



# CATHOLIC CHARITIES NORTH DAKOTA

ANNUAL REPORT  
2023-2024



## CATHOLIC CHARITIES NORTH DAKOTA

According to a study conducted at the University of Michigan, (1) the reason preschoolers ask so many “whys” is not that they wish to annoy their parents, but because they really want an explanation. I must admit that I was (still am) that mom who did use the response of “because I said so,” on those days when I was sure they were trying to just annoy me. Sometimes it was/is a lot of work to explain the rationale behind a decision and you just feel that it is the correct answer. Or it feels like it is the right thing to do. I think that guides us to our “why.” Very simply, if we feel like we are having a positive impact on others, we are more likely to continue or grow in our dedication.

In this report, we explore a question that is not easy to answer: Why do we do what we do? As you read on, you will see many valuable insights as to the reason Catholic Charities North Dakota has been serving the people of North Dakota for over 100 years. You will hear the dedication and desire that encourages our staff to provide support for people every day. You will hear the true connection people have built with their team members, co-workers, and communities. For all of these reasons, our staff beautifully answer their question of “why”.

Each person’s “why” motivates them to do what they do. It shows what they value and how they show value to others. It displays that inner desire to make a change in the world. Ultimately, it is unique and shows how we do things differently. I challenge you to stop and reflect.



*Executive Director*

What is your “why” for where you place your energy each day? What is your “why” for where you work or volunteer? What is your “why” that brings you pure joy and satisfaction?

CCND's people, programs, activities, and dedication to the individuals that we serve truly capture my “why”. I have the best seat to see God's work meet human needs each day and am humbled by how blessed we are to receive your unending support and prayers. As I continue to grow in knowledge and admiration for the work that we do, I very simply just turn this question around. Why would I not want to be a part of Catholic Charities North Dakota?

*Kari Dew, Executive Director*

The work we do at Catholic Charities North Dakota has life changing impacts on everyone we serve. From vulnerable adults needing someone to help them make safe decisions, to pregnant women not knowing where to turn, to kids in foster care looking for permanency, we are here to help. Being able to work for an organization that provides such crucial services fuels my intrinsic need to help others. This is my “WHY”.

Working for Catholic Charities is fulfilling because it allows me to live out my faith in a tangible way. I am honored to serve an organization that upholds the dignity of every human life, recognizing the inherent worth of each person. Through my work, I'm able to participate in God's creation, contributing to a mission that aligns with my Catholic beliefs. It's more than just a job; it's a vocation that brings meaning and purpose to my life.

I enjoy working at CCND because I realize that the work we do profoundly impacts the individuals that we serve.





# CATHOLIC CHARITY

"Why," is a very powerful word. Some of you have had the pleasure of being around a toddler whose favorite word is "why." Why is the sky blue, why do I have to take a bath, why is not ok to pull my brother's hair," As challenging as it is sometimes to stop and provide the "why," that answer is where learning, growth, and connection comes from. In the PPAS program we often walk along side people who are experiencing very difficult struggles, and they too are asking "why."

We, the Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption Services team, get to become part of the answers to those heartfelt "whys." We get to point out open windows when our clients only see closed doors. we get to carry some of the burden when the answer isn't easy to hear, and we get to offer a safe place to process when fear feels overwhelming.

There is no greater gift than supporting someone when they most need it and celebrating with them when they have accomplished things they never thought were possible. Helping to answers someone else's "why" is our "why" we LOVE our job.

*Kris Haycraft, Director of PPAS*



*Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption Services*



# ES NORTH DAKOTA



**7**

*Babies Born to  
PPAS Moms*

**13**

*Forever Families  
Made Through  
Adoption*

**20**

*Pregnancy  
Clients Served*

**11**

*Identifying  
Searches*

**4**

*Non-Identifying  
Searches*



# THE PRIVILEGE TO SERVE

The privilege to serve others in times of need is a profound blessing from God. Each of us is unique, created in the image of God, and when someone walks through my door, a unique reflection of God appears before me. This belief is the cornerstone of my commitment to serve as a therapist at Catholic Charities ND.

Life can be a struggle, often filled with pain and challenges. However, starting from the inherent goodness with which God created us provides direction and purpose. We cannot change the past, no matter how much we might wish to. We cannot predict the future, regardless of how profitable that might seem. What we have is Today. Today, we can make choices about who we are called to be. Today, we choose to live out our purpose.

In this present moment, God's grace allows us to overcome our failings. It enables us to transcend our regrets and grieve our losses. Yet, God offers us a new day. He announces that He is the Resurrection and the Life, holding for eternity all that is good.

Living in the present is a powerful practice. It allows us to focus on the choices we make today, which shape who we are and who we aspire to be. By embracing the present, we acknowledge that while we cannot alter the past or foresee the future, we have the power to influence our current actions and decisions.

God's grace is a source of immense strength. It helps us navigate through our shortcomings and losses, offering us the hope of a new beginning each day. This grace is a reminder that despite our weakness we are loved and valued by God.

Having the privilege of witnessing the transformation of lives through God's grace is what inspires me to do what I do as a therapist.

*Ken Scheller, Director of Counseling*



*Counseling Services*

# *Guardianship Division: Intellectual Disabilities*



## CATHOLIC CHARITIES NORTH DAKOTA

**9,454**

*Visits with the  
Individuals We  
Serve*

**91,409**

*Miles Driven by  
Workers to 30  
Cities*

**25,848**

*Collateral  
Contacts on  
Behalf of our Clients*

**148**

*Individuals on  
Waiting List*

**542**

*Individuals  
Served by our  
Guardians*

**2,586**

*Meetings on Behalf  
of the Individuals  
We Serve*

During the past 12 months, 542 individuals with intellectual disabilities received support from our 16 guardianship workers. Our guardianship workers' duties and responsibilities typically include the following: determining the individual's living arrangements; assuring that the person's medical needs are met and providing consent for all medical procedures, surgeries, treatments, medications, end of life decisions, etc.; arranging and authorizing educational and vocational opportunities; legal decision making; and making financial decisions as well as overseeing the individual's assets and social security benefits. On any particular day or night, this translates into a guardianship worker receiving a call at 3am that someone on their caseload has passed away and they must contact the person's mom and dad and inform them that their loved one has passed away; spending hours trying to secure care for an individual who is experiencing severe psychiatric difficulties; receiving a call that an individual has just been evicted due to chemical dependency issues that resulted in unsafe behaviors in the apartment complex; attempting to work with a cell phone company to prevent further exploitation of the person's cell phone account by a former girlfriend; helping the person make decisions about a difficult medical decision such as whether or not to begin chemotherapy; as well as monitoring and reporting any incidents of suspected abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Serving as an individual's legal guardian is a tremendous responsibility and it is often incredibly challenging work. Why in the world would anyone take on this responsibility? Because everyone deserves someone to care about them. Our guardians love the work they do and you can see why in the quotes on the next page.

The responses of our guardianship workers so clearly show why I come to work every day: I have the privilege of working with each of them and they humble me with their capacity for compassion, creativity, hard work, and absolute commitment to the people they serve!

*Donna Byzewski, Director of GDID*



*Guardianship Division: Intellectual Disabilities*

So many of our clients do not have a voice so if we do not advocate for them to reach their goals and dreams, nobody may and that is not okay with me!

I love being able to make a positive difference in someone's life. People with disabilities are often overlooked and may need assistance to accomplish things; that's where we step in and can help pave the path for them.

I work in the GDID program to help others have a better life.

I enjoy assisting others in achieving their life goals, whether they're small or large.

I love supporting my clients in living an independent, happy, and healthy life!

I get to see that what I do, whether it be helping someone get through a rough spot, or celebrating the accomplishment of a lifelong goal, makes a difference.

I come to work every day with the joy of living out my faith in helping others to feel seen, heard, respected, and appreciated for who they are and the goals they have, and to help them along the way in any way that I can.

I work here because this job aligns perfectly with my skills and experience!

This is my dream job since I was working at the nursing home and Donna Cotton, a retired guardianship worker, came to see four of her clients there. So, I went back to school and have been with Catholic Charities North Dakota ever since.

I work for Catholic Charities North Dakota to help my clients advocate for themselves so they can be as independent as possible.

I enjoy my job, being part of a team and being there for the clients we support.

I come to work each and every day for the people I am guardian for and seeing that I impact their lives in a positive way and help them to have the best quality of life and care possible.

In today's world, it can be easy to get caught up in the hustle of life. With added technologies and the ability to access each other in a moment's time, we can forget to give ourselves opportunities to pause and to practice reflection on "why" we do what we do and make the choices we make.

As I think about my time with Catholic Charities North Dakota, I so vividly remember accepting the role of a Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter and telling myself "I want to make a difference and I know I can make an impact here". I wanted to show kids that they were worthy. I wanted to give them hope and courage. I wanted to find each and every child a forever home. These were things I cared so deeply about and wanted to live them out while staying true to my core values of maintaining integrity, showing compassion, and giving my all. As 9 years have passed and job tasks have evolved, my "why" of making an impact has remained. I am fueled because we are an integrous team that ensures children feel worthy and we all share a deep understanding that one child waiting for a forever home is one too many.

Our team is strong, compassionate, hard-working, and driven. Every staff member has their own why... here are a few reasons why our AASK and Post Adopt staff live out the agency's mission every day:

"I was put on this earth to help children and families. This is my life's mission, and I'm able to fulfill my life mission every day at AASK/Post Adopt."

"The foster care adoption journey is one of the most significant experiences within a child's life, and I am incredibly passionate about partnering with the children and families I serve to ensure their experience is positive and sets them up for success. I am honored to play such a pivotal role in the lives of others!"

872

*Children Served  
by AASK*

244

*Adoption  
Finalizations*

166

*Family Home  
Assessments  
Completed*



*Adults Adopting Special Kids*

"The reason I got into social work initially was that I knew I would get to serve those who Jesus would have hung out with (the last, least, and lost). I think of Matthew 20:16 'So the last will be first, and the first will be last'. The kids we serve continue to motivate me each day as I believe each child is deserving of a loving, nurturing family to call their own. A family to help them grow into adulthood and beyond. I want all kids to grow up knowing how much they are loved and cherished, all while having a family to stand with them no matter what circumstances may come."

"I heard this quote several years ago and it perfectly captures my 'WHY'. Through my work with AASK and CCND, I get to be of service to families during their adoption journey - it is the greatest privilege. There is no greater joy than to see a child exit the foster care system and find permanency, and to see families to establish a legal relationship that mirrors the bond and love they feel in their hearts!"

"My reasons for doing what I do is the joy and satisfaction that happens helping a child find their forever home. Knowing that we have helped to make a profound impact on each family and child's life that we encounter. Social work is a very meaningful and gratifying profession. It is one that I knew as a much younger person was meant for me!"

"Our work can be challenging and unpredictable. The children we work with have been through so much and we have the opportunity to help make a difference in their lives. When you see that you are making a difference, it builds a fire in you to keep doing your job and helping other children. Every child deserves their forever family."

As life moves forward, I would challenge you to stop and reflect... what fuels your soul? Give yourself an opportunity to identify your "why" and use it as motivation as you move throughout your days, weeks, and months ahead.

*Kara Eastlund, Director of AASK*



# GUARDIANSHIP FOR VULNERABLE ADULTS: A NECESSARY SAFEGUARD FOR OUR SOCIETY

In an ideal world, every adult could live independently and manage their personal and financial affairs. However, many adults, due to age, illness, or mental Health, cannot handle these responsibilities. Guardianship plays a critical role in providing the necessary support and protection for these vulnerable adults.

## **The Growing Need for Guardianship**

In North Dakota, 22.7% of the population is currently aged 60 and older, and by 2050, this demographic is projected to grow to 26%. This trend mirrors the broader aging population across the United States, driven by the Baby Boomer generation and increased life expectancy.

As the population ages, the prevalence of age-related conditions like dementia, Alzheimer's disease, and physical frailty increases, necessitating robust systems to safeguard these individuals. Additionally, adults with mental health disorders and traumatic brain injuries face significant challenges in managing their daily lives and often require assistance in making important decisions, ranging from financial management to healthcare and living arrangements.

## **The Role of a Guardian**

A guardian is legally appointed to make decisions on behalf of a vulnerable adult. Responsibilities of a guardian could include:

- **Financial Management:** Overseeing the individual's finances to protect their assets and ensure they are used appropriately for the individual's benefit.
- **Healthcare Decisions:** Making medical decisions, including consenting to treatments, choosing healthcare providers, and ensuring the individual receives adequate care.
- **Personal Affairs:** Managing the individual's living arrangements, ensuring their daily needs are met, and making decisions about social and recreational activities.

The primary goal of a guardian is to act in the individual's best interest, ensuring their well-being, health, safety, and dignity.



*Guardianship Services: Vulnerable*

**Why Guardianship is Necessary**

- Protection from Exploitation and Abuse: Vulnerable adults are often targets for financial exploitation, physical abuse, and neglect. Guardianship provides a legal framework to protect these individuals from harm.
- Ensuring Quality of Life: Guardians make decisions that enhance the individual's quality of life, ensuring access to proper medical care, safe living conditions, attendance to legal affairs and opportunities for social engagement.
- Relieving Family Burden: Guardianship can relieve families from the complex responsibilities of caring for a vulnerable adult by involving a professional trained in managing the individual's needs.
- Promoting Independence: Guardianship can support the individual in making decisions for themselves whenever possible, promoting independence and self-determination.

Guardianship for vulnerable adults is a necessary and compassionate response to the needs of our aging population and other individuals with vulnerabilities. Guardianship is not just a legal responsibility but a cornerstone of compassion and support for our most vulnerable residents. By recognizing its importance and ensuring robust support systems of support, we can uphold the dignity and rights of all individuals in our community. Each and every one of our guardians has chosen this vocation to make a difference in the lives of others.

*Neil Hines, Assistant Director of GSV*

**17**

*Individuals  
Pending*

**137**

*Individuals  
Served by our  
Guardians*

**237**

*Meetings on  
Behalf of our  
Clients*

**2,436**

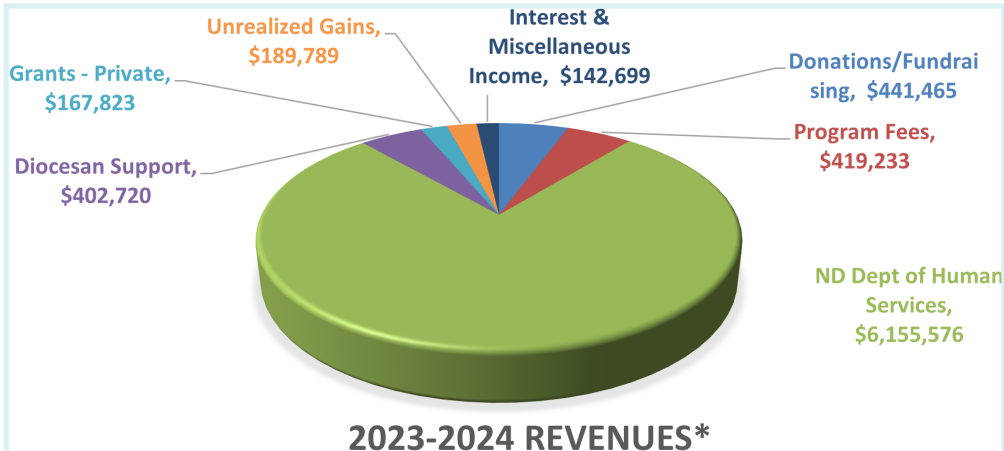
*Visits with the  
Individuals We  
Serve*

**33,880**

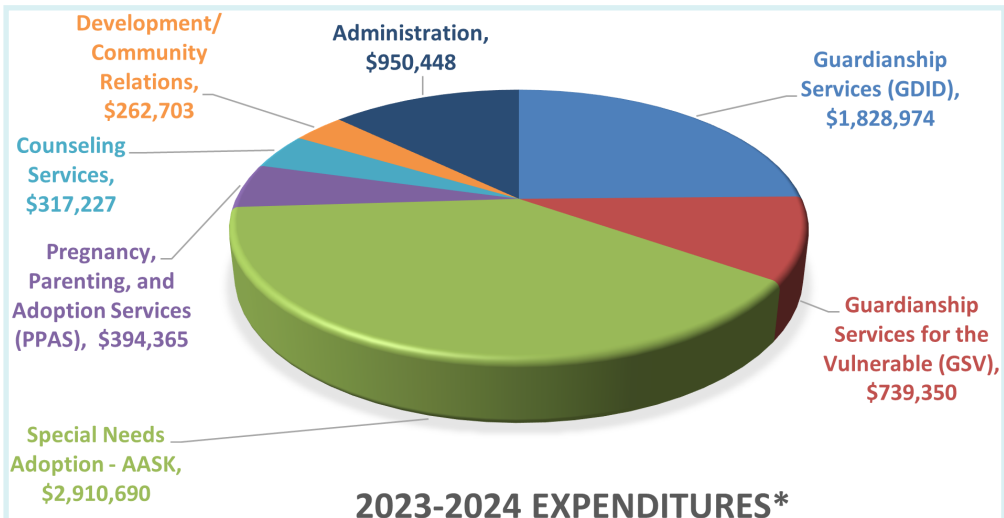
*Miles Driven by  
Workers*

**8,845**

*Collateral  
Contacts on  
Behalf of our Clients*



*Admin  
and  
Finance  
Teams*



\*Preaudited Numbers

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*Guided by our values,  
Catholic Charities North Dakota  
serves people in need and advocates for  
the common good of all.*



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