



2016-2017 SCHOOL YEAR ANNUAL REPORT



STUDENT ADVOCACY CENTER CELEBRATES THE END OF ZERO TOLERANCE

Letter from the Director



A 20-year journey

It was the fall of 2016, and I was leaving a legislative committee meeting for the proposed “Rethink Discipline” bills. A lobbyist abruptly and angrily told me they were pulling support. We would lose everything. My stomach dropped.

I thought back to how long and how hard we had worked for this moment. The Student Advocacy Center has been pushing to overturn “zero tolerance” since it first passed in 1994. And I personally had been fighting for its demise since 2001.

I thought back to the year 2000, the first time I met SAC’s passionate founder, Ruth Zweifler, who remains on our board of directors today. I was stunned to learn that students were sitting at home with no school willing to educate them. My heart was broken when I met student after student in person.

I thought back to years of conference calls and in-person meetings with so many partners like the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency, Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service, the Michigan League for Public Policy, and Michigan’s Children. I remember driving in Ruth’s silver VW Bug to Lansing over and over, presenting to the State Board of Education and different legislators. I wonder how many miles we drove over the years?

I remember a kitchen table conversation with Ruth and Mark Fancher from the ACLU of Michigan, just as they began to ponder their powerful campaign on the school-to-prison pipeline. They became indispensable, tireless partners (a special shoutout to Rodd Monts from ACLU) and we collaborated with them on their critical 2009 report on the issue.

I reflected on how so many forces seemed to unite in the past few years, making this moment possible. There was the development of the Michigan School Justice Partnership, which brought together several state departments, schools and community members with a call to action in 2012. Every county was to develop a team and establish a plan of action to reduce expulsions, suspensions and absenteeism. There was a unified and diverse set of voices now saying the state’s overly harsh school discipline laws needed to change.



History Highlights

1994 - Michigan enacts zero tolerance legislation mandating permanent expulsion for various offenses, exceeding federal requirements.

1995, 1999 - The law was amended to add additional mandatory expulsions.

2003, 2005 - SAC works on important publications highlighting the harm of zero tolerance.

2009 - In collaboration with SAC, ACLU of Michigan releases “Reclaiming Michigan’s Throwaway Kids: Students Trapped in the School-to-Prison Pipeline” and launches a campaign to revise the state’s school discipline code.

2013 - The Michigan School Justice Partnership is launched. SAC participates on 3 county teams.



2014 - Youth from Detroit, Ypsilanti and elsewhere joined together and organized an 80-mile walk for education from Detroit to Lansing to raise awareness about suspensions and expulsions for minor infractions.

2015 - Youth from Ypsilanti, Jackson, Detroit and other organizations staged a “Zero Tolerance Game of Life” demonstration on the Capitol Lawn.

May 3, 2016 - Rethink Discipline bills introduced in the House and passed on June 2.

Spring and Fall of 2016 - SAC youth testified before state legislators and participated in lobbying at the Capitol.

December 2016 - Passed by the Senate, Presented and Approved by Governor; Filed with Secretary of State, becomes Public Acts 360-366 of 2016

February 14, 2017 - Governor Snyder publically signs the Rethink Discipline bills. SAC and two students traveled to Lansing to take part.

August 1, 2017 - Rethink Discipline bills take effect.

www.studentadvocacycenter.org/policy/timeline



I thought of the many youth who so creatively asked for change on this issue. One of the most touching moments was when we collaborated with a group of youth from Detroit, who organized a march from Detroit to Lansing through the night, and delivered passionate speeches on the Capitol Lawn.

They dreamed bigger than I ever could have. I knew in that moment with the lobbyist that I had to dream big, too.

The bills were to end state-mandated expulsions, and create a rebuttable presumption that removals over 10 days were not justified until seven factors were considered, including “lesser interventions.” This language shifted the burden of proof from families, begging for their child’s education, to school districts.

The lobbyist and some school administrators were concerned about this language, but we believed it to be a critical protection for vulnerable students. We fought hard, beside our partners, for it to stay in.

The bills finally passed with the “rebuttable presumption” clause intact, and I was beyond proud to bring two students with me to see the bills be signed into law.

The new bills went into effect Aug. 1, and so far in the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, we have been in high demand, as families seek to understand their rights and districts try to figure out how to implement. We have a long history of successfully using “lesser interventions,” and we are eager to partner with districts to make this happen.

We hope and expect it will mean a shift in our advocacy and support work: Slightly less time in scary expulsion meetings and more time helping students connect to community service, write apology letters and reflection papers, and build their social skills.

We have been doing this “support” work for a long time, but the importance of it became particularly clear last winter when we asked families and students about the most significant change they experienced being part of our programs. We had so many clients reflect on the student’s changes in maturity, that we decided to add that to our revised mission statement. We are proud that we not only help students get back into school and address the barriers to learning — but that we also intentionally do the work to help students reflect, learn new skills and grow.

Thank you for whatever part you played in supporting our journey over the past 20 years of fighting zero tolerance. We hope you continue to stand by our side. The most important work still lies ahead.

Peri Stone-Palmquist

By the Numbers



760
served

662
unduplicated



100%+
over 5 years

By Program	Totals
Statewide Helpline	472
Education Advocacy - Washtenaw	80
Education Advocacy - Jackson	13
Education Advocacy - Wayne	33
Check and Connect - Washtenaw	39
Check and Connect - Detroit	11
Bridges to School - Jackson	19
Youth Action Michigan - Ypsilanti/Jackson	50
Student Rights Project	28
Volunteer Advocates of Mid-Michigan	8
Fee-Based Advocacy (Southeast MI)	7
Total	760



Outcomes

Education Advocacy & Support	Jackson	Washtenaw	Wayne
% Improved attendance	86	68	90
% Expulsion averted	80	88	89
% Decreased disciplinary referrals/suspensions	82	80	83
% Increased grades or maintained passing grades	80	97	78
% of out of school students placed in school setting	100	80	100

Check and Connect – Washtenaw

- 85% of our youth improved their grades or maintained passing grades overall

- 82.4% decreased disciplinary referrals/suspensions or maintained 0-1-day out-of-school suspensions

Bridges to School - Jackson

- 88% of students improved attendance

- 100% improved or maintained attendance

The Team



Staff

Peri Stone-Palmquist, MSW, MPP, Executive Director
 Dee Blair, Advocate
 Elizabeth Bowker, JD, LLM, Advocate
 (*We wish Elizabeth the best in new endeavors. She moved to DC in October 2017 after serving SAC more than 8 years.)
 Kristina Cosgrove, BSW, Mentor
 Hakim Crampton, YAM Adult Ally
 Anell Eccleston, BSW, Mentor
 Danielle Flint, MSW, Wayne County Director
 Kathleen Kosobud, MA, NBCT, Advocate
 Annissa Lewis, MA, LPC, LBSW, NCC, B2S Program Director
 Kelly Ottaway, LLPC, B2S Family Advocate
 Amy Wilhelm, BSW, Programs Coordinator
 Gordie Wykes, Mentor
 Contractor Julia Gilbert, Accountant

2016-2017 Board

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 Faye Askew-King (Vice-Chair)
 Joel Gechter (Treasurer)
 Claudette Braxton (Secretary)
 Nakisha Chaney
 Craig Hernandez
 Katie Hoener
 Jimmie Jones
 Branden Magee (youth member)
 Rossi Ray-Taylor
 Francisco Sanchez
 DiAnna Solomon
 Prestine Spratt (youth member)
 Peri Stone-Palmquist (staff)
 Dwight Wilson
 Ruth Zweifler (founding executive director)
 Board member emeritus: Jim Hawkins and Calvin Williams

4,857
 Intern hours



Valued at
\$62,866

**Volunteer
 Advocates**

73

**Student Rights
 Project**

24

**Volunteer Advocates
 of Mid-Michigan**

Volunteer Hours (other)
130.5

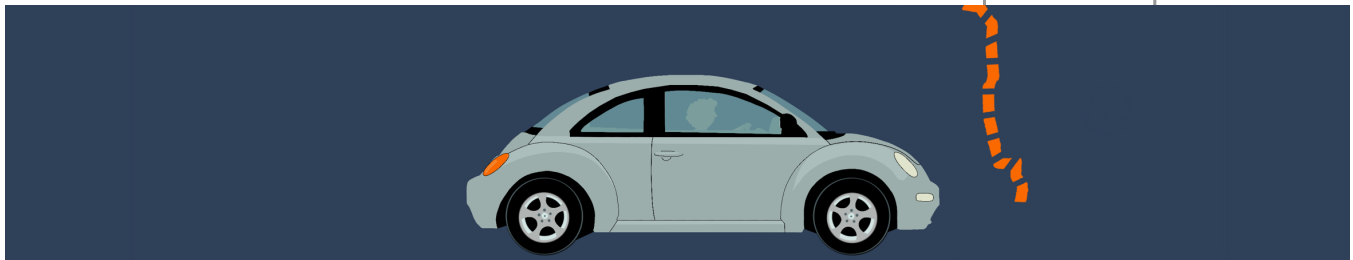
Volunteer Tutoring Hours
131.5

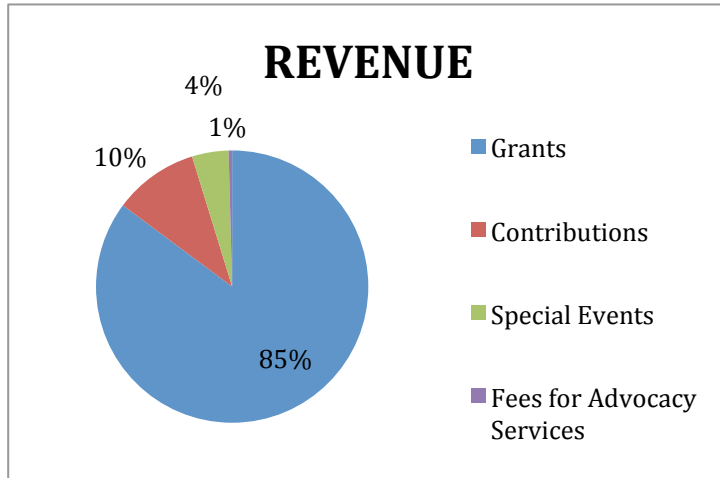
Volunteer Hours Value
\$1,305

Volunteer Tutoring Value
\$2,630



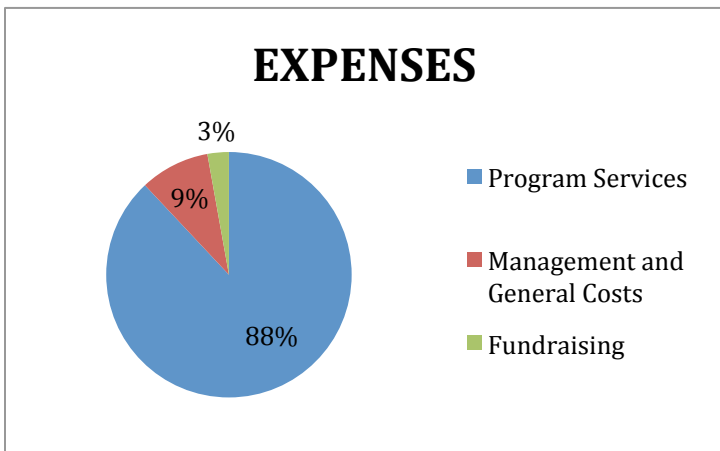
<p><i>(Note: Mother of an adult student with disabilities who had been denied enrollment for two months). “I promise you if you had not intervened, I would still be calling (the district). I had registered him, he had two start dates, no one ever got back to me to tour the program. This went on for two months or so. And then I got in touch with (the program director) and he was just waiting on the releases and paperwork to come over. Just a simple fax or email. Then we wrestled with (the district) for two weeks and then I had to call (SAC). I'm totally satisfied and I honestly would not have gotten it done.”</i></p>	<p>Education Advocacy</p>	<p>Enroll in school</p> <p>Connect with resources</p> <p>Know more options</p>
<p><i>(Student in foster care) “ The most significant change since working with SAC has been helping me with new schools and being there for me when I move. Starting new schools is really rough, but it is kind of a little easier, knowing that SAC is going to make sure that I am in the right classes and take me to sign up for school. SAC also gives me a lot of books, which is cool and talk to my teachers about me being in foster case so that I don't have to do so because it can be weird. ”</i></p>	<p>Education Advocacy</p>	<p>Having an ally</p> <p>Making school supportive</p>
<p><i>“ My kid is in the appropriate placement (school) that fits his needs. I have noticed he takes responsibility for what he’s done more, and apologizes when he’s wrong. He cares more. He used to be nonchalant. But, now he acknowledges when he makes mistakes. He accepts “no” better. He used to get upset and throw things or break things when he didn’t like the response he got to a question. But now, our relationship is better. When (SAC) went with us to the hospital and communicated some of his needs, that I didn’t know how to explain to them, it made them do further testing and monitoring. He stayed in longer, which helped us figure out what was really going on. This helped us find the best setting for my kid. Also, (SAC) contacted the special education director at the district, preventing the school from expelling him, when he was very close to being expelled. We didn’t even have to go to a hearing. ”</i></p>	<p>Education Advocacy</p>	<p>Enroll in school</p> <p>Know more about options</p> <p>Maturation</p>





REVENUE

Grants	\$578,818	85.2%
Contributions	\$68,359	10.1%
Special Events	\$29,499	4.3%
Fees for Advocacy Services	\$2,847	0.4%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$679,523	100%



EXPENSES

Program Services	\$435,001	88.0%
Management and General Costs	\$45,352	9.2%
Fundraising	\$13,926	2.8%
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$494,279	100%

Note: The difference between revenue and expenses is due to the timing of grants.

a Note

SAC is proud that 88% of our revenue goes to programs, a percentage that would qualify us for the highest score on financial efficiency by organizations such as Charity Navigator. Their data shows that 70% of charities spend at least 75% of their budgets on programs.

SAC is a small organization, where even administrative staff members engage in direct service. But we also value high quality governance, oversight and quality control. We urge donors to check out sites such as overheadmyth.com, which asks donors to challenge the false conception that financial ratios are a proxy for overall nonprofit performance.

Please know we are committed to being good stewards of the resources given to us. Thank you for your support.

Our Supporters



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Gerald Beckwith Constitutional Liberties Fund
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Washtenaw Coordinated Funders
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Washtenaw County Trial Court
Wayne County CCF

Thank
you!

Monthly Divers

A special thank you to our monthly donors who have committed to regular and ongoing support: Jessica "Decky" Alexander and Bruce Kutinsky, Faye Askew-King, Nakisha Chaney, David and Jennifer Haines, Carrie and Greg Hammerman, Katie Hoener, Marjorie Kauth-Karjala, Jeralyn Lowe, Cynthia Maritato Shick, Peri and Matt Stone-Palmquist, Dwight Wilson, Gail Wolkoff, Ruth and Andy Zweifler

Launch Living Circle

Thank you to our young professionals and college students who are committed to fighting the school-to-prison pipeline and are "launching" our community's students on a path to learning! We appreciate our Giving Circle donors: Julia Cohen and Jimmie Jones

Legacy Society

We are thankful for our Legacy Society who include SAC in their Will or Charitable Trust!
Peri and Matt Stone-Palmquist

Annual Event Support

Salutatorian: Joan Binkow, Leslie Desmond & Phil Stroffregen

Honor Roll Sponsors: Ann Arbor State Bank, Kris & Dave Denzin, Annmarie & Neil Hawkins, Cindy Strang Insurance Co., Nancy C. Wheeler, Ruth & Andrew Zweifler, Zingerman's Community of Businesses.

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