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#  The Children’s Trust Fund

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# Abstract

A look into the inner workings of The Children’s Trust, its purpose and mission. This public non-profit is the basis for Michigan’s child abuse prevention efforts. In collaboration with local councils throughout the state of Michigan, The Children’s Trust Fund is able to reach families and children at risk for child abuse and neglect and provide the necessary education to prevent such abuse.

# The Children’s Trust Fund

Child abuse and neglect prevention is the foundation of child and family welfare. The Children’s Trust Fund (CTF) is an agency employing every resource possible to stop child abuse and neglect before it starts. Through support from the state legislature, the Children’s Trust Fund is able to enact their mission through the collaboration of local councils and fellow child abuse prevention agencies to provide education and support to at-risk families. The public awareness of abuse and neglect in Michigan and throughout the country is critical in the elimination of child abuse cases. The Children’s Trust Fund, through its mission and efforts raises awareness on these critical issues while providing preventative measures to protect the children of Michigan.

# Mission

The Children’s Trust Fund was established as a public non-profit in 1982 as Michigan’s leader for child abuse and neglect prevention efforts. It began by way of the vision of Dr. Ray Helfer, a pediatrician who through his work recognized the need for a fund to protect Michigan’s children and provide essential parenting education. This vision ultimately shaped the mission of the Children’s Trust Fund as stated in the Plan for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, “The Children’s Trust Fund serves as a voice for Michigan’s children and families and promotes their health, safety, and welfare by funding effective local programs and services that prevent child abuse and neglect” (Children's Trust Fund, 2011). One key aspect of the Children’s Trust Fund is that its efforts are strengths-based and therefore its focus is solely on the *prevention* of child abuse and neglect unlike other agencies through the Department of Human Services that focus on eliminating abuse that has already occurred and the legal repercussions of child abuse and neglect. The theory behind this is, once abuse has occurred children and families are prone to the effects of adverse childhood experiences which can leave a lifelong impact on those affected. By enacting the mission and efforts of CTF, parents and children throughout Michigan are given the tools and skills to ultimately prevent abuse and its adverse effects before it begins.

# Structure and Legislation

The Children’s Trust Fund was established by Public Act 250 of 1982; “An act to establish the state child abuse and neglect prevention board; to provide the powers and duties of the state child abuse and neglect prevention board; and to prescribe the powers and duties of certain state departments” (Legislative Council, 2008). This act lays out the governance and structure that provides the foundation for the Children’s Trust Fund. CTF is comprised of a Governor appointed Board of Directors that develops a state plan for the trust money. The Board consists of 15 members; 11 public members appointed by the governor, the director of human services, the director community health, the superintendent of public instruction and the director of the department of state police. These board members make the ultimate decision and provide approval for use of the funds within the Children’s Trust.

The Trust today, holds nearly $24 million dollars advocated for child abuse prevention and awareness. These funds are accumulated through several means, none of which are direct state or federal funding. The Children’s Trust Fund, as a public non-profit is one-third public and two-third private. The one-third public dollars comes from Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) that’s purpose is stated in [Title II of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act Amendments of 1996](http://friendsnrc.org/direct-download-menuitem/doc_download/4-title-ii-of-capta);

1. to support community-based efforts to develop, operate, expand, enhance, and coordinate initiatives, programs, and activities to prevent child abuse and neglect and to support the coordination of resources and activities to better strengthen and support families to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect; and

(2) to foster understanding, appreciation and knowledge of diverse populations in order to effectively prevent and treat child abuse and neglect which is supported by the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974. (Legislative Council, 2008)

The two-thirds private dollars comes from CTF’s tax campaign, license plate campaign, Signature Auction and donations. The tax campaign is a major fundraiser for CTF and is a check-off of the state income tax form where the public can choose to donate as little or as much of their refund as desired. In 2010 this fundraising effort raised $517,175 for Michigan’s children (Children's Trust Fund, 2011). The license plate campaign in 2010 raised over $318,000 for child abuse and prevention efforts. This campaign, through the Secretary of State provides Michigan drivers the opportunity to purchase a specialty license plate displaying the CTF logo for $35 from which $25 is donated directly to protect Michigan’s children. Lastly, the Pam Posthumus Signature Live Auction Event, which draws more than 600 guests to the Lansing area annually, provides an enormous amount of funding to the Children’s Trust Fund through sponsorships, gift donations and auction dollars. Combined, the majority of these private and public funds are held in the Trust from which CTF gains the interest accrued annually to allocate to local Child Abuse Prevention Councils and toward its funding of grants and programs.

# Program Services and Demographics

The Children’s Trust Fund focuses on providing at-risk communities throughout the state of Michigan with funding to support child abuse and neglect prevention programs. They do so through a rigorous grant approval process in which the local councils and organizations write grant proposals to gain funding. These programs that are funded follow a research-based protective factors strategy focusing on: “parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, nurturing and attachment and children’s social and emotional competence” (Children's Trust Fund, 2011). One of the largest programs supported and implemented through CTF funded agencies is Circle of Parents (COP). COP is a parent directed, mutual support group that is free to participants. It provides an environment that is free of judgment and serves as a place for parents to come and discuss their struggles and triumphs with other parents. Along with the Circle of Parents some other CTF funded programs include, Family Links Program of Cadillac, Nurturing Family Project through the Children’s Aid Society and Teen Parent Training through Traverse City ISD, to name a few.

Ultimately, the Children’s Trust Fund functions at the macro level and does not interact one on one with clients. It is through these programs that CTF is able support clients by funding programs and services. These programs are in place and located in such areas that make these services readily available to those in need. These programs are free to participants and there is no need’s assessment that determines eligibility. Dependent upon the program, participants are given entrance surveys to better understand the needs of the client and to address those needs and assess the progress of the client over time.

# My Role at the Children’s Trust Fund

I am working directly under the supervision of Sylvia Brown Jones LMSW the Direct Services Coordinator of the Children’s Trust Fund. My experience so far has been open to the macro workings of CTF as well as the mezzo level through group sessions. In the office I work with Sylvia to revise and review awarded grant proposals and prepare them to be converted into contracts. I am responsible for compiling data and conducting research to ensure that these new 2013 grantees have a strategic plan for CTF’s dollars. Along with direct services I am also helping prepare for Child Abuse Prevention Month in April and the CTF rally at the Capital. I have assisted in the fundraising efforts that are necessary to raise awareness and get such an event off of the ground. I have been given an opportunity to work with various people on several different platforms which has shaped my knowledge into an outstanding experience. I have also been given the opportunity to facilitate a program like those funded through CTF; ICHANGE, Initiating Communities Helping Area Neighborhoods Gain Empowerment. This is an after school program offered through a local community center for at-risk youth. My role is to facilitate group sessions and provide the youth with a strengths-based curriculum covering topics including, but not limited to; self-esteem, assertiveness and goal setting. This has been an eye opening experience that has been difficult at times but overall rewarding. Through my experiences thus far I have learned a great deal about myself and the inner workings of a large organization.

# Conclusion

#  The Children’s Trust Fund is a strong, stable organization that’s mission is to prevent child abuse before is starts. They do this as the leader of child abuse prevention through funding proactive prevention programs throughout the state of Michigan to improve family relationships and spread knowledge in order to help at-risk families find alternatives. CTF has proven to be an excellent site for my field placement. I have learned so much about philanthropy and the need that exists for educational parenting programs and youth intervention. With better understanding and knowledge of strong families and parenting the catastrophic number of child abuse reports would diminish drastically. Through CTF’s efforts and the implementation of programs throughout Michigan, this will be possible.

# References

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Legislative Council. (2008). *State of Michigan.* Retrieved from Legislative Council, State of Michigan: www.legislature.mi.gov