



Building a Hope Centered Organization:
A Blueprint for HOPE

Oklahoma Human Services

October 1, 2020



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Oklahoma Human Services Hope Centered Vision

Following the vision of Oklahoma's First Lady, Sarah Stitt, Oklahoma Human Services (OKDHS) is proud to be the first state agency to become a hope centered and trauma-informed organization. We have seen first-hand and know that individuals, families, and communities across our state face adversity and trauma. However, we also know that Oklahomans can overcome adversity, Oklahoma Human Services, along with First Lady Sarah Stitt, have recognized that hope has the potential to help buffer the effects of adverse childhood experiences for children and families in our state and strengthening Oklahoma's families has lasting generational impact.

In the fall of 2019, OKDHS began the strategic planning process of becoming the first hope centered and trauma-informed state organization. The science of hope is well-established as an important coping resource and protective factor for children, adults, and families. We have selected hope because it benefits both our employees, who are essential to achieving our mission and goals, and for our great citizens. Hope is one of the strongest predictors of well-being and an emerging robust body of evidence is demonstrating that hope is an important component of organizational well-being, showing significant improvements to job satisfaction, reducing burnout, and improving turnover in the organization. We are drawing from the science of hope as a vision, a tool, and a call to action to ensure that we focus on the well-being for all Oklahoman's served by our organization.

Our OKDHS executive leadership team gathered in February 2020 to create our vision for the science of hope as a guiding framework for practice. This blueprint is a living document which seeks to clarify and prioritize what OKDHS commits to action in using hope to ensure we can align strategies, establish and communicate priorities, and demonstrate how our plan reflects the values of our organization.

"We want clients to believe their future can be better. We want to build hope in those we serve and within ourselves...and support our customers to create pathways they need to be able to build and achieve their goals. Becoming a hope-based organization makes us mindful of the interventions that we implement throughout our divisions."

*Justin Brown,
Secretary of Human Services and Early Childhood Initiatives*



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Overview and Approach

Oklahoma and Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events children experience before the age of 18 including abuse, neglect, witness to violence in the home, family incarceration, or having a parent with untreated mental illness or substance use disorder. Due to the toxic and chronic stress that often accompany ACEs, significant biological, psychological, cognitive, and emotional impacts during childhood development are common. ACEs have a lifetime impact and are linked to many adult health conditions such as difficulty functioning at work or school, chronic health conditions, and even early death. ACEs are the leading cause of death and poor quality of life among adults. Recent national studies have indicated that, collectively, Oklahoma ranks among the states with the highest level of adverse childhood experiences¹. To address this alarming data, our state is determined to improve treatment and services in an effort to mitigate the effects of ACEs across the lifespan. Given the breadth of services offered at OKDHS, it is clear that we are uniquely positioned to have a lasting impact on the reduction of poor outcomes caused by ACEs, as well as building systems that ensure that our children, families, and communities are enabled to thrive. We have engaged with the science and power of hope to guide our blueprint.

The Science and Power of Hope

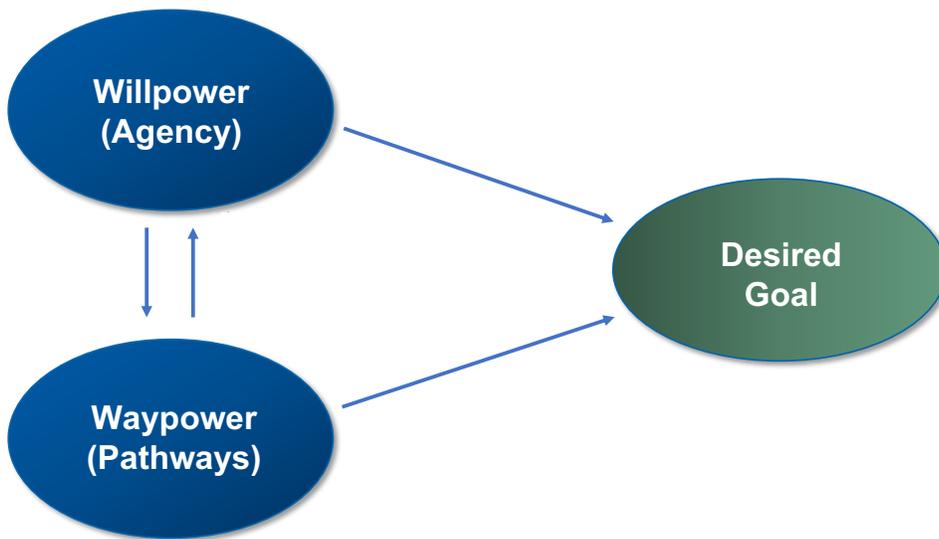
Hope is a belief that our future can be better than our past and that we have a role to play in making that a reality. Building from the work of Snyder², hope is defined as the positive expectation for the future and is grounded in three simple elements: goals, pathways, and willpower. Goals are the cornerstone of our ability to hope. Goals can be short-term or long-term, but must be valued enough to motivate us to pursue the desired outcomes. The nature of the goals we set drives the desired pathways that we pursue to achieve our goals. Pathways are the strategies available to help one reach a valued goal. Hopeful individuals are able to identify and pursue various pathways and resolve potential barriers. Willpower, or agency, reflects the mental energy we have available to put toward our goal pursuits. The hopeful person is more likely to dedicate the energy needed to pursue their goals, while also having the ability to self-regulate their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions along the way. Hope theory provides a foundation for understanding and provides an evidence-based approach and common language that can be used by social service providers, educators, and community leaders who are seeking ways to reduce the harmful impact of adverse childhood experiences. Hope is important for children, youth, adults, families, schools, social service programs, neighborhoods, and communities.

¹ America's Health Rankings analysis of the U.S. HHS, HRSA, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, National Survey of Children's Health Indicator Data Set, Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, United Health Foundation, AmericasHealthRankings.org. Accessed 2020.

² Snyder, C.R. (2002). Rainbows in the Mind. *Psychological Inquiry*, 13(4), 249-275.



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...agency without pathways is a wish!

Hope is not simply a feeling or emotion, but rather a cognitive process or a way of thinking. Therefore, if hope is a cognitive process, it can also be taught and nurtured in others. Research is robust in showing that hope can be increased and sustained with very simple, yet specific activities. Studies from the Hope Research Center at The University of Oklahoma, have shown that hope is a protective factor for adversity and serves as a coping resource to safeguard us from stress and adversity. Hope is one of the single best predictors of the ability to thrive.

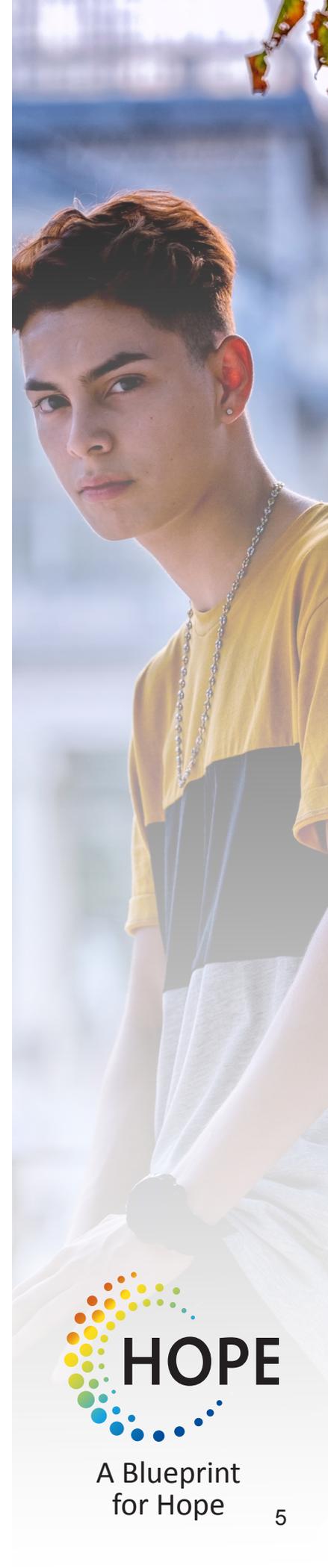
Why is Hope Important?

With over 2,000 published research studies, one finding remains constant: hope is one of the best predictors of well-being for children, adults, organizations, and communities. Conversely, adversity, trauma, and stress are known to reduce hope. Individuals with lower levels of hope experience higher levels of physical, psychological, and social distress. Individuals with higher levels of hope thrive in school, work, relationships, and play. Higher hope is associated with lower workplace burnout and turnover. Higher hope children can perform better at school. Higher hope communities have higher social connectedness, trust, social action (e.g., volunteerism), and have higher life expectancy. Other studies have demonstrated that hope has a positive impact on children who are exposed to violence and can be contributed to psychological flourishing among children.³

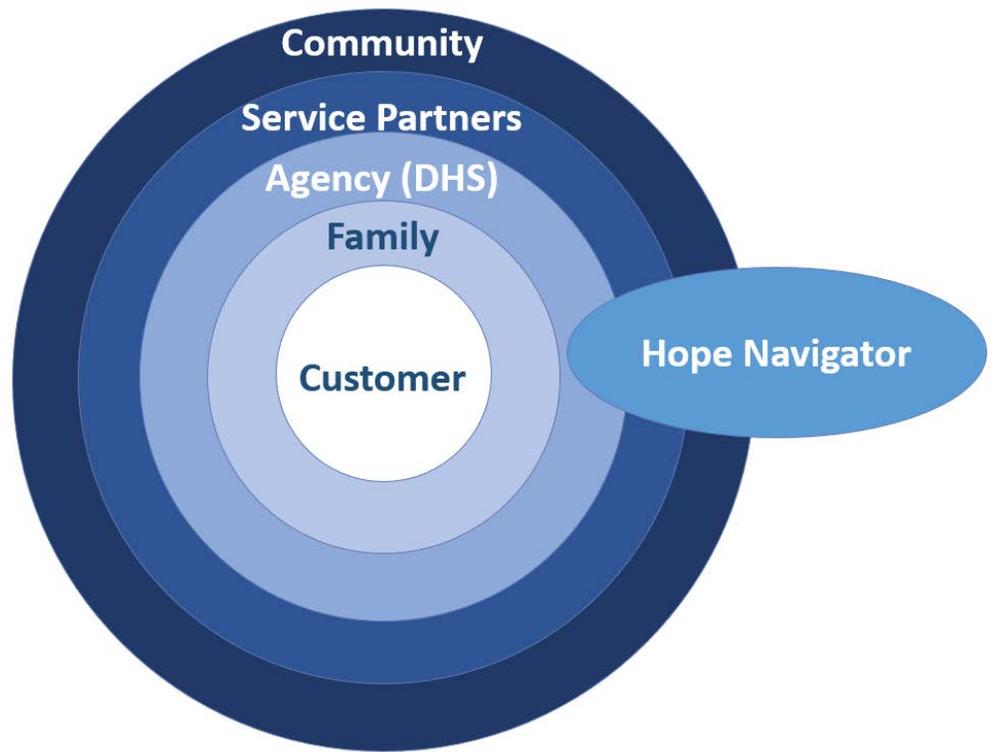
Building an Organizational Culture of Hope

Hope centered and trauma-informed organizations intentionally engage in developing strategies that build pathways and sustain willpower. They help connect their teams to the work by routinely examining “why” the work matters (goal) and fostering collective hope.

³ Munoz, R., Hanks, H., & Hellman, C. (2019). Hope and resilience as distinct contributors to psychological flourishing among childhood trauma survivors. *Traumatology*, 26(2), 117-184.



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Leaders can use hope by asking, “How do we deal with the issue at hand in a way that nurtures hope?” As a result, organizations can use hope to frame meeting agenda action items, develop strategic planning activities, and adopt hope-based goal setting and the pathways process to solve complex issues.

Leaders often oversee policies and programs that are established within an organization. The organization provides the place. The staff and the programs are the pathways for individuals to receive support in their journey toward meeting their goals. The leader fosters the character of the group, sets the way of thinking, and helps the group sustain mental energy.

Hope centered and trauma-informed organizations examine policies and programs and their intended and unintended consequences and ask the hard question, “Do these policies and programs (rules, procedures) create and nurture hope, or do they create and communicate hopelessness?” Hope cannot be just an internal working process. The hope centered and trauma-informed framework will serve as a tool to support OKDHS in working with staff, children, families, internal and external partners, and communities. The capacity to perform this work will be made possible by the strategic use of hope navigators, who are individuals trained in the science of hope and have a strong understanding of hope. The navigator is a certified expert in hope theory and its application. Hope navigators provide leadership and consultation in creating a culture of hope within the organization and the communities they serve. Through this expertise, the navigator is able to create widespread awareness of the science and power of hope through presentations to groups, organizations, and communities. Using presentations, consultation, and leadership, the hope navigator seeks to advance a common language of hope for collective impact among a multi-disciplinary team.



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Framing the Work

OKDHS is partnering with The University of Oklahoma Hope Research Center⁴ to implement a multi-year strategy to transform into a hope centered and trauma-informed organization. As a hope centered and trauma-informed organization, OKDHS is creating hope centered policies, programs, and practices that positively impact systems and communities throughout Oklahoma. The project, led by Dr. Chan Hellman and Dr. Angela Pharris, incorporates assessment, consultation, training, and research in each division within OKDHS.

Executive Leadership

The project launched with a training and planning event with the executive leadership team as they demonstrated their commitment to build a hope centered organizational model. Broadly, the role of leadership will be to ensure that hope becomes a common language and that day-to-day actions demonstrate hope. The primary responsibility of leadership will be to help the team find hope by supporting goal setting, enhancing hope, and modeling hope. Hope leadership is intentional with an awareness of the present and an eye towards the future. Led by Dr. Hellman and Dr. Pharris, the executive leadership used the retreat to understand the collective hope of the organization and how hope impacts outcomes within each division. Together, they drafted a vision for hope centered leadership to guide the work of the OKDHS team.

Hope Centered and Trauma-Informed Executive Vision Statement

As a hope centered and trauma-informed organization, we recognize that childhood trauma negatively affects many in Oklahoma. We believe that hope provides a unified framework to create a positive organizational culture for our customers and staff. We strive to infuse our values, policy, practices, and structure with the science of hope by setting the pathways for success and creating an environment for our customers and staff to thrive. As leaders, we use the science of hope to build a hope centered organization by developing, modeling, and serving in a manner that nurtures the hope for tomorrow.

Hope Centered and Trauma-Informed Staff Development

A multi-level training on the power and science of hope curriculum has been developed by Dr. Hellman and Dr. Pharris and adapted to fit the unique needs of OKDHS. Each training activity is uniquely designed to find, nurture, enhance, and model hope. Strategies for using the concepts of hope; (goals, pathways, and willpower) will be included in the training to ensure participants can use hope in their day-to-day interaction with others.⁵

⁴ Hope Research Center, The University of Oklahoma. www.ou.edu/tulsa/hope

⁵ See Appendix for Staff and Leadership Training Curriculum and Workbook



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Hope Awareness

- A one-hour online training to provide an introductory awareness and familiarity with the science of hope. Used for initial rollout across OKDHS and for a new employee training.
- A 3-hour field staff training to support awareness of hope and the science of hope, plus provide information on goal setting and planning tools.
- Hope navigators can facilitate hope awareness training in the organization.

Hope Leadership

- A 4-6-hour training designed to guide division leadership to visualize hope within their unique program area and think strategically about opportunities for internal and external use of hope.
- Create a division specific vision statement drawing from a hope centered and trauma-informed approach.

Hope Navigator

- A 12-hour training designed for project implementation teams.
- Deep dive and robust training for key project and organizational members.
- Navigators are responsible for supporting the use of hope centered and trauma-informed framework in their organizational space.
- Navigator training is required before and individual can facilitate a hope awareness training.
- Training prepares the individual to lead the hope projects.
- Training is completed with Dr. Hellman or Dr. Pharris.

Training Activities

- Completed customized hope awareness, hope leadership, and hope navigator training plan for OKDHS.
- Hope navigator training for key project leaders for OKDHS in February 2020.
- Training in March 2020 for each division leadership team focused on opportunities to use hope during adversity. This training focused specifically on the challenges of the dramatic changes to work and work processes of COVID-19. The training was designed to help the division, program, and team leadership consider how goals, pathways, and willpower are impacted by stress, and identify strategies to sustain quality work while supporting employees during a time of crisis.
- Capitol Hill training began in September 2020. Capitol Hill team members are the part of the first hope centered and trauma-informed office connected to a Community Hope Center.
- Online hope awareness training video for front-line staff in November 2020.
- Hope navigator training for division project teams will begin in December 2020.
- Hope leadership training will begin in January 2021.



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Programs of Hope: Implementing a Hope Centered and Trauma-Informed Framework

Changing the organizational culture is more than simply adjusting a mindset and language. Hope and the concepts of goals, pathways, and willpower need to be rooted into the policies, programs, and practices of the organization to have a lasting impact. Drawing from the best practices of implementation science, nine divisions of OKDHS have selected a program area to strategically infuse hope.⁶

Division Implementation Activities

- Each division has identified a project and project implementation team.
- Scheduling for hope navigator training for project team in October 2020.
- Hope navigator training conducted from December 2020 through February 2021.
- Teams will build an implementation plan during the hope navigator training, including identifying goals, outputs, outcomes, and key steps.
- Ongoing monitoring and support for project implementation.
- Selection of phase two implementation strategies.

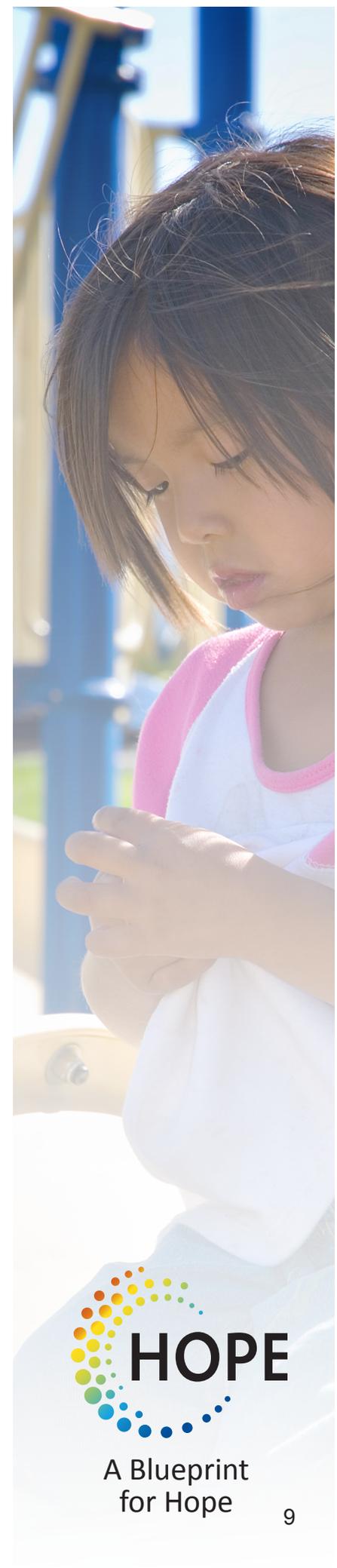
Evaluating Hope at Oklahoma Human Services

Given the relationship between hope and positive employee outcomes, this project will use the science of hope as a standard process of assessment and evaluation to monitor the project outcomes. The first project involved the inclusion of hope, well-being, burnout, and exhaustion measures in the annual employee engagement survey in February 2020. The annual engagement survey provides a baseline assessment prior to the start of several hope centered projects, and provides an opportunity to monitor impact and change of the strategic blueprint activities over time.

A total of 3,337 employees completed this initial baseline survey. The outcomes are promising, with 41.4% of employees reporting high hope, and an additional 51.3% indicating moderate hope. Overall, the employees' collective hope was high at 90.2% of respondents indicating high collective hope. Collective hope reflects the capacity of an organization to identify a common vision, work together to build effective pathways, and generate the collective will to pursue these goals. Collective hope is grounded in social connectedness, trust in leadership, and effective work processes. In this data, the team from the Hope Research Center found that hope was a better predictor of employee well-being than resilience. Collective hope predicts positive job satisfaction and has a significant relationship to employee burnout. Collective hope is significantly associated with employees recommending OKDHS as a place for employment. The baseline survey found the value of hope within the organization and early evidence to support the benefits of enhancing and modeling hope throughout the organization.⁷

⁶ See Appendix for a list of project descriptions

⁷ See Appendix for Baseline Employee Engagement Report, 2020



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Evaluation Activities

- Development and deployment of the employee engagement survey with OKDHS Innovation Services and the Hope Research Center team.
- Results of the employee engagement survey presented to the executive team and each division leadership team presented in April 2020.
- Ongoing use of the employee engagement survey to measure collective hope at OKDHS.
- Evaluation for division implementation projects begins in spring 2021.

The Future of Hope

Hope is the belief that your future will be better than today and you have the power to make it so. As OKDHS transforms into a hope centered and trauma-informed organizations, it is imperative to implement a robust and sustainable training strategy that reaches all employees. Although training is important, true organization transformation occurs through hope centered policies, programs, and practices, which provide pathways and willpower for staff, children, and families to achieve their goals. By infusing the science of hope into training, policies, programs, and practices, OKDHS will evaluate the impact and effectiveness of hope as it relates to outcomes for staff, children, and families.

Lastly, In order for Oklahoma to become a hope centered state, Oklahoma must have hope centered and trauma-informed organizations, systems, and communities. Therefore, OKDHS, in conjunction with Governor Stitt, First Lady Stitt, Dr. Chan Hellman, and community partners has embarked on the below initiative to transform Oklahoma into a hope centered state where all citizens can flourish.⁸

Be A Neighbor

The Be A Neighbor⁹ initiative calls for the deployment of the Governor's innovative web-based portal designed to identify and strengthen collaboration among Oklahoma's nonprofits, faith-based groups, and community organizations across the state's seventy-seven counties. Be a Neighbor is a path-way to foster and encourage support for Oklahomans in transition, including youth preparing to graduate high school, foster youth, and individuals who were formerly incarcerated. Be A Neighbor is a tool to cultivate pathways across the state of Oklahoma by way of sharing resources and opportunities such as jobs, mentoring, housing, and other forms of community support. Be A Neighbor also provides an opportunity to examine the relationship between connectedness and hope.

Communities of Hope

First Lady Sarah Stitt and Secretary Justin Brown charged agencies to simultaneously identify and build strategies to cultivate hope among community partners. The first community of hope project focuses on a community within Oklahoma City - Capitol Hill. The OKDHS Capitol Hill team



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⁸ See Appendix for Gantt Chart and Project Timeline

⁹ www.beaneighbor.ok.gov

represents each division of the organization and involves rich partnerships and collaborations among other community nonprofits and faith-based organizations. Several of the community partners are leading their own efforts to use the science of hope in their own practices and organizations.

Community Hope Centers

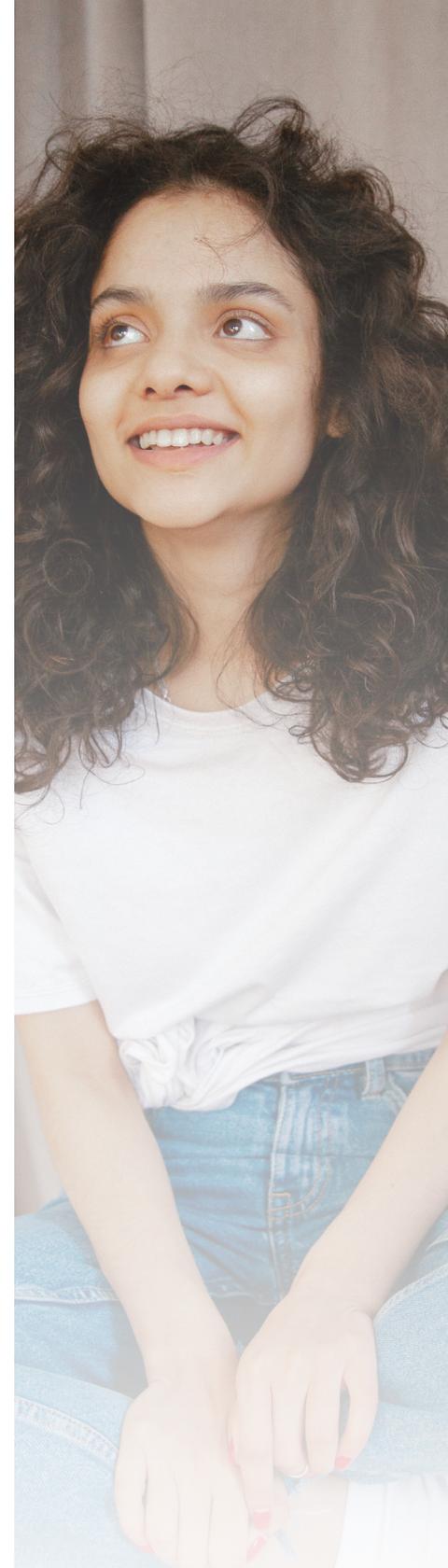
During the rapid changes of the health crisis, it became evident that children and families depend on strong, adaptive community resources to support child well-being and safety. Governor Stitt and the CARES Forward Team approved the use of CARES Act funds to launch the Community Hope Center Initiative. The Community Hope Centers will use community partnerships to provide critical services to families using the science of hope to serve children ages 5-18 years. Each center will have a behavioral health specialist, Oklahoma Human Services staff to build innovative and collaborative partnerships in communities, and will use the hope centered and trauma-informed framework to guide implementation.

Hope Summit

First Lady Stitt believes that to become a hope centered state, Oklahoma must have hope centered systems, both public and private. Therefore, First Lady Stitt is hosting a Hope Summit in the spring of 2021 to learn and apply the science of hope within organizations and communities.

Hope Campaign

OKDHS plans to launch a Hope Campaign in early 2021 to promote the science of hope and how it can positively impact outcomes for all Oklahomans. The campaign will highlight the hope framework and the power of hope. This campaign is a pathway for individuals, organizations, and communities to transform Oklahoma into a hope centered state.



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