

Case Study: The New York Foundling



How The New York Foundling uses Mobility Mentoring® to reduce poverty, address safety and risk factors, and support families in achieving their goals

WHAT IS EMPATH?

Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath) is a Boston-based national nonprofit that disrupts poverty through direct services, advocacy, research, and our global learning network. Our mission is to help people move out of poverty and to provide other institutions with the tools to systematically do the same.

WHAT IS THE ECONOMIC MOBILITY EXCHANGE™?

The Economic Mobility Exchange™ (“Exchange”) is EMPATH’s global learning network of human service organizations and agencies working to promote economic mobility in their own communities.

WHAT IS MOBILITY MENTORING®?

Mobility Mentoring is the professional practice of partnering with participants so that over time they may acquire the resources, skills, and sustained behavior changes necessary to attain and preserve their economic independence.

The New York Foundling (NYF), established in 1869 in New York City, provides child welfare services, foster care, education, behavioral services, developmental disability programs, and juvenile & criminal services supports across all five boroughs and Puerto Rico.

NYF works with the whole family, supporting them to strengthen their stability and independence. The organization integrates evidence-informed and evidence-based models, including Mobility Mentoring, to support families in navigating safety concerns, building skills, and strengthening long-term stability.



New York Foundling Strengthening our Families' program team.



APPROACH

In 2020, NYF integrated Mobility Mentoring into their Family Support Preventive Services, Strengthening Our Families, a program within the New York City Administration for Children's Services Prevention System (NYC ACS).

NYF selected Mobility Mentoring because it aligns with their longstanding commitment to use data-driven approaches that support children, families, and adults in achieving meaningful and lasting change. They were selected to deliver Mobility Mentoring in the Bronx through NYC ACS's prevention system.

IMPLEMENTATION

NYF's implementation approach centered on embedding EMPath's Bridge to Self-Sufficiency® (the "Bridge") and Goal Action Plan throughout services, including home visits, family meetings, and service planning.

Families receive a copy of the Bridge at intake and are encouraged to review it and mark questions, helping them to begin reflecting before the first coaching session. Staff reference referral information to guide engagement and tailor questions across the Bridge pillars. The Goal Action Plan supports the translation of conversation into goals that contribute to reducing safety and risk factors.

- MARCH 2020**
 - NYF joined the Exchange network
- JULY 2020**
 - Began implementing Mobility Mentoring during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 2020 – 2022**
 - Integration of the Bridge during intake and early sessions
 - Use of the Bridge to guide goal setting and problem-solving
- 2022**
 - Built a recognition framework to support and celebrate progress
- END OF 2023**
 - 217 participants received Mobility Mentoring-informed services from NYF.
- FALL OF 2024**
 - EMPATH assessed Strengthening our Families' fidelity to the Mobility Mentoring model and awarded the program Mobility Mentoring Certification
- MARCH OF 2024**
 - Strengthening our Families transitioned to an adapted Bridge, Bridge to Family Self-Sufficiency

To support ongoing skill development, NYF's leadership developed training on intake engagement, Bridge discussions, and goal development, including didactic sessions and role plays.

To support consistent implementation, the team created internal progress note templates that capture Bridge conversations and goals. The team also created a streamlined roadmap, "The Life of a Case," outlining expectations, timelines, and documentation milestones. These tools were supported by a culturally responsive Recognition framework that aligns recognition with families' cultural backgrounds and needs.

Through these structures, Mobility Mentoring became embedded in daily work as a participant-driven and collaborative approach.

NYF also helped shape the citywide adaptation of the Bridge through a three-year ACS-led collaborative with EMPATH, resulting in refined language and the addition of the Children's Needs pillar.

RESULTS



From July 2020 to May 31, 2026, the program served 404 participants.



The program's implementation efforts, in partnership with EMPATH, resulted in a high level of implementation fidelity, enabling them to achieve Mobility Mentoring Certification.



81% of participants enrolled 6+ months increased their economic mobility by an average of 13% from the start of the program.

NEXT STEPS

- Continue strengthening staff training on engagement at intake, Bridge conversations, and SMART goal development.
- Continue reinforcing model fidelity through structured onboarding and ongoing training using the ACS Adapted Bridge Guide and Conversation prompts.
- Continue offering refresher training with role plays and real scenarios to build staff confidence and consistency.
- Continue refining data practices and strengthening the system to ensure accurate data flow.

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“The more engaged the participant is in their goal development, the better they are at achieving their goals”

— GWENDOLYN GONZALEZ, FORMER ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT, BRONX PREVENTIVE

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