



## Volunteer Spotlight: Jo Stumo, CASA Advocate



When Jo Stumo was 10 years old, the local sheriff made an unexpected visit to her home. He arrived with three small children and a hope that Jo's mother could take them in for the weekend. Abandoned by their babysitter and with their parents out of town, the kids needed to be safe and cared for. Jo's mother said yes, and she never forgot that. For the past 15 years, Jo has carried on her mother's legacy of helping children in need as a CASA Advocate.

Jo is one of the North Iowa CASA program's most seasoned volunteers. According to Program Coordinator Crystal Engstrom, she is known for going above and beyond for the children she serves. For example, Jo recently helped the two sisters she has been advocating for locate their birth certificates and start a memory book of their childhoods. Jo has been with these girls for many years – longer than any foster parent, social worker, or therapist.

A lifelong resident of Northwood, Iowa, Jo is a former rural mail carrier and tax preparer. When she is not busy with her CASA work, Jo enjoys quilting and sewing, reading a book every week, and watching live theater.

The North Iowa CASA program is blessed to have Jo as a volunteer and thanks her for outstanding service to Iowa kids!

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### Monthly Morsels and Musings from the Child Advocacy Board Administrator



This month is Social Worker's Month. The theme and logo for this year is "Elevate Social Work." We hear every day about the demands placed on social workers who have responsibility for protecting the safety and well-being of the children they serve. Many times they find less time than they need to fulfill their responsibilities at the level they would like.

In February, I had the opportunity to participate in a meeting with nearly 100 other professionals who are involved in all aspects of the child welfare system as we heard about the results of the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Report completed in 2018. The CFSR measures the effectiveness of states programs in meeting the safety, permanency and well-being needs of children who receive child welfare services. While Iowa is above the national average on some measures and closely matches the average performance in others, we fall short as a state in a couple areas. Two areas needing special attention in Iowa are increasing caseworker visits with children and parents and fully implementing the provisions of case permanency plans.

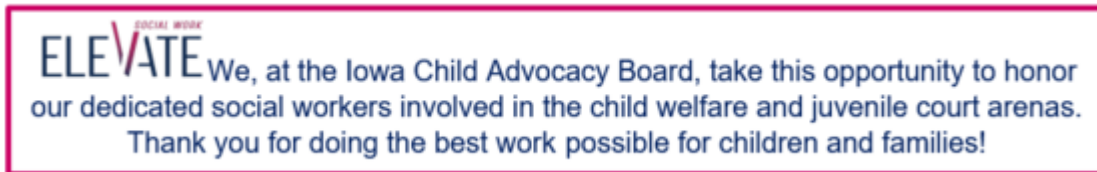
After hearing the results, participants joined small round table discussions to identify strengths and weaknesses and identify some ideas for improvement in the low outcome areas. One of the key outcomes of the small group discussions was that shortages of time and resources were a barrier to good child outcomes in every area. As advocates in either the CASA or FCRB program, you all do a wonderful job already in helping social workers keep pace with their very demanding workloads.

Three things that can be especially helpful to workers as you advocate for children are:

1. CASA Advocates should let the worker know well before the court hearing of any concerns about the frequency of caseworker visits with children or parents. Review Boards should discuss the concerns during the hearing on each case. Then include in your subsequent court reports observations and recommendations related to the frequency of caseworker visits with children or parents. Based on all the Child and Family Service Reviews completed across the nation to date, frequency of caseworker visits is one of the best predictors of good outcomes for children and families.
2. Similarly, let the worker know of any concerns you have about the extent to which the expectations in the case permanency plan are being met. Also include any observations and recommendations you have about following the case permanency plan in your court report.
3. If workers are doing really well on some or all aspects of their work, include a comment about that in your observations in the court report.

I believe that many or even most of you are already paying attention to these areas, so please continue. These are factors that can really help bolster the success of the workers. Calling workers out for good or great work can be especially valuable for those who labor under time and resource shortages. And thank YOU for all the wonderful work you do on behalf of children.

Jim Hennessey



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### Reminder for CASA Advocates and Coaches about the CAMS System



Just a couple of reminders for CASA Advocates and Coaches when working in CAMS:

1. If you're locked out of CAMS and unable to log in, please contact your CASA Coordinator. Your Coordinator will access the correct staff person to get your account unlocked.
2. If you learn of a new Interested Party (IP) to your case, please contact your Coordinator via email or phone to provide them with this information. Your Coordinator will add the Interested Party to the case in CAMS so you can create case notes about the individual.

As a reminder, your Coordinator or their CASA Assistant will be the one to enter all the Interested Parties to a case in CAMS. This helps us avoid having children, volunteers and our coordinators accidentally entered as Interested Parties and will help your court reports reflect contact with the correct individuals.

Thanks so much for all you do and the extensive work you're doing the CAMS system! It's most appreciated!

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## A Big Welcome to Our New Volunteers!

Ikran Ahmed, CASA  
Holly Burns, CASA  
Billie Cornish, CASA  
Joy Greer, CASA  
Julie Phillips, CASA

Melissa Appel, FCRB  
Schauna Chambers, CASA  
Jessica Eglseder, CASA  
Lauren Phalen, CASA  
Cheryl Robben, CASA & FCRB

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## FCRB CASE FILE MANAGEMENT TRANSITION COMPLETED

In November 2016, the Foster Care Review Board program began exploring the possibility of having a more secure, online case management practice for local board members to gain access to case files needed for local foster care reviews. When the State of Iowa made the switch to Google in December 2016, this opened the door for FCRB to initiate a pilot project using a secured, shared drive with facilitators and board members.

### Google Transition

FCRB Chairpersons (or designees) from eight local boards around the State came together as part of a focus group to develop and implement a pilot project with their boards. The pilot ran February through June 2017. The focus group met in July and reviewed evaluations collected from pilot participants. The input from the evaluations and focus group members were instrumental to finalizing the overall practice of using Google Drive for case file management. Since August 2017, the local review boards around the state have gradually transitioned to the new method and we are pleased that all 27 local boards have now made the switch. Throughout the process, adjustments were made as we learned “tips and tricks” on how best to navigate in a shared Google Drive. Volunteers can access the most up-to-date Confidentiality & Case File Management resource at: <https://childadvocacy.iowa.gov/fcrb/current-fcrb-volunteers> .

While we are not completely using a paperless system, we have greatly reduced the amount of hard copy information sent back and forth between local offices and program volunteers, have seen cost-savings in supplies and postage and time-savings for our staff who provide the board support. Embracing technology is not always easy and we recognize that this transition was not necessarily a welcome change for many of our program volunteers. We appreciate that the majority of volunteers have adapted to this different way of doing business and continue their advocacy work on behalf of children in out-of-home placements.

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### New Coordinator Joins ICAB Staff in Ottumwa

The Iowa Child Advocacy Board is pleased to announce that Cara Galloway has joined the organization as a CASA and FCRB Program Coordinator in our Ottumwa office. Cara reports she's excited to join ICAB because she's seen firsthand the value a CASA Advocate and the Foster Care Review Board can provide to the cases of abused and neglected children. She also has a personal passion for advocating for children and helping families in crisis find success. Cara began her employment on February 22nd and is quickly picking up the on the duties and demands of the

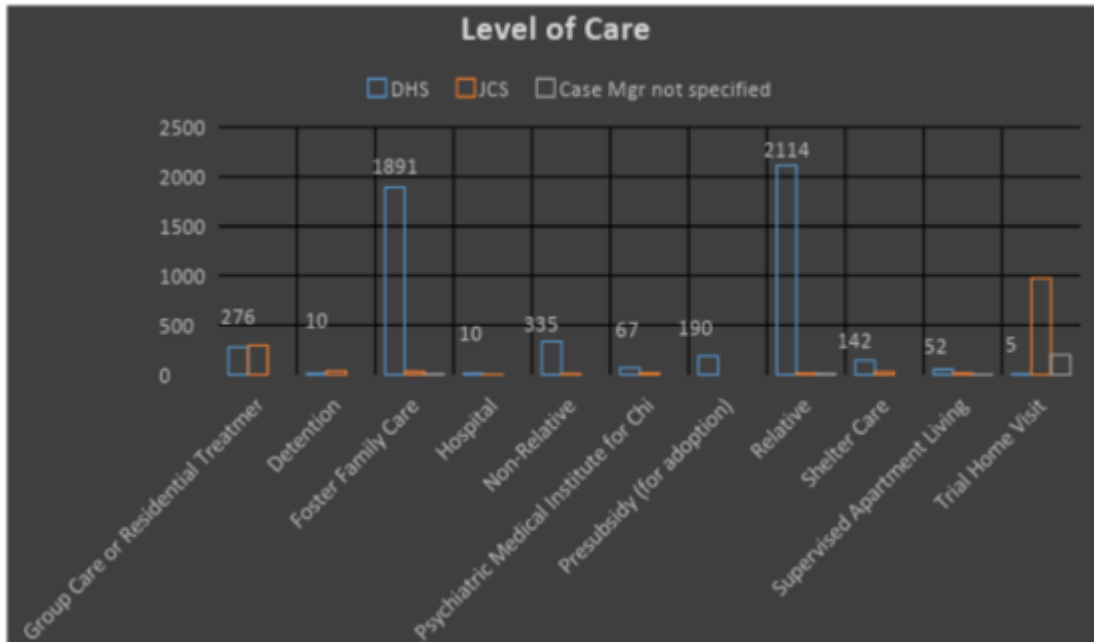
Coordinator position.

Originally an Ames native and 2008 graduate of Iowa State University, Cara comes to ICAB from the Iowa Department of Human Services where she served as both a Child and Adult Protective Worker and Social Work Case Manager. Cara has also served in a supervisory position in the Family, Safety, Risk and Permanency Services unit with Four Oaks, as well as serving in other positions in education and human services.

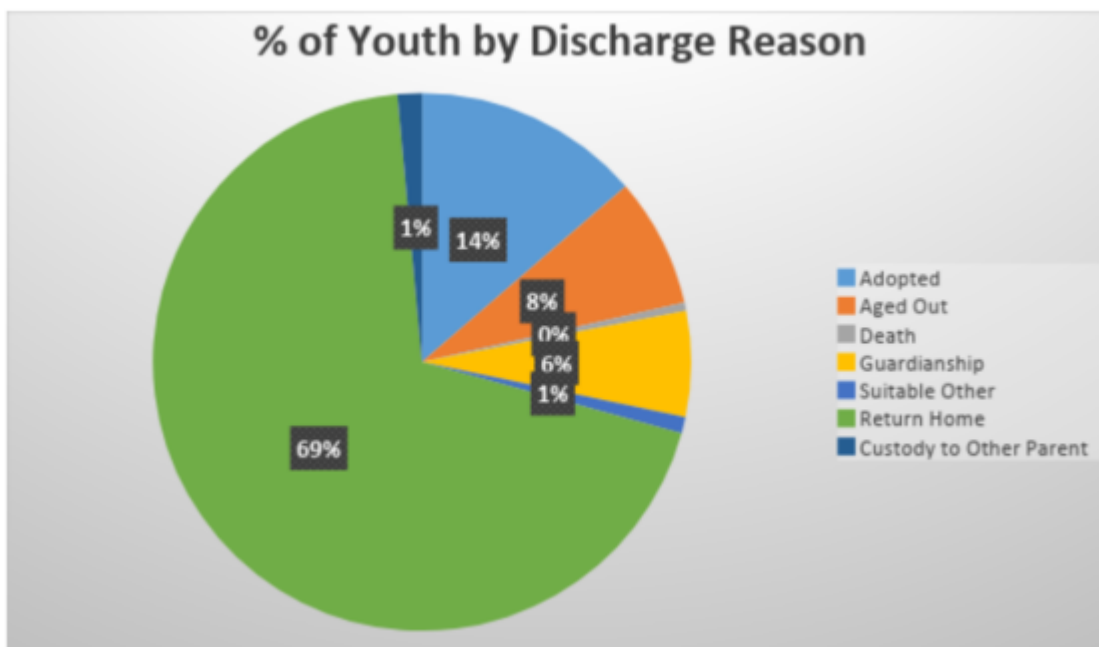
Cara, herself an active volunteer, has lived in Ottumwa over four years and serves her community in many roles including fundraising and promotion of arts and entertainment in Ottumwa. Cara has one daughter, age 4 who attends preschool. She enjoys watching her daughter's basketball team and cheering on the Iowa State Cyclones.

**Snapshot of Children in Iowa's Foster Care System:  
Level of Care and Length of Stay (LOS) on Discharges**

The Iowa Department of Human Services provides a monthly report to the Iowa Child Advocacy Board which contains information about children in Iowa who are in out-of-home placements. During January 2019, there were 6,714 children in an out-of-home placement under the supervision of either the Department of Human Services (DHS) or Juvenile Court Services (JCS). This information is based on data entered into the DHS data system as of January 31, 2019.



CA total of 205 children (DHS and JCS) ended their foster care episode during the month of January, 2019. The average length of stay (LOS) in days for these 205 children was 514.9 days.



ICAB is pleased to introduce Pearl Tate who has chosen to complete her Social Work Field Practicum with us this semester.



"Hello! My name is Pearl Tate. I am a 3rd-year student at the University of Iowa. I am majoring in Social Work with minors in English and Sociology, and I am receiving a certificate in Critical Cultural Competency. In my free time, I love to play games with my family and friends and binging a few Netflix specials here and there. I can't wait for the warm weather to arrive to allow me to spend more time outside, as that is another of my favorite past times. After I graduate with my degree, I hope to find work in the foster care world, working specifically with family planning and therapy. This future goal is one of the main reasons I chose to spend my fieldwork practicum placement at ICAB with CASA. I am working with the CASA program to find ways to increase the level of diversity we see in our advocates and foster care review board members through research and marketing development. So far, I've had a great experience learning more macro level information about a field I already have such a passion for, and I can't wait to continue to learn as I continue my time here."

The key areas of Pearl's field placement work are:

- \* Becoming familiar with both the CASA and FCRB programs;
- \* Assisting with implementation of new national CASA requirements related to diversity and competence; cultural
- \* Becoming familiar with and assessing Iowa's disproportionality data in juvenile court and systems; and child welfare
- \* Assisting with development of a specialized recruitment effort to increase the range of diversity for CASA Advocates, FCRB Members and staff.

We look forward to assisting Pearl with her educational requirements and desire to learn more about the child welfare and juvenile court systems through child advocacy efforts, in addition to gaining her perspective on ways to increase diversity and cultural competency in our programs.



**March sees the return of the Book Nook to the CAB Connection Newsletter.** Every other month, we'll be recommending a new read. This month, we're offering *The Body Keeps the Score*, by Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D.



Trauma is a fact of life. Veterans and their families deal with the painful aftermath of combat; one in five Americans has been molested; one in four grew up with alcoholics; one in three couples have engaged in physical violence. Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, one of the world's foremost experts on trauma, has spent over three decades working with survivors. In *The Body Keeps the Score*, he uses recent scientific advances to show how trauma literally reshapes both body and brain, compromising sufferers' capacities for pleasure, engagement, self-control, and trust. He explores innovative treatments – from neurofeedback and meditation to sports, drama, and yoga – that offer new paths to recovery by activating the brain's natural neuroplasticity. Based on Dr. van der Kolk's own research and that of other leading specialists, *The Body Keeps the Score* exposes the tremendous power of our relationships both to hurt and to heal – and offers hope for reclaiming lives.

Over the course of the last year, we have offered you much information on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, resilience and the importance of healthy relationships in overcoming barriers that negative experiences often create in the lives of the children and families we serve. Emerging science indicates the importance of how epigenetics also impact response, resilience and recovery to traumatic experiences. So . . .

## What is Epigenetics?

Science tells us that the interactions between genes and environment shape human development. “Epigenetics” is an emerging area of scientific research that shows how environmental influences—including the experiences we provide for children—actually affect the expression of their genes. This means that the old idea that genes are “set in stone” has been disproven. Nature vs. Nurture is no longer a debate. It's nearly always both!

How does epigenetics relate to child development? A new resource from the Harvard Center on the Developing Child explains that environmental influences can actually affect whether and how genes are expressed. In fact, scientists have discovered that early experiences can determine how genes are turned on and off and even whether some are expressed at all.

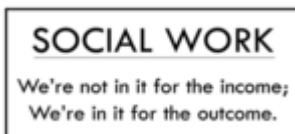
During development, the DNA that makes up our genes accumulates chemical marks that determine how much or little of the genes are expressed. This collection of chemical marks is known as the “[epigenome](#).” The different experiences children have rearrange those chemical marks. This explains why genetically identical twins can exhibit different behaviors, skills, health, and achievement.

To understand more about epigenetics and how it affects child development and long-term health outcomes, check out [this link](#).

**We hope you enjoy ICAB’s Book Nook! As an incentive to participate, once per year, CASA Advocates with at least one year of experience, may receive 2 hours toward the required 12 hours of continuing education for reading one of the books highlighted. Please contact Lesa Christianson, State Training Specialist, at [lesa.christianson@dia.iowa.gov](mailto:lesa.christianson@dia.iowa.gov) for a list of questions and instructions on how to earn in-service training credit for reading this month’s book.**

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## Trainer's Corner



### **For FCRB Members & CASA Advocates:** **March is Social Work Month**

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance the well-being of others and help meet the basic human needs of all people, especially the most vulnerable of society. Social workers are trained to look at situations in a holistic way, bringing people together with others and their communities to find ways to address pressing individual, group and societal problems such as hunger, affordable housing, equal rights for all and making organizations and government accountable. Social workers often speak to what brings them to their profession of choice with descriptions such as “the desire to make the world a better place”, “the need to make a difference and have a greater purpose”, “passion”, “doing what is right”, or “it’s a personal calling or mission”. Social workers follow the NASW (National Association of Social Workers) Code of Ethics, which calls on members of the profession to act according to their root core of values, principles, and standards. [NASW Code-of-Ethics](#). Having a Code of Ethics help us navigate the gray area between what intuitively feels right and those things that are morally wrong.

As advocates of vulnerable children who have been victims of abuse and neglect, we also adhere to a set of ethics that guide our efforts. The Iowa Child Advocacy Board outlines ethical standards for both volunteer programs in the Board Member or Advocate Policy and Procedure Manual. Each program expects volunteers to abide by minimum standards of conduct and responsibility in order to maintain the program and the agency’s competence and integrity.

**As a general premise:** A volunteer must not become inappropriately involved in a case by engaging in activities which jeopardize the safety of the child(ren), the integrity of the program, or the objectivity of the volunteer. A volunteer should steer clear of activities which are likely to result in a conflict of interest or expose the program or the volunteer to criminal or civil liability. The volunteer shall not be related to any party in the case or be employed in a position that might create a conflict of interest.



### **Basics Related to Conduct Include:**

Propriety – Advocates and Board Members should maintain high standards of personal conduct in their capacity as a board member or an agent of the court.

Competence - Volunteers should become and remain proficient in the performance of their duties.

Integrity – Board Members and Advocates should act in accordance with the highest standards of professional integrity.

### **Ethical Responsibility:**

Confidentiality — Each program’s volunteers must maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of others in all matters relating to cases reviewed or assigned.

Respect, Fairness, Courtesy. — The Board Member or Advocate should treat all parties to the case with respect, fairness, courtesy, and good faith.

Use of Authority — Each program’s volunteers should make appropriate use of authority in his/her appointments, limiting the role of either the FCRB Board member or CASA Advocate to fulfilling responsibilities within their role.

Development of Knowledge — The Board Member or Advocate should take responsibility for identifying and developing knowledge and fully utilizing information for performance of their respective role.

Program Integrity. — The Board Member or Advocate should not represent his/her personal views or opinions as those of the program nor should the volunteer refer to or use his/her participation in the program to advance his/her personal views in any proceeding or activity unrelated to their role during a FCRB review or the case in which he/she was appointed as a CASA Advocate.

Click here for the full [FCRB](#) or [CASA](#) P&P Manual.



### **Making Ethical Decisions: Things to Ask Yourself**

Before making a difficult decision, consider asking yourself the following questions to see if you are on ethical thin ice:

- Does your decision conflict with any of core ethical values?
- Think of someone whose moral judgment you respect. What would that person do?
- How will your decision affect others?
- Ask yourself: Are my actions legal?
- Are there regulations, rules, or policies that restrict your choices/actions?
- Would your decision be perceived as unethical?
- How would your decision look if it were reported on the news or in another public forum?
- What would a reasonable person do? How would they perceive your decision?
- Would you be proud of your choice if your child were to find out?
- Would you want them to make the same choice?
- Could you rationally and honestly defend your decision?
- Will you sleep soundly tonight?

Taken from <https://blink.ucsd.edu/finance/accountability/ethics/ask.html> on February 14, 2018.

### **For CASA Advocates:**

For a complete list of all available CASA in-service trainings please click here: [Advocate 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:**

April 6 Cedar Rapids

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**Please print off and use to recruit a new volunteer!**

"We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."  
-Fred Rogers

You could become a CASA Volunteer entrusted to speak up for children involved in the child welfare system.

You could become the voice that carries the message that these children, though not your own, are valued and worthy of the time and attention it takes to advocate for their safety and well-being.

You could become the hero who shows how much you care by responding.

Apply at [iamforthechildiowa.com](http://iamforthechildiowa.com)



4th Floor Lucas Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319

[childadvocacy@dia.iowa.gov](mailto:childadvocacy@dia.iowa.gov)