



# We Are Here.

CENTER FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION

2017 REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY

*The #MeToo movement sparked a global conversation about sexual assault.*

**#WeAreHere**

*That's the message we've been working hard to deliver over the past year, and one we've been sharing with clients, donors, community stakeholders, and partner agencies.*

## 2017 was a year of growth for Center for Women in Transition.

Growth can be both exciting and challenging. But in the mission-centered sphere, it's a necessity. As the local experts in domestic violence and sexual assault response we must push ourselves to evolve alongside the people and communities we serve.

So we evaluate our services often, looking for ways to improve our continuum of care. We listen to and integrate community feedback to ensure our programs are empowering and accessible. Recognizing that the brave survivors who come to us deserve the best, we invest in staff development and education.

Your voice in this work is crucial, as it informs how and where we grow. You asked what we were doing 'upstream' to stop violence before it starts, and we listened. We're proud to say **We Are Here** for local youth, working in schools to implement programming which promotes respectful relationships and healthy masculinity.

On behalf of the agency, thank you for investing in our work and pushing us to grow.



Beth Larsen  
Executive Director



Vicki Rosenberg  
Board Chair

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# We Are Here.

## Services For Our Community

### CRISIS INTERVENTION

- 24-hour help line
- Emergency shelter
- Sexual assault forensic exams
- Emergency walk-in services

### SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

- Case management
- Supportive housing
- Legal advocacy
- Support groups for adults and children
- Trauma therapy for adults and children
- Wardrobe for Work

### PREVENTION & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Girls on the Run
- Engaging Men and Boys Call to Action Team
- Coaching Boys Into Men
- LIVERESPECT Coaching Healthy and Respectful Manhood
- School violence prevention, including educator training and curriculum lending
- Prevention Pays: Domestic Violence and the Workplace training



# Growing alongside our community.

*Extensive conversations between  
Center for Women in Transition’s  
leadership and community stakeholders  
contributed to our growth in 2017.*

We identified several areas in which we could expand or enhance services and programs to better meet the needs of the families we serve.

### 2017 FOCUS AREAS

- + Responsiveness: help-line and walk-ins
- + Shelter & Housing
- + Sexual Assault Forensic Nurse Examinations
- + Therapy
- + Violence Prevention: Engaging Men and Boys
- + Collaboration & Systems Change



# When we say, We Are Here, we mean it.

“After years of emotional and verbal abuse, my ex-husband hit me for the first time. I called the CWIT help line and spoke with an advocate. She immediately arranged for us to meet and discuss options. It was validating to hear that my family and I deserve a safe environment.”

## **Our agency stands ready to respond 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.**

Our 24-hour help line is often the first place clients interact with our agency. Trained advocates field questions about housing and shelter, legal issues, and more. While each day is different, the atmosphere we work to promote is the same. Our community knows that they can count on us for professional, confidential assistance and support, at no cost to the survivor.

The Michigan Incident Crime Report indicates there were 3,638 reports of domestic violence made to law enforcement in Ottawa and Allegan counties last year.

## In 2017, we responded

2,199	Σα	668
CALLS TO OUR 24-HOUR HELP LINE		WALK-IN CLIENTS

## In 2017, we provided

4,845	Σα	20,293
NIGHTS OF EMERGENCY SHELTER		NIGHTS OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING TO LOCAL FAMILIES

Access to safe, affordable housing is crucial for survivors of abuse. But with complex needs comes additional barriers to finding that safe space. **We Are Here** to help by offering emergency shelter and a supportive housing program. We know the first weeks and months after leaving an abusive partner are crucial. Your support allowed us to add to our Client Assistance Fund—to help families meet those initial hurdles. From first month’s rent and security deposit, transportation assistance, or childcare costs—we do what’s necessary to keep families safe and independent.

“For me, the third time I left was the final time. Once again, I was offered a placement at shelter. I’m so grateful that CWIT welcomes victims back to the shelter even if they have stayed there before. There’s no judgment, just acceptance and a genuine concern for your well-being.”







## #WeAreHere,

*providing confidential rape exams  
performed by specially trained forensic  
nurses and trauma therapy for victims  
of sexual assault including adult  
survivors of childhood abuse.*

The Sexual Assault Forensic Nurse Examiner program is survivor-focused, trauma-informed, and fully compliant with legal requirements should the client decide to report to police. Your contributions allow us to provide sexual assault exams at no cost, making this service accessible to all.

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65

INDIVIDUALS CAME TO CWIT FOR SEXUAL  
ASSAULT FORENSIC NURSE EXAMS IN 2017

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“One of my clients was a young woman from a local school who was date raped by a friend. She came in for an exam, and brought about half of her sorority sisters for support. Because we put client needs and healing first, this wasn’t a problem.

I focused on the exam and the client, while the advocate spoke with her friends about available resources and next steps.”

–CWIT nurse

## Trauma-informed therapy

Crisis services—the 24-hour help line and shelter—have a critical place in our work; but the majority of our clients aren’t able to focus on healing immediately after leaving an abusive relationship. So where and when does healing happen? Those questions prompted us to evaluate and add staffing to our therapy program. **We Are Here** for survivors of trauma, establishing a solid continuum of care that lasts as long as our clients need us. Your support allowed us to add a full-time Domestic Violence therapist. She joins a team that includes a full-time Sexual Assault therapist and a full-time Children’s Therapist. We also offer group therapy programs for adults and children which promote healing and provide a sense of community.

“This has been an amazing healing process. I never thought I would actually be able to move on from everything, but I have, and I was given fantastic support.”

In 2017, we established our first therapy group in partnership with Allegan County Correction Center. Many of the clients who participated were incarcerated for crimes committed during an abusive relationship. Recognizing that our work intersects with the work of other community partners, we’ve pledged to bring our services and expertise wherever they are needed.



### Therapy by the numbers

38

CHILDREN LEARNED  
HOW TO COPE FROM  
THE TRAUMA AND  
EXPOSURE TO  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

76

ADULTS PARTICIPATED  
IN DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE THERAPY

89

ADULTS FOUND  
HEALING THROUGH  
SEXUAL ASSAULT  
THERAPY

# Engaging youth in violence prevention

The most recent Ottawa County Youth Assessment Survey revealed the prevalence of dating violence for local teenagers. Among the 46% of students who had a boyfriend or girlfriend in the year of the study, 10% of male respondents and 6% of female respondents reported being hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their partner. And 15.3% of respondents reported being called degrading names. Without intervention, these patterns of abuse will continue into adulthood.

## Measuring Impact

Initial results from a partnership with Spring Lake High School football and West Ottawa wrestling teams show athletes are more likely to identify name calling or insulting a dating partner as very abusive behavior

# #WeAreHere,

*expanding our violence prevention work to include programs specifically for men and boys.*

*We know our mission can not be achieved without their participation and advocacy.*

*A grant from the Office of Violence Against Women enabled us to implement Coaching Boys Into Men; a program that gives high*

*school athletic coaches the skills to hold conversations with their athletes about*

*healthy relationships, respect, consent and vital bystander intervention skills.*

# Strengthening our capacity to respond

Intersectionality is a popular word around our agency, and for good reason. It requires a coordinated community effort to meet the needs of the populations we serve. A renewed commitment to partnership means **We Are Here** to share our expertise and to learn from experts in other fields. Education is key—so we’ve invested in staff training on issues including human trafficking, immigration, and gender identity. Collaboration with Out on the Lakeshore and Holland Area Pride make our services more visible and accessible for the LGBTQIA community.

Our Prevention Pays training educates employees, managers, and human resource professionals to recognize and address the effects of domestic violence in the workplace. Call (616) 494-1741 to discuss how we can customize our curriculum to meet your company’s needs.

We would like to thank the following partners who have worked closely with us over the last year to enhance our community’s capacity to recognize, respond to, and prevent domestic and sexual violence:

- |   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Allegan County Coordinating Council on Domestic Violence (ACCCDV)       | Holland Young Lives  | Management Association (LHRMA)                               | Ottawa County School Psychologists Committee     |
| Allegan High School   | Hope Church  | Latin American’s United for Progress (LAUP)                  | Out on the Lakeshore                             |
| Arbor Circle  | Hope College   | Lighthouse Immigration Advocates                             | Pine Rest EAP                                    |
| Bethany Christian Services  | Hope College Emersonian Fraternity                                 | Legal Aid of West Michigan                                   | Plainwell Community Schools                      |
| Challenge of Children   | Hope College STEP (Students Teaching and Empowering Peers) Program | Love in Action   | Spring Lake Public Schools                       |
| Careerline Tech Center  | Hope College TRiO Upward Bound                                     | Nestlings Diaper Bank  | The Salon Professional Academy                   |
| Fellowship Reformed Church  | Housing Next   | Ottagan Addiction Recovery (OAR)                             | Wee Friends Child Care and Learning Center       |
| Gentex  | Imago Dei  | Ottawa Allegan Human Trafficking Task Force                  | West Ottawa Public Schools                       |
| Good Samaritan Ministries   | Kelloggsville High School  | Ottawa County Community Mental Health (CMH)                  | West Coast Chamber                               |
| Grand Haven Area Public Schools   | Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance (LEDA)                         | Ottawa County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) | Western Theological Seminary                     |
| GVSU Women’s Center (Gayle R. Davis Center for Women and Gender Equity) | Lakeshore Alliance Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (LAADSV)   | Ottawa County Department of Public Health                    | Zeeland Public Schools - Zeeland Venture Academy |
| Grand Valley State University   | Lakeshore Human Resources  |  |  |
| Herman Miller Inc   |  |  |  |
| Holland Hospital  |  |  |  |



# You Are Here.

Your gifts of time and talent are the backbone of our success.

## 19,486 HOURS

WERE CONTRIBUTED BY OVER 190 VOLUNTEERS IN

Volunteers answered the help line, advocated for clients during sexual assault exams, staffed our front desk, greeted guests at agency events, and cheered at the starting line of the Girls on the Run 5k event. Your diverse personal and professional backgrounds extend our reach and further our mission.

***Thank you for being here for local survivors of abuse.***

Want to learn more?

Find information about volunteering on our website at [cwitmi.org](http://cwitmi.org)

Volunteer positions available in these areas:

Advisory councils  
Board of Directors  
Child care  
Data entry  
Event committees  
Food preparation for groups  
Girls on the Run coaches  
and volunteers

Holiday programs  
Interns  
Maintenance  
Receptionist  
Therapy  
Transportation  
Wardrobe to Work

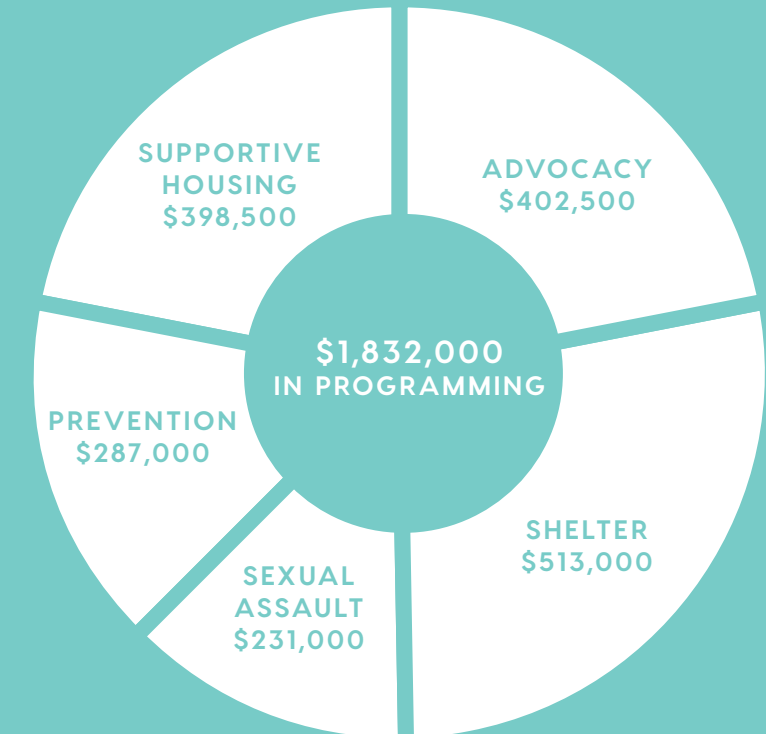
# Your Investment.

## REVENUES

Contributions	\$912,000
Grants and United Way	\$1,281,700
Fees	\$141,600
Designated Awards	\$84,100
Other	\$15,400
TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE	\$2,434,800

## EXPENSES

Program Services	\$1,831,500
Fundraising	\$246,000
Management General Administration	\$192,000
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$2,269,500
NET OPERATING REVENUE	\$165,300



*Sharon\* was a client at Center for Women in Transition around 15 years ago. For the first time, she's*

## *sharing her story.*

When did I first question my relationship with my ex? Before I married him, actually. I remember vividly a day when we were dating and Jay\* had gone to take a nap right after we ordered pizza. When it arrived, I couldn't decide if I should wake him up to eat or let him sleep a little longer. I wasn't sure either answer would be right but I let him sleep. When he woke up, he was furious. He shoved me onto the bed, grabbed a pillow, and held it tightly over my face. I couldn't breathe and I began to panic. He pushed down even harder and then let go.

We met in a couples' sports league and I was attracted to him instantly. He was friendly, had a good sense of humor, and shared my religious beliefs. I was a little older, around 28, and definitely ready to get married and start a family. Unfortunately, I settled for the wrong man. There were a number of red flags over the course of our dating relationship. He convinced me to stop playing sports because he didn't like the

idea of other men looking at me. And he also wanted me to stop attending church. We broke up for a short time because of his controlling nature and verbal abuse.

After a while, Jay asked to meet. He convinced me we were better together. My family noticed how controlling he was but didn't raise any objections to our marriage, especially once we had kids on the way.

My pregnancy was high risk as I was expecting twins. I was delighted to become a mother but nervous about Jay's increasing volatility. He seemed especially irritated when I needed to rest or asked him to take on household chores. My doctor advised me to stop working but I didn't dare raise that topic with Jay.

Midway through my pregnancy, Jay became angry with me for not wanting to go to the store with him. He had offered to go alone and even left the house, but turned around to come home and berate me. He grabbed a knife from the kitchen and started threatening me. I ran towards the bathroom and tried to lock the door. He was able to open the door and began waving the knife around. He threw it

towards me and it wedged into the top of my foot. Jay immediately became apologetic telling me it was an accident and saying he never meant to hurt me. We drove to the med center in silence and I told the nurse I had an accident in the kitchen. Jay stood right next to me the entire time, giving me no opportunity to tell the truth or ask for help.

From that point, I walked on eggshells. Jay loved to manipulate and abuse me mentally. He would ask questions-testing me to see if I gave the 'appropriate' response. The anxiety led to my being placed on bed rest. My water broke 9 weeks early and my twins were born before their lungs were fully developed. They lived in the NICU for about a month.

Shortly after the twins came home, things escalated once again. My parents insisted I document the abuse and advised me not to return to Jay.

What followed were a couple years of back and forth between living with Jay and living with my parents. I would live with my parents until Jay called promising he would do better and saying he deserved to have his children living with him. Every time I went back ended with him verbally abusing and physically assaulting me.

My parents grew tired of the boomerang pattern and eventually advised me that I was no longer welcome to live in their home. They remained supportive, but just couldn't handle the emotional burden of watching me return to the abuse. Jay had also started insisting on keeping one of the twins when I left to live with them, ensuring that I couldn't completely sever contact and start over.

At my insistence, we enrolled in counseling through our church to give the marriage one last try. He participated and showed commitment to working on his issues. It was at this time I became pregnant with our son. Before I had even given birth, we had split up again.

*I called Center for Women in Transition's help line and was offered a place at their emergency shelter. It was such a compassionate, empowering environment. I started attending support groups and developed a community of women who understood my situation.*

CWIT helped me get into an affordable apartment. It seemed like things were looking up but of course Jay was still contacting me. We saw each other on a limited basis because of the twins. I didn't want to ruin their relationship with their father.

I left my apartment and moved back with Jay. Within a few weeks he lashed out physically. This time over the menial task of bottle returns. Equipped with some tools and education from my time at CWIT, I knew I needed to leave for good. Thankfully there's no limit on the number of times you can contact CWIT and I was able to receive services again. I filed for divorce and received legal assistance from a lawyer who donated some of her time to the agency.

My family, friends, faith and CWIT were crucial in getting me through the hard times and reminding me I wasn't alone. That encouragement gave me the strength to stay away for good. The power of an organization like CWIT isn't just the direct assistance. It's the way they help you make connections to build a base of support. I'll never forget the year I was a recipient of their Adopt-a-Family holiday program. It was amazing to me that somewhere in the community a donor cared enough about

my family enough to include us in their holiday traditions. Again, it was another reminder that I wasn't alone and there were people I've never even met supporting me on my path to healing.

Jay never contested the divorce. We agreed to share custody of our three children, and communicated mostly through phone or email. I was able to forgive him for the pain he caused. I'll never forget, but I feel at peace now.

Nothing excuses the hurt Jay caused, but I was able to understand him better after I found out that Jay's father had been physically and verbally abusive to his wife. It was a light bulb moment for me seeing that pattern of abuse passing from one generation to the next. It reaffirmed my decision to leave. The last thing I wanted was my kids, especially my son, watching their father abuse me and believing that was acceptable. I ended the cycle in my family and I'm thankful each day as I watch my children grow into respectful, peaceful members of the community.





# CENTER FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION

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Allegan  
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(269) 673.2299

24-Hour Help Line (800) 848.5991  
Hablamos Español (866) 728.2131

Center for Women in Transition's mission is to respond to, reduce, and prevent domestic and sexual violence. This mission will be achieved through education, collaboration, and advocacy with crisis and supportive services to victims and survivors.

[cwitmi.org](http://cwitmi.org)  
[facebook.com/cwitmi](https://facebook.com/cwitmi)

**LIVE UNITED**



**Community Partner**