



RESILIENT. RESOLUTE. EMPOWERED.

Annual Report 2015

Our Mission

The Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition is a coalition of organizations, parents, and other concerned individuals committed to improving the well-being of Bridgeport's children through research, education, advocacy, and mobilization.

BCAC provides the vehicle for the Greater Bridgeport community to take concerted action on issues that affect children's health, education, and safety. Our coalition is grassroots and independent, diverse and motivated. Together, we are advocating for policy and systems change that will clear a path to a better future, particularly for Bridgeport's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Research.

Research is the foundation for everything BCAC does. Our reports provide objective data, identify best practices, and suggest practical steps to address the challenges our children face.

Advocate.

Advocacy is at the heart of BCAC's mission. We empower community members by giving them the tools and information to effectively advocate for positive change.

BCAC

Educate.

BCAC educates the community by sharing information, ideas, and resources. By advancing a shared understanding of children's issues, we can move forward as a cohesive community.

Mobilize.

As a coalition of diverse members, BCAC harnesses the power of people to bring about systems change and improve the well-being of children and families.

Letter from the Executive Director and Board Chair

Coalition: A group of people who join and grow together for a common cause; a pact or treaty among individuals or groups, during which they cooperate in joint action.

Resilience: The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness; the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.

For over three decades, Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition (BCAC) has been growing together with hundreds of individuals and organizations working towards improving the lives of our children and families throughout the Greater Bridgeport area. We continue to do everything in our power to build upon the resiliency of our community.

BCAC has dedicated its mission to the improvement of physical, behavioral and oral health, childhood obesity, and healthcare reform. BCAC has rallied the community around equity in education funding, school repairs and construction, special education, classroom size, reduction of in-school and out-of-school suspensions, and early childhood care and education. BCAC has advocated for gun safety legislation and stricter gun laws, making Connecticut one of the strictest states on gun control. BCAC was instrumental in the passage of significant legislation impacting our children and families in Bridgeport, including the restriction of school bus idling to reduce asthma attacks and on criminal justice reform.

BCAC led campaigns on "Leave No City Behind", healthcare4every1, Access Health CT, and affordable housing in Bridgeport. In light of the adversity we face here in Bridgeport, it is important that we understand the critical importance of building a resilient community. We can only do this in a collaborative manner by building relationships and partnering with others.

Research continues to be the foundation for all that we do, and BCAC prides itself on our consistent sharing of information with the community. Advocacy is the heart of empowering our community and BCAC continues to harness the power of the people and the people's voice.

Our deep commitment to our children and families is unwavering - Join the Movement!



Mary Pat Healy
Executive Director



Diane Brassell
2014-2015 Board Chair

BCAC 2015 Highlights

1155

STATE OF
THE CHILD IN
BRIDGEPORT
REPORTS WERE
DISTRIBUTED

BCAC's 30th Annual Breakfast Inspires

Our 30th Annual Breakfast in April brought together over 300 attendees to celebrate 30 years of advocacy, research, education, and mobilization. Joining us was keynote speaker Bob Herbert, formerly of *The New York Times*, where he established himself as the leading voice for the working poor and the middle class. Author of *Losing Our Way: An Intimate Portrait of a Troubled America*, Mr. Herbert spoke on a wide array of issues facing middle class Americans today, from housing instability to poverty, to the power of ordinary citizens. BCAC also honored two passionate and committed community members: John Santa, Chairman of the Malta Justice Initiative, and Frances Rabinowitz, Interim Superintendent of the Bridgeport Public Schools. The 2015 Annual Breakfast exemplified BCAC's core principle of collaboration by celebrating community members who stimulate and motivate us to mobilize our community and bring about meaningful change.

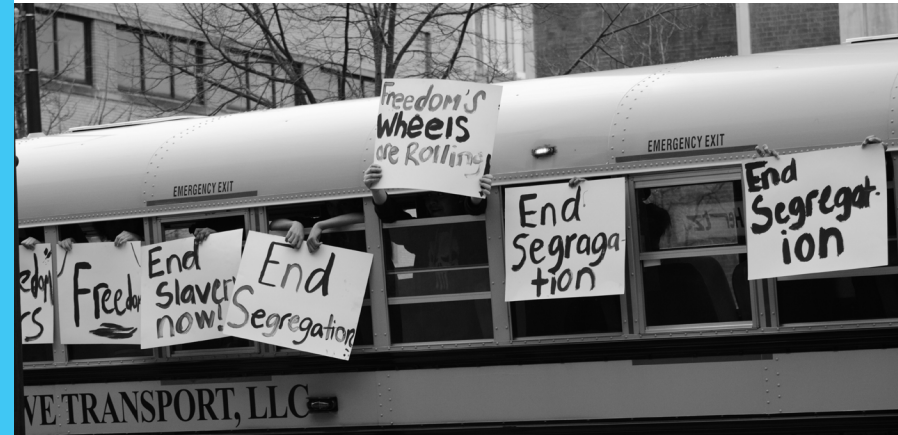


BCAC Connects Families with HUSKY

Julieta Flores-Bravo, a client of BCAC and a working mother of two, knows just how much HUSKY means to her. "I do not know what I would do if my family was no longer eligible for HUSKY because of the unreasonable cost of health insurance and with my son's chronic asthma." Because of her son's condition, he is required to visit a speech therapist multiple times a week. Julieta and her husband would have needed to find a second job and cut back on family activities in order to purchase private insurance. With BCAC's support and assistance, Julieta and her family are grateful to say they have been covered by HUSKY for many years now!

Freedom Riders Visit Bridgeport

In January, BCAC and the Bridgeport Public Education Fund (BPEF) convened a special visit from three Freedom Riders that left Bridgeport incredibly moved and inspired. Joan Browning, Dion Diamond, and Reverend Reginald Green shared memories regarding their brave efforts to obtain civil rights during the 1960s. The Freedom Riders advocated that skin color does not make one inhumane, inferior, and undeserving of human rights. They motivated attendees with the message that ordinary people can make extraordinary things happen. Bridgeport will remember their presence, fearlessness, and endless passion for justice in the face of discrimination. Like the Freedom Riders, BCAC and BPEF work to galvanize and push the community towards equity in health care, education, and basic human rights. "We shall overcome!"



Key Criminal Justice Legislation Passes

Connecticut has seen significant criminal and juvenile justice legislation pass over the last two years. Through the collective and persistent involvement of many organizations writing and collecting testimony, meeting with legislators, and rallying the network to advocate for progressive legislation, we have seen sweeping changes in criminal/juvenile justice reform that have been recognized nationally. Key legislation passed in 2015 includes: the *Second Chance Society Initiative*, which assists with the reintegration of non-violent offenders back into society; *An Act Concerning Out of School Expulsions and Suspensions*, which prohibits out-of-school expulsions and suspensions for Pre-K through Grade 2; *An Act Concerning Lengthy Sentences for a Crime Committed by a Child or Youth*, which ends mandatory life-without-parole sentences for children and youth; and *An Act Concerning An Excessive Use of Force*, which requires CT police officers to wear body cameras at all times in order to take preventative measures against accusations of racially motivated shootings. The power of our voices continues to make a necessary impact, yet there is still much work to be done. Join our voices!

1285

BCAC CLIENTS WERE
INFORMED ABOUT
ACCESS HEALTH CT

Resolute: Mobilizing for Children and Families



1. INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CONNECTICUT'S REFUGEE MENTORING PROGRAM

For 8 year old Merveille and her father, refugees who fled from the Congo, the Refugee Mentoring Program at IICONN has been nothing short of a blessing. Their mentor Carleen stepped in and took on a grandmother-like role in Merveille's life. Carleen supports Merveille in school by representing her father during Planning and Placement Team meetings and medically by taking Merveille to meet with specialists. Merveille is deaf, but with her new cochlear implants, she is able to make sense of the sounds that she hears. Her family is now reunited and is well on their way to a bright future here in Bridgeport. IICONN serves 100+ refugees each year, providing them with the tools they need to become self-sufficient after having survived the trauma and heartache of war, persecution, and a yearning for the home they once knew.

2. REGIONAL YOUTH ADULT SOCIAL ACTION PARTNERSHIP'S STREETS SAFE PROGRAM

For decades, RYASAP has been a catalyst for community change in Bridgeport affecting everything from the leadership development of young people to systems change on criminal justice reform. Their latest initiative, StreetSafe Bridgeport, gets highly-trained Outreach Workers onto the streets to build relationships with Bridgeport's most vulnerable youth and provide them with resources for substance abuse recovery and mental health services, trauma programs, job placement, and more. RYASAP has also been behind some of the most prominent criminal justice legislation reform in Connecticut. Currently, RYASAP is one of many organizations pushing for further reform in raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction.

3. PARENT CONVENTION INTRODUCES RULER

In June, Bridgeport Public School's Parent Center held their 43rd Annual Parent Convention. The BPS Parent Center bridges home, school, and community in addition to providing parents with resources for personal growth. Among the many topics covered was the RULER Approach, a social emotional learning (SEL) initiative through the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. RULER stands for Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating Emotions. Bridgeport is now implementing this program in schools across the District and throughout the entire community. Parents were eager to learn firsthand how this affects learning. Research shows that students with higher emotional intelligence are better prepared to manage emotions so that they can focus, learn, and do their best in school. BCAC will continue to work with the District by providing community trainings on SEL and the RULER Approach.



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Greenfield Hill Congregational Church
Southwest Community Health Center

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*We thank our Members who make
the Coalition possible!*

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New Beginnings Family Academy
Nichols United Methodist Women
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RYASAP
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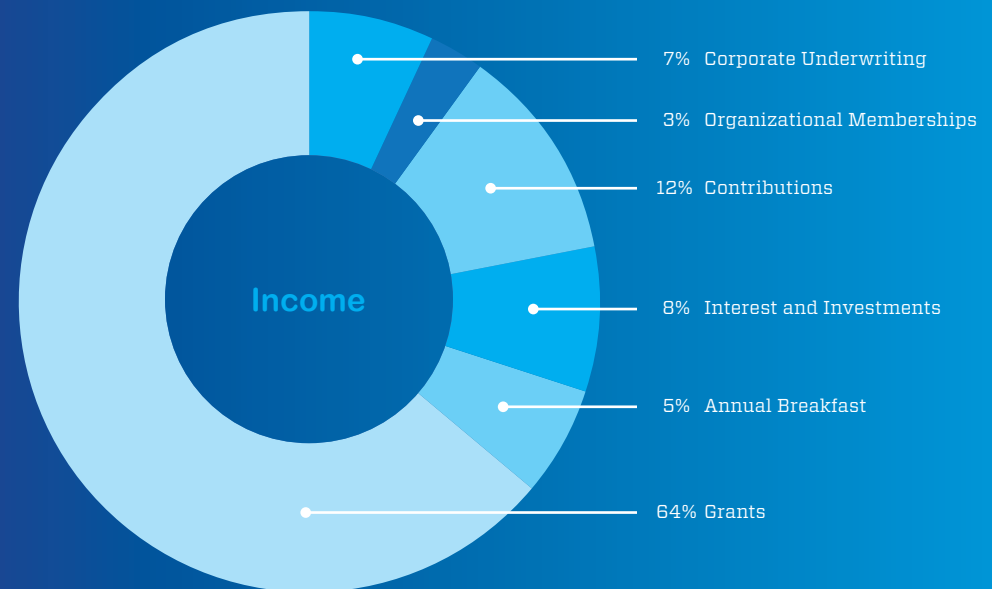
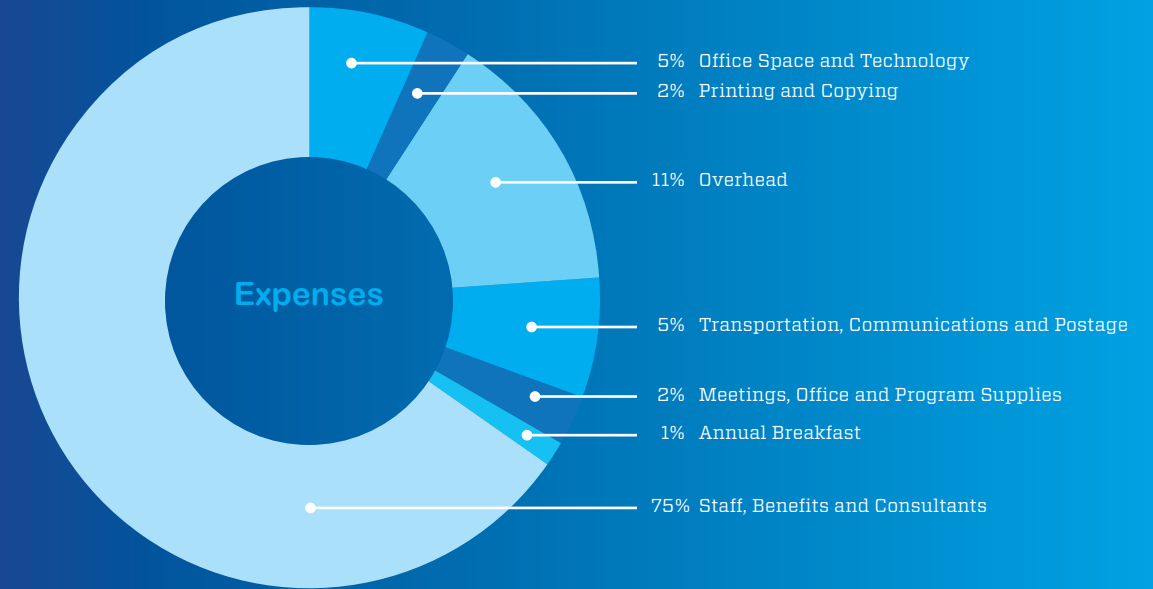
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616

616 PEOPLE
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 OF THE CHILD
 PRESENTATIONS

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*In order to maintain our independent voice,
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2015

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