

Abused children can't wait

A Dallas CASA volunteer was assigned to the case and met the kids shortly after their placement in foster care. The volunteer, Nancy, was a retired educator and immediately recognized signs of severe developmental delay in all three children. All three had behavior problems and speech delays. She advocated for testing and therapy for the siblings, which they soon received.

But the oldest child's challenges seemed to be greater than the other two children. At age 4, Tommy could not use the toilet, talk, respond to his name, sit for meals or play with other children. He did not sleep through the night or make eye contact. Nancy arranged for testing with his school district's special education department. When no one else was available, she went to his daycare, drove him to the testing, stayed with him through four hours of testing and drove him back to daycare.

Tommy's diagnosis was autism. But, again, Nancy's advocacy didn't stop with a diagnosis. As a retired educator, she knew he needed an interventional preschool program for children with disabilities. She sought out a preschool program and CPS named her his temporary educational decision-maker. She got him enrolled in the full-day program where he receives hours of speech and physical therapy every day.

Without Nancy advocating for Tommy, he might have been overlooked. He might not have a school that can meet his needs. He might not be making progress developmentally.

Today, after divorcing their mother and completing extensive parenting classes and therapy, Tommy's father has regained custody of all three children. Tommy still attends his special-needs school, thanks to Nancy's continued involvement with him.

