



**2024**  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



# About PACER

## Mission

PACER Center improves educational opportunities and enhances the quality of life for children and young adults with disabilities and their families.

## Vision

Children and young adults with disabilities and their families have access to resources and equitable opportunities to be successful and valued members of their community.

## Values

- **Parents helping parents.** We believe that parents of children with disabilities have unique experiences to empower other parents to become effective advocates.
- **Inclusion.** We believe that disability is a natural part of the human experience and that individuals with disabilities have a right to fully participate in and contribute to society.
- **Collaboration.** We believe that collaborating with professionals, families, service providers, and coalition partners creates better outcomes for the people we serve.
- **Access.** We are committed to making our programs and resources available to all families of children and young adults with disabilities, with an appreciation of their diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
- **Innovation.** We are committed to developing and using cutting-edge solutions and ideas in our programs and services.

## How we help and who we support

PACER helps families and youth navigate special education and other complex systems, discover assistive technology solutions, and access bullying prevention resources.

PACER is the only organization in Minnesota that provides support for families of children and young adults with any disability from birth to age 26 across the state.

In fiscal year 2024, PACER's programs resulted in thousands of families receiving critical information to support improved outcomes for their children and youth with disabilities:

- **9,500** unique families, professionals, and others received individual assistance and training
- **17,000** people attended PACER trainings, puppet shows, and other events
- **78,000** email subscribers received updates from PACER about important issues affecting children with disabilities



## PACER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Tonia Teasley

### Dear Friends,

As I reflect on PACER's work over the past year, I am filled with gratitude for all who support our work. Your commitment to families of children with disabilities makes a real difference in the impact we are able to achieve.

I am proud to report that in our 2023-2024 fiscal year, we increased the number of unique individuals served to 9,500 families, professionals, and others. We provided valuable resources and information through 1.45 million visits to our websites. Through internal and external strategies, PACER focused its efforts to improve services through its **parent training and advocacy, assistive technology, and social inclusion programs**. We look forward to continuing our efforts to expand our reach in the coming year.

We know that families face ongoing challenges as they seek to access services that will help their children reach their education, employment, and independent living goals. Through the support of the community, PACER is here to light the path as they navigate systems and find the resources they need. Thank you for your partnership in that endeavor.

### Sincerely,

**Tonia Teasley**  
**Executive Director**



# Parent Training & Advocacy

PACER staff help parents and others navigate complex systems that serve children and young adults with disabilities. These areas include special education, transition to adulthood, mental health, and more.

## Services offered include:

- **Individual assistance** by phone or email
- **Trainings** on topics related to special education and disability services
- Print and digital **resources** with practical tips for accessing services for children and youth with disabilities

## 2024 data highlights:

- PACER parent advocates provided **11,000** instances of individual assistance to families and others navigating special education and other service systems
- **7,500** attendees learned how to access appropriate services for their child through trainings
- **86%** of parents surveyed said the information or support they received from PACER met their needs

**11,000**

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**7,500**

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**86%**

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***“Whenever things got difficult for Sophia, they***





Sophia (L) with sister Julia and mom Shari Klein

## *Making a change with PACER by my side*

Shari Klein has always known her daughter Sophia needed extra support to help her thrive. She is a single parent of two daughters, Julia and Sophia, and has appreciated the **information and support that PACER has provided** her over the years. “I couldn’t have done it without the support of PACER,” she said.

Sophia was first referred to special education services before she started kindergarten and began working with a paraprofessional in a general education classroom. However, it became too overwhelming for her to be in a large class and Shari realized that a modified special education setting would be a better fit.

“I knew she wasn’t in the right place, but I was also scared to make that change,” Shari said. “That’s when it was so amazing to have PACER by my side.”

Sophia has autism, developmental and cognitive delays, OCD, anxiety, and health concerns. She is now

20 years old and started transition school last year. At first, Shari was hesitant about her starting a new program. “She has separation anxiety and there were times when she couldn’t lose sight of me and didn’t want to be at school,” she said.

Sophia began attending transition school for an hour and a half each day and quickly started asking to stay longer. “She loved it so much and I will always have PACER to thank for that,” Shari said.

The advice and insight Shari received from PACER staff, workshops, and resources helped her to become a better advocate for her daughter. “Never did a question go unanswered. Whenever things got difficult for Sophia, they were always made better because of PACER,” she said.

***were always made better because of PACER.”*** - Shari Klein





Amanda Teachout-Emerson with her daughter Minna

## *Finding Minna's voice*

PACER's Simon Technology Center (STC) has become a critical resource for Amanda Teachout-Emerson's family and is a key part of the care team that she's built for her daughter Minna.

Minna is three years old and has cerebral palsy from a birth injury. She has begun to take steps with equipment but cannot sit, walk, or stand on her own, and she is also nonverbal. When Minna and her family first visited the STC's Lending Library, they were excited to try different switch-adapted toys that made play more accessible for her.

**Assistive technology consultations with PACER staff** helped Amanda and her family find devices that would be a good fit for Minna. "They listened to what Minna's needs were and what we wanted her to accomplish," Amanda said. During the consultation, staff helped them explore what technology would work best to meet Minna's needs.

Practicing with switches also taught Minna skills that enabled her to explore different communication devices. "When we first started, we knew nothing about communication devices," Amanda said. Minna quickly mastered basic devices and now uses the iTalk4. "It has really opened a lot of doors to communication for Minna, I would not have known about it if we didn't visit the STC," Amanda said.

The iTalk4 is a portable device with buttons that can be programmed to say a different word or phrase. The family has changed the words seasonally so that Minna could trick or treat, tell Santa what she wanted for Christmas, and play the Star in her church's Christmas program.

PACER's assistive technology consultations have helped Minna to learn, develop, and gain independence. "We've received so much support from PACER and will continue to use their services for many years to come," Amanda said.

***"We've received so much support from PACER and will continue***

# Assistive Technology Solutions

PACER's Simon Technology Center (STC) equips Minnesota families with lifechanging assistive technology (AT) solutions that help individuals with disabilities reach their goals. Assistive technology can be a device or service that helps foster independence at home, school, or in the community.

## Services offered include:

- A **lending library of AT devices** to try out before making a purchase decision
- Technology **consultations**, **training sessions**, and **workshops** to explore and learn how to use AT
- Workshops and events like **EX.I.T.E. Camp** and **Tech for Teens** that engage youth with disabilities in **STEM** (science, technology, engineering, math)

## 2024 data highlights:

- Reached **225** people through 100 consultations and individual trainings
- Provided **1,500** assistive technology library loans and renewals
- **3,000** parents, youth, and professionals attended assistive technology and STEM trainings

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*to use their services for many years to come.”* - Amanda Teachout-Emerson

# Social Inclusion Programs

PACER's social inclusion programs engage, educate, and encourage inclusion through entertaining and interactive resources and activities.

## Programs offered include:

- The **National Bullying Prevention Center**, which unites, engages, and educates communities to address bullying through informative and interactive websites
- COUNT ME IN **puppet shows** for young children which inspire them to be more accepting and inclusive to all kids, especially those with disabilities
- PACER's **Fun Times** program, which provides social events for young adults with disabilities and their peers

## 2024 data highlights:

- **800,000** visits to National Bullying Prevention Center websites
- **4,250** children and school staff attended PACER's COUNT ME IN puppet shows
- Seven Fun Times events held, attended by approximately **40** students each time

**800K**

visits to the National Bullying Prevention Center websites

**4,250**

children and school staff attended puppet shows

**40**

students attended each of the seven Fun Times events

***“PACER resources have helped our children***





Shawnda Steer (center) with her children Brielle and Javis

## *Uniting my community with kindness*

Shawnda Steer is a community advocate for bullying prevention. **With support and resources from PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center (NBPC)**, she was able to spread kindness, acceptance, and inclusion across her township and multiple communities in the Chicago area.

When her daughter Brielle was in fourth grade, she expressed to Shawnda that her friends were being mean. For the first time, Shawnda googled the word “bullying,” and found her way to PACER. Using NBPC resources, Shawnda pitched a bullying prevention and kindness campaign with her PTO president. “A lot of parents had the same issue,” she said.

Her efforts included encouraging schools and communities to wear orange and receiving a proclamation from the mayor declaring October to be National Bullying Prevention Month. “I have a background in marketing, and I love the creative ways

we’ve been able to promote kindness and teach kids how to be more active against bullying,” she said.

When Shawnda’s family moved to a new community, her children noticed more bullying in their schools. “My daughter was scared to go to school,” she said.

After her previous experience, Shawnda knew exactly where to start. Her advocacy efforts continued, and she utilized NBPC resources including pledges, activity kits, and posters to bring awareness to bullying prevention in her new home. She organized community events like chalk walks and peace gardens and enlisted the help of local librarians to distribute free materials.

“PACER resources have helped our children express themselves and cope. I hope to help spread the message of kindness, acceptance, and inclusion to other communities too,” she said.

***express themselves and cope.”*** - Shawnda Steer

# Financial Statements

October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024

## Statement of financial position

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### ASSETS

Current assets	\$3,360,143
Furniture and equipment	\$107,059
Other assets	\$19,136,164
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$22,603,366</b>

### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current liabilities	\$333,037
Noncurrent liabilities	\$43,208
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$376,245</b>
Without donor restrictions	\$8,247,756
With donor restrictions	\$13,979,365
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$22,227,121</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$22,603,366</b>

## Income statement and expense allocations

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### SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Government grants	\$1,774,087
Other grants and contributions	\$2,319,474
Special events revenue	\$708,764
Direct cost of special events	(\$426,401)
Material and puppet sales	\$20,244
Cost of material puppet sales	(\$3,195)
Program service fees	\$23,217
Investment return (loss)	\$4,072,422
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>\$8,488,612</b>

## Expenses

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### PROGRAM SERVICES

Parent training and advocacy	\$3,194,437
Simon Technology Center/assistive technology	\$499,775
Social inclusion	\$747,086
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES</b>	<b>\$4,441,298</b>

### SUPPORTING SERVICES

Management	\$456,716
Fundraising	\$542,059
<b>TOTAL SUPPORTING SERVICES</b>	<b>\$998,775</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$5,440,073</b>



# Thank you to our supporters

PACER appreciates the generous support of the following individuals, corporations, and foundations who contributed to PACER through donations, grants, and sponsorships.

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*\*PACER Center apologizes for any unintentional omissions from this list.*

# PACER CENTER

## 2024 IMPACT SNAPSHOT

In 2024, because of the generous support of individual donors, corporate and foundation partners, and other funders, PACER was able to positively impact the lives of thousands of children with disabilities through its parent training and advocacy, social inclusion, and assistive technology programs.

**4,250**

Children and school staff were educated through COUNT ME IN puppet shows

**1.4M**

Visits were made to PACER's websites

**1,500**

Assistive technology loans were provided by the STC Lending Library

**17,000**

People attended PACER's virtual and in-person trainings, presentations, and other events

**82%**

Of PACER's funds directly supported programs and services: *well above industry standards*

**11,000**

Instances of individual assistance were provided by PACER's parent training and advocacy program

**90%**

Of training participants reported they would use information learned to help improve educational outcomes for their child or students

**93**

Assistive technology consultations were provided to individuals with disabilities and their families

**9,500**

Unique families, professionals, and others were served through individual assistance and training across all programs