



“Tapestry” Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry FAQs

Project Snapshot

Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry’s anti-human trafficking program and facility, Tapestry, will provide safe and supportive housing for young people ages 12 to 17 who have been affected by human trafficking. The program will foster a therapeutic, healing environment where young people can rebuild their lives. Staff will work closely with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services’ Oklahoma Coalition Against Human Trafficking and the Human Trafficking Response Unit of the Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General to ensure the program and services meet the best standards for care, staffing, and support for trauma recovery.

Human Trafficking in Oklahoma

- According to Oklahoma’s Department of Health (OKDHS), 76% of youth trafficking cases in the state are committed by a family member, meaning the child is trafficked by a parent, guardian, or relative and not a stranger.
- The Polaris Project has found that most runaways are targeted by human traffickers within just 48 hours of leaving home, often being approached at bus stations, parks, or online.
- In 2023, The National Human Trafficking Hotline reported 310 “signals” (or alerts for help) from 133 victims or survivors of human trafficking survivors in Oklahoma. This number represents only the tip of the iceberg and does not include unreported incidents of human trafficking.
- In Oklahoma, only one facility is certified by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services to serve youth. Of the five beds available in this facility, only one is available to accept OKDHS cases of trafficked youth, and the organization only accepts girls.
- Due to a staggering lack of services for Oklahoma’s trafficked youth, the large majority of children ages 12 - 17 are sent out of state, some halfway across the country, to receive treatment and begin the healing process.

Who is Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry?

Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry (TMM) is an 88-year old 501(c)3 nonprofit located in Tulsa, Oklahoma dedicated to building inner-faith relationships by working to fill service gaps in the community and fostering opportunities for connection. TMM has quietly incubated a number of projects that grew to high-impact nonprofit organizations over the years, including Life Senior Services, Youth Services of Tulsa, Day Center for the Homeless, Tulsa (now Oklahoma) Mental Health Association, Meals on Wheels, RSVP, and many more. In addition to addressing service gaps in the community from food insecurity to human trafficking, the organization also facilitates intercultural trips abroad, funds chaplaincy at the Family Safety Center, and collaborates with local law enforcement to provide trauma-informed and cultural competency training.

How is TMM funded?

TMM is primarily funded through individual contributions. Last year, TMM received approximately 45% of its funding from individuals and church congregations, 15% from private foundations, and 40% in restricted government grant funds. All government funds were restricted to TMM's "Bazar" program, a community-driven farm fresh grocery store serving a North Tulsa food desert.

Why is the organization launching an anti-trafficking program and facility?

The astonishing lack of services available to trafficked youth was first brought to TMM's board of directors by Dr. Kathy LaFortune, licensed Oklahoma attorney, psychologist, and champion for victims of human trafficking. After a thorough review and exploration of the human trafficking landscape in Oklahoma and establishing relationships with Oklahoma Department of Health, the Human Trafficking Response Unit of the Oklahoma Attorney General's office, and certified Quality Residential Treatment Programs across the U.S., TMM's board of directors voted to move forward with bringing these essential services to Oklahoma.

What is human trafficking?

According to the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women, the three most prominent types of human trafficking are: sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and domestic servitude.

- Sex trafficking and labor trafficking of adults occurs when force, fraud, or coercion are used to engage a person in commercial sex acts or labor. Sex and labor trafficking of minors occurs when minors are compelled in any way to perform a commercial sex act or forced labor.
- Labor trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provisions, or obtaining of persons for labor or services using force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. Labor trafficking is the most prevalent type of human trafficking.

- Domestic Servitude pertains to the economic sectors that profit most from human trafficking like agriculture, restaurants, manufacturing, domestic work, entertainment, hospitality, and the commercial sex industry.

What is “Tapestry,” TMM’s anti-trafficking facility?

Tapestry is a 16-bed residential healing facility for youth survivors of human trafficking to be located at the northwest corner of East 171st Street and S. Sheridan Road. To-be-certified as the state’s only Quality Residential Treatment Program by OKDHS, Tapestry will serve girls and boys ages 12 - 17 for a period of six to 18 months. Each survivor will have their own room, receive on-site education appropriate to their developmental level, and engage in therapeutic activities such as equine, yoga, art, and canine therapy and mental health counseling.

Tapestry staff will primarily work with OKDHS in placing youth in the program. TMM will focus on helping local children in need, but will take youth from across the state as space allows.

The 160-acre site is owned by TMM and the primary Tapestry facility will be built on a specific 5-acre plateau located in the center of the property. The western portion of the land will be used for equine and other outdoor therapeutic activities and the remaining land, a lush forested space, will provide natural security and privacy for residents and staff. Tapestry’s residential building will not be visible from the road or nearby neighborhoods and will be accessible only by private, gated driveway for staff and caregivers.

Why was Bixby selected as the site?

The Bixby community is a tight-knit, welcoming, values-based homestead that offers a peaceful, pastoral space for children to embark upon a healing journey. Bixby’s proximity to a large metropolitan area also allows TMM to access a specialized workforce and partner resources, and is close enough to provide children access to community but far enough away that they aren’t stressed by an urban landscape.

Does the Tapestry program have to have approval from the City of Bixby?

Yes. A recent community meeting was the first step in this process. TMM shared plans for Tapestry with local residents and gained a tremendous amount of feedback and support. We now plan to move forward with filing zoning permits with the City of Bixby. Once the city has scheduled our application for consideration, we will share the meeting dates and times on our website at www.tmmtulsa.org and the city will send another letter to local residents.

What will you do with the property if the permits are denied?

The 160-acres located at East 171st Street and S. Sheridan Road was purchased by TMM with the explicit intent of constructing a quality residential treatment program for victims of human

trafficking and launching Tapestry programming. TMM has no other plans for the land at this time.

Will retail buildings be built on the property?

During a recent meeting with City of Bixby officials, the idea of constructing retail space on the southeast corner of the lot was explored with the intention of generating tax income for the City of Bixby. TMM staff and board members shared that while they are open to the idea, their primary intention for the land is to provide residential and therapeutic services for young victims of human trafficking.

At a recent community meeting with local residents, however, a clear consensus emerged indicating that Bixby residents would prefer that retail space NOT be constructed on the property. TMM endeavors only to be a good neighbor and to serve children through Tapestry programming. If local residents are opposed to retail construction on the property, TMM leadership is happy to oblige.

How will existing creeks and waterways on the property be impacted?

Tapestry residents will travel throughout the property for various therapy activities. Using existing infrastructure like a bridge that passes over a creek on the property, TMM intends for children to be transported by a Tapestry staff member via ATV. TMM has no plans to alter the existing creek or waterways, nor to build any additional onsite infrastructure that would impact the creek or waterways. Tapestry residents will not travel outside of the property (for example, using Bixby streets) to access onsite programs.

What kind of security will be in place?

Security is of the utmost importance, given that Tapestry residents are survivors of sexual trafficking, labor trafficking, and/or domestic servitude. In addition to employing its own private 24/7 security staff, Tapestry is a lockdown facility. The facility will utilize security card access control and video surveillance. Surrounding the 5-acre residential area, Tapestry will feature a 12-foot barrier wall. Shrouded by acres of dense forest throughout the property, this wall will not be visible from the road or nearby neighborhoods (nor to the children in the program), but will provide essential security for Tapestry residents.

How close will equine therapy and riding pastures be located to existing homes?

Equine and other outdoor therapies will be available to Tapestry residents on the western and southwest portions of the property. Stables will be located approximately eight acres south of the neighborhood nearest the northernmost point of TMM's property line. To the southwest, open pasture will meet East 171st Street. Outside of the property's central plateau (where the Tapestry residential building will be located on five acres), the rest of the property will remain forested.

Does TMM plan to expand Tapestry's footprint on the site?

Our hope, of course, would be that human trafficking decreases so that additional residences are not needed. Trends in statewide sex and labor trafficking and domestic servitude, however, indicate that the problem is only worsening. The 5-acre plateau housing Tapestry's initial build could accommodate one more 16-bed facility. If the program expanded in the future, it would expand only within this 5-acre space as topography and environmental reports show the plateau is really the only place on the property that can accommodate the program needs.

Will there be animals other than horses? Will the kids learn to garden?

At the moment, both equine and canine therapies are planned. At a recent community meeting with local residents, additional uses of land were suggested, such as a community garden and the possibilities of chickens and other small farm animals. TMM endeavors only to be a good neighbor and to serve children through Tapestry programming. If local residents are interested in volunteering for or engaging with other Tapestry therapy programs, TMM leadership is happy to further explore these opportunities.

What happens to the children when their treatment concludes?

Tapestry residents, boys and girls ages 12 - 17 who are survivors of human trafficking, receive services for six to 18 months, depending on the therapies required for their healing. Once the children have finished their stay at Tapestry, they are then placed in an environment where they can continue to heal and grow. Depending on each child's circumstances, this could mean placement with a parent, family member, or a foster family, in a group home, or transition into an independent living program.

Where do they go when they turn 18?

Tapestry will work with residents who "age out" of the program to transition to an independent living program for adults.

Will residents' therapy be mandated?

The majority of children at Tapestry will be referred to the program through OKDHS. Children may also be referred to Tapestry by other Quality Residential Treatment Programs (like one close by in Arkansas) and agencies like the Human Trafficking Response Unit of the Oklahoma Attorney General's office.

How does Tapestry work with law enforcement?

The organization is not involved in adjudicating their cases. Casework is performed by OKDHS, the Human Trafficking Response Unit of the Oklahoma Attorney General's office, and law

enforcement, who will have resolved any potential security issues before the children are placed with Tapestry.

How can people get involved?

Tapestry's most pressing need is for champions of anti-trafficking, specifically Bixby residents and our future neighbors, to share with the city and your neighbors why Bixby is the ideal home for these children in support of our rezoning application. You can attend the upcoming meeting in-person and share your story, or email your city councilor directly. To sign up for updates about Tapestry's progress in Bixby, including the date and time of the upcoming city meeting, email crista@tmmtulsa.org. **You will not be placed on a newsletter list; you will only receive updates specific to this project.** To contact your Bixby city councilor, go to www.bixbyok.gov/240/City-Council.