

Program Report

San Diego County | FY2018-2019 | Statistics through Q1



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. At the beginning of the fiscal year, approximately 2,600 children were in San Diego County foster care, and 295 children have entered the system since then. Of those children, VFC provided a CASA to 1,435 children, VFC Case Liaison staff members advocated on behalf of 475 children, and VFC staff continuously assessed and monitored the cases of the remaining 656 children through our Case Assessment Program (CAP).



*Children on the waiting list to receive a CASA: 94 children
**Pre-jurisdiction: 193 children

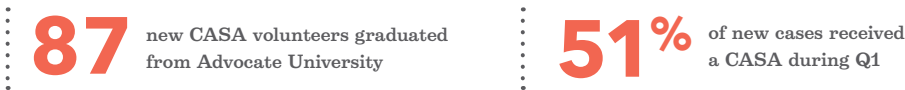
RECRUITING & TRAINING CASA VOLUNTEERS

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 Q1, VFC responded to 463 volunteer inquiries, hosted 7 Info Sessions for prospective volunteers, and completed 3 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.



Through Q1 of FY2018-2019, Voices for Children staff and volunteers advocated on behalf of

1,910

(1,870 in San Diego County foster care, 6 in Riverside County foster care, 34 in delinquency)

children and youth ages 0 - 21.

Throughout Q1,

1,006

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.

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 offenses and would greatly benefit from a CASA. Since the program’s inception in spring 2018, VFC has assigned CASAs to 38 children (14 dual status youth, 19 delinquency, 5 at-risk).

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. During Q1, we conducted a volunteer satisfaction survey, which provided valuable insight into our volunteer experience. It consisted primarily of questions where the CASA could rank their experience from Extremely Satisfied to Extremely Dissatisfied. Out of the CASAs who received it, 43% responded (or 393 volunteers total).

Key Survey Results

- 87% satisfied or extremely satisfied with experience as a CASA this year
- 96% say VFC staff make them feel their role is important & valuable
- 97% say they know where to turn when they hit roadblocks on their case

NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR WORKFORCE TRAINING

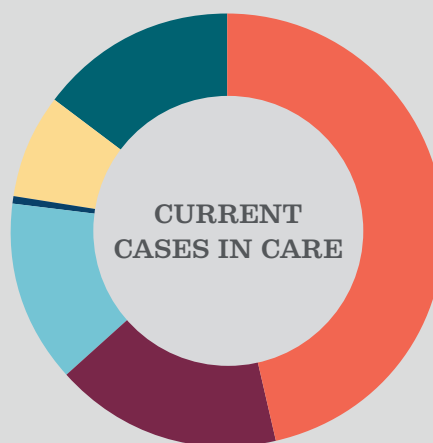
This fall, our team has worked closely with leadership at Goodwill San Diego to build a partnership focused on providing our youth with employment resources and skills. Through Goodwill’s various employment and workforce training programs, we will connect our CASAs and their case children with resume assistance, soft skills training, interview skills, and more. For some youth, there may be an opportunity to participate in the organization’s new Paid Training Program. We are beginning to put together information to disseminate to our CASAs and working towards having the first cohort of youth begin participating in March 2019.

Partnership Plan

- Provide CASAs with information about Goodwill’s employment and workforce programs
- Work towards first cohort of youth to begin participating in March 2019

PERMANENCY PLANS

Establishing permanency is one of the primary goals for a child in foster care, and is thereby one of a CASA’s top priorities. In most cases, when a child enters foster care, the initial plan for permanency is reunification with their family of origin. If that plan is not achieved, all of the professionals on a child’s case, including their CASA, work to find the next best option, whether that is adoption, guardianship, long term foster care, or another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA). Eventually, at age 18, a youth has the opportunity to enter Extended Foster Care until age 21.



- REUNIFICATION **46.6%**
- PENDING **16.9%**
- ADOPTION **13.6%**
- GUARDIANSHIP **0.4%**
- LONG TERM FOSTER CARE / APPLA **7.9%**
- EXTENDED FOSTER CARE **14.6%**