



ESTOY

RMC Ray Marshall Center
for the Study of Human Resources



TEXAS LBJ School

The University of Texas at Austin
Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs

**Evaluating Services for
Texas Opportunity Youth**

WHAT STARTS HERE CHANGES THE WORLD

RMC Ray Marshall Center
for the Study of Human Resources

ESTOY

Evaluating Services for Opportunity Youth

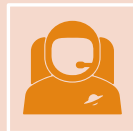
Project Summary



Support from JP Morgan Chase, the UP Partnership, and the Aspen Institute



Identify and describe the ecosystem of Opportunity Youth service providers in Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio.



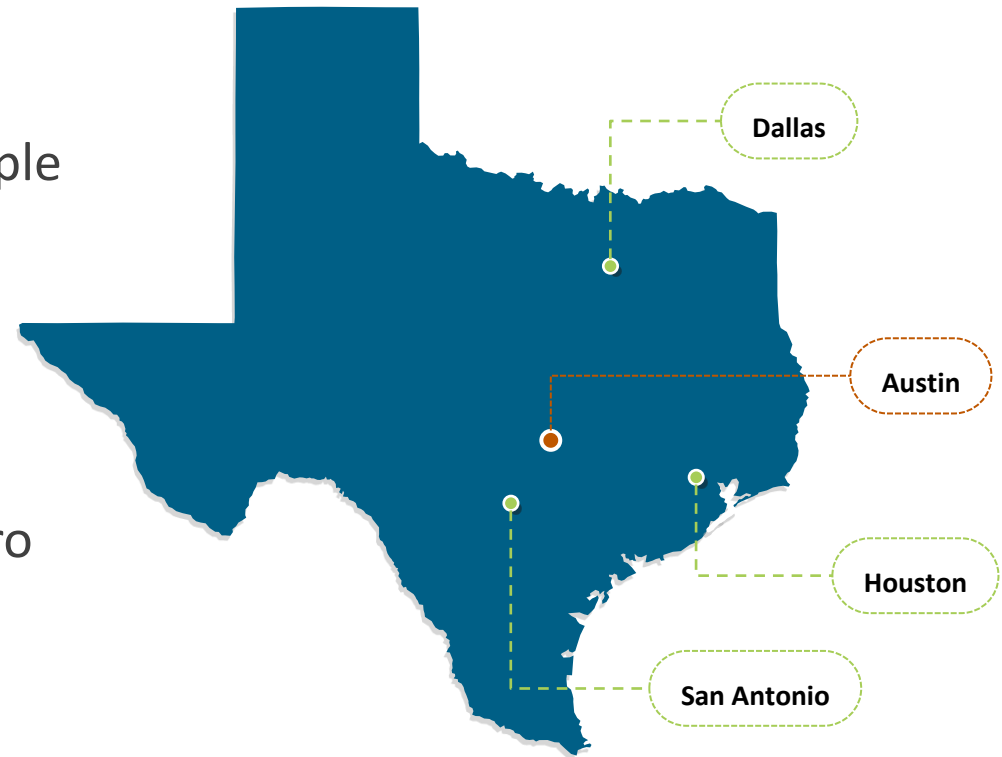
Conduct a 5-year study to evaluate education and labor market trajectories taken by Opportunity Youth.



Identify and articulate policy and practice recommendations emerging from the quantitative and qualitative studies.

Study Region

- ❖ Covers ~4,000 square miles
- ❖ Combined population of nearly 6.5 million people
- ❖ One of the fastest-growing, economically successful groupings of regions in the country
- ❖ ~120,000 Opportunity Youth in these four metro areas (Source: The Annie E. Cassey Foundation Kids Count Data Center)



Opportunity Youth

Opportunity Youth, recognized as young people aged 16 to 24 who are disconnected from the workforce and education systems during a period of development that has the potential for individuals to gain education and/or training that would “...provide the foundation for their occupational trajectories during the rest of their adulthood” (Mendelson et al., 2018, p. 54S).

Opportunity Youth Estimates for 2022 by City: Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston

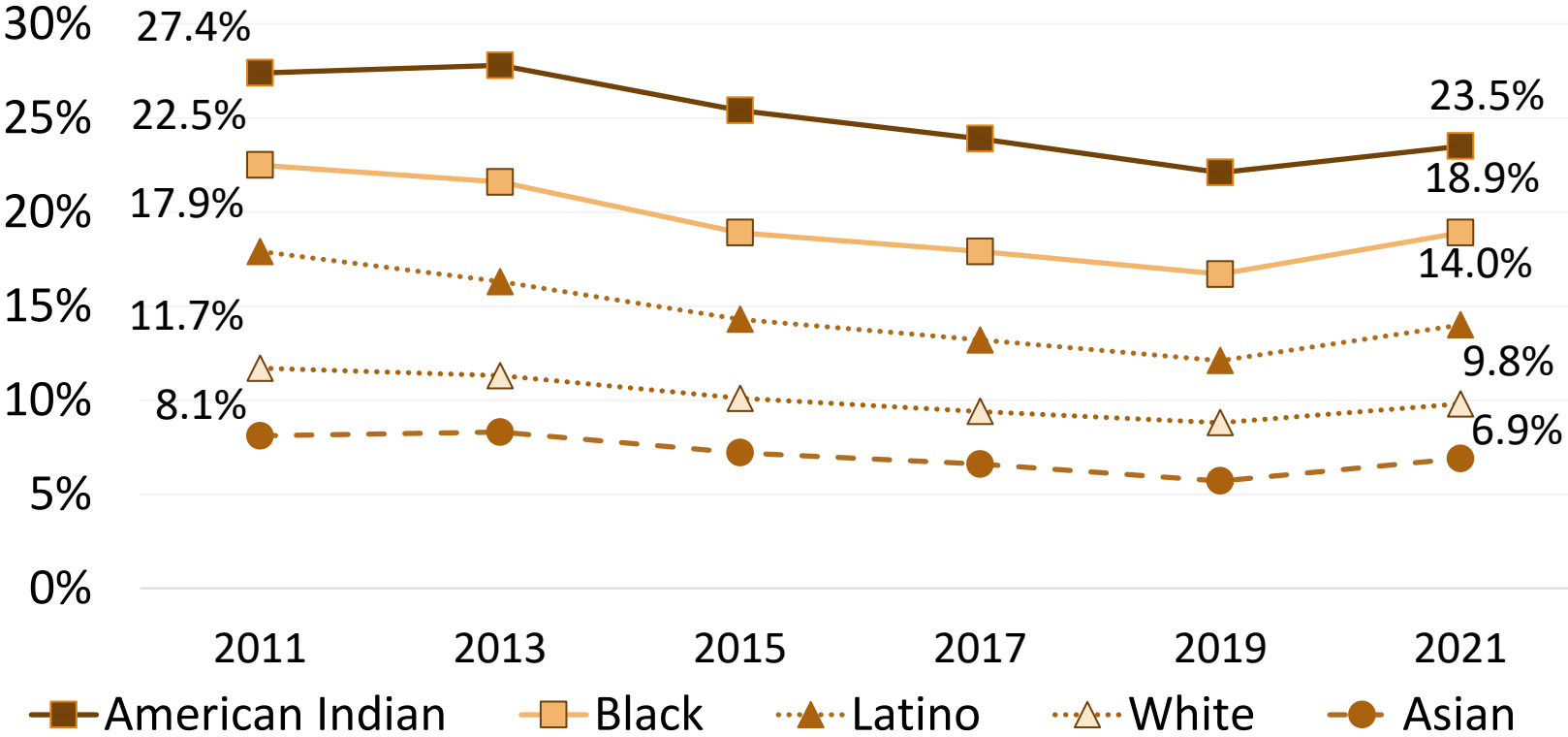
City	Opportunity Youth	
	2019	2022
Austin	8,000 (7%)	12,000 (10%)
San Antonio	28,000 (14%)	26,000 (13%)
Dallas	23,000 (14%)	25,000 (14%)
Houston	37,000 (13%)	49,000 (16%)

Source: The Annie E. Cassey Foundation Kids Count Data Center

Opportunity Youth: A Diverse Group

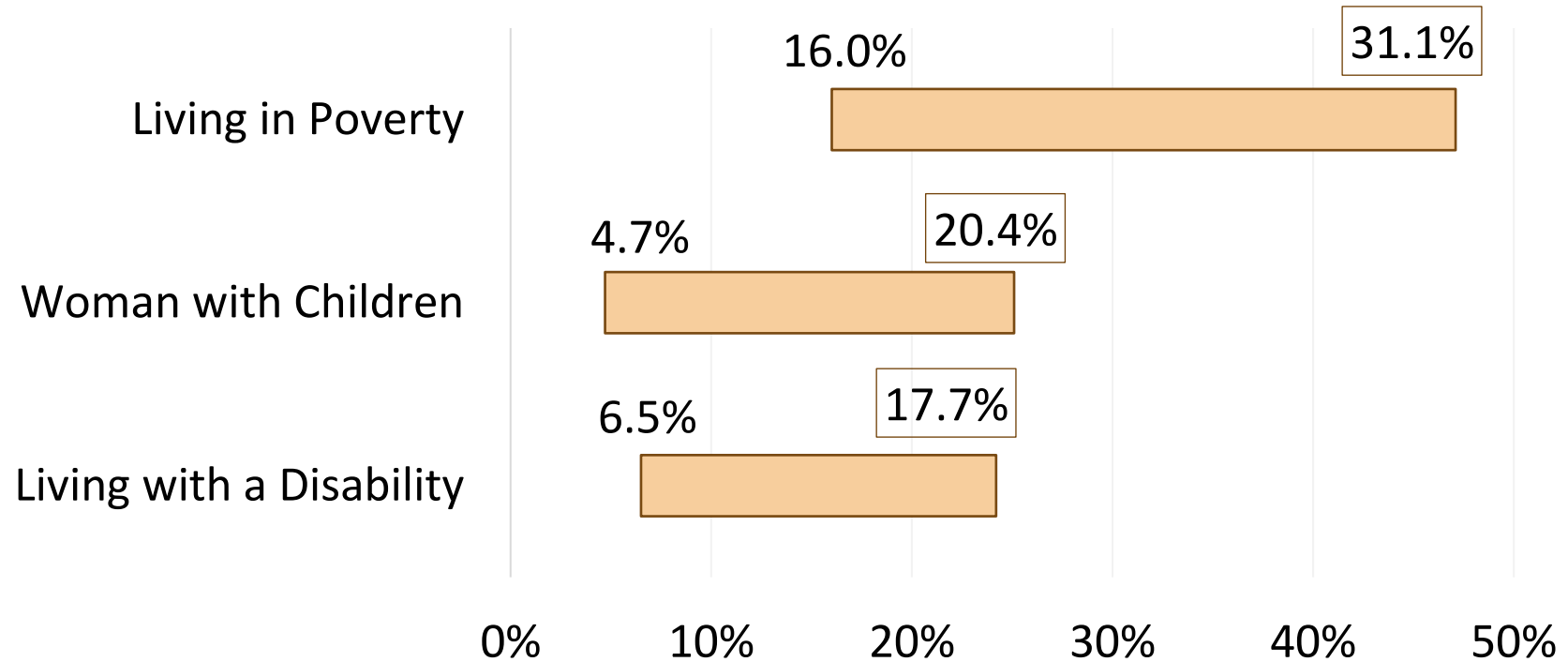
Opportunity youth are a diverse group of individuals with unique experiences and needs. The different life circumstances and challenges opportunity youth experience require different program implementation designs, supports, and partnerships.

Equitable Access to opportunities: Racial and Ethnic groups have unequal rates of youth disconnection



Source: Measure of America using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022

Equitable Access to Opportunity: Subgroups of youth have unique experiences within their communities.



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022

Note: Opportunity Youth rates of disconnection are identified with a border.

Tenuously Disconnected Opportunity Youth

Generally, as a group:

- ❖ Typically have a high school credential or some college
- ❖ May have work experience
- ❖ Goals focused towards gaining employment or obtaining training to enhance their employability
- ❖ Typically need help finding sustainable employment
- ❖ Focused set of needs

Persistent Opportunity Youth

Generally, as a group:

- ❖ At risk of being disconnected from work and school for prolonged periods
- ❖ May have experienced trauma, involvement in systems such as the juvenile justice and foster care system, struggling as young parents, they may be homeless or have unstable, unsafe housing, or coping with mental and physical health challenges.
- ❖ Experience a complex set of needs
- ❖ Reconnecting these youth require case management supports and coordinated services across agencies and service providers

Qualitative Evaluation Purpose

To pursue a deeper understanding of the experience of youth whose needs were not met by the community's traditional education systems, to review the available opportunities for youth to achieve their educational and career goals, and to develop recommendations regarding program practices that support youth in their process of recovery, and in their engagement in education and training opportunities.

Qualitative Evaluation Objectives

Qualitative research methods will be used to enhance the understanding of the quantitative data and to identify practice and policy issues relevant to providing services to opportunity youth.

- ❖ Conduct key interviews/focus groups with staff from identified OY-serving programs and youth receiving services.
- ❖ Create and distribute surveys for program staff and current/former program participants.
- ❖ Identify and describe the broad ecosystem of services available to opportunity youth within each community and describe how organizations work together within a community.
- ❖ Create a directory of education/training and workforce development OY-serving programs within the four metro areas.

Opportunity Youth Survey Development Approach

Researchers used a community-based participatory research approach (CBPR) to invite voices from the community to collaborate with researchers in the design of the survey tool.

An approach that depends upon the knowledge, insights, and experiences of the individuals who are the subject of a study to assist and guide researchers.

Evaluator's Self-Reflection

Qualitative researchers bring to each study the inescapable story of their own lives--culture, history, and experience that impact the interpretation of the life experiences of others.

- ❖ Self-awareness

- ❖ Intersection

Research
Questions
Addressed by
Program
Participant
Survey

- ❖ How do youth learn about education and workforce services?
- ❖ What elements of the programs are most important in meeting participant needs?
- ❖ What program elements contribute to their sense of well-being, and retention and achievement of their education and training goals?
- ❖ What are youth enrolled in workforce/education programs striving for?



**American YouthWorks:
Restorative Justice
Practices Leadership Crew**

**LifeWorks: Impactful
Voices Team**

American YouthWorks - YouthBuild



YouthBuild Austin is a Department of Labor pre-apprenticeship program that combines education and job training. Participants range in age from 16-24 years old, have an income at or below 200% FPG, and are typically disconnected from education and training opportunities.

YouthBuild programs use a service-learning model that combines occupational skills training and academic instruction with community service projects. Training tracks:



- GED test preparation
- Construction,
- Media/information technology,
- Healthcare, and
- Manufacturing

LifeWorks



LifeWorks offers a system of support for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness, youth aging out of foster care, and other youth with complex needs.

LifeWorks provides housing, education, and workforce development support.

Education and workforce program provides:

- Adult Basic Education and GED test preparation classes,
- Connections to other area workforce training opportunities
- Workforce placement
- Workplace skill-building support

Collaborative process

- ❖ How were these two groups selected?
- ❖ What was the process of gaining permission to introduce the ESTOY project to these groups?
- ❖ What was the process of collaborating with each group?

Organization Participant Advisory Groups

American YouthWorks: Restorative Justice Practice Leadership Crew

YouthBuild Director of Restorative Justice Practices

- Documents
- Zoom meeting
- Follow-up email
- Crew received information and agreed to meet with evaluator.
- ESTOY presentation and the vote

LifeWorks: Impactful Voices Team

Chief Research & Evaluation Officer

- Application and review process (5 pages 18 questions)
- Questions
- Research and Evaluation Manager
- Program Manager for the Impactful Voices Team
- Team received information and agreed to meet with evaluator.
- ESTOY presentation and the vote

Process: Co-creating of Opportunity Youth Survey

First Meeting:

- Introduced myself
- Describe the purpose of the ESTOY project
- Confidentiality and Consent
- The role of the Crew and Team
- How the survey information will be used
- Compensation
- Questions
- Vote

Survey Question Categories

- ❖ How did you learn about the program,
- ❖ Your sense of acceptance and connection to the program,
- ❖ Support available in your community outside of the program,
- ❖ What program services were most helpful,
- ❖ What are your goals for your life, and
- ❖ Thoughts regarding your experience at the program.

Survey Issues

- ❖ Selected, edited, and created new questions
- ❖ Organized questions and reviewed questions for redundancy
- ❖ Present this statement twice: “You can skip any question that you do not want to answer. You can also stop the survey at any time, for any reason.”
- ❖ Provide space for more detailed information for certain questions
- ❖ Highlight keywords in questions
- ❖ Include this statement: “These responses will not be shared with program staff. If you have a need for additional support services, please talk with a *Program* staff person.”
- ❖ Reviewed all questions for possible “triggers”

Recognition

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and feelings.

This survey was constructed in consultation with the American YouthWorks Restorative Justice Practice Leadership Crew, and the LifeWorks Impactful Voices Team of Austin, Texas.

Pilot Survey Responses

What are you reaching for in your life?

Further education: going to cosmetology school; go to college to earn an RN degree; or attend community college

Complete training program: GED/HSD; obtain certification

Financial stability; home ownership

To be a successful freelancer; content streaming;

Be successful and be helpful; Peace; The goal for me is to be someone I'm proud of, my son looks up too, I wanna give hope, because there is hope

What program services are most helpful in helping you achieve your education/training goals?

The training program has helped me out a lot with my stress and anger they teach me on how to calm myself before entering the room

The high school/GED/ different training to choose

What helped me in getting my GED was always practicing on paper and asking questions about what I didn't understand, also the practice test helped me understand what I needed to work on more.

The beginning of the month they give me 49 bucks for groceries or food so that's helpful

The gas cards because I live all the way in (*community*) and I drive far and it helps me come to school.

The adulting program they have

Pilot Survey Responses

What could prevent you from reaching your goal?

Mental Health Concerns: Me feeling depressed, Not being focused, My thoughts

My immune system

Not good transportation or family problems

My phone

My outside life and resorting back to my old ways

My car breaking down, having too much anxiety, kids getting sick, day care closed

Not getting enough support

Losing shelter, I guess

Myself

What is the most important skill you learned at AYW that will help you achieve your goal?

To learn on how to have RJP circles with students in order to be successful in classes

Better tech skills; How to be a good construction worker

Being open minded

The most important skill I learned was I have to do it myself and I can't wait for nobody

Determination, taking more opportunities

Don't give up and it only works if you want to

Communication, being active in more things; Trying to get out of being shy while speaking in front of a crowd

To ask questions and not be afraid

To focus on myself before anything

Get out of your comfort zone, be talkative, be yourself, ask questions, never give up

Pilot Survey Responses

When you think about having a job or going on to additional schooling, what do you worry about?

How working changes rent or child care while at school (*Benefits Cliff*)

Having a ride

I worry about not getting accepted because of my past

Time management

Money is the main concern for college but also my kid if she ends up not feeling well.

My gf [girlfriend] calling me or overthinking

kids not having a babysitter or day care being closed

The new experience; Feeling like I don't fit in

Survey Distribution Timeline

AUSTIN
LATE SPRING 2024

DALLAS
LATE FALL 2024


SAN ANTONIO
LATE SPRING 2024

HOUSTON
LATE FALL 2024

EVALUATING SERVICES FOR TEXAS OPPORTUNITY YOUTH -- ESTOY



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