



FY25

ILLINOIS CASA

ANNUAL REPORT

CHANGE A
CHILD'S STORY.™



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A Word from the CEO and Board Chair

Dear Friends and Partners,

As I look back on this past year for the Illinois CASA network, I am filled with a profound sense of pride and determination. Together, we have proven that when we unite around a shared purpose, there is no limit to what we can achieve. Our existing programs stepped up to the challenge to expand CASA advocacy statewide, and I am pleased to share that we are well on our way to fulfilling our vision to operate in all 102 Illinois counties by the end of the decade.

Celebrating Our Collective Impact

This year, we didn't just meet challenges—we rose above them.

Some of the remarkable milestones we achieved include:

- Providing court-based advocacy services to 9,972 youth in care
- Recruiting, training and supervising 2,200 volunteers
- Expanding our reach into 20 new counties, allowing up to 1,000 additional youth access to CASA advocacy
- Securing close to \$10 million in state funding for the network

With Gratitude and Determination

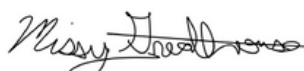
To our supporters, volunteers, and advocates: you are the heart of this organization. Your generosity, dedication, and belief in our mission inspire us every single day. You are proof that one person can make a difference in the life of a child and shape the trajectory of a family.

On behalf of everyone at Illinois CASA, thank you for standing with us. Let's make the coming year our most impactful yet.

With hope and determination,



Mari Christopherson
CEO



Missy Greathouse
Board Chair



ABOUT ILLINOIS CASA

VISION

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

MISSION

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

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 experiencing 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 volunteer will advocate for the child's safety, permanency and well-being while in foster care.

ILLINOIS CASA LOCAL PROGRAMS

Advocacy Network for Children

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

Boone County CASA

Boone

Champaign County CASA

Champaign

CASA of Cook County

Cook

CASA DeKalb County

DeKalb

CASA of DuPage County

DuPage

CASA of East Central Illinois

Cumberland, Coles

CASA for Kids

Clay, Clinton, Edwards, Effingham,
Fayette, Franklin, Hamilton, Jasper,
Marion, Wayne, White

CASA of Jefferson County

Jefferson

Great Rivers CASA/GAL

Greene, Jersey

CASA Kane County

Kane

CASA Kendall County

Kendall

CASA Lake County

Lake

LaSalle County CASA

LaSalle

CASA of McLean and Logan Counties

Logan, McLean

CASA of McHenry County

McHenry

CASA of the Heartland

Christian, DeWitt, Macon, Moultrie

CASA of River Valley

Grundy, Will

CASA of the 10th Judicial Circuit

Marshall, Peoria, Putnam, Stark,
Tazewell

CASA of the 15th Judicial Circuit

Carroll, Lee, Jo Daviess, Ogle,
Stephenson

Child Network / CASA of the 21st Judicial Circuit

Kankakee, Iroquois

CASA of Rock Island County/ EveryChild

Henry, Mercer, Rock Island

Sangamon County Child Advocacy Center/CASA of Sangamon County

Sangamon

CASA of Southeastern Illinois

Gallatin, Hardin, Massac, Pope, Saline

CASA of Southern Illinois

Jackson, Williamson

CASA of Southwestern Illinois

Bond, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, St.
Clair

CASA of Vermillion and Edgar Counties

Edgar, Vermillion

CASA of West Central Illinois

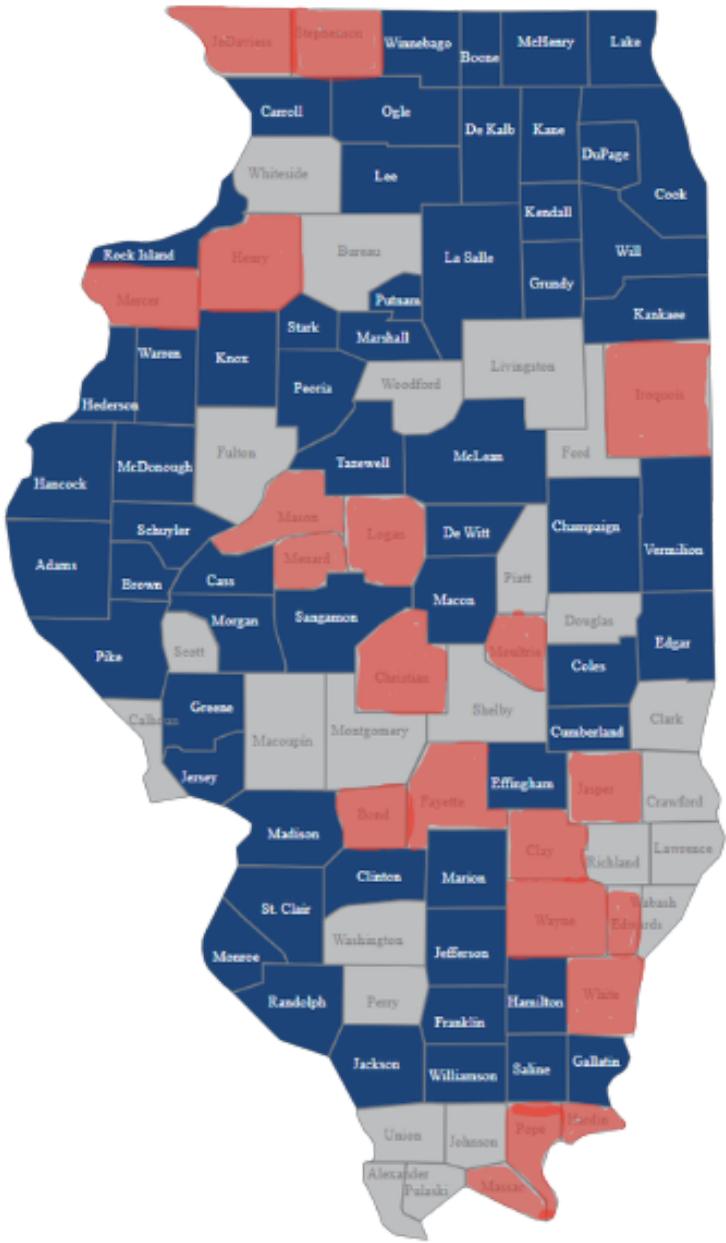
Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Warren

Winnebago County CASA

Winnebago



ILLINOIS CASA 2025 EXPANSION



New FY25 Active Counties :

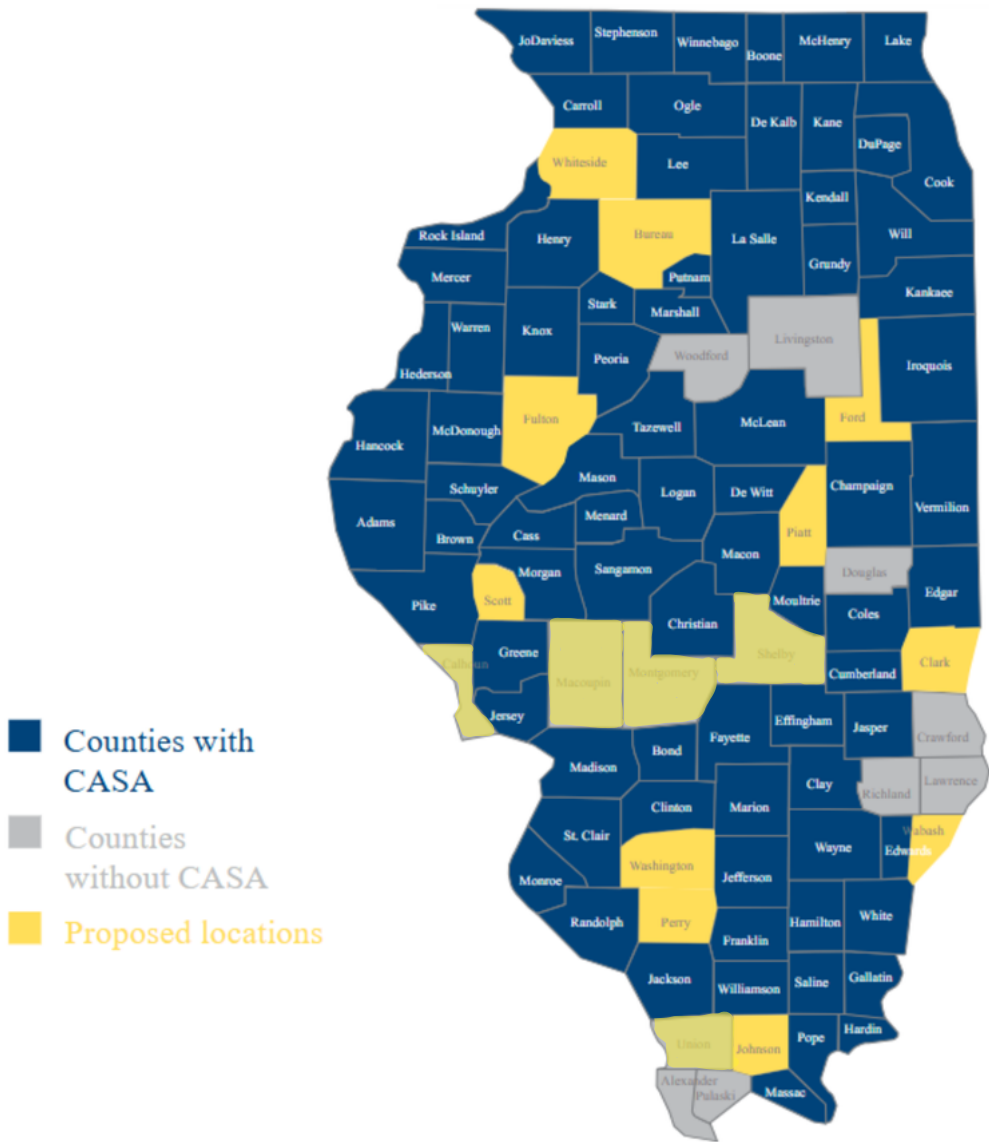
Bond County	Hardin County	Logan County	Moultrie County
Christian County	Henry County	Mason County	Pope County
Clay County	Iroquois County	Massac County	Stephenson County
Edwards County	Jasper County	Menard County	Wayne County
Fayette County	JoDaviess County	Mercer County	White County

ILLINOIS CASA EXPANSION PLAN

GROWTH PLAN MAP



**16 NEW
COUNTIES!**



FY26 Proposed Counties:

Bureau County

Fulton County

Perry County

Union County

Calhoun County

Johnson County

Piatt County

Wabash County

Clark County

Macoupin County

Scott County

Washington County

Ford County

Montgomery County

Shelby County

Whiteside County

CASA'S IMPACT IN ILLINOIS IN FY25

ACTIVE CASA
VOLUNTEERS

3,193

NEW CHILDREN
SERVED

2,790

TOTAL CHILDREN
SERVED

9,960

STATEWIDE
REACH

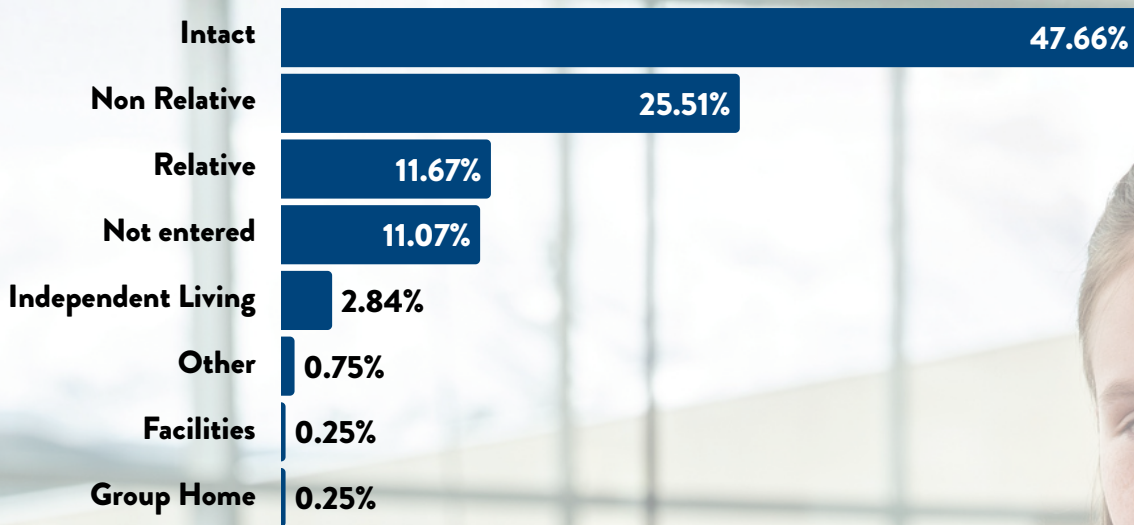
29
78

LOCAL
PROGRAMS
COUNTIES

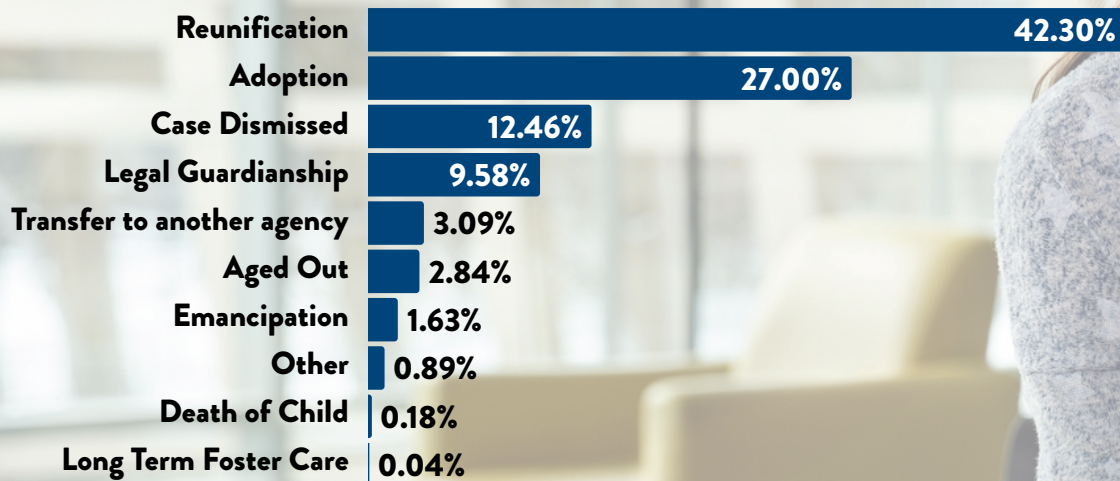


ILLINOIS CASA BY THE NUMBERS

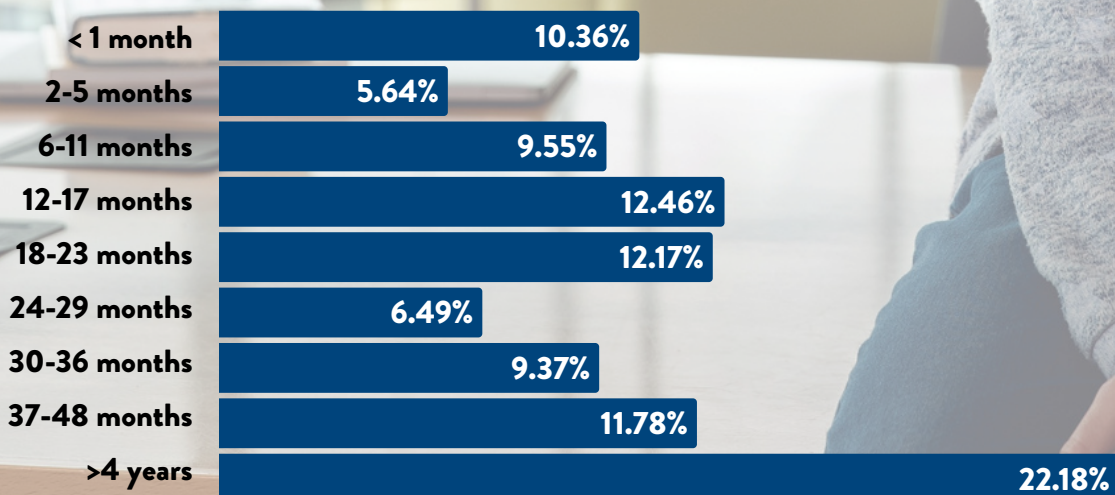
Out of Home Placement Types at Time of Closure



Reason for Case Closure



Time in Out-Of Home Care for Cases Closed



PROGRAM DATA

Program Name	FY25 Children Served	FY25 New Children	FY25 Volunteers
Advocacy Network for Children	645	242	110
Boone County CASA	88	29	28
CASA DeKalb County Inc.	194	47	61
CASA for Kids	515	233	104
CASA Kane County	651	181	275
CASA Kendall County	196	82	70
CASA Lake County	632	143	308
CASA of 15th Judicial Circuit	152	38	33
CASA of Cook County	910	164	424
CASA of Dupage County Inc.	341	123	182
CASA of East Central Illinois	208	30	23
CASA of Jefferson County	136	42	28
Great Rivers CASA/GAL	108	23	32
CASA of McHenry County	358	108	185
CASA of McLean & Logan Counties	188	54	122
CASA of River Valley	448	167	131
CASA of Southeastern Illinois	123	67	33
CASA of Southern Illinois	229	103	72
CASA of Southwestern Illinois	834	120	117
CASA of the 10th Judicial Circuit	490	228	170
CASA of West Central Illinois	146	21	45
CASA Vermilion & Edgar Counties	571	119	55
Champaign County CASA	434	81	119
Child Network	167	48	19
Every Child	93	29	29
LaSalle County CASA	64	28	24
Macon County CASA	559	186	121
Sangamon County CASA	191	30	26
Winnebago County CASA	299	127	111



OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN SERVED BY CASA IN FY25

Research shows that reunification with their parents, when safe and possible, is the best outcome for children in care. CASA volunteers stay by a child's side throughout the case, advocating first for reunification when conditions allow for it. If reunification is not an option, 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.

PROGRAM DATA

Volunteer retention is crucial for local CASA programs to succeed. As CASA volunteers become more familiar with the child's unique needs and circumstances, their ability to effectively advocate increases, ensuring that the child's needs are met with greater insight and care. Retaining volunteers prevents further disruption in a child's life, fosters trust and stability, which are vital for youth navigating the foster care system.

Consistent volunteer retention strengthens the overall effectiveness of the CASA model. Retaining dedicated volunteers reduces the need for constant recruitment and training, allowing resources to be allocated more efficiently toward supporting the children and families in need. When volunteers stay, they help build a more resilient and knowledgeable volunteer community, ultimately enhancing the impact of CASA programs across Illinois.



National Average Volunteer
Retention Rate

65%



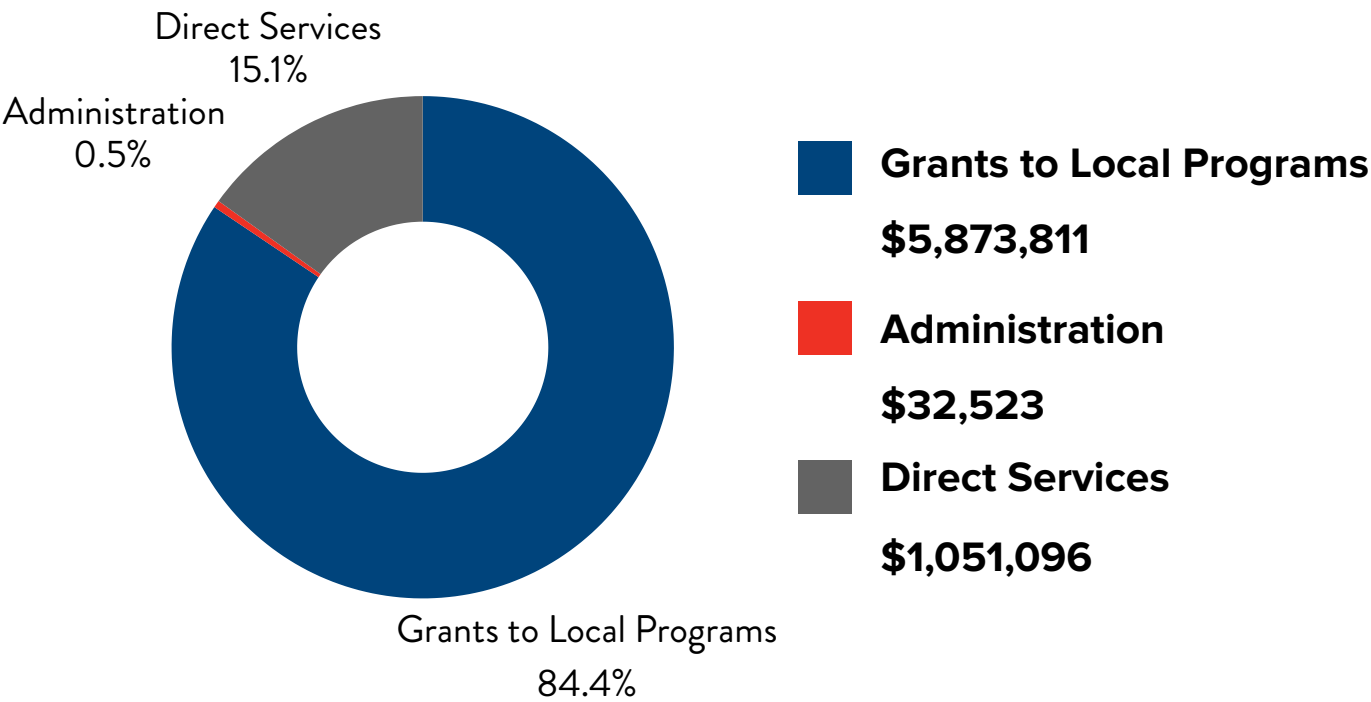
**F2Y5 Illinois CASA
Volunteer retention rate**

77%



FINANCIALS

EXPENSES



REVENUE

Illinois DCFS Program - Contracted Services	\$6,691,662
Other Public Funding	\$233,243
Program Service Income	\$58,107
Donations	\$11,481



2025 ILLINOIS CASA STATE CONFERENCE

Our Annual Conference, *Together for Tomorrow: Strengthening Advocacy, Building Hope*, held on April 4, was a great success with over 200 attendees. staff and board members joined us Thursday for a full day centered on the Healthy Futures data pilot, the DFCS Youth Advocacy Board, Effective Non-Profit Advocacy, and Local Program Expansion. On Friday, we welcomed volunteers and professionals from across the child welfare system. Emcee Matt Elwell opened the day, followed by plenary speaker Susan McConnell with her inspiring presentation, “Let It Be Us”.

The award ceremony celebrated Executive Director Todd Shackleford from Advocacy Network for Children as Staff Partner of the Year, Holly Hawes from CASA of McHenry County as Board Member of the Year, and The Honorable Erick Hubbard from McLean County as Judge of the Year. Twenty-seven volunteers were also recognized with the Presidential Volunteer Service Award.

After lunch, attendees enjoyed the keynote session “Foster Kid Fierce” with Theresa Collins and participated in eight interactive breakout sessions designed to expand knowledge and foster professional growth. The conference provided countless opportunities for connection, collaboration, and inspiration, creating an engaging and memorable experience for all who attended.

Overall Rating of the Conference



4.22
Avg. Response

32
Responses



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

THE FOLLOWING VOLUNTEERS ALL RECEIVED SILVER PRESIDENTIAL VOLUNTEER AWARDS, MEANING THEY COMPLETED OVER 200 HOURS OF SERVICE FOR 2025!



Becky Christensen, CASA of West Central Illinois

“Becky is a wonderful volunteer for CASA of WCI. She sends birthday cards to the children in her cases to make sure they feel loved and cared about. She has always maintained confidentiality and professionalism in all matters. She helps create a supportive and professional volunteer community. She has completed 262 volunteer hours and I would like to recognize her for her professionalism, reliability, and dedication to our mission!”

Kelly Price - Executive Director



Bob Siemer, CASA of Jersey and Greene Counties

“In addition to being a volunteer advocate, Bob is also our Outreach Coordinator. He sees kids at distances no one else wanted to drive. He is very hands on & every child he has, doing what a CASA should be doing; playing with the children, reading to them, etc. He's just the best. The kids all love him. He takes on any case I send his way ”

Stacy Burney- Executive Director



Jenny Carlson, CASA for Kids

“Ms. Carlson is currently appointed to five children each placed in separate homes. For the past two years, Ms. Carlson has visited each child, every month in their home. One home is a little over an hour drive one way, but Ms. Carlson has remained committed. The foster parents speak highly of Ms. Carlson and her dedication to the children. Agency staff often praise her efforts and willingness to work alongside them. Our program truly treasures Ms. Carlson, as she truly embodies what it means to be a CASA.”

Tavan Hiestand, Program Director

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: *Excellence in Advocacy*; *Develop a MAP: Strategies for CASA Support in Reuniting Families*; *Corrective thinking: Helping Children to Make Responsible Decisions*; *Creating a Culture of Support*; *The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children*; and many more.

Illinois CASA partners with Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois, Mercy Home for Boys and Girls, Illinois Family Resource Center, The University of Illinois, as well as local program staff who excel at best practices in their own program's advocacy work and share their experience with fellow program staff and advocates.

TRAINING FEEDBACK

Anxiety in Children

“One of the most useful webinars I’ve seen. Thank you so much for this information. It was very helpful — especially the relationship between anxiety behaviors and ADHD and how they should each be treated.”

Creating a Culture of Support

“Presenter was extremely well informed and kept the audience engaged with both factual and personal examples. Very beneficial.”

Human Trafficking Youth Advocacy

“I learned so much from this training. I’ve been signing up for training as often as possible, and this presenter was the best I’ve seen so far. She was able to smoothly transition between the presentation, answering questions, then tying everything back to the training. So informative, and very needed. This was by far the best trafficking webinar I’ve ever participated in! Well done!!!”



CASA IMPACT STORIES

“A young boy is now on his fifth placement. Because of the complex developmental trauma he suffered, he has been diagnosed with four disorders, which help explain why it has been so challenging for his foster families to ‘handle’ and care for him.

In his fifth foster placement the new foster mother faced many challenges adjusting to having a growing boy in her household and to completing the requirements for being a foster parent.

As the CASA, I became aware that the foster parent was struggling and in response to the needs identified by the foster mother, I was able to connect her with many resources including the food bank, SNAP benefits, carbon monoxide detectors, etc. In addition, I was able to connect her to the Tri-County Opportunities Council, a Community Action Agency, where she was able to apply for assistance with utility expenses based on her income and household size.

I feel that CASA has truly made a difference in the life of the boy and his new foster mom. He is a remarkable little boy who deserves to be provided with the best home and family possible.”

- Staff, CASA of the 15th Judicial Circuit



“This CASA was given a new case with a teen girl. She had experienced much trauma and is diagnosed with severe depression and anxiety and was unable to maintain a placement/continued to run away. The volunteer and youth started talking weekly. The teen reached recently telling her volunteer that she felt as she was slipping back into a dark place and asked her for help. She was admitted to the hospital and the first person she wanted to see was her volunteer. She and her volunteer wrote out ideas for what makes her happy, feel fulfilled and her goals for the future. The youth is on a good path. She has not run away; she finished summer school and passed all her classes with flying colors. She started working out at the gym and has been spending her time learning to cook and bake; things that make her happy. The CASA volunteer spends a lot of time checking in. She says they have a close bond. She thinks she will graduate from high school this year and go on to college, as those are some of the goals they wrote together while she was in the hospital.”

- Staff, CASA of the 10th Judicial Circuit

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS



*Illinois
Children's Justice
Task Force*

Illinois Department of
DCFS
Children & Family Services

