



Offering hope to children and caregivers

*Honoring 29 years in
advocating for children*

2022 Annual Report



Dear Friends,

I am happy to report that we are moving on from the challenges of providing care during COVID and can refocus on expanding our services to meet the needs of children in Central Pennsylvania who have experienced abuse.

We officially opened our Cumberland County satellite office with a key presentation on October 4, 2022. We began providing interviews and mental health services with the plan to offer medical care once we addressed some staffing shortages on the medical team. At the end of December, during extremely cold weather, several water pipes broke in the ceiling and water ran throughout the center unchecked. Unfortunately, the water caused significant damage to the flooring, carpet, and drywall. The costs for repair were covered by insurance, and we should be up and running by April 2023.

The benefit of having an office in Cumberland County is that it will increase access to care for children and families in Cumberland as well as Perry County. The plan is to achieve accreditation through the National Children's Alliance (NCA) within 3 years. This accreditation is important as it indicates we've met the 10 rigorous standards developed by the national accrediting body for CACs.

NCA has introduced 3 new optional standards that will impact our practice over the next several years. These standards include service provision to child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, physical abuse, and child abuse prevention. While CACs seeking accreditation need only meet the 10 mandatory standards, centers opting into the optional standards must meet any to which they commit, as well as the 10 mandatory standards, to receive accreditation. Our initial focus will be on meeting the physical abuse standard.

The CAC has been fortunate to receive several grants including one that will cover salaries for a second referral (intake) coordinator and an additional therapist. Both staff will work from the Cumberland County satellite office. We also received approval to add a lead forensic interviewer who can support the growth and development of our forensic interview team. The lead position will ensure the forensic interview team is using the most current practice recommendations and will guide the professional development of our new forensic interviewers. Drew Krantz has been promoted to Behavioral Health Supervisor, a move that is critical to help our mental health team expansion.

I mentioned in last year's annual report that we are looking at the impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the children and families served at our center. Anecdotally, about 50% of the caregivers disclose that they are survivors of child sexual and/or physical abuse. These experiences can impact the ability to support their child after an abuse and may trigger the caregiver's own trauma response. In 2023, we will be reviewing evidence-based interventions to address Intergenerational trauma and determining how we can implement an intervention at the CAC.

We appreciate the support of all our community partners and look forward to an exciting year.

Thank you,

Lynn Carson

Lynn Carson
Director of Operations

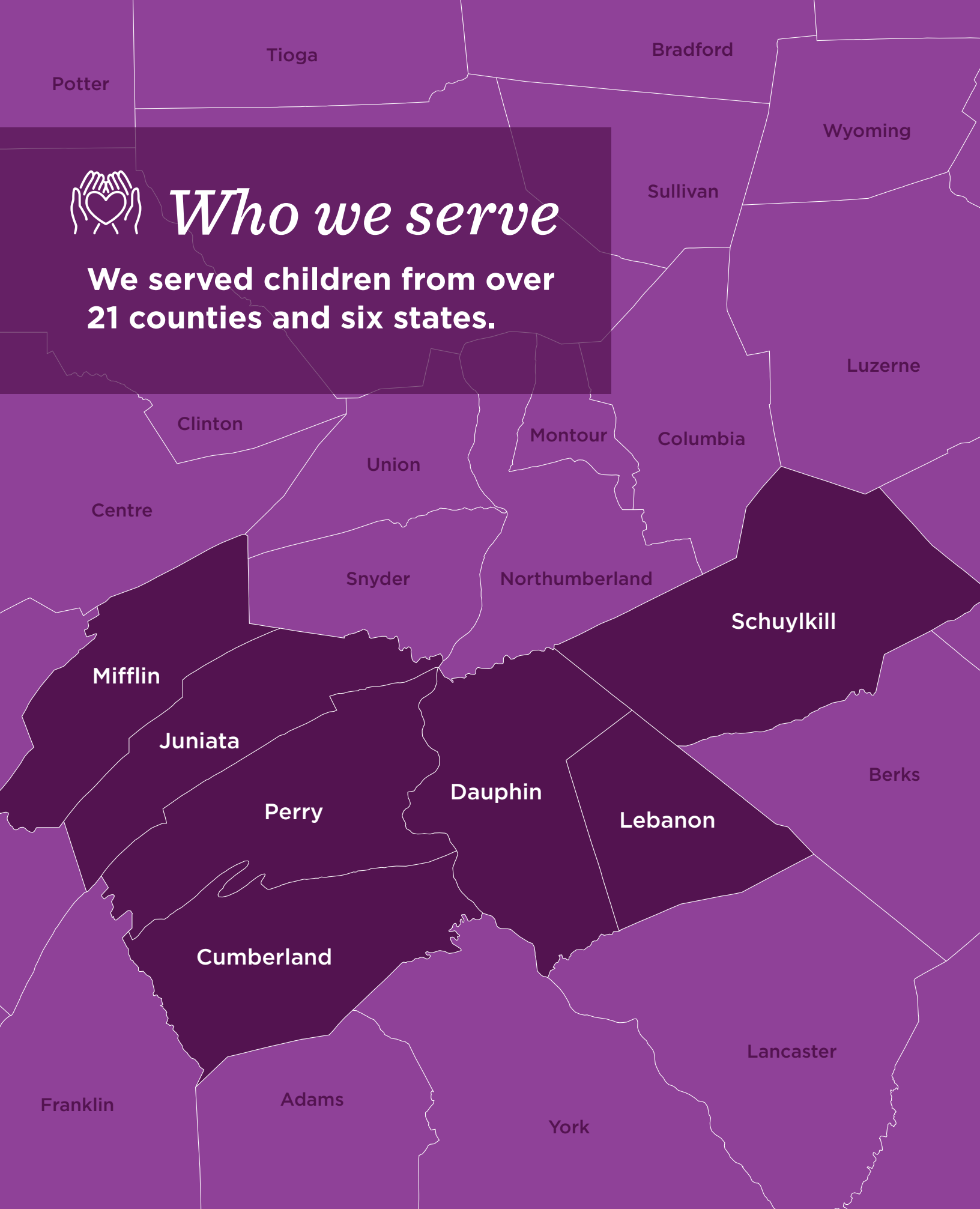






Who we serve

We served children from over 21 counties and six states.





1206  Total number of children served

1206  families were provided with advocacy services

941 or **78%**  children received medical examinations

515  children were referred for counseling



Making a difference in a child's life



While numbers are important, they do not show the tangible difference our staff make in the

lives of children and caregivers every day. When forensic interviewers conduct a non-leading and non-suggestive interview, they give the child space to talk about what happened to them without shame or blame. Children often share that a huge weight has been lifted from them because they could talk about what happened in a supportive environment.



The Medical Team examines each child to ensure they are physically healthy and addresses their medical needs.

Sometimes this includes treating the injuries caused by sexual or physical abuse or neglect and other times it is to identify an undiagnosed illness. The most frequent questions posed to the providers “is my body okay and can anyone see that I’ve been abused?” Our medical team can reassure the child that their body is healthy, providing another opportunity to reduce feelings of shame and blame.



The mental health team plays a vital role during a CAC appointment by addressing the child and caregiver’s trauma. They can assess whether the

child has symptoms of PTSD and if they are at risk to self-harm. The team plays a vital role in ensuring the caregiver leaves the center with tangible strategies to support their child. They also provide information to help families access services when there is food or housing insecurity.



An area of continued growth for the CAC

Ongoing mental health services


The COVID-19 pandemic era ushered in a new set of challenges for youth in the United States, leading to a mental health crisis as declared by the United States surgeon general. But kids have been struggling for far longer.

In the 10 years leading up to the pandemic, feelings of persistent sadness and hopelessness — as well as suicidal thoughts and behaviors — increased by about 40% among young people, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.

Experiencing abuse can aggravate these feelings. To support these children, our behavioral health therapists offer Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention (CFTSI), a short-term intervention that prevent kids from developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They offer Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), an intervention specifically designed for children who experience abuse. We offer Alternative Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (AF-CBT), which focuses on supporting families in which there is physical abuse. Our team also offers Eye Movement

Desensitization Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR), an intervention that helps the brain re-program how it remembers and processes trauma.

The CAC is in the process of implementing the HEARTS program developed by the Granite State Children’s Alliance in New Hampshire. It stands for Helping to Ensure Appropriate Response to Trauma. The focus of this project is to support a child who, after an appointment at the CAC, may be returning to school. On the day of the appointment, caregivers would have the opportunity to sign permission to allow the center to contact district-identified staff about the child’s visit at the CAC. No specific information is provided about the outcome of the appointment, but simply alerts the identified school personnel, so they can respond to the child’s needs in a trauma-informed and appropriate manner.



The CAC team consistently goes above and beyond to support the children and caregivers referred to our center. We provide boxes of non-perishable food items from the food bank to families in need. If families have left their homes emergently, we can supply toiletries and other personal care items (thanks to generous donations from our community partners).

One of the most rewarding activities the staff undertakes each year is to provide a “Santa’s workshop” for caregivers who do not have the resources to purchase gifts at the holidays. Through donations from Toys for Tots®, county prosecutor’s staff, and community members we provided joy to kids as well as support to caregivers.



Community Support

We could not do our vital work without the support of community partners.

Run for Max

René Ryan, a competitive runner and fitness trainer, sponsored the 2nd annual run “For the Love of Max.” She and several dedicated friends braved the cold and somewhat snowy day on February 12 to run 10 miles in honor of Max. The funds raised from this great event supported translating the caregiver’s guide into Spanish. This booklet provides strategies to help caregivers support their children after a CAC appointment.



Erika Epler again hosted a community kids’ event in Annville to benefit the children of Lebanon County as well as the CAC. The event was held Sunday, Sep. 18 and featured food trucks, games, and fun! Proceeds from this event supported the installation of speakers and an IPOD in the Lebanon office to provide a calming atmosphere in the waiting room for caregivers.

On July 16, the Joe Allegrini Children’s Hero Fund held its annual golf tournament to support the CAC. Since its inception, the tournament has raised over \$400,000 to purchase specialized recording and medical equipment and to pay the cost of forensic interviews and therapy services not covered by other payors.

JMG Wealth Management and Excel Remodeling provided the CAC with a variety of personal care supplies which were given to children who were placed in foster care and to families who left domestic violence situations. We often don’t recognize the positive impact of having the right kind of shampoo for your hair texture, a new toothbrush, and special body soap.

We also established a great relationship with Duck Donuts in Camp Hill. During December, the store asked customers to “round-up” their purchase to benefit the CAC. The effort raised \$600, which will be used to translate the caregiver’s guide into Nepali. The staff is especially delighted with the partnership as the Duck Donuts team never arrives at the CAC without a few dozen donuts.



“*Visiting your facility recently left me impressed with the level competency and professionalism of you and your staff. Your CAC is staffed to serve, regardless of circumstance. In my view, the UPMC CAC represents the realization of the promise of Children’s Advocacy Centers.*”

— *Jim Mandes, recent visitor to the CAC.*

“*I think the walking out of that facility today was the most impactful because I know my children and I were not alone in the process and that we have the support in place to help us to get through our lows. For that I am grateful.*”

— *Caregiver*

“*Walking out you learned the shame isn’t yours.*”

— *Caregiver*