



CASA PROGRAMS

For 32 years, CASA (Community Action Stops Abuse, Inc.) has provided wide range of programs for victims of domestic violence and their families, advocacy and community education on domestic violence. CASA has developed, from a small, grassroots emergency shelter with 8 beds and part time staff, into a flagship domestic violence (dv) organization. CASA has a reputation for fine work and innovative programs with 100 employees. CASA is respected as a leader of 42 dv centers in Florida. The agency was a finalist for the Governors Peace at Home award, and in 2003, named “Non Profit Business of the Year” by the St Petersburg Chamber of Commerce. The agency was also named “non-profit business of the year” in 2008 by the *Tampa Bay Business Journal*.

CASA has an annual projected budget for 2009-10 of \$3,612,179. Of this budget, 70% is comprised of government grants (28% federal, 10% state, and 29% local). 30% is comprised of local contributions including fundraising events, contributions and bequests, income from thrift store sales and gifts in kind. CASA has a strong and aggressive grants and development department.

CASA has collaborative grants and partnerships with: The Haven Domestic Violence Center in Clearwater, the State Attorney’s Office, Clerk of Courts, Family Service Center, PEMHS, Safe Children’s Coalition, and the Safestart Partnership Center. CASA coordinates services with the St. Petersburg Police Department, Clerk of Courts, Court Administrator, Family Service Centers, S.A.F.E., WorkNet Pinellas, Help A Child, and Suncoast Mental Health/Homeless Outreach Support Team. CASA collaborates with R’ Club of Pinellas and Coordinated Childcare of Pinellas County to provide licensed afterschool daycare for children residing in CASA’s Gateway Transitional Housing and CASA’s emergency shelter. CASA provides support groups for Operation PAR, Faith House, Mustard Seed, Pinellas Village and the Pinellas County Jail. CASA actively participates with the Pinellas County Domestic Violence Task Force, Fatality Review Committee, Pinellas county Coalition for the Homeless, Area Agency on Aging, Interagency Network, Victim’s Rights Coalition, Urban League, Chamber of Commerce, Weed and Seed, Community Alliance, Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, The Supervised Visitation Task Force, Pinellas County Health Department, the United Way Council of Executives and the Juvenile Welfare Board Council of Executives.

CASA’s mission is to raise our voices against violence through advocacy, empowerment and social change. CASA’s vision is a community without domestic violence so that home is a safe place.

CASA’s current services include a 30 bed emergency shelter, 14 units of transitional housing with a total of 54 beds, a 24-hour crisis hot line, support groups, youth programs, substance abuse advocacy, information and referral program, emergency response teams, legal advocacy,

outreach to under-served communities, thrift shop, visitation program, peacemakers program to pre-school, elementary and middle school students, and a very active volunteer program. CASA has provided community education and professional training for thousands of health care, legal, and educational professionals.

DESCRIPTION OF ALL SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE AGENCY:

A. Description of Program Areas

CASA works with survivors of domestic violence regardless of race, class, age, religion, ability, marital status or sexual orientation. The link to our services is our **24-Hour Crisis Line – 727 895-4912**: Survivors in crisis, children, helpers are all welcome to call. Trained advocates will provide crisis intervention, safety planning, information and referrals to domestic violence survivors and those who may be assisting them.

Residential Services:

Emergency Shelter: Provides refuge, crisis intervention, and advocacy for up to 45 days when home is not safe. Over 350 battered women and children find sanctuary annually. The shelter is always open and can be reached by calling the crisis line. Shelter residents receive clothing, food, and personal items. The shelter has 30 beds.

Shelter Children's Program: Provides play and support groups for children who reside in the shelter. Parents receive assistance with non-violent discipline for their children. Children's support groups for age-appropriate children are held weekly and childcare is provided during the adult evening support groups.

CASA Gateway Transitional Housing: Provides 14 individual apartments and an active program for families transitioning from shelter for up to two years while they rebuild their lives. Seven apartments opened in 1997, seven additional apartments opened in 2000. Only referrals from CASA or The Haven are accepted.

Gateway Youth Center: CASA's transitional housing program youth advocates provide a licensed children's program to 25+ children each weekday afternoon from 2:30-6pm, and full time during the summer months in our Youth Center building. "Kid's Club" includes a nutritious snack, indoor and outdoor activities, a part time Pinellas County tutor, and a computer lab with supervised internet access. Additionally, youth advocates provide advocacy, evening youth groups opposite the adult groups, a "behavior bucks" incentive program, and lessons in peacemaking. A unique partnership with the R'Club, Juvenile Welfare Board and Pinellas County Coordinated Childcare provides CASA with a licensed child care program. Preschool children attend a licensed childcare program operated by Operation PAR.

Special Support to Program Participants:

CASA Collection Thrift Shoppe: CASA families shop for free and the general public shops for bargains at this eclectic "budget boutique." Proceeds benefit CASA programs.

Volunteer Program: Volunteers are essential to the success and depth of our programs, greatly enhancing the services CASA provides to families. CASA has 198 unduplicated volunteers that provide 6,197 hours of service each year.

Cell Phone Program: CASA accepts and provides donated cell phones to survivors of domestic violence who may need the extra safety of instant communication through a 911 phone.

Specialized Programs:

Community Education: CASA's Speakers Bureau provides presentations and workshops to over 300 media, civic, fraternal, professional, religious, school, neighborhood and other groups annually. CASA's Community Education Program emphasizes that "it takes a whole community to stop domestic violence."

The Peacemaker Program: This collaborative program provides holistic peace education for preschoolers, elementary and middle school children in a wide variety of classrooms and schools throughout Pinellas County, nurturing a sense of peace and justice during critical times in child development. Peacemakers also provide resources for teachers to continue the program in the classrooms.

Youth Outreach: Through counseling, music, art, and story-telling, CASA helps children traumatized by violence learn that they can have hope, safety, and love that doesn't hurt. Specialized presentations throughout Pinellas County offer outreach to prevent domestic violence, dating violence, and date rape. As part of this outreach, CASA is beginning to offer youth focused support groups.

The Visitation Center: CASA recognized the need to provide safety for children, domestic violence victims and others including dependency cases. The Visitation Center provides court ordered supervised visitation and monitored exchanges of children for residential and non-residential parents. The Visitation Center provides safe, affordable, supervised visitation and monitored exchange for families court-ordered into the program. Referrals are accepted from the Family, Domestic Violence and Dependency Courts.

ERT (Emergency Response Team): Children and families are referred to the ERT by the Child Protective Investigator. These are families who are experiencing an acute crisis related to mental health, substance abuse, and/or domestic violence that impacts the safety and the stability of the children in the home.

Substance Abuse Program: CASA's innovative program recognizes the perilous interconnection between substance abuse and battering. Services are provided for children and families dually affected by domestic violence and substance abuse who participate in CASA's community support groups or participate in local substance abuse treatment programs.

Legal Advocacy Program and Law Enforcement Liaison: CASA offers assistance and support to survivors utilizing the civil and criminal justice system. Staff meets survivors at the criminal court to assist victims with the court proceedings. Staff also assists survivors at the Clerk of Court making application for injunctions for protection. CASA works collectively to develop a coordinated community response to domestic violence.

Individual and Group Support: Community-based weekly support groups and individual crisis counseling for victims not in CASA's shelter provide support to those in crisis. Participants

learn about domestic violence, community resources and develop safety plans for themselves and their children. Outreach to the elderly and African-American communities bridges logistical and cultural issues for those at risk.

Trafficked Women: CASA serves as one of four hubs in FL and has received special training to serve women and girls who have been trafficked. Services could include shelter and legal advocacy.

Incarcerated Women: CASA assists domestic violence victims arrested for defending themselves. CASA also provides a support group for women in the Pinellas County jail.

The **goal of CASA's programs** is to reduce the incidence of domestic violence by providing families with adequate resources for a safe living situation and a realistic safety plan, to help them achieve stable, violence-free lives.