

WINNER **VAGHC** 2016 Virginia Governor's Housing Conference  
BEST HOUSING PROGRAM or SERVICE



**My Path Forward is a best-practice model designed for young people ages 18 to 25 who have aged out of foster care.**

My Path Forward began with the goal of developing the best services, settings, and policies to support and lift this vulnerable population. In 2016 we launched a research-based program to provide local young people with housing and critical trauma-informed wrap-around supports.

My Path Forward also encompasses a research and advocacy arm. We conducted a nationwide survey to gain more insight into the laws, policies, programs and innovations in the field. Our research with Child Trends, a nationally recognized research firm, provides MPF a new understanding of how these challenges are being addressed in order to better inform our program.

## Why This Matters

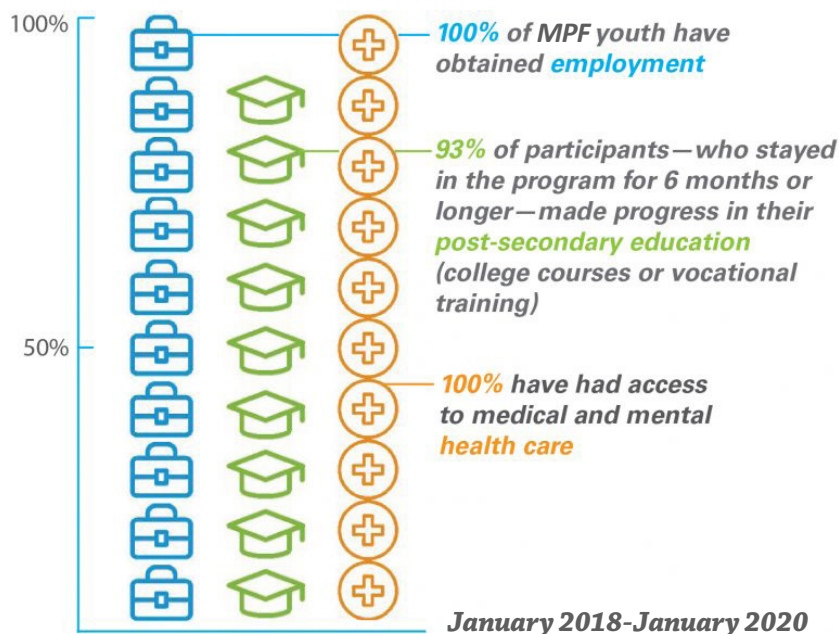
**Virginia is ranked among the worst of the 50 states for the rate at which teens age out of foster care without being adopted by a permanent family.**

Every year, about 500 young people “age out” of Virginia’s foster care system. Often, they are sent into the world with nothing—no reliable housing, no job options, no education, no transportation, no life skills, and no supportive relationships. Like most 18-year-olds, they’re not prepared to be fully on their own. Yet their challenges are compounded by histories of abuse, abandonment, and instability.

The outcomes are devastating:

- 1 in 4 will be incarcerated within 2 years
- 1 in 5 will be homeless within 2 years
- Fewer than 1 in 6 graduate from high school
- They face higher rates of unemployment, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, domestic violence, and more.

*Youth who have participated in My Path Forward have accomplished incredible things that include; completing their Associate's Degrees, Bachelor's Degree, college certifications and vocational trainings. They have gone on to become CNAs, Medical Technicians, Security Officers and valued employees at fortune 500 companies.*





## Our Program

### **My Path Forward invests in youth aging out of foster care and changes the trajectory of their lives.**

Our innovative approach empowers youth 18 to 25 who have aged out of Virginia's foster care system without being adopted. We provide these young people with critical supports and housing to assist them as they develop into independent and engaged community members. All youth in the program receive valuable mentoring and relationship-building, including having a roommate for mutual support and accountability.

My Path Forward uniquely offers crucial services such as housing, transportation, life skills coaching, and intensive case management. We focus on six major service areas which include:

**1) post-secondary education, 2) employment, 3) financial capability, 4) securing safe, stable, and affordable housing, 5) accessing and managing health and mental health care, and 6) establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults.**

We believe that helping our youth reach success in these six areas will increase their ability to become thriving adults.



**Our ultimate goal is to empower these vulnerable young people to achieve independence and personal success, thus transforming their lives and the communities to which they belong.**

## My Path Forward

[www.mypathforward.org](http://www.mypathforward.org)



### **Information**

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### **Children's Home Society of Virginia**

[www.chsva.org](http://www.chsva.org) ■ 804.353.0191

### **Better Housing Coalition**

[www.betterhousingcoalition.org](http://www.betterhousingcoalition.org) ■ 804.644.0546

**Each young person is unique, with unique needs and dreams. To ensure a smooth transition, each youth is:**

- *Able to access a mentor as they pursue their own educational and career goals*
- *Offered opportunities to grow through personal discovery experiences in metro Richmond and surrounding areas*
- *Encouraged to engage with their community and build civic responsibility through advocacy, service, and leadership opportunities*

## **Our Collaboration**

**My Path Forward is a collaboration between two Richmond-based nonprofits:**

### **Children's Home Society of Virginia**

A full-service adoption agency, committed to building lifelong relationships for Virginia's at-risk youth and transforming our community so that all young people are able to thrive.

### **Better Housing Coalition**

A community development organization, founded in 1988, focused on changing lives and transforming communities through high-quality, affordable housing.