

Call for Proposals

About the 2026 Texas CASA Conference

Texas CASA is seeking proposals for workshop presentations for its annual conference. The conference will take place in **San Marcos, TX**, from **September 9-11, 2026**, at the **Embassy Suites by Hilton San Marcos Hotel Conference Center**.

The Texas CASA Conference brings together CASA staff, volunteers, board members, and child welfare partners to provide and encourage innovative ideas and strategies that will empower the CASA community to provide the highest quality advocacy for children and families navigating the child welfare system.

About the workshop sessions

We welcome proposals from CASA and child welfare professionals, subject-matter experts, consultants, trainers, community partners, and individuals with relevant professional or lived experience to share with our audience. We are looking for engaging presentations that provide practical, actionable tools, and experiential learning for volunteers and staff advocating for foster children and their families. Presenters should be prepared to engage a diverse audience across roles and experience levels.

Benefits of presenting at Texas CASA

- Showcase your knowledge and leadership to a statewide and nationwide audience of CASA professional and partners.
- Expand your professional visibility and strengthen your reputation as a subject matter expert.
- Network with key leaders and decision-makers in child advocacy from across Texas and beyond.
- Support the mission of Texas CASA by helping strengthen advocacy for children and families.
- Contribute to meaningful professional development for volunteers and staff serving children in the child welfare system.
- Be part of a highly respected conference focused on real-world impact, collaboration, and best practices.
- 50% discount on one presenter registration, as a thank you for sharing your expertise.

Workshop content

Workshops should be relevant for CASA staff and volunteers and those working in child welfare and be centered around one or more of the following areas of focus. Please note the examples under each area of focus are not exhaustive, and we encourage submissions that explore other relevant topics within the area of focus.

CASA Core Practice and Child Advocacy

- Understanding the role of CASA within the child welfare and court systems (scope, limits, collaboration with CPS, SSCCs, attorneys and providers).
- Writing effective court reports: factual documentation, clear recommendations, cultural context and judicial expectations.
- Child development across ages (infants, school-age, teens, older youth) and understanding advocacy goals, visitation, etc.
- Trauma and resilience and how trauma shows up in behavior and relationships.
- Working with older youth, extended foster care, and successful transition to adulthood (housing, college, work, permanency).
- Specialized advocacy for LGB youth, and youth with disabilities.
- Supporting children and families impacted by poverty, substance use, domestic violence, and mental health.
- Building trust with families, strength-based language, and engaging parents respectfully.
- Panel of youth and parents with lived experience (what helped, what harmed, and what they wish CASA knew).
- The importance of frequent communication and connection with the child.
- Why documenting is crucial to advocacy.

Recruitment, Outreach and Community Engagement

- Data-informed recruitment, reading your county's child welfare data to identify gaps.
- Telling the CASA story without desperation but with a sense of urgency, ethical use of images and stories.
- Digital and grassroots strategies, social media campaigns, faith community partnerships, corporate and small business outreach, and university pipelines.
- Expanding the volunteer pool, successful strategies for reaching audiences from different backgrounds and supports that improve access.
- Converting interest to commitment (info sessions, interview process, pre-service training, etc.).
- Engaging the board as ambassadors, tools for board led recruitment in personal and professional networks.
- Successful strategies for Urban, Rural and multi-county recruitment and community engagement.

Volunteer Supervision, Support and Retention

- Best practices in advocate supervision, case staffing, safety planning, documentation review, coaching and evaluation.
- Understanding the parallel process for supervising volunteers, debriefing difficult hearing or outcomes, ethical dilemmas, secondary trauma and the impact on retention.
- Using technology and case-management systems (e.g. Optima) for documentation, data tracking, and communication.
- Recognition, feedback loops, peer mentorship, leadership opportunities, exit interview and evaluations.
- Designing meaningful in-service training that motivates, inspires and leads to professional development.
- Onboarding: How to retain volunteers and set them up for success.

Leadership, Governance, and Sustainability

- Strategic planning for local CASA programs, aligning mission, community needs, and growth targets (children served, expanding the volunteer pool, quality advocacy).
- Funding and sustainability, grant writing, private fundraising, and building a development plan.
- Board governance roles and responsibilities, fiduciary duties, and effective board-staff partnerships.
- Risk management and legal/ethical compliance (standards, confidentiality, boundaries, conflict of interest).

Legislative Advocacy

- Current child welfare policy landscape in Texas and anticipated legislative priorities.
- The ethics of storytelling in advocacy.
- PAL Program Enhancement: Monitoring the implementation of HB 4655, which added requirements for youth to receive education on credit scores, predatory lending, and budgeting before they exit the system.
- CBC Rollout Oversight: Supporting legislation that requires stricter performance metrics for private contractors (SSCCs) to ensure they are actually keeping children closer to their home counties and reducing placement moves.
- T3C Assessment Accuracy: Ensuring the new CANS 3.0 (Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths) assessment tool is being used to direct kids to the right "service packages" rather than just the most available bed.

Timeline

- **February 13:** Call for proposals released
- **March 31:** Submission deadline
- **Early May:** Workshop selections announced
- **August 19:** Final presentation slides due

Logistics

- All presenters must register for the event to participate.
- Accepted sessions will receive a **50% discount on one (1) presenter registration.**
- Any additional presenters will be responsible for covering the conference registration fee of \$400 per person.
- All presenters are responsible for their own travel and lodging expenses.
- Session dates, times and duration will be determined by the Texas CASA Selection Committee. Presenters will be notified during the contract process.
- Session formats include:
 - Institutes (3 hours): Intensive, interactive, experiential with practical application
 - Half-Institute (1.5 hours): Interactive, skills-based learning with practical application
 - Workshop (1 hour, 15 minutes): Knowledge sharing and skills-based learning

Application

The following information must be provided for each proposed workshop. The information below is for reference only – **applications must be submitted through the [online portal](#).**

Presenter information

Workshop point of contact:

- First name
- Last name
- Job title
- Organization
- Email address
- City, State
- Short bio (up to 75 words)
- Headshot (size limit: 600px W x 600px H)

Proposal information

- Title (up to 15 words)
- Session Format (Final session duration will be determined by the Texas CASA Selection Committee.)
 - 3 hours
 - 1.5 hours
 - 75 minutes
- Topic Area
 - CASA Core Practice and Child Advocacy
 - Recruitment, Outreach and Community Engagement
 - Volunteer Supervision, Support and Retention
 - Leadership, Governance, and Sustainability
 - Legislative Advocacy

- Co-Presenter Information: First name, last name, job title, organization, email address and short bio (up to 75 words each).
- Session Description (up to 75 words)
- Learning Objectives (Three (3) measurable goals)
- Session Outline (up to 500 words)
 - A summary of session content
 - A brief draft agenda outlining how you plan to structure the session. Highlight any interactive elements or unique presentation formats.
- Audio Visual: Texas CASA provides the standard audiovisual setup in each room, which includes a **projector, screen, PC laptop, sound system, and podium microphone**.

Selection Criteria

The Texas CASA Selection Committee will select workshops based on the following criteria:

- **Relevance** - The extent to which the proposed session aligns with audience needs and program goals. Proposals should address current issues, best practices, or emerging trends relevant to CASA volunteers, staff and child welfare professionals.
- **Originality** - The degree to which the session offers fresh perspectives, innovative approaches, or new content. Preference may be given to proposals that move beyond introductory material or repeat presentations and provide unique value to attendees.
- **Speaker Expertise** - The presenter's demonstrated knowledge, experience, and qualifications related to the proposed topic. Consideration includes professional background, practical or lived experience, and ability to effectively deliver the session content.

By applying, I understand that:

- Presenters must register for the event to participate.
- Each approved session will receive a 50% discount for one (1) presenter registration.
- Additional presenters are responsible for registering at the conference rate of \$400 per person.
- Presenters are responsible for their own travel and lodging.
- Presenters agree to promote the conference through social media and other networks.

Questions can be directed to Alice Smart at alice.smart@horizonmeetingmanagement.com or 512-651-3549. Applications available online – [apply now](#).

About Texas CASA

Established in 1989, [Texas CASA](#) is the statewide membership association for all local CASA programs. In this role, we support the CASA network by serving as the administrator of state and federal funds, setting and monitoring standards, providing training, leading a statewide volunteer recruitment campaign, advocating for public policy and more. Texas CASA is committed to partnering with statewide community partners and the CASA network to elevate best practices when working with children and families.