

ELEVATE



**STEP
BY_
STEP**

healing & empowering
young single moms

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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OUR MISSION ...

We're here to empower and embolden young single mothers to improve their lives, their families, and their communities through healing, encouragement, faith and education.

OUR VISION ...

We envision a Lexington that fosters belonging and empowers young, single mothers to positively impact their families and communities.

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Step By Step is entering our 28th year of serving young single mothers ages 12 to 24 and their children. As we look towards 2023, we have such gratitude for our foundations and the hard work, dedication, and prayers of those who came before us. Simultaneously, we stand in awe and excitement as we elevate... taking Step By Step to new heights.

When the phone rings, our staff has no idea what situation will be on the other end of the phone:

- A community partner looking to connect a young mother to ongoing services.
- A 13-year-old mother who is in foster care with her baby and looking for a Mentor to love and support her through court dates, therapies, and transitions.
- A young woman in her Sophomore year of college who just found out she is pregnant, scared and looking for resources.
- A 24-year old mom with a college degree and on a solid career path at work, afraid to tell anyone but our staff that she is leaving her abuser who has isolated her from everyone and is looking for community for herself and her children.

Within these pages, you will find stories of real people in our community. You will see young women who overcome at every turn as they become leaders in our organization and in their neighborhoods and places of work. You will see children thriving as they watch their moms reach goals and blaze new trails.

We have chosen the theme "elevate" for our annual report because we have some audacious goals for the future. We are launching responsive programming for specific needs and moving into spaces of advocacy. We are addressing the overwhelming issues of housing insecurity the majority of our young families face daily. We are creating a strategic plan that sees our services expanding beyond current locals. These efforts are in addition to the day-to-day services we provide, meeting young moms right where they are and walking alongside them.

There is no other agency offering the services we provide at Step By Step. Your support has been integral to the ways we have been able to focus on sustainable and effective supports, while empowering these young women to rise.

As they elevate, we all elevate.

Thank you for your partnership.



Tanya Torp
Executive Director



((Echo)) & RESOUND

CREATING LEADERS

We met Mari when she was a Senior in high school and pregnant with her daughter. Throughout her time at Step By Step, we have seen her grow in confidence and noticed leadership potential in her.

She graduated Step By Step and we encouraged her to apply to our Echo & Resound Leadership Development program launched in 2019.

“Step By Step has supported me through some of the hardest times of my life. I gave birth to my daughter through c-section and the next week I was forced to move out of an unsafe situation. I was homeless with nowhere to go. I remember Step By Step found a bed at a shelter for me, then came to the place I was living and helped me pack all of my belongings into a trash bag. I was so scared when they drove me to the shelter with my newborn, but they kept reaching out to me, reminding me I was not alone. Things were so dark at that time. I had just lost my brother and was experiencing a deep depression. I wasn’t connecting with my baby and I was just so overwhelmed. Step By Step consistently showed up and became my family. They made me see I did not need to be ashamed of my circumstances. They helped me see that a setback would not stop me from reaching goals.”

“Now, I am a leader. I went through two years of intensive training, learning skills to support other moms in our program. I also get to use these skills at work. Our training at Step By Step included group dynamics, professionalism, and soft skills like showing up on time and being consistent.”

“I remember when we learned about boundaries. I have used that lesson repeatedly in interpersonal relationships. Just recently, I was starting a new relationship that appeared wonderfully supportive. When red flags appeared, I recognized them immediately and put a stop to it. My mental health and safety of myself and my daughter are non negotiable. I learned that lesson at Step By Step and I want other moms to get to the point where they understand their inherent value and know they are worthy.”

“I want the moms I lead to know that even through struggles there is hope, and that I am with them every step of the way. That is what Step By Step did for me. And, that is what I get to do now for others.”





FINDING FINANCIAL FREEDOM

In the fall of 2021, we launched our trauma-informed financial literacy pilot program entitled Step Into Freedom, focusing on budgeting, saving, and banking. Sixteen moms participated in a unique program that took into account the perspective of young mothers and the challenges and triumphs they face daily. At the conclusion of the course, participants offered feedback and suggestions for making the program even stronger. Our team re-wrote curriculum, adding new interactive activities, and expanding on topics our moms wanted to learn more about, such as avoiding predatory lenders. With our partners at Studio 46 Media, we produced and recorded videos for the workshops, creating a consistent experience for participants for years to come.

In September 2022, a new round of young single moms enrolled in Step Into Freedom. They attended nine weeks of workshops, opened Individual Development Accounts (IDA), and were paired with Financial Advocates who will follow up with them regularly as they learn to implement the skills they learned into their daily lives. These young women are actively saving towards specific goals such as purchasing a car or saving for higher education. Step By Step will match their savings up to \$2 to \$1 once they reach their savings goals.



Liz is one of our most enthusiastic participants in the program! With a 6-year old daughter, a baby on the way, and a pending marriage to a loving and supportive fiancé, she knew she wanted to ensure financial freedom.

“Everything I do is for my kids. I chose my goal of saving for a car because I don’t want to be tied to a car payment that takes most of my paycheck. Financial freedom is very important to me after having instability for the first part of my life. I want my little family to experience things I did not get to experience as a child.

“I’m in college and it was hard to take my college classes, spend time with my daughter, and fit in the weekly financial literacy work and homework. But, Step By Step provides childcare, a ride, and dinner at each of the classes, so it made it easier to juggle everything.

“The most surprising thing I learned was that some predatory lenders charge up to 400% interest for loans. It makes it hard for anyone to pay off the debt and creates cycles I saw growing up. I learned how to advocate for myself and read the small print.

“Step By Step has seen me through a lot of circumstances in my life. I have always felt loved and supported since I stepped foot in the doors. But learning how to save and what to avoid has given me confidence. I can do anything.”



SUPPORT FOR GRIEVING MOMS

CONTENT WARNING: GUN VIOLENCE

In March, we launched a new support group as a response to the growing number of young single moms we saw impacted by gun violence. Whenever we hear or read about a young person who has been gunned down in our community, we know that our moms are also impacted. We recognize that these deaths are not nameless statistics for our moms and kids. They will experience oceans of grief and feelings of anxiety, fear, and depression whether the victim was the father of their child, a relative, a neighbor, or a friend.

We partnered with a licensed therapist to explore topics such as signs of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), how to process grief, and how to talk to your kids about loss.

“My child is starting to ask questions about her father who was shot and killed by a relative. It breaks my heart that she will never know the sound of his voice. But, I learned in Life After Loss how to share things with her that are appropriate for her age. It is healing for me to be able to talk about him with her. On top of raising a child on my own, I felt like I had to push down all of my emotions just to make it through the day. I thought I wasn’t supposed to show her how hard this has been. Life After Loss taught me that holding it all in has led to my anxiety. I learned mindfulness techniques I can do for myself and with her when I feel overwhelmed. I learned that I can share funny memories and stories so that in a way, even though she will never see him smiling at her, she can know him.”

We will continue to pour resources into issue-specific support groups as our moms continue to inform the direction of our programming.



PROGRAM UPDATE

A PLACE TO BELONG

As is the case with many of our new participants, 21-year-old Donica heard about our program from another Step By Step Mom. “She told me how much fun she has, how much support they provide, and kept telling me, ‘You NEED to sign up.’ Honestly, it got a little annoying so I gave up and just decided to go. I didn’t really know what to expect, but she wasn’t lying!”

Having been in foster care herself, Donica’s goal is to be the best mom she can possibly be and to keep her daughter safe and secure.

“It’s hard being a young mom. People will straight up tell you that you can’t do it. They make assumptions about your story and who you are. They assume you can’t raise children well. The first night I experienced Step By Step we were still meeting online. When the leaders recited the ‘Revive Creed’ and I saw the words, ‘My past does not dictate my future behavior,’ on the screen, I almost cried. When they got to the part that says, ‘I belong here. I am here for a purpose,’ I knew I was in a good place.”

When she heard about our return to in-person programming, she was the first to sign up.

“I couldn’t wait to sign up! Step By Step has meant so much to me. I have gained a whole group of friends who understand what it is like to be young and want the best for your child. The leaders believe in me and encourage me all the time.

“On a typical Thursday night, we check our kids into Revive Kids and go have dinner at a table with other moms. Sometimes it feels like the first time I have sat down and talked to someone else who is really listening to me all week. Then, we do ‘What’s New And Good’, where we get to kind of brag on ourselves and share what we are proud of that we did during the past week or something new that has happened. One time I stood up and said, ‘My daughter turned one.’ You would’ve thought there was a UK game going on. Everyone cheered for me. It was so LOUD. It makes you

feel good when someone celebrates that you are doing it every day and surviving.

“My favorite part of Revive nights though, is the support group. Our group leaders are other mom leaders, so they understand where we are coming from. It gets real in that room. It feels safe. We share all kinds of things we don’t get to share anywhere else. And, we watch out for one another. It means so much when someone says, ‘I’ve been through that too and this is how I got through it.’ It makes you feel less alone.”

Donica recently enrolled in Step Into Freedom with the goal of purchasing a car.

“I go to Step By Step two times a week now. I guess it’s kind of becoming home.”

“Our group leaders are other mom leaders, so they understand where we are coming from.”

— Donica



EMPOWERING ADVOCACY

OUR VOICES MATTER

Over the past several years, Step By Step has increased our efforts in centering the voices and desires of those most impacted. Through our efforts such as our Mom Advisory Board SWOT Analysis Sessions and our program feedback surveys, our moms regularly inform our programming as we implement their suggestions and feedback. A natural result of learning the impact of their voices has been their desire to advocate civically for policies that directly affect them and their children.

Through a grant with Kentucky Equal Justice Center, in partnership with Kentucky Legal Aid and Legal Aid of the Bluegrass, Step By Step moms are making a difference by sharing their personal experiences with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) with court appointed attorneys assigned to cases adjudicated within the Kentucky legal system. These attorneys desire to understand what day-to-day life looks like for a population that relies on programs to make ends meet. We are thrilled that our moms, who desire to become self-sufficient, are able to use their experiences to affect a deeper understanding for litigators.

"We were asked to help train attorneys by sharing how SNAP benefits affect our lives and the lives of people we know. Rather than being shamed for needing help, we are actually able to use our own voices to affect change. I can't believe that I get to stand in front of a group of lawyers with a PowerPoint and remind them that behind every SNAP case they work, is a story of

a real person. Someone like me struggles, working a full-time job, helping my kids with their homework, and trying to just keep my head above water. They need to see that I am a human being who works hard, has a budget, and still needs assistance.

"Step By Step's programs definitely help me reach goals as I move towards no longer needing extra help every month...but until I get there...my voice still matters. If I can use my story to shed light on some of the problems that show up in these systems...I feel like I am doing it for all of us single moms."

As we elevate, we will continue to seek out opportunities with our moms where they are empowered to use their voices in ways that make them feel heard and seen.

"If I can use my story to shed light on some of the problems that show up in these systems...I feel like I am doing it for all of us single moms."

FROM PROGRAM PARTICIPANT TO FULL-TIME SBS EMPLOYEE

Program Coordinator, Kierra Huff moved to Lexington from Western Kentucky to further her college career. She was introduced to Step By Step through a work/study program and applied for an internship in our office. Our staff was impressed with this incredible young single mother whose desire was to support and empower other young mothers. While completing her internship, she actually participated fully in the programming. Her participation and feedback was instrumental in helping us build the Echo and Resound Leadership Development Program.

When her internship ended, we were crestfallen. One of us wrote in her thank you card "You are exactly what Step By Step needed. If we had the money to hire you full-time we would. Your passion for moms is heightened by the fact that you understand what they are experiencing and you have advocated for more voices and input from moms. We are so grateful for the time we got to spend with you. You are certainly leaving Step By Step better than you found it. We can't wait to see what you do in the future. We hope you come back and take our jobs."

We are happy to report that Kierra graduated with her degree in social work and is currently pursuing her Master's Degree in Social Work. And, just a few months ago she applied, interviewed, and was hired full-time as our Program Coordinator.

Daily having the perspective of a young single mother inform our programs, policies, and practices has made us stronger. Kierra is facilitating our Step Into Freedom Financial Literacy Program and all of our other life skills programs to come.

"I get to work my dream job and be a true part of this team. I am so grateful every single day to be a part of the Step By Step staff."

Our dream is to provide even more young mothers with living wage jobs where they get to use their experiences and skills to impact the community they have made.



"I get to work my dream job ..."

— Kierra

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

BELOVED COMMUNITY

It is highly unusual for a nonprofit to retain volunteers during a global pandemic where most of the programming had moved online. But we are incredibly fortunate in our volunteers.

"These moms and families are the leaders of tomorrow."

— Lindsey



"It's funny how sometimes our own major life experiences can set the stage to prepare us for new relationships in the future. When I had my first child, I was overcome and overwhelmed with so many emotions in those first few days and nights. I kept thinking about and expressing how incredibly hard it all was. Then, in the same breath, I was expressing gratitude for my healthy baby and the endless support of family and friends. It was during those late nights that God put a question on my heart – What about single mothers who have no support, no help? At the time it filled me with sorrow and quite a few hormonally fueled tears! It was a refrain that kept coming back to me and weighing on my heart, but something I didn't know how to act upon at the time."

A few years later, Lindsey Clem walked through our doors on a Revive night as a volunteer to serve a meal to our young moms and kids with a group of moms she belongs to on social media. And she was hooked.

"As an organization, SBS's mission is to empower and embolden young single mothers to improve their lives, their families, and their communities through healing, encouragement, faith and education. As a volunteer, it has been incredible to play a small role in that process. Getting to know these moms personally and learning about their stories and struggles has given me a new lens at which I view the world and our community here in Lexington. These moms and their families are the leaders of tomorrow. They work where you work, they serve you at the establishments you visit, their kids go to school with your kids. What a blessing to be able

to pour into them and show them God's love while watching them work hard and achieve their dreams."

Melody Radford heard about Step By Step through two of our volunteers that attended Growth Point Church, where she and her husband, Pastor Mario Radford are the pastors. When she noted how passionate her parishioners were and heard about our mission, she had to check it out for herself.

"One of my favorite quotes from Coretta Scott King is, 'The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.'

"I understand this community more than any other community I'm a part of. I get to 'reach back' from where I came, and 'lift up' to where I'm going, a community of sisters that has so much purpose and the richness of God.

"I volunteer at Step By Step because it has become my life line, and I am grateful to God for the connection to these young mothers, their children, and the other volunteers who have become like family to me.

"We are not merely a village but an entire holistic ecosystem with the goal of walking alongside young mothers as they find themselves, hone their skills, and love their children. These young women want to play an integral role in the health of their families, but it is even bigger than that. Once they learn their inherent value and grow into who they were meant to be, they desire to see the same for their neighborhoods, the community, our city, and the world.

"I will also share that when you volunteer at Step By Step, the staff encourages you to take on the posture of a learner. Though some of us approached volunteering as giving back, Step By Step teaches us that we are also receiving. Recently, staff arranged for our volunteer team to receive Narcan Training through our local health department. We learned how the majority of street drugs are manufactured with fentanyl. Many volunteers did not understand how prolific the access and temptation to engage in these activities is...until the young mothers who are Echo and Resound Leadership Development Program leaders in the organization who were present in the room began

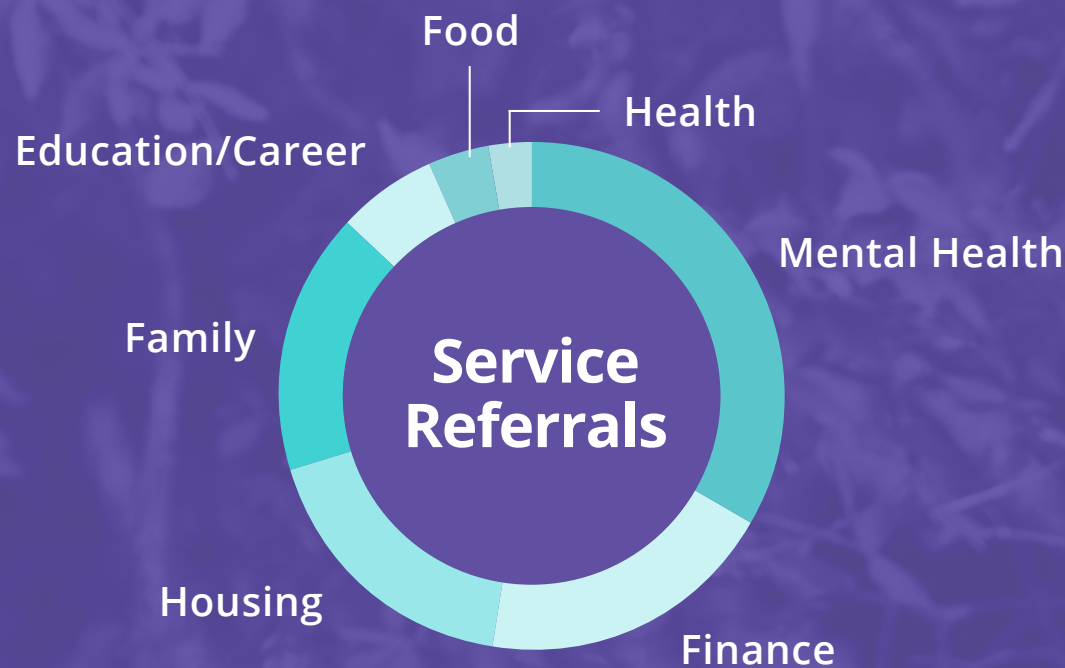
to share stories of what they have seen with their own friends and neighbors. Suddenly, we were receiving a master class in a challenge our young mothers are facing right here in our community. It made it all so very real for us. This is not abstract. We are not merely serving. We are building 'beloved community' with these young women who are a reflection of the priorities of our community."

"We are building 'beloved community'..."

— Melody



OUR IMPACT



797
Basic Needs
Items Delivered

240
Moms and Kids
Served

1,353
Interactions with Young Single Moms
771 phone calls / 360 texts and Facebook messages /
66 in-person meetings / 154 other interactions

OUR PROGRAMS



REVIVE
REVIVE KIDS

REVIVE
REVIVE

((Echos))
& RESOUND



Life
AFTER
Loss



STEP
into
READING



Rooted

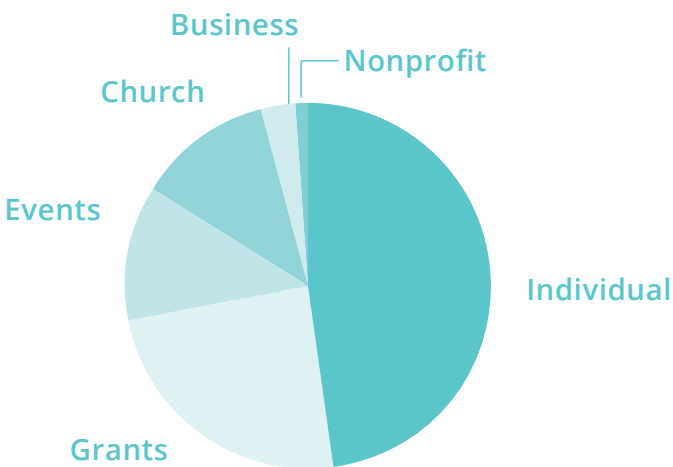
Remnant
CONFERENCE

un
veiled



THE NUMBERS

Data taken from the end of September 2022



Income Distribution Raised to Date

42%

\$205,847
Total Funds Raised to Date

\$486,556.71
Operating Budget

\$93,585.06
Endowment Balance

\$231,262.31
Joseph Fund Balance*

*This fund includes at least three months of operating expenses held in reserve in case of unforeseen emergency circumstances.

PARTNERSHIPS

WORKING TOGETHER

At Step By Step, we believe that partnerships are part of our ecosystem. We work with more than 150 community partners to provide programming and emergency referrals to our moms and kids.

Four years ago we partnered with Intrust Healthcare Services, a mental health provider. To date, we've sent them so many referrals that they opened an office right next door to us!

Jesse Miller, Regional Supervisor and Mental Health Counselor at Intrust, shares the following:

"Step By Step's Program Director, Alicia Sims, reached out to us to learn more about our approach to mental health care and how we could partner with young families receiving Medicaid."

"We really like the mission and what Step By Step is doing. It is very important to us as an agency to help young families. We love partnering with Step By Step because their communication is prompt and responsive. They are just so easy to work with."

"If SBS wasn't around clients wouldn't make as much progress as they do."

"As mental health providers we are only there once or twice a week, Step By Step provides wrap-around support and encouragement at all times."

"Additionally, accountability and support really helps teach some of these young families a lot more responsibility on how to balance their lives. We appreciate how Step By Step is able to normalize and not stigmatize the fact that these young women are not the only ones with struggles and they can still achieve their goals and have fun in the midst of it all."

"The Step By Step setting is very beneficial to our client's success."

"We provide the best treatment possible when we are able to collaborate with Step By Step."



NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY

57%

of our moms are housing insecure

107

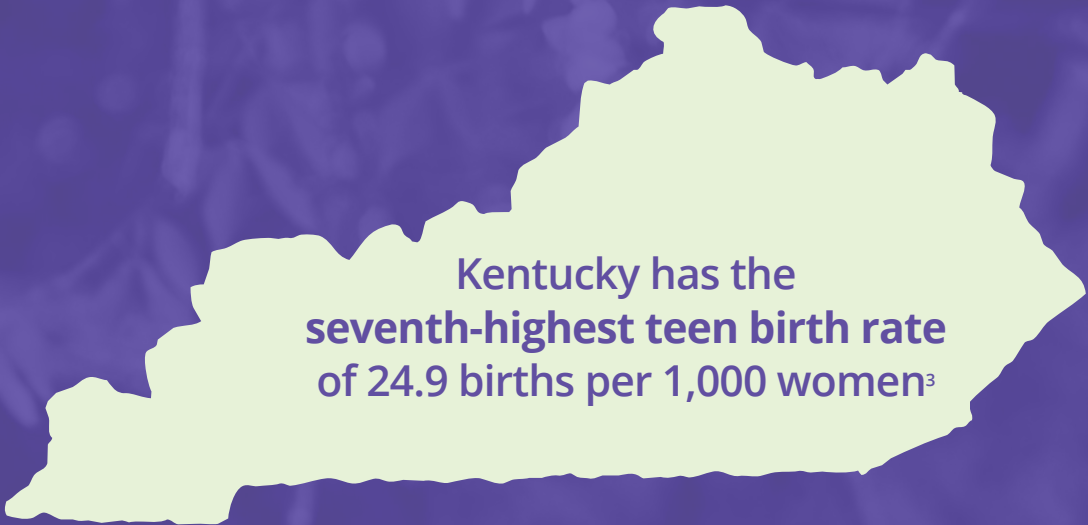
services rendered by SBS or partner organizations to prevent homelessness or get moms re-homed since 2020

11,193

births to single moms age 24 or younger in Kentucky in 2020¹

36%

of children in Kentucky live in single-parent households²



¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics System, Natality on CDC WONDER Online Database. Data are from the Natality Records 2007-2020, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/natality-current.html> on Aug 31, 2022 11:19:14 AM

² <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/map/106-children-in-single-parent-families?loc=1&loct=3#2/any/true/false/1729/any/430/Orange/-9475482.3664645,4162586.9867627,4>

³ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/teen-pregnancy-rates-by-state>

WHAT'S NEXT



DECEMBER 26TH PROJECT

We all love to see faces of excited children opening Christmas gifts on December 25th. It brings us all a sense of joy and community. Join the December 26th Project to continue supporting these families in our community Beyond Christmas.

For \$150, you can sponsor a Step By Step family, providing a full year of programming at Step By Step and fun Christmas treats during our Christmas event. Get started by scanning the QR code here!



GOODGIVING CHALLENGE

Every year Step By Step participates in the "GoodGiving Challenge", a week-long online giving challenge for over 130 local nonprofit organizations. This year's dates are November 29th through December 2, 2022. Approximately 15% of our overall budget is raised yearly by this event. Please sign up to create an Ambassador Page and help us reach our goal of \$40,000 here: bggives.org/stepbystep.

LOVE NOTES

Love Notes is a program that reduces domestic violence and repeat pregnancies. Developed right here in Kentucky, this evidence-based program has proven to be effective all over the country. Our staff are excited to be trained by national facilitators, followed by program launch in Spring 2023.

RESTORE

Our Program Team works closely with young single mothers referred to our program through emergencies and other crisis management situations. Roughly 25% of our moms have or are a part of open cases with Kentucky Department for Community Based Services (DCBS). They are referred to us by social workers, judges, attorneys, juvenile justice workers, and hospital staff when their children or they themselves are involved with the foster care system for any reason. We work closely with teams from other agencies and nonprofits to provide supports and services such as in-home mental health supports and parenting classes to keep families together, reduce child abuse and neglect, and to reduce the risks associated with trauma such as homelessness and domestic violence.

Our team meets with service providers and moms to provide a care team for recovery and reunification. We've sat in rooms where moms had given birth only hours before and were completely alone. We've held the hands of young women in court as they've stared down their abusers and testified to protect themselves and their children from violence. We've also been in court when our moms have come back from the brink of losing their children to foster care, and fought hard to maintain adequate housing, steady employment, and attend mandatory services such as counseling sessions and parenting classes to learn to be more effective parents.

In 2023 we will launch Restore, a support group aimed specifically at supporting moms involved with DCBS. We've surveyed moms and social workers to determine what would be most beneficial. Thanks to their feedback, we will cover topics such as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), how to have protective factors, setting up boundaries, and how to navigate the court process. A trained mental health professional with experience in the foster system will facilitate the discussion. Participating moms will have a safe space to ask questions, letting them know they are not alone in this process.

SUPPORT SBS



Support Step By Step year round by becoming a monthly donor. Get started by scanning the QR code or visiting sbslex.org/donate.



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