



KEYS TO

SUCCESS

Program Overview



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The Need

Each year approximately 800 youth leave the Arizona foster care system at age 18 with significant challenges ahead of them.



“Youth in-care are more likely than their peers not in care to be unemployed, underemployed, commence work early (rather than completing high school), have lower incomes and progress more slowly in their careers. One study found that youth leaving care had less than a 55% employment rate, with mean quarterly earnings well below the poverty level.”

University of Chicago Chapin Hall Center for Children; 2002



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How We Started

No one journey through foster care is the same. What is the same is the need for support as a young person ages out of foster care and transitions to adulthood.

Established in 2014, Keys to Success is the only workforce development program of its kind in Arizona, designed to address the unique challenges faced by youth transitioning from foster care as they strive for independence.

Participants work closely with a professional team to identify both short- and long-term career goals, gain employment readiness skills, secure job opportunities, and pursue education or training that aligns with their aspirations.





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How We Do It



KTS eliminates the transportation barriers that often prevent young people from receiving much-needed support by bringing all our services to the youth in the community, based on their availability.

Our team adheres to standardized operating procedures that ensure consistent quality and quantity of services, but is customized to meet each young person where they are in their life and address their unique needs and goals.



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How It's Going...

Since its inception in 2014, Keys to Success has empowered over 2,000 young people by providing critical support, resources, and opportunities to help them navigate their path toward independence and long-term success.





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Career Development Services



Our Career Development Specialists (CDS) utilize a range of assessment tools to help participants identify their skills, interests, personality traits, and work values, guiding them toward careers that best align with their strengths and aspirations.

Through the exploration of workforce information, participants get a realistic view of the opportunities in their fields of interest, identify viable career pathways and gain an understanding of the cost of living as it relates to their current and future life goals.



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Career Development Services

EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT

Our Career Development Specialists help participants set and achieve educational goals by:

- Working alongside the youth, caregivers, DCS education specialists, current or previous school(s) or district and others on the Child and Family Team to locate transcripts, individual education plans (IEP), 504 plans or other education documents relevant to developing an education plan
- Reviewing all collected documents to identify gaps in education and/or supports





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Career Development Services

EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT (cont.)

- Assisting with educational enrollment including high school, credit recovery or high school equivalency (HSE/GED), vocational training and college/university
- Helping participants access funding and financial aid
- Maintaining communication with schools, districts and agencies about educational issues and concerns





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Career Development Services

EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT (cont.)

- Advocating for youth's educational rights and responding to requests for information
- Ensuring program activities and services are coordinated with partnering organizations and educational institutions





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Employment Development Services



GETTING AND KEEPING THE JOB

Our Employment Development Specialists (EDS) help youth set and achieve educational goals by:

- Creating a master application and resume
- Teaching participants how to conduct a successful job search
- Developing and enhancing interview skills (including the completion of a customer service 101 training)



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Employment Development Services

GETTING AND KEEPING THE JOB (cont.)

Our EDSs take the youth shopping for interview clothing and assist them with access to other employment-related resources provided by AFFCF (bus passes, electric bikes and/or scooters, cell phones, certifications, etc.).

Employment Development Specialists (EDSs) support youth throughout the job application process, assisting with both in-person and online submissions until they successfully secure a job offer.





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Employment Development Services

GETTING AND KEEPING THE JOB (cont.)

After a participant is hired, the Employment Development Specialist (EDS) provides ongoing coaching to promote job retention and career growth. This support includes helping youth develop new skills, adapt to their work environment, and effectively manage their schedules, ensuring long-term success in the workplace.





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Employment Partnerships

The Keys to Success leadership team collaborates with community members, businesses, and organizations to create meaningful work experiences and employment opportunities for program youth.





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Employment Partnerships

Companies are designated as partners if:

- All program youth who submit an application are assured the opportunity to interview regardless of qualifications, as long as an open position is available.
- The company provides feedback to the EDS after the interview for learning purposes.





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Employment Partnerships

Current number of
employer partnerships
by County:

- Maricopa – 124
- Yavapai – 30
- Pima - 25





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Community Support

KTS services operate in full partnership with the youth's team which may include any combination of the following:

- Department of Child Safety
- Therapist or Counselor
- Teacher
- Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
- Guardian ad litem (GAL) or lawyer





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Community Support



Participants requiring a higher level of case management support are referred to our KTS Resource and Housing Specialists. These specialists work closely with participants preparing for independent living, guiding them in making informed housing choices and equipping them with the skills and resources needed for long-term stability. Additionally, funding is available to help participants secure housing or bridge temporary income gaps to prevent homelessness



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Community Support

The Resource and Housing Team also helps participants navigate complex systems to access the support they need. They act as a liaison between the young person and service providers, advocating for their needs and ensuring they receive appropriate and timely care.

Types of Support Include:

- Applying to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Assistance applying for disability
- Access to parenting classes and resources
- Help to navigate the healthcare system
- Teaching life skills related to maintaining a home
- Teaching youth to access the public transit system



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Keys to Financial Success

In 2020, KTS added a financial literacy component to the program.

Participants receive one-on-one financial literacy training from their Employment Development Specialist. This curriculum is designed to be tailored to each participant, based on where they are in their life's journey.





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Keys to Financial Success



- EDSs walk alongside them after course completion to help them put their new skills, tools and knowledge into action.
- The EDS also helps participants to open checking and savings accounts.
- After completion of the training they have the opportunity to make a \$3,000 savings match to go toward the purchase of a vehicle!



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Program Eligibility

Youth are eligible if they:

- Are between the ages of 16 and 26
- Reside in Maricopa, Yavapai or Pima County
- Were adopted or placed in legal guardianship after age 15
- Were reunified with the biological family after age 14

Youth do not need to enter extended foster care to be enrolled in the program after they are 18.





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Program Eligibility (cont.)



Additionally, to enroll in the program youth need to:

- Demonstrate a commitment to engage in the career development services provided by their Keys to Success team, which is necessary for the achievement of the youth's professional and personal goals; and
- Sign the youth participation agreement, which outlines expected commitments, responsibilities, and behaviors.

Referral Form Here:

affcf.org/ways-we-help/keys-to-success



Thank You!

