

# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT





## A Message from Our Chief Executive Officer

As we reflect on the achievements of our organization in the year 2022, we hold space for both joy and grief. In this incredibly challenging year, Vision for Children at Risk and our community lost Rich Patton, VCR's visionary leader for over 25 years. The 12th edition of the Children of Metropolitan St. Louis: A Data Book for the Community (CMSL) was dedicated to this true legend in the field. Mr. Patton and the founding board of our organization have used decades of data to reveal the inequities facing our community. From the first days of VCR's work, Mr. Patton led the effort to focus on and build race equity, a vision and mission that has grown stronger as the years go by. Always remembering the start our founders and late leader gave us, we push on with renewed clarity and determination.

Every year, the CMSL Data Book highlights over 40 indicators of child well-being. In recognition that quantitative data can only go so far in representing the triumphs and challenges of a community, we have taken additional steps to integrate stories of lived experiences from the people we serve. We believe that lived experiences are key sources of meaningful data, and must be incorporated and given equal consideration to traditional quantitative data when making data-driven recommendations and policy decisions.

This year, VCR also partnered with Race Forward to focus on the Building Race Equity training, as well as to better understand how institutional and structural racial inequities

are grounded in history and ongoing practice. This training was offered to VCR's staff, board members, and parent and community partners. We all operate within the context of systemic racism, and this training aimed to offer insight on the awareness and decision-making strategies needed to combat the effects of these systems.

In another memorable highlight of this very busy year, VCR also hosted and celebrated the seventh annual Stepping Up for Children event, during which we honored many of the people who are making a difference in the lives of children and families in our region. Each of our honorees actively creates a better future for children through their dedicated efforts, finding hope amidst the challenges and celebrating the uniqueness of every child.

The VCR team continues to walk alongside families, creating safe spaces where they can come together to focus on parenting skills, building leadership capacity, and advocating together. We value our parents and community members as essential partners in our work. As we begin the new year, we reaffirm our commitment to them, and to the children for whom this organization was built so many years ago.

Sincerely,

*Sanaria 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.



## 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.



## 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.



## 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

### Parent Cafés

We hosted/  
sponsored over

# 40

Parent Cafés this year!

"I am walking away with a reminder that so many parents share the same struggles and with a renewed commitment to finding community with other parents. **It's just so helpful and uplifting to have a place to come and connect with other parents.** The structure helps to focus the conversation, while also promoting connection and vulnerable sharing."

*-Parent Café Participant*

**2** Initiatives

**1** Council

**42** Organizations

**10+** Parent and  
Youth Advisory  
Council  
Representatives



Guiding the work of  
the St. Louis Region  
System of Care and  
Project LAUNCH.

# 10

Caregivers, Service  
Providers, and Child  
Advocates were  
honored at our  
Stepping Up for Kids  
Annual event.

# 175

We have distributed  
over 175 print and  
electronic copies of  
our 12th Edition CMSL  
(A Data Book for the  
Community).

# 180

New participants  
joined the  
PACT-STL Parent  
Cafés this year.

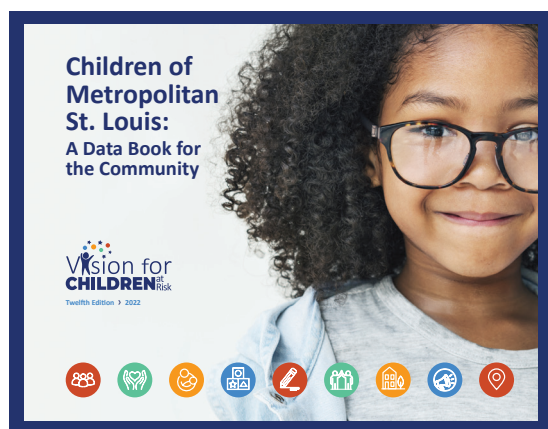
# 13

Project LAUNCH and  
PACT-STL both began  
offering Vitality Cafés  
this year.

## Children of Metropolitan St. Louis: A Data Book for the Community

We were proud to release our 12th edition of the Children of Metropolitan St. Louis: A Data Book for the Community (CMSL) this year. This includes our first look at children's well-being data since the COVID-19 pandemic which we know has had dramatic impacts on our community.

The CMSL continues to highlight the persistent inequities and disparities in child well-being outcomes evident across the St. Louis region while also offering recommendations of what we can do differently. This new edition highlights both quantitative data and qualitative data through lived experiences of parents in our community.

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[Download](#)
[Order Today](#)


## Children's Data Center: Coming SOON!

Alongside producing the CMSL, we have taken a renewed look at the data this year. We have welcomed input and brought our own fresh ideas about how we might continue to make the comprehensive content more accessible and actionable to the community. We have dedicated the year to developing our new, interactive, online Children's Data Center that will be launched in early 2023.

We have worked closely with a design firm to represent the data in a clear and impactful way and look forward to launching this tool in the coming year.

## Informed and Ready to Make a Difference

Data is at the heart of everything we do, including our Community Cafés. This year we moved forward the work of two cafés. One led by Project LAUNCH and focused on reducing mental health stigma, and another led by PACT-STL focused on preventing child abuse and neglect.

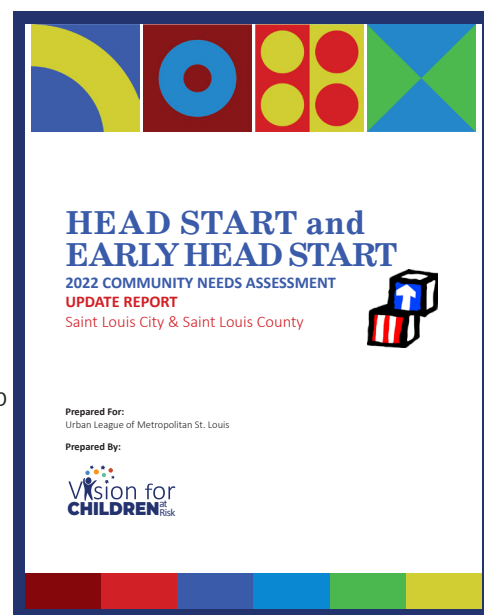
Each of these cafés has centered on lived experiences of people impacted as well as the quantitative data. By combining these two types of data we have a more complete picture and can work towards meaningful change.

Some of the results thus far have been the creation of a Parents' Rights brochure for families directly connected to Children's Division and a plan for a public awareness campaign in the new year.

## Custom Reports

We continue to offer custom report services to the community. This year we completed an update report for the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis Head Start Program. The purpose of this report was to assess how the St. Louis community has changed since the "2019 Community Assessment Report" was produced and examine the changing needs of the community, particularly as it relates to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The update report put the Urban League in a good position to begin using the data to address key strategic issues related to program planning, monitoring, and review and will help the Urban League determine how to best meet the changing needs of the families in our community.



# COLLABORATION

## Parents and Children Together: St. Louis | PACT STL

Parents & Children Together-St. Louis (PACT-STL) is a five-year grant from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families. The purpose is to support the development, implementation, and evaluation of child-abuse prevention strategies to improve the safety, stability, and well-being of families through a continuum of community-based services and supports.

Vision for Children at Risk is leading this five-year initiative in St. Louis City and County alongside many key partners. The PACT-STL Collaborative oversees the work and the Executive Committee keeps us focused on systemic change.

### 2022 Highlights

- Began taking Children's Division, community partner, and self-referrals to our Parent Mentor Program. This is a direct way for our Family Engagement Specialists to support families that have been hot-lined to Children's Division.
- Trained parents and child serving professionals (from six organizations) in The Incredible Years® program.

## Project LAUNCH

Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health) is a child wellness promotion grant program of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Vision for Children at Risk received five years of funding for this initiative beginning in October 2019.

We are fostering the healthy development and wellness of young children in the City of St. Louis by working alongside the community. A joint Project LAUNCH and System of Care Council, made up of service providers, parents, and youth representatives, oversee and guide the work.

### 2022 Highlights

- We sponsored the training of more than 100 St. Louis Public School teachers on the Pyramid Model by the Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. This model is focused on promoting social and emotional competence in infants and young children. The last training in the series will be in 2023.
- LEAP Ahead STL continues to work towards universal early childhood social and emotional screenings. The collaborative group logged 1,671 Ages and Stages screenings from Sept. 2021 to Sept. 2022.

## St. Louis Child Abuse and Neglect Network | STLCANN

The St. Louis Child Abuse & Neglect Network (STLCANN) is an initiative of VCR focused on improving the lives of children and families who have been impacted by abuse or neglect and working to strengthen families to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Beginning in 2019, STLCANN leadership became a core part of the Parents and Children Together (PACT-STL) Collaborative, along with PACT-STL grantee partners and families, and serves as the PACT-STL Executive Committee.

### 2022 Highlights

- Hosted two quarterly trainings for child serving professionals.
- Renewed our commitment to honoring professionals, families, and community leaders with the Stepping Up for Kids celebration. This annual event had taken a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic so honoring these heroes was long overdue.

## System of Care

The System of Care-St. Louis Region (SOC) is a collaborative network of agencies, families, and youth focused on the total health of children and families with, or at risk for, serious emotional disorders. The SOC supports a family-driven, youth-guided approach to care that is centered on Integrated Family Treatment and Family Support Partners. We want children, young adults, and families in the St. Louis region to thrive in every aspect of their lives.

The System of Care-St. Louis Region Expansion (SOC-E) project is a federally funded initiative working to improve mental health outcomes specifically for juvenile justice involved youth. The Mental Health Board received this funding through SAMHSA (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration). We provide project management, infrastructure services, and family support services. A joint SOC and Project LAUNCH Council, made up of service providers, parents, and youth representatives, oversee and guide the work.

### 2022 Highlights

- In partnership with Bold Futures Worldwide, we have formed the Bold Futures/SOC Youth Advisory Council and built relationships across six St. Louis Public Schools to support young person's mental/behavioral health.
- Alongside our SOC partners, this year we implemented a Critical Case Staffing Process which works to support agencies and families when system barriers and/or lack of services prevent the delivery of services.
- Hosted a retreat for the Network of Practice focused on team building, roles, and family engagement.



## Race Equity with Race Forward

At the end of 2021 we received expansion funding through Administration on Children, Youth, and Families and our Parents and Children Together St. Louis (PACT-STL) work. With this, we have been able to partner with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Race Forward to re-envision and take action to strengthen our work, organization, and partnerships, ensuring that equity and inclusion are at the center of it all.

The bulk of the work this year has been through engaging and interactive trainings. Race Forward has led the work and utilized this time to learn more about our work and all of us. This guides how they will continue to push us forward in the new year as we “operationalize racial equity”. In total, we have offered three trainings for our Parent and Youth Advisory Councils, two trainings for partner organizations, and one training for our staff, board members, and evaluation team. Throughout 2022, 114 people completed this initial training.

### Working together towards transformative solutions.

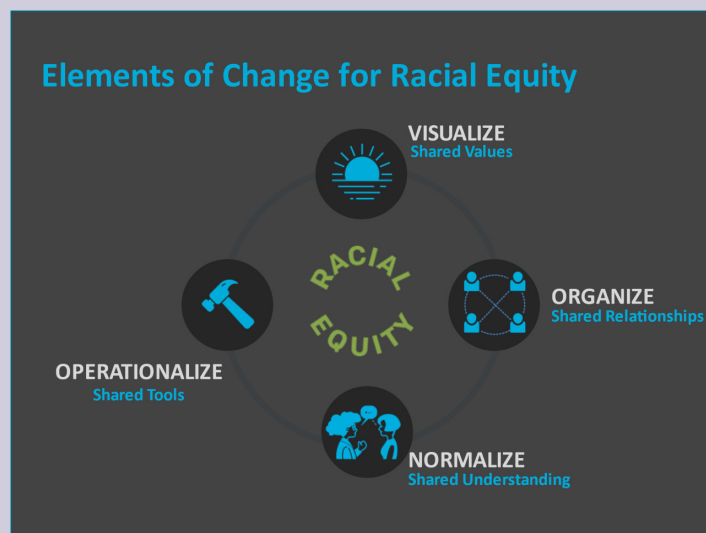


We look forward to hosting additional trainings in 2023 before moving forward with the work alongside the ongoing technical assistance provided by Race Forward.

*The focus of the Building Race Equity training is on understanding how institutional and structural racial inequities are grounded in history and ongoing practice. It is not focused on interpersonal racism or microaggressions, but rather how we all operate within a context of systemic racism -- and how we can all make decisions that undo these systems.*

Race Forward’s model of organizational change includes four key components:

- Shared values (visioning),
- Shared understanding (normalizing),
- Shared relationships (organizing), and
- Shared tools (operationalizing).



# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

## Parent Cafés

Throughout 2022 we hosted over 30 Parent Cafés because we continue to see how impactful they are, a vital source of support for many of the parents and caregivers participating. In addition to the cafés we hosted, we also trained and sponsored partners in hosting their own Parent Cafés and Dad's Cafés.

In the spirit of the café model, a couple of parents were probed to share their experience in "One Word, and Why?" Here's what they had to say (in part):

**NOURISHMENT.** *"It's what I feel when I think of VCR. The location of the building is right in the thick of it, in one of the city's most impoverished neighborhoods and directly across the street from a juvenile hall. The resources offered could assist in health & wealth."*

**LIFE-CHANGING.** *"Because not only has it changed my life for the better by listening to participants and staff share experiences. But, by me integrating and implementing what I've learned from their experiences into my own life. Sharing my life events with others can possibly cause a ripple effort, and hopefully have a positive impact on many lives."*

## Vitality Cafés

Vitality Cafés grew out of the Parent Café experience that parents have come to love (originally designed by parent leaders from [Strengthening Families Illinois](#)). They are centered on six domains of wellness: environmental, financial, mental, physical, social, and spiritual vitality.

Vitality Cafés, or the Journey to Vitality, is focused on ensuring individuals are well. A thriving parent can be their best self for their children and the community! Project LAUNCH and PACT-STL both began hosting ongoing Vitality Cafés this year. In total, they have hosted 10 cafés this year.

## Family Support Network (FSN)

The FSN is a supportive space for parents and caregivers currently working with our Family Support Partners to walk alongside each other. This group started out meeting every other month but wanted more so they now meet monthly.

## Mental Health First Aid Training

This year we hosted a free Mental Health First Aid Training to our Parent and Youth Advisory Council Members, staff, and the community. We saw this as an important offering in response to urgent community needs as families dealt with traumatic events. Participants are now better equipped to deal with traumatic situations and the mental health needs of young people.

## Family Support Services

Our Family Engagement Specialists and Family Support Partners are walking alongside families on a daily basis. This year we have served over 300 individuals. We were especially excited to launch the Family Mentoring Program through PACT-STL in June, which helps connect families that have been hot-lined to Children's Division directly to our peer mentors.

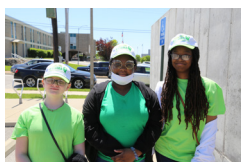
## Black History Month & Parent Leadership Month Celebration

Every year we honor dedicated parent leaders during February, a month for celebrating both Black History and Parent Leadership. This year Mr. Sam Blue, Family Engagement Specialist for PACT-STL, captured the purpose so well during his intro speech, read more [here](#). He reminded all our parents, "At home you are making history when you read a book, sing songs, have family meetings, teach life skills to your children and take care of yourself".

## Children's Mental Health Day Celebration

Every year we celebrate Children's Mental Health Day and this year was a gorgeous day for celebrating, learning, and reducing the stigma around mental health. Children and families enjoyed planting seeds, spinning the wheel of emotions, creating art projects, and much more.

We were honored to hear Dr. Mati Hlatshwayo Davis (Health Director for the City of St. Louis) and Koran Bolden (Bold Moves) speak on the importance of talking about mental health and ensuring young people have access to the supports they need. We also thoroughly enjoyed hearing and watching Gentleman of Vision (GOV) perform. You can watch the event recap video [here](#).





## 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. We have 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.

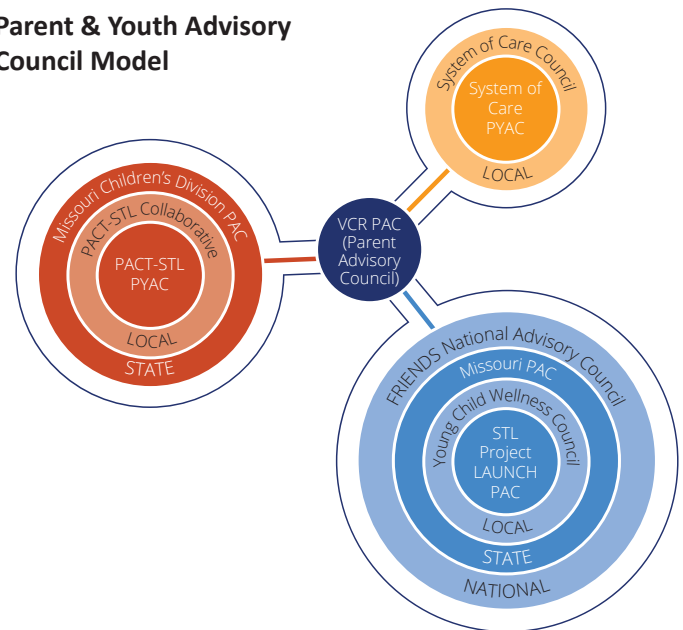
The System of Care PAC has focused on reducing the stigma around children and youth with Serious Emotional Disorders (SEDs) this year. Together they worked through an activity “My child is, my child is not” to help shift away from labels that have been unfairly placed on their child, to boldly proclaim who their child’s strengths. They have since taken this strengths-based approach to school professionals and the community. They also prepared elevator speeches and letters for their state reps advocating for children and youth with SEDs.

We kicked off the Bold Futures/SOC Youth Advisory Council this year and we have been grateful to partner with Koran Bolden of Bold Futures Worldwide to get this off and running.

Our councils have helped plan events, working closely with the Community Cafés, and more.

Quarterly all members have come together to participate in broader trainings, such as the Building Racial Equity Training and Mental Health First Aid Trainings. It is a core part of our model that the councils have their own space for advocating together but that they also are connected to the other councils as the work is interconnected.

### Parent & Youth Advisory Council Model



## Community Cafés

This year we moved forward with two Community Cafés:

1. Reducing Mental Health Stigma
2. Improving the Child Protection System

Community Cafés are all about conversations that matter. We take community issues; we create a safe space for community members and stakeholders to talk; we learn and grow together; and we take action together.

Each café started with intentional conversations and moved towards tangible work plans. They continued to move things forward with work groups.

Out of these cafés we have created a “Know Your Rights” handout that is designed to help parents know what to expect and what to do when services do not meet these expectations when working with Children’s Division. This was a collaborative effort of service providers and families

with about 75% of engaged participants being parents and caregivers sharing from their firsthand experiences.

As a result of the feedback from our community throughout these events, we will be moving forward with a Public Awareness Campaign in 2023. The focus will be on both reducing mental health stigma and preventing child abuse and neglect. Stay tuned for the growing impact!

## Legislative Wrap-Up

We once again joined partners at Generate Health and STLCANN to host the Annual Legislative Wrap-Up. Legislation has a big impact on the families we walk alongside and serve. The Legislative Wrap-Up is important because we get to hear directly from leaders advocating in Jefferson City on behalf of children and families. This helps our partners and us stay aligned and working towards change together.

## OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS

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

### MEMBERS

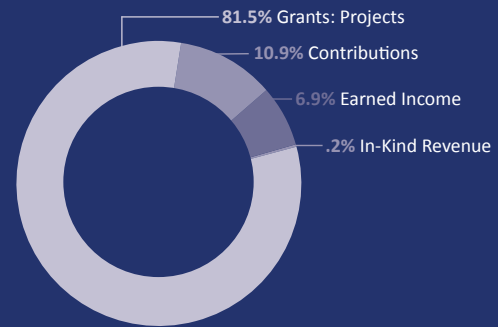
Nanci A. Bobrow  
Sylvester Bolden  
Marga Fronmuller  
Richard Harvey, Ph.D.  
Robert Mai  
Antonia Miceli, J.D., M.P.H.  
Dennis O'Connor, M.D.  
Michael O'Connor, M.D.  
Jamala Rogers  
Pastor Ron Stephens

## OUR FUNDERS

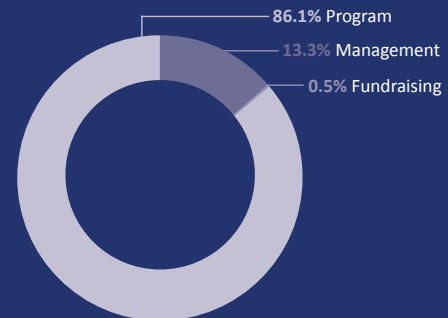
Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF)  
AMEREN  
Deaconess Foundation  
The Mental Health Board  
STUPP Foundation  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
Administration (SAMHSA)

## OUR FINANCES

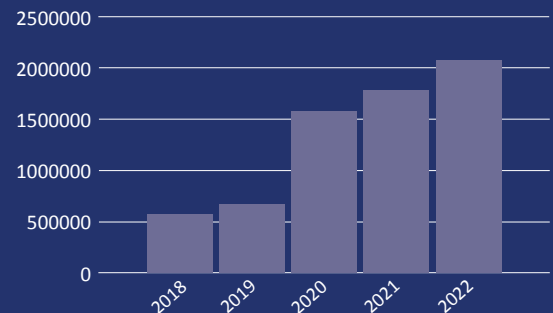
### REVENUE \$2,059,884



### EXPENSES \$1,847,915



### REVENUE GROWTH 2018 through 2022



## CONNECT WITH US



Visionforchildren



Visionforchildren



VCRSTL

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