

Journey to Independence

National Model of Care | The Salvation Army Youth Services



Youth
Services

Journey to Independence is the national Model of Care for The Salvation Army (TSA) Youth Services, one consistent, evidence-informed way of working with young people aged 12–25 across Australia. It's a shared practice framework for how services design, deliver, learn from and improve care. Named with young people, "journey" honours the resilience they show as they move towards independence: confidence, capability, informed choice and equal access to opportunity. Journey to Independence reflects The Salvation Army's mission, values and commitment to inclusion, reconciliation, and the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Its goals: **better outcomes for young people, greater accessibility to higher-quality services, stronger practice and skills, and sector leadership that drives systemic change.**

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Foundations of Care — *how we work*

Our **foundational principles** are: flexible, creative & innovative · holistic & empowering · person-centred & youth-focused · evidence generated & outcomes focused · accessible & inclusive. **These guide how we work with young people and how our services are designed and delivered:** adapting support to each young person, considering the whole person, promoting choice and empowerment, learning from evidence and outcomes, and creating services that are accessible, equitable and inclusive.

These principles are brought to life through a **strong workforce culture**, grounded in accountability, safeguarding and professionalism, with a focus on learning, initiative, transparency, creativity and meaningful participation.

Our approach is underpinned by the **Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE)** framework, which recognises that many young people have experienced complex trauma, and places their psychological, social and emotional needs at the heart of service delivery. At the core of PIE are two fundamental components: **relationships** and **reflective practice**, embedded across all that we do. These are supported by five key elements:

Psychological awareness	Evidence-informed approaches which help staff understand what may be driving a young person's emotions and behaviour, so they can respond to their individual needs with greater understanding and consistency.
Staff training & support	Trauma-informed training, supervision and debriefing, backed by a national workforce development strategy.
Learning & enquiry	Young people's voices and lived experience, evidence and outcomes measurement help us understand what works, learn from practice and continually improve our services.
Spaces for opportunity	Safe, welcoming physical and social spaces co-designed with young people, plus advocacy (self, individual and systems) that opens pathways.
The 3 R's	Minimal, empowering rules (non-exclusion and "elastic tolerance"), clearly defined roles, and responsive, flexible practice.

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Components of Care — *how care is delivered*

Journey to Independence is designed around the individual young person, with flexible pathways between services and support that responds to their needs, goals and circumstances. Our principles in practice ensure care is person-centred, responsive to culture and diversity, inclusive of family where appropriate, child focused and strengthened through collaborative partnerships. Our service delivery elements provide connected support from prevention and early intervention through to coordinated care, group work and transition planning, with a no wrong door approach helping young people connect with the support they need.

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Six Key Outcome Domains — *what success looks like*

Success looks different for every young person. Journey to Independence works towards meaningful, sustainable outcomes across six interconnected areas of life:

Education, training & employment	Housing	Social inclusion & participation
Health & well-being	Life & living skills	Relationships

"Youth Services exist so young people are seen, supported and empowered to reach their full potential. With care and courage, we journey alongside each person, creating safe spaces, real opportunities and stronger communities where young people can thrive."

Youth Services Purpose Statement



Service Delivery Responses — *our programs*

Developed in partnership with young people, based on their circumstances, experiences and choice:



Alcohol & Other Drugs (AOD)

Education and support to reduce harm from alcohol and other drug use, assertive community outreach, clinical counselling and residential therapeutic recovery, in partnership with The Salvation Army's AOD department.



Education

Accredited schools delivering approved curriculum with specialist learning support, re-engaging young people who have disengaged from mainstream education to finish school and transition onward.



Housing & Homelessness

Accommodation across the housing continuum; crisis, transitional, supported residential and independent living, plus assertive outreach, family support and living-skills development, with prevention at the core.



Specialist Therapeutic Responses

Experienced practitioners providing one-on-one and group therapeutic responses, clinical counselling and practice advice that promote psychological well-being and resilience.



Driver Training

Pre-learner classes, formal driver training with qualified instructors, safe-driving programs and mentoring to complete required hours, a licence is a key milestone toward independence.



Employment & Training

Employment orientation, taster and mentoring programs, vocational education with Eva Burrows College and Registered Training Organisations (RTO's), and social enterprises providing real work experience and qualifications.



Social & Community Engagement

Outdoor recreation (camps, sport, bushwalking), creative arts and opportunities to explore faith pathways, building skills, confidence, identity and belonging.



Youth Justice

Restorative justice group conferencing and intensive outreach case management that address the causes of offending, reduce recidivism and divert young people from the justice system.



Partnership & Collaboration — *how we work with others*

We recognise that no single service can meet every young person's needs. We work alongside other specialist services within TSA and with external partners to strengthen referral pathways and connect young people with the right support and opportunities in their communities. This includes connections with Corps (local Salvation Army churches) and chaplaincy, alongside Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, multicultural and LGBTIQA+ organisations, government and peak bodies, and partners across housing, health, education and other community services.

What journey to independence means in practice

For Young People

Care that is safe, respectful and responsive to who you are and what matters to you. Your voice, strengths, goals, culture, identity and relationships are valued, with choice and agency in decisions about your life and support.

For TSA Staff & Services

A shared practice framework that supports consistent, high-quality care through strong relationships, reflective practice, training and continuous learning, with young people's voices and lived experience informing how services are delivered and improved.

For Partners & External Organisations

A consistent national approach to working together, with clear and connected pathways that improve access, coordinate support and expand the choices and opportunities available to young people.

“Wherever there is hardship or injustice, Salvos will live, love and fight alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time, with the love of Jesus.”

The Salvation Army Vision

The Salvation Army is a child safe organisation

TSA is committed to ensuring the provision of safe and inclusive environments for children and young people experiencing vulnerability where they feel respected, safe, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.