



Strategic Plan  
2024-2028



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# Letter from the Executive Director

You spoke. We listened. What we heard was a call for CWS to be a force for change. Our [Strategic Plan for 2024-2028](#) sets the groundwork to answer that call.

CWS has a long history of deep community engagement. For this strategic planning process, we dove deeper, reached wider, and stretched our imaginations to encompass the breadth of feedback we received from the community. Our highest priority was to integrate the diversity, equity, and inclusion work we have been doing in every step of our process. I believe that shaped this plan to become a strong reflection of the community we serve.

I am encouraged by the amount of alignment we saw across multiple perspectives and cross-sections of our community. There was also strong clarity for where we need to be focused to strengthen our foundation and reach more people.

**“It centers the needs of the community we serve and incorporates feedback we received directly from survivors.”**

I’m very proud of the work that went into developing this new plan—a culmination of a year-long process—and the vision that it sets for our future as an organization. It centers the needs of the community we serve and incorporates feedback we received directly from survivors.

Some of the themes I’d like to highlight are:

- **Amplifying and elevating our existing work so it better serves our community.**
- **Ensuring our services remain welcoming, accessible, and culturally and linguistically responsive and specific.**
- **Enhancing access to services and creating more connection points for people in rural, youth, immigrant and refugee, BIPOC, and LGBTQIA2S+ communities.**
- **Creating Beloved Community to nurture connection, wellness, and joy.**
- **An understanding that wellness and hope are intertwined and essential for community healing.**
- **Outreach and partnerships are vital to our work.**

This plan creates an aspirational, yet attainable goalpost, and makes our values actionable. Particularly coming out of the worldwide pandemic, and a great deal of organizational change—having grown from 40 to over 70 staff members over the last 5 years—it was important to pause and reflect on where we have been and where we want to be now.

Thank you for being part of our community. We look forward to doing this work together.

With my deepest gratitude,  
**Melissa Erlbaum**  
Executive Director



# Our Foundations

## What Guides Us

As part of our planning process, we revisited and reaffirmed our mission and values. We considered how well these resonated with us and re-committed to fully integrating our mission, values, and equity lens into how we work every day.

### Our Mission

Breaking the isolation of domestic and sexual violence.

### Our Values

- Honor and Celebrate Survivors
- Establish Safety
- Build Community
- Center Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Create Social Change
- Practice Trauma-Informed Care

“

“I love how kind and caring everyone I’ve met has been. I feel very welcome and not judged, which is huge for me. It took a long time to seek help because others in my life haven’t believed me or been supportive, and to truly feel safe here emotionally has been very healing. I highly recommend your services to friends.”

-Participant

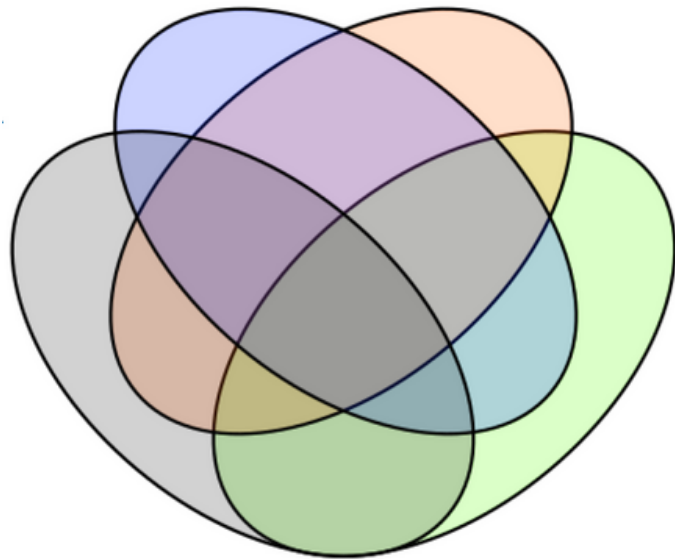


# Our Foundations

## Our Equity Lens

Before launching into planning, we worked closely with Leadership Training Initiative to develop a shared language and practice of considering structural, systemic, organizational, and personal forces that may be creating barriers to equity in our organization.

From this process we adopted a tool to support our conversations and decision-making. This is not a checklist - it is designed to help us **examine our potential impact, center BIPOC communities, invite ourselves and our stakeholders into empathy and curiosity, discover who else we could talk to, decide what other information we need, and slow our process down enough to make space for transparency and some level of consensus.**



The Lens explores equity from several viewpoints:

- Impact
- Distancing Behaviors
- Oppression
- White Supremacy Culture
- Intersectionality
- Power

## What We Offer

Clackamas Women's Services (CWS) serves survivors of domestic and sexual violence, elder abuse, stalking, dating violence, and human trafficking. In 1985, CWS grew out of neighbors opening their homes and sharing what they had in hopes of building a safer community for families. Since then, we've grown beyond shelter to offer a wide range of services for anyone experiencing domestic and sexual violence, child and elder abuse, stalking, dating violence, and trafficking, from initial crisis to long-term healing. We continue the legacy of working with survivors, community members, emergency responders, partner organizations, and businesses to build communities that honor and support survivors.

Our vision is that survivors are fully supported in healing and building resilience to achieve their goals for personal safety, wellness, autonomy, and family stability. CWS works toward cultural responsiveness through language access, visual representations, and cultural adaptations of services, cultural foods, holidays, traditions, and cultural practices. Our survivor-centered programs utilize a trauma-informed practice and individualized service model that effectively reduces barriers.

We work with community members, partner agencies, coordinated response teams, coalitions, and systems to build a holistic community that supports and uplifts survivors of domestic and sexual violence. CWS is the lead nonprofit agency at A Safe Place Family Justice Center providing approximately 75% of all intakes, crisis intervention, and ongoing supportive services. It is part of our DNA to work closely with our partner organizations to amplify our collective impact in the region.



“

“After I worked with you, I got my self-confidence back and I learned how to love myself.” -Participant

## Our Services

Services are available at A Safe Place Family Justice Center, The Village emergency shelter, and our community-based office. CWS staff are also located throughout Clackamas County at schools, DHS offices, Public and Behavioral Health Centers, and in rural communities via our mobile advocates and Promotoras Program.

### Individualized Support

Advocacy and case management, including:

- Emotional support
- Safety planning
- Legal advocacy and help filing for protective orders
- Help accessing community resources and navigating public systems
- Support with economic wellness and sustainability goals

### 24-hour Crisis and Support Line

Emotional support and safety planning for survivors. Consultation and support are also available for family, friends, and other service providers.

### Shelter and Housing

Connecting survivors with a supportive community and the space to rebuild their lives via emergency shelter, short and longer-term housing solutions, with ongoing case management and support.

### Counseling and Support Groups

Individual counseling and a range of support groups, including youth and family counseling, art-based therapy, parenting support, and trauma recovery groups.

### Children and Youth Services

Confidential individual, family, and group support for children and youth who have experienced family, sexual, or dating violence, and/or trafficking, including the Camp HOPE Oregon and Pathways to HOPE programs.

### Community Education and Prevention

Education about how to prevent domestic, dating, and sexual violence, including school-based violence prevention programming for K-12 students.

### Latinx Services

Culturally specific services for Latinx communities, along with investment in leadership development opportunities for Latinx survivors and staff.

“

**“You helped restore my self-worth. I did not value myself enough to do this, you helped me!!!”**

**-Participant**

# Approach to Planning

## Authentic Engagement

It was critical to us that any planning process be informed by the people we serve and the needs of our community. We also wanted to fully engage the ideas, perspectives, and passions of our dedicated staff throughout the planning process. The opportunities and challenges we face, and how we will address them, were revealed through a thoughtful process that brought in community voices and the active engagement of staff at all levels.

## Gathering Input

- Surveys, interviews, and listening sessions with survivors, program participants, community partners, volunteers, funders, and board members
- Engagement with staff via survey, workshops, and collecting ongoing staff feedback on the emerging plan contents
- Consideration of findings and themes from our Culture of Belonging Assessment, led by our consultant partners at Leadership Training Initiative

## Plan Development

- Guidance provided by Strategic Planning Core Team and Goal Teams, representing programs and staff perspectives across the organization
- CWS Board, Leadership Team, and Core Team participated in a planning retreat with ongoing review
- Staff leadership and work groups focused on specific goal areas
- Application of the Equity Lens in considering goals, strategies, and possible action steps

“

**“CWS has a deep belief in collaboration and commits to strengthening partnerships to the benefit of participants.”** -Partner Organization





# Approach to Planning

## What We Learned

As we collected input from our community and staff, we asked questions to uncover what we do well, where we can do better, and challenges we may face. Here are some highlights from what we heard.

### What we do well

- Our current mission and value statements resonate and provide strong guidance.
- CWS delivers essential services and programs that are thoughtful and high-quality.
- CWS has a strong reputation and models collaborative leadership.

### Opportunities to improve

- Partners and participants have many good ideas for how to enhance survivor advocacy services and other programs.
- There is a need to expand and strengthen organizational capacity.
- Barriers to accessing CWS services may include capacity limits, service gaps, external conditions, and a lack of community awareness and understanding of CWS.

### Challenges we may face

- As we grow, working to ensure our spaces, infrastructure, and staff are always ready to meet community need.
- Recruiting, retaining, and supporting a diverse staff.
- Supporting survivors in the face of community vulnerabilities such as the housing crisis, systemic injustices, and income inequality.

# Approach to Planning

## What We Learned

We also asked our community for ideas on what we should prioritize over the next five years. These emerging priorities were critical in informing our goals.

## Priorities for the next five years

- **Many strong ideas emerged to strengthen service to survivors, including:**
  - Enhance accessibility and service navigation for survivors.
  - Continue and enhance our commitment to whole-person healing and wellness.
  - Increase capacity of survivor advocacy services including counseling, housing and shelter services, youth and family services, legal services, and population-specific services.
- **Building on CWS's strong position in the community, there was a lot of energy around community engagement opportunities. Ideas included:**
  - Expand education and outreach for youth and adults with a focus on violence prevention.
  - Strengthen and leverage partnerships to meet our mission.
  - Invest in communications and outreach to increase community awareness and understanding of CWS.
- **Other recommendations focused on what we can do to strengthen our organizational capacity, including:**
  - Manage growth and build capacity, including an expansion of physical space.
  - Support and nurture staff, with a commitment to staff wellness.
  - Continue our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## Our Goals

The input we gathered and the conversations with staff led us to collaboratively identify seven important areas to focus on over the next five years. These goals are not a representation of ALL the work we do. They are major areas where we want to drive change and improve our ability to make a positive impact on our community. The following pages provide more detail for each of the goal areas.



# RAISE AWARENESS OF OUR MISSION AND SERVICES

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## DESCRIPTION

Promote a broader and deeper understanding of CWS and our services through community engagement, outreach, communications, and internal strategies.

## BACKGROUND

Understanding of, and familiarity with, CWS's mission and services is limited among some communities. Developing an approach to raising awareness of our agency will help us ensure that those in need can be connected to our services, our partnerships can continue to flourish and grow, and our community understands how we may be of service.

## STRATEGIES

1. Identify and embrace an organizational name that is welcoming for all who need us.
2. Increase awareness and understanding of CWS through strategic communications and marketing.
3. Enhance community engagement activities to increase awareness and understanding of CWS.



"Get the word out about CWS's services! -Participant

"[CWS should be] more visible/available in communities." -Partner

# IMPROVE ACCESS TO SERVICES

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## DESCRIPTION

Ensure our services are accessible, culturally and linguistically responsive and specific, and easy to navigate for historically underserved populations.

## BACKGROUND

In order to serve communities who might benefit from CWS's services, we must examine possible barriers to accessing our agency. People residing in rural areas, youth, and Latinx and BIPOC communities are especially important to reach. This requires examining the accessibility and cultural specificity of CWS and our services.

## STRATEGIES

- 1. Identify populations underserved by CWS, understand their needs, and align organizational capacity to serve these populations.**
- 2. Strengthen culturally and linguistically specific services.**
- 3. Enhance systems that facilitate access to CWS services.**
- 4. Strengthen and grow youth access to services.**



"Communities in unincorporated, rural, or wild areas are chronically underserved, and have existed there for generations." -Partner

"[We must] normalize accessing housing services in the community - not all who could benefit from intermittent support access it." -Partner

# EXPAND COMMUNITY PREVENTION

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## DESCRIPTION

Provide prevention and education across the lifespan (adult, family and youth) through training, outreach, and partnerships.

## BACKGROUND

CWS has an opportunity to create a through line and connection between areas of prevention, including community education, K-12 education, Latinx services, after an intervention has occurred to prevent future violence.

Clarifying who we seek to serve and the resources we can point people to will be an important part of these efforts.

## STRATEGIES

1. Strengthen K-12 prevention education and wraparound support for youth.
2. Increase offerings and partnerships to expand the reach of community education.
3. Increase access and inclusion to prevention programs.



"[The violence prevention school outreach programs] fill such an important gap in most district curricula. Expand!" -Board member

"[We should be] looking for upstream solutions for family violence and violence against women - prevention." -Partner

"Community education and prevention [should be a top priority for CWS]." -Board member

# DEVELOP SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES

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## DESCRIPTION

Address the need for specialized services to scale our sexual assault work to more effectively reach sexual assault survivors and provide the structural, programmatic, and staff capacity to meet the needs of sexual assault survivors.

## BACKGROUND

CWS's sexual assault services are underutilized relative to domestic violence services. Previous attempts to balance these services have not always been successful. We know there is need for services, advocacy, and outreach around sexual assault in Clackamas County, and CWS is primed to revisit developing these areas of work.

## STRATEGIES

- 1. Implement and champion best practices in sexual assault service delivery.**
- 2. Develop structure, capacity, and roles within the organization to deliver strong and sustainable sexual assault services.**
- 3. Scale in-person hospital response.**
- 4. Provide new and expanded sexual assault services to youth participants.**
- 5. Develop services specific to survivors of trafficking.**



"I see the need for expanded in-hospital response." -Partner

"[I see the need for] therapeutic services for people who've experienced sexual violence - support beyond housing." -Partner

# CREATE BELOVED COMMUNITY

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## DESCRIPTION

Create opportunities for connections that bolster wellness, healing, and develop skills to break isolation and nurture joy.

## BACKGROUND

Input from our community shows a desire for more connection and holistic services beyond crisis. There is an opportunity to leverage partnerships and current resources, and this will take deliberate focus to find ways to enrich existing programs and strengths.

## STRATEGIES

1. **Strengthen programming that focuses on building community centered on wellness and healing for survivors.**
2. **Develop programming that focuses on education and skill building for survivors.**
3. **Create opportunities that honor, develop, and leverage survivor leadership in alignment with our mission.**



"In an increasingly isolated world, [we need] projects that aim to really connect people and build networks." -Staff member

"[We should prioritize building] community connections (events, support groups)." -Staff member



# ENHANCE STAFF SUPPORT AND WELLNESS

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## DESCRIPTION

Develop a holistic approach to staff wellness by fostering a community of care, connection, and belonging while leading with transparency, supporting the continued growth and development of staff, and building supportive structures and practices.

## BACKGROUND

CWS has an opportunity to explore structural and cultural changes that would better support staff, whose health ultimately impacts the health of the agency and the communities we serve.

## STRATEGIES

- 1. Cultivate belonging for all staff.**
- 2. Practice transparent and responsive leadership.**
- 3. Support staff growth and professional passions.**
- 4. Build structures that support holistic balance for all staff.**
- 5. Foster a culture of connection.**

“

“[We must work to prevent] staff burnout so they can keep doing the day-to-day work to support participants.” -Staff member

“[We must foster a] workplace wellness culture.” -Staff member

“[We should] expand mental health support for staff.” -Staff member

“[We should develop greater] staff diversity that more closely reflects the community we serve.” -Staff member

# EXPAND AND ENHANCE OUR SPACES TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY

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## DESCRIPTION

Cultivate our spaces in a way that is designed for survivors, meets program and workspace needs, creates more connection across programs, and supports staff.

## BACKGROUND

CWS was part of the collaborative effort to spearhead the opening of Oregon's first Family Justice Center (FJC) ten years ago. The physical space no longer adequately services the needs of the community. Additionally, CWS has outgrown all our physical spaces, including the emergency shelter. We explored various possibilities for how to approach these challenges and decided a phased approach will allow us to meet our immediate needs and find a future home to accommodate the FJC collaboration that is so valuable to survivors.

## STRATEGIES

1. Develop and implement a phased approach to realize a new central CWS space with A Safe Place - Family Justice Center.
2. Create welcoming and supportive spaces for community and staff.
3. Improve and adapt shelter spaces to meet staff and participant needs.



"[Create] a bigger more trauma-informed space that can feel cozy to those coming in and working." -Staff member

"[We must prioritize] finding a new space that fits our expanding organization and prioritizes survivor needs." -Staff member

## Putting Our Plan Into Practice

Our strategic plan will serve as a roadmap to help us improve outcomes for survivors, bolster community prevention, support staff, and meet our mission to break the isolation of domestic and sexual violence. In order for this plan to serve as an effective guide, we will measure our progress and adapt our approach as needed.

### **Commitment to our Mission, Values, and Equity Lens**

- Building a stronger connection to our work by aligning with our mission
- Better integrating our Values into the everyday “how” of our work
- Using the Equity Lens consistently to evaluate and make decisions

### **Assessing and Adapting Plan**

- Regular process for Board and staff review of strategic plan progress
- Identifying and addressing areas where we are at risk of not making progress on our goals
- Annual adaptation and modification of the plan as needed to address changing needs

### **Development of Annual Goal Work Plans**

- Populate Goal Work Plans with refined Action Steps, Equity Impact, Responsible Parties, Timeframe, and Metrics
- Identify “champions” for each goal area to oversee plan progress
- Develop annual work plans for each goal area

### **Remaining Accountable to Our Community**

- Leadership team to help navigate future vision and partner engagement for physical space
- Annual updates for our community and partners on the plan progress
- Board and staff regular review of plan progress
- Building strategic plan components into employee action plans, as needed

# Credits

This plan was developed with the input of staff, survivors, participants, Board members, partner organizations, and many external stakeholders.

We are grateful to all who contributed their thoughts and shared their experiences.

For more information about CWS, please visit [www.cwsor.org](http://www.cwsor.org)

## Strategic Planning Core Team

Amy Doud, Deputy Director  
Melissa Erlbaum, Executive Director  
Josie Greer, Development Manager  
Cat Koch, Counseling & Youth Program Director  
Kelly Renshaw, Human Resources Coordinator  
Skylar Van Blarcom, Community for Safe Kids Coordinator  
Liliana Weissman, Housing Services Manager

## Admin Team

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Amy Doud, Deputy Director  
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Melissa Erlbaum, Executive Director  
Gabby Gomez, Community Based Program Director  
Cat Koch, Counseling & Youth Program Director  
Brenda Kinoshita, Director of Development & Communications

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### Raise Awareness of Our Mission and Services

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### Increase Access to our Services

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Hannah Glaser  
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### Expand Community Prevention

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### Develop Sexual Assault Services

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### Create Beloved Community

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Bethann Pospischil  
Val Stewart

### Enhance Staff Support and Wellness

Kelly Renshaw, Lead  
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Amy Doud  
Cass Dufresne  
Karla Gonzalez  
Jen Hopkinson

### Expand and Enhance Our Spaces to Serve Our Community

Melissa Erlbaum, Lead  
Amy Doud  
Bethany Ellis  
Brenda Kinoshita  
Cat Koch

## CWS Board Members

Kari Schneider-Hille, President  
Michael Wu, Vice President  
Jaclyn Sarna, Secretary  
Scott Davis, Treasurer  
Jerry Kissler  
Laurie Cremona-Wagner

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