



Court Appointed Special Advocates

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Texas CASA





Overview

- Our mission, vision and history
- The children CASA serves
- CASA Appointment
- Who are CASA Volunteers?
- Role of CASA Volunteers
- The impact of trauma
- Working with other systems and stakeholders
- CASA can make a difference
- Engaging with CASA





Mission and Vision

Vision
A CASA volunteer for every child.

Mission
Texas CASA partners with the CASA community to be a voice for abused and neglected children through the power of volunteer advocacy and change in the child protection system.



History



- Texas CASA formed in 1989
- 13 local programs when formed; 44 by 1999
- 71 Local CASA Programs today
- Serving 207 of Texas 254 Counties
- 7, 611 volunteers last fiscal year
- 23,612 children served last fiscal year
- Currently serving almost half of the children in CPS legal responsibility



CASA in Texas

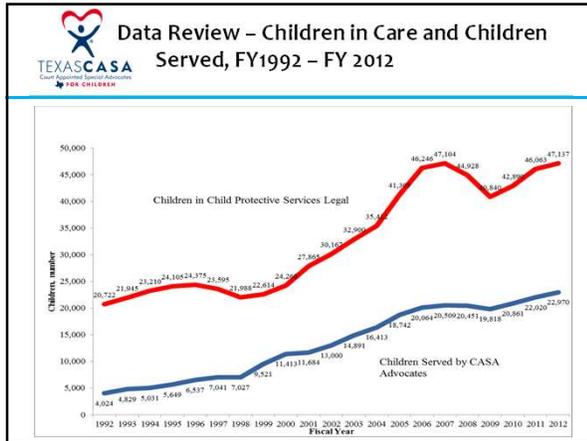


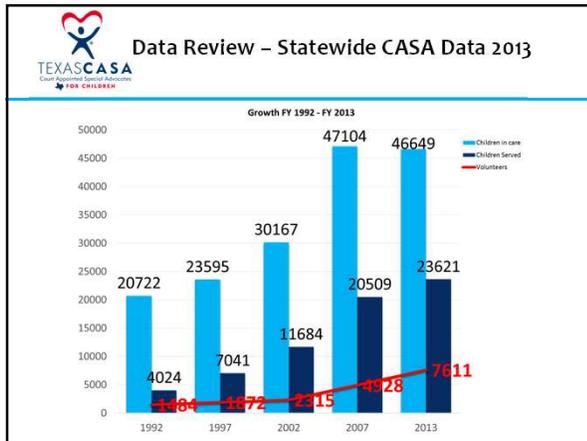

Who are the children CASA serves?



- Approx. 47,137 Texas children in CPS Legal Responsibility in 2013
- CASA advocated for 23,612 children in 2013
- Children 0-18+
- CASA can accept appointment at the beginning of a case or at anytime during a civil CPS case







- Judge appoints CASA to case
- Typically most difficult and complex cases
- CASA volunteers serve as guardian ad litem (GAL)
- CASA volunteers/GALs = "child's best interest"
- Attorney ad litem = child's wishes or preferences

 **Who are CASA Volunteers?**

- **7,611** dedicated volunteers in 2013
- Various cultural/professional backgrounds
- What CASA volunteers have in common:
 - Commitment to improving children's lives
 - Willing to learn and work alongside professionals, attorneys, caseworkers
 - Adherence to CASA standards and required training
 - Persistence and compassion – a belief that there is a safe, nurturing home for every child



 **The Role of a CASA Volunteer**

- Formally accepts assignment to a case and works under the support and supervision of CASA staff
- Spends an average of 20 hours a month on a case
- Gains understanding of needs of the child
- Gathers information about the child's family
- Provides written reports to the court
- Advocates for services
- Appears at court hearings and testifies

Responsibilities Associated with CASA Advocate (CASA/GAL) role

- Investigation
- Consultation
- Assessment
- Identifying the child's interest
- Permanency planning and concurrent planning
- Problem solving and sharing information
- Identifying action steps
- Following up on action steps




107.002 Powers and Duties of the (CASA) GAL for the child

- Conduct an investigation...to determine the best interests of the child
- Obtain and review copies of the child's relevant medical, psychological, and school records
- Interview the child in a developmentally appropriate manner
- Interview each person who has significant knowledge of the child's history and condition, including any foster parent of the child
- Seek to elicit...the child's expressed wishes
- Consider the child's expressed wishes without being bound by them
- Encourage settlement



107.002 continued

- "the court shall ensure in a hearing or in a trial on the merits that a GAL has an opportunity to testify or submit a report regarding the GAL's recommendations regarding
 - The best interest of the child
 - The basis for the GAL's recommendation
- In a contested case, the GAL shall provide copies of the GAL's report, if any, to the attorneys for the parties as directed by the court, but not later than the earlier of
 - The date required by the scheduling order
 - Or the 10th day before the date of the commencement of the trial





Trauma – The Impact of Trauma

- **Trauma Informed – In our work and advocacy with children - what does this mean?**
 - *Understanding the impact of trauma*
 - *Understanding the reason for difficult or aberrant behaviors and treating the cause – the fear – that drives these behaviors in children that have experienced trauma*
 - *Understanding the need for relationships and connections*
 - *TBRI – Trust Based Relational Intervention – developed by the TCU Institute of Child Development - provides not only the "why" but the "how" to help children affected by early childhood trauma heal and reach their full potential*



Working with other Systems and Stakeholders

- Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Attorneys
- Families and Kin
- Education System and Teachers
- Medical and Mental Health systems
- Child Placing Agencies, Foster Homes, Residential Treatment Centers
- Transition Centers for older youth
- CAC's – and Criminal Prosecution of those who abuse



CASA and the Stakeholder Community Critical Partnerships for Children

Some barriers to a successful outcome for a child that comes into the CPS system because of abuse or neglect:

- Substance Abuse treatment options for parents
- Housing, employment and educational supports for parents
- Not having "trauma informed" placements, schools, medical and mental health communities, CASA's, attorneys, caseworkers, and other service provider communities
- Coordination and collaboration among the many stakeholders that "touch a child's life" while in care
- Not having a strong, fervent "belief" that there is a safe, permanent, nurturing and loving family for every child that comes into our child protection system



Impact

- Children with CASA volunteers are:
 - More likely to receive therapy, health care and educational assistance (tutoring) and other needed services
 - More likely to have success in school
 - Less likely to be bounced from one place to another
 - Less likely to get stuck in long-term foster care
 - Significantly more likely to reach safe, permanent homes.
- CASA keeps children connected with family, siblings and culture
- CASA makes each child individual and unique

 **Engaging with CASA**

- **Become a CASA volunteer**
 - www.texascasa.org
- **Help recruit more CASA volunteers**
 - Invite us to speak at your place of worship, business.
- **Help build awareness of the needs of children in foster care in local communities**
- **Help increase resources for children and families in local communities**
- **Provide training and participate in collaborative training with CASA**

 **Thank you for learning about CASA!**



Please let me know if you have any questions.
