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NEWS

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California CASA receives national grant to support California’s network of advocacy programs supporting children in foster care

San Diego, California– October 19, 2020 – California CASA has been awarded a $57,582 Sustainability Grant from the National Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardian ad Litem (CASA/GAL) Association for Children. California CASA is the statewide association that works with the 44 local California CASA programs which recruit, train, and support volunteers. These volunteers—Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASAs—advocate for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

This grant will enable California CASA to help sustain service to our network throughout the state of California, whose nearly 9,000 CASAs are working on behalf of 14,150 children in foster care. Every day, we see how COVID-19 is impacting all children, but especially those who have experienced abuse or neglect and are living in California foster care. Our state has 83,000 children in this situation, more than any state in the nation. These children are isolated, out of school, their already unstable lives now made even more unstable in the face of COVID-19. California CASA is focused on doing all we can for our network of 44 local programs, which serve 51 of the 58 counties in our state (where 99% of children in foster care live). Without question, the most pressing issue for California CASA now and into 2021 is to continue mobilizing support for our network in response to the multiple crises we face, and help the local CASA programs sustain their operations and gear up for what is expected to be an increase in foster placements into 2021. This generous grant from the National CASA/GAL Association for Children will help us provide training, technical assistance, volunteer recruitment, and COVID-19 crisis response to our network.

“We are honored to have been awarded this grant from our national association,” said Sharon M. Lawrence, Esq., CEO of California CASA. “Recognition from the National CASA/GAL Association is an important imprimatur that signals to other funders that our program is strong and our services to the field are vital, never more so than during this
pandemic. We are grateful for this national support, and look forward to continuing to help California’s 44 CASA programs with training, technical assistance, and counsel that will ensure their high level of professionalism and service to their CASAs and children."

California CASA is one of 948 state CASA/GAL organizations and local CASA/GAL programs operating in 49 states (all but North Dakota) and the District of Columbia. The federal grant funds distributed through National CASA/GAL are provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, as authorized under the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990. In 2020, National CASA/GAL was awarded nearly $10 million in federal grants.

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About California CASA

California CASA was founded in 1987 to serve the individual local CASA programs throughout the state. The mission is to ensure that children in the foster care system have both a voice and the services they need for a stable future. There are currently 83,000 children in California foster care—the largest foster population of any state in the nation. California CASA strengthens the state network of 44 local CASA programs and advocates for child welfare policy and practices that will improve the lives of all foster children. CASA volunteers are a crucial intervention to help ensure safety, speed up permanent placement, help children and youth thrive in school, and support positive health outcomes. A CASA volunteer is often the only consistent adult in a child or youth’s life who is not paid to support and advocate for them. Since 2017, the CEO of California CASA is Sharon M. Lawrence, Esq., who served for 20 years as CEO of Voices for Children (San Diego and Riverside Counties), one of the nation’s largest and most successful CASA programs. Chair of the Board of Directors is Kevin Gardner; he leads a statewide Board of 18 individuals representing all regions of California. California CASA is a private, nonprofit organization that is pursuing an ambitious ten-year vision (2020 to 2030) to ensure that every child in California foster care will have a CASA by their side. California CASA is a member of the National CASA/GAL Association, and one of 49 state CASA associations in the United States. Learn more at [www.californiacasa.org](http://www.californiacasa.org).

About the National Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardian ad Litem Association for Children

The National CASA/GAL Association for Children, together with its 948 state and local member programs, supports and promotes court-appointed volunteer advocacy so that every abused or neglected child in the United States can be safe, have a permanent home, and have the opportunity to thrive. The National CASA/GAL Association offers leadership and support to the network of programs and leads its continued growth. CASA/GAL volunteers and staff work every day to help change a child’s story. To learn more, visit [www.nationalcasagal.org](http://www.nationalcasagal.org) or follow National CASA/GAL on Facebook at [https://www.facebook.com/NationalCASAGAL](https://www.facebook.com/NationalCASAGAL) and [https://twitter.com/NationalCASAGAL](https://twitter.com/NationalCASAGAL) on Twitter and Instagram.