



CASA of Franklin & Hamilton Counties  
903 W. Washington Street, Suite 3  
Benton, IL 62812  
Casafranklincounty.org

June 28, 2024

County Board Chairman Miller and County Board,

CASA of Franklin & Hamilton Counties was able to advocate for over 160 youth in Franklin County Juvenile Court from July 2023-June 2024. Our program is making direct impacts in our community with youth to ensure their safety, wellbeing, and to give them a sense of normalcy. CASA helps children of every race, social class, and upbringing. CASA is changing children's lives and having a direct impact on those who are our future. We are working to break cycles of abuse and addiction with every child's life we serve.

We are able to provide this service because of fundraising, donations, grants, and fees received from our jurisdiction. Last year we received \$10,000 from our county's opioid fund. This funding has been critical to allow us to advocate for abused and neglected children in our county who are in desperate need. We are asking for the Franklin County Board to partner with us again and provide financial support for children who are victims of abuse and neglect in this community. We respectfully request \$10,000 from the Opioid Funding Settlement. This is less than \$80 for each child to whom we provide services.

If I can answer any questions or provide any additional information, please don't hesitate to reach out. I can be reached at (618) 438-0608 or via email at [mariah@casafranklincounty.org](mailto:mariah@casafranklincounty.org). Thank you for your time and attention and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mariah Hayes'.

Mariah Hayes  
Executive Director



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Benton, IL 62812  
618-438-0608  
Website: [casafranklincounty.org](http://casafranklincounty.org)

Each year in Franklin County Juvenile Court, there are over 130 children/youth in the system who are victims of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or neglect because of their parents or guardians. Many of these youths become involved in the court due to their parents' history with substance abuse as opioids and/or methamphetamine addiction. Over the last few years, CASA has witnessed and documented a direct correlation between the increase in substance abuse and victimization of our most vulnerable populations, children from birth to eighteen years old. It is an epidemic in our communities.

In the last 24 years, CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) has provided an invaluable service to youth who have experienced abuse and neglect due to their parents or guardians. We have advocated for youth by providing trained community volunteers who are court appointed to the youth. They advocate for the youths' best interest, needed services, permanency, and is a catalyst for youth to have some normalcy while in foster care. CASA is a nonprofit organization who depends on grants, fundraising and community support to advocate for our youth.

We continue to work with the parents who have substance abuse issues and the families. We encourage and support the return home of youth when parents correct the conditions which bring the youth into care. This must be a safe and secure placement and be in the best interest of the youth to be returned home. An average of 40% of our youth have been reunified with parents.

CASA Program has provided the following services:

Youth:

- Advocacy in the court for youths' best interest, permanency in a timely manner (within 2 years), and safe placement. We have advocated for guardianship to help youth move quicker out of the system and remain with family when parents do not correct conditions.
- Advocacy and facilitation of trauma counseling due to the dynamics youth have witnessed. This may include: witnessing parents intoxication and inability to parent, parents failure to protect and youth is victimized, youth having substances in their system either through birth or ingestion, witnessing or trying to stop domestic violence between parents or paramour and many more. The overall trauma of being removed from home, family, school, friends, pets and belongings.
- Medical advocacy for youth who have been substance exposed or overall health care. Many of our youth do not have doctor visits and have never been to the dentist.
- Developmental advocacy for youth who have been substance exposed. Youth many times have delays and need extra therapy due to substance exposure.
- Educational advocacy due to the environment and stressors youth have been removed from. This may include: substance exposure, lack of schooling due to parents inability to have youth attend. Overall struggle with learning environment and behaviors.
- Direct services of clothing, bedding, and needed hygiene supplies. Many youths come into care with nothing. We bought socks, bras, underwear and clothing for youth.
- Youth who are involved in foster care can attend our supervised visitation room and have safe, secure, family friendly place to visit with parents.

Parents:

- Provided encouragement and support to attend outpatient or inpatient treatment.





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- Provided and facilitated parents attending inpatient treatments out of the area.
- Meet with parents to discuss plans for substance abuse treatment. We have met parents while incarcerated, in their homes, and out in the community. Our CASA office is available for parents to reach out to whenever there is an issue, and we will assist with referrals needed.
- Worked with Franklin Co Housing for parents to move into affordable housing. Many of our parents will be homeless at some point during the court case.
- Provided beds, household items, and worked with parents on agencies to assist with resources.
- Attend our secure visitation room to visit with their children free of charge.

#### Families:

- When youth are placed with families, we will work closely with the family to assist the youth and family. We have numerous conversations, support, and encourage families while raising the youth in their care. Our youth have high needs due to the trauma they have experienced and endured.
- Assisted food and supplemental support to grandparents raising grandkids who are on fixed incomes. Many of our youth are placed with family and especially grandparents.
- We provide resources and even training we have attended which may assist families who have members currently struggling with substances.
- Family members, where the children are not placed can visit in our visitation room free of charge.
- Siblings who are not placed together can visit in our visitation room. Many youths' are not placed with siblings.

#### Advocates:

- Attended trainings on substance issues in the community, addiction, and the roadblocks for our families.
- Attended and certified in administering Narcan.
- Supported, supervised and assisted with working with families by CASA Supervisor and Executive Director who have numerous years of experience working with families which have substance abuse.

#### Cases outside of CASA Court Appointment:

- Our visitation room can be used by any youth who is currently in DCFS care free of charge to have a secure, safe, and family friendly environment to visit.
- Many of our families who have Substance Abuse Issues and are in family court either through divorce or Orders of Protection have been court ordered to have supervised visits in the CASA Visitation Room. These are supervised by trained supervisors which CASA supplies and an hourly fee is charged for this service.

More information on about CASA please visit or website at [www.casafranklincounty.org](http://www.casafranklincounty.org) or contact Mariah Hayes, Executive Director at [Mariah@casafranklincounty.org](mailto:Mariah@casafranklincounty.org)