



SPAN Parent Advocacy Network
spanadvocacy.org

Building Bridges to Success



2021 - 2022

ANNUAL REPORT

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Our Vision, Mission and Commitment

Our Vision

SPAN's vision is that all families will have the resources and support they need to ensure that their children become fully participating and contributing members of our communities and society.

Our Mission

Our mission is to empower and support families, and inform and involve professionals interested in the healthy development and education of children and youth.

Our Commitment

Our foremost commitment is to children and families with the greatest need due to disability or special health/mental health needs; poverty; discrimination based on race/ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, immigrant or homeless status; involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems; geographic location; or other special circumstances.

A message from Our Board President

and Executive Director

Managing change as COVID wanes

With COVID becoming more manageable over the last twelve months, the team at SPAN has jumped at the opportunity to offer more in-person training and technical assistance opportunities again for the families and professionals we serve. The digital competencies that were honed during the pandemic have served them well and allowed for hybrid outreach opportunities and a mix of ways for us to reach those that need us most.



Change is a constant, it seems, and I'm so proud of how the dedicated teams at SPAN have managed unprecedented change with both professionalism and grace. No change has been more profound than the transition from long-serving, outgoing Executive Director, Diana Autin on January 1, 2023, to newly appointed Executive Director, Carolyn Hayer.

Carolyn's leadership of SPAN is already beginning to shine and with perfect timing. Our organization has never been larger, with the recent renewal of two cooperative agreements from the U.S. Department of Education at increased amounts.

This doesn't mean that we can rest on our laurels. We still need your help to cover expenses that our government funding will not. For instance, we will be moving our office location for the first time in over 25 years beginning on October 1, to a building two blocks away in Newark. Moving after such a long time will be costly and we could use your help with a donation of any kind.

I will close with a note of personal thanks. We could not have crossed the COVID bridge of the last three years without the hard work exhibited by all the dedicated professionals at SPAN, my Board of Trustee colleagues, nor without the support of our grantors, partners, and everyone else who keeps us going – supporters large or small.

With gratitude,



John Morel, CPCU, ARM
Board President, Board of Trustees
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network



Greetings Family, Friends, and Colleagues,

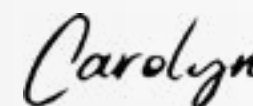
I am delighted to present SPAN's 2021-22 Annual Report reflecting on the past year. In preparing this report, I am reminded of the incredible dedication and passion that define SPAN, and I am humbled by the positive change we've brought to those we serve. This report is intended to keep you, our stakeholders, informed about our activities.

The past year has been a testament to our collective commitment to supporting families, regardless of circumstance, particularly those with the greatest need. In this report you will find stories and data that demonstrate success and progress, triumphs and challenges. We've expanded our programs and initiatives with the renewal of existing grants and with new funding to increase our efforts, touching the lives of even more individuals throughout New Jersey and across the nation. We've navigated a leadership transition and a move to new offices, yet have consistently worked with intention and determination to continue to deliver services and support that provide a positive and lasting impact, staying true to our mission of empowering families. The resilience and adaptability demonstrated by our team and our partners have been crucial in overcoming any challenges we faced.

As we reflect on the year gone by, we also chart our path forward with optimism and anticipation. Our roadmap for the year ahead is guided by our learnings and aspirations and our ongoing commitment to access, diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values in our actions and decision-making. We are excited to embark on new initiatives and projects that will expand our work even further. The road ahead will undoubtedly bring its own set of trials and triumphs, but our shared values and sense of purpose will guide us through.

None of our achievements would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers, staff, Board of Trustees, partners, and donors. A heartfelt thank you for your unwavering support that fuels our passion and lights the path to progress. Your belief in our mission, your commitment, and your contributions are the driving force behind our accomplishments. With your ongoing support, we will continue to create opportunities and triumphs for infants, toddlers, children, youth, and their families. I am filled with a sense of profound gratitude for the privilege of leading this incredible organization. I encourage you to explore this report and join us in celebrating our successes and acknowledging the milestones we've reached together.

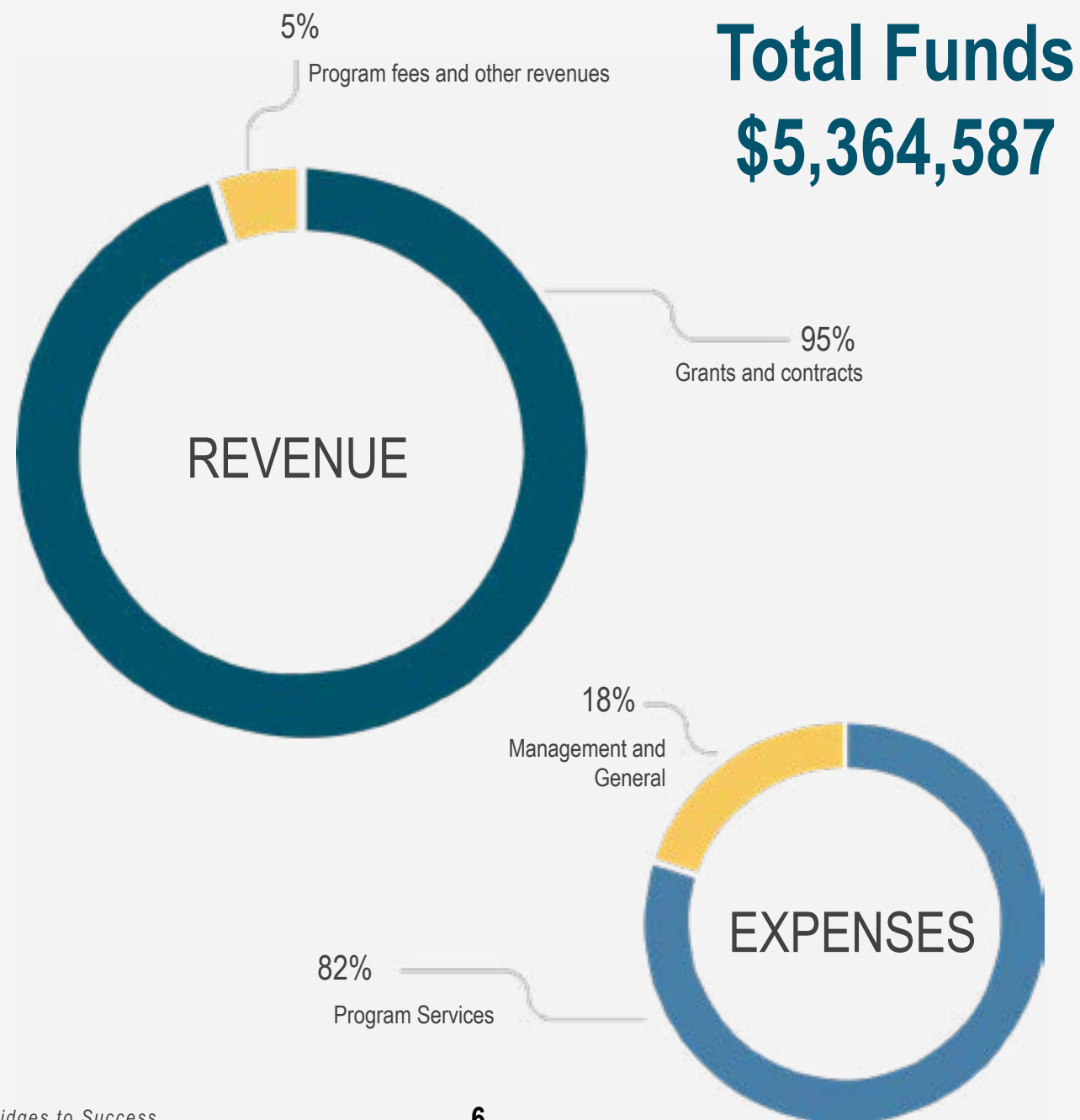
With deep appreciation and excitement for the future,



Carolyn Hayer
Executive Director
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network

2022 Fiscal Year By the Numbers

SPAN is primarily funded via state and federal government grants. This has been the case for many years and while it is a testament to our ability to deliver successful program outcomes year after year, such money may be restricted and can limit our ability to be as flexible as we need to be in order to meet the quickly changing needs of our families and professional partners. A higher percentage of donations from individuals and organizations will allow us to broaden our services and more quickly pivot to meet the evolving needs of the communities we impact.



Our People

"I am a single parent living in NJ with my two adult children, who are 28 and 23.

When my oldest was approximately 18 months old, she started Early Intervention when delays were identified. At that time, the interventionist noticed in me advocacy skills that she encouraged me to develop, to learn how to be more of an advocate for my daughter, and she was the one who introduced me to SPAN.

So, I first signed-up for and attended the Parent to Parent training program at SPAN, in the Newark office, and that was how I came to SPAN. I also started attending SPAN conferences and other trainings. I got on the mailing list, and began to keep in touch with SPAN through my work journey - at that time I was working for Special Child Health Services in Hudson County when my youngest was two years old. As Executive Director of the Family Support Organization in Hudson County, I began partnering with SPAN in various ways

Eventually, about 13 years ago now, I actually began working with SPAN as a per diem trainer - working part-time as a Parent Professional Development Trainer. I always looked for, and found, additional opportunities at SPAN. Later, I worked on the START Project, then moved on to what was called the Empowering Women Project as a Family Resource Specialist. Very soon after, though, I became the project supervisor for that project and I have been dedicated to it for 9 or 10 years. Two years ago, my title changed to Project Director of what is now the Leaders Empowered as Advocates with Dignity project. I have held many other positions at SPAN on various projects including the Leadership in Family-Professional Partnership FV/SPAN project and the NE-PACT Regional TA Center project. I continue to provide training for parents and professionals on various education and health related topics.

Leaders Empowered as Advocates with Dignity provides information sessions on a variety of topics, such as self-care and stress management, and we focus on those areas that are centered around the social determinants of health to help explain to women how to take care of themselves, and redirect them to more healthy ways of living. We tackle issues of mental health and focus our efforts on empowering women. The Empowering Women Project is now also a promising emerging practice in the Innovation Station Hub for the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs, which is a national status that other organizations can replicate.

Most importantly, SPAN helped me become an advocate on behalf of my children, to learn how to navigate systems of care, and to really help them live successful lives, dealing with many complicated issues from school, to healthcare, to mental health, to employment. I'm so proud of my children and how they have succeeded in life now that they are young adults."



Nicole Pratt

Project Director, Leaders Empowered as Advocates with Dignity Project

OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS

SPAN takes a holistic approach to empowering families and engaging professionals across New Jersey, the United States, and around the world. We manage and/or partner in more than two dozen programs at any given time that engage tens of thousands of families - parents and youth/young adults - and professionals each year. From prenatal care and support, to early childhood development, to youth education and healthcare advocacy, all the way to young adult transition guidance; our programs follow the lives of those with the greatest need.



731,585

individuals reached about our services.



36,528

People provided with Individual Assistance.



26,691

Parents/professionals and youth provided with training and support.

SPAN OPERATES MORE THAN 35 PROJECTS WITHIN NINE HOLISTIC PROGRAM AREAS.

Leadership Development



Early Childhood



Family Engagement



Parent & Professional Development



Organizational Capacity Building



Health/Mental Health



Individual Assistance



Policy & Systems Advocacy



Youth Engagement

Our People

"My son was born 16 weeks prematurely 23 years ago. He spent 6 months hospitalized at that time, much of it on life support. Special Child Health Services contacted us shortly after we brought him home, as we were eligible for Early Intervention services. We were grateful for all the progress that he was able to make over time - simple things like making sounds, pulling his sister's hair - and all of this after we were told at the time of his birth that he had about a 10% chance of survival. From very early on, we tried very hard to build on his strengths.

When it came time for school, with guidance from our Early Intervention provider, we were able to get him into the preschool disabled program in our local public school. I went along with what the professionals in the school system were telling me, not realizing everything I was signing. Eventually I met other parents of children with disabilities and we began sharing information. I helped to start a support network called Two River Friends of Diverse Learners which remains active today. Karen Antone from SPAN attended some meetings and told us about SPAN's resources. She provided information on things that we didn't know were issues - our rights, parents are an essential part of the child study team, and that there was a code to follow. Those resources over the years have been priceless.

I attended several SPAN workshops over the years. Basic Rights in Special Education was an eye opener and the value of being with other parents like me, and the camaraderie that developed was tremendous. I began to look up to the people at SPAN as so knowledgeable. Their knowledge and professionalism built my confidence and helped me to understand that I was not alone. Having the resources I needed to advocate has been remarkable, irreplaceable.

In the case of my son, I grew to become an effective advocate for him; he was eventually diagnosed with ADHD, sensory processing disorder and learning delays, but through our advocacy efforts we were able to keep him with his peers in school, with minimal pull-out resources. I came prepared each year as we discussed and planned his IEP - keeping things in writing and according to the law. He graduated high school and graduated from a NJ, four year college in May of last year. I am so proud of my son!

As I got more involved, I helped establish our local Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG) and arranged local meetings so parents could express their concerns to the district and feel empowered. We started a network of emails and resource sharing and monthly meetings. I regularly shared SPAN resources with the parents.

I joined SPAN as an employee six years ago as a SPAN Family Resource Specialist with the WRAP program, then in July 2019 also moved to work the Warm Line, providing individual assistance to families. I have found it rewarding to help parents who are struggling with an issue with their child. It gives me satisfaction that I have helped a parent with a challenge with their school or provided some resource they didn't know existed. I often provide emotional support as well as helpful resources, as I've been where they are. The empathy I have makes me grateful that I can help our parent callers day after day."

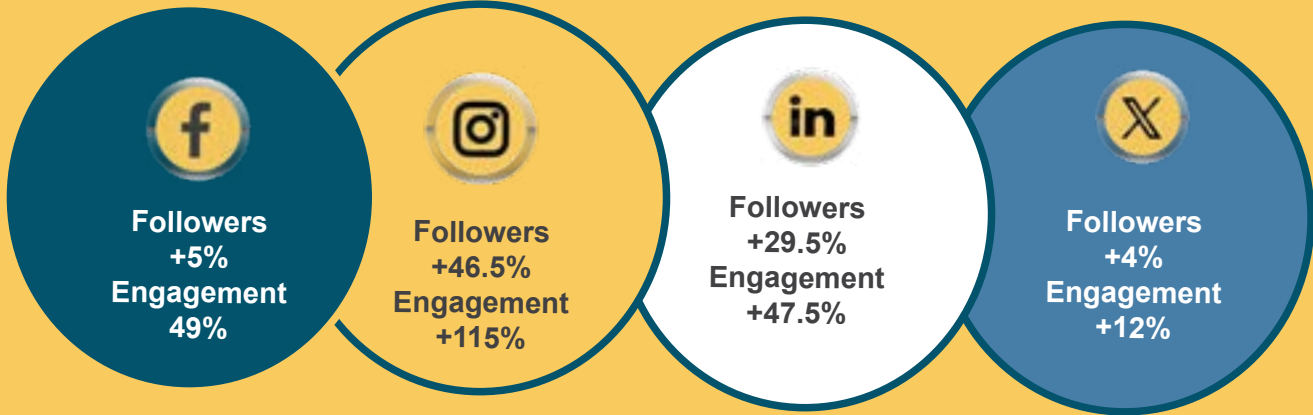


Cathy Balto

SPAN Family Resource Specialist

SOCIAL MEDIA GROWTH

July 2021 - June 2022



Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/parentadvocacynetwork/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/spanadvocacy>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/span-parent-advocacy-network>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/spanadvocacy>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVbpwSxpkc2SlqsAVxn3rw>

EXPANDING VISIBILITY

↑40%

SPAN Parent Advocacy Network

In 2022, 174,000 people visited to the SPAN website. Since the application of our Strategic Communications Plan, our SPANAdvocacy.com website traffic has grown 40%

1.4M

Center for Parent Information & Resources

Our parent center hub site is our largest resource website housing thousands of documents, webinars, trainings and more. 1.4 million visitors navigated to parentcenterhub.org in 2022.

17.5K

Our RAISE Center site provides support to individuals with disabilities through the transition from secondary school into competitive employment and independent living. The number of visitors to raisecenter.org in 2022 was nearly 17,500

The dedicated parent leaders at SPAN are so fortunate to enjoy many wonderful relationships with our grantors, in some cases spanning many years. We offer our sincere thanks to all of our funders and donors.

About Us

spanadvocacy.org/about

Our Dedicated Staff

spanadvocacy.org/staff

Our Programs

spanadvocacy.org/programs

Find Resources

spanadvocacy.org/resource-library

The Learning Portal

spanadvocacy.org/learning-portal

Our Affiliated Networks

spanadvocacy.org/affiliated-organizations

Find News

spanadvocacy.org/news-archive

Help Us Reach More Families



**Give
Today.**

95% of our program funding comes from grants. However, we need individual and corporate contributions to help us meet the quickly changing educational, mental health and healthcare needs of the most vulnerable families in our communities. And remember, since SPAN is also a trainer of professionals, your gift reverberates and can help families across the country! So, please give today by visiting our website at spanadvocacy.org/donate.



SPAN Parent Advocacy Network

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