

**Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate
and Children's Justice Act Programs
Strategic Planning Meeting
October 23, 2026
Virginia Department of Social Services
5600 Cox Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23060**

AGENDA

10:00am	Welcome & Introductions • Introductions • Approval of July 24, 2026, Meeting Minutes • Purpose & Goals of Today's Meeting
10:30am	CASA Update CJA Update
10:50am	State of the Commonwealth: Current Initiatives • Human Trafficking Update (DCJS) • Child Protective Services Update (VDSS) • Office of Children's Ombudsman Update
11:30am	BREAK
11:40am	Committee Member Presentations Open Share
12:30pm	Working Lunch
1:00pm	Overview of Three-Year Plan Priorities • Purpose & Goals of Three-Year Plan • Review of Recommendations Language
1:15pm	Group Discussion: Strategic Initiatives & Collaborations
2:15pm	BREAK
2:25pm	Review of the Updated 2026-2029 Three-Year Plan Recommendations Language & Activities
3:30pm	Final Thoughts & Comments
4:00pm	Adjourn

Report to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee

October 23, 2026, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Programs

Prepared by: Melissa O'Neill, CASA Coordinator - DCJS

I. CASA Network State Leadership Team Updates

The CASA Network State Leadership Team (SLT) is a partnership between the CASA Network and DCJS. DCJS participates on some but not all the committees. DCJS facilitated one meeting of the SLT during this reporting period.

The following is a highlight of accomplishments of the SLT committees during this reporting period.

A. Training Committee

The Virginia Case Studies Training curriculum (VCST) implementation continues across the CASA program network. A summer Training of Facilitators session was held July 30–31, 2026, with five programs attending. Following this session, 25 out of 26 CASA programs in Virginia are trained to facilitate the VCST pre-service curriculum. Throughout the summer and fall, CASA programs are implementing the new curriculum during pre-service volunteer training and reporting positive feedback from volunteers and staff.

DCJS continues to dedicate effort to providing technical assistance and support to local programs to ensure successful VCST implementation. Monthly VCST virtual roundtable meetings are held to discuss successes, challenges, and strategies for enhancement based on feedback from programs that have implemented the curriculum. In addition, the State CASA Training Coordinator offers individualized technical assistance to local programs as needed to support effective implementation. Development of a comprehensive evaluation framework for all programs to use in assessing the VCST continues with a planned date of implementation in early 2027.

The CASA College conducted six training sessions during this quarterly reporting period. The Advo-Chat “Building Bridges” series continued with sessions focused on enhancing communication with key stakeholders, implementing trauma-informed strategies for engaging families, and identifying and managing professional burnout. Additional sessions for CASA program staff included updates from the 2026 General Assembly session, information from the Office of

the Children's Ombudsman, and training on recent changes to Virginia's employment laws.

The state training committee has established plans for the upcoming 2027 calendar year.

B. Data Committee

The committee did not meet during this reporting period. The judicial survey template developed by the committee was distributed to the local CASA programs for use to gather feedback and assess judicial satisfaction with program operations, as perceived by the judges served by each program. Plans are in place to compile the survey results in January 2027.

The CASA Manager User Group (CMUG) met twice during the reporting period.

C. Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee is chaired by a local CASA program director and membership includes local CASA staff and board members. Following a successful Network collaboration to advocate for increased state funding for CASA programs during the 2026 General Assembly session, which resulted in an additional \$2,385,000 for each year of the biennium, the committee will pause and meet as needed to continue to monitor state and federal legislation that may affect CASA programs.

II. Funding Formula Workgroup

DCJS facilitated a workgroup this summer to evaluate the current CASA funding formula and develop recommendations for potential revisions effective in FY2028. A diverse and representative group of directors agreed to participate, with two meetings held on July 16, 2026, and September 9, 2026. A final report with recommendations is forthcoming.

III. Network Support Meetings

DCJS facilitated two CASA Network Support meetings and three New Director Support calls using virtual technology during this reporting period. These meetings assist local programs with navigating program operations and management concerns.

IV. New Director Orientation

During this reporting period, DCJS implemented the comprehensive refreshed New Director Orientation training program. The revised program includes an in-person site visit with the new hire, instruction on essential foundational concepts for effective CASA program management, and a tailored training plan designed to address individual learning needs. The orientation is delivered over the course of the first year of employment. Two new directors are participating in the orientation program.

V. Annual Judicial Conference of Virginia for District Courts

DCJS was pleased once again to serve as an exhibitor on behalf of the CASA programs at the annual Judicial Conference of Virginia District Courts held in October 2026. This engagement provided a valuable opportunity to connect with judges from juvenile and domestic relations district courts who currently partner with CASA programs, as well as those exploring the potential for program development. Feedback from judges overwhelmingly reflected deep appreciation for the dedication of CASA volunteers and the objectivity and value of the reports submitted to the court.

VI. CASA Regulatory Revision

The CASA Regulations were certified by the Attorney General's Office. The Department of Planning and Budget completed the Economic Impact Analysis. The regulations are under review by the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security.

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October 23, 2026 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Children's Justice Act (CJA)

Prepared by Jenna L. Foster

I. Cross-Systems Training: Vicarious Trauma

The Virginia CJA program partnered with the DCJS Center for School and Campus Safety to bring this high-impact Vicarious Trauma training for a vast audience of child and youth serving professionals to Tidewater, Lynchburg, and Fairfax from October 19–21, 2026. The Vicarious Trauma training facilitated by Sarah Yanosy provided participants with a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological impact that exposure to others' trauma can have on professionals in helping roles. Through interactive discussion and practical strategies, attendees learned how to recognize signs of vicarious trauma and support resilience within themselves and their organizations. This collaborative effort helped strengthen the capacity of local practitioners to maintain wellbeing while serving their communities.

II. 2027 MDT Trainings

To support the continued development and effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams across Virginia, the Virginia CJA program is offering two core training opportunities in 2027 designed to strengthen foundational skills and enhance team performance.

The MDT 101 virtual training provides an introduction to the structure, purpose, and best practices of multidisciplinary teams responding to child abuse. Participants learn how effective collaboration improves case outcomes, enhances communication across agencies, and reduces system gaps. The training also emphasizes roles and responsibilities within an MDT and strategies for strengthening coordinated responses. Sessions will be held virtually on January 26, July 20, October 26, and October 27, 2027 from 10am–1pm.

The Good to Great training focuses on strengthening established multidisciplinary teams by refining processes, enhancing communication, and deepening trust among partners. Building on foundational MDT concepts, this session helps teams identify areas for growth, streamline collaboration, and implement practices that elevate overall functioning. Through interactive activities and facilitated discussion, participants explore strategies to sustain high-performing teams and improve service delivery. In-person sessions will be offered April 14 in Tidewater, August 19 in Lynchburg, and October 20 in Charlottesville, all from 10am–4pm.

III. Child and Youth Justice Services 2027 Conference

The Child and Youth Justice Services Conference, to be held May 17-19, 2027 in Charlottesville, brings together professionals committed to improving outcomes for children, youth, and families. This event explores prevention, advocacy, and intervention strategies that strengthen safety, resilience, and system responsiveness. Attendees will engage with approaches that support youth transitioning to adulthood, promote trauma-informed and inclusive family engagement, and increase awareness of emerging trends affecting child well-being. They will examine multidisciplinary methods for youth engagement, community collaboration, resource development, and systems improvement, gaining practical insights to build stronger partnerships and more effective organizations. The conference also highlights innovative interventions that foster positive youth development, enhance partnerships, and provide alternatives to deeper system involvement through community programming, collaborative school-law enforcement efforts, and promising diversion and deflection practices. Registration will open in January 2027.