

2014


Annual Report

2015



**Circles of Care Mission
Statement:**

**To enhance children, youth,
and families' ability for
effective living and growth
through comprehensive social
and mental health services.**



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A Letter from the President

I was pleasantly surprised when a young man visited our office recently. Sammy was in our care for many years in the Cerda foster home. We were so pleased when we got to see him graduate from high school and, in fact, he had four foster siblings that graduated from high school with him that year. We were excited when we purchased his first car for him and then got to see him go off to college at Texas A&M Kingsville. Sammy recently visited our offices to say hello and to thank us for everything that Circles of Care had done for him. He was so proud to show off his college diploma.

We want all this success for all the children that we serve, and it could not have been done without the wonderful and supportive foster parents that he had or the incredible Circles of Care employees.

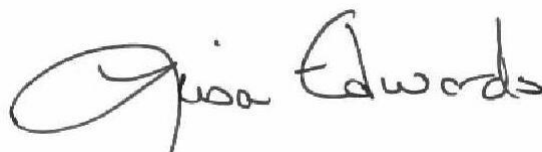
Circles of Care has many stories like this of children reunited with their family, adopted into a new and loving home, or successfully aging out of care and on their own. These success stories never get old and are a testament to the wonderful work Circles of Care does with its team of foster parents, Case Managers, and therapists.

Along with our main goal of helping children navigate the foster care system, Circles of Care met a number of other goals this past fiscal year to include getting accredited by CARF International. CARF is a non-profit, independent accreditor of health and human services which monitors and guides agencies like Circles of Care all across the country. They will help ensure that we deliver top-quality services to all of our clients and that we continue to follow best practices in every aspect of our program. I am very proud of the staff that worked so hard on this goal and of its demonstration of our further commitment to excellence.

All through the CARF preparation and assessment, the staff here worked especially hard when they took on the additional task of receiving certification in Trauma Informed Care through the University of Buffalo. This training affords each staff member, both direct care and support staff, the skills necessary to approach any client on a personal basis and address his or her unique needs in the most appropriate and beneficial way.

In the next fiscal year, I am looking forward to further developments as the state moves toward the SSCC redesign. We will continue to work closely with TDFPS as well as other agencies on this important change. We will also continue to expand our capacity to provide services to an even greater number of children with special attention paid to homes which can accommodate sibling groups and prevent the separation of children from their siblings.

This past year has been busy and productive and, as always, I look forward to the future, to more success, to more development, to the next time I can see one of our kids achieve their potential.



Events

596

The number of tickets bought for children all across the state of Texas for an event or attraction during the summer season. We love helping our families enjoy their vacation time in any way they choose whether that be cooling off at a water park, checking out the exotic animals in a zoo, or catching the latest summer blockbuster. Our kids had even more options this year with the opening of the new Schlitterbahn location in Corpus Christi, always a favorite among our families. These events help our families to grow closer together as a unit and encourage bonding and unity. We start receiving inquiries often months in advance as foster parents start making their summer plans and their kids start looking forward to all the fun they are going to have.



We also frequently receive generous ticket donations from the Shriner Circus and the Ice Rays that we are happy to distribute to our families.

In addition to these great events, we have begun a regular drawing for local concert and other event tickets. While this drawing is random, families may request an opportunity for any event they would like be it a Dallas Cowboys game, a major concert, a comedy performance, or any other attraction. We want to provide the most rewarding experiences for our families and for our kids and to create positive, lasting memories that they can cherish.

Unfortunately, the ever-popular Halloween event in our Corpus Christi office was rained out this year. Our staff worked hard to put on a great night for the kids with candy, games, and spooks, and were very disappointed they were not able deliver on the event that so many of our families look forward to each year. We are already looking forward to next year, however! We will have more games and moon jumps than ever before and a spooky haunted house that will top anything we have done before!

Each year, the Halloween event is headed up by Dawn Marwick who spends countless hours planning the event and organizing the games and attractions. Pat Edwards and Jennifer Hernandez work tirelessly finding sponsors and donations, and the whole staff comes together the day of to serve food and make sure each child is happy and safe. We will be able to apply much of the support we received this year to make next year's event the best one yet.

Halloween





Our annual Christmas celebrations took place at locations such as Play! in Corpus Christi, Dave and Buster's, and other fun locations. Parties were held in Corpus, Houston, Salado, McAllen, San Antonio, Dallas, and Laredo for our families across the state. Each child received a gift hand picked by our staff or a gift card that they could spend as they chose.

These parties mean a great deal to our staff as they get to interact with the children they help on a daily basis in a fun, celebratory environment. Some of these kids have never received a gift before, and seeing their excited smiles is the reward we work toward all year.

The Salado party was especially jolly this year when a kind stranger approached them while they were checking out with their gift purchases. Upon learning they were purchasing for foster children, he offered to donate \$500 toward the total on the spot. Once the cashier rang everything in and the total came to \$800, the gentleman said "I've got this" and paid for the entire purchase leaving our staff and the cashier totally speechless. 'Tis the season!



The STAR program featured its annual community training luncheon featuring a presentation by Dr. Steve Bain, LPC-S (pictured left with attendees). This event is available to the community at large and attendees come from the juvenile justice system, TDFPS, CASA, local schools, women's shelters, and more. Dr. Bain presented "Rethinking Attention Deficit Disorder: A New Paradigm" which addressed changing views and new research on ADD in children to aid those in attendance better meet the needs of children living with ADD. Dr. Bain also addressed abuse.

We would also like to give a special thank you to Kiko's Mexican Restaurant which was kind enough to host us once again this year.

Circles of Care also attended the annual Administrator's Conference and the Texas Foster Family Association conference this fiscal year. These events offer training and information for our staff to learn industry best practices and offer the best possible care to our clients.

The Salado and Dallas locations also participated in the Dallas Women's Expo. This event hosts vendors and community partners all across the Dallas area. Our staff was able to meet with women and families interested in foster care and help spread the word about the great need for foster parents. Recruitment from that event, and others throughout the year, was successful as evidenced by the Salado program's fantastic growth throughout the year. Keep an eye out for us at next year's Expo as well!

Success Stories

Adoption!

Foster mother Ms. Hawkins, in our Houston program, was able to complete her family this year with the adoption of two young boys. The brothers were formally adopted on January 21, 2014 and are doing exceptionally well in their new forever home. The eldest is on his school football team and is a star player while the youngest is attending daycare, has become potty trained, and is learning to talk.

Ms. Hawkins is a dedicated mother who is delighted to have a whole family and see her boys grow and succeed.



The Swaringen family, pictured left and looking very sharp for their consummation court hearing, completed their adoption of this young girl on October 20, 2015. The young boy to her left is her new brother, the Swaringens' biological son. The child was placed with the Swaringen family on February 20, 2015. After more than a year together, becoming a tight knit family and growing to love one another unconditionally, these wonderful parents and precious children now have their forever family. The Swaringens are loving, hard working parents who are committed to their family and their children. The future holds nothing but promise for this adorable girl as she grows, and we could not be more thrilled for all of them.

Emancipation!

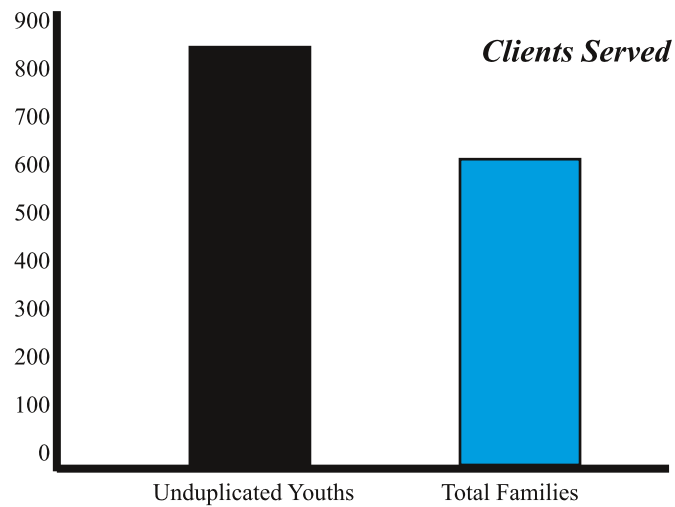
Foster child Russell came into care when he was very young and has thrived ever since. From his humble beginnings, he worked his way through school and was an exceptional student. With his grades and excellent behavior, he qualified for the Circles of Care Car Program and was able to purchase a truck of his own. After graduating high school, he was accepted at Southern Texas University where he will continue to pursue his bright future. We are very proud of all that he has accomplished throughout his tenure with us and cannot wait to see what he will accomplish in the years to come.

Alvin struggled most of his life with his mental health. After a lengthy history of psychiatric hospitalizations, he learned to manage his behavior quite well and only required two hospitalizations while he was placed with the loving Cerda family. He has since moved out on his own from Corpus Christi to the Dallas area, maintains contact with his biological family, has permanent housing, and an impressive resume. He has truly taken control of his own life and will not let anything keep him from accomplishing his goals.

STAR!

A young girl began counseling with our STAR counselor Veronica Aceves this year to help with her behavior and emotion. Veronica has helped her to open up about how she feels and handle those feelings appropriately. Her mother was recently released from jail and she is living with her aunt and uncle. Things are already improving, though, as her aunt and mother support her and each other. Both have been attending group sessions, and the mother is adamant about solving her own issues. She is willing to do whatever she must to ensure they do not end up in this situation again. Thanks to Veronica, this family is on the right track!

Services To At-Risk Youth



Our Services To At-Risk Youth (STAR) program, headed by Program Director Henry Martinez out of the Corpus Christi office, reaches adolescents and families in Nueces, Kleberg, and Jim Wells counties to assist them in crisis resolution and management. This program targets families enduring financial, familial, educational, or any other kind of hardship and helps to return them to a sense of normalcy through effective counseling and skill-building.

Our six counselors actively seek out troubled families in the community to offer assistance and consultation. In addition, referrals are sent from area schools, juvenile justices, and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. DFPS plays a special role in that the program is designed to be preventative, and their contributions often help us locate families in need and avoid child removals and foster care.

In addition to counseling, our staff conduct group class sessions to help clients overcome their burdens. Classes cover a range of topics including bullying, self esteem, hygiene, respect, being a good friend, kindness and compassion, and more. These classes are geared toward the adolescents and aim to help them learn how to appropriately deal with the struggles they face thereby strengthening their family unit as a whole. Primary goals of the program include keeping youths in school and decreasing family conflict. Other issues our counselors are equipped to address include deaths in a family and taking responsibility. Counseling services and these classes are all available free of charge to anyone who needs them.

During fiscal year 2014-2015, the STAR program serviced more than 850 unduplicated youths from more than 600 different families, nearly on par with the previous year. This indicates to us that Circles of Care is adequately addressing the needs of the counties served while we continue to look for clientele and families which may have slipped through. We wish to provide the best possible service to every single family that needs it and prevent conflict and familial breakdown.

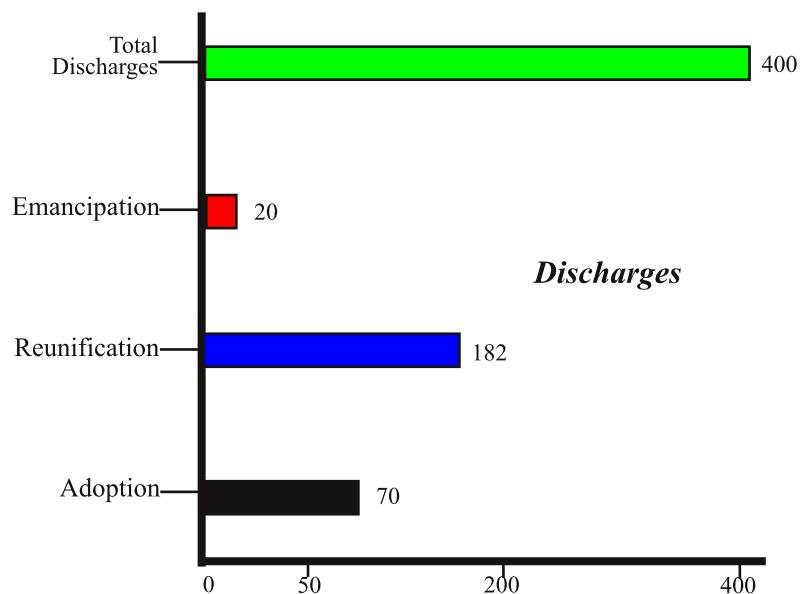
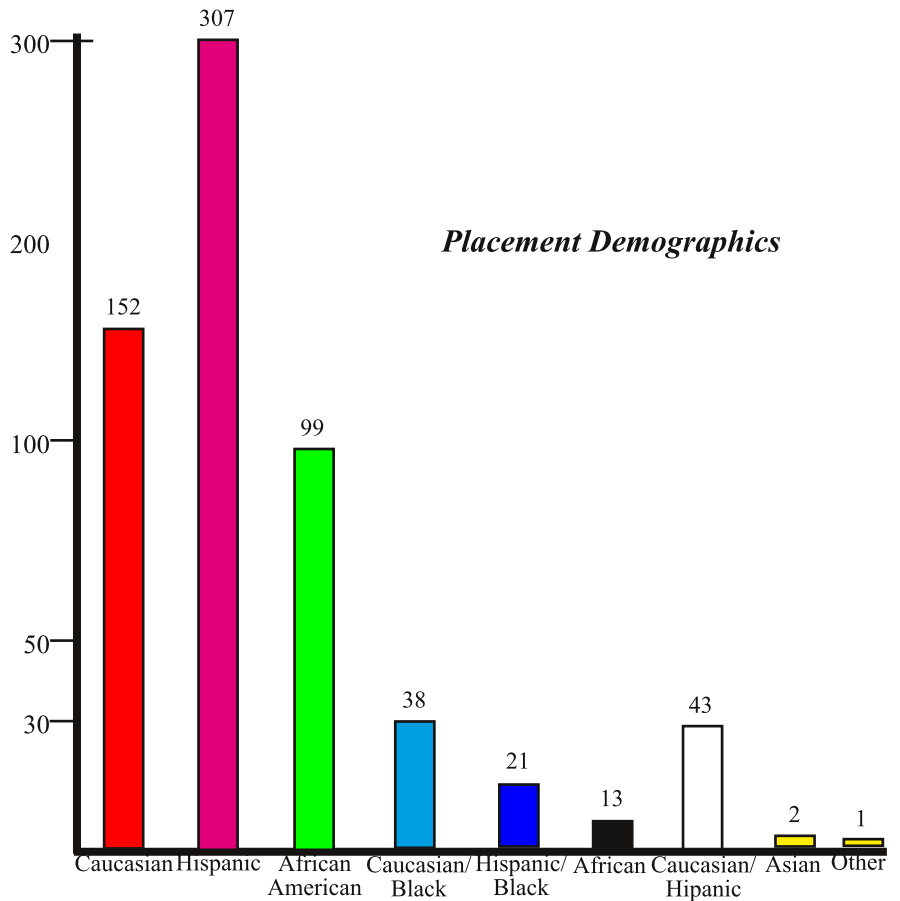
Foster Care

676
Total Children Placed

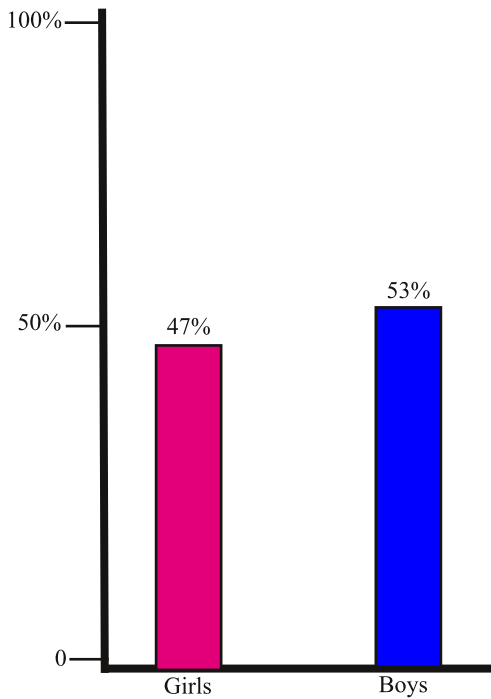
Circles of Care placed a total of 676 children in fiscal year 2014-2015 throughout Texas in Corpus Christi, Houston, Salado, McAllen, San Antonio, Dallas, and Laredo. Corpus Christi had the highest census serving a total of 226 children followed by the Salado location with 136. New admissions totaled 377 statewide with 299 children in care more than one year.

400 children were discharged from care, the majority of whom were reunified with their biological family. Reunification is always the initial and primary goal when a child enters into the foster care system. Circles of Care recognizes this goal and understands the importance of a child maintaining relationships with his or her biological family. We therefore strive in accordance with the state to reunify children with their parents and/or other approved guardian as quickly as possible.

Emancipation, however, is a marvelous accomplishment for any child coming from foster care. Circles of Care saw 20 of its kids emancipate from the system and enter the world as healthy, functioning adults. We dedicate much of our time with adolescents to teaching them the skills they will need to survive independently in the



Gender Demographics



adult world. These skills include grocery shopping, cooking, personal hygiene, budgeting, bill payment, and more. Each emancipation is a proud moment for us, and we are lucky to see so many wonderful young adults succeed.

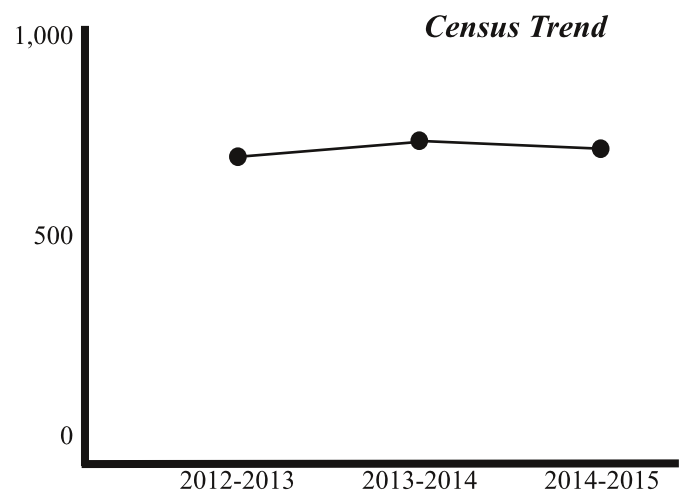
We saw 70 children join forever families this fiscal year. Adoption is great because it makes families whole. Both parties, parents and child, often wait months or years to finalize the process and the joy they feel once it has been consummated is palpable. We love to hear from these forever families to find out how they are doing.

The average age of children placed was 6.7 years. Boys comprised 53% of the placements while girls made up the other 47% breaking almost evenly, but skewed more male unlike the previous year. The vast majority of children spoke predominantly in English with some children speaking both English and Spanish and a small percentage speaking Spanish exclusively. Four children in our care communicated with

American Sign Language. Our skilled and multilingual staff were able to accommodate all of these language combinations and ensure each child was spoken to in his or her preferred dialect.

The vast majority, 78%, of our children were able to be placed in or near (within 60 miles) their original home community. Of the 543 children who came into care with siblings, 55% were able to be placed in a home which could accommodate all of their siblings thus keeping the children together. 8% of children were able to be placed with some of their siblings, but not all of them. This is on par with the previous fiscal year. Circles of Care recognizes the importance of keeping children in their home communities and of placing them with their biological siblings. Both of these factors allow children to transition into foster care more easily, help them to adapt to their new environment, decrease stress, and diminish the appearance of problem behaviors. Further, maintaining connections with the child's home community is a high priority. We continue to seek out and develop new strategies to place our kids in the most appropriate setting.

Finally, we could not have such successful placement without our fantastic foster parents. This fiscal year was a record year for new foster parent recruits. Our Corpus Christi location alone licensed 27 new homes this year with Salado coming in a close second. Statewide, we licensed 70 new homes. All foster parents are licensed through an extensive vetting process which includes detailed background checks and comprehensive training courses to ensure our kids receive the best possible care. The need for new families grows with each year, and our staff worked exceptionally hard to yield such high numbers.



Welcome, all new homes to the ranks of our elite foster families!

Annual Surveys

Q11 Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with Circles of Care?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 0



We queried our partners at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services on their satisfaction with our performance and received glowing results. Across the state of Texas, CPS reported that our staff is quick, helpful, and friendly, that our paperwork is timely and comprehensive, and that our foster parents are well trained. Any suggestions they were kind enough to provide have been taken into account. We very much value our partnership with CPS and hope to continue to see such positive feedback in the coming year.

In their own words:

"COC Case Managers ... go above and beyond for their families and children."

"[Their] efforts are more than appreciated by me, my supervisor, and the department."

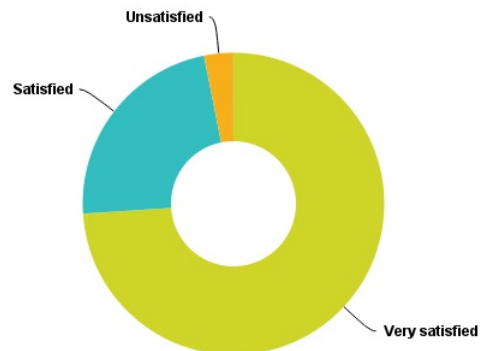
"The Caseworkers are professional and respond to all calls immediately."

"COC has been the only agency that I have worked with ... that provides documentation in a timely manner and keeps the case worker informed."

Our foster parents were also enthusiastic about their experience with Circles of Care. They rated our Case Managers very highly, often describing them as "amazing" and complimenting their response time and helpfulness. The vast majority of our foster parents reported that they chose to foster in order to expand their own families and to provide loving homes to children in need. The most commonly reported issue with children was defiance.

Q19 How would you rate your overall experience with Circles of Care?

Answered: 96 Skipped: 2



Suggestions have been taken into consideration, and we hope to continue to make our foster parents proud to be part of our agency. We could not do it without them!

In their own words:

"I rave about your agency."

"I've been with Circles of Care for four years, and we've had a wonderful experience."

"They value their families and listen to their input. Very respectful of the children in care and their needs."

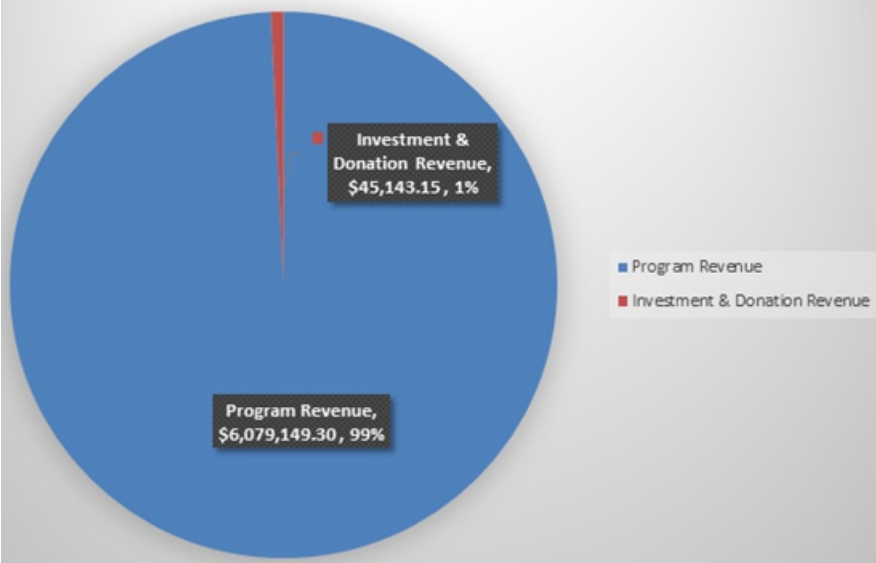
"We fully recommend the agency."

A very special congratulations to the following staff who received personal commendations:

Jonicqua Hooks Norma Rodriguez Patricia Trevino Kirsten Wigley Nicole Euting Elizabeth Lopez
Clarissa Little David Beltran Jessica Killion Anna Alvarado Maya Sheen Summer Solomon Monica Beltran

Financial Data and Outcomes

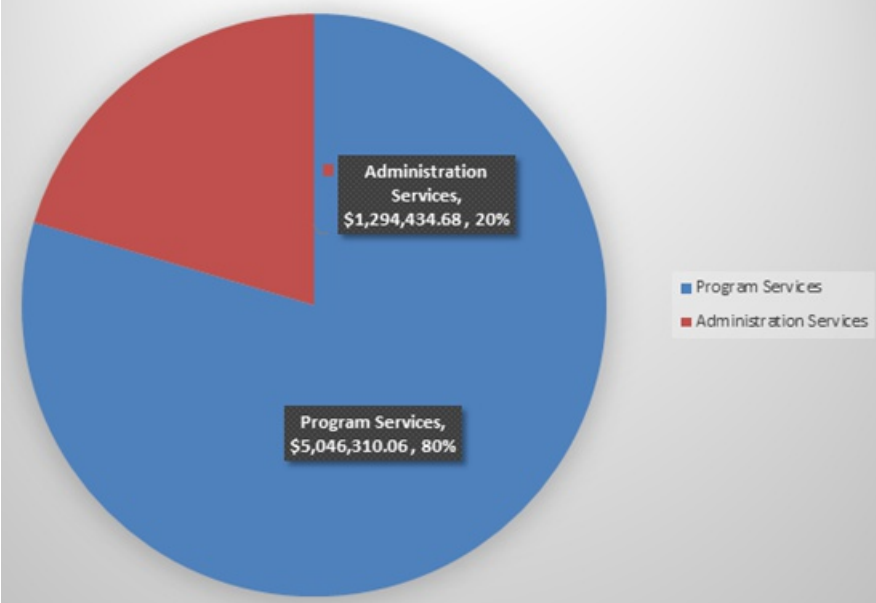
Circles of Care FY 2014 Revenue Breakdown



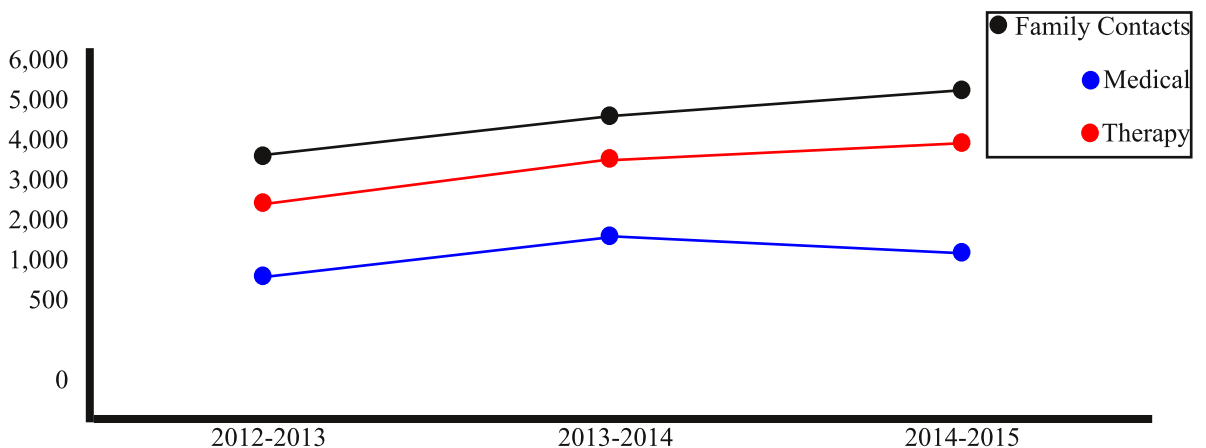
Family visits continued to increase this year totaling 5,137. These visits include the child's biological parents or fictive kin members and are important to help the child transition into foster care and maintain connections with their family and community back home.

Doctor visits, including physical and dental exams, were down this year due to the lower census. A total of 635 physicals and 674 dental exams were conducted. These exams are routine for each child in our care and serve to ensure that they are healthy and to receive proper dental care, including orthodontic work if necessary, and treatment for illness.

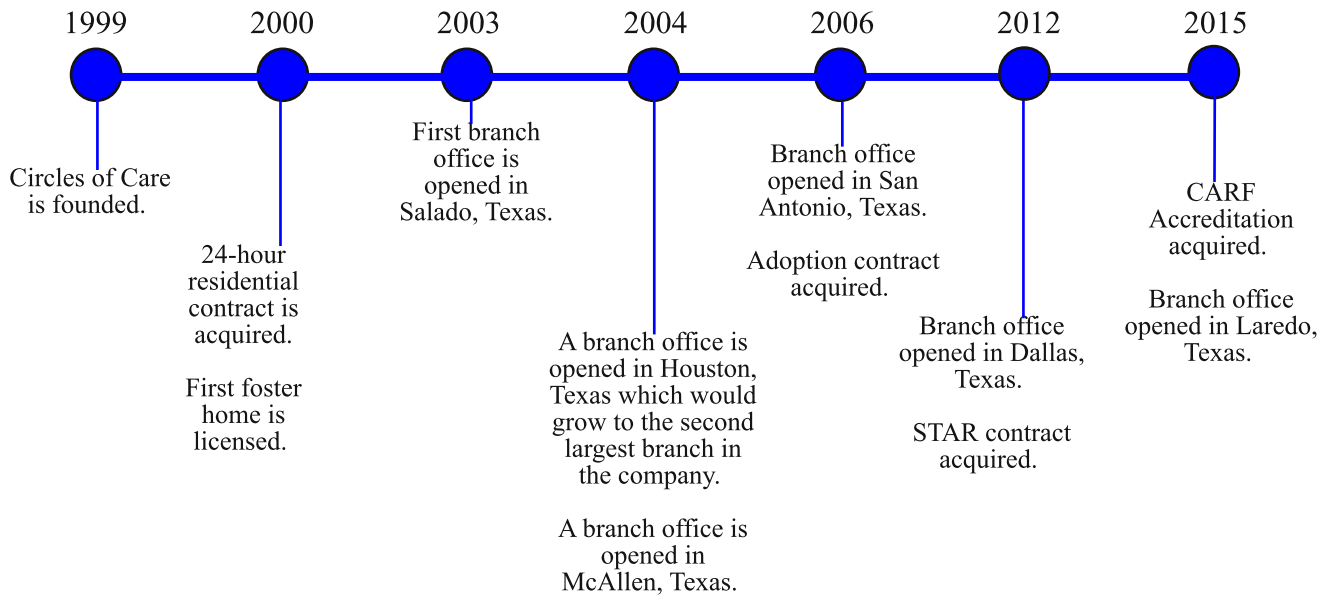
Circles of Care FY 2014 Expense Breakdown



Children in our care attended a total of 3,752 therapy sessions this fiscal year. These sessions also help children to ease into their new environment in foster care and to help foster parents manage problem behaviors and mental health, ensuring children are cared for in the manner most appropriate to their individual needs.



History



State Licensing Office Monitoring

The Corpus Christi office had two office monitorings this fiscal year both resulting in one citation. We were able to come into compliance by the deadline given by the State and correct any noted problems. We will continue to watch the cited concerns more closely in the coming year to ensure continued compliance.

The Houston office had two office monitorings as well one of which resulted in seven citations. By the time of the follow-up monitoring seven months later, all issues had been corrected and the location received no citations.

The Dallas location had one office monitoring which resulted in zero citations.

The McAllen and Salado locations both had two office monitorings this year. Neither office received any citations in any of their inspections and remain in compliance with all State mandates.

This marks McAllen's ninth consecutive inspection with no citations since 2011. Salado has had no citations since 2013 and four inspections.

This fiscal year, Circles of Care was officially accredited by CARF, a nationally recognized accrediting agency which focuses on mental health institutions. Our CARF team was headed up Summer Solomon who worked tirelessly on ensuring the agency was up to par for the inspection, drafted necessary documents, and kept the entire staff informed along the way. CARF inspectors visited each of our offices except for San Antonio and Laredo and were very impressed, even commenting that our agency was one of the best they had ever evaluated. We were awarded a three year accreditation, the highest accreditation that CARF offers.



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Salado and Dallas

Circles of Care

2014-2015 Annual Report

"Bringing children and families together."



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