

# Boston CASA



**BOSTON**

**FOUNDED:** 2012

**CURRENT ANNUAL BUDGET:** \$600,000

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Boston CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) trains and supervises volunteers to help address the challenges of the overburdened child welfare system. Volunteers commit to serve as a child's designated advocate, facilitating collaboration with families, educators, lawyers, and healthcare providers and making recommendations to the court pertaining to the best interests of a child.

At the end of 2016, 1,830 children were involved with the Suffolk County Juvenile Court due to abuse or neglect, and just under 10% of them were assigned a CASA.

While the typical child welfare worker has 20 cases at a time, CASAs are able to focus on one child or one sibling group, providing more intensive support. As a result, young people with a CASA volunteer:

- Spend substantially less time in long-term foster care
- Receive more services while in foster care
- Perform better academically

In addition to improved outcomes for young people, Boston CASA provides an economic benefit. The in-kind value of volunteer services in 2016 was \$630,000.

## Investment Opportunity

Boston CASA seeks a \$1.7M investment over the next two years to increase the number of children served and the number of volunteers recruited and trained by 20% each year.

With additional staff, Boston CASA will meet the demand for additional advocates and build greater organizational capacity to measure outcomes and increase community-wide support for the most vulnerable children.

## Two-Year Goals

- Increase the number of young people served from 180 to 255
- Increase the number of CASA volunteers from 115 to 175
- Strengthen data collection and analysis of outcomes
- Increase support of CASA among judges, partner organizations, the legislature, donors, and the public

## Ways to Invest

### FINANCIAL

- \$60,000 funds a full-time advocate supervisor
- \$7,500 funds training of 20 new CASA volunteers
- \$2,500 provides a child with a CASA volunteer for a year

### IN-KIND

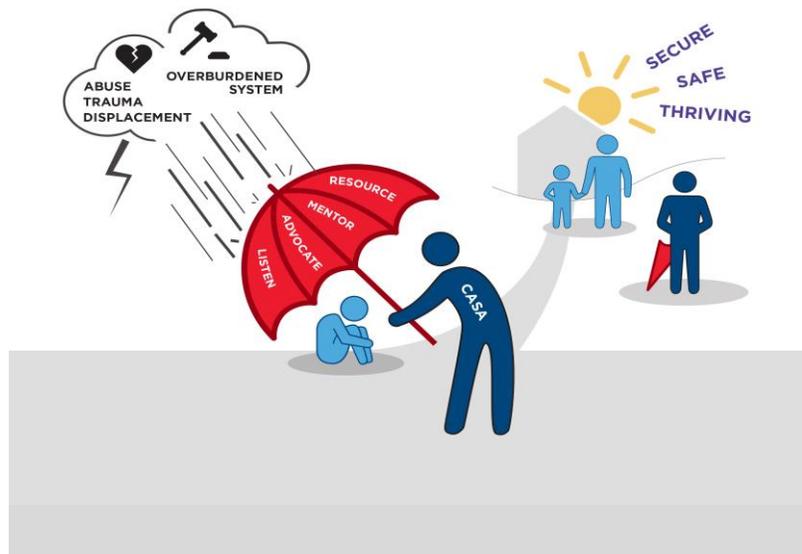
- Become a CASA volunteer advocate
- Host a workplace or home information session to recruit CASA volunteers and donors
- Provide organizational support, including IT, website management, and event planning

## Leadership & Governance

Charles Lerner became the first Executive Director of Boston CASA in 2012. He holds a master's degree in marriage and family therapy and has worked for two decades in child welfare and mental health. In addition to his professional experience, Charles is uniquely qualified to lead CASA: as a former foster child, adoptee, and father of an adopted son, his personal journey is a testament to the resiliency of young people in overcoming early adversity.

Boston CASA is governed by a 16-member Board of Directors.

## BOSTON CASA MODEL



“

**CASA is providing the leadership and vision to conquer new frontiers in serving our youth and their families.**

”

**TERRY CRAVEN**  
First Justice of the Suffolk  
County Juvenile Court



## VOLUNTEER POWER: CHANGING LIVES AND THE SYSTEM

The CASA model was first introduced in 1977 when a Seattle Juvenile Court judge, concerned about making drastic decisions with insufficient information, conceived the idea of citizen volunteers speaking up for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the courtroom. Today there are nearly 1,000 independent CASA organizations across the country.

Boston CASA recruits, trains, and supervises volunteers who come from diverse backgrounds and have a range of life experience. CASAs are officially sworn in by judges to serve as “Guardians ad Litem,” with legal standing to intervene on a child’s behalf. CASAs undergo a rigorous application and interview process. Each CASA receives 40 hours of group training and ongoing individual coaching by Boston CASA staff.

## THE ROLE OF A CASA VOLUNTEER

- Regularly visit children and their families, attend school meetings, ensure that children get proper medical care, communicate with case workers, and guide and support caregivers. CASAs have access to all records, report quarterly to the court, and work with each child until their case is closed.
- Stay engaged with a child’s case for at least 18 months, spending 10 to 15 hours per month serving on behalf of the young person. The majority of CASAs stay in communication with the young person well beyond the time that a case is officially closed.
- Zealously advocate for a child while also acting as a safe and consistent adult in their lives during a critical time. CASAs help ensure that a child’s voice is central to all decisions.

While helping to put a young person on a positive path, many CASAs report that serving as a guardian ad litem to a child is one of the most transformative and rewarding experiences of their life.

“

This is the first time someone has said that I can accomplish something. Thank you for being a part of my life.

”

GILLES  
Age 14, to his CASA volunteer

## ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE OF AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Young adults who grow up in foster care face many challenges related to the trauma they have experienced. They are more likely to encounter physical, educational, and emotional issues that require special and ongoing treatment and support. Too many end up homeless, incarcerated, or repeating the cycle of abuse.

**The Older Youth Advocacy Project**, implemented in 2014 by Boston CASA, targets adolescents aged 16 to 22 years old who are unlikely to be reunited with their family or adopted. CASAs involved with this program receive additional specialized training and support in order to be better equipped to serve these young adults. The program enables teens to build connections to community and develop the skills to make informed decisions about their care and independence.

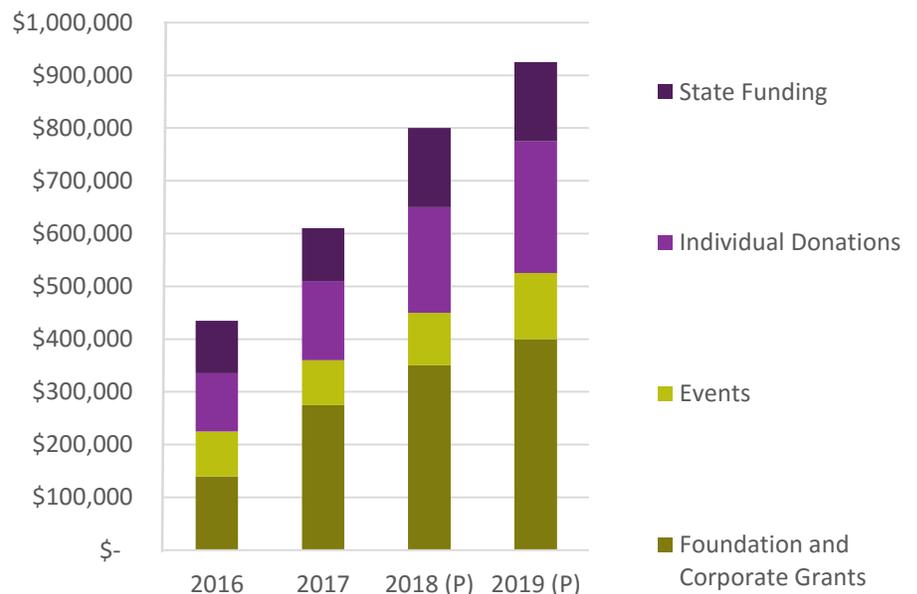
Young people, along with the supportive CASA adults in their lives, develop realistic short- and long-term goals for housing, education, health care, and employment and establish concrete action plans for how to reach these goals and become successful, independent adults.

Given the needs of those aging out of foster care, it is a priority to expand the program in the coming years.

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Boston CASA has consistently increased the numbers of youth served while maintaining strong financial health. In 2016, the Board of Directors and CASA staff engaged in a strategic planning process to set program priorities, staffing needs, and budget goals for the next three years. They have outlined a clear plan that includes a balanced approach to revenue growth from foundation and corporate grants, events, individual giving, and state support.

### Revenue by Source



### Key Investors

- COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
- CUMMINGS FOUNDATION
- LUDCKE FOUNDATION
- THE PHILANTHROPY CONNECTION

### Partners

- DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (DCF)
- OFFICE OF THE MASSACHUSETTS ATTORNEY GENERAL
- SUFFOLK COUNTY JUVENILE COURT

### Success Story: TJ and Jayne

When Jayne was assigned to be TJ’s CASA, she wondered how she would be able to help him. TJ had been removed from his home and separated from his three younger siblings. He was quiet and resistant to conversation about anything. At first Jayne spent hours asking him general questions about his favorite sports and TV shows and over time he opened up to her about his feelings.

As TJ changed foster homes and schools twice before finding a permanent home, Jayne was there for him. She has been the primary adult to connect with his teachers and doctors. She helped arrange times for him to meet with his siblings, encouraged him to try out for the track team, and helped him apply for his first summer job.

Today, three years after they met, Jayne and TJ talk on the phone weekly and have dinner monthly. They talk about how he is doing and his dreams and hopes for the future. Next year TJ will be going to college and Jayne looks forward to helping him move into the dorm. She feels honored to have been part of his life.



## PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Below is a summary of the key measures that Boston CASA will track to demonstrate progress, create internal accountability, incorporate lessons learned, and adjust strategy as necessary.

	FY 2017	FY 2018 (P)	FY 2019 (P)
<b>PROGRAM PERFORMANCE</b>			
Total number of children and youth who are assigned a CASA	180	215	255
Number of youth in the Older Youth Advocacy Project	46	54	65
Number of volunteer CASAs	115	145	175
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH/CAPACITY-BUILDING</b>			
Number of full-time equivalent employees	8.5	10	11
Develop and refine evaluation systems to better track outcomes, including access to services, school performance, and transition planning	Plan and Implement	Implement	Implement and Assess
Increase public relations and marketing activities to raise legislative, donor, and community support	Plan and Launch	Implement	Implement and Assess
Total revenue	\$600,000	\$800,000	\$925,000

## SOCIAL IMPACT

Research has shown that children with a CASA volunteer are more likely to receive services while in foster care, to have better school attendance and academic performance, and to find a safe and permanent home, as well as being less likely to return to foster care.

By helping to reduce time spent in foster care and supporting those “aging out” to formulate transition plans, Boston CASA promotes the long-term health of children and reduces child welfare costs.

INDICATOR FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A CASA	2017
Are placed in a safe and permanent home with a legal guardian	80%
Receive additional resources including one or more of the following: educational support, physical and mental health services, access to enrichment activities	90%
Regularly meet school standards for attendance	Tracking will begin in 2017
Young people aging out of foster care who develop a transition plan to independence including safe and permanent housing, enrollment in an education program, and/or find employment	Tracking will begin in 2017