

Investing in young adults for better futures

SUCCESS STORY CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES



At a glance

Community

- Child and Family Services

Organization

- Youth Villages

Locations

- Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Ohio

Challenges

- Supporting young adults aging out of foster care

Solution

- myEvolv®

Results

- Serving more than 700 young adults daily through intensive community-based program
- Ability to document services, assessments, activities and service plans through single electronic health record (EHR)

Youth Villages helps young adults succeed through intensive, community-based program

About Youth Villages

Youth Villages is a national leader in children's mental and behavioral health, committed to building strong families, delivering effective services and significantly improving outcomes for children, families and young people involved in child welfare and juvenile justice systems across the country. Founded in 1986, the organization's 3,000 employees help more than 30,000 children annually in 24 states across the U.S. Youth Villages has been recognized by the Harvard Business School and U.S. News & World Report and was identified by The White House as one of the nation's most promising results-oriented nonprofit organizations. Youth Villages has a special commitment to helping young people who reach adulthood in foster care become successful adults.

Every year about 20,000 young people turn 18 in state child welfare systems without ever finding the stability of a permanent home. They are preparing to leave foster care on their own, and statistics show they face an array of negative outcomes. They are more likely to be homeless, less likely to complete their education, less likely to earn a living wage and more likely to have their own children younger.

These young people are resilient and capable, but most struggle in the transition to adulthood, especially when working to overcome childhood adversity.

“That big bet we made a few years back when starting these partnerships has really paid off. We are so excited that we have so many more organizations providing services to young people.”

Katja Russell
Managing director of strategic partnerships

Creating the right support

Youth Villages created its LifeSet program to help young people between the ages of 17-22 prepare to successfully leave foster care, juvenile justice centers and mental health systems. Created more than 20 years ago, LifeSet is a voluntary, young adult-driven service that includes 24/7 support. Today, LifeSet is one of the largest program models in the country helping these young people, and it is the only model proven to have impacts on many aspects of a young person's life in a large, randomized trial. National social research group MDRC completed the trial and full results are available at mdrc.org. LifeSet is rated on the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse.

"Our research was showing the rate of kids who were aging out of care unsuccessfully was a pretty ugly number, both nationally and for our organization," said Hughes Johnson, managing director of compliance and performance improvement with Youth Villages. "It was clear we needed to develop a program that focused solely on these young adults."

LifeSet is an intensive, community-based program that acts as a bridge from foster care to successful adulthood for young people who turn 18 in foster care.

The major focus areas for LifeSet are self-sufficiency skills, safe and stable housing, community reintegration, education, vocational skills and job training/experience. LifeSet specialists help young adults not only determine their goals, but also empower them to achieve their goals in a very hands-on way. The goal is to provide a bridge for youth aging out of foster care into successful adulthood, whether that includes finding and maintaining jobs, accessing affordable housing, continuing their education or other services based on specific needs of the individual. LifeSet specialists meet with young adults in the program face-to-face at least once a week, or more often if necessary.

The program also works with individuals regarding relational permanency, which is the lifelong connection to a caring adult, and social support to ensure that once an individual exits LifeSet, they have at least one supportive adult who provides a parent-like connection. Since its creation in 1999, Youth Villages' LifeSet program has successfully helped more than 20,000 young people become successful adults in 18 states and the District of Columbia.

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Hughes Johnson

Managing director of compliance and performance improvement

"After we created LifeSet, we saw tremendous success with young adults in the program," Johnson said.

"We knew this program could reach even more young adults if other organizations around the country implemented it, too. This led us to see if this could be a viable program for partnerships."

Expanding reach through partnerships

In 2015, Youth Villages created a Strategic Partnerships Department to begin sharing LifeSet as a program model with other organizations. The department also needed to decipher what kind of infrastructure an organization needed to have in order to support successful implementation and program sustainability. Youth Villages created a due diligence process that acts as an opportunity for them to ensure baseline criteria are being met by partner organizations.

To determine level of interest and appropriateness, interested agencies are given the chance to learn about LifeSet to establish if they would be a good fit for the model and programming. Youth Villages looks to understand an organization's implementation capacity, including the organization's philosophy around how to serve young adults, experience with community-based programs, organizational infrastructure and performance improvement processes, financial health and positive stakeholder relationships within the community.

"LifeSet is a pretty rigorous model, and there are components related to feedback, supervision and rigor in fidelity," said Kristin Landers, M.A., LMFT, clinical director of strategic partnerships for Youth Villages. "It's essential that partner organizations who are going to offer LifeSet have the proper bandwidth and experience to successfully maintain the program."

It's also essential that LifeSet partners understand the importance of clinical consultation, which is a non-negotiable component of the model. Each team member attends consultation for approximately an hour-and-a-half a week. Service plans are pulled for review and are used to drive the consultation process.

"Consultation is really the magic sauce," Landers said. "This clinical consultation process, which is part of our GuideTree platform, is rigorous in terms of supervision because we want to make sure we are using evidence-informed interventions with young people.

Since establishing their first partnership in 2016, the program's success has contributed to rapid expansion and growth. Youth Villages now has 19 implementing LifeSet partners across the country, with the program being implemented through partner organizations in nine states and the District of Columbia, as well as in nine other states through Youth Villages' services. On any given day, across all of those jurisdictions for partners, the LifeSet model is serving more than 700 young adults. Youth Villages helped nearly 5,000 young people through transition-age services in fiscal year 2020.

"This just shows the tremendous success we've had," said Katja Russell, managing director of strategic partnerships for Youth Villages. "That big bet we made a few years back when starting these partnerships has really paid off. We are so excited that we have so many more organizations providing services to young people."

Leveraging technology

In addition to partnerships, technology also helps the LifeSet program flourish. The Youth Villages research department tracks young adults through their Netsmart EHR, myEvolv. The technology enables not only Youth Villages, but many of their implementing partners to document services, assessments, activities and service plans, which include evidence-informed practices.

"When a partner organization implementing LifeSet is using a Netsmart EHR, it's a faster implementation," Hughes said. "We are able to share assessments, service plans and libraries to help with the consultation process. Instead of building forms manually from scratch, they can upload existing LifeSet forms directly into their EHR."

They also leverage the myEvolv EHR to develop in-house assessments, which have unique builds enabling users to collect a substantial amount of data. Youth Villages also uses the data from the myEvolv EHR to drive additional service provisions.

"The technology and data collection helps us identify trends," Russell said. "This is significant because we can use the data to inform our work and the services we provide. That's been tremendously helpful."

The journey ahead

As LifeSet continues to touch the lives of young adults throughout the country, its work is far from complete. Youth Villages plans to continue to expand the program moving forward.

"We want LifeSet to eventually be offered in all 50 states," Johnson said. "With the success this program has brought, I know there is still so much it can do to help young adults everywhere."

Learn more about Netsmart clients at www.ntst.com/Hear-from-clients

About Netsmart

Netsmart designs, builds and delivers electronic health records (EHRs), solutions and services that are powerful, intuitive and easy-to-use.

Our platform provides accurate, up-to-date information that is easily accessible to care team members in behavioral health, home care, senior living and social services. We make the complex simple and personalized so our clients can concentrate on what they do best: provide services and treatment that support whole-person care.

By leveraging the powerful Netsmart network, care providers can seamlessly and securely integrate information across communities, collaborate on the most effective treatments and improve outcomes for those in their care. Our streamlined systems and personalized workflows put relevant information at the fingertips of users when and where they need it.

For more than 50 years, Netsmart has been committed to providing a common platform to integrate care.