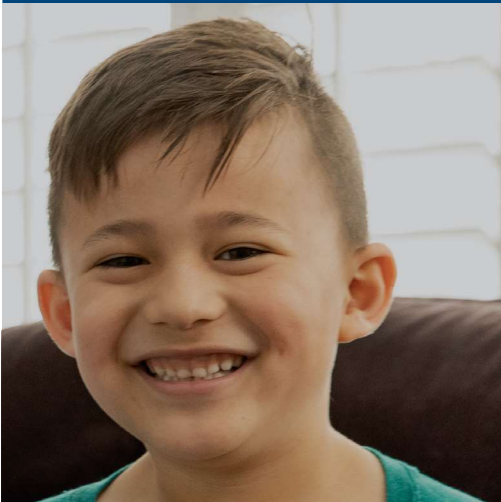
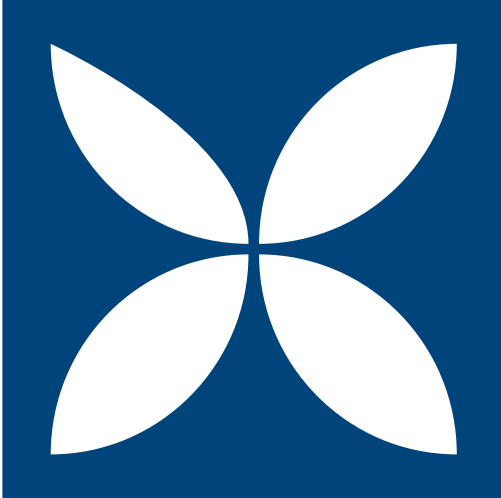
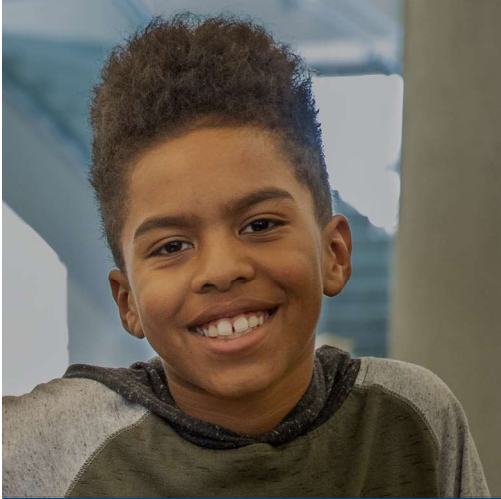
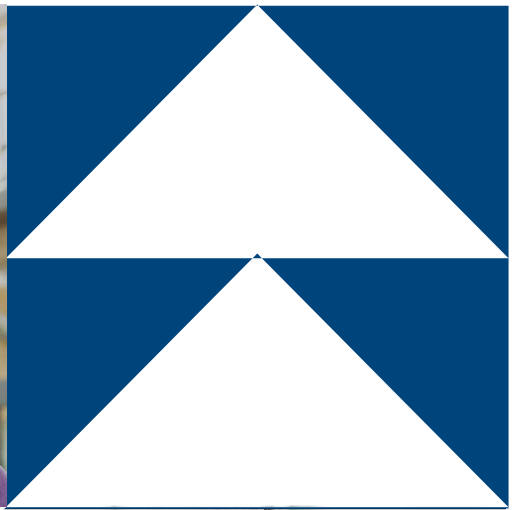






Mari Christopherson
CEO



Missy Greathouse
Board Chair

Dear Friends and Partners,

Thank you for your support of the mission of Illinois CASA. It is because of you – our committed volunteers, dedicated state and local program staff, and generous public, private and individual donors – that we can make a positive difference in the lives of Illinois children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect.

As we celebrate 30 years of best interest advocacy for youth in care, we can't help but think about the passing of time. 30 years of CASA advocacy has gone by in a blink, but 30 days in the life of a child away from their loved ones must seem like forever. A recent independent study commissioned by National CASA/GAL showed that children with a CASA volunteer fare much better than those without; they spend 25 percent less time in foster care and are much less likely to return to the child welfare system. CASA volunteers work to ensure children and their families have access to services that promote engagement and stability.

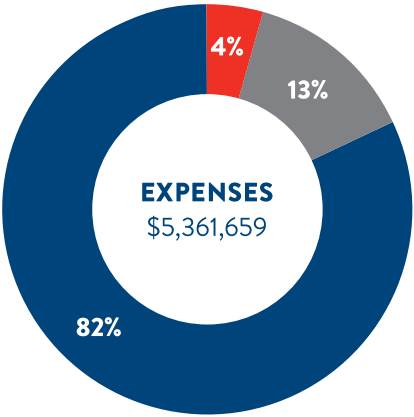
The main function of Illinois CASA is to build the capacity of our network of 31 Local Programs operating in 56 counties – a feat that remains challenging because of the complex child welfare and judicial systems in which CASA operates. We passed through over \$5 million in grant funding to our network who in turn provide advocacy services in the court and the community to vulnerable children and their families. We collaborated meaningfully with partners to deliver training and technical assistance focused on meeting the needs of children. We advocated for policies that more broadly addressed the needs of all involved in the child welfare system. We supported our staff and volunteers with programs that focused on vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout so they can provide trauma-informed support to our children. In short, we continue to figure out how to do the best we can, with our hope intact for continued growth and positive developments in the coming year.

Mari Christopherson
CEO

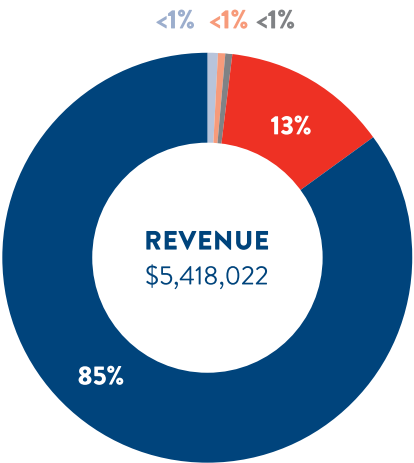
Missy Greathouse
Board Chair

FINANCIALS

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF CASA STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY JULY 2022 – JUNE 2023



- **Grants to Local Programs**
\$4,408,311
- **Administration**
\$232,535
- **Direct Services**
\$720,813



- **Illinois DCFS Grant–State Appropriation**
4,611,515
- **Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA)**
\$710,769
- **Donations**
\$24,689
- **Other Public Funding**
\$27,000
- **Program Service Income**
\$44,049

ABOUT ILLINOIS CASA

MISSION

Illinois CASA, together with its local member programs, supports and promotes court appointed volunteer advocacy for children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

VISION

Our vision is an Illinois in which all children thrive in a safe, permanent and loving home.

PURPOSE

Illinois CASA provides statewide advocacy, technical assistance, quality assurance, training and resources for the network of Illinois Court Appointed Special Advocate Local Programs, builds capacity and plans for the growth of the CASA network, and advocates for reform and improvement in the child welfare sector in Illinois.

VALUES

As an organization we believe:

- All children have the right to grow and thrive in a safe, secure environment.
- It is in a child's best interest to live in a safe, permanent home.
- Every child deserves a consistent, caring adult connection.
- All individuals should be treated with respect.
- In maintaining the highest standards of ethics and confidentiality.
- In serving as leaders for positive change through advocacy and collaboration.



WHAT IS A COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE?

When a family is in crisis and becomes involved in the child welfare system, a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer may be appointed by a judge to advocate for the best interests of the child. This highly trained volunteer is someone from the child's community. Their responsibility is to get to know the child, their parents, their family and everyone else involved in the case. A CASA volunteer will advocate for the child's safety, permanency and well-being while in foster care.

At the local level, the 31 local programs in 57 of 102 Illinois counties do the hands-on work of recruiting, training and supervising these dedicated volunteers. At the state level, Illinois CASA partners with the programs to provide training, coaching and other resources.

As the statewide membership organization, we work to connect each part of the CASA community and empower the local programs to perform at their highest level. Illinois CASA also works to improve the child protection system through legislation and positive public policy changes.

ILLINOIS CASA LOCAL PROGRAMS



Advocacy Network for Children

Adams, Brown, Cass, Hancock,
Morgan, Pike, Schuyler

Boone County CASA

Boone

Champaign County CASA

Champaign

CASA of East Central Illinois

Cumberland, Coles

CASA of Cook County

Cook

CASA DeKalb County

DeKalb

CASA of DuPage County

DuPage

CASA of Effingham County

Effingham

CASA of Franklin & Hamilton Counties

Franklin, Hamilton

CASA of Jefferson County

Jefferson

Jersey County CASA

Jersey

CASA Kane County

Kane

CASA of Kankakee County

Kankakee

CASA Kendall County

Kendall

CASA of West Central Illinois

Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Warren

CASA Lake County

Lake

LaSalle County CASA

LaSalle

CASA of the 15th Judicial Circuit

Carroll, Lee, Ogle

Macon County CASA

DeWitt, Macon

CASA of Southwestern Illinois

Madison, Monroe, Randolph, St. Clair

CASA of South Central Illinois

Clinton, Marion

CASA of McHenry County

McHenry

McLean County CASA

McLean

CASA of the 10th Judicial Circuit

Marshall, Peoria, Putnam, Stark, Tazewell

CASA of Rock Island County/ EveryChild

Rock Island

CASA of Saline County

Saline

Sangamon County Child Advocacy Center/CASA of Sangamon County

Sangamon

CASA of Vermillion and Edgar Counties

Edgar, Vermillion

CASA of River Valley

Grundy, Will

CASA of Williamson County

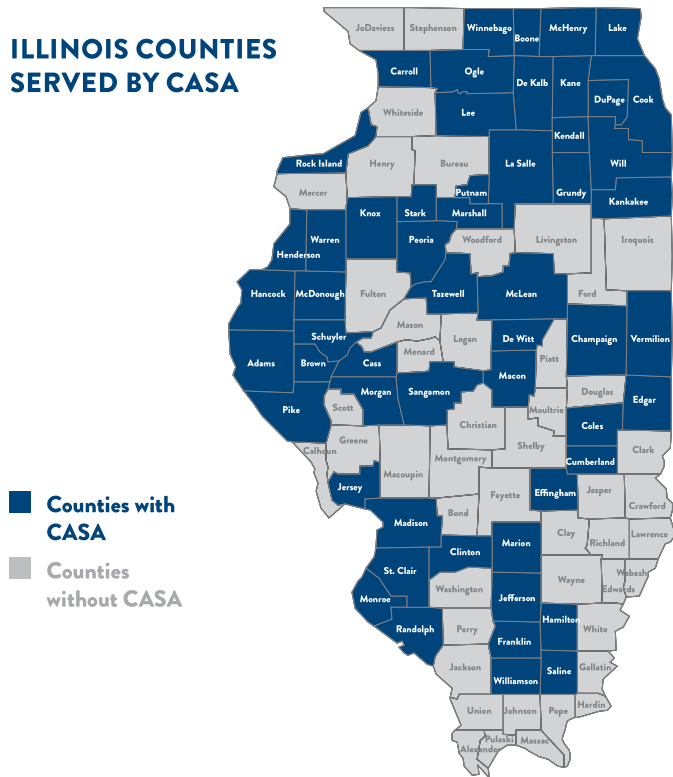
Williamson

Winnebago County CASA

Winnebago

ILLINOIS CASA IMPACT

**ILLINOIS COUNTIES
SERVED BY CASA**



CASA'S IMPACT IN ILLINOIS IN FY23



3,515
ACTIVE CASA
VOLUNTEERS

9,778
CHILDREN
SERVED

2,727
NEW CHILDREN
SERVED

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

The Illinois Equity Taskforce developed and adopted a DEI statement in FY22 after recommendation by the Equity Task Force. Since the adoption of our DEI statement, the Illinois CASA board and the Illinois Equity Taskforce coordinated its ongoing review of our mission statement, policies, and alignment to our newly developed DEI principles.

Our Illinois CASA board and Equity Taskforce have continued to commit to evolving our culture, to partner, train, and advocate for the best interests of children in Illinois who have experienced abuse and neglect.

By focusing on the above, we strive to ensure equity for all children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect in Illinois regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status.

As an organization, in collaboration with our partners, the CASA network, and the Illinois CASA Equity Taskforce we are pleased to highlight FY23 accomplishments that have been designed from our FY22 goals and strategies.

ILLINOIS CASA EQUITY TASKFORCE FY23 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Design and implementation of a strategy to identify and complete two DEIAB projects quarterly.



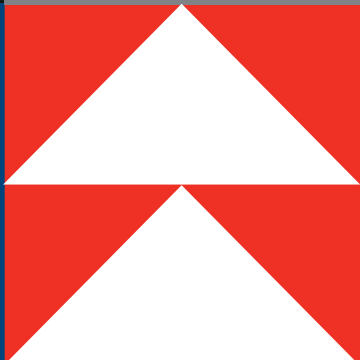
Creation of a DEIAB resource tab on our Illinois CASA website focused on DEIAB readings, resources, partnering organizations, upcoming training, and DEIAB events.



Implementation of an evaluation and working with local CASA programs on reviewing their own Equity Taskforce Strategic Plan, policies, and procedures, DEIAB training, resource library, board member toolkit, and recruitment.

Designed marketing strategies focused on DEIAB messaging of Illinois CASA and local CASA programs.

Incorporating Accessibility and Belonging terms into the DEIAB principles. Revising DEIAB 101 training and beginning to develop DEIAB 2.0.



Creation of the Board Member Toolkit for the Board Member on the GO! The Board Member Toolkit was developed to provide resources and tools focused on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and provide guidance in areas of diverse board and staff recruitment, HR policies, communication, and training.

PROGRAM DATA

OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN SERVED BY CASA IN FY23

Research shows that reunification with their parents, when safe and possible, is the best outcome for children. CASA volunteers stay by a child's side throughout the case, advocating first for reunification when safe and possible. If reunification is not safe or possible, CASA volunteers will advocate for the child to be adopted by or live with other relatives or family friends. If that is also not an option, CASA volunteers will work towards adoption by a non-relative.

No matter the outcome, CASA volunteers will keep in contact with the child's support network until the case closes so that everyone continues to put the child's best interests first.

ILLINOIS CASA LOCAL PROGRAMS

	Children Served in FY23	New Assignments in FY23	CASA Volunteers in FY23
Advocacy Network for Children	588	185	127
Boone County CASA	104	26	21
CASA DeKalb County Inc.	220	53	73
CASA Kane County	637	152	293
CASA Kendall County	195	74	76
CASA Lake County	671	153	347
CASA of Champaign County	549	143	133
CASA of Cook County	773	177	502
CASA of DuPage County Inc.	438	194	189
CASA of East Central Illinois	265	78	38
CASA of Effingham County	100	19	51
CASA of Franklin & Hamilton Counties	183	49	22
CASA of Jefferson County	138	25	32
Child Network/Kankakee	116	32	21
CASA of Marion County	152	49	41
CASA of McHenry County	291	123	178
Every Child/CASA of Rock Island	74	34	28

	Children Served in FY23	New Assignments in FY23	CASA Volunteers in FY23
CASA of Saline County	94	44	26
CASA of Southwestern Illinois	981	157	196
CASA of the Tenth Judicial Circuit	464	88	199
CASA of Vermilion and Edgar Counties	537	101	67
CASA of West Central Illinois	166	66	48
River Valley – Will & Grundy	403	125	139
CASA of Williamson County	155	67	63
CASA-15th Judicial Circuit	166	53	31
Jerseyville CASA	81	14	32
LaSalle County CASA	40	8	35
Macon County CASA	514	176	207
McLean County CASA	142	49	110
Sangamon County CASA	231	73	59
Winnebago County CASA	310	140	131

ILLINOIS CASA CONFERENCE 2023

IT WAS GREAT TO BE BACK IN PERSON! After two years of virtual training, we had our first in person conference in Springfield, Illinois with over 200 people in attendance. It was a great time of learning, engaging and connecting.

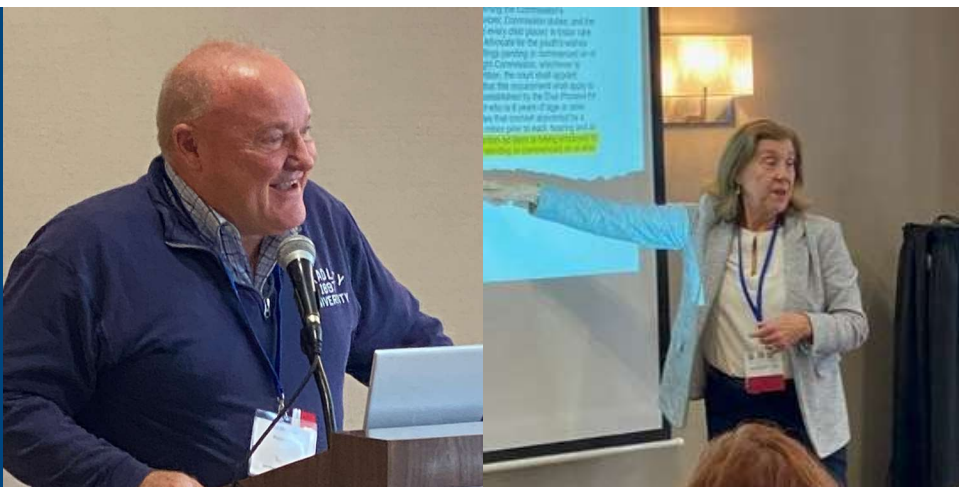
We kicked off on Thursday afternoon with our staff who learned about marketing, building boards of directors, human resources, and had special presentations from Bikers Against Child Abuse. The conference was a full day on Friday and a special thanks to our Emcee Erika Harold from Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism, opening remarks from Director Marc Adams, Department of Children and Family Services and our keynote speaker Ricky Hollar, a Marshall Scholar recipient.

Volunteers, program staff, and board members were able to select from different sessions that included topics such as Equity Centered Child Welfare, Judicial Expectations, DEI and Board Expectations, and the Illinois Bias Free Child Removal pilot. Presenters shared insights, strategies, and messages of hope.

We will be back in Springfield for a full staff day on April 18th and the conference on Friday, April 19, 2024. We have exciting things in the works and hope to see even more of you there next year!

“The keynote speaker and emcee were fantastic! Came away feeling re-committed to my role.”

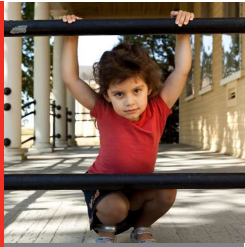
“I am not sure what I was expecting, but this conference exceeded any expectation I could have possibly had! From presenters to content to fellowship opportunities, well done!!”



“Each session that I attended the presenter were well prepared and knowledgeable. They each took the time to answer questions and did not show signs of getting frustrated with everyone questions. The conference was great from the food to the class sessions. It was an excellent time to meet other volunteers/Coordinators and get to know them. Great Job!!”

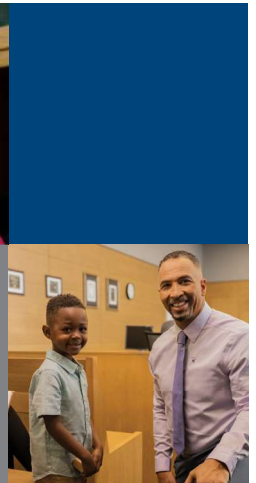
CHILD IMPACT STORIES

One of the children served through a Winnebago County CASA Advocate has recently completed his second year of college and is on the Dean's List. The CASA Advocate has assisted him with navigating his options and even assisted in the execution of a full ride scholarship to an Illinois based university.



In 2018 two sisters came into care. The same dedicated volunteer has been on this case for the 5 years. One of the girls has been a handful and began not attending school on a regular basis 2 years ago. The volunteer is a retired teacher and made her mission to make sure this young lady attended school on-line. She called the school counselor and youth every week and checked her progress. This volunteer helped her when she was struggling and was there every step of the way. The youth graduated this May 2023 with A's and B's.

We had two children come into care because of physical and psychological abuse. The girl, aged 9, was so traumatized that she had to be hospitalized. That is where she first met her CASA. Slowly, the advocate was able to build a bond with the girl and then helped her bond with her foster parents when she was released from the hospital. The volunteer met with the siblings regularly and offered them support, comfort and hope. The children who had never been to school learned to read and excel in other subjects. They began to thrive. They began to trust in adults again. Eventually the children asked their foster parents to adopt them-which they happily did. Both children continue to thrive with their new family.



We have been able to really help one of our children. He has had some significant issues with school as well with other issues. We have been instrumental in getting him get an Individualized Educational Plan. We have been able to work closely with the caseworker and helped facilitate personal needs as well. Because of this, he is doing better and is showing improvement now that he is getting counseling and having other needs met.

TRAINING UPDATE

NETWORK CONTINUOUS EDUCATION

Each staff partner and volunteer is required to complete 12 hours of continuing education annually to meet National CASA/GAL standards. Illinois CASA is proud to have offered a robust training schedule that includes virtual and in-person trainings, workshops, and webinars. Our training platform hosts virtual webinars that can be accessed 24/7. This allows our volunteers to meet the requirements when it is most convenient for them. Topics included: Gangs 101, Viewing Through a New Lens: A Survivor's Guide, CASA 101 for Legislators, Excellence in Advocacy, Cultural Responsiveness with the LGBTQ+ Community, and How to Recognize, Report, & Prevent Sextortion.

Illinois CASA partners with Illinois Attorney General Office High Tech Crimes Bureau, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois, Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center, Illinois Family Resource Center as well as local program staff that excel at best practices in their own program's advocacy work and share their experience with fellow program staff and advocates.

FOSTERING FUTURES

New this fiscal year, we offered Fostering Futures, a two-day training which addresses the needs of older youth. During the training, staff partners learn how to better engage and collaborate with older youth, help guide the youth through possible plans and expectations for their lives, identify resources to assist older youth, and learn the benefits of youth attending hearings. Participants stated, "Very engaging! Activities were helpful and appropriate for the topic. Awesome instructor." "I wish more people were able to receive the training."

We look forward to bringing more Fostering Futures trainings in FY24, along with Fostering Futures Training of Facilitators (TOF). TOF teaches staff how to engage, deliver and facilitate Fostering Futures so they can deliver the curriculum in their area and reach more volunteers.

FEEDBACK FROM OUR TRAININGS

VIEWING THROUGH A NEW LENS: A SURVIVOR'S GUIDE

"This was an amazing event. I'm a brand new volunteer as of Monday, and I loved this webinar and already purchased her book to read How to Recognize, Report, & Prevent Sextortion"

PEOPLE FIRST, IDENTITY FIRST

"Always good to gain a more in depth understanding of these DEIAB subjects to pass along in training."

TODDLERS & TECHNOLOGY: THE TABLET BABY GENERATION

"Mind blowing. So many good points to think about with internet safety and children, especially with the search feature. Girl toys was an excellent example. It's so simple to hand off a device and now I will take the extra steps."

