

What is CASA and Why Do We Need Court Appointed Special Advocates?

An Overview of CASA Programs in Nevada June 20, 2014

Legislature's Committee on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice

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EXHIBIT F - CHILDWELFARE
Document consists of 33 pages.
Entire exhibit provided.
Meeting Date: 06-20-14

An Overview of CASA Programs in Nevada

- ❑ How did GAL/CASA begin?
 - ❑ Why CASA?
 - ❑ CASA's presence across the State of Nevada
 - ❑ How are CASA programs funded?
 - ❑ The Role of CASA—The Permanency Advocate
 - ❑ How can you help?
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How did Guardian Ad Litem/CASA begin?

- ❑ The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974 was passed into law, increasing government intervention in the homes.
 - ❑ CAPTA also required that states receiving federal funds for the prevention of child abuse and neglect would appoint a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) to represent these children.
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The beginning of volunteer court programs

- ❑ In 1977, Judge David Soukup of Seattle, Washington conceived the idea of utilizing trained community volunteers to speak for the best interest of abused/neglected children in court.
 - ❑ The term Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) was coined by the late District Court Judge John Mendoza from Las Vegas.
 - ❑ In 1982, National CASA was formed and managed by a volunteer board. At the time there were 88 CASA programs. Currently, National CASA has a staff of 9 and oversees more than 970 CASA/GAL programs across the US.
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The Mission of CASA

- The mission of CASA is to support and promote court appointed volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children, so that they can thrive in safe, permanent and loving home.
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Laws pertaining to GAL/CASA

- ❑ By 1985, GAL was added to Nevada Revised Statutes: NRS 432B500 reflects that the Court shall appoint a GAL after a child is found to be in need of protection and a petition is filed and NRS 432B505 outlines the Qualifications of a special advocated appointed as a GAL.
 - ❑ 1990, US Congress encouraged the expansion of CASA programs with the passage of the Victims of Child Abuse Act.
 - ❑ By 1994, NV Court Rule 5.69 was approved to reflect the appointment of a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer.
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Why Do We Need CASA?

- ❑ As of September 30, 2012 there were an estimated 399,546 children in foster care as compared to FY 2000 552,000.(AFCARS data)
 - ❑ Last year, more than 75,000 CASA and Guardian ad Litem volunteers, of the 970 CASA programs nationwide, helped 238,000 abused and neglected children find safe, permanent homes.
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Why Do We Need CASAs in Nevada?

- ❑ In Nevada, there are 4,806 children in foster care as of June, 2012.
 - ❑ There are 8 CASA Programs
 - ❑ In 2013, Nevada CASA provided a voice for over 1600 abused and neglected children with 531 highly trained and highly dedicated CASA volunteers.
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Where are we located in Nevada?

- ❑ CASA of Carson City, Carson City, NV
 - ❑ Churchill County CASA- Fallon, NV
 - ❑ Clark County CASA- Las Vegas, NV
 - ❑ Douglas County CASA- Minden, NV
 - ❑ Northeastern Nevada CASA- Elko, NV
 - ❑ Pioneer Territory CASA- Pahrump, NV
 - ❑ Tri-County CASA- Winnemucca, NV
 - ❑ Washoe County CASA- Reno, NV
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CASA of Carson City
1539 E. Fifth St. Carson City, NV. 89703
Chris Bayer, Director, (775) 882-6676

- ❑ Program Started: 1987
 - ❑ Jurisdiction/county they represent: 1st Judicial District, Carson City and Storey County
 - ❑ Number of children in foster care in jurisdiction: 71
 - ❑ Number of children served by CASA volunteers: 71 in dependency cases and 17 in high conflict divorces
 - ❑ Number of staff: 1 FT and 1 PT
 - ❑ Number of volunteers: 27 currently assigned
 - ❑ Funding structure: Non-profit
 - ❑ Program Structure: CASA of Carson City represent abused/neglected children, as well as a very few high conflict divorce cases. There is also a foster kids closet.
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Churchill County CASA

73 North Maine, Suite B, Fallon, Nevada 89406

De Vere Karlson, Program Manager, (775) 217-6004

- ❑ Program Started: Became National CASA member in 4/2014, recruitment will start in July 2014, training in September 2014 and first CASA volunteers to be sworn in by first of 2015.
 - ❑ Jurisdiction/county they represent: 10th Judicial District, Churchill County
 - ❑ Number of children in foster care in jurisdiction: 31
 - ❑ Number of children served by CASA volunteers: 0
 - ❑ Number of staff: 1 (volunteer) program manager ,will become FT by August 2014.
 - ❑ Number of volunteers: 0
 - ❑ Funding structure: Grant funded only
 - ❑ Program Structure: Will represent abused/neglected children only during first year, then expand to delinquent cases and custody cases by 2nd year
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Clark County CASA

601 N. Pecos Rd. Las Vegas, NV. 89101

Shelia Parks, Program Administrator, (702) 455-4306

- ❑ Program Started: 1980
 - ❑ Jurisdiction/county they represent: 8th Judicial District, Clark County
 - ❑ Number of children in foster care in jurisdiction: 3500
 - ❑ Number of children served by CASA volunteers: 900
 - ❑ Number of staff: 5 F/T and 1 P/T
 - ❑ Number of volunteers: 350
 - ❑ Funding structure: County funded
 - ❑ Program Structure: Represent abused/neglected children only, but is currently representing less than five delinquency cases.
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Douglas County CASA

P.O. Box 218, Minden, NV, 89101

Linda Cuddy, Program Manager, (775) 782-6247

- ❑ Program Started: 1980
 - ❑ Jurisdiction/county they represent: 9th Judicial District, Douglas County
 - ❑ Number of children in foster care in jurisdiction: 25
 - ❑ Number of children served by CASA volunteers: 25
 - ❑ Number of staff: 1 FT and 1 staff that works 30 hours a week
 - ❑ Number of volunteers: 31
 - ❑ Funding structure: County funded
 - ❑ Program Structure: Represent abused/neglected children, and any case at the discretion of the court.
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Northeastern Nevada CASA
P.O. Box 1543 Elko, NV. 89803
Alana McKinney, Exec. Director, (775) 934-7636

- ❑ Program Started: 2007
 - ❑ Jurisdiction/county they represent: 4th Judicial District, Elko County
 - ❑ Number of children in foster care in jurisdiction: 42
 - ❑ Number of children served by CASA volunteers: 42
 - ❑ Number of staff: 2 employees working 3/4 time
 - ❑ Number of volunteers: 12
 - ❑ Funding structure: Non-profit, grants, donations and fundraising
 - ❑ Program Structure: Only serve abused/neglected children (432B cases)
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Pioneer Territory CASA, Inc.
1321 S. Hwy 160, Ste. 9A, Pahrump, NV 89048
Willi Baer, Executive Director, (775) 513-9514

- ❑ Program Started: 2011
 - ❑ Jurisdiction/county they represent: 5th Judicial District, Nye, Esmeralda, and Mineral Counties (25,000 sq. mile)
 - ❑ Number of children in foster care in jurisdiction: 80-100
 - ❑ Number of children served by CASA volunteers: 65
 - ❑ Number of staff: 3 P/T (includes Exec. Director)
 - ❑ Number of volunteers: 27
 - ❑ Funding structure: Non-profit
 - ❑ Program Structure: Represent abused/neglected children only. Also have CASA Closet which provides clothing and other needs for foster children.
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Tri-County CASA

P.O. Box 1338, Winnemucca, NV. 89445
Chelle Robinson, Director, (775) 623-2328

- ❑ Program Started: 2013
 - ❑ Jurisdiction/county they represent: 6th Judicial District, Humboldt, Lander and Pershing Counties
 - ❑ Number of children in foster care in jurisdiction: 34
 - ❑ Number of children served by CASA volunteers: None assigned at this time
 - ❑ Number of staff: 2 P/T
 - ❑ Number of volunteers: 9
 - ❑ Funding structure: CIP Funded, donations, and fundraising
 - ❑ Program Structure: They support families and children for advocates of victims of abuse.
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Washoe County CASA

75 Court St. Suite 214 Reno, NV. 89501

Mary Herzik, Family Services Manager, (775) 328-3299

- ❑ Program Started: 1982
 - ❑ Jurisdiction/county they represent: 2nd Judicial District, Washoe County
 - ❑ Number of children in foster care in jurisdiction: 700
 - ❑ Number of children served by CASA volunteers: 177
 - ❑ Number of staff: 5 F/T overseeing four programs in Family Division: CASA, Custody/Dependency Mediation, After Hours TPO and Family Peace Center-Supervised Visitation Program.
 - ❑ Number of volunteers: 101
 - ❑ Funding structure: Court funded
 - ❑ Program Structure: Represent 95% abused/neglected children, and special request cases referred from Court.
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Who are CASA Volunteers?

- ❑ CASA volunteers are professionally trained volunteer advocates, who are appointed by the Judge to serve as a GAL, to represent the best interest of foster children and ensure that children's needs are being met and permanency is achieved in a timely manner.
 - ❑ CASA volunteers are Officers of the Court, to ensure children don't get lost in the overburdened legal and child welfare system, or languish in inappropriate foster or group home placements.
 - ❑ CASA volunteers, not only speak up about the child's best interest, but also about what the child wants.
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What is CASA volunteer's role?

- ❑ Research case: gather information, get to know all parties involved in child's life, to help locate relatives or other significant individuals in child's life.
 - ❑ Facilitate: make sure that the case is progressing between hearings and that the court's recommendations are followed.
 - ❑ Advocate: speak up for children in meetings, schools, in foster homes, etc. They write reports to the court and speak up for child's best interest.
 - ❑ Monitor the child's situation: get to know the child by visiting the child regularly and make sure child needs are being met in a timely manner and most importantly focusing on safety, permanency and well-being of the child.
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What are the Requirements to become a CASA volunteer?

- Must be ages 21 and older
 - Attend one hour orientation
 - Complete an application
 - Pass the extensive background clearances
 - Participate in interview
 - Attend 30-33 hours National CASA approved training (may vary by jurisdiction)
 - Court observation
 - Make a 1-2 year commitment (varies by jurisdictions)
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What differences CASA volunteers make in children's lives?

- ❑ Foster children experience a great deal of instability in foster care, moving from placement to placement, change of workers, schools, and sometimes separations from siblings. However, if there is a CASA volunteer involved, this person can help maintain the continuity in a child's life to relieve some of the fears and anxieties.
 - ❑ CASA volunteers are assigned to one child or sibling group of children, but generally to the more complex cases, since there are not enough CASA volunteers for every child.
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What differences CASA volunteers make in children's lives?

- ❑ CASA volunteers are able to spend quality time with children, to listen to them and make sure their voices are heard and their needs are met in timely manner.
 - ❑ CASA volunteers form meaningful relationship with the children and help them to identify and achieve their hopes and dreams.
 - ❑ CASA volunteers help to achieve permanency for children.
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What does “permanency” mean?

- ❑ Permanency for children might result in: reunification, adoption, guardianship and/or independent living.
 - ❑ Permanency is both a process and a result that includes the involvement of the youth as a participant or leader in finding a permanent connection with a least one committed adult who can provide him/her with a safe, stable, and secure parenting relationship in a loving environment.
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What is a Permanent Connection?

- ❑ Lifelong connections with an adult who is willing to make an unconditional commitment with the youth.
 - ❑ Lifelong supports in which the youth has the opportunity to maintain contact with siblings or other healthy adults, who are important in the youth's life.
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What is a permanent connection?

- An adult who is willing to enter into an unconditional, lifelong parent-like relationship with the youth. The youth agrees that the adult will play this role in his or her life.
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Permanent Connections for Youth who exit foster care

- ❑ For youth who exit foster care, they must have a lifelong connection, i.e., mentor.
 - ❑ Permanence, especially for older youth nearing adulthood, needs to include a broad range of options. All connections that serve to anchor a youth are important and need to be strengthened prior to the youth exiting foster care.
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Permanent Connections for Youth who exit foster care

- ❑ Permanent connections solidify the youth's identity and clarify personal history.
 - ❑ Being connected with family or significant adult(s) is important for the youth, who exit foster care, as it helps them with healthy functioning in the community.
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What is CASA's role in helping youth identify permanent connections when they exit foster care?

- ❑ Permanency is a state of mind, not a placement.
 - ❑ CASA volunteer help youth identify individuals who have been significant in the youth's life, to form a permanent connection or mentor relationship.
 - ❑ Some CASA volunteers agree to serve as the permanent connection or mentor for the youth.
 - ❑ CASA volunteer encourage the youth to actively engage in the development of their independent living and permanency planning.
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Questions every child wants to know

- ❑ Who Am I? (Clarification)
 - ❑ What Happened to Me? (Clarification)
 - ❑ Where Am I Going? (Integration)
 - ❑ How will I get there? (Integration)
 - ❑ When will I Know I Belong? (Actualization)
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Real Examples of things CASA volunteers did to change a child's life.

- ❑ CASA volunteer read through old files and found names of relatives and/or absent parents who had been overlooked as the cases transitioned from one worker to another.
 - ❑ CASA volunteer drove to CA to pick up birth records that was needed to finalize an adoption, that was stalled.
 - ❑ CASA volunteer advocated that the child receive a new pair of eyeglasses, because no one realized that the child needed them for school.
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What does CASA Programs need?

- ❑ Programs need to expand their infrastructure (staff) in order to adequately recruit, screen, train and support the volunteers. (National CASA recommends 1 FT for 30 volunteers)
 - ❑ More CASA volunteers, so that every child's best interest is represented.
 - ❑ Continued statewide awareness and support to promote the mission of CASA
 - ❑ Statewide CASA training
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Need more information about CASA?

- ❑ National CASA Website- www.casaforchildren.org
 - ❑ www.casaofcc.org
 - ❑ dkarlson@churchillcourts.org
 - ❑ www.douglascountynv.gov/sites/casa/contact.cfm
 - ❑ www.CASALasvegas.org
 - ❑ www.nencasa.org
 - ❑ ptcasaanv@yahoo.com
 - ❑ www.Casareno.org
 - ❑ www.humboldtava.com
 - ❑ Follow CASA programs on various Facebook pages
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Questions/Answers ?
