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Update on Youth Programs and Youth Strategic Plan

Quality of Life, Arts, and Culture Committee

November 16, 2026

Thor Erickson
Director
Office of Housing and Community Empowerment

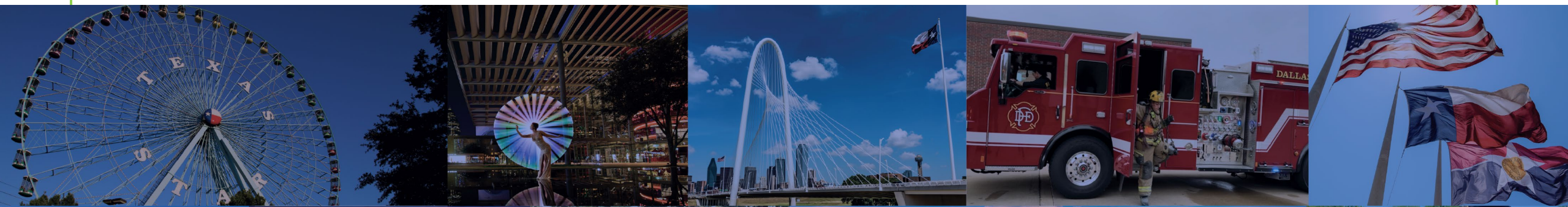
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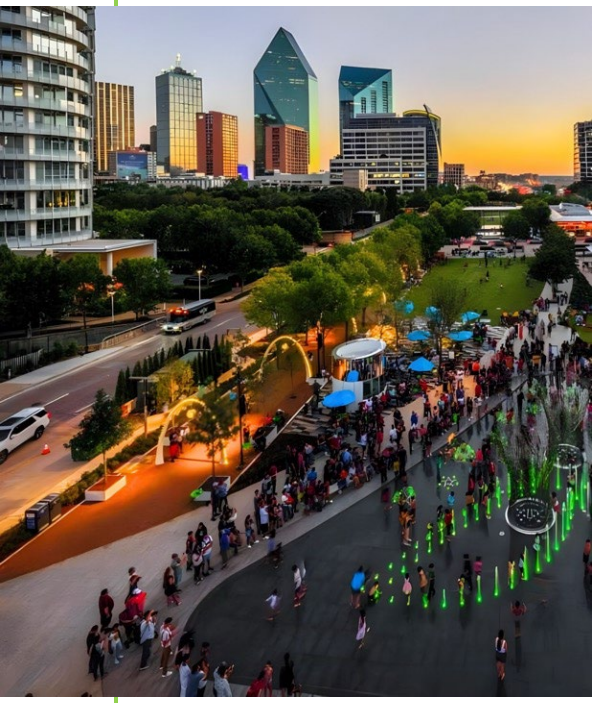
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I. **Data**
Population, economic conditions, and service needs

II. **Multi-Department Focus on Targeted Youth Programs & Partnerships**
How City departments and community partners support youth safety, access to opportunity, and civic participation

III. **Youth Strategic Plan**
Youth-focused strategies, implementation responsibilities, and progress measures

IV. **Committee Action**
Feedback and recommendation to advance the plan for Council adoption

Drivers of Opportunity & the Youth Strategic Plan

Drivers of Opportunity:

Connecting City priorities to the needs and aspirations of Dallas youth ages 12–24.



Gainful Employment



High Quality Education



Public Safety & Wellbeing



Opportunity-Rich Neighborhoods



Healthy Environment & Access to Health Care

Youth Strategic Plan Timeline

Period	Milestone
Fall 2024	City of Dallas Youth Commission and National Civic League launched the Dallas Youth Survey.
April – May 2025	City of Dallas hosts NextGen Youth Summit convening 250 students and elected leaders. City Staff presented input collected from youth to the Workforce, Education, and Equity Committee.
November 2025	Staff presented the draft Youth Strategic Plan to the Quality of Life, Arts, and Culture Committee.
June 2026	Youth Commission voted to approve draft Youth Strategic Plan and recommend it to move forward for Council approval.
November 2026	Request to advance the plan for Council adoption or incorporate its strategies into existing City plans and departmental work

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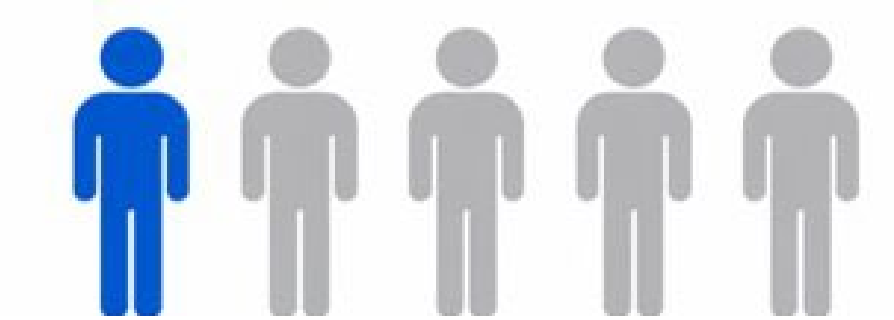
I. Data

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Youth Needs and Access to Opportunity

- **Dallas is home to approximately 242,000 residents ages 12-24**
- **In Dallas, more than one in five young people ages 12–24 live in poverty.***
  - *About 50,900 young Dallasites who need a stronger, coordinated response*



Youth needs span safety, housing, education, employment, and transportation.

Coordinating City and partner services can help young people overcome barriers and access opportunities.

**Source: Census 2020–2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17001, Dallas city.*

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II. Multi-Department Focus on Targeted Youth Programs & Partnerships

Youth Input: Dallas Youth Survey



DALLAS YOUTH COMMISSION PARTNERS WITH NATIONAL CIVIC LEAGUE TO AMPLIFY YOUNG VOICES IN 2024 DALLAS YOUTH SURVEY

By Nate Simmons

Published on October 31, 2024

Source: City of Dallas

The 2024 Dallas Youth Survey, a partnership between the Youth Commission and National Civic League, gathered input from **4,301** young people across Dallas.

Their responses helped shape the Youth Strategic Plan and highlighted the following areas of interest:

- Community and civic engagement
- Recreation
- Outdoor activities and environment
- Socioeconomic challenges
- Transportation
- Advanced education and employment
- School and neighborhood safety

Office of Housing and Community Empowerment

- **Youth safety:** Partner with Lone Star Justice Alliance to provide street outreach and violence interruption, case management, and connections to education, employment, and supportive services.
- **Youth civic engagement:** Bring young residents' priorities into City decisions through the Youth Commission and leadership opportunities.
- **Housing support:** Connect young adults experiencing homelessness, including those leaving foster care, with housing and supportive services.

Youth Commission: Bringing Youth Perspectives into City Decisions

The 15-member Youth Commission connects Council and the City Manager with young residents' experiences, concerns, and ideas.

Broader youth input
Brings perspectives from young people across Dallas into City decisions.

Plan development
Developed the Dallas Youth Survey and reviewed and recommended the draft plan.

Civic participation
Created opportunities for young people to learn about government, lead, and serve their communities.



City of Dallas Winning the All-American City Award for the first time since 1970 for engaging youth in meaningful ways via the Dallas Youth Commission

Housing & Support for Young Adults

OHCE partners with TRAC to support young adults experiencing homelessness, including those transitioning from foster care.

Transition Resource Action Center (TRAC)

Population	Approximately 200 young adults served annually, ages 18–24, including those experiencing homelessness and transitioning from foster care.
Services	Street outreach, day/night shelter, case management, and stable housing
Eligible assistance	Rent, deposits, utilities, transportation, and food
Funding and term	$211,013 through February 28, 2027

Funding: Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA)

Parks and Recreation



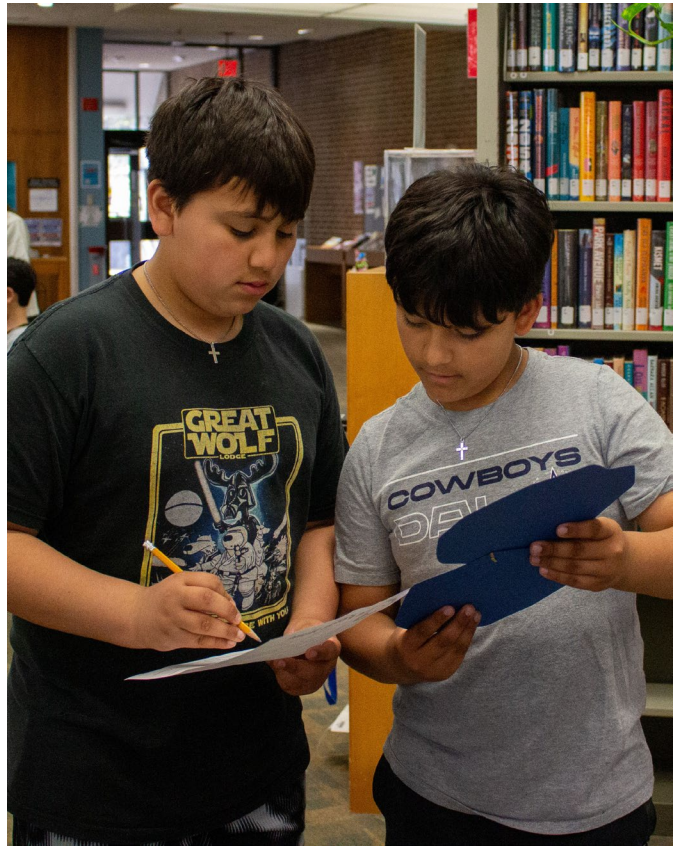




- **Teen Connect:** Structured **Youth served: 4,008 during Fiscal Year 25-26.**
- **Recreation & Employment Opportunities:** Teen All Access Pass provides access to recreation and community activities. Aquatics programs offer youth employment opportunities and swimming scholarships.
- **College & Career Readiness:** Equip teens with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to explore post-secondary education, career pathways and workforce opportunities.
- **Technology:** Provide hands-on technology experiences that build digital literacy, creativity, and technical skills while introducing teens to emerging technologies.
- **Health & Wellness:** Promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being through fitness, nutrition education, healthy lifestyle choices, and access to supportive resources.

Dallas Public Library

- **Literacy & Learning:** Strengthen skills through reading challenges, research training, and live online homework help.
- **Creative Opportunities:** Encourage youth expression through poetry and art contests, gaming and anime clubs, music classes.
- **Volunteering & Leadership:** Give back to the community through the Teen Advisory Council and other in-library service projects.
- **Access & Support:** Provide free resources to help close the opportunity gap, including computers, printers, free Wi-Fi, summer meals, free formal wear.



Office of Arts and Culture

- **Arts education:** Build creative skills through cultural center and arts partner programs.
- **Cultural activities:** Connect young people with opportunities to participate in Dallas' arts and cultural life.
- **Camps:** Provide structured opportunities for arts learning and creative expression through cultural center camps.



Dallas Police Department

- **Youth engagement:** Build positive connections between youth and police through the Police Activities League and Youth Police Advisory Council (YPAC).
- **Mentoring:** Support youth development through mentoring and positive relationships with police.
- **Career exploration:** Introduce public safety career pathways through Explorers and the P-TECH Criminal Justice Pathway.

Dallas Municipal Court

- **Youth Diversion:** Provides eligible youth with an alternative pathway designed to divert them from the juvenile justice system while promoting accountability, positive decision-making, and personal growth.

- **Teen Court:** Provides eligible youth with a teen-led process to resolve certain municipal court cases, promoting accountability, understanding of consequences, and responsible decision-making.

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Coordination Across Youth-Serving Departments

Coordination Component	Progress & Next Steps
Initial Convening	City departments met July 2 and August 20, 2026, to discuss youth-service coordination.
Proposed quarterly meetings	Meet quarterly to share program updates, identify service gaps, and coordinate follow-up.
Progress reporting	Compile quarterly updates on agreed actions and measures.
Alignment with Drivers of Opportunity	Collaborate with external partners to connect youth to education, employment, safe spaces, and supportive services that advance shared Drivers of Opportunity priorities.

In its first year, OHCE began convening youth-serving departments to strengthen coordination across City programs.



III. Youth Strategic Plan

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Youth-Focused Strategies

Youth input informed three priorities that guide City and partner actions for young people ages 12–24.

Plan Priority	Implementation Actions
Youth Safety & Resilience	Connect youth with violence prevention, family support, case management, and housing services through City-funded providers and community partners.
Youth Opportunity and Economic Mobility	Connect youth with learning, workforce preparation, digital access, and financial empowerment. Expand access to recreation, outdoor activities, and environmental learning.
Youth Civic Infrastructure and Engagement	Support youth leadership, civic education, and volunteerism through the Youth Commission and broader opportunities to inform City decisions.

Proposed Strategic Coordination for Youth

How City and Community Partners Support Dallas Teens

Public safety – A Safe Place on Friday Nights

Barrier – A 15-year-old wants to spend Friday evenings with friends, but few places in her neighborhood offer supervised activities after hours.

Connected response – The Dallas Police Department's Community Affairs Youth Outreach Unit and the Office of Arts and Culture could host an evening where a local artist leads an art workshop and Police Activities League mentors organize pickup basketball. The proposed event draws on the departments' existing arts, recreation, and mentoring programs.

Intended outcome – She has a safe place to return to on Friday nights, gets to know a mentor she trusts, and can stay involved in arts or recreation throughout the year.



Opportunity and Economic Mobility – Finishing School and Earning a First Paycheck

Barrier – During street outreach, an 18-year-old swimmer tells an Oak Cliff Empowerment Center violence interrupter that she is a few credits short of graduation and needs a summer job.

Connected response – The interrupter introduces her to a coach at Lone Star Justice Alliance's HYPE Center. The coach helps her return to school and apply for lifeguard training through Dallas Aquatics and Dallas ISD.

Intended outcome – She earns her remaining high school credits, qualifies as a lifeguard, and starts a paid summer job at a City pool.



Civic Engagement – Serving the Community Through Teen Court

Barrier – A 16-year-old needs to complete service hours assigned through Teen Court. He wants to contribute somewhere meaningful and would also like someone to talk to about stress.

Connected response – Dallas Municipal Court's Teen Court helps him identify an approved service placement, such as the West Dallas Multipurpose Center. If he wants counseling, Lone Star Justice Alliance can help connect him with Youth180, its mental health partner.

Intended outcome – He can complete his service hours, takes responsibility as a juror hearing other teens' cases, and connects with mental health counselor that he can turn to for support.



Identify youth needs → Connect teens with partners → Confirm access → Follow up on progress

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Tracking Measures Across Youth Priorities

Area	Measures to Track
Service Access	Number of youth served by each participating program across City departments
Housing Stability	Number of participating young adults who obtain stable housing
Education & Employment	Number of participants achieving the education or employment milestones specified in provider contracts
Civic Participation	Number of young people participating in commission activities, civic education, and leadership opportunities
Youth Influence	Number of youth recommendations submitted and documented City responses or resulting actions
Youth Safety	Number of youth who will be referred, served, enrolled in in post-secondary/training and earning industry recognized credentials. Average hourly wage targets are $16 per hour and $19 per hour for participants with credentials

Proposed measures are subject to confirmation of available data, reporting responsibility, and fiscal year 2027 targets.

FY27 Implementation Responsibilities

Proposed assignments and timing for deliverables

Deliverable	Responsible Party	Timing
Update the youth program inventory and identify service gaps	Office of Housing and Community Empowerment with participating departments	Nov 2026
Deliver contracted services and review provider results	Contract managers and service providers	According to contract schedules
Establish Youth Commission priorities for 2027	Youth Commission with Office of Housing and Community Empowerment staff	Feb 2027
Compile progress against agreed measures and commitments	Office of Housing and Community Empowerment	Quarterly

Office of Housing and Community Empowerment annual investment includes $326,000

IV. Committee Action

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Committee Feedback

Shared Direction for Dallas Youth

The Youth Strategic Plan translates youth input into shared priorities for targeted City and community programs. It guides coordination across departments and partners, improves access to services, and establishes a framework for tracking progress.

Committee Feedback Requested

Staff seek feedback on the plan's priorities and implementation approach, including whether to advance it to City Council for adoption or incorporate its strategies into existing City plans and departmental work.

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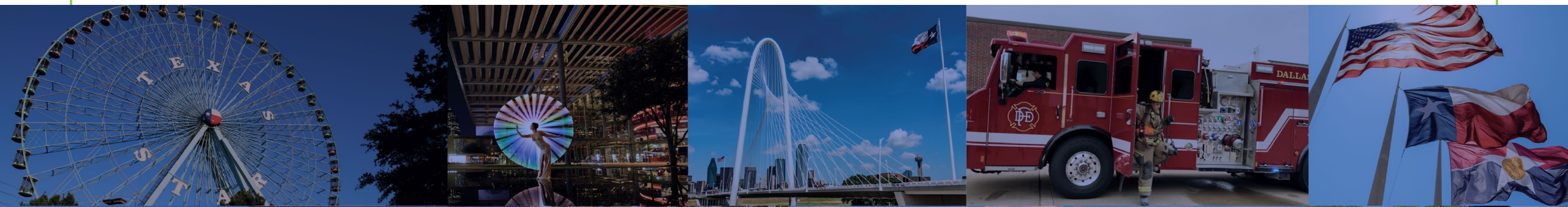
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Appendix

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Multi-Department Focus on Targeted Youth Programs

Office of Housing & Community Empowerment *Youth safety, civic engagement, housing support, and community partnerships*	**Park & Recreation** *Recreation access, enrichment, youth employment and safety*	**Dallas Public Library** *Literacy, learning, and creative opportunities*
Office of Arts & Culture *Arts education, cultural activities, and camps*	**Dallas Police Department** *Youth safety, engagement, mentoring, and career exploration*	**Municipal Court** *Youth safety, diversion and Teen Court*

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Youth Safety – Lone Star Justice Alliance

Budget Allocation	Amount	What it Procures
Helping Young People Elevate (HYPE) Center and participant support	$177,100	Staff coordinating credible messengers, care plans, case management, and stabilization support.
Community partner services	$82,900	Mental health, training, and career preparation, including $29,900 for street outreach and violence interruption.
Partner coordination	$10,000	Partner participation in referrals and coordinated services.
Administration	$30,000	Contract administration.
Total agreement	**$300,000**	**90% program costs, including coordination; 10% administration.**

Targeted Youth Programs Across City Departments

Department	Program examples	Youth Focus
Office of Housing and Community Empowerment	Youth Commission, Lone Star Justice Alliance, Transition Resource Action Center (TRAC) **Completed contracts:** Youth Guidance; Urban Specialists.	Housing stability, safety, learning, and civic participation
Park and Recreation	Teens Organized & Prepared for Success (TOPS); Teen Tech Center; Teen All Access Pass; aquatics, Teen Connect	Recreation, enrichment, and youth employment
Dallas Public Library	Literacy programs; Homework Help; Teen Fairy Tale Closet; youth poetry programs; volunteering	Learning, creative expression, civic engagement
Office of Arts and Culture	Cultural center camps; arts partner programs	Arts education and cultural participation
Dallas Police Department	Police Activities League; Junior Police Academy; Explorers, Pathways to Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) for Criminal Justice Pathway	Youth engagement and career exploration
Municipal Court	Diversion Program; Teen Court	Diversion and civic responsibility

Completed Youth Safety Partnerships

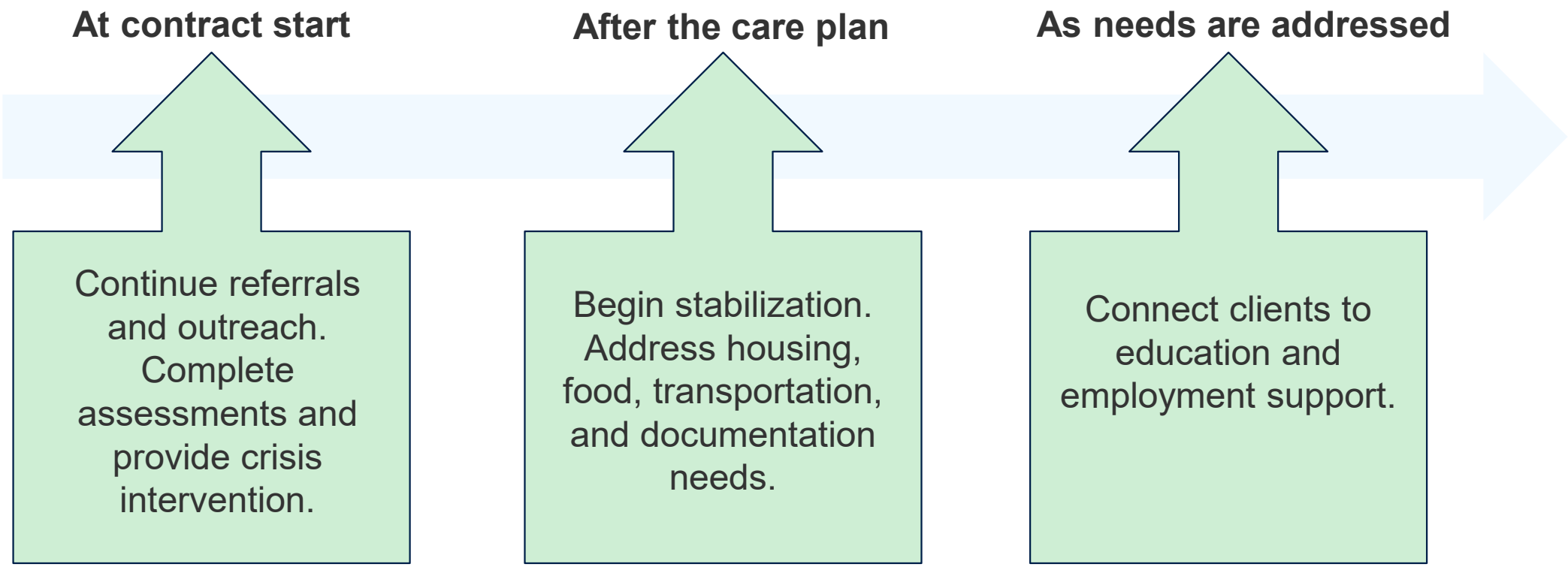
Completed OHCE contracts supported youth development, violence intervention, and connections to resources.

Provider	Services	Youth served	Reporting Period
Youth Guidance	Becoming A Man/Working On Womanhood social-emotional development and enrichment	1,620	FY 23-26
Urban Specialists	Violence intervention, victim and family support, and connections to resources	4,943	FY 24 -26

Provider totals are reported separately and do not represent a combined count of unique youth.

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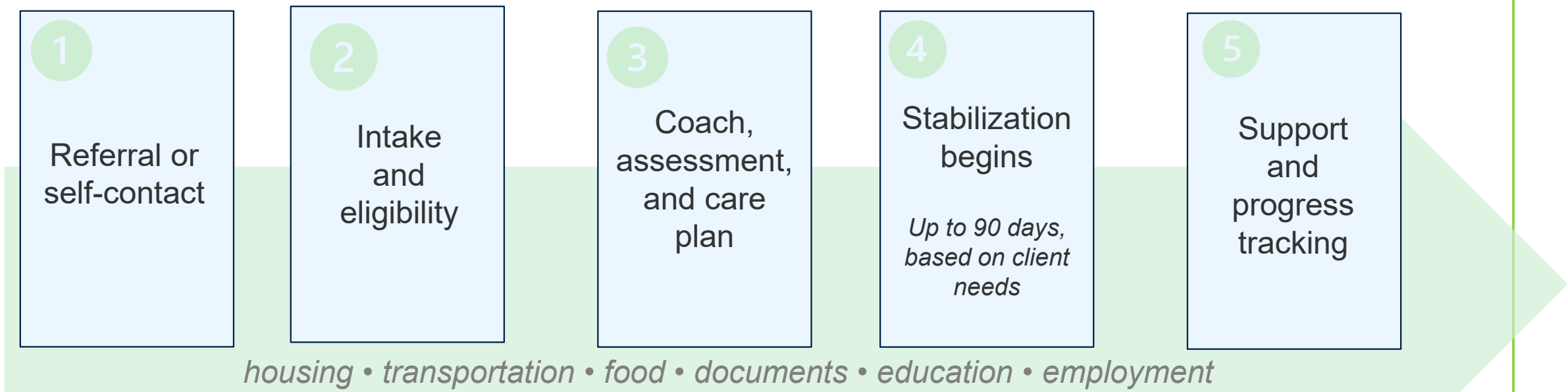
Lone Star Justice Alliance | First 90 Days: Planned Activities



Throughout the first 90 days: Coordinate credible messenger partners and track clients and services in the database.

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Lone Star Justice Alliance | First 90 Days: Client Pathway



Community partners: Credible messengers help identify needs and connect clients with resources. Youth 180; South Dallas Driving Academy; Year Up; Dallas Leadership Foundation; AES Literacy Institute; For Oak Cliff; Big Thought; Youth With Faces; T.R. Hoover CDC; Youth Guidance; Learn With Train LLC; Oak Cliff Empowerment Center; National Reengagement Initiative / Andrew Moore; and Elevate North Texas