



**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

SOUTH MISSISSIPPI

CASA of South Mississippi

# Annual Report

January - December 2024



[www.casasouthms.org](http://www.casasouthms.org)

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**Harrison County Office**

11975 Seaway Rd., A140

Gulfport, MS 39503

**Hancock County Office**

644 Dunbar Ave.

Bay St. Louis, MS 39520

# CASA of South Mississippi

## STAFF

**Cynthia Chauvin**  
*Executive Director*

**Lauren Saucier**  
*Program Director*

**Tanisha Lamb**  
**Linda Perkes**  
**Ashley Tribble**  
**Tyree McDonald**  
*Advocate Supervisors*

**Lori Curia**  
*Finance Director*

**Naomi Strawhorn**  
*Victim Services Coordinator*

**Joellen Williams**  
*Administrative Assistant*

**Remi III**  
*Courthouse Facility Dog*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Myron Labat**  
*President*

**Andy Orzalli**  
*Vice President*

**Caitlin Cruthird**  
*Treasurer*

**Erin Lee**  
*Secretary*

**Lyndle Berryhill**  
**David Buckley**  
**Padrick Dennis**  
**April Parker**  
**Huey Stockstill, III**  
**Ty Wiltz**  
**Haley Wing**

**Heather Smith**  
*Pro Bono Counsel*

## OUR MISSION

To advocate for South Mississippi's abused and neglected children by supporting volunteers who promote safety, permanency, and resilience.

## OUR VISION

A community where all children thrive in safe and nurturing families.



## FOLLOW US ONLINE:



Facebook: [facebook.com/CASAsouthMS](https://facebook.com/CASAsouthMS)



Instagram: [@CASAsouthMS](https://www.instagram.com/CASAsouthMS)



[www.CASAsouthMS.org](http://www.CASAsouthMS.org)

# Program Overview

**423**

Total Children Appointed to the  
CASA Program

## Case Assignments

- Of the **423** children, **307** new children were appointed during this year.
- **352** children assigned an advocate
- **71** children were unserved during this reporting period.

## Advocate Service

- **261** Court Reports written by Advocates
  - **946** Recommendations were made
  - **95%** became Orders of the Court
- **133** Assigned Advocates
- **34** New Advocates Sworn In
- **2,891** Hours of Training Completed

**133**

Advocates provided

**7,057**

Hours of Service to Children

**153**

Children's cases closed  
in the reporting period

## Permanency

During this year, **153 children's** cases closed. Of these children, 94% achieved permanent homes through:

- 101 Reunification
- 35 Adoption
- 8 Durable Legal Custody

The outcomes for the other 6% were:

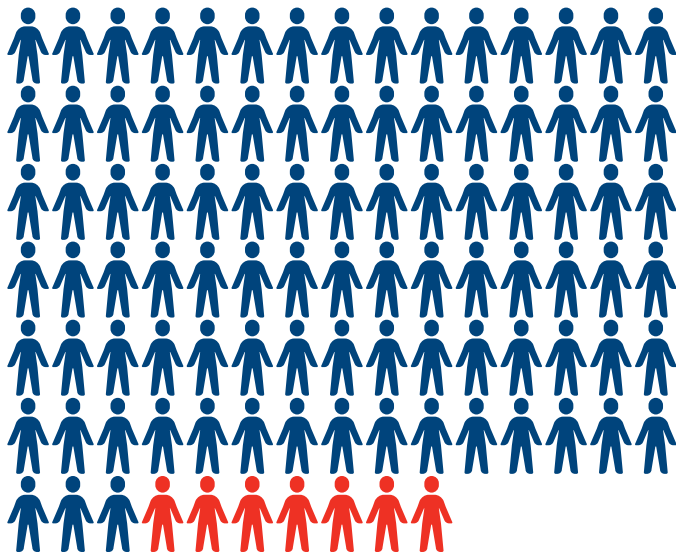
- 8 Children Turned 18/21 and were released from custody
- 1 Child Ran Away

OF THE CASES APPOINTED TO CASA WITHIN THIS YEAR, THERE WERE

**474** Allegations  
of Neglect

**67** Allegations of Abuse:  
1 Emotional  
11 Sexual  
55 Physical

# HANCOCK COUNTY

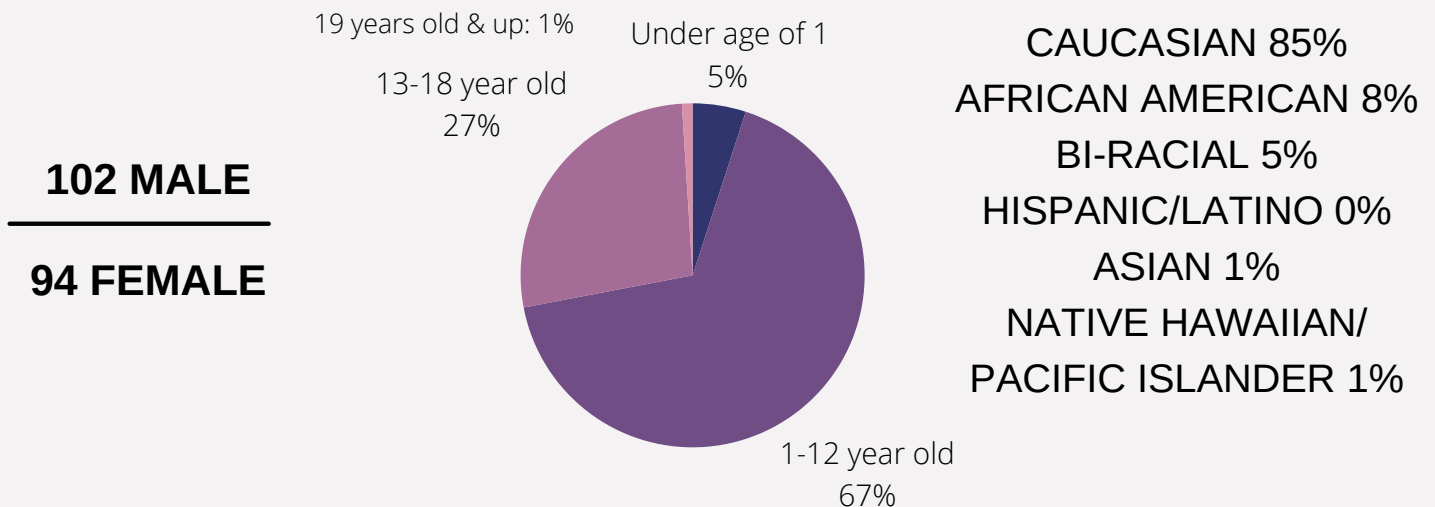


## CHILDREN APPOINTED TO CASA

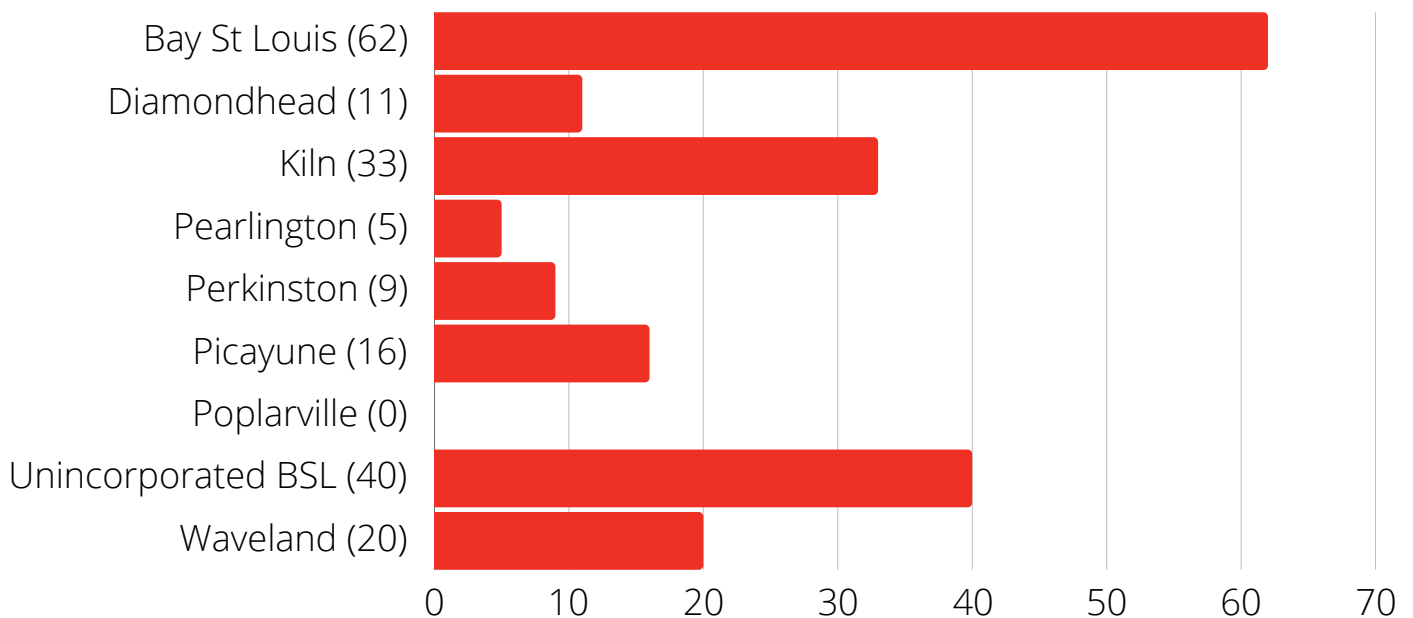
**196** children appointed to the CASA program  
**185** children were assigned to an advocate  
**11** children were unserved

83 children assigned to an advocate were maintained in their homes of origin

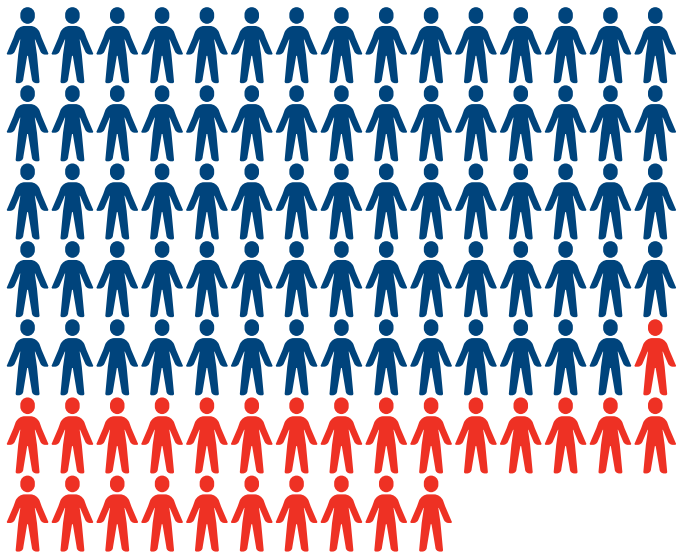
## CHILD DEMOGRAPHICS



## LOCATION OF ABUSE & NEGLECT



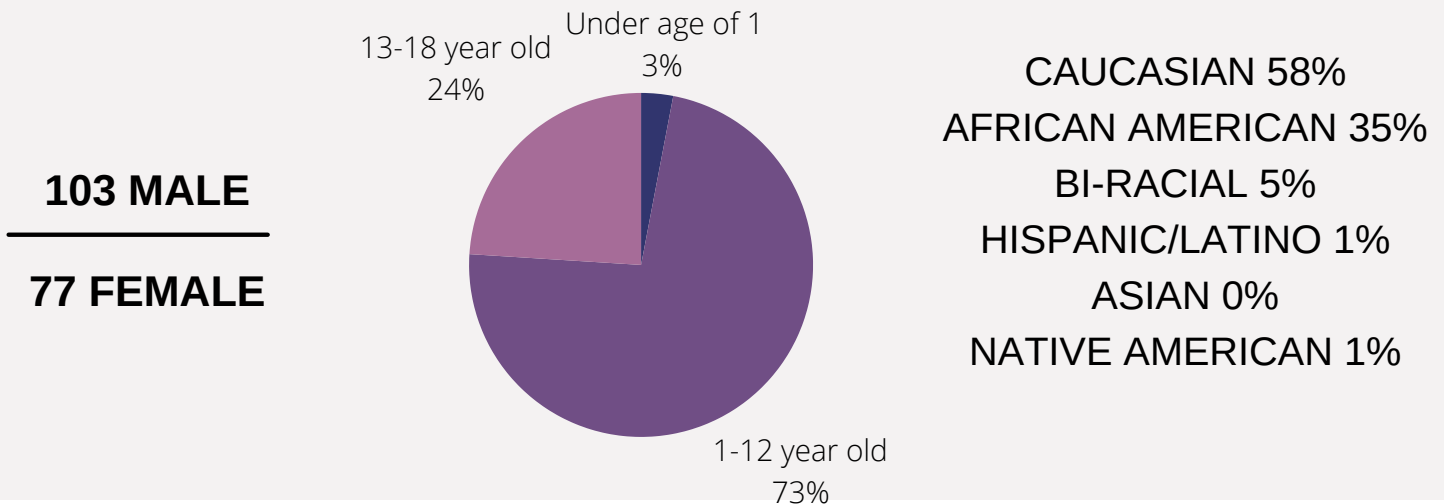
# HARRISON COUNTY



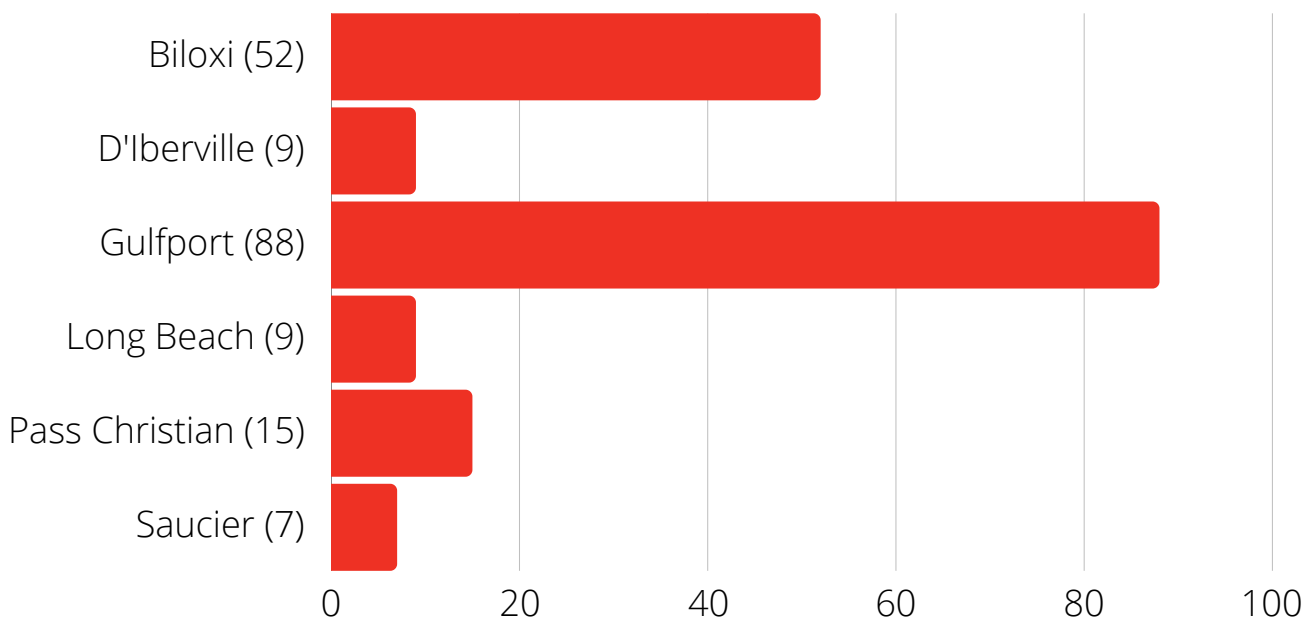
## CHILDREN APPOINTED TO CASA

180 children appointed to the CASA program  
 133 children assigned to an  
 47 children were unserved

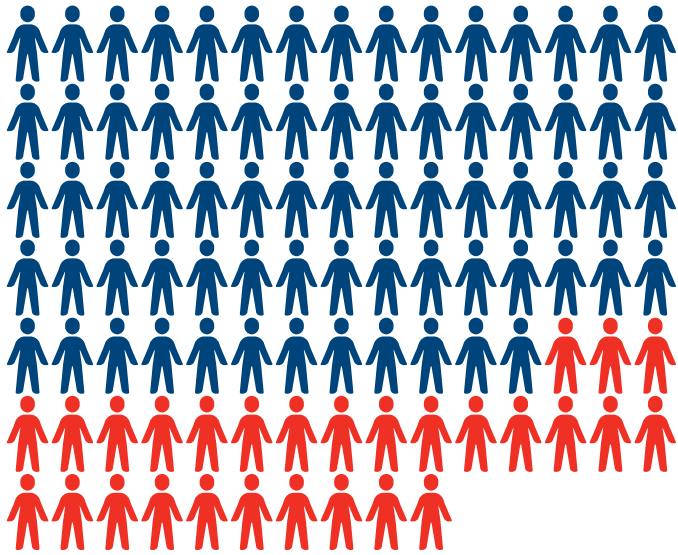
## CHILD DEMOGRAPHICS



## LOCATION OF ABUSE & NEGLECT



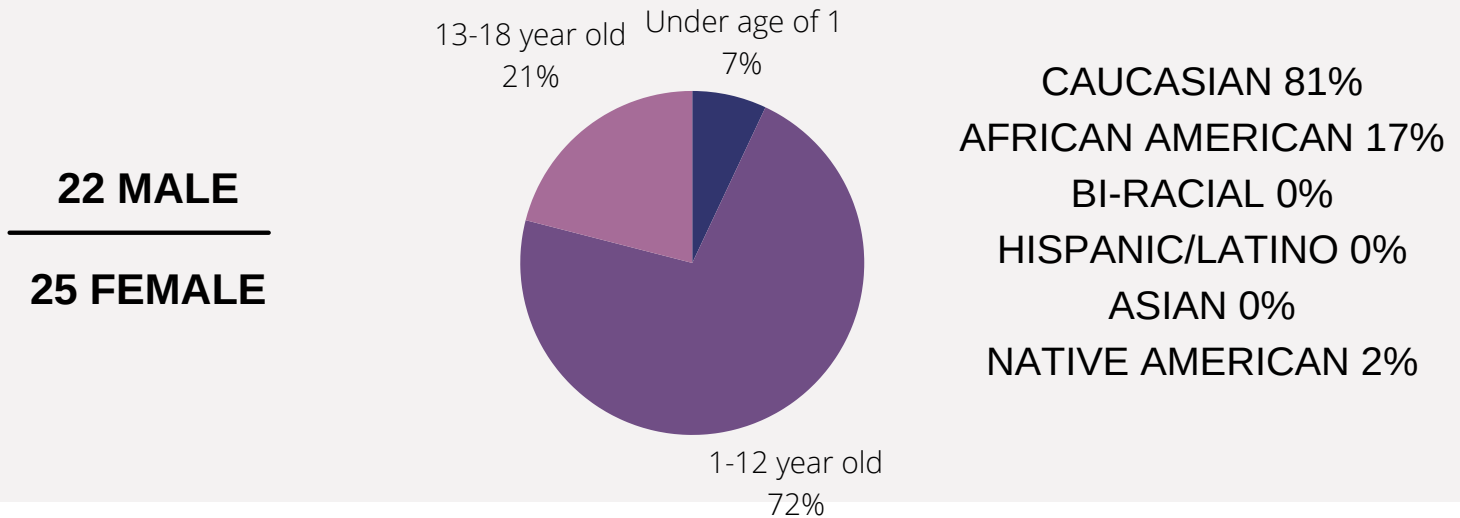
# STONE COUNTY



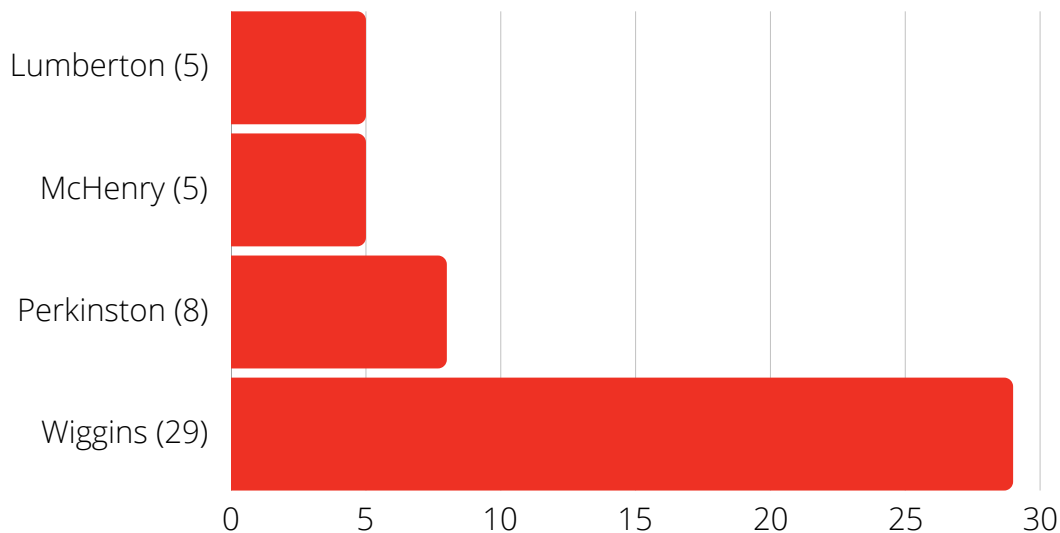
## CHILDREN APPOINTED TO CASA

47 children were appointed to the CASA program  
34 children were assigned to an advocate  
13 children were unserved

## CHILD DEMOGRAPHICS



## LOCATION OF ABUSE & NEGLECT



# Child Wellbeing Projects

## REMI THE COURTHOUSE FACILITY DOG

Remi, Mississippi's only Courthouse Facility Dog, received extensive training from Canine Companions®. Facility dogs like Remi are selected for their ability to calmly interact with people in a high stress environment. Remi goes to work daily alongside her handler Naomi Strawhorn, Victim Services Coordinator at CASA. While Remi primarily attends Youth Court with child victims, she may also accompany children to forensic interviews to enhance the fact-finding process. Off hours, Remi goes home with her handler and is a normal pet. Visit [www.canine.org](http://www.canine.org) to find out more about the Canine Companions program.

**“This victim’s testimony secured a guilty verdict. She **could not have done this** without Remi.”**

Staff with District Attorney Office



## TRUST-BASED RELATIONAL INTERVENTION®

Trust-Based Relational Intervention, or TBRI®, is a trauma-informed intervention designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable children. Victim Services Coordinator Naomi Strawhorn offers this training to help parents & professionals understand, address, and respond to the challenging behaviors of the children placed in their homes.

In addition, Naomi Strawhorn has partnered with other TBRI® Practitioners to create a multi-agency collaborative to implement system-wide trauma-informed training within the state of Mississippi.

In 2024, CASA of South Mississippi was recognized as a TBRI Ambassador Organization in partnership with the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development at TCU. This designation provides the state of Mississippi with a greater level of access to TBRI implementation resources.



CASA's TBRI work is supported by the Velkas Child Welfare Endowed Fund in partnership with the Gulf Coast Community Foundation

23

Number of child victims served by Remi YTD

45

Hours of direct service to child victims YTD

505

Professionals Trained in TBRI® YTD

88

Caregivers trained in TBRI Caregiver class YTD

# Advocates

## Hancock County

Adam, Margaret (9)  
Alexander, MaryBeth\*  
Altsman, Diane (7)  
Bailey, Sarah (10)  
Bair, Anne\*  
Baughman, Jackie (7)  
Berry, Julie (2)  
Bloom, Cheryl (8)  
Bourgeois, Brooke (2)  
Brdecka, Brittni (2)  
Brdecka, John (1)  
Breeze, Stacie\*  
Casano, Laurie (3)  
Cannon, Julie (14)  
Chargois, Victoria (2)  
Coatney, Barbara (9)  
Coleman, Joan (4)  
Cuevas, Janine (8)  
DeBardeleben, Evelyn (1)  
DeHaan, Laura-Michel (3)  
Demarest, Judy (10)  
Dollar, Beverly (8)  
Dubuisson, Heather (1)  
Dudenhefer, Carol (7)  
Ehrich, Alan (2)  
Ehrich, Trudy (2)  
Farrar, Lee (6)

Ferry, Jude (2)  
Fulwiler, John (6)  
Fulwiler, Madeleine (6)  
Gibbons, Barbara (5)  
Grapusa, Christine (7)  
Gray, Christi (1)  
Haberman, Victoria (3)  
Hamil, Cynthia\*  
Hebert, Amanda (2)  
Herring, Rhonda (6)  
Hess, Allison (3)  
Hilliard, Larry (1)  
Hilliard, Terry (1)  
Hubbs, Devin\*  
Jackson, Jessica (1)  
Jackson, Lorenzo (1)  
Joyce, Susan (6)  
Keller, Kathi\*  
Ladner, Christine ((8)  
Ladner, Katelyn (2)  
Lawler, Robinette (9)  
Legeuax, Lisa (1)  
Manko, Rodney (3)  
Maronge, Charlotte (3)  
McKenzie, Nancy (8)  
Melby-Codling, Chris (9)  
Meyer, Marcella (2)

Montjoy, Betsy (3)  
Mumme, Susan (9)  
Murana, Kimberly (1)  
Murphy, Candy (2)  
Murray, Joseph (7)  
Necaise, Kimberly\*  
Nichols, Lylie (8)  
Ortiz, Tish\*  
Reaver, Anne (1)  
Reilly, Kim (5)  
Richardson, Joy (9)  
Riviere, George (5)  
Riviere, Robin (6)  
Salaun, Linda (5)  
Sawyer, Robert (3)  
Searles, Judith (6)  
Shiyou, Carol (10)  
Taylor, Griselda (1)  
Taylore, Marilene (5)  
Tent, Stefani (2)  
Thompson, Tabitha\*  
Trentman, Lily\*  
Van Stelle, Christy (7)  
Vogel, Michael (6)  
Walker, Sharon\*  
Wallace, Susan (2)  
Warran, Alisha (6)  
Woods, Tammy (7)  
Young, Anne (1)  
Yovandich, Carol (1)

(#) indicates years of service  
\*New Advocates in 2024





# Advocates

## Harrison County

Allen, Andria (5)  
Barnes, Rebecca\*  
Benefield, Debbie (6)  
Bignoli, Joan (3)  
Bodden, Katina (1)  
Bonck, Patrick (11)  
Chambers, Linda (4)  
Charron, Moncheri (1)  
Conner, Tasha (2)  
Davis, Betty (2)  
Eady, Melissa\*  
Ezell, Rebecca\*  
Foles, Rhonda\*  
Fowler, Bria (2)  
Fulton, Denise (4)  
Gingerella, April (2)  
Godbolt, Loretta (1)  
Graves, Artina\*  
Hall, Felicia\*  
Hodge, Sharon (2)  
Howard, Sandi\*  
Hoying, Jim\*  
Hubbard, Christine (1)  
Kaiser, Elizabeth (2)  
Keeney, Sharon (6)

Langham, Hannah (2)  
Langham, Mark (2)  
LeRoy, Amy (2)  
Lewis, Anita (10)  
Lind, Donna\*  
Matthews, Donna (3)  
McGuire, Trace (1)  
Mitchell, Gerolyn (3)  
Moore, Diane (4)  
Murphy, Candy (2)  
Parkman, Nikesha (1)  
Peranich, Linda (6)  
Rafferty, Jimmy\*  
Relaford, Jenee (3)  
Renner, Melissa\*  
Richards, Brooke (1)  
Robinson, Stephanie (1)  
Rush, Diane\*  
Saldana, Maria (1)  
Shaw, Cindy (12)  
Shipton, Melanie\*  
Shirk, Linda (2)  
Simpkins, Amber (1)  
Smith, Diana (1)  
Smith, Melinda (1)

Thomas, Kaycee (2)  
Vitale, Bernadette\*  
Walker, Ronni\*  
White, Linda (4)  
Whitlock-Spivey, Jehlani\*  
Wilder, Ruthie (13)  
Williams, Erin (1)  
Williams, Glaudette (2)  
Williams, Jenny (4)

## Stone County

Cater, Kiersten\*  
Cobb, Cynthia (2)  
Gilbert, Teri\*  
Harrell, Allan\*  
Harvey, Charles\*  
Heyer, Rebekah  
Hildestad, Lawrence\*  
Hildestad, Lori\*  
Loose, Allison (2)  
Roberts, Stephanie (1)  
Shelton, Taryn\*  
Thames, Johnene\*  
Thomas, Alex (1)

\*New Advocates in 2024



# Advocates

# 155

## Total Advocates

### Race / Ethnicity

Caucasian 85%

African American 13%

Hispanic 1%

American Indian/  
Alaska Native 1%

### Gender

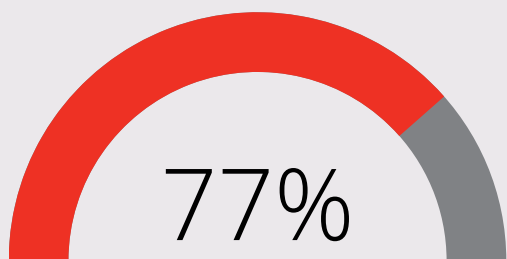
Female 88%

Male 12%

### Employment Status

69 Advocates are Employed

87% of these Employed  
Advocates work full time while  
volunteering with CASA



Volunteers Retained



63

Prospective advocates  
completed orientation

36

Prospective advocates  
completed training

34

Advocates  
sworn in

31

New advocates  
assigned a case  
in this year

# 2024 Annual Goals



## Goal 1

35 New Volunteers Trained & Sworn In

**34 New Advocates**

**97%**

Two additional volunteers were Trained in 2024 & Sworn In during January 2025

## Goal 2

75% of Children in Foster Care Assigned an Advocate

**267 Children Served**

**97%**

Additionally, 83 Children were assigned advocates while remaining in their homes of origin.



## Goal 3

75% of Recommendations became Orders of the Court

**898 Recommendations**

**95%**

946 Recommendations were made, and 898 (95%) of those recommendations became orders of the court

## Goal 4

75% of Children Achieved Safe & Permanent Homes

**144 Children**

**94%**

153 children's cases closed in 2024. 144 children (94%) achieved of safe & permanent homes. 8 children turned 18/21 & were released from custody. 1 child ran away.



## Goal 5

400 Individuals Trained in TBRI®

**593 Individuals Trained**

**148%**

# HOW TO HELP



## 1 Become a CASA Volunteer

In 2024, CASA is committed to recruiting **35 new volunteers** who are screened, trained, & supported by our CASA staff. Volunteering begins with sending an email to [lauren@casasouthms.org](mailto:lauren@casasouthms.org) to express interest and join an informational session to learn more.

## 3 Support Our Program Financially

Become a CASA Anchor--an individual who believes in CASA's mission & contributes monthly as a sustaining donor for as little as \$10/month. Scan the QR code below to donate as a CASA Anchor:



## 2 Connect Us to Your Organization

Connect us to your community organization, club, or church to let a CASA staff member come and present in order to raise awareness about the needs of children from your community.

## 4 Report Child Abuse or Neglect

In accordance with Section 43-21-353 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, "any other person having reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a neglected child or an abused child" shall make a CPS report as soon as possible.

The number to make a report is

**1-800-222-8000**

or you may file an online report here:

**[reportabuse.mdcps.ms.gov](https://reportabuse.mdcps.ms.gov)**

# Fiscal Stewardship



## DONATIONS

CASA is a 501c3 charitable organization and relies on community support. Your gift is tax deductible and makes a big difference in the life of an abused or neglect child. Donations can be made by check, online through our website, Venmo, or PayPal for a one-time donation or to become a CASA Anchor with **recurring** donations.

[www.casasouthms.org](http://www.casasouthms.org)

One-Time or Recurring Donations



One-Time Donations



## CASA'S MISSION PARTNERS

Mission Partners provide a deeper level of year-round support to the CASA Mission



### In-Kind Donors

Special thanks to these partners for donating time & services:

**Dr. West and Pet Haven Veterinary Hospital**  
**Edrington Landscaping**

## CASA'S GRANTS



**HisWay, Inc.**



United Way of South Mississippi

Made Possible by

The Members of Coast Electric



In Partnership with the Gulf Coast Community Foundation



Velkas Child Welfare Endowment Fund



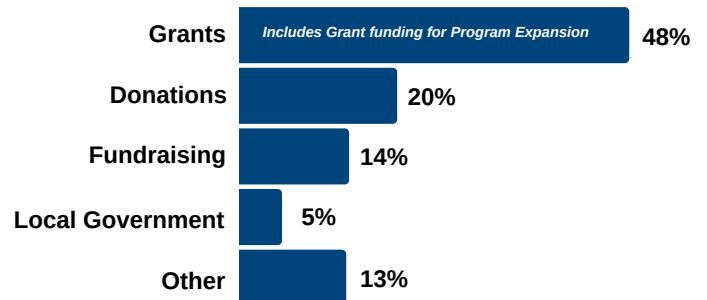
**Mississippi State Department of Health**  
**Office Against Interpersonal Violence**

Victims of Crime Act Grant | State Victim Services Grant



## CASA'S DIVERSE FUNDING

CASA of South MS actively pursues funding from a variety of sources to enhance financial resilience. Through diversification of funding streams and a strategic approach that avoids overdependence on one specific source or tactic, we can better navigate fluctuations and recover from any unforeseen challenges.



*Other includes transfer of assets from dissolved Harrison / Stone County Program*

*Percentages based upon Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Estimates*

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This project is also supported by the MS State Department of Health, Office Against Interpersonal Violence, state administering agency for the MS State Victim Service Grant. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the state.