

IOWA CHILD ADVOCACY BOARD  
STATE BOARD MEETING  
Conference Room 319 & 320  
Lucas State Office Building  
Des Moines, Iowa  
Friday, June 11, 2021  
12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

State Board Members Present:

Rachel Cadena  
Courtney Clarke  
Mark Elcock - Phone  
Alison Guernsey - Virtual  
Beth Myers - Virtual  
Judge Owens - Virtual  
Michael Steele - Virtual  
Dr. Angela Stokes - Virtual  
Wayne Schellhammer

Staff Present:

Amy Carpenter  
Shirley Hoefer - Virtual  
Sherri Ripperger  
Jennifer Slife - Virtual  
Steffani Simbric

Guests Present:

Sally Erny, Deputy CEO, National CASA - Virtual

Call Meeting to Order; Roll Call of Board Members

Myers calls the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m.

Approval of Minutes for Previous Meetings

Handout 1. Judge Owens moves and Clarke seconds a motion to approve the March 2021 Iowa Child Advocacy Board meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

Sally Erny, Deputy CEO of National CASA, states that she will be observing the board meeting as part of the National CASA highly effective standards review process. She's interested in learning how the board supports the state organization. She asked each board member to tell her a little bit about themselves.

CASA Program Report, Amy Carpenter

Handout 2. Carpenter notes that the low numbers earlier in 2020 were due the virus and not being able to train volunteers. We were able to start training volunteers again in August 2020. Our numbers have started to increase during 2021.

The board approved the CASA of Iowa Local Program Policy manual March 2021 and that has been implemented. The new CASA of Iowa State Organization Program Manual will be finished by the end of June. This manual is something new for our organization. It outlines what the state organization does for the local programs.

We are in the process of participating in a Highly Effective Standards Review Process with National CASA/GAL Association. We have many of the tasks completed. Carpenter reviewed the key dates and activities for the HESRP. The next major activity will be a kick-off call with National CASA/GAL scheduled for the third week of June. The actual review is scheduled for August 3 and 4, to be held virtually. We should receive the preliminary report mid-October 2021.

Since beginning using our new pre-service curriculum in August 2020, we have trained 190 advocates. The pre-service training committee continues to work on small changes to make the training easier for volunteers to complete and easier to deliver. We have had a substantial increase in the number of children being seen in person, since the pandemic began last year. Insuring that our volunteers have 12 hours of in-service training annually has been another goal of ours we have been working on.

CASA program planning for FY22 includes state office/organizational structure, services the State office need to deliver to the local programs, physical offices and domiciles, projects related to HESRP for the State organization and self-assessment review of local programs. Erny states National CASA is still in the process of developing the quality assurance process for local programs. It will not be as in depth as what they are doing with the state organizations. Simbric feels Iowa is in good shape for the reviews. One reason for this is that we are all one State of Iowa program. There are many states where each office is its own program.

Carpenter states that they have questions into National CASA in regards to physical offices for employees. Many of our employees work out of their homes. Clarke suggests partnerships for office space. Schellhammer asks what the logic is to have storefronts for CASA offices. Erny states that it's important for volunteers to have a place to go and work and that could be for staff people to have volunteers coming into their home. Schellhammer states that a neutral meeting space is what we will probably need to look for in rural Iowa.

### FCRB Program Report, Shirley Hoefer

Handout 3. Hoefer reviews the data on page 1. She states that they had to do a couple month's worth of virtual reviews. Virtual reviews did increase participation in some areas. The committee will continue to address the low participation of interested parties.

The timeliness reporting requirement has been removed from the MOU with DHS. FCRB staff have consistently met this requirement at 100% for the past several years, so DHS feels it is no longer needed. ICAB will continue to track this data internally using the same methods to be sure ICAB continues to distribute timely FCRB reports.

Hoefer states that board members will be receiving ten volunteer applications and rationale statements to review and approve this afternoon. Eight are new applicants and four of the eight are for the new Polk County board.

All local boards will resume in-person meetings in July 2021. There will be a hybrid model for two offices that have secured grant funds to purchase the equipment needed for parties to participate virtually if requested.

All revisions to the FCRB program policy manual are operational procedures with no policy changes; therefore, the manual changes do not require state board approval. One notable change is that we will be going paperless for our local review boards no later than November 2021.

At the last meeting we talked about having a committee from the State Board be available to help work through some of the code changes. The focus was going to be whether FCRB should shift the focus and expand or change the scope of what the FCRBs do. ICAB feels that the best thing to do at this time is to update the Iowa Code and move into more counties to serve more children in foster care. Clarke asks what determined this decision and what the growth plan is. Hoefer states Family First was implemented in Iowa statewide for the past year. We don't know enough to make significant changes to the work that we do until we see the impact and the outcome of Family First. As the number of children to review declines, we are able to use current administrative employees to staff more boards. The growth plan is dependent on staff resources and looking at the data we get from DHS which tells us counties that have high placement rates. Clarke asks if we should hold off on making Code changes until we see the impact of Family First. Hoefer states that the code is very outdated and feels it needs to be updated at this time to address identified issues.

Work has been completed on the FCRB Pre-Service training. It's more accessible to those who are wanting to volunteer and join a board using the Google Classroom format.

The Polk County pilot board will start July 22, 2021.

The FCRB database will be the number one focus for FY22. ICAB received a \$350,000 state appropriation for the sole purpose of upgrading/developing the FCRB data system.

### Budget Report, Steffani Simbric

Handout 4. Simbric states that the budget for ending FY21 looks great. The wildcard is the IV-E funding. Savings this year came from Covid (less travel, etc.) and a PP2 position that we did not replace. We are trying to make use of any funding that we have before June 30, 2021. We are thinking long term about stability as well. Clarke asks if there is more to do on the CAMS database and if it really is functioning. Simbric states that we have spent some money this year on changes that have helped functionality. We are now able to get usable data out of CAMS.

We met with DIA and our budget is looking good for FY22.

Simbric let the board know that we will have an ICAB Volunteer Conference November 6, 2021. This will be a good opportunity for volunteers to get some of their in-service training hours.

### Code Changes, Steffani Simbric

Handout 5 and 6. We are trying to clarify the role of the state and local board with some of these changes. This is due to DIA by August 31, 2021. Judge Owens recommends if you more generically want to refer to the court system by calling it the "Judicial Branch", say, "To the Governor, the State Court Administrator, the Department and Child Placing Agencies." Hoefler provided clarification to the board's questions regarding code changes.

237.18(2)(b) We do not have a way to validate the information DHS gives us to do a good job of reporting out. It makes more sense for us to change the language to be specific to ICAB's program data.

237.18(2)(d) Clarke feels that we need to keep some of this code. Keep the proposed changes and add (4) Applicable child welfare laws and practices that influence the work of the child advocacy board programs.

237.20(1)(b) Guernsey suggests not striking the last sentence of b. but rewording it to allow for a verbal statement to be given in a private setting upon the request of the person making such a statement. Then develop policy and procedure about how to carry out this piece of code.

237.20 (4)(a) Hoefler states the board had a discussion a couple years ago about interveners and if they should be invited to attend FCRB. The State Board relied on code for the reason not to allow interveners. Does the Board want "intervener" to be a person that would be notified about the FCRB? Elcock suggests that they should be invited.

237.21 (5) Carpenter asks the Board their opinion about if you are an attorney for the parent and you can't talk to the CASA volunteer. There is not an open exchange between those parties at this time. There was a short discussion. Carpenter also sent this to the National CASA legal team. The board would like to see an open exchange between the parent's attorney and the CASA volunteer.

237.19 We need to determine if the state board will continue to approve local board applicants as this is in Iowa Administrative Code but not Iowa Code. Clarke feels like there should be a review that is more than the local coordinator's approval. If there was additional program oversight the board would not need to be involved. Myers and Cadena suggest that we make the onboarding process for both CASA and FCRB the same; programs already have similar onboarding with the exception of FCRB applicants also needing approval by the state board. Guernsey suggests board members review both CASA and FCRB members. If this is not the case, at least review FCRB as is. The board members discussed both viewpoints. Schellhammer notes the state board should not get into the minutiae of the tasks local coordinators do for the program and they should be trusted to do their jobs. 2:28 on the recording....Schellhammer moves and Steele seconds a motion to ask the staff to write in the code a recommendation so the FCRB process aligns with the CASA approval process. Motion passed with 6 in favor and 2 against.

Clarke moves and Cadena seconds a motion to accept the proposed changes to the code. Motion passed unanimously.

Future Meeting Dates


Next meetings are scheduled for September 10 and December 10, 2021 from 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Lucas Building Rooms 319 & 320. Upcoming dates for 2022 are March 10 and June 10.


Clarke motions and Cadena seconds the meeting adjourned. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourns 2:43 p.m.

ICAB Minutes Prepared By:  \_\_\_\_\_  
Sherri Ripperger

ICAB Minutes Approved On: 9-10-21

CAB Minutes Approved by Child Advocacy Board Vote

Approved By:  \_\_\_\_\_  
Beth Myers, ICAB State Board Chair

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Steffan Simbric, ICAB Administrator

Handout 1: March 2021 Board Minutes

Handout 2: CASA Program Report

Handout 3: FCRB Program Report

Handout 4: FY21 Budget Report

Handout 5: Summary of Proposed Code Change Summary Document

Handout 6: Proposed Iowa Code Changes