

LIVING OUR PROMISE

FR1ENDS of the
CH1LDREN
Texas

How Friends
of the Children
is Expanding
Across Texas

Letter from the Executive Director



As is often the case, something big is happening in Texas!

When the co-founders of Friends of the Children-Austin first brought this unique model to Texas in 2017, they hoped it would spark a movement across the state. In 2023, after world-champion gymnast and Houston native, Simone Biles requested a local chapter, the excitement and momentum from Friends-Austin helped launch Friends-Houston. The success of Friends-Austin and the promise of the new Friends-Houston chapter led to increased support at the Texas Capitol during the 2023 legislative session.

With help from the National office, Friends of the Children-Texas became the first intermediary chapter in the national network, tasked with managing statewide funding and launching new chapters in more Texas cities. Thanks to strong foundational funding, Friends-Dallas opened in 2025. Friends-Texas now leads a coordinated, efficient, and collaborative statewide organizational structure while empowering each chapter to remain responsive to unique local contexts and dynamics.

Rather than employing Friends to work directly with youth, Friends-Texas supports local chapters so they can grow

and reach more youth and families in their communities. **When it comes to growth across the state in the years ahead, the giant Texas sky is the limit!**

With Gratitude,

Nancy Pollard

Executive Director, Friends of the Children-Texas



Our Mission & Model

For more than 30 years, Friends of the Children has redefined youth mentoring by creating the country's first and only long-term mentoring program.



We identify youth who have unique talents, interests, and dreams, but also face multiple systemic obstacles, and pair them with a professional, full-time, salaried mentor called a Friend. We commit to each child for the long term, from kindergarten through high school graduation – 12+ years, no matter what.

Each Friend spends 14 to 16 hours per month of intentional, 1:1 time with the youth they support. Friends and youth set goals together, and Friends design activities that advance those goals and build essential life skills proven to empower them to break the cycle of generational poverty.

Friends serve as a link between the different areas of a child's life, creating stability and consistency by spending time with youth in school, in the community, and at home, and by becoming a trusted resource to youth and their caregivers.

While local Friends of the Children chapters in cities such as Dallas, Houston, and Austin pair Friends and youth, Friends of the Children-Texas was formed in 2023 to steward multi-city funding, launch new chapters around the state, and expand the proven model to reach more children facing the greatest challenges.

National Outcomes

We set three high-level goals for each child enrolled in the program:

1 Graduate from high school with a plan for what's next.

2 Remain free from involvement in the juvenile justice system.

3 Wait until after their teen years to become a parent.



Our model is data-driven, distinct, and focused on accountability. And it works.



83%

receive their high school diploma or GED.



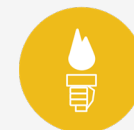
98%

wait until after their teen years to become a parent.



92%

enroll in post-secondary education, serve our country, or enter the workforce.



93%

remain free from involvement with the juvenile justice system.

The Texas Approach

Friends of the Children-Texas is dedicated to building on the proven success of our 1:1 mentoring model and reducing foster care re-entry throughout the state. Friends-Texas is advancing this mission by supporting the growth of current chapters and expanding the Friends of the Children model into additional cities across Texas.

In addition to representing local chapters at the state level, Friends-Texas manages statewide funding, partners with the National office to raise funds for new locations, and works with all Texas chapters to raise funds for the sustainability and growth of existing locations.



From Launch to Legacy

2017



Friends-Austin Established

50 community families committed \$1.7+ million to launch the first Friends of the Children chapter in Texas.

2019



Friends-Austin Launches Pilot Partnership with CASA of Travis County

By pairing professional mentors with 4- to 6-year olds exiting foster care and reunifying with their families, Friends-Austin and CASA achieve the extraordinary outcome of zero youth re-entering foster care.

2023



Friends-Houston Established

With support from Olympic gold medalist and Friends of the Children ambassador Simone Biles, Friends-Houston became the second Texas location, focusing on serving children most at risk of re-entry into the child welfare system.

2024



Major State Funding Grant Secured

Austin and Houston leadership secured a five-year contract with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to provide professional mentoring to children involved in the child welfare system, and resulting in the establishment of Friends-Texas.

2025



Friends-Dallas Established

Inspired by our state's growing commitment to children most at risk of entering foster care, the Dallas community enthusiastically rallied to bring the program to the DFW area.

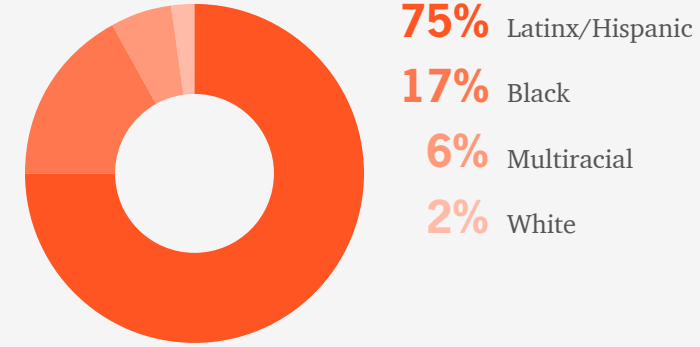


Different Stages, Shared Mission

Texas by the Numbers as of 2026

Friends-Austin

Demographic Breakdown



225

Youth Served

34

Number of Friends

53%

Youth Impacted by the
Child Welfare System

4-14

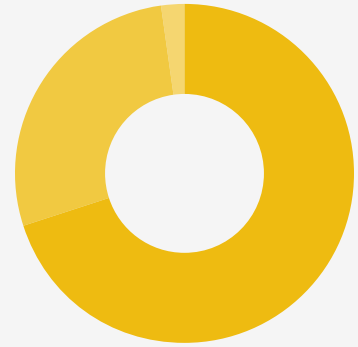
Age Range of Youth

Enrollment Partners



Friends-Houston

Demographic Breakdown



70% Black
28% Latinx/Hispanic
2% White

48

Youth Served

6

Number of Friends

88%

Youth Impacted by the Child Welfare System

4-14

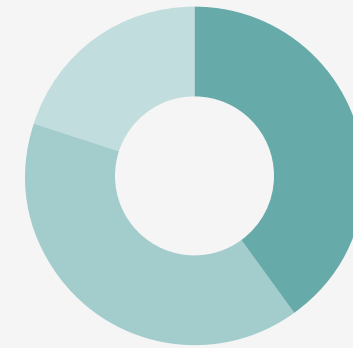
Age Range of Youth

Enrollment Partners



Friends-Dallas

Demographic Breakdown



40% Black
40% Latinx/Hispanic
20% Multiracial

24

Youth Served

3

Number of Friends

4-6

Age Range of Youth

Enrollment Partners





Breaking the Foster Care Cycle in Texas

Friends of the Children plays an important role in ending foster care involvement for kids in Texas.

Since 2019, Friends-Austin has worked closely with partner organizations to enroll and serve child welfare-involved youth. Referral partnerships with CASA of Travis County, Casey Family Programs, and the Center for Child Protection help us reach kindergarten-age children at a pivotal moment — reunification with their families — after they have experienced foster care.

In Texas, 47% of children under 12 re-enter foster care within five years of reunifying with their families. A pilot partnership between Friends-Austin and CASA of Travis County aimed to improve these outcomes by providing children and families with the stability and consistent presence of a Friend. During the pilot partnership, not a single child enrolled in the Friends program re-entered foster care.

Our leadership team advocated within the Texas legislature for a multi-million-dollar, multi-year appropriation to provide long-term professional mentoring for children and families involved in Child Protective Services (CPS). In September

2024, we secured a five-year contract with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to provide professional mentoring for children involved in the child welfare system — a highly traumatic experience correlated with long-term academic, economic, and health consequences. There are now 164 youth enrolled across Friends-Austin, Friends-Houston, and Friends-Dallas with documented histories of abuse and neglect.

This grant was awarded to the Austin, Houston, and Dallas chapters as they continue to grow and serve more youth with child welfare experiences. Friends-Texas is also supported by this grant, enabling us to expand this important work to new chapters across the state.

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Partners in Our Promise

Friends of the Children-Texas' partners help support our mission to end generational poverty, one child at a time. Our organization is committed to building strong relationships with our partners through a variety of engagement opportunities that align with their values, corporate culture, community service and business objectives.



WoodNext Foundation

WoodNext Foundation has played a pivotal role in expanding Friends of the Children's direct intervention model across Texas. WoodNext has provided ongoing support for Friends-Austin since 2021 and for Friends-Texas since its inception, and has also provided seed funding to launch both Friends-Houston and Friends-Dallas.

“The WoodNext Foundation is excited to continue to support Friends of the Children’s work across Texas - Austin, Houston, Dallas, and at the state level. We deeply appreciate that its intensive long-term approach addresses root causes of childhood adversity and empowers youth who are facing the greatest obstacles, with outstanding outcomes.”

Nancy Chan

Executive Director of WoodNext Foundation

Vinson & Elkins

Vinson & Elkins, LLP provides critical funds alongside pro bono support to all four Friends chapters in Texas. Lawyers from Vinson & Elkins provide best-in-class bono counsel in a wide range of areas, including establishment, corporate governance, employment, intellectual property, real estate, government contracting, and more.

In addition to the firm's continued support, individuals from Vinson & Elkins remain equally committed to Friends of the Children's mission and work. Milam Newby (Senior Partner, Austin) serves on the Boards of Friends-Austin and Friends-Houston, and acts as Board Chair for Friends-Texas. Tim Johnston (Senior Associate, Austin) serves on the Friends-Austin Board. Robert P. Hughes (Partner, Houston) previously served on the Boards of Friends-Houston and Friends-Texas.



“At Vinson & Elkins, we believe that investing in the strength and potential of our communities is one of the most meaningful commitments we can make. Friends of the Children-Texas embodies that same belief – its long-term, data-driven model transforms lives and breaks cycles of adversity in ways that create lasting impact. V&E is proud to support this mission not only through financial and pro bono resources, but also through our people, who are deeply engaged in helping Texas children and families thrive.”

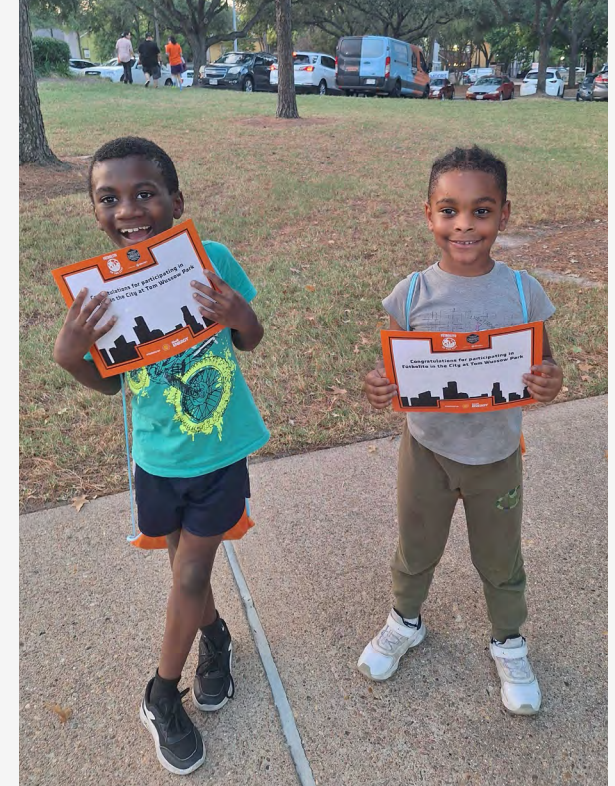
Milam Newby
Partner, Austin

H-E-B
**TOURNAMENT
OF CHAMPIONS**
CHARITABLE TRUST

The H-E-B Tournament of Champions Charitable Trust established dedicated funds to provide emergency basic needs support for our families being served in Austin, Houston, and Dallas.



Brown Advisory generously supports the work of Friends of the Children around the state by providing rent-free office space for Friends of the Children-Texas.



To the friends of Friends-Texas,

On behalf of the Friends of the Children-Texas Board of Directors, thank you for your partnership as we expand Friends of the Children's presence across Texas.



I have witnessed the extraordinary growth of Friends of the Children in Texas firsthand as a founding Board member for both Friends-Austin and Friends-Houston. Friends' data-driven model, coupled with real-world economic impact and proven outcomes for children, has enabled us to develop relationships with corporate, foundation, and government partners across the state in record time. Most significantly, in 2024, we established a multi-year, multi-million-dollar contract with the state of Texas to support our work with youth exiting foster care. This past year, we launched Texas' third chapter in Dallas.

As the parent organization for all local chapters in Texas, Friends-Texas exists to safeguard the sustainability of each chapter, ensuring their ability to deliver on our mission for years to come: 12+ years, no matter what.

Composed of longtime partners and leaders across the state, the Friends-Texas Board is uniquely suited to provide the resourceful, forward-thinking infrastructure and governance needed to deliver on this promise.

Our ambitious goal is made attainable by you, our supporters and partners, who serve as crucial ambassadors for our organization in Austin, Dallas, Houston, and beyond.

With the rest of the Board and staff at Friends-Texas, I reaffirm our commitment to accelerating Friends of the Children's growth across Texas markets in a streamlined, highly effective, and mission-focused way.

Thank you for walking alongside us in bringing more Friends to more children in Texas, no matter what.

Milam Newby
Chair



Friends-Texas Board of Directors

Milam Newby, Chair

Jessica Weaver, Secretary & Treasurer

Rachel Arnold

Ryan Atlas

Jordan Brainerd

Erinn Kelley-Siel

Laura Wolf



FR1ENDS of the CHILDREN

Texas

Design services generously donated
by INK Communications Co.

Impacting generational change by
empowering youth who are facing the
greatest obstacles through relationships
with professional mentors –

12+ years, no matter what.

Friends of the Children-Texas

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