2013 Impact Report
Stories of Change and Great Possibilities
Message
FROM BOARD PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

AT FIRST MENTION PEOPLE THINK ADVOCACY IS ABOUT POLITICS. We beg to differ. There is more to it than meets the eye. Advocacy is about the power of a community to change systems.

For Advocates for Children and Youth, 2013 was a year of positive change on behalf of Maryland’s children. During the legislative session we gave testimony or signed on to a total of 45 House and Senate bills which became law—ranging from important gun control legislation to the hefty Baltimore City Public School Construction bill. We also worked with our advocacy partners to stop the construction of a $73 million youth jail.

These achievements happened in spite of the slow nature of systems change. Every challenge increased our determination to succeed and every win confirmed that change was possible. Our success brought us closer to accomplishing our core goals to protect, strengthen and stabilize families; to promote high quality education; to keep children healthy and to offer second chances.

Although we chronicle these and other hard-won victories in our report, we understand that these advances are not for us. Instead, these wins are for the 2 million children for which we—a community of people who call Maryland home—are responsible.

We aim to affect the entirety of children’s worlds—the systems they touch; the people with whom they interact, and the environment in which they live. We are here to champion solutions to child welfare, education, health, and juvenile justice issues. Standing for children allows us to influence the full spectrum of youth experiences.

There are so many areas of need. As you read through these pages, our hope is that you will join us as we continue to work to improve the lives of our children.

Robert Whelen
Chair, Board of Directors

Rebecca Wagner
Executive Director

2013 Accomplishments

Advocates for Children and Youth successfully advocated for:

• A $1.8 million increase for the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) so that 57,000 more children will have breakfast in school

• A $1 billion budget for the Baltimore City Public School Construction Bill to improve facilities

• The inclusion of the inflationary factor in the education budget to compensate for rising costs

• The prevention of the construction of a new $73 million youth jail

• The passage of sweeping gun control legislation to keep Maryland’s children safe

• The introduction of a system that uses a range of penalties and incentives which are more appropriate for and correspond with the behavior shown by a youth

• The reformation of school discipline policies which hold students accountable for their behavior, limits out-of-school punishment to the more serious infractions, and encourages a better school in environment to improve student behavior

• The expansion of tuition waivers for foster youth, making the pursuit of higher education and training more attainable and affordable, cover more programs, and cover more youth

• The inclusion of legislative language that ensures continuity of health care coverage for youth aging out of the foster care system

Advocates for Children and Youth successfully implemented or assisted in the implementation of:

• An outreach strategy to connect with former foster youth and to provide them with information about health care and tuition benefits

• A consumer assistance program to guide Maryland families through the new health care environment
CHAPTER ONE
How to Create Champions Every Day

Children imagine themselves as champions, or very close to it. However, it is hard for children to imagine their greatest potential when they are hungry.

Hunger can start very easily. It can begin with a factory closing. The shutdown has a ripple effect throughout the entire community. Families begin to struggle financially. Thriving neighborhoods are now heavily dotted with homes occupied by parents who are out of work or under-employed. Groceries that were once purchased freely are now given a second and third thought. To keep the family afloat, breakfast is no longer a necessity—it is an option, one that is sometimes there and sometimes not.

As a result, children go to school hungry, and their hunger affects their ability to concentrate, learn and imagine. This scenario is re-played on a daily basis in every community throughout Maryland.

The good news is that Maryland will be helping to create more champions—57,000 more, in fact—by serving them breakfast at school.

Advocates for Children and Youth collaborated with other nonprofits and advocacy partners to push for additional funding for the Maryland Meals for Achievement program. Our efforts resulted in $1.8 million increase in funding. This increase means that more children will have access to breakfast at school.

Impact: Access to breakfast will improve our children’s ability to learn and will allow them reach their maximum potential.

Lives Touched: 57,000 children and their households.

CHAPTER TWO
“So Close and Yet So Far” Is No More

College-eligible foster youth were ready for the next step in completing their education.

As foster youth, existing Maryland law made them eligible for tuition waivers. This eligibility was good news. However, the good news did not last long. Foster youth received the waiver; but it was applied in such a way that they couldn’t afford college. The waiver was only activated after a foster youth’s scholarships and grants were applied toward tuition. In other words, the waiver only covered the remaining balance—if there was one. The so-called “waiver” wasn’t actually functioning as a waiver at all!

For these students the reality was that there was more to attending college than tuition. Housing, food, books and school supplies were all costly parts of college. Many foster youth would receive the waiver but could not attend college past the first year because of a lack of funds. These students were so close, but yet so far.

However, all was not lost. Advocates for Children and Youth collaborated with other organizations to push for changes in the tuition waiver statute so that foster youth could afford to attend college. As a result, the waiver will now cover the entire cost of tuition so that grants and scholarships can be used toward other college-related expenses. In addition, we successfully advocated for broadening the scope of the waiver to include vocational programs at state university and colleges.

Advocates for Children and Youth also expanded the scope of those eligible for the tuition waiver to youth who exited foster care to the care of a relative. Previously, this provision only applied to youth who were adopted after their 18th birthday and any younger siblings adopted at the same time.

Impact: Financial obstacles are reduced so that foster youth have a better opportunity to become educated and strong contributors to Maryland’s economy.

Lives Touched: Any of the 4,563 current and former foster youth who received their high school diploma or GED while in foster care.
CHAPTER THREE

Going, Going, Not Gone!

Many parents throughout the state noticed that over a four-year period something changed in their children’s education.

At first, there were music and art classes. Tutoring support was available for children who needed the extra help. However, in a matter of time, the very classes that the children loved and needed began to disappear because Maryland’s school districts were forced to make difficult decisions about reducing classes and services.

Funds that previously covered certain classes and tutoring support were used to pay for such school expenses as escalating energy bills. This budget shortfall cost school districts over $700 million a year statewide for four years. Why? The legislature was not funding for inflationary costs.

Through a series of meetings, hearings, and letter and petition drives, the Maryland legislature heard the voice of our K-12 partners and the Maryland Education Coalition, which Advocates for Children and Youth co-chairs. We stood hand-in-hand in Annapolis, Maryland—the state’s seat of power and influence. We all successfully advocated for the education budget to include an inflationary factor to compensate for rising costs. In addition, the Governor also increased the budgets for various educational programs, including special education.

The future will be brighter for our students because there will be more funding available to retain more of the programs and services that suffered cuts during tough budgetary years. Now districts will be better able to fulfill their budgetary requirements.

Impact: Maryland’s children will have the opportunity to take classes and receive support to help them improve academically

Lives Touched: Over 800,000 Maryland students

CHAPTER FOUR

Persistence Prevails

Every year—for 15 years—juvenile justice policy advocates pushed to revise certain Department of Juvenile Services’ procedures and to stop the transfer of youth to the adult prison system. The faces involved in this systemic shift changed over the years, but the resolve remained.

In 2013, we prevailed.

Policy advocates came together to hammer out a five-piece legislative package in which three of the laws passed. The Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) is now required to institutionalize changes to the system that use a range of penalties and incentives which are more appropriate for and correspond with the behavior shown by the youth.

Other legislative successes included mandates to limit the use of out-of-home commitment for certain nonviolent offenses. These laws also required the creation of a task force to determine if youth should no longer be automatically charged as adults and held in adult prisons for 33 separate offenses. We will know the impact of these legislative successes in the near future.

In addition, Advocates for Children and Youth and their allies were instrumental in stopping the construction of a new $73 million juvenile jail with a proposed 120 beds. Through strong coalition building, working with stakeholders in the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Juvenile Justice, and by using compelling data that the advocacy team collected, we were able to persuade public and state officials not to build the jail.

Impact: Offending youth will receive appropriate consequences for their behavior and by halting the construction of the youth jail Maryland moves toward exploring better community-based alternatives

Lives Touched: 300 youth who are involved in Baltimore City’s criminal justice system annually
CHAPTER FIVE

Reaching Those Who Need Health Care the Most

FOSTER YOUTH, A GROUP OF SEEMINGLY SILENT CHILDREN AND YOUTH have a special place in our advocacy work. We pay close attention to statewide policies that impact their lives because their parents are no longer able to guide, protect or advocate for them. So we do. While in foster care, a child has access to health care services that are covered by the State. However, what happens when that youth ages out of foster care at 21?

Advocates for Children and Youth saw an opportunity to address this question through the Affordable Care Act. Beginning in 2010, the Act allowed young adults to remain on their parents’ insurance plan until they are 26 years old. A similar provision is available starting in 2014 for former foster youth. We wanted to ensure that these youth could take full advantage of the opportunity.

Our resolve was heightened because we knew health coverage was essential to this highly transient, frequently underserved group of young adults. Many have chronic health issues and are not aware that the Affordable Care Act included a provision that will expand coverage for them. For this reason, we worked carefully to craft language that ensures that youth who age out of the foster care system in the future will have no lapse in Medicaid coverage. We also ensured that a question about foster care status was included on the online application because former foster youth, like youth remaining on their parents’ policies, are eligible regardless of income.

The more daunting task was to reach and inform youth who have already aged out, are under age 26 and eligible for Medicaid coverage. To spread the message, we sought out former foster youth and collaborated with community-based organizations that served them. Our goal was to make foster youth aware of their new coverage option and how to access the health services they need. We focused on Baltimore City because it has the largest concentration of foster youth but provided information and conducted training sessions across Maryland.

Impact: Former foster youth who have aged out of the system are able to access health services until they turn 26 by enrolling in or maintaining their Medicaid coverage.

Lives Touched: Approximately 3,300 youth who have aged out since 2008 and those who will age out of the foster care system in the future.

CHAPTER SIX

Research Is a Key Component to Every Success Story

SUCCESS DOESN’T JUST HAPPEN. It takes research to understand how Maryland’s children and youth are faring. Only then can we develop effective strategies to help improve life experiences. That is why every year Advocates for Children and Youth collects research on over 60 indicators of child well-being. The annual collection of statewide data is part of our work as the research affiliate for the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s KIDS COUNT.

We also publish child well-being data sheets for all 23 counties and Baltimore City. This important data is used by all those who support and are active in bettering the lives of Maryland’s 2 million children and youth.

In addition to data collection, we also conducted primary research. A case in point was our work with young women who were involved with the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. We read research that indicated that this population was extremely vulnerable and we wanted to help. However, we had to understand these young women’s unique experiences in order to figure out how to serve them. Therefore, we interviewed 20 young women with prior involvement in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. They spoke candidly about their lives and we listened intently to their stories.

It was clear that despite their increased need for more intensive services and coordinated case planning, they frequently slipped through the cracks. Ultimately, these young women most longed for someone to listen to them and address their needs.

We shared our findings and recommendations in an issue brief, ‘Perspectives from Maryland’s Dually-Involved Female Youth: Listening to our Stories is the First Step.’ This brief helped to inform our work on how to develop policies to improve the lives of dually-involved female youth.

Impact: Research provides insight to ensure that our work is appropriately targeted, effective in approach and sustainable in its implementation.

Lives Touched: 2 million children and youth.
YOUR SUPPORT OF ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH is an investment in a brighter future for all of our children.

We moved from strength to strength by increasing our revenue base by 55 percent over FY2012. In FY2013, we received two multi-year grants which are reflected in the increase. We have been good stewards in policy as well as practice. For every dollar you invested, we spent 86 cents to better the lives of Maryland’s children. For a complete list of our donors and funders, please go to our website, www.acy.com.

Below is our financial information which was derived from audited financial statements. For a complete copy of our financial statements, please contact our business office at 8 Market Place, 5th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202.

Financial Summary

Revenue, Gains and Other Support

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<th>FY 2013</th>
<th>FY 2012</th>
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Expenses

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Note: Advocates for Children and Youth’s fiscal year runs from July 2012 to June 2013.
ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH improves the lives and experiences of Maryland’s children through policy change and program improvement. We are every child’s ally, working with the community, nonprofits, government agencies and elected officials to continuously improve each child’s present and future.