

FOSTER 
CARE
ALLIANCE

one
mom at
a time.

2019 Annual Report

one mom at a time.

What an incredible year! Since January, we've interacted with over 70 women from 4 counties in Metro Atlanta. We've had the privilege of helping them to create a path towards healing for themselves and their families.

At the Foster Care Alliance, we believe that every person we encounter in this work has immense worth and value; it's our job to see it and to help them see it, too.

We've seen our nonprofit grow from an idea in the pages of my journal to a model for intervention recognized by the community, the Department of Family and Children Services, and even universities. We get to see hidden trauma and dark secrets brought into the light and released. We get to recognize and validate the pain of those who feel forgotten and help them experience freedom and healing. And those things mean more stable families, less children in foster care, and community transformation.

All of this was possible because of you, our generous donors and partners. Whether you were compelled to give financially or partnered with us in other ways, you have made it possible to restore moms and their families to health. You are the reason the Foster Care Alliance is thriving.

Those who know me know that I love to celebrate, and that is how our staff

started out 2020: reflecting on the wins, the stories of restoration, and the ways that God seemingly intervened in time and space to rescue these precious families.

I am reminded of how God placed foster care on my heart many years ago, and how my son was the answer to a initial step into this purpose for my life. I never would have ventured into this realm, dreamed something great, and had faith that God would create and sustain this great organization without those of you who believed with me and supported. You are my strength and my stories of faith. And those are what we will carry with us through the mountains, and certain valleys, of 2020.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with me. I hope that this report will be more than numbers and data, but will serve as testimony to the wonderful work my team is doing every day and the courageous single mothers who are rising above the status quo. So grab a cup of coffee, iced tea, or maybe even some champagne as you read... and celebrate with me!

Advocating for Healthy Families,



Chelsea Sabo
Executive Director

FOSTER CARE ALLIANCE

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vision

At the Foster Care Alliance, we believe that healthy families belong together. That's why we've created the **Mothers Advocacy Project**, a program that helps biological single moms towards healthier, more sustainable lives for their families.

for moms.

Our data shows that moms who participate in our program present fewer symptoms of mental illness, use more productive parenting strategies, and feel more in control of their lives.

for kids.

Research shows that children are more successful when they remain with a biological parent, whenever possible. Our work makes it possible for kids to grow up happy and healthy with their moms.

the FCA way



vision

All families in foster care to achieve healthy permanency within 6-12 months.



mission

Advocating for healthy families, one mom at a time.



values

Dignity, family, generosity.

FOSTER CARE ALLIANCE

The Foster Care Alliance was founded in 2016 with the mission to restore families involved with the Department for Family and Children Services back to health. Troubled by the stories of trauma she heard from birth mothers while a foster parent, Chelsea wanted to start an organization help other moms to see their value when they could not see it themselves. Now a four-year-old thriving nonprofit, Foster Care Alliance serves as the parent organization to the Mothers Advocacy Project.



MOTHERS ADVOCACY PROJECT

a program of the Foster Care Alliance

The Mothers Advocacy Project is the first of many programs to be unveiled by the Foster Care Alliance. Begun just this year, the Mothers Advocacy Project dedicates all its energy and resources to helping moms specifically. While the Foster Care Alliance is the governing nonprofit organization, the Mothers Advocacy Project is the client-facing program that all moms in our care experience.



our model

Foster Care Alliance is a trauma-informed organization. This means that we understand how trauma -- abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction -- can alter a person's life in catastrophic ways, and we assume that people are doing the best they can to cope with the effects of this trauma. We know that childhood and adult victimization can lead to dissociation, isolation, startle responses, substance use/abuse, self-injury, and even homelessness.

Therefore, we aim to help individuals heal from their original trauma. We believe that the symptoms they've developed to cope with their trauma will begin to lessen as they heal.



Social and Instrumental Support

We believe that healing begins when basic needs are met. We are committed to providing our clients with opportunities for meaningful connections within their cohort. We also assist our clients with basic needs (food, shelter, and clothing) while they are in our care.



Trauma-Focused Therapies & Assessment

We believe that behind their injuries, those who have been hurt trauma are still people worthy of respect and the opportunity to change. We are committed to providing our clients the trauma-informed therapeutic interventions they need in order to heal.

The S.T.E.P. Model, developed and utilized exclusively by Foster Care Alliance, is a mother/child trauma-focused family preservation and reunification plan for families currently involved in foster care systems. The model is based on the findings of the most recent, cutting-edge research and best practices in the field of psychological resilience and post-traumatic growth in trauma victims.

The 16-week program consists of four key components, listed below.



Education

We believe in helping women to become independent, self-sufficient, and in control of their own lives. We are committed to empowering our clients to live sustainably by providing psycho-education targeting emotional intelligence.



Participatory Arts

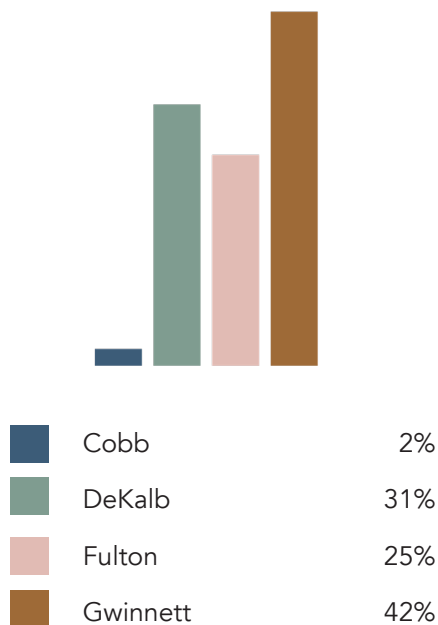
We believe in the research that says martial arts, yoga, and dance help the brain to heal from trauma faster by resetting the central nervous system. We are committed to providing our clients with scholarships to yoga, dance, or martial arts with a trauma-informed provider.

2019 impact

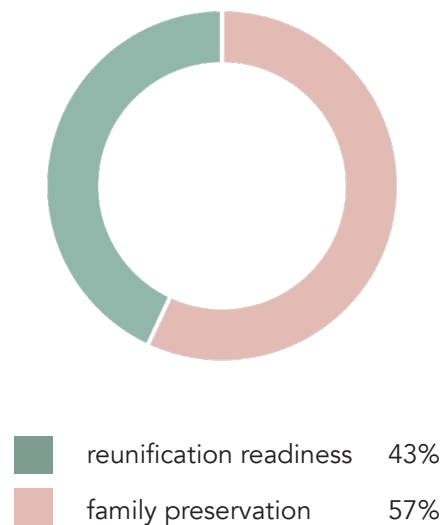
72 families

It was our great honor and privilege to interact with 72 families in the 2019 calendar year. Due to capacity, we were able to work with a third of these families. The remaining two-thirds of these women were referred to other programs, added to our wait list, or treated on an individual track. Our goal for 2020 is to restore 96 families to full health.

4 counties



2 tracks





Celeste's Story

Celeste's journey at Foster Care Alliance began in July, when an altercation with her teenage daughter escalated too far. With her daughter in foster care, Celeste came to us with a deep desire to ditch her anger for good. She saw the hurt that it had caused in her family of five and knew she did not want to inflict the same kind of trauma that she experienced as a child on her own children.

Since being abused by a family member as a child, Celeste had little trust for others. "I don't go out," she says. "I've been so caught up in hurting. But the program," she continues, "has taught me that life is not just all about that." She cites anger management as her biggest area of growth, acknowledging that she can only change what is in her power to change. The rest — the trauma of abuse and of having her daughter removed — she has learned to accept with peace.

Her role in her own cohort became like that of a mother to the other women in the group. She helped one secure a job; she celebrated Christmas with another. She keeps in touch with them and helps to hold them accountable, reminding each of how much they've grown together. She says about her experience in the group, "There are a lot of things that we try not to be ashamed of. But a lot of women had the same story." Sharing similar experiences with other women helped Celeste to feel less alone and give herself permission to grow.

At Foster Care Alliance, Celeste found healing in community. "It's almost building like a family," she says. "There's always somebody you can go back to. These are people that I'll remember for life."



Melissa's Story

Raised by a single mom, Melissa had always been passionate about healthy families. She and her husband, Justin, learned early in their own experience as parents that “the reason that our family was successful and stable was because of the support and resources that my mom had.” Recognizing the huge disparity in resources that each family has to succeed, Melissa and Justin applied and trained to become foster parents, but quickly realized this was not the role for them. “I was not as equipped as I thought to be a foster parent,” Melissa says, recognizing that the job is hard and requires a unique skill set. “But still had a great passion for this need and this opportunity.”

When a mutual friend told her about Foster Care Alliance and introduced her to Chelsea, Melissa was sold. She and Chelsea began to discuss how to improve the lives of those in

foster care in a systematic way, rather than the individual approach she had taken as a foster parent. Melissa joined the Foster Care Alliance board of directors almost immediately. It felt like the perfect opportunity to be a part of restoring families to health, but, in Melissa's words, “in a way that we were well-equipped to do.”

Because she comes from a marketing background, Melissa's role on the board focuses heavily on marketing support. For her, serving on the board is not an obligation; it's a necessity. She had a deep desire to fill this need in the community, and this support is what she does best.

Melissa says about her role on the board, “It's just a way to stretch outside of my day-to-day role that's just a little bit different.” Every role is important.



Antresa's Story

A superstar caseworker for Gwinnett County DFCS, Antresa has sent four clients to work with Foster Care Alliance.

She speaks highly of her working relationship with FCA staff. "They always communicate well with me," she says, "and they help me decide the best course of action." Having this additional support makes Antresa more successful as a caseworker, enabling her to share the work and diminishing her chances of the typical burnout a social worker experiences early in their career. Instead, Antresa says, "I don't have to worry at all; I know they're in good hands."

Antresa believes the Mothers Advocacy Project can help recovering moms in ways that DFCS cannot. The moms she works with feel safer in our care, Antresa says, "without having to worry if DFCS is going to hear every single

detail. So I really feel like they're able to do the work." The trust built at Foster Care Alliance between staff and clients is crucial to these women's success.

Foster Care Alliance is distinct in Antresa's mind because of its clear path towards healing – both for the mom and her entire family. Antresa receives consistent and thorough progress reports and notes that the documentation of a mom's progress is "probably the most important thing out of all of this, because what are we here for if not progress?"

All four moms Antresa has referred to Foster Care Alliance have received varying degrees of support from our staff. "My only regret," Antresa says, "is not sending them sooner."



Notre Dame LEO Institute

The Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities at the University of Notre Dame has selected Foster Care Alliance from organization applicants across the country as one of 6 to conduct a research study and impact evaluation on the S.T.E.P. Model. Over the next 12-36 months we will partner with LEO Institute to design our study, collect data on its effectiveness, and share our results in meaningful ways.

We are incredibly excited about our partnership with LEO because the work of these renowned scholars will help us to demonstrate that our model works! We know based on the data we've collected that moms who complete our program successfully

reduce the symptoms of trauma, but we look forward to sharing how a trauma intervention like ours can significantly reduce the amount of children and families in foster care.

The LEO Institute strives simply and courageously to reduce poverty and improve lives. We believe our partnership with LEO will enable us to advocate for policy change and introduce best practices to the foster care system, in order to have a more systematic impact in the lives of families in Atlanta.



simultaneous groups

In 2019, we had one group per quarter. We now plan to have a minimum of one group beginning every 8 weeks. With the number of referrals we've already received, we anticipate to overshoot this goal!



alumnae ambassadors

Women who have successfully completed our program can continue to receive parenting classes, workshops, case management, and a monthly support group. This way, they will continue recovery beyond our 16 weeks while also supporting new women in the program.



substance abuse support

Through our partnership with the Care and Counseling Center of Georgia, a substance abuse counselor will be joining our team in the office once a week! This will enable us to provide additional support for clients who struggle with substance abuse.



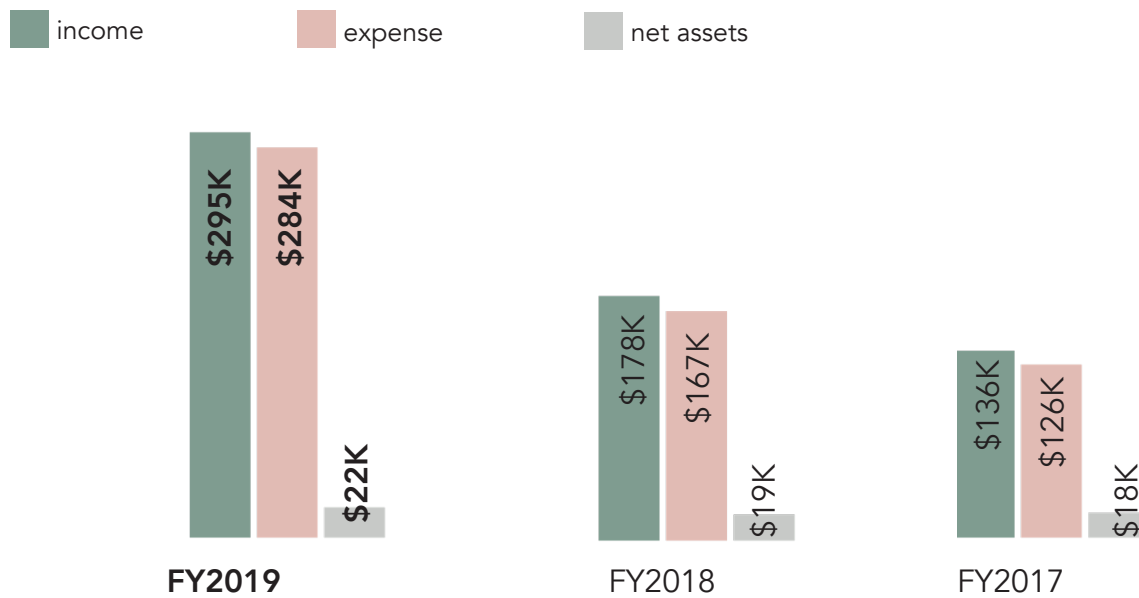
additional office

We are expanding to occupy another office in our current building! With 8 employees and a growing number of clients every day, having more space will allow us to provide our clients with personalized care.

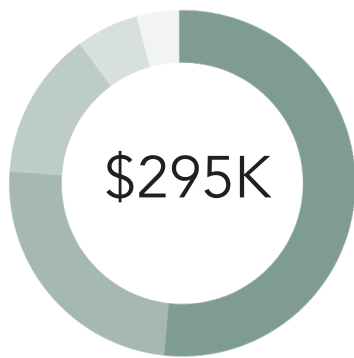
financials

three-year financial analysis

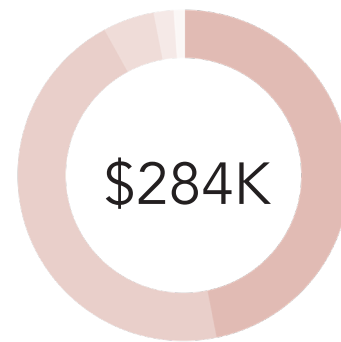
in thousands of dollars



FY2019 income + expense



foundations	52%
individual donors	25%
special events (net)	14%
in kind goods	6%
revenue/sales	4%



Mothers Advocacy Project	47%
operating expenses	45%
client specific needs	5%
fundraising	2%
education/research	1%



thank you

FY19 Supporters

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Jon and Beth Bennett
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United Way Worldwide
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Scott and Annie Whiteside
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Families Director
Grace Midtown Church

Amanda Vandalen, LCSW

Director of Clear Path & Residential Services
Gateway Center

join us!



partner with us

We are always looking for public and private community partners to enable us to serve our families better. If you or someone you know would like to connect with us in this way, please contact Chelsea to talk about a partnership.

sponsor a mom

Our program is free of charge for every mom who participates in it. That means we need sponsors to scholarship them! It costs \$4,500 for a mother to complete our 16-week program. Please contact Carter to learn more about sponsoring a mom.

volunteer

Join our community of volunteers to help with childcare, transportation, office work, events and more. Please contact Raleigh to learn more about how you can serve our families too.

introduce us

Do you know someone who would enjoy getting involved with Foster Care Alliance? We are eager to meet them and find a role for them! Email Chelsea to set up an introduction.

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