The Connected Youth Initiative achieves moderate evidence rating.

### WHAT THE STUDY FOUND

For young people who participated in the study, coaching was the component most frequently accessed. Specifically, across all the CYI communities, 741 young people in the study received some type of service. Of these 741 young people, 54% accessed coaching, 25% accessed support services funding, 25% took part in youth leadership, and 25% accessed Opportunity Passport. However, analysis shows that young people engaged with the components of CYI in 16 different types of combinations, meaning that different participants accessed different types of services in different combinations—even while coaching was the most common component across all.

Matched comparison data show that outcomes for young people were generally positive. Specifically, impact estimates among participants suggest that CYI participation is associated with the following outcomes: a safe and stable living situation, financial stability, perceived hope, and decreased emergency care utilization. It was anticipated that the overall well-being of participants would also show statistically significant improvement, as measured through holistic cross-section of well-being composed of items related to participants’ finances, education, housing, employment, health, transportation, and permanence. However, this was not seen to occur.

Implementation study findings also include insights from community collaboratives. Notably, some community-level staff indicated that setting the CYI model within a collaborative infrastructure often generated greater awareness and understanding of the unconnected youth population within their community.

### NEXT STEPS

CYI will carry on with its implementation in SIF communities until the end of the SIF contract period (March 31, 2020). During this time, Nebraska Children will work with each collaborative and its CYI workgroup to define what CYI will look like moving forward. It will vary by collaborative depending on the specific needs, focus, and additional resources to support young people who might be served through CYI. Nebraska Children is actively reflecting on the CYI experience, including the SIF evaluation, and how the initiative fits within its broader efforts to engage and support older youth populations across the state.
Connected Youth Initiative Social Innovation Fund Evaluation Report Highlights

**SIF CYI BACKGROUND AND MODEL**

- Youth ages 14-24 who lack family support, and: are currently or have been in the Nebraska foster care system, have had contact with child protective services, have had contact with the juvenile justice system (but not current), and/or are homeless or near homeless
- Collective impact approach to create systems change in rural Nebraska communities
- Essential CYI elements: Youth Leadership, Opportunity Passport™ Program (OP), support service funding, voluntary case management (coaching), and system support.

**STUDY BACKGROUND**

- 2015 SIF Cohort*
- Partners: Nebraska Children, WestEd, Nebraska Center for Justice Research, Category One Consulting
- Builds on preliminary evidence of positive impacts

**DESIGN, METHODS, RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To what extent does the CYI improve dimensions of well-being for the young persons who participate compared to similar young people who do not participate?

- Quasi-experimental Design – Propensity score matched comparison
- Extensive implementation data collection
- Bi-annual youth self-report surveys
- Well-being index development

**IMPLEMENTATION**

- Youth: 741 youth received services (June 2016 - March 2019)
- 16 different service combinations
- 54% received coaching
- Collective impact approach to create systems change in rural Nebraska communities
- Essential CYI elements: Youth Leadership, Opportunity Passport™ Program (OP), support service funding, voluntary case management (coaching), and system support.

**HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS**

- 3.8x greater odds of having a safe and stable living situation
- 1.8x greater odds of having enough funds for expenses and 4x greater odds of having a savings account
- Estimated 13% improvement in perceived hope
- Up to 71% lower odds of multiple ER visits

Youth

- 741 youth received services (June 2016 - March 2019)
- 16 different service combinations
- 54% received coaching

**Collaborative**

- History and partnerships led to variation in implementation and timeline
- Great focus on collaborative structure and federal compliance
- Staff capacity varied and turnover was common
- Networking within local economy

**LESSONS AND LIMITATIONS**

- Rural geography compounded challenges around staffing, implementation, and grant compliance
- Transportation and persistent housing shortages were significant barriers that require systemic change
- Older youth bring unique and complex needs for partners and providers
- The nature and complexity of CYI led to unpredictable recruitment and participation patterns
- Saturation and reach are unique issues within the rural context
- Treatment effects were limited by sample and potential contamination

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Assess commitment of partners and identify gaps in capacity
- Provide training in data use and promote continuous quality improvement
- Bolster youth involvement in collaborative and leadership
- Consider adaptations for the rural setting for both implementation and evaluation activities
- Evaluation staff could lead data collection to allow site staff more time for programming
- Increase TA, support, and incentives for youth engagement in evaluation

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