

CLERGY, CASA AND COMMUNITY:

A GUIDE TO FAITH-BASED RECRUITMENT FOR CASA PROGRAMS



TEXASCASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE



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OUR VISION

Texas CASA envisions a safe and positive future for all Texas children and families.

OUR MISSION

Texas CASA's mission is to support local CASA volunteer advocacy programs and to advocate for effective public policy for children and families in the child protection system.





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WELCOME LETTER FROM VICKI SPRIGGS

Dear CASA Community,

This guide for engaging faith-based communities is a toolkit of checklists, suggestions and resources for how to recruit and support partners from the faith-based community in your local area, in order to strengthen your CASA program and strengthen the networks of support for vulnerable children and their families.

There are approximately 31,000 children in foster care in Texas, and each child deserves a CASA volunteer. To achieve that goal, we must double our numbers. Equally important is the need to diversify our volunteer pool so that our corps of dedicated volunteers better reflects the backgrounds of the children and families in foster care. Engaging faith communities is an ideal way to approach both of these goals, and to tap into a rich resource of people motivated to make a real positive difference in our world.

I encourage each of you to consider The CASA Way as you approach this work:

We have an uncompromising belief that we will achieve what others think is impossible, and each of us is an essential part of the solution.

Thank you for your belief in this work, and for the time, talent and treasure that you bring to our shared vision of a safe, positive future for every child and family in Texas.

Yours in service,

Vicki Spriggs
Texas CASA CEO



WE PRAY FOR CHILDREN

By Ina Hughs

We pray for children
who sneak Popsicles before supper,
who erase holes in math workbooks,
who can never find their shoes.

And we pray for those
who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,
who've never squeaked across the floor in new sneakers,
who never had crayons to count,
who are born in places we wouldn't be caught dead,
who never go to the circus,
who live in an X-rated world.

We pray for children
who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,
who sleep with the dog and bury goldfish,
who give hugs in a hurry and forget their lunch money,
who cover themselves with Band-Aids and sing off-key,
who squeeze toothpaste all over the sink,
who slurp their soup.

And we pray for those
who never get dessert,
who watch their parents watch them die,
who have no safe blanket to drag behind,
who can't find any bread to steal,

who don't have any rooms to clean up,
whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,
whose monsters are real.
We pray for children
who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,
who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their
food,
who like ghost stories, who shove dirty clothes under the bed,
who never rinse out the tub,
who get visits from the tooth fairy,
who don't like to be kissed in front of the school,
who squirm in church and scream in the phone,
whose tears we sometimes laugh at and
whose smiles can make us cry.
And we pray for those
whose nightmares come in the daytime,
who will eat anything,
who aren't spoiled by anybody,
who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
who live and move, but have no being.
We pray for children who want to be carried,
and for those who must.
For those we never give up on,
and for those who never get a chance.
For those we smother with our love,
and for those who will grab the hand of
anybody kind enough to offer.

WHAT IS CLERGY, CASA & COMMUNITY?

Clergy, CASA and Community is an initiative by Texas CASA to build a network of faith communities and leaders that will champion speaking up for local children in foster care.

Our goal is to see communities and clergy leaders coming together to live out their calling and be a voice for the children who need them, and to develop a rich network that engages new volunteers and supporters for the CASA mission.

Faith communities are a tremendous resource that CASA programs throughout Texas can turn to. Programs can engage, activate and partner with diverse faith communities to recruit volunteers, as well as to build support for children, their parents, families, foster families and adoptive families.

THE CLERGY, CASA AND COMMUNITY MODEL



PURPOSE & INTENTION



People of faith and places of worship have a long history of providing services directly to children and families facing economic hardship and other crises. Such personal, compassionate service is, for many, a faith imperative and personal calling.

This toolkit advocates for an inclusive approach to partnerships so that the CASA community can mobilize great variety and expertise, with the goal of supporting healthier children, families and communities. Partnerships push participants to think outside their proverbial boxes and enhance participants' abilities to create systems that are adaptable, flexible and responsive to a wide variety of needs.

To be effective, community partnerships require the following essential elements:

- Trust and understanding among diverse individuals, organizational cultures and institutions;
- Open, honest and consistent reflection and communication;
- Mutual respect in embracing and celebrating differences;
- Accommodation and compromise to keep the process moving;
- Generosity of spirit and sharing of resources for greater impact; and
- Faith and determination that the process will lead to a greater good.

It is important that the faith communities you reach out to understand that CASA service is a secular opportunity to serve in an essential role that creates healthier communities and a positive future for children and families in Texas.



WHY DO FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES NEED TO BE AT THE TABLE?

As an ever-present and tangible manifestation of voluntary service and civic engagement in our society, faith-based communities are a part of every community. There are more than 27,000 houses of worship in Texas, encompassing a multitude of religions and spiritual traditions—churches, temples, mosques and more.

We often overlook these communities as viable partners. However, they have significant competence and knowledge to contribute, born of a history of providing services and supports. Many faith-based communities nurture core values of active citizenship, community care and public spiritedness that are vital to building effective partnerships.

In particular, building bonds with those faith communities that families involved in one's local child welfare system are connected to allows CASA programs to recruit volunteers who share cultural and religious values with the children they serve. This can result in excellent advocacy and networks which may be prepared to help marshal greater support for families from within their own neighborhoods.

WHAT ARE FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, EXACTLY?

- They are directly connected to a faith community (a group of people organized around a religious or spiritual belief system).
- They have a religiously oriented mission statement.
- They receive significant support from religious organizations.
- They are initiated by a religious institution.

RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY: STEPS TO PARTNERING

Identifying those faith-based organizations with a capacity and desire to partner involves inquiry, discovery and relationship-building. To identify leaders and congregants of these faith-based organizations requires that you physically enter their world, build trust and connections, and get to know people over time.

Here are several key steps.



1. ARTICULATE INTENTION: Clearly articulate how a partnership could work, including specific possibilities for faith-based participation.



2. CONDUCT A SEARCH: Identify one to three faith-based organizations in your community that you think would make excellent prospects. Consider diversity and which faith communities are attended by the families your program serves.

It is conventional wisdom to begin your search with people you know and communities you are a part of. Ask your network and your corps of volunteers if they know of faith leaders who might be interested in forming a partnership. Ask people you know to make introductions. However, be willing to step outside your comfort zone; if we stay only within our known networks, we may never see opportunities that exist beyond. Take this opportunity to consider what kind of volunteers your program needs most, and where they might be found in local faith communities.



3. INITIATE CONTACT: Personal outreach is vital in initiating and maintaining relationships with faith-based organizations. In-person contact may be necessary, particularly since some faith-based organizations may not be easy to reach by phone; in any case, face-to-face communication can be an especially effective way of reaching out to a particular congregation or leader. Make clear your own commitment as well as the ways in which the proposed partnership would link to the goals of the congregation.



4. ENGAGE IN CO-DISCOVERY: As you share about your CASA organization, learn about the organization you are trying to reach. Find out their process for making decisions and commitments about new partnerships. For some groups, a committee is responsible for decisions; for others, the decision rests on the word of the leader. After your initial meeting, thank your contact by phone or letter, and restate your understanding of the conversation and any agreements reached. Attention to such things as thank-you letters communicates respect for your contact's time and information.



5. PROVIDE RESOURCES: Provide the faith leader or committee with recruitment resources. These can range from offering an info session to providing CASA brochures, posters and marketing videos to people in the congregation.

Remember that this process takes time. It is critical in this phase to allow sufficient time for gathering information and for establishing and building relationships.

The faith-based community is a recruitment pool. Your ultimate goal is to holistically approach the faith community and build the bond with the entire group, not just individual members. This may not produce immediate volunteers, but has the potential to develop into a self-sustaining and long-term recruitment resource.



CHECKLIST TO ASSESS POTENTIAL FAITH-BASED PARTNERS

-  **Capacity:** Understand the capacity of the faith-based groups you are inviting to the table. Carefully research their congregations' strengths and challenges, and assess their potential to be a strong source of volunteers.
-  **Current service activities:** Look at their current service activities, how they carry them out, who they reach and the degree of religious content associated with their services. Are they prepared to participate in a new form of volunteerism, or interested in one that does not involve religious outreach?
-  **Organizational:** How are they structured? What are their affiliations? What is their size? What are the demographic characteristics of congregants?
-  **Administrative:** What is their mission? What is the managerial structure? What are the staffing practices? It is important to understand the mission of the faith community you are engaging with in order to understand their culture and how the CASA mission can align with their mission.
-  **Environmental:** What is their site like? What facilities do they have (kitchen, meeting rooms, etc.)? Where are they located? This information is helpful to know if you would like to ask them to host an information session for inquiring volunteers or training for existing volunteers. If they don't have the resources or environment to help in this way, think about ways you can engage other community partners or spaces to assist with your efforts.

- Program:** What activities are they already providing? What is the proportion of religion-based and service-based activities? What are their requirements for participation in their programs?
- Diversity:** What are the races, ages and ethnicities of people involved in the faith community? Are they affirming of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people and able to provide quality advocacy to these groups? Do they have a diversity of congregants, or congregants representing communities CASA serves?

The intention of engaging a faith community is to look for ways to integrate the CASA mission into an existing ministry. Unless they specifically ask for help in creating a new ministry to support foster/adoptive families and CASA volunteers, look for ways to introduce the CASA mission into their existing programs, ministries or community outreach efforts.



CASA Faith Outreach Teams



Clergy, CASA and Community is a model supported with Faith Outreach Teams.

What is a Faith Outreach Team?

A Faith Outreach Team is a group of experienced CASA volunteers who have committed to recruiting other volunteers from their own faith community and other faith communities in their local area. The team is organized by a staff liaison, who is usually the CASA Volunteer Recruiter.

Who is a Faith Outreach Team member?

A Faith Outreach Team member is a spiritual person well-versed in the tenets of their faith, meaning they understand acceptable language and cultural norms. They are actively involved in their faith community—they attend services regularly; they are involved in other activities or groups; and they have the ability to connect with influential clergy or other community leadership.

How can I select members of the Faith Outreach Team?

Here are some ideas to identify which CASA volunteers should be a part of this unique team:

- Talk to the Child Advocacy Specialists/Advocate Supervisors for recommendations and to reach out to the volunteers directly. They know the volunteers the best!
- Utilize a “Getting to Know You” form to find out if volunteers belong to a faith community, and reach out to them directly.
- Share about the faith-based recruitment initiative with the volunteers and staff, and ask those interested in serving on this team to attend an information session.



WAYS TO PARTNER WITH A FAITH COMMUNITY

There are many ways that you can build a relationship with a faith community that will benefit CASA. As you do this, also consider partnering with agencies, such as DFPS, that serve children in foster care and have a faith-based outreach program.

A unified approach can help you to develop sustaining recruitment mechanisms that give faith community members a variety of options to serve and the opportunity to develop a ministry that they are passionate about.

IDEAS FOR CASA & FAITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

1. Ask the congregation to pray for children in foster care, their parents and families, child welfare workers, foster/adoptive parents, and all those involved in the foster care system.
2. Inspire members to become a CASA volunteer and share the [BecomeACASA.org](https://www.BecomeACASA.org) site.
3. Host an information session at the house of worship.
4. Host an Advocate Summit or continuing education training.
5. Provide ways for the group to “Adopt a CASA,” such as organizing a fundraiser for the CASA program.
6. Provide ways to donate needed kids’ items to the local CASA program or Rainbow Room.
7. Collect school supplies and backpacks for children in foster care in August.

8. Guide the organization to participate in Blue Sunday in April (see www.BlueSunday.org).
9. Guide the faith community leader to give a sermon on child abuse prevention and observe Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.
10. Guide the organization to participate in Stand Sunday in November (see <https://cafo.org/orphansunday/>).
11. Educate the congregation on how to provide foster parent/adoptive parent support.
12. Encourage members to go through foster parent training.
13. Educate the congregation on how to provide respite support for foster parents.
14. Guide the group to become a CarePortal community. CarePortal is a nationwide database connecting faith communities with needs of children and families involved with the foster care system.



UNDERSTANDING FAITH CULTURES & DECORUM

The future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of great leaders, the great powers, and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organize... Each of us, let repeat from the heart: no family without lodging, no rural worker without land, no laborer without rights, no people without sovereignty, no individual without dignity, no child without childhood, no young person without a future, no elderly person without a venerable old age.

- POPE FRANCIS, ADDRESS AT THE WORLD MEETING OF POPULAR MOVEMENTS, BOLIVIA

The elders told us that this is the road of life that we're walking down. We're supposed to be holding up one another, supporting each other, having our arm underneath our brother's arms while walking down the road of life.

- REUBEN SNAKE, WINNEBAGO MEDICINE MAN

Developing an understanding of faith cultures and their generally accepted decorum is key to recruitment in the faith community. Here is a collection of tenets and etiquette guidelines to get you started.



CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is the largest religion in the world, with many unique denominations based on study of the Bible. Different denominations have different traditions and beliefs. General guidelines are below.

- Catholics/Orthodox churches - The leader of a local parish is referred to as "Reverend [Last Name]." When speaking to the parish priest, you may call him "Father [Last Name]." Orthodox churches include the Greek Orthodox Church, as well as those from other countries including Russia, Armenia and Ukraine.
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - Individual large congregations are called "wards," with smaller congregations called "branches." Congregants attend Sunday worship in a "meetinghouse." The church requests to be referred to by its full name, not as "Mormons." Most LDS members abstain from alcohol, caffeine and tobacco.
- Mainline Protestants (including Baptist, Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc.) - The leader is referred to as "Rev. [Last Name]." If they hold a doctorate, the title is "Rev. Dr. [Last Name]."

Generally, the main leader is known as the “pastor.” Many mainline congregations ordain women and men, and some are affirming of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people.

- Non-denominational Protestants - The leader is referred to as “Reverend [Last Name].” If they hold a doctorate, the title is “Rev. Dr. [Last Name].” When speaking, they may also be called “Pastor [Last Name].” Non-denominational churches are independent and operate autonomously.



ISLAM

The world’s second-largest religion is called Islam, and its adherents are called Muslims. Islam teaches that there is one god, who in Arabic is called Allah. A primary tenet of Islam is zakat, or giving to those in need. The place of worship is a mosque, and the leader of the mosque is called the Imam (pronounced “ih-mom”). Many American cities have an Islamic Center, which may include a mosque, a school and/or a counseling center. Sabbath day is Friday. Many Muslims follow “halal” dietary restrictions related to the way meat is slaughtered. Female visitors may be asked to dress modestly, and male visitors may be asked to wear a head-covering.



HINDUISM

Hinduism is the world's third-largest religion. It is based on The Vedas, a large body of Hindu texts and Sanskrit hymns. Houses of worship are called temples. Hindus believe in one god, Brahman, which takes many forms. The local temple's religious leader is called a priest. The first point of contact would be the temple's board of directors. When greeting a priest, do not touch them. You may be asked to remove your shoes upon entering a Hindu temple. Most Hindus are vegetarian.



BUDDHISM

Buddhism is the world's fourth-largest religion. Based on the teachings of Buddha, known as the Dharma, Buddhism encompasses a wide variety of traditions, beliefs and spiritual practices.

A Buddhist temple is run by monks and/or nuns, and many temples double as a community center. Compassion, nonviolence and service to others are core tenets of the faith.

A first point of contact would be the temple or community center's head priest, board of directors or executive director. Because Buddhists are not monotheists, references to God or saying "God bless you" are not appropriate. There is no weekly Sabbath day in Buddhist tradition, as Buddhists practice their religion daily. Most Buddhists abstain from meat, alcohol and tobacco.



JUDAISM

Judaism is the first and oldest monotheistic religion. The house of worship is called a synagogue or temple. The leader is a rabbi, and they are usually called "Rabbi [Last Name]." Core tenets of Judaism are tikkun olam, or repairing the world, and tzedakah, or charitable giving. Most synagogues have committees dedicated to community work. The major sects of Judaism are:

- Reform – The largest affiliation of American Jews, some 35 percent, identify as Reform. The movement has traditionally sought to adapt Jewish tradition to modern sensibilities and sees itself as politically progressive and social justice oriented. Reform Jews are involved in a great deal of volunteering beyond the synagogue. Both men and women can be rabbis in Reform Judaism.
- Orthodox – In an Orthodox synagogue, men and women worship in separate areas. Male visitors to a synagogue will be asked to wear a skullcap (yamaka) and female visitors may be asked to cover their hair and wear modest clothing. Only men can be rabbis.

Orthodox Jews are defined by their strict adherence to a traditional understanding of Jewish law. They follow kosher dietary restrictions that prohibit shellfish, pork, and the mixing of milk and meat products.

- Conservative – Conservative Judaism finds a middle ground between Orthodox and Reform Judaism, with gender-egalitarian prayer. Sabbath is sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Male visitors to a synagogue may be asked to wear a skullcap (yamaka).

UNDERSTANDING THE UNIVERSAL CALLING IN VARIOUS FAITH CULTURES

Every faith shares common tenets, expressed in different words, prayers, stories and metaphors. The core thread of the majority of human faiths can be expressed as a universal calling.

Universal Calling:

TO LEAD A MORAL, VIRTUOUS LIFE, WE MUST VALUE AND CARE FOR ALL PEOPLE, INCLUDING THOSE LESS FORTUNATE THAN OURSELVES.

As a recruiter, being able to articulate the universal calling is your most powerful rhetorical tool. In order to approach the leaders and members of different faith communities, familiarize yourself with the language that they use and the ways that the universal calling is expressed. This communicates respect and a sincere desire to engage the community. It also activates the listeners' sense of moral and religious values and builds a bond with them based on important aspects of life.

Here is how the universal calling is expressed in the five major religions.



CHRISTIANITY

Many verses in the Bible reference assisting those in need:

Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and the needy. (Proverbs 31:8-9)

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress... (James 1:27)

And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. (Deuteronomy 14:29)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34-35)

HINDUISM

Hinduism is an umbrella term for various religious traditions originating in India and is based on the Vedas, ancient texts from 1500 B.C.

“Dana” is a Sanskrit word that connotes the virtue of generosity, charity or giving of alms. In Hinduism; dana is the practice of cultivating generosity. It can take the form of giving to an individual in distress or need. It can also take the form of philanthropic public projects that empower and help many.

Charity given out of duty, without expectation of return, at the proper time and place, and to a worthy person is considered to be in the quality of goodness.
(Bhagavad-gita 17.20)

The Gods have not ordained hunger to be our death; even to the well-fed man comes death in varied shape. The riches of the liberal never waste away, while he who will not give finds none to comfort him, the man with food in store who, when the needy comes in miserable case begging for bread to eat, hardens his heart against him, when old finds no one to comfort him.

Let the rich satisfy the poor implorer, and bend his eye upon a longer pathway, Riches come now to one, now to another, and like the wheels of cars are ever rolling.
(Rigveda, X.117)

ISLAM

“Zakat” is an Arabic word that refers to one’s religious obligation to give charitably and is one of the five pillars of Islam.

Saying of the Prophet Muhammad: “The best of the houses is the house where an orphan gets love and kindness.”

And we made a covenant with the Children of Israel – You shall not worship anyone except God and be kind to your parents, relatives, orphans and the poor. And speak kindly to men, observe prayer and give alms. (Quran 2:83)

They will ask you what they should spend in charity. Say “give to your parents, relatives, orphans, the poor and the wayfarer. And whatever good you do, God knows it.” (Quran 2:215)

And hand over to the orphans their belongings. Do not substitute worthless things of your own for their valuable ones and devour not their property by adding it to your own. For that is a big sin. (Quran 4:2)

BUDDHISM

Buddhists follow the teachings of Buddha, the “awakened one.” He taught four noble truths: (1) life is suffering, (2) suffering is caused by cravings and aversions, (3) nirvana can be achieved by eliminating cravings and aversion, and (4) Buddhism is the way.

Buddhists are focused on not causing suffering to any living thing, and they will recognize the truth that life contains suffering. There are many different kinds of Buddhists practicing in America, such as Zen Buddhists, Tibetan Buddhists and Theraveda Buddhists.

A core practice of Buddhism is meditation, and many chant mantras based on Buddha's teachings.

Bodhisattva Prayer for Humanity

May I be a guard for those who need protection,
A guide for those on the path,
A boat, a raft, a bridge for those who wish to
cross the flood.

May I be a lamp in the darkness,
A resting place for the weary,
A healing medicine for all who are sick
A vase of plenty, a tree of miracles.
And a servant for all in need.

May I bring sustenance and awakening,
Enduring like the earth and sky
Until all beings are freed from sorrow
And all are awakened.

- Shantideva



JUDAISM

A basic tenet of Judaism is “*tzedakah*,” which means charitable giving. It is typically seen as a moral obligation and includes aspects of justice and doing that which is right. For Jews, material support for those in need is not a matter of “charity” but rather an ethical and moral requirement.

From the Torah (which is also the first five books of the Christian Bible):

If your brother falls low, and his hand falters beside you, then you shall strengthen him—sojourner or resident — and he will live with you. (Leviticus 25:35)

When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. (Deuteronomy 24:19)

You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you afflict them in any way – for if they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry. (Exodus 22:22-23)

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS: HOLIDAYS

An important way to show respect for various faith cultures is to know the holy days they observe. Here are some holy days to be mindful of and avoid as you conduct outreach. *Note: The exact dates of these holidays change from year to year for most religions, so please research each religion's holidays for the current year. Know also that many of these holidays have alternate spellings.*

 CHRISTIAN HOLIDAYS	 HINDU HOLIDAYS	 ISLAMIC HOLIDAYS	 BUDDHIST HOLIDAYS	 JEWISH HOLIDAYS
Advent	Diwali	Eid ul-Fitr	Wesak	Rosh Hashanah
Christmas	Holi	Haji	Vassa	Yom Kippur
Lent	Dussehra	Eid ul-Adha	Dharma Day	Passover
Holy Week		Eid ul-Ghadir	Bodhi Day	Hanukkah (8 days)
Easter		Milad an-Nabi		
Pentecost		Lailat al-Qadr		
All Saints' Day				

CALENDAR CONSIDERATIONS: RELATED EVENTS

Below is a list of annual events that provide excellent opportunities for CASA programs to engage faith communities to participate in bringing awareness to the CASA mission.

JANUARY

- Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month
 - MLK Day
-

FEBRUARY

- Black History Month
-

APRIL

- National Child Abuse Prevention Month
 - Blue Sunday – occurs on the last Sunday in April. It is the day when faith communities pray for victims of child abuse and for those who assist them (www.bluesunday.org)
 - Sexual Assault Awareness Month
 - Children’s Day (Dia del Niño) – observed in Mexico on April 30
-

MAY

- National Foster Care Month

JUNE

- LGBTQ Pride Month
 - Juneteenth
-

SEPTEMBER

- Hispanic Heritage Month – September 15-October 15
-

OCTOBER

- National Observance of Children's Sabbaths – the third weekend of October
-

NOVEMBER

- National Adoption Month
 - Orphan Sunday – invites faith communities to care for orphans worldwide (cafo.org/orphansunday/about)
 - Stand Sunday – calls faith communities to stand for children and families in foster care in the United States (cafo.org/orphansunday/resources/foster-care-resources)
-

DECEMBER

- National Human Rights Month

SUCCESS STORY



Evelyn: Putting Faith into Action

Evelyn Keyes is a Justice for the State Court of Criminal Appeals. She has had lots of experience with hearing cases involving children and families over the years. Evelyn's faith fuels her passion for justice, and she has a strong desire to see that all children have opportunities for a bright future. Her faith and experience prompted her to help promote the work of CASA to her Episcopalian church. She wanted to make the greatest impact and started with state-level leadership at the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, which is just down the street from the courthouse where she works. After a few emails and phone calls, Evelyn secured a meeting with the Canon of the Ordinary to talk about how Texas CASA could connect with the Diocese.

This meeting was very successful because Evelyn is active in her home church and was able to speak to the Canon using language that is familiar to the Episcopalian community. The Canon recommended starting with relationship building at the local church, but also extended an invitation to have an exhibit booth at the Diocesan Council meeting in Waco. This meeting is for all of the priests and their lay delegates in the eastern half of the state which includes over 75,000 church members. Evelyn is convinced that the faith community is one of the best places to start for every child who needs a CASA volunteer.

CONCLUSION

As you begin your journey to engaging and recruiting faith communities, take heart in the knowledge that people are looking for opportunities to make their lives more meaningful and to serve others in real ways. This may be particularly true in faith communities, so they are ideal ground for planting the seeds of partnership.

Becoming a CASA volunteer is an extraordinary path which allows people to serve individual children and families and to strengthen the fabric of society as a whole. Because of this, your CASA program has something of significant value to offer to faith communities: a chance to fulfill the universal calling, and a thorough volunteer opportunity with extensive training, strong infrastructure, and ongoing support and training for advocates. All of these combined can allow people to make a profound difference in the world, and your recruitment work is a bridge for those people and the good works they are meant to do.

SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

Engaging and Partnering with Faith-Based Organizations in Initiatives for Children, Youth, and Families

<https://twc.texas.gov/files/partners/engaging-partnering-faith-based-organizations-toolkit.pdf>

Texas CASA Guidelines for Faith-Based Volunteer Recruitment

“A Prayer for Children” by Ina Hughs, A Prayer for Children, William Morrow & Co., 1995.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

- [DFPS Faith-Based Program](#)
- [DFPS Faith-Based Specialists](#)
- [live-religion-stylebook.pantheonsite.io](#)
- [pewforum.org](#)
- [crcr.usc.edu/report/disaster-tips-sheets-on-engaging-faith-communities](#)
- [Baha'i National Schools](#)
- [Buddhist Peace Fellowship](#)
- [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#)
- [Catholic Charities](#)
- [Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#)
- [Episcopal Church](#)
- [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)
- [Islamic Society of North America](#)
- [Pan-Methodist Campaign for Children in Poverty](#)
- [Presbyterian Church USA](#)
- [National Council of Churches](#)
- [Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism](#)
- [Unitarian Universalist Association](#)
- [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](#)
- [United Church of Christ](#)
- [United Methodist Women](#)
- [St. Joseph Ministry of the Catholic Church](#)



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