

FAIRFAX COUNTY SUCCESSFUL CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY TEAM

10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Fairfax County
Government Center
Room 9/10

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Presentations and Action Items
 - a. Action 1: SCYPT Endorsement of the SCYPT Workforce Readiness- Opportunity Youth Plan
 - b. Action 2: SCYPT Endorsement of the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Initiative Plan
3. Recap of New Action Steps or Assignments
4. Items and Announcements Presented by SCYPT Members
5. Public Comment

*This meeting will be live-streamed via Zoom at : <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5097984459>
Password: Scypt2023! Or Telephone: (888) 270 9936 (US Toll Free) Conference code: 402862. The live stream is for viewing only; members will not be able to participate in the meeting via Zoom.*



**THE FAIRFAX COUNTY SUCCESSFUL
CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY TEAM**

Summary of Opportunity Youth Report for SCYPT Committee

FEBRUARY 1, 2023

Meeting Agenda

Report overview

Moving from planning to action

- SCYPT endorsement requested
- Sustainable ownership of next phase
- Potential resource investments?

Open Discussion

Activities Since
September
SCYPT Update

Developed strategic framework
of guiding principles, goals,
strategies and initial action steps

Developed graphic depiction of
system evolution from current
state to desired stage

Modeled role and initial budget
for backbone organization and a
portfolio of coordinated projects

Evolution of Proposed Opportunity Youth Collective Impact Network

Confusing & Disconnected Supports



Aligning System Around Youth Voices



Clear Pathways to Career Advancement



A Three-Pronged Research Effort: Highlights

Youth Voice

- Five focus group discussions with 50+ youth

Local Service Providers

- 19 interviews with youth program leaders

National Best Practice Research

- Literature reviews and discussions with regional and national leaders

Highlights of Key Findings

Overall mismatch of what opportunity youth want/need and what the system does

Disproportionate representation by specific audience sub-groups, neighborhoods and high schools

Lack of backbone coordinating organization

Policy compliance activities precede relationship-building and service experiences

Small scale of OY re-engagement of 100s in Fairfax vs. 1,000s in established OY collaboratives

Proposed Guiding Principles

(TAPE)



Trauma-Informed



Asset-Based



Person-Centered



Equity-Focused

Goal 1

Establish Clear and Consolidated Ownership and Accountability for a Collaborative Network of Organizations and Programs Supporting Opportunity Youth

Strategies:

- § Establish a county-designated backbone organization to develop collaborative system management
- § Infuse all collaborative planning and initiatives with the guiding principles (TAPE)

Goal 2

Lower High School Dropout Rates and Improve On-time Graduation Rates

Strategies:

- § Build collective responsibility around on-time graduation, dropout prevention, and re-engagement.
- § Provide academic and holistic support for age 17-21 English Learners entering at FCPS to ensure progress toward graduation.
- § Increase capacity at Alternative High School programs to support tailored student pathways to graduation.
- § Leverage local business partnerships to establish work-based learning (WBL) and internship opportunities.
- § Increase access to mentors for opportunity youth at community and teen centers.

Goal 3

Provide Consistent Regional Re-Engagement Outreach and Navigation Support to Help Opportunity Youth Access Quality Programs and Services

Strategies:

- § Ensure youth voice is considered in every decision and shared practices supporting opportunity youth.
- § Coordinate outreach and system navigation support among provider organizations to the most disconnected youth.
- § Using the WISH Center as a model, create a blueprint for youth re-engagement centers.
- § Establish a network of re-engagement centers within each county region.
- § Leverage the Healthy Minds Fairfax Transitional Youth Program to provide wraparound services for youth.

Goal 4

Increase Local Capacity in High Quality, Low Barrier, and High-Impact Career Development Programs and Services for Opportunity Youth

Strategies:

- § Convene networks of program peers to conduct joint training and network-building.
- § Increase accessibility, capacities, and partnerships among a network of youth employment programs.
- § Convene key leaders at local colleges and universities to develop comprehensive approaches to support opportunity youth in college programs.
- § Expand youth summer work experience programs targeting underserved youth.

Goal 5

Increase Business Engagement to Help Develop Untapped Youth Talent into Reliable Sources of Skilled Workers

Strategies:

- § Develop a network of Employer Champions to support and advocate youth employment with businesses.
- § Identify, document, and promote effective employer practices for youth talent development.
- § Leverage Fairfax County's work-based learning initiatives to increase work-based learning opportunities for youth workers.

From Planning to Operations

Top Priority: Designate and Fund a Backbone Organization

- Absence of backbone organization is manifested in the absence of a coordinated, youth-focused system in Fairfax County
- Presence of a strong backbone organization is seen in successful OY collaboratives
- Backbone organization essential to develop system-wide metrics

Implement Youth-Focused Practices with Smaller Collaborative before Scaling

- Portfolio of initiatives based on guiding principles, with assessment and knowledge-sharing coordinated by backbone organization
- Smaller-scale projects of collaborative, youth-focused practices with initial core agencies to demonstrate and learn from new practices before scaling

Backbone Organization Ops Budget

Estimated Backbone Organization Budget = \$430,000 per year.

Budget includes: two new staff, consultants, youth ambassadors and administrative costs

- Proposed Backbone Activities and Deliverables:
 - Convene collaborative networks with executive sponsors, program managers, youth-serving staff
 - Begin building shared data management and system-wide reporting system
 - Joint professional development and training for youth ambassadors and program staff
 - Secure additional resources

Budget Source:

- ARPA?

Estimated Project/Service Budget

Estimated Project/Service Budget = \$1.5 million per year over to implement project strategies

- **Proposed Project Activities and Deliverables:**
 - Augment existing and develop new initiatives targeting OY
 - Estimated 250 opportunity youth engaged and supported annually towards employment goals
 - Targeted youth include at-risk high school seniors, youth with disabilities, justice-involved, undocumented, and other disconnected youth

Budget Sources:

- ARPA?, County/Schools general fund, philanthropic interest

Next Steps Following SCYPT Endorsement



Committee Dialogue

- Comments from Champions
- Moving from planning to action:
 - SCYPT endorsement requested
 - Sustainable ownership of next phase
 - Potential resource investments?
- Open Discussion

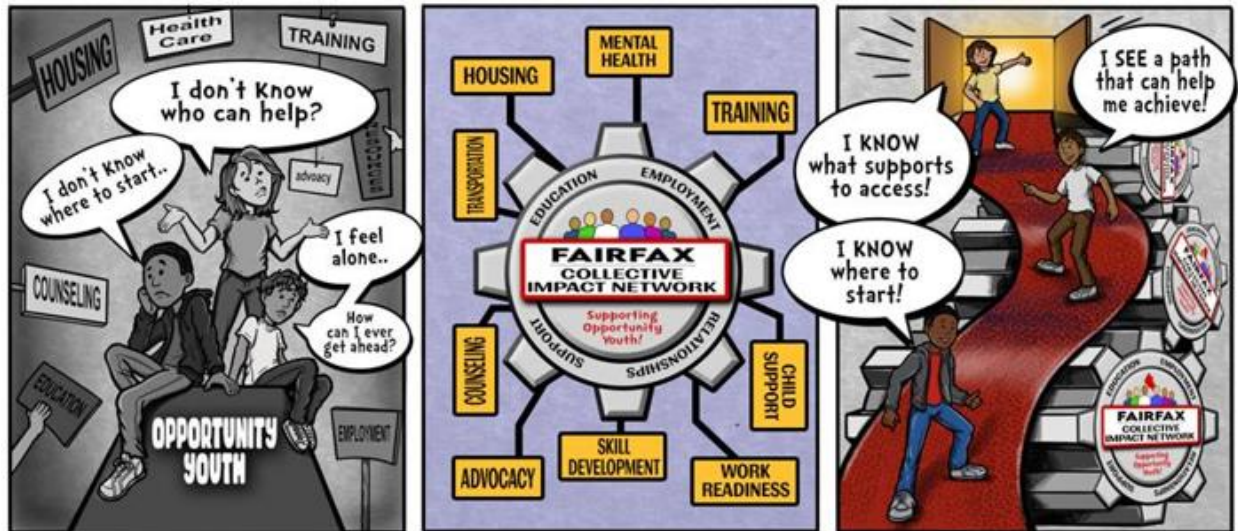


Fairfax County Opportunity Youth Collective Impact Network

Report and Recommendations
SCYPT Workforce Readiness

January 2023

Current State to Desired State



Confusing and Disconnected Supports:

- Opportunity youth are looking for direction on where to start, engagement with trusted advisors, and connections to new career paths of their choice.
- The system to support these youth, ages 14-24, is a disconnected and confusing one with multiple barriers that block their vision of a pathway to a prosperous future.

Aligning the System Around Youth Voices:

- The proposed Fairfax County Opportunity Youth Collective Impact Network begins to pull the pieces together using human-centered design principles centered around youth voices, engagement, and interests.
- This network surrounds youth with an array of accessible support and training that matches their diverse needs and interests.

Clear Pathways to Career Advancement:

- As the gears begin to work together, a well-defined plan, informed by youth experiences and emerging potential, offers clear pathways toward career goals of their choosing.
- Their successful progress represents a long-term solution to address employers' need for skilled talent and the county's goal of inclusive prosperity.

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Executive Summary

I am more than the labels often used to define me -- disconnected, disabled, slow learner, addicted, mentally ill, or criminal. But because I've heard them so often, I fear that I'm destined to be defined by negatives forever. I feel scared and alone and don't know where to start developing a career, whatever that means. I don't trust adults who seem to see me mostly as a problem to solve, so you will have to earn my trust over time by listening to me and helping me identify and develop my unique talents, rather than seeing only my difficulties. If you try to force me to conform with a bunch of forms and requirements so that you can sell your program rather than hear my story, then I'm out. One thing I've been taught is how to spot a phony who says one thing but does another. My friends will continue to invite me to live for the moment because they don't really see a future anyway. To be honest, I don't really know what's possible either. So, I'm going to need a series of second chances and many types of support over several years to pull away from all these negative forces to be more of what I hope to become, which maybe you can help me see? Please don't give up on me like so many others in my life have.

This passage is a composite interpretation of what under-represented Fairfax County youth participating in 2022 focus groups shared about opportunity youth's perspectives and how they hope to be supported in their tumultuous journey to launch a professional career. This report and recommendations are centered around these and other youth voices and related outcome data to develop and shape a proposed Fairfax County Opportunity Youth Collective Impact Network developed in response to SCYPT's charge below.

SCYPT's Charge: Develop an action plan based on the recommendation of the Chairman's Task Force on Equity and Opportunity to: Engage educators, businesses, government, and nonprofits, and involve youth and young adults to align their resources and initiatives to create an education-to-career system that better connects Fairfax's youth ages 14-24 who are not in school or working (e.g., opportunity youth and those at-risk of becoming opportunity youth) to in-demand careers.

There is a systematic mismatch between what opportunity youth want and need from engagement with various county programs and services and how those programs and services are delivered and coordinated (or more often not coordinated). In many cases, opportunity youth and younger students who are at risk of becoming disconnected either don't know where to start or need to explore their interests and innate talents before committing to any program or service. Often, when they do engage, many confront narrow program requirements coupled with extensive paperwork that doesn't match their current exploratory stage. While they want and need trusted advisors who ask questions, listen, and direct them to services that best match their interests, what they often get are very well-intended and dedicated staff who use policies and processes to screen youth out rather than people-centered

approaches that screen youth in by building relationships of trust. Many youth are either turned away or choose to disconnect when they lose hope when confronted with compliance-first program approaches.

Ironically, the disconnection often associated with opportunity youth is mirrored within the system of mostly disconnected service providers across the county. Youth-serving organizations and programs are often friendly competitors whom each strive separately for program enrollments, funding, employer relationships, and political support. Compared to other regions with organized and well-supported opportunity youth collaboratives, Fairfax County's system is notable mostly for what is missing: no common data-gathering approach to enable system-wide tracking and reporting, limited business engagement with no identified youth employment champions, and limited capacity to deliver person-centered, low-barrier and holistic programs for youth.

In successful collective impact collaboratives, the common denominator is a well-resourced and trusted backbone organization. Backbone organizations are charged with clear ownership and accountability to evolve and align an interconnected system of organizations, programs, and supports for opportunity youth.

The #1 goal recommended within this report is to establish a backbone organization to develop Fairfax County's Opportunity Youth Collective Impact Collaborative. This report recommends a specific county-affiliated nonprofit organization that already creates and manages collective programmatic initiatives within the early childhood education field: Fairfax Futures.

The report also recommends four additional goals which together comprise a framework to develop an interconnected collective impact network of affiliated organizations and programs to engage and support opportunity youth. The SCYPT committee is asked to endorse this framework, which centers on a set of guiding principles known as TAPE: Trauma-informed, Asset-based, Person-centered, and Equity-focused. These principles shall be infused into all the goals, strategies, and initial action steps recommended in this report. By following this long-term roadmap that centers the new system around the needs and interests of opportunity youth, Fairfax County will join a collective network of several dozen communities nationwide that are making continual progress towards "solving" the problem of opportunity youth by developing these youth to become the solution to employers' urgent need for skilled talent and a shared vision of inclusive prosperity.

This report was prepared by a core team of 16 organizational and program leaders from FCPS, several Fairfax County agencies, and other representatives from youth-serving organizations, guided by three SCYPT members as sponsors. (See Appendix A for the full list). The report is based on an in-depth inquiry conducted over a period of nine months that included five focus groups with 50+ opportunity youth, interviews with 19 organizations within the region's ecosystem of service providers, and a nationwide scan of opportunity youth collaboratives to identify effective practices and models. This three-pronged inquiry process led to initial findings that identified unmet needs and system-wide gaps within the current disconnected "system" of youth-serving organizations. These findings led to the recommended framework of goals and strategies to address these unmet needs and gaps and to a recommendation to establish Fairfax County's Opportunity Youth Collective Impact Network.

Introduction

With the correct resources and support, all young people can reach their career and educational goals. They are valuable assets in Fairfax County. Yet an estimated 9,200 youth are labeled *Opportunity Youth*: 14–24-year-olds who are mostly disconnected from school, work, and from organizations that can support progress towards those goals.

Some of these youth leave high school without a diploma. Disproportionate numbers are low-income students of color and students with documented disabilities. Leaving high school early is not the only route to disconnection. Every year roughly 450 seniors earn diplomas but have no plans for post-secondary education or work, according to the FCPS Senior Survey data. Connecting with viable alternative education and training programs can be especially difficult for under-resourced youth.

Most Fairfax County youth are ambitious about their futures, and good jobs increasingly require postsecondary training. The community, led by the Fairfax County government and schools, must prevent young people from falling through the gaps in our secondary and postsecondary educational systems, which compels us to work more collaboratively to reconnect those with whom our systems have failed. Such systemic solutions are required to face the growing need to support opportunity youth in Fairfax. The solution must be rooted in equity and lean into youth voices in naming the problem, creating opportunities, and developing collective solutions.

The key to building momentum is to establish a Fairfax Collective Impact Network, anchored by a well-resourced backbone agency, to create a human-centered collaborative network dedicated to supporting opportunity youth. This investment will position Fairfax County to make significant progress in the coming years to accomplish the goals outlined in this report.

Fairfax County has a unique opportunity to do this critical work at scale at a moment when employers in virtually every sector have urgent needs for skilled workers represented in the untapped talent that these thousands of opportunity youth represent. This report identifies strong partners, both public and private, interested in coordinating support for opportunity youth in the community. In focus groups, many older youth who had made some initial progress expressed eagerness to help drive the work forward with their voices, experiences, and expertise.

The Problem: Key Findings

The problem of youth disconnectedness is prevalent across urban and rural areas of the nation. Studies estimate that there are more than 4.5 million opportunity youth nationally¹. Since the pandemic began, youth employment nationally has declined by 1%, and unemployment rates for many segments of youth are several times higher than the overall national unemployment rate of 3.7% in November 2022. These segments include youth who are Black (15.9% unemployed), Asian (10.8%), Hispanic (9.7%), and male (8.8%). (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [report](#), August 2022.)

Several national data findings underscore why this matters so much. By age 28, those who experience longer youth disconnections earn one-third less than the average income at this age and only 1% have completed at least an associate degree. After age 25, the lifetime social burden related to health, crime, and public assistance associated with each opportunity youth total \$529,000. (Source, [Making Apprenticeships Work for Opportunity Youth](#), Jobs for the Future, 2017.)

Lack of Standard Definitions and Accurate Data

The universal challenge faced by communities that have begun to tackle this issue is the lack of shared data definitions of young adults disconnected from school or work and the resulting absence of any direct data about this population. While there is a growing understanding of the unique challenges that young adults between the ages of 14 and 24 experience, better data is needed to shape public discourse and policy dialogue. In Fairfax County, a recent study estimates the number of youth neither in school nor working to be 9,200. (Source: Fairfax County Opportunity Youth Landscape Analysis, November 2021.) However, this estimate may not be completely accurate. No Fairfax County youth-serving organization interviewed has a data definition of opportunity youth nor collects any data specifically on this population. The lack of consistent data definitions also makes it impossible to determine how many of these youth are receiving services across the county and community-based programs.

Disconnected Regional Ecosystem

Opportunity youth in Fairfax County do not benefit from an ongoing initiative to support, coordinate and improve system-wide performance among a network of independent service delivery organizations. Regional partner interviews conducted by committee members and with The Forum for Youth Investment staff demonstrated the lack of coordination on behalf of opportunity youth in this community. National research underscores the importance of strong coordination between various entities providing support to opportunity youth in other communities (See Appendix E). Specific gaps are recognizable by their absences in Fairfax County compared with others with established collaboratives. For example, in contrast to other collaboratives studied, there are no regular convenings of peer networks of program delivery staff to learn from and about one another; no systematic way to identify, assess and scale

¹ Kim, A. (2020). *Abandoned: America's Lost Youth and the Crisis of Disconnection*. The New Press.

promising program innovations across the system; no coordinated employer outreach and engagement; and no online platform or website with system-wide information on the many programs and services for opportunity youth.

Fairfax County has a disconnected network of friendly competitors operating separate programs rather than closely collaborating networks of partners. Individual organizations and programs compete rather than collaborate to enroll mostly easier-to-reach (e.g., not completely disconnected) youth, secure and administer program resources that offer only a limited menu of program and service options and have difficulties engaging beyond a few easier-to-access employers. Even where there are examples of closer collaboration, such as summer youth employment programs run jointly by the Department of Family Services (DFS), Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS), and Virginia’s Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) there is no documentation of what successful collaboration entails. These practices include developing high levels of trust among partner representatives, expertise in navigating separate federal program policy frameworks and braiding funding to mutually support youth participants, joint employer engagement strategies, and a large investment of staff administrative time to effectively manage such complexities. (For a chart of Fairfax County’s current ecosystem of identified youth employment-related programs and services, see Appendix B.)

Capacity Limitations and Lived Experience

There are challenges on the prevention and treatment side of the effort with younger youth in Fairfax County. Keeping young people connected in school is preferable to reconnecting with them post-high school. However, service coordination challenges exist between schools and county or community-based programs for timely intervention to exploit the windows of opportunity before disconnection.

Building authentic relationships with at-risk young people is foundational for success. Many service providers and youth interviewed pointed to specific individuals with exceptional abilities to build trusting relationships with at-risk youth as crucial in youth engagement efforts. Additionally, many older opportunity youth in focus groups expressed a strong interest in using their lived experience in making progress toward education and career goals to support younger youth in similar circumstances, but there are currently few or no opportunities for them to serve in such roles.

Structural Problems of Racial Equity

The literature review supports the notion of youth disconnectedness as a structural problem rooted in historic racial and social inequities. Nationwide, and in Fairfax County, most of the disconnected youth have a common condition of limited household income at or near poverty levels. Opportunity youth are comprised of many sub-groups of youth who struggle to access opportunities that are designed primarily for “mainstream” youth. These often-overlapping segments include higher proportions of youth with disabilities (estimated to be as much as 80% of opportunity youth), English language learners, and black and Hispanic youth. Each of these, and other subgroups, benefit from customized, person-centered services to address their specific needs. Opportunity youth are also found in greater proportions in historically underserved areas within Fairfax County, such as Opportunity Neighborhoods. The

disproportionate representation of students of color among opportunity youth is not a matter of coincidence. It results from structural and institutional legacies and active manifestations of racism. *One Fairfax* identifies race as the number one predictor of how well one will do today. There are wide gaps in income, employment, education, and opportunity by race and geography across the county. Most opportunity youth come from neighborhoods and family backgrounds that limit their choice of economic mobility in school, at home, the workplace, and in the marketplace.

Recognizing the structural nature of the problem and the limited opportunities that the system is currently affording to these young adults has two implications for the effort to address the issue of youth disconnectedness. First, it calls for the application of an equity lens at all intervention levels in understanding the individual youth and how we work with them to provide support. Secondly, such efforts should be combined with more extensive policy and practice-level interventions that focus on the structural problems at all levels. Equity-informed approaches break down structural barriers and open ladders of opportunity for youth who otherwise would not have them. There needs to be a sustainable platform for elevating issues of critical importance to our youth based on data and practice to aid the effort to create a level playing field for all youth regardless of their race or other socioeconomic markers.

Disconnectedness as a Continuum and Mirror

Youth disconnectedness is also best represented on a continuum, which can either be addressed in a preventative mode when early indicators of disconnectedness and struggles emerge while still in high school. Disconnectedness can also be addressed via a re-engagement mode for older youth after they have left high school, a critical moment in the continuum where they are most at risk of dropping off a cliff and rapidly drifting into greater disconnectedness from career and educational opportunities.

Ironically, the definition of opportunity youth as “disconnected” is mirrored by their view of a confusing array of disconnected organizations with no clear map of where and how to connect. System gaps and unmet needs identified by youth show that many are confused by a disconnected and hard-to-access system of providers, not knowing where to start. Many segments of youth are not currently reached or supported in the ways that they need and want to be. Youth focus group data suggest that many of these youth learn best via hands-on skill-building opportunities in work-based learning and apprenticeships rather than traditional classroom learning.

Lack of Trust and a Youth-Focused Menu of Options

According to youth focus groups and national research, opportunity youth view trustworthiness when someone demonstrates a commitment by showing up repeatedly and taking time to listen to their authentic story with a non-judgmental attitude. As noted previously, some youth service professionals have succeeded in building trusting relationships with youth. Such trusted people can include school advisors, parole officers, county social services staff, and nonprofit youth workers. However, many of these people also often lack a clear road map of where and how to connect youth beyond their organizations and programs.

When services are accessed, additional hurdles such as immigration status, income eligibility, and lack of formal education create roadblocks. Some partner programs interviewed report that as many as 50% of youth who make initial contact are turned away due to non-eligibility or opt-out during intake processes when paperwork demands come before the trusting relationships and support that they need are offered. The stories shared by former opportunity youth also confirm that they undertake a multi-dimensional journey over a timeframe greater than a year, while most programs are more narrowly focused and delivered in a limited timeframe that may be as short as one week.

Untapped Youth Talent and Limited Business Engagement

Opportunity youth represent one of the largest sources of untapped talent in Fairfax County at a moment when employers in virtually all sectors have urgent needs for skilled workers. As the county's Spring 2022 [work-based learning report](#) documented, long-term demographic signposts point towards an era of chronic labor shortages in Northern Virginia and elsewhere in which the number of available jobs will far exceed the number of unemployed workers. Employers value youth for their agility with technology, diversity that is linked to innovation and productivity, ability to relate to young customers, willingness to learn, and health. As one report about youth concluded, *“Young people have skills, enthusiasm, and innovative ideas to bring to the workplace, helping your business to stay fresh and up to date”*. (Source: [The Advantages of Hiring Young Workers](#), The Australian National Youth Mental Health Foundation.)

However, despite businesses' urgent need for talent, many employment-related youth program leaders reported difficulty in successfully engaging with employers to promote the hiring of relatively inexperienced youth workers.

Limited Access to Summer Jobs

A related element is access to summer paid work experience programs. Beyond the small incomes generated, they also help youth develop critical foundational workplace skills (e.g., “soft skills”) and habits such as the persistence and stamina to hold down a job, the ability to plan and execute a structured and productive workday and showing up on time. It also helps them to learn important people skills on how to work with peers, customers, and supervisors and build their social (networking) capital. It also boosts their future income earning potential by having work history to put on their resume and raising their confidence and positive stories that they can discuss in interviews and professional references. The summer work experience program coordinated by DFS is the largest such program in the county, serving about 100 youth. A similar program in the City of Alexandria serves twice that number despite having a population a fraction of the size of Fairfax County. Fairfax County government, as one of the largest employers in the region, should set an example by providing increased work experience opportunities for youth so private and nonprofit employers can also follow suit. This could go a long way in addressing disconnection from work as first jobs tend to instill a sense of purpose and direction in the lives of our youth.

Lack of Access to Person-Centered, Low-Barrier, and High-Quality Career Training Programs

Career training pathway programs are limited in their scope of services and often present barriers to access for the opportunity Youth in Fairfax County. These barriers include cost, location, prerequisites, and lack of wrap-around services and schedule flexibility, which combine to exclude the participation of many opportunity youth and contribute to lower success rates for those who do enroll. Northern Virginia Community College, FCPS high schools, FCPS Adult and Community Education (ACE) division, and dozens of proprietary training programs exist in the community but access to these programs is limited for many youth. During focus groups, participants cited typical barriers such as transportation, cost, and lack of information about programs as reasons for not participating. Another less obvious barrier emerged as well – the lack of a champion or a person in their lives who believed they could be successful in a career-centered educational program and professional careers.

Proposed Goals and Strategies

In response to the findings outlined in the previous section, this report offers a framework of long-term aspirational goals, strategies, and initial action steps. In this framework, goals represent broad strategic objectives, strategies represent major components of a set of initiatives to undertake to accomplish goals, and initial action steps are specific recommendations of where to begin these efforts in the near term.

The project team is seeking endorsement from SCYPT on guiding principles to elevate critical service approaches across participating programs and services within the collaborative. The guiding principles, known by the acronym TAPE, shall be infused into planning and operations for all recommended goals, strategies, and action steps, which are described below:

- **Trauma-Informed:**
Recognize that many of our youth have gone through challenging traumatic experiences. Hence, solutions will focus on nurture, care, safety, choice, trustworthiness, and agency in the service approaches to avoid re-traumatization and to ensure a greater chance of success.
- **Asset-Based (See Youth Potential as a Solution, not a Problem):**
Collective efforts will also recognize, honor, and develop the extraordinary potential of all opportunity youth, who also represents a long-term solution to employers' need for talent.
- **Person-Based (Center All Efforts Around Youth Voice and Engagement):**
All initiatives will continually place opportunity youth voices, needs, and interests at the center of efforts and actively engage youth in shaping a system more responsive to their needs and interests.
- **Equity-Focused (Engage Youth to Address Structural Inequities):**
The framework acknowledges the central place equity plays in this initiative in accordance with

One Fairfax. Opportunity youth are disproportionately students of color, disability, immigrants, and other under-represented population groups. These youth voices must be included in the broader racial equity framework.

Goal 1: Establish Clear and Consolidated Ownership and Accountability for a Collaborative Network of Organizations and Programs Supporting Opportunity Youth

Strategies:

- Establish a county-designated backbone organization governed by an executive council to develop policies and performance metrics related to opportunity youth, engage youth in developing a more youth-responsive system, and coordinate, train and align a network of independent organizations to guide the advancement of economic opportunity for youth and young adults. (See Appendix C for a description of the initial roles and budget estimate for the backbone organization.)
- Infuse all collaborative planning and initiatives with the guiding principles (TAPE).

Initial Action Steps:

- Establish and fund the Fairfax County Opportunity Youth Collective Impact Network within Fairfax Futures as the backbone organization to support an opportunity youth collaborative in Fairfax County. (See Appendix C.)
- Convene regular meetings with county leaders, youth-serving organization and program leaders, business leaders, and youth representatives to define and refine the vision, goals, and performance indicators of the collective effort.
- Actively engage within and learn from a national community of practice with leaders of similar communities that have developed opportunity youth collaboratives.

Goal 2: Lower High School Dropout Rates and Improve On-time Graduation Rates.

Strategies:

- Ensure school staff builds collective responsibility around on-time graduation, dropout prevention, and re-engagement for students at-risk of becoming opportunity youth.
- Support English Learners entering FCPS at ages 17-21 with appropriate academic and career planning, wrap-around supports, and monitoring of progress toward graduation.
- Increase capacity at Alternative High School programs to allow alternative pathways to graduation that are more tailored to individual needs.
- Leverage local business partnerships to establish work-based learning (WBL) experiences and internship opportunities for school-aged youth and recent graduates.

Initial Action Steps:

- Establish a central staffing formula to support on-time graduation coordinator positions (203-day teacher) in schools with demonstrated GCI/Dropout risk.
- Develop strategies to increase capacity in Alternative High School programs and connect programming to emerging re-engagement initiatives and partners within the county.
- Establish consistent work-based learning and career pathway staffing supports in each region to ensure all schools are offering high-quality WBL opportunities equitably and increasing connections with business partners and youth employment champions.
- Develop strategies to increase the facilitation of mentors for opportunity youth at community and teen centers through Check-and-Connect.

Goal 3: Provide Consistent Regional Re-Engagement Outreach and Navigation Support to Help Opportunity Youth Access Quality Programs and Services.

Strategies:

- Ensure youth voice is considered in every decision and shared practices related to supporting opportunity youth.
- Coordinate outreach among provider organizations to the most disconnected youth and provide them navigational information and supports and trusted advisors to help opportunity youth choose programs and services that match their interests.
- Using experiences with the WISH Center as a model, create a blueprint for youth re-engagement centers offering high school completion, career training options and holistic support services within lower income neighborhoods and high schools.
- Establish a network of re-engagement centers within each Health and Human Services region as a collective impact approach where opportunity youth can connect to access wrap-around services using a human-center design to holistically address mental health, substance abuse, financial literacy, job readiness, life skills, education and training needs, and other critical services to support their progress towards economic mobility.
- Leverage the Healthy Minds Fairfax Transitional Youth Program to provide wraparound services (e.g., housing, health care, childcare) to support successful engagement in education and career development services.

Initial Action Steps:

- Pilot a Youth Employment Ambassador program within multiple organizations to engage older youth with lived experience in achieving career progress to help build trust with young people in the community, connect them to relevant services, and support progress toward their career goals.
- Develop a website that serves as a portal to learn about and access relevant programs and services and coordinate processes that assist young people in navigating the system of support.

Goal 4: Increase Local Capacity in High Quality, Low Barrier, and High-Impact Career Development Programs and Services for Opportunity Youth

Strategies:

- Convene networks of practitioners at the program management and direct service levels to develop joint training, peer learning, and partnership development opportunities.
- Increase the accessibility, capacities, and partnerships among a network of low-barrier youth employment organizations, programs, and services.
- Convene key leaders at local colleges and universities to jointly develop comprehensive approaches and partnerships to recruit, retain, and support opportunity youth in degree and non-degree career training programs.
- Expand innovative and impactful youth summer work experience programs targeting underserved youth populations.

Initial Action Steps:

- Conduct a pilot to develop a collaborative of accessible, high-impact, person-centered programs within a small network of youth employment and training programs to test and assess new youth-focused and collaborative approaches to employment and training services (See Appendix D for an introductory description of a network of pilot projects currently in a formation stage)
- Create a cross-departmental/agency year-round program where youth will receive career-training experience and targeted interventions with stipends while learning job skills that will empower them to have a successful start and interrupt generational poverty.
- Support and monitor the WISH Center's youth outreach, engagement, support, and training programs and services as a model for place-based approaches in other opportunity neighborhoods within Fairfax County.
- Engage with local colleges and universities in developing collaborative "co-enrollment" approaches to provide more low-barrier, high-quality education programs in which youth aren't forced to choose between post-secondary career education and wage-earning jobs.
- Invest resources to increase the capacity of summer work experience programs.
- Expand summer youth employment sites with county agencies, private sector employers, and non-profit agencies as employer-partners.
- Create strategies to increase restorative justice practices for opportunity youth who face barriers due to justice system involvement and criminal records.

Goal 5: Increase Business Engagement to Help Develop Untapped Youth Talent into Reliable Sources of Skilled Workers

Strategies:

- Identify and deploy individual Employer Champions to support and advocate youth employment engagement within their organizations and business sectors.

- Identify, document, and promote promising and positive employer practices on youth talent development and acquisition.
- Leverage Fairfax County’s work-based learning initiatives to increase the availability of work-based learning opportunities for youth workers.

Initial Action Steps:

- Develop a network of Youth Employer Champions from multiple sectors and occupational pathways to begin building out career pathway onramps and support for opportunity youth and develop an ecosystem of youth-supportive employers from the first job to skilled professional careers.

Potential ARPA Funding to Accelerate Initial Next Steps

At the time of this report, Fairfax County is in an unusual position in that there are significant unallocated Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) resources available that could fund a two-year pilot investment to develop a backbone organization and to pilot promising youth-focused practices with a collaborative network of initial partners as described in Appendices C and D of this report. While the SCYPT does not generally make funding recommendations or decisions, the availability of ARPA resources presents a unique and immediate opportunity. If the committee is interested in accelerating progress in addressing the needs of opportunity youth and more rapid implementation of the goals and strategies outlined in this report, it can choose to signal its support for immediate county consideration of county ARPA funding for these foundational action steps.

Conclusion

Data demonstrates that opportunity youth and younger students who show signs of disconnecting from education - if they continue to experience disconnected support systems at a critical moment in their development – are at risk of enduring a lifetime of challenges that thwart their future growth. As other regions have shown when communities invest in providing opportunities for disconnected youth to earn a living wage, the whole community benefits.

The SCYPT committee is in a position to support this roadmap of recommendations and the creation of the Fairfax County Opportunity Youth Impact Network. The establishment of the Fairfax County Opportunity Youth Collective Impact Network is essential to surround these youth with an aligned network of support organizations, programs, and relationships to help them develop their potential. By doing so, Fairfax County can join a network of other opportunity youth community collaboratives that are already demonstrating measurable progress in supporting these youth and learning from one another. (See Appendix E for examples of what ongoing collaboratives with strong backbone organizations are achieving.) Our success as a community depends on our youths’ success. Now is the time to invest in and support opportunity youth.

Appendices

Appendix A: SCYPT Sponsors and Core Team Members

This report was developed under the guidance of three sponsoring members of SCYPT and a core team of 16 members, listed in the charts below.

SCYPT Sponsors

Dr. Michael Becketts	Director	Fairfax County Department of Family Services
Rodney Lusk	Franconia District Supervisor	Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Dr. Sloan Presidio	Chief Academic Officer	Fairfax County Public Schools

Core Team Members

Jen Glaser	Fairfax County Public Schools
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Kim Carr	Fairfax County Department of Family Services
Bill Browning	Fairfax County Department of Family Services
Sallyann Bergh	Fairfax Futures
Francisco Klockner Gonzalez	Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Tracy Harrington	Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
Amy Dudas	Venture Philanthropy Partners

Appendix B: Ecosystem Chart - List of Fairfax County Youth Employment-Related Organizations

The initial ecosystem mapping conducted in 2022 identified over two dozen youth-serving organizations and programs that provided services related to education and employment for opportunity youth aged 14-24. Information was gathered directly through interviews and other data-gathering methods with 19 of these organizations and programs. The chart below lists the results of this exercise organized by estimated annual service capacity for Fairfax County Youth. The organizations contacted and/or researched are highlighted in **bold font**.

Large Capacity Organizations/Programs (1,000 or more county youth served annually)

Fairfax County Public Schools
Northern Virginia Community College

Moderate Capacity Organizations/Programs (100 to 999 county youth served annually)

Fairfax County DFS Employment and Training Programs
Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services
Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court
Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
Capital Youth Empowerment Program
Edu Futuro
Northern Virginia Family Service Youth Programs
Second Story

Smaller Capacity Organizations/Programs (under 100 county youth served annually)

Melwood (Operator of the Lee District WISH Center)
Building Momentum
Cornerstones Pathways to Sustainable Employment
Britepaths Workforce Programs and Financial Empowerment Center
Raeye Children Aid
Lutheran Social Services Refugee Assistance Program
Generation Hope
English Empowerment Center (formerly the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia)
Year Up
Genesys Works
Chris Atwood Foundation
Josh Anderson Foundation
Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Agency
Korean Community Services Center
United Communities
Lamb Center

Appendix C: Initial Description of the Role of a Backbone Organization

As noted in the previous Problems and Findings section of this report, the presence of a backbone organization has proven to be essential to the success of collective impact initiatives elsewhere. Furthermore, the absence of such a coordinating entity in Fairfax County has resulted in a disconnected array of provider organizations that contributes to disorientation among youth and professional staff about how best to connect with resources within the network of the youth program and service providers. This glaring gap in collaborative system management leads to a strong capacity-building recommendation and goal to establish a backbone coordinating organization, upon which progress in addressing other goals depends.

This report recommends the selection of and investment in Fairfax Futures to develop and coordinate a collaborative that is held accountable to shared goals and is both responsive to and driven by youth. Fairfax Futures already works in a comparable role for early childhood development. *[Note: If this recommendation is endorsed, then this proposed coordinating role of Fairfax Futures will need to be affirmed by the organization's board, followed by organizational funding and a scaling-up process to meet the initial needs of the collaborative.]* The collective impact backbone organization largely serves as a management partner that promotes collective ownership, accountability, coordination, and greater system integration across the collaborative. In its initial phase, Fairfax Futures would convene collaborative working groups to develop more detailed strategies and joint action plans as outlined in this report, develop shared data definitions and metrics to begin developing a regional data management and reporting system, and secure additional funding and in-kind resources to continue building capacities within the collaborative network.

Over an initial two-year period of capacity-building and with an infusion of new resources, the new backbone organization will:

- Enhance rather than compete with affiliated service delivery providers.
- Be equipped with basic fiscal and network management capacities to coordinate system-level activities to help keep collective initiatives accountable.
- Facilitate and sustain stakeholder convening, knowledge management, and system alignment efforts at multiple levels, including:
 - Executive leadership sponsor level to prioritize system goals and identify and advocate for resources
 - Program management level to learn from innovations and promote deeper service delivery integration among a collaborative network of service delivery organizations and programs
 - Youth service delivery staff, youth ambassadors, and volunteer networks to develop, document, and share effective youth-centered engagement practices
- Facilitate and develop collective data management systems and metrics to track and report on progress at system and program levels (see the section on data systems below).

- Secure and manage additional non-county funding and in-kind resources, such as volunteers, to invest in ongoing system-level capacity-building and strategic program investments in promising practices within the collaborative.
- Actively engage within and learn from a national community of practice with leaders of similar communities that have developed opportunity youth collaboratives.

Developing these foundational capacities over a two-year timeframe will require an estimated initial investment of approximately \$860,000, and a county leadership commitment to help secure ongoing investments in the backbone organization over time. As a result of this two-year pilot, progress towards achieving many goals and strategies outlined in this document will be significantly accelerated and resulting in collaborative networks already at work on system integration such as building a collective impact data system among providers. During this timeframe, organizational leaders are expected to identify additional resources that can reduce the county’s long-term investment in backbone organizational capacities at Fairfax Futures.

Establishing a Regional System of Progress Indicators and Metrics

One major gap to address immediately is the absence of a shared definition of opportunity youth and system-wide data-gathering on this population. Fortunately, the county’s collaborative can draw upon data systems developed by the Aspen Institute’s Opportunity Youth Forum’s network of collaboratives, as described in [this 2019 report](#). Starting by developing a shared definition among provider organizations, the backbone organization will gather data to assess progress in system integration, as well as a set of collective impact metrics to track Fairfax County’s progress in engaging more opportunity youth and supporting their achievements in career education and career-track employment. These collective efforts to develop metrics will also engage youth in helping to identify success measures that reflect their experiences of progress milestones and goals that are meaningful to them. Below are initial thoughts on data measures that can be shaped into a balanced scorecard to assess progress in both areas. Given that any system will involve many participating organizations to agree upon common data definitions and new data-gathering methods, it will likely take two years to develop a county-wide data system.

System Integration Metrics

- Acceptance and Use of Common Data Definitions (e.g., the definition of opportunity youth, at-risk youth, re-engagement continuum indicators, outcome indicators, etc.)
- Total Number of Organizational Members Participating in Collective Impact Network and a Summary of System Connectivity Activities
- Member Assessment Results from a Network Health Survey (For an example, see [this Network Health Scorecard](#).)

Proposed Preventative Metrics for Younger In-School Youth

- FCPS Graduation Rates, Dropout Rates, Attendance Rates
- FCPS Non-Traditional School Program Enrollment and Successful Completion Outcomes

- Engagement with Graduating FCPS High School Students Who Report No Plans for Education or Employment

Proposed Re-Engagement Metrics for Out-of-School Opportunity Youth (Individual service delivery organization/program reports rolled up into a system-wide report)

- Overall Volume of Opportunity Youth Engagement Contacts
- Re-Engagement Continuum Measures (following first contact, to include retained engagement, enrollment in service/program, completion of service/program, etc.)
- Employment-Related Success Measures (e.g., credentials earned, new jobs, and wage gains)

Appendix D: Innovative Pilot Project Experiments

Conduct Innovative Pilot Project Experiments:

As described in the Problems and Findings section of this report, candid conversations with youth program leaders found that many have policy requirements - often with federally-funded programs - that limit whom they can serve and that mandate specific eligibility requirements. These compliance requirements are out of step with the exploratory stage where many opportunity youth are at, their expressed need to be heard and not judged, and their difficulties forming trusting relationships with authority figures. As a result, many youth voluntarily disconnect from further engagement or are turned away if they don't meet program eligibility requirements.

The regional scan of programs and organizations also identified examples of youth-focused promising practices that can address these findings. Five agencies represented within the core team built upon successful practices to develop and begin discussing a coordinated series of pilot proposals. They each proposed a new youth-focused approach to address opportunity youth needs in a two-year pilot initiative timeframe. These project leaders also identified an initial alignment strategy built around common youth-focused features and mutual referrals to package these proposals into a cohesive, interrelated series of pilot projects that each use human-centered design processes to assess and learn from youths' experiences and results. Together, these organizations are prepared to begin developing collaborative approaches in response to many of the goals and strategies identified in this report. A pilot initiative to test these approaches will sharpen the collective roadmap and inform the next steps to enlarge the collaborative to include additional participating organizations.

If this pilot network is supported by an ongoing backbone organization and funded over the next two years, these pilot projects can engage an estimated 500+ opportunity youth and younger school-age youth to make faster progress towards career-track employment of their choice. They can also demonstrate progress in testing action steps that include new employer engagement practices and work-based learning, training and deploying youth ambassadors affiliated with multiple programs, and developing an initial network of several dozen youth employment champions with area employers. Ideally, these pilots will coincide with the creation of a backbone organization to support the process of convening, monitoring, and assessing these pilots. However, if these resources are not available, a smaller set of pilot programs may launch within the existing county and school system structures with fewer participants and more modest goals.

In the initial conversation, participating agency managers from DFS, NCS, DARS, and Juvenile Justice agreed to further develop these projects using common youth-focused and human-centered design features outlined below:

- Low barriers to entry, beginning with an exploratory phase in which each youth will have access to a youth employment coach to help them decide which of multiple program options they can choose from.

- Build on the successful practices of current summer youth programs to expand these opportunities year-round.
- Options include access to customized support services to help youth address their specific challenges including disability support, English language acquisition, digital technology, job readiness workshops, paid work experiences and career-specific skills development.
- Incentives that reward continued engagement, such as stipends during training, professional equipment upon program completion, and transportation support if needed to access paid work experiences.
- Rapid expansion of social capital associated with economic mobility, including ongoing coaching services, warm handoff referrals to specialists, introduction to employers, and peer support cohorts.
- “Fading support” empowerment strategy in which youth who demonstrate readiness receive less intense coaching support.
- Opportunities for youth who demonstrate successful progress to be considered for “youth employment ambassador” roles to help advise the collaborative network, support outreach activities, and support the success of other youth like them.

If these proposed pilot initiatives are recommended for immediate funding consideration, program leaders are prepared to accelerate a coordinating process to further refine and align these plans into a cohesive portfolio of pilot projects, including an assessment process to inform the development of a broader collaborative network. This process would begin by applying the TABE guiding principles in further developing this initiative. An estimated two-year collective investment of approximately \$3.0 million can engage and support over 500 opportunity youth and younger in-school youth towards their employment goals. Importantly, the success of several hundred youth within two years can also begin to shift the narrative around opportunity youth and create positive word-of-mouth ripple effects among opportunity youth that can lead to more rapid re-engagement efforts. With the support of the backbone organization in assessing results, these pilots are expected to yield field-tested recommendations that can sharpen and focus action steps on proven strategies and accelerate progress toward addressing more of the proposed goals and strategies within this report.

Appendix E: Excerpts from a National Scan of Opportunity Youth Collaboratives

In several stages from early summer to December 2022, core team members conducted a national scan of opportunity youth collaboratives across the U.S. to address an inquiry question: *What have other regions' opportunity youth collaboratives learned and done that we can adapt for Fairfax County?*

Team members reviewed dozens of reports and case studies, interviewed leaders with several regional collaboratives, and worked in partnership with a national expert from the Forum for Youth Investment. In early Fall 2022, a working group summarized several findings that emerged from this work:

- Within the national network of dozens of regional opportunity youth collaboratives in the U.S., **successful regional collaboratives have made long-term investments in a backbone organization coordinating the regional system** by convening providers and other key stakeholders, reaching out to disconnected youth, and gathering system-level data.
- Among opportunity youth collaboratives, there is a **significant variance in the types of system and program level data that they gather and report on.**
- Nearly all opportunity youth collaboratives nationwide have **actively engaged these youth in shaping youth-focused plans and activities.**
- Several collaboratives' plans and experiences have especially valuable insights and experiences that Fairfax County can learn from, especially [Seattle](#), [Nashville](#), and [Washington D.C.](#)
- Opportunity youth collaboratives often make **strategic investments in a portfolio of high-potential programs and services.**

A later scan of other collaboratives' reports was conducted in December 2022 to learn more about the operations of ongoing collaboratives' backbone organizations and what they have accomplished. Several highlights of interest are summarized below.

- In 2020, six years after Seattle's backbone agency began convening monthly meetings of several dozen practitioners to share promising practices as part of its "open doors" campaign to re-engage opportunity youth, the collaborative reports 2,500 formerly disengaged youth are actively participating in employment-related education programs. The Seattle collaborative also reports rising "stick" rates of continuously engaged youth toward successful completion of their respective programs. (Source: Opportunity Youth Action Plan 3.0 [Report](#) by the nonprofit [Community Center for Community Action](#), 2020.)
- Washington D.C.'s Opportunity Youth Re-Engagement Center has developed a searchable [online platform](#) with information on 37 participating programs and a chat function enabling any youth to immediately connect with a re-engagement specialist.
- Three collaborating anchor organizations in Boston operate summer youth employment programs and organize employment opportunities into a tiered ladder of more advanced opportunities that serves well over 1,000 youth each summer. Youth 14-15 years old begin with highly supported starter opportunities within a network of neighborhood-based nonprofits, with older and more experienced youth eligible for summer employment in city agencies or with

private businesses in summer internships that have the potential to become gateways to new careers.

- Jobs for Maine’s Graduates’ third-party evaluator’s [research report](#) showed progress resulting from their focus on early engagement with youth with disabilities while still in high school, reporting 23% higher employment rates and 49% higher earnings for participants by age 19 compared to a comparison group of similar youth who did not engage while in high school.
- Using a set of common measures piloted across many opportunity youth collaboratives, collective data reported by The Aspen Institute’s network of 35 opportunity youth collaboratives showed a total of 44,000 youth served, with 4,475 youth earning a high school diploma or GED, 3,284 enrolling in postsecondary education, and 3,896 securing new employment. (See [this 2019 report](#) from The Aspen Institute.)

My Brother's Keeper Fairfax Initiative

AGENDA

- What is My Brother's Keeper (MBK)?
- Why should Fairfax County join the My Brother's Keeper Alliance?
- What is MBK Fairfax going to focus on?
- How does this align with other County priorities?
- What are the next steps?

What is My Brother's Keeper?

President Obama launched My Brother's Keeper in February 2014 as a White House Initiative to address the persistent opportunity gaps boys and young men of color face and to ensure all young people can reach their full potential.

Today, the My Brother's Keeper Alliance (MBKA) is a program of the Obama Foundation and works to unleash the power of communities working together to solve problems for boys and young men of color at a level to improve real life outcomes. They believe communities are the unit of change to realize improved life outcomes for our boys.

MBKA's work is rooted in six key life milestones that research shows are especially predictive of later success, and where interventions can have the greatest impact. By focusing on these milestones, doing what works, and removing or avoiding roadblocks that hinder systems change, they are working to provide boys and young men of color the opportunity and the tools to get ahead.

- It is not solely about educational success- it is about success in life.

What is My Brother's Keeper? Continued

MBK focuses on improving the following six key life milestones for boys and young men of color (BYMOC):

- Kindergarten readiness: <https://www.obama.org/mbka2/our-work/healthy-start/>
- Third grade reading: <https://www.obama.org/reading-grade-level/>
- Graduating from high school college and career ready: <https://www.obama.org/mbka2/our-work/graduating-high-school/>
- Completing postsecondary education or training; <https://www.obama.org/mbka2/our-work/postsecondary-education-training/>
- Entering the workforce: <https://www.obama.org/mbka2/our-work/entering-workforce/>
- Keeping kids on track, and re-engaging them when they need it: <https://www.obama.org/mbka2/our-work/second-chances/>

Why Should Fairfax County join MBK?

- This initiative feeds into the One Fairfax racial and social equity policy and attempts to overcome negative outcomes for boys and young men of color in Fairfax County. They deserve it.
- MBKA acts as a solutions partner, working with communities that accept the My Brother's Keeper challenge to implement action plans and drive impact through key investments. They are both concerned with changing systems to work better for boys and young men of color and population level change at the community level.
- Since 2019, the MBKA has invested over 6 million dollars in its grantee communities, helping these communities impact approximately 367,000 youth. MBKA supports efforts on the ground in communities, through direct funding, technical assistance and training, convenings and networking, and we've built a community of practice for organizations and institutions that want to see population level change for our boys and young men.

Why should Fairfax County join the MBK movement? One Example from the Data

- Educational Outcomes vary widely when race and gender are factored in. One Fairfax is about ensuring that all children have an opportunity to succeed. This data is from the FCPS website.

Student Race & Gender	4 Year Adjusted Graduation Rate 2022	4 Year Adjusted Drop Out Rate 2022
All Students/All Races/All Genders	94.1%	4.8%
White Males	98.55%	0.83%
Black Males (not Hispanic)	95.95%	2.91%
Hispanic Males	79.37%	18.69%
English Language Learner Males	70.62%	27.15%

What will MBK Fairfax focus on?

MBK Fairfax adopts all six of the key life milestones of MBKA, however, the Steering Committee is proposing an initial focus on graduating high school college and career ready; completing postsecondary education or training; successfully entering the workforce; and keeping kids on track, and re-engaging them when they need it.

Specifically, MBK Fairfax will work to improve the following outcomes:

- a. Improving on time high school graduation rates for all BYMOC
- b. Increasing the #/% of BYMOC obtaining the advanced diploma
- c. Reducing the % of BYMOC who are dropping out of high school (this includes re-engaging those who have stopped/dropped out)

How does MBK align with other County priorities?

- MBK Fairfax brings a focus on improving outcomes specifically for BYMOC to our work- it does not replace work that is ongoing for all boys or even all students.
- MBK was identified by the Chairman's Task Force on Equity and Opportunity as a County-wide strategy to improve equity. As mentioned, it is also a One Fairfax initiative.
- Fairfax County can be a wonderful place to live, however, we want everyone to be able to join in the success of the County and flourish.

Next Steps

- Present MBK-Fairfax to the SCYPT Executive Committee on 1/11/23 and obtain approval to accept the challenge and present to the full SCYPT
- Present to the full SCYPT on 2/01/23 and obtain approval to accept the challenge
- Present to the Human Services Committee of the Board of Supervisors for approval to accept the challenge on 2/28/23
- Present to the Board of Supervisors on 3/07/23 for formal vote to accept the challenge and register with the Obama Foundation
- Accept the challenge with the Obama Foundation
- Host the Local Action Summit and start brainstorming strategies and solutions for the work

FAIRFAX-FALLS CHURCH COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLAN 2023-2027



Supporting Emotional Wellness
in Youth and Families

**HEALTHY MINDS FAIRFAX
NOVEMBER 2022**

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Background And Approach

In 2001, the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT) launched a System of Care initiative (renamed "Healthy Minds Fairfax" in 2017) to enhance the community's ability to serve youth and families with the most complex mental health and substance use needs. In 2015, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved an expansion of the initiative to a larger population, with the goal of increasing equitable access to quality behavioral health services for children, youth, and their families in the county.

As part of that expansion, a 30-member planning team was convened, comprising county human service staff, school staff, nonprofit representatives, family organizations, family members, and George Mason University faculty. The team was charged with developing a vision and mission for the initiative and establishing goals, strategies, action steps, and a timetable for implementation. They identified fifteen goals that made up the 2016-2020 Healthy Minds Fairfax Blueprint, the framework for the Fairfax-Falls Church System of Care for children, youth, and families.

In early 2022, Healthy Minds Fairfax began work on the 2023-2027 version of the Fairfax-Falls Church Children's Behavioral Health Plan. Like the previous Blueprint, it includes goals, strategies, and action steps to ensure that children, youth, and their families can access behavioral health services and supports. To develop the Plan, the county engaged in an intensive data- and information-gathering process to understand more about community members' experiences with behavioral health services, including what is working and what needs to be improved.


Findings from these data collection efforts informed identification of key issues and strategies to include in the new Plan, which will continue to provide the framework for implementation of the county’s efforts to ensure children, youth, and families have needed behavioral health services and supports.

The 2023-2027 Children’s Behavioral Health Plan

The Children’s Behavioral Health Plan (also known as “the Plan”) is divided into four key areas:


Prevention/Education, Access to Services, Navigation of Services, and System Level. Each key area has at least one goal with key objectives and action steps. These objectives and action steps will help achieve each goal. This Plan will help guide the development of children’s behavioral health services for the next five years.

Vision, Mission, and Values



The Vision of Children's Behavioral Services in Fairfax/Falls Church

To have a range of coordinated community-based behavioral health services and supports across the continuum of care for children, youth, and their families to ensure a healthy, equitable, and resilient community.



The Mission of Children's Behavioral Services in Fairfax/Falls Church

To ensure that all children, youth, and their families have equitable access to a continuum of quality, integrated and/or coordinated services, supports, and opportunities to allow them to thrive socially, emotionally, and behaviorally.

The Values of Children's Behavioral Health Services in Fairfax/Falls Church

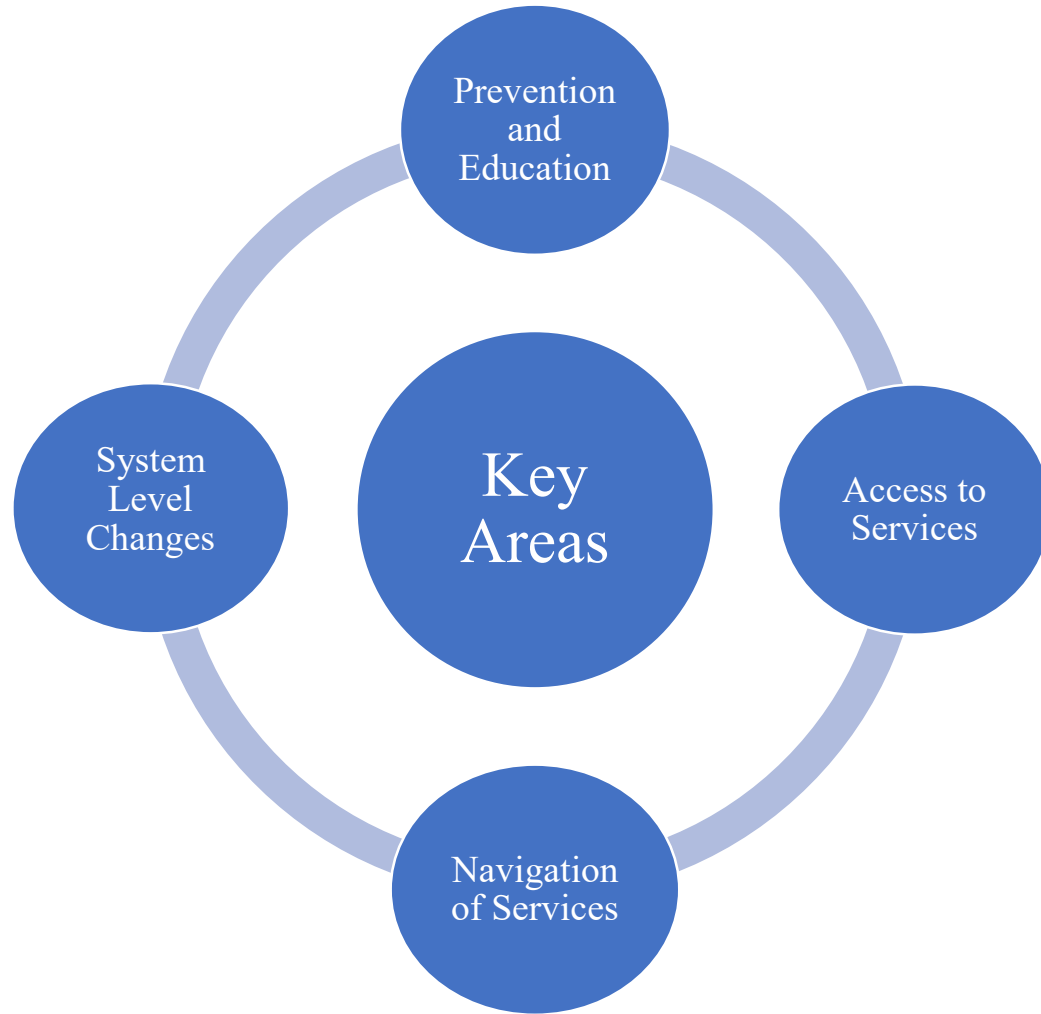
- All services will be family-driven, youth-guided, strength-based, and individualized.
- All children will have access to quality and affordable behavioral health services.
- All services will be culturally and linguistically competent and reflect the cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic characteristics of the populations we serve.
- All services will support the physical and psychological safety of the child.
- All services will be delivered in the community when possible.
- All services will be integrated between all public and private child serving agencies including the school system.
- All services will include family's natural support system (e.g., relatives, faith community, friends, etc.).
- All services will be guided by data at the program level.

The Equity Principles in Behavioral Health Services in Fairfax/Falls Church

The Children’s Behavioral Health Plan builds on Fairfax County's [One Fairfax policy](#). One Fairfax is a joint racial and social equity policy of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and School Board. It commits the county and schools to intentionally consider equity when making policies or delivering programs and services. The One Fairfax policy is a declaration that all residents deserve an equitable opportunity to succeed — regardless of their race, color, sex, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, disability, income or where they live.

The Children’s Behavioral Health Plan works to ensure that all children and youth have equal access to a range of high-quality behavioral health services. To accomplish this, the Plan works to reduce existing disparities in access to care and in behavioral health outcomes. Consistent with the One Fairfax policy, the Plan is informed by the theory of [Targeted Universalism](#), which acknowledges that targeted strategies may be needed to move different populations or communities towards a universal goal.

Key Areas, Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps



Key Areas and Goals

Key Area: Prevention and Education: To raise awareness of behavioral health, reduce the stigma that is associated with behavioral health, and to promote the development of protective factors.

Goal 1: Fostering connection and belonging among children and youth.

Goal 2: Equipping trusted adults to build social-emotional skills in the children and youth they work with.

Goal 3: Raising awareness of mental health and substance use.

Key Area: Access to Behavioral Health Services: To utilize a family-centered approach to connect children, youth, and their families to a complete range of behavioral health services that are equitable and affordable.

Goal: Expanding access to quality family-centered behavioral health services across the continuum of services.

Key Area: Navigation of Children's Behavioral Health Services: To reduce barriers and length of time to receive services by developing strategies to connect children, youth, and their families to appropriate levels of behavioral health services.

Goal: Developing an easier way for youth, their family members, and community members to navigate the children's behavioral health system.

Key Area: System Level Changes: To infuse equity and [trauma-focused](#) care throughout the behavioral health system for children, youth, and their families.

Goal 1: Ensuring that children's behavioral health services is seen through an equity lens.

Goal 2: Continuing to integrate [trauma-informed practice](#) into all public and private child serving agencies.

Key Area: Prevention and Education: To raise awareness of behavioral health, reduce the stigma that is associated with behavioral health, and to foster the development of [protective factors](#).

Goal 1: Fostering connection & belonging among children and youth.

Key Objective	Key Action
<p>1. Reduce social isolation & loneliness and increase social connectedness among children and youth.</p>	<p>1A. Implement strategies to increase inclusion and belonging among participants in youth programs and services.</p> <p>1B. Promote and support the development of trauma-informed spaces and culturally relevant strategies.</p> <p>1C. Address root causes, including difficulties communicating and interacting with others, stigma and discrimination, physical and mental health that limit mobility and social interaction, and traumatic life transitions.</p>
<p>2. Encourage adult family and community members to talk to youth about mental health and substance use.</p>	<p>2. Equip and empower adult family and community members to serve as trusted adults to youth. Specific attention should be given to language & culture to meet the needs of at-risk Hispanic youth.</p>
<p>3. Increase opportunities for children and youth to get involved in their communities and activities (interests, community contributions, sense of place and belonging).</p>	<p>3A. Increase equitable utilization of after-school and summer youth programming (academic enrichment, recreation, athletics, etc.).</p>

<p>4. Increase the sense of acceptance and safety for LGBTQ+ youth.</p>	<p>3B. Improve the availability and utilization of youth programming options in targeted communities (including communities with high levels of child poverty, limited English proficiency, at-risk populations, and transportation barriers). Specific attention should be given to language & culture to meet the needs of at-risk Hispanic youth.</p> <p>4. Identify and endorse a professional model for creating safe spaces for LGBTQ+ youth that can be broadly used across the youth behavioral health system.</p>
<p>Goal 2: Equipping trusted adults to build social-emotional skills in the children and youth they work with.</p>	
<p>Key Objective</p>	<p>Key Action</p>
<p>1. Train people who work with children and youth in out-of-school settings to develop social-emotional skills (e.g., refusal and problem-solving skills, emotional regulation) among their participants. Develop a train the trainer sessions to work on various skills with children (e.g., denial & problem-solving skills).</p>	<p>1A. Identify key learning objectives for an easily implementable strategies to incorporate social emotional learning into everyday programing and interactions.</p> <p>1B. Draft a curriculum and develop implementation strategies for a train the trainer module for trusted adults.</p>

<p>2. Ensure a consistent approach to Tier 1 Social Emotional Learning (SEL) across all FCPS schools.</p>	<p>2. Identify standard objectives and strategies to be implemented across all schools to promote social emotional learning.</p>
<p>Goal 3: Raising awareness of mental health and substance use.</p>	
<p>Key Objective</p>	<p>Key Action</p>
<p>1. Increase awareness and knowledge of issues relating to substance use to promote informed decision-making among children and youth.</p>	<p>1A. Identify and implement interventions that are timely and relevant to current trends in prevalence, morbidity, and mortality. This includes public health engagement, communications work, social media, peer to peer learning, and culturally and linguistically appropriate interventions.</p> <p>1B. Target specific programs and interventions to groups at elevated risk.</p> <p>1C. Develop and implement messaging campaigns (broad campaigns, but also components to be delivered in-person at schools, youth programs, etc.) that emphasize key facts families and youth need to know, to be delivered through a standardized process. Consider SAMHSA's "Talk. They Hear You" media campaign.</p>

<p>2. Increase awareness and knowledge of issues related to mental health to promote effective help-seeking behaviors and reduce stigma and increase acceptance.</p>	<p>2A. Identify and implement an awareness campaign to provide consistent messaging.</p> <p>2B. Promote and ensure access to gatekeeper trainings that promote awareness and encourage help-seeking behaviors tailored to specific populations.</p> <p>2C. Continue to implement and support youth led initiatives to raise awareness and address stigma.</p>
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Key Area: Access to Behavioral Health Services: To utilize a family-centered approach to connect children, youth, and their families to a complete range of behavioral health services that are equitable and affordable.

Goal: Expanding access to quality family-centered behavioral health services across the continuum of services.

Key Objectives	Key Action
1. Address the urgent needs of youth entering the behavioral health system.	1A. Work with public and private child serving agencies, family organizations, caregivers, and youth to explore innovative approaches to meet the current trend in children and youth behavioral health. 1B. Support the work of the Behavioral Health Workgroup, a regional consortium focused on workforce issues. Liaise with the County’s Social Isolation/Stigma Committee to explore mental health wellness programs for the workforce. 1C. Identify and recommend legislative priorities for submission to the appropriate agency legislative affairs committee, the Board of Supervisors, the Fairfax County School Board, or the Falls Church City School Board.

2. Increase resources for youth who have a substance use disorder.

2A. Coordinate with the [Children’s Services Act](#), the [Community Services Board](#), [Fairfax County Public Schools](#), and the [Opioid and Substance Use Task Force](#) on efforts to increase services to youth who have suffered a non-fatal overdose on opioids or diagnosed with a substance use disorder. Specifically, increase the number of placement options for youth detoxification, residential services, and medication and assisted treatment services.

2B. Review services that are currently available to identify gaps and create strategies to fill those gaps.

2C. Increase staff recruitment and retention efforts for youth substance use disorder services.

3. Continue to develop partnerships with families and educate parents and caregivers on evidence-based practices to empower and equip them to make decisions that best meet their child’s needs.

3A. Develop and sustain trainings for public and private child serving agencies staff in promoting a family-centered approach.

3B. Develop opportunities for family members to learn about evidence-based practices and how to connect their child to practices that fits their child’s needs.

<p>4. Increase access and availability to behavioral health services for underserved populations.</p>	<p>4A. Review the recommendations in the Innovative Behavioral Health Strategies for Underserved Populations report (2018).</p> <p>4B. Review current programs, services, and interventions to determine what has increased access and can be scaled up.</p> <p>4C. Determine what additional services, interventions, and policies are needed to continue to expand access to services for underserved populations.</p>
<p>5. Strengthen the current Family Peer Support Partner Program.</p>	<p>5A. Work with current Family Peer Support Partners providers, stakeholders, and caregivers to promote and expand the services to families and the community.</p> <p>5B. Explore how Family Peer Support Partners can be utilized during times of mental health crises.</p>
<p>6. Expand the use of peer support models for children, youth, and their families.</p>	<p>6. Explore peer support models for children and youth and identify effective models to implement in Fairfax.</p>

<p>7. Explore the use of non-traditional services.</p> <p>8. Create innovative ways to pay for services to increase access and affordability.</p> <p>9. Continue to promote quality behavioral health services.</p>	<p>7. Work with community and family organizations to explore alternatives to traditional therapy such as support groups and use of mental health apps.</p> <p>8A. Ensure that all children and youth who are eligible are enrolled in health insurance.</p> <p>8B. Explore innovative ways to incentivize mental health providers to accept health insurance.</p> <p>8C. Promote, support, and incentivize providers to provide free counseling services, counseling services with a sliding scale, and other free or low-cost services.</p> <p>9. Continue to support the use of Evidence-Based treatment through provider trainings and supports and caregiver education.</p>
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Key Area: Navigation of Children’s Behavioral Health Services: To reduce barriers and time to service by developing strategies for service navigation to connect children, youth and their families to appropriate levels of behavioral health services.

Goal: Developing an easier way for youth, their family members, and community members to navigate the children’s behavioral health system.

Key Objectives	Key Action
1. Map out current behavioral health services including location of services.	1A. Identify behavioral health services that are available to children, youth, and their families including location of services. 1B. Work closely with youth, families, organizations that support families to help identify gaps in behavioral health services. 1C. Create strategies to fill gaps of services including any service deserts.

<p>2. Establish a navigation system, to include phone and in-person support, for navigating the children and youth’s behavioral health system.</p> <p>3. Develop an online navigation system that includes information on local resources, service providers and general information on children and youth’s behavioral health issues.</p>	<p>2A. Create and implement an in-person/phone support to help the community navigate the children/youth behavioral health system.</p> <p>2B. Create a clearinghouse of information and resources. This system must be connected to existing local services including Coordinated Services Planning, 2-1-1 Virginia, and the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.</p> <p>2C. Partner with caregivers to ensure the end product is user friendly.</p> <p>3A. Create and implement an online service navigation system that includes information on local resources, service providers, children and youth’s behavioral health information, and service navigation support. This system must be connected to other online systems.</p> <p>3B. Develop a plan for ongoing support.</p> <p>3C. Partner with caregivers to ensure the end product is user friendly.</p>
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<p>4. Partner with youth and caregivers to develop implementation strategies for new navigation tools. This may include a communication plan, trainings, and social media promotion.</p>	<p>4. Create a platform for youth and caregivers to provide input on the new navigation tools along the way.</p>
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Key Area: System Level Changes: To infuse equity and trauma-focused care through the behavioral health system for children, youth, and their families.

Goal 1: Ensuring that children’s behavioral health services is seen through an equity lens.

Key Objective	Key Action
<p>1. Use data to drive decisions on children’s behavioral health care. This includes attaining data required to monitor the status of known vulnerable populations.</p> <p>2. Ensure that people from diverse cultural, ethnic, racial backgrounds and those from the LGBTQ+ community, are included as stakeholders in strategic planning and policy development on children’s behavioral health.</p>	<p>1A. Review all items in this plan to determine where we are missing supporting data.</p> <p>1B. Review all the organizations and programs that need to contribute data to get a complete understanding of “the system.” Explore using Memorandum of Understandings with public and private child serving agencies and Fairfax County Public Schools and Falls Church City Public Schools so data can be shared.</p> <p>1C. Attain data disaggregated by population and place in order to inform future equity conversations.</p> <p>2A. Identify and connect with key public, non-profit and private organizations representing diverse cultural, ethnic, and LGBTQ+ community, to bring expertise and input to the children’s behavioral health.</p> <p>2B. Ensure appropriate representation on policy, management, and advisory teams and committees.</p>

<p>3. Use affirming and inclusive language when talking or communicating about children’s behavioral health.</p> <p>4. Explore the use of a wide range of social media options to communicate on children’s behavioral health issues and services.</p>	<p>3A. Review policies, practices, procedures, and programs to include affirming and inclusive language.</p> <p>3B. Educate the workforce in equity and the use of affirming language across systems in behavioral health.</p> <p>4. Use relevant social media platforms that are widely/commonly used by children and youth to spread relevant information on behavioral health issues and services.</p>
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Goal 2: Continuing to integrate trauma-informed practice into all public and private child serving agencies.	
Key Objective	Key Action
1. Support a resilient workforce that is well equipped to respond to the needs of children, youth and their families who have experienced trauma.	<p>1A. Identify and address current workforce challenges in the behavioral health field that impact the wellbeing of its workers.</p> <p>1B. Offer self-care and resiliency trainings/sharing sessions and initiatives for behavioral health workers (e.g., increase awareness about secondary trauma and foster self-care).</p>
2. Promote trauma-informed policies, procedures, and practices within organizations.	2. Share and review trauma-informed approach in policies, procedures and/or practices among behavioral health organizations and foster implementation.
3. Continue to train non-clinical staff in trauma-informed practices.	3. Identify trainings and offer them to non-clinical staff that interact with behavioral health clients.

Appendix: Historical and Ongoing Work

The Children’s Behavioral Health Plan builds on previous and ongoing improvement efforts. These efforts include, but are not limited to, the following:

Key Area: Prevention and Education

- Creating a system for prevention-focused early childhood mental health consultation services to support children’s successful participation in early childhood education programs and eliminate expulsion and suspension practices ([Fairfax County Equitable School Readiness Strategic Plan](#)).
- Implementing awareness efforts to reduce stigma around behavioral health issues ([Community Health Improvement Plan](#)).

Key Area: Access to Behavioral Health Services

- Providing equitable access to affordable healthcare and healthy living opportunities; supporting all residents in attaining their full health potential ([Fairfax County Strategic Plan](#)).
- Ongoing efforts to eliminate gaps in opportunity, access, and achievement for Fairfax County Public School Students ([Equity and Cultural Responsiveness | Fairfax County Public Schools](#)).
- Increasing the use of health, mental health, and developmental screenings to identify opportunities for early intervention ([Fairfax County Equitable School Readiness Strategic Plan](#)).

- Increasing access to timely and appropriate services and supports to individuals and families ([CSB Strategic Plan](#)).
- Working to ensure that all students have access to mental health resources ([Fairfax County Student Human Rights Commission](#))
- Utilizing a national framework to adapt youth mental health strategies and shape school mental health services in Fairfax County Public Schools. FCPS uses a similar framework to ASPIRE ([ASPIRE](#)).

Key Area: Navigation of Children’s Behavioral Health Services

- Working to reduce the challenges in navigating the complex system of services ([Community Health Improvement Plan](#)).
- Continue to promote the ability of families, youth, and professionals to obtain services and navigate the behavioral health system ([Fairfax-Falls Church Children’s Behavioral Health System of Care Blueprint for 2016-2020](#)).

Key Area: System Level Changes

- Ongoing equity work at the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Service Board. The agency’s equity lead is currently conducting a GARE survey ([Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity](#)).
- Striving for racial and social equity in access to and delivery of behavioral health services ([Fairfax-Falls Church Children’s Behavioral Health System of Care Blueprint for 2016-2020](#)).