

CASA Meeting

Meeting Minutes

**May 5, 2009, 8:00 a.m.
Room 412, SD Capitol Building**

Attendance: Judge Kathleen Trandahl, Kimberly Max, Lisa Thompson, Jaime Rieff, Kristie Fiegen, SCAO Advisory: Sara Kelly. Recording Secretary: Laurie Knutson.

Guests: Brenda Schulte, First Judicial Circuit; Amy Benda, Second Judicial Circuit; Julie Wermers, Third Judicial Circuit; Gypsy Petz, Fourth Judicial Circuit; Shirley Schwab, Fifth Judicial Circuit; Kent Huckins, Sixth Judicial Circuit; Chad Catron, Seventh Judicial Circuit; Jessie Kuechenmeister, State CASA Director, Arlana Bettleyoun and Ben Artichoker, Oglala Sioux CASA.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Judge Trandahl called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Judge Trandahl thanked Sara for all her work involved with the CASA Commission Committee.

INTRODUCTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following committee members introduced themselves: Kristie Fiegen, Jaime Rieff, Lisa Thompson, Kimberly Max, and Judge Kathleen Trandahl. Judge Trandahl introduced State Court Administrator's Office staff members Sara Kelly and Laurie Knutson. Judge Trandahl thanked all for all the hard work involved with CASA.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Judge Trandahl asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes. Kim made a motion to approve minutes and the motion was seconded by Jaime. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

PRESENTATIONS

1st Circuit

Brenda apologized for the mix up in the dates and her late arrival. She thanked the commission for the suggestions she received last year regarding volunteers and fund raising. They have 13 volunteers this year and currently have 9 board members. They are in the middle of their annual campaign and are struggling with the economic conditions. They want to bring CASA to the forefront of the

community. She stated the National Guard unit from Platte has built them a playhouse and they will raffle this off at the end of May as another fund raising effort.

Brenda said they asked the commissioners for more office space and is hoping to get more room for expansion as their program is growing and needs more space. They hired a new office assistant in December and she is working out greatly. Their grant application is the same amount as requested in 2008.

They are working with United Way to put together a volunteer recognition event and this event is approximately a year away. They want to bring all the nonprofit organizations together and show the community what volunteer options are available in their area. She hopes this will bring forth more volunteers and donations.

They held their strategic plan meeting in January and they are working very hard on obtaining groups of volunteers to hold fund raisers for CASA.

Brenda said the numbers are increasing due to the economic conditions and stresses that families are facing. They have 26 children on their waiting list and are currently serving 10 children.

She stated they have cut their budget to the bare bones. Jaime asked if Yankton County is being served and Brenda stated they cannot at this time due to shortage of staff and volunteers. Kristie asked when they started and Brenda stated in 2001. Kristie asked about the unrestricted net assets and Brenda said they are at \$112,000. Kristie asked how they raised that amount of funds in such a short time and Brenda said their first fund raiser was very successful. Brenda said one of the biggest financial stresses is the insurance they are required to carry. Brenda stated in the last 4 to 5 months the CASA program is finally starting to fall together and be recognized in that area.

2nd Circuit

Amy thanked the committee for their past support. They have 107 sworn volunteers and swore in 18 new volunteers this year. The next training is scheduled for July 2009. They are currently serving 114 children in 65 cases and 48 children in 24 cases on our waiting list. Through April 30 they have had 79 new children, this same time last year it was 55 children. Their total for 2008 was 167 new children and 101 new cases. The numbers for 2009 are higher than 2008. Amy stated the severity of the cases is a lot more physical abuse cases and as well as more sexual abuse cases. The longer the problem is in existence and the

longer volunteers are with the program, these volunteers need more encouragement and debriefing. They have hired a part-time case manager for 30 hours per week.

Recruitment efforts continue to be strong. They are trying to recruit volunteers from every spectrum of age, education, and socio-economic backgrounds to provide the broadest base possible.

They were granted a Tradition in Caring grant through KELO-Land TV that provides \$15,000 worth of air-time.

There is a difference of \$26.26 on the financial report due to a check being voided. They are struggling raising money for their endowment funds. Their request at this time is 24% of their total operating budget. Amy stated they are considering moving locations in the next 6 to 12 months as their current office space is rented from the county for \$3,500, but it is very small cramped quarters. They are looking at business owners for larger office space due to the small quarters.

Kim mentioned looking into the Critical Incidental Stress Management Teams as a resource for reducing stress for volunteers. She stated this is generally offered through law enforcement and can also be located on the internet. This is a free service.

Kristie asked about the 2007 audit and the difference between the audit and QuickBooks. She noticed a \$10,000 difference on page 3. Amy said she would have to talk with their auditor to discuss this difference. They do not add interest into their revenue. The only interest added into the revenue is the Endowment Fund interest.

3rd Circuit

Julie thanked the committee for the success they have seen in their program. She said 2008 was a good year for them. They are serving 32 children currently and served 42 children in 2008. They continue to operate their satellite office in Moody County. They are looking at expanding into Codrington or Beadle County. All of the children served in 2008 had the same volunteer through the year. They did lose a few volunteers due to relocating.

Last year they trained and swore in 5 new volunteers from Flandreau and five new volunteers came on board as Friends of CASA. They worked with the domestic violence network in Sioux Falls as well.

Staff and board members went to the National CASA conference. They continue to get the CASA name recognized in the community through radio advertisements as well as redesigning their brochure. They continue with their Fire and Ice event as well as a golf event. The golf event is not a fund raising event but a friend raiser. The board decided this event was the best way to get themselves visible and in the public eye. Kristie expressed her concern regarding the golf event because it is not a fund raising event but a fun event. Julie stated they did go through a strategic planning process and Kristie commended Julie on the new strategic plan.

Lisa asked Julie if she had a resolution from the tribal council and Julie said they did not have that yet. Lisa explained she would have to meet with the whole tribal council to get their support and resolution and approval.

4th Circuit

Gypsy thanked the committee for their time and for the funds distributed to all the programs.

In 2008 their numbers went down due to several reasons. They had several children that had been in the system for several years and aged out of the system. The Department of Social Services is working on trying to do more home based services as opposed to court based services and this did keep some of the cases out of the CASA area.

In 2009 they have 109 children in the system. In 2008 they had 138 children.

They are looking to implement some parenting classes that are more skilled focused and basic parenting skills.

Northern Hills CASA receives the majority of their funds from several foundations and those amounts have been less as they deal with several rural communities.

Kristie asked if budgeting \$30,000 less was due to the economy and to be cautious, Gypsy stated that was correct. Kim asked if they are serving the entire 4th circuit and Gypsy said they are. Jaime stated the Department of Social Services is really trying to keep the children in the home and this will reflect on the decrease in the numbers of children.

5th Circuit

Shirley thanked the committee for all they do and the funding they receive.

In 2008 they did have challenges and the year ended on a positive note. They have a goal of training 10 volunteers in 2009 and they are pleased with the quality of volunteers. They are in their twelfth year and this helps with visibility for the CASA program.

They currently have 50 children in their case load and the cases are getting more complicated and complex. They also had a new states attorney in 2008.

Their in-service training was focused on sexual abuse for children. They are going to have someone come in and discuss debriefing and burn-out for volunteers.

They continue their community awareness events throughout the year. They have approximately 30 volunteers that help with Christmas and Easter events and the Fire and Ice event will be held in November. This event was not held in 2008 due to lack of volunteers.

As part of their strategic plan they are looking at donors for monetary funds versus grant funding. These donors would be contacted each year for donations.

In 2009 they are asking for \$45,000. The City of Aberdeen in the past has donated \$20,000. They have seen donations decrease due to the economy.

Lisa stated she liked to see the percentage of ICWA cases transferred and not transferred to tribal court. Lisa asked how they handle an ICWA child and is there training available? Shirley stated the judges are all very articulate and do note if these children are of native origin. Shirley said they typically wait until adjudication before they bring in a CASA volunteer. Judge Trandahl asked if she is seeing transfers taking place earlier in the case and Shirley said yes they do seem to take place earlier than in the past. Judge Trandahl stated earlier transfers typically are better for the system. Judge Trandahl also commented on the training judges receive regarding ICWA and child related issues.

Judge Trandahl asked Shirley to explain the systematic approach for A & N cases. Shirley said this approach does not hold up the volunteers as long. One of their stumbling blocks has been defense attorneys and nothing gets done and they are looking at a solution to this problem. They are studying each case and meeting with the attorneys to determine what needs to be done to get the children back in their homes. This method helps the volunteers and the frustration levels they

experience. Kim asked if all circuits are waiting until adjudication to assign a volunteer and the directors responded "no", most programs assign a volunteer as soon as possible to a case.

Kristie asked about their application and the budget year. Kristie asked how they got their donations to increase nearly 100%. Shirley stated they have worked very hard in seeking donations and working very closely with those donors on a personal basis.

Shirley mentioned they meet monthly with the Child Assessment Centers and access them for trainings. Shirley stated they are very vigilant in their efforts in getting CASA recognized.

6th Circuit

Kent thanked the committee and the funding provided in the past. He stated it's nice to hear from other directors and their ideas. Kent stated they are requesting \$26,000 for funding and they appreciate the CASA funds.

He said their case numbers are seeing an increase in 2009 and the family sizes are larger in this area. As of today they are serving 63 children. The staff is composed of Kent and one part time person. Kent stated the down side to the small staff is that they do not have all the time to accomplish their goals. They do have a strategic plan in place but it was not submitted due to the fact that Kent did not like the plan. They have 5 new board members and 4 of them are Native American. Kent is hoping the new board members will get the strategic plan completed as well as getting the CASA name recognized in this area. Their struggle has been getting people to volunteer to be advocates. They do have 4 people scheduled to be trained in June and their goal is looking at 5 volunteers in Pierre and 3 in Winner.

One of their biggest accomplishments has been developing a relationship with Social Services. Kent has been speaking with Social Services regarding getting involved with Tribal Court and the Rosebud Reservation.

Lisa stated she has some names she can provide Kent with for volunteers.

Jaime commended Kent on the CasaBlanca event and she felt it was an outstanding event. Kent stated the funds from the CasaBlanca event was less than previous years.

Kristie asked Kent about their name recognition and volunteer recruitment efforts. He stated they are using radio and print ads and volunteers. Kristie stated she does not know what a volunteer goes thru when helping children but she felt face-to-face and approaching businesses for donations and volunteers might be a possibility. Kent said they did get 4 people from the CasaBlanca event that is interested in volunteering.

Kristie asked because they do not have an audit, do they have any unrestricted net assets which are like a savings plan? Kent said they have \$36,000 that is not part of their operating budget and is set aside for financial short comings.

Kim commended Kent on their application and how they have connected with the Pierre school district. She said connecting with the school system will open a lot of doors and is a great pool to tap into.

7th Circuit

Chad Catron is the new CASA program director for this circuit. Prior to this position he was with Big Brothers and Big Sisters in Rapid City.

He thanked the commission for their support for the programs and funding for the general operating expenses.

They have 114 volunteers, but not all of these are active. They serve 150 to 155 children at any given time. The numbers have remained relatively the same as 2008. The Fire and Ice annual event was held in February and donations were down compared to 2008. They are in the middle of their Play House fund raiser and the National Guard donates the materials for this event. This event is being held at the Rushmore Mall. He stated they also have The Black Hills on Board game and businesses purchase a spot. This game showcases the Black Hills area. Chad said this board game forces them to meet face to face with those businesses and builds relationships for the CASA organization.

Their new approach to fundraising is more involvement from the board members. Donors have suggested instead of a one time donation, make a monthly donation as this is easier on budgets.

They have 2 less board members and are looking to fill these positions.

Judge Trandahl noticed there were a number of volunteers lost last year. Chad stated this is due to some of the volunteers having not helped for quite sometime and were considered inactive; the inactive volunteer files were closed out or the

computer system and this reflects the drop in numbers. He noted the required ratio is one full time staff member for 30 volunteers.

Kristie noticed their net assets have decreased in the last 2 to 3 years and asked how they plan to remedy that? Chad stated he is going to focus on personal donations and building those relationships and meeting with these people one on one. He stated that the board is also participating in this process as well.

Oglala Sioux Tribe

Arlana Bettelyoun and Ben Artichoker were both present on behalf of Oglala Lakota (CASA). Ben is the fiscal manager. Arlana was in an auto accident last year and could not attend last year's meeting. Their program has gone through a severe flood disaster and severe economic conditions and their volunteer numbers were down due to these conditions. Arlana had to lay off staff due to these economic conditions.

They had a goal of recruiting 10 new volunteers and will currently have 17 volunteers once trained. They've had to reschedule training 3 times due to the weather. From the funds raised they have been able to hire a staff member to go out and recruit volunteers. There were 8 volunteers trained in September 2007 that are no longer involved and she is hoping to bring these volunteers back on board and retrain them. They had started with 101 children in the past and are down to 86 children. She has had to recreate files due to the flood disaster and is almost done with this project. They hope to have their strategic plan revised by the summer of 2009. Their goal is to retain the volunteers currently on hand.

In 2008 they received a Champion for Children award from both East and West River. This program has received a lot of acknowledgement for their efforts.

Arlana has contacted a friend in California for donations and realized that they need to cultivate those relationships for the donations to continue. She has also contacted Moses Brings Plenty; he is featured on a new brochure and is getting this out into the public for awareness.

They have reapplied for the federal grant they received in the past. They do not know if they will receive these funds again, the application is pending.

Ben gave a brief overview of the financial status. He stated the National CASA organization has been scrutinizing them because of their small number of volunteers. He stated Shannon County is the third poorest county in the United States and 35% of their homes do not have running water or electricity. He said it

is hard to get volunteers when they subsist in some of the poorest economic conditions. It is very hard to do networking and hold fund raisers with this type of economic conditions. It is difficult to raise money state wide for native causes. They operate almost solely on federal funds. They do have a bus transportation system that will help immensely for this CASA program and the large volunteer area.

Arlana stated there are approximately 600 children that need CASA on the reservation. She stated the records are all on hard copies and half of the adult population is on probation for domestic violence.

Lisa commended Arlana for her work and the difficulties they face in finding volunteers when living in those type of depressed economic conditions. Lisa stated transportation is one of the biggest obstacles on the reservation. They currently have 648 open cases. Lisa said volunteers do take a risk in going to court and making recommendations to the court system as to the placement of these children and some do fear retaliation.

Kristie asked Ben for clarification on their financial system. Ben stated they do have funding within the CASA funds. Their audit is not completed at this time. Ben said he is behind on the CASA accounting status. Kristie asked about the 2006 audit and the negative amount for the temporary restricted funds and Ben stated this is due to the federal funds year to year, and you are constantly behind due to the receiving date of those federal funds. Kristie clarified that they have \$390,000 for their budget from July 1 to June 30. They will expend their National CASA grant funds by June 30. Kristie asked about the Child Advocacy Center funds and Arlana stated these funds are for forensic interviews with the children. This was started with National Children's Alliance approximately 3 years ago. Arlana also stated they received \$350,000 from the Children's Justice Grant and most of that money goes to the advocacy center.

Judge Trandahl asked for clarification and the funding for the separate entities. Ben stated there are 3 entities funded. Judge Trandahl asked if these funds are like trust funds and we know exactly what monetary funds are CASA funds. Ben said they know exactly the amount of the CASA funds.

Judge Trandahl asked because of the difficulty in finding volunteers for the reservation system, does National CASA allow for paid volunteers. Arlana said all of the staff is an advocate. Judge Trandahl stated that she understands the tribe's needs are different than what National CASA defines as a CASA program.

South Dakota CASA

Jessie thanked the committee and directors for their work.

Jessie displayed the poster board of the "Forgotten Child" for awareness and fund raising. She mentioned that Dr. Phil and his wife have a goal to make CASA a household name.

She said they are working on data regarding children being transferred from court to tribal court and National CASA is working on recognition for these children.

Jessie talked about a website National CASA recommends local programs use for creating a strategic plan, www.mystrategicplan.com. The cost is \$159 per year for a CASA program; the computer program will assist CASA programs write a strategic plan and it will send out email reminders for goal timelines.

Jesse stated diversity is very important for volunteers. Jesse stated at the 2009 National CASA Conference a panel of former foster care children was asked what was more important to them a volunteer to represent their racial and ethnic background or a volunteer that listens. These children all responded they wanted a volunteer that listened.

Lisa asked to be added to the mailing list of their newsletter. Lisa stressed the importance of diversity and Native American volunteers, and she stated that over half of the children in CASA cases are natives. She knows that children need someone to listen and believe them, but she is concerned with how many volunteers have been to a reservation and have seen that way of life and the economic conditions they live in. Lisa asked can these volunteers relate to Native American children without experiencing these conditions.

Kristie asked when their budget year ends and Jesse stated it is June 30. Kristie asked where they get their funding from now that the Bush Foundation funding is done. Jesse said they are getting the majority of their revenue from the National CASA Association. Jesse said their fund raising efforts are down and the board recognized the need for donations. The board has created a fund raising committee.

Fund Disbursement

Judge Trandahl stated the committee has \$260,000 in funds to distribute for 2009. Last year they had \$266,000 to disburse.

Kim asked for clarification and what their responsibility as a committee is along with the disbursement of funds. Sara looked up the statute online and recited the statute as shown below. This was posted on the LRC website.

16-2-51. Court appointed special advocates grant program established. The court appointed special advocates grant program is hereby established. Under the grant program, the commission shall award grants to entities within the state of South Dakota that are recognized by the National CASA Association, Incorporated, as administering CASA programs. Grants may also be awarded from money in the fund to the South Dakota CASA Association. Grants shall be awarded to support the development, growth, quality, and continuation of CASA programs in South Dakota.

Kim asked the group for clarification regarding the children on the waiting list for 2009. Amy stated children on the waiting list do not have a court appointed advocate and are therefore considered open; whether they have a volunteer or not.

Judge Trandahl asked the committee for proposals regarding funding.

Jaime suggested the below funding recommendations:

1st Circuit -- \$20,000
2nd Circuit -- \$60,000
3rd Circuit -- \$20,000
4th Circuit -- \$35,000
5th Circuit --\$20,000
6th Circuit --\$20,000
7thCircuit --\$60,000
Oglala Sioux CASA --\$15,000
State CASA --\$10,000

Kim suggested the below funding recommendations:

1st Circuit -- \$19,000
2nd Circuit -- \$55,000
3rd Circuit -- \$19,000
4th Circuit -- \$34,000
5th Circuit -- \$27,000
6th Circuit -- \$22,000
7th Circuit -- \$55,000
Oglala Sioux CASA -- \$14,500
State CASA -- \$14,500

Lisa stated she would like to see Oglala Sioux CASA receive \$20,000 in funds. Kristie stated it helps her decision when she analyzes and looks at the number of children and the volunteers.

Lisa stated she would like to see them be on the same level as other counties for funding. Arlana clarified Oglala did not receive any funding in 2008 but did receive \$20,000 in 2007, and thinks we need to make exceptions for the Oglala tribe in their funding.

Jessie stated National CASA does have funding for 15 tribal programs and those funds needs to be applied for. She wanted the committee to know there is funding available for tribal programs. She said it is very competitive, but if you apply, you will receive funding. Kristie asked how much can they apply for and Jessie stated the maximum amount is \$40,000.

Judge Trandahl said when she looks at the numbers she said we have to consider the demographics and the number of children impacted by these numbers. She said we cannot do what we did last year because we do not have the funds available and there is an additional CASA Organization to support. She feels we cannot reduce the funding for Sioux Falls and Rapid City due to the population and numbers of children that are served in these areas. She does have concerns in reducing the State CASA funding by \$5,000 because the Bush Foundation money is no longer available and we have to find a way to fund the State CASA level at \$15,000 which was in 2008. Kim agreed with Judge Trandahl in funding the larger areas with the larger numbers of children as well as funding the smaller programs and less populated areas. Lisa agreed she would like the State CASA level funding to remain at \$15,000. Lisa stated again Oglala receive at least \$20,000 in funding.

Judge Trandahl asked for additional proposals. Kristie moved that the commission adopt the below funding proposals. This was motion was seconded by Jaime. Judge Trandahl asked for a vote regarding the below disbursements. Four commissioners voted yes by voice vote, Lisa Thompson was the lone dissenting vote.

Approved 2009 Disbursements

1st Circuit -- \$18,000

2nd Circuit -- \$60,000

3rd Circuit -- \$19,000

4th Circuit -- \$34,000

5th Circuit -- \$21,000

6th Circuit -- \$19,000

7th Circuit -- \$60,000

Oglala Sioux -- \$14,000

State CASA -- \$15,000

New Business

Judge Trandahl stated the original statute allowing CASA assignment at the time of adjudication was revised to allow a CASA volunteer to be appointed at the temporary custody hearing. Judge Trandahl thanked the Supreme Court and Judith Roberts in their efforts to get this statute passed.

Judge Trandahl stated the application process was changed this year and she asked if this process was improved. All agreed the new application process was much easier to fill out. Amy asked for clarification regarding when a child is transferred to a tribe, do we need to know which tribe. Lisa stated that was not necessary, just that a transfer to a tribe occurred.

Judge Trandahl made a motion to add to the application how many cases are transferred to Tribal court. This motion was seconded by Kim Marx. It was agreed by voice vote by all members to add these tribal transfers to the spreadsheet as well.

Arlana stated at National CASA they discussed disproportional numbers of children served by an area. Arlana said she appreciated the funds they received, but she is concerned and asked if there a better way to chose how the funding gets broken down. Jessie said she would research on how other state organizations break down their funding efforts and how the funds get dispersed. Lisa asked how long would it take for this information. Jessie said she could have this information by the end of June.

Judge Trandahl said she appreciated everyone's efforts and felt bad how the current funding process takes place. She appreciates the stories and open meeting process.

Lisa asked Sara asked how long it takes to put together the numbers. Sara estimated it takes about 1 full day to put together the numbers into the spread sheets, make copies and get the packets together for mailing.

Next Meeting

After some discussion it was agreed by all for May 4th, 2010 and in case of inclement weather May 18th, 2010.

Sara stated the court improvement program is working on a variety of trainings for new state's attorneys and attorneys representing children. All training materials will be on the UJS website and the best way to keep updated is to check the UJS website. Training will be done through a video and written material. Judge Trandahl stated the State Bar does hold training sessions as well.

Judge Trandahl thanked the group for all the work they do. She said the one neutral voice she has in a courtroom is that CASA volunteer and how important that is for a case.

Motion to adjourn made by Kristie, motion seconded by Kim Max. Judge Trandahl adjourned the meeting at 12:50pm.