



## Child Abuse and Foster Care Statistics



### THE COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA) PROGRAM

The federal investment in the CASA program saves tens 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.

#### 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 less time in long-term foster care, experience fewer out of home placements, and have significantly improved educational performance.
- More than 90% of children with CASA volunteers never reenter the child welfare system, a significant difference compared to 87% of 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 tens of millions of dollars in child welfare costs alone. Just 12% of children assigned a CASA volunteer remain in long-term foster care, compared to 16% of the general foster care population.
- The child welfare system could not afford to provide a comparable level of advocacy through non-volunteer approaches. In 2013, CASA volunteers contributed 5.75

million advocacy hours, equivalent to almost \$290 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 foster care costs.
- 75 to 1 return on investment. Federal funding for one staff supervisory position within a local CASA program supports up to 30 trained volunteer workers, assigned to as many as 75 children 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 ensure that the court and child welfare systems remain focused on the specific needs of individual children, so that these needs, 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.