

ALAMEDA COUNTY COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES PROGRAM

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501 (c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

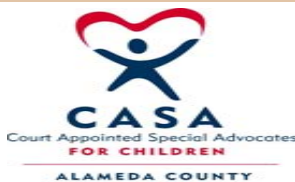
We are on the Web:
www.casaofalamedacounty.org

Foundation Support

- Kaiser Permanente
- State Street
- Honeywell
- In-N-Out Burger
- The Morris Stulsaft Foundation
- Hilton Hotels
- Five Bridges
- Children's Support League of the Bay Area
- Kappa Alpha Theta, UC Berkeley
- John Burton Foundation
- Pottruck Foundation
- Costco

Special Thanks

- Washington Mutual
- State Street



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Mission Statement: Alameda County CASA promotes and supports quality volunteer advocates to speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the dependency court system.

CASA Staff

Regena Jones, *Executive Director*
Tara Beckman, *Deputy Director*
Di Roberts, *Program Assistant*
Maria Mann-Gagné, *Pre-Adolescent Case Supervisor*
Jaime Dadej, *Adolescent Case Supervisor*

Advisory Board Members

Gary Thompson, *Chair*
Chet Hewitt, *Chair of FOACASA*
Ann Garnier, *CASA Volunteer*
Nancy Vachani, *CASA Volunteer*
Alex Briscoe, *Alameda County Health Care Services*
Calvin James, *Assistant County Counsel*
Michelle Love, *Alameda County Social Services*
Kathy Siegel, *Public Defender's Office*
Tony Crear, *Probation*
Paul Seeman, *Alameda County Commissioner*
Sylvia Soublet, *FOACASA Member*
Geoff Douvel, *Clear Channel*
Regena Jones, *CASA Executive Director*

Friends of CASA Members

Chet Hewitt, *Chair*
Donna Robinson, *Social Worker, Sojourner Truth Senior Housing*
Yvette Leung, *Alameda County Health Care Services Agency*
Kendra Roberts, *Delta Sigma Theta, Inc.*
Cindy Burnett, *California Consulting Assn.*
Sylvia Soublet, *Alameda County Social Services*
Kamal Nair, *JJDPC Commissioner*

Ex-Officio Members

Regena Jones, *CASA Executive Director*
Vana Chavez, *HCSA Finance Manager*

Upcoming Court Hearings

Aug. Court Hearings

Elizabeth Candelario: Tues., Aug. 19 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Valarie Medina: Tues., Aug 19 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 503
Vivette Catipon: Tues., Aug 19 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 503
Linda Mason: Wed., Aug 20 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Ana Escobar: Wed., Aug 20 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Sara Webber: Thurs., Aug. 21 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 504
Brenda Nelson: Thurs., Aug. 21 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Kitty Harvey: Thurs., Aug. 21 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Lisa Bereny: Tues., Aug. 26 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 503
Lois Brubeck: Tues., Aug. 26 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 150

*Hearings for early August not listed.

Sept. Court Hearings

Alexandra May: Tues., Sept. 2 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Karen Munoz: Tues., Sept. 9 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Jacqueline Lee: Tues., Sept. 9 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 503
Mahal Watkins: Tues., Sept. 9 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 150
Christopher Roduit: Wed., Sept. 10 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 503
Linda Norton: Thurs., Sept. 11 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 504
Lisa Bashnick: Thurs., Sept. 18 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Katherine Gavzy: Fri., Sept. 19 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Allison Hecimovich: Tues., Sept. 23 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 503
Richard Carter: Thurs., Sept. 25 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 504
Patricia Fitzpatrick: Thurs., Sept. 25 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 504
Janel Brown: Thurs., Sept. 25 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 150
Nancy Vachani: Mon., Sept. 29 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151

Oct. Court Hearings

Letitia Tumaneng: Wed., Oct. 1 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 503
Patricia Ames: Fri., Oct. 3 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Ronnica Gaines: Tues., Oct. 7 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 150
Felicia Chavez: Tues., Oct. 7 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 150
Pamela Casey-Aziz: Tues., Oct. 7 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 150
Britt Tennell: Fri., Oct. 17 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Iris Winogron: Fri., Oct. 17 @ 1:30 pm in Dept. 503 (Contested)
Serene Fang: Tues., Oct. 21 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 150
Ann Garnier: Wed., Oct. 29 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Geeta Makhija: Wed., Oct. 29 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Patte Bishop: Thurs., Oct. 30 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151
Rhondee Epperson: Thurs., Oct. 30 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 504 (Progress)
Diane Hernek: Fri., Oct. 31 @ 9:00 am in Dept. 151

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Special points of interest:

- Why Be a CASA?
- Volunteer Recognition
- Continuing Education

Inside this issue:

New CASA Volunteers Give Their Perspective on the CASA Training

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Voices for Children

Volume 2, Issue 3

July 1, 2008-September 30, 2008

New CASA Volunteers Give Their Perspective on the CASA Training

Although often critical of the effectiveness of pro bono organizations and group training, I was highly impressed by the 32-hour mandatory CASA training.



unteer and mentoring program over the years, CASA is like no other. This is one of the most multi-faceted volunteer programs I have ever seen, utilizing a broad spectrum of outreach methods, which is what led me to apply for this

Importantly, the training provided an optimum mix of theory and practice. Experienced CASA volunteers, foster youth, and parents whose own children have been removed, offered concrete, no-nonsense advice about what to expect and how to handle it. Representatives from Social Services and the Public Defender's Office presented details of the dependency system, children's rights, and applicable law. The broad range of presenters gave the trainees a bird's eye view of the system and each of its various components and actors. That perspective will be essential to becoming an effective child advocate, coordinating members of the team, and optimizing and staying within one's own role as a CASA.

me, the quality and diversity of the CASA volunteers largely confirmed the legitimacy of the program. We had, among others, a nurse, a lawyer, a social worker, an air traffic controller, a marriage family therapist, a college student, a port security contractor, a BART station agent, a medical records clerk, a small business owner, and a theoretical physicist. It would be hard to imagine a more interesting, diverse set of individuals. The collegial, and realistic yet encouraging atmosphere of the training further facilitated camaraderie.

Overall, the training made me confident in the CASA program and excited about my role as a child advocate in the future.

~Ryan Vlasak

Just as important were the fellow CASA trainees. For

While I have been involved with many community vol-

specific program. I was highly impressed by our training process and the way the program addresses so many different needs of children on a variety of levels, combining these issues as opposed to viewing and dealing with them as completely different entities. Learning, encouraging, teaching, protecting, healing, loving—these are all collaborative efforts. Regena Jones was wonderful in relaying the important fact that when it comes to children, nothing in their lives is black and white, nor would it be beneficial in any way to view it as such. For me, CASA training reaffirmed my "it takes a village to raise (or advocate for) a child" philosophy and I feel incredibly privileged to become a part of this team who works so diligently to advocate for the children of our Community.

~Dolores Antolin y Muniz

Volunteer Recognition

Maria Mann-Gagné, Pre-Adolescent Case Supervisor

Stacey Tengeri is flexible as a CASA. Although her youth is moving further away, she has agreed to stay on the case for at least six more months. There are many things Stacey can do to assist the transition following reunification. She has several areas to focus on and is looking forward to being more active on the case than ever.

Jaime Dadej, Adolescent Case Supervisor

Lisa Bashnick has been a volunteer for more than a year. She has been a dedicated volunteer who has responded promptly to her youth's educational needs and has always given him positive encouragement about being able to achieve his goals. Ms. Bashnick recently applied for a laptop computer for her youth through a company that refurbishes computers for foster youth. With her support and continued encouragement, her CASA youth's grades have improved considerably.

Tara Beckman, Deputy Director

Patricia Parker has worked with her CASA youth for only around four months, but she has been able to accomplish many things in this short period of time. CASA would like to thank you for taking the time to schedule a family visit and then drive your CASA youth three hours away to visit his family. Your generosity is truly appreciated!

New Volunteers Give Their Perspective on CASA Training Continued from Page 1

I first heard about the CASA program while watching an episode of the Dr. Phil show which highlighted the removal of the children from the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints Church in Texas. I found the link to my local CASA organization and found out what a CASA does and how important the position is. An orientation was scheduled for the following week so I attended. The timing was just right as I had been looking for a volunteer opportunity.

I just completed the 32 hours of training which is required to become a CASA. In our class, we had quite a large group; about 15 in all. It was a nice mix of ages, races and backgrounds and we even had two men in the class. This training, as I was told, was unique in that it was conducted mostly by current CASA volunteers along with professionals who interact with the program. It began with a few of the volunteers sharing their experiences with us. Hearing from them was priceless. It helped to explain how it was for them upon first meeting with their youth, meeting families and others involved with the youth, and what kinds of things they have done to support the youth. We next had two foster youth attend a Saturday session and share with us their perspective on CASA. What they shared was extremely emotional with many of us moved to tears. They had a great deal to say about how much support they were given by their respective CASA volunteers and how this has led to their successful emancipa-

tion from the system. It particularly heartened me to hear from the young woman who is headed for George Washington University with plans to study pre-law!

The training solidified my decision to help youth in the foster care system. I am very grateful that I happened upon the CASA organization. It appears to be filled with very caring and hardworking professionals. I feel very secure in the support they offer their volunteers and look forward to meeting the youth I'll be learning about and advocating for over the next year.

~Doris Gates

I truly believe that the opportunity to parent a child is a miracle and a blessing. It is also a growth experience for both the adult and the child. Parents have the right, privilege and responsibility to encourage their children in healthy ways, and nurture them into adulthood. In America, parents can obtain help to parent their children. This can be done via formal education and by sharing experiences of other parents. Parents can also ask children, "What do you need?" or "What can I do for you?" or "How was your day today?" Then parents can listen to their child. By utilizing the answers to these questions, parents have an enormous, "insiders" advantage to help children develop their innate abilities.

Well, what about persons who have no biological children? How can they deposit positive input into children's lives? I'm glad you asked. Adults with or without their own biological

children can take on the challenge of supporting children in foster care. This is what I decided to do, after months of working with friends and associates to mobilize volunteers for foster youth. I found out I could volunteer myself! For three weeks, along with about 14 other volunteers, I took the formal training to be a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). We heard presentations by former foster youth, attorneys, seasoned CASAs, their directors and supervisors. They explained the status, rights, privileges, dire needs and fears of youth in foster care and youth emancipating from the dependency system.

We had serious, tearful and laughable moments as we focused on duties and expectations of CASAs. We saw our roles as change agents, and the cheering section for foster youth now and in their future. We were made aware of many volunteer opportunities to advocate for and how to improve the quality of life for foster youth.

Along with my CASA classmates, I have joined the family of Alameda County CASA volunteers, supporting children to be children while they are children. Our goal is to advocate for foster youth to live safely with biological parents, relative caretakers, foster parents and group home providers. We hope youth will get to know their biological families and roots, have permanent connections in their communities, and grow into healthy, productive adults, giving back to those communities. Would you care to join us in this challenge?

~Gloria Anthony-Oliver

Resources for Foster Youth

HIFY (Health Initiatives For Youth) creates publications and resource materials and facilitates workshops and trainings for youth and those who work with them on a variety of youth and health-related topics, such as body image, sexuality, STDs and HIV, substance use, self-esteem and mental health, relationships, and violence. HIFY is located in San Francisco but serves East Bay youth as well. Youth services are free while trainings for service providers have an associated cost. For more information, please visit

www.hify.org; the site is youth-friendly and the program has a MySpace page that youth or other interested parties may link with.

FosterClub is a national network for youth in foster care. Their website (www.fosterclub.com) contains many stories and articles written by current and former foster youth and has sections for both teens and adults. There are also bios of former foster youth who became successful adults. Being able to read such stories can help foster youth understand that they are not

alone and that there is hope for a bright future. Additionally, the site allows visitors to search for resources specific to their state.

Sometimes teenagers have problems but have trouble discussing them or asking for help. **TeenCentral.net** can be found online and provides an anonymous way for teens to tell their stories as well as get feedback when they're dealing with a problem. Following the stories youth submit, there is a "Consider This" section that provides reassurance and advice tailored to what the youth wrote about. This site is not specific to foster

care, but is a great outlet for youth to air their frustrations and get advice on how to deal with difficult situations.



Volunteer Meetings and Continuing Education

Volunteer Support Groups

Maria Mann-Gagné's Meetings (all count for two hours of CE)

Tues., Aug. 26, 6-8 pm:

Volunteer Support Group

Tues., Sept. 23, 6-8 pm:

Volunteer Support Group

Mon., Oct. 27, 6-8 pm:

Volunteer Support Group

Jaime Dadej's Meetings

Sept.-Oct.-Volunteer Support Group Meetings: TBA

Tara Beckman's Meetings

ings

August: There will not be a meeting this month

Mon., Sept. 29, 6-9 pm:

Continuing Education: TBA

Tues., Oct. 28, 6-9 pm:

Volunteer Support Group

Upcoming Continuing Education Trainings

Location: Seneca Center (Registration required: To sign up, please register on Seneca's web site, www.senecacenter.org)

August Trainings

Wed., Aug. 13, 1-4 pm:

Sexual Trauma in Teenagers

Tues., Aug. 19, 6-9pm:

Helping Youth With Birth Family Connections

Wed., Aug. 27, 6-9 pm:

Helping Teens Develop Healthy Social Skills

September Trainings

Mon., Sept. 15, 6-9 pm:

Understanding Child and Adolescent Depression

Wed., Sept. 20, 9-5 pm:

Helping Youth With Emotional and Behavioral Challenges

Wed., Sept. 24, 6-9 pm:

Cultural Competency in Work With Youth

Mon., Sept. 29, 6-9 pm:

Separation and Loss Issues With Youth

October Trainings

Wed., Oct. 1, 6-9 pm:

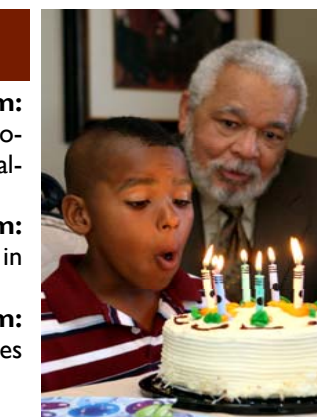
Working with Sexually Exploited Minors

Mon., Oct. 6, 6-9 pm:

Understanding and Meeting the Educational Needs of Youth

Wed., Oct. 8, 6-9 pm:

Talking to Youth About Human Sexuality



CASA volunteers have the opportunity to attend monthly support groups and are required to complete 12 hours of continuing education each year. CASA volunteers can access our continuing education calendar at our web site: www.casaofalamedacounty.org. Click on "Online Resource Center" and then "Calendar."