

State Representatives Conference Call, hosted by National CASA  
Legislative Advocacy, August 22 2013

22 total attending, including:

Sonia Valladares (FL), Mary Hayden (VT), Amphay Champathong (HI), Ruth Lane (IL), Carol Potter (AL), Wendy Spence (TN), Beth Dessem (MO), Laurie Johnson (MS), Megan Schulz (OR), Melissa O'Neill (VA), Casey Kimmel (WI), Cheryl Vallee (NY), Ed Kilcullen (MD), John Kelly (CT), Marcia Sink (NH), Mary Beth Luibel (AR), Doug Stephens (OH), Sally Erny, Sharon Heiber, Carmela Welte, NCASA

Beth Dessem and Sonia Valladares led the discussion

**Normalcy Legislation** Sonia Valladares described the normalcy legislation which was approved by the FL legislature April, 2013. It is also referred to as "Let Kids be Kids". Essentially, it sets a parenting standard for foster parents, which allows them to make parenting decisions in many areas without needing the advance approval of child welfare agency. Initially, liability was an obstacle when the legislation was introduced. The legislation now includes a protection from liability clause when the foster parent decision-making follows a "reasonable and prudent standard", which is defined in the legislation by requirements and definitions.

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2013/0215/BillText/er/PDF> The bill was modeled on legislation previously approved by California, and other states are now looking at adopting similar legislation. Sonia share documents describing [Florida's 2013 legislative efforts](#) and work on the [normalcy bill](#) to provide more details for others who are interested.

GAL State Director Alan Abramowitz spearheaded the effort to pass the state legislation. Prior to his position with the state GAL program, Alan worked with the state Dept of Children and Families, and served as its "normalcy czar", as the state sought to allow youth in care, and their foster parents, greater freedom in daily living decisions. In the next legislative session, the legislature will consider legislation dealing with driving and auto insurance.

Missouri allows children to be insured under state insurance. Hawaii, Utah, Indiana, Michigan and Oregon also afford some insurance protections for foster youth.

**Tax Credit for Contributions to CASA.** Beth Dessem described her state's recent success in securing legislative approval to allow a 50% state tax credit for CASA contributions of \$100 or more. Beth was out of the state early in the year, and attributes the success to local programs who took responsibility for legislative advocacy. They met with their legislators in the state capitol and in their districts, and issued invitations to attend CASA events, esp. events at which press would be present.

She estimates that contributions throughout the state will total \$400,000 as a result of the tax credit. There had been some concern that such a generous tax credit would diminish considerable revenue for the state. Their experience has been that many contribute because of the tax credit, yet never file for it. A special form is required to apply for the credit.

**Domestic Sex Trafficking of Foster Youth.** Carmela asked if CASA programs are involved in advocacy efforts on behalf of victims of sex trafficking, since such a large percentage of these victims either come from the child welfare system, or are referred into the system once they are identified. NJ is coordinating a task force to address the issue, that includes law enforcement. VA has a strong emphasis

on the issue, originating in the governor's office. VT is addressing implementation of processes that include law enforcement. CO participates in a focus group. They have prepared a policy brochure for legislators.

Question re: terminology. "Trafficking" covers so many kinds of victimization, including international human trafficking and slavery. Is there a term that focuses on sex trafficking of youth? Federal efforts often describe it as "Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking", which better defines the population with whom we work.

**Extension of foster care beyond age 18.** There was some discussion of proposals within individual states to extend foster care. NH asked for examples of legislation from other states. A resource for all state legislation regarding implementation of the Fostering Connections Act is <http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/human-services/fostering-connections-act-foster-care-to-21.aspx#Chart>. HI asked the group what is the role of the volunteer for youth beyond age 18? CASA is 1 of 3 programs that provides GAL representation in HI. Many of these youth may be considered adults in juvenile court. What about liability?

**IV E reimbursement for CASA/GAL training.** There was considerable interest among several states about the process for applying to their state for IV E reimbursement for training volunteers. Carmela has sent [documents](#) to those states that requested info, that details how and what CASA may claim for training. It was agreed that this would be a beneficial topic for a future conference call among states, with states that have successfully entered into contracts with their IV E state agency to provide guidance. The question was also raised about how many states have entered into contracts. Results from our 2012 state survey show just 3 states, claiming an average of \$62,000 reimbursement for training. Some states may not have understood or reported, because we know that several states have implemented since then. We will query states again.

**Other Legislative Activity/Trends in States? Commissions and task forces in which state organizations participate?**

National CASA will keep a tally of the commissions and task forces in which state organizations participate. Please send a list of commissions/task forces in which your state participates to [carmelaw@casaforchildren.org](mailto:carmelaw@casaforchildren.org). As examples, CFSR and Children's Justice committees are state entities in which CASA is eligible to participate in, by federal statute.

TX and CA have shared with all states their legislative priorities for 2012 – 2013. CO participates on a Children's Caucus, which addresses a broad spectrum of children's issues, headed by a state legislator. The caucus conducts 8 – 10 briefings each legislative session. Also addressing domestic minor sex trafficking and impact of legalization of marijuana in next session.

**Next Steps.**

There is a [web page specifically for state organizations](#) on [casaforchildren.org](http://casaforchildren.org). We can use this website to post information of significance to states, such as information on IV E reimbursement for CASA training, sample legislation on "normalcy/letting kids be kids", state legislation to implement components of the Fostering Connections to Success Act.

Because of a large attendance and interest among participants, we should continue conference call discussions among states to discuss policy areas of interest and importance.

Suggestions for future discussion topics:

- Title IV E training reimbursements for CASA
- Serving Youth Beyond Age 18, and perhaps incorporating discussion on incorporating other aspects of Fostering Connections, such as family finding, education outcomes, transition planning

Carmela will schedule another conference call for states for Sept - October