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# SUPPORTING OPPORTUNITY YOUTH FOR AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY



**children**  
**at Risk**  
*Speaking Out + Driving Change for Children*

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# SUPPORTING OPPORTUNITY YOUTH FOR AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

## POPULATION OVERVIEW

Despite a decades-long drop in the opportunity youth population, which decreased from 5.8 million to 4.4 million between 2011 and 2021, the number of opportunity youth rose dramatically during the pandemic to more than 6 million.<sup>1</sup> The term opportunity youth (OY) refers to youth between the ages of 16-24 who are disconnected from the conventional paths of adulthood (e.g. neither in school, nor training, nor in the workforce). This disconnection may stem from various factors – including but not limited to not finishing school, involvement in foster care or juvenile justice system, being a teen parent, drug addiction, or even being thrust into the role of head of household when their former caregivers have suffered a negative economic shock.

The term opportunity youth has been used for the past decade in replacement of “disconnected youth” and is used “as a reflection of the optimism they have for finding a pathway to economic stability, and as a reminder that investing in their futures represents an immense opportunity for employers and the nation. By improving outcomes for this population, businesses and communities have the potential to increase savings for society, improve the quality of talent available to employers, and interrupt a multi-generational cycle of poverty for youth and their families.”<sup>2</sup>

With the recognition of the unrealized potential for opportunity youth, over the past decade, additional resources have been invested into opportunity youth programs to address education and job training needs. This effort is partially driven by a need to provide a talent shortage solution that is being created by the retirement of the Baby Boomers. With these shifting workforce dynamics, opportunities exist to provide significant support to opportunity youth that will not only benefit them but will also contribute to a diverse and well-trained workforce.

## BARRIERS: LACKING ACCESS, SUPPORT, AND INFORMATION

Opportunity youth (OY) face many barriers when it comes to re-connecting and participating in the economy and society as a whole. For many OY, like those aging out of foster care or experiencing housing insecurity, they often lack the connections and skills necessary to navigate adulthood and seek employment and, due to their age, they are unaware of how/where to access services. For example, OY may struggle with programs that require certain technology (laptop or printer) or transportation needs. Especially in rural areas or areas without accessible, efficient public transit, programs that require transportation are not particularly accessible to these young people.

Eligibility for programs can also pose a barrier for youth. OY are often ineligible for programs due to age, documentation status, or criminal history which creates a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy because those factors are also indicators of disconnection.<sup>3</sup> For example, youth involved in the justice system are at higher risk of disconnecting. For housing-insecure and foster youth, it is very common to have a criminal record due to laws around running away and/or substance use. Thus, programs that exclude youth with a criminal record are excluding a large proportion of OY who likely need it most.

OY struggle with a lack of awareness around services and resources. OY are less likely than an older adult to be cognizant of social supports and programs that could help them. Many supports do exist for these youth and those programs are working to connect with youth on their level.<sup>1</sup> Programs have success in accessing youth through utilizing social media to engage, providing incentives to participate, providing community-based services, and being accessible to public transportation. Programs such as YouthBuild Houston create opportunities for opportunity youth to gain education and job skills to set them up for a successful future.

## COLLEGE READINESS – ENSURING SUCCESS

Opportunity youth who do not enroll in college or other post-secondary education/training risk further social and economic isolation and limited job opportunities later in life. Creating incentives and support programs for youth at critical pre-college stages can encourage youth to pursue higher education or vocational programs. While in college, community programs and universities can make the course completion process streamlined and provide services that keep students in attendance. Nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and government agencies must work collaboratively to address the needs of these youth and make the college and vocational process enticing and achievable.

### *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Esteem*

Opportunity youth may not see themselves as “college-bound” or able to engage in college coursework. Raising student expectations of themselves, especially through GED and community-based programming, may help youth see themselves on the path towards a college education. Several studies and programs working with opportunity youth emphasize a youth-centered approach to reconnection<sup>4</sup>. Youth-centered approaches place youth at the forefront of designing programs and help them develop their own ability and capacity to advocate for themselves.<sup>5</sup> Programs can help students remain engaged in their educational career by working on developing an intrinsic motivation for youth to attend college and a clear understanding of how college can help them achieve their goals.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for an extensive list of programs and organizations serving OY in the Greater Houston Area.

Programs can help foster youth engagement with their own education through career counseling services and connecting the coursework they take in high school and college to future careers. Practically, this can be achieved through offering more dual-enrollment programs, specialized college-to-career tracks, and peer-to-peer mentoring.<sup>6</sup> In a dual-enrollment program, students can take courses at community colleges or universities while enrolled in high school. Specialized college-to-career tracks include programs that include apprenticeships and real-world career training opportunities during their education that help students land jobs after college.

#### *Community Support and Basic Needs*

Opportunity youth can be socially isolated due to their obligations at home, work schedules, and different experiences from peers their age. To foster interest in college, programs should emphasize community building and work to build relationships with youth's current support systems.<sup>7</sup>

Career coaches who have similar backgrounds to opportunity youth may be able to connect with youth on a deeper level and foster that sense of community. Engaging with parents, teachers, and community mentors to regularly check in on and support youth can reduce levels of isolation and stress.<sup>8</sup> Fundamental to understanding the struggles faced by opportunity youth in attending college is acknowledgement of their insecurity in fulfilling many of their basic needs. Creating community support for social and economic issues such as food insecurity, child care, and housing insecurity that opportunity youth often face can increase their likelihood of being able to focus on college. This can include establishing connections between community organizations and state and local agencies to provide wraparound support for youth.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Programs for College Enrollment and Readiness*

In research conducted by the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy in Massachusetts<sup>10</sup>, students who receive tailored assistance at every step of the college admissions process are more likely to successfully enroll. They advocate for solutions including:

- Assign transition coaches to students early in the college-going process
- Build peer cohorts around student interests
- Ensure that information is easy to understand for students and create a streamlined process
- Create guided student pathways that allow students to make more clear-cut decisions about their future

Community-based organizations play a key role in the development of opportunities for youth. Community programming connected to organizations focused on opportunity youth can be the center of college readiness efforts, as they are more likely to know where to recruit and how to support youth in their communities.

Universities and community colleges who aim to recruit opportunity youth can offer subsidized tuition, affordable college degree pathways, and wraparound services such as housing, mental health support, and stipends.<sup>11</sup> These benefits should be advertised during the outreach and recruitment

process. As anchor institutions, universities can leverage connections with community organizations to assist in providing these needs or receive technical assistance if services are provided in-house.<sup>12</sup>

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#### *Vocational and Job Training Programs*

For many young people, college may not be the first or desired choice for higher education or career advancement. Vocational and apprenticeship programs can link youth directly with an established, well-earning career path. Vocational programs teach youth industry-specific job skills and can assist youth in receiving official certifications for certain fields. As the United States faces a shortage of trade workers, opportunity youth can help to fill this gap. Federal organization such as [Jobs Corps](#) and [YouthBuild](#) offer job training and vocational programs that are free of charge. Apprenticeships can be especially enticing for youth as they are able to get paid while learning and training on the job.

In high schools, students need to be made aware of the alternate career programs available to them aside from a traditional college path. These programs should be presented as an equal alternative to college, rather than a second or inferior choice. Youth-serving nonprofit organizations can collaborate with local workforce boards and employers to make information about these programs available and create a pipeline for youth receiving community services to vocational programs.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Support While Enrolled in College*

Once enrolled, opportunity youth may face considerable challenges in remaining enrolled and finishing their degree. To assist youth in remaining in school, programs must remain engaged in youth support until they successfully complete college and transition into career. Strategies for student retention include<sup>16</sup>:

- Help students receive academic credits before enrolling in higher education programs
- Improve the accuracy and timeliness of the information students receive about their own path to a degree
- Develop a more extensive set of intermediate outcomes charting the path to a degree or credential
- Use intermediate outcomes as an institutional measure of success: Expand the funding incentives tied to student progression & completion of milestones

Fundamental services such as offering a food pantry on college campuses can help ensure that students have the holistic means to remain in school. Universities and training programs that have invested in staff members who specialize in connecting youth to services increase their retention rates.<sup>17</sup>

## HOUSING INSECURITY

Homelessness is a common mechanism of disconnection for opportunity youth. In this age group (16-24), youth are often homeless without their family (defined by the Texas Education Agency as “unaccompanied”). For homeless youth still under 19, the federal McKinney Vento Act defines homelessness as: a person, including a migratory child, who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including a person who is living in an emergency shelter, abandoned in a hospital, or awaiting foster care placement; has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for humans; or is living in a car, park, other public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting.<sup>18</sup>

While our definition of opportunity youth extends to twenty-four years, the McKinney Vento definition is useful in understanding the diversity of experiences of homeless youth. These youth are not just living on the street or in a homeless shelter, it includes youth who are ‘doubling up’ with friends, couch surfing, and otherwise not sure where they might be sleeping on a given night.

The variety of situations in which youth are homeless makes it difficult to understand how many homeless youth live in any given area. For the 2019-2020 School Year, there were 15,316 unaccompanied minors registered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).<sup>19</sup> During that school year, there were 5,494 homeless students (accompanied and unaccompanied) in grades 9-12 in Harris County.<sup>20</sup> However, this number only accounts for children who were recognized as homeless by their school. Of over 3,000 interviews with people in the Houston Area experiencing homelessness, 5% (or around 160) were between 18-24.<sup>21</sup>



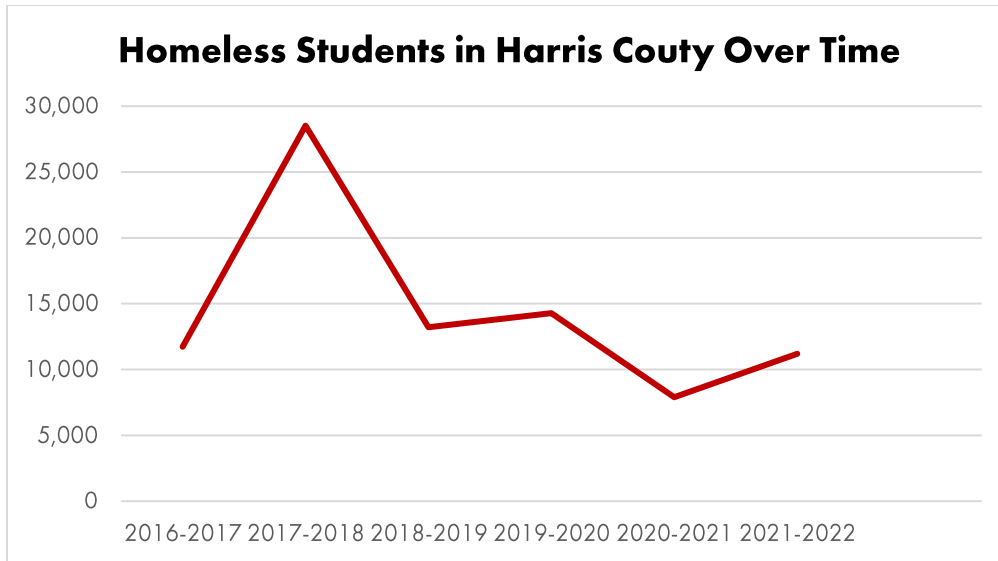


Figure 1. Homeless Students in Harris County Over Time<sup>22</sup>

Youth homelessness can also be traced back to the foster care system. In Harris County, 385 children went missing from a foster care placement (the majority of whom were over the age of 15) in fiscal year 2020.<sup>23</sup> In 2021, 159 youth aged out of the foster care system, meaning they no longer had placement within foster care. In many cases, these youth become homeless because they have nowhere else to go.<sup>24</sup> Texas Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) has a program called Supervised Independent Living (SIL) for this group, but the program is underutilized due to low reimbursement rates for service providers and eligibility requirements for youth. To participate in SIL and take advantage of the life and career trainings, youth must, if they are able, be attending high school, an institution of higher learning or postsecondary vocational or technical program, a program or activity that promotes or removes barriers to employment or be employed at least 80 hours a month.<sup>25</sup> By the time they were 19 years old, 25 percent of surveyed Texas former foster youth had experienced homelessness in the two years since they had aged out of care.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Challenges for Housing Insecure Youth*

Homeless youth face a variety of challenges in the short and long term due to unstable housing and are met with unique barriers to accessing services intended for those experiencing homelessness. For example, homeless youth often report avoiding shelters out of concern for their own safety since there are few, if any, shelters specifically serving young people.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, youth 16-24 years old often lack the experience and references necessary for applying to housing. They may also lack the awareness that older adults may have surrounding the services available to them. As a service provider in Austin, Texas reported to Texas Appleseed and the Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) “the 18 to 24 population, they have more control, but they don’t have access. They don’t

know how to access a lot of things, they don't have the life skills, and they don't have the life experiences the older adults have had yet. They're still learning."<sup>28</sup>

While in school, unaccompanied youth, homeless youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, are five times more likely to repeat a grade in middle school than other students, and over two times more likely to repeat a grade in high school.<sup>29</sup><sup>30</sup> Unaccompanied youth are also 10 times more likely to drop out of school than their non-homeless peers. Students experiencing or at-risk of homelessness are also at higher risk of school mobility. Students experiencing or at-risk of homelessness are also at higher risk of school mobility. Mobility refers to a student moving schools and/or districts and has been linked to lower school engagement and poor learning outcomes.<sup>31</sup> Many mobile students move due to their caregivers' financial situation or because the shelter or housing accommodation they find while homeless is not in their original school zone.<sup>32</sup>

Homeless youth are also at a heightened risk of trafficking and exploitation. A University of Texas study estimated that one-third of homeless youth in drop-in centers have experienced sex trafficking.<sup>33</sup> For those under 18, youth can be particularly vulnerable because they are unable to access resources without informing CPS. This means that a trafficker can promise access to housing and other resources to entice these youth.

In addition to vulnerability to exploitation and education loss, homeless youth often face difficulties accessing consistent health care. Poverty combined with stress, exposure to unclean living environments, and inconsistent access to nutritious food causes otherwise easily addressed conditions to become much more serious. Homeless Youth are particularly underserved in dental and sexual health, which can have lifelong implications. Over 20% of homeless Texas youth surveyed in 2016 said that dental care was a need of theirs that was not being addressed.<sup>34</sup>

Experiencing homelessness also takes a toll on youths' mental health. Covenant House, a network of homeless shelters and service providers in 24 cities across the United States, states that 1 in 5 youth they serve have a mental illness, and 2 in 5 have severe depression and feelings of anxiety and aggression.<sup>35</sup> Sadly, homeless teens are 3 times more likely to attempt suicide than their housed peers.<sup>36</sup> Substance use among homeless youth is up to 5 times more common than among non-homeless young adults. In terms of specific substances, "rates of cocaine use are four to five times higher and amphetamine use is three to four times higher among homeless youth compared to their housed counterparts."<sup>37</sup>

### *Outcomes for Homeless Youth*

Unfortunately, procuring reliable housing and employment is an uphill battle for homeless youth. During the time they are experiencing homelessness and the accompanying stress, trauma, and lack of resources, their non-homeless peers are navigating a crucial time for development and life skills.

Per the National Coalition for the Homeless, barriers to employment for those experiencing homelessness include.<sup>38</sup>

- Low educational attainment levels
- Having young children with no access to child care
- Limited or no past work experience or marketable job skills
- Mental health or substance abuse problems
- Chronic health problems or disability
- Lack of access to transportation
- Low credit score and/or lack of credit history (which can make both finding a job and a house difficult)
- Criminal histories (which is especially relevant to ~2000 Texas youth who find themselves in juvenile justice for running away from a foster home as early as 10 years old).<sup>39</sup>

Without a comprehensive intervention that can accommodate and support these needs, homeless youth will struggle to participate meaningfully in society and create a safe, supported life for themselves.

## COVID IMPACT: GROWING THE POPULATION AND REVERSING YEARS OF PROGRESS

The COVID-19 pandemic had an incredibly negative effect on opportunity youth. By May 2020, the number of young people who were out of school and out of work in America had doubled to nearly 9 million.<sup>40</sup> This impact was not felt equally across racial and ethnic groups. Native American youth and young adults have a disconnection rate of 23.4 percent, followed by Black youth and young adults (17.4%), Latino youth and young adults (12.8%), white youth and young adults (9.2%), and Asian young people (6.2%).

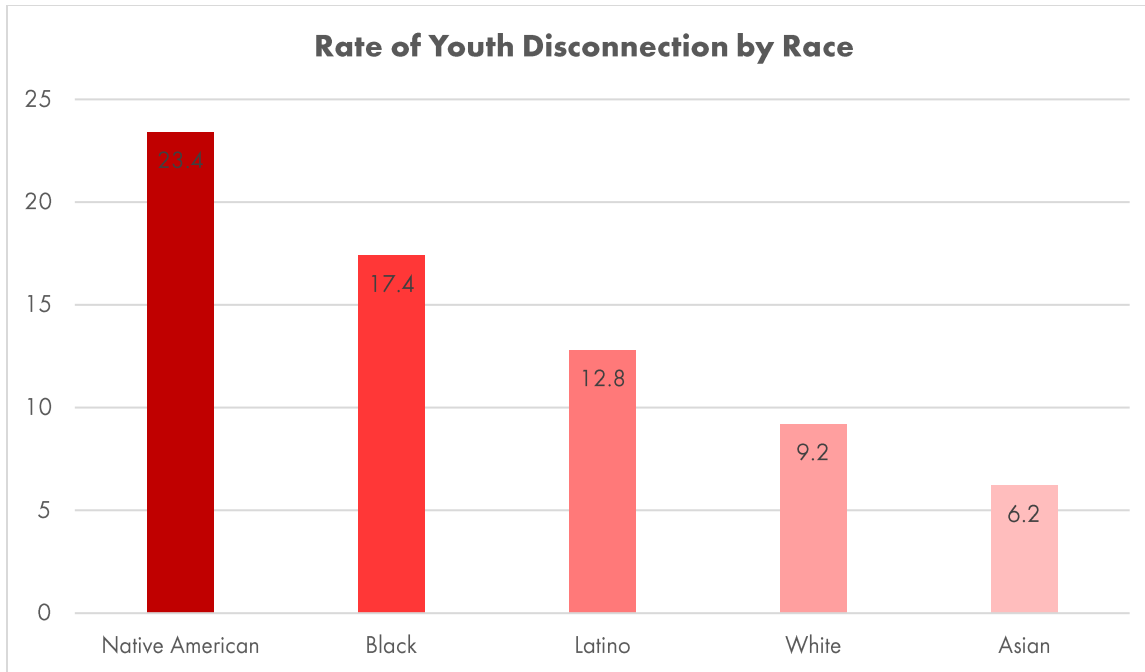


Figure 2. Rate of Youth Disconnection by Race

Per Measure America of the Social Science Research Council, “Covid-19 has likely erased ten years’ progress in reducing the national youth disconnection rate in a matter of months.”<sup>41</sup>

Due to the pandemic, youth and young adults experienced months to years of disruption to their education and job loss. The sectors most affected by COVID-19 were also those that often employ youth: leisure and hospitality.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, the loss of employment opportunities hindered job training programs that are often crucial to reconnecting opportunity youth. A study by the US Department of Health and Human Services found that “67% of [opportunity youth] programs that ended a job training service reported a reduction/loss of employment sites.”<sup>43</sup> In a report done in 2020, “For young workers, [half of whom are employed by the service industry](#), layoffs have hit particularly hard. Almost 3 in 10 youth report not being employed in full- or part-time work, and that rate is even higher (33%) for the youngest adults (ages 18-24).”<sup>44</sup>

Disparities among opportunity youth are prevalent. Based on a Tufts Poll, “data depicts drastic disparities between Black youth and their peers. Nearly half (46%) of Black youth who are not currently in school are also not employed—almost double the unemployment rate of White youth (25%), Asian youth (24%) and Latino youth (26%).”<sup>45</sup> The required transition to virtual programs highlighted another disparity, when “...seven and a half percent of young people say that, during COVID-19, they don’t have sufficient access to the Internet—which corresponds to roughly 3.5 million youth who lack adequate connectivity. However, for Black youth, that rate rises to 12%.”<sup>46</sup>

## MENTORSHIP: IMPROVING ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES

Connecting young adults to caring adults can have positive academic and social emotional impacts. A caring adult is a term used for a mentor that can take form in coaches, teachers, or other supporting staff that connect with teens and provide consistent emotional support. They most importantly can provide “goal-oriented” support by exploring post-secondary education options and application processes and or exploring career options.<sup>47</sup>

One model, youthCONNECT, found that having a present, caring adult outside of a student’s family increased their GPA and attendance while decreasing their engagement in risky behavior.<sup>48</sup> The relationship serves as a protective factor against usage of illicit substances or engagement in external negative behaviors such as fighting. Mentors help youth to productively plan their future and avoid future disconnection.

### *Mentorship and Workforce Success*

Setting career goals, networking, and developing soft and hard skills are some examples that are developed through mentorship that can provide a talent pipeline to those entering the workforces. Exposing students to a diverse range of careers encourages them to take interest in their studies and have experiences that connect them to what they are learning in a classroom.<sup>49</sup>

Local Workforce Boards have begun using effective strategies to connect with OYYA such as using technology and apps to better connect to youth, collaborating with post-secondary institutions, offering financial literacy classes, and working with juvenile probation centers. Some are also partnering with agencies, to try and build career pathways. Significant opportunities exist to develop workplace mentorship programs in connection with community organizations serving opportunity youth.

The lack of relationships with supportive adults leaves opportunity youth alone to navigate the systems they are unfamiliar with. For example, opportunity youth that are aging out of foster care are an at-risk population that is left to learn the housing system. A mentor can help support the job search process, and the other steps to becoming a stable working adult. These connections serve as bridges to employment and education and significantly benefit both parties.<sup>50</sup> A relationship with just one supportive adult could be that extra support a young person needs to avoid dropping out of school or becoming homeless.

## CONCLUSION

As the name suggests, opportunity youth represent a critical opportunity for the workforce and economy. Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, employers in all industries are seeking qualified talent. Additionally, as Baby Boomers exit the workforce, it is essential that our talented young

people are prepared to fill those roles.<sup>51</sup> Building that young workforce requires intentional, cross-sector solutions. For example, strong public-private partnerships support OY by connecting service providers with businesses to leverage expertise and hiring power. Additionally, employers can be incentivized to hire more youth and provide necessary support through their onboarding.

With an investment in OY and a comprehensive support strategy, employers could be well poised to build bridges for OY by providing skills training, mentorship, and connection to community support organizations. These efforts would advance efforts to fill workforce gaps and create a diverse work environment.

## APPENDIX OF HOUSTON-AREA OPPORTUNITY YOUTH RESOURCES

This list is not an exhaustive list of Harris County services, if you program or are aware of another program that offers supports to young parents, please contact Children At Risk's Caroline Roberts at [croberts@childrenatrisk.org](mailto:croberts@childrenatrisk.org).

### GENERAL SERVICES FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

17-25

- Program A: Harris County Housing and Community Resource Center
- Program B: Avenue360: Health & Wellness
- Program C: The Alliance
- Program C: The Alliance (Continued)
- Program D: Catholic Charities
- Program E: Avenue
- Program F: Houston Area Urban League (HAUL)
- Program G: Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, Inc.
- Program H: Change Happens!
- Program I: Workforce Solutions: Gulf Coast
- Program J: Pro-Vision Inc.
- Program K: University of Houston Downtown
- Program L: Goodwill Houston
- Program M: Houston Complete Communities
- Program N: Leadership Experience & Employment Program
- Program O: Hire Houston Youth
- Program P: GRADCafé by Project Grad
- Program Q: Emerge
- Program R: WorkFaith
- Program S: Memorial Assistance Ministries (MAM)
- Program S: MAM Continued
- Program T: Family Houston
- Program U: SERJobs
- Program U: SERJobs Continued

### YOUNG PARENTS

26-29

- Program A: Nurse-Family Partnership Program
- Program B: Women, Infant, and Children (WIC)
- Program C: Safe Haven
- Program D: Blessed Beginnings Life Center
- Program E: Children's Connection Inc
- Program F: Pregnancy Help Center
- Program G: LifeHouse
- Program H: Healthy Families Houston
- Program I: God's Lovely Butterflies Maternity Home
- Program J: University of Houston-Healthy Start
- Program K: MotherToBaby Texas TIPS
- Program L: Houston Independent School District
- Program M: DePelchin Children's Center
- Program N: L.I.F.E Houston

## CURRENT & FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

30-34

- Program A: The HAY Center's Current Foster Youth Programs
- Program B: The HAY Center's Former Foster Youth Programs
- Program C: DFPS Housing Programs
- Program D: DFPS Rental Assistance Voucher Programs
- Program E: DFPS Extended Foster Care
- Program F: DFPS Higher Education Resources
- Program G: DFPS Health Services
- Program H: Texas Youth Helpline
- Program I: Diamond Family Scholars Program
- Program J: Texas Foster Youth Justice Program
- Program K: Dare to Dream
- Program L: Foster Care Academy
- Program M: DePelchin Children's Center

## JUSTICE INVOLVED YOUTH

35-39

- Program A: Harris County Resources for Children and Adults
- Program B: reVision Houston
- Program C: The Harris Center
- Program D: 5th Ward's The Center For Urban Transformation
- Program E: Change Happens!
- Program F: SERJobs
- Program G: 8 Million Stories
- Program H: Juma Houston
- Program I: Collective Action For Youth
- Program J: Goodwill Houston
- Program K: AIDS Foundation Houston

## UNDERREPRESENTED HIGH RISK OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

39-44

- Program A: Houston Area Urban League (HAUL)
- Program B: Fresh Spirit Wellness for Women
- Program C: MAM: Immigration Legal Services
- Program D: Change Happens!
- Program E: Avenue360
- Program F: Harris County Veterans Service Department
- Program G: The Alliance
- Program H: Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
- Program I: The Montrose Center
- Program J: Neuhaus Education Center
- Program K: AIDS Foundation Houston: Supportive Housing
- Program L: Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC)
- Program M: The Beacon
- Program N: Family Houston



## GENERAL SERVICES FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

### Program A: Harris County Housing and Community Resource Center

Harris County Housing and Community Resource Center provides citizens of Harris County online resources and assistance from Resource Coordinators in identifying rental properties, opportunities for first time home buyers, financial assistance, emergency shelter, and a variety of other services offered within Harris County. For more information and access to the online resources, please visit [Harris County Housing and Community Resource Center](#). To connect with a Resource Coordinator via phone, please call 832-927-4955 or via email [HRC@csd.hctx.net](mailto:HRC@csd.hctx.net).

### Program B: Avenue360: Health & Wellness

Avenue360: Health & Wellness offers various affordable medical, behavioral, and oral healthcare services to lower-income populations in the Houston/ Harris County region. For more information on services and locations, please visit [Avenue360](#) or via phone 713-426-0027.

### Program C: The Alliance

[The Alliance](#) provides various support services to immigrant, refugee, and underserved Harris County residents.

- [Center for Entrepreneurship](#)
  - Child Care Entrepreneurship Program is a short-term training program to support individuals in becoming home-based childcare providers. The training consists of an 8-week program covering Business Development, stages of Early Childhood Development, and Application Process and Protocols for Licensure. For more information, please visit [Child Care Entrepreneurship](#), contact via phone 713-776-4700, 832-434-1531, or via email [childcare@thealliance.org](mailto:childcare@thealliance.org).
  - Small Business Development-Entrepreneurship Programs provide technical assistance to new and existing small business owners. The program supports participants in developing a new or existing business, technical assistance workshops, and offer Small Business Administration Microloan Program. For more information, please visit [Small Business Development](#), via phone 713-776-4700 or via email [smallbusinesshelp@thealliancetx.org](mailto:smallbusinesshelp@thealliancetx.org).
- [Center for Literacy and Advancement](#)
  - Adult Education and Training Program provides various Adult Education and Training Programs to Harris County residents. Programs include ESL Classes and various Vocational trainings. For more information on programs and trainings offered, please visit [Adult Education and Training](#), contact via phone 713-776-4700 ext. 119, 713-568-6919, or via email [distanceEd@thealliancetx.org](mailto:distanceEd@thealliancetx.org).
  - Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) provides Employment & Workforce Coaching, Financial Coaching, and Government Assistance & Income Support to Houston's low to moderate income refugee, immigrant, and other underserved populations. For more information on services, please visit [Financial Opportunity Center](#) or contact Stacey Green via phone 713-776-4700 ext. 113 or via email [sgreen@thealliancetx.org](mailto:sgreen@thealliancetx.org).
  - Houston Financial Empowerment Centers offers free one-on-one financial counseling to Harris County residents. Financial coaches offer personalized guidance through various

topics such as banking, credit, debt, and savings. Coaching is offered at two locations [Acres Homes Multi-Service Center](#) and [Magnolia Multi-Service Center](#). For more information on programming, please visit [Houston Financial Empowerment Centers](#) or contact via phone 832-393-1125, or via email [agonzalez@thealliancetx.org](mailto:agonzalez@thealliancetx.org).

- Housing Program provides one-on-one counseling to Harris County residents looking to buy a home or struggling to make housing payments. Staff also offers Educational Workshops and referrals to Community Resources. For more information, please visit [Housing Program](#), contact via phone 832-786-9698, or via email [housing@thealliancetx.org](mailto:housing@thealliancetx.org).
- **Center for Resiliency**
  - Wellness Clinic supports the emotional care, behavioral health, and mental health needs of all Houston-area residents. Services are offered in Spanish, Urdu, Hindi, and Nepali and partner with the Alliance Language Network to accommodate 80+ other languages. For more information on services and other trainings and programs offered, please visit [Wellness Clinic](#), contact via phone 713-554-1890, or via email [wellness@thealliancetx.org](mailto:wellness@thealliancetx.org).
  - Eviction Intervention Program provides Harris County residents that have been taken to court by their landlord for eviction emergency rental assistance. For more information on the program and eligibility requirements, please visit [Eviction Intervention Program](#).

#### **Program D: Catholic Charities**

Catholic Charities Counseling and Behavioral Health Clinic provides behavioral and counseling services to individuals and families of any income level. Bilingual counselors can support individuals and families in schools, at parishes, and in other community locations. For more information, please visit [Counseling and Behavioral Health Clinic](#) or contact via phone 713-791-2496.

#### **Program E: Avenue**

Avenue builds affordable housing, provides education and counseling to help families build wealth, and support communities in achieving goals they set for themselves, in education, infrastructure, public safety, health, and more. For more information on homeowner programs and services, please visit [Avenue](#). For the Avenue Homeownership Center: Homebuyer Education & Counseling, please contact 713-864-9099 or via email [classes@avenuecdc.org](mailto:classes@avenuecdc.org). for Community Initiatives & Administration Offices contact via phone 713-864-8099, or via email [info@avenuecdc.org](mailto:info@avenuecdc.org).

#### **Program F: Houston Area Urban League (HAUL)**

"Haul works to provide all those who come through our doors the power of economic self-reliance, the power of justice, education, and advocacy." HAUL offers several areas of programming including, Education & Youth Development, Entrepreneurship, Health and Wellness, Housing and Social Services, and Workforce Training.

Education & Youth Development (EYD):

- National Urban League Incentives to Excel & Succeed (NULITES) provides youth ages 15-18 an opportunity to develop personal and leadership skills. By the end of the program, participants will have a college plan, career plan, and personal portfolio upon completion of the program.

- HILITES provides young adults ages 19-25 that have earned their high school diploma and are enrolled in college an extended support system and resources to ensure college competition.
- \*HAUL EYD also hosts events throughout the year for youth and families engaged in one of HAUL's Core EYD programs. For more information on EYD programs please visit: [EYD](#).

#### Entrepreneurship Center

- Small Business Development University (SBU) provides a cohort of current and aspiring entrepreneurs in gaining tools to operate successful enterprises. The curriculum provides individuals with various management skills to be successful in their business endeavors. Course concepts include Strategic Marketing and Digital Strategy, Financial Management and Tax Accounting, Venture Financing, and Business Planning to Business Development. For more information and to register for SBU, please visit [SBU](#).
- One on One provides one on one individualized counsel and mentoring to business owners that support or resources to become better entrepreneurs. Mentors are "subject-matter" experts with decades of business success.
- Advisors are available at the Entrepreneurship Center to provide business owners with specific knowledge with any challenges or obstacles they may be facing with their business.
- For more information on HAUL's Entrepreneurship Center's programming please visit: [Entrepreneurship Center](#).

#### Health & Wellness

- HAUL's Health & Wellness Outreach Program aims to increase access to quality healthcare, improve chronic disease management and prevention, and increase access to nutritious food for under-represented and under-served populations. For more information, please visit [Health & Wellness](#).

#### Housing and Social Services

- First Time Homebuyers assists first time homebuyers over a one-year period by providing a 6-hour intensive group education and one-on-one counseling sessions.
- Mortgage Delinquency workshop provides a two-hour long introduction to default and foreclosure processes. A list of legal agencies or referrals are provided. One-on-one counseling sessions are offered to prevent mortgage default and assist families facing foreclosure. Other counseling options are also available.
- Telephone Housing Counseling provides an alternative setting to individuals in need. Housing phone assistance is accessible for both emergencies and non-emergencies.
- Financial Education Workshops offer education around basic money management skills by following the Building Wealth, A Beginners Guide to Securing Your Financial Future curriculum by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.
- Fair Housing Program addresses Fair Housing Organizations Initiative Mortgage Rescue Component, conducting fair housing and lending workshops and community workshops. HAUL will advocate and provide direct assistance to victims of fair housing and fair lending laws resulting from fraudulent or predatory mortgage schemes.
- Rental Counseling provides rental counseling in the following areas: budgeting and money management, review of credit report, information on the application process, available subsidies, and the difference between leasing and rental agreements.

- Pre-Purchase Program provides counseling services to homeowners and former homeowners to re-enter the mortgage market more knowledgeable and mortgage ready.
- Post-Purchase Homeownership Program offers group and individual new homeowner counseling to ensure monthly budgets are not exceeded.
- For more information on Housing and Social Services offered by HAUL, please visit
- [Housing and Social Services](#).

#### Workforce Development & Training

- Basic Skills Training provides individuals with basic job preparation/readiness skills including, personal assessment, resume development, presentation skills/dress for success, effective communication skills, and interviewing techniques.
- Core Skills Training is an extension of the Basic Skills Training but specializes in providing individuals with a particular skill set that will enable them to project more confidence to acquire more gainful employment. The program provides soft skills, peer-to-peer engagement, and support services to enable individuals to secure employment.
- Workforce Occupational Skills provides individuals with the skills, tools, and resources to secure better professional opportunities. Through various initiatives, HAUL provides individuals the ability to grow within high-growth industries and secure employment.
- For more information on Workforce Development & Training programs, please visit [Workforce Development & Training](#).

#### Program G: Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, Inc.

Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, Inc. provides people of all gender identities and sexual orientation access to low-cost and confidential health care services. Various health care services can be accessed at multiple [locations](#) and appointments can be scheduled online. For more information on health care services please visit [Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, Inc.](#)

#### Program H: Change Happens!

Change Happens! Navigator Program provides Harris County residents support in navigating health insurance coverage in the Federal Marketplace. Services are provided both in-person and remotely. Bilingual Navigators are also available. Change Happens! Navigators can be reached via phone 713-374-1282 or 1-844-374-1200 or via email [chnavigator2013@gmail.com](mailto:chnavigator2013@gmail.com). For more information, please visit [Change Happens! Navigator Program](#).

#### Program I: Workforce Solutions: Gulf Coast

- Adult Education & Literacy (AEL) Services provide GED Preparation, Contextualized GED/Skills Training, and English as a Second Language (ESL) and Civics courses. Services are offered at different training sites throughout Harris County. To identify a training site nearest you, please click [here](#). For more information on AEL Services, please visit [AEL Services](#).
- Online Learning offers free online learning tools to provide individuals looking for work with creative solutions for navigating the job market. Online modules are organized by different categories based on the audience. For more information and access to the online modules, please visit [Online Learning](#).
- Workforce Solutions Career Offices allows individuals more in-depth access to career planning, job searching, training and education opportunities, and financial support in office or via virtual appointments. Career offices also offer free access to computers, telephone, and fax machines to

aid in an individual's job search. For more information on Career Offices and locations, please visit [Career Offices](#).

- Jobs Now is an online resource that provides job seekers immediate job openings for employers in need of candidates quickly. For job openings, please visit [Jobs Now](#)

### **Program J: Pro-Vision Inc.**

Character Development Programs offers two Character Development programs to the Harris County community. The Manhood Development Program and S.H.E Program provide participants Character Development, Career Development, and Community Service opportunities. For more information and online application, please visit [Manhood Development Program](#) or [S.H.E Program](#). Program participants are provided the opportunity to also participate in the [Job Enterprise Program](#), which offers members personal mentoring through internships with well-known Houston-area companies.

### **Program K: University of Houston Downtown**

University of Houston Downtown: Upward Bound provides incoming freshman, freshman, sophomore, and junior students at Austin, Kashmere, Madison, Westbury, and Worthing High Schools college preparation support. To be eligible, students must demonstrate need, academic promise, and college aspiration. For more information on the program and the online application, please visit Upward Bound or contact Patricia Hartwell via phone 713-221-8515 or via email [hartwellp@uhd.edu](mailto:hartwellp@uhd.edu).

### **Program L: Goodwill Houston**

Goodwill Houston: Opportunity Accelerator provides youth 15-24 years old support in exploring careers, developing job skills, or earning their GED or High School Diploma. Participants will also earn gift cards after they enroll and complete their training. For more information and application, please visit [Opportunity Accelerator](#) or via phone 832-900-7454.

### **Program M: Houston Complete Communities**

Houston Complete Communities: Houston Financial Empowerment Center provides one-on-one financial counseling to Houston residents free of charge. Counselors can support residents with money management, paydown debt, increase savings, and establish and build credit. Services are offered in both English and Spanish and can be accessed in three different community locations: Acres Home Multi-Service, Magnolia Park-Manchester Multi-Service Center, and Sunnyside Multi-Service Center. For more information, please visit [Financial Empowerment Center](#).

### **Program N: Leadership Experience & Employment Program**

Leadership Experience & Employment Program places Houston area college students in internship positions in county departments and private firms. The program promotes personal growth, academic excellence, and work experience in a variety of fields. To be eligible, students must be enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student and cannot be on academic probation. Students will work 40 hours a week at their assigned job placement and earn between \$10-19/hour. For more information on the program and online application, please visit [L.E.E Program](#) or contact Dymond McClerkin via phone 346-286-1958 or 832-803-7499 or via email [leeprgram@cp1.hctx.net](mailto:leeprgram@cp1.hctx.net)

### Program O: Hire Houston Youth

Hire Houston Youth serves as the facilitator in connecting youth to local “earn and learn” opportunities. Youth, age 16-24, are offered eight-week paid internship and job opportunities within the public, private, and philanthropic sectors in the City of Houston through their GAME, CCP, CLIP, PAN, and Student Entrepreneurship Institute. Youth must present certain documents which can be found [here](#) to participate in Hire Houston Youth. For more information on programs and eligibility, please visit [Hire Houston Youth](#).

### Program P: GRADCafé by Project Grad

GRADCafé offers free services to Harris County youth to help guide them through College Entry & Enrollment, Financial Aid, Career Planning, College Transition, and Goal Setting. Whether individuals want to work towards a degree or earn a certificate in a trade, GRADCafé staff will support youth each step of the way. GradCafé can be accessed in person at their onsite locations ([Park Place](#), [East Aldine](#), [Pasadena](#), and [Galena Park](#)) or request their [On the Go](#) services to your event or community, or schedule a [virtual appointment](#). For more information, please visit [GradCafé](#).

*Aspiring Young Adults Mentorship Program* provides Harris County young adults that have been disconnected from education, age 18-30, a GRAD mentor to support their personal, educational, and social needs. Mentors will support in the development and achievement of the Mentees specific goals. For more information, please visit [Aspiring Young Adults](#).

*Grad Scholars: A Mentorship Program* offers all high school students currently enrolled in school a mentor to assist with the varied aspects of choosing a career path, networking, college exploration, soft skills development, and learning how to execute an effective college or career plan. For more information, please visit [Grad Scholars](#).

### Program Q: Emerge

*Emerge* prepares high-achieving high school students from underserved communities to attend and graduate from selective colleges and universities nation-wide. Students attending schools in Houston ISD, Spring Branch ISD, Spring ISD, Aldine ISD, and Klein ISD that meet the income requirement are eligible to apply. The program connects students with Houston-area leading professionals from across all types of industries and personal backgrounds. For more information, please visit [Emerge](#) or contact Janicca Stephens via email at [janicca@emergefellowship.org](mailto:janicca@emergefellowship.org).

### Program R: WorkFaith

*WorkFaith* provides a three-step faith-based job training and coaching for anyone who desires long-term employment. For more information on the three-step program and program sites please visit, [WorkFaith](#) or contact via phone 713-984-9611.

### Program S: Memorial Assistance Ministries (MAM)

MAM provides a range of programs focused on building financially stable families, a stronger workforce, and healthy, supportive communities. Online Resources available in English and Spanish.

- [Financially Stable Families](#)
- Rent & Utility Assistance: Clients seeking assistance with rent or utilities must schedule an appointment. For more information on information needed to receive assistance please visit [Assistance](#) or call 713-574-7533 for English or 713-574-7536 para [Español](#).

- Medical, Transportation, Clothing, Etc.: Clients needing urgent physical illness, mental illness, access to health care for uninsured patients, and preventative health. Clients can receive clothing vouchers, lunch bags, homecare packs, and transportation assistance. For more information, please visit [Assistance](#) or call 713-574-7533 for English or 713-574-7536 para [Español](#).
- Benefits Enrollment: Clients without computer skills, unfamiliar with the application process, and families with parents who are undocumented who have children who are US citizens and qualify for benefits can receive assistance with applying for state benefits. For more information, please visit [Benefits](#) or call 713-929-6509.
- Financial Education Classes: Financial education classes are offered to support individuals and families improve personal finances. Classes cover a variety of topics and are available in English and Spanish. One-on-one coaching and workshops are also offered to individuals and families. For more information, please visit [Financial Empowerment](#), or contact via phone 713-487-6974, or via email [mpaz@mamhouston.org](mailto:mpaz@mamhouston.org).
- [Stronger Workforce](#)
- Employment Certificate Program (ECP) is an advanced level course incorporating skills and strategies to support success in life. The program includes six workshops, homework, and group projects, consultation with Volunteer Job Coaches, mock interviews and others. For more information, please visit [ECP](#) or contact via email [bzewede@mamhouston.org](mailto:bzewede@mamhouston.org).
- Pathways for Young Adults offers 16–24-year-olds who are considered at risk of dropping out of school and those who are neither in school nor working but are interested in making a change in their life. Supports young adults with job training, career development, develop healthy behaviors and positive work attitudes, help students earn their GED, and basic financial management. For more information, please visit [Pathways](#) or contact via email [cjoblin@mamhouston.org](mailto:cjoblin@mamhouston.org).
- Job Coaching staff and volunteers assist clients in setting job search goals, identify key skills and experience, resume and cover letter support, mock interviews, job referrals, and more. For more information, please visit [Job Coaching](#) or contact via email [bzewede@mamhouston.org](mailto:bzewede@mamhouston.org).
- Vocational Training provides opportunities to clients seeking training in a variety of areas to help clients increase their skills and lead to higher wages. For more information, please visit [Vocational Training](#) or contact via email [bzewede@mamhouston.org](mailto:bzewede@mamhouston.org).
- Computer Literacy offers jobseekers an opportunity to learn basic computer skills and job-seeking needs. The Job-Seeking Computer Lab has 16 computer stations open Monday-Friday from 8:30am-5:00pm. For more information, please visit [Computer Literacy](#)
- Employment Services for English Language Learners offers support to individuals working on their English find and keep great jobs. For more information, please visit [Employment Services](#) or contact via email [bzewede@mamhouston.org](mailto:bzewede@mamhouston.org).
- Literacy Advance Services offers different literacy classes to clients. Classes include English Classes, Citizenship Classes, and GED Preparation Classes. For more information, please visit [Literacy Advance Services](#) or contact via phone 713-266-8777 or via email [info@literacyadvance.org](mailto:info@literacyadvance.org).

## Program T: Family Houston

Family Houston provides Houston families numerous services from counseling, financial and employment coaches, and community support specialists. Services can be accessed in both English and Spanish.

- Community Support Specialists can assist by connecting individuals and families to resources, enrolling them in medical, dental, and food benefits. For more information on support services, service locations, and access to online resources, please visit [Community Support Services](#). To make an appointment call 713-861-4849.
- Family Houston provides professional, confidential counseling for children and adults, individuals and families. Veterans and family members seeking PTSD treatment can receive no-cost treatment. For more information on services, please visit [Mental Health Counseling](#) or contact 713-861-4849.
- Financial and employment coaches will help individuals and families understand their financial situation, generate SMART goals, and reach those goals through education, resources, encouragement, and accountability. For more information, please visit [Financial Stability](#) or contact 713-861-4849.

### Program U: SERJobs

- YouthBuild provides youth ages 16-24 can earn their GED while gaining on-the-job experience, work-ready certifications and strengthening their leadership skills. To be eligible, youth must be high school drop-out, age 16-24, and low income. For more information or to apply, please visit [YouthBuild](#).
- Occupational Training provides young adults seeking to increase their skills and transition into in-demand careers the opportunity to learn and earn more. They offer trainings in several different areas: Construction & Manufacturing, Transportation & Logistics, Work With People, Finance, Information & Communication Technologies, Healthcare, General Skills, and even offers Apprenticeships. For more information on the individual programs and specific eligibility requirements, please visit [Occupational Training](#).
- Financial Empowerment provides members one-on-one contact with a financial coach to discuss member's financial goals, as well as access to webinars covering several financial topics. For more information and online application, please visit [Financial Empowerment](#).
- Career Coaching provides members one-on-one access to a career coach to identify their individual career goals, needs, and plan to reach those goals. For more information on how to get involved, please visit [Career Coaching](#).
- Employment Assistance provides members assistance in finding transitional employment or part-time jobs. The SERJob team will support members in helping members in whatever employment assistance members require. For more information, please visit [Employment Assistance](#).

SERJobs also offers a Resources page providing information to various community partner resources (Food Assistance & Services, Health Services, Emergency Hotlines, etc.). To review these services, please visit [Resources](#).

## YOUNG PARENTS

### Program A: Nurse-Family Partnership Program

The Nurse-Family Partnership Program is a service offered by Baylor College of Medicine TEEN Health Clinic, Houston Department of Health and Human Services, and Texas Children's Health Plan in which low-income, first-time mothers can receive prenatal and parenting education and counseling services. Services are available at the begin of the mother's second trimester until 2 years old. These services are mobile services provided within the home. Services may be available in Spanish depending on the



location and availability. To learn more about the Nurse-Family Partnership Program and contact information for participating organizations please visit: [Nurse-Family Partnership Program](#).

### **Program B: Women, Infant, and Children (WIC)**

Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) is a service offered by Harris County Public Health in which women that are either: pregnant, had a baby within the past 6 months, breastfeeding, or the parent/guardian of a child under the age of 5 and meet the income requirements can receive nutrition education, breastfeeding support, access to healthy foods, and access to online classes covering topics such as pregnancy, breastfeeding, women's health and nutrition. These services are available up until the child is 5 years old. Individuals who are receiving Medicaid, TANF, or SNAP benefits automatically qualify for WIC services. There are 10 WIC centers located throughout Harris County. For more information about locations and application process please visit: [Women, Infant, and Children \(WIC\)](#).

### **Program C: Safe Haven**

Covenant House Texas's program Safe Haven offers housing assistance, along with case management, individualized action plans, and parenting programs to any young adult aged 18-24 years old that are either pregnant or currently have children up to 5 years old. Safe Haven provides a safe environment for young adults and their children, while offering any necessary support services for the young adult and child(ren). Covenant House Texas is located at 1111 Lovett Blvd Houston, TX 77006. Covenant House Texas can be reached at 713-523-2231 until 3pm. Intakes are conducted via phone from 3:00pm-10:00pm and can be reached at 713-630-5601. For more information on Safe Haven and any other services provided to homeless youth within Harris County, please visit: [Safe Haven](#). Covenant House Texas can also be found on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

### **Program D: Blessed Beginnings Life Center**

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston's Blessed Beginnings Life Center offers prenatal and parenting education and material assistance to pregnant women along with their support person(s) and parents with children up to 5 years old. Prenatal and parenting education classes are currently being offered online due to COVID-19 and are available in both English and Spanish. Blessed Beginnings Life Center is located at 2900 Louisiana Street, Houston Texas 77006, for more information on services please visit: [Blessed Beginnings Life Center](#).

### **Program E: Children's Connection Inc**

Children's Connection Inc. offers in-home education and planning around adoption services to both men and women. After an adoption plan is created, Children's Connection Inc. will support the individual with housing assistance and expenses, clothing, transportation, medical and legal expenses, counseling, parenting a child under 3 years old looking for adoption services. Services are provided during pregnancy up until 6 weeks after the birth of the child.

Children's Connection Inc. also offers in-home education and training around life skill topics and parenting topics. They also offer education and training around topics specific to fathers. Individuals who are pregnant or have a child or children under 36 months old, or you adopted in the last 2 years are eligible for services. Participants will receive material assistance during weekly visits. Children's

Connection Inc. offers services across Texas and meet individuals/families where they are in the community. For more information on services please visit: [Children's Connection Inc.](#)

### **Program F: Pregnancy Help Center**

Pregnancy Help Center offers free pregnancy tests, counseling services, case management, peer counseling, limited medical services, childbirth and parenting classes, and fatherhood specific classes to those experiencing a pregnancy-related crisis. The center also offers on-going support and connections to community agencies as well as different referrals for housing, medical, legal, and adoption. The centers are available to anyone experiencing an unplanned pregnancy and can be easily accessible by walking in to either location, calling, texting, or setting up an appointment online. They offer two separate locations, one in the Fifth Ward (743 Shotwell Houston, TX 77020) and one in Downtown (3636 San Jacinto Houston, TX 77004). For more information on services and contact information please visit: [Pregnancy Help Center.](#)

### **Program G: LifeHouse**

LifeHouse is a Christ-Centered residential facility for pregnant teens and young women. First time pregnant young women aged 12+ are eligible to apply for residential support while receiving counseling, mentoring, life-skill classes, nutrition and baby care classes. Most women stay throughout pregnancy until the delivery of the baby. LifeHouse also offers a home for new moms that residents can apply to live in for up to 14 months. Postpartum services, including, counseling, community support, and non-residential services are offered through their alumni program "LifeLine." For more information and online application please visit: [LifeHouse.](#)

### **Program H: Healthy Families Houston**

Houston Health Department offers their Healthy Families Houston program to first time teen parents. Intensive, home visitation services are offered to first time parents aged 14-19 that are either pregnant or have a child that is less than 2 weeks old. Current/former foster youth or individuals involved with Child Protective Services (mothers and/or fathers who are pregnant or are parenting a child between the ages of 0-2 are also eligible for services). For more information on services please visit: [Healthy Families Houston.](#)

### **Program I: God's Lovely Butterflies Maternity Home**

God's Lovely Butterflies Maternity Home offers first time expecting mother's a supportive and nurturing environment to become successful independent caregivers for up to 1 year. First time expecting mothers must apply and be accepted into the housing program. God's Lovely Butterflies also provides material resources to the community through different drives year-round, as well as connected mothers can receive additional material assistance through the Resource Center. Services may be limited due to COVID-19; contact for details. For more information on services please visit: [God's Lovely Butterflies.](#)

### **Program J: University of Houston-Healthy Start**

University of Houston-Healthy Start provides in-home case management services that support clients through their health care and community resource needs. To be eligible for this service individuals must be either non-pregnant but of childbearing age, pregnant, postpartum, and parenting a child under 18 months that live in one of the following zip codes: 77004, 77016, 77021, 77033, 77035, 77047, 77067, 77088, 77091, 77093. Individuals that have received no or late prenatal care during current or

previous pregnancy or experienced previous complicated pregnancy or related maternal health complication living in the above zip codes are eligible for services. Fathers with children 18 months or younger are eligible for fatherhood education and referrals from fatherhood involvement coordinator. For more information on services please visit: [UH Healthy Start](#).

### **Program K: MotherToBaby Texas TIPS**

UTHealth Houston provides women who are pregnant, planning on becoming pregnant, or breastfeeding, as well as health care providers involved in their care, an online, telephonic, or email connection to genetic counselors through MotherToBaby Texas TIPS. The counselors provide callers information regarding potential harmful (teratogens) exposures during pregnancy. Services are available via phone Monday-Friday 8am-5pm at 1-855-884-7248 or via email at [Texastips@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:Texastips@uth.tmc.edu). They offer voicemail access which will be returned same day or next business day. For more information on services and how to contact please visit: [MotherToBaby Texas TIPS](#).

### **Program L: Houston Independent School District**

Houston Independent School District offers a Pregnancy Related Services Program to allow pregnant HISD students to continue their education at home with a Compensatory Education Home Instruction (CEHI) Teacher until they can return to school. To learn more individuals can contact the program nurse, Christi Machel Brewster, at 713-967-5285 or [cbrewster@houstonisd.org](mailto:cbrewster@houstonisd.org). For forms and more information, please visit [HISD Pregnancy Related Services](#).

### **Program M: DePelchin Children's Center**

DePelchin Children's Center offers a multitude of services for pregnant and parenting youth, including parenting classes, individual and family counseling, fatherhood support, and adoption services.

Parenting Programs (offered in both English and Spanish):

- Parenting 101: Free 6-week course covering common parenting topics and challenges. Parents can register by emailing [parented@depelchin.org](mailto:parented@depelchin.org) or calling 713-730-2335.
- ParentingHelp: Parents with a child 0-17 struggling with their child's behavior can access one-on-one parenting support to develop new parenting tools. To learn more please call 713-802-7777.
- Fatherhood Programs: DePelchin offers three Fatherhood Programs to Harris County fathers. 24/7 Dad, Fathering in 15, and Supporting Father Involvement. 24/7 Dad provides fathers and father figures a workshop to develop new parenting tools. Fathering in 15 is an online resource fathers can access to develop skills and knowledge. For more information on 24/7 Dad and Fathering in 15, please contact [jwilliams@depelchin.org](mailto:jwilliams@depelchin.org) or 713-245-9859. Supporting Father Involvement offers fatherhood groups over the course of 16 weeks to discuss different parenting techniques as well self-care and work-life balance. For more information please contact, [rdemar@depelchin.org](mailto:rdemar@depelchin.org) or 713-802-6209.

### **Program N: L.I.F.E Houston**

L.I.F.E Houston's program Feeding Hungry Babies offers emergency baby food assistance for mothers with a newborn to up to 1 year of age. Parent or caregiver can access service up to 6 times within the child's 1<sup>st</sup> year of life. To receive assistance the parent or caregiver must have an ID and child's birth

certificate or proof of birth facts. If the child requires a specialty formula, mothers must possess a prescription for the formula. There are multiple locations throughout Harris County with a variety of hours of operation. Each location requires an appointment, which can be made by contacting 713-528-6044. For more information on receiving assistance and participating locations, please visit: [Feeding Hungry Babies](#).

## SERVICE GAPS FOR YOUNG PARENTS

- Accessible, affordable, and quality childcare options through work or education programs
  - [Young Invincibles' 2018](#) study around Student Parents and their needs, highlighted the barriers young parents, specifically student parents, face when trying to complete their education. A main barrier was accessible, affordable, and quality childcare.
- Timely financial assistance for childcare support for OY population
  - Texas Workforce Solutions offers low-income parents that are working or attending school assistance in identifying good, affordable childcare. They are also able to offer financial assistance, however, due to the increasing amount of families in need there is currently a waitlist for assistance according to the [Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast](#) website.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

### University of Houston, Maternal Health Equity Research and Training Center

The University of Houston's Graduate College of Social Work is the home of the Maternal Health Equity Research and Training Center whose mission is "to improve the health of families through research and service." Through this Center, University of Houston offers Healthy Start, which is a national program to support and improve the lives of families during and post pregnancy. The center strives for interdisciplinary collaboration to improve the lives of families and children within Houston.

### Texas Workforce Commission

The local Workforce Board, [Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast](#), provides resources and assistance to income eligible families that are working or completing education around childcare, which is a major gap.

### DePelchin Children's Center

The DePelchin Children's Center offers multiple programs around supporting children and families from pregnancy through teens. They offer pregnancy and parenting educational support for both mothers and fathers to support healthy families within Houston.

## CURRENT & FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

### Program A: The HAY Center's Current Foster Youth Programs

The HAY Center (Houston Alumni and Youth Center) is a contracted provider through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, that provides assessments and services to current and former foster youth within Houston.

- [Preparation for Adult Living Program \(PAL\)](#) is a permanency planning program for Texas' older foster youth to support in the preparation for transitioning out of care. Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) contracts with local organizations to provide these services to Texas youth. The contracted provider for Harris County is [The HAY \(Houston Alumni and Youth\) Center](#). Preparation services and assessments are listed below:
  - The Casey Skills Assessment: Assessment administered to current foster youth (16 years+) and caregiver to develop an Independent Living Plan. Life Skills classes are offered throughout the

year around personal/social relationships, job readiness, housing and transportation, health and safety, life decisions/responsibilities, and financial management.

- Independent Living Case Planning and Supportive Services: Beginning at age 14, current foster youth can access basic life skill preparation through The Hay Center. These skills include: College Tours, Summer Jobs, Tutoring, Vocational Assessment and/or Training, GED Classes/Preparation for College Entrance Exams, Drivers Education, Mental Health Services, and Transition Coaching.

### **Program B: The HAY Center's Former Foster Youth Programs**

The HAY Center (Houston Alumni and Youth Center) is a contracted provider through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, that provides assessments and services to current and former foster youth within Houston.

- After-Care Services: The HAY Center offers services to former youth needing extra support. These services include: Individualized goal-focused case planning, GED and Credit Recovery Services, Post-Secondary Education Support, Employment, Transportation Assistance, Mailboxes, Voicemail, and Email for Youth, Computer Lab, Education and Training Voucher Assistance (ETV), Drug/Alcohol Abuse Referrals, Transitioning Coaching, Youth Leadership Opportunities, HAY Day (back to school), and access to Holiday Events.
- Bridge Housing Program provides youth who are leaving foster care and in need of additional supports and experiences prior to independent living. Youth engage in services and programming supervised by staff that include budgeting, cooking, house cleaning, counseling, and employment or education assistance. PAL eligible youth must be referred to the program by their PAL worker and HAY Center case manager.
- Aged-out Foster Youth Services: The HAY Center provides support to youth that have aged out of foster care by providing wrap-around services around youth's individualized needs (Tuition and Fee Waiver and Education and Training Voucher referral and support, FAFSA application support, College Partnerships, Transition Planning/Management, Aftercare Room and Board Assistance, Transitional Medicaid, Summer Jobs, and College Tours).

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) provides numerous transitional living services to current and former foster youth. Some of these services that are outlined above are coordinated by The HAY Center. The HAY Center also offers support in accessing the services that will be listed below.

### **Program C: DFPS Housing Programs**

Supervised Independent Living (SIL) is a voluntary program through [Extended Foster Care](#) where young adults live on their own under a supervised independent living setting while receiving case management and support services through their DFPS case worker. The young adult will have increased responsibilities and be required to manage their own needs, finances, time and participate in employment, education, and other social activities. For more information on eligibility requirements and SIL please visit: [Supervised Independent Living \(SIL\)](#).

\*For any Housing related questions, please contact Harris County Housing Program Liaison Vanessa Saldivar, [Vanessa.Saldivar@dfps.texas.gov](mailto:Vanessa.Saldivar@dfps.texas.gov) or 713-838-6346

#### Program D: DFPS Rental Assistance Voucher Programs

Youth-targeted rental assistance programs offered to Texas youth: Foster Youth to Independence (FYI), Family Unification Program (FUP).

- [Foster Youth to Independence \(FYI\)](#): Youth at 18-24 years of age (that have not reached their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday) who have left foster care or will leave foster care within 90 days and are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older can receive housing assistance for a maximum of 36 months. This voucher is to be used with Public Housing Agencies. For more information on eligibility and how to access this voucher, please visit: [FYI](#).
- [Family Unification Program \(FUP\)](#): To be eligible for this housing voucher, individuals or families must fall into one of the following two requirements. 1) Families for whom the lack of adequate housing is a primary factor in: the imminent placement of the family's child or children in out-of-home care, or the delay in the discharge of the child or children to the family from out-of-home care (there is no time limit on FUP family vouchers) or 2) For a period not to exceed 36 months, otherwise eligible youths who have attained at least 18 years and not more than 24 years and have left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, and is homeless or is at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older. For more information on eligibility and how to access this voucher, please visit: [FUP](#).

#### Program E: DFPS Extended Foster Care

Extended Foster Care is a voluntary program for DFPS young adults turning 18 to continue their involvement with DFPS for extra support around transitioning into adulthood. Individuals must follow the following expectations to remain in Extended Foster Care: attending high school or a program leading to a HS diploma or GED, attending college or another institution of higher learning, participating in a program or activity that promotes or removes barriers to employment, employed for at least 80 hours a month, or are incapable of doing any of the allowed activities described due to a medical condition. For more information on Extended Foster Care and forms please visit: [Extended Foster Care](#).

Return for Extended Foster Care allows young adults who turned 18 in DFPS to return to participate in Extended Foster Care until the age of 21 if required stipulations are met. Young adults need to contact their regional PAL Staff to be pre-screen for Extended Foster Care. Harris County's (Region 6) [PAL staff](#) is Fleater Warren, [Fleater.Warren@dfps.texas.gov](mailto:Fleater.Warren@dfps.texas.gov), 713-292-6518 or 281-450-9595.

#### Program F: DFPS Higher Education Resources

- State College Tuition Waiver waives or exempts tuition and fee payments at supported state colleges or universities for current, former, and adopted DFPS youth. For more information on qualifications please visit: [Tuition Waiver](#) or contact Harris County's (Region 6) [PAL staff member](#) Fleater Warren at [Fleater.Warren@dfps.texas.gov](mailto:Fleater.Warren@dfps.texas.gov), 713-292-6518 or 281-450-9595. For adopted youth please visit: [Post-Adoption Services](#) and locate Region 6's Staff organized by adoptive parents' last name.
- Education and Training Voucher Program assists with the education and training needs of eligible youth and young adults currently or formerly in the conservatorship of DFPS. Eligible students include: individuals at least 16 and likely to remain in DFPS until turning 18, or are in [Extended Foster Care](#), have aged out of DFPS foster care and are not yet 23, have been adopted from

DFPS foster care after turning 16 and are not yet 23, or have entered the Permanency Care Assistance program after turning 16 and are not yet 23. For more information on eligibility and how funds can be utilized please visit: [ETV](#) or apply for ETV at [Texas ETV](#) or call the hotline at 1-877-268-4063.

- C. Ed Davis PAL Scholarship is a scholarship for former foster youth that provides \$1,000 a year (\$500 each semester) for basic non-tuition needs for students studying government, political science, history, or other pre-law fields. Students can find more information and link to the application [here](#).
- Federal Student Aid: Federal Student Financial Aid. Students looking for support in completing the application can utilize [The HAY Center](#).
- Freshman and Sophomore Success Scholarship is a scholarship awarded to former DFPS foster youth that are attending a Texas-state funded institution of higher education. For more information on how to apply and further eligibility requirements, please visit: [Freshman and Sophomore Success](#).
- Housing Assistance Between Academic Terms: Texas institutions of higher education are required to assist full-time students from former in DFPS conservatorship or who have been legally emancipated in locating temporary housing between academic terms (winter and summer holiday breaks). For more information, please visit: [Housing Assistance Between Terms](#).

### **Program G: DFPS Health Services**

STAR Health provides a full range of Medicaid covered medical and behavioral health services for children currently in DFPS or in Extended Foster Care program until their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday. For comprehensive list of services and enhancements please visit: [STAR Health](#).

Former Foster Care Children Program (FFCC) provides former foster care youth that were receiving Medicaid at the time they aged out continued Medicaid benefits until their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday. Members that are 18-20 years old will continue to get their benefits in the STAR Health program, unless they choose to change. Members aged 21-25 years old will receive benefits through the STAR plan of their choice. For more information please visit: [FFCC](#) or call 2-1-1.

### **Program H: Texas Youth Helpline**

Texas Youth Helpline provides a free and confidential helpline for youth and families in crisis available 24/7 via phone, text message, and website chat option. Runaway youth can access support in connecting with "Operation Home Free," which is a free ride back home to a parent or guardian. To contact the 24-hr helpline in English or Spanish call or text 1-800-989-6884. For more information and access to the online chat option please visit: [Texas Youth Helpline](#).

### **Program I: Diamond Family Scholars Program**

Diamond Family Scholars Program is a scholarship and support program offered at the University of Houston to individuals from Harris County that were in foster care at the time that they turned 18 years old or graduated high school (whichever is earlier), a ward of the state of Texas, or an unaccompanied minor attending the University of Houston as a full-time student. For more information on eligibility, application

process, and the program please visit: [Diamond Family Scholars Program](#) or contact the program via phone 713-643-0771 or via email [diamondscholars@uh.edu](mailto:diamondscholars@uh.edu).

### **Program J: Texas Foster Youth Justice Program**

Texas Foster Youth Justice Program: Educating Foster Youth about their Legal Rights provides current and former foster youth free legal support and guidance, as well as several online resources for both you and advocates. For more information please visit: [Texas Foster Youth Justice Project](#) or contact via phone 877-313-3688 or via email [info@texasfosteryouth.org](mailto:info@texasfosteryouth.org).

### **Program K: Dare to Dream**

Dare to Dream is a one-on-one mentoring program for current foster youth aged 15-22 years old through Houston Angels. Mentors act as advocates, guides, role models, valued friends, and resources who guide their youth through their accomplishment of developmental milestones through intentional giving, relationship building, and mentoring. For more information on the program and referral process please visit: [Dare to Dream](#) or contact via phone 832-304-4305 or via email info [info@houangels.com](mailto:info@houangels.com).

### **Program L: Foster Care Academy**

Foster Care Academy is a program offered through Houston Community College that offers current and former foster youth to attend college without a TSI test and earn a Level 1 certificate. Each certificate program is between 6 months and two years long and are a combination of credit course, workforce preparation and added support course throughout the program. For more information please visit: [Foster Care Academy](#).

### **Program M: DePelchin Children's Center**

DePelchin's Transitioning to Adulthood through Guidance and Support (TAGS) Program provides a safe, stable environment for homeless former foster youth, aged 18-22. The program seeks to support youth in the development of personal, vocational, and financial independent skills while providing a safe, temporary living environment. To be eligible for the program, youth must be at least 18 years old, must be homeless or pending homelessness, a former foster youth that has completed the PAL program. For more information please visit: [TAGS Program](#) or contact Erin Wiebe at [ewiebe@depelchin.org](mailto:ewiebe@depelchin.org) or 713-802-6342.

## **SERVICE GAPS FOR CURRENT & FORMER FOSTER YOUTH**

- Dual-Status Youth Services
  - There is a lack of programming specifically devoted to the needs of dual-status youth, which are youth that are both involved with DFPS and the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department (HCJPD).
- Mentoring & Mental Health Services
  - Programming specifically aimed at supporting current and former foster youth in developing independent living skills, accessing therapeutic supports, and also a supportive system to further identify and access supportive services through DFPS.



## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

[The HAY Center](#): The HAY Center provides services to foster youth transitioning into adulthood. They provide employment, education, housing, mental health and life skills programs for current and former foster youth.

[Texas Department of Family Protective Services \(DFPS\)](#): DFPS is designed to work collaboratively with communities to promote safe and healthy families and protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. DFPS workers support youth through childhood and adulthood by providing access to both state specific and community programming.

## JUSTICE INVOLVED YOUTH

### Program A: Harris County Resources for Children and Adults

Harris County Resources for Children and Adults offers three different programs to At-Risk Youth aged 12-17 years old and their families' experiencing crises.

- Community Youth Services to Children and Families within [14 Harris County school districts](#), the Pasadena Police Department, and the Educational Services Division of the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department. Crisis intervention, counseling, and case coordination services, including community referrals to appropriate services, are provided to qualifying families and students and can receive service referrals at no cost to the family. For more information on services and participating school districts, please visit: [Community Youth Services](#).
- TRIAD Prevention Program provides intervention support from three agencies ([Harris County Juvenile Probation](#), [Harris County Resources for Children and Adults](#), and [the Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD](#)) to children aged 12-17 and their families to prevent involvement with DFPS or the juvenile justice system. TRIAD offers nine programs to children and their families. For more information please visit: [TRIAD](#).
- Kinder Emergency Shelter provides emergency child-care services to youth, while providing social, emotional, and interpersonal skill development while under the care of staff. For more information please visit [Kinder Emergency Shelter](#) or contact via phone 713-295-2700.

### Program B: reVision Houston

reVision Houston partners with churches, schools, government agencies, and other nonprofit organizations to provide a "community of kinship" for disconnected youth. Youth are often involved in the juvenile justice system and child welfare system, are refugees, experiencing homelessness, or are gang affected. reVision Houston offers several programs including Mentoring, Case Management and Positive Peer Experiences, School Based Programs, First Friday, and Building Communities of Kinship. For more information on reVision Houston and their programs, please visit [reVision Houston](#) or via phone 281-656-6615 or visit their [Facebook](#) or Twitter pages.

### Program C: The Harris Center

Harris County Mental Health Jail Diversion Program provides a voluntary diversion alternative for adults with mental illness who have been picked up for low-level, non-violent offenses. Services include triage, assessment and short-term crisis respite beds, peer engagement and psychological rehabilitation, individualized plans, discharge planning, post-release case management, and post-discharge access to services.

- New Specialized Team of Advocates and Rehabilitation Therapists (New START) provides intensive case management services to adult offenders with a diagnosed mental illness that are on probation or parole.
- Adult Jail Services provides Mental Health Services to individuals within Harris County Jail.
- Children’s Forensic Services provides children age 10-17 years old access to several different programs ranging from Mental Health Services, Alternative Education, and Community Based Services.
- 24-Hour Crisis Line: if you are experiencing a mental health or IDD-related crisis, call 1-866-970-4770

For more information on the Harris Center’s forensic services programs, please visit [The Harris Center: The Forensic Services Division](#).

#### Program D: 5th Ward’s The Center For Urban Transformation

- Juvenile Justice Diversion provides case management, restorative circles, mentorship, and community involvement to 5<sup>th</sup> Ward youth accused of having committed actions considered crimes at school. For more information on the program and referral inquiries, please visit [Juvenile Justice Diversion](#).
- CUT Club offers 5<sup>th</sup> Ward youth ages 12-24 a free after school drop-in program. Youth will have the opportunity to build skills, perspectives, and connections through dance, art, snacks, spoken word, reading materials, special guests, and more! For more information, please visit [CUT](#), via message (Ricki) 346-471-1718, or follow @the\_Fifth\_CUT on Twitter.

#### Program E: Change Happens!

Change Happens! provides several different programs to youth and adults in Harris County.

- Youth C.A.N serves youth under 18 involved in the juvenile justice system in Harris County. They support youth and their families by providing a positive environment, trauma-informed, culturally relevant, and holistic wraparound case management, mentoring, connection to resources, and commitment to individual plans. For more information, please visit [Youth C.A.N](#) or via phone 713-374-1200/346-212-5778 or via email [youthcan@changehappenstx.org](mailto:youthcan@changehappenstx.org).
- VOICES provides wraparound services to girls under 18 that are at risk of juvenile justice involvement. Services include different groups and wraparound case management services. Mentorship Matching is also available for Girls of Color and those impacted by Human Trafficking. For more information, please visit VOICES or via phone 713-374-1200 or via email [voices@changehappenstx.org](mailto:voices@changehappenstx.org). VOICES is also present on [Instagram](#).

#### Program F: SERJobs

SERJobs provides adults who have been formerly incarcerated or involved with the criminal justice system access to their free programs including financial empowerment, occupational training, career coaching, and employment assistance. Adults are paired with a Career Coach to support individuals on their journey. For more information on programs and application, please visit [Re-Entry](#) or connect via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [LinkedIn](#).

### **Program G: 8 Million Stories**

8 Million Stories supports disconnected youth aged 12-21 with a holistic approach by providing support with Education, Employment, and Social-Emotional Learning.

- Education: youth are supported in earning their High School Equivalency Diploma.
- Employment: youth are supported in job readiness, career exploration, and employment opportunities.
- Social-Emotional Learning: youth are supported in developing skills to manage their emotions, form positive relationships, feel empathy, and make responsible decisions.

For more information, please visit [8 Million Stories](#) or via phone 832-217-3246, or via email [info@eightmillionstories.org](mailto:info@eightmillionstories.org).

### **Program H: Juma Houston**

Juma Houston serves youth ages 18-24 years old who are disconnected from work and school or are at risk of disconnection. Juma supports the youth in gaining training and experience, earning an income, building financial capability, and setting career goals. Juma offers year-round employment for youth at collaborating organizations. For more information, please visit [Juma](#) or via phone 832-206-8771 or email Manager, Kylah Frank [kylahf@juma.org](mailto:kylahf@juma.org).

### **Program I: Collective Action For Youth**

Collective Action For Youth advocates for dual-status youth and their families while connecting them to necessary services within their communities. The Collective collaborates with other agencies to provide applicable resources, education, and training to youth, families, and other organizations to successfully support dual-status youth. For more information, please visit [CA4Y](#).

[CA4Y](#) also provides Mental Health Services free of charge to Youth and Young Adults (Ages 16-28), Fostering Families, Adoptive Families, and Kinship Families that are residents of Texas. For more information on Mental Health Services, please call 832-736-1808.

### **Program J: Goodwill Houston**

Goodwill Houston Life Launch Young Adult Re-Entry provides young adults ages 18-24 who have had contact with the justice system assistance with their educational and employment goals. For more information, please visit [Goodwill Houston](#), contact 832-900-7472 or complete the [Information Form](#).

### **Program K: AIDS Foundation Houston**

AIDS Foundation Houston provides incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals living with HIV several different services through their Incarcerated/Recently Released Outreach and Services. For more information on programs, please visit [Community Programs](#) or contact Freeman Fletcher via email [fletcherf@afhouston.org](mailto:fletcherf@afhouston.org) or via phone 346-401-8759.

- Wall Talk is a peer-based education program intended for currently incarcerated individuals focusing on HIV, STIs, and sexual violence. The program aims to provide attendees with the tools they need to make informed decisions regarding their sexual health.

- Somebody Cares is a peer-based program designed to help individuals plan for living with HIV after their release. They provide access to post-release resources and services that increase adherence to treatment and medication.
- Bridge ReEntry Initiative (BRI) is a transitional housing program designed for recently released individuals who are living with HIV.
- Medical Transportation Program provides transportation to recently released persons living with HIV to medical appointments, mental health appointments, probation/parole appointments, and to other supportive services.

## JUSTICE INVOLVED YOUTH POTENTIAL GAPS

- Education Completion and Career Exploration & Training
  - Youth may not be able to complete or access education services or career exploration and training while incarcerated, which can create an even greater disconnect when reentering into society.
  - Youth with criminal records may not be able to participate in certain programming due to their record. Harris County justice involved youth could benefit from more programs supporting youth reentering the community, specifically in identifying employment and education opportunities.
- School-to-Prison-Pipeline/ Community Diversion
  - Harris County offers several Court Diversion Programs, however, there is still a need to reduce the incarceration and detention of youth.
  - In May 2022, Harris County Justice Administration Department (JAD) announced a pilot program, Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund, that focuses on “investing in community solutions to prevent crime.” The pilot program aims to increase community programs to prevent justice involvement within communities with high numbers of youth incarceration. [JAD May 2022 Press Release](#)
- Dual-Status Youth Services
  - “Dual-status youth typically face more challenges than those who are not dually involved. they are often younger at the time of their first arrest, experience more intense mental health and substance abuse issues, have higher recidivism rates, struggle more with academic success, and can experience lifelong barriers to employment.” ([Shared Justice](#))
    - Collective Action For Youth has been an active advocacy program for dual status youth, but there has not been any online activity since December 2021.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

*Harris County Juvenile Probation (HCJPD): Provides supervision and services to youth between the ages of 10 and 17, who are under the Juvenile Court.*

*Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI): JDAI is a network of juvenile justice practitioners and other system stakeholders across the county working to build a better and more equitable youth justice system.*

*Change Happens, Inc.: A nonprofit that transforms the lives of families and children in high-risk communities of the Gulf Coast Region 6. Change Happens, Inc. was approved to serve as the intermediary organization for the Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund.*

## UNDERREPRESENTED HIGH RISK OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

### Program A: Houston Area Urban League (HAUL)

Homeless Assistance Counseling (Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing) provides individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless case management services and access to emergency services and assistance.

Veteran Support Services assists veterans (HUD Vash referral from VA Case Manager), surviving spouse of a veteran and dependent of a veteran with limited financial assistance for rent or mortgage, financial management, credit counseling, and other supports as needed.

For more information on HAUL programs, please visit [Housing and Social Services](#).

### Program B: Fresh Spirit Wellness for Women

Fresh Spirit Wellness for Women provides a variety of support services to assist women who have been verbally, emotionally, physically, or sexually abused. Services include individual counseling, DV counseling, legal counseling, group therapy, premarital counseling, couple counseling, case management, and grief counseling. For more information, please visit [Fresh Spirit](#) or contact via phone 713-588-4418 or 774-275-3728.

### Program C: MAM: Immigration Legal Services

MAM: Immigration Legal Services can help with a variety of immigration matters. For more information, please visit [Immigration](#) or via phone 713-929-9280 or via email [immigrationprogram@mamhouston.org](mailto:immigrationprogram@mamhouston.org).

### Program D: Change Happens!

- Refugee Youth Mentoring Program provides youth ages 15-18 one-on-one mentoring and youth ages 18-24 group mentoring opportunities. The program covers academic support, family engagement, critical youth empowerment & civic engagement, and individual and group mental health counseling. For more information please visit, [Refugee Youth Mentoring Program](#) or contact Steven Benson- [sbenson@changehappenstx.org](mailto:sbenson@changehappenstx.org).
- STAIRS 2.0 Program provides individuals 18 years old and older, living in Harris County experiencing homelessness integrated behavioral health treatment, substance abuse, and co-occurring mental and substance use, permanent housing, and other critical services. For more information, please visit [STAIRS](#).
- Rescue In Motion 2.0 Program provides case management, a wide array of supportive services, and rental subsidies to 68 chronically homeless men and women with a documented disabling condition who reside in scattered site housing throughout Harris County. For more information, please visit Rescue In Motion or contact via phone 713-374-1200 or via email [rescue-in-motion@changehappenstx.org](mailto:rescue-in-motion@changehappenstx.org).

### Program E: Avenue360

Community Wellness

- SOAR Case Management provides case management support to homeless adults with mental illness, physical disability, and/or substance abuse issues for the purpose of expediting the SSDI/SSI and medical benefits application process.
- Health Education & Street Outreach provides services to individuals and families living in places not meant for human habitation in Houston/Harris County. The Street Outreach team collaborates with community organizations and partners to support individuals and families and provide various health education and screenings to individuals and families in the community.

For more information on Avenue360's Community Wellness programs, please visit [Community Wellness](#).  
Housing

- Omega House provides hospice services for patients who are living with HIV (PLWH). Omega House provides a safe place to receive quality care while still allowing loved ones to visit.
- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Programs offers indefinite stay housing options to individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness and where at least one member of the household has a documented disability. Services include rent subsidies, case management, transportation assistance, and advocacy.
- Day Activities and Health Services provides individuals with developmental or mental health disabilities residing in Houston/Harris County a therapeutic and enriching environment to divert individuals from an institutional or correctional setting. Services address 5 physical, mental, medical, and social needs of individuals.

For more information on services and eligibility requirements, please visit [Housing](#) or contact via phone 713-341-3750.

#### Program F: Harris County Veterans Service Department

Harris County Veterans Service Department supports military Veterans and their dependents with a variety of supports, including employment, education, access to community organizations and groups, accessing Veteran specific benefits, and resources specifically for Women Veterans. For more information on services, please visit [Harris County Veterans Service Department](#).

#### Program G: The Alliance

The Alliance provides various opportunities for refugees, immigrants, and underserved residents to achieve goals for self-sufficiency and improve their quality of life.

- **Center for Entrepreneurship**
  - Alliance Language Network is a social enterprise that provides interpretation and translation services in over 70 languages. The Alliance Language Network seeks to employ immigrants and refugees within the community to provide interpretation and translation services to the Harris County community. For more information, please visit Alliance Language Network, via phone 713-776-4700 or via email [info@alliancelanguagenetwork.org](mailto:info@alliancelanguagenetwork.org).
  - The Community Cloth is a microenterprise initiative empowering refugee women in Houston. The program targets economic, educational, and social goals through training, peer support, and by expanding market opportunities for refugee women artisans. Assistance artisans in creating and selling handmade, indigenous arts and crafts. For more information, please visit The Community Cloth or via email [klewis@thealliancetx.org](mailto:klewis@thealliancetx.org).
- **Center for Literacy and Advancement**

- Financial Opportunity Center provides Employment & Workforce Coaching, Financial Coaching, and Government Assistance & Income Support to Houston’s low to moderate income refugee, immigrant, and other underserved
- populations. For more information on services, please visit [Financial Opportunity Center](#) or contact Stacey Green via phone 713-776-4700 ext. 113 or via email [sgreen@thealliancetxt.org](mailto:sgreen@thealliancetxt.org).
- [Center for New Americans](#)
  - Afghan Allies Program provides resettlement support to individuals and families from Afghanistan seeking to rebuild their lives in Houston. Support services include Housing & Arrival Services, Education & Employment, and Support Services. For more information, please visit [Afghan Allies Program](#) or contact Haala Binyam via email [hbinyam@thealliancetxt.org](mailto:hbinyam@thealliancetxt.org) or via phone 713-776-4700 ext. 207.
  - Refugee Services provides various supports to newly arrived refugees and support refugees in their integration process. Through their Reception & Placement program, refugees receive basic needs support, housing, cultural orientation, enrollment into school and public benefits, and more. Refugee Support Services are long-term supports available for refugees up to 5 years, which include job readiness training and placement, recertification support, counseling and support groups, and more. For more program information, eligibility, and events offered, please visit [Refugee Services](#), via phone 713-776-4700, or via email [info@thealliancetxt.org](mailto:info@thealliancetxt.org).
  - Employment Services provides refugee and asylee clients who are fully authorized to work in the United States by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services support in job development and placement, pre-employment counseling, life skills training, re-certification assistance, and more. For more information, please visit [Employment Services](#).
  - Driver’s Education and Mobility Center provides low-cost instruction, training, and resources to refugees to assist them with obtaining a Texas State Driver’s License. The program offers Adult Driver’s Education and Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) Training. For more information, please visit [Driver’s Education and Mobility Center](#), via phone 713-776-4700 ext. 159, or via email [info@thealliancetxt.org](mailto:info@thealliancetxt.org).

**Program H: Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston**

Free Counseling for Veterans and Family offers free counseling and mental health support for veterans and their dependents. For more information, contact their counseling line 713-791-2496 or request an appointment or more information [here](#).

Women Veterans Program offers financial assistance for rent, mortgage, food, employment and education guidance for women veterans that are in crisis. For more information on programs and eligibility, please visit [Women Veterans Program](#) or contact via phone 713-351-6915.

St. Francis Cabrini Center for Immigrant Legal Assistance provides free and low-cost legal services to children who arrived in the U.S. alone, families seeking immigration assistance, crime victims, asylum seekers, and immigrants seeking to become U.S. citizens. Services include Information Sessions, Citizen Workshops, DACA Assistance, and Unaccompanied Children Program Services. For more information on services provided and eligibility, please visit [Legal Assistance](#) or contact via phone 713-595-4100.

Refugee Services provide services to eligible government-approved refugees from all backgrounds, including assistance with public benefits, medical, and financial needs in addition to employment, vocational and immigration services. For more information on programs and eligibility, please visit [Refugee Services](#).

### **Program I: The Montrose Center**

The Montrose Center provides various services to support LGBTQ individuals and their families within Harris County.

- LIFE Counseling provides professional individual, couples/family and group counseling without fear of encountering prejudice, fear, ignorance, homophobia, transphobia or heterosexism. For more information, please visit Life Counseling, contact via phone 713-529-0037, or via email [clientsupport@montrosecenter.org](mailto:clientsupport@montrosecenter.org).
- Therapy Groups are hosted throughout the year and active therapy groups can be found [here](#).
- Case Management services are provided to assist in meeting basic needs, employment, benefits, nutrition, transportation, and legal services. For more information on program and eligibility, please visit [Case Management](#).

For more information on The Montrose Center services and programming, please visit [The Montrose Center](#).

### **Program J: Neuhaus Education Center**

Neuhaus Education Center provides evidence-based professional development to educators, information and resources to families, and direct services to adult learners specifically targeted to the dyslexic student. The Adult Literacy Program offers evening continuing education classes for adults 18 and older to maximize the reading, spelling, and comprehension skills. For more information on program, how to register, and fees please visit, [Adult Literacy Program](#) or contact via email [adultliteracy@neuhaus.org](mailto:adultliteracy@neuhaus.org).

### **Program K: AIDS Foundation Houston: Supportive Housing**

AIDS Foundation Houston: Supportive Housing provides homeless individuals and families permanent housing through five different housing programs. AFH housing programs provide intensive case management, community, and social support. Individualized plans address financial stability, resolve family issues, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, and guidance on how to obtain other medical and social services. For more information on AFH Housing programs, please visit [Supportive Housing](#).

### **Program L: Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC)**

Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC) provides immediate access to 24/7 crisis intervention services, ongoing trauma-informed support programs and violence prevention initiatives to survivors, their support networks and communities. HAWC provides crisis response supports, survivor empowerment, and violence prevention and culture change education & advocacy. For more information, please visit [HAWC](#) or contact via phone 713-528-6798. If you need immediate assistance, please call 9-1-1 first. Otherwise, use one of the Hotline numbers or LiveChat with a HAWC Advocate via the [website](#). Domestic Violence Hotline: 713-528-2121 or Sexual Assault Hotline 713-528-7273.

### **Program M: The Beacon**



The Beacon provides essential and next-step services to restore hope and help end homelessness in Houston.

- Day Center provides essential services to homeless individuals who are active in their recovery. For more information, please visit [Day Center](#)
- Brigid's Hope offers transitional housing and supportive housing support services to previously incarcerated women. For more information please visit, [Brigid's Hope](#) or contact via phone 713-590-3318 or via email [rwalker@beaconhomeless.org](mailto:rwalker@beaconhomeless.org).
- Beacon Law provides legal services to homeless, low-income individuals. For more information on services and to apply for services please visit, [Law](#) or contact via phone 713-220-9737.
- [The Way Home](#) provides housing case management for homeless individuals. For more information please visit, The Way Home or contact via phone 713-220-9737.

### Program N: Family Houston

Veteran Support Services Help provide financial assistance dealing with emergency situations as well as connections to crucial resources. Veterans and their families will also get support in connecting with other Family Houston programs. For more information, please visit [Veterans](#) or call 713-861-4849 to make an appointment.

## ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS & INTERVIEWS

### Barriers

#### 1. Accessibility of Services

- Technology Requirements: Reengagement programs that require any form of technology, that do not provide the technology, are not accessible to everyone due to lack of access to technology.
- Child Care Services: Opportunity Youth that have children may find re-entering the workforce or reengaging in educational programming more difficult due to the lack of accessible and affordable child care services.
- Transportation: Public transportation may not be efficient, accessible, or affordable for Opportunity Youth.

#### 2. Age Eligibility of Services

A potential barrier in accessibility of services may be the age range within the Opportunity Youth definition. Interview insights and internet research provided insight into earlier intervention to prevent disconnection, especially within the justice involved population.

#### 3. OY motivation to participate in services while they are easily accessible

Youth may not want to participate in services while they are easily accessible and available to them, however, accessible and available services may dwindle as youth age.

#### 4. Lack of knowledge of programs

Both youth & providers are unaware of all services available within Harris County within each service provisions niche, but especially outside of their specific service provision

#### 5. Service Deserts

Areas of high need that are lacking in community programs, specifically rural areas that lack easy access to public transportation

### Successful Methods

1. Providers shared success in accessing youth through utilizing social media to engage, providing different incentives to participate, providing community-based services, and being accessible to public transportation.
2. Providers are beginning to focus on collaboration with other providers to increase the number of youths receiving services and ensuring that the youth are receiving the appropriate services.
3. Collaboratives, such as The Greater Houston Opportunity Youth (OY) Collaborative, creating spaces for both providers and Opportunity Youth to come together and discuss how to transform programming and supportive networks for disconnected youth.

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