



WELCOME! TNOYS' 42ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON SERVICES TO YOUTH AND FAMILIES

On behalf of Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS), I want to personally welcome each of you to this year's event. We're thrilled you could join us to strengthen connections in youth and family services.

Guided by the theme *Deep in the Heart of What Connects Us*, this year's conference celebrates and calls for us all to shore up our connections and collaborations across Texas. We're proud to serve as a convener, advocate, and supporter for the incredible Texas organizations that go above and beyond for our state's most vulnerable youth and young adults. Each day, TNOYS members provide critical and often life-saving support to young people, all while navigating resource and funding constraints, capacity shortages, and other daunting obstacles.

Now more than ever, TNOYS is grounded in our mission to strengthen, support, and protect services for young people and the organizations that serve them. We stand proudly with our members as we work together to overcome future hurdles placed in our paths and make progress toward our vision of a 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, opportunities, and support they need to meet their goals.

We look forward to continuing to deepen our connections and building the Texas we know our youth and young adults deserve—one where we can inspire and learn from one another to shape the future of youth and family services together. This year's conference agenda includes opportunities to learn from and alongside young people with lived experience, with time set aside for specialized training, experiential learning, networking, and reflection. We hope you take advantage of this opportunity to reflect, ground, and have fun while you learn from and collaborate with our diverse group of participants.

True to TNOYS' mission and the missions of our member organizations, our focus continues to be on ensuring the most vulnerable but resilient Texas youth and families have opportunities to succeed. If your organization is not yet a TNOYS member, we encourage you to join this week.

Thank you for choosing to spend your week with us.



Sincerely, Fedora Galasso TNOYS Chief Executive Officer



FEATURED SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS



Karla Solomon (she/her) | Keynote Speaker

Karla Solomon is the founder of No Longer Captive (NLC), which is dedicated to assisting sex trafficking survivors in escaping their situations. In addition to her expertise with NLC, she is a consultant for Mercy Gate Ministries, a court-certified human trafficking expert with the State of Texas, a council member with the Human Trafficking Survivor Leader Council for the State of Texas Governor's Office, a mandatory continuing legal education sponsor with the State Bar of Texas, and a board member of For Freedom Initiative. She shares her personal lived experiences and expertise of child sexual exploitation and adult commercial sex trafficking to provide a deeper understanding of the realities of this heinous crime in the United States. Karla connects with survivors of all ages to share hope and resources to assist them in their personal journeys to freedom.



MelRo Potter (she/her) | Keynote Speaker

As a speaker, foster parent trainer, and international advocate, MelRo Potter has made a powerful difference for audiences throughout Texas and worldwide, from high schools to youth-serving organizations. MelRo's keynotes draw from her own lived experiences— including foster care, teen parenting, mental health, and youth homelessness—leaving a lasting impression of hope and resilience. MelRo advocates through the power of choice throughout her work. She is an expert trainer on trauma-informed care, trauma-informed parenting, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).



Chris Thomas (he/him) | Emcee

YungChris is a globally recognized artist who has toured 24 countries as a teacher, DJ, choreographer, and performer. Throughout his career, he has shared the stage with iconic artists such as Pitbull, Flo Rida, Kendrick Lamar, Erykah Badu, Tobe Nwigwe, and Anthony Hamilton. For his exceptional artistry and productions, YungChris has received numerous awards and grants. In 2015, he was honored as a Cultural Millennial by Rémy Martin Cognac, and in 2018, he was named a Houston Cultural Influencer by Red Bull, which now consults him on dance and culture in Texas. YungChris also mentors emerging creatives through the Artist INC program by Fresh Arts. As the director of Sonkiss'd Dance Concepts, he trains dancers who have gone on to work with major artists like Sam Smith, Lizzo, Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga, and Beyoncé. YungChris is also a 2025 BANF Awardee.



Emmanuelee "Outspoken" Bean | Performer

Emanuelee Bean, also known as "Outspoken Bean," was the first poet to perform on Houston Ballet's main stage with their production, Play. He has been commissioned to write and perform a national campaign on diversity for Pabst Blue Ribbon and VICE, while creating and producing his own festival, Plus Fest: The Everything Plus Poetry Festival. Born in New Jersey and raised in San Antonio, Texas, Outspoken Bean serves as Houston's poet laureate through 2023. In 2022, Bean received an Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellowship.



Soulshine | Performer

Founded in Austin in 2016, the Soulshine Rythm Experience has always been about creating connection. Known for her uplifting and inclusive approach, Founder and Chief of Beats Suzy Turner inspires participants of all ages and abilities to relax and connect through the universal language of rhythm. In addition to being trained in multiple evidence-based facilitation methods, Suzy has developed a unique, thythm-based fitness program suitable for all ages and abilities. Suzy is also a Certified NASM Personal Trainer and a member of the Professional Drum Circle Facilitators Guild.

FEATURED ENTERTAINMENT & ACTIVITIES

Exhibit Hall and Raffle

Wednesday, June 11 - Friday, June 13; GALLERIA FOYER

Visit our exhibit hall to learn about dozens of organizations that support youth, young adults, families, and the providers that serve them.. By checking in with all booths during the conference, you will earn a raffle ticket to use toward prizes that include virtual scavenger hunts and escape rooms, wine tasting/classes, gift certificates and baskets, and more!

How to Purchase Tickets and Enter the Raffle



Raffle tickets are \$10 each or 6 for \$50! Scan the QR code to pre-purchase, or visit www.tfaforms.com/5176883. On-site purchases are available at the registration table via credit card or cash (please bring exact change). Winners will be announced by the conference emcee during the event!

Scan to Purchase

TNOYS Member Lounge

Wednesday, June 11 - Friday, June 13; WOODWAY III

TNOYS members are invited to step into our conference member lounge to recharge. Enjoy a continental breakfast each morning as well as coffee and tea available each day.

Youth Lounge

Thursday, June 11 - Friday, June 13; TANGLEWOOD + BELLAIRE

Youth and young adult attendees are invited to take advantage of our youth lounge to connect with other young people, take part in fun activities, and enjoy a restful space created for youth, by youth. Youth can also enjoy continental breakfast each morning and daily snacks in the youth lounge.

Caricature Artist

Wednesday, June 5, 12 - 4 PM, WOODWAY FOYER

Join us in between sessions to have a caricature portrait made by Jody the Artist. Take it home with you as a keepsake from the conference!

Relaxation Room

Wednesday, June 11 - Friday, June 13; KIRBY

Need a moment to yourself to escape the hustle and bustle of the conference? Step into our relaxation room to enjoy a quiet space for sensory soothing, zen, and relaxation.

TNOYS Member Reception

Wednesday, June 11, 5:30 - 7:30 PM; MONARCH

All TNOYS Professional Members and staff from member organizations are invited to two-step into this festive and fun reception! Join us for complimentary Texas-inspired appetizers and drinks, prizes, and fun activities like lasso and line dancing lessons. If you aren't yet a member and would like to RSVP for the reception, join today at tnoys.org/become-a-member.

Grow Your Impact: Become a TNOYS Member!



Not yet a member of TNOYS? Join a statewide community of professionals and organizations who are building a brighter future for young people. Member benefits include advocacy at the Texas Capitol and with state agencies, access to TNOYS' members-only training portal, customized technical assistance, discounts on Annual Conference registration, and much more. Learn more at tnoys.org/become-a-member.

Join Today

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Family Ties, Family Resources

Harris County Resources for Children and Adults

HHSC YES Waiver Programs

Office of the Attorney General of Texas - Child Support Division

PAXIS Institute

Phoenix House Texas

Rock Springs Hospital

Superior Health Plan

Texas Challenge Academy

Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards

Ukeru Systems

University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work

Upbring

Young Audiences of Houston

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Tuesday, June 10: Pre-C	Conference Institutes (separate registration required)	
8:00 am – 11:00 am	On-Site Registration and Check-In for Institutes - GALLERIA FOYER	
9:00 am – 3:00 pm	Turning Down the Heat: Preventing Conflict & Counter-Aggression - BELLAIRE	
9:00 am – 4:00 pm	It's Game Day, Lead the Way! - TANGLEWOOD	
10:30 am – 4:30 pm	Building Alliances to Prevent and Address Children without Placement - SAN FELIPE	
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Early Check-In/Conference Registration - POST OAK	
Wednesday, June 11: Co	nference Day 1	
8:00 am – 9:00 am	Check-In & Registration Open - GALLERIA FOYER	
9:00 am – 10:15 am	TNOYS Welcome + Keynote (Open to ALL) - GALLERIA BALLROOM Keynote: Deep in the Heart: A Survivor's Journey of Resilience and Connection with Karla Solomon	
10:30 am – 12:00 pm	Workshops	Pro
12:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch on Your Own	Professiona Track
1:45 pm – 3:15 pm	Workshops	onal k
10:30 am – 11:00 am	Youth Orientation & Icebreaker Activity - TANGLEWOOD, BELLAIRE	1
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	Listening and Learning from Youth featuring TNOYS' Young Adult Leadership Council	
12:00 pm – 1:10 pm	Youth Lunch + Meet & Greet (Youth & Young Adults ONLY)	Youth Track
1:20 pm – 2:35 pm	Workshops - WOODWAY II, WOODWAY III	
2:45 pm – 3:30 pm	Workshops - WOODWAY II, WOODWAY III	
3:45 pm – 5:00 pm	Performance + YALC Keynote Panel (Open to ALL) - GALLERIA BALLROOM Performance: Emmanuelee "Outspoken" Bean; Keynote Panel: The Heart of Systems Change: Centerin Lived Expertise in Systemic Solutions with TNOYS' Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC)	ng
5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Member Reception (Open to all TNOYS Members) - MONARCH	
Thursday, June 12: Conference Day 2		
8:00 am – 9:00 am	Check-In & Registration Open - GALLERIA FOYER	
9:00 am – 10:15 am	Performance + Keynote - GALLERIA BALLROOM Performance: Soulshine; Plenary Keynote: Deepening Connections with Youth and Young Adults to Sufficient Their Futures with TNOYS' Texas Emerging Leaders Board (TELB)	pport
10:30 am – 12:00 pm	Workshops	
12:15 pm – 1:45 pm	Luncheon: Celebrating What Connects Us (Open to All) - GALLERIA BALLROOM TNOYS' Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) Graduation and 2025 TNOYS Member Awards	
2:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Workshops	
3:45 pm – 5:00 pm	Workshops	
Friday, June 13: Conference Day 3		
8:00 am – 9:00 am	Statewide Collaborative on Youth Homelessness Meeting & Breakfast (Invite Only) - GALLERIA BALLROOM	
8:30 am – 9:15 am	Check-In & Registration Open - GALLERIA FOYER	
9:15 am – 10:45 am	Workshops	
11:00 am – 12:30 pm	Closing Keynote - GALLERIA BALLROOM Keynote: Let Your Light Shine with Melissa Roshan "MelRo" Potter	

PROGRAM GUIDE

The workshops for this year's conference are divided into seven topic tracks. Look for these symbols throughout the program:



HEALTH, TRAUMA, & RESILIENCE



YOUTH VOICE &
YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP



NON-PROFIT LEADERSHIP & INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS



RESOURCES & CROSS-SYSTEMS COLLABORATION



RESEARCH & PERFORMANCE-BASED PRACTICES



PREVENTING & ADDRESSING CSEY



POLICY & GOVERNMENT

TNOYS' conference features programming and activities for both youth and professional attendees. On Wednesday, June 11, we strongly encourage youth to take advantage of and attend the youth-only workshops specifically curated for attendees aged 15-26. On Thursday, June 12, and Friday, June 13, workshops are open to both professionals and youth to learn from and alongside one another. A limited number of workshops are only appropriate for professionals and will be labeled accordingly.

The following symbol marks workshops that are restricted to professionals:



Workshops that are restricted to professionals

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Conference attendees are eligible to earn up to 14 CEU hours throughout the 2.5-day conference and 4-6 additional CEU hours for participating in pre-conference institutes. To earn CEUs, please use the Whova app to check in at each session you attend. Next, please locate the document in your registration folder titled "How to Check Into Sessions & Earn CEUs." Use this document to indicate all the sessions you attended during the event. Remember to sign the included certificate and submit it to your licensing board as appropriate for approval.

TNOYS is an approved CEU provider for Licensed Social Workers (LSW), Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT), and Continuing Professional Education Providers (CPE). The majority of sessions are approved for Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) certification hours/CEUs for Juvenile Probation Officers, Juvenile Supervision Officers and Community Activities Officers. The conference is typically approved for Licensed Child Care Administrator (LCCA) and Licensed Child Placing Agency Administrators (LCPAA) licenses. This conference is typically approved for CEUs for the following substance abuse professional licenses: LCDCs, Associate Prevention Specialists (APS), Certified Prevention Specialists (CPS), and Peer Mentor/Peer Recovery Designation (PM/PRC).





Resources & Cross-Systems Collaboration

TANGLEWOOD



Research & Performance-Based Practices

WEST ALABAMA



Preventing & Addressing CSEY

BELLAIRE



Policy & Government

SAN FELIPE

Collective Impact for Client Success LGTBQ+ Youth:
Barriers, Risk
Factors, and
Provider Allyship

Connecting Students to the Path of Success

Creating
Pathways for
Opportunity
Youth

Project Empathy: The Neuroscience of Addiction & Positive Psychology Approaches

> What Makes Family Work, Work!

Fostering Resilience in Individuals Impacted by Human Trafficking

Practical Applications to Support Survivors of Exploitation Revolutionizing Homeless Response

Texas' 89th Legislature and Juvenile Justice

Breaking Cycles & Bridging Gaps Building
Strong
Learning
Communities

Safe Havens: Empowering McKinney-Vento Families through Collaboration

> Using the Three E's for Purposeful Career Guidance

Interrupting Pathways Between Neurodiversity, IDD, and Juvenile Justice

Developing an Impactful Program for McKinney-Vento Students

> Pieces of Home: Meaningful Connections

Supporting Teens' Autonomy: Bridging Gaps with Research & Resources

Online Dangers & Child Sex Trafficking

Empowering Youth Voices: Building a Legacy to End Human Trafficking Know Your Rights - Law Enforcement, Immigration, & Trans Rights

> The Role of LGBTQ Youth Groups

Rights of Pregnant & Parenting Youth and Young Adults

The HAY Center Self-Sufficiency Triangle Supporting Youth in Transition from Homelessness / Empowering Foster Care Families & Youth

CSEY Advocacy: Texas' Strategy to Support Long-Term Healing

Recap of Texas' 89th Legislative Session

TUESDAY, JUNE 10 Pre-Conference Institutes (separate registration required)

On-Site Registration for Institutes

8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - GALLERIA FOYER

Turning Down the Heat: Preventing Conflict & Counter-Aggression

9:00 am - 3:00 pm - BELLAIRE

Many youth-serving professionals face "challenging" behaviors when working with youth. Though competent staff rarely initiate conflicts with young people, they often keep them alive through their unintended, counter-productive reactions. This training documents the most common reasons that youth-serving professionals become counter-aggressive with select youth and offers dozens of targeted intervention skills to more effectively manage conflict in the service environment. Grounded in neuroscience and trauma-informed approaches, this unique training leads to powerful insights that will change the way you think and behave when you are angry.

Presented by Adrian Jackson, Cal Farley's Boys Ranch

It's Game Day, Lead the Way!

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. - TANGLEWOOD

Imagine it's game day! Whether you're a football fan or not, in Texas, we LOVE a good game day. The good news is that even if you are not ready to get suited and booted (as we say in Texas), in Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) there is a position for everyone. What's even better is that you have the potential to be the biggest game-changer on your team. If you are ready to level up your mindful awareness or gain new TBRI implementation insights, this session is for you. With time-tested TBRI principles that have proven to elevate and accelerate relationship effectiveness, Dr. Avery will provide attendees with an interactive experience and share game-changing perspectives for leading the way in TBRI implementation.

Presented by Angeliqueca Avery, Infinite Potential

Building Alliances to Prevent and Address Children without Placement

10:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. - POST OAK

In this interactive training, participants will discuss their more challenging experiences working with youth and explore the basis for difficult behaviors and situations such as refusing or running away from placements, disengagement, and conflict. Participants will gain perspective on the critical role of trust and transparency, humility and responsiveness, authentic relationship building, and youth voice. Through dialogue, first-hand reflections from youth, and scenario activities, participants will strengthen their framework for addressing and mitigating challenges and add tools to their strategic repertoire.

Presented by Sedoo Ijir, Nicole Merriwether, Jay Wilk, TNOYS; Syd Georg, Mikyra Bisby, Paola Mazimpaka, TNOYS'Young Adult Leadership Council

Early Check In/Conference Registration

3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. - GALLERIA FOYER

TNOYS Board of Directors Meeting (by Invitation)

5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. - WEST ALABAMA

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11: CONFERENCE DAY 1 Separate Professional and Youth Programming

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Check-In & Registration Open - GALLERIA FOYER

9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. TNOYS Welcome + Deep in the Heart: A Survivor's Journey of Resilience and Connection with Karla Solomon - GALLERIA BALLROOM

Human trafficking leaves deep scars, but hope can be found through connection - even in the darkest moments. Karla Solomon will share her journey of survival and healing, as well as the story of a young girl she has walked alongside since she was just 13 years old. Her story, like Karla's, is one of unimaginable hardship, but also of resilience, courage, and the unwavering power of human connection. Together, Karla and attendees will explore how the bonds we build - through mentorship, advocacy, and love - can change lives. Because deep in the heart of Texas, and deep in the heart of all of us, is the ability to bring light to those still trapped in darkness.

PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMMING

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Workshops



Houston Food Bank's Food Insecurity Training

Celeste Hernandez, Houston Food Bank PLAZA I

According to the USDA, 13.5% of U.S. households in 2023 experienced food insecurity. The Houston Food Bank is dedicated to its mission of providing "Food for Better Lives," starting with raising awareness about food insecurity in Texas. Participants will gain a clearer understanding of food insecurity, those most at risk of experiencing food insecurity, and how organizations like the Houston Food Bank take action to improve food access.



Empathy Is a Path and a Trail

Emmanuelee "Outspoken" Bean, Adam Mac, Meta 4, and Writers in the Schools PLAZA II

Writers in the Schools pairs creative, professional writers - like Emmanuelee "Outspoken" Bean - with children and youth to unlock the joy and power of storytelling. Based on the book, "The Vertical Interrogation of Strangers," this workshop is centered around empathy. Come ready to be paired up and write along with Houston's youth slam poetry team, Meta4.



From Vision to Execution: Excelling through Situational Leadership



Adrian Jackson, Cal Farley's Boys Ranch SAGE

Leadership isn't about titles—it's about impact. This workshop will empower participants to lead from any role by aligning their approach to the needs of their team and organization. Participants will learn to assess situations, adapt leadership styles, and inspire action - ensuring seamless progress from vision to execution.



Thoughtful and Supportive Program Models

TANGLEWOOD

Collective Impact for Client Success

Tia Brooks, Healthy Futures of Texas

This workshop explores Healthy Futures of Texas' *Talk About It Texas: Campus Conversations* program, as well as the six key components of its Collective Impact model. Participants will learn how this model brings together diverse stakeholders to work toward a common goal and boost client success, and how they can operationalize it for their own setting.

LGBTQ+ Youth: Barriers, Risk Factors, and Provider Allyship

Alyssa Kelly and Jai Elder, Tony's Place

LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to become unhoused or unstably housed than their peers as a result of specific barriers and risk factors faced by the LGBTQ+ community. Participants will learn to recognize and understand these factors and the specific needs of the LGBTQ+ individuals they serve in order to develop mindful programming that helps young people thrive.



Project Empathy: The Neuroscience of Addiction & Positive Psychology Approaches

Drew Dutton, Phoenix House Texas WEST ALABAMA

Embark on a journey with Project Empathy to address stigmatization around substance use disorders. Rooted in evidence-based practices, this session explores addiction neuroscience, unveils treatment barriers, and introduces tools like solution-focused therapy, strengths-based approaches, and positive psychology. Foster empathy and reshape narratives to ensure everyone belongs.



Fostering Resilience in Individuals Impacted by Human Trafficking

Blanca Denise Lance and Nicole Kelly, Texas Department of Family & Protective Services BELLAIRE

When working with system-involved trafficking victims, failing to recognize or foster resilience keeps the focus on the negative impacts of trauma and the individual's deficits, rather than their strengths. This workshop will provide attendees with the knowledge and skills to identify and cultivate resiliency in youth and families, promoting more holistic and empowering support strategies.



Revolutionizing Homeless Response: The Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network
Anja Taylor, Eric Samuels, Texas Homeless Network
SAN FELIPE

In 2020, Texas Homeless Network launched the Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network (THDSN), a groundbreaking initiative designed to unify homeless response systems across the state. This presentation will delve into how the THDSN has transformed HMIS data usage, driving better decision-making and improving outcomes for those experiencing homelessness.

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Lunch on Your Own

1:45 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Workshops



Amplifying Youth Voices: LifeWorks' Impactful Voices Initiative

Madison Schupp, LifeWorks PLAZA I

Learn about LifeWorks' Impactful Voices initiative, which amplifies youth voice within the agency by allowing current and former clients to provide real-time feedback while gaining hands-on experience and transferable job skills. The session covers the initiative's development, design, impact, and key learnings. Attendees will gain actionable insights to integrate youth voice into organizational growth and decision-making.



Implementing Youth Leadership Opportunities

PLAZA II

Vision, Voice, Variety: Inspiring Youth to Lead and Connect in Their Communities

Brittany Crawford, Kelly Culver, Lake Houston Outreach

This workshop provides strategies, prompts, reflection questions, and renewed excitement for fostering youth leadership. All attendees will learn about contacts in their community for youth leadership opportunities and how to facilitate groups, as well as a framework for youth involvement and insightful content. Additionally, youth attendees will be empowered with connections to pursue leadership and elevate their communities.

How To Have Intentional Youth-Led Work

Leah Williams, Housing Forward

In this workshop, Youth Action Board (YAB) members will describe how having intentional youth-led work creates authenticity in programming, relationships, and sustainability. Attendees will discuss the importance of valuing those with lived expertise and how to create and sustain a YAB before, during, and after YHDP (youth homelessness demonstration program grant).



Introduction to High-Impact Leadership

Paulina Artieda and Mando Rayo, The New Philanthropists

This workshop is designed to help participants understand the importance and value behind high-impact leadership. The training is focused on an introduction to practices and insights that will lead participants to begin or enhance their journeys as inclusive leaders.



Resources for Special Student Populations

TANGLEWOOD

Connecting Students to the Path of Success

Jasmine Hernandez, Workforce Solutions

This session will explore how "disability" is defined and the variety of disabilities included. Student HireAbility Navigators will provide an overview of resources available through Workforce Solutions Boards and how to connect available support to students with disabilities across the state of Texas. Attendees will also learn how to connect with Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Creating Pathways That Stick: What Truly Connects Us

Yvonne Eype, United for College + Career Success

What truly connects us? Join UFCS to explore bold, cross-sector collaborations that create pathways that stick for Opportunity Youth. From innovative partnerships to breaking silos and building bridges, this session reveals the secrets to fostering support, driving action, and making a lasting impact for Texas youth and families. Participants will walk away with tools and ideas to transform their own work.



What Makes Family Work, Work!

John Hazle, Cal Farley's Boys Ranch WEST ALABAMA

Family work can be overwhelming, and it may be difficult to know where to begin. This workshop will highlight research in family work and give a vision for where to focus efforts during struggles in order to create a more positive trajectory for children in care and their families. This workshop will also present practical strategies to spur creative problem solving along with examples from presenters' experiences.



Practical Applications to Support Survivors of Exploitation

Sedoo Ijir, Nicole Merriwether, TNOYS BELLAIRE



In November 2023, TNOYS published a manual for youth housing and homelessness service providers with guidance on meeting the needs of children and youth at risk of Commercial Sexual Exploitation. The manual includes 10 key findings and recommendations based on discussions with over 100 youth and providers. In this workshop, TNOYS will provide targeted support to address recommendations from the manual and put them into practice through case studies and real life examples from your work.



The 89th Texas Lege: What it Means for Justice & Systems-Involved Youth Martin Martinez, Texas Appleseed

SAN FELIPE

This workshop will ensure that service providers understand the legislative changes that come from the 89th Texas Legislative Session to navigate any new hurdles or opportunities for justice involved youth and those involved with other systems such as youth homelessness. This understanding will be key to connecting youth to critical services.

3:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Performance + YALC Keynote Panel - The Heart of Systems Change: Centering Lived Expertise in Systemic

Solutions with Keynote Panelists, TNOYS Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) - GALLERIA BALLROOM

Meaningful change starts with connection. This panel discussion brings together TNOYS' lived-experience leaders to gather insights on building systems that truly support and uplift youth. Panelists will explore the policies and practices shaping their lives and highlight actionable steps providers can take to strengthen relationships and drive meaningful impact. Join us as we center youth and young adult voices, spark solutions, and find inspiration in the connections that bring us all together—right here, deep in the heart of what matters most.

5:00 p.m. Adjourn

5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Howdy, Partners! Member Celebration (Open to all TNOYS Members) - MONARCH

All TNOYS members are invited to two-step into this festive and fun celebration of our network! Join us for complimentary Texas-inspired appetizers and drinks, prizes, and fun activities like lasso and line dancing lessons. TNOYS Chief Executive Officer Fedora Galasso will present updates and lead a discussion on member priorities for the next year and ways to deepen connections across our network to effect systems change. If you are not yet a member and would like to RSVP for the member reception, join today: tnoys.org/become-a-member.

YOUTH PROGRAMMING

10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Youth Orientation and Ice Breaker Activity - WOODWAY II

Join this session to get a breakdown of everything that's in store for our youth and young adult attendees over the next 2.5 days. Meet members of TNOYS' leadership development programs and break the ice with your peers through a fun get-to know-you activity!

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Listening and Learning from Youth at Conference - WOODWAY II

TNOYS amplifies youth voice through listening and learning in order to strengthen services and support for youth and young adults across Texas. Join us for a dynamic session on how to make your voice heard and leave a lasting impact on services for youth and young adults - long after the conference is over!

12:10 p.m. -1:10 p.m. Youth Lunch with Meet & Greet (Youth & Young Adults ONLY) - WOODWAY II

Join your fellow youth and young adult attendees for a youth-only lunch and hangout session in the youth lounge and enjoy an exclusive youth-only meet and greet with special guests Meta4 and Emmanuelee "Outspoken" Bean! Lunch is free for all registered youth and young adults.

1:20 p.m. - 2:35 p.m. Youth-Only Workshops

Ignite Your Potential: Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders Today

Chenita Tayborn and Anayka Stairs, Youth Be Known WOODWAY II

This interactive workshop focuses on fostering leadership qualities such as effective communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and innovative problem-solving while encouraging self-awareness, resilience, and ethical leadership. Participants will learn tools to unlock their full potential and develop the skills necessary to create a positive impact in their personal lives and society.

Engaged, Educated, Empowered Youth: Human Trafficking & Social Media Safety

Denise Mears, Amy Hamilton, Project Protect Our Children WOODWAY III

This interactive presentation equips youth with age-appropriate, trauma-informed knowledge about human trafficking. It covers what trafficking is, warning signs, contributing factors, safe relationship and social media practices, identifying trusted individuals, and seeking help. Youth will also learn how they can contribute to anti-trafficking efforts, leaving with practical tools to protect themselves and their peers.

2:45 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Youth-Only Workshops

Ingredients to Leaving a Legacy

William Winfield, William Winfield LLC WOODWAY II

In this engaging and impactful presentation, youth will discover the key ingredients needed to build a meaningful legacy by mastering social-emotional learning (SEL) and effectively learning how to create their dreams. Young people will learn to identify emotions and explore tools for self-management, goal setting, and creating habits.

Nurturing Brilliance in Youth Through Effective Mentorship

Armand King and Maclovio Marquez, Walk With Me Impact WOODWAY III

This fun and interactive workshop will explore the transformative power of mentorship in unlocking the potential of vulnerable youth. This session highlights strategies for identifying innate talents, building trust, understanding individual needs, and creating supportive environments. Attendees will gain insights into fostering growth and helping young individuals overcome challenges to realize their inherent brilliance.

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Check-In & Registration Open - GALLERIA FOYER

9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Performance + Keynote Plenary: Deepening Connections with Youth and Young Adults to Support Their Futures with TNOYS'Texas Emerging Leaders Board (TELB)

BALLROOM

This plenary session is a celebration of the next generation of young advocates and leaders and their professional and adult allies at local, state, and national levels working together to connect systems-involved youth and young adults to brighter futures. As part of the Texas Opportunity Youth Network, the Texas Emerging Leaders Board (TELB) provides consultation across the state on how to meaningfully connect with Opportunity Youth (OY), young people 16-26 who have experienced a disconnection from education and/or employment. This plenary will discuss national efforts to create better pathways to career and academic success and Texas collaborations between OY and youth-serving organizations in creating supportive pathways to reconnect OY to school and meaningful employment. Panelists will elaborate on the need for cross-systems connections with an emphasis on the role of communities, collaboratives, and youth and young adults in advancing future generations of leaders.

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Workshops



Social-Emotional Learning and Team Building

PLAZA I

Applying Scientific Research To Remain Calm: Home, School, and Workplace

Robin Rettie, Lighthouse Learning Resources

Humans learn through emotions; knowledge of our emotional and rational brain functioning aids with processing challenges while helping us remain calm. In this workshop, participants will learn how to take ownership of their emotional functioning in any setting to increase learning, build relationships, and foster employment and interdependent living.

How to Build a Trauma-Informed Team

Alyssa May, Ranch Hands Rescue

In this workshop, presenters will review strategies to cultivate and empower staff in a trauma-informed way so they can in turn care for survivors effectively and resourcefully. Attendees will learn about boundaries and model these types of behaviors in order to help staff retention and survivor wellness.



OYYA: The Key to Successful Community Impact & Center Operations

Kimberly Head, Elevate 361 Young Adult ReEngagement Center PLAZA II

We aren't the subject matter experts just because we have initials behind our name and funding to make it happen. Opportunity Youth and Young Adults (OYYA) are the true coaches and heroes that make a meaningful and lasting impact. Come meet OYYA Leaders and their supporting cast to hear how youth voice and peer-led navigation are influencing impact.



Leading with Purpose: Solutions & Collaboration for Non-Profit Success

Kayla Smith, Helen's Project SAGE

This interactive session is designed to empower professionals, youth, and young adults with intermediate experience in nonprofit leadership and cross-system collaboration. Participants will explore innovative solutions for driving impact, enhance their understanding of effective leadership, and develop actionable strategies to improve their application of collaborative methods.



Cultivating Communities to Address Youth Needs

TANGLEWOOD

Breaking Cycles & Bridging Gaps: Trauma-Informed Youth Services

Octavia Taulton and Olivia Rivers, The Bridge Over Troubled Waters

This session will explore how The Bridge Over Troubled Waters supports youth and families through trauma-informed healing and innovative services. Attendees will delve into the strategies, activities, and resources that empower families to heal, grow, and thrive in a supportive and nurturing environment. Join this session to hear perspectives from youth advocates, program directors, and youth with lived experiences.

Building Strong Learning Communities: Dyslexia, Structured Literacy, & Advocacy

Sarah Finley, Kaitlyn Gilbreath, Mac Rossum, Alora Rocha, Clark Rodriguez, and Jurrien Knox, Neuhaus Education Center In this session, a panel of young adult learners from the adult literacy program at Neuhaus Education Center in Houston, Texas will share their insights on dyslexia and structured literacy. Together with their instructor, these students - who have built a strong, supportive learning community - will discuss their experiences and share how they support one another, overcome adversities, and celebrate success.



Interrupting Pathways Between Neurodiversity, IDD, and Juvenile Justice

Jay Wilk and Nicole Merriwether, TNOYS; Elektra Alexis, TNOYS' Young Adult Leadership Council WEST ALABAMA

Neurodivergent youth, including youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, express a rich array of behaviors and strengths. However, resources for youth with high-support needs are limited across systems, posing increased difficulty when placing youth in appropriate services. Join us for best practices in services to youth and young adults with neurodiversity, especially as they intersect with the justice system.



Supporting Teens' Autonomy: Bridging Gaps with Research and Resources

Ariana Rodriguez, HK Gray, and Aketch Osamba, Jane's Due Process BELLAIRE

In this session, participants will hear new research findings from over 100 Texas teens on their reproductive rights and learn how Jane's Due Process supports young people. Facilitators will discuss the JDP hotlines, teen referral resources, and safety planning for helpers and teens. Paired with research, this session offers actionable steps and insights to help teens navigate barriers and their bodily autonomy.



Know Your Rights: Immigration, Law Enforcement, & Trans Rights

Ayania Hicks, Brian Klosterboer, ACLU SAN FELIPE

This workshop will equip and empower attendees with important information on constitutional rights to protect each other and our families during encounters with law enforcement or immigration enforcement officers, whether these occur at home, in the workplace, or in formerly sensitive locations (such as hospitals or places of worship). Additionally, this workshop will include a special Q&A session about some of the issues impacting Trans Texans across the state.

12:15 p.m. - 1:45 p.m. Luncheon: Celebrating What Connects Us - TNOYS Member Awards + YALC Graduation (Open to All) - GALLERIA BALLROOM

Join us to enjoy a luncheon and celebrate the efforts and successes of TNOYS' member network and youth and young adult partners! To kick off, TNOYS Chief Executive Officer Fedora Galasso will present Texas-sized accomplishments and new initiatives on the horizon. Next, we'll celebrate TNOYS' member network and youth and young adult partners with the presentation of our 2025 Annual Member Awards and our Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) graduation.

2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Workshops



Listening and Learning from Youth

PLAZA

The Wellness Wave: Understanding Youth Perspectives Around Mental Health

Syd Georg, Diamond Zuniga, Amelia Treash, and Elektra Alexis, TNOYS'Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) In this workshop, we will explore various aspects and approaches to improving the mental health of youth and young adults. Participants will understand the impact of mental health stigma and recognize the importance of prevention/early intervention to facilitate supportive and stigma-free environments. Join us on the wellness wave and together we will help identify key strategies that foster resilience, provide ongoing support, and create lasting positive change in their lives.

Beyond Bars: Reimagining Justice Through Community Solutions

Jasmin Romano, Adrian Johnson, and Angel Jackson, TNOYS' Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC)

This presentation will explore restorative justice and community-led solutions as effective alternatives to youth incarceration. It will highlight practical strategies for rehabilitation, and examine real-world examples and policy recommendations. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of how to advocate for systematic changes that empower youth rather than criminalize them.



Setting Youth Up for Success

PLAZA II

Forming Authentic Partnerships with Youth and Young Adults

Courtney Sellers and Waiola Jones, Montrose Grace Place

In this workshop, the executive director of Montrose Grace Place and members of their youth and young adult-led advocacy collective will offer perspectives from service providers and young people on forming authentic partnerships. Attendees will discuss the importance of mentorship, healthy boundaries, and putting our pride as service providers to the side.

Texas ETV and Other College Resources for Youth with Foster Care Experience

Drew Melton and Krystal Alacron, BCFS Health and Human Services

The Texas Education and Training Voucher (ETV) is a federal fund put in place to assist students coming from foster care with living expenses while attending post-secondary school. The presentation will detail the ETV application process, define the Texas Tuition and Fee Waiver, and highlight resources available to current and former foster youth while attending college.



Beyond Barriers: Building Breakthrough Leadership in At-Risk Youth Programming

Ashley McKelvey, Windham School District SAGE

Transform your youth programs through evidence-based leadership strategies. Drawing from doctoral research in correctional education, Dr. McKelvey shares practical approaches for creating supportive environments that drive student success. Through interactive exercises and real-world scenarios, participants will develop actionable plans to enhance program effectiveness and youth engagement.



Safe Havens: Empowering McKinney-Vento Families through Collaboration

Alexandria Nieto, Region 15 Education Service Center TANGLEWOOD

This workshop will share how, last year, ESC Region 15 partnered with a rural school district to pilot a program where they could build relationships with their McKinney-Vento parents and families. The program is a testament to the need for connection and support on a more intimate scale for our parents and families.



Connection is Where the Magic Happens! Developing an Impactful Program for McKinney-Vento Students

Julie Engelking and Melissa McGee, Brazosport ISD WEST ALABAMA

Presenters will share how Brazosport ISD created and implemented an impactful program that adds intentional support for secondary students facing homelessness. Through the ASCEND Program, students receive mentoring and develop employability skills. Brazosport ISD has improved connection and engagement of students experiencing homelessness, therefore increasing the likelihood of graduation.



Online Dangers and Child Sex Trafficking: Working Together to Recognize, Address, and Prevent the Issue

Sofia Montes Lapray, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

NCMEC's perspective as the nation's centralized reporting mechanism for suspected child exploitation offers insights into the risks children face. NCMEC data shows that children are victims of online enticement and trafficking, among other forms of exploitation. This workshop will focus on recent trends and how we can work together to support victims.



Standing Strong Together: The Vital Role of LGBTQ+ Youth Groups

Winter Sinclair, BCFS Health and Human Services SAN FELIPE

In today's world, it is becoming increasingly necessary to provide youth with reliable, free spaces to come together. Combining research from community partners with personal experience in creating and nurturing an LGBTQ+ youth leadership group, this presentation will discuss the importance of LGBTQ+ youth groups within pre-existing organizations.

3:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Workshops



A Journey to Emotional Awareness and Self-Empowerment

Briana Kirksey, You Are Loved Brand LLC PLAZA I

This interactive workshop empowers middle and high school students to build emotional resilience and self-expression. Through engaging activities and practical tools, participants will explore healthy communication, overcome negative self-talk, set boundaries, and identify their emotions using tools like the emotion wheel. Let's create a safe space for self-discovery and growth!



Embedding Youth Voices in Your Organization's DNA

Sedoo Ijir and Jermaine Neblett, TNOYS; Paola Mazimpaka, Kai'Tee Tristan, Lilyana Kunkel, TNOYS'Young Adult Leadership Council PLAZA II

Join this engaging session to discuss the fundamentals for establishing and maintaining youth input within a youth-serving organization for the long term. Participants will learn strategies to embed youth voice in organizational processes, procedures, and projects while avoiding tokenism and ways to effectively partner with youth to impact organizational change, improve their lives, and ultimately the systems that serve them.



Ethical Storytelling for Youth-Serving Organizations

Valerie Villarreal, Upbring; Anna Schardt Baker, Three Story Strategies

How do you capture your organization's impact while protecting the privacy and dignity of those you serve? This session will cover best practices for ethical, trauma-informed storytelling across marketing communications, fundraising, constituent engagement, and more. Presenters will provide practical tips and resources to promote a culture of storytelling, including how to build a sustainable story library.



Using the Three E's for Purposeful Career Guidance



Jonathan Butler, Texas Workforce Commission TANGLEWOOD

Attendees will hear the life story of Jonathan Butler, from experiencing homelessness to serving as a career coach who is passionate about serving all people in Texas, especially those that are often overlooked or forgotten. This presentation will include tools and resources to assist participants in their own career planning and career implementation process to reach their goals.



Pieces of Home: Meaningful Connections

Tim Packer, The Cove WEST ALABAMA

In this presentation Dr. Packer speaks about the role of meaningful relational connections in The Cove's work with high school aged youth experiencing homelessness. The presentation traces the centrality of relationships in key practice, theory and policy models historically and in current approaches such as Positive Youth Development, Trauma-Informed Care, and Housing First.



Empowering Youth Voices: Building a Legacy to End Human Trafficking

Denise Mears and Amy Hamilton, Project Protect Our Children BELLAIRE

Project Protect Our Children's Youth Action Board (YAB) is a free, sustainable, student-led anti-trafficking club program for middle and high school-aged youth. YAB engages, educates, and empowers youth to create and lead impactful human trafficking awareness campaigns that resonate with their peers, utilizing the power of youth voice. YAB youth become catalysts for change, ensuring a legacy of activism and advocacy against human trafficking for generations to come.



Rights of Pregnant and Parenting Youth and Young Adults

Emily Johnston, Foster Youth Justice Project and Texas RioGrande Legal Aid SAN FELIPE

This presentation will provide an overview of the rights and responsibilities of pregnant and parenting youth and young adults, with a particular focus on youth in foster care and those experiencing homelessness. We will discuss the prevalence of parenting young adults and their constitutionally protected parenting rights, along with common questions and available resources.

5:00 p.m. Adjourn

FRIDAY, JUNE 13: CONFERENCE DAY 3 Half Day - Most Sessions Open to All

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Statewide Collaborative on Youth Homelessness Meeting & Breakfast (Invite Only) - GALLERIA BALLROOM

The Statewide Collaborative on Youth Homelessness (SCYH) will hold an in-person meeting to bring together stakeholders for networking and information sharing. Staff and leadership from relevant state agencies will join to provide updates and network with other SCYH members. Breakfast will be provided.

8:30 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. Check In & Registration Open - GALLERIA FOYER

9:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. Workshops



Empowering Youth Experiencing Homelessness

PLAZA I

Helping Homeless Youth and Their Families Feel Safe, Supported, and Cared For

Gabriela Kocian, Star of Hope Mission

This workshop will provide guidance on how to effectively engage and work with youth experiencing homelessness and their families in a shelter environment. Facilitators will provide guidance on how to gain youths' trust, build strong relationships, and equip youth to navigate school systems, social services agencies, and youth organizations.

Overcoming Educational and Wellness Challenges for Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Teshina Carter, SAMMinistries

SAMMinistries' Transitional Living & Learning Center (TLLC) serves families experiencing homelessness, housing up to 40 families for two years in a communal living setting. This includes over 115 children at any one time. With trauma-informed care practices, TLLC empowers youth to overcome educational, developmental, and wellness hurdles that are often exacerbated by homelessness, turning challenges into stepstones for brighter futures.



Listening and Learning from Youth

PLAZA II

Investing in Tomorrow: Preventing Youth Homelessness Today

Lilyana Kunkel, Zahda Hodges, and Adrian Moore, TNOYS'Young Adult Leadership Council

Learn from lived experience leaders as they discuss youth homelessness as an ongoing crisis across the state by illustrating data, sharing personal experiences, and uplifting helpful resources to combat homelessness and the negative effects experienced by youth. Attendees will learn the various reasons why youth homelessness exists, how providers can leverage prevention efforts with education, and how everyone can be a part of preventing and addressing youth homelessness in Texas.

Mentorship Matters: Unlocking Potential, One Connection at a Time

Paola Mazimpaka, Mikyra Bisby, and Kai'Tee Tristan, TNOYS'Young Adult Leadership Council

In this session, lived experience leaders will uncover the importance of youth mentorship and its critical role for youth and young adults at various ages in their development within foster care and child welfare. Youth presenters will share key strategies to understand what mentors do, how to build trust with mentors, and experiences to illustrate how mentorship can combat trauma with positive alternatives such as focusing on normalcy and centering youths' wants, needs, and long-term goals.



Connection Non-Profit Leaders to Grant Writing Success

Jacob Huereca, Connections IFS SAGE

Join this workshop for leaders and change-makers in youth services to sharpen your skills in developing compelling grant narratives and furthering your organization's reach. Based on his wealth of experience in nonprofit management and passion for organizational science and culture, Chief Executive Officer of Connections IFS, and TNOYS' Board Treasurer, Jacob Huereca will share tools for strengthening organizational impact.

FRIDAY, JUNE 13: CONFERENCE DAY 3 Half Day - Most Sessions Open to All



The HAY Center Self-Sufficiency Triangle

Breanna Haile, Katy Vittoria, Tabitha Jones, Harris County Resources for Children and Adults TANGLEWOOD

Attendees will learn about the Self-Sufficiency Triangle, The HAY Center's wraparound model, and how it creates a safe space for youth currently or formerly in foster care to advocate for the supportive services they need. Having options allows young people the autonomy they need to reconnect with mental health services, all while working toward stable housing and self-sufficiency through sustainable employment and education opportunities.



Transition Supports: Housing and Finances

WEST ALABAMA

Charge Up! Supporting Youth in Transition for Homelessness

Sarah Narendorf, Marcus Brown, Aryeana Straughter, New York University; Alexandria Shelley, Covenant House Texas

This presentation introduces participants to a new intervention called Charge Up! The intervention is a 6-month long, teambased intervention with three roles that work together to provide time-limited support: a healing partner focused on mental health, a transition support specialist focused on skills and personal development, and the Rapid Re-Housing case manager.

Empowering Foster Care Families & Youth: Insurance, Financial Education, & Resilience

Shelena M. Tate, Fostered My Stories; Tyana Bailey, Margaret H. Ley Adult Literacy Program at the Neuhaus Education Center Join Shelena M. Tate, a foster care alum with over 17 years of lived experience, and local community and finance services leader Teyana Bailey as they combine financial education and lessons in resilience for foster care families and youth. This workshop will provide attendees with valuable information and resources to help them navigate the complexities of insurance, finances and emancipation readiness.



CSEY Advocacy: Texas' Strategy to Support Long-Term Healing

Jessica Hess, Office of the Texas Governor - Child Sex Trafficking Team; Chad Frymire, North Texas Coalition Against Human Trafficking; Blanca Denise Lance, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services; Donna Fullilove, Susanne Crane, Nicholas Nesbitt

BELLAIRE

In this session, attendees will gain a comprehensive understanding of what CSEY advocacy entails and its significance in fostering healing and resilience among affected youth. Participants will learn how to access CSEY advocacy for children and transition-aged youth. Additionally, there will be a panel highlighting how CSEY advocates collaborate with other specialized advocates to create a cohesive support network.



Recap of Texas' 89th Legislative Session

Lauren Rose, TNOYS; Adrian Johnson, TNOYS' Young Adult Leadership Council

Join us for an overview of legislative and budgetary decisions made during the 89th Texas Legislative Session, and how those changes will impact Texas' youth and families and the professionals who serve them. Presenter will be joined by a member of TNOYS' Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) to share the impact of youth and young adults with lived experiences educating lawmakers on the need for policy changes.

11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Closing + Let Your Light Shine with MelRo Potter - GALLERIA BALLROOM

We are all lights. However, there may be times when our lights dim. Through hope, resilience, and unwavering faith, join our keynote speaker Melissa Roshan (MelRo) Potter for powerful storytelling. To close out our conference, MelRo will share wisdom for keeping your life full of light, regardless of how dark the circumstances may appear.

12:30 p.m. Adjourn

HOTEL MAP



