Raising Awareness

National Statistics and Key Messages

Infographic

Media Relations Tools

Marketing Tools

Introduction  Raising Awareness  Mobilizing Your Network  Building the Brand  Raising Funds  Holding a Successful Event

Raising Awareness
Raising Awareness of the CASA Cause: Resources

How many times have you heard the question: What is CASA?

Use these tools, templates and tips to increase public understanding of what CASA volunteers do—and why it matters. Materials meant to be used as templates, into which you can place your own text, are provided as downloadable Word documents. Materials meant to be printed and shared are formatted as PDFs.

Resources in this section:

**Tips for Communicating Effectively**

**National Statistics and Key Messages**
- Key Messages About the CASA Program: A Solution that Works
- Compelling Statistics About the CASA Program: Statistical Data on Child Abuse and Volunteer Advocacy
- Infographic—We’ll customize for you!

**Marketing Tools**
- Social Media Tools: Seasonal images, cover photos, profile pictures
- *I am for the child*™ and Child Abuse Prevention Month Online Ads

**Media Relations Tools**
- Editorial Calendars
- Writing Press Releases
- Writing Op-eds
- Writing Letters to the Editor
Top Tips for Communicating Effectively

Keys to Effective Nonprofit Writing

Donors don’t care about your organization. Ouch! But truly, donors care about the results of what you do, your impact on children and the benefits you provide to kids and to society.

That means we must focus on impact and benefits when we talk to donors. It’s about not the programs or services you provide, it’s about what they mean to kids.

We convey benefits and impact best when we use messages that include context and emotion. A well-crafted message paints a vivid picture for the mind. It conveys your impact in a way that resonates with donors. Here are some tips for creating strong and powerful messages.

Communicate impact, not facts

- The fact is: CASA volunteers served 1,217 foster kids last year. The message is: More than 1,200 foster kids had a relentless advocate at their side last year thanks to their CASA volunteers.
- The fact is: We provide training and support to 250 local CASA volunteers so they understand laws and procedures. The message is: Your generosity made it possible for us to train and support 250 local CASA volunteers so they can advocate for the needs of abused and neglected children.
- The most important word in donor communications? You.

Begin with the end in mind

- What do you want your audience to do as a result of reading what you’ve written?
- If your audience remembers only one thing that you’ve written, what should that be? This becomes your major message.
- What real-life story can illustrate your message?
- How do I capture attention from the very first sentence?
Write like you talk

- Use simple words:
  - People, not individuals or persons
  - Use, not utilize
  - On, not upon
  - Find out, not ascertain
- Avoid social service jargon and acronyms
- Avoid fundraising jargon: Major gift, planned gift, leverage, stretch, impactful, sector, capacity
- Use contractions
- Fragments can be powerful for emphasis: We are changing lives. Every minute, every day. And it’s all thanks to you.
- Limit use of the word “very”: If you must amplify an adjective with “very,” you need a stronger adjective.

- Use active voice and sparse words
- Don’t start sentences with “___ing”. It spurs passive sentence structure: Instead of “Donating to CASA is a great investment in our community,” say “Your donation to CASA of Cumberland County is a great investment in our community.”
- Nonprofit clichés (avoid them like the plague)
  - Now more than ever.
  - We need you.
  - Leverage your gift.
- Beware statistical overload. Round numbers up for a whole number: Instead of “We served 1,217 kids last year,” say “We served more than 1,200 kids last year.”
Key Messages About the CASA Program: A Solution that Works

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.

Almost 75,000 trained volunteer CASA and GAL advocates were assigned by courts to the cases of 238,000 abused and neglected children in 2013—37% of children in the child welfare system. CASA and volunteer GAL programs are established in 951 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 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.
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.
Compelling Statistics About the CASA Program: Statistical Data on Child Abuse and Volunteer Advocacy

Child Abuse and Foster Care Statistics

- In 2012, Child Protective Services (CPS) received 3.4 million referrals involving the alleged maltreatment of 6.3 million children. More than 2 million referrals were screened in for a response by CPS.
- 1,640 children died as a result of abuse or neglect; of those, 70% died before reaching their 3rd birthday.
- Throughout 2012, approximately 638,000 children were placed outside their homes for their safety.
- The mean time in foster care is 20.4 months. The median time in foster care is 13.4 months.
- Direct costs for services to abused children total over $33 billion annually. Indirect costs are an additional $47 billion.
- The Center for Disease Control estimates the cost at $210,000 per child, totaling as much as $124 billion for all children each year.

National CASA Statistics

- CASA volunteers make sure that the abuse and neglect that the children originally suffered at home doesn’t continue as abuse and neglect at the hands of the system.
- There are 951 CASA/GAL programs in 49 states and the District of Columbia.
- An estimated 238,000 children were served by local CASA/GAL programs in 2013.
- In 2013, CASA/GAL programs had almost 75,000 volunteers donate more than 5.75 million hours to making a lifelong difference in the lives of abused and neglected children. (Worth nearly $290 million if our volunteers had been compensated for their services).
- Nationally, federal support for CASA programs makes up only a portion of needed support. Programs leverage the federal investment to attract a greater percentage of state, private and court funding to support advocacy within their local communities.

Sources:
Infographic—We’ll Customize for You!

To receive a copy of this infographic customized for your program, email Member Services and provide the pieces of information noted in green. Please allow 7-10 business days for processing.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES CHANGE LIVES

"Being in foster care is living in a constant state of flux. Homes, schools, families...everything is always changing, often suddenly and without warning. The only constant was my CASA volunteer. Without her I would have been lost in the system."

MELISSA, FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

THE PROBLEM: OVERWHELMED SYSTEMS

- The average child will spend nearly 2 years in foster care.
- On average each one of these children will change homes three times.
- There are X,XXX children in foster care and family court systems in INSERT COMMUNITY NAME alone.

THE SOLUTION: CITIZEN VOLUNTEERS

Court Appointed Special Advocates, trained volunteers who help abused and neglected children find safe, permanent homes.

3: Provide number of children in out-of-home care and name of community (e.g., city/county/etc.)

The RESULTS: BRIGHTER FUTURES

A child with a CASA volunteer is half as likely to re-enter the foster-care system and, they are more likely to succeed in school and less likely to spend three or more years in care.

CASA PROGRAMS CHANGE LIVES

A child with a CASA volunteer is more likely to find a safe, permanent home.

Optional 2a: Provide local ratio of Staff/Volunteers/Children

OUR VISION: SERVING EVERY CHILD

234,000

30

75

Volunteers are waiting for a volunteer empowered to find them a safe, loving, permanent home.

"CASA is an organization of people with a proven record of service, excellence, high standards, determination and an unwavering commitment to abused and neglected children and to advocating for justice for all children."

JUDGE JOYCE WILLIAMS WARREN
Tips for Working with the Media

Guiding principle: Give the media what they want! Never suggest a story to a publication without reading it first. Before approaching a particular reporter, understand his/her beat, interests and timelines. And be prepared to deliver—quickly—on all story suggestions.

When considering a topic for its news value, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is it timely? Is it local?
- Is it important or interesting to the general public?
- Does it have consequence, conflict or is it controversial?
- Is it new, novel or different? Is it on the “cutting edge?” Something few people know about?
- Are the people involved community leaders or ordinary people?
- Does it have human interest? What makes it unusual?
- Is it odd, unusual, the biggest, the smallest or is it outstanding in some way, shape or form.
- Does it relate to a “hot” news item? Is the media already interested in the topic?

Ideas to keep your program in the news:

- Anniversaries or milestones
- Retirement of prominent members
- Awards to the program or volunteers
- Outstanding contributions of the program
- Annual conference, awards banquets or special events
- Fundraising events
- Speeches
- Contests or promotions
- Cooperative agreements with other associations or organizations
- Interviews with prominent members on current topics
- Results of a survey
2014 Editorial Calendar - Annual Holidays and Themes

It all starts with a plan! Use this overview of annual themes and events to guide your year-round communications planning. Want to go deeper? Map your content across all channels (newsletters, social media, earned media and more) using the LightBox Collaborative Editorial Calendar.

January:
- Resolutions
- 20 - MLK Day of Service

February:
- Black History Month
- 14 - Valentine’s Day/Generosity Day

March:
- Spring (9 - forward, 20 - first day): Renewal, regeneration, new opportunities
- Social Work Month

April:
- 6-12 - National Volunteer Week
- National Child Abuse Prevention Month (also now National Sexual Assault Awareness Month)

May:
- National Foster Care Awareness Month
- 11 - Mother’s Day
- 26 - Memorial Day

June:
- National Reunification Month (being promoted by ABA)
- 3 - Blogging for LGBT Families Day – writing in support of LGBT issues
- 15 - Father’s Day
- 19 - Juneteenth
- 21 - Longest day of the year – story about putting in a long day for a good result, a day feeling like the longest day of your life

July:
- Independence Day – what does independence mean for you? Stories about supporting children through independence

August:
- Back to school

September:
- 7 - Grandparents’ Day – story about adoption by grandparents
- September 11 Day of Service
- Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept/Oct)

October:
- Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- 31 - Halloween

November:
- Giving thanks, appreciation
- National Adoption Awareness Month/ National Adoption Day
- Native American Heritage Month
- 27 - Thanksgiving
- 28 - Black Friday

December:
- Home for the holidays
- 3 - Giving Tuesday
- End of Tax Year
- New Year’s Eve – resolutions, link between volunteering and better health

Looking for more detail?
Download the free Lightbox Collaborative 2014 Editorial Calendar
Writing Press Releases

Weekly newspapers count on press releases as sources of information for stories and often will print releases verbatim. Although daily newspapers rarely print press releases, they are still helpful in providing reporters with the facts you believe are important to cover (and having everything in writing helps reporters avoid making mistakes). Press releases serve the same purpose with television and radio reporters.

- Get a copy of an Associated Press Stylebook, learn it and follow it in your writing. The stylebook provides guidelines on things like how to write dates and times (3 – 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 20); numbers (spell out one through nine and use numerals for 10 and above); dollars and cents (5 cents, $1.87, $2.4 million); etc. Organizations that produce well-written news releases and prepare them in proper journalistic style are perceived as savvier and more professional by reporters. Being able to write professionally will significantly improve your chances of seeing your press release in print.

- Keep releases under 500 words; the shorter the better.

- Include a contact name and telephone number at the top. If you expect people to call you for follow-ups, include your cell number as well as your office number.

- Include a date at the top.

- Put a headline above the first paragraph.

- Avoid special letterhead or logos or other graphics that might lead the media’s spam filter to relegate your emailed news release to the junk mail folder.

- Try to put a time element in the first, or lead, paragraph—“today” is always the best time element.

- For releases about upcoming events, put the major information about Who, What, When and Where in the lead.

- Follow up with other important facts (including Why) in an “inverted pyramid” style.

- Keep paragraphs short – one or two sentences.

- Consider including a direct quote from your primary spokesperson; clearly identify him/her by title.

- End the release with a paragraph that describes your organization in no more than two sentences.

Download Press Release Templates:
- Child Abuse Prevention Month (April)
- National Volunteer Week
- Giving Season
- New Year’s Resolutions
Op-eds allow organizations to present compelling arguments on behalf of their issues. They work best when they are written under the byline of a person in authority—for example, the executive director or board president of your organization. Here's how to go about asking for an opportunity to write an op-ed.

- If op-ed guidelines are not available online, call the newspaper and ask to speak to the editorial page editor or op-ed editor at daily newspapers or the editor of smaller community newspapers.
- Ask for the opportunity to respond to a recently published editorial, op-ed, news story or issue via an op-ed piece or guest editorial of your own. Inquire about rules for publication, such as space or time limits.
- Be clear and persuasive in stating your position. Focus on a positive representation of your views, not a negative response to the original editorial or opposing viewpoint.
- Use “real life” examples that illustrate how people are affected by the issue.
- Consider closing with a “call to action” that compels people to do something (write their congressional representative, donate money to the cause, vote, etc.).
- Remember the “new” in news. A request for an op-ed must be made within a day or two of when an issue to which you wish to respond arises in the paper.

**Download Op-ed Templates:**

- **Child Abuse Prevention Month (April)**
- **Responding to an Instance of Child Abuse in Your Community**
Writing Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are good ways to respond to news coverage, editorials, columns, or simply to express your views on any issue that has been in the newspaper. Here are some guidelines:

- Know the newspaper’s rules regarding letters to the editor. Find them online or call to ask.
- Write letters the same day that an issue arises in the newspaper.
- Stick to one point.
- Use simple, declarative sentences.
- Be brief. Sometimes the best letters are just one paragraph.
- Discuss an issue in terms of how it affects people.
- Try to connect with readers by appealing to their sense of logic or fair play.
- Express your convictions strongly, but don’t be unnecessarily harsh, cynical or disrespectful.
- Add a motivational line or call to action.
- An upbeat letter may be more persuasive than one that scolds, blames or complains.
- It’s fair for the editor to cut part of your letter for space. To avoid editing, keep your letter to 250 words or less.
- Always have a second person proofread your letter.
- Find the email address to send your letter to online under Contacts or Opinions (often something like letters@newspapername.com) and send your letter along with your full contact information (name, address, city, state, zip, email address). The paper will print only your name and home town, not all the info you provide.
- Online comments on an article do get read. Consider posting.

Download Sample Letters to the Editor:
- Sample Letter Taking a Postion on Legislation
- Three Versions of Responding to an Instance of Child Abuse in Your Community
Web Ads

180px x 150px

350px x 250px

300px x 250px

728px x 90px

Download a zip file of general web ads in CASA or GAL version

Download a zip file of Child Abuse Prevention Month web ads in CASA or GAL version. (Additional sizes not pictured.)
Social Media

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Facebook Cover Photos
Download a zip file of all Facebook Cover Images in CASA or GAL version.

Download Social Media Tips for CASA/GAL Programs.
Facebook Images and Profile Photos

January

Life’s most persistent and urgent question is “What are you doing for others?”
Martin Luther King

Life’s most persistent and urgent question is “What are you doing for others?”

I am for the child

February

Thank you

Thank you

May

“A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.”
Joseph Campbell

“A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.”

May - Foster Care Month

Did you know? Only 54% of youth in foster care earn a high school diploma and only 2% earn a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Our 20,000 young adults age out of foster care each year.

July

(Additional images available, not pictured)

Profile Photos

Download Social Media Tips for CASA/GAL Programs.

Download a zip file of all social media images in CASA or GAL version.
Raising Awareness by Quarter

January – March
Media Relations:
• New Year’s Resolution press release
• Black History Month: Media release shared by Texas CASA
* Social Media:
  • Martin Luther King Jr. image and quote
  • Valentine’s thank you image

April – June
Media Relations:
• Child Abuse Prevention Month press release
• Child Abuse Prevention Month op-ed
• National Volunteer Week press release
• Mother’s Day: Media release shared by Texas CASA
* Social Media:
  • Child Abuse Prevention Month Facebook images - cover photo, images, profile pictures.
  • Foster Care Month Social Media images
  • Memorial Day image of flag with quote

July – September
Media Relations:
• Back to School: Media release about increase in reports of child abuse at beginning of school year
* Social Media:
  • Image of logo and fireworks

October – December
Media Relations:
• Giving season press release
* Social Media:
  • CASA logo carved in pumpkin

Evergreen – For Use Throughout the Year
Media Relations:
• Op-Ed Responding to an Incident of Child Abuse: Use this release after an incident of child abuse or neglect has occurred in your community.

Additional Resources:
• Child Abuse Prevention Month tips
• Child Abuse Prevention Month web banner ads
• Sample Letters to the Editor Responding to Incident of Child Abuse: Three versions of a letter to the editor that can be sent to the local paper following a well-publicized child-abuse incident.
• Sample Letter to Editor: Take a Position on Legislation

* Social Media:
  • I am for the child Facebook cover photo
  • Thumbs-up image (could use for Social Work Month, National Volunteer Week, political shout-outs, etc.)

Additional Resources:
• I am for the child web banner ads

* Download zip file of all CASA or GAL social media images and web banner ads.

Have an example to share? Email the National CASA Marketing Department.