

CAB Connection - August 2020



Dear 2020 Calendar,

I have been tempted to throw you in the trash or maybe stick you in a drawer. It has been a difficult year, and with so many things cancelled, situations changed, loved ones and “freedoms” lost, I’m concerned about what the rest of 2020 may hold. Although I know there will be moments of joy, time to reflect, and occasions to be celebrated, the “new normal” is not yet normal to me. So until I reach that state of being, I will try to remind myself of the good in the world, the things that give me hope, and the reasons I shouldn’t just cross off the next 6 months.

In my volunteer work, I know there are vulnerable children who are depending on me to not give in to discouragement. I know that if I have hope, I can pass on that hope to families who are struggling. I believe I can make a difference

every day in a child's life by my presence and my commitment to the things that are important to them. The truth of the matter is my volunteer work is life changing. It is life changing for myself, my community, and the children and families with whom I am involved. So as August begins, I will continue to mark my calendar with appointments, board days, court appearances, report due dates, scheduled visits, and a few days off. My "normal" as a CASA Advocate and FCRB Member will always be advocating for the protection and permanency of children. I am grateful there are others like me, who feel the same way.

Sincerely,



Welcome New Volunteers!

Riley Carlson, FCRB, Decatur County
Linda Chastain, FCRB, Decatur County
Wilma Frey, FCRB, Decatur County

Craig Hartman, CASA, Woodbury County
Michele Kelso, CASA, Cerro Gordo County
Susan Koertner, CASA, Woodbury County



New Foster Care Review Board Contract Facilitators

The Child Advocacy Board recently implemented contracts with two individuals to provide FCRB facilitation services in Northwest Iowa. *Tricia Dagele* has extensive experience in the child welfare system and is a CASA coach. She will facilitate the Clay-O'Brien and Dickinson-Osceola boards. *Tammy Richison* has a background in social work, child welfare and prior CASA experience. She will facilitate Buena Vista and Cherokee-Ida boards. Both individuals will be an asset to the FCRB process. They will complete training in August and then transition into the facilitator role. We look forward to working with them!

FCRB Volunteer Satisfaction Survey



FCRB volunteers (113) recently completed the annual satisfaction survey. Overall, volunteers reported feeling satisfied with the FCRB mission and motivated to continue in their role. Issues brought forth by volunteers include, but are not limited to:

- Since late March, the FCRB process has been modified to do paper case reviews due to Covid-19 restrictions and boards have not held in-person meetings with parties. Numerous concerns were noted in the survey regarding lack of interaction with the various interested parties due to not meeting in person and the impact that has on the review process.

- Lack of detailed, updated information for all cases to carry out thorough reviews was also noted by many volunteers.
- Varying issues with technology to either participate in virtual meetings or access case file information were also noted by several respondents.
- Some volunteers would like to see improvements to the continuous education materials and opportunities provided to local board members that are more applicable to their role as reviewers.

The Child Advocacy Board is slowly beginning to transition back to in person meetings, where possible, while still paying close attention to CDC guidelines and information from the Governor's office. The safety of FCRB volunteers, facilitators and all those involved with the FCRB process continues to be a priority. ICAB is committed to enhancing the relationship between local boards and interested parties to engage more participation by those involved in a child's case to conduct a more comprehensive review. As technology becomes a more integral component of the FCRB process, ongoing training opportunities will be made available to the volunteers. An assessment of the continuous education program for FCRB members will also be conducted.

Feedback from volunteers is important to help ICAB remain aligned with goals, improve processes and make informed decisions about any changes made to the program. Thank you to all the volunteers who took time to complete the survey!

Trainer's Corner: Back to School



Although our typical "Back to School" activities might look very different this year, nevertheless we need to consider what our advocacy efforts might look like in the months ahead around the educational needs of the children we serve. Foster Care Review Board Members can consider what the educational needs of the child are for the coming year and what questions might they ask at the next review hearing to make valuable recommendations around educational needs. CASA Advocates and Coaches will make plans for upcoming monthly contacts with the child and other parties connected to the child's case, including the educators that can provide a

wealth of specific information related to the needs of the child.



Gathering information about the needs of the child might include asking the following questions:

- What grade and school does the child or youth attend?
- How did the last school year end? What summer activities were completed to help support the educational needs of the child?
- What will the expectations be of the child for demonstrating academic progress with the school's Return to Learn plans? What does this school structure look like such as virtual classes or different schedules on different days of the week?
- What challenges will there be for this child? Does the child have the support they need if there are expectations for learning from home such as adequate computer and internet services? Are the parents able to be involved if they must work outside the home?
- Do they have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in place and are other services provided to them at school?
- What is the date of last IEP? Is there a meeting scheduled that the CASA should know about and consider attending or for the FCRB to request the final report? Is this meeting virtual or in person? If virtual, does the parent have the computer and internet ability to attend that meeting?
- How has the child been doing at school academically- note specific grades, if known? What are the individual goals that can be met with the current CoVid-based school's structure?

- What subjects does the child show strengths from the teacher's perspective? What subjects are deemed more difficult?
- How does the child respond to the same previous question?
- Any problems with behaviors or attendance or the ability to manage a new method of instruction due to CoVid?
- What are the number of suspensions/detentions/behavior reports and the behaviors that resulted in disciplinary actions? Does the school have a plan to address if these are due to the changing world and school structure?
- What was the child's attendance?
- How many days missed due to behavior problems? Missed due to health problems? Missed due to other factors?
- How is the child doing in school socially? What will the rules be around social distancing during the school day in both classrooms and recess?
- Has the child been involved in extracurricular activities in the past? Are these activities available at this time? If so, under what parameters?
- What concerns do the adults in the child's life have or the child express related to the plans for school this year?
- What additional comments did teachers provide regarding progress, issues/concerns and recommendations?
- What do other professionals in the education area share as the child's strengths in education?
- What personal observations has the CASA gathered from interactions related to education that provide a more complete picture?



To learn more about the Education of Children in Foster Care in Iowa and to find additional resources, refer to the following link from the Iowa Department of Education. <https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/learner-supports/education-children-foster-care>

For Resources to Support Learning during COVID-19 use the link: <https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/resources-support-learning-during-covid-19>

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