



April 2011

Issue Alert: "Helping Victims of Child Abuse and Neglect"

Nearly a third (**32.1%**) of youth ages **14 to 17** have **experienced maltreatment during their lifetime** and **34.6%** have **witnessed family violence**. (1) When a child is abused or neglected, a variety of important adults may step in and advocate for the well-being of that child.

Every single adult in the state of Indiana is a mandatory reporter of child abuse and neglect. Any adult who has reason to believe that a child has been abused or neglected is required to immediately call Child Protective Services or law enforcement. Individuals who report suspected abuse or neglect may be anonymous and are immune from all civil and criminal liability, provided they have made the report in good faith. (2)

In cases where a child's physical or mental condition is seriously impaired or endangered as a result of abuse or neglect, the child may be considered a **Child in Need of Services (CHINS)**. This designation from the court is typically made if the parents of a child are unable or unwilling to correct the problem on their own.(4) In Indiana, each child in need of service is entitled to a special advocate who is dedicated solely to representing the best interest of that child to the courts.(5)

Special advocates for children include **guardians ad litem (GAL)**, professionals who are trained to serve as a child advocate; **and Court appointed special advocates (CASA)**, volunteers who receive special training to serve as a child advocate. CASA volunteers spend the majority of their volunteer time in contact with a child and are highly effective in getting their recommendations regarding the child accepted in court. In about 4 out of 5 cases, all or almost all CASA volunteer recommendations are accepted.

In 2009, Indiana volunteers donated 531,850 hours advocating for the best interests of children. Those volunteers provided services for 14,491 children in abuse or neglect cases and 2,362 children in termination of parental rights cases.

You are a mandated reporter.

In Indiana, any suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported to Child Protective Services (CPS), which operates a 24-hour, 7-day a week hotline: **1-800-800-5556**



For ideas on how to handle reporting situations in which teens are involved, download this practical handbook:

["Reaching and Serving Teen Victims."](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/pdf/txt/ncj211701.pdf)
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/pdf/txt/ncj211701.pdf>

For an overview of child abuse and neglect in Indiana, take a look at the ["Kids Count in Indiana Data Book."](http://www.iyi.org/databook)
<http://www.iyi.org/databook>



Signs and symptoms of abuse & neglect (3)

Physical Indicators:

- Unexplained bruises
- Unexplained welts
- Unexplained burns
- Unexplained lumps
- Unexplained bumps
- Unexplained fractures
- Unexplained lacerations or abrasions
- Hemorrhages
- Burns by cigarettes
- Dental/oral injuries

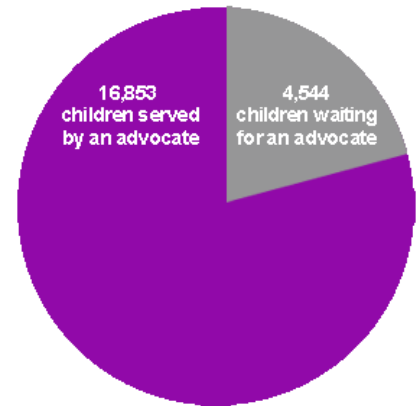
Behavioral Indicators:

- Verbally reports abuse
- Too eager to please
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Behavioral extremes
- Role reversal
- Appears frightened of caretaker
- Exaggerated startle response
- School absenteeism

However, at the beginning of 2010, there were 4,544 children awaiting a volunteer. (6)

[Access a list of all Indiana CASA/GAL programs.](http://www.in.gov/judiciary/galcasa/directory.pdf)
<http://www.in.gov/judiciary/galcasa/directory.pdf>

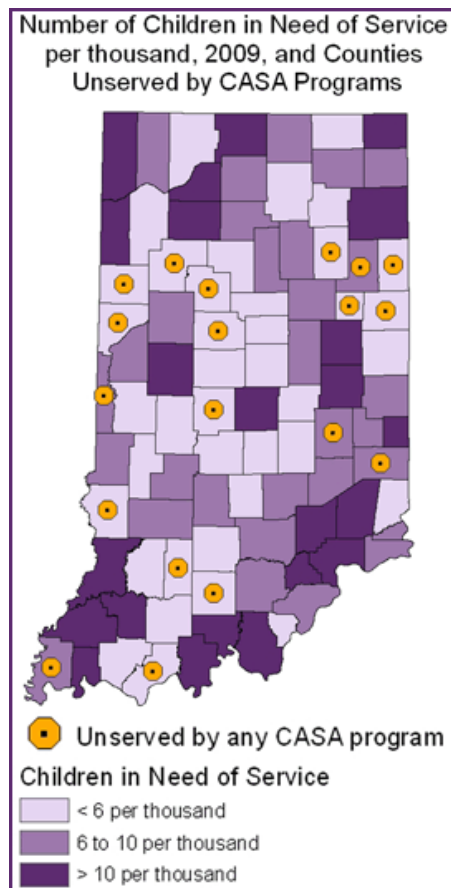
Learn more: [Child Advocates Network](http://www.childadvocatesnetwork.org)
<http://www.childadvocatesnetwork.org>



Children in 71 of Indiana's 92 counties were served by GAL/CASA programs in 2009. An audit of the National CASA Association by the U.S. Department of Justice found that **children with CASA volunteers are more likely than children without them to be placed in foster care**. This may be because CASAs are typically appointed to the most serious cases of maltreatment. However, children with CASA volunteers are less likely to stay in foster care longer than 3 years.

Children receiving CASA services also are less likely to be reunified with their families, but are more likely to find a permanent placement or be adopted. Children with CASA volunteers also are less likely to return to the child welfare system in the future (9% with CASAs return, and 16% without them return).

Furthermore, families of children matched with CASA volunteers were ordered by the courts to participate in more services than those without a CASA. (7)



Resources for dealing with child abuse or neglect

- [The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline](http://www.childhelp.org/) 1-800-4-A CHILD
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](http://www.thehotline.org/) 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](http://www.rainn.org/) 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- [HHS Child Welfare Gateway](http://www.childwelfare.gov/) connects child welfare and related professionals to comprehensive information and resources to help protect children and strengthen families.
- [National Safe Place](http://www.nationalsafeplace.org/) - immediate help and resources for all young people in crisis
- [Nation Center for Victims of Crime](http://www.ncvc.org/) - a resource for crime victims and those who serve them.
- [National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center](http://www.safeyouth.org/) - resources for preventing youth violence
- [Prevent Child Abuse, Indiana](http://www.pcain.org/) - information on preventing child abuse in Indiana

More on this topic from IYI: http://www.iyi.org/media/article-details.aspx?id=709&article_type=2



[April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month](http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/index.cfm)
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/index.cfm>

1. Finkelhor D, Turner H, Ormrod R, & Hamby SL (2009) [Violence, Abuse, and Crime Exposure in a National Sample of Children and Youth](#). Crimes Against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire; and Department of Psychology, Sewanee: The University of the South. <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV193.pdf>
2. IC 31-33-5-1
3. [Prevent Child Abuse, Indiana](#) http://www.pcain.org/recognizing_signs.asp
4. [CHINS law for the general public](#) <http://www.kidsvoicein.org/programs/clci/chins/>
5. Indiana State Court Administration, Office of Guardian Ad Litem / Court Appointed Special Advocate. (n.d.). [About GAL/CASA](#). <http://www.in.gov/judiciary/galcasa/about.html>
6. Indiana State Court Administration
7. [National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association](#). (n.d.). <http://www.casaforchildren.org/>

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IYI Resources

The latest data is at your fingertips with IYI's Data Center (<http://www.iyi.org/data>) Search statistics and gather data to improve your program planning and grant writing. Or, request customized data (<http://www.iyi.org/datarequest>)

Get the most comprehensive overview of children's well-being in Indiana. Download the 2010 Kids Count in Indiana Data Book. (<http://www.iyi.org/databook>)

Want in-depth information on youth or nonprofit advocacy? Check out the free resources at IYI's Virginia Beall Ball Library. (<http://www.iyi.org/library>) We will mail you the library materials and include a postage paid return envelope.

Have a quick question or want to bounce an idea around? Contact IYI's free Youth Service Help Line, and get the answers you need: 1-877-IYI-TIPS.

Need one-on-one assistance with planning, evaluating, or expanding your organization? Benefit from IYI's Consulting Services and receive professional help at affordable hourly rates – discounted far below market value. Browse project examples. For long-term coaching or large-scale projects, IYI's Custom Solutions offers assistance at market rates. Contact customsolutions@iyi.org to begin crafting a project that is custom designed to meet your need.



Promote and support mentoring!
[Purchase a "Mentor a Child" License Plate.](#)
<http://www.iyi.org/plate>

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