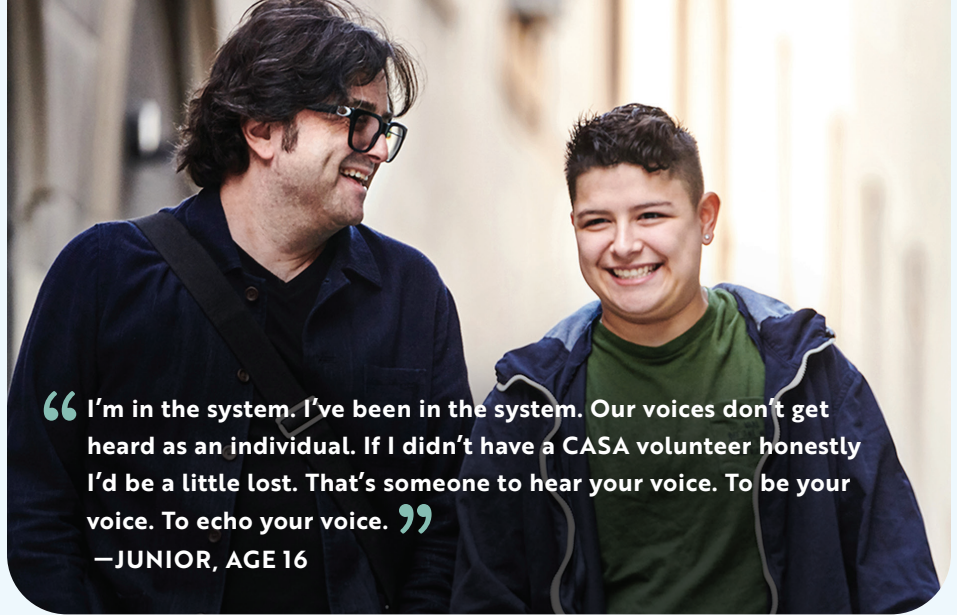




**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

CASA OF LOS ANGELES



“ I’m in the system. I’ve been in the system. Our voices don’t get heard as an individual. If I didn’t have a CASA volunteer honestly I’d be a little lost. That’s someone to hear your voice. To be your voice. To echo your voice. ”

—JUNIOR, AGE 16

Given the instability they face, it is not surprising that children and youth in foster care experience the following distressing consequences:

85%

live with serious mental health challenges

37%

will not finish high school

50%

of girls pregnant by age 19

27%

of the unhoused population have spent time in foster care

This is why having a CASA/LA volunteer dedicated to supporting them, can make all the difference in a young person's life.

**CASA of Los Angeles (CASA/LA) mobilizes community volunteers to advocate for children and youth who have experienced abuse and neglect. Founded in 1978, CASA/LA is an independent nonprofit organization that recruits, trains, and supports qualified volunteer advocates who transform the lives of children and youth in LA County’s child welfare system.**

There are currently over 38,000 children under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County Dependency Court, making it the largest system in the nation supporting children removed from the home due to abuse, neglect, and abandonment. A child’s case can be transferred to multiple attorneys and social workers during their time in care. A CASA volunteer is often the only stable adult in these children’s lives during this time.

CASA/LA has determined that there are 12,000 children living in foster care in Los Angeles County who have an **immediate** need for a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA volunteer) to help them navigate the complex child welfare system, find a permanent home, and ensure that their safety and well-being are cared for. Each of these children matters but only 10% currently have a CASA volunteer. **We are dedicated to changing that.**

CASA volunteers get to know the children they are appointed to and their circumstances. Volunteers encourage youth to grow to their fullest potential and are involved in key issues in their life, advocating in court for the support and services that ALL children deserve: education, physical and mental health, and a safe and stable home.



# CASA/LA PROGRAMS

## GENERAL ADVOCACY

CASA volunteers advocate for children and youth in the courtroom and in all areas of their lives in order to support educational, mental and physical health as well as safety and permanency goals. Advocacy areas include:

### Transition Age Youth

For youth who have spent years in group or foster homes or who are "aging out" or exiting the foster care system without having secured a safe and permanent home, the risks are substantial. CASA volunteers trained to work with Transition Age Youth mentor and support the young person through the process of accessing available aid including: completing their education, securing housing, transportation, job training and employment; and helping them gain confidence and obtain self-sufficiency.

### LGBTQIA+ Support

A disproportionate number of young people in the child welfare system—19% of youth, aged 12-21, in L.A. County foster care—identify as LGBTQIA+ and are twice as likely to report being treated poorly by the foster care system. CASA volunteers support youth who identify as LGBTQIA+, helping to create long-term shifts in how child welfare institutions support LGBTQIA+ identifying youth in the system and throughout all areas of their lives.

### Educational Advocacy

Every child deserves a good education. CASA volunteers help youth connect to assessments, support, and the services necessary to address the students' individual educational issues and needs. Many CASA volunteers also hold the educational rights of the youth they serve.

## SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS

### Early Childhood Initiative

CASA/LA is specially committed to helping children ages 0-5. In LA County, 35% of the children entering foster care are ages 0-5. As developmental needs of children are recognized earlier, interventions happen sooner, and children more quickly and successfully achieve permanency.

### Juvenile Justice

CASA volunteers frequently advocate for youth in delinquency court as it is not uncommon for youth in foster care to come into contact with the juvenile justice system. Volunteers support young people at juvenile justice court hearings and ensure they have all the necessary services to spend the least amount of time in the juvenile justice system as possible.

### Diversion Program

CASA/LA's Diversion Program ensures that young people in foster care have the ability to participate in diversion programming to avoid the juvenile justice system all together.

### Essential History Program

This program helps social workers, attorneys and judges make trauma-informed decisions about the young people they serve by providing them with a detailed summary of the young person's experiences and history. Volunteers review and outline the child's developmental, medical, and mental health history to ensure critical details are not overlooked as decisions about their futures are made.

## CASA/LA MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Through CASA advocacy, our children are meeting more of their educational goals. They are experiencing lower degrees of risk around their mental health and medical wellbeing. They are achieving higher rates of permanency. But most importantly, every child served by a CASA volunteer is connecting with a stable adult dedicated to making a positive impact on their lives.

**1,294**

children supported with one-on-one advocacy through CASA volunteers

**28,083**

Hours of Advocacy

**37%**

of CASA volunteers held educational rights

**76%**

of youth under the age of 12 in permanent placement at end of advocacy

**90%**

of CASA youth maintained or improved physical health

**62%**

of youth prescribed psychotropic medication at assessment improved mental health at case closure

\*Data is from 2020



To learn more or to support CASA/LA's work please contact Celina Santiago, Chief Development & Partnerships Officer at [csantiago@casala.org](mailto:csantiago@casala.org) or Marie Carpenter, Director of Development at [mcarpenter@casala.org](mailto:mcarpenter@casala.org).

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