



## Agency History

Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County is a private, non-profit 501 C 3 organization. The doors were opened in 1959 as an extension of the Archdiocese of Detroit with the following mission statement:

Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County recognizes the value and dignity of each person as a child of God and believes that social service is an essential component of the mission of the church.

Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County will work to encourage a greater understanding, acceptance, and respect among people in our community by

- advocating for the poor, the powerless, and the oppressed
- preventing deterioration of individual and family life,
- enhancing and improving the quality of life for individuals and families.

Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County will make available professionally competent, compassionate service to all residents of the County. The agency by-laws stated its purpose as:

...offering service to persons needing help with personal, family, or other problems of the environment in order to foster the development and stability of healthy family life; to offer services to families with marital or other interpersonal difficulties within the family, unmarried parents, couples desiring adoption of children, and children in need of protective services; when necessary to accept temporary or permanent custody or guardianship of children; and, to carry out the foregoing purposes without regard to the religious background of the persons it is serving.

From its beginning with a staff of seven, CSSW targeted prevention services to high risk families and youth. Free counseling services were offered to young women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy. During the 1960's, the agency doubled in size with an increase in adoption and foster care services. As many as 100 infants were placed for adoption in one year. At this time, the agency joined the local United Way as a member agency receiving their support. CSSW assisted with the creation of Ozone House, SOS Crisis Center and the Whitmore Lake Health Clinic. The services of foster care licensing for short term placement of runaway youth along with staff supervision and training were given to Ozone House while CSSW remained the official licensed child placing agency for Ozone foster homes until 1983. CSSW provided summer programming to youth in the Whitmore Lake area.

The 1970's saw a decrease in demand for voluntary infant adoption placements and an increased need for support services to single parents. In-home counseling to high risk families for abuse and neglect or for having a child removed from their home and who were referred by the Michigan Department of Social Services (now known as Department of Human Services) began and continued on until 1996. Outreach services to the elderly began with the help of grant dollars from state and federal sources in the latter part of the decade. In 1978, Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County developed the first Parent Aide Service in Washtenaw County. This program continues to provide trained, supervised community volunteers to mentor at risk parents and children. The program was expanded in 1988 to target young women pregnant with or parenting an infant for the first time and in 1996 began to include families with children under the age of three. Personnel requirements were upgraded during the 1970's with an increase of BSW and MSW staff. An Ypsilanti branch office was opened and CSSW became affiliated with the then new Diocese of Lansing thus letting go of its ties with the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County experienced tremendous growth with the development of several new programs through state and federal grant contracts during the 1980s. An additional parent aide service began, substance abuse treatment and prevention services were funded, and respite to caregivers of the elderly started. Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP) joined as an agency sponsored program. The Alternatives to Domestic Aggression Program (ADA) was implemented in 1987. Families First, the largest program to develop and funded through a State of Michigan contract, continues to provide intensive, in-home services to at risk families in order to prevent child abuse and neglect. By the end of this decade, the staff count reached 42 with half located in the Ann Arbor office and half in the new and larger Ypsilanti office.

Two additional prevention services for the community were developed by CSSW in the 1990's: Grandparents as Parents (GAP) began in 1992 and Healthy Families America (HFA) was established in 1995. The GAP program offers caregiving grandparents and their grandchildren intergenerational opportunities to share common experiences through support groups. GAP also helps participants better understand each other's special needs through group and individual instruction and works to successfully link service recipients with needed community services. The HFA program is a home-based program available to first-time parents in Washtenaw County who are overburdened, isolated, without adequate support and at risk for abuse and neglect. A family support social worker is available to the family until the child begins Kindergarten. The program's primary focus is to create a safe and stable home environment and to build awareness of the developmental needs of infants and children by increasing positive parent-child interaction through teaching healthy parenting skills.

Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County continued working collaboratively with many groups in the community, including the Washtenaw Housing Alliance. Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County assumed responsibility for providing Housing Support Services to tenants of Avalon Housing in November 2001. These services, often geared toward vulnerable and marginalized persons, build on our competency with in home services, and seek to provide a variety of supports to enable tenants to remain permanently housed. By December, 2002, the Board of Directors of Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County and Father Pat Jackson House Program entered into an Asset Transfer Agreement. Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County now operates the Father Pat Jackson House Program-providing emergency and transitional assistance, as well as parenting supports, to pregnant and parenting teens.

In 2005, after a multidisciplinary community team including health care, law enforcement, prosecution, and child protective services created the concept of a Child Advocacy Center for Washtenaw County, Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County began providing forensic interviews and supports for victims of child sexual abuse. This program is initially housed at the Packard facility.

Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County made many important service and community contributions during 2006. After several years of community planning, Washtenaw County was one of nine grantees from around the country selected by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Community Partnership for Older Adults program. Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County is the lead Agency in this initiative through the *Blueprint for Aging*. We began operations of the *Washtenaw Child Advocacy Center* at the County's Towner Human Services Building. The renovation and furnishings were essentially donated "in kind" by the community. The Agency reactivated its State of Michigan substance abuse treatment license and was awarded the contract from The Michigan Department of Corrections to provide outpatient services for the county. A new statewide initiative-*Michigan Prisoner Re-entry Initiative*- to reduce recidivism within the returning offender population was introduced. Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County was selected as the fiscal leader in the community for this project. We maintained Accreditation by a national accrediting body, the Council of Accreditation.

In 2007, several new affiliations and services began. In response to a set of concerns and innovative solutions presented by a group of community stakeholders about the housing and supports necessary for people with developmental disabilities, we forged a partnership with *Intentional Communities Washtenaw*, to serve as its administrative center, and ultimately, to provide services. By the end of 2007, Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County entered into a staffing arrangement with *His Eye is on the Sparrow*, an emerging organization providing services to persons with developmental disabilities.

A longstanding and important community organization, HelpSource, decided to cease its operations in mid 2007. Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County was asked to continue three of its programs, Behavioral Health, Adult Day, and Supervised Visitation/Parent Exchange. By August, Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County assumed operations for each of these, locating Behavioral Health and Supervised Visitation/Parent Exchange at the Packard facility, and operating the Adult Day program as "The Oaks" in the community space at the Neighborhood Church.

In 2008, as a result of new directions established with the Diocese, we began supporting the Migrant ministry in our County. In April, we co-hosted a regional conference with the Diocese on *Human Trafficking* attended by 130 people. We also entered into a contract with the USCCB to provide assistance to Trafficking survivors.

During 2009 several accreditations were completed. Through the Council on Accreditation, Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County was reaccredited through 2013. The Washtenaw Child Advocacy Center also received national accreditation through the NCA. CSSW began an educational partnership with *Daejin University- School of Social Welfare* in South Korea, and hosted four interns for a month during the summer. As a result of a new adoption contract with the Department of Human Services, we began providing Adoption services in the areas served by our *Families First* contracts.

In January 2010, *Neighborhood Senior Services*, an important organization with a 35 year history of service to seniors in our community, became a program of Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County through a formal asset transfer agreement. Neighborhood Senior Services is also located in the Senior Health Building, along with the *Older Adult Programs* and the *Blueprint for Aging*. CSSW was awarded a (sub) contract to provide *Safe Haven*, focusing on supervised visitation with children and domestic violence. In addition, CSSW was awarded a (sub) contract to participate in the RAISE national research with a focus on preventing the long term debilitating consequences of schizophrenia. We implemented a social work services contract with *Huron Valley Ambulance*, to provide indicated services to their clients.