

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date 8/19/2023

Contact Information

Organization Name: CASA Youth Advocates, INC.
Address: PO Box 407 Media, PA 19063
Phone: (610) 565-2208
Website: <https://www.delcocasa.org/>
Year Incorporated: 1992
FEIN: 23-1901080

ED/CEO Name: Leigh Anne McKelvey, LSW MSW
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Board Chair Name: David A. Cramer
Board Chair Approval (check here):
Primary Contact Name: Shannon Bruno
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

Arts, Culture & Humanities Environment/Animal Welfare Education
 Health Human Services Religion

Mission:

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Youth Advocates' mission is to empower community volunteers to connect with and champion children and youth involved in the child welfare system, advocating for equity, resources, stability, and permanency. We envision a bright future in which all children and youth have the resiliency, consistent relationships with caring adults, and access to child welfare, education, health, and human services they need to fully experience the joys of childhood and pursue their dreams.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): Chester County

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:

CASA Youth Advocates is the only organization in Chester County providing adjudicated children and youth advocacy services. We serve children and youth, ages 0 to 21, living in Chester County, with specialized services—going with them to court, providing judges with comprehensive case information, representing them as Educational Decision Makers (EDMs), and advocating for their needs and wants.

Our young clients are moving through the child welfare system because they are victims of abuse and/or neglect.

In 2023 the percentage of our total children served who are 17-21 was 21%; 16-21 was 30%; 14-21 was 42%. The children and youth that CASA serves often have complex or chronic medical conditions or significant mental health diagnoses. 100% are living below federal poverty guidelines.

Annual Budget \$ 2,663,619 _____	17 _____ # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
30 _____ % of budget for program expenses	14 _____ # of Board Volunteers
12 _____ % of budget for administrative expenses	149 _____ # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
4 _____ % of budget for fundraising expenses	15,660 _____ # of Volunteer Hours
54 % for Salaries and benefits	

Top 3-5 funding sources:

PA CASA - state budget grant \$75,000.00

PA CASA - state budget grant \$20,000.00

Delaware County DHS \$121,000

Is this grant proposal for: Capacity Building ___ or General Operating _x___?

If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:

___ Mission, Vision & Strategy ___ Governance & Leadership ___ Partnerships & Collaborations

___ Fundraising, Development & Marketing ___ Technology Other: _____

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$5,000 _____

Proposal Summary:

CASA Youth Advocates provides court appointed special advocate services to children/youth involved in the dependency court and foster care system in Delaware and Chester counties. The only eligibility criteria are that the child/youth is an adjudicated dependent. The child/youth receive a CASA appointment at the discretion of the court. Most cases are identified directly by the Chester County Judge or Hearing Officer.

Child abuse and neglect is a critical social issue. CASA's core program is advocacy for children and youth under supervision of the court due to abuse and neglect. Often called the "invisible population" adjudicated dependent children/youth are under-served and overlooked. According to the 2023 State of Child Welfare (Chester County) "child maltreatment is a severe problem that has grave and costly consequences for the child, his or her family and the community at-large.

A child/youth who has experienced abuse and neglect is more likely to have social, emotional, and physical health problems and perform poorly in school." Our 2023 program data indicates the average stay for a child/youth in our program is a little over TWO years. This is a significant amount of time in the developmental life of a child or youth. The presence and impact of a caring, stable adult cannot be emphasized enough.

The CASA model engages highly trained community volunteers from a variety of backgrounds in serving as the front-line advocates for children and youth. The program has a one advocate/one child or one advocate/one sibling group model, allowing the CASA for each case to become "experts" on the child/youth's interests and needs. CASA advocates commit to at least one year of service, but stay for an average of 4 years, creating important continuity and consistency in a system in which professional turnover is high. Exceptional CASA advocates are invited to take a second case while their first case remains open. Upon case closure, advocates are welcome to take a new case.

Advocate assignment to a particular child/youth is based on their strengths, interests, experience, availability, and geography. As their time with the agency progresses, advocates often tend to specialize in specific areas - for example working exclusively with older children/youth, children/youth with educational needs, or children/youth with medical needs.

CASA advocates for the best interests of the children and youth to whom they are appointed. This includes making and following through on recommendations for permanency goals, placement,

visitation with family, education, medical needs, emotional and behavioral health needs, and other needs unique to each child/youth.

Due to CASA Youth Advocates' unique role – as an advocate for all aspects of the child/youth's well-being – each CASA has knowledge and understanding of the child/youth's history and current needs and can serve as conduit of information between systems.

In addition to the traditional CASA role, our advocates serve as Educational Decision Makers (EDMs) for many of our children/youth. In 2023, we have served as EDM for 60% of our youth ages 14-21 and 70% of our youth ages 17-21.

CASA Youth Advocates are appointed as an EDM for the child/ youth if the parents are unable or unwilling to participate in educational matters. In the EDM role, the advocate is also the court appointed legal signatory for all educational planning, advocacy and decision-making – including taking the lead in school enrollment; monitoring academic performance; requesting evaluations as needed; attending Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings; signing evaluation reports, IEPs, and Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREPs); requesting and monitoring Section 504 plans; and attending Manifest Determination meetings. In the EDM role, CASA is driving the child/youth's educational plan, in consultation with the child/youth.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

1. Nonprofit's history, goals, key achievements & distinctiveness

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Youth Advocates, Inc., founded in Delaware County in 1992, has been serving children in Delaware County since its start. In 2015, the Chester County Dependency Court Judge asked CASA to expand services into Chester County.

Over 300 hundred Chester County children/youth have been provided a CASA advocate as they navigated the child welfare system. Children/youth who have had a CASA advocate report the relationship was their anchor and support system. Our case closure surveys show the same data. In 2023, 100% of children/youth surveyed at case closure responded Yes to "Were you able to go to your CASA with anything that you needed?" Research has shown that children/youth with a CASA spend less time in foster care, are adopted more quickly, are half as likely to return to foster care, and less likely to be suspended or expelled from school.

2. Funding request

• Description of key initiatives

Individual

1. Core advocacy services for children and youth.
2. Educational Decision Maker program
3. CASA Cares Financial Assistance Program
4. Children's Futures Endowment Fund

Systems wide

1. Voices for Children Coalition: (<https://voicesforchildrendelco.org/>). Our mission is to improve the lives and well-being of children by strengthening families and the systems that support them in Delaware County.
2. Youth Voices Council. The creation of the Youth Voices Council formalizes our on-going relationships with young adults who want to be involved in shaping future CASA services and helping to create change in the larger child welfare system.
3. The Safer Schools Stronger Neighborhoods (3SN) coalition, created in September 2023, works to increase coordination, and prevent, intervene, and respond to gun and group violence among youth and young adults ages 11-24 in the City of Chester, Delaware County.

Diversity and Inclusion

1. Cultural humility community trainings
2. Courageous Conversations
3. MLK Day of Service

• Specific needs & issues to be addressed

2023 was a year of incredible growth for CASA! We broke all prior records serving the most children/youth and managing the most cases with the most volunteers in one year, more than ever before. Even though we served more children/youth with more volunteers this past year, we still are not providing services to every eligible child/youth.

Specific need: staffing and resources to give every eligible child/youth a CASA.

Grant funding, especially foundation funding, is very competitive. Children and youth in foster care because of abuse and neglect can be a difficult topic for some funders. Our impact can be hard to grasp because it is often not visibly immediate and can be more long term. However, the need for CASA services is very important. A child or youth in the child welfare system is dealing with uncertainty, fear, guilt or anger. Having a CASA advocate who understands the child/youth and is a positive mentor is invaluable. CASA advocates provide a stable adult relationship.

Government funding does not cover all expenses. Funding is needed to continue to expand professional staffing levels and volunteers to ensure every eligible child/youth has a CASA. We can only do that with funding from private, corporation, family foundations and donor advised funds.

• Why it is important to fund this now

CASA has significantly increased the number of children and youth served over the last few years, but we are still not meeting the need. In 2023, we served 303 children and youth---exceeding our yearly goal and creating a new milestone (highest # served in a year) for the agency.

Services to Chester County children and youth increased by 13% from 2022 to 2023. In 2023, CASA served 50% of eligible children in Chester County. If we had more funding, we could double the number of Chester County children and youth served in a year and ensure that every child in the Dependency Court system in Chester County has a CASA advocate by their side.

Another important fact is that our Chester County United Way funding was delayed due to the large number of applications submitted in Spring 2024.

• How impact & results will be demonstrated

We are committed to meeting the needs of children and youth in Dependency Court and to ensuring that all abused and neglected children and youth have an advocate by their side during their journeys in the child welfare system.

Our projected outcomes for the funded activities:

1. Increase the number of children served annually by December 2024.
2. Recruit, train, and swear in 50 new volunteer advocates in 2024.
3. Execute an aggressive outreach and public awareness campaign to recruit more volunteers and donors.
4. Hire another Case Supervisor in Q2 of 2024 to support our increasing caseload.

III. ATTACHMENTS

E-mail or mail this support information

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter
2. List of Board of Directors, with their affiliations
3. Most recent annual report & financial statement, audited if available
4. Itemized organizational operating budget with actual results for prior fiscal year & current fiscal year to date
5. If capacity building initiative, itemized budget (including external consultant's proposal, if applicable)
6. Current strategic plan. If your nonprofit does not have a current strategic plan, explain why.

- Use this form @ www.chescof.org to apply online for grants from all Community Foundation Funds.
- **Email proposals to grants@chescof.org**
- Proposals are considered "complete" when CCCF has **confirmed** receipt of the **Grant Proposal Summary Sheet, Narrative & Attachments**.
- Proposals are shared electronically and online with Fund Advisors, Donors & Grant Panels.
- Per IRS Regulations, applicants must be charitable, tax exempt organizations with 501(c)(3) certification & cannot be individuals.

Please contact Grants Administrator Kevin Baffa at
(610) 696-8211 grants@chescof.org with questions.

