

icab

IOWA CHILD
ADVOCACY BOARD

Advocating for the protection of Iowa's children and improvement of the child welfare system.



FY2022 Annual Report

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Iowa Child Advocacy Board

William S. Owens, Chair & Judicial Representative

Wayne Schellhammer, Vice Chair

Ashley Baker

Courtney Clarke

Marc Elcock

Alison K. Guernsey

Don Logan, ICFCRB Representative

Rick McIntosh, CASA Representative

Angela Stokes

Respectfully submitted as required under Iowa Code §237.18(2)(c) and (6)(d).

The Iowa Child Advocacy Board (ICAB) is an independent board appointed by the Governor of Iowa to engage citizen involvement in child welfare issues. ICAB operates two independent child advocacy programs designed to help protect Iowa children and their best interests while being served by the child welfare system: the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program and the Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Board (ICFCRB) program.

We are pleased to present the fiscal year 2022 annual report highlighting the great work accomplished through the Iowa Child Advocacy Board.

childadvocacy.iowa.gov

FY2022 By The Numbers

746

Highly Trained Volunteers

37

Professional Staff

2,471

Iowa Children Served

\$1,403,297

Total Donated Volunteer
Hours and Miles

Recommendations

1

ICAB recommends the Governor and the Iowa Legislature consider the implications of the proposed alignment of ICAB with HHS in HSB 126 and SSB 1123, including the doubt it will cast on ICAB's ability to make credible recommendations to the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the courts regarding the safety, permanency, and well-being of Iowa's most valuable resource - its children.

The nine-member governor-appointed Iowa Child Advocacy Board met in special session on January 20, 2023 and voted unanimously to voice concerns about this proposed realignment. In appointing each member of our board you entrusted to us the responsibility of safeguarding the well-being of Iowa's children, and we each take that job seriously. We firmly believe the realignment threatens our ability to fulfill the oath we made to carry out the duties outlined in Iowa Code Chapter 237.16.

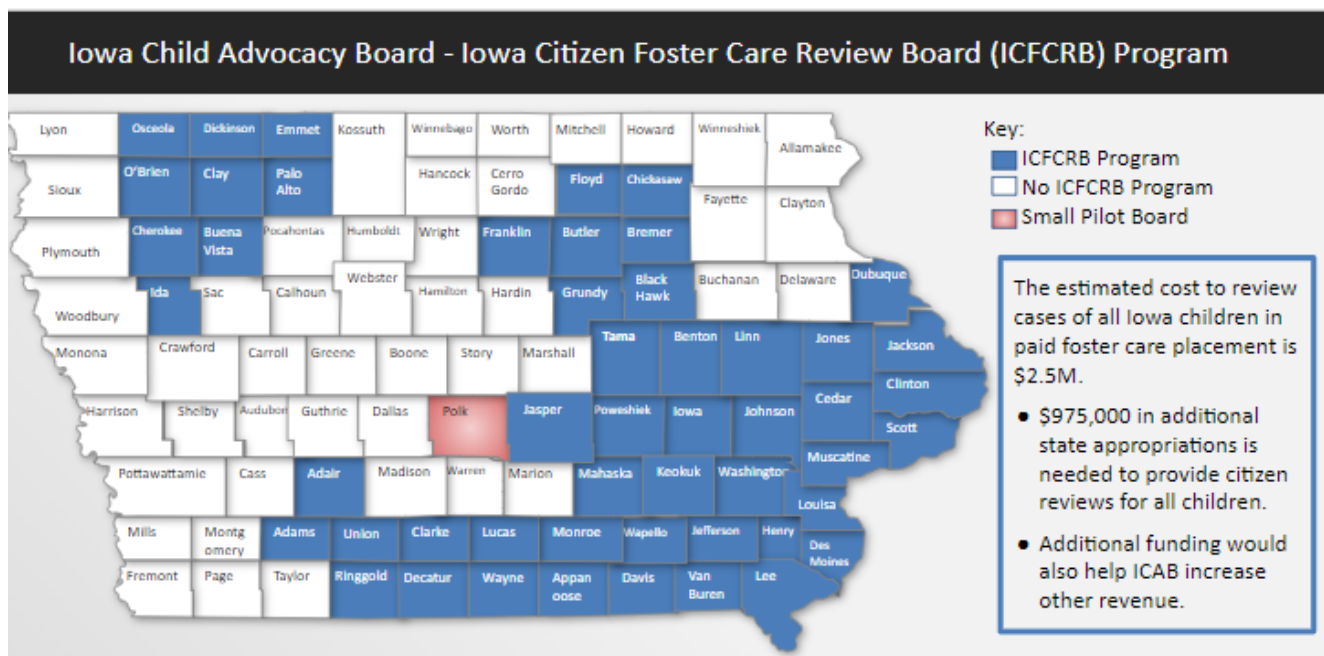
The programs ICAB is statutorily required to oversee are designed to be autonomous from HHS as we are charged by statute to evaluate and report upon. This proposal casts doubt on that autonomy and in so doing compromises the ability of ICAB to evaluate the child welfare system and to make objective recommendations to the Governor's office and the Legislature as required by law. And as noted – in individual cases it casts doubt on the ability of CASA and Foster Care Review Boards to make credible recommendations designed to foster the safety, permanency and well-being of Iowa's most valuable resource – its children.

Not only is this proposed realignment a conflict of interest, Iowa would be an outlier in merging ICAB's CASA and FCRB programs with HHS. To review our recommendation and thoughts on this in full, click [here](#).

Recommendations

2

ICAB recommends the Governor and the Iowa Legislature work with us on a plan to increase state appropriations so the Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Board program is able to review cases of 100% of children in paid foster care placement by 2027. Currently, FCRB programming is available in 52 of Iowa's 99 counties, leaving 47 counties and hundreds of children without citizen reviews.

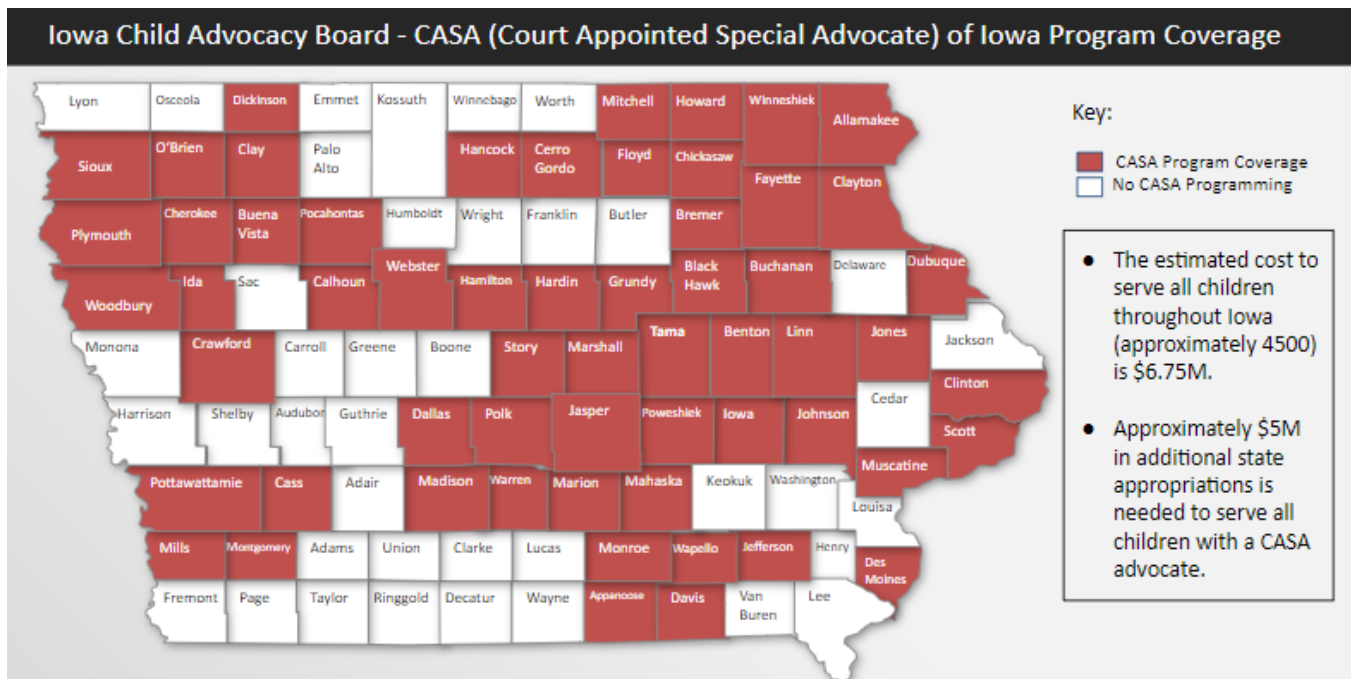


- In FY22, the ICFCRB program reviewed 1,441 case of children in paid foster care placement in 52 Iowa counties (as show on the map). Total cost to conduct these reviews (recruit/train/support local community volunteers to review cases) was approximately \$1.5M. The local community volunteers reviewing these cases donated time and miles valuing \$457,311.
- Additional funding would be used to review cases of children in paid foster care placement where none are occurring now.
 - To review cases of Iowa children ages 0-5 as well as APPLA (16+ who have a goal of another planned living arrangement), identified as a priority population by ICAB and HHS, an additional 6 FTE positions are needed (cost of approximately \$600K)
 - To review 100% of cases of Iowa children in paid foster care placement (all ages), an additional 9 FTEs (including the previously mentioned 6FTEs) are needed (total cost of approximately \$975k)

Recommendations

3

ICAB recommends the Governor and Iowa Legislature work with us on a plan to increase state appropriations so the Iowa Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program is able to serve 100% of Iowa children experiencing abuse and neglect by 2030 (also a nationwide goal set by the National CASA Association).



- The CASA of Iowa program currently serves 40% of children in the above 59 Iowa counties
 - Approximately 18 FTE staff and 550 volunteers serve 1,400 children at \$1.75M
- To serve all children in current (red) service area, an additional 26 FTE positions are needed (approximately \$3.5M)
 - 26 FTEs would recruit, train and supervise an additional 720 volunteers to serve 2,160 more children
- To add CASA programming to counties not served at all, ICAB would need an additional 12 FTE positions (approximately \$1.5M)
 - 12 FTEs would recruit, train and supervise 330 additional volunteers to serve approximately 1,000 more children

Recommendations

4

While there has been some improvement in areas of case permanency planning, data from citizen foster care reviews continue to indicate a low percentage of cases where transition planning has been started in a timely manner for youth aged 14+. **ICAB recommends the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) ensure transition planning is initiated and carried out for all children 14+ years, to include completion of the Casey Life Skills Assessment.** It is suggested that the Department conduct a quality assessment of cases to identify and remedy gaps in the transition planning process across the state.



**TOGETHER WE CAN
CHANGE A CHILD'S STORY**

CASA of Iowa Program

(Court Appointed Special Advocate)

Iowa Code §237.18(6)

CASA of Iowa recruits, trains and supports volunteer advocates who are appointed to the cases of Iowa children who have experienced abuse and neglect and are involved in Child or Family In Need of Assistance juvenile court proceedings.

CASA volunteers are appointed by judges and are tasked with reviewing the child's circumstances throughout the life of the case by keeping in contact with members of the child's team. A CASA volunteer performs their primary advocacy by authoring a report to the Court for each hearing, making recommendations about the child and family's needs, the child's wishes and what is in their best interest.

The concept of volunteer court appointed advocacy, originally founded by a Seattle WA juvenile court judge in 1976, helps to ensure the best interest of Iowa's children remains the priority. CASA volunteers are trained and advocate for these most basic of child welfare principles:

- All families have potential; realized or not yet realized. Families have protective factors that can be enhanced to mitigate risk to the child.
- Children experience trauma when separated from their family of origin. They should be with family when at all possible and safe. Children have an inherent and biological need to be with family.

Volunteer advocates must submit an application, provide personal references, participate in an in-person interview and go through an extensive onboarding process which includes 30 hours of pre-service training. Applicants are also subject to a full background check. As onboarding is completed, applicants are sworn in as CASA volunteers with the juvenile court.

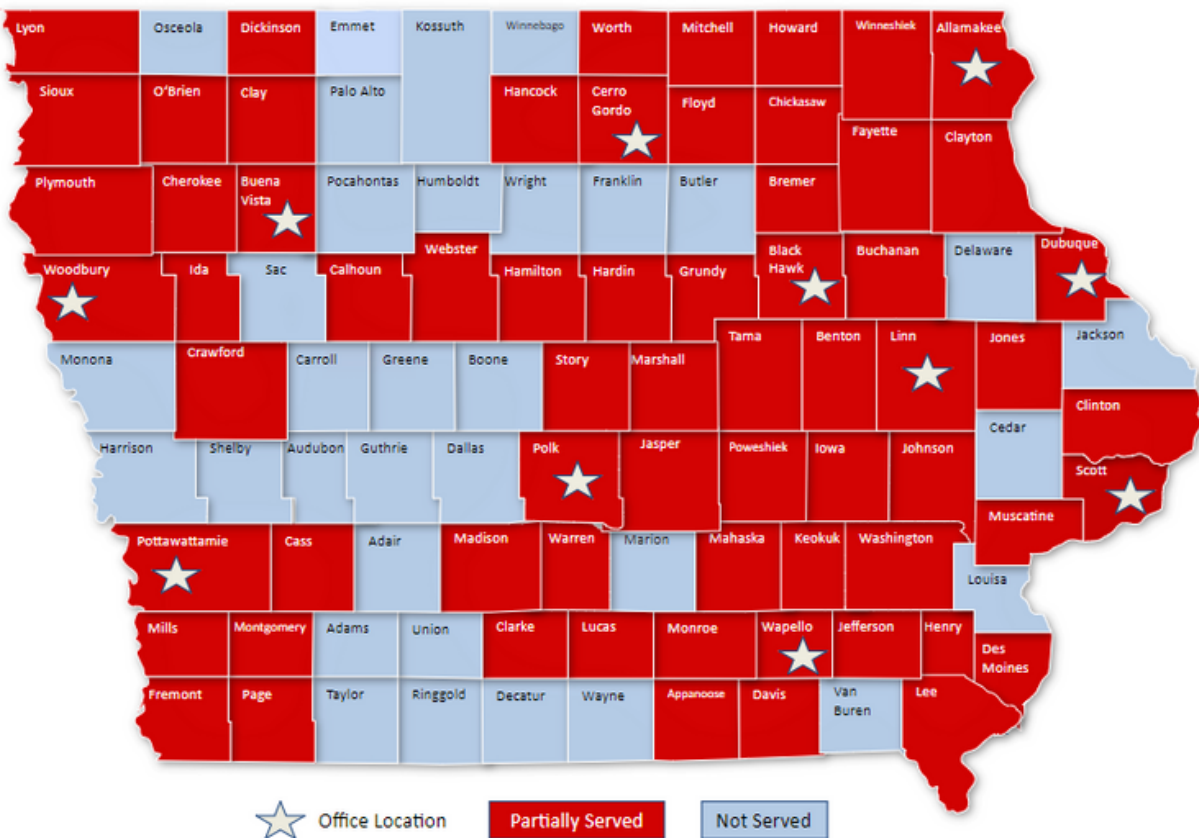
CASA advocacy is unique and very individualized. Even though the situations which bring families before the court may look similar, no two cases are the same. To this end, CASA of Iowa works diligently to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in all facets of our programming and uses data to better understand disproportionately among children and families represented in the child welfare system. CASA of Iowa is committed to advocating effectively for children and families of color.

CASA of Iowa Structure

CASA of Iowa is considered one program, but consists of a State Organization and eleven (11) local CASA programs located throughout the state.

The State Organization provides extensive support to local programs, including primary funding of office operations such as salary, benefits, office space, and supplies; conducting background checks for staff and volunteers; training curriculum and delivery; creation, implementation and review of local program policy and practices; quality assurance; as well as data access, storage, review and reporting.

CASA of Iowa local program staff served at least one family, comprising 1,361 children, from 66 of Iowa's 99 counties in FY2022.



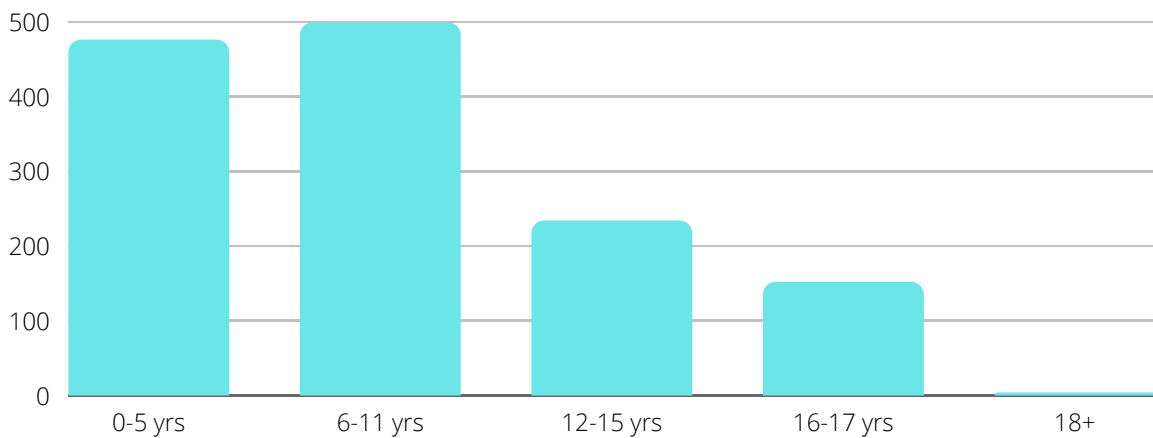
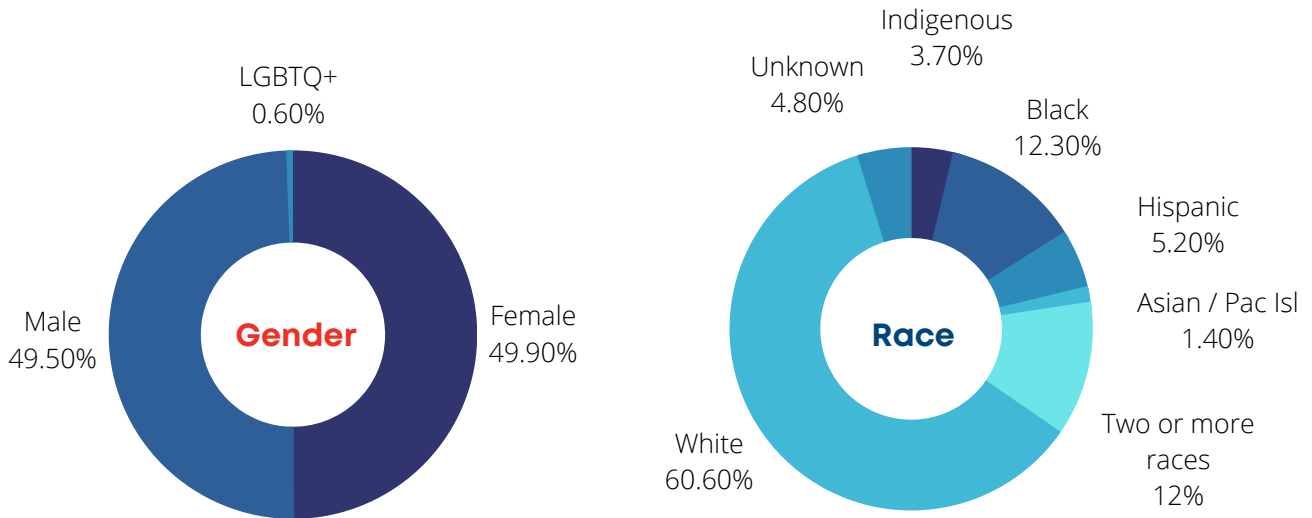
The CASA of Iowa State Organization and each of the 11 local programs are members in good standing of the National CASA/GAL Association for Children. Membership with the National CASA/GAL Association allows CASA of Iowa to use CASA branding, logo and marketing materials, apply for grant funding to fund projects and staffing, receive organizational, legal and policy support and participate with more than 900 state and local CASA organizations across the nationwide network. In FY2022, CASA of Iowa received grant funding from the National CASA/GAL Association to support programming in Dubuque and Polk Counties, along with additional support for background check expenses.



CASA of Iowa operates under the National CASA/GAL Association's Core Model by utilizing screened, trained and qualified community advocates who are appointed by the court to provide best interest advocacy for children and youth up to age 21, who are living in their family of origin's home or in out-of-home care and come before the court as a result of abuse and neglect as defined by Iowa's child welfare laws. All qualified CASA volunteer advocates are screened per National CASA/GAL Association Standards, trained according to National CASA/GAL Training and Facilitation Standards and supported by staff or a CASA coach (peer equivalent) in accordance with National CASA/GAL Standards.

CASA of Iowa Program Child Demographics

Local CASA of Iowa programs served 1,361 children from 705 families in FY2022. The following charts show the basic demographics of children served by an advocate.



CASA of Iowa By The Numbers

The CASA of Iowa program is built on the dedication of Iowa citizens who serve as court appointed special advocates. Here is a look at the work, accomplishments and contributions made by CASA volunteers throughout the fiscal year.



1,361

Children from
705 families served by
CASA of Iowa



569

CASA of Iowa
volunteers including
139 new volunteers



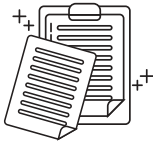
71

CASA of Iowa
volunteers who
served as coaches



154

Volunteer applications
received; 139 were
sworn in as volunteers



1,297

CASA reports
submitted to the courts



18,528

Hours of time donated
by volunteers



214,124

Donated miles driven
by volunteers



\$945,986

FY2022 total volunteer contribution

CASA of Iowa Program Highlights

In the summer of 2021, CASA of Iowa and the Child Advocacy Board began drafting proposed changes to the Iowa Code, bringing code up to date with practice, reinforcing advocate rights and responsibilities, and ensuring best practices are used when serving the children in our program. These proposed changes were approved by the Child Advocacy Board in September 2021 and adopted during the 2022 legislative session to include a new code section to chapter 237. Updates include the new subsection 24 of chapter 237 which outlines the rights, responsibilities, duties and expectations of the Court Appointed Special Advocate as this language was removed from chapter 232. Additional changes in ICAB's legislation, HF2390 allowed CASA volunteers to disclose confidential information to attorneys representing parents in juvenile court proceedings.



In August 2021, CASA of Iowa State Organization participated in a Highly Effective Standards Review with the National CASA/GAL Association. This extensive review included a submission of numerous documents, plans, and verification of work, along with a two day interview. The issuance of a final report is expected this fall.

The eleven local CASA of Iowa programs conducted normal yearly tasks for the National CASA/GAL Association including completion of annual membership activities and their annual survey, submitting all the child and volunteer data that all programs across the country are required to submit. The local programs also participated in local program self-assessments with the National CASA/GAL Association in fiscal year 2022. The self-assessment was the first of a three-part evaluation to be completed with every local CASA program throughout the nationwide network. As next steps, local programs will be participating in on-site reviews with the National CASA/GAL Association.

Also in FY2022, **Judge William Owens**, Associate Juvenile Judge in Iowa's 8th judicial district was nominated for and received the Honorable David W. Soukup Judge of the Year Award from the National CASA/GAL Association for children. The Judge of the Year award is named for the founder of the CASA model and honors the outstanding contributions of a judge who has advanced the best interest of children through support of the CASA model. Judge Owens is the co-chair of the Iowa Supreme Court Advisory Committee for Children's justice, a member of the State Council of the Iowa Supreme Court Commission for Children's Justice and chair of the Juvenile Judge Committee of the Iowa Judges Association. He has also been a member of National CASA/GAL's Judicial Leadership Council. Finally, Judge Owens is a member of the Iowa Child Advocacy Board and was appointed ICAB board chair in May 2022. His dedication to the protection of children and advancement of family garnered his nomination for this award.



Judge William Owens, Associate Juvenile Judge in Iowa's 8th Judicial District, received the Honorable David W. Soukup Judge of the Year Award from the National CASA/GAL Association for Children.

Finally, FY2022 also saw the hiring of a newly created CASA staff position focused solely on recruiting and training new CASA volunteers in Polk and surrounding counties, along with providing continuing education for all volunteers serving in this geographic area. Assigning these duties to one individual allows other staff in the area to focus on supporting volunteers assigned to cases, ensuring quality advocacy is provided. The volunteer management staff are also able to support a larger number of volunteers because of the efforts of the Recruiter-Trainer.



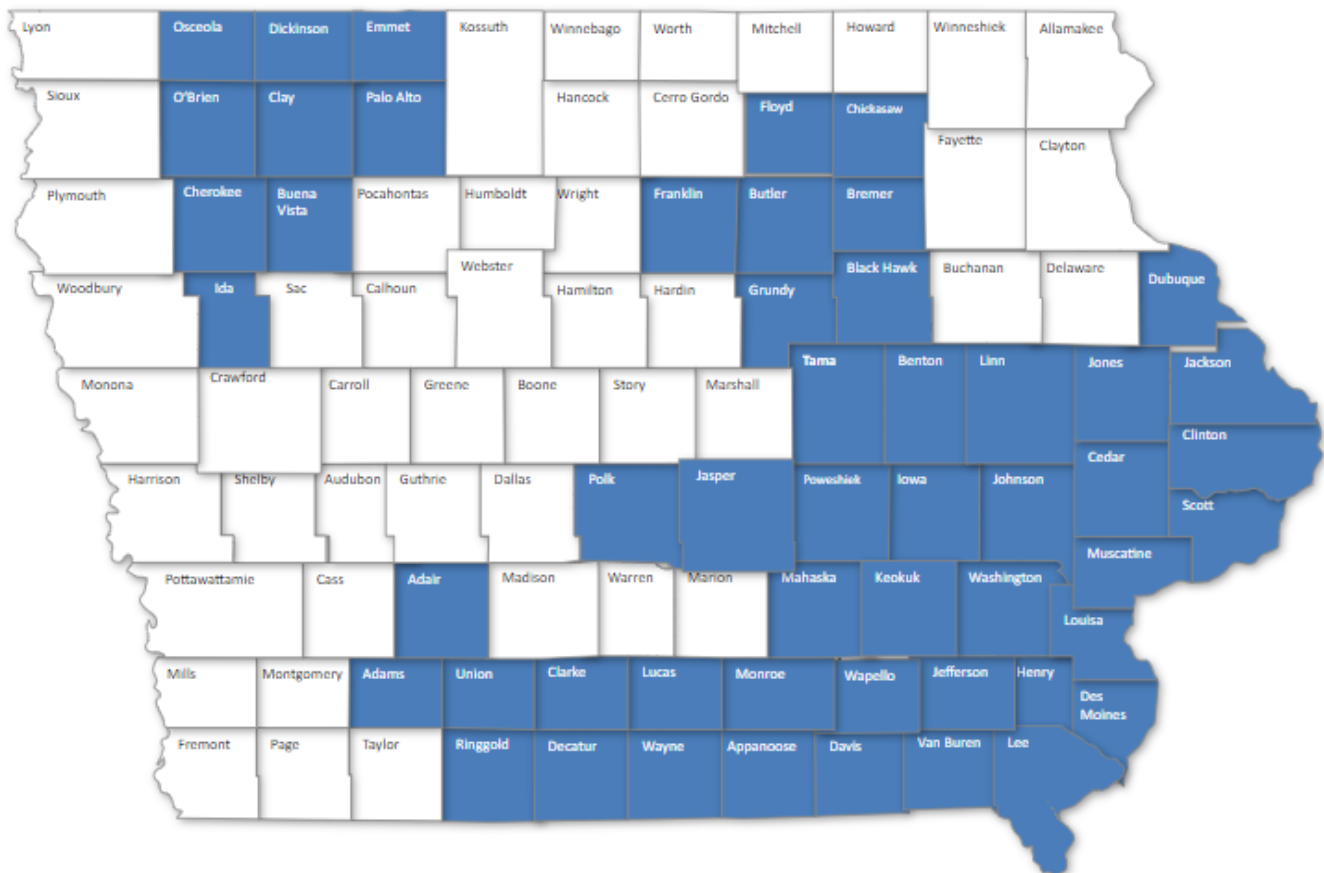
CASA of Iowa trains and supports community volunteers to advocate for a safe and permanent home for children who have experienced abuse and neglect and works collaboratively to ensure their voice is heard.

Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Board

The Iowa Foster Care Review Board empowers the citizens of Iowa to review cases, collect data, and recommend changes to promote the safety and permanency of children who have been removed from the homes of their families.

Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Boards (ICFCRB) are mandated by Iowa Code §237.20 to review the case of each child receiving foster care where local boards are established. This is accomplished through the use of trained volunteers approved by the Iowa Child Advocacy Board (ICAB) and appointed by a local judge. These reviews are conducted to determine whether satisfactory progress is being made toward the goals of the case permanency plan pursuant to section §237.22.

Volunteers serving on these boards meet regularly to review case plans, hear from interested parties, and provide the Court and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) with their findings and recommendations about the safety, well-being and permanency of children from their communities who are placed in foster care or under the guardianship of HHS. In FY2022, there were 26 local boards reviewing cases in 52 Iowa counties shown in blue on the map below. Polk County had one pilot board to review a small, specialized population of cases.



ICFCRB By The Numbers

The Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Boards are composed of community citizens throughout Iowa who make a commitment to serve a three-year term to provide consistency in the review process. Here is a look at the work, accomplishments and contributions made by ICFCRB volunteers throughout the fiscal year.



1,114

Unique number of children served by the local boards



177

ICFCRB volunteers including 32 new volunteers



9,679

Hours of time donated by volunteers



17,319

Donated miles driven by volunteers



\$457,311

FY2022 total volunteer contribution

Local foster care reviews focus on ensuring that case permanency planning is being developed and carried out for children and youth in Iowa's foster care system. The ICFCRB program offers the following data for children reviewed in FY2022 to meet statutory and reporting requirements of a memorandum of understanding with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services.

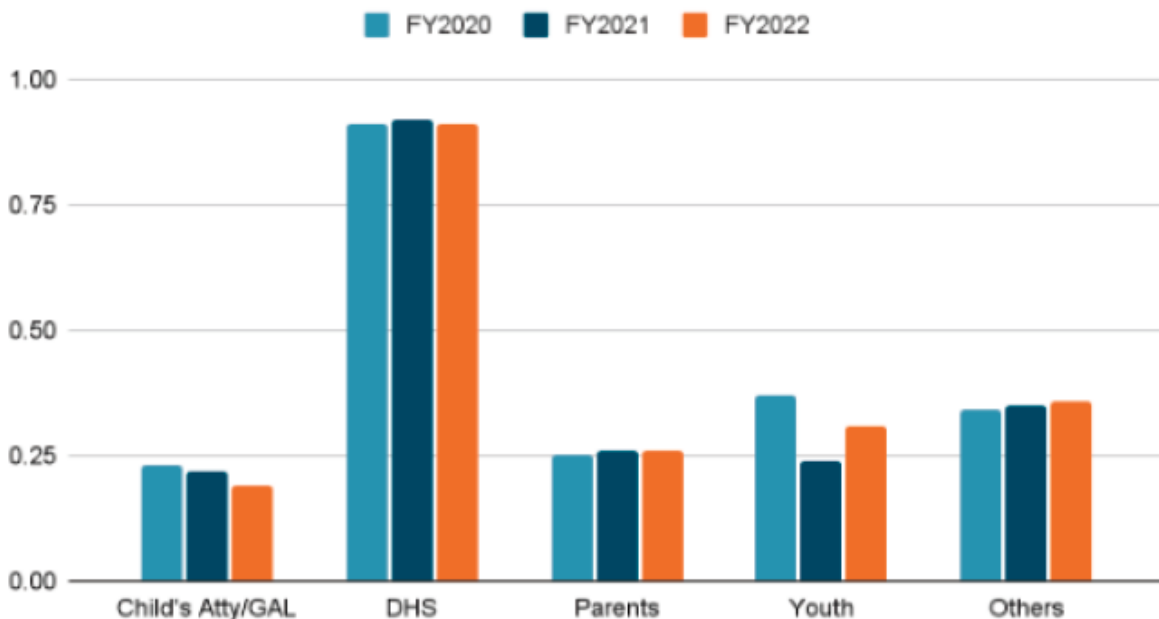
Timeliness of ICFCRB Report Distribution

A total of 1,652 ICFCRB reports were filed and distributed within 15 days of the foster care review pursuant to Iowa Code §237.20(2)(a).



Interested Party Participation in Foster Care Reviews

In an effort to continue active participation by interested parties, a variety of methods were used to provide diverse opportunities for individuals to participate in the local review process. Methods included in-person attendance, submitting statements in written or recorded form, or virtual attendance where technology was available. Participation rates by various parties remained relatively the same as in FY2021 with the exception of an increase in participation by youth (+7%).



Local Citizen Foster Care Review Board Findings

Local boards make case type specific findings to help measure achievements for children in Iowa's foster care system. These benchmarks relate to important safety, permanency and well-being issues for youth to determine child welfare system strengths and areas needing to be strengthened. The following tables provide the local board findings for all ICFCRB reports submitted to the court and interested parties in FY2022. Some areas of case permanency planning show improvement from the prior fiscal year.

Reunification/Guardianship Case Findings by ICFCRBs	# of Responses	Yes Responses	Percent Yes	(+/-) compared to FY21
1. The Board finds the Case Permanency Plan (CPP) meets timelines and addresses the child(ren)'s current out-of-home placement.	978	859	88%	+3%
2. The Board finds the written CPP permanency goal of reunification / guardianship is appropriate for the child(ren).	978	625	64%	+6%
3. The Board finds that HHS has developed a concurrent plan for the child(ren).	978	835	85%	+1%
4. The Board finds continued out-of-home placement is appropriate while awaiting achievement of the permanency goal.	978	963	98%	SAME
5. The Board finds the level of placement is the least restrictive setting available to meet the child(ren)'s needs.	978	965	99%	SAME
6. The Board finds HHS made concerted efforts to place the child(ren) with a relative or a person who has a caregiver relationship.	978	950	99%	+3%
7. The Board finds HHS made concerted and/or continued efforts to place the child(ren) with siblings. *	720	71	97%	+1%
8. The Board finds HHS made concerted efforts to inquire about Indian heritage, notify the tribe, and follow ICWA placement preferences.	974	930	95%	+33%
9. The Board finds HHS has ensured appropriate services are in place to make it possible for the family to achieve the permanency goal and services are responsive to the parents' needs.	977	959	98%	SAME
10. The Board finds the proximity of the placement to the parental home is consistent with the child(ren)'s best interests, and conducive to achieving the permanency goal of reunification (if applicable).	978	928	95%	-1%
11. If youth is 14 years or older, the Board finds HHS has initiated transition planning for the youth. *	251	154	61%	+1%
12. The Board finds that the Court has held a permanency hearing within ASFA timelines for the child(ren). *	531	476	90%	+7%

(* Findings 7, 11 and 12 do not apply to all children in foster care due to the child's age at the time of the review, not all children have siblings in care and/or length of time in foster care at the time of the review; percentage is calculated based on the number of applicable cases.

Adoption Case Findings by ICFCRBs	# of Responses	Yes Responses	Percent Yes	(+/-) compared to FY21
1. The Board finds the goal of adoption is appropriate for the child(ren).	509	489	96%	-2%
2. The Board finds the Case Permanency Plan (CPP) meets timelines and addresses adoption planning for the child(ren).	509	449	88%	SAME
3. The Board finds HHS made concerted efforts to inquire about Indian heritage, notify the tribe, and follow ICWA placement preferences.	509	498	99%	+2%
4. The Board finds HHS made concerted efforts to place the child(ren) with a relative or a person who has a caregiver relationship.	509	503	99%	SAME
5. The Board finds HHS made concerted and/or continued efforts to place the child(ren) with siblings.	509	400	79%	-1%
6. The Board finds the current placement is appropriate to meet the child(ren)'s need for permanency.	509	477	94%	SAME
7. The Board finds HHS has ensured appropriate services are in place to safeguard the child(ren)'s safety and well-being.	508	504	99%	SAME
8. The Board finds the HHS casework responsibility has been transferred to the adoption specialist.	508	469	92%	-1%
9. The Board finds the adoption specialist has met with the child.	508	436	86%	-1%
10. The Board finds the child(ren) has a Life Book.	507	172	34%	+7%
11. The Board finds the child(ren) will be adopted within 24 months of entering care.	507	243	48%	+8%



APPLA Case Findings by ICFCRBs	# of Responses	Yes Responses	Percent Yes	(+/-) compared to FY21
1. The Board finds the court-ordered goal of APPLA is appropriate for the youth and continued out-of-home placement is appropriate until majority age.	130	127	98%	-1%
2. The Board finds the Case Permanency Plan (CPP) meets timelines and addresses the youth's current foster care placement.	131	118	90%	+10%
3. The Board finds the Case Permanency Plan (CPP), Part C includes the youth's transition plan.	131	103	79%	+2%
4. The Board finds the youth has completed the Casey Life Skills Assessment.	131	111	85%	+8%
5. The Board finds that a transition planning meeting has been held for the youth.	131	107	82%	+8%
6. The Board finds HHS made concerted efforts to inquire about Indian heritage, notify the tribe, and follow ICWA placement preferences.	130	124	95%	+3%
7. The Board finds HHS made concerted efforts to place the youth with a relative or a person who has a caregiver relationship.	131	125	96%	+1%
8. The Board finds HHS made concerted and/or continued efforts to place the youth with siblings.*	92	89	97%	+3%
9. The Board finds the level of placement is the least restrictive setting available to meet the youth's needs.	131	127	97%	+1%
10. The Board finds HHS has ensured appropriate services are in place to make it possible for the youth to transition to adulthood.	131	123	94%	+12%
11. The Board finds the youth has at least one caring adult in his/her support system.	131	120	92%	SAME

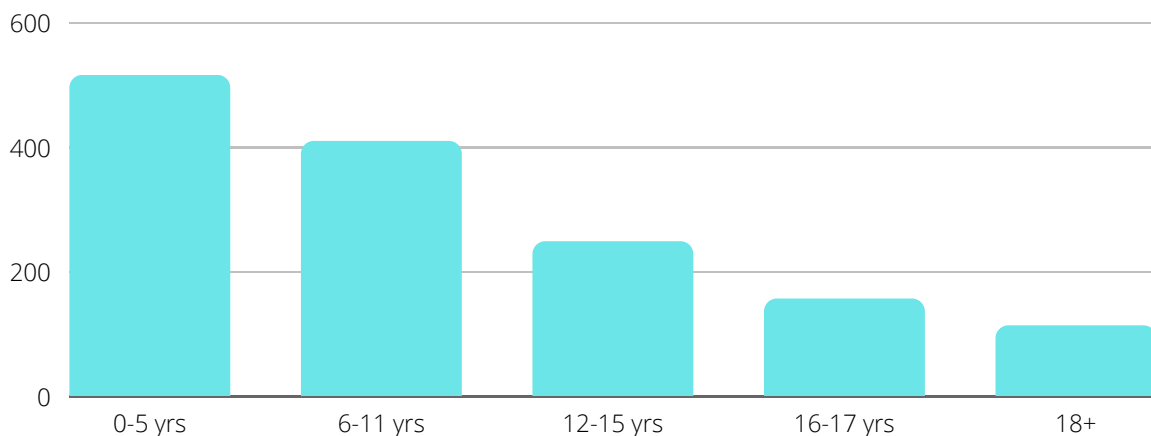
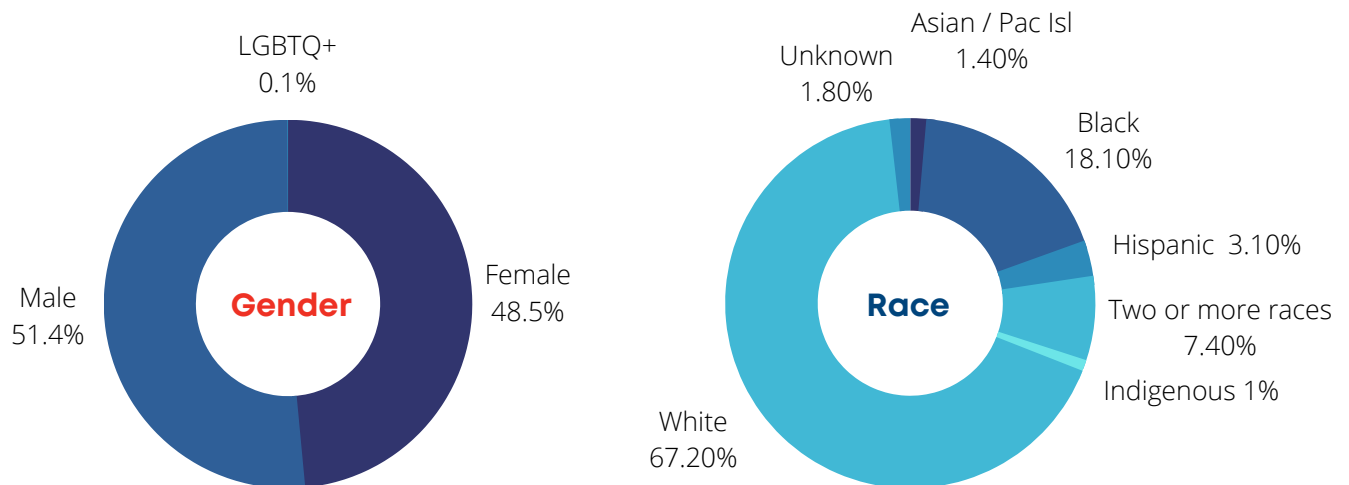
(*) Finding 8 does not apply to all youth in foster care as not all of them have siblings in care.



ICFCRB Child Demographics

Pursuant to Iowa Code 237.18, subsection 2, paragraph b, ICAB offers the following information regarding children served by the ICFCRB program.

Local citizen foster care review board programs accumulated data for 1,441 children from 52 counties in FY2022. Local boards review children in paid foster care placements. Reviews are not held for children who are placed with a non-licensed relative or suitable other adult (fictive kin). The average length of stay in foster care for the 1,441 children tracked by the ICFCRB program was 435 days.



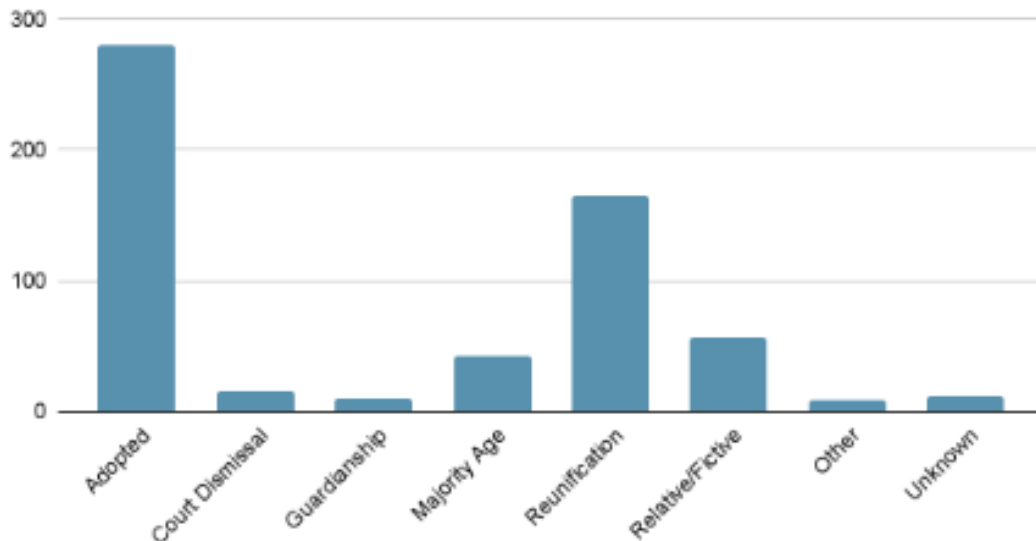
Foster Care Exits

Of the 1,441 children tracked in FY2022, 591 exited the ICFCRB program during the fiscal year.

The average length of stay for the children who exited the ICFCRB program was 470 days.



Destination Upon Foster Care Exit



ICFCRB Evaluation Program Results

Pursuant to Iowa Code §237.18, subsection 6, the Iowa Child Advocacy Board maintains an annual evaluation program 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.”

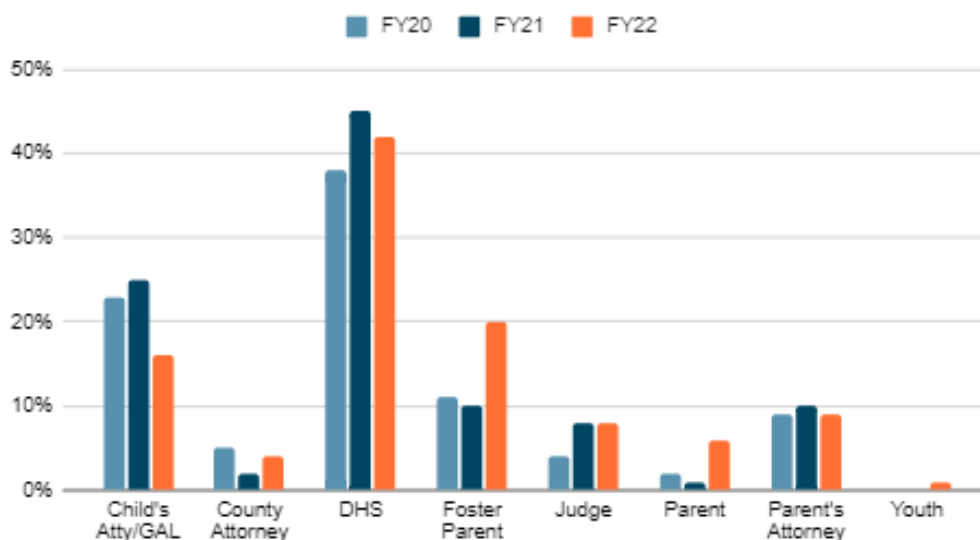
There are four components to the evaluation program:

1. Annual survey of interested parties
2. Comment card results from local foster care review meetings
3. Barriers to achieving the permanency plan goal identified during local foster care reviews
4. Data on the amount of time children spend in foster care placements

Interested Party Survey Results

Individuals and other stakeholders were invited to complete a program survey regarding the effectiveness of citizen foster care reviews in improving case permanency planning and meeting case permanency planning goals. Participation in the survey was similar to the previous fiscal year; 99 individuals completed the FY2022 survey.

Survey Respondents



ICFCRB Evaluation Program Results

Interested Party Survey Results

Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with a number of key components of the foster care review process. Table 1 depicts the respondents' answers.

Table 1. Responses to Key Areas of the ICFCRB Process

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
Citizen reviews adequately address current issues regarding the case permanency plan for children and families	35.35% 35	49.49% 49	12.12% 12	3.03% 3	99
Citizen reviews adequately address progress toward completing the action steps of the case permanency plan	32.32% 32	53.54% 53	12.12% 12	2.02% 2	99
Citizen reviews actively address whether concurrent planning is occurring for children in out-of-home placements	29.29% 29	61.62% 61	7.07% 7	2.02% 2	99
Citizen reviews actively address whether relative searches are occurring for children in out-of-home placements	22.22% 22	55.56% 55	18.18% 18	4.04% 4	99
Citizen reviews actively address progress towards the achievement of legal permanency for children	30.30% 30	52.53% 52	15.15% 15	2.02% 2	99
Citizen reviews focus on the critical needs of children (i.e., educational advocacy, mental health, physical health, placement needs, relational permanence, transition planning, etc.)	31.31% 31	57.58% 57	9.09% 9	2.02% 2	99
Citizen reviews provide an opportunity to identify systemic barriers in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems.	27.27% 27	44.44% 44	22.22% 22	6.06% 6	99
Recommendations made by citizen review boards effectively influence case planning for families with children in out-of-home placements	18.18% 18	51.52% 51	23.23% 23	7.07% 7	99

While the majority of survey respondents indicated their agreement with the identified areas, more work needs to be done by local boards to address systemic barriers in child welfare and/or the juvenile justice systems, as well as offering recommendations that can more effectively influence case permanency planning for children and families.

ICFCRB Evaluation Program Results

ICFCRB Comment Card Results and Evaluative Feedback

Following each individual case review, all groups of participants are given the opportunity to provide feedback about the review process. The Boards and staff are diligent in their efforts to be respectful and thoughtful in their work and maintain focus on the safety and permanency planning for children. Feedback and evaluation of the review process by interested parties is essential for quality assessment and program improvement.

Each interested party who attends a local review is invited to complete a comment card. Due to the continuation of some virtual participation, comment card surveys were not always accessed by all participants. 1,318 comment cards were received in FY2022. In addition to the opportunity to provide open comments, parties are asked to evaluate four areas.

Table 2. Comment Card Results

% of IP Group that <u>Agreed</u> with the Statement					
Relation to Child	The review adequately addressed the issues regarding the child's safety and permanency plan	The Board's recommendations will effectively impact case planning	The Board listened and treated me respectfully	Timely notification of reviews was received (at least 10 days prior)	Total Responses
CASA	100%	99%	100%	90%*	74
Child's Atty/GAL	100%	100%	100%	88%*	67
DHS	100%	99%	100%	90%*	446
Foster Parent	98%	99%	99%	97%	313
Parent	96%	97%	96%	88%	166
Parent's Attorney	100%	98%	100%	98%	47
Relative Caregiver	100%	100%	100%	100%	22
Service Provider	100%	100%	100%	88%*	153
Youth (14+ yrs)	100%	93%	100%	93%	30

(*) Not all respondents answered the question.

ICFCRB Evaluation Program Results

ICFCRB Comment Card Results and Evaluative Feedback

Youth Comments

In response to “What did you like best about the review,” comments from youth participants included:

- *“That they respected my wishes and what I was saying.”*
- *“Talking about working on some goals and my situation.”*
- *“Not sure”*
- *“Comfortable environment and all comments were heard.”*

Many youth noted that they felt heard, that the board members are “nice” and that they receive good feedback at the reviews.

One youth noted that they would have liked more questions asked by the board. Otherwise, the youth respondents did not have additional input on how to improve the process.



ICFCRB Evaluation Program Results

Barriers for Achievement of Permanency Plan Goals

Barriers that prevent achievement of the permanency plan goal at the time of the review are identified through a discussion between the local board members and the parties in attendance. Given the individual dynamics of cases, more than one barrier may have been identified per case. The topmost identified barriers are noted for each case type reviewed by local citizen foster care review boards.

Cases with the goal of reunification or guardianship

Of 858 documented barriers from reviews held, the top four barriers are consistent with the FY2021 data.

- 58 had no identified barriers because the achievement of the permanency goal was in process
- 486 of the barriers were parental mental health issues
- 464 of the barriers were parental substance abuse issues
- 32 of the barriers were family economic issues to include lack of stable housing
- 282 of the barriers were lack of progress by parent(s) to alleviate the concerns that led to the removal within 12 months of out-of-home placement



Cases with the goal of adoption

Of 408 documented barriers from reviews held, the top three barriers are consistent with the FY2021 data.

- 89 had no identified barriers because the finalization of adoption was pending
- 91 of the barriers were the HHS selection staffing not being held to determine the pre-adoptive placement
- 70 of the barriers were children who were not in the pre-adoptive home for 180 days at the time of the review

ICFCRB Evaluation Program Results

Cases with the goal of another planned permanent living arrangement

Of 122 documented barriers from reviews held, the top three barriers differed slightly from FY2021 data.

- 39 identified that the youth needs employment or job experience
- 37 identified the youth did not have a housing plan as part of the transition plan
- 33 identified that the youth needs certified personal documents (photo ID, social security card and/or a birth certificate)

Length of Stay in Foster Care

Local citizen foster care review board programs accumulated data for 1,441 children from 52 counties in FY2022. Of those children, 1,114 remained eligible to be reviewed by a local board at least once during the fiscal year.

The average length of stay in foster care was 435 days for the total children tracked for foster care reviews.

Conclusions

While the majority of survey respondents indicated their agreement with the identified areas, more work needs to be done by local boards to address systemic barriers in child welfare and/or the juvenile justice systems, as well as offering recommendations that can more effectively influence case permanency planning for children and families.

As part of ICAB's continuous improvement plan for the ICFCRB program, emphasis will be placed on volunteer continuing education focused on the key areas identified by survey respondents.

ICFCRB Program Highlights

As noted in ICAB's FY2021 annual report, there were three priority ICFCRB program initiatives planned for FY2022. All initiatives were successfully completed.

Proposed legislative changes. A thorough review was completed of Iowa Code sections 237.15 - 237.22. Legislative changes were made to better align code requirements with current child welfare and juvenile justice practices. Changes related to the ICFCRB program include:

- Intervenors are a party that must be notified of a foster care review
- The program will report out child data for children served by local citizen foster care review boards in its annual report.

Polk Pilot ICFCRB. A pilot citizen foster care review board in Polk County was implemented in July 2021 to review the cases of youth who have legal permanency established as another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA). The focus of the reviews were on transition planning and services for the youth. Due to a lower than expected number of youth with an established APPLA goal, the population reviewed by the pilot program expanded to include the case of some 12-15 year olds identified by HS. The board received additional training on case permanency planning and the juvenile court process for this age group. The board will continue to review this population in FY2023. Funding for facilitation of the Polk ICFCRB is made possible through Polk County, acting by and through its Community, Family and Youth Services Department.

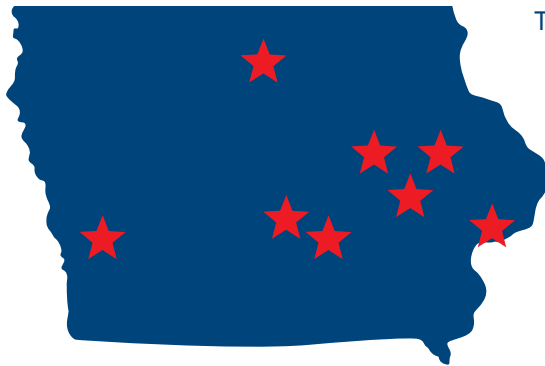
New Data System. Since program implementation in the late 1980s, the ICFCRB child records have been maintained in a Microsoft Access Database. The system was antiquated and the agency was at risk of losing data and the ability to perform essential functions to operate and maintain the ICFCRB program. ICAB personnel worked with staff from Five Points Technologies to incorporate the ICFCRB child records into ICAB's Child Advocacy Match System (CAMS). Funding for this project was made available through the state's Technology Reinvestment Fund. The main features were implemented in late May 2022 and staff began training on how to use the Child Advocacy Match System for ICFCRB workflow. Once the full transition is completed, ICFCRB facilitators and volunteers will be able to utilize the secure system to access case file documentation for foster care reviews.

Citizen Review Panel

Iowa Child Advocacy Review Panel

The Child Advocacy Board coordinates the Iowa Child Advocacy Review Panel as one of Iowa's three citizen review panels required by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). The panel was formally organized and enacted bylaws in September 2021. Active CASA and ICFCRB members, along with community members meet virtually at least six times a year to review policies and procedures related to the child welfare system

Panel Members



Harvey Weinberg, Polk CASA / Coach - Chairperson
Theresa McBride, Pottawattamie CASA - Co-Chairperson
Marilyn Althoff, Delaware, ICAB Support Volunteer
Deanna Curl, Scott ICFCRB
Carol Flaherty, Cerro Gordo CASA
Scott Fortune, Black Hawk CASA
Megan Johnson, Polk CASA
Martha Kroese, Black Hawk CASA / ICFCRB
David Ladwig, Jasper CASA
Tricia McCabe, Benton CASA and Linn ICFCRB
Kourtney Murphy, Pottawattamie CASA
Ken Williams, Pottawattamie CASA

For the duration of FY2022, the panel's focus was on the role of guardians ad litem (GAL) appointed by the juvenile courts to represent the best interests of children. The panel's annual report was submitted to the Iowa Department of Human Services on April 29, 2022 which contained recommendations regarding the role of the GAL. The Iowa Code definition of guardian ad litem was revised with expanded responsibilities during the 2022 legislative session. The changes went into effect July 1, 2022 and address the greatest concerns noted by the panel which include the need for a GAL to meet with the child on a regular basis, the need for a GAL to fulfill the statutory requirements and submit a formal report to the court for judicial consideration, and the need for more accountability of attorneys who accept GAL appointments to ensure the best interests of children are represented in all matters.

As the panel continues to monitor the implementation of Iowa Code changes in regards to the roles and responsibilities of a guardian ad litem, they are also moving forward to learn and better understand Iowa's implementation of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA).

Looking Ahead

ICAB Initiatives

- Review and update Iowa Administrative Code (Chapter 489) to align with best practices and new 2022 code changes.
- Work with social work personnel of Iowa HHS to identify data points for populations reviewed by local boards and establishing outcome measures for reporting purposes.
- Secure funding for technology equipment to allow virtual participation at all local citizen foster care review boards. Virtual participation will reduce attendance barriers for youth, families and professionals and allow for greater participation in the review process.
- Seek resources to establish a statewide model that enables the ICFCRB program to review all cases of children aged 0-5 years and youth with an established permanency goal of another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA), as these are the priority populations identified by Iowa HHS and ICAB for citizen reviews.

