

SOUTH DAKOTA COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA)
MEETING MINUTES
May 19, 2022
9:00 am – 2:00 pm Central Time
Virtual

Attending

Commissioners: Kristie Fiegen, Judge Patrick Smith, Jolynn Bostrom, Crystal Aman, Lloyd Guy

CASA Ex. Directors: Jackie Horton, Sherri Rodgers-Conti, Stacey Tieszen, Julie Wermers, Kate Kelley, Kehala Two Bulls

Guest: Greg Sattizahn

UJS Staff: Sara Kelly

Welcome

Chairperson Kristie Fiegen called the meeting to order at 9:02 am

CASA Commissioners, CASA Executive Directors and staff introduced themselves.

Approval of 2021 Meeting Minutes

Revised December 2021 meeting minutes were shared with Commissioners. Judge Smith moved to approve, Crystal Aman second the motion, all approved, motion carried.

Additional Funds

Greg Sattizahn, State Court Administrator, gave an overview of HB1110 and the approved revisions to SDCL26-8A-20. The revisions will take effect July 1, 2022. Through this process the legislators recognized the gap in CASA coverage in the state and as a response to this the legislators diverted one-million dollars from the general fund to the SD CASA Commission fund. The extra funds will be transferred to the CASA Commission fund by June 28, 2022. The SD CASA Commission was given spending authority for FY 23 and the Commissioners can ask for extension if not able to spend the funds in FY 23. The legislators didn't send a letter of intent on the specifics of how the funds are to be spent.

Kristie Fiegen suggested Greg, Sara Kelly, and she write a letter to the appropriations committee asking what their expectations are for how the funds are to be spent, impact of the funds and expectations for a report to the legislators.

CASA Presentations

Kristie Fiegen asked that the presentations be limited to 10 minutes to allow for questions, comments and follow-up.

- State Organization (State Administered): Sara Kelly stated the state organization is asking for \$5,000 to support the hosting, platform and technical support of the sdcasa.org website. She reported she is not attending the National CASA

Conference. Sara stated she will continue to meet with the local program directors in-person and virtually as needed and support them in their programing efforts.

- **First Circuit CASA:** Founded in 2001, serves Aurora, Brule Buffalo, Charles Mix, Davison, Douglas, Hanson, Hutchinson, and McCook Counties. The program office is in Mitchell, SD.

Jackie Horton, executive director, thanked the Commissioners for past support and shared current statistics of children and cases served.

Jackie shared an adoption story, involving a CASA volunteer, highlighted statistical numbers of new volunteers and children served. The program has no children on a waiting list. The program raised the most funds to date at the CASA Got Talent fundraiser. The program was able to secure four additional city/county funding. Jackie shared how challenges were addressed with communication with the department of social services and efforts to work with Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) representative on CASA services.

Commissioners commented on the hard worked done by the program (increase in volunteers, serving children and communication with the department).

Commissioner Guy questioned the attempts to work with the tribes. Jackie explained the contacts and efforts to schedule meetings, but schedules delayed meeting and the ICWA director is no longer with the tribe. Commissioner Guy shared the ICWA Coalition meets and may be receptive to present at.

Commissioner Bostrom shared Joseph Ashley is the state ICWA specialist and has the contact information on the coalition. Commissioner Fiegen stated she likes the performance matrix.

- **Southeast CASA:** Founded in 2011, serves Bon Homme, Clay, Turner, Union, and Yankton Counties. The program office is in Yankton, SD.

Sherri Rodgers-Conti, executive director, thanked the Commissioners for past support and shared current statistics of children and cases served.

Sherri highlighted the fundraising efforts, public awareness activities, community outreach events, and collaborative meetings with the department of social services. Sherri thanked the Commissioners for last years award letter and suggesting improvements to the program's benefits; Sherri reported the benefits package has improved. Sherri reported the board has gone back to meeting every month after trying every other month meeting scheduled. The board continues to meet virtually, and this helps with board attendance. Sherri shared the board is working on a wealth management fund for the program.

Commissioner Kristie Fiegen commented she likes the flexibility of the board and meetings. Commissioner Fiegen asked if the strategic plan was missing some information, as the plan is very limited, and asked her to work with Sara Kelly on confirming if a page is missing. Commissioner Fiegen asked for clarification on the number of staff serving on a case. Sherri confirmed there was 12 children served by staff; these cases are ones that a CASA volunteer resigned, and the program

didn't add a new CASA to the case. The other cases were going to be transferred out and they didn't put a volunteer on the case.

- **Sioux Falls Area CASA:** Founded in 1994, serves Minnehaha and Lincoln Counties. The program is in Sioux Falls, SD.
Stacey Tieszen, executive director, thanked the Commissioners for past support and shared current statistics of children and cases served.
Stacey highlighted the public awareness activities (digital billboard, Cup O' CASA) and the volunteer appreciation efforts to help with volunteer retention. Stacey shared the Red Cape event was the best fundraiser they've had and is a great public awareness event.
Commissioner Crystal Aman asked about the children served versus children on the waiting list. After discussion, there is still confusion on what statistic column is to be. Commissioner Lloyd Guy stated he applauds the efforts to build capacity and serve more children. Commissioner Kristie Fiegen congratulated Stacey on the Red Cape event and appreciates the board fundraising committee efforts. Commissioner Fiegen stated she likes the performance matrix as part of the strategic plan.
- **East Central CASA:** Founded in 2002, serves Brookings, Clark, Codington, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Kingsbury, Lake, Miner, and Moody Counties. The program's main office is in Brookings, with a satellite office in Watertown, SD.
Julie Wermers, executive director, thanked the Commissioners for past support and shared current statistics of children and cases served. Julie highlighted recruitment and retention efforts and promoting brand awareness. Julie reported the program opened a CASA visitation center for volunteers to use. Julie reported the variety of fundraisers that took place throughout the counties the program serves and reported the major event, Fire and Ice, had to be cancelled due to storm damage.
Commissioner Jolynn Bostrom thanked Julie and the program staff/volunteers/board for their hard work. Commissioner Patrick Smith stated her sister is a volunteer with East Central and has reported her experience is positive and he appreciated the great work and efforts of the program.
Commissioner Lloyd Guy liked to hear all the things they are doing to be more visible. Commissioner Kristie Fiegen stated she loved reading the grant and the strategic move into Codington County and the other counties and happy to see the goal of exploring to move to the unserved counties and have 100% of coverage. Julie stated the board is evaluating if they should expand or open a separate program. The issue is the large footprint of coverage and donors understanding the large coverage area. Julie stated they continue to recruit for board members in the other counties they serve.
Commissioner Fiegen asked about the benefits package and suggested the board look into insurance and retirement benefits.

- **Northern Hills CASA:** Founded in 1986, serves Butte, Corson, Dewey, Harding, Lawrence, Meade, Perkins, and Ziebach Counties. The program office is in Spearfish, SD.

Kate Kelley, executive director, thanked the Commissioners for past support and shared current statistics of children and cases served. Kate highlighted the activities of the program, shared the collaborative meetings with the department of social services and fundraising events. Kate reported they are planning a new event (Dualling Pianos) for later this year. Kate stated they are hosting Cup of CASA meet and greet events for public awareness and recruitment. Kate shared one of Northern Hills CASA's volunteers won a national award for victim serves. Kate shared the program challenges in recruitment of new volunteers and keeping the volunteers once they have been assigned a case.

Commissioner Kristie Fiegen stated she noticed the volunteer recruitment and retention as a key element. Commissioner Fiegen stated she is happy to read of the board involvement and likes the mission moment at board meetings. Commissioner Fiegen asked if they are looking at flex learning for volunteer training. Kate stated they are looking at that option, especially for the rural applicants.

Commissioner Crystal Aman asked if there is a minimum number of board members. Kate stated there is not a National CASA requirement on board membership and each program sets the standard in their bylaws. Commissioner Lloyd Guy stated he is please to hear all the good work the program is doing, he stated he noticed most of the board members are from financial institutions and if there is a plan to expand the board make-up. Kate stated they are always looking at board diversity and the current board make-up is not intended to be primarily financial backgrounds.
- **Seventh Circuit CASA:** Founded in 1986, serves Custer, Fall River and Pennington Counties. The program office is in Rapid City.

Kehala Two Bulls, executive director, thanked the Commissioners for past support and shared current statistics of children and cases served.

Kehala highlighted the collaborative meetings staff have had with the department of social services to re-connect after not having in-person meeting during the pandemic and develop new relationships with new staff at the department. Kehala stated the program is working on new funding and public awareness activities, increasing board membership and recruitment efforts.

Commissioner Guy asked statistical questions on children on the waiting list and number of new volunteers in 2021. Kehala confirmed 326 children are currently on the waiting list, the program has eight new volunteers since October 2022 and 2021 was had the largest percentage of loss in volunteers. Commissioners Aman, Bostrom, and Smith complemented Kehala on the work done this past year.

Commissioner Fiegen thank Kehala for her work and complemented the program website with the training schedule. Commissioner Fiegen stated volunteer recruitment is key this past year and happy to see the board is responsible for two

fundraisers. Commissioner Fiegen asked for clarification on National CASA grants, if the program receive three or four. Kehala state they receive three; there was a coding error that appears there was four. The error has been corrected.

Commissioner Discussion and Awards: \$180,000

Commissioners discussed the program's accomplishments and that every program is doing a good job.

Commissioner Kristie Fiegen suggested awards to start the conversation:

Southeast CASA – Yankton - \$19,500

First Circuit CASA – Mitchell - \$28,000

Sioux Falls CASA – Sioux Falls - \$40,000

East Central CASA – Brookings - \$26,000

Northern Hills CASA – Spearfish - \$22,000

Seventh Circuit CASA – Rapid City - \$39,500

State Organization - \$5,000

Commissioners stated they had similar numbers, after further discussion Commissioner Patrick Smith moved to accept the awards Commissioner Fiegen originally presented. Commissioner Jolynn Bostrom seconded the motion. All approved, Motion carried.

Comments/Discussion

Follow up activities –

Award letters will go out to the CASA programs next week. Commissioner Fiegen, Greg Sattizahn and Sara Kelly will draft a letter to the Joint Appropriations Committee and share it with the Commissioners before sending to the Joint Appropriations Committee/Legislators.

A meeting will be scheduled after a reply is sent regarding the letter of intent and begin to develop parameters for the extra funding.

Set Date for 2023:

Sara Kelly will contact Commissioner Fiegen in October to get dates for May/June 2023. The Commissioners will decide later if the meeting will be in-person, virtual or optional for in-person and virtual.