

HOUSTON ENDOWMENT



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Strengthening the Systems that Support At-Risk Youth

Houston Endowment has invested more than \$2 million in a coordinated set of grants to support the Harris County Dual Status Youth Initiative, aimed at improving outcomes for youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

A broad group of stakeholders in Harris County has come together to improve outcomes for some of our most vulnerable youth, those involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. These youth who are involved in both systems – sometimes referred to as “dual status youth” – experience higher rates of recidivism, substance abuse and failure in school than those individuals involved in only one system.

The Harris County Dual Status Youth Initiative currently includes representatives from the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, the Harris County District Courts, the Department of Family & Protective Services, Harris County Protective Services, as well as other public agencies, academic institutions, philanthropy, and community-based nonprofit organizations. The goal is to create an aligned and data-driven system to improve outcomes for dual status youth.

Recognizing an opportunity to leverage philanthropic dollars to strengthen public systems, in September the Houston Endowment Board of Directors approved a \$2 million investment in the Dual Status Youth Initiative. Funds will support the creation of a cross-system collaboration as well as dedicated staff to facilitate systems alignment and action to help develop more robust and effective support for youth involved in both systems.

“This initiative is an opportunity to strategically support some of our most vulnerable children at a systems level,” shared Tonyel Simon, Houston Endowment program officer. “These efforts bring us significantly closer to ensuring all youth in the greater Houston area have a supportive social safety net and the resources they need to thrive despite challenging circumstances.”

The foundation also approved grants to organizations that enhance the capacity of the Harris County systems and offer innovative programs to bridge the systems or support youth exiting from the systems to the community, including:

HAY Center - \$250,000 over 24 months toward transition coaching and case management for foster youth transitioning to adulthood

Houston: reVision - \$150,000 over 24 months toward connecting youth involved in the juvenile justice system with mentors and positive peers

Texas Criminal Justice Coalition - \$200,000 over 24 months toward support for outreach, education and local advocacy efforts that promote improved justice outcomes for youth and adults