

united in
hope

Pennsylvania CASA Association
Annual Report
July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

PENNSYLVANIA

A Letter From Our President and CEO



As we reflect on the past year, I am thrilled to celebrate the end of an era – CASA in Pennsylvania is no longer one of the three states without state funding. This achievement is a testament to the dedication and advocacy of our board of directors, team, network, volunteers, and supporters who have worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices of our state's most vulnerable children are heard and supported.

In a groundbreaking move, we removed attendance barriers for the PA CASA Conference, making it free for all participants. This marked a historic moment for us and resulted in a 22% increase in attendance. By doing so, we not only made valuable resources and knowledge accessible to a broader audience but also fostered a sense of inclusivity and community within our network. This is just one example of how we strengthened our commitment to local CASA program in Pennsylvania.

Our commitment to bolstering the network drove all aspects of our work. We focused on building strong new programs through our 18-month program development model. We provided an unprecedented number of training and opportunities to network to the programs. And we implemented a funding strategy for local programs that got them the money they needed to serve more children well.

Looking ahead, we are excited to share the active development of two new programs and one expansion of an existing program that will be launched in the coming year. These initiatives underscore our dedication to grow, strengthen, and unite local CASA programs in the Commonwealth.

One of the standout accomplishments of the past year is the success of our Healthcare Advocacy Program. The results speak for themselves – children and youth appointed to a CASA volunteer who completes the healthcare advocacy training program are more likely to have their physical, oral, and developmental healthcare needs identified, met, and supported. This underscores the vital role our volunteers play in advocating for the comprehensive well-being of the children we serve.

As we navigate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, let us continue to work together to build a brighter future for Pennsylvania's children. Thank you for your unwavering support, dedication, and belief in CASA's mission. Together, we can make a lasting impact and create positive change in the lives of those who need it most.

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 21 existing CASA programs serving 28 counties 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.

Where CASA Serves

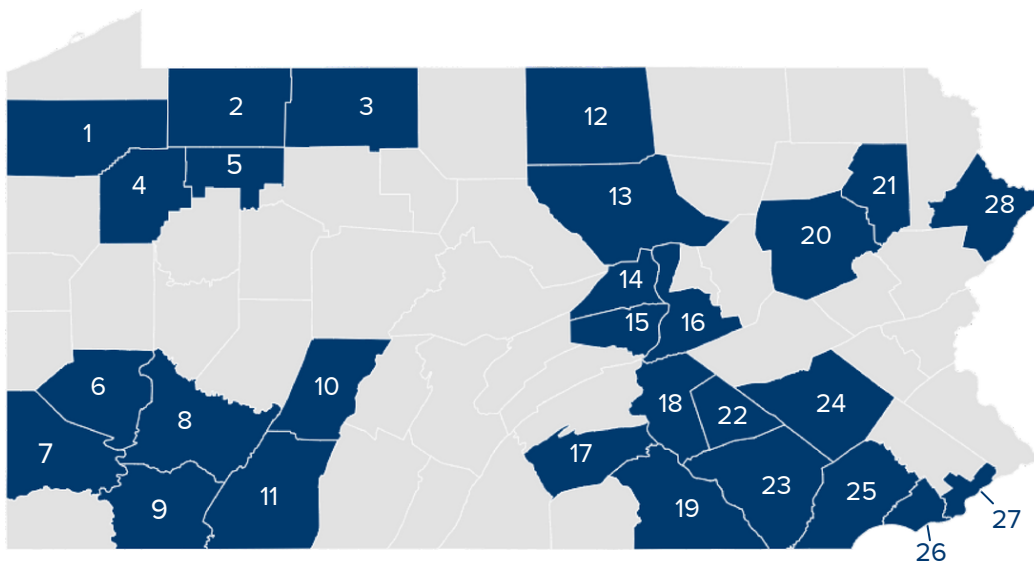


Pennsylvania CASA in 2022-2023

21 local CASA programs

2,074 children served

843 dedicated advocates serving children in 28 counties



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

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.

PA CASA organizes quarterly statewide DEI committee meetings to promote cultural competence and engage in discussions in understanding the disparities that exist for children and families in the child welfare system.

Throughout the past fiscal year, DEI members met to discuss topics including PA CASA's Social Justice Institute, predictive analytics and child welfare, psychological safety, and current news. At each meeting, members reviewed community agreements that they established to create an open and inclusive space. Members also committed to a challenge to complete before convening again.

In addition to committee meetings, PA CASA collaborated with subject matter experts and a curriculum designer to develop courses to address racial, ethnic, and LGBTQ+ health disparities. These courses, completed by CASA volunteers and staff, have demonstrated a significant increase in confidence in advocating for services to meet children's health needs.

20%

increase in confidence in effectively advocating for services to meet each child's health needs.

Growth



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.

PA CASA enhanced our capabilities, facilitated network-wide training, and provided more intensive technical assistance in 2022-2023. We enabled local programs to build capacity to serve more children across the Commonwealth.



With the support of PA CASA, local CASA programs maintained their services to children who have experienced abuse and neglect within their communities and enhanced their capacity to serve more eligible children in the upcoming fiscal year. This resulted in over 679 new children benefiting from the support, advocacy, and services provided by a CASA volunteer in the Commonwealth.

Overall, the network has increased the total number of children served by 4% compared to the previous year.

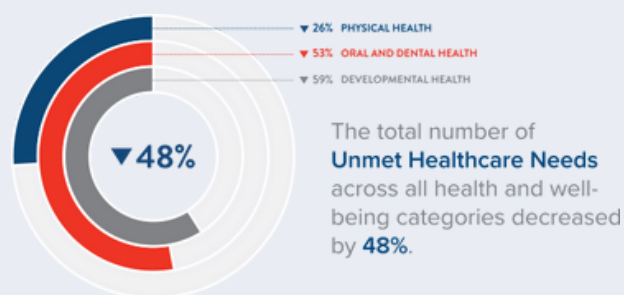
Our network increased volunteer retention by 7% from the previous year. Retaining CASA volunteers year over year ensures continuity of service to children. The Network also recruited and trained 240 new volunteers.



Healthcare Advocacy

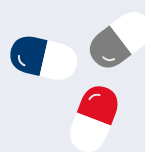
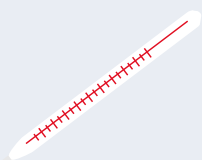
PA CASA recognized the potential to enhance volunteer advocacy, particularly in the health and well-being of children, via a training program to address gaps within the initial 30-hour pre-service training required to be completed by all CASA volunteers prior to being sworn in by a judge. The pre-service training curriculum does not extensively cover healthcare advocacy matters, resulting in the potential for some CASA volunteers to feel hesitant to engage with medical professionals, or become overwhelmed by other facets of their case, limiting the time and depth applied to reviewing medical records. In response, PA CASA proceeded with the establishment of the Healthcare Advocacy Training Program.

Children and youth appointed to CASA volunteers who undergo the Healthcare Advocacy Training Program experience a significant increase in the likelihood of having their physical, oral, and developmental healthcare needs recognized, met, and supported.



Furthermore, CASA volunteers who have successfully completed the Healthcare Advocacy Training Program display a heightened tendency to request and meticulously review health records. They are also more inclined to incorporate specific recommendations addressing healthcare needs within the court reports they submit. This suggests that the training not only enhances awareness but also encourages proactive efforts in addressing healthcare concerns.

Moreover, completion of the Healthcare Advocacy Training Program instills a greater sense of confidence and empowerment in CASA volunteers. This empowerment extends to their ability to advocate for the healthcare needs of children and youth, particularly those within historically marginalized communities. This highlights the program's effectiveness in fostering advocacy skills and addressing healthcare disparities among diverse populations. PA CASA has established an effective framework for program design and development, setting a standard that can be applied to future initiatives related to program establishment, expansion, and improvement.



Strengthening the Network

PA CASA connected local CASA programs through sixteen training opportunities that included book clubs, advocate supervisor trainings, workshops designed to assist with court report writing, a recruitment and engagement training, and networking.

16

statewide trainings and meetings

Supporting Programs

6,416

recorded interactions with local CASA programs

PA CASA supported local CASA programs by providing quality assurance visits, recruitment and outreach support, technology solutions, and maintaining 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.

Support Contacts by the Numbers

Administration	1,438
Program	3,883
Communications	1,095

432

prospective volunteers recruited by PA CASA through marketing and outreach campaigns for local programs



PA CASA Conference

In April 2023, PA CASA hosted its Annual Conference, *Advocating for Outcomes: Advancing Child Advocacy through Storytelling and Data*. The Conference welcomed 76 CASA staff and 126 volunteers in our network. For the first time, PA CASA offered attendance, meals, and lodging at no cost to the Network. By removing attendance barriers, attendance increased by 22%.

Participants had the opportunity to earn continuing education credits. The network-wide training featured presentations and workshops led by professionals with expertise in various fields, such as storytelling, data science, governance, motivational interviewing, older youth advocacy, and youth with lived experience in foster care. Professor John D. Trybus, Ph.D., story scientist and former traveling advisor to Dr. Jane Goodall, opened the day.



PA CASA Awards Dinner



Champion of the Year Award

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

Attorney General Michelle Henry

Attorney General Michelle Henry, who has advocated for children throughout her career, has prosecuted major child abuse cases and launched Bucks County's children's advocacy center.





Heroes of the Year

This award is presented to honor individuals who have furthered the mission of PA CASA and inspired us to become better and to do better on behalf of the children we all serve.

Yvonne Cook

Lauren Orazi

Yvonne Cook, President of the Highmark Foundation, for the grant awarded PA CASA to conduct research to help CASA Volunteers across the state better advocate for child Health Equity by addressing Racial, Ethnic, and LGBTQ+ Health Disparities in the Child Welfare System.

Lauren Orazi, of One + Strategies, who volunteered countless hours helping PA CASA successfully navigate the process of securing its first-ever allocation from the Commonwealth. As a result, Pennsylvania is no longer one of three states in the nation not to receive state funding. The allocation resulted in the expansion of the CASA network throughout Pennsylvania.



Volunteer of the Year Award

Volunteers are the cornerstone of every local CASA program and are vital in advocating for the abused and neglected children in the Commonwealth. This award honors an individual for their commitment to outstanding volunteerism and advocacy. The Volunteer of the Year Award recognizes one extraordinary volunteer for their valuable and selfless devotion, dedication, and contribution to improving the lives of child victims of abuse and/or neglect. The person selected will embody the guiding principles (family preservation, collaboration, and diversity, equity, and inclusion) as outlined by National CASA/GAL Association and work to advance the CASA movement in their community.

Deborah Ridenour

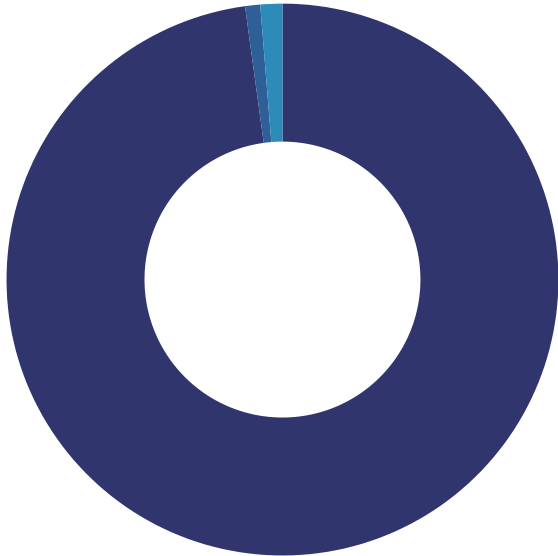
Deb's commitment to children is inspiring. She has gone above and beyond by responding to calls in the middle of the night, helping with college applications, finding resources to meet unique physical and mental health needs, and always fiercely advocating for children.





Financial Health

■ Grants ■ Contributions ■ Special Events



Total Support and Revenue
\$2,178,643

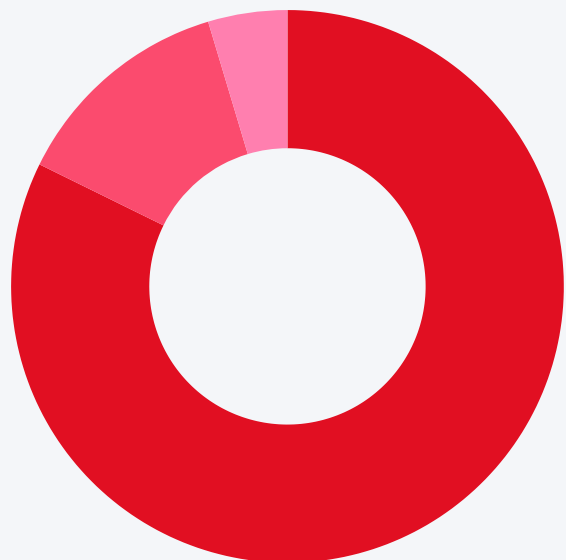
Grants: \$2,131,401
Contributions: \$19,227
Special Events: \$28,015

■ Program Services ■ Management & General ■ Fundraising

Total Expenses
\$1,217,553

Program Services: \$1,001,757
Management & General: \$159,356
Fundraising: \$56,440

Total Pass-through Funding
\$1,090,975





Staff and Board

Staff Members

- Jennifer DeBalko - President and CEO
- Ashley Frank - Chief Impact Officer
- Trevor Brandt - Chief Communications Officer
- Kendra Eckman - Controller
- Maura Kelly - Director of Governance
- Rebecca Matchett - Director of Impact
- Idelia Robinson-Confer - Impact Project Coordinator
- Lynn Frey - Engagement and Outreach Coordinator

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
- Carl Taylor

