



A Better Future
Starts with

One Open Door

A place to turn.
A place to trust.
A place to transition.

At Huckleberry House, our doors are always open.

And time and again, those doors lead to
promising places for our community's troubled teens.

As one of Franklin County's primary providers of shelter and services to runaway and homeless youth, Huckleberry House quite literally maintains an open door. Our shelter is available to youth in crisis situations 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

But when young people come through our doors, it's about so much more than finding a hot meal and a warm bed for a couple of nights. It's about finding the support they so desperately need to address life's challenges and take new steps in a meaningful direction.

The teens and families we welcome into our programs are dealing with serious problems.

Issues such as abuse, violence, addiction, and homelessness. Problems like those rarely get solved quickly or without a lot of hard work.

But Huckleberry House gives youth and their families a great place to turn.

Through our **Crisis Program, Transitional Living Program, Family Support Program, and Youth Outreach Program**, we open doors to ongoing, continuous counseling and support for families that want to address their problems and develop the skills for solving them. We provide the guidance transitional-age teens need to learn to live successfully on their own. And we create community connections for teens and families that help pave the way to self-sufficiency.

In other words, Huckleberry House goes beyond providing respite for an immediate crisis. We establish a foundation of trust and support that helps set the direction for a way out of disruptive, negative, and unsafe situations. And we stand by the teens and families we serve every step of the way, ultimately leading to a better home life and a more productive future.

For each of the individuals and families we serve, it all starts with one open door.

Huckleberry House is continuously grateful to the many individuals and organizations in our community who help us keep opening doors—doors that represent opportunity and hope for the young people and families in our community who need it most.



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Crisis Program

A SAFE PLACE TO TURN

All families have problems. And sometimes, situations like fighting, mental health issues, substance abuse, or violence escalate to a point that it's difficult or even unsafe for a teen to remain at home.

When teens leave home, the Huckleberry House Crisis Shelter offers a safe alternative to the streets.

At the shelter, teens can find:

- An open door
- A hot meal
- A warm bed
- Access to clothing, hygiene items, and other necessities
- Space to think things over
- Individual and family support to resolve issues

Family reunification is the ultimate goal.

Teens and families in crisis benefit from having a break from each other to cool down and think things over. But ultimately, families do best when they develop skills for working through their issues together. Crisis counselors work with teens and their families to address and resolve the problems that bring teens to our door and to reunite runaway and displaced youth with their families.



2015 CRISIS PROGRAM FOCUSES:

Additional programming for longer-term stays

To accommodate teens who are staying longer in our shelter—including an increasing number of Family Support and Emergency Shelter Care teens referred by Franklin County Children Services—the program added:

- Daily homework assignments that correspond to each youth's diagnosis and goals
- More emphasis on independent living skills, especially for older teens who may soon be transitioning out of their parents' homes
- More opportunities for longer-term youth to get involved in leading teen groups

New Case Aid position

The Crisis Shelter created a new position to support the Crisis Counselors and to offer additional services to youth. The Case Aid is involved in:

- Taking teens—especially older teens and those staying at the shelter longer—outside the house to gain hands-on experience with life skills such as riding the bus or accessing food pantries

Crisis Program At A Glance

- 24/7 Crisis Hotline
- 24/7/365 Crisis Shelter
- Beds for up to 16 teens ages 12-17
- Average length of stay: 5 days
- **Teens contact a parent/guardian within 24 hours of entering the shelter**
- Longer term Family Support respite care and Emergency Shelter Care available through a contract with Franklin County Children Services
- One-on-one crisis counseling, family counseling, and teen group counseling services
- Connections to ongoing counseling and support services

- Staying in contact with teens after they leave the shelter to ensure connections are maintained with ongoing social services

New groups on key topics

The Crisis Program works closely with community agencies and with other programs at Huckleberry House to provide relevant and engaging information for the teens in the shelter, including:

- A monthly STI information and testing group facilitated by the Columbus Health Department
- A birth control information group facilitated by Nationwide Children's Hospital
- A domestic violence support group facilitated by Huckleberry House's Crime Victim Specialist

2015 Successes

557 crisis episodes addressed

3028 nights of emergency shelter provided

87% of Crisis Program teens returned to living with family, another relative, or a friend

94 Safe Place Partners (Kroger Stores, White Castle Restaurants, Columbus Fire Stations) provided help contacting Huck House

Jayla's Story

A place to turn

For some teens, staying at home simply isn't a safe option. After Jayla's parents locked her and her younger sister in an attic without access to food or a bathroom, the sisters ran to Huckleberry House.

When the severity of the abuse and neglect the girls had suffered became apparent, Crisis Program Counselors contacted Franklin County Children Services (FCCS). Jayla remained at Huckleberry House for over a month during the course of the FCCS investigation

A place to trust

During her time at the shelter, Jayla's counselors worked with her on building skills to deal with her past traumas. They also helped her set goals for her future and made sure she was enrolled in school for the next year.

In addition to learning to trust and confide in the Crisis Counselors at Huckleberry House, Jalya was linked with ongoing outpatient counseling services so she could continue to build her skills after leaving the shelter. Jayla turned 17 while at the shelter, and the staff helped make the day special for her with a small celebration and gifts.

A place to transition

After substantiating the allegations of abuse and neglect, FCCS took custody of Jayla and her sister. Jayla remained at the shelter until FCCS could place the sisters together at a foster home.

Jayla's new home is outside of Franklin County, but she continues to receive ongoing counseling services from a local organization. In addition, she still contacts her Huck House counselors from time to time for advice and encouragement as she transitions to her new family. **Jayla is grateful to be with her sister and living in a safe place, and she continues to trust the Huck House staff for support.**

The Transitional Living Program

A FRESH START FOR TRANSITIONAL-AGE YOUTH

For some teens, it isn't safe or possible to go home. These young people need a way to develop the skills and confidence necessary to make it on their own and avoid ending up on the streets.

The Transitional Living Program (TLP) helps young people open the door to a home of their own.

Through TLP, transitional-age youth receive:

- A safe, furnished place to live
- Counseling to address educational, employment, and parenting goals
- Guidance to develop essential independent living skills including budgeting, cooking, and health and safety knowledge
- Assistance with mental and emotional challenges
- Help finding permanent housing upon graduating from the program

We help ease the transition to successful independence.

Turning 18 doesn't automatically make a young person an adult capable of living successfully on his own. But some young people have no other choice than to fend for themselves. The Transitional Living Program helps provide the support, nurturing, and guidance that homeless youth are missing, greatly improving their chances of leading a productive and happy life on their own.

The Traditional Living Program At A Glance

- 18-month program
- Designed for transitional-age youth 17-21
- Furnished apartments for up to 30 young people
- Independent living skills support
- **Assistance with education, employment, parenting, and mental health goals**
- A pathway to permanent housing

2015 TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAM FOCUSES:

Expanding the program

Despite losing some program funding, TLP successfully added six spots to the program and now provides apartment accommodations for up to 30 homeless young people. All locations are in the same apartment complex and are monitored by TLP staff, giving TLP youth easy access to support and assistance. TLP hopes to add an additional 10 spots in the coming years.

Providing support for victims of violence

In 2015, the TLP Program obtained a grant through the Victims of Crime Act, allowing the program to hire a Victim Services Specialist. This specialist has dramatically improved services for TLP teens and other Huck House youth by:

- Providing group and individual counseling for victims of violence
- Training staff to recognize red flags and ask the right questions to get teens to open up and talk about their experiences
- Increasing the number of youth who address abuse in their lives—although no young people in the program disclosed abusive relationships at intake, around 50% participated in safety planning and sought additional support after meeting with the Specialist

Focusing on higher education

In 2015, more TLP students enrolled in college courses than ever before in the program's history.

- 23 of 58 youth in the program had a GED or diploma or obtained one during the program
- 13 of these eligible youth enrolled in college courses

Maintaining employment for the long-term

During the fiscal year, 40 out of 58 youth in the TLP program obtained new jobs. Youth in the program worked on developing skills for maintaining these positions, including customer service skills and anger management strategies.

Offering more resources for parents

The TLP Program received a grant to build a playroom in the staff office, providing convenient access to age- and developmentally-appropriate toys for the children of the young people in the program. Teen parents also receive instruction on how to play with their kids in ways that develop coordination and essential vocabulary and motor skills.

2015 Successes

- 58 transition-age youth** received independent living support
- 10,489 nights** of shelter provided in TLP apartments
- 2,436 hours** of community support and mental health interventions
- 98 hours** of group counseling
- 561 hours** of parenting interventions
- 206 hours** of victim services
- 23 youth graduated** from the program
- 96%** of program graduates secured permanent housing
- 57%** of eligible program participants enrolled in college courses
- 35%** of program graduates maintained employment gained during TLP

Sophia's Story

A place to turn

Sophia's mother abandoned her when she was just six years old. Sophia lived with an aunt for a few years until the aunt passed away. She then went to live with her father, who was out of prison on probation. But after dad assaulted her with a knife, he went back to prison. Sophia's remaining family members blamed her for the repeat incarceration. With no other options, 18-year-old Sophia ended up staying on the couch at a known pimp's apartment.

After enduring what was both an uncomfortable and unsafe situation, Sophia found an open door in the form of the Transitional Living Program at Huckleberry House, and she began the process of establishing a safe place of her own.

A place to trust

After a lifetime of grief, loss, abuse, and neglect, confidence and the ability to trust were not Sophia's strong suits. She came to the TLP program extremely depressed with no network of support from family or friends. Sophia worked intensively with the TLP counselors not only on setting up her own home, but also on achieving her employment and financial goals, and most importantly, on building her esteem and social skills.

Though she did not disclose it at first, after several one-on-one meetings with the Huckleberry House Crime Victim Specialist, Sophia revealed that she was in a highly abusive and dangerous relationship with her boyfriend. With her counselors' help, she began to understand the cycles and patterns of abuse. She created a personal safety plan and did all she could to avoid her boyfriend. Eventually, Sophia filed a protection order with the court, representing the first time in TLP history that a young person followed through with the legal process to ensure her own safety.

A place to transition

Sophia came into the TLP program homeless, scared, and unwilling to interact with others. Today, she maintains a full time job and has saved enough to buy a car. More importantly, she's taken steps to put a stop to the abuse in her life and to protect herself from danger.

Throughout her time in the program, she's built the confidence to connect with others. She's able to make eye contact and even share a smile with her counselors and peers from time to time. **Sophia will graduate from TLP in a few months with new skills and the connections she needs to continue living safely on her own.**

Family Support Program

RESOLVING FAMILY PROBLEMS

Families aren't perfect. They struggle with a wide range of problems, many of which can be serious and even seem hopeless at times. But with the right support and a little persistence, even the most challenging family problems can be solved.

Family Support Program counselors use what's right to solve what's wrong.

Our therapists work with teens and their families to:

- Identify and leverage individual and family strengths
- Develop new and effective coping skills
- Improve communications and the ability to work together
- Change negative behaviors

We help prevent crises before they happen.

By focusing on family and individual strong points, we give families a solid foundation upon which to build their skills and tackle even their most difficult challenges. And by keeping our doors open to families on an ongoing basis—and not just when a problem heats up—we can help keep issues from escalating and can prevent the crisis situations that too often tear families apart.



2015 FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM FOCUSES:

Expanding the staff

A new counselor who specializes in trauma joined the Family Support Program team in 2015. The new staff member makes it possible to support more clients and to better serve families that have dealt with a wide range of traumas ranging from abuse, to grief and loss, to homelessness.

Staff training

Family Support Program therapists and counselors received training on critical topics, including:

- Trauma
- Intimate partner violence
- Unhealthy relationships

Family Support Program At A Glance

- Ongoing individual and family counseling
- Designed to address issues such as:
 - > Crisis
 - > Trauma
 - > School problems
 - > Substance abuse
 - > Housing
 - > Mental health
 - > Coming out
 - > Immigration and assimilation difficulties
- Supports teens exiting Crisis and participating in the Transitional Living Program as well as other families and teens in the Central Ohio area
- Day, evening, and weekend appointments are available at Huck House and in family homes

Successfully linking Crisis Program referrals to ongoing counseling

The Family Support Program worked closely with the Crisis Program to ensure that teens exiting the Crisis Shelter and their families have the ongoing support and counseling they need.

- Family Support Counselors successfully linked with 59% of Crisis Program referrals, up from 28% at the end of 2013
- Family counseling helps families work through problems and avoid future crises

2015 Successes

130 families received ongoing counseling

1,920 hours of counseling provided

115 diagnostic assessments completed

69% of clients reported improvement in family functioning

66% of clients reported a decrease in family problems

59% of Crisis Program referrals successfully linked to ongoing counseling

Monique's Story

A place to turn

Growing up, Monique never lived with her biological mom. Her mother struggled with substance abuse and maintaining a job, and she had five other younger children at home. So Monique lived with her grandfather, who maintained custody of Monique most of her life. Due to health issues, her grandfather had to enter a nursing home just a few months before Monique's 18th birthday, and Monique found herself without a place to stay.

With limited options, she reluctantly went to stay with her mom. But the one-bedroom apartment was inadequate for the large family. As one of the oldest, Monique received the least support, but was expected to help out the most financially. When she didn't or couldn't contribute, mom's boyfriend repeatedly kicked her out.

Monique's frustration with her mother intensified, and Monique finally went to live with a friend. She had previous connections with Huckleberry House through the Youth Outreach Program, and through these connections, she was linked with the Family Counseling Program.

A place to trust

Monique's counselor provided an ongoing source of support and consistency that had been lacking from Monique's life. She learned how to process her feelings toward her mother, work on her own self esteem issues, and begin to develop a plan to support herself. Each week in her sessions, Monique developed new coping strategies for her anger, and in between sessions, she would practice her skills and write her feelings in her journal. She learned to change her expectations about her family as a source of support, and to begin relying on herself.

Monique began concentrating on her own future goals for employment and housing. She considered the Transitional Living Program, but with the help of her counselors, she found a more immediate opportunity via the Job Corps, a free education and training program that provides temporary housing along with job skills training and career assistance for disadvantaged youth.

A place to transition

Through the counseling she received at Huckleberry House and the connection to the Job Corps, Monique found the ongoing support she needed to set and achieve goals for her future. She gained confidence and independence and is currently working on her culinary arts certificate through the Job Corps program.

She remains in contact with Huckleberry House and continues to receive the advice and support she needs to stick with her program and keep working toward the future she deserves.

Youth Outreach Program

FINDING YOUNG PEOPLE WHO NEED SUPPORT

It's not always easy to ask for help. It's even harder if you don't know who to ask or where to turn—or if you've been burned by the system in the past. The Youth Outreach Program (YOP) identifies at-risk youth, works hard to build their trust, and aims to connect them with the services and support they need to address problems with family, housing, school, and employment.

YOP brings counseling services and support to teens on their own turf.

YOP workers look for and connect with at-risk youth:

- At school
- At community centers
- On playgrounds
- At shopping centers
- On the streets
- Through referrals

The goal is to connect the disconnected.

It's almost impossible to succeed without any support. For many young people, that support comes from families. But when families face serious problems like homelessness, mental illness, and drug abuse, young people are left on their own. Very often, they fear and mistrust the systems that are designed to support them. The YOP program helps make sure these youth don't get overlooked. YOP workers serve as their advocates and champions, helping to break down barriers and overcome obstacles. Ultimately, we help youth connect with support and assistance to give them their best chance at a more fulfilling and successful life.



2015 YOUTH OUTREACH PROGRAM FOCUSES:

Individual case management

To accommodate an increasing number of referrals from adult shelters, schools, and past clients, the YOP team spent the majority of its time this year working on client's individual cases. Our role includes:

- Helping young people navigate the system and make lasting connections with community resources that can help them become self-sufficient
- Providing support, encouragement, and transportation to ensure success with rehab, housing, or jobs programs
- Serving as advocates for young people with other agencies and with potential landlords and employers

Youth Outreach Program At A Glance

- Targets at-risk youth ages 12-22
- One-on-one street-based counseling and individual case management
- Helps youth set and reach employment, housing, and educational goals
- Distributes food, health and hygiene packets, sexual assault brochures, and information and community resources to youth in need
- Hosts unique community events to engage young people

Giving teens a voice

YOP collaborated with the west side YMCA to host its annual Rebel Youth Summit. The summit offered an opportunity for approximately 90 middle and high school students to:

- Define themselves and rebel against negative stereotypes
- Participate in activities and workshops to identify individual strengths
- Establish their own voice and place in the community

2015 Successes

Made 2,932 youth contacts

Logged 746 hours of street-based individual case management

Opened 56 new individual cases

Linked 88% of individual cases to support services

Conducted 404 hours of youth outreach via
206 youth outreach runs

Delivered 22 in-school presentations

Supported and participated in **12 community events**
to increase awareness of Huck House services

Josh's Story

A place to turn

Josh has dealt with a physical disability his entire life. Although he was receiving assistance from the government, he rarely benefited from the funds; his guardians would cash his checks and use his money for themselves. At 18, Josh found himself living in a men's shelter. His girlfriend, Amanda, was expecting a baby. And neither of them had a place to live.

Having met the Youth Outreach case workers at a charter school event a year prior, Josh contacted Huckleberry House to see if the program could help him and his girlfriend establish themselves and prepare for their new family.

A place to trust

YOP staff worked closely with both Josh and Amanda to help these young people access the support available to them through the adult system while taking steps to set and reach their educational, employment, and housing goals. The YOP team helped Josh initiate the processes of changing the payee for his disability check so that the young couple could use the checks for their new family.

YOP also advocated on the couple's behalf to help them secure an apartment and obtain furnishings. Both Josh and Amanda enrolled in charter school and earned their GEDs. And they both secured part time jobs.

A place to transition

For young people on the streets with no support, it can be overwhelming to know which steps to take to improve a situation and work toward self-sufficiency. The process is often so complex that young people without any experience or assistance are highly likely to fail.

For Josh and Amanda, YOP played a critical role in showing the way and breaking down the process into manageable steps. **With YOP's help and advocacy, the couple went from living off the streets to making their own living today and doing the right things to support their young family.**

Huckleberry House Scholarship Program

ELIMINATING OBSTACLES TO SUCCESS.

Many young people in challenging situations have a strong desire to improve their futures. But a lack of finances all too often stands in the way.

The Huckleberry House scholarship program makes it possible for more dedicated young people to pursue their dreams.

Generous supporters who share our commitment to opening doors provide the scholarship funds, giving the deserving youth in our programs the opportunity to work toward a more rewarding future.

2015 Scholarship Recipients

William R. McNamara Scholarship

Judayza Johnson	\$ 3,000
Jelissa Perry	\$3,000
Markia Smith	\$3,000
Christopher Jurgens	\$3,000
Shawna Santurella	\$3,000

Soltis-Homer Scholarship

Shantira Brown	\$2,000
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HUCKLEBERRY HOUSE FINANCIALS 2015

Revenue

Grants	\$ 1,501,875
United Way	135,068
Medicaid	536,969
Purchase of Services and Discretionary Funding	225,948
Contributions	294,693
Interest and Dividend Income	89,097
Net Gain on Marketable Securities	-101,857
Total Revenue	\$2,681,793

Expense

Transitional Living Program	\$1,106,829
Crisis/Shelter Program	956,132
Family Support	175,040
Youth Outreach Program	158,912
Scholarship	20,398
Fundraising	80,284
Administration	289,305
Total Expense	\$2,786,900
	-105,107

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