



Rising Ground is a leading nonprofit human services organization providing children, adults, and families in the greater New York City area with the resources and skills needed to rise above adversity and positively direct their lives.

**138**  
sites

**101**  
programs

more than  
**10,000**  
direct program participants

more than  
**25,000**  
family members supported

**Rising Ground delivers:**

- Caring supports promoting independence and engagement for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Dedicated services to survivors of intimate partner violence as well as creative preventive programs that foster healthy relationships.
- High quality and effective community based mental health and health services that foster physical and emotional well-being.
- Trusted and targeted assistance and resources to elevate children and families, building on their strengths to overcome challenges.
- Concrete non-judgmental services and results-focused interventions that lay out a constructive path forward for runaway and homeless youth, as well as juvenile justice involved young people.
- Nurturing and compassionate care for unaccompanied minors making a new home in this country.
- Educationally rich and developmentally appropriate programs that build a foundation for the future growth of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Founded as the Leake and Watts Orphan House in 1831, Rising Ground has been at the forefront of evolving community needs, growing into a respected and wide-reaching human services leader recognized for the quality of its services and its results-focused and evidence-based practices. Focused on forging meaningful community connections, the organization has an active commitment to promoting diversity, fairness, and belonging in all areas of its work.



**mission**

Driven by the belief that each of us can thrive when life has hope and opportunity, Rising Ground provides caring support and proven paths to positive change, helping children, adults, and families rise above adversity.

**vision**

Rising Ground envisions a future for New York where every child has an equal opportunity to succeed; where vulnerable individuals and families have the resources and support they need; where people with disabilities can access opportunity and fully participate in their communities; and where all are supported as they navigate life's challenges and positively direct their lives.

# A History of Helping New Yorkers in Need

**1831** Rising Ground is founded as the Leake and Watts Orphan House by the Hon. John Watts, Jr., in honor of John George Leake, in lower Manhattan.

**1843** The Orphan House moves to the current site of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in upper Manhattan.

**1891** We move again to a 33-acre farm in Yonkers, a campus that remains the site of several programs.

**1933** A Social Services Department is established to meet the therapeutic needs of youth.

**1944** As the Foster Home Department is founded, we begin placing children in homes in the community.

**1976** The East Bronx Family Service Center is founded providing Preventive Services with substance-abuse treatment, domestic violence support, and supportive housing assistance.

**1985** We become the first social service agency in the nation to support children with HIV/AIDS.

**1986** We became one of the first child welfare organizations in the nation to address juvenile justice. That same year, a historic trial of women at the Bedford Hills Women's Prison testifying to their histories of battering and its relationship to their criminal charges leads to the founding of our STEPS to End Violence programs.

**1987** Our Group Home services expand to serve teen mothers and their babies, as we also shift focus to early childhood adding new child care centers, the Brownell Preschool and Head Start programs in the Bronx.

**1994** Construction begins on nine new residential cottages and the Carol and Frank Biondi Education Center in Yonkers.

**1997** The Marion & George Ames Early Childhood Learning Center opens in Yonkers, the first to feature integrated special-education and traditional-education classes.

**2007** Three years after launching our Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Services through Medicaid Service Coordination, we open our first residence for young adults with I/DD. Within 4 years, 10 more homes are opened.

**2010** Serving 60 preschool children exhibiting signs of autism at the Children's Learning Center, we expand our support and services in Manhattan.

**2013** We expand our Juvenile Justice services, opening a Non-Secure Placement program as part of the New York City "Close to Home" initiative.

**2014** We are named Gold Winner of the prestigious New York Community Trust Nonprofit Excellence Award. We open our Passage of Hope program for unaccompanied minors primarily from Latin America.

**2015** We open the Family Resource Center in the Bronx to support families with young children and open our first Brooklyn-based program.

**2018** We change our name from Leake & Watts to Rising Ground to embody our wide-reaching, life-changing work helping children, adults, and families find positive paths forward. The new name coincides with a new partnership with Brooklyn-based Edwin Gould Services for Children and Families.

**2020** For the first time since 1891, the organization is once again officially New York City-based, reflecting the community we support. Our headquarters are now located in Downtown Brooklyn.

**2022** Rising Ground sells most of its 32-acre Yonkers campus after 130 years, relocating its programs to sites throughout New York City, while maintaining a Yonkers presence.

**2023** The number of programs offered by Rising Ground dramatically expands to 101 across 138 sites, amplifying our ability to help more New Yorkers citywide. The expansion includes nearly doubling our Passage of Hope program for unaccompanied youth, acquisition of residences for homeless youth, and the introduction of a Parent Advocate Initiative, and a Family Enrichment Center. In addition, through the acquisition of services from Sheltering Arms, this expansion includes drop-in centers for homeless and runaway youth, community mental health services, reception centers for youth entering foster care, as well as growth in other services.

**2024** Rising Ground opens new administrative offices in Midtown Manhattan with program hubs in northern Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn.



**Left:** Rising Ground's Yonkers campus. **Above:** Famed opera singer, Marian Anderson, visits with children.