

CASA FOR CHILDREN
Diversity Volunteer Program Summary

CASA of Northeast Texas, Inc. is a qualified 501©3 nonprofit agency with the mission of working to ensure children receive the needed service to overcome abuse and neglect.

CASA or Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children is a volunteer based non-profit program that advocates for children in foster care. Appointed by Juvenile Court Judges, CASA Volunteers help children who are removed from their homes as a result of physical or sexual abuse, and are placed in foster care under the jurisdiction of the Court. As court appointed advocates, our volunteers speak up for the best interest of these children to ensure that community services are focused on their needs and that help and healing are priorities.

In order to reach our volunteer growth goal of serving all abused and neglected children that are in need, we must diversify our recruiting and retaining methods as to attract a group of CASA child advocates that are more reflective of the population served. Our plan is to hire a male/and or African American volunteer recruiter that will focus primarily on volunteer recruitment.

Our hope is to build our capacity to enable our program to recruit enough diverse, quality volunteers to advocate for every child that needs one in the rural counties we serve in Northeast Texas. Goals include the recruitment of an additional 20 Texas CASA Volunteers. 35 Texas CASA volunteers are currently serving children and this addition would allow service to 50 more, therefore, an increase of 21%, bringing our ratio of children served from 54% up to 75%. Additionally, since more than 1/2 of the CASA children we serve are male and we would like to (at a minimum) double our male and African American volunteer numbers.

The total project will be \$51,650, but we are asking the TRC for only 5% of our budget, **\$2,500**. This grant funding will help to cover equipment, recruiting and training supplies, as well as partial funding of travel out to the rural communities. The overall project will bring beneficial changes such as family reunifications and permanency, resulting in 21% more children in safe and loving environments. Increasing the number of active, diverse volunteers will enable our program to help rebuild and strengthen more families' lives and give them the opportunity to break the cycle of future violence.

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Texas Rural Communities, Inc. Grant Application
Northeast Texas CASA, Inc.

Section I: Contact Information

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Section II: Organizational Description

- a. Give a brief overview of your organization, including its mission, purpose, a short history and any major accomplishments.

CASA of Northeast Texas, Inc. is a qualified 501©3 nonprofit agency with the mission of working to ensure children receive the needed service to overcome abuse and neglect. CASA of Northeast Texas, Inc. was formed in 1990 in Bowie County (Texarkana, TX) under the direction of Judge Jack Carter. Since that time, our program has expanded to two rural counties in Northeast Texas and to six rural counties in Southwest Arkansas. Now in our 26th year, our program has evolved to offer an array of services through CASA, the Texarkana Children’s Advocacy Center, and the Family Matters child visitation and exchange center, resulting in excess of 1,000 abused and neglected children being served annually in an 8 county area. We can be found on the internet at www.casatexarkana.org.

Notable events include CASA expansion to serve counties in two states, the formation of the Texarkana Children’s Advocacy Center in 1996, the formation of a supervised visitation and exchange program in 2006, two donated buildings, and many other mile stones along the way. A major strength of our organization is tenured and trained staff and the efficiency of being able to use their collective experience in all three programs. Administrative personnel are shared between all programs and direct service personnel are assigned solely to a specific program. Danita Abernathy, the Executive Director of CASA for Children joined the program as a volunteer in 1993 and has served as E.D. since January of 1995. CASA currently operates with 14 staff members and served 1034 (unduplicated) abused and neglected children in 2015.

Section III: Program Description

- a. What community and/or constituency needs will your program meet? How did you identify the need?

Currently, CASA is serving 54% of children in the Texas foster care system and are appointed to 100% of new CPS cases entering foster care in Bowie and Cass Counties by our judiciary. Our program strongly values the support and respect of our judges who believe that every child should have a CASA volunteer appointed as GAL. However, when faced with limited volunteers and representation required by staff members, this presents a challenge to provide the highest quality advocacy for the children we serve and in 46% of children not being served at all.

Previous challenges as well as successes were discussed during our recent visit with the Texas CASA Recruitment Team. This discussion resulted in the clear identification of and an outstanding need for a full-time staff member dedicated solely to recruitment of Texas CASA volunteers. Following our visit with the Texas CASA Recruitment team, our program formed a recruitment team of our own consisting of tenured volunteers and community members.

- b. Give a brief description of your program. What are its primary goals? How will you accomplish them?

In order to reach our volunteer growth goals our plans include, the creation of recruitment committees and the hiring of a dedicated recruitment staff member. We have already selected and interviewed a male, African American volunteer who has served as a CASA Volunteer for almost 6 years. Not only does he have several years' experience serving as a child advocate, but has also proven to be an effective speaker demonstrating an overwhelming passion for the mission of CASA.

Our plan to add an African American male staff member will not only improve our outreach to other potential male volunteers, but will also ultimately diversify our advocate pool. With this addition, our goal is to double the number of male and African American volunteers and reach a volunteer case ratio of 90/10 in FY17.

- c. Describe the program participants or beneficiaries. Are you planning to serve people of a particular age group, ethnic background or income level? How many people will your program serve?

Last year, CASA provided advocacy to 350 abused and/or neglected children, ages birth to 18 years of age. Presently, we have 74 advocates serving 237 children, but 133 children and youth in our 8 county service area do *not* have a CASA volunteer to represent their best interests. These are children who are more likely to be placed in different homes from their sisters or brothers, move to multiple foster homes and schools over the course of a few years, and remain in foster care without finding a stable home only to "age out" of the system when they turn 18—often without any consistent adult in their lives. When they age out in this way—

totally unprepared to face life on their own—the odds for a satisfying and productive life are stacked heavily against them.

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- d. Describe the aspects of your program that are unique or innovative. Is your program a model for other communities? How will you communicate your program's success to other communities?

We are working with a brand new recruitment specialty team from Texas CASA that will be making onsite visits with us to find new ways to recruit volunteers. Our new plan could be a model for other CASA programs and successes can and will be shared with all other like programs through our affiliations with Texas CASA, as well as the National CASA Association.

- e. Provide a budget for the project you have proposed, included the specific use of grant funds requested. In addition, include a one-page profit/loss statement and a budget for your organization's prior fiscal year. If TRC were unable to fund the total amount you have requested, would you accept a smaller grant?

Please see attached Project Budget, Profit/Loss Statement and 2015 CASA Proposed Budget
If TRC were unable to fund the total amount we would accept a smaller grant.

- f. Describe the expected outcomes or accomplishments for your program. How will you measure these outcomes?

The overall project will bring beneficial changes such as family reunifications and permanency, resulting in 21% more children in safe and loving environments. Increasing the number of active, diverse volunteers by 20 will enable our program to help rebuild and strengthen more families' lives and give them the opportunity to break the cycle of future violence. With this addition, our goal is to double the number of male and African American volunteers and reach a volunteer case ratio of 90/10 in FY17 that will enable us to serve an additional 50 children.

Evaluation and performance measures include the successful hiring of an appropriate candidate for the position, and completion of training of the diverse recruiter. Measurement will take place through our current case data tracking system, totaling new volunteer recruits, including information on their gender and ethnicity and reviewed monthly by the CASA Program Director and Executive Director.

- g. Give a timeline for your project or program and expenditure

With the new employee ready to join our staff, all we need is to gather more funding to purchase supplies and equipment to get started. We plan to implement this project January 2017.

- h. If the organization has received a grant award from TRC in the two preceding years, report the timeline, outcomes and financial expenditures related to the award.

No previous grant has been awarded.