

Advancing Wilmington Through the Workforce

DELAWARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

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Social Contract

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Definition of Terms

- **Opportunity Youth:** 16-24 years of age. Out of school. Unemployed. Our Target Population.
- **Program Providers:** Employment and training vendors that work with persistently unemployed populations in order to help them access and maintain gainful employment. Example: Challenge Program.
- **Wraparound Services:** Community based, culturally relevant, individualized, family centered services that address basic needs. Example: safety, social, emotional, educational, spiritual, and cultural needs.
- **Wraparound Service Providers:** Organizations providing one or more specialized services known to significantly impact Opportunity Youths' ability to achieve and hold gainful employment. Example: Community Legal Aid.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DELAWARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

The Delaware Workforce Development Board (DWDB), at its October 2018 Annual Retreat, aligned on a strategic priority: improve the workforce development system in Wilmington to improve youth employment outcomes, inspire hope, and reduce gun violence in the community.

To support this work, Social Contract has surveyed the Wilmington landscape of program providers, service providers, and other actors/stakeholders working to expand the employment prospects of Opportunity Youth--those young adults age 16-24 who are not enrolled in an education program and are not employed.

In this report, we explain our findings regarding how these providers currently deliver services to Opportunity Youth, as well as our recommendations for future investment to improve their capacity and effectiveness in serving this population. Detailed results and crucial pieces of information are contained in both the main body and the appendices of this report.

Our research found that Opportunity Youth in Wilmington do not have access to a coordinated

pathway that leads to strong and stable employment.

KEY FINDINGS

- Wilmington's Opportunity Youth need programs and services to address multiple tiers of skill development (e.g., Personal Effectiveness Competencies, Academic Competencies, Workplace Competencies, and Industry and Sector Specific Technical Competencies).
- In general (but with some notable exceptions), program providers and wraparound service providers do not currently coordinate to work with Opportunity Youth.
- The landscape lacks an effective system for case management of Opportunity Youth, which is required to support Opportunity Youth with meeting essential basic needs (housing, food, mental health, and transportation).
- Focusing on Opportunity Youth exhibiting high-risk indicators will provide the best opportunity to impact levels of gun violence.

Based on these findings, we make six (6) key recommendations that we believe should guide further investment in the landscape for Opportunity Youth across Wilmington.

Key Recommendations

1. Target support to 3-5 highly effective and responsive wraparound service providers to exclusively prioritize or serve Wilmington Opportunity Youth.
2. Build a centralized case management entity, embed its case managers inside program providers, and ensure they continue supporting Opportunity Youth past their initial placement with employers.
3. Create an “on-ramp” for program participation (i.e., cohort-based programs explicitly working to provide social, emotional skills development, while offering initial case management and provide basic human needs).
4. Replicate or create additional program providers to offer a more diverse array of programs for Opportunity Youth, and more volume of support available to Opportunity Youth.
5. Engage employers to commit to hiring and effectively supporting Opportunity Youth.
6. Designate and invest in a backbone organization to coordinate, implement, and sustain the recommendations made in this report.

It is certainly possible for Wilmington to build an effective pathway of support for our Opportunity Youth, thereby meeting the stated goals of The Workforce Development Board. Sustained and coordinated investment from leaders, staff, programs, and participants will be required to realize the true economic and social potential of these youth. We believe that the structure outlined in our Key Recommendations and in the details shared throughout this report and its appendices should serve as the basis for this investment-- and that this is an investment well worth making.

BACKGROUND

At the October 2018 Annual Retreat of the Delaware Workforce Development Board, members aligned on the strategic priority of improving the workforce development system in Wilmington to inspire hope, improve youth employment outcomes, and reduce gun violence.

In support of this goal, Social Contract was tasked with researching the current local, regional, and national landscapes, evaluating the existing workforce development infrastructure, and determining what improvements to that infrastructure would help the DWDB reach this goal.

Our first action was to define our target population more narrowly. ***Whose employment outcomes must we focus on to increase hope and decrease violence?***

Based on our research, we determined this demographic is Opportunity Youth, and more specifically, Opportunity Youth who have a history of experience with expulsion, suspension, detention centers, or alternative schools.

Who are Opportunity Youth?

Opportunity Youth is the prevalent term emerging across the United States to refer to those youth aged 16-24 who are not in school and not employed (or who are in and out of school/employment).

When we began this work, the target population was broadly defined as “At-Risk Youth.” However, this term, and others such as “disconnected youth” and even “dropouts,” suffer from two significant flaws. First, they are vague and do not clearly define to whom they refer. Second, they are centered on negative qualities/traits, whereas Opportunity Youth focuses on what becomes possible if and when we support this population. In the United States, and throughout the world, leaders have begun to recognize the untapped potential in Opportunity Youth to meet workforce demand, and the resultant fiscal, economic, and social benefits gained when Opportunity Youth become self-sufficient and gainfully employed.

In Delaware, we see Opportunity Youth as the most significant target population for the DWDB to support. Also, to the extent that the DWDB is interested in driving gun violence reduction, it should focus its attention on

Opportunity Youth with a history of behavioral challenges demonstrated through involvement in alternative schools and detention centers, or through high rates of expulsion, suspension, and truancy.

A 2015 Center for Disease Control (CDC) report talks about certain predictive identifying factors that indicate whether an individual may be likely in the future to perpetrate gun violence. These factors included previous involvement in detention centers and alternative school environments, a history of expulsion, suspension, and truancy, as well as maltreatment, abuse, poverty, and unemployment. Notably, the majority of perpetrators of violence also fell within an age bracket of 18-25 years of age.

With this information in mind, should the DWDB intend to drive gun violence reduction, it will need to narrow its target population. Focusing its purview on those Opportunity Youth, who specifically demonstrate a history of these indicators, will increase the likelihood of gun violence reduction.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT REALITY FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH IN WILMINGTON?

Today, 11.7% of Americans - an estimated 4.6 million teenagers and young adults - are Opportunity Youth. In Delaware, the rate is 12.1%, and we rank 35th in the country for Opportunity Youth measured as a percentage of the state population.¹

These youth have a higher probability of involvement with gun violence and other adverse social outcomes, not to mention the negative economic consequences associated with their status of not being enrolled in school and not being employed.

Opportunity Youth have often been exposed to multiple risk factors. Nationally, thirty percent (30%) of Opportunity Youth report being abused; twenty percent (20%) report being homeless; and 18 percent (18%) have spent time in juvenile detention.²

For many, life has involved experience with traumatic events. These may include exposure to, or being a survivor of, violence at home, at school, or in their neighborhoods. Opportunity Youth also may have personal and family health traumas, where young people often found

¹Two Futures: The Economic Case for Keeping Youth on Track Measure of America Measure of America, Social Science Research Council; October 9, 2018, Kristen Lewis, Rebecca Gluskin; <https://measureofamerica.org/psid/>

²Don't Call Them Dropouts: UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO LEAVE HIGH SCHOOL BEFORE GRADUATION; May 20, 2014; America's Promise Alliance/Center for Promise; <https://www.americaspromise.org/report/dont-call-them-dropouts>

themselves in the role of caregiver or wage-earner not as a result of violence or neglect, but because a parent became ill or disabled. Many poor and low-income youth experience premature adulthood; they may need to tend to younger siblings, care for sick parents, or work to support the family financially. Their schools often are limited in resources with less experienced teachers — many of whom cannot relate to them socially and culturally, or who know very little about the severe conditions from which they come.

Moreover, Opportunity Youth find themselves in demand of basic necessities: stable housing (leaving some Opportunity Youth homeless), food security, childcare, transportation, safety from crime, and mental health issues (often trauma based).

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS TO EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT FACING OPPORTUNITY YOUTH?

Research conducted by Field Guide Counseling identifies several factors that lead Opportunity Youth to disconnect: structural racism, structural poverty around racial and neighborhood lines, poor basic math and reading skills, contact with the criminal justice system, and scarce job

opportunities.³

As discussed above, these factors are often combined with exposure to violence and other traumatic events. Furthermore, Opportunity Youth find themselves outside of most or even all of the support systems/pathways traditionally provided to support people in their educational and career pursuits, as we will discuss in more detail below.

All of our national and regional research

Key Barriers Facing Opportunity Youth



Housing



Food Insecurity



Child Care



Transportation



Criminal Safety



Mental Health

pointed to a significant reality for Opportunity Youth: prior to engaging meaningfully in any kind of sustainable employment trajectory, they require personalized support navigating basic human needs like housing, food insecurity, child

³Connecting Baltimore's Opportunity Youth to Careers. February 2016. Job Opportunities Task Force/Baltimore Promise <https://jotf.org/report/connecting-baltimores-opportunity-youth-to-careers/>

care, transportation, licensing, legal advocacy, criminal safety, and mental health.

Until these needs are met, Opportunity Youth cannot make the significant strides they need to make in order to master the social-emotional, academic, workforce, and sector specific competencies required for them to access and maintain employment.

Throughout our landscape analysis, our Wilmington program partners consistently cited the following basic needs of their participants:

- Basic (food, housing, transportation)
- Credentialing services (ID cards, drivers licenses, birth certificates)
- Expungement services
- Transitional jobs
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

It is for this reason that wraparound services are critical to Opportunity Youth.

What are wraparound services and why do they matter?

Wraparound services are community based, culturally relevant, individualized, family centered services that address basic needs. Opportunity Youth who are facing these barriers require wraparound services and supports that unlock resources that meet the above listed basic needs.

It is widely recognized that Opportunity Youth cannot progress in skills training until these basic needs are met. Further, to be effective, a wraparound service must be delivered in accordance to the following principles:⁴

- Client voice and choice
- Natural Supports (family/relationships)
- Team-based approaches
- Collaboration
- Culturally competent
- Persistence
- Strength-based
- Outcome-based
- Community-based

To that end, an important part of the work conducted by Social Contract for the DWDB has involved analyzing not only what wraparound services are currently being provided for Opportunity Youth in Wilmington, but also how they are delivered.

WITHOUT EFFECTIVE PROGRAM PROVIDERS

⁴Ten principles of the wraparound process. Bruns, E.J., Walker, J.S., Adams, J., Miles, P., Osher, T.W., Rast, J., VanDenBerg, J.D. & National Wraparound Initiative Advisory Group (2004). Portland, OR: National Wraparound Initiative, Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health, Portland State University, <https://nwi.pdx.edu/pdf/TenPrincWAProcess.pdf>

THAT MEET THEIR NEEDS, OPPORTUNITY YOUTH WILL HAVE NO VIABLE PATHWAY TO ACHIEVE GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT.

While program providers serve Opportunity

What are program providers, and why do they matter for Opportunity Youth?

Program providers, in the context of this report, are workforce development providers that offer training to aid Opportunity Youth in securing employment. To do this, they provide experiences and skills required to fill education and developmental gaps that exist as a result of the experiences outlined earlier in this report.

Youth in Wilmington, they are challenged enormously by the many developmental, academic, and basic needs presented by their clients. In this report, we analyze the current capacity and effectiveness of program providers. We also look at how they engage with wraparound service providers to serve their clients, and evaluate their overall effectiveness in helping our Opportunity Youth succeed.

METHODOLOGY

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Social Contract utilized a multiple-step approach to test the DWDB's primary hypothesis regarding the needed relationship between program and wraparound providers and develop a set of key recommendations to move this work forward.

First, we mapped all providers in Wilmington that serve Opportunity Youth.

We held interviews, scoping sessions, and site visits with program providers, their staff, and program participants to understand their current deployment of wraparound services, operational methodology, and capacity for serving additional clients.

This enabled us to identify opportunities for how program and wraparound service providers could better collaborate to serve Opportunity Youth.

At the same time, we researched leading national and regional models to gain insight into how this work might be best structured in Wilmington. A list of the national organizations leading successful Opportunity Youth initiatives and a sample of programs incorporated into these models is

provided in Appendix C.

The culmination of this work are the key recommendations made in this report, below, as well as the analysis ("findings") underpinning those recommendations provided here.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Wilmington's Opportunity Youth need programs and services to address multiple tiers of skill development.

Opportunity Youth are precisely the population that have been left out of many of the investments made in our state. Delaware Pathways has brought significant momentum to career and workforce development, Generations has focused its efforts on upskilling those who are underemployed, and Summer Youth Employment offers those who are in high school, and college, temporary summer opportunities. However, no existing large scale effort has explicitly focused on this Opportunity Youth target population.



Tiers referenced in the graphic are further defined in the graphic on page 13

As illustrated in the above graphic, precisely because they are out of school and unemployed, Opportunity Youth fall outside of the major landscape investments being made in workforce development.

In this graphic, you will see that Delaware’s labor market can be organized into three categories of employment: low-, middle-, and high-skill jobs.

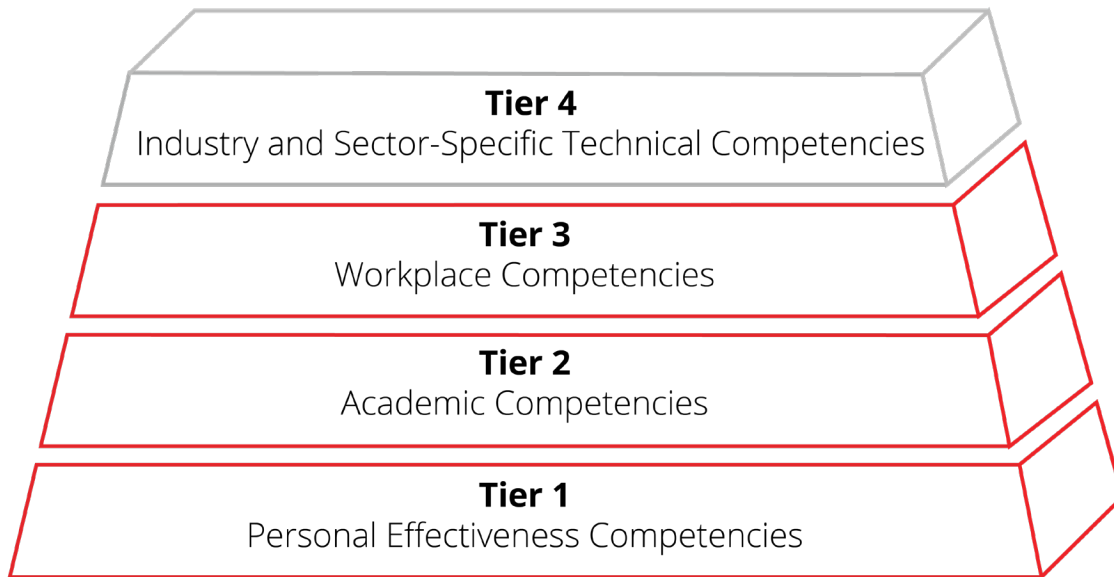
- Low-skill jobs require a high school diploma or less and provide an average wage of \$26,350 per year.
- Middle-skill jobs require some type of postsecondary education, e.g. Registered

Apprenticeship, certification, or an Associate Degree and provide an average wage of \$44,960 per year.

- High-skill jobs require a Bachelor’s Degree or higher and provide an average wage of \$88,510 per year.

A low skilled job requires competency mastery in interpersonal skills such as conflict resolution, professionalism, and adaptability. On the following page, you will see these competencies listed as Tier 1 competencies.

Middle skilled jobs require mastery of Tiers 1 - 3 on this same chart, which includes interpersonal, academic, and workforce



Graphic modified from the Building Blocks for Competency Models Foundational Competencies created by the Competency Model Clearinghouse. Employment and Training Administration, United States Department of Labor. www.doleta.gov.

competencies. This means that our Opportunity Youth, who struggle with severe academic and interpersonal skill gaps, will require deep intervention to master these competencies in order to access and maintain low or middle skill employment:

- **Tier 1:** interpersonal skills, professionalism, adaptability, flexibility, dependability
- **Tier 2:** reading, writing, mathematics, critical thinking, basic computer skills
- **Tier 3:** scheduling, working with tools and technology, problem solving and decision making, planning and organizing
- **Tier 4:** competencies specified by industry-sector representatives

Opportunity Youth have a variety of developmental needs that must be addressed if they are to secure and maintain gainful employment.

Today, most funding to Wilmington’s program providers is restricted Tier 4 technical skill development. Opportunity Youth, however, have significant deficits in Tiers 1 - 3 competencies, as well as Tier 4. Building our capacity to service Opportunity Youth will require investment in solid programming infrastructure targeting mastery of Tiers 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Later in this report, we make recommendations related to how we might operationalize this infrastructure here in Wilmington, informed by national models.

The Wilmington landscape of program providers focused on Opportunity Youth lacks breadth and depth

Throughout this work, we held interviews, site visits, focus groups, and collaborative group discussions with program providers, their leaders and staff, current and past participants, and related stakeholders.

Through this research, it became clear that while there are a variety of programs in Wilmington, and many are high quality, few are focused explicitly on Opportunity Youth.

Program providers self-report that they cannot work with Opportunity Youth at scale. Moreover, due to the challenges facing participants in areas like housing and transportation, many program providers feel like they have (perhaps unintentionally) become wraparound service providers themselves. Providers believe that much deeper engagement is needed, beyond merely placing Opportunity Youth in a first job (as many then lose that job), to ensure they are successful.

At the same time, program participants consistently voiced a need for more options

and more in-depth support. In our interviews, they indicated that they:

- Desire more exposure to a variety of career fields and job skills to determine what may align with their interests.
- Find it difficult to overcome early adverse experiences in a new job, reporting a need for services like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.
- Believe programs are too short and would like to see ongoing mentoring and support while they are beginning to engage with the workplace (post-placement).
- Have friends on waitlists for programs or were themselves on waitlists at an earlier time.

In-depth details from our interviews with program providers and participants can be found in Appendix A. While we will highlight the full landscape in our appendix and resource guide, we would like to draw attention to exemplary program providers. We believe their approaches could potentially be scaled up either through expansion or imitation.

These programs demonstrate a high potential for impact. That said, currently, there are not enough (nor enough variety in) program providers that focus on Opportunity Youth. Even these exemplary programs acknowledge a need for support with case management and academic/developmental assistance. All providers agree that their participants require more support post-placement.

Exemplar: Challenge Program

TARGET POPULATION	17-24 years old
# IN COHORT:	Rolling enrollment to keep number at 30 (max capacity)
LENGTH OF COHORT	Individualized, primarily 6 months, possible 'returns' for longer periods. It is common for their participants to engage with their program for several years.
IN-HOUSE WRAPAROUND SERVICES:	Transportation, resource navigation, GED/tutoring, housing, budgeting, legal matters, job search and placement
WHAT WRAPAROUNDS ARE THEY OUTSOURCING?	Nothing to date (One failed attempt with CBT)
TIER	Tiers 1 - 4 Competency Development

Exemplar: 2 Fish

TARGET POPULATION	Re-entry, 18 years +, approx. 25 % Opportunity Youth
# IN COHORT:	Varies based on projects, started with 15 in cohort (currently 10)
LENGTH OF COHORT	12- 18 months, or until other employment secured
IN-HOUSE WRAPAROUND SERVICES:	None
WHAT WRAPAROUNDS ARE THEY OUTSOURCING?	Working with DE Center for Justice for case management and resource navigation (this has just started)
TIER	Tiers 3- 4 Competency Development

Exemplar: Peace by Piece

TARGET POPULATION	Re-entry, 18 years old plus, approx 30% Opportunity Youth
# IN COHORT:	Rolling enrollment capacity: 105 per year (Workforce Development) Transitional housing - 25 adults, 6 children; Workforce Integration- 56 participants
LENGTH OF COHORT	Ongoing until employment, 90 days case management support.
IN-HOUSE WRAPAROUND SERVICES:	On site transitional housing, and employer engagement through partnership with Aquila.
WHAT WRAPAROUNDS ARE THEY OUTSOURCING?	Partnered with Aquila for sober living and substance abuse therapy and counseling, DHSS for transportation, and other available resources. Goodwill work placement
TIER	Tiers 3-4 Competency Development

Program providers and wraparound services do not consistently work together to provide support for Opportunity Youth.

At the outset of this work, the DWDB had a few questions related to the current landscape of program providers and wraparound services that it asked us to investigate. These were:

- What wraparound services could partner with program providers?
- Which programs already have habitual relationships?
- What wraparounds could be added to best improve outcomes?

While all program providers and stakeholders agree that wraparound services are necessary, program providers consistently reported a struggle to work with wraparound service providers citing barriers in responsiveness, cost, reliability, trust, ease of use, access, cultural competency, and capacity. Our work with wraparound services (described in depth in Appendix B) confirmed that there are many challenges in these areas.

More often than not, providers work to support

their clients with wraparound supports in-house. The best example of this is the Challenge Program, which has done an extraordinary job of providing a full spectrum of support to their clients, no doubt creating the “sense of family” and “community” that has come to define the culture of this banner program.

Exemplary In-House Wraparound Provision:

Challenge Program provides case management and academic tutoring. Their case manager barrier-busts to the extent possible with each client, sometimes supporting them in court on a weekly basis or providing needed emergency funding which could take the form of bus fare, paying an electrical bill, or even legal fees.

They have tight control over their ability to provide nuanced supports to their clients. This does come at a high cost; and while we see glimpses of this, it's not a bar that other programs have been able to hit in the same way.

While all providers feel it necessary to attempt to provide some wraparound services, few providers have the capacity and resources to do this as effectively as they would like.

That being said, we would like to highlight one exemplary case, namely Peace by Piece, which demonstrates the potential and power of a collaborative approach between a provider and wraparound that offer these services.

Exemplary Partnership: Peace by Piece and Aquila

Aquila provides substance abuse, counseling, and housing supports to the clients at Peace By Piece, a recently launched workforce development provider operating in Wilmington. While this is a new model, and the program has only launched within the year, we believe this will be a successful innovation to observe and ultimately emulate in future investments.

While Peace By Piece represents an innovation in the landscape, for the most part, what we see is program providers (like the Challenge Program) fundraising for internal capacity to provide their clients with these services - if they can, and when they can.

A real solution is needed to successfully provide consistency of care around basic human needs; only then can their clients begin to master the Tier 1 through 4 competencies they need to achieve successful and enduring employment.

That being said, our analysis demonstrates that a solution will require more than pairing existing wraparound service providers with existing program providers.

Our analysis finds:

- There are many wraparound service providers, but responsiveness and bandwidth are limited and inconsistent.
- Program providers feel there are numerous barriers to working with wraparound service providers, and there is little coordination/partnership (again, with some notable exceptions) specifically targeting Opportunity Youth.

In-depth analysis of current program providers and wraparound service providers can be found in Appendix A & B.

It will be essential to add/build the capacity of wraparound service providers and ensure that high-quality services are provided and tightly integrated with program providers covering each of the following areas: resource navigation, transportation, mental health, credentialing/legal, housing, and financial services. Moreover, successfully providing access to these services for all Opportunity Youth, while integrating them with the skills, education, and training programs necessary for their success, will require an extensive utilization of case managers, a topic that we will address later in our report on page 22.

Though most wraparound service providers we contacted had little bandwidth and were unresponsive, we did identify existing wraparound service providers that we believe demonstrate the potential to work effectively with Opportunity Youth, particularly if they can be supported at scale. These are: The Achievement Center, Aquila, Delaware Guidance, West End Neighborhood House, Catholic Charities, CLASI, Connections, and WilInvest.

Exemplar Wraparound Providers

Exemplar: Aquila

SERVICES PROVIDED	Individualized treatment to those suffering from substance abuse and psychiatric disorders. Provides outpatient care, drug testing, and psychiatric evaluations and medication management.
TARGET POPULATION	Serves 18+. Anyone who requires assistance to overcome their drug dependencies.
EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT	Partners with Peace by Piece to provide employment training for people with drug dependency problems.

Exemplar: Delaware Guidance

SERVICES PROVIDED	Mental health education and support to youth and families. Provide outpatient counseling, therapy, trauma support services, community based crisis response, psychiatric services and classroom support.
TARGET POPULATION	Children K-12 and their families.
EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT	Masters Level program offers 2 year training and support in therapeutic services. Associates Level program gives exposure within Delaware Guidance by providing supervision and treatment training.
ADDITIONAL SERVICES	Violence prevention programs for youth, financial literacy services for transitioning teens and some parents. Works with police and school events to generate community outreach and exposure.

Exemplar: The Achievement Center

SERVICES PROVIDED	Correctional reentry program, providing comprehensive reentry support service that targets crime-causing factors, shown to be predictors of recidivism, for formerly incarcerated high-risk men leaving prison and returning to Wilmington's most distressed communities.
TARGET POPULATION	Serves men who have been incarcerated
EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT	Partners with the Department of Corrections, Superior Courts, and the Department of Horticulture to provide employment training and experiences for residents.
ADDITIONAL SERVICES	Walk-in resume development assistance, interview preparation, and job postings available on-site.

Exemplar: Connections

SERVICES PROVIDED	Assists people with psychiatric and intellectual disabilities, substance abuse problems, homeless veterans and their families, families who are in crisis, and men and women who are incarcerated.
TARGET POPULATION	Serves 18+.
EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT	Offers on-the-job and specific training in culinary and janitorial services. Needs funding to create and improve programs for janitorial and pest services.
ADDITIONAL SERVICES	Provides homes for veterans, people with disabilities. Services that help youth and their families in times of crises.

Exemplar: Wilminvest

SERVICES PROVIDED	Provides housing accommodations for those in severe need of a dignified place to stay. Wilminvest then couples those accommodations with a supportive culture and intensive case management, “from homeless to self-sustaining,” in partnership with DHSS.
TARGET POPULATION	Serves 18+ and Families
ADDITIONAL SERVICES	Intensive renovations of distressed properties, socially competent property management, case management services.

Exemplar: CLASI

SERVICES PROVIDED	Provides free civil legal services to marginalized populations—people who are poor, people with disabilities, senior citizens, survivors of domestic violence, victims of housing discrimination, and immigrant victims of crime, among others.
TARGET POPULATION	Anyone who needs legal aid
EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT	They support people by helping them to enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act/Fair Housing Act and other civil rights statutes.

Exemplar: West End Neighborhood House

SERVICES PROVIDED	Employment training and support, after school programs, financial literacy education, housing support, educational opportunities (including GED) for 16+.
TARGET POPULATION	Provides after school activities for children K-12. Offers other programs and services for 18+.
EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT	Offers multiple employment training and education services. Employment training for people 16 years+ to help them build critical thinking skills. Offers environmental job training to those looking to work in careers that reduce environmental contamination.
ADDITIONAL SERVICES	Childcare, athletics, advice on how to prepare to become a homeowner, and a variety of other programs

Exemplar: Catholic Charities

SERVICES PROVIDED	The Bayard House provides housing for pregnant women and their families as they look for permanent housing and employment. Mental health and substance abuse programs are offered to those that are seeking help.
TARGET POPULATION	Pregnant women and families. The majority of clientele are 18+.
EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT	Refer clients to the Department of Labor.
ADDITIONAL SERVICES	Food assistance, diaper banks, support to lower energy consumption, and a number of other services

There is great need for additional case management.

Every major report on serving Opportunity Youth and every successful example found in cities and regions across the country emphasizes the importance of coordinated case management.

Currently, in Wilmington, case management suffers in that it is:

- ad hoc, typically located in and limited to a specific program and lacking broader and deeper connections to the landscape.
- not necessarily focused or trained to specifically address the needs of Opportunity Youth.
- terminated prematurely upon initial placement in a job or even simply in a job training or education program.

Current case management capacity is too limited to adequately address the complex needs or volume of this population. This contributes to and exacerbates the disconnect between and among program providers and wraparound service providers.

IN SUMMARY, OUR FINDINGS REVEAL FIVE MAJOR GAPS IN THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE.

Major gaps in the Wilmington workforce development landscape for Opportunity Youth

- Our wraparounds have extremely limited capacity to support program providers servicing Opportunity Youth.
- Program providers require assistance from case managers to help navigate wraparound services on a case by case basis for clients.
- Opportunity Youth require more volume from the landscape, as well as options, to meet their individualized talents and interests (more choice & seats).
- Our program providers require additional capacity to support with Tier 1 - 3 competency needs (interpersonal, academic, and basic workforce skills).
- The sector requires leadership to coordinate solutions to each of the above barriers and broker national and local resources to finance the work.

The recommendations that follow are designed to effectively address each of these gaps. Our recommendations are designed to facilitate more effective partnerships between program providers and wraparound services. This will require stronger infrastructure and a stronger focus on Opportunity Youth.

Recommendation 1

Invest in 3-5 high functioning wraparound service providers that are dedicated to serving Opportunity Youth

We know from our in-depth analysis of the landscape, key areas of need come up again and again for Opportunity Youth (i.e., housing, transportation, legal, etc.). Wraparound providers currently do not and cannot meet these needs.

Wilmington must create, attract, and grow a handful of wraparound providers (likely expansions of exemplary programs already operating locally or elsewhere in the region/nation) that specifically focus on Opportunity Youth and build exclusive partnerships with local program providers. These wraparound providers must gain the capacity to be responsive, agile, and reliable with clients, as well as the cultural competency to act as a trusted partner with clients.

A great example of what is working in the landscape right now is Aquila (a wraparound service provider), which has allied with Peace By Piece (per above). While this is a new model,

and the program has only launched within the year, we believe this will be a successful innovation to observe and ultimately emulate in future investments.

Learning from this example, we can see that a dedicated partnership between a wraparound provider and a program provider could drive significant results by virtue of effectively servicing the basic needs of our client population.

Recommendation 2

Centralize case management. Enlist one entity to recruit and train case managers, then place these case managers with program providers.

While the existence of designated wraparound service providers will greatly improve the ability of program providers to offer needed services to their clients, our research demonstrates that success will hinge on whether program providers are able to offer each of their client's highly individualized case management services. In so many cases, Opportunity Youth face multifaceted and critical life challenges. For example, they may need legal support, housing, food

assistance, and/or childcare all at the same time. Managing this is challenging enough for anyone in our community, but Opportunity Youth are struggling with additional layers of trauma, as well as academic, social-emotional and communication deficits. It is for this reason that case managers are a critically important investment.

Our recommendation is that this service be centralized for efficiency, consistency, and also to ensure that this “lift” is not added as a burden onto the already limited capacity of program providers. If a single “host” entity took responsibility for fundraising, recruitment, training, placement, and coordination of case managers, shared across multiple program providers serving this clientele, they would be able to effectively meet the basic needs of our Opportunity Youth. Once those basic needs are met, we know they will have the foundation from which they can begin engaging with Tier 1 - Tier 4 competency building.

Taken together, these first two recommendations do much to answer the question “How might wraparound providers more optimally partner with program providers to improve outcomes for Opportunity Youth?” However, in order to meet the

DWDB’s goals for Opportunity Youth and the community at large, we need to address additional issues across the landscape.

Specifically, the needs of Opportunity Youth in Wilmington are currently misaligned with the landscape resources across four dimensions:

- **Volume:** there are simply not enough “seats” available through current program providers to support the volume of Opportunity Youth in need of employment skills, training, education, and placement.
- **Interest/Talent:** the program offerings for Opportunity Youth are limited, and clients require a range of program offerings that should extend into a variety of sectors including technology, agriculture, beauty, healthcare and entrepreneurship.
- **Duration of Support:** Opportunity Youth continuously rotate through programs. They are consistently placed, just to lose their job and return to the program. Case management and support are required beyond the scope of the program; and programming must extend far beyond the average 10-week programs we see in the landscape. Employer engagement with case managers, who continue to provide support after placement, is also crucial.

- **Tier 1-3 Supports:** Tier 1- 3 competency mastery takes time. Providing the appropriate social-emotional skill development and academic investment could take several years before a client is ready to sustainably hold employment. The Challenge Program cites that their clients typically require 2-3 years of support before they have found their footing. Today, program providers work to offer Tier 1 - 3 supports to their clients, with great difficulty. The financing isn't always there to do this well. And, as noted earlier, many programs' funding is largely tied to Tier 4 competency building, relegating the foundational skills in Tiers 1-3 to the sidelines.

To address these misalignments, we offer the following additional recommendations.

Recommendation 3

Provide a strong on-ramp into program providers; create a specialized program for Tier 1 skill development + case management.

We believe it will be necessary to create cohort-based programming that specializes in Tier 1 competency building (e.g., social emotional

learning, interpersonal skills), exposes clients to career options, and provides a “lifeline” for all basic needs. This will act as a “pre-term” or “onboarding” phase for clients, preparing them for entrance into a career-track program.

We recommend that this program provide a full year of paid vocational training, potentially in partnership with DHSS. This training should focus on identity development and social-emotional competency building. A case manager should engage with each cohort to build a trusting and enduring relationship with them. At the end of their term in the cohort, they should be placed in an appropriate program provider that is aligned with their interests and level of need.

Recommendation 4

Create more options and capacity amongst program providers. Scale high-quality programs & create new ones that specialize in Tier 2- 4 competencies

In support of this work, leaders of this initiative should:

- Engage anchor employers (including government employers/agencies) to cultivate their interest in employing Opportunity Youth. Program providers could partner with these employers to either commit to hiring Opportunity Youth after they have exited programs or work with them closely to build training programs that graft into their existing training programs or employment pipeline.
- Develop a fellowship or apprenticeship model where a cohort of emerging leaders will learn skills from existing program directors (such as the leadership at Challenge Program). These leaders can then be effectively and efficiently leveraged to scale services. Supporting these leaders with the financing, mentorship and supports they need to effectively launch their own program will be crucial.
- Ensure that all programs have the opportunity to receive the services of case managers to support with basic needs, and resource navigation.
- Leading programs indicated that academic advancement was most successful in individualized settings, and yet they lack the capacity to offer these services consistently

and at scale. Ensure programs have capacity to provide personalized academic support. Consider a talent pool of tutors that program providers can contract with, support their clients' academic needs.

- Recruit and engage a pipeline of leaders equipped with the skills and resourcing required to replicate high-quality programming. Fellowship or apprenticeship models where fellows learn skills from existing program directors could be used to effectively and efficiently scale services.
- Grow a learning network of program providers serving this target population who meet regularly, and benefit from shared service providers, trainers, and talent pipelines.

Recommendation 5 *Engage employers effectively*

To accomplish all of the above, models drawn from our national research and feedback from local stakeholders make it clear that we will need to engage anchor employers to commit to employing and investing in Opportunity Youth. It will be important for the leaders

of this initiative to not only commit to hiring Opportunity Youth, but to provide meaningful support to employees once placed. Opportunity Youth need to continue to have access to case managers until they are stably employed and successful at their jobs. See Employer Engagement section in Appendix C for more detail related to successful employer engagement and related national models.

Recommendation 6

Build a backbone entity to coordinate all of the moving parts in this effort

Every successful model across the nation is conditioned on consistent coordination from a backbone entity (usually distinct from the “convening entity,” like the Workforce Development Board in this case, which typically initiates the work). The role of this backbone entity is to coordinate the execution of vision and strategy, hold actors accountable, and ensure data is used for feedback, planning, and adjustments.

Growing the infrastructure outlined above will require persistent work, additional financing, and coordination of efforts. Growing case

management and developing commitments from employers, growing a pipeline of capable program providers, and scaling up the volume and options available in our landscape will take commitment and time. A backbone entity should be created to sustainably support this work, and ensure effective partnerships are cultivated and metrics are tracked to garner deeper and larger investments over time.

Summary of Recommendations for Investment in the Wilmington Landscape for Opportunity Youth

1. Invest in capacity building of 3-5 highly effective and responsive Wraparound Service Providers, who will prioritize or exclusively serve Wilmington Opportunity Youth.
2. Build a centralized case management entity, embed case managers inside program providers, and ensure case management continues past initial placement with employers.
3. Create an “on-ramp” for program participation, i.e. cohort style programs specifically working to provide Tier 1 skills training, initial case management, and basic

human needs.

4. Replicate/create additional program providers to offer a more diverse array of programs for Opportunity Youth
5. Engage employers to effectively support Opportunity Youth.
6. Designate and invest in a backbone organization to coordinate this work.

In addition, a backbone organization may want to consider closely partnering with the Wilmington Leaders' Alliance (WLA) and The Prosperity Partnership to drive a campaign for employer engagement. They might also consider working with DHSS's Community Partner Support Unit (CPSU) on case management (this is in the wheelhouse for DHSS funding and very much in the spirit of how CPSU wants to be structured to aid their TANF and TANF like client base).

If the DWDB builds on this analysis of the current landscape, carefully considering the findings and recommendations above, we believe it is very possible to radically transform the lives of a significant number of Opportunity Youth throughout Wilmington, while concurrently creating much needed hope in the lives of those who need it most.

This work must be multi-faceted and will require significant sustained investments in leadership, energy, time, and money. It must be coordinated by an effective backbone and consist of both replicating the best parts of our current landscape while incubating new organizations to address the specific gaps that have been uncovered.

CONCLUSION

DELAWARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

When we started this research, our shared assumption with the DWDB was that wraparound service providers could be brought to bear more optimally through partnerships with program providers. This was based on the assumption that wraparound service providers - who service the community in areas of CBT, transportation, and legal support - could be activated to serve additional clientele from program providers if additional funds and coordination were provided.

In our research, we demystify this assumption. Our experience in engaging the wraparound landscape demonstrated a critical deficit of capacity amongst wraparound providers. They do not have the responsiveness, trust, reliability, or capacity to service Opportunity Youth in their current state. This is why our first recommendation is to invest in a handful of specific wraparound providers - like Aquila, CLASI, and others - that will agree to exclusively service (or prioritize) the clients of Opportunity Youth program providers.

National and local experts affirm the distinct need for case management to provide support to clients that extends even beyond their placement

into employment. In the Delaware context, we specifically acknowledge a clear and urgent gap for Opportunity Youth aged 16-18, and a capacity issue for program providers who are attempting to provide Tier 1 - 4 services, when their funding is often tied to Tier 3 and 4 only. Our workforce development landscape must enable Opportunity Youth to engage in a full year of paid Tier 1 "onboarding" in a cohort environment that offers authentic career exposure. This should lead to placement in a career-specific program provider and case management should remain consistent throughout the entire process.

Also consistent between national and regional experts is the need for employer engagement to drive this work forward. A campaign for employers to understand the needs of Opportunity Youth and the role they can play is a critical priority. We need more employers stepping up to employ our Opportunity Youth, and better yet - partner with program providers in the creation of specific programs that lead to a career placement at their firm. We need to partner closely with those employers to provide the support they need to continue to employ our Opportunity Youth.

As we have seen, a backbone entity will also be a crucial part of this ecosystem. It will be especially necessary to bring these various elements from pilot to scale, ensuring they work in coordination with each other. It is our recommendation that this backbone entity work to centralize the recruitment, training, and placement of case managers shared between program providers, as well as manage employer engagement and a learning network of program providers working towards our shared vision and goals.

The Alliance Report states: “When supports around young people — in their families, peer groups, and all aspects of a community — are aligned with their needs and strengths — it is more likely that they will achieve academically, connect socially and emotionally, and engage civically.”⁵

In recent years, Delaware has implemented the DE Pathways System, DE One-Stops, and CTE Programs. It has made numerous advancements to create a system better aligned to provide a career path for Delaware youth and adults. That being said, this report has outlined just how much work needs to be done, specifically for Opportunity Youth. Many of the advancements in education and career training programs are

simply out of reach for Opportunity Youth due to their circumstances.

The challenges facing Delaware in addressing the Opportunity Youth issue are great, but there is a silver lining—much of the foundational work is already in place due to state efforts in relation to DE Pathways, CTE Programs, TANF, SNAP, and a myriad of other initiatives in play under the guidance of DWDB. With the emergence of a backbone organization, and financing of committed and functional wraparound and program providers, a new reality for Opportunity Youth is certainly within reach for Wilmington.

⁵ Don't Call Them Dropouts.

APPENDICES

DELAWARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

APPENDIX A: WILMINGTON PROGRAM PROVIDERS FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

See also attached resource guide.

Our evaluation of program providers included 1:1 interviews, site visits, focus groups with alumni and clients, as well as collaborative group discussions with program providers all together. In our 1:1 interviews, our research team collected responses to the following:

- *What results does the provider hold themselves accountable to?*
- *What services do they offer their clients? Soft skills? Academic Skills? Technical training?*
- *Do they partner with any wraparound service providers?*
- *What wraparound services do they provide inhouse v. referral?*
- *How many clients do they serve?*
- *Do they have the ability to scale further?*
- *Do you provide case management?*

- *Do they have a defined case manager or does staff manage ad-hoc?*
- *What are their highest priority wraparound needs for existing client base?*
- *Why aren't they using wraparound service providers? (ease of access, reliability, immediacy)*
- *Provide contact information (name, number, email - title) - lead Point of Contact*

WHAT RESULTS DOES THE PROVIDER HOLD THEMSELVES ACCOUNTABLE TO?

The metrics that these employment training providers hold themselves accountable to, include program completion, post-program job search, post-program employment, and ability to hold their new job. Project New Start, an organization that provides soft skills and technical skills training, has a 90% job placement rate, and a 22% recidivism rate for participants since 2013. The Delaware Food Works program aims for 70-75% completion of their program, with 60-65% going onto a job afterwards.

Organizations such as Elevated CDC and Delaware Food Works keep track of their clients and offer services to them post-program completion with the intention of helping them keep and excel at their job. All training providers are aware of the situations and mindsets of the populations they serve, and help clients stay focused on short-term goals and are understanding of the challenges they face. Elevated CDC, an organization that primarily serves ex-offenders ages 18+ to assist with them getting jobs and certifications they need, utilize this by assessing clients on 30-day intervals with short term evaluations to keep them focused and driven towards celebrating their employment status.

WHAT SERVICES DO THEY OFFER THEIR CLIENTS?

Training providers are very conscientious about the soft skills that their clients will need to succeed in obtaining and keeping employment. These soft skills are a main focus and first priority of many organizations, with the intention of training communication, team-work and positive self-talk to benefit clients.

Of note is the Delaware Food Bank Food Works Program, an organization that provides culinary training and logic classes to youth, 18+. Delaware

Food Bank Food Works prioritizes soft skills education. Their training includes how to talk to others, resume skills, interview skills, positive thinking, anger management, mock interviews, and more.

The training providers also provide technical training and academic skills opportunities, including but not limited to: GED completion, construction, warehousing, and mechanical certifications, culinary training, and computer education. The goal is to get the clients employed, and many training providers report that they provide assistance in job searches and support clients as they begin jobs.

WHAT DOES THE CAPACITY FOR CASE MANAGEMENT LOOK LIKE?

Program partners largely utilize in-house staff to serve as a “case manager.” This staff member essentially acts as a point person to help refer a client to whatever service they need. The program providers we spoke to all noted that they would benefit from a case manager (or expanded capacity in case management if they already have one) to provide clients the best possible preparation for employment.

WHAT WRAPAROUND SERVICES DO THEY PROVIDE IN-HOUSE? DO THEY PARTNER WITH ANY WRAPAROUND SERVICES?

Almost all organizations noted a partnership with Stand By Me for financial literacy, with the exception of Elevated CDC working with Stepping Stones Community Federal Credit Union. Financial literacy classes are a part of every employment training program that we interviewed, with classes on credit building and money management.

Behavioral health and counseling were provided in-house through Peace by Piece, an organization that offers workforce and life skills training to Opportunity Youth and 18+. Challenge Program attempted to outsource CBT several years ago, but pulled that partnership due to lack of reliability and lack of cultural competency of the provider.

WHAT ARE THE HIGHEST PRIORITY WRAPAROUND NEEDS FOR THE EXISTING CLIENT-BASE?

Most organizations noted transportation as the highest priority wraparound need of their clients, with housing being a close second.

Most organizations refer clients for mental health supports with limited success. While

all organizations recognize that mental health services are vital to their clients' success, they struggle to provide these services with consistency and fidelity.

Providers also mentioned a need for free legal support, legal fees reduction, and targeted academic tutoring. All recognize the need for paid training and on-the-job training.

HOW MANY CLIENTS DO THEY SERVE? WHAT IS THE CAPACITY TO SERVE MORE?

These smaller organizations, like Elevated CDC, Challenge Program, Challenge Program, 2Fish and DE Food Works serve between 20-30 clients each cycle. Most of them provide services to 18+, leaving a major void in our service provision to Opportunity Youth ages 16 - 18.

All program providers stress that they would need more funding and staff to expand their capacity. To expand their capacity, they require space and resources, such as tools, training equipment, or warehouses.

KEY INSIGHTS AND FINDINGS FROM OUR PROGRAM PROVIDERS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

- *There is lack of organizations focusing exclusively on Opportunity Youth.*
- *There is insufficient capacity within the workforce development organizations to work with Opportunity Youth at scale.*
- *Employment metrics are short term and do not accommodate the fact that many participants fall into unemployment repeatedly over a number of years.*
- *Funding is based on short term programming without the recognition that many participants will need support over a path of many years.*
- *Program providers are largely providing wraparound services on an ad-hoc, primarily in-house basis, as they learn the needs of their participants over time. Many spoke of doing this above and beyond their job descriptions, including working overtime and utilizing their own funds to provide emergency support.*
- *Programs are also wary of sending their participants to out-sourced wrap around providers without prior knowledge of the efficacy of the services provided. Program staff is hyper*

aware of the need to balance participant trust without creating more adverse experiences with unknown and untested outside vendors.

- *Programs ability to provide additional services is hindered by funder restrictions, funding, knowledge of accessible wraparounds and staff capacity to manage and implement additional systems.*
- *Programs are seeking fellowship in working together and sharing best practices.*
- *Communication with funders is needed to best align funding with challenges and experiences faced in the day-to-day program cycle. Programs understand the need for maintaining information and data, as it is helpful for them to track their own efficacy, but are concerned that some of the funder requirements create unnecessary burdens and take up staff time that could otherwise go to supporting their clients.*
- *A key need voiced by all programs is the need for employer engagement structured to understand the needs of working with Opportunity Youth. We must provide support to employers serving Opportunity Youth.*
- *Programs recognize the need to provide case management to not only the clients but to their families as well.*

KEY INSIGHTS FROM PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Clients of Wilmington's program partners voiced many of the same barriers and concerns discussed above and were grateful for the opportunity to offer their thoughts and suggestions when consulted throughout this process.

Key points they raised:

- A need to have more exposure to various areas of opportunity to determine what aligns with their passion and interests (programs basically provide few areas of development, ie. construction, agriculture, culinary).
- Inability to engage 'appropriately' once in the work environment. They reference a kind of "fight or flight" response when they face adversity. They realize the need for mental health services like CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy) and additional mentoring to navigate the "real world."
- Programs are 'too short' and participants wanted to see more continuity going forward.

Key takeaways related to program providers in the landscape

1. *There are not enough of them servicing Opportunity Youth (volume or options);*
2. *They require additional support in case management and academic developmental supports; and*
3. *More support is required post placement.*

Right now, the landscape is characterized by an extremely high failure rate. Clients often leave their programs early, citing premature job placement, and family or legal issues as root causes. Graduates and early placements alike find themselves ultimately in unstable employment opportunities, and recycle back through a program after losing employment.

Case management will help, particularly if it extends beyond initial placement. To this point, however, it is crucial to highlight the participants value the sense of family that is created through high-quality program providers. Any additional capacity in the form of case management or academic supports must be offered through

that node of trust. For example, if we offer more case management to our program providers to improve their capacity to service this population, it has to be additional capacity embedded in their organization.

In addition, employer environments do need to make strides in becoming more culturally competent, trauma-informed, and supportive of our participants. Additional layers of support to employers we cultivate to employ our Opportunity Youth will be needed to achieve this.

Case managers must be prepared to connect clients to the following services:

- Basic needs-food, housing transportation
- Credentialing services (IDs, driver's licenses, birth certificates)
- Expungement services
- CBT and other mental health services
- Ongoing support services to participants after they leave the program

Program participants will also need support

- Managing family emergencies that caused work absenteeism
- Employers who better understood the challenges that they faced (work lateness was often due to lack of timely transportation or emergency family situations, including care of siblings)
- Tiers 1 - 3 competency building, in particular academic and social emotional skill development.

APPENDIX B: WILMINGTON WRAPAROUND SERVICES AND WRAPAROUND SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

See also attached resource guide.

Social Contract's research team leveraged multiple networks to identify a list of nearly 70 potential wraparound providers in Wilmington. All wraparound service providers were contacted by email and phone calls - with rigorous rounds of follow up and several in person visits - to ensure we were able to capture the information we sought. All wraparound providers were asked the following questions by our interviewers on calls that ranged 30 minutes to 90 minutes.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- *What do you do? (vetting with the 7 categories)*
- *How do you measure your success?*
- *How many people do you serve annually in Wilmington?*
- *Do you serve Opportunity Youth? (16-24 y/o out of school / out of work?)*
- *What barriers have they experienced (if any) to serving this target population?*
- *What is your capacity to serve more?*
- *Do you offer employment training or employment*

support?

- *Have you partnered formally or informally with any employment training programs?*
- *How is this going? Are you facing any barriers or challenges?*
- *How do your clients typically find you? Referred by others? If so who?*
- *If there was a case manager working with a group of 16-24 year old unemployed/ out of school youth - supporting them with soft skill development - how could they access your services for their clients?*
- *What would the costs be associated with this service ?*
- *Do you partner with any Community Based Organizations? Which ones? Do you have a contractual relationship with these CBOs?*
- *Do you currently partner with the State?*
- *Provide contact information (name, number, email - title) - lead Point of Contact*

While wraparound services are necessary and needed by program providers, they must be delivered with more precision, agility, responsiveness, consistency, and cultural competency. In our research, program providers

struggle to partner or engage with wraparounds due to limitations in these areas. Most have hard won their trust with their clients, and they are unwilling to risk losing that trust by sending or referring their clients into bureaucratic, hard to navigate, and sometimes disrespectful interfaces that fortress access to these wraparound resources.

Ultimately program providers outlined the following key areas as major barriers to access when they have worked with wraparounds in the past, or as they make decisions about not using wraparounds currently:

- Capacity and cost
- Trust and reliability
- Ease of access
- Cultural competency

CAPACITY & COST

Every service provider relayed that costs and finances would be limitations to serving additional clients, and moreover that they had limited capacity to serve additional clients. In nearly every case, transportation would be a limitation; each individual system would be bureaucratic and tricky to maneuver.

TRUST AND RELIABILITY

Our research verified challenges related to wraparound service providers. To us, this endeavor illustrated that in the current state, even if program providers received additional funding to work with external wraparound supports, layers of bureaucracy would remain. Without a major intervention or investment in the wraparound landscape, participants (and programs) would expect to see significant delays in coordination and communication that could sacrifice hard-won trust with their participants - which is not something program partners are willing to (nor should be willing) to do.

EASE OF ACCESS

The first problem was finding information on each of the websites. While many were easy to use and navigate (Jewish Family Services, YWCA, and Stand By Me, and others), many were more challenging. For example, there is no contact information listed on several websites.

Through our research, it became extremely clear that the barriers to identifying a service and making contact with them overwhelm the capacity that program providers can reasonably commit.

When our team reached out to providers, we were often unable to make contact through the direct line at five organizations, because the phone number listed on the website was no longer in service. There was also an issue with discrepancies between websites and location information.

RESPONSIVENESS

Our team pressure tested the responsiveness of the nearly 70 wraparounds on our list through phone calls, site visits, and emails. Despite making contact with organizations multiple times, we did not receive phone calls back.

Another roadblock in this process was speaking with uninformed operators and receptionists. There was also a lack of out-of-office notifications. Our associates visited provider locations during posted business hours and were unable to contact staff at each location. These are the kinds of negative experiences that program providers are concerned about.

Responses improved with those we had personal relationships with, something our clients would not have, although program providers might.

That being said, many of organizations asked for more time to get responses to one or two of the

questions, but never followed through, despite multiple attempts to maintain engagement.

Despite our associates' dedicated capacity, as well as our contacts and insight into these organizations, they still struggled to navigate the system. At every step, they hit a dead end or found someone unwilling to help. On numerous occasions, they were subject to hostility, or were met by service providers who were unwilling to communicate with them. While there are a plethora of services available, significant barriers prevent clients from accessing them.

CAN PROGRAM PROVIDERS MORE OPTIMALLY PARTNER WITH WRAPAROUND SERVICES TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES?

It all depends on strategy: approached, and if there are other pieces of infrastructure in the community to help support that system. With case managers dedicated to the clients, it would be more possible. But our conclusions here indicate that DWDB may want to select 3-5 designated wraparound providers to exclusively service clients in the program provider network. They should receive necessary financial support to provide services to the population, and there should be consistent and open communication between the leaders of the program providers, case managers, and clinicians or support teams associated with respective wraparound service provision.

APPENDIX C: NATIONAL BEST PRACTICES AND ECOSYSTEM MODELS FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

Social Contract's research in Wilmington is supported by workforce development reports over the past five years across the national landscape. The recurring themes behind our recommendations include needs to:

- Coordinate, scale, and support program providers specifically focused on Opportunity Youth
- Support Opportunity Youth with ongoing case management.
- Provide more highly integrated and focused wraparound services
- Create a backbone entity

FRAGMENTATION, QUALITY, AND COORDINATION OF SERVICES

The "America's Promise Alliance Study"⁵ highlights the challenge communities face in fostering high-quality programs and the important need to coordinate a fragmented landscape of services.

They report that Opportunity Youth desire services that are less stigmatizing, more individualized, and more tightly integrated among providers. Youth are seeking more role models and mentors, and

disconnection from education and career training services has left them without a clear pathway to meaningful employment.

The overarching issue that the research cites is the "systemic barriers created by disconnected and fragmented programs and services, an inadequate supply of high-quality programs and pathways with on-ramps for the most challenged youth, and a lack of funding directed to Opportunity Youth", which makes it difficult for these youth to engage with and benefit from the programs that seek to help them.⁶ Additionally, research is clear about the need for connection and adult mentorship; "Opportunity Youth [seek] connections with parents, other family members, school professionals, [and] peers... the presence or absence of these connections drove many of the choices that young people made, including about school attendance and completion."

The research shows that pathways to success for Opportunity Youth typically draw from these common principles:^{7,8}

Re-Engagement: Identify Opportunity Youth, and understand their specific needs and barriers in order to effectively connect them to programs and services that help them surmount challenges as they engage and navigate the career pathway.

⁵ Don't Call Them Dropouts: UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO LEAVE HIGH SCHOOL BEFORE GRADUATION. May 20, 2014.

⁶ Collective Impact of Opportunity Youth, 2012; Mimi Corcoran, Fay Hanleybrown, Adria Steinberg, Kate Tallant <https://www.fsg.org/publications/collective-impact-opportunity-youth> GRADUATION.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Opportunity Youth Data, Brookings Institute, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/employment-and-disconnection-among-teens-and-young-adults-the-role-of-place-race-and-education/>

Educational Momentum: Help youth reach early and frequent educational milestones while setting longer-term goals for completing high school, GED, and postsecondary credentials or degrees.

Connection to Career: Connecting Opportunity Youth to work experiences that will help them on the path to self-sustaining and/or family-supporting careers.

Youth Development: Develop the soft and hard skills while addressing the social and emotional needs of Opportunity Youth to enable them to engage as productive members of their communities.

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF CASE MANAGERS

To fully realize a vision of aligning all services and supports to benefit Opportunity Youth, it is critical to have a sufficient number of well-trained, highly-skilled, and deeply engaged case managers.

These case managers must:

- Provide the adult support to youth in assessing their strengths, talents, barriers, and support needs.
- Formulate individualized plans based on that

assessment, and facilitate their engagement in an appropriate set of activities.

- Provide mentorship and support to keep youth on track.
- Support the transition for youth who are engaged in the child welfare or criminal justice system and connect them to the education, training, and community supports they need.
- Assure that youth don't fall between the cracks of multiple systems and programs.
- Account for the ultimate attainment of education credentials and employment success.

One important function of the backbone organization should be investing in the professional development and networking of those acting as case managers or youth advocates to build their knowledge, skills, and abilities in working with youth, particularly those youth deemed high-risk.

It is critical that the backbone organization assure that there is sufficient access to a range of programs, services, and supports, and sufficient information provided to case managers on the capacity of these programs to enable them make informed decisions about their service strategy.

The function of case management can be accomplished in several different ways. Some communities opt for a case management function that is located in their youth intake centers or one-stop centers. There, a case manager meets with the young person to get a sense of their background, needs, and goals. Based on this assessment, the case manager directs the young person to a particular service provider and also gives the provider notification of the young person's intent to participate in their specific program. The case manager may conduct timely follow-up to ensure that the young person and the program are a successful match, monitor progress, and work with the program and the youth to ensure successful transition to the next step.

Other communities place the responsibility of case management with the service providers. Youth sign up for programs and services directly with the provider; they are not directed to a centralized intake center if they decide to sign up with a particular provider. A case manager there performs the necessary assessments of needs and goals, and then either provides the services or refers the young person to another service provider better able to meet their needs or goals. This case manager is then responsible for tracking a young person's progress in the

program, and helping to ameliorate any barriers to full participation.

The most successful communities meld these two methods of case management to create a system that provides continuous support and smooth transitions until the youth is solidly anchored in successful labor market and postsecondary endeavors.

Whether this function is embedded in the program offerings of service providers, or structured as an overarching system of support in youth one-stops or intake centers, research has repeatedly pointed to the existence of caring adult support as the key ingredient in achieving successful outcomes for youth.

HIGHLIGHTING EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: CASE MANAGEMENT⁹

Our Piece of Pie (OPP) is a youth development organization in Hartford, Connecticut that helps youth ages 14 to 24 become successful adults. The two primary goals of the program are to complete college or receive postsecondary vocational credential, and find long-term employment. The cornerstone of OPP programs and services is its signature Pathways to Success approach. Pathways to Success is a youth development strategy designed to help youth access and attain education, employment, and personal skills. Together, youth and their youth development specialists (YDS) create individualized plans which map a realistic path to reach their goals.

A crucial component to the Pathways to Success program is the role of its youth development specialist (YDS) - a guide to the services OPP offers and a caring and consistent adult who advises and supports youth as they work to accomplish their goals. When a young person enters OPP, they are matched with a YDS, beginning the trust-building process.

The YDS assesses the young person's status and needs and works with them to determine a pathway to a long-term educational and/or employment outcome. Together, they build an individualized service plan broken down into practical steps to achieve larger goals, like graduating from high school or improving school attendance.

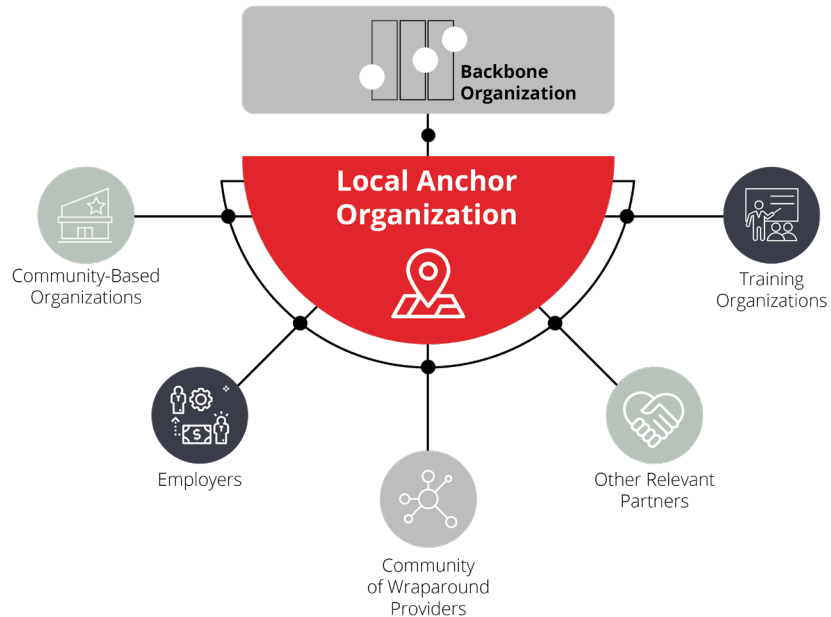
The YDS supports youth as they participate in educational, training, or employment activities and helps them navigate the systems and services he/she may be involved in. An average caseload for a YDS is between 60 to 70 youth, with conscious thought about balancing case loads of each YDS by assessing the level of need of each youth.

OPP and the Pathways to Success approach stays with youth up until age 24. Should a young person enter OPP at age 14, he/she could potentially have that caring adult with them for up to ten years. Because transitioning to adulthood is a critical time in a young person's life, maintaining that support and guidance beyond the period he/she enters into employment or postsecondary education is essential.

⁹CLASP: Building a Comprehensive Youth Employment Delivery System: Examples of Effective Practice 2010 <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/files/Youth-Employment-Systems-1.pdf>

THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE OF THE BACKBONE ENTITY

In every instance of success nationally, we see a backbone organization (assigned or created) which serves as a facilitator of cross-sector initiatives, as well as a local anchor organization to manage the initiative going forward. The below image illustrates this structure:



Graphic from Connecting Baltimore's Opportunity Youth to Careers, February 2016, Job Opportunities Task Force/Baltimore Promise <https://jotf.org/report/connecting-baltimores-opportunity-youth-to-careers/>

The national literature, in every case, also calls for a continuum pathway with the realization that it will need to meet every individual where they are. The research suggests that, “rather than a uniform support system, we must create a holistic model with partnerships that is quickly able to deploy the individualized support needed at any given point in time along the pathway.” It stresses that this work needs to be understood and acknowledged as “a long term undertaking for many participants dealing with personal life challenges,” and that the process by which Opportunity Youth can access these services provide “frequent on ramps” so as to be available at many points for participants who need assistance.¹²

EXAMPLE OF BACKBONE ENTITY:

PHILADELPHIA YOUTH NETWORK¹⁰

In Philadelphia, Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) serves as the backbone organization coordinating the regions work for Opportunity Youth. PYN is a non-profit intermediary organization in the city of Philadelphia and is charged with increasing the capacity and resources that help educate, train and employ the city's youth. PYN acts as the fiscal agent for the council and administers the majority of funds it oversees.

As such, PYN works to:

- Guide vision and strategy
- Broker relationships to align activities
- Establish shared measurement practices
- Build public will and consensus
- Advance policy
- Mobilize funding

Key Elements of Delivery System

- PYN contracts with a network of community providers for education and training services .
- PYN coordinates a variety of program models, including: private sector internships, service learning, subsidized employment in non-profit organizations, and academic support, including college awareness exposure for summer and year-round career preparation
- PYN maintains partnership with education to create nearly 3,000 new high-quality education opportunities for over-age and under-credited youth
- PYN created a new system for reconnecting dropouts to educational options including a re-engagement center to:
 - Focus on aligning and strengthening the career and occupational skills curricula for youth in juvenile placement
 - Develop a methodology to attach costs to the young person not to the activity to better blend funding
 - Provide In-house management of wage and stipend payment for providers
 - Complete quarterly assessments of metrics that are set against programs outcomes for continual development of a standard of practice

¹⁰ Information on PYN and Philadelphia region drawn from: Building a Comprehensive Youth Employment Delivery System: Examples of Effective Practice, February 2010, Sara Hastings, Rhonda Tsoi-A-Fatt, Linda Harris <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017/04/Youth-Employment-Systems-1.pdf>

Services to Youth

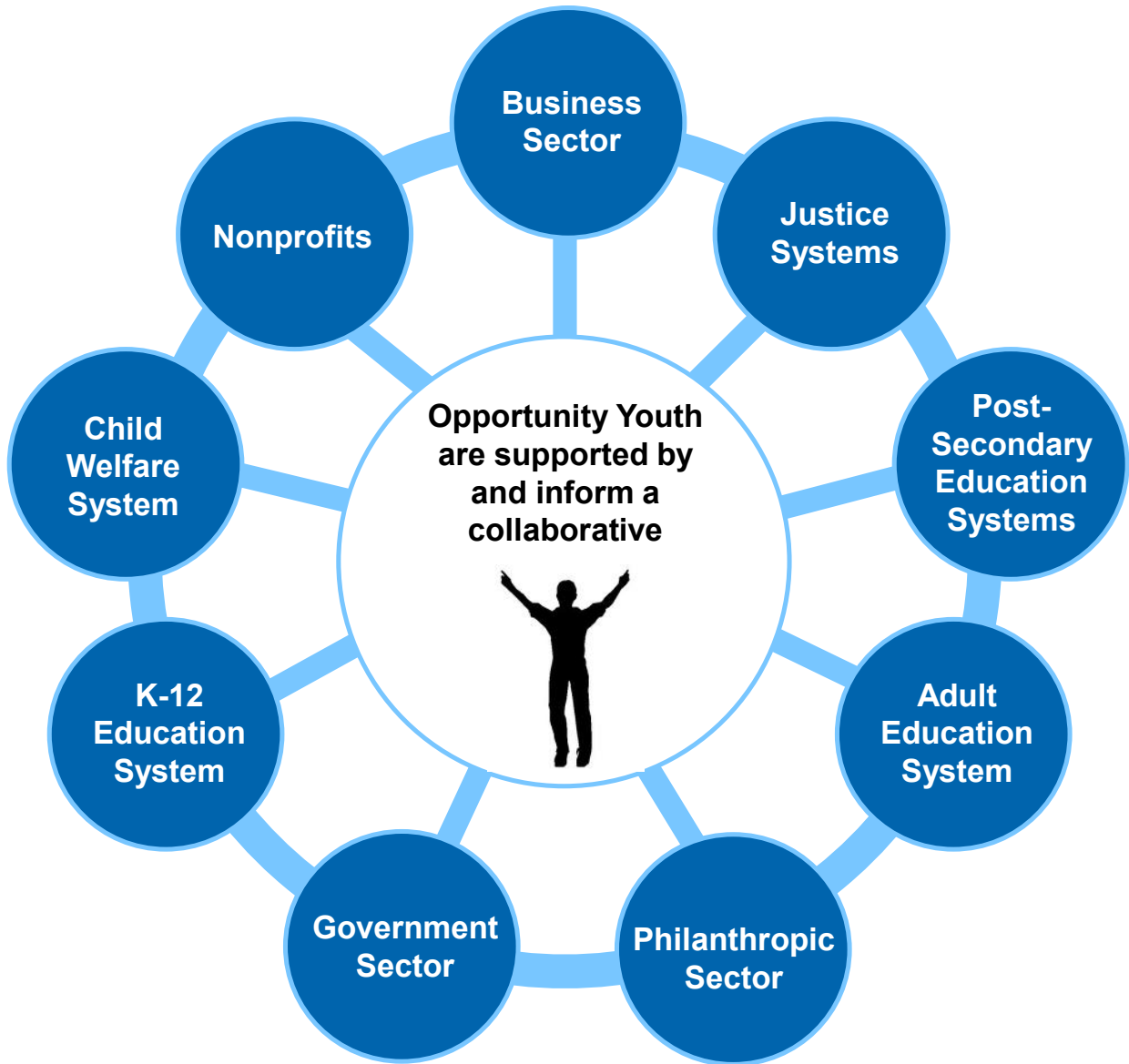
PYN works with providers across the region to provide educational services to prepare youth for postsecondary education and employment, employment readiness and placement into subsidized or unsubsidized employment, occupational skills training with certificates in nurse aide training, multimedia production, customer retail skills training, among others, and life skills training.

Services to Providers

PYN's philosophy is that providers are their partners. PYN works collaboratively with providers to assess how they can best provide support to ensure positive outcomes for youth. PYN offers opportunities for professional development through training and through partnerships with other providers to share effective practices. As members of the Alternative Education Network, providers can also be a part of a larger out-of-school youth network where they come together to provide peer support to one another.

As the example of PYN illustrates, it is critical to have a backbone entity that coordinates across what is otherwise sure to be a deeply fragmented landscape.

Investments in a centralized backbone entity, a fleet of case managers, and a robust system of program providers partnering intentionally with wraparound service providers will ensure that all stakeholders can effectively interface to improve outcomes for Opportunity Youth.



EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AS A KEY TO SUCCESSFUL ECOSYSTEMS

A key component of successful systems across the nation is meaningful employer participation and engagement.

While it is imperative to educate, train, and prepare youth for the workforce, they need work experience to truly be ready for employment, such as internships and job shadowing. Work experience cannot be gained without the engagement of employers. Lack of partnership and collaboration among stakeholders creates a severe disconnect, ultimately hurting providers, young workers, and employers.

There are several key roles employers can play in collaboration with the workforce, education and youth providers to develop a pipeline of prepared workers, including:

- Participating in the customizing of training content/assist teachers with contextual hands-on learning
- Mentoring and coaching in the workplace
- Employer involvement in delivery of workshops and training
- Employers opening workplace for internships, on-the-job-training, work experience

- Providing access to full- and part-time jobs
- Serving on Employer Advisory groups and as champions for the backbone's progress

Employer Engagement Example¹¹

Baltimore, Maryland has developed a variety of strategies to increase employer engagement in its youth programming. It has worked to tie services to labor market needs by creating effective connections to local and regional employers and developing meaningful connections between academic and occupational learning. It also seeks to provide education relevant to the job market particularly in the area's identified high growth industries such as healthcare and social assistance, business services, computer, hospitality/tourism, and bioscience.

One example is the Healthcare Careers Alliance, a partnership with five of the area's leading hospitals including Johns Hopkins Hospital and University of Maryland Medical System, and Civic Works, Baltimore's Urban service corps, that offers a 12-week job readiness training program that works to prepare 18 to 21 year old out-of-school youth for careers in health. The program features paid training, skills development, life skills, on-the-job training, and paid employment. There are two phases to the program: the first 6 weeks youth participate in soft skills training and the second

¹¹ Connecting Baltimore's Opportunity Youth to Careers, February 2016, Job Opportunities Task Force/Baltimore Promise <https://jotf.org/report/connecting-baltimores-opportunity-youth-to-careers/>

six weeks is a paid on-the-job training. Youth work 20 hours per week and both youth and the host site are supported by a full-time Career Coach.

Also offered to 16- to 22-year-old youth is Try Out Employment, an internship program in the YO! Baltimore centers to work up to 25 hours for three months with local employers. YO! Baltimore subsidizes the wages for employers who have been identified by YO! job developers. During this time employers may train, coach and evaluate soft skills and build hard skills prior to hiring. Roughly 75 young people are in this program and about 75 percent of the youth get hired upon completion of the activity.

Industry-based workforce development:

Based on the 100,000 Opportunity Initiative, a broad coalition of public, private, and non-profit partners works in alignment to engage Opportunity Youth as talent for the growing demands of specific industries. Many of the programs provide job training skills using a combination of apprenticeships, internships, training programs, and full and part-time work experience that lead to entry-level jobs with opportunity for advancement in the same industry. The model is executed through partnerships with workforce development organizations in the

given community and it gives special attention to the barriers and challenges faced by Opportunity Youth. It is designed to address these issues effectively to create sustainable employment.

As can be seen, there are a variety of national models to draw inspiration from as we pursue this work in Wilmington. Crucially, each of these models is driven by several common components, namely:

1. A strong backbone organization
2. Extensive use of case managers dedicated to Opportunity Youth
3. Involved leadership across sectors
4. A variety of training, education, job placement, and support programs and wraparound service providers
5. Deep engagement from and with employers and education systems

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