

CASA Chronicle

Director's Corner

Executive Director Anne Duncan

Thank you volunteers, board members and staff for making 2009 such an amazing year for CASA! Thanks to your efforts, CASA was able to serve 151 children in need of care in our community. That is over a 20% increase in children served in 2009 over 2008. What a difference you are making.

Twenty-nine children achieved permanency in 2009 with an average time of 32 months in the system. It can be frustrating when children languish in the system and easy to experience the delays as unnecessary. I empathize with the frustrations and will continue to work with staff to provide the support you need to stay encouraged and working for the children's best interests.

In order to provide you with the best support possible, we seek your input. Any ideas, suggestions, or concerns are always welcomed and appreciated. We will continue to focus on the mission and recognize that volunteers are the heart of the organization. Keep on the lookout for increased in-service training opportunities as well as volunteer connections through arranged social activities. Having an opportunity to share successes and challenges with other volunteers can make a big difference.

CASA volunteers are the heart of

the organization and the hands reaching out and serving the children who need it most. Your tenacity, courage under fire, and passion are admirable. You truly are making a difference in the world – one child at a time. The courts respect and appreciate the work you are doing and I commend you for this. The quality of information you provide is invaluable in so many ways. You know what is going on and what the children need to succeed. Continue what you are doing and let us encourage you when you feel disheartened. It is a true privilege for us to do so.

CASA has an amazing team working for you and being surrounded by such dedicated individuals as Patty, Case, Dani, Iva, and Jen is an amazing and rare gift. Our work environment is pleasant, accepting, encouraging and we are a true team. I hope that this has had an impact on you as volunteers. The CASA board of directors has led by example by committing themselves fully to the organization. It is through their leadership that we continue to stay mission-focused, keeping our eyes on the needs of the children and community we serve.

Keep up the good work and please accept my sincere thanks!

CBS Cares for CASA

From National CASA's Powerful Voice Newsletter, Winter 2009

During rehearsals for the 61st annual Daytime Emmy Awards, Hollywood's best and brightest sampled swag and refreshed their palates at the Lipton Green VitaliTea Gift Lounge backstage at Nokia Theater. Thanks to CBS Cares and Lipton Green Tea, the celebrities who visited the lounge also raised \$20,000 for National CASA.

Celebrities like Jennifer Love Hewitt, Jamie Kennedy and Jimmy Fallon took blindfold taste tests of new flavors, shot hoops and participated in other challenges. For each celebrity, a donation was made to National CASA.

Thank you, CBS Cares and Lipton Green Tea, for helping Hollywood stand up for abused/neglected kids.

February Calendar

- 5—CASA Coffee, 7:30-9:30 am, 1st Presbyterian Church
- 8—Staff training, office closed
- 10—SRS Brown Bag Lunch, 12pm
Board meeting, 5:00 pm
January Monthly Reports due
- 15—President's Day, office closed
- 15-19—Court Furlough Week
- 24—Volunteer Pre-Service Graduation, 12:30pm

February Birthdays

- 2—Diana Sanders
- 15—Steve Hanna
- 15—Kylie O'Connor
- 21—Felisa Heatwole
- 25—Pat Thompson

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January SuperStar Volunteer—Iva McAdams!

Our January SuperStar Volunteer was nominated by Director Duncan. Congrats to Iva McAdams on this very special honor! Although this is Iva's first year as a CASA volunteer, she has already taken on two separate cases, serving 2 children. She also volunteered for 4 months to do administrative work in the office.

"Iva has been a huge help around the office. We are happy we could bring her on as a part-time Administrative Assistant but we'll always remember her willingness to volunteer before we could afford to pay her!" Anne enthused.

"Iva really stepped up to take a second case when she saw that we were struggling to find a volunteer to work



with a 7-year-old girl. This little girl is lucky to have Iva in her corner," said Advocate Supervisor Dani Broughton.

When she's not working on her CASA cases or in the CASA office, Iva spends a lot of time sewing and quilting. She really has done some amazing things. You can see them if you visit her blog: <http://plainandfancypieces.blogspot.com>. She also enjoys traveling and mowing all the grass on the property she and her husband own in Mississippi!

Iva has been a true gift to the program and the kiddos. For her SuperStar Volunteer status, Iva will receive a gas card to assist her in her volunteer role. Way to go, Iva, and thanks for your efforts on behalf of the children CASA serves.

Quick Stats—see how much you ROCK at what you do!!!

CASA Volunteer Case Hours

December: 219
2009: 2,686

CASA Volunteer Case Miles

December: 2,853
2009: 26,158

CASA Volunteer CE/Pre-service Hours

December: 102
2009: 1,462

New CASA Volunteers Certified in 2009: 33

Children Served in 2009: 151

Kudos for the Year

Really stop and take a look at the numbers above. Pretty outstanding. If we had the ability to reimburse you for mileage alone, that amounts to \$14,387 in donations in 2009! It's these kind of numbers that really bring home the dedication you show to your kiddos and to the program. Hurrah to you!!

To Think About...

Protection of Continuity of Care by Richard J. Delaney, Ph.D.

Taken from "The Permutations of Permanency: Making Sensible Placement Decisions"

Continuity of care is the uninterrupted, constant, established, solid thread of relationship which can knit child to care-giver and care-giver to child. Continuity of care sets the stage for attachment and provides one of the basic ingredients of attachment formation: an unbroken, ceaseless, persistent, and steady stream of caring. Provided that constant caring, eventually many children, even though horrendously abused in the past, may form the attachments to care-givers which are so healthy to development. Placement decisions must protect the continuity of care for each child, or avoidable damage to the child may occur, as we see next.

Jane was a multiply-placed girl whose history indicated twenty-five assorted homes, placements, hospitalizations, etc. In her twelve years, the longest and most continuous residence was a children's treatment center, out-of-state. She had lived there for two years and had grown attached to staff, comfortable in her surroundings, and secure in her belonging (no doubt there is something reassuring about the lack of moving.) Unfortunately, due to state mandate, Jane was brought back rather suddenly to an in-state residential center which was less expensive. The written goal was to ready her for family life. Sadly, no contact was maintained between Jane and the out-of-state treatment center staff. Little or no work was done

on grief and loss issues surrounding the move.

In her new, in-state placement, Jane would spend her days circling the center, walking the perimeter of the fenced acreage, sometimes sneaking into houses and pilfering from them. She was caught shoplifting on two occasions. She would not come onto the grounds except to sleep, and sometimes, to eat.

In effect, Jane was boycotting the treatment center. Her behavior communicated that she was unready to risk growing close, becoming a part of, or fitting into, a program which could be ripped away from her precipitously.

The continuous care that Jane had received in the out-of-state treatment center represented the longest, unbroken thread of belonging in her life. When it was taken away in the name of providing better permanency for Jane, potentially irreversible damage may have occurred. Jane was truly the "girl on the fence."

Unfortunately, multiple placements happen all too frequently to the kiddos we work with. If your kiddos experience this, please consider how you can help them adjust and cope with the trauma of their loss of continuity. This may mean advocating for therapy directed at this sort of loss or for visits or some other type of connection with the placement they are moved from. Your advocate supervisor can guide you in the best course of action.

All About Foster Parenting

Most of you work with foster parents on your cases a lot but you may not know much about what it takes to become a foster parent, what kind of support they receive, or what is expected of them. Below are some highlights. Much of this information was taken from the Youthville website. I have also culled some information from my time as a foster care recruiter and from the foster/adoptive parent training curriculum, PS-MAPP. Although this doesn't cover everything, it should help give you a better understanding. ~Jen

WHAT IS A FOSTER PARENT?

A foster parent is a person who provides things any parent should give a child such as shelter, food, clothing, medical care, nurturing, and positive discipline. Foster parents serve as substitute caregivers when children cannot live with their parents. Foster parents come from all backgrounds, occupations, and lifestyles, ensuring a child's connection to kin, community, and culture.

Successful Foster Parent characteristics:

- Empathetic to children and their birth family
- Devoted to the well-being of others
- Demonstrate a genuine interest in the child's life
- Resourceful when dealing with challenges
- Flexible schedule and day-to-day life
- Able to handle uncertainty regarding child's case
- General satisfaction in life
- Able to bounce back from setbacks

BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT

Before placing a child in a home, state law requires that the home be licensed. The process consists of the following steps:

- 1. Orientation**—An informal meeting to learn the process, ask questions and determine if you want to pursue next steps...
- 2. Training**—Interested individuals are invited to attend a free Partnering for Safety and Permanency - Model Approaches to Partnership in Parenting (PS-MAPP) 10 week training. This training is a requirement for all foster/adoptive parents in Kansas. The goal of the training is to:
 - Increase awareness of the children needing care
 - Prepare for the role of a successful foster parent
 - Assist in deciding if fostering or adopting is right for the individual and family.

PS-MAPP classes are offered on a regular basis by all contractors in locations throughout the state.

- 3. Home Study**—Youthville schedules a time to meet with the individual/family in the home to make sure the home passes basic fire/health inspections and provides a suitable environment.

- 4. Licensure/Approval**—The home and family becomes recognized as an official foster home.

- 5. Placement**—Once the home is licensed, children can begin to be placed into the home.

This entire process takes from 3-6 months, depending on training and time it takes to complete and process paperwork.

REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A FOSTER PARENT

- Must be 21 years old or older
- May be single or married
- Must be in overall good physical and emotional health
- Be financially able to provide for own family
- Be able to pass KBI/CANIS Child Abuse background checks
- Own or rent a house or apartment that meets licensing requirements

TYPES OF FOSTER CARE

Foster parents may choose to provide one or more of these types of foster parent care:

Respite Care is planned substitute care for children when foster parents need time away.

Emergency Foster Care is for youth who are in need of an immediate placement when there are no other resources available to prevent them from going to a shelter.

Family Foster Care homes provide for a child's physical, emotional, and social needs over a temporary period of time until a permanent living situation can be established.

Foster to Adopt Care is a family dedicated to the child's needs and will be committed to the child regardless of the child's case plan goal. A child in a foster-to-adopt home may still be visiting with the parents and has the potential to return home to the biological family. If reintegration does not occur and there is no viable relative, the foster-to-adopt family is the next most viable resource for a permanent family.

Specialized/Enhanced Foster Care is for youth who require a higher level of structure and may have additional needs outside the realm of a traditional foster home. More frequent contact with our foster care staff is available to families taking specialized care youth.

Supported Family Living Care is for youth with mental retardation and/or developmental disabilities.

Therapeutic Foster Care is for children and adolescents who require the highest level of structure and close supervision due to serious emotional and/or behavioral difficulties. Training and support are provided to foster families with this level of placement including weekly contact with our Therapeutic Foster Care Clinician.

Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care is a specialized foster care program for some of the most vulnerable children in our care. MTFC is a 6-9 month foster care program for youth ages 12 to 18 with behavioral problems that can no longer live at home. Only one youth is placed in a foster home at a time with additional training and support.

All About Foster Parenting continued...

ONGOING TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Foster families caring for family level children must obtain a minimum of 8 in-service training hours annually per individual. Families caring for specialized level children must obtain 24 hours annually, and families caring for therapeutic level children must complete 40 hours annually.

EXPENSE TO FOSTER PARENTS

Training and support services are offered free of charge. There is no licensing fee. However, there may be some cost incurred through the licensing process in terms of assuring that the home and family are in compliance with regulations. (i.e. health assessments, smoke detectors, updates to home, etc).

SUPPORT AND BENEFITS

Youthville offers:

- Assigned staff to assist in navigating foster care system
- 24-hour on-call support
- On-going communication regarding children in care
- Contact with the foster family in their home
- Assistance locating other support services/resources
- Free on-going training and support meetings
- Liability insurance coverage
- Paid daycare for working parents
- Health insurance coverage for children
- Property damage reimbursement
- Monthly stipend to provide for children in care
- Mileage reimbursement
- Other financial incentives

WHAT DOES PS-MAPP TRAINING INVOLVE?

PS-MAPP training is 10 weeks of 3-hour group training sessions, plus two additional home visits/assessments. PS-MAPP is required to become a licensed foster/adoptive parent in the state of Kansas. Below is some information on what is presented throughout the training.

Meeting 1: Provides an orientation to participants, and introduces the agency and preparation and selection program to the group members. *Topics: foster care/adoption today; roles/responsibilities of foster parents; strengths/needs assessments; criteria for selection; child welfare laws*

Meeting 2: Focuses on important aspect of alliance building in foster care/adoption and introduces important concepts about child development and the impact of abuse/neglect on normal development. *Topics: how families become clients; assessing children's needs; impact of abuse/neglect on child development*

Meeting 3: Explores impact of separation on growth/development of children. Also describes impact of foster care/adoptive placement on feelings/behaviors of children. Most importantly, provides a format for identifying personal losses in prospective foster/adoptive parents and exploring how those loss experiences will enhance or challenge the foster/adoptive parenting experience. *Topics: being a loss expert; the grieving process; impact of loss on feelings/behaviors; turning losses into gains*

Meeting 4: Provides foundation for building and maintaining trust/attachment. Helps participants develop skills to identify children's needs and understand issues that affect attachment for children in foster care or who are adopted. *Topics: building positive attachments; building skills to promote, rebuild and support attachments*

Meeting 5: Helps prospective foster/adoptive parents assess their willingness/ability to teach children who have been abused/neglected how to manage their own behaviors. Integrates information about attachment, identity and loss issues for children in foster care. Prospective foster/adoptive parents are led to anticipate problematic behaviors they may see and consider methods for helping children manage behaviors in ways to help children get needs met in healthy/safe ways, feel good about their relationships with other

children/adults, and develop a positive self-concept. *Topics: helping children express feelings/manage behaviors; issues of safety in regard to behaviors; positive reinforcement*

Meeting 6: Importance of birth family to the child's self-concept/identity. Examines importance of cultural, racial and ethnic heritage and ways foster/adoptive parents can maintain children's connections, especially to their families of origin. *Topics: importance of identity; power of connections; federal legislation and impact on children; understanding cultural needs; supporting shared parenting*

Meeting 7: Emphasizes partnership efforts involved with moving a child to a permanent placement, reunification or adoption. Also addresses issues surrounding disruption and dissolution, with a focus on preventative intervention. *Topics: role of resource parents in reunification; helping children transition from foster care; stages and causes of disruption/dissolution and prevention techniques*

Meeting 8: Helps prospective foster/adoptive parents assess impact of fostering/adopting on their families. *Topics: family as a system; meeting conflicting needs; creating and using ecomaps; assessing family relationships with a family map; dealing with family changes when children in care move in*

Meeting 9: Continues assessment of strengths/needs through a focus on the teamwork/partnership required for fostering/adopting. Also provides preparation and selection process for children of prospective foster/adoptive families. *Topics: teamwork/partnership; effective communication; skills of reflecting/paraphrasing*

Meeting 10: Provides closure to group and provides a structure for identifying individuals/family strengths and needs, especially relative to the partnership with the agency, and next steps in selection process. *Topics: strengths/needs; foster/adoptive family and agency partnership; resources; next steps*