



CASA of Central Virginia

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www.cvcasa.org

BOS mtg

March 2, 2020

Ms. Susan Adams
County Administrator
Appomattox County
153-A Morton Lane
Appomattox, VA 24522

Dear Ms. Adams:

Thank you for your support of CASA of Central Virginia's expansion into Appomattox County in FY 17-18. The need in Appomattox continues to grow, making Appomattox our fourth largest caseload. We would like to request the opportunity to be included in the FY 2021 Appomattox County Budget. We respectfully request a grant in the amount of \$6,000.

Description of Program

The CASA program is based on the concept that every child has a right to a safe, permanent home. The Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judge can appoint a "Court Appointed Special Advocate," or a CASA volunteer, to a case involving a child who is a victim of abuse and/or neglect. The CASA volunteers then become an official part of the judicial proceedings and are supervised by an advocate manager.

The duties of a CASA are 1) to thoroughly investigate the child's situation; 2) to submit to the court a written report regarding the child's best interests; 3) to monitor the case to ensure that the child receives services ordered by the court; 4) to aid the Guardian *ad litem* (GAL); and 5) to serve as the mandated reporter of abuse and neglect (Code of Virginia, Sections 9.1-153).

CASA volunteers work alongside guardians *ad litem* (attorneys who represent the child's legal interest), social workers and other service providers, as an appointed officer of the court, advocating exclusively for the child's best interests. CASA volunteers offer children hope and trust during complex legal proceedings. They explain to the child the events that are happening, the reasons they are in court, and the roles of the judge, lawyers, and social workers. Judges, who appoint CASA volunteers to their most difficult cases, rely on the recommendations and research of the CASA volunteers.



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In the past year, July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019, 89 CASA volunteers were assigned to the cases of 357 children in the region. Of this total, 9% or 33 children resided in Appomattox County. We have four CASA volunteers who are available to be assigned to the cases of children in Appomattox. The number of children in Appomattox County who need a CASA volunteer continues to rise. So far this fiscal year, we have already served 19 children.

Budget Justification

Although CASA of Central Virginia does not generate income for Appomattox County, CASA volunteers can save the County money in legal fees, foster care and the cost of the juvenile justice system. When CASA volunteers collaborate with other service providers and the personnel of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, positive outcomes can be achieved for the abused and neglected children. The CASA program complements the services being provided by other agencies and programs, but no other program provides the same services.

The primary role of the CASA volunteer is to investigate the child's case in order to determine what is in the best interest of the child. The CASA volunteer does extensive research regarding the child's situation. They interview and meet regularly with relatives, teachers, foster parents, medical and mental health care professionals as well as with the child himself. Gathering this information about the child's situation is time-consuming, but it is vital information to have in order to make recommendations to the Judge concerning the child's future. The research is compiled by the CASA volunteer into the court report and is shared with all court personnel. This report can save the Guardian *ad litem* (GAL) assigned to the child's case much time and effort.

By helping to reduce the length of time that children remain in foster care and the number of children who reenter the foster care system, the CASA volunteers can help Appomattox County save money on foster care. Because CASA volunteers have low caseloads, they can provide each child with the sustained, personal attention he or she deserves and gain knowledge of the child's needs. On average, children who have a CASA volunteer assigned to their case spend on average 8 months less in foster care.

Because CASA volunteers provide pertinent information to the court, the Judges can make wiser decisions about the placement of children. Enlisting community volunteer advocates to work with these abused or neglected children during the most difficult time in their lives does make a difference in helping them to grow into healthy, productive citizens. This is much preferable to dealing with the consequences of NOT assigning a CASA volunteer to their cases – increased juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, dropping out of school, drug and alcohol use and abuse, incarceration and homelessness.

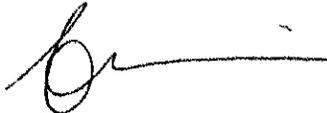
Our request for funding did not come sooner because we had expansion grant funding through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) awarded to our program by the Department of Criminal Justice Services. Those funds have ended and we are now seeking other sources of funding to continue our services in Appomattox. Each county served by our program provides financial support to our program.

Conclusion

CASA of Central Virginia is committed to Appomattox County children. The requested funds - \$6,000 - will be utilized in recruiting and training Appomattox County residents to advocate for and be the "Voice" for Appomattox children whenever the need arises. Funds will also be used to support the salary of the advocate manager who supervises the Appomattox County CASA volunteers. The advocate manager provides assistance to the volunteers from the time the volunteer is assigned to the case until the case is closed.

In conclusion, we appreciate the support that has been provided to CASA in the past and feel we have demonstrated our value to Appomattox County. If you should need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (434) 485-7261 or allison@cvcasa.org.

Sincerely,



Allison Stronza
Executive Director