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.

100% of MPF youth have obtained employment

93% of participants—who stayed in the program for 6 months or longer—made progress in their post-secondary education (college courses or vocational training)

100% have had access to medical and mental health care

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.

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.

January 2018-January 2020
Our ultimate goal is to empower these vulnerable young people to achieve independence and personal success.

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