



2023 Child Welfare Interim Study Committee

Ann Ayers
CEO

Lucinda Wayland Connelly
VP of Programs

September 12, 2023

Connect Youth. Support Families. **Create Hope.**

RAISE THE FUTURE

We believe every young person deserves to go through life knowing they have a caring adult by their side.

So, every day, we show up for kids in foster care by **listening** to their needs and introducing them to adults they can rely on.

We then surround those connections with **support** so that they grow into meaningful, lasting relationships that help our youth **heal** from the past.

Because to truly raise the future, we must raise the bar for what it means to support youth from foster care as they navigate life.



Youth Connections Program

using the Dave
Thomas
Foundation for
Adoption's Wendy's
Wonderful Kids
Model



Data
Driven

Using the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Model, the only **evidenced-based** permanency recruitment program for older youth



Scaling

State-wide expansion initiated in 2018, currently serving 20 of 64 counties



Public/Private
Partnership

Braided funding

State Human Services, Counties, Local Philanthropy, National Philanthropy

State investment ending July 1, 2024



Youth Connections/Wendy's Wonderful Kids

Youth without permanent placements and most likely to age out of foster care:

- 9 years old and older
- Complex backgrounds, high levels of trauma
- Over 70% have learning differences and/or mental or physical disability
- Children of color
- Identify as LGBTQ+



Aging Out - Grim Statistics

- 1 in 5 youth who age out of foster care will be homeless after age 18.
- Only 50% will be employed at age 24.
- Less than 3% will earn a college degree.
- 70% of former female foster youth will be pregnant by age 21.
- 1 in 4 youth will experience PTSD, equal to or higher than U.S. military veterans.
- \$300k per youth who age out in costs to society

Statistics from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative



There Is A Solution!

- A rigorous, five-year Child Trends evaluation of WWK confirmed:
 - Children are **1.7 times** more likely to be adopted
 - Older youth are **3 times** more likely to be adopted
 - Those with mental health needs are **more than 3 times** more likely to be adopted



Family Support Programs

using Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®)



Evidence-based

Using TBRI®, an **evidence-based** caregiving model



Scaling

State-wide expansion in 2020

Launched in 2018 in rural regions



Ensuring Permanency

Multi-prong approach

TBRI Training
Coaching
Support Groups
Respite Care
Specialized Training
Resource Navigation
Therapeutic Case Management
Professional Consultation



The Missing Middle

- At least 400 youth are in Colorado's child welfare system that are neither high acuity nor placed with kin
- These youth deserve targeted efforts to find permanent connections



Services to Our Most Vulnerable Are At Risk

- **July 1, 2024, state's investment will cease, jeopardizing the public private partnership currently serving 120 youth**
- For every dollar the state currently invests (\$340,000/year), youth in foster care benefit by more than 4 times that amount (\$1.5 M annually)
- Current partnerships:

CDHS	23%
Counties	35%
Raise the Future	17%
Dave Thomas Foundation	25%



Placement Is Only Half the Solution

Caregivers need support!

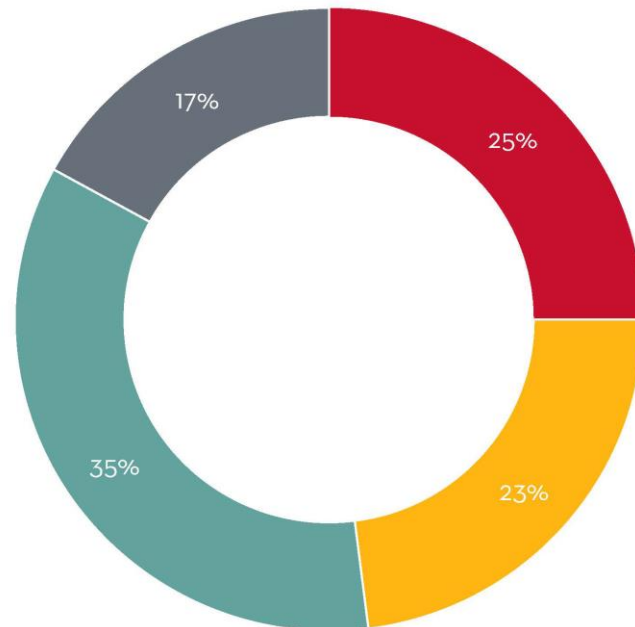
- Public/private success – county, state, and philanthropic funds braided together to intervene early to prevent entry and re-entry.
- Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) provides tools and support to parent children who come from hard places. This is particularly true for children/youth who have found a permanent home through adoption or guardianship.



How Can Colorado Lawmakers Help?

Youth Connections Program Wendy's Wonderful Kids Model

- Maintain the state, county, private philanthropic partnership
- Modest state investment, \$340,000, leads to big returns for Colorado and vulnerable youth



■ The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption ■ State of Colorado ■ Counties ■ Raise the Future



How Can Colorado Lawmakers Help?

Family Support

- Expand the currently successful Family Support Program to help additional caregivers, decreasing the likelihood of entry into the child welfare system and of failed placements.

