



Oklahoma Association of Youth Services

The
Oklahoma Association of
Youth Services

Successful Futures

FY 2024 July/August
Report

Powered by the Tobacco
Settlement Endowment
Trust

Table of Contents

Executive Summary..... 4

Hiring and Training of Staff..... 4

Evaluation Plan..... 5

Assets and Character Traits..... 10

 1. Trustworthiness..... 13

 2. Respect..... 13

 3. Responsibility..... 13

 4. Fairness..... 13

 5. Caring..... 14

 6. Citizenship..... 14

Community Partnerships..... 14

Data and Impact Assessment: July/August FY 2024..... 14

 a. Sustained Tobacco Awareness..... 15

 b. Nutrition Advancements..... 15

 c. Character Growth..... 15

 d. Long-Term Physical Activity..... 15

Current Results..... 15

 a. Training Impact..... 15

 b. Data Highlights..... 16

 c. Youth Engagement..... 17

 d. Number Of Children Receiving Character Education..... 18

 e. New Additions..... 18

Spotlight On Youth..... 18

Challenges..... 23

 1. Staff Turnover..... 23

 2. Data Anomalies..... 23

 3. Resource Allocation..... 23

 4. Maintaining Quality..... 23

 5. Sustainability..... 23

 6. Data Interpretation:..... 23

 7. Meeting Evolving Needs..... 23

***Moving Forward* 23**

- 1. Sustainability and Consistency 24**
- 2. Data Enhancement 24**
- 3. Geographic Equity 24**
- 4. Staff Development 24**
- 5. Community Partnerships 24**
- 6. Continuous Improvement 24**
- 7. Empowering Youth Voices 24**
- 8. Adaptability and Resilience 24**

***Conclusion* 25**

Executive Summary

As the Oklahoma Association of Youth Services (OAYS) sets sail into the fiscal year 2024, there is a palpable sense of excitement and anticipation for the activities and opportunities to come! It is the continued hope of the Association that the Successful Futures initiative acts as a beacon of hope and transformation for the children, youth, families, and communities it serves. OAYS expresses profound gratitude for the trust and support received from stakeholders, especially the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) enabling OAYS to positively impact the lives of countless children and youth in Oklahoma, equipping them with the tools and knowledge for healthier and more fulfilling lives.

Looking ahead, OAYS leadership and the external evaluator are poised to make great strides in their shared commitment to continuous improvement. Recognizing the ever-evolving needs and challenges faced by children and youth, this collaborative effort promises to yield exciting data that delineate a consistent movement toward positive outcomes. Together, they aim to refine strategies, and enhance program delivery, within the communities served, all with the goal of providing stellar access to evidence-based prevention programming and activities to Oklahoma's youth.

In the new fiscal year, OAYS will explore community-tailored approaches to character education, life-skills education, and exercise/activity programs while maintaining its leadership in comprehensive tobacco prevention and nutrition initiatives. The overarching goal is not merely to meet the needs of children and youth, but to exceed them, ensuring that participants are equipped with the resilience, skills, and character traits required to thrive in a dynamic world.

Hiring and Training of Staff

The Oklahoma Association of Youth Services (OAYS) has recently undergone a dynamic phase in staff hiring and training During Q4 of year-one implementation, characterized by both challenges and opportunities. Notably, there has been a degree of staff turnover; however, it is reassuring to observe that this trend appears to be stabilizing. This leveling off reflects the organization's efforts to attract and retain a dedicated team committed to the Successful futures initiative and by the generous increase in TSET funding.

OAYS holds a steadfast commitment to provide ongoing training to both current and new staff members. This commitment is rooted in the recognition that continuous learning and development are essential to maintaining relevance and effectiveness in the ever-evolving landscape of the initiative's programming. By investing in the professional growth of our team, we ensure that they are well-equipped to deliver impactful programs that positively impact children and youth.

Furthermore, OAYS believes in the importance of extending training opportunities beyond the internal team. As part of our inclusive approach, some training sessions are open not only to program staff but also to members of the Association as a whole. This approach fosters a culture of shared knowledge and collaboration, enriching the collective expertise and reach.

To facilitate effective communication and collaboration, weekly meetings are held with the OAYS Executive Director. These meetings serve as a platform for open and transparent communication, allowing for the exchange of ideas, feedback, and insights. By maintaining these open lines of communication, OAYS ensures that the entire team remains aligned with the organization's mission and goals, fostering a sense of unity and purpose.

OAYS recognizes the importance of contracted agency staff as a driving force behind the success of the Successful Futures initiative. Through ongoing training, inclusive opportunities, and regular communication, OAYS is committed to nurturing a dedicated and skilled team that will continue to make a positive impact on the lives of children and youth in Oklahoma.

Evaluation Plan

The Oklahoma Association of Youth Services (OAYS) is pleased to announce the development of an Evaluation Matrix in partnership with the initiative's external evaluator. While this matrix is currently in its draft form, it represents a significant milestone in the Association's commitment to measuring and enhancing the impact of the Successful Futures initiative.

This Evaluation Matrix is a meticulously crafted framework that plays a pivotal role in delineating program metrics. It provides a structured and comprehensive approach to assessing the outcomes of our multifaceted initiative. Within this matrix, a series of carefully curated questions have been thoughtfully included to guide the process of data collection and analysis. This approach facilitates a thorough evaluation that encompasses both qualitative and quantitative aspects.

The collaborative effort between OAYS and the external evaluator to create this matrix underscores the dedication to employing evidence-based practices and continuous improvement. By leveraging the expertise of evaluator, OAYS enhances its ability to assess program effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and align initiatives with programmatic goals and objectives.

This partnership also enriches the development of the evaluation framework and empowers OAYS to make more informed decisions. Working in tandem to refine and implement this matrix, OAYS leadership and the external evaluator remain confident that it will enable the program to have a more positive and lasting impact on the lives of children and youth throughout Oklahoma through the Successful Futures initiative.

The table below outlines the draft evaluation process include the *metric*, which defines what aspect of the initiative is being measured. The *question* articulates the specific inquiry the evaluation seeks to answer within each metric. *Possible data* outlines the types of information expected to collect in relation to each question. The *data collection method* refers to the approach or tool used for gathering this information. The *method* explains how we will analyze and make sense of the data within each metric.

Metric	Question	Possible Data	Data Collection Method	Method
# of youth reached by youth character development education	How many youth have participated in character development education programs during the reporting period?	Count of youth participants	Attendance records, program registration	Count
# of youth volunteering or participating in service-learning activities	How many youth were involved in volunteering or service-learning activities in the past year?	Count of youth participants	Volunteer sign-up sheets, activity participation logs	Count
# of youth reached exhibiting positive changes in desired knowledge, skills, and behaviors	Have you observed positive changes in the knowledge, skills, and behaviors of the youth who participated in our programs?	Qualitative feedback on observed changes	Surveys, interviews, observations	Qualitative assessment
Proportion or percent of Oklahoma's population reached by youth character development and service-learning activities	What percentage of Oklahoma's population was reached by our character development and service-learning activities?	Percentage calculation based on reach	Demographic data, program reach analysis	Percentage calculation
# of youth engaged from rural areas; urban areas	How many youth from rural areas (population of 49,999 and below) and urban areas (population of 50,000 and above) participated in our programs?	Counts of youth participants from each area	Zip code analysis, registration data	Count

Metric	Question	Possible Data	Data Collection Method	Method
# of youth from at-risk, high-risk geographical areas	How many youth were engaged from at-risk and high-risk geographical areas?	Counts of youth participants from these areas	Geographical mapping, participant residence data	Count
# of youth reached that commit to healthy lifestyles	How many youth have committed to adopting healthier lifestyles through our programs?	Count of youth participants committing to healthier lifestyles	Participant pledges, goal-setting documentation	Count
# of youth who change their own active living/healthy eating behaviors	Have you noticed changes in the active living and healthy eating behaviors of the youth who participated in our programs?	Qualitative feedback on observed changes	Surveys, pre and post-program assessments	Qualitative assessment
# of youth engaged in prosocial involvement	How many youth actively participate in school and community activities as a result of our programs?	Count of youth participants in prosocial activities	Activity participation logs, school records	Count
# of youth that increase interaction with prosocial peers	Have you observed an increase in the interaction of youth with prosocial peers after participating in our programs?	Qualitative feedback on observed changes	Surveys, teacher/mentor observations	Qualitative assessment
# of youth with an increase in self-efficacy and self-esteem	Have you noticed an increase in the self-efficacy and self-esteem of the youth who participated in our programs?	Qualitative feedback on observed changes	Self-assessment surveys, mentor feedback	Qualitative assessment
# of youth with an increase in cultural awareness and sensitivity	Have you observed an increase in cultural awareness and sensitivity among youth who	Qualitative feedback on observed changes	Cross-cultural competency assessments, participant reflections	Qualitative assessment

Metric	Question	Possible Data	Data Collection Method	Method
	participated in our programs?			
# of youth showing an increase in youth planning and decision-making skills	Have you observed an increase in youth planning and decision-making skills among program participants?	Qualitative feedback on observed changes	Decision-making scenarios, self-assessment surveys	Qualitative assessment
# of youth who have increased their interpersonal skills, higher-order thinking skills, self-control, perseverance of effort, positive vision of their own future	Have you noticed an increase in interpersonal skills, higher-order thinking skills, self-control, perseverance of effort, and a positive vision of the future in youth who participated in our programs?	Qualitative feedback on observed changes	Pre and post-program assessments, mentor evaluations	Qualitative assessment
# of youth increasing physical activity and healthy food consumption	How many youth have increased their physical activity and consumption of healthy foods as a result of our programs?	Count of youth participants with increased physical activity and healthy food consumption	Self-reported behavior change data, nutrition logs	Count
# of youth with an increased feeling of safety in their physical environment	Have you observed an increase in the feeling of safety in the physical environment among youth who participated in our programs?	Qualitative feedback on observed changes	Pre and post-program safety assessments, participant testimonials	Qualitative assessment
# of youth satisfied with the program	Were the youth satisfied with our program?	Count of youth participants reporting satisfaction	Program satisfaction surveys, feedback forms	Count

Metric	Question	Possible Data	Data Collection Method	Method
# of youth with positive increases in scores across the four domains (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors)	Have you observed positive increases in scores across the four domains (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors) in youth who participated in our programs?	Qualitative feedback on observed changes	Pre and post-program assessments, academic progress reports	Qualitative assessment
# of youth with increases in scores of their school report cards	How many youth have shown increased scores on their school report cards after participating in our programs?	Count of youth participants with increased school report card scores	School report card data, academic achievement tracking	Count
Positive change over time in the # of youth engaging in high-risk behaviors (fighting, hitting, injuring a person, threat of physical harm, alcohol or tobacco or vaping use)	Have you noticed a positive change over time in the number of youth engaging in high-risk behaviors after participating in our programs?	Qualitative feedback on observed changes	Behavioral incident reports, pre and post-program behavior assessments	Qualitative assessment
% of youth that talk with at least one of their parents about the dangers of tobacco use and obesity				

The evaluation framework underscores the commitment to fostering accountability and continuous improvement within the Successful Futures initiative. By addressing key metrics, OAYS is poised to gain valuable insights into program effectiveness and the impact on the lives of children and youth in Oklahoma. This framework will serve to guide ongoing efforts to refine strategies, enhance program delivery, and make data-informed decisions that will ultimately lead to a more profound and lasting positive influence.

Assets and Character Traits

The 40 Developmental Assets represent a comprehensive framework that serves as the cornerstone for nurturing the growth and well-being of children and youth. These assets encapsulate a rich tapestry of character traits, integral to the holistic development of young individuals. Utilized by the Successful Futures Initiative, they play a pivotal role in shaping success for youth. These assets are not merely abstract concepts but practical and actionable components that guide the initiative to foster the growth of children and youth.

The framework of the 40 Developmental Assets embodies character traits that are universally accepted as fundamental to personal and social growth. These character traits, identified in the Six Pillars of Character by CHARACTER COUNTS!, transcend cultural, religious, and socioeconomic differences. They include trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. The Successful Futures Initiative has taken a deliberate and thoughtful approach to correlate the assets with character traits, creating a seamless integration of character development into every aspect of program offerings. This intentional approach ensures that character development is a consciously nurtured aspect of their growth.

The following tables detail the assets, by category, and link the most appropriate character traits with the internal and external assets that children and youth are exposed to with the Successful Futures initiative. These tables not only categorize and associate assets with character traits but also emphasize the intentional integration of character development into the framework of the initiative. This ensures that character is not just a byproduct but an integral and purposeful aspect of all activities, programs, and interactions that children and youth encounter within the context of the initiative.

	Developmental Assets	Asset Description	Character Traits	Internal/External
Support	Family Support	Family life provides high levels of love and support.	Caring, Trustworthiness	External
	Positive Family Communication	Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.	Respect, Responsibility, Trustworthiness	External
	Other Adult Relationships	Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.	Caring, Trustworthiness	External
	Caring Neighborhood	Young person experiences caring neighbors.	Caring, Citizenship	External
	Caring School Climate	School provides a caring, encouraging environment.	Respect, Caring, Citizenship	External
	Parent Involvement in Schooling	Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.	Responsibility, Citizenship	External

Empowerment

Developmental Assets	Asset Description	Character Traits	Internal/External
Community Values Youth	Young person perceives adults in the community value youth.	Respect, Citizenship	External
Youth as Resources	Young people are given useful roles in the community.	Responsibility, Citizenship	External
Service to Others	Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.	Responsibility, Caring	External
Safety	Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.	Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Citizenship	External

Boundaries & Expectations

Developmental Assets	Asset Description	Character Traits	Internal/External
Family Boundaries	Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.	Responsibility, Trustworthiness	External
School Boundaries	School provides clear rules and consequences.	Responsibility, Fairness, Citizenship	External
Neighborhood Boundaries	Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.	Responsibility, Citizenship	External
Adult Role Models	Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.	Respect, Responsibility, Citizenship	External
Positive Peer Influence	Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.	Responsibility, Respect, Citizenship, Trustworthiness	External
High Expectations	Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.	Responsibility, Respect, Citizenship	External

Constructive Use of Time

Developmental Assets	Asset Description	Character Traits	Internal/External
Creative Activities	Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.	Responsibility, Caring, Citizenship	External
Youth Programs	Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.	Responsibility, Citizenship	External
Religious Community	Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.	Respect, Caring, Citizenship	External
Time at Home	Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do," two or fewer nights per week.	Caring, Responsibility, Citizenship	External

Commitment to Learning

Developmental Assets	Asset Description	Character Traits	Internal/External
Achievement Motivation	Young person is motivated to do well in school.	Responsibility, Trustworthiness	Internal
School Engagement	Young person is actively engaged in learning.	Responsibility, Respect, Caring	Internal
Homework	Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.	Responsibility, Fairness, Citizenship	Internal
Bonding to School	Young person cares about her or his school.	Caring, Respect, Citizenship	Internal
Reading for Pleasure	Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.	Caring, Citizenship	Internal

Positive Identity

Developmental Assets	Asset Description	Character Traits	Internal/External
Personal Power	Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."	Responsibility, Trustworthiness, Citizenship	Internal
Self-Esteem	Young person reports having a high self-esteem.	Respect, Responsibility, Citizenship	Internal
Sense of Purpose	Young person reports that "my life has purpose."	Responsibility, Positive Values	Internal
Positive View of Personal Future	Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.	Responsibility, Trustworthiness, Citizenship	Internal

Positive Values

Developmental Assets	Asset Description	Character Traits	Internal/External
Caring	Young person places high value on helping other people.	Caring, Responsibility, Citizenship	Internal
Equality and Social Justice	Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.	Fairness, Responsibility, Citizenship	Internal
Integrity	Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.	Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Citizenship	Internal
Honesty	Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."	Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Citizenship	Internal
Responsibility	Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.	Responsibility, Citizenship	Internal
Restraint	Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.	Responsibility, Trustworthiness, Citizenship	Internal

Social Competencies

Developmental Assets	Asset Description	Character Traits	Internal/External
Planning and Decision Making	Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.	Responsibility, Trustworthiness	Internal
Interpersonal Competence	Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.	Caring, Responsibility, Citizenship	Internal
Cultural Competence	Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.	Respect, Empathy, Citizenship, Respect, Caring	Internal
Resistance Skills	Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.	Responsibility, Trustworthiness, Citizenship	Internal
Peaceful Conflict Resolution	Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.	Fairness, Responsibility, Citizenship, Respect, Caring	Internal

Character First's Six Pillars of Character serve as a foundational framework for cultivating ethical and virtuous behavior in individuals and communities. These pillars represent essential values that guide individuals to lead lives of integrity, kindness, and responsibility:

1. **Trustworthiness:** Trustworthiness is the cornerstone of character. It involves being honest, truthful, and reliable. Trustworthy individuals don't deceive, cheat, or steal. They have integrity and do what they say they'll do, keeping their promises. Loyalty to their values is a key trait, standing by what they believe in.
2. **Respect:** Respect is about treating others with consideration and courtesy. It means following the Golden Rule, treating others as you would like to be treated. It involves being accepting of differences and dealing peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements. Respectful individuals are also considerate of others' feelings.
3. **Responsibility:** Responsibility is the duty to fulfill one's obligations and do what is expected. Responsible individuals try their best and persevere through challenges. They exhibit self-discipline, thinking before they act and considering the consequences of their actions. Accountability is a hallmark, as they take responsibility for their words, actions, and attitudes.
4. **Fairness:** Fairness entails playing by the rules, taking turns, and sharing. It requires an open-minded approach, listening to others, and refraining from taking undue advantage. Fair individuals ensure that their actions are just and impartial, never blaming others carelessly.

5. **Caring:** Caring individuals are kind, compassionate, and considerate. They express gratitude and forgive others, showing empathy and mercy. They understand the importance of considering others' feelings and seek to help those in need, practicing charity and altruism.
6. **Citizenship:** Citizenship revolves around active participation in making the world a better place. Responsible citizens do their part to improve their homes, schools, and communities. They cooperate with others, stay informed, and exercise their right to vote. Being a good neighbor, obeying laws and rules, respecting authority, and protecting the environment are key aspects of citizenship.

Although the six pillars are used as an example, they are meant to serve as a guide, for evaluation purposes, on character education goals being met. The universality of Character First is the core reason for including them on the metric above. The Successful Futures Initiative goes beyond mere alignment; it links these assets to every activity, program, and interaction involving children and youth participants. This ensures that character development isn't an isolated endeavor but an inherent part of their overall experiences. By intentionally weaving character traits into every facet of their lives, the initiative aims to empower children and youth to become responsible, ethical, and resilient members of Oklahoma's diverse and interconnected global community.

Community Partnerships

OAYS is actively pursuing the development of community partnership opportunities with the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS), specifically through their prevention office. Our aim is to create avenues for the implementation of Botvin LifeSkills training programs and the accessibility of associated educational materials. We are excited about the potential impact of this collaboration, as it aligns with our mission to empower youth through comprehensive programs.

The TSET (Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust), has been instrumental in paving the way for these promising opportunities. We look forward to further discussions and collaboration with ODMHSAS to enhance our collective efforts in providing essential life skills education to children and youth in Oklahoma.

Data and Impact Assessment: July/August FY 2024

In the initial months of the 2024 fiscal year, the Oklahoma Association of Youth Services (OAYS) has diligently reviewed the data submitted by contracted Youth Services Agencies participating in the Successful Futures Initiative. Our assessment strategy maintains a primary focus on comprehensive observation and evaluating program reach, all with the goal of measuring the initiative's continued effectiveness in positively influencing children and youth in grades three through eight.

Throughout July and August of FY 2024, we closely monitored the outcomes of the Successful Futures Initiative. These preliminary insights reveal continued progress and positive outcomes for the participating children and youth. Key achievements include:

- a. **Sustained Tobacco Awareness:** Participants have displayed an continuing awareness of the harmful effects of tobacco usage.
- b. **Nutrition Advancements:** Many participants continue to express a strong desire for improved nutrition habits, showcasing a sustained preference for healthier food choices.
- c. **Character Growth:** Activity leaders have reported ongoing positive changes in character traits among program participants, including sustained increases in empathy, respect, and responsible behavior.
- d. **Long-Term Physical Activity:** The trend of increased physical activity levels persists, with children and youth consistently engaging in exercise beyond school hours, promoting a lasting commitment to a healthier lifestyle.

These ongoing findings reaffirm the effectiveness of the Successful Futures Initiative and underscore our dedication to nurturing the well-being and personal growth of children and youth in Oklahoma.

An integral aspect of our evaluation during July/August of this fiscal year has been assessing the reach of the Successful Futures Initiative. We have diligently collected accurate data regarding the number of children and youth served in grades three through eight, relying on program registration records and attendance logs. These established protocols have enabled OAYS to ascertain the extent of the initiative's penetration within the target population, the engagement of adult leaders, and the achievement of our initial objectives in terms of reach.

Current Results

Our evaluation for July/August continues to yield promising results for the Successful Futures Initiative:

- a. **Training Impact:** Every contracted agency participating in the Successful Futures Initiative is welcomed into a supportive and collaborative network that goes beyond initial training. We understand that successful implementation of our programs requires ongoing guidance and assistance. To ensure that our agency partners receive the necessary support, we have established a comprehensive system of ongoing assistance and communication. One of the key components of this support system is the provision of weekly virtual meetings. These meetings serve as a dedicated platform for agency representatives, program leaders, and staff to come together, exchange insights, and address any day-to-day questions or challenges that may arise during program implementation. Through these virtual gatherings, OAYS fosters open lines of communication, enabling partners to seek immediate assistance, share best practices, and collaborate on innovative solutions.

Furthermore, our commitment to providing ongoing support extends beyond the virtual meetings. Agency partners have access to a range of resources, including dedicated points of contact Dr. Messiah who remains readily available to address questions and provide technical assistance. OAYS believes in the value of continuous learning and improvement, and as such, works closely with contracted agencies to ensure they have the tools and knowledge needed to deliver the program effectively.

By offering ongoing support, weekly virtual meetings, and a responsive support network, OAYS empowers agency partners to navigate the day-to-day challenges of program delivery with confidence.

- b. Data Highlights:** a significant trend within Oklahoma counties, particularly those with populations of less than 50,000, indicating a higher number of children and youth impacted by our initiatives. This observation underscores the importance of our work, as it demonstrates that our programs are particularly relevant and impactful in areas where resources and opportunities may be more limited. We are dedicated to addressing the unique needs of these communities and ensuring that every child and youth in Oklahoma has the opportunity to benefit from our programs, regardless of their geographic location or population size. Our commitment remains unwavering as we strive to empower young individuals across the state to lead healthier and more fulfilling lives.

County	July	August	Total
Bryan	138	85	223
Cherokee, Sequoyah	26	141	167
Osage, Nowata	10	110	120
McClain, Garvin	123	48	171
Okmulgee, Okfuskee	203	204	407
McCurtain, Pushmataha	371	194	565
Caddo, Chickasha, Cotton	50	515	565
Jackson, Altus, Beckham, Washita, Kiowa, Tillman, Greer, Harmon	68	0	68
Woodward, Ellis	8	0	8
Woods, Alfalfa, Harper	74	0	74
Colum Total	1071	1297	2368

Number Served in Counties 50,000 Or Less

- c. **Youth Engagement:** Throughout July and August, the Successful Futures Initiative has continued to make a significant impact by reaching and providing services to an impressive total of 3280 children and youth in grades three through eight. This accomplishment highlights the initiative's ongoing dedication to fostering positive development in young individuals.

Agency Location	July	August	Row Total
Alva	74	0	74
Bartlesville	10	110	120
Chickasha	50	515	565
Choctaw	80	100	180
Claremore	0	75	75
Durant	138	85	223
El Reno	3	0	3
Guthrie	0	0	0
Guymon	0	0	0
Hobart	68	0	68
Hugo	371	194	565
Lawton	0	6	6
Midwest City	73	103	176
Muskogee	73	96	169
Newcastle	123	48	171
Norman	37	42	79
Okmulgee	203	204	407
Poteau	0	0	0
Sallisaw	26	141	167
Sapulpa	39	185	224
Shawnee	0	0	0
Woodward	8	0	8
Colum Total	1162	1978	3280

d. Number Of Children Receiving Character Education

Consistent with the Assets and Character Education section of this report, all program activities and learning opportunities are linked to Search Institutes 40 Developmental Assets, and because all Assets are directly correlated to character traits, all populations served are recipients of character education learning. For FY 2024 July/August, the number is 3,280.

e. New Additions

We are excited to announce that two new agencies, Poteau and Guthrie, have recently joined as partners in the Successful Futures initiative. This expansion is made possible by the increase in funding allocated for agency employee compensation, reflecting TSET's commitment to supporting the dedicated individuals who play a pivotal role in delivering initiative programs. Alongside this growth, we acknowledge that agency turnover has led to the introduction of several new employees. These factors have contributed to the presence of certain zeroes in our data charts. However, even in the face of these anomalies, our data demonstrates significant promise. We have witnessed a substantial increase in program participation and impact since the last reporting period, reaffirming the importance of our mission to empower children and youth in Oklahoma to lead healthier and more productive lives. We remain steadfast in our dedication to nurturing the well-being of young individuals across the state, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Spotlight On Youth

Southwest Youth and Families: The Successful Futures Initiative, at Southwest Youth and Families, took a proactive approach in July by organizing and hosting a series of empowerment camps. These camps saw an impressive turnout, with 50 enthusiastic participants eager to engage in meaningful experiences.

Throughout the duration of these camps, the attendees were provided with valuable insights into the importance of positive communication. They learned how effective communication can shape their futures, both personally and professionally. These lessons were delivered through a range of interactive activities, workshops, and discussions, all carefully designed to foster growth and self-awareness among the participants.

The atmosphere during the camps was charged with positivity and excitement as the young individuals embraced the opportunity to learn and grow. They not only acquired essential communication skills but also had the chance to forge lasting connections with their peers. The sense of community and support that emerged during these events was truly heartwarming.

The activities organized by Southwest Youth and Families were diverse and engaging, ensuring that every participant found something to enjoy and take away from the experience. From team-

building exercises to creative workshops, the participants had the chance to explore their interests and develop new skills. They left each day with a heightened sense of self-confidence and a deep appreciation for the power of positive communication in achieving their goals.

Southwest Youth and Families' Successful Futures Initiative continues to make a significant impact on the lives of young people in the community, fostering personal growth, empowerment, and the development of crucial life skills. This initiative stands as a shining example of their commitment to building a brighter future for the youth they serve.



Throughout August, Southwest Youth and Family dedicated their focal point to Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets framework. This comprehensive approach encompassed a range of pivotal concepts that are fundamental to the growth and flourishing of young individuals within their community.

First and foremost, Southwest Youth and Family placed significant emphasis on nurturing the development of self-esteem among their participants. They recognized that a healthy

sense of self-worth is the cornerstone on which young people build their identities and confidence. Through a series of empowering activities and discussions, participants were encouraged to recognize their own strengths and unique qualities, fostering a profound sense of self-esteem. Additionally, the Successful Futures coordinator worked diligently to teach the value of empathy. Empathy, the ability to understand and share in the feelings of others, is an essential skill that contributes to healthier relationships and a more compassionate community.

Problem solving and leadership were two other critical components imparted during this month. Recognizing that these skills are not only valuable in youth but also in adulthood. Beyond their regular after-school activities, Southwest Youth and Family extended their commitment to community engagement by actively participating in a back-to-school fair. At this event, they shared the knowledge and insights gained from the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets with a wider audience, reinforcing their dedication to the holistic development of young people.

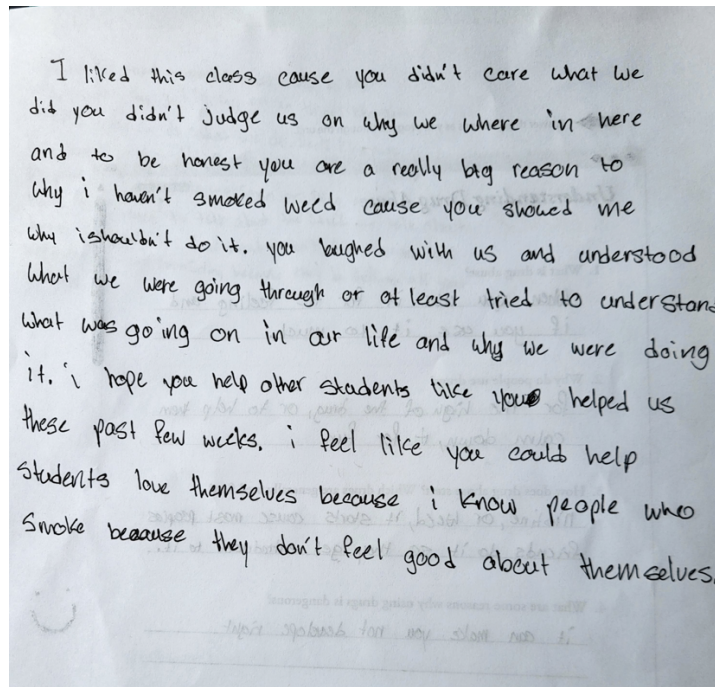
Importantly, all of these activities were carefully designed to cater to diverse learning styles and preferences. This approach ensured that every participant had the opportunity to absorb and internalize these essential life lessons through various modalities, be it through hands-on experiences, group discussions, creative projects, or other engaging methods.

Southwest Youth and Family's concerted efforts in August exemplify their profound commitment to nurturing the potential of their youth, equipping them with the tools they need to thrive as responsible, empathetic, and confident members of their community. This steadfast dedication continues to make a lasting impact on the lives of their participants, instilling valuable life skills that will serve them well throughout their journeys into adulthood.





Okmulgee Youth and Family Services also garnered success in reaching their community through the Developmental Assets. A message from their coordinator, "I just wanted to let you know of a couple of things I just completed. I did a drug education / prevention class for Henryetta. They conduct random drug testing for all kids that are in extracurricular activities in grades 6 – 12. I received referrals for those that had tested positive (within our age group) and did a four-week class that allowed them to be reinstated back into their activity quicker if they completed it. I didn't have a pre and posttest so in our last class I had them write how they felt about the class, what they learned etc. I have attached one example from an 8th grade student. There were so many assets that were focused on during the class..."



I liked this class cause you didn't care what we did you didn't judge us on why we were in here and to be honest you are a really big reason to why i haven't smoked weed cause you showed me why i shouldn't do it. you laughed with us and understood what we were going through or at least tried to understand what was going on in our life and why we were doing it. i hope you help other students like you helped us these past few weeks. i feel like you could help students love themselves because i know people who smoke because they don't feel good about themselves.



Challenges

Based on current data, some potential challenges that the Oklahoma Association of Youth Services (OAYS) may encounter include:

1. **Staff Turnover:** The turnover of agency staff could pose a challenge to program consistency and delivery. Frequent changes in personnel may require additional training and orientation, impacting the seamless execution of the initiatives.
2. **Data Anomalies:** The presence of zeroes in data charts, attributed to new agencies and employees, could potentially affect the accuracy of data analysis. It may be necessary to develop strategies for handling and interpreting this data to ensure its reliability.
3. **Resource Allocation:** As the initiative expands to include new agencies and employees, resource allocation, particularly in terms of funding and training, may require careful planning and adjustment to accommodate the increased scope.
4. **Maintaining Quality:** Ensuring that the quality of program delivery remains consistent across all agencies, especially with the introduction of new partners, can be a challenge. Maintaining program fidelity and adherence to established standards requires ongoing monitoring and support.
5. **Sustainability:** Sustaining the impact of the initiatives over the long term, particularly in the face of changing personnel and program dynamics, is a key challenge. Ensuring that the positive outcomes observed thus far are maintained and built upon will require ongoing effort.
6. **Data Interpretation:** Effectively interpreting and utilizing data with anomalies, such as the presence of zeroes, to inform decision-making and program improvement may be challenging. Developing strategies for accurate data analysis is essential.
7. **Meeting Evolving Needs:** Continuously adapting programs to meet the evolving needs of children and youth, especially as circumstances change or new challenges arise, is an ongoing challenge. Flexibility and responsiveness are crucial in this regard.

While these challenges may present hurdles, they also provide opportunities for OAYS to refine its strategies, enhance program delivery, and further strengthen its impact on the well-being of children and youth in Oklahoma.

Moving Forward

As we reflect on the accomplishments, challenges, and promising outcomes of the Successful Futures Initiative, we are inspired to plan a course that continues to uplift the lives of children and youth across Oklahoma. Moving forward, several key priorities will guide our path:

- 1. Sustainability and Consistency:** Ensuring the sustainability of our initiatives remains paramount. We will focus on maintaining program consistency across agencies, addressing staff turnover challenges, and preserving the quality of our programs to guarantee a lasting impact.
- 2. Data Enhancement:** Building upon our data collection and analysis efforts, we will seek to refine our data management strategies. This includes addressing anomalies, such as zeroes, and adopting more sophisticated data interpretation techniques to better inform our decision-making.
- 3. Geographic Equity:** Acknowledging the disparities in program participation between different counties, we are committed to tailoring our initiatives to meet the unique needs of both urban and rural communities. Geographic equity will be a guiding principle as we expand our reach.
- 4. Staff Development:** Recognizing the critical role that our agency staff play in program delivery; we will invest in ongoing training and support. This will not only address turnover challenges but also empower our staff to excel in their roles.
- 5. Community Partnerships:** We will continue to seek opportunities for collaboration, such as our partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. These collaborations open doors to enhanced resources and greater impact.
- 6. Continuous Improvement:** Our commitment to continuous improvement remains unwavering. We will work closely with external evaluators, agency partners, and stakeholders to refine our strategies, enhance program delivery, and align with best practices in youth development.
- 7. Empowering Youth Voices:** We believe in the importance of listening to the voices of the youth we serve. We will explore avenues for greater youth engagement, ensuring their perspectives shape the evolution of our initiatives.
- 8. Adaptability and Resilience:** The ever-changing landscape of youth development demands adaptability and resilience. We will remain flexible in responding to emerging challenges and opportunities, guided by our strategic goal to empower children and youth.

As we continue forward with this project, we do so with a deep sense of purpose and a commitment to the well-being of every child and youth in Oklahoma. Together, with our agency partners, stakeholders, and the communities we serve, we look forward to a future where the potential of our youth is realized, and their futures are indeed successful.

Conclusion

The Oklahoma Association of Youth Services' (OAYS) Successful Futures Initiative demonstrates our steadfast commitment to the well-being and development of Oklahoma's children and youth. As we reflect on the first two months of program delivery in this fiscal year, it is evident that our initiatives are on a promising trajectory towards achieving significant positive outcomes.

During this period, we have already witnessed tangible impacts on the lives of numerous young individuals. Notably, our efforts have resulted in heightened awareness regarding the detrimental effects of tobacco usage. Furthermore, positive changes in character traits among program participants have been observed, marking a crucial step in their personal growth.

Our initiatives have also influenced healthier nutrition habits, equipping young people with essential life skills, and encouraging physical activity. These early successes bode well for the overall development and resilience of the youth we serve.

While we acknowledge challenges like staff turnover and data anomalies, our commitment to continuous improvement remains steadfast. Geographic equity remains a fundamental principle guiding our efforts, ensuring that all children, regardless of their location, have equitable access to our programs.

We recognize the indispensable role played by our agency staff and remain dedicated to supporting their professional development as they continue to shape the experiences of the children and youth in our care.

Moving forward, our focus remains on sustainability, data refinement, and amplifying youth voices. We understand that our initiatives have a profound impact not only on the present but also on the future of our state. The Successful Futures Initiative signifies our enduring commitment to unlocking the potential within each child, nurturing their resilience, and preparing them for success in an ever-changing world.

In collaboration with our agency partners, stakeholders, and the communities we serve, OAYS will persist in adapting, innovating, and addressing the evolving needs of our youth. As we look ahead, we are united by the shared aspiration for a brighter future for every child and youth in Oklahoma. Together, we will transform this aspiration into a tangible reality.