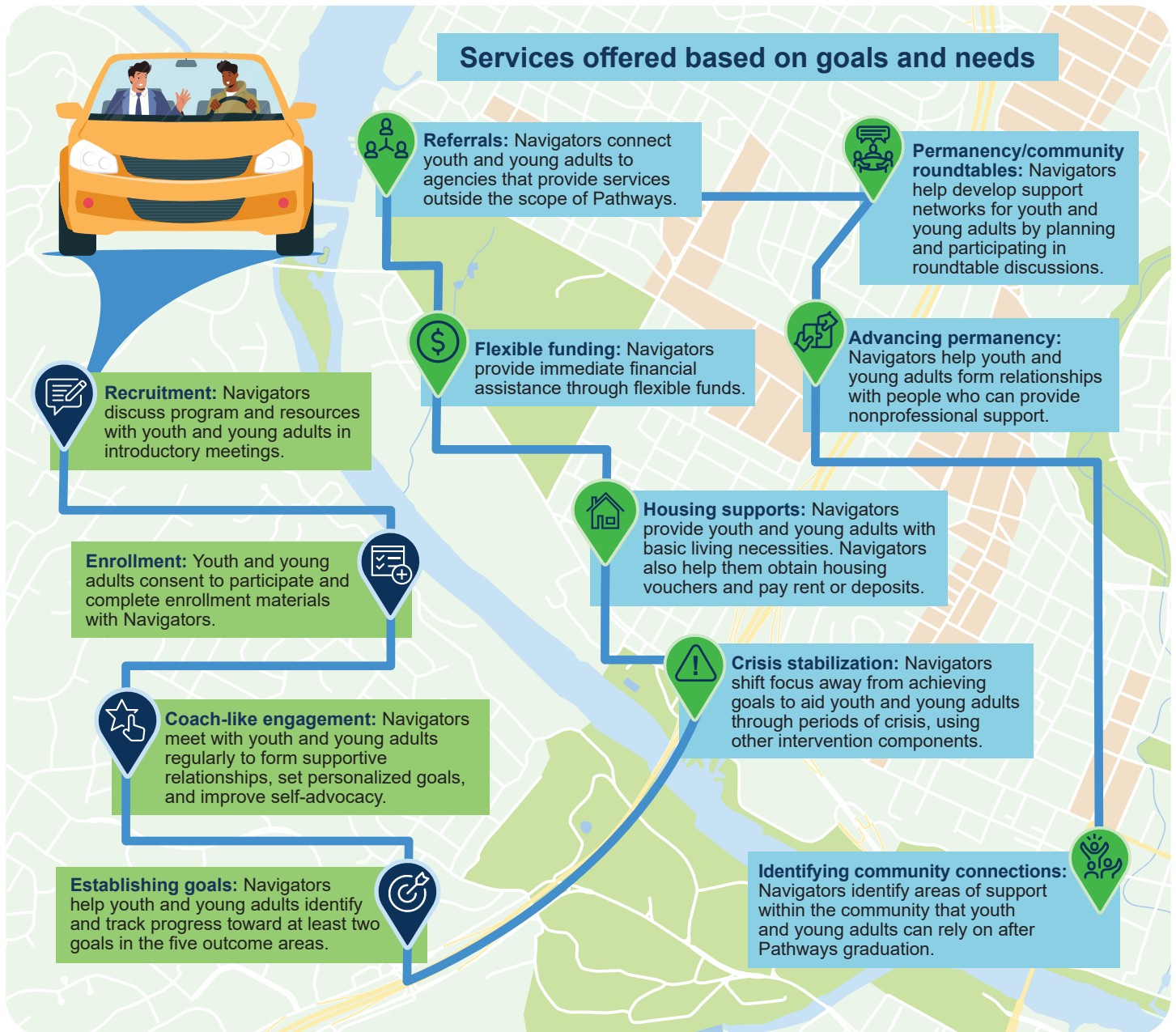


Youth At-Risk of Homelessness

Participants' Experience with Pathways Services

In Pathways, specially trained child welfare workers (known as Navigators) use coaching strategies and a youth-driven approach to help youth and young adults identify their goals, connect them with existing services, and promote positive outcomes. Navigators help youth and young adults identify and work toward achieving at least two goals related to the five outcome areas of (1) housing, (2) education, (3) employment, (4) permanent connections, and (5) health and well-being.

Pathways defines **coach-like engagement** as an ongoing relationship in which child welfare workers, called Navigators, take action to help youth and young adults fulfill their visions, goals, or desires. Navigators are trained to regard youth and young adults as creative, resourceful, and whole individuals who are capable of identifying and advocating for their needs.



Youth At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH) overview: To expand the evidence base on interventions to prevent homelessness among youth and young adults who have been involved in the child welfare system, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched the YARH multiphase grant program. ACF is now in the third phase of YARH (or YARH-3) and is conducting a rigorous summative evaluation of a policy-relevant, comprehensive service model developed and refined during the first two phases of YARH. The summative evaluation conducted under YARH-3 will examine the effect of Colorado's Pathways to Success comprehensive service model (Pathways) and business-as-usual services provided by counties in Colorado through Chafee funding (comparison).¹ The infographic on the preceding page shows how youth and young adults are recruited and enrolled into the Pathways program and the services they are offered.

Pathways: The Pathways comprehensive service model relies on specially trained child welfare workers, known as Navigators, to coach youth and young adults through intensive case management. Navigators help youth and young adults identify and work toward achieving at least two goals related to the five outcome areas of (1) housing, (2) education, (3) employment, (4) permanent connections, and (5) health and well-being.

- **Recruitment:** Navigators recruit Pathways-eligible youth and young adults by describing the program and the offered resources over the course of two or three meetings. Navigators encourage enrollment by framing participation as an opportunity for youth and young adults to advocate for themselves and others like them in foster care.
- **Enrollment:** After youth and young adults consent to participate, Navigators use recruitment meetings to complete the screening, baseline, and Youth Connections Scale assessments and share information about Pathways services.
- **Coach-like engagement:** Coach-like engagement empowers youth and young adults to act as their own advocates. Navigators meet with youth and young adults regularly to build supportive relationships, set personalized goals, and stay on pace to achieve goals.
- **Establishing goals:** Within the first 90 days of enrollment, youth and young adults identify at least two goals in one or more of the five outcome areas. Navigators track progress toward goals and often help youth work toward a set of goals in sequence, such as getting a driver's license before getting a car.

Additional Pathways services offered based on goals and needs:

- **Crisis stabilization:** Some youth and young adults experience a period of crisis while enrolled in Pathways, such as homelessness or involvement with the justice system. During these periods, Navigators shift focus away from goals and use all other components of the intervention to immediately help youth or young adults.
- **Housing supports:** For youth and young adults looking for housing, Navigators help pay rent and deposits, acquire housing vouchers, and tour apartments. Navigators offer those who are already housed materials to help them settle into new housing.
- **Flexible funding:** Navigators can provide assistance through flex funds to youth and young adults with unmet needs, such as bus passes or driver's licenses, furniture, and appliances.
- **Referrals:** Pathways Navigators are familiar with a wide referral network of partners in the human services field. If youth or young adults have a problem or goal outside the scope of Pathways, Navigators refer them to appropriate service agencies.
- **Supporting permanency or community roundtables:** Navigators help youth and young adults plan or participate in permanency or community roundtables, which help youth and young adults develop a large support network.
- **Advancing permanency:** Navigators create spaces where youth and young adults can foster a relationship with someone who can provide support in a nonprofessional capacity.
- **Identifying community supports:** Because Pathways is designed to be short term and intensive, Navigators help youth and young adults identify areas of support within the community that they can rely on after graduation from Pathways.

To be considered for graduation from Pathways, a youth or young adult must meet five of the following eight criteria:

1. **Is not in crisis**
 2. **Is in stable housing**
 3. **Has at least one supportive adult connection**
 4. **Has completed assessments**
 5. **Has achieved two goals**
 6. **Has the daily living skills necessary to sustain independence**
 7. **Demonstrates increased ability to set goals and recognize action steps to achieve goals**
 8. **Demonstrates increased confidence and ability to be assertive and self-advocate**
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The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

¹ The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (the Chafee program) is a federal program that provides funding to support youth and young adults in or formerly in foster care in their transition to adulthood. For more information, please see: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/grant-funding/john-h-chafee-foster-care-independence-program>.