Strategic Growth Plan

Little Dixie Community Action Agency’s Court Appointed Special Advocates Program (Little Dixie CASA) trains volunteers to advocate for children who are victims of abuse or neglect. The CASA volunteers form relationships with the children they are assigned to and report to the Court Judge on the child’s perspective and needs. Little Dixie CASA has a record of providing effective services to victims of crime, the program has the support and approval of its services by the community, and a history of providing direct services in a cost-effective manner.

Mission Statement: The mission of Little Dixie CASA is to provide volunteers to serve as advocates for every abused or deprived child who comes before the District Court. A further mission of Little Dixie CASA is to raise community awareness regarding the needs of abused children, and to develop ways the community can participate in and work towards meeting those needs.

Vision Statement: Little Dixie CASA’s vision is for children and families from all walks of life to be happy, safe, and to succeed.

Long-Range Goals:
- To have a CASA assigned for every case that needs one.
- To break the generational cycle of child abuse for families with whom we work.

Background

Since October 1997, the Little Dixie CASA Program has been serving abused and/or neglected children in rural, southeastern Oklahoma. The program began with a small budget in Pushmataha County, with one staff member and 10 volunteers serving 22 children. Since that time, with increased State and other sources of funding, the program expanded to serve Choctaw and McCurtain Counties as well, and staffing levels have increased to as many as four staff serving up to 126 children with a team of 44 volunteers.

In developing the Strategic Growth Plan for Little Dixie CASA, data was collected to build an understanding of the current need, capacity (existing and historical), and the program’s ability to serve more children. Data collection included the following:

Approved by Little Dixie CAA Board of Directors:
Historical Program Counts (2010 – 2016)
  - Staff size
  - Number of active volunteers
  - Number of trained, available volunteers
  - Number of cases and children served

Need
  - Number of open deprived cases per county in Little Dixie CASA’s district
  - Number of cases and children currently served by Little Dixie CASA
  - Number of cases and children in the system without a CASA

Program Market Analysis
  - Geographic Area
  - Strengths/Weaknesses
  - Opportunities/Threats
  - Funding (current and potential)
  - Competition
  - Trends
  - Partners (current and potential)

Current Capacity
  - Number of Advocate Supervisors on staff
  - Staff to volunteer ratios
  - Capacity for additional volunteers
  - Budget and funding availability for additional staff

The data collected was used as a foundation to plan for program growth, as well as to develop the strategies and action plans to be utilized to achieve the following growth goal set for the program:

- Over the next three years, Little Dixie CASA will work to serve 10% more children each year; as such, by the year 2020, 166 children in the program’s District will have a CASA volunteer.

**Overall Growth Strategy**

**Strategy Area 1: Volunteer Advocates**

**Goal:** To increase the number of CASA volunteers available for court appointment.

A. Enhance recruitment efforts to gain additional new volunteers.
   1. Provide a minimum of 12 CASA orientation sessions each year, in alternating counties to expand access and further participation.
   2. Respond to and provide information packets for all individuals who inquire about the program within 48 hours.
   3. Offer CASA Volunteer trainings at non-traditional times at least once per quarter to better fit the schedules of potential volunteers.
B. Strengthen marketing strategies aimed at volunteer recruitment.
   1. Increase utilization of Little Dixie CASA social media and boost reach by engaging partners, volunteers, and the community at least weekly through informational posts, periodic contests, announcements, etc.
   2. Continue to provide community presentations, increasing the frequency to at least one time per month.
   3. Increase the effectiveness and frequency of use of local media outlets (television, billboards, newspapers, and radio stations) to market the program, dependent on the broadcast/publishing schedule of each (daily to quarterly).
   4. Partner with Oklahoma CASA and other neighboring programs to conduct activities aimed at enhancing and increasing brand awareness.

**Strategy Area 2: Children Served**

**Goal:** To increase the number of children appointed a CASA volunteer.

A. Screen and train additional new volunteers.
   1. Effectively screen potential volunteers through background checks, personal references, and staff-conducted interviews.
   2. Provide at least two initial training sessions for new volunteers.
   3. Provide a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education in-service to all CASA volunteers.

B. Increase the number of cases served by a CASA volunteer.
   1. Work to strengthen relationships with the District Courts, Department of Human Services offices, and court-appointed Attorneys each year.
   2. Ensure all cases referred to the program for appointment of a CASA volunteer are assigned in a timely and efficient manner.

C. Increase the retention rates of active volunteers.
   1. Increase the length of time volunteers spend with the program.
   2. Increase the number of cases of which each volunteer serves.
   3. Develop and implement an active ongoing Volunteer Retention Plan.

D. Ensure the program has staff capacity to supervise more volunteers.
   1. Research and secure program funding annually to support staffing needs.
   2. Assist with the provision or coordination of training (held at least quarterly) and other professional development opportunities for staff.

**Statement of Need**

The data collected supports the need for growth within the Little Dixie CASA Program. Due to the high volume of child abuse and neglect cases within the service area, Little Dixie CASA does not have enough trained volunteers for an advocate to be assigned to every case. In fact, from 2013 to 2016, the number of children in Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties who were substantiated to be victims of child abuse and neglect has risen 65%, as compared to the state rate of around 40%. Furthermore, in 2016, there were...
344 children who were substantiated to be victims of child abuse and neglect; of this total, Little Dixie CASA served 126 children. This means that close to 60% of the deprived children in the tri-county service area do not have a CASA volunteer to ensure their needs are being met and they do not fall through the cracks of an overburdened system.

In addition to the high need for services for child abuse/neglect victims in this poverty-stricken region of Oklahoma, numerous problems exist which are associated with providing services in the tri-county area. For one, geographic barriers and transportation difficulties within the large rural service area limit the public’s access to, as well as knowledge about, the few services that are available to help abused/neglected children. Service providers are overburdened with caseloads and state funding cuts continue to lessen already small budgets for service agencies. Activities through many programs in the tri-county area are targeted primarily to the county seats because those are the most populated areas. Oklahoma is ranked 39th in the nation (with one being the best) for overall child well-being (Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy, 2014). This low ranking is due to the state’s poor performance in areas such as the family and social environment, physical environment and safety, economic circumstances, health habits and access to medical care.

Still, a review of the program and historical data also demonstrates that Little Dixie CASA has the ability and the opportunity to undertake significant growth. Little Dixie CASA has a pool of dedicated volunteers, a strong staff who are knowledgeable and care about the program, and the support of the District Court system and local Department of Human Services offices. As such, from 2013 to 2016, Little Dixie CASA achieved a 60% increase in the number of new volunteers trained, as well as a 63% increase in the total number of active volunteers. With this surge in capacity, the program saw an unprecedented 232% increase in the number of children served over the three-year period.

**Conclusions**

Little Dixie CASA’s main objective is to represent the best interest of every neglected or abused child so they can be moved as quickly as possible into a safe, loving, permanent home where they can thrive. Through the Strategic Growth Plan, the Little Dixie CASA Program aims to recruit and retain more volunteers so that every abused and neglected child in the court system who is in need of an advocate will be provided one to ensure their voice is heard. Little Dixie CASA will continue to work within its communities to develop locally-responsive approaches to aid children who have been victims of abuse or neglect, close the gap in services for victims and their families, and boost access and awareness. Little Dixie CASA will work to coordinate other community efforts in order to promote collaboration among all sectors, including victim service providers, victim advocates, law enforcement agencies, health care providers, and community organizations representing educators, businesses, and others involved in the fight to end child abuse and neglect. Through collaboration with community and professional organizations, Little Dixie CASA has the capacity to raise local awareness and involvement in meeting the needs of abused or neglected children.
In addition, the program’s Diversity Plan will work in concert with the Strategic Growth Plan in order to recruit volunteers who will more accurately represent the demographics of the children served in the tri-county area. Diversity outreach efforts will primarily target American Indian and African American volunteers, as those two demographics more adequately represent the population served at the present time.

Furthermore, based on the review of program and historical data as well as need, the following Priority Areas of Focus have been developed for the first and second years of the three-year Strategic Growth Plan (2017 – 2020):

- Enhance program marketing, advertising, and awareness strategies in order to recruit more volunteers
- Implement and utilize an Outreach Specialist to focus on recruitment and retention of program volunteers, with an emphasis on diversifying volunteer demographics
- Ensure available staff capacity to supervise the anticipated growth in volunteers.

**Growth Plan: 2017-2018 (Year 1 of 3)**

**Goal 1: To increase the number of volunteers available for court appointment.**

A. Enhance marketing efforts aimed at volunteer recruitment for Little Dixie CASA during the course of the program year (2017-2018).
1. Explore and research marketing firms, as well as possible pro-bono consultants, to assist with marketing strategies by December 31, 2017.
2. Develop, implement, and utilize a social media plan for the program aimed at volunteer recruitment by December 31, 2017.
   a. Enlist a social media-savvy volunteer dedicated to program outreach via social media outlets.
   b. Increase the number of social media posts for the program to three times per week.
   c. Utilize boosted posts and paid social media ads for the program, at a frequency of at least one time per month.

B. Increase program awareness and training efforts, resulting in an additional 15% of new, trained CASA volunteers available for assignment.
1. Hold a minimum of 12 new volunteer orientation sessions.
2. Provide five volunteer training classes during non-traditional hours.
3. Provide a minimum of 12 community speaking engagements and/or community awareness events.
4. Publish a minimum of 12 articles in various local publications.
5. Utilize local TV and radio stations to broadcast Public Service Announcements for the program during the year.

C. Improve efforts centered on retaining existing CASA volunteers, achieving a retention rate of 80%.
a. Survey current, veteran, and past advocates by November 30, 2017 to gather input regarding needs, experience, etc. to better enhance retention in the program.

2. Recognize volunteers a minimum of two times per year and celebrate their service and case completions regularly throughout the year.

**Goal 2: To increase staff capacity to manage growth and maintain program quality.**

A. By December 31, 2017, move the newly-hired Advocate Coordinator from part-time to full-time status as the new Outreach Specialist.
   1. Seek new and additional funding opportunities with which to support the full-time staff position by December 31, 2017.

B. Enhance Little Dixie CASA staff capacity through the provision of ongoing professional development training and other opportunities at least quarterly.
   1. Attend monthly case staffing meetings with multisystem, interagency, and multidisciplinary investigation and treatment teams or task forces.
   2. Assist with the provision or coordination of training (held at least quarterly) for volunteers and partner agencies to improve response, documentation, information gathering, services, etc. in cases of child abuse or neglect.

**Goal 3: Increase the diversity base of volunteers to more accurately represent the children served by Little Dixie CASA.**

A. Increase the percentage of African American volunteers within the program from 3% to 6%.
   1. Strengthen relationships with key members of the African American community over the year.
   2. Increase community awareness events and activities within African American communities, at a frequency of at least once per quarter.
   3. Involve current African American volunteers in the recruitment process during the year.
   4. Hold at least one new volunteer training within an African American community facility.

B. Increase the percentage of American Indian volunteers within the program from 20% to 30%.
   1. Strengthen relationships with key members of the American Indian community, particularly the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.
   2. Partner with American Indian organizations or groups to hold community awareness events and activities.
   3. Involve current American Indian volunteers in the recruitment process during the year.
Growth Plan: 2018-2019 (Year 2 of 3)

Goal 1: To increase the number of volunteers available for court appointment.

A. Enhance marketing efforts aimed at volunteer recruitment for Little Dixie CASA during the course of the program year (October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019).
   1. Continue implementation/utilization of social media plan aimed at volunteer recruitment during the program year.
      a. Utilize social media-savvy volunteer dedicated to program outreach via social media outlets, with staff assistance as needed.
      b. Increase the number of social media posts for the program to four times per week.
      c. Employ the use of boosted posts and paid social media ads for the program, at a frequency of at least one time per month.

B. Increase program awareness and training efforts, resulting in an additional 15% of new, trained CASA volunteers available for assignment.
   1. Hold a minimum of 12 new volunteer orientation sessions.
   2. Provide five volunteer training classes during non-traditional hours.
   3. Provide a minimum of 13 community speaking engagements and/or community awareness events.
   4. Publish a minimum of 12 articles in various local publications.
   5. Utilize local TV and radio stations to broadcast Public Service Announcements for the program during the year.

C. Improve efforts centered on retaining existing CASA volunteers, maintaining a retention rate of 80% by September 30, 2019.
   1. Continue implementation/utilization of Volunteer Retention Plan, and revise as needed.
      a. Survey current, veteran, and past advocates to gather input regarding needs, experience, etc. to better enhance retention in the program.
      b. Research effective volunteer retention strategies and best practices.
      c. Maintain regular monthly contact with all volunteers; hold quarterly inservice trainings.
   2. Recognize volunteers a minimum of two times per year and celebrate their service and case completions regularly throughout the year.

Goal 2: To increase staff capacity to manage growth and maintain program quality.

A. Support the work of the part-time Advocate Coordinator/Outreach Specialist in efforts to enhance volunteer recruitment and programmatic outreach during the year (October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019).

B. Enhance Little Dixie CASA staff capacity through the provision of ongoing professional development training and other opportunities at least quarterly.
   1. Attend monthly case staffing meetings with multisystem, interagency, and multidisciplinary investigation and treatment teams or task forces.
2. Assist with the provision or coordination of training (held at least quarterly) for volunteers and partner agencies to improve response, documentation, information gathering, services, etc. in cases of child abuse or neglect.

**Goal 3: Increase the diversity base of volunteers to more accurately represent the children served by Little Dixie CASA.**

A. Maintain the percentage of African American volunteers within the program at or above a level of 7%.
   1. Strengthen relationships with key members of the African American community over the year.
   2. Continue community awareness events and activities within African American communities, at a frequency of at least once per quarter.
   3. Involve current African American volunteers in the recruitment process during the year.

B. Increase the percentage of American Indian volunteers within the program from 18% to 25%.
   1. Strengthen relationships with key members of the American Indian community, particularly the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.
   2. Partner with American Indian organizations or groups to hold community awareness events and activities.
   3. Involve current American Indian volunteers in the recruitment process during the year.
Top 10 Services:

1. Housing
2. Early Childhood
3. Emergency Services
4. Health Services
5. Transportation
6. Youth Services
7. Economic/Community Development
8. Substance Abuse
9. Nutrition
10. Asset Development

Top 3 Needs in Community:

Need:  
1. _____________________________

Reason: _____________________________

2. _____________________________

3. _____________________________
For more information, contact:

Little Dixie CASA
603 SW B Street
Antlers, OK 74523
580.298.2921
www.littledixie.org

A child’s voice.
A child’s life.
Lifted up.
By you.

CASA is central to fulfilling society’s most fundamental obligation by making sure a qualified, compassionate adult will fight for and protect a child’s right to be safe, to be treated with dignity and respect, and to learn and grow in the security of a loving family.

In advocating for an abused or neglected child, you give that child a voice—and a chance for a better life.

Lift up a child’s voice. A child’s life.™

www.littledixie.org
580.298.2921

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Office of Justice Programs • U.S. Department of Justice
LITTLE DIXIE CASA

Lift up a child’s voice. A child’s life.™
Too many children in the child welfare system lose their families, their rights and their hope.

Join our fight to make sure they don’t!

We see news stories every day about children taken from an abusive home, or because of the tragic loss of a parent—to illness or violence or incarceration. We assume there must be a program or system that will take care of these children and make sure they are treated with dignity, given a safe place to live, so they can recover from their hardship and be a child again.

But there is a story behind the story that few people speak about. It is the story of overburdened foster care and child welfare systems that—though full of well-intentioned and deeply committed people—cannot begin to meet the needs of the more than 660,000 children in foster care in the United States.

It is the story of a six-year-old girl who has been moved to six group homes and three schools over the past two years. The story of a toddler separated from her brothers and sisters during the most vulnerable time in her life. The story of a child being handed all his belongings in a plastic bag at the age of 18, because he has “aged out” of the system.

It is a story that occurs over and over again in America’s foster care and child welfare system.

But these stories can have better endings, because there is a group of trained volunteers, appointed by judges to advocate for these children. People who fight for these abused and neglected children, to make sure their basic rights and essential needs don’t get overlooked or ignored by the system. These stories can have better endings because of people like you.

We are Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children, a volunteer-powered network of committed people—from all walks of life—who believe society has a fundamental obligation to these children. We are people just like you who believe that every child has the right to be treated with dignity, to be safe, and to thrive in the embrace of a loving family.

With a CASA volunteer, a child is half as likely to languish in the foster care and child welfare system, and that much more likely to find a safe, permanent home.

“...To give a child a CASA volunteer is to give them a voice. To give them a voice is to give them hope, and to give them hope is to give them the world. I believe that with all my heart.”
—Pamela, former foster child

Help us serve every child.

Today 60% of the children in the system have no access to a CASA volunteer. That’s almost 400,000 children without the hope a CASA volunteer can bring.

We are committed to serving every child. You can help!

Donate.

We have a proven approach; our only challenge is to scale it. Your financial contribution is a sound investment. All donations are tax-deductible and help us expand programs and recruit and train volunteers.

Volunteer.

This is one cause where the actions of a single person mean everything. One volunteer, trained and empowered to ensure that every child can thrive in the safe embrace of a loving home.

Get involved.

Don’t have time to volunteer? You can still be a key part of the solution. Connect with us. We’ll keep you informed on our progress and share the various ways you can help ensure abused and neglected children have their rights protected, and their future is bright.

CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children
LITTLE DIXIE CASA

Lift up a child’s voice. A child’s life.

www.littledixie.org
580.298.2921
The goal of this program is to strengthen the relationship between children and teens and their parents, and encourage them to set short term and long term goals for themselves, and give them the tools and support to accomplish those goals.

For more information on becoming a volunteer or enrolling a child please contact:
Program Coordinator
A.J. Henslee
ahenslee@littledixie.org
580-298-2921
603 SW B St.
Antlers, OK 74523

This brochure was financed in whole or in part by funds from the United States Department of Justice as administered by the Office of Juvenile Affairs.
This program will also recruit several adult volunteers to assist with projects and monthly activities as well as semi-annual events to recognize youth achievements.

skills and family relationships, reduce behavioral problems, delinquency, drug and alcohol use in children and teens, and to improve social skills and academic performance.

Youth First
This program was designed to serve children from the ages of 10-17 and their parents in Pushmataha, McCurtain and Choctaw County. It will partner with local organizations to improve parenting.
October HS/EHS/EHS-CC Program Summary

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment & Attendance:

Little Dixie Head Start is currently recruiting children throughout communities within the tri-county service area to fulfill enrollment openings for 3 and 4 year old children. There are currently 48 children, ages birth to 3, enrolled among the 3 Early Head Start centers and 132 children enrolled in the Early Head Start-Child Care locations. We are currently accepting applications for all 3 programs and have an active waiting list for Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start-CC.

Family & Community Engagement

For the months of August and September we had 471 parents that participated in the Parent Meetings. Family Advocates are working on FPA’s with families. In the Parent Ready to Read in August we had 61 and in September we had 75 with a total of 823 year to date. The Love and Logic parenting curriculum is slowly doing well and I’m very optimistic that we are going to have more parents participate; Love and Logic classes began for Head Start in August, it will be offered more often this year in hopes to increase parent participation. The Books Building Bridges initiative for Head Start started back in September.

Father Involvement:

Activity topics for the month of August was sheep and for September was fish. Fathers, Grandfather, Uncles and other adults attended Dad’s Day. For the month of August, the total in attendance was 70, with 37 being a male figure. For the month of September, the total was 172, with 95 being a male figure. There were also 73 Dads/father figures that participated in August and September parent meetings.

Nutrition:

Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care folder checks have been completed. The first round of CACFP on-site monitor visits have begun. Head Start folder checks have begun. The Nutrition Specialist and Assistant traveled to Idabel for the annual Child and Adult Care Food Program training and obtained a total of 6 hours in training. Head Start/Early Head Start staff will gain information from the training at the upcoming October inservice. The renewal of the CACFP application has begun. Family advocates and teaching staff are working hard to complete 1st semester growth assessments.

Education:

School Readiness is always a goal of Little Dixie Head Start. This year we are implementing a new assessment tool, ELQA, which will help teachers and parents to better equip the students for Kindergarten. ELQA, The Early Literacy Quick Assessment is an assessment which is given to 3 & 4 year olds to assess their knowledge of vocabulary, uppercase and lowercase alphabet, phonological awareness (letter sounds), book and print knowledge.
AmeriCorps Program

September marked the start of the Little Dixie School Readiness AmeriCorps Program. Many members have completed orientation and started working with the children. Members received training pertaining to day to day responsibilities, prohibited activities, and criteria mandated by the Oklahoma AmeriCorps. 21 members are currently tutoring children within HS and EHS centers. Several potential members are in the process of background checks.

Program Summary for Health

During the month of September, necessary screenings for newly enrolled children were completed within the 45-day timeframe. EHS and EHC-CC folder checks were completed for the third quarter. The first round of Head Start folder checks and observations began. All of the data was entered in the Child Plus database.

Professional Development

In the month of September, an Early Head Start-Child Care Director’s meeting was held with the Partnership Directors and members of the Management team. The Partnership Directors were able to meet with our new Associate Director, hear updates about their sites, and receive information from each component area pertaining to their center. These meetings are a great time for us to come together as partners to share how the partnership is going and present any questions.

Professional Development has been busy ensuring that all staff are on track to meet any education requirements in the proper timeframe. Staff members have been making progress and are on track to be completed within requirement deadlines.

Next month we will hold our annual In-service on October 25th at the Kiamichi Technology Center. Several topics will be highlighted at this in-service, such as Child Abuse Awareness, which we present to staff annually. Members of the management team are also preparing all information which needs to be presented to staff as well.

Disabilities/Mental Health/Transition

Currently, we have 15 Early Head Start-Child Care children that have been identified by Sooner Start as eligible for services. They are receiving services at the EHS-CC centers. Seven other EHS-CC children are in the referral process to Sooner Start. Sooner Start Staff are also providing services to five Early Head Start children. In Head Start, we have 51 students on IEPs that are receiving services from the public schools. Screenings are being done in the areas of vision, hearing, speech, and the developmental areas of motor skills, communication, problem solving, personal-social and social-emotional skills.

The Mental Health Consultant will provide classroom observations in every classroom the first semester of the 2018-19 school year. Parents are able to request services and referrals can be made for evaluation and counseling for those children.

At the Early Head Start-Child Care Centers and the Early Head Start Centers, staff have been providing transition activities for children ages 2½ to 3 years old to promote a smoother transition to Head Start.
WEATHERIZATION DAY CELEBRATION

Date: Tuesday, October 30, 2018
Location: Little Dixie HomeOwnership Center, 500 East Rosewood, Hugo
Time: 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

$283: Weatherized homes save an average of $283 a year in energy costs.

$514: Households save $514 a year in out of pocket medical expenses.

30%: Weatherization saves households an average of 30% on heating costs.

With the help of the WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, over 7.4 million homes have been weatherized since 1976.

National Weatherization Day is celebrated every year on October 30 to remind us to prepare our homes before the coming colder months. Little Dixie Community Action Agency's Weatherization Staff will be on hand to discuss energy saving ideas that you can do on your own home. All eligible homeowners are encouraged to apply for our free Weatherization assistance program. Refreshments will be served. If you have any questions please call 580-326-5434.