Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Youth First? Youth First is a nonprofit organization focused on strengthening the mental health and well-being of youth and families. Through proven prevention programs and services, we equip young people with lifelong tools to succeed. Our core offerings include Youth First Mental Health Professionals placed in partner schools, prevention programming available for students, schools, and communities, and public engagement campaigns.

2. How did Youth First get started? While working as the director of a treatment center in the mid-1990s, Youth First Founder and addiction medicine specialist Dr. William Wooten noticed that the kids he was treating were presenting with more complex problems at younger ages. Often, by the time they sought treatment, it wasn't easy to turn their lives around. In seeking more effective prevention strategies, Dr. Wooten founded Youth First in 1998. Youth First was formed as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on serving youth, families, and the community with effective, accountable care and early intervention strategies.

3. Why is effective prevention important? Effective prevention reduces risk factors, increases life skills, and ultimately builds resiliency in kids and families, so they can successfully navigate life's challenges. Youth First offers prevention strategies with a proven track record, and we evaluate all our programs to ensure we achieve the best results.

4. What programs and services does Youth First offer?

- *Youth First Student Assistance Services* are available free of charge through a licensed, resident mental health professional in schools that partner with Youth First. Youth First Mental Health Professionals (MHPs) support students facing emotional, behavioral, and academic challenges by facilitating prevention and fostering positive development. For more information about where Youth First MHPs are available, visit https://www.youthfirstinc.org/mentalhealthprofessional.

- Youth First offers an array of age-appropriate prevention programs, each designed to address rising statistics on youth substance misuse and mental health. These free programs are available in schools and communities through Youth First MHPs and trained teachers and facilitators. For more information about Youth First's specific programs, visit *youthfirstinc.org/programs.*

5. How can students and families access Youth First's programs? Youth First's goal is low-barrier accessibility of prevention programs and mental health services that support students through emotional, behavioral, and academic challenges by fostering positive development and connection. With parental or guardian permission, Youth First programs and services are available free of charge to youth and their families in partner schools and communities. Additional information can be found on our website at youthfirstinc.org

6. How can the community help? Operational funding for all aspects of Youth First is dependent upon individual donations to sustain delivery and accessibility. While school partners pay a portion of the costs, Youth First could not continue to provide accessible, free prevention programs and mental health services without assistance from community members. Donate and get involved via our website, youthfirstinc.org, or call 812-421-8336.