



CASA of Larimer County 2010 Annual Report



CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate), Inc. Of Larimer County is a non-profit organization that trains volunteers to speak up for children, who are abused, neglected or abandoned by their families. CASA has served Larimer County since 1984 as an independent chapter of the National CASA Association.

CASA also offers the community the Harmony House Visitation Centers in Fort Collins and Loveland which offers children the opportunity to stay connected to family members through supervised visitation with non-custodial parents or as a safe exchange site.

CASA's Mission is: To provide a volunteer advocate's voice in court and a safe environment for family interactions for children who are victims of abuse, neglect or domestic conflict.

Our Vision is: To promote a safe environment for all children in the 8th Judicial District exposed to abuse, neglect or domestic conflict.

In 2010, CASA of Larimer County's 27th year serving our community, there were approximately 400 children involved in Dependency and Neglect actions in Larimer County Courts. 75 CASA advocates were assigned 260 children from 128 families providing independent advocacy for these children and their best interests. CASA volunteers, following an intensive 40 hour training on all aspects of child abuse, serve as part of the team that gathers information and works to determine the best interests of the child and then make a recommendation to the Court as to the best permanent home. In the past year these volunteers spent more than 5,650 hours interviewing family members, medical professionals, teachers, therapists and the child in order to provide the Court with a clear, current picture of the child's situation.

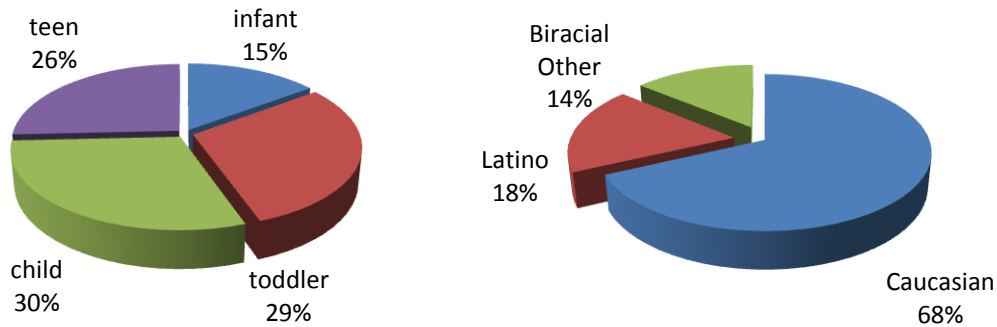
At the same time, the two Harmony Houses served 582 children from 351 families, providing them a safe, homelike setting in which they can maintain their bond with non-custodial family members. The Harmony Houses were the site of over 2,600 custody exchanges and supervised visits, keeping the children shielded from further trauma from parental abuse, domestic violence or substance abuse. The safety of the child is the main concern of the Harmony House program. All visitations are supervised by trained volunteers who factually document all interactions and reserve the right to stop conversations or end visitations if the situation is inappropriate or the child becomes upset or uncomfortable.

Both CASA and the Harmony Houses serve children from birth to age 18 in Larimer County and the 8th Judicial District. While child abuse and neglect knows no socio-economic boundaries, over 85% of our clients fall below 80% of the Area Median Income level.

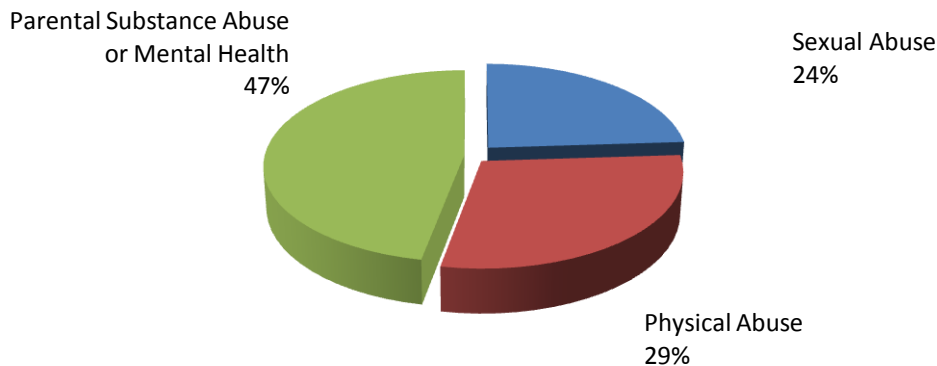
We welcome the opportunity to visit with you in person, to explain the work we do and answer questions you may have about our organization and our community. Please feel free to contact our Executive Director, Lynn Oesterle-Zollner at (970) 498-6180 or any of our board members.

Sarah Liggett, President; David Zwisler, Vice President, Mark Magnuson, Secretary; Rich Serrano; Treasurer
Chris Baker; Tim Jones; Phyl Nichols; Preetysathe; Cindy Wedding

Who Are CASA's Kids?



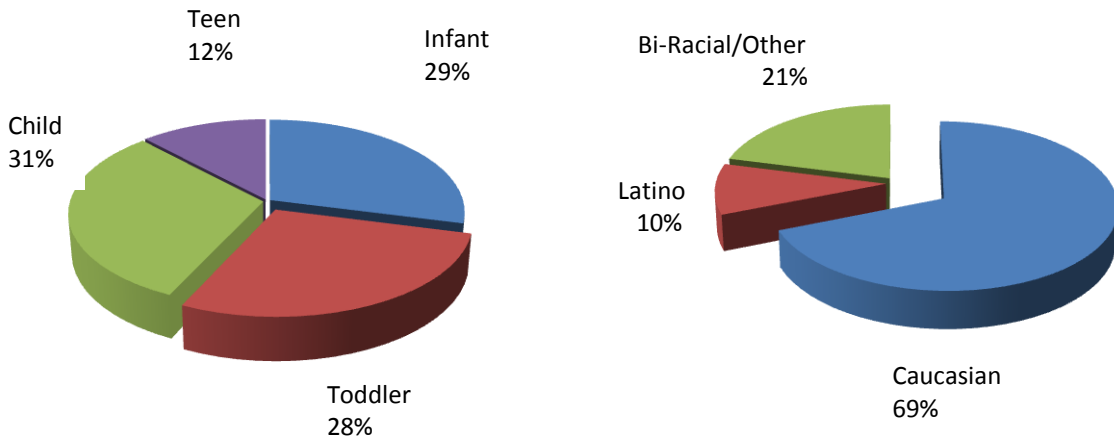
Why Do They Need Us?



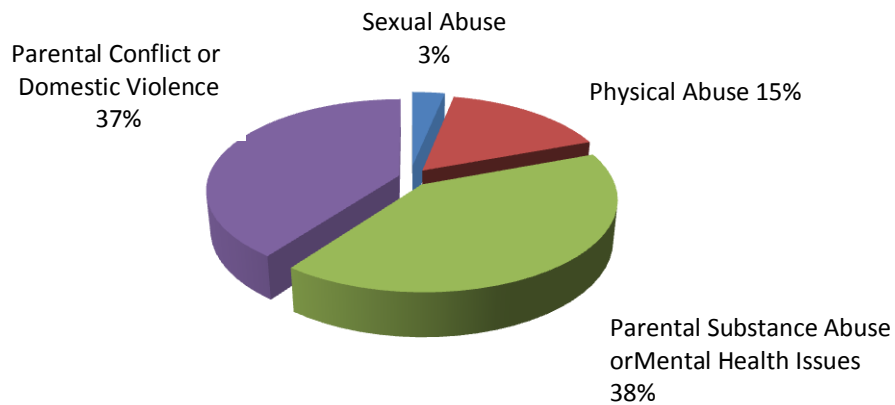
While child abuse and neglect knows no socio-economic barriers, more than 80% of the children CASA serves come from families that fall below 80% of Larimer County's Area Median Income level. Some level of substance abuse on the part of the parent(s) is involved in 47% of the cases that have been brought to the courts. Substance abuse can lead to family violence, neglectful or injurious home environments or a myriad of other situations that put these children at risk.

It is not uncommon for CASA's children to be moved to 2, 3, 4 or more foster homes and often also change caseworkers and schools. The CASA volunteer provides stability...one constant person to help the child as they navigate the legal system over the length of their case, usually 12-18 months. While recent studies show that it costs range from \$1,243-\$4,846 a month for a child in out of home placement, last year it cost less than \$750 for a child to have a CASA advocate for an entire year. If a CASA volunteer's involvement results in a case closing earlier...even if we can move that child from foster care to a permanent home only one month earlier... we have saved taxpayers at the very least, the cost of a CASA volunteer.

Who Are Harmony House's Kids?



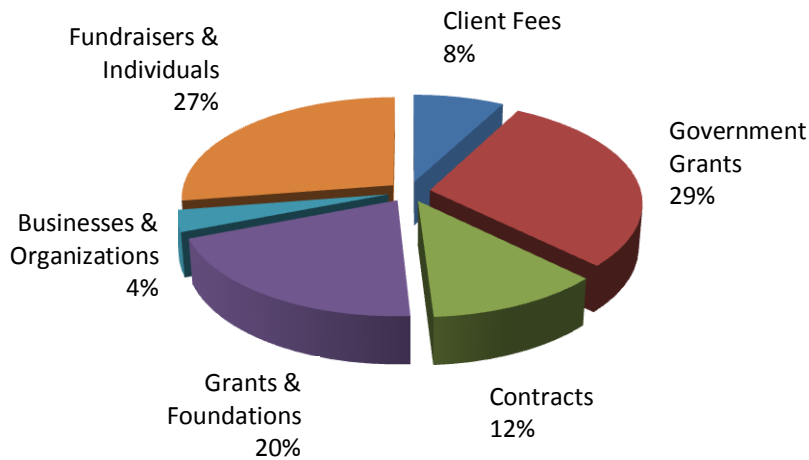
Why Do They Need Us?



The two Harmony Houses, in Loveland and Fort Collins, are busy old homes that provide a safe, homelike setting for children to visit parents and family while ensuring they are safe from the kind of trauma that first brought them to us. These connections are vital to the well-being of the child and the parent, keeping them engaged with one another as the parent(s) work on the issues that have resulted in legal or domestic problems.

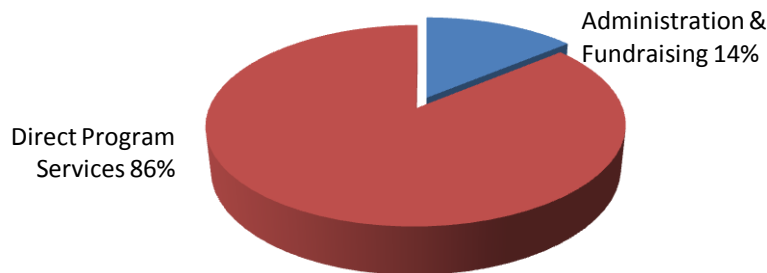
The Harmony Houses provided almost 1,200 supervised exchanges, ensuring that the children were safe from the conflict that can happen between estranged parents. At the same time the homes were the site of over 1,400 supervised visitations between the non-custodial parent and the child. The visits and exchanges are documented by staff or volunteers to ensure that the child is not exposed to any inappropriate conversation or action and that parents are practicing appropriate parenting skills. The child is also empowered to give a "secret sign" if they feel uncomfortable and want to stop the visit...their safety is our number one concern.

Where Does the Money Come from?



The Board of Directors and the Executive Director of CASA of Larimer County have made a deliberate effort to diversify the funding streams of this agency. We are pleased that in the last few years we have established new fundraisers, designed not only to help us with our sustainability but also to educate the community about the issue of child abuse in our community and our work to protect our most vulnerable children. While we are still dependent on grants and foundations, our community is invaluable to us through the support they give...from dollars to office supplies to help in keeping up the maintenance of our old homes.

Where Does the Money Go?



CASA of Larimer County is very fortunate to have been given the use of our two old homes by generous donors, making it possible to keep our expenses minimal so we can concentrate our efforts and dollars on reaching more children. We are also fortunate to have dedicated staff, volunteers and board members who work every day to make Larimer County a safe community for our children to grow and thrive in safe, loving homes. In 2009, we experienced the impact of the economic downturn and made hard decisions regarding our programs. We scaled back hours of operation at the two Harmony Houses, while trying to assure that our clients would not be negatively impacted. We also scaled back on the size of our volunteer training classes due to the full capacity we currently have and our inability to supervise additional volunteers

with our current staff levels. Despite these measures, we were able to provide a CASA volunteer to more children than ever and the number of children and families using the Harmony House services remained consistent with the previous year.