

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

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA)
PLANNING GRANTS - FY 2013

Issue Date: January 27, 2012
Applications Due: March 19, 2012

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 appointed at the judge's discretion to represent the child's best interests.

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. To that end, the Department of Family Administration (DFA) at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is requesting applications for CASA Planning Grants. The grants are intended to support the initiation of new CASA programs in jurisdictions that are not currently being served. Subject to the provision of funds for Fiscal Year 2013, grants will be awarded to applicable programs that have a solid plan for the establishment of a sustainable CASA program.

Funding Priorities

For best consideration, applicants should demonstrate a need within the community that is to be served and that the program will work in collaboration with the court to meet that need.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible grantees include any government/government entities, non-profit organizations or institution 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.

NOTE:

CASA Planning Grants are a "one-time" award. To be eligible for future CASA funding from the AOC, the program must:

- a. *Become a member in good standing of the National CASA Association and be in compliance with NCASAA standards;*
- b. *Become a member in good standing of the Maryland CASA Association and be 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*
- e. *Demonstrate adequate internal financial controls to properly administer grant funds.*

Grant Review

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

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 2013. The DFA intends to make funding decisions by the end of May 2012.

Funding Cycle

All granted funds must be expended during the period of July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013. No extensions can 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

All 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, applicants for CASA Planning Grants may request a waiver of the matching fund requirement. A waiver can be requested using section D on the last page of the grant application narrative form.

Reporting

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. Information collected from the 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 REPORTS

Statistical

All CASA grantees are required to comply with quarterly 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 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

Specific statistical reporting requirements, including required Excel reporting forms, will be provided to the grantee prior to the start of the funding period.

Narrative

CASA Planning Grantees are required to provide a narrative report describing the progress the program has made and the challenges the program has faced during the quarter.

Financial

All CASA grantees are required to submit quarterly financial reports reflecting their expenditures for the quarter, as well as proof of matching funds. Each grantee will be provided with a personalized Excel financial workbook containing their project’s budget information. Expenditure Reports and Request for Payment forms will be contained within these workbooks for each quarter.

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 REPORT

All CASA grantees must submit an annual report to the DFA and 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.

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 FY13 posted at: www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html.

Application Information

Application Forms

The CASA Planning Grant application is contained in two separate documents; a Word narrative form and an Excel budget form. All applicants are required to submit both completed application forms.

Grant Application forms are posted at: www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html.

Letter(s) of Support

Applicants must show collaboration with the court in the jurisdiction where services are to be provided and must submit a letter(s) of support from the appropriate court(s) in the jurisdiction(s) to be served. To be considered by the review committee, support letters must be postmarked by the application deadline below. Letters can be sent directly to the DFA or submitted with the grant application and should be addressed to the DFA's Executive Director, Connie Kratovil-Lavelle. Letters of support postmarked after March 19, 2012 may not be considered.

Submission: This application must be submitted electronically (by email) AND by mail. Two original copies are required by mail.

Deadline: Applications must be **emailed** to the DFA by:
Monday, March 19, 2012 at 4:30pm

Two hard copies* with original signatures must be **mailed** to the DFA,
postmarked by: March 19, 2012

**Please do not staple or bind your application.*

Contact Information:

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, *for example:* "CASA FY13 Anne Arundel"

Applications and Support Letters 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 7th 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. Your “RSVP” will help ensure that there are adequate hand-outs for all attendees.

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

**This meeting is intended for existing CASA programs, but may be of interest to start-up programs.*

February 14th 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 10, 2012 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.

After the conclusion of the meeting, a recording of the web meeting will be posted on the DFA’s grants page (www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html).

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