



Dependency Neglect Attorney Ad Litem Program

A Brief History

Understanding Where We Came From

In 1995, the AR Supreme Court contracted with Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families for an Assessment of how the courts could improve child abuse and neglect cases. The Assessment found that children were not being

Courts. The AR Supreme Court adopted Administrative Order #15 establishing minimum standards and qualification for attorneys representing children and indigent parents in 1999, with an

In 2005, the AR Supreme Court Ad Hoc Committee on Foster Care and Adoption issued a reassessment of the status of child abuse and neglect cases in the state and found that children were better represented since the implementation of the AAL and CASA Programs.

adequately represented in court proceedings and recommended minimum qualifications and statewide programs for legal representation for children and indigent parents. In 1997, the AR General Assembly created the Division of Dependency-Neglect (DN) Representation within the Administrative Office of the

amendment in 2001.

In July 1999, the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program received funding for grants to local CASA programs enabling more local programs to begin. The AAL and CASA work in partnership to advocate for the best interest of children in DN court.



By The Numbers

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FY2001

14 Full Time Employees

70 Part Time Contracts

2,953 Cases

4,504 Kids

FY2014

32 Full Time Employees

33 Part Time Contracts

5,604 Cases

8,981 Kids

On Average:

**1 CASA advocates for
3 youth clients**

**1 Full Time AAL
represents 150 clients**

Attorney Ad Litem Training

Initial Qualification and Ongoing Requirements

The AR Supreme Court requires that all attorneys appointed to represent children complete not less than 10 hours of initial qualification training and complete a clinical component where the attorney must participate in each type of hearing with an appointed attorney ad litem. To remain qualified, the attorney must maintain at least four additional hours each year.

The Attorney Ad Litem

Program requires all attorneys employed or contracted with the program to attend the Children in the Courts Conference and a Fall Conference each year. The AAL Program offers approximately 40 hours of continued legal education annually. There are many opportunities for joint training with CASA and other child welfare professionals.

The Arkansas AAL Program has been nationally recognized for their development and implementation of a comprehensive children's attorney evaluation protocol

One half of the AALs have been with the program for more than 10 years

Key Responsibilities of the DN AAL

- Provide Independent Legal Advocacy for Child's Best Interest
- Maintain Ongoing Contact with Client and/or their Caregiver's
- Conduct Independent Investigation - May be done in Conjunction with CASA
 - Actively Participate in all Hearings
- Earnest Efforts to Attend all Case Plan Staffings and Mediations
 - Provide all Relevant Information to the Court
- Inform Court of Child's Wishes if Different from AAL Recommendations
 - Explain Court Proceedings and Attorney Role to Client
 - Assist Client in Understanding their Legal Rights
- Advocate for Case Specific Services for the Child & Family
- Monitor Implementation of the Case Plans and Court Orders and Case Progress
 - File Appropriate Pleadings
- Advocate for Timely Hearings without Unnecessary Delays
 - Advocate for Speedy Permanency for the Child
- Request Orders that are Clear, Specific, and Include Timelines
 - Advocate for CASA Volunteer to be Appointed
 - Ensure CASA Report is Introduced into Court Record



Arkansas CASA – A Statewide Program of Advocacy for Abused and Neglected Children

During FY 2015, 3,768 youth in foster care had a relentless volunteer advocate at their side thanks to 1,325 CASA volunteers. All twenty-five local CASA programs across Arkansas are united in their mission to provide quality advocacy for abused and neglected children in the court system and adhere to comprehensive program standards. Volunteers undergo thorough background checks and complete a minimum of thirty hours of training prior to working with any child.

A SOLUTION THAT WORKS-THE COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE PROGRAM

Better Outcomes Proven for Children

- Low CASA caseloads mean the courts can make better decisions for children. CASA volunteers handle just 1 or 2 cases at a time, so that they can give each child's case the sustained, personal attention he or she deserves.ⁱ
- Children with CASA volunteers spent 7.5 months less in foster care, experience fewer out-of-home placements and have significantly improved educational performance.ⁱⁱ

Cost Effectiveness

- During 2013, Arkansas CASA volunteers donated 132,385 hours, valued at \$3,706,178 to support youth in foster care.ⁱⁱⁱ
- 75 to 1 return on investment. Funding for one staff supervisory position within a local CASA program supports 30 trained volunteer advocates, assigned to 75+ children's cases within a year.^{iv}

ⁱ Caliber Associates, National CASA Association Evaluation Project, Fairfax, Virginia, 2004.

ⁱⁱ Calkins and Miller, The Effectiveness of Court Appointed Special Advocates to Assist in Permanency Planning, 1999 and Waxman, Houston, Profilest & Sanches, The Long-Term Effects of the Houston Child Advocates, Inc. Program on Children and Family Outcomes, Child Welfare, vol. 88 #6, pp. 25-48, Child Welfare League of America, Nov/Dec 2009.

ⁱⁱⁱ Arkansas Department of Human Services-Division of Community Service and Nonprofit Support, The 2013 Economic Impact of Arkansas Volunteers.

^{iv} National CASA Association Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs, 2012 edition, p. 30 and National CASA Association, 2013 National CASA Association Annual Local Program Survey, Seattle, WA, (2013). CASAforChildren.org



Arkansas CASA Programs

Arkansas CASA Association

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CASA of the Third Judicial District
Sharp, Lawrence, Randolph, & Jackson

2nd Judicial District

CASA of the 2nd Judicial District

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CASA For Children



Arkansas CASA Programs

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13th Judicial District

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13th South Judicial District CASA
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Arkansas CASA Programs

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