



FIRST PLACE  
FOR YOUTH  
MORE IS POSSIBLE

Uniquely focused on  
transition-aged foster  
youth since 1998

2021 Annual Report

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## MISSION

First Place for Youth supports foster youth to build the comprehensive skills needed to make a successful transition to self-sufficiency and responsible adult lives.



*“More is Possible” is not just a tagline; it is a belief that burns bright within our entire organization. The contents of this annual report tell a dual story of our work and aspirations for creating the conditions for change.*

## DEAR FRIENDS,

Imagine a country where the 23,000 foster youth who age out of care each year have safe, stable housing, caring adults in their lives, and dependable support systems that give them the peace of mind to identify, pursue, and achieve their hopes and dreams. Thanks to supporters with imaginations and hearts like yours, First Place for Youth has moved that vision closer to reality in California over the last 23 years with programs, expertise, and concrete supports to strengthen foster youth in six California counties. Building from that work, our national agenda reimagines foster care policy and practice to leverage partnerships with leading child welfare partners in counties and states across the country.

With your support, First Place for Youth has helped make California’s extended foster care system the envy of states across the country. We continuously evaluate, learn, and improve. Our new approaches are increasing college enrollment and building workplace experience through apprenticeships. Our Youth Roadmap Tool leverages data from our programmatic experience to individualize offerings for each young adult and provide real-time reporting on what works. We are intent on enhancing the field of practice by using and sharing these more effective, data-driven methods to support foster youth as they learn to support themselves across the country.

Our reach is expanding. First Place is building a movement to solve the national problem of youth aging out of foster care without support to transition to self-sufficiency. We are deepening our partnerships with foster care agencies in Boston, New York City, and Cincinnati who offer the My First Place™ Program. In Jackson, Mississippi, we are partnering with foster youth and child welfare leaders to inform statewide policy change so all young people transitioning from foster care have the relationships, resources, and opportunities for true well-being. We remain steadfast in our commitment to foster youth in California and we know More is Possible thanks to the strong foundation you helped us build.

As the newest member of the First Place for Youth family, I am honored to servant-lead this amazing organization. I have high regard for its rich history and relentless pursuit of excellence. I recognize the importance of the many young lives we will impact. Each youth deserves the best support we can offer, filled and delivered with love. Together, with your generous support, we will continue to help foster youth reach their full potential in school, work, and life.



Thomas G. Lee, CEO



## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Nancy Heinen, Chair  
Andrew Monach, Vice Chair  
Anthony J. Maggiore, Treasurer  
Georgia Lorenz, Secretary  
Teresa Allen  
Carrie Busch  
Chuck Daggs  
Kappy Dye  
Jennifer Friedman  
Darryl Glass  
Paul Harder  
Desmond R. “Des” Lovell  
Marian Macindoe  
Darryl McDavid  
Ivor Nanton  
Sheri Paulo  
Angelica Salmeron  
Keith Schultz  
Hilda West

## **LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGIONAL BOARD**

Bill Gould  
Ellen Nagler  
Kamili Samms  
Adam Sisson

## IMPACT

Last year, First Place for Youth and our network partners in Boston, New York, Mississippi, and Cincinnati served 1,602 young people; of those, 625 gained housing, education and employment coaching, as well as comprehensive case management supports through our flagship My First Place program.

Other foster youth were connected to services designed to help them navigate their transition to adult lives through Independent Living Skills Programs or transitional housing providers. The youth we serve are among those with the greatest needs across the country. On average, before they come to First Place, our youth have spent **more than eight years in the foster care system** and lived in **six different foster homes**.

**88%**  
of eligible youth enrolled  
in post-secondary education

51% of youth were not enrolled in school upon program entry

**96%**  
avoided pregnancy  
while in the program

13% of young people had children upon entry to the program

**93%**  
of youth in the program  
exited to stable housing

39% were not stably housed before they joined the program

**87%**  
obtained employment  
while in the program

55% were unemployed upon entry

**97%**  
avoided arrest  
while in the program

42% have prior involvement with the justice system



## Gathering and Sharing Evidence to Change the Systems Serving Foster Youth

Since its founding in 1998, First Place has engaged system stakeholders to help ground public policy in program learnings, data and evidence, and youth voices. In 2020, we celebrated the ten-year anniversary of California’s extended foster care program by cultivating evidence-building partnerships to better understand “what really works” for foster youth ages 18-25. In 2021, we shared those learnings in *Raising the Bar: Building system- and provider-level evidence to drive equitable education and employment outcomes for youth in extended foster care*. Once published, we hosted a well-attended webinar to inspire policymakers, county administrators, community providers, and other stakeholders to incorporate suggested practices and advocate for policy changes based on our findings and recommendations.

## California Policy Wins through Legislative Advocacy and Implementation

Through coalition building and advocacy in virtual legislative sessions, our policy team supported key legislation to expand supportive housing for older foster youth. Once passed, the team worked to ensure successful implementation.

One key 2021 win was the \$22.2M Preventing & Reducing Foster Youth Homelessness Act. In 2021, First Place advocated for an initiative sponsored by John Burton Advocates for Youth and authored by CA Assembly Member Phil Ting. Its successful passage will fund an expansion of transitional housing resources for former foster youth in safe, accessible neighborhoods, and increase providers’ rates in the highest cost counties. In the year ahead, our advocacy team will collaborate with policy makers, county regulators, and other organizations to make sure the new funds can be used for the greatest impact.

### Next up?

Already, we’re working with child welfare leaders in Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and Mississippi to offer better options to transition-age foster youth by leveraging our policy and practice expertise to engage in systems-change work nationwide.

*“In moments where I was completely doubting myself, they were able to bring me back and guide me in the right direction. When I can just talk to someone, it’s so helpful. The next day I’m able to tackle my problems a little bit better.”*





## KARLA

“For me personally, and for a lot of youth who are coming out of foster care or other programs, it’s a huge benefit to have First Place for Youth to help you, guide you, and allow you to grow, so you’re in better shape, you’re ok,” said 23-year-old My First Place program graduate Karla.

Last summer, Karla graduated with an associate degree in psychology and completed the My First Place program in Contra Costa County. While in our program, Karla worked for two years as a police aide at Diablo Valley College and now works as a police cadet on a Bay Area city force.

Karla came to First Place when she was no longer eligible for one type of housing support available to foster youth until age 21. At First Place, she quickly learned that “Team Karla,” her Youth Advocate and her Education and Employment Specialist, were dedicated to helping her identify and reach her goals.

“In moments where I was completely doubting myself, they were able to bring me back and guide me in the right direction. Maybe to someone else, a phone call is just a phone call,” she said. “But for me, when I can just talk to someone, it’s so helpful. The next day I’m able to tackle my problems a little bit better.”

When it came to dealing with the stresses of college, Karla needed support. She was the first member of her family to earn a degree—a point of pride, but it also set her apart and left her feeling like there weren’t many people in her life she could talk to about her experience.

*At First Place, she quickly learned that “Team Karla,” her Youth Advocate and her Education and Employment Specialist, were dedicated to helping her identify and reach her goals.*

“When I joined the program, I needed support and I wasn’t ready to take on life yet,” she said. “College was something that had never been done in my family, so there was really no one that I could talk to about that.”

For a young person like Karla, having the time, space and personal attention can be a life-changing opportunity to prepare for the responsibilities of adulthood. Thanks to our generous donors, since 1998 First Place for Youth has been helping foster youth ages 18–24 gain the support they need. By providing a safe and stable place to call home and comprehensive services focused on education, employment, and well-being, our My First Place program helps these young adults build the skills, the confidence, and the networks that will help them reach milestones that translate into long-term success.

**Contra Costa County**

EST. 2005



MY FIRST PLACE PROGRAM

**Solano County**

EST. 2007



MY FIRST PLACE PROGRAM



INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS PROGRAM

**Alameda County**

EST. 1998



MY FIRST PLACE PROGRAM

**San Francisco County**

EST. 2003



MY FIRST PLACE PROGRAM



INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS PROGRAM



SERVICE PARTNERSHIPS:

Rising Up Initiative, Mercy Housing,  
John Burton Housing at the  
Booker T. Washington Community Service Center

**Santa Clara County**

EST. 2015



MY FIRST PLACE PROGRAM

**Los Angeles County Offices**

EST. 2010



MY FIRST PLACE PROGRAM

## PROGRAMS



### MY FIRST PLACE™ PROGRAM

Housing, education and employment coaching with social supports help young people transition to adulthood



### SERVICE PARTNERSHIPS

First Place partners with affordable housing developers to coordinate and deliver programs and services for transition-age foster youth



### INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS PROGRAMS

First Place delivers county programs providing guidance, support and services to current and former foster youth (ages 16-21)



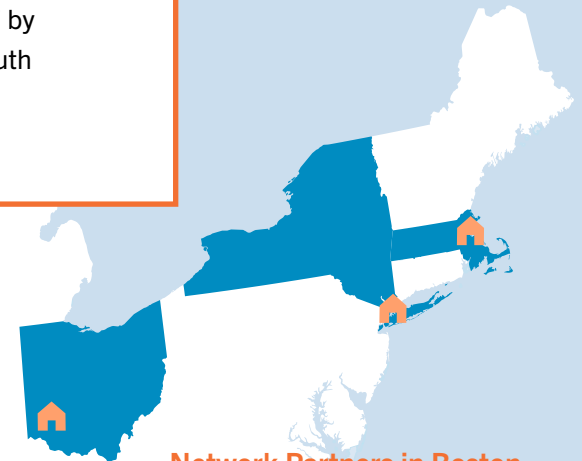
### MISSISSIPPI YOUTH VOICE

Empowering young people who have experienced foster care to advocate for themselves and their peers



### OPPORTUNITY PASSPORT®

Matched savings program offered in Mississippi by First Place, in partnership with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative



**Network Partners in Boston, New York City and Cincinnati**



MY FIRST PLACE PROGRAM



**Mississippi**



MISSISSIPPI YOUTH VOICE



OPPORTUNITY PASSPORT

## FINDING PATHWAYS TO EARN, LEARN, AND THRIVE

Data and evidence have informed the work of First Place since our founding in 1998 by two graduates of the UC Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy. Despite housing and other supports, recent research demonstrates that all California foster youth need more help to meet education and employment goals to set them up for success.

Foster youth apply to college at higher rates than their non-foster peers, yet they drop out from school at even higher rates: often failing to persist with classes or complete their courses of study. When asked, many foster youth who had dropped out of school said their classes and degrees did not seem meaningful to them or they were so busy working that their coursework suffered.

To combat these disparities, First Place for Youth is using its real-time data management system, the Youth Roadmap Tool, to track the efficiency of two innovations in our My First Place program:

- **Post-secondary education** coaching will help our young adults zero in on why they want to attend school, determine best-fit options, and pair work experience with educational pathways to high-growth careers and living wage jobs.
- **Pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship** “Earn-and-Learn” experiences are uniquely suited to transition-age foster youth in offering paid, on-the-job-training, and industry-recognized credentials in high-growth industries. They pair career-focused education with workplace training to position youth who need to support themselves for success as they transition to independent adult lives.



### Henry, age 22

#### LOS ANGELES MY FIRST PLACE PROGRAM

Henry had enrolled in and dropped out of college multiple times and jumped from entry-level job to entry-level job. Through intentional post-secondary Education Coaching, Henry identified an interest in the medical field and enrolled in a Medical Assistant pre-apprenticeship program. He has completed over 50% of the program credits to earn a Medical Assistant Certificate and with the support of his team, he landed a position in the medical field that increased his pay. He is now thriving on his own.

*“The fact that I didn’t have to worry about how to pay rent—that set me up to be focused on the stuff that I needed to, like school and working.”*



***“I think the biggest challenges I’ve faced were having to learn and be independent at a young age, learning through trials and tribulations without having my parents’ guidance. First Place staff teams’ support and resources helped me to be self-sufficient and independent.”***

**Angel, age 22**

**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY MY FIRST PLACE PROGRAM**

Angel went to school to focus on Fire Technology in Contra Costa County. Through close work with her First Place team, she was able to complete a Career Technical Education Certificate in Fire Technology *and* complete her associate degree. She has consistently held a job where she is on a pathway to living wage.



PHOTO BY JAMES MICHAEL JUAREZ, COURTESY OF ART + PRACTICE

**Shane, age 22**

**LOS ANGELES MY FIRST PLACE PROGRAM**

Shane attended Los Angeles Harbor College working towards pre-requisites to become an RN, but didn’t know that he could work as a CNA to gain wages and experience along the way. While working towards his AA degree, Shane achieved his Certified Nursing Assistant credential, his AA, and now works as a full-time Certified Nursing Assistant. He has set a goal to continue his education, earn a Bachelor’s degree and become a Registered Nurse.

***“The post-secondary education coaching did have an impact on my career path because I didn’t know about the CNA certification. The coaching, mental support, encouragement and motivation has also been positive reinforcement.”***



# FINANCIALS

## Revenue

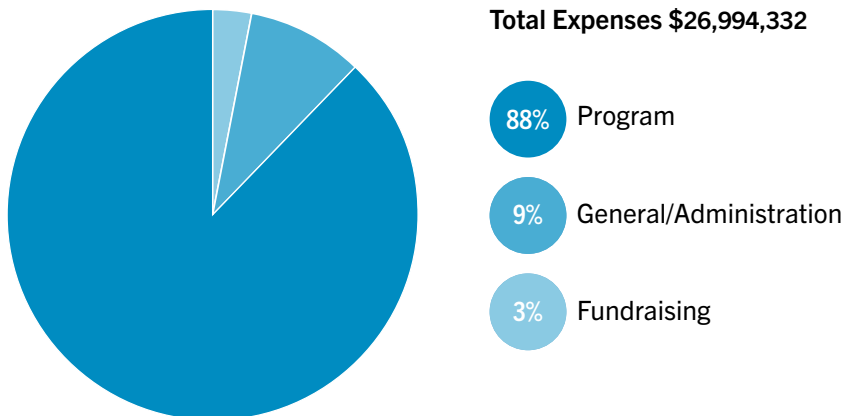
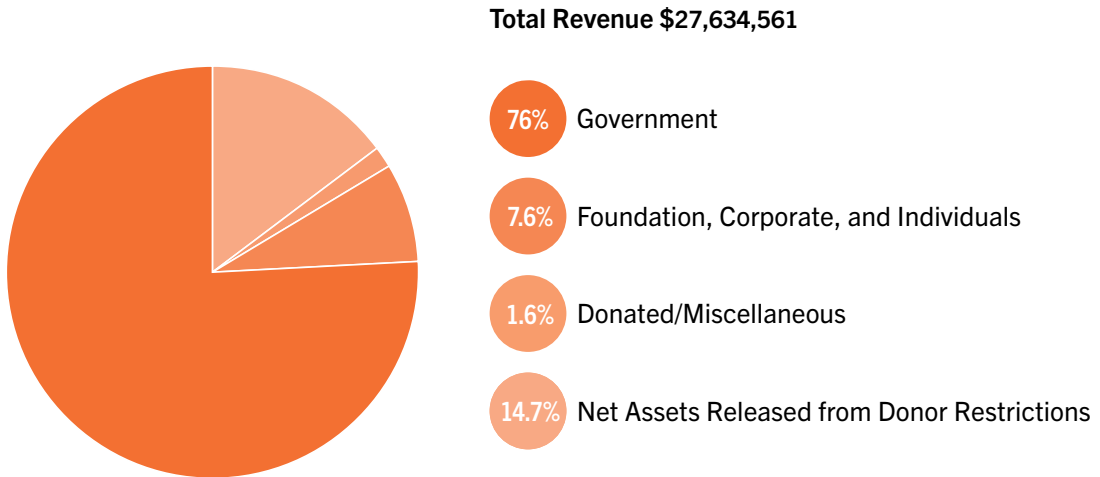
Government	\$21,024,027
Foundation, Corporate, Fund, and Individuals	\$2,089,013
Donated/Miscellaneous	\$454,713
Net Assets Released from Donor Restrictions	\$4,066,808
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$27,634,561</b>

## Expenses

Program	\$23,865,535
General/Administration	\$2,357,922
Fundraising	\$770,875
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$26,994,332</b>

## Statement of Financial Position

Current Assets	\$15,289,132
Fixed Assets	\$205,215
Other Assets	\$1,888,284
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$17,382,631</b>
Total Liabilities	\$2,999,940
Net Assets	\$14,382,691
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$17,382,631</b>



*“Finances and budgeting have always been a struggle, but slowly I’m getting better at saving money,” said Jaxon, age 19, who is enrolled in our My First Place Program in Alameda County. “I appreciate the opportunities I’ve been given and the freedom of having choices available.”*

