



ANNUAL REPORT

2014-2015



OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE

A note from Executive Director Peri Stone-Palmquist, LMSW, MPP, CTS

2014-2015 was a rewarding and momentous year.

We kicked off the school year with a celebration of **40 years of advocacy** at which Sen. Rebekah Warren was honored and presented special tributes to SAC and founding executive director, Ruth Zweifler. Later in October, we received an award for our “tireless advocacy” (see far right).

After the holiday season, we moved our Ypsilanti headquarters from southwest Ypsilanti to downtown Ypsilanti. It was a big job with long hours, but we quickly settled into our 5th floor suite.

The rest of this report will highlight some of the amazing work we did. We are particularly proud of our students who do community organizing work around school pushout. Students from

Ypsilanti, Detroit and Jackson joined together in Lansing for a powerful demonstration. (Learn more inside the report).

We are most thankful for several of our students who beat the odds and graduated this spring. They worked so hard — and so did staff. We never stop believing in our students. It’s why so many tell us:

“You saved my life.”



The Michigan League for Public Policy awarded SAC the Sharon Parks Award for Leadership on Oct. 30, 2014. Here, MLPP Board member Lynn Jondahl presents the award to Executive Director Peri Stone-Palmquist.

EDUCATION ADVOCACY

SAC provides youth-driven, collaborative, non-legal education advocacy and support for low-income families in Washtenaw, Wayne and Jackson counties. Professional advocates, depending on county, assist in both general and special education issues, including disciplinary hearings, behavior plans and enrollment. We also provide discipline advocacy using trained volunteers in Wayne, Ingham, Livingston, Lenawee, Monroe, Oakland, southern Macomb and Flint.

Washtenaw County

“John” was a student with disabilities who faced the possibility of extra years in school due to missing credits. He struggled with academics, and was told that he couldn’t meet the requirements to get a diploma. SAC helped to secure a Personal Curriculum for him and tracked down credits from his old school. Because of this, he graduated on time, with a diploma. He received a scholarship for \$1,000 and a principal’s award for his successes in high school. He accomplished all of this while working to support himself and living with relatives.

Outcomes for our Washtenaw County cases include:

- Average attendance went from 80% at the time of referral to 97% at the time of closing (n=64)
- Overall school engagement increased in 90% of cases (n=64)

- 90% of students increased grades or maintained passing grades (n=64)
- 86% of out-of-school were back in school by the end of the year (n=29)
- 82% of students with disciplinary concerns showed improvements in discipline (n=44)

Wayne County

A 17-year-old student who experienced the foster care system was offered a full tuition scholarship to the college of his choice after struggling to finish his last year at high school. This student had minimal support from his adoptive and birth families. SAC worked with the student to get his application, essay and transcripts together and considered, despite having missed the deadline for consideration. This student secured the scholarship and is now in his first year of college.

Outcomes for Wayne County cases include:

- 100% of served students with closed cases (n=13, data not

Mission

The Student Advocacy Center works to assist our most vulnerable students stay in school, realize their rights to a quality public education and experience success

- available for one student) improved attendance
- Overall attendance of served students with closed cases went from 37% at time of referral to 92% at time of case closure
- 100% of served students with closed cases (n=14) showed increased engagement in school
- 93% of served students with closed cases (n=14) increased their grade averages in school or maintained a C or better
- 79% of served students with closed cases (n=14) decreased time out of school for disciplinary or maintained a good discipline record



Jackson County

A high school student with autism and schizophrenia was being suspended and sent home due to potential harmful “thoughts” and “words,” caused by his mental illness. The special education team, SAC and parent worked on identifying these disability-related behaviors and developed a safety response plan. Staff dealing with the student were trained in the use of restorative questions supplied by the Student Advocacy Center. At time of closure, the student enjoyed a successful school year with no disciplinary referrals. Outcomes include:

- We handled 5 expulsions and in all cases, the expulsions were averted and the students stayed in school. In two cases, the expulsions were reduced to 5-day suspensions.
- 65% of cases (n=20) showed increased levels of engagement in school (looking at domains such as attendance, school support, discipline referrals). None showed decreased levels of engagement.

Volunteer Advocates

Student Advocacy Center partners with two groups of volunteers to provide school discipline advocacy in southeast Michigan.

The Student Rights Project at University of Michigan served 13 students in the 2014-2015 school year. With SAC’s assistance, they trained 73 advocates (35 law students, 26 social work and 12

community members), and 28 advocates worked on the 13 cases. 80% of cases had reduced disciplinary outcomes as a result of SRP advocacy. SRP was honored with the Pro Bono Project of the Year Award at the annual Michigan Law public service spring banquet. SRP secured office space in the U-M Student Union and several internal U-M grants to support outreach materials and training expenses. They had 7 outreach meetings in Wayne County, where they also promoted the work of SAC, and four public events at the university exploring the school-to-prison pipeline. Volunteer hours totaled 220. SAC advocate Elizabeth Bowker and Executive Director Peri Stone-Palmquist provided supervision.

SAC started a new partnership in the 2014-2015 school year with a group of volunteers in Ingham County that includes attorneys, community members and Michigan State University Social Work students. They meet at least monthly. Eight core advocates completed training in the 2014-2015 school year, and a total of 79 individuals participated in a variety of training throughout the year. The focus was outreach and getting the word out about services. No cases were taken.

Student Rights Hotline

SAC receives calls from parents and professionals across the state. In the past two years, we have helped families in more than 60%

of counties in Michigan. In the 2014-2015 school year, we assisted 192 students, providing referrals, advice, assistance with letter writing, reviewing school records, researching school options, helping with school reinstatement and hearing prep, and much more.

Hotline Assistance by County

Genessee	4
Ingham	3
Jackson	9
Kent	4
Lapeer	4
Lenawee	3
Livingston	5
Macomb	4
Mason	4
Oakland	9
Washtenaw	89
Wayne	31

Other counties assisted included Calhoun, Clinton, Kalamazoo, Lake, Midland, Muskegon, Ottawa, Berrien, Monroe, Eaton, Linden, Marquette, Newaygo, Emmet, Montcalm, Shiawasee, Ionia, and Arenac.

YOUTH ACTION MICHIGAN

SAC's Youth Action Michigan is a student-led, youth organizing, social justice initiative that builds self and collective power to create positive change in schools and communities with the support of caring adult allies. Our current focus is to address school pushout and the school-to-prison pipeline in collaboration with the national Dignity In Schools Campaign.

Students meet once and sometimes twice a week during the school year, planning events and actions, meeting with community leaders and learning a variety of skills.

In the 2014-2015 school year, about 40 youth participated from Ypsilanti, Jackson and Detroit.

Much of the spring was devoted to preparing for an action at our state capitol, done with the support of state Rep. David Rutledge. On June 10, 2015, students from Ypsilanti, Detroit and Jackson, donning DSC "Education is the Key" T-shirts, staged a "Zero Tolerance Game of Life" demonstration on the Capitol Lawn, complete with a jail cell, jumpsuit and judge costumes, and stations for the classroom, restorative circle, teen court, board of education, expulsion, suspension, juvenile detention and a bank. Two parents directly affected by zero tolerance volunteered and acted as the judge and board member, as youth worked their way



through the game, sharing how stories of harsh school discipline policies can result in incarceration and school dropout. After each round, students and passersby were invited to debrief. While the game progressed, other students talked with legislators, aides, superintendents and community members, passing out a sheet outlining our legislative priorities.

Media coverage (including a great video) can be found here: <http://on.freep.com/1JG91ai>

During the week of our "Game of Life: A Zero Tolerance Demonstration" at the Capitol, state Rep. Jeff Irwin introduced HB 4697, which eliminates mandatory expulsions and suspension.

SAC was featured in the Membership Spotlight for July's national Dignity In Schools membership call. One of our students stepped up and



presented, with help from Anell Eccleston, a SAC Check and Connect mentor who also serves as an Adult Ally for Youth Action Michigan.

Jackson youth finished their PSA campaign to change the image of their school: <https://youtu.be/jo83uGT3MH0>.

Also this year, youth from Detroit and Ypsilanti were able to attend the national membership meeting of Dignity In Schools in Chicago.

CHECK AND CONNECT

This intensive, evidence-based mentoring program provides weekly check-ins, monitoring of grades and attendance, assistance with problem-solving and at least two years of support. We currently only offer Check and Connect in Ypsilanti. We are proud to report that this spring one of our seniors graduated after extensive help from his Check and Connect mentor (including tutoring and assistance with credit recovery). This student had experienced two long-term suspensions and was behind. His mother credits SAC with helping her son graduate! Here are our program's overall outcomes for the 64 students we served during 2014-15 school year:



- Average attendance rate went from 42% at the time of referral to 73% of days attended
- 74% of the students maintained or showed improvements in attendance
- 83% of students showed overall increased engagement in school, looking across several domains such as



- attendance, disciplinary referrals, parent involvement
- 85% of students averaging 2 or 3 days of suspension a month at the time of referral improved their disciplinary records
- 73% of students who were out of school (dropped out or on expulsion) at the time of referral were back in school

FAMILY SUPPORT

SAC believes strongly in supporting families and equipping them with the tools they need to nurture their children. In the 2014-2015 school year, we had two family-focused programs, both in Jackson County.

Families Together Building Solutions is a solution-focused, in-home, short-term intervention for families to improve family functioning,

increase family stability, and prevent removal from the home. The FTBS program served 54 families in the 2014-2015 program year.

- 96% of families achieved 100% of their goals
- 98% of families did not require out-of-home placement during program participation
- 100% of families completing services avoided removal to foster care within 6 months of case closure

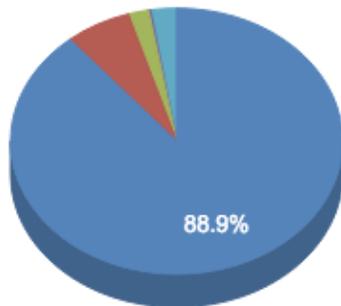
The Early Truancy Intervention program

provides home-based support services to families with Jackson County elementary school-aged children, grades K-5, who have been referred by their elementary school for absenteeism and/or chronic tardiness. From January 2015 to June 2015, we served 20 students. 80% maintained or improved attendance in that time.

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

JULY 1, 2014 - JUNE 30, 2015

REVENUE

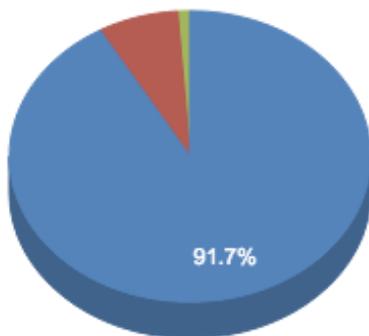


- Grants
- Contributions
- Special Events
- Fees for Advocacy Services
- Other Revenues

Revenue

Grants and Contracts	\$672,194	88.9%
Contributions	\$48,406	6.4%
Special Events	\$15,142	2.0%
Fees for Advocacy Service	\$1,642	0.2%
Other Revenue	\$19,059	2.5%
Total Revenue	\$756,425	100%

EXPENSES



- Program Services
- Management and General Costs
- Fundraising

Expenses

Program Services	\$584,501	91.7%
Management and General Costs	\$45,841	7.2%
Fundraising	\$7,206	1.1%
Total Expenses	\$637,548	100%

Based on the principles of fiscal efficiency and responsibility, **only 7%** of expenditures went towards management, **1%** towards fundraising. **92%** directly supported programming costs.

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

2014-2015 Board

Faye Askew-King
 Claudette Braxton
 James Bunton
 Joan Chesler
 Leslie Desmond
 James Hawkins
 Katie Hoener, Chair
 Cynthia Maritato, Vice Chair
 Twila McKinney
 Theresa Schenk, Treasurer

Peri Stone-Palmquist
 DiAnna Solomon
 Ted Sturdivant
 Ruth Zweifler

Staff

Peri Stone-Palmquist
Executive Director

Elizabeth Bowker
Education Advocate

Hakim Nathaniel Crampton
Youth Action Adult Ally

Anell Eccleston
Check and Connect Advocate

Kathleen Kosobud
Education Advocate

Cathy Clark-Heins
Education Advocate

Danielle Flint
Education Advocate

Annissa J. Lewis
Early Truancy Intervention Program Director

Amy Wilhelm
Outreach & Administrative Associate

Gordon Wykes
Check and Connect Advocate