



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
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## FACT SHEET

August 2023

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# Court Appointed Special Advocates

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained<sup>1</sup> volunteer appointed by a judicial officer to provide advocacy for a child who is under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. The CASA volunteer serves as the “eyes and ears” of the judge for children in foster care. Volunteers spend time with children, monitor needed services, and provide child-focused recommendations to the court based on the best interest of the children they serve. Studies conducted on outcomes for children served by CASA volunteers indicate that children served by a CASA volunteer are more likely to achieve permanency, less likely to reenter the child welfare system, and have better educational outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

A CASA program is a nonprofit organization designated by their local juvenile court that supports and promotes trained volunteers. Currently, there are 45 CASA programs providing services to the local superior courts in 52 of California’s 58 counties with approximately 11,000 active CASA volunteers serving 13,000 children and youth statewide.

The Judicial Council’s CASA grants program provides funding, technical assistance, evaluation, and training for CASA programs and local courts in California.

### **CASA Funding**

The Judicial Council provides \$2.713 million annually in funding to all CASA programs serving the superior courts. The Judicial Council’s CASA funding is administered in accordance with Welfare and Institutions Code section 100 and

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<sup>1</sup> All CASA volunteers are required to complete formal training, including 30 hours of initial training and a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education in each year of service. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 103(a); Cal. Rules of Court, rule 5.655(f)(1), (k)(2).)

<sup>2</sup> National CASA/GAL Association for Children, “Research and Effectiveness,” <https://nationalcasagal.org/our-impact/research-and-effectiveness/> (as of Aug. 25, 2023).

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allocated based on the funding methodology adopted by the Judicial Council in 2013 and amended in 2018 and 2023. In addition to state funding, local CASA programs in California receive funding from a variety of other sources including federal grants, private foundations, organizations, and individuals.

### **CASA Program Site Review Evaluation**

The Judicial Council contracts with the California CASA Association (CalCASA) to evaluate local CASA programs. CalCASA staff members conduct site review evaluations to determine compliance with rule 5.655 of the California Rules of Court, Welfare and Institutions Code sections 100-109, and National CASA Association Standards. CalCASA interviews CASA staff and volunteers, meets with judicial officers, attorneys, and social workers to understand local CASA needs and challenges. The program evaluations confirm compliance and identify program challenges. The Judicial Council's Center for Families, Children & the Courts CASA program staff and CalCASA staff then provide follow up technical assistance based on evaluation findings.

### **Additional State Funding for CASA Programs**

The State Budget Act of 2022 (Stats. 2022, ch.45) included a \$60 million one-time appropriation to be allocated to CalCASA for support of local CASA programs, including \$20 million in fiscal year (FY) 2022–23, \$20 million in FY 2023–24, and \$20 million in FY 2024–25. The appropriation specifies that \$48 million be allocated to provide funding to the local CASA programs to expand capacity, recruitment, and training and to stabilize local budgets and staffing; and \$12 million be allocated for statewide volunteer recruitment initiatives, shared resources and infrastructure, development of statewide training curriculum, and collection of data on program implementation and outcomes.

### **CASA Technical Assistance and Training**

CASA program staff provide technical assistance to local CASA programs for issues related to grant funding, compliance, and data collection.

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