

10 Good Reasons to Support the Growth of CASA in Nebraska



1 Children without CASA Volunteers are twice as likely to spend more time in foster care.

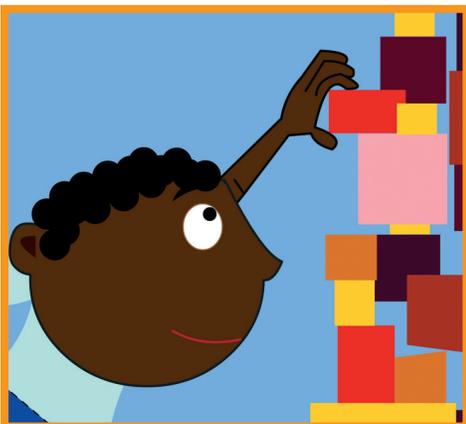
Children with a CASA Volunteer are substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care (defined as more than three years in care). About 13% of children who had CASA Volunteers were in foster care for more than three years, compared to 27% of children who had no CASA Volunteer.

2 Children with CASA Volunteers are less likely to re-enter the foster care system.

Two comparative, national studies determined that children without a CASA Volunteer were 16% more likely to re-enter foster care (as the result of a subsequent incident of abuse or neglect that caused their removal again), compared with children who had CASA Volunteers, who experienced re-entry rates ranging from 1.4% to 9%. This is particularly significant because judges generally assign CASA Volunteers to children whose cases present the greatest challenges.

3 Children with CASA Volunteers are more likely to receive the services they need.

Most child welfare agencies must manage care and services for children within limited budgets, and children's caseworkers are not always in the best position to advocate for additional resources when they are needed. In 2006, the U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General conducted an audit of the National CASA Association and its programs. It determined that children and families with CASA Volunteers received more necessary services. Research conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Family Services determined that "CASA Volunteers are excellent investigators and mediators, remain involved and fight for what they think is right for the child." The study concluded, "We give CASA models our highest recommendation."



4 Judges believe in the power of CASA.

In an independent survey published in 2005 of more than 550 judges, 97% agreed that children were better served with CASA advocates. The judges felt that the type and quality of information they received from CASA Volunteers was beneficial to their decision making and to the children and families they served.

5 CASA Volunteers strengthen continuity for kids.

Most CASA Volunteers serve as their child's advocate from the time a judge appoints them until the court's involvement in the child's life is concluded. That might be over a period of weeks, months or even years. The steady presence of a CASA Volunteer helps ensure that information about a child's experiences, needs and wishes does not get lost when changes in systems or service personnel occur.

6 CASA Volunteers improve safety for children.

CASA Volunteers are mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect. Their frequent contact with children puts them in a unique position to notify the authorities when safety concerns arise.





7 CASA Volunteers provide valuable information to professionals.

County child protective services caseworkers are chronically overburdened; their average caseloads may range from 10 to more than 25 families (averaging about 2.5 children per family). As required in federal standards and state guidelines, child protective service caseworkers are required to make a minimum of one face-to-face visit to a child once per month. On average, caseworkers are typically unable to exceed that standard as a result of insufficient resources for better staffing ratios, and excessive staff turnover in this difficult profession.

In comparison, CASA Volunteers visit their children an average of once per week. CASA Volunteers typically have substantial contact with a child's circle of support and others who play an important role in the child's well being. Because CASA Volunteers share their reports with the child's assigned caseworker as well as the judge, they often provide CPS caseworkers with information that they would not otherwise have. This helps make children safer.



8 CASA Volunteers improve collaboration between the systems serving children.

Because CASA Volunteers have contact with key service providers and community resources touching many aspects of a child's life (education, recreation, health, mental health and more), they serve to strengthen collaboration and communication among the programs and systems that serve child victims of physical and sexual abuse and neglect. This holistic approach helps target resources, increases efficiency, and raises questions, problems and issues earlier (when they are generally less expensive to address).



9 CASA is a highly cost-effective program.

With a service delivery model that uses volunteers supervised by professionals, CASA programs in Nebraska provide continuous contact with children and reports to the court at an average cost of \$1,020 per child, or about \$2,450 per volunteer. This cost includes recruitment, screening, training and supervision of volunteers as well as visits to children and contacts with educators and service providers. Nebraska is one of only seven states that does not provide state funding for CASA; therefore, local programs must rely on county funding and charitable contributions for their operating expenses. CASA program operational costs are uncommonly modest.

10 CASA invests the community in its children.

Through this unique opportunity to help a child, CASA Volunteers learn to understand the need of kids and families, and the strategies that are most effective in supporting them. They observe the challenges of the courts and the child welfare system, and are important advocates for public policy change when such change is needed. CASA Volunteers also invest in a very practical and personal way. In addition to donating significant time to serving children – almost 15,000 hours in 2009 – they also donate the cost of their transportation to visit their assigned children, their families, foster families and service providers.

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