



President's Annual Report 2014-2015



Helping Kids in Crisis. Building Strong Families.

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Note from Jim Blue, President

Every day when I walk into CEDARS I stop to think about how grateful I am that this organization exists for children and struggling families. I think about the kids and families who will be in our programs that day, and how they will be cared for and supported by the very best in our field - passionate professionals who give all they have because they believe in the potential in each child with whom they work.

I know you believe in their potential, too. That's why you have chosen to invest in our work. Your financial support, your advocacy, your time - you enable each one of us to do this most valuable work each day.

My gratitude for each of you is immeasurable.

Thank you for helping us ensure that this nearly 70-year-old agency remains a safe and strong place for kids and families in need.

Together, we are helping our most vulnerable children find safety, stability and permanent families.



Our Commitment

In 1947 when CEDARS Home for Children was founded, too many children in our community suffered physical abuse, neglect and homelessness. *That is still true today.*

CEDARS is committed to helping kids in crisis and building strong families through our integrated cornerstone service areas.

Providing safe and stable housing for children and youth who have no other safe place to spend the night will remain at the core of the CEDARS organization. We will also continue to grow as a leader in the development and delivery of focused preventative services to prevent abuse and neglect in vulnerable families.



Out of Home & Emergency Services

For those children and youth unable to live at home due to neglect, abuse, homelessness, runaway, or other family crises, CEDARS provides an individualized array of emergency and supportive housing to protect their safety, promote their healthy growth and development, and facilitate their successful transition to permanency.

Family Resources & Education

Focusing on maintaining positive family and community connections, family strengthening services assist children and parents as they work to remain intact. CEDARS also provides children with early and ongoing developmental opportunities to become better learners.

Juvenile Justice

For youth who are at risk for or who have committed law violations, CEDARS provides positive development programs to prevent subsequent law violations and prepare them to live successfully in their community. Youth receive support in the areas of education, employment, basic living skills, crisis intervention and healthy relationships.

Out of Home & Emergency Services

Children come into **Out of Home and Emergency Services** when their families are in crisis. Our primary goal for every child is their safety. Once safe and stable, our focus turns to finding them a permanent home; whether that be back home safely with their family, in a new home, or successfully living independently.

CEDARS Pioneers Center houses the only shelter in Southeast Nebraska for unaccompanied youth. It serves as a hub of CEDARS out of home programming, providing a temporary, safe shelter environment for youth ages 13-18. In the past year, 135 youth found safe shelter at the Pioneers Center, an increase of over 10 percent from the previous year.

Foster Care continues to be a growing and preferred placement for children and youth who need a safe place to stay. In the last year, we have seen a growth in the number of children who are being placed with relatives and those who are known to the child. These “child-specific” placements comprise 50 percent of CEDARS foster care placements.

CEDARS also continues to build upon our services for older teens impacted by homelessness. Through the **Bridges** and **Street Outreach programs**, our trained staff are able to provide assistance in finding safe housing and offer the protection of CEDARS safety net services. **Last year CEDARS served 66 youth in Bridges and had contact with 870 youth through street outreach programming.**



Today...

CEDARS will serve **1,197** children and youth.

257 will be in Out of Home programs.

13 will be in temporary emergency shelter.

Scott's Story

Scott came into our care at the Pioneers Center after being asked to leave his home by his mother. Scott had just turned 18 and his mother, who had been abusive to him most of his life, no longer wanted the financial responsibility of caring for him.



When he first arrived at CEDARS, there was no real plan for where he would go next. Scott was 18 and had no other family in the state. We took the opportunity to work with Scott to help determine what he would need to successfully move forward.

Upon arrival, our Education Specialist immediately began working with Scott to get him enrolled in a local school since he had been attending a school out of the county. Though there were initially some barriers, the Education Specialist was able to get Scott enrolled in a program that would allow him to swiftly complete the 14 hours he had left to earn his diploma.

Our team also began working with Scott to help him develop independent living skills. Scott was provided with a bus pass and staff reviewed bus routes with him. Scott was unaccustomed to being treated as a responsible young person and was a bit overwhelmed at first, but was soon able to articulate that he was grateful that staff approached teaching by allowing him to learn independently and make mistakes himself while still being there for him when there were problems as he continued to learn.

Our team also assisted Scott in filling out job applications and practiced with him to prepare for interviews. In a relatively short time, Scott demonstrated that he was fully capable of living independently. Scott was interviewed for the CEDARS Bridges program and accepted into this supervised transitional living program.



Family Resources & Education

At CEDARS we know that the removal of a child from their home can, in some situations, be prevented. When vulnerable families are provided the necessary tools, resources, education and support, they can often successfully create safe and nurturing environments for their children to grow strong and healthy.

Our Family Resources and Education programming helps families that are experiencing crisis or under-resourced to build stronger homes for youth of all ages.

One of the best tools for the healthy development of a child is **quality early childcare**. Last year, CEDARS was pleased to provide nationally-accredited care to over 230 young children in our two child development centers, and 125 elementary school age children through our **Community Learning Centers**.

CEDARS also works with families when they struggle to meet the basic needs of their children. Through an array of **family strengthening programs**, families learn about appropriate child development, effective parenting tools and techniques, and receive help to access community resources and build up a team of support.

Last year **111 families had access to support and guidance from CEDARS' skilled family partners, and 88% of those families were able to leave the program with their family successfully intact.**

Missy's Story

Missy reached out to CEDARS at the age of 16 after finding out she was pregnant. The father of Missy's child did not want to be involved. Due to her age and lack of adequate family support, Missy was seeking support and guidance for her pregnancy. Missy was living in her older brother's home at the time, and while he wanted to offer support, he had a work schedule that didn't allow him a lot of extra time to devote to spending time with Missy, nor did he feel confident in his own ability to help raise a child.

Missy was a sophomore in high school, struggling to maintain her grades due to lack of academic support and transportation issues. She had not been around many children and felt overwhelmed with what being a parent would mean for her.



We immediately began sending a home visitor into Missy's home to educate her about healthy prenatal care, immunizations and appropriate child development standards. We also talked with Missy about her other goals and were able to provide extra support to her in a number of areas, in particular her goal to graduate high school.

Twelve months later, Missy has given birth to a healthy boy, has established consistent and regular health care for herself and her child, has obtained safe childcare for her son, and is on track to graduate from high school early.

Missy has been able to learn about child growth and development and is always eager to try new things to help her son develop and learn. Missy also still has us to call to ask questions when she doesn't know what to do. She has been particularly grateful for the extra support when her little one is ill.

It has been our joy to celebrate Missy's son's developmental successes, such as when he rolled over for the first time. Missy shared with us that without the support of her home visitor, she is unsure where she and her son would be.

Juvenile Justice

Youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system at an early age can be at great risk for continued involvement with the court systems as they become adults. One estimate suggests that between 50 and 75 percent of adolescents who have spent time in juvenile detention centers are incarcerated later in life.

We believe in the potential of these youth and want to provide opportunities for youth who are at risk for or who have committed law violations to learn from their experiences and make positive changes to avoid future involvement with the law.

CEDARS **Life Skills** Program is one of several programs we offer to youth involved with the juvenile justice system. Through this program, youth have the opportunity to remain in their homes, attend school, be employed, and attend counseling, while benefiting from some additional structure. Professional staff members offer accountability and engage participants in community service work, academic tutoring, job search and readiness, and other developmental workshops.

Among the priorities for youth in the Life Skills program is the attainment of each youth's educational goals. Emphasis on meeting educational goals is supported through the efforts of a **specialized education support team** at CEDARS. This team serves as a liaison between youth, their schools and their support teams, and can offer one-on-one tutoring and educational advocacy as needed.



Education Support

Last year, our education support team worked with over **150 teens**, providing **213 hours** of direct tutoring and facilitating **65 education groups**.

Rawlins' Story

Rawlins is always respectful, saying "Yes, Ma'am," or "Yes, sir." He looks people in the eye and has a firm grip when shaking hands. Just last week, a member of the CEDARS team drove him to a job interview for which they'd spent a great deal of time preparing.

Rawlins is a sixteen-year-old working toward successful independence. Because of a difficult home life, Rawlins lives independently, supported by CEDARS services. One of the goals he set for himself was to find a job, but he had no real idea how to get one.



CEDARS staff were there to help. In addition to talking through the possibilities listed on CEDARS' bulletin board of job openings and in our file box of job applications, staff worked with Rawlins to identify potential employers close to where he lived.

Rawlins was worried he wouldn't be hired because he had no previous employment experience. Our team guided him through the process of filling out an application, taught him how to follow up with potential employers, and helped him build a resume. To prepare for interviews, the team conducted mock interviews and provided Rawlins with positive, constructive feedback. They even helped him determine appropriate attire and served as his references.

Throughout the process, Rawlins proved that he was self-motivated and determined. Without having an adult to give reminders, youth living independently often miss appointments and other obligations like school. Rawlins comes to every appointment with a smile.

Last week, when a member of CEDARS team drove Rawlins to Walmart for his job interview, his knees were bouncing with nerves. He got out of the van with a brave face and went inside. He came out with the most radiant smile.

Looking Ahead

In 2015, CEDARS embarked on a new two-year strategic plan to address persistent and ongoing driving forces that affect our daily work with the community's most vulnerable children. CEDARS leadership presents the following as their primary objectives of the agency over the next two years.

Outcome-Based Definition of Success

In order to address government and major private sector decisions being increasingly influenced by performance outcomes, CEDARS will establish an independent, but industry-aligned, definition of success, which is outcome based, for every child in CEDARS care. We will make certain that our efforts to measure the safety, stability and wellbeing of the children in our care are appropriately resourced, ingrained into our culture and communicated to a broad set of stakeholders.

Enhanced Environment of Care

In order to address persistently unmet behavioral health needs of the children, youth and families in our care, CEDARS will establish a clinical lead to assess the needs of the children and youth in our care and work within in our programs to develop a significantly enhanced environment of care that incorporates a therapeutic overlay.

Support for Foster Families

Family-based foster care is the predominant out of home care resource in Nebraska, and placement with a family that is known to the child is preferred. CEDARS will work to provide additional support to meet the unique needs of every foster child and family in the foster care program. With an aim to remove barriers for success, we will seek to provide the tangible resources and tools necessary for children to stay in their foster home and successfully work toward independence or permanency.

Employer of Choice

CEDARS will be the employer of choice for four-year degree students entering the fields of criminal justice and human services. CEDARS will offer the qualities of a workplace that attract, engage and retain the newest generation of talent. We will be an organization where employees find a supportive and growth-oriented work culture, professionals can come and find their fit by offering great flexibility, and future leaders can learn from the best in the industry.

Engagement in Strategic Partnerships

CEDARS will use its unique vantage point into the abuse and neglect of children and commit to further study the varied points of greatest vulnerability for children and families. CEDARS will then engage in strategic partnerships that allow us to intersect with families in Southeast Nebraska when they are at greatest risk.



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

CEDARS Youth Services Financial Highlights (Fiscal Year End June 30, 2015)

ASSETS & LIABILITIES

Total Assets	\$3,256,304
Total Liabilities	\$1,884,609
Total Net Assets	\$1,371,695

REVENUES & EXPENSES

Contributions & Support	\$507,643
Grant & Service Revenue	\$11,225,166
Total Revenues	\$11,732,809
Total Expenses	\$11,682,341

CEDARS Youth Services Program Expenses by Cornerstone
(Fiscal Year End June 30, 2015)

PROGRAM SERVICES

Out of Home & Emergency Services	\$5,585,167
Family Resources & Education	\$2,220,015
Juvenile Justice	\$1,584,165
Evaluation	\$102,555
Management Contract	\$679,940
Total Program Services	\$10,171,842

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Management & General	\$1,510,499
Total Supportive Services	\$1,510,499

TOTAL EXPENSES	\$11,682,341
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DONOR SUPPORT

The important work of helping kids in crisis and building strong families would not be possible without the generosity of our loyal donors. They play an integral role in ensuring that we are able to open our doors to vulnerable children for years to come.

Each year, CEDARS pays tribute to our friends who have made significant contributions to the children of CEDARS through the years. They are honored here as Lifetime Benefactors. Those who are new contributors or have increased their giving to a new level in 2014-2015 are distinguished with an asterisk (*).

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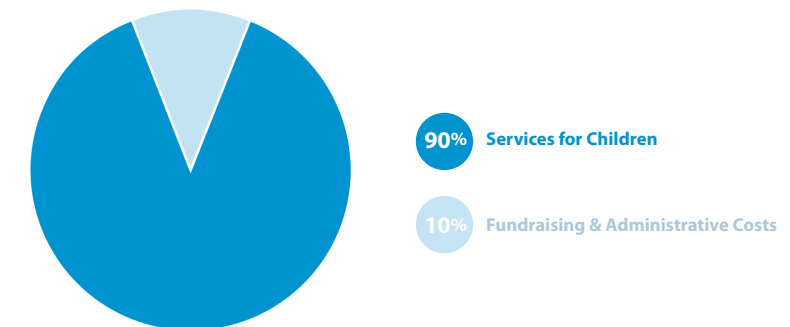
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CEDARS is...

- a safe place where children are welcomed night or day
- a provider of care for 2,500 children each year
- a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization
- a partner of the United Way

CEDARS is accredited through the Council on Accreditation and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. CEDARS is an "A" rated charity with the American Institute of Philanthropy and has received numerous awards for excellent business practices from the Better Business Bureau.



In the last fiscal year CEDARS consolidated agencies spent 90% of all expenditures on services for children. Percentages are based on the formula set forth by the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance, whose standard recommends at least 65% of an organization's total expenses be spent on program activities.



CEDARS

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