



**2015 2016**

# **Annual Report**





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# Letter from the President

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I always look forward to our Annual Report as it allows us an opportunity to summarize and showcase some of the great work that we have done all year serving children and families and meeting our mission.

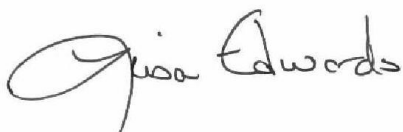
We had an increase in the number of children we served from last fiscal year. However, even more exciting is that we saw an increase in the number of successful discharges due to children in our care being able to be returned to their biological families through parental reunification or kinship placement as well as adoption. Circles of Care saw 86 adoptions this fiscal year, 58 of which were in our very own homes and provided a forever family to children in need. We routinely monitor the length of time children remain in our care and work closely with the State of Texas to confirm each child's current permanency goal and ensure there are no barriers for that child working toward permanency. Whether the goal is the child's return to his or her family or adoption into a new and loving home, we keep our eyes on the goal of permanency for each foster child.

As the State suffers a shortage of foster homes, we have been working diligently in the communities we serve across Texas to continue to find more homes to provide care to children in need. We have focused in particular on finding and licensing foster parents who can take sibling groups of three or more in order to meet our goal of keeping children close to their community and keeping siblings placed together. These groups can be especially difficult to place and no less in need of care than a single child. In addition, we are attending numerous community events in all of our office markets, and we are reaching out and working with both faith-based organizations and even restaurants to help.

Our STAR services are a service that focuses on prevention of child abuse. Through this service, we are able to provide free counseling to families undergoing a crisis or stress. This allows us to be at the forefront of the foster care challenge and help prevent removals before they happen. As the State looks at renewing the contract next year, our goal will be re-procurement so that we can continue to aid families in our communities.

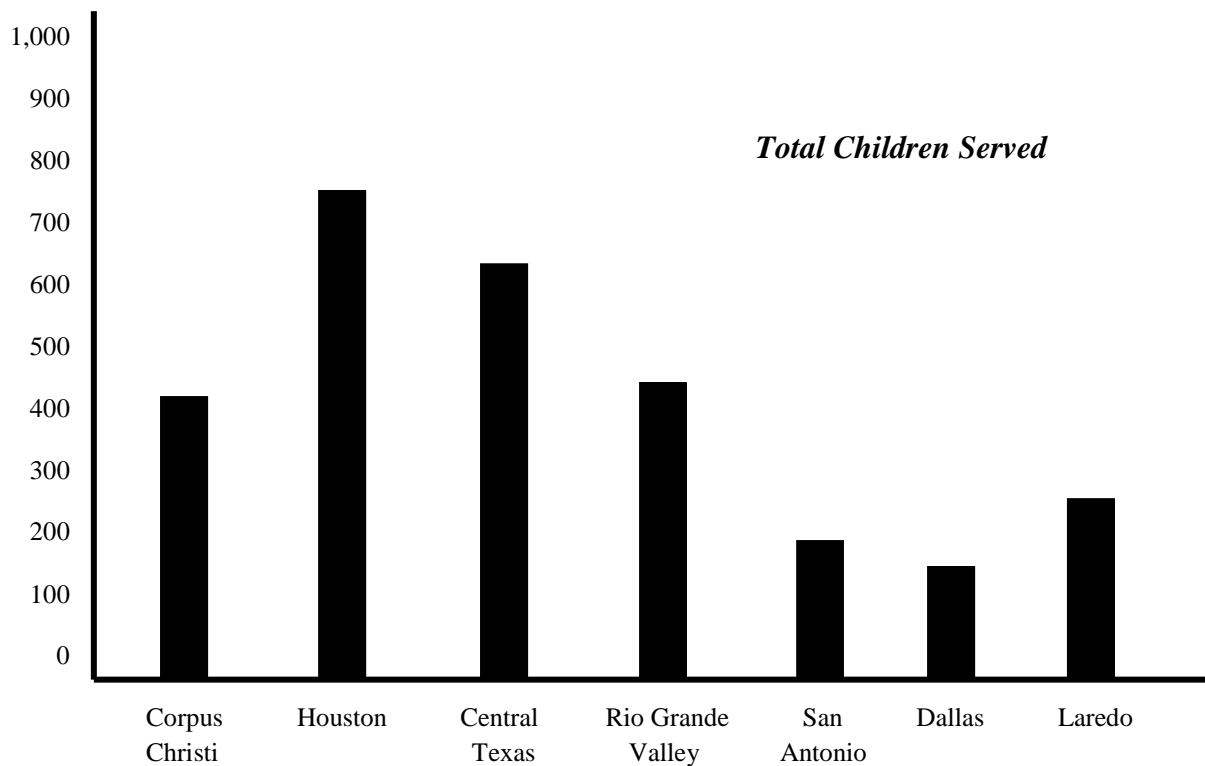
I am honored to lead the incredibly caring and talented staff at Circles of Care and our dedicated foster parents. Thank you to all of our partners who journeyed through this last year with us. I look forward to the new year when we can continue on!

Sincerely,



# Foster Care

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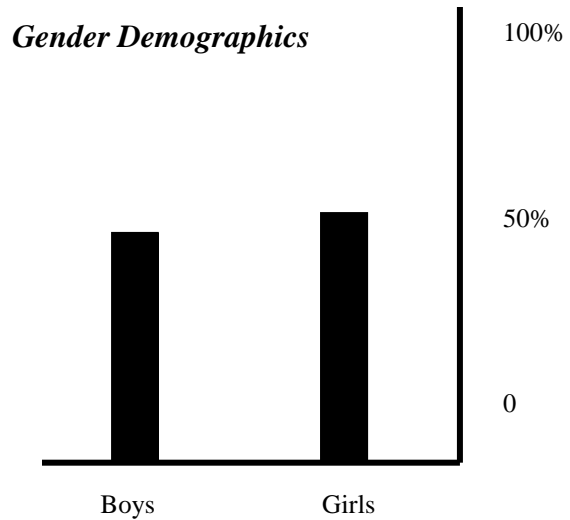
Circles of Care served a total of 2,955 children in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, 434 of those children being new placements. This is a 15% increase in new placements over the previous fiscal year. Our Houston branch served the most children at 850 throughout the year while the Corpus Christi location saw the highest number of placements with 119 children placed into care. The Central Texas office, located in Salado, was second with 94 new admissions. Almost 40% of the children served were Hispanic which is typical of the demographics in Texas. Ethnicities of other children served include:

- Caucasian – 12%
- African American – 2%
- Caucasian/Black – 3%
- Hispanic/Black – 1%
- African – 2%
- Asian – <1%
- Other – <1%
- Undisclosed – 40%

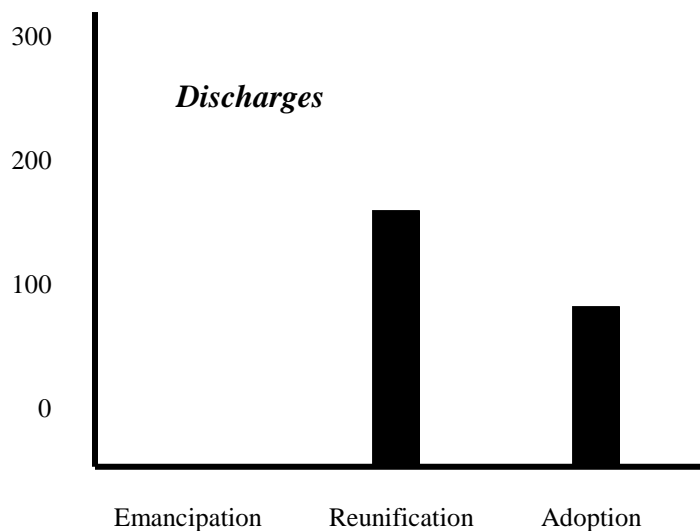
The Circles of Care staff and all foster parents receive annual training on cultural competency to be certain that they are equipped to address the wide range of ethnicities and cultures that Texas has to offer and ensure that each child's background is respected.



Girls made up 52% of placements while boys were the other 48% better reflecting fiscal year 2013-2014 while the year ending September 2015 saw more males placed. The average age of children placed was 5.8 years.



The majority of children who were in care with siblings were able to be placed together as a unit or be placed with at least one sibling. 197 children had siblings, but were not able to be placed with them. This underscores the serious lack of foster homes which are willing or able to accept groups of children. Circles of Care has worked throughout this fiscal year to combat this shortage and will continue to do so in the future to ensure that children are able to remain with their brothers and sisters while in care.



There were a total of 458 discharges this fiscal year, 178 of which resulted in the child's reunification with his or her biological family. Circles of Care approaches all cases with the goal of reunification in mind unless the State determines otherwise. We strive to ensure the safety and success of each child in our care until he or she can return home.

Emancipation saw a sharp decline since the last fiscal year with no children in care aging out of the system. This could be indicative of the relatively lower age of the children placed this year or that more and more youth are taking advantage of the State's extended foster care program.

There was a 22% increase in adoptions from the 2014-2015 year. Circles of Care saw 86 children join forever families and celebrated this landmark occasion with them. Each adoption requires the joined efforts of Circles of Care, the State, the courts, and the family, and is a huge achievement in the lives of our foster parents. Congratulations to all of those families who are now whole.



# Services To At-Risk Youth

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Our Services To At-Risk Youth or STAR program had a very successful year. This program provides counseling services to youth and families across south Texas in Nueces, Kleberg, and Jim Wells counties. The services are free of charge to the community and cover topics ranging from school issues including truancy, drug and alcohol use, family conflict, death, divorce, and any other event which may cause a family

turmoil or constitute a crisis. These services are geared toward helping a family navigate the crisis they are currently undergoing as well as teaching them the tools necessary to handle future conflicts in a healthy way thereby preventing the abuse and neglect which can result in the removal of children.

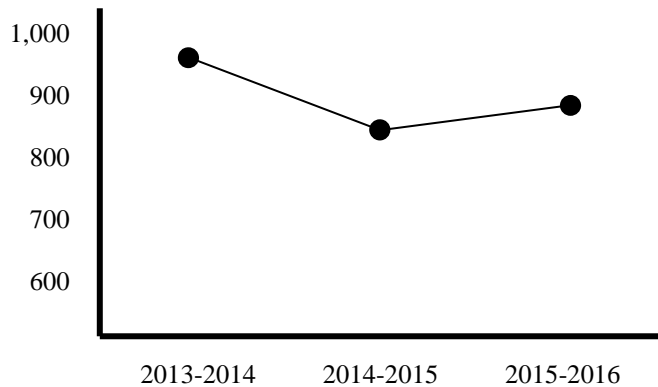
This fiscal year, our counselors helped 893 youths in crisis, an increase over the previous year. The counselors are on a constant search for families who may need help and the best way to reach out to them. They participate in events across our service area including Halloween and Christmas events, health fairs, and back to school events. The STAR program also had a presence at this year's Home and Garden Show in Corpus Christi and the Connection Quest on the Regional Educational Service Center. Other events included:

- The Rubber Duck Roundup
- The Grandparents Workshop and back-to-school giveaway hosted by the Corpus Christi Police Department
- The Lead First back to school event
- A presentation at Whataburger Field for Spaulding Families
- School registrations at West Oso ISD and The School of Science and Technology

Circles of Care is also part of a three agency club including the League of Latin American Citizens and Communities in Schools. Through this partnership, the STAR counselors are able to provide life skills classes to high school students in a relaxed, club atmosphere. These classes help these students and youth to prepare for adulthood and teach them valuable skills they can apply in their everyday lives. In addition, attendees are able to enroll in additional counseling if they so desire.

Finally, the State of Texas will begin taking applicants this fiscal year to provide STAR services beginning in 2017. Circles of Care will once again apply to continue to provide these much needed services to our communities.

*Total Unduplicated Youths*

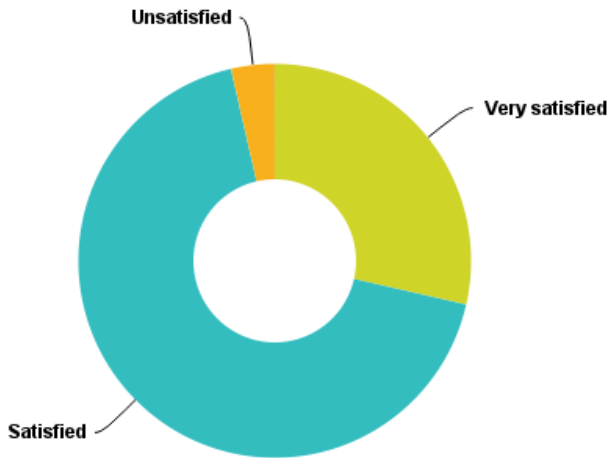




# Annual Surveys

## Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with Circles of Care?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 0



In their own words:

*"...obviously committed to our children's well-being."*

*"Always so knowledgeable and attentive."*

Our foster parents were also very satisfied this past fiscal year. Our families almost unanimously believe that we make the fostering experience easier and less intimidating and that we provide them with the support they need to make a difference in the lives on the children they care for.

Our families also gave special recognition to: David Beltran, Shelly Salazar, Shantel Carter, Natalie Hernandez, Ambyr Campbell, Maya Sheen, Clarissa Little, Nicole Euting, and Patricia Trevino.

In their own words:

*Thank you ... for being such an awesome agency."*

Our Department of Family and Protective Services partners are consistently impressed with our staff. This year, they agree that our Case Managers and office staff are timely and friendly, that our documentation is thorough and completed on schedule, and that we always put the needs of the children first. The DFPS workers were generous with suggestions that we have taken into account and begun to implement as we work on improving our shortcomings. We deeply value the partnership we have with these workers and always appreciate their feedback.

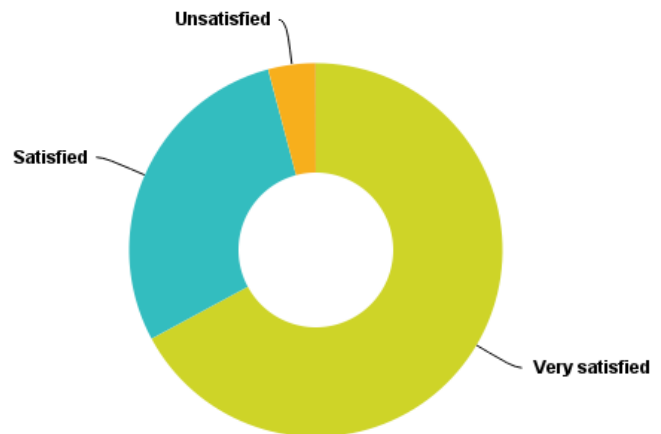
*"By far the best agency I have worked for."*

*"[Circles of Care] always works with me in efforts to avoid a placement disruption."*

*"Always a pleasure."*

## How would you rate your overall experience with Circles of Care?

Answered: 73 Skipped: 1



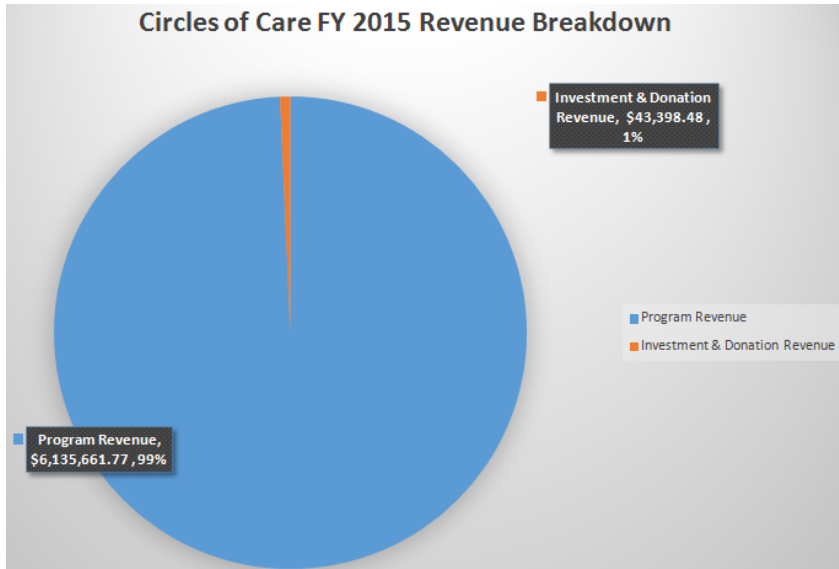
*"I have always felt supported."*

*"[Your] great work shows how much you all value children."*

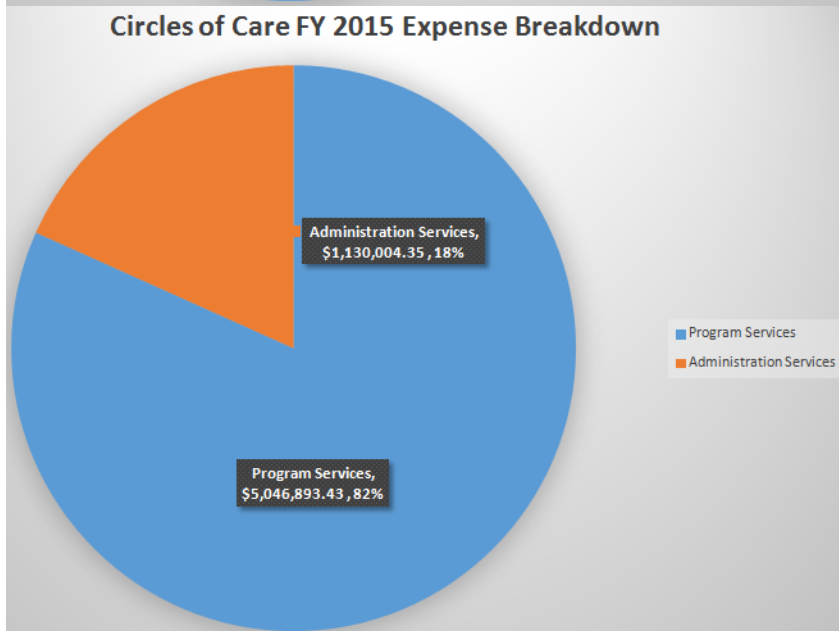




# Financial Data and Outcomes

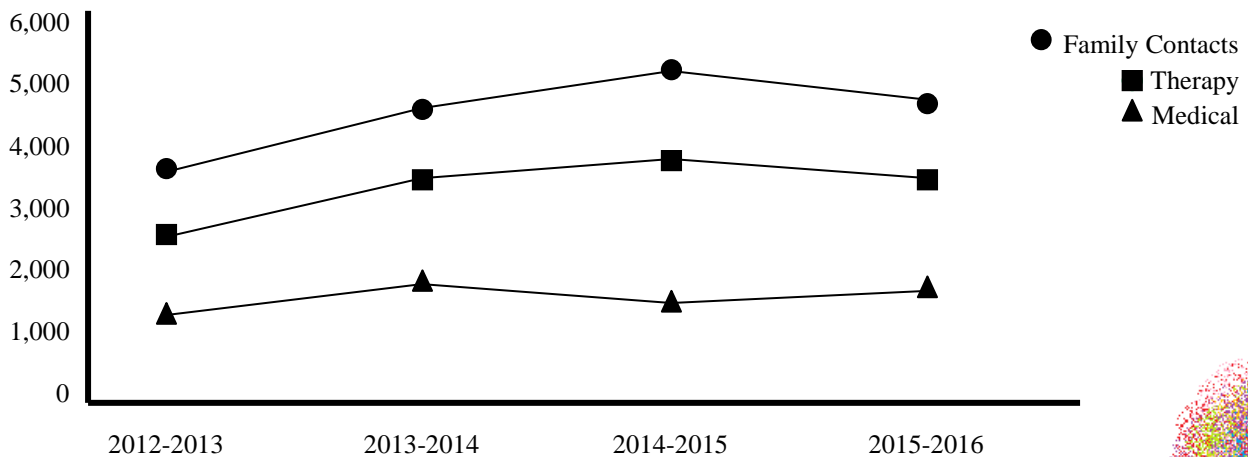


Family visits saw a slight decrease this fiscal year to 4,776 visits. These visits help the children in care to maintain connections with their biological families and members of their home community. Circles of Care makes these visits a priority for our children.



Routine medical and dental appointments were up over the previous year with 763 physicals and 779 dental exams conducted ensuring that each of the children in care is healthy and has his or her needs met.

For mental health, 3,480 therapy sessions were held. These help children and youth transition into foster care as well as addressing any behavioral, learning, or other challenges they may experience.



# Events

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Our kids get so excited for summer time! Each year, we send our foster kids from across the state to any one of the wonderful attractions that Texas has to offer. This year, we supplied more than 700 tickets to more than 130 families to attend one of Texas' fun and educational zoos, to a summer blockbuster film, or to any one of the exciting water parks across the state including the one and only Schlitterbahn!

Our families and kids look forward to this event all year round and often plan their summer schedules around it. We begin getting inquiries as soon as the school year ends and families are free to use the tickets at their leisure. The zoos and water parks really go out of their way to accommodate us and make sure that the kids have a great time! These activities help the kids bond with their foster families and give them a memory of their time with our agency that will last for the rest of their lives.

Our Halloween party was back in full swing this year! After getting rained out last year, we pulled out all the stops to make this our best Halloween event ever! We had bounce houses and blow ups including a huge obstacle course that the kids wanted to fight through again and again!



We also had games and plenty of food to go around with hamburgers, hotdogs, nachos, cookies, and cupcakes. Patches the Clown was in attendance with face painting and balloon animals. At the end of the night, we opened up our haunted house and let the kids go through and get a little fright. Plenty of the kids came in costume and each one got a goody bag filled with toys and candy. The weather was beautiful this year, and the turnout was fantastic.

The entire event was possible because of the hard work of Dawn Marwick who heads up our Halloween Committee as well as Pat Edwards and Jennifer Hernandez who were able to get donations from the following generous companies: La Costa Dental, the Sonics, Walgreen's,

Popeye's, Jason's Deli, the Corpus Christi Police Department who sent McGruff, HEB, Sam's Club, Yolanda's Specialty Cakes, Buttercrust, Weinerschnitzel, Schlotzky's, McDonald's, and Crocker and Deaver Dental. Whether you donated time, food, or funds, we thank you!



We hosted holiday parties across the state this year as well. We selected venues which provide games and safety for the children and gift each child with a special present handpicked by our staff or gift cards for the older children to spend how they like. Our staff love to interact with the children in a fun environment and giving them a memorable gift and experience is priceless.

We attended major training and recruitment events across the State of Texas this year to help spread the word about the need for foster care, support our community, and keep our staff in the best shape to handle the challenges of foster care. You could find us at:

- The Women's Expo in Dallas, Texas. This huge event boasts vendors from across the country and attracts well know speakers and celebrities. Our staff hosted a booth with Circles of Care items and discussed the need for new foster and respite parents with the attendees.
- The Victory Fest 5k Run/Walk in Central Texas. This was an ambitious event for the staff and helped spread the word about Circles of Care.
- Prevention and Early Intervention. The STAR staff attended this conference. With its focus on preventing abuse before it happens, this event helps our counselors learn the best, proven techniques for helping a family navigate a crisis.
- The Spring Into Fitness Health and Wellness Expo. At this event, the Houston staff was able to interact with the community as well as learning valuable information about fitness, nutrition, and other health facts that they can share with foster families and children.
- 5K Run with Heroes. Not to be outdone by the Salado team, the Rio Grande Valley office participated in this 5K featuring members of the area's local police, fire department, and EMS workers.
- The Administrator's Conference. This conference, which gets larger every year, offers a wide range of topics and trainings for our staff to help them better relate to the children in care and get them the services that they need.
- The Home and Garden Show. This huge event in Corpus Christi draws great crowds. It features vendors from all over, and we were right up front with them. We raffled off prizes and had goodies to give away while we spoke to upwards of 100 people about foster care and adoption.





## Success Stories

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Yancy, pictured left, has been in the Mayo home since 2011. She came into care struggling in school and speaking minimal English. Her grades were suffering and her periodic behavior challenges warranted her a high level of care. With the perseverance of the Mayo family and especially Yancy herself, she now holds a high school diploma and has begun taking classes at the San Jacinto community college to study child development. She was able to turn her

education around and graduated in May of this year. In addition, her excellent grades and dramatically improved behavior qualified her for the Circles of Care car program which provided her with \$4,000 toward the car she is seen with as well as her first six months of car insurance. She intends to use this vehicle to further her education by conducting observations at various daycare facilities as well as attending her classes and her place of employment. Yancy had a serious mountain to climb when she first came into care, and her future is incredibly bright. Way to go, Yancy!

The Zeigler family, right, has been with Circles of Care for more than ten years. In June of this year, they added yet another child to their growing family. Aaliyah was placed with them as an infant. The Zeigler family has so much love to give, they were happy to share it with Aaliyah as well. A few short years after her initial placement, she became their fifth adoption with Circles of Care and found her forever home. Ten years in the making, this is one beautiful family!



One of our Houston homes, the Lashley family, had a very exciting year. They have five nieces who were taken into care due to neglectful supervision. The girls were found in the care of a drug user and had numerous injuries including a fractured leg and hip which required a cast, and older partially healed fractures that no one could explain. The girls were placed into the care of the Lashleys to ensure their safety. The children entered care each requiring near constant therapeutic and behavioral care. However, through the exceptional love and devotion of the Lashleys, all the girls are now functioning well and are healthy. Their adoption was consummated on May 25, 2016. They have their forever home with the Lashleys who will continue to help each of the girls thrive.



The Shafer family, pictured left with their adoption attorneys and CPS workers, was already pretty big! But they had even more love to give. Little Addison was only a month old when the Shafers took her in. After two patient years, Addison's adoption was finally consummated, and she became a permanent part of the perfect family for her. Mrs. Shafer said that, though long, adding Addison to their family was well worth the wait.

The Nemec family, right, completed their adoption of Jasmin and Viviana this year. Viviana has been with them since she was just 20 days old, and Jasmin decided on her own that she would like the Nemecs to be her forever family. Both girls come from difficult backgrounds, but are now doing well in school, playing sports, and are especially loving and affectionate with their adoptive parents. The Nemecs are exceptional caregivers who want nothing but the best for their girls.



### *Saying Goodbye*

“We are writing to inform you that we have decided to close our home to fostering. This decision comes after heavy thought and consideration for the children in need and how the process affects our family. We have been very blessed to have met the children that came into our lives as a result of this opportunity and we will never be the same. When we got started, we did not realize how much room we had to grow in tolerance, forgiveness, and patience...not only for the children but with adults and with the entire State program for fostering and adoption. We are definitely better people for participating in the program and we were given the opportunity to adopt three beautiful children. For that, we cannot be more grateful. These children are an amazing reminder of what this process has the power to do. Thank you for all of your dedicated work. We know that your jobs are far from easy. You have been a tremendous part of our family and that is genuinely appreciated.

The Circles of Care staff have all been extremely supportive, understanding, and considerate of our needs. I will never forget the first placement phone call that I had with Maya. She was very professional and personable. She helped me through the first placement which will forever have a place in our hearts. Clarissa was our first contact with the agency and she has been a guiding light throughout our experience. Henry has also played a part in our family. He has been there when we needed clarity on some delicate situations. And David, you have been a part of our family truly with us from the initial placement, through court hearings, birthdays, and our adoption. You have answered our phone calls on nights, weekends, and holidays. We know how dedicated you are to your job and it has made you a part of our family.

We feel very strongly that we have accomplished what we set out to do...change the lives of children. In the process, the children have changed our lives. The children that have been in our home will forever have a place in our heart as will all of you.

Sincerely,  
The Gonzalez Family”



# Our Staff

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Barbara Ayala-Garza – Clinical Director

Carrie Mata – Human Resource Director

Henry Martinez – Program Director  
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Ambyr Campbell – Program Director  
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Summer Solomon – Program Director  
Rio Grande Valley and San Antonio

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Dawn Marwick – Office Manager  
Corpus Christi and STAR

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Margarita Arjona – Office Manager  
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Sarah Martinez – Office Manager  
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*Bringing children and families together.*







# **Circles of Care**

## **2015-2016 Annual Report**