



OUR FUTURE IN FOCUS

2024
ANNUAL
REPORT



FAMILY & CHILDREN
SERVICES A SOURCE OF HOPE

TOGETHER, WE THRIVE

A letter from our Chief Executive Officer

As I reflect on 2024, I remember it as a year of planning for new beginnings. For 121 years, Family & Children Services has adapted to the evolving needs of the communities we serve—and this past year was no exception.

We took important steps to launch new services that will further our mission of strengthening the safety and well-being of children, individuals, and families.

In behavioral health, we began laying the foundation for a new partnership with Integrated Services of Kalamazoo: Children's Treatment Family Care. This service offers temporary, supportive placements for children experiencing mental health challenges, allowing families to receive direct care and guidance from mental health specialists.

We also launched Family Skills Services in collaboration with the Kalamazoo Department of Health and Human Services. This family preservation program focuses on building parenting skills, improving communication, and strengthening family bonds—ensuring children can remain safely at home.

In foster care, we saw meaningful growth in the number of licensed foster homes—creating more opportunities for children to find safe, nurturing environments and, in some cases, forever families.

Another major milestone in 2024 was the completion of our next three-year strategic plan for 2025–2027. In creating this plan, we listened closely to our community, stakeholders, and staff to understand where we need to go next. Our mission and values guided us as we set new goals, shaped department priorities, and aligned employee objectives—all with one shared purpose: to improve lives.

In putting our vision into words, we are reminded of the real children, individuals, and families behind everything we do. Their stories connect us to our mission and fuel our passion for service.

At Family & Children Services, we know we can't do this work alone. I am deeply moved as I read through the names in this report—individuals, businesses, and foundations who generously support our mission. Thank you for standing with us.

Together, we move closer to a future where every child is safe and cared for, mental health services are within reach, and parents are empowered to help their families thrive. ■

Diane L. Marquess



BOARD OFFICERS

Standing:

Brian Hudson, President; Victoria Reese, Secretary

Seated (Left to Right):

Carrie Morrow, Vice President; Diane Marquess, CEO;
Linda Miller, Treasurer

CELEBRATING BELONGING

Braydon Dennis was only eight years old when he entered foster care—a day marked by fear, confusion, and overwhelming sadness. As the car pulled into his Aunt Katie and Uncle Rob’s driveway instead of a stranger’s, Braydon’s fear turned into profound relief.

This was a place he knew—a place filled with warmth, love, and familiar faces.

Katie and Rob Kuipers had always been part of Braydon’s life. From a very young age, he spent weekends with them and their son, Weston, whenever his parents needed support. So, when the call came that Braydon needed a full-time home, there was never a question.

Katie and Rob opened their lives to him without hesitation.

At the time, Katie was pregnant with their second son, Carson. Yet, she says the transition to being Braydon’s full-time mom felt natural.

Braydon, who is talkative, curious, kind, and wise beyond his years, responded with maturity. Katie and Rob made sure he understood the process in age-appropriate ways, giving him the stability and clarity he needed. Communication became the anchor that helped Braydon feel secure and included.

One of the most important pieces of this journey, Katie notes, was the support from Braydon’s biological father—Katie’s brother—who consistently reassured



his son that he was exactly where he was meant to be. That respect and understanding made all the difference for Braydon, who loves easily and hard.

The experience with Family & Children Services was smooth and compassionate. Ira Green, their Foster Care Specialist, kept them informed and supported at every step. Larissa Haroff, who began as Braydon’s Family Support Worker and later became their Adoption Specialist, served as a constant, trusted presence. The consistency and care shown by Ira and Larissa helped make the path to adoption clear and comforting for everyone involved.

When it came time to finalize the adoption, the Kuipers chose National Adoption Day—a day already steeped in joy and community. The celebration was everything they hoped for: cake, face painting, and friends gathered to cheer on Braydon.

His only request? To wear a suit.

“We wanted it to be a day of celebration, not sadness,” Katie said. “And it truly was.”

That night, Braydon called it the best day of his life. His little cousin Weston, now officially his brother, was beaming.

Today, the Kuipers are simply a family—busy and full of love. Braydon and Weston are always on the go with sports, little Carson tagging along, and when the sun is shining, you’ll find them outside, soaking up childhood—a childhood Braydon now gets to fully live, surrounded by the family who chose him. ■





OUR PATH FORWARD: THE 2025-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

When our organization set out to create our new strategic plan, we wanted it to be more than just a document—it needed to reflect the heart of what we do.

Our goal was to create a plan that not only guides Family & Children Services but also unites every program and staff member under a shared purpose.

Whether working in mental health services or foster care and adoption, we need to move forward together with a common vision.

Through this process, we refined our mission statement to its essence: Family & Children Services strengthens the safety and well-being of children, individuals, and families. This mission is more than words—it is the foundation for everything we do.

Our vision is simple yet powerful. We envision:

- A community where children are cared for and protected.
 - Parents have the resources to support their children's growth and development.
 - Accessible mental health services for all who need them.
-

To ensure our strategic plan truly represents the needs of our community, we engaged in conversations with board members, community partners, donors, contractors, clients, and staff. These discussions were open and meaningful, allowing us to gain real insights from those we serve and those who support our mission.

Kelly Conway, a strategic planning consultant and Agency community volunteer, led us through the process.

"By combining direct community input with macro-level data, this strategic planning process ensured Family & Children Services is positioned to make the greatest possible impact. The plan reflects a shared commitment to strengthening services, supporting families, and driving measurable change," Kelly said.

Looking beyond statistics and into the lived experiences of those around us, this approach helped us develop a plan that prioritizes people first and focuses on five key areas to ensure every child, individual, and family in our community has the opportunity to thrive.

Seeking Family Care Homes

We believe every child deserves a safe, loving home where they are nurtured and protected. For some children facing challenges, living with their family can be difficult without the right support.

Our new program, Children's Treatment Family Care, assists children and families who are not involved in the foster care system yet require extra support by providing Family Care Homes.

Similar to foster homes, these homes provide a structured, nurturing environment where children can work through challenges while their parents learn strategies to support them when they return home.

This short-term program lasts 6-9 months and strengthens families by equipping them for long-term success.

Children receive tailored mental health support to develop problem-solving and coping skills. Parents get hands-on coaching to build confidence and tools to navigate challenges. Family Care parents receive 24/7 support, training, and resources.



If you'd like to help by becoming a Family Care or Foster Care parent, visit fcservice.org.

Our Plan:

1. Resilient Families

- Listening to family and client voices when designing programs and improving services.
- Addressing the root causes of instability to protect children and families.
- Creating pathways for continued care and support.

2. Mental Health Promotion

- Expanding access to therapy and reimagining how mental health services are delivered.
- Increasing community knowledge and reducing the stigma around mental health.

3. Community Innovation

- Building mission-aligned collaborations to create a collective impact for under-resourced communities.
- Breaking down barriers between disciplines and organizations to foster innovative solutions.

4. Empowered Talent

- Providing training and development for staff to confidently deliver high-quality services.
- Increasing staff engagement and strengthening their connection to our mission.
- Developing targeted recruitment strategies for professionals in public health and social services.

5. Financial Strength

- Maximizing service delivery and ensuring financial sustainability.
- Taking thoughtful risks to develop new revenue opportunities.
- Advocating for fair funding that reflects the true cost of our services.

“This new strategic plan takes our mission into action and is truly embedding it into everyone who works here and in everything we do,” said Family & Children Services CEO Diane Marquess. “It not only captures who we have always been, it pushes us to think bigger and do more for those we serve.”

At Family & Children Services, we believe every child, individual, and family deserves a strong foundation and a community that supports them. Our strategic plan is our commitment to making that vision a reality. ■



HELPING FAMILIES MOVE FORWARD

Closing the Gap on Autism Testing

When Shae Goretzka, Supervisor of Case Management Services, noticed a backlog of up to a year for children awaiting Autism testing, she took immediate action.

She reached out to Integrated Services of Kalamazoo (ISK) to explore ways to reduce the prolonged wait times. ISK identified a need for another certified professional in Autism screening and assessment and knew Family & Children Services could help fill that gap.

“ISK came to us because they know Family & Children Services sees a need and then meets it, while keeping client care front of mind,” Shae said. “It speaks to our relationship with ISK as well as our commitment to our clients and programs that they continually reach out to us when there is a gap in services.”

Determined to make a difference, Shae embarked on 40 hours of specialized training to earn her certification. Despite her dedication—balancing Autism screenings alongside her role as Supervisor—she soon realized the backlog was still too extensive.



Tria Williams,
Autism Diagnostic Specialist



Knowing that long delays deprived families of essential resources and support, Shae sought a solution aligned with Family & Children Services' mission of removing barriers to care. After discussions with leadership, she received approval to reassign a Case Management staff member to focus full-time on Autism screening and assessments.

Tria Williams, now the Autism Diagnostic Specialist, transitioned from Case Management into this critical role. Having witnessed the impact of delays firsthand, Tria was eager to be part of the solution. Her familiarity with Case Management ensured a seamless transition for families and allowed her former team to easily connect with her for Autism screenings when needed.

Since families must already be engaged in Case Management services to receive an assessment, Tria or Shae complete the evaluations and promptly share results with Case Managers. This streamlined process ensures families can quickly access the necessary services without further delays.

Thanks to the addition of a full-time diagnostician, the once-lengthy delay time for Autism screenings has been eliminated in just four months.

At Family & Children Services, our commitment to building resilient families means listening to their needs and frustrations. When parents expressed their distress over year-long delays for help, we responded by creating solutions to expand access and improve outcomes for children and families in our community. ■

BUILDING A READY WORKFORCE

In recent years, Family & Children Services has faced an ongoing challenge: ensuring we have enough skilled staff to meet the increasing demands of our clients and community.

Human services is a deeply rewarding yet demanding field, and finding qualified professionals who align with our mission has been difficult. We knew we had to be creative to find a long-term solution to help us today and establish a future-ready workforce.

Through a generous grant from the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation, we have collaborated with Western Michigan University and the Kalamazoo Higher Promise program to build a robust workforce development initiative. This program is designed to cultivate and nurture aspiring human service workers and clinicians, providing them with the necessary skills, experience, and resources to succeed in this critical profession.

One of the key components of this initiative is a stipend provided to students who intern with us. Being able to offer financial support ensures that we remain a viable option for students who might otherwise be drawn to other organizations and companies. This stipend allows them to focus on their professional development without the financial strain that comes with unpaid internships and enables us to promote our mission to interns looking to make decisions on future employment.

Our commitment to interns extends beyond financial incentives. We provide comprehensive hands-on learning that mirrors the realities of full-time employment in the field. Interns receive access to the same technology, tools, and resources as full-time staff, ensuring they gain practical experience with the systems and methods used in professional human services settings.

All interns participate in essential training programs that equip them with the foundational knowledge required for success in human services work. They also receive specialized instruction tailored to the unique approaches of Family & Children Services.

This combination of broad-based education and organization-specific training ensures that they emerge from their internships prepared for a career in human services and are well-versed in our agency's mission, values, and best practices.

Extending far beyond those who choose to remain with Family & Children Services post-internship, the impact of this program provides a deep understanding of our processes, the importance of our work, and the critical role human services play in the community even to students who pursue careers elsewhere. By embedding this knowledge and experience into future professionals, we are fostering a community-wide appreciation for the work we do and strengthening the overall network of support for children and families.

This initiative is a testament to the power of strategic partnerships and innovative solutions. By working with local institutions and leveraging the support of local foundations, we are addressing immediate staffing needs while laying the groundwork for a sustainable, knowledgeable, and passionate workforce.

As we continue to refine and expand this initiative, we remain committed to empowering the next generation of human services workers and ensuring our community has the support it needs to thrive. ■



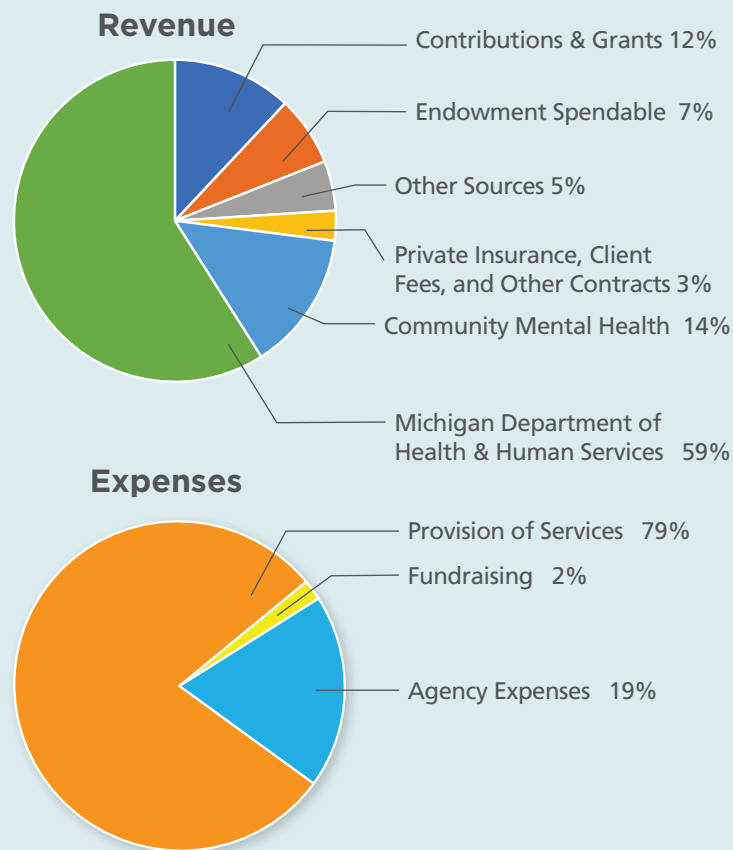
2024 Financial Highlights

In 2024, Family & Children Services continued to thrive thanks to the unwavering support of our community and partners. Our operating revenues reached \$7.74 million, a testament to the trust and commitment of those who believe in our mission.

We are especially grateful for the incredible \$1.29 million in contributions and grants from our generous donors, as well as \$751,742 from Agency Endowment Funds that directly fueled our programs. Additionally, we received \$200,000 in non-cash gifts, further enhancing our capacity to serve.

Operating expenses, excluding depreciation, totaled \$9.96 million, reflecting the scope and depth of the critical services we provide.

Though our financial position is strong at this time, reductions in child welfare and behavioral health funding could severely impact our ability to serve the most under resourced in our community. With your support and advocacy, we can continue to build a strong future for children and families.



Community Fund Supports Children's Medical Needs

The **Children's Medical Needs Fund (CMNF)** provides financial assistance for medical services and equipment to children under 18 with special healthcare needs, particularly those not fully covered by any other community, state, or federal resource.

Supported by the Kalamazoo Community Foundation and funded by a generous anonymous donor, **CMNF** is administered by Family & Children Services.

In 2024, one of the requests was for a support dog for a 10-year-old boy living with epilepsy. The boy's mother shared that his seizures were unpredictable and debilitating, leaving him with little quality of life. The diagnosis brought not only fear, but deep loneliness and stress that affected the entire family.

A heartfelt letter from the boy's physician strongly recommended a support dog, even helping the family



research a dog specifically trained to detect and respond to seizures, an invaluable resource in managing such a complex condition.

Thanks to the **CMNF**, a yellow Labrador trained in seizure detection joined the family, making for a happy, healthy little boy.

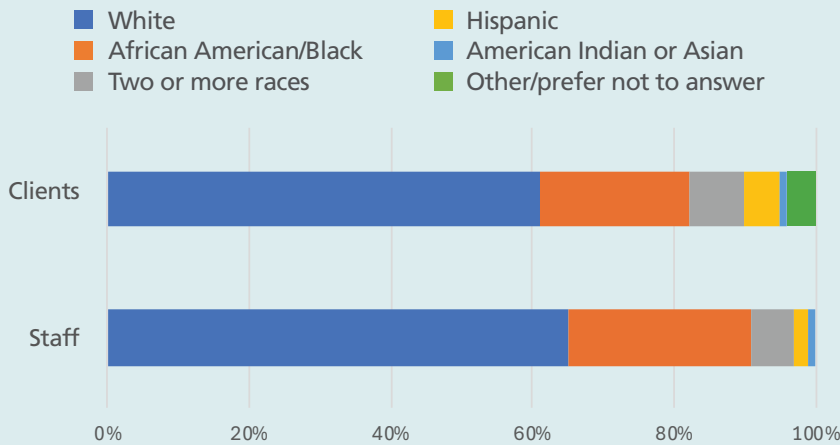
Support like this doesn't just change one moment, it transforms lives. Family & Children Services is honored to be part of this journey through the **Children's Medical Needs Fund**.

If you or someone you know needs support for a medical need, email **Tesi Klipsch** at tesi.klipsch@fcsources.org.

Who We Are & Who We Serve

4,448 Individuals Impacted
2,402 Children/Youth Impacted

More than 80% of those served have income under federal poverty guidelines



Customer Satisfaction Ratings

- 99% felt treated with respect
- 97% felt satisfied with all services
- 93% felt staff were sensitive to culture/ethnicity

Family & Children Services supported 4,448 individuals in 2024; of those impacted 2,402 were children/youth. More than 80% of those we serve live 200% below Federal Poverty guidelines, 20% identify as LGBTQIA+, 52% live with a physical and/or emotional impairment or disability, and 18% are homeless/unhoused.

Those we serve self-identify as 61% White, 21% African American/Black, 8% two or more races, 5% Hispanic/Latinx, 1% American Indian or Asian, and 4% other/prefer not to answer.

Positive Outcomes for Our Community

Child Welfare

Family Preservation and Parenting Support

- 882 individuals impacted
- 100% of high-risk families remained together after services

Foster Care and Adoption

- **Foster Care** – 739 individuals impacted
- **Adoption** – 924 individuals impacted
- **Licensing** – 591 individuals impacted
- **Relative/Kinship Caregivers** – 138 individuals impacted
- 43% of children achieved permanence within 24 months
- 100% of homes received monthly support to maintain child placement and support foster parents

Behavioral Health

Family and Community Treatment, Case Management, Outpatient Counseling, and Residential Services

- **The Counseling Center** – 498 individuals impacted
- **Community Based Mental Health** – 315 individuals impacted
- **Mobile Crisis Response** – 289 individuals impacted
- **Therapeutic Residential Youth Services** – 15 youth served
- 83% of youth/families improved or maintained their functioning



THANK YOU DONORS

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Jack & Helen Wattles: A Legacy of Quiet Generosity

Jack and Helen Wattles loved Kalamazoo. Helen was born here, while Jack was from South Bend. They met on a blind date at Western Michigan University.

Married with three children, they quietly fostered a thriving community. Their philanthropy wasn't about recognition but about instilling generosity in their family.

Believing strong communities were built on connections, support, and opportunity, their philanthropy focused on meaningful, lasting contributions, especially to camps. Both valued summer camps' role in childhood development and their ability to teach resilience, teamwork, and self-reliance.

Jack served over 40 years on the Kalamazoo YMCA board and helped found the Sherman Lake YMCA Outdoor Center, aligning with his values of honesty, caring, respect, and responsibility.

Longtime supporters of Family & Children Services, the Wattles helped launch its Summer Enrichment Program, ensuring access to camps and other summer enrichment opportunities for children. Their legacy of quiet generosity continues through the Wattles Family Foundation, enriching lives and strengthening communities.

Planned giving allows donors to impact families and children in our community well beyond their lifetimes. We appreciate the Wattles family and donors like them who continue to support this community long after they are gone.



To read more about Jack and Helen and learn more about creating a lasting impact through planned giving, visit <https://fcsource.org/support-us/make-a-planned-gift/>.

Enduring Impact: The VanWestriens

Paul and Barbara VanWestrienen exemplified service, generosity, and commitment to their community.

Dedicating themselves to helping others, Paul served over 20 years on the Family & Children Services board and Barbara appreciated that our services impacted children.

They gave intentionally, utilizing an enduring IRA fund to ensure their philanthropy has lasting impact by supporting local causes.

To read more about the VanWestriens and learn about planned giving, visit fcsource.org.



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We would like to extend a special
thank you to the following United
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This Annual Report recognizes
those who gave between
January 1, 2024 – December 31,
2024. While every attempt was
made to report names accurately,
please accept our apology if we
have made an error. If you would
like a change in the way your
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Office at 269.488.7936. Our most
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- * Funds are held at the Kalamazoo
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- ^ All or a portion of this gift was
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Join Our Vision to Meet Needs & Improve Lives

Your generosity helps every child find safety,
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Creating safe, stable homes for children starts
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HANDLE WITH CARE Annual Fund is a unique
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Our **Summer Enrichment** program provides
opportunities for children served by the agency
to participate in activities over the summer, such
as day and overnight camp, academic tutoring,
art and music classes, sports, and more.

Holiday Giving matches client families and
children with individuals, schools, community
groups, and corporate donors to provide holiday
gifts and gift cards during the holiday season.

Our **Year-Round Pantry** collects in-kind gifts
from the community to support client needs such
as blankets, bedding, coats, household items,
personal care products, diapers, back-to-school
items, toys, and books.

Visionary Club donors provide planned gifts
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To make a gift, please contact Courtenay
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