

CASA Program Status Report, March 2022



FY2022 CASA Dashboard

Month	# Assigned Advocate's (actual)	Assigned Advocate expectation- annual goal	Families served by assigned CASA	Children with assigned CASA's	Active Coaches (actual)	Active Coach Floor 2019 (annual goal)	# cases coached	# Advocates Coached	Advocates sworn	CASA Applications filed	# volunteers exited
July	402	409	464	921	66	61	206	181	15	9	4
August	402	409	462	913	68	61	204	177	12	7	4
September	390	409	451	874	66	61	197	168	3	11	2
October	392	409	468	913	70	61	214	178	21	11	6
November	385	409	453	873	71	61	207	180	2	26	2
December	373	409	442	839	65	61	190	160	9	17	2
January	373	409	439	815	65	61	184	160	5	15	8

Hours and Miles donated to the CASA Program FY2022

Month	Hours Contributed	Mileage Contributed
July	1,130	14,998
August	1,422	12,688
September	1,732	16,740
October	1,743	15,018
November	1,685	18,353
December	1,521	15,740
January	1,563	14,473

Finishing up FY21/CY21 Program Priorities

Volunteer Satisfaction Survey

In December 2021, CASA of Iowa State Organization surveyed volunteers about overall satisfaction. The volunteer annual survey results are included in board documents as a

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separate handout. This year, included in that handout, you'll find all responses to the survey, including individual text responses.

As usual, CASA volunteer advocates and coaches report altruistic reasons for volunteering and this helps them find motivation to continue when the tasks are difficult. You will also note several coordinators and assistants are mentioned by name for their support, coaching and professionalism.

A few common themes rise to the top of the list when discussing barriers or improvements that could be made to our programming. These include reimbursement for travel, feeling accepted and respected by parties on the case, specifically including parents and Guardians Ad Litem.

Another barrier reported was the difficulty of child and family visits related to Covid-19 and an often-heard request (also related to the pandemic) was the desire to gather in-person for training and networking opportunities.

Strengthening efforts to ensure all advocates and coaches meet their annual continuing education requirement:

At the end of the calendar year 2021, the training specialist created reports reflecting our program efforts to ensure advocates meet their continuing training requirements. She found the following data:

- Statewide, 65.7% of CASA volunteers met their annual continuing education target. That is an increase from 23.61% over CY2020 (2020 actual meeting the goal was 42.09%).
- Statewide 63.6% of volunteers met their diversity training requirement (this is a National CASA standard)
- 68.8% of volunteers completed their security awareness training requirement (This is a state of Iowa policy for any user of a data system hosted or owned by the state)

FY22 CASA Program Priorities

Continuing Education priorities:

One thing the pandemic created in our program was a demand for a variety of training methods for volunteers. For CY2022, the training specialist has implemented a plan that directly supports the local program staff in their task of helping volunteers meet their training requirements.

New for CY2022, the State Organization is sending out one monthly email to volunteers noting training information on live training sessions, recorded webinars, independent

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studies and other opportunities for training, along with hosting a virtual event monthly for all coaches, advocates and staff, delivered by an outside expert on relevant, requested topics. The State Organization has also switched to the Zoom platform which allows volunteers to easily register for training, puts the registration on a digital calendar if they use one, and takes attendance.

Also, in CY2022

- The CASA Program's Fostering Futures training – Advocating for Older Youth is being updated and moved to an online platform to reduce printing costs
- Pre-Service and continuing education training is being updated to be consistent with the ICAB Messaging Book using inclusive language
- Focused attention on training quality and outcomes using training evaluation data

State Organization support of local CASA offices

Each January, all the CASA of Iowa local offices and the State Organization complete an Annual Survey for the National CASA/GAL Association. These surveys report data back to National CASA in areas such as volunteerism, child/case characteristics, program staffing, revenue and expenses.

New in 2022, every local CASA/GAL program nationwide (900+) has to complete a self-assessment reflecting compliance with the 2020 National CASA local program standards. For the past year, the State Org has been working with local offices to help them prepare to complete the National CASA/GAL Association Self-Assessment for local programs by April 30, 2022. All programs will receive a report with potential areas for improvement by September 30 2022. Between January 2023 and December 2025, National CASA has committed to conducting site visits with every local CASA program in the nationwide network. The Self-Assessments and Accountability Reviews (site visits) are intended to:

1. Develop data driven supports, training and resources for the network
2. Create verifiable evidence of quality and consistency CASA service over time

In January 2022, we learned National CASA would be incorporating the annual survey into the new self-assessment. The combined questionnaire is 179 questions and collects information or data on over 600 data points. Because CASA of Iowa is one, publicly administered, state-run program, the self-assessment answers are the same for each local program. CASA of Iowa met with National CASA about the possibility of submitting one local program self-assessment along with our twelve annual surveys. National CASA requested that CASA of Iowa submit 11 local program assessments, but provide a "teachers copy" of the answers to the self-assessment questions to the local program staff so all questions were answered identically.

After the assessment opened, we learned the platform used for collection isn't easily accessible, or save-able and is one long web page; 179 questions without prompts for saving. Given the extensive work involved in completing the assessment in its entirety, the State Org will be

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assisting local programs by entering the self-assessment portion of the survey. Local programs are working to collect annual survey data and returning the data to the State Org. At that time, Amy, Sherri and whoever else is available will take time to enter all the self-assessment and annual survey answer. All assessments need to be complete by April 30, 2022.

Staffing the Polk County CASA team

ICAB is in the process of hiring a new Program Planner 2: CASA Recruiter/Trainer to serve in Polk County. The new position will be responsible for recruitment, on-boarding and training new volunteers, along with providing formal continuing education opportunities for all advocates in Polk County. The new position won't carry a caseload unless circumstances show a need. The three staff already serving in Polk County will be named volunteer managers. They will have limited responsibilities related to recruiting, on-boarding and training volunteers, but will instead be expected to carry higher caseloads, anticipated to be around 45 to 50 advocates. When fully operational, it is anticipated the four-person specialized team could support up to 150 advocates, versus the +/- 100 advocates the team has been supporting for the past several years while all trying to do all facets of the coordinator position.

Legislative Update:

At the ICAB December board meeting, we talked briefly about DHS's proposed legislative changes to Iowa Code chapter 232 to remove the ability for a CASA volunteer to serve as a child's Guardian Ad Litem (GAL). At that time, ICAB had yet to see any documentation of the proposed changes.

Upon receiving the slide deck of proposed changes and the draft legislation put forth by DHS, on January 5th, ICAB set meetings with National CASA staff, Woodbury County judges and DHS central office staff about the CASA/GAL change in particular. This language change had the capacity to significantly weaken the CASA role and CASA's access to information statewide, not just in the areas where a CASA volunteer could be appointed as a GAL.

During a January 18th meeting with DHS, DHS reported they had been working on code changes since June 2021, but had been prohibited from releasing any information about this until November 2021. However, at that January meeting, ICAB learned DHS had made several contacts with their child-welfare partners (including the County Attorney Association, Attorney General's office and the State Public Defender) and had already garnered substantial support for removing code language that allowed a CASA to serve as GAL; all without consulting with or notifying ICAB.

To counteract proposed changes to chapter 232, ICAB and DHS worked together to develop a new section to be added to Chapter 237 outlining the duties of the court appointed special advocate. The proposed legislation strengthens CASA volunteer and program rights and

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codifies CASA responsibilities when appointed to a child. [HF 2390](#) and [SF 2174](#) contain the proposed addition of Section 237.24 which is proposed to read:

12 Sec. 15. NEW SECTION. 237.24 Court appointed special
13 advocates.

14 1. A court appointed special advocate shall receive notice
15 of all depositions, hearings, and trial proceedings in a matter
16 to which the court appointed special advocate is appointed.

17 2. The duties of a court appointed special advocate with
18 respect to a child, unless otherwise enlarged or circumscribed
19 by a court or juvenile court with jurisdiction over the
20 child after a finding of good cause, shall include all of the
21 following:

22 a. Conducting in-person interviews with the child every
23 thirty days, if the child's age is appropriate for the
24 interview, and interviewing each parent, guardian, or other
25 person having custody of the child as needed, if authorized by
26 counsel.

27 b. Visiting the home, residence, or both home and residence
28 of the child and any prospective home or residence of the
29 child, including each time placement is changed.

30 c. Interviewing any person providing medical, mental health,
31 social, educational, or other services to the child.

32 d. Obtaining firsthand knowledge, if possible, of the facts,
33 circumstances, and parties involved in the matter in which the
34 court appointed special advocate is appointed.

35 e. Attending any depositions, hearings, and trial
1 proceedings in a matter to which the court appointed special
2 advocate is appointed for the purpose of supporting the child
3 and advocating for the child's protection.

4 f. Assisting the transition committee in the development of
5 a transition plan if the child's case permanency plan calls for
6 the development of a transition plan.

7 g. (1) Submitting a written report to the juvenile court
8 and to each of the parties identified in section 237.21,
9 subsection 4, prior to each court hearing unless otherwise
10 ordered by the court.

11 (2) The report shall include but not be limited to the
12 identified strengths of the child and the child's family,
13 concerns identified by the court appointed special advocate,
14 the court appointed special advocate's recommendations
15 regarding the child's placement, and other recommendations the
16 court appointed special advocate believes are in the child's
17 best interests.

18 h. Submitting periodic reports to the court or juvenile
19 court with jurisdiction over a child and interested parties
20 detailing the child's situation as long as the child remains
21 under the jurisdiction of the court or juvenile court.

22 i. Filing other reports as ordered by a court or juvenile
23 court.