

ALAMEDA COUNTY COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES PROGRAM

1000 San Leandro Blvd.
Suite 300
San Leandro, CA 94577

Phone: 510.618.1950
Fax: 510.618.1966

501 (c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

We are on the Web:
www.casaofalamedacounty.org

Thanks to all our supports, funders, volunteer professionals and numerous partners that contribute to the success of CASA of Alameda County.

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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.

Volunteer Meetings and Continuing Education

CASAs have the opportunity to attend volunteer support groups and are required to complete 12 hours of continuing education each year.

Volunteer Support Groups

Support Groups count as two hours of CE. Please RSVP to your case supervisor at least two business days prior to the meeting.

Maria Mann-Gagné's Meetings

Wed., July 21, 6-8pm: Volunteer Support Group
Tues., Aug. 17, 6-8pm: Volunteer Support Group
Thurs., Sept. 23, 6-8pm: Volunteer Support Group

Jaime Dadej's Meetings

Tues., July 20, 6-8 pm: Volunteer Support Group

CASA Staff

Ginni Ring,
Executive Director

Di Roberts,
Program Assistant

Tara Beckman,
Case Supervisor

Jaime Dadej,
Case Supervisor

Maria Mann-Gagné,
Case Supervisor

Tara Beckman's Meetings

Mon., July 19, 6-8 pm: Volunteer Support Group
Tues., Aug. 31, 6-8 pm: Volunteer Support Group
Mon., Sept 27, 6-8 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)

July Trainings

Thurs., July 22, 1:00-3:00 pm: Creating Fun Activities for Youth in Care
Tues., July 27, 6:00-9:00 pm: Success Navigating the Educational Needs of Foster Youth
Thurs., July 29, 6:00-9:00 pm: Supporting the Racial and Ethnic Identity Development of Foster Youth

Advisory Board Members

Gary Thompson, *Chair of FOACASA*
Chet Hewitt, *Chair of FOACASA*
Ann Garnier, *CASA Volunteer*
Nancy Vachani, *CASA Volunteer*
Yvette Leung, *Alameda County Health Care Services*
Calvin James, *Assistant County Counsel*
Michelle Love, *Alameda County Social Services*
Kristin Mateer, *East Bay Children's Law Offices*
Tony Crear, *Alameda County Probation*
Sylvia Soublet, *FOACASA Member*
Geoff Douvel, *Clear Channel Outdoor*
Ginni Ring, *CASA Executive*

August Trainings

Tues., Aug. 3, 2:00-5:30 pm: Multiculturalism
Wed., Aug. 11, 6:30-8:30 pm: Separation and Loss Issues with Youth
Sat., Aug. 21, 10:00 am-1:00 pm: Helping Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Challenges
Thurs., Aug. 26, 2:30-5:00 pm: Cultural Competency in Work with Youth

September Trainings

Thurs., Sept. 2, 2:00-4:00 pm: Working with Teenagers
Thurs., Sept. 16, 3:00-5:00 pm: Child Development
Sat., Sept. 18, 9:30 am-1:00 pm: Youth Depression and the African American Culture
Thurs., Sept. 30, 10:00 am-12:00 pm: Grief and Loss: Helping Youth Cope

Friends of CASA Board of Directors (FOACASA)

Chet Hewitt, *Friends Chair, Sierra Health Foundation, President & CEO*
Cindy Burnett, *Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, Development Director*
Yvette Leung, *Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, Director of Children & Youth Initiatives*
Marie-Pescale Peterson, *Fremont Bank Foundation, Director of Community Outreach*
Sylvia Soublet, *Alameda County Social Services, Media Relations Officer*
Gary Thompson, *Chair, Advisory Board*

Ex-Officio Members

Ginni Ring, *CASA Executive Director*
Vana Chavez, *Health Care Services Agency, Finance Manager*

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Special points of interest:

- Standing Boldly for Foster Children
- Fostering Futures: Supporting Youth Transitions into Adulthood

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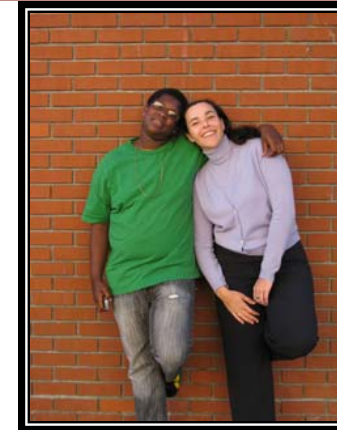
Voices for Children

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Guide to Independent Living for Transitional Age and Emancipated Foster Youth

The "Guide to Independent Living for Transitional Age and Emancipated Foster Youth" is a 214-page comprehensive guide, which was designed to provide Alameda County CASA volunteers and youth with resources and checklists for emancipation preparation. CASA youth will be encouraged to use this guide prior to their dismissal from dependency, ideally beginning at 15 years of age. This will enable youth to have adequate time to prepare for their emancipation and understand the services and resources available to them during this process. Volunteers will teach their assigned youth how to understand and make the best use of this guide. This guide provides our volunteers and youth with both practical and accessible information. In addition, we hope to educate and empower our foster youth to plan for their future by taking the time to thoroughly review this guide with their CASA volunteer.



CASA volunteers will also work with their youth's team to coordinate services and offer assistance with completing tasks in the Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP). To effectively advocate, CASA volunteers get to know the youth and speak to everyone involved in their life, including the youth's family members, teachers, attorneys, social workers, therapists, psychiatrists, and others. CASA volunteers research the facts of the case, create a plan for advocacy, facilitate a collaborative relationship between all parties on the case, make written recommendations to the court and monitor

percent of former foster youth will become unemployed. Fewer than 10 percent enroll in college, and only one percent graduate. Sadly, an astounding 25 percent of former foster youth will become incarcerated within two years of emancipation. This is both shocking and, we believe, unnecessary if our youth have adequate and consistent support during their emancipation process.

This is where a CASA can make a significant difference. CASAs make certain that all professionals newly involved in the case are consistently being updated to ensure they have adequate and current information. Advocates also monitor progress toward established goals and follow up with professionals to certify that tasks are completed in a timely manner. Due to the fact that transitional age foster youth are required to meet application deadlines and enroll in numerous supportive services, it is important for someone to adequately monitor their progress. CASAs can be the person who assists the team to ensure that a foster youth's needs are met and help the youth to achieve positive outcomes. They help youth set and achieve realistic goals, develop skills and move toward greater independence.

We are very excited to share this valuable resource with other organizations supporting transitional age youth. You can download a free copy from our web site at www.casaofalamedacounty.org

progress towards established goals. The information they gather and their recommendations help the court make informed decisions.

Alameda County CASA believes it is critical to provide adequate and consistent adult guidance to youth during their emancipation process. Unfortunately, many foster children face a lack of consistency among the multiple systems involved in their case. As a result, youth may experience a lack of continuity among professionals, including caregivers, social workers, attorneys, teachers, therapists, psychiatrists, judges/commissioners, etc. This constant movement of professionals in their lives often leads to a lack of continuity in care and can contribute to poor emancipation outcomes.

Here in Alameda County, at least 60 percent of youth emancipating from foster care become homeless within one year, according to the Alameda County Ombudsman's Office. The Children's Law Center of Los Angeles predicts that 50

Volunteer Recognition

Maria Mann-Gagné, Pre-Adolescent Case Supervisor

I would like to recognize A'sonda Adams for remaining dedicated to CASA and her assigned youth in spite of treacherous journeys to Antioch for visits (at least once finding that the youth was not home) and less-than-responsive collaterals. I am truly impressed with A'sonda's commitment and willingness to stay involved throughout significant personal life-changes.

Jaime Dadej, Adolescent Case Supervisor

I would like to recognize Jenny Beck as a superb CASA. Jenny's case has had some extreme challenges in the past several months which she has been able to successfully navigate through. Jenny was recently granted educational rights for the youth she is advocating for and has assumed the role of an educational surrogate seamlessly. I am impressed with Jenny's commitment to the young woman that she serves and am confident that her advocacy and interventions will have long term benefits for her assigned youth.

Tara Beckman, Case Supervisor

I would like to recognize Theodora Adkins for her commitment to her CASA youth and the youth's family. Theodora provided ongoing support to the family during a personal tragedy, helped the family obtain much-needed resources and continues to encourage her youth to prepare for independent living. Thank you!

Standing Boldly for Foster Children



The most poignant moments I have experienced so far in my new position as Executive Director have come from the moving demonstrations of compassion, selfless service and bravery of the CASA volunteer. My world revolves around the volunteer as I lead a team of dedicated staff, guide day to day operations, collaborate with our partnering agencies and plan for the future. Without the volunteer, not one child would be heard, advocated for or be given a voice in a complex sea of people and systems the children must navigate. Together we are in the business of keeping promises to children by standing boldly, being vigilant and aiding in their safe passage through this difficult time period in their young lives.

Moving forward I carry the vision of creating innovative

strategies and programs that support volunteers in achieving positive outcomes for the children we serve. Some key goals are to:

- Strengthen and grow our partner relationships
- Expand fundraising capacity and visibility in the community
- Increase the number of children assigned to CASAs
- Engage in recruitment activities that attract diverse volunteers
- Improve and enhance service delivery through training, collaboration, and community outreach

I have spent the past three months in dialogue with volunteers and our counterparts at the local, state and national level. Everyone seems to be trying to do more with less and are actually finding creative ways to do so. They are also envisioning ways to expand and improve service delivery by thinking beyond limited boundaries.

We are asking questions such as, "How can we serve more kids with tighter budgets?"; "What kind of outcomes can we expect of our CASA youth and how do

we best measure them?"; "Who will contribute funds to support these kinds of outcomes?"; "How do we build and sustain relationships with our supporters over the long haul?; and "What do we need to do to get the word out that we exist and make a difference in these young lives in our communities?"

CASA's mission is strong and compelling; positively impacting hundreds of Alameda County children. That mission is something worth talking about and inviting people to join in. CASA is the golden nugget-a model of human triumph over adversity in a society that needs more consistent caring human relationships. With your support, insight and passion, we will accomplish our goals and Alameda County CASA will flourish. I look forward to meeting all of you and invite you to contact me at any time to share your ideas. Let's stand together boldly in the CASA movement and forge ahead with a vision of greatness.

~Ginni Ring, MDiv, MSW,
CASA Executive Director

Fostering Futures for Teens

CASA of Alameda County launched a new pilot project called **Fostering Futures** along with 16 other CASAs within the National CASA network. Funded by the Walmart Foundation, the program focuses on foster youth ages 14-19 who will soon age out of the system.

Volunteers will undergo specialized training to work with youth to develop plans for making a successful transition from foster care into independent, successful

adulthood. Statistics indicate that youth who age out of the foster care system are at greater risk for homelessness, unemployment, substance abuse, criminal involvement and mental health issues.

Fostering Futures is based on a research model out of the University of Michigan called *Possible Selves* that helps young people achieve their full potential by promoting positive self identity, setting goals for the future and planning to achieve those goals.

CASA volunteers are uniquely positioned to provide the right support and guidance to assist their youth to envision their future and take steps to make their dreams real. As one of our foster youth so eloquently stated, "Even though it looks like there is no happy ending, remember that you are telling your story so YOU make the happy ending."

If you have a CASA youth age 14-19, contact us to sign up for this training to enhance your work with your teen.

Applied Mindfulness Trainings



Gabriel Kram, Director of Applied Mindfulness

Gabriel Kram, Director of Applied Mindfulness, Inc., with the support of the Seneca Center's Training Department, has joined forces with Alameda County CASA to develop a seminar-style interactive training series for CASAs to help them cultivate stronger inner awareness skills to apply to the challenges of their demanding volunteer roles. The trainings will lay a foundation in basic mindfulness, somatic awareness, and emotional self-awareness, with the goal of making these tools

a relevant part of the day-to-day activities of CASAs.

The trainings emphasize working sustainably, cultivating resilience in stressful situations, effectively navigating resistance, and maintaining equilibrium and positive focus. "CASAs are such a vital and sometimes misunderstood part of the support system for foster youth, and are constantly negotiating a complex network of relationships within a variety of family and institutional systems, which is potentially very stressful".

"Our work is to support the well-being of these dedicated volunteers by giving them access to a new set of tools and competencies that can be applied in their day-to-day responsibilities, and can help them more effectively respond rather than react to the complex demands made on them as they work to fulfill their responsibilities. "The desired outcome is more

clarity, ease, enjoyment, and sustainability in this vital role- and for me personally, it is an honor to have the opportunity to support this community whose work I deeply respect," says Gabriel.

Applied Mindfulness, Inc. (www.applied-mindfulness.org) is an intervention design, training, and consulting firm that provides transformative experiential training to empower clients of all ages to discover and cultivate the inner resources, tools, and competencies to live healthier, more fulfilling, and effective lives. Applied Mindfulness works in medical, emergency medicine, mental health, and youth development contexts teaching caregivers and providers how to bring greater awareness and sustainability to their demanding roles. Gabriel was previously Executive Director of The Mind Body Awareness Project whose innovative mindfulness-based interven-

tions for incarcerated youth are being scaled into new national models of rehabilitation. Gabriel has a deep and abiding interest in and practice of mindfulness, emotional self-awareness, and somatics work. Over the past sixteen years, these modalities have transformed his life, and he is committed to training organizations and individuals in these tools to transform quality of life and organizational culture. He studied neurobiology at Yale University, and narrative at Stanford University. He brings a reverence for indigenous culture, sixteen years of mindfulness practice, ten years of mindful movement, and a lifetime of wilderness exploration, nature awareness, and creative expression to his work, and is very happy to be working with Alameda County CASA.

CASA Training at Cornerstone Fellowship



This spring we were able to bring our training on the road and host our very first CASA training in Livermore at Cornerstone Fellow-

ship. Cornerstone Fellowship launched a ministry that focuses on the needs of foster youth. As part of the Foster Youth Ministry, CASA was invited to host our training at the church. The class met on Monday evenings in one of the classrooms. Following the same curriculum as our San Leandro course, speakers or the facilitator presented training material. We recently wrapped up the training

with nearly 20 new CASAs graduating!

CASA is grateful to Cornerstone for the opportunity to offer a satellite training and reach volunteers in the outskirts of the county which allows us to better serve kids who have been placed outside of Central Alameda County. We give special thanks to Judge David Krashna for presiding over our graduation

and offering the graduates inspirational words.

We look forward to a continued partnership with Cornerstone's Foster Youth Ministry.

