Christian City Home for Children, Inc.


This report represents Christian City Home for Children, Inc.'s responses to Charting Impact, a joint project of BBB Wise Giving Alliance, GuideStar USA Inc, and Independent Sector. Charting Impact uses five simple yet powerful questions to encourage strategic thinking and help organizations share concise information about their plans and progress toward impact.

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Mission:
With the support of churches, donors, and the community, The Children’s Village at Christian City ministers to neglected, abused, and abandoned children and their families by providing out-of-home care with the goal of family restoration and reunification.

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1. What are we aiming to accomplish?

The program’s goal is both reunification of the family unit and, when that is not possible, provision of a home environment to maximize each child’s opportunities for success. Although our organization is based on Christian principles, we welcome children of every religion - or with no religion. This unique ministry provides a caring atmosphere where children can learn structure and responsibility while living in a productive and affirming home. These positive principles are reinforced as each child is given the opportunity to develop both individually and as part of an integrated family unit. The strength of the program lies in our team-centered approach towards meeting the needs of the children. Planning for the child’s care includes input from the family/guardian, staff members, house parents, teachers, and mental health professionals. Specific goals in line with these principles include: emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual development for children; family and/or guardian rehabilitation and reunification, academic success for all students; strong connections and collaborations between The Children's Village and the community; and development of independent living skills for older children.

2. What are our strategies for making this happen?

Based on the framework of Positive Youth Development (PYD), The Children's Village at Christian City provides children with growth opportunities on psychological, behavioral, and social levels. Beginning with their initial intake and throughout their time at The Children's Village, they build relationships with caring and supportive adults in a protective and structured environment. Based on a trauma-informed approach, house parents, case workers, and psychologists mentor children, and when ready, include them in decision-making and leadership roles. Therapeutically, the children are empowered to recognize and identify their trauma, and supports are put in place to assist them as they develop a new framework for viewing the world around them. They receive not only therapeutic support, but also mentors in the community who provide safety and protection as they navigate their new world. Children are taught healthy lifestyles and skills and are allowed to practice these skills in the broader community. By practicing youth engagement on all levels of the program, from therapy and case planning to programmatic decision-making, The Children’s Village provides protective factors and a stronger safety framework for all children in the program. Spiritual development is promoted through regular church attendance, participation in youth activities, and opportunities for devotional time – both private and with family. Several ordained ministers are available to youth as they explore their spiritual life. Another feature of The Children’s Village is the opportunity for intergenerational mentoring between children/youth and seniors who live nearby on the Christian City campus. Older adults who are part of this sister ministry sometimes volunteer with residents at The Children’s Village and share their unique perspective with children and teens. Additional opportunities for the children include a VIP Host Family Program (where they can join in activities with a host family outside of their home at The Children’s Village), Independent Living Program (for children 14 years and up, to gain on-campus assistance with employment prep and basic life skills), and Transitional Living Program (for post-high school residents to receive support as they make decisions about college, trade school, career prep, or entering the workforce).

3. What are our organization's capabilities for doing this?

Over the past 49 years, The Children’s Village at Christian City has been proud to earn the respect and trust of the community in which we serve. This support of our program is vital to the work we do helping children who have suffered abuse, abandonment, or neglect. The Children’s Village works directly with government agencies including the Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), the Georgia Governor's office, and the Fulton County Adolescent Health and Youth Development Program. We also work with local law enforcement agencies and the Department of Juvenile Justice, as needed. We hold membership with National Safe Place and Together Georgia - a statewide child placement organization that coordinates training, advocacy and program services for private provider member agencies. Under the direction of experienced Program Directors and COOs through the years, The Children’s Village has developed a comprehensive and effective program that provides support for children who have experienced
trauma. Phil Kouns, our current COO, has over 30 years of experience in the field of human services, over 10 years in the ministerial field, and prior to joining Christian City, was founder and Executive Director of Rainbow House children’s shelter. He recently completed his Masters in Mental Health Clinical Counseling and currently serves on both the National Safe Place Advisory Board, and the Together Georgia Board of Directors. Anna Aycock, our Program Director, has a Masters in Professional Counseling and a BA in Psychology with a minor in Criminology. Her previous work experience includes positions at A New Start Counseling Center, Hope Counseling Center, and the Georgia Baptist Children’s Home. Additional staff includes social workers, house parents (some trained as Safe Place house parents), and administrative and support staff. The Children’s Village at Christian City does not use sub-contractors for primary program activities, but does coordinate with other local non-profits to help address situations affecting children and their families. These issues can range from food insecurity and domestic violence to special cultural, or language requirements, or issues surrounding sexual identity. The staff at The Children’s Village is trained to address most issues internally, but connection to this support network provides valuable resources for situations requiring additional expertise. A close connection is also maintained with school administrators, and area doctors/dentists/therapists to address each child’s physical, mental, and emotional needs. Local civic groups, churches, school groups, and others also volunteer their time, make donations, sponsor children, hold food drives, and participate in fundraisers.

4. How will we know if we're making progress?
Quarterly reports from the Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children’s Services, and Office of Provider Management provide feedback in the areas of Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being Outcomes. Case worker files and other in-house documentation, plus data collected through National Safe Place, give Children’s Village staff the tools needed to evaluate each child’s progress. This evidence-based information can be incorporated into existing and future programs. The Children's Village believes that youth engagement and involvement are paramount to their future success. Youth are involved on the advisory board for The Children's Village, assisting with programmatic decision-making. This not only allows their voices to be heard, but also provides valuable feedback about the program from those who truly have first-hand knowledge of trauma-informed care. Family/guardian rehabilitation and reunification are also important indicators of program success, as are academic and social accomplishments by the children. For older youth, the acquisition of basic life skills is another important indicator as they make their preparations for transition out of the program.

5. What have and haven't we accomplished so far?
As with any ongoing program, there are improvements and adjustments that continually need to be made to better serve the children in our care. We are currently working to expand our recreational facilities on campus, to provide both children and their families more opportunities for exercise, leisure activities, and time spent together. The completion of the new Crisis Stabilization Cottage was a major accomplishment for us this year. Additionally, a new multi-court pavilion was finished, providing a variety of recreational opportunities for our children. Over 30% of resident children increased the number of visits they had with their families this past year, and 9 were reunited with their parent/guardian. Four of our high school students graduated this year and our Brenau University student also graduated in May. Between July 2012 and June 2013, our children received numerous recognitions including induction into the National Honor Society, A/B Honor Roll, Talents and Gifted Certificates, Teacher’s Citizenship Awards, Student of the Week Award, and the Shield Award for Excellence on the Soccer Field.