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# How CASA helps reunify families | National Reunification Month 2021

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers advocate for services that help children under court protection return home safely.

CASA



National Reunification Month is celebrated every June to recognize the people and efforts around the country that help families stay together. It's also a time to celebrate the families who have overcome obstacles to provide a safe and loving home for their children.

We know children do best when they can safely remain with their parents or with other family members. According to the Children's Bureau with the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, family reunification is the most desired and common goal for children in out-of-home care, as well as the most common outcome for children transitioning from care.

## **BEST-INTEREST ADVOCACY & REUNIFICATION**

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers advocate for the best interests of children and youth who experience abuse and/or neglect. They spend time with the child, talk to individuals in the child's life (caretakers, foster parents, teachers, doctors, social workers), and submit monthly objective court reports on the child's safety and wellbeing. Because of their unique role, CASA volunteers are able to identify and advocate for services and/or resources that help to expedite safe, effective family reunifications.

## AVA'S\* REUNIFICATION STORY

Last year, 47 children served by CASA volunteers in Brown County and Marinette County were reunified with their family of origin. Ava\*, a bubbly and creative 3-year-old girl with an affinity for arts and crafts and princesses, is one of these children.

When she was 12 months old, Ava was removed from her mother's care and placed with a relative. Ava's mother struggled with substance abuse, homelessness, and maintaining safe housing.

The court appointed a CASA volunteer to advocate for Ava's best interests while her mother worked on recovery. Ava's CASA volunteer visited her weekly (*Ava wore a different princess outfit for each visit*) and shared observations and information in monthly court reports to the judge. As Ava's mother continued to recover, Ava's CASA volunteer advocated for visitation between the mother and daughter. During these visits, Ava's CASA volunteer modeled developmental play activities and shared relevant books and resources.

In her monthly court reports to the judge, Ava's CASA volunteer described the interactions between Ava and her mother. This information, coupled with Ava's mother's continued commitment to recovery (she maintained sobriety, secured a steady job, and acquired housing), helped lead to a safe and happy family reunification.

After 1.5 years in out-of-home care, Ava is now thriving at home with her mother, who describes Ava's CASA volunteer as "helpful and fun."

We're grateful to the many CASA volunteers in our community whose advocacy helps children reunify with their families. More advocates are needed to speak up for the best interests of children under court protection in Brown County and Marinette County. Learn [how to become a CASA volunteer](#) today!

*\*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality. Image is not of actual CASA child or volunteer.*