



**Advisory Committee to the
Court Appointed Special Advocate
and Children's Justice Act Programs**

AGENDA

In-Person Committee Meeting

Henrico Training Center

7701 E Parham Rd, Richmond, VA 23228

April 28, 2023

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

- 1. Welcome, Roll Call and Introduction of Guests**
- 2. Review and approval of October 28, 2022 Minutes**
- 3. Final Outcome of Tracked General Assembly Bills**
- 4. Appointment of Nominations Committee for Chair and Vice-Chair**
- 5. CJA Program Update**
 - Final approval of the 2024-27 Three Year Plan
 - Update on 2023 CJA Application
- 6. Citizen Review Panel:**
 - 2023 CRP Recommendations
- 7. CASA Program Update**
 - Review Guidance Policy on the Use of CASA Volunteers in Custody Related Cases
- 8. Adjournment**

Report to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee

April 28, 2023 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Programs

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

I. CASA Network State Leadership Team Updates

The State Leadership Team (SLT) is focused this year on updating and implementing the goals of the strategic plan. The following is a highlight of accomplishments of the SLT efforts during this reporting period.

A. Training Committee

The Training Committee prepared the 2023 CASA College training plan. The plan includes six Advo-Chat sessions for volunteers and CASA program Staff and five sessions for CASA directors.

DCJS facilitated the first Advo-Chat training session for CASA volunteers on January 31, 2023 on Sex Trafficking: Identification and Response. The session was presented by McKayla Burnett, DCJS State Trafficking Grant Program Specialist.

The Training Committee and Marketing and Volunteer Recruitment Committees worked together to begin posting all the archived CASA College training recordings to the Virginia CASA website. A formal launch of this section of the website is expected in the next quarter.

B. Marketing and Volunteer Recruitment Committee – Statewide Volunteer Recruitment Campaign

The State Leadership Team (SLT) Marketing and Volunteer Recruitment Committee continues overseeing the Statewide Volunteer Recruitment project. The project is expected to run through June 2023. Once the campaign is completed, a final report will be generated on the outcomes of the project. Local CASA programs will be invited to attend a presentation from The Idea Center, the marketing and public relations firm contracted to implement the campaign, to gain more information about how to utilize the assets created during the project on the local level.

C. Data Committee

DCJS completed the Annual Report, “CASA in Virginia FY22.” This report utilizes data provided by the 27 local CASA programs from FY22 annual reports in addition to other statewide statistics from partner agencies.

DCJS worked with CASA Manager to develop a revised and improved CASA Connect aggregate reporting tool. The Virginia Performance Measures Report includes all the data points DCJS currently tracks for reporting purposes. This new report will improve efficiency and data efficacy. The new report launched in January 2023; local programs report that generally, the rollout was smooth.

II. Network Support Meetings

DCJS facilitated three CASA Network Support meetings using virtual technology during this past quarter. These meetings assist local programs with navigating program operations and management concerns.

Over one third of CASA programs have experienced staff turnover in CASA program leadership positions. DCJS initiated monthly New Director Support calls to assist in supporting new leaders in their positions. Three New Director Support calls were held during this reporting period.

III. DCJS FY24 CASA Grants

DCJS announced the grant application process for the FY24 CASA grants. The total amount available to local CASA programs is \$1,533,415 in state general funds and \$1,499,364 in federal VOCA funds, for grant awards totaling \$3,032,779. Applications were received, reviewed and approved by the CJSB at the March 2023 meeting. Programs will receive award notices in June 2023.

DCJS announced the availability of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the purpose of CASA program expansion to unserved localities in the state. This funding will be available for one year, from July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024. Potential applicants were invited to submit a Letter of Interest by January 13, 2023. DCJS received five Letters of Interest. Invitations were extended to three applicants; the deadline for submission is April 3, 2023. Approval of grant awards will be made at the June 2023 CJSB meeting.

Report to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee

April 28, 2023 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Children's Justice Act (CJA)

Prepared by: Jenna L. Foster, Children's Justice Act Coordinator - DCJS

I. Child Death Investigation Protocol Regional Trainings

Eight regional Child Death Investigation Protocol (CDIP) trainings have been opened to constituents from May-November 2023 (online registration via DCJS website). In 2019, DCJS finalized the Child Death Investigation Protocol as recommended by the State Child Fatality Review Team under the direction of the Chief Medical Examiner's Office. In response to case reviews which identified a need for improved collaboration surrounding the investigation process, DCJS moved the recommendation forward to create the final protocol to be used by law enforcement and child protective service investigators across the Commonwealth. The protocol calls for a uniform, collaborative response to child death investigations in Virginia. The target audience for these trainings include law enforcement investigators, Child Protective Services (CPS) investigators, and prosecutors. Teams that include at least one law enforcement and one CPS investigator are encouraged to attend.

II. MDT Stakeholder

III. Group: Statewide MDT Support Initiative

DCJS is collaborating with Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), Child Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA), and the Commonwealth Attorney's Services Council (CASC) to provide training and technical assistance to underdeveloped multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) in the Commonwealth. Two virtual *MDT 101* sessions were held in March. Two *Good to Great* six-hour MDT training for established teams will be held virtually in May and June.

IV. Telemedicine Pilot Project: Phase Two

Two additional health centers have expressed interest in using the VCU Telehealth model to continue to provide telehealth services to children in rural localities in Virginia. DCJS is working with Valley Urgent Care (Harrisonburg) and Highlands Community Service Board (CSB) to implement the telehealth model for children in these areas and surrounding rural localities. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding has been allocated to support these two new telehealth locations in FY24.

V. CJA 2023 Annual Meeting and Application

The 2023 CJA Annual Meeting will be held in Baltimore, Maryland on May 23-24, 2023. This mandatory meeting provides an opportunity to learn from other CJA programs and receive technical assistance directly from federal CJA leadership.

The FY24 grant is in development and due at the end of May. The 2024-2027 CJA three-year recommendations that were developed by the Committee will be included in this application submission.



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

October 4, 2022

Melissa O'Neill
CASA/CJA Citizen Review Panel Coordinator
Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
1100 Bank Street, Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Ms. O'Neill:

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) commends the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program and Children's Justice Act Committee for their work as an active Citizen Review Panel (CRP) as part of Virginia's Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Plan. The feedback for our Child Protective Service Program by our Citizen Review Panels is crucial to the improvement of our program for the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Child Protective Services (CPS) in Virginia is a continuum of specialized services designed to assist families who are unable to safely care for their children. CPS is child-centered, family-focused, and based on the belief that the primary responsibility for the care of children rests within their families. CPS encompasses the identification, assessment, investigation, and treatment of abused or neglected children. Virginia's specialized services are designed to:

- Protect children and their siblings;
- Prevent future abuse or neglect;
- Enhance parental capacity to provide adequate care; and
- Provide substitute care when the family of origin cannot remedy the safety concerns.

CPS will respond to valid child abuse or neglect reports by conducting a Family Assessment response or an Investigation response, also known as Differential response. The goals of both responses are to: assess child safety, strengthen and support families, and to prevent future child maltreatment. The track decisions are guided by state statute and local policy. In SFY 2021, there were 52,263 children reported as possible victims of child abuse or neglect in 30,223 completed reports of suspected child abuse or neglect. Of those children, 5,261 were involved in founded Investigations, 7,801 were involved in unfounded Investigations, and 38,107 in Family Assessments (differential response). In SFY 2021, Family Assessments accounted for 73% of all CPS reports accepted by local Departments of Social Services, and as of 12/15/21, 55 children died as a result of abuse or neglect. There were 23 children involved in 15 Human

Trafficking Assessments, which are required when a report alleges a child is a victim of human trafficking, sex or labor, and does not meet the validity criteria for an Investigation or Family Assessment.

VDSS continues to prioritize working towards meeting our federal outcomes related to child protection including responding to reports of abuse with a timely consistent response, providing ongoing services to children who are at high or very high risk (In-Home Services) and ensuring timely case closure. Additionally, VDSS is prioritizing family engagement through the use of Family Partnership Meetings, and Child and Family Team Meetings.

We have reviewed your recommendations and thank you for your input. VDSS offers the following responses to your recommendations:

1. Prevention/FFPSA

Prevention Services in Virginia are provided on a continuum that includes primary, secondary, and tertiary activities. Both LDSS, VDSS and a variety of partners provide services across the continuum in the state. VDSS is working closely with DBHDS and DMAS on the Children's Behavioral Health Enhancement, which will promote a robust array of outpatient services, integrated behavioral health services in primary care and schools, and intensive community-based and clinic-based supports shifting from a crisis-oriented approach towards prevention and early intervention. While Medicaid is the largest payer of behavioral health services for children in Virginia, VDSS' coordination with this Enhancement is integral to success in ensuring children, regardless of funding source, have access to high-quality, evidence-based, and trauma-informed services.

Title IV-E Prevention Services are integrated seamlessly into the public Child Welfare System, ensuring that children and their families are provided a full array of services to meet their individual needs. Children and families eligible for Title IV-E Prevention Services will also be eligible for existing funding streams such as OCS (state and local funding), Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF), and other funding sources. This ensures that children and families have a wide array of funding and services to meet their unique needs.

The implementation of Family First provides Title IV-E funding for specific evidence-based services to support families who have been identified as high/very high risk for maltreatment or removal from the home. The evidence-based services include: Multi-systemic Therapy (MST), Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). VDSS is working towards increasing IV-E eligible services and has partnered with the Center for Evidence-based Partnerships in Virginia (CEPVa) to assist in expanding service eligibility and availability. CEPVa conducted a Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis (NAGA) and prepared a report that highlighted which areas of the state are in need of evidence-based services and what the service needs are for Virginia's families. Based on the findings in the NAGA report, Virginia is adding the following evidence-based services to the Prevention Plan: Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT), Family Check Up, Homebuilders, High Fidelity Wraparound, and Motivational Interviewing (MI). A Request for Applications (RFA) was issued to allow Virginia service providers to apply for training funding to increase the availability of evidence-based services across the state. MI will be implemented among local Department of Social Services (LDSS) In-Home staff. Studies have shown that MI may help to support workforce capacity by providing staff with skills to increase job satisfaction, which may reduce burnout and turnover.

Virginia has taken a multi-pronged approach in expanding evidence-based services throughout Virginia. The LDSS were invited to attend a Kick-off session and purveyor open house to learn

more about the additional evidence-based services mentioned above. The NAGA report highlighted 13 Community Services Boards (CSBs) jurisdictions with the highest rate of foster care entries, showing areas of special need. Targeted outreach was conducted to the 13 CSBs to encourage them to apply for the RFA. VDSS is also utilizing the state CQI Communities of Practice model to build capacity within the LDSS to open In-Home cases and utilize evidence-based services. VDSS and CEPVa are partnering with the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) to assist with additional capacity building within the LDSS. Lastly, VDSS has added a 5 module online training series, “Family First in Virginia”. This training provides an overview of Family First, along with practices related to opening In-Home Cases, Service Planning, monitoring the delivery of In-Home Services and goal achievement and case closure for In-Home cases.

2. System Improvement

Workforce

The Department of Social Services (DSS) requested an appropriation of \$52,914,688 in FY 2024 to provide 609 local Child Protection staff, 122 CPS supervisors, 5 Regional Child Protective Services Practice Consultants and 23 State Hotline specialists. This appropriation included 28 new MELs. In Virginia, Child Protective Services (CPS) is a continuum of specialized services designed to assist families in safely caring for their children. It encompasses the identification, assessment, investigation, and treatment of abused or neglected children and is designed to support and strengthen families. In SFY 21, local Department of Social Services staff received 76,632 reports of child abuse or neglect and responded to 30,223 of those reports involving 52,263 children. Assessing child safety, determining risk of future maltreatment, and providing necessary services are the key functions of local Child Protective Services staff.

Collaboration

The Virginia Department of Social Services will encourage local Departments of Social Services to improve cross systems collaboration to support thorough investigations of child abuse and neglect. Upon commencement of dependency proceedings, VDSS should encourage inclusion of attorneys, relatives and other actors in service planning (i.e., FPMs and team meetings). Quality legal representation for a parent or guardian and child outside the courtroom is as important to achieving positive outcomes for children and families as in-court representation. At Family Partnership Meetings and other team meetings, crucial decisions are made regarding the child’s placement, the services for the child and family, and to propose a permanency goal. Some local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) invite Guardians ad Litem for children to the meetings consistently or more often, and some invite attorneys representing parents or guardians less often. By providing notice of FPMs and other team meetings to the attorneys consistently and considering their schedules in calendaring the meetings, a local Department of Social Services promotes participation. A parent’s attorney or Guardian ad Litem may be able to facilitate family preservation, reunification, or other earlier permanency, for example, with a relative. The attorney-client relationship is built on trust, and a parent may more readily engage in the FPM or team meeting process if they have an advocate present that is on their side. There are many types of advocacy through which an attorney diligently represents the client, e.g., mediation rather than an adversarial approach, which can facilitate the overall planning and meeting process. The Court Improvement Program is sponsoring an in-person, recorded training for child dependency attorneys - parents’ counsel, Guardians ad Litem for children, local Departments of Social

Services counsel - on September 30, 2022. Two sessions will cover constructive communication and advocacy styles. These sessions are titled *How to effectively advocate for your client in a foster care case* and *Round Table Discussion – the development of the foster care plan*.

VDSS continues to encourage improved communication and collaboration across jurisdictions when investigating reports of child maltreatment. VDSS made a number of Guidance enhancements to Section 3 Complaints and Reports of the Child Protective Services Manual to promote multi-jurisdictional coordination.

Continuous Quality Improvement

The Virginia Department of Social Services uses a Continuous Quality Improvement system that is designed to operate at all levels within the Child Welfare system. There are three core principles of the CQI system: collaboration, data-driven and solution-oriented, and informed by practice. VDSS utilizes this process with all three of our programmatic areas; Prevention, Protection and Permanency. VDSS also participates in the federal Child and Family Services Review which includes the tracking and monitoring of safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. The data pulled is discussed at CQI meetings and is shared at the state, regional and local levels. The CQI model allows VDSS to ensure all levels are informed, understand trends occurring in data, facilitate conversations, and hold the Department accountable to regularly monitor the data.

As part of the CQI process, VDSS regularly monitors all three of our programmatic areas; Prevention, Protection and Permanency. Alternative Living Arrangements (ALA) are jointly looked at by both the Prevention and Protection programs. If there are significant safety and/or risk needs identified in the home, the child may be placed in an ALA. An ALA is when a child is temporarily placed outside of their primary caregiver(s)' home with a relative or fictive kin. In SFY21, there were a total of 5,208 referrals opened to cases with 36% identified as having an ALA. Of these cases 41% were opened to In-Home cases, 22% were opened to Foster Care cases, 3% were opened to a Family Support case, 1% were opened to other cases, and 34% did not have a case opened. Due to system limitations, ALA data is only available at the referral-level and not yet available at the case-level. The Division of Family Services is committed to providing case-level data and is actively working on system improvements in order to gain access to this critical information. As this information becomes available, VDSS plans to conduct deeper dives into ALAs at the case-level and how this impacts outcomes for children and families.

Virginia HEALS

Virginia HEALS is a statewide cross-systems initiative to prevent and mitigate childhood trauma through the implementation of Virginia's **Trauma-Informed Model of Service Delivery**. The Model, supported by a toolkit and e-learning courses, promotes policies and practices to identify children who have experienced trauma and to provide them with coordinated support based on their individual needs and identities. By encouraging local Department staff to implement the Model and participate in training on key components of it, such as Community Resource Mapping and the Referral and Response Protocol, cross-systems collaboration will improve.

Pandemic Response

As a result of the Global COVID Pandemic, Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) had to assess, evaluate and revise all existing Disaster Plans, as they did not address the unique challenges that the pandemic presented. Many of the elements of the existing Disaster Plan were established or revised in response to the lack of preparedness discovered with Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The state and the country were not prepared for the significant impact of COVID-19 on all aspects of Child Welfare, both at the local agency or state level.

Immediate steps were taken at the state and local level to ensure the safety of the staff, children, families, students, clients and communities. Of particular concern was the shift to conducting business virtually, which included public education. Educators have traditionally been our top mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. When schools closed down and went virtual, both VDSS and the Department of Education (DOE) were concerned about the ability of educators to fulfill their mandate to identify and report suspected child abuse and neglect. A state level work group was formed. It was quickly discovered that there was a lack of existing resources to address this need.

Numerous meetings were held with VDSS and DOE and other community partners resulting in the following:

- An educators' guide was produced by Families Forward, which subsequently became a two page educators' reference resource for DOE. This guide was disseminated via a DOE Student Services newsletter, reaching over 2,000 specialized instructional support staff.
- The Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) at the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) developed a **webinar series** for educators that was focused on supporting students during the Pandemic.
- DOE created a series of virtual courses within the "Mental Health in Schools" conference. One of these courses was done in collaboration with Families Forward, titled "Preventing Child Maltreatment in a Virtual Learning Environment" and can be found [here](#). A [discussion guide](#) was created to accompany the session.
- DOE also created an entire learning series related to COVID-19. It can be found by topic search [here](#).

3. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Child Welfare

VDSS is committed to fostering a workplace that is diverse, inclusive, and prioritizes equity in all matters. DFS has a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee that is charged with developing initiatives that bolster diversity of thought and perspective within the division, including, but not limited to, providing educational materials, raising awareness and collaboration to encourage change. The DEI Committee strives to foster awareness-raising in matters of DEI on behalf of people with marginalized identities and experiences, inclusive of DFS staff, local stakeholders and the people they serve, support the collection and dissemination of relevant resources related to diversity, equity and inclusion, and develop and share DEI recommendations for DFS. The Committee has 14 members representing all programs with a diverse representation. The committee is developing the charter, ground rules and developing a communication plan in order to share information and ideas with Leadership, State staff and local Departments of Social Services.

In the past year, DFS continued to review and share data related to disparities and disproportionality among the Leadership team, in program meetings, in bi-monthly CQI meetings, during monthly "Knowledge Break" DFS meetings with State staff, and during CWAC

meetings. Programs within the Division are working to determine the best method of sharing and addressing this data with local agencies. DFS reached out to the Capacity Building Center for States to assist in initiatives to advance racial equity. A concerted effort has been made to include data in each meeting, internally, with stakeholders, and with LDSS, about racial inequalities within Virginia's Child Welfare system. A list of racial equity resources have been compiled and shared with DFS staff in an effort for individuals to begin the process of self-reflection and understanding of internal bias, prejudice, and to encourage conversations. Five DFS staff members host monthly Knowledge Break events for staff that focus on a variety of topics, including for example Child Abuse Prevention Month, Foster Care Awareness Month, and Black History Month. During each of these events, a team of subject matter experts present to their colleagues, always including topic relevant disparity and disproportionality data. There are frequent opportunities during these monthly events to engage in discussion about the data and to discuss areas for growth.

VDSS collaborated with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), the Family and Children's Trust Fund (FACT), and Families Forward (Virginia's Prevent Child Abuse chapter) to submit a proposal for federal technical assistance to develop and implement a comprehensive prevention model based on strategic partnerships and shared responsibility to achieve greater equity in families' access to Prevention Services to enhance well-being. Virginia was selected as one of 12 jurisdictions to participate in the Round Two of the Thriving Families, Safer Children opportunity hosted by the Children's Bureau, Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Prevent Child Abuse America. The technical assistance received through this opportunity will further work towards greater equity in access and service provision to all families, utilizing the voices of lived experience, collaborating with partners who can be most responsive to the unique needs within distinct communities, and address disparities in service access.

VDSS offered a bias workshop during the Fall 2021 STEP (State Engaging as Partners) meeting in September as an opportunity for personal and professional development for State staff. The Bias Workshop was hosted by the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC). This workshop served Virginia 2022 APSR 65 as a resource to continue to promote a diverse, equitable and inclusive climate and culture within VDSS' Human Services Portfolio. These values also permeate VDSS' work with partners and stakeholders throughout Virginia. The workshop helped participants to better understand unconscious bias and how to create empathy and understanding for one another and the communities VDSS serves. In addition, the workshop provided individual actions staff could take to foster inclusion, practical tips and approaches to implement to help eliminate bias and prejudice. During the Spring STEP meeting in May 2022, Diasopora AI presented an in-depth workshop about "Making Inclusion Actionable in 2022" to state staff. This workshop provided a deeper view of diversity and bias, specifically unconscious bias. The workshop consisted of bias refresher, building self-awareness to reduce the potential for unconscious bias and building multicultural intelligence through self-awareness, empathy and social skills. The workshop was designed to address scenarios for the work environment through several breakout sessions.

VDSS is committed to continuing conversations and examining legislation, regulation, Guidance, and practice to determine ways to improve the work VDSS does in an attempt to remove discriminatory practices and attitudes. Activities have been added to the strategic plan to examine data related to Prevention, Protection, Permanency, and the workforce and determine action steps for addressing critical issues.

We look forward to continuing our work together. Please let us know if you have any additional questions. Again, we thank you for serving as one of our Citizen Review Panels.

Sincerely,

Shannon Hartung

Shannon Hartung

Protection Program Manager

Cc: Kimberly Huhn Murphy, Children's Bureau

CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Citizen Review Panel 2022 Recommendations

Approved April 22, 2022

Prevention/FFPSA

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) should continue to focus prevention efforts to support families in ways that provide support and enhance permanency while ensuring safety and well-being of the child. This includes providing services to prevent removal, and services to support adoptive and kinship families. VDSS should seek to implement evidence-based practices and services and then work toward enhancing a robust and qualified workforce. Services should include respite for all members of the family including siblings in the home. Primary and secondary prevention efforts should focus on avoiding penetration into and continued need for tertiary services.

System Improvement

The Virginia Department of Social Services continues to focus on Family Engagement practices as a cornerstone of the child welfare system. In order to implement Family Engagement practices effectively, more trained workers are needed. The Department of Social Services has experienced the impacts of a reduced workforce due to the pandemic, fiscal constraints and vicarious trauma.

The Virginia Department of Social Services should encourage local Departments of Social Services to improve communication and collaboration across jurisdictions when investigating child abuse and neglect.

The Virginia Department of Social Services should encourage local Departments of Social Services to improve cross systems collaboration to support thorough investigations of child abuse and neglect. Upon commencement of dependency proceedings, VDSS should encourage inclusion of attorneys, relatives and other actors in service planning (i.e., FPMs and team meetings).

Data indicate a reduction in the number of child abuse and neglect complaints in the Commonwealth. The Virginia Department of Social Services should continue to study if the reduction in complaints equates to a reduction in harm to children.

The pandemic presented numerous challenges, especially for frontline workers. The Virginia Department of Social Services should examine the preparedness for the COVID19 pandemic and begin planning for the next pandemic that will inevitably strike. Included in this planning should be helping teachers and other mandated reporters to identify child abuse and neglect in a virtual environment.

The Virginia Department of Social Services In-Home services practices align CPS ongoing practice, prevention services and the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act. The Advisory Committee requests data and information on the path to permanency for children and families involved in Alternate Living Arrangements.

As the Virginia Department of Social Services builds the new Child Welfare Information System (CWIS), the committee requests updates and asks the Department to seek stakeholder input into the development of data points for the system.

The Virginia Department of Social Services will provide the committee with a report on the impact and utilization on the Virginia Heals project.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Child Welfare

The Virginia Department of Social Services should ensure equity in its response to child welfare including examination of data through an equity lens. The examination of child welfare practice should include practice implications for children and caregivers of color, children and caregivers that identify as LGBTQ, and children and caregivers with disabilities.

VDSS should ensure voices with lived experience are included in decision-making and policy considerations, with special consideration given to parents and caregivers.

Bill Number	Patron(s)	Committee	Topic	Summary	Status
SB 871	Ryan T. McDougle	Judiciary	Family Abuse Orders - Filing a petition on behalf of minors	Provides that for purposes of filing a petition for preliminary protective order in a family abuse situation, the attorney for the Commonwealth or a law-enforcement officer may file a petition on behalf of a minor as his next friend.	03/26/23 Governor: Approved by Governor-Chapter 565 (effective 7/1/23) 03/26/23 Governor: Acts of Assembly Chapter text (CHAP0565)
SB 1081	John S. Edwards	General Laws and Technology	Office of the Children's Ombudsman technical amendments and clarifications of the role of the office	Repeals the Children's Advocacy Fund created to support the Office of the Children's Ombudsman (Office), as general funds are used to fund the Office. The definition of "abused and neglected child" is amended to match the definition in Title 63.2. The bill removes the authority previously granted to the Office to investigate "adoption attorneys." The bill also	03/02/23 Senate: Enrolled Bill Communicated to Governor on March 2, 2023 03/02/23 Governor: Governor's Action Deadline 11:59 p.m., March 27, 2023 03/26/23 Senate: Governor's recommendation received by Senate 03/27/23 Senate: Governor's substitute printed 23107705D-S2
SB 1241	Mark D. Obershain	Judiciary	Child Pornography Registry - required information	Requires the Child Pornography Registry to include hash values or other applicable identification method of all known or suspected child pornography obtained during the course of a criminal investigation or presented as evidence and used in any conviction. Under current law, the Registry is required to include copies of such content.	03/02/23 Senate: Enrolled Bill Communicated to Governor on March 2, 2023 03/02/23 Governor: Governor's Action Deadline 11:59 p.m., March 27, 2023 03/16/23 Governor: Approved by Governor-Chapter 29 (effective 7/1/23) 03/16/23 Governor: Acts of Assembly Chapter text (CHAP0029)
SB 1367	Jill Holtzman Vogel	Judiciary	Child abuse or neglect - definition of independent activities	Clarifies that no child whose parent or other person responsible for his care allows the child to engage in reasonable independent activities without adult supervision shall for that reason alone be considered to be an abused or neglected child, provided that such independent activities are appropriate based on the child's age, maturity, and physical and mental abilities. The bill provides that such independent activities may include traveling to or from school or nearby locations by bicycle or on foot, playing outdoors, remaining at home for a reasonable period of time, or remaining in a vehicle if such vehicle is parked in a safe location and the temperature is not and will not become dangerously hot or cold.	03/26/23 Governor: Approved by Governor-Chapter 568 (effective 7/1/23) 03/26/23 Governor: Acts of Assembly Chapter text (CHAP0568)
SB 1441	R. Creigh Deeds	Rules	Office of Children's Ombudsman - recommendations for establishment of Parents Advocacy Commission report	Directs the Office of the Children's Ombudsman to convene a work group to study and make recommendations for the establishment of the Parents Advocacy Commission. The bill directs the work group to report such recommendations to the Chairmen of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and the House Committee for Courts of Justice by November 1, 2023.	03/27/23 Governor: Approved by Governor-Chapter 730 (effective 7/1/23)
SJ 241	John S. Edwards	Rules	Study of legal representation in child dependency cases	Directs the Office of the Children's Ombudsman to continue its work group convened pursuant to Chapter 305 of the Acts of Assembly of 2022 to consider issues relating to the Commonwealth's model of court-appointed legal counsel in child dependency cases and to make recommendations for legislative and budgetary changes to address such issues to the Chairmen of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and the House Committee for Courts of Justice by November 30, 2023.	02/17/23 Senate: Bill text as passed Senate and House (S1241ER)
HB 1268	Christopher T. Head	Health, Welfare and Institutions	Interviews by Child Advocacy Center time limits	Requires local departments of social services (local department), when determined necessary by the local multidisciplinary team during the local department's investigation of a report of child abuse or neglect, to facilitate within 14 days an interview of the child by a child advocacy center that is recognized by the National Children's Alliance and located in the locality served by the local department. The bill allows, in cases in which the investigation is being conducted in cooperation with a law-enforcement agency, such interview to be conducted within 21 days.	03/22/23 Governor: Approved by Governor-Chapter 170 (effective 7/1/23) 03/22/23 Governor: Acts of Assembly Chapter text (CHAP0170)
HB 1990	Charniele L. Herring	Courts of Justice	Appointment of Counsel or Guardian ad litem	Specifies that any attorney appointed to represent a child or parent, guardian, or other adult at a hearing in the juvenile and domestic relations district court shall continue representation at all other stages of the proceeding, to include upon appeal to the circuit court.	03/26/23 Governor: Approved by Governor-Chapter 623 (effective 7/1/23) 03/26/23 Governor: Acts of Assembly Chapter text (CHAP0623)

[HB1786](#)

What CASA Does

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers are appointed by juvenile court judges to cases involving child abuse and neglect. These specially trained citizen volunteers provide a consistent presence and a voice in court for children, helping to ensure the best possible outcome for child victims of abuse and neglect. CASA volunteers provide victims with a fighting chance to thrive during one of the most vulnerable times in their young lives by giving them a voice, ending the cycle of violence and working to place them in safe, permanent homes.

In FY22, CASA programs continued to deal with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Eighteen of the 27 CASA programs experienced a reduction in cases due to a lack of abuse and neglect petitions coming before the court. This represents an eight percent reduction from FY21. They attributed the following as the primary reasons for the reduction in caseloads: the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in child welfare practices.

FY22 CASA PROGRAM STATISTICS

- There are 27 operational Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Programs in Virginia
- 3176 children received advocacy services
- 1328 citizen volunteers active on cases
- 116,274 volunteer advocacy hours were contributed valued at \$3,581,239.



CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

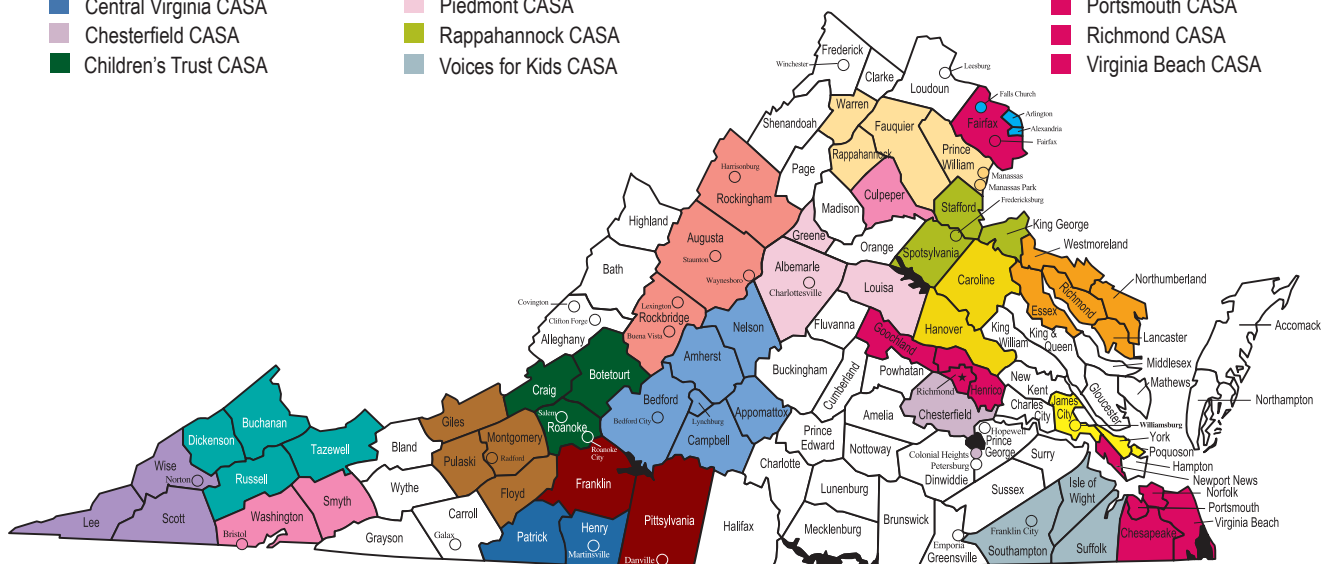
Programs in Virginia

Multi-Jurisdictional Programs

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 28th Judicial District | Colonial CASA |
| 29th Judicial District | FOCUS on Youth CASA |
| Alexandria/Arlington CASA | Franklin County/Pittsylvania County CASA |
| CASA Child Intervention Services | Hanover CASA |
| Blue Ridge CASA for Children | LPOY CASA |
| CASA of the New River Valley | Northern Neck CASA |
| Central Virginia CASA | Piedmont CASA |
| Chesterfield CASA | Rappahannock CASA |
| Children's Trust CASA | Voices for Kids CASA |

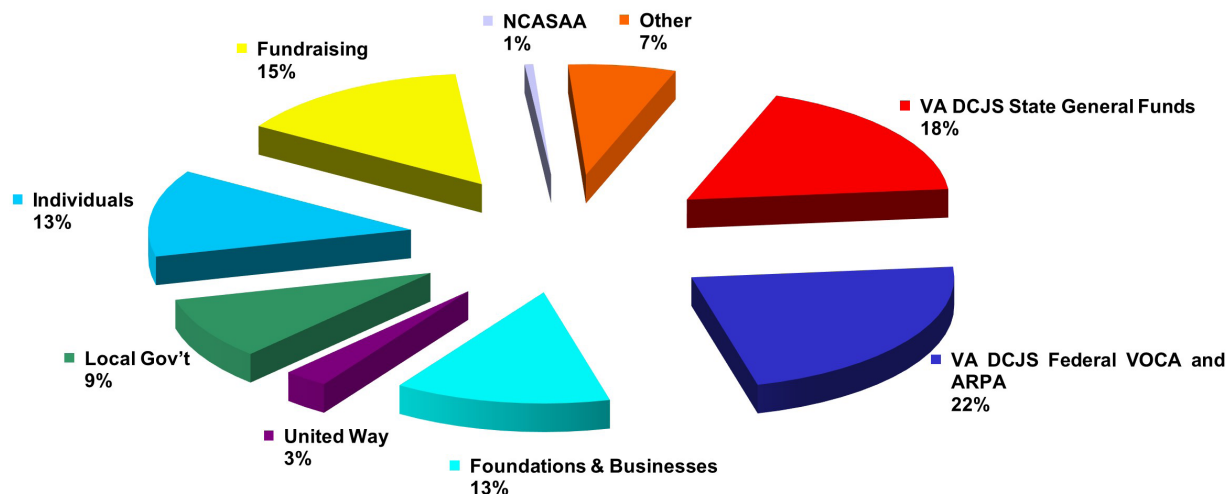
Single Jurisdiction Programs

- Chesapeake CASA
- Fairfax CASA
- Goochland CASA
- Henrico CASA
- Newport News CASA
- Norfolk CASA
- Portsmouth CASA
- Richmond CASA
- Virginia Beach CASA



VIRGINIA CASA PROGRAMS HAVE DIVERSE FUNDING

2021–2022 Total Income for CASA Programs = \$8,145,377



SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Abuse and Neglect in Virginia in FY22

- 39,804 children involved in Child Protective Services Family Assessments
- 4911 abused and neglected children in founded Child Protective Services Investigations
- 29 children died as a result of abuse or neglect
 - Data as of October 19, 2022 with 55 investigations pending final disposition
- 5007 children in foster care
- 49% of the children in Virginia’s foster care system are between the ages of 13 and 19

Young People Aging Out of Foster Care

CASA programs are dedicated to improving outcomes for older youth continuous, youth centered advocacy until age 21. CASA volunteers begin to shift advocacy efforts for those older youth who may age out of the system to create successful independence if other permanency efforts are not achieved. Without support, research that shows that, when compared with their peers, young people aging out of care are, on average:

- Less likely to have a high school diploma
 - Less likely to be pursuing higher education
 - More likely to experience unemployment
 - Less likely to be earning a living wage
 - More likely to experience homelessness
 - More likely to have had a child without being married
 - More likely to become involved with the criminal justice system
- (Barth, 1990; Cook, 1991; Courtney & Barth, 1996; Courtney & Piliavin, 1995, 1998; McDonald, Allen, Westerfelt & Piliavin, 1996)*

CASA Volunteers Make an Impact in the Lives of Children

- 85% of CASA volunteer recommendations are accepted and incorporated into judicial court orders
- 84% of children had one CASA volunteer throughout the duration of their case. Scientific research indicates the presence of one caring, stable adult relationship one of the keys to building skills of resilience.^(1, 2)

¹ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2015). *Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience: Working Paper 13.* www.developingchild.harvard.edu

² Levine, S. (2003). *Psychological and social aspects of resilience: A synthesis of risks and resources.* *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, 5, 273-280. doi: 10.31887/DCNS.2003.5.3/slevine

CASA Programs are Economical

Of the various interventions provided to a child, CASA provides a cost effective service. In Virginia in FY22, it cost:

- \$2565 to provide CASA advocacy services to one child
- \$5,652 to \$8,400 to provide basic foster care to one child
- An average of \$28,519 to serve one child in Treatment Foster Care and \$34,047 for Residential Treatment
- \$235,789 to serve one child in the direct care of Virginia’s Department of Juvenile Justice.

For questions regarding the administration of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program and funding in Virginia, please contact: Melissa O’Neill • 804.786.6428 • melissa.o'neill@dcs.virginia.gov

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE/CHILDREN’S JUSTICE ACT
PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Discussion Summary

January 27, 2023

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act programs was held virtually on January 27, 2023. The Committee met virtually pursuant to the approved CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Remote Participation Policy.

Members Present

Kim Barbarji
Eugene Butler
Shamika Byars
Jackie Robinson Brock
Shardell Gerald
Shannon Hartung
Katharine Hunter
Judge Jerrauld Jones
Sandy Karison
Jeannine Panzera
Giselle Pelaez
Pat Popp
Eric Reynolds
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair

Members Not Present

Regina Baker
Randy Bonds
Allison Gilbreath
Ashley Thompson

Staff Present

Jenna Foster (DCJS)
Laurel Marks (DCJS)
Tony Nelson (DCJS)
Melissa O’Neill (DCJS)
Terry Willie-Surratt (DCJS)

Guests

Kathleen Hollywood (Virginia Department of Social Services)
Aaran Kelley (Virginia Department of Social Services)

- I. Call to Order**
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:01.
- II. Welcome and Introductions**
Judge Sotelo facilitated the roll call and introductions of members.
- III. Review of October 28, 2022 Meeting Minutes**
The Committee reviewed the minutes. No corrections were needed. The minutes will be approved during the next in-person meeting in April.

IV. General Assembly Session: Presentation of Bills of Interest

DCJS and members of the committee reported on bills of interest introduced during the 2023 General Assembly session regarding the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse cases.

V. Three-Year Plan Recommendation Review

Committee members reviewed and provided input on the Three-Year Plan recommendations for 2024 - 2027 developed during the planning meeting held in October 2022. Six recommendation themes emerged: MDT support: best practices; policy; CASA support; multi-systems training; and diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and access. Members reviewed the proposed recommendations language together. If members have additional feedback, it can be provided to the CJA Coordinator, Jenna Foster.

VI. CASA Program Update

The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program.

Melissa O’Neill led the committee in a discussion regarding the handling of complaints received by DCJS related to CASA programs. DCJS sought input from the committee in an effort to streamline the process and provide enhanced responses to both complainant and local CASA programs. Committee members provided input and advice for DCJS consideration to improve the complaint process.

VII. CJA Program Update

The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Children’s Justice Act Program. One highlight of mention is the MDT Stakeholder Group. This group, originally convened by DCJS, is comprised of staff from DCJS, VDSS, CACVA, CASC, and the Southern Region CAC and is tasked with the development and facilitation of training and technical assistance for MDTs at varying levels of engagement (newly established - fully functional). These training sessions will be provided virtually and in-person. The first virtual trainings are tentatively scheduled to begin in March 2023.

VIII. Child Protective Services/Citizen Review Panel

Aaran Kelley, Family First Project Manager with the Virginia Department of Social Services, provided a presentation to the Committee on the status of the implementation of the Family First program. This presentation was in response to the Committee’s Citizen Review Panel recommendation to support prevention efforts and specifically the Family First Prevention Services Act.

IX. Adjournment

Before adjournment, the Chair invited members to share updates, information and news from their respective agencies and disciplines. Judge Sotelo adjourned the meeting at 12:00 PM.

Next meeting dates:

Friday, April 28, 2023

Friday, July 28, 2023

DRAFT

Pursuant to § 2.2-3707.1 of the Code of Virginia this DRAFT of the minutes of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and Children’s Justice Act (CJA) Advisory Committee is available to the public. The public is cautioned that the information is provided in DRAFT form and is subject to change by the Advisory Committee prior to becoming final. Once the minutes have been finalized, they will be marked “FINAL” and made available to the public.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE/CHILDREN’S JUSTICE ACT PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

October 28, 2022

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act programs was held on October 28, 2022 at St. Joseph’s Villa in Richmond, Virginia.

Members Present

Randy Bonds
Kim Barbarji
Eugene Butler
Shamika Byars
Shardell Gerald
Shannon Hartung
Katharine Hunter
Judge Jerrauld Jones
Sandy Karison
Jeannine Panzera
Giselle Pelaez
Eric Reynolds
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair

Members Not Present

Regina Baker
Jackie Robinson Brock
Allison Gilbreath
Pat Popp
Ashley Thompson

Guests

Angela Alvernaz, DCJS
McKayla Burnett DCJS
Cayla Morris, VDSS
Lora Smith, VDSS

Staff Present

Jenna Foster (DCJS)
Melissa O’Neill (DCJS)
Terry Willie-Surratt (DCJS)

- I. **Call to Order:** Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM. Members introduced themselves.
- II. **Approval of Minutes:** The committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of the July 22, 2022 meeting. Giselle Pelaez made a motion to approve the minutes. Shannon Hartung provided a second. The motion was approved.
- III. **Overview of Three-Year Plan Requirements**

The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee met to prepare the 2024-2027 Three-Year plan for the Children’s Justice Act. Jenna Foster, DCJS Children’s Justice Act Program Coordinator, provided committee members with an overview of the purpose of the federal requirements for consideration when developing recommendations.
- IV. **State of the Commonwealth Presentations – Current Initiatives**

Committee members heard presentations on the following topics:

 - Human Trafficking Response – Angela Alvernaz, DCJS State Trafficking Response Coordinator
 - Virginia Department of Social Services – Shannon Hartung, Protection Program Manager, Virginia Department of Social Services
 - Office of the Children’s Ombudsman – Eric Reynolds, Director
 - Safe and Sound Task Force – Eric Reynolds, Director, Office of the Children’s Ombudsman
 - Law Enforcement Response to Child Abuse – Lieutenant Randy Bonds, Christiansburg Police Department
- V. **Review of Feedback from Current Recommendations**

Jenna Foster prepared a summary of the feedback provided from committee members during meetings held the previous year where the current plan recommendations were reviewed and evaluated.
- VI. **Development of 2024-27 Three Year Plan Recommendations**

Committee members incorporated information from the previous discussions held throughout the year and from the presentations during the meeting to formulate new recommendations. Members worked in teams to determine general themes for updated recommendations.

The following topic areas were identified as priorities for inclusion in the final recommendations: Multi-Disciplinary Teams; best practices; policy; CASA programs; multi-systems training; and diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging. DCJS will develop recommendations based on the information provided during the discussions and provide a draft of these recommendations to the Committee for review at the January 27, 2023 meeting.
- VII. **Adjourn** –The meeting adjourned at 3:13 PM.

Next meeting dates:

Friday, January 27, 2023 (this meeting will be held virtually)

Friday, April 28, 2023

Friday, July 28, 2023