



STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

FY 2023 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 some funding. Program administration and direct service to children and families is the role of local CASA programs.

Programs completing the Fiscal Year 2023 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.

Volunteer Recruitment & Retention

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

- The volunteer recruitment media campaign will continue with a new vendor who is developing a comprehensive media plan for all areas of the state. New recruitment visuals and ads are under development in FY24 to update and enhance statewide recruitment efforts. Texas CASA will coordinate marketing and media plans with the network to collaborate on media coverage.
- The statewide volunteer council is weighing in on recruitment, training, and retention strategies.
- Texas CASA developed a Growth Strategist contract position in FY24 to facilitate strategies with targeted CASA programs, beginning at the “Together We Can” meeting in January 2024.
- Texas CASA is tailoring the Volunteer Power Unleashed Recruitment Summit in February 2024 around current challenges faced by network programs.
- Clergy, CASA, and Community is expanding to more programs each year to aid recruitment.
- PwC is partnering with Texas CASA to design a data entry interface that would simplify data entry for CASA volunteers, which is one common cause of volunteer attrition.

Training

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

- NEW: A webinar focused on how to locate potential grants will be offered in FY24.
- NEW: A series of trainings on trauma-informed advocacy will be developed and offered in FY25.
- A number of training topics will be incorporated into Texas CASA offerings, such as: ICWA, substance abuse, undocumented youth, data management, and a Day in the Life of CASA resource.



- Texas CASA is offering a quarterly virtual training for volunteers to assist them in getting in-service training hours. Program Directors meet monthly with biannual in-person training in the Spring/Fall.
- In response to requests for training to provide quality advocacy to ALL children, Texas CASA will support the newly released [Strengthening Core Advocacy](#) through regional meetings in FY24.
- Specialized training is underway covering human trafficking (CASA ACTs), a Train the Trainer for Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE), and inperson training for supervisors March 4/5 and May 15/16.
- NEW: Online learning covering a CASA board member's role will be offered in FY24.
- NEW: Training on dual-status cases as well as Court Ordered Services cases is under development.

DID YOU KNOW: Many training tools and resources are available on the Texas CASA website, including all required board training and CASA on the Go podcasts that cover various advocacy topics. Training of Facilitators is offered every quarter. Download the FY24 training and events calendar [here](#).

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

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.

- A board member listserv is now available! Any board member can join. Contact [Dylan Bednar](#).
- NEW: Quarterly Zooms will be offered to all CASA board, staff, and volunteers to review what resources are available to members based on their role. Be looking for upcoming Zooms on how to navigate the Texas CASA website for training, communication templates, sample policies, and more!
- 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.
- NEW: Texas CASA will update the messaging book with a relevant and timely inclusion of CASA's value and to address any misconceptions of CASA.
- Texas CASA met with programs upon request and by region in both FY23 and FY24 to discuss current challenges, changes, and priorities for the CASA network. NEW: A gap analysis evaluating the varying challenges across the state will be completed in FY24.
- In FY24, Texas CASA is working with programs on Court Ordered Services and Justice Involved Youth pilots to explore how CASA services might evolve. If serving all children in care with a volunteer.
- CFE will be adding program mentoring in Spring 2024 to help achieve the shared goal of CFE for each child. CFE questions? See [CFE Manual](#), [CFE page on program portal](#), or contact the [CFE Team](#)!
- New data dashboards have been released in FY24 sharing each program's advocacy hours and instances as well as statewide advocacy and Value of CASA.
- NEW: A data activity guidebook will be produced in FY24 with updated definitions and guidance.

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



Legislative Advocacy

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

- Legislative Advocacy Training specifically for EDs and Board members in FY25, since it is important they have the same information and details that LAT members have.
- Focus meetings with SSCCs will continue to be scheduled in an effort to develop the partnership between CASA and their Community Based Care partners.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SSCCs and DFPS will be revised.

CASA Requirements

Many comments within the annual survey addressed the growing number of requirements placed on CASA programs. While some conditions of operation are beyond the control of Texas CASA, we will respond to comments and suggestions through the following:

- NEW: Texas CASA and PwC are working together in FY24 to develop an interface for volunteer data entry that would simplify data requirements, regardless of the data management system.
- Texas CASA worked with programs interested in a new data vendor option and issued an RFP for additional data management options. Two companies, Bonterra and CASAManager responded to the RFP. Information was shared with the interested programs and the Regional Representatives.
- Texas CASA commits to communicating any changes as soon as we receive them, also keeping a document that has all requirements in one place for ease of tracking and compliance.
- NEW: Texas CASA will compile all of the sample policies created in FY23 that reflect the National CASA Standards as well as HHSC requirements into one manual.
- Texas CASA will continue to distribute the agenda and notes for the Regional Representative meetings to provide opportunities for programs to provide input on discussions and decisions.

Pass-Through Funding

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

- The fundraising coach Colton Strauser is available to programs to contract with directly for additional support, should programs seek continued assistance.
- NEW: To aid in the cost of benefits for program staff, a webinar will be offered in FY24 that explores how CASA programs in Nebraska have been able to cost share employee insurance plans.

DID YOU KNOW: Inside CASA highlights possible state/federal funding tailored to local CASA programs.

DID YOU KNOW: Texas CASA administers reimbursement grants (i.e. after funds are expended) to programs. Requests for reimbursement are processed by Texas CASA, HHSC (minimum of 30 days) and Governor's Office (minimum of 15 days) based on their payment schedules. Once Texas CASA receives reimbursement from the granting agencies, we distribute funds to programs within one business day.

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.