

CASA Fund Year-End Report July 31, 2018

As required by LB463, Nebraska CASA issues this report to the Supreme Court, State Court Administrator, Clerk of the Legislature, and the Governor regarding the Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Fund. The CASA Fund was established by the 2011 Nebraska Legislature to recruit and train CASA volunteers, to develop new CASA programs or expand current CASA programs into areas not currently served and to create new and innovative programming for CASA.

Twenty-one local CASA programs in 47 Nebraska counties recruit, screen, train and supervise volunteers who are appointed by Judges to speak in court for the safety and well-being of children who have been abused or neglected. The Nebraska CASA Association partners with those local CASA programs, providing leadership, quality assurance, training, technical assistance and funding. The information in this report pertains to fiscal year July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018.

The CASA Fund continues to move toward its goal toward assisting the network of CASA programs in Nebraska to provide a CASA volunteer for every child who needs one. Nebraska State Statutes and the National CASA Standards for Local CASA Programs require a minimum of 30 hours of pre-service training before a volunteer is assigned to a case. In addition, State Statutes require a minimum of 10, and National CASA Standards 12, annual hours of continuing education for volunteers.

There were more than 1,406 contacts made to recruit new volunteer advocates by local programs through presentations and booths at community events. There were 341 new volunteers who were trained and sworn in as CASA volunteers. 822 volunteers participated in new volunteer and/or continuing education classes.

For the fifth fiscal year (FY), there is a marked increase in the number of active volunteer advocates. A 95% growth in 6 years:

- 421 volunteers in FY 2011/12
- 480 volunteers in FY 12/13
- 663 volunteers for FY 13/14
- 726 volunteers for FY 14/15
- 770 volunteers for FY 15/16

- 815 volunteers for 2016/17
- 820 volunteers for 2017/18

Not all volunteers who are recruited are able to complete the training and/or be assigned cases. Prospective volunteers discontinue initial training for any number of reasons, including schedule changes, moving from the area or the discovery that this is not the appropriate volunteer match. In addition, local CASA programs use this 30 hours of training as part of the screening process to ensure volunteers are appropriate for the job of serving as an advocate for abused and neglected children. Of the more than 350 volunteers recruited during the year, 341 completed initial training and were assigned to cases.

The cost for training the 341 new volunteers and continuing education for 820 active volunteers in 2017-18 was \$1004 per volunteer.

Recruitment is vital to local CASA programs. New volunteers need to be recruited to serve additional cases and to replace retiring or redirected volunteers. Volunteers are asked to serve for at least one year after completing training and to remain with a child until her or his court case is closed. Almost all volunteers fulfill both of those obligations and more. This is an intense volunteer obligation.

In this fiscal year, 176 volunteers left the program in Nebraska. The number of volunteers leaving is increasing each year. A focus on retention has been in place. This year a pilot project was launched with three local CASA programs. Heartland, Lancaster and Sarpy CASA staff are being trained in Reflective Practice. The goal of the program is to increase communication and the effectiveness of communication with staff and volunteers to increase retention rates. Results will be available next year.

New and Expanding Programs

Southeast Nebraska CASA - This program, formerly known as Seward County CASA, has now expanded into Jefferson, Saline, Gage, Saunders, and Thayer Counties. Each County has committed to providing funding and support to the program. Volunteers have been recruited, screened and trained in each county. Due to challenges of traveling the distance of these three counties, an additional staff member was hired this year. Gage County now has a part-time volunteer coordinator dedicated to recruiting and supporting volunteers.

Prairie Plains CASA - In addition to Red Willow, Furnas and Hitchcock this program is now serving Frontier, Hayes, Dundee, and Chase Counties.

PlainsWest formerly Cheyenne County CASA - This program expanded into Morrill and Deuel Counties last year and changed its name this year to PlainsWest Casa. However, the challenges experienced with Cheyenne County’s largest employer’s corporate sale and downsizing is affecting the ability of local community members to commit to CASA’s long-term volunteer job.

SENCA CASA formerly Otoe County CASA – Southeast Nebraska Community Action became the home of our Otoe County CASA program in 2016. This partnership was created to determine if non-profit programs such as a community action agency could serve as a home for programs in counties that have few children in care. Last year SENCA CASA expanded into Nemaha County.

CASA served 47 courts during the year. Local CASA programs served the county courts in the following counties:

Adams	Furnas	Madison
Arthur	Gage	Merrick
Banner	Garden	Nemaha
Buffalo	Gosper	Nuckolls
Cass	Hall	Otoe
Chase	Hamilton	Perkins
Cheyenne	Harlan	Phelps Platte
Clay	Hayes	Red Willow
Colfax	Hitchcock	Saline
Dawson	Howard	Scotts Bluff
Deuel	Jefferson	Seward
Dodge	Kearney	Thayer
Dundy	Keith	Webster
Fillmore	Kimball	York
Frontier	Lincoln	

Local CASA programs also serve the separate juvenile courts in the following counties:

Douglas Lancaster Sarpy

1,952 children were served by CASA volunteers during the fiscal year. Nebraska CASA programs have increased the number of abused and neglected children served by 57% since the 2011/12 Fiscal Year.

New and Innovative Programming

Sarpy County, CASA for Douglas and Lancaster County programs continue to use the Peer Coordinator Model. This model trains experienced volunteers to supervise up to 11 new volunteers. Paid staff then supervise the Peer Coordinators. Not utilizing the Peer Coordinator model requires that one staff supervise up to 30 volunteers if there are no other assigned job duties. This is a requirement of National CASA's Standards.

Nebraska CASA Association has entered into a contract with the Foster Care Review Office (FCRO) to review outcomes of CASA kids. The program will review the outcome differences for children with and without a CASA volunteer.

A brief overview of some successes during fiscal year 2017-2018

Nebraska CASA focuses on expansion of programs in current counties serving many children in foster care. Douglas and Sarpy Counties have nearly one-half of all foster care children served in their Juvenile Court. A successful recruitment campaign continues in this geographic area. Since the CASA Fund began in 2011-12, these programs have grown the infrastructure to support additional volunteers serving more abused and neglected children.

As we work toward expansion into unserved counties, Douglas, Sarpy, and Lancaster Counties are working diligently to serve all of the children in these large juvenile courts. Fifteen classes of new volunteers graduated in these three programs this year.

Prairie Plans CASA provides a visitation center for families involved in the system. The center includes a kitchen, living and sleeping area for families to utilize to meet supervised court visitation requirements.

Nebraska CASA Association provided four pre-service volunteer facilitator trainings in western and central Nebraska for CASA staff. The National CASA Association released a new 30 hour curriculum for new volunteers. Programs who use this curriculum had their training staff attend the facilitator training.

The Nebraska CASA Association State Conference was attended by 84 CASA Volunteers and staff from 20 local programs. Drug Investigator Brad Butler, Charlotte Endorf, Deb VanDyke-Ries, and Jill Hamilton of the Kim Foundation provided training on illicit drug use, society’s history of orphan treatment, court improvement activities, and suicide prevention.

A) FINANCIAL REPORTS: A narrative report detailing the expenditures of your CASA Fund Recruitment and Retention and (if applicable) New or Expansion Grant.

1. Program, award amount and target program area

Program Name	Recruitment & Training	New & Expanding	Innovative	Total
CASA Connection	\$7,569.00			\$7,569.00
CASA For Douglas County	\$40,455.00			\$40,455.00
CASA for Lancaster County	\$22,311.00			\$22,311.00
CASA for York County	\$6,435.00			\$6,435.00
CASA of Northeast Nebraska	\$6,275.00			\$6,275.00
CASA of Scotts Bluff County	\$8,704.00			\$8,704.00
CASA of South Central NE	\$11,916.00	\$4,500.00		\$16,416.00
Cass County CASA	\$7,191.00			\$7,191.00
Plains West CASA	\$4,280.80	\$4,595.48		\$8,876.28
Dawson/Gosper Co	\$10,030.00			\$10,030.00
Fillmore County CASA	\$4,734.00			\$4,734.00
Heartland CASA	\$6,434.00			\$6,434.00
Kearney/Buffalo	\$13,806.00			\$13,806.00
Keith/Perkins Co	\$6,435.18			\$6,435.18
Lincoln County CASA	\$7,758.00			\$7,758.00
Otoe County CASA	\$5,112.00	\$4,600.00		\$9,712.00
Phelps/Harlan Co	\$7,380.00			\$7,380.00
Prairie Plains CASA	\$6,811.40	\$4,600.00		\$11,411.40
Sarpy County CASA	\$29,115.00			\$29,115.00
Southeast Ne	\$7,800.00	\$4,600.00		\$12,400.00
Local Program Training, technical assistance costs for travel and materials	\$9,960.79			\$9,960.79
Travel for state association to train local program staff & volunteers	\$2,313.70			\$2,313.70
Statewide volunteer recruitment	\$349			\$349.00
Casa Manager License for Heartland CASA			\$253	\$253.00
Casa Manager State Subscription			\$13,800	\$13,800.00
Casa Connect Annual License			\$899	\$899.00

Basecamp			\$178	\$178.00
Nebraska CASA Salary. Time for training local program staff & volunteer training & recruitment	26225.43	9564.06	\$12,330	\$48,119.03
National CASA Membership Dues	\$275			\$275.00
Evaluation Project	\$5000			\$5000.00
TOTAL	\$259,676.30	\$32,459.54	\$27,459.54	\$324,595.38

B) STORIES: Please share at least one story of how a volunteer has affected the life of a child served by CASA.

One advocate began working with two high school aged females as their CASA volunteer. In the beginning of the case, both girls were failing all of their classes, defiant and wanted to live with their mother. Their mother’s boyfriends and current husband had sexually abused both girls and their siblings. Their mother would take them to meet older men. She was not able to protect them from the abuse they were experiencing. The CASA assigned to the case taught these sisters to cook simple meals, do homework, and developed a positive relationship with the girls. This was their first experience with a positive adult role model. One of the girls will be graduating next year. The other has graduated and received a scholarship to attend their local community college. Without their CASA being involved, it is hard to say where these two girls would be right now.



“Sally” came to the attention of the courts shortly after her mother passed away and was living with her deceased mother’s boyfriend. He was sexually abusing Sally. Sally was removed from the home and put into foster care. That foster care placement took guardianship over Sally. A year later that guardianship was disrupted due to self-harm behaviors by Sally and once again Sally was placed back into foster care. This placement was over 100 miles away from where Sally was raised. Sally and her CASA spent numerous hours on the phone talking and texting and Sally’s CASA traveled to visit Sally on the weekends. Sally’s CASA knew how important it was to be consistent for Sally. Sally’s CASA knew that one of her foster placements was not in Sally’s best interest after Sally experienced several setbacks. Sally felt unheard and misunderstood. So Sally’s CASA contacted the GAL on the case and expressed these concerns. Sally was moved shortly after. If it wasn’t for Sally’s CASA Volunteer, Sally may have always felt unheard. Sally thrived in her new foster home and went on to graduate high school and is attending college. Sally finally had someone beside her that knew she could trust, would listen to her and that person was Sally’s CASA Volunteer.