

Helping Kids Succeed

(NAPSA)—The next time you see kids going to their high school graduation, you're looking at money in the bank for all Americans. That's because every youth who graduates from high school saves taxpayers \$1 million over their lifetime.

The Problem

For some kids, however, getting to graduation can be particularly difficult. For example, the average youth in foster care changes schools three times and loses four to six months of academic



Treehouse's Graduation Success program helps youth in foster care beat the odds with an 89 percent extended graduation rate. From left are Class of 2017 graduate Brianna and her Education Specialist, Taji Ellis.

progress at each stop. Nationwide, only 50 percent of these youth graduate from high school. Without a diploma and a plan for their future, they experience disproportionately high rates of poverty, homelessness, incarceration, early parenting and substance abuse.

5-Year Goal

Helping these vulnerable students is a nonprofit based in Washington state that provides guidance to organizations all over the country. Called Treehouse, it focuses on giving youth in foster care a childhood and a future. In fact, its Graduation Success program has an 89 percent extended graduation rate. The culmination of a five-year goal for the youth to earn their diplomas at the same pace as their peers, the rate includes both on-time and fifth-year graduates. When the program began in 2012, less than 40 percent of youth in foster care locally were graduating.

"Youth in foster care often need extra time to graduate because of challenges out of their control, and Treehouse sticks with them regardless of how long the journey takes," said Janis Avery, CEO of Treehouse.

How It's Done

Based in middle schools and high schools, Graduation Success introduces consistent education focus into the students' lives, often for the first time. Part coach, part parent and frequently part best friend, Education Specialists meet with their students weekly—year in and year out, even during the summer. The students take charge of their own futures by learning to set goals, make plans and advocate for themselves.

Learn More

Visit www.treehouseforkids.org for further facts, to make a donation, host a drive or volunteer.