



**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

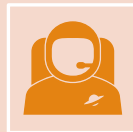
### Project Summary



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.



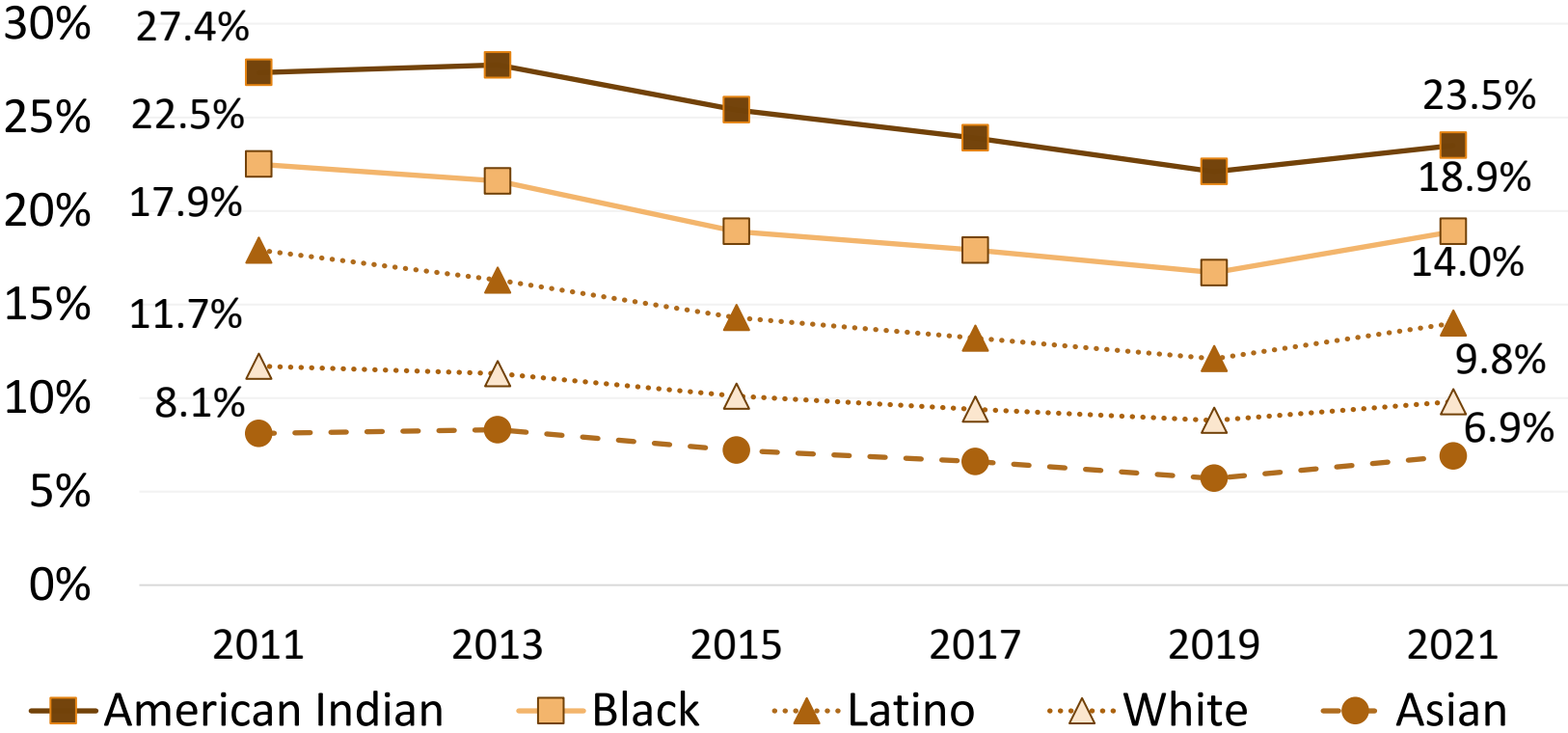
Identify and articulate policy and practice recommendations emerging from the quantitative and qualitative studies.

# Opportunity Youth

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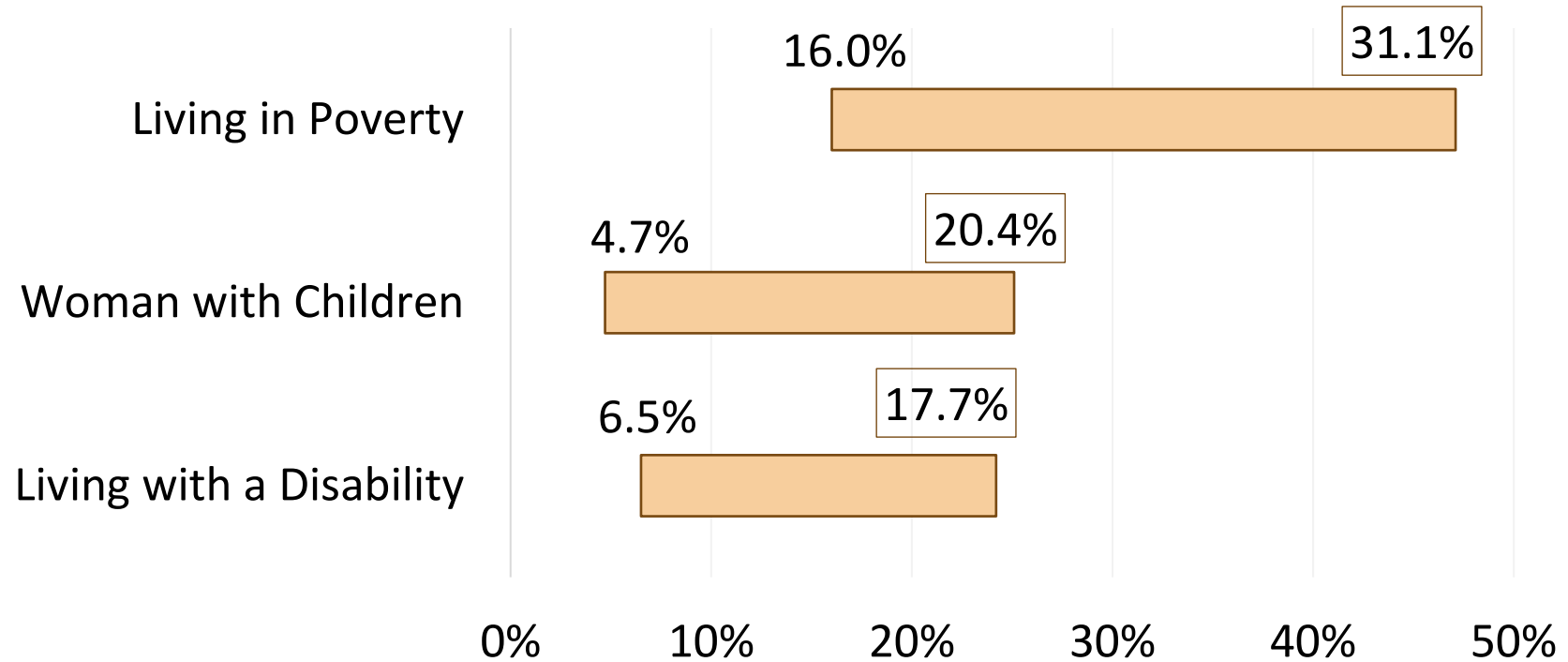
Opportunity Youth, recognized as young people aged 16 to 24 who are disconnected from the workforce and education systems during a period of development that has the potential for individuals to gain education and/or training that would “...provide the foundation for their occupational trajectories during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

# 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.

# Opportunity Youth: A Diverse Group

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

# Tenuously Disconnected Opportunity Youth

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## 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

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## Generally, as a group:

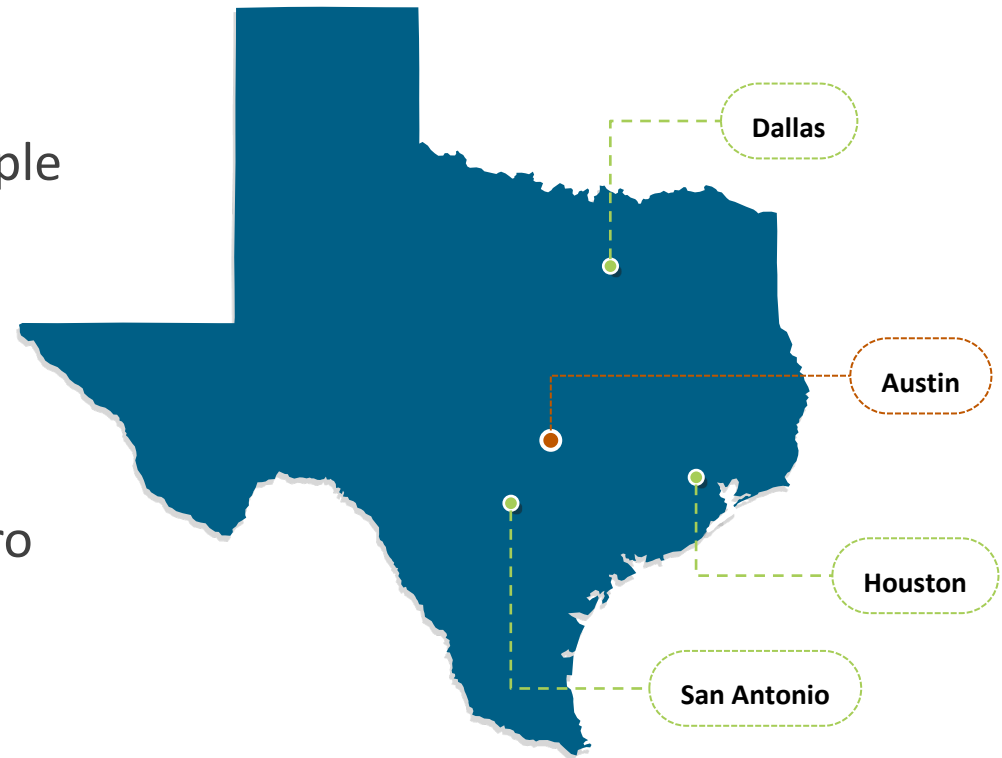
- ❖ At risk of being disconnected from work and school for prolonged periods
- ❖ May have experienced trauma, involvement in systems such as the juvenile justice and foster care system, struggling as young parents, they may be homeless or have unstable, unsafe housing, or coping with mental and physical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



# ESTOY Study Region

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- ❖ 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 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

# ESTOY Qualitative Evaluation Purpose

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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

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- ❖ Conduct key interviews/focus groups with staff from identified education/training and workforce development 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

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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.

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?

# Evaluator's Self-Reflection

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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

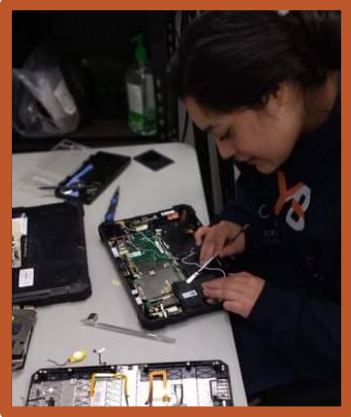


**American YouthWorks:  
Restorative Justice  
Practices Leadership Crew**

**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.

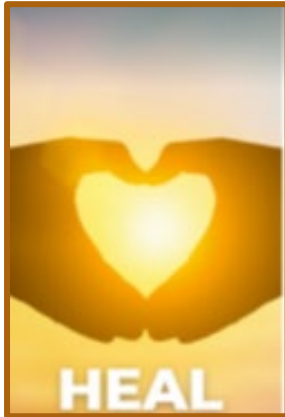
YouthBuild programs use a service-learning model that combines occupational skills training and academic instruction with community service projects. Training tracks:



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

# LifeWorks

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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

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- ❖ 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

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## 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

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## Meeting with Restorative Justice Practice Leadership Crew & Impactful Voices Team

- 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

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- ❖ 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 Development

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- ❖ 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”

# Evaluator Reflections





# Recognition

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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.

# Survey Distribution Timeline

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**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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