# CHILD ADVOCATES OF FORT BEND™

**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.

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025

**Friends of Child Advocates of Fort Bend,**

Our theme in 2025 was "Better Together" and as we reflect on this past year, we are filled with immense gratitude for the progress we've accomplished together. We have strengthened our Core Programs of CASA and our Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) with expanded breadth and depth of services. We have introduced and expanded three new intiatives to reach new children and youth who were outside of our traditional population of clients but had histories of maltreatment. These included youth in juvenile probation, children and youth in court-ordered services cases and minors who were commercially sexually exploited. With a new grant from the Governor's office, we were designated as The Fort Bend County Care Coordinator for sex trafficked youth. Child Advocates of Fort Bend continues to stand as a beacon of hope for children and youth in our community who have endured unthinkable abuse and neglect. Thanks to your unwavering support, we are driving transformative change and creating brighter futures for those who need it most.

This year marked significant milestones and achievements in our mission to end the cycle of abuse. *Together, we have:*

- Provided life-changing support to over **3,289** children and families through our advocacy, therapy, and specialized services.
- Ensured that **100% of children** in foster care were matched with a dedicated CASA Advocate, empowering them to find safety and stability.
- Expanded our outreach and safety training to reach over **24,000** children and adults with trauma-informed education and prevention messaging.
- Achieved a remarkable **100%** high school graduation rate for aging-out foster youth), illustrating the resilience of our young people.

Behind each of these accomplishments are stories of courage, perseverance, and compassion—stories of children finding their voices, families coming together, and communities uniting to protect and nurture the most vulnerable among us.

In 2025, we also made significant strides in advancing our countywide child abuse prevention initiative called Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative or CAP-C. Prevention is now a pillar of our strategic positioning to reach children, parents and youth-serving community members with education, resources and safety planning before a child may experience abuse or neglect. CAP-C creates system change and is the cornerstone of building a trauma-informed community.

None of this would have been possible without you—our dedicated supporters, donors, and volunteers. Your commitment to our mission inspires us every day and strengthens our resolve to continue this vital work.

As we look ahead, we are filled with hope and determination. Together, we will keep raising the bar, expanding our reach, and ensuring that every child in our community has a safe childhoood. Thank you for standing with us and for being a part of this journey.

For the Children's Sake,

*Ruthanne Mefford*

## OUR VISION:

To End the Cycle of Child Abuse and Neglect

## OUR VALUES:

**C**ollaborative

**H**ealing

**I**nclusive

**L**ife-Changing

**D**edicated

# MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

# Transforming Lives

## WHO WE SERVED

**27,000**
Children served since 1991

**3,289***
Children and families in 2025
**159 CASA** **3,153 CAC**
**unduplicated children*

**FREE**
ALL of our services are free

**42% MALE** **58% FEMALE**

## ETHNICITY
of children served

**34%** - Black
**33%** - Hispanic
**25%** - White
**6%** - Bi-Racial/Other
**2%** - Asian

Children and families received **19,774** total agency services in 2025 ranging from forensic interviews and Multi-Disciplinary Team case coordination to therapy, psychiatric and SANE referrals, clinical family advocacy, CRT staffing, criminal court advocacy, CASA advocacy, Courtesy CASA visits, collaborative family engagement and trust-based relational intervention.

**100%**
of youth we serve who were on track for High School graduation reached this goal.

**1,187**
Forensic Interviews were conducted to help children share what had happened to them

**2,451**
Therapy sessions helped children heal

**3,649**
Clinical Family Advocacy services created support and comprehensive case management

**159**
Children had a dedicated CASA Advocate ensuring their best interests were being served

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

## OUR NUMBERS

# CORE SERVICES

Our Core Services are comprised of **18** wraparound services that provide the full breadth and depth of comprehensive, trauma-informed care to help children find safety, recover from abuse and neglect, and transition to a life beyond harm. Our Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Program is in its **34th year** providing **100% of children** who have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care with a dedicated CASA Volunteer Advocate. From medical advocacy to educational advocacy, trauma-informed care advocacy and more, CASAs show up, visit their children regularly and help to strengthen and amplify children's voices in court and in their daily lives. With their support, children thrive while in care, and reach safety, permanency and when possible, family reunification. Child Advocates of Fort Bend has been a leader in the state of Texas by matching **100%** of children with an advocate, achieving **90-100%** high school graduation every year and maintaining over **85%** volunteer retention.

For **29 years**, our Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) has provided forensic interviews to child victims of crime who have experienced sexual abuse, severe physical abuse or the secondary effects of domestic violence. Today, we offer a full range of services including sexual assault medical exams, family and criminal court advocacy and comprehensive case management. The CAC coordinates the joint investigation of crimes against children with partners in law enforcement, district attorneys and child welfare agencies. Staffed with a team of **28** professionals with advanced degrees and licensures, our CAC plays a critical role in the identification, healing and justice for child victims of crime.

## NEW INITIATIVES

Child Advocates of Fort Bend has long been recognized as one of the most innovative agencies in the state by introducing novel approaches for child welfare treatment and recovery. From a pilot site in the late 1990s serving infant children in the for Zero To Three program, CAFB has launched specialized programs for Infants and Toddlers working with a dedicated Infant & Toddler Court, NEST for elementary children and WINGS Life Skills for teens exiting foster care at age 18, Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE), Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI) and many more. In 2025, CASA expanded the population of children served by introducing court advocacy for **Justice Involved Youth (JIY)** who are in juvenile probation but not in foster care and early, supportive intervention for families in **Court Ordered Services (COS)** in an effort to prevent children from entering foster care. In both these cases, judges appoint CASA Volunteers to advocate for children's "best interests" while the child or family works to address concerns through their probation journey or have been identified by Child Protective Services. By providing wraparound services earlier, children and families are supported before circumstances might dictate a child's removal from their homes. In 2025, CASA Volunteers and staff were trained in these specialized advocacy services and served **6** JIY youth and **46** court-ordered services children.

Tragically, over the years we have seen the increase of sexual exploitation and trafficking of children. In 2025, we were awarded a grant from the Governor's Office to become Fort Bend County's designated **Care Coordinator for Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth**. We lead a team of professionals from across disciplines and agencies in a coordinated approach for the protection, identification, rapid response and recovery of these victims. Care Coordination promotes sustainable autonomy, healing, justice and stability for youth who have experienced, or are at risk for experiencing, commercial sexual exploitation.

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH + TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Healing the Hurt is central to our mission at CAFB. With trauma-informed therapy, children can recover from their abuse and move on to happy, healthy lives. Transforming Lives is imbedded in every aspect of our behavioral health services across our agency and all our programs. The anchor of this is our robust **therapy** and **psychiatric services**, led by our Clinical Director, staffed with seven full-time licensed therapists and housed in a beautiful, dedicated therapy wing. In 2025 we provided **2,451** therapy sessions to children who had experienced sexual abuse and other crimes against children. Utilizing a range of therapeutic modalities all focused on specialized treatment plans for children with trauma symptoms, the CAFB therapy program helped hundreds of children recover and heal. With the addition of our partnership with UT Health Sciences Pediatric and Adolescent Psychiatry, we can now provide onsite psychiatric services to children when needed. In addition, our team of six Clinical Family Advocates implement **a range of assessments and trauma services:** biopsychosocial assessments, crisis interventions, trauma and suicidality screenings, and short-term clinical counseling. For children in the foster care system, our CASA Advocates utilize a trauma-informed care approach called **Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI)** which incorporates evidence-based practices when working with children who have experienced child abuse, neglect and trauma. CAFB leads the Fort Bend County TBRI Collaborative which has trained **1,106** child welfare providers, school educators, nurses and counselors, law enforcement, faith leaders and youth serving organizations in TBRI.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH + TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

# PREVENTION

While it is great to help children who have experienced abuse, wouldn't it be better to prevent abuse in the first place? This is the ambitious goal that we set out to address in 2023 with our Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative (CAP-C). Now, two years later, we have made huge advancements in educating the community about child abuse. CAP-C has made significant progress in creating a model program for how a community can come together united against child abuse. 2025 saw the introduction of the CAP-C Website (**www.capcfb.org**) filled with **1,685** resources, information and tools. The CAP-C Collaborative engages **48** agencies who meet monthly to exchange best practices and speak as one voice. Stakeholder research of survivors informed us of targeted messaging and safety information that parents, children and youth need to stay safe. We have incorporated these findings into the design of a countywide child safety campaign we call, **"You Have The Power"**. With catchy graphics and actionable tips and information, this multi-format campaign will reach both parents and children in day cares, schools, medical clinics, houses of worship, youth serving organizations and community centers.

Throughout the year, our outreach efforts reached **24,584** people with safety information and education. This vigorous community engagement focused on schools by reaching elementary and secondary students as well as teachers, nurses and counselors, recognizing that these adults must be educated on the latest information about identification as well as prevention.

## Operational Funding

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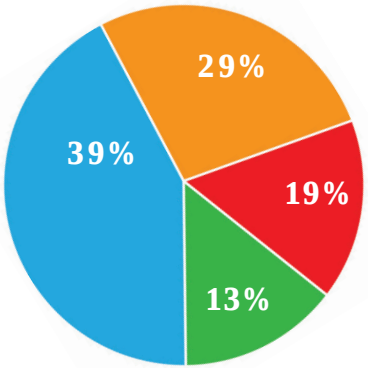
| SPECIAL EVENTS | $ 803,084 |
| GENERAL DONATIONS | $1,191,513 |
| FOUNDATION GRANTS | $1,821,205 |
| GOVERNMENT GRANTS | $2,445,560 |
| | $6,261,362 |




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**.

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

**Thank you to all of our 2025 donors and funders for your generosity and support.**
**You are truly changing children's lives!**

# OUR SUPPORT