

Vanessa Behan

Spokane, Washington

vanessabehan.org

Amy Knapton Vega, Executive Director

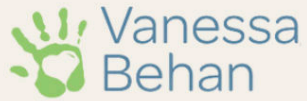


History and Mission

- Opened in 1987 in response to Child Abuse/Neglect related death of 2-year-old Vanessa Kay Behan
- 24/7/365 Emergency Respite Childcare; Parent Education & Support Programs; Diaper Bank; Courthouse Childcare
- Caring for children birth to 12 years, up to 72 hours per visit
- Annually: 7000 child visits; 700 unduplicated families; over 75,000 hours of care
- Privately Funded

Vanessa Behan keeps kids safe, builds strong families, and creates a healthier community in an environment of inclusion, authenticity and adaptability





Providing immediate refuge for children and support for strengthening families

WHAT WE DO¹

- ▶ 24-hour emergency respite childcare for infants and children
- ▶ Parent education and classes that guide positive parenting practices and *Stay, Play, and Learn* playgroup for children and caregivers
- ▶ Help with diapers and formula, and referrals to other family supports
- ▶ Parent crisis counseling
- ▶ Developmental Screening

WHO WE HELP

- ▶ Parents having difficulty providing safe shelter or care for their children
- ▶ Families dealing with issues including substance abuse, domestic violence, or homelessness — **The majority of families served live in poverty.**
- ▶ Parents struggling with the demands of caregiving — **80% of the children we serve are five or younger.**

"He's getting an education here that I don't know if I can provide because I simply don't know what to do. And they seem to be doing a lot more filling in the gaps than what I can myself."
-Parent



"It's just a place for [the children] that feels safe, but also there's endless things to do that they don't get to do at home or anywhere else."
-Parent



HOW WE HELP IN THE SHORT-TERM

- ▶ Children receive physically, psychologically, and emotionally safe care.
- ▶ Parents receive the physical and psychological space they need to address pressing life circumstances, regain equilibrium, and reduce stress.
- ▶ Parents and staff collaborate to establish trusting relationships and make decisions together to meet children's and parents' needs and to promote parents' self-efficacy.

HOW WE HELP IN THE LONG-TERM

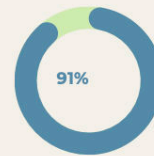
In the short-term, emergency respite alone is invaluable to families. To strengthen and support vulnerable families in the longer-term we ensure parents have access to emergency respite and other supportive services any time they need extra support. By modeling nurturing care and providing families with needed tools and resources beyond their prescribed respite time, parents are assured they don't have to 'go it alone'. Over the long term, we create a caring community that values family well-being and supports children's optimal development.

¹ For more information about our services, visit www.vanessabehan.org

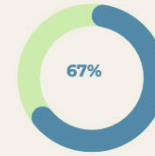
OUR RESULTS

- ▶ Our emergency respite program served **699** parents and **1,043** individual children, with a total of **7,000** child visits in 2023.
- ▶ About half — **312 families** — used emergency respite for the first time; **387 families** returned for respite.
- ▶ Families used **77,440** respite hours and child stays averaged **11 hours** based on individual family needs.

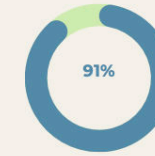
In a qualitative evaluation of caregiver wellness conducted by Washington State University, parents reported that Vanessa Behan helped with caregiver wellness and reduced caregiver stress by acting as a support system — a steady presence when parents need a break. Evaluators found:



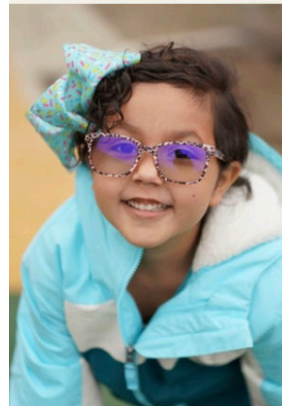
91% of parents reported that services helped with caregiver wellness.



67% of parents reported services gave their children a break from family stress.



91% of parents reported child safety as a benefit of our services.



When asked what they would do without our services, parents responded:

"I honestly wouldn't know what to do. I came from a very toxic environment, and that's why I won't send my kids back into that. I won't let Grandma and Grandpa watch them because I don't want them to treat [my kids] like they did me."

"I probably honestly would've called the CPS line . . . because I don't know what I am doing."

"That is a frightening thing to think about . . . I have used this place to shelter my children so they don't have to see the domestic violence."

A child guest at Vanessa Behan said this about her stay:

"I love this place. They are probably the nicest people I have ever had."

Vanessa Behan was recognized by the **ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center's Innovative and Exemplary Respite Services Evaluation Initiative** as an Innovative and Exemplary Respite Service in 2019, and was part of the Exemplary Respite Services Evaluation Initiative. For details of the evaluation activities and the tools used, contact Amy Vega, amy@vanessabehan.org



This publication is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$1,647,597 with 75 percentage funded by ACL/HHS and \$549,200 amount and 25 percentage funded by non-government source(s). The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

Data Brief — Demographics*

Of 700 families served during the past year:

- ▶ 53% of parents are single parents
- ▶ 47% of children served are white (vs. 69% of Spokane child population)
- ▶ 82% of children are birth to 5 years (fewer than 2% of children are 10 to 12 years)
- ▶ 70% of families are housed, and 30% lack stable housing
- ▶ Nearly 100% of families live below Federal Poverty Level
- ▶ Families average 5 visits per year/per child
- ▶ Reasons families cited for using emergency respite included: 26% stress; 23% work related; 12% housing related; 11% medical

* Of all families using emergency respite in 2023

Data Brief - Dose and Fidelity

EMERGENCY RESPITE CHILDCARE

Dose

- ▶ Dose is based on parental request and varies for individual families
- ▶ Limited to 72 hours per visit (average stay is 14 hours)
- ▶ Licensed for 60 children, but financial resources allow care for 28
- ▶ Approximately 4000 requests for emergency respite are turned away annually due to budget constraints
- ▶ Follow-up support services (meals, referrals, check ins) 98% of requested follow up is met

SERVICE MODEL FIDELITY

- ▶ All staff follow the same, verified intake process - ICMS data base
- ▶ Interactions with families may vary based on individual family needs and staff experience

Evaluation Project

- ▶ Partnered with Washington State University School of Nursing
- ▶ Survey and interview questions focused on caregivers' perceptions of wellness and how Vanessa Behan supports and enhances wellness
- ▶ Surveys conducted in four Vanessa Behan program areas (Emergency Respite; Stay, Play & Learn; Children's Waiting Room; Diaper/Formula Bank)
 - ▶ Surveys conducted from April 2024 through early August 2024
 - ▶ Interviews conducted during May, 2024
 - ▶ 95 of 200 surveys completed
 - ▶ 15 (of 15) interviews completed
- ▶ Confidentiality was strictly protected (Vanessa Behan unable to tie individual participants to data)
- ▶ Participants were compensated \$10 for surveys (20 minutes) and \$50 for interviews (60 minutes)

Sample Survey Questions

Demographic Questions allowed comparison of families across Vanessa Behan programs

Caregiver Questions

- ▶ Caregivers selected what **Caregiver Wellness** means to them (financial security, physical/mental health for self and/or children; safe child care; parental education resources; social connection; basic needs; other)
- ▶ Caregivers described levels of **Stress**
 - ▶ In the past month, how would you describe your stress level related to parenting? (Likert Scale: 1 - little to no stress to 4 - very stressed)
 - ▶ What are some ways you manage your stress related to parenting? (Free response)
 - ▶ How has Vanessa Behan helped you manage your stress related to parenting? (Free response)
- ▶ Similar questions were asked about **Mental Health, Social Health, and Support Systems**

Program Model Questions

- ▶ Asked what programs at Vanessa Behan have been used, how often, if they were helpful, and how.
- ▶ Final questions asked about benefits parents felt their children received from staying at Vanessa Behan; what they would have done without Vanessa Behan; whether they would refer others, and what other families might like to see at Vanessa Behan

Overall learnings

- ▶ Challenged to think about Caregiver Wellness and how we can impact it
- ▶ Partnering with an outside agency was helpful in navigating new territory
- ▶ IRB process was longer than expected
- ▶ Survey return rate was lower than anticipated
- ▶ Survey process could be improved
 - ▶ We anticipated that surveys would take approximately 20 minutes, but for some families, survey completion took up to 40 minutes
 - ▶ Surveys were limited to only English speaking/writing responders
 - ▶ Survey technology was confusing for some families who had difficulty getting past the first page
- ▶ Adding surveys to family discharge procedures bogged down the process for families and for staff during this essential part of services

Key Survey Findings: Caregiver Wellness

- ▶ Participants of survey and interviews appear to be slightly more affluent than general population of Vanessa Behan families
 - ▶ 78% housed
 - ▶ 11% earning more than \$40,000/year
- ▶ More than 90% of parents defined caregiver wellness in terms of:
 - ▶ Financial security
 - ▶ Good physical health
 - ▶ Good mental health
 - ▶ Access to basic needs for children (diapers, wipes, clothing)
 - ▶ Having a safe place for children when parents needs a break (respite)

*“Being treated with care, smiles, respect, common courtesy.
Not to be looked down on for needing to use helpful programs.”*

Key Survey Findings: Benefits for Children

- ▶ More than 80% of parents described benefits for their child/ren in terms of:
 - ▶ Safe caregiving environment
 - ▶ Fun environment
 - ▶ Socialization opportunities with other children
- ▶ More than 70% of parents described benefits for their child/ren in terms of:
 - ▶ Social skills development (sharing, learning to take turns)
 - ▶ Social emotional development (learning to manage big feelings, problem solving)
 - ▶ Basic needs being met (meals, sleep, hygiene)

“Experiences with loving and caring adults they can trust.”

Key Interview Findings: Caregiver Wellness as Overall Health

*“I think overall health, internal and external. Like having your **basic needs** met – food, shelter, safety. And also have the **mental capacity** to take care of your children properly. ”*

*“Being **mentally well**...being **physically well**...**being rested**. Wellness is getting sleep.”*

*“Parent wellness is **taking care of yourself so that you can take care of your family**, I believe...Because you can't help anyone if you can't help yourself first...So if we're talking about Vanessa Behan, it'd be 'I need a break.' This is a safe space I can take my child while I take care of myself so that I can take care of my child more proficiently.”*

Key Interview Findings: Social Climate and Ethos



- ▶ Parents feel they and their children are valued
“When he wasn’t in school and he needed peer interaction - like especially during the winter, he came to (Vanessa Behan) to play. And he likes - they like him. He’s got a nickname and everything.”
“She calls (Vanessa Behan) her friend’s house. She loves to come here.”
- ▶ Parents validated our value of being non-judgmental
“You know, it’s a simple matter of fact that (Vanessa Behan) is great. You know, they take care of your kids...I’ve never received any sort of judgment from them for whatever reason I need to come by and drop off the kids, whether it be I have an appointment - a doctor’s appointment or if I have work. If I just need a moment to myself. They’ve never judged me for it.”

Parents' Recommendations

- ▶ Provide transportation services
- ▶ Increase opportunities for parent engagement/socialization
- ▶ Add non-traditional, family-friendly hours for Stay, Play & Learn, and Diaper Bank
- ▶ Increase staffing so more fewer children are turned away

