



Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

Children bear the brunt of hard economic times, through added stress to already vulnerable families and through increased domestic violence, substance abuse and resulting incarcerations. When the state decides to take custody of a child, it is obligated to provide proven, cost-effective practices to ensure that each child is safe and that their needs are met.

CASA is the mechanism for communities to care for their children with trained, supervised citizen volunteers. On behalf of the child's best interests, CASAs are catalysts for the implementation of best practices in the child welfare and court systems.

CASA programs are state mandated to appoint a CASA to every child in a dependency case. Program budgets are dedicated to providing staff to train and supervise volunteers, manage the legal paperwork and work with community-based boards. Each supervisor mobilizes 30 volunteers who provide, on average, 10 to 12 hours each month. CASA has become a public and private partnership and CASA programs, together statewide, leverage \$4.50 for each \$1 of state general funds.



Investment in CASA Is an Investment in:

- Providing judges with the information they need to make critical decisions about each child
- Increasing the accountability of the child-welfare and court systems
- Reducing the number of children in long-term foster care
- Increasing educational advocacy and student achievement
- Connecting children with family and relatives
- Aligning children and families with appropriate services
- Ensuring that children are only in state custody once: Children with a CASA are 50 percent less likely to re-enter child welfare and also less likely to be arrested or enter the juvenile or adult correctional systems
- Providing children with hope and a plan for their future

The Numbers

The number of CASAs in Oregon tops 1,500. In 2007, CASA served 4,238 children, 35 percent of the 12,045 abused and neglected children in family foster care statewide; there were 15,060 children in all foster care arrangements.

Oregon's CASA programs are efficient. The median annual cost per volunteer is \$2,677 compared with the National CASA median of \$2,920. Oregon's median annual cost per child is \$956; the National CASA median is \$950.

In 2007, volunteer advocates reported 189,000 case hours, worth \$9.45 million, using the nationally reported average compensation for guardian ad litem services of \$50 per hour. Guardian ad litem or GAL is the legal equivalent of a CASA in Oregon. Due to under-reporting we believe the real figure to be 3 times higher.

CASA: A Public-Private Partnership

CASA is a public and private partnership, with local communities donating the primary private support (56 percent of the total revenue generated in 2007) and the State carrying the primary public support (22 percent of the total revenue generated in 2007.)

In the 2007-09 biennium, six major Oregon foundations partnered with the State to bring more statewide coordinated support to build the capacity of CASA programs. These foundations have contributed \$1.4 million and the State increased general state funds designated for CASA by \$1 million.

The six foundations are: Oregon Community Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, The Collins Foundation, The Ford Family Foundation, Juan Young Trust West, and Spirit Mountain Community Fund.

The estimated cost of full implementation of CASA -- a CASA for every eligible child -- is \$24 million per biennium. CASA's strategic plan sets the long-range goal for State support at \$10 million per biennium, or 40 percent of the total cost, and recommends an incremental growth in State funding (see table below).

“When I was 7, a family got to know me and wanted to adopt me, but it had already been decided that I was ‘unadoptable’ due to my acting out and residential placements. My CASA worked and worked to get the court to try to find out if maybe I could be ‘adoptable,’ and when I was, my family took me home to be theirs forever.”

-- 14-year-old boy, now adopted

Strategic Plan Recommended State Funding for Full Implementation of CASA

<u>Biennium</u>	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>State's Share</u>
2003-05		\$1,462,955	21% of total revenue
2005-07		\$1,497,521	19% of total revenue
2007-09	add 1.86M	\$3,362,074	30% of total projected
2009-11	add 2.52M	\$5,883,629	35% of total projected
2011-13	add 3.83M	\$9,712,658	40% of total projected

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