

## SOUTH DAKOTA COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA)



### **How did CASA start?**

In 1977, a Seattle juvenile court judge concerned about making drastic decisions with insufficient information conceived the idea of citizen volunteers speaking up for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the courtroom. Nationwide the CASA program has grown to a network of nearly 1,000 CASA and guardian ad litem (GAL) programs that are recruiting, training, and supporting volunteers in 49 states and the District of Columbia.

### **What is expected of a CASA?**

Judges appoint CASA volunteers to represent the best interests of children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. Each year, more than 600,000 children experience foster care in this country.

CASA/GAL volunteers stay with each case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. For many abused children, their CASA/GAL volunteer will be the one constant adult presence in their lives.

Volunteers get to know the child by talking with the child and others in the child's life, such as, parents and relatives, foster parents, teachers, medical professionals, attorneys, social workers, and others. They use the information they gather and submit a report to the judge overseeing the case prior to court hearings.

### **How to become a CASA?**

CASA welcomes people from all walks of life. CASA is simply looking for people who are committed and care about children. As a volunteer, you will be thoroughly trained and well supported by professional staff to help you through each case.

Requirements include:

- Be 21 years old
- Be willing to complete necessary background checks, provide references, and participate in an interview
- Complete a 30-hour new volunteer training and annual continuing education
- Be available as needed for court appearances

