

2019 Annual Report

www.ConnecticutCASA.org



CASA: The Beginning

Court Appointed Special Advocates, “CASA”, was first established in 1977 by David Soukup, a Juvenile Court Judge in Seattle, Washington. Judge Soukup was concerned that he was making life-altering decisions regarding the children before his court with inadequate information about the children or their circumstances. He had the idea to train citizen-volunteers to work one-on-one with children who had experienced abuse or neglect and provide routine reports to the court in regard to their best interests.

Judge Soukup’s program in Seattle inspired a movement that now includes more than 900 CASA programs nationwide. In 2018, 93,300 CASA volunteers supported over 271,800 children in 49 States. Connecticut CASA Association was incorporated in 2017 to expand, promote, and support CASA’s nationally proven programming for children who have experienced abuse or neglect in Connecticut.

Our Guiding Values

Vision. Connecticut CASA Association envisions a State child welfare system in which every abused or neglected child is given the opportunity to thrive in a safe, and loving home.

Purpose. The purpose of the Connecticut CASA Association is to ensure that local CASA programs have the support and resources they need to provide the highest quality best interest advocacy for abused and neglected children before Connecticut’s Superior Court of Juvenile matters.

Mission. The Connecticut CASA Association promotes and empowers a statewide network of court appointed volunteer advocacy programs that recruit and train volunteer advocates to safeguard the best interests of abused and neglected children before Connecticut’s Superior Court of Juvenile matters.

www.ConnecticutCASA.org

Dear Friends of Connecticut CASA,

2019 was a pivotal year for our growing organization. With your support, we expanded our Board of Directors, established a Memorandum of Understanding with the Connecticut Judicial Branch, partnered with the National CASA/GAL Association to establish two new local CASA programs, and implemented the National “Change a Child’s Story” branding campaign in local media markets to raise awareness about our mission.

As we look ahead in 2020 and to 2021, we are focused on continuing to build and expand our new programs, diversifying our Board of directors to better reflect the communities we serve, and developing strong relationships with policymakers, funders, and community leaders to broaden support for our mission. Ultimately, our goal is to build on the infrastructure we established in 2019 to increase the number of children served by our local programs in 2020 from 48 to 72. We hope to see that number double year over year for the next five years. This will ensure that up to 30% of the children living in Connecticut’s foster care system in a given month will have the benefits of a dedicated CASA volunteer.

We are proud of our achievements in 2019 and look forward to continued progress in the years to come. Thank you for being part of our journey. Together we can ensure that every child who has experienced abuse or neglect in our State is given the opportunity to thrive in a safe, loving home.

Warmly,

Lauren Gibbons Messner, Executive Director



How your support helps children

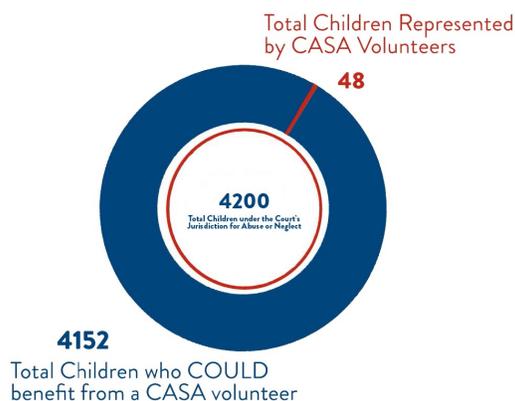


In any given month during 2019 in Connecticut there were approximately 4,200 children in the custody of Connecticut's Department of Children and Families due to abuse or neglect. Connecticut CASA develops, promotes, and empowers a statewide network of local CASA programs to provide best interest advocacy services for this population of children. Our affiliate programs in New Britain, New Haven and Fairfield County recruit, train, and supervise CASA volunteers in their respective communities to advocate for children using CASA's nationally proven training curriculum and performance standards.

A Daunting Task

It's true, there are many children who could use our help! Connecticut CASA is a new state program with tremendous potential. As judges become more familiar with the benefits of the CASA program our goal is to double our cases year over year for the next 5 years.

Room for CASA Growth in CT



“After working with 11-year-old Kyle for many months, it is clear that having an independent person focusing only on his best interest makes all the difference. Whether it's just spending time together to show that another adult cares about him, or making sure he gets the right services at school and in his foster home, having someone on Kyle's side guarantees that his needs are not slipping through the cracks so he can enjoy his childhood, the way every child should.”

-Arthur, CAC Volunteer Advocate
CASA of SW Connecticut

Connecticut CASA Impact

OUR VISION: **SERVING EVERY CHILD**



“CASA volunteers play a unique role on behalf of some of our most vulnerable children. Their commitment, vigilance and persistence offer hope where there has been little.”

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN, FOUNDER OF THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

THE RESULTS: **STUDIES HAVE SHOWN...**



A child with a CASA volunteer advocate is **more likely to find a safe, permanent home.**



A child with a CASA volunteer advocate is **half as likely to re-enter the foster-care system.**



And, they are **more likely to succeed in school and less likely to spend three or more years in care.**



Letter Written by a 14 year old foster child to her CASA of SW Connecticut advocate

I'm so grateful to have you in my life. You've been through the ups & downs. You've been there for me when I wasn't behaving. I love you because whenever I do an you always perk my spirits back up! I'm going to get back on track. I know you heard that so many times. You probably think I'm bullshitting you lol. But I'm being so serious. I really want to go back home with my family. I actually spend time with them. But I'm going to make changes in my life. Anyway I hope you have a nice summer. I'll be out in January. I love you to the moon & back.

WHAT A CASA DOES



ADVOCATE

Speak up for the best interest of the child



SUPPORT

Provide a stable & caring relationship



COLLABORATE

Coordinate care across agencies



REPORT

Organize & present details



RECOMMEND

Offer ideas to improve the situation

CASA Programs in Connecticut



State Level CASA Organizations

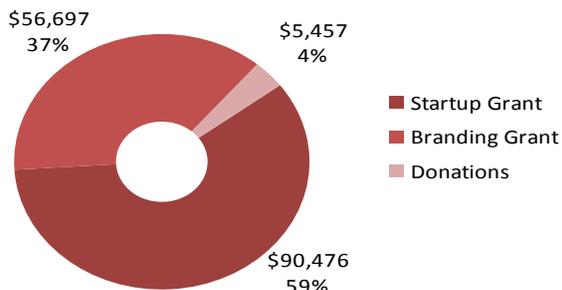
- Work as a partner with the National CASA Association
- Promote state level awareness about CASA programs
- Manage outreach to Connecticut's Judicial Branch and child welfare agencies
- Support Local Programs
 - Review for quality
 - Provide technical assistance
 - Assist with planning & execution to build capacity
 - Foster collaboration throughout the State
- Provide fundraising initiatives & resource development support
- Provide training & development opportunities

Local Program CASA's

- Provide CASA Volunteers
- Recruit, screen, and train CASA volunteers
- Supervise CASA volunteers' case work
- Raise community awareness
- Protect the CASA brand through thoughtful adherence to National standards
- Interact effectively within the local court system
- Collaborate with regional DCF staff and attorneys

Financials at a Glance

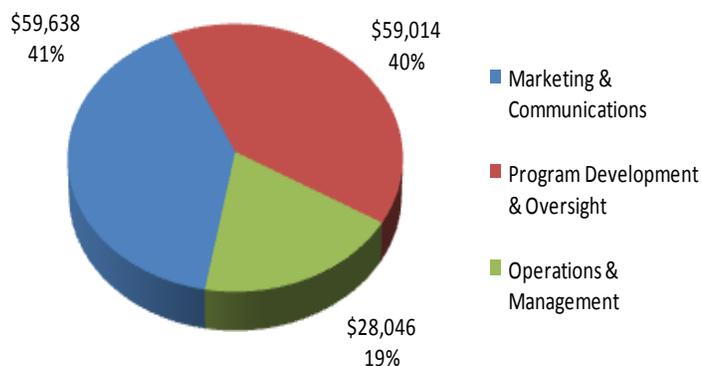
Income



Our 2019 income and expenses reflect the start-up phase of our organization. We were awarded Development and Branding grants from the National CASA Association through the Federal funding they receive from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

Our goal in the coming years is to earn the support of local funders and major donors to develop sustainable, ongoing funding for the CASA mission in Connecticut.

Expenses



Balance Sheet

2019

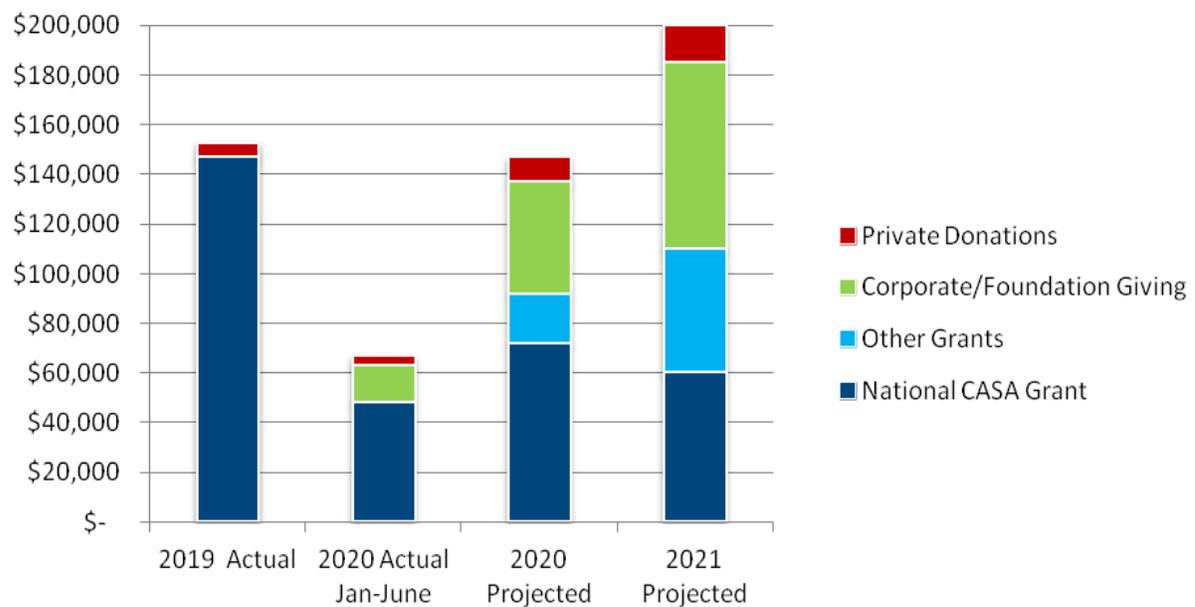
As of December 31, 2019

	Total
ASSETS	
Total Accounts	4,991.53
Other Current Assets	11,816.67
TOTAL ASSETS	\$16,808.20
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Current Liabilities	243.2
Total Equity	16,565.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$16,808.20

Financial Goals

Our goal in 2020 is to sustain the services and operations developed in 2019. As we look ahead to 2021, we are aspiring to raise additional funds to increase our reserves and expand our services to include more training and development resources for CASA staff and volunteers.

Looking Ahead



	2019 Actual	2020 Actual Jan-June	2020 Projected	2021 Projected
National CASA Grant	\$ 147,173	\$ 47,917	\$ 71,875	\$ 60,000
Other Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ 50,000
Corporate/Foundation Giving	\$ -	\$ 15,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 75,000
Private Donations	\$ 5,457	\$ 3,870	\$ 10,000	\$ 15,000
	\$ 152,630	\$ 66,787	\$ 146,875	\$ 200,000

Staff



Executive Director, Lauren Gibbons Messner

Lauren began her CASA journey in 2011 serving as a CASA volunteer for Voices for Children in San Diego.

Lauren experienced the impact a CASA can have on a child's life first hand; representing a brother and sister in San Diego county through their second time in the child welfare system. Lauren was a supporter and community organizer for Essex County CASA in New Jersey from 2013 until 2018. Professionally, Lauren is a skilled trainer, consultant, and client advisor with experience in the non-profit, real estate, and management consulting industries.

Director of Operations, Alyssa Goggin

Alyssa is a lifelong Connecticut resident who joined CT CASA in March of 2020. Bringing with her a 15 year background in Operations in varying industries and a previous 10 years in Financial Management. As a single mother of three, she is in-tune with the immense need of children everywhere to have an ally during difficult times. Alyssa is honored and excited for the opportunity to apply her professional experience in support of CASA's mission and programs in Connecticut.



Board of Directors

President

David Bayne, Partner, Akerman LLP

Secretary

Sheryl Culotta, Associate Provost, Wesleyan University

Treasurer

Erin Cornell, Associate Director, Help Me Grow National Center

Directors

Mario Chiappetti, Retired Insurance and Non-profit Executive

Lynx McClellan, Associate Professor, University of Bridgeport School of Nursing

Emily Lorei Rodrigues, Communications Mgr, BAE Systems

Christopher Trombly, Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership, SCSU