



# Louisville's Opportunity

**Identifying the gap between the goals of Louisville's disconnected youth and the opportunities they need to reach them.**

A Report on the Findings of the Coalition Supporting Young Adults  
Opportunity Youth Needs Assessment

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# The Coalition

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The Coalition Supporting Young Adults (CSYA) is a collective action initiative of more than 60 community organizations and individuals in Louisville who are committed to transforming the way Louisville provides care for and supports vulnerable youth and young adults. We accomplish this by listening to marginalized young people, advocating for their success, and connecting them with programs and other opportunities.

CSYA focuses on young people (16 to 24 years old) living in Louisville, Kentucky who are currently not in school and not employed, or have experienced exclusion and barriers to economic and social wellbeing due to:

- homelessness or unstable housing,
- involvement in the child welfare system,
- conflict with the law,
- suspensions from high school,
- physical or emotional special need or disability, including addiction,
- leaving school before graduating,
- early pregnancy or parenting,
- discrimination or harassment due to their race or gender, gender identity or orientation, or
- low-income or persistent economic stress.

We understand no single organization, public agency, or philanthropist can address these complex and interrelated needs. Solutions are possible only through coordinated, collaborative efforts. Together, we are committed to developing a common agenda and goals, new and innovative partnerships, continuous communication, and mutual support that promotes growth, accountability, and consistency.

The CSYA Executive Committee guides the goals, strategies and activities of CSYA. In 2017, the Executive Committee includes:

- Alliance for Youth – Patricia Cummings, Chairperson
- Cities United – Anthony Smith, CEO
- Coalition for the Homeless – Natalie Harris, Executive Director
- Dearing & Bear – Heather Dearing, Principal
- Emerging Workforce Initiative – Elizabeth Senn-Alvey, Executive Director
- Family Scholar House – Kristie Adams, Vice President
- Jefferson County Public Schools – Jonathon Lowe, Director of Strategy
- KentuckianaWorks – Cindy Read, Deputy Director
- Kentucky Department of Education – Judi Vanderhaar, PhD
- Louisville Metro Mayor’s Office – Ashley Parrott
- Louisville Metro Office of Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods – Rashaad Abdur-Rahman, Director
- Louisville Urban League – Lawrence Wilbon, Director of Youth Development
- McNary & Associates – Lacey McNary, Principal
- Metro United Way, TJ Delahanty, Manager of Youth Development
- True Up – Nikki Thornton, Program Director
- YMCA Safe Place – Matt Reed, Executive Director
- Youth Build Louisville – Lynn Rippey, Executive Director

# Project Overview

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During 2017, CSYA conducted a comprehensive assessment of the needs of Louisville’s disconnected or “opportunity” youth, 16 to 24 years of age, that looked beyond statistics to understand the barriers preventing Louisville’s young people from reaching their goals. Working with young people, program providers and community leaders, CSYA identified specific, actionable recommendations that will reconnect young people to the supports and opportunities they find difficult to reach.

## Objectives

- Develop a method to collect information on the needs of Louisville’s vulnerable youth and young adults ongoing;
- Inventory current services for disconnected youth in Louisville, including the local, state, national, and private resources funding these services;
- Identify the systemic barriers to education and employment that coalition members could address through new collaborations and expanded services.

## Activities

- **Youth Voice** – Working with faculty from Spalding University, the project team developed a survey and focus group process to collect responses from approximately 200 disconnected young people on their needs, goals, and barriers.
- **Fiscal Mapping** – This inventory of local, state, federal and private funding outlines the current investments in programs to reconnect Louisville’s most vulnerable youth and young adults with housing, employment, education and other supports.
- **Recommendations** – Committees of CSYA members have reviewed available data and Youth Voice results to identify collective action steps that transform the way Louisville assists young people in crisis who lack support.

## Outputs

In early January 2018, CSYA will present the final report to the community in two formats: a video documenting the goals, assets and challenges of Louisville’s youth and young adults, as they describe them; and a report that summarizes the data collected from youth, the fiscal resources committed to serving vulnerable youth and young adults, and recommendations that close gaps in services.

## Team

Fiscal Agent Director:	Matt Reed
Project Director:	Elizabeth Senn-Alvey
Research Coordinator:	Cassandra Webb
Fiscal Mapping Coordinator:	Erin Smith
Research Principal:	Stacy Deck, PhD, MSSW
Research Assistants:	Midaya Marshall, TreyVon Neely, LaDonna Kennedy
Project Committee:	Matt Reed, Nikki Thornton, Heather Dearing, Natalie Harris

## Working Assumptions and Questions

**Assumption:** Transition into adulthood requires an array of competencies, credentials, and connections to opportunities. All young people have the responsibility to set goals for becoming responsible, independent adults and work toward them.

**Questions:** Is the community ensuring inequities at this starting line are mitigated? What can we do better?

**Assumption:** Young people with behavior, academic, social-emotional or economic difficulties in childhood are likely to receive services from multiple systems or programs.<sup>1</sup>

**Questions:** Are data shared across systems so the complex needs of children/youth and families are identified and addressed? Do we know, for instance, whether youth in the juvenile justice system are homeless or whether young people with former child welfare involvement are “disconnected” or need mental health services? Are vulnerable young people underserved, mis-served, or overserved because of the complexity of needs they’ve experienced in childhood?

**Assumption:** Identifying and assisting young people who face exclusion and barriers to a successful transition to adulthood would reduce social services costs, increase the skills of our workforce, and raise family incomes.

**Questions:** What are the costs of providing effective supports, multiple pathways, and second chance opportunities? Is it time to set important goals, make the essential investments and hold ourselves accountable for results?

**Assumption:** A cross-functional collaboration of agencies and organizations can effectively advocate for policies and programs that transform the way a community assists its most vulnerable youth and young adults.

**Questions:** What policies, programs, and initiatives currently exist that address the education, employment, housing, and health/wellness of vulnerable young people? How can new or expanded program models, innovative funding strategies, and systemic policies or procedures in these focus areas assist vulnerable young people?

**Assumption:** Collective goals to improve the economic and social wellbeing of disconnected youth will take an innovative approach to funding.

**Questions:** Where are investments in disconnected youth being made in Louisville? Who is making the investments and are they increasing, decreasing or staying constant? Which funding streams or funders may be interested in or appropriate to blend or braid with other sources to increase outcomes? How can we “do more” with collaboration in outreach, assessment, collocating services, removing entrance requirements, and early interventions?

## Key Concepts

### Disconnected Youth

Young people age 16 to 24 who are not in school or work. A young person is “in school” if they have attended school or college in the past three months. A young person is “working” if they have been employed full- or part-time work in the last week.

### Chronically Disconnected vs Under Attached

“Chronically Disconnected” young people have been mostly out of school and work from 16-24 years of age. “Under-attached” youth are in and out of school or work over time.<sup>1</sup>

## Why Focus on Disconnected Youth

Approximately **15,200** (10.9%) of Louisville’s 16 to 24 year olds are **neither in school nor working**.

According to data from the 2015 U.S. Census analyzed by Measures of America (*Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps*, 2017), there are 15,200 16 to 24 year olds who are neither in school nor working in Louisville. This represents 10.9% of all youth and young adults in Louisville, a percentage that has fallen since the economic recovery from the Great Recession. A comparison of the percentage of Louisville’s 16 to 24 year olds who are disconnected to the U.S., Kentucky, and peer cities is outlined below.

### Number and Percentage of Disconnected Youth

	2013 <sup>2</sup>		2015 <sup>3</sup>	
	total number disconnected	percent of 16 to 24 year olds	total number disconnected	percent of 16 to 24 year olds
<b>Louisville</b>	21,750	14.0%	15,200	10.9%
<b>Nashville</b>	29,283	12.8%	22,000	9.3%
<b>Indianapolis</b>	35,539	15.8%	25,400	11.1%
<b>Cincinnati</b>	38,312	12.8%	33,400	12.4%
<b>Columbus, OH</b>	30,403	11.0%	21,700	9.3%
<b>St. Louis</b>	48,903	14.0%	39,900	11.5%
<b>Kentucky</b>	81,850	15.2%	75,600	13.9%
<b>United States</b>	5,527,000	13.8%	4,881,500	12.3%

There are, of course, many different life circumstances among the estimated 15,200 youth people who are out of school and work in Louisville. Some young people remain primarily disconnected during these years (young people who are incarcerated or institutionalized are not included in this estimate) while other young people are “under attached” to school or work due to life crises or persistent challenges. Additional Census data illustrate the number of young people who are unemployed and out of school in our community:

- 2,058 16 to 19 year olds are not in school and have not yet earned a diploma <sup>4</sup>
- 8,094 16 to 19 year olds are unemployed.<sup>5</sup>
- 10,268 18 to 24 year olds have not completed high school. <sup>6</sup>
- 6,843 20 to 24 year olds are unemployed <sup>7</sup>

To members of the Coalition Supporting Young Adults, the estimate of 15,200 disconnected youth seems low. Educators, counselors, social workers, and others who work directly with young people know many face challenges that are complex, compounding, and often linked to traumatic experiences or entrenched community problems well-beyond their control. A review of the numbers of young people served or identified by local programs illustrates how many of Louisville’s youth and young adults are struggling as they transition to adulthood:

<b>971</b>	Young people (10 to 17 years old) experienced abuse or neglect in 2016. <sup>8</sup>
<b>399</b>	Young people 14 to 18+ years lived in out-of-home foster care in Oct 2017. <sup>9</sup>
<b>5,026</b>	Juveniles were referred to court for criminal or status offense in 2016. <sup>10</sup>
<b>2,591</b>	High school students received ECE services in Jefferson Co Public Schools in 2016-17. <sup>11</sup>
<b>3,649</b>	Students were enrolled in JCPS district alternative schools in 2016-17. <sup>12</sup>
<b>1,538</b>	JCPS high school students reported being homeless in 2015-16. <sup>13</sup>
<b>54</b>	Homeless young people (16 to 24) report they are a victim of sex trafficking. <sup>14</sup>
<b>443</b>	Unaccompanied 18-24 year olds were living in emergency shelter, transitional shelters or on the streets last year. <sup>15</sup>
<b>15,494</b>	High school students in JCPS comprehensive high schools qualify for free or reduced lunch program this school year. <sup>16</sup>
<b>2,580</b>	13 to 17 year olds were admitted for inpatient psychiatric treatment in Louisville, 2016. <sup>17</sup>

Housing instability, physical or emotional illness, economic scarcity, system involvement, abuse or neglect, academic disruption or crime victimization, and related challenges overshadow the opportunities young people have to learn, to become financially independent, and to fully participate in our community. While every young person who faces challenges will not become “disconnected”, there is a strong link between these challenges and periods of unemployment or academic disruption.

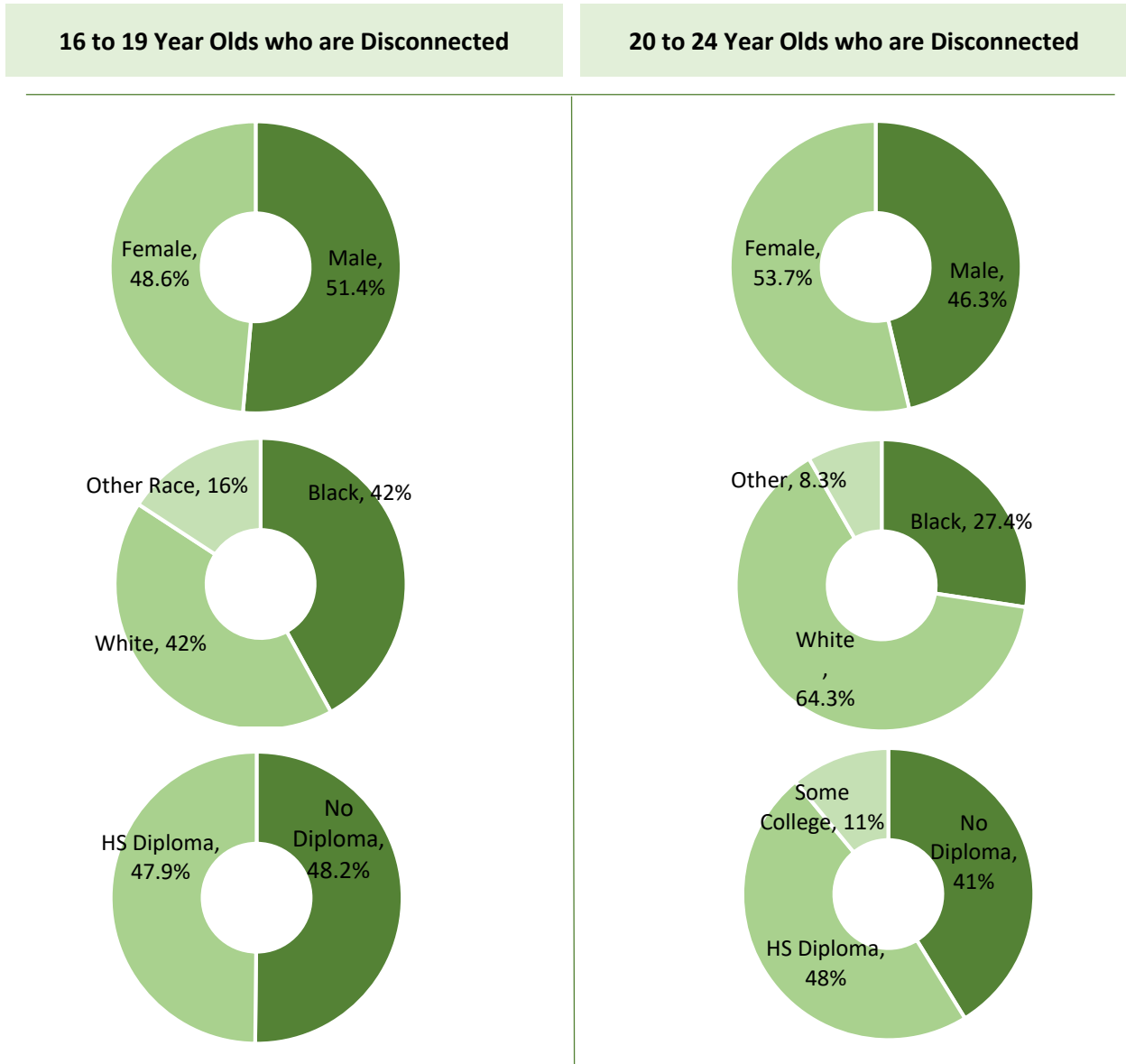
The consequences of disconnection impact a young person’s ability to gain the skills and credentials to support themselves and their families. Disconnected youth earn 60% less than their connected peers during the years from 16 to 24 and, because they are less likely to complete higher education, their lifetime earnings are often significantly less.<sup>18</sup>

Communities also assume substantial costs in increased social supports and decreased revenue. Disconnected youth are more likely to need mental health services, to lack health insurance, and to receive public supports such as welfare or food stamps.<sup>19</sup> According to 2011 estimates, costs to the community in lost tax payments and increased costs in health care, welfare and crime is \$13,900 for each year a young person is “disconnected” and \$170,740 over a lifetime.<sup>20</sup> By these estimates, Louisville’s disconnected youth will cost families and tax payers more than \$211 million this year, excluding the costs of training workers who do not have entry-level skills or the costs to the local economy in lost jobs when employers choose to locate where the workforce is more highly skilled.

# Who are Louisville's Disconnected Youth

According to national estimates, young people who are disconnected are more likely to live in a poor household, to have a disability, and be parenting than their connected peers. <sup>21</sup> Census data (analyzed by the Brookings Institute) describe the age, gender, race and educational level of Louisville's disconnected youth and young adults. <sup>22</sup>

## Demographics of Louisville's Disconnected Youth



While data provide some insight into who is disconnected in Louisville, there is much more to learn from young people about their lives. The CSYA needs assessment survey presented a series of statements, reflecting both “positive” and “negative” experiences, and asked respondents to indicate whether each was true for them. Their responses are summarized in the chart below. <sup>23</sup>



## Louisville's Disconnected Youth Describe their Lives

Statement	Percent of respondents indicating the statement is true for them
I have/had friends in school.	67.3%
I have attended more than one high school.	56.3%
I like(d) learning.	49.0%
I can/could use what I learn in school.	49.0%
Doing well in school is/was important to me.	48.0%
I have been in foster care or kinship care, or lived in a residential facility.	44.7%
I have been arrested.	43.7%
Teachers respect(ed) me.	42.9%
I have a checking and/or savings account in my name.	38.8%
I have low income and/or receive benefits like welfare, food stamps, etc.	36.9%
I have a child.	34.0%
I get/got in trouble at school.	33.7%
I have been a crime victim.	28.2%
I have been diagnosed with a mental illness.	28.2%
I am homeless.	26.2%
I have a disability.	20.4%
I live with my parents.	17.5%
I feel/felt unsafe at school.	14.3%
English is not my first language.	6.8%

# Findings: Youth Voice

“These young people want to be self-sufficient, contributing members of society. They are asking us for support and mentorship in finding their way along this path to success.”

**Stacy Deck, PhD**  
*Spalding University School of Social Work*

Throughout 2017, CSYA engaged 197 young people in a conversation about their goals and challenges as they prepare for or enter adulthood. Of the 131 young people who met the qualifications for the needs assessment project, 117 took the survey and 61 participated in focus groups (most focus group participants also took the survey). Eight youth and young adults were interviewed for the video. The stories and suggestions they shared were varied and complex. No two young people had walked the same path or faced the same challenges. Nonetheless, several themes emerged throughout these discussions and the data analysis that indicate clear actions our community should take to reconnect our vulnerable youth.

**Disconnected young people want the same things for their future as their connected peers**, to take care of their family, to be financially stable and independent, to complete their education (earn a college degree) and start a career, to be free to make their own decisions, to stay off drugs and out of jail, and to exceed others’ expectations of them.

**Young people want to be held accountable for their choices and for others to have high expectations for them.** Young people participating in the focus groups and interviews conveyed a gap between the expectations they have for themselves and the expectations others seem to have for them. They feel they would work harder if asked and that they are capable of more than people generally assume they can do.

**Resources most needed by disconnected youth are often difficult to access.** Young people participating in the needs assessment identified the gap between the assistance they need and services accessible in our community. When asked to describe the areas of need that were most critical and most difficult to resolve, young people indicated the following: <sup>24</sup>

Top Five Needs Identified by Young People	Five Most Difficult Resources to Access by Youth People	Top Priority Areas (High Need/Low Access)
Transportation	Housing	Housing
Housing	Transportation	Transportation
Planning for the future	College/training programs	College/training programs
Financial resources	Financial resources	Financial resources
Getting and keeping a job	Food	Planning for the future

CSYA member organizations consistently report that affordable housing and accessible transportation are significantly underfunded or unavailable in Louisville. Without a stable address and transportation, school and work attendance becomes less consistent. These challenges are particularly difficult for young adults who are without the financial support of family when they turn 18 or who lack the credit history or savings to purchase a car or sign a lease.

Participants shared additional suggestions on services or programs that would be helpful to them, including:

- Opportunities to connect with mentors - particularly positive male role models – not just during program hours but at the moment they are needed.
- Effective, accessible treatment for addiction, depression, loss, trauma, and anxiety.
- Assistance finding a job that pays family-supporting wages, offers consistent and adequate hours, and is close to home or transportation.
- Financial management training to help them avoid making mistakes with money and getting into debt.
- School-based services to help struggling students understanding class material and to learn how to focus. Participants suggested that schools should make learning more relevant and engaging, and increase flexibility.
- Life skills programs that help them make plans for their future and stay motivated.
- Positive peer networks can also be helpful if they “really have my back”.

**Current resources are not always “youth friendly”.** When asked about existing programs, focus group participants indicated some programs have waiting lists or too many qualifications. Young people suggested that programs serving them should be:

- **Flexible:** Reduce barriers to participations in entrance criteria, scheduling, and policies for re-enrolling.
- **Youth Friendly:** Staff programs with consistent, qualified, and caring adults.
- **Easy to Find:** Promote effective programs and resources in multiple ways and several times.
- **Lead by Youth:** Create meaningful ways for young people to get involved in decisions that impact them.
- **Reliable:** Follow through on commitments. Let young people know their concerns have been heard.

## Disconnected Youth: How to Help

Develop options for safe and affordable housing and transportation.

Make resources (services, job opportunities, emergency help) easier to find.

Help young people plan for their future.

Connect youth with caring and consistent adults.

Create meaningful ways for young people to get involved in decisions that impact them.

## Findings: Fiscal Map

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The CSYA needs assessment team began the process of mapping the fiscal resources committed to serving disconnected youth in Louisville and developed a data base to store and track these resources for analysis. Community organizations shared information on the funding they receive and additional information was collected from available sources (federal and state budgets) and annual reports of expenditures. Contributing significantly to the data collection were Louisville Metro Government, including Office of Youth Development and KentuckianaWorks.

While the picture is incomplete, the CSYA project team's interviews with local agencies and organizations and review of available funding identified the following general findings.

- Programs are largely dependent on grant funding for services to disconnected youth. Appeals to private donors have been challenging, largely because disconnected youth are perceived as difficult to serve or capable of caring for themselves. Dependence on grant funding leads to inconsistent service levels when grants end and put providers in competition with each other.
- Despite Louisville Metro and Metro United Way's efforts over several years to incentivize or build programs' capacity to create afterschool programming for older youth, the number of young people served through new or expanded programs has not increased substantially.
- While outreach and referral services are available for young people experiencing homelessness, a comprehensive intake/assessment/referral system linking all community services for opportunity youth would save considerable costs to individual programs, increase access to services, and reduce systems costs to the community.
- Federal budget cuts are putting at-risk services for youth people accessing Louisville's two part-time drop-in centers. Mental health services, support for young people living on the streets (meals, showers, clothes washing), job placement, and case management services for approximately 800 young people annually could be eliminated.
- Emergency housing for young adults (age 18 to 24) that has been in place for several years is being de-funded effective Dec 2017. Funding for transitional or supported housing is limited. There are no or limited housing supports for populations with specific needs (parenting, LGBT).
- Case management services are limited by restrictive funding requirements, making it unlikely young people will be able to request help or guidance once exited from programs (DCBS services for former foster care). Access to adults when they need it is one of the most frequently expressed needs.
- While the demand for the SummerWorks program continues to grow, the funding from Louisville Metro is decreasing, making the program more dependent on private funders.

## Findings: Program Map

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**Dropout prevention and reengagement efforts are needed.** Public schools in Louisville recognize the need to support struggling students through graduation. However, a significant number of students are failing and the resources to assist or reengage them are limited.

- By design, alternative schools serve students who are not thriving in comprehensive high schools. 3,649 students were enrolled in JCPS District-level alternative high schools last year. These students were the most likely to experience academic disruptions and behavioral disabilities. They were also the most likely to leave without graduating:
  - Graduation rate for students eligible for free or reduced meals: **81.9%**
  - Graduation rate for students who receive special needs services: **63.3%**
  - Graduation rate for students who are English learners: **60.8%**
  - Graduation rate for students enrolled in District alternative schools: **28%**.<sup>25</sup>
- Career and technical programs or courses that teach skills and credentials are another district level strategy designed to assist struggling or non-college bound students. In the 2016-17 school year, 15,219 high school students were enrolled in CTE programs. However, only 1,814 students completed certificates in a career field.
- Once an alternative for young people who are struggle academically, the GED credential has become more difficult to earn. In FY 2016, 1,070 16 to 24 year olds enrolled in JCPS Adult Education. Over the next two years, only 190 passed the GED.<sup>26</sup> For the 1,378 young people who didn't graduate from high school with their classmates in May of 2017, the GED is not likely to be their path to a high school credential.<sup>27</sup>
- Increasing the compulsory age in Kentucky from 16 to 18 years is expected to have a positive impact on high school graduation rates and, ideally, lower the number of disconnected young people in our community. However, there are 2,058 16 to 19 year olds who are not in school in Louisville and have not earned a diploma, according to Census data. For these young people who are not yet 19 years old, there are few options to earn a high school credential. Comprehensive high schools, who are reluctant to re-enroll them, often refer them to alternative schools, Job Corps, or suggest homeschooling.
- Available in many cities with high rates of disconnected youth, high school reengagement services and supports, such as academic skills assessment, re-enrollment into comprehensive high schools, and credit/content recovery assistance, are not available in Louisville.
- Programs to assist students at risk of dropping out with non-academic supports are losing funding (Family Resource Youth Service Centers). And programs designed to prevent school dropouts such as the Louisville Education and Employment Partnership are funded by KentuckianaWorks and Louisville Metro but are not designed to meet the emerging needs of students, leaving many of the highest need students unserved.

## Recommendations

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"The best insurance for the future is preparing generations of skillful, enthusiastic and purposeful young men and women." - Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Becoming Adult*

Structural racism and poverty are at the heart of many of the challenges disconnected young people face in Louisville. Addressing these issues will take a significant shift in thinking and a funding strategy that demonstrates a commitment to preparing each member of the next generation for the tasks we're leaving to them. The costs of continuing to marginalize young people is both unsustainable and unacceptable.

There are collective actions Louisville's service providers, public agencies, educators, leaders, and adult advocates can take to transform the way we assist and advocate for our most vulnerable young people. Agreeing on the actions that are both achievable and effective will continue to be challenging and the Coalition Supporting Young Adults invites all community members – youth and adults - to join us in this important discussion.

### **As CSYA concludes this yearlong process, we commit to the following collective actions:**

1. Continue focusing on the overarching goal of making opportunity youth in Louisville a priority.
2. Identify the most impactful next steps we can take as a community to address the findings of this needs assessment. CSYA is committing to using a racial equity tool to evaluate the impacts of each recommendation under consideration and to link the recommendations to the needs identified in the assessment results.
3. Utilize existing or create cross-agency work groups focused on improving the education, employment, housing and health & wellness services and systems affecting disconnected youth. Membership on each work group will include organizational decision-makers, frontline staff, and youth from "anchor" and related organizations.
4. Involve opportunity youth and young adults in authentic and intentional ways. Advocate for young people to be heard during institutional decision-making processes and hold leaders accountable for responding to the feedback they receive. Ensure youth receive training and support to become effective advocates (youth-participatory research based).
5. Work with Louisville Metro to integrate specific goals to reengage marginalized youth and young adults into their strategic plan and to ensure funding priorities align with these goals.
6. Establish a CSYA leadership team to develop a comprehensive cross-agency funding proposal to address the immediate and/or high priority needs for programming and other supports for OY. Working collaboratively, identify funding sources, develop distribution processes, and advocate for funding of priorities.
7. Identify ways to increase access to services such as mental health services, life skill building activities, mentoring, job placement, crisis intervention, and other support.

### **Recommendations to Community Leaders and Funders:**

1. Commit to growing an unrestricted fund, managed by the Coalition for the Homeless, to assist young people with one-time expenses relating to housing, education, or employment.
2. Fully fund current public programs that serve vulnerable youth including services for youth aging out of foster care and Family Resource and Youth Service Centers. Establish or expand resources for young people who have a history in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
3. Establish an “Opportunities for Opportunity Youth” Fund for grants to support programs and capacity building for youth-led grassroots groups, community organizations, and collaboratives serving young people who face multiple barriers to economic and social wellbeing.
4. Explore options for blended and/or braided public funding. Blending co-mingle funds into one “pot” that covers program, staff and other cost. Braiding uses multiple funding streams to pay for all the services needed by a given population.

### **Recommendations to Improve Access to Education:**

1. Establish a Superintendent-level committee (District and community members) that meets on a regular basis to address needs of students at risk of dropping out, academic failure, or educational disruption.
2. Request an ongoing report from District on indicators of progress for foster, homeless, and alternative school students in District and State Agency programs (i.e. English and math scores, behavioral referrals and suspensions, progress toward graduation, school mobility, comprehensive survey data, absences, and enrollment in postsecondary education following graduation). Ensure the Board is updated regularly to ensure issues are addressed quickly.
3. Remove transportation barriers to school (both in-school and afterschool) for students who are homeless, in foster care, or at high-risk of dropping out.
4. Create educational pathways to a high school diploma for vulnerable students who are over-age and under-credited. Provide evidence-based supports that address the complex needs of students (flexible schedule, work-learn opportunities, postsecondary and college preparation, life skills development).
5. Build the capacity for existing programs (FRYSC, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Guardian Ad Litem, Department of Community Based Services, etc.) to provide educational advocacy for youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (i.e. professional development, training and opportunities for student voice/empowering youth, and parent/advocate support).
6. Conduct immediate and thorough assessments of the academic needs of students who are homeless, in foster care, at high-risk of dropping out, or have dropped out and enroll or re-enroll into the “best interest” setting, considering student goals and interests.

### **Recommendations to Improve Access to Housing**

1. Establish a host home program that connects young adults (18 to 24 years) with screened and trained families while permanent housing is pending. Provide ongoing support to the young person and their host including goal setting, crisis intervention, and case management.

2. Provide a minimum of 50 youth-centered emergency shelter beds for young adults 18-24 years. Ensure an adequate number of beds that are LGBTQ inclusive and welcoming to parenting young adults.
3. Increase the number of permanent and supported housing units.
4. Create youth-specific access points to the homeless services entry process, both virtual and physical, including schools, libraries, community-based organizations, recreation spaces, and drop-in centers.

### **Recommendations to Improve Access to Employment**

1. Develop career exploration programs for opportunity youth that introduce the high-demand, high-wage pathways likely to be available in Louisville in the next five to ten years.
2. Develop additional innovative partnerships that offer high school and postsecondary credentials with full-time work opportunities for vulnerable or disconnected young people (consistent hours, paid time off, policies for making up absences, and health insurance).
3. Develop new and expand existing social enterprises that give hands-on job skill development, mentor support and wages to opportunity youth.
4. Increase the number of sponsored job opportunities that offer advancement potential and on-the-job learning (i.e. year-round SummerWorks, internships, and apprenticeships) that specifically address the needs of opportunity youth.
5. Increase the capacity of programs to offer financial support for transportation, child care, work clothing and other work-related expenses to disconnected youth.
6. Develop a car purchase program that provides a low-cost vehicle, financial literacy support, and connections with family-supporting employment.

### **Recommendations to Improve Access to Health and Wellness Services**

1. Increase awareness of and access to mental health and wellness services, including care for current/past trauma, substance abuse and loss.
2. Reform processes and supports for youth exiting foster care. Remove the deadline for accessing tuition waivers and other educational vouchers. Change default from “aging out” to “staying in”, requiring youth to request to leave care at 18 years.
3. Create/expand ongoing “listening sessions” for young people to meet with supportive peers and mentors, to learn life skills, and to share their concerns and suggestions.
4. Ensure laws, policies and practices do not lead youth experiencing homelessness, economic hardship, or crime victimization to be cited, arrested, or charged for survival acts or “quality of life” offenses.
5. At the start of juvenile justice system involvement, conduct a thorough needs assessment that includes comprehensive services (including housing and education) during diversion, confinement, and probation periods.
6. While holding youth accountable for illegal or disruptive behaviors, use policies and procedures such as restorative justice that teach skills needed in work, school, and life.
7. Increase the services to young adults reentering the community from incarceration.



## Resources

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Alliance for Youth: [\*Youth Report Card – Louisville, KY 2015\*](#)

Civic Enterprises: [\*A Bridge to Reconnection: Federal Funding Streams\*](#)

Civic Enterprises: [\*The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth\*](#)

Cowen Institute: [\*Accounting for Opportunity: A Fiscal Scan for Funding Services for Opportunity Youth\*](#)

Louisville Metro: [\*My Brother's Keeper\*](#)

Measure of America: [\*Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps: Youth Disconnection in America.\*](#)

Measure of America: [\*One in Seven: Ranking Youth Disconnection in the 25 Largest Metro Areas\*](#)

National Youth Employment Coalition: [\*Building Capacity for Reconnecting Opportunity Youth\*](#)

Private Industry Council: [\*Youth Voice Project – Boston\*](#)

Transitional Age Youth: [\*Policy Priorities for Transitional Age Youth in San Francisco\*](#)

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1 Cross -System Involvement Disconnected OY frequently are involved in multiple systems: 80% of young adults age 18-25 on Adult Probation lack a high school diploma/GED; 75% were unemployed at time of arrest. Between 2005 and 2009, 15% of foster children had an episode of involvement with the Juvenile Probation Department; 7% of youth on probation had an episode of foster care. In 2011, approximately 8% of foster youth age 16 or older ran away from placement. 37% of foster care youth are currently in mental health services. SF report on OY

2 Zeroing in on Place and Race, Measures of America 2015 U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2013, Public Use Microdata Sample. <http://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/MOA-Zeroing-In-Final.pdf>

3 Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps, Measures of America 2017, <https://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/moa/Promising%20Gains%20Final.pdf> US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2011–2015 Five-Year Estimates, Table B19013B. American Community Survey 2011–2015 Five-Year Estimates, Tables B17001B and B17001. American Community Survey 2011- 2015 Five-Year Estimates, Table B17001, B19013. American Community Survey 2011- 2015 Five-Year Estimates, Table B17001.

4 Census 2016, SEX BY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS FOR 16 TO 19 YEARS 2016 American Community Survey  
[https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_16\\_1YR\\_B14005&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_1YR_B14005&prodType=table)

5 Census Employment Status 2011-15 American Community Survey 5 year estimates, Table S2301  
<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

6 Census 2015, S1501 Educational Attainment for 2011-15 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates  
<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

7 Census Employment Status 2011-15 American Community Survey 5 year estimates, Table S2301  
<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

8 Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts Statistical Report. Estimate calculated by multiplying 3,884 (total number of children with substantiated cases) by .25, the approximate percentage of cases involving 10 to 17 year olds.  
<https://courts.ky.gov/aoc/statisticalreports/Documents/INS010.pdf>

9 KY Department of Community Based Services Report, TWS-058 10/1/17

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10 KY AOC: <https://courts.ky.gov/aoc/statisticalreports/Documents/INS010.pdf>

11 Jefferson County Public Schools High School Data Books 2016-2017  
<https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/sites/default/files/jcpsdbk210.pdf>

12 JCPS DRMS Report ORR - A5 School Data 2013 to 2017 TABLE v2.xlsx, dated 11/28/17

13 JCPS DRMS Report IRB – Homeless Trend Data 2011 to 2016, dated 10/2017

14 Youth Experiences Survey: Exploring the Scope and Complexity of Sex Trafficking in a Sample of Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Kentuckiana. Jennifer Middleton, Kent School, 2017

15 Louisville Metro Continuum of Care 2016 Homeless Census, Coalition for the Homeless, unduplicated homeless people who were served between October 1, 2015 and September 31, 2016. This represents a 5.4% decrease in the number of homeless people last year over the year prior, including people who were sheltered (who stayed in emergency or transitional shelter) and unsheltered (who lived only in the streets or in camps). As with each year, the count of unsheltered homeless is likely an undercount due to the difficulty in counting these individuals.

16 JCPS Data Books JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2017-2018 FREE/REDUCED LUNCH PARTICIPATION A1 SCHOOLS GRADES 09-14 <https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/sites/default/files/jcpsdbk211.pdf>

17 Kentucky Department of Cabinet for Health and Family Services, 2016 Kentucky Annual Hospital Utilization and Services Report for 2016; reflects the number of admissions into Norton, Our Lady of Peace and the Brook Hospitals who were between 13 and 17 years. Patients may have experienced more than one admission and may have come from other counties <http://chfs.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/EE832139-CB58-4CFD-8B72-03780C04DBA3/0/2016KYAnnualHospitalReport.pdf>

18 Belfield, C.R., Levin, H.M., & Rosen, R., The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth, 2012.

19 *ibid.*

20 *ibid*

21 *ibid*

22 Employment and Disconnection Among Teens and Young Adults: Place, Race and Education, 2016  
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/employment-and-disconnection-among-teens-and-young-adults-the-role-of-place-race-and-education/>

23 CSYA Opportunity Youth Needs Assessment, Stacy Deck 2017

24 *ibid*

25 Jefferson County Public Schools High School Data Books 2016-2017

26 KY CPE, KY Adult Education data request, 10/30/17

27 JCPS Data Book, High School Graduation Rate, <https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/sites/default/files/jcpsdbk255.pdf>