

013 SD CASA Commission Meeting Minutes  
May 8, 2013

**Attendance**

Commissioners: Judge Kathleen Trandahl, Committee Chair, Kristie Fiegen, Jaime Reiff-Hybertson, Kim Max and Judge Karen Jeffries

CIP Committee Representative: Judge Scott Myren

UJS/SCAO Staff: Sara Kelly

CASA Program Directors: Jackie Horton (1<sup>st</sup> Circuit CASA), Sherri Rodgers-Conti (Southeast CASA), Amy Benda (Sioux Falls Area CASA), Julie Wermers (East Central CASA), Kate Kelley (Northern Hills CASA) and Chad Catron (7<sup>th</sup> Circuit CASA and SD CASA Association)

**Welcome/Opening Remarks**

Judge Trandahl called the meeting was called to order at 8:00 am

Judge Trandahl welcomed everyone for coming to the meeting and welcomed the new tribal representative to the commission, Judge Karen Jeffries. The commissioners, Judge Myren and Sara Kelly introduced themselves as well.

Judge Trandahl stated there is \$200,000 to distribute this year. All programs that applied for SD CASA Commission grant funds are recognized in good standings by National CASA.

Judge Trandahl also stated Judge Brown (Presiding Judge, Sixth Judicial Circuit) recently asked her why the Sixth Circuit didn't have a CASA program. Judge Trandahl explained to him why not and that it could be explored again.

**Approval of 2012 Meeting Minutes**

Judge Trandahl asked for a motion to approve the 2012 SD CASA Commission meeting minutes, Kim Max so moved, Jaime Reiff-Hybertson second, motion carried.

**CASA Program Presentations**

❖ **Sioux Falls Area CASA - Amy Benda, Executive Director**

Amy Benda thanked the Commission for their past and ongoing support. Amy handed out a local "Now Pavilion" magazine and article from "SHE" magazine highlighting the

CASA program and a volunteer advocate. Amy gave a brief overview of a case in which CASA made the difference in a child's life.

Amy stated the program has 110 sworn in volunteer advocates, 269 children being served and 137 cases assigned. The program does have a waiting list, but those are cases that are near termination or disposition.

Amy stated the program was the featured program for the "CHAIRity" event, where chairs are decorated and auctioned off. The estimated net amount for the program is \$16,000. The annual letter of appeal was sent out in April. CASA will be the highlighted non-profit at Hy-Vee stores from May 22-28. Amy stated this is also a great public awareness piece as each check-out stand has a CASA donation bucket at it. The Pro-Am golf tournament committed the next three years to CASA as the sponsored non-profit organization. The "Hunt" will again raise funds for CASA; last year the program received over \$12,500, this is double the amount from the previous year. Amy talked about Threads for Teens a charity that provides clothes for kids. Sioux Falls CASA was contacted as an organization to have teen girls receive clothes from the mobile unit traveling the US. Amy stated this is another great public awareness event for the program. Amy also talked about the ongoing effort of the program and board members to cultivate relations with potential donors.

Amy stated the program had staff changes over the past year and some restructuring within the program. The restructuring was needed to increase the case management staff in order to have more volunteers and ultimately eliminate the waiting list.

### **Commission Questions and Comments**

Judge Trandahl stated she was impressed with the program's approach to ICWA compliance by making sure tribes are notified, advocate for tribal enrollment and other culture awareness activities, as stated in the grant application. She was also impressed with the innovated fundraising.

Judge Trandahl asked how the board recruits new board members. Amy stated the board has a sub-committee that ensures the board matrix is met. They build relationships through professional and fundraising events. The board also utilizes the person's expertise and areas of comfort when assigning to board sub-committees.

Judge Trandahl asked if the program has a four to six month contingency fund for times when fundraising is difficult. Amy stated the program has a four month "rainy-day fund", the United Way dictates programs can only have four months. Amy also stated the program and board work hard to cultivate donors and move up the amount donated.

Judge Trandahl asked Amy to elaborate on the training for volunteers on ICWA and tribal relations. Amy stated the National CASA curriculum requires one-half day of training on cultural diversity and the program connects with tribal members to present on tribal relations.

Jaime Reiff-Hybertson asked if any board members were Chamber of Commerce members. Amy stated the program is a member and benefits from Chamber.

Kim Max asked if the percent of children on the waiting list is up. Amy stated it is, but several cases are too close to disposition for a volunteer to be assigned. The program is working with volunteers to take less down time between cases. Amy also commented recent families coming into the system have several children and it is harder to get a match with a volunteer.

Kristie Fiegen complimented Amy on the great job she does and acknowledge the commission looks to her as a leader of the state. Kristie asked what the \$7,500 from the SD CASA Assoc. was for. Amy referred the question to Chad Catron (acting association director), Chad stated the association awarded each program that amount as it was pairing down non-allocated funds as the network of directors decided to dissolve the association and divide funds equally among all programs. Chad state he can elaborate more during his presentation.

Kristie Fiegen asked about the health insurance refund. Amy stated the national “Health Care Act” states that a small organization that provides employees with insurance qualifies for a refund.

Kristie Fiegen asked if she has approached the county or city for funding. Amy stated the county provides in-kind of office space and she has asked the city several times and has been turned down with each ask. Kristie recommended she continue to ask the city.

Kristie Fiegen also commented on the lack of hours indicated in the 990 for the board. She strongly encouraged the board to report the hours they donate to the program.

Kristie Fiegen asked what it the plan to overcome the waiting list. Amy stated recruiting more volunteers and retention of volunteers along with volunteers taking less time between cases. Amy also stated the National CASA standard is only 30 volunteers per case manager, the case managers have indicated that 30 is too many, 23-26 is easier to manage and with that in mind the program restructured and is looking to hire another case manager.

Kristie Fiegen asked how many volunteers have full-time jobs. Amy stated about 70 percent of the volunteers have full-time employment; the program participates in corporate volunteer fairs. Kristie recommended asking a CEO to hold a breakfast or social and highlight CASA as the non-profit to volunteer for. Kristie stated this approach has had a good success rate for volunteer recruitment.

**❖ East Central CASA – Julie Wermers, Executive Director**

Julie Wermers thanked the Commission for their past support the opportunity to highlight the program’s successes. Julie stated the program continues to serve five counties and

serves on a case by case basis in Beadle and Codington. The program has 23 volunteers and serves 55 children. Julie also stated 98 percent of the cases have the same CASA from start to finish and they don't have any children on a waiting list.

Julie stated the program trained 13 new volunteers in the past year and had a large number of volunteers attend the Children's Justice Conference and Community Response to Child Abuse. The program also provides in-service for volunteers.

Julie stated the program continues to work on name and logo recognition; this past year city buses had the CASA logo advertised on it and several inquiries have come from seeing the buses. This year the United Way highlighted a CASA volunteer on the radio ads. The program updated their website and utilized Facebook and Twitter for other media outlets. Julie stated the Fire and Ice event raised over \$60,000. The program also has other fundraising and public awareness events throughout the year such as, a booth at Brookings Art Festival, serving burgers and brats at grand reopening for Do-It hardware center, being the recipient for local business fundraisers.

Julie stated the program conducted a survey with volunteers and board members, in 2012; the overall results indicate the program is effective and the will continue to explore serving more children in other counties.

### **Commission Questions and Comments**

Jaime Reiff-Hybertson compliments Julie on having 98 percent of the cases with the same CASA. Jaime asked if she has done anything with SDSU and the Dykhouse for fundraising. Julie said they have looked into it but haven't yet.

Judge Trandahl commented on the ICWA training noted in the grant application.

Judge Trandahl asked how the program balances fundraising and public awareness events and if they are effective or not. Julie stated all events go hand-in-hand with public awareness. Julie also stated the board doesn't have a set amount of how much an event should make. Julie commented except for Fire and Ice, the other fundraisers have minimal expense and time commitment of staff.

Kim Max asked what was holding the program back from expanding. Julie stated they were being cautious due to distance to Huron. The program handles the Beadle and Codington on a case by case basis.

Kristie Fiegen complemented Julie on the strong reserve fund (\$127,000); she liked the laser focus on the mission of CASA and the third party fundraising events because they don't take up a lot of staff time. Kristie Fiegen complemented on the board hours listed in the 990. Kristie asked what was the amount raised at the brat feed. Julie stated about \$1000. Kristie asked why she asked for an 85% increase from what was awarded last

year, why did she ask for that amount. Julie stated it is the same amount she asked for last year and always asks for more than what is anticipated.

### ❖ **Seventh Circuit CASA – Chad Catron, Executive Director**

Chad Catron thanked the Commission for past support and allowing him to update them on the program's accomplishments for the past year. Chad stated the program continues to serve largely in Pennington County and began serving in Fall River and Custer Counties in 2012. The program and volunteers decided to avoid the struggle of volunteers knowing the children and families to be served in the small counties to serve in the other county in which they live (Fall River volunteers serve Custer County and Custer volunteers serve Fall River County).

Chad stated the program strives to serve 100 percent of the children, however due to several cases nearing the end volunteers are not assigned to the case. Chad stated approximately 46 percent of the cases/children need a CASA volunteer.

Chad talked about a three-part program evaluation. The program asks volunteers, foster-parents, judges and attorneys to complete a survey when a case is finished; the Volunteer Coordinator has the volunteer to fill out a program support evaluation, and after each new volunteer training they are asked to evaluate the training they received.

Chad stated the program has Shirley Bad Wound present on cultural diversity and the tribal perspective of ICWA, Roxie Erickson (Pennington County State's Attorney's Office) presents on the legal aspect of ICWA. The program also provides ongoing in-service training throughout the year on a variety of topics.

Chad stated the board updates the strategic plan every two years and reviews it annually; this is done to keep the program moving forward. The board also evaluates fundraising events and determines if it is worth the time spent for the return in funds raised. The board decided to retire the playhouse fundraiser, due to time commitment on the event and the return in funds. The program continues with its Fire and Ice gala with a new large item to raffle and 5K marathon in Rapid City; the program will also have a 5K marathon in Custer this year. The program continues to be active in the communities for public awareness, volunteer recruitment and fundraising.

Chad stated the program made an operational change in the benefits package offered to employees, they no longer cover 100 percent of the health insurance, it is now a cost-share benefit. Chad stated the employees understood and were accepting of the change.

### **Commission Questions and Comments**

Jaime Reiff-Hybertson compliments Chad on the program expansion into two new counties. Jaime asked what the big item was for the raffle. Chad stated it was a trip to Ireland and they are looking at options for selling raffle tickets 500 tickets at \$50 each,

the winner will have the option of the trip or \$4000 voucher. They will partner with a travel agency and split the profit; the tickets will be sold online and by board members.

Kim Max compliments Chad on the highest percent to date on serving children and the continued increase in services.

Judge Trandahl asked how the program decides on the cases to take. Chad stated they have a priority list, children with a physical or sexual abuse are top priority, volunteers have input on taking a case, some volunteers are more comfortable with a certain age or sex of a child(ren). Chad stated the male volunteers tend to take on cases with teenage boys. Chad commented on the challenge of volunteers trying to meet with children placed out of the area, they are trying Skype to meet this need as well as other technology means. Chad also commented the children placed out of the area tend to not get a volunteer as soon as children in the area. Judge Trandahl stated with modern technology it is a good idea to meet with children out of the area via Skype.

Judge Trandahl commended Chad and the board for retiring the playhouse fundraiser and knowing when to let it go. She also complimented on the expansion to Custer and Fall River Counties.

Kristie Fiegen commented the program is a big organization with a lot of responsibility. She complimented Chad on the increase in revenue and the \$57,000 in unrestricted funds for 2013.

Kristie stated she didn't see the \$7500 from the SD CASA Association. Chad stated it is in the miscellaneous grant fund line item. Kristie asked what the program made on the Fire and Ice event. Chad stated approximately \$33,000-\$32,000 net, not all of the bills are in yet.

Kristie asked what the program's plans are for sustainability for the expansion. Chad said at this time the expense to expand is minimal, staff will attend hearings if a volunteer can't, the volunteers are in the area and they have made contacts with area businesses for fundraising.

Kristie asked if staff helped in the development of the strategic plan. Chad stated staff has opportunities for input but the board created the strategic plan. The board and staff did come together as a group in the development process.

#### ❖ Northern Hills CASA – Kate Kelley, Executive Director

Kate Kelley thanked the Commission for their ongoing support. Kate stated the program is serving 68 children, with 26 volunteers. The program gained nine new volunteers this past year.

Kate reported the program held a new fundraiser – a raffle for a trip to Hawaii. The program held the 5K marathon and encouraged runners to have teams and dress in

costume to make it a fun run. The program held the CASA auction, which Kate stated was good money for not a lot of work, and they recently mailed out the annual donation letter. Kate reported the program did not receive funds from Meade County, but she plans to ask them for support again. The city of Sturgis cut their funding due to the cities own budget cuts. Kate reported on a new Red Rooster program from a convenience store donates a portion of select items they sell. The program also accepts donations online from the program website.

Kate stated the program speaks at many clubs and organizations in their service area and holds other public awareness events in their service area. Kate stated the program conducts ongoing training for volunteers and staff. The program trains on culture awareness and ICWA and they are always looking at ways to improve and provide more training.

Kate stated she will be talking to the judges in their service area to get feedback on how CASA is doing and any needs they have regarding CASA.

Kate shared a story on how the CASA assisted the child and family they were assigned to and how the CASA is the eyes and ears of the court.

Kate stated the program recently purchased a building and they hope to provide a visitation space for CASA children and parents and learning experiences for teenage CASA youth (Fostering Futures).

### **Commission Questions and Comments**

Kim Max commented on the difficult balance and possible confuses with the community regarding the visitation center. Kate stated the visitation center is only for CASA to observe visits not to supervise them.

Jaime Reiff-Hybertson questioned if the education opportunity for youth is the role of a CASA. Kate stated the Fostering Futures in an extension of CASA and doesn't take away CASA focus.

Judge Trandahl complimented on the increase in training opportunities for volunteers and staff. Judge Trandahl commented on the decrease in revenue over the past year. Kate stated they has a one- time only fund that was spent down from last year, and with only four staff they can't take on any extra fundraising activities. Kate stated she and the board is working towards cultivating donors and the program does have CD's as an investment if funds are needed. Kate also stated the new building has two rental units in it and could be a source for extra income.

Judge Jeffries asked why the rent payments increased. Kate stated the line item reflect the purchase of the new building; the amount will adjust down after they move into it.

Kristie Fiegen asked if they access Skype or other technology to meet the need of travel due to the large area they cover. Kate said the volunteers communicate with the children by conference call and text, they are looking into Skype.

Kristie Fiegen commented Kate talked about attending a lot of meetings and to elaborate on that. Kate stated these are networking opportunities with community agencies.

Kristie Fiegen asked about the \$80,000 in revenue from last year that is not indicated in this year's budget. Kate state \$40,000 of that was due to the delay in purchasing the building, \$40,000 is in 2013 budget.

Kristie Fiegen commented it is important to be transparent on financial statements and to be laser focused on the mission of CASA. Kristie advised to beware of activities and time spent on them not being a good return on your investment. Kate stated the activities promote healthy families and helps the program get known in the community and exposure for future fundraising.

Kristie Fiegen asked why the request this year was 120 percent increase than what was awarded last year. Kate stated the amount ask doesn't change from previous year, she always asks for more and is happy with what is awarded.

❖ **Southeast CASA – Sherri Rodgers-Conti, Executive Director**

Sherri Rodgers-Conti introduced herself and thanked the Commission for the opportunity to present to them today. Sherri stated last year she gave an overview of the program as it was in the final phase of starting up and as of June 2012 the program was given full membership by National CASA. Sherri stated Yankton County gives the program office space as in-kind.

Sherri stated the program has 13 volunteers and they are currently advocating for 19 children. Sherri also stated two volunteers have two cases assigned to them because the cases are related to each other.

Sherri stated she is speaking at many community organizations to raise awareness of CASA in the community; she recently received a \$1000 donation from the Lions Club. Sherri stated the program has held several fundraisers over the past year with good response. The program is part of the non-profit community volunteer group and each year the hold an event to recognize the volunteers in the community. The program is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and has been invited to speak at chamber sponsored events. The program was featured on the radio for one week in April. Sherri stated other marketing items are CASA cozies, window clings and t-shirts; the program is also on Facebook and has a website. Sherri also stated a sorority from USD helps the program with public awareness and fundraising.

Sherri stated volunteers give a “mission moment” at board meetings, this is a brief overview of a case and helps the board stay focused on the CASA mission.

Sherri stated the program recently became an official agency of the United Way; they have not received funding yet, but hope to in the future.

Sherri stated she attended a training sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce on sustainability. The program also utilizes a professor at USD to present on ICWA, the philosophy and implementation at volunteer training.

Sherri stated due to the NCASA funding cuts last year the program did not receive a second year of funding, as a result the board cut her hours and salary, but recently reinstated her back to full-time due to five new cases and the time needed to manage them. Sherri commented this year has been a learning curve but does have the support of the court and judges.

Sherri stated the program goal is to have 100 percent of the cases covered by a volunteer and to expand into Bon Homme and Clay Counties; they currently have volunteers in these counties.

Sherri lastly complimented the other programs for their support.

### **Commission Questions and Comments**

Jaime Reiff-Hybertson commented she was impressed with all the work done and a goal to expand. Jaime asked if office space is given as in-kind why the financial statement shows a \$70 rent expense. Sherri stated this is for the post office box.

Judge Trandahl commented in order to build strong foundations and partnerships; the program needs an active board membership. Judge Trandahl asked how much of a loss the National CASA funding was. Sherri stated about \$24,000.

Kim Max commented it is great to have a mission to expand, but cautioned not to take on more than they can; the program needs to make sure they have a strong foundations and it is hard with a one person office.

Kristie Fiegen asked Sherri if she was the first staff person for the program. Sherri stated yes, she is the first and only staff person.

Kristie Fiegen asked what the plan is to generate more funds for the program. Sherri commented she has written several grants. Kristie commented grant writing is tough and no guarantees.

Kristie Fiegen asked what policies and procedure to expand and what did the board have to do before the program started. Sherri stated National CASA gave them start-up funds to plan and meet National CASA's required items before being awarded full membership. Once the plans were in place they hire a director to implement the plans. Sherri stated some local entities donated funds to offset other start-up costs.

Kristie Fiegen commented a program needs a strong director to move a board forward and keep them focused on the mission and strategic plan.

Kristie Fiegen asked Sherri to clarify if she was salaried or hourly, as she had some concerns if they were violating wage and hour laws. Sherri stated she was salaried.

Kristie Fiegen asked what the fundraising goals are for the program. Sherri stated she focuses on obtaining grant funds and the board has three fundraisers planned for 2013.

Kristie Fiegen asked is the program received the \$7500 from the state association, as she didn't see it in the budget. Sherri stated they did and it was given after the budget was set.

Kristie Fiegen commented that churches are a good source for fundraising and recruiting; the board needs to focus on fundraising. Kristie also expressed her concern of expanding and the program needs to have a solid foundation before expansion.

#### ❖ **First Circuit CASA – Jackie Horton, Executive Director**

Jackie Horton thanked the Commission for past support and the opportunity to present today. Jackie stated the program is currently serving 36 children, 16 families and 21 volunteers. The program has eight new volunteers trained and sworn in in 2012. The program doesn't have any children on a waiting list.

Jackie stated the program held new volunteer training in March, training and swearing in three new volunteers. The program will have seasoned CASAs mentor new CASAs, especially on tough cases.

The program recently asked Kristie Fiegen to speak to the program board on mission and focusing on goals.

Jackie stated the program ended the year in the black. The program is focusing on major gift giving and they held training for the board on cultivating donors and asking for major donations. Jackie stated the program has a lot of support from the communities they serve; they utilize RSVP program for assistance when preparing for the annual giving campaign. Jackie talked about the various fundraising and public awareness activities the program held in 2012.

#### **Commission Questions and Comments**

Jaime Reiff-Hybertson complimented Jackie on the in-service training and work the program is doing in the community for public awareness.

Judge Trandahl commented on the amount of work the program has done in the past year, ending the year in the black and please to see the board has 100 percent giving.

Kim Max asked if the Bull Ride event and raffle was successful. Jackie stated it was very successful. Kim stated it was a good outreach to a population of individuals that may otherwise not have been tapped into. Jackie commented it was nice exposure for CASA and they were the only non-profit sponsored at the event.

Kristie Fiegen congratulated Jackie on turning the program around and she liked the “smart model” strategic plan. Kristie also stated she has glad to see a \$79,000 and growing reserve fund. Kristie asked the \$7500 from the SD CASA Association was not in the budget. Jackie stated the budget was set prior to the award notice; Jackie stated the award is in the profit/loss statement. Kristie commented the board needs to show their hours on the 990.

Kristie Fiegen asked how the program assesses if a fundraising event is working or not. Jackie stated she meets with the board after every fundraiser to determine if it was a good return on investment.

### **Distribution of Funds**

Judge Trandahl asked for a motion, Kim Max moved to award the programs as followed

- First Circuit - \$25,500
- Southeast - \$10,000
- Sioux Falls Area - \$65,000
- East Central - \$18,500
- Northern Hills - \$20,000
- Seventh Circuit - \$61,000

Total amount - \$200,000

Kristie Fiegen seconded the motion.

Judge Trandahl asked for discussion.

The Commissioners complemented the programs for the hard they do and commented on each program.

- First Circuit CASA – commented on the good work to turn the program around
- Southeast CASA – program needs a strong foundation and a laser focus on the CASA mission as well as more board involvement on fundraising
- Northern Hills CASA – concern the focus is other than CASA, concern the visitation center and Fostering Futures takes away from the mission of CASA
- Seventh Circuit CASA – commented on the good work and the expansion to Custer and Fall River Counties
- Sioux Falls Area CASA – commented on the evaluation of staffing needs and changes made to meet the need for more volunteers for more services to children
- East Central CASA – commented on the solid foundation of the program and encouraged the program to expand into Codington County (Watertwon)

Kristie Fiegen commented the importance for programs to be laser focused on the mission of CASA and to have board involved in fundraising efforts.

Motion Carried

**Next Meeting**

A date is pending on schedules of Commissioners. Notice of 2014 meeting will be given via email to all.

Kristie Fiegen moved to adjourned, Judge Jeffries seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm.