



STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

FY 2020 Texas CASA Annual Survey Response to Additional Services Requested from Texas CASA

The mission of Texas CASA is to support CASA volunteer advocacy programs and to advocate for effective public policy for children and families in the child protection system. This supportive role is manifested through assistance and resources, oversight regarding standards, and as a funder. Direct service to children and families is the role of local CASA volunteer advocacy programs.

Programs completing the Fiscal Year 2020 Texas CASA Annual Survey had the option of providing comments and listing other assistance they would like Texas CASA to offer. Network feedback is a vital part of planning for Texas CASA. Texas CASA leadership reviewed each comment to determine if the need was already met or how we might meet it. Additional services or assistance requested from the CASA network falls within areas of support as outlined below.

Training

The network made multiple requests regarding targeted training topics and audience, responded to as follows:

- Board training (LBOD) will be virtual again in FY21 and will include how board members can best support their programs during the pandemic. In addition, a Texas CASA board member will host a quarterly Zoom for other board members around the state for information sharing and group discussion. Additional board resources, such as orientation, are underway.
- Grants management resources are available on the Texas CASA website with a new Guide to Grants to offer additional support to local programs.
- Volunteer Coaching and Advocacy (VCA) focuses on various aspects of coaching volunteers, best interest advocacy and the GAL legal role each year. With regard to legal training, in FY19, the focus was on understanding the Texas Family Code/GAL duties. In FY20, the focus was on court reports and trial testimony. In FY21, the focus will be on parental presumption and statutes related to normalcy.
- In light of requests for diversity training, Texas CASA has been working with a group of select network programs to better understand the needs around diversity and equity and to develop a curriculum for use by local CASA programs to meet those needs.

DID YOU KNOW: Many training tools and resources are available on the Texas CASA website, including: a revised and updated OCAST which covers the child protection system in Texas, four interactive pre-service training modules online, CASA on the Go podcasts that cover a variety of advocacy topics, and many more!



DID YOU KNOW: National CASA makes a Board Source membership available to every program, which is a great way to access additional governance resources and training.

DID YOU KNOW: Texas CASA is always seeking input on new training topics, so please send us your “wish list”!

Communications

Several requests related to our website, who to contact at Texas CASA, communicating the role of CASA, and network communication were mentioned and are being addressed as follows:

- Texas CASA has redesigned our website for ease of navigation and to create a Program Portal for all materials and resources programs may want to access.
- A directory of Texas CASA staff with a description of teams has been included on our website to help point you in the right direction for targeted support.
- Texas CASA is implementing the focus group feedback received in FY20. One area of feedback was needing a better understanding of the CASA role, also mentioned in the survey. We will be developing resources for use with community partners in FY21.
- Texas CASA will develop tips on building relationships with stakeholders.
- To meet specific requests, the Social Impact team at Texas CASA will write an article in FY21 on building a case for support and relationships with donors.

DID YOU KNOW: Local program staff can stay connected! Texas CASA hosts listservs for the following groups—Executive Directors, Program Directors, fund developers, recruiters, LATs, trainers, Community Based Care catchment areas, and staff who work directly with volunteers!

Child Welfare System

Survey respondents made multiple requests regarding legislative advocacy, Community-Based Care and data. Texas CASA is responding to those requests in the following ways:

- In FY21, Texas CASA will host a meeting in February for all programs involved with Community-Based Care to understand current challenges as well as promising practices and develop a response plan for enhanced dialogue.
- In connection with the 87th Legislative Session, the Public Policy team is hosting four webinars which will also be archived online.
- Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been obtained with three of four SSCCs related to Phase 2 of Community-Based Care. In addition, updating a CASA/DFPS MOU has begun.
- Evinto (Optima), local CASA programs and Texas CASA will continue to strive for consistent, accurate data collection and reporting with new Optima reports, Optima training, and a statewide portal available in FY21.
- Texas CASA is continuing to explore new data profiles that can be distributed to local programs utilizing the performance measures reported each quarter. On the horizon are an executive dashboard for program leadership and an outcomes dashboard that will compare local outcomes to those statewide.



Services

Requests for general support to aid programs and staff will be addressed through the following:

- If you are a new ED, there are weekly Zoom calls, orientations, a new ED Survival Kit, and annual training. In FY21, we are adding New ED University that offers one-on-one weekly meetings spanning 8 to 12 weeks which includes a leadership activity for the New ED group.
- Regarding the pandemic, Texas CASA will continue to message out resources and crucial information via our COVID webpage and through emails and Inside CASA. We will continue the waivers put in place almost immediately after the outbreak of the virus until they can safely be lifted and, at that point, programs will have a 30-day notice of the change. Executive Directors are encouraged to keep their courts and other community partners informed as well.
- Texas CASA has offered a short e-learning course on the Board President's role and the Board Treasurer's role. We will continue with a general board member's role outlining board duties and responsibilities which allows board training to be available on demand.
- The volunteer recruitment media campaign will continue and is designed to reach as much of the state as possible.

DID YOU KNOW: Volunteer recruitment support and assistance is always available! Resources are available on rural recruitment and social media. Men of CASA continues to be available with a new CASA, Clergy & Community campaign underway. A recruitment summit is held every other year. A monthly Zoom is held for recruiters. Individualized assistance to programs is available upon request!

DID YOU KNOW: 47 CASA programs serve more than one county and many of the resources developed by Texas CASA are specifically for rural areas.

We appreciate the feedback received through the annual survey and the time invested in the comments. Specificity in comments helps us to understand and respond to concerns! Please reach out to us at any time with concerns or questions. Texas CASA is committed to incorporating suggestions as we move forward into a new fiscal year.