

Texas Network of Youth Services 2020 Year in Review

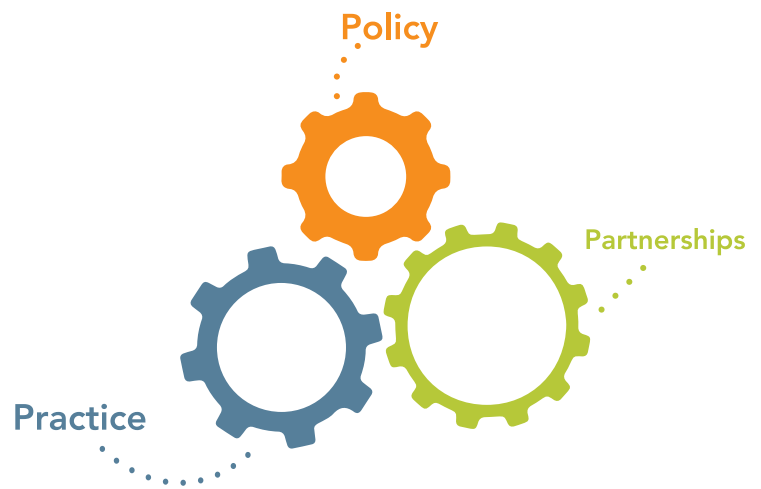


Our Approach

Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) is a statewide member network that strengthens services and supports for youth and families. We share a vision of Texas where all youth and young adults are valued, their strengths are recognized, their voices are heard and respected, and they have access to the resources and support they need to succeed.

TNOYS' systems-change work spans policy advocacy on behalf of young people and those that serve them, partnerships with youth and young adults, and training and capacity building to ensure that organizational and frontline staff are fully equipped to meet the complex needs of youth and families.

Our work is guided by a comprehensive systems-change approach:



Reflecting on 2020 and Looking Ahead

2020 brought new challenges to TNOYS' network and the youth and families we serve. Our members confronted the COVID-19 pandemic with strength and dedication, quickly pivoting services and supports at a time of critical need. TNOYS is incredibly grateful for the advocates and frontline staff who maintained and expanded services for youth and families, often at great personal risk.

We know there will be ongoing challenges as Texas service providers and youth continue to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. Bolstered by the resilience of our member network and the youth they serve, our team is optimistic and hopeful for 2021. We look forward to new projects that will provide cutting edge training, center youth-adult partnership, and drive important policy change.

100+

Organizational and individual members

240+

Training hours provided in 2020

90%

Of members surveyed agree TNOYS helps strengthen their services

Policy



TNOYS collaborated with young people and youth-serving providers to build a comprehensive policy agenda in 2020. Our team hosted listening sessions with hundreds of youth-serving providers and young people to learn about gaps in support and recommendations.

This feedback influenced TNOYS' policy agenda for the 87th Texas Legislative Session. Our 14 priorities recommend funding, policies, and programs to strengthen and support our seven system areas. TNOYS looks forward to working with lawmakers, members, and youth advocates to prioritize prevention and early intervention, health and mental health, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, funding support, and many other critical needs during the upcoming legislative session.

80 youth engaged

1,500 providers engaged

14 policy priorities centering
youth & member organizations



In our 2020 annual survey, members ranked advocacy at the Texas Capitol as their most valued member benefit.

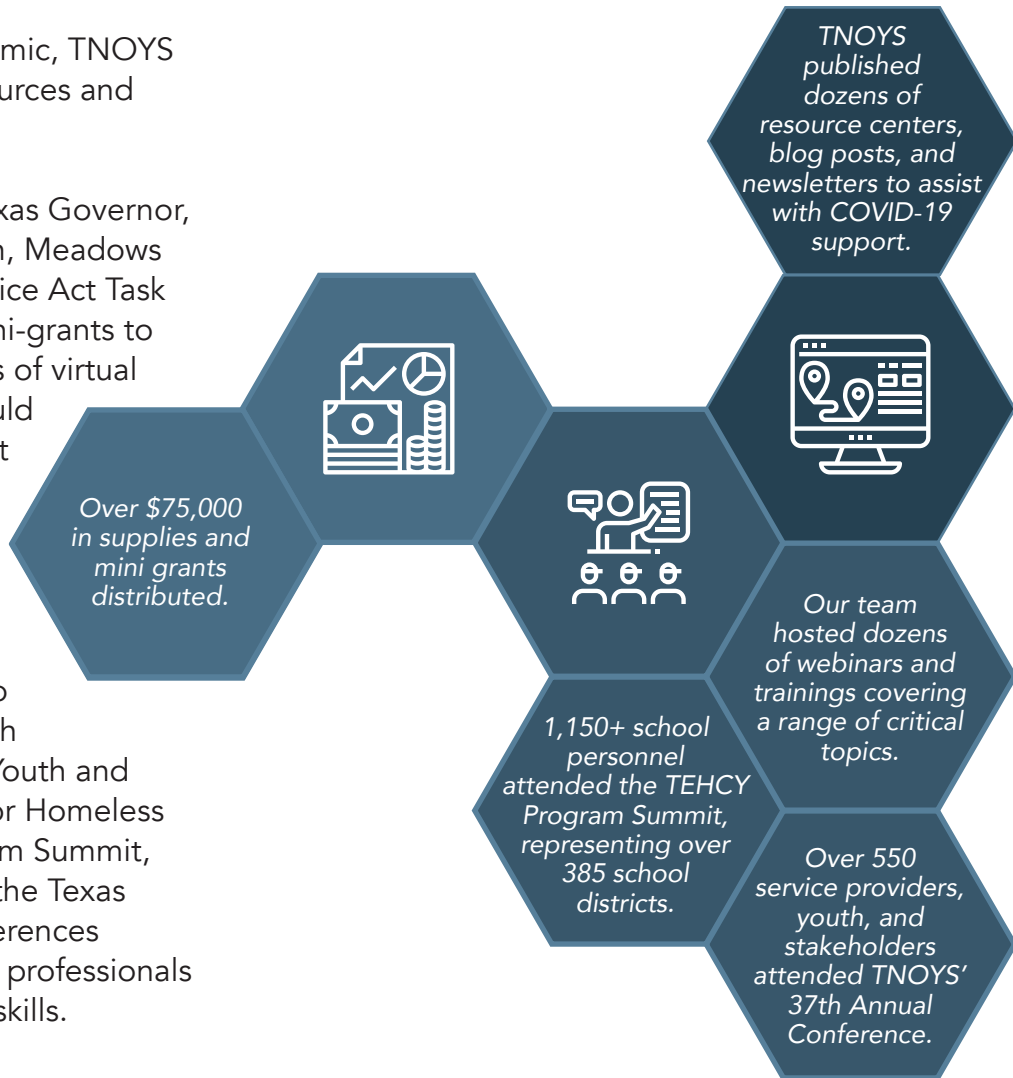
Practice



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, TNOYS connected members to critical resources and training.

We teamed up the Office of the Texas Governor, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, Meadows Foundation, and the Children's Justice Act Task Force to distribute supplies and mini-grants to members. TNOYS also held a series of virtual meetings so that state agencies could hear from providers and learn about concerns on the front lines.

TNOYS continued to offer professional development by moving important opportunities to virtual platforms. We pivoted two statewide conferences, TNOYS' 37th Annual Conference on Services to Youth and Families and the Texas Education for Homeless Children and Youth (TEHCY) Program Summit, which was held in partnership with the Texas Education Agency. The virtual conferences convened over 1,700 youth-serving professionals to network and build cutting-edge skills.



Partnership



TNOYS engages and centers youth and young adults across our policy, programs, and communications work.

In 2020, youth partners presented at conferences, led trainings and workshops, and hosted listening sessions as part of our policy work. TNOYS also centered youth voice in our digital campaign to “Get Out the Count” for the 2020 Census. As part of a collaboration with Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and the Supreme Court of Texas Children’s Commission, TNOYS young adults on staff also led an update of the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Independent Living Study Guide, ensuring that activities were current, relevant, and engaging for youth preparing to age out of the foster care system.

15 youth and young adults ages 16 - 25 joined TNOYS’ first cohort of our reimagined Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC)



TNOYS is working diligently to center youth and young adults’ voices in everything we do. We’re especially excited to have four young adults on staff and a reimagined young adult leadership council whose lived expertise will inform the priorities of our work moving forward.

Message from Fedora Galasso

In August 2020 TNOYS was excited to welcome Fedora Galasso as our new executive director.



As I reflect on TNOYS’ accomplishments over the past year, I am incredibly grateful for the hard work of our members and team on behalf of Texas’ youth and families. Since joining TNOYS six months ago I have sought to do justice to the organization’s 40 year legacy and the teams before me who worked tirelessly to support our members and youth.

I am continually impressed and inspired by the dedication of our member network, and I am grateful to work alongside you to forge new partnerships, explore policy solutions, and bring the voices of providers front and center.

Many in our network faced enormous challenges this year, both professionally and in their personal lives. Through it all, TNOYS has been proud to see organizations go above and beyond at a time when services for youth and families were more critical than ever.

The past year has made it difficult for youth to succeed in school, to secure good jobs and safe housing, to successfully transition out of foster care and into adulthood, and to take care of their mental health. Through our partnerships with young people, we’ve learned that they lack the support needed to overcome these challenges, achieve normalcy, and thrive. Youth of color have been especially impacted and the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated existing gaps in support, as well as the disparities Black, Latinx and LGBTQ+ youth, young adults, and families face in youth-serving systems. As we move into this new year, TNOYS will continue to work with our members to advance cross-systems change that is informed by research and data, guided by equity and inclusion, and centers the voices of youth and young adults. I am excited and hopeful for all that we can achieve together in 2021.

Spotlight on Youth and Young Adult Partners

TNOYS believes we can best support and serve young people by elevating their voices and giving them opportunities for meaningful partnership.

Recently, we redoubled our commitment to youth-adult partnership by reimagining our Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) as a more robust, comprehensive program. TNOYS welcomed Engagement Manager Josue Rodriguez to lead a new program grounded in diversity, equity, inclusion, and youth engagement best practices. Thanks to this work, TNOYS has relaunched the YALC as a 9-month training program in which youth and young adults build skills in self-advocacy and leadership.

The first cohort of TNOYS' reimagined YALC kicked off in January with 15 youth and young adults from across Texas. Our team is excited to learn from and alongside these young leaders throughout 2021!

"Youth partnership is not just about giving equal respect and responsibility. It's about offering new and impactful opportunities for youth to own their own power in any and every space. In the past few years, our team has come to understand that we can do more to engage young people with lived expertise and form impactful partnerships. The goal of the new YALC program is to equip youth and young adults with the tools they need to be effective, confident partners and advocates."

- **Lyric Wardlow**

Young Adult with Lived Expertise
Program Coordinator, TNOYS

Spotlight on TNOYS' Member Network

"The gifts from TNOYS meant everything to our staff and youth. The thermometers and other PPE supplies were still completely unavailable at the time we received them and allowed the staff to more safely interact with those youth we could not serve virtually. The laptops that went to our freshman college students will be a huge factor in keeping them in school and keeping them virtually connected with THRU Project staff and their volunteer mentor during this time of distancing."

- **Elaine Andries Hartle**
CEO/ Co-Founder, THRU Project

TNOYS responded to the COVID-19 outbreak by connecting members with needed supplies and resources. The TNOYS network is diverse, and each organization we serve faced different needs. Many members requested health and cleaning supplies such as masks and sanitizer, while others received computers and tablets to assist with remote case management and meet the growing demand for services. TNOYS was pleased to distribute \$42,000 in supplies and over \$33,000 in mini-grants.

One member that received supplies was THRU Project, based in San Antonio. Program Manager Chris Lopez explained that the laptops from TNOYS' donation were gifted to young adults whose college classes were moved online. The laptops were critical for helping them attend classes virtually, keep up with assignments, and stay in contact with a support system that includes THRU Project mentors.