



# LYGHT

LISTENING & LED BY  
YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

GRIEF, HOPE, &  
TRANSITIONS

A DOUGY CENTER PROGRAM

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

RELEASED 2021

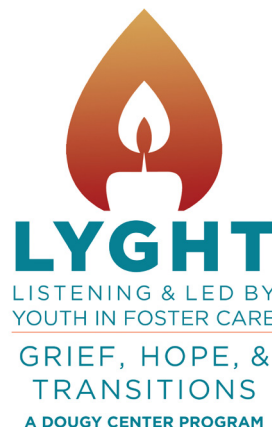


The National Grief Center  
for Children & Families

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# L.Y.G.H.T. Mission

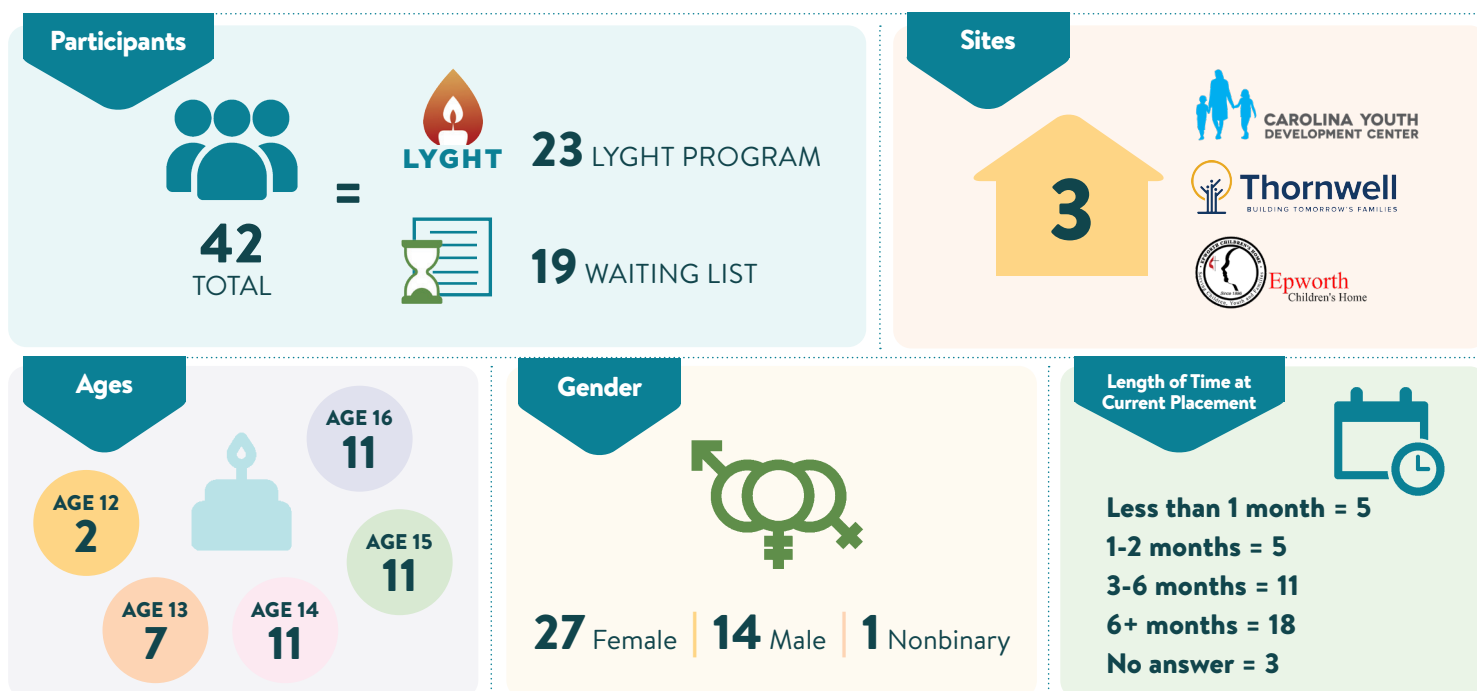
At the core of the L.Y.G.H.T. program, we aim to raise awareness about how youth in foster care who are grieving experience marginalization on various levels, to create ways to provide trauma-informed peer support to youth in foster care, and to promote the importance of moving the child welfare community toward a grief-informed holistic model of care.



## Research Question

Does the L.Y.G.H.T. program, a peer grief support program for youth in foster care, enhance the well-being of youth in foster care?

## Study Demographics



# Outcome Measures

## Quantitative - Questionnaires

- Hopefulness
- Social Support
- Total Difficulties
- Self-Worth
- Problem Intensity
- Program Helpfulness
- Trauma-Informed Climate



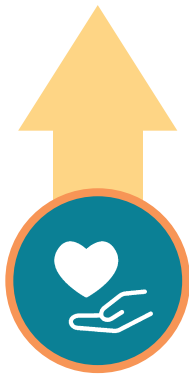
## Qualitative – Focus Groups



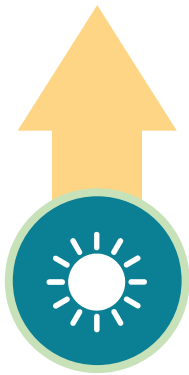
- Initial Interest in the Program
- Perceived Program Benefits
- Program Dislikes
- Barriers to Program Participation
- Program Recommendation
- Additional Feedback

# Findings

For youth who participated in the L.Y.G.H.T. program:



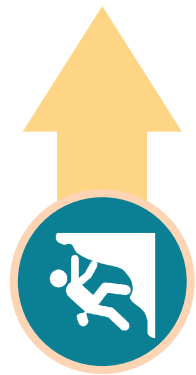
SOCIAL SUPPORT  
INCREASED



HOPEFULNESS  
INCREASED

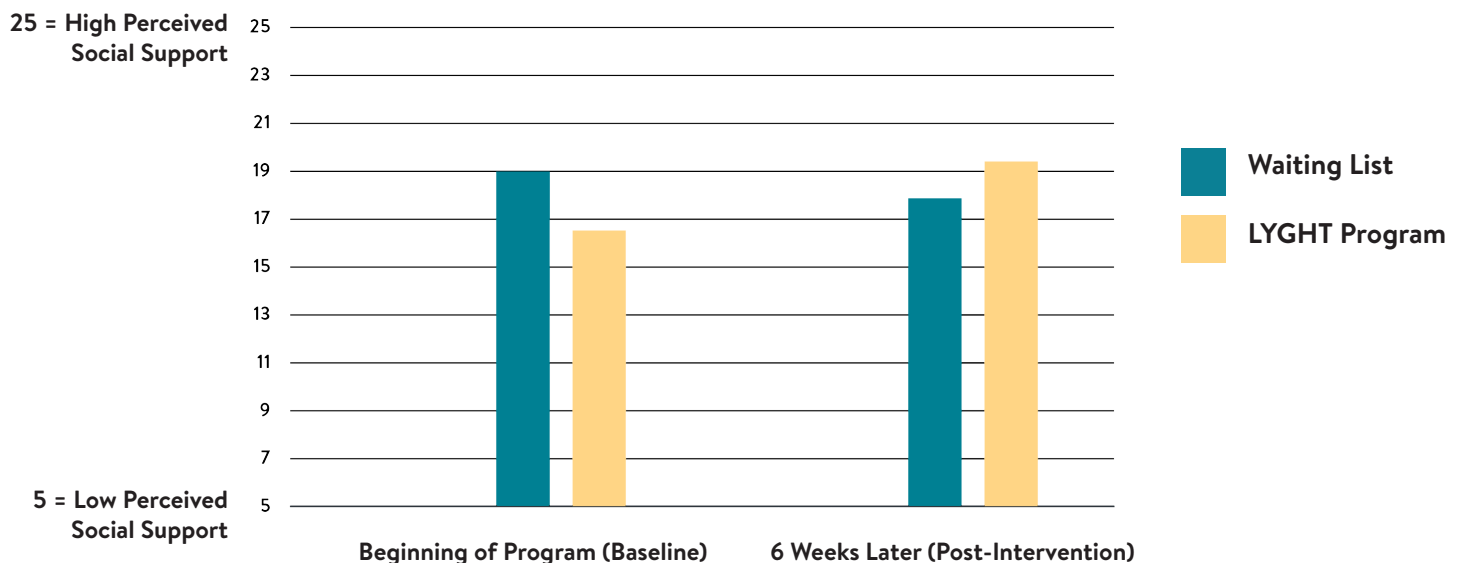


SELF-WORTH  
INCREASED



PERCEIVED PROBLEMS  
BECAME BETTER AND  
MORE BEARABLE

## Social Support\*

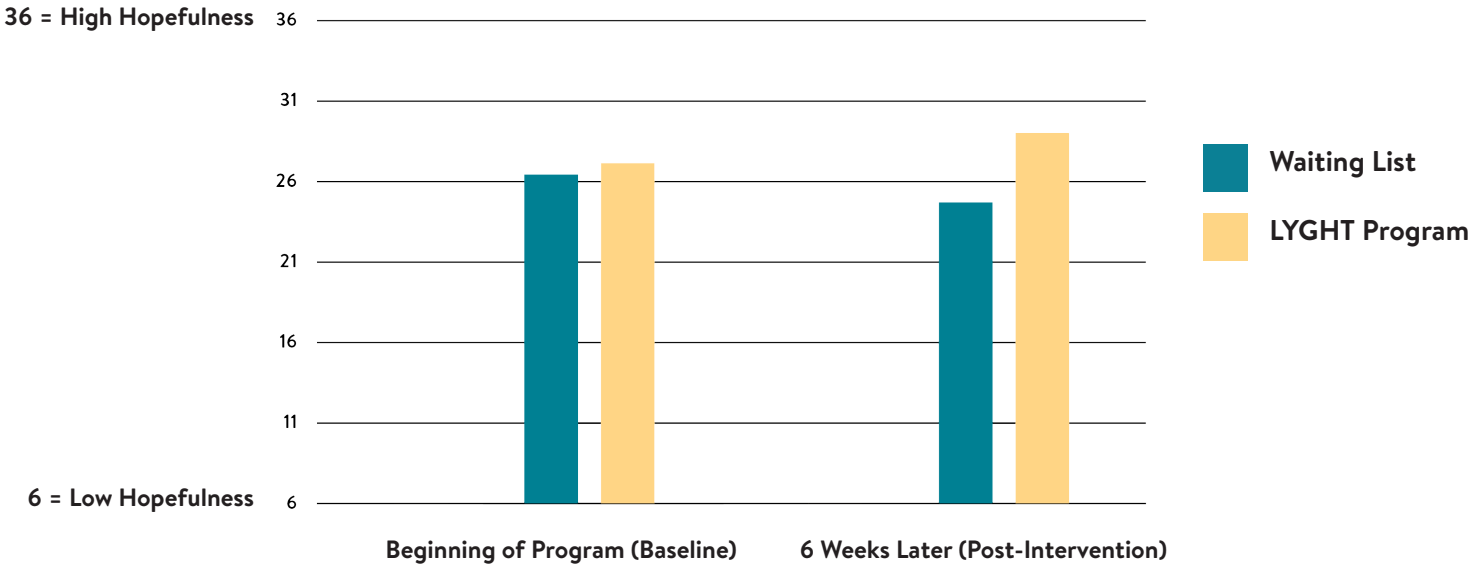


Results indicate a positive medium effect (effect size = 0.13) of the LYGH T program for social support: For youth who participated in the LYGH T program, perceived social support increased ( $t_1$ :  $M=16.54$ ,  $SE=1.11$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M=19.42$ ,  $SE=1.17$ ) compared to youth who did not participate in the LYGH T program ( $t_1$ :  $M=18.99$ ,  $SE=1.14$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M=17.87$ ,  $SE=1.20$ ).

t=Time Point, M=Mean Value, SE=Standard Error

\*Controlled for site of intervention

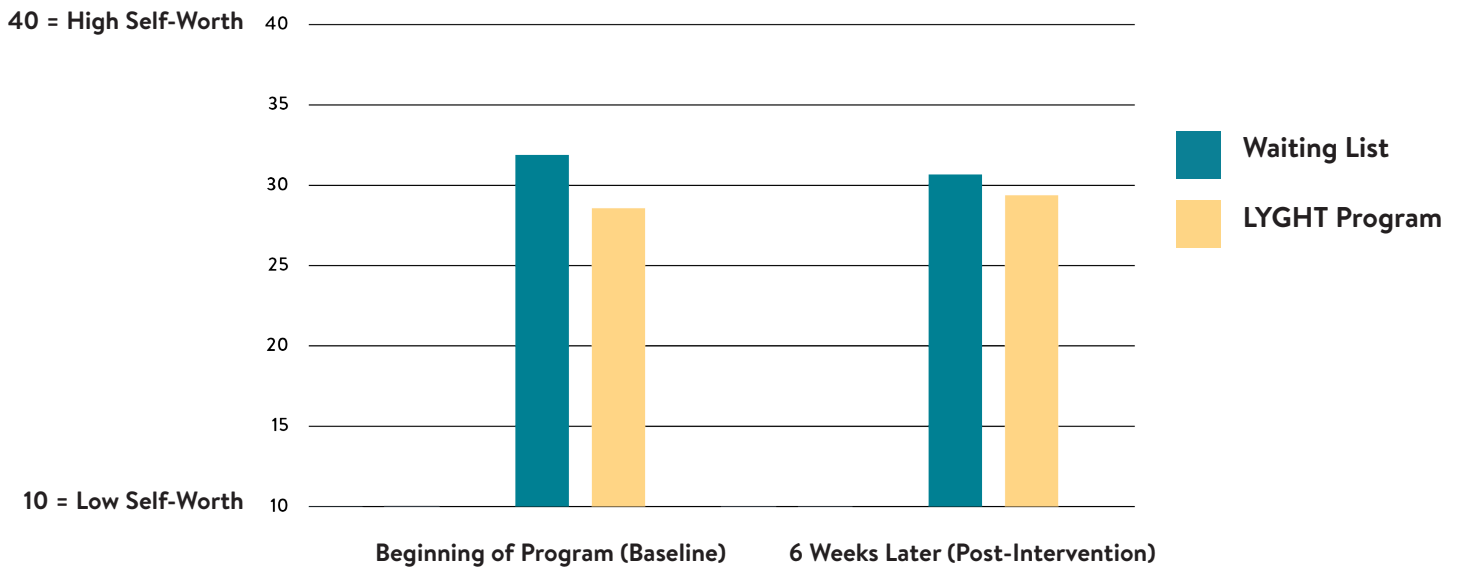
# Hopefulness\*



Results indicate a positive medium effect (effect size=0.09) of the LYGHT program for hopefulness. For youth who participated in the LYGHT program, hopefulness increased ( $t_1$ :  $M=27.16$ ,  $SE=1.72$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M=29.03$ ,  $SE=1.58$ ) compared to youth who did not participate in the LYGHT program ( $t_1$ :  $M=26.45$ ,  $SE=1.78$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M=24.72$ ,  $SE=1.63$ ).

t=Time Point, M=Mean Value, SE=Standard Error      \*Controlled for site of intervention

# Self-Worth\*

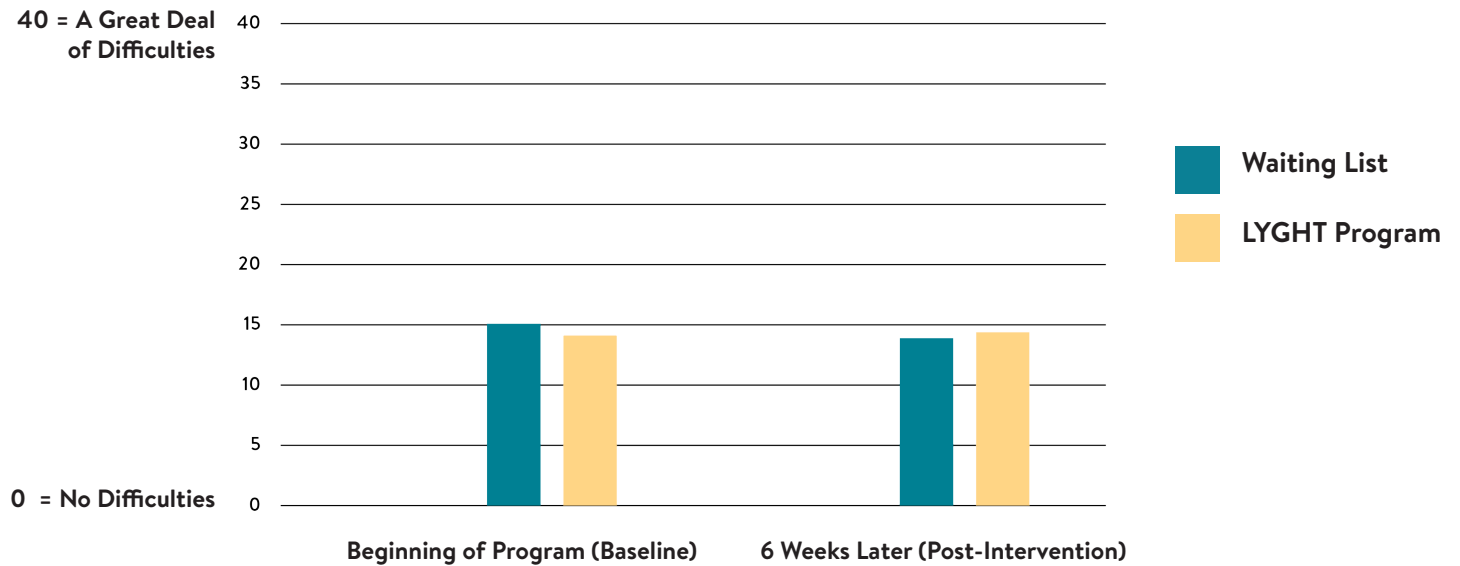


Results indicate a positive medium effect (effect size 0.08) of the LYGHT program for self-worth: For youth who participated in the LYGHT program, self-worth increased ( $t_1$ :  $M=28.59$ ,  $SE=1.50$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M=29.39$ ,  $SE=1.42$ ) compared to youth who did not participate in the LYGHT program ( $t_1$ :  $M=31.90$ ,  $SE=1.54$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M=30.69$ ,  $SE=1.46$ ).

t=Time Point, M=Mean Value, SE=Standard Error \*Controlled for site of intervention

# Total Difficulties\*

(Emotional Problems, Conduct Problems, Peer Problems, and Hyperactivity)

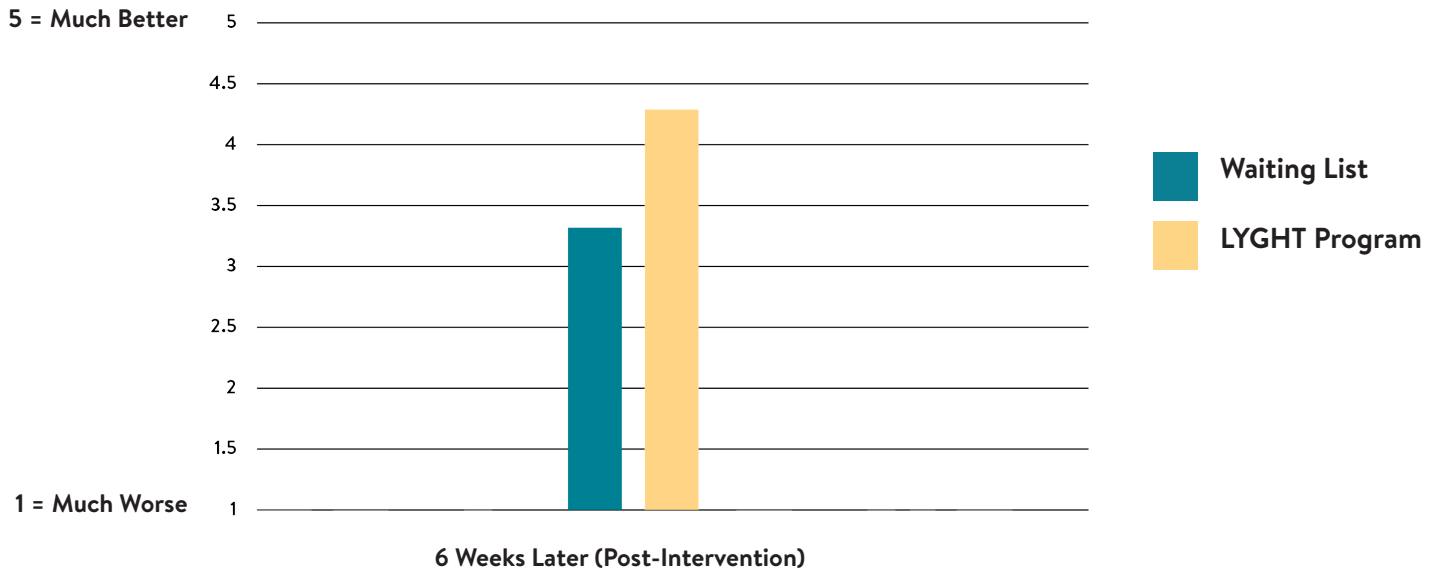


Results indicate a small effect (effect size=0.03) of the LYGHT program for total difficulties: For youth who participated in the LYGHT program, total difficulties stayed the same ( $t_1$ :  $M=14.13$ ,  $SE=1.48$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M=14.39$ ,  $SE=1.47$ ) compared to youth who did not participate in the LYGHT program ( $t_1$   $M=15.11$ ,  $SE=1.53$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M=13.90$ ,  $SE=1.52$ ).

t=Time Point, M=Mean Value, SE=Standard Error

\*Controlled for site of intervention

# Problem Intensity\*

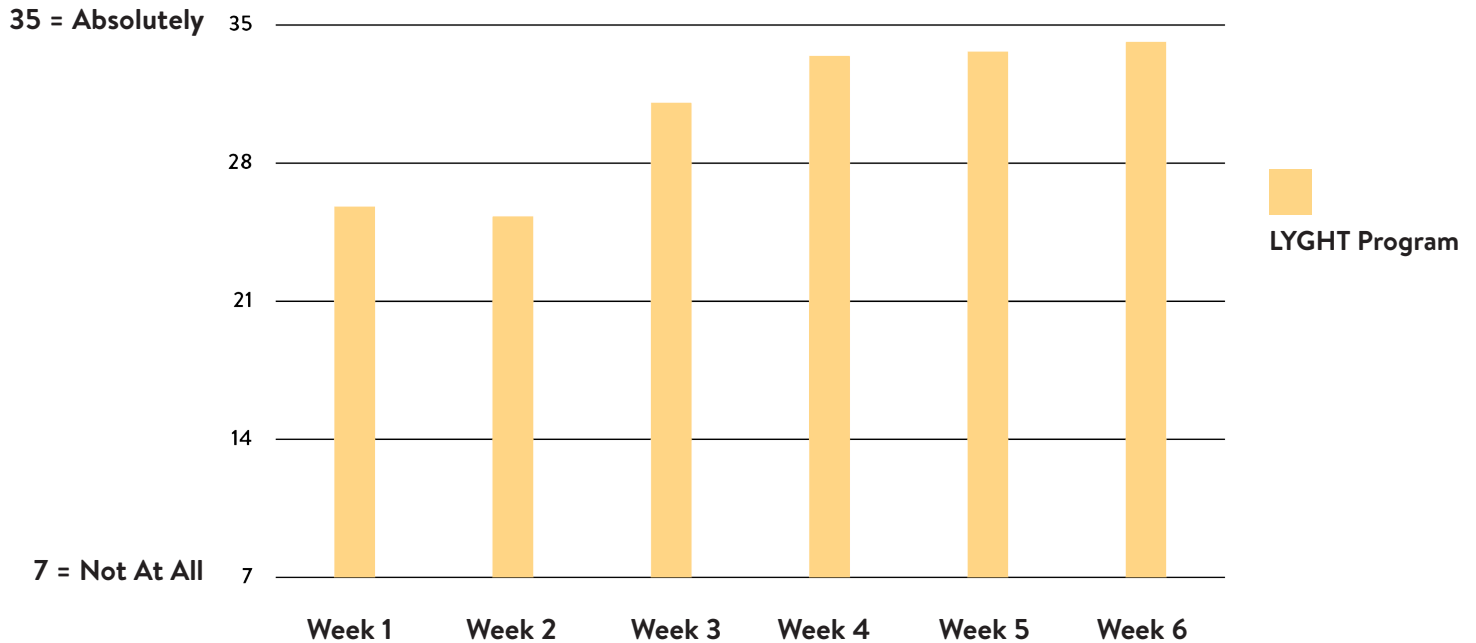


Results indicate a large effect (effect size=0.20) of the LYGHT program for problem intensity: For youth who participated in the LYGHT program perceived problems became better ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SE=0.21$ ) to a stronger degree compared to youth who did not participate in the LYGHT program ( $M=3.32$ ,  $SD = 0.30$ ).

t=Time Point, M=Mean Value, SE=Standard Error      \*Controlled for site of intervention



# Trauma-Informed Climate



Results indicate a large effect (effect size=0.32) of the LYGHT program for trauma-informed climate: Lower levels of trauma-informed climate were reported during Week 1 (M=25.82, SE=2.64) and increased by the end of the program. At Weeks 4 (M=33.45, SE=0.65), 5 (M=33.68, SE=0.40), and 6 (M=34.17, SE=0.51), youth reported higher levels of trauma-informed climate compared to Week 1.

**Across all three sites, youth reported the L.Y.G.H.T. program provided a trauma-informed climate\* where youth felt:**

- **safe** in the L.Y.G.H.T. group
- they could **trust** other members in the L.Y.G.H.T. group
- **supported** by the other members in the L.Y.G.H.T. group
- the other L.Y.G.H.T. group members **understood** them and what they had been through
- the L.Y.G.H.T. group members **appreciated** sharing with and listening to one another
- that **they had choices** about whether and when they spoke, listened, or participated in the L.Y.G.H.T. program
- that their uniqueness and identity were **respected**

\*The Trauma-Informed Program Scale (TIPS; Mitchell & Schuurman, in preparation)

# Focus Group Overview



**3**  
FOCUS GROUPS

**91%**  
PARTICIPATION RATE



**SITE 1**

=

**6**  
PARTICIPANTS



**SITE 2**

=

**7**  
PARTICIPANTS



**SITE 3**

=

**8**  
PARTICIPANTS



AVERAGE LENGTH  
OF FOCUS GROUP

**30-60**  
MINUTES

## Focus Group Topics



- **Initial Interest in the Program**
- **Perceived Program Benefits**
- **Program Dislikes**
- **Barriers to Program Participation**
- **Program Recommendation**
- **Additional Feedback**

# Initial Interest in the Program

When asked what initially drew them to be interested in the L.Y.G.H.T program, participants provided various responses.

**I didn't have anything better to do.**

BOREDOM

**I don't know. I am curious about stuff.**

CURIOSITY

**I wanted to experience how was to sit in a group and talk about life.**

AN INTEREST IN BEING INVOLVED IN A GROUP THAT DISCUSSED LIFE

**First was for the money. I'm not gonna lie.**

RESEARCH INCENTIVES OF A \$25 GIFT CARD

**Someone brought it to my attention and I thought it would be a good idea to join the group to support others.**

AN INTEREST IN HELPING OTHERS

**I wasn't sure if I wanted to do it or not.**

AMBIVALENCE

# Perceived Program Benefits



**Personal  
Well-Being,  
Empowerment,  
and Agency**



**Relational  
Connection and  
Perceived Support**



**Safe Space**



## Theme 1: Personal Well-Being, Empowerment, and Agency

### HEALTHY EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL MANAGEMENT

I was grieving so I could have the opportunity to open up so I don't have to keep those feelings inside.

I knew that if I was going to stay in the house any longer, I would fight someone, even grown people.

It was my first time in a program like this. It was nice. It helped me to cope with what I was dealing with.

### HOPEFULNESS

It helps you to feel like you are not alone. They are also going through something as well and you can help each other.

### AGENCY

We had time to sit there and think about the people. It was like sending a message to that person, letting them know that I am okay and that everything is going to be okay.

# Perceived Program Benefits



## Theme 2: Relational Connection and Perceived Support

### SHARED LIVED EXPERIENCE

I am not the only person who feels the way I feel.

It's a great group. It can help with your problems and you have support there.

### DEVELOPING AND BUILDING NEW RELATIONSHIPS

What I like the most about the program was meeting new people and discussing and talking about their stuff and them knowing what they are going through.

### ACCEPTANCE

I liked the program where everyone was understanding — when you come in with an attitude, they wouldn't jump back at you. They would help out and it would make me feel better.

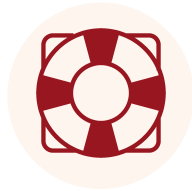
### "RELATEDNESS" AND CONNECTION

Everyone could relate to the topics. It hits you.

It drew me closer to the rest of the kids. I got comfortable with others.

This program was different from other because this program, like the title says, it brings LYGHT. Happiness and powerful. Relatedness.

# Perceived Program Benefits



## Theme 3: Safe Space

### CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRUST

I like that you can talk about [your experiences of loss] and that no one tells anyone around the campus.

I was able to trust these kids with what I was going through. Lately I have been having trust issues. At first, I wasn't sure I could open up to these kids. I learned I could open up to them and it would stay between us.

### YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

We didn't have to share when we didn't want to.

I like that we could go off topic and we had a little freedom.

### NONJUDGMENTAL AND RELAXING ATMOSPHERE

I liked that you are not judged by others and what you say.

It was stress free.

## Program Dislikes

There wasn't really a part I didn't like. Everything was good.

NOTHING

I didn't like the seats. They were uncomfortable.

FURNITURE

I didn't like how long it was.

THE LENGTH OF THE GROUP

I didn't like that I couldn't stop talking all the time.

THE INABILITY TO SELF-REGULATE TALK-TIME

Some parts were boring.

A DISINTEREST IN SOME OF THE PROGRAM CONTENT

I didn't like the fact of seeing people hurting. I wish I could fix their issues.

THE DESIRE TO HELP "FIX" PROBLEMS THEY COULD NOT RESOLVE

## Barriers to Program Participation

CONFLICT WITH THEIR WORK COMMITMENTS

I had to leave for work 30 minutes early. I was sad.

FATIGUE

Sometimes I was sleepy, so I didn't want to come.

COMPETING HOBBIES

I had to stop playing [my game].

# Program Recommendation

## VALUE OF PEER SUPPORT

It's a great group. It can help with your problems and you have support there.

I would tell [another youth] it helps you to feel like you are not alone. They are also going through something as well and you can help each other.

## TESTIMONIALS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

I shared it with others living [in my community]. I told them I like it and it helps other kids.

I told my sister that she needs to come here and so she can quit telling me what she was going through so she could get some stuff off her back.

## PROBLEM-RESOLUTION AND OVERALL WELL-BEING

I would tell [other youth] to join because when they join they are going to feel so much relief from their problems and stress.

I would recommend it. It's very, it's like soothing. It helps you to get through what you go through and to get advice on how to cope with your situations.

## LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

I would tell [other youth] to join it! It would really help you out for the rest of your life.



# Additional Feedback

I learned that other people may have nothing. They could be very depressed.

LEARNING FROM PEERS

There are also people who are not in foster care that it would be good for.

PROGRAM EXPANSION  
For other youth populations who are grieving.

You should expand the program to the community, people all over the world.

At first I didn't want to go, even if it was for money. After the first few sessions, it changed the way I saw the group.

CHANGE IN PERCEPTION

I think you should combine the program for all the different group homes because it would really help us support each other more because we know people from different places can relate to what we are discussing and feeling.

PROGRAM EXPANSION  
For youth in foster care at multiple locations.

## Additional Study Highlights

**3 out  
of 4**

YOUTH CHOSE TO  
PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY  
(42 OUT OF 54 ELIGIBLE YOUTH)

PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH WHO  
ATTENDED EITHER 5 OR 6 SESSIONS

**90%**

**Only  
1**

YOUTH WITHDREW  
FROM THE STUDY



MORE THAN 60 HOURS  
OF THE LYGT PROGRAM  
WERE OFFERED TO YOUTH  
IN FOSTER CARE

NUMBER OF HOURS  
THE CLINICAL  
SUPPORT PERSON HAD  
TO BE CALLED UPON  
DURING GROUP:

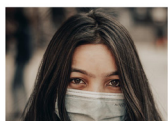
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# L.Y.G.H.T. Resources



## L.Y.G.H.T. during COVID

The L.Y.G.H.T. program has been offered to youth in foster care even during the global pandemic. With physical distancing and safety adaptations, we have been able to serve our participants with this youth-led program to help during a time of crisis, ambiguity, loss, and grief. Check out the feedback we've received from two of our current L.Y.G.H.T. participants in South Carolina.



## LYGHT NEWSLETTER & LYGHT LISTSERV



## LYGHT BROCHURES



## PODCAST EPISODES

- EPISODE 136: L.Y.G.H.T. SUPPORTING GRIEVING YOUTH IN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM
- EPISODE 137: GRIEF & THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM – A PERSONAL STORY



## LYGHT TIP SHEETS

## Next Steps

EXPANDING THE LYGHT PROGRAM  
TO MORE COMMUNITY SITES IN  
SOUTH CAROLINA



EXPANDING THE REACH OF THE L.Y.G.H.T.  
PROGRAM THROUGH MORE TRAINED  
L.Y.G.H.T. FACILITATORS



EXPANDING THE DELIVERY OF THE  
L.Y.G.H.T. PROGRAM TO INCLUDE  
YOUTH RESIDING IN FOSTER HOMES

EXPANDING THE LYGHT PROGRAM TO  
YOUNG ADULTS (17 TO 23 YEARS OLD)  
IN FOSTER CARE



## Acknowledgments

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