

Step Ahead Enterprises



2025 Report to the Community

Our Vision and Mission

Purpose:

The Purpose of our agency is to provide a safe, productive, and trauma-informed care curriculum for children living in one of our satellite homes and to meet the unique needs of the youth population we serve.

Philosophy:

Our philosophy is to treat all youth with the same respect, regardless of the individual circumstances or previous life choices. This includes food, activities, living environments, and opportunities.

Our Principles

At Step Ahead Enterprises, we are guided by core values that shape every interaction:

💛 **Dignity and Respect** - Every young person deserves to be treated with empathy, regardless of their past

💙 **Trauma-Informed Care** - Understanding that trauma affects behavior, development, and relationships

💛 **Youth-Centered Engagement** - Listening to each youth's voice and involving them in decisions

💙 **Safety and Consistency** - Creating predictable environments where youth feel secure

💛 **Family and Team Collaboration** - Working with support systems to prioritize stability and healing

💙 **Continuous Improvement** - Regularly seeking feedback to enhance our services

Message from Our CEO

Dr. Tracie Rogers

2025 was a year of growth and achievement for Step Ahead Enterprises. As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with pride for our dedicated staff, gratitude for our community partners, and hope for the young people we serve.

This year, we operated five Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) homes across Arizona, providing specialized care to youth with significant trauma histories. Our commitment to trauma-informed care remains the foundation of everything we do—from how we design our living spaces to how we respond to challenging behaviors.

We achieved CARF Accreditation, validating our dedication to quality and our alignment with internationally recognized standards. This accomplishment reflects the hard work of our entire team and our unwavering focus on continuous improvement.

Perhaps most importantly, we listened to the youth in our care, to their families, to our staff, and to our community partners. Their voices shaped our services, guided our improvements, and reminded us daily why this work matters.

The young people in our care continue to inspire us with their resilience, courage, and capacity for growth. Their success stories include graduating high school, reunifying with families, learning independent living skills, and building positive relationships. This reminds us that healing is possible and that every young person deserves a chance to thrive.

As we look toward the future, we remain committed to walking alongside each youth on their journey, always moving forward together.

With gratitude and hope,

Dr. Tracie Rogers, PhD
Chief Executive Officer

What We Provide

Our comprehensive services address the whole child—physical, emotional, educational, and social needs:

- ✓ **Safe, Home-Like Environment** - Clean, comfortable homes that feel welcoming, not institutional
 - ✓ **Individual Therapy & Counseling** - Professional services coordinated with external providers
 - ✓ **Educational Support** - Tutoring, school liaison services, GED preparation, and post-high school planning
 - ✓ **Life Skills Training** - Cooking, budgeting, job readiness, and independent living skills
 - ✓ **Family Engagement** - Supporting family connections and working toward reunification when safe
 - ✓ **Recreational Activities** - Sports, arts, community service, and creative expression opportunities
 - ✓ **Positive Role Models** - Caring staff trained in trauma-informed care and crisis intervention
 - ✓ **Medical & Dental Care** - Coordinating all health needs and medication management
 - ✓ **Case Management** - Working with DCS, probation, schools, and therapists as a unified team
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What Youth Are Saying

In their own words, youth shared what Step Ahead means to them:

"I like the food and housing and staff." - MV

"I'm excited to graduate the program." - JV

"I have lots of support when I want drugs." - MR

"Staff helps me with my goal to save money." - HK

"I feel listened to." - JS

"They feed us bussin food." - EM

"I get to have my phone and be a teenager."

"I'm excited to go home." - CB

"You treat me like family and actually care." - BP

"I was able to earn my own room." - AR

"Staff helped me get a job and a bike." - CG

"The staff actually enrolls us in school." - AK

"Staff takes us on fun outings." - RR

Trauma-Informed Care in Action

What makes Step Ahead different?

At Step Ahead Enterprises, trauma-informed care isn't just something we do—it's who we are. This philosophy shapes every aspect of our organization:

Understanding Trauma

All staff receive extensive training on how trauma affects the developing brain, behavior, emotional regulation, and relationships. We view challenging behaviors as communication, not problems to control.

Building Trust

We create environments of predictability, safety, and consistency. Daily routines, warm living spaces, and reliable staff help youth feel secure and valued.

Empowering Youth

Youth participate in creating their own goals, shaping their spaces, and making decisions about their care. We emphasize strengths, not deficits.

No Physical Restraints

Step Ahead staff do not use physical restraints. We use Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) de-escalation techniques and call external support if needed.

Evidence-Based Practices

Our approach is grounded in research and best practices, including CPI training, individualized safety planning, and therapeutic interventions.

Continuous Training

Every staff member completes **24+ hours of continuing education annually**, including trauma-specific training through The Dawn Institute, cultural competency, and specialized cohort training.

Our Workforce: The Heart of Our Mission

Staff Excellence

Professional Development:

- 100% of new hires complete comprehensive 48-hour orientation
- 100% of staff complete minimum 24 hours annual continuing education
- Weekly staff training sessions on advanced trauma topics
- Monthly specialized training through The Dawn Institute
- All staff certified in CPR, First Aid, and Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI)

Staff Training Focus Areas:

- Trauma-informed care and trauma-specific interventions
- Cultural competency and diversity
- De-escalation and behavior management
- Medication management
- Youth rights and confidentiality
- Secondary trauma and staff self-care
- LGBTQ+ inclusion and sensitivity

Staff Support:

- Regular documented supervision addressing clinical skills, ethics, and wellness
 - Annual performance appraisals with measurable goals
 - Recognition programs and career advancement opportunities
 - Competitive wages and benefits package
 - Mental health support and secondary trauma resources
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Strategic Achievements in 2025

Goal 1: Strengthen Leadership and Planning

- ✓ Achieved CARF Accreditation
- ✓ Conducted quarterly strategic plan reviews
- ✓ Implemented formalized succession planning
- ✓ Shared strategic plan with youth through house meetings and posted highlights
- ✓ Enhanced performance measurement systems

Goal 2: Enhance Quality and Effectiveness

- ✓ Implemented quarterly quality record reviews
- ✓ Ensured 100% of service plans include youth-expressed goals
- ✓ Strengthened individualized planning processes
- ✓ Improved documentation timeliness and quality
- ✓ Enhanced medication management protocols
- ✓ Developed comprehensive safety plans for all youth

Goal 3: Invest in Workforce Development

- ✓ Achieved 24+ hours continuing education for all staff
 - ✓ Implemented annual performance appraisals with multi-source feedback
 - ✓ Enhanced supervision addressing six core competency areas
 - ✓ Updated all job descriptions annually
 - ✓ Provided specialized trauma training through The Dawn Institute
 - ✓ Improved staff retention through competitive compensation and support
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Looking Ahead: 2026 Goals

As we move into 2026, Step Ahead Enterprises remains committed to continuous improvement and expanding our impact:

Enhanced Performance Measurement

- Expand data collection on youth outcomes
- Develop real-time performance dashboards
- Strengthen linkages between data and improvement initiatives
- Increase transparency in communicating results

Youth Outcome Enhancement

- Reduce AWOL incidents through enhanced engagement
- Increase educational milestone achievements
- Strengthen independent living skills preparation
- Improve family engagement and reunification rates
- Expand therapeutic recreational opportunities

Service Innovation

- Implement advanced trauma-specific interventions
- Enhance integration for youth with co-occurring conditions
- Pilot evidence-based practices
- Develop specialized programming for identified needs

Workforce Investment

- Improve staff retention rates
- Expand professional development opportunities
- Enhance employee wellness programs
- Continue building diverse workforce
- Address secondary trauma and burnout

Infrastructure Enhancement

- Upgrade technology systems
- Improve data management capabilities
- Enhance facility safety and comfort
- Strengthen accessibility across all domains

Community Collaboration

- Expand partnerships with educational institutions
 - Develop vocational training connections
 - Strengthen recreational and cultural organization relationships
 - Increase community awareness of our mission
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Thank You

Step Ahead Enterprises extends heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made 2025 a year of growth, healing, and hope:

To the Youth We Serve:

Thank you for trusting us with your journey. Your resilience, courage, and growth inspire us every day. You are the reason we do this work.

To Our Dedicated Staff:

Your compassion, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to trauma-informed care create the foundation for healing. Thank you for walking alongside our youth every single day.

To Families:

Thank you for partnering with us in supporting the young people in our care. Your involvement and love make a difference.

To Our Community Partners:

Your collaboration extends our reach and enhances our services. Together, we create a network of support that helps youth thrive.

To DCS and Managed Care Organizations:

Thank you for entrusting us with the care of Arizona's youth and for your partnership in our mission.

To Our Board of Directors:

Thank you for your leadership, guidance, and steadfast commitment to our mission.

Step Ahead - Always Forward

Creating pathways from surviving to thriving

Serving Arizona's foster youth since 2016