



Judicial Council of California

Family & Juvenile Law Advisory
Committee

www.courts.ca.gov/familyjuvenilecomm.htm
familyjuvenilecomm@jud.ca.gov

FAMILY AND JUVENILE LAW ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING

April 8, 2024

4:30-5:30 pm

Virtual

Advisory Body Members Present: Hon. Charles F. Adams, Commissioner Sue Alexander (Ret.), Hon. Craig E. Arthur, Hon. Bunmi O. Awoniyi, Hon. Brett Bianco, Hon. Brooke A. Blecher, Hon. Tari L. Cody (Acting Chair), Ms. Risé A. Donlon, Hon. Ana L. España, Hon. Katherine Fogarty, Hon. Suzanne Gazzaniga, Hon. Jennifer L. Giuliani, Ms. Julia Hanagan, Mx. Cory Hernandez, Ms. Diane Iglesias, Ms. Selis Koker, Mr. Joseph Koller, Hon. Mary Kreber Varipapa, Mr. Jonathan Laba, Ms. Sharon M. Lawrence, Hon. Frank J. Menetrez, Hon. Laura H. Miller, Mr. Joe Navarro, Hon. Cheri Pham, Ms. Melissa J. Poulos, Chief Brian J. Richart, Hon. Lawrence P. Riff, Hon. B. Scott Thomsen, Ms. Susan Thrall, Hon. Rubén A. Villalobos, and Hon. Monica F. Wiley

Advisory Body Members Absent: Hon. Stephanie E. Hulse (Chair), Ms. Mary Majich Davis, Hon. Susan M. Gill, Ms. Leslie Heimov, Ms. Rose Klein, and Ms. Sherry Peterson

Others Present: Ms. Sage BlackOwl, Mr. Tony Cheng, Ms. Charli Depner, Ms. Audrey Fancy, Ms. Diana Glick, Ms. Jessica Henderson, Ms. Tracy Kenny, Ms. Stephanie Lacambra, Ms. Jamie Lau, Ms. Anna Maves, Ms. Kelly Meehleib, Ms. Brandie Pilapil, Ms. Marci Reichbach, Ms. Melissa Rodgers, Ms. Gabrielle Selden, Ms. Christy Simons, Ms. Marymichael Smrdeli, Ms. Marina Soto, Ms. Ella Miles-Urdan

OPEN MEETING

Call to Order and Roll Call

The chair called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and took roll call.

Approval of Past Meeting Minutes

The advisory body reviewed and approved the minutes of the January 8, 2024, Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee meeting.

ACTION ITEMS (ITEMS 2)

Item 1

Child Support: AB 1058 Child Support Commissioner and Family Law Facilitator Program Funding for Fiscal Year 2024–25

Presenter: Anna Maves, Principle Managing Attorney, Center for Families, Children, and the Courts, Judicial Council of California

This report details the program allocation of funding for the Assembly Bill 1058 Child Support Commissioner and Family Law Facilitator Program for fiscal year 2024–25. The funds are provided through a cooperative agreement between the California Department of Child Support Services and the Judicial Council, which requires the council to annually approve the Assembly Bill 1058 Program funding allocations. The committee is therefore asked to review the draft report and make recommendations on funding allocations discussed in the report.

Action:

The committee decided to recommend approval of the proposal after a voice vote with no objection.

Item 2

Juvenile Law: FY 2024-25 Recommended Funding Methodology for the \$500,000 Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Local Assistance Funding Augmentation (Action Required)

Kelly Meehleib, Supervising Analyst, Center for Families, Children, and the Courts, Judicial Council of California

The committee reviewed and considered proposed recommendations for an ongoing funding methodology for the \$500,000 CASA Local Assistance funding augmentation to be effective beginning FY 2024-25.

Action:

The committee decided to recommend approval of the finding methodology after a voice vote with no objection.

The next meeting will be held on April 22, 2024.

A D J O U R N M E N T

There being no further open meeting business, the open session of the meeting was adjourned at 4:52pm.

Approved by the advisory body on enter date.



Judicial Council of California

455 Golden Gate Avenue · San Francisco, California 94102-3688

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M E M O R A N D U M

Date

April 23, 2024

Action Requested

Please Review

To

Members of the Family and Juvenile Law
Advisory Committee

Deadline

April 29, 2024

From

Kelly Meehleib, Supervising Analyst

Contact

Kelly Meehleib, 916-263-1693
kelly.meehleib@jud.ca.gov

Subject

Draft Judicial Council Report regarding
FY 2024–25 Court Appointed Special
Advocate Local Assistance Funding
Methodology for \$500,000 Augmentation and
Funding Allocations

The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory committee serves as the oversight body for Judicial Branch Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program funding and annually recommends allocations to the Judicial Council. The committee is asked to review the attached draft Judicial Council report and make recommendations, as detailed in the attached report and set forth in Attachment A to propose funding allocations for FY 2024–25.¹

¹ At its [meeting](#) on April 8, 2024, the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee considered and approved recommendations submitted by an ad hoc working group comprised of committee volunteers for an ongoing funding methodology for the ongoing \$500,000 funding augmentation included in the Budget Act of 2018.



Judicial Council of California

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 24-088

For business meeting on: July 11-12, 2024

Title

Juvenile Law: Court Appointed Special Advocate Funding Methodology and FY 2024–2025 Allocations

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected

None

Recommended by

Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee
Hon. Stephanie E. Hulse, Chair

Agenda Item Type

Action Required

Effective Date

July 1, 2024

Date of Report

April 23, 2024

Contact

Kelly Meehleib, 916-263-1693
kelly.meehleib@jud.ca.gov
Vida Terry, 415-865-7721
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Executive Summary

The judicial branch budget for Judicial Council Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) grants for fiscal year (FY) 2024–25 is \$2.713 million, which as of FY 2018–19 includes an ongoing \$500,000 funding augmentation to support efforts to increase the number of foster children served and reduce backlogs of youth in local courts waiting for a volunteer assignment. The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee recommends an amendment to the funding methodology for allocation of the \$500,000 funding augmentation and allocation of \$2.713 million for FY 2024–25 for the CASA Local Assistance program based on the methodology as amended. The allocations would fund 45 CASA programs serving 52 counties.

Recommendation

The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee recommends that the Judicial Council, effective July 1, 2024:

1. Amend the funding methodology approved by the Judicial Council to include an ongoing funding methodology for the \$500,000 augmentation with the following parameters:

- a. Allocate the funding as a separate growth-based incentive;
 - b. Allocate this growth-based incentive to a total of 30 eligible local CASA programs, comprised of 15 large and 15 small programs, based on the current methodology for determining incentive funding eligibility for large and small programs; and
 - c. Allocate this funding equally among the 30 eligible local CASA programs; and
2. Allocate \$2.713 million to the CASA programs based on the recommended amended methodology.

Relevant Previous Council Action

A CASA program is a nonprofit organization that supports and promotes trained volunteers appointed by a judicial officer to provide advocacy for a child who is under the jurisdiction of a juvenile court. A CASA volunteer spends time with the child, monitors the child's needed services, and provides child-focused recommendations to the court based on the best interest of the child.

Legislation (Stats. 1988, ch. 723) amended Welfare and Institutions Code section 100 et seq. to require the Judicial Council to establish guidelines encouraging the development of local CASA programs that assist abused and neglected children who are the subject of judicial proceedings. The legislation also called for the establishment of a CASA grant program to be administered by the Judicial Council.

In August 2003, at the recommendation of the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee, the Executive Committee approved a formula-based method for distributing Judicial Council CASA program funding to California CASA programs. The new funding approach replaced the previous competitive request-for-proposals process with predetermined program awards. Then on August 23, 2013, the Judicial Council approved a new funding methodology that was formula-based and used program data submitted by local programs to evaluate the efficiency and growth of those programs.¹

At its meeting on July 20, 2018, the Judicial Council adopted a revised methodology that provides a larger percentage of funds as base funding and replaced the two existing incentives with a growth incentive for those programs that are eligible.² The revised methodology made no changes to the four-tiered base funding portion of the methodology.

¹ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Juvenile Dependency: Court Appointed Special Advocate Program Funding Methodology* (July 19, 2013), www.courts.ca.gov/documents/jc-20130823-itemM.pdf.

² Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Judicial Council Budget: Court Appointed Special Advocate Funding Methodology and FY 2018–19 Allocations* (June 28, 2018), <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6357571&GUID=C010F4D4-28C5-4868-871C-94B763688ACA>.

The Budget Act of 2018 included a \$500,000 augmentation to Judicial Council CASA funding, which increased funding from \$2.213 million to \$2.713 million to promote program growth, specifically to support efforts to increase the number of foster children served by CASAs and to reduce backlogs of youth in local courts waiting for a volunteer assignment. At its meeting on September 21, 2018, the Judicial Council approved the allocation of these funds to CASA programs as additional base funding for FYs 2018–19 and 2019–20 using the four-tiered base funding methodology adopted and reaffirmed at its August 2013 and July 2018 meetings, respectively.³ In this report to Council, the Committee noted that it would develop recommendations for a methodology specific to these funds for implementation in FY 2020–21. The committee deferred this item during the pandemic and in FY 2021–22, the Judicial Council approved extending utilization of the four-tiered case funding methodology for allocation of the augmented funds beyond the two-year funding plan.⁴ On July 15, 2022, the Judicial Council directed Judicial Council CASA program staff to develop a funding methodology for the \$500,000 augmentation.⁵

At its July 2023 meeting, the Judicial Council approved recommendations to continue allocation of the \$500,000 funding augmentation using the four-tiered base funding methodology approved by the Council on September 21, 2018 and amended the existing methodology to allow for expansion of the CASA Local Assistance program to serve new courts without a program.⁶ The council also directed the committee continue to review data regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the child welfare system and local CASA programs, and present recommendations for a funding methodology for this \$500,000 augmentation for FY 2024–25.

Analysis/Rationale

\$500,000 augmentation

In FY 2023–24, the committee convened an ad hoc working group to work with program staff to develop an ongoing funding methodology for the \$500,000 funding augmentation. The ad hoc working group reviewed CASA Local Assistance base funding amounts for each county, the number of dependents served by CASAs, and the resident population for each county. In developing its recommendation, the ad hoc working group considered several factors and options

³ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., (Aug. 14, 2018), *Judicial Council Budget: Allocation of Augmented Funding for Court Appointed Special Advocate Grant Program*, <http://jcc.legistar.com/gateway.aspx?m=l&id=/matter.aspx?key=2133>.

⁴ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Juvenile Law: Fiscal Year 2021–22 Funding Allocations for Court Appointed Special Advocate Local Assistance* (June 16, 2021), <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9487734&GUID=BD0E146D-4BF6-40A9-B325-779E70763AAD>.

⁵ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Juvenile Law: Fiscal Year 2022–23 Funding Allocations for Court Appointed Special Advocate Local Assistance* (June 22, 2022), <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11051536&GUID=CB060812-69AE-4272-9D05-0F0AECEA8ABC>.

⁶ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Juvenile Law: Court Appointed Special Advocate Funding Methodology, Program Expansion, and Fiscal Year 2023–2024 Allocations* (June 21, 2023), <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=12124955&GUID=4BBC2005-07B6-4FC7-AF49-155BED6339E0>.

including the intended purpose for the augmentation funding, equity, and potential impact on programs. Questions considered by the ad hoc working group are detailed below.

1. *Should the \$500,000 augmentation funding be allocated to programs as a separate growth-based incentive?*

The ad hoc working group determined that the \$500,000 funding augmentation should be awarded and allocated as a separate growth-based incentive as the purpose for this specific funding is to support efforts to increase the number of foster children served and reduce backlogs of youth in local courts waiting for a volunteer assignment.

2. *How many programs should be eligible for this second growth-based incentive?*

Currently, 27 programs are eligible for the existing growth incentive. The ad hoc working group determined that eligibility for this separate growth-incentive should be increased to 30 programs, 15 large and 15 small, using the existing methodology for determining eligibility for incentive funding.⁷ Awarding the augmentation funding to 30 programs makes seventy-five percent of all programs eligible for incentive funding. The ad hoc working group determined that increasing the number of programs eligible for incentive funding would best support the purpose of the funding and promote equity.

3. *How should the \$500,000 augmentation funding be allocated to eligible programs?*

The ad hoc working group determined that the funding should be allocated equally among the 30 eligible programs as this option best advances the intended purpose of the funding which is to support efforts to increase the number of foster children served and reduce backlogs of youth in local courts waiting for a volunteer assignment. In addition, this option will provide a fair and equitable distribution of the funds as eligible programs, both large and small, will receive equal funding.

After careful consideration, the ad hoc working group agreed that creating a separate growth-based incentive that distributes funding equally among seventy-five percent of all local CASA programs is the most equitable option.

Proposed funding allocations for FY 2024–25

The judicial branch budget for Judicial Council CASA grants for FY 2024–25 is \$2.713 million, including the ongoing \$500,000 augmentation. This funding supports 45 CASA programs serving 52 counties. The committee recommends allocation of the \$2.713 million for FY 2024–25 to the CASA programs based on the recommended amended methodology as outlined in Attachment A.

⁷ The existing funding incentive is allocated to 14 large programs and 13 small programs. Programs serving counties with less than 50 children in foster care are exempt from receiving an incentive. Large programs are evaluated based on the number of children served by CASAs compared to the previous year, with the top 14 programs with the largest increase receiving an incentive. Small programs are evaluated based on the percentage of children in foster care served by CASAs for the current year, with the top 13 programs serving the largest percentage receiving an incentive.

Policy implications

There are no policy implications to consider for the recommended allocation and methodology revisions.

Comments

Circulation for public comment was not required for this report. However, as indicated previously, the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee convened an ad hoc working group to work with program staff to develop an ongoing funding methodology for the \$500,000 augmentation. When evaluating various options, the working group considered child welfare data, county populations, the historical funding methodology, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the child welfare system, the challenges faced by the local CASA programs, the purpose for the augmentation funding, equity, and impact on the programs.

Alternatives considered

Three alternatives to recommendation 1 were considered:

1. *Allocate the \$500,000 to a total of 27 programs based on the existing methodology for incentive funding.*

The ad hoc working group determined that allocating the \$500,000 funding as a separate growth incentive to additional programs would better promote growth and equity. Expanding eligibility to a total of 30 programs makes seventy-five percent of all local CASA programs eligible for incentive funding.

2. *Allocate the \$500,000 to 30 eligible programs (15 large and 15 small) with \$300,000 for large programs and \$200,000 for small programs.*

This option generated substantial discussion and consideration. The ad hoc working group found that this would advance the intended purpose of the funding and incentivize programs to increase the number of foster children served by CASAs. This option also would provide incentive funding to seventy-five percent of all programs. However, because the purpose of the augmentation funding is to increase the number of foster children served by CASAs, the ad hoc working group concluded that creating a separate growth-based incentive that distributes funding equally between eligible large and small programs is a slightly more equitable option.

3. *Allocate the \$500,000 to 30 eligible programs (15 large and 15 small) with \$200,000 for large programs and \$300,000 for small programs.*

For the same reason stated above as to alternative 2, the ad hoc working group determined that a separate growth-based incentive that distributes funding equally between eligible large and small programs is more equitable.

Fiscal and Operational Impacts

This recommendation is for the allocation of funds that are included in the FY 2024–25 budget. If the recommended funding methodology for the \$500,000 augmentation is approved, seventeen

programs will see a decrease in overall funding as this funding has been allocated to all programs as additional base funding using the four-tiered base funding methodology adopted and reaffirmed at its August 2013 and July 2018 meetings, respectively.

Attachments and Links

Attachment A: Proposed Allocation for FY 2024–2025 Judicial Council Court-Appointed Special Advocate Local Assistance Funding

DRAFT

Judicial Council Court-Appointed Special Advocate Local Assistance Funding

Local CASA Programs by County(ies)	Base Allocations	Growth Incentive A \$500,000	Growth Incentive B	Total Proposed JC Local Assistance Grant
Alameda	\$57,500.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$78,227.66
Amador /Calaveras	\$44,850.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$65,577.66
Butte/Glenn	\$58,650.00	\$16,666.66		\$75,316.66
Contra Costa	\$57,500.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$78,227.66
Del Norte	\$29,900.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$50,627.66
El Dorado	\$39,100.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$59,827.66
Fresno/Madera	\$86,250.00	\$16,666.66		\$102,916.66
Humboldt	\$29,900.00			\$29,900.00
Imperial	\$39,100.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$59,827.66
Inyo/Mono	\$44,850.00			\$44,850.00
Kern	\$57,500.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$78,227.66
Kings	\$39,100.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$59,827.66
Lassen	\$29,900.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$50,627.66
Los Angeles	\$57,500.00			\$57,500.00
Marin	\$39,100.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$59,827.66
Mariposa	\$29,900.00			\$29,900.00
Mendocino/Lake	\$58,650.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$79,377.66
Merced	\$39,100.00	\$16,666.66		\$55,766.66
Modoc	\$29,900.00			\$29,900.00
Monterey	\$48,300.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$69,027.66
Napa	\$39,100.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$59,827.66
Nevada	\$29,900.00			\$29,900.00
Orange	\$57,500.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$78,227.66
Placer/Yuba	\$72,450.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$93,177.66
Plumas	\$29,900.00			\$29,900.00
Riverside	\$57,500.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$78,227.66
Sacramento	\$57,500.00			\$57,500.00
San Benito	\$29,900.00			\$29,900.00
San Bernardino	\$57,500.00			\$57,500.00
San Diego	\$57,500.00			\$57,500.00
San Francisco	\$48,300.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$69,027.66
San Joaquin	\$48,300.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$69,027.66
San Luis Obispo	\$39,100.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$59,827.66
San Mateo	\$48,300.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$69,027.66
Santa Barbara	\$48,300.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$69,027.66
Santa Clara	\$57,500.00			\$57,500.00
Santa Cruz	\$39,100.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$59,827.66
Shasta/Tehama	\$58,650.00			\$58,650.00

Judicial Council Court-Appointed Special Advocate Local Assistance Funding

Local CASA Programs by County(ies)	Base Allocations	Growth Incentive A \$500,000	Growth Incentive B	Total Proposed JC Local Assistance Grant
Siskiyou	\$29,900.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$50,627.66
Solano	\$48,300.00			\$48,300.00
Sonoma	\$48,300.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$69,027.66
Stanislaus	\$48,300.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$69,027.66
Tulare	\$48,300.00			\$48,300.00
Ventura	\$48,300.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$69,027.66
Yolo	\$39,100.00	\$16,666.66	\$4,061.00	\$59,827.66
<u>Totals</u>	<u>\$2,103,350.00</u>	<u>\$499,999.80</u>	<u>\$109,647.00</u>	<u>\$2,712,996.80</u>

Total Local Assistance Grant	\$2,713,000.00
Total Base Amounts	\$2,103,350.00
Growth Incentive A Awards for Top 30 Programs (15 Small & 15 Large)	\$499,999.80
Growth Incentive B Awards for Top 27 Programs (13 Small & 14 Large)	\$109,647.00

**Base Allocations are based on the four-tier methodology*

After allocating funds to the base according to the methodology, \$4,061.00 per qualified program was available for Growth Incentive B funding.



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M E M O R A N D U M

Date

April 23, 2024

Action Requested

Please Review

To

Members of the Family and Juvenile Law
Advisory Committee

Deadline

April 29, 2024

From

Kelly Meehleib, Supervising Analyst

Contact

Kelly Meehleib, 916-263-1693
kelly.meehleib@jud.ca.gov

Subject

Draft Judicial Council Report and Draft
Report to the Legislature regarding FY 2023–
24 Funding for California Court Appointed
Special Advocate Association

The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory committee serves as the oversight body for the Judicial Branch Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program funding. The Budget Act of 2023 appropriated \$20 million to the California CASA Association for support of local CASA programs for fiscal year (FY) 2023–24¹ and requires the Judicial Council to submit a report to the Legislature on CASA program implementation and outcomes by July 1, 2024. The committee is asked to review and consider the attached draft Report to the Legislature and corresponding draft Report to the Judicial Council.

¹ At its meeting on September 19, 2023, the Judicial Council [approved allocation](#) of the \$20 million in General Fund appropriations, included in the Budget Act of 2023, to the California CASA Association for FY 2023–24.



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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 24-089

For business meeting on: July 12, 2024

Title

Report to the Legislature: FY 2023–24
Funding for California Court Appointed
Special Advocate Association

Submitted by

Judicial Council staff
Audrey Fancy, Principal Managing Attorney
Center for Families, Children & the Courts

Agenda Item Type

Information Only

Date of Report

April 23, 2024

Contact

Audrey Fancy, 415-865-7706

Audrey.Fancy@jud.ca.gov

Kelly Meehleib, 916-263-1693

Kelly.Meehleib@jud.ca.gov

Executive Summary

On or before July 1, 2024, staff for the Judicial Council’s Center for Families, Children & the Courts submitted to the Legislature *Report on California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association Funding Allocations and Program Development: Year Two*, in accordance with the requirements stated in the Budget Act of 2023.

Relevant Previous Council Action

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program is a nonprofit organization that supports and promotes trained volunteers appointed by a judicial officer to provide advocacy for a child who is under the jurisdiction of a juvenile court. A CASA volunteer spends time with the child, monitors the child’s needed services, and provides child-focused recommendations to the court based on the best interest of the child.

At its meeting on September 20, 2022, the Judicial Council approved allocation of the \$20 million in General Fund appropriations, included in the Budget Act of 2022, to the California

CASA Association.¹ On June 30, 2023, staff for the Judicial Council’s Center for Families, Children & the Courts submitted to the Legislature the *Report on California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association Funding Allocations and Program Development: Year One*, in accordance with the requirements stated in the Budget Act of 2022.²

At its meeting on September 19, 2023, the Judicial Council approved allocation of the \$20 million in General Fund appropriations, included in the Budget Act of 2023, to the California CASA Association for FY 2023–24.³

Analysis/Rationale

A total of \$60 million one-time General Fund is appropriated for the California CASA Association for support of local CASA programs was appropriated through the Budget Act of 2022, including \$20 million in FY 2022–23, \$20 million in FY 2023–24, and \$20 million in FY 2024–25. (See Link A.) The Budget Act of 2022 further specified that for FY 2022–23, “\$16 million shall be allocated ... to provide funding to the local [CASA] programs to expand capacity, recruitment, and training and to stabilize local budgets and staffing” and “\$4,000,000 shall be allocated to the California [CASA] Association to be used statewide for volunteer recruitment initiatives, shared resources and infrastructure, development of statewide training curriculum, collection of data on program implementation and outcomes to support the report to the Legislature, and other uses to expand [CASA] services in the state,” and that “[t]he Judicial Council shall annually report to the Legislature on the court-appointed special advocate (CASA) program implementation and outcomes. The initial report shall be due on July 1, 2023, and will describe funding allocations and program development.” (See Link B.)

The Budget Act of 2023 includes the \$20 million appropriation for allocation to California CASA Association for FY 2023–24. (See Link C.) As required by the Budget Act, the attached legislative report describes funding allocations and program development for FY 2023–24.

Fiscal Impact and Policy Implications

On January 10, 2023, Governor Gavin Newsom proposed eliminating the \$40 million in funding for years two (FY 2023–24) and three (FY 2024–25), in an effort to achieve a balanced budget. As a result, California CASA and local CASA programs began adjusting their plans in preparation for the possibility of reduced funding. Subsequently, on May 12, 2023, the Governor’s May Revision included an adjustment to restore the funding for years two and three.

¹ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Juvenile Law: Fiscal Year 2022–23 Funding Allocation for California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association* (Sept. 2, 2022), <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11204252&GUID=EAE945CB-DE38-46FB-B38D-9AA373B27A29>.

² Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Report to the Legislature: FY 2022–23 Funding for California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association* (June 21, 2023), <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=12124956&GUID=A040336C-429B-4192-AD16-D6CB0E323FAA>.

³ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Juvenile Law: Fiscal Year 2023–24 Funding Allocation for California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association* (Sept. 19, 2023), <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=12246017&GUID=71F6ABFC-A250-4283-9CF8-52ABFA1F6460>.

Although California CASA and local programs adjusted and retooled implementation plans in anticipation of the reduced funding, they were positioned to continue implementation efforts to meet planned outcomes by July 2023.

Attachments and Links

1. Attachment A: *Report on California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association Funding Allocations and Program Development: Year Two*
2. Link A: Sen. Bill 154 (Stats. 2022, ch. 43), SEC 2.00, item 0250-101-0932, schedule (5), provisions 31 & 32,
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB154
3. Link B: Assem. Bill 178 (Stats. 2022, ch. 45), SEC. 4., item 0250-101-0932 of section 2.00 of the Budget Act of 2022, provisions 31, 32 & 34,
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB178
4. Link C: Assem. Bill 102 (Stats. 2023, ch. 38), SEC 6. Item 0250-101-0932 of section 2.00 of Budget Act of 2023 (Assem. Bill 102), provisions 31, 32 & 34,
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB102

July 1, 2024

Report on California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association Funding Allocations and Program Development: Year Two

Fiscal Year 2023–24



Judicial Council of California

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

Hon. Patricia Guerrero

*Chief Justice of California and
Chair of the Judicial Council*

Shelley Curran

*Administrative Director
Judicial Council*

Robert Oyung

Chief Deputy Director

Salena Chow

Chief Operating Officer

CENTER FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN & THE COURTS

Charlene Depner

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Don Will

Principal Manager

Audrey Fancy

Principal Managing Attorney

Kelly Meehleib

Supervising Analyst

Sarah Saria

*Attorney and
Primary Author of Report*

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Executive Summary

Under the State Budget Act of 2023, the Judicial Council is submitting *Report on California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association Funding Allocations and Program Development: Year Two* for the one-time \$60 million appropriation to the California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association.

The State Budget Act of 2022 (Stats. 2022, ch.45) amended the Judicial Council's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) grant funding to include an additional \$60 million, to be paid in three increments over three years, to the California CASA Association (California CASA) for support of CASA programs across the state. On January 10, 2023, Governor Newsom proposed eliminating \$40 million in funding for fiscal years two (2023–24) and three (2024–25) in an effort to achieve a balanced budget. On May 12, 2023, the Governor's May Revision included funding for years two and three. Although the proposed elimination of the second and third-year funding caused delays in the capacity-building efforts of some local programs, the programs readjusted and positioned to meet planned outcomes by July 2023.

The State Budget Act of 2023 appropriated a total of \$20 million for fiscal year 2023–24, including \$16 million to provide funding to local CASA programs to expand capacity, recruitment, and training, and to stabilize local budgets and staffing. The remaining \$4 million is to be used by California CASA for statewide volunteer recruitment initiatives, shared resources and infrastructure, development of statewide training curriculum, collection of data on program implementation and outcomes to support the report to the Legislature, and other uses to expand CASA services in the state.

The State Budget Act of 2023 specified that the Judicial Council annually report to the Legislature on CASA program implementation and outcomes. This second report due on July 1, 2024, is required to describe funding allocations and program development.

I. Background

A CASA program is a nonprofit organization that supports and promotes trained volunteers appointed by a judicial officer to provide advocacy for a child who is under the jurisdiction of a juvenile court. A CASA volunteer spends time with the child, monitors the child's needed services, and provides child-focused recommendations to the court based on the best interest of the child.

There are 44 local CASA programs in California serving 52 of the state's 58 counties. In 2023, 8,638 active Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA volunteers) served 12,022 youth in the dependency and juvenile justice systems across California. CASA volunteers spend time with children in person each month, meet with the stakeholders involved in the children's lives, and provide recommendations to superior court judges based on each child's needs and best interests.

II. Year Two Funding Allocations

Year two funding of \$20 million included \$100,000 for Judicial Council’s administration of the funds. The remaining \$19.9 million was transferred to California CASA: \$19.5 million in November 2023 and \$400,000 in March 2024.

The balance of \$3.9 million is designated for California CASA–driven initiatives to implement statewide services and efficiencies that benefit the local programs collectively. California CASA allocated funds to implement a comprehensive statewide marketing campaign aimed at recruiting new volunteers and donors and initiated efforts to measure the impact of a CASA volunteer on the health and well-being of children. California CASA is also supporting its network of local CASA organizations with growth plans, training, administrative support, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs.

III. Year Two Grant Opportunities and Funding Allocations for Local CASA Programs

California CASA distributed \$16 million in grants and designed year two grant activities to be meaningful and measurable, emphasizing progress and impact. After consulting with local CASA programs, California CASA concluded that the most effective use of year two grant funds would be to allow local programs to build upon the strategies and focus areas they developed during year one.

California CASA created three grant opportunities for local programs in the second year: Grant Opportunity 1 provides funding to stabilize operations; Grant Opportunity 2 provides funding for staff retention; and Grant Opportunity 3 provides funding for growth and expansion of the CASA program. Each local CASA program had the choice to apply for one, two, or three grant opportunities. California CASA conducted two online network conferences in 2023, which allowed local programs to seek clarification and offer input on these grant opportunities.

California CASA allocated:

- \$3,898,000 to 44 programs for Grant Opportunity 1;
- \$1,211,476 to 39 programs for Grant Opportunity 2; and
- \$10,890,524 to 35 programs for Grant Opportunity 3.

The total funding allocated to each program for year two (FY 2023–24) is detailed at Appendix A. The grant period for all opportunities is October 1, 2023, through June 30, 2025.

Grant Opportunity 1

Grant Opportunity 1 provides funding to local CASA programs for day-to-day operational expenses, including those for recruiting, training, and supervising CASA volunteers. The funding allocation for this opportunity was based on the number of children served by each local CASA program in a consecutive 12-month period over the last two years (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023).

Every local CASA program received a base amount of \$8,500 and for every tier of 25 children served, a program was eligible for \$8,500, with award increments capped at \$300,000. California CASA awarded a total of \$3,898,000 to 44 local programs for this grant opportunity. Local CASA programs will submit reports explaining how the funding strengthened the infrastructure of their organization in July 2025.

Grant Opportunity 2

Grant Opportunity 2 provides funding to local CASA programs to support staff retention efforts including salary enhancements, benefits, 403b matching, and professional development opportunities. The funding allocation was calculated at 3% of the organization's annualized costs for salaries, including payroll taxes, based on the most recent fiscal quarter's payroll report. California CASA awarded a total of \$1,211,476 to 39 programs for this grant opportunity. Local CASA organizations are required to report on measurable outcomes including year-over-year staff retention numbers and documentation of equitable compensation and benefits in the workplace, supported by written narratives, in April 2024, December 2024, and July 2025.

Grant Opportunity 3

Grant Opportunity 3 provides funding to help local CASA organizations scale up and sustain growth in order to increase the number of children served. This opportunity included the option to expand into other areas beyond dependency by recruiting, training, and supervising CASA volunteers to advocate for youth in juvenile justice or Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) cases. To apply for this grant, programs presented a measurable and meaningful project plans, addressing an identified problem within their service area. Plans were required to outline strategies for growth or expansion using trained CASA volunteers and/or paid staff members, and a project budget. California CASA awarded a total of \$10,890,524 for this grant opportunity. Programs are required to report on at least two measurable outcomes that increase the number of children served by either a CASA volunteer or staff member, supported by written narratives, in April 2024, December 2024, and July 2025.

IV. Year One Progress and Ongoing Year Two Activities of California CASA and Local CASA Organizations

California CASA developed a comprehensive, multiyear statewide plan for:

- Implementation of volunteer recruitment initiatives,
- Distribution of resources and infrastructure,
- Development of curriculum, and
- Collection of data.

Local CASA Program Accomplishments in Year One¹

- Increased community outreach and volunteer recruitment resulted in more CASA volunteers,
- Increased supervisory staffing led to more training and individualized assistance for volunteers,
- Improved staffing levels led to improved staff retention and greater program efficiency and productivity, including more participation with child welfare partners,
- Increased participation with local probation and juvenile justice partners resulted in better outreach and service to youth,
- Increased participation with local school districts led to additional assessments and better monitoring of youths' progress,
- Participation with local government and county partners helped youth in foster care find employment, navigate Extended Foster Care services for youth up to age 21, and improved advocacy related to the psychotropic medications of youth,
- Improved data collection and analysis led to better tracking of advocacy goals and grant reporting, and
- Additional staffing led to caseload redistribution so staff with expertise can focus on needs of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC), LGBTQ+ youth, youth with mental health needs, transitional age youth (TAY), and youth with educational and juvenile justice issues.

Volunteer and Recruitment Initiatives

In November 2023, after a statewide Request for Proposal (RFP) process, California CASA engaged a marketing agency to collaborate on volunteer and recruitment initiatives. This digital marketing agency focuses on branding, creative production, marketing, and technology, working across multiple sectors, including the nonprofit civic sector. Collaboration began in February 2024. It is expected that this collaboration will continue and will be addressed in the next reporting period.

The California CASA marketing and communications team continues to work with the local network, through monthly Marketing & Philanthropy Zoom meetings, sharing resources, and providing one-on-one counseling where requested. As part of this state grant-funded volunteer and recruitment initiative, California CASA launched an extensive campaign on PBS stations that ran from June through December 2023.

Through year two, California CASA provided monthly social media kits for the 44 local programs, highlighting volunteer recruiting messaging and providing them with ready-made graphics and text to use on their own social media platforms. Statewide, California CASA is complementing this messaging with paid social media ads and posts. Through these efforts and

¹ See Appendix B for details.

others, California CASA doubled the number of volunteer leads generated by its website for local programs, from 1,173 leads (FY 2021–22) to 2,617 leads (FY 2022–23).

California CASA will spend at least \$3 million for a volunteer recruitment campaign, including extensive statewide advertising, through 2026 . California CASA will use data analysis, research, and goal assessment to guide its approach. A key objective is to increase the number and diversity of the pool of CASA volunteers to align volunteer demographics more closely with children in foster care. Currently, 67% of CASA volunteers are white, but children in foster care are 21% white and 79% Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

Shared Resources and Infrastructure

California CASA engaged a consultant to assist the local network with recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and all aspects of cultivating a workplace where employees can thrive. In year one, California CASA helped local programs create new staff personnel policies, collaborated with local programs on hiring and staff performance management, offered virtual trainings by human resources experts, and began working with local programs to provide benefits more efficiently. Appendix B contains comments from local programs about the impacts of this work.

Local programs welcomed LanguageLine Solutions, the language translation service that California CASA secured for all programs to use free of charge. The service is proving popular, with many programs using the service regularly to help CASA volunteers and staff communicate with youth and their families.

Increasing philanthropy is an ongoing and high priority for the entire network. In its effort to consult and assist local CASA programs with fundraising, California CASA added two regional directors of philanthropy who are assigned to specific local programs in northern and southern California. This assistance is intended to help local programs increase their fundraising regionally.

Growth Strategist

California CASA engaged two consulting firms specializing in growth strategy to help local programs create efficient and sustainable processes. These consultants are working with local programs to create or modify their existing strategic plans to increase the number of children they serve. The consultants will work with California CASA staff to provide change management training for all local programs. Local programs have the option to use this service and select which consultant they want to engage. This work is in currently in the beginning stages and updates on progress will be included in the year three report.

Collection of Data and Outcomes

The collection of data and outcomes is a very important part of the collective-benefit support for the local CASA programs statewide. In year one, California CASA partnered with a consulting firm to assess current data readiness and make recommendations for meaningful metrics statewide and locally.

The consultant is now developing a mixed-methods evaluation framework and will provide capacity building to ensure sustainability. Local programs will provide data about their programs in the coming years. California CASA will continue collaborating with the consultant to identify ways to collect data and measure outcomes in the most accurate and efficient ways.

Development of a Statewide Training Curriculum

Of the 44 local CASA programs, 35 currently use CASA University to train volunteers both before they are assigned to a child's case and on an ongoing basis. CASA volunteers are required to complete at least 30 hours of pre-service training and an additional 12 hours of in-service training annually. California CASA provides an online platform in CASA University that allows trainees to access and complete half of their pre-service training virtually. To fulfill their annual 12 hours of in-service training, volunteers and staff can access the online platform's extensive catalogue of over 70 recorded and interactive courses available ranging from 30 to 120 minutes each. As of April 2024, California CASA issued 575 certificates based on completed courses. California CASA is reviewing all content – eight chapters and 37 units currently in the curriculum – with a goal of making the curriculum more reflective of current needs, the diverse populations served by programs, and the best practices in adult learning strategies.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

In year one, California CASA provided a statewide nine-month DEI training to the staff and the boards of directors of California CASA and 26 local programs. In August 2023, California CASA hired a full-time DEI manager, who has been working to make DEI training more widely available to the local network. This work includes creating a DEI training guidebook that can be used by California CASA and local CASA organizations and in-person consulting with program staff and boards.

California CASA is introducing new DEI modules, encompassing topics such as gender biases and unconscious biases. California CASA also convened a DEI task force in January 2024 to evaluate network feedback and deliberate on future actions and received suggestions for updating its DEI Pledge, to examine and work to eliminate learned racism, bias, and discrimination; and its DEI Plan for building DEI capacity internally and throughout the California CASA network.

Conclusion

In FY 2023–24 California CASA allocated \$16 million in funding to local CASA programs to expand capacity, recruitment, and training to stabilize local budgets and staffing through the three grant opportunities detailed in this report. The three grant opportunities were designed to emphasize progress and impact and allow local programs to build upon the strategies and focus areas they developed during year one.

California CASA continues to make progress on efforts funded by the \$3.9 million appropriated to the organization to initiate, administer, and execute projects of shared benefit to the entire local CASA network. California CASA allocated \$1 million to defray part of the costs of

overseeing statewide initiatives and hiring experts and the remaining \$2.9 million for the expansion of statewide awareness and recruitment campaigns for CASA volunteers, the development of new data and outcomes measures, and the hiring of consultants to help local programs expand CASA services to California's foster population growth strategists and human resource experts.

California CASA's initial implementation plans were based on funding over a three-year period. The proposed elimination of the second and third-year funding caused delays in the capacity-building efforts of some local programs in year one, but the programs adjusted and positioned to meet planned outcomes by July 2023, and California CASA is positioned to continue the planned implementation efforts described in this report.

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Appendix A Year Two Funding Allocations

The table² below lists the 44 local CASA programs and their grant award amounts, with the biggest award going to CASA of Los Angeles and the smallest going to Modoc CASA and Plumas CASA.

County	Organization	TOTAL
Los Angeles	CASA of Los Angeles	\$3,295,807
Orange	CASA of Orange County	\$2,063,557
Riverside	Voices for Children Riverside	\$882,661
Fresno and Madera	CASA of Fresno and Madera Counties	\$703,213
San Diego	Voices for Children San Diego	\$611,441
Placer	Child Advocates of Placer County	\$602,173
Santa Cruz	CASA of Santa Cruz County	\$586,666
San Francisco	San Francisco CASA	\$582,080
Kern	CASA of Kern County	\$506,974
Santa Clara	Child Advocates of Silicon Valley	\$491,222
Sacramento	CASA Sacramento	\$481,253
Monterey	CASA of Monterey County	\$368,664
Santa Barbara	CASA of Santa Barbara County	\$358,831
Tulare	CASA of Tulare County	\$346,956
Humboldt	CASA of Humboldt	\$309,432
Marin	Marin CASA	\$293,013
Alameda	Alameda County CASA	\$285,054
Solano	CASA of Solano County	\$267,694
San Luis Obispo	CASA of San Luis Obispo County	\$266,878
Kings	CASA of Kings County	\$260,186
San Mateo	CASA of San Mateo County	\$251,866
Ventura	CASA of Ventura County	\$251,575
Imperial	CASA of Imperial County	\$202,818
Contra Costa	CASA of Contra Costa County	\$201,616
Amador and Calaveras	CASA of Amador and Calaveras Counties	\$147,701
El Dorado	Child Advocates of El Dorado County	\$133,784
Yolo	Yolo County CASA	\$126,488
Merced	CASA of Merced County	\$121,382
Stanislaus	CASA of Stanislaus County	\$116,619
Siskiyou	CASA of Siskiyou County	\$113,065
San Joaquin	CASA of San Joaquin County	\$105,587

² California CASA Association, email from CEO Sharon Lawrence, *Awards by Amounts – Cycle 2 (2023–2025)* (Feb. 21, 2024).

Sonoma	CASA of Sonoma County	\$98,464
San Bernardino	CASA of San Bernadino County	\$86,150
Mariposa	CASA of Mariposa County	\$76,825
Lassen	CASA of Lassen Family Services	\$75,014
Butte, Glenn, Shasta & Tehama	CASA of Butte, Glenn, Shasta & Tehama Counties	\$65,480
San Benito	CASA of San Benito County	\$63,190
Nevada	Child Advocates of Nevada County	\$60,294
Napa	Napa CASA	\$42,500
Mendocino and Lake	CASA of Mendocino and Lake Counties	\$35,445
Del Norte	CASA of Del Norte	\$22,515
Inyo and Mono	CASA of the Eastern Sierra	\$20,867
Modoc	Modoc CASA	\$8,500
Plumas	Plumas CASA	\$8,500

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Appendix B
Selected Comments from the CASA Network/Year One Funding³

As part of the grant application, each local CASA program was asked to answer two questions:

1. How has the grant funding improved the overall quality of your CASA program? Please include a short success story that highlights the improvements. If possible, please include quotes from youth and/or advocates.
2. How has the grant funding allowed your CASA program to engage with the local community or collaborate with other organizations to better serve children?

Note: Each respondent reported on the impact of state funding on their operations and stability, as well as the number of children in care as of January 1, 2023. A selection of these responses is below.

CASA Program / service / grant impact	Comments Excerpted from Local CASA Programs' Reports 2023: Year One State Grant Funding
CASA of Butte, Glenn, Shasta, Tehama Counties (1,185 children in care)	Grant funding to our rural counties from the State has allowed us to maintain staffing after losing other funding in the year prior. We have been able to increase staff to include a training coordinator, which is critical to our mission and allowed us to serve additional children. Having adequate staff, we have been able to increase the availability and support we provide to the CASA Volunteers. CASA feedback has been positive, with staff being told by several volunteers: <i>“You always go above and beyond.”</i> We have increased our participation in community outreach events, reconnecting with partners after limiting our community events due to COVID. We have grown our relationships with all of our County DA/Victim Witness offices.
CASA of Del Norte (105 children in care)	The impactful grant funding from the State has transformed our organization, enabling the hiring of a dedicated Marketing Associate. This strategic addition has helped free up time from our program and executive staff to excel in their respective roles, with our Case Supervisor providing increased support to CASA volunteers and the Executive Director focusing on vital tasks like training and budgeting. Moreover, the funding has facilitated the recruitment of more volunteers, staff training, and essential equipment upgrades. The community engagement aspect has thrived through our Marketing Associate's collaboration, resulting in the establishment of a quarterly newsletter, partnerships with local businesses through the Traveling Banner program, and impactful event documentation by a skilled photographer. CASA of Del Norte stands as a community leader for our rural county, advocating for collaboration and systemic change to improve access to

³ California CASA Association, memo from CEO Sharon Lawrence, *Report to the Judicial Council from California CASA: Year One Funding/State Appropriation* (Feb. 1, 2024).

CASA Program / service / grant impact	Comments Excerpted from Local CASA Programs' Reports 2023: Year One State Grant Funding
	quality services for foster children and youth, all made possible through the transformative State grant funds
CASA of Fresno and Madera Counties (2,810 children in care)	<p>For CASA of Fresno and Madera Counties, the state funding through California CASA has been very important in stabilizing our organization and setting us up for the future, including by being able to retain quality staff and CASAs. We have redesigned and revamped marketing materials to increase awareness for recruitment of CASAs. In addition, our CASA program is building strong meaningful partnerships with local nonprofits who provide services for our foster youth. The State funding has helped CASA of Fresno and Madera Counties expand our collaboration efforts with local community partners, and we are very active with the local probation and the juvenile justice department, attending meetings on a regular basis and participating in the juvenile justice commission. We have also partnered with the City of Fresno Workforce Program to help foster youth obtain employment through the City of Fresno. The program is designed to provide all the wrap-around services foster youth might need in order to continue employment.</p> <p>We continue to provide ASQ assessments (a developmental screening tool designed for use by early educators and health care professionals) to children ages 0 to 5 in Madera County. We also partnered with the local Fresno Unified School District to serve children in the district who are foster youth assigned to CASAs. We are working with the Madera Unified School District to provide ACES and Building Resilience Support Groups for foster youth in the district who have CASA volunteers – this was a very successful program for the participants, an effective support group for those with similar background who could relate to each other and learn ways to mitigate their trauma.</p>
CASA of Kings County (336 children in care)	<p>We are so grateful for this funding from the State, which has improved the quality of our program in many ways, including the recruitment of new CASA volunteers – our October training and swearing-in was one of the largest class sizes we have ever had. Our upgraded recruitment strategies include using new paid Facebook ads targeting specific groups through SGT Media, leads which were diligently followed up by the Program Assistant. Our Program Assistant connected with the new CASA prospects and provided support and motivation through the Information Session, application, interview, advocate training, and on-the-job training while starting their new cases. The results for our last recruiting period (mid-April – September 2023) were strong. 82% of new leads were from ads placed by SGT Media (97 of the 118), as were 79% of the applicants (11 of 14) and 78% of newly trained CASAs (7 of 9). We observed that one of our new CASAs was apprehensive about starting her case. But, after guiding her through the on-the-job training steps she said, <i>“This has been a great experience.”</i> She had a new sense of confidence, and we know she will be a great CASA for her youth in Kings County.</p>

CASA Program / service / grant impact	Comments Excerpted from Local CASA Programs' Reports 2023: Year One State Grant Funding
<p>CASA of Los Angeles (25,609 children in care)</p>	<p>The transformative first-year grant funding from the State of California has made a significant positive impact on CASA of Los Angeles' ability to provide a high-quality advocacy program. By hiring more Advocate Supervisors, we decreased the caseload for all of our Advocate Supervisors. Not only has the reduced caseload led to greater staff satisfaction, but it also resulted in CASA volunteers feeling better supported by having a dedicated Advocate Supervisor with more time to guide them. Grant funding allowed us to hire a new Manager of Volunteer Relations, whose focus is on strengthening our relationships with CASAs and the overall volunteer community, as well as to organize continued education and in-services for our volunteers so they are equipped with the knowledge to better support our children. To increase staff retention, CASA/LA has been able to offer a more positive work-life balance to our staff with the introduction of a four-day work week that has been very well-received.</p> <p>CASA/LA also initiated and staffed the new position of Data & Evaluation Specialist, a person solely dedicated to data, which has allowed us to expand on and better track and analyze the data we are collecting to measure advocacy goals for each of the children with whom we work, and, if necessary, modify programs to better serve children and their families. This position has also helped us improve reporting, which supports grant and funding applications. A combination of State and private sector grant funding has given CASA/LA the opportunity to lay the groundwork to recruit more volunteers through the connections we are establishing, develop more formal partnerships, refer children to vital services, respond to the growing need for educational and mental health-related advocacy for systems-impacted youth, and co-develop program goals and objectives.</p> <p>By hiring more Advocate Supervisors and thus providing reduced caseloads across the team, these staff members have had more time to spend building relationships with other community members and organizations. CASA/LA staff have been able to join multiple court and community partner meetings, for instance, including with the AB 12 Steering Committee (for the needs of our non-minor dependents), the Office of Child Protection's permanency committee, the Los Angeles County Office of Education Conference, the Court Psychotropic Medication committee, DCFS Young Children in Care (YCIC) committee (which focuses on 0-5 population), California CASA's local programs meetings, and many more. At the same time, we have continued to ramp up our efforts to collaborate with other organizations supporting young people involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, such as the Children's Law Center (legal support and referrals), A Home Within (mental health), Butterfly's Haven (housing and service linkage), and Stepping Forward LA (peer support and 18+ resources), to name a few. State grant funding has also helped CASA/LA's marketing efforts, allowing CASA/LA to recently hire a Marketing Manager whose efforts will bring us heightened visibility to promote</p>

CASA Program / service / grant impact	Comments Excerpted from Local CASA Programs' Reports 2023: Year One State Grant Funding
	<p>our mission and increase awareness of our work within Los Angeles County – all supporting our goal of better serving systems-impacted children and their families.</p>
<p>CASA of Monterey County (233 children in care)</p> <p><i>* Note that whenever a child's name is mentioned, as it is here in this impact story, it has been changed to protect their confidentiality, an important rule of CASA practice.</i></p>	<p>The State funding we received from California CASA has helped stabilize our organization, adjust to our rapidly changing environment, and expand services. The strength of our program begins with our staff. This year we have had 100% retention, to which we ascribe the state funding; this is critical to the high quality of the services and support we provide. The funding has ensured that we can give annual increases that appropriately meet inflation in Monterey County. It has also allowed for the implementation of a 3% contribution to a new staff retirement plan. These are both contributing factors to our staff stability. We have also been able to offer several staff members professional development experiences (National CASA conference, local leadership program) and the entire team will be participating in the Bridgespan program (funded by California CASA and the state grant) starting in January.</p> <p>One of the biggest challenges we have faced over the last 18 months has been volunteer recruitment. The additional funding has created bandwidth among our senior-level staff to fully assess our marketing/recruitment efforts. We have returned to in-person recruitment, setting up tables at over 70 community events over the last 8 months. We have also increased our presence on local TV and radio and are assessing all materials and our strategies with a local marketing expert, anticipating a coordinated new campaign prior to February training. To help retain current CASAs, in January 2023 we conducted a Volunteer Insight survey, sending a survey to 500 current and former volunteers. We received 139 extremely detailed responses to 39 questions. Working with an external facilitator, we have taken action on many points and, to date, we have seen dramatic improvements in our communication with judges and children's attorneys and our local Department of Social Services. We have rearranged some of our continuing education offerings and added sessions based on survey feedback, prioritizing additional issues including an update of our website. We have increased marketing and recruitment efforts with an emphasis on returning to in-person community events to ensure that we are visible and present; we have expanded our social media presence with regular posts on events, thank you's to sponsors, stories about our children and youth, and resources from CA CASA's toolkit; we have strengthened collaboration with Judge Anderson to improve our partnership with the attorneys and court personnel to ensure we're all working together to achieve the best outcomes possible; we held our CASA Appreciation event for the first time in Salinas. Over 100 attended, including CASAs, judges, attorneys, Monterey Office of Education colleagues, Department of Social Services staff, Board members and funders.</p> <p>We have also assessed how we can best expand our services to continue to support youth in juvenile justice following the completion of the successful pilot program. The results of the study through California CASA and the University of Michigan</p>

CASA Program / service / grant impact	Comments Excerpted from Local CASA Programs' Reports 2023: Year One State Grant Funding
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	<p>showed the positive impact that CASAs have on youth in juvenile justice. Our program is now fully launched with local Probation Department and Juvenile Justice judge. This story highlights the impact of our juvenile justice work: CASA Troy is working with a fifteen-year-old youth “Adam,”* who is part of the Juvenile Justice Program. When Troy met Adam, he was told by the group home staff that Adam is very reserved and would most likely not talk much, especially since it would be on the phone. But CASA Troy and Adam immediately connected. Troy lives in Pacific Grove, and his youth is now placed in Fresno. However, that has not stopped Troy from making the 300+-mile roundtrip regularly to visit him. When they meet, they talk about school, therapy, family, etc., and finish by having some fun (games at Dave & Busters, walks to a local park or library). CASA Troy has become a key player for Adam on his team, which includes his therapist, Probation Officer, group home staff, and biological parent. Everyone on this team values Troy’s input as a CASA. And we are confident that Adam is on his way to successfully completing his probation conditions soon and moving forward towards adulthood and a productive future away from crime.</p>
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<p>CASA of Orange County (2513 children in care)</p>	<p>The impact of State funding on CASA of Orange County has been profound, both on our staffing and essential services and on our expanded community outreach. With the support of this funding, we hired a Community Partnership Coordinator who has played a pivotal role in engaging the local community. Since January, the Coordinator has successfully formed partnerships with numerous organizations throughout Orange County. These collaborations have yielded donated tickets for events and opportunities to purchase tickets at discounted rates from partners such as the Pacific Symphony, Pretend City, the Orange County Zoo, The Ocean Institute, and the Pacific Marine Mammal Center, along with Angels baseball. This initiative has enabled us to offer enriching activities for our youth while alleviating some of the financial burden from our dedicated CASAs. The State funding has not only strengthened our organizational capacity, allowing us to increase salaries and benefits to staff and thus improve stability, but has also directly translated into enhanced experiences and support for both our CASA and youth.</p>
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<p>CASA of San Joaquin County (1,362 children in care)</p>	<p>State funding has empowered our CASA program in San Joaquin with a new full-time recruiter/trainer, ensuring consistency in volunteer recruitment and training. The recruiter plays a pivotal role in building strong relationships with potential CASAs, guiding them through training and facilitating a smooth transition to their assignment to a CASA Supervisor. Recognizing challenges in the initial hiring process, adjustments were made, leading to the successful onboarding of CASAs in early November. One retired volunteer emphasized CASA’s post-retirement significance, viewing it as a meaningful opportunity to contribute to a child’s success within the foster care system. The recruiter collaborates with external organizations, such as the Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program, and engages in quarterly meetings with key partners to address the needs of at-risk</p>
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CASA Program / service / grant impact	Comments Excerpted from Local CASA Programs' Reports 2023: Year One State Grant Funding
	<p>youth. Collaborations with Victim Witness, Agape Worship, Assistance League, and the Pride Center of SJC further extend our support, ensuring comprehensive enrichment activities and meeting basic needs for youth. State funding has streamlined our recruitment process and fortified impactful collaborations for the benefit of our youth.</p>
<p>CASA of San Mateo County (186 children in care)</p>	<p>California CASA’s funding through the state appropriation for operational expenses (Opportunity #1); staff retention efforts (Opportunity #2); and the hiring of an administrative associate (Opportunity #3) has greatly enhanced our program this past year. Specifically, between 10/1/2022 and 10/1/2023, our program experienced the following significant changes and improvements: Staff grew with the addition of a new Program Manager position; a new position was added dedicated to communications and events; another new position focused on establishing more youth-centric and out-of-county partnerships; and we also added a much-needed new administrative associate position. We also promoted a Program Manager to Program Supervisor. These additions and changes allowed us to provide better and more focused services to youth and volunteers. We redistributed caseloads and created greater capacity for our Program Director to focus on larger strategic initiatives, including the creation of our new strategic plan and addressing the needs of our waitlist via new, targeted recruiting efforts as well as the exploration of other options such as reciprocity with CASA chapters in other counties. The redistribution also gave our Program Managers the ability to focus more on their specialty areas (covering CSEC, LGBTQIA+, mental health, transitional age youth, education and juvenile justice matters) to enhance offerings, resulting in a 50% increase in continuing education opportunities and increased outreach to and collaborations with relevant community partners. We are also in the process of creating volunteer resource guides on education and mental health.</p> <p>For the first time since COVID restrictions, we also resumed in-person events and activities. In-person pre-service trainings, orientations, and continuing education workshops are now underway. We have also held in-person Back-to-School, Halloween costume parties, and holiday gift drives. We increased volunteer engagement opportunities by hosting a live volunteer appreciation party in the summer and a volunteer holiday party in the winter. Recently we launched a new volunteer engagement portal through which volunteers can communicate and collaborate with each other and staff to discuss case challenges and successes. Initial reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. One volunteer said: <i>“The resources on CASA Circle are wonderful. Circle is an easier and more timely way to get information out to us volunteers. I love being able to quickly click and open links to view.”</i> Another peer supervisor during training called it a <i>“game changer.”</i> The portal will also serve as an information/events hub for our program, and it will contain the Education and Mental Health resource guides we are currently working on.</p>

CASA Program / service / grant impact	Comments Excerpted from Local CASA Programs' Reports 2023: Year One State Grant Funding
	<p>The hiring of our administrative associate created capacity in many areas. We improved our accounts payable systems which enabled our Finance and Operations Director to facilitate a pilot scholarship program; provide timely reimbursements and monetary support to volunteers and their youth; and set up mileage reimbursement programs to volunteers who take our out-of-county cases. The program associate who previously managed administrative matters is now able to focus her efforts on program needs and events. As a result, we are represented at hearings for cases we are monitoring (resulting in greater efficiency in processing cases and provide CASAs once jurisdiction is established), and this staff member was able to quickly begin processing the large influx of juvenile justice cases we unexpectedly received this year (resulting in a doubling of our waitlist).</p>
<p>CASA of Santa Barbara County (441 children in care)</p>	<p>Funding from this state grant helped in two significant ways. One, it helped bridge funding lags from other sources, specifically event-driven revenue. We primarily used Opportunity #1 funding for expenses that were previously covered with event income. We are looking at the likelihood of bringing back a second event to diversify our funding streams further. In addition, the funding from Opportunity #1 gave us some extra time to focus on new training positions since the pandemic. This has worked exceptionally well, providing our program with a comprehensive grants program and a well-trained grant writer, as well as giving time for the individual promoted into the direct fundraising role to become more familiar with her tasks as they returned to a more normal function post-pandemic. Opportunity #2 enabled our program to provide competitive pay and benefits to all our employees, which is helping with staff retention, and we have already made strides in this area. With this funding, we established CASA of Santa Barbara County as a career destination, not a stepping-stone. Our Program Manager has more than 17 years of CASA experience. Senior Advocates with 12 and 7 years of experience are not far behind her. Our grant writer and donor relations manager has almost 12 years of experience and has held other key positions in the agency. Overall, our staff of 17 offers more than 118 years of CASA experience, and 1/3 of our staff have served as CASA volunteers. By offering more competitive funding, we can keep these seasoned employees and, thus, better help our CASAs and children.</p> <p>We have dramatically improved our relationship with our local CWS department, and they have engaged with us to assist in pre-service and in-service training. This has the effect of improving our overall training program, as well as the communication between CWS staff and CASA volunteers. Most Social Workers welcome the addition of a CASA on their cases and see us as an important resource. Our time from case acceptance to court order was shortened from 3-4 weeks to 1 week, as a result of our staffing and procedural improvements and better communication. We were able to further improve the priority system that our program assistant uses, which allows the Judge, attorney, or social worker to set a higher priority to a case. In several instances, we were able to do a same-day assignment of a CASA to a high-priority case. Additionally, we worked closely with</p>

CASA Program / service / grant impact	Comments Excerpted from Local CASA Programs' Reports 2023: Year One State Grant Funding
	our local District Attorney's office to directly refer cases to them for potential victim witness funding. We consider this a tremendous success because a large number of the children did qualify, but we needed the D.A.'s endorsement.
CASA of Solano County (393 children in care)	State funding has had a transformative impact on our organization. It enabled us to upgrade our internet infrastructure, enhancing efficiency and reducing frustration for both staff and volunteers. The expanded health and other staff benefits have contributed to better retention, and we are fostering a more cohesive team through staff retreats. This positive shift was evident in improved advocacy during court proceedings, ensuring better support for foster youth. The funding also empowered our Development Director to establish expanded connections in the community, resulting in valuable partnerships with new businesses. Collaborations, such as with a golf course management company, have extended beyond donations to include youth-engagement activities. Additionally, initiatives like the Men of CASA program and a sorority-led shoe drive demonstrated the community's growing support of CASA of Solano County. We are grateful for the state funding that has played such a pivotal role in strengthening our operations and community relationships, ultimately benefiting our staff, our CASA volunteers, and the youth we serve.
CASA of Sonoma County (681 children in care)	<p>The expansion of the CASA of Sonoma County team, thanks to California CASA and the state funding, has absolutely improved the stability and well-being of the staff and allowed them to avoid professional burnout, vicarious trauma, or compassion fatigue as we have added an additional Case Supervisor to the team. Plus, as we now offer a more flexible training schedule, we are recruiting a more diverse pool of volunteers. Regarding expanding our capacity and training more volunteers, the promotion of staff and new hires is supporting our mission to ultimately offer advocacy and support to every child in the Sonoma foster care system that needs our services. CASA volunteer Carole said: <i>"CASA of Sonoma County provides extensive training to empower their volunteers to be able to adeptly navigate the complex foster care system. Whether a volunteer finds themselves in meetings with child protective services or in juvenile court, CASA of Sonoma County prepares them for everything. The training is overwhelming, but that's because it covers everything. I felt so prepared."</i></p> <p>After promoting the current Recruitment & Training Coordinator to Case Supervisor and hiring a new Recruitment & Training Coordinator, we saw improvements in the heavy caseloads for each supervisor, which became lighter; this freed-up time allowed more prompt and focused case supervision. Most noteworthy is that our Superior Court Judge started again referring children younger than 7 to our CASA program. She reports that she feels very knowledgeable about the cases to which a CASA volunteer is assigned, due to the timely and informative court reports submitted. Moreover, we now have an additional presence in the courtroom, besides our CASA volunteers, as one of our Case Supervisors sits in court regularly for</p>

CASA Program / service / grant impact	Comments Excerpted from Local CASA Programs' Reports 2023: Year One State Grant Funding
	support and observation. Thus we are getting first-hand information to expedite the process of identifying children in need of our services.
CASA of Tulare County (1,029 children in care)	<p>Guided by a strategic planning consultant provided to Tulare County's CASA program by California CASA and funded with the State appropriation, our organization underwent a successful Board restructuring, leading to increased engagement and the addition of three new Board members. The resulting three-year strategic plan, developed collaboratively with stakeholders, has provided a comprehensive framework for decision-making, enhancing satisfaction among Board members and staff. Our fully-staffed team, including a Program Manager, has improved our ability to support and advocate for children awaiting CASA volunteer assignments. The addition of a Program Manager has strengthened collaborations with community partners, enabling more timely interventions and resource provision. Our strategic planning process identified and prioritized key partnerships, fostering connections with mental health clinics, First 5 Tulare County, vendors, and all school districts in the county. These initiatives showcase the positive impact of strategic planning on our organizational structure, partnerships, and service delivery to children. In a notable success story of youth assigned to CASAs, we were able to facilitate vital connections for two Tulare County sisters escaping abusive conditions at home. Through diligent efforts by both the staff and CASAs, suitable relatives were identified in Coachella, and the girls were placed there, leading to improved mental health and a path to legal guardianship.</p>
CASA of Yolo County (319 children in care)	<p>Thanks to the state funding, we have been able to stabilize the CASA of Yolo County staff and avoid turnover by being able to offer more competitive wages and benefits. This has allowed stability in our program, and we have been able to retain more CASA volunteers by having well-equipped and experienced staff to support them along the way. We have also been able to use funding for a building remodel that will provide space for youth and CASAs to come in and meet. We have also been able to install two large screens and hybrid training capabilities. This has allowed more CASAs to be trained even if they cannot make it to all of the in-person sessions. We have received positive feedback about the flexibility of this new option.</p> <p>Over the last year, CASA of Yolo County has focused on recruiting more volunteers to serve as CASAs, and we have successfully become fully staffed. During this time, we have focused on collaborating with community committees and partnerships, which has yielded a greater community presence for us. We are now able to use this community awareness to provide increased Yolo County resources to our CASA volunteers and youth. In addition, we have also strengthened our relationships with child welfare partners including Dependency Legal Services and Yolo County Health and Human Services. Historically, these relationships have been somewhat difficult, but we have worked diligently to streamline process on dual support and cross-collaborate. We are now viewed as an integral part of the Yolo County Child</p>

CASA Program / service / grant impact	Comments Excerpted from Local CASA Programs' Reports 2023: Year One State Grant Funding
	Welfare team. This has enabled CASA volunteers and staff to help better support and facilitate best outcomes for the youth we serve, as well as become more likely to receive referrals to serve more youth.
Child Advocates of Nevada County (44 children in care)	<p>The grant funding from the state, through California CASA, allowed us to provide staff with adequate pay increases, which helped in the retention of long-time staff members. The funding also increased the hours of the administrative assistant, who has a pivotable role in our communication and coordination with CASA volunteers. The funding has allowed us to purchase high-quality outreach tools that were put to use throughout the last year, and the results are still being felt. An example of a recent increase in administrative assistant hours allowed us to produce our first newsletter, which was mailed to more than 8,000 community members. The newsletter includes information about the importance of CASA in our rural county and directs volunteers and contributors to our website for more information. A mass mailing at this level had never before been attempted nor was it affordable in the history of Child Advocates of Nevada County. These outreach efforts have exceeded expectations, and the program now has many community individuals both interested in supporting the program and contributing to the mission.</p>
Child Advocates of Placer County (360 children in care)	<p>The State grant provided through California CASA has helped us have zero staff turnover this year – a level of staff stability which positively impacts the quality of our program. Opportunity #1 funding granted enough funds to hire a Case Supervisor who works with out-of-county youth, increasing our service level to those harder-to-serve children.</p> <p>This is a brief success story about our CASA Heidi A.: “Max” was originally removed from his mother and placed with a non-related extended family member. Max is 12 years old and had not been to school since he was 6 years old. This family member ended up physically abusing Max, so he was removed from their home and placed with his maternal grandmother. Max came there lacking trust in the adults in his life, fearful of strangers and new situations. He also had a lot of anxiety around school and social situations. Max told his CASA Heidi, <i>“I do not want to go to [that middle school]. I am afraid of being made fun of for missing school so much.”</i> When CASA Heidi first met Max, she experienced the apprehension Max had towards new adults in his life. She stated, <i>“When I first arrived, he would not leave his bed as he is fearful of strangers. However, on the next visit he sat outside with me. On the third visit he went out to eat with me.”</i> Heidi kept showing up and worked slowly to gain Max’s trust. After a couple of months, Max felt comfortable enough with CASA Heidi to go out on visits in the community without hesitation. Max told Heidi that she was one of the only adults in his life he could trust. After seven months, Heidi helped Max get out of the one-bedroom studio that he shared with his grandmother and baby brother and go back to school. Max reported that he really enjoyed school, and he even made some friends! Unfortunately, Max’s grandmother was evicted, so Max and his baby brother returned to foster care. Thus,</p>

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	<p>Max's journey continues as we try to help him find permanency. But CASA Heidi is there every step of the way to make sure Max is comfortable and secure, even as he was taken to his new foster home. She is by his side through all the changes, and Max deeply appreciates the role that Heidi plays in his life. We are confident that he will find permanency one day soon, with the help of the court and his CASA.</p>
<p>Marin CASA (96 children in care)</p>	<p>The State grant has resulted in important outcomes for Marin CASA allowing us to strengthen organizational stability and community engagement. This support has allowed us to retain valuable staff, hire a development director for innovative funding strategies, and enhance CASA supervision and program direction. A notable achievement involves Vanessa B., a dedicated CASA volunteer, advocating for a youth facing multiple challenges, including potential loss of financial support. Vanessa's commitment and understanding of the young person's background, shared racial and ethnic identity, and struggles highlight the importance of our having a diverse volunteer population.</p> <p>The increased funding has facilitated richer relationships with local partners, such as Marin County Children and Family Services and the Marin Foster Care Association. Staff retention and the addition of a development director have played pivotal roles in community engagement and training initiatives. For instance, we hosted a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training led by Marin County Children and Family Services Division Director Bree Marchman. This training, made possible by the state grant support, fostered valuable discussions on using an equity lens in our program activities. The state funding has been essential in building strong relationships, retaining staff, and successfully implementing impactful initiatives like this training, and we are grateful.</p>
<p>Sacramento CASA (1,605 children in care)</p>	<p>State funding has allowed Sacramento CASA to diversify our staff through recent additions to our team; ensure staff has the technological equipment they need for productivity both in the office and at home; and allow for staffing bandwidth to carry out programs that in the past we could only dream about (e.g., Early Assignment Protocol, Men's and Youth Focus Groups, purposeful data audits). We have been able to retain high quality staff by providing more competitive compensation packages and we've been able to elevate our training opportunities for both staff and CASAs – all in an effort to serve more youth and retain the highest number of quality CASAs possible. We've seen an increase in the number of CASAs willing to serve a second youth, which has been a longtime goal. Nearly 45% of CASAs who were active during this grant time period have served more than one youth at a time, and 40% of them did so within the last year. With increased staffing in other areas of the organization, Case Supervisors have been able to focus more on the long-term retention of CASAs. This has led to an increase in thoughtful and well-timed requests to see if a CASA volunteer would be willing to take on a second case when their first case is nearing closure.</p>

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	<p>One example of CASA/youth impact thanks to this grant is as follows: “Alyssa” is a 17-year-old African American female with an extensive trauma history; she has been in foster care more than seven years and has experienced the juvenile justice system as well. She is easily triggered and has trouble with emotional regulation. Her high level of needs, coupled with placement shortages, have led to multiple periods of placement instability. This fact, plus a lack of engagement in mental health services and her self-medicating have made consistent participation in school an uphill challenge. Alyssa has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) in place, along with a strong special education team. Attending a mainstream high school setting has proven overwhelming, despite her stated desire and her team’s flexibility in adjusting her schedule to allow for a shorter day. Alyssa has had the same CASA since 2021. Her CASA Laura has functioned as her Educational Rights Holder for much of the time and has worked to elevate Alyssa’s rights as a foster youth to access free and appropriate education. CASA Laura engages with Alyssa with unconditionally positive regard, and her court reports, while transparent, are strengths-based and reflect Alyssa’s hopes and desires. Alyssa wants to work and support herself, though it has been a struggle. She and CASA Laura have been talking about employment pathways and jobs that might fit with her energy and personality. As a member of Alyssa’s care team, Laura has provided emotional support, active advocacy, educational intervention, transportation, problem-solving, de-escalation, and has encouraged/facilitated Alyssa’s participation in both juvenile dependency and juvenile justice court hearings. CASA Laura has celebrated small successes, such as Alyssa attending school for six days without incident, successfully completing the terms of her probation, and prioritizing her own safety more frequently in her choices. Recently, Alyssa texted her CASA to express her appreciation for their relationship and stated that, in so many ways, Laura has been more of a mother figure to her than her own biological mom.</p>
<p>Voices for Children Riverside County (4,590 children in care)</p>	<p>The state’s grant funding through California CASA is making an enormous difference in the quality of our CASA program in Riverside County. Overwhelmingly, our recruitment efforts are enabling us to find more CASAs we can train and match with children. VFC launched a new recruitment campaign this year called, “Your Voice, Their Future,” which we launched in January 2023. The goal of the campaign was to match new CASAs to 100 more youth on our waiting lists by May 1, 2023, the beginning of National Foster Care Month. Current CASAs referred friends or contacts who they felt would be an outstanding CASA. VFC more than doubled our goal. This successful campaign was among our ongoing efforts to attract new volunteers. We are improving our recruitment by identifying strategies to align the demographics of CASA volunteers with youth in foster care.</p> <p>Also in the last year, VFC Riverside is deepening our program by conducting individual assessments for dual status youth to determine their needs for a CASA volunteer. This effort is preliminary to our launching a “CASAs for Juvenile Justice Youth” program in Riverside County, where it is very much needed. Finally, over</p>

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the last year, we have spent time improving the quality of our CASA training. We developed a resource library for CASAs – staff compiled resources from various documents and solicited staff recommendations in order to create a single cross-county shared independent study library for both VFC Riverside and VFC San Diego. Supervisors in both counties can send the link to the resource library to their CASAs, and new resources are added monthly.

VFC is grateful for the external support of our program. Recently, one of our Riverside County judges shared the following statement with our staff, “When I see that a struggling child has a CASA, I believe that that child has a better chance of being emotionally, mentally, and physically healthy because of the service the CASA provides.” Our CASA program is making an incredible difference in the lives of children in foster care and more so with the State’s support. Grant funding provides the internal stability that our organization needs in order for our external-facing staff members to achieve more in their roles. For example, with this funding, VFC Riverside hired an Administrative Assistant to support our new Managing Director of Programs, Philanthropy Manager, and our Recruitment Manager. As a result, each of these staff members has had more time to spend out in the community building the relationships needed to further the efforts of the CASA program. Just a few new collaborations that were a direct result of this funding include a new relationship with Pechanga Band of Indians; multiple, new, third-party events benefiting VFC Riverside, and the development of a new CASA Outreach Team to help spread the word in Riverside County about becoming a CASA volunteer.

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