

# 2024 Annual Report



Creating a better future for children & families.

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Each year around this time, we take a moment to reflect on our work and the progress we've made. We assess our approach to serving the community, celebrate what has been successful, and collaborate to identify opportunities for growth and improvement in the year ahead.

Vision for Children at Risk (VCR) continues to be deeply committed to centering the voices and perspectives of the community, ensuring that our work is guided by genuine representation. We approach our mission through collaboration, viewing community members as equal partners, united in addressing challenges and advocating for racial equity through grassroots initiatives. Our team, including leadership, mirrors the diversity of the communities we serve, with many members sharing lived experiences that resonate with the families we support. Programs such as our Cafés and the community-driven Parent Advisory Councils empower families and community members to actively shape the services we offer. Cafés provide a welcoming space where families can share their stories, offer feedback to service providers, and influence the direction of our services. The Parent Advisory Council helps strengthen advocacy skills, offering families a platform to amplify their voices.

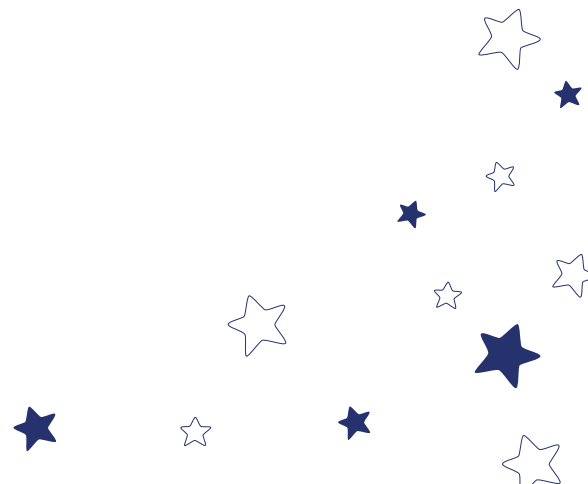
VCR continues to lead in various collaborative efforts, including the System of Care Council, LIFT-MO, and the STLCANN Collaborative, all dedicated to promoting well-being and prevention. Highlights from 2024 include a public awareness campaign aimed at reducing the stigma around mental health and connecting individuals with critical services. Another major initiative was LIFT-MO, a partnership with DSS and the Family and Community Trust, which supports families receiving TANF through a peer support model. Our team also stays engaged in ongoing conversations with community members, listening to their evolving needs and building trust over time. This grassroots engagement ensures that our services remain relevant and responsive to the specific challenges families in St. Louis face.

As we look forward to another year, we stay focused on progress and extend our sincere gratitude to the partners, parents, and providers who make our work possible.

Sincerely,

*Sararia Sulaiman*

Chief Executive Officer



## WHO WE ARE

Vision for Children at Risk is a nonprofit dedicated to promoting the well-being of children, families, and the community. Over the past three decades, we have advocated tirelessly to change the relentless inequities that persist in our region's systems. The work of building a better future for children at risk has never been easy, but it has always been rewarding.

**We do it by sticking to what we know works: engaging with the experience, passion, and creative voices of our community members.** Our team is committed to empowering families and uplifting communities. We cultivate active collaborations to develop new ideas and methods for protecting our community's youngest and most vulnerable members.



## WHY WE DO IT

We believe that the neighborhood in which a child lives should not determine the limits of their future. We know that change is possible when you empower parents and engage with communities as partners in the work of protecting our region's children.

## WHAT WE DO

Vision for Children at Risk (VCR) promotes the well-being of children, youth, and their families, with a primary focus on those impacted by socioeconomic risk and racial inequity. **We do this by:**



**Informing** the community with data and research,



Promoting **collaborative** action,



**Engaging** and supporting families, and



**Advocating** for child well-being through policy and community investment.

## Parent Cafés | Hosted 19 Cafés and 2 Training Institutes

Parent Cafés are hosted by parents for parents, and provide parents and caregivers a safe and welcoming space to connect and learn from each other. Over the years, we've had parents describe their experience and the impact on their family with phrases such as: personal growth, connection & community, improved relationship with self, connected to community resources, and improved communication & interpersonal skills.

- "I am learning to communicate with others in a safe setting."
- "We are a stronger family."
- "I learned how to handle situations with my child better."

## Walked Alongside Families Navigating Complex Services & Systems

**One of our Family Support Partners shares the story of a mother she's been walking alongside:**

*A mother of nine children has faced significant challenges over the past two years, including multiple instances of displacement and homelessness. Through it all, including the loss of multiple jobs, she has remained connected to our Family Support Partner (FSP) program where I've been able to share my lived experiences and support her journey. She has demonstrated remarkable resilience in overcoming each obstacle. When she first began her journey, she had no transportation and was living with a family member, without a home of her own.*

*Her oldest son has presented some difficult behavioral challenges, but through it all, this mother has shown incredible strength and perseverance. With the support of System of Care, she has navigated these tough situations with courage and determination, learning and growing from her experiences.*

*This mother is nothing short of phenomenal. She will soon graduate as a certified CNA. She now has reliable transportation, a full-time job, and recently moved into a spacious 6-bedroom home. Her oldest child is receiving better support and showing significant improvement in his mental health. Through all the ups and downs, this mother has demonstrated resilience and an unwavering commitment to her children's well-being. She has built her confidence, making empowered decisions that ensure her family feels safe and happy.*

## Wrapped Up 5 Great Years with PACT-STL (Parents and Children Together-St. Louis) and Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions in Unmet Needs for Children's Health)

**We celebrate an incredible five years of impact through two federal initiatives that have enhanced support for children and families in St. Louis, leaving a lasting positive effect on the community.** We know there is still work to be done and we continue to explore ways to sustain our efforts and learnings so that we can better serve children and families. Here's what some members shared about the impact:

"Connection with other parents helped participants open up to others, see different perspectives, feel less alone, and made their challenges easier"

"[There is] more communication in my family, we are more active. It's actually gotten our physical and mental [health] to where, you know, the kids, our older kids, are able to express themselves more than what they were expressing themselves when I first became a part of the program."

"I've been able to utilize services outside of just cafes. Very, very helpful services that also help not only myself, but you know what we're in it for, for our families which ultimately helps the community like it, all works together."

## DATA & RESEARCH



### CMSL Release

This year, we released the 13th Edition of the Children of Metropolitan St. Louis: A Data Book for the Community (CMSL) and included partner and parent voices throughout!

### Top 4 Anticipated Use Cases for the CMSL

1. Grant & funding application and reporting;
2. Program development/planning;
3. Needs assessments; and
4. Personal knowledge and growth.

**CMSL Books Distributed**  
(electronic & print)

**250+**

“I have used data from the CMSL Data Book over the years for professional projects that I have worked on- from grant writing to professional development training. **It has been an awesome resource!** Thank you!”

“I have used your research resource for many years: as a member of a...board of directors; working on grant writing teams; in my advocacy role representing students and families...**This book has been a treasure for years! I love being able to see how our community is functioning through the data.** Thank you for the excellent work.”

### Children’s Data Center

After launching in 2023, our Children’s Data Center is becoming a vital resource to the community. This year we updated the data and released a new feature, Customized Reports! This new feature will be especially helpful to folks diving deep with the data. It allows you to tailor a report to your specific needs by selecting a targeted group of geographies and multiple years of data for a child well-being indicator of interest.



Scan & Click to access our [Children’s Data Center!](#)

**Children’s Data Center Views**  
**850+**

### Head Start Reports

Over the years VCR has produced numerous reports and publications. We welcome opportunities to collaborate on such projects and strives to produce reports that help foster informed, community-driven action that is aimed at addressing inequities and improving the well-being of children and families in our community.

This year, we were able to support Urban League and YWCA Head Start with their Community Assessment Reports.

# COLLABORATION



Parent partners, community partners, and organizational partners are an integral part of our work of improving child well-being. We utilize an Advisory Council model made up of parents, community members, and partners to guide and implement the work, because the well-being of children is a shared responsibility that requires the concerted effort of society, communities, and families. Some of our key initiatives of 2024 included:

- **Parents & Children Together - St. Louis (PACT-STL):** Preventing child abuse and neglect and improving the safety, stability and well-being of families.
- **Project LAUNCH:** Fostering the healthy development and wellness of young children in the City of St. Louis by working alongside the community.
- **St. Louis Child Abuse & Neglect Network (STLCANN):** Preventing child abuse & neglect and promoting advocacy, education, and networking to improve the lives of children and families who have been impacted by abuse or neglect.
- **The System of Care – Children’s Mental Health Initiative (SOC-CMHI):** Coordinating a comprehensive spectrum of mental health and essential support services that builds upon the strengths of youth and their families, and ensures care is centered around the child and driven by the family.
- **LIFT-MO:** Walking alongside families enrolled in TANF as they navigate services and systems, identify and engage their natural supports, and grow their skills and parenting confidence.

## 2024 Highlights

### STLCANN

Provided education and networking opportunities for professionals and community organizations with **4 trainings, averaging 92 registrants per session.**

Co-hosted our 9th Annual Stepping Up for Kids event.

### Project LAUNCH

LEAP Ahead logged 2,000+ developmental, social, and emotional screenings in 2024, with 9000+ throughout the 5-year grant.

Supported a year of coaching to family childcare homes on the Center for Social Emotional Foundation on Early Learning (CSEFEL) Pyramid Model through our partnership with United4Children.

**“The most valuable thing that... I’ve learned is teaching the kids techniques to calm down when they’re feeling frustrated or angry.”**  
Childcare Provider,  
Coaching Participant

Engaged 48 organizations plus 10 representatives from the Parent Advisory Councils through the Joint SOC and Project LAUNCH Council.

**“I really appreciate the strategy of taking care of myself so I can pass that on to the students. I have to self-regulate to help them regulate.”**  
SLPS teacher,  
Conscious Discipline Participants

### LIFT MO

We had the honor of presenting at the 2024 APSHA (American Public Human Services Association) Conference. This was a great platform to share about our core family engagement work and Missouri’s innovative approach through LIFT-MO.

### PACT-STL

Spread the impact of Parent Cafes & Vitality Cafes, by hosting 2 training institutes.

Offered 3 sessions of Incredible Years in collaboration with community partners.

Hosted the **Annual Healthy Family Summit** alongside community partners and parents. The two days of education, engagement, and empowerment touched over 60 families and community partners.

**Healthy Family Summit Sessions:**

- How to advocate for your child’s education,
- Importance of Parent Voice,
- Economic Empowerment,
  - and more!

### System of Care (SOC)

Collaborated with community partners to offer cultural competency training on serving youth of color and LGBTQI youth.

Provided trauma- and grief-informed care through three community partners

Continue to bring organizational and family partners together to strengthen and expand mental health services:

Critical Case Staffing- a collaborative effort when families have exhausted mental health resources and require additional assistance and advocacy navigating systems.

Co-hosted the Annual Children’s Mental Health Day events. The first day reached 60+ people virtually for educational sessions on topics such as mental health and LGBTQI youth, mindfulness, and trauma. The next day was an in-person celebration with over 200 participants and featured a presentation by our Youth Advisory Council members, inspiring step and dance performances, activities, and more.



We engage, empower, and provide education to parents and caregivers so they are equipped to be the best parents they can be. We believe in and support parents' power to create positive, lasting change within their own families and throughout our region. Our north star is child well-being, but we cannot get there without family well-being.

## 2024 Highlights

### Family Support Services

Our Family Support Team, made up of Family Support Partners (FSPs), a Resource Advocate, and Family Engagement Specialists, bring lived experience to their roles of peer support. They understand the complexities of life and trust parents as the experts on their families.

Our LIFT MO Resource Advocate has played a vital role this year in helping to assist 61 families on TANF with over 170 referrals to a wide array of services and connecting them with benefits within the TANF program that many are unaware of.

Family Support Services continue to be a key strategy for building trusting relationships. With this foundation, many seek and accept clinical professional supports and services, including mental health services, medical services, housing supports, and more from our amazing partners.

Throughout 2024, our System of Care/Family Support Services Team served over 140 families, reaching 182 youth and siblings. Our Project LAUNCH and PACT-STL Family Engagements Specialists also served over 675 individuals.

### County Courts

Because of the trust we build, outside organizations have also sought us out as a safe connection for families. We are excited about the connection our System of Care Councils have made this year to support family engagement efforts with the County Courts.

### Cafés

Cafés help us focus on our own well-being, strengthen our families, and make a difference in our community. They continue to be a valuable tool for building trust in the community- a core foundation to serving families more comprehensively, connecting them with resources, and creating opportunities for them to use their voice for change.

## Parent Cafés

19

**“I practiced ways to talk with others that will improve my relationships.”**

– Parent Cafe Participant

**Our north star is child well-being, but we cannot get there without family well-being.**

**“I’ve never had a worker fight for me like you did!”**

–LIFT MO Participant

### Incredible Years®

Incredible Years aligns closely with the vision and mission of VCR where the parent/child relationship is at the heart of child’s development and behavior. In 2024, we had 30 parents complete this parenting program.

### Family Support Network

All of the families walking alongside our SOC Family Support Partners have the opportunity to also connect with one another through the Family Support Network. Our Family Support Services are built upon peer support, and this Network is a unique space for families to directly connect with and support one another while they are facing similar challenges. They met bi-monthly throughout 2024 and worked to actively strengthen their parenting skills and knowledge through relevant topics of learning and discussion.

## Vitality Cafés

19

**“I have a better understanding of how I can increase my personal well-being.”**

– Vitality Cafe participant PACT-STL



VCR believes that no meaningful advocacy for a community can be done without acknowledging the community as an equal partner. We are committed to uplifting and empowering the voices of our community members, recognizing them as powerful advocates for our region.

## 2024 Highlights

### Parent & Youth Advisory Councils

Parent and Youth Advisory Councils are focused on ensuring that leadership and decision-making power is in the hands of those most impacted. We serve to facilitate, connect members with each other, and connect the councils to a broad network of systems change makers. Throughout 2024, we had three Parent Advisory Councils and one Youth Advisory Council with very engaged members. Each council also has representatives that serve on the overseeing initiative councils/collaboratives as well.

The Bold Futures/SOC Youth Advisory Council Members worked on re-defining how people might see them. They presented their "I am, I am not" statements at this year's Children's Mental Health Day Celebration:

"I am listening, I am going to keep trying. I am not a failure, I'm not going to give up."

"I am learning from my mistakes, I am not your description- I do not fit it."

The PACT-STL Council planned a full Educational Series for the community focused on relevant topics for strengthening families and preventing child abuse and neglect.

The Project LAUNCH and PACT-STL Parent Advisory Councils wrapped up at the end of the grant period in September, but we were thrilled that several of these members found a fit within our System of Care Parent Advisory Council.

### Legislative Wrap-Up

We joined STLCANN and Generate Health for another year's Legislative Wrap-Up. Presenters joined us from Missouri Budget Project, Kids Win MO, and Missouri Network Against Child Abuse. Despite a challenging year for policies supportive of children and families, our presenters left us inspired to continue advocating for children and families.



### Connected2Thrive:

#### A Public Awareness Campaign

This year we launched Connected2Thrive, a public awareness campaign focused on reducing mental health stigma and preventing child abuse and neglect. It's a two part campaign that we released in April and May, celebrating Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention month and Children's Mental Health month respectively. Although designed in the final year of both Project LAUNCH and PACT-STL, Connected2Thrive is a great way for us to keep the work going.

The campaign utilized a dedicated website, social media, local newspapers, and public radio to promote mental health-related resources and messaging aimed at encouraging help-seeking behaviors and supporting community well-being. We estimate the reach to be over 150,000 people.

Connected2Thrive is a community vision, where St. Louis thrives because we have open dialogue about overall health and the availability of needed resources so families can show up in strong and resilient ways for their children.

**Together, we can prevent child abuse and neglect and reduce mental health stigmas.**



**60,000**  
Connected2Thrive ads printed and distributed by the St. Louis American

**350+** People visited the Connected2Thrive website in 2024

**66,000** St. Louis Public Radio listeners reached weekly (2 weeks total)

**19,000** Facebook users reached with the first April and May posts





# OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**OFFICERS**  
 Bryan Berry- **President**  
 Bob Buck- **Vice-President**  
 Michael Dozier- **Treasurer**  
 Thomas Nolan- **Secretary**

**MEMBERS**  
 Nanci A. Bobrow, Ph.D.  
 Maggie Callon  
 Marga Fronmuller  
 Marie Kenyon  
 Josh Morris

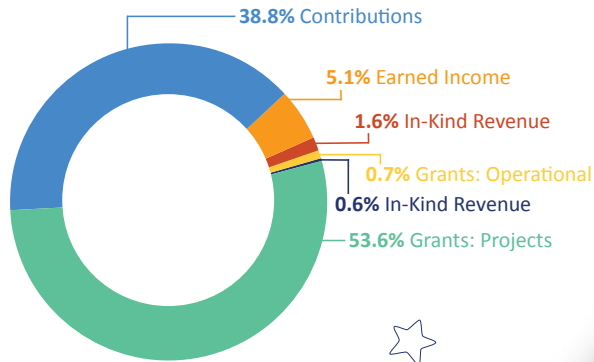
Dennis O'Connor, MD  
 Michael O'Connor, MD  
 Jamala Rogers  
 Ron Stephens  
 Sanaria Sulaiman

# OUR FUNDERS

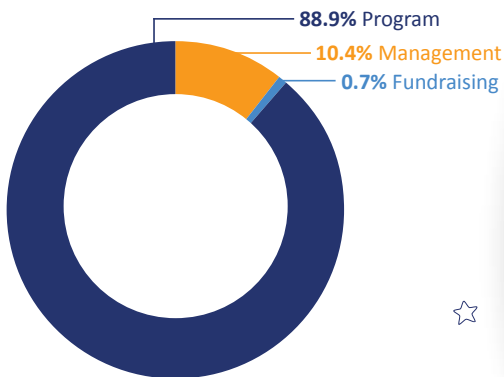
- Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF)
- STL County Children’s Service Funds
- Deaconess Foundation
- The Mental Health Board
- STUPP Foundation
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

# OUR FINANCES

REVENUE \$3,211,108



EXPENSES \$1,927,844



# CONNECT WITH US



[visionforchildren.org](http://visionforchildren.org)

# REVENUE GROWTH 2019 through 2024

