

CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™



2022 Annual Report

OUR MISSION:

We Strengthen the Voice,
Heal the Hurt and Break the
Cycle of Abuse and Neglect
for children and families in
Fort Bend and surrounding
counties.

OUR VISION:

To End the Cycle of Child
Abuse and Neglect.

OUR VALUES:

Collaborative

Healing

Inclusive

Life-Changing

Dedicated

**Child Abuse is a Public Health Epidemic
impacting thousands of children**



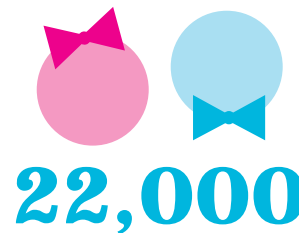
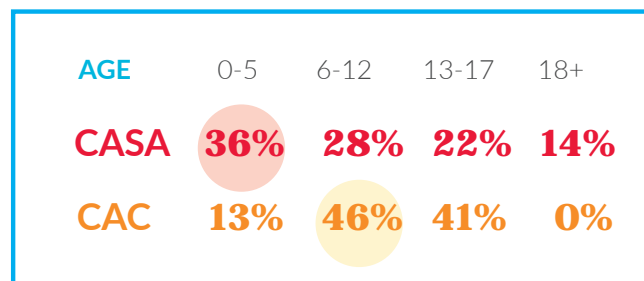
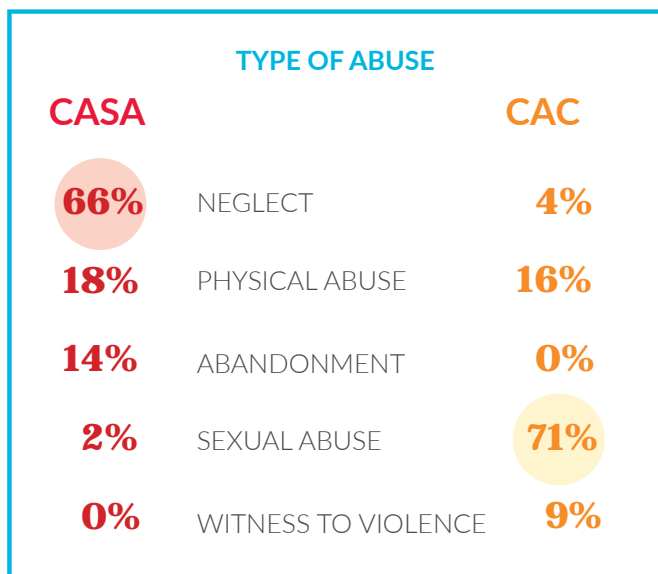
In Texas, **1 in 6** children will be abused by age 18.

Children under 18 make up **26%** of the state's population.

10% of the child population in the United States lives in Texas.
Texas has the **2nd largest population** of children in the U.S.

Our Children

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.



22,000

children since 1991

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

CASA CAC

BLACK
44% 29%

HISPANIC
26% 42%

WHITE
13% 21%

BI-RACIAL/ OTHER
12% 4%

ASIAN
5% 4%

Our Services

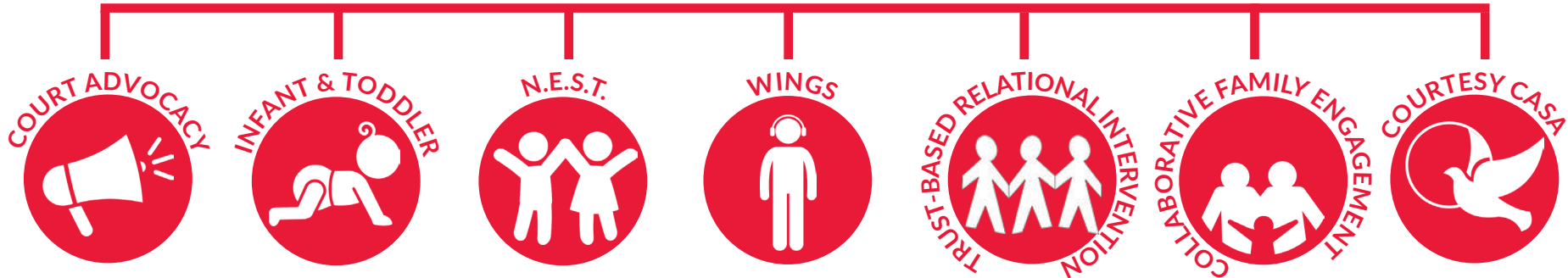
Our approach to the identification, treatment and prevention of child abuse is:

- **comprehensive**
- **individualized**
- **collaborative**
- **evidence-based**

Through our Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program, Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) and Community Engagement (CE) we offer an expansive array of services **(18 total)** designed to identify, prevent and treat child abuse. Our services are evidence-based and designed around each individual child's needs.



COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA)



Court Advocacy

CASA Volunteer Advocates are assigned to a child or sibling group from the time the child enters foster care until the case closes. Advocates meet with the child regularly as well as their teachers, doctors, foster and biological family and others to assess their medical, physical and emotional health and needs. Advocates present their findings in court to the judge at every court hearing, advocating for the child's best interests and their welfare. We match **100%** of children in foster care with a CASA Advocate. **161** children were served by our CASA program in 2022.

Infant & Toddler

The most critical developmental years are birth through age 5. Advocates monitor children's health and medical care, cognitive and emotional development and address any issues that may arise. They ensure that children receive appropriate developmental screenings and medical attention. CASAs are trained to model positive parenting skills and promote positive child-parent visitations. The goal of this program is to expedite permanency plans for children, whether reunification with parents, placement with extended family members or adoption. CASA Advocates visit and monitor younger children more often and attend court on a more frequent basis to ensure that these young children do not languish in the system.

N.E.S.T.

Nurturing Education and Social Triumphs (N.E.S.T.) is designed for elementary and early-middle school children ages 6-13 years old to build strong foundations in education, health and social interaction. Educational and enrichment workshops and events are offered throughout the year. Personal educational and behavioral goals are established for each child and working with teachers, progress is monitored. **52** children were served by our N.E.S.T. programming in 2022.

WINGS

For many of our teens, they will remain in foster care until they age out at 18 years of age. WINGS helps youth ages 14 – 18+ years old flourish in school, develop individualized education plans tailored to their needs, plan for college or higher education or a sustainable career path, and prepare for successful independent living when they age out of the foster care system. Throughout the year, youth participate in interactive, educational activities and workshops including a weeklong Life Skills Workshop and weeklong Campus Crawl. **52** children were served by our WINGS program in 2022.

Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)®

TBRI® is an attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention that is designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable children. TBRI® is based on years of attachment, sensory processing, and neuroscience research but the heartbeat of TBRI® is connection. Because of their histories, it is often difficult for these children to trust the loving adults in their lives, which often results in perplexing behaviors. TBRI® offers practical tools for caregivers and can be used with all children. All CASA staff are trained in TBRI® which we use in our advocacy and emphasize during volunteer training.

Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE)

CFE is a structured approach to build a support system around a child. From family finding to building lifetime networks of family, kin, and community members a child creates connection and engagement. Knowing that every child in the child welfare system has experienced trauma, CFE strives to decrease trauma issues and help these children move on with their lives in a supportive, family environment. Working together to strengthen families

helps provide accountability, safety, placement, permanency and healing. CFE also recognizes that children heal through relationships, and that every child has a family who can be found through perseverance. **75** cases received CFE services, connecting **117** children to family members in 2022.

Courtesy CASA

CASA provides courtesy visitation for children who have been placed across the state of Texas and outside the state. This is an essential service to ensure that all children in foster care are seen and they don't fall through the cracks of the child welfare or legal system. Courtesy CASA staff traveled over **30,000** miles making **234** visits to children placed outside their home counties.



CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER (CAC)



Intakes

Our team reviews every report of child abuse made to CPS for Fort Bend County. This totaled **7,133** reports in 2022, an increase of **14%** over 2021 which was **18%** over 2020. After review, we facilitate the coordination with CPS and law enforcement to ensure that all children receive the appropriate CAC services. Enhanced coordination of these complex cases has been proven to lead to better outcomes and less trauma to children.

Forensic Interviews

Alleged child victims of abuse are referred to the CAC for a forensic interview. The child is able to talk to a specially trained professional in an emotionally safe and child-friendly environment. The child is interviewed one-on-one by the interviewer and the interview is video recorded. The child's CPS caseworker and detective are in another room and are able to view the interview. We interviewed **1,253** children last year, with **83%** of these children disclosing sexual abuse. This coordination of efforts reduces the number of times a child has to be interviewed and lessens the trauma to the child.

Medical Exams

We partner with the University of Texas CARE Program and Harris Health System who provide sexual assault examinations, clinical oversight and expert testimony. Exams are conducted at the Texas Medical Center's Ben Taub Hospital Forensic Nursing Program and at a new clinic in Access Health. The Texas Crime Victim Compensation Funds pay for all sexual assault exams so that the family is not burdened by this expense. **271** children were referred for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) exams in 2022.

Clinical Family Advocacy

Our Clinical Family Advocates are licensed social workers who provide support, crisis intervention and resource referrals to help families during this difficult time. They help families process their feelings surrounding the abuse and refer children and family members for other services they may need. Advocates provided case management to **1,404** families in 2022. Family Advocates are available to the families from the moment they arrive at our building until they heal and/or their case is closed.

Therapy

We employ a variety of trauma-focused, evidence-based modalities, tailoring them to the individual needs of each child. We offer individual and group therapy and provide therapy to siblings and non-offending caregivers. Children are able to participate in treatment for as long as they need to help them recover and be emotionally healthy. Therapists conducted **2,363** therapy sessions in 2022.

Psychiatric Services

Thanks to a 2022 partnership with the UT Health Sciences Pediatric and Adolescent Psychiatry's Nurturing Resilience Program, services are now available to children who are experiencing psychiatric symptoms. Since July of 2022, we have had a psychologist on-site once a week. **38** psychiatric evaluations and follow up sessions were held in 2022.

Criminal Court Advocacy

Criminal Court Advocates work with the District Attorney's office to provide support, court preparation and accompaniment during trials. They also ensure that the children and families are referred to all of the services that they may need during this time. The Criminal Court Advocates are with the families throughout the entire criminal case and accompany the child in court if they testify in the trial or hearing. **1,063** children had criminal case support in 2022. This was a **43%** increase over 2021.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Volunteer Engagement

By leveraging a small staff with hundreds of community volunteers, Child Advocates of Fort Bend can match **100%** of children with a CASA Volunteer, can greet every child who enters our CAC with a smiling adult who welcomes and comforts them, spread awareness about child abuse and make our glamorous Gala and well-honored Christmas Home Tour traditions continue to raise needed funds to ensure our services continue.

Training

We provide CASA volunteer advocates with **45** hours of comprehensive pre-service training to ensure that they have all the information that they need to be successful advocates for the children we serve and **16** hours of pre-service training for volunteers who work in our Children's Advocacy Center (CAC). In 2022, we trained **40** new volunteers. **31** CASA Volunteer Advocates and **9** CAC volunteers.

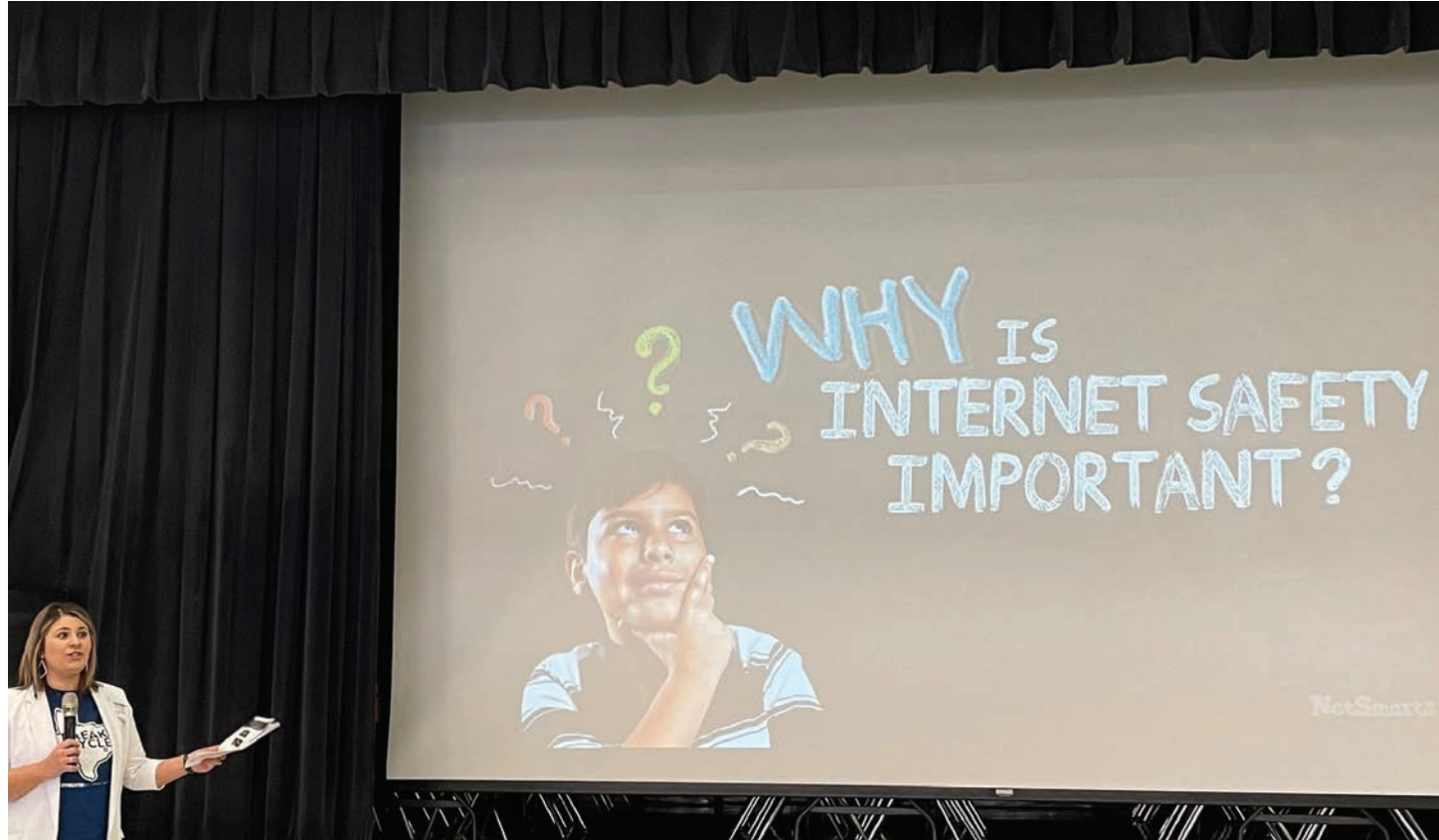
In addition to training new volunteers, we offer a variety of trainings for staff, volunteers and partners.

Community Outreach

Awareness, education and safety messaging are critical to reaching our vision of ending the cycle of child abuse. We partner with area schools and school districts and the faith-based community to provide child abuse awareness and safety education to teachers, administrators and students. In 2022 we reached **11,367** people through **128** presentations (including Spanish-only presentations), **36** community outreach events and **27** tours of our campus.

Prevention

While our primary focus for over three decades has been child victims who have experienced abuse, we have now moved upstream to focus on preventing children from becoming abused in the first place. By identifying the social determinants of abuse and neglect and applying a public health framework, we are identifying ways that we can reduce the incidence and severity of abuse and keep children safe.



Our People

Our team of professionals, social workers and therapists are dedicated to helping children and families.

Our dedicated and highly professional staff includes **50** full-time, **1** part-time and **4** contract employees. **23** of our staff members hold advanced degrees, including **16** with Master's Degrees in Social Work and **1** with both a Master's Degree and PhD.

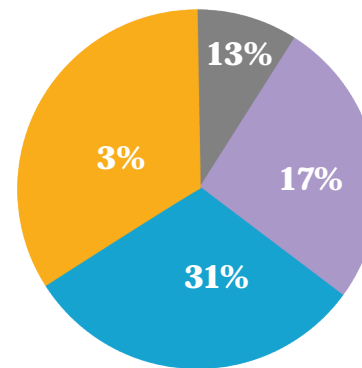
- All CASA staff are trained in Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®).
- We incorporate trauma-informed care into our practices.
- Our CASA program is considered one of the leaders in the state of Texas.



Our Support

OPERATIONAL FUNDING

SPECIAL EVENTS	\$730,648
FOUNDATION GRANTS	\$946,770
GENERAL DONATIONS	\$1,801,950
GOVERNMENT GRANTS	\$2,248,684
	\$5,728,052



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.

**Thank you to all of our 2022 donors and funders for your generosity and support.
You are truly changing children's lives!**

Our Future



Friends of Child Advocates of Fort Bend,

As we reflect on 2022, the most striking accomplishment is the significant expansion of our services that we have undertaken over the past few years by broadening the breadth and depth of our offerings -- from **1** Program to **18** Services across **3** Programs. In 1991, we began with one singular mission – to find safety and permanency for children in foster care through CASA's court advocacy. Thirty-one years later, we still do this - and do it remarkably well as one of the only programs in the state of Texas that matches **100%** of children with a volunteer advocate. This translates to immediate benefits as well as positive lifelong outcomes for these children, their families and generations to come. In 1996, we added our Children's Advocacy Center as our second program to serve the unique needs of children who had experienced sexual abuse with a focus on bringing together a multi-disciplinary team of professionals across agencies to work under a collaborative model for the best outcomes for these children. With a focus on joint investigations coordinated across agencies, clinical treatment and healing, and justice served, our CAC is now **20** times the size of our CASA program. In 2019, we introduced our third program, Community Engagement, which moved our work upstream to bring awareness education and safety messaging to children and adults with the goal of early intervention and prevention. To support this shift, we revised our Vision Statement to read: "End the Cycle of Abuse" which is our moonshot and we think by approaching child abuse as a public health issue and not only a criminal justice statistic, we can make huge inroads into reducing the incidence and severity of abuse and neglect. While we have broadened our programming, we have deepened our services. In 1991, a child may have received one service, court advocacy through CASA. Now, a child may receive **5** or **8** or **10** or more services through multiple programs. To deliver these services, we have restaffed our team with specialists in each of these service lines and created specialized training for our volunteers. We have developed innovative approaches and tools as well as identified and utilized outside best practices, evidence-based curriculum and peer-reviewed research, specifically in the field of adverse childhood experiences and the effect of trauma on children.

We are now both a direct service provider as well as a convener and have formed collaboratives with other child serving agencies to adopt uniform practices to create systemwide impact. **But our work is not over.** We continue to adapt to the changing landscape of the child welfare system and to the needs of our diverse community of children and families.

Thank you for joining us on this journey, for your commitment to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive and have a better tomorrow, and for your generosity to allow us to grow, adapt, and never lose sight of our purpose and mission – to strengthen the child's voice, heal the hurt and break the cycle of abuse and neglect.

For the Children's Sake,

Ruthanne Mefford
CEO





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®.

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