

2022

Strategic PLAN



VOICES for CHILDREN

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

INTRODUCTION



The Voices for Children Montgomery (VFCM) Governance Committee and Executive Director developed this strategic plan to provide VFCM with a five-year roadmap for service support and organizational development. The Governance Committee met multiple times over the past year to reflect on the mission, vision, core operating values, and assumptions underlying the organization's approach to its work. This plan was also developed with broad consultation and guidance from the full Board of Directors. The Board of Directors and Executive Director will review progress, as needed, annually.

The Board met in the fall of 2021 and identified the following Board objectives:

- 1** Review and deepen VFCM's existing local supporters and services to ensure continued CASA services.
- 2** Further assess local and regional community needs to identify service gaps and/or service modifications, which will inform whether VFCM expands or modifies its services.
- 3** Expand VFCM's leadership role to ensure high competency training for staff and volunteers and their delivery of services.
- 4** Expand VFCM's discretionary financial resources, including building a reserve fund.

The Governance Committee then convened regular work sessions in 2022 during which the organization's strategic direction was further refined into this plan, which was then presented to and adopted by the Board of Directors at its 2022 Annual Meeting with implementation to begin on July 1, 2022.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The VFCM Strategic Plan reflects VFCM’s mission, vision, and direction developed by the Board of Directors and Executive Director, while also considering its existing strengths, opportunities for growth, and aspirations for the future. VFCM has identified in this process where its energies must focus to ensure the long-term success of its mission and progress toward its vision.

The strategic direction and goals included in this plan are based upon VFCM’s understanding of the needs of children in foster care and the need to provide advocacy services not offered by other organizations in Montgomery County.

In summary, the strategic plan outlines three strategic goals:

STRATEGIC GOAL 1:

Increase Organizational Visibility

STRATEGIC GOAL 2:

Ensure Organizational Sustainability

STRATEGIC GOAL 3:

Provide Fiscal Stability

For each goal, VFCM has identified broad strategies to guide the annual development of priority activities and specific measures to determine our progress toward meeting each goal.

This plan sets a five-year period (2023-2028) to implement VFCM’s approach to its work and strengthen the organization’s infrastructure to ensure fiscal stability for the future. The time period will also enable VFCM to expand its leadership role in Montgomery County’s foster care program.

HISTORY OF VFCM

The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program of Montgomery County, Maryland, Inc. is one of over 900 child advocacy organizations nationwide that provide a voice for children involved in the juvenile justice system because they have been victims of abuse or neglect.

The first CASA program was started by David Soukop, a Superior Court judge in Seattle, Washington in 1977. Judge Soukop found it increasingly difficult to make decisions regarding the fate of abused and neglected children appearing before him, based on the limited information he was provided by the parties involved in the case. He conceived of the idea of recruiting and training volunteers from the community whom he would appoint to the cases of abused and neglected children. These volunteers, or “CASAs,” would research the child’s situation, interview all of the parties involved in the child’s case and make recommendations to the judge as to the child’s best interest.

The idea rapidly gained popularity across the country and has been endorsed by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The National CASA Association was created in 1984 as a non-profit 501(c)(3) membership organization for local CASA programs. The national CASA organization provides technical assistance, financial support in the form of grants, and sets standards and management practices for local CASA programs. There are now over 900 programs nationwide, operating in every state, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands.

CASA of Montgomery County, Maryland was founded in March 1987 by members of the local chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women and was the first CASA program in Maryland. In 2017, the organization adopted the "doing business as" name Voices for Children Montgomery.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES



1. Every child deserves a safe, loving, and permanent home, if possible, with family.
2. Children deserve permanence as quickly as possible.
3. The child's best interests should be the ultimate criterion in determining the child's placement.
4. Children under the jurisdiction of the Court deserve culturally responsive care, which supports a strong cultural identity.
5. Children under the jurisdiction of the court deserve the implementation of advocacy services as early in their cases as possible.

VISION

We will be the leading voice championing and advocating for every child in Montgomery County foster care.

MISSION

We train and support volunteer advocates for children in Montgomery County foster care to ensure their placement in safe, permanent homes.

CORE OPERATING VALUES

We will live our mission and achieve our vision by continually demonstrating the following values:

- Advocacy
- Competency
- Thought Leadership
- Compassion

STRATEGIC GOALS AND STRATEGIES



Using its guiding principles, vision and mission statements, and core operating values as direction, VFCM has set three goals over the next five years are the organization's response to the important issues identified as part of the strategic planning process. These goals, along with broad strategies for achieving these goals, provide VFCM with a roadmap for fulfilling the strategic direction.

Strategic Goal 1: Increase Organizational Visibility

Increase organizational visibility to increase awareness about VFCM's mission and the organization's unique impact as the champion and advocate for every child in Montgomery County foster care. Our core audience is community members, partner organizations, the Montgomery County judiciary, and current and potential funders.

Strategies to Increase Organizational Visibility

- VFCM will engage with the judiciary on the value and mission of VFCM including through educational programs, seminars, and programs at the courthouse and through the Judicial Institute.
- VFCM will reach out to the local bar associations to educate attorneys about the existence, role, and value of VCFM through legal educational programs, social events, and other local bar activities.
- VFCM will develop and foster partner relationships and educate community partners on the existence, role, and value of VFCM as appropriate for the particular community partner.
- VFCM will increase brand recognition and expand its current marketing efforts to advertise to new audiences.

Strategic Goal 2: Ensure Organizational Sustainability

Ensure organizational sustainability so that VFCM has the talent and human resources needed to successfully advance our mission and accomplish our goals, including staff, volunteers, and Board members.

Strategies Toward Organizational Sustainability

- VFCM will continuously evaluate the skills, networks, and fundraising propensity and needs of the board to seek and recruit new qualified board prospects to ensure our ability to accomplish its mission.
- VFCM will engage in recruitment and retention activities to help us build relationships with and recruit and retain diverse volunteers to meet the needs of the children and families (or community) VFCM serves.
- VFCM will assess its current and future staffing needs and engage in recruitment and retention of staff that reflects the diversity of the community it serves.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND STRATEGIES



Strategic Goal 3: Ensure Fiscal Stability

Ensure fiscal stability for VFCM by maintaining and stewarding current donor relationships and identifying and cultivating new funding sources.

Strategies to Ensure Fiscal Stability

- VFCM will grow its existing donor base through broader community outreach, by engaging and nurturing relationships with these donors, and demonstrating effective stewardship of all donations through responsible management of resources.
- VFCM will cultivate new local business and corporate donor relationships to provide new private donations.
- VFCM will identify and develop donor engagement opportunities to foster sustained giving across multiple years.
- VFCM will create diversified revenue streams to generate more unrestricted funding through its identification of new private donor opportunities and increased community donor engagement.

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Board of Directors will use this strategic plan (1) to document planning decisions reached by the Board of Directors and (2) to serve as a roadmap and management tool to guide the activities and investments of the organization. The plan will be publicly available on VFCM's website, clearly communicating VFCM's focus, performance, and resulting impact to the foster care community in Montgomery County.

Annually, the Governance Committee will work with the Board of Directors and Executive Director to develop priorities and activities for the year consistent with the strategic plan and after evaluating progress toward the strategic goals in the prior year using predefined measurements. During annual planning, an accountable party will be identified to lead the completion of each activity, along with a measure and a timeline for reviewing progress. The Governance Committee will monitor the work on the annual plan throughout the year and provide regular updates and recommendations to the Board to aid in implementing the strategic plan within the five-year target period.