



# Overview of Brightside Child & Family Advocacy

Presented by:

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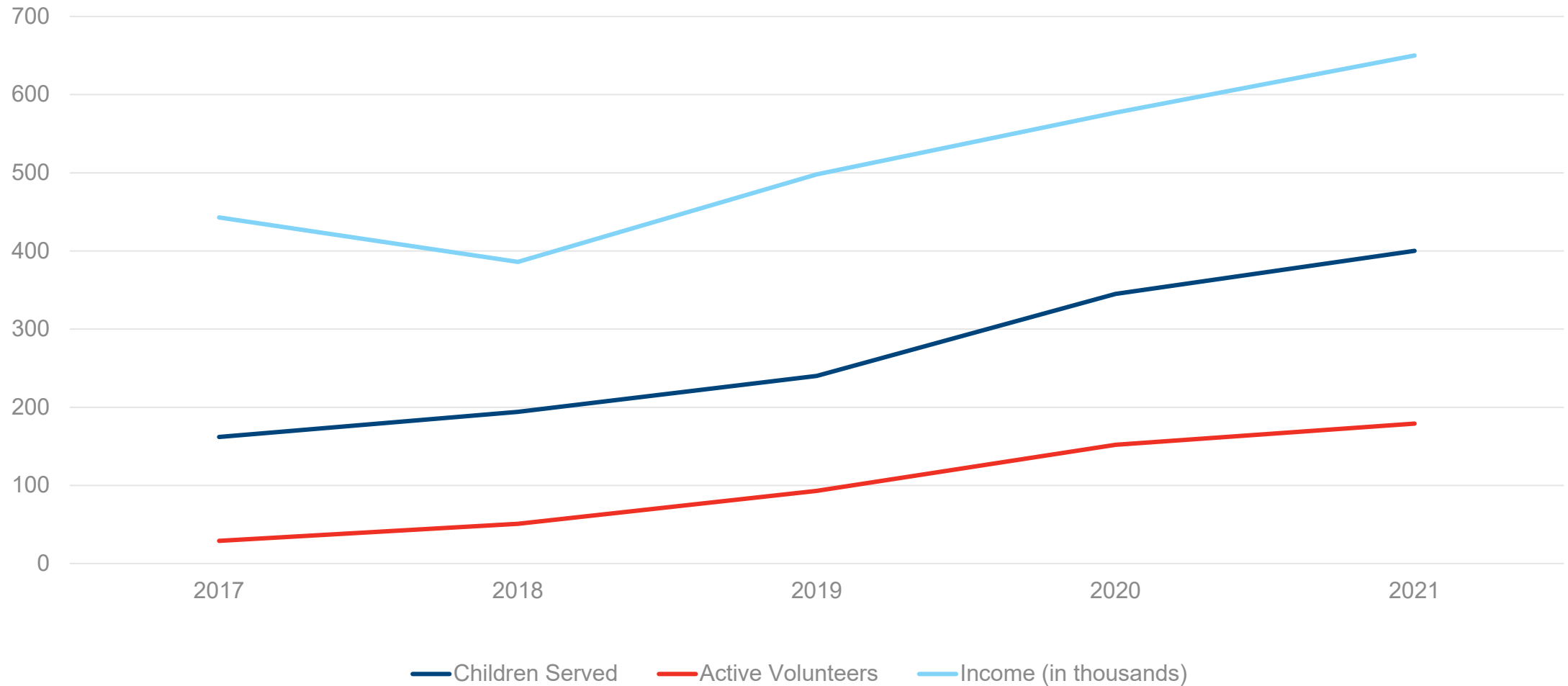
**BRIGHTSIDE**  
CHILD AND FAMILY ADVOCACY

# Thirty Years of Advocacy

- Since 1991, Savannah CASA has provided courtroom advocacy
- Highly supportive judges who appoint CASA volunteers to every dependency case
- CASA staff has developed specialties to provide better advocacy to children
- We are expanding our organization with the new Bright House.



# Organizational Progress



## Strategic Priorities

The 2020-2022 Strategic Plan was created by a committee of staff, board, volunteers, and contracted facilitators. Several listening sessions were conducted that included DFCS, Juvenile Court, and community partners.



### GROWTH & EXPANSION

- Increase the number of children served
- Implement new services



### INCREASE FUNDING & RESOURCES

- Increase overall funding by 20% annually
- Diversify overall funding sources
- Ensure fiscal responsibility of the organization



### ENHANCE VOLUNTEER ADVOCACY

- Increase number of volunteers by 100%
- Improve volunteer advocacy
- Provide referrals to community services to volunteers
- Increase diversity among volunteers



### IMPROVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

- Increase public awareness
- Strengthen relationship with DFCS
- Strengthen relationship with the Juvenile Court
- Develop community partnerships



### BOARD & STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- Improve employee retention
- Improve diversity of the board and staff
- Improve board engagement



# The Savannah CASA Program



# What is a CASA Volunteer?

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) are volunteers appointed by the Chatham County Juvenile Court to advocate for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect.



# Being a CASA

## A CASA Volunteer:

- Spends time monthly with their assigned child(ren).
- Has access to all of the child(ren)'s records.
- Speaks with teachers, family members, counselors, caseworkers, medical professionals, foster parents, etc.
- Evaluates all areas of the child's life to ensure that their needs are being met educationally, emotionally, psychologically, and physically.



A woman with short brown hair, wearing a light grey t-shirt and blue jeans, is sitting on a grey couch. She is smiling warmly at a young boy with short blonde hair, wearing a teal polo shirt. They are holding hands and looking at each other. The background is a bright, modern living room with a fireplace and large windows. The overall mood is warm and supportive.

# Supervised Visitation & Family Support





Today, there are  
**308**  
**CHILDREN**  
in foster care  
in Chatham County.

**93%** served by Savannah CASA



# Foster Care in Chatham County



## Reasons for removal

- Neglect - 13%
- Caretaker drug and alcohol use - 30%
- Physical abuse - 5%
- Inability to cope - 36%
- Inadequate housing - 14%
- Incarceration - 2%
- Child behavior - 20%
- Abandonment – 10%

# Foster Care in Chatham County

## Exiting Foster Care

- Reunification – 38%
- Adoption - 18%
- Emancipation - 19%
- Guardianship - 17%

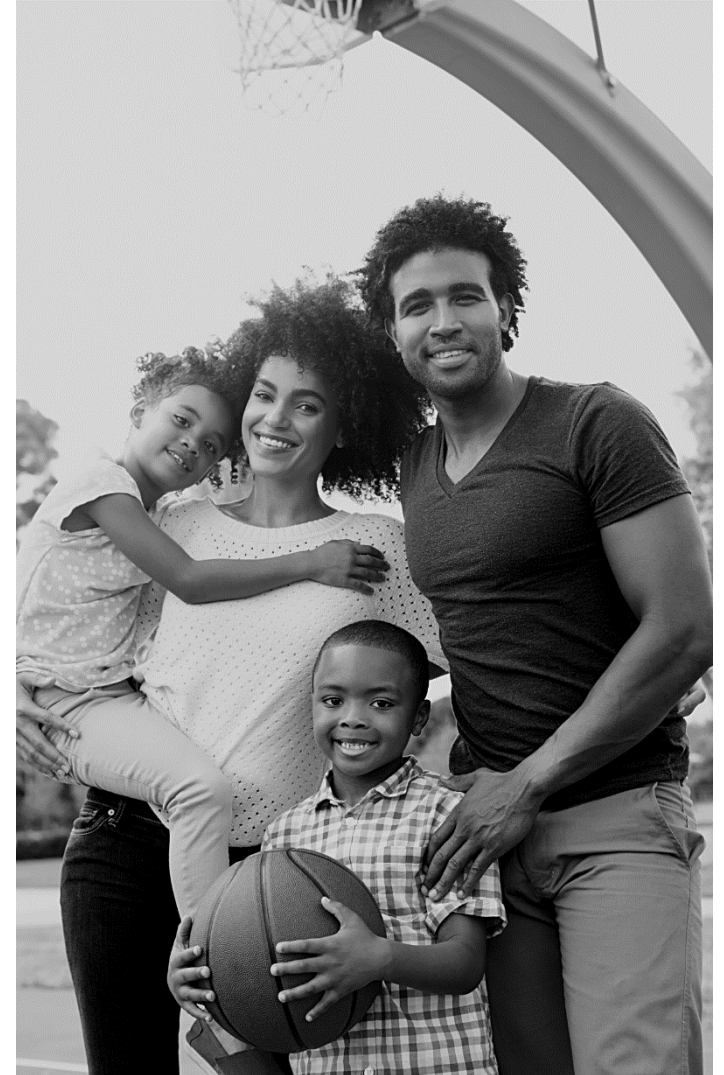
Median length of stay in foster care –  
27.6 months

Median length of stay in foster care  
before reunification – 14.7 months



- When a child enters foster care due to abuse or neglect, it is often caused by generational trauma, mental health concerns, stress caused by poverty, or substance use of the parent. Ideally, these causes can be addressed and the child returned home.
- Reunification is the preferred and most common outcome for children in foster care.

# Reunifying Families



# Healing Families Through Supervised Visitation

## The Benefits of Supervised Visitation

- Strengthens parent-child attachments
- Decreases sense of abandonment
- Less time in out-of-home care

## The Bright House Offers

- Minimally invasive supervised visitation
- Parental coaching
- Community resource referral









# Healing Families Through Supervised Visitation

## The Bright House at 705 Harmon

- Open 7 days a week from 10 am to 6pm
- Typically 2 hour visitations 1-2 visits per week
- Ability to serve up to 18 families
- Only morning shifts remaining open







**Thank You**



**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

SAVANNAH/CHATHAM COUNTY