|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | *December 2018 Newsletter*  **What’s in This Issue**:   * Information about CASA Kids and the CASA program * CASA Highlights * Resources for Dependent Teens * About the Best for Babies Program * Legal Corner * Training Calendar |

**About CASA Kids**:

CASA Kids is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organized to support the Pierce County CASA program.   This year we’ve:

* Provided funding for the “A Book for Me” program and the Diaper Drive.
* Helped with recruitment efforts through speaking engagements and booths at community events.
* Partnered with the United Way to provide our kids and CASAs with tickets to community events.
* Provided some of the meals for the Arts Connect girls.
* Funded CASA and GAL requests that were denied by the Children’s Fund.
* Worked on the Pinwheels for Prevention project.
* Produced the CASA newsletter.

CASA Kids meetings are open to all CASAs and supporters of the CASA program.  Like to learn more about CASA Kids or attend a meeting?  Contact any of the board members.

**CASA Kids Officers:**

President: Mary Bartley bartley\_casa@hotmail.com

Vice-president: Kathy Bertram kathy.bertram2@gmail.com

Secretary: Jenny Kenyon Gentry casajennykg@gmail.com

Treasurer: Dan Casey dcasey.casa@gmail.com

**Committee Chairs:**

Children’s Program Coordinator Annette Lukinbill & Dan Casey

Recruiting & Retaining Chair Kathy Bertram & Jenny Kenyon Gentry

Community Relations & Social Media Annette Lukinbill & Jenny Kenyon Gentry

Fundraising Chair Mike McGowan

Compliance Director Annette Lukinbill

Newsletter Editor Lauren Stasiak & Annette Lukinbill

**Quick Facts About the CASA/GAL Program and the Children we Serve**

* On any given day, the CASA/GAL program serves **1,300 children**
* As of the end of October, there are **233 CASAs serving 385 children** (**GALs currently serve 908**)
* A total of **61 CASAs** have been trained this year to date

**CASA Highlights**

In this section we honor a CASA who went above and beyond to help a child in dependency. Tracey Czar shared this information about the recent actions of one of her CASAs:

A CASA (with the agreement of the social worker) facilitated communication between the mom and foster parent to work out a transportation schedule to allow the child to continue to attend her ECAEP program while she transitioned home. To make this happen, the CASA coordinated a meet-up between the foster parent and mom so they could share the transportation duties. Had the CASA not encouraged this communication and facilitated an agreement between the foster parent and mom, the child would not have been able to continue attending a program that the child loved and which had a positive impact on the child’s life by preparing her for kindergarten.

Coordinators please feel free to send a CASA highlight to Lauren Stasiak at l\_stasiak@yahoo.com.

**Resources for Dependent Teens**

*HELP WITH GETTING A DRIVER’S LICENSE*

Do you have a young adult (age 15-21) on your case? The Treehouse Driver’s Assistance Program provides funding and assistance for youth in foster care to obtain: Washington State ID Cards, Driver’s Education Courses, Washington State Learner’s Permits, Washington State Driver’s Licenses & Enhanced Driver’s Licenses and Liability Automobile Insurance. To find out more, c**heck out the**[Driver's Assistance Flyer](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/CA/fos/documents/DriversAssistanceFlyer.pdf)**.**

*PAYING FOR COLLEGE*

For children who are in foster care at age 13 or older, college education is free at almost every Washington state college.  More information can be found at the following links:

<https://readysetgrad.wa.gov/fostercare>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/FosterCare/Postsecondary.aspx>

**Friendly Reminder**

Jenny Kenyon Gentry recently donated 50 copies of the *Foster Cub* workbook. This 32-page workbook helps kids age 4 to 12 understand what it means to be in foster care, the roles of the new people in their lives, identifying their feelings, and age-appropriate ways to advocate for themselves. At the bottom of each page are “words of help” for the adults supporting the child(ren). Young adults in care were instrumentally involved in development of this workbook.

Please help yourself to a copy from the CASA room.

**Legal Corner**

**Washington State Supreme Court Rules on Whether All Children in Dependency Are Entitled to Appointed Counsel in *In re Dependency of E.H. and S.K.-P.***

The Washington State Supreme Court recently held, in a 6-3 decision, that children in a dependency proceeding are *not* automatically entitled to have an attorney appointed on their behalf. The Court held that the appointment of an attorney for a child should be made on a case by case basis, which is the existing practice in Pierce County.

In its decision, the Court identified a number of factors that should be considered when deciding whether a child would benefit from having counsel. The list is not exhaustive, but includes:

* Did the child specifically request an attorney?
* How old is the child?
* Where is the child currently placed?
* Does the child dispute the facts that form the basis for the dependency?
* What would the child like the attorney to help them with?
* What additional decisional accuracy will an appointed attorney provide for the Court?
* Does the child present a sophisticated argument against a proposed decision?
* Are those issues actually being addressed at an upcoming hearing?
* What does the child want? What is in the child’s best interest?
* Are the child’s stated wishes misaligned with the CASA’s assessment of the child’s best interest?

As a reminder, RCW 13.34.100(7) requires you to (1) Inform a child who is 12 years or older of their right to request an attorney and (2) Ask the child if they would like an attorney. This notification and inquiry is required immediately after the child’s 12th birthday or when you are assigned a case with a child who is 12 or older.

RCW 13.34.100(7) also requires you to repeat the notification and inquiry at least once per year and whenever there is a motion or petition filed that will affect the child’s placement, services, or family relationships.

If you need help analyzing whether or not a child on your caseload should be appointed an attorney, please speak with your CASA Coordinator or program attorney Morgan Chaput at [morgan.chaput@piercecountywa.gov](mailto:morgan.chaput@piercecountywa.gov) or 253-798-7338. They can talk through the case with you and help determine the best course of action.

**About Best for Babies**

As CASAs, we have the unique opportunity to be part of an innovative program for babies who are in foster care. The program seeks to improve outcomes for infants and toddlers from birth to 3 years old and supports healthy and secure attachments to parents and caregivers.

Research has repeatedly shown that these formative years are critical ones for brain development and attachment. Additionally, babies who are placed quickly in a safe, permanent home are less likely to come back into care. That’s why Best for Babies emphasizes increased family time and the removal of barriers that prevent early engagement with parents and caregivers.

**History of Best for Babies in Pierce County**

Best for Babies (also known as Baby Court) began in Pierce County in 2014 thanks to former CASA coordinator Maureen Sorenson and Sally Mednansky. The specialized docket of Best for Babies cases began in October 2016.

Pierce County is the first county in Washington to start a Best Specialized Baby Court. Pierce County Juvenile Court recently became an official Infant-Toddler Court team through the Zero to Three organization.

**Changing the Culture of Dependency**

An integral part of the success of the Best for Babies program lies in its attempt to change the culture of dependency by approaching problems more collaboratively. In practice, this means that Best for Babies cases are reviewed more frequently and are overseen by dedicated social workers and specially trained CASAs. Staffings include a community team of volunteers involved in issues related to child development, and these volunteers make recommendations to address the specific needs of each child. In addition, the same judge hears the case at every review hearing, allowing for consistency and a more nurturing court environment.

**Facts About Best for Babies:**

* Children served by the Safe Babies Court Teams reached permanency two to three times faster.
* Children served by the Safe Babies Court Teams exited the foster care systems approximately one year earlier than children in a matched comparison group and they are more likely to reach permanence with a member of their biological family.
* 99.05% of the infants and toddlers served were protected from further maltreatment.
* 97% of the identified service needs of infants and toddlers served by the Safe Babies Court Teams had either been met or were in the process of being met.

Best for Babies is an evolving and expanding program that currently encompasses 11 cases. Best for Babies team reviews petitions and works with the Department to determine if a case can come in to the program. Best for Babies and CASA Coordinator Kris Freeman says that the goal is to increase these cases to 20 in the coming months. The next Best for Babies CASA training will take place on February 21, 2019 from 5:30-8:00pm.

Interested CASAs should contact Kris Freeman (kris.freeman@piercecountywa.gov or 253-798-7944) or Julie Hoffman ([Julie@amaraputskidsfirst.org](mailto:Julie@amaraputskidsfirst.org)) for more information.

**Upcoming Trainings**

CASA/GAL Safety Framework Training

December 6: 11:00 – 12:30

January 10: 11:00 – 12:30

February 7: 11:00 – 12:30