



Chase House Bolsters Youth Crisis Continuum in the Heart of Texas

The Chase House is a “blink and you’ll miss it” structure that could exist along any curvy road in McLennan County. But its exterior isn’t what makes it special.

Inside the Chase House, staff care for youth experiencing homelessness and human trafficking, and caregivers and youth with mental illness find respite options. Through several funding sources and programs, and a staff committed to caring for youth, the Chase House serves a core need in a flourishing community.

The Chase House plays a key role in the Klaras Center for Families’ dedication to reducing justice involvement for youth. Respite at the Chase House is part of a constellation of other services geared to linking youth with treatment before the involvement of law enforcement. The Chase House also works with youth exiting a Texas Juvenile Justice Department facility and reentering their community.

As part of the area’s local mental health authority, Heart of Texas Behavioral Health Network, the Klaras Center for Families serves youth and their families in McLennan, Falls, Freestone, Limestone, Hill and Bosque counties.

The Klaras Center for Families sustains the Chase House through a variety of funding sources and programs. Among those are a 2019 Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program grant from U.S. Housing and Urban Development, a Runaway and Homeless Youth grant, a Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) grant to provide respite, and a grant from the Office of the Governor to support young survivors of human trafficking.

The interior of the Chase House is warm and inviting. Guinea pigs are available for youth to take care of, as they learn to take care of themselves. A new art room allows youth to express themselves, and the shelter’s gym equipment helps them stay physically active.

Far more than providing shelter, Chase House staff take every opportunity to prepare youth for success and independence. Youth who stay at the Chase House work alongside program staff to take care of the building, do laundry, make shopping lists and cook dinner. Every task and chore is an opportunity



to work together, manage disagreements, and learn how to cope with stress, all under the watchful eye of supportive staff.

Because the Chase House serves youth in a variety of programs, the length of stay for each person depends on their individual needs and grant enrollment. During their stay, program staff work diligently with local schools to ensure youth are keeping up with coursework and accessing any needed academic support. Youth can see their doctor regularly and meet with the on-site nurse, and psychotherapy and trauma treatments are available.

Although the Chase House cannot accept drop-offs from law enforcement, it can be accessed through crisis services provided by the Heart of Texas Behavioral Health Network and Klaras Center for Families. Mobile crisis outreach teams can also offer the Chase House to youth and families in crisis.

By serving youth in need, the Chase House deflects costs from the community. Supporting youth in Chase House costs \$135 a day, as opposed to over \$200 a day in a juvenile detention center and over \$400 a day in a psychiatric hospital. In addition to cost savings, the Chase House keeps youth away from justice involvement and closer to their communities, schools, and natural support systems.



Additional Resources

- [National Guidelines for Child and Youth Behavioral Health Crisis Care](#). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2022.
- [Making the Case for a Comprehensive Children's Crisis Continuum of Care](#). National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, 2018.



In the News

- [Million-dollar grant given to Central Texas youth mental health services](#). KXXV, 2022.
- [Waco center's youth crisis to prevent unnecessary hospitalizations](#). Waco Tribune-Herald. 2022.