



Together, we are a powerful voice for vulnerable children

WHAT IS THE CASA/GAL PROGRAM?

It involves a nationwide network of state and local programs with 96,929 trained community volunteers who step up to assist judges and advocate for the best interests of children who have been abused or neglected. We work in thousands of courtrooms and communities across 49 states and the District of Columbia and serve 276,809 of America’s most vulnerable children. Our court-appointed volunteers are recruited, trained, and supported by 948 CASA and GAL programs.

HOW DO VOLUNTEERS HELP CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN ABUSED OR NEGLECTED?

Children removed from home because of abuse or neglect face a frightening, profound unknown, and we make sure they don’t face it alone. CASA/GAL advocates help these child victims heal and thrive, through a dedicated, one-on-one relationship. They remain appointed to the child’s case throughout its duration, so while the child may have multiple attorneys, social workers, therapists, and foster placements throughout the life of the case, they may have only one CASA/GAL advocate. Knowing their advocate is not paid for their time helps to build trust and credibility.

“ It is our goal that every child in the dependency system has a trained CASA or GAL volunteer. We will continue our work to create and expand these critical programs because we have seen firsthand that these volunteer advocates make a positive difference in children’s lives.

– STATEMENT BY 15 PAST PRESIDENTS OF NCJFCJ



HOW IT ALL BEGAN

In 1977, Seattle Judge David Soukup spent sleepless nights wondering whether he had made the right decisions for the children before his court that day.

It struck him that volunteers could be recruited and trained to speak up for the best interests of each child in his courtroom, and the first program was started in King County, Washington.

After he retired from the superior court bench, Judge Soukup became a volunteer. He called it “both the hardest and best thing” he’d ever done. He said, “Although I had slept better as a judge knowing that CASA volunteers were speaking up for children who needed their voices, the volunteers were now up at 4 a.m. worrying about those kids.”



NATIONAL CASA/GAL ASSOCIATION

WHY SHOULD A JUDGE APPOINT A CASA OR GAL VOLUNTEER?

We bring the voice of the community into the courtroom.

CASA/GAL programs engage volunteers in the community to transform the lives of children who have experienced trauma and tragedy, increasing public understanding, transparency, and accountability.

We help judges make the best-informed decisions.

CASA/GAL volunteers can improve the quality of judicial decision-making by providing unique, up-to-date information that could only come from a one-on-one relationship between a child and a dedicated volunteer.

We help make sure children receive the services ordered.

CASA/GAL volunteers monitor the child's case, working with all parties in the courtroom to ensure they receive every evaluation, treatment, and service ordered by the judge.

We are trained to help children heal and thrive.

Each volunteer completes at least 30 hours of training before taking a case. The training covers topics like child development, trauma-informed care, and educational advocacy. The child's volunteer is a caring, consistent adult during a time of chaos.

WHY DO JUDGES DEPEND ON CASA AND GAL VOLUNTEERS?

Nearly 700,000 children are victims of abuse or neglect every year. To make decisions that affect the rest of a child's life, judges need to know the child. CASA/GAL advocates help them do that by taking the time to get to know the child and talking to the people in their lives—parents and foster parents, family members, teachers, doctors, social workers, attorneys, and therapists. In an overburdened and underfunded child welfare system, every detail we provide helps judges make the best-informed decisions to ensure the child has a safe, permanent home. Our work is guided by the principal that children grow and develop best in their home of origin, if that can be safely achieved.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL CASA/GAL ASSOCIATION?

The National CASA/GAL Association is the hub of a nationwide network of state and local CASA/GAL programs. Working in partnership with its member programs, National CASA/GAL:

- Delivers state-of-the-art, rigorous training programs and tools.
- Provides quality assurance support to ensure the highest standards of excellence in service to children.
- Raises public awareness about the needs of America's most vulnerable children.
- Supports member programs with pass-through grants from public and private funding sources.
- Leads the growth of the CASA/GAL network so that every child victim can have the support of a caring, consistent, and highly trained advocate.

Help us serve every child before the court who has experienced abuse or neglect by appointing a CASA or GAL volunteer to all your cases.

