



COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

The Voice that Matters for Foster Youth

FRESNO & MADERA COUNTIES

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES



CASA MISSION

- We are a community based organization whose mission is to **recruit, train and support** volunteers to advocate and speak up for abused and neglected children in the foster care system.
- **CASA** is nation-wide and growing stronger.

HISTORY OF CASA

- In 1977, a Seattle Judge David Soukup concerned about making drastic decisions with insufficient information conceived the idea of volunteers speaking up in the courtroom for the best interests of foster children.
- At that time, children in foster care didn't receive the same representation in court as parents did.
- 50 volunteers were recruited, trained, and supervised to build meaningful relationships and advocate for abused and neglected children in the juvenile dependency court.
- Those first 50 volunteers became Court Appointed Special Advocates and gave birth to a movement. Today, close to 1,000 CASA programs serve children in 49 of our 50 states.



CASA OF FRESNO AND MADERA COUNTIES



- There are approximately 2,700 children in the dependency system in Fresno and Madera Counties.
- Approximately 150 children are on the waiting list for a CASA Advocate.
- Independent research has demonstrated that children with a CASA volunteer are substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care and less likely to re-enter care.

ROLE OF A CASA ADVOCATE?

- CASA Advocates are volunteer, sworn officers of the court appointed by a juvenile court judge.
- CASA volunteers are appointed to advocate for abused and neglected children. Our role is to ensure these children don't get lost in the overburdened legal and social service system.
- CASA volunteers review documents and records pertaining to the child's case.
- CASA volunteers communicate with family members as well as other adults involved in the child's life.
- Volunteers provide written reports for court hearings.



WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE?

- Be at least 21 years of age
- 18-month commitment of service to provide consistency for the foster youth
- Pass a background check, including a fingerprint scan
- Possess a valid California driver's license
- Own or have access to reliable transportation with car insurance
- Submit an application, and include 3 References
- Complete the 40-hour Advocate Academy Training.



ADVOCATE ACADEMY

Once you have completed the application and interview process, you will attend our Advocate Academy where you will receive the training and information regarding the following important topics:



JUVENILE COURT
PROCESS AND
PROCEDURES



TRAUMA
INFORMED CARE



SOCIAL SERVICES



JUVENILE JUSTICE
SYSTEM



SPECIAL NEEDS
OF ABUSED AND
NEGLECTED
CHILDREN

RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN ADVOCATE

- Spend approximately 15-20 hours each month on your case
- Supporting the children through building healthy, caring relationships
- Communicate with Advocate Supervisor, identify concerns and find solutions.
- Work collaboratively with social services and all service providers as a member of a team.
- Attend court hearings and meetings
- Complete a Court Report with recommend decisions that serve the best interests of the children
- Complete 12 hours of continuing education annually
- Carry out assigned duties and responsibilities in an ethical manner and follow the organization's policies
- Have access to and the ability to use a personal computer and various software programs, including Microsoft Word and email



DO I NEED ANY SPECIAL SKILLS TO BE AN ADVOCATE?



- No special background or education is required to become a CASA volunteer.
- We encourage people from all cultures and professions, and of all ethnic and educational backgrounds.

CAN I WORK FULL TIME AND STILL BE AN ADVOCATE?

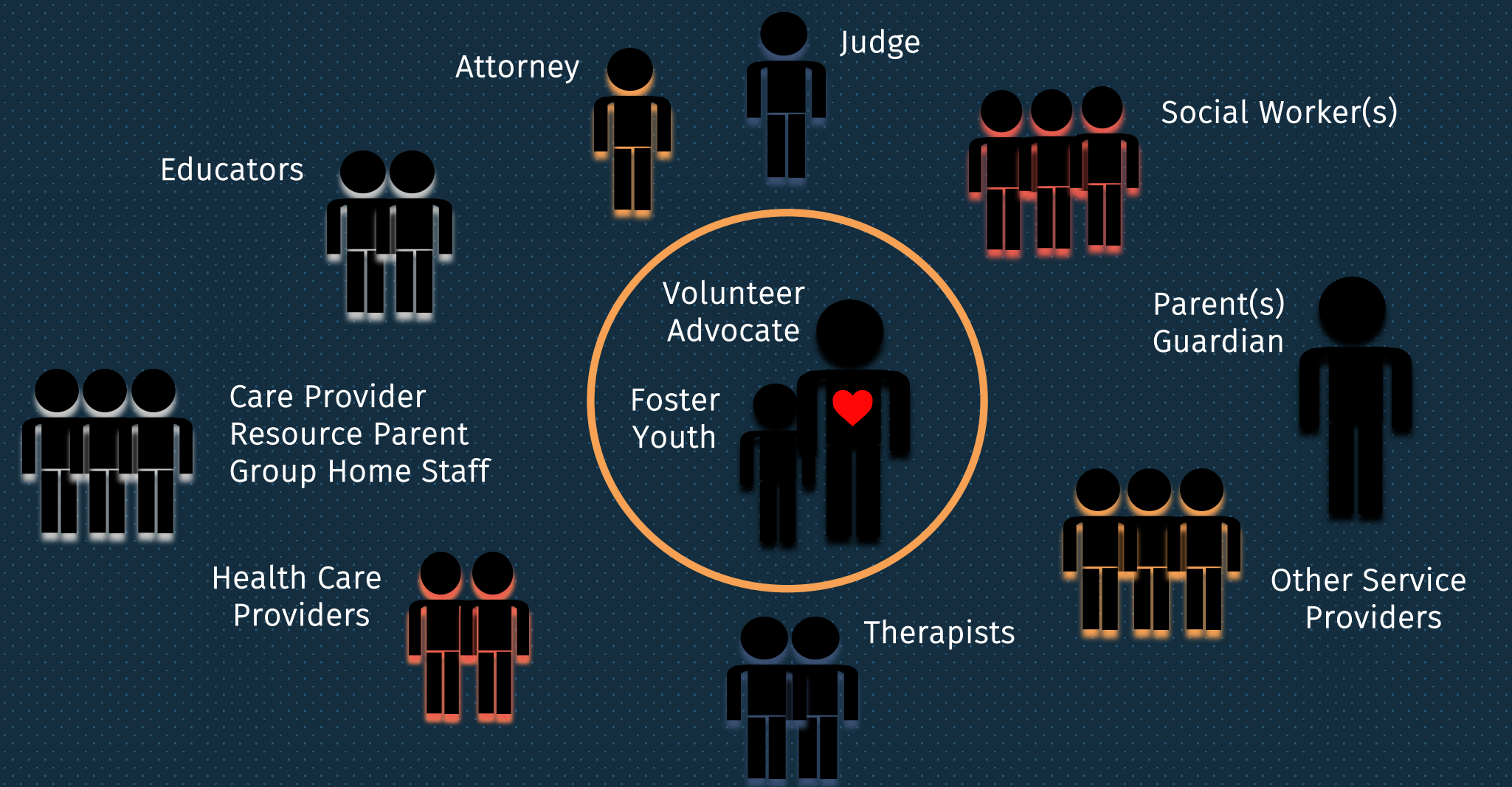


Yes. Many of our volunteers have families and hold full-time jobs and still have time to be successful advocates.



Advocates spend approximately 15-20 hours each month. This includes all the activities associated with your case.

WHO ARE THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE?



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES THAT OUR FOSTER YOUTH FACE?

- Changing Homes
- Changing Schools – Teachers, Friends, Etc.
- Changing Social Workers
- Loss of Biological Family
- Unaddressed Basic Needs
- Behavioral Challenges
- Mental Health Concerns
- Developmental Delays
- Lack of Natural Support System
- Instability
- Isolation
- Lack of Trust
- Insecurity
- Fear
- Broken Parental Bonds
- Powerlessness
- Shame
- Feeling Unheard

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DON'T HELP?

- Under-Educated
- Unemployment
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Incarceration
- Mental Illness
- Substance Abuse
- Human Trafficking



HOW CAN A CASA ADVOCATE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?



WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO BECOME AN ADVOCATE?



STEP 1

- Attend an information session

STEP 2

- Complete an application and background check

STEP 3

- Interview with a CASA representative

STEP 4

- Complete our Advocate Academy Training

STEP 5

- Take the Oath of Office

APPLY NOW

559.244.6485 casa@casafresno.org f t i

ADVOCATE EMAIL

CASA

ABOUT ▾ VOLUNTEER ▾ GIVE ▾

ABOUT ▾ VOLUNTEER ▾ GIVE ▾ NEWS AND EVENTS ▾

BECOME AN ADVOCATE

APPLY NOW

VOLUNTEER STORIES

JOURNEY OF HOPE STORIES

OTHER WAYS TO HELP

THE VOICE THAT MATTERS FOR FOSTER YOUTH

Foster youth in Fresno and Madera counties desperately need a voice as they navigate the court

The image is a screenshot of the CASA website. At the top, there is a red navigation bar with contact information and social media icons. Below this is a white header with the CASA logo and a main navigation menu. A dropdown menu is open under the 'VOLUNTEER' link, and the 'APPLY NOW' option is highlighted with a red hand-drawn box and a red arrow. The background of the page features a photograph of diverse foster youth walking together, with the text 'THE VOICE THAT MATTERS FOR FOSTER YOUTH' overlaid in large white letters. At the bottom, a tagline reads 'Foster youth in Fresno and Madera counties desperately need a voice as they navigate the court'.

HOW TO SUPPORT CASA



HOSTING A
SESSION IN THE
PLACE OF
BUSINESS



VOLUNTEER AT
ONGOING EVENTS



BECOME A
SPONSOR



DONATIONS



To make a difference in a child's life, you don't have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful, or perfect.

You just have to care enough and be there.

Thank You For Your Time!



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FRESNO & MADERA COUNTIES

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The Voice That Matters for Foster Youth!