CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF ARIZONA

Dear CASA Supporter,

Thank you for your interest in the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program of Arizona. You have just inquired about an advocacy program that dramatically changes the lives of abused and neglected children unlike any other.

CASA volunteers act as the "eyes and ears" of the court, but more importantly they provide a voice for traumatized children who cannot speak for themselves during a time of great vulnerability and fear.

CASA of Arizona is an affiliate member of the National Court Appointed Special Advocates Association (www.CASAforChildren.org). The CASA movement (over 1,000 programs nationwide) strives to ensure that society is fulfilling its most fundamental obligation to children in need -- to fight for and protect a child's right to be safe, to be treated with dignity and respect, and to learn and grow in the security of a loving home.

Enclosed you will find our CASA of Arizona brochure, child abuse statistics and facts, FAQs, requirements to become a CASA volunteer, and contact information for all fifteen county CASA programs in Arizona. Please visit our website at www.CASAofArizona.org to learn more about the history of CASA, and to read about CASA volunteers who have tirelessly advocated for abused children in Arizona for over 25 years.

For more information on how to become an advocate, visit your local county CASA program's website for information on the application process specific to that county.

Once again, thank you for your interest in CASA of Arizona. We hope that you will join us in our efforts to advocate on behalf of Arizona's most vulnerable children.

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www.CASAofArizona.org

Find us on social media!

FAQs

CASA of Arizona

What is a CASA Volunteer?

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate. CASA volunteers are everyday citizens appointed by a judge to speak up for abused and neglected children to ensure they have a safe and permanent home.

Is Training Provided to be a CASA Volunteer?

All advocates complete 30 hours of training - 15 hours of training with the CASA of Arizona Advocacy Academy and 15 hours of training with the local CASA county program. During Advocacy Academy, advocates are educated about child welfare issues from experts in the field including child maltreatment, permanency planning, negotiation and interviewing, case assessment, and court report writing. Ongoing in-service training and support are provided in every county program, including opportunities for online training.

What Kind of Background or Experience is Required?

No specific educational background, profession, or experience is required. CASA volunteers are dedicated individuals of high moral character who have a strong desire to advocate for abused and neglected children. Interested individuals must complete an application, provide recommendations, be interviewed, be fingerprinted and go through a background check.

How Much Time Does Being a CASA Volunteer Require?

Each case is unique. More time must be spent in the beginning, researching files and court documents and conducting interviews. CASA volunteers schedule their own time, with the exception of required attendance at court hearings and team meetings. Once familiar with the case and the parties involved, a CASA volunteer spends an average of 15-20 hours a month. Many CASA volunteers balance full-time or part-time employment with their CASA duties.

How Long Does a CASA Volunteer Remain on a Case?

The advocate continues with the case until it is permanently resolved. We ask that advocates commit to volunteering for at least a two year period. Often children are moved from one foster care home to another, and there can be a frequent change of case managers, judges, and hearing officers. One of the primary benefits of an advocate is to be the one consistent person who is there for the child throughout the entire process.

How is a CASA Volunteer Different from an Attorney or Case Manager?

Once appointed, the CASA volunteer becomes part of the judicial proceedings working alongside attorneys and case managers as an appointed officer of the court. Unlike attorneys and social workers, however, the CASA Volunteer speaks exclusively for the child's best interest.

How is CASA of Arizona Funded?

In Arizona, the CASA program receives 30 percent of unclaimed state lottery prize money pursuant to A.R.S. §§ 5-518 and 8-524. Funds are appropriated annually by the Arizona State Legislature. The Arizona Supreme Court's CASA of Arizona Office administers fifteen county CASA programs which are supervised and operated locally by Arizona's Superior Courts.

How Does a Child in Foster Care Get a CASA Volunteer?

Due to a shortage of CASA volunteers, there are thousands of children in foster care who are still waiting for a CASA volunteer. The Court or any person or agency having knowledge of the facts of a dependency case can contact the local CASA program to request an advocate. Appointment is made by the local County CASA program.

BE THE VOICE
FOR AN ABUSED CHILD

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Abuse and Neglect Stats and Facts

CASA of Arizona

Child Abuse In Arizona

Source: DCS Semi-Annual Child Welfare Report, Reporting Period April 2015- September 2015

- During the reporting period, the statewide Child Abuse Hotline received ***26,455 calls*** that met the statutory criteria for a report.
- The number of children in out-of-home care increased from ***17,592 in the prior reporting period to 18,657***.
- The majority of children in out-of-home care have a ***case plan goal of family reunification*** (54.9%).
- In the reporting period, ***3,102*** children exited DES custody due to family reunification, and ***1,576*** children exited DES custody due to adoption.
- The majority of children in out-of-home care are from ***ages 1 to 5 years*** (33.4%).
- The ***ethnic majority*** of children in out-of-home care are Hispanic (35.2%) and Caucasian (35.6%).
- African American children represent ***4.8% of the state's population yet represent 15% of the out-of-home care population.***
- Children with a case plan of adoption spend an average of ***2 years and 51 days in out-of-home care.***
- A quarter (25.6%) of children in foster care have been in ***out-of-home care for 13 to 24 months.***
- The ***average number of placements*** was 2.3, and the range for the number of placements was 1 to 59.

Advocacy for Arizona's Abused and Neglected Children

Source: CASA of Arizona data as of March 2016

- CASA volunteers have made a ***significant impact in the lives of over 20,557 Arizona children*** by helping them find safe and permanent homes.
- In 2015, CASA volunteers logged over ***92,600 hours serving Arizona's abused and neglected children.***
- In 2015, CASA volunteers drove over ***647,000 miles (often on their own dime)*** to visit children, attend court hearings, meet with teachers, foster parents, social workers, and advocate relentlessly for the children they serve.
- CASA of Arizona and its programs currently have ***1,010 advocates*** that serve abused and neglected children throughout the fifteen counties in Arizona.

Better Outcomes and Cost Effectiveness

Source: 2013 National CASA Statistics Report

- More than ***90% of children with CASA volunteers*** never reenter the child welfare system, a significant difference compared to the general foster care population. This outcome also results in significant savings in child welfare expenses.
- Children with CASA volunteers, and their families, ***receive more court ordered services*** and because of the volunteer's detailed knowledge of the child's circumstances, those services are more carefully targeted and monitored.
- The total estimated ***annual direct cost of child abuse and neglect in the U.S. is over $33.3 billion***. These are costs associated with the immediate needs of abused or neglected children, and include hospitalization, mental health care, child welfare systems, and law enforcement.
- The child welfare system could not afford to provide a comparable level of advocacy through non-volunteer approaches. In 2013, CASA volunteers (nationally) contributed ***5.7 million advocacy hours, equivalent to almost $290 million in taxpayer dollars*** if compensated for their service.

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CASA Volunteer Position Description

CASA of Arizona

Summary

This Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer provides support to county juvenile court judges responsible for reviewing juvenile dependency cases. The advocate develops and maintains a trusting relationship with an assigned child, interacts with parties involved in the child's (or children's) case plan, and provides recommendations to the juvenile court about the best interests of the children. The CASA volunteer will work closely with Department of Child Safety case managers and others involved in the child's case plan to ensure the best outcome for the assigned child.

Responsibilities

- Develop and maintain a relationship with the appointed child including contact with the child on at least a monthly basis
- Participate as a member of the child's case management team
- Prepare written court reports as required
- Attend all court hearings pertaining to the appointed case and provide oral testimony to the court when requested
- Advocate for the child throughout the case to ensure that appropriate case planning and services are provided
- Maintain confidentiality regarding case information as required by law and program policy
- Communicate with caregivers about the child's behavior and relationships
- Exercise considerable independent judgment in developing community contacts
- Maintain frequent communications with assigned CASA County Coordinator and/or Peer Coordinator
- Travel to and from child's place of residence or school
- Spread the word about CASA

Requirements

- Have the ability to communicate verbally in person and using a telephone
- Agree to a background check and complete a polygraph exam with a successful outcome
- Have the ability to either operate a motor vehicle or have a reliable mode of transportation for in-state/in-county travel
- Be a legal resident of the United States
- Must be 21 years of age or older at the time of application
- Basic computer skills and access to the internet and a computer
- Complete 30 hours of pre-service training and complete 12 hours of in-service training annually
- Be sworn in as an officer of the court
- Dedicate approximately 15-20 hours a month to change a child's life

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CASA Volunteers Make a Difference

CASA Children In Their Own Words...

My name is Pamela. I was 7 years old the first time I was taken from my home. Foster homes came and went. Schools were here and there. Caseworkers drifted in and out of my life. After six years of placement, the court appointed my CASA - Pat. I never had someone stand up for me like she did. She stood before the judges, the lawyers, my mother, and caseworkers and wasn't swayed by their opinions. It completely amazed me. I trusted her more with every visit. She became not only an advocate but a friend.

My name is Ashley. I was in the system five years before I was given a CASA. The system had already taken a toll on me. I was eight when I was assigned a CASA. I didn't trust her. She was just another adult in my life making promises that I didn't quite believe. I'd like to think that my story has three parts. First is the time I felt like I was lost in the foster care system. Second is when my CASA came into my life. And third is when she helped find a family for me. If I had been given a CASA from the moment I went into the system, many mistakes could have been prevented. The truth is that it was only when I was assigned a CASA that things began to change. Many people are ignorant about what foster children can achieve. Luckily my CASA volunteer had great expectations for me! Without my CASA I don't know where I would be today.

My name is Cynthia. Have you ever thought that you will never be able to love someone? Love yourself? Be somebody? Then all of a sudden when you are at your lowest, you get introduced to someone who touches your life forever? I have been there. I have come from the lowest of the low: thinking that there wasn't a chance for me to survive. Then my CASA came into my life. She helped me see a future with love, happiness, and success. She guided me to set goals and have the faith that I never thought I would have again. We set goals together, and, today, I am following them. I am going to college in the spring, and right now I am working with a nonprofit organization for homeless and abused women and children. I still speak with her and get her advice and support and share my accomplishments with her. I am grateful to have her in my life, extremely grateful. Thank you to the CASA program for bringing her into my life.

My name is Joanna. I have had my CASA worker for 11 months now. She is a person I look up to because of her honesty and kindness. She has helped me find a better future. She has always been there for me and always is on top of things when I need her. She is a parent figure in my life. My sister and I are separated from each other in different towns. My CASA worker is the only one who comes and sees us both. I was given a home pass once to see my foster family. I was told they couldn't have me that weekend because they were providing respite care two boys that weekend. I had worked hard and gotten good grades and my CASA worker knew I was really sad. She worked with the caseworker to have someone else watch the boys so I could go "home." She has done things for my sister, too. Next month she will be getting her GED. The other girls in my group home wish they had a CASA. They hear what she has done for me, plus they like to talk to her when she comes to visit. I think it would be nice if everyone could have a CASA volunteer because she is my friend.

My name is Shamor and I am a 14-year-old-boy who loves to have fun. Unfortunately the events in my life have not all been fun and games. I have been in the system since I was six weeks old. My CASA has helped me the last several years, since I was eight. She helps me get through hard times in my life. I honestly love her to death. I don't know what I would do without her. She is sweet, kind, and she does her best. Sometimes I wonder why she keeps getting me the things I need when I am a real jerk. Trust me on this one, I can be a jerk. One day I figured out it was because she truly cares for the children that she helps. Having a CASA has helped me to improve my life. She is truly an inspiration. She has greatly influenced my life. Hopefully I can inspire others to believe in their selves in the way that my CASA believed in me.

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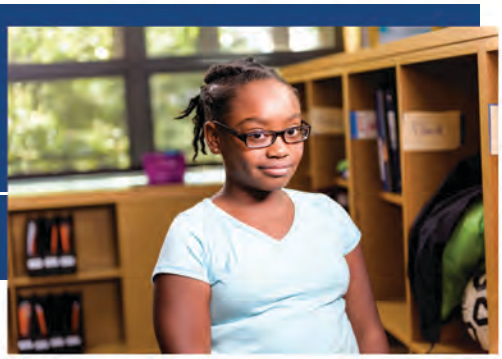
Contact Information



CASA of Arizona - State Office
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County CASA Program List

Apache County	928-337-3552
Cochise County	520-432-7521
Coconino County	928-226-5420
Gila County (Globe)	928-402-4427
Gila County (Payson)	928-474-7145
Graham County	928-792-5103
Greenlee County	928-865-2072, ext. 129
La Paz County	928-669-6188, ext. 237
Maricopa County	602-506-4083
Mohave County (Lake Havasu City)	928-453-0705, ext. 3730
Mohave County (Kingman)	928-753-0790, ext. 4229
Navajo County	928-524-4135
Pima County	520-724-2060
Pinal County	520-866-7076
Santa Cruz County	520-375-7740, ext. 8159
Yavapai County (Prescott)	928-771-3165
Yavapai County (Verde Valley)	928-554-8900
Yuma County	928-314-1830

National CASA Association www.CASAforChildren.org	800-628-3233

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