

Child Advocacy
The Link for Families!

FY 2023

ANNUAL REPORT

PANTRY PROGRAMS

1,947 Baby Pantry family visits

51,465 diapers and training pants distributed

530 containers of formula supplied

7,203 toddler snacks, cereal, or jar food provided

90 car seat installations completed

796 food bags distributed

98 Foster Closet visits

79 children sponsored for Fostering Joy

44 children sponsored for Fostering Fun

56 menstrual products/packages provided



CAN ACTIVITIES

210 mandated reporters
trained

16 Breastfeeding Coalition meetings/trainings
convened

5 CAN Committee Meetings
facilitated (43 members)

53 trained in
Stewards of Children

824 children graduated from
Protect Yourself


The Pantry Programs, services within the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Program (CAN Program), set record-high numbers in fiscal year 2023. In the month of August 2023 alone, the Baby Pantry provided over 6,200 diapers and averaged 51 family visits per week. Our partnership with the Greater Lansing Food Bank was secured for another year and we successfully completed and passed our first site visit. Food bags provided through the Greater Lansing Food Bank saw an increase of 81% compared to the previous fiscal year, aligning with the increase among our Pantry Programs and demonstrating the importance for these supplemental basic needs.

Due to these increases, Child Advocacy hired its first Pantry Program Coordinator to oversee daily operations of the Baby Pantry, Foster Closet, food bag partnership, and Supply the Cycle programs. Having a dedicated staff person to coordinate this busy program will allow for increased volunteer recruitment and management; enhanced client education, support and referrals; and additional fundraising and supply drive opportunities to support the Pantry Programs.

The Gratiot County Breastfeeding Coalition (GCBC) completed a successful first year with 66 members on its listserv, 10 expert guest presenters, and four additional community events: a babywearing workshop, infant massage class, Breastfeeding Awareness Month walk, and participation in the Global Big Latch On - being the only host in the state of Michigan. GCBC also developed the county's first and only Rock and Rest Tent, a traveling space for parents with infants equipped with a changing table, rocking chair, sound machine, and more! The Rock and Rest Tent was available during the Breastfeeding Awareness Month Walk and Lucky McDuck Community Day. To wrap up the fiscal year, the GCBC developed a Lactation Room within Child Advocacy with the support of the Gratiot County Community Foundation; offering a breastfeeding and pumping-friendly space to all Child Advocacy visitors. We hope to use this space as a model for other Gratiot County businesses, while providing education and support regarding the value of offering dedicated and thoughtful space to lactating parents.

The CAN Committee increased membership to include local libraries and churches, and several additional school personnel. Educational topics provided to CAN Committee members during this fiscal year were; "What Happens After I Make a Report?," minimal facts interviewing, code of conduct basics, and an overview of school-based prevention education and suicide prevention efforts provided by Child Advocacy. The Mandated Reporter Task Force provided training to Alma College education and nursing students, educators from Ithaca Public Schools and the Gratiot-Isabella RESD, Gratiot Integrated Health Network clinical staff, and OB/GYN staff with MyMichigan Health, doubling training numbers from the previous fiscal year.

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GRATIOT COUNTY
SUBSTANCE & SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

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- 109** Above the Influence meetings and events facilitated
 - 14** Question, Persuade, Refer trainings held (225 trained)
 - 77** NOT on Tobacco sessions delivered (32 adolescents)
 - 11** GCSSP Coalition meetings coordinated (55 members)
 - 225** outreach activities, presentations, and trainings completed
 - 471** lock boxes distributed
 - 340** Narcan kits supplied

In 2023, the Gratiot County Substance and Suicide Prevention Program (GCSSPP) celebrated 13 years under the umbrella of Child Advocacy. Through transitions in program leadership and staffing, GCSSPP maintained the incredible prevention services and work that has been provided for so long.

In February, GCSSPP hosted their first ever Coalition Conference with CADCA, where members and attendees learned about capacity building, advocacy, and sustainability.

In March, with grant support from MidState Health Network, GCSSPP partnered with Gratiot Integrated Health Network to install a Narcan Vending Machine for Gratiot County residents. From April-September 2023, the Narcan Vending Machine dispensed 190 kits to the public, a four-fold increase in kits distributed from the previous year.

In September, GCSSP Coalition members voted on the acceptance of integration of the name change from Gratiot County Substance Abuse Coalition to The Gratiot County Substance and Suicide Prevention Program - removing the term “abuse” to reduce stigma.

As the fiscal year came to a close, GCSSPP was awarded the Coalition of the Year from the Michigan Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking, an initiative through the Prevention Network of Michigan.





166 forensic interviews
conducted

2,576 victim and family advocacy services
provided

26 adolescent art therapy sessions
held

9 parent support groups
facilitated

420 hours of trauma informed therapy
completed

542 children and families
supported

Kicking off 2023, the Children's Advocacy Center of Gratiot County celebrated 10 years since opening its doors to serve child victims of maltreatment and their protective family members. In what became a year of transitions for the Children's Advocacy Center of Gratiot County, the CAC faced its first major staffing changes since 2018. A strategic succession plan eased the process as the center welcomed a new case manager/forensic interviewer and a new victim advocate. The CAC Multidisciplinary Team welcomed a new Prosecutor along with the majority of investigators representing law enforcement and Child Protective Services.

In spite of the transitions, the program was successful in its application for re-accreditation from the National Children's Alliance this year - it's third consecutive stamp of approval from the accrediting body. The National Children's Alliance awards accredited membership every five years based on a CAC's compliance with 10 national standards to ensure effective, efficient and consistent delivery of services to child abuse victims. Accredited Members must demonstrate a functioning and effective multidisciplinary team approach to child abuse investigation, prosecution, and treatment. Additional requirements include cultural competency and diversity, forensic interviews, victim support and advocacy, medical evaluation, therapeutic intervention, overall organizational capacity, and service to children and families in a child-focused setting.

The CAC was also awarded the Field Agency of the Year by Central Michigan University's School of Social Work for the implementation of a comprehensive Bachelor of Social Work internship program that centers on victim advocacy services and support.



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF GRATIOT COUNTY

19 advocates served

500 hours of advocate education completed

25 children supported

1474 advocacy hours logged

193 trained and supported caregivers (caregiver support group)

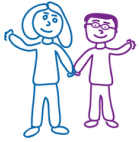
64 outreach and recruitment activities conducted

In 2023, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) celebrated 10 years under the Child Advocacy umbrella. The program faced a reduction in staff and funding, but that did not impact program outcomes. CASA celebrated Jennifer Leppien as the longest serving advocate (15 years) and a combined CASA team total of 99 years of service. Karen Kerr was selected as Michigan CASA's advocate of the year at the State Conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

In 2022, CASA of Gratiot County founded a recruitment strategy group to identify and attract new advocates in Michigan and was tapped to lead the group again in 2023. CASA also completed a second year serving on the National CASA Rural Leadership Council.

Advocates spent 500+ hours in training and logged 1,474+ hours visiting children, attending meetings, court, and medical appointments. Providing a supportive, safe environment for caregivers and children, CASA also convened 12 support groups throughout the year - groups that allow space to learn about available resources, counter trauma, and bolster resilience.

CASA provided support for 53% of children under court jurisdiction. Of those children, 44% were under the age of six. Advocates helped secure permanency for 10 children with six adoptions and four family re-unifications.



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VOLUNTEERS AND EVENTS

8 interns gained work experience

43 event volunteers supported outreach activities and fundraisers

1,202 hours of volunteer service were donated

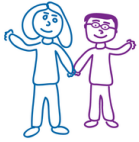
472 supporters paid to participate in fundraising events

218 Lunch and Learn Participants

Child Advocacy, as an agency, celebrated a notable year in 2023. Community engagement events were held in-person or hybrid and fundraising activities were held in-person and at full capacity for the first full year since the COVID-19 pandemic. In previous years (2020-2022), fundraising dollars lagged - a reflection of the ongoing struggles the community faced in the wake of the pandemic. In 2023, fundraising revenue rebounded to pre-pandemic levels with a positive forecast for the years ahead.

The rebound was anchored by two Designer Purse Bingo events (added to the event menu in spring 2022) and Trivia Night. Total dollar goals were met this year with sell-outs and near sell-outs on these signature events.

Child Advocacy boasts strong relationship with the community, local businesses, and colleges. As a result of increased recruitment and outreach efforts across programs, volunteer hours, internships, and speaking engagements increased. The number of paid event supporters also improved to reach pre-COVID levels.



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SUPPORTERS

5 Community Foundation Grants
\$18,607

5 Community Grants
\$20,550

3 Campaigns
\$21,270

169 Donors
\$150,249.81

10 Event Sponsors
\$10,900

