



# Strategic Framework



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Tennyson Center for Children **empowers children** who have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma to bravely and safely **change their life's story.**

## INTRODUCTION

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Imagine you are a child so scared that you refuse to get out of bed in the morning. The covers wrapped around you help you feel safe, even hidden. But sometimes that's not enough. Your bed hasn't always been the safest place, so you often crawl under it and try to disappear into the floor.

Later that day, having gathered the courage to get out of your bedroom and go to school, you're just walking down the hall when the sound of a locker closing transports your mind to a memory so painful it causes you to wet your pants. You're beyond embarrassed, and as classmates laugh and point all you want to be is somebody other than who you are.

Or Imagine you are the parent of a child who has started to torment kids at school and hide in the bathroom between classes. You are not sure how to help or even where to go for help, and from your perspective your child has had an uneventful and happy upbringing.

Sadly, far too many of Colorado's youth are forced to endure such experiences. They are experiences borne of immense trauma, trauma composed of many layers, that can arise from the most unexpected places, and that severely impact a child's chances of succeeding and thriving.

While the roots of childhood trauma are both complex and varied, the impact is clear: those living with it struggle to succeed in school, to maintain relationships, and to give and receive love while in even the most supportive households and families.

## INTRODUCTION CONT'D

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The impact of childhood trauma can linger and transfer into adulthood if ignored, as is often the case. The CDC-Kaiser Permanente [Adverse Childhood Experiences Study](#), one of the largest studies investigating childhood abuse and neglect, found strong correlations between childhood exposure to emotional, physical and sexual abuse (as well as household dysfunction), and significant negative consequences for adults, including exceptionally high rates of alcoholism, substance abuse, depression, suicide attempts and severe obesity.

Trauma's impact doesn't end there. It's felt well beyond the child and family; emergency health care providers, first responders and the judicial system often become engaged in the crisis as well.

And while the costs of trauma to the children and families affected is incalculable, we are starting to understand the significant short- and long-term costs to society when those forced to endure it do not get the help they need. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2012) suggests that the [lifetime financial cost](#) to society of child abuse and

neglect is a staggering \$124 billion, and the San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center recently found that “each incidence of child abuse costs the public \$400,533 over the course of a victim’s lifetime.”

Many kids whose behavior masks extreme trauma are marginalized and written off as “broken” and abandoned. They are pushed out of classrooms, out of families, and often out of society. In contrast, Tennyson embraces kids and families whose experiences suggest trauma. When others turn away, we turn towards. We celebrate their capacity for resilience and their immense potential. We pride ourselves on never abandoning children who are “too hard” for others.

For over 100 years, Tennyson has played a crucial role in helping children not only work through their trauma, but reintegrate back into society and flourish. We have a rich history of helping families navigate the challenges of raising children living with trauma, and we know from experience that with our support traumatized kids can stand again and grow into community role models.

Colorado is flush with successful adults who at one stage in their life passed through Tennyson. They are great parents, dynamic employees, and wonderful members of our community who overcame adversity and now shine.

**“Each incidence of child abuse costs the public \$400,533 over the course of a victim’s lifetime.”**

We are now poised to build on our profound institutional history to play an even more significant role in addressing childhood trauma throughout the state, ensuring that no child living with trauma in Colorado will ever again feel alone, abandoned, lost or broken. We believe that all children experiencing trauma from abuse and neglect must receive the support they deserve, and we are building Tennyson to ensure that this ambition becomes a reality. 🌟

# Tennyson's Overarching Strategic Intent: *Every Kid Forever.*

## STRATEGIC INTENT CONT'D

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Children living with trauma, and the families supporting them, often struggle to navigate the complex web of services and finances needed to heal and reintegrate back into school and broader society. Unfortunately, many traumatized children bounce from service provider to service provider, often get lost in “transitions” between those service providers, and ultimately must wait for long periods of time to get the services they so desperately need. At the moment they need help the most, these systemic dysfunctions add additional layers of stress to already traumatized children and their families.

Frankly and perhaps most sadly, those who have experienced abuse and neglect (and those trying to help them) get so confused and frustrated when trying to access services that they end up deciding to manage their trauma alone with minimal resources. Service providers, policymakers and child advocates consistently state that the “systems” designed to help children recover from trauma are broken for the reasons outlined above.

**Tennyson will rewrite this story by launching *Every Kid Forever* in 2018. In the ensuing 5 years, we will model a new way of working collaboratively to ensure that none of Colorado’s traumatized youth are abandoned, told to wait, or forced to dramatically relapse while in transition between service providers. This child-centered approach is radically different than the landscape children and their families now encounter, and could lead to more collaborative sector-wide reconsiderations of roles and responsibilities across the state and country for the good of children.**

**“We believe that Colorado’s youth will have a far greater chance to recover and heal if Tennyson builds upon existing relationships and creates new pathways for collaboration...”**

Long gone are the days when agencies could make the case that they, and they alone, could solve complex social problems—such as those endured by children who have experiencing extreme trauma. Such isolated ways of working inevitably puts agency before child, and leads to unhealthy competition that does little for children or their caretakers.

Tennyson knows that collaborative work is essential, and this is why we are forging new, unconventional and creative alliances with government, service providers and community partners whose skills and capabilities—in combination with our own expertise and commitment—are essential for child and family healing. We will continue to excel in the ways we work with children and families by seeking excellence in the direct services we provide, while more effectively working with others in ways that enhance the chances for children and families to fully heal. We will fill gaps in support that we believe can best be filled by Tennyson, and we will ensure the smoothest and most effective transitions to other services should a child or family need support in areas where those collaborating with us excel.

## STRATEGIC INTENT CONT'D

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Our relentless focus on supporting children experiencing trauma, regardless of which service providers intervene, will rebuild families, neighborhoods, broader communities and Colorado in profoundly new ways.

We believe that Colorado's youth will have a far greater chance to recover and heal if Tennyson builds upon existing relationships and creates new pathways for collaboration with historic "competitors" while simultaneously forging dynamic new partnerships with our allies in government, as well as private and non-profit trauma-informed service providers. This will demand a lot of work, and we are committed to embracing it with the same enthusiasm with which we embrace children experiencing trauma.

This collaborative work will develop as we strengthen our broad portfolio of customized services for each child and family's particular needs. Tennyson is a tremendous resource for therapy and support, and we will continue to improve and adapt to ensure this strength of ours remains world-class for children and families in Colorado.

We will continue our push to keep families together or forge the new family ties that are critical for creating the environments of safety and love every child needs in order to heal and thrive. In addition, we will sustain our residential and emergency services for those children who have no alternative but to be removed from abusive or neglectful households, and we will continue to expand our work directly in households and schools.

**Our programming from 2018-2022 will include the following strategic priorities that bring the ambitions of our bold intent to life. 🌟**



A hand holding a small globe of the Earth against a blue background. The globe is centered in the lower half of the frame, with the hand's fingers visible around it. The background is a solid blue color with a faint, out-of-focus image of a landscape or cityscape.

Strategic Priority One:  
**County-Wide Models**



## 1. COUNTY-WIDE MODELS



**IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS,** to test Every Kid Forever, Tennyson will align, support and partner with diverse counties and strategic allies across Colorado.

We will seek partnerships with an array of counties that fairly represent the challenges faced by similar counties across the state. We will model new ways to enhance and strengthen local capacity so that counties in fact create a new local paradigm where all children and families experiencing acute trauma get the support they need to heal, reintegrate and flourish. We will work with them to not only respond to the trauma evident in their counties but also to build out preventative measures in an effort to reduce trauma locally.

Bringing our intent to life means moving beyond our core work in metro Denver to support counties across the state. We understand that a county on Colorado's eastern plains faces different challenges supporting children experiencing trauma than would be faced, for instance, in Colorado's mountain communities or across the Front Range.

Importantly, Tennyson is not imposing "its model" on counties. Instead, we recognize that counties have capacities and ambitions that align with ours at Tennyson. We will offer our support to augment and strengthen local capacity so that counties can become models of excellence where no child experiencing trauma is abandoned. Together, we hope to help break down systematic barriers so that all children experiencing trauma get the help they need to thrive.

Tennyson is not simply scaling so that we can help more children. Instead, we are reprogramming the way that Tennyson delivers services and partners with county governments and other exceptional service providers to help every child and family in need in the counties where we work.

## 1. COUNTY-WIDE MODELS CONT'D

### THIS APPROACH WILL:


- Offer a collaborative roadmap that demonstrates transformative and sustained impact and is replicable in other counties statewide.
- Create the programmatic and administrative foundations for a statewide response that supports all children experiencing trauma.

### TENNYSON WILL:

- Identify at least 5 counties to test Every Kid Forever across Colorado (beyond metro Denver) that fairly reflects the statewide challenges. These collaborative partnerships will be built in dialogue and partnership with county and state officials, and will be secured and initiated by 2019;
- Customize our support to enhance existing capacity so that local partners succeed;
- Visualize and publicize the “service provision ecosystems” in all target counties, highlighting how Tennyson will engage to support existing services while enhancing the ability of counties to respond to trauma and to begin proactively pushing for better prevention methods that could lead to reductions in abuse and neglect over time;
- Build out a team of financial experts to help children and families effectively access the financial resources (government, insurance, and other social services) needed to get the treatment and support they need to heal and sustain their healing over time. We will tangibly reduce the financial stress felt by families, government and society as a whole as an outcome of children and families healing;
- Track the impact of our collective county-wide work and publish annual reports; and
- Develop policy papers and other documentation that empowers policymakers in Colorado and nationwide to program and finance to enhance impact and ensure that every child experiencing trauma receives the support they need. 🌟

## *By 2022, Tennyson and partners will have:*

- Modelled county-wide programs in **at least 5 Colorado counties** beyond metro Denver;
- Demonstrated how the support we are providing to counties will be **sustained locally over time**—even if Tennyson’s direct support is no longer needed as county capacity expands and succeeds;
- Demonstrated that **local solutions are possible**, and that alternatives to relocating children to Denver for services are in place;
- Shown over this strategic planning period that the **collaborative work** we implemented is spreading, scaling and replicating beyond the initial 5 counties;
- Targeted and supported all children and their families in the identified counties that require trauma-informed care so that **no child is abandoned**;
- Demonstrated dramatic improvements for children **and families** affected by the program; and
- Demonstrated ways in which this approach enhances impact and **reduces costs** to families, communities, counties and society as a whole.

A child with long, wavy hair is seen from behind, holding a large, unfolded map. The child is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a warm, orange-toned landscape, possibly a field or a beach. The overall image has a soft, artistic feel with a monochromatic orange color palette.

Strategic Priority Two:  
**#NoKidWaits**

## 2. #NOKIDWAITS

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### **WAITING LISTS ARE A PLAGUE THAT WE COMMIT TO ERADICATE.**

When children and families are in crisis they are often told they have to wait for space to open up (sometimes for as long as 8 weeks) because the service providers themselves are overburdened. This only serves to further deteriorate the fragile wellbeing of Colorado's traumatized youth.

Waiting is not consistent with the principles of Every Kid Forever.

Tennyson will work with counties to enhance their ability to build out customized stabilization and support plans for children and families; or Tennyson will provide direct services to those families. We will ensure that #NoKidWaits regardless of whether children and families use Tennyson immediately, or ever.

As such, we will partner with local governments, schools and other agencies so that #NoKidWaits. We will ensure that immediate safety and support plans are available to all children and families in target counties within 24-hours of notification, and we will show how this immediate response actually enhances healing journeys. 🌟

# #NoKidWaits

### **IN THE SHORT-TERM, TENNYSON WILL:**

- **Build out a Community-Based Support Bridge Team by the end of 2018 that models how to support families with customized plans upon notification so that treatment does not only start once the child is cleared from a wait list;**
- **Test how to embed the Bridge Team methodology and capacity locally across target counties by the end of 2019; and**
- **Publish #NoKidWaits lessons and impact annually so that others can learn, adopt and replicate.**

## *By 2022, Tennyson will:*

- No child or family waits for help for **more than 24 hours** upon notification in the counties where we work, and that this approach has spread to other counties;
- All families have an **immediate safety and support plan** in place so that they can start to settle, feel heard and become safer from the moment they contact us;
- All children are effectively supported as they move from the **bridge program to the longer-term** services they require to heal, whether that is through Tennyson or elsewhere; and
- This investment enhances **child and family healing journeys** in ways that reduce pressure on the children and families, and saves costs to families and society in the future.

A young man with dark hair, wearing a patterned sweater, dark pants, and a dark beanie, is sitting on a concrete ledge. He is looking down and to his left with a thoughtful expression. The background shows a river with white water rapids and some trees. The entire image has a purple color overlay.

Strategic Priority Three:  
**New Pathways for Children Over 13**

### 3. NEW PATHWAYS FOR CHILDREN OVER 13

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#### **EVERY KID FOREVER IS BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT NO CHILD EXPERIENCING TRAUMA FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT SHOULD BE ABANDONED.**

The goal is to reintegrate children into loving families who are empowered to continue a child's healing journey.

Sadly, some children need new families to heal over time. Foster care and adoption are important solutions for many children, and Tennyson will continue to ally with service providers and government to link kids in need with loving families so that they can be cared for forever.

That said, we know that finding loving parents through foster care and adoption becomes harder for children entering adolescence. The decrease in adoption rates for children who turn 13 is alarming, and this means that far too many children reach a stage in their healing where their family options are constrained. According to Denver DHS, a kid's potential to be adopted declines dramatically as they get older. A recent report shows that only 33% of 6-year-olds get adopted, but that this percentage drops to as low as 13% when they reach 10 years-old.

**Children “age-out” of the “system” alone, feeling unwanted and abandoned yet again.**

Tennyson will work with governments and service providers to create new options for children whose options for adoption and foster care dwindle as they age. We will explore new pathways for kids with an eye on helping children “age through” instead of “age out” of the system. We will work with others to ensure that kids who pass through Tennyson are prepared for independence should they no longer have options to reintegrate with families.

Tennyson will pilot, in collaboration with our partners, new ways to enhance teens' life skills so that children are prepared to live independently, and we will relentlessly focus on helping children get the education they need to advance academically. We will build out relationships with and align with others so that job/apprenticeship opportunities emerge for children, giving them both educational and job options that will help them succeed as adults.

Tennyson will create a team of navigators assigned to kids to ease the burden and smooth potential relapses that occur as they transition from service provider to service provider—from infancy to early adulthood. We will explore ways in which we can stay with children and families as their healing journey unfolds so that they never feel abandoned through transitions, and we will remain by their side as needed to ensure they emerge as successful adults whether reintegrated back into families or not. 🌟



## *By 2022, Tennyson will:*

- Build a new collaborative model that empowers all to **rethink “aging out”** and instead imagines how children can “age through” the system more effectively;
- **Look for partnerships**, and consider filling needed gaps if necessary, that will enhance life skills, education and job opportunities for children we work with whose options for adoption and foster care are limited;
- Build out a cohort of **navigators who can track and support** children as they “age through” in ways that maintain their healing and reintegration journeys;
- **Reinvest in our school and in schools we partner with** so that children get the best education possible while healing, including the relaunching of our school in Denver by the end of 2019 as a model of educational and therapeutic excellence nationwide; and
- Demonstrate that **children are advancing academically**, in life skills and in job possibilities, so that they can flourish as adults.



Strategic Priority Four:  
**Monitoring Over Time for Impact**

## 4. MONITORING OVER TIME FOR IMPACT

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Tennyson will relaunch its monitoring program to more closely track impact on children and families over time, verifying continued healing and successful reintegration back into families, schools and society while also confirming that children become functioning adults in society. We will enhance “customer feedback” (regular feedback loops from children, families, schools and other service providers) on the impact of our work so that we can constantly build around the parts of our work that seem to help children and families while fearlessly rethinking parts of our portfolio that do not achieve expected results.

Importantly, we will make all of our data and results available to the public at large as such transparency is both essential and expected. We will make all of our monitoring tools and programmatic approaches available and accessible to all and reject the notion that the tools we use are somehow proprietary or should be concealed to give Tennyson some sort of advantage over others.

Trademarking and keeping training, treatment and monitoring protocols “confidential” puts agency ahead of children. We will open source everything we do, maintaining HIPAA compliance but sharing in a way that enables others to adopt and enhance the tools, lessons and experiences we have for the good of children experiencing trauma everywhere.

Moreover, we will build up our ability to assess the true costs to children, families and society of healing and reintegration, as society broadly knows it's expensive to not respond to children experiencing trauma but is not totally clear what mix of investments is needed to actually help children with diverse needs truly heal and reintegrate. 🌟

### IN THE SHORT-TERM, TENNYSON WILL:

- **Implement our revised monitoring program by the start of this strategic plan so that data becomes available as this plan launches;**
- **Make our monitoring framework available to all by the middle of 2018;**
- **Partner with a university in 2017 to not only build the monitoring system but to also independently verify results; and**
- **Publish all changes to our monitoring process annually so all can understand what we are tracking, why we are tracking identified indicators, and can clarify all assumptions being made in our monitoring framework.**

## *By 2022, Tennyson will:*

- **Publish bi-annual impact reports** that show what is working and what needs to improve to enhance healing and reintegration across the counties where we operate;
- **Clarify actual costs of diverse healing** journeys to enhance government and society's understanding of the best ways to invest to help children heal and reintegrate;
- Demonstrate tangible **quantitative and qualitative evidence of meaningful and sustained progress** towards healing and reintegration back into supportive families, schools and the broader community for kids throughout the counties we serve by following a representative sample of previous members of our community through age 30;
- **Track compliance** with rigor; and
- Demonstrate compelling quantitative and qualitative **evidence that youth become functioning adults** when they have 1.) The finances needed to live a healthy and productive life; 2.) A secure place to live; 3.) The support surrounding them to navigate future challenges they may face that could have derailed them as children; and 4.) Dramatically reduced and in most cases eliminated their reliance on emergency support services.



Strategic Priority Five:  
**Modelling Organizational Excellence**

## 5. MODELLING ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Tennyson will be seen as a model agency in the nonprofit space, whose investment decisions are clear and understood internally and externally. We will exceed expectations on how nonprofits are run and managed, and provide insights into how we are run and managed that enable others to learn and emulate as they wish.

Tennyson will be a place where the best and brightest practitioners want to learn, work and be retained, and we will ensure that staff who worked at Tennyson are highly valued in the marketplace if they move on from Tennyson.

**We will blend philanthropic capital and state funding in ways that truly transform lives, and continue to invest in and expand our philanthropic community of individuals, churches, companies and**

**foundations who— together with Colorado state and county governments— believe that a radical change in the way the sector operates is not only possible, but essential to enhance the opportunities for children experiencing trauma**

We will therefore re-imagine relationships with key donors throughout Colorado and the country whose philanthropic investments, entrepreneurial spirit, staff talent and voice can reshape the way kids are supported to heal in the transformative ways outlined above.

We will have a smart, nimble and strategic governance structure that enables Tennyson to reach its ambitious objectives, including the

launch of a “youth board” that brings kids across the state into the Tennyson community so that they can guide our work moving forward both as mentors and influencers of the future.

Finally, we will also re-imagine how Tennyson operates to reach kids and families in distant parts of Colorado where services may be particularly fragmented and scarce. We imagine leveraging the Denver campus and any other potential central locations to optimize new and/or existing programming while also becoming far more mobile, tech-enabled and “virtual” over time. This will enable us to build meaningful, lasting and impactful relations with communities in the mountains dominating western Colorado and along the eastern plains of our great state. We will build an organization that is more decentralized but maintains our culture and supports staff operating in more isolated parts of Colorado so that they, and the children and families they serve, do not feel isolated. 🌟

## *By 2022, Tennyson will:*

- Restructure its Board to align with this strategic plan by the middle of 2018;
- Established a state-of-the-art HR structure by 2019 with the presence, flexibility, and tools to attract, retain and promote the highest-qualified and mission-driven employees across the state;
- Have a funding stream in place to expand to at least 5 counties by the end of 2019 and a plan in place to sustain these investments beyond 2022;
- Develop an IT infrastructure by the end of 2018 that supports the strategic initiatives outlined above and have plans for how to expand fully statewide over the following five years;
- Create an institution that supports the replication of our programmatic model of assessment, response and collaboration so that we can move forward with statewide implementation over time;
- Be the leading child services employer in Colorado as evidence by industry-leading turnover rates and recruitment success; and
- Expand partnerships across Colorado that support increased access to financial resources dedicated to supporting children and families in Colorado, increased services accessibility across Colorado, and increased efficacy in advocacy for children and families in Colorado.

## CONCLUSION

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Tennyson will use the experience of the next 5 years (2018—2022) to create the foundations for state-wide expansion in 2023-2027, so that no Colorado child or family in crisis is left to heal alone. We will openly share data, lessons, programs and tools so that others can adopt and modify our work, using lessons and inspiration from our experiences to help kids and families in Colorado and beyond. And we will relentlessly push to continuously improve and strategically collaborate in ways that truly bring lasting improvements to the lives of the kids and families we see every day.

**The children of our great state  
deserve nothing less.**



# For questions, please contact:

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