



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



WE ENVISION A
WORLD IN WHICH
INVOLVEMENT IN THE
FOSTER CARE SYSTEM
DOES NOT LIMIT
THE OPPORTUNITY
TO THRIVE IN
ADULTHOOD.



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New this year: Learn more about our updated theory of change – our first in over ten years - and the strategies, actions, and resources we plan to deploy to facilitate systems change and achieve incredible outcomes for older foster youth. Our leadership team leveraged an incredible data cache from our twenty-five year history as well as youth insight and staff experience to refresh our comprehensive plan. **More on page 6.**

LETTER FROM CEO

Dear Friends,

The heart of our mission lies in the care and compassion we give everyday in thought and deed as well the stories of resilience told by our youth.

Over the past fiscal year, we served 1660 youth across six California counties and six states. 545 of those young adults were My First Place™ program participants who were provided safe, comfortable apartments while receiving education and employment coaching, as well as loving support and guidance. We cheered them on as they planned careers and embarked on educational pathways that lead to rewarding, satisfying lives.

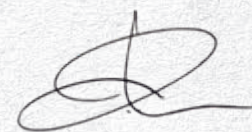
Our roots will always be here in California; and we are eager to share the incredible success of our evidence-informed programs and branch out to make sure every foster youth across our country has an equal opportunity to learn and grow like our youth across the Golden State. Every year, around 20,000 young people in the United States are unduly initiated into adulthood as they come of age while in foster care, and First Place for Youth wants to make sure that each one has the support they need. We're actively charting a comprehensive plan to do just that. We've recently expanded to our seventh state, New Jersey. Our program innovations and youth outcomes are a reflection of our values, and we are seeing a growing resonance across the country. As we expand nationally, it's crucial that we continue to leverage our amazing programmatic, policy, evaluation and learning work locally. To make a bold play nationally, we need a strong California. A chorus of youth all over the United States have told us, explicitly, that there's more work to do.

We strongly believe that youth should have a voice in shaping the policies and services that affect them. Nothing for them, without them. During our first Advocacy Day in April, youth met with state legislators,

advocating for policies to remove unnecessary barriers impeding progress for all foster youth. Our youth-led initiatives like the Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) and the Mississippi Youth Voice Program are led by young people with rich insights and wisdom. Their important work serves as a diagnostic tool in advocating for system level changes in child welfare.

Evidence-based programs, data-driven decision-making, and deeply listening to youth tell their stories are critical components to achieving our mission. Make no mistake, love is at the core. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr said, "Without love, there is no reason to know anyone, for love will, in the end, connect us to our neighbors, our children and our hearts." Together, we can continue to uplift and empower foster youth, ensuring they have the necessary support to thrive as independent and successful adults. We all have a role to play. Thank you for being an integral part of our community. You're the reason more is possible.

Hearts forward,



Thomas G. Lee, CEO and the First Place for Youth Team





SHANE

Los Angeles County
His Heart is in Nursing

Shane has long wanted to work in the healthcare field, specifically as a nurse. He was placed in foster care at the age of 15, spending his high school years in a group home. After receiving a trade school scholarship, he graduated from community college as a certified nursing assistant. Although he has earned a decent income in his work as a travel C.N.A., he has set his sights on achieving a Bachelor of Science in Nursing so he can become a Registered Nurse.

“Even though a lot of people might choose work over school, I realize that getting an education is a better investment for my future and working toward securing a better living for myself.”

While enrolled in the My First Place™ program, he has embraced opportunities to interact with insightful roundtable speakers at Art + Practice, including a visit to Snapchat headquarters, which have illuminated career pathways beyond nursing. However, his heart has always pulled him toward a career in nursing.

Shane is currently enrolled in the nursing program at Charles Drew University. First Place for Youth supports Shane with housing, food, gas, and clothing so he can focus on his education.

“I’m looking forward to becoming an R.N. I don’t know which area of nursing I’d like to work in, but I’ve always wanted to support developmentally disabled people.”

My First Place™ provides housing, education, employment, and case-management support for young adults ages 18-25. A primary goal throughout the program is to prepare young adults for living-wage employment and achieving educational goals.

Jayla found her way to My First Place™ after struggling to find the support she needed elsewhere.

“I entered foster care at 13, and with foster care, there’s no one there for you. No structure, no routine, no parenting. It’s very hard to learn how to figure things out as an adult when you have to start from scratch with a full plate. Before First Place, my support network consisted of my state appointed attorney and my social worker. Working here at First Place as an intern, I feel supported.”

Jayla resides in Alameda while successfully balancing school and work. After having some difficulty with calculus, First Place was able to secure a tutor for Jayla, and she achieved a B in her first semester at school.

“I have a home, and it’s awesome! I’m in school, I’m working at First Place, and I have people that care about me. My supervisor Carmen, and my Education & Employment Specialist are always there for me. I can just walk up to Carmen’s desk and ask for a hug - and she gives me one.”

Jayla aspires to become a video game designer, and she’s already made important connections in that industry, working periodically as a video game quality assurance tester at Playstation Headquarters. She holds the opportunities for growth, education, and support she’s received at First Place close to her heart.

Because youth come to us with a wide variety of needs, skills, and abilities, we strive to meet every young person where they are, supporting them in setting and achieving individual goals. Over the last twelve months, First Place for Youth has provided 1.5 million minutes of service to transition age youth and conducted over 40,000 meetings. We’ve provided educational, employment, life skills, and housing support to over ten thousand young adults throughout our history.



JAYLA

Alameda County
A Storyteller at Heart

THE PROBLEM

Across the U.S., there are nearly 200,000 youth aged 16-25 who are transitioning out of foster care. Many of these young adults are not prepared for independence and existing laws and policies create barriers rather than opportunities for them to thrive.

First Place for Youth THEORY OF CHANGE

For all young people exiting foster care to develop the skills they need to make a successful transition to independence, we must fix broken and inequitable systems while ensuring supports are tailored to the unique needs of each youth.

Programming

- My First Place™ Program (MFP)
- Independent Living & Supportive Service Programs

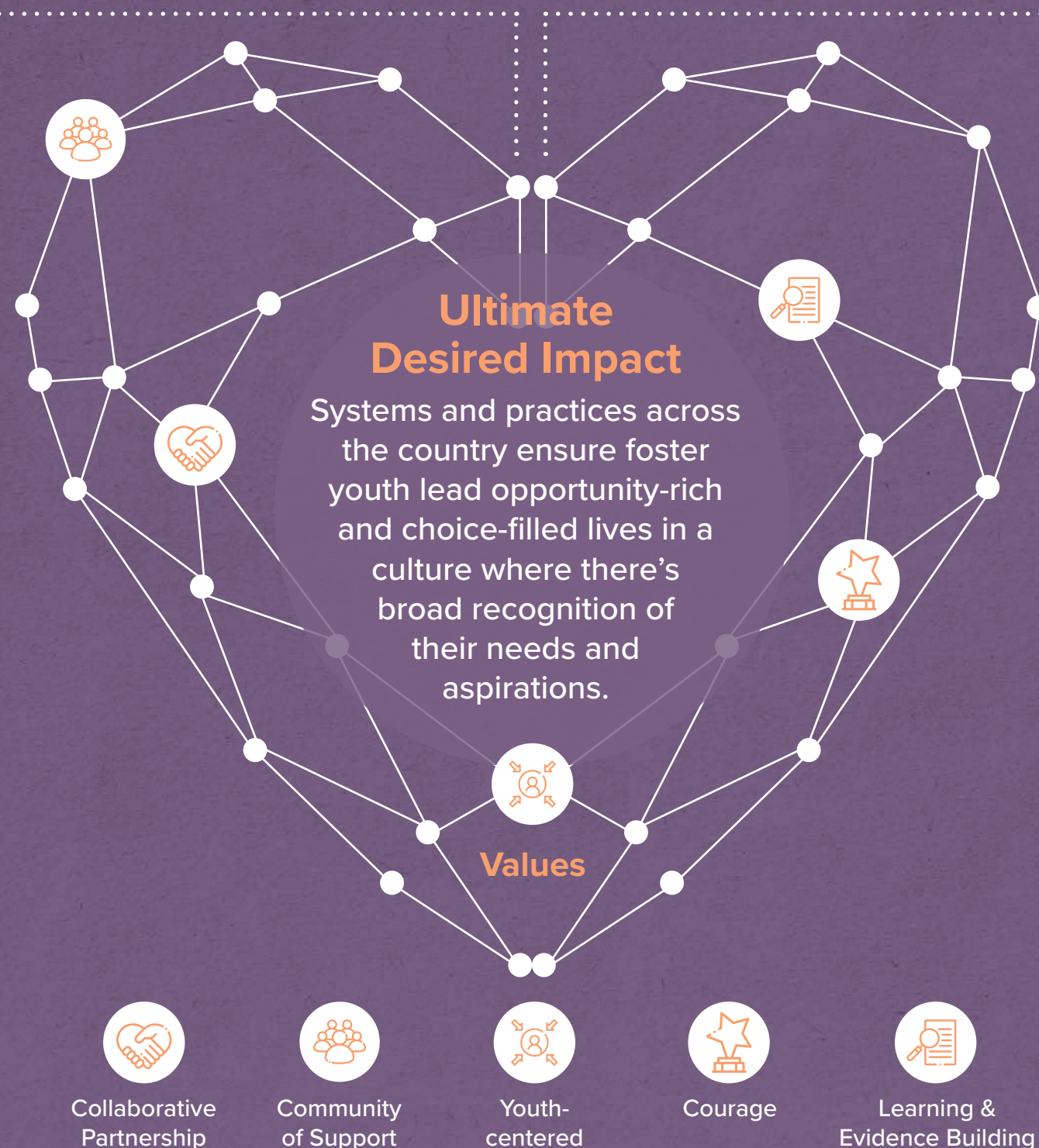
Outcomes

SHORT-TERM

- Well-being
- Educational attainment
- Employment milestones

LONG-TERM

- Pathway to living wage
- Safe & stable housing
- Decrease in intergenerational CPS involvement



Systems Change

- MFP Scaling
- Policy Advocacy
- Youth Voice Councils

Outcomes

SHORT-TERM

- Increased youth access & benefit from resources
- Increased funding
- Commitment & accountability from systems actors

LONG-TERM

- Sustained and ongoing funding
- Practice improvement across: child welfare, data & outcomes monitoring, trauma informed care, prioritizing youth voice
- Policy adoption

2023 BY THE NUMBERS

1660

Youth served by First Place for Youth and network partners in California, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New York & Ohio.

545

My First Place™ program participants in California gained housing, education and employment coaching, as well as comprehensive case-management support.

Youth entering our program have been in foster care in the custody of the state for an average of nearly eight years, with placements in at least six different foster homes, and have changed schools many times.

THE YOUTH AT ENTRY*

 **40%** Are not stably housed

 **49%** Are not in school

 **64%** Are unemployed

 **13%** Have children

 **40%** Have been involved with the justice system

MY FIRST PLACE™ PROGRAM OUTCOMES** in California

 **92%** Exited the program into stable housing***

 **85%** Were enrolled in a high school diploma or GED program***

 **78%** Of eligible youth enrolled in post-secondary education

 **86%** Obtained employment or realized a wage increase

 **96%** Maintained family size

 **98%** Avoided arrest



90%

of youth in
My First Place
rated the
program as
Good or Excellent
after 12 months
in program.

* Snapshot of our youth entering the My First Place Program in FY2023. ** Youth who were in program after 180 days in FY2023. *** Youth who exited the program after 12+ months



BENJAMIN

Solano County
Navigating with Heart

Benjamin is driven by a clear vision for his future and he's always interested in new opportunities to grow. Benjamin joined the My First Place™ program in 2022, marking a new chapter in his life's journey.

As a kinesthetic learner, Benjamin says the hands-on learning approach in First Place's apprenticeship programs and workshops aligns perfectly with his personal learning style and has enabled him to explore various career paths.

Recently, Benjamin accomplished a significant milestone by graduating from the CVS Pharmacy Technician Apprenticeship. He hopes that this new opportunity will be a stepping stone towards a promising career in the healthcare field.

"I'm trying to dip my toe in all the opportunities that I can because, as a young man, I still have time to choose and to see what kind of career I want. I'm not afraid to try everything and see for myself what I like and don't like."

Looking ahead, Benjamin plans to transfer from Solano Community College to a four-year university, ultimately pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Benjamin believes that difficult life experiences shape individuals for better things to come. "I think it's important to be true to yourself and learn how to be disciplined. Because once times are rough, we tend to give up, but we need to still take care of ourselves and learn to reach out and ask for help when we need it."

First Place's newly introduced "earn and learn" model promotes professional progress through job-direct training, career-focused education, industry-recognized credentials, and employment skills. Through programs such as apprenticeship, youth are provided an alternative to traditional AA/BA degrees while still gaining the fundamental skills needed to compete in a growing job market and advance towards earning living wages.



CVS PHARMACY TECH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

2023 marks a successful year of our partnership with CVS Health Pharmacy, a major employer with locations in all of the communities where First Place youth live. Our education and employment team worked with CVS Health and Thryv Training Institute to develop a partnership that would provide an Earn and Learn pathway to financial independence for our program participants. Through the Pharmacy Tech Apprenticeship program, Thryv instructors provide training classes on site in our offices, and we provide youth with stipends for the time they're in those classes, tutoring, and supports. CVS then provides 80 hours of paid on-the-job work experience, and once completed, CVS is incentivized to hire those youth in full-time positions. These critical types of partnerships create opportunities for youth to obtain living wage jobs near their homes. First Place is developing partnerships with existing apprenticeship programs, as well as creating new ones that are tailored to our youth.

This year, CVS Pharmacy offered My First Place program participants across our Solano, Contra Costa, Alameda and San Francisco County the

opportunity to obtain paid pharmacy training in a Pharmacy Tech Pre-Apprenticeship Program. The first-hand training provided an in-depth understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and workflows at each of the five main pharmacy workstations, on-the-job work experience in the pharmacy, and hours towards state licensing.

A CVS Pharmacy Tech earns as much as \$25/hour, well above the living wage threshold in California.

Seventeen apprentices completed their pharmacy tech training, eight were hired on with CVS and three graduates have been promoted into full-time Pharmacy Technicians positions at a local CVS Pharmacy, including Benjamin! Six youth from Cohort 2 are preparing to enter their CVS work experience at this time. We are preparing for our next cohort, and we're excited about the continued popularity and success of the program.

Pictured at right: Janiese, a 2023 graduate of the apprenticeship program.



“Our partnership with CVS has truly been a game-changer for our young adults in transition. It’s provided them with top-notch training and valuable work experience as pharmacy technicians. This program not only helps these young folks secure jobs right where they live, but it also empowers them to become active and positive members of their communities.”

-Thomas G. Lee, CEO

Dinero's path through foster care has been marked by his remarkable initiative and aspiration. Despite the challenges he faced as an older youth in the system, Dinero recognized that he needed support and guidance to break free from his past experiences and habits and sought out First Place for Youth on his own.

Dinero's journey with First Place has been transformative. He highlights the importance of the financial training workshops and career exploration opportunities that have played a significant role in his personal and professional growth. He values learning and is always eager to seize new opportunities for self-improvement. Currently, Dinero is working towards obtaining his driver's license, establishing a bank account, and planning his steps to secure stable housing after he exits My First Place™ in 2024. Looking ahead, Dinero recognizes the significance of addressing basic needs and building a foundation for a secure future.

As a self-described creative and artistic individual, Dinero envisions a future where he can bring his unique perspective to the world. He sees himself as a CEO and is committed to attaining higher education so that he can pursue a career advocating for underrepresented groups.

Recently, Dinero was featured in a 3-hour documentary about the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals that is now used in mandatory trainings for Santa Clara County medical providers. His dedication to advocating for marginalized groups and his creative mindset are assets that he plans to harness for a brighter future.

For fellow transition age foster youth, Dinero offers a heartfelt message: "Don't give up. Learn as much as you can, help yourself, and remember to love and believe in yourself. It's going to be okay."

According to the Trevor Project, LGBTQ+ youth who reported experiencing homelessness or housing instability at some point in their lives had two to four times the odds of reporting depression, anxiety, self-harm, considering suicide, and attempting suicide compared to those with stable housing. First Place delivers youth-driven individualized support and interventions, motivational interviewing, positive development, and trauma-informed care to all of our program participants.



DINERO

**Santa Clara County
Guided by His Heart**



DULCE

Los Angeles County
Her Heart is Set on University

Dulce made her way to First Place for Youth after beginning her post-secondary education at Pasadena City College. Though she lived in a warm, supportive foster care environment, the academic rigors of college life and a desire for more independence inspired her to seek out a transitional housing program. Her social worker recommended First Place for Youth, and she began the program in 2022.

The transition offered her the independence and control she needed to thrive academically. Aiding her journey were the Art + Practice Scholarships, which provided vital financial support. These scholarships became a safety net, ensuring she could count on help when needed.

First Place for Youth's holistic approach deeply resonates with Dulce. She appreciates the frequent events and gatherings, offering her both professional guidance and social interaction with fellow program participants.

Currently, Dulce is pursuing a sociology major, a subject she is passionate about. "I'm in the process of starting my applications to transfer to a four-year university and I genuinely don't think that I could have gotten to this point without the support from First Place and Dept. of Child and Family Services (DCFS). The fact that I get to go to a university now is just a really big deal."

College has opened up exciting possibilities, with law school emerging as a potential path. Although she hasn't finalized her plans, she's considering transferring to prestigious universities like UC Santa Barbara and UCLA, seizing the opportunity to shape her future.

Dulce's journey is a testament to the support provided by First Place. Her Youth Advocate's personal connection has been invaluable, streamlining her access to the resources she needs. Her message to others in similar situations is clear: "Take advantage of the opportunities, because there are so many resources out there. You won't know until you look for it."

Dulce's story illustrates that with resilience, determination, and the right support, young adults can overcome adversity, achieve academic success, and build a brighter future.

Only 64%* of youth with lived experience in foster care will enroll in some form of post-secondary education by age 23, whereas 80% of My First Place participants have enrolled after 6 months or more in our program.

*CalYOUTH Study



My First Place™ program participants work with their teams to strengthen their life skills – for financial literacy, wellness, healthy relationships, parenting, and accessing community resources.

JASMINE & FARAH

Solano County | With Heartfelt Gratitude

Jasmine's journey with First Place is a powerful story of resilience and transformation. At 18, she found herself without parental guidance or support, embracing newfound freedom but also facing its consequences. After a series of challenges, she was asked to leave First Place at 19, leading to a period of couch surfing and uncertainty, compounded by becoming a young, single mother.

However, at 22, Jasmine made a pivotal call, hoping for a second chance. First Place surprised her with open arms, allowing her to secure stable housing for herself and her daughter, Farah. With their support, she achieved remarkable milestones, including obtaining her Certified Nursing Assistant (C.N.A.) license.

Today, Jasmine stands as a confident, successful, and proud young woman, mother, and professional, thanks to First Place for Youth. Her story embodies the organization's transformative impact and the importance of providing a safe place for young individuals.

Jasmine expresses her heartfelt gratitude to First Place for Youth, emphasizing the organization's unwavering commitment to improving young lives.

Introducing a Remarkable Partnership:

EMPOWERING NEW JERSEY'S YOUTH FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

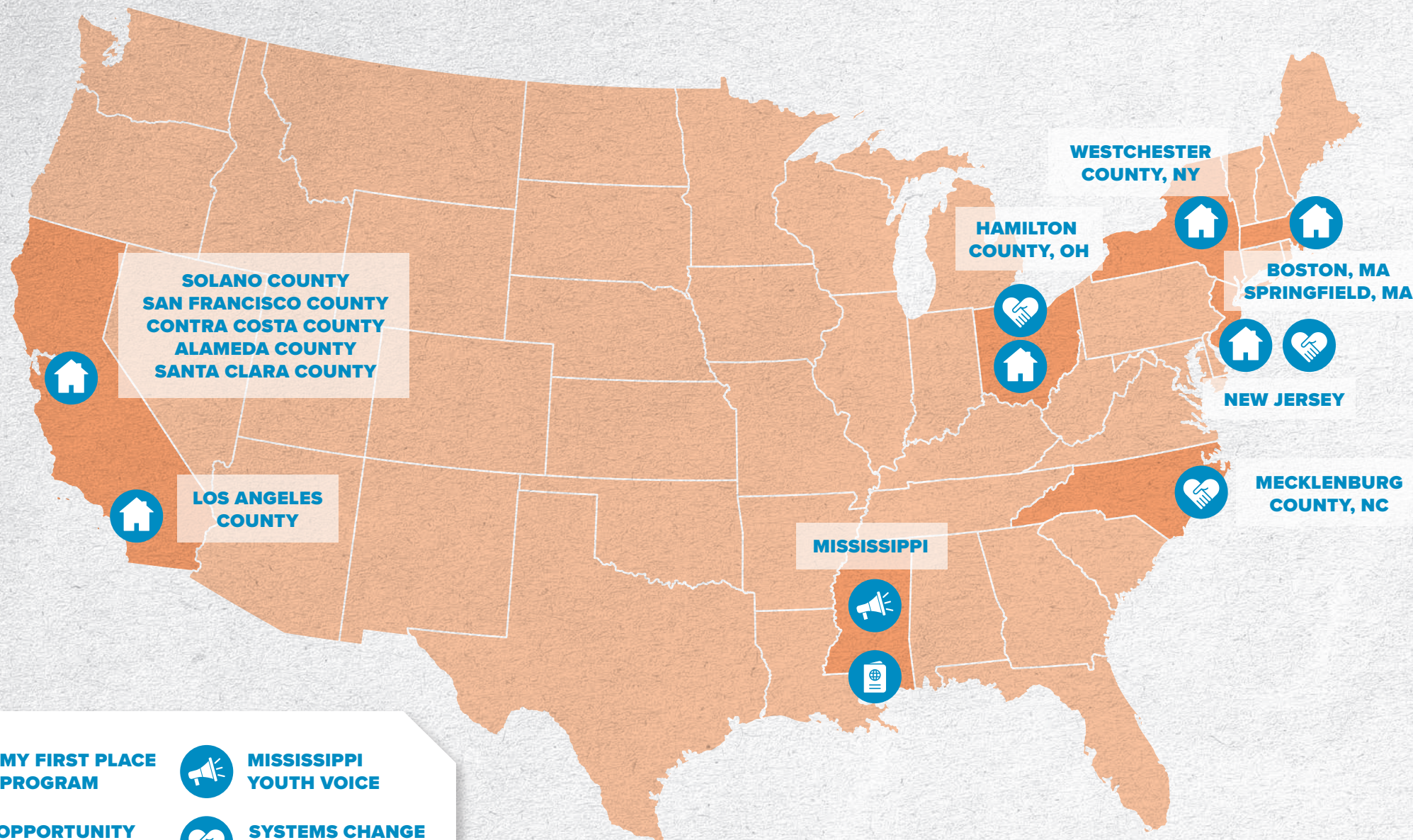
Over the past few years, First Place has engaged in ongoing dialogue with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (NJ DCF), seeking the perfect synergy to drive positive change. The fruits of this collaboration are now becoming reality, as we proudly announce the launch of our partnership. With a shared vision to empower youth, this partnership aims to extend the transformative My First Place™ services throughout the state.

Team members from our national expansion, evaluation and learning, and policy teams are at the heart of this endeavor, driving the vision forward. The first phase of this remarkable journey involves implementing the My First Place model through two chosen NJ providers: Volunteers of America and Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen.

In this initial phase, 30 Union County youth have been entrusted to the service of Volunteers of America, while Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen will extend its support to 30 youth in Middlesex and Somerset Counties. As the year unfolds, the inaugural program is projected to positively impact the lives of 60 young individuals, fostering growth and independence.

In order to facilitate the partnership and ensure success, First Place program staff spent six weeks training staff at each New Jersey partner site to prepare them for the October 2023 launch.

This partnership signifies a pivotal moment in the lives of New Jersey's youth, where empowerment, independence, and possibility unite. We look forward to more partnerships in New Jersey and throughout the United States, where every step taken paves the way for a thriving generation of young folks with lived experience in the foster care system.



**MY FIRST PLACE
PROGRAM**



**MISSISSIPPI
YOUTH VOICE**



**OPPORTUNITY
PASSPORT**



**SYSTEMS CHANGE
PARTNERSHIP**

POLICY WINS



California Youth Voice (CAYV)

In order to deepen our work to empower foster youth as change agents, we are building the CAYV cohort: an advisory board comprised of program participants who shape an advocacy agenda that centers youth needs, challenges, and experiences, and identifies and removes barriers to improve the lives of all foster youth throughout California.

This year, the First Place Policy Department embarked on a new process to identify our organization's legislative priorities that engaged youth, leadership, and program staff. The team developed a list of five bills and one budget request that became their main policy priorities. This list was used to support and advocate for the bills throughout the legislative session in Sacramento.

On April 27th, the Policy Department organized our first Advocacy Day in Sacramento when leadership, staff, and youth met with the offices of eleven elected California officials to advocate for our policy priorities. This was an excellent opportunity to provide valuable information about our organization and priorities to legislators, specifically those Members who were newly elected and who represent the counties where First Place is located. It also helped lay the groundwork for future visits and established connections that will be useful when advancing our policy work.

Three of our six priorities ended up being passed in the Budget bill and are now law.

MY FIRST PLACE™ POLICY OUTCOMES

AB 525 (TING)

Increasing access to housing in extended foster care through the creation of a housing supplement for the Supervised Independent Living Placement *(Included in Budget)*

AB 369 (ZBUR)

Providing a longer timeline for youth to receive independent living training and support by increasing the age limit for Independent Living Programs *(Died in Appropriations)*

AB 963 (SCHIAVO)

Supporting nonprofits to invest in housing stock by creating a loan guarantee program for foster care housing *(Died in Appropriations)*

SB 307 (ASHBY)

Removing barriers to postsecondary education attainment by increasing financial aid for current and former foster youth *(Included in Budget)*

SB 456 (MENJIVAR)

Encouraging the development of more supportive housing infrastructure by allowing direct Homekey funding for community-based organizations *(Died in Appropriations)*

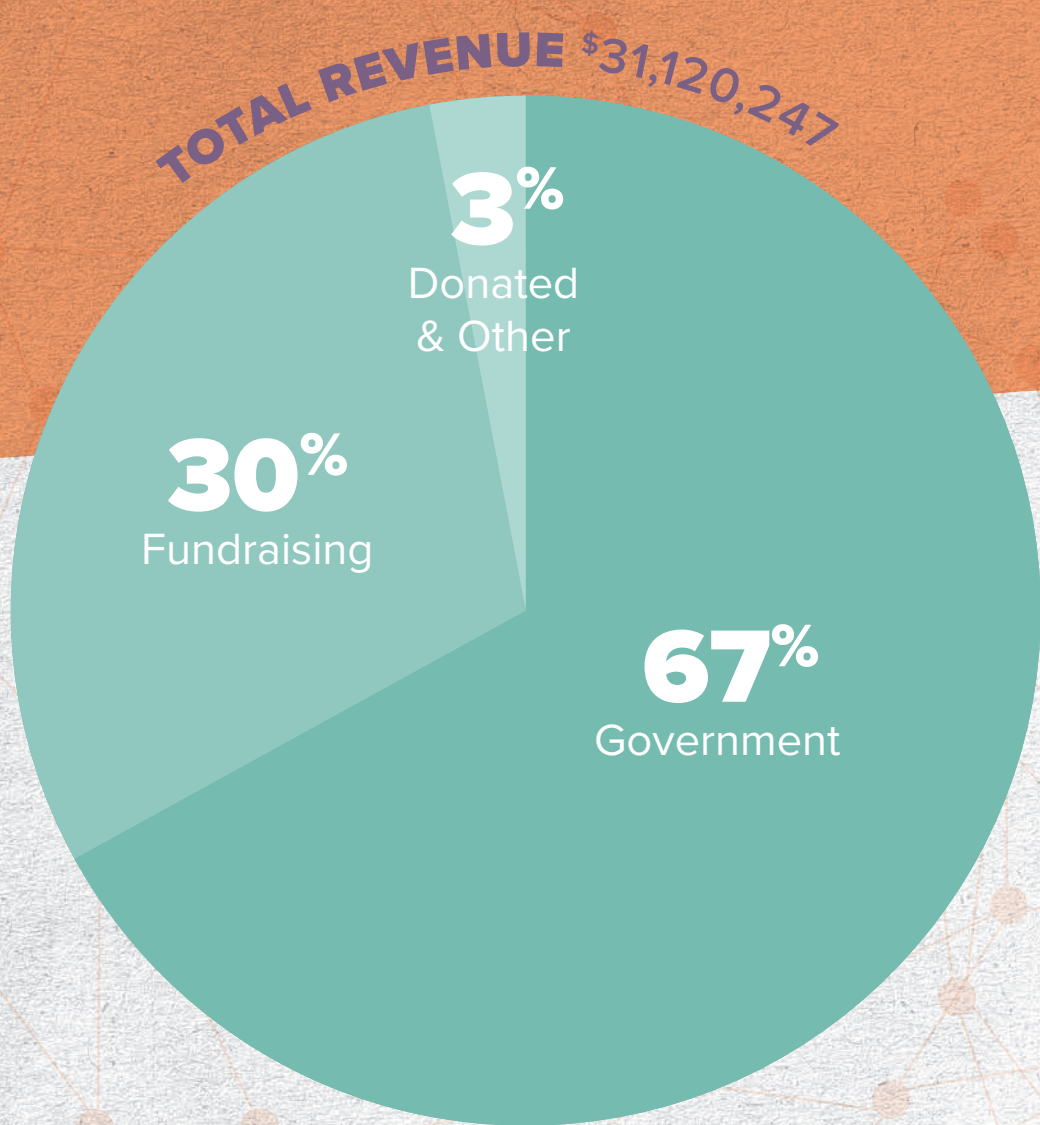
GUARDIAN BUDGET REQUEST

Reducing wait times for hiring new staff and serving additional youth by increasing funding for the state to process background checks *(Included in Budget)*

2023 FINANCIALS

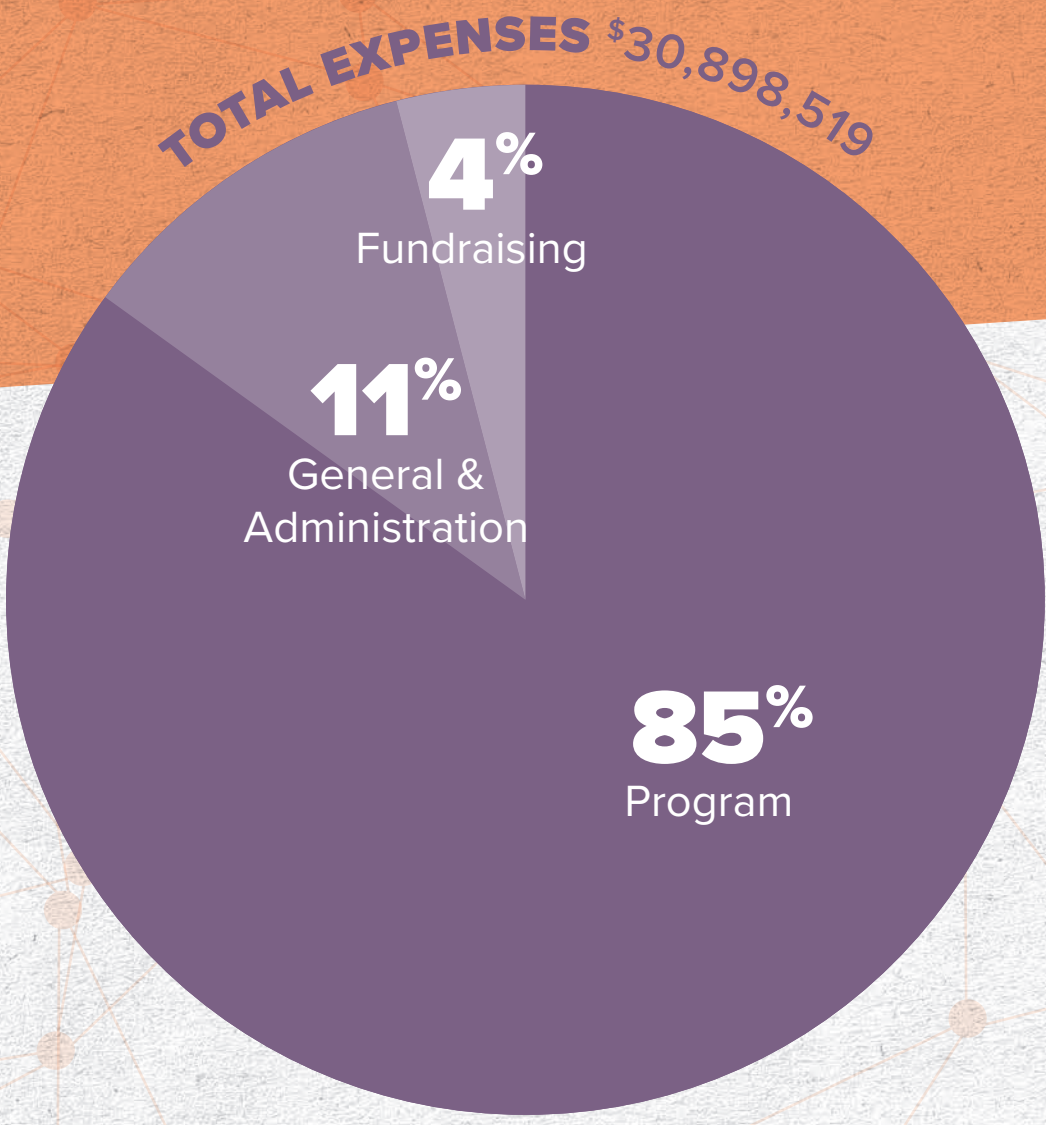
REVENUE

Government	\$21,003,206
Fundraising	\$9,199,627
Donated & Other	\$917,414
Total Revenue	\$31,120,247



EXPENSES

Program	\$26,142,661
General & Administration	\$3,343,663
Fundraising	\$1,412,195
Total Expenses	\$30,898,519



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Current Assets	\$12,621,485
Long Term Assets	\$7,454,352
Total Assets	\$20,075,837
 Total Liabilities	 \$9,789,510
Net Assets	\$10,286,327

Audited financial position
as of June 30, 2023.

DONORS

First Place for Youth is tremendously grateful for the support of all our donors and funders. Your generosity has helped us to make more possible for older foster youth throughout California and beyond. **7/1/22 THROUGH 6/30/23.**

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