The Children’s Center of the Antelope Valley
Strategic Plan
FY 2023 – 2027
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Acknowledgments

CCS thanks The Children’s Center of the Antelope Valley (CCAV) for the opportunity to partner in the creation of a strategic plan which will advance the organization’s legacy and shape their path forward for the next five years.

We appreciate the input and candor of all staff and board participants. We are especially grateful to Sue Page and Donna Gaddis for their guidance throughout this process, to Sam Schmitz for her exceptional vision and enthusiastic leadership as Board Chair, and to CCAV staff leaders Carol Stevenson, Destiny McCune, and Natasha Castro for their indefatigable efforts and outstanding contributions from beginning to end.

Finally, we thank board members Joe Acosta, Zac Cullen, Lori Fischer, Joshua Ginsberg, Michael Hernandez, Alex Massari, and Tonia Symensma-Cohen for their participation in numerous strategic discussions over the past several months.

CCS Team
Lindsay Freyermuth, Senior Vice President
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Executive Summary

The Children’s Center of the Antelope Valley is dedicated to providing the highest quality of care to children, families, teens, and young adults throughout the region. For more than 30 years, CCAV has promoted healing within the Antelope Valley community, dedicated to the treatment and protection of children and families—and more recently, to teens and young adults facing urgent challenges and trauma — through a continuum of services. CCAV has earned an excellent reputation as a leader in the field, employing best practices while providing both preventive services and treatment programs and strategies for many of the most vulnerable people in the Antelope Valley.

Committed to reviewing all activities and aligning the organization for maximum efficiency while responding to the evolving needs of the community, CCAV engaged CCS Fundraising to guide the organization through a comprehensive strategic planning process. Over the past five months, staff leaders and board members have worked together with CCS to create this roadmap that will guide the organization over the next five years. The strategic plan was approached as a collaborative effort, with a shared vision of continued commitment to the mission and dedication to the children and families served by CCAV and its strategic partners.

This strategic planning process builds on past accomplishments to deepen CCAV’s position as the regional leader for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and expand its efforts to create lasting generational change. The cornerstone of the plan is a series of three overarching organizational goals, each with strategic objectives underscored with measurable outcomes designed to propel the organization forward in the years ahead.

CCAV seeks to continue as a quality leader in the child welfare marketplace and expand its impact throughout the Antelope Valley. Market-responsive strategies will maintain growth and provide for the organization’s long-term stability and vitality while expanding its impact both geographically and programmatically.
Organizational Profile

The Children’s Center of the Antelope Valley offers a variety of programs and services designed to prevent child abuse and care for those who have experienced it. Founded in 1988 by a group of doctors and community leaders, CCAV is a private, nonprofit healthcare organization located in Northern Los Angeles County that provides a continuum of services to child victims of abuse, children at risk of abuse, and their families. CCAV has recently added prevention and treatment services targeted at teens and young adults.

CCAV offers innovative, comprehensive prevention, intervention, and treatment services and is the coordinating agency of multiple community partnerships involving both public and private agencies. Core CCAV programs include:

**Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment**

*Clinical Therapy*
Providing effective treatment for individuals experiencing depression, anxiety, or trauma. This program is designed to support and educate individuals and their caregivers to promote positive mental health and well-being. Focused on the therapeutic needs of children and their families, CCAV’s highly trained clinicians provide individual, group, and family therapy, including:

- Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy
- Managing and Adapting Practices
- Parent-Child Interactive Therapy
- Individual Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

*Relative Support Services*
Sponsored by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), this program provides extensive resources and support for grandparents and other relative caregivers who are raising children due to loss of custody or other extraneous circumstances.

*Domestic Violence Support Services (DVSS)*
Sponsored by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, this program provides a network of support to domestic violence survivors so that they can overcome barriers to employment and become self-sufficient.

*Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)*
Parent-Child Interaction Therapy is a proven parent-child treatment program for parents who have children with behavioral problems (e.g., aggression, non-compliance, defiance, and temper tantrums).
Wraparound Engagement Desert Outreach (WEDO)

WEDO CCAV is a program dedicated to providing a network of support to Transitional-Age Youth (ages 16-25 years), justice-involved adults, and those adversely affected by COVID-19 in order to ensure they have the tools they need to be successful and thrive independently. WEDO is a collaboration of local agencies working to build a trauma-informed community in the Antelope Valley. CCAV’s partners recognize the long-lasting effects of trauma, including homelessness and justice involvement. WEDO works to provide resources, referrals, and opportunities for particularly vulnerable populations:

**Transitional Age Youth (TAY)**
Transitional age youth are young adults aged 16-25—who are at risk of, or experiencing, unstable housing and need resources in order to sustain independence. Particularly vulnerable TAY include those who are aging-out or have aged-out of the foster system as well as those who identify as LGBTQ+.

**COVID Affected**
A community-based initiative designed to bring pandemic-recovery resources to local residents, COVID Affected provides assistance to those adversely affected by COVID-19. CCAV helps people overcome hardships created or exacerbated by the pandemic.

**Justice-Involved Individuals**
Justice-involved individuals are adults with a history of trauma and incarcerations and need resources and opportunities to ease re-entry within the community. WEDO also works to reduce stigmas associated to trauma and its effects by providing education and training to our community. Those reentering the community after justice involvement can face significant barriers to securing employment, housing, and more.
Environmental Context

The child welfare industry includes enterprises primarily engaged in providing one or more of a range of individual and family social, counseling, welfare, or referral services, including out-of-home placement, child abuse and neglect prevention, and temporary relief services. Major trends facing The Children’s Center of the Antelope Valley — important factors related to this strategic plan — include:

1. **Uncertainty and Contraction of State and Federal Funding**: Total expenditures on child welfare services in the United States exceed $30 billion dollars annually and include prevention services, family preservation, child protective services, in-home services, residential, and adoption and guardianship services and supports. However, federal and state funding has been flat for approximately ten years, yet expenses have continued to rise. Worth noting, however, is CCAV’s growth in county funding during the past two years—a reflection of the high regard the organization enjoys.

2. **Privatization of Services**: States and counties across the U.S. are embracing privatization as a strategy for improving the cost effectiveness of child welfare and youth services. For organizations like CCAV, this means greater demands on agency resources—exacerbated by the flat federal funding, flat insurance reimbursement funding, and limited philanthropic support from regional stakeholders.

3. **Market Consolidation in Child and Family Welfare**: The child and family welfare industry is experiencing provider consolidation. Mergers and acquisitions are the result of fiscal pressures, changes in operations, and changes in funding. Small child and family welfare service organizations may be susceptible; opportunities for larger and adaptive entities to consolidate these smaller service providers may be significant in this environment. As CCAV is somewhere in the middle—and as noted during the SWOT analysis—this circumstance may present both opportunity and threat. The opportunity may be particularly compelling in light of the expressed interest in deepening organizational impact throughout the Antelope Valley.

Other key factors related to CCAV’s work include:

- Industry estimates suggest that funding for child welfare will remain lax at both federal and state levels. However, corporate, and private donations should be expected to increase, particularly with increased attention and resources directed to these areas.

- There has been great variance in child welfare spending from state to state in the past that can be explained by different state-specific issues. CCAV must look at the dynamics of both the state of California and the region it serves—the Antelope Valley—to understand where the best opportunities are in terms of policy and fiscal direction.

- Each year in California, 4,000 young people “age out” of the foster care system upon reaching adulthood, usually at the age of 18; 20% of these will end up homeless. This presents both risks and opportunity. DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) funding, family preservation efforts, and aging out funding are opportunity trends to monitor, particularly as the organization seeks to expand its work with transitional-age youth and justice-involved youth.

- Homelessness and incarceration are prevalent in the Antelope Valley. Unemployment, failing health and death are related downstream negative impacts.
Strategic Planning Objectives and Methodology

To affirm CCAV’s mission and impact, evaluate the organizational structure, and assess priorities for the future, a series of carefully organized activities was constructed as the framework for the strategic planning process. This framework was created, in part, as a result with the following questions in mind:

- What are the perceived strengths and challenges for the organization?
- Which key mission priorities resonate most with supporters and funders and have the greatest impact on the Antelope Valley community?
- What changes must be made organizationally to sustain future growth, both programmatically and financially?
- Does the organization effectively communicate its impact?

The first phase of the process was a period of gathering information, recruiting and orienting the committee, and providing all participants with an overview of the fundamentals of strategic planning. The balance of the work was anchored by five Visioning Sessions held mostly at three-week intervals, each session focusing on key components of the work:

I. Visioning Session #1: Mission, Vision, Core Values
II. Visioning Session #2: SWOT Analysis
III. Visioning Session #3: Special Focus
   a. Corporate vs. nonprofit: similarities and differences
   b. board Focus: Strategy vs. Tactics
   c. Roles of Marketing and Development
   d. Setting appropriate fundraising goals and expectations
IV. Visioning Session #4: Mini Retreat
   a. Review work to date
   b. Brainstorming top Organizational Goals
   c. Breakout sessions: Strategic Objectives and Measurable Outcomes
V. Visioning Session #5: Review, Discuss, Debate Goals, Objectives, Measurables

Between each session, committee members met in small teams to further discuss the materials, with homework and direction provided by CCS, to propel the activity forward. The teams were headed up by dedicated CCAV staff leaders Carol Stevenson, Destiny McCune, and Natasha Castro. The many contributions of various board members and CCAV staff have resulted in an intelligently explored, creatively designed, and potentially powerful strategic plan.
Mission, Vision, and Core Values

A nonprofit’s mission, vision, and core values are more than just statements – they are the heartbeat of the organization. They establish the reason the nonprofit exists, the outcomes it is looking to drive, and the mindset it aims to maintain across staff and board members in doing the work. They also serve as a filter through which every organizational decision must pass.

Specific to the strategic planning process, these are the fundamental building blocks upon which everything else evolves. The essence of these elements can be described as follows:

- **Mission**: the work you are doing every day to drive toward your vision – what you do, who you do it for, and the intended impact
- **Vision and Core Values**: the future you would create if your organization achieved all its goals, based on a set of guiding principles that shape the behavior and decision making of everyone on the CCAV team

Upon careful reflection and considerable discussion, the Strategic Planning Committee decided to adopt the following for CCAV:

**Mission:**

*To promote healing of the whole person and a healthier community by providing care and services to empower children, individuals, and families to overcome life’s difficulties*

**Vision:**

*A community where we invest in families and individuals to empower them to reach their fullest potential and create lasting generational change*

**Core Values:**

- Compassion
- Equity
- Excellence
- Integrity
- Leadership
- Mentorship
SWOT Analysis

Following the work on Mission, Vision, and Core Values, the board and staff turned their attention to CCAV’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. These are identified from taking a wide look around the outside of CCAV (an external analysis) and careful look inside CCAV (an internal analysis), and then identifying what are the most important issues to address. The information below was provided as a guide to undertaking this important step:

STRENGTHS
What is CCAV good at? Where do we shine while others do not? What makes us better or different from the rest of our competition? Identifying strengths is a significant starting point when building any strategic plan. Start by recognizing what we are good at and use that as a foundation for planning our future. Acknowledge what we are best at and how we can become even better at it.

Include:

- Things we do well
- Qualities that separate us from our competition
- Internal resources such as skilled, knowledgeable, committed staff
- Tangible assets such as property, proprietary systems, etc.

Ask the following:

- How are we different from our competition?
- What is the one thing CCAV is best at?
- What service/program do we take the most pride in? Why?
- How is CCAV unique?

WEAKNESSES
What are our limitations and weaknesses? Be honest and real in identifying the places CCAV really lacks. The more honest you are, the more useful the SWOT analysis will be. Dig deep into our services, goals, reports, services, programs, etc. and see what is not working. Look at our competition and see what they offer that we do not.

Where to look for weaknesses:

- Services being provided
- Client service
- Team communication
- Brand awareness
- Website appeal, information, ease of use
- Social media and online presence
- What your competition is doing

Consider:

- Things we lack
- Things our competitors do better than we do
- Resource limitations
- Unclear/conflicting goals
OPPORTUNITIES
With every organization, there are always opportunities being overlooked, you just don’t see them. Conducting a SWOT analysis makes us take the time to look in every crack and hole to uncover any missed opportunities.

Here are some examples of opportunities we might be missing:

- Partnerships with other organizations
- Relationships with local vendors
- Community involvement
- Brand awareness through community activities
- Social media engagement

Taking the time to recognize opportunities and how we can incorporate them into our strategic plan ensures that we’re taking advantage of all options.

Consider:

- Underserved constituencies/markets
- Few competitors in our market
- Emerging need for our services
- Community/Civic recognition

THREATS
Threats may be the easiest to spot. Most organizations already know their threats but do nothing about them. Having a list of all your competition and challenges will force you to look them in the eye and do something about it, rather than avoiding them.

Threats do not always mean other nonprofit agencies that are providing similar services as you. For example, having a limited budget could be a threat. You know this is an issue, but rather than avoiding it, our SWOT analysis is going to make you face it. How can we address this problem and stop it from being a threat? We could (and will) explore new and different approaches to fundraising. The important thing is that we are addressing the issues and coming up with a plan of attack.

Include:

- Emerging competitors
- Funding challenges
- Changing regulatory environment
- Negative press/civic/community attention
- Staffing challenges

The members of the Strategic Planning Committee provided extensive input across multiple weeks, both individually and within the small teams led by CCAV staff members, carefully evaluating each of these areas. Participants contributed to a wide range of thoughtful discussion and made several recommendations for this critical step. The results are found on the next page.
CCAV Identified Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

**STRENGTHS**
- Important resource for our county
- High standards of care and professionalism
- Boutique, not a “mill”
- Broad array of resources
- Board and staff want to work here—passionate people in key positions (Internal Resource)
- We care about our clients and change lives.
- Collaborative leader, we partner well w/ others.
- Peer Mentor model
- Transparency & integrity with finances
- 92% of income goes to direct service
- We own our building
- Training facility, working with local colleges
- Therapy for children
- Nimble—very good at adjusting to community needs, trends, opportunities
- Solution based, not enablers

**WEAKNESSES**
- Lack of clarity of vision, goals, priorities
- Growing pains—organization has grown significantly over past 10 years
- Significant growth has led to internal communications issues
- Multiple roles by key staff (ex: Sue, Donna)
- Name—not all about children anymore
- Marketing; limited messaging to community
- No legacy giving program
- No dedicated development person (fundraising)
- Small board including several new members
- Space: need more for additional programs
- Spending only 8% on overhead limits our infrastructure
- Long-term tracking of participants is lacking—can negatively impact funding
- Not approachable enough. Clients do not need to be at rock bottom to access services

**OPPORTUNITIES**
- Great stories to tell, need to learn how
- Re-branding as CCAV (dropping full name... much more than just children)
- Community partnerships. Ex: collaborating w/ JetHawks to host Children’s Center of AV night.
- Vocational training and job readiness ideal for CCAV to further invest in. (Especially TAY)
- Potential to enter the housing market for TAY
- Truly addressing “whole person” needs (relates to new Mission)
- Great training center for colleges
- College-directed marketing campaign
- Grow the board
- Establish Community board—more involvement from people interested in education component, in volunteering component
- Committee involved with the new building/capital campaign, would love to help
- Federal Grants

**EXTERNAL FACTORS**

**INTERNAL FACTORS**

**THREATS**
- Funding challenges.
- Aligning diversity of board and staff with community demographics
- More formal in nature than many social service organizations, makes it more difficult to raise $$
- Heavy burden of regulations in CA—dealing with OSHA, LACDPH, etc., potential for litigation
- Potential for larger organization seeking to acquire CCAV
- Ability to change/adapt to trends
- Quality control when collaborating with other organizations
- Potential for HIPAA violations
- Ability to keep up with digital technology/IT infrastructure
Strategic Growth Initiatives

The comprehensive goals and objectives in CCAV’s Strategic Plan, as presented on the following pages, align with the planning committee’s vision, developed over the course of several months of extensive engagement. They serve to focus the organization’s work to achieve a specific set of results. Three overarching goals will be undertaken, each with a defined set of strategic objectives; for each objective, several related measurable outcomes have been identified to define how this work will be accomplished. These outcomes have specific performance measures that define how CCAV leadership will know they are successful in achieving these goals.

The ability to achieve the goals and objectives described in this Strategic Plan depends on the level and allocation of budgetary and human resources. Through this plan, CCAV is committed to allocating resources efficiently by measuring performance, evaluating programs, and monitoring the contributions of staff, board, and community partners.

Historically, CCAV has held itself to high standards of excellence; with this plan, the organization endeavors to continue to be accountable. The plan reflects the organization’s commitment to strengthening its ability to report on performance results in achieving its strategic goals and delivering value to the Antelope Valley.

The Strategic Plan focuses on 32 agency-level measures across eight objectives under the three goals that reflect the top identified priorities. For each, there are levels of performance to be met over the course of the next five years. Careful monitoring of performance should be done annually (at a minimum) to track and improve progress. Where and when appropriate, metrics should be modified or added as circumstances evolve. Operational and programmatic improvements should be built into the organization to reinforce a culture of continuous improvement and operational excellence.

Finally, as this Strategic Plan proposes to begin with the current fiscal year, some consideration should be given to establishing modified performance tracking during the plan’s first year, in recognition that the current fiscal year will be 1/3 over by the time of the Strategic Plan’s adoption. While all baselines for performance and many action steps related to the plan should be implemented as soon as possible, it is recommended that the majority of performance tracking should begin with FY 2023.
Overarching Organizational Goals, Strategic Objectives and Measurable Outcomes

The following three goals, along with associated objectives and outcomes, serve as the foundation for this five-year Strategic Plan. In addition to guiding the organization’s activities over the next five years, these goals, objectives, and outcomes should challenge all to lead and operate at the highest level of accountability, integrity, and transparency.

GOAL #1: Increasing financial accountability and sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL</th>
<th>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>MEASURABLE OUTCOME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Increasing financial accountability and sustainability</td>
<td>1.1 Seek new organizational resources while better utilizing the ones we have</td>
<td>1.1.1 Increase percentage of restricted financial resources applied to administration from 8% to 10%</td>
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<td>1.1.2 Increase percentage of unrestricted financial resources applied to administration by 5%</td>
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<td>1.1.3 Explore legality and financial implications of CCAV paying rent to itself in buildings owned by the organization</td>
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<td>1.1.4 Review all positions with financial responsibilities and modify responsibilities as appropriate to ensure optimal cash management and accounting procedures</td>
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<td>1.1.5 Hire dedicated internal auditor to manage high demands of state &amp; federal regulations</td>
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<td>1.2 Diversify funding sources to better manage financial opportunities and challenges</td>
<td>1.2.1 Hire Director of Development and Development Administrator to create a more robust and diversified development program</td>
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<td>1.2.2 Through active board engagement, increase total annual contributed income from non-governmental sources (individuals, businesses, private foundations, other) by 25% per year</td>
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<td>1.2.3 Expand base of direct support from federal funding sources</td>
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<td>1.2.4 Create a legacy giving program</td>
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<td>1.2.5 Establish corporate funding program including range of recognition opportunities</td>
<td>1.2.6 Establish appropriate allocation of financial resources, associated with 1.1.2 above, to enable a more impactful development program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GOAL #1: Increasing financial accountability and sustainability

The Children’s Center of the Antelope Valley adheres to sound financial practices, serving as careful stewards of the organization’s funds. This is one reason CCAV enjoys a stellar reputation within the child welfare community, and particularly the funding community. The combination of exceptional services and strong financial management were largely responsible for the organization receiving major funding with the onset of COVID-19 in early 2020 to help alleviate emerging community needs resulting from the pandemic.

While this strong financial management serves as a solid foundation for future growth and impact, heavy dependence on restricted county funding—more than 90% of contributed income each year—is of some concern relative to the aspirational goals of the organization. Other factors at play include:

- Flat funding from medical insurance reimbursement streams.
- Likelihood of flat federal spending, with state and local governments seeking to reduce both costs and responsibility for child services.
- Extremely time-consuming and staff-draining demands of state & federal regulations, exacerbated by the additional workload due to COVID-19 requirements.
- CCAV’s commendable commitment to hiring only highly qualified (and therefore more highly compensated) professional staff and providing professional development opportunities.
- Segmented financial management responsibilities spread across multiple staff members creating potential inefficiencies.
- Lack of professional, broad based development plan.

While the percentage of county funding received is in line (even better than most) with other Antelope Valley agencies that provide related services, diversifying and growing non-governmental contributed income is essential to Organizational Goal #1. Just as financial resources must be allocated to ensure impactful programs and organizational structure that focuses on delivering the highest quality of care for children and families, so too must resources be allocated to enhancing fundraising efforts. Over the course of the five-year plan, ongoing financial analysis will continue to ensure that these resources are strategically used to achieve organizational, financial, and operational goals.

Locating and maintaining the long-term funding necessary to offer a sustained level of services to children, youth, and families requires an initial re-alignment of financial resources, extensive program planning and the ability to adapt to changes over time. The decision to increase the percentage of restricted (county) funding allocated to administration from 8% to 10%, and to reallocate 5% of unrestricted financial resources to administration, will help provide the expanded infrastructure necessary to accomplish the goals in this plan.

For the programmatic side, the commitment to a professional, comprehensive development program will help secure necessary funding for this initiative. The funding plan should include pursuing federal grant opportunities directly, including Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI). These additional sources of revenue should provide benefits both to the organization and, most importantly, to its clients.

Specific to Strategic Objective 1.2 Diversifying funding sources to better manage financial opportunities and challenges, a comprehensive Development Plan for CCAV is provided under separate cover.
GOAL #2: Deepening impact throughout Greater Antelope Valley to meet evolving and emerging needs

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<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL</th>
<th>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>MEASURABLE OUTCOME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Deepening impact throughout Greater Antelope Valley to meet evolving and emerging needs</td>
<td>2.1 Strengthen and expand leadership role as premier agency in the region</td>
<td>2.1.1 Create a clear vetting process to guide decisions regarding which organizations—particularly grass roots &amp; smaller community-based organizations—CCAV will collaborate with</td>
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<td>2.1.2 Create formal set of rules and guidelines detailing roles and responsibilities for collaborative relationships with other organizations, including CCAV’s leadership role (whenever possible), and authorization of final decision making and approvals of all aspects of engagement</td>
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<td>2.1.3 Establish CCAV presence in Antelope Valley communities where need is greatest, including but not limited to Palmdale and Rosamond; expansion of services may come in the form of satellite CCAV presence, collaborations with existing agencies, or acquisition of smaller organizations with complementary missions and services.</td>
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<td>2.1.4 Expand the continuum of services to meet the challenges of the most vulnerable individuals and families in the Antelope Valley</td>
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<td>2.2 Enhance and expand marketing &amp; communications</td>
<td>2.2.1 File a DBA* as CCAV and undertake major re-branding with careful attention to appropriate positioning.</td>
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<td>2.2.2 Broaden and diversify marketing activities, including entry into new distribution channels, to reach optimal target audiences and expand stakeholders.</td>
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<td>2.2.3 Augment current onboarding program for board and staff to include skills training in networking, mentorship, and marketing.</td>
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<td>2.2.4 Establish appropriate allocation of funds, associated with 1.1.2 above, to enable successful expansion of marketing &amp; communications efforts.</td>
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<td>2.3 Continue to build a strong talent pool across all staffing categories</td>
<td>2.3.1 Review and carefully communicate job descriptions for each staff position; align all job descriptions where appropriate for current functions and responsibilities.</td>
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<td>2.3.2 According to organizational needs, create new job positions with clearly defined and delineated job descriptions.</td>
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<td>2.3.3 Provide appropriate professional development opportunities for internal growth of employees at all levels to increase employee retention.</td>
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*DBA ("Doing business as") is a simple, economical, and legal way to register a name a business wishes to go by that is easily recognizable but does not include the full legal name.
GOAL #2: Deepening impact throughout Greater Antelope Valley to meet evolving and emerging needs

One of the drivers behind the Strategic Planning process was the organization’s recent growth, resulting in an organization budget ballooning from $5.7 million in fiscal year 2020 to $7 million in 2021 and a projected $8 million in the current fiscal year. This growth, coupled with a history of demonstrable impact and high-quality delivery of care, led to the big questions: Who are we and Who do we want to be?

While considering the future—and during the Strategic Planning process—the question of being acquired by a larger organization was raised. With no interest in this as an option, the board and staff ended up in quite the opposite place. Over the past two years, CCAV has shown that it could do more than ever before in prevention, treatment, and advocacy; it could take on more responsibilities across a broader spectrum of services. Looking to the future, the intent with Goal #2 is further expansion and deepening impact.

Deepening CCAV’s impact throughout Greater Antelope Valley may take any number of directions, but it starts with the baseline of building upon strengths, including:

- Being recognized as experts in trauma treatment, with an exceptionally well-trained staff.
- Having earned a reputation as being highly reliable and dependable and trustworthy.
- Being viewed as leaders in the Antelope Valley for providing awareness and outreach resources in the community.
- Cultivating meaningful relationships with elected officials, who in turn are largely supportive and recognize our value.

With this as the backdrop, CCAV is positioned to expand its leadership role throughout Antelope Valley, both programmatically and geographically. Current services are primarily focused in and around Lancaster, but the needs are great across the region. There is significant potential for CCAV to grow its influence on shaping public policy, including systematically engaging political and community leaders to educate and build effective coalitions. CCAV leadership should be the leading voice for advocacy and seek to build relationships with public officials and other child welfare decision makers. Building connections with key community influencers and decision makers will help impact future initiatives.

In seeking to accomplish this goal, other considerations should include:

- Carefully-assessed and vetted strategic partnerships from multiple stakeholder groups
  - Develop a policy and procedure manual that spells out requirements and expectations regarding relationships with existing and future partners, broken out by specific categories
- Asking what it means to be a leader in the community, and how being viewed as experts in the field can best be leveraged.
- Exploring qualified acquisition/new venue opportunities.
  - Develop a strategy to identify potential acquisition candidates in Antelope Valley.
  - Identify smaller organizations that complement CCAV’s programs/services and provide targeted growth opportunities, particularly in underserved communities where need is greatest.
  - Explore partnership opportunities with other nonprofit organizations or potential corporate partners that would invite CCAV presence and provide access to space.
Continue commitment to building a workforce rich in diversity and talent
  - Continue to engage, train and nurture employees, and employ best practices, empowering professional staff through effective onboarding and ongoing development
  - Engage a professional recruiter with expertise in seeking, finding, and assessing qualities and fit for diverse candidates
  - Recognizing the challenges of recruiting top level employees to the Lancaster area, a commitment to staff retention through mentorship, professional development, and recognition is imperative

Create succession planning guidelines and methodology for all senior staff positions
  - Planning for the successors of the Executive Director, Clinical Director, Compliance Manager, and other staff leadership positions is crucial to ensure the smooth transition of the organization

Recognizing that some of these are already part of CCAV’s current strategies, here are some suggestions related to this goal for broadening the organization’s impact:
  - Seek “thoughtful representation” by inviting representatives from diverse groups to speak to your staff and board about cultural differences and concerns unique to them.
  - Support the development of mentoring programs within faith communities for children and families under stress.
  - Educate law enforcement and other first to help them recognize signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect, work with victims and their families, and make appropriate referrals.
  - Encourage religious leaders to acknowledge publicly that child abuse is a major concern for the faith community and that they are dedicated to supporting families and protecting children.
  - Offer to speak at a parent-teacher organization (PTA or PTO) meetings.
  - Recruit high-profile business leaders to serve as ambassadors for CCAV. Encourage them to challenge fellow business leaders to join them as advocates for the important work of CCAV, and to contribute.
  - Identify ways employee volunteer programs could work to support safe and healthy families in the community.

Specific to **Strategic Objective 2.2 Enhance and expand marketing & communications**, a Marketing Plan for CCAV is provided under separate cover.
  - Train religious and lay leaders to recognize signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect, work with victims and their families, and make appropriate referrals.
  - Encourage religious leaders to acknowledge publicly that child abuse is a major concern for the faith community and that they are dedicated to supporting families and protecting children.
  - Offer to speak at a parent-teacher organization (PTA or PTO) meetings.
  - Recruit high-profile business leaders to serve as ambassadors for CCAV. Encourage them to challenge fellow business leaders to join them as advocates for the important work of CCAV, and to contribute.
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Specific to **Strategic Objective 2.2 Enhance and expand marketing & communications**, a Marketing Plan for CCAV is provided under separate cover.
GOAL #3: Creating lasting generational change by breaking the cycle of trauma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL</th>
<th>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>MEASURABLE OUTCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Creating lasting generational change by breaking the cycle of trauma</td>
<td>3.1 Empower individuals to be self-sufficient through impactful resources</td>
<td>3.1.1 Provide comprehensive support services including domestic violence counseling, parenting skills, financial literacy groups, academic support and others as deemed appropriate</td>
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<td>3.1.2 Reduce by 5% the number of CCAV clients <strong>solely dependent</strong> on government subsidies</td>
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<td>3.1.3 Reduce by 10% the number of CCAV clients <strong>partially dependent</strong> on government subsidies</td>
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<td>3.2 Shift the limiting mindset to disrupt the negative cycles of behavior that limit opportunities</td>
<td>3.2.1 Provide whole person enrichment through exposure to experiences (cultural, beach, athletic, etc.)</td>
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<td>3.2.2 Advocate for priority housing for clients who desire to become self sufficient</td>
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<td>3.2.3 Expand TAY program into middle school and add STEAM component</td>
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<td>3.2.4 Create partnerships with higher-level entities (e.g., trades, unions) to ensure livable wage career path</td>
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<td>3.2.5 Establish inspirational mentorship program</td>
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<td>3.3 Maximize utilization of spaces to complement grants</td>
<td>3.3.1 Build a Family Solution Center to connect families and youths and reduce the self-limiting mind set through vocational training, experiential enrichment, and educational resources.</td>
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<td>3.3.2 Ask the donors who committed support to the proposed multi-functional TAY building prior to the onset of the pandemic to renew their support, now for the construction of the Family Solution Center.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
GOAL #3: Creating lasting generational change by breaking the cycle of trauma

CCAV has taken its core vision and philosophy and become one of the preeminent organizations providing services to children with some of the most severe issues related to being abused, and their families. One of the central tenets of this philosophy is “Empower” not “Enable.” It is this core value that led to this goal, and it is no mistake that empower found its way into the first strategic objective.

Just as this goal evolved late in the Strategic Planning process, its roots are also recent. Its inspiration comes largely from the work of the last two years with the WEDO program. Transitional age youth and justice involved young people are the most vulnerable of falling into (or remaining in) the cycle of trauma.

This is a truly lofty, aspirational goal, as are its objectives and outcomes. Achieving these outcomes, for both objectives, will be challenging yet attainable; they are certainly worthy of focused attention, with this background as context:

- CCAV has achieved remarkable results with a recidivism rate of 3% for its clients vs. 48% for the general population throughout California
  - *It will be important to continue to monitor these results and track any programmatic changes against any upticks in the rate*

- Statistics indicate that the children of justice involved individuals are at far greater risk of suffering from trauma and abuse. Moreover, CCAV data shows that 95% of justice involved individuals who are on parole have kids.
  - *As with current programs, future programming should include activities for families, allowing CCAV to monitor and assess the children*

- TAY falls under each of the three areas: Prevention, Education/Awareness/Outreach; Treatment

- CCAV became a liaison with public health on behalf of this cohort in order to build trust with communities who are otherwise unwilling to cooperate or engage with government entities.

- With the premise that COVID made those already vulnerable more vulnerable, it accelerated and exposed the inequities that already existed.

The heart of this goal is the construction of the comprehensive family solution center/connection center, similar to the building originally envisioned prior to the onset of the pandemic. Adding this valuable space—and providing the programs as outlined in the plan—will require funding. CCS recommends that CCAV revisits the list of those who had committed philanthropic support for the originally-proposed building and seek renewed commitments for the re-imagined building. A carefully planned approach should be undertaken, with much thought given to the sequence of conversations and the well-orchestrated involvement of key donors helping with subsequent asks.
Conclusion

Understanding the long-term implications for young people exposed to domestic violence, substance abuse, and other related traumas, it is admirable that CCAV seeks to expand its impact throughout the Antelope Valley. This strategic plan offers guidance for the CCAV staff, administration, and board to follow as they continue to address some of the region’s most significant challenges. The plan will assist in the prioritization of prevention and treatment initiatives that have the greatest impact on individuals and families. It will help with the engagement of diverse stakeholders to plan, implement, and evaluate programs that meet the social and cultural needs of Antelope Valley families. It will support innovative approaches to meeting evolving community needs.

Through its Organizational Goals, Strategic Objectives, and Measurable Outcomes, this strategic plan supports a vision for the future with the plan at the center, directing multiple initiatives across all aspects of the organization. At its core, this plan addresses a cycle of inter-connected pursuits:

- **Mission Clarity**
  - Adopt new Mission and promote CCAV Vision and Core Values
  - Rollout of CCAV and related brand messaging
  - Expand message strategy

- **Capacity Building**
  - Commitment of financial resources to infrastructure needs
  - Key additions to staff
  - Succession planning
  - Evaluation of job descriptions for optimal financial and program impact

- **Growth Opportunities in Fundraising**
  - Dedication to development
  - Expand individual and corporate giving using best practices
  - Evaluate programs & create list of donor investment opportunities

- **Sharpness of Focus**
  - Honest assessment of what CCAV does best
  - Careful evaluation of Antelope Valley needs that can best be addressed through CCAV
  - Focused, impactful collaborations

Members of the Board of Directors and senior staff team of The Children’s Center of the Antelope Valley have invested a great deal of time and energy over the past five months toward the creation of this five-year strategic plan. This plan reflects a level of aspirational vision that speaks to the commitment of organizational leaders to do more than it ever has — to truly create lasting generational change.
Appendix

Antelope Valley Providers Comparative Data
CCAV Strategic Plan VISIONING SESSION 1
CCAV Strategic Plan VISIONING SESSION 2
CCAV Strategic Plan VISIONING SESSION 3
CCAV Strategic Plan VISIONING SESSION 4
CCAV Strategic Plan VISIONING SESSION 5
Mission Vision Values Committee Input
Mission Vision Values DRAFT v1
Strategic Plan Overview
SWOT Input and Feedback