



Nebraska Children and Families Foundation Connected Youth Initiative is a Bring Up Nebraska statewide system change network to improve outcomes for unconnected youth and young adults in Nebraska.

This is achieved through a collective impact approach that brings together policymakers, community leaders, providers, and young people that co-create an environment that values, prioritizes, and actively supports intervention and prevention. The Connected Youth Initiative program model includes evidence-based services and best practices aimed to increase youth and young adult's protective and promotive factors so that they have the relationships, resources, and equitable opportunities for themselves and their child(ren) to thrive.

## CYI HISTORY

In 2007, a public-private partnership was formed in Omaha, called Project Everlast. Project Everlast focused on age and developmentally appropriate services and supports to help youth aging out of foster care achieve better outcomes. In partnership with Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Project Everlast became the urban framework for older youth work in Omaha and Lincoln. In 2009, the Supportive Services for Rural Homeless Youth (SSRHY) initiative enhanced the Project Everlast model by expanding to a broader population, including homeless youth. This SSRHY initiative was the

first rural-based collective impact model for older youth work in Nebraska. In 2015, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation was awarded \$1M from the Social Innovation Fund and matched with \$1M from local funders to expand the older youth model, previously known as Project Everlast. This is now identified as Connected Youth Initiative and serves all Nebraska counties. In 2020, Connected Youth Initiative concluded a multi-year evaluative study that examined the impact and implementation of CYI in Nebraska that led to a moderate evidence rating from the Corporation for Community and National Service.

## YOUNG PEOPLE THAT PARTICIPATED IN CYI HAVE:



**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**



**13% improvement in perceived hope**

Up to **71% lower odds** of multiple **ER visits**



## WHO ARE UNCONNECTED YOUTH?

Youth and young adults are considered unconnected in Nebraska if they are aged 14 to 26, without permanent family connections and have lived experiences such as current or former involvement in foster care or juvenile

justice systems, transitioning from probation, are homeless or near homeless (e.g., couch surfing, unstably housed), runaway, and/or experienced exploitation (e.g., human trafficking).



## CONNECTED YOUTH INITIATIVE INVESTMENT

**PUBLIC**  
**\$2,724,000**

**PRIVATE**  
**\$5,700,200**

**TOTAL ANNUAL INVESTMENT  
TO SERVE OLDER YOUTH  
IN NEBRASKA**  
**\$8,400,000**

## CONNECTED YOUTH INITIATIVE BEST PRACTICES

Connected Youth Initiative is grounded in several theoretical frameworks and evidence-based best practices, including:

- Center for the Study of Social Policy's **Youth Thrive™ and Families Thrive** – protective and promotive factors, strength-based framework designed to counteract Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to strengthen young people and their families across the lifespan
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's **Your Money, Your Goals** toolkit – financial literacy and case management tool
- Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative **Keys to Your Financial Future** – curriculum used in Opportunity Passport™ to help young people build financial skills
- Jobs for the Future's **Back on Track™** framework – 3-tiered approach to help youth achieve postsecondary and career goals
- Trauma-informed practices, including Dr. Kenneth Ginsberg's **Reaching Teens** toolkit – aimed at reducing additional trauma to youth and their families

## CONNECTED YOUTH INITIATIVE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Unconnected youth across the state can access an array of evidence-based programming via central navigation in their area. These programmatic supports and services are delivered by contracted Coaching providers across the state and by community collaborative partners. All CYI services are youth-led, strength-based and voluntary and available up to age 26. These program components include:

1. **Central Navigation:** coordinated approach via Bring Up Nebraska community collaboratives that ensures unconnected youth have access to services to avoid duplication of efforts and maintain connection to community.
2. **Support Services Funds:** emergency funding accessible via Community Response central navigation to address an array of basic needs.
3. **Leadership and Engagement:** empowering opportunities for young people for leadership and advocacy which is community-led and youth-driven via local CYI Youth Leadership Chapters. There are also opportunities for statewide and national leadership such as Legislative Days, State and National Youth Advisory Boards, and policy advocacy.
4. **Coaching:** an array of evidence-based coaching services that provide goal-orientated, voluntary, youth-driven coaching with unconnected youth to develop skills in key domains, access services and enhance protective and promotive factors. CYI Coaching model includes LEAP postsecondary and career pathways strategies, 2Gen support for parenting youth, and financial education.
5. **Opportunity Passport™:** coaching curriculum that promotes financial literacy and asset-building.