

CASA OF LOS ANGELES

2018 IMPACT REPORT



Dear Friends,



It's not every year that a non-profit gets to reach out to its friends and supporters and say, "Hooray!" we have conquered big dreams this year.

But for CASA of Los Angeles, FY2018 was all about conquering big dreams.

For years, CASA/LA has worked to increase the number of children we serve, not just because we wanted to reach a certain number, but also because the children in LA County's child welfare system are in desperate need of the support and care that CASA volunteers provide. And there was one primary reason we were driven to conquer that dream: helping children heal from trauma. Children in LA County's child welfare system experience trauma over and over again, and as science has shown, trauma doesn't end in childhood. It has life-long physical and mental health implications. It isn't just about supporting a child today, but about changing their trajectory to support the adult they will become tomorrow.

The sad truth is, most children served by CASA/LA first experienced trauma in their own homes and at the hands of their parents—the place they should be most safe. It's why they entered the child welfare system initially. But then, these children and youth are torn from their homes, and far, far too often continue to experience trauma in the foster care system. They continue to experience abuse and neglect, they experience broken relationship after broken relationship. They end up in a system that some can't escape, and the consequences are dire.

We are all responsible for these children.

Cornel West once wrote, "Justice is what love looks like in public." That is what our CASA volunteers do. They manifest love in a system that so often feels devoid of justice. They are there for their CASA child. They advocate for them in the formal way that we train them to and then they also do genuinely human things on their behalf. They love them. They stick with them. They fight for them.

That is why on a sunny April day last year, when we reached our benchmark of serving 1,000 children in foster care, we didn't cheer in delight because it was a number, we cheered for the justice that was being served to each of those children, and we cheered for the love that they were being offered. But that was just the beginning of our good news.

During the last fiscal year, CASA/LA served 1,124 unique children (18% more than in FY2017 and 39% more than in FY2016), we received 647 case referrals (9% more than in FY2017 and 38% more than in FY2016), we trained 402 new CASA volunteers (25% more than FY2017 and 100% more than FY2016), and appointed 931 unique volunteers (an increase of 25% from FY 2017 and 67% from FY2016). We conquered big dreams. As you will see in the following pages, the numbers are just the beginning, our CASA volunteers enhanced the lives of the children they served by improving youth outcomes around safety, permanency, and well-being, they reduced the number of placements per child from 4 to 1.7 every year, and they helped to significantly reduce the number of youth on psychotropic medications.

But what no number, statistic or database can show us, is that they conquered trauma with the greatest tool on earth. Love. They showed up for youth who are used to being abandoned. They fought for children who are used to being failed. And they brought justice to our community's most vulnerable: children and youth who live in cycles of trauma and for whom their only way out might just be you. Their CASA volunteer or the people who support them.

Thank you for supporting us this year, and always.

And here's to conquering a new set of dreams in

FY2019—we look forward to you joining us on our path!

Sincerely,

Wende Nichols-Julien
Chief Executive Officer

Louis Lucido Chair, Board of Directors

Impact by the Numbers

3,276
Children Assisted in Court



1,124

Children Served with
Intensive One-on-One
Advocacy

621
Applications
Generated







CASA of Los Angeles recruits, trains and guides CASA volunteers to provide intensive advocacy for children or youth in Los Angeles County's child welfare system who have been abused and neglected.

In FY18, CASA volunteers dedicated thousands of hours in order to advocate on behalf of these children and youth in a way that no one else can. They get to know the children and their circumstances, show them that someone cares, advocate for their best interests (including making recommendations to the Court), encourage them to grow to their fullest potential, and become involved in key issues in their life, especially permanent placement, school, physical health and mental health.

Our CASA volunteers spend their time visiting the children they have been appointed to, attending court hearings, speaking and meeting with case parties that include case workers, lawyers, caregivers and countless others to ensure the child has their unique needs met, as well as writing court reports and updating CASA/LA's online case management system.

KEY FINDINGS

A survey was conducted recently with court partners, Children's Law Center (CLC), Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers (LADL) who indicated positive experiences with CASA volunteers. According to respondents, CASA volunteers' strengths include:

Professionalism

Effectively Identifying the Needs of Children

Practicing Strengths-Based Advocacy

Providing the Court with Objective Information

Cultural Competency

1,786

Number of Court Hearings Attended

1,860

Number of Court Reports Written

9,193

Number of Child Visits

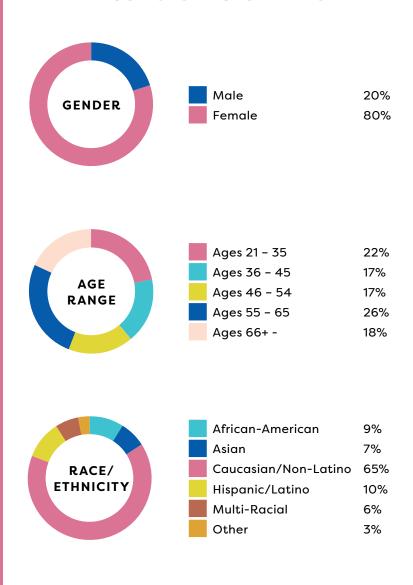
14,736

Number of Meetings with Case Parties





OUR CASA VOLUNTEERS

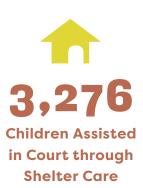


I've known CASA volunteers to be tuned in to the children in a way that is personal to them and not strictly from the perspective of a social worker, lawyer, or judge. Things that may seem unimportant relative to the child's legal case, but that have a huge impact on the child's quality of life, are what CASA volunteers consistently relay to the parties and court. The benefits of CASA volunteers are undeniable in every case.

- Children's Law Center Attorney

1,124 Children Served with Intensive One-on-One

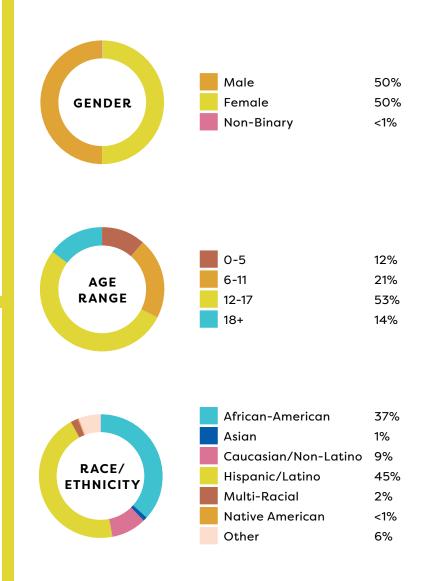
Advocacy



CASA/LA also trains and manages court assistants who provide "day-of-court" advocacy for children and youth who are experiencing their first time in court, or are attending court without a guardian or escort.

Through the Shelter Care program, CASA volunteers have helped 3,276 children with court assistance.

OUR CASA CHILDREN





Through CASA advocacy, our children are meeting more of their educational goals.

They are experiencing lower degrees of risk around their mental health and medical wellbeing. They are achieving higher rates of permanency. But most importantly, every child served by a CASA volunteer is connecting with a stable adult who is helping them without ever being paid.

According to children's attorneys and social workers, children and youth with a CASA volunteer are more likely to:

Receive needed services in a timely manner

Be enrolled in an appropriate educational setting

Participate in extracurricular activities

Have long-term connections to siblings, relatives or other support people

Be on track to graduate high school on time

Enroll in post-secondary education

The CASAs have been instrumental in advocating for appropriate educational services and issues with placement. As a CSW and due to our high caseloads, the CASAs help me best meet the needs of or mutual client. They help focus me, give suggestions, and help follow up with service providers.

 Social Worker with Department of Family and Social Services

Permanancy

57%

moved from non-permanent to permanent placement

33%

reunified with families

CASA volunteers support children and youth in identifying options for a long-term and safe home, whether that is at home with parent(s) or identifying a legal guardian or adoptive home.



Celia was only 9 years old and living in her fifth home when she met her CASA volunteer Wrenn Chais. Celia experienced extraordinary tragedy in her life being in and out of the foster care system, reunified at one point with her father and then losing him in a car accident. Faced with a life of uncertainty, it appeared Celia would spend the remainder of her childhood in foster care and age out of the system at 18. Celia had been labeled unadoptable in her case file and there were no plans to find a permanent home for her. After securing a number of medical services for Celia that were discovered after the car accident with her father, Wrenn began to question why Celia was labeled unadoptable.

She immediately advocated to have a court assign an adoption social worker. Not wanting to lose any more time finding a home for Celia, Wrenn did her own research and discovered a program called Kidsave that hosts events focused on the adoption of children over the age of 8.

It was at a Kidsave event where Celia met Trish and Andy, who both made a connection with her. After several get-togethers, Celia was placed in Trish and Andy's home. In December 2017, Trish and Andy formally adopted Celia in a touching ceremony attended by loved ones, including many of her father's friends.

Safety

66% experienced improved safety outcomes

Children and youth in foster care face risks to their safety. They may not have a safe place to live or may have a mental health challenge that puts them in harm's way. A CASA volunteer can work with the child's care team to ensure that he or she has all the support and services to keep them safe and stable.

At the time CASA volunteer Cameron was assigned to James' case, he was one of nine children removed from his mother's care. James was in a nonpublic school and was possibly being bullied. He was also taking a long list of prescription medications due to trauma and living in a group home. Cameron was immediately assigned educational rights and was able to work together with James' school under his individualized education plan (IEP) so that James could get the services he needed.

In reviewing James' case file, Cameron found out about an adult half-brother, Michael, who lived in Las Vegas who might be available to help. When Cameron spoke to Michael, he was a bit apprehensive but agreed to visit James and attend a school meeting with Cameron. While he was there, Michael could see how much his little brother needed a stable family member to care for him. After all, Michael had been through a similar situation.

After several months of visits, Michael moved to Los Angeles so that he could become James' guardian. Cameron also transitioned educational rights to Michael and is continuing to monitor James' therapeutic and supportive services. After 11 months of taking care of his brother, Michael has started the adoption process so that James can finally feel safe and thrive.



Education

38%
of CASA volunteers
held educational
rights

Education is an important part of any child's life. When a child or youth is in foster care, they may experience disruptions in their education and may not have a stable adult to oversee their education planning. CASA volunteers provide assessment, support and advocacy services that address a child's specific educational issues and needs — from preschool to college graduation. CASA volunteers frequently hold the educational rights of the youth they serve to ensure these valuable services are implemented.



When CASA volunteer Nila met Joshua* for the first time, she played a game of basketball with him to break the ice. She soon found out that he was on probation and was placed in a lower grade level. Joshua let Nila know that although he enjoyed school, he was frustrated with his situation. Nila realized she needed to have educational rights so she can serve as the point-person for all decisions around Joshua's academic and developmental needs.

After receiving Joshua's educational rights,
Nila began attending all of his school meetings
— working with Joshua's probation officer
and teachers to ensure his individualized
education program guidelines were met.
Soon after, Joshua was finally transferred
into the appropriate grade level and he is
now earning A's and B's.

*child's name has been changed

Mental Health

83%

no longer prescribed psychotropic medication

(at the end of their advocacy case)

Many young people in the foster care system experience the mental health impact of trauma, neglect and abuse. CASA volunteers assist the child's team by ensuring that they have the access to the mental health assessments and services that they need to heal. CASA volunteers are also instrumental in monitoring and evaluating psychotropic medications that are prescribed to youth in care.

At their first meeting, Mary Jane let 9-year-old Josie* know that she was there to help make sure she had everything she needed. That's when Mary Jane realized Josie was drooling. Her eyes rolled back to the back of her head and Josie curled up in Mary Jane's lap and went to sleep.

Mary Jane realized that Josie was so drugged she was almost nonfunctional, so Mary Jane's first order of business was to get Josie's drug regimen under control. According to her files, Josie was on four psychiatric medications. It took Mary Jane several visits with doctors and many appearances at court to remove all but one of the medications.

Josie is now 18 years old and has a baby of her own.

Through it all, Mary Jane helped her get into schools that didn't want to accept her, worked with social workers to get Josie and her baby the services they needed, and has been the only person who has ever been to a back-to-school night for her.





Physical Health

84%
of the children
we served had
improved physical
health outcomes

Children in foster care comprise some of our most medically at-risk and vulnerable children. In some cases, a child and youth may not have access to the full medical services or treatments that are needed to live a healthy life. CASA volunteers encourage timely responses for the children they serve, connecting them with vital medical services, and overseeing their preventative, planned and crisis care.





CASA volunteer Christie was assigned to David when he was only two months old. David was in the NICU (neo-natal intensive care unit) at Children's Hospital Los Angeles with a number of physical health concerns. He was connected to oxygen and needed heart surgery.

Christie began to visit David in the hospital and knew he needed lots of love and care. Because of his condition, David required 24-hour care and had his first heart surgery at 12 months old. Christie immediately began to work with Regional Center, acquiring educational rights so that David could get occupational therapy. David began to get stronger and healthier - finally sitting up and crawling at 14 months. David was living in a facility for medically fragile children and children with disabilities. Christie and the court discovered there were no family members who were able to take on David's care. An adoption worker on the case soon discovered a family who expressed interest in fostering David. After almost a year in their home, David's foster family was able to adopt him. He is now thriving in a family that includes four other adopted children.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS





The CASA volunteer kept an open mind and did a good job assessing the case issues. She encouraged the mother, who was being inaccurately portrayed to stay on course. The CASA volunteer did not present as being on anyone's side.

Los Angeles Dependency Lawyer

CASA VOLUNTEERS

David Crocker Ernie Acosta Ron Bar-Zion Lizzy Bultema Patricia Burkholder Valerie Crooks Gloria Adams Sadie Bascom Sheri Adams Lisa Baskin Rinarda Burnley Adina Crow Valerie Addas Sharon Batiste Paul Bustrum Jason Cruze Sarah Baumann Angelica Butiu-Coronado Charles Currey Jill Aguilar Alexis Butler Craig Curtis Joseph Ahdoot Nicole Bautista Judith Beckmen* Jill Cady Krystine Curtis Bruce Albert Marla Alders Amber Becerra Mark Caffee Ericka Danko Trent Allen Cadena Bedney Monica Caldas Bruce Danziger Joyce Campbell Glen Alpert Christine Beilinson Cindy Dardon Jane Belanger Claudia Cano Loretta Altamirano Karen Darling Joel Dauten Alexandra Alvarez Carolin Belcher Alice Cao Lainnie Capouya Jeffrey Ames Mary Ann Bell Billy Davidson Denis Davis Sofia Ames Thomas Bell Mariangela Caraballo Jane Belzberg Tamara Davis Kris Amon Linda Caravana Kate Andersen Rae'Mishka Benjamin Amy Carbo Vicki Davis Cathy Anderson Nicola Berlinsky Kamille Carruthers Simone Deblasio Elizabeth Anderson Erin Berman Norman Carter Debra DeBose Rachel Carter Cara Delcher Scott Anderson Jodi Berman Levine Rita Carton Paul Del Rosario Tyrone Anderson Keith Bernstein Samuel Bernstein Mandy Denaux Eyonna Andreatte Silvana Casalegno Natalie Andres Hari Berrier Jennifer Caudillo David Denning Bud Betts Andrea Cavanaugh Tessa Dent Nannina Angioni Adele Chadwick Cynthia De Nuno Marjorie Annapav* Gayatri Bhasin Wrenn Chais Robert DeRing Wayne April Aishwarya Bhave May Arakaki* Renne Bilson Aaron Chan Marie De Varennes Jessyca Dewey Anita Aratow Pamela Bingham* Aster Chang Hana Chang Christie Diaz Daniel Araujo Pam Birmingham Daniella Arias Jan Black* Courtney Chatterson Marta Dimchenko Heather Blades Charlie Chavez Aaron Dinsdale Talia Arica Barbara Arlow Janet Blair Leticia Chavez Sonum Dixit Xaris Bloxham Benjamin Cheng Barbara Dixon Aura Armas Christine Armenta Christy Boardman* Elsie Cheng **Emily Dixon** Victoria Childs Erika Dizon Trudy Armer* Meghan Boehman Jacquelyn Armstrong Honor Boone Stefanie Chin Alison Doherty Karen Bowles Talia-Farrah Chism Kelly Dollens Terri Arnold Melissa Arnson Pamela Bowman Camrin Christensen Fang Ming Michelle Dong Samia Arslane Holly Clark Candice Dottin Catherine Boyd Jane Clausen Susan Douglas Katelyn Ascencio Harriet Boyd Sheri Brady Cathleen Cobb De Anna Dove Heidi Ashcraft Paul Ashmore Caren Bramhall Edward Coe Melissa Dragge Virginia Coffin Jan Drayer Kimberley Askew Emily Branam Luciana Brancorsini Stacey Cohan Karen Drummey Kelly Attwood Jerry Auerbach Rebecca Brandes Julie Cohen Gary Duboff Monica Duke Lovette Austin Susan Brandler* Melody Cohen Sarah Avalon Jody Brandt Marie Cole Daniel Duncan Christian Collins Raina Duncan Laura Aversano Nancy Brashears Galina Babadzhanyan Laurence Braude Marie Connolly Charlotte Dunnam Kelton Durham Bette Jo Babcock* Beth Braunstein Deanna Cooke Gabriela Cook Linda Dutcher Ann Bailey Maria Brenes Julie Dwyer Claire Brian Kelly Cook Katie Bain Rachel Baker Claudia Bright Jane Edwards Stephen Cooper Bobak Bakhtiari Sarah Bromell Lauren Costa Clay Eichner Denise Cote Don Eklund Toni Balch Jacolyn Bron Kathleen Cotter Elsa Elbert Cory Bales Liese Brown Sharon R. Ellingsen Alison Ball Rocky Brown Andrew Cox Polly Bamberger Timothy Brown Gayle Coyle-Ikemoto Bebe Emerman Barbara Bruner Carolyn Craddock Audrey Emerson Julie Bank Eve Banuelos Lois Brunet Oona Cremata Julie Engelman Brook Epperson Samuel Barragan Robyn Buecker Kierra Crisswell

Janet Jan Azize Erim Carol Gaspar Kari Hanson Tricia Harding Ardelle Jarvis Irene Escalante Lisa Gaston Lindsey Esplin Penelope Gaston Amanda Harris Carolyn Jarynowski Daisy Esqueda Emma Gerch Amber Hartgens Flo Jeanes Jessica Evans Jennifer Anne Gerich Amos Hartston Dona Jeffery Gabrielle Harvey Sarah Jesse Blaise Eversole William Germani Fiona Harwich Deborah Johnsen Karen Eyres Lisa Gerson Stella Fabinyi Saina Ghandchi Maria Hassani Belynda Johnson Kathryn Fagerquist Linda Ghazarian Robin Hatfield Cora Johnson Robert Giffin Madison Hathaway Elisa Johnson Cindy Fagin Melanie Gifford Erika Johnson Sheila Fairley Tanya Hauer Kathy Barrett Johnson* Beverly-Jo Farzin-Nia Aimee Gill Matt Hawkins Kenneth Feick Eneyew Girma Marcellina Hawthorne Teri Johnson Jorge Fernandez Alyssa Ghedsted* Adis Hayrapetyan Peggy Johnston Barbara Field Janet Gleason Tiffany Joiner Edvis Hayrapetyan Joy Finch Christine Goddard Belinda Heard Ashley Jones Harry Finkel Beth Godfrey Rose Heffernan Frances Jones Robbie Finnigan Thomas Goff Sara Hein Jena Jones* Elizabeth Hely Sallie Jones Charles Fisher Jared Goldin Edward Goldstein Naomi Hentschel Dixie Jordan Jay Fitzgerald Marcy Goldstein Candice Herman Randy Jubinal Ginny Fitzgerald Susan Fitzpatrick Behrens Sonia Gomez Samuel Herod Leila Jung Christine Fleming Deisi Gonzalez Lainie Herrera Ronald Kagan Susan Herron Dani Kaiserman Anita Flores Dawn Goodman Paige Kaluderovic Aurora Flores Kathy Gooze Myna Herscher Claudia Flores Maria Teresa Gordon Kimberly Hicks Amanda Kammier Vasiliki Kampas Abraham Flores-Rojo Peter Gordon Carolyn Higgins Rodriguez Lynne Hill Bernstein Susan Kandel Luyani Fong Sean Grady Beverly Hill Roberto Fonseca Sheila Grady Wynn Kaneshiro Shirley Ford Victoria Grandsoult Katherine Hill Joan Kaplan LaTanya Hill James Fossett Polly Grant Margaret Kaplan Nirja Kapoor Jamie Grav Maahra Hill Catherine Foulkes-Sutton Lisa Foux Glen Greenfield Joyce Hobbs* Melissa Kasek Harvinder Kaur Nathan Fox Jennifer Green Deborah Hoffman Angela Franchino Ariel Greenspun-Gale Shannon Hoffmann Daniel Keatinge Abbe Hofstein Linda Keefer Dayra Frantela Sid Greenwald Marion Fredericks-Mapes Joan Griffith-Malloy Robin Hollis Amanda Keenan Mary Freedman Michelle Grimaldi Mary Holmes Diana Keeney Kerry Grimes Christine Hood Lisa Kelton Jesse Freeman Randy Grimmett Mary Jane Horton Krystal Kennedy Betty Freitag Ronald Grover Kayla Horwat Martha Kennedy Jacklyn Freyberger Sandra Grunsell Mona Houghton Barbara Kernochan Michael Friedlander Stefanie Guarino Joel Howard Mana Khafaf Nancy Friedman* Susan Friedman Millie Guerbaoui Evanie Huang Denise Esquivel Khera Kristie Hubbard Fonda Khuu Mary Ann Friedrich Nastasha Guerrero Lori Froeling Sandra H. Guerrero Vanessa Hubert Angie Kim Donald Gustavson Cynthia Hudley Brian Kim Crystal Fryman Ranko Fukuda Silvia Gutierrez Athena Hunter Javon Kim Demetric Fuller Nikki Hunt-Hicks Nayeon Kim Danica Guzman Lisa I'Anson Roy Kim Beth Fuller Lisa Guzman Lori Haas Cameron King Michelle Gagnon Karen Ide Lynda Hadjian* Jasmine Irons-Anokute Serena Kirk Karen Galeana Betty Hagan Rachel Iverson Karen Klein Diondra Gallegos Kara Klenk Richard Halke Nelson Galloway Lynette Jackson Linda Koch Fernando Garcia Patrice Hallman Lindsey Jacobs Jaremko Ashley Koester Ashley Gardner Alberta Hampton Smith Lynette Jacobson Andres Garduno Amy Hanawalt Farzaneh Jalili Courtney Koester Lynn James Drew Kolanz Hilary Garland Diana Hanbury Michele Garofalo Audrey Handelman Randal James Nancy Kolodny

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Allyson Gartside

Afroditi Kontos

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Gerald Riggs
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Rick Son
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Darnell Williams
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Francee Williams
Sonjia Williams
Jean Ann Wilson*
Michele Wilson
Sarah Wiltfong
La Donna Wingfield
Becky Winn
Brigitte Wintner
Lara Wojahn
Eric Wong
Foty Wong

Leina Wong Theresa Wood May-Ann Woolsey Andrea Worrall Eric Worthington Denise Wright Sharon Wu Deborah Wyle Robin Wynne-Davis Nicole Wypychowski Joni Vamashiro Lee Yamashiro Andrea Yochim Jean Youngquist Anila Zafar Erin Zamarripa David Zaro Vyonne Zaro Martha Zavala Molly Zbojniewicz Jessica Zeichner Liliya Zherebnenko Marie Zondler* Harold Zuckerman

Tami Zussman

17

*FY2018 Court Assistants

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