



Kane County

KC Committee of the Whole

Agenda

Government Center
719 S. Batavia Ave., Bldg. A
Geneva, IL 60134

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

4:00 PM

County Board Room

- 1. Call To Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Remote Attendance Requests**
- 4. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 5. Approval of Minutes: February 10, 2026**
- 6. Public Comment**
- 7. Presentations/Discussion**
 - A. CASA Kane County Update** (J. Chakires, CASA Board Chair, M. Isaacson, KCHD Executive Director, and J. Di Ciaula, CASA Executive Director)
- 8. Executive Session (if needed)**
- 9. Adjournment**

STATE OF ILLINOIS)
COUNTY OF KANE) SS.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION NO. TMP-26-275

CASA KANE COUNTY UPDATE (J. CHAKIRES, CASA BOARD CHAIR, M. ISAACSON, KCHD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AND J. DI CIAULA, CASA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR)



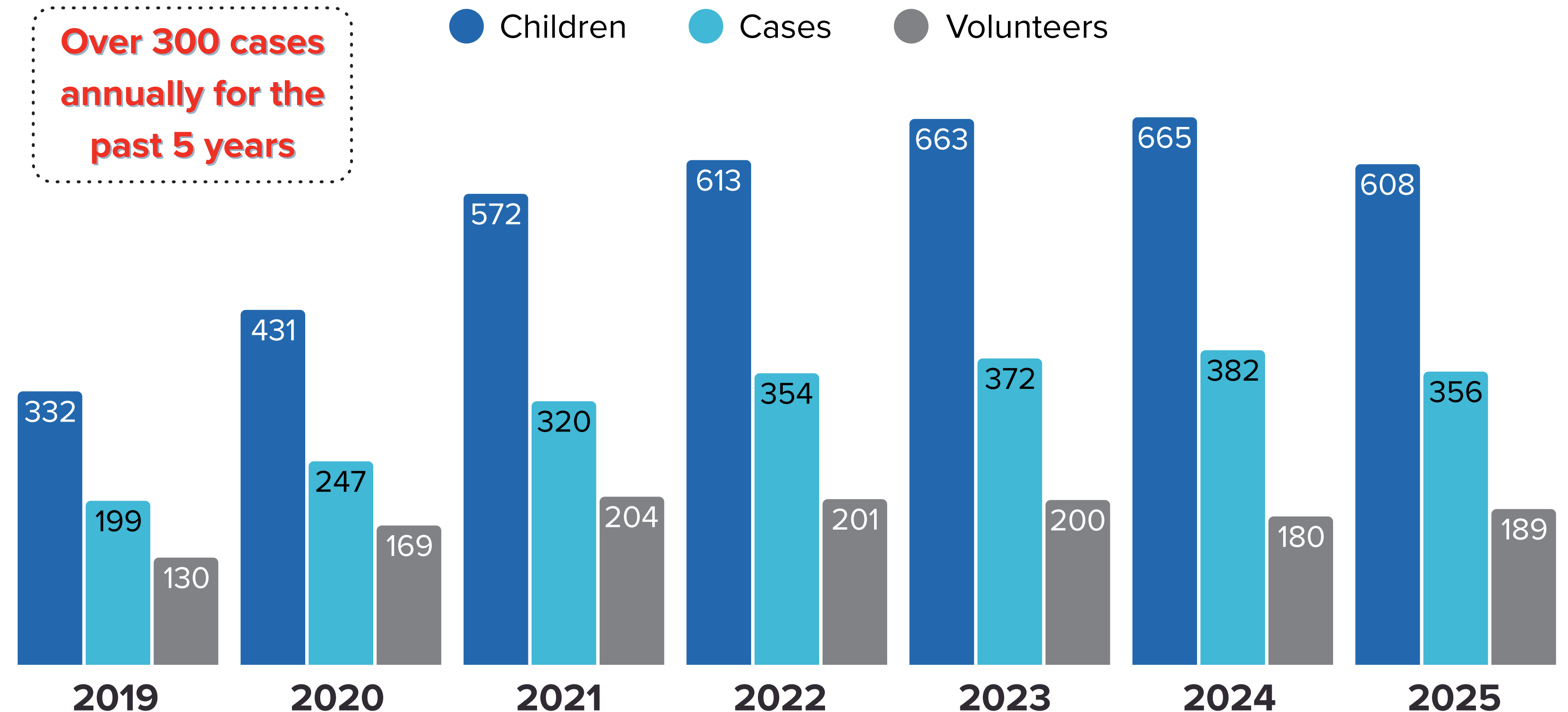
CASA Kane County

Presentation to Kane County Board
February 24, 2026

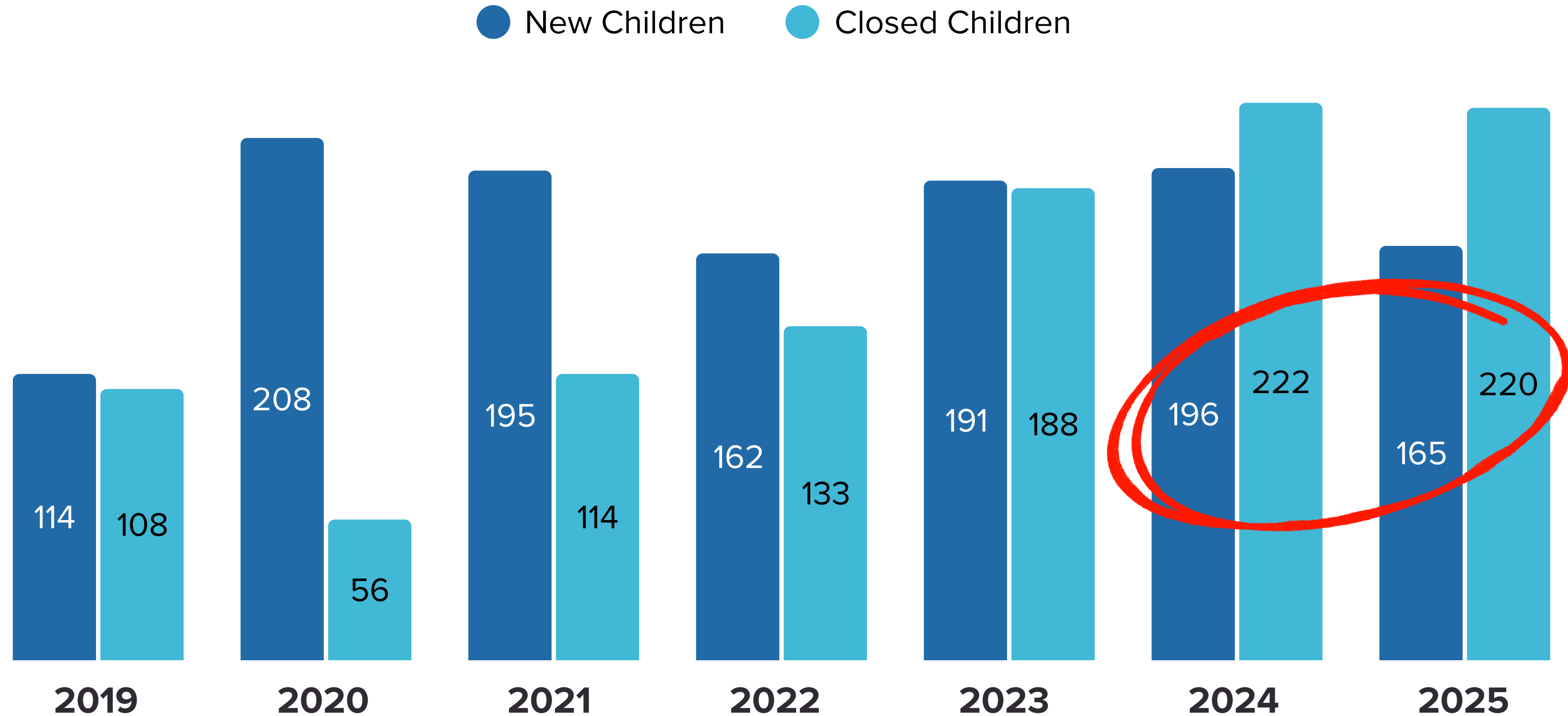
Purpose and Overview

- ✓ Trends, Accomplishments and Challenges
- ✓ Partnership with Kane County
- ✓ Launch of Kane County Circle of Care

Let's Start with the Statistics



Moving in a Positive Trajectory



Key Accomplishments

In 2025, CASA Kane County's 200+ trained CASA/GAL Volunteers provided court-appointed advocacy for **608 children** in the Child Welfare System.

Volunteers contributed more than **12,000 hours of casework** and traveled over **130,000 miles** to conduct child visits.

96 Reunifications were achieved

79 Children were Adopted

24 Children had their case closed in Guardianship

Key Accomplishments, cont.

Highlights of on-going enhancements to the program include:

- Developed and deployed a **highly successful mentorship program** that built strong peer relationships and a culture of mutual support across mentors and mentees.
- Created an **online court report platform** that streamlined reports, improved data accuracy for judicial decision making and enhanced the experience for volunteers and advocacy team.
- **Stabilized and strengthened** the legal team's expertise and legal advocacy
- Established the **Kane County Circle of Care**, a collaborative initiative across the County, focused on connecting children and families with well-being services.

Key Challenges

- **Case volume increased dramatically** since 2019 and holding relatively steady
 - no reason to believe it will decrease
- **Cases remaining in care longer** requiring more court dates and increased GAL and GAL attorney involvement for a longer period of time
- **Operational costs up** but revenue sources are uncertain
- **Office moving out of the County building** will dramatically increase expenses
 - initial capital outlay
 - financing costs and additional expenses associated with a move

Partnership with Kane County

Context

- CASA Kane County was formed in 1988 and has partnered with the Kane County Board, Judiciary, and the States Attorney's Office to advocate for children in the juvenile abuse/neglect court system (38+ years).
- In 1992, CASA Kane County, with the full support of the County Board and Judiciary partners, expanded as the Guardian ad Litem program, becoming one of only four GAL programs in Illinois and among the 10% nationwide. Since that time, the program has generated substantial cost savings to the County and its taxpayers.
- By law, the Court shall appoint a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) for a minor upon the filing of an Abuse/Neglect petition. If not CASA, then the court must appoint attorneys at the County expense.

Kane County Financial Support

- 1994: the County, in partnership the County Board, Judiciary and SAO, provided space for CASA offices, **at no cost**.

With County Board approval and support, CASA Kane County:

- 2012: made a **significant improvement** to the courthouse grounds by creating the *Grow a Healthy Child Garden* and has been covering the maintenance costs since then.
- 2015: expanded and renovated offices at a **cost to CASA of over \$600,000**.

Kane County Financial Support, cont.

- 2018: CASA incurred expenses associated with hiring in-house GAL attorneys resulting in further cost savings to the County.
- 2015-2024: CASA received grants **in average of \$65,000/year** from Kane County (via the River Boat Grant)
- 2022: The Kane County Board was instrumental in CASA receiving a **\$1,000,000 ARPA grant**, which was distributed between 2022-2024.

2025

- For the first time since the partnership was formed in 1988, CASA **did not receive any grant or other funding** from Kane County.
- The loss of several grants, **including the Kane County grant**, along with the postponement of a major event, resulted in a **revenue shortfall of more than \$200,000 in 2025**.
- Despite aggressive efforts to replace this income, CASA ended the year with a **net operating shortfall of approximately \$75,000**.

Estimated Cost Savings to Kane County

By way of example:

- In 2025 CASA handled 356 abuse and neglect cases
- **Assuming:**
 - an average of 2.5 hours per month, per case
 - a \$200 per hour private GAL attorney

The total cost would be an estimated \$2,136,000

Looking Forward

- **Our partnership has always been, and will continue to be, important** because our children are our future, and our community has consistently prioritized their well-being.
- **Without ongoing support from across the community,** CASA would face a difficult financial situation.
- **Due to the need to relocate,** CASA must raise funds not only for securing and setting up a new space, but also for the ongoing maintenance and associated costs of that space.

CASA Kane County Office Plans

- As of February 2026, CASA has a contract on an office condominium and is currently in the Due Diligence period.
- It is anticipated that a closing date would occur in early June, 2026 with a preliminary move date occurring sometime in Fall, 2026.
- Currently, CASA is in process of planning a capital campaign to support the purchase and on-going maintenance

For Discussion

What is Kane County's Commitment/Support to CASA as we Move Forward?

- **New Space:** How can the County Board assist with the cost of our new space and relocation?
- **Operating Costs:** Given the significant cost savings and service that CASA Kane County provides to the County and the community at large, what support can the County Board provide on an annual basis, towards operating costs?
- **Other:** Is the County Board able to assist in obtaining other sources of funding for CASA Kane County in relation to the new space and relocation and/or on-going operating costs?

Kane County Circle of Care

Launched in January, 2026, Kane County Circle of care is a CASA Kane County-led program, in strong partnership with Kane County Health Department and the Kane County Regional Office of Education. The collaboration brings together community leaders and local service providers to help reduce the number of children entering foster care and to improve opportunities for children and families to access much needed services and program.

Through preventive and early-intervention supports, the program's vision is to connect children and families to trusted, community-based resources that promote well-being, meet basic needs, and strengthen families before challenges become crises.



Key Benefits to Kane County

In addition to improving outcomes for children and families, Circle of Care will provide multiple benefits for Kane County:

- reducing long-term public costs
- easing pressure on County and Judicial systems
- strengthening interdepartmental coordination
- shifting County resources from reactive crisis response to proactive, prevention-driven solutions



Together, these impacts position Circle of Care as both a high-impact community initiative and a fiscally responsible systems-level approach to improving child and family well-being across Kane County.

Kane County Circle of Care Leadership

Supported by a diverse group of community leaders including:

- Jeff Aranowski, Chief of Executive Services, Kane County ROE
- Jim Di Ciaula, Executive Director, CASA Kane County
- Carissa Ellison, Former Foster Parent
- Michael Isaacson, Executive Director, Kane County Health Department
- Dr. Brian Knetl, President, Waubonsee Community College
- Heidi Mueller, Director, DCFS
- Laura Oswald, Board Vice Chair, CASA Kane County
- Laura Sanders, Director of Advocate Supervision, CASA Kane County

Advisory Council Members



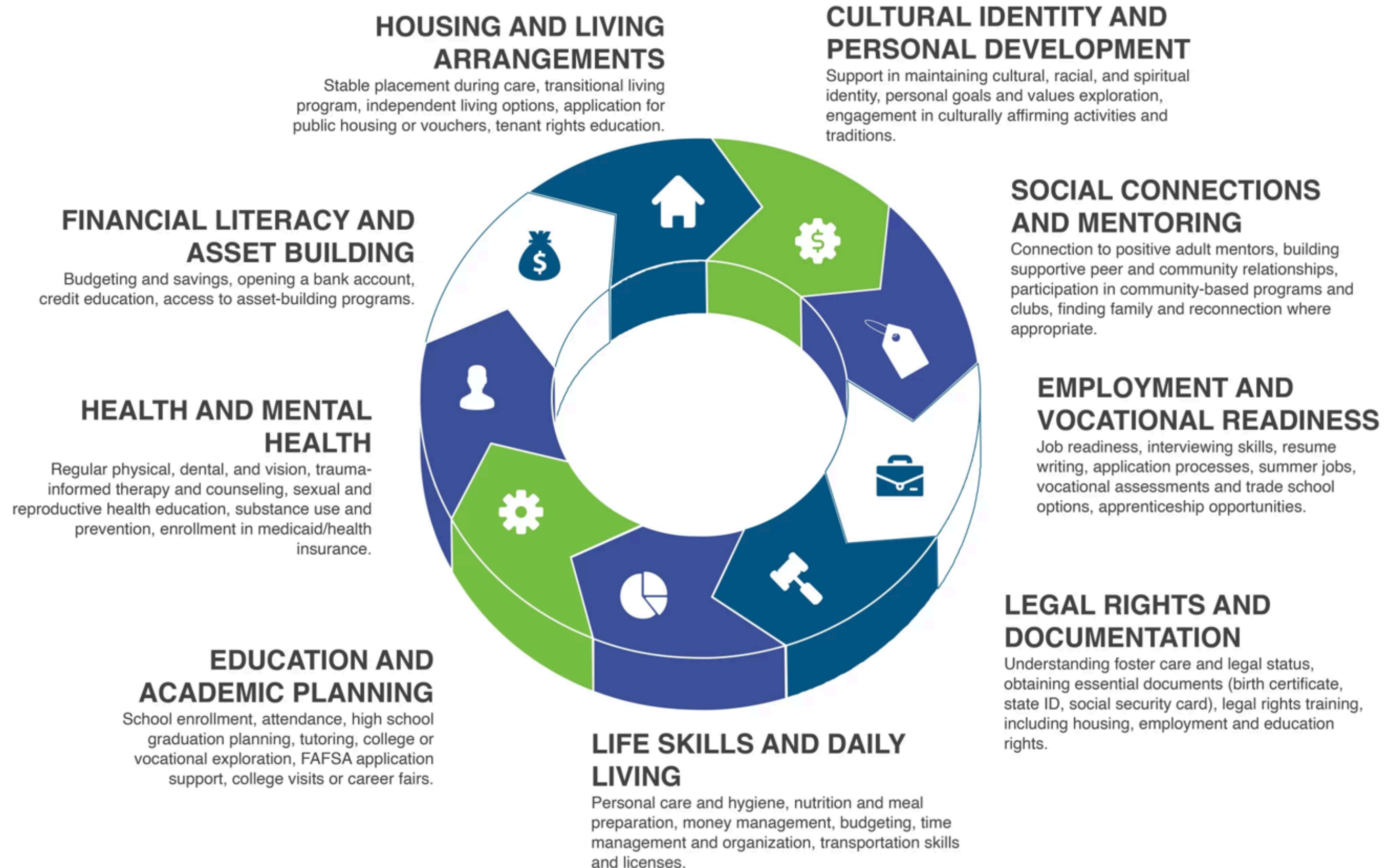
REGIONAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION
KANE COUNTY



Kane County
Workforce Development Division



Categories of Well-Being Resources



2026 Goals and Priorities

Website and Resource Tool, across various categories of well-being, starting with:

- General Resources
- Prevention/Early Intervention Resources
- Older Youth (14+) Resources

Helping Families Thrive Through Early Intervention & Prevention - May 1

Fall Educational Conference, Older Youth Resource Track - October 15

HOPE Program for children in care; a collection of experiential opportunities for engaging youth in “positive childhood experiences”

Thank You!