




CHILD
ABUSE COUNCIL

EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

2022 Annual Report



Contents

Introduction	2
Prevention	3
Children’s Advocacy Center	5
Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)	8
Financial Information	11
Child Abuse Council Team	13

Our Mission Statement

The mission of the Child Abuse Council of Muskegon County is protect your child and your family through Education, Intervention, Advocacy and Community Collaboration.

Our Vision Statement

Protect all children and create a safe and healthy community.

Child Abuse Council of Muskegon County Board Members

Doug Hughes: President

Edie Kessler

Tanya Haynes

Thea McMullen: Vice President

Hon. Gregory C. Pittman

Kendrah Robinson

Kathy Fearnley: Treasurer

Sheriff Michael Poulin

Amanda Tumele

Helen Dobb: Secretary

Kim Bourdo

Jared Meldrum



Introduction

Dear Supporters of the Child Abuse Council,

In 2022, our agency provided services to 11,720 children in Muskegon County. These services included forensic interviews, specialized medical examinations, trauma informed therapy, court preparation and accompaniment, personal body safety lessons, anti-bullying and internet safety, human trafficking awareness, and personal advocacy.

One of the programs we have here at the Child Abuse Council is the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC). The CAC specializes in treating child victims of sexual abuse. CACs across the state serve over 10,000 children each year, of which over 8,000 are for sexual abuse. While some believe that sexual abuse is perpetrated by a stranger, 97% of the child victims know their offender.

We teach children how to keep themselves safe with our prevention programs in the schools, however it is ultimately the responsibility of adults in our community to ensure that children are safe. If you would like to learn more about how you can help in the fight against child abuse, please visit our website at www.childabusecouncil.org and click on the 'Prevention' tab. We have many informative resources as well as the opportunity for you to sign up to take our Stewards of Children training. This training teaches individuals how to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to the reality of child sexual abuse.

We want to send our most heartfelt thanks to all in our community who have supported us in our mission. It may take a village to raise a child, but it takes an entire community to keep them safe.

~ Kyleen Gee
Executive Director



Prevention

Debbie Anderson
Prevention Director

Sexual abuse is likely the most prevalent health problem children face, with the most serious array of consequences.

Research shows that people who are sexually violated as children are far more likely to experience psychological problems often lasting into adulthood, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, delinquency, decreased school performance-related problems, and suicide. Survivors often struggle with health problems as well.

Child sexual abuse is not a problem of socio-economic status, culture, race, religion, or gender. It impacts every community and every person across the globe.

Without prevention, incidents of child sexual abuse seem to come from nowhere and blindside the whole community. Our children and their families are traumatized, and the rest of us wonder how this could happen.

Prevention education is our first line of defense. The two populations to be educated are our children and the adults in our community, whose responsibility it is to protect them.

In 2022:

- 9,777 Preschool, kindergarten and elementary-age children received personal body safety lessons.
- 1,040 middle and high school students received personal body safety lessons, internet safety, anti-bullying lessons and human trafficking awareness.
- 405 community adults were trained in the Stewards of Children training.



Early Childhood Personal Body Safety Puppets



Prevention

Prevention training doesn't guarantee that sexual abuse will not happen – but it helps dramatically reduce the risk, especially if adults are provided with tools to understand the issue, create policies and organizational structures that protect children, recognize warning signs and behaviors, and intervene if they suspect or discover abuse.

The Child Abuse Council offers free training to adults to increase their knowledge of recognizing, reacting, and responding appropriately to potential child abuse. It is our hope that by educating children about child abuse and by helping adults to know how to identify and respond to potential abuse situations, we can help lower the risk of a wide range of problems which, in turn, could affect the health and welfare of our children.

Personal body safety programs work.

A student and her friend in a fourth-grade classroom approached Mrs. Anderson after a personal body safety presentation. The student told her that, way back in second grade, her stepdad was sexually abusing her. She said that after seeing the video Mrs. Anderson showed, she knew she should tell, but was too afraid. She said that the next year when she saw the video in third grade, the "bad stuff" was still happening, but again was too afraid to tell. She said that now in fourth grade the "bad stuff" was still happening, she wasn't going to say anything because her stepdad warned her that if she told, everybody in her house would die and it would be her fault. She then said that her friend standing beside her told her that if she didn't tell, her friend would.

From second through fourth grade that little girl was sexually assaulted by her stepdad. It took that long for her to come forward. She said the reason she finally did was that Mrs. Anderson said that if a friend knows what's going on, they need to try to get the person to tell. And if that person is too scared, then that's just what a good friend does...tell.



Children's Advocacy Center

Cortney Aspinall
In-take Coordinator

Andrea Kelley
Family Advocate

Grace Strauss
Forensic Interviewer / Family Advocate

Rachael McEnhill
Forensic Interviewer / Victim Advocate

Madison Pierman
Administrative Support / Clinical Assistant

Vicki Price
CASA Supervisor / Medical Coordinator

Dr. Yvonne Rekeny
Specialized Physician

Dr. Cory Schmidt
Specialized Physician

Christina Tulgestke
Clinician

Statistics

The most recent available data (year 2021) from the Annie E. Casey Foundation:

- Michigan had 25,710 children who were confirmed victims of abuse and/or neglect.
- Muskegon County had 767 children who were confirmed victims of abuse and/or neglect in the year 2022.



Children's Advocacy Center 2022

- 326 Forensic Interviews were conducted
- 78 children received Counseling
- 33 children received a Specialized Medical Examination

***"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."
Martin Luther King, Jr.***

Children's Advocacy Center

Details of this story have been changed to protect the privacy of the client and family.

Twelve-year-old Oscar was having a sleepover with friends when he told them a secret about his dad. After he left, Oscar's friend told his parents about Oscar's secret. The next day, investigators went to Oscar's home and asked to speak to his mother, Carla. They told Carla that there were some safety concerns and that Oscar's father had to leave the home. They also told Oscar and Carla that they had an appointment at the Child Abuse Council (C.A.C.) that they would need to attend. Oscar and Carla struggled to sleep that night, as the anxiety they felt about the next day took over. They had no idea what to expect. When entering the C.A.C., Oscar and his mother were warmly greeted by the front desk staff whose smiling faces helped calm their nerves. They were seated in the waiting area, which was bright and inviting. Oscar and Carla were introduced to the family advocate and the forensic interviewer whom both explained their roles. The family advocate checked in with Oscar to see how he was doing that day. He felt comforted to know that the staff cared about his feelings. The interviewer brought Oscar to a child-friendly room with fidgets and things to color. Oscar had no idea that the investigators were listening to his interview directly across the hall. The interviewer took her time acclimating Oscar to the room and getting to know him. She asked Oscar open-ended, non-confrontational questions. During his interview, the family advocate met with Carla in a private room. Carla had tried to be strong in front of Oscar and finally felt like she had a space to express her emotions. After the interview, Carla was brought back to speak with the investigators. She was informed about what Oscar had disclosed and the next steps in their investigation.

Next page.....



Children's Advocacy Center

Continued...

After that day, the family advocate kept in touch with Carla to see how her and Oscar were doing. During one of their phone calls, a specialized medical exam was scheduled. Carla expressed interest in counseling for Oscar to begin to work through his trauma. Carla was worried about Oscar, but was also stressed about how they were going to afford their rent and utilities with her husband out of the home. The family advocate provided some referrals to local programs that could assist with paying her bills. A clinician reached out to Carla and explained the intake process for counseling. An appointment was scheduled for Carla to come in and meet with her to review the intake paperwork, and address any questions or concerns Carla had about counseling. On the day of Oscar's first counseling appointment, he was not very excited to be back at the place he told his secret to. Oscar's head and stomach hurt. He wasn't sure if he could do this. Just when Oscar was about to tell his mom he wanted to leave, the clinician came into the lobby and greeted both Carla and Oscar with a smile. She introduced herself and asked if Oscar wanted to come back to her office and talk. Oscar agreed, but still wasn't feeling better about being there. Once inside the office, Oscar noticed all of the fidgets and stuffed animals and felt a little better about being there. The clinician and Oscar talked about what he liked to do for fun and the sports he was in. Not one time during that first appointment did the clinician ask about Oscar's secret, they only talked about fun stuff. The clinician reviewed confidentiality with Oscar and that made him feel safer knowing that what he talked about with his clinician stayed between them unless it broke one of the rules. By the end of his first session, Oscar was feeling better about counseling and was open to continuing. Oscar continued to attend his sessions with his clinician and worked hard each week to process his feelings and emotions around what happened to him and started to heal from his trauma. Despite this, Oscar still felt anxious about the court process. The agency began doing court preparation sessions with Oscar to help him know what to expect when he went to court. Oscar was relieved to hear that the kind women at the agency planned on accompanying him to court. The court process was difficult, but the C.A.C. was there every step of the way. Oscar and Carla did not know how they would've gotten through it without them.



The Child Abuse Council Children's Advocacy Center is there "Every Step of the Way". From the instant that a family walks in our doors, they are greeted with a friendly and supportive staff, just as Oscar and his mother were. We're here to help with state-of-the-art therapy and processes to help families through the most difficult times in their lives.

CASA

(Court Appointed Special Advocate)

Vicki Price
CASA Supervisor

CASA Statistics for 2022:

- 54 children were assigned a CASA volunteer
- 9 new CASA volunteers were trained
- 17 In-Service Trainings were held for all existing CASA volunteers on topics relevant to their role as CASAs.
- CASA volunteers donated 3,780 hours advocating for their assigned children
- Number of children in care in our county – approximately 400
- Number of Children eligible for a CASA volunteer - 346

Details of this story have been changed to protect the privacy of the client and family.

While looking in the mirror Mia allowed her mind to wonder. She remembers how she was looking for something that she could volunteer for that would make a difference in someone's life. When she met her friend Amelia for lunch that day, Amelia explained that she just came from visiting her CASA kids. CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate and that they are trained volunteers who advocate for the best interest of children who do not have a safe home for them to grow in.

Amelia stated that she was the voice for a child in court. Mia asked what does that mean. Amelia explained that most kids involved in the abuse and neglect system in court were there through no fault of their own. That she was the person who visits with her CASA kids and the adults in their lives. She stated she makes recommendations to the court that directly benefit the children and are in their best interest. Amelia provided a number for her supervisor of the program and encouraged Mia to call and find out more about the program.



CASA Makes a Difference

The first step being contacting the Court Appointed Special Advocate office in Muskegon County. The CASA supervisor offered to meet with her to explain the program. Mia set up an appointment.

On the day of the appointment Mia was so nervous. Mia was met by the CASA Supervisor and taken into her office to discuss the CASA program. The CASA supervisor explained that it was a volunteer-based program that helped children that are in the foster care system through no fault of their own. Mia asked what does that mean "through no fault of their own?" The CASA supervisor explained that a lot of children are in foster care because their caregiver did something to endanger them. Mia nervously laughed and stated she didn't have children and wasn't sure if she would be a good fit. The supervisor answered that she could understand Mia's concern, but that there were a lot of volunteers who have never had a child of their own, who have never worked in a child-focused environment, but they are amazing. That they tend to be among the best volunteers because they don't come with a preconceived notion of what a child should do. She explained that a CASA volunteer could be anyone who has a bit of time and a whole lot of caring and desire to learn. CASA volunteers are people who come from all backgrounds.

Mia asked what the time commitment would being a CASA involve. The supervisor explained that she would need to go through 35 hours of training, have a background check done and be free from any criminal record that impacts children. Once you have completed the training you are then sworn in as an officer of the court. What that means is that you are essentially working on behalf of the court system to make recommendations that directly benefit children and what is in their best interest. That's important because your loyalty is to the program and that child. That a volunteer is asked to commit to 1 1/2 years to the program. The CASA supervisor explained that the average child generally spends at least 14 months in foster care. When a CASA volunteer takes a case, they are asked to stay on that case until it reaches permanency. One of the most important components of what a CASA volunteer does the supervisor explained, is be that constant person in the life of the children they are serving. That means they see the child four times a month and visit all the adults in that child's life. It was important to see the child so that the CASA volunteer can build a relationship with that child. Foster kids tend not to trust people because they have no reason to. Just as they are getting comfortable with a person that person can change. A CASA volunteer is that one person who never changes in the child's life. When they are assigned a new foster home the CASA volunteer will visit them there, they can get a new foster care worker or a new judge, but their CASA volunteer will remain the same. Their CASA volunteer is that person they can count on to advocate on their behalf and always be there for them. A CASA volunteer normally spends between 10 to 20 hours a month involved with their CASA kid, and that includes note-taking and report writing. To remain in good standing with the program volunteers are required to complete 12 hours of training per year. The trainings are provided for them through the CASA Supervisor.

Continued...

CASA volunteers speak to anyone who is involved with the child and then report back to the court what is in that child's best interest. Mia remembers that it wasn't always smooth sailing there were things that came up and she had to learn how to deal with them so that the end results were in the best interest of her CASA kids. Her CASA supervisor and the other volunteers were always there for her to reach out to and ask questions and feel supported.

If you are interested in becoming a CASA volunteer and being a voice for a child, contact Vicki Price at vprice@childabusecouncil.org or 231-728-6410 ext 1100.



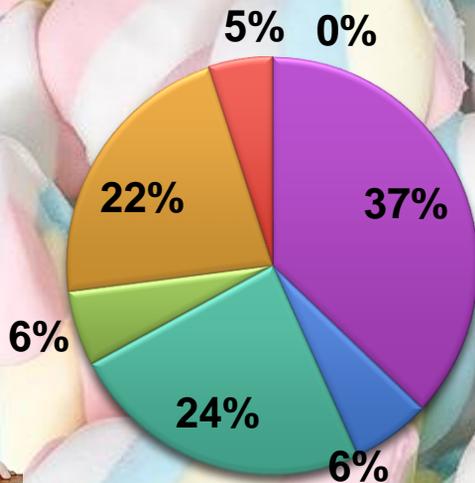
Fiscal Year 2021-2022

Financial Information



Revenue Sources	
Federal Grants	\$382,702
State Grants	\$64,500
Local Grants	\$251,854
Contributions	\$61,181
Fundraising	\$225,832
Forgiveness of Long-Term Obligations	\$55,578
Other	\$4,667
TOTAL REVENUE	\$1,046,314

Revenue Sources



Fiscal Year 2021-2022

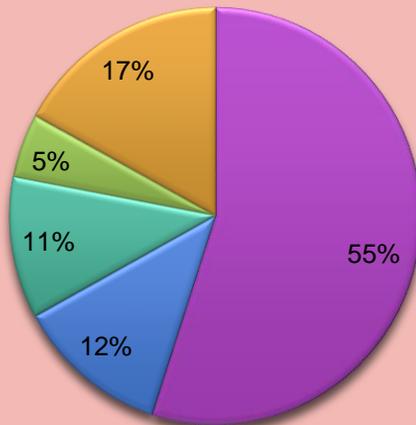
Financial Information

Expenses	
Children's Advocacy Center	\$579,799
CASA	\$130,427
Prevention	\$113,959
Management/General	\$48,792
Fundraising	\$174,329
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,047,303



Expenses

■ Children's Advocacy Center ■ CASA ■ Prevention ■ Management/General ■ Fundraising



Child Abuse Council Team

(featured with their favorite candy)



Executive Director:
Kyleen Gee



Prevention Director:
Deb Anderson



CASA Supervisor/
Medical Coordinator:
Vicki Price



Family Advocate:
Andrea Kelley



Administrative Support &
Clinical Assistant :
Madison Pierman



In-take Coordinator:
Cortney Aspinall



Forensic Interviewer
& Family Advocate
Grace Strauss



Forensic Interviewer
& Victim Advocate
Rachael McEnhill



Clinician:
Christina Tulgestke

