

# A Model for Success

How FSH Affiliates are changing how America thinks about supporting student parents



## Introduction

For more than three decades, Family Scholar House (FSH), based in Louisville, Kentucky, has refined and scaled a comprehensive approach to supporting parents pursuing higher education. FSH provides integrated supports that address the real-life barriers student parents face, including access to childcare, transportation, nutrition, healthcare, and academic guidance.

By aligning these supports with postsecondary education and career pathways, FSH helps parents remain enrolled, complete their programs, and transition into sustainable careers. The model is intentionally strengths-based, building on each parent's existing capabilities while reinforcing consistency, stability, and forward momentum.

Since 2020, the FSH affiliate network has expanded from two to ten organizations across the country. These affiliates represent a diverse cross-section of sectors, including national nonprofits, community-based organizations, and workforce and education partners. Despite their differences in origin and capacity, each affiliate shares a commitment to implementing a model that is both structured and adaptable. The affiliate framework is intentionally designed to accommodate this variation by offering structured onboarding, technical assistance, and shared standards that support growth while maintaining program fidelity.

FSH and its Affiliates implement a Whole Family approach. This comprehensive, wraparound model that centers on strengths-based engagement with student parents. Rather than focusing on deficits, this approach identifies and builds upon the existing skills, resilience, and potential of each adult, helping them progress toward long-term self-sufficiency.

This work occurs alongside the pursuit of postsecondary education and career advancement. Parents are supported as they navigate traditional college pathways, apprenticeships, and industry-recognized certification programs, ensuring that their academic progress is directly connected to sustainable employment opportunities. By aligning individualized support with clear educational and workforce goals, FSH and its Affiliates create pathways for parents to achieve stability, increase earning potential, and model the value of education for their children.

Results across the affiliate network demonstrate strong outcomes. Parents are increasing their educational attainment and workforce participation, while their children benefit from more stable, supportive environments that reinforce the value of education. Families experience reduced exposure to the stressors associated with poverty, enabling them to focus on long-term goals rather than immediate survival.

The broader impact is both economic and social. As families move toward self-sufficiency, reliance on public assistance decreases and workforce participation increases. At the same time, improved access to preventive care and healthier lifestyles contributes to better long-term health outcomes. A growing body of evidence shows that when parents are equipped to succeed, their children are more likely to achieve higher levels of education, economic stability, and overall well-being.

## The FSH Affiliates Origin Story

Family Scholar House's Affiliate Program emerged in response to strong national interest from organizations seeking to replicate its success in supporting single-parent students. Across sectors (including nonprofit, education, housing, and community-based organizations) leaders observed the outcomes FSH was achieving and sought guidance on how to bring a similar model to their own communities.

In response, Family Scholar House formalized the Affiliate Program to provide a clear, structured pathway for replication. Built on decades of experience and proven practices, the program equips partners with the tools, support, and guidance needed to implement the model effectively while adapting it to local needs. Organizations interested in becoming affiliates complete a two-tiered application process to ensure alignment, readiness, and a shared commitment to the Whole Family approach. At its core, the Affiliate Program enables local organizations to deliver comprehensive, wraparound services that address the full range of challenges faced by student parents from housing instability to educational attainment and economic mobility. The network has grown to include 10 affiliates across 19 locations, with additional organizations exploring affiliation.

Family Scholar House recognizes that these challenges exist in every community. Through its affiliate network, FSH is extending its impact nationwide; strengthening local organizations, expanding access to proven supports, and helping more families break the cycle of poverty through education.



## How it works

Organizations seeking to become Family Scholar House (FSH) affiliates participate in a structured application and review process designed to ensure alignment with the model and readiness for implementation. The process begins with the submission of a Letter of Intent, in which prospective affiliates articulate their organizational mission, community context, and rationale for pursuing affiliation. Selected organizations are then invited to complete a comprehensive application.

Applications are evaluated using a defined set of criteria to assess organizational fit and preparedness. Specifically, reviewers consider:

1. Organizational self-assessment – the extent to which the applicant demonstrates a clear understanding of its internal capacity, strengths, and areas for growth;
2. Alignment with the FSH model – the degree to which the organization understands and is committed to implementing the Whole Family, trauma-informed, and data-driven approach; and
3. Clarity of intended outcomes – the organization’s ability to articulate specific goals for affiliation and how participation will advance outcomes for the populations it serves.

This evaluative framework ensures that affiliates are well-positioned to implement the model with fidelity while adapting it appropriately to their local context.

The Affiliate Program operates under a defined fee structure, reflecting the comprehensive suite of resources, tools, and ongoing technical support provided to participating organizations. Recognizing that financial constraints may present barriers to entry, Family Scholar House has strategically leveraged external funding sources, including grants and philanthropic awards, to subsidize affiliation costs for qualifying organizations.

Upon acceptance, affiliates gain access to a replicable, evidence-informed model developed over more than three decades of practice. This model enables organizations to accelerate program development by reducing the time and resources typically required to design, test, and refine complex, wraparound service systems. By leveraging established frameworks, affiliates can mitigate implementation risk and improve program effectiveness from the outset.

FSH Affiliates operates as a subsidiary of FSH, Inc., providing a formal structure to support program expansion while maintaining consistency, accountability, and adherence to the core elements of the model across the national network.

## What it means to be an affiliate

When organizations are approved to join the Family Scholar House Affiliates program, they become part of a nationwide network of organizations working toward shared goals. Among other benefits, the affiliates gain direct access to FSH staff, tools, and ongoing training and professional development to guide them along their organizational journey.

Upon acceptance, each organization receives meaningful support, including access to FSH's proven wraparound services model and a comprehensive suite of resources to guide program development and implementation. These supports include, but are not limited to:

- Weekly opportunities for technical assistance
- Comprehensive database that tracks 238 fields of data
- Program activities and implementation
- Mock practice sessions
- Annual affiliate convening
- A secure communication app for participant engagement
- Targeted, area-specific professional development
- Intern supervision
- Manuals, assessments, and additional program resources
- Assistance with reporting and outcome tracking

Affiliates also gain access to a robust proprietary data system that tracks more than 250 data points, enabling deeper insights to inform strategy, performance measurement, and decision-making. In addition, organizations also receive access to a HIPPA-compliant communication platform to ensure secure engagement with participants.

Hands-on technical assistance brings best practices into daily operations, helping organizations optimize performance and address common challenges. Monthly support meetings keep affiliates aligned with the model, while connections across the national network create opportunities to share ideas, celebrate successes, and build lasting professional relationships.

## The Affiliate Institute

*Lifting others up lifts you up as well. Success isn't just about what you accomplish in your life; it's about what you inspire others to do." – Unknown*

Launched in 2022, the Family Scholar House Affiliate Institute is an annual convening held in Louisville, Kentucky that brings together affiliates from across the FSH network. The institute provides a dedicated forum for collective learning, collaboration, and strategic alignment, enabling affiliates to strengthen relationships, exchange best practices, and build organizational capacity. Attendance has steadily grown, reaching its highest level in 2025 with 68 participants.

Through a combination of workshops, facilitated discussions, and networking opportunities, participants deepen cross-affiliate connections and gain practical tools to better support scholar families in their local communities. Speakers include FSH staff, subject-matter experts, and community leaders who offer insights grounded in research, practice, and lived experience.

A signature and highly valued component of the institute is the closing panel, which centers lived experience and elevates participant voices. Panelists have included current FSH participants during the first two institutes, second-generation FSH participants who grew up in the program, and participants from affiliate organizations. This evolving panel format reinforces the institute's commitment to participant-informed learning and continuous improvement across the network.

### Current Affiliates (As of March 2026)

**Arizona - Save the Family; Phoenix Scholar House**

**California - Raise the Barr; The Huddle**

**Florida - Dream Givers, USA**

**Indiana - Heartland Community Action Services; Anderson Scholar House; Heartland Scholar House; Muncie Indiana Scholar House**

**Kentucky - Lincoln Grant Scholar House; Eastern KY Scholar House; Kit Carson Scholar House**

**Minnesota - Raise the Barr**

**Ohio - Cincinnati Scholar House**

**Pennsylvania - Pittsburgh Scholar House**

**Tennessee - Angelic Ministries**

**Washington - Peninsula College**

## Why it works

Student parents, particularly single student parents, represent a unique and often underserved population. Many balance employment with their educational pursuits in order to support their child(ren), while also facing challenges such as food insecurity, housing instability, and limited access to preventative healthcare.



Data-informed programming is central to the success of FSH Affiliates. By leveraging key tools and frameworks such as the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Survey, program staff can design individualized support plans that help participants progress toward long-term self-sufficiency.

A review of ACEs data among FSH participants and affiliate participants reveals consistent and concerning trends. Exposure to violence, whether in the home or in the community, can have profound and lasting effects on individuals and families.

First, exposure to violence, either in the home or out of the home, can have profound and lasting effects on individuals and families. Further, adverse experiences of any kind can be disruptive to educational attainment and self-sufficiency efforts, and the more ACEs a person experiences, the more severe the disruption. Trauma manifests in various physical and psychological ways that can impact an individual's willingness to trust medical professionals, develop healthy relationships with family and friends, and get along with others in the workplace (Zlate, 2020).

Adverse experiences can disrupt educational attainment and progress toward self-sufficiency, with greater exposure associated with more severe challenges. Trauma manifests in both physical and psychological ways, shaping an individual's ability to trust, build relationships, and function in workplace environments (Zlate, 2020).

Explained in a Kimberg and Wheeler 2019 paper, “Experiencing trauma can alter individual biology and behavior over the life course; these changes have an impact on interpersonal and intergenerational relationships.”

This context is particularly important given that approximately one in five college students in the United States is a parent and nearly 70% of those student parents are single mothers (Raise the Barr, n.d.). Understanding the need for targeted, data-informed supports to address the complex challenges they face, Family Scholar House utilizes a range of assessment tools to identify participant needs and proactively align resources.

Research demonstrates that ACEs are linked to long-term health risks, including increased likelihood of chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease, higher rates of risk-taking behaviors, and elevated substance use. By leveraging these tools, organizations can anticipate participant needs and ensure that appropriate supports are in place to help student parents persist and succeed.



## Program expansion and service delivery

As the affiliate network expanded, and as affiliates strengthened their organizational capacity over time, the program demonstrated substantial growth in both the number of participants served and the number of services delivered.

Educational attainment is a key long-term outcome of FSH. To date, 317 degrees have been earned by student parent participants, reflecting sustained progress toward economic mobility and long-term self-sufficiency.

Participant's progress and program effectiveness are assessed using the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix, a nationally-recognized tool that measures stability across multiple life domains, including housing, employment, income, education, health, and family well-being. Higher matrix scores indicate increased stability and progress toward long-term self-sufficiency.

Among participants engaged in residential affiliate programs, the mean initial matrix score rose from 53 at program entry to 62 after participation in a residential program, a 17% measurable improvement.

Self-sufficiency often relies on improving educational attainment, but nearly one in five college students are also raising children at the same time. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, 18% of undergraduate students are parents – accounting for 3.14 million people (Dundar, 2024). Nearly three-fourths of those are women, who are consistently showing to take on more parenting duties than men (Gender Equity Policy Institute, 2024). According to 2024 data, mothers spend more than twice as much time as fathers on essential work of taking care of the home and family, working women spend twice as many hours per week as working men on childcare and household work combined (Gender Equity Policy Institute, 2024).

Recent findings show that parenting students are also more likely than nonparenting students to be first-generation college students and to have income below the poverty level (Dundar, 2024). They also tend to perform at higher levels than nonparenting students, with student parents boasting an average GPA of 3.17 compared to their nonparenting peers at 3.15 (Dundar, 2024).

## Evidence of impact: Participant outcomes and program effectiveness

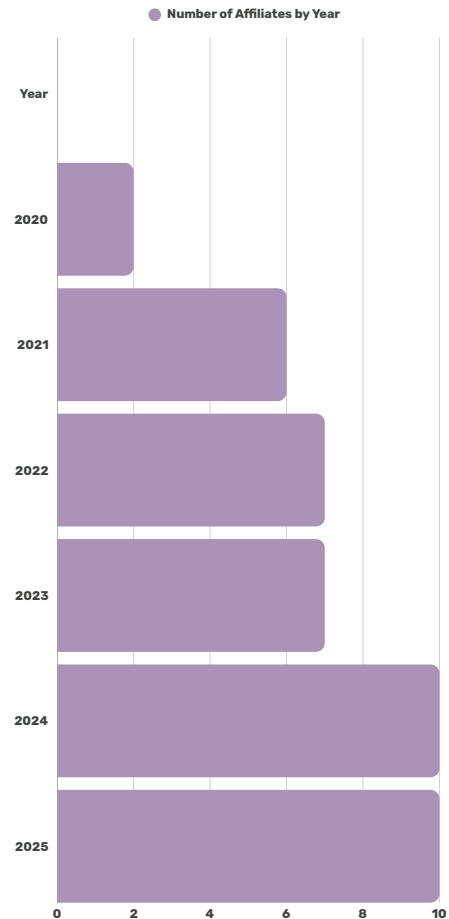
Findings from *Characteristics, Needs and Barriers among Family Scholar House Participants* (Bloomer & Williams, 2024), a study conducted using data from both Family Scholar House and its affiliate network, provide strong evidence of the model’s effectiveness across diverse communities.

**Rebecka Bloomer, PhD & Sara Williams, PhD**  
Spring 2025 (on study of data)

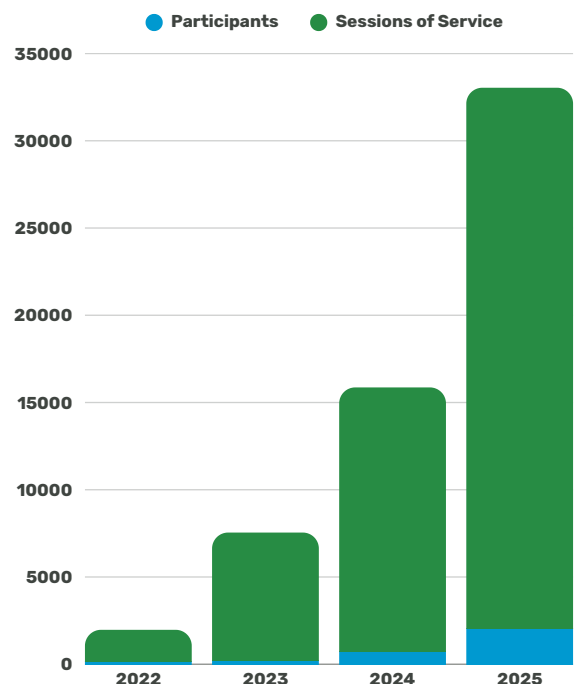
“Participants in Family Scholar House programs face a complex interplay of barriers and strengths impacting degree completion. Participants who completed degrees often exhibited greater needs at program entry- particularly in mental health, food security, and support systems- suggesting resilience in the face of adversity.

Participants showed measurable improvement in housing, income, and well-being over time. Findings highlight the importance of trauma-informed and holistic support services to address structural and personal barriers to educational success, as well as the intentional collection of data markers related to supportive service provisions.

Some findings challenge traditional assumptions. Participants who experienced more food insecurity and transportation barriers at baseline were more likely to complete their degrees. These unexpected patterns may reflect greater motivation among participants facing urgent challenges, or a stronger connection to program



### Participants and Sessions of Service



services. Similarly, lower support system scores among degree completers suggest some participants may have relied more heavily on programmatic support in the absence of informal networks.

Participants demonstrated statistically significant improvements across several domains over the course of program involvement, including mental health, housing, food security, transportation and support systems. These outcomes point to the effectiveness of the FSH model in supporting holistic participant growth and stability which likely contributes to educational persistence and success.

These findings underscore the importance of trauma-informed, wraparound support services tailored to the diverse experiences of single mothers in higher education. Programs like Family Scholar House play a critical role in mitigating systemic barriers and nurturing the strengths of participants. “



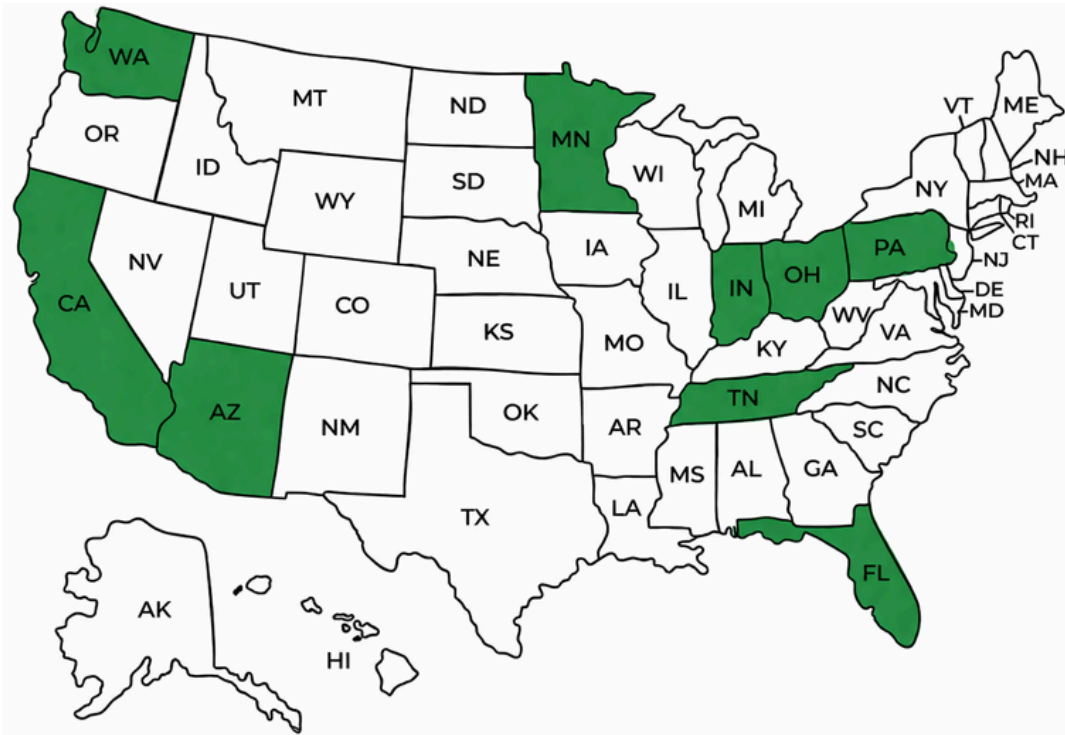
## Conclusion

The Family Scholar House Affiliate model delivers meaningful impact at every level: supporting student parents, strengthening communities, and generating long-term economic returns. By combining stable housing, education pathways, and wraparound services, the model enables families to achieve self-sufficiency while reducing reliance on public assistance and increasing workforce participation.

Most importantly, it creates lasting intergenerational change. Parents gain the stability and skills needed to succeed, while their children benefit from stronger foundations for future success—breaking cycles of poverty and creating new pathways of opportunity.

As a proven, cost-effective approach, the FSH Affiliate model offers a scalable solution for policymakers, funders, and community leaders seeking to drive sustainable impact. Expanding this model nationwide represents a strategic investment in stronger families, a more resilient workforce, and healthier communities.

## Active affiliate states: March 2026



## Affiliate perspectives: Voices from the field

The impact of the Family Scholar House Affiliate Program is best understood through the experiences of those implementing the model. The following testimonials reflect how affiliates have leveraged FSH's framework, resources, and support to strengthen their organizations and improve outcomes for the families they serve.

What we love most about being a Family Scholar House affiliate is the sense of community. We feel supported, encouraged, and surrounded by people who truly want to see us and our families succeed. Kristie and Maria have been our constant rocks of encouragement, always showing up with compassion, guidance, and unwavering belief in our goals. We are truly grateful to be part of such an incredible and impactful affiliation, and we feel honored to grow within a community that lifts us up every step of the way. What has been especially beneficial is the canvas/s database. I am often asked for specific reports on our residents or other data, and I am able to pull exactly what is needed in a timely manner.

*Bridget Pracht, Director, Lincoln Grant Scholar House*

“Being an affiliate of Family Scholar House provided a strong foundation for our program, allowing us to build on proven strategies rather than reinvent the wheel. The most valuable aspect for us is the direct staff support across all areas of our mission. Having access to experienced professionals who understand our challenges and share our goals creates a true sense of community. Whether it’s asking questions, seeking advice, or connecting to resources, this support system is invaluable. For us, being an affiliate means being part of a village, a network of guidance, collaboration, and encouragement that is essential in this work.

*Rainie Moody, Cincinnati Scholar House*

“Family Scholar House has been an invaluable partner to Pittsburgh Scholar House (PSH), providing ongoing support and encouragement during our foundational years. Kristie Adams and Maria Wilson are true cheerleaders. They offer real-time coaching, resources, and celebration – standing alongside us through milestones both big and small.

Maria’s four-day visit to PSH in spring 2024 remains one of my most memorable moments, reinforcing the strength of our partnership. While in Pittsburgh, Maria joined the Pittsburgh Council for Higher Education (PCHE) convening to celebrate our first graduates. She toured our residential pilot program, connected with two of our higher-ed partners, engaged with community partners, and she facilitated an inspiring conversation with scholars titled Strength in Storytelling. Scholars soaked up the insights and strategies Maria shared on how to tell your story in a way that is powerful and impactful.”

*Dr. Sherlyn Harrison, Pittsburgh Scholar House*

“Heartland Scholar House is proud to be an affiliate of Family Scholar House, the nationally recognized originator of the two-generation model for single-parent student families. As a startup program launching in three countries in three years, our affiliation with FSH was instrumental in helping us gain early support and funding. Their dates, outcomes, and proven model provided the credibility and clarity needed to secure investment from stakeholders and founders who were eager to back a solution with demonstrated impact. As an affiliate, FSH has provided us with comprehensive training, ongoing technical assistance, and access to a robust, customized CRM platform built on Salesforce. This system allows us to track participant progress across multiple domains – education, housing, family stability, and more – with precision and consistency.

Beyond technical support, it was FSH’s scholars themselves who inspired our vision and helped us tell the story of what this program could be. Their lived experiences and successes gave us a powerful narrative to share with our community, illustrating the transformative potential of the Scholar House model.

FSH staff have been invaluable partners throughout our journey. With their deep experience, they have seen nearly every challenge a program like ours might face – and they have consistently been available to advise, troubleshoot, and guide us through complex or sensitive situations. Their mentorship has allowed us to maintain program fidelity while adapting to local needs, ensuring that our services remain high-quality, trauma-informed, and outcomes-focused.

In short, our affiliation with Family Scholar House has been a cornerstone of our success, enabling us to launch, grow, and sustain a program that is uniquely equipped to break cycles of generational poverty and build thriving futures for single-parent families.”

*Brian Price, Heartland Scholar House*

## References

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## About Family Scholar House and Family Inc. Brands

Family Brands is a compassionate, multifaceted organization dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty and creating lasting success in communities. Through its various initiatives, Family Brands empowers individuals and families by providing access to education, employment opportunities, and essential resources, promoting long-term stability and generational prosperity.

Family Scholar House (FSH) focuses on helping families and youth overcome poverty through education, enabling them to achieve lasting independence. FSH Works builds on this mission by supporting individuals on their path to sustainable employment and career growth, fostering cycles of success within communities. FSH Affiliates extends the impact of FSH by partnering with organizations nationwide, empowering families and youth, and creating opportunities for lasting change. FSH Resources connects individuals to free local services, helping them access the support they need to build resilience. FSH canvas/s uses technology to provide real-time data, enabling informed, compassionate decision-making to guide individuals and families toward success.

As of 2025, the completion rate for college credit hours attempted by FSH participants was 91 percent, resulting in 949 college degrees earned. FSH Works completed over 235,000 calls with over 122,000 unduplicated households. FSH Affiliates now has programming in 19 different locations across the nation. FSH Resources averages 20,000 users per month getting connected to free resources. FSH canvas/s tracks over 250 fields of data from the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix to education and trauma.

Together, these initiatives create a supportive environment where everyone's journey is understood, respected, and nurtured toward a brighter future. To learn more about Family Scholar House, visit [familyscholarhouse.org](http://familyscholarhouse.org). To learn more about Family and its subsidiaries, visit [familybrands.family](http://familybrands.family).



<h3>Trager Response Center</h3> <p>Family Scholar House is a free resource to support student and family success both inside and outside the classroom. Contact us for immediate support.</p> <p>877-677-9177</p>	<h3>Apprenticeship Programs</h3> <p>Family Scholar House provides support for potential students, current students, and their families as they transition into work and apprenticeships.</p> <p><a href="#">Learn More</a></p>	<h3>Academic &amp; Career Coaching</h3> <p>Participants looking to enroll in the accredited colleges or apprenticeship programs of their choice to pursue the courses of study they prefer, with the goal to obtain a post-secondary certificate or degree.</p> <p><a href="#">Learn More</a></p>	<h3>Advocacy Support</h3> <p>Family Scholar House assists participants in obtaining needed support services and helps them address barriers to education.</p> <p><a href="#">Learn More</a></p>
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