A Tribute to Court Appointed Special Advocate™ and Guardian Ad Litem Volunteers

September 2012

Childhood Abuse and Neglect Lead to Adult Criminal Behavior

A study by the US Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, found that children who suffer abuse or neglect are:

♦ 28% more likely to be arrested as adults
♦ 59% more likely to be arrested as juveniles
♦ 30% more likely to become violent criminals

CASA/GAL Volunteers Help Abused and Neglected Children Find Safe, Permanent Homes

The CASA model has been recognized by the US Department of Justice as a model juvenile delinquency prevention program. A 2006 audit conducted by the Office of the Inspector General determined that:

♦ Children with a CASA volunteer are substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care, defined as more than three years in care: 13.3% for CASA cases versus 27% of all children in foster care.
♦ Cases involving a CASA volunteer are more likely to be permanently closed (i.e., the children are less likely to reenter the child welfare system) than cases in which a CASA volunteer is involved.

Judges Value Care, Commitment and Common Sense of CASA Volunteers

I believe there is no greater work we judges do than work that affects the lives of children. I was first introduced to the CASA organization over 30 years ago, when I was attending the National Juvenile Justice College in Reno, NV. Since then, CASA has grown into one of our most powerful national organizations serving children. It was a privilege for me to help organize Anchorage's first CASA program in 1987. Since then, I have been so inspired to see first hand the care, commitment and common sense CASA volunteers bring to their cases.

Master William Hitchcock, Presiding Judicial Officer for Children's Court in the Anchorage Superior Court, 2009 National CASA Judge of the Year
Public and Private Organizations Endorse Work of CASA Programs

2007
♦ The National CASA Association was the first nonprofit organization to receive a Seal of Excellence from the Standards for Excellence Institute. When presenting the award, institute CEO Peter Berns commented: “Your organization demonstrates the best nonprofit governance and management, bringing to everything you do fundamental values of honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, trust, responsibility and accountability.”

2005
♦ The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges adopts a resolution that strongly urges all judges serving in juvenile and family courts to assist in the creation and expansion of CASA/GAL programs to utilize CASA volunteers in cases involving abused and neglected children.

2004
♦ The nonpartisan Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care urges states and private organizations to assist in efforts to expand the CASA program. “CASA is a proven means of strengthening the voice of children in dependency courts.”

2003
♦ Resolutions are passed by the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators in recognition of CASA volunteers serving in court.

1997
♦ The National Bar Association—the nation’s oldest and largest national association of predominantly African American lawyers, judges and students—issues a formal resolution endorsing CASA programs.

1996
♦ The US Congress recognizes CASA volunteers as appropriate to advocate for abused or neglected children.

1991
♦ The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Department of Justice, names CASA an “Exemplary National Program in Juvenile Delinquency Prevention.”

1990
♦ The US Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect recommends appointment of CASA and guardian ad litem volunteers among critical first steps it recommends to bring the “national emergency” of child abuse and neglect in America under control.
♦ The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges names CASA the “Outstanding Volunteer Program” in America’s juvenile and family courts.

1989
♦ The American Bar Association endorses CASA programs.
♦ The Kappa Alpha Theta Foundation adopts the CASA cause as its national philanthropy.
The CASA model clearly excelled as a method of GAL representation. CASA volunteers were highly rated by professional respondents and outshone the other models on the quantitative best interest outcome measure. Due to these factors—thorough case investigation, independence of viewpoint, monitoring of the case, positive relationships with the child and assistance in securing needed services—we give the CASA model our highest recommendation.

National Evaluation of the Impact of Guardians ad Litem in Child Abuse and Neglect Judicial Proceedings

Keeping children safe must be everybody's business. Court Appointed Special Advocate volunteers play a unique role on behalf of some of our most vulnerable children. They often stand alone for abused and neglected children. Their commitment, vigilance and persistence offer hope where there has been little. They help to light the way for these children—and for all of us.

Marian Wright Edelman
Founder and President, Children's Defense Fund

CASA volunteers are invaluable in helping judges make better decisions for abused children. I know that with a CASA volunteer on his or her side, an abused child has a better chance of ending up in a safe, permanent, loving home.

Hon. Leonard Edwards (ret.)
Past President, NCJFCJ

As chairman of the National Commission on Children, I have observed judges in juvenile courts with a mere 10 to 15 minutes to decide whether a child should remain in a distressed family or be placed in foster care. With growing caseloads, it's increasingly difficult for the courts and social workers to make the system work for families and children. This is why CASA volunteers are so essential. They provide valuable information and insight about individual children. CASA deserves our deep admiration and support.

US Senator John D. Rockefeller, IV (D-WV)

Most citizens do not know what goes on behind the closed doors of the juvenile and family courts of this nation—but CASA volunteers do. They guide the child through the labyrinth and give the child comfort during a traumatic time. The CASA volunteer appears in court...to hold the system accountable to the best interest of each child.

Hon. J. Dean Lewis (ret.)
Past President, NCJFCJ
Editor, The Judges' Page Newsletter

To give a child a CASA is to give them a voice. To give them a voice is to give them hope, and to give them hope is to give them the world.

Pamela Butler
Former Foster Child
In addition to the National CASA Association, there are 946 CASA/GAL state organizations and local programs serving children nationwide.

More than 77,000 women and men are CASA volunteers. Last year, these volunteers spoke for more than 234,000 abused and neglected children in court.
A SOLUTION THAT WORKS
THE COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA) PROGRAM

The federal investment in the CASA program saves hundreds of millions of dollars in federal and state government expenses. It is a research-based, effective program of trained, competent, court-appointed community volunteers stepping forward to deliver greater efficiency in government systems, and significantly improved outcomes for the abused and neglected children that they serve.

An estimated 77,000 trained volunteer CASA and GAL advocates were assigned by courts to the cases of 234,000 abuse and neglected children in 2011 (36% of children in the child welfare system). CASA and volunteer GAL programs are established in 946 communities nationwide.

Better Outcomes Proven for Children

⇒ Low CASA caseloads mean the courts can make better decisions for children. CASA volunteers handle just 1 or 2 cases at a time, so that they can give each child's case the sustained, personal attention he or she deserves.
⇒ Children with CASA volunteers spend 7.5 months less in foster care, experience fewer out of home placements, with significantly improved educational performance.
⇒ More than 90% of children with CASA volunteers never reenter the child welfare system, a significant difference compared to the general foster care population. This outcome also results in significant savings in child welfare expenses.
⇒ Complex cases receive more attention so they can move forward in a timely way. CASA volunteers are typically appointed to the more complex children's cases – those where there are multiple risk factors which must be fully understood in order to make a placement decision that will be in the child's best interests.
⇒ More effective use of service dollars. Children with CASA volunteers, and their families, receive more court-ordered services and because of the volunteer's detailed knowledge of the child's circumstances, those services are more carefully targeted, and monitored.

Cost Effectiveness

⇒ CASA volunteers save hundreds of millions of dollars in child welfare costs alone. Children with CASA volunteers spend 7.5 months less in foster care than the general foster care population, a savings of $24,375 each year for each child served by a CASA volunteer. For the 234,000 children served by CASA in 2011, this represents a savings of $5.7 billion in additional foster care costs.

National CASA Association
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The child welfare system could not afford to provide a comparable level of advocacy through non-volunteer approaches. In 2011, CASA volunteers contributed 6.5 million advocacy hours, equivalent to $327 million in taxpayer dollars if compensated for their service.

By reducing long-term placements, subsequent victimization, and reentry into the foster care system, CASA substantially reduces child welfare costs.

30 to 1 return on investment. Federal funding for one staff supervisory position within a local CASA program supports 30 trained volunteer workers, assigned to 75+ children’s cases within a year.

High Quality Advocacy

Judges assign CASA/GAL volunteers to 36% of abuse and neglect cases before them. They express a great need for more volunteers for their cases.

CASA volunteers assure that the court and child welfare systems remain focused on the specific needs of individual children, assuring that children’s well-being, including their need for safety and permanency, are addressed expeditiously.

Judges, attorneys, child welfare workers, and parents overwhelmingly report that CASA volunteers make a difference with the children they serve.

With a limited number of available volunteers, judges assign CASA/GAL volunteers to their most difficult and complex cases: those with prior maltreatment or contact with child welfare, cases of extreme neglect, physical or sexual abuse, and those where children have a great level of risk.

CASA volunteers are far more likely than paid attorneys to visit children in their homes, and more likely to investigate whether there are appropriate services for the child or family, and to monitor delivery of services.

Efficiency

Since CASA is a program of citizen volunteers, funds invested deliver a quick and impressive return in terms of children served within communities. Federal funding is turned around by National CASA within months as competitive, peer-reviewed grants to CASA programs.

Funding from the Justice Department is awarded through a competitive, external review process. By contracting with the National CASA Association to administer the CASA grants program, the Department of Justice is able to assure effective utilization of funds, in compliance with federal regulations and National CASA standards.

Grants awarded by National CASA allow a large number of communities (484 grants in 2011) to expand volunteer advocacy without becoming dependent upon a single source of revenue. CASA programs leverage the federal investment to attract a greater percentage of state, private and court funding to support advocacy within their communities.
CASA’S REQUEST FOR CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

Restore the authorized funding level of $12 million for FY 2013

The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program is authorized in the Violence Against Women Act (PL 109-271), Section 112, and scheduled for reauthorization in VAWA in 2012.

Jurisdiction: Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice

FY 2013 Request $12 million (the same funding level for FYs 2002 - 2007)

FY 2009 & 2010 appropriations $15 million
FY 2011 under Omnibus $12.4 million  17% reduction from FY 2010
FY 2012 appropriations $4.5 million (a reduction of 65%, down to the funding level of FY 1994)

FY 2013
Senate recommendation $6 million
House recommendation $4.5 million

The Child Protection Division of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Department of Justice, awards the funding through a competitive, external review process.

The federal investment in the CASA program saves hundreds of millions of dollars in federal and state government expenses. The CASA program is a research-based, effective program of trained, competent, court-appointed community volunteers stepping forward to infuse greater efficiency in government systems, and to significantly improve outcomes for the abused and neglected children that they represent. The appropriation also supports training and technical assistance to assure quality, consistent volunteer training and standards in well-managed local CASA/GAL agencies.

✓ CASA volunteers save hundreds of millions of dollars in child welfare costs alone. Children with CASA volunteers spend 7.5 months less in foster care than the general foster care population, a savings of $24,375 each year for each child served by a CASA volunteer. For the 240,000 children served by CASA in 2010, this represents a savings of $5.850 billion in additional foster care costs.

National CASA Association
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√ **30 to 1 return on investment.** Federal funding for a single grant-funded staff position supports 30 trained volunteer workers, assigned to the cases of 75+ children within a year.

√ CASA advocacy is cost-effective because it is an organization of volunteers. In 2010, CASA volunteers provided advocacy hours **equivalent to $300 million in taxpayer dollars** if compensated for their service.

√ More than 90% of children with CASA volunteers never re-enter the system, yet another significant savings.

√ Judges express a great need for more volunteers for their cases. CASA volunteers fight for a child’s fundamental right to be protected and to be safe.

√ In 2010, an estimated **75,000 volunteers** provided advocacy for **240,000 children.** This is just 36% of the children in foster care. The need to expand CASA advocacy is critical for both for the best interests of our nation’s most vulnerable children, as well as the resultant federal and state government savings with volunteers assigned to their cases.

√ Evaluations have shown that CASA volunteers excel in advocating for a child’s best interest, and are appointed to the most serious cases, with multiple risk factors.

√ The child welfare system could not afford to provide a comparable system of advocacy through non-volunteer approaches

As recommended by the White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth, and Congressional efforts to assure that nonprofits are accountable, the CASA grants administration is highly efficient and accountable to OJJDP, and requires accountability by subgrantees. The National CASA Association administers the competitive grants program at a much lower cost than if administered by government staff.

14-May-12

For more information contact:

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ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN BELONG AT THE TOP OF ANY PRIORITY LIST

CASA is central to fulfilling society's most fundamental obligation by making sure a qualified, compassionate adult will fight for and protect a child's right to be safe, to be treated with dignity and respect, and to learn and grow in the security of a loving family.

Approximately 660,000 neglected and abused children find themselves – through no fault of their own – in the foster care and family court systems in the United States each year.

A child will be uprooted and moved at least three times during the average 22 months spent in foster care (frequently separated from siblings).

In 2010, 1,560 children died as a result of abuse or neglect – nearly 80% of those children were younger than four.

35% OF FOSTER CHILDREN SERVED BY A CASA VOLUNTEER

65% OF FOSTER CHILDREN STILL IN NEED

CASA FOR CHILDREN: A PROVEN SOLUTION

Each of the nearly 1,000 CASA programs across the country are proof of what is possible when we strike a balance between government funding, corporate and foundation support, and the power of American Volunteerism.

Last year, over 77,000 CASA volunteers helped nearly 235,000 abused and neglected children.

Since it's founding in 1977, CASA for Children has ensured transition to a safe, permanent home for more than 2 million children.
A CHILD WITH A CASA VOLUNTEER IS

More likely to be adopted, than to linger in long-term foster care
Half as likely to re-enter the foster care system
More likely to have a plan for permanency, especially children of color
More likely to do better in school

CASA FOR CHILDREN SAVES MONEY

The average cost of providing a CASA volunteer to a child in need: $1,040*

The resulting reduction in the amount of time a child is in foster care: 7.5 months**

The average cost of a month in foster care: $3,250***

Taxpayer savings for every child with a CASA volunteer: $24,375

COSTS OF FOSTER CARE:

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<th>Annual Cost Per Child</th>
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$39,000

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CASAfors CHILDREN

* National CASA Association Annual Local Program Survey Report, 2010
** National CASA Association Annual Local Program Survey Report, 2010