



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NEWS

Contact: Pamela Perrilles
pperrilles@peoriacounty.org
(309)966-0709

**During Pandemic, Local Volunteers Work to Ensure At-Risk Children are Safe:
CASA Volunteers Needed Now More than Ever**

PEORIA, IL – April 3, 2020 – Child abuse and neglect is likely on the rise in the face of this pandemic, as families are put under more financial and emotional stress. Children are no longer in the public eye—they are not at schools or daycare, or in other locations where caring individuals would be able to spot signs of abuse. One group of volunteers in The Tenth Judicial Circuit is working hard to ensure that abuse and neglect do not go unnoticed.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) are community members who volunteer with CASA of the Tenth Judicial Circuit. They work with children in the child welfare system who have already experienced abuse or neglect. They meet with children in person at least monthly and provide information to judges that helps them make the most well-informed decisions about each child.

These visits provide an opportunity for CASA volunteers to check in on children's safety and well-being. But right now, meeting in person with the children they advocate for is difficult or impossible. This means it is harder for them to gauge what is going on in children's lives and their needs.

These volunteers are working with program staff to find creative ways to continue to meet with children. CASA Volunteers or CASA Staff are communicating weekly with assigned children and families: utilizing phone, video conferencing and traditional letters.

"While none of these is not a grand solution, this kind of creativity is what will make a real difference in children's lives," said Lisa Norwood, Program Director. "We need volunteers now more than ever and are encouraging all community members to join with us either by volunteering or by helping us ensure children are safe during this time of national crisis." – **#EyesOnKids!** To join our upcoming Virtual Training Class in late April, email casa@peoriacounty.org for more details.

If readers suspect a child is in immediate danger, they should contact the police or call 9-1-1. They can also contact the IL Child Abuse Hotline at 1(800)-25-ABUSE (800-252-2873) or use this link <https://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs/safekids/reporting/Pages/index.aspx> to report abuse.

Change a Child's Story™

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About CASA of the Tenth Judicial Circuit (www.casaofthetenth.org)

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of the Tenth Judicial Circuit is a nonprofit, volunteer organization that advocates for the best interests of abused and neglected children within the Juvenile Court system. Its existence is based on the belief that every child has the right to a safe and permanent home allowing them the chance to reach their full potential in life. The organization has been serving abused and neglected children since 2005. CASA of the Tenth Judicial Circuit is a Member of that National CASA/GAL Association.