

Virginia's Court Appointed Special Advocates

A Proven Solution for Children and Courts

CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN
VIRGINIA

CASA IN VIRGINIA

Virginia's 27 CASA programs, regulated by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), train and deploy community volunteers to serve as Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. These dedicated advocates are appointed by judges to advocate for the best interests of children throughout their court proceedings.

CASA programs ensure the courts receive critical, child-specific information and insights to make informed, timely decisions. CASA protects children, supports families, and relieves pressure on our overwhelmed child welfare system.

In FY2024 alone, Virginia's CASA programs **served more than 3,260 children** across the Commonwealth through the efforts of more than 1,300 trained volunteers who **contributed 138,000 hours of advocacy — valued at more than $4.6 million.**

WHY CASA IS INDISPENSABLE

CASA was created by judges to fill persistent gaps in Virginia's child welfare system.

CASA Advocates are trained volunteers who build trust with children, monitor safety, and coordinate with placements and providers.

CASA Advocates report detailed information to judges, improving judicial decision-making and strengthening family stability.

CASA eases the burden on overwhelmed DSS staff, Guardians ad Litem, and other systems experiencing workforce shortages and systemic strain.

Expanded capacity is critical at a time when workforce shortages are impacting child welfare effectiveness across Virginia. CASA's volunteer Advocates extend the reach of the system, strengthening oversight without increasing bureaucratic overhead.

A COST EFFECTIVE SOLUTION

Virginia's CASA programs offer a highly efficient use of public and private resources. When compared to other child welfare and intervention expenditures, the return on investment is substantial. Investing in CASA is a fiscally responsible strategy that strengthens families, improves child outcomes, and reduces the need for far more costly interventions later, benefiting both children and taxpayers.

Annual Cost Per Child

CASA	$2,830
Foster Care	$8,400
Residential Treatment	$70,000
Juvenile Justice Treatment	$246,000

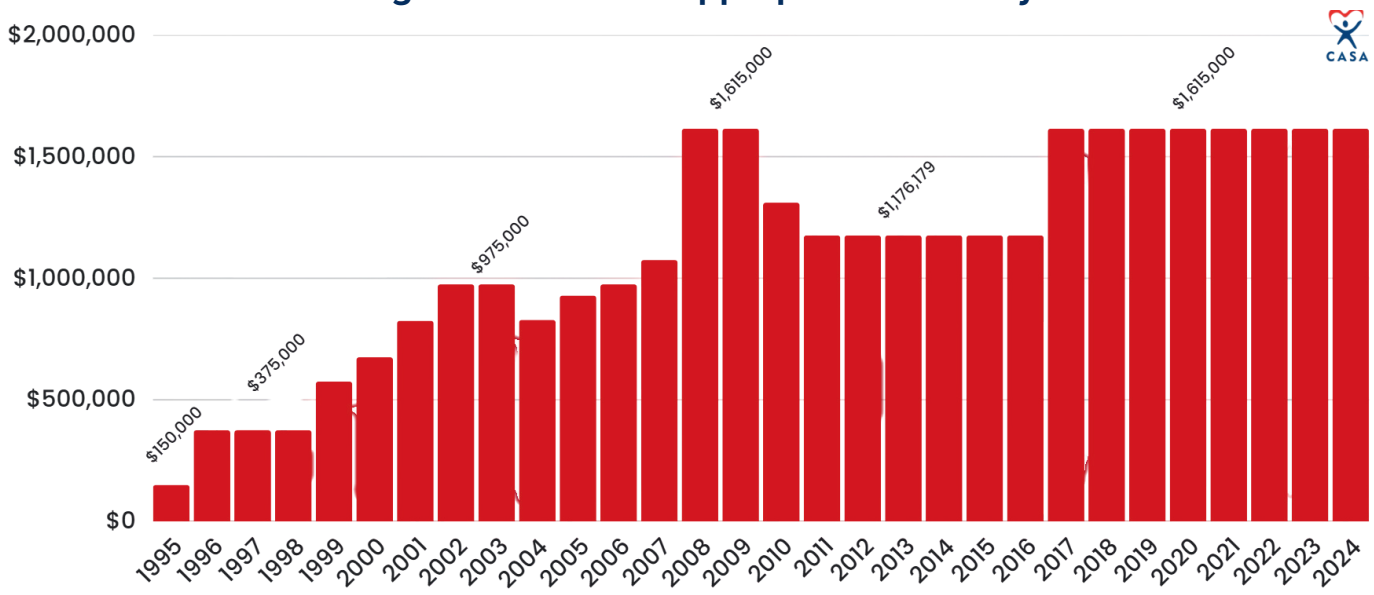
THE URGENCY OF INVESTMENT

CASA's State General Fund (SGF) support has been **capped at $1.615 million since 2008,** well below current program needs. Despite no increase in SGF since 2008, CASA programs face:

- Rising judicial demand across all 27 programs, reflecting increased case appointments
- Compounding complexities in case issues that represent prominent societal challenges, including addiction, mental health, housing, and parental incarceration
- Escalating workforce and caseload pressure across child welfare, human services, and judiciary systems

In FY 2024, CASA programs were unable to serve more than 3,400 judicial referrals due to volunteer and supervision gaps (HD6 - DCJS Work Group Report). Additionally, with federal VOCA funding projected to decline by 2030, the need for stabilization has become critical.

Virginia CASA SGF Appropriation History



CASA'S LEGISLATIVE REQUEST

Virginia CASA programs respectfully request an amendment to increase SGF support to $4 million annually (a $2.35M annual increase). This investment will enable the 27 CASA programs to recruit and retain more Advocates and staff in order to:

- Expand and strengthen capacity to respond swiftly to judicial appointments;
- Bolster ability to support the judiciary with reliable, unbiased, child-centered information; and
- Reduce waitlists so every referred child has representation to ensure that no child in the Commonwealth of Virginia is left without a trusted voice in court.