



Annual Report Fiscal Year 2017-2018

CASA, First Judicial District

FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

The mission of CASA, First Judicial District is to support and promote court-appointed volunteer advocacy so that abused and neglected children in Santa Fe, Rio Arriba and Los Alamos Counties can be safe, establish a permanent home and have the opportunity to thrive.

CASA First was established in 1995 and since that time we have advocated for thousands of foster children in Santa Fe, Rio Arriba and Los Alamos. We recruit, train and support impassioned community volunteers connecting them to our most vulnerable families for a disproportionate impact per investment. CASA volunteers spend hundreds of hours getting to know each child and their families in their natural setting, meeting with social workers, therapists, schools, corrections institutions & medical personnel ensuring that they are not lost in the system. Our CASA Volunteer Advocates work hard so that each foster child has access to appropriate developmental services, medical and mental health care, is safe, with caregivers that understand their needs and are moving effectively towards safe permanency.

CASA First News

10 Who Made a Difference

Nancy Gehman who has been a CASA Advocate with us for over 12 years was awarded the New Mexican's prestigious honor of 10 Who Made a Difference in our community.

CASITAS

Our Court Appointed Special Infant Toddler Advocates, specialize in advocating for babies in foster care so they can have the best start possible. CASITAS understand the importance of early intervention and family support, advocate to assure a child's primary attachments are central in placement decisions, and resources are adequate including a safety net.

New CASA Volunteer Advocate Trainings

We held 2 New CASA trainings, 32 hours each. We use the National CASA Flex training model which combines in-class trainings, role playing, panels with our partners and an on-line interactive study portion.

In-service Trainings

CASA Doreen Sansom continues to run a monthly peer reflection group for our CASA Advocates. In service-

trainings included many with non-profit partners including Esperanza Shelter, Youth Works, Christus St Vincents Hospital on prenatally drug exposed babies, Solace Crisis Treatment Center, and Gerard's House Grief Center. We held a half day training in Espanola with multiple local partners so our volunteers have a better understanding of resources in the community.

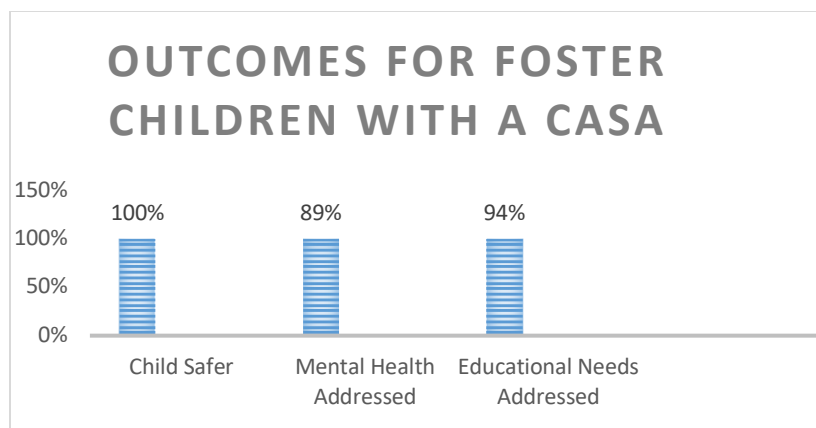
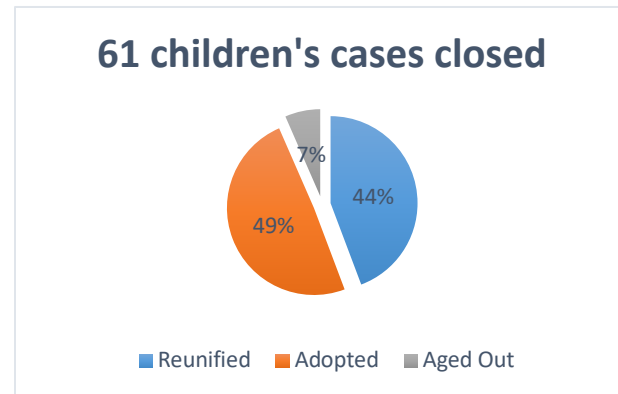
MUGS FOR CASA

We held a special Event at Opuntia Café where dozens of artists created over 100 unique and clever mugs which were sold to support CASA First.



The Data

- CASA First represented 171 children in 91 cases. 92 foster children were from Rio Arriba County.
- We served 76% of all foster children in our district.
- 29 cases representing 61 children closed during the fiscal year. Of the 61 children, 27 were reunified, 30 were adopted and 4 aged out.
- 60% of new children assigned a CASA during the year (44 children in 28 cases), were birth to 5.
- 20 new CASA Volunteers were trained and sworn in.
- 169 court reports were filed and 237 court hearings were attended.
- CASA Volunteer Advocates contributed a total of 5780 hours, 4606 of which were working a case.



Outcomes

We surveyed our CASA Volunteers to assess the impact they are having on the foster children they advocate for, and learn how we may improve:

- 100% reported that in cases where safety was a concern, their foster child was safer by virtue of them being on the case:
“Sexual abuse-never discussed- I questioned at every chance- finally got answers”, “Lots of turmoil and movement, I am the constant for them”
- In 89% of the cases, the CASA ensured that the child was receiving mental health services or advocated for an assessment and treatment. In the most of the remaining 11%, the child was already assessed or receiving services.
- For 94% of children represented, CASAS advocated for the developmental and educational needs of their foster child:
“I worked very hard to ensure the child received all the developmental therapy she needed and deserved.”, “I helped with an “IEP, child care, and summer camp applications”
- Close to 90% felt that their foster child had a caring adult in their life, though some were uncertain or reported “No; too much shuffling.”
- 82% felt their child got to experience “normal” activities of childhood. Some of the resources our CASAs provided to foster children this year included: quilts, books, art supplies, birthday gifts and parties, clothes, toiletries, stuffed animals, holiday gifts, passes to Meow Wolf, the Lensic and the Children’s and Georgia O’Keefe Museums, participation in Basketball Camp, and photo albums.



Our vision continues to be that every foster child has access to their individual developmental, mental health, medical and educational needs, finds a safe and loving forever home and has a bright future.

New Mexico CASA Network - CASA First is an active member of a network of 15 regional CASA programs throughout our state to strengthen supports for maltreated children.

Vignettes from some of our CASA Volunteers on why they advocate for foster children:

Three-year-old John and his 11-month-old sister Katie were taken from their apartment, the only home they had ever known, by people they did not know. Their mother was taken to jail. Their father was already in jail. John and Katie were taken to a foster home and two weeks later to another foster home and on the weekends they were taken to different foster homes that changed almost every week. They had not only lost mom and dad, but there were dozens of new adults in their lives. Fortunately the social worker found a day care facility for them, but that meant yet more changes and more new people in their lives.

John and Katie responded differently to day care, John ran in circles unable to focus and his sister sat uninterested in crawling, climbing or in exploring the world around her as a normal child would. John clung to the day care teachers, crying uncontrollably when yet another unknown foster parent came to retrieve him. He needed consistency in his life more than anything. That's when the CASA volunteer arrived. As John began to see her regularly, he slowly began to normalize his behavior. It has only been a few weeks, but John is starting to take an interest in the books, crayons, puzzles and the other resources at the day care facility. CASA is working to get developmental therapy for his sister and to get a full time, loving foster home for both of them as their parents work to meet the requirements to be reunited with their children.

The parents may or may not be successful in their efforts to regain their children and, regardless of the outcome, it will take many, many months. In the meantime, the CASA volunteer is the only adult who will be working consistently with the children to insure their needs are met - medically, emotionally, physically and educationally

Kristen CASA Volunteer Advocate 7/2018

At ages seven and five, my two sibling CASA charges entered the system with a lifetime of emotional, nutritional neglect and physical abuse by their bio parents. But Fortune shone upon them when a loving and professionally-trained young woman and her now-husband became their foster parents and currently-pending adoptive parents.

Long, painful trials with diagnoses and eventual successful treatment of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, eating disorders, and educational and emotional deficits have resulted in the blossoming of two happy, vibrant children in a loving home. Throughout the process, I maintained regular contact, provided positive emotional

support and avidly promoted this particular foster experience in the courtroom. These two kids represent an amazing success story coming out of a very sad beginning.

Bill CASA Volunteer Advocate 2/2018

I helped a treatment foster family get reimbursement for over \$7,000 for a hydraulic ramp to assist one of their severely disabled children who was adopted from foster care to get in and out of a vehicle, The foster parents had paid for this ramp out of their own pockets so were thrilled to receive these monies.

My heart burst with joy for this foster family and now with this help, they can have more foster children.

Heather CASA Volunteer Advocate 2/2018