

National Angels Process Evaluation

DECEMBER 2021

MAJOR FINDINGS FROM THE FINAL REPORT:

NATIONAL ANGELS' PROGRAMMING MEETS IMPORTANT NEEDS

National Angels programs are meeting immediate needs and providing long-term support for children, youth, and families that is not offered through traditional service models. Volunteers matched with caregivers through National Angels programming provide important tangible and emotional supports, which reduces caregiver stress and improves retention.

NATIONAL ANGELS' PROGRAMMING ESTABLISHES RELATIONAL PERMANENCE

National Angels volunteers are able to form genuine and authentic relationships with caregivers and youth, which leads to relational permanence. National Angels volunteers remain committed to families and youth and often stay connected with them after their volunteer period has ended.

NATIONAL ANGELS' PROGRAMMING PROMOTES NORMALCY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

National Angels programming creates normalcy opportunities for youth in foster care, which promotes healthy social development and wellbeing. Children and youth in foster care exhibit improved confidence, behavior, and relationships with others during their participation in both the Love Box program and Dare to Dream program.

NATIONAL ANGELS' PROGRAMMING GENERATES SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital is the culmination of strong relationships that provide tangible and emotional support, guidance, and companionship in times of need. The social capital generated through National Angels programming can help reduce hardships experienced by children and families by providing relationship-based resources to navigate challenges.

"It was less of the materialistic things. It was just more of [National Angels] just pouring into me with their love and the situation I was in with my family, just showing me who they were and dragging me through the mud and wanted to kick me out, and I was pregnant. It was just a lot. You know what I mean? And they were there for me as a family. The family that I needed, my biological family, was hurting me. For me, [National Angels] were there for me as a family, mentally during my pregnancy, praying for me, supporting me. And then not just that, it was just like, okay, whatever we do help you with, we wanna make sure it's gonna be something that's gonna impact your life forever."

-Youth Formerly in Foster Care

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. IMPROVE TRAINING AND ONBOARDING OF VOLUNTEERS
2. CREATE SPACE FOR VOLUNTEERS TO COLLABORATE AND CONNECT
3. RECRUIT MORE DIVERSE VOLUNTEERS
4. IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY OF THE MATCHING PROCESS FOR CAREGIVERS
5. ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE ON AGE-APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNGER YOUTH
6. INCREASE CONNECTION WITH BIRTH FAMILIES

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

National Angels contracted with the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing (TXICFW) at The University of Texas at Austin, Steve Hicks School of Social Work to conduct a comprehensive program evaluation of the Love Box and Dare to Dream programs. The evaluation began with a process evaluation in 2021 to better understand how the Love Box and Dare to Dream programs work, identify strengths and challenges, and offer insight on any adjustments to maximize the impact that National Angels has on children, youth, and caregivers who are involved with child protection systems. TXICFW researchers conducted 31 interviews with staff (8), volunteers (10), caregivers (10), and former foster youth (3) who all had current or former experience with Austin Angels programming. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for major themes. All participants were asked to complete a pre-interview form which collected demographic information. Results from this process evaluation will be used to inform the research design and activities of the outcome evaluation in 2022.

8 NATIONAL ANGELS STAFF:



10 VOLUNTEERS:



10 CAREGIVERS:



3 FORMER FOSTER YOUTH:



"I will add that without people like this [National Angels] caring and checking in, and having an extra level of support, I think that if every foster family had something like this available to them, I think there would be less families pulling out of the system."

-Caregiver

"You know how you can just feel people's energy, and you could just tell with certain people that they have something that you could just attach yourself to, and it's just an amazing vibe? And that's just what I got from [National Angels]. So, I've always had the best experiences with them. They just came into my life not just for a little bit or a season. It's more of a lifetime. So, I've built lifetime friends."

- Youth Formerly in Foster Care

"My son, who is 10, participated. [National Angels] have with their partnership Lone Star soccer and it's been a really good experience for him being a part of a team, having kind of an outlet for energy, being able to learn those skills has been really cool for him, definitely something that he might have not otherwise been able to participate in so that was good."

-Caregiver