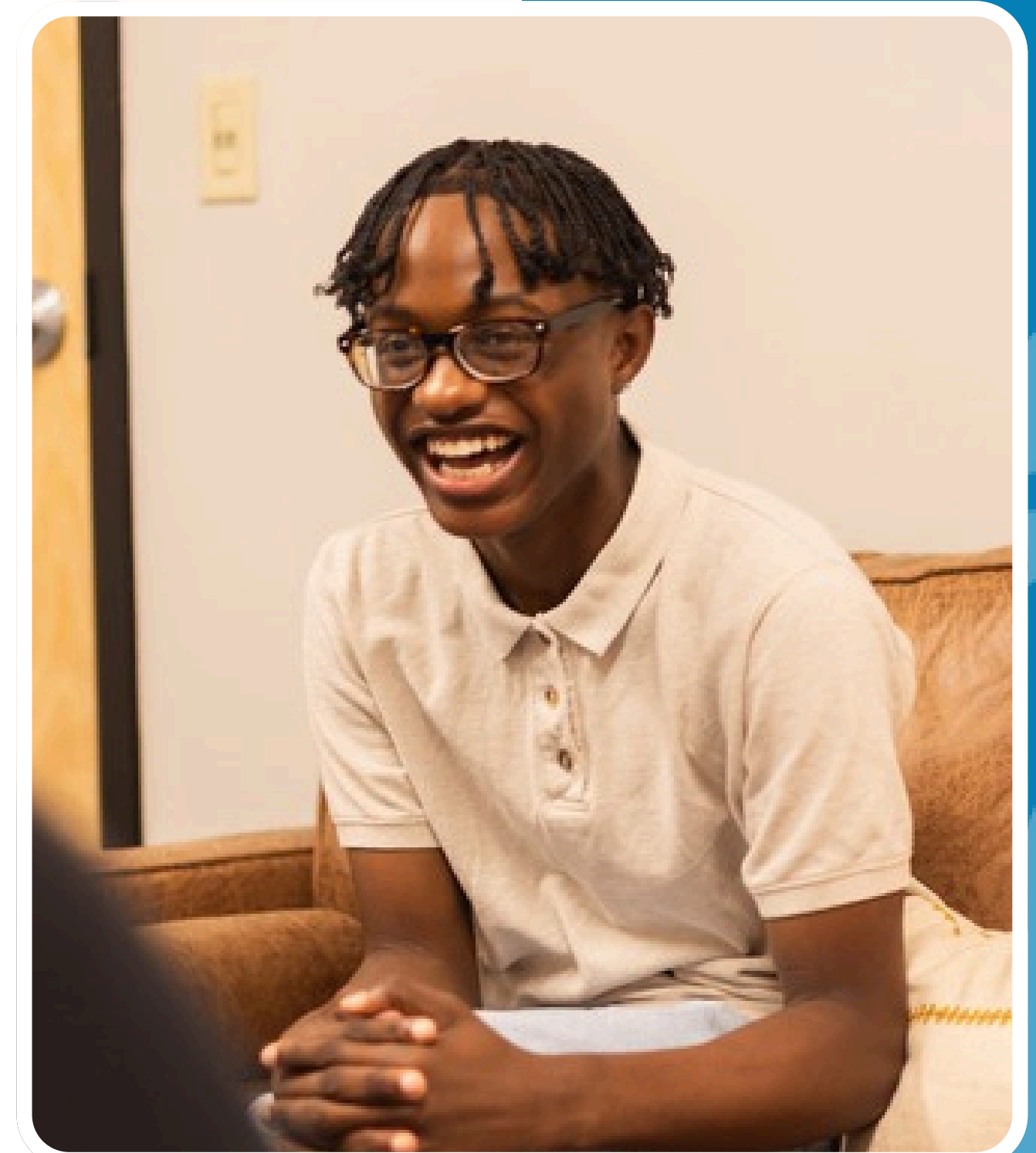


Ready for Life Task Force
REPORT + RECOMMENDATIONS

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OUR BIG GOAL

**To build a broad,
reliable pathway to
healing available
to every
youth from crisis
in Arkansas.**



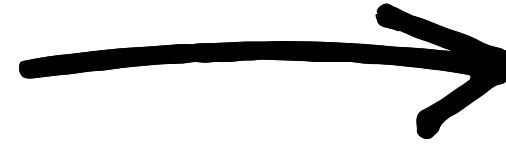
CHASE, 14

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YOUTH FROM CRISIS

**Transition Age Youth
14- to 24-Year-Olds**

In foster care or aging out
Adopted
Runaway
Experiencing homelessness
Trafficking victim



OVERCOMERS

Adulthood

Resilient
Healing
Ready for Life

Protect youth experiencing housing instability through a low-barrier safe place to sleep and get help.

Short-Term Housing





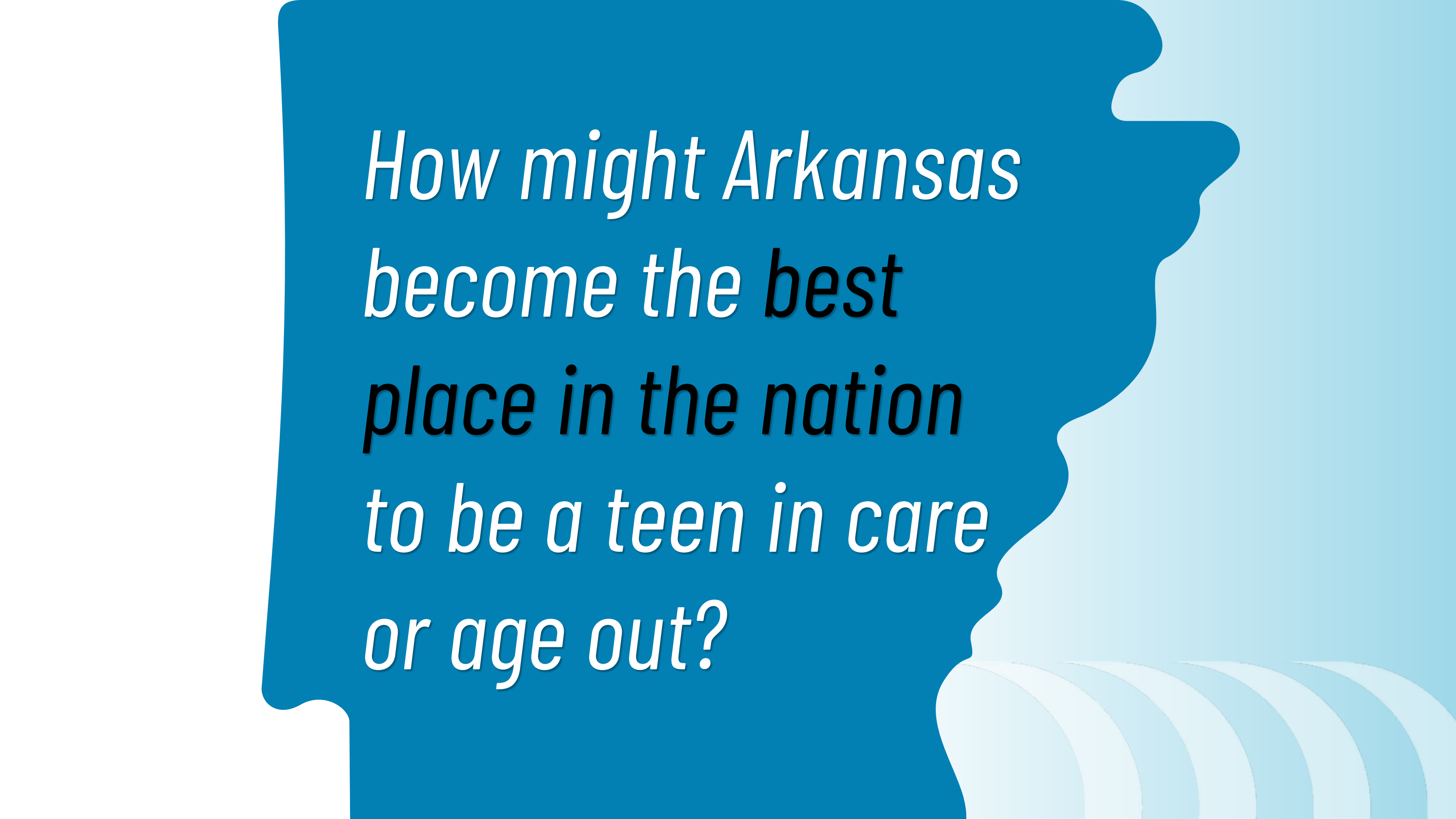
Ready for Life

Task Force



Every child in Arkansas deserves a safe, stable, nurturing family every day.





*How might Arkansas
become the **best**
place in the nation
to be a teen in care
or age out?*

WE MUST REIMAGINE FOSTER CARE FOR OLDER YOUTH

~~FIX~~

~~IMPROVE~~

~~STRENGTHEN~~

~~REBUILD~~



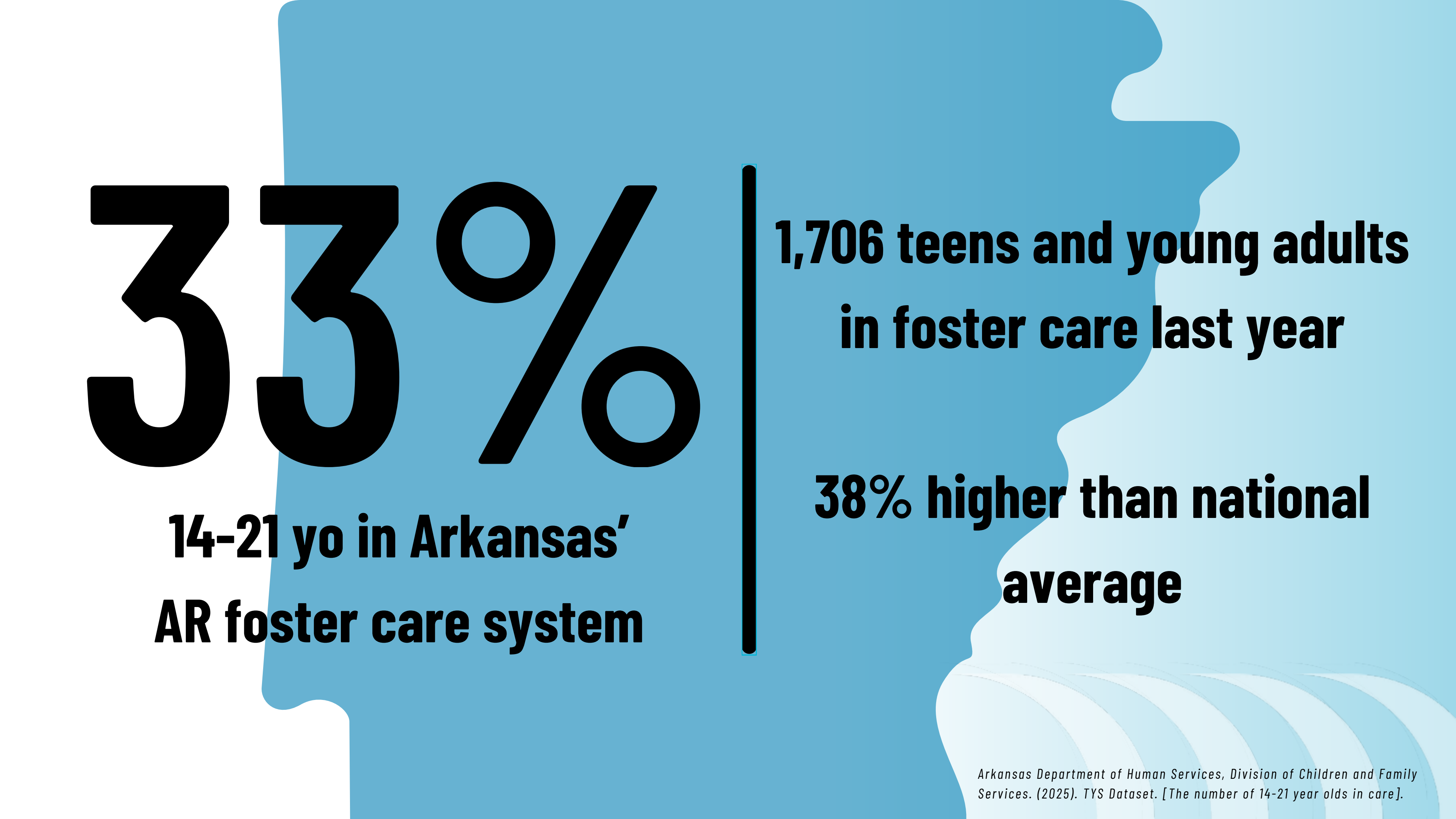
**READY FOR LIFE TASK FORCE
LITTLE ROCK COHORT**

REIMAGINING A MODEL FOR OLDER YOUTH IN CARE

- 1. A BASE Coach for Every Teen**
- 2. Backbone Training & Technical Assistance**
- 3. Specialized Homes**
- 4. Targeted, Wraparound Mental Health and Earning Potential Supports**



HALEIGH, 15,
AND COACH



33%

**14-21 yo in Arkansas'
AR foster care system**

**1,706 teens and young adults
in foster care last year**

**38% higher than national
average**

**138
days**



average time
between placement
moves for teens
ages 14-17

24%



lower graduation
rate than their non-
foster peers

**925
youth**



aged out of foster
care in AR in the
last 5 years

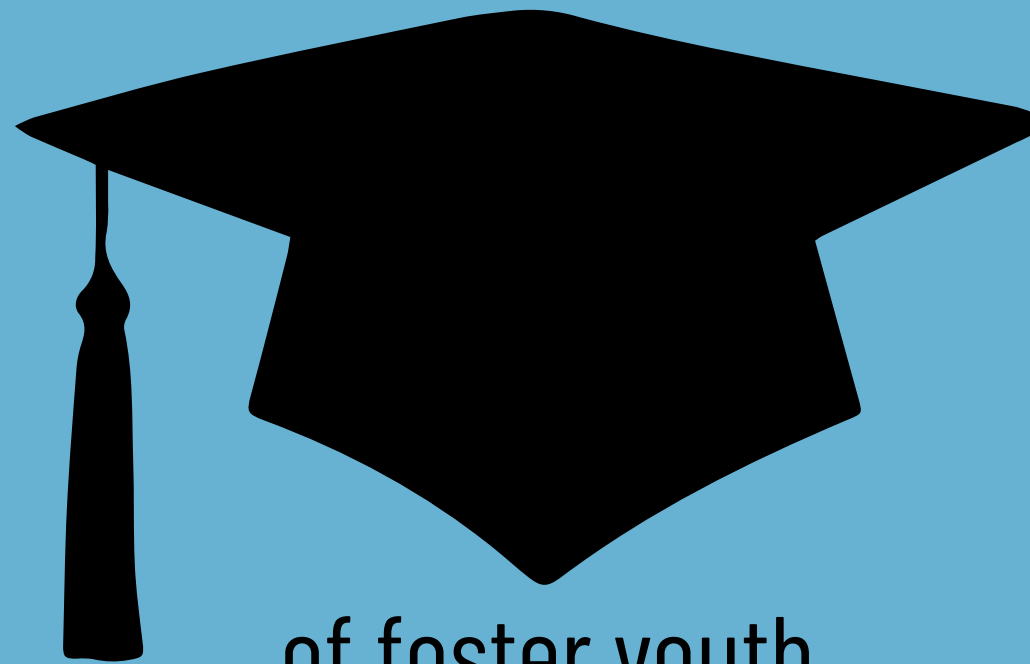
Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services. (2025). Annual report card: State fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025).
Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services. (2025). Placement Stability Dataset [Placement moves per 1,000 days for youth ages 14-17].
Arkansas Department of Education (2022). Graduation Rates 2021-2022.

1 in 3



youth who exit foster care at age 18 will experience homelessness at least once by age 21

8-12%



of foster youth complete a post-secondary degree

Up to 80%



of foster youth possess significant mental health challenges

55%



employed at 21

THE COST OF INACTION

- Each young person that ages out costs Arkansas **\$300,000** in lifetime public assistance
- For the 925 youth who aged out in the last five years, the projected lifetime cost of doing nothing approaches **\$278 million**



QUAN, 19, AND
TRAUMA THERAPIST

THE SYSTEM IS PRODUCING PREDICTABLE RESULTS

WHAT THE SYSTEM IS DESIGNED TO DELIVER

- Transitional Services Coordinator assigned
- Transition plan developed
- Life skills assessment and classes
- Progress documented in the court report

*Required under DCFS policy, 9 CAR § 40901

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ACTUALLY REPORTED

55% / 40%

of ages 14-16 / 17-21 aren't meeting regularly with a TYS Coordinator

21%

of 17-21-year-olds have no diploma or GED

66%

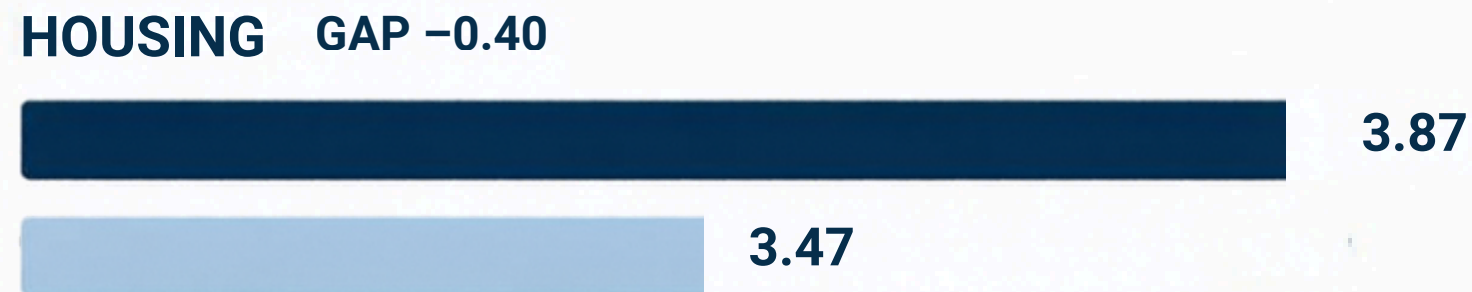
of 17-21 year olds have no driver's license

34%

aren't enrolled in Medicaid, though eligible until 26

350 YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US WHAT THEY NEED: RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPLOYMENT.

■ How much youth value it ■ How accessible it is Ages 17-21 · 1-5 scale



"This stuff is hard and neither school nor DHS taught us anything we need to know."

YOUTH SURVEY RESPONDENT

Across every age group, youth asked for **lasting relationships**: kin, mentors, foster parents, and employers.

REIMAGINING THE TEEN & YOUNG ADULT YEARS

Predictable Failure → **Predictable Success**

Ready for Poverty → **Ready for Life**



LUKE, 21, AND
IMMERSE COACH

REIMAGINING A MODEL FOR OLDER YOUTH IN CARE

1. **A BASE Coach for Every Teen:** A privatized coach partnering with a young person to develop a BASE and enter adulthood resilient and ready for life.
2. **Specialized Homes:** Agencies recruit and support homes for teens, providing a safe and stable option for youth to live within a familial structure.
3. **Backbone Training & Technical Assistance:** Providers will receive technical assistance from a backbone agency to ensure best practice delivery and strides toward statewide collective impact.
4. **Targeted, Wraparound Mental Health and Earning Potential Supports:** Providers ensure teens and young adults have access to age-appropriate and adequate employment, educational, and mental health supports; including free state college tuition.



READY FOR LIFE: A COACH, A PLAN, AND A FOUNDATIONAL BASE FOR EVERY TEEN



B

WELL-BEING

Trauma-informed, age-appropriate behavioral health that continues past 18.

Gap closed: care that changes with each move or ends at aging out.



A

AT LEAST ONE CARING ADULT

The coach builds a circle of kin, mentors, and employers.

Gap closed: youth asked for lasting relationships.



S

SAFE & STABLE PLACEMENT

Families recruited, trained, and supported for teens, plus housing help when aging out.

Gap closed: a placement move every 138 days.



E

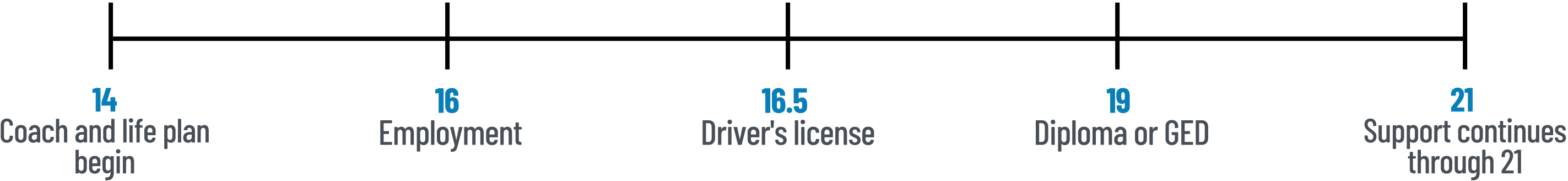
EARNING POTENTIAL

A path to employment at 16, a diploma or GED, and a state-funded trade or college degree.

Gap closed: employment is most wanted, hardest to reach.



THE COACH WALKS ALONGSIDE EACH YOUTH, 14 TO 21



EVERETT, 18

Current Reality vs. Ready for Life

	Today: Transitional Youth Services	Ready for Life: Community Provider Model
Built to answer	How do we meet legal and procedural requirements?	What does this young person need for their life?
Who delivers	DCFS coordinates many separate providers	One community organization, one team, one plan
Connection	A caseworker and transition coordinator	A BASE Coach from 14 to 21 and a circle of caring adults
Home	Whatever placement is open; a move every 138 days	Families recruited, trained, and supported for teens
Success means	Requirements completed and documented	Diploma, ID, job, stable home, a caring adult
Accountability	To the system	To the young person's future

WHAT CHANGES AND WHAT STAYS WITH DCFS?

STAYS WITH DCFS

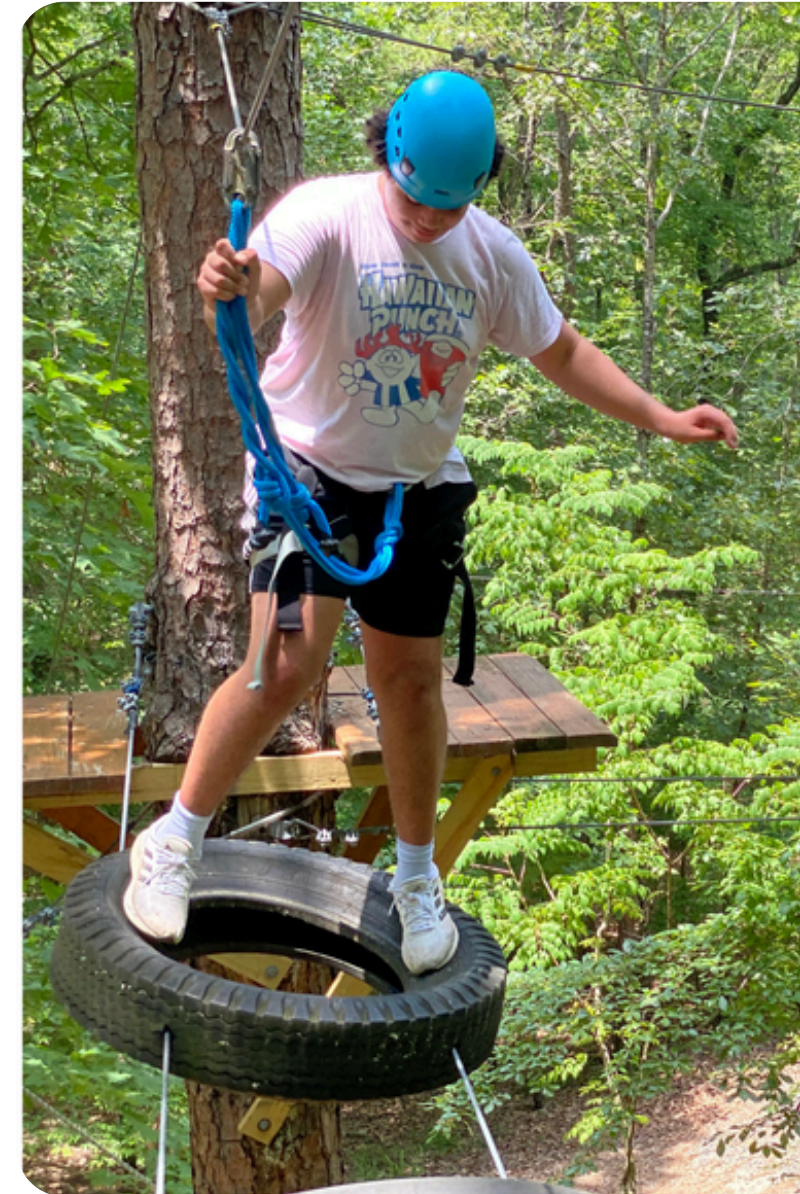
The legal functions it must hold by law

- Custody
- Court Reporting
- Permanency determinations

SHIFTS TO COMMUNITY PROVIDERS

The day-to-day work of preparing youth for adulthood

- Replaces the Transitional Services (TYS) Coordinator function
- Life skills and transition planning, through BASE Coaches
- Recruiting, training, and supporting families for teens
- Securing stable housing for youth aging out



STATEWIDE SCOREBOARD

 **Diploma**

 **Driver's License**

 **Employment**

 **Stable home**

 **Caring adult**

TARGETS

88% (on par) high school graduation, on par with peers, up from 68%	39% (on par) employment for youth 16-18 in care, on par with peers	75% of youth in one home or placement for at least a year	90% connected with a family or community support person
42% of former foster youth entering trades or higher education	0% unwanted homelessness among former foster youth 26 and under	<5% incarceration of former foster youth under 26	90% of former foster youth earning a livable wage



RECOMMENDATION: A PHASED PILOT

WHY NOW?

Federal momentum

Fostering the Future Executive Order, six related bills awaiting Senate action, and HUD's FYI housing vouchers

Partners are ready

DCFS and thirteen statewide partners spent a year building this model together

The cost of inaction

About \$278 million in projected lifetime public costs for the 925 youth who aged out in five years

PHASE 1

BASE Coaches in pilot counties

A coach for every youth 14-21 in foster, adoptive, and reunited homes, in counties chosen by need and population

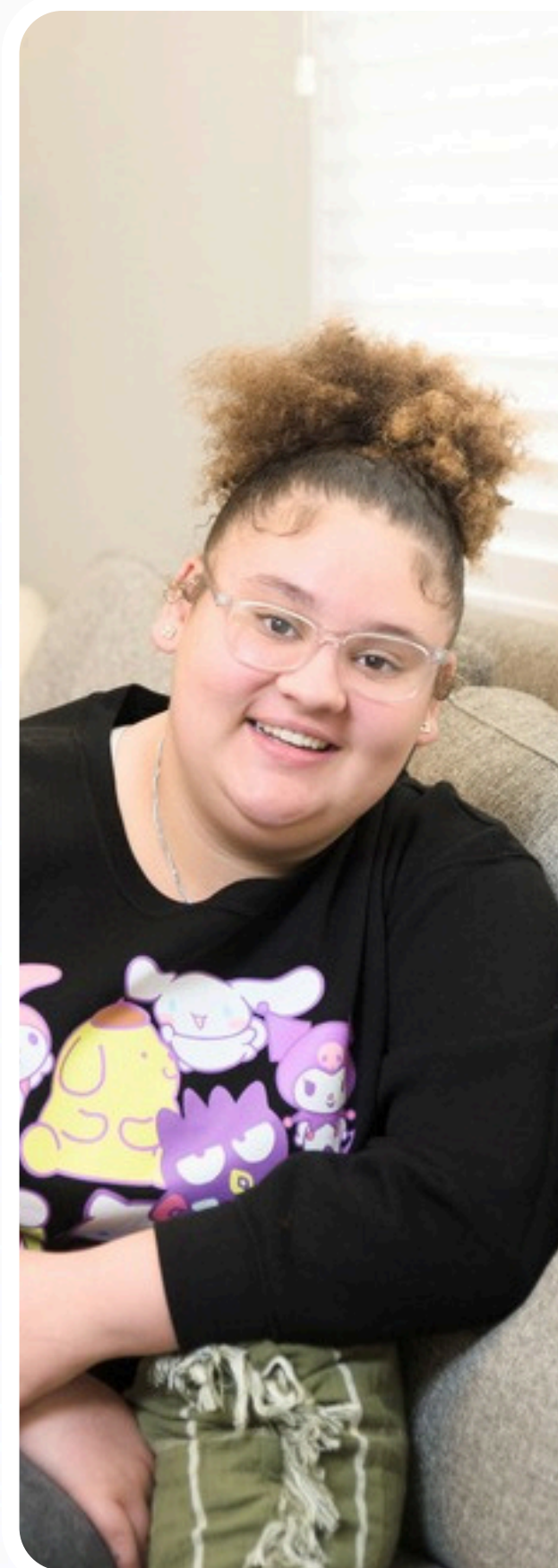
Backbone Support

Providers will receive technical assistance from a backbone agency to ensure best practice delivery and strides toward statewide collective impact.

PHASE 2

Specialized homes

Once early outcome data is in, open, license, and support homes for teens in those same counties



An aerial, wide-angle shot of a multi-lane highway with traffic moving away from the camera. The road is divided by a central median and has multiple lanes on each side. Several cars are visible, including a silver sedan in the left lane and a dark pickup truck in the right lane. The surrounding landscape includes trees, some bare and some with autumn foliage, and a large industrial building on the right side. The sky is overcast and grey. The text "SAM'S STORY" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

SAM'S STORY

immerse

Ready for Life

Young people who were counted out will secure jobs, obtain higher education, find safe and stable housing, and heal from trauma.

Future generations will experience permanently broken cycles of poverty and trauma.

Arkansas communities will be made stronger through the lives of restored young people and their families.



Christian, 18, purchasing his first car after obtaining a full-time job upon high school graduation.

READY FOR LIFE REPORT OUT

Thu., Oct. 22, 2026

11:30am - 1:00pm

(Lunch provided)

Immerse's Overcomer Central

5300 Asher Ave.

Little Rock, AR 72204

