



Annual Report

2024-2025



Dear Friends and Supporters,

It has been over 32 years since the founding of Advokids and we have accomplished so much! We started out in 1993, a small but mighty band of women, including attorneys, a social worker, and an esteemed child development expert who were witnessing firsthand the trauma and stressors that children experience while in foster care. Jan Sherwood was our fearless leader and has served as Advokids' deputy director since 2004. As we begin a new fiscal year, Jan is stepping down as deputy director but will continue working part time as a senior staff attorney.

It has been a privilege and an honor to work side by side with Jan for so many decades. We met in 1991, when Jan was a full-time working mother of two, with her own law practice, representing children and adults in child welfare and adoption proceedings in the trial and appellate courts throughout the Bay Area. She was a preeminent child welfare legal scholar and fierce warrior for children and those seeking to advocate for them. Jan has remained uncompromising in her conviction that children's needs must be paramount in all child welfare cases and cannot ever be sacrificed to political or financial interests.

Jan's professional lifetime achievements have left a lasting impact on how children experience foster care in California. She has inspired, educated, and mentored several generations of child advocates and served as a model of excellence for Advokids' staff attorneys since our inception. She is beloved and revered and we are all smarter and stronger because of her.

I salute and thank Jan and all of you for your unwavering support and dedication to Advokid's mission. Together we will continue to fight for every child in foster care's right to a childhood that is safe and secure.

Sincerely,

Margaret Coyne

Executive Director & Co-Founder



Protecting the right of every child in California to safety, security, and a permanent home.

For over 30 years, Advokids has been the only statewide non-profit legal advocacy organization in California singularly dedicated to securing the physical safety and emotional well-being of the over 38,000 children in the California foster care system. Advokids' free legal services and legal programs meet the urgent and immediate needs of individual children in foster care while identifying and curing systemic failures for the benefit of all children in foster care in California.



41%

of children in foster care are between ages 0-5



59%

of children in foster care ages 0-5 are in care for more than 18 months

2024-2025 BY THE NUMBERS



58
Counties
Served



680
Active
cases



967
Children
Served



304
Children
ages 0-5



WHAT WE DO



Free Child Welfare
Legal Services



Online Legal
Education & Self-
Help



Pro Bono Attorney
Program



Child Welfare
Oversight & Reform

- Providing Free Child Welfare Direct Legal Services, legal tools, and support for as long as it takes to empower any concerned community member in California to participate in juvenile dependency court proceedings and share information to protect a child's physical or emotional health, maintain familial relationships, mitigate or prevent trauma, and ensure timely permanency for a child who cannot be returned to their parents.
- Improving legal literacy across the state by providing the only comprehensive Online Child Welfare Legal Library and Self-Help Resources, ensuring that anyone, regardless of background or legal expertise, can stand up and advocate for a child in need.
- Ensuring access to justice for children in every juvenile courthouse in California.
- Promoting systems change reform initiatives to improve the safety net for all children who have suffered from, or are at risk of, abuse and neglect.

A DAY ON THE HELPLINE

"My little sister entered foster care and was placed with a relative many years ago and the case was closed. The relative does not want to be responsible for her anymore so she has been living with me for the past few weeks. How can I formalize her placement with me and become her legal caregiver and provide a stable home?"
– Sibling

"I am foster mom to a 2 year old little boy who the county plans to move to a cousin out of state who has never met him. I am concerned he will lose the close bond he has with his 3 older siblings who were raising him when they were all taken into foster care. I need help advocating for this loving sibling group."
– Resource Parent

"We are current foster parents to our adopted son's infant sister. We are concerned for her safety as we feel reunification with her mother is happening too fast. Her mother has several other children and we've seen how they have been impacted by the cycle of abuse. We are trying to make sure the baby girl does not experience the same trauma by going back home too soon."
– Resource Parents

"We are paternal grandparents who cared for our grandson for 10 months after he entered foster care. He is 2 years old and was returned to the care of his mom and maternal grandmother but he remains under the supervision of the juvenile court. We have not been able to see him because mother and grandmother will not allow it. What are our rights as grandparents?"
– Grandparents

AN EAR TO THE GROUND THAT INFORMS OUR SYSTEM REFORM EFFORTS

Advokids' staff reviews and analyzes all of our cases weekly to identify trends and system failures that adversely affect foster children. Our current reform efforts on the state and local levels include:

- **Preserving a Child's Family Ties**

Statewide education of all county social workers on their legal duty to send all of a child's identified relatives the JV-285 Relative Information Form within 30 days of the child entering foster care. This form allows relatives to engage directly with the juvenile court to share information and seek visitation with and/or placement of a child in their family.

- **Ensuring A Safety Net For Children at Risk of Being Harmed**

When a child is being harmed or remains in danger after a child abuse report has been made, the reporters feel helpless. Advokids has launched a statewide educational campaign to teach mandated reporters and all community members how to directly petition the juvenile court for review of a child abuse investigation, allowing the court to address the child's safety more quickly.

- **Holding Court Appointed Attorneys for Children in Foster Care Accountable**

All foster children are entitled by law to be represented by committed, competent counsel who meets with them regularly regardless of their age. When attorneys fail in their duties, children have a legal right to complain to the court but most children are unable to do that for themselves. Advokids is working to ensure that there are procedures statewide that allow a child's relative, caregiver, CASA or other designated adult to lodge a complaint on the child's behalf when the child's attorney is not meeting their legal obligations.



LUCAS & AVA'S STORY

Lucas and Ava were 13 and 17 years old when they were removed from their mother's care due to her struggle with alcohol addiction. Their grandparents stepped up immediately to provide a home for the children in the 55+ residential community where they lived. For two months Lucas and Ava lived safely with their grandparents and spent supervised time with their mother. The children were doing well, attending school regularly and feeling safe. Their grandparents were actively looking for a new home closer to the children's school.

Suddenly, and without any notice to their grandparents, Lucas and Ava were traumatically detained at school in the middle of their day, taken into foster care without any of their belongings, and placed with strangers. The county child welfare agency told the grandparents that the children were detained because the grandparents were living in a 55+ community and the children could not remain there.

Heartbroken, the grandparents contacted Advokids for help. A staff attorney encouraged them to request visitation immediately to help reduce the children's anxieties, helped them request a meeting with their county child welfare agency and helped them submit court forms asking the court to return the children to their care.

Because of the grandparent's persistence and Advokids' guidance, the court authorized the children's return. The grandparents also began the process of becoming certified foster parents so they could continue to care for their grandchildren. Lucas and Ava are now safely back with their grandparents, where they feel supported, secure, and loved.

OUR DONORS

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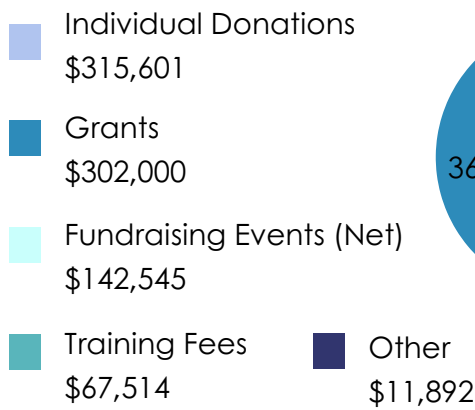
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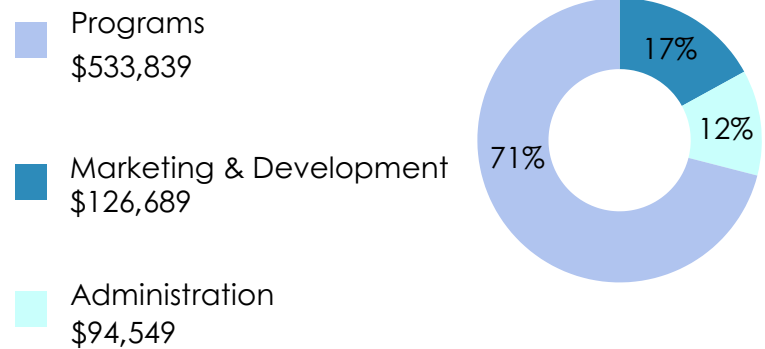
2024-2025 FINANCIALS

Revenue



Total = \$839,552

Expenses



Total = \$755,077

Thank you.

Because of you, more children are safe, secure,
and in stable, permanent homes.

Save the Date!

Advokids' Annual Fundraiser

Friday, March 13th, 2026

advokids