

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY
Department of Family Administration
Administrative Office of the Courts

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA) GRANTS - FY 2012

Issue Date: February 1, 2011

Applications Due: March 21, 2011

General Information

The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program was authorized to operate in Maryland subject to approved Rules and Guidelines, by the 1989 adoption of Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article, §3-830. The Annotated Code of Maryland states that the role of the Court Appointed Special Advocate is to:

- Provide the court with background information to aid the court in making decisions in the child's best interest; and
- Ensure that the child is provided appropriate case planning and services.

The CASA volunteer is considered a friend of the court and does not have party status. The volunteer is considered an agent of the court and is appointed at the judge's discretion to represent the child's best interests. Volunteers are not represented by an attorney but should be provided access to legal counsel by the program.

The Maryland Judiciary receives state funding each year to enhance the circuit courts' ability to provide a fair and efficient forum for resolving domestic and juvenile matters. The Department of Family Administration (DFA) at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is requesting applications for CASA Grants. The grants are designed to improve the management of family law cases and support a spectrum of services to families involved in the legal system and are administered by the DFA.

Subject to the provision of funds for Fiscal Year 2012, grants will be awarded to applicable programs which enhance the experience of families and children involved with Maryland's legal system.

Funding Priorities

For best consideration, applicants should demonstrate a need within the community that is to be served and that the program's services will be complimentary to those provided by the court. Priority will be given to the continuation of projects currently funded through the DFA CASA Grants.

Eligible Applicants

1. Eligible grantees include any government/government entities, non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education administering a CASA program.

To be eligible for funding, the program must:

- a. Be a member in good standing of the National CASA Association and in compliance with NCASAA standards;
- b. Be a member in good standing of the Maryland CASA Association and in compliance with Maryland CASA standards;
- c. Be in compliance with all CASA Rules & Guidelines (found at www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html);
- d. Demonstrate the ability (i.e. experience and expertise) to provide the service; (NOTICE: Qualifications of all new Program Directors must be submitted to the Administrative Office of the Courts prior to budget approval and release of funds) and
- e. Demonstrate adequate internal financial controls to properly administer grant funds.

For CASA programs who have received AOC funding in the prior year (FY11), all required reports and documentation must have been submitted prior to this grant's submission deadline.

2. Grants are also available to any government/government entities, non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education in which there is not presently an established and active CASA program, but where one is being planned. These groups are eligible to apply for a one-time planning grant from the DFA. All groups must work in conjunction with the Maryland CASA Association when starting a program for a jurisdiction.

Grant Review

The AOC is committed to a fair and open process in awarding grants. Grant applications will be reviewed by a committee including DFA staff members and the Maryland CASA State Director. Final award determinations will be made based on the recommendations of the review committee.

Awards will be granted in accordance with process explained in great detail in the *Performance Based Funding Model for Maryland CASA Programs* found at www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html. In accordance with that model, the CASA grant award is a sum of four possible awards:

1. Quantitative Award – based on the number of active volunteers in the program.
 2. Qualitative Award – based on the program's efforts to meet the ten performance elements.
 3. One-Time Expansion Grant – a flat, prorated amount awarded for use for hiring an additional case supervisor or other capacity building activities.
 4. Multi-Jurisdictional Bonus – a flat prorated amount per additional jurisdiction determined by number of active volunteers in the additional jurisdiction.
- NOTE: Please review the *Performance Based Funding Model for Maryland CASA Programs* for more information.

All grantees should thoroughly review the *Performance Based Funding Model for Maryland CASA Programs* before applying as it has been updated for FY12.

Award Information

The availability of funds for this program is contingent upon the provision of funds in the Maryland Judiciary budget by the Maryland General Assembly for Fiscal Year 2012. Funding decisions will be made by the end of May 2011. Grantees will be notified in writing of changes to the project award based on the Judiciary's budget constraints.

Funding Cycle

All granted funds must be expended during the period of July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012. No extensions will be granted.

Grant Payments

If awarded, and unless otherwise provided for in the grant agreement, grant funds will be paid on a *reimbursement basis* only, upon submission of a timely financial expenditure report and a request for payment each quarter.

Matching Fund Requirement

CASA grantees must provide a one hundred percent match for their total CASA grant award. Both cash (at least 75%) and in-kind (no more than 25%) may constitute match.

Waiver: At the discretion of the grantor, matching fund requirements can be waived for:

- start-up programs,
- the optional one-time expansion grant bonus, and
- the multi-jurisdictional bonus.

Reporting

Programs must use the *CASA Outcomes Measurement and Evaluation Tool (COMET)* or the *CASA Efforts to Outcomes (ETO)* performance management system for data collection purposes. Programs will be required to report on the progress toward specific project goals as well as provide statistical information, on a quarterly and annual basis.

Specific statistical reporting requirements, including required reporting forms, will be available to the grantee prior to the start of the funding period. Reporting forms will be posted on the DFA's website at www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html.

Information collected from the quarterly and annual reports will be used to monitor funded programs and assist the DFA in determining if the program is meeting its stated goals and objectives. Additionally, the AOC reserves the right to use this data in statistical reports, annual reports, and other publications for general distribution.

QUARTERLY

Statistical

All CASA grantees are required to comply with quarterly reporting. Programs will be required to track statistical information, including, but not limited to:

- Number of children served
- Number of volunteers trained and assigned
- Status of children's cases at closure
- Number of court reports and recommendations submitted/accepted by the court

Narrative

CASA grantees are encouraged to provide a narrative report when necessary to explain any inconsistencies or abnormal information in the statistical report or to highlight any information that the program believes to be important or indicative of a trend.

Financial

All CASA grantees are required to submit quarterly financial reports reflecting their expenditures for the quarter, as well as proof of matching funds.

Quarterly Reports and Requests for Payment are due (postmarked) not later than 15 days after the close of the quarter based on the following schedule:

<u>Reporting Period</u>	<u>Report Due Date</u>
1 st Quarter (July 1 thru Sept 30)	October 15
2 nd Quarter (Oct 1 thru Dec 31)	January 15
3 rd Quarter (Jan1 thru Mar 31)	April 15
4 th Quarter (April 1 thru June 30)	July 15

ANNUAL

Local CASA grantees must submit an annual report to the Maryland CASA Association no later than July 15, 2012. That report will be a compilation of statistics and data reflecting the program's performance during the fiscal year. The Maryland CASA Association must submit a combined statewide report to the DFA no later than August 1, 2012.

Applicable Guidelines

In applying for funds, grantees agree to comply with the *Maryland CASA Program Performance Standards* and the Department of Family Administration's CASA Grant Guidelines for FY12 posted at: www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html.

Application Information

All applicants are required to submit the completed CASA Grant Application including a proposed budget.

The Grant Application is posted at: www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html

Submission: This application must be submitted electronically (by email) AND by regular mail. Two original copies are required by mail. If funds are granted, one original will be returned to the grantee with the award letter.

Deadline: E-mailed applications must be received at the DFA by:
5:00pm on Monday, March 21, 2010.
Original copies must follow; submitted by regular mail. Original copies must be received by **March 31, 2011.**

Electronic copies should be emailed to:

Jennifer.White@mdcourts.gov

*The subject line of the email should indicate the grant type, the fiscal year, and program county or name, *example: "CASA FY12 Anne Arundel"*

Mailed copies should be directed to:

Connie Kratovil-Lavelle, Executive Director
Department of Family Administration
Administrative Office of the Courts
580 Taylor Avenue, 2nd Floor, A Pod
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Technical Assistance

An informational session will be provided to anyone seeking additional information regarding the application process. Attendance at the informational session is *not mandatory* and is offered only as a supplement to the information included within this NOFA and the application.

Technical Assistance Meeting for all DFA Applicants:

February 14th at 1:00pm

Judicial Education Conference Center (JECC), Conference Rm. #2
2009-D Commerce Park Drive, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Please contact Jennifer White at 410-260-1739 or Jennifer.White@mdcourts.gov to notify us if you plan to attend the in-person session or to request directions.

Web (Online) Technical Assistance Meeting for CASA Programs Only:

February 15th at 1:00pm

Applicants interested in attending the web meeting should contact Jennifer White at 410-260-1739 or Jennifer.White@mdcourts.gov by February 11, 2011 to register for the session. The web sign-in and conferencing information will be provided after registration. No webcam or special computer software is needed to participate in this online technical meeting.

The web meeting will be recorded and posted on the DFA's grants page (www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html).

For further information regarding this notice of funding or the application process, please contact Kelly Franks, Department of Family Administration, at (410) 260-1722.