

Investing in a Continuum of Care: Sample Youth Programs

The [Youth First Initiative](#) seeks to end youth incarceration and increase investments in communities and in opportunities for youth to thrive. We frequently receive questions about what types of programs could be part of a continuum of care that does not rely on harmful youth prisons. The below programs are just a few examples of the many community-based initiatives serving youth across the country. Costs per participant, where available, are shared as a contrast to the high costs of youth incarceration, which can exceed \$250,000 annually for one young person.¹ We encourage you to reach out directly to any of the programs listed here, and to identify similar programs in your own community.

Program: Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.’s wraparound-advocacy model (“YAP Wrap”)

How it works: “YAP spends individual time with each youth and family and their team of professional and non-professional supports to develop a plan that identifies the youth and family’s strengths, assets, challenges and needs. The plan is then implemented with the support of paid, trained and supervised community ‘Advocates.’”²

Cost: \$15,000 to \$20,000 per youth.³

For more information: <http://www.yapinc.org/>

Program: Community Connections for Youth’s South Bronx Community Connections

How it works: “In the SBCC model, a network of faith and community organizations in a given police precinct form a network to engage youth who have been arrested in mentoring and positive youth development activities. CCFY facilitates partnerships between juvenile justice system stakeholders and local neighborhood organizations to create new options for alternatives to formal court processing.”⁴

Cost: Approximately \$15,000 per youth per year.⁵

For more information: <https://cc-fy.org/>

Program: Arches Transformative Mentoring program

How it works: Young people engage in group mentoring sessions led by Arches mentors, who also work with participants one-on-one as needed. The sessions use motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy principles (through an Interactive Journaling curriculum). Arches mentors are “‘credible messengers,’ people with backgrounds and characteristics similar to the populations they serve, who develop robust relationships with program participants built upon authentic shared experiences and understanding,” and “Arches is based on the idea that credible messengers are best positioned to engage the young people who are hardest to reach.”⁶

¹ Justice Policy Institute. *Sticker Shock 2020: The Cost of Youth Incarceration*, http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/Sticker_Shock_2020.pdf

² <http://www.yapinc.org/how>

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<https://www.pennlive.com/news/2020/02/harrisburg-based-alternative-to-prison-program-continues-to-grow-push-for-juvenile-justice-reform.html>

⁴ <https://cc-fy.org/project/south-bronx-community-connections/>

⁵ This includes the cost of court advocacy, mentoring, positive youth development activities, family strengthening, parent support, stipends, and wraparound support for families. E-mail from Rev. Rubén Austria, Executive Director, Community Connections for Youth, August 19, 2020.

⁶ https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/96601/arches_transformative_mentoring_program_0.pdf

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Cost: When Arches began in 2012, it had an annual budget of \$4,700,000 and served 840 youth annually, averaging to less than \$5,600 per youth.⁷

For more information: <https://cmjcenter.org/archesimpact/>

Program: Roca, Inc.

How it works: Roca's intervention model includes two years of intensive services plus two years of follow up and is "uniquely designed to serve high-risk young people, who are not yet ready, willing or able to change."⁸ This begins with Youth Workers who "relentlessly reach out to [young people] until they engage in the program,"⁹ and build "transformational relationships," including through intensive case management. Roca participants engage in education, life skills, and employment programming "designed to withstand the comings and goings of high-risk young people who have failed in traditional learning environments."¹⁰

Cost: Just over \$6,000 per year per youth (\$24,500 for the four-year program).¹¹

For more information: <https://rocainc.org/>

Program: UTEC

How it works: UTEC Streetworkers reach out to young people in their neighborhoods and in incarceration facilities to build relationships and encourage eventual participation in the program. Once young people are involved with UTEC they receive a Transitional Coach who provides mentorship and service coordination. The young person also receives paid work experience in a social enterprise and may participate in on-site education and social justice activities. UTEC also offers onsite child care for young parents, and a drop in center with cultural programming, recreation, and fitness opportunities.

For more information: <https://utecinc.org/>

Program: YouthBuild, USA

How it works: YouthBuild provides "pathways to jobs, education, entrepreneurship, and other opportunities leading to productive and contributing livelihoods."¹² Youth engage in building projects, developing useful skills while improving their own communities. Young people involved in the program also spend approximately half their time completing their education, and also engage in leadership development activities.

Cost: \$22,000 per year per young person.¹³

For more information: <https://www.youthbuild.org/>

Program: Young Women's Freedom Center

How it works: YWFC offers a range of programming ranging from peer advocates who provide crisis intervention and stabilization support to "freedom circles" which involve support from peers, mental

⁷ <http://www.nyc.gov/html/yji/downloads/pdf/arches.pdf>

⁸ <https://rocainc.org/work/our-intervention-model/>

⁹ <https://rocainc.org/work/our-intervention-model/relentless-outreach/>

¹⁰ <https://rocainc.org/work/our-intervention-model/stage-based-programming/>

¹¹ https://www.masslive.com/politics/2013/09/1167_million_federal_grant_to.html

¹² <https://www.youthbuild.org/what-we-do>

¹³

<https://www.youthbuild.org/our-impact#:~:text=Examples%20of%20cost%20per%20young,YouthBuild%20Research>

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health professionals, and community healers and culminate in the creation of a “self-determination life plan that includes educational, employment and job training, healing support, health, and other social services.”¹⁴ Participants also receive support from a life coach who meets with them individually at least once per month and up to 2-3 times per week, as needed. Young people can also participate in other healing activities such as trauma-informed yoga, guided writing, meditation, and therapy. YWFC also has internship programs, leadership development offerings, and specialized programs for pregnant and parenting mothers and for girls, women, and transgender/gender nonconforming young people who've been sexually exploited.

Cost: Costs vary according to what programming participants choose to engage in. As an example, YWFC's internship program includes training plus 300 hours of paid work for each participant and costs \$14,700 per young person to run.¹⁵

For more information: <https://www.youngwomenfree.org/>

Program: Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS)

How it works: GEMS' “Victim, Survivor, Leader” (VSL™) model “aims to ensure that girls and young women become free from commercial sexual exploitation, make improvements in trauma recovery, increase their healthy social support, achieve educational and vocational gains, and become self-sufficient, as well as becoming empowered advocates for themselves and their peers.”¹⁶ GEMS also offers direct services including court advocacy, transitional housing, a Survivor Leadership Program, education support services.

For more information: <https://www.gems-girls.org/>

Program: S.O.U.L. Sisters Leadership Collective

How it works: S.O.U.L. Sisters offers a range of programs that provide leadership development, entrepreneurship opportunities, and restorative justice opportunities with the goal of “young women, femmes, and non-binary youth of color blossoming into leaders with political and self awareness, creative problem solving skills, and strong ethics.”

For more information: <https://soulsistersleadership.org/>

Program: Choose 180

How it works: Choose 180 offers half-day workshops that help young people recognize unhealthy behaviors and challenges, and develop goals and plans for positive change. After the workshops, Choose 180 follows up individually with each participant, connecting them to the specific services and supports needed to achieve their goals. The majority of participants are referred to Choose 180 as part of justice system diversion programs, but community members can also refer young people ages 12 to 24 who need services. Choose 180 also has a separate school-based five-week program that supports middle and high school students at risk of suspension or expulsion.

For more information: <https://choose180.org/>

Program: Teens with a Purpose

¹⁴ <https://www.youngwomenfree.org/healing-self-determination/>

¹⁵ E-mail from YWFC, August 18, 2020.

¹⁶ <https://www.gems-girls.org/what-we-do>

How it works: Teens with a Purpose (TWP) provides leadership development and civic engagement opportunities through peer-led projects in the arts and humanities. TWP members collaborate and support each other in performances and events such as poetry workshops, open mic nights, and visual arts events that are “safe inclusive spaces that challenge young people to find, develop, publicly present and apply their voices as creators of positive social change.” TWP youth also created a community garden and continue to maintain it, sharing the healthy food they harvest with their community.

For more information: <http://www.twpthemovement.org/>

Program: Black Family Development, Inc.

How it works: Black Family Development, Inc. provides “case management services; assessment; service coordination; community linkage; crisis intervention services; monitoring service; court attendance; treatment; team coordination.”¹⁷

For more information: <https://www.blackfamilydevelopment.org/>

Program: EBP+ Collaborative

How it works: The EBP+ Collaborative is a partnership between 12 community organizations, Impact Justice, and the W.H. Burns Institute. Each organization is currently providing a range of services and supports to youth in their communities and together they are “developing a program model that can be used as an alternative to incarceration for youth charged for serious and violent crimes.”¹⁸ In addition to Youth Advocate Programs and Community Connections for Youth, profiled above, the participating community groups are:

- Alternative Rehabilitation Communities, Harrisburg, PA
- Barrios Unidos, Santa Cruz, CA
- Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ), Oakland, CA
- Fathers and Families of San Joaquín, Stockton, CA
- La Plazita, Albuquerque, NM
- Latino Network, Portland, OR
- POIC, Portland, OR
- Running Rebels, Milwaukee, WI
- RYSE Center, Richmond, CA
- Youth Education Programs, New Orleans, LA

For more information:

<https://impactjustice.org/resources/the-ebp-plus-model-liberating-youth-families-and-community-from-the-justice-system/>

¹⁷ <https://www.blackfamilydevelopment.org/index.php/programs-services/juvenile-justice>

¹⁸

<https://impactjustice.org/resources/the-ebp-plus-model-liberating-youth-families-and-community-from-the-justice-system/>