

2017 Annual Report



CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™

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Our Affiliations:

Child Advocates of Fort Bend partners with 37 agencies and organizations and is accredited with Texas CASA™, National CASA™, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc. and the National Children's Alliance®.



2017



heralded the 26th Anniversary of Child Advocates of Fort Bend serving abused and neglected children in Fort Bend County.

For these children, we have provided a voice, healed the hurt and broken the cycle for 15,000 children – babies born to drug-addicted mothers, young children removed from their homes by parents who physically hurt or severely neglected them, and teenagers who were sexually abused by someone they trusted. In 2017, we reached 20% more children and families from the prior year. We expanded our services, added staff and resources, piloted new initiatives and brought awareness of child abuse and neglect to all segments of our community – children, teachers, school administrators, parents, health care professionals and others who should be protecting our children. Over more than a quarter-century, we have heard story after story of tragedy and heartbreak. But most importantly, through the work of a dedicated multi-disciplinary team of volunteers, staff, partners and donors, we have built a comprehensive agency and a coordinated public-private response to the growing number of children who need our help. In doing so, we have turned heartbreak into triumph and resiliency. Let me share with you how we are doing just that.

Provide a Voice

Volunteers form the core of service delivery in our CASA Program and leverage limited staff and financial resources. We were honored in October as the only program in the state of Texas that matches 100% of children with a CASA Volunteer! Statewide, only about half of children in foster care have the support and advocacy of a CASA – and our outcomes demonstrate how life changing this is for children. We are so pleased that our community has repeatedly stepped up to ensure that no child falls through the cracks.

In year two of our Collaborative Family Engagement pilot, we connected 33 children to family members previously unknown to them to restore their sense of identify and belonging, an increase of 94%!

In our Children's Advocacy Center, we were challenged by a doubling in the number of state reports of child abuse that came into our office. We were forced to add a second full-time coordinator as part of our Multi-Disciplinary Team Enhancement Response (MER) to handle this increased load which in turn impacted all other downstream services – forensic interviews (+21%), therapy clients (+22%), medicals (+8%), case management (+14%) and criminal court advocacy (+54%). More recently, we have been further impacted by recent legislation that requires the interviewing of all child victims to be conducted by an accredited CAC, in our case, Child Advocates of Fort Bend. The result has been an increase in forensic interviews of 95% just in the past few months. We anticipate this trend to continue with even further increases in the demand for all services.

Heal the Hurt

Abuse impacts children in profound ways. 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys has been sexually abused by the age of 18 years old. And 96% of these children are abused by someone they know and trust – a father, a sibling, a teacher, a coach or family friend. The trauma that results can be debilitating and have long term effects, unless children receive trauma-informed, evidence-based therapy as quickly as possible. Child Advocates of Fort Bend operates the largest therapy program for children in the county. We provide a range of specialized therapies and mental health methodologies, each customized for the child's age and treatment plan. In 2017, we expanded our Parent Child Interaction Therapy to guide parents with positive parenting skills for children with severe antisocial behaviors as a result of their trauma. We launched training for staff and volunteers in Trauma Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) so that all child welfare providers would speak a common language and understand the impacts of trauma on children's emotions, mental health and behaviors. We added 4 new therapy dogs for a total of 10 furry friends to comfort children while they wait for treatment. And we enhanced our staff by hiring 2 additional therapists. As we look toward the future, we will be adding evening therapy for greater accessibility and convenience for our children and families.

Break the Cycle

Children who age out of foster care at 18 years old after spending much of their lives in the system often experience homelessness, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, lack of a high school or college degree, and little to no job skills. To counteract these negative outcomes, we expanded our WINGS Lifeskills and college preparation workshops to 7-weeks throughout the summer, with specialized tracks by academic and career interests. This was an overwhelming success with more youth participating and a higher level of engagement. And we celebrated the graduations of two former foster youth from college, with one currently in law school! For many of our children, National Adoption Day is a day of celebration as they break the cycle of abuse by finding their "forever homes." This year, we expanded our celebration at the courthouse with an "Over The Rainbow" themed day of games, food and photos of these happy new families. We also heightened our focus on measuring the impact of our programs and services. We developed a Logic Model in our CASA Program, implemented a feedback loop survey in our CAC and received a very strong Net Promoter Score of 95 from our therapy clients.

Future Outlook

As the demand for services grows by double digits, we are increasingly challenged to reach every child. We undertook an extensive study in 2017 to understand the resources we will need going forward. We will now turn our attention to developing a Blueprint For Growth for the next decade with expanded services, staff, physical plant and resources. Our commitment is that we do everything in our power to never turn a child away. Thank you for your continuing support for our mission.

For the Children's Sake,

Ruthanne Mefford
CEO

The number of children and families served by our Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) increased **25% in 2017 and has increased **58%** in the last five years.**



In 2017, we saw year-over-year increases in growth.

The urgent increase in need for CAFB services is attributable to a variety of factors including the impact from Hurricane Harvey on children and families, recent legislation requiring that CAFB staff are now tasked with reviewing reports of child abuse and interviewing all children who disclose sexual or severe physical abuse, lack of parenting skills by young parents, substance abuse and mental illness. The county's population growth and significant challenges in Texas's child welfare system mean that, now more than ever, CAFB is needed to fill service gaps and meet its purpose to ensure that every abused and neglected child receives essential services. In the last few years alone, the increase in human trafficking and sexual exploitation of vulnerable children online has contributed to other new, unique challenges. CAFB has formed additional partnerships, adapted its service approaches and added specialized staff. All of these factors underscore the vital purpose of CAFB. They demonstrate the continued need for a comprehensive, community-driven response to child abuse in order to stay ahead of the many challenging circumstances brought about by current events and changing social needs. **As the demand for services grows by double digits, we are increasingly challenged to reach every child.**

growing demand

8% increase in medical exams/sexual assault exams.

13% increase in total children served.

20% increase in total children and families served by both of our programs.

21% increase in forensic interviews.

25% increase in children and families served in CAC.

47% increase in intakes of abuse reviewed.

63% increase in intakes meeting criteria to receive services at the CAC.

76% increase in children receiving bilingual services.





our numbers

66 volunteers were trained in 2017; **1,137** since 1991. **102** Voices For Children tours and child abuse presentations. **286** foster children had a CASA volunteer (100%). **299** children and family members received therapy to help them heal. **414** children received criminal court advocacy services. **644** bilingual families were served. **924** children received forensic interviews. **2,110** children and families were served in 2017. **3,206** therapy sessions were provided free of charge. **50,130** miles were traveled by volunteers.

15,000+

children since 1991



our successes

We were recognized in October 2017 as the only program in Texas to serve 100% of children in foster care with a CASA Volunteer.

1st Collaborative Family Engagement Coach hired. 2nd youth from our WINGS Program graduated from college. 18 partner agencies showed their commitment to the CAC model by re-signing Memorandums of Understanding. 43 children who were victims of sexual abuse graduated from therapy. 70 children in Austin and Waller Counties received interviews as we expanded to these counties. 85 children in foster care were adopted and found their “forever homes.” 78% of children who disclosed sexual abuse received sexual assault exams. 4,333 reports of child abuse were reviewed. Web and social media presence continued to grow with website traffic increasing 800% and media circulation climbing to 21.5 million. 100% of children requiring forensic interviews received this much needed service AND 100% of children in foster care have a CASA volunteer.

All services provided to children and families are free thanks to the generosity of our donors and community support



Child Abuse affects all ethnicities, neighborhoods and income levels.

Diversity of children served in 2017

	CASA Program	Children's Advocacy Center
African American	32%	30%
Hispanic	38%	37%
Caucasian	16%	25%
Bi-racial/Other	12%	5%
Asian	2%	3%

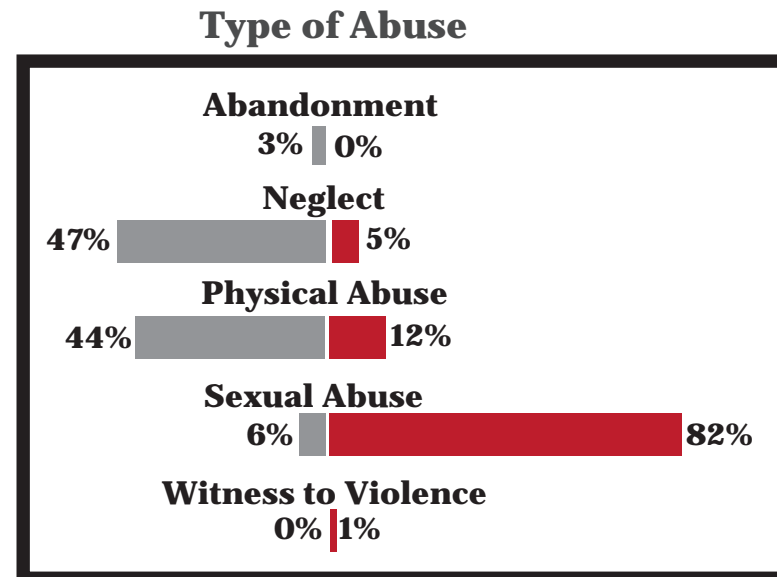
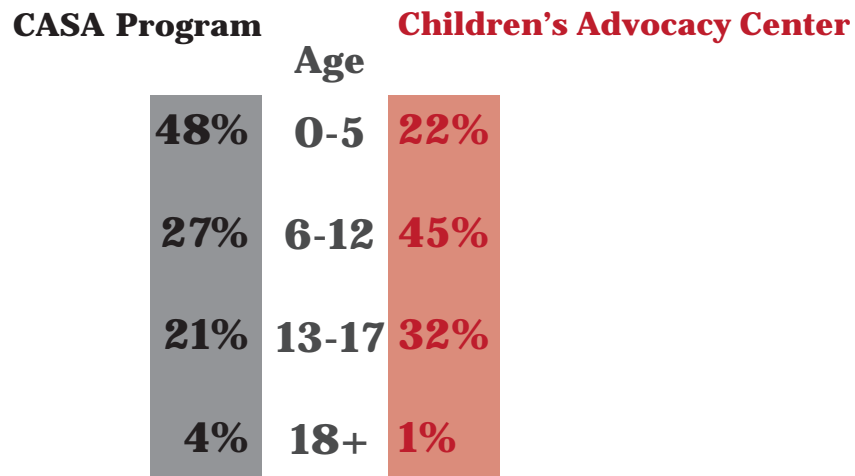


Every child, every effort, every service.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend operates the largest therapy program for children in the county with a range of trauma-informed, evidence-based methodologies, each customized to the child’s age and treatment plan. Staffed with nine licensed therapists, many of whom are bilingual, we provided 3,026 therapy sessions in 2017 for children and caregivers including trauma focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TFCBT), play therapy, parent child interaction therapy (PCIT) and animal therapy. For children in foster care, we offer age-specific programs and specialized training to advocates that incorporate strategies to help the children achieve cognitively, educationally, behaviorally and gain healthy life skills.

In 2017, we developed a Logic Model in our CASA program which connects our inputs and activities to the impact these are having for our children. In our CAC, we were selected to participate in a breakthrough research project administered by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors with Episcopal Health Foundation as our sponsor. Called Listen for Good, we have implemented ongoing surveys with our therapy clients to better understand their needs and wants. We were delighted that they scored us extremely favorably compared to providers nationally in our Mental Health peer group (Net Promoter Score of 95 compared to 69). We also heard that clients were interested in expanded services and greater accessibility. We will demonstrate that we listened to their feedback and plan to open evening hours in 2018.

Ages and types of abuse



Left untreated, child abuse costs society over \$124 billion annually and has an immediate and long-term impact.

Abused children are at high-risk of long-term physical and mental health issues, substance abuse, dropping out of school, joblessness, homelessness, incarceration and human trafficking. CAFB addresses childhood trauma immediately so children have the best chances to recover and lead healthy, productive lives.

CAFB creates positive outcomes for abused children and transforms lives. Babies born to drug addicted mothers never had the chance to bond with someone. CASA helped them form emotional connections and reach developmental milestones. A teen had no one to turn to while failing school and was facing homelessness upon aging out of foster care. CASA provided an advocate and guidance for him. A young girl was cutting herself and contemplated suicide, not realizing that what her father did to her was not her fault. The CAC provided therapy to heal her hurt and build resiliency to regain her life. There are thousands of stories like these, and for each one, CAFB has been there to provide healing and hope.

Prior to CAFB, child victims of abuse were labeled as “problem children,” falling through the cracks of many systems. Since it is estimated that only 1 in 10 children come forward to disclose sexual abuse, as many as 90% of children are still in desperate need of help.



\$3.6 Million annual budget in 2017 providing direct services to children and families who are victims of abuse.

Revenue Sources

General Donations **14%**

Special Events **15%**

Foundation Grants **35%**

Government Grants **36%**

Child Advocates of Fort Bend is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization.

Our 990 is available at www.cafb.org.
Copies of our audited financials and annual budget are available upon request.

Today and looking forward.

In 2017, we expanded our Parent Child Interaction Therapy, we launched training for staff and volunteers in Trauma Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®) so that all child welfare providers would speak a common language and understand the impacts of trauma on children's emotions, mental health and behaviors. And we enhanced our staff by hiring 2 additional therapists and a Collaborative Family Engagement Coach. We hope to add evening therapy hours for greater accessibility and convenience to our children and families in 2018.

We undertook an extensive study to understand the resources and capacity demands we will need going forward. We will now turn our attention to developing a Blueprint For Growth for the next decade with expanded services, staff and resources.

We are committed to doing everything in our power so that we never have to turn a child away.

2017 Exceptional Donors to our operating budget

\$50,000 - \$140,000

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Maria (15), Denise (13) and David (10) shyly opened the door to our Children's Advocacy Center on a hot, humid summer day. For the next two hours, the children told their stories of how their stepfather had been sexually assaulting them for the past 7 years. They talked about how scared they were to say anything for fear that they would be killed, a repeated threat.

While they spoke to a forensic interviewer, our partners in law enforcement, Children's Protective Services and the District Attorney's Office viewed the interview via closed circuit television in another room. Because of this coordination, the children's stepfather was arrested immediately.

Over the next several years, the children received weekly therapy from our Licensed Therapists, their family was prepared for the trial by our Criminal Court Advocate and they were referred for free services

and resources available to victims of crime from our Children's Services Coordinator. Today, the stepfather is incarcerated, the children are thriving, doing well in school and able to move beyond their trauma.

Child Abuse hurts. It hurts the vulnerable children who are victims. It hurts families by exposing "secrets" and threatening the family structure. And it hurts our community by increasing the need for services, costing us money and increasing crime.

And that is where you come in.

And that is where you come in. As people who care deeply about our children and making a community a wonderful place for **every** child. Your support and generosity is changing lives of children like Maria, Denise and David **every** day. You are helping them to heal and move forward so that they can break the cycle and become healthy, productive adults.

Child Abuse hurts.

It hurts the vulnerable children who are victims. It hurts families by exposing "secrets" and threatening the family structure. And it hurts our community by increasing the need for services, costing us money and increasing crime.

In 2017, we were introduced to the **Red Sand Project**, the brainchild of Molly Gochman, a Texas born, conceptual artist and activist based in New York City. Red Sand Project uses sidewalk interventions to create opportunities for people to question, to connect and to take action against vulnerabilities that can lead to human trafficking and exploitation.

To recognize the overlooked, Gochman invites you to take the time to find and fill a sidewalk crack with red sand and to then document your sidewalk transformation on social media using #RedSandProject. Photos in our 2017 Annual Report were taken during a sidewalk intervention with a group of youth at our building.

Human trafficking is a growing problem. In fact, according to a groundbreaking study by the Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (IDVSA) at The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work, there are more than 300,000 victims of human trafficking in Texas, including almost 79,000 minors and youth victims of sex trafficking and nearly 234,000 adult victims of labor trafficking. Vulnerable populations – children in foster care, runaways, refugees, girls *and* boys – are most at risk of being enslaved, spending their lives being exploited for the profit of others. **Children in foster care are particularly at risk.**

Trafficking is only one of several factors that has led to the growing need for the services offered by Child Advocates of Fort Bend.

Red is the color of extremes and signifies danger. As the demand for our services grows by double digits, we are increasingly challenged to reach every child and we are in danger of being unable to provide services for all of the children who need them. We cannot allow even one child to fall through the cracks. We thank you for your support in 2017 and ask for your continued support as we work to Provide a Voice, Heal the Hurt and Break the Cycle of Abuse for thousands more children in Fort Bend County.

For more about Red Sand Project go to www.redsand.org.



CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™

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