

The Iowa Child Advocacy Board staff continues to learn a great deal from our FCRB Members and CASA Advocates. On a regular basis you teach us. You teach us...

 the priceless value of time given to another

human being,

 the immense power of the spoken and written word,

 what compassion looks like when you empathize with a hurting child,

 how the presence of a consistent, caring adult can impact a child's life, and

 the courage it takes on a daily basis to make a difference in the world.



Volunteer Spotlight - Jamie Watts, CASA Advocate

Jamie Watts has been a CASA for about eight months. She said a friend told her about the CASA program years before, but she wanted to finish grad school first so she would be able to dedicate the time the case deserved once she was assigned.

As a 911 dispatcher, Jamie has heard a lot of things that most people wouldn't normally be required to handle. She stated that when she started the job, she hadn't realized how many people lived in situations she had never experienced such as poverty, homelessness, abuse, and neglect. Jamie was taught to see and hear things from a non-judgmental perspective. Her training has helped in her CASA advocacy work in asking the questions that most people would shy away from. She describes her approach in being able to be direct, but sympathetic.

Jamie shares that she has personally experienced traumatic events in her life and these have taught her healthy coping mechanisms, perseverance and resiliency. And while Jamie describes these things as vital to survival, she also



identifies them as strengths which help her advocate for the children in her case, and she is determined to make sure the children have a voice and that it is heard in court.

As a mother herself, one of the challenges Jamie has found in her CASA work is trying to understand when a parent does not appear to be doing the best they can for their children. She deals with this by reminding herself that sometimes people have grown up in circumstances beyond their control and they don't know any different. Knowing this motivates her to do the best she can for the children and to be a consistent and positive presence in their lives.

When one of the children on Jamie's case disclosed an unknown abuse, Jamie was able to notify DHS, which led to the abuser being dealt with criminally. Jamie said being a CASA is rewarding in ways she cannot explain, knowing that the children trust her and they know she is there for them.

Jamie has found that she is now more sympathetic to situations, has gained more patience and been taught persistence; this has immensely helped in her personal and professional life. Jamie said, "I feel like the CASA program truly gives kids a voice when they are in a situation they have no control over. It teaches them people in their lives care and want the best for them. We are their cheerleaders, their confidants and their voice in court." Jamie believes that the support and guidance of her Coordinator Anne Christensen has helped her think outside the box and given her ideas which help in and outside her case.

Tricia Scheinost, GAL for the children on Jamie's case shared these words about Jamie and her CASA Advocacy:

"I just wanted to tell you how amazing she is on this very difficult and perplexing matter. Not that any of these families are "typical" but this family is very unique and every time we turn around we uncover another layer, like peeling away an onion. Jamie is a godsend. Not only is she diligent in her work, her ability to be persistent, her intelligence, compassion and knowledge of resources has been essential. We are a long ways from where we need to be with this group but we are so blessed to have Jamie. The team we have formed between myself as GAL, Jamie as CASA and Juanita as the DHS caseworker is small but mighty and hopefully we will see progress when we leave this family eventually. This is the picture of how this should work between the players and that's rare!"

The Iowa Child Advocacy Board is proud of Jamie and the amazing example of what it is to be a CASA Advocate. Thank you Jamie for all you do!

FY2019 YEAR IN REVIEW

Local foster care review boards provide citizen oversight of case permanency planning and follow through for children in out of home placements in 50 Iowa Counties.



177
Local FCRB volunteers



1,243
reviews held



2,070 comment cards
from interested parties



11,534 hours donated
by volunteers



18,990 miles donated
by volunteers



99.8% of FCRB
reports filed timely

Thanks to all the local board volunteers, board facilitators, FCRB staff and interested parties who make citizen reviews possible!



Welcome to Our New Volunteers!

Karen Byrne, CASA, Cerro Gordo
Rose Bogaard, CASA, Mahaska
Kathryn Bugenhagen, CASA, Polk
Lindsey Holm, CASA, Polk
Lorie Howe, CASA, Clarke
Cindy Hyndman, CASA, Woodbury
Jeremy Kaufmann, CASA, Woodbury

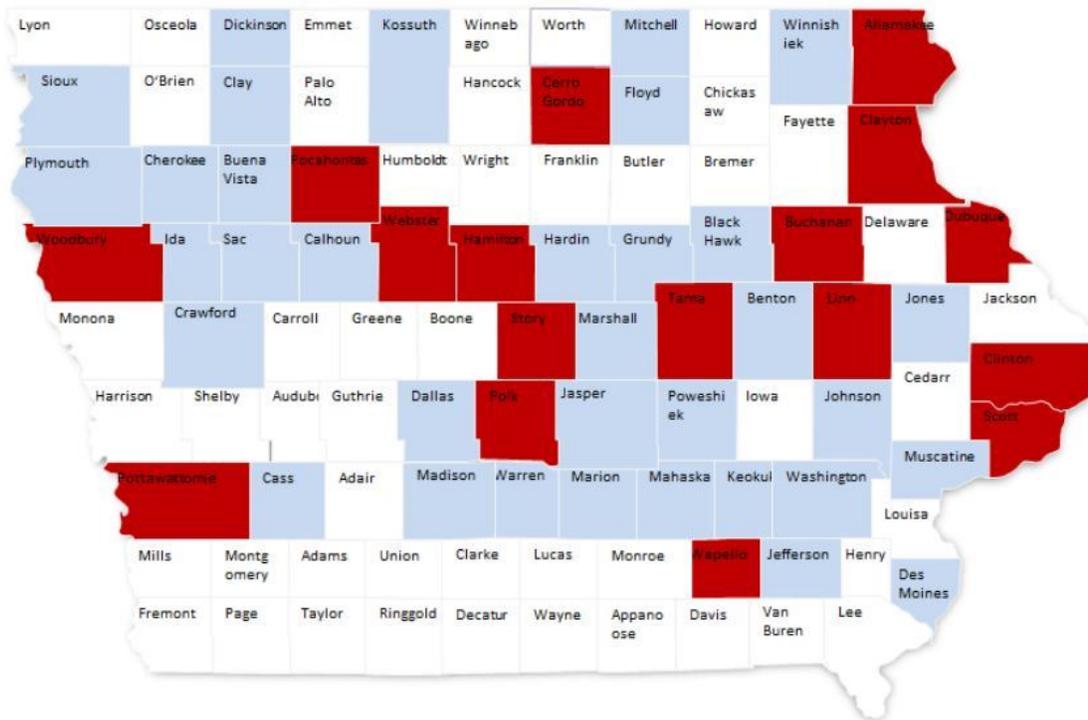
Katie Koelling, CASA, Polk
Linda Liston, CASA, Polk
Katherine Luzier, CASA, Polk
Rick McIntosh, CASA, Polk
Connie McQuieston, FCRB, Benton
Cecelia Ronnfeldt, CASA, Woodbury
Whitney Smith McIntosh, CASA, Polk

CASA Program Conducts Annual Survey of Juvenile Court Judges

Each year, the Iowa CASA program surveys judges who preside over the juvenile courts where the CASA program has operated. In May 2019, juvenile judges were asked to complete a 15 question survey to provide feedback to CASA

program staff in their assigned areas. Of the 55 juvenile judges invited to complete the survey, the CASA Program received 18 completed surveys, a 32.7% response rate. CASA Program staff continue to consider additional ways to survey members of the juvenile judiciary to create a more robust set of data.

Judges completing surveys cover these counties in red:



*counties in white indicate no formal CASA Programming in that county.

As in years past, the CASA program continues to enjoy strong judicial support. Below, please find statewide survey results:

CASA Reports:	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
Contain Relevant information	76.47%	17.65%	5.88%	0.00%
Help me get a detailed understanding of the child's situation to assist in making decisions about the child	83.33%	5.56%	11.11%	0.00%
Clear and concisely written	61.11%	27.78%	11.11%	0.00%
Recommendations are supported by the content contained with the report	66.67%	22.22%	11.11%	0.00%

Percentage of CASA Advocate Recommendations adopted by the court:	RESPONSES
100% to 75%	66.67%
74% to 50%	27.78%
49% to 25%	5.56%
24% or less	0.00%

Per each judge's perception, when children have a CASA Advocate, they are:	RESPONSES
Significantly Safer	44.44%
Somewhat Safer	44.44%
About the same as children without a CASA Advocate	11.11%
Somewhat less safe	0.00%
Significantly less safe	0.00%

Per each judge's perception, children involved with the CASA Program reach permanency:	RESPONSES
Significantly faster than children without a CASA Advocate	5.56%
Somewhat faster than children without a CASA Advocate	44.44%
About the same as children without a CASA Advocate	50.00%
Somewhat slower than children without a CASA Advocate	0.00%
Significantly slower than children without a CASA Advocate	0.00%

Per each judge's perception, children with a CASA Advocate receive needed services:	RESPONSES
Significantly more often than children without a CASA Advocate	22.22%
Somewhat more often than children without a CASA Advocate	61.11%
About the same as children without a CASA Advocate	16.67%
Somewhat less often than children without a CASA Advocate	0.00%
Significantly less often than children without a CASA Advocate	0.00%

What do you feel is most helpful about the CASA Program?	RESPONSES
Providing court reports with details of the child's life	88.89%
Attending court and providing verbal updates	16.67%
Having an ongoing relationship with the child	77.78%
Providing recommendations to the court	50.00%
Communicating with DHS and the Child's Attorney/GAL	77.78%
Monitoring the case plan	61.11%
Providing children a voice in court	33.33%

Judge's level of agreement with these statements:	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
I have a better understanding of what is happening in a case when a CASA Advocate is appointed	55.56%	44.44%	0.00%	0.00%
CASA Court Reports are filed in EDMS in a timely manner according to my local protocol (e.g. X number of days before the hearing)	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%
The information in the CASA reports meets my expectations	72.22%	27.78%	0.00%	0.00%
I believe CASA Advocates effectively and professionally speak for the best interest of the child throughout the judicial process.	70.59%	29.41%	0.00%	0.00%
I have more information on which to base decisions regarding a child's best interest when a CASA Advocate is assigned.	72.22%	27.78%	0.00%	0.00%
I believe the CASA Program is influential in impacting positive outcomes for children.	72.22%	27.78%	0.00%	0.00%
Overall, I am satisfied with the CASA program that I work with.	72.22%	27.78%	0.00%	0.00%

What is Summer?

John Mayer: *'Cause a little bit of summer is what the whole year is all about.*

Susan Branch: *I could never in a hundred summers get tired of this.*

Kellie Elmore: *I love how summer just wraps its arms around you like a warm blanket.*

Sam Keen: *Deep summer is when laziness finds respectability.*

William Carlos Williams: *In summer, the song sings itself.*

Jenny Han: *Everything good, everything magical happens between the months of June and August.*

Hans Christian Andersen: *Just living is not enough ... one must have sunshine, freedom, and a little flower.*

Robert Orben: *A vacation is having nothing to do and all day to do it in.*

My own memories from childhood: *Up at dawn, walking bare-foot in the dew-covered grass, nature at every turn.*

What are your childhood memories of summer?

What will the children for whom we advocate remember of summer?

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-Jim Hennessey, CAB Administrator

CAMS CASA REPORT WRITING TRAINING AVAILABLE

Kerry Brennan, CAMS Specialist, will be offering a monthly training on CASA Report Writing in CAMS beginning in August. Each session will be held using Google Hangouts. The monthly session is for any CASA advocate, coach or



staff who would like to learn more about how to create the CASA report in CAMS. Kerry will provide “best practice guidelines” to help CAMS users better understand the Court Report process. Between August and December, the monthly sessions will be offered on the second Tuesday at noon.

To **register** for a class, complete the Google form for the date that works best for you by clicking the corresponding link:

August 13 at noon [Sign up for August CAMS CASA Report Writing Training](#)

September 10 at noon [Sign up for Sept. CAMS CASA Report Writing Training](#)

October 8 at noon [Sign up for October CAMS CASA Report Writing Training](#)

November 12 at noon [Sign up for November CAMS CASA Report Writing Training](#)

December 10 at noon [Sign up for December CAMS CASA Report Writing Training](#)

Registration is important so Kerry knows how many participants to expect each month. All registrants will receive an email from Kerry with instructions for how to join the Google Hangout prior to their selected session date.

Calling All CASA Advocates!!

If you have found yourself looking for a new challenge, have a desire to take on a leadership role within the CASA program, or feel excited about creating a team of fellow Advocates, consider learning more about becoming a CASA Coach!



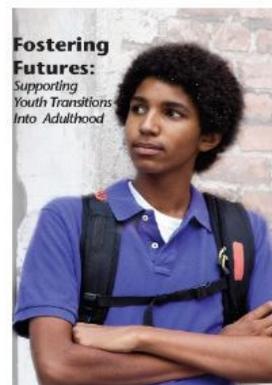
This fall we will begin offering our newly revised CASA Coach Pre-Service Training and would love you to join us! Contact your Program Coordinator if you are interested in learning more about what it takes to become a Coach. To learn about the revised Coach Curriculum or how to register for the training, please reach out to the State Trainer. Email lesa.christianson@dia.iowa.gov or call 515-986-4790.

CASA Advocates:

Fostering Futures: Supporting Youth Transitions to Adulthood Training is required for Advocates serving on cases of youth 14 or older within 6 months of case assignment or by the time the youth is 14 1/2. You may also attend a training session prior to the youth’s 14th birthday as this curriculum addresses the unique need of building rapport and trust with an older child.

Upcoming Sessions:

September 6 West Des Moines
October 18 Cedar Rapids
October 26 Storm Lake



Register for your preferred session through your Local Coordinator.

Trainer's Corner: Education Advocacy in Dependency Court

WHY IT MATTERS

Excerpt from National CASA's *ADVOCACY IN ACTION: Resources to Improve Safety, Permanency and Well-Being*

The body of research on the educational outcomes of students in foster care has grown significantly over the past several years. And the research has shown a consistent theme: children in foster care face significant barriers to their educational progress, starting from before school begins and extending through post-secondary education. Yet education provides opportunities for improved well-being in physical, intellectual, and social domains during critical developmental periods and it supports economic success in adult life. Recognizing the importance of supporting the educational needs of students in foster care, child welfare agencies, education agencies, and courts have been working together to improve policies and practices around the country. For more than a decade, there has been growing momentum at the federal, state, and local level to prioritize the educational needs of students in foster care.

Many judges and courts are working with advocates and systems to alter children's educational paths. These efforts can improve school outcomes, boost graduation rates, reduce disciplinary actions, increase college attendance and help break the cycle of justice system involvement.¹

Unfortunately, there are courts that don't yet recognize the critical role they play in promoting educational success. Consequently, social workers and advocates may not come prepared to talk about the educational strengths and concerns of a child. Judges who ask about education services, special education plans and how the child is doing in school, hold others accountable and social workers, as well as advocates, quickly learn to come to court prepared to share this information.

One survey of 169 judges, 65 key stakeholders, and 1,1107 CASAs, conducted in partnership with Casey Family Programs and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), found that there was widespread agreement by all respondents that judges have a role in ensuring that the educational needs of youth in care are met. In this study, the following issues were noted:

1. School placement stability is a significant concern with the transfer of records and paperwork cited as the number one barrier to timely school enrollment;
2. Special education services are often lacking with the court not always addressing special education on a regular basis; and,
3. Children do not always have educational advocates in court.²

Judges also reported that a consistent barrier to effectively addressing education concerns was that caseworkers were unprepared or not knowledgeable about educational issues, a lack of information from or involvement of the school, and infrequency of court hearings.

ADVOCATES IN ACTIONS

*"Part of a judge's leadership role is to always build a sense of urgency in the lives of these children. We can't burn days of these kids' lives. We can't take three months to update their IEP or to figure out what we're going to do when they're high school juniors, 17 years old, and have 8 credits. That's an emergency."*³

– Judge Egan Walker

The good news is that advocates can help support education advocacy in the courtroom by doing a number of things that bring attention to the importance of educational success and modeling the urgency that Judge Walker describes is so needed.

Know how children or youth are doing developmentally (for younger aged children) or academically. Keep regular track of their achievements and challenges to prevent things from falling through the cracks or blow up into bigger problems. Meet their teachers, principals, and counselors as appropriate so they can provide you updates and concerns. The Questions to Ensure That the Educational Needs of Children and Youth in Foster Care Are Being Addressed tool developed for judges by the National Council for Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) provides an extensive list of checkpoints for understanding how children and youth are doing educationally.

Look for education-related flags. Actions or behaviors that should concern all involved include poor school attendance, tardiness, a drop in school performance, a deviation from positive behavior in school, lack of stable home environment with support and structure to succeed in school, running from home, out-of-control, unmanageable behavior at school or a lack of urgency to address a child's education needs. Sound the alarm when something is "off" and advocate for needed supports or interventions.

Be prepared to update the court on developmental or educational progress and concerns. Even if it isn't a part of the court's culture to ask questions about the child's development or academic part of their lives, present the outcomes consistently both in your reports and in the courtroom. Your education advocacy may influence the behaviors of others involved in the child's case, causing them to pay more attention to the education issues of the child.

Ask children and youth what specific information they would like reported (if they are not able to be in court) about their educational experience. Having them either share directly or indirectly what they perceive as their strengths and need areas will help individualize the uniqueness of the child's situation and prompt others to both celebrate the child's strengths and achievements as well as provide needed supports in the areas they are missing or struggling in.

Remember that going to school is bigger than just academics. Many students in foster care report that school was the one place where they could just be kids and feel normal. Help students participate in extracurricular activities, after school clubs, sports, dances, etc., things that they identify as important to them. Advocate that the court does not schedule hearings that involve children and youth during school hours, or that caseworkers do not visit children at school if possible. Protect the child's privacy when contacting school people so as not to "out" them to their peers and classmates.

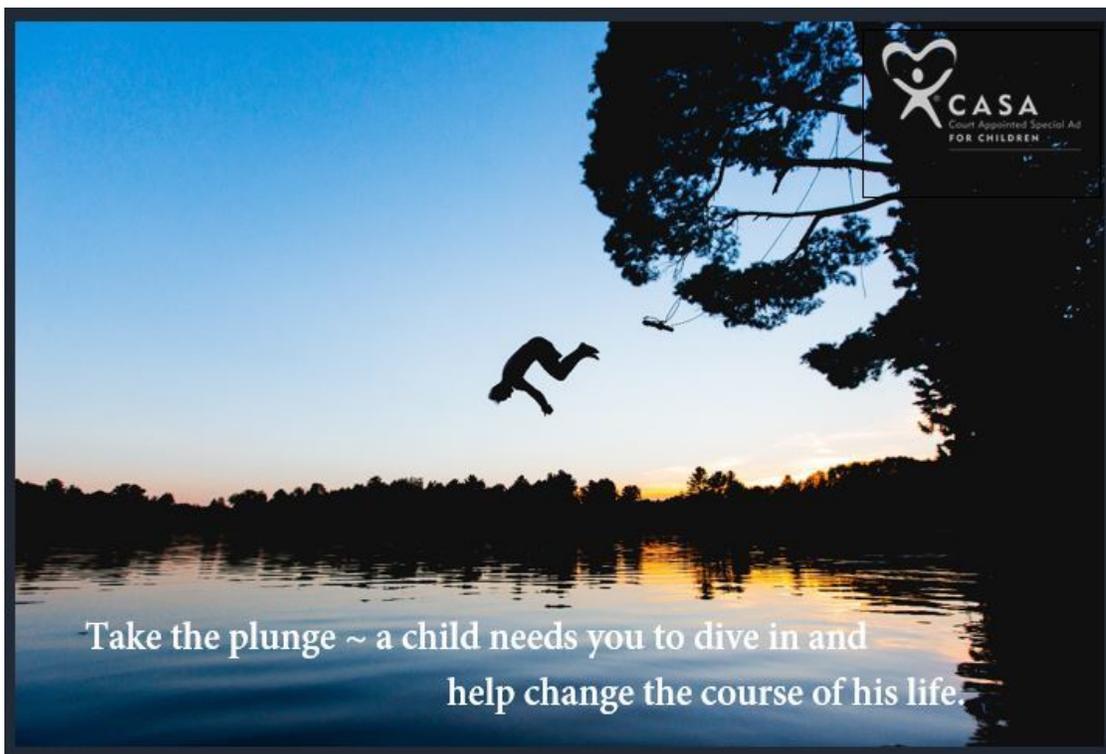
1 Chiamulera, C. (2017). *The court's role in supporting education for court-involved children*. Child Law Practice, 36, (6).

2 *Court-based education efforts for children in foster care: The experience of the Pima County Juvenile Court*. Casey Family Programs and National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

3 This quote was originally published in: Chiamulera, C. (2017). *The court's role in supporting education for court-involved children*. Child Law Practice, 36, (6).

Go to: <https://childadvocacy.iowa.gov/forms-and-resources> to access ICAB's Educational Resources and Checklists.

Please print off and use to recruit a new volunteer!



Take the plunge ~ a child needs you to dive in and help change the course of his life.

You know that feeling when you dive into cold water and begin to reach depths deeper than you anticipated? You have no idea what lies beneath you and you begin to propel yourself upward. You finally break through the water's surface and take a huge, necessary life-giving breath. After a brief hesitation and while getting your bearings, you determine your course and begin to move forward with your eyes on a focused destination.

So it is with the work of a child advocate. As a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA volunteer), you dive into the unknown world that is the life of an abused and neglected child. You move deeper into the child welfare case by reviewing the information provided and reaching out to others who know the child to get a complete picture of their circumstances. You become acquainted with the child and with each visit you break through the surface of experienced traumas. As you become the child's voice, speaking for what he wants and for what is in his best interest, you help him find his bearings and give assurance and hope. You understand the course that must be followed, your focus in on the child, and the destination is a safe and permanent home.

Take the plunge ~ a child needs you to dive in and help change the course of his life.

Apply now to become a CASA Volunteer by visiting www.casaiowa.org



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