

Homeless and Hopeless

Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services helped Kiara find a stable home and recover relationships

**Responsible
Budget
Coalition**



Meet Kiara

At 15-years-old, Kiara was hopeless and homeless. After her father suffered a medical emergency that left him in a coma, both her mother and grandmother turned her away. With nowhere to go, Kiara was referred to Children's Home + Aid's Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services (CCBYS) program, which provides crisis intervention services. The crisis worker met with Kiara and contacted her mother. Due to past family conflict, Kiara's mother was unwilling to allow Kiara to live with her but she helped to arrange a temporary family placement for Kiara at her cousin's home.

Kiara was then linked with a case manager, Ashley, who provided counseling, enrolled Kiara in school, and helped Kiara purchase clothing, school uniforms and school supplies, all which she lacked after moving. Although Kiara went to bed each night with a roof over her head, the instability and worry she faced was overwhelming and she was hospitalized because she had suicidal thoughts. During her hospital stay, Ashley met with Kiara to develop a safety plan and discuss Kiara's concerns. Kiara, her caseworker and mother all agreed Kiara would move in with her great aunt, while they worked on reuniting the family. While living with her aunt, Kiara thrived. She attended school regularly, completed chores, obeyed her aunt's rules, began attending church and was overall a happier person.

With the help of her caseworker, Kiara and her mother developed a behavior agreement to address their history of conflict and to help work through their issues in a positive and healthy way. Stability was once something Kiara experienced only in dreams. At 17, Kiara is happy to be living with her mother and siblings again. She dreams of growing up to complete college, get a good job and own a home of her own. Before entering the program, Kiara was suicidal, on the verge of dropping out of school and at risk of being homeless. Without the CCBYS program, Kiara would not have had the resources required to succeed at home and in school.

Over 95 percent of youth like Kiara who are in the CCBYS program in the Metro East are reunified with their families or placed in another safe, family-approved long-term living arrangement within four months. Consequently, these youth do not enter into the state's care or juvenile detention. Due to the state budget crisis, Children's Home + Aid has reduced its services for youth who are locked out or run away from home and now is serving only two counties, down from seven. And the CCBYS program in Chicago's Englewood community has been suspended. Overall, the agency is serving 290 fewer youth and families in our CCBYS and Homeless Youth Prevention services.

Already other youth are being denied the life-transforming services Kiara received. CCBYS costs \$1,883 per youth annually compared to the cost of incarcerating a juvenile at approximately \$111,000 per year. Without a state budget and enough new revenue, even fewer success stories like Kiara's will be possible and, in the long-term, it will cost the people of Illinois more, in both dollars and wasted human potential.

The Responsible Budget Coalition is made up of more than 300 organizations throughout Illinois representing human services, health care, education, labor unions, civic organizations and faith communities. **Together, we are calling on Governor Rauner and Illinois lawmakers to pass a responsible budget NOW that raises adequate revenue to fully fund vital services.**

CCBYS

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The Youth Services program offered by Children's Home + Aid provides family counseling and crisis intervention to runaway and lockout youth between the ages of 11 to 17. The primary program objectives are family preservation/reunification and to prevent placement of the youth in the state child welfare system.