



EVERY CHILD HAS A CHANCE
– IT'S YOU.®



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

HILL COUNTRY CASA

2024 IMPACT REPORT

“Your entire group is so appreciated!
We cannot thank you enough for all
you do for our children.”

Susan F. Harris
Judge, Kerr County Court at Law

CONTENTS

President’s Message	3
The Challenge	4
CASA Volunteer Roles	5
2024 Statistics	6
CASA Programs	8
Funding	9
Peterson Visitation Center	10

MISSION

HCCASA advocates for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect by training diverse volunteers who create opportunities for children, youth and families to be successful.

VISION

Our vision is that all children, youth and families thrive emotionally, mentally, and physically with lifelong connections to caring and responsible adults, a permanent home, and a safe and nurturing environment where they have a sense of belonging.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I first became involved with Hill Country CASA in 2006 when I moved to Boerne, TX and my law practice included representing children in foster care and the parents from whom they were removed. Although having practiced child welfare law before moving to the hill country, specialized Child Protection Courts had only been in existence in Texas for a few years. I was knowledgeable of the involvement of CASA programs in the system, but was amazed that Hill Country CASA served every child that came into care in their four-county service area. I soon learned that often the best place to get a clear perspective and a more supportive response when either advocating for a child or parent, was to contact CASA.



Hill Country CASA is one of the few CASA programs in Texas that provides a volunteer for every child that enters foster care. Hill Country CASA has been able to help those children and parents who can make the necessary changes to be reunified. For those families that cannot be reunified, Hill Country CASA has kept a volunteer advocating for each child until they achieve permanency. Our CASA volunteers give time and heart – truly selfless gifts – to ensure none of these children get lost in the large and impersonal Texas foster care system.

The child welfare system in Texas has been constantly changing. Hill Country CASA has adapted to these changes and our volunteers work within the court system to advocate for these children's needs and best interests; prioritizing keeping children with family, so long as it is a safe situation.

As Hill Country CASA enters our 36th year of strong advocacy for our community's foster children, we thank you, the Hill Country community, donors, and volunteers, for your support of our mission's work.

Sincerely,

Charlie Wetherbee

Charlie Wetherbee
Hill Country CASA
Board President



A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE...

Why is CASA Needed?

1 in 4

Adults in the US are estimated to have experienced 3 or more ACEs.

<1%

Percentage of children who have experienced trauma who are removed from their home to enter foster care. The majority of children who experience trauma (> 99%) are victims, but they are without care.

20%

of the US prison population is comprised of former foster children.

58,120

total confirmed victims of child abuse and/or neglect in Texas in 2023.

Understanding Childhood Trauma

Childhood trauma is often described as serious Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines ACEs as all types of abuse, neglect, and other potentially traumatic experiences that occur to people under the age of 18. Examples of ACEs include exposure to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; physical and emotional neglect; and witnessing violence, serious mental illness, or substance misuse in the home. ACEs have profound psychological, physiological, and sociological impacts and can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being.

164

Number of child fatalities in Texas where abuse/neglect was confirmed in 2023.

4.8

children die every day in the US due to abuse or neglect.

#1

State ranking for Texas for number of confirmed victims of child abuse among 51 reporting states/districts.

8 of 10

of the leading causes of death in the US are correlated with high ACEs.

~60%

Percentage of children who have experienced trauma by age 16.



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CASA VOLUNTEERS

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers are everyday people from the community appointed by a judge to look after a child's best interests while they're in foster care. CASA volunteers are well-trained and work to address a child's needs around safety, permanency, connections and well-being. They represent the best interest of the child in court, help ensure the child is safe and advocate to keep families together when possible.

CASA volunteers learn about the child by getting to know the child's family, the child's community members (caregivers, foster care providers, doctors, therapists, teachers, etc.) and the child's legal team (their attorney and caseworker).



*CASAs come from all walks of life and a variety of professional, educational and cultural backgrounds - but all have one thing in common: **THEY ARE PASSIONATELY COMMITTED TO HELPING CHILDREN***



THE ROLE OF CASA VOLUNTEERS

CASA volunteers provide the court with objective information about their assigned child to help the judge make sound decisions about that child's future.

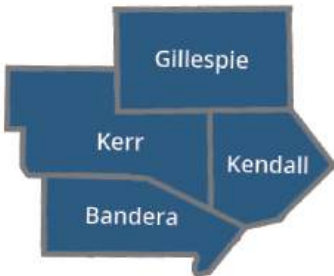
CASA volunteers get to know the child and learn information from everyone involved in their daily lives, including family members, caretakers, teachers, daycare providers, doctors, therapists, lawyers, and others with knowledge of the child's history and situation.

CASA volunteers use the facts they gather to report to the court, advocating for the child's best interest.

BY THE NUMBERS...

Hill Country CASA volunteers consistently provide an invaluable contribution to the wellbeing of children in Kerr, Gillespie, Bandera, and Kendall Counties. CASA volunteers dedicate hours to gathering crucial information, collaborating with caseworkers, educators, and family members to develop tailored recommendations for each child’s welfare.

Their commitment has a profound impact, often resulting in improved case outcomes, including safer, more permanent home placements. This selfless dedication by Hill Country CASA volunteers helps to bring hope and stability to some of the community’s most vulnerable members, empowering children to find brighter, safer futures.



Serving the Hill Country

4

Texas counties, serving an area that is home to 150,000 Texans



127

Children Served in 2024



Engaged & Active

53

Total Volunteers, 2024



Educating Service Providers

209

Registrants for Ad Litem Seminar



1,976

Hours Donated by
CASA Volunteers in 2024

54,058

Miles Driven in 2024



“When I get married, he will be the first invitation I send out, because [my CASA] is the reason I will have made it to that point in my life with success.”

- CASA Client

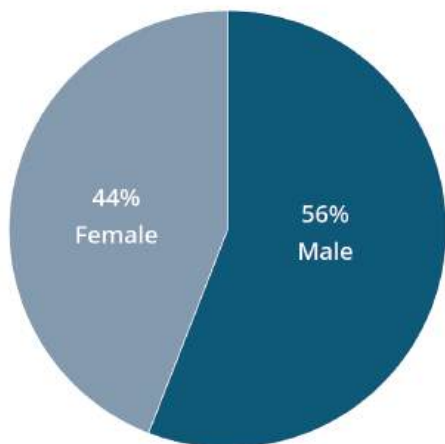


CASA

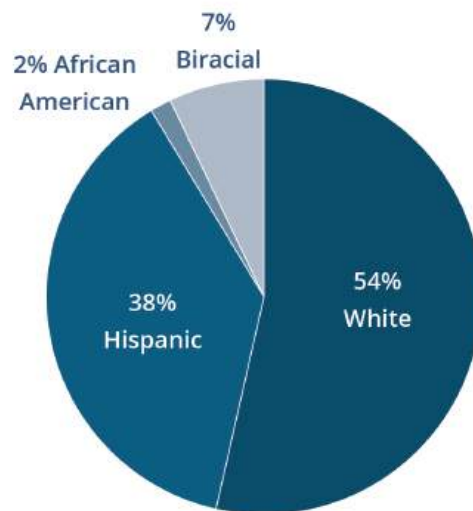
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HILL COUNTRY CASA

2024 RESULTS

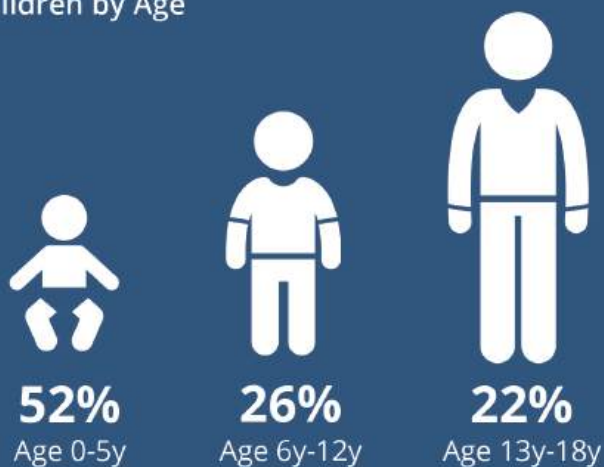


Children by Gender



Children by Race & Ethnicity

Children by Age



HCCASA Actions for Children

4,672

Logged Child Wellbeing
Actions in 2024

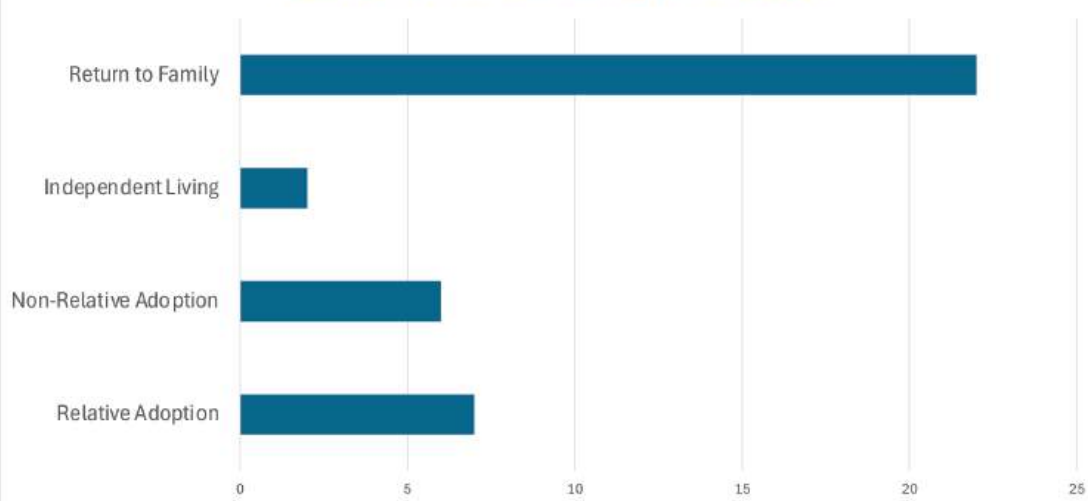
597

Logged Legal Advocacy
Actions in 2024

802

Logged Family & Community
Actions in 2024

Outcomes for Closed Cases in 2024



CASA PROGRAMS

In Addition to Our Advocacy Services



Direct Assistance and Emergent Needs

When children enter foster care, we prioritize placing them with relatives rather than in facilities. However, these relatives often need extra support to keep the children safe and healthy, more than paid foster placements might require. With our local child welfare system being largely virtual, CASA steps in to bridge the gaps, offering personal support such as cash aid and emergency assistance.

In FY2024, Hill Country CASA spent \$40,102 on Direct Assistance and Emergent Needs to address health, developmental, educational, and basic needs for children in foster care across our service area. This fund supports relatives and fictive kin caregivers in providing safe homes and assists parents working toward reunification by helping with education, job skills, travel expenses, and initial housing costs.



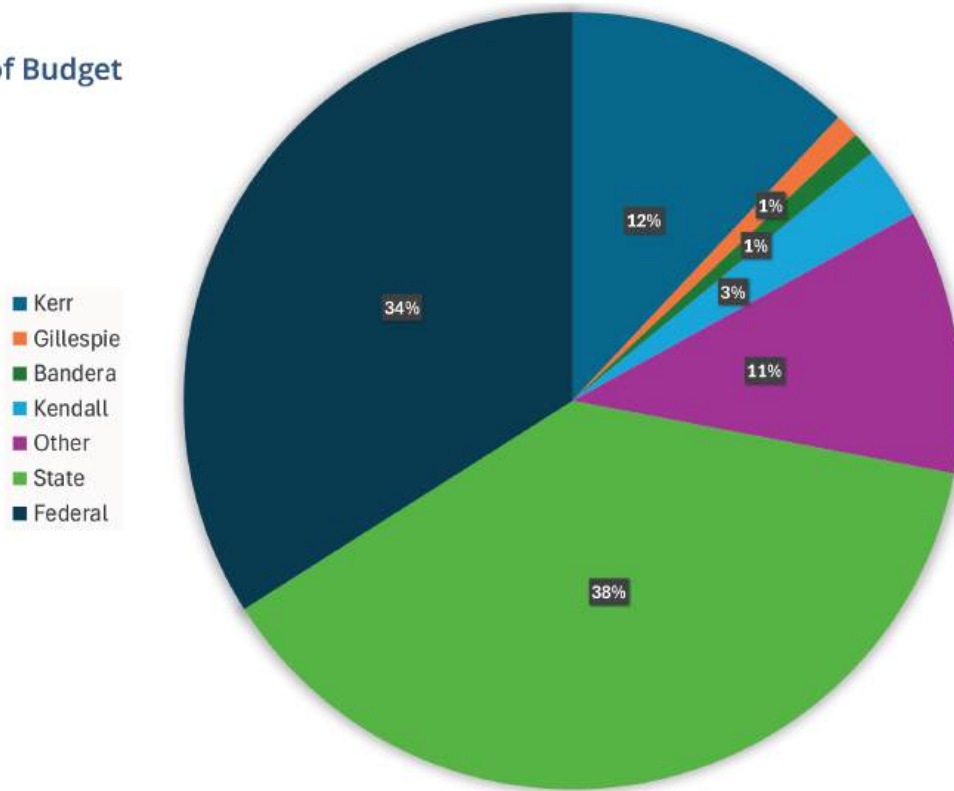
Ad Litem Seminar

For the past 15 years, Hill Country CASA has worked with the area Child Protection Court Judges to facilitate a two-day continuing education for volunteers and professionals working in the child welfare system. This training is registered with the State Bar of Texas for official CLE for our rural public service attorneys. This training provides volunteers, caseworkers, attorneys, and judges with consistent information that directly impacts the children and families we work with in the child welfare system.

This in-person training also provides a venue for individuals working in the child welfare system to build and strengthen professional relationships. It provides time for fellowship and collaboration in addition to education. These relationships have allowed us to create a culture in Gillespie, Kerr, Kendall, and Bandera Counties that is focused on family reunification and placement with relatives whenever children's safety is not compromised.

FUNDING

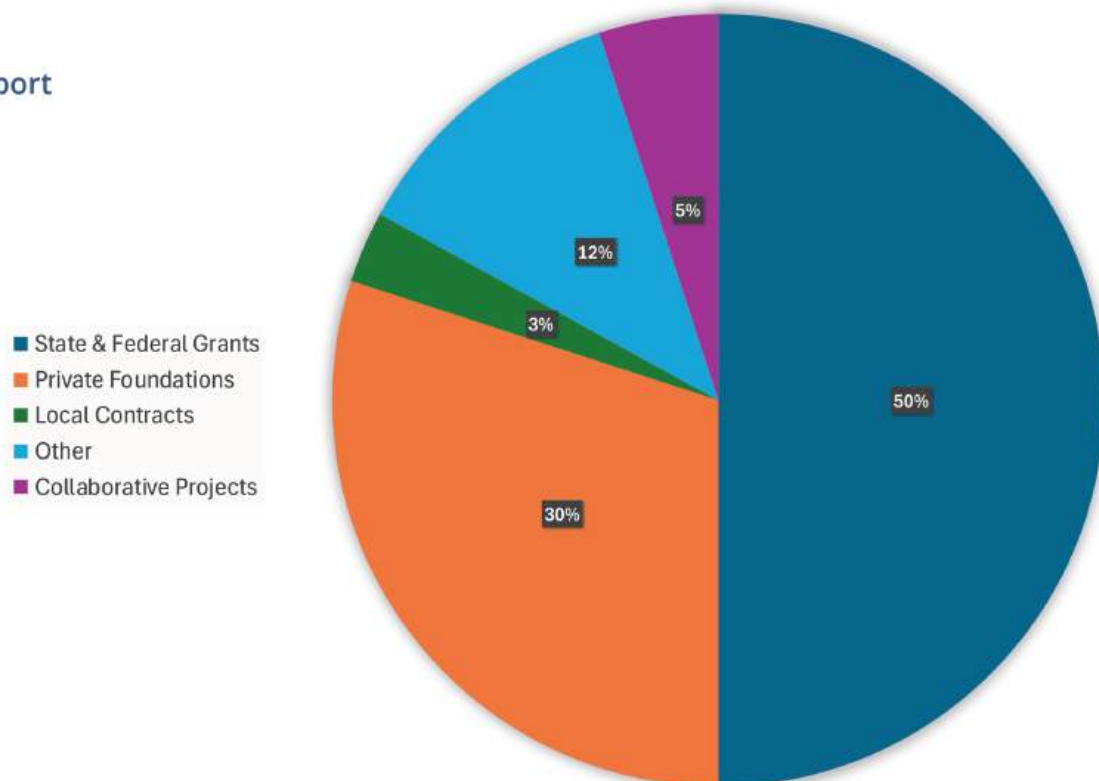
Support By County, % of Budget



Number of Children Supported, Based on County/Government Contributions:

Kerr (15 Children), Gillespie (1), Bandera (1), Kendall (4), Other (14), State of Texas (49), Federal (43)

Sources of Support



PETERSON VISITATION CENTER

A Powerful Resource for Children, Families, and Care Teams

The Peterson Visitation Center is provided by Hill Country CASA and is located adjacent to our offices at 309 Earl Garrett in Kerrville. This facility provides a physical space for any child in foster care, at risk of coming into foster care, or who is involved with law enforcement or CPS investigations and needs a safe place to be. We provide a safe, stable, and comfortable location for area children to visit with their parents, siblings, CASA, caseworker, and attorneys.



Hill Country CASA has collaborative working agreements with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, BELONG, Hill Country Crisis Council, and law enforcement agencies that allow them access to the facility 24 hours a day. Allowing children to be in a safe and comfortable environment if they are taken into foster care in an emergency or if they are removed from the scene of a crime minimizes the potential for additional trauma by having to wait at a CPS office or a law enforcement facility.

The Peterson Visitation Center is also the home of the Hope Closet in partnership with the Kerr Country Child Services Board. The Hope Closet stores physical resources including diapers, hygiene items, car seats, and other needs of children. These resources are available all the time to our community partners.





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Hill Country CASA
305 Earl Garrett
Kerrville, Texas 78028

830-896-2272
hccasa.org





**CASA VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT CHILDREN
AND FAMILIES INVOLVED IN THE CHILD
WELFARE SYSTEM.**

**CASA VOLUNTEERS INCREASE THE
WELL-BEING OF THE CHILDREN IN
FOSTER CARE.**

**CASA PROGRAMS ARE OF, AND FOR,
THE COMMUNITY.**

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