

INFOCUS



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Child Protection: Dependency Courts

Judges and court personnel are uniquely positioned to identify and help children who have been abused, neglected, or exploited as well as those who are at risk of victimization. Juvenile and family courts play a critical role in preventing victimization and working to achieve safe, stable, and permanent homes for children.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) works to ensure that court personnel have the skills to address the complex needs of these children and their families. The Office also aims to provide youth with access to well-trained volunteer advocates who represent their best interests.

Program

Court Appointed Special Advocate Program

This program recruits and trains volunteers who serve as fact finders, monitors, and facilitators in child dependency cases. These court appointed special advocates and guardian *ad litem* volunteers help ensure that abused and neglected children and those in foster care do not get lost in the legal or social service system and are placed in safe, permanent homes. The funding also supports a national court appointed special advocate membership and accreditation program.

In 2019, local programs across 49 states and the District of Columbia served more than 271,000 children.

Training and Technical Assistance

Child Abuse Training for Judicial and Court Personnel Project

OJJDP provides training and technical assistance to judicial, legal, and social service professionals to improve their response to child abuse cases, including cases of children who are victims of domestic child sex trafficking, and families impacted by opioids. To better serve children and families, the project also teaches practitioners how to coordinate information and services across the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

For More Information

Access additional information about OJJDP's child protection programs at <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/child-abuse-prevention>.

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Funding

Between fiscal years 2017 and 2019, OJJDP awarded more than \$34.5 million to improve the judicial system's handling of child maltreatment cases.

- ▶ Fiscal Year 2019—\$13.4 million
- ▶ Fiscal Year 2018—\$12.4 million
- ▶ Fiscal Year 2017—\$8.8 million

From the Field

Idelia has been in foster care since age 13. Through changes in homes, families, and schools over the past 7 years, Idelia's court appointed special advocate (CASA) volunteer has remained a consistent source of support to her. "Having a CASA has changed my life forever," Idelia shares.

Now 20 years old, Idelia is a first-generation college student studying psychology with a minor in leadership studies. She has a 4.0 GPA. Upon graduation, Idelia hopes to inspire other young people who have been involved with the foster care system and help them understand that their background does not define them or prevent them from being successful.

"My CASA volunteer has believed in me since the beginning," Idelia said. "Because of her, I became stronger and confident in the person I am today."

OJJDP

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Delinquency Prevention
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