



# Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2019

*July 2018 – June 2019*



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

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# Table of Contents

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## Contents

Executive Summary _____	2
Legal Representation of Children _____	3
CASA Volunteers and Contract Child Attorneys _____	3
Volunteer Child Attorneys _____	3
Child Representation Statistics _____	4
Child Welfare Policy _____	5
Training, Conferences, and Professional Development _____	6
Committees, Task Forces, and Initiatives _____	8
Child Abuse and Neglect Panel _____	9
Office of the Investigation Coordinator _____	10
Court Appointed Special Advocates Program _____	12
Law Clerks and Interns _____	13
OCA Partnerships _____	14
Youth Activities and Donations _____	15
Volunteer Honor Roll _____	17
Fiscal Year 2019 Staff and Contractors _____	21

## 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 needed to 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; to 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 all children in the custody of Delaware's Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF) through the employment of four Deputy Child Advocates (DCAs), seven 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 2019, 363 new Court appointments for children were made. OCA provided legal representation through Child Attorneys and CASA Volunteers to a total of 1,038 abused or neglected children throughout the year. On the last day of the fiscal year, 598 children were in the legal custody of DSCYF.

In addition to coordinating the legal representation of children, OCA's 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 continued to work with partners to improve outcomes for infants with prenatal substance exposure and support efforts to promote refinement of the multidisciplinary response to child abuse cases. OCA staff attended several national trainings and conferences on a variety of child welfare issues.

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 to play a vital role in the In-Depth Technical Assistance provided to Delaware by the National Center for Substance Abuse and Child Welfare. This collaboration led to the ceremonial signing of HB 140, also known as "Aiden's Law," which ensures that there is a coordinated effort in the community to support families experiencing substance abuse through the implementation of Plans of Safe Care.

OCA is extremely grateful to all of the individuals and organizations that support the children served by OCA through donations, volunteering and 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



CASA Coordinator Tahira Ayyaz with a client on her adoption day.

## Legal Representation of Children

Legal representation of children has been a central focus of Office of the Child Advocate since 2000 and OCA provides legal representation for every child in DSCYF custody. The agency is statutorily required to coordinate a program of legal representation on behalf of children. OCA utilizes 4 full-time Deputy Child Advocates, 7 Contract Child Attorneys, 259 CASA Volunteers supervised by 10 CASA Coordinators, and 282 volunteer Child Attorneys who are supervised by the Chief of Legal Services in the representation of the best interests of dependent, neglected, and abused children statewide.

## CASA Volunteers and Contract Child Attorneys

During FY19, 571 children benefitted from having both a Contract Child Attorney and a CASA Volunteer working together to represent their best interests. Two hundred and thirty two (232) CASA Volunteers partnered with OCA's 7 Contract Child Attorneys to represent those children throughout FY19. The CASA Program trained 30 new CASAs through multiple statewide training sessions. Numerous hours were also spent on in-service trainings of CASAs. Of the dedicated CASA Volunteer pool, 79 had at least five years of experience. Twenty-two of the 79 volunteers had ten years or more experience. One volunteer has 22 years of service. Contract Child Attorneys spent approximately 6,700 hours working in tandem with CASA Volunteers and CASA Coordinators. Staff spent over 13,000 hours supporting volunteers and attorneys in advocating for children, and almost 800 hours recruiting, training and retaining volunteers.

## Volunteer Child Attorneys

During FY19, 219 volunteer Child Attorneys actively represented 394 children. Of those volunteer Child Attorneys, 22 were new volunteers



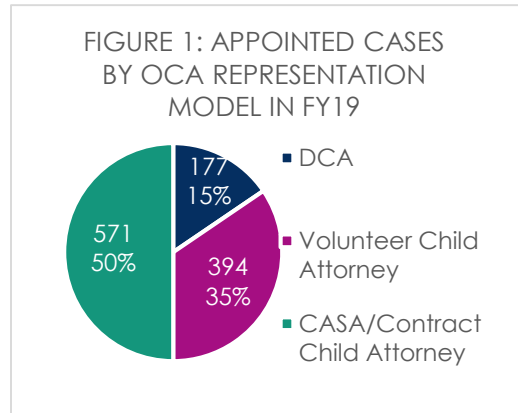
Leslie Spoltore, long-time OCA volunteer, receiving her DSBA award for her pro bono work

handling their first case. OCA's Chief of Legal Services trained 24 new attorneys in FY19. By the end of FY19, OCA had a dedicated volunteer pool of 260 attorneys, 188 of which had at least five years of experience. One hundred twenty-five volunteers had ten years of experience or more, and OCA now boasts 21 attorneys who have volunteered for at least 15 years. Collectively, over 8,000 hours of volunteer attorney time were dedicated to cases that closed in FY19. OCA staff spent approximately 1,000 hours training and supporting volunteer Child Attorneys as well as supporting attorneys appointed directly by Family Court under the OCA statute.



Access to Justice Awards Breakfast, October 2018

## Child Representation Statistics

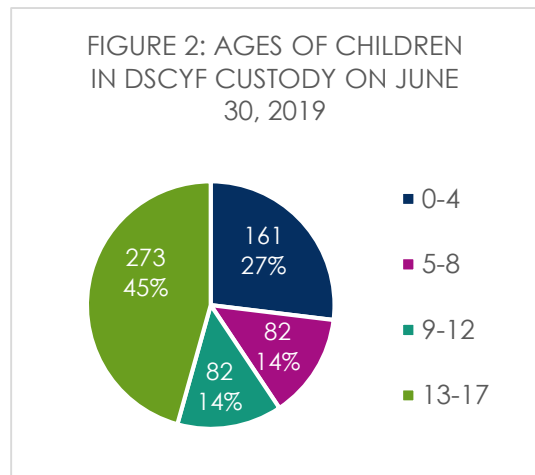


Throughout FY19, OCA provided legal representation to 1,038 children statewide. Five hundred seventy-one (571) of those children were represented by a Contract Child Attorney and CASA Volunteer, 394 were represented by a Volunteer Child Attorney and 177 were represented by a DCA (see Figure 1). Broken out by county, 230 children were represented in Kent throughout the fiscal year, 213 in Sussex, and 595 in New Castle. CASA Volunteers, partnered with Contract Child Attorneys, handled 58% of the cases in Kent County, with DCAs handling another 23% of the cases. In Sussex County, while the volume is notably lower, only 5%

of the children were represented by volunteer Child Attorneys, with DCAs representing 30% of the children and CASAs and Contract Child Attorneys representing the remaining 65% of the children.

On the last day of the fiscal year, 598 children were in the legal custody of DSCYF. This was a 17% decrease over FY18, which ended with 719 children in care. Two hundred seventy-two (272) of those children benefited from a CASA Volunteer and Child Attorney while the remaining 326 received a volunteer Child Attorney or a DCA. Of the children in DSCYF custody on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 128 (21%) were from Kent County, 126 (21%) were from Sussex and the remaining 344 (58%) were from New Castle. While only 18% of the Delaware population lives in Kent County, the number of children in care is higher at 21%. One hundred sixty-one (161) of the children were 0-4 years of age, 82 were 5-8 years of age, 82 were 9-12 years of age and 273 were 13-17 years of age. The younger children and the teen population continue to represent the largest numbers of children in care (see Figure 2).

During the fiscal year, OCA filed 363 new attorney appointments. Broken down by case type, 316 (87%) were DSCYF custody cases, 41 (11%) were for extended jurisdiction, 3 (1%) were for guardianship cases and 3 (1%) were in custody and visitation disputes. Two hundred twenty-three (61%) new appointments were made in New Castle County, 63 (17%) in Kent and 77 (21%) in Sussex. One hundred fifty-nine (44%) new cases were assigned to a CASA Volunteer and a contract Child Attorney, 139 (38%) to volunteer Child Attorneys and 65 (18%) to DCAs.



DCAs and Family Crisis Therapists spent over 8,500 hours on the direct representation of children in FY19, including representation of 20 children who themselves or their siblings suffered death or near death injuries as a result of child abuse or neglect. Contract Child Attorneys spent approximately 6,700 hours representing children and CASA Coordinators spent over 13,000 hours on the representation of children.

## Child Welfare Policy

Child welfare policy is another area in which OCA acts to strengthen the system that serves children and families. OCA is 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 380 hours on efforts involving child protection policy and procedure in FY19, and another 1,400 hours fulfilling their duties as staff to CPAC.

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, Data Utilization, Education, Legislative, Substance Exposed Infants and Medically Fragile Children, and Training Committees. For more information on the work of CPAC, please see the FY19 CPAC Annual Report.

Casey Family Programs Grant. During the first half of FY19, OCA remained the recipient of a Casey Family Programs grant to improve educational outcomes for children experiencing foster care. Since



Compassionate Schools training by OCA

transfer of this grant to OCA in 2016, CPAC has focused on two main goals as part of its strategic plan. First, CPAC targeted strategies and trainings to address the social and emotional needs of youth involved with child welfare or juvenile justice systems. Second, CPAC focused on efforts to improve interagency cooperation and coordination of educational services for all system-involved youth. CPAC has moved at a rapid pace to make significant progress on initiatives and collaborate with system partners to improve school stability and academic supports for system-involved youth, and particularly for children experiencing foster care. In January 2019, the grant transitioned from OCA to Children & Families First to pursue a new direction.

During the fiscal year, the Learning Collaborative met quarterly to share effective trauma-responsive practices with representatives from multiple schools across the state. OCA staff and contractors have also presented at the Delaware State Education Association Annual Conference, the Trauma Informed Schools Conference in St. Louis, MO, the National At Risk Youth Conference, the Jefferson University Medical School Trafficking Event, the Vision Coalition, the Western Sussex Summit, the Delaware Superintendents Annual Retreat, and Judicial retreats. Eliza Hirst presented along with the Honorable Peter Jones and Rachael Neff from the Family Court at the National Association of Counsel for Children. In addition, staff at the Department of Education (DOE) and students at the University of Delaware Graduate School of

Education have received training. The Learning Collaborative also partnered with the Delaware State Education Association for the Compassionate Connections grant funded by the National Education Association to improve trauma informed practices in five high-needs schools in Wilmington. As a result of its training on trauma to educators and Delaware school superintendents, the project has seen a continual decline in out-of-school suspensions for youth in foster care between 2015 and 2018. This data demonstrates that educators understand the impact of trauma on vulnerable populations, and the devastating impact that out-of-school suspensions can have on students in DSCYF custody and other systems involved youth. By the close of FY19, the Collaborative had trained over 5,000 professionals on the impact of trauma. OCA spent approximately 400 hours on administration of the grant and participation in strategic planning meetings and trainings.

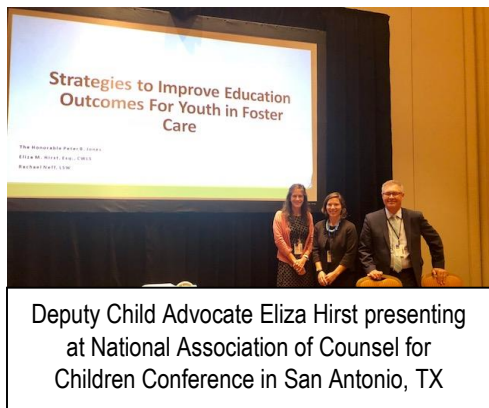
## Training, Conferences, and Professional Development

OCA staff attended several local and national multidisciplinary conferences, trainings, and professional development opportunities throughout FY19. OCA also conducted numerous training programs focusing on improving skills and knowledge in navigating the many facets of child welfare. OCA spent over 3,000 hours providing and receiving training in FY19.

OCA staff attended and trained in many national venues including: Protecting Delaware’s Children Conference, National Association of Counsel for Children Conference, Delaware Women and the Law Retreat, ABA Center on Children and the Law Conference, National CASA Annual Conference, 35<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Child Abuse, Ray E. Helfer Society Annual Child Abuse Pediatrics Meeting and the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Crimes Against Children Conference. Topics trained on by OCA staff and contractors included: *De-Escalation of Life Support for Children in Child Welfare Custody*; *Strategies to Improve Education Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care*; *Education Advocacy in the Courtroom*; *Infants with Prenatal Substance Exposure*; and *Coordinating a Multidisciplinary Team Response to Child Death, Serious Physical Injury and Sexual Abuse Cases*.



OCA staff also attended and trained locally on topics such as Stewards of Children, Trauma, Toxic Stress and the Impact on Learning, Supporting Education Stability for Youth in Foster Care, permanency and normalcy for youth in foster care, social security benefits, representing children in Family Court, “Understanding Family Court” for foster parents, substance exposed infants and mandatory reporting of child abuse. OCA staff presented at local law firms, in-state conferences, community agencies, Delaware State Bar Association, schools, and other system partner agencies. Staff also regularly present to community partners on OCA’s work.



# OCA Annual Report

During the fiscal year, OCA staff continued to partner with Division of Family Services (DFS) to provide onsite training to 306 educators and general professionals on their statutory, child abuse mandatory reporting obligations. Another 54 mental health professionals received advanced training on issues related to reporting. Additionally, online training was provided to approximately 15,073 professionals, many of whom were medical professionals, educators and other school staff. In total, 15,433 professionals received the state approved child abuse mandatory reporting training in FY19.

OCA held several in-house professional development trainings during FY19. OCA's full staff retreat focused on a number of topics including the Family First Act, OCA Serious Injury Protocol, Plans of Safe Care, Permanency Options for Older Youth and Professionalism. Also at the retreat, OCA recognized Rosalie Morales as the Employee of the Year, and several staff were recognized for their years of service to OCA and CASA. The focus of the Legal Services retreat, which included attorneys and CASA Coordinators, was an "Urgency for Permanency." This training focused on finding legal and relational permanency for all children experiencing foster care. The Permanency Roundtable model and the necessary steps to move a case through the adoption process were both discussed.



OCA attorneys at the OCA annual retreat



Governor's Cup 5K, October 2018

Staff celebrated their own physical health by participating in the Governor's 5K in October of 2018, and celebrated our children at Child Abuse Prevention Month in April of 2019, which was held again at Nemours/Alfred I.

DuPont Hospital for Children. More than 100 child welfare professionals joined hospital staff to renew their commitment to preventing child abuse. OCA was on hand with a table recruiting CASA volunteers.



CASA at Child Abuse Prevention Month celebration at DuPont Hospital for Children

Finally, OCA staff have been recognized by system partners for their outstanding work in child welfare in FY19. Eliza Hirst received the First Chance Delaware Foundation Award from First Spouse, Tracey Q. Carney, for her work around the impacts of trauma on youth, and Molly Shaw received the first CIP Recognition Award for her dedication and advocacy for her clients.



## Committees, Task Forces, and Initiatives

In addition to staffing CPAC and providing training, OCA's staff was highly committed to Delaware's child welfare system through a number of committees, task forces, and initiatives throughout the state. Many OCA staff participate in multiple committees and workgroups, some of which are referenced in this report.



Eliza Hirst presenting at ABA event in Wilmington

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 (IACOA), the CFSR Permanency Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) Workgroup, the CIP Parent Representation and Engagement Workgroup, the Social Services Intervention Project, Quality Hearing Surveys and the CIP Visit Host Guidelines. 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 served 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 served on a subcommittee of the Access to Justice Commission, and provided training on Family Court Appointments and on pro bono opportunities to new admittees to the Delaware Bar. Staff attended required grantee meetings such as the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Grantee Meeting and the Annual Citizen Review Panel Conference.



Melissa Palokas and Kelly Ensslin presenting about the CASA Program and volunteer opportunities to DuPont Hospital for Children staff

Staff participated in committees focused on domestic violence, juvenile trafficking and juvenile justice such as the Juvenile Justice Conference, the Juvenile Justice Collaborative, SMART on Juvenile Justice State Improvement Grant, and the Youth Advisory Council and Conference. Other committees included the STEPS Workgroup, Northeast Leadership Collaborative, CFSR Safety PIP Workgroup, Annual Progress and Services Review and Strategic Planning Annual Meeting, and CPAC's Caseloads/Workloads, Abuse Intervention, Data Utilization and Training committees, with an eye towards improving the overall child welfare system.



Tania Culley, Kelly Ensslin and Judge Jennifer Ranji presenting at the Supreme Court Access to Justice Summit.



Eliza Hirst and Kirsten Olsen (Children & Families First) receiving the First Chance Delaware Foundation Award from First Spouse, Tracy Carney

In addition to the significant work invested in the Casey Family Programs grant and the Compassionate Schools Initiative, staff supported the CPAC Education Committee and its workgroups, and worked with the DOE to refine and produce quality data on the educational outcomes of children in foster care. Staff have also collaborated with DOE on the First Spouse’s First Chance Initiative and the Trauma Informed Schools Opportunity Grants. Staff helped create a training on Trauma, Toxic Stress and the Impact on Learning, which is a nonacademic training available to educators for credit as part of the mandatory training requirement. Finally, staff have worked diligently to improve Court Education Reports and develop forms and guides for the appointment of Education Decision Makers.

## 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 over 1,800 hours on CAN Panel work in FY19. The CAN Panel, with oversight from the CAN Steering Committee, conducted retrospective reviews on 80 death and near death cases of abused and neglected children, which resulted in 264 strengths and 285 findings across six system areas. In November 2018, the CAN Panel’s long-standing Chair, Janice Mink, announced her retirement after 19 years of service to CPAC.



Tania Culley helped to recognize long-time CPAC member and CAN Panel Chair, Janice Mink, upon her retirement.



Child Protection Accountability Commission and Child Death Review Commission Joint Retreat

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 (CDRC) and its Executive Committee, the Delaware Violent Death Reporting System Advisory Board, the Child Abuse Committee at Beebe Hospital, and the Child Advocacy Committee at Bayhealth Medical Center. 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, revisions to 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 FY19 CPAC Annual Report.

## Office of the Investigation Coordinator

The Office of the Investigation Coordinator (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 serious physical injury, death, sexual abuse and sex trafficking of children from inception to final criminal and civil disposition to ensure a multidisciplinary team response; and 2. Gathers data on infants with prenatal substance exposure and their families to ensure a multidisciplinary team response for the creation of Plans of Safe Care.



Investigation Coordinator Jennifer Donahue presenting at the Helfer Conference, Orlando, Florida

To fulfill its charge of monitoring cases of alleged child abuse and neglect, the IC receives weekly and monthly data extracts from 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 data management system and DELJIS, and then opened if they fit within the purview of the IC. In FY19, the IC received 5,728 referrals from DFS, DELJIS and the CAC, and opened 1,971 cases to monitor. Of the 1,971 cases opened, 93% (1,823) alleged child sexual abuse, 4% (83) involved a serious physical injury to a child, and approximately 1% (33) were child deaths and 1% (32) were sex trafficking. On June 30, 2019, 1,851 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 child 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 CPAC and members of the MDT and making recommendations for system improvement in accordance with State and Federal law. IC participates in MDT Case Reviews four times per month, and began facilitating special case reviews in FY19. Increasing expertise around the MDT, and its positive impact on outcomes for victims of crime, in FY19 IC staff participated in the International Symposium on Child Abuse, Crimes Against Children Conference, and the Babies and Toddlers Trauma Investigations Conference at the New York City Chief Medical Examiner's Office. IC staff also attended Cornerstone Basic Interviewing trainings and Conducting Child Abuse Investigations training through the National Criminal Justice Training Center. IC regularly participates in the CPAC Training Committee workgroups, including DOE Title IX, MDT Case Review and CAN Best Practices, with a focus on further improving

the multidisciplinary response to child abuse cases, as well as assists with mandatory reporting training, MDT protocol training and planning the Protecting Delaware's Children conference. IC and law enforcement partners have conducted local and national presentations on the multidisciplinary response to child abuse investigations, including a presentation at the 2019 International Symposium on Child Abuse in Huntsville, Alabama in March, 2019.

IC 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 FY19, the IC received 690 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 Joint Committee on Substance Exposed Infants and Medically Fragile 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



35<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Child Abuse –  
Huntsville, Alabama

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. IC and DFS regularly partner to conduct local and national trainings with a recent focus on implementation of Plans of Safe Care statewide and DFS' leadership to develop dedicated staff for these complex cases. IC staff was invited to present on its work on behalf of these infants at the following



Abusive Head Trauma Conference,  
Orlando, FL

conferences: FRIENDS National Center for Community Based Child Abuse Prevention Grantee Meeting, in Washington, DC in July, 2018; Strategic Prevention Framework Partnerships for Success State Epidemiological Workgroup in Wilmington, DE in December, 2018; 35<sup>th</sup> Annual International Symposium on Child Abuse in Huntsville, AL in March, 2019; Protecting Delaware's Children Conference in Dover, DE in April, 2019; Ray E. Helfer Society Annual Child Abuse Pediatrics Meeting in Orlando, Florida, in April, 2019; and the Division of Family Services and Home Visiting Professionals Conference, in Dover, Delaware, in June, 2019. For the core work of IC, 3,286 OCA staff hours were dedicated in FY19 with another 253 hours devoted to the work of CPAC.

## Court Appointed Special Advocates Program

Pursuant to 29 Del. C. § 9005A, OCA is charged with implementing and coordinating programs providing legal representation on behalf of a child, including the CASA Program. The purpose of the CASA Program is to serve as a voice for Delaware’s abused and neglected children through skilled volunteers, community collaboration and quality representation that instills the belief that safe and permanent relationships will build healthy and resilient children. The CASA Program provides carefully selected, thoroughly trained, and responsibly supervised skilled volunteers to work in conjunction with the quality representation of a Child Attorney.



In FY19, Gwen Stubbolo, Delaware’s CASA Director, retired, and Melissa Palokas accepted the position as state director. Melissa’s vision is to grow the program so that every abused and neglected child will have a CASA Volunteer, and build a strong legacy for the CASA program. The CASA program hired 2 new Program Coordinators, Amy Hughes and LaTysse McKinzie-Mack within FY2019.



CASA training, Sussex County

During FY19, the CASA program provided supervision to 232 CASA Volunteers in coordination with 7 Contract Child Attorneys to ensure advocacy of the 571 children the program served. Thirty (30) new CASA volunteers were sworn in during this time. CASA volunteers donated over 12,000 hours to advocate for these children. In order to assure quality representation, skilled volunteers, community collaboration and permanent relationships, the CASA Delaware program operates as a triad method of advocacy. Each CASA Volunteer is assigned a Program Coordinator for supervision, guidance and training. Additionally, each case referred to the CASA program is also assigned a contractual Child Attorney to represent the child. The CASA Volunteer, Program Coordinator and Child Attorney work together as a triad to advocate for the child.



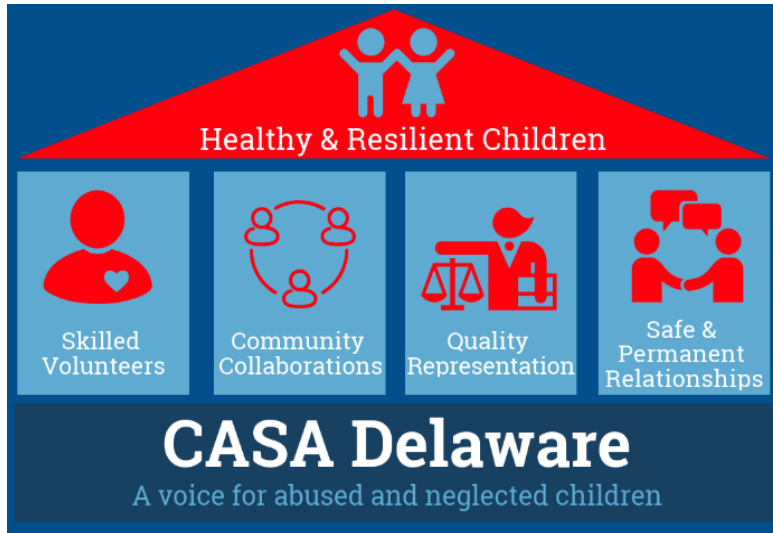
Recognizing CASA Volunteers

The CASA Volunteers were recognized at statewide luncheons in Dover and Wilmington sponsored and hosted by Friends of CASA, Inc. and in Sussex sponsored by Friends of Sussex CASA, Inc. We thank our two auxiliary boards for their continued support to our program. The partnership between both Friends of CASA, Inc. and Friends of Sussex CASA Inc. continues to grow and we are thankful for their continued support.



Recognizing CASA Volunteers

In June of 2019, the CASA program held a strategic planning retreat facilitated by a national consultant funded by National CASA. This retreat brought together child welfare professionals and CASA stakeholders to build a vision for the future of CASA Delaware. The key messaging discovered from the retreat participants was that CASA Delaware needed to build a solid mission for the future. Through collective work of the retreat participants, a framework was developed that focused on CASA Delaware's mission.



The mission of CASA Delaware, reflected in the graphic, is to serve as a voice for Delaware's abused and neglected children through skilled volunteers, community collaboration, quality representation, and finding children safe and permanent relationships that will enable healthy and resilient children.

The CASA program continues to be in good standing with the National CASA Association. In June 2019, 7 CASA program coordinators were able to attend the National CASA Conference held in Atlanta, GA. The CASA program was awarded a

National CASA grant to fund the strategic planning event in June and to cover a portion of the National Conference expenses. This was the first time in over 7 years Delaware's CASA program was awarded grant funding from National CASA.



Child Attorney, Jennifer Kline, at the National CASA conference

### Law Clerks and Interns

OCA benefited from the assistance of two law clerk during the summer of 2018 and two law clerks during the summer of 2019. 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 a paralegal intern and two social work interns. During FY19, law clerks and interns 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 FY19.



National CASA Conference, Atlanta

## 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. Meetings with DSCYF helped to advance issues such as case management decisions, caseloads, placements, permanency, and system challenges.

OCA also continues to collaborate with Family Court in a number of areas. OCA and the Court meet on a quarterly basis to review procedures, volunteer recruitment, court appointments and scheduling. Family Court has also continued to delegate a portion of its federal Court Improvement Project (CIP) grant to contract a CPAC Data Manager, 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 CPAC Data Manager, with support from the Family Court and the CIP grant, identified, secured and built a cloud-based data management system for the Office of the Child Advocate. The CPAC Data Manager and the OCA Office Manager continue to input data, build reports and manage the new system. OCA staff also serve on the CIP Steering Committee, attend national CIP meetings representing the child’s voice, participate in county stakeholder meetings and engage in developing CIP trainings and initiatives that meet the goals of Delaware’s CIP Strategic Plan.



Champions for Children event, November 2018

OCA also met with both the criminal and family divisions of the Department of Justice to review policies and procedures, establish collaboration and tackle system issues. Likewise, OCA has meetings with the Children’s Advocacy Center to develop common goals, address system breakdowns and partner for funding opportunities and support.



Aiden’s Law Recognition event at Beebe Hospital

## Youth Activities and Donations

OCA received many generous donations from individuals and community agencies this past fiscal year. Kind to Kids routinely provides OCA with their signature Blue Duffle Bags to be provided to OCA clients. They have also provided homemade blankets to be distributed to children when they enter foster care. These contributions are always well received by the volunteers, children and social workers.

OCA has also been fortunate for nearly a decade to be the 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 collaborate with this program on behalf of OCA, which provided holiday gifts for almost 400 children during the 2018 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. Eastpoint Community Church has also been a veteran supporter of OCA clients during the holiday, purchasing gifts for individual children's wish lists. 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.



OCA "elves" organizing holiday gifts from the TOUCH Program and Eastpoint Church



OCA holiday gift delivery

One of our many volunteer attorneys, John Fisher Gray, Esq., shared his thoughts about the holiday drive:

"Thanks for arranging this year after year. My client, Julian, has benefitted. He liked his toys this year, and will certainly benefit from the very nice winter coat (he hates the cold) and other clothing he received."

Our office received many thanks from foster parents of clients as well:

"Thank you all so much for the sweet presents for my sweet J and J. They are going to be tickled. I am so so so appreciative. Christmas morning is going to be absolutely magical. We are extra grateful for you and all of the wonderful people on our team. Praying hard that this time next year my beautiful girls will be forever family; they certainly already feel like they are. We are so blessed."





DMBA presents Chief of Legal Services Kelly Ensslin with a check for over \$18,000 to benefit children experiencing foster care.

The Delaware Mortgage Bankers Association (DMBA) continues to support OCA by raising money for the OCA donations fund. A special thanks to longtime OCA Child Attorney Volunteer, Michael Isaacs, for making the work of OCA known to this association. In FY19, DMBA held two events to benefit OCA. The first was a guest bartending event held in October 2018 at Brandywine Brewing Company. The second event was the DMBA annual holiday party held in December 2018. Between the two fundraising events, DMBA donated more than \$18,000 to OCA to provide life experiences for children experiencing

foster care. This was a significant increase from the money raised in FY18. The partnership between OCA and DMBA has greatly benefitted children experiencing foster care in Delaware.

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. During FY19, over \$17,000 was utilized for laptops for high school and college students, school field trips, tutoring, school supplies, senior pictures, homecoming and prom attire, summer camps, sports equipment and lessons, and essential items like clothes and baby supplies.

OCA was also able to use funds towards a student's ambition of wanting to play on a basketball team. The team not only showed the client how to improve his skill level but it also taught the importance of teamwork, perseverance, integrity, respect and humility. His CASA Volunteer, Karen Reuschlein, had some kind words to say about her client:



OCA Child Attorney, David Holloway, guest bartending to help raise money for children experiencing foster care.

“S absolutely loved having this funded. It greatly helped him increase his basketball skills for the season at school. He continues to play for a traveling team, at a community center and during the season at school. Thanks again!”

Thank you to the amazing donors who have made these experiences possible for our children, and thank you for continuing to donate to OCA so that these experiences may continue to be funded.

## Volunteer Honor Roll

### CASA Volunteer Honor Roll

#### 30+ Years of Service

Joan Heller

#### 20+ Years of Service

Judith Miller  
Matilda Snable  
Gloria Sanders  
Shirley Bryan

#### 15+ Years of Service

Emory Buck  
Beverly Flannigan

Ellen Levin  
Leslie Raia

Bette VanKavelaar  
Belinda Wilson

Karen Young

#### 10 + Years of Service

Robert Barnes  
Jennifer Blair  
Henry Coghlan  
Selina Coghlan  
Kitty Correia

Dennis Hallock Sr.  
Starr Hargraves  
Lisa Hollandsworth  
Caroline Jones  
Deloris Luckett

Constance Luetngen  
Nancy Misita  
Rose Nolen-Watson  
Edith Outten  
Jean Simpson

Karen Skurla  
Gail Truxon

#### 5 + Year of Service

Patricia Abernethy  
Tenley Alexander  
Diana Allen  
Jennifer Allen  
Marius Ambrose  
Michelle Anderson  
Trudi Kae Anderson  
Susan Arruda  
Patricia Baines  
Richard Gray Banks  
Bobbi Barends  
George Berkowitz  
Felicia Bowe  
Marybeth Ceello  
Lois Clifton  
Ann Couzens  
Joanne DiBella

Gayle Dillman  
Michael Eisenhauer  
Aimee Elson  
Sue Eriksen  
Suzanne Feaster  
Diane Fleming  
Maude Gloré  
Janet Gordon  
Colleen Harbison  
Nancy Horne  
Edward Irvin  
Marsha Jendrewski  
Michelle Johnson  
Elaine Jones  
Deborah Koppes  
Patricia Lanham  
Anthony Lewis Sr.

Kathleen Lock  
John Loehr  
Alan Machtinger  
Donald Miller  
Laura McGowan  
Rebecca Moody  
Sheron Moody  
Dorothy Nicholson  
Bernard Nowell  
Susan O'Doherty  
Maureen Rayborn  
Karen Reuschlein  
Erin Elizabeth Rich  
Jeanne Riley  
Susan Rohrbacher  
Rhonda Rolfes  
Amina Saunders

Nathan Lou Schloss  
Carroll Shannon  
Suzanne Shealy  
Dana Silverman  
Geraldine Storan  
Cristian Tijerino  
Daneen Tucker  
Marguerite Veney  
Andrea Volpe  
Nichole Welling  
H. Richard White  
Cassandra Wilkerson  
Annetrea Wilkins  
Bruce Wyngaard  
Elvida Yoder

## CASA Volunteers

Jessica Acito  
Lauren Allgood  
Elizabeth Baker  
Patricia Barnes  
James R. Beirnes  
Barbara Berrick  
Donna Bond  
Thirwall Bonham  
Amy Brackin  
Mary Ann Brosso  
Jennifer Brown-Davis  
Lyn-Diane Budd  
Linda Busacca  
Peggy Butler  
Kiesha Canon  
Lane Carter  
Jessica Clampitt  
Kevin Clark  
Kristen Clark  
Eschalla Clarke  
Carmel Colica  
Nancy Commisso  
Nancy Contel  
Bruce Conway  
Janet R. Cornwell  
Joe Anne H. Corwin  
Carole Cotman  
Lisa Crimm  
Darlene Dahling  
Christine deBrabander  
Carrie DeVaughn  
Theresa Doherty  
Rebecca Drummond  
Nancy Dunn

Laurie Evans  
Amanda Flagg  
Brandy Forston  
Toni Gehman  
Jessica Glass  
Mindy Goss  
Margaret Hannan  
Mark Hare  
Thomas Harris  
Belinda Harrison  
Deborah Hartnett  
Denise Hoban  
Kimberly Holm  
Denise Sylvia Hubbell  
Karen Ingram  
Patricia Jackson  
Leah Jaffee  
Delia Joseph  
Evelyn Kauffman  
Deanna Killen  
Paul Marti King  
Marjorie Kobin  
Kathleen Koster  
Jody Kusek  
John Kusek  
Tiffany Jean Lacy  
Marietta Laporte  
Diane C. Latocha  
Michelle Lauer  
Laura Lee  
Linda Sue Lett  
Nancy Maldeis  
Patricia Mangini  
Mary Marchegiano

George Marshack  
Pam Marshack  
Anne Martelli  
Malinda Maslo  
Sharon McBride-Howard  
Brooke McCabe  
Margaret McCloskey  
Helene McKinny  
Leann Moore  
Robert George Myers  
Marrissa Nardo  
Weston Nellius  
Lynne Nickel  
Deborah O'Brien  
Maureen O'Brien  
Biola Ojedokun  
Jackie L. Onwu  
Linda Owings  
Marie Therese Peters  
Lucille Pollard  
Mary Mackenzie Priapi  
Dell Printz  
Elizabeth Raney  
Erin Elizabeth Rich  
Velma Richardson-Graziano  
Beverly Rickards  
Craig Rinschler  
Dianne Rogers  
Barbara Roos  
Dennis Edward  
Rozumalski  
Nathan Lou Schloss  
Diane Senerth

Robert Sherrell  
Michelle Smith  
Priscilla Sorrell  
Deb Spandikow  
Pamela Spencer  
Lauren Staley  
Regina Starr  
Richard Sulkovsky  
Yvette Sullivan  
Marcie Tauber  
Allison Taylor  
Eileen Taylor  
Gary Tennant  
Virginia Terczak  
Anita Thorpe  
Tonya Thorpe  
Kathy Tilghman  
Gwendolyn Trammell  
Martina Travis  
Rachael VerNooy  
Andrea Volpe  
Dorothy Walker  
Sarah Walsh  
Jennifer Whitehead  
Annetrea Wilkins  
Joy Wolven  
Sarah Wooten  
Uma Yanamandra  
Marlene Zeleny  
Cathy Zimmerman  
Allan Zoeller

## Volunteer Child Attorney Honor Roll

### 15+ Years of Service

Derek Abbott, Esq.	Mike Eaton, Esq.	Judy Jones, Esq.	Tamara Sampson, Esq.
Susan D. Ament, Esq.	Margaret England, Esq.	Eleanor Kiesel, Esq.	Thomas Shellenberger, Esq.
John C. Andrade, Esq.	Glynis Gibson, Esq.	Gretchen Knight, Esq.	Lisa Stark, Esq.
John Balaguer, Esq.	William Gonser Jr., Esq.	Gregory Ladner, Esq.	Gregory Taylor, Esq.
Shakuntla Bhaya, Esq.	Todd Goodman, Esq.	Kathryn Laffey, Esq.	Patricia Urban, Esq.
Curtis Bounds, Esq.	Brian Gottesman, Esq.	Lewis Lazarus., Esq.	Elizabeth Weinig, Esq.
Jennifer Brady, Esq.	James Green, Sr., Esq.	Mary Erin Mariani, Esq.	Patricia Widdoss, Esq.
Megan Cascio, Esq.	Thomas Grimm, Esq.	Carolyn McNeice, Esq.	Natalie S. Wolf, Esq.
Eileen Caulfield, Esq.	Jerome Grossman, Esq.	Bruce McNew, Esq.	Davis Wright, Esq.
Joseph Cicero, Esq.	Gerald Hager, Esq.	Stephen Milewski, Esq.	Lisa Zwally Brown, Esq.
Miranda Clifton, Esq.	Thomas Hanson, Esq.	Susan Over, Esq.	
Edward Curley, Esq.	Thomas Hauske, Esq.	Mary Ann Plankinton, Esq.	
Brock E. Czeschin, Esq.	David Hutt, Esq.	Richard Renck, Esq.	
Jill DiSciullo, Esq.	Michael Isaacs, Esq.	Joseph Rhoades, Esq.	
Shawn Dougherty, Esq.	David Jenkins, Esq.		

### 10 + years of Service

Jennifer Becnel-Guzzo, Esq.	John T. Dorsey, Esq.	Edward Kosmowski, Esq.	Michael R. Nestor, Esq.
Sean Bellew, Esq.	Timothy Dudderar, Esq.	Nicholas Krayer, Esq.	Ryan Newell, Esq.
Travis Bliss, Esq.	David Felice, Esq.	Carl Kunz, III, Esq.	Joshua Novak, Esq.
Lori Brewington, Esq.	Lauren Fortunato, Esq.	Tara Lattomus, Esq.	Jonathan O'Neill, Esq.
Nicholas Caggiano Jr., Esq.	Stuart Fullerton, Esq.	Timothy Lengkeek, Esq.	Sarah Pierce, Esq.
Shannon Carmean, Esq.	Andrew Gonser, Esq.	James Lennon, Esq.	Pamela Politis, Esq.
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Kevin Collins, Esq.	Ed Harron, Esq.	Margaret Manning, Esq.	Melanie Smith, Esq.
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Todd A. Coomes, Esq.	Michael Hochman, Esq.	Dennis Mason, II, Esq.	Chad Stover, Esq.
Kara Coyle, Esq.	Suzanne Holly, Esq.	Michael Maxwell, Esq.	Kara Swasey, Esq.
Kristen Cramer, Esq.	Thomas Horan, Esq.	Michael McDermott, Esq.	Scott Swenson, Esq.
Mark Desgrosseilliers, Esq.	Jennifer Jauffret, Esq.	Matthew McGuire, Esq.	Seth L. Thompson, Esq.
Allyson DiRocco, Esq.	Clay T. Jester, Esq.	Tammy Mercer, Esq.	Matthew P. Ward, Esq.
Nicole DiSalvo, Esq.	Judy Jones, Esq.	Eric Monzo, Esq.	Gregory B. Williams, Esq.
	Cory Kandestin, Esq.	Sharon Morgan, Esq.	Josiah Wolcott, Esq.
	Nicholas Kondraschow, Esq.		

### 5+ Years of Service

Bill Adams, Esq.	Matthew Bartkowski, Esq.	Christopher Blaszkowski, Esq.	Nicholas Brannick, Esq.
Meghan Adams, Esq.	Vera Belger, Esq.	Arthur Bookout, Esq.	Kevin Capuzzi, Esq.
Tiffany Anders, Esq.	Dean Betts, Jr., Esq.	Paul Bradley., Esq.	Albert Carroll, Esq.
David Anthony, Esq.			Marc Casarino, Esq.

Jeffrey Castellano, Esq.  
Lauren Cirrinicione, Esq.  
Santosh Coutinho, Esq.  
Rachelle Cutrona, Esq.  
Scott Czerwonka, Esq.  
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Kasey DeSantis, Esq.  
Melissa Dill, Esq.  
Mary Dougherty, Esq.  
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Kieth Ellis, Esq.  
Ryan Ernst, Esq.  
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Monika Germono, Esq.  
Thomas Gorman, Esq.

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Reneta Green Streett,  
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Stephanie Habelow,  
Esq.  
Susan Harron, Esq.  
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Kelley Huff, Esq.  
Travis Hunter, Esq.  
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Peter Kyle, Esq.  
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Karen Poppel, Esq.  
Dana Reynolds, Esq.  
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Tiffany M. Shrenk, Esq.

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Amanda Steele, Esq.  
R. Mark Taneyhill, Esq.  
Marissa Terranova, Esq.  
Bryan Townsend, Esq.  
Robert Vrana, Esq.  
Lawrence Wentz, Esq.  
Chandra Williams, Esq.  
Daniel Young, Esq.

## OCA Volunteer Attorneys

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Veronica Bartholomew, Esq.  
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Tiphany Cascella, Esq.  
Alaina Chamberlain, Esq.  
Alberto Chavez, Esq.  
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Sean Coley, Esq.  
Kristin Collison, Esq.  
Alexander Corbin, Esq.  
Brian Currie, Esq.  
Charles Davis, Esq.  
Meryem Dede, Esq.  
Stephen Della Penna, Esq.  
Anthony Dohring, Esq.  
Brenna Dolphin, Esq.  
Jennifer Ellsworth-Aults, Esq.  
Benjamin Esparza, Esq.  
S. Alexander Faris, Esq.  
Eliezer Feinstein, Esq.  
Stephen Ferguson, Esq.  
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Paul Fioravanti, Esq.  
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Stuart Fullerton, Esq.  
Kyle Gay, Esq.  
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Mary Kathryn Harmon, Esq.  
Sabrina Hendershot, Esq.  
Coleen Hill, Esq.  
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Shaivlini Khemka, Esq.  
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Andrew Meyer, Esq.

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Megan O'Connor, Esq.  
Morgan Patterson, Esq.  
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Staci Pesin, Esq.  
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Laura Readinger, Esq.  
James Reichert, Esq.  
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Aaron C. Sims, Esq.  
Holly Smith, Esq.  
Katherine Sullivan, Esq.  
Lilianna Townsend, Esq.  
Nicholas Verna, Esq.  
Randolph Vesprey, Esq.  
Raeann Warner, Esq.  
Margaret Wilks, Esq.  
Andrew Wilson, Esq.  
Elise Wolpert, Esq.  
Ping Xu, Esq.  
Brittany Yodis, Esq.  
Lydia York, Esq.

## Fiscal Year 2019 Staff and Contractors

<p><b>Tania Culley, Esquire, CWLS</b> Child Advocate</p>	
<b>Legal Services</b>	<b>Legal Services</b>
Renee Duval, Esquire, Child Attorney	Tahira Ayyaz, CASA Coordinator
Kelly Ensslin, MSW, Esquire, CWLS, Chief of Legal Services	Lauren Brueckner, CASA Coordinator
Elizabeth Fillingame, Esquire, Deputy Child Advocate	Megan Caudell, CASA Coordinator
Bonnie Gladu, Esquire, Child Attorney	Shana Cipparone, Family Crisis Therapist
Eliza Hirst, Esquire, CWLS, Deputy Child Advocate	Sam Clancy, CASA Coordinator
David Holloway, Esquire, Child Attorney	Jennifer Falkowski, Family Crisis Therapist
Mark Hudson, Esquire, CWLS, Deputy Child Advocate	Nakia Howard, CASA Coordinator
Melissa Hutchison, Esquire, Child Attorney	LaTysse McKenzie-Mack, CASA Coordinator
Jennifer Kline, Esquire, Child Attorney	Emella Kamara, CASA Coordinator
Al Lindh, Esquire, Child Attorney	Jacqueline Kemp, CASA Coordinator
Molly Shaw, Esquire, Deputy Child Advocate	Camille Keshishian, CASA Coordinator
Elizabeth Soucek, Esquire, Child Attorney	Melissa Palokas, CASA Program Director
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Administration and Data Management</b>
Angela Birney, Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) Review Specialist	Brittany Willard, CPAC Data Manager
Jennifer Donahue, Esquire, CWLS, Investigation Coordinator	Marissa Reed, Data Analyst
Kathleen McCormick, CPAC Training Coordinator	Stephanie Scollo, Office Manager
Rosalie Morales, MS, Chief Policy Advisor	
Jennifer Perry, Investigation Coordinator Case Review Specialist	

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Administrative Office

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[courts.delaware.gov/childadvocate](http://courts.delaware.gov/childadvocate)

