



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

AGENDA

Virtual Committee Meeting

July 26, 2024

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81210799736>

Meeting ID: 812 1079 9736

Passcode: casacja24!

Phone: 1 301 715 8592

Meeting ID: 812 1079 9736

Passcode: 8206662586

- **Welcome and Introductions**
- **Review and Approval of April 26, 2024, Minutes**
- **Set Meeting Dates for Upcoming Year**
 - Proposed dates:
 - Friday October 25, 2024
 - Friday January 24, 2025 - Virtual
 - Friday April 25, 2025
 - Friday July 25, 2025 – Virtual
- **CASA Program Update**
 - CASA Expansion Study Update
 - CASA Regulations Update
- **CJA Program Update**
 - DSVV Work Group
 - DCJS Domestic Violence Conference
- **Citizen Review Panel**
 - Parental Child Safety Placement Program Update
 - Child Welfare Information System (CWIS) Update
- **Adjournment**

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

April 26,2024

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act programs was held on April 26, 2024, at the Henrico Training Center in Richmond, Virginia.

Members Present

Randy Bonds
Jackie Robinson Brock
Judge Eugene Butler
Shamika Byars
Davy Fearon
Katharine Hunter
Jeannine Panzera
Giselle Peleaz
Pat Popp, Vice-Chair
Shannon Hartung
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair
Ashley Thompson

Members Not Present

Regina Baker
Sandy Karison

Guests

Lora Smith (VDSS)
Rachel Miller (VDSS)
Dara Hecter (Office of the Children’s Ombudsman)

Staff Present

Jenna Foster
Carolyn Halbert
Laurel Marks
Melissa O’Neill
Terry Willie-Surratt

- I. **Call to Order:** Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM. Members introduced themselves. Two members attended the meeting virtually per the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee approved Remote Participation attendance policy. Judge Thomas Sotelo is attending the meeting virtually due to his location being more 60 miles away. He is currently located in southwest Virginia on personal business. Giselle Palaez is also located more than 60 miles away and is attending the meeting virtually in Alexandria, Virginia.
- II. **Approval of Minutes:** The committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of the January 26, 2024, meeting. Randy Bonds made a motion to approve the minutes. Shamika Byars provided a second. The motion was approved with Eric Reynolds abstaining.
- III. **Final Outcome of Tracked General Assembly Bills:** DCJS and members of the committee reported on bills passed during the 2024 General Assembly session regarding the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse cases.
- IV. **Presentation on Human Trafficking Multi-Disciplinary Team and Response:** This presentation was postponed and will be rescheduled.
- V. **CASA Program Update:** The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program. The following additional updates were discussed.

Draft Proposed Regulations Review: A draft document of proposed changes to the CASA regulations was reviewed during the January meeting. Committee members were requested to provide any additional written comments for consideration prior to today's meeting. The committee discussed the comments received and additional items of interest. The committee agreed to advance the draft proposed regulations as presented to the Criminal Justice Services Board for consideration at the June 13, 2024, meeting.

CASA Expansion Legislative Study: Committee members were briefed on the CASA Expansion Legislative Study included in the 2024 General Assembly session. DCJS is directed to complete a study to determine the feasibility of requiring a local CASA program in every jurisdiction throughout the Commonwealth and to identify any obstacles regarding the establishment of programs. The report is due by November 1, 2024.

- VI. **CJA Program Update**
The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee was provided with a written report detailing significant activities of the CJA program this quarter. The following additional updates were provided.

Domestic and Sexual Violence Housing Programs – Children's Advocacy Workgroup: Committee members were briefed on a workgroup being formed to address the needs of advocates for children in domestic and sexual violence housing programs.

It is our expectation that this workgroup will help us all to better support advocates that work with children involved in domestic and sexual violence related cases. This, in turn, will allow the advocates to offer services and support to the child and family that may ultimately have a positive impact on the child testimony in court proceedings.

DCJS Domestic Violence Conference: Members were informed about the Domestic Violence focused conference, scheduled for October 7-9, 2024 in Williamsburg that DCJS is planning. The conference will have a child-focused track in addition to specific sessions for program leadership. Scholarships may be available pending available funding.

VII. Citizen Review Panel

The committee reviewed and discussed the current Citizen Review Panel recommendations provided in advance to the Committee. An amendment to the draft was made to include the language under paragraph one of “System Improvement.” Judge Thomas Sotelo made a motion to approve the amendment and Pat Popp seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. Without further amendments to the draft recommendations, Davy Feron made a motion to approve the 2024 Citizen Review Panel Recommendations and Ashley Thompson seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

VIII. New Business: Members provided updates, information and news from their respective agencies and disciplines.

IX. Adjourn: Ashley Thompson made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Davy Feron provided the second. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 12:01 PM.

Next meeting dates:

Friday, July 26, 2024 – This meeting will be held virtually

Report to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee

July 26, 2024 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Children's Justice Act (CJA)

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

I. Victim Services Grant Program (VSGP) FY25 Child-Treatment Grants

Due to the decrease in federal VOCA funding, DCJS issued a competitive solicitation for FY24 VSGP grants. Existing and new grantees were invited to apply. Five of the twelve grantees applying for funds to continue their child treatment grants were funded and will be monitored by the CJA Coordinator. Funding is for twelve months with no commitment for continuation in FY26. Award recipients were Ready Kids, Charlottesville Evergreen, Center for Child and Family Services, Warren Coalition, and Greater Richmond SCAN.

II. Telehealth Projects

DCJS committed ARPA funds to support two Telehealth projects in FY24. These projects began July 1, 2023. Valley Urgent Care and Highlands CSB provide telehealth services to both child and adult victims of crime with medical oversight from Dr. Andrews at UVA. Both programs received a no-cost extension of their grants through December 31, 2024.

III. MDT Stakeholder Group: *Good to Great* Training

DCJS continues to collaborate with Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), Child Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA), and the Commonwealth Attorney's Services Council (CASC) to support the development of local and regional MDTs across the Commonwealth. Currently, DCJS is providing quarterly MDT 101 training that is held virtually. To provide a more in-depth training and response to MDTs, we are planning to host two in-person *Good to Great* MDT trainings. This six-hour training course takes a deeper dive into MDT roles, responsibilities, and functioning to support functioning MDTs that are eager to expand their current teams. Dates for these sessions will be announced later in 2024.

IV. 2024 Child Death Investigation Protocol Update

DCJS will continue to provide regional in-person Child Death Investigation Protocol (CDIP) trainings throughout the Commonwealth. Two remaining trainings are scheduled in 2024 in Staunton and South Hill. DCJS will also work with regional police academies to institutionalize the protocol training information as part of mandatory training for investigators in Virginia. The CDIP content is currently included in the Child Protective Services (CPS) training and as a part of the annual conference for prosecutors facilitated by the Commonwealth Attorney's Services Council.

Report to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee

July 26, 2024 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. DCJS facilitated one meeting of the SLT during this reporting period. The following is a highlight of accomplishments of the SLT efforts during this reporting period.

A. Training Committee

The Training Committee developed the 2024 CASA College schedule of events for the remainder of the calendar year. During the past quarter, two workshops were held.

In May, CASA program staff attended a workshop focused on Communication in a Crisis, facilitated by Mark Hubbard from McGuireWoods Consulting. The training aimed to enhance participants' understanding of effective communication during crises, emphasizing the critical role of maintaining trust. Attendees also acquired skills in managing reputational risks and preserving organizational integrity. The workshop included an opportunity for participants to evaluate their current communication methods and pinpoint areas needing enhancement. Practical tools and strategies were shared to aid in the development of customized communication plans tailored to CASA programs.

In June, CASA program staff participated in a CANVA workshop led by Carlos Clanton, Executive Director of Friends of the Portsmouth Juvenile Court. CANVA, a free online graphic design tool, empowers CASA programs to craft social media posts, presentations, reports, and other visuals. This all-in-one platform equips users to produce professional-grade presentations. Attendees gained insights and techniques for creating dynamic presentations tailored for their respective CASA Programs.

The Training Committee continues to make progress with the revision of the Virginia Case Studies Curriculum. The Committee met three times during this reporting period to complete the final review of the draft and is finishing final minor edits. The next steps include incorporating activities from the NCASA curriculum and developing the Training of Facilitators guide.

B. Data Committee

The Data Committee did not meet during this reporting period. The next meeting is scheduled in August 2024. DCJS facilitated two meetings of the CASA Manager User Group (CMUG) during the reporting period.

DCJS continues tracking CASA Manager user support requests. Thus far, there have been no discernible trends in the types of support requests, except for issues arising when the system experiences disruptions. DCJS and a local program CASA staff member attend the Developer Assistance Team (DAT) monthly meetings held by CASA Manager. This group provides an opportunity to provide feedback on user issues and concerns directly to the CASA Manager vendor.

C. Marketing Committee

The Marketing Committee devised strategies to sustain the success of the statewide volunteer recruitment campaign in FY23, funded by DCJS's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation. The SLT decided to allocate a portion of the funds from the CASA Network towards maintaining the most effective digital marketing initiatives.

II. Network Support Meetings

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

III. DCJS CASA Grant Program

The Criminal Justice Services Board (CJSB) awarded grants to local CASA programs for FY25.s. The total amount awarded is \$1,532,870 in state general funds and \$1,499,900 in federal VOCA funds, for grant awards totaling \$3,032,770.

IV. CASA Regulations Revision

The CJSB approved DCJS the proposed changes to the CASA Regulations. The Regulations will move forward through the Administrative Process Act steps, allowing for public comment and further consideration.

V. Expansion Study Workgroup

DCJS was directed by the 2024 General Assembly to complete a study to determine the feasibility of requiring a local CASA program in every judicial district throughout the Commonwealth and to identify any obstacles regarding the establishment of programs.

The report is due by November 1, 2024. The workgroup met July 10, 2024. Staff is now drafting the report.