



MINDFUL TRAINING SOLUTIONS

BRIDGES

Building Readiness, Independence,
Direction, Guidance & Empowerment

Foster Youth

Empowerment Workshop Series

2026

Mindful Training Solutions in collaboration with:



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH
hope. recovery. wellbeing.



WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE



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INTRODUCTION

BRIDGES is an 8-week, trauma-informed empowerment program designed to support foster youth ages 14–25 across Inglewood, Baldwin Hills, and Long Beach. Rooted in culturally responsive practice, BRIDGES provides a safe, affirming space for young people to explore identity, build emotional literacy, strengthen communication skills, and develop practical tools for navigating adulthood.

The program was created in response to the complex realities faced by Los Angeles County’s foster youth—many of whom experience housing instability, inconsistent access to mental health support, and systemic barriers that impact school, work, and long-term planning. BRIDGES integrates mental wellness, life skills, financial literacy, and systems navigation into a cohesive curriculum that centers youth voice and lived experience.

Over eight weeks, participants engaged in interactive workshops, peer discussions, scenario-based learning, and reflective exercises. Dinner and stipends were provided weekly to reduce barriers to participation and affirm the value of youth time and presence.

BRIDGES is more than a program—it is a community space where young people are seen, heard, and supported as they build the confidence and skills needed to shape their futures.

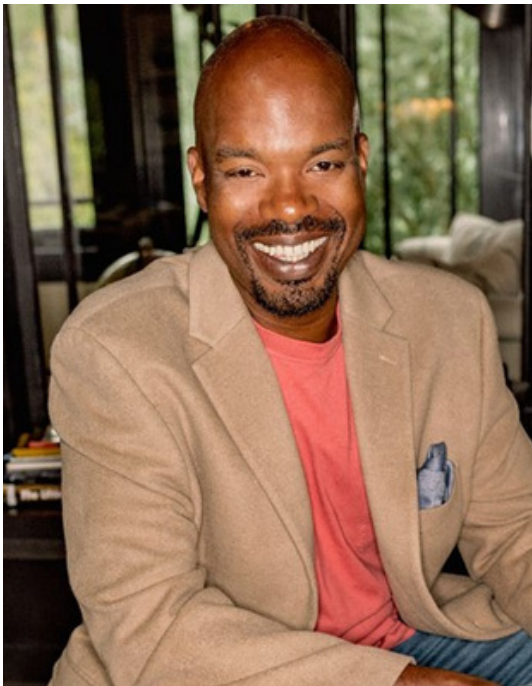
MESSAGE FROM OUR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Donald E. Grant Jr., PsyD

It has been an honor to walk alongside the young people who participated in BRIDGES this year. Their honesty, brilliance, humor, and resilience shaped every session and reminded us why youth-centered spaces are essential. BRIDGES was designed to meet young people where they are, honor their lived experiences, and equip them with tools that support emotional wellness, self-advocacy, and long-term stability. I am deeply grateful to our nonprofit partners Jabali Academy and The Right Way Foundation, their site staff, and community supporters whose commitment made this work possible. Your belief in the potential of our youth—and in the power of culturally grounded programming—helped create an environment where young people could show up fully and authentically.

As we close this cycle, we celebrate the growth we witnessed and remain committed to expanding opportunities for foster youth across Los Angeles County.

— Dr. Donald E. Grant Jr. Program Director,
Mindful Training Solutions
www.MindfulTrainingSolutions.com



“Individual actions matter, but systems shape lifetimes. When we repair systems, we reduce harm at the root and break cycles that people alone could never create.”

PRIORITIES & AT-A-GLANCE DATA

TOTAL YOUTH SERVED

48

- Participants represented **15+ neighborhoods** across LA County
- **12 parenting or pregnant** youth participated
- **85%** reported housing insecurity (historical and/or current)
- **Ages 14–25**, with strongest engagement among **ages 19–23**

PROGRAM INVESTMENT

- \$80,000 Program Budget
- \$8,000+ Meals & Snacks
- \$20,000+ Stipends Distributed
- 530+ Total Participation Hours



PARTICIPANTS & PARTICIPATION



60%

Attended five or more sessions.

Participants (10) with

PERFECT ATTENDANCE

21%

Cultural Background

52%

Hispanic/Latinx

44%

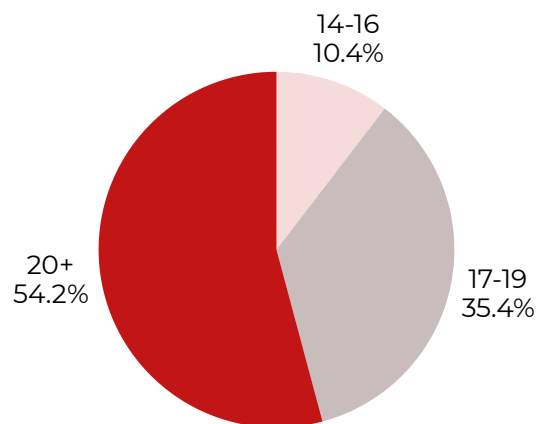
Black/Afr. Amer.

4%

Other

Participant Ages

14-16 17-19 20+



PARTICIPANT STATED PRIORITIES



- Housing Stability
- Career Exploration
- School Completion
- Employment & Income
- Long-Term Planning
- Health Access

SKILL ATTAINMENT

- Mental Health Literacy
- Financial Confidence
- Systems Navigation
- Boundary Setting
- Communication
- Self Advocacy



MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

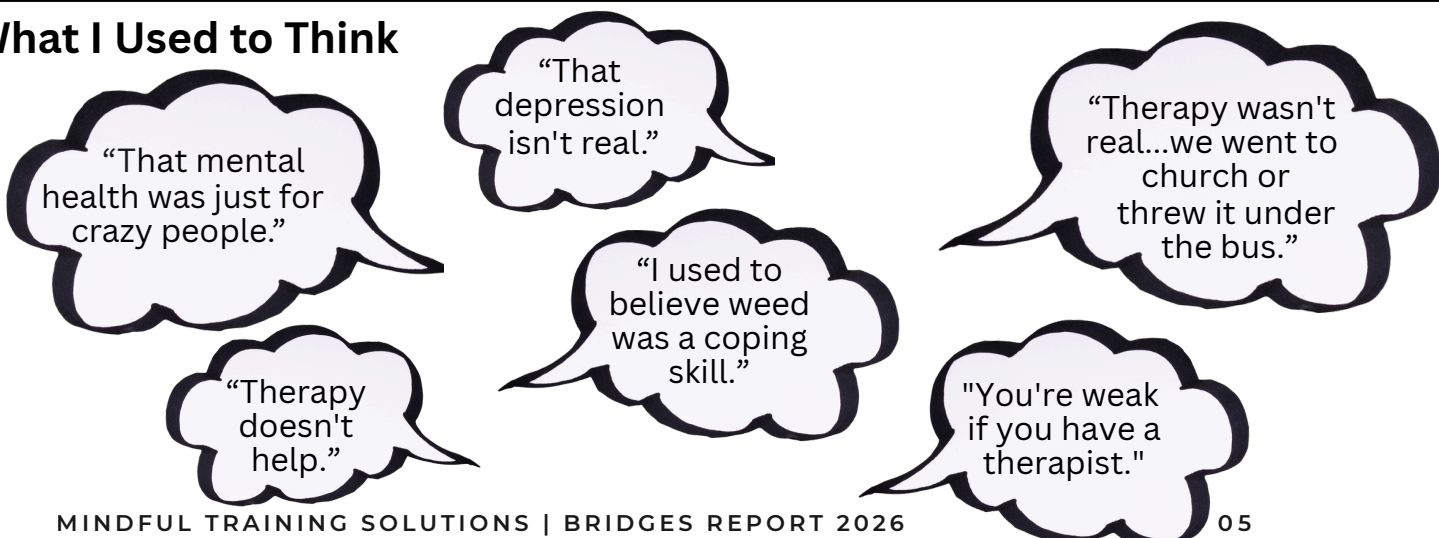
Evidence-based insights to strengthen service delivery and system accountability

Tracking these indicators allows us to understand not only what young people learn, but what they need from the systems designed to support them. Data like this helps illuminate patterns, barriers, and strengths across cohorts, creating a foundation for practices and policies that ensure continuity of care. When we measure growth in skills, confidence, and access, we generate evidence that can guide system-level improvements and inform programs that are responsive, equitable, and built to last.

Key Indicator	Method	Outcome
Mental Health Literacy 	Taught coping tools (breathwork, meditation, stretching, journaling) and normalized help-seeking through trauma-informed discussions.	• 90% reported increased confidence identifying personal strengths, values, and emotional needs. • 100% identified at least one support person.
Communication & Boundary Setting 	Used role-plays and real-life scenarios to practice assertive communication and examine consequences of unclear boundaries.	79% felt more confident using “I feel/I need” statements to express needs and set boundaries.
Financial Literacy 	Analyzed real-world financial scenarios (housing deposits, car loans, predatory offers) and introduced budgeting and credit-building tools.	Improved by 35% Participants demonstrated significantly increased engagement with financial tools—such as bank accounts, credit-tracking apps, and savings platforms—and showed stronger understanding of budgeting and credit.

What I Used to Think

In Their Words



TRACKING WHAT'S GAINED

Results from the Pre/Post Test

Participants completed a brief pre- and post-assessment aligned with BRIDGES learning objectives. Scores reflect self-ratings on confidence, knowledge, and skill use. The results below represent the average improvement across all participants, demonstrating meaningful growth.

Identify personal strengths & values

*Improved by **31%** (Pre: 3.39 → Post: 4.44)*

Showed increase in their ability to recognize and articulate their personal strengths and core values.

Practiced self-care activities

*Improved by **43%** (Pre: 3.00 → Post: 4.28)*

Increased their use of self-care strategies including journaling, movement, and intentional rest.

Set healthy boundaries

*Improved by **33%** (Pre: 3.33 → Post: 4.44)*

Strengthened their ability to set and maintain healthy boundaries in relationships and daily interactions.

Confident about school/work/career

*Improved by **37%** (Pre: 3.50 → Post: 4.78)*

Greater confidence in academic and career pathways, including next steps and long-term goals.

Understand basic coping tools for stress

*Improved by **56%** (Pre: 2.78 → Post: 4.33)*

Reported stronger understanding of coping tools such as breathwork, grounding, and mindfulness practices.

Felt confident asking for help

*Improved by **43%** (Pre: 2.83 → Post: 4.06)*

Greater confidence in reaching out to trusted adults, mentors, and peers when support was needed.

Understand how credit works

*Improved by **45%** (Pre: 3.06 → Post: 4.44)*

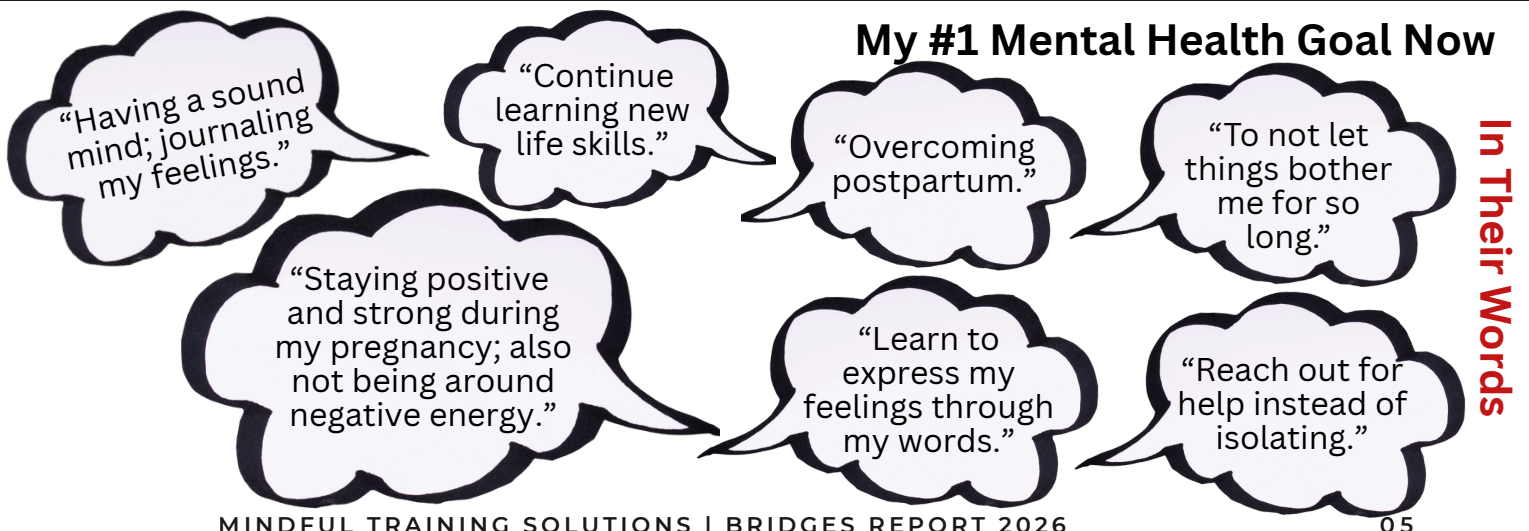
Gained clearer understanding of credit scores, interest, and the long-term impact of financial decisions.

Believe in skills & support for the future

*Improved by **33%** (Pre: 3.39 → Post: 4.50)*

Youth expressed stronger belief in their abilities and the support systems available to help them move forward.

- **Understand basic coping tools for stress** had the largest average gain, reflecting the biggest area of growth from the curriculum.
- **Confident asking for help** showed the most dramatic individual gains — many participants started at 1-2 and ended at 4-5, signaling a major shift in willingness to seek support.
- **Financial literacy** showed strong gains for participants who had very low baseline scores, suggesting the financial curriculum is especially impactful for those with less prior exposure.



PEER RESOURCE PROJECT

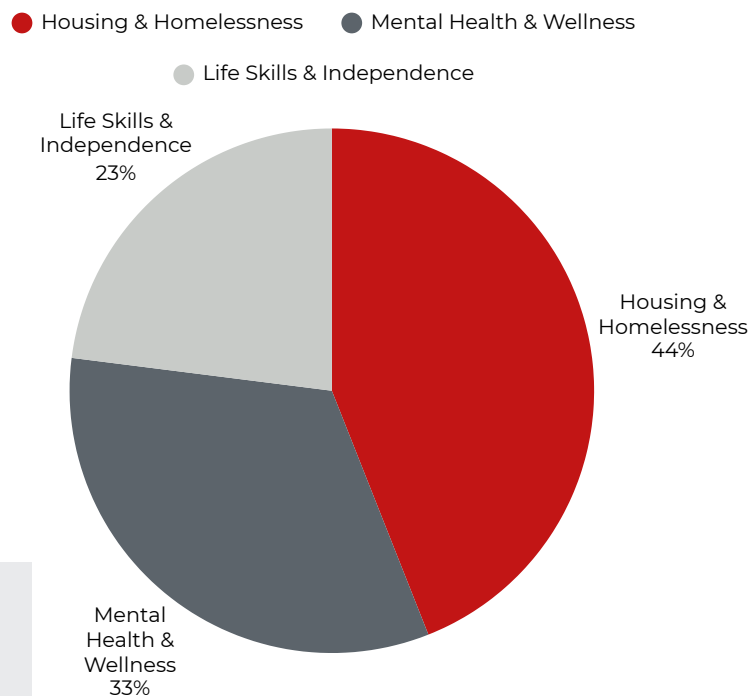
Overview

The Peer Resource Project supports youth-driven initiatives that foster leadership, teamwork, and community impact. Although participants did not activate their projects due to more immediate needs during the program, each youth ideated a project concept that reflected their vision for change. These ideas demonstrate creativity, empathy, and a desire to leave a lasting legacy for future cohorts.

Leadership Roles

56% of participants wanted to play a leadership role in their project. **44%** preferred to contribute in support or background roles.

Project Focus Areas



Resources Needed to Launch

When asked what they would need to bring their ideas to life:

- 44% **Funding & Financial Support**
- 33% **Partnerships with Organizations**
- 23% **Training & Mentorship**

Key Insights

- **Youth Leadership:** More than half of participants see themselves as leaders capable of driving change.
- **Community Priorities:** Housing and mental wellness remain top concerns among transition-age youth.
- **Capacity Building:** Access to funding, mentorship, and partnerships are critical to transforming ideas into action.

CONCLUSION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BRIDGES is possible because of the young people who bring their voices, their stories, and their vision into the room. Their growth throughout this series reflects not only their resilience, but the power of intentional, culturally responsive programming. *The outcomes demonstrated in this report show clear gains in confidence, coping skills, boundary-setting, financial literacy, and future planning — areas that directly support long-term stability and wellbeing.*

We extend our gratitude to the RightWay Foundation team, Jabali Academy, LA County partners, and the community members who helped create a space where youth could learn, lead, and thrive. Your collaboration ensures that participants receive the guidance, tools, and support they deserve.

As these results show, sustained investment in youth-centered programming is essential. Continued funding and partnership will allow BRIDGES to deepen its impact, expand access, and build a lasting legacy for future cohorts. Thank you for believing in this work and in the young people who make it meaningful.



ABOUT THE ORGS

Mindful Training Solutions

Mindful Training Solutions (MTS), established in 2013, is a leadership, wellness, and equity-centered consulting practice with both domestic and global partnerships. Led by Dr. Donald E. Grant Jr., MTS provides culturally responsive training, program development, and organizational strategy to institutions committed to strengthening communities. Through evidence-based facilitation and mental wellness expertise, MTS supports youth-centered initiatives like BRIDGES that equip participants with lifelong skills, confidence, and tools for personal and professional growth.

The RightWay Foundation

The RightWay Foundation is BRIDGES' most essential community partner, offering trauma-informed support, workforce development, and wraparound services for transition-age foster youth across Los Angeles. Founded and led by Franco Vega, RightWay's mission is to break cycles of instability by providing healing-centered programming and economic mobility pathways. Their partnership was foundational to the success of BRIDGES and remains central to its ongoing impact.

Jabali Academy

Jabali Academy is a new and dynamic school serving as an anchor institution in the Inglewood community. Led by Dr. Jon Carroll, Jabali Academy is committed to academic excellence, cultural empowerment, and community engagement. We are deeply grateful for their partnership and for providing space for our Inglewood cohort meetings, helping create a welcoming environment where youth could learn, connect, and grow.

LA County Department of Mental Health – Black/African Heritage Underserved Cultural Communities Subcommittee

This project was made possible through the support of the LA County Department of Mental Health's Black/African Heritage Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC) Subcommittee, whose advocacy created the funding pathway for BRIDGES. We extend special acknowledgment to our county liaison, Dr. Chiyah Lawrence, whose leadership, responsiveness, and hands-on involvement ensured seamless coordination between the program and county offices. Dr. Lawrence attended workshops at each location and participated in our closing celebration, embodying the commitment and partnership that made this work possible.