



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Over the past three decades, VCR has been committed to the well-being of children, families, and the communities in which they live. We believe that **child well-being does not and cannot happen in isolation of family well-being**. That is why the VCR team continues to walk alongside families, creating safe spaces where they can come together to focus on growing their parenting skills and building leadership capacity. 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.

One of the highlights of 2023 was the development of our new interactive [Children Data Center](#)! Our vision for the Children's Data Center grew from our ongoing production of the Children of Metropolitan St. Louis (CMSL) Data Book, which features over 40 indicators of child well-being at the zip code level. The community can now access all that important data via the interactive website and run reports based on their need. We are continuing to take additional steps both with the CMSL and the Children's Data Center to integrate stories of lived experiences from the people we serve, as 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.

In another memorable highlight of this very busy year, VCR hosted and celebrated the eighth annual Stepping Up for Kids event, during which we honored resource families, frontline staff, and community partners who have and are making a difference in the lives of children and families in our region. Each of our honorees represent going the extra mile to create a better future for children through their dedicated efforts, finding hope amidst the challenges and celebrating the uniqueness of every child. Additionally, we honored and celebrated two leaders that have served the St. Louis region for many years: Ms. Annett House and Mr. Tim Decker. What made the event even more special was having Judge Darrel Missey as the keynote speaker for the event. Read their inspiring stories [here](#).

We look forward to another year of partnership and progress, and express our sincere gratitude to all the partners, parents, and providers, who make our work possible.

Sincerely,

Sararia Sulaiman

Chief Executive Officer



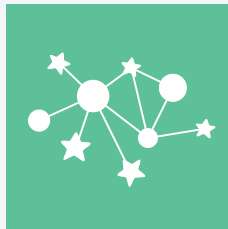
WHO WE ARE

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.

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.



2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Hosted 61 Parent Cafés & Vitality Cafés while continuing to train others on the effective models for helping strengthen parents & families.

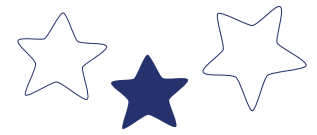
The System of Care has been sustained for another 4 years with additional SAMHSA funding.

Launched the interactive **Children's Data Center**, making child well-being more accessible to advocates, community groups, organizations, and more.

Supported & amplified community voice through our Parent & Youth Advisory Councils and the Community Café model. Each Council and Café focused on issues that matter and what we can do to drive change.

Grew stronger partnerships through our engagement with 100+ partners that help guide our initiatives. Our multiple collaboratives & councils meet monthly & are an integral part of the work.

DATA & RESEARCH



Foundational Tools for Creating Change

Since 1991, we have worked hard to ensure child well-being data is available and accessible for community advocates, business leaders, policy makers, and more. One of our main tools for this was the twelve editions we have produced of the *Children of Metropolitan St. Louis: A Data Book for the Community*. This book contains over 40 indicators of child well-being (i.e. poverty, income, unemployment) and illustrates the inequities in child well-being outcomes

found throughout the St. Louis region. Recently, we added community perspective and voice throughout the book. We offer this resource to the community free of charge.

This year, we are thrilled to report that we launched a new tool: **The Children’s Data Center**, a new interactive online platform for exploring data and sparking action towards a better future for children and families. We are continuing to expand the functions and will be adding new data on a regular basis.

2023 By the Numbers

CMSL Books Distributed (electronic & print)
225+

Children’s Data Center Views
1000+

About the Children’s Data Center

- Your go-to place to find data on child and family well-being in the St. Louis region.
- Offers easily accessible data that focuses attention on inequities in child well-being outcomes.
- Helps us all use data to drive change, creating a better future for children.



visionforchildren.org/childrens-data-center/

Regional Data

This engaging, interactive data center currently contains data on 5 counties, 138 zip codes, and over 60 school districts in the St. Louis region.

Easy to Navigate



Users can explore the data through a guided step-by-step process, selecting an indicator and geographies they are most interested in.

Quick & Customized Reports

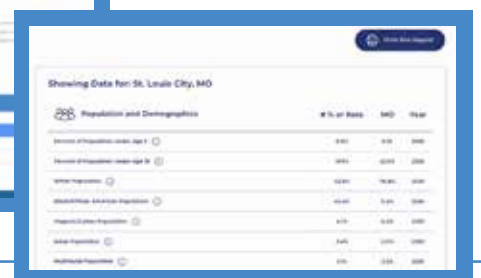
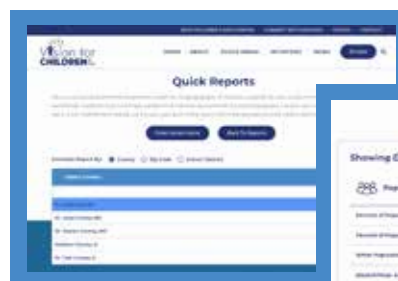
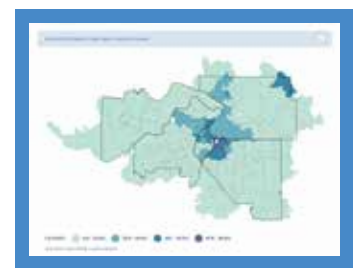
Users can produce “Quick Reports” for a snapshot of the zip code, county, or school district of interest, or customized reports (*coming in 2024!*) that include multiple indicators and geographies.

Comprehensive Data

Includes 6 fundamental need areas and more than 40 indicators related to child well-being from cradle to career.

Interactive

Results can be viewed in several ways including interactive maps that help users better visualize and understand the story the data is telling.



COLLABORATION

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.

2023 Highlights

- Continued to expand our partnership with St. Louis Public Schools by providing 3 sessions of the Pyramid Model by the Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), and Conscious Discipline training for teachers and staff. We've also offered the CSEFEL training to local childcare partners throughout the St. Louis Pre-K Cooperative.
- LEAP Ahead STL continues to work towards universal early childhood social and emotional screenings. The group has logged over 6,000 screenings to date. The Project LAUNCH team became certified trainers with ASQ3 and ASQ-SE, and trained local childcare partners in ASQ screenings in support of developmental screening efforts and workforce development.

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.

2023 Highlights

- Hosted four trainings for child serving professionals, reaching an average of 60 attendees at each training.
- Hosted our Annual Stepping Up for Kids Event. We had a lot of great nominees this year, creating a very competitive selection process. It was truly an honor to celebrate with so many incredible people.

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.

2023 Highlights

- Hosted Parent Café Training Institute (PCTI) and Incredible Years® training - both strong models for strengthening families.
- Our Collaborative is working with Wash U to engage in Group Model Building work focused on strengthening collaboration.

System of Care

The Mental Health Board received new federal funding (SAMHSA – Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration) to sustain the work of the System of Care for another four years. The System of Care – Children's Mental Health Initiative (SOC-CMHI) is a comprehensive spectrum of mental health and essential support services organized into a coordinated network to address and meet the varied needs of children, youth, and young adults at risk for or with Serious Emotional Disorders (SED)s, their families, and their caregivers.

VCR is contracting with the MHB to provide overall project management, infrastructure services, and family support services. Our joint SOC and Project LAUNCH Council is continuing to oversee and guide this work.

2023 Highlights

- We had a great 2023 Children's Mental Health Day Celebration! Our Youth Advisory Council shined with their panel discussion on mental health stigma.
- The Critical Case Staffing Team is serving people facing some of the most complicated situations. They support both families and referring agencies that seem to be hitting roadblock after roadblock.
- We've worked closely with University of Missouri's CIAC, SOC partners, and community members on a Juvenile Justice Mapping Project. We have successfully implemented a prevention process centered on active communication between SLPS, family court system partners, and VCR's Family Support Partners.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family Support Services

Our Family Support Partner Program is dedicated to providing peer support. We are here to walk alongside families as they navigate parenting and accessing supports.

Our Family Support Team, made up of Family Support Partners (FSP), Family Mentors, and Family Engagement Specialists, bring lived experience to their roles. They understand the complexities of life and trust parents as they experts on their families.

Our System of Care team had 57 **new** parents and caregivers of youth invite an FSP to walk alongside them as they navigated mental health and other child serving systems. Many of these have been referred by DJOs on the delinquency side of the court, while others have connected with us via Community Mental Health Centers, Children's Division, and more.

Throughout 2023, our Project LAUNCH and PACT-STL teams also served over 500 individuals.

Parent Cafés

This year, we celebrated 10 years of utilizing the impactful Parent Café model! We continue to stick to the fidelity of the model while making other adaptations to ensure people are able to get the most out of this. In 2023, PACT-STL switched to a marathon format for each series. Each series includes three cafés, and typically we host these once a month. With the marathon format, they have hosted cafés three weeks in a row. We are finding success in how many people are able to complete a full series this way.

Project LAUNCH continues to host and grow attendance in Parent Cafés they host monthly. Parents and caregivers love the community and connections with others and consistently report that the Café model has helped them in their home lives.

In sum, PACT-STL and Project LAUNCH have hosted 37 Parent Cafés this year with a growing number of first-time participants. Together they have served over 500 unique individuals through the café.

In addition to the cafés we hosted, we also trained and sponsored partners in hosting their own Parent Cafés and Dad's Cafés and trained numerous new parent partners as room hosts to help facilitate the events. Project LAUNCH also hosted a Parent Café for Columbia Elementary in their school to connect directly with parents in their school community and will return for future sessions.

Concrete Support

The line between concrete needs and child neglect is all too often blurred. We recognize the importance of connecting families to services and supports while also meeting the concrete needs of families, all so parents and caregivers can be their best selves for their children. This year we were grateful to partner with the YWCA Cooking Matters program where families learned to cook healthy meals AND received all the groceries to create the meals at home.

In addition, the YWCA Economic Empowerment Program was offered to our parents in 2023 and at each Parent and Vitality Café we presented community resources to members and invited participants to share other events and opportunities, building a network of support amongst the attendees.

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. They are actively strengthening their parenting skills and knowledge. The group covers topics from the Family Journey Assessment (FJA) Model, which was developed and validated in partnership with FSPs in Maryland and Georgetown University. Parents have shared that the groups are very beneficial, and they enjoy the gathering and learning aspect of each meeting.

Incredible Years®

Incredible Years aligns closely with the vision and mission of VCR and PACT-STL where the parent/child relationship is at the heart of child's development and behavior. PACT-STL has hosted training plus two cohorts of this evidence-based parenting program. We also supported CASA de Salud to offer Spanish-speaking clients the same program alongside Parent Cafés.

Vitality Cafés

Vitality Cafés are centered on six domains of wellness: environmental, financial, mental, physical, social, and spiritual vitality.

The Journey to Vitality is focused on ensuring individuals are well. We have seen first hand that a thriving individual or a thriving parent can be their best self for their children and the community! Project LAUNCH and PACT-STL have hosted 24 Vitality Cafés this year.

- In December of 2023, PACT-STL started hosting a Men's Vitality Café as these events have proven to be a good way to get men and fathers involved.

ADVOCACY

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 (SOC) PAC members are actively working on advocacy efforts that involve identifying valuable resources for other parents and communicating how they want school professionals to recognize their children's strengths.

The Bold Futures/SOC Youth Advisory Council consists of 14 youth that meet monthly. The council also includes Family Support Partners and the Bold Moves Worldwide partnership which supports the youth in topics related to youth well-being, leadership, and community engagement. They were a big part of this year's Children's Mental Health Day Celebration by facilitating a panel discussion on mental health stigma.

Both the SOC Parent & Youth Advisory Councils have played an important role in our collaborative work with University of Missouri's CIAC by participating in the Juvenile Justice Mapping project. This involved group discussions amongst community members and professionals about implementation plans to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice systems or going further into the system.

Children's Advocacy Day

Every year Missouri has a day dedicated to advocating for children at the state capital. We've been a part of this for many years, and welcomed another opportunity to partner in the planning for our region.

In preparation, we hosted an Advocacy 101 training for the parents and caregivers we walk alongside, and then several of our dedicated parent leaders and staff members took part in the 2023 Child Advocacy Day in Jefferson City.

It was another great year for speaking up about the need to invest and value children's and family well-being.

Community Cafés

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.

PACT-STL kicked off the community café work groups this year focused on improving the Child Protection System. In 2023, we held eight community cafés with the focus being on redefining child welfare from a community standpoint and focusing on the healing, advocacy, and resources for those affected by the child welfare system.

Project LAUNCH completed our first Children's Mental Health Awareness Virtual Conference, attended by over 50 community members at the guidance of our Community Café workgroup and had presentations on bullying, mental health awareness, and the 988 Crisis Line expansion.

Legislative Wrap-Up

This annual event continues to be a popular choice for our partnering organizations and is made possible because of our close work with Generate Health & STLCANN. Legislation has a big impact on the families we walk alongside and serve.

At the Legislative Wrap-Up 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.

This year our 60+ participants heard from Amy Blouin with the Missouri Budget Project, Jessica Seitz with Missouri KidsFirst, and Robyn Schelp with Kids Win Missouri.



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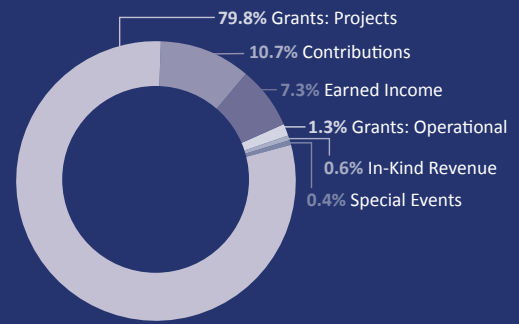
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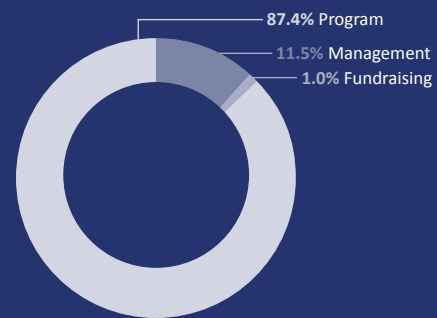
Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF)
AMEREN
Deaconess Foundation
The Mental Health Board
STUPP Foundation
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Youthbridge

OUR FINANCES

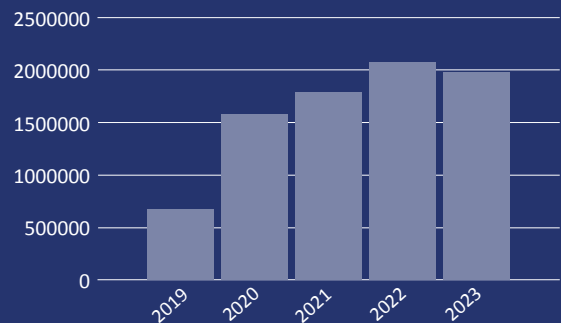
REVENUE \$1,978,477



EXPENSES \$1,720,678



REVENUE GROWTH 2019 through 2023



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