

Resilient in Growth, Rooted in Strength, Helping to Unite

Pennsylvania CASA Association
Annual Report
July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022



A Letter From Our President and CEO

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud to share that we have made significant progress in expanding CASA programs to serve more children and families in need throughout the Commonwealth.

32 of Pennsylvania's 60 court jurisdictions do not have access to a CASA program, leaving over 16,145 children without a dedicated advocate to support them through the legal and emotional complexities of the child welfare system. Our mission is to bridge this gap and make sure that every child in Pennsylvania has access to the resources they need to thrive.

In the last fiscal year, we were able to grow to serve three new jurisdictions in Pennsylvania through new program development and existing program growth. This success is a testament to the power of community and judicial support, creating a positive impact on the lives of children and families in the State.

I would like to take a moment to extend my deepest appreciation to our dedicated staff, board of directors, volunteers, supporters, and local programs. Their unwavering commitment and hard work have been instrumental in our progress and we couldn't have achieved our goals without them. The tireless efforts of our staff and volunteers, in particular, have been essential to CASA's success in Pennsylvania. We are incredibly grateful for their dedication and passion for the mission.

Looking ahead, we are committed to continuing to expand programs and serve more children and families in need.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your support of PA CASA. We could not have achieved our goals without you and we look forward to continuing to work together to make a positive impact on the lives of children and families.

Jennifer DeBalko

Jennifer DeBalko
President and CEO



PA CASA

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.





CASA Overview

What is a CASA volunteer?

A CASA volunteer is a trained community member who is appointed by a judge to advocate for the best interest of abused and neglected children in foster care in accordance with PA Juvenile Act (Title 42 Act PA C.S. Sec. 6301 et.seq.) CASA volunteers complete pre-service training, meet with the child, interview appropriate persons in the case, attend relevant meetings, submit reports to the court and attend court hearings concerning the child. CASA is the only program of its kind, built around assigning one compassionate adult advocate to the case of one abused and neglected child or sibling group. A CASA volunteer is the only person involved with a caseload of one.

What is a local CASA program?

A local CASA program's purpose is to provide and promote court-appointed volunteer advocacy in their community so that abused or neglected children can be safe, establish permanence and have the opportunity to thrive. Local CASA programs recruit, screen, train, and supervise CASA volunteers appointed through the Dependency Court to the cases of abused and neglected children.

What is PA CASA?

PA CASA works for children in the child welfare system who do not have a CASA volunteer. Each year PA CASA strives to increase the number of children served by CASA volunteers and assure that each CASA is providing high-quality advocacy. By providing critical resources for 23 existing CASA programs serving 28 judicial districts and opening new CASA programs, PA CASA works to achieve the vision of a CASA volunteer for every abused and neglected child in Pennsylvania.

Our Values

We value

- High-quality, volunteer-led child advocacy.
- Empowering local communities.
- Strengthening local CASA programs.
- Sustaining the Pennsylvania CASA network.
- Diligence, thoughtfulness, and follow-through.
- 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.

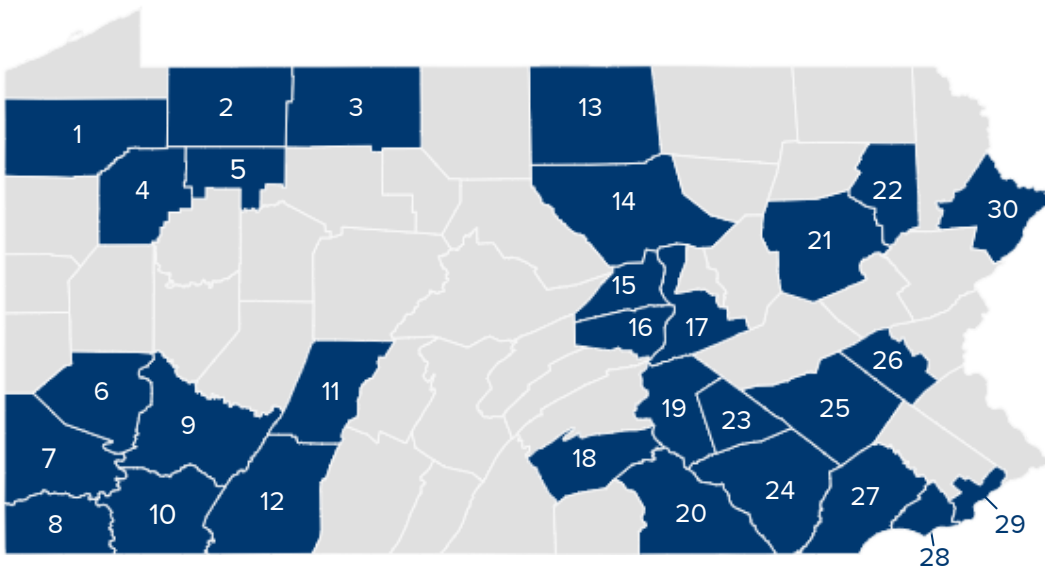


Pennsylvania CASA in 2021

23 local CASA programs

2,135 children served

1,408 dedicated volunteers serving children in 28 judicial districts



1 Crawford	9 Westmoreland	17 Northumberland	25 Berks
2 Warren	10 Fayette	18 Cumberland	26 Lehigh
3 McKean	11 Cambria	19 Dauphin	27 Chester
4 Venango	12 Somerset	20 York	28 Delaware
5 Forest	13 Tioga	21 Luzerne	29 Philadelphia
6 Allegheny	14 Lycoming	22 Lackawanna	30 Pike
7 Washington	15 Union	23 Lebanon	
8 Greene	16 Snyder	24 Lancaster	

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



Our Commitment To Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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.

DEI Committee

PA CASA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee, composed of local CASA programs, PA CASA staff, and board members defines 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 focuses on gathering data to understand diversity, equity, and inclusion strengths and challenges in Pennsylvania. The committee develops 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

Professional Development Opportunities

PA CASA is dedicated to producing better outcomes for children and families and addressing the disparities in the child welfare system. This means creating a culture of continuous learning and improvement, where our programs, staff, and partners reflect and address the needs of the diverse communities and children we serve.

In 2021, PA CASA offered two professional training sessions. Partnering with Voce, a nationally recognized adoption advocacy organization, and the Bryston Institute, PA CASA delivered 14 hours of training.

The training sessions addressed racial disparities present in the child welfare system, historical and structural causes of racial discrimination, how to develop a deeper understanding through self-reflection on each person's role within the system while working with families and children of color, and information regarding sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTQ+).

86 individuals from around the Network attended the training opportunities.

Growth

In Pennsylvania, 32 of the 60 court jurisdictions do not have a CASA program, meaning that over 16,145 children who have experienced abuse and neglect do not have access to a CASA volunteer simply due to where they live.

PA CASA's mission focuses on increasing the geographic reach by building new CASA programs and assisting existing CASA programs to expand their service region. PA CASA is the only organization entrusted by the National CASA/GAL Association, the CASA membership organization, to establish new CASA organizations throughout Pennsylvania. Both community support and judicial support are required to start a program. In the last fiscal year, CASA grew to serve three new jurisdictions in Pennsylvania through new program development and existing program expansion.

New Program Development

PA CASA provides robust services for new program development so that new local CASA programs can begin serving children quickly. Those services include:

- Securing funding;
- Assisting in the creation of governing documents required for membership;
- Communication with National CASA/GAL Association
- Onboarding a new Executive Director;
- Identifying an office space;
- Supplying IT support; and,
- Providing pre-service training.

CASA of Fayette County

- Established at the request of the judge;
- Funded through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant provided by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency Office of Victims Services;
- Additional funding provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Keystone Communities Program;
- Received full membership approval from National CASA/GAL on February 10, 2022;
- 380 children have access to a CASA volunteer;
- 12 volunteers trained to serve as CASA volunteers; and,
- Serving 18 children who have experienced abuse and neglect and are before the court.

CASA of Pike County

- Established at the request of the judge
- Full membership approval by National CASA/GAL in February 2022
- 72 children have access to a CASA volunteer
- 16 volunteers trained to serve as CASA volunteers
- Serving 30 children who have experienced abuse and neglect and are before the court



"Despite having CASA experience, the new program in Fayette was my first experience at the Director level. Stepping into this role, especially with a brand new program, was challenging. PA CASA staff provided support and guidance that ensured early success, and through this support it created a foundation that will allow the program to continue to build and grow successfully within Fayette County."

Program Director Mitch Samick

Program Expansion

PA CASA also assists existing local programs in expanding their service area through similar services. During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, PA CASA assisted one local program to increase its service area through expansion.

Lancaster - Lebanon Expansion

- Established with the support of the court
- Received approved program membership on May 26, 2022
- 118 eligible children have access to the service and support of a CASA volunteer
- Goal to serve 48 children with 24 new volunteers in the first year

Grow Existing Programs

While CASA programs exist in only 28 judicial districts, they cover 67% of the children eligible for CASA volunteers. This means that the best path to growing the number of children with a CASA volunteer is through growing the 23 existing local programs. PA CASA assists local programs in growing through:

- Securing funding;
- Providing technical assistance;
- Facilitating pre-service training; and
- Promoting awareness.

The Impact of VOCA

In 2019, Pennsylvania CASA Association was awarded a 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. PA CASA successfully wrapped up the VOCA grant in September of 2021 with all three stated project goals successfully achieved:

Goal 1 >>>>>>

Open two new programs in Tioga and Dauphin Counties to increase service to children who are victims of abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse.

Goal 2 >>>>>>

Build a partnership model with local programs that developed a large-scale regranting process with local programs that could be replicated for future funding sources and efficiently get resources to local programs to serve children.

Goal 3 >>>>>>

Provide statewide technical assistance and enhanced service to the CASA network to impact services to child victims.

The outcomes of this project were transformational for the CASA network:

- 2 new programs were established in Dauphin and Tioga Counties
- 400 children served through existing counties in Crawford, Philadelphia, Tioga, and Washington Counties
- 9,456 recorded technical assistance interactions with local programs in the last year
- A local program regranting process that has been replicated to direct more dollars to local programs so that they can serve children who have experienced abuse and neglect

Responding to Program Needs

PA CASA recognizes that small, rural offices have limited resources to address the barriers to recruiting qualified volunteers. As part of the third project goal, PA CASA's Director of Recruitment and Outreach analyzed demographics and worked with four Northwest Regional programs to determine recruitment and diversity priorities. PA CASA's IT Specialist then created and initiated an advertising campaign, including paid social media posting and printed materials, for the CASA programs of McKean, Crawford, Venango, and Warren/Forest Counties. The advertising campaign assisted these programs in identifying media tactics with the highest return on investment to deploy ongoing recruitment efforts in the following year for the next training class. PA CASA further assisted these specific Northwest Regional programs by facilitating regional information sessions for the volunteers recruited from the focused advertising campaign. These information sessions provided potential candidates the opportunity to learn more about becoming a CASA volunteer

Project results:

- Throughout the campaign, PA CASA saw a 103.1% increase in traffic, and new user traffic (users who had never visited pacasa.org before) increased by 117.67%.
- The campaign was incredibly effective in the northwestern part of the state with an increase in traffic in several of the cities (Meadville, Kane, Erie, Warren, Smethport, Clarion) ranging from 100% to 1,400%
- At the conclusion of the campaign, PA CASA facilitated a regional pre-service training for the four participating programs.
- 8 volunteers trained



Strengthen

PA CASA's greatest asset is the existing network of CASA programs. While they cover a large percentage of eligible children, they are faced with complex challenges that make service to all children in their regions difficult. It is essential that PA CASA strengthen local CASA programs. PA CASA deepened connections to local CASA programs while strengthening the services they provide to the children they serve by offering:

- A series of training courses throughout the year for both Executive Directors and Board Members to bolster their understanding and support their advocacy work
- Engaging activities for program staff, boards, and volunteers to develop a deeper understanding and participate in peer-based discussions

Providing a Foundation for Excellence in Advocacy

For the second year in a row, PA CASA offered the Excellence in Advocacy training. This training requires participants to complete a self-paced course with assignments in advance of the two-day virtual workshop. 11 staff representing seven local programs received further education on the following topics:

- Orientation to the National CASA/GAL Core Model, Local Program Standards, and Pennsylvania law;
- Methods to recruit, screen, and train volunteers;
- Ways to engage and motivate volunteers through intentional supervision;
- Creative ways to thank volunteers to promote retention; and,
- Court report writing exercises to identify ways to enhance recommendations.



2020 National CASA/GAL Standards for Local Programs

In late 2020, National CASA/GAL Association released updated standards for local programs. In early 2022, local programs were required to demonstrate compliance with these standards through a self-assessment process through National CASA/GAL Association. To reduce the burden of compliance for local programs, PA CASA developed a three-tiered strategy to assist local programs with compliance. This programming included:

- Continuous Quality Improvement - Site visits that reviewed case files, volunteer files, and governance documents and produced a report on compliance with new standards
- Core Documents - Templates for all compliance documents that can be downloaded and tailored to meet local program needs
- Governance Training - A virtual training provided for staff and board leadership to explain new standard expectations and provide support for compliance.

The results:

- 22 of 23 programs participated in PA CASA’s Continuous Quality Improvement process
- 2,716 CASA Core Documents referenced
- 13 Executive Directors and nine board members representing 15 local programs participated in the Governance Training

All programs received scores above 70% on the National CASA/GALs Self-Assessment.

Healthcare Advocacy Project

Pennsylvania CASA Association (PA CASA) partnered with Aetna Better Health to create healthcare training for Court Appointed Special Advocates. PA CASA developed training and tracked the impact on volunteer practices, court decisions, and ultimately children's health well-being. What resulted was an industry-leading training model proven to change volunteer behavior and improve children's health well-being. The following results were compiled in the first six months of data collection.

1 INCREASED CONFIDENCE IN ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN’S HEALTH NEEDS.

Hundreds of CASA volunteers and staff logged on to PA CASA’s learning management system to take the first online course offered by the state office. Data collected in pre and post-tests indicated a 20% increase in confidence to advocate for children’s healthcare needs.

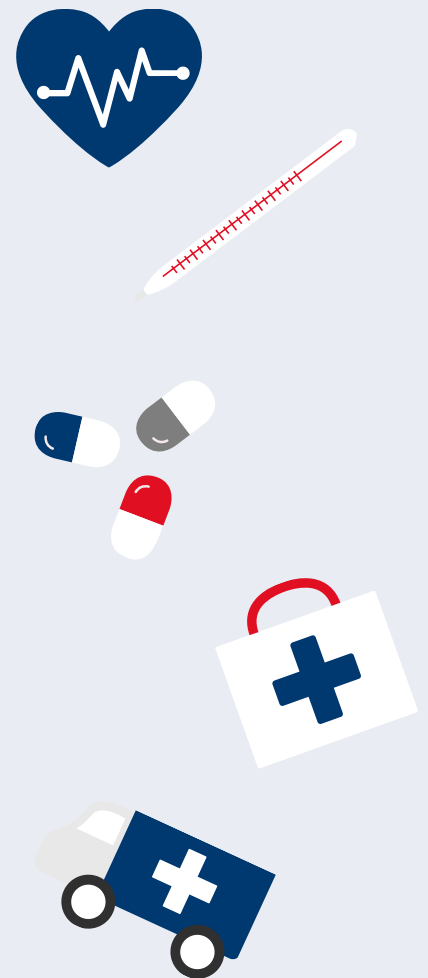
2 VOLUNTEERS HAVE THE INFORMATION THEY NEED TO ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN.

Volunteers took assessments on the health well-being of children served at the beginning of the project, and at three months and six months following the training. Response of “unknown” decreased by 85%, indicating that volunteers obtained information about children’s health well-being.

3 CHILDREN’S HEALTH IMPROVED.

Data gathered reflects that children’s overall health well-being improved within the first six months of the project. Improvement is measured by children’s needs being met.

- 16% increase in overall health
- 14% increase in physical health
- 13% increase in oral health
- 20% increase in developmental health



Trauma-Informed Advocacy Training Development

Leveraging the successful model for Healthcare Advocacy, PA CASA conducted a needs assessment survey on local program confidence to provide Trauma-Informed Advocacy. Working with an outside expert, PA CASA leveraged the survey responses to begin the development of a Trauma-Informed Advocacy Course to launch in 2022. Course development for the Learning Management System (LMS) module included:



- How to use To Do's for Advocacy Planning
- Tracking court report recommendation outcomes
- Writing detailed contact notes
- Completing child well-being assessments

PA CASA Book Club

Strengthening PA CASA's connection to local programs and volunteers across the Commonwealth took many forms. In August 2021, PA CASA launched the first statewide book club discussion on *The Deepest Well* by Nadine Burke Harris, M.D.. A total of 17 staff and volunteers engaged in an intellectual discussion on topics related to the book with a focus on trauma-informed advocacy and understanding adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).



PA CASA held a second statewide book club discussion in December 2021 on *What Happened to You? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing* by Bruce D. Perry and Oprah Winfrey. PA CASA was able to purchase 45 copies of books to provide two copies to each local program. A total of 19 staff and volunteers participated in this activity. Both book club discussions offered two discussion times to accommodate various participant schedules, one on Tuesday evening and the other on a Saturday morning.



Unite

After two long years of a global pandemic, this year has offered a refreshing opportunity to fulfill the mission of uniting the PA CASA network. For the first time since 2015, Pennsylvania CASA held a conference that brought together the local programs across the Commonwealth.

Conference

The PA CASA Conference successfully united local PA CASA programs by bringing together CASA volunteers, staff, and board members from across the Commonwealth to learn about best practices in trauma-informed, healing-centered advocacy. The dynamic, two-day event held in Harrisburg on Monday, April 11, and Tuesday, April 12, 2022, provided practical strategies and tools to ensure safety, create opportunities for survivors, and prevent re-traumatization.

It also provided an opportunity to recognize those key stakeholders, without whom, we could not fulfill our mission.



Recognizing Outstanding Effort at the Conference

After the first breakout session, PA CASA distributed three awards during the Awards Luncheon.



The Champion of the Year award honors an individual who demonstrates outstanding leadership and has advanced the best interests of the Commonwealth's children through their support of PA CASA.

Senator Pat Stefano received the award in 2021 for helping to establish funding for CASA of Fayette County as well as for securing funds to support PA CASA between grants.



The Hero of the Year award recognizes an individual who has furthered the mission of PA CASA and inspires us to become better and to do better on behalf of the children we all serve.

Idelia Robinson-Confer received the award in 2021 for her youth advocacy initiatives and bravery in sharing her lived experiences to educate and inspire PA CASA and local program staff and volunteers.

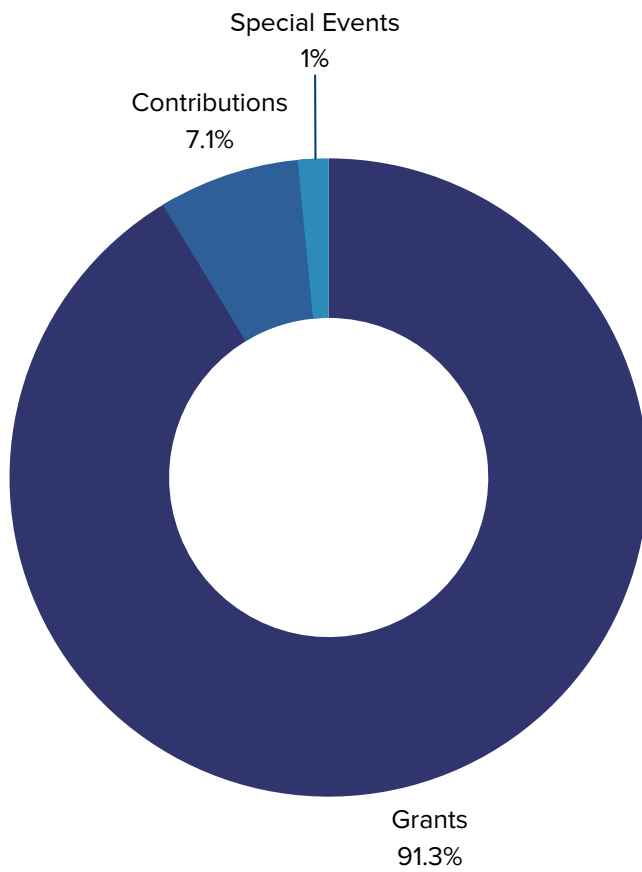


The Volunteer of the Year Award appreciates one extraordinary volunteer for their valuable and selfless devotion, dedication, and contribution to improving the lives of child victims of abuse and/or neglect.

Mary Slegel of York County CASA received the award in 2021 for her amazing advocacy for abused and neglected children.

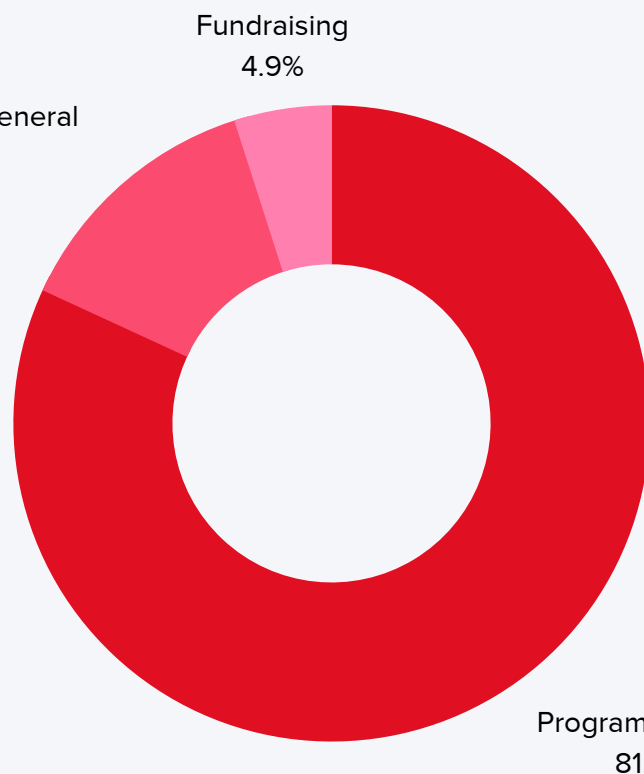
For the first time in 2022, PA CASA assembled a panel of independent judges to select a Volunteer of the Year. The judges reviewed applications from across Pennsylvania and unanimously selected Mary Slegel, a CASA volunteer from York County. Mary was sworn in as a CASA volunteer on July 18, 1977, after retiring from a 44-year career as a registered nurse. During the course of her volunteer advocacy, she has been assigned to 15 cases, and has served 34 children. Those at the luncheon were inspired by the words Mary shared about her experiences as a CASA volunteer and her gratitude to all the volunteers that serve such an important mission.

Financial Health



Total Support and Revenue \$924,282

- Grants - \$843,872
- Contributions - \$66,055
- Special Events - \$14,355



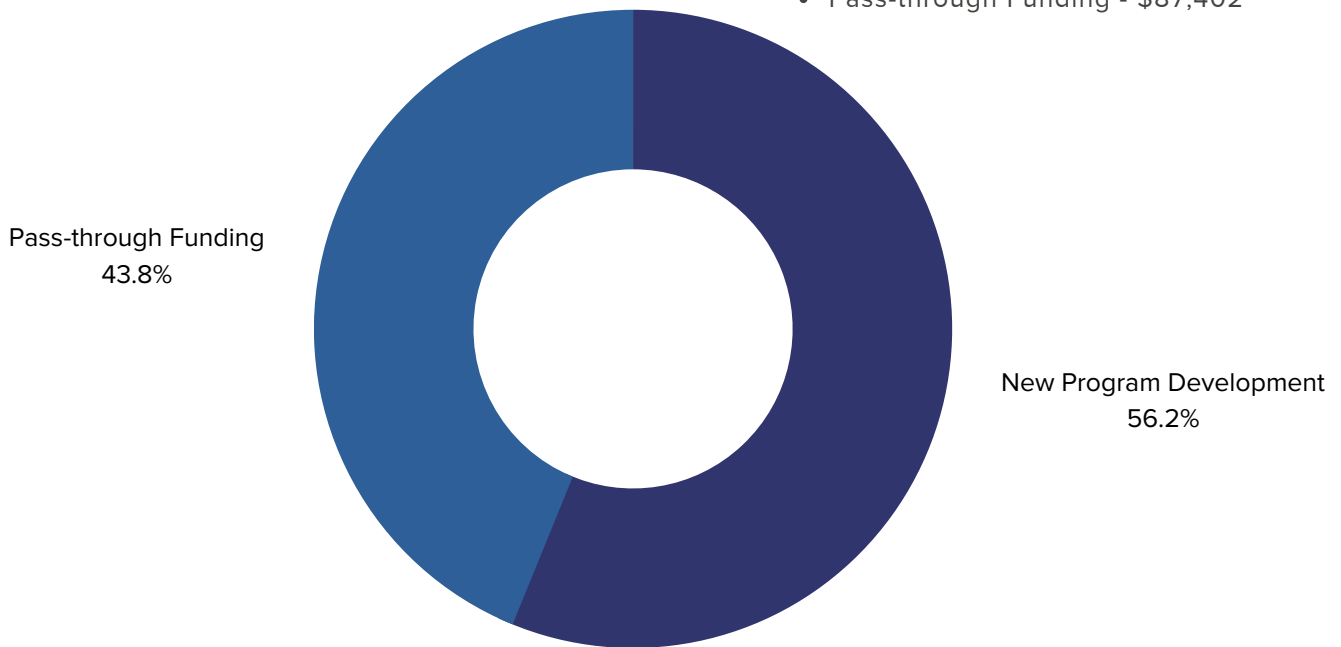
Total Expenses \$851,337

- Program Services - \$697,004
- Management & General - \$112,209
- Fundraising - \$42,124

Directly Supporting Local Program Work Through Funding

Total Pass-through Funding
\$199,369

- New Program Development - \$111,967
- Pass-through Funding - \$87,402



Staff and Board

Staff Members

- Jennifer DeBalko - President and CEO
- Ashley Frank - Chief Impact Officer
- Trevor Brandt - Chief Communications Officer
- David Taylor - Chief Financial Officer
- Maura Kelly - Director of Governance
- Rebecca Matchett - Director of Impact
- Steve Gill - Program Specialist
- Idelia Robinson-Confer - Program Specialist
- Lynn Frey - Coordinator of Communications
- Tesla Taliaferro - Coordinator of Information Technology

Board Officers

- Daniel Babin - Board Chair
- Anna Maria Kiehl - Treasurer
- Justin Fleming - Secretary

Board Members

- Dr. Bradley Beckwith
- Brett Benton
- Dr. Jeannette Carter
- Pamela Golden
- Happi Grillon - Local Program Board Representative
- Kelly Light
- Kevin Lutz
- Joan Peterson - Local Program Board Representative
- Tammy Royer
- Jennifer Scott



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

PENNSYLVANIA