

Vermont Children's Alliance
ANNUAL REPORT



2021



A MESSAGE FROM **THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

These past months have certainly been like no other. From the unfortunate loss of life, jobs, schooling, and what was considered “normal”, the COVID-19 pandemic presented one of the most challenging times in recent memory. The Vermont Children’s Alliance (VCA) and its member Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) remained open through the entire pandemic continuing to provide critical services. While delivering these essential services, team members recognized that households were more vulnerable than ever to abuse and child exploitation. Without program directors, staff, and multidisciplinary team members who worked to provide and deliver services in creative new ways, we may not have known just how at risk these children were.

When schools shut down and went to virtual classrooms, the daily interactions with mandated reporters most often recognizing symptoms of abuse ceased. Kids were more isolated than ever. Caregivers took on the role of teacher while maintaining full-time work either from home or outside the home. It is an unfortunate reality that instances of child abuse increase in times of extreme stress. The level of stress throughout these previous months was extreme for all, but even greater for families navigating the evolving changes.

Vermont CACs identified that collaboration was never more necessary than it was during the pandemic. Multidisciplinary teams rallied together with their partners to ensure essential services remained available and adaptable to support child victims and their caregivers. The VCA tapped funds to ensure services could be provided virtually. Some of those services included victim advocacy by phone or video, tele-health, and tele-forensic exams, while always meeting the highest of standards. We created and shared resources to help Vermont residents recognize the signs and symptoms of child abuse, while at the same time educating the public about their moral responsibility and mandated duty to report suspicions of child abuse.

Without a team effort, CACs would not have been able to provide the services our communities needed most. Each year we are overwhelmed by the generosity of so many who support our CAC programs with services and monetary donations; small and large businesses, local, state and federal politicians, and the community at large. We are extremely grateful for these organizations and the teamwork that exists between us. All that has happened this past year emphatically shows the effectiveness of Children’s Advocacy Centers and our collective mission. New and strengthened collaborations helped to meet the needs of our community members during the most critical times, reinforcing what we already knew: when we work together, we are stronger.

-WENDY LOOMIS
Executive Director



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WHAT WE DO

The Vermont Children's Alliance (VCA) is a non-profit network of child advocacy centers committed to working together to improve the way Vermont supports and responds to victims of child abuse and child sexual abuse. Our 13-member organization serves all 14 counties in Vermont.

Our goal is to provide every child victim in the state of Vermont, along with their non-offending caregivers, with a friendly and safe space where allegations of child sexual and physical abuse can be investigated while appropriate supporting resources and services are being provided.

At a CAC, a coordinated team of experts in health and human services, law enforcement, victim advocacy, mental health, and other disciplines holds offenders accountable and helps children and families heal in a comprehensive, seamless way. This team of experts is called a multidisciplinary team or MDT.

WITHOUT CACs



Kids and families must often find mental health, medical, and other services on their own.

WITH CACs



CACs bring the services to the kids and families need to them, all in one place.

WHAT WE DO

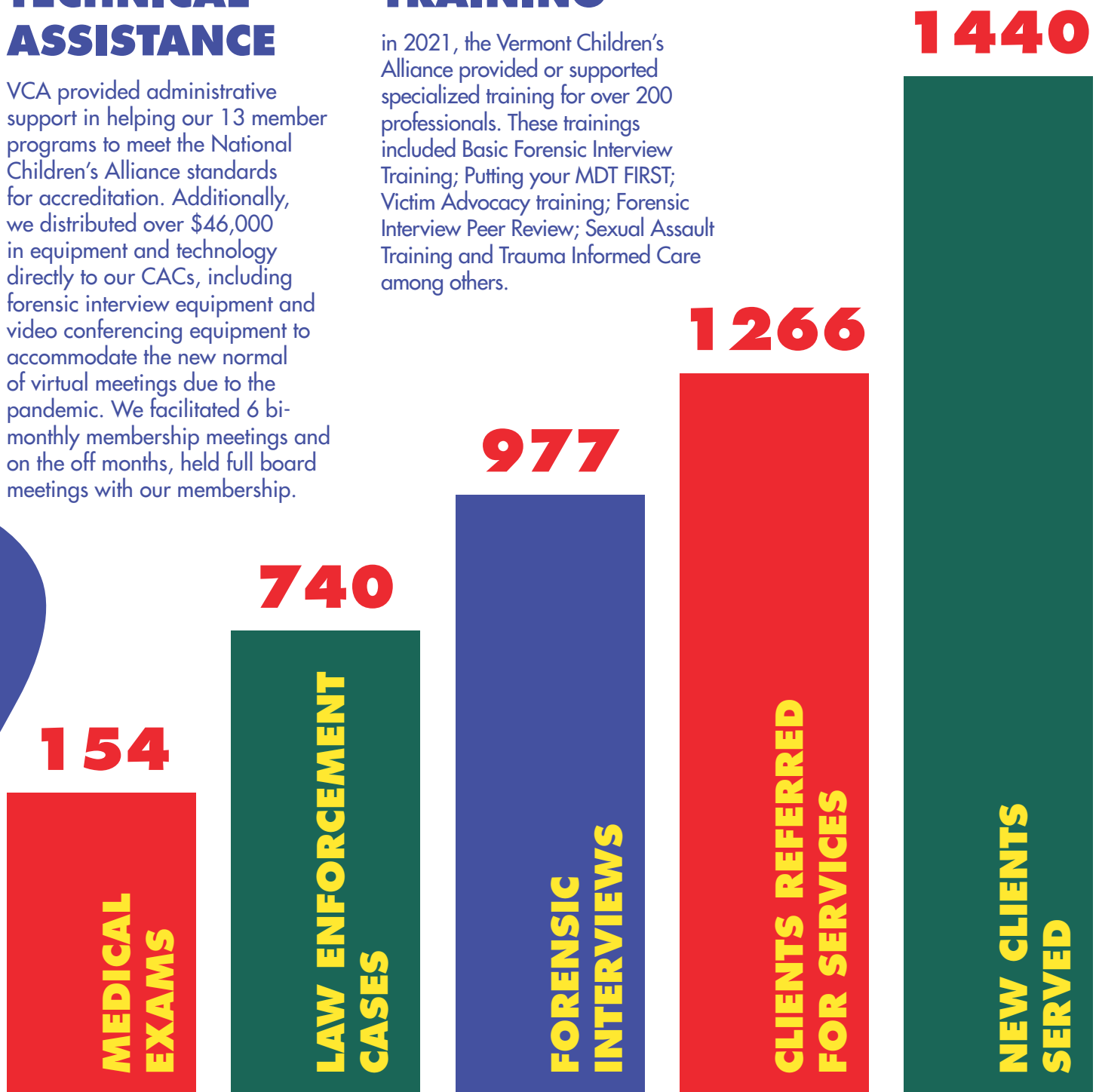
2021 SNAPSHOT

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

VCA provided administrative support in helping our 13 member programs to meet the National Children's Alliance standards for accreditation. Additionally, we distributed over \$46,000 in equipment and technology directly to our CACs, including forensic interview equipment and video conferencing equipment to accommodate the new normal of virtual meetings due to the pandemic. We facilitated 6 bi-monthly membership meetings and on the off months, held full board meetings with our membership.

TRAINING

in 2021, the Vermont Children's Alliance provided or supported specialized training for over 200 professionals. These trainings included Basic Forensic Interview Training; Putting your MDT FIRST; Victim Advocacy training; Forensic Interview Peer Review; Sexual Assault Training and Trauma Informed Care among others.



MEET THE VCA STAFF



WENDY LOOMIS **Executive Director**

Wendy has been leading the Vermont Children's Alliance since 2017 and serves as Vermont's representative of the National Children's Alliance (NCA), providing technical assistance, training, and organizational resources to the thirteen CACs throughout Vermont. She has been part of the CAC movement since 2009 when she was hired as the Victim Advocate and Outreach Coordinator for the Child First Advocacy Center and Rutland Unit for Special Investigations. In 2010, Wendy was promoted to the Executive Director and still holds that role. Born and raised in Rutland County Vermont, Wendy graduated from Castleton University with a BA in Health Science and spent fifteen years in healthcare before getting involved in the non-profit world. Wendy enjoys spending time with her two children and grandson, as well as family, friends who became family, woodworking, baking and any new creative adventure she can find.



PATTI RANDALL **Assistant Director**

Patti has held the role of Assistant Director of the Vermont Children's Alliance since 2012 with her main focus being financial and grant management of the Chapter. Previously, she held the position of Executive Director of the Bennington County Child Advocacy Center and Special Investigations Unit from 2009 until 2012 when she joined the VCA. Prior to her work in the CAC movement, she was an office assistant in the Trust & Estate Administration Office at William's College. Besides spending as much time as she can with her husband, three kids, and three grandchildren, she enjoys reading and writing contemporary fiction. She also dabbles in acrylic painting.

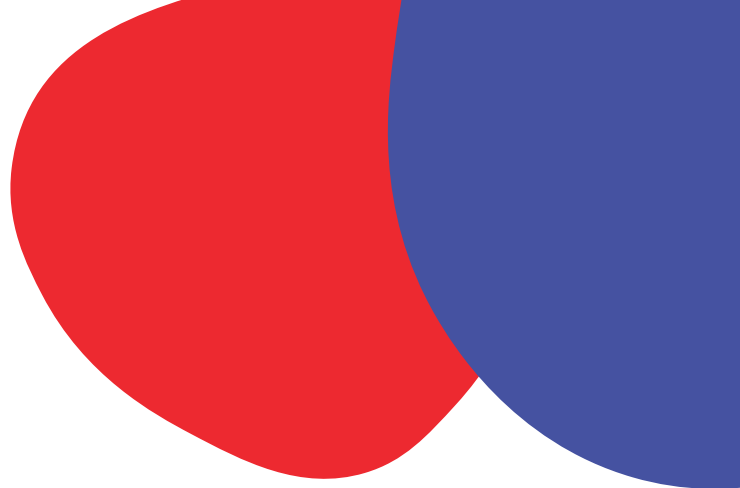


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JENNIFER POEHLMANN **Public Policy and Outreach Director**

Jenn came to the VCA in 2010 serving as its first Executive Director before switching gears in later years to become the Director of Public Policy. As the Director of Public Policy, Jenn focused on the impact of child advocacy centers and child protection policy issues affecting the well-being of children in the state of Vermont. Devoting her career to advocating on behalf of children and families affected by abuse, Jenn has been part of the CAC movement since 2010. She earned her BA from Brown University and went on to earn her law degree from Cornell Law School. Born and raised in New England, Jenn enjoys watching the New England Patriots and cheering for the Red Sox alongside her three children. In late 2021, Jenn left the VCA when she accepted a position as the Executive Director of the Vermont Center for Crime Victim's Services.

2021 VCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Vermont Children's Alliance Executive Committee

PRESIDENT

Tracy Patnoe, Executive Director

Lamoille County Special Investigation
Unit/Child Advocacy Center

VICE PRESIDENT

Chris St. Cyr, Executive Director

Caledonia Children's Advocacy Center

TREASURER

Fred Saar, Community Member

SECRETARY

Vickie Rathgeb, Executive Director

Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center



Board of Directors

Jenna Caslin, Executive
Director Bennington County
Child Advocacy Center/ SIU

**Rebecca
Duranleau**, Executive Director
OUR House of Central Vermont,
Inc. CAC/SIU

Julie Gaudette, Director
The CACs of the Family Place/
Windsor County SIU

Meghan Gyles, Executive
Director The Orleans County
Child Advocacy Center

Betty Lavoie, Executive
Director Northwest Unit for
Special Investigations NUSI/
CAC

Wendy Loomis, Executive
Director Child First Advocacy
Center

Caroline Mellish, Executive
Director Addison County Unit for
Special Investigations

**Samantha (Sam)
Prince**, Executive Director
Windham County Safe Place
CAC/ SUSI

(Vacant), Executive Director
Orange County Special
Investigations Unit & Child
Advocacy Center

WHAT IS A CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER?

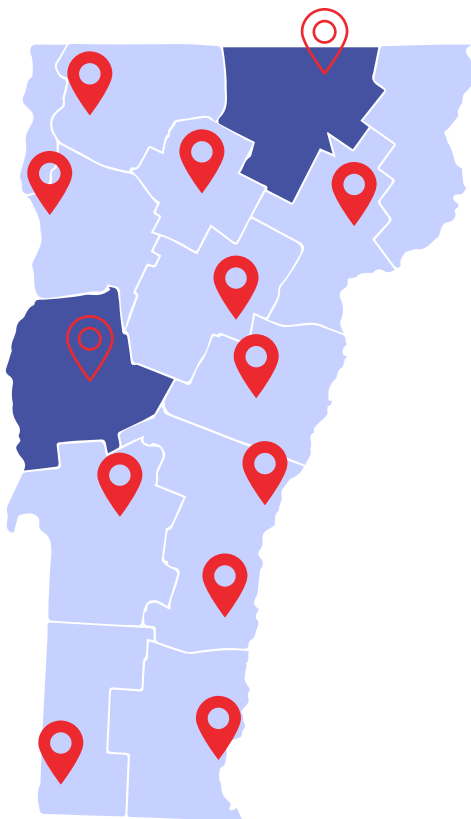
At a child advocacy center, or CAC, a coordinated team of experts (multidisciplinary team or MDT) in health and human services, law enforcement, victim advocacy, mental health, and other disciplines holds offenders accountable and helps children and families heal in a comprehensive, seamless way. The child meets once with a trained interviewer who knows the right questions to ask.

Then, based on the interview, the MDT makes decisions together about how to help the child. Finally, CACs offer a wide range of services like therapy, medical exams, courtroom preparation,

victim advocacy, case management and others to help produce better outcomes.

To really understand what a CAC is, you must 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, law enforcement, 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.

Child Advocacy Centers provide healing, justice, and trust for child victims of abuse.



VERMONT CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS

CAC LOCATIONS, COVERAGE AREAS BY NCA MEMBERSHIP
STATUS LEVEL, CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

**100% of Counties (14 of 14)
Covered by CACs**

85.7% (12) Accredited CACs
14.2% (2) Associate / Developing CACs



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National Children's Alliance Membership Status



ACCREDITED MEMBER



**ASSOCIATE /
DEVELOPING MEMBER**

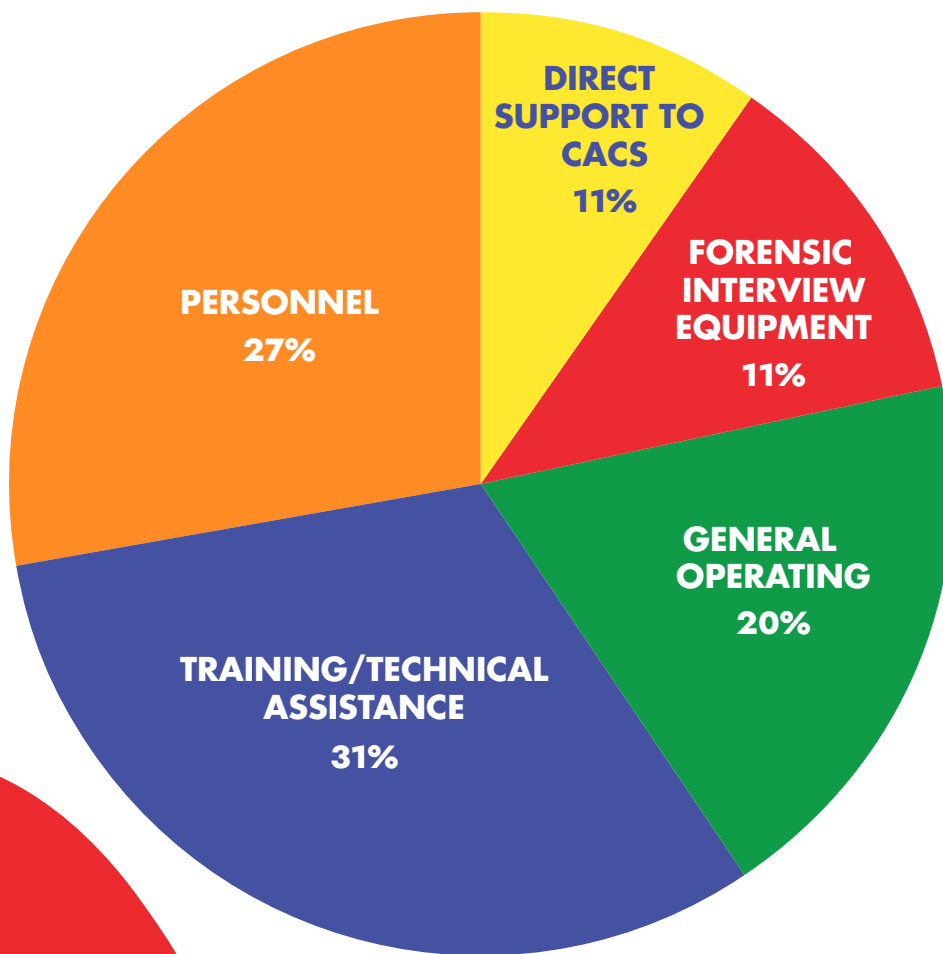


**COUNTY SERVED BY
AN ACCREDITED CAC**



**COUNTY SERVED BY
AN ASSOCIATED /
DEVELOPING CAC**

2021 FINANCIALS



REVENUE

Grants	\$222,378.00
Contributions	\$5,732.00
Other	\$7,499.00
TOTAL	\$235,609.00

EXPENSES

Personnel	\$60,962.00
Training & Tech Support	\$70,305.00
General Operating	\$46,851.00
Forensic Interview Equipment to CACs	\$25,826.00
Direct Support to CACs	\$22,575.00
TOTAL	\$226,519.00

LOOKING AHEAD

As we look ahead to 2022 and 2023, we will focus on maintaining accreditation with the National Children's Alliance and continue our trusted relationship with the Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center.

We will also:

- Provide stronger prevention efforts and programming through the addition of an Outreach Education and Training Coordinator to focus on building awareness around child abuse and the role of CACs
- Strengthen VCA's Organizational Capacity through additional staffing and funding
- Diversify revenue and resources available to support VCA and CACs through increased public awareness of the CAC/MDT model with corporations, general population and government at the local and state level
- Complete our statewide goal to have access to an accredited CAC in every county in Vermont through providing technical assistance and advocacy
- Advocate for continued state funding for Child Advocacy Centers and the Vermont Children's Alliance to support continued services
- Continue to provide educational and high-quality training opportunities to multidisciplinary team members



THANK YOU.

- The Vermont
Children's Alliance