

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

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA) GRANTS - FY 2015

Issue Date: January 24, 2014

Applications Due: April 4, 2014

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 is 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 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 2015, grants will be awarded to CASA programs that have a proven track record of success.

Eligible Applicants

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;
- e. Demonstrate adequate internal financial controls to properly administer grant funds; and
- f. For CASA programs who have received AOC funding in the prior year (FY14), all required reports and documentation must have been submitted prior to this grant's submission deadline.

*All programs must submit a copy of their most recent Certificate of Compliance from the National CASA Association with their application.

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, the Maryland CASA State Director and may include other subject matter experts as deemed beneficial by the Department of Family Administration's Executive 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 *Guidelines for Funding for Maryland CASA Programs* which is Appendix A to the Grant Guidelines found at www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html. In accordance with those guidelines, the CASA grant award is a sum of three possible awards:

1. Capacity Award – based on the average number of volunteers in the program who were assigned to and serving children.
2. Needs Award – based on the number of children in foster care in the counties served by the program and other factors illustrating need described in the Grant Application.
3. Performance Award – based on the program's ability to fulfill the tenants of the *Ten Point Performance Model for MD CASA Programs* found in Appendix A of the Grant Guidelines.

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 2015. The DFA intends to make funding decisions by the end of May with notice to grantees in early June.

Funding Cycle

All granted funds must be expended during the period of July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015. 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 and program reports reflecting adequate efforts and progress toward project goals.

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. Grantees who will use in-kind match must maintain documentation of the match. More details about this requirement are found in the CASA Grant Guidelines for FY15.

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

up programs in their first year of funding or for good cause upon consideration of the DFA's Executive Director.

Reporting Requirements

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 a formal data tracking system such as the *CASA Outcomes Measurement and Evaluation Tool (COMET)* or the *CASA Efforts to Outcomes (ETO)* performance management system for data collection purposes. Other data systems may be authorized upon written request to the DFA. 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 each the grantee prior to the start of the funding period.

Narrative

CASA grantees are required to report quarterly on their progress toward the goals set forth in their grant application. CASA grantees are also 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. 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 to be received no 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

CASA grantees must submit an annual report to the DFA and to the Maryland CASA Association no later than January 31, 2015. That report will be a compilation of statistics and data reflecting the program's performance during the calendar 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 FY15* posted at: www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html.

Application Information

Application Forms

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

Please Note: *Unlike past years, the Grant Application is contained in one document. This document contains both the narrative and budget sections.*

Letter(s) of Support

Applicants must show collaboration with the court(s) in the jurisdiction(s) 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 should 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 April 4, 2014 may not be considered.

Submission: This application must be submitted by mail. Two hard copies with original signatures are required by mail.

Deadline: Two hard copies* with original signatures must be **mailed** to the DFA, **postmarked by: April 4, 2014**

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

Contact Information:

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

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.