TEXAS HOUSING ASSOCIATION · AUG 2025

Beyond Housing:

Helping Immigrant Families Navigate the Path to College Success

Building community-driven pathways — and how your community can too

Vickery Meadow Youth Development Foundation · Dallas, TX

VICKERY MEADOW
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Before We Begin —
Who's in the room?

Help me understand where you are — so I can meet you there.

Just exploring
You're curious about what's possible. You're not sure yet what you'd do with this — you're here to learn and see what resonates.

Thinking about building
You're starting to imagine what a program or partnership could look like in your community. You want to understand what it takes.

Ready to partner
You're actively looking to connect with an organization. You want to know what to expect and what a good partnership looks like.

Already doing this work
You have something going. You're here to deepen, refine, or find language for what you're already doing.

Also helpful to know:

- What's your role — resident services, programming, leadership?
- Do you currently have space or staff you could dedicate to youth programming?
- Are families in your community already asking for something like this?
- Have you tried something before? What happened?

WHO WE ARE

Vickery Meadow, Dallas

- One of the most ethnically diverse ZIP codes in the U.S.
- Home to refugees & immigrants from 30+ nations
- Working families navigating systems not built for them
- VMYDF was born FROM this community — not built FOR it

"We don't define our community by what it lacks. We define it by what it holds."

College Readiness Programs

Grades 6–12 youth development

Whole-Family Navigation

Students + parents navigate together

Asset-Based Approach

We start with strengths, not deficits

Scholar Coaches

College graduates who light the way back

COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH

Dr. Tara Yosso, 2005

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"Instead of asking what students lack, we ask: what do they bring?"

Yosso identifies six forms of capital that communities of color carry — often unseen by dominant institutions.

ASPIRATIONAL CAPITAL

The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers.

LINGUISTIC CAPITAL

The intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language or style.

FAMILIAL CAPITAL

Cultural knowledge nurtured among family — the community memory, history, and intuition that binds and sustains.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Networks of people and community resources — the relationships and supports families draw on to navigate life.

NAVIGATIONAL CAPITAL

The skills to maneuver through social institutions that were not created with communities of color in mind.

RESISTANT CAPITAL

The knowledge and skills fostered through resistance to subordination — and the will to challenge inequality.

ACTIVITY: ASSET MAPPING

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Think about a community you serve. Take 3 minutes — list what you notice:

Aspirational & Linguistic Capital

What do families say they want for their children? What languages, dialects, and communication strengths exist here?

Social Capital

Who do people already go to for help — not who they're supposed to go to, but who they actually trust? What informal networks already exist?

Familial Capital

What traditions, practices, and community memory do families carry? Who has been here the longest — and what do they know?

Navigational & Resistant Capital

How have families figured out how to make things work despite barriers? What have they built, survived, or created on their own?

Share with a neighbor — what surprised you about the assets you listed?

OUR COMMUNITY

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"Our community isn't defined by one story. Every family here — immigrant, refugee, or born in this neighborhood — has figured out how to make things work. That is not nothing. That is everything."

Immigrant & Refugee Families

- Parents who sacrificed everything for this moment
- Cultural wisdom that U.S. systems rarely honor
- Resilience built across oceans and borders

Families Born Here

- Navigational capital earned through years of figuring it out
- Survivors who have made things work against the odds
- Knowledge and strength that isn't always honored — but should be

What We Share Across Communities

- Dreams for children that don't waver despite systemic barriers
- Trust in people and relationships — not institutions
- A right to be seen as contributors, not just recipients

How We Engage

- We start every conversation: 'What do you already have?'
- Programs built WITH communities, not AT them
- Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) as our foundation

HOW WE WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

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Project-Based · Experiential · Real-World · Student-Centered · 21st Century Learning

Project-Based Learning	Experiential Learning	Student-Centered	Design Thinking
Students tackle real community challenges. The work is meaningful because it matters to their actual lives.	College visits, career shadowing, community interviews. Learning by doing — not just listening to lectures.	Youth set their own goals, lead their own projects, and present to real audiences. They own the journey.	Empathize → Define → Ideate → Prototype → Test. Students learn to solve real problems with creativity.

College readiness begins at age 6, not 16.

Early access to books, experiences, and intellectual challenge sets the foundation long before high school. When a child at age 7 sees themselves as someone who reads, who asks questions, who has ideas worth sharing — that is college readiness.



21st Century Learning: Critical Thinking · Collaboration · Creativity · Communication

NAVIGATING THE COLLEGE SYSTEM

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For first-generation families, the college system isn't just complex — it's written in a language they've never been taught.

What Families Must Navigate:

- FAFSA, scholarships, and financial aid systems
- Application timelines, deadlines & testing requirements
- Understanding credits, GPA, majors & transfer options
- Immigration status & DACA considerations
- Cultural expectations about leaving home
- Work obligations competing with school

How VMYDF Bridges the Gap:

Whole-Family Navigation

Parents as partners, not bystanders — in the language they understand

Scholar Coaches

College graduates from similar backgrounds who have been through it and come back to walk alongside current students

Finding the Hidden Rules

The GPA that drops to 2.49, the 12-hour minimum, the Pell Grant clock, the scholarship strategy — rules no one tells families until it's too late

Walking With Them Through

College is a journey full of roadblocks students don't know to expect. We're there for the small things that turn out to be enormous things

Language Access by Any Means

Google Translate, bilingual Scholar graduates, trusted community members — we find a way because we have to

WHY OUR MODEL WORKS

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1 Trust is the Curriculum

No intervention works without trust. We earn it by showing up in families' languages, at community events, in ways that feel familiar.

2 Students as Leaders

When young people lead, they don't just learn — they own. Ownership drives persistence through real obstacles.

3 Families as Partners

We don't ask parents to 'get out of the way.' We invite them in. Informed families are the strongest college-going support system.

4 Identity-Affirming

Students who see their culture as a source of strength — not shame — are more likely to persist through adversity.

5 Relationships Over Transactions

We're not a service. We're a community. Long-term relationships produce long-term results that data rarely captures.

6 Honest About Barriers

We name systemic inequities — immigration status, poverty, discrimination — because naming them helps students navigate them.

WHAT THIS COULD LOOK LIKE IN HOUSING

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Housing authorities have something most programs don't: concentrated community, trusted relationships, and place-based access to students who come home every evening.

Start With What You Have

- Identify the informal connectors — the trusted neighbor, the building elder
- Create space for youth intellectual curiosity, even just a corner with books and a question on the wall
- Ask families what they already know and do — then honor it publicly
- A 25-cent library started with a box of donated books — it doesn't require a budget

Partner With an Organization

- Invite a college-readiness org to co-locate or run programming in your space
- Look for organizations already trusted by families — not just the biggest name
- You bring the place and the people; they bring the curriculum
- Has it been done in housing? Someone has — we haven't yet, but we can see exactly how

Build a Model Together

- Youth advisory board: let young people design what they need
- Scholar Coach pipeline: connect college-going youth with recent graduates from the community
- Monthly family conversations — not presentations at families, but conversations with them
- Document what works — stories are data too

GROUP DISCUSSION

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What Could This Look Like in YOUR Community?

Pick one question. Talk at your table for 5 minutes. We'll hear a few responses.

1. Who in your building or community is already doing informal mentoring, connecting, or supporting families — and how can your organization amplify them rather than replace them?
2. Think about a young person in your community who has been written off or overlooked. What capital do they carry that hasn't been named or honored? What would it look like to honor it?
3. If you had a community room, a committed staff person, and the trust of families — what's the one thing you would start with? What would you NOT do first?
4. What are the hidden rules of the college system that the families you serve don't know — and who in your organization could start teaching those rules right now?
5. When has your organization asked families 'what do you already have?' versus 'what do you need?' What would change if you led with that question every time?

Beyond Housing.
Beyond Limits.

When we start with what communities already have — strengths, languages, dreams, resilience — we build something that lasts.

Connect With VMYDF:

vmydf.org

ourasafamily.blogspot.com — our early work with youth in housing

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Thank you for the work you do for families across Texas.

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