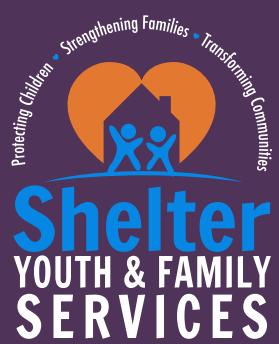


# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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*we envision a world where every child grows up in a safe and loving home.*



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

# Bold Steps, Brighter Future

This past year has been one of resilience, growth, and momentum at Shelter Youth & Family Services. We have seen the strength of young people, the dedication of our staff, and the generosity of our community come together to change lives. Nearly 700 youth and families found safety, stability, and support through our programs this year. Each connection made, each safe night provided, and each family strengthened, moving us closer to our vision: all children raised in safe and nurturing homes.

But our work is more than meeting urgent needs. We know our youth need a holistic approach to wellbeing, one that ensures safety and stability today, while also equipping them with the resources and relationships that allow for a brighter future tomorrow. That clarity is shaping how we grow, how we focus our expertise, and how we partner with others to make the greatest impact.

In the year ahead, we are committed to deepening our services and strengthening our collaborations. Thanks to our funders, partners, volunteers, and advocates, fiscal year 2025 was a year of impact and momentum. And we are not slowing down.

To those who have been walking with us for years: thank you for your steadfast belief in this mission. To those just joining us: welcome. Together, we can protect children, strengthen families, and transform communities.

With gratitude,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carina H. Santa Maria".

**Carina H. Santa Maria, MSW, LCSW**

**Chief Executive Officer**



Our mission is to end the cycle of child abuse by providing emotional and physical care, programs, and services that children need to build safer, healthier, and brighter futures.

## The Change We Seek

Together, with the support of our community, we can ensure that every young person who needs a lifeline, receives it.

Over the next five years, our impact will be measured by lives changed through ensuring:

- **More young people find stability**
- **More new parents gain the tools needed to help their families thrive**
- **More children are welcomed into forever families**
- **More people can access the mental health care they need**
- **More young people have the resources and skills needed to live independently**
- **More cycles of abuse are broken**

## The Framework of Change

### PROTECTING CHILDREN

Shelter is committed to ensuring that every child has a safe place to turn in times of crisis. Our team creates a stable, nurturing environment where children feel seen, heard, and valued.

### STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Strong families are essential to the well-being of children and youth. Our approach is collaborative, trauma-informed, and rooted in respect for each family's unique journey.

### TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

Shelter's impact extends beyond individual households. We strive to create healthier, more supportive communities. Through education, advocacy, and partnerships with schools, social services, and local leaders, we address systemic barriers that affect youth and families.

# Your Giving, Our Growing Impact

Our impact touches nearly every corner of the child welfare system with programs that range from emergency housing and foster care to home visiting for new parents and specialized support for youth who have experienced human trafficking.

## HEALTHY FAMILIES

A child abuse prevention program that offers five years of free, one-on-one home visiting support for first-time parents



61  
families served

4,364  
hours of care

## CLINICAL CARE

Mental health support for youth and families in Shelter's programs and in the community

100  
youth served – capacity more than doubled!

## TRANSITIONAL LIVING HOME

A two-year program for 17-21 year olds who are assigned male at birth that promotes independence

9  
young adults live at our TLP (capacity)

2,158  
days of care

## EMERGENCY SHELTERS

Two emergency shelters in Chicago's northwest suburbs provide trauma-informed care for youth ages 11-17 years.

70  
youth served

2,158  
days of care

+70%  
from FY24 clients served at Jennings Emergency Shelter

+10%  
from FY24 clients served at Buckholz Emergency Shelter



## YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Housing for up to 24 months and individualized support services for ages 14-24 who are experiencing homelessness

91

young people served:

- **10** young people served through housing
- **18** young people provided resources
- **63** young people supported through outreach services

3,695

days of care

## FOSTER CARE

Traditional, home-of-relative, and emergency foster care provide safe and loving homes for children from birth-21 years.

94

families served

19,661

days of care

12

permanencies ("forever families")

## The Power of Your Support



- **661** young people found **safety, stability, and hope**; the most in Shelter's history.
- **Mental health counseling** became a core part of every program as the Clinical team doubled in size, expanding access for youth and families healing from trauma.
- New donors grew by 32% and our annual budget grew from \$6.7M to \$10M, including \$1.7M raised in **private funding**; the most in Shelter's history
- Shelter broke ground on **Illinois' first DCFS-licensed home for child survivors of human trafficking**, a long-time vision made possible by key partners including Illinois DCFS, the Foglia Family Foundation, the Canning Foundation, the Fitzgerald Family Foundation, Endeavor Health Community Investment Fund, and the Chicago Bears.





# Real Impact, Real Change

Every day at Shelter Youth & Family Services, lives are being transformed in quiet but powerful ways. Behind every statistic are youth and families finding safety and bright futures. Here is just a glimpse of what you made possible with your support. For every story told, there are many more like it, reminding us why Shelter's work matters.



## THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

A Shelter client graduated from our Transitional Living Program and continued to work toward independence by partnering with our Youth Experiencing Homelessness team to secure his own apartment. **Today, he works full-time as a Certified Nursing Assistant.** His journey shows that with the right support, young people can rewrite their futures and rise to their full potential.



## MORE THAN A RIDE

Responsiveness and compassion are at the heart of everything our Shelter staff does. When one of our teens shared that she was walking nearly two hours each day just to get to work, her caseworker stepped up. He **secured and repaired a donated bike and turned her exhausting commute into a manageable 40-minute ride.** Small interventions can create life-changing impact.



## DEDICATION THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Our foster care team reached a milestone that few child welfare agencies achieve: **100% completion of required monthly in-person visits** for more than six consecutive months. This remarkable accomplishment reflects both the unwavering dedication of our staff and the trusting relationships they've built with foster children and families.

## THEY DESERVE TO SHINE

In October, Shelter staff ensured one of our young residents could **shine at her high school Homecoming dance.** From helping her find the perfect look to cheering her on as she stepped out with confidence, the evening was a reminder that every young person deserves to feel celebrated and valued.

## A FAMILY REUNITED

A journey nearly 200 days long happily ended where it began: **two children back home with parents who never gave up.** In December, two girls were placed in foster care following an unexplained injury. From that day, a Shelter caseworker worked closely with the family, supporting their participation in services and consistent visits.



# Allies in Action

True Change Happens When We Work Together



## STRONGER TOGETHER

To further meet rising needs, Shelter launched a first-of-its-kind partnership with Palatine School District 15, bringing **free, on-site counseling directly into schools**. Funded by the Stronger Together grant from the Cook County Health Office of Behavioral Health, this initiative is breaking down barriers, ensuring timely care, and improving outcomes for young people and their families.

## A SEAT AT THE TABLE

In June, **CEO, Carina H. Santa Maria was elected Vice Chair of Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Board** to help shape child welfare policy in Illinois and bring Shelter's work to the forefront.

## INSPIRING CHANGE IN WASHINGTON D.C.

In April, staff attended the **Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) National Conference** and met with Senators Durbin and Duckworth, and Congressman Danny Davis (pictured) to inspire action for advancing family and community well-being.





Santa Maria thanks Hey Nonny of Arlington Heights for hosting Rock 'n Roll Bingo to benefit Shelter's mission.



Staff attended the Domestic Violence Legislative Breakfast hosted by State Representative Michelle Mussman and Northwest Suburban Alliance on Domestic Violence.



At the Thrive Together Annual Community Mental Health Fair, CEO, Santa Maria, State Representative, Nicolle Grasse, and Arlington Heights Village Trustee, Wendy Dunnington.

## A TRANSFORMATIVE GIFT

**A \$1,000,000 gift from the Canning Foundation** pledged over the next five years will fuel lasting impact for youth and families. This extraordinary gift is a powerful investment in Shelter's mission, providing Shelter the stability and flexibility to meet urgent needs, expand innovative programs, and plan confidently for the future.

## FIRST FEDERAL GRANT SUPPORTS YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Shelter received its **first federal grant award** through a new community-based collaboration with The Harbour to address housing and support solutions for runaway and homeless youth.



## A Half-Century of Hope

Two hundred people came together to celebrate Shelter's 50th anniversary on Saturday, April 26. The evening, full of laughter, milestones, and memories, honored five decades of impact and those who made it all possible. Together, we raised \$217,000 to protect children and help families thrive.

For their years of commitment, Denise and Gerry Fitzgerald were honored as Shelter's Buckholz Award recipients, an award named after Shelter founder, Paul Buckholz.

CEO, Carina H. Santa Maria, spoke at the celebration, saying "As we celebrate this milestone, we honor the incredible legacy of those who have shaped our mission and recommit ourselves to ensuring that every child has a safe, nurturing place to call home."

Shelter's 50th Anniversary Celebration was made possible by the support of Cornerstone Bank, Wintrust, Studio North, Webit, Wheels, Fifth Third Bank, and Mirar Media.

Attendees heard Khaliyah Tintera's personal story about her courageous journey through foster care and adoption and the people who traveled alongside her.



## A Look at 50 Years of Shelter

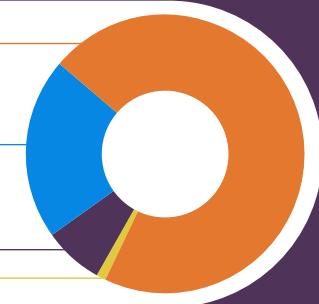
- 1974 Officer, **Paul Buckholz**, recognizes youth experiencing homelessness need safer place to stay.
- 1974 **Hired, Allen Yasgur** First Executive Director
- 1975 Began placing youth in licensed volunteer foster homes
- 1977 **Hired, Pat Beck** Executive Director
- 1983 **Opened** Jennings Home for Girls, Schaumburg
- 1994 **Launched Healthy Families Program**, Child abuse prevention support for new mothers
- 1996 **Boys Group Home opened**, the first of its kind in the northwest suburbs
- 1996 **Established** Transitional Living Program to provide stability, support, training, and resources for young male adults
- 2000 **Accreditation Received** from the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children, Inc.
- 2016 Illinois State Budget Impasse left Shelter with no state funding for Healthy Families Program.  
**Donors stepped up** essentially saving the entire agency
- 2018 **Hired, Carina H. Santa Maria** Executive Director, ushering a new era for Shelter
- 2019 **Launched** Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program for ages 14 to 24 years
- 2021 **Launched** Clinical Program with two therapists
- 2024 **Broke ground** Illinois' first DCFS-licensed home for youth human trafficking survivors

# Financial Report

For the year ending June 30, 2025

## REVENUE

Government Contracts	71%
Agency Fundraising Support	21%
Service Fees	7%
Miscellaneous Income	1%



\$9.8M  
Total  
Revenue

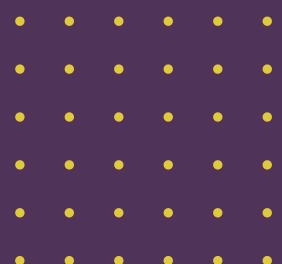
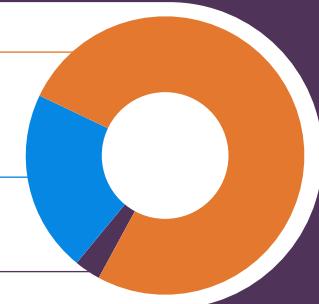
## REVENUE

	FY2025	FY2024
Agency Fundraising Support	\$1,895,420	\$1,539,602
Government Contracts	\$6,265,962	\$3,692,695
Service Fees	\$610,969	\$419,049
Investment Income	\$3,598	N/A
Miscellaneous Income	\$47,839	\$12,183
Other	\$30	N/A
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$8,823,819</b>	<b>\$5,663,529</b>

	FY2025	FY2024
<b>Cost of Goods Sold (C.O.G.S.)</b>	<b>\$951,357</b>	<b>\$913,289</b>
Change in Net Assets (Net Revenue)	\$2,758,022	\$652,261
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	\$1,579,138	\$926,876
Net Assets, End of Year (Equity)	\$4,337,160	\$1,579,137

## EXPENSES

Program Services	76%
Management and General	21%
Fundraising	3%



## EXPENSES

	FY2025	FY2024
Program Services	\$3,880,447	\$3,376,048
Management and General	\$1,078,454	\$582,264
Fundraising	\$155,539	\$139,666
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,114,440</b>	<b>\$4,097,978</b>

FY2025 Audited Fiscal Figures

# Leading with Purpose

## Leadership Staff

CARINA H. SANTA MARIA, MSW, LCSW Chief Executive Officer

GINA CIULLA, MSW, LCSW Associate Director

PATRICE BRAZIL, PHR Director of Human Resources

SIMONE WHEELER, CFRE Director of Development

CHRISTINE ROERIG, PCM, Director of Marketing & Communications

CAITLYN LIERMAN, MSW, LSW Residential Director

CHRISTINA GAYTAN, MSW, LCSW Foster Care Director

LYNN PUCKELWARTZ, MSW Healthy Families Program Director

SARAH GALLA, MSW, LSW, Clinical Director

## Board of Directors

REBECCA HELKOWSKI, President

LARRY COLLINS, Vice President

J.J. COMISKEY, Treasurer

LINDSAY TINTERA, Secretary

GUY W. EISENHUTH

JULIE GIBSON

ARLEN GOULD

NINA MCILREE

HEATHER MOSS

RIAN SPENCER

JOHN STOMPER

*"I'm so proud of the growth and expanded services we achieved together, thanks to the dedication of staff, volunteers, partners, and donors transforming children's lives. As I transition to the role of Vice President, I look forward to supporting our leadership and building on this momentum for even greater impact."*



**- REBECCA HELKOWSKI, President**



**Shelter  
YOUTH & FAMILY  
SERVICES**



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[shelter-inc.org](http://shelter-inc.org)

24-Hour Referral Line: 847.255.8060

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