

# Nurturing Youth: Opioid Misuse Prevention Through Relationship-Based Professional Mentoring

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*2023 Montana Opioid Abatement Trust Grants*

## ***Friends of the Children Eastern Montana***

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# Application Form

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## *Region Selection*

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To collaborate with someone else on this request, click the blue "Collaborate" button in the top-right corner.

### **Project Name\***

Nurturing Youth: Opioid Misuse Prevention Through Relationship-Based Professional Mentoring

### **Select Abatement Region and/or Metro Region\***

Select the Multi-County Abatement Region **and/or** the Metro Region you are requesting grant funds from. Select all regions that apply, for example if you are collaborating with multiple Counties **and/or** Abatement Regions select each region the program/project will serve. Click [HERE](#) for a detailed map of Multi-County Abatement Regions and Metro Abatement Regions

Abatement Region 3  
Yellowstone County

## *Application Overview*

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### **About the Organization/Program\***

Give a brief description of the Organization/Program/Project. Include the mission statement and the services provided.

Friends of the Children – Eastern Montana (Friends Eastern) was established in June 2022 in response to the community's great need for long-term, holistic services creating positive outcomes in health, education, and well-being for families experiencing extreme poverty and trauma. For 30 years, Friends of the Children has disrupted cycles of poverty and trauma, changing the trajectory of lives for youth facing enormous barriers to their long-term well-being and success. Our research-validated program model impacts generational change by empowering youth facing the greatest obstacles through relationships with professional mentors (called "Friends")—for 12+ years, no matter what. We do this by providing 1:1 professional mentoring to youth experiencing the greatest need with the fewest protective factors. We enroll each child ages 4 – 6 and work with them 4 hours every week, year-round, through high school graduation, providing individualized support and access to resources for overcoming obstacles, ultimately building paths to health and stability.

Our distinctive model mitigates the long-term effects of early childhood and on-set trauma through social-emotional growth:

We collaborate with schools and other partners to identify and enroll youth ages 4-6 who have a history of multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

We employ full-time, highly trained professional mentors who come directly from the communities we serve  
We commit to mentoring each child through high school graduation – a level of long-term consistency not offered by any other child-focused organization in Eastern Montana

Friends provide wraparound support across all facets of the child's life (school, home, and community) to address the underlying issues impeding their positive development

Friends spend 4 hours each week with each youth inside and outside the classroom

Friends develop trusting relationships with each child's caregiver through our intergenerational (2Gen) approach

### What category does the program fit into\*

Check the category/categories the program fits into. You may select more than one option.

Click [HERE](#) for a list of approved opioid remediation uses

Prevention

### How does the program meet the Opioid Remediation Guidelines\*

In detail, describe how the program fits into the approved Opioid Remediation Guidelines selected in the above question.

*Please be specific*

Friends Eastern intentionally enrolls youth exposed to systemic poverty, complex trauma, and multiple ACEs, recognized as risk factors for Opioid Use Disorders (OUD) and adverse mental health outcomes. Our initiatives align with the Opioid Remediation Guidelines prevention strategies, with a distinct emphasis on youth with the greatest risk factors and least protective factors. Specifically, our evidence-informed program addresses the mental health needs of young people who are at risk of misusing opioids or other drugs by providing services that build emotional modulation and resilience skills over the long term. Our model is shown to mitigate risks and impacts of trauma to stabilize youth and families and strengthen prevention effective responses in countering co-occurring conditions in youth. This approach provides consistent service starting when children are young, mitigating the long-term impact of ACEs on a child's health and development. early. Our long-term holistic and relationship-based services foster mental health and strengthen protective factors through connectedness and social-emotional security. Additionally, we cultivate and reinforce prosocial skill development and goal setting in areas such as health, education, and planning for the future.

Our 2Gen prevention strategy connects youth and their families to community-based education and intervention services that specifically address co-occurring conditions related to OUD. We leverage trust-based, trauma-informed individualized support to ensure families receive services effective for them, strengthening protective factors and mitigating co-occurring conditions to prevent opioid misuse. We support enrolled youth and families by actively connecting them to community services and organizations, thereby extending the local continuum of care's prevention strategy. Collaborating with non-profits and the faith community, we support the local comprehensive outreach system for treatment and recovery.

### New Program or Existing\*

Is the funding intended for a new program or to expand an existing program?

A proposed supplement or expansion to a program.

## *Fiscal Information*

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### Requested Amount\*

\$343,045.00

### Program Budget\*

How will the funds be allocated? Attach a detailed line item budget breakdown for the program. If the funds are intended for a multi-year program please specify the amount budgeted for each year.

Friends-Eastern MT 2024 Opioid Prevention Budget.xlsx

### Source of Funding\*

Does the program currently receive funding from another source? If yes, please explain in detail. (i.e. amount, funding source, etc.)

Grant funding is intended for the creation or expansion of opioid prevention, treatment, and recovery projects. The money is **NOT** meant to replace or supplant existing funding.

Our Nurturing Youth program is an expansion of enrollment and services over three years to support three additional cohorts of 16 youth, 48 in total. Funding from the Montana Opioid Abatement Trust will cover the salaries and benefits of two new Friend positions per year, with each position providing weekly 1:1 services to eight youth. Youth and families enrolled in the program will be those identified as being at risk for OUD and will receive individualized professional mentoring services that effectively prevent opioid misuse. Friends' salaries and benefits will comprise 88% of the Nurturing Youth program budget. The remaining 12% of costs will be funded from other philanthropic sources, including the organization's general operating funds. This funding will support the expansion of program services to new participants and will not support existing services to current enrollees or supplant existing funding. Services will be provided to each youth, their caregivers, and other families, reaching approximately 230 individuals in Yellowstone County and Bighorn County during the grant period. This expansion of services will double the number of youth we plan to serve over the next three years from 48 to 96 children, increasing our community impact from 384 to 614 individuals across Yellowstone and Bighorn Counties.

When Friends-Eastern MT launched in 2022, we leveraged seed funding to develop interest from individual donors and local, regional, and national foundations to ensure a healthy and diversified revenue portfolio. Since then, we have a slate of current and potential funders whose goals align with our services. Other sources of funding for our organization include: Individual Contributions, \$236,000; Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, \$100,000; SCHEELS, \$100,000; Tykeson Family Foundation, \$75,000; MacKenzie Scott, \$70,000; Special Events, \$50,000; Otto Bremer Trust, \$50,000; Montana Mental Health Trust, \$45,000; Mary & Bill Underriner, \$34,000; United Way of Yellowstone County, \$25,000; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, \$15,000; Washington Foundation, \$10,000; Sample Foundation, \$7,000; Margaret V Ping Foundation, \$5,000.

### Do you have a Fiscal Agent\*

No

## *Program Abstract*

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### **Program Description\***

Describe the objectives of this project. Provide a detailed overview of the program, including its purpose, priorities & objectives, and intended results.

#### **OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE**

With this funding support, Friends Eastern will expand enrollment in Eastern Montana for opioid misuse prevention over three years by hiring two Friends annually, expanding our cohort by 16 per year, and begin serving Crow Nation youth and families in 2025. Our Nurturing Youth program will enroll youth and their families, providing uninterrupted, trauma-informed educational and social-emotional support that increases protective factors, reduces and mitigates risks, and prevents OUD and other substance disorders. Once enrolled, Friends help youth with academic and social-emotional growth, ensuring they get necessary services. Friends and youth also engage in enrichment activities essential to goal-setting and social-emotional skill development to mitigate trauma's impact and promote healthy behavior.

#### **PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES**

Our trauma-informed approach mitigates the enduring effects of ACEs on youth health and development, fostering positive outcomes in education, mental health, and overall well-being. Our strategies are effective for preventing chronic health issues associated with multiples ACEs (including substance disorders). We focus on two evidence-based strategies: 1) a consistent relationship with a caring adult (a Friend), and 2) age-appropriate social-emotional skill development spanning childhood through adolescence. Activities between Friends and youth focus on building resilience and confidence through real-life contexts by learning and practicing nine social-emotional skills called "Core Assets". Research highlights the struggle of individuals at risk for substance use disorders (SUD) in managing emotions. Friends help youth develop self-regulation, stress management, and coping skills, thereby preventing substance misuse while promoting self-management, positive relationships, and problem-solving skills to mitigate trauma and ACEs. Youth also collaborate with Friends to set "Roadmap Goals" across five outcome areas that strengthen prevention skills and support healthy choices.

Our evidence-based 2Gen approach supports caregivers and families, many of whom experience co-occurring conditions. Caregivers often face obstacles accessing support systems with impacts to their children. Friends leverage existing connections with community resources and connect families to them, including intervention services. Engaging with youth, caregivers, and families is vital to mitigating ACEs, breaking the cyclical impact of poverty, and preventing misuse of opioids and other substances.

#### **INTENDED RESULTS**

Friends - Eastern MT will use specific goals to measure the programmatic impact on the lives of youth and their families in opioid misuse prevention. During the funding period, youth will progress in developing skills and setting goals that promote healthy behaviors and reduce risk. Friends will also engage with caregivers, connecting families to health and well-being resources that promote stability.

### **Program Reach**

If you are requesting funds from multiple Abatement Regions please specify how your program serves each region. **Be specific.**

Friends Eastern's program serves youth from low-income families who identify as Caucasian, Indigenous, and people of color, residing in urban, rural, and tribal communities. Not only do our program participants include members from all these groups, but many of our participants, in fact, overlap in representing two or more of these demographic characteristics. Yellowstone County has a large Indigenous population with close ties to the nearby Crow and Northern Cheyenne Nations. It is critical that we provide culturally led services, and we approach this work thoughtfully and with humility. This request will expand enrollment and serve youth and their families from the Billings region and Region 3, primarily those residing on Crow Nation.

Program services, objectives, and priorities are consistent across Abatement Regions, with variations based on community partnerships and individual community needs.

In Spring 2023, we enrolled our first cohort of 16 children ages 4 – 6, and we will continue to serve these youth through high school graduation. Currently, we have enrolled our newest cohort of 16 more children, bringing our total enrolled youth to 32. Indigenous youth in Billings are entering foster care at a high rate, with 24 new children per day on average. Although only 9% of local youth under 19 identify as Indigenous, they comprise half the youth in foster care in Yellowstone County. Children in foster care face an increased risk of OUD due to trauma, disrupted social bonds, and mental health challenges. Our prevention efforts prioritize comprehensive support and stability to mitigate these risks and promote positive outcomes. Of the first 16 youths enrolled, all of them have co-occurring conditions that increase their risk of opioid misuse, SUD, and OUD. We plan to focus future enrollment on similar risk factors.:

19% experience housing insecurity

20% have experienced the death of a family member by homicide

31% have experienced domestic violence in their homes

38% have parents with reported substance use

56% identify as BIPOC

94% have a parent who is currently or has been incarcerated

100% have experienced significant trauma and multiple ACEs

100% live in families experiencing poverty

## Specific Goals\*

What are the specific goals of the program? List several goals the program hopes to accomplish and how the program intends to meet these goals.

Over the three-year funding period, Friends – Eastern will advance opioid misuse prevention among youth through program targets focused on Core Asset (growth mindset, positive relationship building, finding your spark, problem-solving, self-determination, self-management, perseverance/grit, hope, and belonging) development and Roadmap Goal (School Success, Making Good Choices, Plans and Skills for the Future, Prosocial Development, and Improved Health) achievement. Our weekly service delivery at home, school, and in the community includes wraparound support that contextualizes the application of social-emotional skills effective for healing trauma, fostering resilience, and creating pathways to long-term success. Our primary objective is to provide consistent, caring, relationship-based programming to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors among youth. Each year, we will enroll 16 youth through partnerships, set individualized goals for each child within six months of enrollment, and solicit feedback from families to evaluate our effectiveness. This will include 2Gen programming to support caregivers with connections to stabilizing resources and mental health services.

To measure our progress toward the broader protective factors contributing to the prevention of opioid misuse, we will utilize the following developmentally- and age-appropriate indicators:

**School Success (≥80%):** Evaluate indicators such as regular school attendance, completion of homework, and sustained focus in class to ensure progress in academic success.

**Prosocial Development (≥90%):** Assess healthy coping mechanisms for stress, effective communication skills, and positive relationships with peers and adults to ensure progress in prosocial development.

**Making Good Choices (≥80%):** Monitor participation in positive extracurricular activities, avoidance of risky behaviors, and non-aggressive conflict resolution to ensure progress in making good choices.

**Plans and Skills for the Future (≥80%):** Track goal-setting and achievement, as well as planning for special activities to ensure progress in preparing for the future.

Core Assets Development (≥80%): Ensuring progress in developing a minimum of 7 out of 9 Core Assets, fortifying their resilience against risk factors.

Caregiver Engagement (≥85%): Foster strong partnerships with caregivers measured by at least four monthly interactions between caregivers and Friends.

## Evaluation Method\*

Describe how you plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and what the method for evaluation will be.

Friends Eastern amplifies and incorporates the voices of the youth and families we serve, bringing together diverse experiences, skills, and backgrounds to provide opportunities to overcome systemic and complex barriers to equity and success. Our program is voluntary and tailored to participants' needs, goals, and aspirations. We are dedicated to rigorous monitoring, measurement, and evaluation based on concrete, high-quality data that is made openly available to stakeholders and program participants. To track youth progress and continually improve service delivery, Friends record every interaction with children and caregivers in our Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) database management system. Each child's progress in developing Core Assets and achieving Roadmap Goals is also tracked and recorded in the ETO database. Friends of the Children produces Program Performance Scorecards for every child from that data. These scorecards measure children's progress of developing Core Assets, quantifiable outcomes that reflect skill-building and the impact of the Friend's relationship with the child. The data is reviewed monthly, allowing Friends to adjust in real-time to align with each child's progress and needs.

Scorecard results from across the national network show early gains from our approach. Within two years of enrollment, 95% of children attain overall success in their school performance, feel a deep sense of connection to their culture and community, and identify accomplishments that make them proud.

Furthermore, we will engage in the annual Caregiver Survey in Fall 2024. This third-party validated survey is voluntary and assesses the program's impact on youth progress, family stability, and overall program satisfaction. The survey is completed by caregivers whose youth have been enrolled in our program for over one year. Results are leveraged to inform individual-, chapter-, and network-level program delivery, guaranteeing services are continuously informed by and held accountable to our children, families, and communities.

Our model is being evaluated through numerous independent studies and third-party evaluations. We are part of an ongoing longitudinal randomized-controlled trial—the longest of its kind—run by researchers from the University of Washington, Princeton University, and New York University. The results of these studies allow us to find ways to serve youth better and strengthen our relationships with youth and caregivers.

## Awareness\*

How do you plan to create awareness of this program? Briefly describe what action the program plans to take to create awareness in the community.

To create awareness of our program, we have developed a multifaceted strategy rooted in community collaboration, engagement, and targeted outreach. Our first action involves forging partnerships with local organizations, schools, and institutions to leverage existing networks and establish a robust community presence. We actively engage with non-profits, faith-based groups, and community leaders to promote the program, fostering a supportive network to extend the local continuum of care.

Our MOUs with schools as enrollment partners and agreements for Friends to spend time in the classrooms helping youth pursue their goals, promotes awareness of our program. This work also enhances our understanding of the challenges faced by youth at school. By actively engaging youth in the classroom, we utilize existing communication channels and direct interaction with teachers and administrators to further program awareness while also exchanging information.

Our media and online outreach strategy utilizes local media channels, including newspapers, radio, and community newsletters, to disseminate success stories, program updates, and pertinent information. We maintain an active online presence through social media platforms and the program's website and participate in coalitions such as Substance Abuse Connect, facilitating ongoing engagement and information sharing. We aim to reach a wider audience and inform the community about our endeavors through these channels. Additionally, we will launch a media campaign in late spring, 2024.

Our staff's outreach through our 2Gen approach builds and maintains connections with caregivers as partners in their child's pursuit of goals and well-being. This approach also addresses concerns and encourages active participation by caregivers. We connect caregivers and families with culturally led, community prevention resources and intervention service providers, a priority of our OUD-focused program. These connections are made during 1:1 interactions, chapter-sponsored events, and through printed informational materials. This increases community awareness about local providers as resources and our programmatic approach to prevention strategies and OUD response services. Additionally, we encourage youth and their caregivers to share success stories and testimonials, leveraging positive word-of-mouth within the community and positioning our organization to create awareness.

## *Additional Documents*

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**Use this section to upload or explain any additional information regarding the program/organization. ie. a detailed budget projection, program/organization history, etc.**

### **Upload #1**

Eastern MT Overview Jan 2024.pdf

### **Upload #2**

4517\_001.pdf

### **Upload #3**

## **Additional Information**

The rise in youth-involved violent crime and gang activity across Yellowstone County can be linked to opioid and other substance misuse (as described below), making a preventative response imperative. High rates of community violence further endanger the well-being of youth and families, particularly those whose safety and well-being are already at risk due to poverty, instability, and other hardships. Violent crime in Billings has increased by 48% over the past 3 years, disproportionately affecting youth. Friends Eastern's evidence-based model comprehensively supports youth and their families through relationship-based, professional mentoring as a proactive measure to build safety for youth, protect them from victimization, and prevent engagement in opioid misuse, violent crime, and gang involvement.

### **IMPACT ON INDIGENOUS YOUTH**

The intersection of violent crime, gang involvement, and opioid misuse creates a challenging environment in Yellowstone County, especially for Indigenous youth. The state's Indigenous community disproportionately experiences violent crime. In 2021, Indigenous people made up 30% of all missing persons despite only



accounting for 6.7% of the population and are, on average, 4 times more likely to go missing than other Montana populations. Between 2017 and 2020, Montana's opioid overdose death rate almost tripled (from 2.7 deaths per 100,000 residents to 7.3). In the decade leading up to 2020, the rate of overdose deaths among Native Americans was more than twice that of white Montana residents, according to the state Department of Health and Human Services. The resulting opioid overdose death rate increase and the disproportionate impact of violence on Eastern Montana's Indigenous populations underscore the urgent need for preventive measures.

Friends Eastern - focusing on Indigenous communities - is an ideal partner to receive funding and provide prevention services to the Crow Nation. The daily toll of violent crimes and opioid misuse significantly compounds the already existing trauma Indigenous youth experience. These experiences include exposure to economic and environmental hardships, violence, parental addiction in the home, co-occurring conditions, OUD, and SUD. Our evidence-based model is intentional and addresses these compounded risks Indigenous youth face. Where traditional youth-serving organizations struggle to adequately address these extreme barriers, we succeed through an intensive, culturally led, long-term, relationship-based approach utilizing highly-trained, professional, paid mentors. Friends help youth develop opioid misuse prevention strengths through social-emotional growth that mitigates the long-term effects of trauma and ACEs. This holistic approach uses the Core Assets as strength-based solutions that lead to resilience, confidence, and empowerment, characteristics shown to successfully prevent opioid misuse.

#### CO-OCCURRING CONDITIONS IN YOUTH

At 22%, Montana has the third-highest rate of ACEs in the US. The state also has a childhood abuse rate above the national average, with 13 children per 1,000 affected. Youth across the state are experiencing high and increasing levels of need for behavioral health services, at the same time as support in schools and other child-serving institutions are becoming less accessible. According to the 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey annually conducted in public high schools across the state, 41% of youth reported feeling so sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row that they stopped usual activities, a 16% jump from 1999, when the study was first conducted. Nearly 22% of youth said they had seriously considered attempting suicide in 2021, down since the survey's first year but an increase of more than six percentage points since its low in 2007. Roughly 10% of youth attempted suicide, a consistent level since 1991, but an increase of almost four percentage points since hitting a low in 2011. Eastern Montana requires additional services to support the existing continuum of care, creating equitable outcomes for all youth, and preventing co-occurring conditions that can lead to OUD.

Friends Eastern emerges as a powerful preventive force by providing consistent, caring relationships, fostering prosocial involvement, and reinforcing core individual beliefs. Friends bolster all protective factors identified in the 2022 Montana Prevention Needs Assessment (MPNA): opportunities and rewards for prosocial involvement in the school, community, family, and peer group; family attachment; interaction with prosocial peers; and core individual beliefs. Our program's success is evidenced by the significantly lower rates of alcohol and drug use among participants compared to the broader youth population. Our model is proven to provide effective early prevention for youth at high risk of substance abuse. A Friends of the Children 2023 survey found that 91% of program middle and high school youth drank no alcohol, 88% used no marijuana, and 99% used no illegal drugs in the past year. By contrast, the 2022 MPNA Yellowstone County data showed that 69% of all 8th-12th graders reported drinking no alcohol over the past 30 days, and 75% have never used marijuana. Finally, the 2023 survey showed that 86% of youth in the program reported having fewer thoughts of self-harm. The implementation of evidence-based training for Friends in substance abuse prevention further strengthens the program's capacity to address the evolving challenges youth face.

#### A FRIEND'S IMPACT ON YOUTH

The rise in violent crime and drug-related activities across Yellowstone and Big Horn Counties underscores the need for effective prevention strategies. Friends - Eastern MT has built capacity in substance use prevention. Through a US Department of Justice - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention grant, our national network supports enhancements specific to youth ages 4 to 17. Program elements developed through this partnership include evidence-based training for Friends in motivational interviewing and attunement, skills directly related to substance abuse prevention, and adopting Family Check-Up, a National

Institute of Justice model incorporated in our 2Gen approach for connecting with families using these strategies.

Friends Eastern's program serves as a potent protective factor for youth, mitigating the risk of drug use and adverse behaviors. Our intentional approach is to be developmental, not prescriptive. Youth who develop self-management and emotional regulation skills, work through challenges and find solutions, both in schoolwork and in life, increase protective factors that mitigate ACEs and prevent potential opioid misuse. These social-emotional skills are developed through Core Assets, strengthening youth's ability to problem-solve and think critically, which is essential to their long-term success against ACEs and co-occurring conditions that lead to opioid misuse, OUD, and SUD. By supporting youth empowerment and providing opportunities for social-emotional skill development, youth gain protective factors for long-term success in preventing opioid misuse and adverse behaviors. Development of these skills by youth is crucial for long-term success into adulthood.

#### TWO-GENERATIONAL APPROACH

Many of our youth have caregivers who have their own history of trauma with a high likelihood of having multiple ACEs and, unfortunately, never received the treatment and support they needed and deserved as youth. As a result, caregivers face mental health challenges, poverty, and physical health issues as adults. Caregivers deserve empathy, support, and access to resources just like their children, and when Friends support caregivers, the youth also benefit. Our 2Gen approach encourages and supports families, many of whom are socially isolated and distrustful of systems, to access local resources. We empower families to advocate for themselves and articulate their needs and challenges, amplifying the support system's work to prevent and treat. Our collaborations with community partners aims to remove the complex administrative and social-emotional barriers that keep our families from using the behavioral and physical healthcare services available to them. We recognize our community partners' important role in the local continuum of care addressing mental and physical health. We leverage our relationships with these service providers, which include rehab and treatment facilities, making them more accessible to the youth and families we serve. By maintaining open lines of communication and promoting collaborations, we perpetuate a supportive and empowering network of local resources focused on opioid misuse prevention and intervention strategies. The emphasis on connecting families with healthcare resources, navigating systems, and collaborating with community partners contributes to disrupting systemic cycles of harm. When youth have a healthy, supportive family and stability in the home, they are at lower risk for opioid misuse, joining gangs, and committing violent crimes.

## File Attachment Summary

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### *Applicant File Uploads*

- Friends-Eastern MT 2024 Opioid Prevention Budget.xlsx
- Eastern MT Overview Jan 2024.pdf
- 4517\_001.pdf

**Friends of the Children - Eastern Montana  
Montana Opioid Abatement Trust Budget**

Activities	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Totals
	Expenses	From Trust	Expenses	From Trust	Expenses	From Trust	
Salaries – 2 Friends	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$92,700	\$92,700	\$95,481	\$95,481	
Benefits & Taxes	\$20,350	\$20,350	\$21,599	\$21,599	\$22,915	\$22,915	
Youth & Friend Activities	\$12,192	\$0	\$12,600	\$0	\$13,008	\$0	
Family Engagement	\$3,200	\$0	\$3,296	\$0	\$3,395	\$0	
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$125,742</b>		<b>\$130,195</b>		<b>\$134,799</b>		<b>\$390,736</b>
<b>Total Trust Contribution</b>		<b>\$110,350</b>		<b>\$114,299</b>		<b>\$118,396</b>	<b>\$343,045</b>

**Adjustment of 3%, in line with average annual inflation rate, accounts for increased expenses in Year 2 and Year 3.**

**Salaries and Related Expenses:** Each Friend provides direct services to eight youth. Services include preventing opioid misuse in youth, focusing on building emotional self-regulation and resilience skills over the long term to promote healthy behaviors.

- Year 1: Project staffing includes two Friends at \$45,000 per position annually. Benefits and taxes are multiplied at 22.61%.
- Year 2: Project staffing includes two Friends at \$46,350 per position annually. Benefits and taxes are multiplied at 23.3%.
- Year 3: Project staffing includes two Friends at \$47,741 per position annually. Benefits and taxes are multiplied at 24%.

**Friends and Youth Activities:** Friends and youth engage in enrichment activities essential to goal-setting and pro-social-emotional skill development that mitigate the impacts of trauma and promote healthy behavior. These activities reinforce and contextualize academic instruction and support pro-social and emotional skills development with outings tailored to meet each child's goals and interests.

- Year 1: Costs included are for two Friends and 16 youth activities annually (\$26/child/month) and (\$300/Friend/month).
- Year 2: Costs included are for two Friends and 16 youth activities annually (\$27/child/month) and (\$309/Friend/month).
- Year 3: Costs included are for two Friends and 16 youth activities annually (\$28/child/month) and (\$318/Friend/month).

**Family Engagement and Support:** Activities include parenting supports and educational classes/workshops that connect families to community resources.

- Year 1: Costs include food and activities for events that include caregivers and family members (\$200/family/year).
- Year 2: Costs include food and activities for events that include caregivers and family members (\$206/family/year).
- Year 3: Costs include food and activities for events that include caregivers and family members (\$212/family/year).

# OUR STORY

We are dedicated to breaking the cycle of generational poverty. We effect transformational change by empowering youth who are facing the greatest obstacles through relationships with highly trained Professional Mentors.

# FR1ENDS of the CH1LDREN Eastern Montana

Friends of the Children - Eastern Montana (Friends Eastern) is part of a national network of separate, independent, and autonomous chapters licensed by Friends of the Children - National to exclusively deliver the Friends Model in their state or region.

## OUR IMPACT IN EASTERN MONTANA

### FRIENDS EASTERN EST 2022

- Launched in partnership with School District 2 and Lockwood Schools, focusing on low-income areas within our community.
- Our first cohort of 16 children has large families with multiple siblings. 96 family members are benefitting.
- Launched in partnership with youth behavioral and mental health providers to address suicide prevention, domestic violence, and substance abuse.
- Part of the foster care prevention and intervention continuum in Yellowstone County by enrolling youth in foster care who are statistically at highest risk in our community. This is our second cohort of 16 children, to be enrolled by 1/31/24.
- Provides culturally responsive programming to best serve Indigenous youth, both on and off reservations.
- Launching dedicated 2Gen family engagement services in 2024 to best support caregivers at home.
- Expansion interest from several communities including Bozeman, Crow Agency, and Hardin. Conducting feasibility studies for strategic, sustainable chapter growth.

“My daughter absolutely loves her Friend, who also helps me with parenting skills, connecting me to job opportunities, and supporting my sobriety.”

– Katrina, Caregiver



# THE FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN MODEL

Research has shown that the most important factor for building resiliency in children who face the greatest challenges in life is a long-term, consistent relationship with a caring adult.

- We invite youth and caregivers to join us.
- We hire and train full-time, paid, professional mentors.
- We commit for the long-term.
- Our work is relationship-based, individualized, and intentional.
- We work with youth and caregivers in the community, at-home, and at-school.
- We evaluate, measure, and improve.

## \$1 = \$7

For every \$1 invested in Friends of the Children, the community benefits over \$7 in saved social costs. Helping one child saves the community nearly \$ 1 million.

## OUR WORK IN FOSTER CARE

The Friends of the Children model is increasingly being sought out by communities and foster care systems across the country as a foster care prevention and intervention strategy. For 30 years, our model has been breaking cycles of poverty and seeing results for youth in care. Of youth who have experienced foster care:



**92% enroll in post-secondary education, serve our country or enter the workforce.**



**83% graduate high school**



**93% avoid juvenile justice**



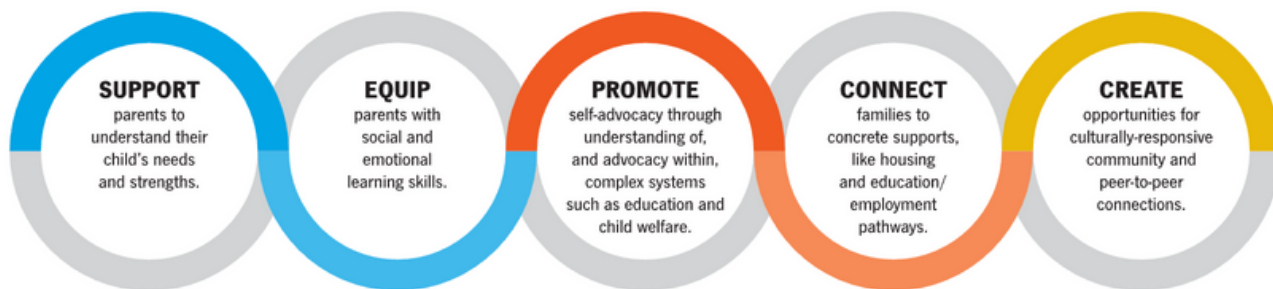
**98% avoid early parenting**

Compared to youth who experienced foster care without a Friend:  
55%                      74%                      74%

*We envision a day when every 4–6-year-old in Montana who is at imminent risk of, or who is experiencing foster care, has a Friend. With the accelerated expansion of the Friends of the Children model, we believe that by 2030, we can reduce the number of 5-year-olds entering foster care by 10% in the communities we serve.*

## TWO-GENERATION IMPACT (“2GEN”)

Recognizing the power of our model to empower youth, Friends of the Children is now implementing a two-generation (2Gen) approach to meet the needs of both youth and caregivers. In addition to providing a one-on-one salaried, professional mentor (a Friend) to individual children, our 2Gen approach supports parents and caregivers by:



For more information about Friends Eastern, contact Nina Hernandez, Executive Director [nhernandez@friendsmontana.org](mailto:nhernandez@friendsmontana.org) (406) 534-3138

[friendseasternmt.org](http://friendseasternmt.org)  
[friendsofthechildren.org](http://friendsofthechildren.org)

   
[@friendseasternMT](https://www.facebook.com/friendseasternMT)

February 29, 2024

Dear Committee,


I am pleased to write this letter of support for Friends of the Children–Eastern Montana.

In my role as Project Director of the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders, I partner with Friends of the Children as a volunteer leader for our shared work in substance use prevention for youth. I believe their culturally-led services are already playing a critical role in the continuum of care for youth. They serve children and families who face tremendous challenges and are most in need of long-term, trauma-informed support. Working with Friends of the Children has been a positive experience. They show strategic thoughtfulness and a desire to partner in an innovative way that complements and expands Montana’s prevention care for children and families.

Friends of the Children–Eastern Montana helps our community broaden the continuum of care by providing individualized, professional, trauma-informed services and support to children and families in homes, schools, and communities. Salaried, professional mentors (“Friends”) also mitigate trauma through their consistent weekly support across domains, including schools, home, and community, allowing Friends to support youth as they practice skills.

As Friends of the Children strives to understand our state’s priorities and address its unmet needs, I am continuing conversations with Friends about strengthening a partnership approach to best amplify and expand the work already underway to address the needs of children. I hope you will support their efforts to deepen their work in opioid prevention.

Respectfully,



Les Left Hand

Project Director, All Nation Youth Partner for Success  
Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders

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**Friends of the Children - Eastern Montana  
Montana Opioid Abatement Trust Budget**

Activities	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Totals
	Expenses	From Trust	Expenses	From Trust	Expenses	From Trust	
Salaries – 2 Friends	\$94,500	\$94,500	\$97,335	\$97,335	\$100,255	\$100,255	
Benefits & Taxes	\$20,350	\$20,350	\$21,599	\$21,599	\$22,915	\$22,915	
Youth & Friend Activities	\$12,192	\$0	\$12,600	\$0	\$13,008	\$0	
Family Engagement	\$3,200	\$0	\$3,296	\$0	\$3,395	\$0	
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$130,242</b>		<b>\$134,830</b>		<b>\$139,573</b>		<b>\$404,645</b>
<b>Total Trust Contribution</b>		<b>\$114,850</b>		<b>\$118,934</b>		<b>\$123,170</b>	<b>\$356,954</b>

**Adjustment of 3%, in line with average annual inflation rate, accounts for increased expenses in Year 2 and Year 3.**

**Salaries and Related Expenses:** Each Friend provides direct services to eight youth. Services include preventing opioid misuse in youth, focusing on building emotional self-regulation and resilience skills over the long term to promote healthy behaviors.

- Year 1: Project staffing includes two Friends at \$45,000 per position annually. Benefits and taxes are multiplied at 22.61%.
- Year 2: Project staffing includes two Friends at \$46,350 per position annually. Benefits and taxes are multiplied at 23.3%.
- Year 3: Project staffing includes two Friends at \$47,741 per position annually. Benefits and taxes are multiplied at 24%.

**Friends and Youth Activities:** Friends and youth engage in enrichment activities essential to goal-setting and pro-social-emotional skill development that mitigate the impacts of trauma and promote healthy behavior. These activities reinforce and contextualize academic instruction and support pro-social and emotional skills development with outings tailored to meet each child’s goals and interests.

- Year 1: Costs included are for two Friends and 16 youth activities annually (\$26/child/month) and (\$300/Friend/month).
- Year 2: Costs included are for two Friends and 16 youth activities annually (\$27/child/month) and (\$309/Friend/month).
- Year 3: Costs included are for two Friends and 16 youth activities annually (\$28/child/month) and (\$318/Friend/month).

**Family Engagement and Support:** Activities include parenting supports and educational classes/workshops that connect families to community resources.

- Year 1: Costs include food and activities for events that include caregivers and family members (\$200/family/year).
- Year 2: Costs include food and activities for events that include caregivers and family members (\$206/family/year).
- Year 3: Costs include food and activities for events that include caregivers and family members (\$212/family/year).