



STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

FY 2021 Texas CASA Annual Survey Response to Additional Services Requested from Texas CASA

The mission of Texas CASA as a membership organization 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 funding. Program administration and direct service to children and families is the role of local CASA programs.

Programs completing the Fiscal Year 2021 Texas CASA Annual Survey had the option of providing comments and listing assistance they would like Texas CASA to offer. Network feedback is a vital part of planning. 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 six areas of support.

Training

The network made multiple requests regarding training, responded to as follows:

- Board training (LBOD) will be virtual again in FY22 to accommodate *all* board members and will include strategic planning for growth and financial sustainability. In addition, a Texas CASA board member will host a quarterly Zoom for board members around the state for information sharing and group discussion. A board recruitment guide will be developed and distributed to the CASA network.
- Volunteer Coaching and Advocacy (VCA) for volunteer supervisors focuses on the fundamentals of retaining volunteers by utilizing a coaching approach to support best interest advocacy, MSL, and the legal role of CASA. Regarding legal advocacy, FY19 focused on understanding the Texas Family Code/GAL duties. FY20 focused on court reports and trial testimony. FY21 focused on parental presumption and statutes related to normalcy. FY22 will focus on CASA scope of service.
- In response to 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 which will be released in FY22.
- Texas CASA will resume in-person training events with The Forum in March 2022 and the Texas CASA conference in July 2022 and will also continue virtual training allowing for greater attendance. You can download the FY22 training and events calendar [here](#).
- Texas CASA will develop training strategies that focus on small class size and distance learning.

DID YOU KNOW: Many training tools and resources are available on the Texas CASA website, including: trauma-informed, Praesidium online training (e.g. “It Happened to Me”), and CASA on the Go podcasts that cover various advocacy topics! Train the Trainers are offered throughout the year; three scheduled in FY22.

DID YOU KNOW: Texas CASA offers customized training for individual programs based on their request. If you’re interested, please contact the [Chief Network Services Officer](#).



Communications

Valuable comments regarding our website, needed resources, who to contact at Texas CASA and what services are available are being addressed as follows:

- Texas CASA is upgrading our hosted, branded website template for local CASA programs.
- A [directory](#) of Texas CASA staff with a description of teams and services has been updated on our website to help point you in the right direction for available services and targeted support.
- Texas CASA released a [CASA Crisis Communications and Risk Management Guide](#) in October 2021.
- Texas CASA released a [Social Media Guidebook & Content Bank](#) in December 2021.
- The volunteer recruitment media campaign is targeting a more diverse and younger demographic.

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 (supervisors/coaches) who work directly with volunteers! [Join now!](#)

DID YOU KNOW: Toolkits are available: [marketing toolkit](#), [public relations toolkit](#), and [messaging book!](#)

Child Welfare System

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

- Texas CASA engaged the services of a lobbyist to provide guidance during the 87th Legislative Session and will not hesitate to secure that assistance, if needed, in preparation for and during the 88th Legislative Session.
- In preparation for the 88th Legislative Session, the Public Policy team is hosting training and webinars to leverage LAT teams across the state.
- A revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DFPS is underway, to be finalized in FY22.
- Stakeholder focus groups will be held in FY22 to further inform CASA's services and relationships.
- Funding has been secured from the Children's Commission to develop resources that will foster an understanding of roles between CASA and CPS, attorneys, providers and family members.

Data

With the many challenges and changes in data collection, reporting and services in the past year, we appreciate the constructive comments and positive feedback! To address the concerns, Texas CASA:

- Revised the process for committee review of and notification to programs of changes to grant requirements as well as placement of any revisions within grants contracts.
- Formed a Data Committee with members who represent 13 CASA programs, select Texas CASA staff and board members to assess the data needs of the CASA network and vet any changes to data collection.
- Has contracted with a local program to create an Optima Demo site for safe training exercises.
- Is working with renowned data analyst, Peter Wiley, to demonstrate the value of CASA based on the newly standardized activity and definitions, beginning with FY22 Quarter 1 data.

DID YOU KNOW: Customized Optima reports have been developed to aid with quarterly ODM reporting and QA reviews. In addition, there is a new custom report for volunteer activity tracking. Find the toolkit [here!](#)



Services

Comments and requests regarding general oversight, support and assistance to programs and staff will be addressed as follows:

- Texas CASA offers support to new Executive Directors including: weekly Zoom calls, orientations, ED Survival Kit, and annual training. In FY21, we added New ED University that offers one-on-one weekly meetings spanning 8 to 12 weeks which includes a focus on standards and leadership.
- The volunteer recruitment media campaign will continue and is designed to reach as much of the state as possible. Texas CASA will collaborate with the network on regional recruitment and retention.
- Texas CASA is requesting assistance from National CASA on out-of-state/country background checks.
- Emails and calls should be responded to within 2 business days, which we will reinforce in our protocols and processes.
- To aid with the incorporation of new National CASA standards and funder agreements, Texas CASA is developing a resource that provides the exact change and suggested language for all requirements. In addition, the QA team is developing document examples and templates as optional resources.
- National CASA's role of the national, state and local programs has been added to our website.
- Texas CASA will focus on how to enhance community partnerships and relationships within the child welfare system and resources needed to support children and families through a workgroup in FY23.

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 piloted in FY21 and underway in FY22. 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. Visit our website to find [resources for serving multiple counties](#).

DID YOU KNOW: Texas CASA contracts with an attorney who is available, on a limited basis, to answer case related questions, including Discovery Requests, as well as employment law queries.

Pass-Through Funding

Requests for additional financial support and assistance will be addressed as follows:

- Two new resources on [pledges](#) and [board fundraising](#) are available, and be watching for new quarterly resources in Inside CASA!
- Texas CASA is exploring statewide vendor contracts within region meetings across the state.
- Texas CASA continues to advocate for additional government funding.
- Exceptional items request to HHSC has been submitted that supports a lower staff: volunteer ratio.

DID YOU KNOW: While state and federal funders determine grant requirements and any payment delays, the Grants team offers an [annual webinar](#) and updated [Guide to Grants](#) for consistent, relevant information.

DID YOU KNOW: Many public resources are also available on topics such as [Grant Writing](#) and [Fundraising](#).

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 each new fiscal year.