



# Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2017

*July 2016 – June 2017*



Office of the Child Advocate <https://courts.delaware.gov/childadvocate/>

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## Executive Summary

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) was created in 1999 in response to numerous child deaths in Delaware resulting from child abuse. These cases pointed to deficiencies in the child protection system that could only be remedied through the collaborative efforts of Delaware's many child welfare agencies. The General Assembly determined that an office to oversee these efforts, staff the Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC), and provide legal representation on behalf of Delaware's dependent, neglected, and abused children was necessary. Pursuant to 29 Del. C. § 9005A, OCA is mandated to coordinate a program of legal representation for children which includes the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program (CASA); to periodically review all relevant child welfare policies and procedures with a view toward improving the lives of children; recommend changes in procedures for investigating and overseeing the welfare of children; to assist the Office of the Investigation Coordinator in accomplishing its goals; to assist CPAC in investigating and reviewing deaths and near deaths of abused and neglected children; to develop and provide training to child welfare system professionals; and to staff CPAC.

OCA accomplishes its charge to represent children through the employment of four Deputy Child Advocates (DCAs), eight Contract Child Attorneys, a substantial and dedicated pool of CASA Volunteers and volunteer Child Attorneys supervised by OCA staff, and strong partnerships with the child-serving agencies in Delaware. During Fiscal Year 2017, 403 new appointments for children were made, and 67 case reviews were completed to ensure the child welfare system was adequately protecting the children involved. OCA provided legal representation through Child Attorneys and CASA Volunteers to a total of 1,261 abused or neglected children throughout the year. On the last day of the fiscal year, 776 children were in the legal custody of Delaware's Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF).

In addition to coordinating the legal representation of children, OCA together with its staff of social workers, policy advisors, and data analysts participated in many initiatives to improve policies, procedures, practices, and laws on behalf of children. OCA staff worked diligently to deliver training on trauma and mandatory reporting of child abuse to child welfare professionals, as well as to raise awareness within the community, and to make this information widely available online. OCA took substantial steps with its partners to improve outcomes for infants with prenatal substance exposure. OCA continued to support efforts to promote permanency and stability for older youth in foster care and those aging out of foster care, and its staff attended several national trainings and conferences on a variety of child welfare issues.

This past fiscal year OCA assumed the responsibility for the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program welcoming its staff, contractors and volunteers to the OCA family. OCA continued its responsibility, as staff to CPAC, to investigate and coordinate the reviews of all Delaware children who died or nearly died from child abuse or neglect and to oversee the Office of the Investigation Coordinator, which is responsible for monitoring the civil and criminal response systems to child deaths, serious physical injury, and sexual abuse. Finally, OCA continued as the recipient of the Casey Family Programs Education grant charged with improving educational outcomes for children experiencing foster care and played a vital role in the In-Depth Technical Assistance being provided to Delaware by the National Center for Substance Abuse and Child Welfare.

OCA is extremely grateful to all of the individuals and organizations that support the children served by OCA either through donations, volunteering or partnership. The assistance and partnership of these entities are critical as OCA strives to fulfill its mission to safeguard the welfare of Delaware's children through educational advocacy, system reform, public awareness, training, and legal representation of children.



Tania Culley, Esq., CWLS  
Child Advocate

## Legal Representation of Children

Legal representation of children has been a central focus of Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) since 2000. The agency is statutorily required to coordinate a program of legal representation on behalf of children. OCA utilizes four full-time Deputy Child Advocates (DCAs), 8 Contract Child Attorneys, 213 CASA Volunteers supervised by CASA Coordinators, and approximately 275 volunteer Child Attorneys who are supervised by a Managing Attorney to represent the best interests of dependent, neglected, and abused children statewide.

## CASA Volunteers and Contract Child Attorneys

During FY17, the CASA Program relocated to OCA. 213 CASA Volunteers in partnership with 8 Contract Child Attorneys represented 555 children. The CASA Program trained 36 new CASAs through multiple statewide training sessions. Numerous hours were also spent on in-service trainings of CASAs. Of the dedicated CASA Volunteer pool, 82 had at least five years of experience. Twenty seven of the 82 volunteers had ten years or more experience. One volunteer has 30 years of service. Contract Child Attorneys spent more than 7,800 hours working in tandem with CASA Volunteers and CASA Coordinators. Additional staff spent 900 hours assisting with the relocation and supporting staff, volunteers and attorneys throughout the process.



Adoption Ceremony

## Volunteer Child Attorneys

During FY17, 266 volunteer Child Attorneys represented 498 children. Of those volunteer Child Attorneys, nine were new volunteers handling their first case. OCA's Managing Attorney trained 20 attorneys through six training sessions in FY17, including veteran volunteers who attended the training to refresh their knowledge of the child protection system. By the end of FY17, OCA had a dedicated volunteer pool of 249 attorneys, 176 of which had at least five years of experience. One hundred six of the 176 volunteers had ten years of experience or more experience. OCA now boasts 17 attorneys who have volunteered 15 years or more. Collectively, nearly 5,600 hours of volunteer attorney time was dedicated to cases that closed in FY17. OCA staff spent just under 600 hours training and supporting volunteer Child Attorneys as well as supporting 35 attorneys appointed directly by Family Court under the OCA statute.

## Child Representation Statistics

Throughout FY17, OCA provided legal representation to 1,261 children statewide. Five hundred fifty-five children were represented by a Contract Child Attorney and CASA, 498 were represented by a Volunteer Child Attorney and 208 were represented by Deputy Child Advocates. (See Figure 1) Broken out by county, 314 children were represented in Kent throughout the fiscal year – 726 in New Castle and 221 in Sussex. Kent County remained a struggle this fiscal year with the volume nearly one hundred children more than Sussex County. CASA Volunteers, partnered with Contract Child Attorneys, handled 55% of the cases in Kent County

FIGURE 1: APPOINTED CASES BY OCA REPRESENTATION MODEL IN FY17

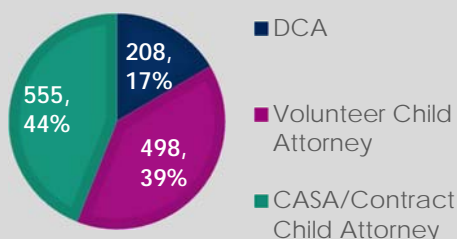
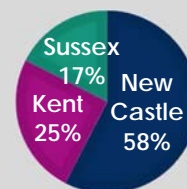


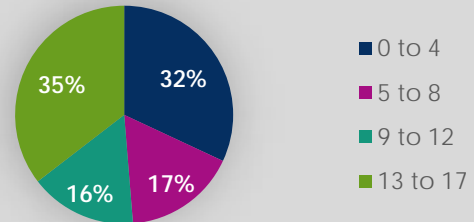
FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF CHILDREN REPRESENTED BY OCA IN EACH COUNTY DURING FY17



with Deputy Child Advocates handling another 26% of the cases. In Sussex County, while the volume is notably lower, only 7% of the children were represented by volunteer Child Attorneys – Statewide DCAs represented 34% of the children and CASAs and Contract Child Attorneys represented 59% of the children. (See Figure 2 above)

On the last day of the fiscal year, 776 children were in the legal custody of DSCYF. This was an 8% increase over FY16 with 718 children in care and a 15% increase over FY15. On June 30, 2017, 357 of those children benefited from a CASA Volunteer and Child Attorney while the remaining 417 received a Child Attorney volunteer or a Deputy Child Advocate. Of the children in DSCYF Custody on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 248 were 0-4 years of age, 130 were 5-8 years of age, 123 were 9-12 years of age and 275 were 13-17 years of age. One hundred ninety-four (25%) of the children were from Kent County, 143 (18%) were from Sussex and the remaining 439 (57%) were from New Castle. While only 18% of the Delaware population lives in Kent County, the number of children in care is much higher at 25%. The younger children and the teen population continue to represent the largest numbers of children in care. (See Figure 3)

FIGURE 3: AGES OF CHILDREN IN DSCYF CUSTODY ON JUNE 30, 2017



During the fiscal year, OCA filed 403 new attorney appointments. 91 of those children were also fortunate enough to have a CASA Volunteer also appointed to advocate on their behalf in DSCYF Custody cases. Broken down by case type for new appointments, 20 (5%) were for guardianship cases, 359 (89%) were DSCYF custody cases, 20 (5%) were for extended jurisdiction, and 4 (1%) were in custody and visitation disputes. Two hundred sixty-two (65%) new appointments were made in New Castle County, 91 (23%) in Kent and 50 (12%) in Sussex. Ninety-one (23%) new cases were assigned to a CASA Volunteer and a contract Child Attorney, 80 (20%) new cases were assigned to DCAs and 232 (57%) new cases were assigned to volunteer Child Attorneys.

DCAs and their support staff spent over 8,000 hours on the direct representation of children in FY17. Contract Child Attorneys spent 7,800 hours on representing children. Deputy Child Advocates represented 35 children who themselves or their siblings suffered death or near death injuries as a result of child abuse or neglect. Volunteer hours and staff support hours will be further detailed next fiscal year.

## Child Welfare Policy

Child welfare policy is another area in which OCA acts to strengthen the system that serves children and families. Mandated under 29 Del. C. § 9005A to periodically review child welfare policies and procedures, to recommend changes in procedures for investigating and overseeing the welfare of children, and to develop and provide training to child welfare system professionals, OCA staff spent over 600 hours on efforts involving child protection policy and procedure in FY17, and another 1,800 hours on such efforts while fulfilling their duties as staff to CPAC.



OCA and DFS Staff at Gals that Give Event Fundraiser

CPAC. In its role as staff to CPAC, OCA supports CPAC and its committees by ensuring compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), preparing minutes and agendas, scheduling meeting times and locations, facilitating communications, conducting research and chairing committees. Each full-time staff member participates substantively on at least one CPAC committee or initiative including CPAC's Caseloads/Workloads, Child Abuse Medical Response, Data Utilization, Education, Legislative, Permanency for Adolescents, Substance Exposed Infants and Medically Fragile Children, and Training Committees. For more information on the work of CPAC, please see the FY17 CPAC Annual Report at the following link: <https://courts.delaware.gov/forms/download.aspx?id=100038>.



**Legislation.** OCA participated in the passage of several bills during FY17 as well as advocated to the Joint Finance Committee for state resources for various child welfare agencies. Senator Margaret Rose Henry and Representative Melanie George Smith, with assistance from their colleagues, introduced five CPAC bills – SB86, SB87, HB140, HB181 and HB182. Senate Bill 86 established Family Court authority to appoint an Education Decision Maker for dependent and delinquent children and Senate Bill 87 updated the school stability law for children in DSCYF Custody to comply with new federal law. Both bills were awaiting the Governor's signature at the end of the fiscal year. House Bill 140, also known as Aiden's Law, codifies the State's duty to provide for infants with prenatal substance exposure. Due to fiscal constraints, the bill did not pass; however, OCA is hopeful for its passage in 2018. House Bill 181 is a result of the new MOU for the Multidisciplinary Response to Child Abuse and Neglect approved by Delaware's Multidisciplinary Team. House Bill 181 codified best practices for a multidisciplinary response to investigations of child abuse and neglect. House Bill 182 tightened protections in the confidential reviews of child deaths and near deaths. Both bills were awaiting the Governor's signature at the end of the fiscal year. OCA also participated in multiple meetings and legislative drafting for Senate Bill 102 which reorganized non-academic trainings for school personnel, and provided flexibility in hours and years to allow schools to best meet the needs of children and staff. That bill was also awaiting the Governor's signature. OCA staff spent more than 450 hours in legislative drafting and shepherding these bills through the General Assembly.



**Eliza Hirst, Esq. testifying before Senate Committee**



**Members of the Child Welfare Community at the School Justice Partnership**

**Casey Family Programs Grant.** During FY17, OCA remained the recipient of a Casey Family Programs grant, to improve educational outcomes for children experiencing foster care. While the accomplishments under this grant are numerous, OCA staff together with its contractors, have trained over 2,000 educators and other related agencies on how the Compassionate Schools Model can improve connections between educators and students who have experienced trauma, foster care, or toxic stress. Through these trainings, educators learn how trauma impacts brain development, the importance of relationships with students, and strategies to foster safe learning environments. The Casey Education Demonstration Project also developed a Compassionate Schools Learning Collaborative, which is comprised of more than 10 schools and school districts with a focus on improving education outcomes and connections for at-risk students, including students experiencing foster care. The Learning Collaborative has also developed

partnerships with the University of Delaware/Department of Education DE-Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) Project and Children and Families First to administer trainings and evidence-based strategies to help educators understand how to work with at-risk students. OCA staff also coordinated a multidisciplinary team to attend the Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy School Justice Partnership to assist in providing further strategies to improve educational outcomes for at-risk youth. OCA spent approximately 500 hours on administration of this grant and participation in strategic planning meetings and trainings.

## Training, Conferences, and Professional Development

OCA staff attended several local and national multidisciplinary conferences, training, and professional development sessions throughout FY17. OCA also conducted numerous training programs focusing on improving skills and knowledge in navigating the many facets of child welfare. OCA spent approximately 800 hours on these tasks in FY17.

OCA held two professional development retreats during FY17, one for all staff and another for attorneys. OCA staff trained on vicarious trauma, permanency options, infants with prenatal substance exposure, and educational outcomes relating to child welfare. OCA attorneys focused on concurrent permanency planning, use of another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA) as a permanency plan, preparing children for permanency, new state and federal laws and the relocation of the CASA Program. Eliza Hirst, Esquire, was recognized as OCA's 2016 Employee of the Year at the all staff professional development retreat.

Various staff attended and trained in national and local venues including the National At-Risk Youth Conference, the 2016 National Association of Counsel for Children Conference, the 2017 American Bar Association Children and the Law Conference and the 2017 National Citizen Review Panel Conference. Topics included *From Review to Action: How Delaware has improved the State's Child Protection System Through the Review of Individual Cases; Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Trauma and Becoming an Effective Educational Advocate; and Using Social Security to Maximize Permanency.*



**Rosalie Morales at the 2017 National Citizen Review Panel Conference**

OCA staff also attended and trained locally on topics such as Trauma, Toxic Stress and the Impact on Learning, Supporting Education Stability for Youth in Foster Care, normalcy for youth in foster care, social security benefits, representing children in Family Court, legal permanency options, Court Improvement Project (CIP) Leading Practices, "Legally Speaking" for foster parents, substance exposed infants and mandatory reporting of child abuse. OCA staff presented at local law firms, in-state conferences, community agencies, schools, and other system partner agencies.



**Kelly Ensslin, Esq. at the Protecting Delaware's Children Conference**

In FY17, DSCYF and OCA have provided onsite training to 369 professionals using the mandatory reporting for general audiences, *How to Identify and Report Child Abuse and Neglect in Delaware*. Additionally, 636 participants completed the online training and survey through OCA's Online Training System located at the following link: <https://ocade.server.tracorp.com>. DSCYF and OCA staff provided the onsite school training, *How to Identify and Report Child Abuse and Neglect in Delaware: 2016-2017 School Training*, to 862 professionals. Approximately 8,000 additional teachers and other school staff completed the online training and survey. Each year, OCA staff partners with Department of Education (DOE) to make the training available. OCA staff also coordinated with the Department of Professional Education and the Medical Society of Delaware (MSD) to revise and provide the

medical training, *Child Abuse Identification and Reporting Guidelines for Delaware Medical Providers* to 4,644 medical professionals through OCA's online training system.

Throughout FY17, OCA staff focused on offering additional continued education opportunities through the Learning Management System (LMS), an online program that allows professionals to take courses in a variety of topics and obtain continuing legal and professional credits when applicable. Training can be accessed at OCA's Online Training System.

OCA Deputy Child Advocates Kelly Ensslin and Eliza Hirst both had child welfare articles published. Ms. Hirst, together with OCA former law clerk Annika Jones, was published in the *Juvenile and Family Law Journal* for *Breaking the Cycle of Intergenerational*



## New York Law School Children's Law Center Article

*Child Maltreatment: A Case For Active Efforts For Dependent Minor Parents and Their Children in State Custody.* Ms. Ensslin was published in the New York Law School Children's Law Center for *Delaware's Efforts to Decrease Adoption Displacement: Post Adoption Services and Support.*

## Committees, Task Forces, and Initiatives

In addition to providing training, OCA's staff was highly committed to child welfare policy through a number of committees, task forces, and initiatives throughout the state.

Staff participated in a number of committees and initiatives with a focus on permanency for children experiencing the foster care system including the Interagency Committee on Adoption (IACO), the IACO Community Education on Adoption Subcommittee, the CPAC Permanency for Adolescents Committee, the CFSR Permanency Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) Workgroup, the CIP Parent Representation and Engagement Workgroup, and the CIP Visit Host Guidelines Workgroup. Staff contributed to policy meetings through the federal Court Improvement Project grant such as quarterly stakeholder meetings in each county, the CIP Leading Practices and the CIP Steering

Committee and serve the Delaware State Bar Association (DSBA) through Mark Hudson's position as President of the Sussex County Bar Association and Vice President, Sussex County of the DSBA. Staff serve on the Carpenter-Walsh Pro Bono Inn of Court, and provided training to new admittees to the Delaware Bar and current members who wished to learn more about Delaware's pro bono opportunities. Staff attended required grantee meetings such as the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Grantee Meeting as part of the 20<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect.

Staff also became more involved in initiatives to protect infants with prenatal substance exposure by participating on Delaware's Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Task Force and the CPAC/Child Death Review Commission (CDRC) Committee on Substance Exposed Infants (SEI) and Medically Fragile Children. Staff co-chaired the SEI Committee and acquired In-Depth Technical Assistance for Substance-Exposed Infants from the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare. Staff attended the 2017 Policy Academy hosted by the National Center on *Improving Outcomes for Pregnant and Postpartum Women with Opioid Use Disorders and their Infants, Families and Caregivers.*

Staff attended trainings and participated in committees focused on juvenile trafficking and juvenile justice such as the Juvenile Justice Conference, the Juvenile Justice Collaborative, the Human Trafficking Conference and the Juvenile Human Trafficking Committee. Other committees included the DFS Advisory and Advocacy Committee, Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) Child and Domestic Violence Subcommittee, CFSR Safety PIP Workgroup, Annual Progress and Services Review and Strategic Planning Annual Meeting, CPAC Caseloads/Workloads, Abuse Intervention, Data Utilization and Training with an eye towards improving the overall child welfare system.

Staff also participated in a number of committees and initiatives with a focus on educational needs of children experiencing the foster care system including the Casey Education Demonstration Project, which OCA began managing in January 2016. Staff and contractors are working with a grant from Casey Family Programs to build the Compassionate Schools Learning Collaborative which convenes a variety of schools from different districts and charters to support schools to become trauma-informed. The group is training schools on trauma and the impact on learning as well as assisting them in creating a framework to become compassionate schools. Twelve schools are currently involved with the Compassionate Schools Learning Collaborative, and more schools are joining this movement. OCA staff is also partnering with Children and Families First and the University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies on this project.



**Jessica Begley at Casey Family Programs Training**



## Child Abuse and Neglect Panel

OCA, on behalf of CPAC, coordinates the Child Abuse and Neglect Review Panel (CAN Panel), which is charged with investigating and coordinating the review of child deaths and near deaths as a result of child abuse and neglect. Each of these cases must be reviewed within 6 months of the incident, and the cases often involve complicated medical, child welfare and law enforcement histories. OCA staff spent nearly 2,000 hours on the CAN Panel work in FY17. In addition to preparing, reviewing, tracking findings and disseminating reports, OCA staff also support the CAN Steering Committee and represent OCA at child death related meetings including the Child Death Review Commission and its Executive Committee, the Delaware Violent Death Reporting System Advisory Board, the Child Abuse Committee at Beebe, and the Child Advocacy Committee at Bayhealth Medical Center. Staff received training from the National District Attorneys Association on the *Investigation and Prosecution of Child Fatalities and Physical Abuse* to assist both CAN Panel and IC with increased expertise, but also to bring innovative approaches to Delaware's multidisciplinary team (MDT). Staff participated in a meeting with leaders from the National Commission on Child Fatalities to share Delaware's progress and shared Delaware's model in a workshop at the 2017 Citizen Review Panel Conference. The work of OCA staff, the CAN Panel and the CAN Steering Committee shape the CPAC/CDRC Annual Retreat, the CPAC/CDRC Joint Action Plans, trainings offered to MDT partners, the comprehensive rewrite of Delaware's Memorandum of Understanding for the MDT response to child abuse and neglect, and the Protecting Delaware's Children conference speakers and themes. For more information, see the FY17 CPAC Annual Report.

## Office of the Investigation Coordinator

In April 2016, the Office of the Investigation Coordinator (IC) relocated from DSCYF to OCA. The IC performs two mission critical functions for at-risk populations of children in Delaware: 1. Monitors each reported case involving the death of, serious physical injury to, or allegations of sexual abuse of a child from inception to final criminal and civil disposition; and 2. Monitors infants with prenatal substance exposure.

To fulfill its charge of monitoring cases of alleged child abuse and neglect, the IC receives weekly and monthly data extracts from the Division of Family Services (DFS), the Delaware Criminal Justice Information Center (DELJIS), and the Children's Advocacy Center of Delaware (CAC). All of the referrals are reviewed and analyzed utilizing the DFS Family and Child Tracking System (FACTS) and DELJIS, and then opened if they fit within the purview of the IC. In FY17, the IC received 2,970 referrals from DFS, DELJIS and the CAC, and opened 1,181 cases to monitor. Of the 1,181 cases opened, 91% (1,080) alleged child sexual abuse, 6% (66) involved a serious physical injury to a child, and 3% (32) were child deaths. On June 30, 2017, 748 cases were open in the IC database.

Initiating and facilitating communication between the MDT is also a core function of the IC and improves the MDT response in these cases. All open cases are then periodically reviewed and analyzed to ensure the criminal and civil legal response and protection system has followed best practices to achieve punishment for perpetrators and legal protections for victims. On a quarterly basis, the IC is responsible for analyzing collected data and statistics, identifying child welfare system issues and trends, providing pertinent data to the CPAC and members of the MDT and making recommendations for system improvement in accordance with State and Federal law.

The Office also receives weekly data extracts from DFS for any infant reported to DFS for suspected prenatal substance exposure. These cases are reviewed, analyzed and monitored in the same manner as cases of alleged child abuse and neglect and entered into a separate independent database case tracking system. In FY17, the IC received 414 referrals of infants exposed to substances ranging from opiates to benzodiazepines. In addition to monitoring these cases, the IC is responsible for co-chairing the CPAC/Child Death Review Commission's Committee on Substance Exposed Infants and Medically Fragile



Jennifer Donahue, Esq. and Jennifer Perry

Children, overseeing the state's In-Depth Technical Assistance for Substance Exposed Infants from the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare (NCSACW), and supporting the federal grant application for a Regional Partnership Grant to fund the development of Plans of Safe Care for infants with prenatal substance exposure and their families. Data and statistical reports are regularly prepared by the IC and submitted to CPAC, the Joint Committee, NCSAW, and other partner agencies. For the core work of this Office, over 2,100 OCA staff hours were dedicated in FY17 with another 500 hours devoted to the work of CPAC.

## Court Appointed Special Advocate Program



In March 2017, the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program (CASA) with its 12 full-time employees and over 200 volunteers relocated to OCA. With changes to the statutes regarding representation of children, OCA also contracted with 8 Child Attorneys to work with the CASAs. The CASA Program advocates for children in Family Court proceedings, primarily those children in foster care, through a team approach. The CASA Volunteer assists the Contract Child Attorney in making sure an independent investigation is conducted, the Child's best interests are represented to the Court, and the statutory duties are fulfilled. The Contract Child Attorney and CASA Volunteer work together as a team, with the Contract Child Attorney primarily in charge of legal duties and the CASA Volunteer in charge of fact gathering and meeting with the child. The CASA Coordinator completes the team by supporting the CASA Volunteer and facilitating communication between the CASA Volunteer and Contract Child Attorney. This creates the "Child Team," a triad of persons who are advocating for and supporting the child.

During FY17, the CASA Program Director and Coordinators provided supervision to 213 CASA Volunteers and coordination with 8 Contract Child Attorneys to ensure the best interests of the 555 children the program served. Staff recruit volunteers, and then supervise the CASA Volunteers by providing training, resources, expertise and regular guidance. Staff also assist with scheduling and conducting client visits; assisting the CASA Volunteer in providing legal testimony for court proceedings as necessary; acquiring, summarizing, and compiling voluminous records from various agencies through the discovery process; scheduling and attending witness interviews; attending and supporting the volunteer at team meetings, IEP meetings, and other multidisciplinary meetings; coordinating with the Contract Child Attorneys; preparing reports for the Court; resolving conflicts; and generally making sure the CASA Volunteer is complying with all laws and appropriately discharging his or her duties. Strong recruitment, training and recognition of volunteers is what makes this program successful.

Prior to relocation, staff and the CASA Program Director traveled to North Carolina to observe their Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) Program and learn about their Child Team. Many ideas and strategies for an integrated legal representation program were learned. In FY17, more than 900 hours were devoted to the relocation, and the Contract Child Attorneys logged approximately 7,800 hours working in tandem with CASA Coordinators and CASA Volunteers to advocate for children. During the transition, trainings of attorneys, coordinators and volunteers occurred together with developing guides, procedures and other documents necessary to integrate CASA into OCA's Legal Representation responsibilities. In FY18, the OCA staff hours supporting this program will be provided.

## Law Clerks and Interns

OCA benefited from the assistance of two law clerks during the summer of 2016 and one law clerk during the summer of 2017. These law clerks helped the staff with record reviews, memos, and preparation for court hearings. The law clerks also conducted legal research, drafted legislation and observed the legislative process. OCA also benefited from two social work interns. During FY17, law clerks and interns have contributed invaluable assistance to the OCA staff through research, policy work, and record reviews. Law clerks and interns donated about 1,000 volunteer hours to OCA during FY17.

## Youth Activities

In October 2016, the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) donated its final mural to be displayed in the New Castle County Family Court in honor of the late Judge Alan N. Cooper. Judge Cooper's family was able to be present as were countless members of the Delaware State Bar Association (DSBA) Family Law Section. The mural is proudly displayed on the second floor of the courthouse.



Family Court Judges and Judge Cooper's Family at YAC Mural



DSBA Family Law Section Members at YAC Mural

## OCA Partnerships

OCA continued to meet with the Family Court, DSCYF, the Children's Advocacy Center and the Department of Justice to improve policies and procedures in the child welfare system and to develop future policy and legislative agendas. Quarterly meetings with DSCYF helped to advance issues such as case management decisions, caseloads, placements, advanced training, permanency, and system challenges.

OCA also continues to partner with Family Court to contract with a CPAC Data Analyst, who has worked with system partners to review and analyze child welfare data, and staff the CPAC Data Utilization Committee and Education Data Workgroup. The contractor and OCA staff have worked with OCA's partners to develop and maintain efficient processes for the collection and analysis of data to report the current trends on a consistent basis to CPAC and other agencies upon request. Family Court, through federal funding, is also committed to assisting OCA in securing a data management system.

## Donations

OCA received many generous donations from individuals and community agencies this past fiscal year, including Kind to Kids. OCA has been fortunate each year to be the continued recipient of the *Transform One Unique Child's Heart (TOUCH) Program*, a joint project of the Christiana Rotary Club and Wells Fargo. Staff continued to partner with this program on behalf of OCA, which provided backpacks to nearly 150 children to start school and holiday gifts for more than 300 children during the 2016 season. TOUCH sent out shopping teams weeks prior to the holiday, working very hard to fill wish lists. Even last minute requests from volunteers and advocates, on behalf of their child clients, were able to be filled due to the dedication of OCA staff and its generous community partners. Thanks to TOUCH and Eastpoint Community Church, children received gifts including toys, games, clothes, shoes, educational items, sports equipment and apparel, electronics, art supplies, jewelry, toiletries and more.



Touch Program Backpacks



**Kind to Kids Blue Duffel Bag**

In December 2016, the Delaware Mortgage Bankers Association (DMBA) adopted the Office of the Child Advocate as its charitable recipient for its annual fundraiser. A special thanks to longtime OCA Child Attorney Volunteer Michael Isaacs for making the work of OCA known to this association. After an evening of silent auctions and speeches, DMBA donated more than \$4,000 to OCA to provide life experiences for children experiencing foster care.

In FY17, donations continued to be received in honor of Delaware Family Court Judge Alan N. Cooper, who passed away in 2015. During the 2016 holiday season, the Bankruptcy, Carpenter Walsh, Melson Arshnt, and Terry Carey Inns of Courts continued a very long tradition of donating money and gifts to OCA to provide youth with special opportunities and memories that would not be provided otherwise. Additionally, individual donors continued to make

contributions that directly impact the lives of children. Kind to Kids also regularly donates Blue Duffel Bags to OCA to support child clients as they enter foster care.

Through the generosity of these organizations and individuals, OCA is able to partner with DSCYF to provide life experiences and normalcy to children who have experienced foster care. OCA has been able to provide weeks of camp, clothing, senior pictures, sports equipment and team fees, attendance at special events, and computers. The office has sent kids to educational tutoring including math and reading, music lessons, and a variety of life experiences that children should have as a part of growing up and having normal childhood experiences. Thank you to the amazing donors who have made these experiences possible for our children.



**OCA Staff at DMBA Event**



## Volunteer Honor Roll

### CASA Volunteer Honor Roll

#### 30 Years of Service

Joan Heller

#### 20+ Years of Service

Matilda Snable  
Gloria Sanders

#### 15+ Years of Service

Joan Boyle  
Shirley Bryan  
Betsy Corrigan

Beverly Flannigan  
Judith Miller  
Leslie Raia

Joanne Ryall  
Dorothy Warmack  
Balinda Wilson

Karen Young

#### 10 + Years of Service

Claire Brown  
Emory Buck  
Cardine Jones

Ellen Levin  
Veta McCarther  
Vanessa Minor

Nancy Mistia  
Christina Sailer  
Jean Simpson

Bette VanKavelaar

#### 5 + Year of Service

Patricia Abernethy  
Terley Alexander  
Diana Allen  
Jennifer Allen  
Michelle Anderson  
Trudi Kae Anderson  
Patricia Baines  
Richard Gray Banks  
Robert Barnes  
George Berkowitz  
Jennifer Blair  
Rahmanda Campbell-Golder  
Lois Clifton  
Henry Coghlan  
Selina Coghlan  
Dorothy Copes

Kitty Correia  
Candace Crosse  
Kim DeShields  
Gayle Dillman  
Michael Eisenhauer  
Aimee Elson  
Sue Eriksen  
Suzanne Feaster  
Michele Ginn  
Gloria Grantham  
Dennis Hallock Sr.  
Collen Harbison  
Starr Hargraves  
Lisa Hollandworth  
Nancy Home  
Edward Irvin

Michelle Johnson  
Elaine Jones  
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