

## Pauline's Story



*"I wasn't expecting a permanent relationship, but I really connected with my foster mom and things worked out great."*

Pauline was just 13 years old when she entered the foster care system. Both of her parents were suffering from serious mental illnesses, which prevented them from giving her the care and support she needed.

She was living in another foster home when a friend who was part of the Adolescent Services division of our Family Foster Care program invited her to dinner. During the meal, she and her friend's foster mother felt an immediate connection and eventually Pauline became part of her friend's foster family. "I wasn't expecting a permanent relationship," she says,

"but I really connected with my foster mom and things worked out great." She also found a great deal of support from her social workers, "They took the time to talk to me and ask me questions and you could tell that they really cared about my well-being. If I needed something they got right on it and I knew that I could call them with any problem," she says.

Already an intelligent and motivated youth, Pauline flourished in her foster mother's care - consistently attending school and working part-time to earn money for college. She graduated from high school and began attending Lehman College full-time. As Pauline prepared to transition out of foster care, she took advantage of the agency's resources by participating in our independent living workshops, "the workshops were really helpful, especially the ones about budgeting and the basics of living on your own," she says.

Today, Pauline is a senior in college studying social work. She lives on her own at a supported housing program in Brooklyn and works as a youth coordinator for a non-profit organization. And the chance encounter she had with a friend's foster mother has blossomed into something much, much more; the two talk on the phone regularly and spend holidays together. Pauline says "My relationship with my foster mom is still great, I love her very much."

### FACTS & FIGURES

Last year, there were more than 58,000 reported cases of child abuse or neglect and over 16,000 children and youth in foster care in New York City.

Nationally more than 20,000 young people age out of foster care without the support of family or a caring adult legally committed to help them.

79% of the young people discharged from our Foyer supported housing program were self-sufficient at the time they left the program.

100% of the youth who aged out of our Family Foster Care program had a permanent connection with a caring adult at the time of discharge.

#### ABOUT

**Good Shepherd Services** works with more than 20,000 New York City children, youth and families through more than 70 programs which include two networks of community-based youth development, education, and family service programs in Brooklyn and the Bronx; group homes for adolescents; and foster care and adoption services. Long considered a leader in the youth development field, in 2007 Good Shepherd was the winner of the inaugural New York Times Company Non-Profit Excellence Award for overall management excellence.

Our mission is to surround at-risk New York City youth and their families with a web of supports that promote a safe passage to self-sufficiency. To achieve our mission, we lead in the development of innovative youth development programs; provide quality, effective services that strengthen participants' connections with family, school and community; and advocate on their behalf for broader change.

#### CONTACT

For more information about Good Shepherd's Out-of-Home Care programs, please visit our website [www.goodshepherds.org](http://www.goodshepherds.org) or contact:

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Out-of-Home Care Programs



#### OUT-OF-HOME CARE PROGRAMS

# Keeping Youth Safe, Strong and Connected



## A Safety Net of Quality Care

Sometimes it becomes impossible to address the needs of children and youth within their families. Good Shepherd began caring for young people who could not live at home in 1857, and we continue this work today. In both foster care and residential settings, we surround young people with a supportive environment, positive relationships and comprehensive services that address their physical, emotional and educational needs. We bring families back together whenever possible, but when this is not a viable option, we find adoptive homes or other nurturing living arrangements for the young people in our care. To prepare youth for adulthood we make sure that they all have a permanent connection to a responsible adult in the community, and help them develop the appropriate life-skills they will need to be independent.

Our out-of-home care programs seek to provide a continuum of quality care to achieve the following agency-wide objectives for our program participants:

- **Safety:** keeping youth and their families out of harm's way.
- **Belonging:** helping youth build strong connections to family/nurturing adults, supportive peers, school and the broader community.
- **Skill-Building:** helping youth build a wide range of developmentally appropriate competencies.



## The Way We Work

### Building on Strengths

We believe in the inherent strengths of every individual with whom we work. Helping youth and their families identify and build on their unique abilities is key to their success. Through our use of the youth development model, we provide young people with safe and structured environments that promote caring and trusting relationships, set high expectations and provide opportunities for them to develop the life-skills they'll need for the future. In our work with families, we focus on helping them develop their capacity to solve the challenges facing them and achieve long-lasting self-reliance.

### Promoting Self-Sufficiency

We know that young people have what it takes to succeed. We help youth build the skills they will need to become independent adults by focusing on academic success and developing appropriate post-secondary educational goals. Through work-readiness and life-skills activities, we offer experiences that prepare our young people for the world-of-work and independent living. Our aftercare program provides a range of supportive services to ensure a smooth transition for youth leaving foster care.

### Permanent Connections

Relationships are key to nurturing youth and helping them to succeed. No young person leaves our care without a meaningful permanent connection with a caring adult. Our primary goal is to create that permanent connection by reunifying young people with their families. When a return home is not possible, another family member often steps in to fulfill this role. In addition, our mentoring program provides youth with a positive support system through a one-to-one relationship with a responsible adult.

### Sanctuary Model

The Sanctuary Model, utilized within our out-of-home care programs, is a comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of children and youth who have experienced severe forms of trauma. Consistent with our own thinking, the premise of the model is that the troubled young people in our care have been injured and can be treated and healed if they have a supportive, therapeutic and safe place to recover. We use Sanctuary in our work with both young people and their families to empower them to influence their own lives and communities in positive ways.

## OUR SERVICES



### Family Foster Care Program and Adoption Services

We provide safe, temporary care in the homes of trained kinship or foster parents to children and adolescents who have been removed from their families because of possible abuse or neglect. At the same time, we work intensively with their birth parents to get them the help they need so their children can return home. Families, agency staff and foster parents work together as partners to devise a plan for each child's future. When young people cannot return to their birth parents we place them in permanent, nurturing homes, often with their kinship or foster families.



### Treatment Family Foster Care Program (TFFC)

Our TFFC program provides intensive clinical services to children and youth with significant emotional and behavioral difficulties. Treatment parents receive additional training and support to provide the best care for these children, allowing many young people who might otherwise be placed in a hospital or residential treatment center to remain within a family setting, and reducing disruptions in foster care placements due to behavioral issues.



### Residential Programs for Young Women

Our residential programs provide a fluid continuum of care for adolescent girls who are unable to live at home or in a foster family setting. These programs offer highly structured therapeutic environments where a young woman and her family receive the support services necessary to heal from the crisis situation that led to placement, and focus on safety, well-being and permanency planning.



### Group Homes for Youth Involved with the Juvenile Justice System

Our non-secure detention homes provide temporary residential and supportive services to adolescent boys and girls who are awaiting family court outcomes. The residences offer a safe and nurturing environment for the young people, as well as a range of positive interventions aimed at preventing a return to custody.



### Supported Transitional Housing

The Chelsea Foyer at The Christopher, our innovative supported housing program, serves young adults in their late teens and early twenties who have aged out of the child welfare system, are homeless, or on the verge of homelessness. Residents live semi-independently in studio apartments or suites while receiving on-site case management services and linkages to job training and placement, educational and life-skills development resources.

*"While living [at the Foyer], I was a full-time student and able to maintain full-time employment... I learned about money, and was matched with a mentor who helped keep me grounded. All of these things allowed me to become the person I knew I could be."*

Moses, former Foyer resident

All of the young people pictured are or have been participants in Good Shepherd's various programs, but not necessarily in our out-of-home care programs.

*"I can't change what has happened in the past, but I most definitely have lots of control over my future."*

DJJ group home resident