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Burnes Center on Poverty and Homelessness

Mile High United Way – Bridging the Gap
Evaluating the Experience of BTG Participants

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Introduction

Bridging the Gap (BTG) is a program of the Mile High United Way (MHUW). BTG assists young adults aged 18 to 24 exiting the child welfare system with supportive services related to housing and life skills.

This report summarizes an evaluation to assess the successes and challenges of BTG with specific attention to the following goals:
- To understand the needs and challenges young adults experience upon exiting the foster care system, juvenile justice system, or kinship care in Colorado.
- To understand the characteristics and qualities that make for a successful BTG independent living coach (ILC).
- To understand the impact of BTG coaching on participants' perceptions of personal success.

The Burnes Center on Poverty and Homelessness (Burnes Center) proposed a mixed-methods study employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods carried out over a seven-month period. This evaluation includes administrative case reviews as well as interviews with former BTG participants and current and former BTG staff.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed by the Burnes Center, which seek to inform three distinct components of the BTG program: BTG participants' needs and challenges, BTG coaching features, and successful BTG program completion. The research questions are as follows:

BTG Participants' Needs and Challenges

1. What are the needs and challenges young adults experience upon exiting the foster care system, juvenile justice system, or kinship care in Colorado?
1a. How do these needs and challenges interact with housing stability?
1b. When a young adult exits the system, what kinds of supports are needed from adults?

Coaching Features

2. What makes a good ILC?
2a. What are the features of the ILC?
2b. What are the features of a successful coaching relationship?
2c. What role does a BTG participant's engagement/motivation to change play in cultivating a positive coaching relationship?

3. What are perceptions of coaching for successful program completion?

3a. How do BTG participants perceive coaching as it relates to successful program completion?

3b. What are the correlations between participant characteristics and BTG administrators' perceptions of successful program completion?

3c. What are the correlations between coaching characteristics and BTG administrators' perceptions of successful program completion?

Methods

The BTG evaluation involves a mixed-methods design using the following data sources: 1) review of administrative case data, 2) interviews with former BTG participants, and 3) interviews with current and former BTG ILCs. The methods section here details the intervention, study participants, study design, research measures, and analysis procedures employed in this evaluation.

Study Setting

BTG is a program of the Mile High United Way based in Denver, Colorado. It employs trauma-informed ILCs to work with young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 that have aged out of the child welfare system via the foster care system and/or the division of corrections. BTG participants receive Family Unification Program (FUP) housing vouchers, which provide 18 months of housing subsidy. When a young adult receives a FUP voucher through BTG, the participants are assigned a BTG ILC who supports them in becoming independent and self-sufficient adults through coaching. Coaching sessions are designed to help BTG participants find, secure, and maintain housing with their FUP voucher. Additionally, the BTG program supports independent living goals by assisting young adults in the core program areas of wellness, healthy connections, crisis intervention, education, employment, financial health, and civic engagement.

Study Participants

BTG Participant Interviews

The evaluation assessed former BTG participants who took part in the program from January 2014 through December 2015. The dates (January 2014 to December 2015) were selected to precede a policy change in the FUP voucher, which extended the program from 18 to 36 months. Thus, the dates sought to capture a more substantial range of participants who completed the entire 18-month program before the new voucher policy was enacted.

A sampling frame of 82 participants was selected based on the BTG participants who completed the program between the aforementioned dates. Characteristics of the 82 participant sampling frame are provided in Table 1.

To gather more in-depth information about BTG, Burnes Center evaluators reached out to all 82 former participants via telephone, text message, and email using contact information accessed via the BTG administrative database. From the sample of 82, Burnes Center evaluators met with 15 former BTG participants to discuss their experiences exiting the child welfare system, their perceptions of core coaching components, and their perceptions of how coaching impacted their personal success in the program.

Table 1 | Participant sample characteristics (N=82)

Sample Characteristics	Mean (SD) or Percent (frequency)
Age	22 (1.2)
Number of coaching sessions	14.3 (13.3)
Number of months housed	11.8 (6.4)
Number of months employed	7 (5.9)
Number of months enrolled in school	2.8 (4.6)
Self-identified race: American Indian or Alaska Native	7% (6)
Self-identified race: Black or African American	35% (29)
Self-identified race: White	24% (20)
Self-identified ethnicity: Hispanic/Latino	30% (25)
Parent (yes)	23.2% (19)
High school diploma/equivalent or greater education	76.8% (63)
Self-identified gender: female	41.5% (34)
Self-identified gender: male	58.5% (48)

From Table 1, it can be observed that the majority of the sample identified as White and male. Seventy-seven percent have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, and almost one-quarter are parents. On average, participants engaged in 14 coaching sessions, were housed for 12 months, were employed for seven months, and were enrolled in school for three months. These outcomes are noteworthy for a group of participants exiting the foster care and/or justice systems.

ILC Interviews

Current and former BTG ILCs were identified for evaluation participation and contacted by Burnes Center evaluators. Evaluators met with three current and former ILCs in order to capture their perceptions of the needs and challenges experienced by BTG participants as well as core components related to the coaching process.

Study Design

The BTG evaluation involved a mixed-methods approach using the following sources of data: 1) review of administrative case data, 2) interviews with former BTG participants, and 3) interviews with current and former BTG ILCs.

Data Collection

Administrative Case Data

The MHUW Evaluation and Learning team pulled and organized the BTG data for the sample of 82 cases used in the administrative case review. The sample included any BTG participants who started the program on or after January 1, 2013, and ended the program before July 1, 2016. This sample was chosen because formalized data collection for BTG participants began at the start of 2013, and the voucher program significantly changed in July of 2016. Data was pulled from the archived Efforts to Outcome (ETO) database that was used during this time period. Data from a participant's intake application was merged with data recorded monthly by the participant's ILC. Several variables were created from this data to document the total number of coaching sessions received, the total number of months employed, the total number of months enrolled in school, and the total number of months housed. In order to get a complete record of a BTG participant's time in the program, qualitative data from the ETO database on the reasons for exit were compared to the Elite database, which was used to track the federal housing voucher. Any additional notes from Elite were then used to inform a participant's reasons for exiting the program. The combination of all this data served to form a complete record of a participant's time in the program.

BTG Participant Interviews

The participant interview protocol was comprised of 17 qualitative items intended to capture information across the following domains: challenges upon entry into the program (2 items), specific aspects of the coaching relationship (8 items, which also featured a quantitative scale), participant's contribution to coaching (3 items), and reflections on the coaching experience (4 items) (see Appendix A).

Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and was recorded. Interviews were administered in person by members of the Burnes Center evaluation team. Burnes Center evaluators and BTG staff reached out to former participants via telephone, text message, and email using contact information accessed via the BTG administrative database. Willing evaluation participants were scheduled to meet Burnes Center evaluators at either the MHUW offices, the Burnes Center offices, or over the phone, depending on availability.

Each study participant was given a consent form that provided a detailed description of the study purpose, procedures, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality, risks, benefits, incentives for participation, researcher information and contact information, should they have

follow-up questions (see Appendix B). Compensation of a $100 gift card was provided to all participants who completed the interview.

ILC Interviews

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to capture qualitative information from current and former BTG staff working as ILCs. A total of three ILC interviews were successfully collected for this evaluation. The ILC interview protocol included 15 qualitative items intended to capture information across the following domains: participant challenges upon entry into the program (2 items), specific aspects of the coaching relationship (8 items, which also featured a quantitative scale), and reflections on the coaching experience (3 items) (see Appendix C).

Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and was recorded. Interviews were administered by members of the Burnes Center evaluation team. Willing evaluation participants were given a consent form that provided a detailed description of the study purpose, procedures, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality, risks, benefits, incentives for participation, researcher information and contact information, should they have follow-up questions (see Appendix B). No compensation was provided to current or former BTG ILCs who participated in the evaluation.

Measures
Administrative Case Data

For each participant in the sampling frame, a successful exit from BTG was determined by the MHUW Program Director based on one of two definitions: 1) a BTG participant completed the 18-month program with BTG or 2) the BTG participant opted out of the FUP voucher and BTG program at some point having secured stable and employment/education goals. The BTG Program Director defined unsuccessful exits in one of two ways: 1) the BTG participant was evicted from their apartment and lost their FUP voucher or 2) the BTG participant left the program without securing stable housing or achieving employment/education goals.

Qualitative Data

A number of scales are embedded in the qualitative interviews. The scales measure how often BTG ILCs and participants discussed various topics. The topics are as follows: securing and maintaining housing; physical, mental, sexual or emotional health concerns and needs; making healthy, safe connections in the community; personal crisis; employment goals; managing finances; educational goals; how to communicate; and how to advocate for oneself. During the qualitative interviews, BTG participants and ILCs were asked to score how often the above topics were discussed on a scale from 1 (very infrequently) to 5 (very frequently).

Analysis

Administrative Case Data

Descriptive statistics and bivariate analysis were used to assess the administrative case data. When using bivariate analysis (which measures the relationship between two variables), indicators of statistical significance are provided. Statistical significance uses probability theory to conclude that a statistical relationship exists between two variables being assessed.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data were collected via interviews with former BTG participants as well as current and former BTG ILCs using open-ended questions intended to provide information on BTG participants' needs and challenges, coaching features, and successful program completion. The resulting qualitative data were analyzed by two Burnes Center evaluators using a two-step content analysis technique. Initial analysis resulted in a comprehensive list of codes largely aligned with the predetermined research questions. In a second round of analysis, individual quotes organized by code (or research question) were further analyzed for subcategories. Related subcategories were combined and organized by evaluators based on unifying themes. The convergent themes represent the final results of the analysis and are reported in this evaluation along with relevant quotes from the various interviews.

Results

This section presents evaluation findings organized by the aforementioned research questions. Some of the research questions are answered using quantitative data only (i.e., administrative case data and/or interview data), some are answered using qualitative data only (i.e., BTG participant and/or ILC interview data), and some are answered using both sources of data.

BTG Participants' Needs and Challenges

1. What are the needs and challenges young adults experience upon exiting the foster care system, juvenile justice system, or kinship care in Colorado?

BTG participants reported experiencing a range of challenges upon existing previous systems and entering the BTG program. Many of these challenges proved to be complex and persistent in nature and, therefore, not quickly or definitively addressed at any given point. Evaluators concluded that there were no discernable trends or patterns with regards to reported challenges based on either successful/unsuccessful program completion or foster care/corrections involvement. They proved to be unique and dependent upon individual circumstances, just as each BTG participant is unique.

The following categories of need and challenge were reported by BTG participants:
- Housing (e.g., apartment search, landlord communication, conflicts, criminal records)
- Life skills (e.g., cooking, shopping, time management, transitioning to adulthood)
- Children (e.g., childcare, benefits, supplies)
- Transportation (e.g., bus fare, securing a vehicle)
- Employment (e.g., professional development, resume writing, interview skills, clothing)
- Education (e.g., enrollment, courses, financial aid/other funding, career planning)
- Mental health (e.g., access to care/benefits, trauma, anxiety, anger management)
- Medical conditions (e.g., access to care/benefits, medications)
- Finances (e.g., banking, bills, budgeting, decision-making)
- Food assistance
- Substance use/sobriety
- Trafficking/trading or selling sex
- Moral support (e.g., someone to talk to, encouragement, advocacy, advice)
- Healthy relationships (e.g., family, dating, friends, communication)

It is worth noting that several of these challenges may not have been arrived at completely organically by interviewees, given that the interview protocol was designed to target specific coaching features (i.e., housing, health and wellness, community connections, crisis management, employment, financial management, education, communication, and personal advocacy) by asking about them directly. Even so, Burnes Center evaluators found them to be central to the BTG participants' lived experiences and circumstances at the time of their involvement with the program.

1a. How do these needs and challenges interact with housing stability?

Given that housing is a core focus of the BTG program, it stands to reason that housing stability would be central to many of the participants' presenting needs and challenges. Indeed, there was considerable overlap reported, including an urgency for housing imposed by other life circumstances (e.g., exiting foster care or the justice system, unstable family conditions), lack of transportation hampering the apartment search, needing to build budgeting skills with regards to paying bills, and the impact of unhealthy support networks on one's housing security.

Additionally, participants described numerous specific housing supports received from BTG that promoted their overall housing stability:
- A detailed apartment search list
- Assistance with the lease and other unfamiliar paperwork, security deposit, and overall Section 8 process
- Advocacy with landlords (specifically modeling effective communication, instilling confidence, and stepping in as needed)
- Advocacy related to housing restrictions placed on prior criminal justice involvement and felony records

- Helpful information about Denver neighborhoods and advice to consider proximity to key resources (e.g., RTD, grocery stores, hospitals)
- Promotion of acceptable living conditions (specifically related to pests, mold, and unit damage)
- Provision of budgeting support and furnishings/supplies
- Advocacy related to evictions, abatements, and other legal issues related to housing

1b. When a young adult exits the system, what kinds of supports are needed from adults?

In terms of supports that BTG participants expressed needing from adults, several of these were outlined in the above question about needs and challenges. These supports were often **material or financial** in nature, including the FUP voucher, bus passes, rides, diapers, bedding, kitchen supplies, food, and gift cards.

"I mean, I was broke a few times, and I was given gift cards and bus tokens or bus passes. They would give me diapers for him when I needed them. Those are crises to me because, I mean, if I was broke and I didn't have a kid, I could manage. But he needs diapers, he needs food, and they always helped me out every time I needed those."

"Yeah, I mean there was times where they did help out. They gave me, like, when I first moved in they gave me, like, bedding and just stuff to live with. They gave me, like, glasses and cups and dishes and stuff, so they did help me out in that regard when I first moved in."
"They helped me so that I didn't have to purchase a lot of things. They supported me with some of that, so that was helpful."

However, intangible supports were often raised as having a major impact on participants as well. Two themes stood out in this area: **moral support** and **building healthy relationships.**

Moral support involved having someone who was there when participants needed them, who motivated and encouraged them, who they trusted and felt they could go to for help or advice.

"Just talking about problems that I had because, like I said, around that time I was emotionally going through some things with my foster mom just passing not that long ago. And I was having issues with my kids' father and visitations with them and me going through just getting back into work after breaking my ankle. So I kind of talked to them about that for a while."

"Back then I think the best part of having a BTG coach was I knew I had a support system."

"Knowing that someone was already there for you, no matter what kind of thing. If you needed help with something, then they could help you find the answer. So it wasn't just me on a mission trying to find something; I had another person helping me."

"Having somebody there, regardless if you asked for it or not. Always having that helping hand because a lot of us, we didn't have families. It was like, if I was to create that bond with her, I knew that she would always be there."

BTG participants also expressed appreciation for the support they received around **building healthy relationships,** specifically being challenged to re-evaluate the quality and intentions of their peer groups, help navigating conflicts in romantic and family relationships, and generally receiving guidance around advocacy and communication of their needs with others.

"Every time she would bring it up. She would ask who am I around? She would ask what are they doing. You know, how are they conducive to your environment cause you do have kids now."

"We would go through friends lists. We would go through pros and cons of each situation, I guess, that I was put in. And kind of taking a step back of what I could do to not be in dangerous situations like I kept putting myself in or that I was being put in. And how to get out of it without harming, getting hurt, can't think of the word. Just being safe about it because at that time I was not on good terms with people and making very bad life decisions."

"She actually talked to me about picking my friends wisely...My friends would try to come over and drink with me. They always wanted to come over. She was just like, 'You know what? You need to focus on yourself. You need to make – The people that are trying to put you in the bad path, you need to cut them off because they are just gonna – ' She expressed to me that those people weren't a good influence on me. Honestly, I just cut them off and my life is better now."

"[She] would always talk to me about choosing my friends wisely and helping myself before I help anyone else. Like how you need to love yourself before you love someone else, pretty much."

Coaching Features
2. What makes a good ILC?
2a. What are the features of the ILC?
2b. What are the features of a successful coaching relationship?

Quantitative Interview Data
Interviewed BTG participants and ILCs were asked how often they discussed various topics during the participants' time in the BTG program on a scale from 1 (very infrequently) to 5 (very frequently). Average responses and paired-sample t-test scores for each topic area were assessed for significant differences in participant and ILC ratings. These scores are presented in Table 2. Copies of interview protocols for BTG participants and ILCs can be found in the appendix where exact questions on interview topics are available.

Table 2 | BTG participant and ILC scores rating often the following topics were discussed (BTG participants: N=15, BTG ILCs: N=3**)

Scale: 1 (very infrequently), 2 (infrequently), 3 (occasionally), 4 (frequently), 5 (very frequently)

Topics Discussed	Participant Mean	ILC Mean	T-test	
Housing	3.5	4.7	-1.50	
Health & Wellness	**2.4**	**4.7**	**-2.80**	*
Community Connections	3.3	3.7	-0.43	
Crisis Management	**2.5**	**5.0**	**-3.20**	*
Employment	4.4	4.3	-0.13	
Financial Management	3.8	4.0	-0.28	
Education	3.8	4.0	-0.21	
Communications & Personal Advocacy	3.1	3.7	-0.52	

*p < .05. T-tests used Levene's test for equality of variance, given the variable sample size of groups.
**Note that there was a sample of three ILCs interviewed. Due to this relatively small sample, interpretations of mean scores should be done with caution.

From Table 2, it can be observed that, on average, ILCs perceived that they talked about most of the topics at least frequently, with the exception of Community Connections and Communications & Personal Advocacy, which they talked about occasionally to frequently.

BTG participants' ratings differed from ILCs in that they felt, on average, that Employment was discussed most frequently, with Health & Wellness and Crisis Management discussed least frequently. Interestingly, there is a statistically significant difference between ILCs' perceptions of how often they talked about Health & Wellness and Crisis Management and participants' perceptions of how often they talked about these same topics. In fact, all three ILCs said they talked about Crisis Management very frequently, while participants, on average, rated this topic as one they talked about the least.

BTG Participant Interviews
Qualitative responses from BTG participants and ILCs were also analyzed for themes about the features that make for a good ILC and a successful coaching relationship. Participants identified the following themes as being helpful or desirable for an ILC:
- Instrumental and informational support
- Empathy
- Fit
- Communication
- Parental-type support
- ILC savvy
- Goal setting

Next we provide a brief description of each identified theme and supporting quotes from participants.

- **Instrumental and informational support**: As previously mentioned, the ability of ILCs to assist in the provision of material and financial goods was seen as tremendously beneficial to BTG participants. This not only included housing resources, financial support, and other supplies and goods but also assistance navigating systems, information about community resources, coping skills, and other practical advice.

"Getting into an apartment and explaining those things because they've been there and they've done that. You don't know anything about it and some people try to scam you, especially if you're a girl. If you're a young girl, people try to scam you, you know? So it's nice to have somebody go in and check it out, knowing things that need to be done in an apartment and knowing what you should spend and how to manage because younger people just are not that coordinated. And it's nice to have someone there that is, like, basically another voice for you."

"It was nice having someone I could talk to about housing stuff, and, you know, it was nice to get the emails about job stuff. Or she'd send everybody links of, these are places hiring, these are job fairs, these are this. So it was nice to be able to be like, okay, so this is what I could do. Yeah, it really was her that got me into my youth corp. Even though I wasn't really there long, that was really cool to experience in my life."

"She had me advocate for myself as much as I could. Like I said, she sent me the list of the places to search for. It was up to me to search for – she gave me what I needed to do, things, but it was up to me to do a lot of it. Though, if I get a good kickstart, I'll try to pick it up and go with it, and that's what they did. They gave me the kick start."

"Told me some coping tools I could use or resources I could call when things become out of control. To not really keep your mind on your problems, and there's ways to deal with them without stressing too much. So I got into writing poetry and rapped a lot."

- **Empathy**: One of the most commonly cited qualities valued in an ILC was empathy, which participants broadly described as being patient, open-minded, non-judgmental, relational, reliable, and supportive. This type of ILC took the time to listen to and really hear the participant and responded with flexibility and genuine warmth. They were able to convey a genuine understanding of the where the participants were coming from.

"I feel like an understanding, being able to understand others and where they came from and how they communicate with them. You know, just need to have that overall understanding. I feel like it's a skill that all BTG coaches need."

"Open-minded because they deal with a profession with a lot of kids that don't have normal lives, so you can't expect them to be a normal person or kid. I think that's important. And, I

think, just be kind of nice, courteous about any situation because these kids come in from all types of places, and they've been moved around, disappointed a lot of people, so I think it'd be nice to have someone to encourage us all."

"I guess I would want them to kind of have a degree in something, whether it's an Associate's or a Bachelor's, just so that you're not having somebody tell somebody to go to college who didn't go through the experience themselves."

"Patience, a lot of patience and understanding. Then being humble."

- **Fit:** Some participants described a natural connection they felt with their ILC, that their personalities just meshed. Often times the ILC was credited with taking the time to build rapport, develop trust, and foster a relationship that felt appropriately mutual (versus one-sided). Other participants expressed a misfit or lack of connection with their ILC, citing that this was something they wished had been addressed or prioritized in the program.

"She had a personality. She was the right coach for me, let me put it that way. She was the right coach for me."

"Our personalities really clashed. But we talked about how I was doing, and I think we talked about work, and I talked about how I actually wanted to go to school for psychology and stuff like that. The way she responded to me was not very nice. I felt like she was looking down on me, so I didn't have a good working relationship with [her]."

"So I talked to her on personal levels, and she kind of just takes a different perspective of it, and makes sure it's not you in a one-sided conversation and one-side street. It's a two-way street, and so she kind of gave me perspective to look at it not so much – I wouldn't say selfish, but not just from my perspective."

- **Communication:** BTG participants described communication skills as an important quality in an ILC. This entailed regular and reliable contact; flexibility as needed (especially when participants had scheduling conflicts, like work); a sense of organization and professionalism from the ILC; and a proactive approach involving clearly established expectations, terms, and structures. One area of communication that many participants expressed disappointment in was the termination of their relationship with their ILC and BTG. Several participants noted that there was not sufficient acknowledgement of the fact that their time with the program had come to an end or explicit instructions or expectations about what to expect at that stage of the process.

"She always checked up on me when I had any questions or concerns or advice. I would always call her, and she would call me back immediately. She would answer emails. I mean, there was a lot of frequent communication between me and my coach."

Expressing disappointment: "I just didn't like how often she would just show up at my apartment or not give me cancelizations. Like when she would cancel our meetings, and then it would kind of backfire on me. So communication when we weren't in the same room was very off. It was hard to get along and get ahold of each other."

Expressing disappointment: "Their case load was probably massive, so they probably had, like, 30, 35, 40 people. And to keep track of all that and make sure that everything's all taken care of was pretty difficult for them. So I can't blame them for doing that. But I felt like they could have, they could have just checked in. I mean, I think there should be a standard, like 'how are you doing, what do you feel like you need, is there anything that you really need?' There should be like a top five questions that should be done on a monthly basis to understand on a one through five scale of how is this person actually doing…But there should be a little bit more attention to that."

Expressing disappointment: "Once my voucher ended, she, like, washed her hands and was, like, 'okay, well I'm done with this lady.' For me, with working with somebody for 16 months and building that relationship, I still talk to the people from X County. But with her, she just had to, like – was fed up or something. I don't even know…but it wasn't closure. It was just, like, 'okay, bye, you're out of the program.' So I feel like she could've been a little bit more to me respectful. Cause by the end of it, I did change my ways, and I was trying to be respectful and, like, take her into consideration, but I didn't feel like I was getting that back."

- **Parental-type support**: Several BTG participants expressed a value in ILCs who exuded a quality often described as parental or familial in nature. This person provided what felt like firm or tough love; they were consistently there and didn't just tell participants what they "wanted to hear." These ILCs acted as something of an adult role model and even disciplinarian.

"Even though he knew he wasn't exactly like a parent, it really did feel having a parent around, and I needed that for sure. I needed an adult role model."

"I don't want to say she mom'ed me or nothing, but I could tell that she had kids. She could be, like, 'no you gotta do this' sometimes, you know what I mean. It was like, 'okay.'"

"We go through life circumstances, and that's what you're here for because we don't have, a lot of us don't have parents, or we don't talk to the people we were in foster care with. So you guys are there for that, I feel."

"She was always motivating me. She was always telling me – she gave me, like, tough love. That's why I said she's like a sister. You know, she reminded me of someone like a sister because she wasn't the type of person to tell me what she felt I wanted to hear. She told me what I needed to hear, whether it hurt my feelings. I really love her for that."

- **ILC savvy**: Some participants highlighted this quality in ILCs, which was perceived as not taking everything at face value and continuing to dig in or pursue the full story, even when participants pushed back and presented a tough exterior. This quality involved knowing where the BTG participants were coming from and how to appropriately respond to them.

"Let's say there's a teenager who's been, let's say, molested, and then she doesn't feel too comfortable with just talking about things. But the BTG's job, or career, is to focus on trying to get the kid to feel more comfortable and open up to them. But if you just go over exaggerating, like your smile is too big or just, you know, kind of thing and then just lean into something too fast for the handshake, like, 'hi, my name' and, you know, the voice. That's going to push that person away."

"If she would've stayed on my helmet, pushed me a little bit harder than just saying, 'Hey, what now?' Just – I know it's because some people are like, 'Hey, we deal with so many kids. You can't help somebody that doesn't want the help.' But I feel like, like I said, if you don't know then you really don't know. That's just really how it is. If you don't know, you're not gonna know. Take the time to talk or try to break the wall down. But it's hard for some people, I know. Comfort zone and stuff like that."

- **Goal setting**: This quality was directly related to program outcomes and the ability of participants to achieve their goals. Participants expressed great value in having an ILC who provided guidance and structure around setting clear goals, who helped them stay focused and positive about those goals. These ILCs provided encouragement, motivation, and wisdom. They held participants accountable in a way that felt helpful, safe, and productive, and they ultimately believed in the participant's ability to succeed.

"A lot of what I felt that I needed during the time was I needed more 'what's your goals, where are you headed to, and how are you going to reach those goals.' Instead, it was more 'these are the resources that we currently have, and this is how we're going to help you, and here's your coach, and they're there to support you.' But there wasn't necessarily a strategy of – other than just getting someone housing and employment. Obviously what's in the long-term because this isn't going to last."

"[She] was someone that pushed me. She pushed me to the extreme. She's like, 'No, you're going to be able to get through this.' Her support really helped me. That's what I needed, because I didn't get that with my family. I didn't get that with my grandfather. I didn't get that with nobody. Nobody supported in that way, supported me and tried to help me that way. They

helped me because they were very caring. Honestly, they were more caring than my family. They didn't give up on – just really helped me. They helped me, not just with living but helped me build good relationships with other people."

"I'm the type of person, like, it's hard for me to get my mind focused on something. But if somebody can help me get focused on something, I can pull through with it. You know what I mean, so having that – she kind of lit a fire under me sometimes, had me go, like, you know, this is what you gotta do, you know. So it was helpful to have that support."

"It was just the motivational part of it. I guess I would say, if you don't have anybody to motivate you, then you're not going to be wanting to motivate yourself. So the motivational part and just knowing that you have somebody in your corner to actually – if you fall, then hey, you got to get back up because the finish line is just right there."

"He definitely encouraged me and let me know I was capable of wanting things in life, and if I just found what I wanted to do, I could do it. We just had a hard time figuring that out."

Comparing Themes of "Successful" Versus "Unsuccessful" Participants

Burnes Center evaluators further analyzed these themes by comparing responses from BTG participants who successfully completed the program with those who did not. Evaluators counted the number of participants in each group who mentioned each theme (e.g., how many participants from the successful versus unsuccessful program completion group mentioned empathy as an important coaching characteristic). Findings demonstrate that nearly all participants from both groups mentioned the themes of instrumental and informational support, empathy, and communication. Just over half of the participants from both groups mentioned fit and, of those participants who mentioned fit, the vast majority from both groups cited this characteristic in negative terms (i.e., a poor fit with their ILC). As for the themes of parental-type support, ILC savvy, and goal setting, these findings were more nuanced. A higher proportion of participants from the successful group reported on characteristics reflecting parental-type support and goal setting. Conversely, a higher proportion of participants from the unsuccessful group cited characteristics associated with ILC savvy.

ILC Interviews

Similar to participants, ILCs listed **empathy** and **flexibility** as essential to a good and successful coaching relationship. Additionally, they cited **communication and relationship skills** and **one's own life skills and experiences** that provided context for the realities of young adulthood and what the participants may be going through. ILCs reported **clear and healthy boundaries with participants** as a critical component of the coaching relationship. This included not doing the work for the participants but supporting them in doing the work themselves. Highlighting the professional development of ILCs, some cited **active supervision, focused training,** and a **consistent understanding of expectations** surrounding the participant-ILC relationship as central to cultivating positive and productive coaching dynamics and results.

"Speaking truth with love, I think, is a skill."

"I like to empower them to speak up for themselves as well. 'Then get out there. Your voice is just as powerful as mine.' Basically letting them know that if you have something to say, you should be heard too. At the same time, as far as advocating for themselves, when they see something wrong in the world and if there's some way that you can step out and do something about it, instead of bitching, let's figure out what we can do about it."

"I just do my best to reach out to them, check in on them. Even if they're youth that I've never met with, I'll still send them emails, text messages, phone calls, just say, 'Hey, how's it going? Hope things are going well.' Kind of let them know that they're not forgotten, that we do care, they're on our radar. So I try that as much as I can. And then the youth that I have that regularly meet with me, they do see a benefit because they do keep coming."

"I'm real and genuine with them. I'm being myself in that. I keep in contact with them and even if they're having a bad day, I don't shut them down...even if they have a bad day, I don't treat them bad within that moment as well. I'm consistent, I'd say, for sure, and I'm very supportive. I always tell them I'm their biggest cheerleader."

"Another skill, I think, is helping them build a network of people that they could call on. So relationship-building I guess you could call it? Help showing – modeling to them healthy relationships is huge. And it can't always be accomplished, so that's a really defeating thing to accept."

"We do have to talk about mental health issues, recognizing your feelings and things of that nature. And then letting them know that it's okay to go and get help for that. It doesn't make you a crazy person. I even try to normalize it and throw myself in there. I've been depressed and had to go get meds. Something like that, just to make them feel okay about talking about it. And physically how to respect your body. Things of that nature."

"I think that the biggest needs would be somebody, good on-going support, and maybe not someone always doing for them but a lot of good cheering on, doing with them type thing."

"Not working for but working with is another huge skill because, I'm not going to bad-mouth other coaches, but I would see all the time people doing things for the youth and then it just blowing up in their face. I even was guilty of it a lot myself, as far as getting youth into an apartment. Then they're gone within a week; they're evicted, and I tried real hard to get them into that apartment. So I think that's a huge, like, that's the frame of mind that you need to have going into the job. They're system raised, so how do you break that cycle? And I don't want to generalize, but a lot them were system kids."

"Boundaries. Everybody needs to have their boundaries professionally and personally to do this work, I think. I think because we are so flexible, and there's not a lot of guidelines as to, 'Hey, you can do this with your youth, or you can't do this.'... I also think as a team, maybe with our new supervisor, just kind of meeting and saying these are the expectations. These are what we can and can't do, and here are the boundaries. 'You should not be answering your text

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messages after you leave work, and you shouldn't be answering them at six o'clock in the morning either.' Just kind of those things just to – consistent throughout the board."

"I didn't realize how much I needed that direct supervision in this position, but I needed it. That was what was most important. I think that supervision is very key, to have a very good leader."

"I would also say just having more, maybe, training or experience with assessment. Like safety assessments, those kinds of things. Not necessarily that all of us have to be therapists or mental health people but just to have those skills because we do deal with that crisis all the time. And just kind of knowing what questions to ask and how to ask them, I think, would be really important."

2c. What role does a BTG participant's engagement/motivation to change play in cultivating a positive coaching relationship?

Some participants reported that they weren't as engaged in the coaching relationship as they could have been and, in hindsight, wish they had been.

"It's a great program. I mean, like I said, I wish I would've taken advantage of it. Now when I think back on it, I would love to have that program again cause I know the things that I know now that I didn't know when I was 18 and especially coming out from foster care and rehab."
"She would ask me how am I feeling, how am I doing, you know? Am I – because I would deal with depression, so she would ask about it. She would ask about who I have as a support system. And at that time I didn't have nobody, so that's really why I didn't ever wanna talk about it…I really wish I'd take that help back then."

"He was really persistent on me going to college or getting a trade. I really wish I did. I still haven't and I'm about to now. Man, I could be almost done with all of that right now. But it's okay, better late than never."

Several reasons were cited for lack of engagement and motivation: **logistics, just being young, participant characteristics, poor communication,** and **poor fit**.

- **Logistics:** For some of the participants, limited engagement was not intentional but due to a range of life circumstances, including demanding work schedules, lack of childcare or transportation to MHUW, physical or mental health issues, substance use, or simply being in a difficult season of life at the time.

"I would talk to her, I would call her, email her. I tried to do some programs. I would RSVP for some of the things they did, but then I'd end up having to work or something would happen. But, yeah, I would call her, tell her what was up."
"I tried to get there as much as I could and be there for appointments. It's rough sometimes when you live far, when you live – like, you have a million things going on, and, just, it's crazy, but I think we did a fairly good job."

- **Just being young:** Many of the participants attributed their lack of engagement simply to being young, lacking perspective at the time about the opportunity that was presented to them and lacking the professionalism or organizational skills (e.g., time management, goal setting) necessary to fully engage. They often expressed great remorse for not taking fuller advantage of the coaching relationship and demonstrated some awareness about the value of the program, staff, and overall potential for committed young adults.

"Especially with me being young, I didn't know how to interact with that person. I didn't know whether to trust that person or to have faith in that person. I think myself and other people feel like that all the time because there's numerous people going through their life. And then when they meet someone, it's like, oh great, I'm going to get some resources. I'm going to get some help. But how do I have that confidence and that trust and that faith that this person is someone that I feel, like, not necessarily dependent on for everything, but I can communicate clearly and I can go ahead and be, like, 'you know what, this is what's going on.' Or 'hey, I need to talk to someone about my mental health.' Something like that."

"I entered this program very young, and some come in a little bit older. Some come younger, as I did, but I didn't know enough about myself. I wasn't aware of how I interacted with people. I wasn't aware how my personality – how I feel internally. I think that's one thing that a lot of young people need help with, is to realize who they are and how they interact with others, so they know how to become the best versions of themselves. I felt like that's one thing I really wish that they would've taken the time to assist – ."

- **Participant characteristics:** Similar to being young, many of the participants demonstrated a high level of self-awareness about other personality traits or characteristics that may have impeded the coaching relationship. A range of personal descriptions were provided, including being hard-headed, strong-willed, resistant, intimidated, selfish, easily bored, frustrated, annoyed, impatient, and not nice. Trust was also raised as a personal barrier, with some participants describing themselves as guarded due to past traumas.

"I feel like it was more so me at that time not really understanding how to take that help, being I was in foster care and before foster care I was just a runaway teen. So it was kind of hard for me to accept that help."

"You know, it's, it was hard. It's hard for me to open up to people; it really is. I feel like I tried as best as I could."

"I should've better managed my time, my money, been a friendly person up front instead of having my guards up, not fought her every way that I could...I'm a very strong-willed and hard-headed person."

"I think that was more on my end because I just kind of felt like I was depending on myself, basically, while I was in there. But then I tried to kind of lean in and open up a little more. But, like I said, I'm more just an enclosed person."

- **Poor communication:** As previously noted, communication was cited as a common barrier to engagement, either described as a failure on the part of the participant or the ILC, a difference or incompatibility in communication styles, or some logistical issue, such as full voicemail.

"I mean I tried communicating. I tried following what they wanted to, you know, call them if you needed something or if you needed advice for something. I tried getting in contact with her a few times, and I hated kind of, like, the kind of poor communication and kind of not after a while. Because voicemail started getting full, and you couldn't leave a voicemail. Or you'd text a person, or you'd end up calling here, and they were out. And then you'd leave a voicemail, and maybe it'd take like three days or almost a week for them to call you back, and it's just. not cool."

"Getting a hold of your coach in particular was always the actual problem. Always getting a hold of somebody at Mile High was never really a problem. I think I talked to probably Erin more than I did my own coach. It's just because, like I said, voicemail was always full and stuff."

- **Poor fit:** Along the lines of poor communication, poor ILC-participant fit was also cited as a reason for lack of program engagement. BTG participants stated that they weren't able to fully invest in the coaching relationship because they either didn't get along with their ILC or they didn't feel that adequate rapport, intimacy, and trust were developed in the relationship to warrant a deeper level of engagement. Sharing the same gender identity was also raised as a potential consideration for ILC-participant fit.

"Something that I don't like, personally, is when one of the BTG coaches or advocates just kind of put on that fake aura kind of thing, if that makes sense. Like they overdo it to try to make you feel comfortable, and then that will cause the person in the system to actually feel more uncomfortable than they are trying to do. Instead of pulling them in, they're pushing them away."

"I think the intention wasn't set from the very beginning. You met your coach, it was great, this is who you're assigned to, give them a phone call. But it wasn't like – I might be wrong, but I don't think when I first met my coach, we met actually in person. We met over the phone. So I felt like there needs to be a more intimate relationship with that person...I think that's the most important thing that I wish I would've had is little bit more clear intentions on how that relationship's going to go and how that's going to develop. And then it needs to be more like, 'hey, let's sit down, let's go have a lunch, let's go walk.'...That's why some people don't even show up, I feel like. I feel like the reason they don't show up is because they don't think, like,

maybe it's not a great place or a great resource. The reason that they don't show up is there was no relationship there."

"I think I would like it to be better if I had a female coach to talk to, stuff like that, than just like, hey, some people would prefer when they had their check-ups a female doctor too, instead of a guy doctor. It's kind of like that in the same sense because I feel like, I don't know, we all kind of have the same parts, so at least they all work similar. So I mean, why not?"

"Not being judgmental right away. Like with my circumstance, I got judged right away, and I think that's why it kind of set us off bounds for a minute because how I came off about myself or how she looked at me. It made me feel like she wasn't actually there to help me. So, yeah, see I'm having bad time with a word. Her perception, I guess? No, that's not the word. Just how she comes off. I mean, I guess if you're gonna be like a worker and you're gonna help with people, you should take time to get to know that person and not judge them right away."

"Because of the business thing with him, I just felt so – I had a lot of emotions still. I just had a baby, it was on my own. It was just a lot going on and I needed more nurturing. I didn't have that at all growing up, so I really needed that. It was just facts, facts, facts, alright finish your food, here's a check, we're out. I'm like, 'okay, shake your hand.'"

Several other participants reported that they were very invested in the program and coaching relationship. Those participants who identified as exhibiting a high level of investment described their engagement as follows: they **took advantage of BTG opportunities** and tried to attend as many classes and events as possible, **maintained open lines of communication**, **invited their ILC to participate in their lives**, and **acknowledged the limited timeframe** of the program in order to make the most of the opportunity.

"I would like to say I was in it full-force cause I came to every event, I'd get out speaking for, advocating for homelessness in Colorado, took all the life advice I could've, and followed through with my goals instead of saying, 'Oh, I'll do it next month,' and all that."

"What I was personally doing was I made appointments, I kept appointments, I came out here quite often. Sometimes I came out here unexpectedly to talk to her because I needed something…We just kept a friendly relationship. I'm actually still, like, I still have her email, and I keep up with her on Instagram still."

"I gave it my all. I was honest with her. I took advantage of having that extra resource."

Successful Program Completion

3. What are perceptions of coaching for successful program completion?

3a. How do BTG participants perceive coaching as it relates to successful program completion?

The findings listed above under Coaching Features (Q2, 2a, and 2b) provide insight into these questions of successful program completion. Participants and ILCs reported various qualities that, in their experience, promoted a positive and, therefore, successful coaching experience.

Interestingly, participants rarely spoke about their experience with BTG in terms of "success" or "nonsuccess." Rather, they cited specific aspects of the program and coaching relationship that they felt had a positive, beneficial, and productive impact on them and their situation. They were able to critically reflect on areas of growth and improvement for themselves as well as their ILCs and the overall BTG program. However, success as a finite achievement was rarely cited – rather, when it was mentioned, it was framed in gray, sort of nebulous terms. Additionally, it is worth noting that Burnes Center evaluators never posed questions in these binary terms (i.e., successful and unsuccessful).

> *"I think it's one thing having someone enter a program, but it's another thing actually having them succeed after the program. So I felt like that was one thing that could have been done a little bit better. What's the follow-up process after that…A lot of that, I had to navigate on my own."*

3b. Is there a relationship between participant characteristics and BTG administrators' perceptions of successful program completion?

Administrative case data from 82 BTG participants who completed the program were used to assess whether a relationship exists between specific participant characteristics and successful program completion. It is important to understand if there are any patterns to participant success so that BTG administrators can either 1) build on successful programming trends or 2) make changes to address program characteristics that are not associated with success.

Table 3 presents mean participant characteristics and identifies, with the use of t-test results, whether program characteristics were associated with successful or unsuccessful program completion.

Table 3 | Comparing participant characteristics and success in the BTG program (N=82)

Participant Characteristics	Success (N=38) (mean/frequency)	Not Success (N=44) (mean/frequency)	T-test/ Chi-square	
Age	**22.6**	**21.9**	**-2.50**	*
Days in program	346	390	1.20	
Months housed	11.0	12.4	0.90	
Months employed	6.4	7.5	0.90	
Months enrolled in school	2.6	2.9	0.40	
Race: American Indian or Alaska Native	3	6	2.33	
Race: Black or African American	13	17	2.33	
Race: White	18	19	2.33	
Ethnicity: Hispanic/Latino	13	12	1.75	
Parent: yes	28	35	0.39	
Parent: no	10	9	0.39	
Gender: female	17	17	0.31	
Gender: male	21	27	0.31	

$p < .05$. T-tests used Levene's test for equality of variance, given the variable sample size of groups.

Interestingly, the only statistically significant difference in demographic characteristics between those participants considered successful and unsuccessful is age. On average, being older is associated with a higher rate of program success. At the beginning of the evaluation, the variables *months housed*, *months employed*, and *months enrolled in school* were all hypothesized to be positively correlated with program success. However, none of these outcome indicators were found to be significantly related to program success.

3c. What are the correlations between coaching characteristics and BTG administrators perceptions' of successful program completion?

Administrative data from the 82 BTG participants of the sampling frame were also used to assess if a relationship exists between coaching touchpoints or the number of coaching sessions and successful program completion. Table 4 presents mean coaching touchpoints, mean coaching sessions, and the discrepancy between touchpoints and months in the program. Table 4 also provides t-test results assessing if there is a significant difference in reported success based on average touchpoints and coaching sessions.

Table 4 | Comparing coaching characteristics and success in the BTG program (N=82)

Coaching Characteristics	Success (N=38) (mean)	Not Success (N=44) (mean)	T-test
Monthly touch points	13.8	14.6	0.6
Discrepancy between touchpoints and months in the program (Elite)	-0.6	-0.8	-0.6
Coaching sessions	14.8	13.9	-0.3

$p < .05$. T-tests used Levene's test for equality of variance, given the variable sample size of groups.

The mean number of monthly touchpoints for those participants identified as having successfully completed the program was 13.8. The mean number of monthly touchpoints for those participants identified as having unsuccessfully completed the program was 14.6. A statistically significant difference was not found between the two means. The mean number of coaching sessions for successful participants was 14.8, while the mean number of coaching sessions for those who were not successful was 13.9. There is not a statistically significant difference between these two means. For those identified as successfully exiting BTG, the mean discrepancy between touchpoints and months in the program was -0.6. This means that, on average, successful participants had nearly one less touchpoint than the number of months they were in the program. For those participants identified as unsuccessfully exiting BTG, the mean discrepancy was -0.8. There is not a statistically significant difference between touchpoint discrepancies for program participants identified as successful and unsuccessful.

Discussion

The transition out of foster care or the justice system is a critical time for youth. During this time, young adults are at high risk of experiencing homelessness. The Family Unification Program (FUP) provides housing vouchers for young adults during this critical time. However, housing without supports is often not enough to stabilize young adults through this transition. The MHUW BTG program pairs FUP housing vouchers with an ILC to provide the material help of housing with the social support and mentorship needed to navigate the many obstacles facing young adults during this transition.

Participants in the BTG program have very diverse experiences. They come from different places and with vastly different histories. Despite their differences, many participants have similar needs. The needs include the tangible support of stable, safe, and clean housing and the relational support needed to overcome the ongoing challenges accompanying a transition from youth to life as an independent adult. The MHUW BTG program meets both of these needs within the context of a relatable, trusting, committed relationship. Additionally, support programs like BTG must be prepared to respond to several presenting issues occurring simultaneously in the lives of participants. Presenting issues for transitioning youth, as

evidenced in this evaluation, may be related to the following: education, employment, housing, life skills, mental health, parenting, and transportation.

What makes the BTG program unique is the relationship between BTG staff, the ILC, and participants. Developing this trusting relationship takes time. Typically, participants do not have many experiences of long-term, reliable relationships to draw from, so they need time to understand and develop trust in their ILC's style and approach. ILCs need to exhibit a range of soft skills, including patience when participants are not yet ready to trust the program or commit to the relationship. BTG staff need to be sure to provide training on both soft skills needed in the relationship and hard skills needed to navigate the complex systems and issues participants face.

Findings from the study suggest that, if ILCs do all the front-end work, they may compromise a participant's success at achieving independence. Instead, an ILC model that empowers participants to overcome the many barriers they may face can be more effective. For example, advocating for a participant to conduct a housing search independently (with peripheral support from the ILC, at least at first) may be more impactful than if an ILC leads the housing search process for the participant. Training ILCs in an empowerment model is critical for BTG. Establishing a single, stable coach, even if the participant and ILC experience some challenges, is a necessary balancing act for BTG staff to achieve.

In contrast, findings from the study also show that there needs to be a fit between the participant and the ILC. This may include a match based on gender preference. Part of the fit may also include participant readiness to engage in the ILC relationship and program. BTG could benefit from an initial assessment tool that scores on participant readiness and provides fit criteria for ILCs and participants. For example, findings from the study show that participants and ILCs do not perceive crisis situations the same way. An initial assessment tool could help address differences in perceived levels of crisis for different issue domains, including housing, health, education, and relationships.

Limitations

This report provides useful information for staff and administrators interested in serving young adults transitioning out of foster care and the correctional system. However, there are limitations to our findings. First, we do not advise that generalizations be made from this study to all young adults transitioning out of foster care and corrections. The participants in our study were selected out of convenience. Therefore, future investigations should attempt to confirm the results for the specific samples with whom one is working. Additionally, the MHUW was interested in information on specific domain areas; therefore, these domain areas were explicitly included in the interview protocols (see appendices). Thus, much of the information received pertains to the prompted domain areas. Information not shared or uncovered in this evaluation should not be seen as being absent or missing from the program but instead potentially unsolicited from this evaluation.

Also, the qualitative analytic process involved the subjective uncovering of themes using two-coders for reliability checks. Themes and quotes were captured to the point of saturation. Therefore, conclusions about counts of qualitative codes and themes may provide a biased understanding of the relative importance of the resulting themes.

The data from the study is also self-reported. It is well-known that there are social acceptability biases in self-reported data. In the case of the BTG program, both participants and ILCs may have held the belief that they would receive some benefit, or their responses might benefit the BTG program if they were share in a positive light. (It should be noted that the study has IRB approval from the University of Denver and the approved consent form for the study explains that there would be no immediate benefit from participating in the study.) One example of potential biases is under-reporting activities undertaken to secure housing, such as trading sex for shelter, doubling up, or sleeping on the streets. Additionally, the quantitative data from the study comes from a system that was newly implemented at the start of the study. Program staff and ILCs did not always capture data as directed. Ultimately, the Program Director made the final decision about participant success in the program based on the following criteria: all BTG participants who completed their 18-month housing voucher were considered successful. If a participant did not complete the program, the BTG Program Director reviewed the participant's transition out of the program to determine whether the participant was successful or unsuccessful. BTG participants who did not complete the 18-month housing voucher but had a plan for housing upon exit were considered successful. If a participant did not have a plan for housing after not completing the FUP voucher or if the ILC lost contact with the participant, that participant's completion of the program was considered unsuccessful.

Implications for Future Research

This evaluation report provides a strong starting place for MHUW and BTG to move forward. Findings provide important insight into the experiences of both ILCs and BTG participants. Findings also show that success in the program is variable and may depend, at least partly, on the readiness of participants. From these findings, there are a few important next steps that can be pursued by MHUW and BTG.

Including assessment information for both participants and ILCs may be useful in maximizing the possibility of success in the program. This assessment information can then be used to assess participant characteristics of readiness for the program. By understanding readiness for the program, BTG can then prioritize participants who have the best chance to succeed. With assessment information, BTG could also provide training or education to potential participants that may increase their chances of entering and succeeding in the program.

Another area for future research is to investigate what creates good fit between an ILC and a participant. Again, assessment information about both ILCs and participants can be used as data for this fit. Specific analyses on characteristics, or matching, in successful and unsuccessful

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relationships can be undertaken. Information from these analyses can be used as guidance in creating the best fit for future ILCs and participants.

Conclusions

The experience of homelessness can have a profound, and often negative, impact on an individual's life. Preventing homelessness should be a high priority of social service providers. We know that the transition out of foster care and the correctional system puts young adults at high-risk of experiencing homelessness. Therefore, it is critical to identify and understand programs that target this transition time and can demonstrate success in keeping young adults stably housed. Youth enter correctional and foster care systems for a multitude of reasons. Yet, when they transition out of these systems, they often need housing, and they often need ongoing supportive services in order to transition to independence. BTG provides these services and has demonstrated success in helping to stabilize the life circumstances of extremely vulnerable youth. Researchers need to continue to evaluate and understand what makes BTG successful, how BTG can be improved, and if the program can be scaled up to provide population level service.

Appendix A | BTG Participant Interview Protocol

BTG Youth Interview Protocol

PART I: YOUTH CHALLENGES AT ENTRY

1. Before becoming involved with BTG, what challenges/needs did you face as you were exiting the foster care system or Division of Youth Services (DYS)?

2. What challenges did you want to talk to your BTG coach about when you first started working together?

PART II: FEATURES OF THE COACHING RELATIONSHIP

Housing
3. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often did you and your BTG coach discuss finding, securing, and maintaining housing?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What goals regarding finding, securing, and maintaining housing, if any, did you discuss with your BTG coach? How did your coach help?

Health & Wellness
4. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often did you and your BTG coach discuss physical, mental, sexual, and emotional health concerns/needs?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What physical, mental, sexual, and emotional health goals, if any, did you discuss with your BTG coach? How did your coach help?

Community Connections

5. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often did you and your BTG coach discuss how to make healthy, safe connections in your community?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What goals regarding making community connections, if any, did you discuss with your BTG coach? How did your coach help?

Crisis Management

6. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often did you and your BTG coach discuss personal crises?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What goals around personal crises, if any, did you discuss with your BTG coach? How did your coach help?

Employment

7. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often did you and your BTG coach discuss employment goals?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What employment goals, if any, did you discuss with your BTG coach? How did your coach help?

Financial Management

8. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often did you and your BTG coach discuss managing your finances?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What goals around managing your finances, if any, did you discuss with your BTG coach? How did your coach help?

Education

9. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often did you and your BTG coach discuss your education goals?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What education goals, if any, did you discuss with your BTG coach? How did your coach help?

Communication & Personal Advocacy

10. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often did you and your BTG coach discuss how to communicate and advocate for yourself?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What goals around communication and personal advocacy, if any, did you discuss with your BTG coach? How did your coach help?

PART III: YOUTH CONTRIBUTION

11. How invested in the BTG coaching relationship were you?

12. What did you do to make the BTG coaching relationship work?

13. What could you have done better?

PART IV: REFELCTING ON THE COACHING EXPERIENCE

14. What was the best part of having a BTG coach?

15. How did having a BTG coach motivate you to address your goals and challenges?

16. What three skills do you think every BTG coach should have?

17. How could your BTG coach have been more helpful?
    [Probe: note coaching features mentioned above that received low scores]

Appendix B | Consent Form

> **University of Denver**
> **Consent Form for Participation in Research**

Title of Research Study: Evaluation of the Mile High United Way's Bridging the Gap Program

Researcher(s): Kat Hughey, MSW

Study Site: 711 Park Avenue West – Mile High United Way/Bridging the Gap (BTG)

Purpose:
You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research is to:
1. Understand the needs or challenges youth experience upon exiting the foster care system, Juvenile Justice System, or kinship care in Colorado.
2. Understand the impact a Bridging the Gap "coach" makes on participants' perception of personal success.
3. Understand the characteristics that make for a successful BTG coach.

Procedures
If you participate in this research study, you will be invited to participate in a survey about your experiences with BTG.

Voluntary Participation
Participating in this research study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to answer any survey question for any reason without penalty or other benefits to which you are entitled.

Risks or Discomforts
There are minimal risks and/or discomforts for participants. If you had a negative experience while in the BTG program you may recall that negative experience during the interview.

Benefits
Possible benefit of participation includes MHUW and community partners understanding impact of the BTG coach role and how this role can be strengthened for future BTG youth.

Incentives to youth participates
A $100 (gift card) incentive will be provided to former BTG participants upon completing a one to one-and-a-half-hour interview. No compensation will be provided to current or former BTG staff who participate in the evaluation.

Confidentiality

The researchers will not record any names in any data collection materials. Original audio files collected from co-researchers will be deleted from devices as soon as they are securely downloaded to the PI's laptop. Individual identity will continue to be kept private when information is presented or published about this study. Audio recordings will be taken to capture the full answers that participants share. Audio recordings will be destroyed within 5 years of the study.

However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. The research information may be shared with federal agencies or local committees who are responsible for protecting research participants, including individuals on behalf of Mile High United Way/BTG.

Questions

If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please feel free to ask questions now or contact Kat Hughey at kat.hughey@du.edu at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the DU Human Research Protections Program by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researchers.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_____   _____

Participant Signature   **Date**

Appendix C | BTG ILC Interview Protocol

BTG Staff Interview Protocol

PART I: YOUTH CHALLENGES AT ENTRY

1. What are the needs or challenges you see youth experiencing upon exiting the foster care system or Division of Youth Services (DYS)?

2. What are some of the initial challenges you encounter when you begin working with new BTG youth?

PART II: FEATURES OF THE COACHING RELATIONSHIP

Housing
3. When coaching BTG youth, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often do you discuss finding, securing, and maintaining housing?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What goals regarding finding, securing, and maintaining housing do you discuss?

Health & Wellness
4. When coaching BTG youth, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often do you discuss physical, mental, sexual, and emotional health concerns/needs?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What physical, mental, sexual, and emotional health goals do you discuss?

Community Connections

5. When coaching BTG youth, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often do you discuss how to make healthy, safe connections in the community?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What goals regarding community connections do you discuss?

Crisis Management

6. When coaching BTG youth, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often do you discuss their personal crises?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What goals around their personal crises do you discuss?

Employment

7. When coaching BTG youth, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often do you discuss employment goals?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What employment goals do you discuss?

Financial Management

8. When coaching BTG youth, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often do you discuss their management of finances?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What financial management goals do you discuss?

Education

9. When coaching BTG youth, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often do you discuss their education goals?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What education goals do you discuss?

Communication & Personal Advocacy

10. When coaching BTG youth, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very infrequently and 5 being very frequently, how often do you discuss their communication and personal advocacy?

1 (very infrequently)	2 (infrequently	3 (occasionally)	4 (frequently)	5 (very frequently)

What communication and personal advocacy goals do you discuss?

PART III: REFELCTING ON THE COACHING EXPERIENCE

11. What is the best part of being a BTG coach?

12. What do you do to motivate youth to engage in the process of coaching?

13. What three skills do you think every BTG coach should have?