

# Program Overview



**KEYS TO**

**SUCCESS**

# History

- Each year approximately 900 youth leave the Arizona foster care system at age 18 with significant challenges ahead of them.
- “Youth in-care are more likely than their peers not in care to be unemployed, underemployed, commence work early (rather than completing high school), have lower incomes and progress more slowly in their careers. One study found that youth leaving care had less than a 55% employment rate, with mean quarterly earnings well below the poverty level.” (University of Chicago Chapin Hall Center for Children; 2002.).
- The Keys to Success program was established in 2014, to address an unmet need in the community to provide youth transitioning from foster care with intensive, individualized career, education and employment development services.
- The only program of its kind in Arizona, Keys to Success has served more than 900 youth to date.

# Career Development Services

- Keys to Success offers participants an opportunity to work with a professional team of Career and Employment Development Specialists.
- Career Development Specialists (CDS) utilize a variety of assessment tools to help youth identify skills, interests, personality traits and work values and the careers that best align with their profiles.
- Through the exploration of workforce information, youth get a realistic view of the opportunities in their fields of interest, identify viable career paths, and gain an understanding of the cost of living within an area.

# Education Achievement

**The CDS help youth set and achieve educational goals by:**

- ✓ interviewing youth, care giver(s), and schools to develop an education profile and research missing records as needed;
- ✓ reviewing transcripts to identify gaps in education and/or supports;
- ✓ assisting with enrollment in education including, high school or GED, vocational training, and college/university;
- ✓ helping youth access funding and financial aid;
- ✓ maintaining communication with schools, districts, and agencies about educational issues and concerns;
- ✓ advocating for youth's educational rights and responding to requests for information;
- ✓ ensuring program activities and services are coordinated with partnering organizations and educational institutions.

# Getting and Keeping the Job

- Youth are prepared to achieve employment goals by working with their employment development specialist (EDS) to create a master application and resume, review tasks necessary to complete a successful job search, and develop/enhance interview skills, including the completion of a customer service 101 module.
- The EDS will take the youth shopping for interview clothing and assist with other employment related resources that are provided by AFFCF (work clothing, bus passes, bikes, cell phones, certifications, etc.).
- The EDS assists youth with submission of in person and online applications up to the point a youth receives an offer of hire.
- Once a youth is hired, the EDS continues to provide coaching to support employment retention and advancement. The EDS assists to youths to learn new tasks and adjust to their work environment/schedule.

# Employment Partnerships

- The EDS team and program director work with community members, businesses, and organizations to develop meaningful work experience and/or employment opportunities for participants
- Companies are designated as partners if all youth who submit an application are assured the opportunity to interview regardless of qualifications, as long as an open position is available, and feedback after the interview is provided to the EDS for learning purposes
- 30 employment partnerships in Yavapai County
- 124 employment partnerships in Maricopa County

# Community Support

- KTS services are implemented in full partnership with each youth's team.
- As needed, youth are referred to partnering organizations to that provide resources or support that eliminate barriers to career and life success.
- The network of supportive services youth may be referred to includes, basic needs, housing, transportation, child care, and work place supplements.

# Keys to Financial Success

- \$ In 2020 KTS added a financial literacy component to the program.
- \$ KTS now offers participants a five-session course that includes money management coaching, core concepts of understanding and building credit, as well as a matched savings account opportunity.
- \$ Youth not enrolled in this course receive one-on-one financial literacy training from their employment development specialist (EDS)
- \$ The EDS also helps youth open checking and savings accounts as needed.



# Program Eligibility

To enroll in Keys to Success a youth must:

- ✓ be between the ages of 16 and 21
- ✓ be in foster care or have been in care at age 18
- ✓ reside in Maricopa or Western Yavapai counties

The referral form is VERY simple and can be found on our website

<https://www.affcf.org/keys/>