



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

SOUTH MISSISSIPPI

CASA of South Mississippi

Annual Report

January - December 2024



www.casasouthms.org

Phone: 228-344-0419

Fax: 228-344-3209

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

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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



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



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:

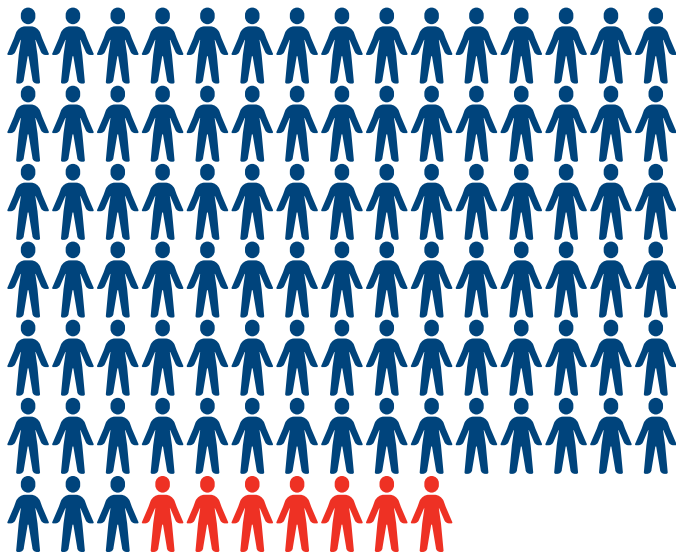
- 8 Children Turned 18/21 and were released from custody
- 1 Child Ran Away

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

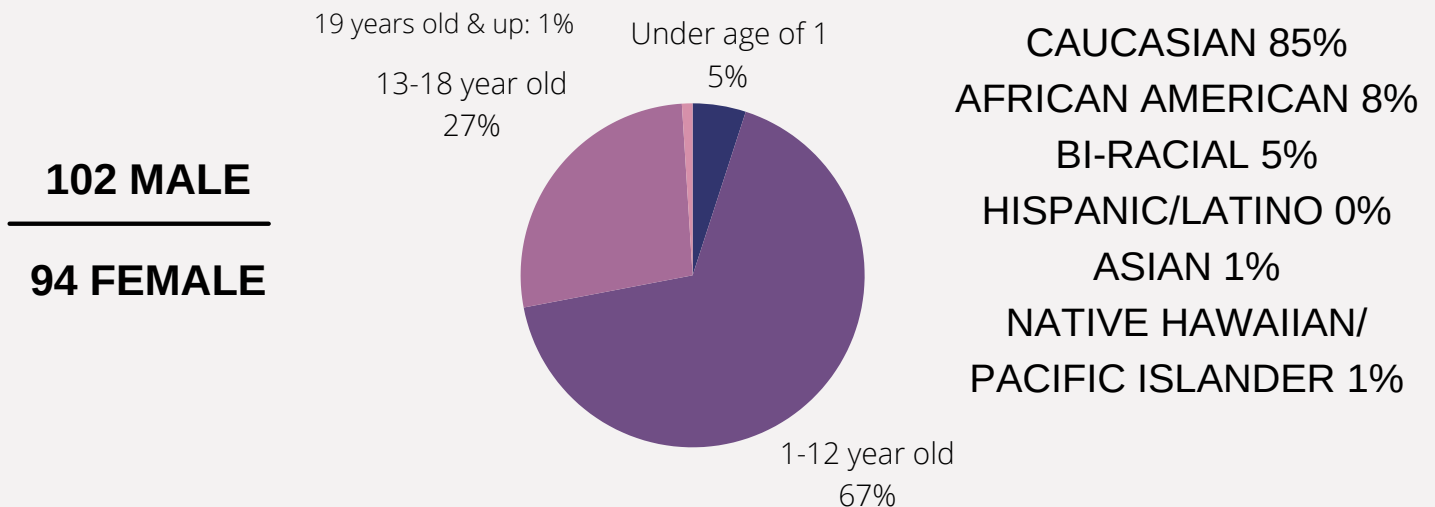


CHILDREN APPOINTED TO CASA

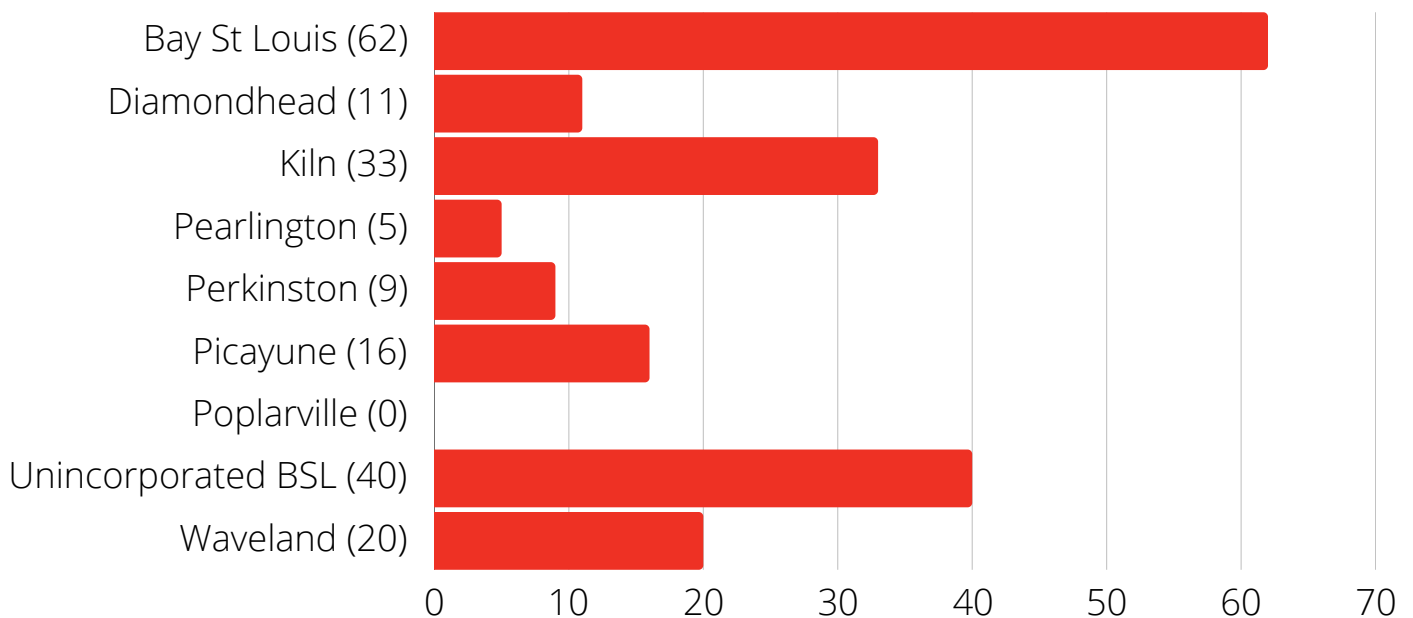
196 children appointed to the CASA program
185 children were assigned to an advocate
11 children were unserved

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

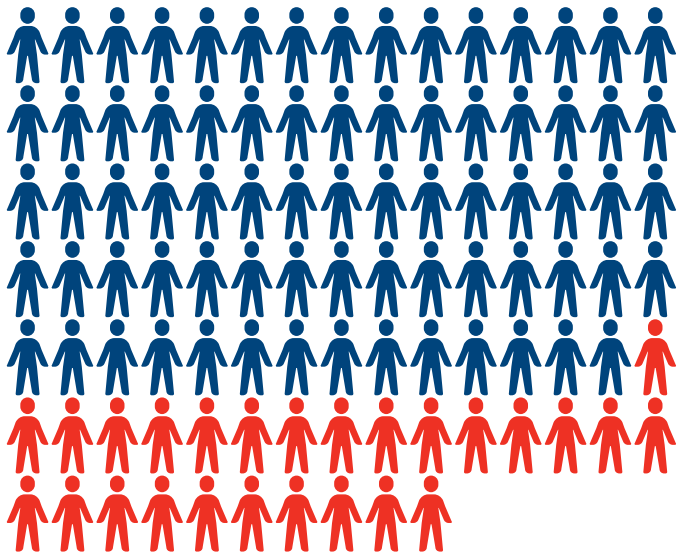
CHILD DEMOGRAPHICS



LOCATION OF ABUSE & NEGLECT



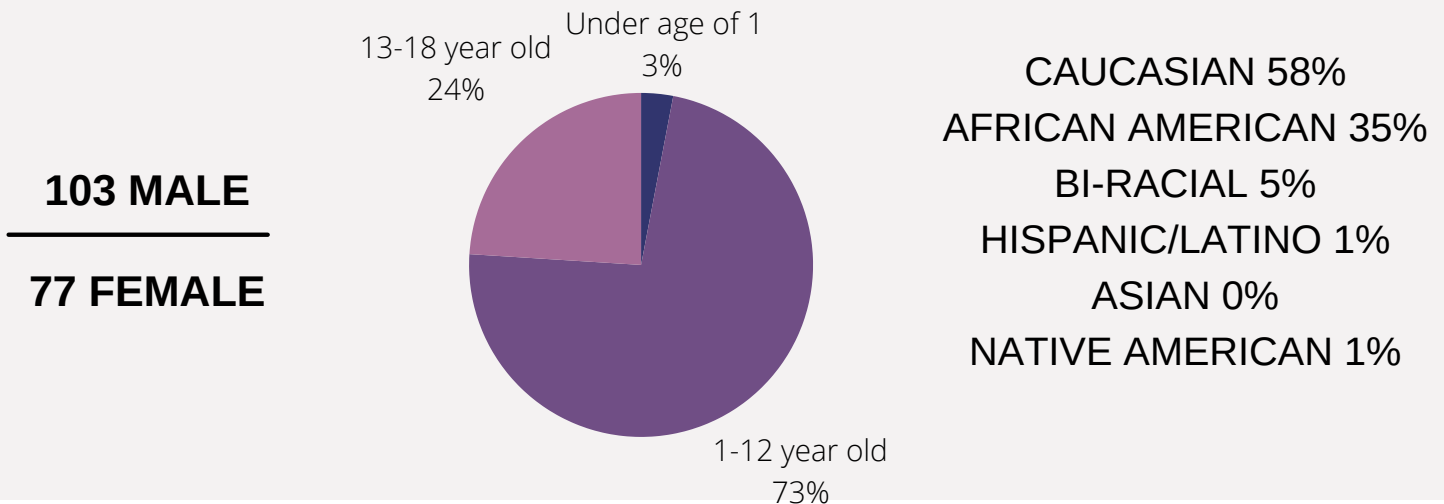
HARRISON COUNTY



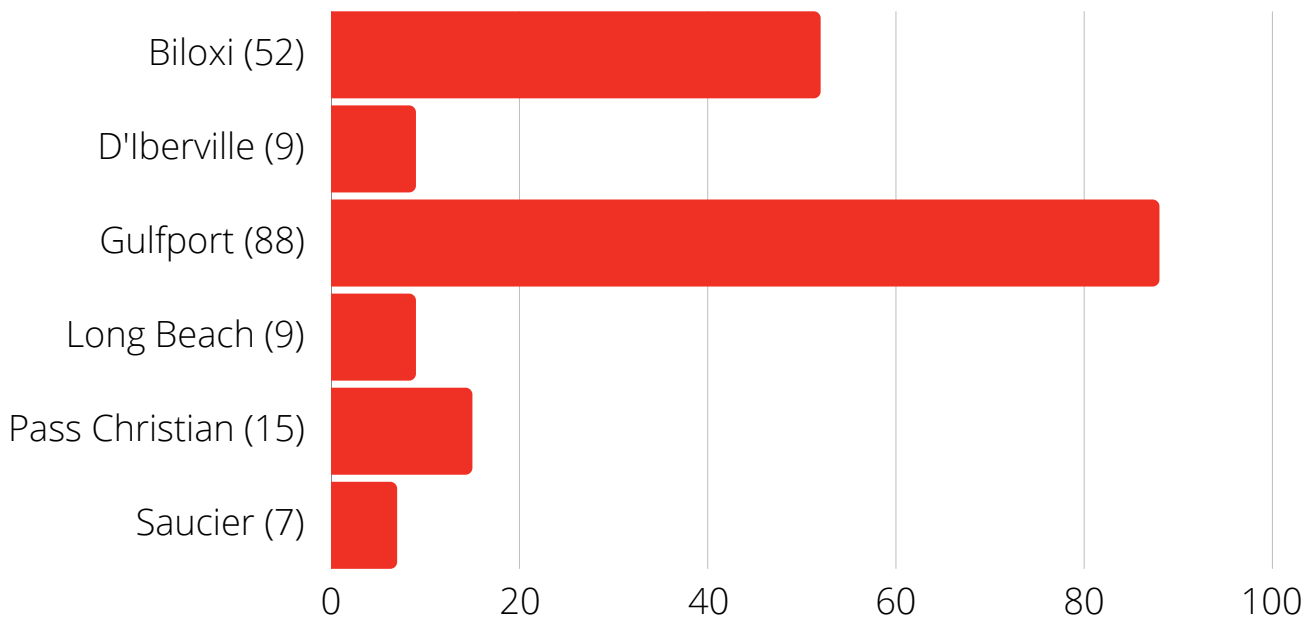
CHILDREN APPOINTED TO CASA

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

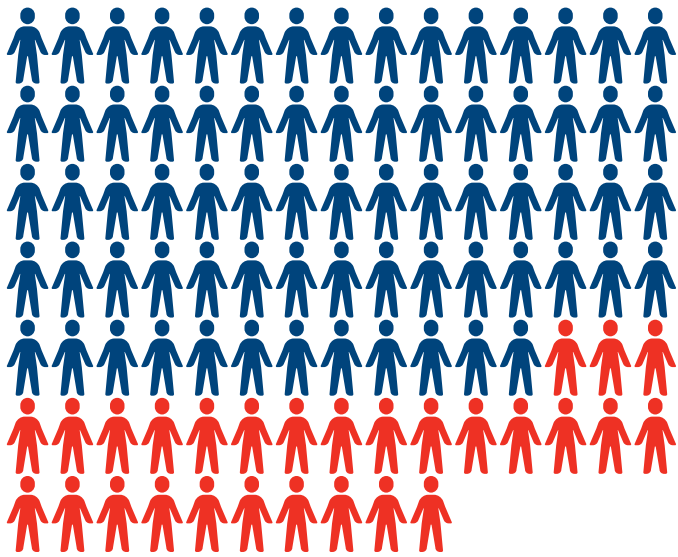
CHILD DEMOGRAPHICS



LOCATION OF ABUSE & NEGLECT



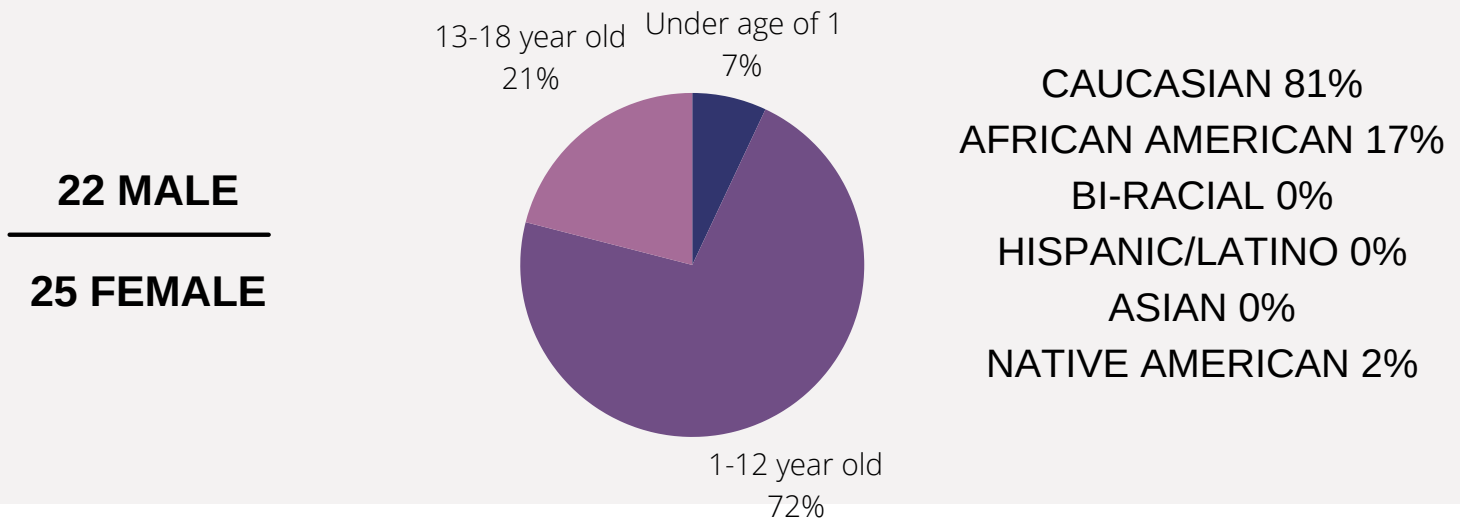
STONE COUNTY



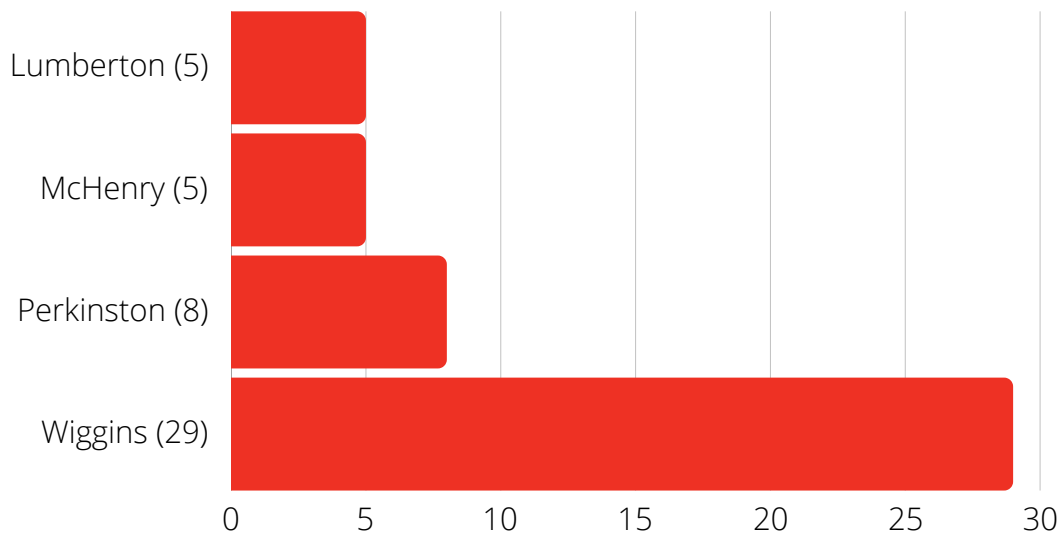
CHILDREN APPOINTED TO CASA

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 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, Victoira (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)

*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%

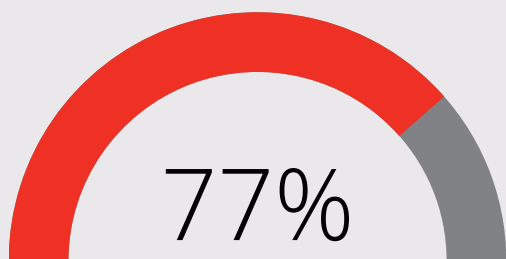
Male 12%

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 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.mdcpss.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

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



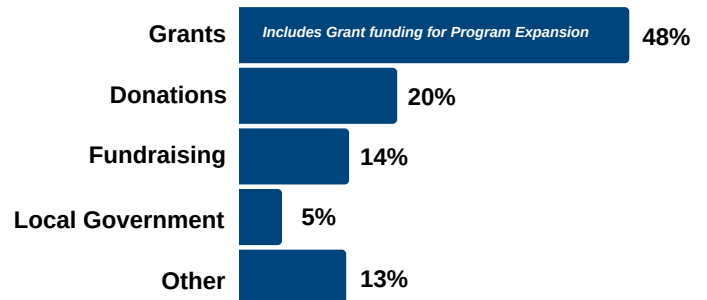
Mississippi State Department of Health
Office Against Interpersonal Violence

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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