

**Our plan for
2020-2023**



**The Campaign
To Serve
3,000 Children**

WHAT IS A CASA VOLUNTEER?

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 the foster care system.

Being a CASA volunteer is unlike any other volunteer opportunity. These committed, highly-trained volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) are appointed by a Dependency Court judge to an individual child's case, to advocate for the child's best interests in court and in all aspects of their life where the support of a responsible adult can make a positive difference.

For over 40 years, CASA/LA has been the only organization in Los Angeles County providing court-appointed advocates to youth in foster care, helping these children navigate the trials of the courtroom, and also the trials of a challenged childhood.



“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

“One person can be the tipping point that turns a life in a positive direction. Without that little nudge, that child’s life can take the opposite direction. If you can help change their trajectory where the youth feels like they might have a chance, maybe they have somebody in their corner, maybe they have someone who believes in them and believes them to be of value, that can change everything.”

-SAM, CASA VOLUNTEER



Who do we serve?

There are currently over 30,000 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. Often a child's case will be transferred to multiple attorneys and social workers during their time in care.

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%

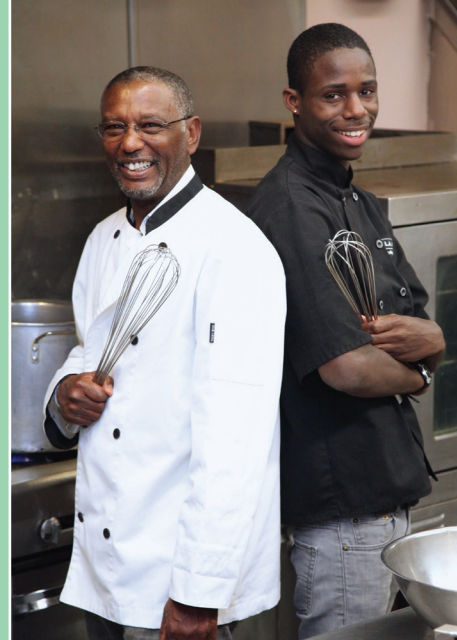


OF THE UNHOUSED POPULATION HAVE SPENT TIME IN FOSTER CARE.

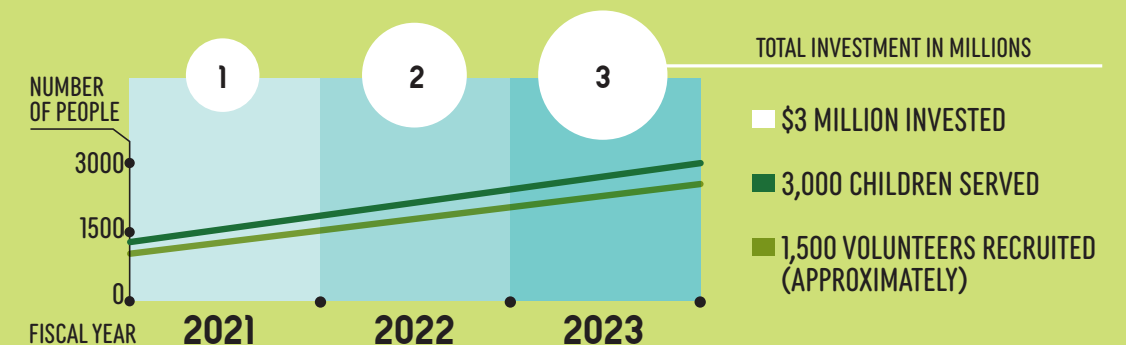
Why 3,000?

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) 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% have a CASA volunteer. We must change that.

In order to reach these significantly increased numbers, CASA/LA is launching a widespread marketing and fundraising campaign to serve 3,000 children and youth in the next three years.



Through this three-year campaign, we will more than double the number of youth served from 1,294 in 2020 to 3,000 in FY2023, and increase the number of new CASA volunteers by approximately 500 each year to get to our goal.



Funding Opportunities

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. Funding opportunities 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 the young person through the process of accessing available aid, completing their education, securing housing, transportation, job training and employment, and most importantly, helping them gain confidence they need to 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. Many children in the system experience educational challenges, all have experienced abuse or neglect, and most are struggling with the emotional ramifications of a disrupted home environment. CASA volunteers help youth connect to assessment, support, and advocacy services to address the students’ specific educational issues and needs. In addition, CASA volunteers frequently hold the educational rights of the youth they serve.

SPECIALIZED

EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE

This initiative advances CASA/LA’s commitment to help children ages 0-5. In LA County, 35% of the children entering foster care are ages 0-5 with 19% under 24 months. As the developmental needs of the child are recognized earlier, interventions happen sooner, and children achieve permanency quicker and more successfully.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

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

DIVERSION PROGRAM

As part of this initiative, 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. Youth in the dependency system have often been limited in their ability to participate in diversion programs due to the lack of a stable adult who can monitor their participation. CASA volunteers will support these young people by overseeing their diversion programs and collaborating with the youth’s team to ensure all services are in place and their needs are being met.

ESSENTIAL HISTORY PROGRAM

The Essential History program aims to help social workers, attorneys and judges make trauma-informed decisions about the young people they serve by providing them with a summary of the young person’s experiences and history in critical areas of life. Through this program, volunteers complete a detailed review of a child’s file and write a report outlining the child’s developmental, medical, and mental health history to ensure critical details are not overlooked by the various stakeholders in the child’s case.

CAPACITY BUILDING

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

CASA/LA uses many methods and strategies to recruit volunteers, ranging from media outreach, advertising, online marketing, social media, earned media, and (often one of the most effective strategies) person-to-person word of mouth from current and former CASA volunteers. The recruited individuals then receive in-person or online intensive training in order to perform trauma informed, culturally competent services. In addition, CASA/LA offers comprehensive ongoing training and support for new and continuing volunteers in issues unique to children in the child welfare system.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

In order to serve more children and to serve them well, CASA/LA has become a leader in implementing data systems for program evaluation, allowing us to improve the quality of service and administrative efficiency to our volunteers and to the youth that we serve. Through the implementation of the data management system ETO (Efforts to Outcomes), CASA/LA is able to track our volunteer-to-case assignment pipeline, and ultimately, the impact of CASA advocacy on the safety, permanency, and well-being of the youth served.





Make a difference in the life of a child
in LA County's child welfare system who
has experienced abuse and neglect.

Together we can all do something for
vulnerable children in our community.

CASA of Los Angeles' mission is to mobilize community
volunteers to advocate for children who have experienced
abuse and neglect.

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