



STAR
Institute

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

SENSORY HEALTH TRANSFORMS *Lives*

STAR Institute is the international leader for research, treatment, and education related to sensory integration and processing. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, we are dedicated to improving mainstream awareness of sensory health and to providing life-changing support and resources for individuals and families across the lifespan. STAR Institute supports all areas of sensory health including mental health, school success, child development, parenting, relationships, and vocational success. For some, disordered sensory processing profoundly impacts daily functioning. However, many differences in sensory processing do not need to be disabling. With more research, education, and awareness across the globe and throughout communities, schools, and workplaces we can make sensory health universally accessible.

Gold
Transparency
2022

Candid.

We are thrilled to announce that the STAR Institute was awarded the esteemed Gold Seal of Transparency by Candid in 2022, a recognition that underscores our commitment to openness and accountability. This distinction highlights our dedication to providing comprehensive and accurate information about our nonprofit organization. By achieving this recognition, we aim to build trust among our stakeholders, demonstrating our commitment to transparency in all aspects of our operations, impact, and financial stewardship.

ASSOCIATIONS



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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LEADERSHIP

Andrea Stoker
Chief Operations Officer

Dr. Virginia Spielmann
Executive Director

Dr. Sarah Schoen
Director of Research

Mim Ochsenbein
Director of Education





DIVERSITY STATEMENT

In accordance with the STAR Institute's mission, vision, and core values, we recognize and celebrate diversity throughout the world in all its forms: differences of race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, neurotype, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, marital/relationship status, and physical and mental abilities. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion informs our actions as an organization and our standards for personal conduct to all. We pledge to celebrate and cultivate a diverse, inclusive community, share our platform with those who have been marginalized, and work to ensure that all are able to experience sensory health.

MISSION

To impact quality of life by developing and promoting best practices for sensory health and wellness through treatment, education, and research.

VALUES

Sensory Health and Wellness for the State, the Nation, and the World.

CORE VALUES

- Promoting occupation, participation, engagement, function, and psychological well-being
- Elevating awareness and knowledge about the transformative power of the sensory domain
- Building and strengthening relationships
- Empowering families
- Removing barriers to participation
- Embracing and celebrating diversity
- Advocacy for true inclusion
- Occupational justice for all

Dear valued supporters,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. As the Executive Director of STAR Institute for Sensory Processing, I am thrilled to share with you the remarkable achievements and progress we have made over the past year.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for your unwavering support and dedication to our cause. Your generosity has played a pivotal role in enabling us to expand our outreach and make a lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.

Over the course of this year, we have focused our efforts on building our capacity for greater outreach. Through strategic planning and collaboration, we have successfully implemented several initiatives that will allow us to reach a wider and more diverse population and extend our services to more individuals in need.

One of our key accomplishments has been the establishment of new partnerships with local community organizations and businesses. These collaborations have not only provided us with additional resources and expertise but have also allowed us to tap into new networks and reach individuals who were previously beyond our reach. We are incredibly grateful for our partners this year: Dreampad, Summit Sensory Gyms, ICDL, Developmental Pathways, and Rocky Mountain Human Services.

Furthermore, we have invested significant time and resources into enhancing our technological infrastructure. By upgrading our electronic medical record, practice management, scheduling, and other technology-driven systems, we have been able to streamline our operations, improve efficiency, and ultimately serve more individuals with the same level of dedication and care. These changes have also made it possible to initiate Medicaid accreditation and mean that supporting the Medicaid population is just around the corner. This is a huge and very meaningful, step towards health equity in the work that we do.

Another key development in addressing the reach of our work has been our commitment to training more and more clinicians. As part of this vision, we launched our first Fellowship this year and were joined by two excellent new graduates. These fellows-in-training will spend two years at STAR receiving intensive one-to-one and group mentoring, training, and certification in the STAR Frame of Reference and DIR/Floortime, experiencing each of our departments, and participating in research.

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Beware the temptation to blame behavior. This is usually shorthand for *I don't know what this is, but it's inconveniencing me*. Take a breath and look deeper at the child, the context, and the environment. A child's sense of self is at stake. ~ **Dr. Virginia Spielmann**

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Words from Our Executive Director

Dr. Virginia Spielmann



In addition to these developments, we also focused on strengthening our internal capacity. With your support we have invested in professional development opportunities for our executive team and staff, providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their roles. This investment in our team has not only boosted morale but has also empowered us to deliver our services with even greater impact, efficiency, and effectiveness.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the support and commitment of our community. Indeed, we were given hardware, software, new equipment, and so much more this year. The selflessness and dedication of our community has been instrumental in driving our mission forward and ensuring that we can make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities that lie before us. With the foundation we have built this year, we are confident that we will continue to expand our outreach and make an even greater impact in the coming years.

Once again, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering support. Together, we have accomplished so much, and I am truly excited about the future of our organization.

Warm regards,

Dr. Virginia Spielmann



2022 HIGHLIGHTS



Sensory Health Hits the Airways

STAR's Executive Director, Dr. Virginia Spielmann, engaged in a compelling discussion with Dr. Sanjay Gupta on the CNN podcast Chasing Life. Together, they broke down sensory integration and processing, creating a relatable and educational conversation. This insightful dialogue clearly demonstrated how understanding sensory health is key to cultivating well-being and compassion.

<https://bit.ly/living-sensory-informed-life>



This is Sensory Health Infographics

During Sensory Awareness month, we embarked on a journey to unravel the intricacies of sensory integration and processing through our "This is Sensory Health" infographic series. Delving into the profound impact on sensory health, we confronted stigmas surrounding our sensory systems.

<https://bit.ly/sensory-awareness-infographics>



\$247,028.82

In charitable contributions from over 100 individuals, organizations and foundations.

- RESEARCH GRANT: Brain Foundation (\$44,250)
- RESEARCH GRANT: O'Sullivan Foundation (\$44,250)
- GRANTS AND SPONSORSHIPS: Developmental Pathways (\$11,930)



3,350+

Individuals participated in our education programs, events and courses.



250+

individuals and families received services (locally, nationally and internationally).



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Research papers and chapters were published in 2022.

AOTF A. JEAN AYRES AWARD RECIPIENT

We are thrilled to share that Dr. Sarah Schoen, our Director of Research, was awarded the prestigious A. Jean Ayres Award by the American Occupational Therapy Foundation. This award, given annually at the AOTA Annual Conference, recognizes individuals dedicated to research-related development or testing of theory in occupational therapy, with a focus on sensory processing. Dr. Schoen's outstanding contributions have significantly impacted the field, and we are immensely proud of her achievements. Congratulations on this well-deserved honor!



NEW GARDEN BEDS

Celebrating the success of our new garden beds, built by volunteer Sophie to enhance our feeding program! These beds empower kids to actively engage in growing their own food, creating a more meaningful connection to what they eat. Sophie, a high school volunteer, played a pivotal role in planning and designing these raised garden beds, contributing not only to STAR's program but also earning her Eagle Scout award. Kudos to Sophie for her dedication and positive impact on our STAR community!

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Trunk-or-Treat

We hosted our 3rd Annual Halloween community event, featuring an outdoor trunk-or-treat affair with creatively decorated trunks by staff, volunteers, and sponsors. Over 200 children and families enthusiastically joined in the festivities.

Magic of the Jack O'Lanterns

In a delightful collaboration, STAR joined forces with Magic of the Jack O'Lanterns to make their much-anticipated carved pumpkin event accessible and magical for everyone during Sensory Friendly Night.

Gobble 'til you Wobble

Our 2nd Annual Thanksgiving event provided an intimate setting offering families a warm and sociable space. This carefully curated event aimed to foster positive connections and food experiences, especially for those who may find large holiday meal gatherings challenging.

Free Webinars

We conducted 5 no-cost webinars to provide valuable insights and support for understanding sensory processing challenges.

SUMMIT SENSORY GYM

STAR Institute is excited to share news of our collaboration with Summit Sensory Gym, a partnership designed to assist clinicians and families with unique, customized gym structures. Summit's freestanding sensory integration therapy gyms create a safe and engaging environment for children to explore and refine their sensory skills.

We're pleased to announce the installation of our custom Sensory Gym, ready to serve as a versatile space for clinicians and families. Featuring elements such as a zip line, monkey bars, swings, and more, our new gym structure offers expanded opportunities for therapeutic play and exploration. We anticipate numerous moments of growth and development within our STAR community in this enhanced space.

OUR PILLARS: TREATMENT

STAR Institute stands as a leading authority in sensory integration and processing. In 2022, we persevered in delivering evidence-based, client-centered care, ensuring the continued provision of essential services for individuals of all ages. Our unwavering commitment propelled us to overcome challenges, allowing us to offer comprehensive support from diagnosis to successful intervention.

Within our treatment center, we offer a wide array of services, including occupational therapy, speech therapy, mental health services, pediatrician-led multidisciplinary evaluations, specialized feeding therapy, a School Readiness therapeutic classroom, groups, and services tailored to adults and adolescents. The STAR treatment team addresses various aspects such as regulation, relationships, community engagement, mental health, feeding and eating, academic/vocational success, communication, and language development throughout the lifespan.

Acknowledging the significant impact of sensory processing differences, we specialize in supporting conditions such as autism, ADHD, neurodevelopmental differences, trauma, learning variations, and various mental health conditions.

- Our treatment team participated in four community events, including the Macaroni Kids Kids Fair, Autism Community Store Resource Fair, PASCO's Annual Picnic, and ACECC. During these gatherings, we engaged in discussions about sensory processing challenges and showcased the services offered at our treatment center.
- Incorporating the STAR frame of reference, our center organized 10 therapeutic programs and camps, prioritizing sensory-regulation and relationship dynamics for a holistic approach to well-being.
- STAR introduced autism services, providing secure sensory exploration and a collaborative team approach with strengths-based therapy, self-advocacy education, and relational health support for individuals on the spectrum.
- Our Feeding Team's success involved consulting and co-treating with ERC, running a highly effective Snack and Play group that garnered positive parent feedback, and successfully collecting valuable research data.

CLINICAL DIRECTOR

Mim Ochsenbein, STAR's former Director of Education, transitioned into the role of Clinical Director. Mim has significantly shaped and evolved our education program, responding to the needs of the field and community. Mim's expertise as a licensed occupational therapist and her background in social work make her an ideal leader for our therapy and treatment team.



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To say that we saw immediate results is an understatement. Within the first few sessions at STAR, it felt like we were finally able to meet our son. All of the sudden a light turned on. He had a personality! He started pushing himself physically. He started playing with us! He began communicating so well, and even using his imagination. To see my son laugh, play, ask for help, problem--solve, to see him persevere when it's a little bit hard, was like the answer to a million prayers.

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OUR PILLARS: EDUCATION

The mission of STAR's Education Department is to actively contribute to the elevation of global awareness surrounding the pivotal role of sensory health and well-being. With a dedicated commitment, we strive to empower professionals, families, and individuals impacted by disordered sensory processing by offering comprehensive and up-to-date information based on research and best practices. Through our efforts, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of sensory integration/progressing and health and its significance in enhancing overall well-being, thereby positively impacting communities worldwide.



Community Workshop

STAR hosted a virtual community workshop with our clinical team, engaging in a 3-part, open-forum discussion on daily challenges in the sensory community. Participants, including parents, individuals with sensory differences, and professionals, explored specific topics each day, contributing to our understanding of sensory health and addressing common day-to-day challenges.



Virtual Summit: Sensory Health in Autism

We hosted our third annual Virtual Summit: Sensory Health in Autism, uniting speakers from academia, clinical practice, and advocacy. The event drew 350 attendees, fostering exploration into the extensive impact of disordered sensory processing on the Autistic experience.



Annual Symposium

Our 2022 STAR Symposium marks our return to in-person events post-COVID, centering on the significance of Sensory Health and Wellness. This event explores the profound impact on physical, emotional, and mental health throughout the lifespan. Speakers this year delved into the relevance and power of sensory health, addressing its influence from early interactions and attachment development to adulthood.



Virtual Summit: Sensory Health in Schools

STAR's second virtual summit, which attracted over 200 participants, focused on sensory health in school environments, highlighting its significant impact on the broader community. This multi-day event provided valuable insights into the crucial role of active awareness and the implementation of sensory health practices within educational settings.



FACULTY & INSTRUCTORS

Virginia Spielmann, PhD, OTR/L (CO)
Mim Ochsenbein, MSW, OTR/L (CO)
Sarah Schoen, PhD, OTR/L (CO)
Renee Allen, MS, OTR/L (CO)
Lisa Porter, PhD, OTD, OTR/L (OR)
Carolyn Schmitt, OTR/L (CO)

Colleen Whiting, MS, OTR/L (MA)
Robyn Chu, MOT, OTR/L (CA)
Michele Parkins, MS, OTR (NJ)
Cintia Cortez, MS, OT (MEX)
Amanda Newchok, MS, OTR/L (NJ)

25

Comprehensive Educational Courses

STAR offers in-depth educational courses designed for clinicians, expanding their understanding and knowledge of sensory processing and providing valuable insights to enhance their practice.

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Precision Short Content

Breaking big ideas into easily digestible and applicable concepts through focused webinars, short courses and interactive discussions.

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Outside Professional Training

STAR collaborated with Dr. Shelly Lane, MindSpark, and Quiara Smith to provide specialized training, expanding sensory understanding.

OUR PILLARS: RESEARCH

The research team at STAR Institute conducts and collaborates in rigorous research into the identification, characterization, and treatment of sensory integration/processing strengths and needs. Research allows for the development of more targeted interventions and the refinement of existing interventions, as well as impacting the content of our educational programs. The overarching goal is to enhance sensory health, wellness and quality of life for children and adults and their families.

2021 RESEARCH PROJECT WRAP UP

Feeding Research into the Effectiveness of the STAR SOS Approach

For feeding research, we needed to identify sensitive outcome measures that would reflect the changes we see in therapy. Videos give us actual objective performance rather than the parent reports and home videos give us carryover and generalization to real life.

Research on Adults with SPD Characterizing Individuals Who Seek Intervention

This year we published on the adult experience in therapy. We are also examining interoception and how adults and adolescents self-report interoceptive strengths and challenges.

Here is what we are hoping to explore or learn from these studies or why these studies are critical to the advancement of sensory integration and processing.

- Research and first-person testimonials support the fact that children on the autism spectrum have a higher degree of anxiety, which is further exacerbated by being non-speaking. However, despite these widely appreciated facts, there is limited guidance, and only a small research base informing therapeutic supports for this population. Indeed non-speaking children's autonomy is further limited by clinical supports that are overly simplistic and fail to accommodate significant arousal and motor differences that hamper the development of cognitive and emotional capacities. Can we identify physiological and behavioral toxic stress patterns in non-speaking autistic children and do these patterns change during treatment? This study will inform a more targeted approach to the treatment of non-speaking autistic children, by characterizing stress patterns, testing a novel intervention, and integrating the use of wearable technology.
- There is an increasing number of adults and adolescents with sensory processing differences impacting daily life. As a leader in the field, STAR Institute is one of the few clinics where adults/adolescents can receive services. Our goal is to characterize individuals seeking support and to provide evidence of the effectiveness of our intervention.
- Feeding research is needed to provide evidence of the effectiveness of programs that support children who are problem eaters. STAR's program is unique in that it integrates the SOS Approach with the STAR Frame of Reference.
- Collaboration is the hallmark of research. Looking at physiological and behavioral measures of arousal in collaboration with Dr. Connie Lillas.
- Studying the impact of mentorship training on knowledge development and professional growth with the OT pediatric community in collaboration with Dr. Bryan Gee of Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions.

We earned an \$88,000 grant from The Brain Foundation to study the Bio-Behavioral Study of Arousal in non-speaking or minimally speaking autistic children.



PUBLICATIONS

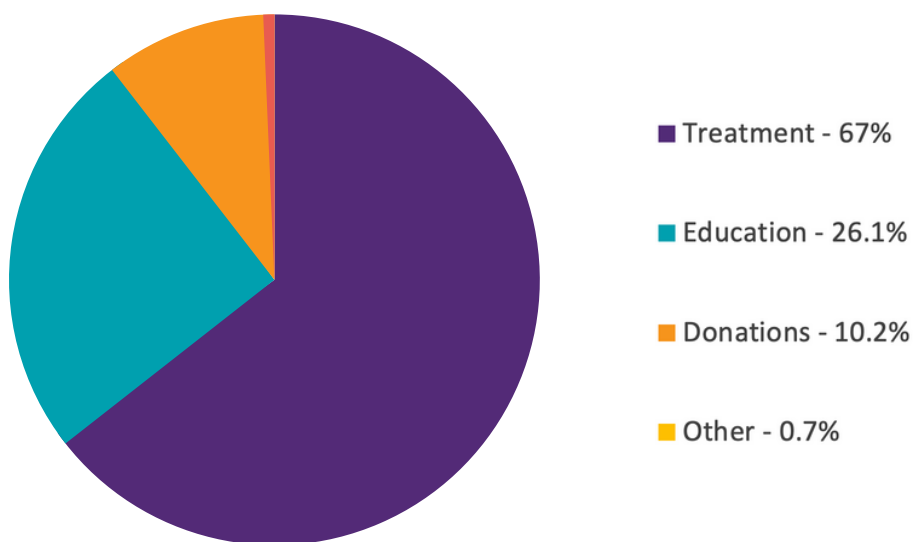
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FINANCIAL INFORMATION

STAR Institute commits its resources to treatment, education, and research opportunities in order to help millions of people whose lives are impacted by sensory processing challenges every day.

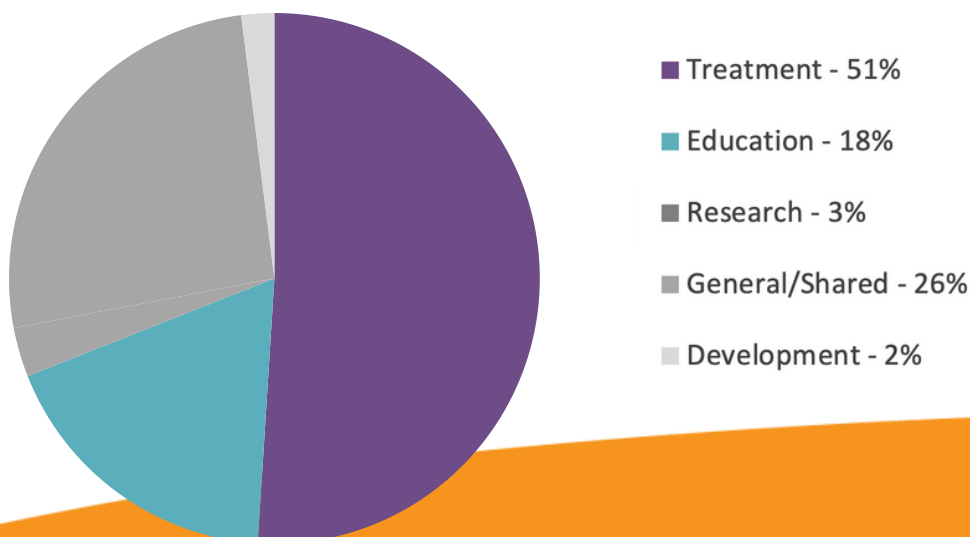
Revenue

Revenues in 2022 totaled \$2,454,952 and were generated primarily from treatment, education, events, and donations.



Expenses

Expenses in 2022 totaled \$2,421,560.



THANK YOU DONORS

Here's a compilation of donors whose names can be shared openly. It's important to note that this roster represents only a portion of our generous supporters, as some have opted to maintain their anonymity.

Alyssa Langner
Amelia
Anastasia Martinez
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Wade Housewright
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Zixuan Dong



THANK YOU PARTNERS

STAR's community partnerships are intentional relationships with other organizations that will strengthen connections, education/awareness, and resources for our sensory community. We are excited to enter into these mutually beneficial partnerships to better our work and expand our reach in creating more sensory-informed spaces, products, and approaches.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Ways **YOU** Can Support STAR Throughout the Year

1 *Donate* NOW

givebutter.com/starinstitute

Make a safe and secure gift online.

You have the option of making a one-time donation or you may set up a recurring gift.



2 **Mail donation to:**

STAR Institute
6911 South Yosemite Street
Centennial, CO 80112

3 **Facebook Fundraiser**

Create and share your own fundraiser on Facebook by visiting the following link: www.facebook.com/fund/TheSTARInst

4 **Instagram Fundraiser**

Create and share your own fundraiser on Instagram by visiting the following link: www.facebook.com/fund/TheSTARInst

5 **Planned Giving / Make a Tribute Gift**

Contact STAR Institute for more information at 303-221-7827 or development@sensoryhealth.org.

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