



# The Thread That Connects Us All

Pennsylvania CASA Association  
2020 Annual Report

# A Letter From Our Executive Director

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This past year, Pennsylvania Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (PA CASA) engaged in our mission “to grow, strengthen, and unite local CASA programs so they can ensure the safety, well-being, and forever home for every abused and/or neglected child in Pennsylvania.” At no time in our history has the importance of a cohesive statewide network of local Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs been more apparent—or more critical—than it is today.

In the face of a global pandemic, we were challenged to find resourceful ways to connect and support our network of 21 local CASA programs covering 27 counties across the Commonwealth, many of whom were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We adapted to pandemic restrictions by providing online educational programming, virtual meetings, and a steady flow of communications. This made the local CASA programs’ work easier and efficient in a very challenging year.

Our capacity-building efforts have resulted in measurable improvements in our organization's ability to fulfill our mission through a blend of sound management, strong governance, and dedication to assessing and improving results. Additionally, these efforts have created a thread that connects local CASA programs across the Commonwealth to support each other.

We laid the foundation for strengthening our network of local CASA programs through Continuous Quality Improvement, Volunteer and Program Management, and Case Consultation. We committed to enhancing greater use of technology throughout the network by providing the infrastructure and tools local CASA programs were requesting.

We are growing the network and connecting with new stakeholders who are supporting PA CASA’s future. This report outlines the impact of our work, and demonstrates how we are creating an infrastructure that supports and strengthens local CASA programs and their volunteers to provide better outcomes for abused and/or neglected children across the Commonwealth.

*Jennifer DeBalko*

Jennifer DeBalko  
Executive Director



# Who We Are

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## Our Mission

To **grow**, **strengthen**, and **unite** local CASA programs so they can ensure the safety, well-being, and forever home for every abused and/or neglected child in Pennsylvania.

## Our Vision

Every abused and/or neglected child in Pennsylvania has access to the service and support of a CASA volunteer.



# What We Stand By

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We value high-quality volunteer-led child advocacy.

We value empowering local communities.

We value strengthening local CASA programs.

We value sustaining the Pennsylvania CASA network.

We value diligence, thoughtfulness, and follow-through.

We value cultural awareness and diversity by engaging and providing services to individuals equitably regardless of race, color, ethnicity, pregnancy, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, marital status, age, disability, genetic information, and other differences.

Pennsylvania CASA Association's values are founded in the belief that best-interest volunteer advocacy can ensure safety, well-being, and permanency for abused and neglected children.

We live our values by:

- Communicating with accuracy, integrity, and truthfulness
- Creating a community of respect, without judgment
- Listening to communities and programs to build understanding
- Integrating the values of individual communities into our work
- Intentionally setting goals
- Focusing on solutions
- Collaborating with local CASA programs and stakeholders and persevering to achieve our goals

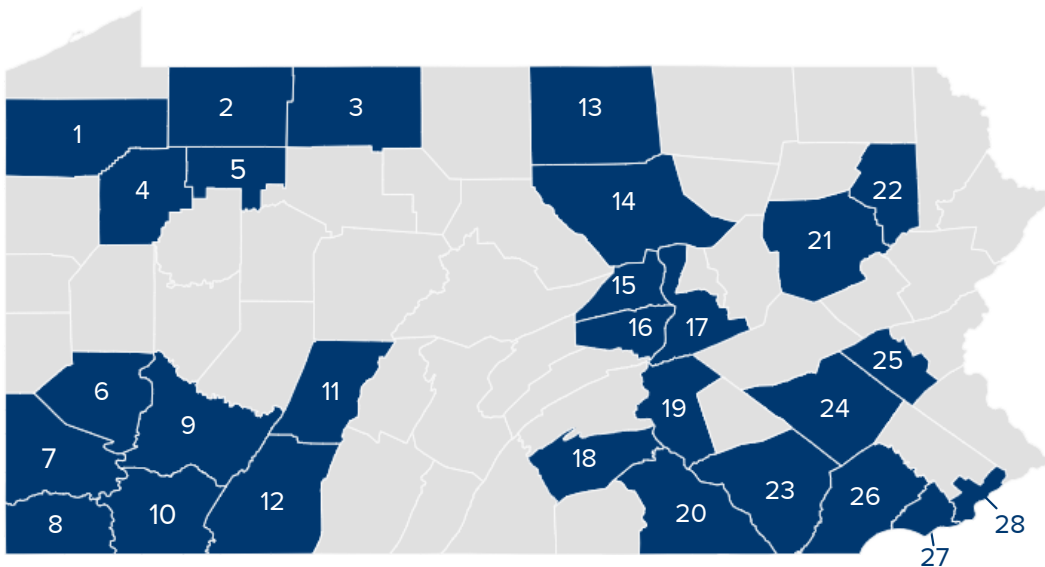
# Where CASA Serves

## Pennsylvania CASA in 2020

21 local CASA programs

2,121 children served

1,185 dedicated volunteers serving children in 27 county courts



1 Crawford	9 Westmoreland	17 Northumberland	25 Lehigh
2 Warren	10 Fayette*	18 Cumberland	26 Chester
3 McKean	11 Cambria	19 Dauphin	27 Delaware
4 Venango	12 Somerset	20 York	28 Philadelphia
5 Forest	13 Tioga	21 Luzerne	
6 Allegheny	14 Lycoming	22 Lackawanna	
7 Washington	15 Union	23 Lancaster	
8 Greene	16 Snyder	24 Berks	

\*CASA of Fayette County was in new program development throughout 2020.

For program contact information, visit <https://pacasa.org/map/>



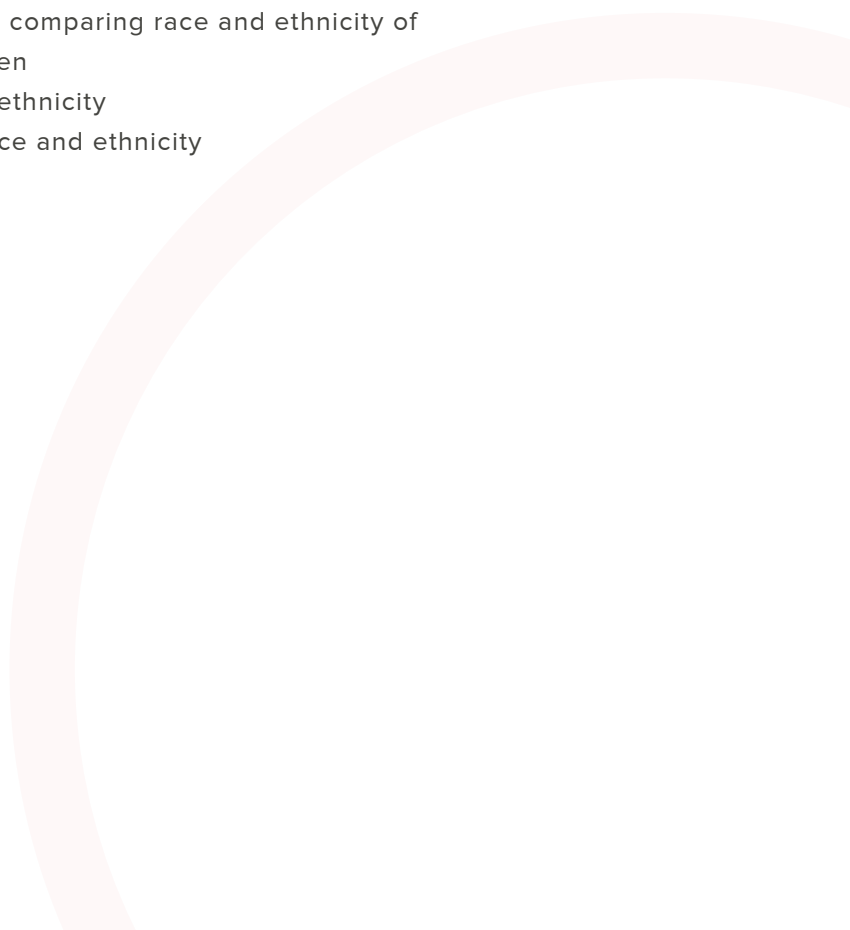
# Our Commitment To Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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We value cultural awareness and diversity by engaging and providing services to individuals equitably regardless of race, color, ethnicity, pregnancy, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, marital status, age, disability, genetic information, and other differences.

A Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee, composed of 12 local CASA programs and PA CASA staff and board members was created. The committee's purpose is to define the network's commitment to all children, regardless of their backgrounds, who are victims of abuse and/or neglect.

The work of the DEI committee focused on gathering data to understand diversity, equity, and inclusion strengths and challenges in Pennsylvania. The committee developed tools to promote understanding and build a foundation for future work, including:

- A disproportionality chart including statistics comparing race and ethnicity of board members, staff, volunteers, and children
  - An outcomes report of volunteers' race and ethnicity
  - An outcomes report of children served by race and ethnicity
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# Building Program Capacity

The year 2020 created many challenges and an abundance of uncertainty for Pennsylvania CASA Association and local CASA programs across the state. PA CASA partnered with local CASA programs to support our shared vision to reach more children who have been victims of abuse and/or neglect despite these unprecedented challenges.

## Innovative Strategies, High Impact



### Strategy: Capacity Survey

PA CASA staff met individually with local CASA program directors and staff from all 21 programs to find strategies to build program capacity across Pennsylvania to serve more children. This input was used to build a legislative strategy that was shared with statewide stakeholders.

**Impact:** Identified resources needed to serve more than **600** children who are waiting for a CASA volunteer.



### Strategy: Regional Training

PA CASA facilitated a regional pre-service training including local CASA programs in Crawford, Venango, and Warren and Forest Counties. This collaborative approach combined resources from the state office and local CASA programs to prepare more volunteers to serve children in need, and provided rural local CASA programs with limited resources an opportunity to share the training experience. The regional training model combined training classes that led to a more enriched experience for the volunteer participants.

**Impact:** As a result, **6** trained CASA volunteers are providing best-interest advocacy to **15** children.

# Strengthening the Network

PA CASA connected local CASA programs through five opportunities that included a training of pre-service facilitators, an Executive Directors' Conference, and technology instruction to use PA CASA's statewide communication, e-learning, and resource platform.

11

statewide trainings and meetings attended by staff from all 21 local CASA programs

## Supporting Programs

511+

recorded interactions with local CASA programs

PA CASA supported local CASA programs by providing quality assurance visits, recruitment and outreach support, technology solutions, and creating an online shared library of over 100 core documents and resources developed to align with the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) / Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Association for Children's (National CASA/GAL) Standards for Local Programs.

### Local Support Contacts by the Numbers

Continuous Quality Improvement	95
Volunteer and Program Management	165
Case Consultation	23
VOCA Grant Support	84
Technology	53
Legislative	46
Program Development	45

484

core documents referenced and 198 downloaded by 20 local CASA programs



# Opening New CASA Programs

Developing new CASA programs across the State is essential to realizing PA CASA's vision of ensuring every abused and/or neglected child in Pennsylvania has access to the service and support of a CASA volunteer.

PA CASA is the only organization authorized to open new CASA programs in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In 2020, we moved forward in opening a program in Tioga County with support from the court and local community volunteers and stakeholders.



**Tioga County CASA** was established and recognized by National CASA/GAL as Pennsylvania's newest program in May 2020. Eight volunteers were screened, trained, and sworn in before the start of 2021; all ready to begin serving children in the new year.

**Now, nearly 70 children will have access to the dedicated advocacy of a CASA volunteer.**

## New Program Development Plans for 2021

### Fayette County

- Steering Committee formed
- PA CASA secured start-up funding
- **363** children will have access to the dedicated advocacy of a CASA volunteer

### Pike County

- Feasibility study completed with judicial support
- **42** children waiting to receive the dedicated advocacy of a CASA volunteer



# Securing Resources Critical to CASA

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2020 led to more innovative and creative technology solutions leading to an increased capacity of the statewide CASA program network to connect with one another and support each other.

## Platform Launch

Throughout 2020, Pennsylvania CASA Association launched a variety of technology resources for local CASA programs on PA CASA's platform for learning and collaboration. Resources include a customer relationship management (CRM) tool for local CASA programs, groups for facilitating training, and Google Workspace access. CASA core documents, an initiative providing resources and documents consistent with the 2020 National CASA/GAL Standards for Local Programs, was also deployed.

## Website Development

PA CASA launched a Website Rethink course equipping local CASA programs with knowledge of writing for the web, sourcing photography for their online presence, and providing resources to prospective and current volunteers. In 2020, PA CASA trained **5** local CASA programs through the course. Participating local CASA programs received seven weeks of hands-on training, monthly check-ins, and free website hosting with their participation. Programs that completed the course saw a significant increase in web traffic and conversions.

# Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Efforts

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## Recruitment

PA CASA released a recruitment tool, Start Your Journey, in 2020. The tool provided local CASA programs throughout the Commonwealth the ability to receive and respond to volunteer inquiries, facilitate volunteer training on PA CASA's platform for learning and collaborating (Engage), and communicate with volunteers on a virtual platform throughout the pandemic. The tool connected **300+** prospective volunteers with local CASA programs.

## Retention

With the intention of connecting volunteers throughout the State with the larger CASA movement, PA CASA developed CASA Across the Commonwealth, a bi-monthly newsletter. With assistance from local CASA programs, PA CASA highlighted program successes and explored ways volunteers were providing best-interest advocacy throughout the pandemic.





## Virtual Town Hall

Although our 2020 statewide conference was postponed due to the pandemic, Pennsylvania CASA Association, with the help of stakeholders and our local CASA program network, pivoted and hosted our first-ever online gathering, “CASA Across the Commonwealth - Virtual Town Hall.” This online event featured and elevated 21 stories from CASA leaders, elected officials, and advocates across the state highlighting the important work of CASA volunteers and their commitment to ensuring children are cared for and safe. This event broadened the awareness of CASA in communities across Pennsylvania. A total of **2,180** people tuned in to the live broadcast on October 23rd.



**Libre, an advocate for other animals in Cumberland County, joined Judge Guido to show his support for CASA.**

# Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Funding

In 2019, Pennsylvania CASA Association was awarded a Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant to build the capacity of the CASA network to serve more abused and/or neglected children through opening new CASA programs, expanding services within existing CASA programs, and providing technical assistance to the network of local CASA programs. This funding stream provided PA CASA the ability to administer the VOCA grant as pass-through money to **6** local CASA programs.

With this VOCA award, Pennsylvania CASA:

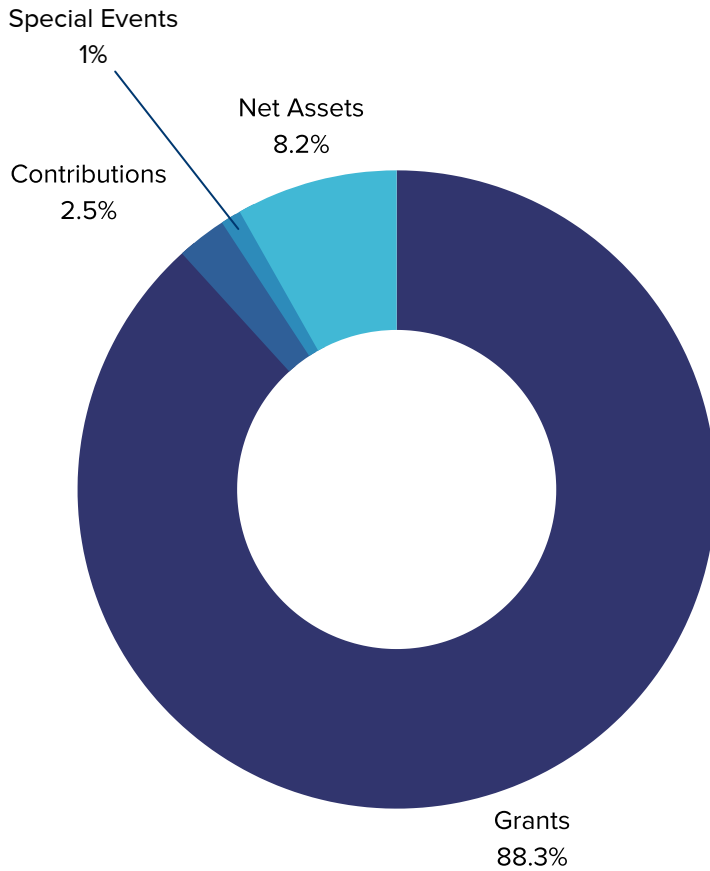
- Opened **2** new CASA programs in Dauphin and Tioga Counties
- Maintained core direct services and expanded services to children and volunteers through building a partnership model with the **6** local CASA programs receiving pass-through funds
- Supported local CASA program staff directly recruiting, screening, training, and supervising CASA volunteers
- Provided statewide technical assistance to enhance service to the local CASA program network, impacting direct services to child victims of abuse and/or neglect.

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- 1 Crawford
  - 2 Dauphin
  - 3 Philadelphia
  - 4 Tioga
  - 5 Venango
  - 6 Washington

## Impact of VOCA Funding

- **\$206,986** funding infused into the Pennsylvania CASA network
- **178** children served by CASA volunteers
- Development of a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Quality Assurance review process focused on compliance requirements for volunteer and case files, in addition to strengthening volunteer advocacy efforts

# Our Financial Health

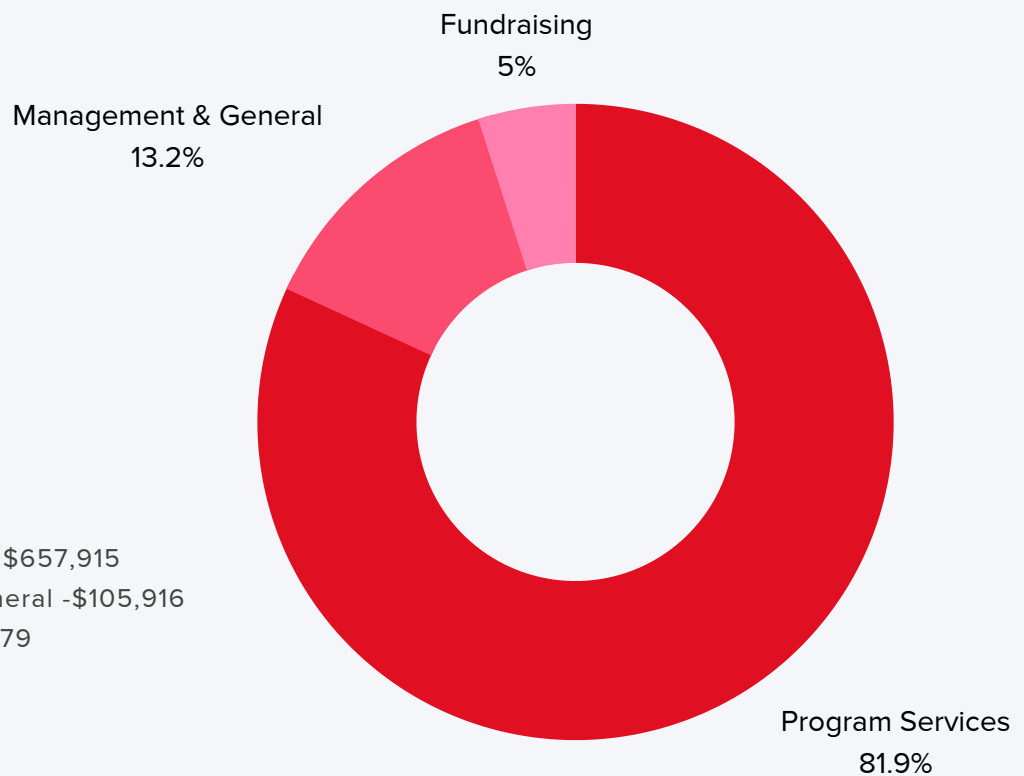


## Total Support and Revenue \$742,561

- Grants - \$655,312
- Contributions - \$18,732
- Special Events - \$7,712
- Net Assets - \$60,805

## Total Expenses \$803,610

- Program Services - \$657,915
- Management & General - \$105,916
- Fundraising - \$39,779



# Staff and Board

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## Staff Members

- Jennifer DeBalko - Executive Director
- Trevor Brandt - Program Specialist - Information Technology
- Ellen Brown - Director of Recruitment & Outreach
- Ashley Frank - Partnership Director
- Steve Gill - Program Specialist - Eastern Region
- Maura Kelly - Program Operations Director - West
- Rebecca Matchett - Program Specialist - Western Region

## Board Officers

- President - Kelly Light, CFP, CRPS
- Vice President - Joan Erney
- Treasurer - Jeannette F. Carter, PhD
- Secretary - Justin Fleming

## Board Members

- John Aciukewicz, Esq.
- Brett N. Benton, Esq.
- Julia Chapman, Esq.
- The Honorable Shamaine A. Daniels, Esq.
- Sharon S. England
- Ross Kanenson
- Spero Lappas, JD, PhD
- Joan Peterson, BSW, MPA
- The Honorable Lori K. Serratelli, Esq.
- The Honorable Tammy Lynn Shearer

# Our Supporters

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Pennsylvania CASA Association is a tax-exempt non-profit public charity under Section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible.

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Lori Serratelli\*  
Tammy Shearer\*  
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United Way of Lancaster County  
Verna O. Canova Foundation  
Williams Companies, Inc.  
YourCause, LLC

\*Current or former PA CASA Board Member

*To all of our supporters and partners, past and present, we'd like to express our gratitude for helping to amplify our impact and vision to ensure more abused and/or neglected children have access to the service and support of a CASA volunteer.*





