



CASA of Arizona
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CASA of Arizona Awarded \$75,000 Grant
National grant to support statewide awareness campaign**

(Phoenix, Ariz.—June 16, 2016) The Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Program of Arizona has been awarded an extra financial boost to raise awareness of the program and find more volunteers willing to help children in the state’s foster care system. The \$75,000 grant was awarded by the National Court Appointed Special Advocates Association to launch a statewide awareness campaign in 2016. The campaign will last six months with a goal to raise awareness of the program and to recruit more diverse volunteers in all areas of the state.

“Court Appointed Special Advocates are a vital part of the court team, helping gather the full picture so everyone can work toward what is in the child’s best interest,” said Nancy Molever, program manager for the Court Appointed Special Advocates Program of Arizona. “Unfortunately not every child gets the benefit of having a Court Appointed Special Advocate on their side. There’s a great need statewide for more community support and that’s what this grant will help us achieve.”

Every day more than 30 children are removed from their homes due to neglect or abuse and enter Arizona’s overburdened foster care system. Court Appointed Special Advocates are everyday volunteers who are appointed to a case, get to know the children involved, and advocate for their best interest in court. Court Appointed Special Advocates act as the eyes and ears of the court to ensure children are not languishing in care.

The 2016 National CASA Association State Awareness and Recruitment Campaign grant was designed to help programs recruit more diverse volunteers, especially in rural parts of the state. Currently in Arizona there are just over 1,000 CASA volunteers. Eighty-two percent of the volunteers are women and 85 percent of all Arizona CASA volunteers are Caucasian. The goal of the campaign will be to reach a broader audience and attract new volunteers to better reflect the children the program serves—51 percent of whom are male and 35 percent are Latino.

For more information on the program or to find out how you can become a CASA volunteer visit www.CASAofArizona.org or call 602-452-3683.

More about CASA:

The CASA program is administered by the Arizona Supreme Court and has programs in all 15 Arizona counties. County programs recruit and train community-based volunteers to speak up for the rights of abused and neglected children in court. CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to foster children who have the greatest need for an advocate. Volunteers do not provide placement or a home for the child, but are strictly advocates who submit their recommendations directly to the judge hearing a child's case. CASA volunteers complete 30 hours of training to prepare them for their duties.

Child Abuse Statistics:

- Neglect is the most common form of child abuse followed by physical abuse.
- Reports of child abuse and neglect have been consistently rising in Arizona since 2009.
- The majority of children who are in out-of-home care in Arizona (33.5%) are ages 1 to 5.

CASA Volunteers:

- Volunteers must be at least 21 years old.
- Volunteers go through a rigorous screening process including interviews, reference check, a fingerprint check, and polygraph exam.
- Volunteers are asked to make a commitment to one case until its conclusion, typically involving 15-20 hours per month.
- Volunteers must complete 30 hours of pre-service training.
- CASA volunteers are advocates, not mentors. Their objective is to help the court system determine the best outcome for the child.
- CASA volunteers try to build a 360-degree view of the child and his or her surroundings. To do this, they meet with teachers, counselors, physicians, and guardians.
- CASA volunteers work to ensure that children are in safe, permanent homes where they can thrive.