

UPDATED March 6, 2018

Investing in Prevention: The Michigan Children's Trust Fund

For children and youth, exposure to unsafe environments and trauma through abuse or neglect has long-term consequences for child well-being. To prevent the health, criminal, and other costs of child abuse and neglect (CAN), Michigan invests in CAN prevention councils and direct service programs through the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) to take a coordinated, localized, evidence-based approach to prevention.

The response of CTF grantees to Michigan's substance use disorder (SUD) crisis embodies this approach. Children in homes experiencing a SUD are often at greater risk of experiencing abuse or neglect, and in 2016, roughly one quarter of Michigan CAN victims had a caretaker with a SUD. In response, many CAN councils prioritize SUD prevention, offering programs like coaching and peer support. Furthermore, they coordinate with healthcare providers, law enforcement, and other local partners to build protective factors that reduce the risk of developing a SUD, like making social connections and providing concrete supports. Many direct service grantees also target populations at risk of or already experiencing substance abuse for intensive care.

Demand for prevention services is rising – while CAN councils reached over 100,000 children in 2016, more than twice that number live in families that are investigated for cases of abuse and neglect, and rates are growing – Kids Count showed a 51% increase in investigated families just since 2009. Furthermore, about half of qualified direct service applicants for funding were turned away due to lack of CTF resources, and few receive enough resources to reach the full need of the populations they serve.

The CTF was established to provide consistent funding for prevention, however some of its major revenue sources, including tax check-off donations and license plate purchase fees, have lost significant value in recent years. For example, tax form check-off donations have fallen from \$938,349 in 2000 to \$57,385 in 2016, largely due to the transition to electronic tax filing. Michigan has an effective localized strategy for preventing the conditions that lead to abuse and neglect, but these efforts need a recommitment of state funds to meet the rising need.

Recommendations:

1. Increase state appropriations for the CTF by \$3 million, doubling the grant amounts of local CAN councils and expanding direct service coverage across the state.

For more about the Children's Trust Fund, please see our Issues for Michigan's Children, *[Preventing Abuse and Neglect: The Michigan Children's Trust Fund CAN Councils](#)*