A Publication of the National CASA Association

Communications Manual
for CASA and GAL Programs

CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

THE NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED
SPECIAL ADVOCATE ASSOCIATION

Communications Manual for CASA and GAL Programs

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Preface

Why a Communications Manual?

When the National CASA Association asks program directors and CASA volunteers across the country to describe the "absolute most important barrier" our cause needs to overcome to achieve our vision, "Lack of awareness and understanding of CASA" is often mentioned first. Building a community CASA or GAL program begins with awareness. How can a caring adult volunteer their time or a donor fund the program if awareness about the CASA cause does not exist?

The purpose of the National CASA Association Communications Manual is to help build a practical communications plan for the CASA/GAL program. This manual incorporates key concepts from the National CASA Association (NCASA) awareness and communications study as well as advice on nurturing a productive relationship with the media. This revised edition also includes information on web-based resources and technology as well as crisis communication and targeted recruitment efforts.

The information contained in this Communications Manual can be a useful resource to help build an individual awareness plan for your program. As you need additional help and advice, contact the National CASA communications team.

National CASA Can Help

This manual is designed to help CASA/GAL managers create a positive and respected image for their community program and can be amended, where necessary, to reflect the needs of a particular program. What works in rural Maine may not be effective in urban Los Angeles. Outreach efforts should complement the resources and target audience of each individual program.

The National CASA Association encourages individual programs to submit suggestions and new material for future revisions of the *Communications Manual*. Revisions will be made as new material is available and programs are encouraged to submit ideas, information and samples from their communications outreach efforts. Please use the Communications Manual Feedback Form in the appendix of this guide to provide suggestions for future revisions and updates.

We encourage you to maintain contact with the National CASA communications department. This not only keeps the program aware of new national communications efforts but also provides information about public relations efforts of other local CASA/GAL programs.

Note: In the interests of brevity and readability, CASA/GAL will be simply referred to as CASA. This term includes all programs within the National CASA network, including CASA and GAL programs, Child Advocate, Voices for Children and CAJA programs.

Outreach recommendations for all National CASA programs include:

- Utilizing the annual public relations tool kit with local community media to assure a consistent message among CASA programs.
- Reading National CASA publications such as the *Connection* magazine and *Update* newsletter to get the most up-to-date news about national programming efforts benefiting CASA programs.
- Providing volunteer names and addresses on a regular basis for the *Connection* mailing list.
- Consistently reviewing casanet.org and nationalcasa.org. Public relations campaign information and outreach materials are often available directly through these sites.

The information provided in this guidebook should provide a solid foundation for building a communications plan that will last for the life of the program. Contact the National CASA Association with questions or requests for assistance.

Chapter 1: Public Relations Planning

Take a moment to imagine what it would be like if everyone knew about CASA.

Funding would flow to the program from many new and unexpected sources. Programs could expand staff, take on more cases and help more children. More people would want to become volunteers. You would not have to explain to everyone (over and over again) what it is you do for a living. Congressional representatives, newspaper editors and city leaders would actually listen to what you think about issues affecting children. And, best of all, the program would become a solid, permanent and highly visible part of the community.

Does this scenario sound too good to be true? It's not. In fact, each and every CASA program in the country has the power to reach this level of recognition, respect and influence. How? By gaining visibility in the community and increasing public awareness about what CASA does and why it is important.

Successful public relations are not always easy.

> "Public relations" (PR) is one of those skills everyone thinks they should know instinctively, but few people really do. It is much harder to launch a PR plan than you might think. The secret is not only learning the tricks of the media trade—how to write a news release or be interviewed—but to understand how and why they are used.

Big Picture of Public Relations

Some approach public relations planning by focusing on the parts of the process: getting a story in the local newspaper, preparing a speech, assembling a slide show and building a relationship with a journalist. By looking at each task as a separate accomplishment, they fail to see how all the various public relations tasks are linked.

Public relations efforts for the CASA program are an ongoing process that should permeates the entire management plan. It is a task which never ends. One helpful approach to public relations management is to consider how every single work-related task affects the public image of the program.

For example:

- How is someone treated when calling the office? Who do they speak with?
- Is the program listed in the phone book? Does the listing say something different than the letterhead?
- Do you ever have to fire volunteers? Is there a standard procedure to follow when this occurs?
- What do people receive when they request more information about the program?
- Do you know the congressional representative for the district? Does the representative know about the program?

- Has the program run short of money at the end of the year and turned to members for support?
- Are staff members participating in other child advocacy organizations in the community?
- When a radio talk show discusses child abuse, does a program representative call to comment?
- Is a prominent CASA logo posted on the office door?
- When receiving a new grant, is an announcement made to highlight how the money will help children in the community?
- Are training sessions presented to volunteers in a consistent, cohesive and easy-to-understand manner?
- Do volunteers know what CASA is called in other states? Do they know they are part of a national movement?

These are routine program management functions that have public relations implications.

> **Note:** The first step in effective public relations planning is to remember that decisions made and actions taken throughout a work day affect how people view the CASA program.

Building a Solid Foundation

At a meeting of state CASA directors, the manager of a major metropolitan CASA program was distressed because she did not have time for public relations since the program began. What had she been doing?

> During the early part of the year, she spent most of her time meeting with the county's two juvenile court judges to determine just exactly how CASA was going to be implemented into the existing system. She then had extensive meetings with the director of the Department of Social Services and spent six weeks speaking to groups of caseworkers about CASA. In April, she found an office, had her stationery and brochures printed and contacted numerous agencies and service providers to inform them they would soon be working with volunteers. Her first training class had 16 recruits—all chosen as volunteers because of their key positions in the community. "I've only spoken at a couple of Kiwanis groups and I tried to call the paper a couple of times but no one would ever take my call," she sighed. "I guess I'm just not good at PR."

What this director did not realize was that an aggressive PR campaign was already being launched. Public relations are more than reaching thousands of people reading the paper over morning coffee. There are many different audiences to reach depending on the public relations goal.

Grab a piece of paper and walk through the questions and exercises on the next few pages to help determine program goals, define target audiences, list possible media outlets to contact and select projects to attain those public relations goals.

Determine Program Goals

What are the goals of the program? What were the goals of the program when it first began? What are the current program goals? What will the goals be one year from now? Five years from now? Below is a typical list of goals for the early years of a CASA program:

1. Get the program started in the juvenile court
2. Put CASA in state statute
3. Find funding
4. Recruit volunteers
5. Provide adequate training and supervisions for volunteers

After the first year, program goals may broaden:

6. Expand staff and volunteer pool in order to serve more children
7. Start CASA programs in towns that do not have them
8. Find ongoing funding, or money from new sources
9. Upgrade training materials

Established CASA programs find themselves facing ambitious challenges:

10. Influence or change state laws affecting children
11. Expand and improve services available to children and families
12. Secure a permanent funding source
13. Form a state-wide CASA network

Define the Audience

Determine who must be reached to accomplish these goals. What do people need to know about CASA in order to support the mission and achieve these goals? Most public relations planners divide this list into two audiences: internal and external.

Internal Audiences

The internal audience is comprised of people within the CASA 'business': judges, attorneys, caseworkers, service providers, child advocacy groups, etc. Effort should be made to reach professionals who form the backbone of the child welfare system in your community.

Ensure all juvenile court judges in the community are aware of CASA and support the program. Next develop a strong working relationship with the Department of Social Services. Attorneys involved in abuse/neglect proceedings and court employees should also understand the program.

Service providers should also know about the local CASA program. Send information about the program and consider visiting agencies personally. Service providers may be agencies and programs CASA volunteers work alongside to help children and families: counselors, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) workers, job training programs, day care providers, school officials, local children's advocacy centers, women's shelters, etc. Extend awareness efforts to include other child advocacy organizations (public and private) that are prominent in children's affairs (for example, the local Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, the ABA's Young Lawyers group and police officers)

External Audiences

The external audience is comprised of people who have nothing to do with the child welfare system: potential volunteers, funders, the media, policymakers, the general public, etc.

Key political leaders must know about CASA and actively show their support for the program. Not only do political leaders manage the strings that provide community or state funding for the program, they make and change laws for children.

One key way to secure widespread support for CASA with little effort (and fairly low risk) is by cultivating awareness with community groups. Kiwanis breakfasts and Junior League meetings can be the foundation for a public awareness program. Many national minority organizations also have local chapters (for example the Urban League, National Council of Negro Women and the League of Latin American Citizens). These groups can be a valuable source of support for CASA and a great help in introducing CASA to the minority community.

Select Projects to Accomplish Goals

The National CASA Association continues to work with CASA programs to launch public relations campaigns. Below is a suggested list of PR projects for programs.

If you are starting a new CASA program:

- Obtain copies of available National CASA public relations kits.
- Order National CASA informational brochures designed to provide judges, attorneys, social workers and other professionals technical information about the program.
- Contact other local CASA programs in your state to gather samples of their communications materials (brochures, newsletters, newspaper clippings, etc).
- Obtain available National CASA campaign materials.
- Contact the state organization for information on current local media efforts.
- Visit both National CASA websites (casanet.org and nationalcasa.org) on a regular basis.

When a new or established program wants to increase visibility, assist in fundraising, help with volunteer recruitment or increase political awareness, the following projects should be considered to meet these goals:

- Develop an awareness program deciding what graphic elements will be used. Follow National CASA's graphic standards. See the National CASA Association Graphic Standards in the appendix of this manual.
- Cultivate a library of advocacy stories to use in sharing the CASA message. Print basic informational materials relaying these messages.
- Get to know your local media—so they can get to know CASA—with ongoing media relationship building.
- Consider launching a public service campaign.
- Consider holding an event or fundraiser to bring awareness to the program.
- Collaborate with community organizations to create combined awareness of issues facing children in your community.

A strong outreach plan is built strategically block by block, with the first block being your goals. Begin with your goals, and then determine the audience you need to reach in order to achieve your desired goals.

> **One of the best kept secrets in the PR business**: The public relations task depends on the audience you wish to reach, which is determined by the PR goals.

Only after the first two building blocks of a communications plan are in place should you begin to look at specific media options. Each item below builds on the strength and scope of the others. Like building blocks, one supports the others.

Goals:	Audience:	PR Projects:
♦ Starting new program ♦ Finding 1st funding ♦ Recruiting volunteers ♦ Finding secured funding ♦ Increasing donations ♦ Expanding staff ♦ Changing Laws	♦ Judges ♦ Caseworkers ♦ Attorneys ♦ Service providers ♦ Community groups ♦ Policymakers ♦ Public at large	♦ Awareness program ♦ Basic information kit ♦ Speaker's bureau ♦ Newsletter ♦ Website ♦ Media Relations

Please note that as you become more effective and consistent with your awareness efforts, your visibility will increase, and so will risk and public scrutiny of your program.

Visibility: More people know who you are and what you do

Risk: Less control over information flow about program

Scrutiny: People are more likely to want to evaluate the program's performance and hold you accountable

Here are a few things to remember when planning to achieve visibility while minimizing the risk of the unintended consequences.

- Do not contact the media to write a story about CASA if the juvenile court judge does not approve of how the program is run. There is a good chance the judge will be quoted in the story. .
- Do not launch a volunteer recruitment campaign if funding is not available to supervise new recruits. Launch a fundraising drive instead.
- Do not tell the media CASA is the most important force for children in the community; if other child advocacy organizations have not heard of CASA, your credibility will be questioned.

Don't be intimidated. You are not alone. Building a solid communications program is as important in CASA management as setting up recruiting procedures and developing training materials. But often public relations efforts are the last area to be implemented, if considered at all. If you have never constructed a public relations plan, particularly one including an aggressive media outreach plan, you are not alone.

When program directors gather to discuss the needs of their programs, they say they want funding, volunteers, additional staff, larger offices, higher salaries and changes in local and state laws. And yet they are reluctant to bring extensive public attention to their program. There are several reasons why this happens:

1. Environment—CASA programs usually operate alongside the doors of the local Department of Social Services. These state social service or CPS agencies are often closed to the press due to confidentiality statutes in their jurisdictions. Their fundraising is directed at the legislature. Lobbying may be done by their unions. Although CPS agencies do not often seek out publicity to help them do their jobs, there is a strong argument that social workers are badly in need of a public awareness campaign (for example if the public knew the impossible conditions under which these men and women worked, we might see fewer stories burning caseworkers at the stake when a child in custody dies).
2. History—CASA was born out of the juvenile court and is cloaked in a mantle of confidentiality. For good reason, the justice system instills an overwhelming sense of responsibility and protection for the children and families who are thrust into its courtrooms by anyone who becomes a part of the process. Over the years, confidentiality policies have become so ingrained that parties feel they have somehow violated a child's rights if they whisper even a particle of veiled information about the case.
3. Background and Skills of Program Director—A good CASA director is a person with solid management skills not necessarily good public outreach skills. Many CASA directors are former attorneys and caseworkers adept at handling complex legal obstacles. Quite simply, many CASA directors are uncomfortable with public relations tasks and do not make communications a priority or goal for their program. Often, the best way to handle this situation is to appoint a volunteer as the PR Coordinator.
4. What We Do Is Hard to Explain or Understand—It sounds so simple: we advocate for children in court. But what does that really mean to the average person? The truth is that the average person in America doesn't know what the juvenile court is, how foster care works or what happens to kids when their parents abuse them. They certainly do not grasp concepts such as "foster care drift" or "permanency planning," which are the cornerstones of the CASA concept. Another benefit of this manual is learning how to explain what CASA is in a way the average person can understand.

We list these public relations barriers not to dissuade you from developing a PR plan for your program, but to help in understanding that initial reluctance or apprehension is common and many others have experienced the same feelings

National Identity

A national reputation—for a product, a celebrity, a large corporation or a new nonprofit program—is rarely built from the top down but instead from the ground up. Local programs play a crucial role in helping CASA emerge into national prominence. While the National CASA Association concentrates on expanding public awareness through public service campaigns and

exposure in the national media, local programs create a grassroots movement to parallel National CASA efforts.

It's a two-part plan: National CASA creates the overall "umbrella" awareness campaign for CASA while local programs and state organizations lay the groundwork of public relations activities at the local level.

Each program is a vital link in the chain creating the national CASA identity. When people realize the CASA network is in New York, Houston, San Diego, Miami *and* Las Vegas, individual efforts begins to build into a greater public relations force. We evolve from an anonymous group of loosely connected local programs into a full-fledged, nationally-recognized movement.

The strong grassroots awareness created today for local programs helps the entire CASA network tomorrow. Programs are encouraged to work in partnership with the National CASA Association. This manual is intended to serve as a road map in deciding where your program will go and how it will get there effectively.

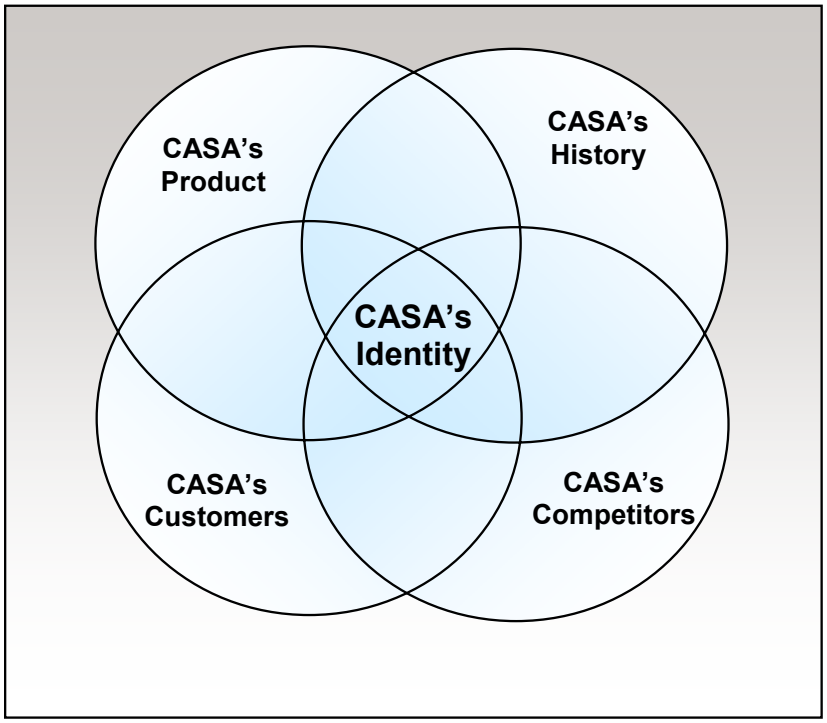
Chapter 2: Defining CASA

Think of some popular brands and a clear image probably comes to mind.

Even if you don't smoke, you probably have a clear image for Marlboro—a cowboy. And when you think of Coca-Cola, you probably see their patented bottle. These images or identities go back nearly 70 years and have contributed to making Marlboro and Coca-Cola, along with McDonalds and Disney, the four most valuable brands in the world (according to *Financial World).* These companies became visible and memorable by defining a unique identity meaningful to their customers and consistently communicating that identity over time.

CASA's Unique Identity

What is the identity for CASA? Before building an awareness plan for making potential volunteers and supporters aware of us, we must first define who we are. An identity, whether for a brand or organization, is comprised of four interlocking elements: the organization's history and heritage, "product" (or what it does), customers and competitors.



CASA's Customers

The CASA network's customers are the children we serve. CASA programs have two target groups of customers for public relations. The first customer group is the internal audience of current staff, volunteers and current donors. The second group of customers is the external audience of people outside the organization: potential staff, volunteers and donors.

To be fully effective, the identity of the program must be equally powerful to both the internal as well as external customers. This is why the most successful organizations begin their marketing process by looking within themselves and building their identity from the inside out.

Numerous surveys of local CASA programs as well as external research studies found that the person most likely to volunteer or support a CASA program is:

- Female
- 35 years of age or older
- College educated or has some college experience

Your program likely includes people fitting this description and that is not a coincidence. To be relevant to ourselves, our values and the customers we serve—especially the children— we must actively and aggressively reach out to diverse populations as well. We need to select specific targets, such as men and people of color, to direct PR efforts and increase our presence and awareness within these communities.

History and Heritage of CASA

The National CASA Association is an organization of more than 975 community programs across the country that recruits and trains volunteer advocates to speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children. CASA is truly a grassroots movement in the most literal sense of the word. When the first program began in Seattle, WA, in 1977, few people imagined it would become the giant, coast-to-coast movement for children that it is today. Programs grew autonomously with little connection to each other. These programs often created their own guidelines and names as they went along.

When the National CASA Association was formed in 1982, there were approximately 40 CASA programs in the U.S. By the time the national office opened in 1984, there were over 100 programs. Meanwhile, a large number of CASA programs (many of whom were in business before the national office) had created solid reputations for themselves in their local court systems under names other than CASA. For example, Voices for Children in San Diego, CA, had become a highly respected organization in its hometown and had greater name recognition than CASA.

Other programs had established themselves with the name, "Guardian Ad Litem," including three of the largest state networks: Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina. Many GAL programs felt bound by law to adhere to the GAL name since it was documented in state statute.

Multiple individual agencies and the resulting lack of a single national identity have also produced a variety of different identities for CASA. In our research, we were able to identify 15 different slogans that National CASA and local programs have used in building our identity. Is CASA the "voice of the child," "advocates for the child's best interests," "help for judges," etc.?

The CASA network needs one unifying identity if we are to achieve the awareness of successful national organizations like Boys and Girls Club. Most local CASA programs recognize this, and have stated the following in program surveys: if we are to achieve our aggressive vision of having a CASA volunteer for every child needing one then the CASA network must grow from a group of anonymous loosely connected local programs into full-fledged, nationally-recognized movement.

CASA's Competitors

The simple fact is that your program must compete with other worthy nonprofit agencies, many of which also benefit children. Most of these agencies are better known and certainly have simpler concepts to communicate.

Awareness is our first and largest obstacle to overcome. Recent communications research has indicated that we have made some progress increasing awareness of CASA above the 1998 benchmark of 2% of our potential donors and volunteers. But even if we have doubled our awareness in the last five years, we are still looking at less than 5% awareness. When you consider well known organizations such as the Girl/Boy Scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, March of Dimes and Boys and Girls Clubs, we still have a lot of work before us.

We need to build awareness of our cause, but awareness alone is not sufficient. We need to distinguish ourselves to stand out from other agencies benefiting children. We need to challenge ourselves creatively to develop a look and identity that is not only meaningful but is also strikingly unique to CASA. Finding that unique solution to the CASA identity is the single most difficult, and important, part of the communication process. To do so, we must look at what we do, our "product."

CASA's Product

As an organization, we 'produce' volunteer advocates for abused and neglected children. Nationally, we have only enough volunteers to help about one-third of the abused children needing one. How do we attract more volunteers? What message can we send that will reach potential volunteers in an emotional way and affect their individual decision making?

To answer that question, we examined the ways National CASA and local CASA programs have tried to answer that question. We identified 15 different ways to describe the benefit volunteers bring to children and local communities. Some of these named benefits included "speaking up for a child's best interests in court," "keeping a child from falling through the cracks of the system" and "helping a child find a safe, permanent home where a child can thrive."

National CASA completed two research projects (in 1998 and 2002) where we asked current nonprofit agency volunteers and donors to tell us which CASA benefit was most important. In both surveys, the messages considered most important are action oriented rather than processes oriented and refer to a benefit for a child. The top CASA benefits include "CASA stands up for abused children", "CASA helps to change the life of an abused child" and "CASA helps an abused child find a safe, permanent home." Note that every one statement includes the word "abused."

CASA Identity Statement

An identity statement is the single, most powerful definition of an organization. An organization's identity is the one most repeated message to the world. The CASA identity statement is your answer to the now-familiar question: "What is CASA?" The short and concise answer should be something similar to: "CASA is an organization of volunteer advocates who stand up for abused and neglected children to help them find safe, permanent homes."

Message Strength in Numbers

We live in a world where people are bombarded with more and more images and messages, while our time and attention spans continue to shrink. According to *Advertising Age*, there are approximately 1,600 different messages competing for our limited attention in a given day.

If we are not consistent and single-minded with our communications to potential volunteers and donors, they will never hear our message. Each message must reinforce the prior message—not compete with it. Any parent will share the secret to training children: repetition, repetition and repetition. Advertising and marketing professionals long ago figured out this approach works well with adults also.

Use your local communications efforts to repeat and reinforce the National CASA communications campaigns and message. Imagine your program is a single flashlight in the dark. Now imagine what can happen if you combine that single light with National CASA's light and the lights of more than 975 CASA programs across the country. Together, we can build a powerful beacon for our cause.

Use the CASA Name

Lack of a strong national name and identity is the single largest barrier to achieving the goal of a CASA volunteer for every abused child who needs one. This is why using and clearly referencing the CASA name in all communications materials is a specific requirement for the National CASA grants program.

During the past few years, National CASA was made great strides in gaining national media presence, appearing in programs such as:

- The *CBS Early Show, NBC Dateline, The Today Show* and the nationally-syndicated *Montel Williams Show*.
- Full-page feature article in *USA Today* plus articles in *Family Circle, AARP Bulletin* and *Essence.*
- National network PSA schedules featuring Amy Brenneman of *Judging Amy* and Simon Baker of *The Guardian.*

National CASA is committed to expanding this level of national media support. If your program does not use CASA in its name nor does it identify itself with the National CASA Association, this valuable national media attention will be lost to your program. Building awareness and identity is one of the hardest challenges faced by local programs. National CASA does not want to render program names other than CASA obsolete. Instead, local programs are encouraged to utilize any of these three options in building a national name:

1. New programs should use the CASA name instead of creating a new name.

2. If your program's local reputation is not widespread, consider changing the program name to CASA. In fact, you can probably get some publicity just by changing your looks (smaller newspapers will run the announcement).
3. If your program is established and uses another name, you now have the option to use a custom CASA logo design that ties your program to the other 975 National CASA member programs across the country.

Using the National CASA Trademark Logo and Slogans

One of the benefits of membership in the National CASA Association is the ability to use the National CASA trademark logo. You also have the ability to use trademarked slogans that have been proven as effective tools to market CASA programs.

In 2004, we introduced a new logo design, our first new CASA logo design in 25 years. The purpose of this new design is to unite National CASA member programs across the country, regardless of the local program's name. Additionally, research conducted nationally among 1,000 potential CASA volunteers and donors showed more than 80% prefer the new logo design, seeing it as clearer and easier to read and better communicating our mission as caring for children.

To assure we protect the trademark of logo and slogans, members of the National CASA Association must adhere to the Graphic Standards. See Chapter 4 for detailed graphic standards.

Chapter 3: Launching an Awareness Program

Creating an awareness program is not as hard as you might think because much of the work has already been done. By using National CASA's communications materials, you are well on your way. Following are recommended actions to take in launching an awareness program specifically for your program.

Resources for Building Awareness

There are several resources available to National CASA member programs for building awareness for the local program.

Obtain PR kits from National CASA

The National CASA Association provides member programs with PR kits to assist awareness building. Theses public relations packets are distributed to support National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month in April.

Download National CASA Communications Materials from CASAnet.org

The Communications section of CASAnet.org contains many National CASA PR campaign materials and logos. Visit casanet.org, select a topic or subject of interest and download relevant materials for an awareness campaign.

Find Professional Graphic Artists to Design Materials

Beware of taking short cuts to produce communications materials; the risk is a sloppy and unprofessional product. Nothing undermines a program's credibility faster than low-quality printed materials. Seek out a graphic artist to design public relations materials. This investment will pay off in the long run with more volunteers, supporters and public awareness for the program.

To help the design fit local programs materials and national efforts, provide copies of the CASA logo, slogan and photographs to the artist along with samples of brochures and ads from National CASA. Give the artist a copy of the National CASA Graphics Standards. Discuss your goals with the artist, and tell him/her what you want. Work out a visual plan based on the National CASA awareness campaign.

Dealing with graphic artists and printers can either be a helpful experience or a nightmare, depending on who is selected to handle projects. Like any service, quality can vary tremendously. Following are tips on finding a good vendor.

If the program budget is small, choose artists on staff at small printing companies. These people can usually perform basic page layout services. Don't expect cutting-edge design work from this source. A print shop graphic artist can, however, put together quality materials for you at minimal cost if you provide the CASA logo, slogan, photographs and a copy of the National CASA's Graphics Standards.

The best graphic artists can usually be found running their own companies, freelancing or working on staff at public relations or advertising firms. These individuals may charge more than small print shop artists and might be more talent than needed for preparing basic materials such as letterhead and forms. However, professional graphic artists can breathe excitement and life into printed projects, especially for special events, fundraisers and public service campaigns. Select a printer or graphic artist based on the specific printing and creative needs of a project.

A word of caution: Some high-end graphic artists might encourage working outside the standard CASA graphic tools (logo, slogan). Why? If a program already has a logo, design fees are less. Artists are creative people and usually like to develop projects from the beginning. Do not be surprised if you get pressure to use new material, a new logo or different name. Do not be tempted. Graphic artists and printers outside of the CASA network do not understand how a different approach can damage the flow of visibility and partnership with other CASA programs. It would keep a program's reputation local with little hope of benefiting from national media about CASA or legislative activities.

Consistency is Key

The biggest mistake small organizations make when producing materials one at a time is varying the design and look of public relations materials for the sake of creativity. The result can be a program brochure that does not look remotely like the letterhead and might also be different from the sign on the door. The net result to your staff, volunteers and supporters is confusions. For consistency sake, consider the whole public awareness picture. Ensure everything produced uses the same program name or image.

Here's a sample list of communications materials being produced by a typical CASA program:

- General information brochure
- Newsletters
- Letterhead and envelopes
- Training materials
- Business cards (for staff and volunteers)
- Thank you notes
- Volunteer application forms
- Posters
- Court reports
- Office signage
- Website

All of these various communication materials reinforce a consistent identity for the program when using the same graphic identity. When each one of these items is stamped with the same logo, color and design configurations, they will synchronize with a national image. Each promotional and public relations tool should be part of a carefully constructed image plan. When there is consistency and uniformity, the lasting impression says, "This program looks professional and well-organized."

Photography

The National CASA communications campaign strives to combine photos of actual volunteers and children. CASA tries to differentiate the organization from other child welfare agencies by building an identity around volunteers. In doing this, we honor our volunteers and reinforce their loyalty. We recommend using actual volunteers that highlight the diversity of the program: gender, ethnicity and age.

Using pictures of children is also helpful as they provide an emotional connection for the public showing CASA helping children. Where possible, use images that include both actual volunteers and children; images are even more helpful in portraying our mission when the volunteer in a caring pose appropriate to CASA advocacy.

Acquiring quality photographs of children can be a challenge for many programs. CASA is faced with a couple of hurdles in this area. The first has to do with confidentiality and the sensitive nature of what we do. Using photos of "real" CASA children is an option only if the child is no longer in the system, has emotional distance from their experience, wants to participate in a photo session and most importantly, has the permission from a parent or guardian. National CASA often finds it easier and just as effective to use models (often children of friends and staff members). Often photographers can help locate child models for a photo shoot.

When soliciting friends or staff members about allowing their children to be model, a variety of responses can result. Some people are very supportive and happy to have their children photographed. Others are uncomfortable with the idea of their children being portrayed as abused or neglected. Above all, respect should be given no matter what response occurs.

> **Note**: No matter the photographer, ensure parents or guardians of models understand what CASA is before the photo shoot and always have parents and guardians sign a release form. Standard release forms are available from office supply stores or you may want to create your own. See the Appendix for a sample photography release.

Professional photographers can be extremely expensive. If you have exhausted all your connections and still have not found someone, investigate photographers used by other nonprofits involving children. Pay attention to advertising or print PSAs in your community and seek out the photographer's name if you see something you like. Programs may find someone willing to donate talent or work for a reduced rate. Inquire at local photo labs if staff work as freelance photographers and are interested in an outside assignment. If budget does not allow for paying models a fee, consider giving each child a quality print of their best photo.

Chapter 4: National CASA Association Graphic Standards

Logo Standards

THE CASA/GAL PROGRAM MUST ADHERE TO THE GRAPHIC STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE NATIONAL CASA ASSOCIATION FOR ALL TRADEMARKED WORD MARKS, SLOGANS, LOGOS AND GRAPHIC ELEMENTS.

REQUIREMENTS

THE CASA/GAL PROGRAM ADHERES TO NATIONAL CASA REQUIREMENTS REGARDING USE AND GRAPHIC PRESENTATION OF ALL THE NATIONAL CASA TRADEMARKS NOW IN EXISTENCE OR LATER CREATED, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION THE NATIONAL CASA LOGOS, "A POWERFUL VOICE IN A CHILD'S LIFE®," "CASA®," "COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE™," "GIVE THE LIGHT OF HOPE TO A CHILD®," "LIGHT OF HOPE®," "SPEAK UP FOR A CHILD®," AND "STAND UP FOR AN ABUSED CHILD™":

National CASA Logo

- The National CASA logo contains two basic elements: the trademark icon and a program descriptor.
- The National CASA trademark icon consists of the following image:

- Five program descriptor versions of the National CASA logo are now available: CASA, GAL, Child Advocates, Voices for Children and Guardian ad Litem.

- National CASA can develop, upon request, an official program descriptor for program names not covered by one of the five standard versions shown above. This is to accommodate programs such as CAJA of Marshal County, PARACHUTE, Kid's Voice, Roots and Wings and others. Customized state and local program versions are also available from National CASA upon request. Examples are below:

- The National CASA logos cannot be redrawn or modified in any way.
- The National CASA trademark icon and descriptor must always be linked. The National CASA trademark icon cannot be used as a separate design element. The exception will be the National CASA pin, due to production limitations that apply only to the pin.

- Only National CASA member programs may use the official National CASA logos.
- The National CASA logos may be used only in connection with programs, promotional materials, and projects directly related to the goals and purposes of the National CASA Association.
- Only National CASA has ownership rights in the National CASA logos, and the permission granted to the National CASA membership programs does not grant any ownership interest in said marks and may be withdrawn at National CASA's sole discretion at any time.

Logo Requirements

- The National CASA logos should be printed in:
  - PMS #295U blue and PMS #485U red
  - Black and grey (black screened back 60%)
  - All black or, the all black can be printed in a single color
  - Logos should always be printed on a white or light colored background that provides sufficient contrast.
- The National CASA logos may be printed in white reverse when the logos are positioned against a dark background.
- The National CASA logos are available in a vertical treatment, which may be used whenever production needs require it. An example is provided below.

CASA Logo Restrictions

- The CASA logo is not used on commercially developed products for sale to the public except as authorized by National CASA Association.

National CASA Seal

- The National CASA seal is built from our original National CASA logo and identifies CASA program communications as authentic and approved by the National CASA Association. Use of the seal keeps our traditional CASA logo graphic alive, while supporting the new official National CASA logo.
- The National CASA seal is always used in conjunction with the official National CASA logo in all applications, and is sized in a way that is secondary to the logo (smaller, at the bottom of page, on the back of a brochure, etc.)
- The National CASA seal is black on white or any light-colored background that provides sufficient contrast. The seal may also be white reversed out of blue, black or any dark-colored background that provides sufficient contrast.
- Only National CASA has ownership rights in the National CASA seal and the permission granted to the National CASA membership programs does not grant any ownership interest in said seal and may be withdrawn at National CASA's sole discretion at any time.
- The CASA design within the National CASA Seal is owned by the Rhode Island CASA program and licensed to National CASA. The seal, containing the Rhode Island CASA design, cannot be used for lapel pins or note paper.

Official Trademarked National CASA Slogans

- "A powerful voice in a child's life", "Stand up for an abused child", "Speak up for a child." and "Give hope to a child." are trade marked slogans to be used only by program members of National CASA.
- All trademarked slogans are used only in connection with promotional materials and projects that are directly related to the goals and purposes of National CASA.
- Additional slogans may be developed to meet specific awareness campaign needs. Use of these campaign specific slogans will be defined by National CASA publications, notably the National CASA PR kits. Any questions regarding use should be forwarded to the National CASA Chief Communications Officer.
- Only National CASA has ownership rights in the National CASA slogans and the permission granted to the National CASA membership programs does not grant any ownership interest in said slogan and may be withdrawn at National CASA's sole discretion at any time.

Chapter 5: Telling the CASA Story

Clearly, planning for public relations is important. By now you have a list of program goals and potential projects to help reach those goals. There is now a well thought out plan along with visual directions the program will take in carrying out the awareness plan to the community. Before you pick up the phone and call the newspaper, we recommend stopping to consider these facts:

Most people in America:

- Are not aware of the huge number of children being abused and neglected by families today.
- Do not know where children go when they are taken away from their parents by the state.
- Have no idea what the juvenile court is or what happens there.
- Believe if a child is involved in the courts, then he or she must be a juvenile delinquent.
- Think abusive families are bad, ca not change their ways and should not be given another chance.

In other words, a great majority of the people in your community have absolutely no knowledge about CASA or why the program is needed.

The Challenge of Communicating CASA

Unlike many nonprofit organizations and "good causes," CASA faces a serious challenge in its public relations efforts. Not only do we need to communicate what CASA is, we must first explain why CASA is needed.

The Red Cross provides an example to illustrate this point. When the Red Cross makes a public service announcement, the announcer only needs to say two words: Give Blood. The audience immediately knows what that message means; they understand the problem (people have accidents in which they lose a lot of blood). They also understand what they can do to help (donate blood to save lives).

With CASA the public does not understand what happens to abused children in our society. They do not know anything about the problems of juvenile court or the child welfare system. And the public certainly does not perceive what could do personally to help or what their donation of time or money could accomplish.

When a person puts a dollar in the Toys for Tots bucket, for example, they know it will help put a new toy under a needy child's Christmas tree. However, if a member of the public was to write a check for $50 to the local CASA program, there is not a clear idea about what could be accomplished with that donation.

Explain the Problem First

When you talk about CASA—in a brochure, a speech or on a television interview show—and your goal is to educate a general audience, always explain the problem first.

Imagine creating an information brochure for the CASA program. Which lead statement would you use?

> **Lead Statement #1:** The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program uses volunteers as Guardians Ad Litem to represent the best interests of abused children in court.
>
> **Lead Statement #2:** Every year, more than (XX Number) abused and neglected children in the (county or city) are placed in foster care because they are unable to live safely at home. Imagine what it would be like to lose your parents, not because of something you did, but because they cannot or will not take care of you. Now, into these children's lives come dozens of strangers: police, foster parents, therapists, social workers, judges, lawyers and more. Hopefully, one of these strangers is a CASA volunteer. CASA volunteers watch over and advocate for these abused and neglected children to make sure they don't get lost in the overburdened legal system or languish in an inappropriate group or foster home. They stay with each case until it is closed, and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. For many children, their CASA volunteer will be the one constant adult presence—the one adult who cares only for them.

Lead Statement #1 is technically accurate, but few people reading it would understand CASA or want to become involved. Lead Statement #2 is also technically accurate, but its impact is much more effective because its message carries emotion. It reaches out and tugs at the heartstrings. It gets attention. It holds interest. In short, it makes people care.

> **Note:** If you are directing your message to an internal audience such as judges, attorneys or caseworkers, it is more important to use technical language. Using the right language for a particular audience builds credibility.

Use Real Stories

Using stories to get CASA's message across captures the reader's imagination. Stories also have the unique ability to tell what CASA volunteers do in a way that is compelling and attractive to the media. Local programs throughout the country share emotionally powerful stories with National CASA for use in national media outreach efforts. Below are a few examples of powerful stories:

- A younger sibling was removed from an extended family and placed in foster care; the CASA volunteer fought for three years to get him back.
- A child is branded by the court and has no future at the age of 10. She is placed in a permanent home with a legal guardian; she entered college and is now happy and successful.
- A GAL child graduated from college; the GAL program auxiliary prepaid her college tuition.

- A CASA volunteer worked to reunite a mother and daughter after a separation because the mother's boyfriend molested the daughter and the mother did not initially believe the story.
- A family recently moved from Africa and the child was removed because of a cultural misunderstanding. The CASA volunteer was able to help reunite the child and family within 3 weeks.
- A four-year old boy was determined to be "unacceptable" by previous caseworkers. A CASA volunteer got involved, worked closely with an adoption worker, identified an appropriate family and now the child thrives.
- A boy had been assigned to more than 20 caseworkers, but had only one CASA volunteer. When he graduated from high school, county services paid to fly the CASA volunteer to the graduation, because she was the only person the boy wanted in attendance. She is one of his few close relationships.

USA Today—the largest circulation newspaper in the U.S.—dedicated an entire page to a feature on CASA. The *USA Today* reporter had not heard of CASA before. The following letter helped introduce the editors and reporters to the CASA cause.

USA Today
10877 Wilshire Blvd., Suite #406
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Dear_____:

Here is a potential story idea for April. You have expressed an interest in the idea of adult volunteers who change children's lives, and I can't think of a better example than Colorado Springs CASA volunteer Dick Milton.

In his seven years as a CASA volunteer, Dick has found safe, permanent homes for 22 abused and neglected children. In a recent case, Dick was able to find a permanent home for four siblings, keeping the family together. Keeping siblings together is a special interest for Dick, who is also a counselor for a camp dedicated to bringing together siblings who have been separated in foster care. The issue of families broken up by foster care is a powerful one, which Dick can speak knowingly about. We would also be able to arrange interviews with the adoptive parents and the four children.

This specific case also contains an additional heart-warming story concerning the oldest child: Aletha. Aletha was born without an opening for her right ear. When Dick asked her what she wanted most in life, she responded to be able to hear fully. Apparently, Aletha has a beautiful voice and an aspiration to be a professional singer one-day. Dick was able to find specialists willing to test her hearing and to perform the needed surgery entirely pro bono. This is how CASA volunteers change children's lives.

Should you choose to interview Dick, you'd find him to be a pretty interesting story in his own right. He is a former elementary school teacher, diplomat and retired Political Advisor with the US Space Command. While working as a diplomat in Bangkok, he set up the Family Reunification Program to help bring Amerasian children out of Saigon and into the US. He was also stationed at the US embassy in Nicaragua. After one of Nicaragua's worst earthquakes, he found an abandoned child alone in a crib. He brought the child home for three months and helped the child become adopted in the US. He continues to be in contact with the child, who now lives in Washington, DC. These experiences helped to lay the groundwork for Dick becoming a CASA volunteer.

Dick was attracted to CASA by reading an article in the local newspaper that called for CASA volunteers. With half a million abused and neglected children in the US needing safe, permanent homes, we need a lot more volunteers like Dick Milton. The awareness generated by your article in USA Today would surely help stimulate interest from potential CASA volunteers – future Dick Miltons.

I know how busy you are right now, and I greatly appreciate your time and consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to work with you on this story.

Respectfully,

Dealing with Confidentiality

Giving specific examples of what CASA does to help children when you have taken an oath of confidentiality to protect their identities can be a difficult challenge. As a result, most programs avoid using specific examples at all. Children should never be compromised or exploited by the news media to gain publicity for CASA. However, there is a sensitive way to share CASA experiences without violating a child's right to privacy. This approach requires planning and knowing exactly what to say when an opportunity arises to share program stories.

Talking to the Media

There are several things a program can do to prepare itself for talking to the media: prepare key stories illustrating CASA advocacy, establish media protocol regarding interviewing parties involved in cases and learn how to talk about CASA without using jargon.

Choose Stories Ahead Of Time

Meet with other CASA managers and review files of current and closed cases. Look for two or three good stories clearly and simply illustrating how CASA volunteers help children.

Think Happy Ending

Choose stories with happy endings where the volunteer played a significant role in helping the child. We all know life is not black and white, but the media rarely deals with it any other way. Try to find stories the media can use showing the impact a volunteer can have on a child's life or even the impact an abused or neglected child can have on a volunteer. Stories of successful transitions out of foster care are also valuable and communicate a valuable perspective.

Aim for revealing "happy endings" on CASA cases. Any of the following three scenarios will generate media attention:

- Volunteer helps family get back on track and the result is being reunited with their child.
- Volunteer helps child to be adopted.
- Volunteer helps steer child or family to important services enabling them to be reunited.

Notice the key words in these scenarios are "volunteer helps." Choose cases in which the volunteer clearly improved the life of the child. Jane Doe may be a wonderful volunteer and perhaps the child loves her dearly. But if Jane has not enabled that child to dramatically move toward a permanent placement, then her case might not be the best example to highlight in the media.

This exercise can be extremely frustrating for CASA managers because victories are often small: a child moves from a bad foster home to a mediocre foster home or a boy leaves a group home for a foster home. The media, which is not knowledgeable about the child welfare system and does not understand how the system works, will not see the same successes. As trite as the suggestions sounds, stories with "made-for-TV-movie" appeal are often picked up by media outlets. Chosen stories must have drama and involve an easy-to-understand situation; stories must also have a beginning, middle and end.

Change Names and Small Details

There is nothing wrong with changing minor story details as long as the reporter knows. When first meeting with a journalist, explain how laws prevent the program from using real names and that identities were changed to protect the child. Journalists will respect knowing this information up front. If you live in an area where you think the child might be identified from case details, leave identifying factors out or change them. For example, do not mention the specific part of town where the child lives, change the child's sex in the story, alter the number of siblings or change identifying characteristics of the parents. Don't exaggerate a story, but alter enough detail that key points are heard and the child is protected.

Use Articulate Volunteers

Once you start telling these stories, reporters will most likely want to interview the volunteer involved. Make sure the volunteer can represent the program in manner that enhances the public image you want to portray. John Brown may be a "sweet man," but what he says on camera may be a different story.

If volunteer recruitment is a program goal, remember that volunteers speaking to the media convey the image of the program. An articulate and committed male volunteer might encourage other men to consider volunteering. This holds true for retirees, members of an ethnic group, etc.

Choose Cases Complying with the National CASA Program Standards

The last thing you need in the newspaper or on television is a story about how a volunteer helped a family by taking all the children to Disney World for the summer. Misconceptions about the role of CASA volunteers will only cause confusion and uncertainty to external audiences but the risk exists in alienating internal audiences (judges, attorneys and caseworkers).

Media Requests to Interview Parties to the Case

One thing to count on in working with reporters is that most journalists will want to interview parties involved in a case, especially the child or family involved. Many CASA managers shudder at the thought; however, some of the best stories ever written or broadcast about CASA feature real families and children. Don't rule out this approach entirely, simply use caution instead. Allowing these interviews is a big step in a communications program.

Before the media can feature a child's story on camera, it must get permission from the person or agency holding legal custody. If a child is out of the system, all that is needed is permission from the person with legal (not just physical) custody. If your child's case is still active within the Department of Social Services, agency permission must be granted.

Keep in mind that it is entirely possible the family, or individual holding legal custody of the child, wants to talk to the press and gives permission independently for the child to be on camera. This can and does happen, so don't be surprised. When you select your CASA cases and make them available to the media, anticipate this possibility and carefully consider how to respond.

As a rule of thumb, newspapers can be much easier for CASA exposure than television news programs because they do not have to rely entirely on a camera to tell their story. Newspaper journalists are almost always willing to change names and have more flexibility with photographs.

Media Confidentiality Agreements

Create a media confidentiality agreement for your program. It is quite common for media to agree to certain guidelines when reporting stories of a personal nature, such as those in the CASA network. Reporters may ask to attend trainings or other program-related events to gain a further understanding of the program or a particular case. It is possible to invite media and still maintain confidentiality by establishing a mutually acceptable confidentiality agreement.

Sample media confidentiality agreement language might read:

> "I hereby attest to the validity of my media credentials and I promise to hold in confidence all pertinent information. I will not compromise or violate any confidential relationships between (your CASA program), its volunteers, related agencies, court and any other parties interviewed. I understand reading and/or removal of any written documents is prohibited without prior consent of Executive Director (Name). I will not contact any volunteer without permission of the volunteer and his/her case supervisor. I agree not to use any personal identifying information of any children, family members or foster care persons of (CASA program). I accept full responsibility for maintaining the confidential and private nature of all records and information. I understand and accept personal liability for any violation of this agreement."

Keep copies of all such agreements for your records and have the agreement signed and dated by the media representative.

Pointers for Working with African-American and Hispanic Media

When approaching African-American and Hispanic media it is vital to address the specific needs of each community, rather than deliver a generic CASA message intended for the general audience. Some key messages that speak to the need of more African American and Hispanic CASA volunteers include:

- Nearly 500,000 children in the United States are in the foster care system, and 220,000 (nearly half) are African-American.
- African-American children in need of CASA volunteers outnumber the African-American volunteers. More than 3 million children are reported abused and neglected each year in the United States. Nationally, 39 percent of those children are African-American, yet only 10% of the CASA volunteers are African-American. That equates to 7,000 African-American volunteers to serve 220,000 African-American children.
- African-American children stay almost twice as long in foster care (62 vs. 36 months.)
- Hispanic children in need of CASA volunteers outnumber the Hispanic volunteers. There are only 2,800 Hispanic volunteers in 975 CASA programs nationwide to help place approximately 80,000 children in safe homes.
- Becoming a CASA volunteer is a chance to be a role model and make a life-changing impact on a child's life.
- It is important for a child going through the system to have someone with whom they can culturally identify, speak the same language and better communicate their needs.
- A child in the system can see their CASA volunteer as a positive and consistent adult role model, which can make a life-changing impact on a child's life.

Speaking CASA (Minus the Jargon)

There once was a CASA program director named Jane who was considered one of the best managers in the CASA network. She was a whiz at organizing her program and had earned the respect of many attorneys, judges and social workers in the courthouse. She could argue case law with the best, knew the system inside and out and learned how to get her CASA children the attention their cases deserved.

That's why her problems seemed so frustrating. First, she just could not recruit enough volunteers. People always seemed interested in the program and said they thought it sounded like a good thing. But when training rolled around, the classes were small and people kept dropping out of the program. What she dreaded the most was the annual budget process. She hated fundraising or going before a board of county commissioners or corporate types who had never heard of CASA to beg for money to keep the program going. There was nothing worse than staring into those blank faces, knowing how badly children needed help and getting the sinking feeling that she might be cut off at any minute. Jane wonders what is wrong and why people in the community just were not getting the message about CASA.

One weekend, Jane's mother-in-law came to visit and the following conversation occurred:

> "Bob tells me you've been working a lot lately."
>
> "Well, yes. It's spring so I've had a training class on top of a budget request and fundraiser, so it's taken quite a bit of time."
>
> "You know, I was reading a story in *Reader's Digest* the other day. Something about child abuse, and it was just awful, and I thought to myself, 'Jane has something to do with this.' Just what is it that you do, dear?"
>
> "I'm the director of the Court Appointed Special Advocate program. We use advocates to serve as volunteer guardians ad litem in juvenile court dependency proceedings."
>
> "Oh...I see."

What Jane didn't realize is that in 24 words, she lost her mother-in-law. Now, maybe that's not so bad. But consider that her mother-in-law—like your friends, neighbors, or the tired guy who owns the hardware store and happens to also sit on the county board of commissioners—is not unlike the people you try hardest to reach: potential volunteers and funders.

Although we work alongside attorneys and social workers and court administrators, we must remember one important thing: CASA is not like any other agency or program in the justice system. Why? Because CASA depends on laypeople to get the job done. The average person will not support the program if they do not understand what CASA does, why the program is important or how it makes a difference for children.

One of the keys to a successful CASA program is to learning how to talk to the general public on a level they can understand. That means sometimes it is necessary to take a step backward. Yes, it seems crazy after spending years learning how to be a professional in this business, studying terminology and learning the law. Yet to do this very important part of your job, set aside the professional jargon and speak in clear, simple and often elementary terms.

Consider this fact: 90% of the general public has no idea how the child welfare system works. National CASA research shows 90% of potential CASA volunteers and donors believe child abuse and neglect is a large problem in America today. The research further shows that opinions are split nearly 50/50 regarding the system's ability to handle the problem of child abuse.

This is why it is so important to make your community aware of the solution CASA and its volunteers provide as independent advocates for abused children in the legal and foster care system.

A double challenge exists when explaining CASA.

First we must explain the problem: how child abuse has become an epidemic in this country. What happens to abused and neglected children when they enter the hands of the state? Foster care is not always rosy and is not a permanent answer. The lack of a 'sense of place' while growing up hurts a child. The child welfare system is in a state of crisis with more cases than professionals could ever begin to handle. Families and children need help with their problems through community services like counseling, parenting education and treatment for addiction.

Then we must explain how CASA was designed to help: CASA programs use trained, community volunteers to speak for abused and neglected children in court. Volunteers follow these children's cases as they move through the court system, making sure children do not get lost in foster care. The CASA volunteer researches the case, learns everything about the child's special situation and presents findings to a court judge on the child's best interest. CASA helps make sure abused and neglected children are able to live in safe, permanent homes. CASA helps children have the chance to reach their full potential in life.

Explaining the problem to a Kiwanis Club, Kappa Alpha Theta chapter, corporate board, the mayor, a reporter or even your next door neighbor is very different than talking to a judge or attorney. Although it seems comfortable, the most deadly thing we can do is to slip into technical jargon.

> **Consider another scenario demonstrating the affect of jargon:**
>
> You walk into a print shop.
>
> "May I help you?"
>
> "Yes, I'd like to have some party invitations printed."
>
> "Okay, let me see your copy."
>
> "My copy?"
>
> "Yeah, you know, your copy."
>
> "Well, all I brought was the information I want you to print."
>
> He grabs your piece of paper and starts writing.
>
> "Now, for an invitation I would recommend the Productolith Gloss Book or perhaps you would prefer the Cougar Opaque Offset?"
>
> "What?"
>
> "And what about the font? We've got Helvetica, Bookman, New Century Schoolbook, and Bodoni."
>
> "Gee, I don't know. I just wanted some blue invitations."
>
> "Will that be Pantone Reflex Blue 286? Or how about Pantone Process Blue 300? That's always a good one."

By this time, odds are you leave and would not want to have the invitations printed anymore; you probably would want to cancel the party. And you certainly wouldn't be inclined to be

sympathetic to the printer's union next time they talked about their problems, or how they need your support when they go on strike.

Without being aware of it, potential funders and volunteers are left with the same confused, uncomfortable impression of CASA when they hear the program explained using technical jargon. They lose interest, and the program loses valuable community support.

Why is community visibility and support so valuable to CASA programs?

- People volunteer for causes they recognize and understand.
- Private foundations, businesses, governments and corporations fund organizations they perceive to be making communities better.
- Individuals pull out their wallets and donate when they learn how their dollars can help solve a moving, emotionally-charged problem.
- People familiar with and supportive of the program can apply political pressure to help advocate for changes and growth and persuade legislatures to pass laws to enhance program operations and change laws to make conditions better for children. They can even clamor for more funding to hire additional staff to serve even more children.

CASA is a wonderful cause, filled with compelling emotions and drama. At the heart of it all are the children, volunteers and their stories. Communicating about CASA should start there.

Chapter 6: Media Relations

An active and positive relationship with newspaper, radio and television journalists can make a CASA program director's job easier. The information provided in this chapter will help develop or improve a professional working relationship with members of the news community.

Getting the Media's Attention

Few people actually enjoy dealing with the media because it can be an intimidating experience. Reporters are usually working on deadline and can therefore appear brusque and perhaps rude. It is important to remember news teams work under short and stressful deadlines and think in terms of minutes rather than days or weeks. Each second literally counts for people working under newsroom conditions. As a result of this working environment, you may call a TV news producer or newspaper editor and be cut off before ever pitching a story idea. Do not be discouraged; the key is being persistent and courteous. Keep trying.

Many CASA programs have developed an ongoing relationship with the media. Those relationships begin with knowing who in the media has an interest in what you are doing. Following are steps to take in building these relationships.

Introducing CASA to the Media

Send a letter of introduction about the program to each member of the local media. Enclose a press kit or other information explaining the program to editors or assignment editors. It may help to attach an article about CASA from another news sources. This adds credibility and often journalists are inclined to further develop a story once it has been reported by someone else.

The media has a responsibility to report community activities, so explain why the CASA program is newsworthy. The first two sentences of your letter are crucial and will make or break your chance. Remember to use emotion and clear language in your pitch. Don't start the letter with, "We are a new program in Smithtown and want you to write a story about us." Rather, "Every day in Smithtown hundreds of children are being abused, neglected and lost in foster care. There's a direct way every one of your readers can help..." See the Appendix for a sample pitch letter that can be adapted for a specific program.

The media needs a contact for more information. If a program uses a member of the governing board or committee as a spokesperson, list the appropriate name and a telephone number.

Make sure the right contact person receives the information. When approaching a newspaper, direct letters to either the news editor or features editor. When contacting television or radio stations, direct correspondence to news assignment editors. Request a meeting to discuss news coverage of your activities.

Meet the press and do not be bashful about asking for coverage. Remind yourself that working for abused and neglected children is important business. Be prepared to talk about the specifics of your program:

- How many hours a month do volunteers spend in court?
- How many children get CASA services each month or each year?
- How many children need the help?
- Do they know April is National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month?
- Supporters of the program? Is there a Friends of CASA group in the community?

There are other ways to sell the CASA story. Inform the press about how the program is a new and/or permanent fixture in the judicial process. Recruit a reporter/television journalist as a CASA volunteer for a first-person story, provided they agree to honor the confidentiality. Tell the press about the volunteers. Is there a volunteer with an unusual job or background? These are all feature ideas reporters might enjoy writing about. Heroes make good features and volunteers qualify.

Set Media Relations Goals

Plan news and press coverage as with other program management functions. Getting caught up in the day-to-day program work routine is normal, but doing so prevents you from seeing activities as news. A large majority of newspaper articles as well as radio and television stories are the result of planning. Automobile accidents and other incidents of mayhem are the exception, not the rule. News seldom happens; instead news is created. Be that creator. Gather your staff, board, judge and volunteers to brainstorm ideas to promote as news and determine which medium is best (print, television or radio).

Newspapers, television stations and radio stations each provide something different in their approach and delivery of news. Learn the nuances of each medium to improve the likelihood of a pitch being picked up by a news outlet.

Newspapers

Newspapers come in a variety of disciplines, each unique in what they print. Your daily newspaper has one function in your community; weeklies, shoppers and student publications carry news and feature items that a daily does not. Read every community's newspapers and learn the nuances of each. Which papers print public service announcements? Cover the courts? Have a feature section? Focus on children's issues? Permit guest articles?

Photos and images used to compliment newspaper article should reflect a cross section of people which ultimately provide a strong image for the program When targeting a community newspaper, consider using photos including members of that community.

Television: the Land of Opportunity

Although television is considered news media, a few minutes watching and listening will reveal how different it is from a newspaper. The television news business is more competitive than print media and this can work to the program's advantage.

In most markets, there are 3-5 network-affiliated and at least one independent station. Watch each station for a solid period of time and take notes on the type of stories presented. This

exercise helps to determine which story ideas you'll likely pitch. Avoid sending every media outlet the same story idea. Target your idea toward a particular station and, if you've done your homework, a particular reporter.

Television is a powerful medium where picture and messages are combined, so consider the visual pull television needs when preparing a story idea. Courtrooms are places of high drama, yet confidentiality policies and state laws make it hard to use this setting for a visual treatment. Consider other visuals: a CASA volunteer making the rounds, local people meeting with lawyers, the judge and others. All create the strong visuals television needs. Make the television reporter's job easier by being prepared to share visual ideas for a story idea.

Many local stations produce local news or information shows which could feature a segment about the program. Contact the station for the producer's name and phone number (it may be listed in the credits at the close of the show). Send the producer an information kit and a letter pitching an idea for a segment on the show and possible guests.

Radio: More than Music

Similar to newspapers and television, know a radio market before making contact. Radio talk or news stations need story ideas. Finding content for an all-news radio station is a formula for stress. Talk and news radio station managers will listen and possible provide valuable airtime. Some predominate music radio stations may have a community interest show on the weekend.

Here is a radio trade secret: you do not need to be a studio guest to get a point across about CASA. Learn the principal characters on your local talk radio station and assign a staff member to listen at appropriate times; when the subject of neglected or abused children hits the air, call in and share the CASA message. You may be surprised at how quickly listeners will respond with a call or question about CASA and ask how they can get involved.

Other Publications

Don't overlook specialized publications, like regional or city magazines, trade publications, and minority community publications. Corporate newsletters often run short human-interest stories and may be receptive to CASA if the company is supportive of volunteering or a CASA volunteer works for the organization.

Tricks of the Trade

There is nothing as compelling as a good, lively story to get a news or assignment editor interested. But there are ways to wedge in a story that may be ignored. Try these tricks of the trade:

Tickler File

In the news business, editors maintain a monthly and daily file of story material. Submitting a news release about a fundraiser a week or less in advance may be ignored, but if you send it in two months in advance it will be put in the tickler file where it stands a better chance of being covered.

Immediacy Method

On the other hand, some newspapers and television stations do everything at the last minute. If a release is sent in advance and does not generate a response, send another the week prior to the event. Follow up by calling the newspaper editor three days before and the TV editor

the day before the event. Giving editors the sense that an event is happening now can sometimes encourage coverage of the event.

Reacting to News

In cities with more than one daily newspaper, the reaction story can be an effective means in keeping the CASA name in front of the public. This approach can work in one-newspaper towns too as a second-day story follow-up also. Examples of reaction stories include:

1. An abused or neglected child story appears in the paper. The program issues a statement saying the county's juvenile court judge is prepared to appoint a CASA volunteer to represent the best interests of the child in court. Tell the CASA story in the statement and send it to all media.
2. Perhaps the county court system is hit with budget cuts. Issue a call for new volunteers, explaining in the statement that your program continues to provide full services for abused and neglected children. Send the statement to all media.
3. Any story about children offers an opportunity to talk about your CASA program. Mother's Day? Issue a statement about families and keeping children in a home environment. Father's Day? Same thing. Try to connect your statement with a current event.

Editorials and Columnists

Set up a meeting with a member of your newspaper's editorial board. They may be willing to write an editorial supporting the program during April (National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month). The same approach can be applied to a local columnist or the paper may accept pieces from guest columnists. A supporter of the program could tie CASA work to April, Mother's Day, September (back-to-school), etc. If the program recognizes a "volunteer of the year" or has a long-serving volunteer, local newspaper editorial boards may be willing to work with the program on producing a column.

Newsmaker Lists

Laminate the business cards of the program's official spokesperson(s) and send to the appropriate editors of all media with material explaining your program. Use a cover letter to explain the spokesperson may be contacted for a comment on breaking stories involving abused and neglected children. List home numbers also to ensure the spokesperson is available at all hours.

Letters to the Editor

An occasional, well-written letter to the editor can help spread the CASA message. Letters to the editor are widely read. Keep letters brief, factual and whenever possible connect content to fresh news stories or other editorials. Letters to the editor have more impact if written by a volunteer or a Friend of CASA.

News Conferences

Do not call a news conference unless there is an outstanding story or breaking news. The first event or happening for a program might be news conference material (for example, the first swearing-in ceremony for the program's volunteers). Never use a news conference for a "second" of something. A poorly conceived and received news conference will cost a program its credibility. What happens when no one shows?

Miscellaneous Tips

- Some public radio stations accept "commentaries" from local citizens, as does National Public Radio. Call your local station and see if tapes are accepted.
- If resources are scarce, consider collaborating with another child-focused organization on an event, fundraiser, talk show panel, etc.
- Get a local celebrity involved. A well known community member might emcee a fundraiser, present an award at a banquet, serve on your board, help make media contacts, etc.

Over the past five years, the National CASA Association has worked with national public relations firms and professionals and surveyed reporters in all media to understand how to best cultivate and preserve a productive relationship with members of the press. Below are their suggestions:

- Always follow up on information sent to the media. Newsrooms are busy and information will go unnoticed if not brought to the attention of staff. Follow up within three days of distributing materials. This also allows sufficient time to provide additional information and set up interviews if needed.
- At the same time, know your limits when following up. If a journalist indicates they will not cover an event or take the assignment, leave it at that. Other opportunities will happen for story and event coverage.
- When journalists indicate they do not accept follow up calls, this request should be respected. They will contact you if additional information is needed.
- Mornings are generally the best time to call media. By mid-day, things are in full swing and the chance to pitch a story idea. Always ask the media if they are presently on deadline or if they have a minute to talk before delivering a pitch.
- Know the media. Review local media to determine the most appropriate recipients for materials.
- Confirm media contact lists prior to distribution to prevent materials from being misplaced or overlooked. This saves the program time in the long run.
- When working with weekend media staff, make sure you have direct contact information as switchboards are generally closed on weekends. Most media operate with "skeleton crews" on the weekends, making it more difficult to secure coverage.
- Respect journalist deadlines. Remember, you are at the reporter's mercy. If you fail to meet a deadline, the story will not run, not to mention that the chance for future coverage is greatly reduced.
- Honor and respect a journalist's preferred method of contact (email, phone, U.S. mail). A story is more likely when you communicate in a format that best suits the reporter. Credibility is gained because you took the time to research the issue.
- Customize a pitch for each particular medium. For example, if local TV afternoon talk shows features a weekly segment on volunteering, include these details in your pitch letter. This shows media that research was done to ensure the best possible fit for a story.
- Form personal relationships with your local media. If you have had past success with a particular journalist, contact them again. If the opportunity

arises, meet in person with individual reporters. Reporters are busy, but a quick in-person meeting can be instrumental in forging ongoing relationships.

Information/Press Kits

One of the best ways to tell the story about your program and its work in the community is through an information kit or press kit. An information kit is a collection of materials (usually a careful selection of printed materials) used as an informational "calling card" to acquaint the media and others with the program. Organizations use information kits to introduce themselves to media contacts, service club officers, potential funders and others needing detailed information about the program. A general information brochure often does not contain enough in-depth materials to answer the questions posed by reporters and business leaders. A press kit is a concise, professional way to profile the CASA program to contacts needing more information.

A typical information kit contains:

- Basic facts about the program: the program's purpose, how it operates, funding sources, program goals and accomplishments (this could be your general information brochure or fact sheet).
- Program history: when it began, statistics to indicate growth, earliest supporters and who currently operates the program. Reporters and people in the media value statistics, so provide as many pertinent numbers as possible.
- National perspective: information about the program being part of a nationwide network.
- Newspaper or magazine reprints: favorable articles that have appeared about your program or other programs in your state.
- Primary contacts and/or staff members.

The contents of the information kit should be kept in an attractive folder printed with the CASA logo. If costs prohibit the printing of folders specifically for this purpose, use CASA or GAL logo stickers and add the program name. Stickers are available from National CASA.

Be selective about who receives an information kit. Don't overload or stuff your kit with excess or nonessential material that may distract the recipient from the main point (an introduction to CASA). Tailor information kits to fit the recipient (for example, include the Annual Report in kits to potential donors) or include a personalized letter. An information kit serves an entirely different purpose from a general information brochure and using press kits liberally (casual inquiries) can be expensive. Time and effort are needed to create and continually update an effective kit.

News Releases

The news release is one of the most effective tools in communicating program news to the media. Typically no more than two pages, the news release allows you to share a brief, well-planned statement about the organization or event. See the Appendix for samples of news releases. Consider the following tips when drafting a news release:

- Think like a journalist: always ask who, what, when, where and why.
- Begin with a strong headline and lead sentences. These two elements are the most important parts of the release and are used to attract the media's interest.
- The lead should be no more than two to three sentences and should summarize the "meat" of the story (who, what, when, where and why). Compelling statistics are often a good "hook" for headlines and help create a strong lead.
- Read the release as an editor or reader would. Is the headline compelling? Are you intrigued to keep reading? If the answer is "No" chances are the news is not compelling enough.
- Check the facts. The organization will instantly lose credibility with inaccurate information.
- Know the audience. Use simple language to ensure understanding.

The following are formatting guidelines for a news release:

- Always include a release date. Use either "For Immediate Release" or "Hold for Release". The date appears over or under the release line and reflects the date the new item can be released to the public.
- Type (double-spaced) the release and use organization letterhead.
- Headline should be in bold capital letters.
- The sub-head (if applicable) is positioned below the headline, capitalizing the first word and proper nouns only.
- Include accurate contact information (name, phone number and email address).
- Avoid sentences that split a paragraph between two pages.
- Include boilerplate language (brief paragraph) providing general overview of the CASA program.

Event releases can be included as part of a media kit and should be distributed two to four weeks prior to an event. If the release is not announcing an event, it should be distributed immediately upon breaking news. When following up, have a reason for calling. This is the perfect opportunity to discuss specific story angles as well as provide additional information about the event or organization and to confirm the need for additional information and materials. If a journalist has committed to running a story on the event or organization, confirm the story run date. This will allow you to track and confirm the story ran. In case the story is "bumped", follow up with the reporter to explore future opportunities.

Media Alerts and Advisories

Media alerts answer the five essential questions of journalism (who, what, when, where and why) and alert media when the program has particular information they might find useful (an event or source available to comment on current issues). Media alerts serve as a news release synopsis and often are used as a follow-up or reminder after the distribution of a news release or media kit. Media alerts are typically distributed to assignment/photo editors, two days to one week prior to event and follow up is encouraged to confirm the event is on their calendar. See the Appendix for samples of releases.

Community Calendar Releases

Community calendar releases are used to communicate information about specific community events. Calendar releases consist of a release date, contact information, the name of the event, and a short description of the event, including who, what, where, when and why. See the Appendix for a sample Community Calendar Release. Most major dailies, local weeklies as well as local TV and radio stations have a community calendar editor or contact.

Before distributing a Community Calendar Release, contact each publication, as well as TV and radio stations, to confirm names of calendar/community events editors or contacts. If no one is listed by that title, ask for the person responsible for community event information. Often with a small publication, one person will serve many roles. To ensure inclusion, distribute calendar announcements four to six weeks in advance of when the information should run/air.

Photo Releases

Many times a news release is accompanied by a photograph. If you feel a photograph would enhance the news, submitted photos must be good, clear quality (no Polaroid or amateurish "snapshots") and have genuine news value. If a photo contains people, make sure they are identified in an attached cut line or caption. The cut line should also provide a short, concise description of the photo. Newspaper editors at larger papers generally do not run unsolicited photographs and prefer to use staff photography. However, smaller community papers tend to use the good quality photos.

> **Note**: Remember, a photo of volunteers carries a message about who CASA is. If the program is targeting a minority newspaper with a news item, include a minority volunteer in any visuals provided with the story. A cross-section of people will reinforce the important message that CASA is an inclusive and diverse organization.

Photo releases typically consist of an event photo and supporting caption and are typically sent immediately after an event. The less timely the release, the less likely a photo is to be used. Photo releases are particularly beneficial if local media are unable to cover the event but still interested in covering the story. A photo release also provides the opportunity to summarize and recap the event.

Official Proclamations

An official proclamation can add importance to the local program. The proclamation can also provide an opportunity for publicity. Below are suggestions for obtaining a proclamation:

- Send a letter requesting a proclamation. Contact the press office of the mayor's/executive's/governor's to request advice on how to proceed.
- Follow up within a week to the mayor's/executive's/governor's office.
- If a proclamation is granted, arrange with the press secretary or assistant to photograph the proclamation presentation. Invite local newspaper and TV crews through a news release/media alert.

- Present the mayor/executive/governor with a poster and literature on CASA. Ask if the poster could be displayed in City Hall/County Office or State House.
- Write a thank you letter for their support of CASA's national campaign to raise awareness and help fight child abuse. Send a copy to the editors of your local media.

Op-ed Articles

Opposite Editorial (op-ed) articles are excellent ways for getting information about CASA to the public. Op-eds are opinion articles printed in newspapers (opposite the editorial page) and share a particular point of view on a specific issue. See the Appendix for a sample op-ed pieces which can provide ideas for writing a localized op-ed piece. Consider asking a volunteer or program supporter to draft an article on a subject relevant to the local program. Following are some additional tips on writing op-ed articles:

- In general, op-eds are 700 to 800 words in length.
- State your opinion early in the article and, although taking a strong stand is important, the article should not be combative.
- Attribute information to authors within the body of the article; don't use footnotes or cite references.
- Avoid acronyms and jargon.
- The op-ed should be timely. When writing about a past event, submit the article as soon as possible.

In order to place your Op-ed article, call the local newspapers and ask to speak with the person who receives and reviews these articles. Send a letter with the Op-ed article to the correct contact. Do not be surprised if the article is edited or if the title you submitted for the article is not used. It's typical to "shop around" when looking to place an Op-ed. Do not submit the same article to different papers at the same time. Distribute the piece to the media outlet most likely to use it. Follow up to determine interest. If particular media has confirmed they will not be using it, move on to the next outlet.

Marketing an Op-ed

After an op-ed runs in a local newspaper, investigate reprint rights and ordering extra copies of the article. Reprints can be sent to current or potential donors as well as volunteers to provide additional information about the program. The article could also be included with background materials shared with the public.

Chapter 7: Interviews and Public Speaking

Local efforts to obtain publicity will likely result in a news interview. The following chapter addresses the various issues surrounding quality media interviews and provides suggestions on speaking publicly about the CASA program.

Quick Tips for Media Interviews

Following are quick tips and guidelines for facing television cameras; many apply as well to radio and newspapers.

Know Your Material

Develop main points to make in advance of a media interview. The main point should be the answer to give if asked only one question. An example might be: the system is failing children; CASA needs volunteers and the program needs funding.

Be prepared to make this point as quickly as possible in the interview. A radio or television story generally runs about 30 - 45 seconds, (minus the anchor/announcer's introduction). Important facts and conclusion should be stated at the very beginning and reinforced throughout the interview. Quotes used in the story provide credibility and impact. Knowing what you want to say and saying it as soon as possible, gives you some control over the final story.

Appearance

Television is an intimate medium. It should be approached with the thought you are talking to one or two people in their living room. Strive to be as natural as possible. It doesn't hurt to get together with a friend or colleague in advance to review your material. Project as pleasant and natural an image as possible.

Television cameras are sensitive to light, so avoid wearing extremely dark, white or very light colors, or prints or stripes. Avoid bright, flashy jewelry. If the interview is in a studio, don't be timid about asking for makeup assistance. After all, television stations want their material to look good too.

If you are seated, don't slump. If you are standing, don't slouch. Never smoke or chew gum. Look relaxed and avoid forced smiles or grins. If the reporter uses a hand-held microphone, don't reach for it. Look at the reporter/host during the interview.

Reporter Perspective

The reporter/host will generally talk to you in advance about the interview. Even though he or she will outline the story, do not be surprised if other questions are asked during the interview. Don't say anything you would not want repeated on air. And don't be afraid to say, "I don't know," to a question for which you don't have the answer.

Remain calm and try not to lose control of your goal should the discussion become heated or controversial. Speak as calmly and quietly as possible even if the reporter/host tries to provoke a response; you will gain the respect and empathy of the audience by remaining calm. Remember the main point you want to make and avoid being glib.

If the reporter tries to speed things up by moving the microphone back and forth, resist the impulse to talk faster, but deliver key points as briefly as possible. If the reporter leaves the microphone under your chin after you've finished your answer, resist the urge to continue speaking.

Avoid letting the reporter/host lead the discussion to side issues. Tactics, personalities and politics may make headlines, but they don't explain the CASA concept. If you get tossed a diversionary question, try a response like: "That's a good question, but the point I want to make here is (main point).

A little nervousness can be expected before interviews, but remember the CASA mission of being a child's voice in court. A media interview is an opportunity to let the public know just how important CASA is to the community.

Public Speaking Opportunities

There may be occasions when you are asked to give a speech about CASA, but such opportunities don't always come naturally. To make them happen, find out what opportunities exist to address community members by calling service organizations or other groups that meet regularly. Most service organizations have regular meetings with a variety of speakers invited to address topics of public interest. Typically, community service groups have a program chair in charge of scheduling speakers. As you can imagine, it's not always easy to find speakers, so he or she might be very receptive to requests. The following is a partial list of community organizations to consider contacting to schedule a presentation:

Chamber of Commerce	Elks Lodge
Municipal League	Urban League
League of Women Voters	NAACP
Junior League	tive American Tribes
Rotary Club	PTA
AARP	Kiwanis Club
Church groups	Lion's Club

Kappa Alpha Theta Alumnae and Collegiate Chapters

Before beginning to draft a speech, consider the following:

Audience and Speaking Considerations

- What are the demographics of your audience? (Primarily female or male, age range, education level, etc.).
- How much does the audience know about CASA?
- How many people will be in the audience?
- What are they expecting to hear? Make sure you have a clear understanding about how the speech has been promoted or described to the audience.
- Equipment/Logistics
- Will the audience be seated auditorium style, classroom, etc?
- What equipment is provided and what are you expected to bring? Be sure to test the equipment in advance of the speech. If there is a microphone, practice with it beforehand. If not, make sure to speak loudly enough for the entire audience to hear you. Once the audience arrives, avoid broadcasting unintentional comments by following the general rule of thumb of always assuming a microphone is on.
- How long are you expected to speak? Do you need to build in time for questions?
- Who will introduce you? Do you need to provide information about your background? Do you need to introduce a speaker after you are finished?
- How will you prompt yourself during the speech (teleprompter, notes on large cards, etc.)?
- Will you include videos, charts or photos to help illustrate your speech?

Organizing and Drafting a Speech

Building on the considerations mentioned above, the next step in speaking publicly is to thoughtfully develop an outline with an introduction, supporting points and conclusion.

Introduction/Thesis

Introductions are extremely important in grabbing the attention of the audience. A speech should have a clear message or thesis on which the entire speech is developed. It is especially effective to give the audience a problem and then ideas about how they can take action or become part of the solution. Determining one clear message gives the presentation focus and keeps the speaker focused and calm. Establish credibility by giving your credentials/background and then start with a compelling introduction. This could be a startling statistic, a personal story, or humorous anecdote. Use humor only when you are comfortable and confident the audience will respond well. Gentle stories that involve children and humor can be particularly effective: the child who took her GAL to her kindergarten class and introduced her as "my guardian angel."

Body

Develop three to five main points to support the main message. Include facts, statistics, stories, examples, analogies, opinions, etc. Choose vivid, descriptive words or stories to paint a picture for the audience.

Conclusion

The conclusion of a speech should summarize the key points and restate the thesis or main point of the speech. Provide a sense of closure for the audience by making the last sentence very strong; using a quote, question, prediction or a link back to the introduction can be an effective method of concluding a speech. If listeners come away remembering just one thing (the main message), the speech is a success.

Mechanics of Public Speaking

Relaxation and Calming Techniques

Take three large breaths before a presentation; it fills your brain with oxygen and sends a message to the body that everything is going to be fine. Speak slowly, use short sentences and continue consciously breathing and filling yourself with air as you proceed through the speech. Project confidence and enthusiasm by visualizing yourself as a successful, confident presenter. Research shows that your brain cannot distinguish between excitement and fear. Turn your nervousness into excitement.

Other tips for reducing stress when giving a speech include tensing and releasing muscles before getting in front of the audience; arriving early to meet people in the audience before speaking; and taking a few minutes to take a drink of water if you lose your train of thought.

Posture and poise when speaking

Remember to look at several different people in the audience, keeping your eyes on each person for a few seconds. Smile as often as appropriate and use gestures to emphasize points. Be aware of your own distracting movements such as swaying back and forth or tapping hands on the podium.

Speech Delivery

Speak conversationally and avoid difficult words, jargon and acronyms (unless the audience will understand). Do not read the speech: very short notes, even single words, can be a roadmap for the presentation. Get excited, move around and vary your tone, even if it feels more dramatic than you would in normal conversation. Add pauses when emphasizing key points and showing visuals so the audience has time to absorb the information before you continue.

Nothing is more helpful than rehearsing a speech multiple times, especially if a time limit is set. Practice by speaking aloud, into a tape recorder or in front of friends or family.

Using Visuals and Handouts

- Visuals should be large and include only essential data with short phrases.
- Visuals and props should also be clearly marked and colorful if possible.
- When introducing visuals, verbally highlight the main points and draw conclusions.
- Keep your body and attention directed toward the audience when discussing the visual.

- Remove the visual when finished ensuring the audience's attention is on the speech.
- Handouts should provide more detailed information about the speech. However, distribute handouts during the speech only if the audience needs to refer to information during your talk. Otherwise, distribute handouts at the end of a presentation.
- Have a back-up plan. If someone forgets to deliver an overhead, be prepared to proceed without. Arrange for photocopies to be made if visuals are crucial to the presentation.

Q and A

- Have some questions ready for the audience if they don't ask their own. Make your questions are open-ended.
- Listen carefully. Don't assume you know what the person is going to say.
- Be aware of body language. Be careful not to switch to a hostile expression. Do not fold your arms in front of you while listening. Look audience members in the eye as they ask questions.
- Take time to gather your thoughts before answering a question. Restate the question to the rest of the audience.
- Keep your answers short and succinct.
- Give everyone a chance to ask questions. If one person tries to monopolize the discussion, offer to talk further with that person afterwards. Explain that everyone needs a chance to speak.
- Be honest. Admit when you don't know the answer to a question. Offer to get the information, if you can and follow up with the individual.

Additional Resources:

toastmasters.org

ragan.com/sn

Chapter 8: Promoting the Local Program

Newsletters, websites and promotional items are valuable ways to promote awareness of the local CASA program. This chapter explores each promotion vehicle and provides considerations for using each.

Newsletters

A newsletter can be an effective communications tool for CASA programs. It can run the gamut from a single sheet, typed and copied on the old copier, to a multi-paged publication on nice paper stock using photographs and color.

Anyone in charge of producing a newsletter knows the assignment can take on a life of its own. Several factors play into a newsletter. Programs may, in fact, produce several types of newsletters depending on the audience, program budget and staff resources. There are many considerations in developing a program newsletter. Start planning a newsletter by asking the following question: What audience needs what kind of information?

Define the Newsletter Audience

Several factors determine what the finished newsletter will be. Information presented to volunteers may be very different from information provided to the public and potential donors. If the goal of a newsletter to provide information for volunteers, it is perfectly acceptable to send a simple yet informative newsletter to this audience. Consider producing two publications: an internal newsletter for volunteers (inexpensive and easy to produce) and an external (more professional looking) for the public. Technically advanced newsletter design and layout will cost more money and staff resources. Volunteers are already invested in the program and will likely be more concerned with program news more than the use of a 4 color design and high resolution photos.

On the other hand, if a newsletter is being sent to community leaders, potential funders, politicians and the media a professional layout, design and tone is a requirement. This audience doesn't want to read about volunteer marriages or staff birthdays but they may be moved by a recent CASA child success story, legislation recently introduced at the state level in support of CASA or that National CASA Association leaders met the President in D.C. Don't forge to clearly identify the program on the masthead of the newsletter.

Note: Remember to include the National CASA Association on program newsletter mailing lists. Local program newsletters are used to generate story ideas and find potential volunteer profiles for national promotion and publications.

Several sources exist for gathering story ideas and state and local news to share in program newsletters. Search for news items in the state CASA newsletter if one exists. National CASA encourages local programs to reproduce articles of interest from its quarterly magazine, *The Connection*. Contact National CASA to arrange an article reprint and credit the publication using the following source sequence: © 2001 National CASA Association. Reprinted from The Connection, Vol. #., No. #.

Technology helps produce well designed publications at a personal computer. Although there is not enough money in the budget to hire a graphic designer, most quick print shops have desktop publishing, word processing capabilities and talented staff to help with most printing needs. Printing companies may also be willing to donate the printing. Some large corporations have in-house printing facilities and may be willing to print the newsletter at no cost. Compiling and laying out a newsletter is the perfect task for someone willing to help the program but not yet ready to become a CASA volunteer.

Electronic Newsletters

In addition to mailing hard copies of your newsletter, you can save on both printing and mailing costs by utilizing an electronic newsletter. One easy option is to scan your printed newsletter to create an electronic version and e-mailing it to readers with computer access. A better option is to build your electronic newsletter specifically for reading via a computer monitor, with the information written in a manner that is short and concise, and most easily read. Choose the most compelling or important information to highlight in an e-newsletter. Readers will not take as much time to scroll down a long document, so the most important information should be presented at the beginning of the message. Remember to follow reprint and confidentiality rules as with print publications. Although content may be designed for a specific audience, it is easy and common for messages to be distributed to a far greater audience without knowledge of the program. Never include anything unless it is considered public information.

Websites and the Internet

The National CASA Association maintains two separate websites: nationalcasa.org and casanet.org. The primary purpose of **nationalcasa.org** is to provide information for people outside the CASA network. The national site is a general information site where members of the public and media are directed when they have limited knowledge about CASA. Information listed on this site includes: the mission statement, contact information, events, conference details and information on how to support CASA through membership and donations.

Another important service of the national website is the search engine created in partnership with Impact Online's *VolunteerMatch* website allowing potential volunteers to find contact information for the nearest CASA program in their area.

The purpose of **casanet.org** is to provide resources and information for those within the CASA network. Program staff, volunteers, judges and other child welfare agencies are encouraged to utilize the resources casanet.org provides. Each section of casanet.org contains detailed information on various aspects of National CASA operations and program support material.

- Volunteer Information (dedicated to information specific to interests of CASA volunteers)
- Annual Conference details (updates and registration forms for the annual National CASA Association conference)
- Program Services (program assistance including training manuals and materials)
- Communications and public relations support (see below)
- Volunteer Training (information on curriculum training and retaining volunteers)
- Program Management (Materials and information on all aspects of managing a CASA program)
- Grants (funding opportunities and information)
- Reference (library of articles, manuals and other resources)

CASAnet.org Communications Resources

The communications section of casanet.org contains information and resources to help build and support awareness activities for local CASA programs' public relations efforts. Included are:

- The latest National CASA PR campaign materials are available for download.
- The latest print advertisements
- The National CASA trademark logo site provides electronic files of the new CASA logo in a variety of formats. This site also offers an easy way to order a customized version of the new CASA logo, incorporating a local program name. These customized logos are available at no cost to National CASA member programs.
- A Program Feedback Request Page enables National CASA to receive information from programs about special events, awards, volunteer stories or other items for inclusion in the *Connection* or other national publications.

National CASA Website Reprint Guidelines

National CASA's websites are a valuable resource for information but careful guidelines should be followed when using material found on the Internet. Although it is free to surf the web and locate information, guidelines must be followed when using and reprinting information. As with the print publication realm, there are reprint permission rules for web content. When using information from either of National CASA's websites, do so by either citing the URL (website address) to the article or reprint the article in its entirety.

When citing the link to an article use the name of the article, author and the URL so readers can visit the website and read the text in its entirety. The URL displays in the top horizontal window of the browser when viewing the article (for example, casanet.org\communications\graphicstandards). Highlight the URL, copy and paste the location into your document or website.

Although programs are welcome to list links to articles, National CASA cannot grant unlimited or free reprint permission. For full use, you must have permission granted by the original author of the article. Authors outside of National CASA staff have granted the national organization permission to reprint their work on our sites. In turn, the author must be contacted by any additional parties interested in using the material. Contact information is included with each article on our websites. To request reprint permission of National CASA articles, contact the Communications Department.

Graphic Standards

Once a website is outlined and designed, program may want to add photographs or other graphic images. The recommended way to save and use graphics for the web is with either the JPEG or GIF formats. The JPEG format is designed to compress photographic images while GIF format is the best choice for graphics such as logos with solid color areas. Monitor screen resolution is 72 pixels per inch. To create the smallest file size, all images for web display should be reduced to 72 pixels per inch. This will ensure the finished web page will display as quickly as possible for users.

The recommended procedure for creating print ready images is to use a scanner. When scanning an image it is best to scan at a high resolution. Images to be used in print publications should have a resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch) for the desired print size (standard size is 4x6"). The highest resolution computer monitors can view images at is 72 ppi (pixels per inch, which is similar to the dpi or dots per inch used in printed images). Therefore when an image is saved and used on the web, there is no need to exceed 72 ppi. However, if the image is to be printed as well, then scan or save the image at a resolution of 300 dpi.

National CASA Graphic Standards for the Web

National CASA must grant approval for any website using the name Court Appointed Special Advocate, the CASA logo, slogans and/or any graphics licensed to National CASA. National CASA reserves the right to restrict usage by anyone if the content of the site is not in direct line with the CASA mission. Please forward all URL locations (website addresses) to National CASA's Communications Department for approval.

The web graphic standards for the National CASA logos are the same as those for print. The logo and tagline cannot be redrawn or modified in any way. The logo is available on a dedicated National CASA Trademark Logo site on casanet.org.

National CASA's current annual conference logo may be featured on a website to promote or publicize the conference. It may not appear alone, but must be accompanied by the conference dates, location and affiliation with National CASA Association. Permission to include the conference logo on any website expires upon development of the following year's annual conference logo. The logo is available upon request from the Communications Department.

Photographs and current public service announcement campaign ads are available for download from casanet.org. These images may be featured on National CASA Association member program websites only. Photo images and PSAs are created for National CASA member programs for their public outreach and recruitment efforts. Any use of these images outside of this intent is strictly prohibited, including use on personal websites.

Permissions/Confidentiality for the web

In developing and deciding content for a program website, it is important to protect the program from any potential permission use infringements or confidentiality breaches. Any use of photographic images should have a disclaimer stating that images do not portray actual abuse and neglect cases. Protect the program site and its contents by establishing rules for others to follow. When text and information from outside the program is used on the local site, make sure reprint permissions have been granted and are clearly stated. Although information and pictures from other websites may seem free since it is easily available, permissions are still necessary.

Tips for using CASAnet.org

1. **Using the Download Section on CASAnet.org**
   The Download Section is popular because it displays all available casanet.org downloads from one location. It can be intimidating because at first glance it is very different from the other areas on casanet.org. Select the "How to Use" download from this list for a short tutorial about using this feature. All files available in the Download Section are also available from other pages of casanet.org (for example, the print ads can be downloaded from the Ads page in the Communications Section).
2. **Use the Casanet.org Search Engine**
   The casanet.org search feature is a quick way to locate articles and information about a specific topic. Click the SEARCH button on the casanet.org home page and enter a single word to begin.

Using the Web for Public Relations

Once the local website is live, it is important to share the values of this resource with both internal and external audiences. For example, if the press is a target audience, create a highly visible and accessible link from the home page. Advertise the website on promotional materials and include the website address on business cards and publications.

Commonly requested information on local websites includes program history, media contact, statistics about abuse/neglect in the local area, as well as the program's number of volunteers and the number of children helped. Ensure quality content is a top priority. If a website becomes outdated, its usefulness diminishes; website maintenance is even more important than having one.

Email Security

Most users do not realize how open to the public ordinary email messages can be. Email should actually be called 'e-postcards' because as a message journeys through the Internet, it can be intercepted and read at numerous points. If programs use email for business or personal use, several things should be understood: privacy is a myth unless encryption software is used. Programs should take caution with email attachments and create an Internet policy for the workplace.

Ordinary email messages are not private and confidential information should never be sent unless it is encrypted. Never put confidential information into email messages about the program, cases or employees (this means no full names, birthdates, social security numbers, bank account or charge card information).

Email messages travel from point A (your computer) to point D (another person's computer). Between A and D various places exist to intercept the message. The route taken varies depending on the situation but here is one example of a common path: a friend sends an email message from his work computer to your work email account. Along the way it passes through his work network to their ISP (Internet Service Provider) and out to the Internet where it goes through various systems and network devices. The message is then received at your work ISP and then to the office network before reaching your computer. Each relay offers a point of interception. Because various people have the ability to view the contents of a document, email is more like a postcard sent through the mail where any mail carriers could read it.

> **Note:** As a general email rule, never write anything in an email message that you wouldn't want displayed elsewhere on the Internet or on the front page of a newspaper.

Encryption is the best way to safeguard personal and private correspondence. Encryption programs scramble the message and make it unreadable unless the end-reader has the "Key" or code to unscramble the information. The main complication is that sender and receiver need to use the same encryption software and have the code for sharing information.

Computer viruses cost companies and governments millions of dollars in lost productivity and lost information and revenue. Viruses come in many forms and are normally attachments the user executes when opened. Always question email attachments even if it is from someone you know (unless the attachment is expected). Attachments with extension such as "*.VBS, *.EXE *.KAK or *.HTA" carry viruses that cause serious harm to a computer system. The best defense against viruses is scanning software that checks email messages for viruses; however, sometimes new viruses get through. Caution should be taken and infected messages deleted immediately.

Finally, the program should have a published policy on email content and privacy. Employers should tell employees if they will be scanning email for offensive remarks or content and what the repercussions are for such actions. Rules on the content of messages can be restrictive (Email is to be used for business-related communication only) or open (Email may be used for personal purposes at will). The best policy reserves the program's right to examine email for legitimate business purposes but forbids unauthorized individuals from reading or intercepting other's email messages. Personal use is usually allowed within reason.

Promotional Merchandise

You see it everyday: Nike tote bags, Coca Cola key chains, rock band t-shirts and Pokemon pajamas.

These are more than just popular trinkets dropped in shopping baskets at Wal-Mart. Promotional items are subtle forms of advertising distributed to the general public but designed to sell particular products. Promotional item are a great avenue to promote an organization, product or service when plastered across the chests, car bumpers, coffee cups, key chains, baseball hats and ink pens of millions of people around the country.

When used correctly, promotional merchandise can be extremely effective publicity tools. Their cost is often minimal when compared to the penetration into the market and resulting visibility. Promotional merchandise can raise public awareness about the organization, promote program activities and (most importantly) create a concrete image for CASA in the minds of community members by letting them know in a very obvious way that CASA exists.

Planned Distribution of Promotional Merchandise

Promotional items are most helpful when used as part of an overall public relations campaign and compliment program informational materials (newsletters, information kits, etc) but do not replace them. Incorporate promo items into the overall public relations strategy by deciding the target audience and how these materials should be distributed to reach that audience. For example, if your goal is to improve public awareness of your program, distributing items to CASA volunteers, judges and social workers will not fulfill this goal. The program may find itself spending a lot of money with disappointing results. Instead, consider mailing items to community leaders, service club officers, public officials and local media contacts.

Sell Or Give Away?

Many organizations opt to provide promotional items primarily as freebies while others use them as a fundraising tool. Whether or not items are sold or given away depends largely on funding needs and operating restrictions. It is often quite possible to do a little of both.

Give away promotional items:

- for volunteer recognition
- as holiday gifts
- as thank you gifts for board members and primary funders
- to local and state politicians
- to media contacts (some media outlets may have policies against receiving gifts)
- to civic clubs or school groups who might wear or use the item prominently

Sell promotional items:

- to volunteers wanting to buy in quantity
- at fundraising events
- at state conferences or workshops (if allowed)
- through the program newsletter and website
- at local bazaars, community events or crafts fairs

Note: Remember to first get permission from the National CASA Association before printing the CASA logo or slogan on resale items. National CASA promotional photographs are not allowed as design elements on resale items and designs must comply with the National CASA Graphics Standards. For more information, contact the National CASA communications department.

Be Sensitive

People tend to react sensitively when it comes to promotional items. These items are often perceived as rewards or perks. It is easy to inadvertently offend or alienate people if they are not included in your distribution (for example, "John got one, why didn't I?"). Be careful when distributing promotional items and when in doubt, it is best to give an item to a supporter than risk having them feeling left out.

Chapter 9: Managing a Communications Crisis

CASA programs and volunteers face crises every day. It is the nature of CASA work: we deal with children in troubled situations. We are often involved in volatile situations involving families in crisis.

Our volunteer program is also vulnerable to other kinds of emergencies—ones we ca not necessarily handle with traditional training. These are crises of communication where situations suddenly thrust CASA into the news and threaten the program's public image and credibility.

This chapter is designed to help a program control and manage its reputation when challenged in the media. The information presented will help prepare a program for a communications crisis before it happens and cope if you should find the program in the middle of one.

Types of Crises

A communications crisis is any incident or situation bringing media attention to the CASA program that threatens to damage its reputation and credibility.

Communications crises CASA programs might face include:

- A volunteer is accused of harming a child.
- A volunteer is accused of inappropriate or incompetent behavior by angry parents or another party to the case.
- A professional in the court or child welfare system (a social worker or attorney) publicly criticizes the CASA program.
- Another facet of the system is involved in a scandal and a caseworker is blamed for a child's death. The case involves a CASA volunteer.
- A messy firing or resignation results in a volunteer taking their story to the media.
- A member of the CASA board is implicated in criminal activity or "scandalous" personal behavior inappropriate for a child advocate

Some of these scenarios may sound far fetched, but in a flash can become reality. In the past, some CASA program directors have picked up the phone or the morning paper to suddenly find the program and themselves the target of a reporter's questions.

Imagine this scene:

> It is 8 a.m., and you have just arrived at work. You park your car and head to your office. The phone rings.
>
> *"Hello."*

"I'd like to speak to the director of the CASA program."

"This is Sally Smith. I'm the director. How can I help you?

"This is Bill Bishop from the Times-Herald. How long has Dick Jones been working on little Carole Carson's case?"

"What?"

"Were you aware when he came to work for you that he had been implicated in a child molestation case seven years ago in another state?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Dick Jones was arrested last night after abducting Carole from her group home and holding her hostage. She is claiming he has been sexually abusing her, threatening that he will have the court send her to jail if she didn't go along. Did you check him out when you hired him?"

"Well, he's a volunteer. We do a criminal records check with the state but that doesn't turn up charges from other states...."

"What was he doing with this kid anyway? Exactly what is CASA?"

Headline in the afternoon paper:

Foster Child Says She Was Molested By Court Volunteer;
CASA program did not check for prior charges

Although this is an extreme scenario, the example illustrates what can happen when an unexpected call from a newspaper or television reporter thrusts your program into the spotlight. What would you do in this situation? How would you react? Would you talk to the reporter? What would you tell him?

Even though the circumstances may initially be out of your control, it is possible to position the program and regain control of the situation. Manage your own crisis; do not let the media manage it for you.

Steps in Managing a Crisis

As soon as you learn of a situation that has led—or could potentially lead—to a public crisis, follow these steps:

Gather Key CASA Program Advisors

This would probably include you, your supervisor (if applicable), the juvenile court judge and the CASA program's staff attorney. If something has happened that could possibly interest the media, do not wait for the news to leak out before getting started. It is best to be prepared when you get the initial call from a reporter than to say something you might regret later.

Openly Share Crisis Details with Key Advisors

- Go over the details of the incident.
- Make a list of the people involved.
- Discuss people's motives (where they are coming from, what they are trying to accomplish and why).
- Study the complete history of the child. Retrace the case from the time CASA was assigned. Talk to people who came in contact with the volunteer; conduct your own investigation.
- Review the history of the volunteer. How did he become involved in CASA? Was he screened properly? Did he complete training? Has he performed well with the program? What do his reviews say?
- If police are involved, request their information.

The main charge for this key group of CASA advisors is trying to determine if the program is liable in any way or made a mistake. Look at the information and try to spot holes. If there are problems or unanswered questions, then find the solutions and answers.

Document What the Media May Know

- Collect all newspaper clippings.
- Tape TV reports and radio broadcasts discussing the situation.
- Determine who the media has talked with, who is speaking out on this situation and what is being said.
- Who is not talking, and why? Is there missing information? Is it good or bad for your program?

Determine What Can and Cannot Be Said to the Media

What can and cannot be said to the media varies from state to state depending on regulations and the local political climate. Consult with the staff attorney and, by all means, confer with the program's judge. Just as CASA volunteers are taught what questions they can and cannot ask alleged perpetrators, find out the boundaries for public comment on the case. You may be dealing with the rights of an individual accused of improper conduct so make sure the program attorney guides your actions and responses. Your goal is to provide accurate information on behalf of the program without abusing the rights of the accused.

Although it is easy to say "no comment," doing so is more damaging to the program in the long run. Thanks to the work by the program's key advisors, you should be ready to talk to the media. Ironically, many people decide at this juncture to do just the opposite; they refuse to comment at all. It is a common in a crisis situation to want to run and hide. In reality, nothing could be more damaging to the program. These situations sometimes deal with information that has already been published. It may be within safe legal boundaries to comment on it. Again, check with your judge and staff attorney.

Consider this scenario, based on an actual incident:

> The CASA program director picks up the morning paper. He sees a picture of one of his volunteers on the front page, a woman he just fired from the program for inappropriate behavior (she allowed her CASA child, a ward of the court, to spend the night in her home). The headline read: Volunteer Fired Because She Tried to Help." The story, written by a reporter without a solid understanding about the purpose of CASA, went on to blast the CASA program for penalizing a woman "who opened up her home and her heart to a little child." The director was ordered by his superior to refuse commenting on the case. For the next several days in television reports, when it came time to explain CASA's side of the story, the camera lingered on the closed door of the CASA office. That is all the public ever learned of the CASA program.

Reporters are going to include CASA in stories whether official comments are made or not. The image of the program is somewhat controlled when commenting on the case is allowed. A time of crisis is a time for honesty and candor; quick and accurate disclosure is a must. Do note create long term image problems for the program by pretending the situation did not happen, refusing to take calls or hiding from the media.

Name an Official Spokesperson and Media Contact

The program must delegate a media contact and a program spokesperson. Reporters work with a media contact to request interviews or logistical information. Hopefully this will be an individual who has promoted the program in the past and has a long standing relationship with the media.

The spokesperson is interviewed and comments about the situation publicly; this will probably be the judge or CASA program director. Depending on the size of a program, the roles of media contact and spokesperson can be filled by the same person. Choose a program spokesperson carefully. This individual can make or break a program's image in the public's eye. Since a spokesperson will deal with a barrage of questions from curious reporters, they must be quick, personable and able to follow a line of questioning and skillfully steer information in another direction if needed. Assign a spokesperson who is articulate and media savvy—the wrong person will come off stiff, scared, secretive or (worst of all) bureaucratic. If the CASA program director does not feel comfortable in this role, consider the board president, judge, PR committee chair or staff attorney.

Responding to the Media

There are many approaches to responding to the media: reactive, commenting on the situation only when asked or releasing an official statement. Sometimes agencies and corporations deal with crisis situations by putting comments in a succinct, written statement and hand it to reporters. There are pros and cons to releasing official statements. On the positive side, a prepared statement may protect the program from heated questioning that might cause inappropriate information to be released. Unfortunately releasing official statements smells of fear and covertness which make reporters even more interested in the situation because they think something is being hidden.

Issue a prepared statement if the situation is a legal nightmare (for example, the situation is so sensitive that commenting freely and publicly is not an option) or if a spokesperson comfortable with the media cannot be found.

As stated earlier in the manual, news conferences are tricky and can easily backfire. Do not hold a press conference unless you have something very new, important and newsworthy to announce. Instead, prepare for possible questions. Complete a scouting report analyzing media coverage of the situation.

- Who is covering the story?
- What is known about the reporter covering the story and their professional reputation?
- Who are the program's allies and potential enemies?
- What media contacts do you have in the community, within the organization or on the board?
- How can they help you?

Try to anticipate the potential questions asked by the media. Pretend for a moment you are a reporter and consider what you would want to know about the current situation. Remember, most reporters are not familiar with CASA or the workings of the child welfare system and juvenile court. Many questions will be basic or steeped in misinformation. Ask a family member or friend unfamiliar with CASA to pose potential questions. Try to determine what will be asked before facing reporters so you can consider various responses. Determine a message objective in dealing with the media. Don't think of interviews in terms of "how can I survive?" Make the point that CASA is credible and it works.

If a volunteer is involved, expect questions about the volunteer's personal history/personality, their history of affiliation with CASA, program screening procedures, training requirements, case history/other cases worked on, co-workers and other volunteers

Begin Planning Now

A crisis communications plan is based on the possibility that the program could be thrown into the public arena in a negative situation and that it will have to be dealt with. There are several things to do now to prepare should a crisis ever happen to the program.

1. Select and train a spokesperson now. Find out now who can and cannot handle the media in the middle of a crisis.
2. Have the spokesperson on radio programs (especially call-in shows) and TV to learn how to talk publicly about the program. This is a great way to learn what the public thinks about the program and what questions they are likely to ask. Local TV talk shows will also provide a feel for how the spokesperson handles television interviews and appearances.
3. Develop a relationship with the media before a crisis happens. If reporters are aware of the benefits of CASA they are less likely to put the program on trial during a bad situation.
4. Make sure volunteers are properly screened and trained and that records are kept detailing their work with the program. Consider this example: a CASA program director called the National CASA office upset that one of her volunteers had been arrested and his record turned up an incident of child

abuse. We asked if the volunteer was screened when he applied. She could not remember, and did not have any records of the volunteer's work with the program prior to the time she had been hired. If such information had become public knowledge, the program's credibility would have been severely damaged.

5. Have a policy in place dictating what action is taken when a volunteer is accused of inappropriate behavior. Are volunteers suspended, given an opportunity to state their side of the story or allowed a hearing of some kind? Who is involved when this happens? Determine a policy now so one does not need to be developed in the middle of a crisis.

Protecting People's Rights

Before facing the media, remind yourself of the "rights" that apply for children, volunteers, staff and the public:

The rights of the child are the first responsibility of CASA managers and volunteers. Even in crisis situations, we are bound to advocate for the best interests of the child. Publicity should not divert attention from fulfilling this responsibility. Do not toss the case aside just because it gets sticky or difficult to handle.

Volunteers are also entitled to rights. Policies should be in place dictating actions taken when a volunteer is arrested and charged, accused directly or accused indirectly of a crime. Just because a person has been accused of inappropriate behavior doesn't mean they are guilty. This person needs to be treated with courtesy and respect throughout the situation, even if you believe the accusations are true. Gather thorough documentation to support any punitive action that might have to be taken.

Program staff and other volunteers have the right to certain information for their morale and because they may be contacted by the media. It is common in times of crisis, when the media is standing outside the door, to forget many people are involved with the CASA program and, therefore, are also affected by bad publicity. One thing is true: gossip festers under a veil of secrecy. When nothing is said, misinformation may come from within the organization.

Even though it may be uncomfortable to face, the public also has a right to know. This is the one "right" most of us do not want to accept, but we have no choice. We live in a free country, with a Constitution that guarantees freedom of information and the media's right to report it. Public scrutiny can be a difficult and uncomfortable experience for CASA managers. As professionals, they are bound to uphold the confidential nature of the juvenile court. They must train volunteers to protect the privacy of children. But CASA cases are handled by public agencies funded through tax dollars (social services department and juvenile court). The public does have the right to know what goes on in those arenas. This does not mean the confidentiality of case files should be jeopardized; it simply means the public has a right to know how the process works and—if there are problems—why they are occurring.

During Watergate, even the president of the United States believed his records were not for public scrutiny. The courts ruled he was wrong. As much as you may resent it, the media does have a right to ask you about the program.

Internal Planning

Below is advice on handling staff, volunteers and other CASA supporters in a time of crisis:

Acknowledge the situation and be accessible to discuss it without revealing confidential information. If you have read or seen a story about CASA, so have volunteers, staffers, board members and funders. These key audience members need to be informed in times of crisis. Double check the information key program advisors have determined appropriate to disclose/comment on and share it with these audiences as well. Don't tell those not directly involved in the crisis anything you are not willing to reveal to the media; it may come back to hurt the situation even more if private or confidential information is shared.

Don't hide. Deal with staff and volunteer's questions directly. Depending on the severity of the situation, be accessible to answer volunteer concerns and questions. Prepare an official statement and either mail it to their homes, include it in a special edition newsletter or place it on the program website. Call program supporters together to discuss the crisis; however, if the volunteer pool is large, the media may be interested in attending the meeting.

Deal with the emotional impact, especially if the crisis is severe. If the program is involved with issues as critical as a child's death or indictment of a volunteer, consider having a counselor available to answer questions or conduct special group crisis trainings for staff and volunteers.

> **Note**: Even though you plan for a crisis, the actions of others cannot be guaranteed. People out of your control can, and will, talk. They are less likely to misconstrue information, however, if you are calm and have a planned response, both internally (staff and volunteers) and externally (media and general public).

Allow people freedom and room for individual opinions to be expressed about a crisis situation. By dealing with the problem head on, there is a better chance to monitor unwarranted speculation or inaccuracy and stop it before it spreads.

Don't forget to acknowledge and plan for turf battles. Perhaps there are many factions in the courthouse, some who would like to see CASA fall by the wayside. Survey the political landscape and coordinate planning with other agencies especially if they are also involved in the crisis and being approached by the media. When it comes to dealing with the media, the right hand must know what the left hand is doing. Make other players aware of the planned response and determine how to work together. Educate them about the positive goals of your plan and how it can help everyone involved.

No Comment—Not a Great Idea

Few things are as intimidating as being interviewed by a reporter, particularly in times of crisis. But with thorough planning the following is already known about the situation: what the media knows, what it doesn't know, what can and cannot be commented on and the key messages that need to be made to the media and public. You will be ready to speak to the press with these key facts. Use "no comment" creatively

Rather than use "no comment," explain the reasons why the question can't be answered.

Because of the legal ramifications involved in this case, I cannot address that issue...."

OR

"Since the child involved is a minor under jurisdiction of the juvenile court, state law prohibits me from commenting."

The second response takes the focus away from the CASA program/spokesperson and clearly identifies the law and judicial system as the reason behind not answering a question.

Admitting Mistakes

What if the program really did do something wrong, the volunteer was incompetent or the staff made a mistake? Generally, the best thing to do is to acknowledge mistakes right away. The pen is mightier than the sword, but there are two words mightier than the power of the media: I'm Sorry. These two words have great power in times of scandal and crisis. The pendulum of public opinion can swing very quickly. Just as much as the media and the public hate a cover-up, they admire and respect someone who admits mistakes.

Note of Caution: Consult with your judge and attorney over the program's liability before issuing a public apology. If a crisis surrounds a situation where you could be sued, that's an entirely different situation. In that case, the challenge would be to appear empathetic and caring in your statements while staying within legal boundaries.

When admitting wrong, focus on conveying a message of caring about how CASA helps children.

There are several examples of a bad public reaction in a time of crisis and times when individual behavior made the situation worse. Throughout the Watergate crisis, Richard Nixon refused to comment on Watergate for eight months. When he finally held a news conference, he refused to answer Watergate questions directly, chastising the media for not focusing on important issues. By the time the situation diminished, no one had much sympathy for "Tricky Dick."

Actions can also diffuse public controversy in times of crisis. In the early 1980s, Billie Jean King was sued by a woman revealing she had been King's lesbian lover. In our homophobic society, the incident had the power to destroy the champion's career. Due to the fact that King faced the challenge head on, it did not. King called a news conference to confirm the allegation and presented her viewpoint, answered questions candidly and repeated her "message objective" to reporters. Because she was forthright and honest, the incident died quickly and King continued her career as a sports commentator without permanent damage.

The difference in these examples has to do with basic human nature. A secret becomes much bigger and more sinister the longer it is kept. Secrecy arouses suspicions and those acting suspiciously or secretive about a situation only intensify scrutiny.

Confidentiality in Times of Crisis

Do not misconstrue the confidentiality rules of the juvenile court. There's a difference between using confidentiality to protect a child and using confidentiality to protect yourself or the program. Confidentiality should never be used as an excuse for not talking to the media.

Consider the number of articles written about a dependent child's death in which the Department of Social Services looks heartless and insensitive. This type of coverage happens because state workers are rarely allowed to talk to the media in times of crisis:

> The child, four-year-old Ashley Cocharan, was pronounced dead on arrival at Brown County Hospital at approximately 3:30 a.m. Doctors say the cause of death was a severe blow to the head. Police believe Ashley's father beat her after the child wet her pants. Ashley had been living with her father for just three days after she was taken from her foster home by the Brown County Department of Social Services. When asked about Ashley, DSS Director Dan Smith had "no comment" because the case was "confidential."

It certainly was not confidential information that Ashley was dead. Why couldn't Dan Smith say he was "sorry" the child had died? Saying this would not imply that he or his agency was responsible for her death. It only indicates he is human and cares about children. He could have said: "Any time a child dies it is a tragedy. I am sorry this incident has occurred and send condolences to all the people who cared about this little girl. My department is launching an immediate investigation into the circumstances surrounding Ashley's death and we will issue a full report as soon as possible."

Making Your Point

There are ways to talk to the media without revealing information or jeopardizing the CASA child or cause:

Comment Only on Confirmed Information

Know confirmed information and facts allowed for public knowledge before a media interview. If caught unaware by a reporter's question, assure them you will check into the issue and call back. Carry through with the promise and keep the reporter updated.

Set the Record Straight

A careful study of the situation will unveil misinformation being reported. Use the interview to correct anything previously misstated in the press.

Use Bridging Techniques

Make the key point—CASA is a credible program that works—by using the bridging technique. The following examples demonstrate this approach:

> **Q. I understand Jane Smith had an incident of child abuse in another town several years ago. Did you have knowledge of that?**
>
> **A.** As I explained in my opening statement, the legal issues in this case prohibit me from being able to share details of Mrs. Smith's personnel file with you. But I can tell you that each volunteer accepted into the CASA program has a routine police search done on them, conducted by the

sheriff's office, so that we may ensure to the best of our ability no one with a problematic history will be accepted as a volunteer.

Q. Mrs. Smith is a housewife with a high school education. Do you really think 20 hours of training is enough to allow someone with no legal or social service background into the case of an abused kid?

A. In the five years our program has existed in Brown County, more than 150 volunteers—most of who have no experience or legal background—have helped hundreds of kids find safe, permanent homes. Studies show they perform as well on the job as attorneys who have not received special training in abuse and neglect. Our volunteers enter an intensive course of study before they ever enter a courtroom and we provide continuing education through their tenure as volunteers.

The Interview Bill of Rights

The person being interviewed has the right to:

- set the pace of the interview
- request a reporter repeat a question
- ask for more information or clarification on a question
- a two-way conversation conducted with ordinary language
- set the time and location of interviews
- not answer uncomfortable or inappropriate questions
- demand a retraction when inaccurate information is printed
- file a complaint against a reporter
- say "I don't know"

When conducting an interview, the reporter has the right to:

- have phone calls returned
- have deadlines honored
- be treated as an individual
- honest and accurate answers

Because the media deal with deadlines and competition daily, they may seem bothersome, exploitative, brash, harsh or unrelenting. The media however holds the key to public opinion; they make or break it. To create a desired public impression for the program, foster the best possible working relationship.

Trick Questions

Be aware of trick question approaches that reporters may take. When you're hit with a trick question, stick with pre-determined parameters for answering and try to bring the response back to a place where the main point can be stated. Following are three tricky question approaches to be aware of:

The Pregnant Pause

"Mrs. Smith's neighbors say she had been acting erratically the week before the incident. Maybe she was under pressure from work, at home, or perhaps . . ."

A or B answers

"Mrs. Smith was erratic. Was it because she was under pressure from work or experiencing violence at home?"

The Absent Third Party

"One of your other CASA volunteers went through training with Mrs. Smith and said she thought she was erratic and confused. Would you agree?"

Follow Up and Evaluation

In the middle of a crisis, it is hard to measure community impact. It is in the program's best interest to be aware of public mood and opinion as it applies to CASA. Informal ear-to-the-ground research can be a valuable way to determine the extent to which the program's image and credibility is damaged. What are friends thinking and saying? What is the talk on the street? What are your children hearing at school? What has your spouse heard at work? What are they saying at church, the health club or hair salon?

When the crisis passes, learn from the experience. Analyze what went right, what could be improved and learn how to avoid certain situations or handle them better. Keeping a diary during the experience (log of calls and interviews and news clippings) will later demonstrate if the formal crisis plan worked. If you didn't have a plan, one should certainly emerge from the experience.

The heart of a crisis communications plan is basically sound judgment, common sense and preplanning. The best way to prepare for a communications crisis is to build a solid working relationship with the local media before a crisis occurs. Laying the groundwork now for an ongoing, day-to-day PR plan will pay off in a time of crisis. At that time there will be familiar faces behind the microphones who already know the value and positive contribution CASA makes in the community.

Proactive Crisis Communications

Sometimes a crisis may occur that may warrant the program initiating contact with the media. The media can be a friend when a program is faced with these potential situations:

- **Budget cuts** in which the program is in danger of losing its funds.
- **Sensational cases of child abuse and neglect** can highlight the solution the program brings to the community. React to abuse and neglect situations in which CASA might have made a difference. Some people are uncomfortable to use a time of grief and pain to promote CASA but these cases are often reasons why CASA was created. If these cases occur in areas without a CASA program, contact community members about starting one.

- **To help children.** If there are more children coming into the system than the local program can handle, this may be useful information for the public. Are needed services lacking in the community? Is there an increase in number of cocaine babies or children with AIDS in the community? Inform the media with information on these subjects and use the power of the media to help improve conditions for children in the community.

Appendices

Sample News Release

Sample Media Advisory (Alert)

Sample Community Calendar Release

Sample Photo Release

Sample Mayoral Proclamation

Sample Op-ed Pitch Letter

Sample Op-ed Letter #1

Sample Op-ed Letter #2

Sample African-American Op-ed Letter

Sample Hispanic Op-ed Letter

Sample Speech for National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month

Communications Manual Feedback Questionnaire

Sample News Release

Month Day, 2001

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Name
Organization
Phone Number
email address

[Local Program Name] MARKS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS MONTH WITH [Event/Activity]

CITY, State (include state only if not a major metropolitan city) — Every year, more than **[XX]** children are abused and neglected in **[County, city]**. To raise awareness of alarming statistics like these, **[Insert local program name here]** affiliated with the National CASA Association), a nonprofit organization that trains community volunteers to speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children, today announced it will host an **[insert event name here].** This event supports national efforts to fight child abuse throughout the month of April, which is National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month.

This year's event **[give origination date if this is not the first year for the event]** will help to kick off the first of several awareness and education activities across the country in April to recognize National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month. **[Insert local program name here]** hopes to encourage community members to come together to **[incorporate individual event details here.]**

"Nothing touches your heart more than helping a child," said **[First Name Last Name]**, **[title]**, **[program name]**. "And helping a child who's been abused or neglected will affect you in ways you'd never expect. **[Add comment related to local event/activity]**."

[INSERT LOCAL PROGRAM INFORMATION HERE]

About the National CASA Association
In 1976, concerned over making decisions about abused and neglected children's lives without sufficient information, a Seattle judge conceived the idea of using trained community volunteers to speak for the best interests of these children in court, helping to ensure they will live in a safe and loving environment. So successful was this Seattle program, that soon judges across the country began utilizing citizen advocates. Today, more than 900 CASA/GAL programs exist in all 50 states, with more than 50,000 men and women serving as CASA volunteers.

For more information on **[event]** and National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month, or how you can be a CASA/GAL supporter or volunteer, contact **[program name]** at **[local program phone number]** or visit the National CASA Web site at nationalcasa.org.

###

Sample Media Alert

COMMUNITY RALLIES IN FIGHT AGAINST CHILD ABUSE
[Insert Date]

Who:
[Insert local program name], a local nonprofit organization that trains community volunteers to speak for the best interests of children in court, announced today it will join in the national effort to kick off National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month with **[Event].**

What:
Every year, more than **[XX]** children are abused and neglected in **[city or county]**. April is officially proclaimed as National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month (NCPAM). **[Insert local program name]** is offering community members an opportunity to help in the fight against child abuse by hosting an **[insert event details]**.

Why:
To generate awareness and support in the fight against child abuse during National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month.

When:
[Insert event date and time here]

Where:
[Insert event location here]

For further information:
Please contact **[insert local program]** at **[insert local phone number]**, or contact the National CASA Association at 1-888-414-CASA or visit their Web site at www.nationalcasa.org.

# # #

Sample Calendar Release

FOR RELEASE: Month Day, Year
Chapters Please Note: Community calendar releases should be distributed four to six weeks prior to the event.

CONTACT:
[Insert contact name]
[Insert organization name]
[Insert local phone number]
[Insert email address]

[Insert Name of Event]
Community Calendar Release

Release should be no more than three to four sentences. Lead sentence should include the event name, event time and date, and where it takes place. Subsequent sentences can give a few details, including how community members can participate. Last sentence should include any event contact information.

# # #

Sample Photo Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:
[Insert contact name]
[Insert organization name]
[Insert local phone number]
[Insert email address]

PHOTO GOES HERE

Community members join forces with **[insert local program name]** on **[insert day and date]** at **[insert location]** to help generate awareness and support in the fight against child abuse, as part of a national effort in honor of National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month.

# # #

Sample Photograph, Videotape and/or Sound Recording Release

I, ____ of _____, hereby voluntarily and without compensation authorize and consent that (Local CASA/GAL Program Name), its legal representatives, successors, or assigns, shall have the absolute right to copyright, publish, use, sell or assign any and all photographic portraits or pictures, videotapes, other media material, and/or sound recordings, or any part thereof, they have taken or made of me on this date or in which I may be included in whole or in part, whether apart from or in connection with illustrative or written printed matter, story or news item, motion pictures, or for any other lawful purpose whatsoever, in conjunction with my own or fictitious name, or in reproduction thereof in color or otherwise.

I hereby waive all claims for any compensation for such use or for damages. I hereby waive any right I may have to inspect and/or approve the finished product or the advertising copy that may be used in connection therewith or the use to which it may be applied. I hereby warrant that I am of lawful age and have the legal capacity to contract in my own name in the above regard. I state further I have read the above authorization and release, prior to its execution, and that I am fully familiar with the contents thereof.

Date_____ Signature _____

*For children under 18, this form must be signed/co-signed by a parent or legal guardian.

Sample Mayoral Proclamation

THE MONTH OF APRIL

SAMPLE MAYORAL PROCLAMATION

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE OF _____
CITY OF _____

PROCLAMATION
By the Mayor

WHEREAS: The city of [CITY NAME] prides itself on giving back to the community, contributing to the quality of life among our citizens; and

WHEREAS: The [PROGRAM NAME], in association with the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association, speaks for the best interests of abused and neglected children who are involved in the juvenile courts; and

WHEREAS: More than [XX] children in the [CITY NAME] area suffer from some form of abuse or neglect each year; and

WHEREAS: Through a national effort, [CITY NAME] community members are encouraged to join together to raise awareness for those children fallen victim to abuse and neglect throughout the month of April; and

WHEREAS: This effort will give abused and neglected children in our community, and around the country, a chance for a safe and positive future.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, _____, Mayor of the City of _____, by virtue of the authority vested in me, do hereby proclaim April 2001 as

[CITY NAME] CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS MONTH

in this city, and in doing so, urge all citizens to join in a national effort to raise awareness and help prevent child abuse and neglect.

_____Mayor

Sample Op-ed Pitch Letter

[DATE]

Editorial Director
Name of publication
Address
City, STATE Zip

Dear Editorial Director:

Enclosed please find an Op-Ed piece the [LOCAL PROGRAM NAME] has developed in response to the startling number of abused and neglected children in our community. Every year, more than [XX] children in [CITY] face fear and uncertainty as they wind their way through the legal system. These children need our help finding safe, permanent homes – something every child deserves.

With your support, together we have the opportunity to turn lives of hurt into ones of hope. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me. I can be reached directly at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Program Director
Local Program Name

Sample Op-ed Piece #1

Child Abuse Hurts Us All: Together We Can End the Pain

The Numbers Don't Lie

If you think child abuse doesn't affect you, you couldn't be more wrong. It may not be in your home, or on your block, but child abuse is a problem that affects all of us. When a child suffers, we all suffer. In 1998, according to the Department of Health and Human Services, there were nearly three million reported cases of child abuse or neglect in the country. As if that is not alarming enough, every day an average of three children die as a result of abuse and neglect. While the thought of harming a child, or anyone for that matter, is incomprehensible, it is important we not only recognize the pain the children feel, but the long-term effects child abuse has on our community as a whole.

Children who suffer abuse or neglect are 53 percent more likely to become juvenile delinquents, 38 percent more likely to be arrested as adults, and 38 percent more likely to become violent criminals, according to a study conducted for the National Institute of Justice. What's more, abused and neglected children are involved in delinquency and criminal activity earlier, commit more offenses, and more often become chronic or repeat offenders. Abused children also have lower IQs and reading ability, higher rates of unemployment, more low-paying jobs and higher rates of suicide attempts.

Additionally, the costs associated with child abuse are phenomenal. The National Institute of Justice estimates that child abuse costs this country approximately $56 billion annually; however, the human loss is incalculably greater.

How Can We Help?

You've seen the statistics. You've heard the reports. Child abuse happens all around us, and even though you may not recognize it or see it, you *do* suffer the effects. So you may ask yourself, "What can *I* do about it?" In a word: plenty. For years, community volunteers across the country have given abused and neglected children a second chance for a positive future. It can be as simple as reporting a case of abuse. Childhelp USA provides community members the resources to recognize the signs of abuse, as well as the necessary tools to report abuse and neglect quickly and easily. Through the work of such programs as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Clubs and various other mentoring programs, at-risk children are given guidance and hope for a better future.

While these volunteer programs are crucial in identifying abuse and mentoring children, there is a need for programs to assist abused and neglected children through the legal process in search of safe, permanent homes. Examples of these types of organizations are the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association and Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) programs.

These programs recruit and train community volunteers to advocate for children in court, helping them to find loving homes. Through the work of these extraordinary individuals, these vulnerable children find safe, permanent homes as quickly as possible. To date, nearly one million children have been given a second chance for a positive future.

As a court appointed volunteer, you take on a number of roles. You are a fact-finder for children in need. You are a powerful voice for a child in court. You are a "watchdog" for a

child who otherwise may have no one. You have the power to provide the link between where a child is and where that child wants to be.

And the work of these volunteers goes beyond the physical support they provide to abused and neglected children. In 1999, court appointed advocates provided service hours equivalent to more than $360 million in taxpayer money.

The statistics are staggering, and while it may seem overwhelming, there are many ways in which we can help. We all have the power to make a difference. In doing so, we will experience the satisfaction of knowing we've made a lasting impact on our community and its children for many years to come.

By Program Director, Title, Local Program Name

Sample Op-ed Piece #2

Imagine the Life of an Abused Child

Imagine being 12 years-old and not having a mother, father or any family member.

Imagine there is a school recital and you're the only one who hasn't the resources to purchase the required dress.

Imagine being a teenager and not having any money to buy a Coke, much less go shopping.

Imagine having $75 every three months to buy shoes and clothing.

Imagine wondering what you would do when you turn 18 and now you are out on your own with no family to turn to for support.

Imagine being scared and alone and crying all night – and having no father or mother to comfort you.

Imagine going to strangers' homes for the holidays because you have no where else to go.

Imagine trying to fit into a home that is not your own and having "Uncle Andy" correct you when you call him uncle, because you are a foster child.

Imagine moving two or three or more times each year to a new school.

Imagine having adults making all these decisions about your life, and you have no say.

Imagine all your clothes come from garage sales or church donations, while all the other children receive new clothes because they are "real children" to their families.

Imagine living in a group home with delinquent kids, and your only crime is you have no one to care for you.

It is hard for most of us to imagine the life of an abused child. But the situations above are real, and the children described above are living here in Payne County. These antidotes are in their own words.

Fortunately, we have over 40 Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) who have stepped up to help our community's abused children. As a group, they helped 162 Payne County abused and neglected children last year – one child at a time - bringing some hope into the lives of each child.

The Payne County CASA program is an organization that recruits and trains community volunteers, who are appointed by judges to be independent fact finders and to speak up for the best interests of abused children, in Payne County District Court and elsewhere. You can help by becoming a CASA volunteer, or by supporting the Payne County CASA program by providing a service, a product or by making a donation.

For more information, call (405) 624-2242 or email kids4casa@casaforkids.com.

By Mikki Couch, Executive Director, Payne County CASA

Sample African-American Op-ed Article

Editorial Available for Publication

Will You Please Stand Up For Me?
By (*Your Full Name*)

Each year, more than half a million abused and neglected children are living in temporary foster care while waiting for a safe, permanent and nurturing home. Unfortunately, nearly half of them are African-American.

You may remember five-year-old Rilya Wilson, a girl who was under the care of the state of Florida. She was missing in the state system for nearly a year and a half before anyone ever noticed. Rilya still hasn't been found. Regrettably, Rilya's case is just one of many examples of kids getting lost in our child welfare system. As caring adults, we must prevent future tragedies of this kind.

Volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) are everyday citizens that have the courage to stand up for abused and neglected children. They don't have to be a social worker or lawyer. They are people from all walks of life who help assure that child protection agencies and the courts properly perform their responsibilities to the children. The goal is a safe, permanent home for each child. Their work makes them everyday heroes.

The task for volunteers is also manageable. The required commitment is thirty hours of training and about 10 hours of casework each month – nothing compared to the satisfaction of having made a powerful difference for a child and for generations to come.

But today there are more than half a million other children – more than 200,000 of them African-American – and there are too few volunteer advocates to watch out for them.

How much time and money would it take to provide a volunteer for each of them? The more important question is the cost of inaction.

If you're interested in getting involved to help serve the best interests of these vulnerable children, visit www.nationalcasa.org and look up a program near you, or call 1-888-805-8457 for more information on becoming a CASA volunteer.

But before you do, ask yourself: What is the true value of a child's life? In these cases, it really does take a village to raise a child. Are you ready to get involved now? A child is waiting for your answer.

(*Your full name*) is the (*title*) of the (*full name of program*) and can be reached at *XXX/XXX-XXXX*.

Sample Hispanic Op-ed Article

Editorial Available for Publication

Victims without a voice.
By (*Your Full Name*)

Every year, over 500,000 children in the United States are thrust into the judicial court system through no fault of their own. Some are victims of violence, psychological or sexual abuse, and others have been neglected or abandoned by their own parents. Most of these children are frightened and confused. Unfortunately, a disproportionate number of these children are Hispanic.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers are everyday citizens that have the courage to stand up for these abused and neglected children. They don't have to be a social worker or lawyer. They are people from all walks of life who help assure that child protection agencies and the courts properly perform their responsibilities to the children. The goal of the CASA volunteer is to help find a safe, permanent home for each child. Their work makes them everyday heroes. Having a CASA volunteer whom the child can culturally identify with and speak the same language encourages them to freely communicate their needs, ultimately resulting in the successful placement of the child.

The task for volunteers is also manageable. The required commitment is thirty hours of training and about 10 hours of casework each month – nothing compared to the satisfaction of having made a powerful difference for a child and for generations to come.

Currently there are only 2,800 Hispanic volunteers in 975 CASA programs nationwide to help place approximately 80,000 Hispanic children in homes.

As Hispanics, we need to start to care for Hispanic children beyond our immediate family and neighbors. It is our business to ensure that Hispanic children who have had to be removed from their homes for one reason or another, find safe and loving homes. A few hours a month can make a huge difference in the life of a child.

If you're interested in getting involved to help serve the best interests of these victims without a voice, a Spanish-language website is available. Visit www.nationalcasa.org or call 1-888-805-9127 for assistance in English or Spanish.

Now more than ever, we need your help. Are you ready to get involved now? A child is waiting for your answer.

(*Your full name*) is the (*title*) of the (*full name of program*) and can be reached at *XXX/XXX-XXXX*.

Sample Speech for National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month

(DO NOT READ) The following is an example of a speech that addresses National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness month. The speech assumes the speaker has already been introduced.

Spring is a time of hope and new beginnings. But for the nearly one million children abused and neglected every year in this country, their worlds remain dark and full of fear. Imagine a little four-year-old boy whose mother has left him. He has no home, no comfort, nothing to call his own. This little boy is then thrust into the court system, waiting for strangers to determine his fate. And then imagine someone in the system describing this boy as hopeless. Just think of that – FOUR-YEARS-OLD and no future.

PAUSE

Fortunately for this little boy, a CASA (GAL) volunteer was appointed as his advocate. This volunteer, like all CASA volunteers, holds dearly the belief that there are no hopeless children, only children who have yet to experience hope. In the case of this little boy, the CASA (GAL) volunteer stuck with him throughout the court proceedings. As a result, this child found a safe home with nurturing parents who will soon adopt him. This is a story of a child's life literally being saved. And this is only one example of how CASA (GAL) volunteers are giving thousands of abused and neglected children a second chance. [This beginning story should be replaced with a specific local story if available (without releasing confidential information). Or, contact Jim Clune at National CASA to obtain stories already approved for public release.]

April is National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness month. Some might say this is an odd idea; selecting the first full month of spring to represent something as tragic as child abuse and neglect. But when you think about it, April is a perfect choice. Spring is a time of new beginnings. And creating new beginnings for abused children -- changing children's lives -- is why we are here today.

Too many children in [CITY/COUNTY/STATE] live in fear: Fear of what their father or mother might do to them. The fear of being totally alone and neglected. And the fear they will never have a home they can call their own.

PAUSE

Every day, CASA (GAL) volunteers throughout [CITY/COUNTY/STATE] help children replace their world of fear with one of hope. Our volunteers are everyday people just like you. They are teachers, retirees, stockbrokers, construction workers and stay-at-home moms. The only special background or equipment you need is the heart to care for some of the most vulnerable children in our community, and the determination to do something about it.

CASA (GAL) volunteers are everyday heroes as well. They have the power to change children's lives. Last year, [TOTAL NUMBER] CASA (GAL) volunteers here in [CITY/COUNTY/STATE] helped [TOTAL NUMBER] children find safe, permanent homes and the opportunity for better lives. But there are still many children in [CITY/COUNTY/STATE] in need of a CASA (GAL) volunteer.

As we approach this season of new beginnings, think about the story I just shared with you. A four-year-old child labeled hopeless without being given a chance.

Through the work of a single caring individual, this child has a chance for a positive future. So when you think to yourself, "What can one person do?" In the case of an abused and neglected child, you can do more than you'll ever know.

If you've ever wanted to make a difference in a child's life, now is the time. A child is waiting and you have the power to help. Please consider becoming a CASA (GAL) volunteer and bring hope back into a child's life.

Communications Manual Feedback Questionnaire

We encourage feedback to identify problems, shortcomings, strengths and weaknesses of the 2004 edition of the Communications Manual. Please take a moment to complete this short questionnaire. Your feedback helps ensure the usefulness of publications produced by the National CASA Association.

1. Type of Program Using the 2004 Communications Manual (check one):

___ State CASA/GAL Organization

___ Local CASA Program

___ Local GAL Programs

2. Position/Title of individuals using this guidebook (check all that apply):

___ Executive Director or Assistant Director

___ Volunteer Coordinator or Volunteer Support Personnel

___ Public Relations or Event Planning Professional

___ Board Member

___ Program Staff (not listed above)

3. How often does your program use this guide/manual?

___ Weekly

___ Monthly

___ Less than Monthly

4. What chapters, resources or sections were the most valuable?

5. List any suggestions for improving this publication:

6. Describe any problems or difficulties experienced while using this guidebook.

7. List any suggestions for additional topics or material to include in future editions.

8. How long have you worked for CASA or GAL?

Please forward completed questionnaire to:

National CASA Association
Attn: Publications
100 W. Harrison Street
North Tower, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98119

or Fax (206) 270-0078