

# You Gotta Believe Adoption Competent Mental Health Program 2024 REPORT



## EMPOWERING FAMILIES: HEALING, GROWING, AND BUILDING CONNECTIONS

*The You Gotta Believe Adoption Competent Mental Health Program envisions a future where every foster and adoptive family can access specialized, relationship-focused mental health services, empowering them to heal, grow and thrive together as a strong, resilient, nurturing family unit.*

# THE DIFFERENCE WE'VE MADE – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its 2022 inception, our specialized program has profoundly changed the lives of foster and adoptive families in New York City and Long Island.

## WHO: 57 Individuals Served

In FY 2024, 20 families participated in mental health services at YGB. Of those families, the ten who were in active treatment as of June 30, 2024 were assessed for this report. Those families had been receiving mental health services for anywhere from three months to 2.5 years.



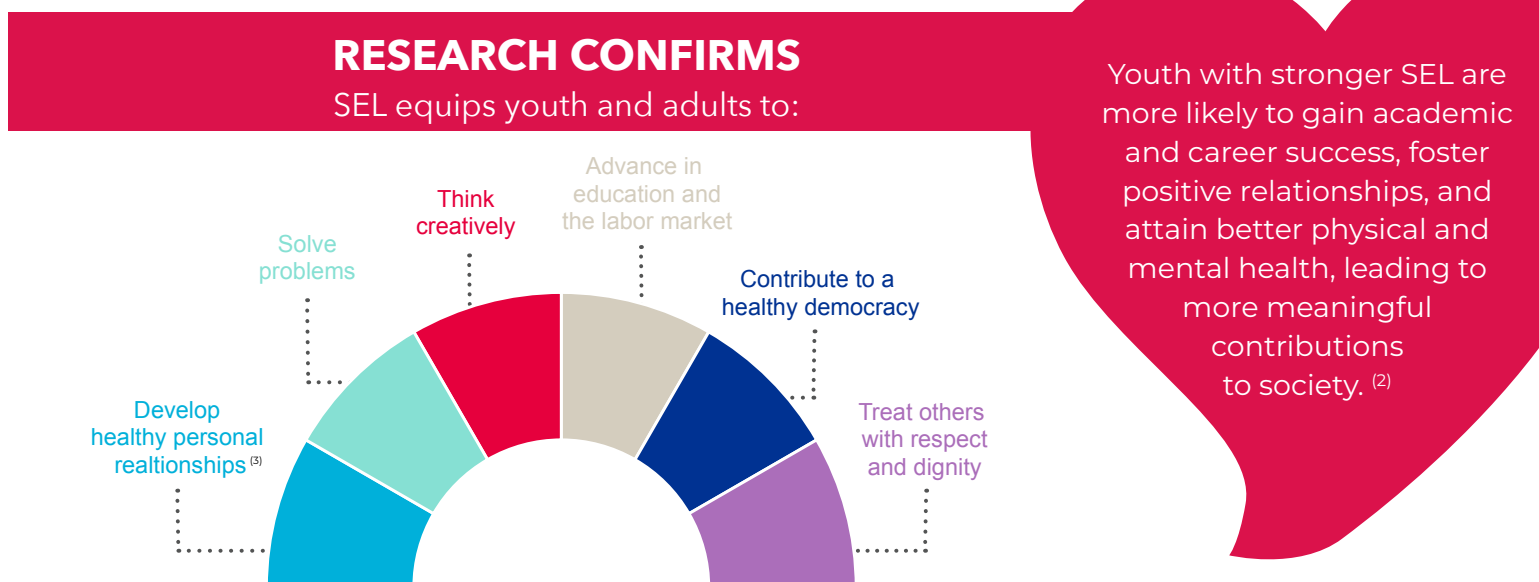
## WHAT: Initial Impact Survey for the Mental Health Department

Working in partnership with SEED Impact, YGB customized the SEED Competency Ladders™ to create a tool that could capture the progress made by families participating in our adoption competent mental health services. The treatment goals of adoption competent therapy are unique, and not accurately reflected in published assessment tools currently available to mental health providers; the creation of this assessment tool and process lays the foundation for collecting data and analyzing the impact of our mental health program for years to come.

## WHY:

YGB used SEED Impact’s SEL framework to develop tools to understand the complex changes experienced by family, youth and parents, and to evaluate progress towards the therapeutic goals and practices set forth by our mental health department.

**Social Emotional Learning** (SEL) programs have been found to “significantly improve youth social-emotional skills, reinforce affect and attitudes, promote academic performance, increase prosocial behaviors, and reduce antisocial behaviors.”<sup>(1)</sup>



<sup>(1)</sup> Shi, J., & Cheung, A. C. (2024). Effective Components of Social Emotional Learning Programs: A Meta-analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 53(4), 755-771.

<sup>(2)</sup> Council of Distinguished Scientists National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development. The Aspen Institute, September 2017.

<sup>(3)</sup> Greenberg, M. T. (2023). Evidence for social and emotional learning in schools. Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/928.269>

# WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Families dealing with adoption and foster care often struggle to find qualified, affordable mental health professionals. We aim to fill this gap by providing specialized care that promotes healing and prevents placement disruptions.

## HOW WE DO IT



## OUR TOOLS: WHAT WE DO

Relationship  
Centered



Specialized  
Therapies



Expert, Passionate  
Treatment Providers



Accessibility: Centralized  
Locations and telehealth



Continuous Learning  
Improvement



Flexible,  
Long-term Support



## SUPPORTED BY: MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT



# HOW WE MEASURE PROGRESS TOWARDS THERAPEUTIC GOALS

Working in partnership with [SEED Impact](#), YGB customized the [SEED Competency Ladders™](#) to assess the mental health progress made by the youth, parents and families.

**The tool developed with SEED Impact allows us to measure youth, parent, and family change across three domains:**

- 1. CONFIDENCE:** Self-awareness, self-management and mindfulness, cultivating resilience, a growth mindset and a strong personal identity through introspection and reflection
- 2. SKILLS:** Goal-setting, decision-making, and responsible behavior to help parents and youth translate self-awareness into positive actions and ethical choices
- 3. CONNECTION:** Social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making in social contexts to foster healthy relationships.



Research confirms:  
**SEL skills, attitudes, and behaviors** are essential for personal, academic and social success, which was reflected in the therapeutic goals established by the youth, parents and families. <sup>(4)</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Yale School of Medicine. (2023). Research Finds Social and Emotional Learning Produces Significant Benefits for Students. <https://medicine.yale.edu/news-article/new-research-published-in-child-development-confirms-social-and-emotional-learning-significantly-improves-student-academic-performance-well-being-and-perceptions-of-school-safety/>

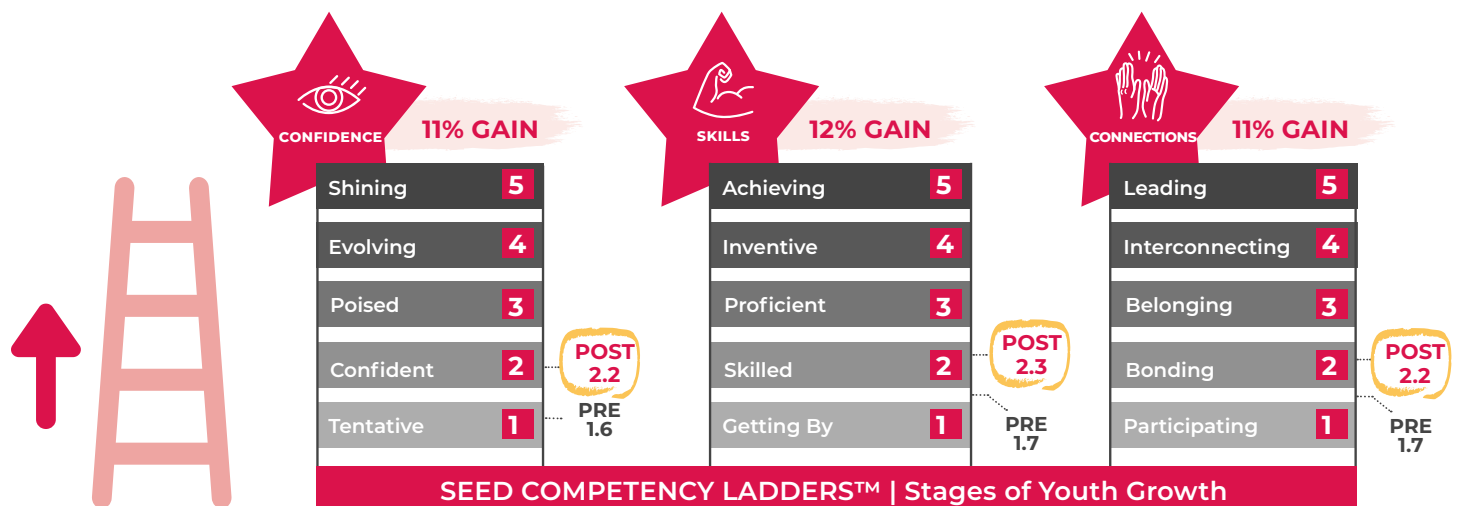
## EMPOWERING YOUTH

For youth in care who often face emotional, behavioral and social challenges due to adverse experiences, participating in adoption competent therapy has a profound impact on their overall well-being and resilience, including:

- **Self-awareness** to recognize and understand their emotions, foster self-confidence and personal growth
- **Self-management** skills to cope with stress, manage impulsive behaviors, and set personal goals, leading to better academic performance and mental health outcomes
- **Social awareness and relationship skills** to build positive connections with peers and caregivers, contributing to a sense of belonging and improved relationships.
- **Responsible decision-making** to make ethical choices, contributing to their social integration and future success

### Growth in Mental Health Competencies: YOUTH<sup>(5)</sup>

YGB mental health therapists conducted mental health assessments for 10 of 14 youth participants. Across all three domains, therapists reported observable progress towards mental health treatment goals. As shown, the greatest increase for youth was in the domain of **SKILLS**.



**Overall, average mental health competencies increased by 11 percent across all three domains.**

The self-reported improvements by the youth surpassed the assessments made by their therapists, demonstrating the significant positive impact mental health services had on their internal experience of themselves.

“

**... Before I was super EMO and now I'm not super EMO. I feel like this changed my mindset a lot and the way that I see things and react to things.”**

– YGB Youth

<sup>(5)</sup> Our treatment philosophy is that the family is the client. Our work has the end goal of improving family relationships whether or not the whole family actively participates in therapy. For example, a parent may meet regularly with a therapist, but their child may not. The therapist works to build the parent's understanding of their child, as well as their parenting skills, thus impacting the parent-child relationship and family dynamics as a whole.



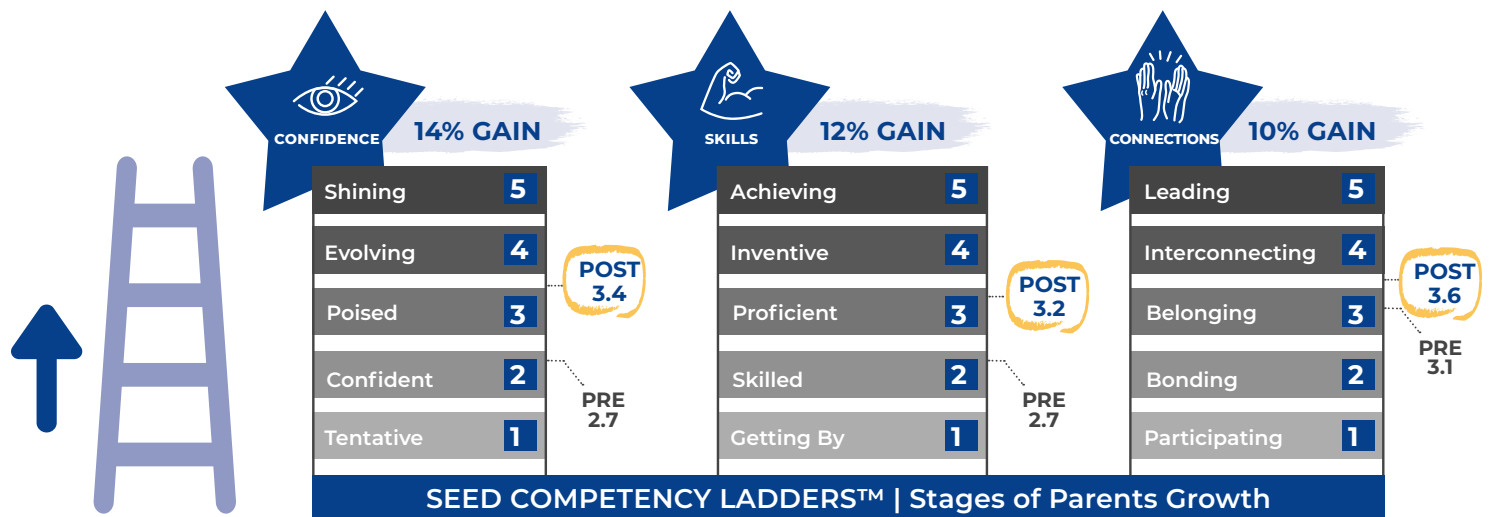
## EMPOWERING PARENTS

As parents actively participated in therapeutic sessions, voiced concerns and responded to therapeutic interventions, we observed increased confidence in their parenting abilities. Generally, as their need for external assistance decreases, they develop greater resilience and self-compassion. This progress ultimately contributes to the parent's ability to self-regulate during interactions with their child and fosters a sense of competence. Additionally, their journey serves as a source of inspiration and guidance for other parents facing similar challenges.

### Growth in Mental Health Competencies: PARENTS

YGB mental health therapists conducted mental health assessments for 18 parents. Across all three domains, the therapists observed an average **increase in therapeutic Competencies of 11 percent**. As shown, the greatest increase for parents was in the domain of **CONFIDENCE**.

The mental health department's interventions had a notable impact on the parents' overall well-being, as evidenced by the parents' self-reported improvements surpassing the assessments made by mental health therapists.



**Overall, average mental health competencies increased by 11 percent across all three domains.**

“

It's been quite a learning curve that took a while to "click." I feel that I am starting to grasp the therapeutic parenting styles and what works for our family. We still have much to learn!!

– YGB Parent

It has helped broaden my thinking to consider perspectives I wouldn't otherwise consider. This has helped me be the parent my child needs me to be. — It really helped make my relationship with my child better.

– YGB Parent

## EMPOWERING FAMILIES

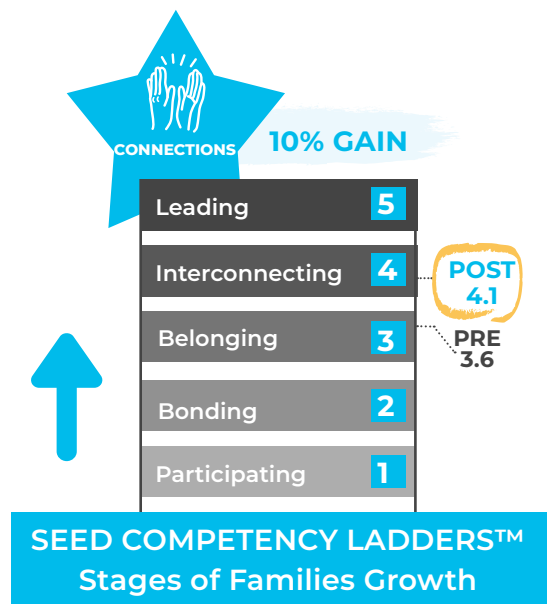
The primary relationship in a child's life is their family. As parents and youth exhibit openness to embracing lifestyle changes and participating in inclusive activities, a positive family dynamic is fostered.

Our therapists hold space for strengthening and supporting each youth as well as their familial relationships. By creating a therapeutic environment centered around family and home, we strive to cultivate a space where healing can occur.

Although parenting a new child may present challenges, the family maintains an optimistic outlook for the future and displays resilience by addressing and resolving conflicts when necessary.

### Growth in Mental Health Competencies: FAMILIES

YGB mental health therapists conducted mental health assessments for 11 families. Our interest was to observe change in one domain only: CONNECTIONS. As shown, families were tracked on a five-point spectrum.



**Overall, average family connection mental health competencies improved by 10 percent.**

Our findings emphasize the importance of cultivating connections and unity within families, particularly during the integration of youth.

Ultimately, our intent is for the family to effectively incorporate the youth's needs into their established norms, creating a cohesive and nurturing environment where all members feel secure and appreciated.

“

**We turned to YGB when we were in crisis as a family. Our therapist helped us communicate, pull together, learn how to connect and communicate, and we're enjoying the fruits of that now. Thank you!!!**

– YGB Parent

**Before, I wasn't good at therapy. I didn't know what to talk about. Now, I've gotten used to the idea of coming here and getting to talk to my therapist and I'm better at talking about what's going on with me.**


– YGB Youth

# WHY THIS MATTERS

## Importance of Assessing Mental Health Programs

Assessment and evaluation of our mental health program play a critical role in ensuring we are meeting our goal of providing the highest quality mental health services to our families, and in making programmatic adjustments to any areas where that goal is not being met. Our approach keeps therapists focused on the essential elements of adoption competent therapy, as well as allowing us to:

- **Identify strengths and areas for improvement** in program design and implementation
- **Demonstrate program impact** through measurable outcomes, such as increased self-regulation skills for both youth and parents, and increased connection between family members
- **Ensure cultural relevance and sensitivity** in addressing the specific needs and experiences of foster and adopted youth
- **Allocate resources** effectively by identifying successful program components that can be replicated or scaled
- **Promote continuous improvement** in mental health by adapting to new research findings and best practices



Your investment in both the delivery and evaluation of our approach allows us to provide youth in care, parents and families with the tools they need to thrive and reach their full potential.

Youth and parent self assessment findings are provided in [addendum](#).

## WHAT NEXT?

Moving forward, all families engaged in therapy with YGB will be assessed every six months. These assessments will be used to both inform treatment planning and reflect outcomes. We look forward to deepening this work and reporting cumulative and more far-reaching outcomes year-by-year.

## RIPPLES OF EMPOWERMENT

**“The program’s emphasis on honesty, creativity, and empathy has led to improved perspectives on parenting and problem-solving. By fostering a non-judgmental environment, we feel supported and gain confidence in our abilities to navigate various challenges, ultimately strengthening our parenting skills.”**

– YGB Parent

**“You don’t understand the training you need until you’re in your situations.”**

– YGB Parent

**“By recognizing our personal experiences’ impact on current interactions, we improved our understanding of our child’s perspective, ultimately enhancing emotional connection and care.”**

– YGB Parent

**“The parent sessions have been really helpful. Understanding “trauma time” and practicing co-regulating are two of the hardest but most profound tools for me to pick up. Our therapist is a gift.”**

– YGB Parent





## SPECIAL THANKS

### Our 2023-24 Funders & Donors Made This Work Possible

You Gotta Believe would like to extend our deepest gratitude to our incredible individual donors and funders whose generosity makes our work –and our meaningful results—possible. In particular, we offer our thanks to Impact 100 NYC, RBC Foundation USA, and van Ameringen Foundation. Without their support, this program would not exist.



The YGB families pictured in this report have given permission to use their photos; they are not necessarily families engaged in YGB counseling services.