

CASA Community Survey -- December 2003

The Karuk Tribal Court is seeking your input about the development of a Tribal Court CASA program in our Tribal community. CASA stands for *Court Appointed Special Advocate*. The CASA volunteers are lay people who are assigned by a Judge to represent the best interests of children. CASA volunteers serve as the eyes and ears of the judge, gathering relevant information about the child and the family. It is the CASA's job to interview anyone who might have information about the case -- parents, foster parents relatives, teachers, doctors, and most importantly the child. The Casa fulfills a unique role in the child protection system: The INDEPENDENT representation of the child's best interest.

Please respond to the following questions to the best of your ability. If you have additional comments there is room for them at the end of the survey.

	Circle one		
Before today did you know about CASA?	Yes	Don't Know	No
Do you believe that child abuse and/or neglect exists in our community?	Yes	Don't Know	No
Do you believe that Tribal children belong in Tribal homes?	Yes	Don't Know	No
Do you believe that Tribal children involved in the Court System needs representation?	Yes	Don't Know	No
Would you support the development of a Tribal Court CASA?	Yes	Don't Know	No
Would you be interested in becoming a member of the Tribal Court CASA Board of Directors or on a Steering/Planning Committee?	Yes	Don't Know	No
Would you be interested in becoming a CASA Volunteer?	Yes	Don't Know	No
Would you attend a community informational meeting about CASA?	Yes	Don't Know	No
Comments:			
Name & Phone Number(Optional):			

Karuk Tribal CASA Community Assessment Questionnaire  
Tribal Social Services

1. How many child abuse and neglect reports were made to the Indian Child Welfare/child protective services last year?
2. Of these reports, how many were substantiated?
3. How many new child abuse and neglect cases involving tribal children were filed in state court last year?
4. How many had CASA/GAL advocates familiar with the Indian community?
5. How many children in your community are currently in foster care placements?
6. Note the number of cases in which a child has been in foster care placement, with out a permanent plan, for the following time frames:  
      \_\_\_ <18months      \_\_\_ <1year      \_\_\_ <2years      \_\_\_ <3years
7. How many children in your community are currently placed with non-Indian families?
8. How many children in your community are currently waiting for adoption or guardianship?
9. Are guardian ad litem/CASA currently provided in Tribal Court?
10. What is the average number of cases carried by the Indian Child Welfare service worker?
11. What is the average number of foster care placements for each child in foster care?
12. What services are currently available for abused or neglected children?
13. How many of the service providers are Indian tribe members or are familiar with the Indian culture?

Karuk Tribal CASA Community Assessment Questionnaire  
State Judicial

1. Does the State Court assert jurisdiction over both civil and criminal child abuse and neglect cases?
  
2. Are there jurisdictional problems with the state courts concerning child abuse and neglect cases (for example, how well does the state court comply with the ICWA)?
  
3. What does your State/County code provide with regard to the jurisdiction and handling of child abuse and neglect cases?
  
4. How many reports of suspected child abuse were received in your area?
  
5. How many new child abuse and neglect cases were filed in State Court last year? Of those how many cases were there that the ICWA was applicable?
  
6. How many children were terminated from court involvement last year?
  - a) Of that number, how many were returned home?
  
  - b) How many were placed with extended family?
  
  - c) How many were placed in guardianship situations?
  
  - d) How many were placed in adoptive homes?

Karuk Tribal CASA Community Assessment Questionnaire  
State Judicial

7. How many Indian children in your community are currently placed with non-Indian families?
  
8. Are guardians ad litem/CASA currently provided in State Court? If so, is every child involved in an abuse or neglect proceeding appointed a guardian ad litem? If not, which cases do receive appointments? How many children were represented by guardian ad litem/CASA last year?
  
9. How do the Judges responsible for child dependency cases rate the current system? Are the judges satisfied with the information being provided to assist their decision-making?
  
10. Does the State Court/County code define the role of guardian ad litem/CASA? If yes, what is it? Does the code specify who can serve as guardian ad litem/CASA? If yes who can serve?
  
11. What is the average length of stay of children in foster care?
  
12. What is the duration of the court process in child abuse cases?

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Karuk Tribal CASA Community Assessment Questionnaire  
Tribal Court Judge

1. Does your Tribal Court assert jurisdiction over both civil and criminal child abuse and neglect cases?
  
2. Are there jurisdictional problems with the state courts concerning child abuse and neglect cases (for example, how well does the state court comply with the ICWA)?
  
3. What does your Tribal code provide with regard to the jurisdiction and handling of child abuse and neglect cases?
  
4. How many reports of suspected child abuse were received in your area?
  
5. How many new child abuse and neglect cases were filed in Tribal Court last year?
  
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Karuk CASA</b> <b>Roles of the CASA Committee Members</b></p>
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**General Expectations**

- ◆ Become knowledgeable about the Tribal CASA Program.
- ◆ Serve in leadership positions or undertake special assignments.
- ◆ Keep the Tribal Court Administrator informed about any concerns the community has regarding the representation or advocacy of children in Judicial matters.
- ◆ Follow trends in the Indian child welfare and juvenile justice fields.

**Meetings**

- ◆ Prepare for and participate in committee meetings, including appropriate organizational activities.
- ◆ Ask timely and substantive questions at committee meetings consistent with their conscience and convictions, while supporting and adhering to the majority decision on issues decided by the committee.
- ◆ Maintain confidentiality of the committee's executive sessions, and speak for the committee or organization only when authorized to do so.
- ◆ Suggest agenda items periodically for committee meetings to ensure that significantly policy-related matters are addressed.

**Relationships with Staff**

- ◆ Offer support and assistance to the Tribal Court Administrator when appropriate.
- ◆ Avoid asking for special favors of the staff, including requests for extensive information, without at least prior consultation with the Tribal Court Administrator and /or Judge.

**Avoiding Conflicts**

- ◆ Serve the Tribe as a whole rather than any special interest group or constituency.
- ◆ Avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest that might embarrass the committee or the Tribe, and disclose any possible conflicts to the committee in a timely fashion.
- ◆ Maintain independence and objectivity and do what a sense of fairness, ethics, and personal integrity dictate even though not necessarily obliged to do so by law, regulation, or custom.
- ◆ Never accept (or offer) favors or gifts from (or to) anyone who does business with the Tribe.

**Fund Raising**

- ◆ Assist in resource development by implementing fund-raising strategies through personal influence with others.





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## **What is CASA?**

A CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) for Native American children is a community member appointed to represent the best interests of a child in tribal or state court. CASA volunteers generally are community members appointed by the court to advocate for children who are victims of abuse or neglect.

## **What Does a CASA Volunteer Do?**

A CASA is an independent, objective advocate for the child who makes recommendations to the court regarding the child's best interests. The CASA volunteer gathers independent information by reviewing all records pertaining to the child and talking with the child and others involved in the case. The volunteer then makes recommendations to the court and monitors the progress of the court approved plan for the family. A CASA volunteer usually handles only 1 or 2 cases at a time - so that they can concentrate solely on the needs of the child. Do We Need CASA? All children have a right to a home with loving people to care for them. However, each year in the United States, millions of children are abused, neglected, or abandoned by their families. Eventually, many of these children end up in court with a judge deciding their future - should the child remain in foster care, be reunited with their parents, be placed with someone in their extended family, or be adopted? The needs of children may become lost in an overburdened child welfare system that cannot pay close attention to each child.

## **What are the Benefits of a CASA Program?**

Children learn that there is one special person who is there for each of them - someone who will help them make it through the system; someone who is there for them only because they care. The CASA volunteer provides the court with additional information which helps the judge make important decisions which impact the child. Other agencies know they can turn to a CASA volunteer for information and assistance, because the CASA volunteer has more time to spend on each child's case. The community knows there is a way of becoming involved in protecting the rights of Native American children.

## **How Can CASA be Adapted to Meet the Needs of Tribal Courts and Native American People?**

The CASA concept is a flexible approach to providing advocates for children in child dependency proceedings which can be adapted to meet the needs of individual Native American communities. The tribal court CASA programs have developed many adaptations and innovative policies and procedures, including tribal resolutions allowing tribal employees time off work to perform CASA duties, obtaining credit at tribal colleges for CASA volunteers, incorporating tribal custom and tradition, involvement of tribal elders, use of family group conferences, and use of traditional program names/logos.

## **Who Can Become a CASA?**

If you care about Native American children, have time to commit, and are a mature, responsible adult, then you may qualify to be a CASA volunteer in your community. No special experience is required. CASA volunteers are selected on the basis of their objectivity, competence, and commitment.

**What Training and Support Do CASA Volunteers Receive?** Once accepted, volunteers receive the tools they need to serve as a CASA, including in-depth training and ongoing monthly support sessions. They learn about courtroom procedure, the tribal court system, the social services system, how to work with families in crisis and the special needs of children who have been abused or neglected. The CASA program provides support and assistance on an on-going basis.

**How Much Time Does It Require?** Although each case is different, a CASA usually spends about 10 hours doing research and talking to persons involved in the case prior to a court appearance. More complicated cases take longer. Once initiated into the system, volunteers generally work about 10-15 hours a month. With the exception of court appearances, CASA volunteers have considerable flexibility in scheduling interviews and other appointments. Consequently, you can serve as a CASA even if you have a full time job.

## **Why Should I Become a CASA?**

The Native American Child Welfare Act states that "there is no resource that is more vital to the continued existence and integrity of Native American tribes than their children." Tribal Court CASA programs provide an opportunity for individual community members to demonstrate that they truly believe that the children are their community's most precious resource. CASA volunteers understand the work may be challenging, but it is also gratifying. CASA provides a unique community experience - the opportunity to work for abused and neglected children in a meaningful way and the opportunity for personal growth and development through challenging work.

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### **KARUK TRIBE OF CALIFORNIA**

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## ***COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE PROGRAM***

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*... a child's voice in court.*

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The Mission of the Karuk Tribe of California, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program is to train and support court approved volunteers to advocate for Native American Children who need representation in the State/Tribal Juvenile Court System, servicing the children's best interests quickly and efficiently while preserving tribal traditions and restoring common bonds.

The Mission of the Karuk Tribal Council is to promote the general welfare of all Karuk People, to establish equality and justice for our Tribe, to secure to ourselves and our descendants the power to exercise the inherent rights of self-governance.

A4 - Darlene Navarro - Handout 10 - Karuk CASA Committee  
Goals sample

**Program Name:** Karuk Tribal CASA

**City/State:** Yreka, CA

GOAL # 1 Develop the Tribal Court CASA Planning Committee.						
OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TITLE OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE
1. Hold first meeting	a. Generate invitation list	X				CASA Vol. Coordinator
	b. Coordinate place & time	X				CASA Vol. Coordinator
	c. Present overview & program history	X				CASA Vol. Coordinator
	d. Develop the Program Mission Statement	X				Committee
2. Hold additional committee Mtgs. April, May, June	a. Create/adopt policies and procedures for committee organizational plan					Committee
	b. Approve draft of policies and procedures and plan for committee					Committee
	c. Present draft for finalization to Tribal Council for approval					Committee
3. Hold additional committee Mtgs. July, August, Sept.,	Establish & define the financial and legal responsibilities					Committee
	Determine liability risks and research insurance needs					Committee
	Determine additional program goals and timelines					Committee
4. Committee meeting Oct., Nov., Dec.	Develop a fundraising plan					Committee
	Identify potential funders					Committee