Texas CASA

Growth Planning Toolkit

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Dear CASA Programs:

The number of children removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect in Texas is on the rise and is expected to continue to increase over the next 5 years. In FY 2011, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services assumed legal custody of more than 44,000 children.[1]

Local CASA programs know these statistics well, as part of planning and providing volunteer advocacy for children in their communities. 69 programs strong, the CASA network in Texas is still only able to serve just less than half of the children in care. Despite the critical service these programs and their volunteers, staff and board members provide, more is needed. CASA programs must plan, achieve and sustain growth to meet this need.

Texas CASA is pleased to offer the **Growth Planning Toolkit** as an important resource for local CASA programs seeking to serve more of their community's children through CASA volunteer advocacy. It is our hope that it will serve as a guide for program leaders as they develop plans to expand while maintaining the highest levels of quality advocacy and program operations.

The Growth Planning Toolkit is divided into two sections:

- **Section I: Growth Planning Guide** - A thorough examination of the critical factors unique to CASA program growth and a process for developing a comprehensive growth plan; templates and samples for determining individual program growth needs
- **Section II: Growth Planning Resources** – Surveys, samples and best practice resources for growth planning and implementation

Through the use of the guide, tools and resources, programs will have an opportunity to review critical questions related to growth, better understand their own program readiness for growth and assess the commitment within their program to creating and implementing a comprehensive growth plan. *And* it provides the practical "how to" steps; from forming a growth planning committee to final plan review and revisions.

An electronic version of the Toolkit will be available on the secure portion of the Texas CASA Resources site at www.texascasaresources.org . It will include downloadable versions of many of the tools that programs can use to create and tailor their own plan.

Although the Toolkit is designed to provide a do it yourself process for creating a growth plan, Texas CASA is available to provide consultation and assistance as your program addresses the need to grow. Together we can move closer to the vision of a CASA volunteer for every child in need.

Texas CASA

[1] 2011 DFPS Databook

Introduction

If you are reading this, you are already thinking about growing your program.

Why do you believe your program should grow? What's been stopping you?

While there may be unlimited answers to the second question, for many CASA programs, it is as simple as this: *We don't know how to do it*.

We believe the reason to grow is simple. It is to realize our shared vision: A CASA volunteer for every child. For most programs to see this vision become a reality, growth is necessary.

The Growth Planning Toolkit, offered by Texas CASA, is designed to provide the guidance and resources you will need to create an effective and strategic growth plan. This is the "how to" guide for CASA program growth.

CASA Program Growth

The term *program growth* encompasses many dimensions. Before we begin, it's important to have a clear understanding of what is meant by CASA program growth. Ideally, it is defined as **increased positive impact on the lives of individual children and increased influence in improving the lives of all children.** But what does this really mean? Numerically, growth may be defined by increases in:

- the number of children and cases assigned
- the number of volunteers trained and assigned to cases
- the number of volunteers retained and the length of tenure
- the percentage of children and cases served by volunteers (versus staff)
- the diversity (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, experience, skills) of the staff, board and volunteers
- the number of staff members and scope of staff positions
- the financial stability of the program

Attaining statistical increases is one way of marking what defines CASA program growth. But increased numbers and greater resources are not the end game. Growth supports our capacity to improve the lives of the many unserved foster children who are desperately in need of the tremendous positive impact of CASA volunteers.

Toolkit Overview

The Growth Planning Toolkit is divided into two sections:

- **Section I: Growth Planning Guide** – A thorough examination of the critical factors unique to CASA program growth and a process for developing a comprehensive growth plan and templates and samples for determining individual program growth needs

- **Section II: Growth Planning Resources** – Surveys, samples and best practice resources for growth planning and implementation

Section I: Growth Planning Guide

The first section of the toolkit presents new ideas and challenges long-held beliefs about growth. It's designed to help programs consider their growth challenges and assess their starting point. You will have the opportunity to review crucial questions, better understand your readiness, and assess your commitment to creating and implementing a comprehensive growth plan.

The Growth Planning Guide provides detailed descriptions of the six critical areas that are key to the success of any CASA program: Executive Leadership, Judicial Engagement, Fund Development, Community Engagement, Diversified Board of Directors, and Organizational Excellence.

This section includes tools and worksheets that will help you determine needs and set program-specific goals. Using the worksheets, you will be able to clearly visualize your individual growth needs. The areas to focus on include:

- number of children and cases served
- number of volunteers trained, assigned and retained
- expansion in supervisory staff and diversification of volunteers
- projected budget needed to support and sustain growth

The guide also includes step-by-step instructions for creating a growth plan, such as:

- forming a planning team
- gathering information and completing assessments
- completing a program SWOT analysis session
- setting goals
- creating action plans
- reviewing and sustaining growth

Section II: Growth Planning Resources

The second section of the toolkit contains a collection of best practices related to each of the six critical areas. These resources are shared by local, state and national CASA organizations. You can select from these as you form strategies and create action plans to meet your individual program growth goals.

Texas CASA wishes to thank Amarillo Area CASA, CASA of the Coastal Bend and CASA of Tarrant County for their work in piloting this toolkit. As these programs captured the CASA vision and created plans to march forward toward their goals, they graciously shared their input and feedback about the process. We believe this toolkit can be used as a resource for every CASA program in Texas that is eager to make the same commitment.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to programs that have shared sample documents with us: CASA of Travis County, CASA of Brazos Valley, CASA of the South Plains, Child Advocates of San Antonio, and CASA of El Paso.

We welcome your feedback and look forward to continuing to enhance the quality, scope and applicability of this toolkit for all CASA programs within Texas.

Making the Decision to Grow

We know that all too often, children must navigate the rough waters of the foster care system in their community without a CASA volunteer by their side. Sometimes, this is simply because there aren't enough volunteers. When programs face this challenge, they must also answer this crucial question: *Will we choose to meet the needs of <u>all</u> the children, or just some of the children?*

Is Growth Really a Choice?

Every CASA program has a strategy in place designed to recruit new volunteers and retain tenured volunteers. And most programs have experienced periods of growth (and perhaps, decline). Sometimes growth is the direct result of the strategy. And sometimes, growth just happens. As communities grow and economies thrive, people have more available time and discretionary resources. Naturally, this will positively, if unintentionally, impact local charitable organizations within the community.

Many CASA program leaders have never seriously considered the possibility of significant *planned* growth. Leading a non-profit organization that strives to serve the most vulnerable children -- in the middle of a broken system -- presents daily crises and ongoing urgencies. Just keeping up becomes the norm. Maintaining the status quo can become an acceptable, if not admirable, goal. But is this enough?

Is growth really a choice? Indeed, we must ask ourselves this: *Are we intentionally growing to meet the needs of every child in care?* If this is a goal of your program, how is it reflected in your strategic plan? **Does every board and staff member envision the individual positive outcomes for each additional child served by your program? Are they deeply troubled by knowing that children go without critical CASA advocacy because program growth has not yet met the need?**

Is Now the Right Time to Grow?

Due to the broad impact of program growth, it certainly makes sense to give considerable thought to this choice. Many times, this is a pivotal point when the challenges to growth seem insurmountable and leaders become concerned that growth *right now* is not in the best interests of the program. Sometimes, the discussions around growth may echo this statement: "It's the wrong time for our program to tackle growth because . . ."

> . . . we're in a devastating recession.
> . . . growth planning is too time consuming.
> . . . we don't have a board and/or executive director invested in growth.
> . . . we can't predict what will happen with removals in our area.
> . . . we might have to endure crippling funding cuts.

. . . our judge is happy with the program as it is.
. . . we don't want to hire and fire staff.
. . . we don't want to shortchange our current volunteers.
. . . our program is too rural / urban.
. . . has too few/many counties.
. . . we don't want to overburden our staff.
. . . we have a brand new board (or executive director).
. . . quality of advocacy and operations will suffer through all the change.
. . . we are just hanging on.

Each of these statements can and do represent real challenges to CASA programs. Growth planning doesn't ignore these realities. Rather, it addresses the challenges in a way that provides a step-by-step process that can be tailored to individual program needs. The process can be implemented when you and your leadership team decides that your program is ready to grow.

Is Your Program Ready?

How can you determine whether your program is on track and prepared to purposefully grow? All organizations have key indicators of performance and results. Providing volunteer advocacy for every abused or neglected child in a community is a key indicator of CASA program success.

Typically, CASA programs experience varying degrees of peak performance at varying times in the life cycle of the program. There are many factors worth exploring that are considered hallmarks of peak performing CASA programs.

Following this section, you will find a **Program Assessment and Discussion Exercise** that includes benchmark examples of success. The assessment is **not** a checklist of indicators that must be present before growth is considered. It is a comprehensive view of what might be considered best practices in any local program. Some programs will have achieved many of these marks of success, but it's unlikely that any single program has achieved them all.

The assessment is provided to you for two reasons:

1. to provide you with a list of ideals as **a way to prompt discussion about your current program functioning**
2. to provide an overview of **growth beyond the numbers**, to better prepare you and your leadership team for the road ahead as you strive to reach the CASA vision

Board and staff can use this tool as a final step in the decision-making process. Facilitate a planned group discussion of the results as you consider the scope of work and your shared commitment to growth planning and implementation.

How Do We Take the Next Step?

To answer that key question it will take more than just one person. Program growth is a shared decision and a shared commitment.

Fundamentally, you and your leadership team must decide if you are satisfied with the status quo. You must decide if you are satisfied serving *some* of the children. There is no doubt, your program has and will continue to do good work for children. But is doing good, good enough?

If there was a way to change, would you be ready? Are you prepared to meet the challenges to excellence that exist within your program?

It's decision time. Are you ready? What remains now is simply making the decision to grow.

Program Assessment and Discussion Exercise

An important part of strategic planning in any organization is assessing current status and performance. As you consider the issue of growth, it's helpful to engage in discussion about the functions and program characteristics that impact growth planning. Executive directors and board members can use a brief assessment exercise as part of introducing the growth planning process and gauging the "buy-in" of board members and staff.

Instructions for the Executive Director:

As part of a growth planning discussion in a board or staff meeting, share the following Brief Program Assessment and ask participants to consider each CASA Program Quality listed and indicate to what degree they believe their program demonstrates this quality.

Review the assessment as a group and invite individuals to share their feedback. Use the following questions to guide further discussion:

- Does everyone understand each quality? Which, if any, terms or ideas seem unfamiliar?
- Is there a great deal of consensus on the performance of the program for some qualities?
- Where do great differences occur? Why?
- How many "Don't Know" responses are there? What might this mean?
- What do individual and collective responses tell you about the amount of change that may be needed in your program as part of growth planning?

Part of the challenge of growth planning is addressing program barriers to growth. Remind everyone that no program is likely to function at the highest level in all these areas, all the time. Regardless of a program's current performance level, it is always possible to improve and move forward. Encourage the participants to understand that areas of concern should not be viewed as reasons to delay growth planning.

End the exercise by discussing how a comprehensive growth plan might address these issues (more in-depth assessment, feedback, SWOT session, specific strategies and action plans).

Brief Program Assessment

CASA Program Quality	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
1. Every child served receives the highest quality of volunteer advocacy					
2. Children served by the program experience better outcomes					
3. *Clear evidence* demonstrates children served by the program experience better outcomes					
4. The board is mission-motivated, diversely competent and fully engaged					
5. The executive leader possesses strong vision and expertise in strategically directing the organization					
6. A tenured and well-trained staff team works within a volunteer-centered culture					
7. A diverse, tenured and talented pool of volunteers invest with CASA at all levels					
8. Strong judicial support, including GAL appointment, enables quality advocacy and volunteer retention					
9. Strong working relationships with stakeholders result in collaboration and healthy conflict resolution in pursuit of the best interests of children					
10. An exceptional reputation within the community is utilized as a way to further public understanding of CASA and enables recruitment and successful attainment of resources					
11. A diverse funding plan provides for incremental growth, allowing operations to be maintained at a comparable scale to other successful non-profits					
12. Physical space is adequate, safe, well maintained, and located in area(s) convenient to volunteers, including satellite offices as appropriate					
13. Operational tasks, including financial and grant management, HR, facility oversight, and data reporting are completed effectively and efficiently					

Section I: Growth Planning Guide

This section of the toolkit provides information and guidance around the following areas related to developing and sustaining a plan for growth:

- An Examination of Six Critical Areas
- Selecting and Developing a Growth Planning Committee
- Developing a Strategic Plan for Growth
- Sustaining Action on the Plan

An Examination of Six Critical Areas

In all organizations, there are key performance areas that drive success. Consistently examining and measuring achievement in these areas is important to understanding the strengths and weaknesses. By the nature of our shared vision – a CASA volunteer for every child – all CASA programs share six key areas of focus that are pivotal and unique to our success.

As you plan for growth, closely examine your performance in the following *Six Critical Areas*. Identify those that critically impact your mission. By gaining an understanding of these CASA-specific issues you will be able to complete a more in-depth program performance plan than traditional or generic strategic planning might allow.

The *Six Critical Areas* for CASA program success are:

Executive Leadership	A highly effective executive director, capable of maximizing their own leadership strengths and the strengths of their team to accomplish the program's mission and goals.
Judicial Engagement	Meaningful judicial support as evidenced by a positive working relationship between the judiciary and CASA program.
Fund Development	A robust and intentional long-term fund development plan which focuses on individual donor growth and enables and sustains anticipated growth.
Community Engagement	Dynamic community engagement planning that supports successful recruitment, fundraising and public awareness.
Diversified Board of Directors	A board made up of key individuals with expertise and ownership of the vision to grow.
Organizational Excellence	Managing the changing organizational structure while preserving quality advocacy and excellence in operations.

What follows is an in-depth examination of each of these areas. Reviewing this information will help everyone involved in the growth process better understand the needs of their program and the specific challenges inherent in each area. As plan development progresses, you and the growth planning committee members will become "experts" at understanding the influence of

each area on your program. You will be able to create strategies that address your specific challenges.

In addition to these six areas, you will undoubtedly discover your own set of unique program challenges and opportunities. For example, geography and organizational structure (e.g., stand-alone programs vs. umbrella programs) are two special considerations. A thorough understanding of all of the factors impacting your program is a necessary first step in the growth planning process.

Executive Leadership

Leading a growing organization presents new challenges that require strong and flexible leadership. Programs may consider building into and fortifying current leadership with additional management and entrepreneurial skill building and development. Assuming that everyone within the organization is already competent in the area of managing significant growth is a dangerous assumption that could lead to a failure in developing and executing your growth plan.

There are as many leadership theories, models and programs to follow as there are leaders. You may currently ascribe to a specific set of leadership principles, values, theories and methods. Maybe you haven't given it much thought. For many in CASA leadership, there are so many important and urgent requirements that must be met, formal leadership development is something that remains on the "nice to do" list.

The breadth and depth of leadership development information available to today's leaders, including non-profit leaders, is astounding. Most CASA leaders have had the opportunity to participate in some leadership training, but may lack both the time and the resources to truly commit independent, dedicated, consistent time to elevating and developing their leadership skills.

"It's Good for You!"

We all know this statement tends to precede things like "eat 3 servings of vegetables a day", "complete daily cardio workouts" or "add flax seed to your ice cream". While it's hard to argue the health value of these things, it's equally hard to jump on board and do them when they seem to require both effort and change.

Sometimes that's how leaders and those responsible for overseeing leaders feel about professional development – yes, it's great, but it requires a lot of time, effort and change.

Do we really want to spend time on this now? Right when we're committing to a big growth plan in our organization? There is so much to do, so many challenges, and the risk can feel almost overwhelming. Like a commitment to a healthy lifestyle, investing in leadership development is all about prevention. Equipping your executive director with the additional knowledge, insight and skills for leading your program will provide the best opportunity for successful growth. It will also minimize the potential perils of organizational change.

Initial leadership evaluation and self-assessment will help determine the types of professional growth and development opportunities that would best serve the goals of individuals and the organization as a whole.

Lead with your Strengths

Rather than suggesting that CASA programs adopt a broad and comprehensive leadership assessment and development program as part of growth planning, we recommend that board leaders use the growth planning process as an opportunity to examine the current leadership strengths and the correlation of those strengths to achievement of effective and sustainable growth.

Attaining success by leveraging a leader's natural strengths – versus a focus on improving weaknesses – has been a key topic in leadership development for nearly a decade, ever since Gallup released the results of their landmark 30-year research study. Books and development programs, including Tom Rath and Barry Conchie's bestselling book, <u>Strengths Based Leadership</u>, have begun to center on the revelations that:

- The most effective leaders invest in strengths. When an organization's leadership fails to focus on individuals' strengths, the odds of an employee being engaged are a dismal 1 in 11 (9%). But when an organization's leadership focuses on the strengths of its employees, the odds soar to almost 3 in 4 (73%). When leaders focus on and invest in their employees' strengths, the odds of each person being engaged goes up eightfold.

- The most effective leaders surround themselves with the right people and then maximize their team. The best teams are well-rounded. Strong, cohesive teams have a representation of people with strengths in each of these four domains: executing, influencing, relationship building, and strategic thinking.

- The most effective leaders understand their followers' needs. People follow leaders for very specific reasons. Research from surveys of thousands of followers shows that the top four followers need from a leader are: trust, compassion, stability, and hope.

As CASA leaders, we must strive to lead with our strengths, develop well-rounded teams, and satisfy our constituent needs. We must lead with self-knowledge, intention and a leader-as-servant approach. James Kouzes and Barry Pousner outline in <u>The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations</u> that we must leverage our personal clarity and practice exemplary leadership by modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart.

To understand and support your executive director (ED) as a leader, a thorough performance evaluation of the ED is a critical responsibility of the board of directors. This evaluation should be conducted annually and should include a variety of feedback sources, including a self-assessment component. If the annual ED evaluation was recently (within 90 days) completed, programs leaders are encouraged to review the results in light of the growth planning process. This should help to identify the strengths that the ED brings to the program and leverage them to support the execution of a strategic growth plan for the program.

If the ED evaluation is not current, or as comprehensive as might be helpful, consider completing an assessment as an early step in the growth planning process. A sample **Executive Director Assessment Tool** is included in the **Executive Leadership Resources, Section II**, for this purpose.

Leadership development is not just for executive directors. All CASA program staff and board members can benefit from understanding more about the strengths they bring to the program and how their teams can work most effectively toward common goals.

Facing the Fear Factor

Being the ED of a CASA program is not a job for "sissies". It comes with an overwhelming responsibility to serve abused and hurting children in the community. It comes with stress and conflict and a never-ending list of "must dos" with seemingly impossible deadlines. It's tough. And it can feel like there is no end to the constantly growing list of urgent and important responsibilities. So what can possibly frighten this tough group of hard-working, multi-talented leaders?

Change. Doing things differently. Setting aside the old and embracing the new.

And these leaders are not alone. As part of the human condition, it seems as though our "comfort zones" are exactly that – comfortable, familiar, known, and even loved. Stepping outside them can produce anxiety, apprehension and even greater stress. Do any of the following sound familiar?

1. Fear of Failure
2. Fear of Trading Security for the Unknown
3. Fear of Being Overextended Financially
4. Fear of What Others Will Say or Think

These fears are real and **do** accompany change. And yet, that is exactly what the growth planning process will demand of the executive director. It requires a willingness to take a close look at the program, the staff, the board and ultimately themselves, as a starting place for change. Who in their right mind invites that kind of self-inflicted scrutiny?

CASA executive directors! They realize that the proverbial message, "if you're not growing, you're dying" offers some very real truth. They understand that intentional change represents the best way to move forward, to grow, and to expand the value of something they already deeply believe in – the need and responsibility we have to serve abused and neglected children.

Judicial Engagement

The relationship between a CASA program and the court is foundational. In 1977, a juvenile court judge in Seattle, Washington first conceptualized the idea of using volunteers from the community to assist in gathering information about children and providing best-interest advocacy. Today, CASA programs can operate because the local judiciary endorses the program, referring cases through legal appointment and court order. Without this judicial endorsement, CASA programs cannot operate.

Beyond providing the legal mechanism and authority by which CASA operates in a community, an ongoing working relationship between CASA and the Court must exist to determine the practical and process-oriented rules to determine how CASA volunteers will serve the Court and fulfill their duties. Statutes and laws help define the role of CASA within the legal and child protection systems, but it is the individual judge(s) and programs that define the operations within *their* individual court system.

A strong, professional, and mutually supportive relationship with the judiciary is a critical benchmark in all successful CASA programs and it is vital to programs that choose to grow. Completing a thorough assessment of the relationship between the CASA program and the judiciary is necessary to understand what contributes to quality advocacy, volunteer effectiveness and satisfaction and what might create barriers to successful growth.

The following best practices are divided into 6 categories and are designed to help you examine the critical area of judicial engagement:

1) Clarity of Role and Expectations

Best Practice: The court is familiar with the role of CASA, as provided in the Texas Family Code, CASA standards, and local CASA program training curriculums and policies.

By understanding CASA's role, the court can avail itself of all of the benefits of a CASA program – independent fact finder, information-gatherer for the court, monitor of court orders, advocate for the child's best interests, etc. – and hold the CASA program accountable for fulfilling its duties. Most Texas-based CASA programs are appointed as guardian ad litem (GAL), but even those that are not often structure their training and expectations of volunteers around the legally defined GAL role.

2) Case Assignment Policy

Best Practice: The court should support quality supervision of volunteer advocates. Ideally, the court appoints a CASA program to a case and then allows the CASA program to assign the case to a specific volunteer.

CASA standards require that programs carefully match volunteers to their particular case(s), taking into consideration volunteer experience, understanding, skills, availability, and case type

preference, in consideration of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. CASA program staff spends a considerable amount of time recruiting, screening, training and supervising volunteers. As such, they are much better equipped to appropriately match individual volunteers to a particular case. If the court makes these decisions for the CASA program, it can negatively affect the quality and effectiveness of CASA volunteer advocacy, staff supervision of volunteers, retention of volunteers, and ultimately, outcomes for children.

3) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Best Practice: The CASA program and Judge develop a working agreement or MOU that clearly defines the expectations and duties of both the court and the CASA program regarding CASA operations. The MOU includes, but is not limited to:

- The timing and procedure for appointment of cases to the CASA program, taking into account the number of volunteers available and the capacity of the program;
- The format for the CASA court report and the method and timing of distribution to the judge and the parties;
- The expectations of the court regarding CASA oral testimony;
- The court's expectations around the screening, training and supervision of volunteers;
- Protocol for addressing crises that may arise in program operations and require judicial assistance;
- Protocol for regular court input regarding program functions and activities that affect court operations;
- Development of a protocol for access to court records and other information;
- Protocol for CASA requesting court review of issues in the case;
- Protocol for handling a complaint about a CASA volunteer or staff member, including removal of a volunteer from a case and removal of a volunteer from the program;
- A schedule of regular meetings between the court and the CASA program and others regularly involved in cases (the attorneys for CPS, the CPS program director, attorneys ad litem);
- Court participation in training and swearing in and appreciation of volunteers;
- Access to court proceedings to CASA volunteers during their training;
- Access to court proceedings to CASA board members, donors, and other stakeholders.

4) Model Court Practices

Best Practice: The court and the CASA program work together to continually improve the CASA program and court processes related to CASA effectiveness.

Working with the CASA program to set expectations, the court should try to maximize the program's effectiveness in providing useful information to the court and advocacy to the child.

Below are examples from the only National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Model Court for CPS cases in Texas, the 126th District Court in Austin, Texas:

- The CASA program is appointed at the earliest possible stage of the case. This allows CASA to provide the court the maximum amount of information and recommendations regarding the child's best interests at the first hearing.
- The court allows CASA to request emergency hearings to address urgent issues that must be addressed prior to the next regularly scheduled hearing.
- The court has ordered that CPS is prohibited from changing child placement without the pre-approval of CASA, the child's attorney, or a court order.
- The CASA supervisor and volunteer are regular and active participants in mediations and settlement agreements.

5) CASA as Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

Best Practice: The court appoints CASA as GAL, a role clearly defined in the Texas Family Code.

The Court may appoint CASA as GAL or as "volunteer advocate."   The role and duties of a GAL are well-defined and detailed in the Texas Family Code. The duties and role of a volunteer advocate largely remain for the court to define in the orders appointing the volunteer advocate. Most CASA programs are appointed as GAL and Texas CASA believes that appointing CASA as GAL is a best practice because:

- The GAL role is clearly defined in the Texas Family Code and relatively familiar to attorneys, CPS, and most other stakeholders;
- The GAL role is consistent and not subject to the court's definition;
- The GAL role empowers CASA to provide the most effective advocacy possible by ensuring that CASA has the ability to fully participate in the case (i.e., providing oral and written testimony, notifying the court of any objections to a mediated settlement agreement, advocating as a surrogate parent for the child in special education proceedings, accessing and reviewing records and information regarding the child from service providers and caregivers);
- CASA can serve as a GAL at no cost to the court and without the potential conflict of interests between the child's best interests and the child's legal interests that attorneys serving in the dual role may have, especially with older children; and
- The Family Code provides limited immunity to the GAL, not provided to volunteer advocates.

6) Support for CASA in the Courts and in the Community

<u>The judiciary actively and openly supports the involvement and contributions of CASA programs and volunteers.</u>

CASA program success in the community is heavily dependent on the judge's active support of and involvement in the CASA program.   It is essential for recruiting quality board members, staff and volunteers. It helps in providing effective training and in garnering the respect of the legal community and the child protection system staff.

The following excerpt from <u>Juvenile and Family Justice Today</u> (Spring 2005), a publication of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, provides these recommendations to judges considering a CASA program or wanting to better understand their role within their existing program:

- *There is no better recruiter of volunteers or spokesperson for the CASA program than the juvenile court judge. Whenever we speak in the community—whether it is at service clubs, at schools, or at public forums— we always emphasize the need for volunteers in the juvenile court. Usually, people ask "What can we do to help?" and our answer is that you can become a CASA, and serve one child.*

- *Additionally, we have always been prepared to and do talk with other community leaders who may have questions or concerns about the CASA program.*

- *We regularly communicate with the media about the program and its value to the court and to the community's most vulnerable children. We have found the media to be receptive to stories about volunteers working with children in crisis. Of course we have to ensure that confidentiality is preserved, but that can be accomplished while still permitting the public to know about the wonderful work that CASA volunteers do.*

- *We also are prepared to respond to questions when there is a tragedy or a crisis regarding a child and the program.*

Fund Development

Fund development is an essential component of every CASA program. Without adequate funding organizations simply cease to exist. Programs engaged in growth planning will immediately confront logical questions related to the viability of financial stability and growth. *How can we grow if our funding doesn't increase? Will we outpace our funds? Where will we go to increase our revenue? Can we grow if we don't increase our staff? How do we do this?*

First and foremost, growth efforts simply cannot be sustained without a well-designed and strategically implemented fund development plan. The plan doesn't do the driving, but it is the map that charts the route.

Prepare for Change

Accept that a new and robust plan may look quite different from any fundraising outlines your program has created in the past. Most CASA programs have strategies and tactics that provide for current operating needs and include steady but modest financial growth. Successful growth planning will require new approaches to obtaining resources and providing a level of security that allows for future operations and financial independence for the program.

Many programs currently have fund development staff and/or a fund development board committee. Often, these planning responsibilities may fall to a financial committee or with individuals appointed by the board president. In some programs, the fundraising and/or fund development may even be ad hoc, piloted by anyone willing to proactively put forth the effort. Regardless of the way your program has operated its fund development responsibilities in the past, to grow you must have strong and skilled leaders who are both willing and able to create and implement a new and aggressive fund development plan. The long-term execution of a good plan will require the contributions of not only key leaders, but coordinated teams – large and small – that strive to reach common goals.

The fund development plan is actually <u>a plan within a plan</u>. There are few things that require a well-designed plan more than the accomplishment of financial goals. Thus, the funding plan is part of the overall growth plan. It is created by the committee responsible for fund development and serves as the roadmap for getting from where you are today to where you want to be – financial independence.

Special Events vs. Fund Development

Many non-profit organizations, CASA programs included, are very special-event dependent. Unfortunately, special events are actually the least effective way to raise money. They are excellent venues for public awareness, public recognition and event volunteer recruitment. But they are not the way to long-term financial stability. They are also a poor long-term investment of the significant time and energy required to execute them. Why? Often, it's simply a saturation of events that takes place, inside and outside your program. There are only so many

events that sponsors, volunteers, staff and attendees can support. They also typically require a significant amount of planning and poor planning can, and often does, lead to poor results. This does not mean that special events shouldn't be a part of your CASA calendar. It's important to integrate well-planned, well-executed, and well-leveraged events into your overall fundraising plans. However, to grow financially it is important to accept the idea that these programs serve a purpose that is generally not fund development. Fundraisers are not the same as fund development. While some of the money garnered from events may not go to support the annual budget expenses, most often it does. For a more extensive discussion of this topic, see **Making the Move from Fundraisers to Fund Development** in **Fund Development Resources, Section II**.

So what exactly is fund development if it isn't 5K Runs, Golf Tournaments, Casino Nights and Cookoffs? **Fund development is the intentional long-term plan to cultivate donors to lead them from today's first-time CASA donors to tomorrow's lifetime – and beyond – CASA benefactors.** It is the process of employing strategies and actions for prospecting, cultivating, soliciting and stewarding donors. It is all about developing long-term mutually beneficial relationships with potential donors for the purpose of serving the CASA mission by satisfying the needs of the donor. And ultimately, it is all about people. The people who want to help the children who so desperately need a CASA in their life. We can't serve the kids without the money to support the organization. And people who donate to CASA use us and our volunteers to vicariously serve their need to help abused and neglected children. That is a good thing.

Again, the process of ensuring financial stability is not brief. Think of it like saving for higher education, or even planning for retirement. While it may take a long time to realize big financial goals, there's no better time to start acting than today!

The Steps in the Process

Generally, the steps involved in making the transition from dependence on event fundraisers to security with long-term fund development include the following:

1. Create an initial fund development team.
2. Review the commitment to the organizations' values, mission and vision.
3. Assess your starting point.
4. Set goals.
5. Craft the donor presentation(s).
6. Create the donor prospect list.
7. Build the donor relationships.
8. Make the donor requests.
9. Continue to repeat steps 7-8 continuously, while reassessing and updating the goals, presentations and prospect lists.

Securing financial gifts from donors is more than just funding the current needs of the organization. The funding plan should target individual donors, foundations, and corporations. With individual donors, the goal should be not to simply secure a donation *today*, but to build a genuine relationship with them that makes them feel that they want give again and again, hopefully to a greater and greater degree. When people really identify with and feel personally connected to the mission of the organization they are much more likely to become annual donors, major donors, capital projects donors, lifetime donors and ultimately, consider CASA as a beneficiary in their estate planning. This progress does not happen by accident. Few people are out looking for places to donate their money. It is the relationships built and the communication with the people in the CASA organization that drives this donor cycle. It is donors seeing that their money is being put to good use that makes them want to give again and again.

Think Long-Term

One goal your program should set is establishing an endowment fund for your CASA program that will continue to grow indefinitely. Initiating this fund does not require a great deal of money. However, it does send a message that you are serious about the financial and credible stability of your program.

The principal of the endowment fund is never used, continuing to grow to ensure regular income, generational equity, and financial stability.

How you contribute to this fund is up to you. Some programs make a decision to contribute a portion of all unrestricted donations to the fund. Others may use the fund as a tool or option when making solicitations for major gifts. Many major donors are impressed by the ability to make a gift that is perpetual in nature.

Donors who see that the leaders of an organization are good stewards of money are more likely to feel confident that their donations will have a lasting impact on the community. And though everyone roots for the underdog, everyone likes to invest in a winner – donors are attracted to successful endeavors and a strong endowment fund will build donor confidence.

Regardless of the specifics of your fund development plan or the pace at which you reach your new financial milestones and goals, set your sights high and get prepared for a rewarding journey.

Community Engagement

Dynamic and creative community engagement planning is the foundation for successful recruitment of volunteers, staff and board members. It is also an essential component of fund development activities, as well as public awareness of the program within the community. As part of the overall growth plan, programs will strengthen and enhance their community engagement efforts through recruitment planning and organization-wide communication strategies.

Recruitment Planning

Planning and executing an aggressive and sustained volunteer recruitment campaign is paramount to achieving significant program growth. As one executive director put it, "It is the first domino that has to fall in order for growth to occur."

Forming a Volunteer Recruitment or Community Outreach team or committee is one way to accomplish a great deal with limited resources. The best recruitment plans are created and implemented by teams of people who understand the CASA role, the desired attributes of the CASA volunteer, and creative ways to reach the target audiences.

Team members can include the executive director, program director, recruitment staff, board members and volunteers. You may also consider members of your community that might be able to assist -- a representative from a faith community, media or public relations specialists, and perhaps others who cannot be CASA volunteers or board members but want to see your program grow.

The growth planning phase may be also be a time to consider adding new staff positions dedicated exclusively to these areas. Your program may consider adding a volunteer recruiter, community outreach specialist, communication director or public relations specialist to support reaching your growth goals.

Creating the Plan

Most CASA programs have a formal or informal plan or documentation of efforts aimed at recruiting volunteers. Often, this is a list of events, speaking engagements and media exposure. Sometimes these are planned in conjunction with upcoming trainings, or just listed on an annual calendar of recruitment activities. Some programs repeat the same activities year after year, regardless of success rates, and declare that recruitment is just very difficult. And they are right! Recruitment is and may always be one of the biggest challenges to growth.

Why are some programs successful in recruiting volunteers, while others stagnate in their efforts? Is there a magic recruitment formula? Perhaps there's a one-size-fits-all solution to the recruitment dilemma?

If only it were that easy. There may not be a magic formula, but there are cornerstones of successful recruitment, as well as great latitude for creativity and innovation. It's all in the plan. Let's examine those cornerstones of success in the following four-part process to creating winning recruitment plans: completing assessments, setting goals, selecting strategy, and implementing an action plan.

Part One: Recruitment 360° Assessments

Just as the strategic growth plan requires an overall assessment of past and current program performance, a recruitment plan requires a similar assessment of the recruitment efforts and volunteer-centered culture of the program. (See **Values of a Volunteer-Centered Culture** in **Community Engagement Resources, Section II**.) A Recruitment 360 ° assessment (R360°) reviews all aspects of program functioning measured by the messages conveyed to potential and current CASA volunteers.

The R360° assessment may include many different types of reviews, including:

- Program data for the previous 3-5 years
- Past and current recruitment plan documents
- Current recruitment messaging, including:
  - program communications (websites, social media, printed materials, newsletters, email signatures, volunteer application, pre-service information, business forms, etc.)
  - paid and earned media coverage
  - event and themed PR (child abuse awareness month, 5K, etc.)
  - other forms of communication to volunteers, staff, board, stakeholders and the community
- Telephone and voicemail messaging
- Staff engagement, friendliness and comfort level with volunteers and recruitment
- Coaching and professional development in the area of volunteer management for all staff
- Potential volunteer contact, information, and tracking process
- Pre-service training evaluations
- Closed case and volunteer exit evaluations
- Survey data related to recruitment and retention
- Office space

As you review each of these areas, look for ways that potential volunteers are currently being encouraged (or discouraged) from taking the next step. What does the data tell you about the level of volunteer-centered behavior in the program? How are practices and policies inclusive of the needs of volunteers?

The Growth Planning Toolkit includes several ready-made assessment tools to help recruitment teams get started. Because every area of a program can be assessed, it is helpful to determine

which areas hold the highest priority. Not every area needs to be reviewed and changed all at once. The team can determine the top areas for review and then consider a regular schedule of review for other areas (e.g., recruitment team is responsible for completing an R360° assessment on one area each month).

Part Two: Goal Setting

Recruitment goals for the number of volunteers that are assigned to cases, volunteers trained, and volunteers retained will be established as part of the larger strategic growth plan (see the **Growth Projection Worksheet** in **Developing a Strategic Plan for Growth, Section I**). The recruitment team will take these goals and break them into appropriate increments. A 12-month recruitment plan will include goals for the number of volunteers assigned to cases, volunteers completing pre-service training and volunteers retained into the coming year.

Recruitment Goals for FY 2013
• Number of Volunteers Assigned Cases on 9-1-2012 = actual
• Number of Volunteers Assigned Cases in FY13 = volunteer goal
• Number of Volunteers Completing Pre-Service Training in FY13 = training goal
• Number of Volunteers Assigned Cases on 9-1-2013 = retention goal

Additionally, programs will track the volunteer to case ratio, to ensure growth is occurring through volunteers serving cases (as opposed to staff serving cases).

Beyond the numbers, focus on the specific attributes that your program needs in its volunteers. Children are best served when CASA programs carefully match volunteers to cases. Determine your needs and set recruitment goals designed to provide a richly diverse pool of volunteers. Programs should set goals for a variety of demographics related to the community and children served, including gender, race and ethnicity, geography, age, special advocacy needs and any other demographic as appropriate.

Once the team has these numbers, they can determine incremental goals as a way of tracking progress (i.e., monthly, quarterly). These incremental goals should be tied to an annual training calendar, and will help determine a timetable for recruitment activities.

Part Three: Recruitment Strategy Selection

There are many tried and true ways that volunteer recruiting strategies that programs have used successfully in the past. This is not a time to abandon those strategies, but it is a time to carefully evaluate and select the strategies you believe will be most successful and most efficient, given your available time and resources. This may mean eliminating some of the

activities that have been done in the past which are ineffective but fall into the "we've always done this" category. Effective core recruitment strategy categories include: Word of Mouth, Communication Planning, Online Recruitment, Corporate and Community Partnerships, Special Events, and Targeted Recruitment Campaigns.

Word of Mouth

Research has clearly shown that the most successful strategy for recruiting CASA volunteers is by word of mouth. The strongest recruitment force for any program is the passionate and articulate person who is prepared to share a compelling CASA story and the right information (e.g., next training date, qualifications, and contact information). When such people reach out to others in their circle of influence and do so in a deliberate way, the right people are much more likely to receive the right message.

Word of Mouth (WOM) recruiting is one-to-one, but can be done in many different ways, such as house parties, card campaigns, or contests. Ongoing training for staff, volunteers and board members on effective WOM recruiting should be included in every program's recruitment strategies.

Communication Planning

Like earned and paid media, communication planning is a direct recruitment strategy. However, it also serves as support for the overall growth plan, including fundraising and public awareness activities. Effective communication planning includes:

- strong branding and consistent messaging

- name recognition within the community

- positive working relationships with the media

- innovation in telling the CASA story

- participation with other systems stakeholders

- preparedness for responding publically to program crises

Publicity is often approached on an as-needed basis in CASA programs, such as support of specific events or occasions. It may or may not directly tie back to recruitment goals. Programs should use a 12-month recruitment planning calendar to determine what, where and when communication efforts can best support the short-term and long-term needs of the program.

Leveraging local media resources as part of the overall recruitment strategy is a best practice in successful programs. While programs differ in their ability to purchase media, it is important to prioritize at least some portion of the budget for effective program advertising and publicity. Take time to carefully research the best and most effective return on investment based on the

specific recruitment goals. Start by ensuring that you have a media expert connected to your program (e.g., board member, volunteer, or friend of CASA). Ask this person to help create an effective media plan based on your recruitment goals.

Don't reinvent the wheel. Use both state and national CASA resources. There are many excellent public service announcements (PSAs) to which your program can simply add local contact information. Keep in mind that quality is very important in all forms of media. Leverage the expertise of others whenever possible.

Earned media is invaluable to CASA programs. Not only is it a way to reach potential volunteers, but it serves as a primary connection to the community at large. Pitch compelling stories designed to inform and educate the community about the plight of foster children and share ways for people to respond and help. Use ready-made templates from Texas CASA.

Strive for consistent, professional branding throughout your program communications. Develop multi-purpose materials that utilize same colors, logos, and messages to further strengthen community awareness of your program. Doing this will prevent the need to create a new set of materials for every event or activity in your program.

Online Recruitment

Programs seeking to grow need to ensure an informative, functional and current online presence. This begins with the program website. It also includes social media, online recruitment resource sites, community sites, blogs, twitter feeds and more. Because of the need for continually updated content, programs need a dependable system of maintaining their online profile. Whether staff, board, volunteer or program friend, someone needs to assume this area of responsibility and develop a regular schedule for updating the content to assure a high level of impact.

Corporate and Community Partnerships

CASA programs regularly partner with businesses and organizations in their communities. Although these connections are often used specifically for fund development purposes, they also present opportunities for effective recruitment relationships. It's important to approach partners strategically, and with specific targeting related to your recruitment goals.

- Seek speaking engagements where prospective volunteers are likely; choose quality over quantity

- Expand mutually beneficial relationships with partners; seek help with ongoing program needs, provide recognition for recruitment support, become a "part" of your community

- Utilize current state and national CASA partners

Special Events

Recruitment is an ongoing set of actions. Be certain that every program event and activity has an **intentional** recruitment focus. When planning annual fundraisers, appreciation events, retreats, and trainings, include specific opportunities in the agenda or announcements. These events are the best time to deliver a compelling recruitment message, along with the necessary follow up information. You have a captive audience that's already interested in CASA and the event! You may want to develop a script so that the message is clear and all pertinent information is delivered. Make sure everyone involved in running the event is not only working the event, but acting as a volunteer recruiter on the day of the event. Communication is the key to recruiting and the most successful volunteer recruitment programs take advantage of every opportunity to recruit by thinking ahead and planning for recruitment.

Targeted Recruitment Campaigns

Children are best served when matched with volunteers from a richly diverse pool. Use your demographic goals for recruitment to select strategies that will achieve this diversity. Recognize that recruitment is not a one-size-fits-all process. Look for barriers inherent in your program's environment and culture that may exist. Educate staff on issues related to disproportionality, better outcomes for children, racial and cultural inclusion, and proficiency.   If you are uncertain about effective recruitment strategies related to ethnicity, race or any other demographic, seek help and resources. Focus on meeting the needs of the children and the community you serve, rather than attempting to "meet a number". (See **Targeted Volunteer Recruitment Campaign** in **Community Engagement Resources, Section II**.)

Part Four: Annual Action Plan

Once you have conducted the R360° assessments and selected the recruitment goals and strategies most likely to be successful, the final step in the plan is to define the steps or actions necessary to meet the goals. Consider and identify the needed resources, persons responsible and timeframes for implementing and completing the action.

We recommend planning twelve months in advance, continually updating the plan so that it is always a "12-month plan". However, recruitment is more than just a series of separate actions. Strategic recruitment planning that actively and consistently uses a team approach becomes integrated into the program culture. It is no longer viewed as a stand-alone activity that must be "checked off" each year, resulting in better volunteer recruitment and retention rates.

A 12-month recruitment plan can start any month; it is not necessary to delay planning based on your fiscal or calendar year. Your plan should include a calendar of pre-service training dates with confirmed times and places for the next 12 months. The recruitment team should work with the training staff in developing a 12-month calendar. Base the number of trainings offered on recruitment goals. This is a recognized best practice.

Avoid completing pre-service training schedules on a need-to-train basis (i.e., waiting to schedule a class until there are enough potential volunteers enrolled). This will significantly handicap your program's ability to recruit. Potential volunteers want to know when they can plan for training classes. Clear planning and communication increases program credibility and likelihood of better recruiting outcomes.

Offer a training class at least every three months. Programs offering pre-service training less than quarterly are encouraged to reexamine their strategy. It is much easier to recruit potential volunteers when you can advertise that a new training class starts within the next 90 days, versus 6 months from now. Time is an enemy when it comes to recruiting and it's best to act when someone is interested.

Although training typically occurs in groups, training a small number of new volunteers, through independent study or some other adapted curriculum, can be effective and rewarding. If the recruitment strategies tied to the training calendar are successful, you can expect better numbers for each class.

Once the calendar is set, the team then has the task of scheduling the strategies it has chosen to best support the goals and training dates. Consider the following when creating the action plan:

- Use long-term strategies:
    - Use an overarching theme for recruitment and promote all efforts using the theme
    - Keep momentum going throughout the year and celebrate benchmarks

- Use short-term strategies:
    - Create a word of mouth campaign that includes training and equipping your staff and volunteers

- Create a media plan that provides timely coverage of compelling CASA stories

- Utilize PSAs and other media tools and resources from Texas CASA

- Utilize National CASA's "I Am For The Child" campaign

- Plan a recruitment focus for every event your program participates in, especially fundraising events

- Make sure strategies and actions are specific and measureable; avoid vague action verbs like encourage, strive, and assist, and instead, opt for hard action verbs and attach numerical measures

- Identify the necessary resources for each action

- Identify who will carry out each action item and benchmarks for evaluation

- Determine an active process of plan review and revision as needed

Part Five: Start Over

Wash, rinse, and repeat! The ongoing nature of recruitment means there is no completion date for the project, no end to the process. There is only forward motion, with regular and consistent review. The recruitment plan should be a dog-eared, well-used part of any program. And many people need to be invested in its ongoing creation, implementation, and revision.

The team approach to a recruitment plan is a best practice. Teams – as opposed to one dedicated recruiter – provide a ready group of people who share the same goals and are willing to keep recruitment on the "front burner" at all times. People may cycle on and off the team periodically, but the recruitment plan remains a constant hub that allows current members to assess and prepare and create and implement and succeed.

Even programs with more volunteers than cases are aware that this situation could change at any time. Thus, the work of the recruiting team will always require accomplishing today's work as well as preparing to recruit the volunteers of tomorrow. The reward for this good organization and hard work is an end in and of itself – the knowledge that there is a secure base of volunteers capable of serving *all* of the children in need of a CASA.

Diversified Board of Directors

A diversified board of directors includes individuals with varying skills, talents, interests, board experience, and community connections. Having a diversified board is essential in providing the direction, leadership and support for programs seeking significant growth.

How would you describe your current board? If your board doesn't represent your ideal vision yet, take heart. In Getting the Best from Your Board, Williams and McGinnis share this about the challenge of assembling a top-notch board, "Structuring board members' work so that they are fully engaged in their governance role has been compared to herding cats." Sound tough?

Effective boards are built and matured over the life of an organization. Often, developing a strong board takes years, simply because it's tough to attract talented people willing to give of their time and resources. Thoughtful and systematic recruitment, selection and development of members remains the keystone to assembling a truly excellent board of directors. As part of a regular strategic planning process, and certainly prior to taking on a significant growth initiative, existing boards should conduct an effectiveness assessment and address those areas identified as weaknesses. Section II of the Toolkit includes a board matrix (inventory) and board self-assessment tools for this purpose.

Board members with a wide range of assets will be needed to accomplish the work. First and foremost, select and retain members with good analytical skills and the ability to make decisions. Among the other skills, talents and assets a board needs are:

- Diversity of subject matter experience including child protection, education, mental health, foster care, policy, and organizational operations (nonprofit governance/administration, local CASA program operation)

- Talents and expertise in financial oversight, fund development, media relations, and information technology, and key legal areas (employment, nonprofit management, family law),

- Community connections that can open doors and provide access for fund raising, policy efforts, volunteer recruitment, and in-kind services

- Diversity of demographics including race and ethnicity, age, gender, and geography (in multi-county programs)

Demographic Diversity

"Achieving meaningful representation on non-profit boards of directors requires more than an externally mandated diversity policy. It requires a commitment to the benefits of diversity (i.e. creativity , differing perspectives, and innovations) and the pursuit of common interest and values." *Perspectives on Nonprofit Board Diversity (1999). BoardSource.*

Diverse boards first address the need for meaningful representation, including racial and ethnic diversity, through open discussion. Members need to understand and appreciate the true value of a diverse governing body, versus meeting a required diversity goal. An emphasis on how diversity enhances the organizations' ability to achieve its mission is a good place for the discussion to start.

If a board has not previously considered this issue, and has not already implemented intentional recruitment and selection strategies to achieve representative membership, the growth planning process can serve as an ideal time. Effectively engaging the community is a critical component of growth. Diverse board composition not only assures the talent, expertise and leadership to fuel the growth effort, but it also makes a strong statement about the program's overall commitment to serving the entire community.

Mission Driven

Assessing a board's effectiveness in preparation for growth planning should include an earnest look at how well members understand the core mission of CASA. Every board member should aspire to grow in their understanding of the work of serving children in foster care. As part of mission awareness, board members minimum core competencies related to the mission include:

- Having a firsthand understanding of what a CASA volunteer does

- Understanding how having a CASA volunteer positively impacts the lives of abused and neglected children

- Understanding the basics of volunteer recruitment, screening and supervision

- Understanding the challenges of the child protection system

When board members fully understand the statistics in their local community *and* determine that even one child navigating the foster care system without a CASA volunteer is too many, the necessary **ownership**, **urgency** and **passion** for growth emerges. A board with this sense of purpose is a force to be reckoned with and will lead the charge in growth planning, implementation and beyond.

The Board's Role in Growth Planning

Each member of the board must endorse the creation and implementation of a strategic plan for growth. Board members may have many questions about program growth and it's important that these questions be addressed.

Part of the growth planning process as outlined in this Toolkit includes a comprehensive process of gathering program information, including history, statistical data, and survey feedback from staff, volunteers, judges and other stakeholders who work directly with the program. Board

members may help in compiling this information, providing an opportunity to understand the program from different perspectives.

As active members of the Growth Planning Committee, board members will also become experts in the way each of the six critical areas impact their local CASA program. They will develop strategies and action plans to address identified challenges and build on program strengths. While it's true that board ownership, urgency, and passion for the CASA mission will drive program growth, the growth planning process itself is also designed to further enhance the board's understanding, support and commitment to the mission.

Organizational Excellence

Significantly increasing your program's capacity to serve children with volunteers requires a monumental commitment and a sustained focus of resources including time, finances, and people. Ensuring continued quality advocacy for children and excellence in operations during times of growth can be very challenging. If the quality of CASA advocacy suffers at the expense of growth, what is the purpose of growing? If new positions are created and staff is expanded, the value of these moves is virtually eliminated if they create confusion of roles or new gaps in service.

Maintaining and enhancing excellence while growing becomes the responsibility of many, but is directed and managed by key staff leaders. Leaders must keep a close watch over the day-to-day work, minimizing chaos while preserving and improving overall quality. This is done by identifying, monitoring and striving for accomplishment in three key areas of program work: **Excellence Through Inclusion**, **Quality Volunteer Advocacy** and **Excellence in Operations**.

Excellence Through Inclusion

As part of both state and national standards, all CASA programs strive to be inclusive organizations. That is, the volunteers, staff and board members should reflect the diversity of the children and community they serve. Program leaders support and endorse the value of inclusion in their program because they believe diversity is a hallmark of excellence in *both* advocacy for children and program operations.

Opportunities exist throughout the creation of a growth plan to bolster diversity and inclusivity efforts. For example:

- Provide leadership, training, and resource materials to *prospective* board members, staff, and volunteers as well as ongoing training designed to focus on self-awareness and cultural sensitivity

- Collect and analyze demographic make-up of the board, staff, volunteers, and the children served as part of planning for growth

- Include targeted presentations and information to attract minority communities

- Make a long-term commitment to developing an inclusive organization

Quality Volunteer Advocacy

Quality volunteer advocacy for children is at the very core of the CASA mission. Programs are able to achieve growth precisely because the service they provide is <u>valued</u> and <u>valuable</u>. To ensure quality volunteer advocacy remains the center focal point of your program's mission, give

careful consideration to how growth will affect advocacy. As you do this, consider the following:

- volunteer numbers will increase at the same that increases in necessary support staff and resources are needed

- growth may require new levels of management to oversee the screening, selection, training, supervision and support of volunteers

- an influx in *new* volunteers will inevitably require more time than working with large numbers of tenured volunteers

Important issues related to quality advocacy and growth include the **volunteer to case ratio**, **volunteer retention** and your program's **compliance with standards**.

Volunteer Case Ratio

The volunteer case ratio (VCR) is an indicator of quality advocacy within CASA programs. At the core of the mission, CASA programs exist to recruit, train and supervise volunteers to provide best-interests advocacy for abused or neglected children.

For a variety of reasons, some programs serve children using paid CASA staff. To ensure that this method of service is not overused as a strategy, Texas CASA standards require that a minimum of 70% of cases be served by volunteers. All programs submit quarterly data to Texas CASA, indicating both the total number of cases and the number of cases served *by volunteers*. This data determines the Program VCR. Programs that consistently fall below the requirement must submit action plans to reverse the trend.

Why Do Programs Serve Cases With Staff?

Most programs in Texas far exceed the 70% minimum VCR. However, programs may fall below the 70% because:

- they have more cases than volunteers; either by judicial insistence (automatic assignment), by program choice, or lack of action to deter
- they believe that staff service is better than no service
- a volunteer leaves near the end of case that is hard to reassign
- the cases include issues deemed too challenging for volunteers, such as geography, PMC, sibling group, complexity of issues, etc.
- the program staff often see themselves as case workers (many were former CPS case workers) and may not fully embrace the volunteer model of advocacy
- a staff-driven culture is rooted in the program history
- they find volunteer recruitment too challenging

- the staff enjoys directly serving the children (vs. supervising volunteers)
- they believe that they can serve more children with staff vs. volunteers
- they are not familiar with the volunteer-centered model
- they hold a perception that the program will "shrink" if they stop taking cases; they believe they will go backwards (i.e., loss of confidence, support, donors, etc.)
- they have low expectations of what volunteers can and will do
- they have a lack of volunteer management and/or development skills and may hold a belief that "it's easier to do it yourself"

As you can tell, some of these reasons seem to support the possibility that cases may occasionally benefit from CASA staff advocacy. However, some of the more common reasons reflect an adherence to ideology, program culture, and historical challenges within the program.

Programs with a VCR below 70% must address in their action plan: 1) aggressive recruitment, 2) focused retention activities, and 3) a case assignment protocol that allows the program to meet and sustain the minimum requirements. This may involve strategically changing historical working agreements with the court. In any event, this improvement will likely involve both staff and board leadership.

Knowing and understanding your program's VCR is important in developing the overall program growth plan, ideally providing effective strategies to maintain a consistently high VCR. This becomes the work of everyone in the program. However, as a key indicator of quality advocacy, it is ultimately the board, the executive director, and the program director that will set the expectations and lead the way.

Volunteer Retention

The value of a well-trained, effective and tenured CASA volunteer cannot be overstated. Retaining quality volunteers ensures that advocacy is high impact and life-changing for the children served by your program. Because of this, strong volunteer retention is a cornerstone of quality advocacy and requires thoughtful planning and ongoing focus and resources.

The volunteer retention rate is defined as the percentage of volunteers remaining in service for a specified period of time. Knowing your starting point is essential in setting a goal regarding the number of new volunteers that must be recruited in the coming months and year. Calculating your program's volunteer retention rate is the first step in this critical part of the overall growth plan. Typically, volunteer retention is calculated in one-year increments.

Calculating the Volunteer Retention Rate

The example below visually depicts the method to calculate the one-year retention rate for fiscal year 2011. (The steps in the formula can be used for a different time period.)

First, list the names of volunteers assigned to a case September 1, 2010 (column A). Next, list the names of unique volunteers who were assigned from September 2, 2010 through August 31, 2011 (column B). This is the total number of volunteers assigned cases in FY 2011 (column C).

Now, create a similar list for FY 2012. List the names of volunteers who had case assignments on September 1, 2011 (Column D) and the names of unique volunteers assigned to a case between September 2, 2011 and August 31, 2012 (Column E).

Count the number of names that appear on both lists (the bold, shaded names in the table). Divide that number (14, in this example) by the number of volunteers assigned cases in FY 2011 (Column C). Multiply that product by 100 to convert to percent. This is the one-year volunteer retention rate for FY 2011.

Volunteer retention rate is an especially important calculation to make before estimating volunteer recruitment goals.   This information directly determines the number of new volunteers the program must recruit and train each year to replace exiting volunteers and achieve growth.

EXAMPLE
Volunteer Retention for FY 2011

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F
Volunteers Assigned Cases on 9/1/10	Volunteers Assigned Cases 9/2/10 - 8/31/11	Total Volunteers Assigned Cases FY 2011	Volunteers Assigned Cases on 9-1-11	Volunteers Assigned Cases 9/2/11 - 8/31/12	Total Volunteers Assigned Cases FY 2012
Mary Adams	Brent Basic		**Mary Adams**	Angel Adams	
Charlie Best	Callie Elder		**Brent Basic**	Brenda Boone	
Priscilla Olson	Finona Gap		**Finona Gap**	**Callie Elder**	
Anya Sanchez	Jennie House		**Jennie House**	Skip Flick	
Peter Wilson	LaToya Lund		**Bill Mason**	Han Hu	
Beatrice Zook	Bill Mason		**Tillie Pallet**	**LaToya Lund**	
	Grant Mason		**Tom White**	Saddie Nip	
	Tillie Pallet		**Peter Wilson**	**Priscilla Olson**	
	Allison Samson			Edward Prank	
	Gennifer Swenson			Lorna Rook	
	Tom White			Jane Royers	
	Veronica Young			**Allison Sampson**	
				Gennifer Swenson	
				Veronica Young	
				Sybil Young	
				Roberta Yuill	
6	12	18	8	16	24
Total number of names that appear on both lists (shaded): **14**					
Total number of volunteers with assigned cases in FY 2011: **18**					
Total on both lists / Total volunteers assigned cases FY 2011: **14/18 = 0.77**					
Convert to percentage: **0.77 x 100 = 77%**					
The program's volunteer retention rate for FY 2011 was 77%.					

Retention Planning

In addition to more accurately predicting growth goals, calculating the program volunteer retention rate is the first step in developing concrete plans to maintain or improve it. This will be a part of the overall strategic plan for growth. As with recruitment, volunteer retention is not a once-a-year event or a box to be "checked". Retaining volunteers, like recruiting volunteers, must remain central to the organization activities.

Although retention might seem to be an issue that programs would address *after* volunteers achieve some milestone (e.g., training completion, first case closing, one-year anniversary) volunteer retention actually begins long before those events. Programs with high retention rates know that every contact with volunteers is an opportunity to enhance retention. Prior to pre-service training, the application, screening and interview processes all set the early expectations that contribute to retention.

Assessing your program's retention from a 360° degree perspective can be very helpful. The same volunteer-centered culture that encourages people to become CASA volunteers will cause people to remain with your program, advocating for more children and serving on more cases. Start with feedback from your current, tenured volunteers. How does the program contribute to their satisfaction as a volunteer? What can be added? Create a plan that addresses the needs of your volunteers and consider including special activities geared toward volunteer recognition, appreciation, continued growth, and courses related specifically to CASA and children's' welfare.

See the **Community Engagement Resources** and **Organizational Excellence Resources, Section II** for surveys and best practices in volunteer recruitment.

Quality Advocacy and Texas CASA: Standards

All CASA programs in Texas are subject to national and state standards that establish uniform requirements for organizational and advocacy quality. Although each program is its own independent, non-profit entity, by membership in both National CASA and Texas CASA, programs agree to adhere to these standards and participate in quality assurance review processes. The standards are designed to help programs make decisions related to best practices with continual reflection and evaluation of outcomes for children.

A set of quality standards to measure a program's operations demonstrates that an organization:

- Respects and protects the children it serves
- Utilizes established policies and procedures necessary for effective management
- Manages its financial affairs prudently and is committed to the principles of public disclosure
- Continually evaluates its services and operations

From a thorough understanding of state and national standards, program leaders demonstrate their commitment to quality. During times of rapid change – such as program growth -- standards become an important benchmark to maintaining and enhancing quality advocacy, as well as operations. Standards will guide hiring new staff and recruiting new volunteers and board members.   Standards will also provide clear expectations related to financial and risk management practices.

Quality Advocacy and Texas CASA: Quality Assurance

The purpose of quality assurance is to support the mission and philosophy of CASA, ensuring excellence in service to children. Quality assurance monitoring assists programs in identifying both strengths and needs. It serves as a tool for program and financial accountability and provides technical assistance as needed.

Programs engaged in growth planning have a wealth of information about past functioning available in the program's most recent Quality Assurance Report. Currently, programs in Texas are reviewed once every three years, either by an onsite review team or a desk review process. Programs can use the most recent report to assist in identifying program strengths and challenges.

Another way program leaders can use the quality assurance process as an aid to growth planning is to conduct a self-assessment using the current Quality Assurance questions, available from Texas CASA.

Excellence in Operations

Expanding Your Staff

Quality volunteer advocacy is made possible through excellence in program operations. One of the most important components of the growth plan will be determining how the organization will expand its paid staff. It is easy to predict the number of volunteer supervisory positions needed as the volunteer base grows; standards provide clear guidelines. It is more difficult to determine other positions that will be necessary as the program expands its services.

The role of the executive director will undoubtedly expand to provide the implementation and oversight needed in the growth plan. This may also be a good opportunity to provide higher level leadership positions in other areas. Program director, fund development director, communications director, vice president, and team leader are just some of the positions that may be considered. The **Organizational Excellence Resources, Section II**, contain sample job descriptions of some of these leadership positions. As positions are added and the organizational chart grows, consideration must be given to lines of supervision and accountability.

As staff size increases, human resource support needs may also increase. Make sure that policies and procedures for recruiting, screening and hiring employees are current. Also ensure that the

process for new employees includes a formal orientation. Taking time to ensure the successful transition of new staff, particularly new positions, can help minimize organizational confusion. (See **New Employee Orientation Checklist** in **Organizational Excellence Resources, Section II**.)

Managing Administrative Needs

Just as a thoughtful and well-executed plan for adding staff positions can minimize transitional chaos, planning for the additional administrative needs of a growing program can also go a long way toward smoothing out the inevitable wrinkles caused by growth. Programs grow in many directions and the administrative functions of such programs require new levels of time, skillfulness and competency that may not currently be in place.

In many programs, the high-level administrative responsibilities are carried out by the executive director. He/she likely performs the financial management duties, budgeting, payroll, human resources, grant procurement and management, statistical data collection, reporting and many other important administrative duties. Since growth in programs typically occurs slowly and over time, the administrative needs of the program have probably been manageable. To date, administrative support positions may have been created to simply assist as the program grew.

Significant growth will not only increase the administrative support needs in a program, it will also increase the complexity of those needs. Budgets will be larger, resources more diversified, and staff numbers greater. The "old ways" of administrative management may not work. Plan for growth in all areas of the organization. This may be a good opportunity to provide higher level administrative positions to the organization; office manager, accountant, and chief administrative officer are just some of the positions that may be needed.

Changing the ways things have always been done in a program can be both scary and exciting. Excellence in administration prepares a program for these changes. Manage growth appropriately by thoroughly gauging current administrative functions and strengthen where a need exists. An **Organizational Self-Evaluation Checklist** and **Administrative Competency Self-Assessment**, located in **Organizational Excellence Resources, Section II**, can help you with this review of your program.

Selecting and Developing a Growth Planning Committee

The Growth Planning Committee (GPC) is perhaps the most important part of developing and executing any strategic growth plan. Consider convening a diverse group of individuals with strengths in the areas of leadership, action/execution, influence, relationship building and strategic thinking. Equally as important as skills and strengths is the commitment to remain engaged through the process. To sustain action and follow-through on the plan, members of the GPC should be dedicated to reaching goals and taking action to a long-range plan.

Following its bylaws, a local program board may convene an existing or newly formed committee to be charged with creating a strategic plan for growth.

Using a Current Board Committee or Creating a New Board Committee

An existing board committee, whether it is a standing committee or ad hoc, may be charged with developing the growth plan. A planning committee, a strategic planning committee, or some other similarly named committee might naturally assume this responsibility. When using an existing committee, consider the other obligations currently assumed by the committee. The work to develop the growth plan will be significant and an existing committee with other responsibilities may not be able to do both.

The board may also choose to form a new committee for the express purpose of developing and overseeing the growth plan.

Creating a Charter for the Committee

A clear scope of work and responsibility is helpful in recruiting members for the Growth Planning Committee (GPC). A charter outlines the objectives, roles, responsibilities and accountability for GPC members. In addition, it can include:

- Purpose statement
- Board endorsement
- Job description
- Commitment statement
- Clear definition of time commitment, including the number and frequency of meetings
- Growth Planning Assistance Timeline

The charter or scope of work document should also include reporting expectations and a statement clarifying the interaction between the GPC, staff members and the board as they carry out their work.

Determining Committee Size

To help estimate the workload and determine the appropriate size of the GPC, consider that the growth plan will include six components. Therefore, a chairperson and 1-2 people per component would require 7-13 members. Depending on your specific program needs, a larger group may be indicated. Also, consider the existing resources within the program. Does your program have staff members devoted to areas such as resource development or public relations who could be available to assist or serve as members?

Membership Considerations

Regardless of committee structure or size, give careful consideration the selection of the committee members. The GPC should include current board members, the executive director, other key staff positions, volunteers and stakeholder and community participants with specialized expertise.

Selecting GPC members provides an important opportunity to engage key individuals in contributing to the future of your program. Create a profile of the skills, competencies and influence most needed in GPC members. Evaluate each of the Six Critical Areas related to program growth and determine the perspectives you will need to address each area. Use the profile and think broadly about prospective members; **consider history and effectiveness of prior service, current time constraints, and familiarity with CASA's mission and service.** As you recruit members, keep in mind the personality dynamics of the group.

The GPC is first a team of planners, individuals who gather and interpret pertinent information about the program and present creative recommendations for goals and activities. There is uncertainty in planning for future growth. Select members willing to encounter these uncertainties and collectively push forward to create a growth plan that will be both ambitious and attainable.

Developing the Strategic Plan for Growth

Introduction

The following information provides an outline to use when developing a growth plan. It includes six components and is designed to be completed in sequential order. One component builds upon the next.

Components 1-3 include the completion of the historical program overview, volunteer/case data analysis, and current comprehensive program overview. Combined, these elements provide the platform from which you will complete components 4-6: the SWOT analysis, growth goals, and action plans. Once completed, the detailed SWOT analysis becomes the starting point for determining the plan goals.

The end product will be a cohesive, concise, and comprehensive plan that provides clearly supported goals for program growth. The plan will be the roadmap to growth, including program strategies and tactics designed to meet aggressive 2-year benchmarks and sketch a plan for years three through five.

Step-by-Step Growth Plan Development Instructions

Complete the Pre-Work: The Growth Planning Committee (GPC) members should have a thorough understanding of the Six Critical Areas related to program growth through review of information and committee discussion about each area.

Before assigning tasks or components, GPC members should understand how each of the critical areas impact program functioning and how the final growth plan will provide important perspective on each area. If you have not already done so, distribute a copy of the section **An Examination of Six Critical Areas** and ask GPC members to read it. Following this, the GPC chair or ED will facilitate a group discussion about each area and answer any questions. Members should consider areas of expertise, interest or influence when determining component and task assignments. GPC members can read and prepare questions prior to the first GPC meeting and the chair can begin the meeting with a discussion related to the reading.

Next step: The GPC Chair assigns one or more members to work on each of the first three components.

Components 1-3 must be completed prior to commencing work on components 4-6. The GPC chair will assign each of the components to one or more members. The members will gather and compile pertinent information and produce a draft component for committee review. The components are designed to provide the context of past and current program performance and will be used to complete the SWOT analysis and aid in determining goals.

Component 1: Historical Overview

This component of the growth plan should include the following:

1. Brief narrative of program formation

2. Timeline of significant program milestones to date (first volunteer training class, case assignment, paid staff, grants, expansion into new counties, etc.)

3. History of the following:

    - Judicial support and engagement from program formation and other significant junctures
    - (Graph) Annual budget growth
    - (Graph) Annual growth in assigned volunteers and children served (note: this will also be used for Component 2)
    - Organizational chart progression for paid staff

The Historical Overview does not need to be a lengthy or cumbersome component. However, the final product should very clearly state the broad historical context on which the program will be building.

Component 2: Data Analysis

This component of the growth plan should include the following:

1. Growth statistics, including trend charts and comparison data, from program inception to present day, for the following measures:

    - Volunteers assigned to cases
    - Children served
    - Children in custody of DFPS
    - Volunteers trained
    - Volunteers retained
    - Volunteer to case ratio
    - Volunteer to staff ratio
    - Volunteer demographics

This component should be concise and provide a visual representation of the primary measures of program growth. This component will be used as the baseline when selecting growth goals in Component 5.

Component 3: Current Overview

This component of the growth plan should include the following:

1. Current organizational chart
2. Annual budget
3. Most recent strategic plan
4. Current signed working agreements with Court, CPS and other stakeholders
5. Recent survey data
6. Most recent recruitment plan

Component 3 creates a current picture of program operations and feedback from volunteers, staff, board members and stakeholders. The easiest and most efficient way to gather this type of information is by using online surveys. We have included survey samples in the **Growth Planning Resources, Section II** to assist you in this process.

Next Step: After completing Components 1-3, the GPC should approve a draft of Components 1-3 and present to the full board for review.

Component 4: SWOT Analysis

This component of the growth plan should include the following:

1. Select the SWOT Team. These are the people who will attend and provide input at the SWOT session. The team should include the GPC, full board and staff, and other external stakeholders as appropriate.

2. SWOT Team members will review the board-approved Components 1-3 and the SWOT Analysis Questions. This should be done before the SWOT Analysis Session. The SWOT Analysis Questions are provided as part of the support documents in this section.

3. Conduct the SWOT Analysis Session. (See **Conducting a SWOT Analysis Session**.)

4. Following the session, the GPC will complete a summary of the session findings. This will become part of the final growth plan.

Component 5: Growth Goals

This component of the growth plan includes the following:

1. Year 1 and Year 2 numerical goals for growth in the following:

- Volunteers assigned to cases
- Children served
- Targeted goals by demographics

2. Percentage increase goals for years 3-5

3. Growth Projection Worksheet. (See **Growth Projection Worksheet**.)

4. Budget Projection Worksheet. (See **Budget Projection Worksheet**.)

Using the Growth Goals created in Component 5, action plans can now be developed.

Component 6: Action Plans

This component of the growth plan includes the following:

1. Strategies, tactics, actions, timelines and measures for growth goals for Year 1, as determined through the SWOT Analysis and in consideration of the Six Critical Areas

2. 12-month and 24-month budgets in support of goals

3. Fund Development Action Plan which addresses current needs as well as resources for sustaining future growth

4. Other action plans as appropriate

5. Method, format and timeline for regular reporting, review, evaluation and revision of action plans

6. Draft outline of strategies proposed for Years 2-5

This component is the framework that guides the actions that must be taken to achieve growth. It is based on the information gathered and understanding gained throughout the plan development process. Because the foundation of history, data, current functioning, SWOT and goal setting are now in place, determining the needed strategies, tactics and actions to meet each goal will be straightforward.

Action Plans do not detail *every activity* to be undertaken, but orchestrate and direct the operational changes necessary for significant growth. We recommended that the GPC divide the responsibility for developing these action plans and bring in additional ad hoc members to assist when necessary. This is also an opportunity for a skilled contracted professional to assist.

Next step: Create the final plan.

All six components are merged to create the final plan for growth. Once approved by the board, the final plan should be distributed to everyone who participated in its development. It will serve as a public statement of your intent to grow and will signal important changes that will affect everyone in and outside of your program.

The board will determine a regular cycle of review to evaluate action plans and revise as necessary. The ED, in conjunction with the board, will oversee the implementation of all action plans.

Purposeful growth happens with a well-designed and well-executed plan that is created by a team of committed individuals. The steps, or components, in designing this plan are intentionally created to allow you to build upon what you know and have successfully experienced with your program. By doing this, we hope you will envision and plan for achieving an even more successful future, one that fulfills the vision of a CASA for Every Child.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How long will it take to produce the final growth plan?**

   That depends on many factors and is different for every program. Plan for a timeframe of 3-6 months from the first meeting of the GPC to the point of gaining full board approval of the plan. Programs will develop a reasonable and appropriate timeline for completion. Programs that have recently engaged in strategic planning may have much of the information already compiled. Programs that have never engaged in strategic planning will be starting from scratch.

   As a general guide, these are the timeline steps that most programs will take during the 3-6 month plan development period:

   - Program leaders review the Growth Planning Toolkit
   - The Growth Planning Committee (GPC) is formed
   - The GPC holds an initial meeting and assigns tasks to complete Components 1-3
   - The Growth Planning Committee holds a follow-up meeting to review completed Components 1-3
   - Develop vision and mission statements
     Board, GPC and staff meet to complete SWOT Analysis Session and selection of growth goals
   - GPC develops 12-month and 24-month action plans to meet the goals
   - The board adopts the final growth plan and schedules a public "kick off" event

- The implementation of the plan begins; consistent action tracking and periodic plan evaluation and updates/revisions are made

2. **Does a program need to develop new components if it has the same information in a different format?**

   No, as long as the information included covers the same core segments as detailed above. Programs can add to or revise current information.

3. **Do the components need to be developed in the exact order as listed?**

   Yes, although components 1-3 can be completed simultaneously, they are designed to inform the SWOT session and thus should be completed first.

4. **Why is it important for committee members, staff, board members and external stakeholders to all be involved in the planning process? Wouldn't it go faster if one or two people put it all together?**

   The plan represents a significant transition in any program and will result in substantial change for everyone involved. It's important to establish the foundation, understanding and investment of those people most affected by this change. It is also important to include the input and feedback of a diverse group of people, representative of the community in which the program serves. Enthusiasm for the plan may peak during its first few months. A larger group of key investors will help ensure the sustainability of growth and will deter responsibility for plan implementation from falling on too few people.

5. **Who can help our program with its growth plan?**

   Texas CASA is available to consult with programs as they work through the planning process. In addition to the Growth Planning Toolkit, Texas CASA has a variety of resources related to program operations and advocacy located on www.texascasaresources.org.

   Programs may also want to consider seeking outside assistance from non-profit membership organizations, local strategic planning professionals or business consultants.

Conducting a SWOT Analysis Session

SWOT is an acronym that stands for Strengths, Weaknesses (or Limitations), Opportunities and Threats. Completing a SWOT analysis is an important part of creating a comprehensive strategic plan for growth and goal attainment. SWOT analyses are used in all types of organizations – for-profit, non-profit, governmental and academic. The SWOT analysis is considered to be a key activity to begin the planning process.

SWOT analysis sessions are instrumental in strategic planning because they allow, in a structured brainstorming format, the ability to gather and discuss opinions and insights from a diverse group of individuals. Small groups (or subcommittees) discuss and identify program strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats to the organization. The SWOT session provides critical information that is used to move forward with any plan.

Primary objectives of the SWOT session as related to growth planning are as follows:

1. Identify key information about program functioning to inform goals and actions.

2. Identify key information about external conditions to inform goals and actions.

3. Educate and engage a larger group of program allies about the plan for growth.

4. Create momentum, ownership and enthusiasm for the work ahead.

Programs need to consider who will facilitate their SWOT session. Preferably, it is someone experienced at such facilitation and knowledgeable about your growth planning process. For many programs, this will be the time to consider a contracted professional. Working closely with the GPC, a professional planner can take the early work of the GPC as a foundation for assistance with the SWOT session and beyond. The SWOT session serves as an introduction of the planner to the people who will be involved in the completion and implementation of the plan. Texas CASA is able to assist programs in identifying professionals in their community for this purpose.

Some programs choose to use the services of a non-paid facilitator. Many businesses, corporations and other non-profit organizations have staff capable of assisting your program. The key is to ensure they are knowledgeable enough about your program and your growth planning process to be an effective SWOT facilitator.

The Set Up

Determining the participants in a SWOT session is the job of the GPC chair(s), ED, board president or some combination of these people. At a minimum, participation is expected from the full board of directors, key staff, and the GPC. To gather the diversity of information and opinion optimal to a robust session, invite others who are connected to your program or have a

vested interest in its success. Consider inviting additional volunteers, judges, CPS, advisory group members, non-profit leaders and other community members at large.

Once you have your list, consider the best way to extend the invitation. For those who are aware of your growth planning process, an email invitation is sufficient. But for anyone who may not be as knowledgeable about your current plans, a personal invitation is more appropriate.

SWOT sessions are typically held in extended timeframes; either full-day or half-day. Time is structured on an agenda and goes very quickly. To successfully meet all session objectives, plan for at least 3.5 hours. Planning the session around a meal is a good way to encourage participation.

Your SWOT session needs to be held in space adequate for the number of participants. Ideally, the room set-up would include six tables for small group work, a projection system, and space for each of the groups to work on a flip chart. Consider hosting your session at a location most convenient to the majority of participants.

Pre-Work

Ideally, everyone attending a SWOT session is knowledgeable and informed about some aspect of the program, but very few people will be versed in all areas of program functioning critical to growth. It's important to provide the right information and context that will lead to thoughtful discussion and participation during the session.

The SWOT session is designed to follow the completion and approval of growth plan components 1-3. We recommend providing and using this clear and concise summary of history, data and program information to prepare SWOT participants for an effective session. In addition to reading **An Examination of Six Critical Areas** and reviewing Growth Plan Components 1-3, provide the **SWOT Analysis Questions** to the participants. These questions have been designed to help programs uncover and examine current program issues in light of the six critical areas to growth. Programs can consider how best to use the questions as pre-work. For some participants, you may ask that only a subset of questions be reviewed in preparation for the session. For others , such as full board and staff, it would be helpful to gather feedback on all six areas. Participants won't likely be able to answer all questions. However, there is still value in providing the questions and asking them to respond with their own thoughts or questions. Think of the SWOT Questions as a way to launch the type of brainstorming you need for a productive meeting of the minds.

Agenda

The dynamics of the SWOT analysis session will vary across different programs. Some may use this time to examine the program mission and vision, in light of the overall growth planning process. Others will stick solely to the task of paring down key information and determining the majority-held views. The latter is the first step in how best to move forward. Some sessions

may be incorporated into a separate context (i.e., included as part of an extended board or staff retreat). Regardless of framework or workshop dynamics, each SWOT session will have a common agenda of activities. This agenda will include:

- Introduction and Overview
- Definition of SWOT and Session Objectives
- Small Group Work
- Large Group Work
- Summary and Next Steps

Session Prep

Designate someone to take notes throughout the session and provide a camera to take pictures of flip charts or white boards before they are erased. Much of the work in brainstorming sessions is lost when the valuable brainstorming notes are inadvertently deleted.

Provide participants with adequate note taking materials. Ask that they print and bring with them the pre-work materials, but have copies available for those who may forget.

Designate each of the tables to work on one of the six critical areas. Provide a summary of the issue and SWOT questions. Provide flip charts for each table.

Pre-load the SWOT PowerPoint presentation and have a white board or flip chart available at the front of the room.

The SWOT Session

Introduction and Overview

This should be done by the GPC chair(s) or board president. Briefly introduce the purpose of gathering as a group. This will provide the context of growth planning and the objectives for the session. Include a compelling mission moment that communicates the need and the urgency. Set expectations for participation and introduce the facilitator. A strong start to the meeting will go a long way to setting the tone for a productive session.

Definition of SWOT and Session Objectives

The facilitator will present the SWOT concept in the context of the six areas identified as critical to CASA program growth. The facilitator will also explain session objectives and exactly how the work product from the session will be used to complete the growth plan.

Small Group Activity

Either through self-identification or by assignment, participants will divide into small groups (3-4 participants, at minimum) to focus on a single critical area. Pre-assigning groups will help ensure appropriate people (with special expertise or insight) are together in each group. Groups should include at least one member of the GPC, one staff member and one board member.

Each group should have a flip chart with the SWOT grid. Ask groups to begin by reading the critical area summary and sharing their understanding of the issue as it pertains to growth. Groups will then use the SWOT questions and their pre-completed answers to discuss their thoughts, perceptions, questions or concerns. At the same time the group will identify and note the responses by placing them in one of the four SWOT categories: strength, weakness, opportunity or threat. Groups are encouraged to come up with as many SWOT items as they can, but must then determine at least 3 and no more than 5 items to place on their grid.

Large Group Activity

The next activity is to present the SWOT items from each table to the large group. A spokesperson for each group presents the selected 3-5 strengths for their critical area, while a recorder notes these items on a white board or flip chart. Encourage brief explanation of items selected. (Be mindful that this part of the exercise keeps moving in a timely manner. Strong group facilitator skills will be very helpful at this point in the session.) If there are many questions, or lack of understanding, suggest moving an item to a "parking lot" for later review. If members of other groups offer additional items for consideration, record those also, but remind the group that the objective in this exercise is not to identify every SWOT item, but **the most critical ones to program growth.** After each group has presented their strengths, move on to the weaknesses, then opportunities, and finally, threats. At this point, each grid should be completed on the white board.

The final step in the SWOT exercise is for each team member to assign a priority to the items recorded. This can be done in any number of ways, but everyone must indicate **three** items for each SWOT category they believe will most significantly impact the program's efforts to grow, and rank those three items based on importance (i.e., 1st, 2nd, and 3rd).

The end product is likely to look very messy at the actual SWOT meeting, but the results of this brainstorming, idea exchange and voting will be put together in a concise report and will serve to inform the remaining growth planning process. Essential program strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified within the context of the six critical areas of growth will drive decision making. They will translate directly to the goal-setting, strategy development and action plans that are incorporated into the final plan.

Summary

These types of planning exercises often turn out in one of two ways: highly successful and relevant to the overall growth planning process or a confusing and tedious practice which can hinder the future engagement of team members. An experienced facilitator, along with appropriate preparation of all team members will go a long way in getting the most out of this time and effort.

The SWOT Analysis Questions

SWOT Questions: Executive Leadership

Effectiveness Assessment

1. Does the board of directors conduct an annual evaluation of the executive director?
2. Is feedback from all levels of program stakeholders included in ED evaluations? (staff, board, volunteers, external stakeholders)
3. Does the board chair meet regularly with the ED for purposes of oversight and leadership support?
4. How has the ED invested in strengthening leadership capabilities in their tenure?
5. How has the board invested in strengthening leadership capabilities for the ED?
6. Are annual performance goals reflective of executive level decision making, strategic deliberation and careful discernment regarding improving program effectiveness?
7. Does the ED have a positive working relationship with key stakeholders, including judges and CPS supervisory staff? How often do they meet?

Organizational Structure

1. What are the current leadership positions within the staff? (ED, PD, Team Lead, Office Manager, Fund Development Dir., etc.)
2. How many individuals in current leadership positions were promoted to their current position? How many were hired for their current leadership position?
3. Is the organizational structure of the program clear to all staff? Board? Volunteers?
4. Have the job descriptions for positions of leadership been updated and/or reviewed in the past 12 months?
5. List the tenure of individuals for all paid positions.

Management and Supervision

1. How often does the leadership team formally meet? One on ones?
2. How often do program leaders meet with their teams? One on ones?
3. How often does the entire staff meet together?
4. How often does ED meet with individual staff members?
5. Describe how employee performance is measured, evaluated and recognized?

6. How are performance goals communicated to employees?
7. Are salaries and benefit packages competitive with other non-profits in your community?

Professional Development

1. Are employees offered regular opportunities for professional development in their related areas?
2. Is participation in professional development training a requirement for the executive director?
3. Do supervisors and managers receive professional development in the area of leadership?

SWOT Questions: Judicial Engagement

Working Relationship

1. Were the current judges involved in the program's inception? If yes, describe their involvement.
2. If the current judges were not involved in the program's inception, how did they receive information about the program when they assumed their duties?
3. Does the program have a current MOU that defines the working relationship with each of the judges? How often are the MOUs reviewed?
4. How does the program regularly communicate with the judiciary for input on satisfaction and recommendations?

Volunteer Status

1. Are volunteers appointed as GAL? If no, summarize your understanding of why they are not.
2. Does the current process for case assignment allow for appropriate matching with volunteers?
3. Is there a written referral criteria which requires the program and judges to collaboratively determine which cases can be effectively served based on program resources, capacities, statutory authority and mission?
4. Is CASA appointed at the earliest possible stage of the court proceedings?
5. Are hearings scheduled in a way that minimizes wait time for volunteers?
6. Do judges acknowledge the volunteer during hearings? Do volunteers testify? Do volunteers stand with other parties to the case? Do judges directly solicit input from volunteers?
7. Do judges indicate that they have read the CASA report?
8. Are the recommendations included in the CASA report given due consideration by the judges?
9. Do judges direct the CASA program to provide services outside the scope of their mission?

Recruitment and Retention

1. Do judges assist in volunteer pre-service training? In-service training?
2. Do judges participate in volunteer recognition activities and events?
3. Do judges speak in support of CASA to the media or other community groups?
4. Do judges convey their personal appreciation to individual CASA volunteers?

General

1. Does the CASA program formally recognize its judges for their service in the child protection system?
2. Does the CASA program conduct surveys of its judges to assist in program evaluation?
3. Do CASA staff and/or board members participate in other systems collaborations that serve to strengthen the child protection system?
4. Do judges participate in judicial training designed to inform best practices in child protection courts?

SWOT Questions: Fund Development

Fund Development Culture

1. Is financial support communicated to prospective board members as an expectation of membership?
2. Do all current board members contribute financially to the program?
3. Do board members sign an agreement or written pledge of financial support?
4. Does the program have key individuals involved in fund development who have engaging personalities, who are articulate, and who are not afraid to seek out prospects?
5. Are staff members given the opportunity to be workplace donors?
6. Has the board and staff received training on fundraising, specifically making "the ask" for funds?
7. Has the board and staff received training on being ambassadors for CASA - articulating the CASA story and the impact it makes in the community?
8. Does the program have board adopted policies regarding fund development and fundraising activities? Are they effective? Helpful? Utilized regularly?
9. Does the program follow the Association of Fundraising Professionals' Code of Ethics?

Planning

1. Does the program have an annual fund development plan that is approved by the board?
2. Who coordinates and ensures oversight of the program's fund development activities?
3. Is current funding well diversified between revenue sources?
4. Has the board appointed a Fund Development Committee (FDC) with the depth of skills, focus and creativity to develop a diverse plan and organize for the ongoing implementation of fund development activities?
5. Has the FDC reviewed the organization's mission, goals, and objectives in light of the desired growth?
6. Has the FDC written a compelling case statement that provides the rationale for its efforts?
7. Are board and staff members able to articulate the case for support in a clear, concise way?
8. Does the program evaluate its funding sources annually to determine if it is heavily reliant on 1-2 donors or grant makers?
9. In creating the annual development plan, is there a strategy for increasing diversity in the donor base? (Ex: acquiring more individual and corporate donors)
10. Are there benchmarks and measures of success that the FDC and the board have adopted?

Activities

1. Are fund development activities chosen from a broad range of strategies that target diverse sources?
    - special events
    - annual fund
    - corporate giving
    - foundation and grant writing
    - major gifts
    - planned giving
    - capital campaign
    - website/online giving

2. Do fund development activities always include volunteer recruitment opportunities?
3. Are the tasks of funding activities balanced between board and staff?
4. Does the program invite participation from its volunteers in fund development activities?
5. Are accountability measures and accurate reporting built into every activity?
6. Are fund development activities evaluated annually for effectiveness?
7. Does the program utilize social media and marketing tools for the purpose of generating revenue?

Critical Area: Community Engagement

Communications Plan

1. Who is primarily responsible for carrying out communications related duties?
2. Does the program have a current communications plan?
3. Does the plan include strategies for reaching diverse demographics?
4. Does the plan include strategies for responding to a crisis?

Branding

1. Rate the community awareness of your program on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being very low). Rate for each of the counties you serve.
2. Does the program utilize a National CASA recognized logo on all materials?
3. Does the program have a website?
4. Has the website been evaluated by persons familiar (volunteer, staff, board) and persons unfamiliar with the program?
5. Does the office have appropriate signage?

Media Relations

1. Describe current media contacts and efforts.
2. Does the program have a current staff member who has attended Texas CASA or other media training?
3. Are relationships with media sources on a first name, friendly and professional basis?
4. Does the program utilize both earned and paid media?
5. Has the program ever been the target of negative press?

Innovation

1. Does the current communications plan utilize the latest social media and social marketing tools? (Facebook, Twitter, electronic newsletters, etc.) Give examples.
2. Is the program's website utilized as a recruitment tool?
3. Are the numbers of website visits tracked on a regular basis?

Best Practices in Recruitment

1. Has the program completed a 360° evaluation of its volunteer-centeredness?
2. Has the program provided recent training for staff, volunteers and board members on word of mouth recruitment techniques?
3. Does the program have a recruitment team?
4. Does the program have specific annual recruitment and retention goals?
5. Do recruitment strategies target broad demographics? Racial and ethnic backgrounds? Gender? Socio-economic status? Geography? Age?
6. Does the program utilize every contact with potential volunteers as opportunities to screen and allow for self-screening?
7. Are volunteers well qualified to carry out their roles and responsibilities following pre-service training?
8. Do staff members who supervise volunteers have educational or work experience in the management of people?
9. Does the program offer avenues for strengthening the volunteer management skills of staff?
10. Does the program provide a varied in-service training schedule to advance the skills and knowledge of its volunteers?
11. Are volunteers regularly invited to provide feedback regarding their experiences in the program?
12. Are volunteers invited to invest further in the program through service in non-advocacy roles?

Stakeholder Relationships

1. Does the program have a current MOU that defines the working relationship with CPS? How often is the MOU reviewed?
2. Does the program regularly communicate with CPS staff regarding their satisfaction with the program and solicit recommendations for improving program effectiveness?
3. Do staff members, volunteers or board members routinely participate in stakeholder forums or trainings?
4. Do subject matter experts from the community assist in training volunteers?
5. Do CASA staff members provide training to stakeholders on the role of CASA?
6. Does CPS provide training to CASA staff?
7. Has the program engaged with its elected representatives? Staff, board, volunteers?

Critical Area: Diversified Board of Directors

Size

1. Is the current board membership large enough to accomplish its primary duties?
2. Is the current board membership large enough to support sub-committees within its standing committees when appropriate?
3. Does the board have a quorum at every meeting?

Composition

1. Does the board include representation from key constituencies including past volunteers, related professionals (attorneys, social workers, public relations) and business or corporate sectors?
2. Is the board well diversified across demographics including race and ethnicity, age, gender and geography?
3. Has the board completed a composition analysis in the past 12 months?
4. Has the board completed a board profile of areas of expertise in the past 12 months?

Culture

1. Rate the board's passion for the program's mission on a scale of one to five (one being very low).
2. Rate the board's ownership of the program's mission on a scale of one to five (one being very low).
3. Does every board meeting include a mission moment?
4. Do board members regularly hear from volunteers about the work they are doing?
5. Do board members attend court?
6. How often do board members prematurely leave the board?
7. Are board meetings well attended?
8. Is the work of the board done primarily through effective committee work?

Development

1. Does the board have a standing nominating committee that oversees the recruitment, selection and training of new board members?
2. Does the board utilize a written application for membership? Has the application been recently reviewed?

3. Does the board have a formal interview process for prospective members?
4. Does the board have a job description that explains the scope of work and responsibilities expected of board members?
5. Does the program conduct board orientation for every new member?
6. Do new board members receive a board manual?
7. Does the board engage in ongoing training designed to improve their understanding of the program's mission and enhance the board's governing capabilities?
8. Are board members regularly recognized for their commitment and service?
9. Does the board set aside time for strategic planning and regularly review the current strategic plan?

Relationship with Staff

1. Do the executive director and the board president communicate in a consistent, meaningful and positive manner?
2. Are the distinctions in roles and responsibilities between the board and staff made clear to both?
3. Is the executive director included in identifying prospective new board members?
4. Is the executive director included in providing training and mission oriented education to the board?
5. Does the program provide opportunities for board members and staff to meet and interact?
6. Are staff members given opportunities to serve on board committees?
7. Does the board provide an annual performance evaluation for the executive director?

Critical Area: Organizational Excellence

Diversity and Inclusion

1. Does the program utilize a diversification plan to ensure that staff, volunteers and board members reflect the racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and full cultural mix of the community?
2. Does the program offer training on understanding racial and ethnic identity on both a personal level and as it relates to advocacy for children?
3. Does the program's public image reflect their commitment to diversity? Print materials, office environment, media, website, etc?

Quality Advocacy

1. What is the annual volunteer to case ratio?
2. Have all volunteer trainers participated in National CASA's Training of Facilitators class?
3. Is the program's volunteer retention rate used as part of strategic planning around retaining quality, tenured volunteers?
4. Are volunteers familiar with Minimum Expectations of Service on a Case?
5. Are volunteers trained and encouraged to advocate beyond minimum expectations?
6. Does the program have current non-compliance findings from either a Texas CASA or National CASA quality assurance review?
7. Is a copy of the Texas CASA standards provided to every staff member? Board member?
8. Does the program conduct regular audits for minimum expectations, volunteer and case files and statistical data?
9. Are program policies and procedures reviewed on a regular basis and updated when necessary?
10. Does the program seek feedback from its constituents? Volunteers, judges, stakeholders, parents, etc.

Statistical Reporting

1. What software is used to record and report case and volunteer statistical information?
2. Who is responsible for entering data? If only one position, are others trained as back-ups?
3. Does the program conduct regular statistical data audits?
4. Are quarterly statistics submitted to Texas CASA on a timely basis?
5. How often do quarterly statistics require revision due to error?

Office Operations

1. Are the human resources currently allocated to office administration adequate to meet the needs?
2. Is the telephone routinely answered by administrative staff? If not, please describe alternative.
3. Are visitors to the office routinely greeted by administrative staff? If not, please describe alternative.

Financial

1. What staff position is currently responsible for financial recordkeeping?
2. Describe the oversight mechanisms in place designed to minimize risk in financial management.
3. Has the program received a significant audit finding in the past 5 years?

Grant Management

1. Are grant applications, reports, budget documentation and RFR's submitted on a timely basis?
2. How often are grant documents returned due to error?

Human Resources

1. Does the program follow best practices in recruitment, screening and selection of new employees?
2. Do new employees receive a formal orientation?
3. Describe how new employees are trained.
4. Are all new employees required to participate in volunteer pre-service training?
5. Are personnel files kept in a secured location and maintained with all necessary and appropriate documentation?
6. Are HR policies and procedures reviewed annually, including an employee handbook?

Volunteer and Case Files

1. Does the program conduct routine volunteer and case file audits?
2. Does the program have a clear policy on the use of electronic communications, including record retention, open records liability and confidentiality?

Sample - SWOT Analysis Session Agenda

Amarillo Area CASA SWOT Session
July 27, 2011

AGENDA

12:00-12:30	Lunch, Introductions, Overview of Session-Facilitator
12:30-12:45	Review of Growth Planning Process-GPC Chair
12:45-1:15	Mission and Vision Statements-Facilitator and ED
1:15-1:30	Explanation of SWOT-Facilitator
1:30-2:30	Small Group SWOT by Critical Issue
2:30-2:40	Break
2:40-4:00	SWOT Presentations
4:00-4:15	SWOT Voting-Facilitator
4:15-5:00	Presentation of Goals-ED

Sample SWOT Analysis Session Presentation

Strategic Growth Planning
SWOT ANALYSIS SESSION

Sample Presentation

TEXAS**CASA** www.BecomeACASA.org

Growth Planning To Date

- Program leaders initiated process
- Texas CASA provided resources for forming the GPC and plan development
- Committee members recruited and chairs selected
- Components 1-3 of Plan are completed and approved by BOD

TEXAS**CASA** www.BecomeACASA.org

Components 1-3

1. Historical Overview   -The Foundation
2. Data Analysis   -The Results
3. Current Overview   -The Starting Point

TEXAS**CASA** www.BecomeACASA.org

Components 4-6

4. SWOT   -The Honest Evaluation
5. Goal Setting -The Way to our Vision
6. Action Plans -The Map to Success

TEXAS**CASA** www.BecomeACASA.org

Vision Statement

Defines the way an organization or enterprise will look **in the future**. Vision statements represent a long-term view, sometimes describing how the organization would like the world to be in which it operates. For example, a charity working with the poor might have a vision statement which reads "A World without Poverty."

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Anytown CASA Vision Statement

Insert Your Local CASA Vision Statement Here

TEXAS**CASA** www.BecomeACASA.org

Mission Statement

A concise description of the **purpose** of the organization. It answers the question: Why does our organization exist? When answering this question, include the nature of your services, groups of clients that you serve and how you serve them.

Mission Statement Standards

Standard 1.A.1 – A CASA program has a mission statement that:
- Is consistent with National CASA and Texas CASA standards and mission
- Is written
- Is adopted by the program's Board

Texas CASA and National CASA Mission Statements

Texas CASA partners with the CASA community to be a voice for abused or neglected children through the power of volunteer advocacy and change in the child protection system.

The mission of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association, together with its state and local members, is to support and promote court-appointed volunteer advocacy so that every abused or neglected child can be safe, establish permanence and have the opportunity to thrive.

Anytown CASA Mission Statement

Insert Your Local CASA Mission Statement here.

SWOT Analysis Description

Strengths
- **Existing internal factors that help the program**
- **Action: Leverage and Grow**
- **General Examples: Good cash flow, strong management team, engaged and knowledgeable staff, etc.**

Weaknesses
- **Existing internal factors that hurt the program or limit the effectiveness of it**
- **Action: Stop and Fix**
- **General Examples: High employee turnover, cuts in funding, organizational dysfunction**

Opportunities
- **Existing external factors that can help the program but have not yet been seized**
- **Action: Seek, learn and leverage**
- **Examples: Demographic changes, new business development, new media outlets, a strong economy, etc.**

Threats
- **Existing or potential external factors that may negatively affect the program**
- **Action: Anticipate and plan**
- **Examples: Poor economy, potential cuts in funding, competing non-profit organizations, etc.**

Anytown CASA SWOT Analysis

Judicial Engagement	Fund Development	Community Engagement	Diversified Board of Directors	Organizational Leadership	Administrative Competency
Strengths	Strengths	Strengths	Strengths	Strengths	Strengths
Weaknesses	Weaknesses	Weaknesses	Weaknesses	Weaknesses	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Opportunities	Opportunities	Opportunities	Opportunities	Opportunities
Threats	Threats	Threats	Threats	Threats	Threats

SWOT Analysis Template

	Executive Leadership	Judicial Engagement	Fund Development	Community Engagement	Diversified Board of Directors	Organizational Excellence
Strengths						
Weaknesses / Limitations						
Opportunities						
Threats						

Sample Completed SWOT Analysis Template

Fund Development	Community Engagement	Board Development	Org. Leadership & Admin	Judicial Support
Strengths	**Strengths**	**Strengths**	**Strengths**	**Strengths**
Strong Executive Director: ability to write grants	Annual participation in almost 100 diverse community activities by staff, volunteers & board members	Board knows mission and takes ownership	Strong ED: knowledge of system, relationships in community, CASA history, grant-writing, etc.	CASA volunteers in two counties are appointed as Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)
CASA has strong and "marketable" cause: save taxes, positive impact for foster kids, clear mission	Positive, consistent communication with recognition of local political figures	The Board has past advocates: lawyers, social worker, accountants, business people, teachers, etc.	Executive Director, staff and key volunteers have strong relationships w/ TX CASA	Some judges acknowledge and get volunteer input in hearings; volunteers testify
There is unity toward mission within the entire organization	Committed staff; always willing to participate in community events when needed	Board always has a quorum	Staff is committed to the CASA cause and has depth of experience	Some judges speak in support of CASA to media and other community groups
Weaknesses / Limitations	**Weaknesses / Limitations**	**Weaknesses / Limitations**	**Weaknesses / Limitations**	**Weaknesses / Limitations**
No donor management tracking system – no single database of donors	Lose too many volunteers between 1) swearing-in and first case, and 2) after first case	Board does not have strong committees	Lack of working space in the CASA office	No consistent requests from CASA to judiciary for feedback on satisfaction and recommendations
Need a balance on profits; currently rely too much on Government funding verses Fund raising	Visible and recognizable branding; CASA logo s/b instant reminder of CASA's mission for general public	Board is not ethnically diverse	Need a more formalized employee performance management system	Volunteers in one county are not appointed as GALs
There is no board-adopted fund development plan	Improve consistency of uniform communications and monitoring of comm. by all CASA constituents	Not all members are active in terms of ownership and passion	Need for more administrative staff	Some judges do not acknowledge volunteers during hearings
Opportunities	**Opportunities**	**Opportunities**	**Opportunities**	**Opportunities**
Funding Plan – Map out targets for Major Donors	Leverage the unique talents and abilities of the volunteers	Members from the corporate/business sector	Dev. Director position (strong)	Increase staff/board participation in other systems that strengthen the child protective system
More training on the "ask" for funds	Increase the quality and current messaging on the website; track the website traffic	Stronger nominating committee for solicitation	Implementing a performance system that can include career development, rewards, team leaders	Influence change and reduce inconsistencies process: CASAs as GALs; judges assist in vol training
Fund development staff & more staff support	Increase number and quality of strategic alliances and venues for CASA recruitment messaging	Make board more attractive to high profile people in the county	TX CASA growth funding	Judge participation in judicial training on child protection court best practices; CASA rep at training
Threats	**Threats**	**Threats**	**Threats**	**Threats**
Economy	Competition for volunteers, donations and board members with other non-profit orgs	Average volunteers in the US are middle age plus Anglo women – need a more representative vol base	Liability – lack of knowledge of legal responsibilities and guidelines – risk	One judge directs CASA to provide services outside the scope of the mission
Too much funding in state & federal grants	May lose volunteers w/o a change to current post-training contact and strong social network for volunteers	Some members don't like to ask for funds	Funding issues – liability – if Open Records training is not provided	Judges do not acknowledge volunteer, volunteers do not stand, and input is not solicited from CASAs
Competition from other organizations		People are busy; ability to devote time to CASA activities limited	Poor economy – people need to work and not much time for volunteering	Changes in legislators, representatives or judges

Growth Projection Worksheet

GROWTH PROJECTION FOR:

1. Number of children in legal custody of CPS in my counties each year:

2008	
2009	
2010	
2011	
2012	
Average Change	

2.a. Percentage of annual growth based on 7 year average from the DFPS databook:

#DIV/0!

3. Goal by % of children to serve annually:

4. Goal by % of your cases served by staff:

5. Total Number of Assigned Volunteers in FY 2012:

6. Total Number of Trained Volunteers in FY 2012:

7. Average number of cases served per volunteer:

8. Your retention rate:

9. Demographics of children served:

2.b. Percentage of annual growth as projected by the program (see instructions)

FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017

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FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017

| Hispanic | Afr. Am. | Caucasian |

Year	Estimated Children in State Care per Year	Estimated # of CPS Cases per Year	Goal: # of CPS Children served by CASA Program Per Year	Goal: # of CPS Cases Served by CASA Program	Goal: Total # of Assigned Volunteers Per Year	Minimum # of Supervisors required	# of Cases Served by CASA Staff	# of Volunteers needed to replace staff	# of Volunteers to Train	# of Hispanic Volunteers to recruit	# of African American Volunteers to recruit	# of Caucasian Volunteers to recruit
Actual 2012	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013	0	0	0	0	0		0	0				
2014	0	0	0	0	0		0	0				
2015	0	0	0	0	0		0	0				
2016	0	0	0	0	0		0	0				
2017	0	0	0	0	0		0	0				

Growth Projection Worksheet (Continued)

<u>**Using the Growth Projection Worksheet**</u>

The worksheet represents a simple formula for projecting the number of volunteers and volunteer supervisors needed to serve an increasing amount of children in any CASA program. It is not an exact calculation; rather it depends on averages, selected goals and known standards (volunteer to case ratio). It provides a picture of how many volunteers would need to be trained (based on your retention goals), how many cases currently served by staff that would need to be served by volunteers (based on your VCR goals) and helps identify targeted recruitment goals to maintain a racially diverse pool of volunteers reflective of the children served. It does not account for any additional hard costs of growth, such as other staff positions, space considerations or recruitment costs. It is meant to be used as a guide, and can be manipulated and tailored differently for each program.

1) Fill in actual numbers for 'Children in DFPS Legal Responsibility' for the counties served by your program. This information can be found on the DFPS website:
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About/Data_Books_and_Annual_Reports/
This will calculate the average percentage of growth of children in care over time. The simple average may or may not be predictive of future growth. (See #2)

2) a. The average growth of children in care (percentage) over a 7 year period is autofilled here.   **b. Req'd field.** If your program anticipates that growth will be higher or lower than the seven-year trend provided, enter the new, projected percentage here. If you believe the percentage of growth will match the seven year trend, re-enter the number from 2.a. **You must enter a number in this box to complete the form.**
3) Using the FY12 statistics as reported to Texas CASA, determine the **actual** percentage of children in care served by your program in FY12 and enter this number. For each of the remaining five grey boxes, fill in the percentage of children your CASA program would like to be serving (goals).

4) Using the FY12 statistics as reported to Texas CASA, determine the **actual** percentage of staff serving cases for the year and enter that number. For each of the remaining five grey boxes, fill in the percentage of cases your program would like to be serving with staff (goals). This should be a decreasing percentage overtime.

5) Using the FY12 statistics as reported to Texas CASA, enter the total Number of Assigned Volunteers in FY 2012.
6) Using the FY12 statistics as reported to Texas CASA, enter the total Number of Volunteers Completing Pre-Service Training in FY12.

7) The FY12 average cases per volunteer will autofill based on the number of cases served by staff subtracted from the total number of cases served and divided by the total number of assigned volunteers. (Cases are calculated by multiplying total children by .55; you may adjust this formula up or down to more closely match your actual child to case ratio). Set your goals for the upcoming years based on your FY 2012 rate.

8) Retention Rate - Enter the retention rate for the previous fiscal year (percentage).

9) Enter the percentage of your children that fall into each of the three listed demographic classifications.
The chart will be autofilled based on the numbers entered, including actual data and projected goals.

Budget Projection Worksheet

Budget Projection Worksheet
Plan to Serve 100% of CPS Children by 2018

	Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	Number of Children Served					
	Number of Volunteers Assigned					
REVENUE						
3	State 421 Fund					
4	State CVC Fund					
5	VOCA Fund					
6	OVAG from Atty Gen					
7	Fundraising Events					
8	Foundations					
9	Corporations/Businesses					
10	Individual Gifts					
11	City/County/CDBG					
12	United Way					
13	National CASA					
15	Board Contributions					
16	Carry over from previous year					
	Total Revenue					
	Funds required to meet expenses					
EXPENSES						
	Salary /Fringe Benefits:					
17	Executive Director					
18	Fringe Benefits					
19	Case Supervisor/Volunteer Coordinator					
20	Fringe Benefits					
21	Other Staff					
22	Fringe Benefits					
	Total Salary/Fringe Benefits					
	Operating Expenses:					
23	Rent					
24	Furniture/Equipment					
25	Postage					
26	Office Supplies					
27	Equipment/Maintenance					

#	Category				
28	Printing/Advertising/Recruitment Materials				
29	Telecom/Internet, website				
30	Dues/Subscriptions, Library				
31	Accounting (Audit)/ Fees				
32	Miscellaneous				
	Total Operating Expenses				
	Professional:				
33	Travel/Local Mileage				
34	Fundraising Events/Meetings				
35	Volunteer Training				
36	General Liability & D &O Insurance				
37	Workshops/Conferences				
	Total Professional Expenses				
38	**Reserve Funds**				
	Total Expenses				

Notes

Row	Note
3	State 421 fund (Reimbursement Grant)
4	State CVC fund
5	VOCA fund
6	Apply to Office of Attorney General for two-year Grant
7	For example, the 5K Run, a gala, golf tournament, etc.
8	List foundations
9	Corporate support
10	Individual gifts
11	City Government Support like a CDBG through HUD funds, county funds for GAL services, etc.
12	United Way
13	Apply for National CASA start-up or expansion funds
15	Board member contributions
16	Self explanatory
	Amount to be raised to meet annual budget (Calculated field)
17	FY 2014, future adjustments based on merit and availability of funds
18	SS/FUTA (19%)
19	Case Supervisors
20	SS/FUTA (19%)
21	Additional Staff including administrative support
22	SS/FUTA (19%)
23	Consider additional space as the organization grows
24	Equipment and Furniture needs as organization grows

Sample Action Plan

AACASA Strategic Plan – Judicial Engagement / Focus Area: Enhance communication and relationships with area judges

Objectives	Responsible Person(s)	Required Resources	Timeframe	Status
Schedule meetings with judges in courts where CASA does not have GAL status	GPC Chair, Board President and Executive Director	Create meeting schedule Designate reps to attend		Complete **GAL in all counties but Potter**
Schedule follow-up meetings with judges once GAL status is approved to review working agreements, provide judicial best practice resources, etc.	Executive Director	Create meeting schedule		Complete
Identify person(s) to serve as liaison between CASA and judges who do not acknowledge/utilize CASA in court (Kincaid – Swisher)	Linda	Liaison – possibly Judge Self from Swisher Co.	By April 13	

Sample Growth Planning Committee Communications

Email following the initial growth planning meeting

To: Members of the Strategic Growth Planning Committee
From: Growth Planning Committee Chair
Re: Strategic Growth Planning Meeting Follow-Up

Hello Dedicated CASA Volunteers, Staff and Board Members!

Thank you so much for your attendance, your wise input and your hard work at Saturday's strategic growth planning meeting!

When considering the impact of your individual contributions, please remember that every child who needs a CASA and does not have one is out there waiting -- alone in the child welfare system. For many abused children, their CASA volunteer is the one constant in their lives and often, the one adult who cares only for them. Reaching our goal means bridging a big gap in Nueces, San Pat and Aransas Counties. CASA of the Coastal Bend currently serves just over 400 children. There are more than 1,000 in need of a CASA. In 2012, we intend to serve 600 children. In 2013, our goal is more than 750. We can only do that by significantly increasing our volunteer base and our funding. And that's where we all can play a big role. So, thank you for stepping up to make a difference.

The **next meeting** of the full SGP Committee will be on **Tuesday, November 29th from 6:00p.m. – 8:00p.m.**

Committee chairmen/women: Please arrive at the meeting ready to hold a brief subcommittee discussion and vote on the top 3 Strengths, Weaknesses/Limitations, Opportunities and Threats within your Critical Area. (Ideally, your committee brainstorming should produce about 10 items in each category. Use the SWOT questions to guide your input.) We'll use your feedback to set our goals and create action plans for 2012-2013.

Thank you for making a difference!

Email following a growth planning meeting

To: Invited Members of the Strategic Growth Planning Committee
From: Growth Planning Committee Chair
Re: Strategic Growth Planning Meeting Follow-Up

To the members of the CASA Strategic Growth Planning Committee:

Thank you so much for all the time and hard work you put in on Tuesday night. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me as you continue creating goals and action plans. If you can get

those to me by end of the day on Tuesday, December 6th, that would be great. If you're struggling with that deadline, just do your best.

I've included three items for you: 1) The presentation from our meeting on Tuesday evening, 2) A completed SWOT analysis for all critical areas, and 3) a template you can use for the goals and action plans.

If you can, please take a little time to print and review the SWOT and feel free to share your questions or feedback about these priority items. As you scan it, perhaps you can think about how the goals and action plans of your subcommittee might integrate and overlap with those of other groups.

In creating action plans and assigning tasks to individuals or teams, let's try to share the responsibility of the action plan items across our entire staff, board and volunteers. Think about the fantastic pool of skills we have within our CASA team and reach out to those you know can help. If we all take on something, we can really put our plan in motion to secure more active volunteers, solicit more funding and SERVE MANY MORE CHILDREN WHO NEED A CASA.

The kids are out there waiting . . . let's make this a year when even more kids are able to say "My CASA has made a difference in my life."

Email following the creation of the growth plan

To: Members of the Strategic Growth Planning Committee
From: Growth Planning Committee Chair
Re: Strategic Growth Planning Meeting Follow-Up

Hello to the members of our dedicated growth planning committee!

Here is the first draft of the Strategic Growth Plan. It would be great to receive feedback and suggestions from all of you on any or all of the goals and actions to accomplish those goals.

Although this plan is a living document and will certainly undergo additions and changes throughout the coming year, the Board of Directors will approve the "final" plan next week on Tuesday, December 20th (by email).

Please share your feedback with me in any format that's easiest for you, including calling me on my cell phone. If possible, please share your feedback by Saturday, December 17th.

Thanks very much for all the time and energy you have given to work through this important step in reaching our ultimate goal -- a ***CASA for every foster child in crisis***.

Sample email for approval of the growth plan

To: Members of Board of Directors
From: Growth Planning Committee Chair
Re: Strategic Growth Planning Meeting Follow-Up

Hello CASA of the Coastal Bend Board of Directors:

Attached is the completed Strategic Growth Plan for your approval. Also attached are items relating to the plan: CASA of the Coastal Bend SWOT Analysis, CASA Growth Chart and 2012 Budget. Please review the document and if you approve this plan, please send your electronic approval to the Executive Director no later than NOON on Wednesday, December 21st.

Thanks again for your valuable input into this important step in our future growth.

Email regarding the follow-up meeting to review progress on the growth plan

To: Chairs of the Strategic Growth Planning Subcommittees
From: Growth Planning Committee Chair
Re: Strategic Growth Planning Meeting Follow-Up

Hello SGP Committee Chairs –

Our agenda will cover each of the co-chairs sharing goal and action plan progress reports on each of the 5 core areas: 1) Fund Development, 2) Community Engagement, 3) BoD Development, 4) CASA Leadership / Admin, 5) Judicial Support.

If you have not already talked or met with the members of your committee, please try to "fill in the blanks" on the status of the SGP actions. This meeting is our first opportunity to share how well things are going in executing the action plans. We can also discuss changes and updates to the plan that was approved in December.

Please bring a copy of the most recent plan (attached) to the meeting. Final e-copy and paper copies will be distributed and sent to everyone at the Board Meeting on 2/21/12.

Email regarding action on the updated growth plan

To: Members of the Strategic Growth Planning Subcommittees
From: Growth Planning Committee Chair
Re: Strategic Growth Planning Meeting Follow-Up

Hello Everyone –

Here's the most recently updated copy of the CASA strategic plan. Please replace the current one in your binder with this. There are many updates to the plan, so please take a little time to review it when you can.

Committee Chairs, please reach out to the members of your committee and try to schedule some time over the next month to meet and discuss your goals and action plan progress. Look at it with a critical eye – questions, challenges and controversy is definitely more valuable than a "rubber stamp." Don't be afraid to make significant changes if you think current situations require it.

Sustaining Action on the Plan for Growth

The CASA Growth Planning Toolkit provides programs with the instructions, information and guidance for creating a growth plan and taking the first steps toward addressing the key areas related to growth. Once these critical steps have been taken, the real action of putting the plan into motion will begin. This is a very active and exciting time for any program and sometimes, getting people energized and ready to take action seems to come easy.

The second phase of implementing the newly created plan is a time when work must continue and envisioned results are still in the distance. It can be a very challenging period and may seem difficult to engage people and keep their interest high and their efforts focused. If left without strong committee leaders, the burden to execute the plan may fall to the executive director or another key leader. Often, this is the point where a new and aggressive plan falls to the wayside and things just go back to "normal", the plan put on the shelf as an accomplishment in and of itself.

Two things are certain at this point in the process:

1) **Strong leadership is needed by the executive director, program leaders, and SGP committee chairs.** This is the group of people who must hold themselves and others accountable, initiate communication and see to it that the growth plan becomes a living document.

2) **The broad scope of a growth plan requires that the actions be undertaken and executed by many people.** All members of the staff, the board and others on the committees must follow through with their initial commitment to give of their time and talents.   It is essential that communication continue and the leaders stay focused on making positive forward progress, using the new plan as their "treasure map".

Thus, a very important part of the growth planning actually takes place at the very beginning of this big process. A discussion about the amount of work involved in growing a CASA program will naturally be a part of **Making the Decision to Grow**. Beyond the creation of the plan which takes a few months and the implementation of the first action steps, the work of growth must continue during Year 1 and into Year 2. It's important to set reasonable expectations about the period when <u>sustained</u> follow-through on the actions and activities are needed to make growth happen.

Ask the Growth Planning Committee to read through the following tips as part of their early involvement. Discuss ways to uphold their enthusiasm and commitment. All strong leaders understand that their followers will struggle with some discouraging times. The best leaders understand that the time to combating stagnation is before it begins.

Make certain that all members of your growth planning team fully understand the level of commitment and time involved **prior** to serving. Use a written job description, or committee charter to clearly communicate what's involved. Prevention can go a long way toward managing unrealistic expectations. Consider asking people to sign an informal growth

planning commitment form. Research shows that people will feel more committed to their actions if they've acknowledged it in writing.

Make sure your team is large enough for plan creation, plan implementation, and follow-through. It's likely that some people will be unable to maintain their commitment to the process. For this reason, you may want to and begin with a bit larger group than you think might be needed.

Start large, but engage in smaller numbers. Sub-committees or sub-teams can take care of many tasks without the need for the entire group to meet. Use efficient structures within your larger committee and, as leaders, hold each other accountable for effective time management.

Match assignments with interests. The plan is designed to be tailored to the specific needs of each local program. Find out who is most interested or knowledgeable about each area and make assignments accordingly. Don't put your outgoing community engagement person in charge of your data charts (unless they have dual interests!)

Inertia is the enemy of engagement. Not everyone needs to have a big area of responsibility, but everyone should have *something* they are directly contributing. When people question whether they are really needed due to inactivity, it is easy to slip off.

How Much Can We Ask?

Many of the people who will invest in creating and implementing a growth plan will be board members, CASA volunteers or interested community participants. These are individuals who may already have weighty professional and personal responsibilities outside their involvement with your CASA program.   Prior to the implementation of a new growth plan, they are already serving the program in important ways. So how much can we ask of people?

Asking this question is a very good start to addressing any potential problems a program might have with overloading its dedicated volunteers. It is the job of the executive director and other staff leaders to be aware of the additional work and remain sensitive to individual limitations. As important as it is to have a diverse section of your program constituents involved in the growth planning process, the staff will still carry the largest share of tasks related to implementation.

If you sense the balance may have shifted for an individual contributor or with a particular sub-committee or work group, address the concerns up front. Ask if people are feeling overwhelmed. Ensure that the process is adequately supported with staff involvement. And as is always appropriate, express your authentic appreciation to volunteers in ways that are most meaningful to them.

Mission Focus

It is easy to get caught up in the details of any process. Growth doesn't happen overnight and sometimes there will be discouraging results to contend with. Not all actions will happen as planned, not all goals will be met. It's the nature of undertaking an aggressive plan.

However, it's important to celebrate the successes that you do have along the way and link them back to the reason for growth – the goal to serve more children in a high-quality way.

Leaders can help sustain their team through these times by maintaining a strong message of mission focus. One way to do this is to include the mission and vision messages at the beginning of every meeting and communication with the growth committee members. Remind everyone of the reason why they have accepted this challenge and let them know that what they are doing makes a positive difference in the lives of children. Share the stories of how CASA volunteers continue to positively impact the lives of abused and neglected children in your community. And let them know that you are grateful for their contributions.