Optimist Youth Homes & Family Services has come a long way since our humble beginnings on the Strickland's chicken ranch 113 years ago. Optimist's programs have grown tremendously while staying true to our original purpose of providing high-risk children with not just a home, but hope. Since our inception, Optimist has continued its mission to provide innovative and individualized treatment, education, and support services to children, young adults and families to better their lives.

Now entering its second century, Optimist has become one of the largest residential treatment programs serving high-risk youth in California. A multi-service organization, it provides a broad array of services and programs supporting the well-being of youth and families from throughout Southern California. A non-profit 501(c)3 corporation, we provide the following programs for at-risk children: Residential and Behavioral Care, Independent Living, Community Based Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs, a Charter School, Youth Vocational Center & Cultural Arts, Community & Residential Mental Health Services, Mentoring, Family Finding, Foster Care & Adoption Services, Wraparound Services and Aftercare Services. Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services continues to stay at the forefront of youth and family service agencies. Our biggest accomplishment is the difference we make in the lives of the high-risk youth we serve. We can proudly say that 60% of youth emancipating from Optimist make a successful transition to life in the community during the first year following their 18th birthday. Approximately 20% of our youth go on to attend classes at a college or vocational training school upon their graduation from high school. Optimist is a beacon of hope and opportunity, providing high-risk youth with services, resources and tools to regain and rebuild their lives. We are proud to share our low administrative costs that are consistently 11% or less.
Our Programs & Services

**Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTP’s):** The main campus houses up to 85 boys between the ages of 12 and 21 referred by county probation departments throughout California. Residents and their families are actively involved in individual, group and family therapies to address the issues that brought them to placement. Additionally, ancillary therapies are available including, but not limited to, Art, Movement, Music and Pet Therapy. Therapists, youth care counselors and educators are assigned to each client and their families to craft individualized treatment plans. Our Independent Living Program provides on-campus apartment living for 12 boys while they learn self-sufficiency, life and job skills to further prepare for emancipation. Our Pacific Lodge Campus houses up to 51 boys between the ages of 12 and 21 and offers similar services and programs as our main campus.

**Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS):** We offer TBS to children, adolescents and their families to ensure that the client can remain in the least restrictive environment possible and can transition between treatment levels when necessary.

**Recreation and Leisure Activities:** The Recreation Department provides a variety of on and off-grounds activities for the residents in an effort to help teach them the meaning of healthy, pro-social leisure time activity.

**Four Community Based Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs:** Community-based STRTP’s throughout Los Angeles County (two of which are for girls) offer residents an alternative approach to the main campus. Some residents are graduates of our main campus who no longer need its more formal structure thereby enabling a quick transition into mainstream community living.

**Foster Care & Adoption Services:** Our Foster Family & Adoption Agency (FFA) was established to find loving, safe, temporary and permanent homes for infants, children and teens. Professional social workers and staff recruit, train and certify foster and adoptive parents and provide regular follow-up care.

**Mentoring:** A caring, trusting relationship between a youth and an adult mentor can provide enlightenment, incentive and encouragement in all areas of a youth’s life, including educational attainments, professional aspirations and an appropriate model of healthy adult living. Mentors can provide tutoring and educational assistance, guiding and supporting higher educational, vocational and career goals while becoming a supportive, caring adult figure.

**Project Fatherhood:** Project Fatherhood is designed to help fathers become more involved in their children’s lives. Residents who are fathers meet in this support group to develop strong paternal skills, and the fathers, or male role-models, of our residents are also encouraged to attend a support group to improve their relationships with their sons. Additionally, there is a “Significant Others” group for relatives (aunts, grandparents, older siblings) to meet in a supportive setting and foster improved relationships with the residents.

**Optimist Charter School:** Optimist Charter School opened in the fall of 2013 and is authorized by the Los Angeles County Office of Education. It features a one to ten teacher/student ratio and is WASC accredited. Students are offered accredited academic classes as well as electives. A workability program is also offered whereby students can work part-time in our cafeteria, maintenance or laundry departments or in our auto shop. Special Education needs are respected and Optimist Charter School is a member of the LAC-SELPA.

**Family Finding:** Children in the foster care system often feel completely alone without parents or extended family for support or a sense of belonging. Our Family Finding Program attempts to locate, connect and establish relationships between foster children and family members who have been lost and may be able to provide new direction and stability to a child.

**Mental Health Services:** In partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, we offer individual and family counseling sessions for our residential and foster family placed children and their families, as well as community based services for children and families in need. The goal is to improve self-esteem while assisting with adjustment issues and family relations. Program graduates and their families who reside in Los Angeles County receive follow-up via Aftercare services.

**Community Mental Health Programs:** Optimist’s Community Mental Health Programs are in place to stabilize families and avoid institutional placement of their children. The clinics are located in Los Angeles, Woodland Hills and Palmdale and we also offer treatment services to those incarcerated in L.A. County Juvenile Halls. Additionally, we provide comprehensive mental health services in several school settings.

**Wraparound Program:** Wraparound is a community based program designed to assist with keeping the family together and to avoid out-of-home placements. The program utilizes a team approach to provide services in the home and community and attempts to do “whatever it takes” to support the child remaining in the home and with the family. A therapist, parent-partner, case manager, and wrap facilitator make up the agency’s treatment team.
Our Mission
Our mission is to provide innovative and individualized treatment, education, and support services to children, young adults and families to better their lives.

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