



# 2023

**Annual Report**



Changing Tides in the Lives of Families

**Ocean  
Partnership  
for Children**





Supporting and  
advocating for  
Ocean County youth  
and their families  
while helping them  
navigate their own  
individual journey.

# 2023 Board of Trustees

Ocean Partnership for Children is governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees, who give their time to ensure the stability and sustainability of the organization. OPC's Board is comprised of family members whose youth have been involved with care management, providers, and community leaders dedicated to helping children and youth in need. OPC's Board actively participates in Board meetings, but also committee meetings including the Executive, Finance and Investment, Human Resources, Quality Assurance and Corporate Compliance, Marketing and Fundraising, and Nominating Committees. OPC appreciates the service of these Board members!

## Officers:

- Gina Polese-Grosso**  
President
- Robert McGillick, Jr.**  
Vice-President
- Jim Cooney**  
Treasurer
- Elsworth Martin**  
Secretary
- Art Rone**  
Immediate Past President

## Trustees:

- Heather Barberi**
- Tiffany Fisher**
- Jim Gillick**
- Aleida Salguero**
- Wendy Saunders**
- Janine Speiser**
- Joe Stroffolino**
- Jerome Townsend**
- Michael Kaufmann**
- Sheila Santos**
- Miriam Turk**



## MESSAGE from Mary Jo

Since Ocean Partnership for Children's inception in 2005, the agency has continued to faithfully fulfill its mission of enhancing the well-being of youth and their families through natural and community supports. This past year has been another exceptional one in helping thousands of youth and their families connect to the resources they need.

I'm often asked what makes Ocean Partnership for Children so special. It definitely is a mission-driven organization, which motivates all involved to do the very best to help every youth and family referred to us.

But what makes OPC most special are the staff and the Board of Trustees working in tandem to change the tides in the lives of our families.

All of our staff, from our care managers to the supporting departments, work together with dedication, commitment, and passion. Staff support one another wholeheartedly, through Nurtured Heart activities sharing the greatness of each staff member and by engaging in community activities to spread the word about OPC. Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee ensures that our staff embraces inclusivity, as well as respecting the cultural diversity in our Ocean County community.

The staff culture is so special that the agency has achieved Top Workplace status again this year!

Our Board of Trustees also makes OPC a very special place. Their commitment and caring for children in need inspires them to think strategically, ensure the agency's financial sustainability, provide oversight of youth outcomes, and provide the tools staff needs to do their work. This year, we welcomed two new Board members, Michael Kaufmann and Miriam Turk. Sadly, we said goodbye to long-time Board member Rita MacIntosh and thanked her for her service.

I am excited to share with you the many accomplishments of OPC in this year's 2023 Annual Report. Thank you for taking the time to read it and please help share the great work of Ocean Partnership for Children!

Mary Jo

Mary Jo Buchanan, LCSW, MPA  
Executive Director



# Overview



## Mission Statement

The mission of Ocean Partnership for Children (OPC) is to enhance the well-being of youth and their families through natural and community supports.

## History

Ocean Partnership for Children was founded in 2005 as Ocean County’s designated Care Management Organization (CMO). Initial funding for the organization was provided through a grant from the OceanFirst Foundation.

## Who We Are

Ocean Partnership for Children provides care management services for youth up to age 21 years old with significant behavioral health needs, using a wraparound model of care. OPC strives to keep children and adolescents at home, in school, and in the community by connecting them to resources that meet their unique needs. Services are provided at no cost to the youth and family.

Ocean Partnership for Children is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization. The agency’s care coordination services are available to all youth and families that live in Ocean County and meet the eligibility criteria of the New Jersey Children’s System of Care.

## Who We Help

Any youth up to 21 years of age living in Ocean County with behavioral health, mental health, substance use, or intellectual and developmental needs and their families are eligible for services. Examples of issues that youth may be struggling with include anxiety, depression, self-harm, bullying, school struggles, abusing drugs or alcohol, or intellectual and developmental challenges, such as autism.

## How to Get Help from Ocean Partnership for Children

Families need to make one phone call to **PerformCare at 1-877-652-7624**. Their care coordinators are available 24/7 and 365 days a year. A complete needs assessment will be made and if care management is needed, PerformCare will refer your child to Ocean Partnership for Children (OPC). An OPC care manager will outreach you as soon as the PerformCare referral is received.

## How to Outreach Us

You can contact Ocean Partnership for Children by phone at **(732) 202-1585**. Our normal business hours are 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Calls after hours are taken by OPC’s answering service and emergent calls are forwarded to on-call staff.

The agency’s website is **[www.oceanpartnership.org](http://www.oceanpartnership.org)**. You can email OPC at **[information@oceanpartnership.org](mailto:information@oceanpartnership.org)**.

You can also follow OPC on social media, including Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Ocean Partnership for Children also provides an online resource directory, including many valuable resources, from employment to housing and other needs. You can visit OceanResourceNet at: **[www.oceanresourcenet.org/](http://www.oceanresourcenet.org/)**.



# Wraparound Values

Ocean Partnership for Children uses a unique approach to providing care coordination, utilizing wraparound philosophy. The following are the wraparound values that guide every aspect of the work of OPC:

- **Family Voice and Choice** – The youth and families served by OPC guide the work of the care managers and their voices are always encouraged to be heard and respected.
- **Team-based** – The Child and Family Team, including the youth, family members, and anyone else providing care and supporting the youth, is the primary team putting together the Individualized Service Plan and ensuring that the plan is moving toward the youth and family’s vision and goals.
- **Collaboration** – OPC staff collaborate with a multitude of providers, system partners, and community agencies to provide the necessary support.
- **Individualized** – OPC strives to make each plan individualized for that particular youth and family. Because each youth and family are unique, so are the individualized plans developed by the Child and Family Team.
- **Strengths-based** – OPC finds and highlights the strengths of the youth and their families to help them find success.
- **Unconditional Care** – OPC staff never give up and always provides unconditional care for the youth and family, no matter this issues or challenges that may arise.
- **Community-based** – OPC leverages every aspect of the community to help the youth and family. A primary goal of OPC is to keep the youth at home and safely in the community.
- **Natural Supports** – OPC also focuses on creating natural supports in the community, in addition to the professional supports put in place. These natural supports can include the youth and family’s faith community, scouting, sports activities or other community connections.
- **Culturally Competent** – OPC strives to respect every culture represented in Ocean County, as well as understand and honor the cultures of the youth and families.
- **Outcomes-based** – OPC focuses from the first day of meeting a youth and family to work towards the outcomes desired by the Child and Family Team.



# Our Services

## Care Management

The primary service provided by Ocean Partnership for Children is care management. The primary purpose of care management is coordinating and connecting youth and families to resources that they need. Every youth and family referred to OPC has a Care Manager assigned to them, whose responsibility it is to identify strengths and needs of the youth and family, find community resources to meet these needs, and then coordinate all of the care providers and services.



## Youth Groups

To meet the increasing needs of our youth and families, OPC has created the following groups for youth:

- **Your Authentic Self (YAS) Teen and Your Authentic Self TOO (YAS TOO) Groups** – these groups support youth in the LGBTQIA Community and their Allies. The groups run in conjunction with PFLAG Jersey Shore on a monthly basis.
- **Girls Empowerment Group** – this group supports girls between the ages of 9 and 12 years and girls between 13 to 17 years. Both groups support girls who have experienced depression, anxiety, bullying and disordered eating. The group teaches skills, builds self-esteem and creates healthy body images.
- **Game Changers Boys Empowerment Groups** – this group supports boys between the ages of 11 and 14 years who need a positive male role model in their lives. The activity-based curriculum includes physical activities and games that promote social emotional learning, interpersonal skills and positive self-image.
- **Birds of a Feather** – this group supports youth and their caregivers to strengthen their relationships through nature and bird watching.



## Other OPC Programs & Services

- **I/DD Specialist** – This full-time Specialist assists families with completing the DD and DDD applications so that their youth can receive services from the Children's System of Care, as well as the adult Division of Developmental Disabilities. This service is generously funded by the Ocean County Department of Human Services/Office for Individuals with Disabilities.
- **Connections Program** – This innovative program helps youth with neurodiverse challenges to

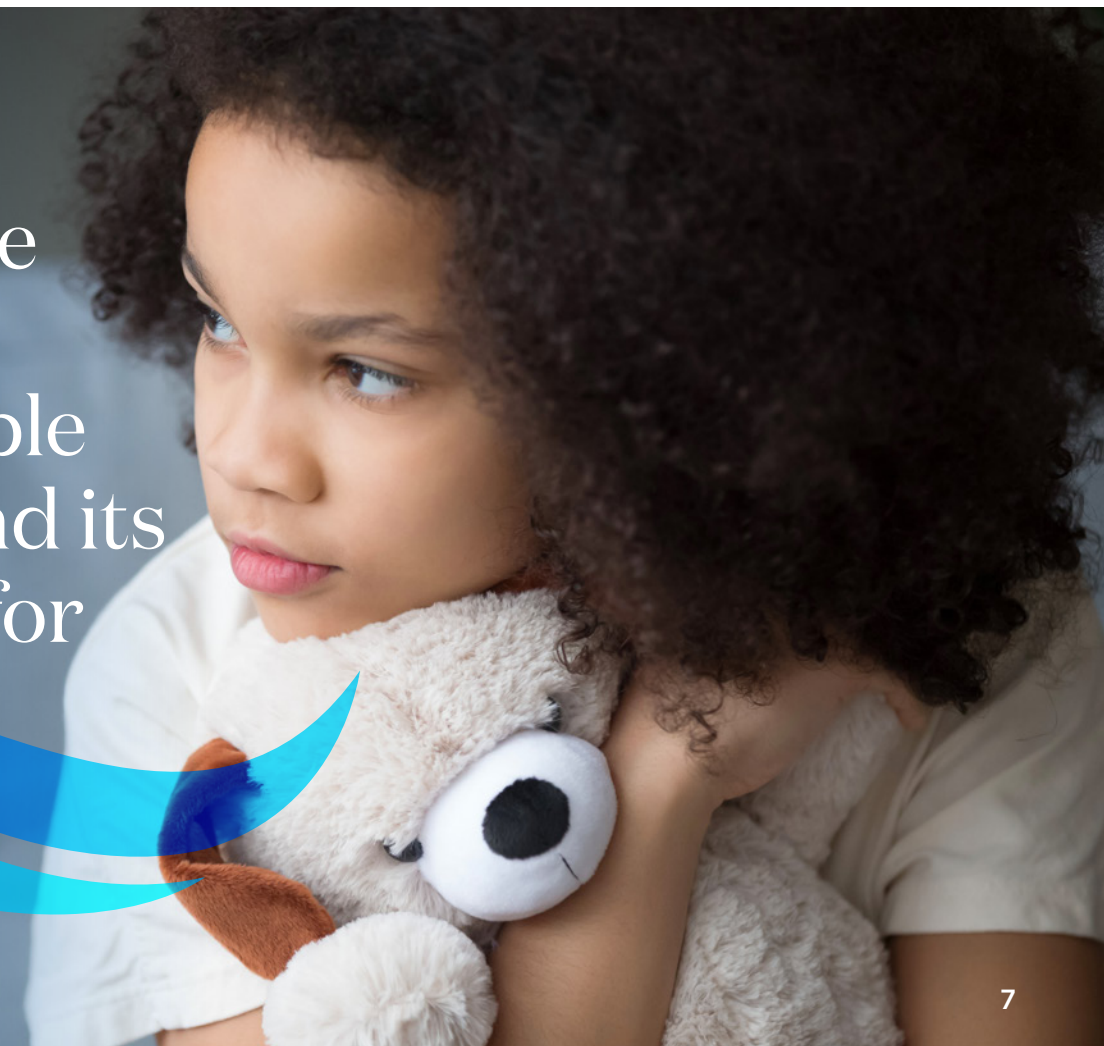
connect with their peers, make friends, practice wellness, and engage in recreational activities. This service is also generously funded by the Ocean County Department of Human Services/Office for Individuals with Disabilities.

- **Resource Navigator** – This full-time position assists students, youth and their families in need of connection to resources in the community. The program is generously funded through McKinney Vento funds administered by the Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission.

- **Court Liaison** – This specialized Court Liaison provides care coordination for youth involved in the juvenile justice and court system.
- **Clinical Consultant** – This specialized position provides clinical consultation to OPC's partners at the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P). The Clinical Consultant also serves as the liaison between DCP&P and CMO services through Ocean Partnership for Children.

“Children are the world’s most valuable resource and its best home for the future.”

– John F. Kennedy



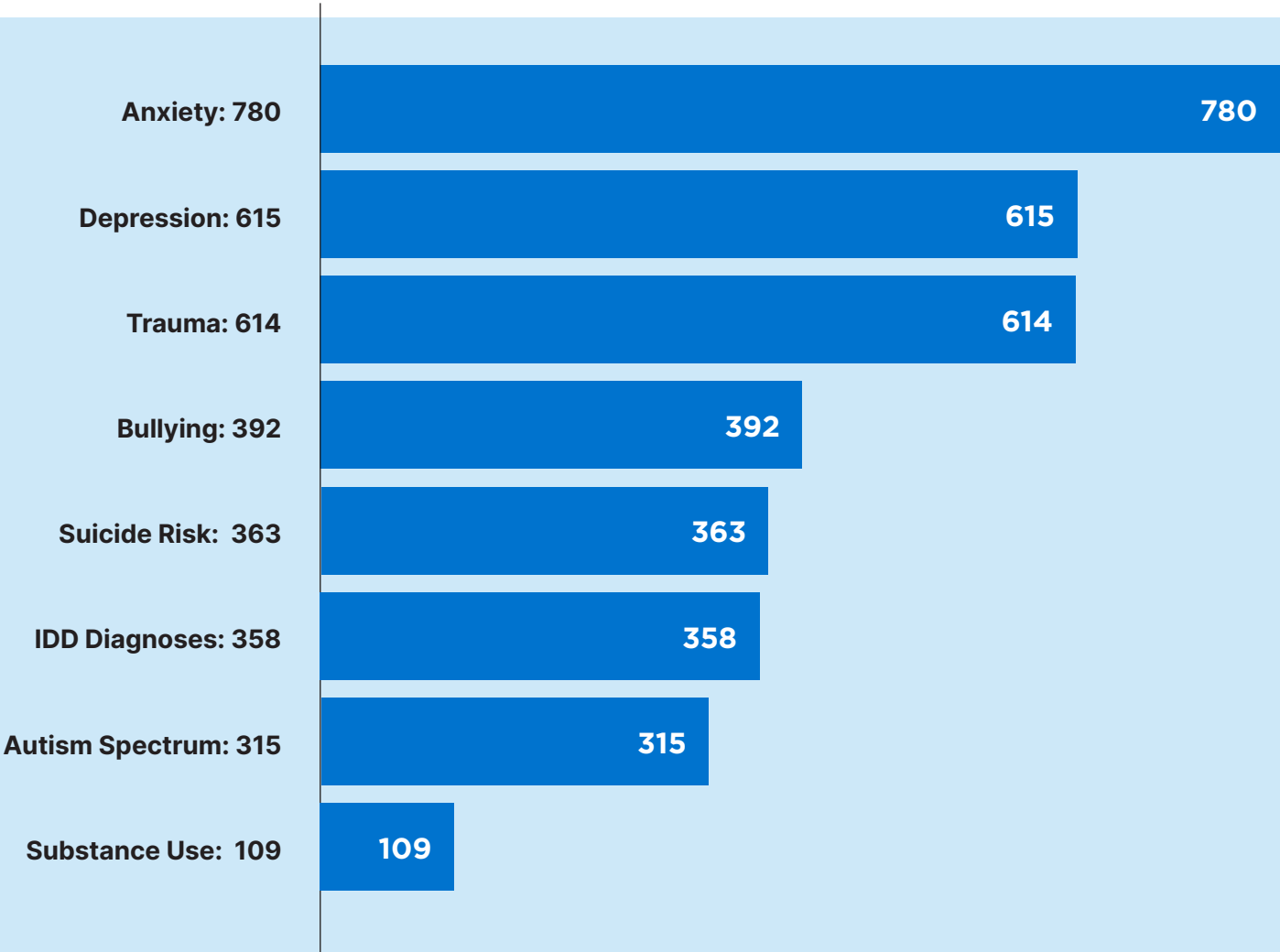
# Our Youth Served

## How Many Youth Do We Serve?

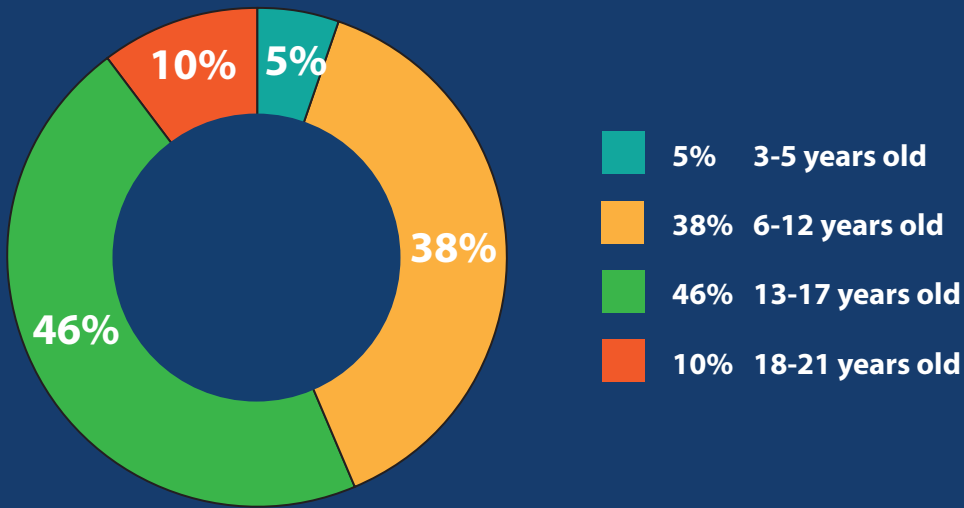
|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Total # of Unique Youth Served in FY23:                 | 2,054 |
| Average Monthly Census for FY23:                        | 1,098 |
| # Youth Served by IDD Specialist:                       | 275   |
| # Youth Served by School Resource Navigator (Jan-July): | 81    |
| # of Youth Served by Court Liaison:                     | 119   |
| # of Youth Group Sessions Facilitated:                  | 73    |

## Who Are Our Youth? (PIT Data July 2023)

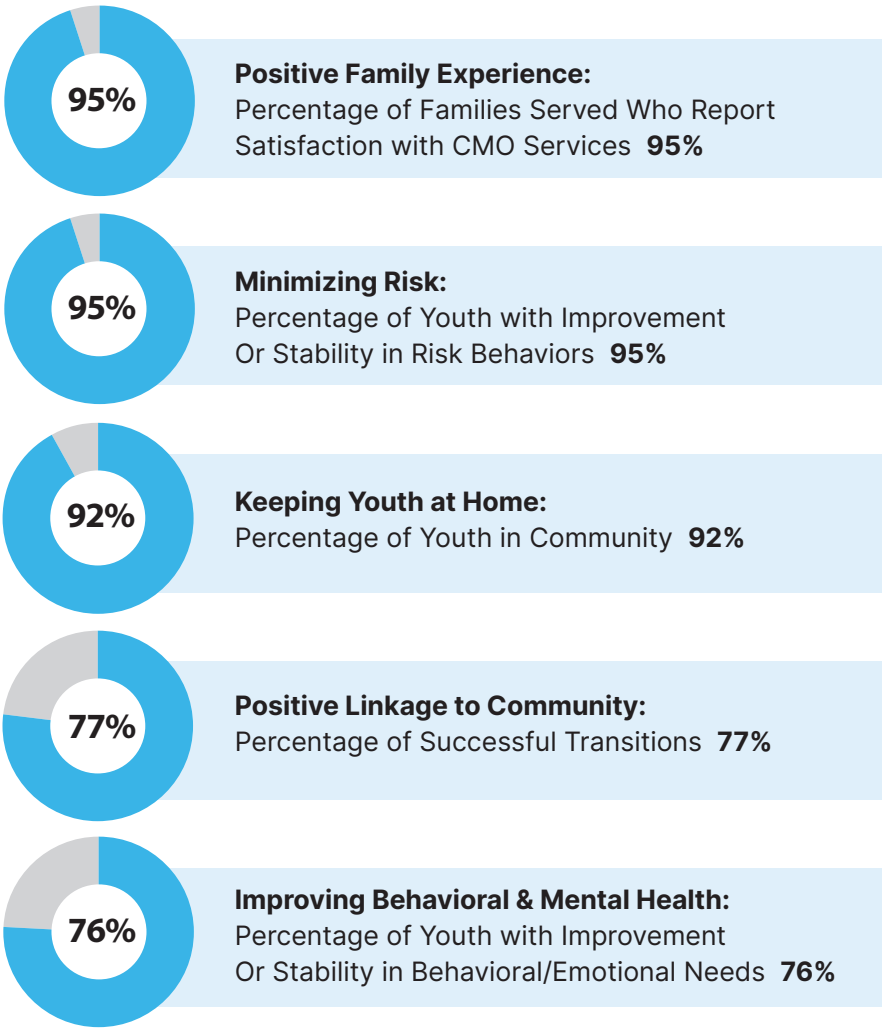
Top 5 Towns: Toms River, Lakewood, Brick, Barnegat, Jackson



## Age Range:



## What Are Outcomes?

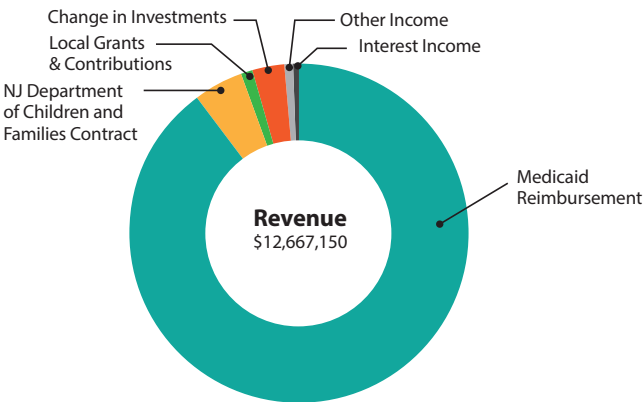




# Financial

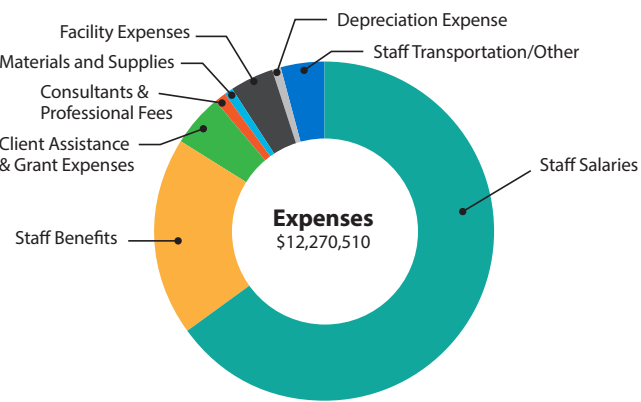
## Support & Revenue – Total \$12,667,150\*

- **Medicaid Reimbursement** (\$11,415,579).....**90%**
- **NJ Department of Children and Families Contract** (\$590,294).....**5%**
- **Local Grants & Contributions** (\$168,383).....**1%**
- **Change in Investments** (\$348,099).....**3%**
- **Other Income** (\$123,623).....**1%**
- **Interest Income** (\$21,172) .....**<1%**



## Expenses – Total \$12,270,510\*

- **Staff Salaries** (\$8,016,648) .....**65%**
- **Staff Benefits** (\$2,378,191).....**19%**
- **Client Assistance & Grant Expenses** (\$576,668) .....**5%**
- **Consultants & Professional Fees** (\$96,845).....**1%**
- **Materials and Supplies** (\$30,420) .....**1%**
- **Facility Expenses** (\$545,551) .....**4%**
- **Depreciation Expense** (\$116,105) .....**1%**
- **Staff Transportation/Other** (\$510,082) .....**4%**

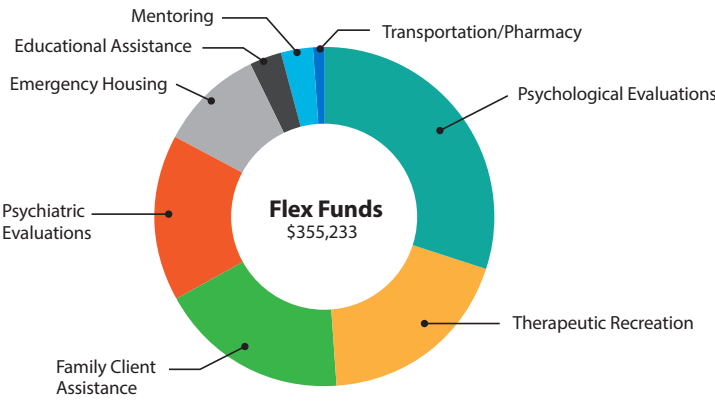


Please note that 86% of all expenses are for staff to deliver OPC services.

## Flex Funds – Total \$355,233\*

Flex Funds are funds made available by the State to cover youth and family expense needs that are not covered by Medicaid. These funds are used to provide services to the youth and families that are necessary for their success.

- **Psychological Evaluations** .....**30%**
- **Therapeutic Recreation**.....**19%**
- **Family Client Assistance**.....**18%**
- **Psychiatric Evaluations**.....**16%**
- **Emergency Housing** .....**10%**
- **Educational Assistance**.....**3%**
- **Mentoring** .....**3%**
- **Transportation/Pharmacy**.....**1%**



## Community Resource Development Funds – Total \$68,530\*

Each year, the Children's System of Care provides funding to OPC to grant back out into the community to fund needed services for youth and families. In 2023, Step Up Family Services Learning Center received these funds and offered three types of support groups for the I/DD community: social skills groups, sibling support groups, and professionally facilitated parent support groups. These services were provided to all youth diagnosed with Intellectual or Developmental Delays and their families. The program will begin again in Fall 2023 at the Ocean County Youth Center.

\* Full financials can be obtained by contacting Keith Savage, Chief Financial Officer: (732) 202-1585.

# Honors



This past year has been a special one for Ocean Partnership for Children as the agency has received the following honors and recognition for the work of the staff and Board:

- For the second year in a row, Ocean Partnership for Children received **NJ Top Workplace Honors**. This honor is based on a research-backed workplace survey that captures anonymous responses in 4 culture areas, including alignment, connection, coaching and performance. The survey also measures employee engagement, leadership and the basics (pay, benefits, training, etc.).

- Ocean Partnership for Children has maintained **accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)**. This accreditation signals a service provider's commitment to continually improving services, encouraging feedback and serving the community.

- OPC staff distinguished themselves by being chosen to **present at the TCOM Conference** this year. Andrew MacMath, Director of Organizational Development and Technology; Liz Menges, Assistant Director of Clinical Operations; and Melinda Santiago, Care Manager Supervisor, presented at the international TCOM 'Transformational Collaborative Outcomes Management' conference. OPC staff presented on the innovative 'weighted' system that OPC has developed in implementing the Strengths and Needs Assessment. This weighted system allows Care Management staff to identify youth and families with higher risk factors while recognizing the value of protective factors captured in the assessment.

- OPC staff also were **honored to present trainings** as follows:

**Liz Menges**, Assistant Director of Clinical Operations; **Richelle Corbo**, Care Manager Supervisor; **Tara Boyle**, Care Manager Supervisor; and **Kaitlin Lord**, Community Resource/Social Media Specialist, presented trainings on working with LGBTQ+ youth to OPC staff internally (*2 trainings*) and to staff at other partner agencies, including Bright Harbor Healthcare and Ocean Academy (*4 trainings*).

**Rosbel Aguilar**, Care Manager Supervisor, presented a training titled '*Latino/x & Hispanic Community: Guidance for Educators and Mental Health Providers*' for the members of the Ocean County Children's Inter-Agency Coordinating Council (CIACC).

**Areefah Saheb**, Care Manager Supervisor, presented a training titled '*Understanding Islam: Considerations for Providers, Educators and System Partner*' at the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, for the members of the Ocean County Children's Inter-Agency Coordinating Council and for the staff at MonmouthCares CMO.

# Success Stories



*Ocean Partnership for Children has saved my life. The help and care I have gotten is beyond helpful. I felt so alone in my child's journey until OPC came along and they have become part of my family. The knowledge they have to help us is so great! I truly would be lost still if they hadn't come into our lives!*



*Our Care Manager is an exceptional listener, she follows through on her word, she's easily reachable. My daughter talks about her all the time and can't wait for our meetings with her.*



*I am so grateful for everything this organization has done for our family. Thank you!*



*My family and I are truly grateful for care manager and all she has done for our son. She has worked well our son's therapist, to provide optimal care for him as well as our family. I love this service because it does not just treat the child, but the family as a whole.*



*Thank you so much for this service and helping our son get to a better place!*



*Ocean Partnership for Children has been an enormous help throughout my daughter's teen years. We appreciate their supportive services and all the therapists that have made a positive impact on her life.*



*The team has been amazing. Getting us through rough patches and IEPs has not been easy, but we did it. My child still struggles with self-harm and is refusing therapies. Every step of the way my care manager has been a constant guide.*



*Without the support, I don't know how I could have gotten through all of this.*



*You guys are good influencers!*



*Ocean Partnership has saved her family. The family has gone through a lot, cancer, school refusal, death of spouse/father etc.*



*Youth's mother reports that her care manager is very efficient and helpful to the family. She further states that she has never had a care manager take so much time and interest in her family. Mother reports that the youth trusts the care manager and the family is very happy with her work.*



*Youth's father stated that he feels happy with CMO services and believes that the care manager has connected well with the youth. Youth's father stated that youth has taken 3 steps forward in a positive direction and to this is a huge advancement. Youth's father stated that he is appreciative of the follow up and attentiveness of Ocean Partnership for Children.*



*Youth's mother reports that she is very happy with services at this time and feels that the care manager has made her feel heard and understood. Youth's mother stated that she supports her with school meetings and assists her in gathering necessary paperwork to better advocate for herself and her son.*



*Caregiver reports being very happy with the support she is given by Ocean Partnership for Children and the care manager. Mother describes the care manager as a beautiful person in every way.*

# Meet our Staff

## Leadership Team



**Mary Jo Buchanan, LCSW, MPA,**  
Executive Director



**Victoria Azzopardi, LCSW,**  
Director of Clinical Operations



**Liz Menges, LPC,** Assistant  
Director of Clinical Operations



**Maureen DeSantis, LCSW,**  
Assistant Director of  
Clinical Operations



**Alyssa Christman, LCSW,**  
Assistant Director of  
Clinical Operations



**Jill Carlin, SHRM-SCP,**  
Director of Human Resources



**Andrew MacMath,**  
Director of Organizational  
Development and Technology



**Katie Colhoun, LCSW,**  
Director of Community Resources  
and Advocacy



**Keith Savage,**  
Director of Finance/  
Chief Financial Officer



**Kristin Space,**  
Office Administrator/  
Executive Assistant

## Staff Composition

At FY end on June 30, 2023 OPC had 127 employees

- **83 Care Managers Total**
- **15 Care Manager Supervisors Total**
- **1 Care Manager Training Coordinator**
- **3 Care Manager Specialists**
- **4 Specialized Care Management Staff**
  - 1 Clinical Consultant**
  - 1 School Resource Navigator**
  - 1 IDD specialist**
  - 1 Court Liaison**
- **4 Care Manager Leadership Total**
- **6 Non-Care Management Leadership Total**
- **3 Administrative Staff**
- **3 Finance Staff**
- **3 Organizational Development and Technology Staff**
- **1 Human Resources Staff**
- **1 Community Resource Staff**

Breakdown of staff is **87%** of staff dedicated to care management and providing services to youth and families; **13%** supporting/administrative staff

## Other Highlights

- **Top Workplace** – 2nd year in a row, increased overall engagement by 5%
- **87% Retention at year end**
- **Jill Carlin**, Director of Human Resources achieved the prestigious certification of SHRM-SCP (Senior Certified Professional)
- **A busy recruiting and hiring year** – 18 new hires; 3 new Care Manager Specialists were created to cover youth and families when care managers went on vacation or leave; 7 Care Managers were promoted to the Care Manager Lead position and 1 Care Manager was promoted to Care Manager Supervisor.





At OPC, we find that when we listen and celebrate what is both common and different, we become wiser, more understanding, and more capable of change





# Partners & Supporters

There are so many partners and supporters to thank who have helped the agency flourish this year!

## Thanks go to:

- Ocean County Department of Human Services
  - Jersey Shore BlueClaws
  - PFLAG Jersey Shore
  - Pro Bono Partnership
  - Ocean County Youth Center
  - Garden State Distillery
  - WOBM
  - Jade Destiny
  - Ocean County Prosecutor's Office
  - Providence House
  - The Stephanie Nicole Parze Foundation
  - Community Ambassadors
  - Ocean County Library
  - Ocean County Family Support Organization
  - Ocean County Inter-Agency Coordinating Council
  - Ocean County Human Services Advisory Council
  - Ocean County Mental Health Advisory Council
  - Children's Mobile Response and Stabilization Services
  - New Jersey Department of Children and Families
  - New Jersey Children's System of Care
  - Ocean County Division of Child Protection and Permanency
  - Ocean County Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Coalition
  - Ocean County Youth Services Commission
  - Ocean County Workforce Development Board
  - Ocean County Office for Individuals with Disabilities
  - Causeway Dealerships
  - Community Health Law Project
  - Toms River Business Improvement District
  - Toms River Artist Community
  - Ocean First Bank & Foundation
  - Design 446
  - New Jersey Alliance for Children, Youth and Families
  - Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission
  - NJCMO and our 14 partner CMOs
  - A Moment to Smile
  - A Need We Feed
  - All of our wonderful provider agencies
- (If we have missed anyone, we apologize. Please let us know and you will be included in OPC's next Annual Report)
- If you want to support the great work of Ocean Partnership for Children, please visit our website at [www.oceanpartnership.org](http://www.oceanpartnership.org) or click on the QR code below.

Thank you in advance!



OceanPartnership.org





For more information, contact  
Ocean Partnership for Children  
at **(732) 202-1585** or visit  
**[OceanPartnership.org](https://OceanPartnership.org)**.

**Learn more about  
all our groups here.**

