

***“Improving the quality of life for all
citizens of St. Joseph County
through collaborative efforts.”***

2024

Annual Report to the Community

Adult Services Network

Child Death Review

**Early Childhood Workgroup/
Great Start Collaborative**

Housing Task Force

Project Connect Committee

Substance Abuse Task Force



**ST. JOSEPH COUNTY
HUMAN SERVICES
COMMISSION**

2024 HSC Members

Executive Committee

Chair, Cameron Bullock

Executive Director, Pivotal

Vice Chair, Stacy Linihan

Director, Covered Bridge Healthcare

Past Chair, Kathy Olsen

Quality Assurance & Project Coordinator / WDB
Liaison, Michigan Works! Southwest

Member at Large, Rebecca Burns

Health Officer, BHSJ Community Health Agency

Member at Large, Courtney Iobe

Director, Community Action Agency

Member at Large, Stephanie Zann

Director, GSC, Help Me Grow St. Joe

St. Joseph County Commission, Fiduciary

Rick Shaffer, County Commissioner

HSC Body

Lee Herschberger

Exec. Dir, Operations, Three Rivers Health Beacon
Health System

Allen Balog

Director, St. Joseph County Transportation Authority

Teresa Belote

Superintendent of Schools, SJC ISD

Lynn Coursey

Community Development Coordinator, Goodwill
Industries of Southwestern Michigan

Christian Garcia

Aetna Better Health of Michigan

Deborah Hackworth

Director, Domestic and Sexual Abuse Services

Anita Harper

Executive Director, Keystone Place, Inc.

Tonya Howden

V.P. of Student Services, Glen Oaks Community College

Matie James

Citizen Representative

Karen Marcath

Director, Department of Health & Human Services

Kevin Kane / Judge David Tomlinson

St. Joseph County Juvenile Court

Rachel Kowalski

SJC Superintendent's Association Colon Community Schools

Lindsay Richardson

Executive Director, Sturgis Area Community Foundation

Pamela Riley

Executive Director, SJC Commission on Aging

Luis Rosado

St. Joseph County Commissioner

Message from the 2024 Human Services Commission Chair

Greetings!

It's time to celebrate another year of the dedicated efforts and accomplishments of the St. Joseph County Human Services Commission. We especially want to thank the task force and work group members for their commitment and dedication in enhancing and filling gaps in human services within our community.

We have continued to take great strides as we grew the SJC Resources Google Group, building and strengthening community connections to address immediate needs; and the task forces have been instrumental in keeping the valuable Resource Guide updated. Additionally, there has been a renewed focus on addressing the need for more affordable housing throughout the county.

The 2024 annual report highlights the past year's accomplishments of the St. Joseph County Human Services Commission, its task forces, and work groups.

Please join us as we celebrate our progress and move into 2024!

Best regards,

Cameron Bullock, Pivotal

2024 Chair, St. Joseph County Human Services Commission

Mission & Vision

The **MISSION** of the SJC HSC is to “coordinate and leverage collaborative efforts to improve the quality of life for all citizens.”

Our **VISION** is to facilitate “seamless and efficient access to services that support individual, family, and community needs.”

The Purpose of the HSC

The St. Joseph County Human Services Commission (HSC) was established by the St. Joseph County Commission in 1995 as the single multi-purpose collaborative for St. Joseph County. Their resolution authorized SJC Human Services Commission to:

- Forge alliances
- Create a shared vision
- Mobilize resources for services to families whose needs are being met by multiple agencies

Currently HSC is comprised of 20 member agencies working together to coordinate health and human services across systems. HSC fosters collaboration and relationships among agencies to prevent duplication of services and provide better service to our citizens.

The HSC does this work through established task forces and workgroups.

To learn more about the work of the HSC, contact Collaborative Coordinator Laura Brott, at 269-625-1820 or BrottL@michigan.gov.

"Connection" Tools at your Fingertips

"Our agency appreciates all the resource tools and services the HSC provides for our county. We use them virtually every day." - SJC Resources Google Group member

"Covering multiple counties in our region, I've noticed that St. Joseph County really has it together for resource connection among agencies and is a "best practice" model for other counties!"

SJC Resources Google Group member



With over 500 front line workers across the county in this email chain, **SJC Resources Google Group** continues to meet non-traditional needs countywide.

"Needs are met quickly without the hindrance of paperwork!"-

SJC Housing Task Force member



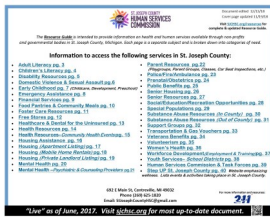
The **Community Resource Roundtable** quickly connects current agency and organization staff, providing a snapshot of services available in the county and the faces that provide these services. Over **90** front line workers attended the roundtable in 2024.

"The round table is such a great event! I learn so much and I am able to pass this information on to those I serve."

"Your county works so well together! Your communication and how you partner together is stellar! You don't see that in every county. -Roundtable attendees



St Joseph County Human Services Commission on Facebook is one more avenue to connect to the public and push information out about the many events and resources in St. Joseph County. The page has 1,817 page followers. Popular posts include monthly food distribution locations and Thanksgiving meals.



St Joseph County's comprehensive **Community Resource Guide** is located on the HSC website. This is a live document regularly updated with current services. Popular pages include the food resources, free store hours, parent resources, and apartment complexes.

"I sure appreciate this county's grassroots effort to collect information about the services available and share the information with front line workers and the public"

- SJC Resources Google Group member



The HSC calendar of supportive events and services includes community events, food pantry and free store hours, support & recovery groups, and more. Users can add events directly to their own calendars from the site.

"I am on this calendar ALL the time. Thank you!! - SJC Task Force on Family Violence member

The HSC website was accessed by over 1,000 users each month in 2024.

Add the HSC website onto your mobile phone home screen or add as a favorite on your desktop!

www.sjcHumanServices.com



2024 SJC Community Resource Roundtable

Read what are participants saying about the roundtable...



"A great opportunity to learn about resources available in our community and connect with local service providers."

"The Roundtable is a great event to network at and learn more about organizations in our county."

"A great opportunity to hear about the needs and services available through our community organizations in a condensed format. A great event to make connections at!"

"The Roundtable is a great learning experience to broaden the capacity of any agency or church group in service to the community!"

"This is a great way for each resource to explain a little about their programs and what they offer."

"I appreciated being able to pick up flyers for the individuals we work with as well as connecting with agencies who could assist some of our clients and other members of the community."

"The Roundtable was very informative. I gained a much better understanding of the work being done in St. Joseph County, the resources available to support and empower people in need, and [it] inspired me to learn more about the work being done in our community."

The SJC Resources Google Email Group

was created among the task forces and workgroups in November 2016 and has grown to over 500 caring individuals and professionals working on the front lines in St. Joseph County across many human services agencies, groups, and faith based organizations. The group email service is used to share agency updates, upcoming events, and request help finding a service or meeting a need.

* Fewer requests are coming into the Google Group for furniture and households goods. This can likely be attributed to the increase awareness agencies and front line workers have of Hope United's Restored Hope and free store ministries in the county.

**Front line workers in St. Joseph County can
request to join the SJC Resources email group by emailing
BrottL@michigan.gov**

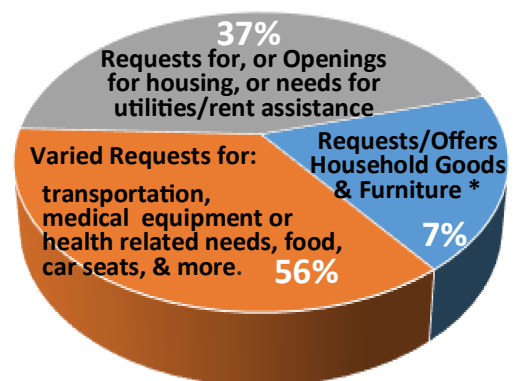
541 Google Group posts during 2024:

Offers of Assistance 198

Requests for Help 166

Information Shared & Agency Updates 90

Event Sharing Posts 87



2024 Project Connect & Veteran Stand Down

Project Connect is a collaboration of the SJC Human Services Commission, its task forces, and other agencies serving St. Joseph County. The 17th Annual Project Connect was held October 11, 2024 at the fairgrounds in Centreville. It was held in conjunction with a Veteran Stand Down.

Event Impact:

- 252 households attended
- 571 persons were impacted (includes household members not present)
- 90% of attendees reside within St. Joseph County
- 91% of households completing an exit survey indicated they connected at the event to a resource to help with their current needs
- 77 new households attended that did not attend in 2023
- 76 veterans attended
- Average household size was 3 persons
- Average age of attendee was 56-65 years old
- 15% of households had less than 12 years of education
- 31 households were currently homeless
- 3 households were in process of being evicted
- 64 attendees were currently unemployed
- 56 % of attendees sought food assistance
- 23% of attendees sought healthcare assistance

Project Connect is a community resource fair for individuals and families who are low income, homeless, and/or veterans to give them a hand up and improve their quality of life. Free items, services, information, and help is available on site at this one-day event.

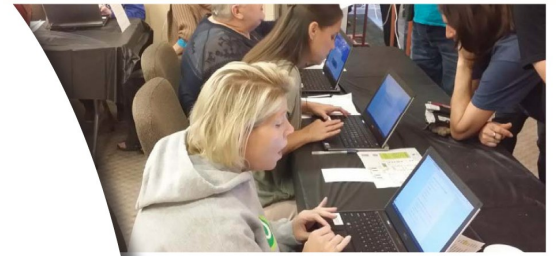
Services Provided at 2024 Project Connect:

- 30 rides provided to and from the event by SJCTA, Pivotal, or Grace Sturgis
- 330 meals served
- 82 service agencies participated
- 250 hygiene kits provided
- 250 commodities boxes and 200 fresh food boxes distributed
- 55 shots administered
- 134+ health screenings provided

2024 Project Connect & Stand Down Planning Committee

*Chair: Laura Brott, SJC Human Services Commission
BrottL@michigan.gov*

Angela Anderson, Community Action
Joshua Reetz, Community Action
Laura Jones, Community Action
Bethenie Letts, Community Action
Stephanie Belote, Community Healing Center
Jordan Brinker/ Maria Williams, US Department of Veterans Affairs
Michelle Boudreau, South Michigan Food Bank
Holly Cerny, Pivotal
Marci Goodman, St. Joseph County Transportation Authority
Jill Gunn, Hope United
Aimmee Mullendore, BHSJ Community Health Agency
Lynette Page, Michigan Works! Southwest
Susan Pyles, DHHS- MYOI Program
Amanda Johnson, Covered Bridge Healthcare
Stephanie Zann, Help Me Grow St. Joe
Carol Dornhecker, St. Joseph County Transportation Authority
Debbie Stiles, Community Volunteer



Housing Coordinator Update

(This report covers a two-year period from July 2023 through June 2025)



Clayton Lyczynski II was hired with ARPA funding in July 2023 to fulfill a two-year St. Joseph County Housing Coordinator role.

In this role, Clayton was responsible for coordinating efforts to move the work of the St. Joseph County Housing Plan forward. The multi-pronged housing plan developed by the Southcentral Michigan Planning Council in 2021, focused on three goals:

- Maintaining a diversity of housing options for all residents of St. Joseph County.
- Increasing available housing in the county for those who need options with less maintenance.
- Collaboration to better promote the county's amenities to potential residents.

One of Clayton's largest thrusts was his pursuit of grants to help maintain and increase housing stock. Clayton spent considerable time researching, planning, and pursuing MSHDA MINeighborhood funding. Some of his activities included actively participating on the State's Region J Housing Planning Committee and the Housing Eco-system sub-committee. While Clayton was engaged in the beginning stages with the City of Sturgis seeking funds, the Sturgis Neighborhood Program eventually took the lead in applying for a \$200,000 rehab grant. He also assisted the Village of Constantine and Mendon in their pursuit of rehab grants in the amount of \$200,000 each, including gathering letters of intent. The Village of Constantine was awarded this funding. Three Rivers' grant writer worked closely with Clayton to apply for multiple grants, including \$400,000 toward home rehab, and a \$1.5million infrastructure grant. Although the infrastructure grant was denied, the rehab funding was awarded.

Clayton helped promote many housing opportunities and played both minor and major roles in bringing more housing projects to St. Joseph County. He promoted dozens of new apartments in Centreville, White Pigeon, and Three Rivers. The Three Rivers rental properties included an investment in excess of \$9 million dollars from Allen Edwin Homes to build out a neighborhood. Clayton was asked to speak publicly at City Commission meetings and also reached out to individual commissioners to share the details of the investment. According to Executive Director Tiffany Wagler, Clayton played a critical role in helping her relaunch efforts to secure funding for the Rooted Safe House (for children transitioning into foster care). This initiative was impacted by his assistance connecting her with the Sturgis Area Community Foundation. Another non-profit organization that Clayton worked with closely was Hope United, and the organization's efforts to create Tiny Home Villages through their church network. Clayton was supportive in multiple ways—attending meetings and sharing information in the community, as well as attending a multi-day trip to Minnesota, to visit a development that the local plan is modeled after.

There were two large projects for which Clayton was very active and is expected to help bring those projects to completion. The first was the development of an entire block on S. Main Street in Three Rivers, for Veteran apartments. The other was helping a startup company, Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI), build new homes for under \$200,000. Clayton's role was (and will continue to be) to create a system that leads to home kits with XL panels which will increase the quality and number of homes while lowering the overall cost. This is expected to be an industry disrupter that will have considerable impact on the housing crisis.

In regards to the St. Joseph County Housing Plan's goal to promote the county's amenities to potential residents, Clayton's "Community Connector" Facebook page complements the Sturgis and Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce pages as the three entities have diligently worked to promote the businesses, services, and events available in St. Joseph County. Promotion helps the curb appeal of the county, builds retention of current residents, and helps our local businesses and services succeed.

With all County contracts coming to an end, Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI) has brought Clayton on as their new Director of Business Development and Community Relations. He will also continue his career as an insurance agent.

More information regarding the St. Joseph County Housing Plan and Clayton's 2023-2025 monthly housing reports can be found on the St. Joseph County Human Services Commission website: <https://sjchumanservices.com/housing-plan/>.

Child Death Review

Co-Chair: Brian Stears, St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department, StearsB@stjosephcountymi.org

Co-Chair: Madonna Hilarides, BHSJ Community Health Agency, hilaridesm@bhsj.org

Participating Agencies:

- BHSJ Community Health Agency
- Pivotal
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse Services
- Michigan Public Health Institute
- Michigan State Police
- SJC Prosecuting Attorney's Office
- SJC Human Services Commission
- SJC Intermediate School District
- St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department
- Sturgis Fire Department
- Sturgis Hospital
- Sturgis Police Department
- Three Rivers Health– Beacon Health System
- Three Rivers Police Department

This interdisciplinary team of medical staff, law enforcement, and other professionals, reviews child deaths within St. Joseph County to determine if these deaths of 0-18 years olds were preventable. When appropriate, they suggest community-wide prevention education to prevent future deaths.

- ◆ 4 cases were reviewed in 2024; two natural, one transportation-related, and one where the manner of death was undetermined.

Great Start Collaborative/Early Childhood Workgroup

Chair: Stephanie Zann, Great Start Collaborative/ISD, szann@sjcisd.org

Participating Agencies:

- Aetna Better Health of Michigan
- Area Preschool Providers / Child Care Programs
- BHSJ Community Health Agency
- Community Action
- Council for Prevention of Child Abuse/Neglect
- Covered Bridge Healthcare
- Dept. of Health and Human Services
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse Services
- Kinship Care
- Local School Districts
- Michigan Alliance for Families
- Pivotal
- Pregnancy Helpline of Three Rivers
- Southwest Child Care Resources
- SJC Human Services Commission
- SJC Intermediate School District
Great Start Readiness Program
Early Headstart & Childcare Partnerships
Early On
Special Education
Family Coalition
- SJC Probate Court
- Sturgis Pregnancy Helpline
- Three Rivers Schools

Collaboratively accomplished:

- Coordinated the Diaper Bank Grant for St. Joseph County with DHHS, Covered Bridge Health Care, BHSJ CHA to offer 6 diaper giveaway events serving 449 children.
- Offered 43 Books, Blocks, and Balls screening events in the community for families to find out if their child is developmental on track.
- Completed 1,079 screenings on children with the Ages and Stages online questionnaire.
- Offered 4 Conscious Discipline classes and offered 2 Parenting Your Teen course with the Child Abuse/Neglect Prevention Council.
- Continued the implementation of Help Me Grow St. Joe to support families get connected to early childhood services like Early Head Start, Early On, and GSRP, along with community resources.
- Continued building early literacy skills with 5 Musical Storybooks in partnership with Three Rivers Library, Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, and The Huss Project.
 - Contributed \$15,000 to St. Joseph County's Dolly Parton's Imagination Library partners (The Huss Project and White Pigeon Library).
 - Installed 13 Little Free libraries across the county.
 - Held 2 ongoing Book-Walks, in partnership with the Three Rivers Library, throughout the summer at The Huss Project and Skidmore Park.
 - Distributed 450+ books to families across the county.
 - Continued the Talk, Read, Sing community campaign with reading corners at the Pivotal locations, CTAG, Laundry mats.
- Distributed 170 Welcome Baby Bags to new parents thru Beacon-Three Rivers Hospital and Bronson Hospital as a collaboration with the St. Joseph County Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Council, and BHSJ CHA.
- Trained 16 Doulas with a collaborative grant from SWMPQIC and Branch Great Start Collaborative.
- The Great Start Collaborative (GSC) Joined the Region 8 Literacy Hub initiative, collaborating with Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, and VanBuren counties to develop regional literacy based projects encouraging family engagement.
- Received a \$10,000 gift from SWMPQIC to use to support maternal health.



Substance Abuse Task Force

Co-Chairs: Mikayla Finnerman and Mark Olsen, Pivotal

mfinnerman@pivotalstjoe.org, molsen2@pivotalstjoe.org



Participating Agencies:

- Aetna Better Health of Michigan
- BHSJ Community Health Agency
- Destiny Church
- Covered Bridge Healthcare
- Department of Health & Human Services
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse Services
- Great Start Collaborative
- Michigan State Police
- St. Joseph County Community Corrections
- Pivotal
- SJC Human Services Commission
- St. Joseph County Probation Division
- St. Joseph County Transportation Authority
- Riverside Church
- Southwest Michigan Behavioral Health

Collaboratively accomplished:

Held 5 campaigns in FY 23/24: Methamphetamine, Underage Alcohol Use, Underage Marijuana Use, RX Drug Misuse, and Underage Vaping

- Grew email database to reach over 600 community members and front line workers.
- Social Media interactions: over 6,790 people reached on Facebook.
- Expanded community sectors represented on Task Force.
- Continue to manage a Spanish Facebook page and established a Spanish speaking person to manage the page.
- Increased school appearance with Too Good For Drugs program.
- Alcohol/ Compliance Checks (to prevent distribution of products to individuals under age of 18)
- Provided education to 70 alcohol/tobacco retailers.
- Completed 51 retailer alcohol compliance checks (51 passed).
- Completed 68 tobacco retailer compliance checks (67 passed).

Opioid / RX Drug Mis-Use Campaign

- Campaign flyers reached 10,000 people on Facebook.
- 12 individuals attended in person presentation.
- 35 individuals viewed virtual presentation about RX overdose.
- All police and fire departments in St. Joseph County were trained and re-stocked with Narcan kits.
- Held Naloxone trainings for 247 people with 183 Narcan kits distributed.
- 1,960 pounds of medication was collected at drop off locations.

Methamphetamine Campaign

- Campaign flyers reached 10,300 people on Facebook.
- 2024 Voices of Hope and Recovery Event for Meth Campaign— 97 in-person attendees.

Underage Drinking Campaign

- Facebook posts reached 10,000 individuals.

Underage Marijuana Use Campaign

- Facebook posts reached 10,000 individuals.
- County Fair presentation – 700 individual interactions at educational booth.

Underage Vaping Campaign

- Reached 15,000 individuals through Facebook posts.
- Presentations to Colon MS, Colon HS, and Sturgis football teams.
- Ran 90 thirty second commercials on both WBET and WTHD radio.

Continued Prime For Life Curriculum

- Served 84 individuals in Saturday Prime for Life classes.
- Served 161 individuals in the 12 hour Saturday Prime for Life classes.
- Served 7 Juvenile Day Treatment Center students in program.
- Made 2 referrals for only Spanish speaking individuals to a Kalamazoo Spanish provider.
- Created all posts and flyers in Spanish & English.
- Offered a virtual training option in Spanish in Kalamazoo.



Housing Task Force/Local Planning Body of Balance of State Continuum of Care

Chair: Whitney Wardell: Neighborhoods Inc. Battle Creek, wwardell@nibc.

Vice Chair: Laura Brott, St. Joseph Count Human Services Commission, stjosephcountyhsc@gmail.com



Participating Agencies:

- Balance of State Continuum of Care
- Battle Creek VA
- Community Action
- Pivotal
- Covered Bridge Healthcare
- Disability Network
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse Services
- Elm Tree Apartments
- Fair Housing Center SWM
- Gryphon Place
- Habitat for Humanity
- Hope United
- Integrated Services
- KeyStone Place
- KMG Prestige
- Neighborhoods Inc.
- Michigan State Housing Development Authority
- Michigan Works! Southwest
- RESET Day Center
- SJC Commission On Aging
- St. Joseph County Government
- SJC Intermediate School District
- SJC Veteran Services
- SJC Human Services Commission
- SJC Realtor/Renter Association
- St. Joseph County Transportation Authority
- Salvation Army
- Sturgis Neighborhood Program
- United Community Assistance Program (UCAP)
- Woda Management
- City of Sturgis
- St. John's Episcopal Church - Friday Friendship Meal

2024 Statistics

- ◆ 78 individuals counted were experiencing literal homelessness on 2024 Point-In-Time Count Day (21 were located in our homeless shelter, 12 under Domestic Violence shelter, 44 unsheltered, and 1 individual was unwilling to share.)
- ◆ 140 households served by homeless prevention programs, equaling \$119,855 (This includes rent and utilities).
- ◆ 38 households were served by rapid rehousing programs equaling \$129,922.
- ◆ 252 families were impacted through 2024 Project Connect (571 total persons in households)

Collaboratively Accomplished:

- Oversight to St. Joseph County's Housing Assessment and Resource Agency (NIBC); money received, spent, and outcomes to assure a comprehensive community-wide service and housing delivery system.
- A successful 2024 Point in Time (PIT) Count

Adult Services Network

Chair: Amanda Johnson, Covered Bridge Healthcare, Amanda@sjccbh.org

Participating Agencies:

- Absolute Homecare
- Aetna Better Health of Michigan
- Area Agency on Aging 3C
- Beacon-Three Rivers Home Health and Hospice
- Birch Meadows
- CentricaCare
- Covered Bridge Healthcare
- Department of Health & Human Services
- Disability Network Southwest Michigan
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse Services
- Edgewood Healthcare
- Fairview Rehabilitation Community
- Home Joy
- Pivotal
- Safe Haven
- SJC Human Services Commission
- SJC Veterans Services
- SJC Commission On Aging
- Skaggs Assisted Living
- Thurston Woods Village

Collaboratively accomplished:

- ◆ 50 community partners involved in the ASN google group and 8 regularly attended the monthly meetings.
- ◆ Collaborated with the Human Services Commission to update the St. Joseph County Community Resource Guide pages pertaining to Seniors and Senior Health.
- ◆ Organized a 2024 Senior Resource Fair.
 - ◆ 32 Agencies participated
 - ◆ 141 people attended (70 were agency reps and volunteers and 71 were attendees)
 - ◆ Continental breakfast and beverages provided throughout the event for all
 - ◆ 12 Hearing screens were provided
 - ◆ 100 bags of fresh market produce distributed
 - ◆ 2 rides to and from the event were scheduled by SJCTA.
 - ◆ Event was the morning after multiple storms and tornados came through the county.



The Adult Services Network provides opportunities to discuss issues affecting the older and vulnerable adult population in St. Joseph County and to identify programs to implement.

Amanda Johnson, Adult Services Network Co-Chair



Strategic Planning

Much of our strategic plan for 2024 focused on strengthening communication within our collaborative as well as communication with other bodies and agencies in St. Joseph County. The end result is that residents receiving services because both the frontline workers serving them know what is available in our county and residents know how to access these services.



Strategic Plan Items Accomplished in 2024

HSC continues to address the lack of housing in St. Joseph County. The full time housing Collaborative Coordinator hired in 2023 has been building connections within the community and leading the work collaborating with municipalities, chambers of commerce, and agencies to follow a community master housing plan developed under the guidance of the South Michigan Planning Council.

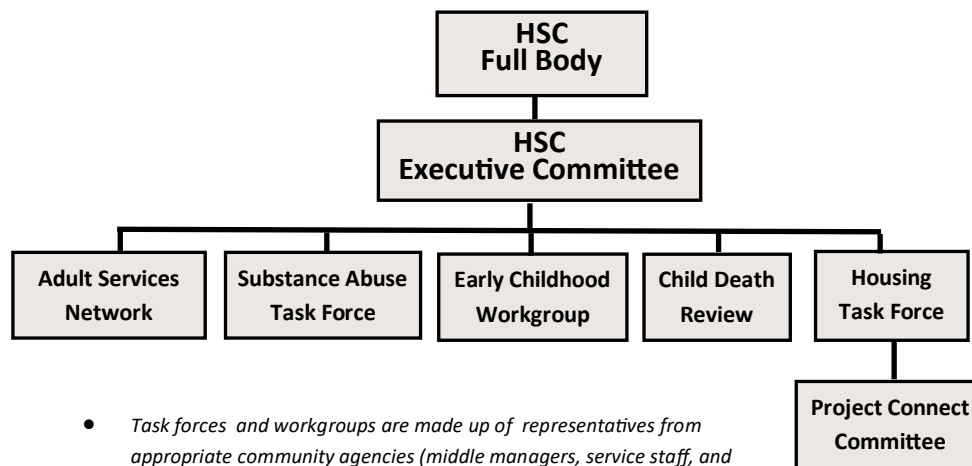
In 2024, the HSC's website of connection tools (including the community resource guide and community help card) along with its Facebook page and SJC Resources Google Group were an integral part of informing the community of services and events.

Focus for 2025

Housing continues to be a priority. The Housing Collaborative will continue with the new Housing Coordinator to work on the county-wide housing plan. The HSC will also continue to build its network with community groups and marketing its resources website to agency workers and the public throughout the county.

The St. Joseph County Human Services' Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 can be viewed at:
www.sjchumanservices.com

SJC Human Services Commission - Organizational Diagram



- Task forces and workgroups are made up of representatives from appropriate community agencies (middle managers, service staff, and consumers) as recommended by their directors and interested citizens.
- The HSC provides feedback to the workgroups on their goals and activities, and offers assistance and resources as needed and available.

To get involved in the HSC work groups, contact Laura Brott, 269-625-1820 or email BrottL@michigan.gov