

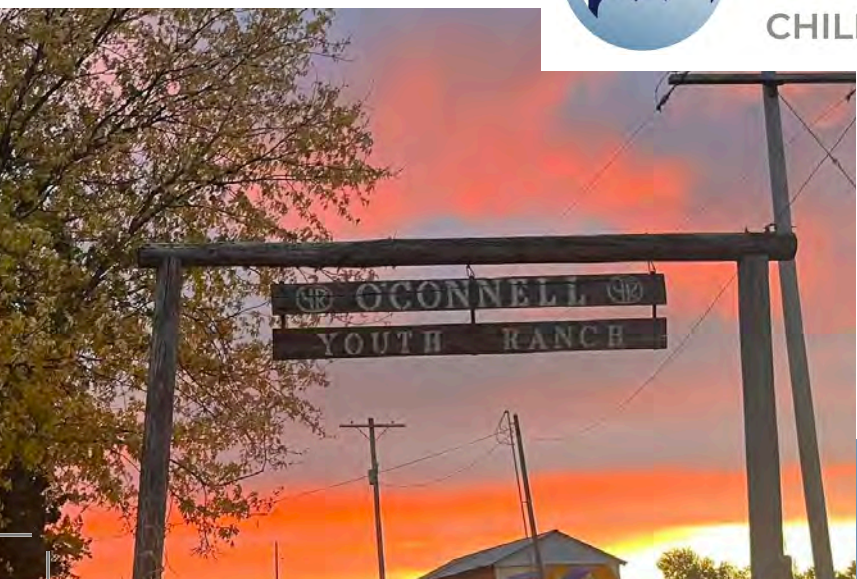


**O'Connell**  
CHILDREN'S SHELTER

PO Box 3589  
Lawrence, KS 66046



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*Serving Kansas communities since 1976*

**2023 IMPACT  
REPORT**

# From our Executive Director

As I reflect on 2023, I am in awe of our staff at O'Connell Children's Shelter (OCS). They continue to do outstanding work with those we serve. They continue to strengthen families and our community overall.

Again this year, we helped stabilize youth in the foster care system who have been placed with us. We are proud to support and affirm the dignity and worth of all these young people who have been through so much.

In 2023, we were excited to launch the H.O.P.E. Center, delivering educational support and vocational training, and offering art, music, life skills, physical activity, and spiritual support to the youth in our care – all in a dedicated, comfortable, and safe space. On the same grounds, the OCS garden mentorship program continues to grow and is a first-class operation, providing our youth with tangible life skills to take with them always.

Along with those efforts, we are proud of the OCS outreach program, introducing coaches, mentors, and volunteers to support our youth. These individuals provide tremendous benefits, not the least of which is to allow our youth to experience the world around them in meaningful ways. One of our youth called his mentor his best friend.

In our prevention programs we continued to support families by offering case management, in-home, and in-school support to youth and families. This year we were able to bring an evidence-based practice modality to our work and we grew our reach to families through a new program aimed at curbing juvenile delinquent behavior. We are also proud of the work we do to continually build promising futures for social service workers. Each year we support more than ten Washburn University and University of Kansas students through our internship program. We teach these dedicated students what this real and important work looks like, encouraging them to make a meaningful difference as they move forward in their education and into their careers. Many of these interns will hopefully come to work for us upon graduation. Both our Executive Director and our Chief Operating Officer are adjunct professors at local universities, further demonstrating our collective dedication to developing strong workers in this very important work.

As 2023 ended, we wrapped up our most successful Festival of Trees in the event's history. As you may be aware, this is our large annual fundraiser, which not only brings needed resources to our organization, but also brings holiday cheer to this community! Thanks to all who came out, we look forward to seeing you in late November-early December 2024.

We will not stop there; O'Connell Children's Shelter is changing in a multitude of meaningful ways.

As we near our 50th year of serving our county's and our state's children, youth, and families, we are ever committed to growing hope together with those we serve. With your help, we plan to revitalize all five of the homes our youth live in and bring a beautiful welcoming building to the front part of the O'Connell Youth Ranch property. The additional space will serve as our administrative headquarters and serve to extend observation/crisis beds to youth.



## Festival of Trees



Our annual major community event, the Festival of Trees, was a shining success this year! More sparkling trees and wreaths, more wonderful events, more jolly-filled days, and an exciting new-to-us location (Maceli's), all helped OCS have the best event in our history. It was an outstanding way to end 2023 and we have laid the groundwork for amazing events in the future. A special thanks to our Development Director, Maren Ludwig, and to the Festival of Trees committee led by Deb Drummet.

Here are the fun facts:

- 63 trees
- 29 wreaths
- Two quilts
- Three gingerbread houses
- One painting, which we sold twice!
- And over \$210K raised to support the work of the O'Connell Children's Shelter.



**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Lawrence Festival of Trees  
Maceli's Banquet Hall**

**Friday, November 29th - Sunday, December 8th**



## Introducing our New Logo

The legacies of The Children's Shelter and O'Connell Youth Ranch continue as O'Connell Children's Shelter. We support the children, youth and families in our community by:

- Maintaining existing and building new services and programming
- Delivering both human and physical resources in support of those efforts

Our new logo represents who we are and what we do. In addition to our more well-known residential care efforts, OCS wraps services around the most vulnerable in our community, providing physical safety, support, guidance, stability, and consistency.

Hope grows here. O'Connell Children's Shelter provides a complete solution surrounding children and families in Lawrence, Douglas County, and the state of Kansas.



## H.O.P.E. Center



Margaret Harris,  
Case Coordinator Manager, welcomes  
youth to the H.O.P.E. Center.

OCS staff members are always looking for innovative paths to take in how we care for the youth we serve. And in 2023, needs were clearly defined, resources were efficiently aligned, and our new H.O.P.E. Center became a reality! In an existing building on the ranch in southeast Lawrence, we have reimagined, redirected, and rededicated the use of precious resources. OCS brought to life a central hub for focusing Health, Opportunities, People, and Excellence. Life skills training and quality in education are two examples of how these resources are proving beneficial to the youth we serve.

## Executive Director Continued...

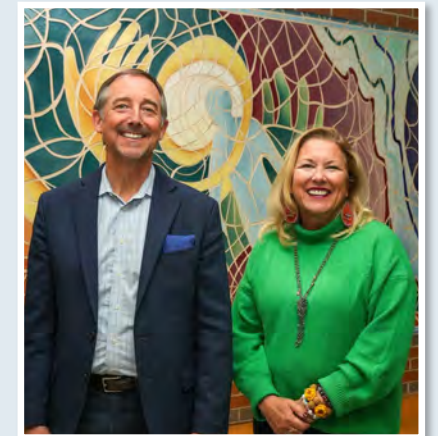
Additionally, we have joined forces with Bert Nash Mental Health Center (BNMHC) to provide greater impact with the crisis continuum of care to our community and state. We hope to launch the Youth Recovery Center in 2026.

Finally, with a goal of making a difference for generations to come, we are excited to launch our Generations program this summer. With the help of a generous grant from DCF, we will be working alongside families impacted by poverty to change the trajectory of their lives.

The OCS vision is to serve more children, youth, and families. We seek to make a true impact in our community now and on generations to come. We've been here almost fifty years and are looking forward to the next fifty as we look to make our community stronger because of our work. Hope grows here.

None of this happens without you. We are grateful for the state agencies and private agencies who partner with us, our city and county officials who support us, and many generous donors and volunteers who understand the needs of those we serve and help OCS succeed. You know that healthy children, youth, and individuals make healthy families, which make a healthy community and state. Our commitment is to "keep at it" because this work matters.

Forever grateful and in service to others,  
Gina Meier-Hummel  
Executive Director



Gina Meier-Hummel, Executive Director of OCS, and Patrick J. Schmitz, CEO of BNMHC, are excited to collaborate on continuum of care efforts in Douglas County.

## Thank you to our Donors

It is with heartfelt gratitude that we recognize the many donors who helped make O'Connell Children's Shelter successful this past year.

We cannot begin to list the many individuals and businesses who keep our agency in mind with donations of items, much-needed volunteer hours and efforts, trees, wreaths and gingerbread houses for Festival of Trees, and so much more! Without you, the children, youth, and families we support would not experience the level of success that together we achieve each year. Thank you. Thank you for your support in 2023 and years to follow.

Hope grows here.

**DONATE HERE!**



Hope grows here. At O'Connell Children's Shelter, every effort we make is to stabilize youth and families, to provide safety and love, to be an answer for the most vulnerable people in our community. We are called upon to serve and we gladly honor that invitation.



# IN 2023

### Long Term Placement\*

21,029

total days of care

276.7

average length of stay in days

### Crisis Placement

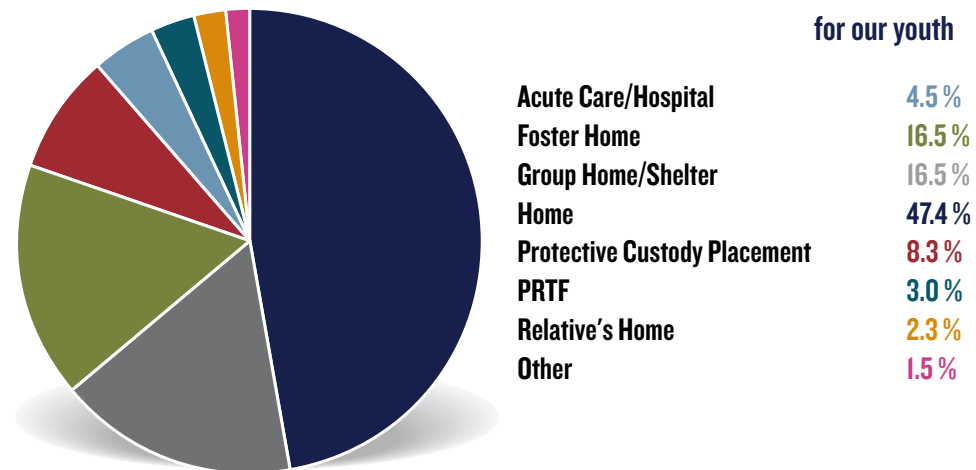
216

total days of care

3.8

average length of stay in days

### Immediate Previous Placement for our youth



\* These metrics reflect the entire length of stay for youth served in 2023, as of December 31, 2023. (Some youth continued in care into 2024.)

The chart below demonstrates O'Connell Children's Shelter's dedication to providing wrap-around services to vulnerable families in our community. Excitingly, we can continue this work in 2024 as OCS has recently been awarded additional money from DCF to expand our prevention programming to assist more families in need through our Generations program. We will work alongside the whole family unit to identify strengths, community resources, and opportunities in an effort to make a meaningful difference on generational poverty.



35

Families served in Shawnee and Douglas County



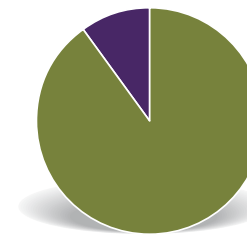
97%

Families maintained their family unit while receiving services



4.9 months

Average length of time in program



90%

Families met their case plan goals for intensive family therapy and were successfully discharged in 2023



Attending school and gaining an education is a foundational element to success for those we serve. History proves that attending school, experiencing a solid education, and graduating from high school – all lead to long-term well-being. Embracing the needs of the youth we serve so they do not enter the judicial system, and keeping families together, are equally important to the health of our overall community.

# IN 2023



Youth in Truancy Program



Newly Opened Cases in 2023



Youth successfully completed the program by maintaining attendance without unexcused absences for two consecutive quarters or by finding alternative educational opportunities



Youth were still working toward program completion at the conclusion of the year

In addition, we provide prevention case management services to families identified as at risk for removal into state custody due to other issues, including behavioral or mental health challenges.



New Family Referrals



Families discharged upon the completion of their case plan goals

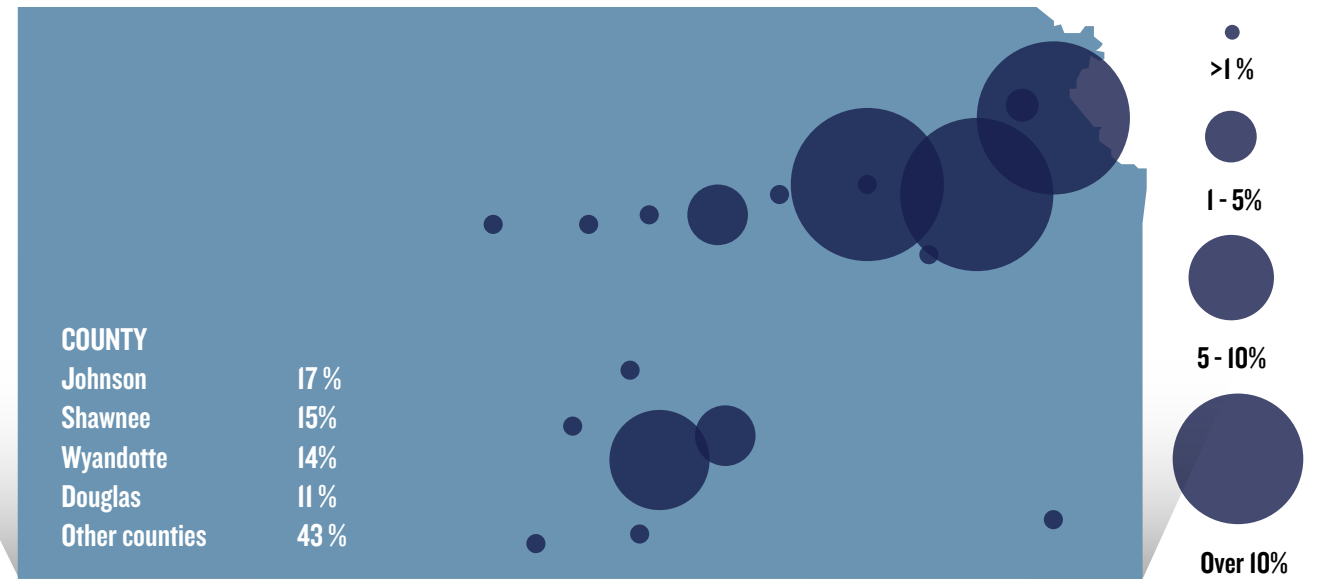


Families discharged stayed out of care six months past program discharge date

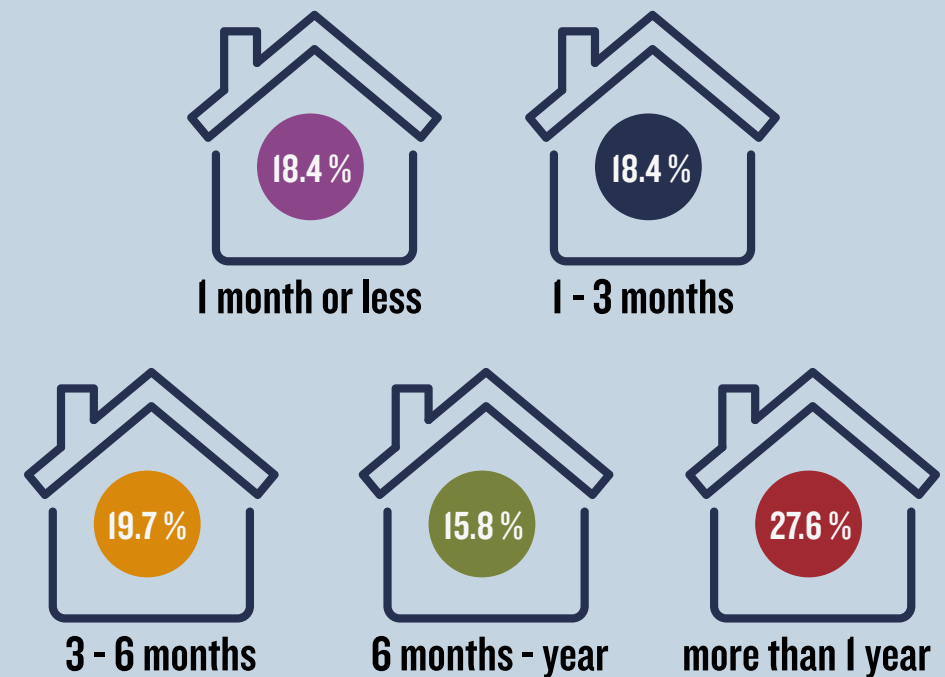


At O'Connell Children's Shelter we care for children, youth, and families in Douglas County, and across many other counties. Our residential program is built to support Kansans in need, for however long is necessary.

## Percent of youth entering our residential care by county

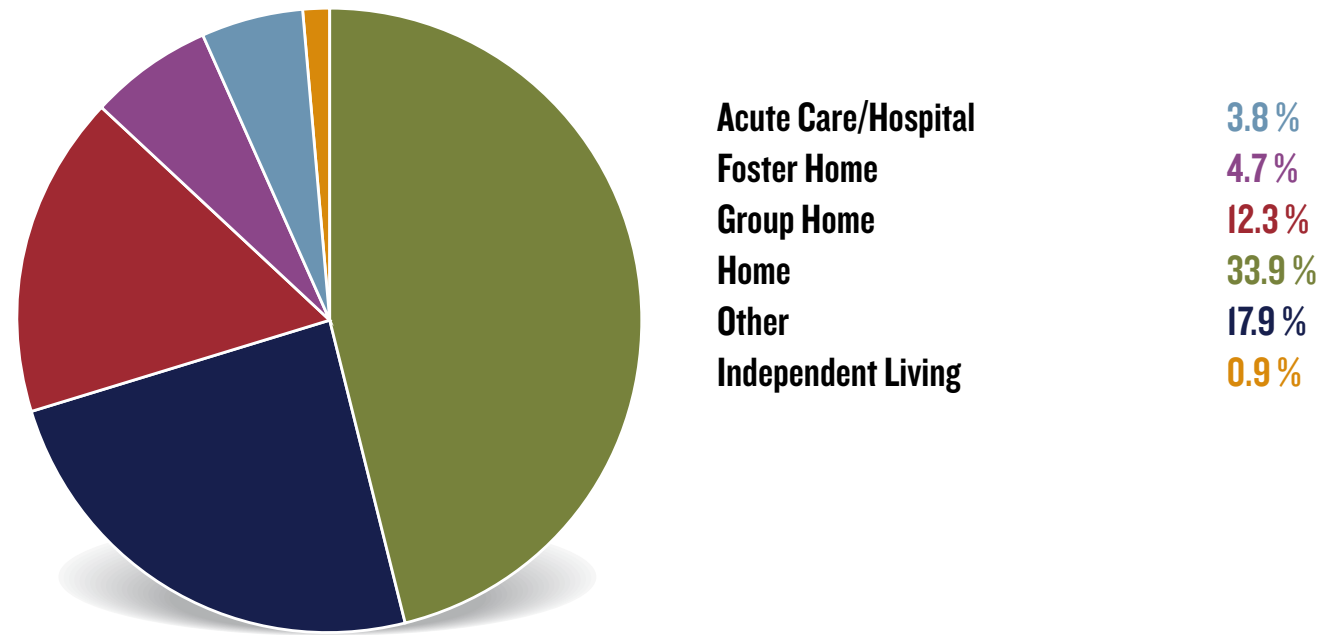


## Length of stay for youth in Long Term Care



Our goal at O'Connell Children's Shelter is to make certain that children in our care transition to the best-matched placement for their individual needs and circumstances. Our hope is that each child returns home. Our promise is to provide an environment where each youth is successful wherever life takes them.

## In 2023 our departing youth transitioned to:



### Foster Family Placements

OCS continues to dedicate resources to the ever-present need for foster families, whether this be traditional fostering or kinship care. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Shannon Heide Livingston at [shannonhl@oconnellcs.org](mailto:shannonhl@oconnellcs.org).

**5** Licensed Foster Homes

**3** Families seeking license

**733** Days of Care

Partnering with community resources is paramount to the success of the children and youth in our residential care program.

Hope grows here.

