

2021 GRATITUDE REPORT



FOOTHILLS Child Advocacy Center

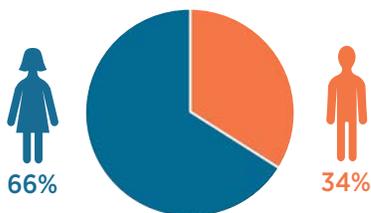
In 2021, Foothills continued to serve children who have experienced abuse and supported their families. With the backdrop of a worldwide pandemic and the resulting increase in the severity of cases, we expanded our services to match the need. We are grateful to everyone who helped the most vulnerable in our community: our hardworking staff, our dedicated board, and our generous donors. Together we held the hands and comforted the hearts that came to us to heal. *Thank you.*

246

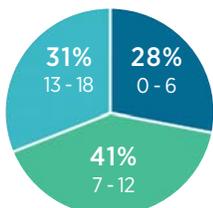
forensic
interviews
of children



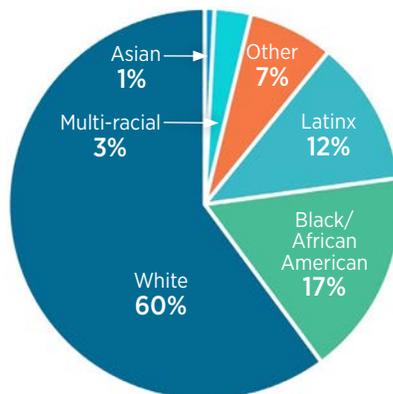
GENDER



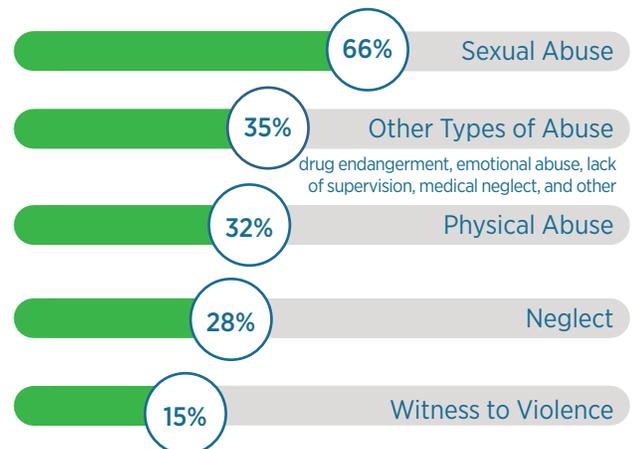
AGES



RACE/ETHNICITY



Children were alleged victims of one or more types of abuse:



572 adults participated in training on child abuse prevention and intervention



FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I look back on 2021, I see in my mind's eye the faces of the children and their families who come into Foothills with varying degrees of angst, desperation, and fear. I see their faces soften and their eyes light up.

I hear their voices expressing gratitude to our hard-working staff who listen to their stories and guide them on a healing path.

We are unable to share those voices and faces with you. So, we create the picture we can share in the form of this annual report. You can read what caregivers wrote. You can see the types of abuse, the ages of the children, their demographics. These data points help us clarify for you the daily effort we all make at Foothills, our staff, our MDT partners, and our board of directors, to bring healing and hope to the most vulnerable in our community. Thank you for being part of this effort.

In gratitude,

Cynthia Hurst, Executive Director

We work with several Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) that include the Commonwealth's Attorney, Victim Witness, Department of Social Services (DSS), local law enforcement, University of Virginia (UVA), and other service organizations in Charlottesville, including Ready Kids, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Region Ten, and the Sexual Assault Resource Agency (SARA).

2021 MDT Meetings

Staffed

60

Facilitated

29

GRATEFUL CAREGIVERS

My child shared her story and said she felt heard in the process.

I appreciated that you shared resources for my family, made recommendations and counseling referrals for us.

My son had a safe place to share his experiences.

Mental Health Support

During the pandemic, we have seen an increase in demand for mental health services, in part due to a spike in self-harm urges and suicide ideation in children. In response to the growing need, Foothills' Mental Health Clinician, Amberly Fix, LCSW, finished certification for Trauma Focused – Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) and became a Certified Complex Trauma Practitioner (CCTP).



We served 23 clients who did not have to be added to a waitlist for mental health services in the community. Waitlisting is an ongoing

concern for our area residents, showing that there is far more need than our community partners can provide. To address this issue, we meet quarterly with our partners to coordinate and reduce wait times as much as possible.

New Initiatives

- A **forensic interview screening** policy which helps identify child mental health safety concerns quickly and sets a plan in motion to address all needs without causing harm to the child.
- A **debriefing policy** for the most difficult cases, such as death of a child, in order to support Foothills' staff and MDT members. Hearing the details can cause secondary trauma to our partners and this policy helps us to reduce those risks and improve recovery.

created to engage clients in telehealth sessions. Videos such as coping skills reminders and presentations that artfully draw a child in to learn about emotion regulation have been vital for clients. One client reported that she watched the coping skills video repeatedly as a refresher!

I just want to say THANK YOU for including this [Foothills' Debriefing Policy] as part of our MDT. It is so needed. I am all in favor of this method, so thank you so much for looking out for our vicarious trauma—it is real and it is difficult. We need to bring it out into the open and not expect everyone to be able to cope. So thanks MDT team!

— Areshini Pather, Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney of Charlottesville



Digital Help for Kids

Online videos and presentations were

Expanded Service Area

Foothills serves nine jurisdictions: Albemarle, Buckingham, Charlottesville, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, and Orange. In 2021, we added Orange County as an MDT. We entered into a unique collaboration with the Child Advocacy Center in Fredericksburg: Safe Harbor, which serves children in the northern part of the county while Foothills serves children in the southern part of the county. Splitting a jurisdiction between two child advocacy centers is unprecedented—we are creating a template for other CACs to follow while keeping the benefit of the children top-of-mind.



Upgrades in Technology

Foothills upgraded observation room equipment in September thanks to a generous donation from Crutchfield and our Board Chair, Todd Cabell. Now investigators can watch two children being interviewed simultaneously in each of the interview rooms. This option is particularly helpful when multiple children are visiting from the same family because the wait time for families is reduced considerably.



Welcome to New Staff

Dr. Jennifer Andrews joined us as the Medical Director in July. Trained as a Child Abuse Pediatrician, Dr. Andrews is a wonderful addition to our team. She also sees children at UVA Hospital when their injuries are too serious to come to our exam room.



Astrid Escobar started in November thanks to a grant from BAMA Works in support of a Bilingual Family Advocate. Astrid helps Spanish-speaking families navigate the process and connects them with local services. She is also trained in the *Stewards of Children* child abuse prevention training to help residents in our community learn how to identify and prevent child abuse.



Cory Douglas joined the Foothills team in December as a Family Advocate and Forensic Interviewer. She completed Child First Forensic Interviewer training in January. She is excited to be helping the children tell their stories in a safe, child-friendly environment.



Partner and Community Trainings

Foothills' staff conduct regular trainings for our nine MDTs and the public. We also offer customized trainings for community organizations such as the Junior League, Charlottesville Parks and Recreation, Monticello Area Community Action Agency, Boys and Girls Club, churches, daycare centers, and schools—including Albemarle School nurses, Madison County teachers and administration, and UVA Medical students.

Community Awareness

In April, Child Abuse Prevention Month, we partnered with the Departments of Social Services in Albemarle County and Charlottesville City to increase community awareness and involvement. We held events at Albemarle DSS and on the Downtown Mall, where a local artist, Polly Breckenridge, created an inspiring piece and passersby could “pick” pinwheels with child abuse prevention info attached. Merchants on the Mall placed the cards at their check-out counters as well.



L to R: Tammy Yarborough, Kelly Rogers, Albemarle County CPS Supervisors; Polly Breckenridge, artist; Cynthia Hurst, Executive Director; Helen Mays, Charlottesville CPS Supervisor; Alicia Milligan, Deputy Commonwealth Attorney of Albemarle County



Additionally, we ran ads in local papers, including *Nuevos Raices*, and Executive Director, Cynthia Hurst, appeared on Channel 29, Channel 19, and WINA to increase awareness and promote the *Stewards of Children* training in English and Spanish.

Future Child Abuse Prevention Plans

We are partnering with UVA Health System to promote the *Stewards of Children* program. Board Member, Dr. Mark Mendelsohn, is spearheading this initiative and has secured agreements to promote the program to several departments. Foothills' website has a new page for parents to learn about child abuse prevention and to sign up for trainings. UVA will share the information and encourage parents to take advantage of our free services. We plan to expand this initiative to other local pediatric agencies.

On the Horizon

- Expand mental health services to further reduce the wait-time for children who have experienced the trauma of abuse.
- Add laboratory services on site so more children can have all their forensic medical needs met at Foothills.

THANK YOU

to our business and foundation supporters

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Caplin Foundation
Charlottesville Area Community
Foundation
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Charitable Trust
The Whitney and Anne
Stone Foundation
The Williams Companies
Virginia National Bank
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Despite the pandemic, we continued to have interns from the Masters in Social Work program at Virginia Commonwealth University. Summer Jones, Laura Heck, and Emarie Drake, all assisted with Family Advocacy, MDT meetings, and client data collection and entry, helping staff and clients alike.

651 volunteer hours
from our interns

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Professor of Psychology, University of Virginia

NEW MEMBER
Kurt Woerpel III, CPA
Woerpel & Company, LLC



Kurt Woerpel, III is the Founding Partner of Woerpel and Company, LLC and the Chief Financial Officer of the Focused Ultrasound

Foundation. He brings over 30 years of financial expertise to the Foothills board of directors, along with a strong dedication to our mission to minimize trauma, promote healing, and ensure child safety.



Foothills Child Advocacy Center
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