

Champaign County CASA

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

Because of you...

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2024-2025

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A Message from Our Executive Director

As we reflect upon the completion of another fiscal year, the gratitude that we share with all of you is immeasurable. Because of you, we have helped children through some of the most difficult times of their young lives.

Your generosity is more than a donation; it's a powerful statement of belief in our mission and in the children we serve. Every step we take, every life we touch, every challenge we face, none of it would be possible without you.

Because of you, this important work continues to be possible. This Annual Report reflects the dedication of our supporters in our mission to speak up for children. On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff and attorneys I say THANK YOU. While the work that is done at CASA on a day-to-day basis can be difficult, knowing of the support of our community helps to keep us all motivated.

The challenges these children face can be daunting but with the dedication and support of the volunteers and our staff, we help to make sure these kids have what they need to overcome the hurdles they face. We tirelessly speak up for them at every turn so that their lives can be better. As we look ahead into another fiscal year, we promise to honor your gifts by continuing this work. Our Kids need us, and because of you, we can be there for them.

With great thanks,

Rush Record



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We believe that every child who has experienced abuse or neglect deserves the opportunity to thrive in a safe and permanent home.



...Champaign County CASA can fulfill its mission of standing up for children in the court system who have experienced abuse and neglect.

Right now, approximately **330** Champaign County children are in foster care due to abuse or neglect. As a result, courts are required to make very difficult decisions about their futures. Our trained volunteers, with the help of our staff and attorneys, focus on their situations and advocate for their best interests in court and in the community. CASA volunteers and staff are the only ones in the foster care system who concentrate solely on the needs of the kids - Our Kids - giving them the opportunity for hope, stability, and a safe and permanent home.

The children Champaign County CASA serves range from birth through 21 years of age.
40% are under six years old.



From July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025,
the Champaign County CASA team of **119** volunteer advocates,
10 professional staff, and **2** dedicated attorneys,
with the generous support of **631** individual and business donors,
stood up for a total of **434** children
who have been in the Champaign
County Court system
due to abuse and neglect.

Because of
you...



...Champaign County CASA can recruit and train
volunteer advocates, equipping them to serve Our Kids
most effectively.

Volunteer Advocates are the backbone of the work we do. Our advocates multiply our effectiveness, reaching many more children much more frequently than our small professional staff could do alone.

- Every new volunteer completes **27 hours** of pre-service training before being sworn in as a Court Appointed Special Advocate and assigned to a case.
- In FY24-25, Champaign County CASA trained **16 new volunteer** advocates.
- The curriculum combines local and national information and standards, and our professional staff and local experts facilitate it **4 times** per year.



Annette King

Volunteer Advocate

I had always planned to become a CASA volunteer after retirement, thinking it would be impossible to manage with my work schedule. I'm so glad I took the time to look into it further and speak with the CASA team—turns out, it is possible, and it's been such a rewarding experience. The CASA team was

incredibly supportive, answering all my questions and guiding me through the process. Hannah led a training that was thorough, well-structured, and focused on exactly what we needed to know. She was wonderful to work with, and I felt fully prepared to take on my first case. They also provided plenty of reference materials to support us along the way, and the dedicated advocate coordinators are incredible to work with.

Because of you...



...Champaign County CASA can support every volunteer advocate with professional staff and provide expert legal representation for
Our Kids in the courtroom.

Our professional staff brings a wealth of experience and expertise concerning the complex factors involved in abuse and neglect cases. Our attorneys work alongside our staff and volunteers, bringing knowledgeable legal representation for every child in every hearing. Our team is dedicated specifically to the kids in each case and gives a voice to their best interests in court.

- Our Program Administrator and **5 Advocate Coordinators** work closely with a designated number of volunteer advocates, helping them navigate the case from start to finish.
- This past year, our **2 CASA attorneys** represented Our Kids at **1,070 hearings**, standing up for what is truly best for each child.



Lynne Callaghan

CASA Attorney

For me, CASA's work is invaluable in helping me represent each child in the courtroom. CASA advocates provide information to me and to the court that makes us all remember how unique and special these kids are. I have learned so much from our kids and from CASA."

Because of you...



...Champaign County CASA can visit each of Our Kids, ensure their safe placement, and work to identify and secure what they need for their overall well-being.

When we have a volunteer assigned to a case, child visits occur every month. If a case does not have an assigned volunteer, then a member of our staff or volunteer team visits the child between hearings to provide the most up-to-date information and make recommendations to the court.

- This past year, CASA made **1,263 child contacts**.
- Many of Our Kids are placed in foster care outside of Champaign County, but that does not stop us from seeing each one. In total, **39,071 miles** were logged for child visits this past fiscal year.
- **Our team** advocates for placement stability, educational support, medical and dental care, social-emotional wellness, extracurricular activities, and more.



Anonymous

Volunteer Advocate

CASA advocates offer the child regular contact with someone who focuses completely on their well-being during a stressful time when they tend to feel out of control of their situation and are most likely no longer in their own familiar home. CASA advocates have the opportunity to establish a direct connection with the child and learn about their likes, dislikes, feelings, interests, and dreams. We also connect with the foster families to make sure they have what they need to meet the physical and emotional needs of the child placed with them.

Because of you...



...Champaign County CASA can move Our Kids toward the goal of thriving in a safe and permanent home.

At the beginning of every case, the goal is the same: to reunify children with healthy parents. Sometimes, that is possible and other times, an adjustment is made. For CASA, the goal is met when children are ultimately thriving in a safe and permanent home.

- In FY24-25, volunteer advocates collectively worked **3,016.2 hours** with a total of **278 cases**.
- Of those, **66 cases** were closed, involving **105 children**.
- The closed cases resulted in **13 cases** with children returning home, **31 cases** with children adopted. **9 cases** involved children who aged out, and **13 cases** had other outcomes.



Pat Warren

Volunteer Advocate

Being a CASA volunteer, I feel a great sense of responsibility to make sure that the kids we serve get to have a childhood - that they live in a safe home where they are not worried about being harmed, where they don't have to be responsible for looking after their siblings, where they have enough food, and where they feel loved. It is rewarding to see these kids blossom in a healthy, stable home. It affects their behavior at home and school. I believe it will have a ripple effect as they become adults and establish their own families.

Because of you...



Will*

Will was a toddler when he encountered threats to his safety due to the dangerous actions by his parents towards him and others. Will was placed in a traditional foster home after it was determined there were no relatives available to care for him. Laney* was assigned to be Will's advocate. She met with him regularly in his foster home and made reports to the court about his development. Will's parents were offered opportunities to address the concerns that precipitated him having to be removed from their care. However, it was determined later that permanency other than returning to his parents' care was necessary due to their lack of engagement in services and in his life. Laney had observed Will's growing attachment to his caregivers and their dedicated care and love for him. She advocated for his best interests and made recommendations regarding the outcome of his case. Will was able to achieve permanency through adoption with his caregivers, and he is thriving.

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*



Sierra & Calvin*

Sierra & Calvin's parents were living in a cycle of domestic violence and the children were often present. The children were able to remain placed together while their parents were given the opportunities to engage in services. The children were appointed Mandy*, a CASA volunteer, who visited them in their foster home, attended meetings and observed them with their parents. Mandy also spoke

with the case management agency and daycare and school providers to gather information about progress or needs. Mandy provided reports for the Court to consider as decisions were being made about permanency for Sierra and Calvin. The children were able to return to the care of their parent after successful completion of domestic violence classes and demonstration of what was learned for a sustained period of time.

Because of you...



...Champaign County CASA can advocate for Our Kids with the support of our local community.

The mission and work of Champaign County CASA is funded because local people are invested in our local organization, which serves Our Kids. We all have a role in keeping children safe, and we are grateful for those who stand with us as we stand up for kids in court.

*Special thanks for the generosity of **631** Supporters who have made our work possible! Of those, there were:*

- 4** Champion Sponsors
- 538** Individuals
- 93** Businesses/Organizations
- 60** Event Sponsors
- 35** Recurring donors
- 12** Donors who gave over \$10,000
- 90** Donors who gave in-kind

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We appreciate your support of Champaign County CASA. Our community is only as strong as people that live here make it. We are grateful that you help us make CASA stronger for the most vulnerable children who deserve the best chance for a safe and permanent home.

On behalf of everyone at CASA, thank you.

Amy Rouse, 2024-2025 Board President



United Way of
Champaign County

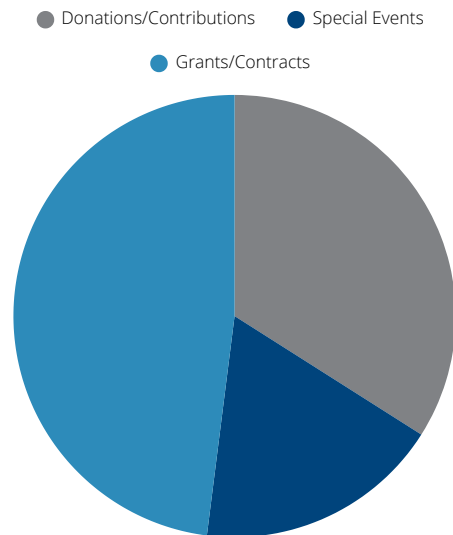


Because of you...



...Champaign County CASA has financial stability.

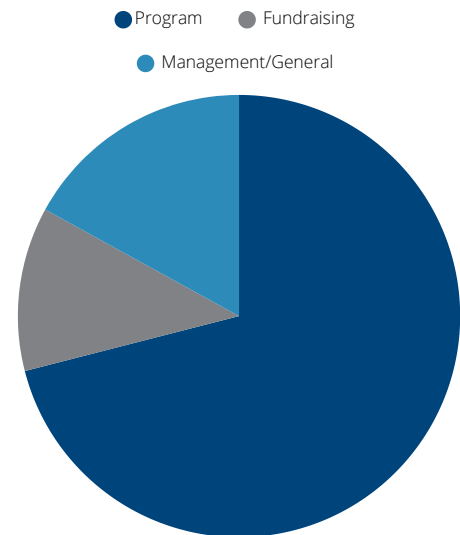
Under the direction of our Board of Directors, Champaign County CASA is a responsible steward of all funds that support the program. Thanks to our generous donors and other funders, we are fortunate that resources were available to meet the increasing expenses of the program for 2024-25. CASA is pleased to report that assets are stable, and long-term financial stability for the program is at the forefront of our financial vision.



Total Revenue*
\$1,379,739.10

FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

*The FY24-25 numbers reported are not yet confirmed by the annual audit.



Total Expenses*
\$977,009.47

Continue the Story

Volunteer - Advocates provide consistency and a voice for Our Kids.

Donate - Steady funding makes it possible for us to train and support our volunteers, and represent Our Kids in court.

Speak-up - We all have a role in keeping Our Kids safe.

For information about these opportunities and more, go to casa4kids.org



CASAblanca
Champaign County CASA's annual fundraising gala