

# Program Report

San Diego County | FY2017-2018 | Statistics through Q4



## Meeting the Need

Voices for Children (VFC) believes that every child deserves a safe and permanent home and, to that end, will provide a trained CASA volunteer to every abused, abandoned, or neglected child who needs one, and advocate to improve the lives of children in the foster care system. During FY2017-2018, 3,999 children spent time in San Diego County's foster care system. Of those children, VFC provided a CASA to 2,062 children, VFC Case Liaison staff members advocated on behalf of 825 children, and VFC staff continuously assessed and monitored the cases of the remaining 926 children through our Case Assessment Program (CAP).

3,999 children in San Diego County foster care



\*Children on the waiting list to receive a CASA: 98 children  
\*\*Pre-jurisdiction: 88 children

## RECRUITING & TRAINING CASA VOLUNTEERS

Voices for Children is dedicated to spreading awareness about the role of a CASA and the need for more volunteers to speak up for local foster children. Those interested in becoming a CASA begin by attending an Information Session, followed by a formal application, interview process, and thorough background checks. Once accepted, volunteers attend Advocate University, an online and in-person training program that prepares CASAs for their important role.

▶ *During FY2017-2018, VFC responded to 2,418 volunteer inquiries, hosted 40 Info Sessions for prospective volunteers, and led 11 Advocate University trainings, averaging 29 graduates per class.*

## THE CASA PROGRAM: 'EYES AND EARS' FOR THE COURT, 'VOICES' FOR CHILDREN

CASAs have two key objectives: get to know their child in order to understand his or her needs, worries, hopes, and dreams; and use that information to advocate for the child's best interest to the judge making decisions on the case.



## THE CASE LIAISON PROGRAM: EARLY INTERVENTION

Case Liaisons, stationed in each of San Diego's main dependency courtrooms, triage cases in real time, capture important information about the complexity and severity of each child's case, find and advocate for services on less urgent cases, and provide information to the matching team that will help find the most appropriate CASA volunteer for each child.

## THE CASE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM: A VITAL PIECE OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

VFC Case Assessment Program (CAP) staff and volunteers monitor and review the case file of every child in San Diego County foster care who does not have an advocate. They assess each child's circumstances to identify the most urgent situations, match those children with an advocate immediately, and monitor the remaining cases on an ongoing basis should the need for an advocate arise.



Q4

Through Q4 of FY2017-2018, Voices for Children staff and volunteers advocated on behalf of

**2,899**

children in San Diego County.

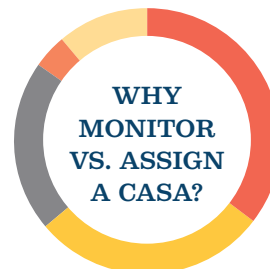
Throughout FY2017-2018,

**1,337**

community members served as CASA volunteers in San Diego County.

**\$2,500**

allows Voices for Children to recruit, train, and support a CASA for an entire year.



- PENDING ADOPTION 36%
- NON-MINOR DEPENDENTS WITH NO CASA CONSENT 28%
- PENDING REUNIFICATION 21%
- OUT OF COUNTY / STATE 4%
- OTHER / VARIOUS 11%

## LAUNCHING JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAM

It is a sad statistic that many boys and girls in the foster care system, who have been victimized by unimaginable mistreatment by their own families, have also been convicted of violating the law themselves, and are in danger of spending their lives in and out of juvenile detention and, ultimately, jail and prison. A new grant is allowing us to serve youth in the juvenile justice system—many of whose families have a history with Child Welfare Services—who have committed minor offenses and would greatly benefit from a CASA. By the end of FY2017-2018, VFC assigned CASAs to 21 children through this program.

### Juvenile Justice Goals

- Develop & launch program, including training curriculum
- Serve 30 justice-involved youth by December 2018, and 80 by December 2019

## RETENTION & RECOGNITION EFFORTS

The role of a CASA is a unique experience, requiring a higher level of commitment than the average volunteer role. However, it is our goal to continually increase our retention rates by providing the best volunteer experience possible and by recognizing our CASAs for their dedication. Due to a variety of reasons, 356 CASAs resigned or were terminated during FY2017-2018, down 8.25% from the previous year. During the same time, 43 CASAs were re-engaged and returned from a LOA or prior resignation. CASAs who are currently active have been serving for an average of 2.8 years.

### Retention & Recognition Goals

- Host regionalized small groups & continuing education courses
- Host CASA mixers & CASA appreciation event to build community
- Recruit enough new CASAs to keep pace with LOAs and resignations

## TARGETED VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

During FY2017-2018, only 16% of CASA volunteers serving youth in San Diego County were male, despite the fact that approximately half of the children in the foster care system were boys. In addition, only 10% of CASA volunteers spoke Spanish. With these statistics in mind, VFC is actively engaged in targeted strategies to recruit more male and Spanish-speaking volunteers with the goal of better aligning our corps of volunteers with the diversity of the children we serve. At the beginning of FY2017-2018, the recruitment and marketing teams conducted male focus groups to evaluate our recruitment and marketing efforts. In addition, the recruitment team worked to recruit male CASAs onto our first-ever Male CASA Advisory Council, providing ongoing support, input, and feedback to our team.

### Targeted Recruitment Goals

- Conduct focus groups of male CASAs & build Male CASA Advisory Council
- Increase number of male & Spanish-speaking CASAs by 5% each
- Recruit more male and Spanish-speaking CASAs to Outreach Team

## SERVING EVERY CHILD

In 2006, Voices for Children adopted a strategic vision to “Serve Every Child.” At the time, we were providing CASAs to just 12% of the foster children in San Diego County, but the Board of Directors was determined to provide vital advocacy to every child who needed one. Since then, Voices for Children has grown to continuously assess and monitor the cases of every child who enters foster care in San Diego County and provide tailored advocacy to every child who needs a voice.

