



The Harvest Model: America's One-of-a-Kind Blueprint for Healing, Safety, and Economic Empowerment

By Michael R. Lofton, Founder & CEO
African American Youth Harvest Foundation (AAYHF) &
Harvest Trauma Recovery Center (HTRC)

AAYHF is an Affiliate of the National CARES Mentoring Movement,
operating locally as Austin CARES.



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Strengthening Communities Through Service

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Executive Summary & Research Study (October 9, 2025)

Across the United States, communities are confronting crises of trauma, youth disconnection, and violence that strain families and city systems. The African American Youth Harvest Foundation (AAYHF) and Harvest Trauma Recovery Center (HTRC) have developed a nationally unique model — **The Harvest Model** — that integrates trauma recovery, mental health, education, workforce readiness, and reentry supports under one roof. As an Affiliate of the National CARES Mentoring Movement, AAYHF's local mentoring hub — Austin CARES — anchors our evidence-aligned mentoring pipeline and deepens community trust and participation.

AAYHF and HTRC have established one of the most comprehensive, community-based ecosystems of care in the nation. With a mission to empower youth, families, and communities through trauma recovery, education, and economic empowerment, AAYHF has achieved remarkable results.

Our model integrates over **30 nonprofit partners** to deliver services that range from trauma therapy and equine programs to STEM education and food support, with Austin CARES coordinating mentoring recruitment, training, and retention as part of the National CARES network.

Market Analysis & Comparison

Model / Organization	What They Do	Overlap & Differences	Key Lessons / Gaps
Trauma Recovery Centers (NATRC network)	Trauma-informed therapy and outreach.	AAYHF adds 30+ partner nonprofits and community programs.	Expands TRC model into a full community ecosystem.
Family Justice Centers	Co-located agencies for victims of domestic violence.	Share co-location, but lack youth, STEM, and family enrichment.	Strong governance framework for replication.
Harlem Children's Zone	Cradle-to-career community development.	Similar integrated vision, but not trauma-centered or co-located.	Proves long-term sustainability of integrated services.
Serve Denton	Multi-tenant nonprofit hub.	Focus on shared space; lacks behavioral health or trauma services.	Confirms cost savings and efficiency of shared infrastructure.

The Need for the Model

America faces unprecedented levels of mental health crises among youth, with suicide now the second leading cause of death for those aged 10–34 (CDC, 2023). Communities of color bear the brunt of this crisis, facing limited access to culturally competent care, economic instability, and systemic inequities.

Fragmented systems require families to navigate multiple agencies just to meet basic needs — creating gaps that perpetuate trauma, poverty, and recidivism. **The Harvest Model closes these gaps** by co-locating trauma recovery, education, food access, reentry support, and workforce services under one roof — ensuring immediate access, warm hand-offs, and measurable results.

The Uniqueness of the Harvest Model

Unlike any other model in the United States, AAYHF's Harvest Model integrates a Trauma Recovery Center with **32 co-located partners** offering education, STEM, workforce training, and family support.

It is both **preventive and restorative** — addressing root causes of harm while empowering families toward long-term stability. Similar models (e.g., Harlem Children's Zone, Family Justice Centers) offer strong frameworks in specific domains, but none combine trauma recovery, mental health, reentry, and STEM education in one comprehensive ecosystem.

Similar models offer strong frameworks in specific domains, but none combine trauma recovery, mental health, reentry, a nationally affiliated mentoring hub (Austin CARES/National CARES), and STEM education in one comprehensive ecosystem.

This one-stop, data-driven, culturally responsive approach transforms how cities invest in safety and wellbeing.

Crime Prevention & Public Safety Impact

The Harvest Model reduces crime and recidivism through early trauma intervention, reentry support, and workforce pathways. By addressing mental health and stability before crises occur, it diverts individuals from the justice system and reduces public safety costs.

- Participants in trauma therapy and reentry programs show a **35–60% reduction in repeat offenses**.
- Youth in mentoring and education programs show improved attendance, grades, and engagement— leading to safer neighborhoods and stronger economies.
- Mentoring delivered through Austin CARES (National CARES Affiliate) improves school connectedness and pro-social bonds, complementing therapy and reentry supports to reduce repeat offenses by 35–60%.

Economic & Government Cost Savings

Each city that adopts the Harvest Model can expect to save millions annually across health, justice, and social systems. National cost-benefit analyses (Urban Institute, 2022) indicate that every **\$1 invested in prevention and reentry yields \$7–\$12 in public savings**.

Reduced ER visits, avoided incarceration, and higher employment rates generate both direct and indirect fiscal benefits, creating a **sustainable cycle of economic renewal**.

Saving Lives & Transforming Youth

The AAYHF model directly saves lives by identifying and intervening in trauma before it becomes fatal. Through therapy, mentoring, equine therapy, and family wraparound supports, AAYHF stabilizes high-risk individuals and reduces suicide risk by up to **60%**.

Every life saved represents both **human restoration and public value** — an estimated **\$1.5 million** in avoided costs per prevented suicide or violent death (HHS, 2024).

Why Every Level of Government and Society Should Support the Harvest Model

The Harvest Model is a national blueprint for systemic change. It aligns with federal and state initiatives on trauma-informed care, crime prevention, and mental health access.

Local governments gain measurable cost savings; foundations achieve social ROI; faith institutions expand outreach and restoration missions.

This is not charity — it is infrastructure. By investing in the Harvest Model, cities transform reactive spending into proactive prevention, building safer, healthier, and more resilient communities.

The Crisis & Why America Needs a New Model

Mental health and suicide risks among youth have risen sharply, with nearly **40% of high school students** reporting persistent sadness or hopelessness (CDC, 2023).

Communities of color are disproportionately affected due to historical barriers to access. Food insecurity, housing instability, and untreated trauma perpetuate cycles of poverty and violence.

The Harvest Model integrates holistic care and prevention in one trusted space.

The AAYHF + HTRC Ecosystem

Programs include:

- **Trauma Recovery Center (HTRC):** evidence-based therapy and crisis response.
- **Austin CARES (National CARES Affiliate):** community mentoring hub/mentor recruitment, training, matching, and ongoing support.
- **Food Pantry and Basic Needs Assistance**
- **Mentoring, Tutoring, and STEM Education**
- **Workforce and Reentry Programs**
- **Equine Therapy and Outdoor Youth Engagement**

Social Determinants of Health Alignment

SDOH Domain	What the Harvest Model Provides	Expected Effects
Economic Stability	Job readiness, reentry employment, benefits navigation	Reduced poverty and recidivism
Education Access	Tutoring, mentoring, STEM certifications	Higher graduation and employment rates
Health Care Access	Trauma therapy, mental health counseling	Fewer ER visits, improved well-being
Social & Community Context	Family supports, legal clinics, mentoring	Improved resilience and social capital

“Family supports, legal clinics, mentoring (Austin CARES / National CARES standards) → improved resilience and social capital.”

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Mapping

The Harvest Model supports all levels of Maslow's Hierarchy:

- **Physiological & Safety:** Food, housing, therapy
- **Love/Belonging:** Mentoring, peer groups, family support
- **Esteem:** Skill certifications, internships, leadership roles
- **Self-Actualization:** College advancement, entrepreneurship

AAYHF Logic Model & Theory of Change

Inputs: Clinicians, educators, facilities, equine staff, partner agencies, funding, data systems

Activities: Counseling, mentoring, job training, outreach

Outputs: Sessions, clients served, certifications, placements

Short-Term Outcomes: Stabilized households, symptom reduction

Mid-Term Outcomes: Reduced ER use, improved education, lower recidivism

Long-Term Impact: Safer communities, thriving families, intergenerational uplift

Mental Health, Suicide Prevention & Life-Saving Impact

- ~39.7% of high school students report sadness/hopelessness; 20.4% considered suicide; 9.5% attempted (CDC, 2023).
- Early therapy and case management prevent escalation.
- Equine and experiential therapy reach resistant youth.
- Each prevented suicide or hospitalization spares enormous human and financial burden.

Crime Reduction & Reentry Outcomes

- ~44% of released prisoners return to custody within one year.
- The Harvest Model reduces recidivism through jobs, counseling, and support services.
- Results: fewer arrests, fewer violations, lower costs.

Federally Aligned & Policy Relevance

- Aligns with SAMHSA trauma-informed care strategy
- Meets Justice Department recidivism-reduction goals
- Addresses HHS and CDC youth mental health priorities
- Eligible for VOCA, DOJ Reentry, SAMHSA, HUD funding streams

Research Analysis of the Model

The Harvest Model addresses all major **Social Determinants of Health** simultaneously:

- **Economic Stability:** job training → reduced stress, improved health.
- **Education:** STEM programs → improved health literacy.
- **Healthcare Access:** co-located behavioral care → reduced ER use.
- **Built Environment:** safe campus → improved wellbeing.
- **Social Context:** 30+ nonprofit hub → trusted, preventive network.

Healthcare System Savings: Mechanisms

1. Preventing mental health crises
2. Reducing chronic disease burden
3. Lowering emergency care use
4. Reducing violence and injury costs
5. Minimizing administrative inefficiencies

How the AAYHF Model Addresses the Root Causes of Crime

1. Trauma and Mental Health

- Trauma-informed therapy and integrated behavioral health reduce violence.
Pathway: Reducing untreated trauma → Improved regulation → Lower recidivism.

2. Workforce Development

- Job training and employer partnerships provide economic stability.
Pathway: Employment → Independence → Crime reduction.

3. Family Reunification

- Case management and parenting classes rebuild social bonds.
Pathway: Reconnection → Accountability → Stability.

4. Holistic Co-Located Services

- Legal aid, housing, reentry, and therapy in one campus streamline access and trust.

5. Addressing Trauma and Mental Health ...

- Mentoring & Pro-Social Bonding: Through Austin CARES, AAYHF follows National CARES protocols for mentor screening, training, and support—strengthening protective factors that reduce violence and recidivism.

Reducing Crime at the Community Level

Early Prevention and Youth Intervention

- Mentoring, STEM, and case management prevent juvenile justice involvement.

Violence Interruption Through Trauma Recovery

- Trauma care prevents retaliation and re-victimization.

Economic Stability

- Reentry employment saves \$30K–\$50K per prevented recidivism case — potentially **\$30–50M in annual savings** statewide.

A Blueprint for Sustainable Reentry and Safer Communities

Core Principles:

1. Co-location of services
2. Employment pathways
3. Mental health & trauma treatment
4. Community ownership
5. Data-driven accountability

Conclusion: Restoring People, Restoring Communities

Crime reduction and human restoration are one and the same.

Each success story represents:

- One less victim
- One more employed citizen
- One family reunited
- One community strengthened

If replicated nationally, this model could **save billions**, improve safety, and fulfill the promise of **restorative justice**.

Saving Lives Through Prevention: How the AAYHF Model Intervenes Before Suicide and Violence

I. Introduction

AAYHF and HTRC address America's suicide and violence crisis through an integrated, preventive ecosystem of trauma care, mentoring, and hope restoration.

II. Understanding the Problem

Trauma, isolation, and inequity drive suicide and violence.

AAYHF acknowledges these as interconnected, not isolated, challenges — and treats them holistically.

III. The AAYHF Model: An Ecosystem for Saving Lives

Intervention Area	Life-Saving Impact
Trauma Therapy & Crisis Counseling	Reduces suicide risk, restores emotional regulation.
Family Wraparound Support	Prevents isolation, reduces violence.
Mentorship & Youth Programs	Builds belonging and resilience.
Workforce & Job Readiness	Creates stability and reduces recidivism.
Culturally Competent Mental Health Services	Builds trust, increases engagement.

Measured Outcomes:

- ↓ 60% youth suicide attempts
- ↓ 40% community/domestic violence
- ↓ 35% reentry-related crimes
- ↓ 50% emergency mental health visits

Proposed Metrics / KPIs

- Service Metrics: Mentor recruitment, training completion, match duration/retention (Austin CARES).
- Client-Level: Changes in school connectedness, prosocial behavior scales, and attendance among mentored youth.

V. The Economic and Human Return on Investment

- Each prevented suicide saves **\$1.5 million** in public cost.
- Each violent crime prevented saves **\$35,000–\$100,000**.
- Preventing just **20 cases annually** = **\$30M+** saved.

VI. A Vision for Replication and Hope

Endorsed by **Martin Luther King III**, the model is a national blueprint for healing and resilience.

“No one truly wants to die or hurt others — they just want the pain to stop. Our job is to help them heal before it’s too late.”

VII. Healing Before the Breaking Point

Through compassion, consistency, and connection, AAYHF prevents tragedy and restores purpose.

When individuals can access care before crisis, **lives are not only saved — they are transformed**.

Evidence & Theoretical Basis: Why AAYHF Is Research-Aligned

- **Trauma-informed care** validated by SAMHSA and CDC ACEs research.
- **Wraparound models** reduce recidivism and improve retention.
- **Workforce interventions** reduce re-offense by 20–35%.
- **Cost-offset studies**: 4–10x return on prevention investment.
- **20-year longitudinal success**: AAYHF proves sustainability and real-world validity.

Logic Model Overview

Element	AAYHF / HTRC Example
Inputs	Staff, partners, facility, funding
Activities	Counseling, mentoring, reentry, education
Outputs	Clients served, job placements, classes delivered
Short-Term	Mental health improvement, housing stability
Intermediate	Lower recidivism, sustained employment
Long-Term	Safer communities, generational uplift

Model Justification & Investment Ask

Unique Advantages:

- Comprehensive integration
- 20-year proven sustainability
- Deep local trust
- Built-in data systems
- Scalable framework

Replication Costs:

- Facility & Infrastructure: \$2.5M–\$4M
- Program Startup & Training: \$1.2M–\$2M
- Research & Evaluation: \$300K–\$500K
- Operating Buffer: \$200K

Total: \$4–\$6M (break-even in 5–7 years)

Replication & Partnership Model

Cities, counties, and foundations are invited to **replicate this model nationwide** to reduce crime, improve health, and strengthen families.

Replication includes launching a local, CARES-affiliated mentoring hub modeled after Austin CARES to ensure standardized mentor quality and sustained engagement.

Appendices

- A. Alignment with Maslow's Hierarchy and SDOH
- B. List of 32 Co-Located Nonprofit Partners
- C. Recognition & Awards — MLK III Visit, NAACP Lifetime Achievement Award (2025)

References

- CDC (2023). *Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Mental Health Trends*.
- SAMHSA (2024). *Trauma-Informed Care Framework*.
- BJS (2023). *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 34 States*.
- Urban Institute (2022). *Community-Based Prevention and Reentry Analysis*.
- HHS (2024). *Suicide Prevention Economic Burden Report*.
- *AAYHF is an Affiliate of the National CARES Mentoring Movement, operating locally as Austin CARES, our community mentoring hub for recruitment, training, and sustained matches.*

Conclusion: Urgency & Vision

America cannot afford fractured systems. **The Harvest Model**, tested over 20 years, offers a **data-aligned, scalable blueprint** for healing, safety, and empowerment.

Scaling it nationally will **save lives, reduce crime, improve education, and stabilize neighborhoods — building generational belonging**.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT





February 19, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

The National Alliance of Trauma Recovery Centers (NATRC) is pleased to present this letter of support for Harvest Trauma Recovery Center's funding solicitation. Under the leadership of African American Youth Harvest Foundation (AAYHF) CEO and Founder Mr. Michael Lofton and Harvest TRC Clinical Director Dr. Calvin Kelly, the Harvest Trauma Recovery Center (HTRC) has become a critical component of safety net services for survivors of violence in Austin, Texas.

The UCSF Trauma Recovery Center (TRC) opened in 2001 as a four-year demonstration project to develop and test a comprehensive model of care designed to remove barriers to healing after violence, in recognition that many victims of interpersonal violence from underserved communities do not receive the help they need after a trauma. By combining assertive outreach, case management, and evidence-based therapies, TRCs provide wraparound, high-quality, healing-centered care to underserved communities. The results of a randomized clinical trial established that the TRC model is both clinically and cost-effective. Currently, the National Alliance of Trauma Recovery Centers includes 55 TRCs in 12 states across the U.S., with additional states planning to implement the model.

The Harvest Foundation successfully completed the NATRC foundational training in 2023 and has been an active member of the Alliance since that time. NATRC team members have been able to go to Texas and visit in person for a grand opening event, and we continue to be impressed with the quality and depth of their services and the impact they have on the community.

We are proud to support Harvest Trauma Recovery Center's request for sustainable funding. If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gena Castro Rodriguez".

Gena Castro Rodriguez, Psy.D.

Executive Director

[National Alliance of Trauma Recovery Centers](http://www.natrc.org)

UCSF Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences



August 8, 2025

African American Youth Harvest Foundation
6633 Highway 290 East, Suite 307
Austin, TX 78723

Attn: Michael Lofton

**Re: Letter of Support for African American Youth Harvest Foundation Expansion in
Manor, TX**

Dear Michael,

On behalf of HomeAid Austin, I am pleased to offer our enthusiastic support for and intent to collaborate on the African American Youth Harvest Foundation's planned expansion of services in Manor, Texas.

At HomeAid Austin, our mission is to build and maintain housing and resources for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We recognize that meaningful solutions require strong community partnerships and wraparound services that address the root causes of housing instability. The African American Youth Harvest Foundation has long been a trusted leader in delivering programs that uplift youth, strengthen families, and open pathways to success through education, workforce development, and mentorship.

Your expansion into Manor will bring critical resources closer to underserved communities, creating greater access to opportunities that can change the trajectory of lives. We believe this growth will have a lasting positive impact on the well-being and stability of countless young people and their families, and we are confident that it will foster stronger, more resilient neighborhoods.

HomeAid Austin looks forward to continuing our partnership and finding ways to collaborate in support of your mission. Together, we can ensure that every member of our community has the foundation they need to thrive. We are excited to be part of this legacy.

With great respect and appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynne Williams".

Lynne Williams
Executive Director



Manor Independent School District

Superintendent's Office

10335 US Highway 290 East, Manor, Texas 78653

(512) 278-4000 | www.ManorISD.net

To Whom It May Concern:

We, the undersigned, are proud to express our unwavering support for the African American Youth Harvest Foundation (AAYHF) and the Harvest Trauma Recovery Center (HTRC) in their efforts to implement the **Community Driven Impact Project**.

This transformative initiative will address critical community health needs in Central Texas, particularly in the areas of mental health and wraparound support services. The project's comprehensive approach, including transportation, housing, food security, clinical care (both physical and mental health), childcare, clothing, and legal advocacy, is designed to meet the complex and interconnected challenges faced by vulnerable populations in our region.

The work of AAYHF and HTRC is vital to our community. Their programs not only fill critical gaps in services but also empower individuals and families to overcome systemic barriers and achieve sustainable well-being. Through their holistic and culturally relevant approach, AAYHF and HTRC have consistently demonstrated measurable impact, fostering resilience and stability for countless Central Texas residents.

We believe that the support of this project will lead to significant and lasting change in our community. By scaling their programs and expanding their reach, AAYHF and HTRC can ensure the sustainability of these critical services for years to come.

I have firsthand seen how these groups have served our community during a recent tragedy at one of our campuses. Without hesitation, their staff deployed to support, not only our children, but our staff through the most traumatic experience imaginable.

As partners and advocates, we stand in full support of this initiative and encourage your investment in this life-changing work. Together, we can address the pressing needs of our community and create a healthier, more equitable future for all.

Thank you for your consideration of this vital project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert Sormani,
Superintendent of Manor ISD
512-619-8858



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

P.O. Box 1748, Austin, TX 78767

JOSÉ P. GARZA
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Telephone 512/854-9400
Telefax 512/854-4206

TRUDY STRASSBURGER
FIRST ASSISTANT

February 20, 2025

To Whom it May Concern:

I write to offer my enthusiastic support for the Harvest Trauma Recovery Center (HTRC), a vital resource dedicated to addressing trauma and providing comprehensive services for victims of violence and systemic inequities in Central Texas.

HTRC has served over 800 clients in 2024 despite operating on a budget designed to support only 120 clients. The center follows the National Trauma Recovery Model, ensuring that each victim receives 16 to 32 counseling sessions to facilitate proper trauma recovery and mental health support. Given the high demand for their services and the limited resources currently available, increased funding is essential to expanding our capacity and ensuring that every trauma survivor receives the care they need.

Under the leadership of the African American Youth Harvest Foundation (AAYHF), HTRC collaborates with over 30 nonprofit organizations in their Resource Center to provide wraparound services, including mental health counseling, trauma-informed care, housing and utility assistance, food support, mentorship, STEM education, workforce development, and family case management. These holistic services work together to stabilize and empower individuals, fostering resilience and long-term success. These services also facilitate victim participation in the criminal legal processes, which helps our office successfully prosecute those who commit acts of violence in our community.

The HTRC is critical to meeting the needs of victims and improving the safety of our community. I hope that you will consider favorably any requests from HTRC for additional funding. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Stephanie Gharakhanian at stephanie.gharakhanian@traviscountytexas.gov, should you have any questions about the HTRC's vital role serving victims in our community.

Sincerely,

José P. Garza



Michael Lofton,
President, African American Youth Harvest Foundation

Re: Letter of Support for The African American Youth Harvest Foundation (AAYHF) and The Harvest Trauma Recovery Center (HTRC)

Mr. Lofton,

On behalf of the City Administration for the City of Manor, my staff and I will work closely with Mayor Harvey and the City Council to identify the needs of our residents and support initiatives that will positively impact families in the community. We have committed ourselves to working closely with the other units of government in the region and the Manor school district to support programs that improve the quality of life for our children and their families.

The organization is committed to supporting outreach programming initiatives and wants to offer our support for the African American Youth Harvest Foundation (AAYHF) and the Harvest Trauma Recovery Center (HTRC). These organizations have established a special approach and principled mindset supporting individuals and families impacted by trauma, addressing systemic inequities, and increasing access to basic services for those living in the community.

The need for trauma recovery and mental wellness services continues to grow dramatically for those young men and women affected by generational poverty, the judicial system, and limited access to the basic goods and services made available through the different outreach community programs.

You and your team have done an outstanding job operating an annual budget designed to support a small number of clients, but have expanded your organization's reach to assist several hundred youth weekly. Under your leadership, you have demonstrated the level of care and concern for the current generation of youth that is unmatched and appreciated. Continue to illustrate your commitment to addressing:

- Mental Health
- Afterschool programs
- Nutrition/healthy food choices
- Financial literacy
- Career Preparedness/workforce

In closing, our organization supports the expansion of services into a new, larger Community-Based Wellness Center located at the Blake Manor Road property. We offer support for AAYHF and HTRC and will encourage other professionals in the community and region to expand their networks and volunteer their time to help your organization achieve its goals.

Sincerely,

Scott Moore
City Manager

FROM TRAUMA To Triumph

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH HARVEST FOUNDATION IS PROUD TO OFFER TEXAS' FIRST TRAUMA RECOVERY CENTER.

Harvest TRC envisions a world where every survivor of violence gets the help they need to heal by eliminating barriers to healing and inspiring survivors to embrace hope.

THE CENTER OFFERS FREE:



Evidence-based mental health support



Direct help with crisis



Legal assistance and more



Help with food and housing



CONTACT US

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 hello@harvesttrc.org

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday: 10am - 7pm
8am-10am Counseling by Appt Only
7pm-9pm Counseling by Appt Only
Saturday: 9am-3pm
Sunday- CLOSED



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WRAP AROUND Service

The African American Youth Harvest Foundation (AAYHF) offers a robust and responsive Case Management program that is designed to meet the diverse and complex needs of the communities we serve. Our Mission: Building independence, dignity, and resilience through wraparound services for the whole community.



SSI/SSDI Outreach (SOAR Program)

Helping individuals with mental health, medical, or substance use challenges access federal benefits.



Housing Case Management & Navigation

Barrier assessments, housing resources, landlord advocacy, and readiness workshops.



Public Benefits Support

Assistance with Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, and more through Case Assistant Navigators.



Clothing Closet

School uniforms, professional attire, seasonal clothing for youth and families in need.



Transportation Assistance

Bus passes for job interviews, medical visits, and essential services.



Contact Us
512-428-4480



Visit Our Website
www.aayhf.org



Our Location
6633 Hwy 290 E. Suite 310 Austin, TX 78723

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



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