

Children And Families

Volunteers Look Out For Foster Children

(NAPSA)—Every day, an estimated 850 children are caught up in America's court and child welfare maze because they are unable to live safely at home. Suddenly, into these children's lives come dozens of strangers: police, foster parents, therapists, social workers, judges, lawyers and more. Hopefully, one of these strangers is a Court Appointed Special Advocate volunteer.

The National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association is a nonprofit organization that recruits volunteers who are appointed by judges to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in family court.

Judges, attorneys, child welfare workers and parents overwhelmingly report that volunteers make a difference with the children they serve. Children who are paired with CASA advocates are half as likely to remain in long-term care—defined as more than three years in care.

CASA is the only program in which everyday citizens are appointed by judges to speak up for a child's safety and well-being. These volunteers come from all walks of life, and people from all cultures, professions, and ethnic and educational backgrounds are welcome. Roughly half of CASA volunteers work full-time.

Foster Care Awareness

During National Foster Care Awareness Month this May, or at any time of year, it is essential to give attention to America's forgotten children—and seek out dedicated individuals to become CASA volunteer advocates.



A volunteer program is seeking people to advocate for children in the foster care system.

CASA volunteers spend most of their volunteer time in contact with a child. They generally handle just one or two cases at a time so that they can give each child's case the sustained, personal attention that he or she deserves. To a child, that means a consistent and caring adult presence in his or her life.

Positive Outcomes

A major factor in avoiding bad outcomes for an abused child is the presence of a concerned adult in that child's life. As a result of CASA volunteers' help, these children receive the care and services they need, and are placed into safe, permanent and nurturing homes.

In addition, CASA advocacy saves taxpayer dollars. If the median length of stay were shortened for children in foster care by just one month, it would realize a national savings to taxpayers of approximately \$2.75 billion.

To learn more, call (888) 805-9127 or visit the Web site at www.nationalcasa.org.



Note to Editors: May is National Foster Care Awareness Month.