

**IOWA CHILD ADVOCACY BOARD**  
*advocating for abused and neglected children in Iowa*

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HURTS. BUT NOT ALL WOUNDS ARE VISIBLE.**

**Thank you for seeing them anyway ~  
And helping others see them too.**



Thank you all for the opportunity!

At the end of December this year, I will resign from my position. I am retiring from paid work – perhaps for the final time.

It has been a high honor and great privilege to work for and with you for the past six and a half years. I have gained a great deal personally from my association with you through this job. We have made some headway working together toward helping the many children in Iowa who have been abused, neglected and placed in foster care.

Yet the sense of urgency remains strong about the continued need to expand the reach of effective advocacy for Iowa's most vulnerable children. You all have my best wishes as you continue to share your wisdom, talents and compassion in your work to help our children in their quest for safety, loving homes, fulfilled lives and freedom from abuse, fear and trauma.

Thank you for your service to Iowa's children!

Jim Hennessey, Administrator

Iowa Child Advocacy Board



**Volunteer Spotlight:  
Rachel Cadena, CASA Advocate - CASA Coach - FCRB Member**

When Rachel Cadena was taking a Legal Assistant class at Kirkwood Community College in the mid-90's, she saw a posting on the instructor's bulletin board about CASA. She thought it would be a great way to expand her work in the legal field. It wasn't until much later that Rachel became more aware of why she felt so strongly about advocating, in particular, for women and children.

Rachel shares that she grew up in a large family. When she was 14 years old her family went through a stressful divorce which was, as she describes it, "chaotic and unbalanced" and "hard watching everyone suffer and struggle." She believes this history along with having two daughter of her own, has made her a stronger advocate for children; that her experiences and her work early on as a legal assistant have given her passion and insight, and helped prepare her to be a CASA.

Rachel's length of service to ICAB's programs has been nothing short of amazing. She has been a CASA Advocate for 23 years, a CASA Coach for 3 years, and on the Foster Care Review Board for 2 ½ years. When asked what she finds rewarding about her CASA and FCRB experience, Rachel states it is "making sure children are heard and that we advocate for what's best for them. Children are the most vulnerable and need to be protected when their parents are unable to; then other adults such as CASA's, GAL's, judges and social workers come to their aid".

When asked what is challenging about this work, Rachel expresses that understanding and accepting the minimum requirements that a parent must provide and work toward, is difficult at times. In addition, she feels that there are gaps in the oversight, policies, and laws surrounding the funding and support of foster parents and family members who become caretakers for the children. Rachel believes there can be improvements – that "we can do better." She knows ICAB volunteers can reach out to community leaders, Senators and Congressmen and share about the work ICAB is doing.

As challenges arise, Rachel knows she can find support in her Coordinator Jennifer Gericke. Rachel feels this work is her way of giving back; that since she was once a teenager in a home with its own level of abuse and neglect that she is meant to defend those going through similar situations.

Rachel adds, "Our program improves the lives of children because we are advocating for them and giving them a voice. Without CASA, many children's stories are not told and they fall through the cracks. We need more CASAs on these cases for a better outcome for these children and our communities.

Thank you Rachel for your many years of service to ICAB and children, whose lives have surely been changed because of your involvement.



## Welcome to Our New Volunteers!

Emily Bahnsen, Polk, CASA  
Kristofer Fenrich, Polk, CASA  
April Kelley, Humbolt, CASA  
Brittany Lockey, Worth, CASA  
Elizabeth Mooney Miller, Polk, CASA



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### **For CASA Advocates: In-Service Trainings**

For a complete list of all available CASA in-service trainings please click here: [In-Service Trainings](#)

**Reminder CASA Advocates:**

**Fostering Futures: Supporting Youth Transitions to Adulthood Training** is required for Advocates serving on cases of youth 14 or older. You may also attend a training session prior to the youth's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, as this curriculum addresses the unique need of building rapport and trust with an older child.

**Upcoming Fostering Futures Sessions:**

October 18 Cedar Rapids

October 26 Storm Lake

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Gov. Kim Reynolds and Lt. Gov. Adam Gregg have been presenting awards to Iowa's volunteers at special ceremonies across the state. Several CASA Advocates and FCRB Members have received the Governor's Volunteer Service Award for the time and energy they have given in serving as a voice for Iowa's most vulnerable children who are involved in the child welfare system.

Rachel Cadena, a CASA Coach who has mentored her fellow volunteer advocates for the past three years (also an Advocate and FCRB Member), is pictured below with the Governor and Lt. Governor at the Cedar Rapids ceremony held at Kirkwood Community College. Cindi Smith, who also volunteers as an Advocate, was interviewed by TV-9 at this same ceremony. She told them, "You don't even think of it as volunteering. You just think about it as helping kids, helping the kids that really need it the most that have no one in their corner."

[Click here to see the video clip.](#)

We are proud of all our volunteers across the state of Iowa in how well you represent CASA, FCRB, and most importantly, our system's children. Congratulations to Rachel Cadena, Cindi Smith, and everyone honored this year from both our programs for your tireless support of the children for whom you advocate.



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## FY20 Foster Care Review Board Projects



The Child Advocacy Board is committed to improving the quality and value local foster care reviews have on influencing case permanency planning and better outcomes for children. There are two focus areas that the FCRB Program Committee is working on this fiscal year.

### **Develop and Implement a FCRB Evaluation Program**

Per Iowa Code §237.18, 6, duties of the State Board include maintaining an evaluation program regarding citizen foster care review programming. "The evaluation program shall be designed to evaluate the effectiveness of citizen reviews in improving case permanency planning and meeting case permanency planning goals, identify the amount of

time children spend in foster care placements, and identify problem issues in the foster care system. The state board shall submit an annual evaluation report to the governor and the general assembly.”

The evaluation program will include surveying interested parties, utilizing comment card results and systemic barriers identified by local review boards.

### **Develop and Implement a FCRB Quality Review (QR) Process**

The FCRB Program Committee will be developing a QR Process for the FCRB program. The initial work includes obtaining baseline data from FCRB reports to assess the thoroughness and overall quality of local reviews. This will be done by:

- Outlining key areas that impact child outcomes
- Assessing barriers to the review process (e.g., lack of updated case information, lack of attendance by interested parties)
- Identifying key factors contained in FCRB reports to assess
- Reviewing FCRB reports and collecting data

The second phase will include analysis and formulating conclusions from the baseline data and developing strategies for change. The other key component of the second phase will be developing training materials for facilitators, staff and board members on how to conduct reviews that elicit more information that adds value to the court reviews and DHS case planning.

The third phase will include implementation of new review process strategies.

Special thanks is extended to the FCRB Program Committee members for their continuous work. In addition to management personnel, members include local coordinators Kerry Brennan, Cara Galloway, Melissa Loehr and administrative staff Ann Empen and Cindy Goellnitz.

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## **From the Bench**

A Q & A with Linnea Marie Nelson Nicol, District Associate Judge in the First Judicial District of Iowa. Judge Nicol covers Allamakee, Buchanan, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek counties.

**Q:** *What factors do you consider when determining whether to assign a CASA to a case?*

**A:** If one of the parties on the case requests a CASA I appoint one if a volunteer is available. If a case is complicated, meaning particularly difficult fact situations, or if the adults are trying to manipulate the children, I tend to appoint a CASA volunteer if one is available. I have also appointed a CASA when I feel a case would benefit from a different point of view.

**Q:** *What benefits have you seen for the children involved in CASA cases?*

**A:** Children benefit from the adults paying attention to them. I have had the privilege of working with some outstanding CASAs. One of the CASA volunteers got involved and immediately improved the quality of life of the child by suggesting a change in the visitation schedule that worked better for all the parties. The fresh perspective of the CASA challenged "the way we always do things" and paid dividends for the child and the family.

**Q:** *What benefits do you believe the CASA program provides the juvenile court system?*

**A:** CASA volunteers bring their unique way of looking at how the Iowa Department of Human Services and the Juvenile Court system work. Challenging some of our "but we've always done it this way" policies, they bring the eyes of the child to the table. They meet with the child frequently and focus on the immediate needs as well as the long term needs of the child.

**Q:** *What advice would you give someone considering volunteering as an advocate with CASA?***A:** If you care about children and can invest some time, you have the skills to be a CASA volunteer. You don't need a certain education (CASA will train you) and you don't need to be retired or have all the time in the world; if you want to do it, you are probably capable of it. What are you waiting for? Now is the time. This is your engraved invitation.

Thank you Judge Nicol for sharing and serving Iowa's vulnerable children and families, from the bench.

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## **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:

**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.

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Home sweet hope.

**BECOME A CASA VOLUNTEER.**

Children in foster care who have a CASA volunteer are more likely to succeed in school and adjust to change. And they're half as likely to re-enter the foster care system later. As a volunteer, you can make all the difference for a child who has experienced abuse or neglect in your community. Get involved, and change a child's story.

Learn more at [casaiowa.org](http://casaiowa.org)

CHANGE A CHILD'S STORY.™



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