

JB Pritzker  
Governor



Marc D. Smith  
Director

# CAC/CASA FUNDING TASK FORCE REPORT

December 30, 2022



## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### STATE OF ILLINOIS

December 28, 2022

Governor JB Pritzker  
Office of the Governor  
401 S. Spring Street  
Springfield, IL 62704

Dear Governor Pritzker,

Enclosed, you will find the final report of the Task Force on Children Advocacy Centers (CAC's) and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA's) for Children Funding, hereafter referred to as the [SJR47](#) Funding Task Force or "Task Force", which held five meetings in order to complete its goal of examining the funding mechanisms for state dollars that support Children's Advocacy Centers and Court Appointed Special Advocates, hereafter referred to as CAC's and CASA's.

Overall, we believe that the participants learned new information about the funding sources, goals, and operations of these organizations. Both are represented and under the umbrella of a statewide organization: Children's Advocacy Centers of Illinois and Illinois CASA.

We did not, as a task force of sixteen members, complete our report with an agreed-upon set of recommendations. You will find throughout the report recommendations made by specific stakeholders about their respective organizations. We, the chair and vice-chair, agreed that there is a need for greater oversight and compliance of the member organizations. CAC's appear to be in a strong position to fairly distribute state funding using a formula that is based upon the number of children served, among other factors. Illinois CASA agreed to distribute state funding as a flat rate by the number of children CASA serves in each county. This funding formula had been decided previously by all Illinois CASA member organizations, except Cook County CASA, after their bi-weekly meetings prior to the Task Force start date. The exception to this was Cook County CASA, whose Executive Director stated that their additional line-item funding was appropriate and necessary because of the total number of children in the DCFS system in Cook County; clarifying that the funding is not being directly tied to the number of children served by Cook County CASA. As the report establishes, there is a great disparity in the dollars provided to Cook County CASA and the other CASA programs across the state.

We understand Cook County CASA has acted independently and without compliance with the statewide Illinois CASA organization. And while the additional services no doubt are helpful to older children leaving the system,

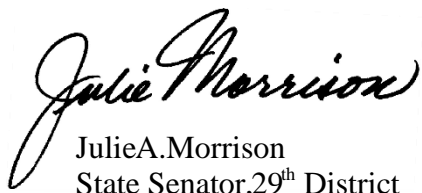
the question becomes whether Cook County CASA is a service provider, or intends to be a CASA, subject to the jurisdiction and funding formula of Illinois CASA.

Fairness and equity across Illinois should be our primary goal for each child served by either CAC or CASA; whether that program area covers children in Cairo or Chicago, or Effingham and Quincy. Additional oversight by the agencies distributing the funds must occur. For CASA, as it pertains to compliance with Illinois CASA requirements, there appears to be zero oversight by DCFS on how the dollars are used or dispensed. Whether this is due to the line-item creation of member initiatives or a lack of oversight via Illinois statute, we as a General Assembly are essentially providing significant dollars to an organization without accountability on how the dollars are tied to the original mission of the organization. Creating a separate 501 C3, non-compliance with safety standards, and expansion of services already under the responsibility of DCFS, dilute the mandate and indeed the mission of CASA's.

As chair and vice chair, and as legislators actively participating in the budgeting process, we request that the funding mechanisms for these two organizations be based on the number of children served and compliance with their respective statewide leads. To allow deviation from these agreed upon funding formulas will encourage other CASA's to splinter from important standards and operating methods, as well as solicit for more state tax dollars independently. Additionally, there should be timely payments to each organization so they can provide services as required. If DCFS is to remain the fiscal agent, then we should empower the department to monitor compliance with the terms of each organization's agreement. This Task Force was long overdue and allowed all participants a deeper dive into the child welfare funding arena.

We would welcome a discussion with you, Deputy Governor Sol Flores, Director Marc Smith, and any other child welfare policy experts that are appropriate, regarding our Task Force findings. Please contact either office at 217-782-3650/847-945-5200 (Senator Morrison) or 217-782-8037/630-812-9292 (Representative Costa Howard).

Sincerely,

  
JulieA.Morrison  
State Senator, 29<sup>th</sup> District

  
Terra Costa Howard  
State Representative, 48<sup>th</sup> District

cc: Attorney General Kwame Raoul  
Deputy Governor Sol Flores  
Director Alexis Sturm  
Director Marc Smith  
Executive Director Delrice Adams  
Representative Tom Weber  
Senator Brian Stewart

## **SJR47 CAC/CASA FUNDING TASK FORCE REPORT**

### **Purpose**

The Task force on Children Advocacy Centers and Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children Funding is created to ensure that each CAC and CASA facility receives adequate funding to respond to the number and severity of child abuse and neglect cases in their respective jurisdictions.

### **Children Advocacy Centers (CAC)**

Children's Advocacy Centers coordinate the investigation, treatment, and prosecution of child abuse cases by utilizing multidisciplinary teams of professionals involved in child protective and victim advocacy services, law enforcement and prosecution, and physical and mental health. There are 39 accredited CACs.

### **Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children (CASA)**

Supports and promotes court appointed volunteer advocacy for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. Illinois CASA network has 31 independent, non-profit or county-based programs.

### **Task Force Members**

Chair ..... Senator Julie Morrison  
 Vice-Chair ..... Representative Terra Costa-Howard  
 Members..... Senator Brian Stewart  
                   Representative Tom Weber  
                   Betti Mucha, Executive Director - Perry-Jackson CAC (Rural)  
                   Dr. Bonita Carr, Executive Director – CASA of Cook County (Urban)  
                   Char Rivette, Executive Director – Chicago CAC (Urban)  
                   Carrie Flanigan, Executive Director – Lake County (Suburban)  
                   Suzanne Skala, Executive Director – DuPage County (Suburban)  
                   Julia Livingston, Director – Macon County (Rural)  
                   Marc Staley, Deputy Directory – Governor’s Office of Management & Budget  
                   Royce Kirkpatrick – DCFS Division of Budget and Finance  
                   John Carroll – Office of Illinois Attorney General  
                   Kelly Pasholk, Associate General Counsel – IL Criminal Justice Information Authority  
                   Mari Christopherson, Executive Director – Illinois CASA  
                   Kim Mangiaracino, Executive Director – Illinois CAC

## Appropriated \$ Amounts

### CAC Funds

- a. FY23 \$2.0 million GRF
  - b. FY23 \$1.5 million CSF
  - c. FY23 \$1.8 million Foster Care
  - d. FY23 \$3.0 million ARPA Funds
- Total:** \$8.3 million

### CASA Funds

- a. FY23 \$2.0 million GRF Cook County CASA
  - b. FY23 \$54,476K ARPA Funds Cook County CASA
- Total:** \$2.05 million for Cook County CASA
- c. FY23 \$4.67 million CSF for IL CASA

\*\*\*\*ARPA are one-time funds and not available in FY24\*\*\*\*

## Overview/Breakdown of Funding

### CAC

- All accredited CACs and developing get DCFS funding.
- Each CAC has their own contract with DCFS.
- There is no funding formula, it's based on historical utilization and communication between DCFS and individual agency.
- With increase funding/services, there is an increase of children seen.
- Implementing a funding formula, it would give some CAC a loss and it would give some CAC a gain

#### Lake County CAC

- a. \$1.0 million total funding
- b. 45% county
- c. 10% special events fundraising
- d. 38% grants

#### Perry Jackson CAC

- a. \$280k total funding
- b. 80% grants
- c. 4% county mental health grant
- d. 16% fundraising

#### Chicago CAC

- a. \$8.0 million total funding
- b. 30% federal funding
- c. 16% City of Chicago
- d. 21% DCFS
- e. 1% County

## Illinois CASA

- All CASAs can service youth up to the age of 21.
- CASA programs funding is based just on the number of children assigned to their program.
- One child or sibling group is assigned to one volunteer.
- CASA program needs to be supervised by the Illinois Association CASA.

### Macon County CASA

- a. \$110k total funding
- b. \$86k state funding
- c. Grants – federal, state and local

### DuPage CASA

- a. \$130k total funding
- b. \$55k state funding
- c. 30% special events fundraising
- d. 30% donations

## Cook County CASA

- In FY21 Cook County had their own separate line item in the state budget of \$2 million.
- Funding from IL CASA did not address disparity and unique needs of urban CASA program in Cook County.
- Trains over 130 volunteers annually. Been able to add more training classes because of funding. 261 volunteers over past 2 years.
- Creating Independent Transition for Youth (C.I.T.Y.) Program Cook County CASA is modeled after National CASA and would require additional funding.

Secured 3 major partnerships with this program.

1. CTA – Jobs for 50 foster youth as intern, \$15 hrly and college credit
2. Chicago Heartland Alliance & Chicago Housing Authority – Secure housing
3. Cook County Healthcare System – Address mental health with our youth

### Cook County CASA

- a. \$1.8 million FY 23 budget total
- b. \$1.0 million state funding
- c. \$800k from fundraising and grants

## Recommendations

### Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS)

DCFS continue to formally meet with the CAC network representatives in a work group setting to develop a more standardized funding formula for the statewide network. Funding formula should be finalized prior to FY24 so that progress towards achieving the funding formula can be quantitatively measured against the established goal.

### Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) – 31 Programs

1. Equitable funding based on the number of children assigned by the court to CASA in each service area. This number does not include services beyond the core CASA model of providing highly trained citizen volunteers to advocate on behalf of children and families involved in abuse and/or neglect case proceedings.

*The cost per child in Illinois according to the National CASA/GAL annual survey of Local Programs is \$1,478.00. 9582 youth were assigned to CASA programs in FY22. Total cost:  $\$1,478 \times 9582 = \mathbf{\$14,162,196.00}$ . The total number of eligible children in counties where CASA currently operates is 17,602. If eligible child population is considered, the total cost of providing best interest advocacy is  $\$1478.00 \times 17,602 = \mathbf{\$26,015,756}$*

2. The current practice of a separate appropriation for the Cook County program results in funding disparities for CASA programs funded through the Illinois CASA Association's line item administered by DCFS. As of November 30, 2022 (latest DCFS data) CASA of the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit (Peoria, Tazewell, Stark) is assigned to 602 youth and serves 24% of youth eligible. This program receives \$241,665.00 in state funding. CASA of Southwestern Illinois is assigned to 975 children and receives \$359,000. CASA of Cook County serves 608 children and receives \$ 2 million. The cost per child calculation for programs that are a part of the Illinois CASA line item is \$765.00, and the cost per child of state funds for CASA of Cook County is \$3311.00.

The Juvenile Court Act requires: "in counties of populations over 3,000,000" that the guardian ad litem must be an attorney. Legal representation is not required in any other Illinois county, making the role of the CASA as the eyes and ears of the court vitally important where legal representation is not mandated by statute

3. Illinois CASA requests 50% of cost of currently assigned youth, \$7,081,098.00 and requests a second appropriation of up to \$2 million for capacity building for existing CASA programs and new program development. This funding would be distributed via a competitive grant process scored

by a team from DCFS, Illinois Office of the Courts, ICJIA, Illinois CASA, and stakeholders with lived experience including foster parents, former youth in care and their family members.

4. The funding for core best interest advocacy services would consist of 4 parts: base award + multi-county allocation + number of children assigned to program + number of volunteers assigned to program. The award data will be based on the first 3 quarters of the current fiscal year: 7/1 through 4/30.
  - *Tiered Base Allocation based on size of program: \$25,000 under 100 children, \$50,000.00 over 100 children*
  - *Multi-County: \$15,000 per additional service area*
  - *75% of remaining allocation based on number of children assigned to program*
  - *25% of remaining allocation based on number of volunteers actively assigned to a case*
5. Illinois CASA recommends that all CASA programs are awarded funding based on the same criterion and that the State Office is the fiscal agent (lead entity) for all 31 CASA programs. We further recommend that Illinois CASA is funded adequately to ensure both fiscal and programmatic quality assurance, adherence to the requirements of the program plan, continuing education and training for CASA/GALs, future development of CASA in underserved areas and as the administrative and training lead for the network.
6. Pre-payment and subsequent timely payment is essential to capacity building for CASA and all other providers, including the CACI. The delay in payments adversely affects Illinois youth and families. Illinois.
7. We recommend that DCFS, Illinois Office of the Courts, LE representatives and a representative from the Governor's office meet at least bi-annually to discuss progress, analyze needs, share data, and strategize on increasing legal representation for all youth in care in Illinois for both best interest and client directed advocacy.



### Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Cook County

CASA of Cook County is an independent 501C 3 and therefore, shall remain independent from the IL CASA Association for funding. The unique needs and urgency to build capacity has put CASA of Cook County and the Child Protective Courts, in a position to mainly assign Cook County to the most severe cases. As an urban program our children and families face the longest permanency period. Some of the factors that attribute to this permanency time is lack of access to mandated and vital mental health services, long wait list for housing vouchers, access points to job training or trade programs, and childcare services, as well as many other systemic issues shows that the greatest need for gaps in service for CASA advocacy must be prioritized as a provider of direct services for foster children and youth in care in Chicago and Cook County. CASA of Cook County recognizes that older youth in care faces many obstacles on their path to independence. Obstacles faced by youth in care requires specialized support, training, and advocacy through Cook's Creating Independent Transitions for Youth (C.I.T.Y) program. Cook County is committed to removing obstacles for youth in care and replacing them with options to assist youth to successfully transition out of the child welfare system. Statistics show that older youth are a vulnerable population who are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors that could have lasting consequences.

1. CASA of Cook County recommends that prioritization of addressing disparity of CASA advocacy for children/youth in Chicago and Cook County remains a focus. This prioritization will allow CASA of Cook County to continue to identify and advocate for support of whole families that are at high risk of re-abuse and neglect. It will also enable families in Chicago and Cook County to receive additional services to help prepare for safe reunification. CASA of Cook County with continued funding support will continue to build our infrastructure to better support and advocate for family preservation, by identifying support services, crisis intervention, parenting classes, referrals and grant assistance for trade/career programs, day care referrals and support groups for parents.
2. CASA of Cook County recommends that funding is consistent to allow provisions of innovative, culturally relevant programming, with wrap around services to assist with progress for older youth in housing stability, education attainment, financial responsibility, mental and physical health, and pathways to future success through higher education, trade schools or employment.

### Children Advocacy Center (CAC)

On behalf of the 41 Children's Advocacy Centers that cover all 102 counties of Illinois, we make the following recommendations:

1. Equitable funding should be based on the number of children who are eligible for CAC services in each county/service area. According to data received from DCFS, .67% of children in Illinois have reported eligible allegations of sexual and physical abuse that qualify for an Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) response. (This number does not include cases that are not DCFS eligible and that are law enforcement only).

*Illinois child population 2,761,984 x .67%=18,505 x estimated average cost of MDT response \$2,902 per child (attached finding from National Child Advocacy Center Cost Analysis) = \$53,702,359*

At this time, we ask this state appropriation to directly allocate a minimum of 50% of the total cost= \$26,851,180 as we understand the limitations of the state budget as well as individual CACs to build and grow capacity. We recommend that this calculation and percentage be revisited on an annual basis to assess needs, sustainability and growth of individual CACs as well as the network.

2. The funding formula recommended consists of four parts: base award + multi-county allocation + satellite center + county per capita allocation
  - a. All centers receive a base award, which accounts for % of the pass-through funding
  - b. Centers serving multiple counties without a satellite receive funding with a maximum of 5 additional counties.
  - c. The remaining funds allocated are distributed based on the state demographer's child population estimates for each county in the center's official services area.
  - d. A per capita figure is calculated by dividing the amount of funding available by the total population officially served by Active centers.
  - e. Awards losses are capped at 5% of center's prior year award.
3. We recommend that there is an acknowledgement of the Fees and Fines legislation **Public Act 100-0987** that resulted in an overall loss of \$1,352,456 per year to Illinois CACs.
4. We recommend that Children's Advocacy Centers of Illinois becomes the fiscal agent for the CACs for state funding (as VOCA funds are through ICJIA). We further recommend that Children's Advocacy Centers of Illinois is funded adequately to ensure quality control of current CACs, future development of CACs in underserved areas, and as a resource in training of the MDT model and individual disciplines. Recommendation is for 12% of total allocation to the CACI.

5. Pre-payment of grant funding should be considered to reduce delays of payment which adversely affect the functions of the individual CACs and CACI which can adversely affect the services that children and their families receive.
6. We recommend that DCFS, CACI, LE representatives, and a representative from the Governor's office meet regularly (quarterly/annually) to share data and assess progress on closing the gap of children who are eligible to receive services but are not being referred. In FY 22, 12,343 children received an MDT response, a minimum of 18, 551 were eligible (per DCFS), leaving at least a 6,208 child gap. By not continuously acknowledging this gap, we are failing children who deserve to receive the justice and healing services of the CAC and MDT response. *Please note, these are only DCFS eligible cases. This does not include law enforcement only cases that do not meet DCFS eligibility of (family member, household member, or person of authority). Law enforcement only cases make up approximately 20% of all CAC cases.*
7. We recommend that the State of Illinois considers annually monitoring VOCA funding due to the volatility of this fund and supplementing when the fund is reduced.

#### **Lake County Children's Advocacy Center (CAC)**

1. The CACI should oversee all the allocated State funding. Similar to ICASA and ICADV this allows for the entity who is well versed in the required protocols and policies to adequately delegate the funding. The CACI meets with Directors monthly and is very familiar with needs and National Children's Alliance requirements. They hold the State centers accountable and would be the best fiscal agent. In addition, they are accessible to the members. Most importantly, as we have seen with VOCA funding, they would get the funding to the Centers in a timely fashion and be able to address the funding needs moving forward. I would recommend that additional funding be given to them to support this with staff.
2. Contracts with fiscal agent should be more than 1 year. I would recommend 2-year contracts, at a minimum. Currently contracts are not received in timely fashion and the cycle of contract renewal is timely. It would also assure that positions would not have to worry year to year about funding loss. Hiring staff has been an issue when they worry that they will only have their jobs for a year.
3. DCFS should be required to have a CAC liaison within their agency. One person who is responsible for understanding and working with all the CAC's in the State. The liaison should know and understand the NCA requirements of the Centers and be well versed in how the systems work together. In addition, one point of contact for all concerns and issues CAC related. Currently, we all have different contacts and the message to each of the centers is different. The rules for each agency vary and it leads to great confusion amongst the Directors. We saw this firsthand with ARPA funding and in day-to-day operations.

4. Payment schedules should be outlined. Specific months the centers will receive the checks should be clear. I would recommend 2 times a year to receive the funds. Currently, we have no consistency and centers are relying on loans to pay staff until a check comes. This would be extremely helpful for strategic planning with fundraising and job procurement.
5. DCFS should have requirements to make all CAC's aware of eligible CAC cases. This is extremely helpful to capture what we are missing and what needs to be addressed moving forward. We are missing cases and the only way to know is if DCFS informs us. This should also be true for CAC referral cases that the hotline will not take but they send to us for assistance. We should be seen as a partner and recognized in the Multi-Disciplinary Team.
6. I would recommend an MOU with the DCFS liaison every year. This would be in addition to any funding contract. It should outline the expectations of each agency moving forward and make clear the expectations of DCFS and the CACs. All CAC/MOU's should be the same and each MOU should outline points of contact.
7. Grace period for growth if funding is increased.