



Kansas CASA Association

The Kansas CASA Association is a network of 23 community-based programs that recruit, train and support citizen-volunteers to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in courtrooms. The Kansas CASA Association (KCA) was incorporated in 1991 to promote and support the development, growth and continuation of local CASA programs to increase the number of trained volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children in the Kansas court system.

Kansas CASA provides an array of services to local programs. Growth of the Association has benefited local programs in many ways including:

Technical Assistance: We offer extensive technical assistance to help programs serve more children more effectively and provide guidance and tools to assist with quality program management.

Networking/Community: Kansas CASA coordinates meetings of local programs six times a year in order to provide time for programs to share best practices and learn from each other. In addition, a listserv is provided to enable programs to easily reach out to one another for support and problem-solving between in-person meetings. Kansas CASA collaborates on a statewide level, providing representation among agencies serving children and working on prevention, intervention, and services to children and families.

Training: Kansas CASA provides annual training for CASA directors as well as training specific to local program boards.

Volunteer Recruitment and Public Awareness: We coordinate recruitment efforts through print materials, social media, a statewide website, and other ways to help recruit CASA volunteers and raise awareness about child abuse. We also work on corporate partnerships to assist with public awareness. Kansas CASA has benefitted from hiring an additional full-time staff person to focus on statewide volunteer recruitment.

Data Collection: We provide local programs with the most current upgraded version of CASA Manager software, a volunteer and case management system, to better track program outcomes and statistics pertaining to the children we serve.

Resource Development and Grants: Kansas CASA provides pass-through funding to local CASA programs through two statewide grants - Kansas Bar Association's IOLTA and the Department for Children and Families' Children Justice Act funds.



The CASA Concept

The CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) concept is based on the belief that every child has the right to a safe, permanent home. CASA volunteers serve as advocates for abused and/or neglected children in the court system. Volunteers complete independent, objective investigations and monitor cases until a safe, permanent home is found. CASA volunteers prepare reports to the court, to share information gathered with the judge as well as make recommendations regarding the case based on their observations and time spent with the child.

CASA volunteers speak exclusively for the child's best interests. By handling only one or two cases at a time (compared to a social agency caseworker's average load of 30-40), the CASA volunteer has the time to explore thoroughly the history of each assigned case. The volunteer talks with the child, parents, family members, neighbors, school officials, doctors and others involved in the child's life that may have facts about the case. The volunteer reviews all records and documents pertaining to the child, including court records, social agency records, medical or mental health records, and others. He or she then submits a formal report to the court, with recommendations: Would the child and family benefit from services which would assist the family and enable the child to safely go home? Should the child stay with his or her parents, be placed in foster care, or be freed for permanent adoption? If the court leaves the child in temporary care, the CASA volunteer provides continuity by staying on the case until it is permanently resolved.

Children served by CASA volunteers are victims of abuse and trauma. **Many times, these children suffer from the lack of proper nutrition, lack of medical care, and physical injuries. Some are victims of violence, psychological torment, or sexual abuse.** These frightened and confused children often become victims of an overburdened child welfare system, which is a complex legal network of lawyers, social workers, and judges who frequently are too overburdened to give thorough, detailed attention to each child who comes before them.

CASA volunteers are asked to commit to a minimum of 1 year to a CASA program; however, most cases can remain open 2 – 3 years or more. In Kansas, the role of the volunteer is defined by Supreme Court Rule 110. The three main responsibilities are to personally investigate, advocate for the best interest of the child, and assist the Court in obtaining a safe, permanent placement for the child. Volunteers are expected to maintain at minimum monthly contact with their assigned child, as well as attend court hearings, meet with various professionals, and submit court reports. Programs stress the importance of consistent contact between the CASA volunteer and their assigned child, as we believe the volunteer can advocate for the child effectively only if they truly know the child and their needs. For this reason, most volunteers see their child weekly in order to build and maintain a good rapport.



Did You Know?

- CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate.
- A judge in Seattle, Washington created the CASA concept in 1977.
- CASA is a nationwide organization, with nearly 1,000 programs across the U.S.
- In 2016, CASA programs in Kansas served 1,994 CINC children with 915 volunteers.
- There are twenty-three CASA programs serving 71 counties in Kansas.
- The first CASA program in Kansas started in 1981 in Wichita.
- In 1986, the Kansas Supreme Court created program standards and guidelines for all CASA programs to follow.
- All programs in Kansas must meet state standards and guidelines to be a certified CASA program in this state. Each year, the Office of Judicial Administration conducts the certification process including an on-site visit.
- Every four years all programs must participate and complete a quality assurance process through the National CASA Association and must meet specific standards.
- In order to become a CASA volunteer, a person must pass local, state and national background checks.
- Most CASA volunteers work full-time jobs
- Anyone can be a CASA volunteer. No special education is required.
- Every day in this country, 1,900 children become victims of abuse and neglect and four of them will die.
- A child with a CASA volunteer is more likely to find a safe, permanent home.
- Children with CASA volunteers spend less time in foster care.
- Children with a CASA volunteer is less likely to be bounced from home to home.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA)

THE PROBLEM: AN OVERWHELMED SYSTEM



6,900
children in the custody of the Kansas Department for Children and Families.



Shortage of foster homes



Staff Turnover

THE SOLUTION: CITIZEN VOLUNTEERS

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



1 staff person



Supports
30
Volunteers



Serving
60
children

THE RESULTS: BRIGHTER FUTURES



CASA Programs Change Lives

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



A child with a CASA volunteer is less likely to re-enter the foster care system.



And, they are more likely to succeed in school.

THE VISION: SERVING EVERY CHILD

In 2016,

915

CASA Volunteers helped change children's lives everyday



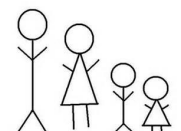
1,994

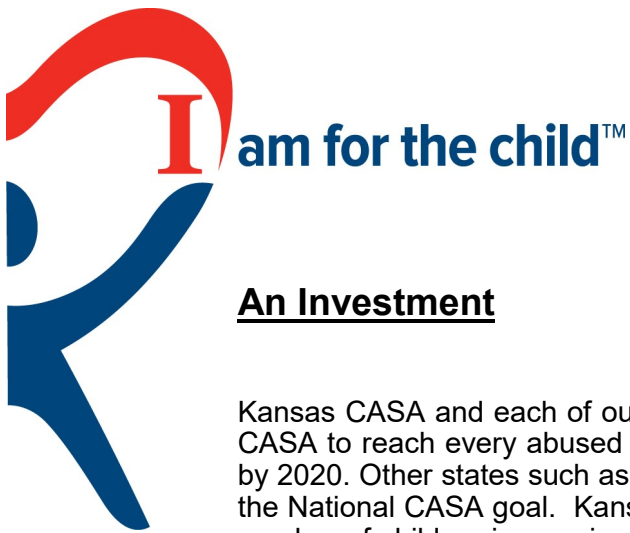
Abused and neglected children had a CASA volunteer speak up for their best interest.

Nearly

5,000

children are waiting for a volunteer





An Investment

Kansas CASA and each of our local programs embrace the goal established by National CASA to reach every abused and neglected child and provide them with a voice in court by 2020. Other states such as Georgia, Florida and New Hampshire are on track to reach the National CASA goal. Kansas has a long way to go. According to national trends, the number of children in care is going down. However, in Kansas, the number of children in state custody has risen to record levels, correlating with a rising number of child abuse and neglect complaints.

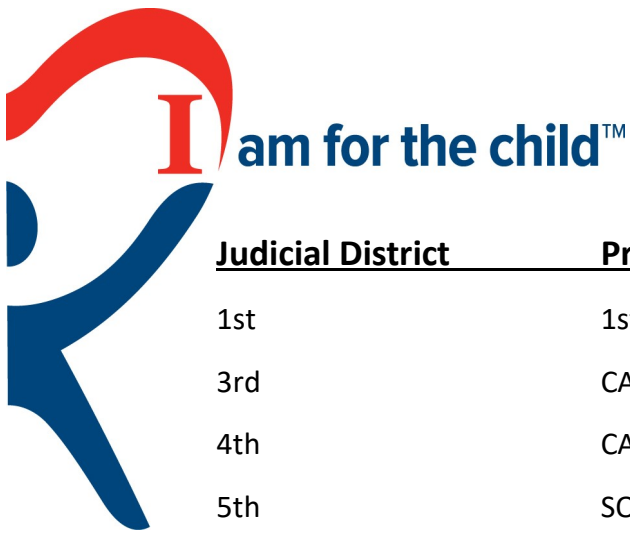
Our ability to advocate for every child is dependent on our capacity to increase the number of trained volunteers in our state. National CASA standards only allows a full-time staff person to supervise 30 volunteers. Some of our programs are at capacity and can only serve more children if they have additional staff to recruit, train and supervise CASA volunteers. Therefore, programs must focus on building capacity to serve more children.

Kansas CASA is seeking support from organizations and foundations to invest in our efforts to build program capacity to serve more children. Now more than ever, local programs need additional support and resources to manage their programs and to maintain staff to recruit, train and supervise volunteers. This is your opportunity to make a stronger impact by supporting our goal to serve every child.

Building Capacity

NCASA is looking to State Associations to support local programs. It is critical for every state to build the capacity to support local programs.

1. Recruit more volunteers — using social media, statewide website, and statewide recruitment efforts.
2. Provide training to local staff and boards to build program capacity.
3. Build staff capacity to support more volunteers.
.....All to increase the number of children we serve.
4. Quality Assurance - Program Improvement



Judicial District	Program Name	Location
1st	1st Judicial District CASA	Leavenworth
3rd	CASA of Shawnee County	Topeka
4th	CASA of the 4th Judicial District	Ottawa
5th	SOS CASA of the Flint Hills	Emporia
6th	Bourbon County CASA	Ft. Scott
7th	Douglas County CASA	Lawrence
8th	CASA of the 8th Judicial District	Junction City
9th	CASA: A Voice for Children	Newton
10th & 29th	CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties	Mission
12th	North Central Kansas CASA	Concordia
13th	Tri-County CASA	El Dorado
16th	CASA - Children Worth Saving	Dodge City
17th	CASA of the 17th Judicial District	Osborne
18th	CASA of Sedgwick County	Wichita
19th	CASA of Cowley County	Winfield
20th	Central Kansas CASA	Great Bend
21st & 2nd	Sunflower CASA Project	Manhattan
23rd	CASA of the High Plains	Hays
25th	Spirit of the Plains CASA	Garden City
27th	Visions of Hope	Hutchinson
28th	Ottawa & Saline County CASA	Salina
30th	CASA: Children's Advocates	Wellington
31st	CASA of the 31st Judicial District	Iola