



STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

FY 2022 Texas CASA Annual Survey Response to Comments and 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 2022 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 Executive Officers 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 fall 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 FY23 to accommodate *all* board members and will include an addition of one in-person training to accommodate the requests for in-person training. A board orientation and recruitment guide was developed and distributed in FY23. A listserve for board members will be created and hosted by Texas CASA in FY23. Finally, Texas CASA will update the “Programs by Numbers” data on all programs for release to the network in Spring 2023.
- **NEW in FY23!** Texas CASA will offer a quarterly virtual training for volunteers to assist them in getting in-service training hours with topics developed by local CASA programs. Program Directors now have the opportunity to participate in a monthly meeting to discuss topics of common interest and request training (for example: training on resilience was requested and provided in December).
- In response to requests for diversity training, Texas CASA will finalize a curriculum, two years in the making, on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in FY23 for use by and with input from CASA programs. In addition, Clergy, CASA & Community has expanded into an additional ten programs in FY23, creating additional avenues for diverse recruitment.
- Specific training topics requested on advocacy and the legal requirements of the CASA role are planned for inclusion in FY23, for example: social media at the Volunteer Power Unleashed Summit, Human Trafficking Guidebook and Training in January 2023, and website management to come!

DID YOU KNOW: Many training tools and resources are available on the Texas CASA website, including: trauma-informed advocacy and CASA on the Go podcasts that cover various advocacy topics! Training of Facilitators (TOF) are offered every quarter. You can download the FY23 training and events calendar [here](#).

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](#).

Volunteer Recruitment & Retention

Valuable comments regarding a great need for additional volunteers through targeted recruitment and effective retention are addressed below:

- The volunteer recruitment media campaign will continue and is designed to reach as much of the state as possible. New recruitment visuals and ads are under development in FY23 to update and enhance statewide recruitment efforts. Texas CASA will re-bid the campaign in FY24.
- The volunteer recruitment media campaign is targeting a more diverse and younger demographic.
- A "How You Heard" report from Optima was added to the Optima Portal to help track the effectiveness of the volunteer recruitment media campaign with increasing active volunteers.
- Through "listening posts" with recruiters and polls with volunteer supervisors/coaches, Texas CASA tailored the Volunteer Power Unleashed Recruitment Summit and VCA training in FY23.

Ongoing Support & Assistance

Suggestions on how to improve communication and partnership between Texas CASA and the CASA network were especially helpful, as well as other comments related to ongoing support.

- Texas CASA will begin offering a virtual "office hour" meeting once a month for any/all program staff to meet with Texas CASA leadership the third Tuesday of the month at 10am, beginning January 17th.
- In FY23, six in-person regional meetings will be scheduled to focus on how to improve the communication and collaboration between the CASA network and Texas CASA.
- 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 continues to follow up with Evinto on network concerns and requests. Programs may select any vendor for data management software. Optima training, a new tip sheet, and reports are available online. Read more in [Data Management](#) on the Texas CASA website, Program Portal.
- Programs will receive updated, including "Programs by Numbers", as well *new* data graphics, such as a CFE dashboard and an advocacy activities dashboard coming in FY23. Programs may also request a data visualization of any data outputs currently collected within the Online Data Management (ODM).
- In FY23, Texas CASA will begin sending email communication to both the Executive Director and Program Director (if applicable) listed in the ODM and will keep emails brief and to one subject.
- Based on a legislative priority regarding Court Ordered Services Cases, Texas CASA will have training, tools and resources available for the network in FY23, should CASA become funded for those cases.
- Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) has been added to standardized activities in Optima with a report available in FY23, a statewide symposium will be held May 2023, and see our new [CFE tools!](#)
- Texas CASA will provide timely Save the Dates and plan email releases to the network that do not fall on holidays or Friday afternoons.

DID YOU KNOW: Toolkits are available! [Volunteer Recruitment Campaign toolkit](#), [Public Relations Toolkit](#), [CASA Crisis Communications and Risk Management Guide](#), [Messaging Book](#), [Optima Data Management toolkit](#), [Growth Planning Toolkit](#), [Normalcy Matters](#), and [Resources for Programs Serving Multiple Counties](#)

DID YOU KNOW: Texas CASA remains committed to program support despite a slight reduction in our FTEs through intentional and strategic focus on priorities related to current changes in our child welfare system.

Legislative Advocacy

Survey respondents gave valuable feedback regarding legislative advocacy. Texas CASA is pleased to offer:

- Ten Legislative Advocacy Training (LAT) sessions in FY22 and FY23 based on priorities established by the network and Texas CASA board with additional plans for post-legislative sessions statewide. LAT invitations will be extended to board chairs as well as Executive Directors in FY23.
- Training will include changes to the CASA role, definitions of abuse, and the child welfare system.
- A revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SSCCs finalized in FY23.

New CASA Requirements

With revised standards from National CASA and new contract language from HHSC, FY22 was a year of increased requests of CASA programs. While some conditions of operation are beyond the control of Texas CASA, we will respond to comments and suggestions through the following:

- Texas CASA will commit to communicating any changes as soon as we receive them.
- Texas CASA will take advantage of the upcoming opportunity at The Forum to host network breakout sessions on how to keep the CASA role manageable for volunteers, while still evolving.
- Texas CASA will also focus on how to enhance community partnerships and relationships as part of the upcoming, in-person Forum. Registration opens January 19th.
- Texas CASA will continue to send the agenda for the Regional Representative meetings in advance to all Executive Directors and to send out the notes following the meeting to all programs, providing additional opportunities for programs to provide input and feedback on discussions and decisions.
- Texas CASA is offering assistance to help programs align their policies with new CASA standards.

Pass-Through Funding

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

- A new resource will be available in FY23 to support local programs receiving targeted assistance from fund raising professionals. More information will be coming soon!
- A combination of established grants (CVC, VOCA) and new grants (PMC, CFE) are being offered and explored to maximize support to the network. Texas CASA leadership is tracking and evaluating child welfare system trends with plans to evaluate the funding formula with a group of programs in FY24.
- Regarding new insurance requirements, Texas CASA provided a resource in Stirling Insurance but continues to advocate for a reduction in HHSC requirements and is exploring an insurance pool.

DID YOU KNOW: Other states have begun adopting pass-through funding as a way to significantly increase the amount of funding available to all CASA programs within a state, just as it has done in Texas.

DID YOU KNOW: Travel costs are allowable VOCA and CVC grant expenses and [Courtesy CASA](#) is available as an additional tool for long distance visits! On average, local programs saw their VOCA grant increase by 7% through consolidation of the Volunteer Travel and Background Check direct grants into the VOCA grant.

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.