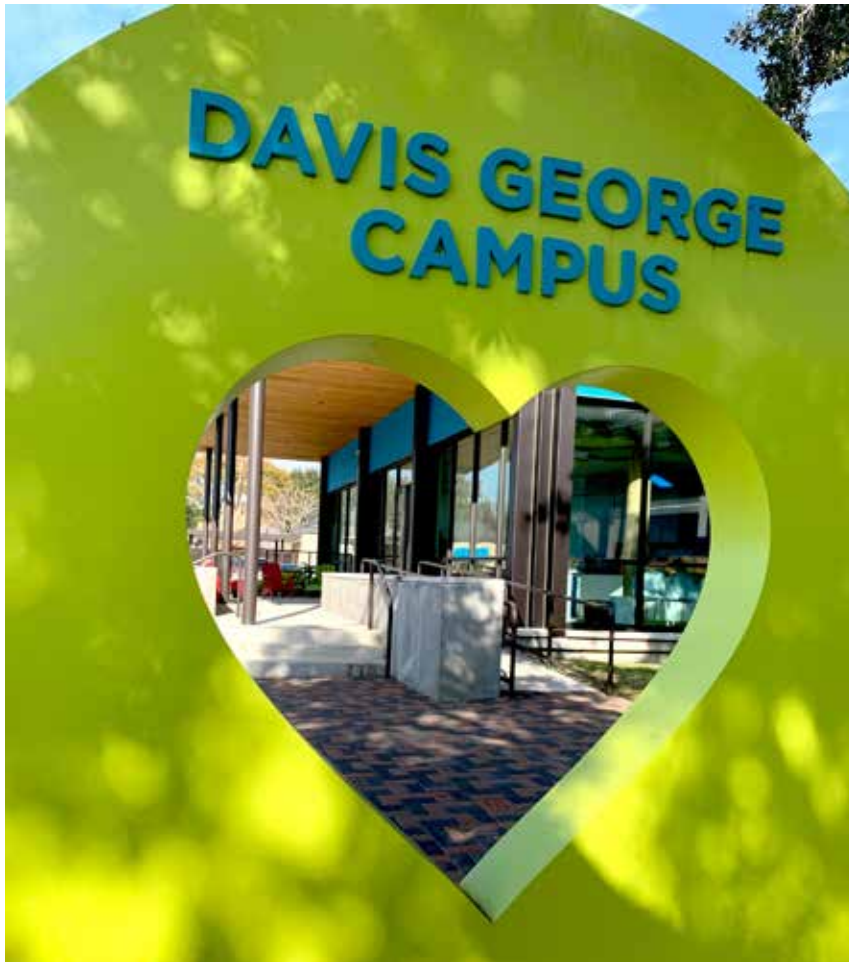


# 2021 Annual Report



CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™



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**Volunteer Council:**

Deann Rueff **CHAIR**, Donna Anderson, Nancy Dale, Kathy Eyring, Carrie Fix, Alexis Jackson, Rhonda Kuykendall, Julia Saller, Shirley Thornton, Sheri Walters

**FRIENDS Council:**

Sue Lockwood **PRESIDENT**, Lynn Halford, Alexis Jackson, Peggy Jackson, Laura Leatherwood, Joyce Levine, Judy Maddison, Lisa Moore, Pat Somers

**Our Affiliations:**

Child Advocates of Fort Bend partners with 40+ agencies and organizations and is accredited with Texas CASA™, National CASA™, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc. and the National Children's Alliance®.





Friends of Child Advocates of Fort Bend,

We are excited to bring you our 2021 Annual Report. As you know, the past year was challenging for all of us but particularly for children who have been abused and neglected. With schools continuing to be shuttered for most of the year due to the pandemic, children were isolated in their homes away from the watchful eyes of teachers and healthcare professionals, the two primary reporters of child abuse. When schools did start to reopen, the reports of abuse skyrocketed. And it wasn't just a higher incidence of abuse and neglect but more severe and for longer duration. This held true for all types of abuse – sexual, physical, neglect and emotional. At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, we rose to the challenge and increased our services by **20%** to meet the increased demand. We served more children and families in 2021 than ever before – a whopping **4,230**. Our new David George Campus which we completed in 2020 proved to be perfectly suited for the influx of children. Our new Children's Advocacy Center with twice the number of forensic interview rooms, an expanded therapy suite and spacious family meeting rooms provided safe, healing spaces to support the children's journey to recovery. In our CASA program, we pivoted our advocacy work and utilized hybrid and remote services as well as in-person to provide an array of safe options for our children. With children spending more time on computers, tablets and smartphones, social media and online solicitation of children surged. We responded by amplifying our prevention work and activated our Community Engagement Team to increase outreach to children across the community with safety messaging, tools to protect from abuse, and early intervention steps for reporting.

With a deep understanding of the impact of trauma on our children with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), we embedded evidence-based, trauma-informed practices throughout all our services and programs. Our staff is now trained in Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) and other trauma-based therapeutic methodologies so that we focus on connecting, empowering and correcting the behaviors that result from the trauma of childhood abuse and neglect. Recognizing the "whole child" and that abuse and recovery occurs within the context of the child's environment and family, we expanded our clinical family advocacy for sexually abused victims and identified and engaged responsible family members in children's networks of support for our children in foster care through Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE).

We could not do this work without the many caring, generous community members whose volunteer and financial support allowed us to continue our life-saving services. Thank you to the hundreds of donors, local and regional foundations, and thousands of volunteers who stood hand in hand with our staff to ensure that no child fell through the cracks. We are deeply grateful to you for all you do and for your commitment to end the cycle of abuse and neglect.

For the Children's Sake,

**Ruthanne Mefford**  
**CEO**



**20,500+**  
**children since 1991**

We have a **zero tolerance policy** for child abuse.

*“Child Advocates of Fort Bend is very important to me because they break the cycle of abuse for these children. [sic]. They have a place to go. They have a voice. They get the help they need so they don’t grow up later to do it themselves. It changes not only their life, it changes their future – it changes their family’s future.”*

**-TRACY WALKER,** VOLUNTEER and DONOR



# 4,230

## Total children and families served in 2021.

CAFB operates its **Children's Advocacy Center (CAC)** with a range of evidence-based methodologies, each customized to the child's age and treatment plan. Our team of professionals, social workers and therapists utilize trauma-focused treatments to heal these very hurt children. Children and family members receive an array of services including forensic interviews, victim and family advocacy, medical referrals, therapy/mental health services, case coordination and criminal court advocacy.

CAFB also operates its **Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)** program to advocate for the "best interests" of children who have been removed from their homes and placed in the foster care system. Started by a judge and now a national movement with nearly 1,000 CASA programs nationwide, it is widely heralded as an effective public/private partnership to ensure the welfare of children in foster care. CASA staff train and utilize community volunteers called CASA Advocates. Supervised by a staff of professionals, the CASA Advocates meet with the children regularly, with their teachers, doctors, foster and family of origin and others in the child's life to assess their medical, educational, physical and emotional health and needs. They write up their findings in court reports which they present to a judge at every court hearing. A CASA Volunteer Advocate is assigned to **100%** of children in CPS custody in Fort Bend County - an accomplishment very few counties have achieved.

**Community education and engagement is critical to ending the problem of child abuse.** CAFB runs a robust Community Engagement program using evidence-based best practices to improve our Child Abuse Prevention curriculum for educators, children and adults. We want every member of our community to be able to recognize, report and know how to respond appropriately to child abuse. But we go further. By teaching children protective skills, addressing risk factors to reduce their likelihood of becoming abused and practicing early intervention, Child Advocates of Fort Bend is moving toward realizing our vision - Ending the Cycle of Child Abuse.

*“Child Advocates of Fort Bend is important to me because there was a time in my life when I needed the services of a Center just like this. I am the survivor of child abuse and **were it not for advocates just like those we find here at Child Advocates of Fort Bend, I might not be here today.**”*

**-Dexter McCoy**, VOLUNTEER, BOARD MEMBER and DONOR



## **We help children and families believe that healing is possible and see a life beyond the abuse.**

We provide a safe place in our Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) to tell what happened, utilize trauma-informed, evidence-based therapies and ensure medical needs are met leading to healing and restoration. Our Multi-Disciplinary Team works collaboratively with law enforcement, CPS and the District Attorney's Office to achieve the best outcomes for children. Our CAC provides a safe, child-friendly environment to support children and families on their journey to healing.



## CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER (CAC)

# 6,258

### Reports of child abuse reviewed in our CAC.

Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) Multi-Disciplinary Team Coordinators review all state intakes of child abuse to see if they meet criteria for the children and their families to receive our services. **2,848** of those met criteria to receive a forensic interview -- a **16%** increase over 2020 where 2,458 met criteria.

We conducted **1,466** forensic interviews of children who were alleged victims of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse or witnesses to violence. The interview enables children to have their voices heard and is the first step on their journey to healing. **95%** of children are abused by someone they know - and most often a family member or friend.

**We create a customized treatment plan for every child.** Our team of clinical professionals, social workers and therapists coordinate services for the children and family to ensure the best outcomes so these very hurt children can heal. Children and family members received **2,905** free therapy sessions. Clinical Family Advocates provided support and resources and coordinated victim services for **1,391** families. Our Criminal Court Advocates were a support and companion for **610** children as they prepared for court, faced their abusers in courtrooms and were called to testify.

**334** children were referred for sexual assault exams in 2021. The sexual assault exam (SANE) is a critical step in a child's physical and emotional healing as well as in the prosecution of criminal offenses of child abuse. Thanks to a partnership with Access Health, we opened a medical clinic in December of 2020 in Fort Bend so that these children were able to get those exams locally.

All Children's Advocacy Services are available free of charge in English and Spanish.

*“Our CASA Advocate was a mentor for me. She was a guide and protector for our son. . . she wasn’t just volunteering. She really cared about what happened to him. . . if he was happy, if he had everything he needed, not just the basics. . . is he enjoying his life? Is he able to be a kid? Is he able to participate in sports?”*

**-Jennifer B.,** ADOPTIVE PARENT



**We build resiliency and empowerment, creating family support systems and networks, training in life skills and providing educational enrichment to transform lives and break the cycle of abuse.**

Our staff and volunteers go above and beyond by doing everything in their power to advocate for a child’s best interest and meet the child wherever they are in their journey.





## COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES™ (CASA)

# 32,009

### Miles traveled by CASA Volunteer Advocates

Our CASA Volunteers and staff donated **5,646 hours** and helped **191 children** in foster care regain their voices last year. They presented the “best interests” of children in foster care in over **444 hearings**, guaranteeing that the children did not fall through the cracks and become another statistic.

We continue to provide **100%** of children in foster care with a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) who visits the child(ren) regularly to ensure their well-being. They are often the only consistent person in the lives of these children and truly make a difference. With their help, **13 children** in foster care were successfully **reunited with family** and **23** children in foster care were adopted and found their “forever” homes.

Our Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) program located, engaged and built relationships with extended family members for **136** children to create lifelong support networks, affirmed belonging and family identity and often led to permanent placements. We provided lifeskills and educational advocacy for **130** elementary, middle and high school children and youth. N.E.S.T. youth ages 6-13 participated in remote learning experiences through custom kits and interactive virtual sharing workshops, focused on back-to-school readiness, social enrichment and health and hygiene. WINGS youth ages 14-18+ engaged in lifeskills training including career readiness, financial literacy, health care management, housing, transportation and foster alumni resources using specialized kits, interactive learning sessions and mock job interviews. **93%** of WINGS seniors graduated from high school and are now pursuing higher education, military service or careers. We advocated for developmental assessments for **61** infants and toddlers (0-5). Our Infant and Toddler program focuses on early childhood development and the importance of attachment and connections. CASA volunteer advocates monitor children’s health and medical care, cognitive and milestone development, and facilitate connections between families of origin and foster families to build support networks. By modeling during parent-child visitations, advocates gently guide parents to support their children’s optimal cognitive, emotional, and social development.

**All CASA staff are trained in Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI).** TBRI recognizes the impact of trauma on the brain and the resulting behavior and how to respond through a trauma-focused lens. TBRI helps caregivers provide support and treatment for at-risk children through Connecting, Empowering and Correcting Principles so that they can build healthy relationships. We use TBRI when working with the children and train our volunteers to reach the best outcomes.

*“Child Advocates of Fort Bend is important to us and our foundation because the life of a child is something that continues to prosper. Making an impact in the life of a child really give us all hope for the future.”*

**-Amy Becker** (Amy & Gary Becker Foundation), DONOR



## **We worked to prevent child abuse through awareness and education.**

We revised our child abuse trainings and strengthened our partnerships with school districts and faith based communities to deliver better services to reach more people so that everyone in our community has the opportunity to learn signs and symptoms of abuse and protective strategies so that children know how to be safe.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

# 9,770

### Community Engagement

In 2021, we reached **9,770** people through **70** presentations and trainings, **63** virtual and in-person tours of our campus and **15** community events. The community learned how to recognize and respond to child abuse, how to be a safe adult for children, how to protect children, the impact of trauma resulting from adverse childhood experiences (ACE's), Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI), met our staff, toured our building and heard stories about healing and recovery that the children achieved. More than **230** people attended our Voices for Children Breakfast in September and were able to hear first-hand from one of the children we served and his family.

We expanded prevention education about Child Advocates of Fort Bend's life-changing services through increased outreach to schools and the faith community, offering trainings virtually and in person. We introduced expanded curriculum for educators, children and adults and trained staff members as facilitators for Monique Burr Foundation Child Safety Matters® and Darkness to Light® Stewards of Children® and have incorporated these evidence-based trainings into our outreach offerings.

In addition, we introduced specialized training classes for volunteers to work in our Children's Advocacy Center to meet a need for expanded coverage. We added virtual training opportunities to increase the number of volunteers and facilitate continuing education training for existing volunteers. We hosted **three** virtual Continuing Education Conferences on topics ranging from Infant & Toddlers to Disproportionality of children of color in the child welfare system to Trauma-Informed Care.

We updated our diversity, equity and inclusion practices, increased diversity within our volunteer corps, staff and board, improved communications to volunteers and the community and developed training curriculum for both our staff and our board to create a more culturally responsive team.

# demographics

We are open to ALL child victims and non-offending family members, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, language, or any other factor. All our services provided to children and families are free thanks to the generosity of our donors and community support.

## CASA CAC

AFRICAN AMERICAN

40% 28%

HISPANIC

29% 42%

CAUCASIAN

16% 21%

BI-RACIAL/ OTHER

11% 4%

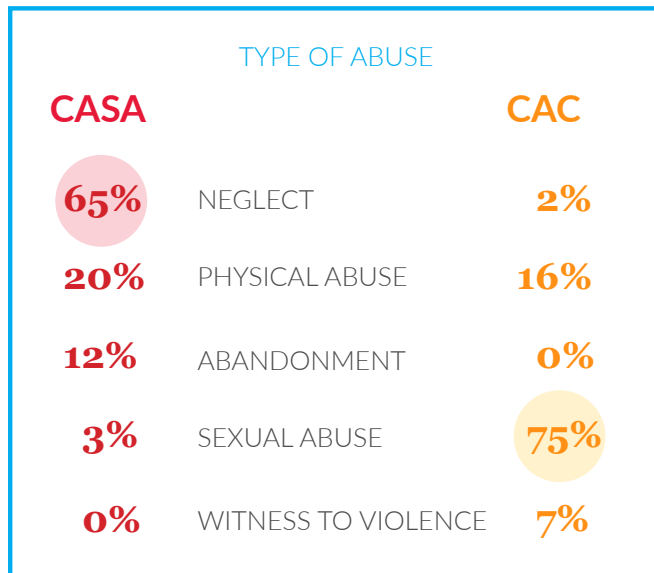
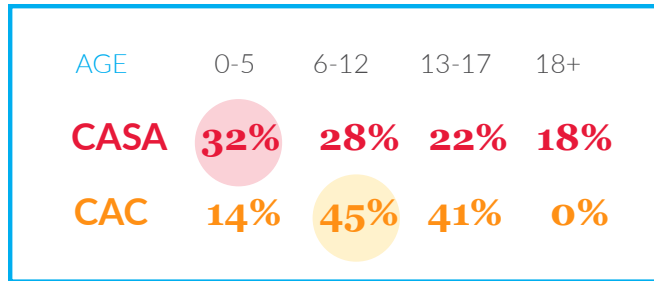
ASIAN

4% 5%

*“Child Advocates of Fort Bend is a place where I feel safe. They want to make sure that you’re healed and that you’re not hurting anymore and they really do a good job at doing what they do.”*

**-C.B.,** CHILD SERVED BY CAFB





## NOT JUST STATISTICS

**It is a fact.** Children of color are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system. In fact, more than **80%** of the children served in our CASA program are African American, Hispanic, Multi-Racial or Asian. Research findings have shown the importance of training in diversity, equity and inclusion and utilizing best practices to ensure cultural sensitivity and lack of overt or implicit bias when advocating for the children we serve. In 2021, we created a DEI task force, hired a DEI consultant and assessed agency practices. We began training volunteers in DEI best practices and coached volunteers in interactions with children and provided guidance to help them better serve the children.



*“After learning the amount of work that Child Advocates does - its scope and its breath and it’s successes, I realized that all of these services wouldn’t be possible if we didn’t donate funds to support them. And so it was important to me to start helping to end that cycle of child abuse and that’s why I am both a volunteer and a donor.”*

**-CHINNU MEHER-HOMJI,** VOLUNTEER and DONOR



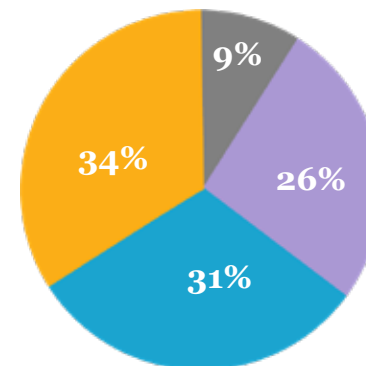
**We are incredibly grateful for the financial support of all of our donors and funders.**

You are helping educate the community about the problem of child abuse and helping children to heal and move forward to lead healthy, productive lives. As individuals who care deeply about children, you are helping to make our community a wonderful place for every child. **On behalf of all of the children you have helped in 2021, we thank you for your generosity and support. You are changing children’s lives!**

# 2021 Revenue Sources

## OPERATIONAL FUNDING

SPECIAL EVENTS	\$600,657
FOUNDATION GRANTS	\$1,672,839
GOVERNMENT GRANTS	\$2,059,525
GENERAL DONATIONS	\$2,211,976
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	<b>\$6,544,997</b>



Child Advocates of Fort Bend is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization.  
Copies of our audited financials and annual budget are available upon request.  
Our 990 is available at [www.cafb.org](http://www.cafb.org).

*“Child Advocates of Fort Bend helped us by giving us a chance. They gave us the support that we desperately needed when there was no other support out there and I will forever be grateful to them.”*

**-Lisa K.**, PARENT OF CHILD SERVED BY CAFB



## Your support is transforming children's lives.

The critical, life-saving and transformational services that we provide to children who have experienced abuse and their families would not be possible without you. We help them heal and give them the tools to move forward to a brighter future. We thank you for your support in 2021 and ask for your continued support as we work to Strengthen the Child's Voice, Heal the Hurt and Break the Cycle of Abuse and Neglect for Children in Fort Bend and surrounding counties.

