

MORE together



ANNUAL REPORT 2018

NEXUS



**DR. MICHELLE K. MURRAY**

President & CEO



**NATALIE MCGRADY**

Nexus Board Chair

**ON A MISSION TOGETHER**

Nexus is an ever-evolving organization, adapting to meet the changing needs in children and families’ mental health. We have a strong history of positive impact, stemming from our roots of caring for individuals who couldn’t find the right help elsewhere. We exist to heal the past, break the cycle of harm, and change the future of children and families who struggle with trauma and mental health challenges.

More and more children are experiencing trauma that takes a toll on their physical and mental health, creating a greater need for high-level providers who are well-versed in the effects of trauma. Unfortunately, we are seeing providers across the nation close their doors because they simply can’t handle the severe mental and behavioral issues that many youth are experiencing. **This is why your support is critical.**

Our mission to change the course of a child’s life by stabilizing families and strengthening mental health addresses these issues that often create serious health and social consequences into adulthood.

With your help, Nexus will continue to grow services to meet these ever-changing and more severe needs of youth and families.

Thanks to your support in 2018, we made impactful changes to our services to expand and provide additional resources to children and families in need of mental health care. Together, we can make a difference for children, families, and communities.

Dr. Michelle K. Murray  
Nexus President & CEO

Natalie McGrady  
Nexus Board Chair

**TOGETHER**  
we built hope

**NEXUS RECEIVES  
100% INVOLVEMENT  
IN BOARD GIVING!**

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FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Richie is a teenager who has overcome many struggles in his life. He was born with a heart disorder, undergoing three surgeries before the age of two. School also created hardships. Richie’s physical limitations and learning disability brought on bullying from his classmates. At one point, the family even lost their home, all their belongings, and family pets in a house fire.

Richie remained friendly and outgoing through all of this pain. He found ways to be involved in school athletics, like becoming the football team’s manager, even though his physical health prevented him from playing.

As Richie continued to age, his past experiences started to overwhelm his thoughts. This resulted in the development of several maladaptive coping skills and an overall hopeless outlook on life. Richie began to isolate, withdraw, and wished that he were dead. He stopped talking to his mom and would refuse to leave the house.

His family knew something had to be done. Gerard Community Mental Health Services (GCMHS) was recommended to Richie’s family and he started seeing GCMHS Outpatient Therapist Matthew Talmadge on a weekly basis.

The two really “clicked,” said Richie’s mom. He began to trust Matthew and shared the thoughts and feelings he was struggling with. Through therapy, Richie learned new coping skills to use when feeling overwhelmed and hopeless.

Richie’s mom acknowledged, “Matthew has been instrumental in Richie being able to open up and talk about his feelings again. He has given us our Richie back.” She cannot believe the changes Richie has made this past year. “He laughs again. He does things with the family without being forced to. He is fun. He is Richie again.”

Richie has progressed to the point where he no longer needs weekly visits with Matthew, but asks for an appointment when he finds himself struggling. His mom calls this his occasional “tune-up.”



TOGETHER we did more

With the help of our staff, donors, and community partners, we took the leap to expand our current mental health services, build new vocational programs, and collaborate with other agencies to provide more care options for the families who need it most.

WE BROUGHT MORE SERVICES CLOSER TO HOME!

In 2018, we added resources to our community mental health programs in the Twin Cities, Austin, MN, and Fargo, ND, allowing more clients to receive quality services locally.

In the Twin Cities, Nexus partnered with Guadalupe Alternative Programs (GAP), a community-based education and social service agency, to expand our reach in the community. GAP enabled us to provide additional mental health resources in schools and offer in-home and in-office therapeutic services for children and families who have completed a Nexus program,

Our existing community-based mental health services in Austin, MN, and Fargo, ND, also saw great growth in the number of clients seeking care.

With the increasing interest in Gerard’s Community Mental Health Services (MN), and with the help of your donations, Gerard renovated their outpatient building. The renovation added a larger and more comfortable waiting room and additional therapy rooms. The growing clientele also prompted hiring two additional full-time therapists and two interns.

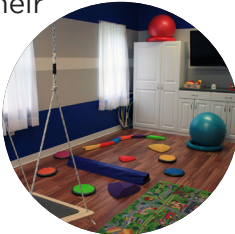
PATH’s Trauma and Stress Clinic (ND), a mental health clinic for the Fargo community, reached client capacity for its three therapists in 2018. The Clinic also expanded its offerings with the addition of Moose, Nexus’ first therapy dog.



WE EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR CLIENTS WHO SIMPLY NEED MORE!

An important aspect of our services is providing youth with tools that will help lead them to success after treatment.

For some, knowing how to calm their mind or self-soothe isn’t a natural function. At Onarga Academy, they used funds raised at their annual events to add sensory rooms to their campus. Sensory rooms are immersive, therapeutic spaces that help a youth regulate emotions, learn positive behaviors, and cope with mental health symptoms.



In Baltimore, MD, immense community support helped Woodbourne Center complete construction on and open a new vocational training center in 2018. The 5,000-square-foot facility offers technical skills training for both Woodbourne clients and Baltimore students. The program provides carpentry instruction, basic automotive skills, and STEM training and certification.



WE STABILIZED YOUTH & FAMILIES!

PATH North Dakota and Kindred Family Focus (MN) made great strides in supporting youth as they enter and exit foster care.

Kindred Family Focus piloted the use of “comfort calls,” a new practice through a partnership with the Quality Parenting Initiative. Comfort calls lessen the stress and confusion that a child experiences when they enter a foster home by initiating dialogue between the foster family and the child’s biological family to address concerns and create a stronger support system.

PATH revamped their Specialized Family Care program, helping youth as they transition from the State’s care into a foster family setting, and from foster care back into the community. Their efforts helped youth get into a family setting faster, starting the path to success sooner, and ultimately prevented homelessness and other struggles by connecting the youth to resources in their community.

PATH’s new program model won the Program of the Year award by the North Dakota Family Based Services Conference.



NEXUS SERVICES

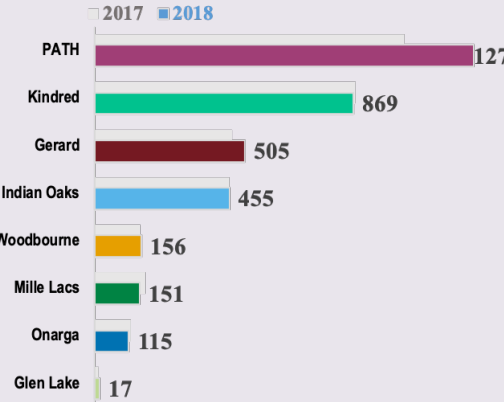
**Community Mental Health Services**  
Serving individuals, families, and groups, through mental health clinics and therapeutic care in the home, office, or a community setting.

**Foster Care & Adoption**  
Offering care for kids, ages birth to 21, who are in need of a safe and supportive home and finding permanency for long-term family stability.

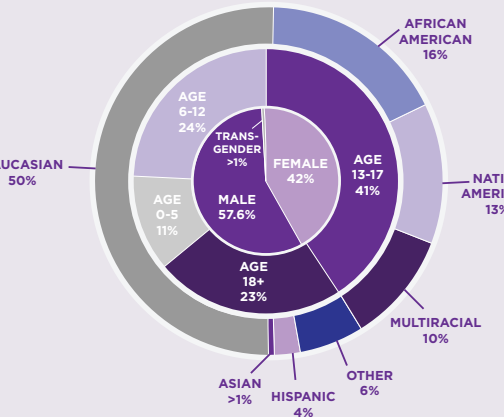
**Residential Treatment**  
Providing intensive treatment for youth, from ages 6-21 (gender and age services vary by location), with severe mental, emotional, and behavioral health needs.

**Accredited Education Programs**  
Instilling lifelong skills for youth in residential treatment programs through on-campus schools and vocational training opportunities.

NEXUS IMPACTED 3,543 CLIENTS



CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS



TOGETHER we made an impact

Nexus served over 3,500 youth and families in 2018 through community-based mental health services, foster care and adoption resources, and residential treatment programs.

In 2018, 75% of youth entered Nexus services having 4 or more traumatic experiences.

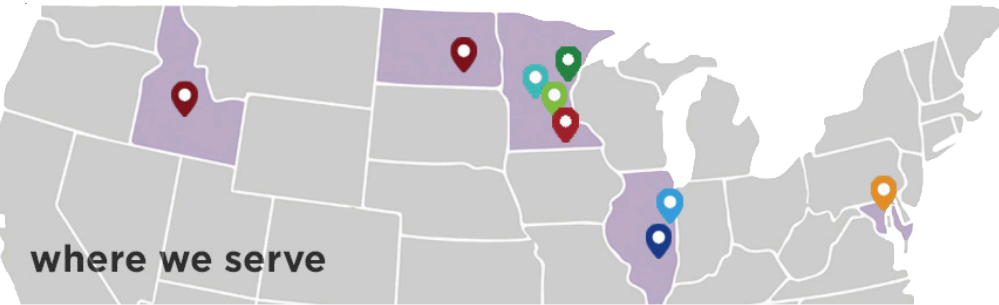
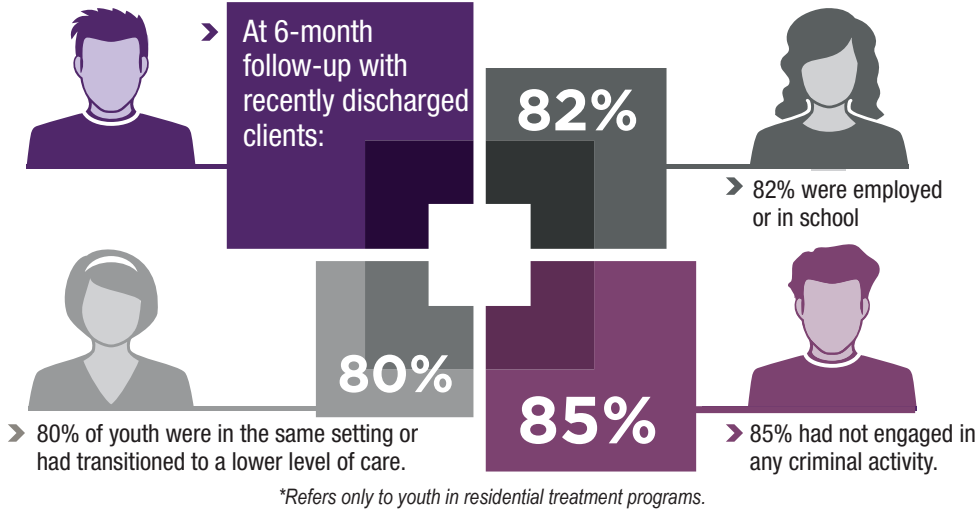
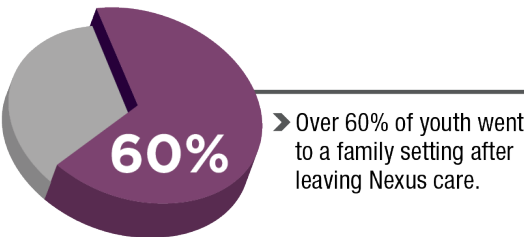
Nexus helps youth and families heal painful emotions and recover from the impact of disruption. As a result:

- families get along better;
- youth improve their performance in school;
- youth have healthy social interactions; and more importantly,
- youth no longer repeat the same harmful behaviors toward others.

Youth entered Nexus services having 12 high-level behavioral and emotional needs like aggression, abusive behaviors, self-harm, running away, and suicidal actions.  
*\*Refers only to youth in residential treatment programs.*

Youth reduced their safety concerns to 7 needs, meaning that they are now able to:

- improve school performance;
- develop healthy interpersonal skills and self-control over their harmful behavior;
- demonstrate the ability to live with their family; and,
- engage in community activities.



CREATING FAMILIES

Margo has been a PATH treatment foster parent for 13 years. She changed the lives of many kids through foster care, but her biggest impact was with three girls who she now calls family.

Margo has two grown sons and was an empty-nester, but felt there was something more for her to do as her heart tugged her toward foster care. She had heard two local sisters were going back to foster care in Minnesota due to a disrupted placement in Fargo, and would potentially be separated; she was compelled to step in. Margo knew these girls from a young age and couldn't bear to see them removed from their friends, family, or potentially each other. She called PATH to start her licensing and training process, and together, they worked to get the girls into Margo's care.

Just a year after taking in the sisters, Margo decided to permanently add them to her family, adopting both of the girls. Her two daughters are now adults and living successfully. Both daughters work in professions helping disabled adults.

"It's the toughest job you've ever loved," Margo said, "You're going to meet kids that you won't want to let go of."

Margo continued to foster for the joy of helping teens find their way to adulthood and independence, not expecting to add any more children to her family. But, when she opened her home to Tiana, she knew their relationship was meant to be.

"Everyone needs a forever family," Margo said. "I love this little girl."

Tiana was in Margo's care for three years before Margo moved forward to finalize the adoption paperwork. She planned out the adoption announcement, keeping it a secret until the annual North Dakota Heart Gallery—an event that promotes the adoption of children waiting for forever homes. When Margo slipped a yellow sash around Tiana's head, indicating she was one of the lucky kids to be adopted, shock and joy lit up Tiana's face. Tiana had her forever family!

Through tears, Tiana remarked, "I'm finally home!"



PARTNERING WITH PARENTS

When a child is dealing with severe mental health issues and needing residential treatment, it can take a toll on families. Mille Lacs Academy found a way to help parents deal with the uncertainty and mixed feelings by establishing the role of Parent Partner.

Chrissie Veerkamp serves as the Parent Partner with her unique experience as an employee of Mille Lacs Academy and a mother of a child who once needed residential care. She is a guide for many parents, offering support before and after a child enters care.



Chrissie knows the emotional struggles a parent goes through when trying to help a child find the right solution and validates their feelings of sorrow, relief, and anxiety. By being in their shoes, Chrissie knows parents need to be cared for, too.

“It is so hard when your child is being raised by others to still feel important,” said a youth’s parent. “Chrissie has done that for us.”

HELPING YOUTH NOW

Felecia Brown, a senior youth care professional at Indian Oaks Academy, has given to Youth Now for over 14 years ago.

“I have been donating since I first got hired,” she said. “I was taught to always give to others who may not have what I have. I considered it a blessing to be able to have a job, so I wanted to extend that and help youth who may need a blessing, too.”

Felecia said, “The most rewarding part of my job is seeing change, supporting and teaching youth. Having them call back years later thanking you, reminiscing on their experience, things that they’ve learned and now use. This reminds me that it’s all worth it.”



She is a true advocate for giving back to the youth, saying, “To the employees who haven’t considered donating, it doesn’t take a lot to make a difference in someone’s life. Any small amount makes a big difference in the youth’s opportunities and towards their growth.”

TOGETHER we gave back

In 2018, you showed up for our kids. **Your generosity allowed the youth in Nexus care to experience new activities, grow their life skills, and rediscover what it’s like to be on the path to success.**

- **You donated tickets to professional sports games and concerts.**
- **You brought holiday feasts to our campuses to make it feel more like home.**
- **You helped us add therapeutic tools to our programs.**
- **You supported new vocational opportunities to get kids on the track to a lifelong career.**
- **You built bikes for our kids to call their own.**

Nexus employees also went the extra mile in giving back to the kids we serve.

In 2018, we revamped our internal employee giving program and created **Youth NOW**. This program allows employees to make a payroll deduction that goes directly into a fund for youth support purchases.

- In the past, these funds have been used for:
- **glasses and hearing aides.**
  - **properly-fitting clothes, winter necessities, and work uniforms.**
  - **transitional living expenses for the youth as they leave treatment and need support getting started on their own.**
  - **educational opportunities and school supplies.**
  - **gang tattoo removal to get them ready for a fresh start after treatment.**
  - **transportation expenses so a youth can visit their family.**

We appreciate everything you do to provide opportunities that make life a little easier and a little more joyful for our clients and their families. Together, we are changing futures!

BUILDING HOPE: BOARD MEMBER SUPPORTS OTHER FAMILIES IN CRISIS

Bill Spotts serves on the Board of Directors for Woodbourne Center and the Nexus Foundation. His family shares the hardships that many face when a family member is struggling with mental health issues. Bill and his wife, Beth, have been generous financial contributors to the organization; in fact, their own experience inspired them to pledge one of the largest private gifts supporting the new vocational building that opened on the Woodbourne Center campus in 2018.

The teenage years are often difficult – for both parents and kids. But for Bill and his daughter, they were years of chaos. From the age of 13, his daughter began behaving differently and more dangerously: smoking, drinking, drugs, self-harming, expressing suicidal ideation, and more.

On several occasions, Bill and his then wife turned to their local mental health system and had their daughter hospitalized when her thoughts of suicide became severe. She was always released in a matter of days, which was never enough to get to the root of her problem. They knew she needed more intensive treatment, but admittance into a residential treatment facility was nearly impossible.

At age 15, the daughter shoplifted from a local mall and entered the juvenile justice system. It was then that she was finally connected with the long-term residential treatment she needed.

She was admitted into a residential facility for 18 months, a long time to be separated from family, but a standard stay in 1997. Family connections were limited during the first 90 days; it was an emotional time for the entire family.

The financial costs of treatment and the process of navigating the mental health system were overwhelming, but the benefits of the residential setting were clear. Bill’s daughter was supported through consistent therapy and learned from interacting with other girls that she was not alone in her experiences and struggles.

The family rebuilt their trust of one another through family therapy. The on-site school helped keep the daughter on track to graduate from her local high school when she returned home. This set her on course to complete a vocational program that boosted her confidence and set the stage for gainful employment as an adult.



Fast forward 20 years: having experienced the challenges of dealing with mental health crises, Bill wanted to make a difference for other families.

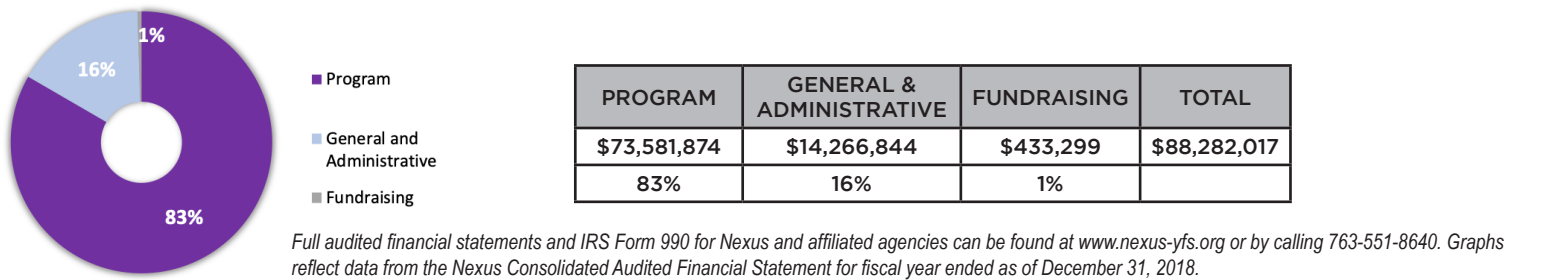
Bill and his current wife, Beth, sought out a mental health organization close to their Baltimore-area home as the facility that helped his daughter has since closed (a scenario playing out across the country, creating a critical gap in care). The leadership and board members involved with Woodbourne Center respected them as parents and business professionals. There is great energy about improving and adding programs to help youth while also finding ways to make the organization more productive.

The Spotts are excited to invest their time and resources into the success of youth supported through Woodbourne Center and Nexus while also inviting others to support this work.

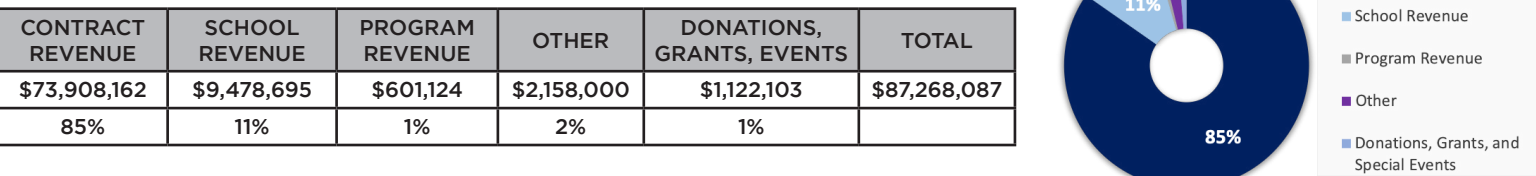
“Nexus is helping youth create a path for life beyond treatment. As philanthropists, this is important to Beth and me.”

# TOGETHER we can change lives!

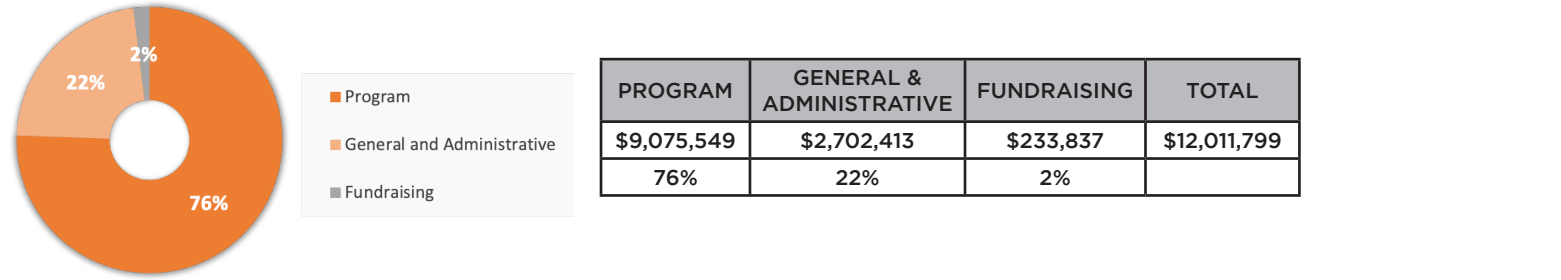
## NEXUS FUNCTIONAL EXPENSE ALLOCATION



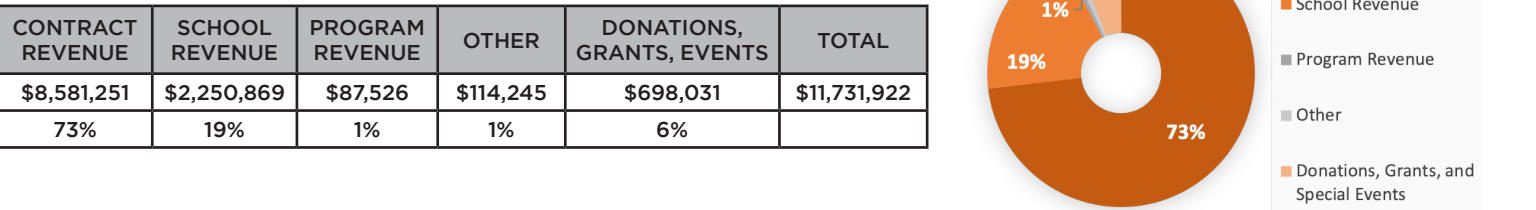
## NEXUS FUNDING BY SOURCE



## WOODBOURNE CENTER FUNCTIONAL EXPENSE ALLOCATION



## WOODBOURNE CENTER FUNDING BY SOURCE



Today, we know that many children are feeling the lifelong effects of emotional and physical trauma on their mental health. With your help, Nexus can continue to expand our services and build innovative programs to respond to the growing need for resources to help stabilize families and support mental health for children.

As Nexus is able to provide care and healing to more people, you will start to see a difference in your community. That difference may be in the way mental health is perceived, the way care is delivered, or a change in the actions of your neighbors.

We hope to see less violence, fewer suicides, decreased child abuse and neglect, and start seeing more support, more hope, and more success. **Together, we can change lives.**

- Your philanthropic investment will:
- Support the Mental Health Workforce
  - Create Alternative Education Experiences for a Child's Lifelong Success
  - Provide Family Healing and Support during Foster Care
  - Increase Access to Mental Health Treatment
  - Provide Opportunity for Increased Family Stability, Safety, and Well-Being

Thank you to everyone who donated their time, gifts, and money in 2018 to help Nexus stabilize families and strengthen mental health.

[www.changingonelife.org](http://www.changingonelife.org)



### Join our mission!

Be a Foster Parent  
Volunteer  
Donate  
Host a Fundraiser  
Attend an Event  
Join our Board  
Work with Us  
Be an Advocate



# NEXUS

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PATH ✕ IDAHO

## Nexus in Illinois

INDIAN OAKS ✕ ACADEMY

ONARGA ✕ ACADEMY

## Nexus in Maryland

WOODBOURNE ✕ CENTER

## Nexus in Minnesota

GERARD ✕ ACADEMY

KINDRED FAMILY ✕ FOCUS

MILLE LACS ✕ ACADEMY

NEXUS ✕ GLEN LAKE

## Nexus in North Dakota

PATH ✕ NORTH DAKOTA



signature program  
DAVE THOMAS  
FOUNDATION FOR ADOPTION



F F T A  
Foster Family-based  
Treatment Association

AspireMN

Nexus is a national nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization, that serves children, youth, and families through Community Mental Health Services, Foster Care/Adoption, and Residential Treatment Programs. Nexus, Gerard Treatment Programs, LLC, Kindred Family Focus, and Woodbourne Center, Inc., and PATH North Dakota, Inc. are each separate legal entities, organized or treated as nonprofit organizations under their respective State's law, and qualified for state and federal tax exemption under Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status of the Internal Revenue Code. Mille Lacs Academy, Indian Oaks Academy, Onarga Academy, Nexus Glen Lake programs are not separate entities, but rather programs operated directly by Nexus with an underlying adherence to the Nexus Cornerstone Values and Guiding Principles.