



CONNECTED YOUTH INITIATIVE

October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025

Scope of the Report

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF) seeks to build strong, healthy families throughout Nebraska and believes that strong communities are at the core of this mission. The current report focuses on the Connected Youth Initiative, a statewide Bring Up Nebraska (BUN) public/private partnership that supports positive outcomes for youth, young adults, and young families with experience in public systems and without permanent family and/or community support.

Connected Youth Initiative (CYI) focuses efforts on supporting youth, young adults, and young parents who are aged 14 to 26 who are without permanent and/or supportive family connections, who have spent time in the foster care/child welfare system, have had formal involvement with the juvenile justice system, are homeless/near homeless, and/or are pregnant or parenting. Until September 30, 2024, CYI also served those who have experienced human trafficking. That project is covered in this report.

To understand this work, it is important to understand the theoretical underpinnings of CYI, and how the work embeds itself in the greater collective impact work of NCFF and across the Bring Up Nebraska initiative.

This report will discuss the overall theoretical approach that informs CYI's approach, how CYI embeds itself in the greater collective work of Bring Up Nebraska, the different strategies CYI takes to connect with its target population, and the outcomes of those various strategies.

This report covers CYI's work from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

Acronyms

NCFF: Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

CYI: Connected Youth Initiative

PPF: Promotive and Protective Factors

BUN: Bring Up Nebraska

Note about Data Presented in this Report:

Collecting consistent and representative data across diverse programs and projects within a collective initiative presents inherent challenges. To address these complexities, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation utilizes a variety of tailored data collection approaches and tools that reflect local and regional contexts. As of July 1, 2024, a new statewide data collection platform is being implemented, with CYI actively transitioning to this system.

During this early phase of implementation, data quality is impacted by the coexistence of legacy systems and the new platform. This transitional period has resulted in variability in data sources, which affects the representativeness of the data relative to the broader CYI participant population. Consequently, this report identifies instances where sample sizes are insufficient to support broad or conclusive findings.

Additionally, the reporting timeline for this document (July to June) differs from last year (September to October) to better align with CYI's updated reporting periods and improve consistency moving forward.

Executive Summary

The Connected Youth Initiative (CYI), led by the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF), is a statewide effort to support youth, young adults, and young parents aged 14 to 26 who lack permanent family connections and have experienced systems involvement such as foster care, juvenile justice, homelessness, and/or are pregnant or parenting. This evaluation report covers CYI's activities and outcomes from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, highlighting its impact across coaching, financial education, parenting support, leadership development, and postsecondary advancement.

Key Highlights and Impact Areas

- **CYI Coaching** served over 1,500 youth, offering strengths-based, goal-oriented support. Participants reported high levels of trust, motivation, and personal growth. Survey results showed consistently strong scores in Promotive and Protective Factors (PPFs), Hope, and Coach Relationships.
- **Parenting Support** reached 430 young parents and 474 children, emphasizing a two-generation approach that builds family resilience and economic stability.
- **Opportunity Passport™**, CYI's financial education program, engaged 153 new participants in 2024. Youth contributed over \$125,000 in savings, matched by partners for a total investment of \$528,011, enabling asset purchases such as vehicles and housing.
- **Youth Leadership and Advocacy** involved 489 participants in 61 activities, including Legislative Days, national conferences, and local chapter engagement. Youth influenced policy through platforms like the Young Adult Citizen Review Panel and the Foster Youth Bill of Rights campaign.
- **Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development (RPED) Grant** launched in October 2024, supporting cross-sector collaboration to expand access to education and career pathways for system-involved youth.

Nebraska's Statewide Prevention Effort Coordinated by Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation's Approach to Prevention

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF) envisions a Nebraska where all people live in safe, supportive environments that provide opportunities for everyone to reach their full potential and participate as valued community members. To accomplish this vision, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation works in partnership with national, state, and local community partners to improve the well-being of children, youth, young adults, and families.

Specifically, NCFF provides the overall framework, shared tools, and guiding principles for building safe, stable, and nurturing communities across Nebraska. Within that framework, community collaboratives adapt and apply these strategies locally by coordinating partners, resources, and data to meet the unique needs of families in their area. State partners play a critical role in ensuring alignment and accountability across the system. Their engagement ensures that lessons learned at the community level inform statewide strategy, funding priorities, cross-system coordination, and policy conditions that strengthen and sustain prevention efforts across Nebraska. The underlying assumption is that by strengthening these local systems, and working in partnership with state leaders, communities enhance family promotive and protective factors, leading to improved well-being for children and families (Figure 1).

Together, the network of Community Collaboratives, state partners, and NCFF make up Nebraska's Statewide Prevention System. This collective system is organized and advanced through the public-private partnership known as *Bring Up Nebraska*, which operationalizes the statewide framework through local implementation. Community Collaboratives and state partners come together through the Collective Impact Model, promoting and addressing local priorities and implementing specific targeted strategies to build Promotive and Protective Factors for all children, youth, and families.

Bring Up Nebraska, coordinated by Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, is a network working to unite a powerful group of changemakers at community, state, and national levels. This includes service providers, educators, health care professionals, law enforcement personnel, businesses, funders, policymakers, government agencies, and most importantly, parents and youth.

Together, *Bring Up Nebraska* aims to build the strongest Statewide Prevention System in the nation through the power of Community Collaboratives and coordinated state partnerships. To do this, the network has co-created a Statewide Plan for Community Well-Being which is a unified framework guiding prevention efforts. The Bring Up Nebraska Statewide Plan for Community Well-Being is a comprehensive, community-driven plan designed to ensure that all children, youth, young adults, caregivers, and families in Nebraska can thrive. It is built on a prevention-focused model that emphasizes local leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and data-informed strategies to address challenges before they become crises.

The purpose of this plan is for Nebraska to create, implement, and sustain the most robust community well-being prevention model in the nation, by aligning local and state efforts to improve outcomes for children, youth, young adults, caregivers and families.

Figure 1



Nebraska's shared goals, as outlined in the plan, are as follows:

1. Strengthen collaboration among youth and young adults, parents and caregivers, community members, system partners, school districts, and Community Collaboratives to support community-driven approaches to well-being.
2. Strengthen statewide collaboration to support community-driven approaches to well-being and foster shared responsibility among partners.
3. Enhance access to and quality of educational programs, mental health services, and community resources that build Protective and Promotive Factors in thriving children, youth, young adults, families, caregivers, and communities.
4. Develop and strengthen a quality workforce of those supporting the Community Well-Being system in Nebraska.

Community Collaboratives

The Statewide Plan for Community Well-Being calls for building a comprehensive Statewide Prevention System that serves Nebraskans across the lifespan. Community Collaboratives form the foundation of that system, providing the local infrastructure to braid resources, build capacity, and ensure prevention strategies are accessible in every corner of the state. Utilizing a Collective Impact model Community Collaboratives align partners, set shared priorities, and coordinate resources, while also responding to the immediate needs of children, youth, and families through direct connection to supports and services.

A fully developed prevention system, anchored in Collaboratives, extends across the lifespan from early childhood to adulthood. It does so by leveraging multi-sector partnerships and diverse public and private funding streams. While many resources focus on families with children under 18, Collaborative-led efforts ensure communities can meet the needs of individuals and families at every stage of life, reducing risk and building resilience across Nebraska. The Connected Youth Initiative is the statewide effort, connected to collaboratives, that supports youth, young adults, and young parents who are aged 14 to 26 who lack traditional supports as they work toward stability and independence.

Central Navigation

Central Navigation is the component of the local community prevention system through which parents, community members, and youth and young adults are matched to services. In addition to direct service to community members, Central Navigation is the intersection point where community partners collaborate to enhance community capacity through training, and to identify and address barriers to thriving. Through Central Navigation and Coaching, local community prevention systems coordinate existing resources within a community to help children, young adults, and families address immediate needs, as well as increase Promotive and Protective Factors in the long-term. This is meant to not only serve participants directly, but also to build workforce capacity and to address larger, systemic issues that pose barriers to thriving people and thriving communities.

Each community-based network is unique but typically includes a variety of partners, such as mental and physical health care providers, child-care services, faith-based and civic organizations, and school systems. As members of the community, youth and young adults engaging with CYI can include interacting with Central Navigators as part of the Bring Up Nebraska Network.

Connected Youth Initiative

The Connected Youth Initiative (CYI) is a statewide effort led by Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF) to support older youth, young adults, and young parents, particularly those with experience in foster care, juvenile justice, or other systems. CYI's mission is to prevent repeated system involvement and promote long-term well-being by strengthening Promotive and Protective Factors (PPFs) through coordinated, developmentally appropriate services.

CYI's work is organized around two strategic goals:

Statewide Collaboration and Infrastructure:

CYI supports and sustains a statewide prevention system by:

- Fostering formal and informal partnerships through a Collective Impact framework.
- Leveraging public and private funding to expand local capacity.
- Scaling the CYI Model with training and technical assistance for the well-being workforce to ensure fidelity and quality.
- Promoting youth work as essential to prevention and well-being.
- Expanding access to trainings (e.g., Youth and Families Thrive, Speakers Bureau, Back on Track).
- Strengthening local infrastructure and leadership capacity.
- Elevating youth voice in policy and advocacy across Nebraska.

Individual and Family Well-being:

CYI ensures youth have access to high-quality, strengths-based services that build PPFs and support growth:

- CYI Coaching helps youth set and pursue self-directed goals aligned with their values.
- Concrete supports and referrals connect youth to housing, education, employment, healthcare, and basic needs.
- Parenting supports strengthen family relationships and resilience.
- Leadership and advocacy pathways empower youth to influence systems and policies.
- Financial literacy and education promote economic stability and mobility.
- CYI's approach is rooted in youth empowerment, community collaboration, and evidence-informed practices, connecting Nebraska's young people with the tools, relationships, and opportunities they need to thrive.

CYI Strategies and Outcomes

The Connected Youth Initiative (CYI) uses a flexible, participant-centered approach to support youth, young adults, and young families in avoiding repeated system involvement. CYI's strategies operate at both the statewide and individual levels with participants engaging voluntarily and accessing services as needed.

Table 1

CYI Strategies	
Core Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotive and Protective Factors (PPFs)• Collective Impact• Youth and Families Thrive (YFT)• Youth-led advocacy
Strategic Goal 1: Statewide Collaboration & Infrastructure	Build and sustain a statewide prevention system through partnerships, funding, training, and youth-centered advocacy.
Statewide Collaboration & Infrastructure Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen Collective Impact networks connecting collaboratives, schools, and community organizations• Leverage public/private funding and partnership with system partners• Scale CYI Model with training & technical assistance• Promote youth work as prevention• Expand access to targeted trainings• Strengthen local infrastructure and leadership capacity• Elevate youth voice in policy and advocacy
Strategic Goal 2: Individual & Family Well-being	Ensure youth have access to high-quality, strengths-based services that build PPFs and support personal growth.
Individual & Family Well-being Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement CYI Coaching• Provide concrete supports and referrals• Support multi-generational family resilience• Develop youth leadership and advocacy pathways• Promote financial literacy and economic mobility
Outcomes Sought	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased youth stability and self-sufficiency• Stronger community infrastructure• Youth empowerment and leadership• Prevention of system re-entry

The Theory Behind the Work

The Connected Youth Initiative (CYI) is built on two foundational concepts: Hope and Promotive and Protective Factors (PPF). These concepts guide CYI's mission to strengthen youth and families across Nebraska.

- **Promotive and Protective Factors (PPF)** refer to the strengths, supports, and resources that contribute to healthy development and well-being. Promotive Factors encourage positive growth and achievement, while Protective Factors help maintain stability and support individuals in navigating life's challenges.
- **Hope**, as defined by Snyder et al. (1991), is a cognitive framework involving goal-directed energy and the perceived ability to find pathways to achieve those goals. It reflects a person's motivation and confidence in shaping their future.

CYI works to enhance these factors by funding and supporting programs that build hope and reinforce PPFs within the communities it serves. These initiatives include services such as education, housing, employment readiness, and mental health support.

CYI consulted external evaluators for a formal impact evaluation of CYI 2016 to 2020. This evaluation connects CYI's theoretical foundation to real-world outcomes.

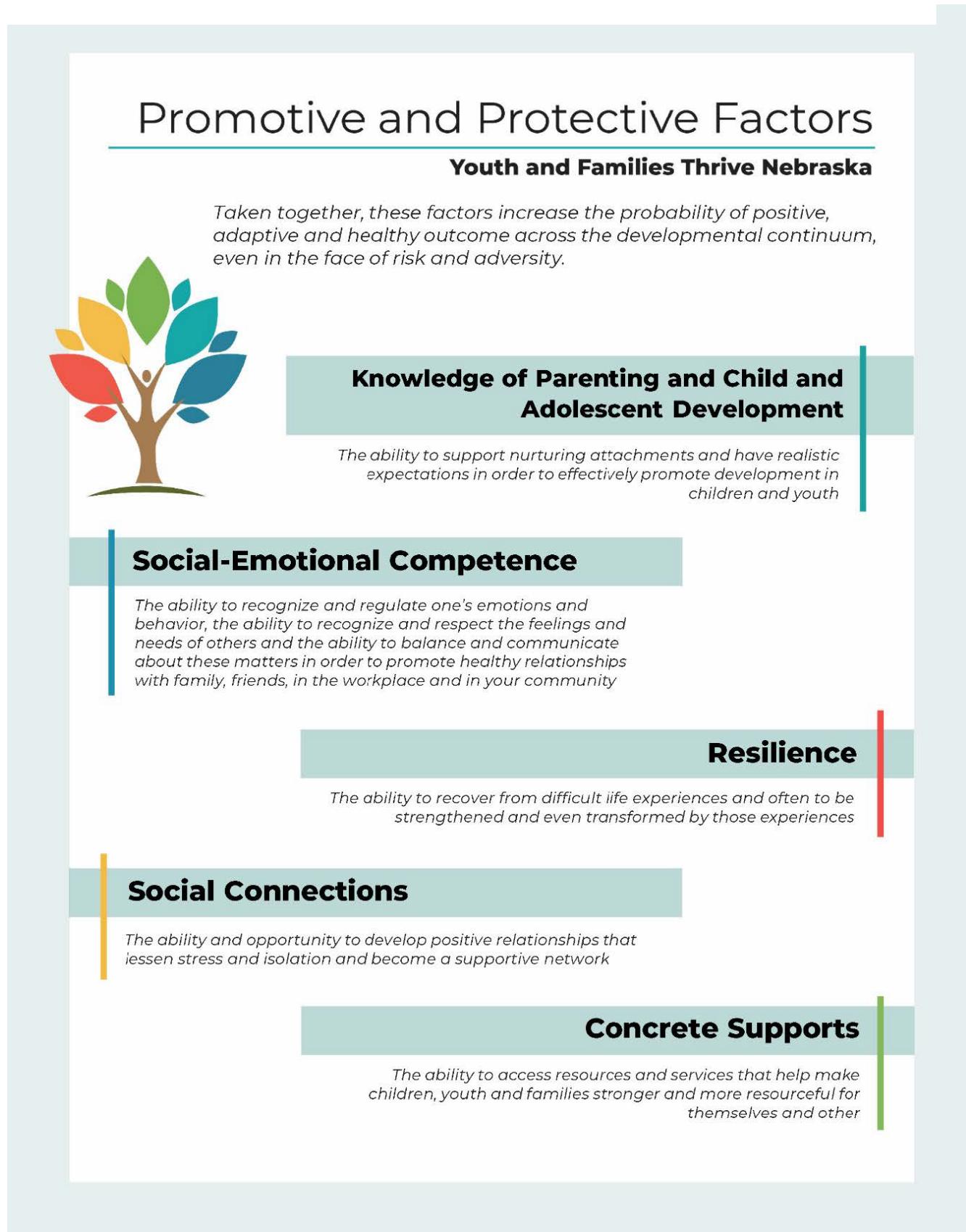
Promotive and Protective Factors

Promotive and Protective Factors are key elements that support healthy development, well-being, and long-term success for individuals, especially youth and families. Promotive Factors are the strengths, opportunities, and resources that actively support positive development, goal achievement, and overall well-being.

Promotive Factors enhance growth, build capacity, and create momentum toward thriving. Protective Factors are supports that help individuals maintain stability and navigate life's challenges. They reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes by reinforcing resilience and providing buffers against stressors. By enhancing Promotive and Protective Factors, youth and young adults are more likely to have the relationships, resources, and knowledge to navigate the world successfully and thrive.

Information about Promotive and Protective Factors can be found here: [Youth and Families Thrive : Training : Connected Youth Initiative](#) and [Youth Thrive - Center for the Study of Social Policy](#).

Figure 2: Promotive and Protective Factors



Hope

Over the past few decades, hope has evolved from a vague emotional concept into a measurable psychological construct. Psychologist C.R. Snyder and his team (1991) developed the Hope Theory, which views hope not merely as wishful thinking, but as a cognitive-motivational system. According to this theory, hope consists of two key components:

- **Agency Thinking**— the motivational aspect; a person's determination or willpower to achieve goals.
- **Pathways Thinking**— the perceived ability to generate routes or strategies to reach those goals.

Together, these components form the basis of the Hope Scale, which measures an individual's level of hope by assessing both their goal-directed energy and their confidence in navigating obstacles.

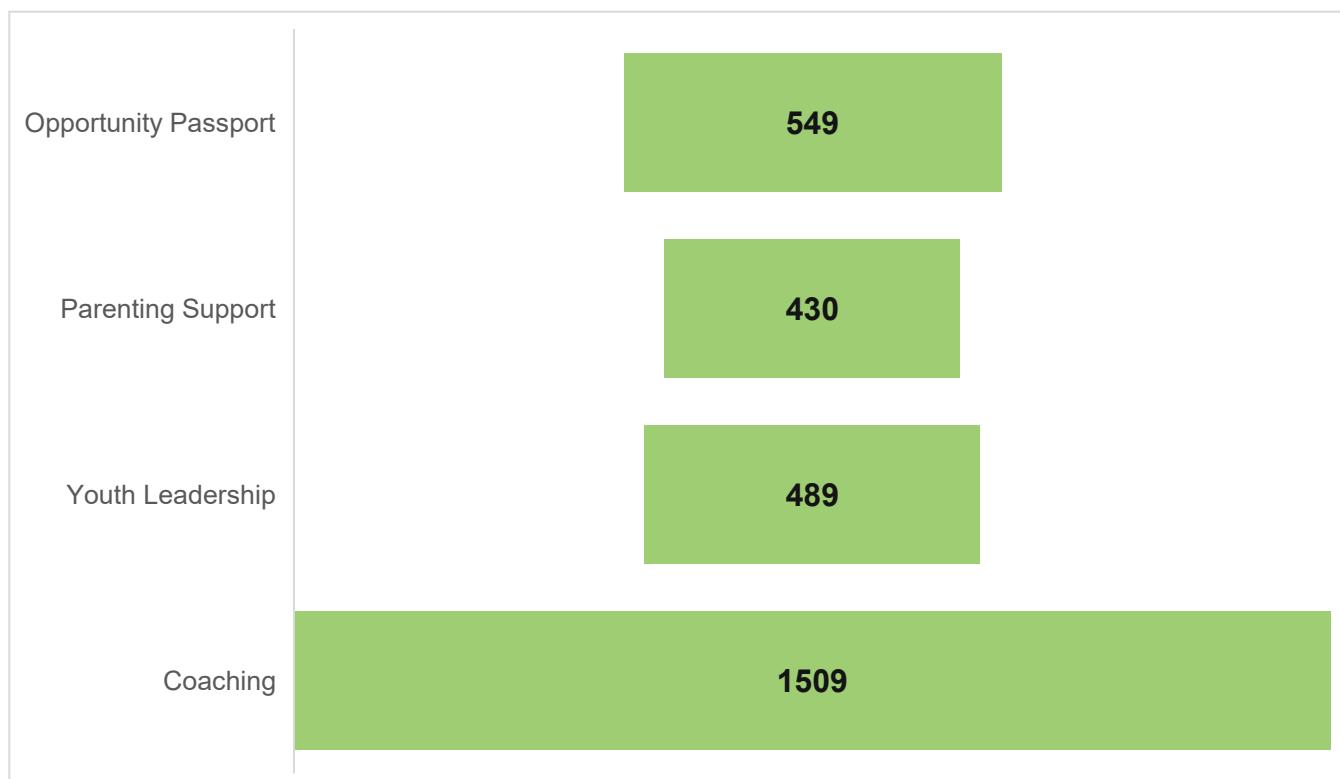
Hope allows youth and young adults to fully engage in the work necessary to become independent adults (Guse & Shaw, 2018; Schnornick et al. 2023; Ahmed & Duhamel 1994.; Mattis & Hellman, Chan, n.d.; Pleeging, 2022; Rand & Touza, 2021; Rose 2022).

Participation in CYI

CYI follows a “no wrong door” approach, meaning participants can enter through multiple access points. Once engaged, Central Navigators or CYI Coaches help identify participant-defined needs and connect them to appropriate resources.

Participants may engage in more than one strategy. The 'Participation by CYI Strategy' figure (Figure 3) presents the total number of participants involved in each strategy; however, individuals may be represented in multiple categories if they participated in more than one strategy. Figure 3 shows the number of participants across strategies.

Figure 4: Participation by CYI Strategy 2024-2025



Central Navigation

Central Navigation is a component of the Bring Up Nebraska Network through which youth and young adults are matched to developmentally appropriate services. Those who engage with Central Navigation are those who need access to community resources to thrive. CYI youth have access to this statewide prevention system, unlocking concrete supports and access to resources they might otherwise lack.

CYI Coaching

CYI Coaching is a voluntary, goal-oriented, strengths-based, and participant-driven case management approach. All eligible CYI participants are encouraged to work with a coach and many do. Coaching is available to young people up to age 26, and they can enter/exit as needed throughout their transition to adulthood. This allows youth and young adults to get connected to supportive services, build socio-emotional competencies, build social connections, and enhance protective and promotive factors.

Young people are truly in the driver's seat when they participate in CYI coaching. They determine how often and how intensely they engage with their coach. Coaches can provide objective perspective; they have no incentive (beyond the best interest of the participant) to choose one program over the other. Trust is established between the coach and the participant; this trust in and of itself can be the first step toward social-emotional growth.

Coaches participate in ongoing technical assistance to maintain fidelity to the CYI coaching model. CYI coaching strategies include:

- **Jobs for the Future's Back on Track™** framework to support young people pursuing postsecondary and career outcomes.
- **Youth and Families Thrive™**, a practice developed by NCFF in partnership with the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP).
- **Your Money, Your Goals**, a financial empowerment toolkit to help participants get on track financially.
- **Reaching Teens** toolkit, which focuses on trauma-informed practices aimed at reducing additional trauma on youth and their families.
- **Keys to Your Financial Future** – a curriculum developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. It helps young people—ages 16 to 26 who are, or will soon be, facing adult responsibilities—build the financial skills they need. Through interactive activities, the curriculum aims to empower young people to make informed decisions about their financial lives.

Collectively, these strategies and the training associated with them give CYI Coaches a variety of approaches that help them best address the needs of CYI participants. These approaches allow CYI Coaches to put practices in place that support Protective and Promotive Factors in youth and young adults.

From July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 over 1,500 youth received coaching services as a part of CYI (Table 2). Participants who responded to the survey were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences.

Who Participated in CYI Coaching?

NCFF contracts with coaching provider Central Plains Center for Services. During the 2024–2025 reporting period, **1,509 young people participated in CYI Coaching through Central Plains**. Figure 4 illustrates the range of age groups that CYI supports; while CYI Coaching primarily serves youth and young adults under 22, a substantial number of participants are 22 or older, which shows engagement with young adults.

During the 2024–2025 evaluation year, 430 coaching participants reported being pregnant or parenting, which is an increase from the previous year. This can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Age Groups of CYI Coaching Participants July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

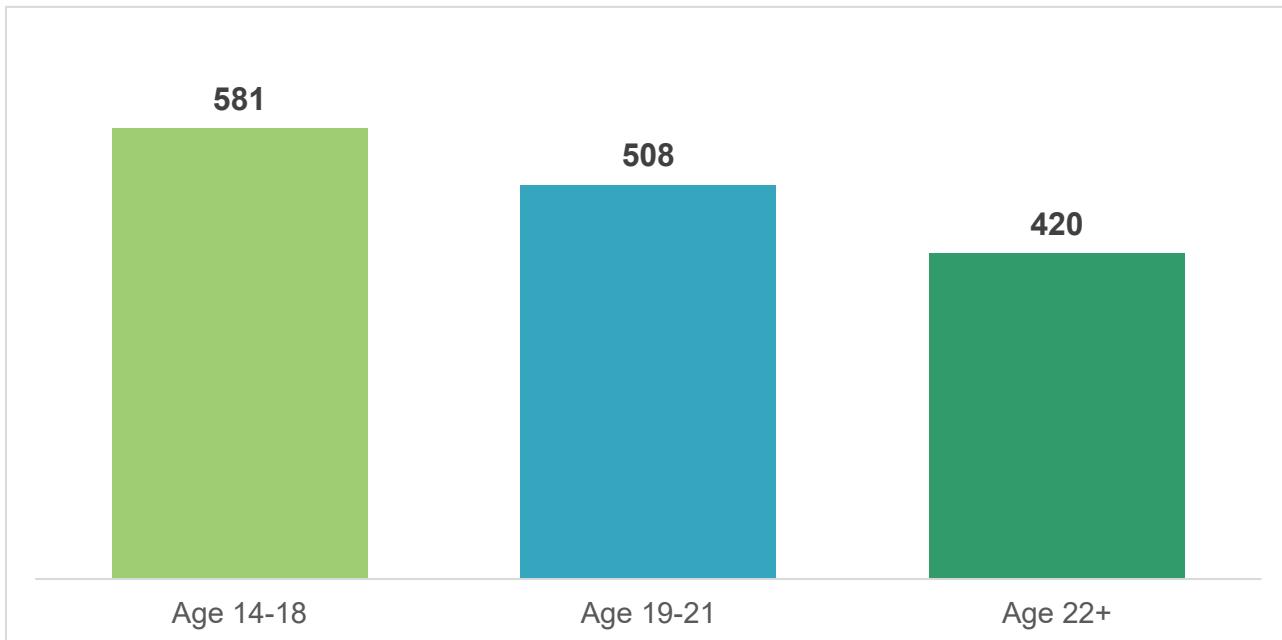
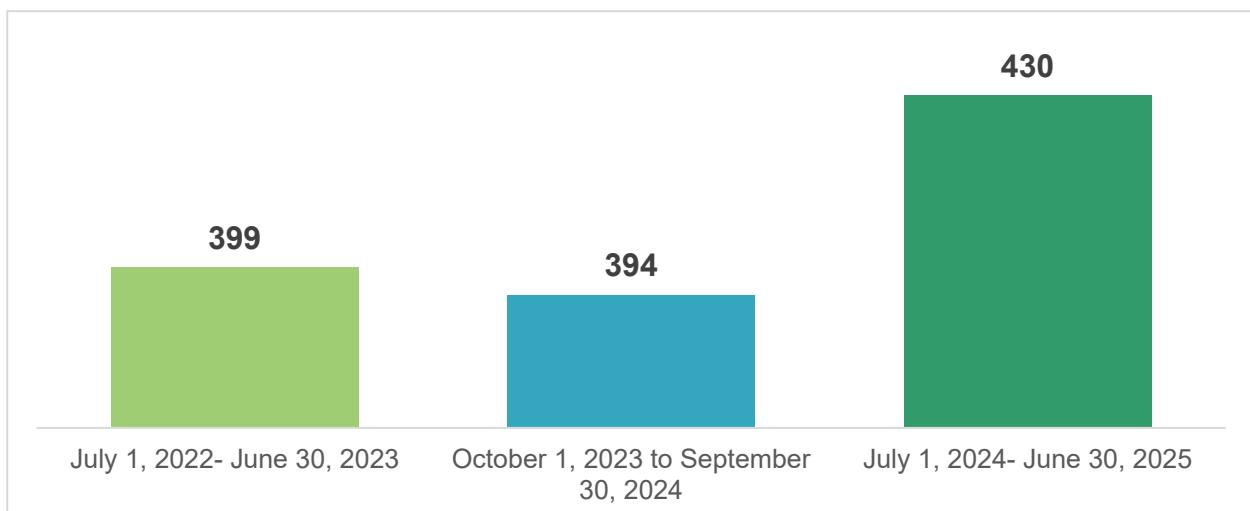


Figure 6: Parents Served by CYI Coaching: Year-Over-Year



CYI Promotive and Protective Factors, Hope and Youth-Coach Relationship Survey Overview

Twice a year (April and October), all participants in CYI coaching are encouraged to complete the CYI Coaching Survey. Participants who complete this comprehensive survey are given a \$20¹ incentive payment. This survey is administered with two tools: The Youth Thrive™ Promotive and Protective Factors Survey, developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, which evaluates five key promotive and protective factors (See Figure 1) and Qualtrics, which is used to administer a modified version of the Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1996), gather insights into the youth-coach relationship across several domains, and collect open-ended feedback about participants' coaching experiences. Additional details about the CYI Coaching Survey can be found in the Appendix.

Overview of Survey Participants

All individuals who completed the survey were CYI Coaching Participants. However, survey participation was voluntary rather than mandatory, meaning not all CYI Coaching Participants chose to respond. Because participation in coaching varied between April and October, with some participants entering and others exiting during that time, the group of survey respondents may not fully capture the perspectives of the entire coaching population. No statistical analysis was conducted to determine how closely the respondent group represents the overall CYI Coaching group. Additionally, because participants must switch between tools (the CSSP survey and the Qualtrics survey), some participants only completed half of the overall measurement. That said, the majority of active CYI Coaching Participants in the month the survey was taken did complete both parts of the survey.

Limitations of Analysis

These surveys reflect participant perspectives at a single point in time. While participants are invited to complete the survey twice a year, no baseline data is collected prior to the start of coaching, making it difficult to determine the degree of change attributable to coaching. In addition, because unique identifiers are not used, it is not possible to track individual participants' responses across time points for direct comparison.

Despite these challenges, comparisons could be made for 192 participants who completed the CSSP Promotive and Protective portion of the survey at both time points. This subgroup, however, was not statistically representative of either the April or October respondent groups. For example, results indicate what changed for these 192 people, but no conclusions can be drawn about the full group who took the survey. Those who completed both surveys may have been more engaged or consistent participants, meaning their experiences might not reflect those of people who only took the survey once. Furthermore, across the CSSP PPF domains, no statistically significant differences were found between time points for this subgroup.

Considerations for Interpretation

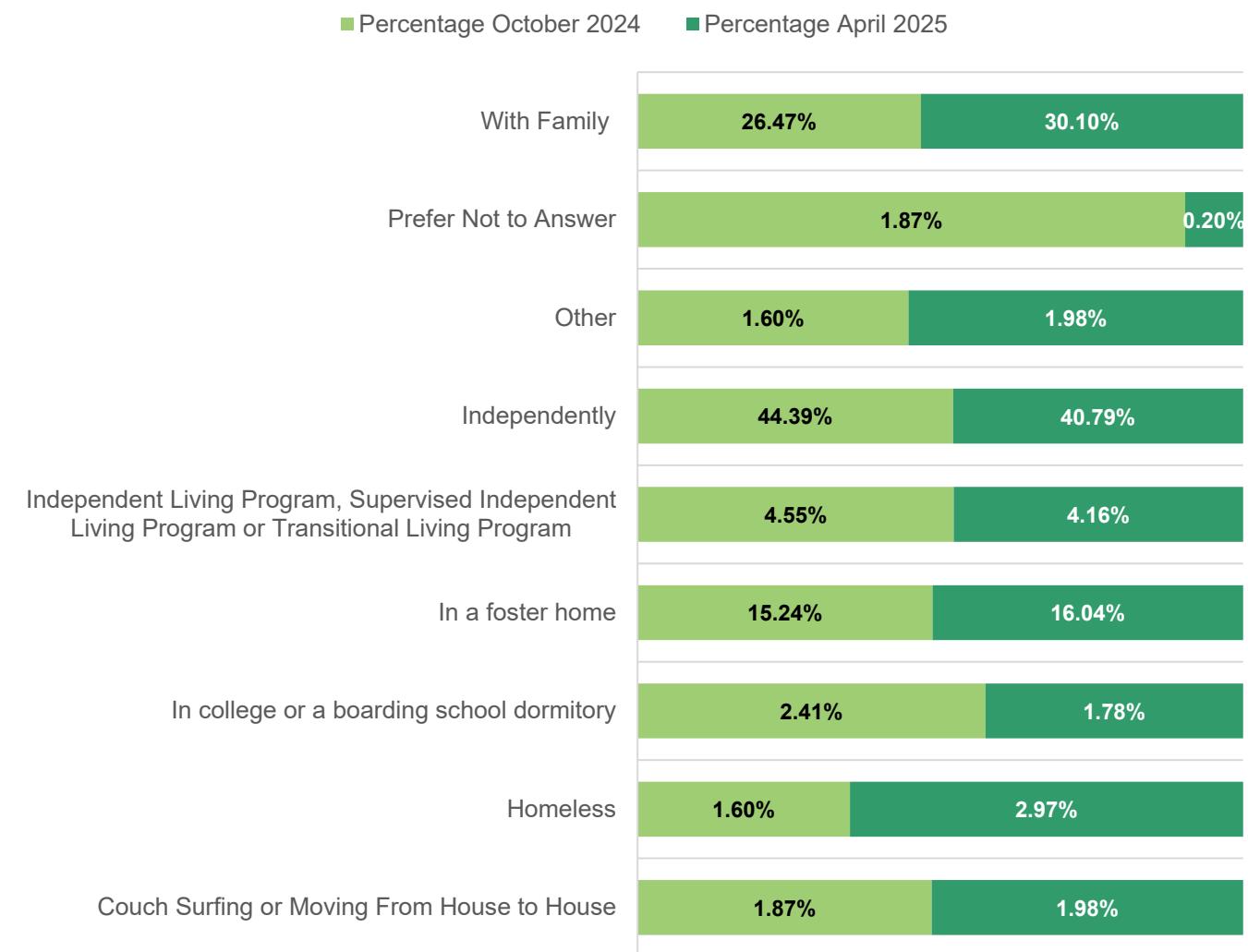
Findings should be understood as descriptive of the experiences of respondents, rather than representative of all CYI Coaching Participants. The results provide useful insights into participant perspectives but should not be generalized without caution.

Survey Construct: Promotive and Protective Factors (PPF)

Participation Overview of CSSP PPF Survey

Figure 6 describes the housing status of the participants who took the CYI CSSP Survey. The majority of participants live independently or with family members. The second largest group of participants reported being in a foster care home at the time of the survey.

Figure 7: CSSP Survey Participants: Housing Status



Results of CSSP PPF Survey

Scores for the PPF scales were relatively high overall. Response options for each item in the scales were 1= “Not at all like me,” 2= “A little like me,” 3= “Sort of like me,” 4= “A lot like me,” and 5= “Very much like me.” Over 500 youth (n=505) completed the PPF survey in April 2025 and 374 completed the survey in October 2024. Average scores on each PPF factor were consistent across the April and October administrations, with average Resilience, Social Connections, and Social and Emotional Competence ratings between “Sort of like me” and “A lot like me.” Average ratings for Adolescent Development and Concrete Supports were between “A lot like me” and “Very much like me.” (Table 2). **The data indicates generally positive trends in promotive and protective factors over the six-month period, with most scales showing slight improvements.** These findings suggest that interventions or environmental changes during this time may have contributed to enhanced well-being and support among participants.

Table 2

Promotive and Protective Scores - Averages from CSSP Survey		
Promotive and Protective Factors Scales	October 2024 Average Scores (N=374)	April 2025 Average Scores (N=505)
Resilience	3.77	3.81
Social Connections	4.0	4.06
Adolescent Development	4.22	4.25
Concrete Supports	4.17	4.14
Social and Emotional Competence	3.95	4.01

Scale: 1= “Not at all like me,” 2= “A little like me,” 3= “Sort of like me,” 4= “A lot like me,” and 5= “Very much like me.”

Survey Construct: Hope

Results of Trait Hope Scale: A modified version of the Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1996) was used to measure participants' sense of hope in October 2024 and again in April 2025. Participants generally reported feeling hopeful at both times.

In October 2024, the average Hope Score was 52.17 out of a possible 64, while in April 2025 the average was 51.54. Scores ranged from 26 to 64 in October and 11 to 64 in April. The number of participants completing the Hope Scale increased from 322 in October to 475 in April.

Among the 180 participants who completed the Hope Scale at both time points, scores were slightly higher in October than in April, though the difference was not statistically significant. Overall, this suggests that participants' levels of hope remained consistently positive over time.

Survey Construct: Youth-Coach Relationship

As part of our ongoing commitment to understanding and strengthening the coaching experience, youth participants complete a relationship quality survey every six months. This tool assesses key dimensions of the coaching relationship, including comfort, trust, encouragement, and communication. Surveys were administered in October 2024 (n=374) and April 2025 (n=505). Due to fluctuations in program participation, the respondents at each time point do not represent a fixed cohort. However, the data provides valuable insight into overall trends in relationship quality.

Across both time points, youth reported consistently strong and positive relationships with their coaches. The composite “Relationship with Coach” score remained high, with an average of 55.34 in October 2024 and 55.77 in April 2025 (out of a possible 60). Item-level responses further underscore the strength and stability of these relationships:

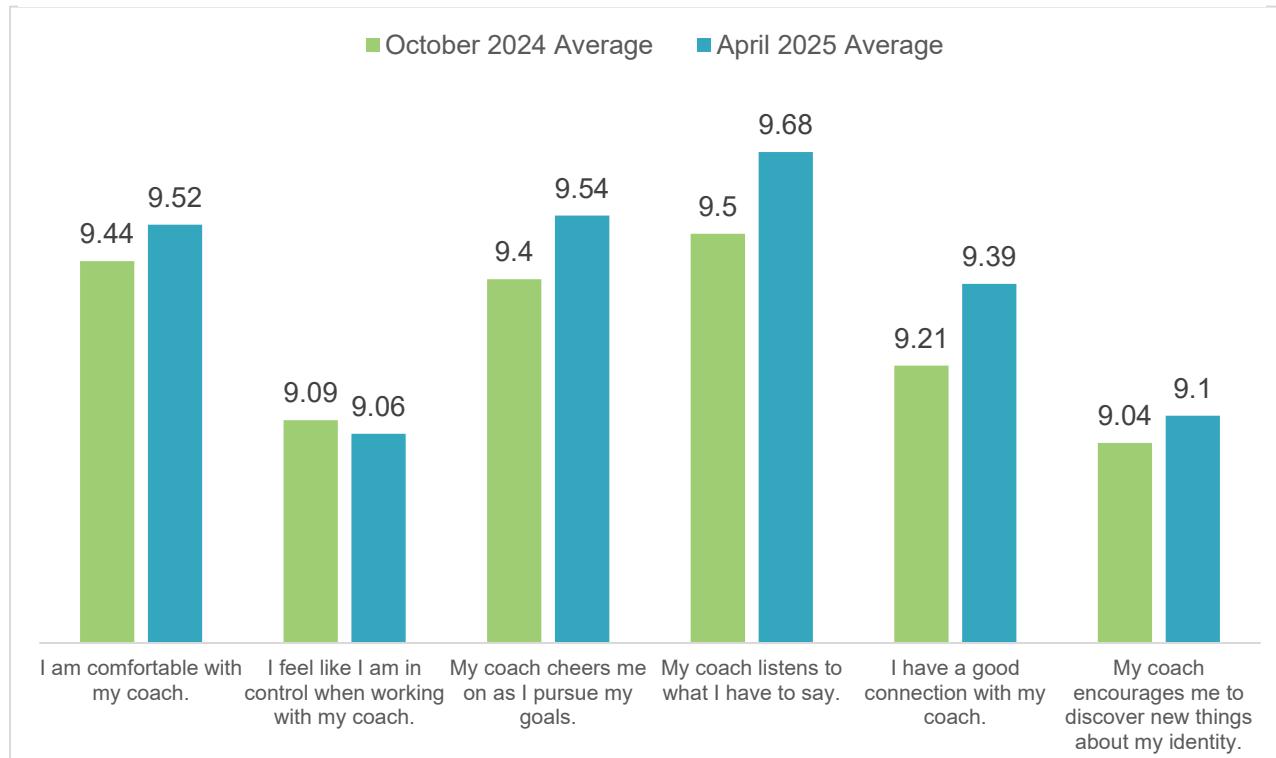
Table 3 shows that at both time points, youth most frequently reported that their coach listens to them, cheers them on and that they are comfortable with their coach. **These results demonstrate a stable pattern of high-quality, supportive coaching relationships over time.** The consistently high scores across both survey periods support the effectiveness of the coaching model in fostering trust, motivation, and a sense of empowerment among participating youth and young adults.

Table 3

CYI Youth-Coach Relationship Survey Results		
Survey Item	October 2024 Average Scores	April 2025 Average Scores
I am comfortable with my coach.	9.44	9.52
I feel like I am in control when working with my coach.	9.09	9.06
My coach cheers me on as I pursue my goals.	9.4	9.54
My coach listens to what I have to say.	9.5	9.68
I have a good connection with my coach.	9.21	9.39
My coach encourages me to discover new things about my identity.	9.04	9.1

All responses were collected using a 10-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree" and 10 represents "Strongly Agree."

Figure 8: Youth-Coach Relationships Averages from Survey



Domain: Participation Impact and Advice

As part of our commitment to elevating participant voice, we included open-ended questions in both our October 2024 and April 2025 surveys. These responses offer insights into the impact of our programming and the experiences of those we serve.

1. Advice to Coaches

Participants were asked: “What advice would you give your coach?”

- October 2024:
 - 277 responses
 - Over 100 participants offered encouragement such as “Keep it up”
 - The majority of comments were positive, reflecting strong relationships and satisfaction with coaching support
- April 2025:
 - 394 responses
 - 120 participants responded with “No advice” or “None,”
 - Again, the majority of feedback was affirming and appreciative

These responses highlight the value participants place on their coaches and suggest a high level of engagement and satisfaction with the support they receive.

2. Personal Pride and Progress

Participants were also asked: “Over the last 6 months, what are you most proud of?” Answers included purchasing new assets such as cars, learning to budget, getting jobs, earning degrees, learning how to be a better parent, learning financial skills, gaining more independence, obtaining stable housing, improving the relationships in their lives, maintaining sobriety, and gaining life skills.

- October 2024:
 - 318 responses
 - Notable reflections included:
 - “Graduating high school and being the first in my family to attend college”
 - “I have been able to get back on my feet and accomplish things that I hadn't been able to do before. I feel like I have changed to make myself better.”
 - “Keeping a steady job and doing more things with my son”
 - “I'm most proud of how far I have come in my journey, I'm proud that I know who I am and can be myself. I'm also proud that I know when I want to accomplish a goal I will push myself towards it. I'm really happy about all the progress I've made”
- April 2025:
 - 428 responses
 - Highlights included:
 - “Over the last 6 months there is so much I am proud of I went from being a broken weak homeless girl to knowing I belong and finding what I want in my future I have gotten my own apartment! Joined the YESI youth action board gotten my CNA and

phlebotomy license gotten my driver's license and I'm close to my 2,000 dollars to match with opportunity passport hopefully a week or two before graduation starting next year I will be going to get my BSN at the UNK and I would have never ever gotten this chance if it weren't for PALS I am forever grateful for the opportunity to work with this program and my amazing coach!"

- "Finally getting housing permanently not being homeless anymore been successful and staying off of drugs and I'm very proud of my pass coach"
- "I am proud of my grades and how hard I have been working to get where I want to be. I am also very proud of my adaptiveness and how I can become comfortable even in uncomfortable situations."
- "I graduated with me CNA and MA certifications"
- "Taking care of my baby by myself and just being the best mom getting a new place"
- "That I have a great support to help me reach and keep me on the path to my goals. I feel like i can express any concern with my worker and accomplish what i need to get my future set for me."
- "I bought myself a car with the match, I am doing phenomenal in school, I got many awards in speech and one act, I found out the career path I want to take, and that I pulled myself out of a sticky situation."

These responses reflect deep personal transformation, resilience, and forward momentum—core outcomes that align with our mission and demonstrate the long-term impact of our work.

Summary of Survey Results

Overall, findings from the CYI Coaching Survey demonstrate consistently strong outcomes across key areas of youth well-being. Participants continue to demonstrate strong promotive and protective factors, a sustained sense of hope, and consistently positive relationships with their coaches. Scores across all domains remained high and stable between October 2024 and April 2025, suggesting that youth feel supported, motivated, and connected. Qualitative feedback reinforced these results, with many participants expressing pride in their personal growth and appreciation for the encouragement and guidance provided by their coaches. While results should be interpreted as descriptive rather than representative, the overall patterns suggest that the CYI Coaching model continues to foster trust, resilience, and meaningful progress toward positive life goals among participating youth.

Parenting Support

At NCFF, in partnership with Central Plains Center for Services, support a two-generation, whole-family approach that meets young parents where they are and supports them in building the future they want for themselves and their children. The CYI coaching model is designed to help pregnant and parenting young adults access the education and training they need to secure and keep employment, or to prepare for and enter post-secondary education. It also provides financial education, leadership development, and other supports that complement their own efforts toward self-sufficiency and long-term financial stability. **Strong families start with strong foundations.**

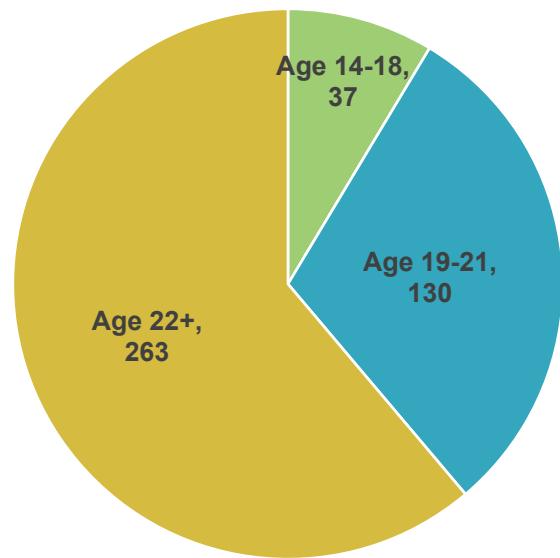
With CYI Coaching, young parents have access to high-quality early childhood education and opportunities to engage in developmentally appropriate activities. These supports help parents grow their confidence and capacity to nurture their children. Through personalized coaching, participants learn how to set goals and move toward them in a way that's measurable, intentional, and tailored to their unique circumstances. This work strengthens the well-being of the whole family. When young parents and their children are supported in building strong family bonds and healthy community connections, they can thrive.

During this evaluation period, **430 parents were served.** **Figure 8** shows that the majority of those parents were over the age of 22. **474 children were served.**

In the CYI Coaching Surveys administered in April and October, many respondents mentioned “parenting” as a theme in their responses to the question, “*Over the last six months, what are you most proud of?*” In October 2024, 24 out of the 318 respondents answered this way, and in April 2025, 38 out of the 428 respondents answered this way. Examples include:

- “Building a stable environment for my son and I”
- “Taking care of my baby by myself and just being the best mom getting a new place”
- “Moving, having my baby, and getting CNA class done”
- “My baby and what I have done for her and my self”
- “getting my own place, a car and my kids back”
- “Over the last 6 months I’ve fought and fought to see my daughter again. Today I now have joint custody being able to see her Tuesday, Thursdays, and every other weekend”
- “I am proud of how resilient I have been through my endeavors. Saving money, finding a job, and getting stuff for my baby.”
- The fact that I got my kids back and got cps out of my life.”
- “I got my own place with the help of Amy. somewhere my son and I can call home. shortly after I gave birth to my second son in January and then a month ago I went back to work and I am finally starting to feel like I don’t have to depend on anyone but myself. And I finally bought myself a car!”
- “The progress I have made in such a short time after finding out I was pregnant, getting a new job, a new place and in a much better mental state.”

Figure 9: Ages of Young Adults Accessing Parenting Support



- “I’m most proud of the progress I have been making to reach my goals and give my girls a better life”
- “Over the last 6 months I went from having no job no car being homeless no hope no achievements, to now working my way to getting a job having a vehicle being able to live in a home with my children. As well as getting back into therapy and working on my issues.”
- “getting a car through opportunity passport, about to get my own place and getting my boys back”
- “Getting through the struggles as a teen mother and raising a happy baby!”
- “Becoming more independent and confident with myself. Starting a new part time job to support my 3 daughters and our needs.”

These responses highlight how many participants view parenting as a central source of pride and motivation. Their comments reflect progress toward stability, independence, and resilience are often tied to creating safe, nurturing environments for their children. This theme highlights the importance of family connection and personal growth as meaningful outcomes of CYI’s support.

Opportunity Passport – Financial Education

Opportunity Passport™ (OPP), a program developed by the [Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative®](#), is the primary CYI strategy implemented around Financial Education. OPP connects young people in CYI with essential financial literacy and match-savings opportunities as they transition into adulthood, equipping them with tools for planning for the future and saving money for important expenses, while learning critical financial skills. OPP offers to match savings from youth (up to 3:1), giving them a critical chance to manage finances, interact with mainstream banking systems, and set aside money for purchasing assets. Opportunity Passport™ participants in Nebraska who have met their savings goals have made a variety of asset purchases, including vehicles and payments on mortgages/housing, as well as paying for college tuition, credit repair and reduction, investments, and business start-up costs.

Theory Behind Opportunity Passport

When youth and young adults who have grown up in poverty and developed a poverty mindset gain exposure to financial literacy that challenges their previous beliefs, their thinking and behavior can undergo significant positive changes (Nadon, 2020; Salazar et al., 2021; Scannapieco et al., 2016; Trejos-Castillo et al., 2015). By understanding the value of money, recognizing the importance of building a relationship with financial institutions, and learning how responsible financial management can enhance their lives, young adults served by CYI can fundamentally transform their relationship with money.

By integrating financial literacy with CYI coaching, OPP offers a personalized approach that helps young people reevaluate their attitudes toward spending money and earning it. Young people are empowered to make their own financial decisions, opening the opportunity to improve their sense of agency. Coaches provide insight and financial guidance so that young people recognize resources and opportunities to improve their lives.

Participation in Opportunity Passport™

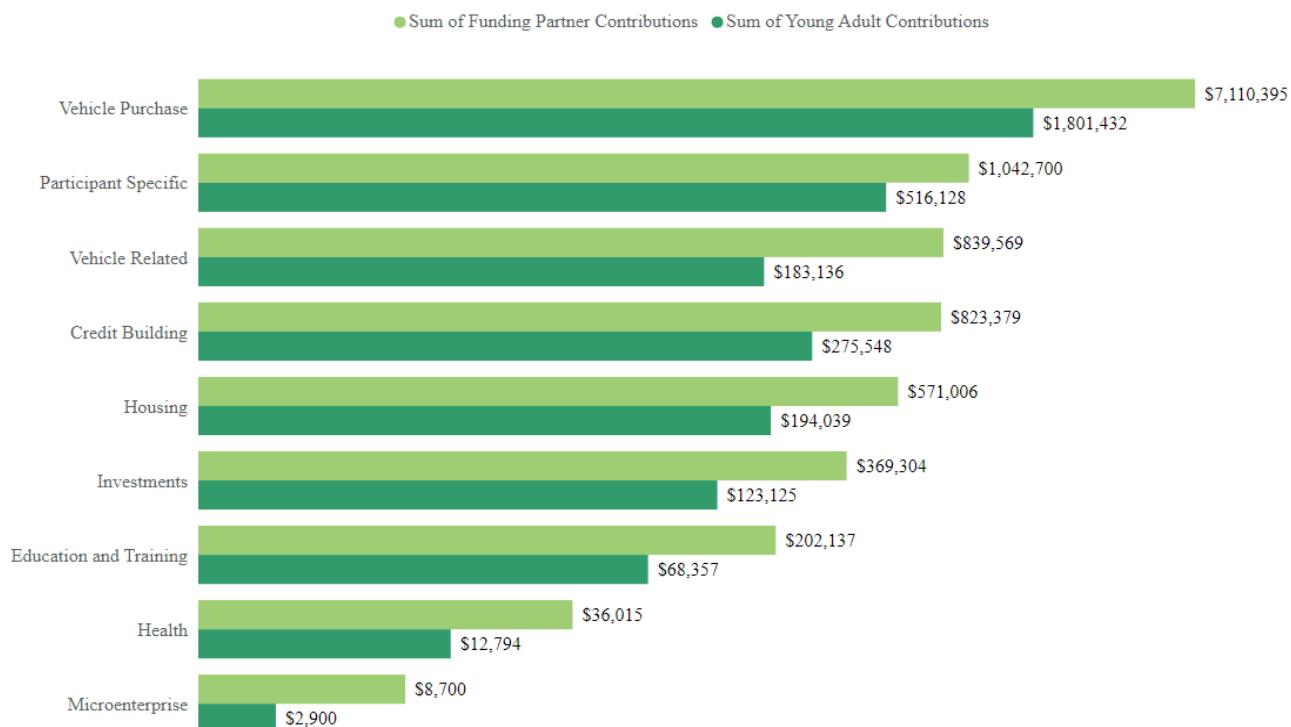
Since CYI began implementing Opportunity Passport™ (OPP) in 2007, over 2,475 young adults have accessed the program. As of July 1, 2025, Nebraska had 182 new participants, out of the 549 currently enrolled.

According to the 2024 Performance Measure Report on Opportunity Passport Participants – published March 31, 2025 and covers data through December 31, 2024 - since its inception, Nebraska has served 2,475 youth and over 46% (1,136 youth) participants have successfully made an asset purchase, with many young adults purchasing multiple assets. In 2024, 25% (76 youth) made asset purchases. CYI Coaching provider, Central Plains, encourages youth to participate in both coaching and Opportunity Passport™ when possible; those who participate in coaching and CYI, in general, complete matches at higher rates than those who participate in Opportunity Passport™ without coaching.

Table 4

OPP Purchases and Participation: 01-01-2000 to 06-30-2025				
Asset Purchase Category	Total Number of Participants	Number of Assets Purchased	All Match Dollars (\$)	Participant Dollars Raised (\$)
Credit Building	24	469	\$823,378.56	\$275,547.52
Education and Training	70	101	\$202,136.88	\$68,356.71
Health	19	26	\$36015.45	\$12,793.65
Housing	228	317	\$571,006.16	\$194,038.81
Investments	67	81	\$369,304.38	\$123,125.46
Microenterprise	2	3	\$8,700	\$2,900
Participant Specific	469	1243	\$1,042,700.39	\$516,127.51
Vehicle Purchase	819	909	\$7,110,395.414	\$1,801,432.47
Vehicle Related	164	167	\$839,569.27	\$183,136.09
Total	1862	3316	\$11,003,206.5	\$3,177,458.22

Figure 10: Contributions and Asset Purchases in Opportunity Passport



Vehicles continue to be the most popular asset purchase (Table 4) making up over 30% of all asset purchases since the beginning of OPP. Over 900 vehicles have been purchased. The category of “Participant Specific” purchases makes up approximately 38% of purchases; these are smaller and less costly on average and often keep young adults financially stable and on track. While participant specific purchases are programmatically important, larger asset purchases, such as vehicles, have the potential to be transformative. For example, a car might allow a participant to regularly report to work on time and advance in a career, which may not be possible using public transportation in much of Nebraska.

Overall, the monetary investment by both young adults and funding partners is substantial Figure 4 demonstrates how investments by youth and young adults are coupled with matches. Since 2000, participants have raised over \$3,177,458.22, and have been matched over \$11003206.5. Participants have learned how to budget, save and navigate the financial landscape with support from their community and coaches. As a result, they have purchased vehicles, participated in job training and advanced their education. In the CYI Coaching Survey, participants report that these matches have helped them maintain their vehicles, get better jobs, obtain stable housing and improved their financial outlook.

Leadership and Advocacy Overview

The CYI component of Leadership and Advocacy includes opportunities for young people to engage in opportunities that empower them to use their voice to create change. **CYI supports over 60 leadership opportunities** at both the local level and the statewide and national levels. At the local level, engagement opportunities are community-led and youth-driven via local CYI Chapters (e.g., Project Everlast). At the statewide and national levels, leadership opportunities range and include Legislative Days, LEAD the Summer, Opportunity Youth United (OYU) Community Action Teams, Nebraska Citizen Review Panels, Young Parent Advisory Committee, State and National Youth Advisory Boards, national Fellowships, and policy advocacy.

The goal of leadership and engagement is to provide youth and young adults with opportunities to build social connections, develop leadership skills and competencies, and advocate for systems change. Youth participation in community decision-making has many benefits to the participant and to the community. These benefits for the participant include enhanced self-esteem and self-efficacy, opportunities for empowerment, and enhanced social capital (Augsberger et al., 2019, 2020; Havlicek et al., 2016; Salazar et al., 2021). In return, the community benefits from having a safe place where young people gather and find acceptance.

CYI chapters - in partnership with the local Community Collaboratives - help young people find their place in their own community through networking and connections. There are currently six (6) local youth chapters operating across the state. Youth Advisors within the Community Collaboratives help young people develop skills to become better advocates for themselves and others.

In the past evaluation year, 489 youth and young adults accessed youth leadership opportunities (Table 5), with over three-quarters of young adults accessing opportunities through their local chapter. The participants from the various opportunities may be from the same pool; therefore, the same young adults may be participating across the various levels of advocacy. Over 61 different youth leadership activities were offered in the past year, with the vast majority occurring at the local CYI Chapter level.

Table 5 4

Leadership and Advocacy Participation Numbers	
Leadership and Advocacy	2024-2025
Total Number of Young Adults Involved in All Activities (Duplicated)	489
Total Number of Youth Leadership Activities Offered	63
Number of Statewide Youth Leadership Activities Offered	12
Number of Community-Based Youth Leadership Activities Offered	75

Some highlights for the year include:

Legislative Days 2025:

Legislative Days is an annual event aimed at educating young people on the legislative and policy-making process. CYI elevates civic engagement as it serves both the individual and the community; it inspires growth and maturation for the young adults that engage, and it is important for functioning democracies (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). CYI's commitment to having young adults participate in this event has often been the start of many advocacy journeys and has led young people to future leadership endeavors. Prior to the event, participants are mentored so they know what to expect at the event and how to fully engage with the opportunity. During the event, young people learn about public speaking, what advocacy is and current bills in the legislature. All youth then choose a bill of interest, develop an argument, construct a presentation, and present it to state senators during a luncheon, and later to the governor at the state capital. When the bills youth speak on pass, it helps youth to understand the impact they can have in legislative policymaking.

More than 20 young adults attended this year's annual Legislative Days. Amidst all the skill-building, participants engaged in thoughtful discussions about legislation impacting young Nebraskans. **Together, they selected five bills to highlight and began preparing brief presentations to share their perspectives.** On Sunday, they worked in teams to develop and practice their presentations.

On Monday, the youth practiced their presentations before traveling to Lincoln. They were recognized by the Legislature, toured the Capitol, and presented their selected bills to legislative staff and NCFF partners during a working lunch. In the afternoon, they had the opportunity to meet with Lt. Governor Joe Kelly and Supreme Court Justice William Cassel.

The five bills they presented addressed critical issues including suicide awareness and training for child welfare workers, access to public benefits for eligible immigrants, expanded eligibility for SNAP benefits, reforms to habitual truancy policies, and opposition to lowering the age at which young people can be charged as adults.

More information can be found here: <https://www.nebraskachildren.org/what-we-do/connected-youth-initiative/2025-youth-legislative-day.html>

Young Adult Citizen Review Panel Recommendations 2023-2024

The Young Adult Citizen Review Panel (CRP) consists of 12 community members between 16 and 26 with experience in the child welfare, juvenile justice, and/or homelessness systems in Nebraska. The group made the following three recommendations to DHHS in 2023-2024, which DHHS is taking under advisement and incorporating into its policy and procedures. They already provided some data and information around Deaf and Disabled Youth.

- 1. Make the Youth Court Questionnaire Mandatory:** The Court Improvement Project Youth Court Questionnaire is currently not a DHHS requirement but making it a requirement would greatly benefit system-involved youth in Nebraska by further including them in their outcomes and giving them more agency and control in decision-making. Requiring the completion of the form ensures that caseworkers and other personnel are held accountable for how they treat the youth. The form will ensure everyone is on the same page by lessening misunderstandings and putting the power back in the hands of the youth. Making the youth court questionnaire mandatory would be a simple step in the court hearing process. It would cater to the youth's needs and teach them that they are their own best advocate.
- 2. Logging, analyzing and sharing data on Deaf and Disabled youth:** Currently no concrete numbers exist on how many Deaf and/or Disabled youth are in the foster care system. If this data was collected quality care and access to accommodations could be provided for these youth. Once data on impacted youth in care is collected, other avenues to meet their needs can be explored. DHHS can provide foster parents/group homes/placement with information regarding the youth's disability (how to fingerspell, providing ramps and necessary accommodations for wheelchair users and other disabilities either seen or unseen). Additionally, providing access to mentors within their community (Deaf mentors through Nebraska Hands and Voices).
- 3. Address the needs of foster youth seeking employment and income security:** Financial well-being and security start with foster youth having autonomy over their earnings. Foster youth are often disproportionately affected by extra barriers to employment opportunities that can contribute to their lack of overall well-being. These can include requesting vital documents and receiving them on time, being allowed to have a job, transportation, and accessibility issues with opening a bank account. Once the youth have obtained employment, it is essential to provide them with autonomy over their earnings. Youth should not be expected or required to pay bills or provide financially for the household needs. This should all be covered under the monthly reimbursement the foster parent receives, as it is not the obligation of the youth to provide for their basic needs.

Leaders 4 Change - Foster Youth in Action National Conference

A member of CYI and a Youth Advisory Board leader represented Nebraska at the National Leaders 4 Change Conference in Washington D.C., December 9-12, 2024. The event, themed “Our Voices Our Vision” provided an incredible opportunity to connect with other passionate young leaders, learn from lived experience experts, and advocate at the Capitol for policy changes to improve the lives of foster youth across the country. Journey to Success organized the event to celebrate significant policy milestones, including the 25th Anniversary of Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, which strengthens the transition into adulthood.

Event activities included a celebration of the Chafee program at the Senate office, featuring speeches by Senators Chuck Grassley and Amy Klobuchar and was followed by a reception at the House office building attended by several congress members, including Representatives Don Bacon, Danny Davis, and Judy Chu. The youth leaders spoke at the Capitol. The youth leader from Nebraska highlighted the need for the Foster Youth Bill of Rights to become federal law, noting that currently only one-third of states have enacted it. The Foster Youth Bill of Rights addresses critical issues, such as access to mental health services, education, sibling reunification, and language access.

State Policy and Advocacy Committees

Local, community-supported CYI Chapters include:

- Omaha Project Everlast
- Norfolk 3D Leadership
- Beatrice's Southeast Collaborative
- Lincoln Project Everlast
- Kearney's Buffalo County Youth Advisory Board
- North Platte's Las Mañanitas

State policy and national systems change opportunities include:

- The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services *Bridge to Independence* Advisory Committee Sustainability Workgroup
- The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services *Bridge to Independence* Advisory Committee Data & Evaluation Workgroup
- The Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice
- The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Continuous Accountability and Learning Workgroup
- The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Continuous LEAP National Learning Cohort
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation and Full Frame Initiative's Narrative Change Learning Cohort

Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development Grant

In October 2024, NCFF was awarded the Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development (RPED) multi-year grant to support community members between 16 and 26 with experience in the child welfare, juvenile justice, and/or homelessness system in pursuing postsecondary and career advancement. The grant spans from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2028, and focuses on building cross-sector partnerships that connect communities, schools, and youth-serving organizations.

The first year of RPED implementation concentrated on establishing foundational infrastructure and strategic relationships to align local efforts with RPED's overarching goals. This included:

- Cross-sector collaboration with Community Collaboratives, community partners, school districts, and service providers.
- Development of coordinated strategies to expand access to postsecondary education, workforce training, and career pathways.
- Emphasis on procedural consistency across communities to enable data collection, outcome measurement, and policy alignment.

A total of 58 planning, strategy, and innovation sessions were held between October 2024 and June 2025, demonstrating a robust commitment to systemic coordination and responsiveness to local contexts.

CYI Future Outlook

In 2026, the Bring Up Nebraska internal team will advance its mission to support youth, young adults, and young parents through a refined, data-informed, and community-driven approach. Building on a decade of insights, the team is committed to strengthening coaching frameworks, enhancing data systems, aligning with emerging funding priorities, and deepening multigenerational strategies. Here are the goals:

Coaching Framework Enhancement

Bring Up Nebraska will refine its coaching pathways and core competencies to better reflect evolving best practices and the diverse needs of youth and families. This includes:

- Updating coaching models to ensure relevance and impact.
- Developing targeted training and support to build coaching capacity and consistency.
- Strengthening infrastructure and tools for sustainable implementation.
- Advancing a blended funding strategy that aligns with pathway-specific goals and outcomes.
- Identifying sustainable funding sources for juvenile justice-involved young people to engage in coaching.

Data-Driven Learning and Evaluation

To foster continuous improvement and informed decision-making, the team will:

- Clarify and streamline reporting processes.
- Leverage enhanced data tools (e.g., FindHelp) to measure impact.
- Provide technical assistance and resources to community partners.
- Promote a culture of learning and accountability across systems.

Strategic Funding Alignment and Financial Literacy

Recognizing the shifting funding landscape and the economic needs of young adults, Bring Up Nebraska will:

- Refine and expand strategies that support postsecondary access and completion.
- Integrate career exploration and workforce development into coaching.
- Embed financial literacy into programming to promote economic mobility.
- Monitor funding trends and adapt programming for sustainability.
- Strengthen partnerships to ensure smooth transitions from education to employment, especially for youth with foster care experience or parenting responsibilities.

Multigenerational and Family-Centered Support

Acknowledging the importance of supporting young families as a prevention strategy, the team will:

- Apply a multigenerational lens to youth strategies, focusing on young parents and their children.
- Tailor coaching pathways to meet the unique needs of young families.
- Promote practices that enhance family engagement, stability, and educational success.
- Ensure programming is informed by community voice.



Appendix

Table 6.5: CYI Coaching Survey Constructs

Survey Construct	Description
Youth Thrive™ Protective and Promotive Factors	<p>Developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, measures presence, strength and growth of the following factors that advance healthy development and well-being and mitigate the impacts of trauma and negative life experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Resilience • Social Connections • Knowledge of Adolescent Development • Concrete Supports in Times of Need • Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence
Hope	Measures current state of hope according to both agency thinking and pathway thinking. Modified from (Snyder et al., 1996)
Coaching Relationship	<p>Questions self-designed by NCFF, provider partners, and young adults, intended to assess the quality of the relationship between a young adult and their CYI coach defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of trust and mutual respect • Youth-led • Comfortable and affirming of young adult's identity
Achievements, Advice, and Additional Help	Open-ended questions self-designed by NCFF, provider partners, and young adults that allow young adults to share their perspective in own words and provide detailed examples of other survey constructs

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