



TRANSFORMING OUR FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS

C A S E F O R S U P P O R T



OUR MISSION. The YMCA of Greater Seattle (the Y) is committed to building a community where all people, especially the young, are encouraged to develop their fullest potential in spirit, mind and body.

For more than 35 years, the Y has supported our region’s children and teens in foster care, as well as, parents and guardians in reuniting with their children. We also provide support and resources to foster families so they can provide normalcy, a respite, and nurturing relationships for young people experiencing out-of-home care.



OUR CHILDREN & TEENS IN FOSTER CARE. Approximately 1,300 children in King County experience out-of-home care or foster care. Two-thirds are kids of color and nearly 40% of these children are under the age of five.¹² Children of color are more likely to be removed from their homes, stay in foster care longer, and less likely to return home. On average, **children who are in foster care in King County stay for nearly 800 days – nearly one-third more time than the state average of 600 days.**¹³

Placement stability is critical to the well-being of children in foster care. Yet, less than 40% of states are able to achieve the goal of two or fewer placement settings for children in out-of-home care. This is particularly challenging in King County, given the lack of available foster care families exacerbated by the above average time children spend in out-of-home care. This instability can often cause both behavioral and mental health issues, as well as poorer educational outcomes.¹⁴ Children in foster care lag behind their peers across several key indicators, including: kindergarten readiness, particularly in social emotional learning, early grade reading, school stability, and high school completion.¹⁵



HOW WE ARE RESPONDING. In 2020, **we supported 71 foster families and 224 children in foster care.** In collaboration with our community partners, we work with families to become foster families, and offer comprehensive resources and the skills necessary to provide caring and nurturing homes until children and teens can reunite with their parents or find a ‘forever family’ through adoption. **The Y also supports approximately 270 young people annually in King County who age out of foster care and are at high-risk of becoming homeless.**

From 2016-2020, we piloted YV LifeSet, an evidenced-based case management model with generous support and funding from Ballmer Group. Upon completion, participants in the program are found to earn more income, have more positive mental health and are less likely to be homeless. Following the pilot, the Washington State Legislature fully funded the current program and allocated additional resources to expand YV LifeSet to Eastern Washington. This is great news, but the need is far greater and continues to escalate locally and nationally.

Looking Toward 2025

In addition to providing children and teens in foster care with caring families and nurturing homes, and young people who age out of the system with case management and comprehensive supports and services, we are also working to close the inequitable gaps in outcomes facing these children and youth by:

- **Reducing the educational disparities between children in foster care and their peers.** Through our affordable, accessible, high-quality early learning program and centers, we will ensure that our youngest learners and their families, furthest from opportunity are prepared and empowered for early success on their educational pathways.
- **Supporting Youth Aging out of Foster Care to Live Independently.** For teens experiencing early trauma in their lives, including those experiencing out-of-home care, we are unequivocally committed to ensuring that our young people experiencing health and social risk factors build the skills and social networks to succeed and reach their full potential.
- **Building Social Emotional Learning Skills.** Finally, to further support and bolster the mental/behavioral health of our young people, including those experiencing foster care, we will support young people in our Y programs to build core social emotional learning capacities to equip them to make positive & future oriented choices.

Joining Us > How You Can Help

Your engagement and generous support can help us transform the experience of out-of-home and foster care for our children, and will require resources on many levels.

By 2025, we will:

- Increase the number of children experiencing poverty, inclusive of those in out-of-home and foster care, who are kindergarten-ready following their enrollment in our early learning programs at one of our Early Education Centers.
- Bolster our community partnerships to support our young people experiencing early trauma, including the temporary removal from a family, parents or guardians, with comprehensive services. We will establish additional partnerships with other providers, and expand our referral network to employment and job skill training, stable housing, legal supports, navigating institutional systems, and other critical supports.
- Build and integrate social emotional learning as an anchor in all of our youth development programs and services, including those that support children and teens in out-of-home and foster care.

To learn more about how you can get involved and help us transform our foster care system and help young people and their families, experiencing out-of-home and foster care, view [volunteer opportunities](#) or email us at give@seattlemca.org.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹² Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families, Caregiver Recruitment & Retention Report, July 2021
- ¹³ Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families, [Foster Youth and Hotel Stays](#), September 2020
- ¹⁴ Casey Family Programs, [Strong Families: What Impacts Placement Stability?](#) October 2018
- ¹⁵ Education Research and Data Center (ERDC), Washington Office of Financial Management, [Education Outcomes of Children and Youth Experiencing Foster Care](#). Children in foster care complete 138 days as compared to 162 days for kindergartners not in foster care; 9th graders – 123 days as compared to 153 for 9th graders not in foster care. In 2012, 42% of 9th graders graduated from high school as compared to 74% of their counterparts.



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