



# Abused and Neglected Children Need Congressional Support

## What is Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children?

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children is a network of 951 community-based programs that recruit, train and support citizen-volunteers to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in courtrooms and communities across the country. Volunteer citizen advocates—empowered directly by the courts and trained by local CASA programs—offer judges the critical information they need to ensure that children’s rights and needs are addressed while they are in foster care and until they are placed in loving permanent homes.

## Why do Abuse and Neglect Courts Depend on CASA Volunteers?

Every day in the United States, 1,900 children are victims of abuse or neglect. More than 600,000 children experience foster care annually. Along with state and local child welfare agencies, courts play a critical role in keeping maltreated children safe and finding permanent families. In an underfunded and overburdened child welfare system, judges appoint volunteers to advocate for individual children and provide them with key insights to make the best possible decisions. Over the past 38 years, Courts have supported the CASA movement’s growth of 951 programs in 49 states. Last year alone, 75,000 highly-trained volunteers helped more than 238,000 children in the foster care system.

## What is the National CASA Association?

In partnership with its state and local members, the National CASA Association offers critical leadership and support to provide quality advocacy and lead the continued growth of the CASA network, including assistance with:

### TRAINING & CURRICULUM:

National CASA creates new, research-based training opportunities, such as our new e-learning series on educational advocacy and core volunteer training curriculum.

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE &

**QUALITY ASSURANCE:** We help programs effectively serve more children with our framework for quality program management.

### VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT &

**PUBLIC AWARENESS:** National CASA coordinates national campaigns to help recruit CASA volunteers and raise awareness about child abuse and neglect.

### RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT &

**GRANTS:** National CASA provides pass-through funding to local and state CASA programs through federal and private sources.

## Funding History

FY 2002 – 2008	\$12 million
FY 2009 & 2010	\$15 million
FY 2011	\$12.4 million
FY 2012	\$4.5 million
FY 2013 (sequestration)	\$6 million
FY 2014	\$6 million
FY 2015	\$6 million
<b>Authorized Level</b> (Violence Against Women Act of 2013 P.L. 113-4; originally authorized under the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990)	<b>\$12 million</b>
<b>FY 2016 Request</b>	<b>\$12 million</b>

*“The judicial community cannot do this job alone. We need the support of the community. CASA volunteers are the most effective community representatives that our country has come up with yet.”*

– Judge Leonard Edwards (ret.)

## Why are CASA programs a wise federal investment for abused and neglected children?

### **CASA USES EFFECTIVE EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES:**

Independent studies have established that a child with a CASA volunteer is more likely to find a safe and permanent home; more likely to be adopted; half as likely to re-enter foster care; and substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care than children without a CASA volunteer.

### **CASA VOLUNTEERS ARE A CARING AND CONSISTENT ADULT PRESENCE FOR ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN:**

For many abused and neglected children facing multiple challenges, a CASA volunteer may be the one constant adult presence in their lives. Volunteers stay with each case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home.

### **CASA SAVES THE GOVERNMENT MONEY AND HELPS COURTS FUNCTION MORE EFFICIENTLY:**

CASA is an exemplary public private partnership that demonstrates a 75 to 1 return on investment. Federal funding for a single grant-funded staff position supports 30 trained volunteers advocating for 75 children per year. In addition, CASA volunteers help judges and attorneys leverage limited funding in overburdened court systems.

**CASA PROGRAMS INCREASE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE COURT SYSTEM:** To keep children safe and ensure their voices are heard, concerned citizens must partner with government systems. CASA programs promote civic engagement in the courts and increase public transparency and accountability.



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

– Melissa, Foster Care Alumni



## How can Members of Congress support CASA programs?

CASA programs are supported by four funding sources: private foundations, corporations, individual donors and federal/state funding. The Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provides critical resources for the National CASA Association and its exemplary public-private partnerships.

We request that Congress fund the Department of Justice’s Court Appointed Special Advocate program at the authorized level (VAWA 2013) of **\$12 million in FY 2016**.