challenges, much has happened to improve our outlook for the future. The federal government stepped up to assist former foster youth and provide relief similar to that received by other adults to assist them through the pandemic. During FY 2021 the education and employment criteria for Extension of Foster Care was waived through the passage of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act federal legislation. As a result of the legislation, the Office of Independent Living and Youth Villages staff made efforts to re-engage youth who were disconnected from services in 2020 due to the pandemic. Youth who aged out or lost eligibility due to their educational status after the pandemic began in January 2020 could re-enter the program and measures to prevent others from aging out were taken. Youth turning 18 were given the option to enroll in Extension of Foster Care with the education criteria waived. These efforts led to more than 150 additional young adults enrolling into the program.

In FY 2021, 717 young people turned 18 years of age in state custody, returning to the trend of fewer youth aging out of custody each year as noted prior to the pandemic.

	Total Aged Out	Total Aged Out Eligible for EFCS	Eligible Population Accepting EFCS	Percent Accepting EFCS
FY 2008-09	1209			
FY 2009-10	1162			
FY 2010-11	1131	813	163	20%
FY 2011-12	1084	748	201	27%
FY 2012-13	1017	768	301	39%
FY 2013-14	984	779	312	40%
FY 2014-15	932	731	353	48%
FY 2015-16	996	815	388	48%
FY 2016-17	935	793	349	44%
FY 2017-18	961	790	367	46%
FY 2018-19	876	741	332	41%
FY 2019-20	876	755	338	45%
FY 2020-21	717	626	335	54%

Of the 717 youth aging out, 626 were eligible for EFCS with 335 accepting the services, an uptake rate of 54 percent. This increase is likely attributable to pandemic flexibilities put in place by federal legislation. Of all the youth eligible for Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS) who aged out during FY 2021, four percent of eligible juvenile justice youth accepted EFCS, while 47 percent of eligible dependent/neglected youth accepted. Three percent of eligible youth adjudicated unruly accepted EFCS.

A total of 782 youth were served by Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS) in FY 2020-21. The average length of stay in EFCS was 263 days, down from 311 days in 2020. Half of youth exited after 162 days. Youth requesting termination of services, or self-termination, were the largest group losing services in FY 2020-21, followed by those who lost academic eligibility.

Two scholarships are available to DCS youth, the federally-funded Education and Training Voucher and the state-funded Bright Futures Scholarships. In FY 2021, 569 young people received these scholarships, a decrease from 2020.

To improve Authentic Youth Engagement, DCS created a statewide Leadership Board called the Young Adult Advisory Council that serves as the foundation for all youth engagement work throughout the state. The council consists of current and former Extension of Foster Care 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. Seven hundred and twenty-eight (728) adolescents participated in TOP in these settings during FY 2021. This number is about 20 percent lower than previous years due to temporary suspensions of services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as high staff turnover. 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 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 7,265 hours of service to Tennessee communities.

Affordable housing continues to be 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) who provide additional information in this report about Tennessee's Housing Trust Competitive Grants. Grantees receive additional points in scoring for the competitive grants by setting aside availability for former foster youth. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development continues the Foster Youth to Independence "FYI" voucher program. During FY 2021 partnerships with the Knoxville, Memphis, and Oak Ridge housing authorities were finalized to offer FYI housing vouchers to eligible young adults in their areas.

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. The focal areas of YVLifeSet 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 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 2021, YVLifeSet served about 708 youth daily. A total of 1,556 youth participated in the program. At 12-month follow-up, 93 percent were in school, had graduated or were working, 95 percent were living with family or independently and 94 percent experienced no trouble with the law

DCS, along with community partners, provide Resource Centers for the youth in Extension of Foster Care Services, including Nashville Youth Connections (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 supports and opportunities they provide.

A significant issue for youth aging out of foster care and all former foster youth is access to affordable housing. Former foster youth make up one third to one half of the homeless population in Tennessee and across the country. The Tennessee Housing and Development Agency has increased its efforts over the years to serve these young people. The THDA strategic plan includes provisions to address the housing needs of youth aging out of foster care. Priority points are added to Tennessee Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant applications proposing to serve youth aging out of the foster care system. In FY 2021 Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency received funds for construction of 4 units of permanent rental housing in Nashville.

Two units will be set aside for youth aging out of the foster care system. Two units will be set aside for homeless veterans. The grant amount was \$500,000.

The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services currently implements three programs addressing the needs of transition age youth: the Tennessee Healthy Transitions Initiative, the First Episode Psychosis Initiative and Tennessee Clinical High Risk for Psychosis 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 HT-ILT is to assist Tennessee youth and young adults age 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 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 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 15-30 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.

2021 Recommendations of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council

- 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) DCS should expand eligibility criteria for Extension of Foster Care under the Federal Fostering Connections legislation to include youth who are working or engaged in activities that lead to employment. Programs should be promoted that assist these young adults with job readiness and job retention skills.
- 4) 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.
- 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 related 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, since the most likely reason youth become ineligible for Extension of Foster Care Services is academic ineligibility.

- 7) Services provided in the Resource Centers for transitioning youth must reach underserved areas too. As described in Tennessee Code Annotated 37-2-603, the Resource Centers that currently exist in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville provide a “one-stop shop” for foster youth and former foster youth. When assistance with continuing education, financial literacy, job search and life skills are provided in one place, it helps youth stay engaged and ensures that more of their needs are met. Resource Centers and the services they provide 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.



Activities and/or programs being undertaken by the Tennessee Housing Development Agency to address the housing needs of youth aging out of foster care include the following:

Tennessee Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant

Awards were made to these agencies providing housing for youth aging out of foster care:

- *2012 TN Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to Omni Community Services, Inc.* The grant was originally awarded to provide 12 housing units, on a statewide basis, for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The homes acquired under the grant are single-family three- or four-bedroom units and are occupied by three or four persons per home.

Omni Community Services works with special needs persons of all ages, including youth involved in the foster care system. A request was made to expand the scope of the grant to provide housing for youth aging out of foster care. Two units in Davidson County were provided for youth aging out of foster care. Each home has the capacity to serve up to four youth. The Housing Trust Fund grant and agency funds were used to acquire each of the properties. The grant amount utilized for the homes for youth was \$154,000.

The project was completed in December 2015.

- *2014 TN Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to the Crossville Housing Authority for new construction of a four-plex of one-bedroom apartments for youth aging out of foster care in Crossville.* The grant amount was \$136,050. The units are located in walking distance or close proximity to post-secondary educational institutions, medical facilities, grocery stores, restaurants, discount stores and the Tennessee Career Center.

Youth residing in the apartments receive case management and supervised independent living services from the Department of Children's Services. Services may include job placement assistance, vocational assessments, self-sufficiency skill training and transitional living services. The project was constructed on property already owned by the housing authority, and it was funded by the TN Housing Trust Fund grant, a zero percent loan made possible through the THDA/Tennessee Department of Revenue Community Investment Tax Credit Program, agency funds, and donations.

Tenants receive Section 8 rental assistance and a homeless priority. The tenants also receive a living allowance through the Department of Children's Services, and some are employed. The project is complete and is fully occupied.

- *2015 TN Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to Crossroads Campus for six beds of transitional housing for youth aging out of foster care and other at-risk youth facing poverty and homelessness in Nashville.* The program is a pet retail social enterprise providing job training for disadvantaged youth and adoptions for homeless dogs and cats at risk of euthanasia. Earned revenues from the pet shop help to sustain the program. The grant amount was \$159,877.

The project was funded by the TN Housing Trust Fund grant and private funds raised through fundraising efforts. The project was completed in March 2016.

- *2016 TN Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to Keystone Development, Inc. for the development of 12 one-bedroom apartments in Johnson City.* The grant was for Phase 1 of the Baker Street Apartments development. Six of the apartments were set aside for homeless youth, many of whom will have aged out of foster care. The other six units were set aside for seniors who will serve as mentors and role models for the youth.

The units were developed in partnership with the Department of Children's Services and Youth Villages. The partner agencies are providing financial assistance and case management. The grant amount was \$500,000. Other sources of funding in this project include a Federal Home Loan Bank grant award, a bank loan, and a Johnson City HUD HOME grant.

The project was completed in August 2017.

- *2017 TN Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to Keystone Development, Inc. for the development of 12 apartments in Johnson City.* This is Phase 2 of the Baker Street Apartments development under which Keystone was awarded a 2016 TN Housing Trust Fund grant. Three units were set aside for homeless youth many of who will have aged out of foster care. Nine units were set aside for seniors.

The units were developed in partnership with the Department of Children's Services and Youth Villages. The partner agencies will provide financial assistance and case management. Completion is anticipated by November 2017. The grant amount was \$500,000. Other sources of funding in this project include a Federal Home Loan Bank grant award.

- *2017 TN Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to the Franklin Housing Authority for the rehabilitation of the 22-unit Park Street Apartments development in Franklin.* The rehabilitation of Park Street Apartments represents the third site

of the Franklin Housing Authority's Master Redevelopment Plan. One unit will be set aside for youth aging out of foster care. The grant amount was \$500,000. Other sources of funding in the project include a Federal Home Loan Bank grant award, a TN Department of Environment and Conservation grant award, and a loan from Pinnacle Bank utilizing the THDA/Department of Revenue Community Investment Tax Credit Program.

- *2018 TN Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to Woodbine Community Organization for the development of two shared living residences that will provide 16 single room occupancy units in Nashville.* Each resident in the shared living project will have an accessible bedroom and private bath and will share the kitchen, living, dining, and laundry areas. The project also includes two SRO units for live-in caregivers. The grant amount was \$500,000. Woodbine Community Organization has partnered with Monroe Harding for the provision of onsite services to include continued education, vocational training and life skills. Other sources of funding include owner equity being provided by Woodbine.
- *2018 TN Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to Case Management Inc. for the rehabilitation of 8 units of housing in Memphis.* Two units will be set aside for youth aging out of foster care. Other populations to be served include homeless adults and veterans. The grant amount was \$210,515.
- *2019 TN Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to Crossroads Campus for construction of 25 units of rental housing in Nashville.* The housing will serve young adults facing homelessness, including individuals who have experienced foster care, juvenile justice, the effects of long-term poverty, and other past traumas. The grant amount was \$500,000.
- *2020 TN Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to Johnson City Housing Authority for construction of 8 units of permanent rental housing in Johnson City.* Four units will be set aside for youth who have aged out of the foster care system and the other four units will serve the elderly, disabled, and/or veterans. Grant amount was \$500,000.
- *2021 Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency for construction of 4 units of permanent rental housing in Nashville.* Two units will be set aside for youth aging out of the foster care system. Two units will be set aside for homeless veterans. The entire development will include 96 mixed income units. Grant amount was \$500,000.

2014 Emergency Solutions Grants to the following youth serving agencies for rapid re-housing, street outreach, and funds for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

- *Monroe Harding in Nashville.* The grant amount was \$36,615 for rapid re-housing activities.
- *Oasis Center in Nashville.* The grant amount was \$63,385 for street outreach, rapid re-housing, and funds for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

Strategic Planning

The THDA strategic plan includes provisions to address the housing needs of youth aging out of foster care. Priority points are added to Tennessee Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant applications proposing to serve youth aging out of the foster care system.

THDA also included a session on “Housing the Hard to Serve” during the 2017 Governor’s Housing Conference. In an effort to encourage the development of more housing for youth aging out of foster care, panel members presented strategies utilized in successfully developing housing for youth aging out of Tennessee’s foster care system.



Youth Transitions Advisory Council Data

Strategies to access and track effectiveness of Extension of Foster Care services and the operation of the Resource Centers

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.

Transitional Survey Results of Youth Exiting Custody

DCS is committed to ensuring 90 percent or more of youth who age out of custody at 18 have at least one of the following apply at the time of emancipation:

- earned a GED/HiSET,
- graduated from high school,
- enrolled in high school or post-secondary program.

Youth with special needs who age out must be currently enrolled in a vocational training program or employed full time.

DCS compiled survey results of all youth who aged out of care between January 1, 2021 and June 30, 2021. Out of the 253 Dependent/Neglected/Unruly youth, 84 percent met one or more of the outlined criteria.

DCS will continue to promote educational opportunities for youth in custody and those who leave custody at an older age.

The following graduation data for FY 2021 is for 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. This data is collected by the DCS Office of Education, as these programs fall under DCS as the Local Education Agency (LEA), as follows:

High School Diplomas from In-House School:	104
HiSETs from In-House School:	31
High School Diplomas from Wilder Youth Development Center:	24
HiSETs from Wilder Youth Development Center:	12
Total Secondary Graduates:	171

The collaborative between the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), Davidson County Juvenile Court, and the Department of Children's Services' (DCS) Central Office staff & Davidson County Regional staff entitled Project Wrap Around continued during FY 2021. The goal of the project is to increase timely high school graduation rates, matriculation, retention rates, and attainment of post-secondary certificates or degrees among the 14 - 21 population in foster care. This is currently 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 secondary graduations rates, post-secondary enrollment, and improved post-secondary success.

The following graduation data was obtained from the Tennessee Department of Education for students designated as being in foster care during academic year 2021:

Public School Foster Care Graduates State-Wide 2020-21: 331*

*Source: Data downloaded from EIS Discoverer on 10/8/21 by

Programs & Operations, Office of Districts and Schools, Tennessee Department of Education.

Notes: Count of foster care students who graduated from high school in SY 2020-21.

Foster care graduates include students who were flagged with the FOS01-foster care student classification any time during the school year (including in a LEA that did not award the diploma).

Graduates include students who:

- Earned a regular diploma,
- Regular diploma with foreign language waiver,

- Regular diploma with fine arts waiver, or
- 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 2021 fiscal or academic year was 502.

During FY2021, 30 DCS scholarship recipients completed post-secondary education. The following represent the post-secondary programs completed.

Non EFCS

- Austin Peay University
- East Tennessee State University
- Jackson State Community College
- Lane College
- Middle Tennessee State University
- Roane State Community College
- Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology
- University of Memphis
- University of Tennessee, Chattanooga

EFCS

- Austin Peay State University
- Chattanooga State Community College
- Empire Beauty College
- East Tennessee State University
- Nashville State Community College
- Pellissippi State Community College
- Southwest Community College
- Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology
- University of Tennessee, Memphis

Educational caregiver/advocacy efforts include attending educational meetings, consulting with DCS staff, resource parents and schools, as well as providing educational training to departmental personnel and schools. From July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, the Education Division provided consultation to Child and Family Teams, field services worker (FSWs), and public/non-public schools over 41,400 times. Education staff participated directly in over 2,700 Child and Family Team Meetings and more than 750 Individual Education Plan (IEP)/504 Meetings. Additionally, the Education Specialists advocated for students in 25 disciplinary hearings and in nearly 150 specialized foster care review board meetings. This year, special attention was given to provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). DCS Education and departmental staff teamed with Public Schools to hold nearly 550 Best Interest Determination Meetings to keep students in foster care from changing schools when entering state custody or moving DCS placements. Finally, DCS Education Staff also provided 159 educational training sessions for nearly 3000 FSWs, resource parents, surrogate parents, and school staff.

Both the Youth Development Center (YDC) and the provider 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 a provider 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, provider 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 and in our YDC who are significantly behind in credits based 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 of the 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—Wayne County, and Wayne Academy Davidson County have now completed the necessary requirements to become HISET computer-based test centers. At least 4 other provider in-house schools are seeking to become HISET test sites as well. 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 remains a major focus in transition planning to help young people meet their educational goals. 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 TN Promise, that help support their educational well-being.

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.

TN DCS utilizes the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) data to help understand the circumstances of our transition aged youth. The most recent NYTD submission contains survey data for youth who had their 21st birthdays during the survey period October 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. This is a partial year's submission and included the following data:

- 63 of 97 youth eligible to be surveyed participated in the NYTD 2021A Follow-Up survey
- 29 were reported as Unable to Locate/Invite, 3 were incarcerated, 2 Declined, and 3 were deceased who were not counted as part of the surveyable population
- 87 percent of participating young adults reported having connections to an adult
- 22 percent of participating young adults reported having children
- 27 percent of participating young adults reported being homeless at some point in the past two years
- 21 percent of participating young adults reported incarceration at some point in the past two years

National statistics for this population are not yet available, because the entire two data submission periods have not been completed.

EFC Criteria Expansion Project

Tennessee's EFC program currently operates three of the five eligibility criteria outlined in the Fostering Connections guidelines and Tenn. Code Ann. 37-2-417 Tennessee's Transitioning Youth Empowerment Act of 2010:

- Completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential.
- Enrolled in an institution that provides postsecondary or vocational education; and
- Incapable of working or enrolling in an approved academic program due to a medical condition, including a developmental or intellectual condition.

In FY 2017, DCS began an analysis project to explore expanding EFC to include the two remaining eligibility criteria:

- Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment and
- Employed for at least 80 hours per month.

DCS partnered with representatives from the Jim Casey Youth Initiative (JCYI) and Main Spring (MC) consulting to analyze the fiscal and programmatic impact expanding the program would have. This expansion would not only impact the Office of Independent Living but would involve expansion of services, supports and policy/protocol for Divisions of Adoption and Permanent Guardianship, Juvenile Justice, Foster Care, Placement, and others. In preparation to meet with executive and regional leadership three focus group meetings with current and former foster youth in Memphis, Nashville, and Knoxville was conducted. Youth were asked to provide feedback about the current EFC program and areas they would like to see improvement. Some highlights consistent across all three groups were youth felt supported by their case managers

and stated desire to meet with and connect more with them. Youth felt the biggest need was more housing options. The report was finalized in November 2018. DCS executive and senior staff decided to proceed with the privatizing of the EFC case management with the goal of expanding the eligibility criteria thereafter.

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 of the legislation 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 Extension of Foster Care 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 Extension of Foster Care 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.

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 Extension of Foster care services 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. The number of services provided by the Department of Children's Services

Services Available to Youth in State Custody and Those Who Receive Extension of Foster Care Services

- 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)
- Bright Futures (State Funded) Scholarship
- YVLifeSet
- Opportunity Passport™ (per the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative) - Provided Via the Resource Centers
- Placement Services
- Case Management
- Household Furnishings

Source: Tennessee Department of Children’s Services – TFACTS

The number of young adults who received these services during FY 2020-2021 and length of stay in EFCS.

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

Services Provided

YVLifeSet served: 1,265 youth in FY21.

- **790 were DCS grant-funded at some point during FY21.**
- **475 did not receive DCS grant-funding at any point during FY21.**

Please note:

- 1. Youth may have received both types of funding at different points during FY21, but not simultaneously.**
- 2. There is a slight change in wording from last year’s statement: Previously, there was overlap in the numbers of DCS grant-funded youth and privately funded youth. We present here non-overlapping groups.**

- Extension of Foster Care Services: 782 Individuals/845 EFCS Episodes.

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

FY 2021 EFCS Retention: Days in EFCS

Region	Mean (Days)	Median (Days)	Mode (Days)
Northwest	346	233	0
Southwest	247	132	9
Shelby	308	263	112
Davidson	289	206	0
Mid Cumberland	356	273	1096
South Central	208	101	100
Upper Cumberland	230	119	56
Northeast	200	162	0
Knox	285	162	1096
East	159	87	0
Smoky Mtn	186	147	83
TN Valley	340	200	154
Total (Days)	263	162	0

In FY 2021, the mean (days) was 263 days and median (days) were 162, which is down from last year. In FY 2020, the mean (days) was 284 days and median (days) were 184. This data is based on EFCS episodes that ended July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, many of which occurred during the nearly 7 months prior to the introduction of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act/Division X flexibilities allowing DCS to re-establish EFCS for young adults during early calendar year 2021. Many of the young adults who had services ended, which is represented in this data, were able to re-start services and had open EFCS episodes at the end of the fiscal year. This data indicates that many youth had shorter episodes initially, which may have been due to the pandemic. DCS will continue to evaluate supports needed to increase retention of youth in Extension of Foster Services, as the pandemic related flexibilities ended 9/30/21.

Program Exits

The following represent the circumstances by which young adults leave extended foster care that are captured for reporting purposes during FY 2021:

- Academic Ineligibility.
- Risk to Self or Others (example: committing a violent crime, which is in violation of the Rights and Responsibilities Agreement young adults sign when accepting extension of foster care services).
- Voluntary Termination of Services (Self Termination).
- Successful Completion of Educational Program.
- Transition to Adult Services.
- Turned age 21; and
- Unable to Locate.

Region	Academic	Risk to Self or Others	Self	Successful Completion of Ed. Program	Transition to Adult Services	Turned Age 21	Unable to Locate	Total
Davidson	10	2	8	0	2	0	2	24
East	7	0	11	1	1	1	2	23
Knox	0	0	15	0	4	2	0	21
Mid Cumberland	14	2	19	1	4	4	1	45
Northeast	12	2	4	0	4	0	3	25
Northwest	9	1	7	2	0	2	2	23
Shelby	13	0	9	0	4	2	1	29
Smoky Mtn.	5	1	14	2	7	0	1	30
South Central	11	4	6	0	3	0	5	29
Southwest	5	1	5	0	0	1	0	12
TN Valley	7	5	14	1	3	3	5	38
Upper Cumberland	16	0	9	3	3	1	6	38
Total	109	18	121	10	35	16	28	337

The primary support service offered to young adults who exit EFCS is YVLifeSet. YVLifeSet continues working with the youth after EFCS end and can assist working with the youth to re-establish EFCS, depending on the reason for exiting. Youth who exit for academic reasons can work a viable education plan to get back on track and eligible for EFCS before they turn 21. Other services available to youth who exit to adult services that have and 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.

The number of youth who exited state custody and received scholarship assistance from DCS to continue into post-secondary educational programs during FY 2020-2021.

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. The Office of Independent Living has a Scholarship Administrator who manages the ETV funds available and State Funded Scholarship. ETV applicants are required to provide documentation of total cost of attendance and the financial aid package for the programs they are enrolled into the Scholarship Coordinator who reviews this information and establishes ETV awards accordingly.

DCS can provide an unduplicated number of ETVs award each year. The program will continue looking at ways to maximize the impact of funding and involving communities and individual colleges and universities in providing increased opportunities for this population. Data is currently being reviewed to help determine fluctuations in ETV awards, identifying the factors affecting this to inform strategies for maximizing utilization. The Bright Futures State Funded Scholarship awarded through the Governor’s Office will continue in the coming year, and \$500,000 is the amount the state legislature has allocated toward this program.

There was a slight decrease in the number of scholarships provided during FY 2020.

Post-Secondary Institution	2020			2021		
	ETV	State	Total	ETV	State	Total
Tennessee 4-Year University	94	35	129	74	16	90
Tennessee Community Colleges	282	60	342	194	51	245
Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology	65	27	92	75	13	88
University of Tennessee System	29	17	46	45	25	70
Private 4-Year Colleges	45	0	45	47	0	47
Non State Technical Colleges	35	0	35	29	0	29
Total	550	139	689	464	105	569

Source: Independent Living Scholarship Report

Number of EFCS young adults served in FY 2021 broken down by adjudication, gender, race/ethnicity, and region/county.

Region	Number
Davidson Region	58
East Tennessee Region	53
Knox Region	49
Mid Cumberland Region	110
Northeast Region	57
Northwest Region	45
Shelby Region	79
Smoky Mountain Region	69
South Central Region	60
Southwest Region	31
TN Valley Region	92
Upper Cumberland Region	79
Total	782

Total Individuals Served: 782

Adjudication (at time exiting DCS custody)

Dependent/Neglected: 690

Unruly: 26

Delinquent: 66

Gender

Female: 402

Male: 380

Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS

Race	Number Served
American Indian/Alaska Native	2
American Indian/Alaska Native, White	1
Asian	7
Asian, White	1
Black/African American	213
Black/African American, Multi-Racial - One Race Unknown	3
Black/African American, Multi-Racial - One Race Unknown, White	1
Black/African American, White	38
Multi-Racial - One Race Unknown	2
Multi-Racial - One Race Unknown, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	2
Multi-Racial - One Race Unknown, White	8
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	2
Unable to Determine	3
White	499
Total	782

Ethnicity/Hispanic Origin	Number Served
DECLINED	2
NO	709
UNKNOWN	28
YES	43
Total	782

The following describes the number of youth who received independent living wraparound services in FY 2020-2021. The information for prior fiscal years is available in those years' reports, located here: www.tn.gov/content/tn/tccy/programs0/ytac/ytac-report1.html

Independent Living Wraparound Services Custodial Population FY 2020-2021

SERVICE	Total	Instances of Service	Number of Youth Served*
Drivers Education	\$24,279.00	55	54
Educational Fees	\$676.35	1	1
Extra-Curricular Leadership Activity/Membership Fees	\$4,449.95	15	14
Good Grades Incentive	\$1,332.68	27	24
Graduation Package	\$28,995.61	112	73
Housing Application Fees (Post-Secondary)	\$550.00	3	3
Other Special Needs	\$1,818.15	7	7
Post-Secondary Application/Registration Fees	\$440.00	3	3
Testing fees (GED, SAT, ACT)	\$95.00	1	1
Yearbooks	\$1,186.00	13	13
Youth Leadership Stipend	\$575.00	13	13
Total	\$64,397.74	250	206

*This represents unduplicated clients; some youth received more than one type of service during FY 2021.

Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS

Independent Living Wraparound Services Extension of Foster Care Population 2020-21

SERVICE	Total	Instances of Service	Number of Youth Served*
Auto insurance	\$7,868.39	23	21
Driver's Education	\$6,748.00	16	16
Extra-Curricular Leadership Activity Fees/Memberships	\$770.00	4	4
Good Grades Incentive	\$60.00	1	1
Graduation Package	\$10,628.98	53	39
Household furnishings	\$4,441.89	17	8
Housing Application Fees (Post-Secondary)	\$100.00	1	1
Job Training -Start Up Cost	\$145.51	2	2
Materials for Vocational Studies	\$701.44	2	2
Non-recurring Housing Start-up	\$8,016.23	21	13
Other Special Needs	\$1,440.66	6	5
Post-Secondary Application/Registration Fees	\$180.00	5	5
Testing fees (GED, SAT, ACT)	\$155.00	2	2
Tools for Vocational School	\$1,158.69	10	3
Transportation Grant	\$1,966.50	39	12
Vehicle repairs	\$2,538.29	8	8
Yearbooks	\$531.00	7	7
Youth Leadership Stipend	\$175.00	5	5
Total	\$47,625.58	222	154

*This represents unduplicated clients; some youth received more than one type of service during FY 2021.

Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS

Number of youth who decline continuation of foster care services and the reasons given.

Reason	Number	Percent
Refusal	94	32%
Could Not be Located	66	23%
Academic Ineligibility	34	12%
Moved Out of State	27	9%
Uncertain	19	7%
Social Security Benefit	15	5%
Undocumented	12	4%
Transition to Adult Services	11	4%
EFCS Not Offered	9	3%
Went to Work	2	1%
Criminal Charges	1	.003%
Entered Military	1	.003%
Total	291	

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 continues to be a desire to work instead of continue 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. Results were compiled into the statewide table to the right.

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

During FY 2021, fewer youth aged out and were eligible for EFCS. Fifty-three and a half percent of the total eligible population accepted EFCS, up from last year's 45 percent. This is likely attributable to the pandemic flexibilities. Of this total, 88% of the youth who accepted EFCS were Dependent/Neglected in custody, 9% were adjudicated delinquent and 3% were Unruly. This can be compared against 86% of the total EFCS eligible population being Dependent/Neglected, 11% Delinquent and 3% Unruly. Within adjudication, it breaks down as follows: 55% of Dependent/Neglected young adults accepted EFCS, 45% Delinquent and 50% Unruly. Against the total eligible population, 47% were Dependent/Neglected, 4% Delinquent and 1% Unruly.

Region	Aged Out	Aged Out Eligible	Accepted EFCS	% EFCS Uptake
Davidson	61	53	21	39.6%
East Tennessee	49	44	26	59%
Knox	46	42	24	57%
Mid Cumberland	90	87	40	45.9%
Northeast	45	45	25	55.5%
Northwest	33	33	19	57.5%
Shelby	118	57	27	47%
Smoky Mountain	57	57	31	54%
South Central	58	56	28	50%
Southwest	29	26	14	53.8%
TN Valley	69	68	43	63%
Upper Cumberland	62	58	37	63.7%
Total	717	626	335	53.5%

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

Number of young adults receiving Extension of Foster Care Services who were in foster care placement, supervised independent living arrangements and other placements.

- EFC youth in foster home-type placements at some point during FY 2021: 226
- EFC youth receiving the Independent Living Allowance during FY 2021: 467

Extension of Foster Care Placements (Note that some individual young adults received more than one type of placement service during FY 2021):

EFCS Placement Service	Number of Young Adults Per Service (some were in more than one placement during the Fiscal Year)
Regular Rate Extension of Foster Care	410
Independent Living Residential Extension of Foster Care	128
Contract Foster Care Extension of Foster Care	120
Regular Board Rate Extension of Foster Care	71
Independent Living Assistance - Parenting	52
Continuum: Level 3 Special Needs Extension of Foster Care	24
Level 2 SN Continuum Extension of Foster Care	19
Level 2 Continuum Extension of Foster Care	9
Level 4 Special Needs Extension of Foster Care	6
Graduated Rate Extension of Foster Care	5
L3 AS-ND RTC Extension of foster Care	3
Level 2 Continuum Group Care Extension of Foster Care	3
L3 AS-ND PRTF HIGH Extension of Foster Care	2
L3 AS-ND PRTF MID Extension of Foster Care	2
Level 2 Congregate Care Extension of Foster Care	2
Level 3 Continuum Extension of Foster Care	2
Level 3 Enhanced Sex Offender Treatment Extension of Foster	2
Level 3 Extension of Foster Care	2
Extraordinary Rate Extension of Foster Care	1
L3 SED-PRTF Extension of foster Care	1
Total Individuals Served	718

The following summarizes the 64 young adults in Extension of Foster Care who did not have a placement service during FY 2021:

- Had an EFCS episode during the Fiscal Year but no EFCS placement: 37
- EFCS episode ended on or after July 1, 2020 but the placement service ended on or before July 1, 2020. The last payment date was in the last fiscal year (ending June 30, 2020): 4
- EFCS placements existed during the Fiscal Year but no payment records in a valid reporting status until after July 1, 2020, or at all: 23

The Department of Children's Services continues to be focused heavily on implementation of the federal Fostering Connections Act and Tennessee's Transitioning Youth Empowerment Act. 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.

Child and Family Team Meeting Type	Number of CFTMs Attended by IL Staff
Progress Review Custody	1313
Discharge/Exit Custody	605
Extension of Foster Care Progress Review	540
Transition to Adulthood	474
Permanency Plan Revision Custody	441
Initial Extension of Foster Care	237
Discharge/Exit Extension of Foster Care	197
Initial Permanency Plan Custody	175
Special Called	143
Initial Custody	89
Placement Stability	87
Individual Program Plan	33
JJ - Release to Aftercare	14
Plan Revision (IPP)	5
JJ - Program Transfer	4
Permanency (Adoption Only)	4
FSW - Progress Review of Non-Custody	3
Quarterly IPP Review	3
EFCFS Progress Review	2
FSW – Pre-custodial CFTM	2
JJ - Discharge from Probation/Aftercare	2
JJ - Reclassification	2
Progress review/custody	2
Extension of Foster Care Discharge	1
JJ release	1
Grand Total	4379

Additionally, Independent Living staff assisted with the development of 287 Independent Living Plans and 915 Transition Plans based on manual reporting.

Source: Independent Living Monthly Report

The Office of Independent Living trained participants in several related agencies or groups. The number of individuals trained during FY21, particularly of DCS staff and foster parents, likely dropped due to pandemic related restrictions.

- Court: 39
- DCS: 62
- Foster Parents: 50
- Provider Agency: 58
- Youth: 299
- Other: 20

Source: Independent Living Monthly Report

Youth-Involved Advocacy and Engagement Activities

The Office of Independent Living Central Office staff handled more than 100 Formstack inquires submitted via the online transmission form and responded to a high number of phone and in-person 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. Common resources connected include YVLifeSet, Opportunity Passport, EFCS re-establishments, Community Resource referrals, ETV/Bright Futures Scholarships and even TennCare.

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 adulthood, DCS and partners work towards creating many youth engagement activities. This section highlights activities involving youth during FY 2021.

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 council identified three main needs of young adults during the pandemic as being 1. Financial support for everyday needs, 2. Assistance with housing support such as rental and/or utility payments, and 3. Assistance with transportation such as vehicle payments. Based on the responses of the council DCS implemented plans for direct stimulus one-time payments to be

distributed by DCS and a direct vendor payment contract with Youth Villages for housing, utility, vehicle, and childcare related fees.

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 services opportunities, focus group and discussion topics, skill and knowledge training, college tours, and fellowship with other foster youth.

Under the federally funded PREP contracts Leadership Academy Camps has been a success. Coordinated by the Harmony Family Center, this two-day event is held at the scenic Camp Montvale in Maryville, 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, including ropes courses, wall climbing, equestrian therapy, swimming, hiking, preparing meals, and, of course, campfires and s'mores. During FY 21, overnight camps were not able to be held due to COVID 19. However, a day camp was held in May 2021. DCS and Harmony continues to seek the recommendation and approval of medical professionals before resuming the overnight camps.

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, through Metro Nashville Juvenile Detention Center and in Upper East TN communities through a Juvenile Justice Reform Act project. Seven hundred and twenty-eight (728) adolescents participated in TOP in these settings during FY 2021. This number is about 20% lower than previous years due to temporary suspensions of services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and high staff turnover.

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. Last year foster youth participating in TOP provided 7,265 hours of service to Tennessee communities, doing such things as writing letters

to nursing home residents, grooming horses at a therapeutic riding program, and educating the community about Juneteenth in American history. 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 effort. In FY 2021, TOP was implemented at twenty-eight (28) locations across the state. Due to the pandemic, Oasis staff were prevented from providing on-site observation and coaching, in contrast to previous years. Seventy-eight (78) staff from implementing agencies participated in TOP Facilitator Training, gaining skills in effective youth engagement and high-quality group facilitation.

New Resources, Services and Other Interesting Updates

-DCS Independent Living recently met with the Division of TennCare and TennCare Select to begin discussions about the possibility of maintaining TennCare Select through the age of 26 for youth aging out of foster care.

-In effort to improve Authentic Youth Engagement, DCS created a statewide Leadership Board entitled Young Adult Advisory Council that will serve as the foundation for all youth engagement work throughout the state. 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. There were 5 new members added to the council during fiscal year 2021.

-Chambliss Transitional Living Program has expanded their program with six additional apartment units during fiscal year 2021. Youth receive a fully furnished, single-room unit with all utilities paid including internet. Youth also receive a monthly bus pass, weekly allowance for groceries and hygiene items, connections with opportunities at local colleges and trade schools, life skills training and financial management classes.

-Partnership for Children, Families and Adults expanded their program with an additional home to serve males in the Chattanooga area.

-The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development launched the Foster Youth to Independence “FYI” voucher program. The FYI program allows for Public Housing Authorities to request Tenant Protection Vouchers to serve youth under the age of 25 with a history of child welfare involvement, for up to 36 months. This initiative aims to increase housing option for youth with a current or prior history of child welfare involvement that are homeless or at risk of homelessness. During fiscal year 2021 partnerships with the Knoxville, Memphis, and Oak Ridge housing authorities were finalized to offer FYI housing vouchers into eligible young adults in their areas.

-Since the enactment of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, the Office of Independent Living and Youth Villages

staff have made efforts to re-engage youth that are disconnected from services. Re-Establishments of youth into Extension of Foster Care 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 Extension of Foster Care with the education criteria waived. These efforts led to more than 150 additional young adults enrolling into the program. Utilizing the additional Chafee funding under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, young adults between the ages of 18 through 26 that were in foster care at the age of 14 or older are eligible for a direct stimulus payment of \$1,200. Young adults in the Extension of Foster Care program are eligible for a direct stimulus payment of \$1,000. In addition to the direct stimulus payment, a contract was developed with Youth Villages to provide direct vendor payments up to \$1,000 on behalf of the young adult. The direct vendor payments are used to address immediate financial needs of young adults that apply for the DCS pandemic support. Immediate financial needs being addressed include preventing evictions, vehicle repossessions, utility services, phone services, etc. The additional Education and Training Voucher funding under the Consolidated Appropriations Act is used to provide scholarship support to young adults up to age 27. Policy revision was approved to raise the maximum award to \$12,000 per year until September 30, 2022 to follow the law. Funding is being applied towards the total cost of attendance as well as paying educational debt to allow young adults to enroll or remain in school.

Supervised Independent Living Residential placement options for Extension of Foster Care young adults

- Free Will Baptist Family Ministries in Greeneville, TN accept males.
- Holston Homes for Children in Greeneville, TN accepts both males and females
- Smoky Mountain Children's Home in Sevierville, TN accepts 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 accepts males.
- TN Children's Homes in Clarksville, TN accepts both males and females.

Improvements were made to the way Tennessee DCS develops Independent Living and Transition plans for youth in DCS custody and those receiving Extension of Foster Care Services. The enhancements were developed in the Tennessee Family and Child Tracking System (TFACTS) and included adding system enforcement of required categories and action steps to address such things as credit checks, opportunities for mentoring and support, essential documents to provide upon exit from care, maintenance of health insurance and providing

information about advance care plans/health care proxies. These sections of the permanency plan also print out in ways that make it easier for youth and team members to work with and review. These changes bring Tennessee's permanency plan development more in line with federal law and state policy requirements and help ensure older youth have their needs addressed. Modifications in how strength and need records are addressed will systematically link with assessment information in a future phase of the permanency plan enhancement project.

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.
- Increasing access to housing for young adults receiving EFCS, especially in West Tennessee, is another opportunity DCS continues to explore. Tennessee Housing and Development Agency (THDA) has provided information on grants and their web-based housing search. Current DCS providers are developing unique approaches to make housing available as well and applying for local housing authority funding. DCS is exploring other options such as establishing EFC-only foster parents.
- 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. Expanding EFCS to include the working criteria would provide significant support and opportunity for youth transitioning to adulthood. Expansion of EFCS remains DCS' greatest opportunity.
- 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 12,318 young adults in Tennessee (and 22,670 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 1,847 young adults daily in Tennessee and eighteen other states, with a success rate (defined as living independently or with family) of 87 percent at Discharge, 95 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 2021

- LifeSet served about 708 youth daily
- 1,556 youth participated in the program
- At 12-month follow-up:
 - 93 percent in school, graduated or working
 - 95 percent living with family or independently
 - 94 percent no trouble with the law no change

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 Helen Ross McNabb Center (The McNabb Center since January 2021) 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 70 years of providing services to communities in East Tennessee, its mission remains clear and simple; “Improving the lives of the people we serve.”

McNabb has over 30 years of experience working with runaway, homeless and at-risk teenagers, complemented by over 20 years of providing outreach services to youth in local schools, as well as many years providing street outreach services, over 15 years of offering transitional living services for older youth and young adults and five years of permanency services for youth in foster care. 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*. Helen Ross McNabb is accredited by CARF (Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities). Reaccredited earlier 2020.

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, 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!* provides sexual health and pregnancy information for girls through the *Sisters Saving Sisters* program. Our financial literacy partner provides assistance with instruction and individual coaching to youth. The Jim Casey Foundation provides training for staff, leadership opportunities for youth and financial assistance in the form of matches for youth who meet the saving criteria for an asset purchase. Other collaborations of note are driving and personal safety skills programs through the Knoxville Police Department. Incentives workshops at the Knoxville Career Center include personal safety through a private collaboration and pregnancy prevention programs through a

new organization called Step Up. *Project NOW!* continues to work with the Department of Children's Services who provide the most program referrals as well as Youth Villages, foster parents, and foster youth themselves and other private entities that are providers of services to youth in foster care.

Several organizations have provided services through training programs and information sessions providing a positive experience for our youth. Pellissippi State assists youth in providing presentations focusing on post-secondary opportunities. Area military recruiting offices have presented other post-secondary options. The Knoxville Center for Applied Technology offers tours, free lunch and encouragement and information for youth transitioning out of foster care. Other collaborations include: ICAM (Integrated Community Agency Meeting), the Knoxville Leadership Foundation and the Knoxville Homeless Coalition; all providing interagency support to transitioning youth. The Job Corps has 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 Mountain and East Tennessee)
- Knox County Juvenile Court
- Knox Area Compassion Coalition
- YMCA Knoxville
- First Tennessee Bank
- Knox County Health Department
- Emerald Youth Foundation
- Papa John's
- Firehouse
- KAPPI
- Subway
- Omni Visions
- Tennessee College of Applied Technology
- Knoxville Police Department
- Tennessee Housing Development Authority
- Knoxville Homeless Coalition
- The McNabb Center's Runaway Shelter, Transitional Living Program (TLP) and Street Outreach
- K-town Empowerment Network and K-town Coordinating Council
- Youth Villages Transitional Living Program
- Goodwill Industries
- Knox County CASA
- Knox Works
- Food City
- KARM (Knoxville Area Rescue Mission)
- Job Corps
- Youth Transitions Advisory Council of Knoxville
- Panera Bread
- Chick-fil-a
- Knox County Schools
- Village Behavioral Health
- CCAHT Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking

Successes

In July of 2018 the Resource Center moved into a space shared by the Transitional Living Program, the Runaway Shelter, and Homeless Outreach. The current facility also shares a building with the Great Starts program (for at-risk mothers and children). Also on the campus is the Katie Miller Residential Facility that serves teenage girls. 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!* Facebook Page posts about resources and program opportunities to keep youth informed. The page has more than 270 likes. Quarterly, the Page reaches more than 1,000 Facebook users. The rate of contact with users and “likes” has grown exponentially in the last months and youth, foster parents, stake holders, businesses and providers are encouraged to use it as a source of information.

Community outreach continues to grow and has resulted in numerous workshops made available thru 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 in a variety of ways. Attendance at life skill events and other programs has grown from attendance of 2 – 3 to 6-8. A relationship with several community partners has resulted in much needed classes on driver’s safety, personal safety, soft skills, career opportunities, human trafficking, character development, healthy living, and cooking through collaboration with the Knoxville Career Center and Knoxville Police Department and the University of Tennessee Extension Office (Paused for Covid-19). 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 the youth. The McNabb Center has provided the use of their trainer to teach CPR and First Aid as well as AED use.

Sisters Saving Sisters has become a vital part of the *Project NOW!* Resource Center. Over 60 young women have taken advantage of the course in the past year (Lower number because of Coordinators changed and Covid-19). *Sisters Saving Sisters* addresses 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 all of 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 Jim Casey funding, *Project Now!* was able to provide sexual health classes for males. Twenty-nine males participated in classes regarding healthy relationships, STD prevention, contraception, responsible relationships and long-term goal setting. The young men

engaged in conversation that was productive and positive and were provided information to encourage responsible actions to protect themselves and potential partners.

Project NOW! has several youth enrolled at the University of Tennessee and East Tennessee State University. In the past year at least three youth have chosen the military for a post-secondary option serving full-time and in reserve status. Two youth have been accepted by the Job Corps and several others are in the application process.

Knoxville Police Training Department has purchased state of the art driver training simulators and has provided their use to the program. This is a huge positive for these youth who typically have no one to assist them in the basics of driving and/or provide a vehicle for them to learn and practice. Being able to acquire a license is an incentive to save for a vehicle. Without this local support many of these youth would not have gotten driving practice with positive direction, correct information, and a supportive knowledgeable adult to assist with acquiring driving skills.

Project NOW! Youth 4 Youth has become active and has developed a mission statement and goals. *Youth 4 Youth is committed to reaching out to foster youth, networking with the community, making an impact to change policies and practices that effect youth encourage speaking engagements that help advocate, and to connect with other youth* is the mission statement. They have been actively implementing it, by encouraging potential foster parents in training classes to foster older youth. Youth 4 Youth has been more of a support group for youth during the time of Pandemic.

Challenges and Barriers

The Knoxville based Resource Center has its own unique population differing some from other centers throughout the state. The population of youth referred to *Project NOW!* are, for the most part rural youth. Transportation to the Center is a problem for youth who do not drive and many that are more than 50 miles from Knoxville. The problem with doing virtual is they may not have w-fi where they live, or the connection is so slow they or the instructor screens freeze.

It was been difficult to assess what the youth are learning with the post-test because they are not at the center to see if they are reading the questions or just making marks. Many of them, may need help reading the questions or may not have the patients to answer the questions. The mail and email communication with the youth due to the pandemic has caused some communication difficulties.

The *Project NOW!* Center has a substantial number of youth who cannot participate because of lack of transportation. While the program is available to youth in 16 counties no transportation exists beyond the initial entry into the program through *Opportunity Passport* where transportation must be provided by a caseworker or the foster parent. Continual referrals have increased the number of young people in the program with youth who cannot attend, have no internet or continually must be encouraged to communicate, attend events, complete paperwork,

and others who are not interested. Communication regarding the Resource Center services is an obstacle with much misinformation being passed on to providers, youth, and foster families.

Only one person is employed at the Resource Center and services are sometimes stretched between programs. Scheduling, planning and presenting activities, networking with the community, providing financial literacy classes, sexual health classes, processing matches and the accompanying paper work, as well as continually communicating with youth have to be carefully prioritized and scheduled. In order to provide classes at hours and times youth can attend there is a great deal of evening or weekend work.

Our youth are resilient despite a history of abuse and neglect and in many cases a transient life style. Soft skills, general knowledge and basic communication safety and healthy living skills are sometimes lacking and continued programming is needed to address the development of these essential tools for success.

Next Steps

The coordinator, youth, or others should 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. Continuing to increase networking with other service organization in the area should be done. 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 & in person because of Covid-19. The Center listened to news reports, CDC guidelines and McNabb Center's Guidelines to determine virtual or in person events.

Programs and presenters that meet the real world and life challenges (Finishing High School, gender identity, & homelessness) of these youth in transition should be a priority as well as more opportunities for youth leadership. Providing opportunities for youth to attend in person or virtual events that are cultural, community, art, or athletic continues to be a needed service for these youth to expand and stimulate their interest in the larger world. Collaboration between the Resource Center and other providers is needed and would provide a stronger, larger base of programs and better understanding of the Resource Center services.

Knoxville Resource Center	July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020	July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021
Opportunity Passport		
Number of new youth enrolled	23	25
Number of Financial Literacy Classes offered	9 (7 completed) Cancellation: March (Covid-19) June (Coordinator injured)	17
Number of Asset Specific Classes offered	8	9
Percent of youth with favorable post-test outcome	87%	90%
OPPS Surveys		
(April & October only) percent of youth completing an OPPS survey	October 2019 60% April 2020 80%	October 2020 87.5% April 2021 80%
Community Partnership Boards		
Number of board meetings	3	2
Number of new door openers created	6	5
Life Skills Classes		
Number of life skills classes held	25	42
Total number of participants in life skills classes	97	47
Percent of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment	87%	62%
Youth Leadership & Engagement		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	9	10



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, what we call the “H2O” that is vital to helping 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, Residential Programs, 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 26.

Youth Connections Resource Center’s Core Services

Youth Connections has been in existence for nearly 15 years and has focused on quality performance since inception. The center provides an assortment of services focused on empowering young adults ages 16-26 who are transitioning out of care as well as other vulnerable young people. Youth Connections supports our young adults through The Opportunity Passport™ financial 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 foster youth. Through our programs, we encourage personal stability and a healthy transition into adulthood.

Local Partnerships

Youth Connections continues to partner with the Department of Children’s Services, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and US Bank. Through our Workforce Development program, Monroe Harding has partnered with several local businesses, business leaders and organizations such as Crossroads Pet Shop and Adopt, Eat Well Nashville, the Public Defender’s Office and the National Museum of African American Music. These businesses partnered with us to provide

experiential learning opportunities, including internships and job shadows, to assist in preparing young adults for the workforce.

The center also collaborates with Oasis Center, Martha O'Bryan Center, Goodwill Career Solutions, Youth Villages, Mental Health Cooperative, and the Community Advisory Board to provide services to young adults who do not meet the criteria to be in DCS custody.

Successes

The Works Wonders™ Career Readiness and Employment Engagement program that focuses on a comprehensive career readiness approach was able to reach its goal of serving 65 young people. This program is a new initiative that was launched at the beginning of the pandemic. We were able to continue offering the program virtually and provide several experiential learning opportunities for the participants. We work with young adults to develop a career path that will lead to the economic self-sufficiency they want and need while providing the social and emotional benefits that come from meaningful employment. The program has an evidence-informed training curriculum to provide the skills needed to get a job and a range of supports to help youth successfully complete training and maintain employment. This approach works to identify and minimize the obstacles of life that affect career decisions and the ability to seek, secure and sustain work. Works Wonders was also a recipient of a \$50,000 super grant from the Nashville Predators Foundation and Smile Direct.

This year, Monroe Harding awarded 10 scholarships that totaled \$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 Belmont University, Nashville State Community College, Alabama A & M University, TCAT, The Paul Mitchell School, Austin Peay and MTSU.

Challenges and Barriers

Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic remains a challenge. Our number one priority is the health and well-being of young people, families, staff, volunteers, and partners. To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 the Youth Connections Resource Center and Reengagement Hub remained closed until this past summer. While we do have staff present at the center daily, we are limiting the number of young people and visitors at the center and encouraging our young people to make appointments. All classes continue to be offered virtually.

In addition to COVID-19 being a challenge, many of the young adults who contact Youth Connections for services continue to lack support systems that can assist them with navigating the challenging period of transitioning into 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 presenting issues make it difficult for the young adults to remain focused on following through with 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

YTAC Annual Report/Update

Report Completed by Pamela Madison

Opportunity Passport™	Previous Year	Year to Date
Number of new youth enrolled		
Number of Financial Literacy Classes offered	26	23
Number of Asset Specific Classes offered	8	7
percent of youth with favorable post-test outcome	16	13
	98%	98%
OPPS Surveys		
(April & October only), percent of youth completing an OPPS survey		
	90%	85%
Community Partnership Boards		
Number of board meetings		
Number of new door openers created	2	3
	3	3
Life Skills Classes		
Number of life skills classes held		
Total number of participants in life skills classes	3	3
Percent of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment	57	31
	95%	95%
Youth Leadership & Engagement		
Number of youth leadership activities offered		
	9	4



River City Youth Collective YTAC Report 2020-2021

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 organization. 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 blessed to be able to have funding to financially support our youth on a continuous basis. We renovated and redecorated all the Pathways' homes where the youth in our supervised independent living program are housed. These upgrades were not just cosmetic; they also improved the comfort and safety of the residences.

Under the direction of the RCYC Program Manager, all RCYC staff continue to provide financial literacy, sexual health education, and life skills classes virtually until further notice. Monthly calendars go out to all RCYC participants and community members. In addition to our normal class offerings, we now hold a "Mindset" session every Monday to channel motivation among our youth and help them to gain coping skills to deal with the stress of the pandemic.

We continued to provide the Camp Hope America experience to 24 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 2021. We provided the opportunity to attend the week of camp at no cost to 24 participants.

Michelle Howard-Hamidi, Site Director for Camp Hope Chattanooga, recruited volunteers, assessed children for camp readiness, and organized programming. 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 include 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 that all people have the right to live stable, healthy lives. The 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."

All the RCYC staff are fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus. We are currently educating our youth about the virus and helping to dispel myths and misinformation.

We were able to secure funding for a full time RCYC Therapeutic Counselor who is available for private counseling, groups, and workshops. The vision for RCYC therapy is to empower youth to take ownership of their own emotional health. Therapy sessions provide a safe space where youth can speak freely without judgment, process past, and present emotions, improve self-awareness and establish and

pursue personal goals. Individual therapy sessions, group therapy sessions and enrichment classes are all offered. Therapy is available as a free service to RCYC youth ages 14-24 years old that qualify.

The RCYC will still support the Sisters Savings Sisters sexual health education curriculum for girls and young women, the Jim Casey Opportunity Passport financial literacy curriculum, and life skills education classes for youth and young adults transitioning out of foster care and juvenile justice. 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 2019, male clients may also receive education through the manhood 2.0 curriculum.

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 leaned heavily on the Mid-Cumberland Workforce Services to aid in financial assistance for school items, tutoring when necessary, and paid internship placements when deemed appropriate. They also are assigned a support specialist whose role is to encourage youth to complete career assessments to determine their strengths and interests to aid in gaining employment or planning for entrepreneurship. If a youth is wanting to go the route of entrepreneurship, our youth engagement specialist connects them to one of community partners, LAUNCH Chattanooga where they can begin business planning and courses to develop their ideas.

Referring Agencies:

- Tennessee Department of Children's Services
- Chambliss Center for Children
- Youth Villages
- Omni Visions
- Cleveland Academy
- Parkridge Valley

Community Partners:

- Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Chattanooga
- Unum
- EPB
- Tennessee Valley Federal Credit Union

- UT Hamilton County Extension Office, SNAP-Ed
- UT Bradley County Extension Office, SNAP-Ed
- CoLab
- LAUNCH Chattanooga
- Mid-Cumberland Workforce Services
- University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Educational Opportunity Center
- A Step Ahead Chattanooga

Successes

- New SIL site
- Approval to Relocate New Facility
- New Grant—TN Community Cares
- 90.48% and 76.19% Opportunity Passport survey completion during survey administration this past fiscal year
- Victory Lap Partnership
- LAUNCH Chattanooga Partnership

Challenges and Barriers

The COVID-19 pandemic has obviously presented some challenges across the nation, particularly with the ability to hold events, classes, and much needed groups in person. 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 such as Tech Goes Home who has provided numerous electronic devices to our youth so that they can continue with their education endeavors as well as still have the opportunity to connect with us and other mentors. Finally, we were also fortunate enough to have been awarded funds to further assist with barriers directly related to COVID-19 through our new TN Cares Grant.

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	July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021
Number of new youth enrolled	3
Number of Financial Literacy Classes Offered	8
Number of Asset Specific Classes Offered	3
(April and October) percentage of youth completing an OPPS survey	October 2020: 90.48% April 2021: 76.19%
Number of board meetings	0
Number of new door openers created	1
Number of life skills classes held	25
Total number of participants in life skills classes	70

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

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 locations,**

Educational Services

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

- Parenting classes,
- Comprehensive sexual health education for male and female clients
- Sponsorship Opportunities

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	MemTV
Memphis Cares	Grizzlies Foundation	State of Tennessee (Shelby County) Community Advisory Board	Shelby County Juvenile Court
Flextronics Logistics, Memphis	CD Council	Urban Child Institute	TennDerCare
United Way of the Mid-South	Memphis Public Library	ResCare	The Grizzlies Foundation
Planned Parenthood of the Greater MidSouth	The Assisi Foundation	Shelby County Family Planning	MALSI,
Omni Visions	Memphis Artists for Change	Lemoyne Owen College	St. Jude Research Hospital
Porter Leath	Shelby County Health Department	Maximus	Hope Credit Union
Amerigroup	Ross Innovative Employment Solutions	BlueCross Blue Shield	IKEA
Paragon Bank	Memphis Public Library	Sweet Cheeks Diaper Ministry	Mid-South Food Bank

Successes

- SMA received a \$10,000 sponsorship to assist our clients and community members with a Social Suds Resource Center and Laundromat Computer Lab during this pandemic.
- The Dream Seekers have also attended events and outings from the proceeds of SMA's monthly fundraising events.
 - Our Opportunity Passport Dream Seekers have volunteered for monthly fundraising events.
 - 100 percent survey completion for April 2020.

Challenges and Barriers

- Housing is a consistent barrier to engagement. The young people are moving multiple times in a year due to their inability to secure housing. Their addresses and their phone numbers change frequently, and they often are unable to connect with needed resources due to no consistent place to stay or be located.
- Transportation needs are a barrier for the population that SMA serves. The agency provides bus passes to participants, but the public transit system in the area is often inadequate.
- Due to transportation issues, youth who enroll in the program at satellite sites often are more difficult to engage for group activities.
- Due to Covid-19, we have limited in-person client contact and have hosted zoom classes and interactions.

Next Steps

- SMA continues to diligently seek housing options and innovations in providing housing for young people transitioning out of care.
- Sponsorship for IDA matches; stipends/incentives and computer equipment/ building space are among top priorities.

Memphis Resource Center Report

YTAC Annual Report/Update

Report Completed by: Tiffany N. Turnage

	Previous Year	Year to Date
Opportunity Passport™		
Number of new youth enrolled	40	41
Number of Financial Literacy Classes offered	4	4
Number of Asset Specific Classes offered	4	4
Percent of youth with favorable post-test outcome	100%	100%
OPPS Surveys		
Percent of youth completing an OPPS survey (April & October only)	100% April 2020	The October survey is coming up.
Community Partnership Boards		
Number of board meetings	1	1
Number of new door openers created	2	1
Life Skills Classes		
Number of life skills classes held	6	3
Total number of participants in life skills classes	18	30
Percent of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment	100%	100%
Youth Leadership & Engagement		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	2	8



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 FY2021 year include:

- The Healthy Transitions sites served a total of 61 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 to ensure that youth and young adult voice and input are included at the state level, including participating on and presenting to the Council on Children’s Mental Health (CCMH).
- 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; Effective Facilitator training to provide engagement tools and techniques needed to make virtual meetings more productive; and a Supervisor training for supervisors of Certified Peer Support Specialists.
- TDMHSAS launched the Certified Young Adult Peer Support (CYAPSS) program in May 2021 and is scheduled to begin training and certifying young adult peers in FY2022.

These efforts support 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 voice at both the local and state level.

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 OnTrackTN and modeled after OnTrackNY, serves youth and young adults between the ages of 15-30, 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. 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 OnTrackTN program to two additional sites in Tennessee, and (2) Create a statewide FEPI Learning Collaborative consisting of, at minimum, all three OnTrackTN sites.

In May 2016 TDMHSAS released an Announcement of Funding requesting proposals to implement OnTrackTN in two counties among 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 OnTrackTN 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 OnTrackTN in Hamilton County. A review panel scored the proposals, and a contract was awarded to Helen Ross McNabb. All programs were trained in the OnTrackNY model. Additionally, the increase in funds was used to bring on a Statewide Youth/Young Adult Best Practices Trainer and Consultant through Vanderbilt Center of Excellence. This position provides support and training to the OnTrackTN sites and will provide fidelity checks to ensure fidelity to the OnTrack model.

Team members from TDMHSAS regularly attend YTAC meetings to provide updates on progress toward goals. Some of the successes during FY 2021 year include:

- OnTrackTN teams served 154 youth and young adults experiencing a first episode of psychosis.
- TDMHSAS released an Announcement of Funding to expand the FEPI program to three additional sites for the next four years (until June 2025) through COVID relief and ARPA funds. Awards were made to the following agencies: Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System which will serve Rutherford County; Ridgeview Psychiatric Hospital and Center, Inc. which will serve Anderson County; and Mental Health Cooperative (MHC) which will serve Montgomery County. Services for the new sites are set to begin in FY2022.

- The Vanderbilt Statewide Trainer and Consultant provided ongoing targeted training, coaching, technical assistance, OnTrack fidelity monitoring, and consultation to support the statewide implementation of youth/young adult best practices to 61 unduplicated individuals, including 33 staff across all FEPI sites.
- TDMHSAS, in collaboration with Vanderbilt’s Statewide Trainer and Consultant, offered multiple training opportunities to OnTrackTN sites including: Multi-Family Groups 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 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 OnTrackTN 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 is a five-year \$1.6 million discretionary grant awarded to the TDMHSAS by SAMHSA in October 2019. 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.

The CHR-P Initiative has one site in Shelby County that is being implemented by CMI Healthcare Services. Services and supports are designed based on the OnTrack model and 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. Centerstone Research Institute will provide evaluation of the CHR-P Initiative.

Some of the successes during FY2021 year include:

- The CHR-P team began receiving referrals and served 13 youth and young adults at clinical high risk of developing psychosis.
- TDMHSAS, in collaboration with Vanderbilt’s Statewide Youth/Young Adult Best Practices Trainer and Consultant, provided training opportunities to the CHR-P team, including: Multi-Family Groups 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.

- TDMHSAS, in collaboration with TN Association of Mental Health Organizations, held a virtual Early Psychosis Conference to provide education and awareness of clinical high risk and first episode of psychosis to a Tennessee and national audience in which 393 people attended.
- The CHR-P team at CMI continues to provide outreach in the greater Shelby County area to promote awareness of the program and continues to plan for implementation of a local Young Adult Leadership Council.