



The Beginning...

- 1977—Judge Soukup in Seattle dreamed of citizen volunteers to advocate for children in dependency court
- He founded the CASA program beginning a nationwide grass roots movement that is over 70,000 strong today
- His vision allowed for lay people to focus solely on a child's best interest

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FOR CHILDREN

CASA

Tribal Programs

- The Tribal Court CASA Project was started in 1994 to assist in the development and enhancement of Tribal Court programs that provide volunteer advocacy for abused or neglected American Indian children.
- The goal of National CASA is to increase the number of Indian children who are receiving culturally sensitive representation through indigenous CASA programs in Tribal Court and State Court proceedings.
- There are currently 22/6 CASA programs serving Tribal Courts.

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CASA Requirements

- Appointed by a court judge
- CASA volunteers can be legal parties to a case
- Four responsibilities —interview, advocate, monitor, facilitate
- Full access to all of the child's information without anyone else's authority needed
- Serve until permanency is achieved
- Bound by strict confidentiality
- Supported by professional program staff

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Becoming a CASA

- Attend an orientation
- Complete an application
- Submit to a criminal background check
- Participate in a personal interview
- Successfully complete 30 hour training
- Be sworn in by a judge
- Be assigned to a case

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Legal Party—What's That?

- Have legal standing—participate in all hearings
- Right to be heard—speak up in court, call witnesses and ask them questions
- Access to confidential material—review all materials relating to the child

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What Does it Mean to be a CASA?

- Visit with your CASA child at least every 30 days
- Build relationships with legal parties and surrounding supporters of child and family
- Review all relevant reports, documents, evaluations
- Attend court hearings, treatment meetings, school meetings, etc
- Write reports to the court making recommendations about services, placement, visitation, etc.
- Be a mandatory reporter

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Interviewing

- Talk to everyone (child, parents, relatives, social workers, teachers, attorneys, therapists, foster parents)
- Read all materials
- Look into relevant history, environment, relationships, and needs of the child
- Know what a child needs to attain a safe and permanent home as quickly as possible

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Advocating

- Speak up for the child; both in and out of court
- Attend any and all meetings that relate to ensuring the child's needs are met (school, treatment, placement, visitation)
- Bring together those who surround a child and family to talk
- Share thoughts and opinions with those who provide services to a child and family

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Monitoring

- Keep track of whether court orders are being carried out
- Report progress to the court toward those orders
- Collaborate with Child Services on ensuring services to child and family
- Collaborate with foster families to ensure child's education, medical, physical, emotional and **CULTURAL** needs are being met

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Facilitating

- Identify resources and services for the child
- Build collaboration between all parties
- Help to create a situation in which the child's needs can be met
- Bring people together to talk and ensure a swift conclusion and close gaps
- Call meetings, write letters, make calls

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CASAs Do Not...

- Provide direct services
- Make referrals
- Supervise visits
- Make placement arrangements
- Provide gifts to the child or the family
- Become a Big Brother/Big Sister or a visiting resource
- Transport the child or the family without program approval

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Getting a CASA for a Child...

- Court appoints through court order
- Caseworkers, parents, relatives, foster parents, attorneys ALL can request a CASA
- Once appointed, the CASA program staff assign volunteers to cases; matching strengths of the CASA with the needs of the case
- Program staff monitor and supervise caseloads (generally one supervisor to 30 CASA volunteers)

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Permanency

CASA volunteers work to ensure that a child's time frame is in the forefront to achieving one of the following:

- Return to Parent
- Adoption
- Guardianship
- Permanent Foster Care

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The ending...

- Once permanency is achieved, the CASA says goodbye to the child, the family, the providers, the parties, the foster family and the courts.
- The case closes!

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