



**Strategic Plan  
October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2022**



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## Youth Guidance Mentoring Academy Overview

### Our Story:

Youth Guidance is the longest running mentoring program in Indian River County, providing positive adult role models for children from low-income and single parent families since 1973. Our founder, Rita Dion, led the organization for more than three decades before retiring. She along with the staff and volunteers following in her footsteps have shown tremendous dedication to the well-being of local children in our community. Their incredible passion is evidenced by our many success stories.

Our very first mentee was a young boy named Brian Connelly. Brian was raised by a single father in the 70s in a household that he describes as living in the movie, "Animal House."

Brian credits the mentoring he received at Youth Guidance for giving him stability needed to get on track academically and achieve his dream of attending law school. He is now a prominent lawyer in Vero Beach with his own firm. Brian's story goes full-circle. He and his wife, Laurie, now mentor two children in the Youth Guidance program, Chris and Kyle.



### Our Children:

Brian is one of thousands of individuals whose lives have been forever changed by Youth Guidance. In Fiscal Year 2019-20, Youth Guidance served 166 children (ages 5-18) from low-income households. Our goal is to increase this number to 250 within a two-year period.

Our youth mainly reside in the high-need areas of Gifford, Central Vero, and South County/Oslo. The majority of our children (66%) are of African American descent followed by Caucasian (17%), Hispanic (12%), and Mixed Race (5%).

### Programs:

When children enter our doors, they access a safe, positive place with caring mentors and positive programs that help them identify a pathway out of poverty. We also provide healthy meals daily for our children. **All programs and meals are free for our kids.**

Our services are delivered through two components:

1. Group Mentoring – Children participate in small group activities led by a part-time Group Leader and adult mentors. All mentors and staff must pass a Level 2 Background Check and complete our Mentor Training Modules. We strive to maintain an intimate

ratio of 1 adult per 4 children. Youth develop life skills, positive academic habits, job skills, and civic engagement. Activities include: Tutoring, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math), music, sports, field trips, community service, life skills, and vocational/trades programs.

2. One-on-One Mentoring – Our one-on-one mentoring program pairs a caring adult mentor with a student, offering the opportunity for an even deeper and more meaningful relationship.

One-on-one mentors agree to a one-year commitment to meet with the child a minimum of two hours per week. One-on-one mentors assist children with academics, help them manage their behavior, and spend time with them in the community. One-on-one mentoring activities may occur inside or outside of our facility at any time.

Before embarking on a one-on-one mentoring relationship, an adult must spend at least one semester volunteering in our Group Program. Children and mentors get to know each other, discover common interests, and develop a mutual connection. Before a match is finalized, the mentor must complete an interview with the student, parents/guardians, and Youth Guidance staff.

### **Contribution to Indian River County Quality of Life**

Mission Statement: Youth Guidance is dedicated to enriching the lives of Indian River County youth through mentoring relationships that inspire trust, self-esteem and positive futures.

Vision Statement: At Youth Guidance, we envision an Indian River County where all children see life's possibilities and achieve their dreams.

Our mentors and staff work tirelessly to help our children succeed in school and learn the skills necessary to become positive and productive citizens.

During Fiscal Year 2019-20:

- **94%** of children graduated high school on time or were promoted to the next grade level.

- **100%** of children in our tutoring program made learning gains.

- **97%** of parents believe that Youth Guidance is having positive impact on attendance, behavior, and/or homework completion.

- **90%** of our children possessed at least three of the following developmental assets: 1. Positive, responsible adult role models; 2. involvement of the local community in projects; 3. service to others; 4. effective peer relationships; and 5. time spent in creative activities, for children enrolled in the Mentoring Academy, as measured by pre- and post-assessments.

- **166** children ages 5-18 participated in mentoring programs.
- **53** active volunteer mentors helped our children.
- **15** community partners meaningfully contributed to the success of our children.

### Research Proposition

Numerous studies support the effectiveness of mentoring for improving outcomes across behavioral, social, emotional, and academic domains of young people's development. The most common pattern of benefits is for mentored youth to exhibit positive gains on outcome measures while non-mentored youth exhibit declines.

Link: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1529100611414806>

## **Meeting the Needs of Local, At-risk Youth**

### *Cultivating Interest in Trades and Vocations*

Traditionally, our nation has encouraged children to attend college and obtain an advanced degree. But for our kids, particularly those from low-income families, college isn't always a reality. Indeed, while 60% of the wealthiest students complete their studies and graduate from college, only 16% of low-income college students graduate, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

A viable path for our children is a career within the trade sector. In 2020, Youth Guidance staff met with the owners of several local businesses and there remains a huge demand for qualified workers within the trades (plumbers, electricians, chefs, HVAC technicians, mechanics, etc.). According to the National Electrical Contractors Association, 7,000 electricians join the field each year, but 10,000 retire.

Notably, these are lucrative careers that do not require a college education. Our children can graduate high school and begin earning a great salary working in the trades, enough to help them climb out of poverty and begin providing for themselves and their families.



With this in mind, **vocational training and life skills will be a core focus of Youth Guidance Mentoring programs going forward.**

Already, we have partnered with several community organizations to provide these opportunities for children:

- **Bike Repair and Bike Mechanics** with Bike Walk Indian River County

- **Boat Mechanics** with Youth Sailing Foundation

- **Gardening and Agriculture** with Keep Indian River Beautiful

- **Cooking** with Community Church

Other vocational and life skills programs currently offered include: Cosmetology and career prep (interviewing, resume writing, etc.).

### Looking Ahead

Going forward, our Operations Manager will strengthen these partnerships with community organizations to unlock additional vocational and life skills opportunities for our children.

**In fall 2021, we will add an eight-month pre-apprenticeship program, introducing students ages 16-24 to HVAC, plumbing, welding, carpentry, and electric. They will graduate the program with six different certifications.** We also hope to offer automotive repair.

Our Operations Manager will formalize vocational and life skills programs with targeted assessments to measure children's progress and growth.

Within the next three years, we will renovate our 8,600 square-foot facility, adding a small commercial kitchen, dining room, bike shop, multipurpose room and shop space to house our vocational and life skills programs.

### *Promoting Academic Achievement*

As the 2020 school year began, the devastating impact of COVID-19 on our children's progress in school became readily apparent. After extensive conversations with parents and families, we learned that at-risk youth enrolled in virtual school were struggling to complete their work at home due to poor Internet access and limited adult supervision.

Prior to the pandemic, 44% of families struggled financially to meet basic needs, such as food, child care and transportation. (Source: 2020 ALICE Report, United Way of Indian River County). This issue worsened due to widespread layoffs and prevailing uncertainty about the future.

More than ever before, parents needed a safe, positive place to send their children while they worked to overcome the obstacles they faced.



On September 28th, 2020, to respond to the needs of our children and families, Youth Guidance began opening its doors all day, from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Monday through

Thursday. We called this full-day program, the only one of its kind in the county, our Learning Center.

The Learning Center served a maximum of 50 children (ages 5-18) each day. **As part of the program, youth received breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as assistance with virtual school.**

Breakfast and lunch were provided by the School District of Indian River County, and dinner was provided by The Source, another local nonprofit. We partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters to provide additional tutors to supplement our staff to help our children with virtual school.

**We are pleased to report that out of the report cards collected for students enrolled in the Learning Center, 100% graduated high school on time or were promoted to the next grade level.**



Now that children are returning to their brick-and-mortar schools, we will discontinue our virtual school assistance program starting in Fall 2021 and focus our resources on expanding our after-school program Monday through Friday from 2 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

### **Program Accountability & Improvement**

**Result we seek for children:** Children enrolled at Youth Guidance will receive a mentoring-based experience resulting in higher self-esteem and trusting relationships that will lead to positive outcomes enriching their lives and the lives of those around them.

#### **2-Year Plan**

**Goal 1: Increase to 100% the children who graduate high school on time or are promoted to the next grade level.**

Individuals Responsible: Executive Director, Operations Manager, Family Services Specialist, Mentor Group Leaders

Measurement Instruments: Student's grades and report cards obtained from the Indian River County School District.

Action Steps: Enhance tutoring program by strengthening partnerships with Big Brothers Big Sisters, The Learning Alliance, and Indian River State College. Build relationship with St. Edward High School and John's Island Community Service League to secure additional tutors.

**Goal 2: Increase to 94% the percentage of Youth Guidance children who possess at least three of the following Developmental Assets: 1. Positive, responsible adult role models; 2. involvement of the local community in projects; 3. service to others; 4. effective peer relationships; and 5. time spent in creative activities.**

Individuals Responsible: Executive Director, Operations Manager, Family Services Specialist, Mentor Group Leaders

Measurement Instruments: The research-based Developmental Assets were developed by the SEARCH Institute and are being utilized by youth-based mentoring organizations across the country as a benchmark of success.

Action Steps: Ensure children attending Youth Guidance have the highest-quality experience through quarterly monitoring, assessments, personal check-ins, and parent surveys. Maintain a 1:4 mentor-to-child ratio in group settings.

**Goal 3: Increase number of children served to 250 annually.**

Individuals Responsible: Executive Director, Operations Manager, Family Services Specialist, Mentor Group Leaders

Measurement Instruments: Attendance sheets and enrollment data collected for each participant.

Action Steps: Initiate partnerships with other agencies that may facilitate expansion into underserved areas of the county. These partnerships include (but are not limited to): The Intergenerational Center, the Environmental Learning Center, and local schools. Due to COVID-19, we have not been able to facilitate programs in schools, though we hope to re-establish our presence in them once things normalize.

**Goal 4: Increase number of one-on-one mentoring pairs from 8 to 25 over a two-year period.**

Individuals Responsible: Executive Director, Family Services Specialist, Operations Manager, Mentor Group Leaders

Measurement Instruments: Case files are kept by our Family Services Specialist for each one-on-one mentoring pair.

Action Steps: Seek outside expertise to further develop the mentor training modules found on our website that are used for





onboarding of mentors. Develop communication plan for one-on-one mentors, mentees, and their families. Encourage current group mentors to become matched with a mentee.

### **Fundraising, Sustainability and Future Growth**

Youth Guidance currently maintains a staff of 9 employees and a Board of Directors of 10 members. Youth Guidance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and receives support from United Way of Indian River County.

Funding from Youth Guidance comes from a diverse mix of revenue streams, including individuals, grants, corporations, and foundations.

Starting in March 2020, Youth Guidance carried out a comprehensive fundraising campaign to spread awareness and cultivate new donors. From March to December 2020, 132 new donors have supported Youth Guidance and donations have increased by 42%.

We will continue to implement targeted fundraising strategies to keep this momentum going forward.

Youth Guidance will continue to host two key fundraising events each year: The King of the Hill Tennis Tournament in February and the Tropical Night Luau in October.

#### **2-Year Plan**

##### **Goal 1: Increase number of Board members from 10 to 15.**

Individuals Responsible: Executive Director, Board of Directors

Measurement Instruments: Board roster

Action Steps: Identify and recruit 5 Board members with diverse skillsets that will help further the mission of Youth Guidance. Attend at least 4 community events quarterly and take advantage of networking opportunities to connect with potential Board members while spreading awareness of Youth Guidance.

##### **Goal 2: Increase overall donations to Youth Guidance by 25% and increase reserve fund by 15%.**

Individuals Responsible: Executive Director, Public Relations Specialist, Board of Directors

Measurement Instruments: QuickBooks Accounting Reports, DonorPerfect Gift Records



Action Steps: The Executive Director creates a comprehensive fundraising plan to be approved each year by Board of Directors. The Board-driven Development Committee plans and implements tactics to raise funds and generate new revenue sources. These include sending targeted appeal letters, identifying and applying for additional grants, soliciting planned gifts, conducting online giving campaigns, hosting special events, stewarding donors in a timely and effective manner, collaborating with local businesses and organizations, and networking whenever possible to increase awareness of Youth Guidance in the community.

### Goal 3: Launch an Endowment

Individuals Responsible: Executive Director, Board of Directors

Measurement Instruments: QuickBooks Accounting Reports, DonorPerfect Gift Records

Action Steps: Launch endowment with the Indian River Community Foundation. Carry out marketing campaign to spread awareness of endowment. Execute strategy to secure gifts from individual donors to increase endowment principal. Ultimately, the endowment will ensure the fiscal sustainability of Youth Guidance Mentoring Academy for the foreseeable future.

### Goal 4: Launch Capital Campaign to Renovate Building

Individuals Responsible: Executive Director, Public Relations Specialist, Board of Directors

Measurement Instruments: QuickBooks Accounting Reports, DonorPerfect Gift Records, Capital Campaign Pledge Forms

Action Steps: Youth Guidance currently occupies the old library building in Vero Beach, an 8,600 square-foot facility located across from City Hall. Within the next two years, we will take the following steps to make capital improvements and renovate the facility:

1. Replace the roof. This is the first step we need to accomplish before remodeling the interior.
2. Finalize renovation plan. Currently, our goal is to include a small commercial kitchen, multipurpose room, shop space for vocational training, recording studio, bike shop, and fabrication/tech lab.



3. Carry out capital campaign. Approach current and prospective donors in the community who will contribute to building renovations. Include naming/promotional opportunities.

4. Complete renovations: Identify developer, architect, general contractor, inspector, and contractors to complete the project.