

**CHANGE A
CHILD'S STORY.™**



The Missouri CASA Association Presents:

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

DSS Learning Lab
December 1, 2022



Missouri CASA Association
1000 W. Nifong, Bldg. 4, 201-D
Columbia, MO 65203

WWW.MOCASA.ORG

(573) 256-1445
info@mocasa.org

Our Mission

We support, improve, and grow local Court Appointed Special Advocate programs and lead advocacy efforts for abused and neglected children across Missouri.

Our Vision

We envision that all Missouri children have safe permanent homes free of abuse and neglect. To achieve this vision, MOCASA works to ensure that CASA® programs are in all Missouri judicial courts, supported by the Missouri Legislature, and sustained by highly-trained CASA Volunteers.

Our Values

We value Trust, Accountability, Efficiency, Commitment, and Relationships.

MISSION | VISION | VALUES

WHAT IS CASA?

1 **History**



2 **Structure**



3 **Best-Interest Advocacy**



HISTORY



- In 1977, Seattle Superior Court Judge, David Soukup, was concerned about making decisions on behalf of abused and neglected children without enough information.
- He had the idea of appointing community volunteers to speak up for the best interests of these children in court.
- He made a request for volunteers—Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). Fifty citizens responded, and that was the start of the CASA movement



There are now nearly **950** state and local CASA programs nationwide! These programs have over **97,000** volunteers who advocate for over **242,000** children annually.

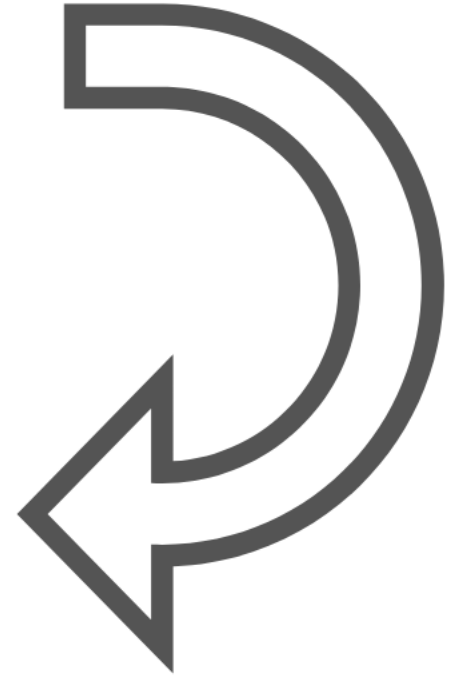
STRUCTURE



NATIONAL CASA/GAL

MISSOURI CASA
ASSOCIATION

24 LOCAL CASA
PROGRAMS



STRUCTURE



National Court Appointed Special Advocate and Guardian ad Litem (CASA/GAL) Association for Children.

- Owns the CASA brand and logo, and protects the overall health and well-being of the organization.
- Provides training, technical assistance and the pre-service training curriculum for CASA Volunteers and CASA staff.
- Provides standards for state and local programs and performs quality assurance checks to ensure that these standards are being followed.
- Lobbies for CASA and child welfare issues on the federal level.

Missouri CASA Association

- MOCASA is the coordinating agency for CASA programs throughout Missouri.
- MOCASA does not provide direct services, but provides support, technical assistance, training, and funding for its 24 local programs, and is focused on expanding CASA programs throughout the state and growing its current programs.

Local CASA Programs in Missouri

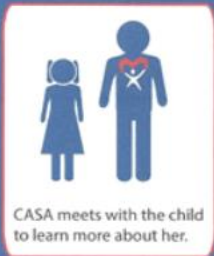
- The 24 local CASA programs in Missouri recruit, screen, train, and support community volunteers who advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the foster care system.
- One member of staff may supervise up to 30 volunteers or 45 cases (children and/or sibling groups).
- CASA Volunteers typically work with one child or sibling group to provide best-interest advocacy for these children.

BEST-INTEREST ADVOCACY



Court Appointed Special Advocates

Follow a CASA's journey to help a child find her forever home.



- After they are screened and trained (30 hours + court observation), CASA Volunteers are sworn in by the Juvenile Court Judge or another Associate Judge. CASA Volunteers act as friends or officers of the court as described in **RSMo 210.160.6-7**.
- CASA Volunteers may be requested by any party on a child's case, but the referral must be approved by the Juvenile Court Judge, who signs the appointment letter, assigning CASA to a child's case. Appointment is also contingent on the availability of a CASA Volunteer.
- Once a CASA Volunteer is assigned to a child's case, they follow the **best-interest advocacy model** as provided by National CASA/GAL.
- CASA Volunteers are encouraged to remain with a child or sibling group through the duration of their case. CASA is typically included in a child's case after the adjudication hearing.



- CASA volunteers are assigned to one child or a sibling group.
- Visit the child at least once a month.
- Gather information about the child and the child's family.
- Prepares written, **fact-based** reports to the court.
- Monitor the case so that the child remains safe in their current placement with needs met appropriately.

CASA/GAL Best-Interest Advocacy

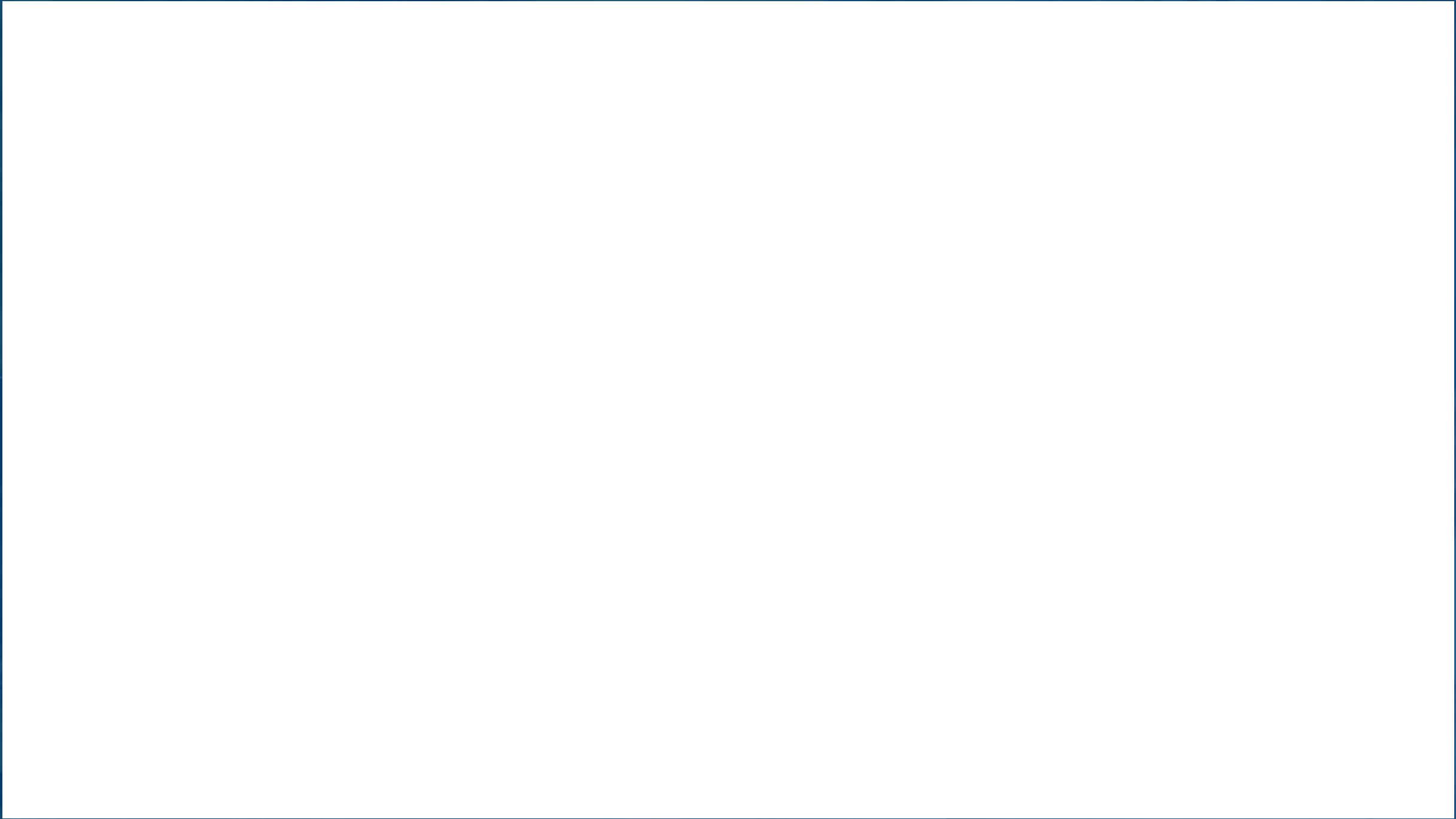




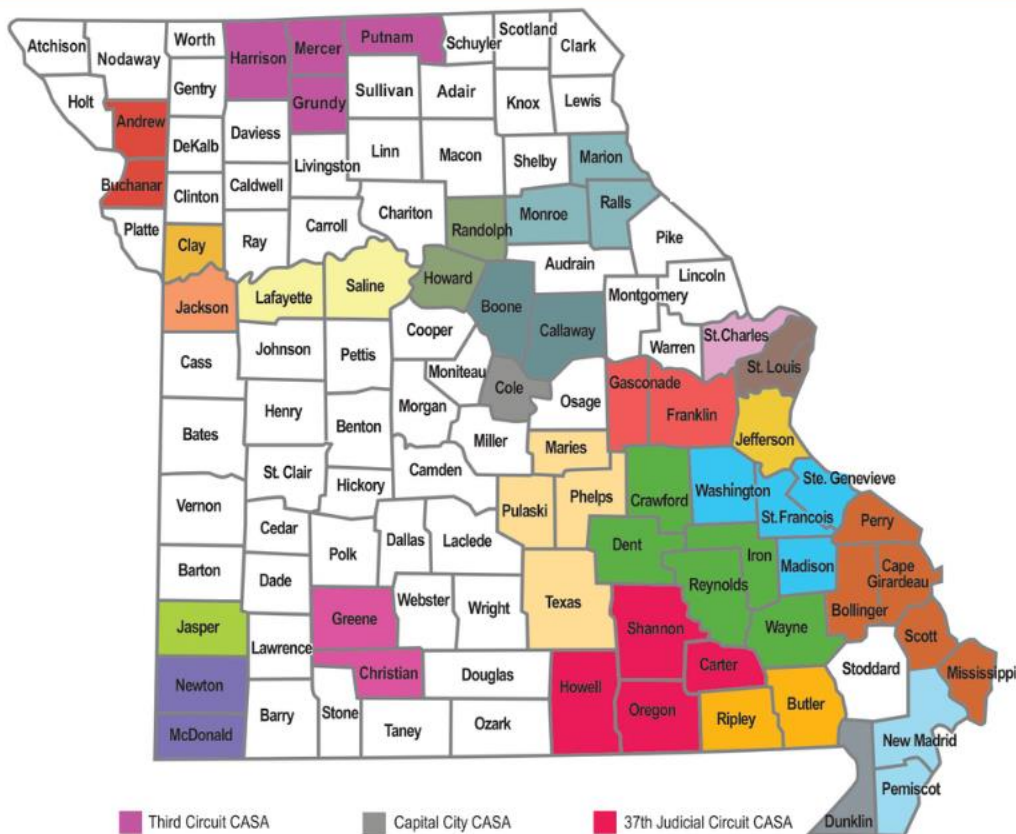
CASA VOLUNTEERS DO NOT:



- Replace any other member of the Family Support Team. Our role is to provide best-interest advocacy for children, while collaborating with others who are there to support the child and family.
- Provide forensic interviews or investigate allegations of child abuse or neglect. This is the role of Children's Division, Child Advocacy Centers, the Juvenile Office, and local Law Enforcement.
- Make legal decisions in court on behalf of a child. A child is legally represented by a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) and all decisions made on behalf of the child are done so by the Juvenile Court Judge presiding over the child's case.
- Share any details of a child's case with anyone outside of the Family Support Team and CASA staff assigned to the child's case. Every CASA volunteer and staff member must sign a confidentiality agreement.



CASA[®] IN MISSOURI



- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Third Circuit CASA | Capital City CASA | 37th Judicial Circuit CASA |
| Fifth Circuit CASA | CASA of the Parkland | New-Mac CASA |
| Clay County CASA | Franklin County CASA | Mid-Ozark CASA |
| Douglass Community Services | CASA of St. Louis | CASA of the 34th Circuit |
| 11th Circuit CASA | CASA of Jefferson County | Without a CASA Program |
| Heart of Missouri CASA | CASA of South Central MO | |
| 14th Circuit CASA | CASA of Southwest MO | |
| 15th Judicial Circuit CASA | Voices for Children/CASA of Southeast MO | |
| Jackson County CASA | CASA of Dunklin County | |
| Jasper County CASA | CASA of the 36th Circuit | |

ONE STAFF MEMBER

CASA is effective because all it takes is one staff person to supervise several volunteers, who then speak out for even more abused and neglected children in the foster care system.



30 CITIZEN VOLUNTEERS SPEAKING UP

One member of CASA staff can supervise up to 30 CASA Volunteers, so 30+ children can have one consistent voice through their journey in foster care.



60 CHILDREN WITH A VOICE

Many local CASA programs serve twice as many children with their volunteers. Even new CASA programs have the potential to impact the lives of many children in foster care.



OUR IMPACT



- In 2021, **2,025** CASA Volunteers spent nearly **126,000** hours advocating for abused and neglected children in the foster care system.
- CASA programs in Missouri served over **5,000** children and have served **many thousands** of children over the course of its inception in Missouri.
- Historically, children with a CASA Volunteer are **more likely** to receive services, **more likely** to succeed in school, and **less likely** to re-enter the foster care system.
- There are more than **14,000** children in care each day in Missouri. We would like to provide best-interest advocacy for every child in foster care in the future.

A photograph of two women sitting at a table outdoors, engaged in conversation. The woman on the left is smiling and looking towards the woman on the right. The woman on the right is looking back at her. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'MOCASA.ORG' is centered in white, bold, sans-serif font.

MOCASA.ORG

QUESTIONS?



Leanne Reese

Executive Director
lreese@mocasa.org



Brock Whisler

Program Services Coordinator
bwhisler@mocasa.org

(573) 256-1445

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