

Child Welfare Council

March 5, 2025



State of California
Child Welfare Council



Housekeeping items

- ***Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act:***
Per the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, CWC Members who are participating remotely must be visible on camera during the open portion of the meeting, unless it is technologically impracticable to do so. If you are unable to be on camera, please indicate so in the Zoom chat.
- *Council Members attending via Zoom – Please **rename** yourself as follows:
First Last – Member (i.e., Jane Smith – Member)*
- *Please **remain on mute** when not presenting or planning to speak.*

Options for Member Comments

1. If virtual, “Raise Hand”

2. If in person, seek recognition of the Co-Chairs by raising your hand and wait for the microphone before speaking

Options for Public Comment

1. Members of the public participating **in person** may seek to make comments during the Public Comment portion of the meeting by letting one of the meeting staff know
2. Members of the public **participating virtually** should raise their hand in Zoom if they want to make a comment during the Public Comment portion of the meeting

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March 5, 2025



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Child Welfare Council



Call to Order

Justice Laurie Earl, Co-Chair
Sect. Kim Johnson, Co-Chair



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CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS & ROLL CALL



State of California
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PUBLIC COMMENT



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Options for Public Comment:

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2. Members of the public **participating virtually** should raise their hand in Zoom if they want to make a comment during the Public Comment portion of the meeting

DISCUSSION AND ROLL-CALL VOTE ITEM



State of California
Child Welfare Council





Office of Youth and
Community Restoration

Child Welfare Council Update: Stepping Home Model

March 5, 2025



Stepping Home Model Review

September 4, 2024: OYCR presented an overview of the elements of the Stepping Home Model and the linked research briefs to the Child Welfare Council

December 4, 2024: The Youth Justice Committee approved the Stepping Home Model Memo and linked research briefs to be moved to the Child Welfare Council for adoption

Today: Call for the Council's Adoption of the Stepping Home Model Memo and Linked Research Briefs

Youth Justice Committee Members

CO-CHAIRS

Director Katherine Lucero
OYCR

Chief Robert Reyes
San Luis Obispo County Probation

Brooke Harris
Executive Director,
Pacific Juvenile Defender Center

JUDICIAL BRANCH:

Honorable Tilisha Martin
San Diego County Superior Court
Assistant Supervising, Juvenile

PROBATION REPRESENTATION:

Chief Dan Prince
Imperial County Probation

Chief Jennifer Branning
Lassen County Probation

JUVENILE LAW EXPERTS:

Elizabeth Calvin
Senior Advocate, Human Rights Watch

Frankie Guzman
Director, California Youth Justice Institute
National Center for Youth Law

TRAUMA RESPONSIVE/THERAPEUTIC CARE EXPERT:

Carly B. Dierkhising
Assistant Professor
School of Criminal Justice and Criminalistics, CSULA

DIRECT YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM EXPERIENCE/ YOUTH ADVOCATE:

Juan Gamez
Direct Youth Justice System Experience

COMMUNITY PROVIDERS

Danielle Lowe
Director
Behavioral Health Services, Shields for Families

OTHERS:

Virginia Corrigan
Deputy Attorney General , Bureau of Children’s Justice
Civil Rights Enforcement Section, CA Department of Justice

Lauren Mendez
Child & Family Policy Institute of California
Youth Engagement Project

Diana Becton
Contra Costa County District Attorney

Tyee Griffith
Associate Dean
Educational Partnerships and Associate Faculty,
Social Justice Studies, Norco College

Rosalinda Vint
Program Director
Woman of Substance, Men of Honor


VICTIM VOICE/RESTORATIVE JUSTICE:


Kasey Halcón
Deputy County Executive
Office of the County Executive- Santa Clara County

Stepping Home Model Overview



Stepping Home Model Briefs





Office of Youth and
Community Restoration

The purpose of this document is to put forth principles that promote healing and accountability for youth dispositioned to Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTF). These principles, outlined in the Stepping Home Model, are intended to provide guidance to counties and partnering entities as they work to ensure the safe and successful transition of youth from SYTFs to their communities.

Stepping Home Model

Stepping Home is a process for all youth, starting from the beginning of a youth's confinement in a secure youth treatment facility (SYTF), to returning them safely and successfully to their communities as thriving, successful young adults. The model transitions the youth from the SYTF to less restrictive programs (LRP) to gradually increase their involvement in the community as they achieve the goals in their case plan until they are successfully home without supervision from county oversight agencies. While SYTFs provide maximum security and supervision, less restrictive programs gradually increase the youth's positive engagement in the community while decreasing supervision. Less restrictive programs can include camps and ranches, group living and cottages, and community living with supervision (e.g., living with family, independent living, college dormitories). The youth's transition from the most restrictive SYTF towards home should begin as soon as is reasonably possible consistent with public safety.

Key Elements of the Stepping Home Model

The Stepping Home Model encourages counties and partnering entities to include the following elements in their respective plans for youth dispositioned to SYTFs for safe and successful transitions to their communities:

INFORMATION ITEM

Mandated Reporting to Community Reporting + Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee Update

Jen Troia, Director, CA Department of Social Services
Dana Blackwell, Senior Director, Casey Family Programs



State of California
Child Welfare Council





**Mandated Reporting to
Community Supporting
Task Force**

*Communities Keeping Children Safe
and Families Together*

Implementation Planning to Advance the Mandated Reporting Reform Recommendations

UPDATE by: CalHHS, CDSS, and the PEI Committee

March 5, 2025

MRAC Steering Committee Leadership

Recommendation 1: The California Child Welfare Council (CWC), through its Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee, shall establish a Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC) to ensure the transformation of Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting continues and disparities in the child welfare system are eliminated. (SP 1)

The PEI Committee shall appoint Tri-Chairs to lead the MRAC's efforts, with:

- An individual with lived expertise
- A Child Welfare Council member, and
- A child and family serving system representative in these positions.

Focus and sustain action to ensure the efforts of mandated reporting reform are carried out with fidelity and accountability.

Introducing the MRAC Tri-Chairs

Representing: **Janay Eustace**
Child Welfare Council President & CEO, Child Abuse Prevention Center



Representing: **Juan Solis**
Lived Expertise Father Engagement Coordinator, San Bernardino County

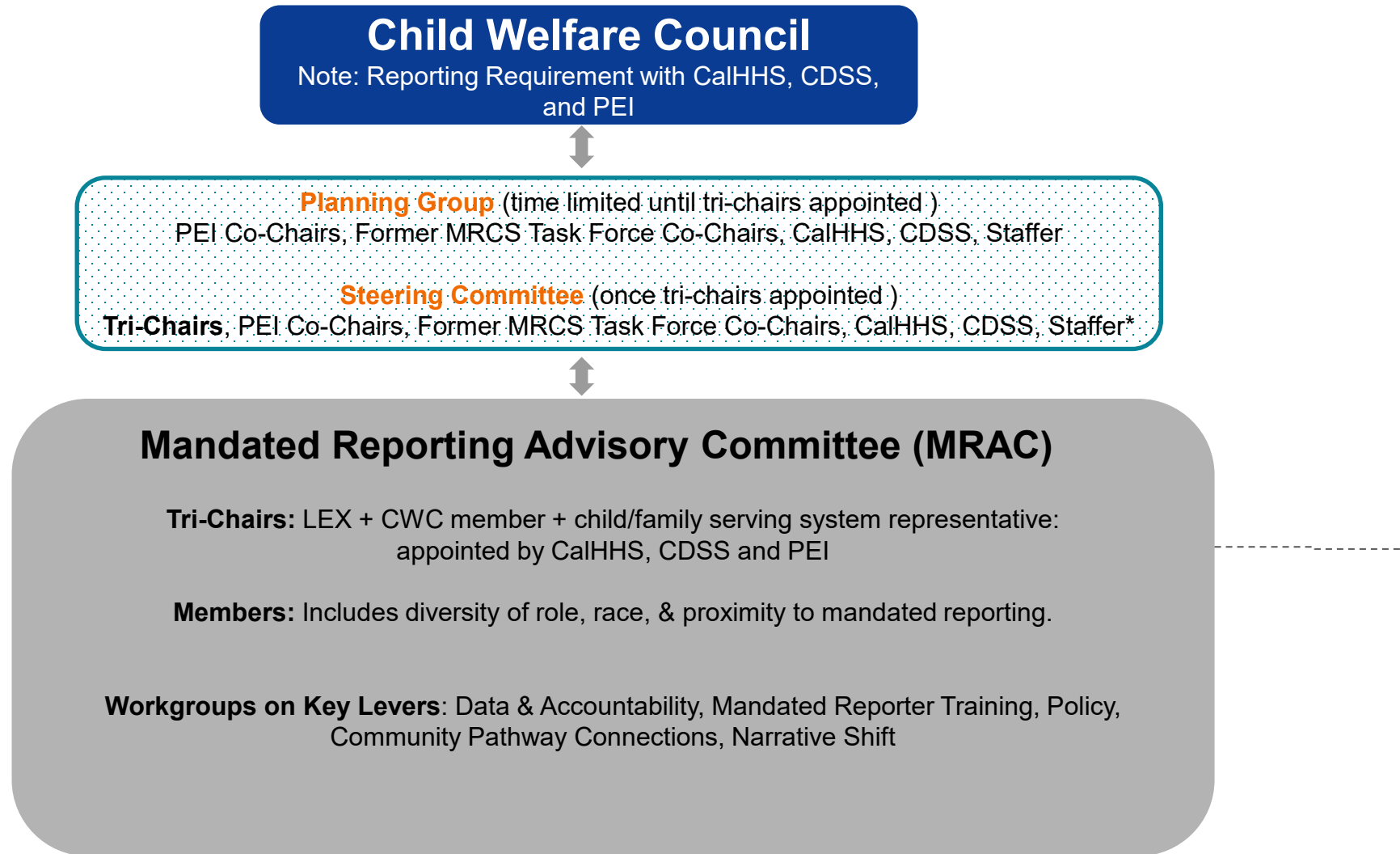


Representing: **Alicia Garoupa**
Child and Family Serving System Chief of Wellbeing and Support Services, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)



* Alternate position is open

Proposed Implementation Strategy Structure



MRAC Composition Requirements**

“A minimum of 50% of the MRAC’s membership shall be representative of those who have been impacted by Mandated Reporting or have advocated for changes in the child welfare system. Additionally, the MRAC shall consist of key stakeholders comprising Mandated Reporters, community representatives, and County and State Departments including Child Welfare, Justice, Behavioral Health, Education, Housing and Health Care.”

**As defined in MRCS Task Force Recommendation 1²⁰

MRAC Member Seats and Recruitment

We have decided on a set of MRAC “seats” that best support effective and sustainable implementation of the recommendations.

- **17 Community, Organizations, and Provider Seats** – Invited applicants from Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force and Subcommittee members
- **9 CalHHS Department Seats** – Request to recommend candidates from each Department
- **6 State Association Seats** – Request to recommend candidates from each Association

32 TOTAL MEMBER SEATS + TRI-CHAIRS

Activities and Successes To-Date

Order of Operations to Advance the Recommendations Per the Motion	Success To-Date
Continue to build awareness and support for the Task Force recommendations	Established a Dissemination Team focused on informing stakeholders with proximity to the issue and solution, with 20+ formal presentations since August and many state and national speaking engagements planned
Establish a time-limited Planning Group to begin working on the development of the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC) and Subcommittees. Secure representatives from CalHHS, CDSS, and the PEI Committee for this team.	Completed , and includes continuity from the MRCS Task Force (Co-Chairs), PEI Co-Chairs, and new members as specified in the motion—CalHHS, and CDSS. This group will become the Steering Committee once the Tri-Chairs are selected/added.
Select MRAC tri-chairs and formalize the Steering Committee to approve and guide the development of the MRAC	Completed
Establish a process for selecting members for the MRAC and Subcommittees	Completed
Stand-up the MRAC and Subcommittees	Goal: By end of March 2025
Continue to develop state implementation plans (how, timing, metrics), and begin to support implementation at the state and local levels	Goal: April 2025 and ongoing
Provide quarterly updates to the CWC	Ongoing

Next Steps

- Continue the work to establish the MRAC
- Resources that we are working to secure:
 - Funding for Lived Experience
 - Funding for communications – website, narrative shift
 - Project management team

INFORMATION ITEM

California Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children (CASA) Presentation

Sharon Lawrence, CEO, California CASA Association

Hon. Craig Arthur, Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, Orange County Superior Court

Jeana Marie Pecha, Executive Chef and Owner of Omakase Por Favor, former foster youth

Lisa Addy-Peat, CASA volunteer



State of California
Child Welfare Council



Presentation to the Child Welfare Council



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CALIFORNIA



Speakers



Sharon M. Lawrence, Esq., CEO, California CASA Association



Lisa Addy-Peat, CASA Volunteer, Placer County



**Jeana Pecha, Executive Chef and Owner of Omakase Por Favor,
Former Youth in Foster Care**



**The Hon. Craig Arthur, Presiding Judge, Juvenile Court, Orange
County Superior Court**

What is a CASA?

- “CASA” is the acronym for a “Court Appointed Special Advocate.”
- Women and men from all backgrounds volunteer to help a child or youth in the foster care system, being their “voice” and advocating for their best interests. They serve an average of 36 months.
- CASAs are recruited, trained, and supervised by professionals at the 44 local CASA programs in California, advocating in court, schools, and the community, and serving as trusted adult mentors.





CASA [kah-sah] n. - a common person with an uncommon role; a child's advocate in court; a committed volunteer, making a difference for a child in foster care.

The Unique Contribution of CASAs

CASAs develop reliable, caring relationships with children and youth – from newborns to age 21

CASAs are champions. They build trust, and encourage and mentor youth to dream big and plan for a bright future

They provide important volunteer support to the child welfare system statewide.



About California CASA

California CASA is a private, nonprofit organization serving the 44 local CASA programs located in 52 of California's 58 counties, the areas where 99% of children and youth in foster care live.

The mission is to ensure that children and youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have both a voice and the services they need to thrive. We achieve this by strengthening and empowering California's network of local CASA programs and advocating for effective child welfare policies and practices.

Our Vision is that every child in the California child welfare and juvenile justice systems who need advocacy will have the transformative support of a CASA volunteer.





11,261

*Children in Foster Care
and Juvenile Justice
Served by the California
CASA Network



67,229

**Children in
Foster Care
in California



8,012

Active CASA
Volunteers



379,672

Total Hours
Contributed by
CASA Volunteers



\$14,659,136

***Total Value
of Service
Hours



44

Local CASA
Programs



52

Counties
Served by Local
Programs



524

Staff Members
Employed by
CASA Programs



473

Local CASA
Program Board
Members



\$63,832,000

Total Annual Revenue of
all Local CASA Programs
Statewide

Key Findings of Learning for Action



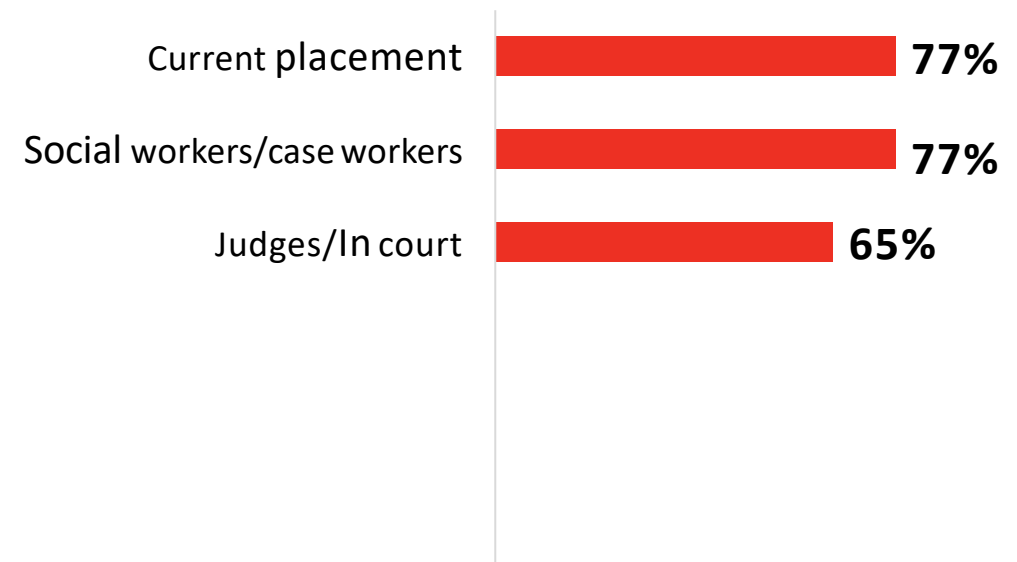
Data Study:

Key Finding: Placement & Permanency

Placement/Permanency is a critical part of any foster youth's case plan. Where they live and with whom they live can impact youth in profound ways. CASAs may support by...

- ...Developing a permanency plan
- ...Advocating for youth to leave a placement, if needed
- ...Helping youth move when they change homes, and supporting youth emotionally during and after moves
- ...Building relationships with families and resource families
- ...Supporting youth to maintain and cultivate positive relationships with their families of origin and resource families

To what extent have CASAs been able to advocate for the youth's best interests with...



93% The majority of CASAs believe that their youth's **current permanency plan is in the youth's best interest.**

Key Finding: Education

CASAs play a critical role in supporting youth to get the best education possible, despite the many barriers they face.

CASAs are supporting youth in education in the following ways...

85%

Supported youth in **developing plans for college or higher education, trade school, or vocational training**

83%

Actively advocated for the youth to **receive an education that meets their developmental and academic needs**

79%

Actively advocated for the youth to **receive appropriate special education services or additional educational services and supports**

78%

Supported the **youth's attainment of a diploma or GED**

77%

Supported the youth's **educational advancement toward the next grade, high school graduation, and/or completion of their GED**



Key Finding: Life Skills (Transition Age Youth)

CASAs support youth in thinking expansively about what their futures may hold, planning for those futures, and taking the next steps in becoming independent adults. For Transition Age Youth, this pivotal period of time can be overwhelming.

For Transition Age Youth, CASAs ...

- 75%** ... Supported the youth in securing stable housing
- 73%** ... Provided assistance related to enrollment in college, trade school, or vocational training
- 68%** ... Contributed to the youth's development of financial literacy skills
- 58%** ... Provided assistance related to the youth's employment





PROMOTIVE AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Key Finding: Promotive and Protective Factors

CASAs play an impactful role in creating or improving conditions in a youth's life that support success and mitigate the negative effects of trauma, stress, and other barriers to thriving. **Among the things CASAs commonly put in place and/or strengthen for youth in foster care ...**

88% ... Contributed to the youth's development of self-advocacy skills

83% Encouraged the youth's development of relationships with other caring adults

66% ... Actively advocated for the youth's participation in extracurricular activities

CASAs also advocate for youth's best interest **related to placement and visits with siblings.**

64% Around two-thirds of advocates provided a high level of advocacy related to **sibling placement.**

65% Around two-thirds of advocates provided strong advocacy related to sibling visits. **The majority of these advocates (84%) play an important role in recommending sibling visits when youth do not have regular visits in place** and the advocate believes it is in their best interests for this to change.

Key Finding: Well-Being

A strong sense of well-being is a core indicator that a young person is holistically healthy, stable, and on track. CASAs play a unique role in ensuring and enhancing the well-being of the youth they serve and support. Elements of well-being that CASAs may meaningfully influence include...

83% ... Actively advocated for consistent and appropriate mental healthcare for the youth

74% ... Contributed to ensuring the safety of the youth's environment

64% ... Actively advocated for the youth's receipt of consistent and appropriate physical healthcare



CASAs also work to ensure youth are meeting key developmental milestones, with advocacy in the following areas:

How much did CASAs contribute to the youth's development in each of the following areas?



From Advocacy to Outcomes: A Randomized Controlled Study of CASAs in Juvenile Justice



Overview of the Study

- The randomized study in the pilot was conducted with the CASA programs in Santa Cruz, Ventura, and Monterey Counties and was conducted between 2019 and 2023.
- The study author was Dr. Joseph Ryan, University Michigan, Co-Director of the Child and Adolescent Data Lab. It was funded by a private donor, and coordinated by The Hon. Carol Isackson (ret.), Senior Policy Advisor at California CASA.
- The conclusions were clear. **When a child had a CASA, their self-efficacy improved, they did better in school, they were more likely to complete conditions of probation, and more likely not to commit a new offense.**

This is the first randomized control study of CASAs in juvenile justice. A central finding is that CASA volunteers significantly improved outcomes for adolescents on probation. Specifically, youth assigned to CASA volunteers experienced significantly larger gains in their perceptions of academic self-efficacy and overall self-efficacy. Moreover, youth assigned to CASA volunteers were significantly less likely to experience an arrest for a new offense. In fact, the CASA group was approximately half as likely to experience a subsequent arrest (23.7% v. 46.3%).

Key Finding: Juvenile Justice Pilot Program

- CASA programs offer youth on probation to the opportunity to cultivate meaningful connections with positive adults, gain access to potential role models and networks that contribute to their overall well-being. It is possible that CASA can be at least as effective, if not more effective in juvenile justice settings as compared with child welfare.
- California CASA is launching a statewide Juvenile Justice Program in 2025 to expand CASA services in all counties that request it.



State Funding Allocated to CASA 2022-2025



A network of 44 local CASA programs in 52 counties advocate on behalf of children and youth in foster care, where 99% of the youth in foster care reside.

State Funding Allocated to the CASA Network

In June 2022, the **Budget Act** provided for a **\$60 million** appropriation to the CASA network to be paid over three years.

Purpose: To strengthen the local CASA programs and to expand capacity to serve more children.

80% of the funds are passed to the local programs through a grant process created and administered by California CASA. Each one of the 44 CASA programs operating in 52 counties are being funded.

State Funding Allocated to the CASA Network:

20% of the funding is allocated to California CASA to provide centralized services and administrative support for the network, including:

- Statewide Volunteer Recruitment Campaign
- HR services
- Data and Outcomes Evaluation
- Volunteer recruitment specialists and strategic planning consultants

Statewide Volunteer Recruitment Campaign



BECOME A CASA VOLUNTEER
SUPPORT CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Volunteer Recruitment Campaign, 2024

Major campaign focused on social media, radio, television, Los Angeles Times. Results include:

- 80 million impressions to date
- 6,000 volunteer referrals to local programs (April-December 2024)
- 58% of the referrals identified as BIPOC

Questions?

Sharon M. Lawrence, Esq.
CEO California CASA
slawrence@californiacasa.org

www.californiacasa.org

Imagine a young kid that will not dream, will not talk about the future. And one day they start to dream because they see that they can.

— CASA Volunteer

COMMITTEE AND TASK FORCE UPDATES

- **Prevention and Early Intervention Committee:** *Kathryn Icenhower, Dana Blackwell*
- **Permanency Committee:** *Bob Friend & Hon. Leonard Edwards (Ret.)*
- **Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee:** *Dr. Daniel Webster*
- **Youth Justice Committee:** *Hon. Katherine Lucero (Ret.)*
- **Behavioral Health Committee:** *Karen Larsen & Chris Stoner-Mertz*
- **CSEC Action Team:** *Leslie Heimov & Kate Walker Brown*
- **Empowerment Committee:** *Jevon Wilkes*



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FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CLOSING



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