



# Community HOPE Centers

OKLAHOMA Human Services

In July 2020, Oklahoma Human Services (OKDHS) proposed direct collaboration with existing community partners to develop a new platform referred to as 'Community HOPE Centers' to serve the needs of the state's most vulnerable children by infusing the science of Hope.

OKDHS sought and granted \$15 million in CARES Act funding to community partners including Urban League, Boys & Girls Clubs, & YMCAs, to develop robust programming and provide supports and resources to children and families to combat unprecedented levels of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) related to COVID-19. Officially launched on August 3, 2020, Community HOPE Centers helped children ages 5-18 and their adult caregivers receive support and resources for new and existing challenges worsened by the pandemic such as food insecurity, decline in mental health and the transition to remote learning.

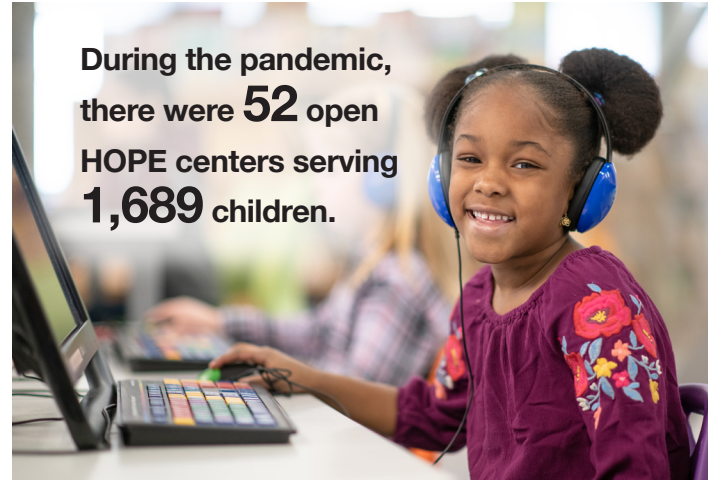
## Program Activities

CARES Act funds allowed providers to, among potential other interventions, engage in the following required activities:

- Within the program period, provide trauma-informed mental and emotional health professionals to work with children and program staff to address new, higher levels of childhood trauma;
- Embed a OKDHS employee to connect families to resources like TANF, SNAP, workforce programs and LIHEAP;

True North goals are a set of priorities developed by OKDHS to guide the work of the agency in order to focus resources and improve collaboration and communication with stakeholders. Each of OKDHS's divisions has approximately three to five focused True North goals in addition to nine agency-wide True North goals.

True North Executive Leadership Goal 8: Move the agency to a space of prevention, going 'upstream' to build a system that supports families with services and resources before they are in crisis.



During the pandemic, there were **52** open HOPE centers serving **1,689** children.

- Work with students to help facilitate engagement in remote/virtual learning platforms, including help with homework and access to technology;
- Provide deeper enrichment activities to combat social and emotional distress;
- Provide two meals and a snack to children daily to address rising food insecurity;
- Follow CDC guidelines, including the purchase of proper PPE and sanitation supplies and maintaining small group sizes.

## Support for Parents

Parents faced many difficulties to fulfill the physical, social, and academic needs of their children while dealing with a host of other issues and responsibilities such as finding or maintaining employment, caring for sick family members, and managing their own mental health. Community HOPE Centers offered parents trustworthy assistance and a safe environment to send their children while they focused on meeting the basic needs of their families.

## Reducing ACEs

The effects of ACEs and trauma are significant and multi-generational after children have grown up. The Community HOPE Center platform met families upstream to reduce ACEs at a time when Oklahomans were experiencing the unprecedented impacts of a pandemic on daily life. Most of all, the platform transformed service delivery to children and families while keeping their health and well-being in mind.