



## Georgia CASA's Education Advocacy Initiative

*A child's academic potential should not be limited by his/her experience in state custody.*

The goal of Georgia CASA's Education Advocacy Initiative is to positively impact the educational trajectory of children and youth in foster care by providing CASA volunteers with the tools needed to do the following:

1. Advocate for all children in DFCS custody to have access and the ability to receive a free and appropriate public education.
2. Collaboratively work to eliminate barriers that might otherwise prohibit a child in DFCS custody from participating in educational experiences in a manner similar to their peers who are not in care.
3. Teach age-appropriate, self-advocacy skills and strategies so that children and youth can have an active voice in their own education.

### **Georgia CASA Strategies:**

- Provide Education Advocacy training for CASA volunteers, CASA staff members and others.
- Provide direct consultations on education-related case issues with CASA staff members and volunteers.
- Collaborate with stakeholders throughout the state to comprehensively meet the educational needs of youth in care.
- Serve as a liaison between CASA and education-related agencies, initiatives, committees, task force, etc.
- Work with state and local partners to make Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Surrogate Parent Training available to all CASA volunteers.
- Provide a clearinghouse of information, policies, laws, services and support specific to education.

### **CASA Volunteer Education Advocacy Strategies May Include:**

- Providing the court with detailed education related information and recommendations.
- Participating in school-related meetings and tribunal hearings.
- Monitoring education progress and achievement.
- Advocating for appropriate education services and supports.
- Ensuring school records are made available in a timely manner.
- Advocating for fewer school placement changes and associated logistical considerations (timing, distance, transportation, etc.).
- Serving as a surrogate parent in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.
- Collaboratively planning post-secondary experiences and supports.
- Facilitating credit recovery.
- Advocating for youth participation in extracurricular, sports and supplemental academic activities.



The CASA organization is central to fulfilling society's most fundamental obligation by making sure a qualified, compassionate adult will fight for and protect a child's right to be safe, to be treated with dignity and respect, and to learn and grow in the safe embrace of a loving family.

Through individualized attention, CASA volunteers advocate for the best interests of Georgia's abused and neglected children. Bringing urgency to a child's needs, both in and out of the courtroom, CASA volunteers promote safety, permanency and well-being through independent recommendations.

A CASA volunteer is a trained community volunteer who is appointed by a judge, in accordance with state statute as a guardian ad litem, to advocate for the best interests of an abused or neglected child involved in juvenile court dependency proceedings.

The CASA volunteer gathers information about the child's situation, attends court proceedings and makes a recommendation to the judge so that the judge has the information to make a decision about the child's future.

The CASA organization in Georgia includes Georgia CASA and our 47 affiliate CASA programs, currently serving 143 of Georgia's 159 counties and present in 47 of the 48 judicial circuits in the state. Last year, over 2,100 CASA volunteers served over 9,700 dependent children in Georgia.