

Helping the Youngest Victims of Abuse Heal and Thrive



Annual Report 2021

From Our Executive Director



Thank you for your interest in the Canopy Child Advocacy Center. Canopy was founded in November 2018 under the auspice of the Domestic Violence and Child Advocacy Center. In March 2020, Canopy was incorporated as an Ohio non-profit and in January 2021 obtained its 501 (c) (3) status. It is independently governed by a board of directors.

Canopy is the only child advocacy center in Cuyahoga County and is based on a national best practice model designed to prevent and address child abuse and neglect. More than just a child and family friendly physical space, Canopy functions as an interagency response hub that manages and coordinates service providers to ensure timely, relevant, and high-quality service delivery.

Canopy and its partner agencies provide forensic interviews, medical and mental health services, victim advocacy, law enforcement and prosecution support, Multi-Disciplinary Team case review, and case tracking. With all the partners present during the forensic interviews, it limits the number of times a child has to tell the worst story of their lives—sometimes to a single interview.

Canopy's mission is to serve children and families affected by child abuse through a multi-disciplinary partnership focused on safety, healing, and well-being. We envision a community where children are safe, families are resilient, and those affected by child abuse are empowered to heal and thrive.

We invite you to learn more, advocate and donate to protect vulnerable children at Canopy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Johnson".

Jennifer L. Johnson, MSSA, LISW-S
Executive Director

Canopy's Mission, Vision and History

Mission & Vision

Canopy's mission is to serve children and families affected by child abuse through a multi-disciplinary partnership focused on safety, healing, and well-being. We envision a community where children are safe, families are resilient, and those affected by child abuse are empowered to heal and thrive.

Our multidisciplinary team conducts case reviews and meets with Cuyahoga County families from the beginning of their engagement with Canopy to the end of their journey towards healing. This ensures that the child has all the support from law enforcement, medical, therapy, children's services, victim advocacy and prosecution as they have to tell the worst story of their lives.

History

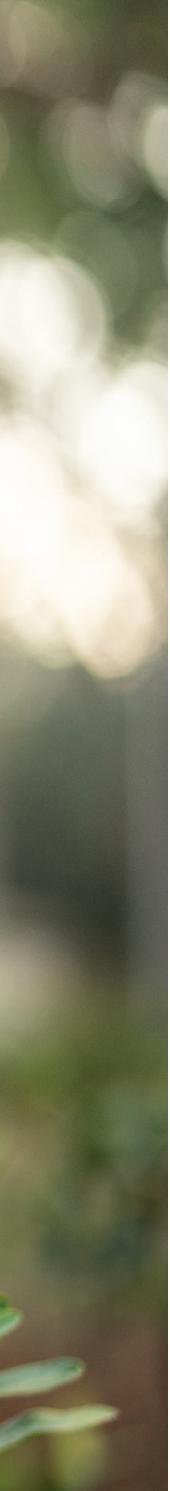
On November 19, 2018, Canopy successfully opened its doors thanks to tremendous hard work and dedication of each of the partners. In our first year, we saw 692 clients, exceeding our original goal by nearly 14%. We were also able to incorporate services for human trafficking victims and have eagerly answered calls to assist with providing services and advocacy to this vulnerable population.

Culminating the original vision of community partners, on January 1, 2021, Canopy became an independent 501 (c) (3) nonprofit working toward full accreditation with the National Children's Alliance. We expanded beyond Cleveland to include additional Cuyahoga County suburbs.

Due to the pandemic, we saw a decline in the number of cases due to limited interactions with those who normally would report abuse such as teachers and daycare providers. This caused us to redouble our efforts for community outreach and working with our partners. For example, Canopy expanded partnerships with three additional law enforcement organizations and deepened the work currently being done with human trafficking victims and those at risk of human trafficking.

Canopy also focused on cultivating relationships with stakeholders as an independent entity and cultivating future partnerships that focused on Canopy's sustainability. We continue to build our fundraising programs so that we can be a vital resource to those in need.





A Look at 2021 by the Numbers

In 2021, of the **478** clients served, **434** children received forensic interviews on site at Canopy which resulted in nearly **20%** of those involved in law enforcement being accepted into prosecution.

Victim Advocacy was provided **3,249** times and **327** kids were referred to therapy.

Each case was reviewed at least **17** times by the multidisciplinary team with over **60%** reviewed by an advanced medical consultant.

A breakdown of our clients demographically:

Gender

Female	356
Male	120
Unidentified	2

Ages

0-6 years	210
7-12 years	232
13-17 years	30
18-24 years	2
25-59 years	3
60+ years	1

Race

Black or African American	264
White	127
Multiple Races	34
Asian	1
Unknown	52

Allegations

Sexual Abuse	371
Child-on-Child Sexual Behaviors	71
Human Trafficking (Sexual)	13
Neglect	12
Sexualized Behavior	9
Physical Abuse	7
Sexual Assault	7
Incest	4
Sexual Exploitation of a Child	3
Internet Crimes Against Children	2

Ethnicity

Not Hispanic or Latino	371
Hispanic or Latino Hispanic	54
Unidentified	53

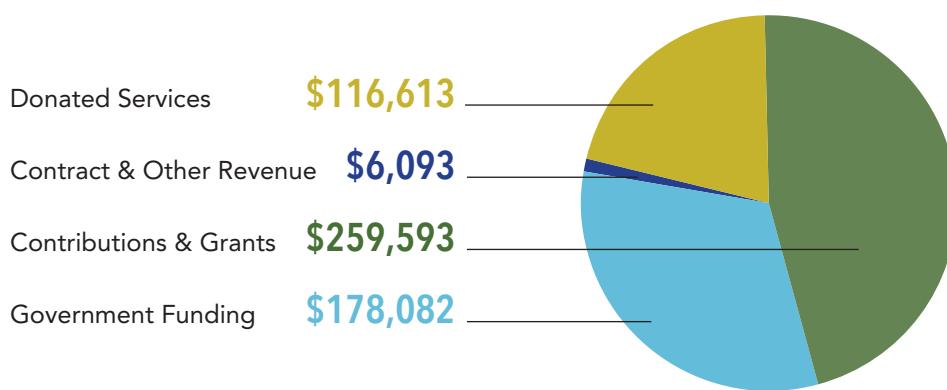
Financials

(January 1–June 30, 2021)

Canopy follows a July 1–June 30 fiscal year. Because Canopy became an independent 501 (c) 3 on January 1, 2021, our latest financials, compiled by an independent auditing firm, reflect a six-month period from January 1 to June 30, 2021.

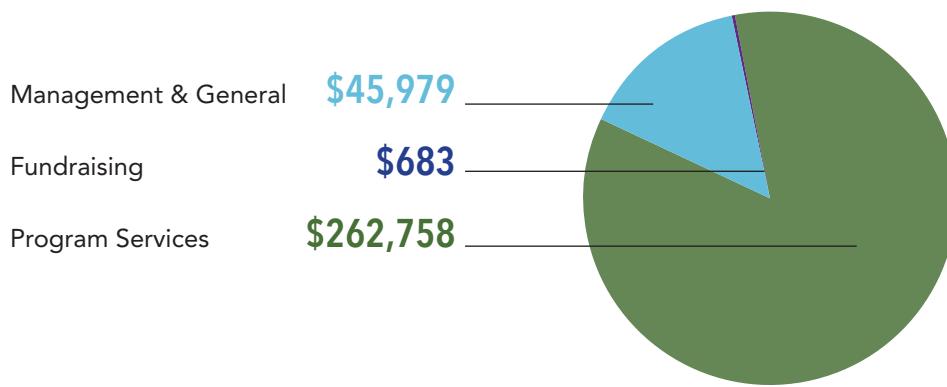
Revenues

January–June 2021



Expenses

January–June 2021



What Our Partners Say About Canopy



Multidisciplinary Team Partners

Cleveland Clinic Foundation	Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office
Cleveland Division of Police	Frontline Service
Cleveland Rape Crisis Center (CRCC)	Journey Center for Safety and Healing
Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS)	MetroHealth Systems
Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office	Local Suburban Law Enforcement Agencies
	University Hospitals



"The Child Advocacy Center (CAC) is an invaluable resource for the Sex Crimes and Child Abuse Unit! Law enforcement no longer has to struggle to line up all parts of the child's safety and our investigation. The CAC brings everyone together in one place ensuring there is open communication and that everyone is able to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of the child and their family. The agency and the staff are so caring, professional and understanding. We truly couldn't provide this level of service without them!"

Sgt. Tom Forester

Sex Crimes and Child Abuse Unit, Cleveland Police

"Our forensic nursing team is proud to support Canopy, a center that provides a powerful child-focused environment where medical care is provided as part of a multidisciplinary team that includes mental health, law enforcement, child protective services and prosecution all working together to develop a coordinated strategy to support a child in need."

Michele Reali-Sorrell, DNP, RN

Cleveland Clinic Nurse Manager Forensic Nursing

"Being a part the multidisciplinary team within Canopy has been such a great asset for the families we work with. It has given me so much hope to see how things can work when providers from different professions come together to best serve our families in need. This collaboration makes a real and noticeable difference in the quality of mental health care for families that have been through such terrible events."

Kevin Torigoe, MSSA, LISW-S
FrontLine Service



"The important work of Child Protection and Advocacy never ends. Our staff work tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of every child that we encounter. However, we could never do this work alone.

That is why our Community Partners, like those at the Canopy Child Advocacy Center, are so vital and valued. The staff at the CAC are always there for us, to assist us with some of our most challenging cases. The work that Jennifer and her staff does is nothing short of amazing. It's very clear how much they cherish the children that come through their doors and treat them with compassion and kindness. However, their advocacy is taken to a different level in the genuine concern they show for our staff and with the support they are always willing to provide."

Christopher Cabot
Deputy Director, CCDCFS



Taking Steps Toward Healing



It is hard to imagine the trauma that a child experiences when subjected to inappropriate and sexualized contact by an adult. An example of the work of Canopy does happen earlier this year, when the team met with a 7-year-old girl who came in for a forensic interview (FI) after disclosing to her father that she was inappropriately touched by a male neighbor while visiting her mother.

The parents were divorced, and the child primarily lived with her father. When the child disclosed this information, the father immediately contacted the police. The police contacted Department of Children Family Services, who then contacted Canopy to schedule a forensic interview.

Everything that Canopy did for the child and her father was designed to reduce potential trauma and take steps towards healing. When the family came to Canopy, they were warmly greeted by all Canopy staff. The front desk staff person explained the process the family would go through while at Canopy, completed intake paperwork, and offered snacks, juice, and water to try to put the family at ease.

Next, the victim advocate assigned to the case met with the family, explained their role, and provided resources to the family. This helped the family to feel more comfortable and supported while trying to process a difficult situation.

Ultimately, as many of the children who come to Canopy do, the child disclosed abuse during the FI. Members of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) including law enforcement, victim advocacy, and prosecution watched the interview in real time to hear the information first-hand.

Throughout the interview, the interviewer came out and asked members of the MDT if there were any additional questions or information they wanted to know. This helped the team gather a more comprehensive interview, so they would not have to go back and re-interview the child; making her relive a traumatic situation.

During the interview the child displayed no signs of distress. The forensic interviewer asked questions in a non-traumatizing and objective manner, creating a safe space for the child to disclose. Also, during the interview the child drew pictures on the “writable” table, which contributed to the child being less anxious during the interview.

After the interview, law enforcement and the victim advocate met with the family to explain the next steps. The child was referred for therapy and was able to receive crisis intervention services immediately while waiting for her first mental health appointment.

We are proud of the effectiveness of working together as a multi-disciplinary team. This story underscores the need for Canopy Child Advocacy Center. The family is on the road to healing and the alleged perpetrator is being pursued by the criminal justice professionals.



Recognition of Donors



Our donors help Canopy build a lifeline to our clients. We are so grateful to the following organizations and individuals who supported Canopy in 2021:

Alpha & Omega Logistics Inc
CARES Act (via Cuyahoga County)
Cleveland Foundation
Community West Foundation
Constellation Community Champions
Department of Justice, Office For Victims of Crime
Falk Brothers
Fowler Family Foundation
Gund Foundation
Health and Human Services (Cuyahoga County)
Kaulig Foundation
Three Arches Foundation
Victims of Crime Act (Ohio Attorney General)

Board of Directors

William Lipscomb, President
Philanthropist/ Independent Non-Profit Consultant

Janet Flory, Vice President
Child Welfare Consultant

Jennifer Driscoll, Secretary
Prosecutor/ Supervisor
Cuyahoga County Major Trials Unit

Matthew Golish, Treasurer
Senior Counsel, Walter Haverfield

Paula Atwood
Student Advisor, Women in Transition
at Cuyahoga Community College

Rosemary Creeden,
Associate Director, Trauma Services
Frontline Service

Diane Daiber
Forensic Nursing Specialist, International
Association of Forensic Nurses

Melissa Graves
CEO, Journey Center for Safety and
Healing

Heather Miksch
Lieutenant, Special Victims Units
Cleveland Division of Police

Sondra Miller
President/ CEO
Cleveland Rape Crisis Center

Kevin Tabor
Partner, Thompson Hine, LLP

Tips for Parents and Caregivers

What should you do if a child discloses abuse?

Remain calm. Avoid making facial expressions when the child is speaking and emphasize your acceptance.

Help make the child feel comfortable. Telling someone about abuse is difficult and uncomfortable.

Listen closely to what the child has to say. Limit questions or interruptions when possible. Be patient.

Don't interrogate. Let the child explain to you in their own words what happened. Ask open ended questions and only what is necessary for you to be able to reach out to a professional.

Emphasize safety. Reassure the child that what happened is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing by saying something.



Making a Report

A report of abuse can be made if you have a “reasonable suspicion” that abuse is taking place. Report all the facts about the situation that you know. You do not have to investigate or confirm any information.

To report child abuse in Cuyahoga County, OH, Call **216.696.5437 (KIDS)**

Canopy Staff

Jennifer Johnson
Executive Director

Timothy Benedict
Community Response Team Coordinator

Heaven Miller
Multidisciplinary Team Coordinator

Mariah Stambaugh
Family Liaison

Marya Simmons
Operations Manager

Other important members of our team:

Kelly White
Victim Advocate, Cleveland Rape Crisis Center

Laura Skerbec
Therapist, Cleveland Rape Crisis Center

Jennifer Mancino
Therapist, Journey Center for Safety and Healing

Brittany Whitley
Victim Advocate, Journey Center for Safety and Healing

Marina Giannirakis
Victim Advocate, Journey Center for Safety and Healing

Mauricea Sweet
Victim Advocate, Journey Center for Safety and Healing

Dr Joshua Friedman
Advance Medical Consultant, MetroHealth

Your donation to Canopy can make a world of difference in building a community where children are safe, families are resilient, and those affected by child abuse are empowered to heal and thrive. You can immediately help children heal from devastating circumstances by donating online: canopycac.org/get-involved or by sending a contribution to the address below.

Interested in learning more ways to help Canopy?
Please contact Jennifer Johnson at jjohnson@canopy.org
or call 216.514.4325, ext 250



P.O. Box 5386, Cleveland, OH 44101