



Fostering  
Resiliency for  
Survivors of  
Child Abuse



Report to the Community | 2022–2023



## Letter from our Executive Director

If I had to come up with one simple phrase to describe the last two years, it would be *transformative growth*. Canopy Child Advocacy Center has transformed itself from an \$835,000 agency in fiscal year 2022, to a \$1.2 million agency in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2023, with greater growth that has continued to come. Much of this growth is the result two major grants from Cuyahoga County and the City of Cleveland to build our capacity and expand to serve those children experiencing severe physical abuse.

Our growth has been recognized by full accreditation from the National Children’s Alliance. It has been championed by Cleveland City Council President Blaine Griffin and his colleagues. It attracted 330 individuals to attend our “One Place, One Time” gala celebration—raising \$114,500 to serve more

*“One simple phrase to describe the last two years is transformative growth”*

children. It has given us the chance to dream about a bigger building to meet growing needs and growing services!

Throughout this report to the community, you will see facts and figures that detail our growth and expansion. But we hope you’ll be moved by the people—donors, Board members and staff—who form the canopy for children telling the worst story of their lives and helping them heal. You’ll read Brynn’s powerful story about what a place like Canopy, had it existed, would have done for her and her family and forever increase understanding as to why we exist every single day.

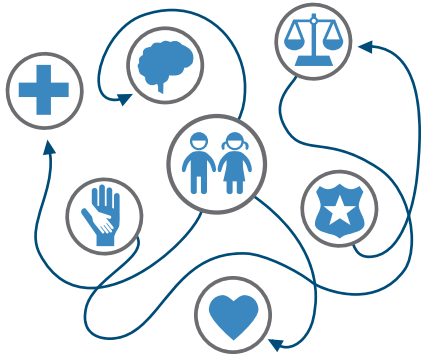
As we celebrate our five-year anniversary milestone on November 18, we hope you will join us—to *advocate, to contribute, and to protect* the children at Canopy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

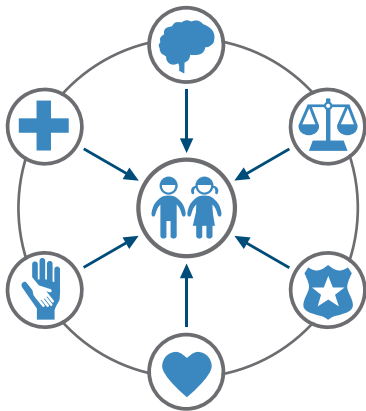
Jennifer L. Johnson, MSSA, LISW-S  
*Executive Director*

# What Is a CAC?

## Without CACs



## With CACs



To understand what a Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) is, it is important to understand what children face without one. Without a CAC, the child may end up having to tell the worst story of his or her life over and over again, to doctors, cops, lawyers, therapists, investigators, judges, and others. They may have to talk about that traumatic experience in a police station where they think they might be in trouble, or may be asked the wrong questions by a well-meaning teacher or other adult that could hurt the case against the abuser.

When police or child protective services believe a child may be experiencing abuse, the child is brought to the CAC—a safe, child-focused environment—by a caregiver or other “safe” adult. At the CAC, the child tells their story once to a trained interviewer who knows the right questions to ask in a way that does not retraumatize the child.

Then, a team that includes medical professionals, law enforcement, mental health, prosecution, child protective services, victim advocacy, and other professionals make decisions together about how to help the child based on the interview. CACs offer therapy and medical exams, plus courtroom preparation, victim advocacy, case management, and other services. This is called the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) response and is a core part of the work we do at Canopy.

## Mission and 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.



# Brynn's Story



*My life* changed forever in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I was—well, I still am, a perfectionist and when I was in school, any grade less than an A—was failing in my mind. So, imagine my shock at receiving a B- on an English paper with the only comment in bright red pen shouting out at me: “Stop showing off.” I was hurt—no, more than hurt—I was crushed—and confused, not entirely sure what I had done wrong.

Wanting to prevent another B- for the next assignment, despite misgivings about him, I asked if I could meet with my teacher after school to go over my rough draft and make any improvements needed so I could get my coveted A. I went to the classroom once school let out and while we did go over my paper, it turned into something that changed my life forever. I was sexually assaulted at age 15 by my 10th grade English teacher. That day, I walked home in a daze.

For a long time, I pretended that nothing had changed. But the truth is I had changed: my fundamental sense of self and safety had been cruelly stripped away by someone I was supposed to trust. I began self-harming, still keeping everything a secret.

About a year after I graduated high school, reports of an inappropriate student-teacher relationship at my school surfaced. The teacher in question was my teacher's best friend. I had therapy that day and something inside my broke. I was too ashamed to say aloud what had happened, so I drew some pictures and from there, my therapist figured it out. I resisted my therapist's urging to go to the police because my teacher had threatened that he would

kill me and my family if I ever told anyone. I developed an eating disorder as a way of numbing myself and coping.

I was concerned for my youngest sister's safety when she started at my old school. My truth came out when I was asking my former Latin teacher whether this English teacher was still teaching. I didn't realize at the time that her legally required mandated reporting still applied to me, even though I was no longer a student. Next thing I knew, two detectives came to my dorm at Cleveland State to hear my story. The detectives did their best to reassure me that nothing

My journey is why I am so supportive of Canopy Child Advocacy Center and their mission to provide a space for a child to only have to tell their story one time in one safe place. Canopy provides this safe space for a team of professionals, law enforcement, prosecutors, therapists and medical examiners to serve the children referred there with trauma-informed care.

I like that Canopy not only supports the child but the family as well. If my parents had a space where they could have been better informed about what I was going through and what was normal to expect,

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*“It only takes one person to alter  
your life, but it takes a village to heal.  
Canopy provides that village...”*

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would happen to me or my family. Slowly I became convinced that maybe it was time to finally tell people who had the power to do something about it.

About a month after the police report, I entered into my first of many stays in residential treatment for my eating disorder. I spent that time preparing myself for testifying in front of the grand jury, who in the end believed me. It was really happening—my secret was going to be told in court.

The trial was a different story. I felt I had to tell every detail of that nightmare experience perfectly every time to all the different people I spoke to just to be believed. And because I was too fearful to have a physical exam that would have shown proof of my story, in the end, a jury decided that there was insufficient evidence and my teacher walked free.

maybe they could have supported me better. If they had been given resources to help not only me but themselves as well, they might be further along in their healing today.

It only takes one person to alter your life, but it takes a village to heal. Canopy provides that village in a place where children can finally reveal the shameful secrets they have been carrying. Having one centralized location would have made such a difference for me and my family, so I am grateful that there is a Canopy for providing One Place, One Time care for Cleveland's children.

# Canopy by the Numbers

## January 1, 2022–December 31, 2022

In 2022, of the 379 clients served, 328 children received forensic interviews on-site at Canopy, which resulted in nearly 40% of those involved in law enforcement being accepted into prosecution.

Victim Advocacy was provided 3,967 times and kids received therapy 953 times.

Each case was reviewed at least three times by the multidisciplinary team with 80% reviewed by an advanced medical consultant.



### GENDER

Male: 111  
Female: 267  
Nonbinary: 1

### AGE

0–6: 143  
7–12: 198  
13–18: 34  
18+: 4

### ETHNICITY

Non-Hispanic or Latino: 271  
Hispanic or Latino Hispanic: 35  
Unidentified: 73

### RACE

Unknown: 73  
Black or African American: 185  
White: 95  
Multiple Races: 21  
Asian: 3  
Other Race: 1  
Native Hawaiian or  
Other Pacific Islander: 1

### ALLEGATIONS

Problematic Sexualized Behavior: 46  
Sexual Abuse: 214  
Human Trafficking (Sexual): 23  
Internet Crimes Against Children: 3  
Neglect: 4  
Sexual Assault: 11  
Other: 1  
Physical Abuse: 1



# Financials

	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Budget
<b>REVENUES</b>			
Foundation Grants	\$ 346,681	\$ 480,339	\$ 515,858
Government and Contracts	383,181	517,266	3,008,246
Corporations, Individuals, Events	20,648	25,147	175,000
Other Donations and Income	3,263	13,938	40,000
In-Kind Program Revenue	122,521	122,607	
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 876,294</b>	<b>\$ 1,159,297</b>	<b>\$ 3,739,104</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Direct Personnel	\$ 275,282	\$ 472,315	\$ 1,522,894
Contractors/Professional Fees	192,687	365,497	1,701,168
Indirect Personnel	37,993	27,717	76,750
Legal/Audit/Technology Expense	44,372	24,706	85,450
Occupancy/Maintenance/Insurance	103,760	85,926	234,842
Program Supplies/Client Assistance	37,656	(390)	44,000
Depreciation	20,378	20,018	24,000
Fundraising Expenses			50,000
In-Kind Program Expense	122,521	122,607	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 834,649</b>	<b>\$ 1,118,396</b>	<b>\$ 3,739,104</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$ 41,645</b>	<b>\$ 40,901</b>	<b>\$</b>

## Kudos from City Council



*Cleveland City Council Leadership Team: Kerry McCormack, Ward 3; Council President Blaine A. Griffin, Ward 6; Jasmin Santana, Ward 14*

“Cleveland City Council proudly supported Canopy Child Advocacy Center with a \$500,000 American Rescue Plan Act grant because our members recognize the importance of your work in Cleveland. Your support, intervention, and advocacy for child abuse victims and their families creates safe spaces for children to recover and thrive. Canopy truly makes a difference in the lives of some of our community’s most vulnerable individuals. We are grateful for your role in making Cleveland a better place for all.”

## 2023 Valued Partners

Cleveland Division of Police | Cleveland Municipal Prosecutor’s Office | Cuyahoga County Prosecutor’s Office | Cuyahoga County Sheriff’s Office | Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services | Cleveland Rape Crisis Center | FrontLine Service | Journey Center for Safety and Healing | Bellefaire JCB | Cleveland Clinic | University Hospital | The MetroHealth System | Local Suburban Law Enforcement Agencies

## “One Place, One Time, One Evening to Make a Difference” Gala

On May 18, 2023, Canopy hosted its first annual “One Place, One Time, One Evening to Make a Difference” gala, which raised \$114,500 to support our growth to meet the increasing needs of our community.

Canopy is grateful to Planning Committee members Stacy Loizos, Maria Sakoutis Melacrinis, Julie Tsirambidis, Diana Vianos, Kelli Almiroudis, Lia Fresty, Ali Milli, Cate Weber, Jennifer Driscoll, Athena Diamantis, Tricia Coyne, Fevi Gountis, and to Title Sponsor MetroHealth for helping make this event a success.

The evening was an event to remember as guests had great fun listening to a live band, making connections, engaging in the live auction and paddle raise, all while enjoying a delicious meal and learning more about Canopy’s mission. The speakers spoke passionately about their experiences in Cuyahoga County and why the child advocacy center matters. All were impacted indefinitely and look forward to this annual event in 2024!



**SAVE THE DATE—April 18, 2024  
at the Old Courthouse in Cleveland**





*We salute event chair, Stacy Loizos, her committee, and all who attended the One Place, One Time, One Evening to Make a Difference Gala.*



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# DONORS

*Our donors help Canopy build a lifeline to our clients. We are grateful to all who supported Canopy from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.*

## FOUNDATION AND GOVERNMENT GRANTS\*

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to Canopy can  
help children and  
families heal  
from devastating  
circumstances.

We invite you  
to donate by  
going online at  
[canopycac.org/get-  
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Thank you.



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