



GOALS
CENTER

Greater Omaha Attendance and Learning Services

2021-2022

Annual

REPORT

As I prepared to pen this letter, I reflected in amazement that a full year has passed since GOALS's 10-year anniversary. The evolution of the organization continues to surprise and astonish me. I am humbled by the accomplishments of the agency and my fellow GOALS teammates. However, despite our accomplishments, challenges are ever present. Just like our partners and community, we experienced our own issues to overcome. We faced them head-on as a team and leaned on our supportive relationships to assist us in finding solutions. Some of those challenges included changes in organizational and operational funding, the emergence of a waitlist for GOALS services, staff turnover, and the ripple effect of the pandemic's impact on families in the community. Another area of concern is the consistent increase and upward trends in the attendance data across all 11 school districts. We continue to see greater increases in families of color experiencing poverty, further highlighting the disparities across the Omaha metro. Despite the efforts of schools, providers, system stakeholders, and community members, over 26% of students in the Learning Community were chronically absent from school. This is critical, as every minute a child isn't in school, they are missing valuable information—and each missed lesson contributes to the suffocating feeling that it is impossible to catch up, further compounding low school attendance.

This past year, GOALS witnessed overwhelming and complex needs for families with students experiencing chronic absenteeism. The complications families faced were more significant than ever before, often causing us to create multi-faceted plans and innovative strategies. Listening to our kids and families, GOALS was able to access targeted solutions with dedicated partners to work in conjunction to support families. We found success in working with other professionals in their area of expertise and in a true sense of partnership to benefit families. Serving the community with like-minded professionals afforded GOALS and families a rewarding experience for success.

As an agency, if last year was focused on opportunity and growth, internally and externally, this year's focus was on improvement and refinement. This year, we evaluated our work and commitments to ensure each employee was concentrating their efforts in a meaningful way. As a team, we re-evaluated programs, processes, and outcomes that we created in the past few years and fine-tuned them based on their efficacy. We adjusted the way we talked about families and our work and wove diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout our organization. The team was diligent about strengthening existing partnerships and creating new relationships across sectors, so that our families had the accessibility to networks for them to thrive. GOALS had the honor of consulting and presenting locally, statewide, and even nationally, to share our work and experiences for all kids and families struggling with chronic absenteeism. Through these opportunities, we were also able to gain valuable insights on how to do our work better while focusing on honoring research, data, culture, and equity.

Despite the fact that students, faculty, and staff have transitioned back into the classroom in this post-pandemic year, our community continues to feel the aftershocks of the pandemic. Unfortunately, the data from the 2021-2022 is dismal as systemic disparities continue to rock our black and brown families significantly impacting student attendance, and subsequently other outcomes like graduation rates, dropout rates, and educational achievement overall. Increases in chronic absenteeism for students of color were seen across both Douglas and Sarpy counties. In addition, families experiencing poverty are overrepresented in our attendance data, with over 25,000, or over 49% of students in poverty considered to be chronically absent. The very children that need the presence of school in their lives fail to regularly attend at alarming rates. Only as a community can we improve outcomes for kids and families. Improving outcomes for families and supporting them in overcoming the obstacles that contribute to chronic absenteeism result in measurable gains in all social determinates of health. Increased social determinates of health, consequently, creates a city with reduced disparities and flourishing communities.

Now more than ever, we must recognize that it is time to invest in our future workforce, uplifting children of color and children in poverty so they are afforded the same opportunities for future success. We must not maintain the status quo as it will limit growth and development for the children of Douglas and Sarpy counties. The talent and intelligence of these children can not and will not be wasted.

Although the problems of chronic absenteeism, racial and ethnic disparities, and poverty feel overwhelming and impossible to tackle, it can be improved. All of us must ask our families what they need, listen to understand, and provide them with what they ask for to experience sustainable life changes. I believe we already have the partners that are passionate to serve, and I believe with honesty, trust, and collaboration between us all, Omaha's kids can achieve every goal.

Nicole Seymour



Nicole Seymour
Executive Director

MISSION AND VISION

The mission of the GOALS Center is to address absenteeism and at-risk behavior through encouragement of coordinated efforts to improve student attendance and learning.

PROGRAMS

ENGAGEMENT OUTREACH

For students who missed over 10% of the current or previous school year. GOALS offers students and their families 90 days of targeted interventions based on immediate needs. Which is identified in the referral form or during contact with the family in the initial meeting. Family Advocates priority is re-engagement in the school setting. Services will be targeted to caregivers to address the basic needs of the family as well as the needs of the youth to increase school engagement.

ELEVATE

A pilot program designed to serve BIPOC youth and their families to address barriers in the school, home, and community experienced by the entire family that contributes to chronic absenteeism. This model uses restorative and peace-making practices facilitated by the Concord Meditation Center. Charles Drew is available to serve mental and physical needs. GOALS and the Urban League serve as mentors to help youth navigate school and their social life. Combining the strength of the four community agencies to serve the families to increase school engagement and academic achievement.

TRADITIONAL SERVICES

If the student missed under 10% of the current or previous school year. Family Advocates use family-centered case management with the youth and family for 6-12 months. Family Advocates meet with school partners monthly to help resolve attendance concerns and meet with caregivers monthly to address the concerns and create service plans. Service plans are updated monthly and Family Advocates follow service delivery schedules based on the grade level of the student. Kindergarten to 5th grade youth are visited twice a month in the school setting. 6th to 12th grade youth are visited three times a month in the school setting. Each visit is to increase school engagement and academic achievement.

MEET THE TEAM



Nicole Seymour *Executive Director*

Nicole has been a champion for children and families for over 15 years, working in various capacities in the non-profit sector.



Rebecka Theurer *Program Manager*

Rebecka was one of the first employees at the GOALS Center, she has been working with students and families regarding concerns that affect attendance for almost ten years



John Paul *Operations Manager*

Before joining GOALS, John worked in the Omaha non-profit sector as a violence prevention expert and a youth and family advocate. John is a Citizen of the Chickasaw Nation.



Andria Thompson *Intake Specialist*

Andria has been working at GOALS for two years. She is the organization's Intake Specialist and serves as the initial point of contact for most students and their families. Andria also maintains the organization's records and operates as a data analyst.



Lydia Turner *Community Navigation Coordinator*

Lydia has been working at GOALS for three years. She serves as the organization's Community Navigator and is responsible for developing community partnerships and facilitating coordinated efforts to improve student attendance and learning.



James Ross *Family Advocate*

An artist turned case-manager, he brings a sense of calm to the families and students he works with.



Jasmine Rennie *Family Advocate*

Jasmine has worked in human service for many years and has a big heart for helping families overcome barriers to attendance.



Traci Ford *Family Advocate*

Traci has worked in human services for much of her career, she has also spent some time working in early childhood education.



Stacy Vogt *Family Advocate*

Stacy has experience working with non-profits organizations within the Omaha community for 3 years.



Axel Olivo *Family Advocate*

His first job was at a non-profit, non-partisan organization called the Heartland Worker Center as a paid canvasser, to spread information about voter rights and the importance of voting.



Skye Gonnie Meints *Family Advocate*

Skye is from the Navajo Reservation. She has worked in the non-profit world for a year, but she has volunteered and worked with the Native American community for over five years.

SPECIAL THANKS TO CHELSEY ERPELDING:

The GOALS Team would like to send special thanks to our former team member, Chelsey Erpelding. Chelsey joined the GOALS Team in September 2019. During her time at GOALS, she played a major role at GOALS. From data, to grant writing, to managing of the day-to-day functions, her role was pivotal to the growth of the GOALS organization. Chelsey left GOALS to begin a new adventure, to pursue her dream in nursing. We appreciate Chelsey and wish her well with her new endeavor!





Grant Recipients at the Midlands Community Foundation (2020). Lydia Turner (front row, second from right) representing GOALS



The Team taking a tour of the food bank and community outreach center at Heart Ministry Center

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Director



"One of our Family Advocates has been working with a student for a little over 10 months. Prior to this time, the student's attendance had fluctuated up and down. Due to the number of days missed, the student has struggled to earn credits. After meeting with the Family Advocate the student has found a glimpse of hope.

“ Thank you for reminding her that the world hasn't given up [on] her.
- quote from a Caregiver ”

While working with the Family Advocate, the student's attendance and grades have improved. The Family Advocate and the student, in recent months, have worked on creating a routine that has contributed to success this school year. Despite where the student stands in credits, the student's main priorities have shifted from making money to graduating high school"
-excerpt from a GOALS Manager's notes.

"My student graduated from high school and she gave me a painting. She said that the energy drink in the painting is because of all the energy drinks that that I brought to her during the school year for her incentive. The image of communication represents the times we talked and listened to one another, and the picture of the brain is because she said that I helped her grow as a person. The art palette is because of the connection that we had because she also loves art" -James, a GOALS Family Advocate



Partnerships

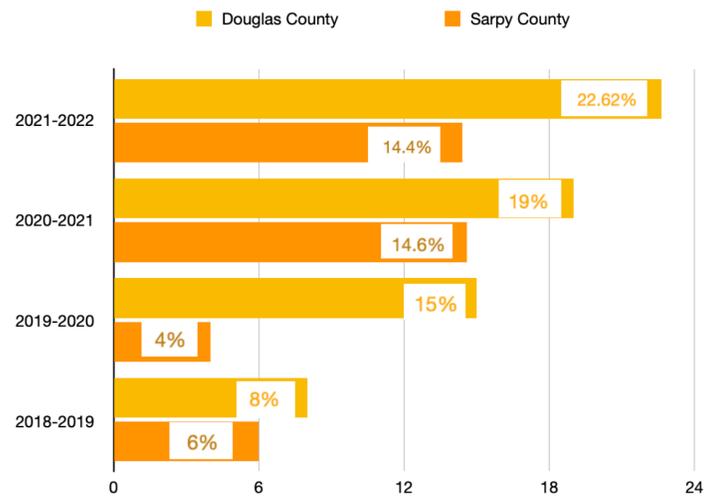
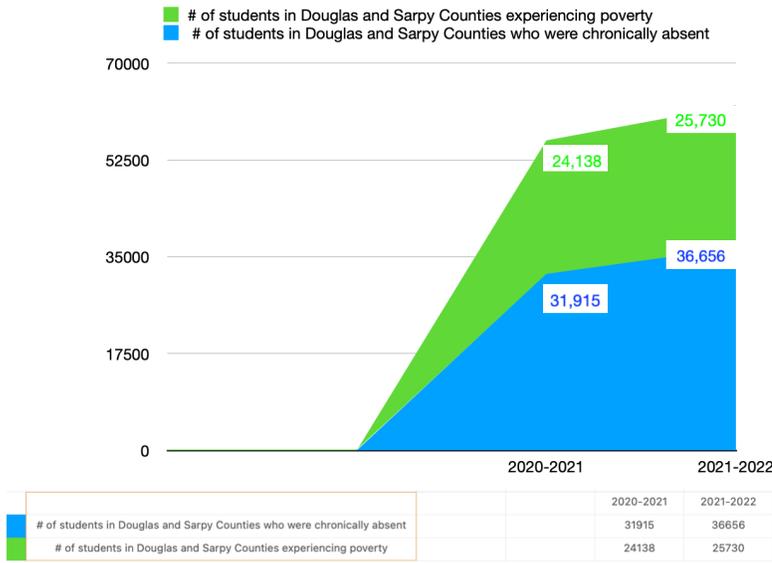
The GOALS Center is incredibly active in the community, partnering with agencies and collaborations that are working on similar capacities. We are a part of the following collaborations: Student-Based Attendance Coalition (SBAC), Juvenile Justice Stewardship Group, Juvenile Justice Detention Alternatives (JDAI) through Douglas County, Douglas County Community Response Collaborative, Lift Up Sarpy, Metropolitan Omaha Education Consortium (MOEC), the Community Achievement Plan with the Learning Community, and the Nebraska Department of Education working groups. Project Harmony 1184 multi-disciplinary team member, School-Based Mental Health Collaborative (SBMHC), Metro Area Youth Services (MAYS).

We are especially proud of our organizational relationships in our Elevate Program. Elevate, as previously identified, is a program designed specifically to serve BIPOC youth and their families and combines the strength of multiple community agencies. This model uses restorative and family and community peace-making practices as facilitated by the Concord Mediation Center. Charles Drew is available to serve mental or physical health needs. Finally, GOALS and the Urban League serve as mentors to help youth navigate school and community life.

Additionally, as we are building our Native outreach program, we are happy to report that we have healthy and interactive partnerships with the N.I.C.E office (the Native Indigenous Centered Education Program at OPS), the Native American Foundation (an Omaha based Native non-profit), and the Indigenous Youth Engagement Program (a coalition includes UNL's Office of Interpersonal Violence Research Laboratory and the Pine Ridge Nation/Reservation). Collectively, we work to improve attendance for Native youth and engage in resource cultivation (including traditional cultural resources acquisition and preservation).

Lastly, within the last year, GOALS recently created a new position within the organization -- A Community Navigation Coordinator who cultivates collaborative partnerships with external agencies to streamline resource delivery to the students and their families in our programming. Here, our Community Navigation Coordinator has been building relationships with community organizations as diverse as The Furniture Project (to help our families with "furniture poverty") to MENTOR Nebraska (to provide the youth we serve with additional relationship-building opportunities).





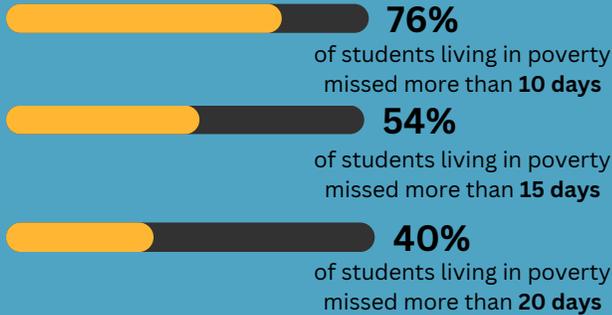
Percentage of Students Missing More Than 20 Days of School

Impact of Race and Poverty in Douglas & Sarpy Counties, 2021-2022

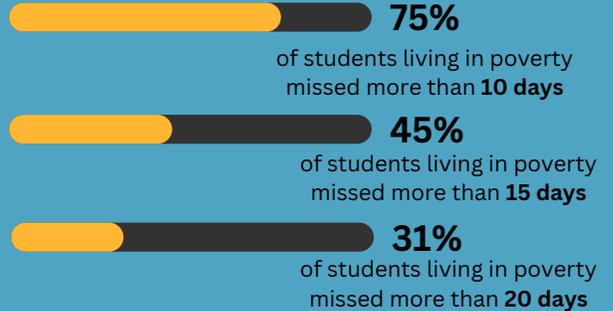
Poverty and school attendance often feed each other. The conditions that students living in poverty face (poor nutrition, lack of access to healthcare, lack of transportation, etc.) often exacerbate poor attendance.

Poverty as an Indicator of School Absenteeism

Douglas County

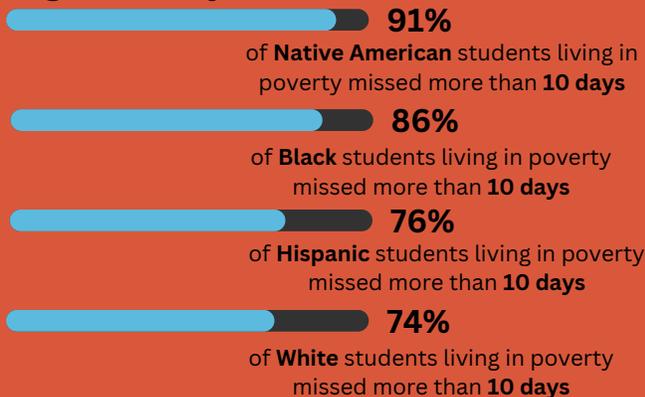


Sarpy County

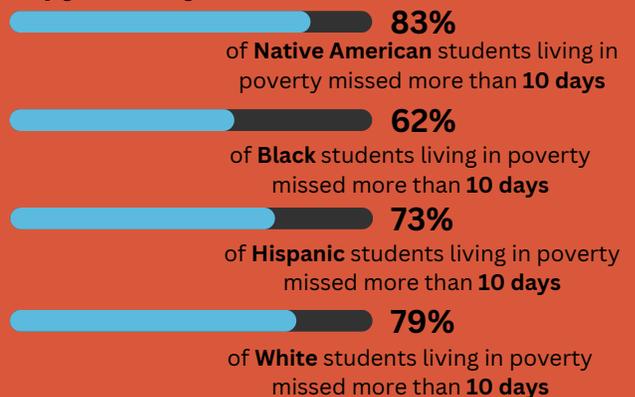


Poverty and Race as an Indicator of School Absenteeism

Douglas County



Sarpy County



Chronic Absenteeism is defined as missing 10% of school days or about two or more days per month.



On average, students began having problems with attendance **one year** before being referred to GOALS and missed an average of **39%** of school at referral.

298 Students referred to Traditional and Engagement Outreach services

+ **10** Students referred to the Elevate Program

308 total students and families served

*approximately 1,232 individuals; 308 students x average family size of 4

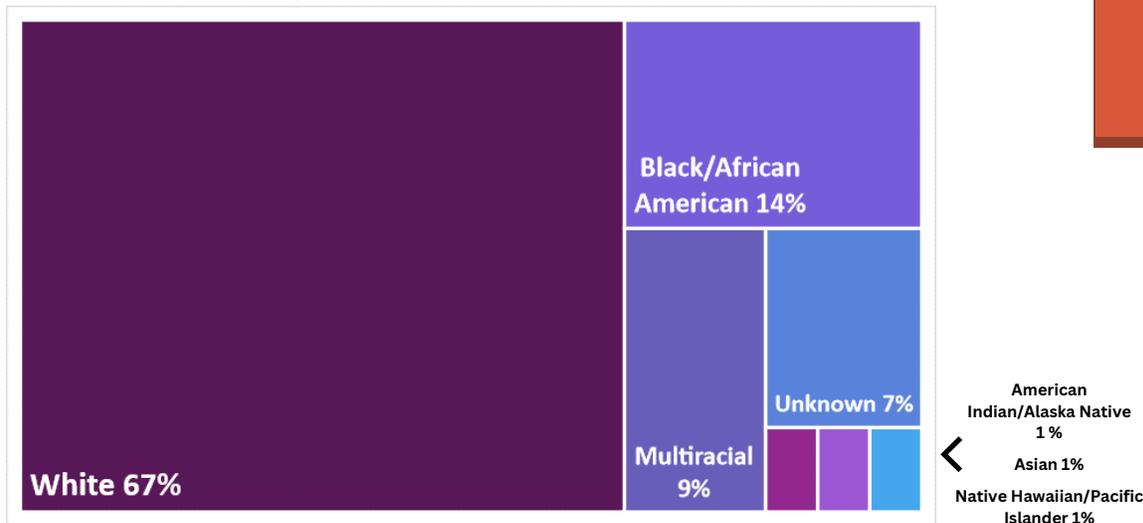
- ▶ **55%** referral increase from last year
- ▶ **57%** of students improved attendance
- ▶ **Less than 6%** of students were re-referred from last year
- ▶ **11** different school districts served + **2** private schools
- ▶ **84** unique school buildings

Top ZIP Codes Referred

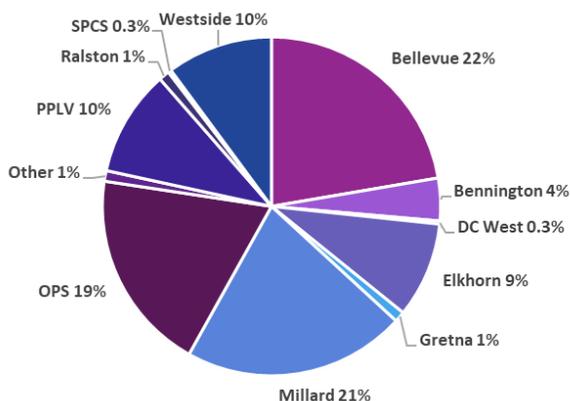
68123	30
68005	27
68022	17
68046	17
68137	17

23% of students identified as **Hispanic/Latinx**

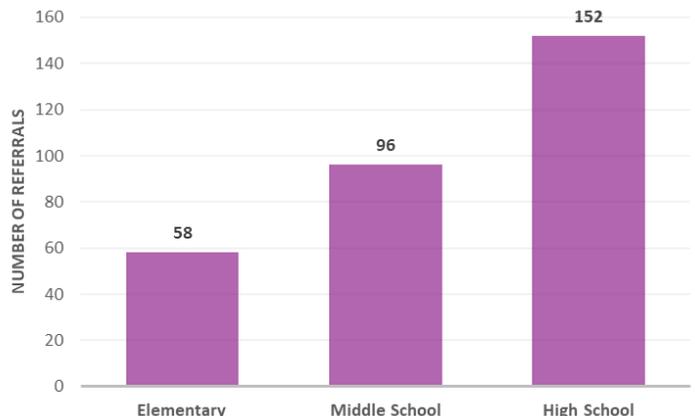
Race and Ethnicity of Students



School Districts Served

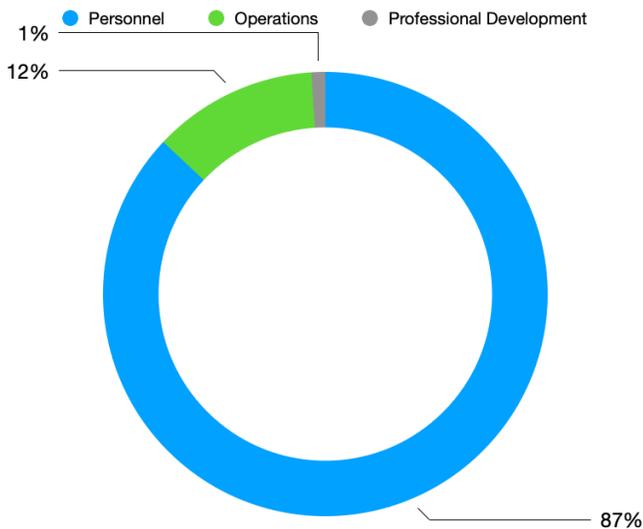


Grade Levels Served

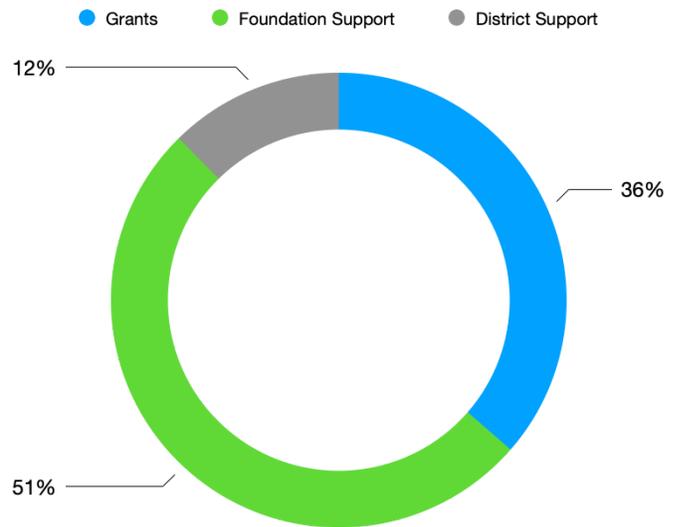


2021-2022 Total Budget: \$630,690

Expenses



Funding



2021-2022 Supporters

Thank you to all of the organizations, foundations, and donors who supported the GOALS Center this year. We are grateful for all that you have done to help students and their families.

With Special Thanks to:

- The Sherwood Foundation
- The Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties
- Douglas County-Community Based Aid
- United Way of the Midlands
- Nebraska Crime Commission- Juvenile Services
- Midlands Community Foundation
- William and Ruth Scott Family Foundation

“ I'm honestly so pleased and impressed, and the only thing that could improve is if there were more advocates!
-School Stakeholder ”



Our New Location: 3535 Harney Street Omaha, NE 68131



Inside our new space - excuse our mess :)



Repping GOALS out in the community



Happy Juneteenth <3



Moving Day!

[A GOALS Family Advocate] has been working with [this family] since January 2022. The Student refused to attend school and his mom would call the sheriff to come over to scare the Student into going to school. However the Student still refused to attend school. This year the Student is working with a Family Advocate and has stated that he now understands the importance of his attendance. The Student is hoping to have perfect attendance throughout this entire school year and currently hasn't missed any classes or been late to school at all this year! Student is happy to have friends at new high school and is making new friends too.

-NOTES from the Family Advocate's Case File.



All smiles at the Annual NJJA Conference



A GOALS Family Advocate worked with a student and their caregiver—a single mom. This family's attendance concerns stemmed from a family tragedy and a serious medical diagnosis that resulted in profound and persistent trauma. While working with the family, the Family Advocate connected both the mother and student to grief counseling and aided in setting up doctor's appointments. After several months of positive case intervention and advocacy, the student successfully closed out their relationship with GOALS. However, a few months after closure, the Family Advocate received word that the student's caregiver had unfortunately passed. Despite not having an official case assignment with the student, the Family Advocate nonetheless aided them by helping extended family members (with paperwork and narratives to the court) gain guardianship of the student. The student is now living with extended family members and continues to attend therapeutic services that aid in their healing and resiliency.

-NOTES from the Family Advocate's Case File



GOALS CENTER

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