

The background of the entire page is a soft, light-colored photograph of several hands of different skin tones interlocking and supporting each other. The hands are positioned in a way that suggests strength, unity, and care. A dark teal rectangular box is centered on the page, containing the title and subtitle.

# FOSTER CARE ADVOCACY CENTER

2022 Annual Report

Join us in a recap of the work we are  
doing to create a more just  
foster care system.



# FOSTER CARE ADVOCACY CENTER



## Join us in our mission to create a more just foster care system.

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# A letter from Tara

Co-Founder and Executive Director

2022 was truly a life-changing year for me as I welcomed my first child into the world! I have desperately wanted to be a mom for many years. Many days during my pregnancy, and the first few months of my baby's life, felt surreal. For the last few months, as I rock my newborn baby to sleep at night, I cannot help but think about our work at FCAC. Becoming a mom has radically changed the way I feel about FCAC.

When you practice child welfare law, you essentially practice constitutional law in a juvenile or family court. It is nuanced, specialized, and very complicated. This makes communicating what we do to outsiders very difficult. FCAC's practice is unique because sometimes we represent the child in the case, and sometimes we represent a parent. Typically, a multidisciplinary law office is set up to represent either parents or children. This tension in our work makes our lawyers highly versatile in their depth and breadth of skills because they can litigate every angle of a case. However, it also creates cognitive dissonance in trying to see multiple viewpoints simultaneously that can be challenging to reconcile.

When I first brought Ainsley home, I immediately thought about our clients that do not get to bring their babies home from the hospital. The anguish I felt at the mere thought of CPS taking my baby--even for 14 days as I waited for a removal hearing--was overwhelming. I thought of one of my clients who had her child removed from the hospital as collateral damage from an ongoing unfounded investigation. She desperately tried to breastfeed, but her infrequent visitation made that impossible. When I change my baby's diaper, I think about what would happen if she accidentally fell and a doctor subsequently accused me of deliberately harming her. The thought of losing even one night together in our rocking chair still brings tears to my eyes.

But then I put on a different hat. As I cherish these sweet moments with my baby, I think about our clients on the other side of the hospital. I think about the baby I represent, shaken so severely that he is now blind. I think about the multiple children we represent who have witnessed their fathers murder their mothers. I think about the surviving siblings we represent in child fatality cases where a child was killed or gravely injured at the hands of their caregiver. As I snuggle Ainsley with every fiber of my being that wants to protect her, I also yearn for justice for these children, and that, too, brings tears to my eyes.



As I rock my baby to sleep, I rock for the mothers with empty arms, and I snuggle my baby a little tighter for all of the babies who did not get the snuggles they deserved. I also take solace in knowing that our team is filled with exceptional talent passionate about this work. The mothers will have a Parent Partner by their side every step of the way in the case. The children will have a Social Services Director ensuring they are placed in a nurturing, stable, trauma-informed environment. And all of our clients will have an attorney litigating for justice in the courtroom.

**Thank you for joining us in this work.  
Thank you for weeping with us, standing  
with us, and celebrating with us. Because  
of your support, we are creating a more  
just foster system.**

With gratitude,

*Tara Grigg Green*



“

**My attorney makes me feel like I am more than just someone in foster care because she listens to me and gives me the opportunity to ask a lot of questions.**

**- Youth Client**

#### **WE ARE THE FIRST**

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Foster Care Advocacy Center is the first nonprofit law office in Texas to employ a multidisciplinary representation model where staff attorneys and social workers work together to provide holistic legal representation for children and parents involved with the child welfare system.

#### **FCAC EMPOWERS**

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Countless studies nationwide have shown this model to be the gold standard in child welfare legal aid. This approach empowers FCAC to achieve its mission of providing quality legal services, reducing the time children spend in foster care, helping individuals access services to stabilize families, keeping children more stable while in care, and placing children home with parents or relatives more often than attorneys working alone.

A LOOK AT  
**THE IMPACT**

292

93

Parent Clients

199

Kid Clients

Total Clients Served

74

Cases Closed

93

Cases Opened

209

Current Open Cases

63%

Reunification Rate

0%

Parent Recidivism

1.4%

Child Recidivism

311

**Number of Children Positively Impacted in 2022**



# COMMUNITY LEGAL ADVOCACY

At any given time, there are approximately 4,000 Harris County children in foster care, and they spend an average of 30 months, or over 900 days, in the state-run system. Each year more than 1,000 children are removed from their families, primarily from specific zip codes with large minority and low-income populations that may have 50 or 60 children removed in a year. After a child is removed, courts appoint attorneys for the child and indigent parents. Reunification depends largely on the quality of legal representation. Fewer than 1/4 of Harris County families are reunified, leaving disproportionately minority and high-needs children to grow up in foster care.

Unfortunately, indigent individuals are only entitled to representation after a termination petition is filed and children are removed, not before. This, compounded by the fact that currently government funding is only available to pay for court-appointed attorneys after a lawsuit is filed by CPS, means that many families do not have timely access to legal services that can help prevent unnecessary removals of children.

The CLA program assists families before children are placed into foster care by addressing discrete legal needs. An attorney and a case manager, with some assistance by our parent partner, defend parents during an abuse and neglect investigation, help individuals appeal investigation findings, and file family law cases so that a non-offending parent can get primary custody or a family member can get legal guardianship of a child in an unsafe situation. This means that issues are resolved without child welfare involvement and children are able to remain safe and stable with family members. Though FCAC is saving the County an enormous amount of money by preventing long and protracted litigation in these cases, FCAC currently relies on the generosity of individual donors and foundation partners to fund this project.

## Services Provided

Custody Modification/Family  
Law/Guardianship: 45%

Investigation Defense: 43%

Administrative Review of  
Investigation Findings: 9.5%

Civil Legal Aid: 2.5%



# 58 Cases Referred

74

Cases Closed

29

Current Active Cases

22

Cases Opened in 2022

13

Cases Closed in 2022

2

Currently Pending Cases

32

Cases Rejected



**FCAC provides pro bono legal services to members of the community to prevent children from unnecessarily entering the foster care system. The Community Legal Advocacy (CLA) program is “pre-petition” or “preventative legal advocacy” work.**

**To date, this program has a 100% success rate and has prevented 106 children from entering the child welfare system.**

# Organizational Growth

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**FCAC started in June of 2018 with a total of \$60k in seed money, one attorney, and 30 clients. Since then, FCAC has experienced exponential growth and 2022 was no exception. We welcomed a new Staff Attorney, a Legal Operations Specialist, and two Board Members. The demand for our services continues to grow, and FCAC hopes to continue expanding to meet this need.**

This year, FCAC also has added two new board members.



**Maria Mathis**



**Myra Siddiqui**



Staff Attorney

## **Le'Otis Boswell Johnson**

Le'Otis Boswell Johnson graduated from Florida State University in the Spring of 2017 with a Bachelor of Science in Criminology, with a secondary major in Psychology, and began his legal journey at Thurgood Marshall School of Law, where he graduated in 2021. From a young age, Le'Otis knew he wanted to become an attorney to lend his voice to those overlooked, ignored, and pushed to the side. His passion led him to begin to work with youth in multiple facets, such as education advocacy, juvenile justice, and community involvement. Le'Otis wants to create a space that allows all kids, despite their circumstances, to have a fighting chance to discover and utilize their potential to the fullest.



Legal Operations Specialist

## **Diana Grimaldo**

Diana is a resident of Houston, Texas, where she lives with her husband and three young children. She joins FCAC with a broad administrative experience that she hopes to utilize to contribute to the organization's mission of providing quality service to families and children in need. Diana is excited to be a part of the FCAC team and is hopeful that with her work experience, ethical values, and willingness to help, she can have a positive impact on our community. When she is not working, Diana enjoys spending time with her family, visiting new places, trying new food, and building memories with her loved ones.

# Waco Pilot Program

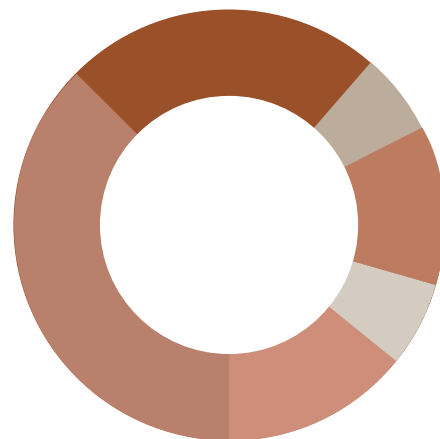
In November 2021, FCAC helped launch and began incubating the McLennan County Parent Advocacy Program. This pilot program was created in partnership with the Supreme Court of Texas Children’s Commission, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), and Casey Family Programs. Like our Houston-based Community Legal Advocacy program, the Waco-based program is a pre-petition legal representation pilot that helps reduce the number of children entering the foster care system and prevents unnecessary removals of children.

The pilot consists of two attorneys and a social worker that primarily provide legal defense for parents under investigation by DFPS. FCAC is the fiscal agent for this project and provides mentorship and support to the Parent Advocacy Program team based on the success of our Community Legal Advocacy Program.

## SERVICES PROVIDED

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- Investigation Defense: (25%)
- Custody Modification: (34%)
- Other Family Law Matter: (20%)
- Protective Order: (9%)
- Civil Legal Aid: (6%)
- Guardianship: (6%)

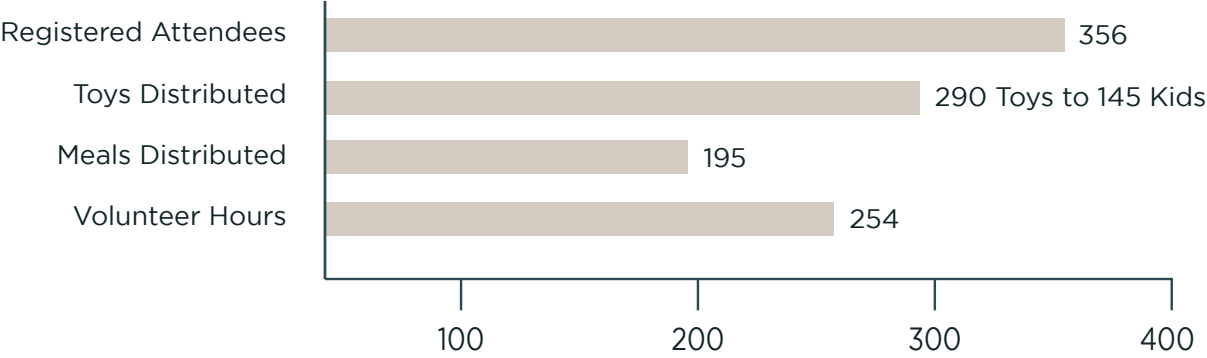




# Toy Drive Success

On December 17th, we hosted a toy drive benefiting kids and families involved in the foster care system. We were blown away by your support and participation.

“ I had the opportunity to attend the FCAC Holiday Toy Drive on Saturday, 12/17. Congratulations to the hard-working people that put this event together. The best part was seeing all the smiles on kids' faces receiving gifts because so many would not have received anything. Also, the volunteers were a great help. Kudos for all the happiness your organization brings to the kids. - Adelina Gonzales

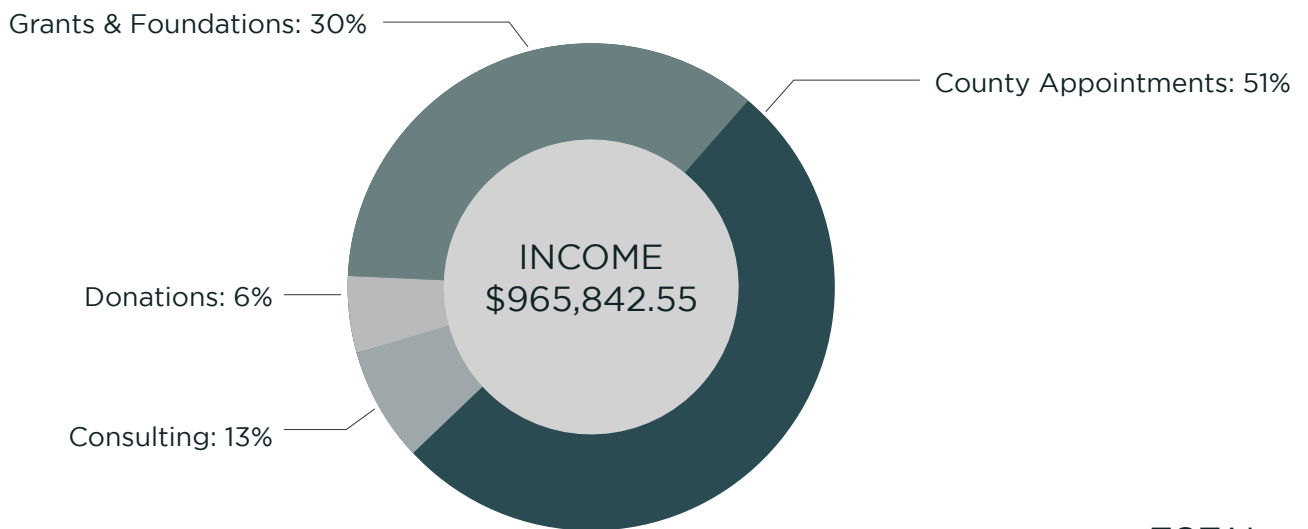


# Thank you for your incredible generosity!

“

FCAC is an organization that meets a local need I didn't know existed, and now I cannot ignore it. I believe in this organization's integrity and values, both internally with its staff and externally with its clients. I believe that through FCAC, my donation is making a true difference in places where it is needed most.

Abbie Madden,  
Monthly Donor



TOTAL  
EXPENSES

**\$834,717.88**

**13%**

**Fundraising**

**22%**

**Operations**

**65%**

**Programs**

To Donate: [www.fcactexas.org/donate](http://www.fcactexas.org/donate)

Foster Care Advocacy Center is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, IRS tax ID 82-4805883.

All donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

SAVE THE DATE

# 5 Year Anniversary

Mark your calendars for  
the evening of  
**FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 2023**



Plan to join us as we celebrate 5 years of zealous legal advocacy and expert social services. More details to come, but it's going to be a PARTY!

So you know more friends when you get there, let's connect  
**@fcactexas**



## Contact Us

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## Connect with Us

@fcactexas



## Support Us

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