



**Oregon Commission on Children and Families  
Report to collaborating Foundations  
CASA Get Ready, Get Set, Go! Statewide project  
July 2008**



Oregon Community Foundation provided startup funding and Meyer Memorial Trust provided a two-year grant to the Oregon Commission on Children and Families (OCCF) to assist with state coordination for the *CASA Get Ready, Get Set, Go!* (GGG) project. Thank you for this opportunity. This report brings you up to date on the full GGG project.

## **Goals, Objectives and Activities to Date**

### **Phase 1: Startup –**

#### **Preparing and Building OCCF Capacity to Coordinate Training and Assistance to Local CASA Programs**

The Startup Phase is complete.

##### **❖ Staffing**

- In April 2007, Barbara Hansel was hired as a Training Specialist (.75 FTE).
- In April 2007, a contract was finalized with Pattie Johnson at the Teaching Research Institute, Western Oregon University for data management and analysis.
- Both Barbara and Pattie have CASA experience and were able to orient quickly to the demands of this project.
- The OCCF CASA Team now includes: Pat Pitman, OCCF Policy and Program Director; Becky Smith, CASA State Coordinator; Barbara Hansel, CASA Training Specialist; Pattie Johnson, CASA Data Analyst; and Yani Davison, Program Assistant.

##### **❖ Foundation grant application process and guidelines**

- The matrix was established and contact was made with each participating foundation to clarify application procedures.

##### **❖ Project committee for joint decision making**

- The Project Committee convened on May 1, 2007, by conference call. Fifteen members represented 11 CASA programs and four local Commissions on Children and Families.
- Four subcommittees were established to accomplish the objectives. Each committee was active throughout May.
- The committee met in person on May 30, 2007, to present committee recommendations and made final decisions on a) a regional structure of training and a training survey to determine topics and format, b) the developmental assessment goals and measures, c) the readiness screening tool, and d) recommendations for trainers and consultants.
- OCCF CASA State coordinator staffed each committee along with either the new training specialist or the new data analyst.

##### **❖ Training Contracts**

- A training contract was established with Heidi Clark, Community Development Coordinator with Rural Development Institute (RDI) and Jordana Leeb, RDI Field Staff to provide a training session, *Resource Development in communities where resources are less apparent*, at the CASA Directors' Network meeting August 3, 2007, and individual consultation in subsequent months to participating programs. Thirteen programs participated in this training and evaluations were very positive.
- Training on August 3 also included:
  - *Recruiting for Diversity in CASA Boards, Volunteers and Staff*, led by John Sena and Eric Moore of the Juvenile Assistance Corporation, Clackamas County, and
  - *Organizational Stages: Understanding Where Your Organization Is*, led by Michael Heaton, National CASA Association Western Region Program Specialist.
- A training contract was established with Carol Cheney at Technical Assistance for Community Services (TACS). Carol is the lead trainer for the TACS/Ford Family Foundation's Effective Organizations Program, providing training and coaching to rural organizations in Oregon. She has provided eight regional training sessions, four in the fall of 2007 and four in the spring of 2008, all including follow-up individual consultation to participating programs.
  - October – Grantwriting in Baker City and Corvallis
  - November – Board Development in Grants Pass and Bend
  - February – Board Development in McMinnville
  - March – Grantwriting in Bend
  - May – Advanced Grantwriting in Eugene; Board Development in Baker City
  - Note - The Board Development sessions were half day and training on Volunteer Supervision was offered the other half day, led by OCCF CASA Training Specialist Barbara Hansel.
- Peer Cadre: Bids were solicited for peers to provide training for new and current volunteers, boards, directors and program staff. Two RFP cycles have occurred. Accepted bids came from CASA of Coos County, CASA for Children (serving Multnomah and Washington counties), CASA of Marion County and Sandy McIsaac (former director and board member of Columbia Gorge CASA) offering new volunteer training, program management training, and also specialized trainings in legal issues in juvenile court and in administrative review of foster care, psychotropic medication management, or other topics as needed. The first provisions are under way in Southern Oregon with CASA of Coos County staff helping the new Curry program with interviewing prospective volunteers, setting up and implementing their first pre-service volunteer training and TA for the new director. The RFP process will be repeated as necessary in order to involve more CASA programs.
- ❖ Local Program Assessments and Action Planning -- the key to building local CASA Program capacity
  - The finalization of the Developmental Assessment Worksheet and subsequent Action Plan involved detailed review and testing by local programs. The resulting form was made available online in spreadsheet and document form, simplifying data entry for the programs. This has resulted in detailed assessments and a favorable response to this level of presentation.

- As programs submitted their assessments and action plans for review, two or more members of the OCCF CASA Team reviewed them and worked with the program to clarify and complete the assessment. A letter and the completed review/readiness form was addressed to the participating foundation and sent to the program to accompany their grant proposal.
- Subsequent to clarification gained at the January 2008 meeting of the collaborating foundations in the CASA GGG project, grant proposals were reviewed by the OCCF CASA Team to verify that proposals were based on the assessment and action planning and to alert programs of major deficiencies.
- Program assessments give local CASA programs data describing their current or baseline programmatic and financial status, their needs at full implementation and allow them to systematically identify their short and long term priorities. The information is useful in a) board and leadership development, b) strategic planning, c) resource development, and d) marketing and recruitment.
- Local program developmental assessment and action planning began in phase one and is still under way; 73 percent of the programs (22 of 30 programs) have completed the first year assessment and action planning. The current status of each program is indicated in the following chart.

<b>CASA Program Status in GGG</b>	<b>As of 9/14/07</b>	<b>As of 3/14/08</b>	<b>As of 7/1/08</b>
<p>CASA Programs that have completed GGG assessments, action plans and OCCF review</p> <p>Baker County CASA  CASA for Children (serving Multnomah &amp; Washington Counties)  CASA for Children in Klamath County  CASA of Columbia County  CASA of Coos County  CASA of Douglas County  CASA of Jackson County  CASA of Lane County  CASA of Lincoln County  CASA of Linn County  Central Oregon CASA  Child Advocates (serving Clackamas Cty)  Clatsop CASA Program  Columbia Gorge CASA  Curry County CASA  Grant-Harney CASA  Josephine County CASA  Malheur County CASA  Polk County CASA  Tillamook County CASA  Yamhill County CASA</p>	8 programs	14 programs	22 programs
Lake County CASA			
<p>CASA Programs that have submitted GGG assessments and action plan to OCCF and are in the review process</p> <p>CASA: Voices for Children in Benton County</p>	2 programs	5 programs	3 programs

Umatilla County CASA CASA of Marion County CASA Programs known to have been preparing GGG assessments and action plans but have not yet submitted them for OCCF review	7 programs	5 programs	2 programs
Gilliam County CASA Morrow County CASA CASA Programs that have not engaged yet in the assessment and planning process	13 programs	6 programs	3 programs
Union County CASA Wallowa County CASA Wheeler County CASA Foundation GGG Grant Awards	8 programs 11 grant proposals	14 programs 22 grant awards	21 programs 31 awards 2 awards pending
Year one awards to programs *including multiple year awards **including OCCF multiple year awards		782,000* 1.165 M**	936,100 1,114,600* 1.495 M**

Observations or “What we are learning”:

- As expected, the programs for which assessment and planning is easiest were finished first. At the same time, many of the programs that took longer to complete their plans also had very good plans. Timing and ease did not necessarily equate with quality.
- The level of understanding and skill development of some program leaders (including program directors, staff and/or board members) that is resulting from the engagement in this project is visible, often profound, and difficult to measure.
- Asking programs for the added detail included in the assessments is revealing a new level of differences between programs in defining terms and case management practices. At the same time, we are pursuing and finding the underlying commonalities. This slows, but improves, our ability to develop sound outcomes and our data system.
- We predicted correctly that a growing number of programs are serving 90 percent or more of the children eligible, and need to shift from an expansion to a maintenance model. This affects all levels of the organization from internal and external messaging to how cases are managed.
- Clear and appropriate board engagement is pivotal to a sustainable, strong program. Succession planning for the board and director is critical.
- Developmental growth seems to entail three steps forward and two steps back.
- Program management and advocacy issues are the two overarching training areas. Program management skills are essential but it is the child advocacy issues which connect to the primary driving passion of most of our CASA leaders. A balance between the two helps maintain interest in our training program.

**Phase 2A – Training and Assistance to Build Local CASA Leadership**

❖ Volunteer Training

- Training for Trainers was held April 11-13, 2007, led by the National CASA Association Training Specialists, Brian Washburn and Rebecca Grossman. Fifteen Oregon CASA programs participated along with trainers from programs in Washington and Idaho.
  - Thirty-hour, pre-service volunteer training in October and November 2007, along with new director training, was provided by the OCCF CASA Training Specialist for the Gilliam and Wheeler County CASA programs. The National CASA Association training curriculum was used. These two very small programs have adequate staff for the daily supervision of CASA volunteers but do not have the capacity to train them, especially when staff are new.
  - Thirty-hour, pre-service volunteer training in April and May 2008, along with new director training, is being provided by Peer Cadre member, CASA of Coos County, for the new Curry County CASA program.
  - Volunteer training coaching, consultation and/or hands-on training was provided at the request of CASA of Linn County and CASA: Voices for Children in Benton County.
  - Strategic Volunteer Retention Training was held June 25-27, 2008, led by OCCF Training Specialist, Barbara Hansel and the National CASA Association Western Region Program Specialist, Michael Heaton. Thirteen participants from ten programs and one Tribe participated.
- ❖ Data Management – provide TA and training on outcomes, measures and COMET, interface with OCCF and NCASAA on their concurrently developing data systems.
- Developing the actual tools for CASA programs to use in their self-evaluation has led to a close examination of how the data will be collected, analyzed and reported within the context of transitioning OCCF and National CASA Association data systems.
  - Local CASA programs have been surveyed to determine which have data questions and/or needs. The OCCF CASA Data Analyst contacted each program to explore the problems they experience in order to assess the short- and long-term intervention and design issues, as well as to provide assistance as needed and possible.
  - By contracting with Pattie Johnson and the Teaching Research Institute, Western Oregon University, OCCF has been able to access technical support to build a communication web site for OCCF CASA *Get Ready, Get Set, Go!*, [www.casa3g.org/](http://www.casa3g.org/). This web site has allowed the final assessment documents, along with the goals, timeline, and supporting documents to be instantly available to program directors, staff, board members and local commissions. It has also allowed online registration for training sessions and meetings.
  - The Progress Report for GGG targets progress in our six outcome areas:
    - Maintain or increase the rate of achieving safe and permanent homes for children
    - Increase in children served
    - Increase in appointed CASA volunteers and volunteer retention
    - Increase in diversified private and public funding
    - Development of local strategic and sustainability plans
    - Increase level of board engagement in planning, resource development and fundraising

The plan is to report back to each program to show the progress they are making. The state data summaries aggregating all programs will be distributed to GGG foundations and other funders.

- As the developmental assessments are completed and returned, the data supplied by the programs is looked at in consort with the National CASA Association Annual Survey. Along

with these two sources of program data available to the state, is the quarterly data submitted to the local Commissions and the State OCCF-CASA office. This grant activity has coincided with a move on the part of the Oregon Commission on Children and Families to update the Commission data submission and handling capabilities.

- OCCF is developing a web-based CASA client database as part of its new data system. Currently in the design stage, it is slated for testing this summer and will be available as soon as possible to all CASA programs in Oregon. This new system will enhance data entry and streamline the reporting process for the local CASA programs, the local Commissions and the state office.
- Along with this activity by the OCCF, additional conversations have occurred with the data collection and management for Court-related data handled by the Oregon Judicial Department’s Juvenile Court Improvement Project. Where possible, the discussions of increasing the value of CASA data, Court data and DHS data are occurring so that common definitions and needs can be identified and included.
- While these activities are not at this moment providing program data to answer immediate questions, they are building the appropriate infrastructure to handle an increased accountability and enhanced value to the data that will be gathered to measure progress against the goals and actions of the *Get Ready, Get Set, Go!* project.

❖ Leadership Training– provide TA and training appropriate to programs’ needs.

- Training opportunities for CASA leaders were initially developed based on input from the CASA director survey developed by the GGG Project Committee. Continuing identification of topics and trainers has been based on feedback from CASA directors, staff and board members, and from RDI and TACS as they have interacted with local programs.
- Training sessions offered by RDI and TACS also included individual program consultation in the months following the training session.
- Offering training in volunteer supervision and retention has expanded the networking between CASA programs by providing a forum for supervisors to compare practice as well as directors.

Date	Training Session	Trainer	Location	Attending
<b>2007</b>				participants: programs
April	Train the Trainers	NCASAA	Portland	15 programs
August	Resource Development	RDI	Florence	14 programs
	Recruiting for Diversity	J.Sena & E. Moore, Juv. Assistance	Florence	8 programs
	Organizational Stages	M.Heaton, NCASAA	Florence	22 programs

October	Grantwriting	TACS	Corvallis	11: 8 programs
	Volunteer Training (30hrs)	OCCF-CASA	Condon	2 programs
November	Board Development	TACS	Grants Pass	8: 4 programs
	Board Development	TACS	Bend	10: 7 programs
	Volunteer Supervision	OCCF-CASA	Grants Pass	11: 5 programs
	Volunteer Supervision	OCCF-CASA	Bend	10: 7 programs
December	Grantwriting	TACS	Baker City	5: 3 programs
	Regional Meeting	OCCF-CASA	Baker City	5: 3 programs
<b>2008</b>				
January				
February	Volunteer Training	OCCF-CASA	Albany	1 program
	Board Development	TACS	McMinnville	9: 5 programs, 2 others
	Volunteer Supervision	OCCF-CASA	McMinnville	7: 4 programs
March	Grantwriting	TACS	Bend	3 programs, 3 others
	Board Development	OCCF-CASA	Corvallis	1 program
	New Director Orientation	OCCF-CASA	Gold Beach	1 program
April	Oregon Safety Model	DHS	DN: Bend	25: 20 programs
	Permanency and Assigning CASAs	OCCF-CASA	DN: Bend	25: 20 programs
	Legal Issues in Child Advocacy	Peer Cadre	DN: Bend	25: 20 programs
May	Advanced Grantwriting	TACS	Eugene	4: 3 programs
	Volunteer Supervision	OCCF-CASA	Salem	9: 4 programs
	Board Development	TACS	Baker City	4 programs
	Volunteer Supervision	OCCF-CASA	Baker City	4 programs
June	Volunteer Retention	NCASAA & OCCF-CASA	Newport	13: 10 programs, 1 Tribe
July	Board Development	OCCF-CASA	St. Helens	1 program
	Statewide Directors' Meeting (DN)		Astoria	est. 22 programs
SUMMARY	28 training sessions, 5 more scheduled; more planned for fall and spring			100% of programs participating in at least one session

**Modifications that have been made.**

1. In the original plan, it was anticipated that programs would complete the developmental assessments within a 6-month timeframe. In fact, it has taken the entire first year. As some programs are just beginning and others are preparing for year two, statewide progress will be slower and less dramatic. This changes the organization of training, technical assistance, and the collection and reporting of baseline data and progress.
2. Managing the data has not been as easy as predicted. Variances in local definitions, reporting and in the sources and timing of data add layers of complexity. Further discussion is earlier in this section. The timing of the initial baseline and progress reports has had to be delayed.

3. Contracting with programs and individuals to form a peer cadre has been slower than predicted. OCCF has responded with a more user-friendly RFP process. Interest in the CASA Network for the Cadre is increasing, including among the CASA Directors who are nearing retirement.
4. The original training concept was to group programs with similar developmental interests and provide ongoing consultation and training to each group as well as network-wide and in response to individual needs. Instead, the Project Committee decided to offer training sessions on topics of highest request in four regions of the state. Each training session would be followed by free consultation with the trainer. In the second year, we plan to continue locating training in various regions of the state but not necessarily repeated in each region. Consultation was under-used and we are currently exploring better strategies for providing specialized assistance.

**GGG's measurable results to date, specifically new private funding, increased collaboration with other organizations, and increased volunteer involvement?**

- 1) New private and public funding.
  - a. Six foundations collaborating in the GGG project have awarded \$1,494,600 to 21 programs and the state office.
  - b. Through the active partnership of local CASA programs, OCCF and the GGG foundations, an additional \$1 million of state general funds was secured for 2007-09.
  - c. GGG project goals include increasing the diverse sources of funding and for a program to be able to sustain approximately half of the foundation's investment by the second year. Individual program successes indicate probable overall success. Examples:
    - i. Clatsop CASA Program more than doubled the revenue from their annual celebration and auction event.
    - ii. Malheur County CASA increased participation and revenue from their annual Police vs. Fire basketball tournament and are adding additional fundraising events.
    - iii. CASA of Linn County held their first "ask" event and raised \$11,000 in 45 minutes.
    - iv. CASA of Central Oregon held their first major public awareness and fundraising event -- a fun run. It was profitable in many dimensions.
- 2) Increased collaboration with other organizations
  - a. CASA of Jackson County collaborated in a successful federal grant.
  - b. Malheur County CASA's basketball success was due, in part, to the support of the Malheur County Commission on Children and Families.
  - c. Columbia County CASA is participating in the Ford Family Foundation's Effective Organizations project, along with other local organizations.
  - d. CASA of Lane County worked with other children's organizations to mount a local initiative on child safety.

- e. There is increased networking among volunteer supervisors through the training opportunities as well as among CASA Directors.
- 3) Increased volunteer involvement
- a. Board members are volunteers. Without question, a strong and engaged board of directors (or advisory or “Friends” board) is critical to the stability and sustainability of a program over time. Many of the examples above are a result of increased board engagement.
  - b. It is a GGG goal to increase the number of volunteer advocates for children. Early data indicates an upward trend in approximately half of the programs. A variety of issues, including data clean-up efforts, affect the remainder.

### **The impact of GGG on the children CASA serves.**

What the GGG project has accomplished to date is intended to have a measurable impact on the children in the custody of the State due to abuse or neglect. GGG sets in motion the resource development – of people, skills and funding – necessary to recruit, screen, train, supervise, support and thus retain excellent advocates for children.

Research points to the importance of a caring adult in a child’s life. CASA provides this for children who have been removed temporarily or permanently from their parents and seeks to build a permanent support system for each child.

Three measures indicate success:

- 1) The percent of eligible children who have an appointed CASA volunteer.
- 2) The number of children with a CASA volunteer who maintains their advocacy for that child while the case is open or until permanency is achieved, thus reducing the further trauma of changing caregivers, caseworkers, schools and service providers.
- 3) The percent of children achieving permanency through reunification with parents or relatives, adoption or guardianship.

The GGG project focuses on program capacity building in order to realize these needs of the children. We are looking forward to presenting to you the individual program and statewide aggregate data that will set the baseline and begin to mark the progress being made toward the full implementation envisioned in this project.

If you have comments or questions, please contact:

Becky Smith  
OCCF CASA State Coordinator  
530 Center St NE #405  
Salem, OR 97301  
503 378-5151  
becky.f.smith@state.or.us