



NEWS RELEASE

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Texas CASA Launches

Distinguished Speaker Series Videos Featuring Prominent Texas Judges

AUSTIN, Texas – Texas CASA is thrilled to announce the launch of the Distinguished Speaker Series – Advocacy from the Bench 2023. This year's series features four honorable judges from across Texas including Judge Carlos Villalon, Jr., Judge Robert R. Hofmann, Judge Delia Gonzales and Judge Aurora Martinez-Jones.

"We are proud to partner with each of these judges who serve as strong leaders within the child welfare system," said Vicki Spriggs, CEO of Texas CASA. "Their unique perspectives and stories give us a glimpse into the realities of the child welfare system and inspire us to move forward to protect all children and families."

The 2023 Distinguished Speaker Series provides valuable knowledge and insights into these judges' experience ruling on cases involving foster care, empowering attendees to enhance their advocacy for children and families in the child welfare system.

For only \$25, you can join us throughout the month of September when the new DSS episodes will be released every Wednesday at 11 a.m. C.T. [Registration](#) opens Aug. 1 and closes Aug. 25.

The Distinguished Speaker Series has offered engaging discussions on critical topics within the child welfare system over the years. We have had the privilege of hosting esteemed speakers in [2020](#) and [2021](#) who addressed a range of pressing issues, including disability rights, race, and antiracism. Learn more about our new 2023 speakers below.

Judge Aurora Martinez-Jones



Judge Aurora Martinez Jones is the 126th District Court judge in Travis County and is responsible for the administration of all Travis County Termination of Parental Rights lawsuits filed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. She is the presiding District Judge for the Travis County Family Drug Treatment Court: Parenting in Recovery and of the Crossover Program for Dual Status Youth. She co-founded the Child Welfare Race Equity Collaborative in Texas and is committed to equitable and progressive approaches to supporting the children and families who appear in her court.

Judge Carlos Villalon, Jr.

Judge Carlos Villalon Jr. is appointed as Associate Judge for the Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande Valley West and presides over child welfare cases in both Hidalgo and Starr Counties. He has served as a Commissioner on the Texas Children's Commission and currently serves as Chair on the Commission's Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Task Force. His court is also a mentor site in the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges' Implementation Sites Model Courts Project and the Child Protection Court Dual Status Pilot.



Judge Delia Gonzales



Judge Delia Gonzales is appointed as the Associate Judge for the Child Protection and Permanency Court in Dallas County. She serves on multiple committees through the Texas Children's Commission and the National Center for Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Recently, she was awarded the Ken Fuller Pro Bono award by the State Bar of Texas for her dedication and leadership to the youth that the Court serves. She has built the fundamentals for the court to assist children who are in the permanent custody of CPS obtain positive permanency, and address wellbeing issues.

Judge Robert R. Hofmann

Judge Rob Hofmann recently began a fourth term as judge of the 452nd Judicial District in five Hill Country counties. In 2021, he was appointed by the Supreme Court of Texas to serve as Senior Jurist in Residence for the Children's Commission. He currently serves as President-Elect for the board of directors of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. He has served Texas as judicial representative at several national summits as well as current membership on the National Center for State Courts' Rural Justice Collaborative Advisory Council.



About Texas CASA

Austin-based Texas CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) is the statewide organization of 73 local CASA programs that recruit and train volunteers to advocate for children and families in the child protection system. Last year, 9,590 well-trained volunteers served 23,943 children in 219 of the 254 Texas counties. Texas CASA supports the local CASA programs by advocating for effective public policy for children in the child protection system and by providing funding, training and technical assistance to program staff, board and volunteers.

CASA volunteers are everyday people from all walks of life in the child's community who are specially trained to advocate for them. They get to know the child, parents and family, and gather information from everyone involved in their daily life. Volunteers work collaboratively with professionals, family and others to promote the child's best interest in court, school, their foster placement and other settings. CASA volunteers advocate first for reunification when safe and possible, and work to keep children connected to their family and community of origin. They focus on facilitating nurturing relationships for the child and helping to find, engage and strengthen a support network for the child and family.

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