

Since [Youth Arts Alliance](https://youthartsalliance.org)'s (YAA) founding in 2013, over 11,000 young people and families from across Michigan have engaged in our healing-centered, high quality arts programming. These opportunities are made possible by master-level, experienced teaching artists. YAA intensively trains and supports teaching artists to build curriculums in their areas of artistic focus. Our programming model is built on strengths-based, trauma-informed

(healing-centered) practices and research in the landscape of mental health and developmental needs of children and adolescents. YAA prioritizes youth and families impacted by the justice system; youth who currently reside in carceral detention and treatment settings, and community spaces where youth have limited access to high quality arts experiences. We firmly believe that access to high-quality arts experiences and education is a human right. YAA programming invites connection, dialogue, and empathy, bringing us towards healthier, more just, collaborative communities. Our ethos puts arts and supportive relationships with skilled arts practitioners at the center of individual

healing, social and emotional growth, and community connectedness. Children and adolescents are exploring their complex and shifting identities, interests, and relationships. Continued engagement in YAA programming highlights their expanding identities as artists, writers and performers. Well-vetted and emerging research indicates the far reaching benefits of arts engagement across the lifespan.

In 2024, Ann Arbor Housing Commission's investment continued to galvanize our mission impact in serving youth and families with healing centered arts programming. Our direct programming impact continues to be deepened and expansive in partnership with many long-standing and new community resource and support organizations: Avalon Housing, Ypsilanti District Library, Washtenaw County Youth Center, Washtenaw Alliance for

Virtual Education, Parkridge Community Center, Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative, Our Community Reads, Friends In Deed, South Pointe Scholars, Ann Arbor Assembly of God: Foster Care Respite Program, Black Men Read, Savvy Science Kids Club, Bichini Bia Congolese Theater and Dance Company, Mentor2Youth, Food Gatherers, Department of Health and Human Services of Washtenaw County and Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice. Youth Arts Alliance's programming is

interwoven with the aforementioned resources and support provided by each community invested stakeholder; youth and young adults were visionary and prolific in their creation of music, short films, ceramics, 2D and 3D art, improv and comedy theater, photography, creative writing, poetry and performance.

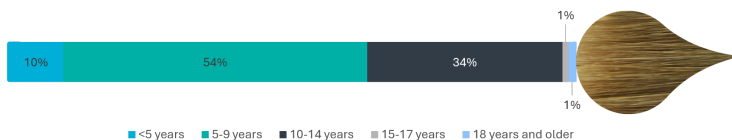


A few of the many 2024 Programming Highlights:

- Over 50 youth artists who were/are incarcerated at Washtenaw County Youth Center molded ceramic sculptures, masks and vessels as gifts for loved ones; wrote narratives of their Afrofuturistic dreams and corresponding visual works; wrote, filmed and produced their own poetry-based short films, explored story-telling through puppet creation and more!
- Artists transitioning from the foster care system as young adults, explored photography, collage and 2D practices bringing to life their dreams and visions; deepened connections to local artistic and cultural events and shared their reflections in programming.
- Young artists engaged in the no-barrier Summer of HeART initiative at the Ypsilanti District Library-Superior Branch where a team of YAA teaching artists, alongside YDL staff/interns, and community partners provided 89 direct programming hours to 339



More than half of our Summer of HeART participants fell between the ages of 5 and 9.



community members, majority of whom walked and rode bikes to join in music, visual art, theater, dance, drumming and STEM activities over the 8 weeks of summer; each participant was provided a nutritious lunch and snack in

partnership with Food Gatherers support.

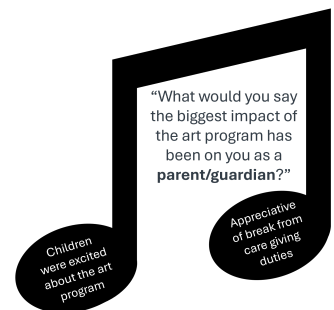
YAA has proven impact. Our knowledge of impact is reflected in our robust evaluation of our programming in partnership with University of Michigan School of Public Health and School of Social Work evaluation groups.



Folks who participate in programming experience an impact in their ability to recognize and cope with their own emotions and those of others. If all circumstances and conditions remain the same outside of programming, folks participating have increased resilience to those conditions. Additionally, the vast majority of participating artists tell us that they are often experiencing an arts practice for the first time in Youth Arts Alliance workshops highlighting the

responsive resource of arts and cultural access in neighborhoods and communities. Parents and caregivers are grateful for the social connections with peers, the enthusiasm their loved ones have to participate and the no-cost respite it provides.

On behalf of Youth Arts Alliance, staff and teaching artists, community partners and the hundreds of youth and families who engaged in the expansive, no-cost to participate programming in 2024, thank you for your continued investment in the holistic needs and endless talents of our communities' creative leaders.



Ozone House: Low-Income Youth Services

Program Description

For over 50 years Ozone House Youth and Family Services has been the only youth-serving agency in Washtenaw County that provides housing and supportive services along a continuum of care for youth, their families, and young adults experiencing homelessness, at-risk of homelessness, or running away. Services include the minor youth (10-17) short-term emergency shelter, street/community outreach and drop-in center services, case management and rental assistance, transitional living program for youth and young adults (16-24), prevention services for youth and families, education and employment support services, life skills and support groups, 24/7 crisis line, and basic needs pantry.

Youth and young adults experiencing homelessness face significant barriers to achieving stability and independence, including lack of access to safe housing, inadequate support networks, and difficulty navigating public systems. These challenges are exacerbated by stigma, systemic inequities, and limited opportunities for growth.

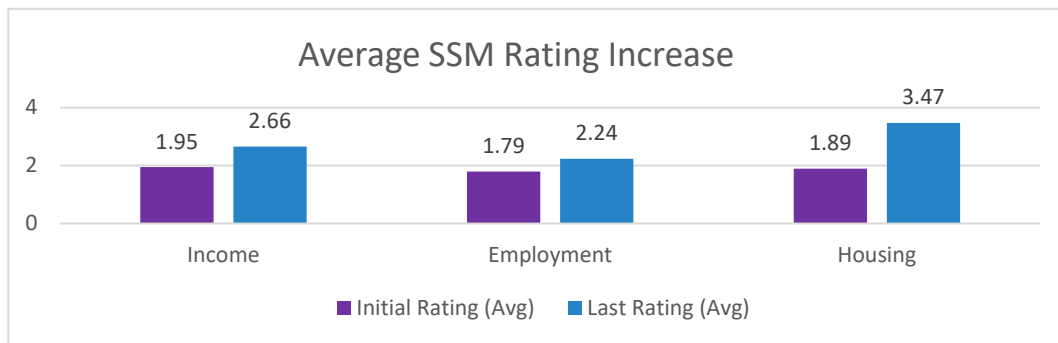
The funding received from the Ann Arbor Housing Commission from the Marijuana Rebate Funds supports our non-residential case management services for homeless young adults. The primary objective for case management services is to help youth and young adults build skills and capacities that contribute to healthy, positive, and productive functioning and transition to adulthood. Services begin with staff completing an initial assessment upon entry, comprised of various screening tools, including human trafficking, substance use, mental health, and the Self-Sufficiency Matrix. Using a trauma-informed and client-centered approach, an individualized service plan is created to identify housing and other goals with related action steps. Subsequent case management meetings typically occur weekly and encompass navigation of public systems including obtaining vital documents (i.e. birth certificates, IDs, social security card, etc.) and applying for benefits, life skills education, physical and mental health support, assistance with basic needs, education and/or employment support, and referrals and linkages to internal and external programs and resources.

This program reflects Ozone House's commitment to meeting the unique needs of homeless and at-risk youth in our community, ensuring they have the resources and support to thrive.

Outcomes

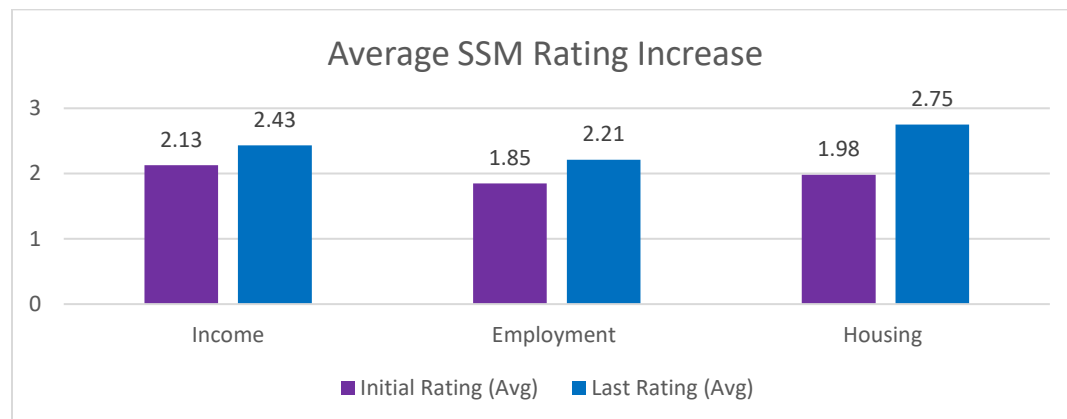
July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024, Ozone House has provided **856 hours** of case management services and **50 hours** of life skills education and training to a total of **55 young people**. **79%** of the young people participating in case management services identified as Black/African American or multi-racial; **56%** identified as female, **26%** as male, and **18%** as transgender.

Income, employment, and housing are measured on a 5-point scale, at regular intervals using the Self-Sufficiency Matrix (SSM). For case management clients, there has been a 1 point or greater increase from initial SSM to the most recent SSM completed, since July.



July 1, 2024-December 31, 2024, Ozone House has provided **496 hours** of case management services and **63 hours** of life skills education and training to a total of **51 young people**. **80%** of the young people participating in case management services identified as Black/African American or multi-racial; **63%** identified as female, **31%** as male, and **6%** as non-binary or transgender; **33%** identify LGBTQIA2S+

Income, employment, and housing are measured on a 5-point scale, at regular intervals using the Self-Sufficiency Matrix (SSM). For case management clients, there has been a 1 point or greater increase from initial SSM to the most recent SSM completed, since July.



Avalon Housing Youth Services Report

Description of Need

Avalon Housing provides Permanent Supportive Housing for individuals and families in Washtenaw County as a long-term solution to homelessness. In 2024, Avalon served 103 families with children including 204 children impacted by chronic homelessness, meaning that at least one person in their family experienced homelessness for longer than one year and has a disabling condition. Bringing culturally responsive, trauma-informed, accessible youth programming to these sites provides additional positive youth development opportunities for children and provides additional resources for low-income families. As these youth age into adulthood, providing additional services around education and employment supports them to achieve outcomes such as increased independence, higher income, and permanent housing retention.

Programming Funded

Since July 2023, Avalon has worked with two subcontractors and an AmeriCorps program to implement youth activities across program sites with children and families:

- CLR Academy (Year 1)
- Youth Arts Alliance (Years 1 and 2)
- AmeriCorps Futures Forward (Year 2)

Statement of Activities

In Year One of the contract, Avalon Housing partnered with two community organizations to provide culturally responsive youth programming for children in families touched by chronic homelessness. **CLR Academy** provided mentorship, coaching, and guided activities for children in grades K-8 with focus areas of sports, nutrition, meditation, and restorative circles. **Youth Arts Alliance** engaged youth in grades 9-12 in healing centered, high quality arts instruction with a strengths-based approach rooted in trauma informed practices.

Evaluating the success of programming at the end of Year One resulted in an expansion of the CLR Academy activities to sites throughout Washtenaw County utilizing a different funding source. Year Two activities under the contract focused on expanding the smaller sessions offered through Youth Arts Academy and the development and implementation of an **AmeriCorps Futures Forward** Program.

During the first six months of Year Two, registration and attendance increased for the subset of programming provided by Youth Arts Alliance. The contract also supported initial operations of Avalon's AmeriCorps program to provide employment and educational support to transitional age youth. During this time period Avalon applied for and received additional funding to operate

the program, hired and onboarded two new AmeriCorps members, and began to serve clients by providing employment support. The program will continue to expand during the next six months of the current contract year to provide support addressing special education needs, assistance obtaining a high school diploma or GED, and support for employment for transitional age youth and young adults.

Outputs

- Program staff and subcontractors provided 106 hours of high quality programming across 59 sessions at 2 program sites.
- 73 youth registered or dropped in for a program session between June 2023 and December 2024.
- 100% of registered youth attended at least one session in Year 2, up from 88% in Year 1.
- Avalon onboarded two new AmeriCorps members to support education and employment programs for transitional aged youth.

Outcomes

In key informant interviews, program staff were asked to identify the most significant changes they observed for individual participants and at the community level at each site.

The program offered a safe and accessible environment for children to learn and grow, especially for younger participants who couldn't use public transit independently. Beyond this, high quality programming from partner organizations allowed youth to explore new experiences in sports and arts with trusted and knowledgeable adults. Avalon staff also recognized the responsiveness of partner organization instructors to the individual interests of participants as a key element of success across programming.

At the community level, staff observed increased connection among youth and increased respect for community property at program sites, such as playground equipment, after programming had ended. The programs created opportunities for youth to reconnect with communities of peers and trusted adults after the first years of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the CLR Academy program created a framework for youth to resolve disputes independently or with staff assistance using a shared language for dispute resolution introduced through the programs.



FY25 6-Month Report to the City of Ann Arbor for Youth Services Funding

During the pandemic, a resident of Sycamore Meadows noticed how much time Washtenaw My Brother's Keeper (WMBK) was spending trying to uplift that community by distributing masks, cleaning products and food. She approached WMBK Director, Jamall Bufford about doing something for the kids to get them active and having some fun. Bufford and fellow WMBK steering committee member Justin Harper started visiting the property regularly, hosting activities and spending time with the kids. After the COVID-19 pandemic, WMBK Fireashes, South PSD and Scholars in Superior Township (the program) Westinghouse summer work began. Each week youth are provided neighborhood cleanups, soccer and football, and the draw (summer) basketball community and fire fighting, social-emotional learning capacities.

- Guest presenters included: Creature Teacher, martial arts, virtual reality art, yoga, storybook readings, and a DJ/violinist
- Distributed 600 turkeys and 600 gallons of milk to Ypsi neighborhoods Sycamore Meadows, South Side and Huron Heights residents in partnership with NFL running back Blake Corum.
- CLR Seattle ran programming for the second summer in an under-resourced predominantly Latinx neighborhood of White Center.

City of Ann Arbor:

Grant Report 1.14.25



The mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southeast Michigan (BBBSSEM) is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth through Community and Site Based Mentoring programs.

In 2024 BBBSSEM served 22 youth living in the City of Ann Arbor and 135 youth and families in Washtenaw County, many which attend school, work and frequent the City. Of those Ann Arbor families, 85% are living in single parent, or other relative, households and 81% receive free/reduced lunch.

And although BBBSSEM has no specific enrollment criteria for youth other than age and living in our service area, many of the families that we partner with report a disproportionate number of ACE's, or Adverse Childhood Experiences, compared to the National Averages. These young people and their families typically do not have the knowledge of, access to or time for full exploration of all that our community has to offer them to learn and grow. We live in a community, and surrounding area, rich in art and culture, full of educational opportunities, and broad outdoor spaces. But without cash, cars, and comfort – those things are not as accessible. Through matching young people with volunteers that can help them explore their interests, and with the benefit of BBBS staff support we can start to break down some of those barriers.

BBBSSEM provides professional staff that recruit, enroll, match and support youth, volunteers and families to create and support these relationships. We believe that relationships are most meaningful when they are full of Empathy, Genuineness, and Unconditional Positive Regard. We utilize the Search Institute's Developmental Relationship Framework in creating and supporting the relationship life cycle through Expressing Care, Challenging Growth, Providing Support, Sharing Power and Expanding Possibilities. We give our matches the flexibility and autonomy to decide upon activities that will work well for their growing relationship. However, we encourage activities that fall under the concept of REACH (Recreation, Education and Careers, Arts and Culture, Civic Engagement, and Health and Wellness).

In addition to providing support to the mentor and mentee through monthly check in's, we provide ongoing educational opportunities to the Bigs and the Parent/Guardians. In addition to educational opportunities for Parents/Guardians, we provide support for family basic needs through our work with other service organizations. Throughout the year, we maintain an online resource guide for families to access, and we highlight one time and ongoing opportunities in our monthly newsletter to both families matched and on our wait list.

Last years' Youth Outcome Survey (YOS) showed a reduction in depressive symptoms of youth served, as well as maintenance or improvement in three risk factor areas: bullying, school discipline, and juvenile justice contact. These are important as Children and adolescents engaging in risky behaviors are more likely to face negative long-term outcomes, including the increased risk of health complications and mental health disorders, poor academic outcomes, increased behavioral problems, increased risk of engaging in risky sexual behaviors, increased risk of substance abuse, and an increased risk of anti-social behaviors.



Community Action Network (CAN) partners with children, youth, and families from under-resourced Washtenaw County neighborhoods to create better futures for themselves and improve the communities in which they live. CAN operates under the pillars of Education, Stabilization, and Community Building, facilitating free, wraparound supportive services for families living in six of Washtenaw County's most under-resourced communities (three of which are Ann Arbor Housing Commission properties). CAN created this suite of services to close the socioeconomic gaps that exist between under-resourced and affluent families in Washtenaw County, which is considered one of the most economically segregated cities in the country, and especially the state (UM Poverty Solutions 2024). The City's funds have been supporting CAN's Education Programs for 2024/2025, which are year-round and include educational summer camps and after school programs. These programs support youth K-12 who are struggling academically and/or behaviorally and live in the six neighborhoods with which CAN partners. CAN's approach to these programs is addressing the whole child—that is why ensuring students' basic and foundational needs are met is at the core of this work. CAN's summer camps are six weeks (7 hours per day, M–Th) to provide children and youth with an engaging and safe space to prevent summer learning loss. During the school year, CAN operates ASP for approximately 2.5 hours per day, M–Th. While each site is unique, the centralized goals remain the same, and each program has the same components. With academic rotations and exploration into various themes, CAN youth develop skills while building community with their peers and compassionate adults. Rotations offer the structure and balance that our students need to succeed: academic skill development, social-emotional development, nutritious snacks/meals, free play, enrichment activities, and CAN Art & Design (where students explore a new thematic curriculum each year; this year's theme is CAN Bands Together). Volunteer groups regularly visit CAN's sites to provide additional enrichment for youth. Each day, students engage with both academic and enrichment activities, ensuring a well-rounded experience for everyone.

During the first half of this year, these programs reached more than 175 under-resourced youth. At the three Ann Arbor Housing Commission sites (Creskide, Green Baxter, Hikone), there are 70 youth impacted. Of these youth, the majority (57%) are females, and the demographic breakdown is: ~65% are Black, ~16% identify as more than one race, and 1% are White. All students who participate in CAN's programs are eligible for Free/Reduced Lunches, many have IEPs or 504 plans at school, and many live with families who experience complex challenges: high unemployment rates, low education and literacy skills, chronic physical illness, mental health and cognitive challenges and addiction issues. Families are often precariously housed, access to transportation is frequently limited.

CAN was established in 1987 by a resident of the Hikone public housing community in partnership with an administrator of the property. Their idea was to enrich the lives of neighborhood youth through afterschool educational and enrichment activities to experience the art and culture that Ann Arbor has to offer. Today, the ultimate goal remains the same. Programs like these are vital in Ann Arbor, where poverty and inequity are often hidden despite 43% of households falling under the ALICE threshold. It is well-documented that economically disadvantaged students do not perform as well as their more affluent peers in AAPS (mischooldata.org), so CAN's education programs work to close this gap by increasing access to high-quality out-of-school programming that allows them to sharpen their academic skills, explore their passions, receive mental health support, and get access to resources that they may not otherwise have access to. These programs go beyond after school or summer camp, though; CAN staff have close relationships with students' schools/teachers and their families to support students in all aspects of their lives. CAN meets students and families where they're at in order to create the biggest impact.

Narrative

Results

Girls Group has prioritized expanding access to our services and attaining the following goals. **With your support over the past year, we were able to:**

(1) Serve an additional 200 participants in 2024

By the end of 2024, **we exceeded our goal and expanded our capacity to serve an additional 250 participants**, increasing our total participants from 850 to 1,100. This was achieved through expanding current in-school programs in Ann Arbor (including doubling the number of programs at Scarlett Middle School) and the creation of three new program sites in Ypsilanti. This allowed us to meet the growing demand and continue providing valuable opportunities for self-expression, positive challenges, and peer learning. We remain committed to further expanding our services in both Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti to ensure we can meet the evolving needs of participants.

(2) Increase college tours, Grades 6–12

Your support helped us significantly expand the number of opportunities. **In 2024, we facilitated 27 college and career tours, including 2 overnight college exploration experiences in Ohio and Lansing.** These experiences were powerful in helping students explore various career paths, imagine themselves as college students, and motivated them to see higher education as an achievable goal. We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to support young women in their journeys toward success.

(3) Provide daily lunchroom support at schools

In 2022, we successfully launched our first drop-in mentoring opportunities for 11th and 12th grade participants, allowing them to set goals, process emotions, build connections, and plan for their futures. Building on this success, we have expanded our mentoring services to include daily lunchroom mentoring sessions for both middle and high school students. **Currently, we provide support at 15 school sites, reaching more participants across grades 8-12.** Your ongoing support has enabled us to continue fostering personal growth and future planning for a greater number of young women in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.

(4) Expand support for academic transitions

In 2021, we piloted the High School Readiness Program with the goal of expanding our transition programs at Girls Group to equip participants with the skills, resources, and support needed to successfully transition through key educational and developmental milestones.

As part of this effort, **we formally established year-round transition programs.** This includes attending high school orientation, hosting graduation and back to school events, middle school retreats with panels of current high school students, and ongoing mentoring beginning in 6th grade.

Outcomes for the past school year are as follows:

At Girls Group, we believe that with the right tools and guidance, all young women can break through barriers, achieve self-sufficiency, and make a lasting impact in their communities. At the end of 2024, we now proudly serve over 1,100 participants:

**405 Middle School
Students**

**260 High School
Students**

**205 College & Early
Career Participants**

220 Alumni

1. Building a college and career mindset- 96% of participants demonstrated academic readiness.

Girls Group facilitated year-round college and career exploration events, in-school and after-school college readiness workshops, additional support during academic transitions, and goal setting activities to support participants in building a college mindset.

- 96% of participants believe they can succeed & are planning for their future.
-

2. Participants (95%) were able to demonstrate early skills and attitudes to achieve emotional self-sufficiency including advocacy, self-management, coping skills, teamwork, social awareness, and healthy relationships.

Girls Group programming provides opportunities for participants to develop strong guiding values and a belief in their own abilities, as well as skills to interact effectively with others, make difficult decisions, and cope with new situations.

Girls Group programming creates a continuous supportive community for participants to increase their self esteem and self awareness. 97% of participants developed positive mentoring relationships:

3. Participants (97%) demonstrated the early attitudes and skills necessary to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

This includes understanding key financial concepts such as budgeting, saving, and managing credit, as well as exhibiting positive financial behaviors like planning for the future and making informed financial decisions. These early indicators suggest that participants are building a strong foundation for long-term financial independence and success.

4. Participants (97%) demonstrated the desire and ability to engage in meaningful community service.

Each year, Girls Group facilitates a youth-driven community service initiative where participants at each school select a community service project that aligns with their interests and values. They take the lead in planning, executing, and reflecting on the experience, with staff providing only the necessary support and guidance to ensure the project's success. This approach empowers participants to take ownership of their impact on the community while fostering leadership, collaboration, and personal growth.

We are incredibly grateful for the generous support of the Ann Arbor City Council, which has allowed Girls Group participants to further develop their skills, attitudes, and beliefs to accomplish their goals and ultimately achieve economic and emotional sufficiency.

Name of the program/s that the City's funds supported:

Refugee Youth Mentoring and Refugee School Impact Programs

Brief description of the program/s

Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County's (JFS) Refugee Youth Mentoring and Refugee School Impact programs provides comprehensive support to refugee and immigrant youth and families. These programs offer vital community, social, educational, and mental health services to parents and youth aged 0–25, helping them overcome barriers to achieving their educational and personal goals. Our staff collaborate closely with local school districts to ensure there are no barriers or disruptions to the educational goals of refugee and immigrant families. We also partner with community organizations to connect families with additional resources in their new environment.

City funds supported several initiatives for youth over the summer including educational field trips, weekly social groups and regular after-school activities (most youth are taking classes over the summer). Field trips included visits to Leslie Science and Nature Center, the Hands-On Museum, the Adventure Leadership Center at University of Michigan and regular trips to the library and local parks. We were also able to bring youth to attend an Ann Arbor Football Club soccer game and take a group of youth to the Michigan Immigrant Youth Conference in Troy, where they met other youth and had an opportunity to discuss and learn about issues important to refugee youth.

Weekly social groups, including opportunities to play sports and play music were also made possible with city support, and encourage community building and social support. In addition, we were able to promote youth civic engagement by organizing opportunities for youth to volunteer, such as assisting with community garden cleanups. This year, we also celebrated the successes of 13 refugee students graduating from Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor school systems. To honor their achievements, we hosted a graduation ceremony recognizing their dedication to learning English and excelling in U.S. schools.

The City's funding has been instrumental in ensuring the success of these programs, covering activity costs, food and transportation. JFS is grateful for support and proud to partner with the city to bring these programs to the community.

Please include enough information about why your agency created this program/s. What were the problem/s that your program/s are trying to address. *Remember that you are communicating to the public why the work your agency is doing is important.*

JFS has 30 years of experience contracting with the U.S. Department of State to resettle refugees selected to relocate in the United States. Many resettled refugees are youth who, like their parents, have often experienced significant trauma due to fleeing war and persecution in their home countries. These families arrive in the U.S. with few belongings, limited resources, and no connections in their new communities. JFS has youth-focused programming to help these youth overcome trauma and face the challenges of adjusting to a new culture, language, and school system.

The programming described above address these challenges in several ways, including:

1. **Building Peer Connections:** Providing opportunities for refugee youth to form supportive relationships with others who share similar experiences is crucial for helping youth overcome trauma. It helps them connect through shared experiences and provides a group of supportive peers.
2. **Improving Language Proficiency:** Learning English is essential to success in school and beyond. Our programs create spaces and many opportunities for youth to practice and strengthen English skills.
3. **Expanding Horizons:** Programming helps expose youth to new interests and helps them to see and explore opportunities. This programming supports success in school and beyond.
4. **Building Community Connections:** Introducing families to local resources and services that support their well-being.

Share any information your agency collects about the youth that you served such as the number of youth and demographic information. *Due to the nature of the program, I understand that some programs do not or cannot collect specific demographic information. Just be as descriptive as you are able to provide.*

The Refugee Youth Mentoring Program currently serves over 50 refugee youth from diverse countries. Youth and families come from Guatemala, El Salvador, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Somalia among others.

Ann Arbor Housing Commission City Youth Service Grant Check and Connect Mid-Year Report - January 2025

Program Overview: Check and Connect (C&C) is an intensive evidence-based academic intervention program for students who are disconnected from school and learning. C&C provides a minimum of two years of support and includes weekly checks of school data, weekly connects, and frequent communication with schools, parents/guardians. Every week, the mentor provides feedback on school progress. Connects can involve goal-setting, problem-solving, homework help, support at school meetings, transportation to a therapist appointment, etc. Other services may include connection to leadership and after-school opportunities, advocacy for needed services in school, direct assistance for items such as school supplies etc. SAC uses the C&C model as a **partnership program**, meaning that collaboration from all parties involved is key for whole child success. The students served in the program are typically those who are impacted by the school-to-prison pipeline, which systemically and disproportionately impacts students of color. These students are often unable to access other services within the formal school system, for various reasons, often most related to why the student is struggling to begin with. C&C mentors are trained in and utilize comprehensive trauma-informed approaches, with an emphasis on mental health, self-care, and community care.

Focus Areas: Research indicates that this program has been shown to decrease behavioral referrals, truancy, and tardiness while increasing high school graduation rates, student attendance, school enrollment, student persistence and motivation towards school, and overall credit accrual. Dropping out of school is one of the most serious challenges to our public schools and communities, impacting health outcomes and life changes for particularly vulnerable youth. On average, individuals who dropout of high school are more likely than their graduated peers to be unemployed, incarcerated, living in poverty, on public assistance, single parents, and in poor health (e.g., Bridgeland, 2006; Levin, Belfield, 2007; Sum, 2009). Youth who are struggling and disengaged from school are at an increased risk for depression and suicide. COVID and subsequent school shut-downs continue to impact students, presenting an increase in mental health needs and concerns. It was reported in the 2021-22 school year that 70% of 7th graders in Washtenaw County earning grades of D's and F's reported feeling so sad or hopeless in the last two weeks they stopped doing activities, which is nearly double from 10 years ago (MIPHY). These same youth are increasingly more likely to have considered suicide, made a plan, and made an attempt. The benefit and need for one-on-one mentors is widely recognized. In research, University of Minnesota has found that relationships are essential for students' behavior change, commitment to learning, and academic progress. For these reasons, C&C is a long-term, relationship-based intervention. Research from Mentor National shows that 73% of youth who had a mentor in adolescent years reported an increase in confidence, while 79% of youth in mentoring programs showed an improvement in mental health.

Updates: In the last 6 months SAC, in partnership with Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS) has continued to provide Check and Connect services to youth on caseload, serving 27 youth thus far during the 2024-2025 school year. Of the 27 youth served, 9 are female, 17 are male, and 1 is transgender. 3 students are in the 6th grade, 12 students are in the 7th grade, and 12 students are in the 8th grade. 20 students are Black, 1 student is Native/Indigenous, 1 student is Hispanic, 1 student is Pacific Islander, 2 students are Multi-Racial, 1 student is white, and 1 student refused to report.

One mentor shared a celebration about a current student on caseload, who we will call "Philip". "Philip is a 7th grade student at Scarlett Middle School. Philip was referred to Check & Connect

for behavior concerns. Seeing that Philip gets good grades and attends school regularly, when this mentor met Philip, this mentor asked Philip about the number of referrals he received at school. Philip shared with this mentor that he likes to fight. During Philip's mentorship, he and this mentor engage in after school activities that allow this mentor to explore with Philip why he likes to fight and appropriate times to fight. Philip enjoys the in school and afterschool connects with this mentor and since his mentorship started 5 months ago, he has not received any referrals. He recently shared with this mentor that fighting is stupid and he understands better how important school is and getting good grades. Philip's grandmother and guardian expressed to this mentor how impactful the mentorship has been for her grandson and how excited he gets when this mentor visits or calls."

"We absolutely loved having [Check and Connect] at our school! The mentor went above and beyond working with not only our students but the staff to help support the students. Our students looked forward to meeting with him each week and we saw tremendous positive changes in the students that he supported! We are looking forward to his continued support this upcoming school year and watching our students grow! WE can't thank him enough for his effortless work!" - Principal at partner school

"[The mentor] is true CHAMPION for children!!! He has made a remarkable impact on the lives of the students he has served in such a short period. His ability to build authentic connections has empowered our students to thrive both in the classroom and at home. The mentor's consistent presence, regular communication, and problem-solving strategies have all been outstanding and instrumental to this successful partnership. We are deeply grateful for all that [Check and Connect] has contributed and will continue to bring to the School community. He consistently exceeds expectations, and our students are truly fortunate to have such a dedicated leader and mentor. - Staff Person at partner school