

Starfish Family Services



STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 – 2023

Strengthening families to create brighter futures for children

June 1, 2020

This plan is proudly presented by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and valued participants in our three strategy labs.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

From the earliest days of our organization, Starfish Family Services has sought to bring compassion and effective practice to our work supporting and partnering with the families of Wayne County as they seek the best developmental, educational and health outcomes possible for their children. Over the years, our mix of services has evolved, and our geographic footprint has expanded. At the same time, our focus on enabling pathways of opportunity for those who are experiencing the disparities and barriers of social, racial, and economic inequity has remained at the core of our work.

During the time we've worked on this important strategic planning effort, our communities, staff, and organization have been faced with a new, unprecedented threat to our physical and mental health and our economic wellbeing. We will need to attack the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated economic fallout with renewed collaboration, innovation, and compassion if we and Starfish families are to maintain and build upon the hard-earned results of the past several years. We also know that the impacts of this pandemic have landed on and will continue to disproportionately impact the most disadvantaged segments of our communities, and, therefore, our response needs to be deeply informed by a social justice and equity perspective in order to ensure that we and our communities may thrive in the years ahead.

As we embarked on this most recent strategic planning journey in the months preceding the arrival of COVID-19, we recognized that while our organization has many assets and accomplishments of which we are rightfully proud and are best articulated through our Blueprint for Brighter Futures, we also must be humble and thoughtful enough to deeply examine those areas where we have opportunities to improve. In this examination of our "organizational DNA," we learned that:

- Our years of expansive growth now challenge us to bring greater clarity and focus to **refining our core purpose** in terms of both the communities where we choose to work and the positive, well-integrated impacts we seek to generate there, but also in terms of explicitly addressing the systemic social justice imbalances that exist in our society.
- We should be rightfully proud of the recognition we have received over the years for our efforts to deliver high-quality, evidence-based, family-centric services. And yet it is clear that we need to continue to find new approaches for **enhancing our accountability to our families and those who fund our work** in measurable and consequential ways.
- One of the most central challenges we face will be to evolve and strengthen our tools and practices for **motivating our staff and partners to continue generating the strong results** they and our families have achieved together. This particularly includes addressing the areas of staff compensation, talent development, and partnership management.

- We have been and will continue to wrestle with the tension between **ensuring greater consistency and fidelity to our programs and processes while simultaneously providing flexibility** that staff and partners need to adapt and evolve our services to meet the unique needs of our families and communities. In addition, it is clear that we will need to further invest in our staff by providing the developmental opportunities, tools and work environments that enable us to increase the strength of our team members so they can do their best work.
- Our efforts to integrate trauma-informed practices into our work has been a hallmark of **building a resilient organizational culture**. This will need to continue and be further supplemented by continued, intentional strategies and investments to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in our programming, leadership, and organizational practices.

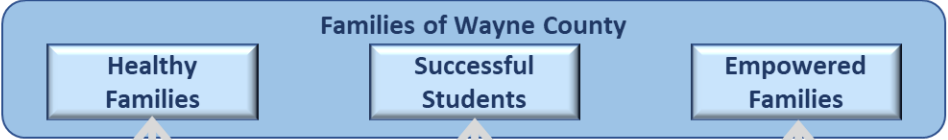
With the above context and in the face of the new uncertainties introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are both excited and anxious to share our new strategic direction with our board, staff, families, and community partners. We believe this plan lays out a strong foundation of an aspirational vision, an integrated framework of desired outcomes, a set of quantifiable measures of progress and success, and a collection of responsive, achievable strategies. We have also outlined a three-year roadmap of initiatives that we believe will position us to succeed in achieving these results. At the same time, we know that these initiatives will need to evolve to meet the changing conditions faced by our organization and communities; we welcome that challenge and hope you will join us in this journey.

2020-2023 STARFISH FAMILY SERVICES STRATEGIC PLAN – CONCEPTUAL MODEL



We envision a just society in which all children, families, and communities have equitable opportunities to grow, learn, and thrive.

OUR ULTIMATE VISION AND PURPOSE



OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE VISION
Indicators of Family Outcomes

- Our Theory of Change**
- Engage families
 - Build trusting and supportive relationships
 - Offer high-quality, multi-disciplinary service experience

OUR CORE SERVICES (INTERVENTIONS)
Indicators of Effective Practice

Social Justice and Equity	Talent Attraction, Development, and Retention	Leadership Diversity and Competency	Culture of Philanthropy	Data-Driven Decisionmaking	Facilities	Partnerships	Policy Advocacy
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OUR PRIORITY STRATEGIES
Indicators of Organizational Effectiveness

OUR MISSION

Strengthening families to create brighter futures for children.

OUR VISION

At Starfish Family Services, we envision a just society in which all children, families, and communities have equitable opportunities to grow, learn, and thrive.

Underlying our vision is a belief in the innate potential and capacity of all human beings and a recognition that talent is universal, but opportunity is not.

We know that there are deep disparities between the families we serve and our broader society in terms of overall well-being and access to high quality resources and services. Our work focuses on eliminating disparities by understanding the barriers some families face, helping them break down those barriers, and addressing their existing needs. Further, we work to change the context in which children and families live in order to create more equitable and sustainable systems and policies. By doing so, we contribute to creating a just society in which opportunities for all children, their families, and their communities are not determined by race, ethnicity, gender or zip code.

We understand that the challenges faced by the children and families we serve are in part the result of systems (e.g. social, economic, and political) that sustain inequitable distributions of power and resources. We are committed to addressing these roots of inequality through the multi-faceted strategies articulated in this document which include defining and leveraging a set of key partnerships.

At the center of our work at Starfish is another belief in the transformative power of trusting and supportive relationships between and among our staff and families. The importance of healthy relationships to fulfilling our mission and vision extends to our Board, volunteers, donors, funders, strategic partners, and community stakeholders.

We strive to provide exceptional services that positively impact the three key pillars of our Blueprint for Brighter Futures: Healthy Families, Successful Students, and Empowered Families.

Our approach will continue to be grounded in the foundational understanding that all families are able to identify their own strengths and needs and can make self-determined decisions based upon their values and available choices.

As we work with families to help them achieve better outcomes, we also envision a bright future for our passionate and talented Starfish staff - a future in which they feel recognized and valued for the work they do for families. We see them working in welcoming and stable facilities that are designed and maintained to feel both physically and psychologically safe and secure. Our team members will be supported by the development opportunities, tools, and flexibilities they need to serve families effectively. (Our learnings during the pandemic about remote work and the enhanced use of technology will also be applied to our work going forward).

The organization is led by board members, executives, and supervisors who are equally committed to the Starfish vision and mission and equipped to both challenge and support our valued staff in their work. And, finally, this entire vision is supported by public and private funders and policymakers who are eager and willing to invest the resources necessary to make our bold vision a reality.

OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

The following are the key results that Starfish seeks to achieve on behalf of the children, families, and communities of Wayne County with whom we partner:

- **Healthy Families**
- **Successful Students**
- **Empowered Families**
- **Engaged Staff and Volunteers**
- **Strong Organizational Reputation**
- **Sustainable Stewardship**

For each of these outcomes, we will identify, track, and report on quantifiable measures that indicate how well Starfish is making progress on achieving those results. For some of these measures, Starfish may benchmark its performance against other organizations providing similar services. And, as much as possible, we will disaggregate the data for these indicators by race, gender, ZIP code, and other key demographics and variables as a way to understand our impact on equity.

Healthy Families indicators:

- A. Level of mental health functionality and wellbeing of BH clients and (potentially) EC students
- B. Participation rate of BH clients at their scheduled sessions (alternatively, percentage of BH clients receiving the prescribed level of care and service plans)
- C. Percentage of BH clients discharged with successfully completed service plans
- D. Percentage of Starfish families with key positive health contributors (health insurance, established medical home, up-to-date immunizations, annual physical, not smoking, etc.)
- E. Percentage of Starfish families with positive health outcomes (healthy BMI; self-reported quality of health, etc.)

Successful Students indicators:

- A. Percentage of Early Childhood (EC) graduates who are assessed as “ready for kindergarten” (using multiple elements, potentially including family’s self-assessment of readiness)
- B. School attendance and retention rates for EC students (and potentially Behavioral Health (BH) clients)
- C. Percentage of Early Childhood students achieving age-appropriate developmental milestones and growth
- D. Percentage of BH clients and EC alumni achieving grade-appropriate academic proficiency and/or growth

Empowered Families indicators:

- A. Parent participation rates in Starfish enrichment activities
- B. Parent participation rates in Starfish governance activities
- C. Parent participation rates in advocacy efforts for social justice, educational and system reforms
- D. Level of knowledge/confidence among parents regarding school choices and overall educational self-advocacy
- E. Level of knowledge/confidence among parents regarding where to go to get their needs met; percentage who report that their basic needs are being met
- F. Level of self-perception of empowerment by parents (may include percentage with established goals)
- G. Percentage of Starfish families with increasing levels of social capital (measurement approach to be determined)

Engaged Staff and Volunteers indicators:

- A. Level of staff engagement/satisfaction
- B. Staff retention rate
- C. Rating of Starfish on “best places to work” assessments (may include the number of internal staff referrals for filling open positions)
- D. Hours of volunteer service provided
- E. Rating by volunteers of their experience
- F. Level of board engagement

Strong Organizational Reputation indicators:

- A. Number of children and families directly served by Starfish
- B. Level of client satisfaction with Starfish programs and services
- C. Number of referrals made by Starfish families to other families
- D. Level of partner / delegate satisfaction with Starfish
- E. Number of positive “earned media” stories about Starfish and its work

Sustainable Stewardship indicators:

- A. Amount of annual net revenue (disaggregated by service/program: EC, BH, and other forms of earned income)
- B. Amount of dollars in financial reserve/endowment
- C. Amount of dollars raised via philanthropic sources (donations and non-governmental grants)
- D. Number of new donors
- E. Donor retention rate

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

We support the success of children and families with two primary interventions. We deliver early childhood education and care services, and we provide behavioral health services for children and families experiencing or at risk of mental health challenges or intellectual / developmental delays and disabilities. Underpinning both of those core interventions is an integrated “theory of change” regarding what we believe leads to the most effective outcomes in those areas, recognizing that how these principles are implemented will be tailored to match the respective type of service. We will continue to invest in the key elements of that theory of change summarized below.

Family engagement: We use a holistic, family-centric (two-generation) approach in our work – going beyond just delivering services directly to children but also engaging with their parents and caregivers to enhance their capabilities and confidence in parenting. To that end, we will continue to advance the following approaches:

- Employ intentional and targeted outreach activities to inclusively welcome more families to our programs
- Establish user-friendly and understandable, integrated enrollment processes
- Identify and address barriers that might inhibit equitable access to our services, such as location and hours
- Develop and deliver a sustained set of communications and activities to enable parents to stay effectively engaged with their child’s teachers, therapists, and other program staff
- Create a number of ways for parents to be present and actively involved in shaping our community – from physical spaces in our facilities that are designed specifically for parents to opportunities to serve on parent leadership teams

Trusting and supportive relationships: We will only succeed with the families with whom we partner if we share and cultivate relationships with them that are mutually respectful and collaborative. To do so, we are committed to pursuing the following strategies:

- Operate from a mindset and approach that acknowledges the critical importance of family- and self-advocacy in our work
- Maximize the amount of experience, quality, and stability in our staff, particularly those providing direct services to children and families
- Ensure that staff are trained and skilled in the areas of cultural competency and trauma-informed care practices
- Emphasize and embrace the values of empathy, humility, equity, and authenticity as we invest our time, energy, and emotional commitment in building these relationships
- Use a relational health approach that empowers the caregiver with the tools to strengthen the bond between parent-child and positively impact the child's healthy development

High-quality, multi-disciplinary service experience: Building off the key foundations of family engagement and trusting relationships, the third key element of our “theory of change” is the design, implementation, and ongoing evolution of the services that we provide to Starfish children and families. As such, we strive to do the following:

- Use evidence-based practices, techniques, and interventions that are culturally informed
- Ensure effective coordination and integration between our early childhood education and behavioral health services so that each can apply relevant insights and techniques from the other
- Deliver an appropriately intensive level of services/treatment to increase the likelihood that children and families achieve the outcomes they are seeking
- Coordinate proactively with other care providers and organizations that are supporting the families with whom we partner
- Develop thoughtful, achievable plans for how children will successfully graduate from our programs or conclude their treatment

The Theory of Change is grounded in our belief in the transformative power of healthy relationships between and among Starfish staff and families as well as a performance-measurement system that applies data and insight to continuous quality improvement.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Who	Approaches and Activities			Accountability Measures	Aspirational Goal
<p>Families in Wayne County with children prenatal to 21, prioritizing families who face socio-economic barriers, trauma, and/or are at risk for trauma and other behavioral health concerns.</p>	<p>Engage families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice of community informs our approach • Intentional and targeted outreach activities • Accessible, stable and welcoming facilities • User friendly intake and enrollment processes • Assess and address access to services (i.e., hours/transportation) • Strong SFS brand and reputation for quality • Create opportunities for families to connect to Starfish 	<p>Build trusting and supportive relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable, high quality, and committed staff • Cultural competency • Trauma-informed • Relational health approach • Intentional and sustained parent engagement including spaces for parents, parent curriculum, peer/ social capital opportunities (e.g.: parent leadership team), external partnerships for education/economic mobility • Employees' values reflect those of the organization (empathy, humility, equity, and authenticity) 	<p>Offer high quality, multi-disciplinary prevention, behavioral health services and early childhood care and education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence-based practices, curricula and techniques • Family centric • Family and self-advocacy • Trauma-trained workforce • Culturally informed interventions • Successful graduations and discharges according to individual plans • Appropriate dosage, intensity and length of services to achieve desired outcomes • High quality facilities • Integration of internal services and coordination with external service providers • Early Childhood focuses on center-based experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Families • Empowered Families • Successful Students • Engaged Staff • Reputation 	<p>Just Society and Equitable Opportunities For All</p>

Healthy Relationships Between and Among All Stakeholders

Performance Measurement: Data-Driven & Culture of Continuous Improvement

OUR PRIORITY STRATEGIES

Over the next three to five years, we will focus on a number of key strategies in order to advance our mission and achieve our desired results. Some of these strategies represent an affirmation and continuation of things we are already doing; others are new areas of focus for us. The list below does not outline everything we will be doing, but it does indicate those elements that we believe are most critical to our success. More details on each strategy are provided below.

- Apply a **social justice and equity focus** to everything we do
- Recruit, develop, and retain **great talent** – among our staff as well as our volunteers
- Strengthen the **diversity and competencies of our leadership**
- Embrace a **culture of philanthropy** by boldly clarifying what we need to reach our goals and then creatively generate the revenue necessary to fulfill those inspiring needs
- Embrace the **use of data and stories** to guide our decisions at all levels and demonstrate our impact
- Ensure we have **unapologetically high-quality, well-maintained facilities** for our staff and families
- Raise and align expectations for **when and how we and our partners collaborate** to advance our mission
- Become a more **proactive and visible advocate for policy changes** that impact our organization and the families and communities with whom we partner

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY

As we embrace our pursuit of a more just society with equitable opportunities for all and consider our role in advancing that vision in Wayne County, we are committed to taking thoughtful, authentic actions in this space. This means that we will invest in:

- Learning from leading organizations who are deeply engaged in social justice work and, with the help of an experienced external guide/facilitator, use that knowledge to inform how we define our objectives and shape our approach to equity and social justice
- Engaging everyone in Starfish – including board, staff, volunteers, investors, and families – in understanding how we will need to evolve our behavior, policies, programs, and systems to match our social justice and equity goals
- Creating an organizational culture where individuals feel safe to ask questions, raise concerns, and identify behavior that doesn't match our intended vision
- Integrating the concepts of social justice and equity into our human resource practices (such as onboarding, training and development, and performance reviews) and other dimensions of organizational development

TALENT ATTRACTION, DEVELOPMENT, AND RETENTION

The success of our organization in serving children and families is primarily dependent on the quality and stability of our staff and volunteers. As such, we are committed to becoming an “employer of choice” in terms of both attracting new passionate and skilled staff and ensuring that they and their colleagues experience Starfish as a nurturing place where they can develop and expand their skills and feel they are respected and valued for the contributions they make every day. Fulfilling this commitment over the next few years will mean:

- Developing and implementing a clear, proactive recruitment strategy – with customized marketing materials, established strategic partnerships with higher education institutions, and a year-round schedule of recruitment activities
- Strengthening our onboarding process as well as the “catalog” of ongoing developmental opportunities for staff, including but not limited to arranging for experts-in-residence and enhancing on-the-job learning opportunities
- Implementing a talent development system that defines and strengthens our team’s competencies and builds future leaders to move our vision forward
- Understanding the interests and goals of Starfish parents to become employees; support them accordingly
- Regularly evaluating our compensation and benefits and adjusting them to ensure that we offer a package that is above the market average
- Developing a “One Starfish” internship program to both attract new employees and introduce them to the organizational culture and expectations prior to becoming permanent employees
- Maintaining and investing in an intentional practice and culture of self-care for staff as they manage the stress associated with this work

LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY AND COMPETENCY

Our organization and the results we produce will improve even more as we strive to align the demographics of our Board and senior staff leadership with those of the communities we serve. In addition, we will support those leaders individually and collectively with developmental opportunities that will strengthen their leadership competencies. Some of the strategies we will pursue include:

- Proactively seeking out leaders from under-represented parts of our community and inviting them to learn more about our work and hopefully be inspired to serve as Board members
- Creating opportunities that are safe and authentic for leaders, staff, and parents to share their experiences around diversity, equity, and inclusion and consider ideas for making Starfish an organization that lives up to its aspirational values in this area
- Establishing clear, proactive succession plans for key leadership positions that are grounded in our defined leadership competencies and supported by developmental plans (training, mentoring, etc.) for non-leadership staff to prepare to lead in the future

CULTURE OF PHILANTHROPY

The current reality is that government funding for early childhood education and behavioral health services does not match the level needed to deliver the quality of program that our families need and deserve. In response, we will not be bound by a “culture of scarcity.” Instead, we will embrace a “culture of philanthropy” in which we are passionately:

- Forging an internal spirit and capacity among staff to develop compelling “case statements” – using a combination of data and stories – that can be used to articulate key program needs to potential funders and investors
- Establishing reserves or endowment from which money can be drawn annually to fund key strategic initiatives
- Creating a dedicated fundraising/philanthropic committee of the board and challenging board members to be active contributors and participants in helping us reach our fundraising goals
- Strengthening our ongoing relationships with grantmakers and foundations as well as funding collaboratives focused on early childhood education, behavioral health, and social justice issues
- Advocating and negotiating – either alone or as part of a coalition of similar providers – for payment rates that demonstrate and respect the value and quality of the services that we deliver
- Pursuing opportunities to earn revenue through the sale of consulting services and materials to other organizations looking to improve their early childhood education and/or behavioral health services

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

We will continue our long-term investment in moving towards managing our core data centrally, aligning data across services, utilizing technology to reduce manual work, and improving data quality. In turn, this enables us to more effectively rely on that data to make decisions that improve child and family outcomes, gain deeper understanding around equity and social justice impacts, and to share our results and our stories transparently with others, particularly those who fund our work. As we do this, we will undertake the following key strategies:

- Optimize our data warehouse to provide secure and easily consumable data for reporting across multiple services
- Create a single, consistent, 360-degree view of a child and family so that a “golden record” for each child and family exists
- Integrate our master data into operational systems for real-time access to the comprehensive child and family records to enable improvements such as centralized intake and coordination of Starfish services
- Align the data management practices of our partners with ours so that we can more effectively learn from each other and also produce a more holistic picture of the impact of our partnership

FACILITIES

The quality of our facilities is key to not only the quality of our program delivery but also to our objectives regarding equity, organizational reputation, and talent attraction and retention. Therefore, it is critical that we ensure that they are welcoming, safe, and conducive to the learning and/or counseling services provided. In addition, we need to ensure that our facilities have the proper capacity and design to accommodate the families with whom we partner in the years ahead. To that end, we will take the following approach to acquiring and maintaining facilities:

- Shifting to owning rather than leasing our space so that we have greater control over the quality and layout of the space, and we are building important organizational assets
- Seeking out facilities with a large physical footprint that enable us to pursue more co-locating of services, whether delivered by Starfish or other service providers, as well as enhance our operational/financial efficiency and risk management practices
- Using data about where our families live and their transportation patterns/needs to guide our decisions about facility locations
- Establishing and meeting a clear set of high-quality facility standards so that staff and families have confidence that these places are safe and comfortable

PARTNERSHIPS

We recognize that we cannot achieve the bold, important outcomes outlined in this plan without the collaboration of a variety of external partners. Effective partnerships don't just happen naturally; they require a great deal of communication, candor, respect, and humility. As we make planful choices in the years ahead about where and how we want to extend our impact and/or capacity by forging partnerships, we are committed to the following strategies with each of those selected partners:

- Seeking out organizational partners with whom we share a set of aligned values and whose unique cultures and capabilities are complementary with ours
- Clarifying the shared, measurable outcomes that we seek to achieve through our partnership
- Ensuring that each member of the partnership understands their respective roles – including decisionmaking – and the results that they are expected to contribute
- Establishing transparent channels of communication and investing time and energy in building a trusting relationship, including the sharing of candid, respectful feedback with each other
- Developing written partnership agreements that clarify performance expectations, compliance obligations, payment terms, redress in circumstances when performance falls short, and clear dissolution processes should the partnership end

POLICY ADVOCACY

Our effectiveness in serving children and families and their ability to thrive in their communities depend, in no small part, on the policies established by federal, state, and even local governments. We intend to pivot from a more reactive role in advocating for policy change to one that is more intentional and visible – with the resources necessary to implement it. Over the next few years, that means we are committing to:

- Setting a one-to-two-year policy agenda that includes items that may directly benefit Starfish organizationally as well as those that have broader community and/or industry implications
- Building intentional and strategic relationships and alliances with advocacy groups as well as state and local officials whose views and activities can advance our policy agenda and provide us with critical information we need to make timely and informed decisions
- Identifying groups/venues where key policies are being shaped and seeking opportunities to participate in those discussions, where we can share stories and data that can illustrate a more effective policy direction
- Appropriately mobilizing Starfish parents, alumni, donors, and staff and building their capacity and commitment to advocate on behalf of specific policy changes

Partner with Us

The board, staff and leadership of Starfish Family Services believe that our strategic actions will be accomplished best by enlisting the entire community in our efforts. We welcome your participation in the work of our agency, so that we may continue providing excellent programming to strengthen families to create brighter futures for children.

You can partner with us by volunteering, making a financial contribution, donating your professional expertise, securing funding for Starfish projects, or telling others about the work we do. We welcome your involvement at any level.

This plan was adopted by the Starfish Family Services Board of Directors on June 5, 2020

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Errol Hau, Secretary
Carla Burney-Jones, Treasurer
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