



Change a Child's Story



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

COLORADO

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2021 Colorado CASA* Strategic Framework

OUR VISION: Every child in Colorado has a voice and a hopeful future

OUR MISSION: To strengthen local CASA programs and advocate for children in the child welfare system

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Lead the Narrative
Educate the Public
Be Data Informed

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Strengthen Local Programs
Optimize Collaboration
Leverage Thought Leadership

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Educate Policy Makers
Maintain Legislative Support
Affect Public Policy

ORGANIZATIONAL VITALITY

Govern Effectively
Increase Sustainability
Assure Quality

OUR VALUES: Children in Need Deserve a Voice / Data-Informed Advocacy / Diversity and Inclusion / Collaboration

DEAR FRIENDS,

We are extraordinarily proud to present our 2020 Annual Report which showcases the transformative, life-changing mission of CASA in Colorado. Amid the extreme challenges of this past year, 2020 was filled with building, growing, and expanding our vast network to reach more children who have experienced abuse and neglect. The spirit of this work is making a lasting impact on children and families in communities all across Colorado.

For over 30 years, the Colorado CASA network has advocated for a child's right to a safe and permanent home. We are so very grateful to you for your steadfast, enduring commitment, and selfless investment in 2020.

Together, we experienced a year of growth. 2,241 volunteers fiercely advocated for 4,597 children in Colorado. This is a 16% increase in volunteers over last year.

Our focus in 2020 was on providing our statewide CASA network with the necessary resources to support their work and advance our collective mission. This included data collection and analysis, a statewide branding campaign resulting in volunteer recruitment,

training resources, and building on our state organization's strategic framework to strengthen local programs.

This year we furthered the development of our multi-pronged data and evaluation strategy. Program leaders from across the state worked closely with Colorado CASA's program and data evaluator to implement our system for measuring the strengths and needs of children served as well as CASA volunteer advocacy actions. Some results are highlighted in this report.

When operations went remote, due to the pandemic, Colorado CASA became a clearinghouse of information and resources for local programs. We offered our annual statewide

training conference on a remote platform and began monthly network continuing education training sessions, timely and relevant to remote advocacy.

Because of you, we are charting a new path for a bright future for vulnerable children. We are grateful for you working with us in 2020 and beyond to change a child's story - today and tomorrow.

Amid the extreme challenges of this past year, **2020 was filled with building, growing, and expanding our vast network to reach more children who have experienced abuse and neglect.**

Sincerely,



JENNY BENDER
Executive Director
Colorado CASA



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Board Chair
Colorado CASA

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2020 FINANCIALS

	Source	Amount	FYE2020 Percentage
INCOME	CO State Funding	1,520,000	87%
	Other Government	30,000	2%
	Individuals & Corps	40,014	2%
	Conference fees	15,742	1%
	Foundations and organizations	125,907	7%
	Membership and dues, other	19,458	1%
	TOTAL		1,751,121

	Source	Amount	FYE2020 Percentage
EXPENSES	Program	1,620,386	91%
	General & Administration	148,114	8%
	Fundraising	10,412	1%
	TOTAL		1,778,912

2020

was a year of growth



4,597
children

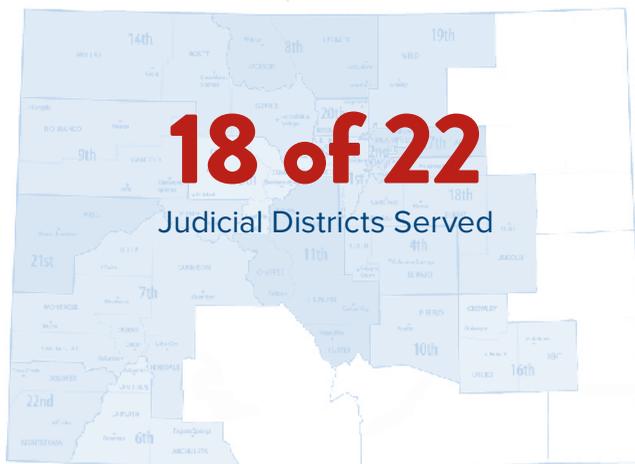
2,550
cases served



2,241

CASA volunteers (a 16% increase from 2019!)

Supported by **140** program staff +
3 Colorado CASA staff



CASA volunteers stepped-up in 2020.

While all CASA volunteers are responsible for learning about children's placements and making recommendations that support the safety and permanency, their work goes far beyond. CASA volunteers are trained to make a difference in the areas that we know contribute to children's quality of life now and in the future.

Children receiving CASA advocacy by key domain (Oct. 2019-Oct 2020)



“Now, more so than ever, when we are bombarded with news of people not taking care of each other, I think it is important to do some good in the world.

Small gestures make a big difference. It gives me a sense of fulfillment and reminds me that we can do good in the world if we want to.”

— *CASA advocate*

CASA volunteers continued visits.

While every program set their own visitation guidelines in accordance with the changing county and state mandates, CASA volunteers persisted in finding ways to connect with their children. In October, nearly 3 in 4 children (72 percent) saw their CASA in person at least some of the time. (see Figure 1).

How CASA Volunteers are engaging with children during COVID-19

● Mostly or all in person ● Not at all ● Virtually and in person ● Virtually only

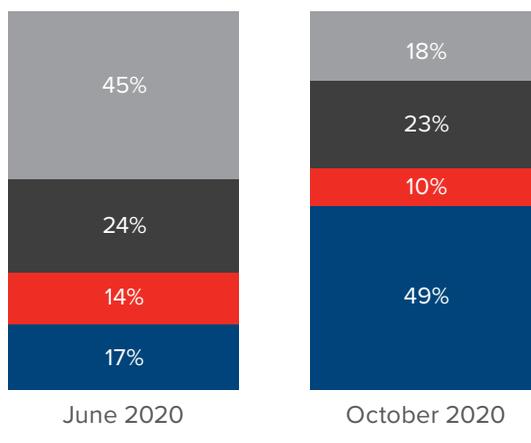


Figure 1

During a year of changes and uncertainty CASA volunteers stood steadfastly by their assigned children. They adapted visits to Zoom, took walks with masks and dropped off care packages for families.

They learned how to use technology to connect with teenagers and how to engage toddlers with toys from a distance. They continued writing reports, making recommendations and asserting that even during a pandemic, children have the right to safety, permanency and the full-range of services that supports healing, health and a bright future.

Data source: The data shared is based on Wellbeing Assessments administered by Colorado CASA and completed by CASA volunteers during two-week assessment periods occurring: October 2019, February 2020, June 2020 and October 2020. Nearly 90 percent of eligible children were included in each statewide survey. Total children assessed by survey ranged from 1,655 to 1,927. Children in grades 1-12 were included on education questions.

A closer look: spotlight on education

In October 2019 CASA in Colorado launched a data collection process to monitor progress and outcomes for children in key domains associated with long-term health and wellbeing. Education is a key area where there is need and CASA volunteers can make a difference.

For the 2019/2020 school year, only 32 percent of youth in out of home placements graduated high school within 4 years, compared to 82 percent of all students. Students in out of home placements also had over 3.5 times the drop-out rate of all students (6.4 compared to 1.8). CASA in Colorado began collecting graduation and grade progression data this year (figures 2 and 3) and will continue developing our methods to better compare our outcomes to statewide data.

Challenges this year included virtual and hybrid learning (figure 3), difficulty getting accurate information on educational progress (figure 2), and increased challenge for children with special needs in navigating these changes (figure 4).

CASA volunteers met these challenges with educational advocacy. This year, CASA volunteers supported 491 children with over 1300 educational advocacy actions (see Table 1). They called and emailed teachers, provided written court reports and education recommendations to judges, and helped caregivers learn about and advocate for services including trauma-informed care, transportation, and special education services.

School performance pre and during COVID-19 (attendance, academic, work completion & behavior)

● Doing well ● Needs more info ● Needs support

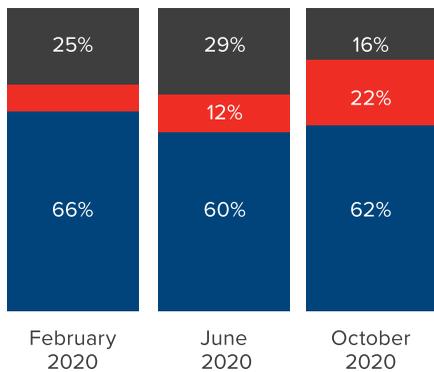


Figure 2

School performance by educational setting (attendance, academic, work completion & behavior)

● Doing well ● Needs more info ● Needs support

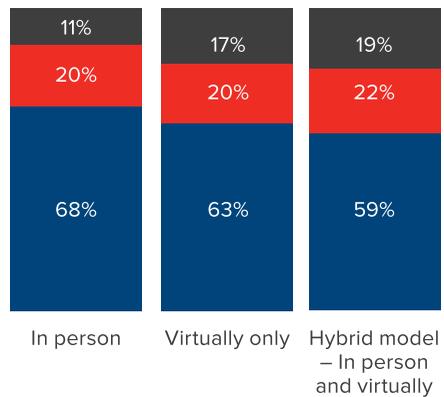


Figure 3

Children’s academic status by special education service/needs (Oct. 2020)

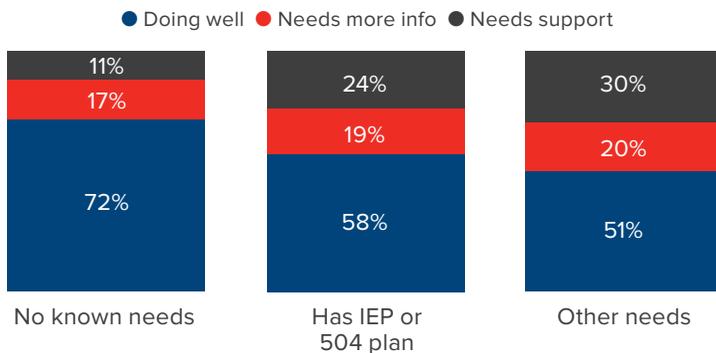


Figure 4

Table 1. Educational advocacy for children

Advocacy action	Actions (n)
Communicated with teacher/other at school	349
Court recommendation	259
School services	203
Behavior	123
Provided advocacy or support around special education services	90
School move	77
Tutored child	65
Transportation	60
School placement	49
Support outside school	31
Total actions	1306

Table 2. Grade progression June 2020

Grades	Progressed (n)	Progressed (%)
1st-4th grade	428	88
5th-8th grade	447	91
9th-11th grade	266	77
Total		87

Table 3. Did youth enrolled in 12th grade graduate high school (2019-2020 school year)

Graduate	Youth (n)	Youth (%)
Yes	21	66
No	11	34

Not all reasons for not graduating were negative: students had plans to earn alternative completion, take courses through community colleges and graduate in December, 2020.



CASA VOLUNTEERS BUILD LASTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY DURING TOUGH TIMES

In 2017, Jane and Philip Johnson* decided to become CASA Volunteers together. As a busy couple with two children of their own, they figured volunteering together would be the easiest way to ensure consistency on a case. They were assigned to a case with 4 children, 3 boys and a girl, ages 5 - 11. The case got off to a slow start, as it can be stressful for families to have multiple professionals involved and it can take time for CASA Volunteers to build relationships and trust. Initially, the children's mom was hesitant to work with the Johnsons.

Despite mom's original worries, the Johnsons did what good CASA Volunteers do – they kept showing up for the kids. They took them on many adventures and introduced the kids to new activities like hiking and bowling. Over time, the children began to trust Jane and Philip. For 19 months, the Johnsons had the opportunity to get to know the children quite well.

When the case was coming to a close, they were sad that the relationship would end. But a surprising thing happened; the mother of the children asked if they would stay involved with

the children. The Johnsons were not only helpful to her family during a tough time, but they had built strong, lasting relationships with the kids and with her.

Once the case closed, the Johnson's two teen girls could meet the children, so the kids started sleeping over several times a month. The girls view the children as part of the family and the eldest, a senior in high school, wrote about the experience of getting to know these children in her college essay and now refers to them as cousins. Meanwhile, their mom now asks for parenting advice and even has Jane join her at appointments at school concerning the children's academic progress.

The Johnsons have become extended family and a support system to a family that was struggling. Being a single mother of four is never going to be easy, but knowing that someone else cares about your success as a parent and the well being of your children is a boost. The relationships that these two families built will continue to be beneficial for everyone; positive childhood memories build resilience in adults.

The Johnsons have become **extended family and a support system to a family that was struggling.**

* The names were changed to protect confidentiality

Our Supporters

Thank you to all of the donors and funders who make our progress possible. Together, we are a powerful voice for vulnerable children and youth.

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\$5,000+

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