



2024 ANNUAL REPORT



LYGHT

LISTENING & LED BY
YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

GRIEF, HOPE, &
TRANSITIONS

A DOUGY CENTER PROGRAM



The National Grief Center
for Children & Families



NEW YORK LIFE
FOUNDATION

L.Y.G.H.T. Mission

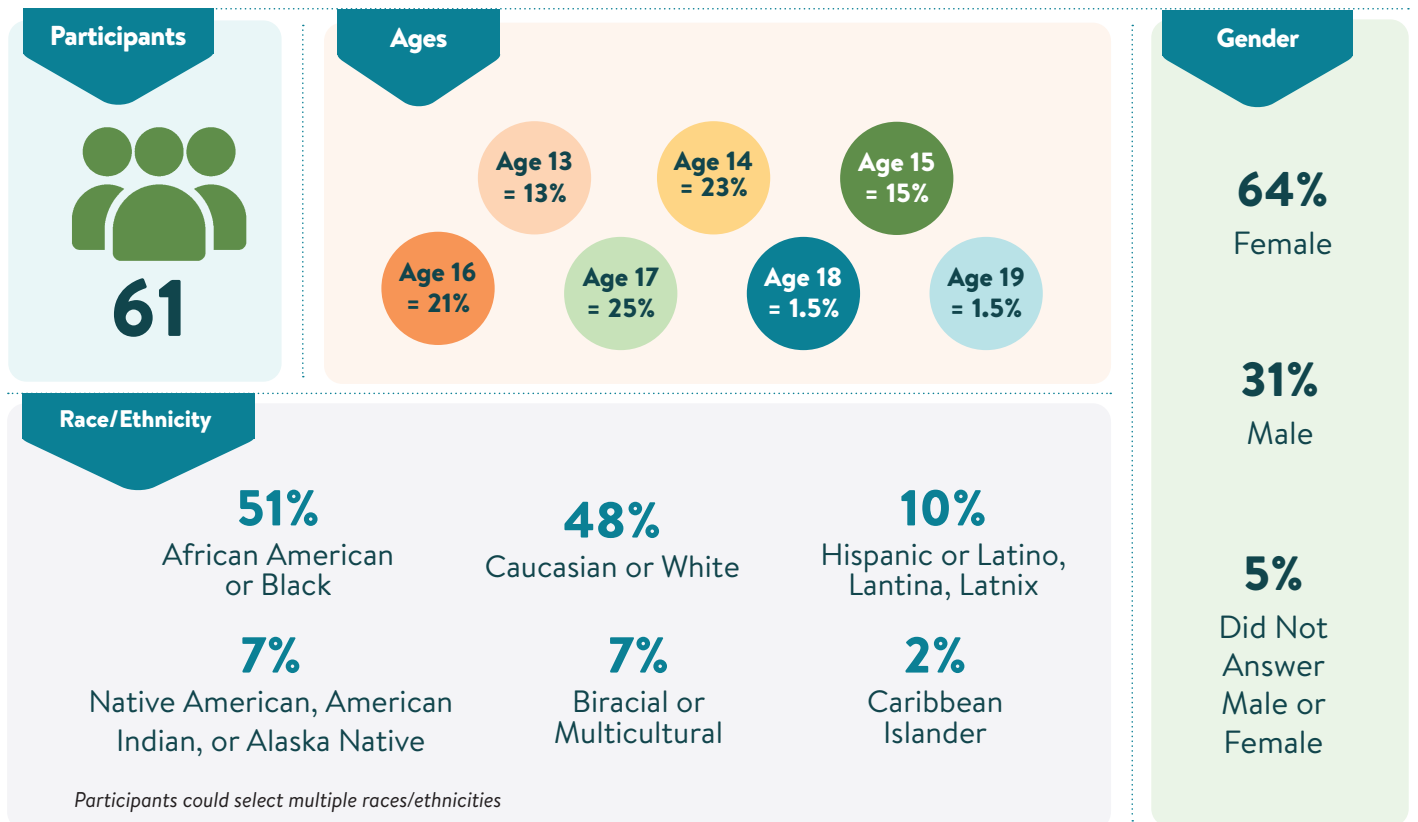
At the core of the L.Y.G.H.T. program, we aim to raise awareness about how youth in foster care who are grieving experience marginalization on various levels, to create ways to provide trauma-informed peer support to youth in foster care, and to promote the importance of moving the child welfare community toward a grief-informed holistic model of care.

Program Evaluation Question

Does the L.Y.G.H.T. program, a peer grief support program for youth in foster care, enhance the well-being of youth in foster care?

From January to December 2024, the Listening and Led by Youth in Foster Care: Grief, Hope, and Transitions (L.Y.G.H.T.) program was conducted with youth in foster care throughout South Carolina. The evidence-based program was run under real-world conditions at community sites in the Midlands, Upstate, and Pee Dee regions.

Study Demographics



Outcome Measures

Quantitative - Questionnaires

- Hopefulness
- Social Support
- Self-Worth
- Problem Intensity
- Program Helpfulness
- Trauma-Informed Program Atmosphere



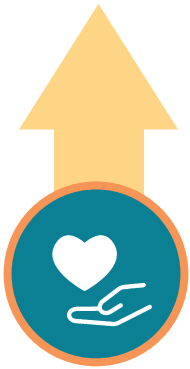
Qualitative – Focus Groups



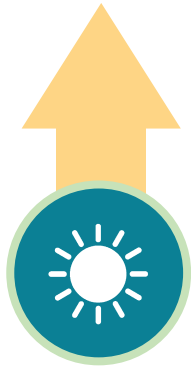
- Initial Interest in the Program
- Perceived Program Benefits
- Program Dislikes
- Program Recommendation

Findings

For youth who participated in the L.Y.G.H.T. program:



SOCIAL SUPPORT
INCREASED



HOPEFULNESS
INCREASED



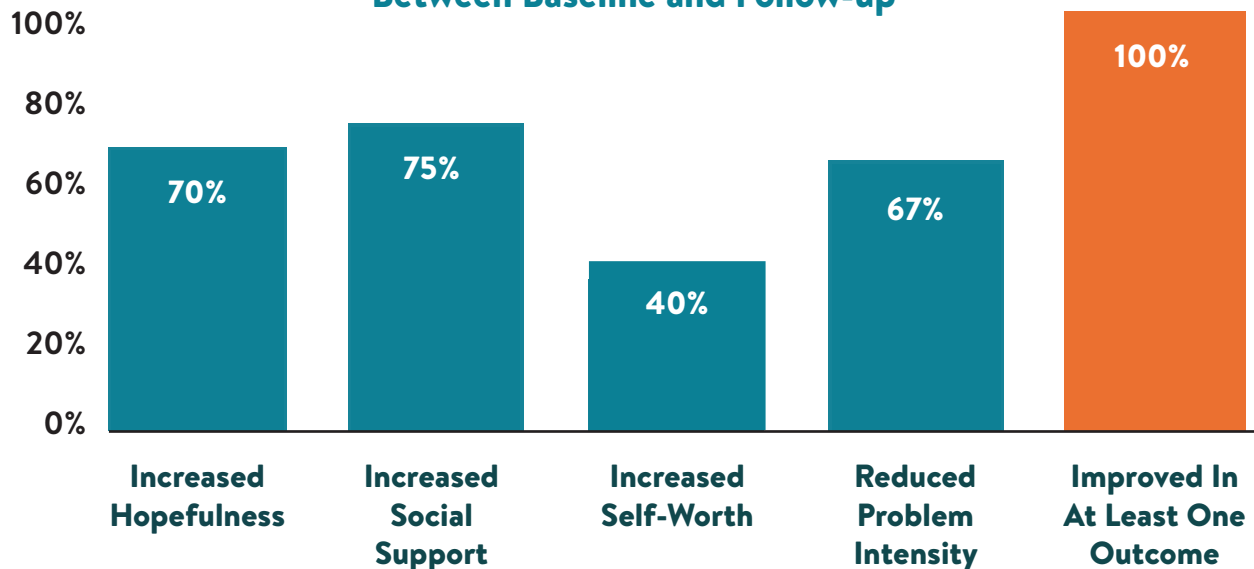
SELF-WORTH
INCREASED



PERCEIVED PROBLEMS
BECAME BETTER AND
MORE BEARABLE

Long Term Impacts

Percent of Participants Showing Improvement
Between Baseline and Follow-up



Results indicate a positive effect of the L.Y.G.H.T. program on youth hopefulness and social support. Additionally, results showed that two-thirds of L.Y.G.H.T. participants reported that their problems had improved since beginning the program. 100% of L.Y.G.H.T. participants with a follow-up survey reported improvement in at least one outcome between baseline and follow-up

Trauma-Informed Program Atmosphere



I feel like L.Y.G.H.T. gives me the time and space to speak openly and safely, without being judged about what I've been through or what I have lost throughout the years. I feel like I can say anything. That's why I like to come almost all the time, the only time I don't come if I am having a really hard day and can't express how I feel because I am hurting. Mainly it is a place I can talk openly without me ever feeling not listened to. I feel safe.

- L.Y.G.H.T. youth participant, age 17



Youth reported the L.Y.G.H.T. program provided a trauma-informed program atmosphere where youth felt:

- **safe** in the L.Y.G.H.T. group
- they could **trust** other members in the L.Y.G.H.T. group
- **supported** by the other members in the L.Y.G.H.T. group
- the other L.Y.G.H.T. group members **understood** them and what they had been through
- the L.Y.G.H.T. group members **appreciated** sharing with and listening to one another
- that **they had choices** about whether and when they spoke, listened, or participated in the L.Y.G.H.T. program
- that their uniqueness and identity were **respected**

Average ratings were high on each item, with participants rating the L.Y.G.H.T. program between “most of the time” and “absolutely” a trauma-informed atmosphere.

Youth Perceptions of the Program



I love the whole program. I love the way it's built and how everything is an open space. I love that there is no harsh judgment and that you can be open about things you may not be comfortable sharing freely. I love the open room the program gives. It's a really great space for people that are struggling and need a hand to hold.

- L.Y.G.H.T. youth participant, age 15



Youth were invited to share their feedback through open-ended survey questions. A total of 22 youth provided feedback on their perceptions of the program.

- **Initial Interest in the Program**
- **Perceived Program Benefits**
- **Program Dislikes**
- **Program Recommendation**

Initial Interest in the Program



I heard that it was a great opportunity to talk about the things that I grieve about and things that are difficult to speak about in most places. I choose to participate in L.Y.G.H.T because I feel that I need to be heard every once in a while and L.Y.G.H.T gives me that chance.

- L.Y.G.H.T. youth participant, age 17



When asked what initially drew them to be interested in the L.Y.G.H.T program, participants provided various responses.

3 out of 4 participants

reported that their initial interest in the program was for support or to learn how to cope with their problems:

“I needed a support system. At the time of entering L.Y.G.H.T., it seemed like something that could help me in my troubles and get to know others.”

“I chose to participate in the L.Y.G.H.T. program because I want to learn how to communicate with people about my grief and family.”

Other responses included **the desire to be involved in something, to get to know their peers,** and **following a recommendation to join.**

Perceived Program Benefits



Personal Well-Being, Empowerment, and Agency



Relational Connection and Perceived Support



Safe Space



LYGHT

Program Components



Theme 1: Personal Well-Being, Empowerment, and Agency

73% reported that the program assisted them with...

Developing skills:

“I learned that is ok to laugh about things that are hard.”

Self-awareness:

“I’ve learned there are many ways to deal with grief.”

Learned interpersonal skills:

“I have learned how to effectively communicate my emotions and feelings to a group of people.”

A sense of agency:

“I’ve also learned that many things in life can affect people and you can grow and learn from the things that happen to you and that the past is not the future.”

Hopefulness:

“You always have people to talk to. It’s ok to feel how you do.”

A sense of recognition and worthiness:

“Getting to know everyone better, and having them trust me.”

Personal growth:

“I think that L.Y.G.H.T is making me come to terms with the things that have happened to me, and it has helped me grow as a person overall.”

Perceived Program Benefits



Theme 2: Relational Connection and Perceived Support

92% of participants stated that through the L.Y.G.H.T. program they felt a sense of ...

Relational connection and perceived support:

“I love the sense of community that has been built around the L.Y.G.H.T. program.”

Shared lived experience with other participants:

“I’ve learned that I’m not alone and that many other people have experienced similar things as me and I can openly talk about things that have impacted my life.”

A feeling of acceptance:

“Everyone processes emotions differently and everyone is valid to miss whatever they want.”

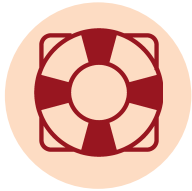
Developing and building new relationships:

“Getting to communicate and have fun with others who have things in common with me.”

Helping one another:

“It’s a great way to bond with others and to understand others better. Its also a great way to heal each other.”

Perceived Program Benefits



Theme 3: Safe Space

Non-judgmental program space:

“I feel like it gives me the time and space to speak openly and safely, without being judged about what I’ve been through or what I have lost throughout the years.”

A space that facilitates opportunities for confidentiality and trust:

“Getting to know everyone better, and having them trust me.”



Theme 4: Program Components

Specific program components:

“The questions box! It’s so fun to just randomly get a question and not have structured questions that feel the same.”

Program Dislikes

45% of participants reported they had no dislikes:

“I don’t have a least favorite experience.”

The most common dislike reported by youth **(23%)** involved the discomfort that can arise from having difficult conversations:

“Feeling bad about things everyone’s been through and knowing no one deserves any of it.”

The second most common dislike reported by youth **(9%)** was peers talking over one another:

“People talking too much when other people are talking.”

Program Recommendation



I enjoy it a lot. I look forward to it every time we have it and I think that L.Y.G.H.T is making me come to terms with the things that have happened to me, and it has helped me grow as a person overall.

- L.Y.G.H.T. youth participant, age 17



100% of participants reported they would recommend the L.Y.G.H.T. program to other youth.

Reasons for why they would recommend the program included:

Providing a safe, non-judgmental space for sharing feelings:

“Because it gives them a place to share what they are actually feeling instead of just going out and people judge them.”

Helping participants cope with grief and loss:

“I would recommend it to other teens. I feel that it is a good experience and for people to know that they are not alone.”

Building connection and understanding with others:

“It’s a great way to bond closer with people and helps you understand things from a different point of view.”

Offering emotional support and healing:

“I would recommend it to other people in foster care because it gives you an opportunity to express your feelings without feeling like you’re being judged.”

Additional Study Highlights

8 out of 10

eligible youth chose to participate in the voluntary L.Y.G.H.T. program

Percentage of youth who provided feedback and said they would recommend the program to other youth in foster care:

100%

75%

of youth in the L.Y.G.H.T. program who chose to identify their race/ethnicity were from historically racially minoritized communities.

The L.Y.G.H.T. program was accessed

239 times

by youth in foster care

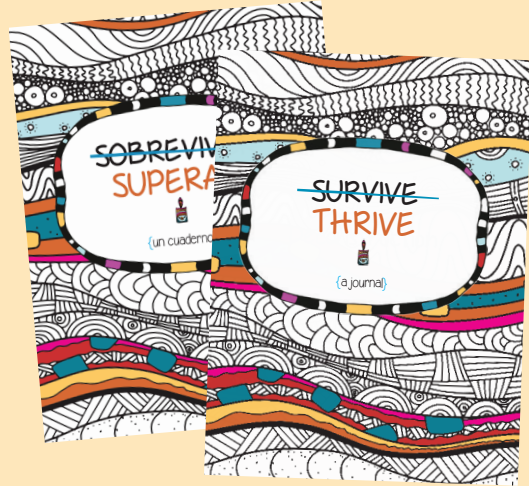


At follow-up, youth rated the L.Y.G.H.T. program between **“most of the time”** and **“absolutely”** as a trauma-informed atmosphere

L.Y.G.H.T. Resources



L.Y.G.H.T. Newsletter



Survive/Thrive Journal



L.Y.G.H.T. Tip Sheets

Sign Up for LYGT Updates

* Email

First Name

Last Name

Street

City

State/Province

Postal Code

L.Y.G.H.T. Updates
Sign up [here](#)

Next Steps



*This is a really good program for teens, especially ones in foster care.
Thank you for letting me be a part of this. Keep up the good work!*

- L.Y.G.H.T. youth participant, age 17



Expanding the L.Y.G.H.T. program to teens and young adults in all four regions of South Carolina



Bringing the L.Y.G.H.T. program to youth in foster care in Oregon



Expanding the reach of the L.Y.G.H.T. program through more trained L.Y.G.H.T. facilitators

Acknowledgments

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