An MDRC evaluation of the YVLifeSet program operated by the nonprofit Youth Villages found that the program improved earnings, housing stability, and mental health among young adults who had been in foster care or juvenile justice custody in Tennessee.

**How YVLifeSet Works**

YVLifeSet, formerly known as the Transitional Living (TL) program, provides intensive individualized and clinically focused case management, support, and counseling to youth in their homes and communities. A look at some key services offered during the study period between 2010 and 2012, according to MDRC’s implementation findings:

- **ASSESS AND PLAN**
  TL Specialists use various assessments to gauge each youth’s needs and strengths throughout the program to inform their goals and activities in different domains, like housing and education.

- **MEET REGULARLY**
  TL Specialists meet with youth weekly to work on goals, and they check in by phone or text message. If critical needs arise, meetings occur more frequently.

The program typically lasts nine months.

**TL SPECIALISTS USE THREE MAIN STRATEGIES IN WORKING WITH YOUTH**

- **EVIDENCE-INFORMED** assessments, curricula, and practices, like motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy
- **CONVERSATION-BASED** counseling on life issues from both past and present
- **ACTION-ORIENTED** activities like taking youth to a bank to open an account or to a college to gather information about classes

**SERVICE COORDINATION**

TL Specialists coordinate with community providers working with youth — foster care case workers, for example.

**CLINICAL OVERSIGHT**

TL Specialists receive guidance from supervisory staff to ensure sound clinical practices. All treatment plans are reviewed by clinically licensed staff.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

Youth can access flexible funds for expenses such as clothing for a job interview or an apartment application fee.

**EDUCATION AND CAREER SUPPORT**

Youth who require more support to find postsecondary training or job opportunities can work with staff dedicated to those areas.

**PEER SUPPORT**

Youth are encouraged to attend monthly group meetings with other participants.
Findings from MDRC’s Evaluation of YVLifeSet

The study sample includes more than 1,300 young people ages 18 to 24 who were living across Tennessee and had left foster care or juvenile justice custody as teenagers or were aging out at age 18. The evaluation is the largest experimental test of services for this population of youth, who often experience poor outcomes as adults.

The program produced impacts on a range of outcomes in three of six domains that it was designed to affect. For more information, visit www.mdrc.org/project/youth-villages-transitional-living-program-evaluation

**ONE-YEAR IMPACT RESULTS**

The program produced impacts on a range of outcomes in three of six domains that it was designed to affect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment and earnings</th>
<th>Housing stability and economic well-being</th>
<th>Health and safety</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Social support</th>
<th>Criminal involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17% ▲ Earnings from formal work</td>
<td>22% ▼ Homelessness</td>
<td>13% ▼ Mental health problems</td>
<td>So far, no statistically significant impacts on:</td>
<td>Measures like closeness to, or contact with, a caring adult</td>
<td>Criminal behavior or contact with the criminal justice system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% ▲ Employment</td>
<td>13% ▼ Number of hardships, like lack of food</td>
<td>30% ▼ Violent relationships</td>
<td>Receipt of high school diploma or equivalent certification or other training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notable given the national decline in youth employment at the time of the study

Notable given TL does not offer housing or substantial financial support

While modest in size, the impacts are very meaningful because no other programs for this highly vulnerable population have been shown to be effective in improving their well-being across a wide range of outcomes in a large-scale, rigorous study. Future analysis will determine whether other impacts emerge.

**Next Steps**

Two-year impact findings and a benefit-cost analysis will be released in late spring of 2016.

MDRC is exploring the possibility of testing the program in other contexts, since foster care policies vary from state to state.

MDRC’s evaluation of YVLifeSet, formerly known as the Transitional Living program, is funded by The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

For more information, visit www.mdrc.org/project/youth-villages-transitional-living-program-evaluation