

icab

IOWA CHILD
ADVOCACY BOARD

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



Respectfully submitted as required under 2023 Iowa Code §237.18(2)(b),(c), (5) and (6)(d).

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Executive Summary

The Iowa Child Advocacy Board is an independent board appointed by the Governor of Iowa to provide for citizen involvement in child welfare issues. ICAB oversees two volunteer child advocacy programs designed to help protect children in Iowa and their best interests while being served by the child welfare system. The Iowa Child Advocacy Board is pleased to submit to you its report on the work of the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program and Foster Care Review Board Program for the period of July 2022 to June 2023.

The Board commends the 609 volunteers who worked as Court Appointed Special Advocates and Foster Care Review Board Members during the past fiscal year serving just over 2,400 children. Their dedication and professionalism in advocacy missions have positively impacted children's lives, offering hope and improving outcomes. The CASA and FCRB volunteers receive support from committed staff and contracted partners, many of whom have dedicated their careers to assisting vulnerable children and families in Iowa.

In the fall of 2022, Iowa's CASA program was recognized by the National CASA/GAL Association as being in compliance with the 51 National Standards for CASA programs. The final report highlights the strengths and contributions of the CASA program.

The Iowa Child Advocacy Board is exploring methods to maintain consistent programming throughout the state. Additionally, we are persistently working with our non-profit partner, Friends of Iowa CASA and ICFCRB, to secure additional funding to complement the state's allocation for our initiatives. We are grateful for the support from the compassionate citizens of Iowa who have backed our program through their private contributions.

Under the Governor's alignment bill of 2023, the Iowa Child Advocacy Board's CASA and FCRB programs will be moved from under the auspices of the Department of Inspection and Appeals to the Department of Health and Human Services as part of the Division of Compliance in FY2024. The Board is deeply grateful for the support and collaboration extended by the Legislature, Governor, Iowa Court System, and the Department of Health and Human Services towards Iowa's CASA and FCRB programs. We look forward to strengthening partnerships to work together for improvement of Iowa's child welfare system and the best possible outcomes for children and families.

Respectfully submitted,



Honorable Judge William S. Owens
Iowa Child Advocacy Board Chair

FY2023 BY THE NUMBERS

609

Highly trained
volunteers

35

Professional
Staff

2,404

Iowa children
served

\$1,743,660

Total value of the contribution of volunteer hours and miles



State Board Members

William S. Owens, Chair & Judicial Representative

Wayne Schellhammer, Vice Chair

Ashley Baker

Courtney Clarke

Marc Elcock

Alison Guernsey

Don Logan, ICFCRB Representative

Rick McIntosh, CASA Representative

Angela Stokes

CASA of Iowa Program

(Court Appointed Special Advocate)

2023 Iowa Code §237.18(6)(d)

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 are required to fill out an application, supply personal references, attend an in-person interview, and undergo a thorough onboarding process that involves 30 hours of pre-service training. Additionally, applicants must pass a comprehensive background check. Upon finishing the onboarding process, applicants are officially sworn in as CASA volunteers within the juvenile court system.

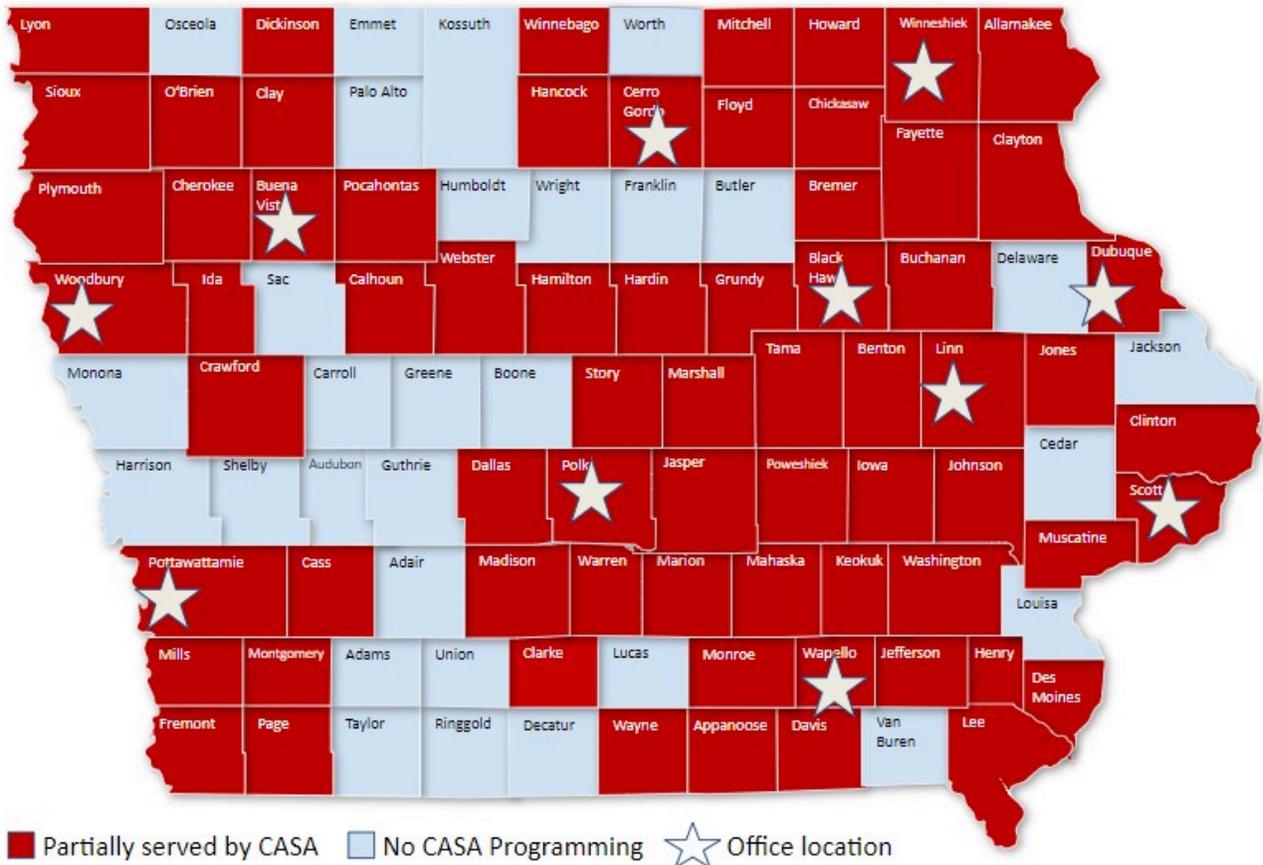
CASA advocacy is distinctive and highly personalized. While the circumstances leading families to court may appear alike, each case is unique. Thus, CASA of Iowa actively promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion across all aspects of its initiatives, utilizing data to comprehend disparities among children and families involved in the child welfare system. The organization is dedicated to advocating effectively for children and families of diverse backgrounds.

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 and volunteers served families in 69 of Iowa's 99 counties in FY2023.



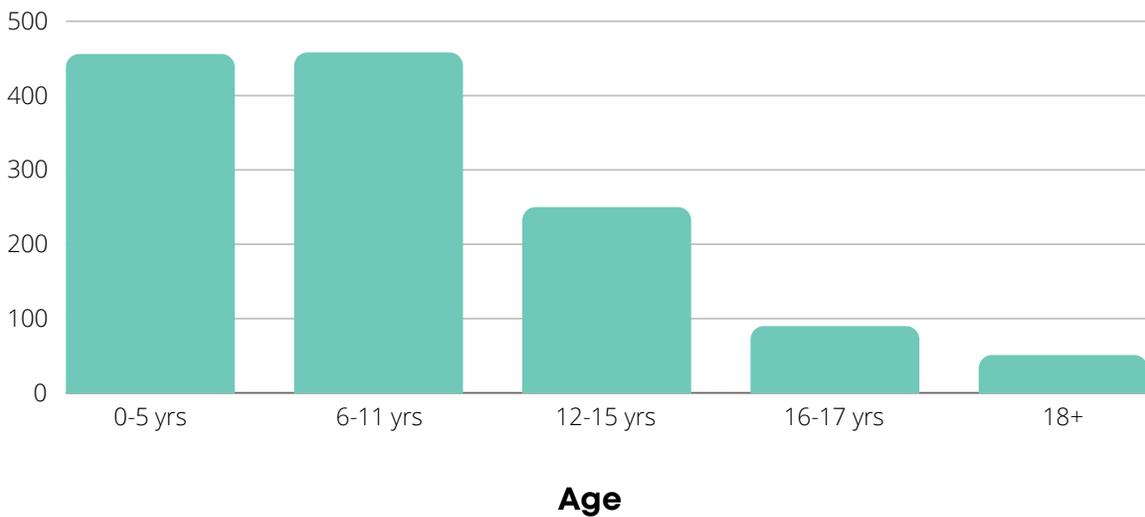
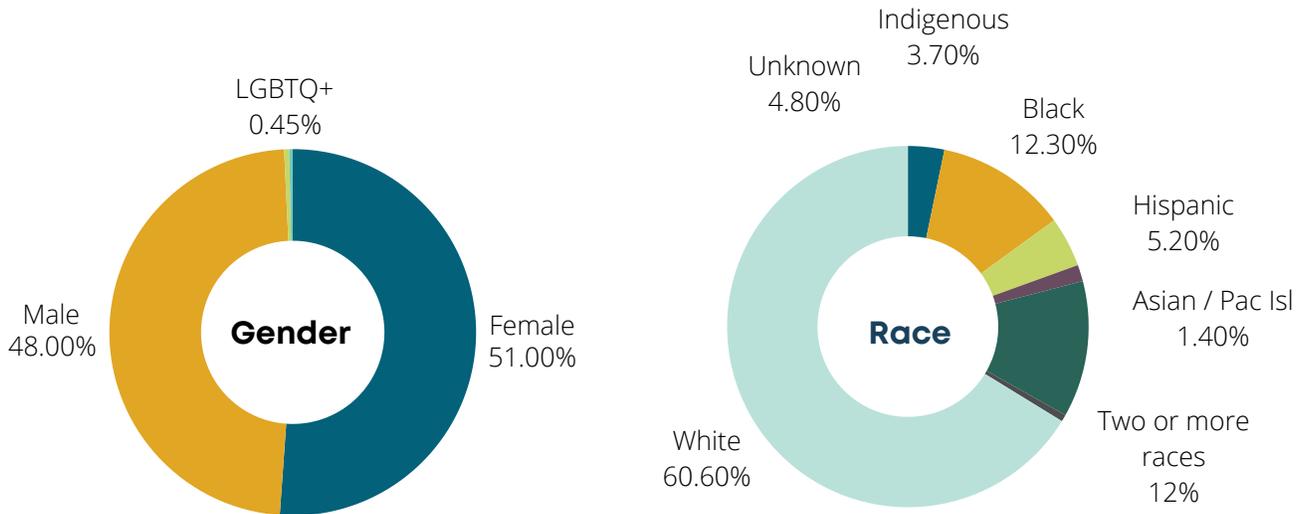
The CASA of Iowa State Organization and each of the 11 local programs are members in good standing of the National CASA/GAL Association for Children. Membership with the National CASA/GAL Association allows CASA of Iowa to use CASA branding, logo and marketing materials, apply for grant funding to fund 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 FY2023, CASA of Iowa received grant funding from the National CASA/GAL Association to support programming in Dubuque County and SE Iowa CASA, 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 1,305 children from 701 families in FY2023. The following charts show the 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.



1,305

Children from
701 families served by
CASA of Iowa



477

CASA of Iowa
volunteers including
103 new volunteers



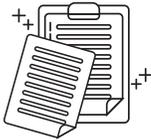
51

CASA of Iowa
volunteers who
served as coaches



184

Volunteer applications
received; 103 were
sworn in as volunteers



1,305

CASA reports
submitted to the courts



25,813

Hours of time donated
by volunteers



205,642

Donated miles driven
by volunteers



\$1,265,232

FY2023 total volunteer contribution

FY2023 CASA of Iowa Program Highlights

National CASA/GAL Association Highly Effective Standards Review of Iowa CASA Produces No Findings

In November 2022, CASA of Iowa received a final report from the National CASA/GAL Association who conducted a review of the state organization in the summer and fall of 2021. National CASA found CASA of Iowa to be in compliance with all 51 state standards. In the report final summary, National CASA staff made the following comments: *“Iowa CASA is viewed as a leader and, through its position as part of Iowa state government, is engaged at the state level with the judiciary and child welfare stakeholders. Local offices feel supported and rely on the state office for guidance and leadership. Iowa CASA is strongly supported by the Iowa Child Advocacy Board and Friends of Iowa CASA. Through the state government infrastructure, governance, human resources, financial management and technology are among the functions made possible. The state government infrastructure allows the CASA program administrator and state level staff to focus primarily on local office support and advancing the CASA mission.*

Iowa CASA demonstrates leadership, knowledge and engagement, as well as a strong commitment to the CASA mission, Core Model and National CASA/GAL’s standards and policies. The state office and local offices and volunteers enjoy a good reputation in the state. National CASA/GAL is grateful for the state of Iowa and ICAB’s administration of the state CASA office and for the commitment and expertise of state office leaders, and the many dedicated CASA staff across the state of Iowa. Iowa CASA has long been a strong partner to the National CASA/GAL Association.”

Analysis and revision of CASA Coach Program

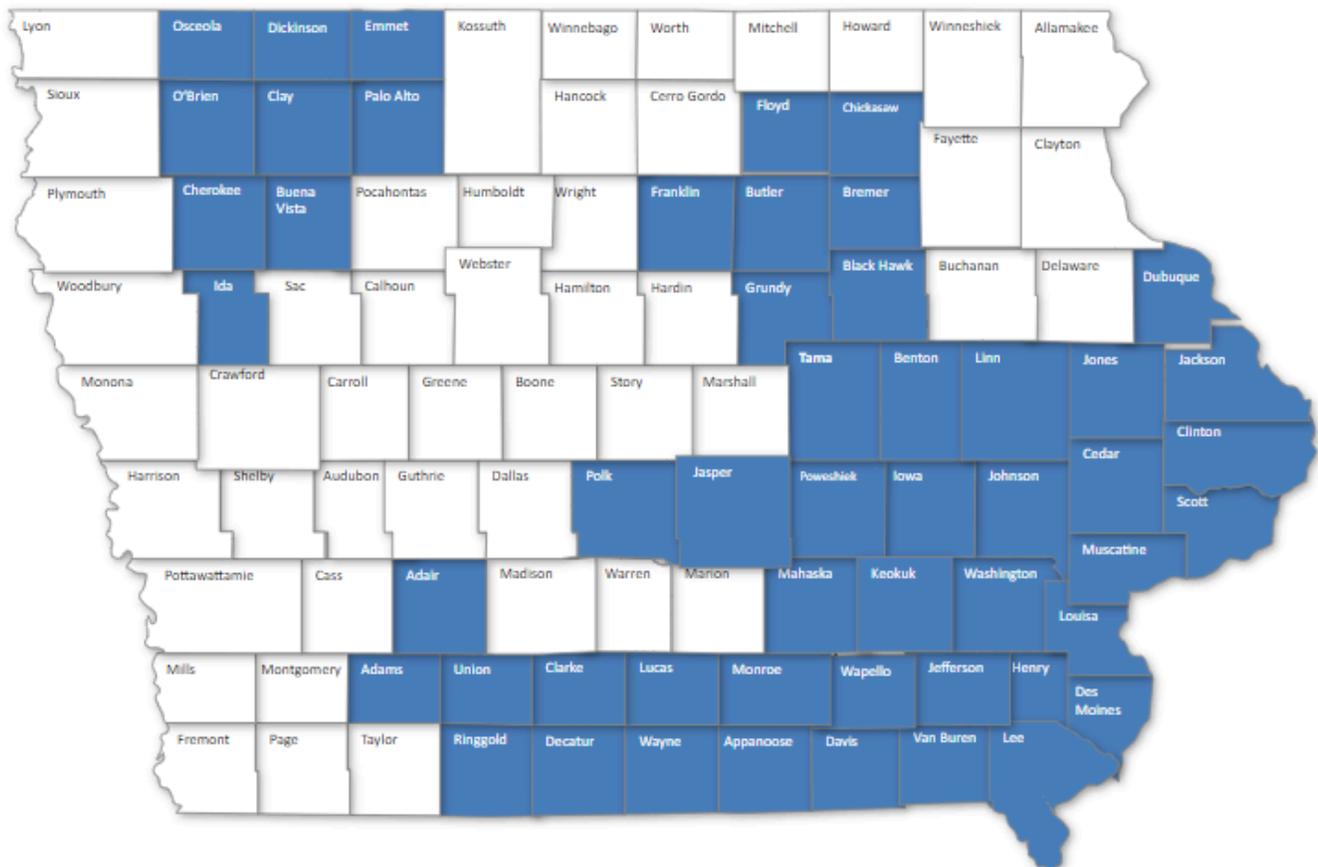
In April 2022, the CASA Program Manager began a comprehensive review of Iowa’s CASA coach model to determine if our current Coach role meets the needs of our local programs. A final report was issued to staff, along with policy changes which were effective October 1, 2022. The Coach Pre-Service training was revised to become ‘task-based,’ which includes four modules of training, two of which are required to become a CASA Coach.

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 FY2023, there were 26 local boards reviewing cases in 52 Iowa counties shown in blue on the map below. Polk County had one board to review the cases of 0-5 year olds who had been in foster care for at a year or longer.



ICFCRB Program Highlights

Child Advocacy Match System (CAMS)

The ICFCRB contracts with Five Points Technology Group for software as a service. In FY2022, program staff began using CAMS, a secure data system, for child and case record management. Enhancements were made to the system for local board members to access case file information and documents for foster care reviews.

By November 2022, all volunteers had received training on utilizing CAMS. Local board members can now take notes within the system in preparation for reviews. CAMS not only streamlines the case file management process but also enables tracking of volunteers' donated hours and miles, pre-service training and continuing education completion, volunteer training evaluations, and data from foster care reviews.

Program Policy Review

A thorough review and update of the FCRB program policies and procedures was executed in FY2023. Changes were made to align with new legislation, the implementation of CAMS and to further streamline work processes. The update policy manual was approved by the state board in December 2022.

Hybrid FCRB Meetings

Factors such as distance, lack of transportation and timing of reviews are often barriers for interested parties to participate in a child's foster care review. Stakeholder input indicated a desire for an alternative method to engage in the foster care review process in lieu of in person attendance.



Grant funds were secured to provide each board with essential tools to enable virtual participation upon request. Since February 2023, all local boards have introduced virtual participation options for interested parties. This hybrid model aims to reduce obstacles and promote greater involvement in the foster care review process.

ICFCRB By The Numbers

The Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Boards consist of community members from across Iowa who dedicate themselves to serving a four-year term to ensure continuity in the review procedures. Let's delve into the efforts, achievements, and impact of ICFCRB volunteers during the fiscal year.



1,099

Unique number of children served by the local boards



132

ICFCRB volunteers including 31 new volunteers



9,944

Hours of time donated by volunteers



15,082

Donated miles driven by volunteers



\$478,428

FY2023 total volunteer contribution

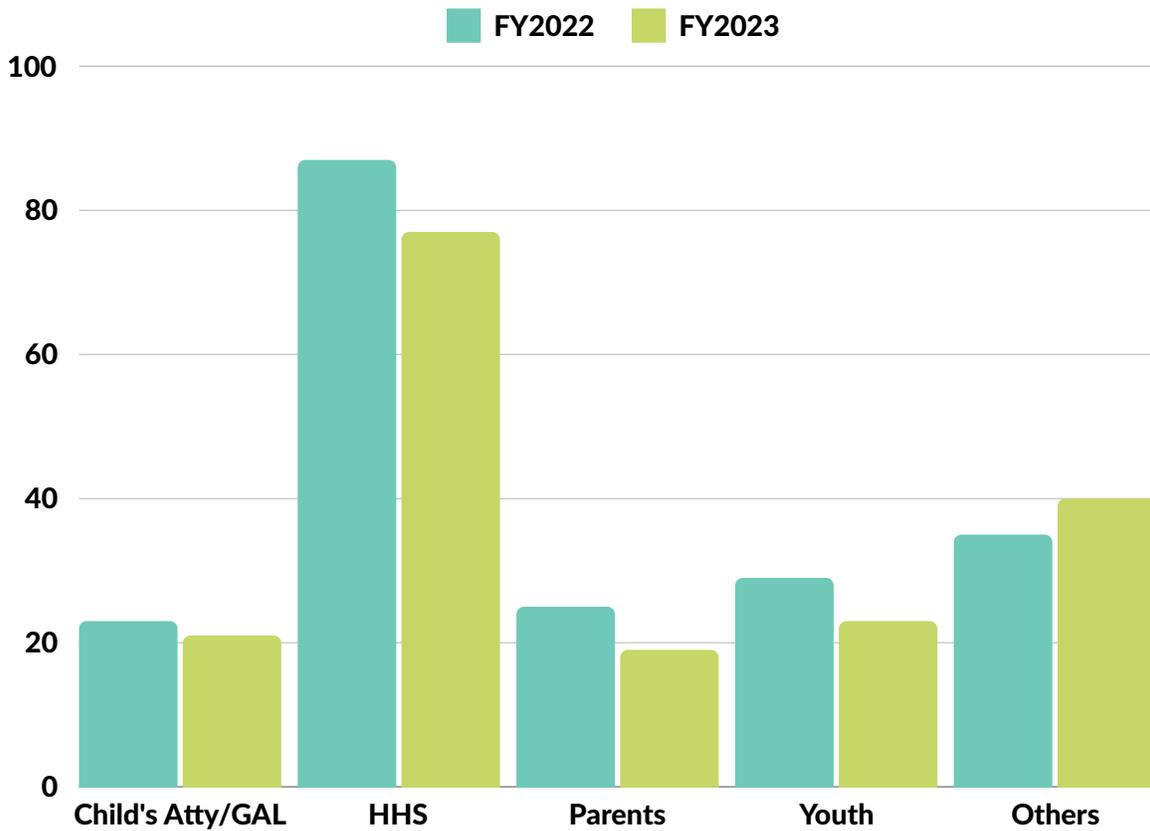
Local foster care reviews focus on ensuring that case permanency planning is being developed and carried out for children and youth in Iowa's foster care system. The ICFCRB program offers the following data for children reviewed in FY2023 to meet statutory and reporting requirements of a memorandum of understanding with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services.

Timeliness of ICFCRB Report Distribution

A total of 1,166 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. Data indicates a decrease in participation compared to FY2022 by key parties: HHS, attorney/guardians ad litem, parents and youth.





Local Citizen Foster Care Review Board Findings

Within Iowa's foster care system, local boards carry out case-specific assessments to monitor the development of children. These evaluations center on critical safety, permanency, and well-being factors that influence young individuals, showcasing the strengths of the child welfare system and identifying areas for improvement. The following tables exhibit the discoveries made by the local boards in all ICFCRB reports disclosed to the court and relevant stakeholders in the FY2023. While certain aspects of case permanency planning have demonstrated improvements compared to the prior fiscal year, a significant area of concern is the absence of updated case plans given to local boards for executing their essential mandated duties.

Reunification or Guardianship Goal Cases	# of Responses	# Yes responses	% Yes responses	(+/-) compared to FY22
1. Case Permanency Plan (CPP) meets timelines	1174	895	76.2%	(-8%)
2. Written CPP permanency goal of reunification / guardianship is appropriate	1174	763	65.0%	+1%
3. HHS has developed a concurrent plan	1174	1006	85.7%	SAME
4. Continued out-of-home placement is appropriate	1174	1164	99.1%	+1%
5. The level of placement is the least restrictive setting available	1174	1157	98.6%	SAME
6. HHS made concerted efforts to place the child(ren) with a relative or a person	1174	1144	97.4%	(-1%)
7. HHS made concerted and/or continued efforts to place the child(ren) with siblings *	983	971	98.8%	+1%
8. HHS made concerted efforts to inquire about Indian heritage, notify the tribe	1174	1112	94.7%	SAME
9. HHS has ensured appropriate services are in place	1174	1133	96.5%	(-1%)
10. The proximity of the placement to the parental home is consistent	1174	1124	95.7%	SAME
11. HHS has initiated transition planning for the youth 14 years or older*	352	215	61.1%	SAME
12. The Court has held a permanency hearing within ASFA timelines*	777	704	90.6%	SAME

(*) 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.

TPR/Adoption Goal Cases	# of Responses	# Yes responses	% Yes responses	(+/-) compared to FY22
1. The goal of adoption is appropriate	560	541	96.61%	SAME
2. The Case Permanency Plan (CPP) meets timelines and addresses adoption	560	431	76.96%	(-11%)
3. HHS made concerted efforts to inquire about Indian heritage, notify the tribe	560	554	98.93%	SAME
4. HHS made concerted efforts to place the child(ren) with a relative or a person	560	554	98.93%	SAME
5. HHS made concerted and/or continued efforts to place the child(ren) with siblings *	482	475	98.55%	**
6. The current placement is appropriate to meet the child(ren)'s need	560	533	95.18%	+1%
7. HHS has ensured appropriate services are in place to safeguard the child(ren)	560	554	98.93%	SAME
8. HHS casework responsibility has been transferred to the adoption specialist *	549	505	91.99%	SAME
9. The adoption specialist has met with the child	549	492	89.62%	+3%
10. The child(ren) has a Life Book	560	200	35.71%	+2%
11. The child(ren) will be adopted within 24 months of entering care	560	262	46.79%	(-1%)

(*) Findings 5, 7 and 8 do not apply to all youth reviewed.
The percentage is calculated based on the number of applicable cases.
(**) FY22 data on #5 was calculated incorrectly in FY22; no comparative data.



APPLA Case Findings	# of Responses	# Yes responses	% Yes responses	(+/-) compared to FY22
1. The court-ordered goal of APPLA is appropriate for the youth	81	80	98.8%	SAME
2. The Case Permanency Plan (CPP) meets timelines and addresses the youth	81	63	77.8%	(-12%)
3. The Case Permanency Plan (CPP), Part C addresses the youth's transition plan	81	64	79.0%	SAME
4. The youth has completed the Casey Life Skills Assessment	81	76	93.8%	+8%
5. A transition planning meeting has been held for the youth	81	72	88.9%	+7%
6. HHS made concerted efforts to inquire about Indian heritage, notify the tribe	81	79	97.5%	+2%
7. HHS made concerted efforts to place the youth with a relative or a person	81	78	96.3%	SAME
8. HHS made concerted and/or continued efforts to place the youth with siblings *	55	55	100.0%	+4%
9. The level of placement is the least restrictive setting available	81	79	97.5%	SAME
10. HHS has ensured appropriate services are in place	81	73	90.1%	(-4%)
11. There is at least one caring adult in the youth's support system	81	77	95.1%	+3%

(*) Finding 8 does not apply to all youth reviewed as not all have siblings in care. The percentage is calculated based on the number of applicable cases.



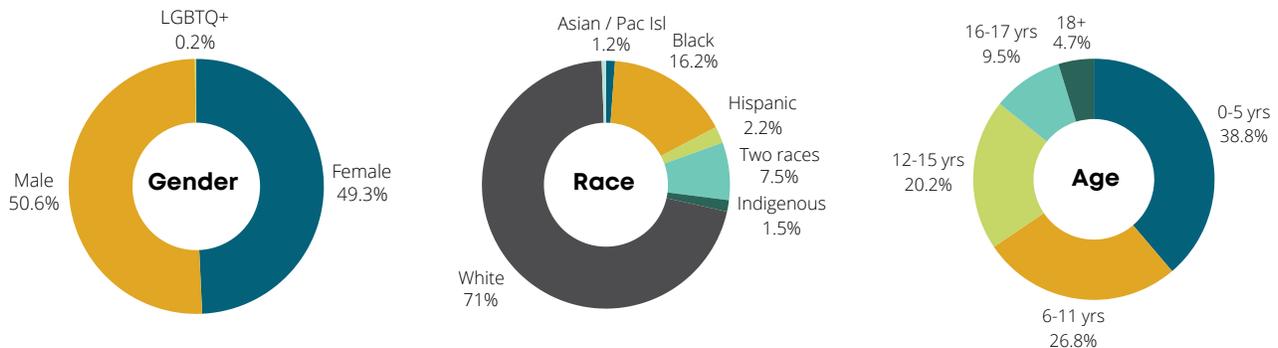
ICFCRB Child Demographics

Pursuant to 2023 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 1,624 children from 52 counties in FY2023. 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). Children placed in Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) were excluded to reduce duplicative review efforts. Not all children remain eligible for a citizen foster care review. For FY2023, the case selection plan of children to be reviewed was as follows:

1. Cases where the children are under the age of 6 in paid foster care placements; then
2. APPLA cases; then
3. Cases where the children are ages 6-10 years old in paid foster care placements; then
4. Cases where there are transition staffings for ages 16 ½ and older; and then
5. Other cases traditionally reviewed

The average length of time the 1,622 children were under the purview of the ICFCRB program was 357 days. Due to some youth remaining in foster care (QRTP) or being placed with unlicensed relatives or fictive kin, but no longer eligible for a citizen foster care review, ICAB is not able to accurately calculate the length of stay of children in foster care.



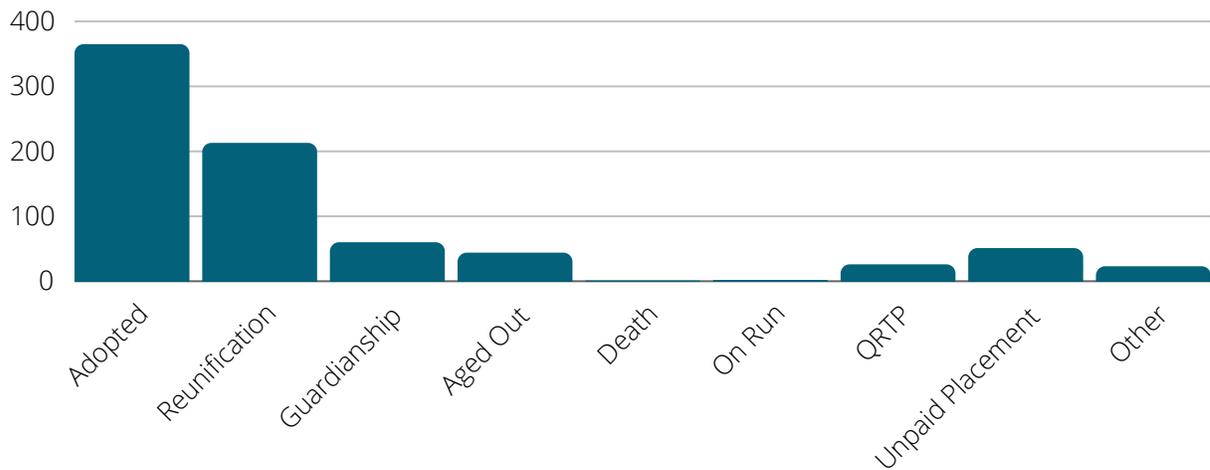
ICFCRB Program Exits

Of the 1,662 children tracked by the ICFCRB program in FY2023, 785 exited the program during the fiscal year.

The average length of stay for the children who exited the ICFCRB program was 348 days.



Destination Upon Exit from the ICFCRB Program





ICFCRB Evaluation Program Results

Pursuant to 2023 Iowa Code §237.18, subsection 5, 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.”

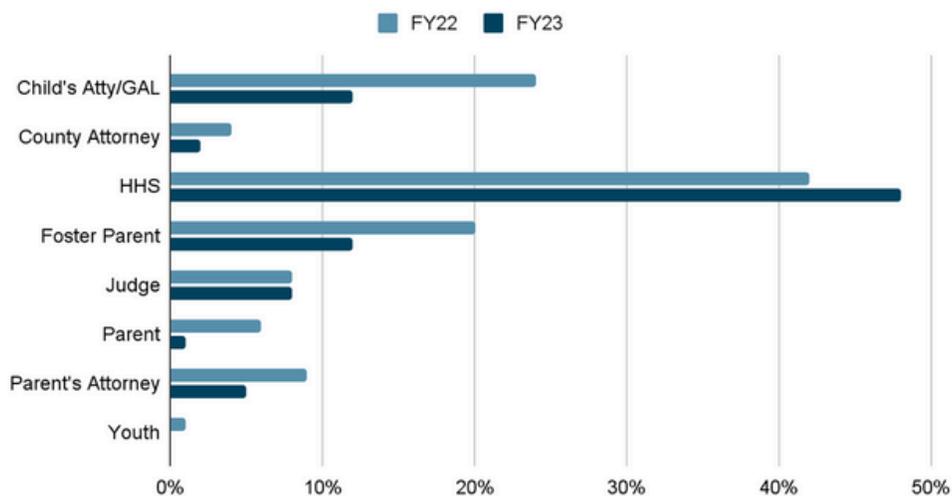
There are four components to the evaluation program:

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 asked to take part in a program survey to evaluate how effective citizen foster care reviews are in enhancing case permanency planning and achieving related goals. The survey saw a comparable level of participation to the previous fiscal year, with 97 individuals responding to the FY2023 survey, while no youth provided feedback.

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
Citizen reviews adequately address current issues regarding the case permanency plan for children and families	40.21% 39	51.55% 50	7.22% 7	1.03% 1
Citizen reviews adequately address progress toward completing the action steps of the case permanency plan	39.18% 38	56.70% 55	4.12% 4	0.00% 0
Citizen reviews actively address whether concurrent planning is occurring for children in out-of-home placements	41.24% 40	50.52% 49	8.25% 8	0.00% 0
Citizen reviews actively address whether relative searches are occurring for children in out-of-home placements	36.08% 35	48.45% 47	14.43% 14	1.03% 1
Citizen reviews actively address progress towards the achievement of legal permanency for children	39.18% 38	55.67% 54	5.15% 5	0.00% 0
Citizen reviews focus on the critical needs of children (i.e., educational advocacy, mental health, physical health, placement needs, relational permanence, transition planning, etc.)	43.30% 42	49.48% 48	7.22% 7	0.00% 0
Citizen reviews provide an opportunity to identify systemic barriers in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems.	32.99% 32	49.48% 48	15.46% 15	2.06% 2
Recommendations made by citizen review boards effectively influence case planning for families with children in out-of-home placements	29.90% 29	46.39% 45	19.59% 19	4.12% 4

Although most survey respondents expressed agreement with the highlighted areas, local boards must intensify efforts to tackle systemic obstacles within child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Moreover, providing recommendations that can significantly enhance case permanency planning for children and families is essential.

ICFCRB Evaluation Program Results

ICFCRB Comment Card Results and Evaluative Feedback

Upon completion of each case review, all participant groups are invited to offer feedback on the review process. Both the Boards and staff are committed to conducting their work with respect and consideration, emphasizing the safety and permanency planning for children. Feedback and assessment of the review process by stakeholders are vital for enhancing program quality and effectiveness.

Each interested party who attends a local review is invited to complete a comment card; a direct survey link is provided to individuals who participated virtually. Over 1,300 comment cards were received in FY2023. In addition to the opportunity to provide open comments, parties are asked to evaluate four areas.

Table 2. Comment Card Results

Relation to Child	Today's review adequately addressed the issues regarding the child's safety and permanency plan.	The Board's recommendations will effectively impact case planning for the child(ren).	The Board listened to my comments and concerns and treated me respectfully.	Timely notification of reviews was received (at least 10 days prior) *	Total Responses
Atty/GAL	100%	97%	98%	88%	86
CASA	98%	96%	100%	86%	81
Foster Parent	99%	97%	100%	95%	287
HHS	100%	99%	100%	86%	420
Other	95%	100%	93%	80%	131
Parent	93%	92%	94%	89%	122
Parent's Atty	98%	96%	98%	94%	49
Relative Caregiver	100%	100%	100%	85%	26
Service Provider	99%	99%	98%	85%	98
Youth	100%	100%	100%	100%	11

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 the eight youth participants included:

- *“I think this new plan will work for me.”*
- *“I got to talk.”*
- *“Everything and it was short.”*
- *“Clarity.”*
- *“Plans they have to help me reach my goal.”*
- *“That I am doing good in school.”*
- *“They are very kind and helpful.”*
- *“Open communication.”*





ICFCRB Evaluation Program Results

Barriers for Achievement of Permanency Plan Goals

Barriers that impede the achievement of the permanency plan goal are identified during reviews through discussions with local board members and relevant stakeholders. Since each case is unique, multiple barriers may be pinpointed in each instance. Local citizen foster care review boards document the primary barriers identified for each case type.

Cases with the goal of reunification or guardianship

Of 2,224 documented barriers from reviews held, the top four barriers are consistent with the FY2023 data.

- 407 of the barriers were parental mental health issues
- 396 of the barriers were parental substance abuse issues
- 304 of the barriers were family economic issues to include lack of stable housing
- 302 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
- 54 had no identified barriers because the achievement of the permanency goal was in process

Cases with the goal of adoption

Of 525 documented barriers from reviews held, the top three barriers are consistent with the FY2023 data.

- 71 of the barriers were the HHS selection staffing not being held to determine the pre-adoptive placement
- 64 of the barriers were children who were not in the pre-adoptive home for 180 days at the time of the review
- 27 of the barriers were related to the youth's special needs being a challenge in securing a pre-adoptive placement
- 89 had no identified barriers because the finalization of adoption was pending

ICFCRB Evaluation Program Results

Cases with the goal of another planned permanent living arrangement

Of 139 documented barriers from reviews held, the top three barriers differed slightly from FY2022 data.

- 26 identified that the youth needed to be connected with the Aftercare worker.
- 20 identified that the youth needs certified personal documents (photo ID, social security card and/or a birth certificate)
- 18 identified that the youth needs employment or job experience
- 17 had no barriers noted

Length of Time in the ICFCRB Program

Local citizen foster care review board programs accumulated data for 1,624 children from 52 counties in FY2023. Of those children, 1,099 remained eligible to be reviewed by a local board at least once during the fiscal year.

The average length of time these children were under the purview of the ICFCRB program was 348 days.

Conclusions

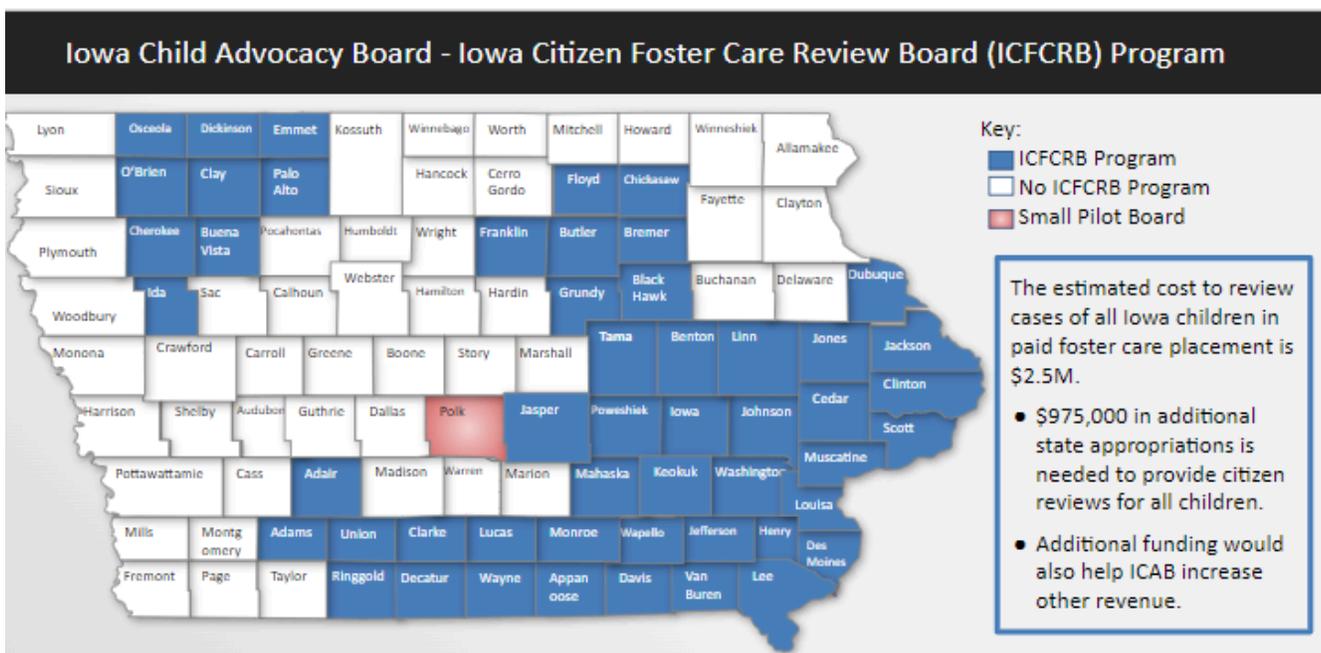
While the majority of survey respondents concurred with the identified areas, local boards must prioritize resolving systemic challenges within child welfare and juvenile justice systems. It is imperative to offer actionable recommendations that can substantially improve case permanency planning for both children and families.

In alignment with ICAB's continuous commitment to enhancing the ICFCRB program, there will be a dedicated emphasis on providing volunteer training tailored to the key areas pinpointed by survey participants.

Recommendations

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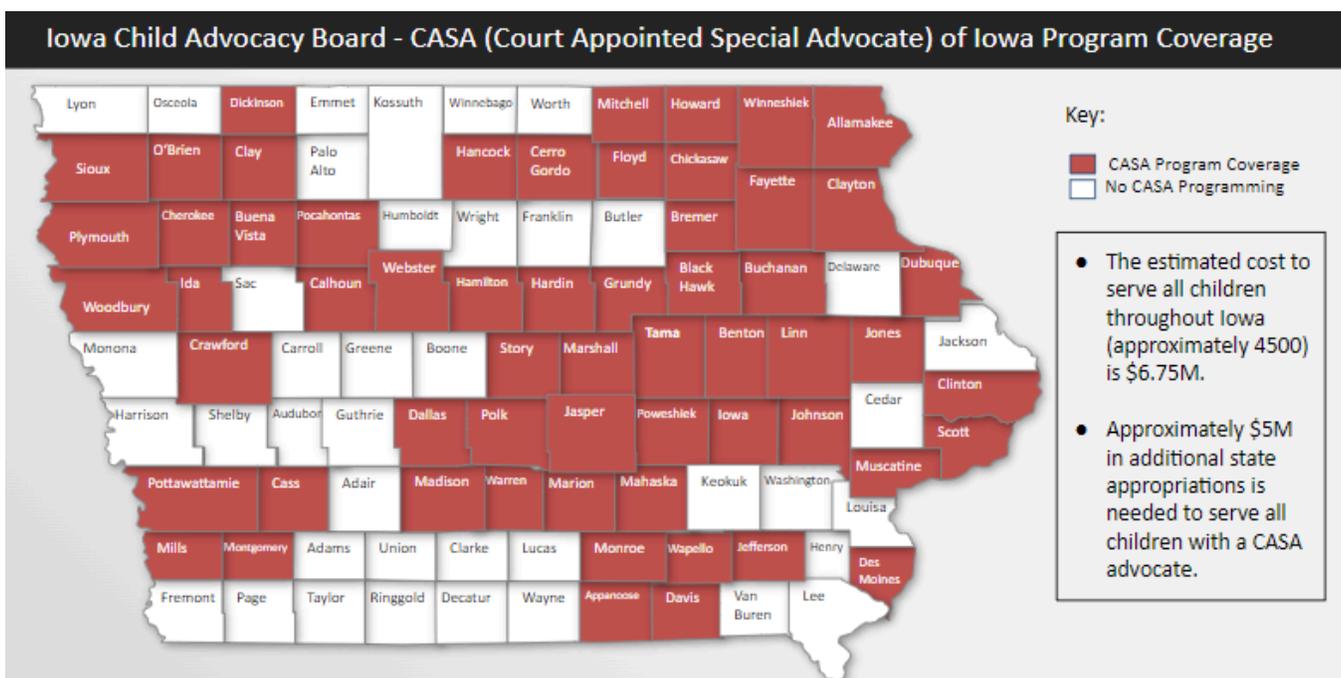
ICAB recommends the Governor and the Iowa Legislature work with us on a plan to increase state appropriations so the Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Board program is able to review cases of 100% of children in paid foster care placement by 2027. Currently, FCRB programming is available in 52 of Iowa's 99 counties, leaving 47 counties and hundreds of children without citizen reviews. (This recommendation is a carryover from the FY22 ICAB Annual Report.)



- In FY22, the ICFCRB program reviewed the cases of 1,441 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 \$478,428.
- 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

- 2** 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). This recommendation is a carryover from the FY22 ICAB Annual Report.)



- 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

- 3** Despite some progress in transition planning, data shows that less than 80% of older youth reviewed by local boards have a transition plan included in the case permanency plan. **ICAB recommends that the Department of Health and Human Services - Child Protection Services Division ensure prompt initiation of transition planning for youth at age 14 and include the plan in the case permanency plan document. It is also recommended that the Department conduct a thorough quality assessment of cases to address any gaps in the transition planning process in the service areas.**
- 4** **ICAB aims to enhance and maintain communication between this board and the staff of the Department of Health and Human Services.** The objective is to pinpoint systemic issues in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, suggest enhancements to improve efficiency and safeguard children's well-being, and address necessary changes in data collection.