

CASA Fund Year-End Report July 30, 2026

Nebraska CASA issues this report to the Foster Care Review Office, Clerk of the Legislature, and the Governor regarding the Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Fund. The CASA Fund was established by the 2011 Nebraska Legislature and continues to be an essential investment in the child welfare system by supporting the recruitment, screening, training, and supervision of volunteer advocates appointed by Nebraska juvenile court judges. These volunteers provide independent best-interest advocacy for abused and neglected children involved in juvenile court proceedings.

Twenty-one local CASA programs in 56 Nebraska counties recruit, screen, train and supervise volunteers who are appointed by Judges to speak in court for the safety and best interest of children who have been abused or neglected. The Nebraska CASA Association partners with these local CASA programs providing leadership, quality assurance, training, technical assistance, and funding. The information in this report pertains to fiscal year July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

During Fiscal Year 2025–2026, CASA volunteers served **1,802 children**, contributed **24,870 volunteer hours**, traveled **159,291 miles**, and conducted **7,448 visits** with children involved in the child welfare system due to abuse and neglect. These volunteers provided stability, advocacy, and an independent voice for children during some of the most difficult periods of their lives.

Recruiting and preparing qualified volunteers remains the highest priority of the CASA programs in Nebraska.

Throughout FY 2025–2026:

- **161 new CASA volunteers** completed background screening, interviews, 30 hours of pre-service training, and were sworn in by Nebraska judges.
- Nebraska CASA continued statewide volunteer recruitment campaigns utilizing:
 - Paid digital advertising
 - Television and radio campaigns
 - Social media marketing
 - Community presentations
 - Civic organization outreach
 - Faith community engagement
 - Community events and fairs

CASA staff and volunteers conducted hundreds of volunteer recruitment presentations and community awareness events across Nebraska. There is an increased outreach effort, including presentations, radio interviews, and statewide marketing campaigns.

Nebraska has seen a 92% growth in volunteers serving children since the CASA Fund began. The last five years has seen a decline in volunteerism that has been a significant challenge.

- 421 volunteers for FY 2011/12
- 480 volunteers for FY 2012/13
- 663 volunteers for FY 2013/14
- 726 volunteers for FY 2014/15
- 770 volunteers for FY 2015/16
- 815 volunteers for FY 2016/17
- 820 volunteers for FY 2017/18
- 886 volunteers for FY 2018/19
- 957 volunteers for FY 2019/20
- 938 volunteers for FY 2020/21
- 960 volunteers for FY 2021/22
- 931 volunteers for FY 2022/23
- 797 volunteers for FY 2023/24
- 794 volunteers for FY 2024/25
- 810 volunteers for FY 2025/26

During the fiscal year, 101 volunteers concluded their CASA service, matching the previous year's total and reflecting improved stability after the unusually high loss of 146 volunteers two years earlier. While volunteer retention has stabilized, exit interviews indicate that delays within the child welfare system and limited services available to children continue to contribute to volunteer frustration. Some experienced advocates have also chosen to take temporary breaks between case assignments rather than permanently end their service. Nebraska CASA remains committed to supporting both volunteers and staff through enhanced training, peer networking opportunities, and retention initiatives developed in response to statewide burnout surveys.

New and Expanding Programs

CASA Connection – This program began serving Platte County in 1992 and Colfax County in 2000. Four years ago, Nance County was added to their service area and this year the program successfully expanded into Boone County.

CASA of Elkhorn Valley- This program is the result of a successful merger of the local CASA programs serving Madison and Holt Counties. The program has been completing the requirements of the National CASA/GAL Association for Children to add Boyd, Garfield, Wheeler, Antelope, Pierce and Stanton Counties to the service area. Memorandums of Understanding have been signed with judges serving each of these County Juvenile Courts.

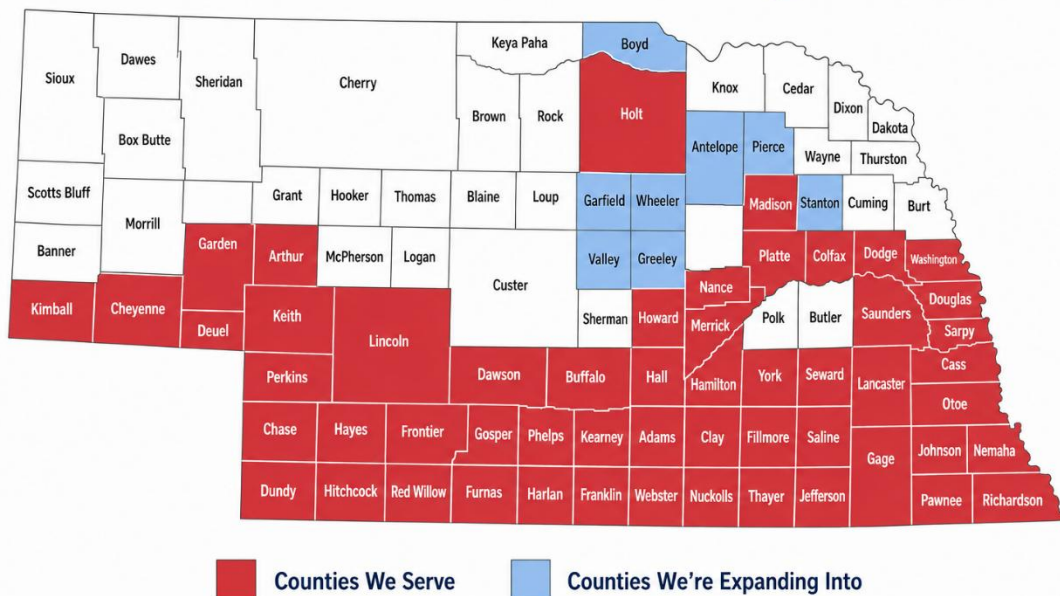
CASA served 55 courts during the year and began recruiting new volunteers to serve Boone County. This has been an increase of 24 counties since the CASA Fund began. Local CASA programs served these county courts:

Adams	Garden	Nemaha
Arthur	Gosper	Nuckolls

Boone	Hall	Otoe
Buffalo	Hamilton	Pawnee
Cass	Harlan	Perkins
Chase	Hayes	Phelps
Cheyenne	Hitchcock	Platte
Clay	Holt	Red Willow
Colfax	Howard	Richardson
Dawson	Jefferson	Saline
Deuel	Johnson	Saunders
Dodge	Kearney	Scotts Bluff
Dundy	Keith	Seward
Fillmore	Kimball	Thayer
Franklin	Lincoln	Washington
Frontier	Madison	Webster
Furnas	Merrick	York
Gage	Nance	

Local CASA programs also serve the separate juvenile courts in Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy Counties. 1,802 children were served by CASA volunteers in 55 counties during the fiscal year.

Nebraska CASA Programs



Financial Report Program Name	Recruitment and Training	New & Expanding	Innovative	Total
CASA Connection	\$18,509.00	\$12,500.00		\$31,009.00
CASA for Douglas County	\$28,415.99			\$28,415.99
CASA for Lancaster	\$25,117.67			\$25,117.67
CASA of Gage Co	\$19,125.82			\$19,125.82
CASA of Midlands	\$18,037.44	\$12,500.00		\$30,537.44
CASA of Elkhorn Valley	\$17,965.11	\$12,500.00		\$30,465.11
CASA of Scotts Bluff	\$17,539.38			\$17,539.38
CASA of South Central	\$20,728.17			\$20,728.17
CASA of York	\$16,518.47			\$16,518.47
Cass County CASA	\$15,104.91			\$15,104.91
Dawson/Gosper	\$19,693.00			\$19,693.00
Heartland CASA	\$18,070.50			\$18,070.50
Kearney/Buffalo	\$20,910.03			\$20,910.03
Lincoln County CASA	\$19,439.94			\$19,439.94
Phelps/Harlan	\$16,708.60			\$16,708.60
PlainsWest	\$17,212.86			\$17,212.86
Prairie Plains	\$18,797.95			\$18,797.95
Sarpy County CASA	\$12,000.00			\$12,000.00
SENCA CASA	\$18,221.37	\$12,500.00		\$30,721.37
Southeast Nebraska CASA	\$17,874.17			\$17,874.17
Trails West CASA	\$22,601.87			\$22,601.87
Volunteer Recruitment	\$783.53			\$783.53

National CASA Membership Dues			\$275.00	\$275.00
Basecamp			\$1,722.00	\$1,722.00
Training			\$2,251.60	\$2,251.60
Background checks		\$134.15		\$134.15
Travel	\$588.65		\$205.00	\$793.65
Statewide Training			\$45,447.82	\$45,447.82
TOTAL	\$399,964.43	\$50,134.15	\$49,901.42	\$500,000.00

STORIES: Stories of a volunteer affecting the life of a child served by CASA. (All names have been changed to protect confidentiality.)

At age 12, Charlie entered foster care after spending much of his childhood living with his parents in hotels. His parents faced developmental challenges that affected their ability to consistently meet his basic needs. Charlie often went without regular meals, owned very few personal belongings, and rarely received adequate sleep because of the instability and lack of privacy in his living environment. Although he had shared concerns about his home life with adults, he felt that no one fully understood or responded to what he was experiencing.

After entering foster care, Charlie was placed in a home with several other children. Although the placement provided greater stability, he struggled to adjust. Frequent visits with his parents, combined with school, homework, and the demands of becoming part of a new household, left him feeling overwhelmed and exhausted.

One of the first things Charlie's newly assigned CASA volunteer did was meet with him at school and listen. Charlie shared his fears about returning home, his difficulty managing the visitation schedule, and the toll the situation was taking on his well-being. His CASA volunteer reassured him that his experiences and concerns mattered and that his perspective would be presented to the court.

In his first court report, the CASA volunteer described how the visitation schedule was affecting Charlie's ability to rest, adjust to his foster placement, and succeed in school. After reviewing this information, the judge modified the visitation schedule to better support Charlie's needs while continuing to promote the goal of family reunification.

Since the change, Charlie has reported feeling more settled and less overwhelmed. Although the adjustment may have been difficult for some of the adults involved, it made a meaningful difference in his daily life.

Charlie's story illustrates one of the most important roles a CASA volunteer can play: taking the time to truly listen to a child and ensuring that the child's voice is heard and considered when decisions are made about their future.

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One of the year's most meaningful outcomes involved two CASA volunteers who chose to step away from their advocacy roles so they could become foster placements for the children they had previously served. Because maintaining appropriate boundaries and protecting each child's best interests were paramount, these transitions were carefully considered and reviewed before moving forward.

For one child, the placement has been life-changing. Since joining the home of her former CASA volunteer, she has made tremendous progress and is experiencing stability, care, and belonging in ways she had not known before.

For the first time, she is enjoying many of the everyday moments that other children may take for granted: being tucked into bed each night, receiving help with homework, going on a family vacation, seeing her school picture proudly displayed at home, and hanging her own stocking at Christmas.

These moments may seem small, but together they represent something profound. For the first time in her life, this child is experiencing what it means to be part of a safe, loving, and stable family.

This story reflects the lasting impact that caring adults can have in the life of a child. It is also a powerful reminder that every child deserves not only safety, but the opportunity to feel valued, included, and truly at home.

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Mary's journey began 11 years ago when, as a high school junior, she entered foster care to escape years of physical and emotional abuse by her mother and grandmother. Her mother struggled with mental illness and substance use, leaving Mary to navigate much of her childhood on her own. Despite these hardships, Mary remained remarkably kind, compassionate, and determined. She worked throughout high school and demonstrated resilience far beyond her years.

A CASA volunteer was appointed shortly after Mary entered foster care and put in a kinship placement. It soon became clear that the placement was not in her best interests. As family members encouraged Mary to move out on her own while she was still in high school, her CASA volunteer and caseworker worked together to find a more supportive home.

During her senior year, they found Linda, a compassionate woman who had recently lost her husband and had room in both her home and her heart. Their placement became life-changing, as Mary found the stability, encouragement, and sense of belonging she had never experienced before. In many ways, Mary and Linda helped each other heal and thrive.

Today, Mary's story stands in contrast to the difficult outcomes too often experienced by youth aging out of foster care. Rather than becoming another statistic, she graduated from high school, pursued her dream through years of hard work and determination, and is now a registered nurse. She remains in touch with her CASA volunteer, who continues to encourage and support her—a reminder that the caring relationships built through CASA often last long after a case is closed.