

# United Way of Laramie County End-of Year Report

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Agency Name: CASA of Laramie County Program: CASA of Laramie County Reporting Period: Jan - Dec 2009

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<b>Agency Mission/Vision:</b>	To provide a volunteer court appointed voice for abused and neglected children, whereby advocating a safe and permanent environment in the community for children to grow and develop into stable adults.
<b>Community Issue Program Targets:</b>	To advocate for abused and neglected children in Laramie County who are in the legal system. CASA of Laramie County advocates for the best interests of the child while also recommending community services for the child and family to facilitate timely movement for the child through the legal system. CASA Volunteer Advocates are appointed by a Judge in district court and report directly to the court. Helping Neighbors in Crisis and Strengthening Families to move them toward Self-Sufficiency.

<b>Program Target Population:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CASA of Laramie County serves abused and neglected child crime victims in Laramie County District Court, as their cases go through the legal process. CASA Volunteers advocate for children ages birth to 17, who constitute 25.6% of the total population of Laramie County.</li> <li>• In 2009, CASA served a total of 166 children, in a total of 85 family groups. The program opened 57 new children in 2009 and closed 66 children during this period.</li> <li>• The average age of children served was 8, with 50.6% being female and 49.4% being male.</li> <li>• The ethnicity of children served is: White 63.25%, Black 13.25%, Native American 4.82%, Latino/Hispanic 16.27%, other 1.81%.</li> <li>• Describe the individuals who are the focus of your work, and are influenced by your activities?</li> <li>• CASA volunteer Advocates advocate for these children on many levels. They advocate for the children's education, mental and physical and safety needs. Since the primary goal at onset of a case is family reunification the volunteer advocates are attentive to the services provided to the biological families, ensuring such services are offered to increase the safety and well-being of the child if/when they are returned to their families, for example parenting classes, family counseling, anger management. Additionally the Volunteer Advocates assist in assuring time lines are met for MDT's (Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings), law required court hearings. The Volunteer Advocates are also active in assuring that a concurrent case plan is in place. It is the ultimate goal of the Volunteer Advocate to speak on behalf of the child, to give that child a voice, to the court in regards to that child's best interest at all times throughout the life of the individual case.</li> <li>• Cultural Diversity is an important factor for CASA of Laramie County. This program strives to match Volunteer Advocates to the children when possible. In some cases it is imperative to understand the cultural aspects of the family in order to understand the dynamic, and how to best advocate for that particular child while taking into consideration cultural differences, that may play a significant role in the progression of the individual case.</li> </ul>
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<b>Program Significance to the Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child abuse and neglect comes in many forms; in Laramie County it is driven by the impact of methamphetamine use, other substance abuse, domestic violence, isolation and poverty. The economic situation in Laramie County appears to have also been a factor in 2009.</li> <li>• CASA trains new volunteers at least twice a year to meet the increasing need to help children, who through no fault of their own have entered the highly confidential juvenile justice system. CASA fills this niche by working with the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) attorney, Department of Family Services (DFS), the Assistant District Attorney (ADA), and others to provide additional advocacy for children and prevent further abuse and neglect.</li> <li>• CASA volunteer advocates act as "the voice of the child" to promote safe and healthy environments for children in Laramie County.</li> <li>• CASA volunteer advocates are assigned to one abused child or sibling group, maximum of two cases, to be the "eyes and ears" for the court.</li> <li>• The court appointment orders allow the advocates to research and contact those involved with their case, see the child at least once per month, prepare court reports for all hearings, and are key to implementing a coordinated effort to determine and meet the best interest of the child.</li> <li>• Advocacy for less time in out-of-home placement(s), combined sibling placements, attention to development, educational, mental health issues and permanency reflects Best Practice Policy.</li> <li>• The children involved in abuse/neglect cases are historically underserved, because they cannot speak for themselves in court proceedings, and have little opportunity to interact with those who traditionally represent their interest. AS a result, each time a CASA volunteer observes and interacts with a child, and articulates that child's needs in a court report, a historically underserved person is provided with advocacy.</li> <li>• If children in the confidential juvenile justice system are allowed to slip through the cracks, the system will be impacted in far greater ways through juvenile delinquency, unplanned pregnancies and education failures, etc.</li> <li>• Regular one-on-one time with a caring adult who can explain the process and make sure that the child's wishes and needs are being heard and met means that there is at least one stable individual in the life of this child at a very unstable time in the child's life.</li> </ul>
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Program Resources		Program Activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CASA currently staffs the program with four (4) full-time staff. One (1) Full-time Program Director, one (1) Full-time Office Manager, one (1) Full-time Lead Case Manager, one (1) Full-time Case Manager. (Per National CASA standard we will provide one(1) supervisor per 30 volunteer advocates). Additionally CASA has 41 trained volunteer advocates.</li> <li>This program is governed by a 15 member Board of Directors.</li> <li>Facility and Equipment: CASA currently is housed in a 2200 sq foot rented, private, office space located downtown approximately two(2) blocks from the County Court House. We currently own all of our equipment.</li> <li>Collaboration with Department of Family Services, Laramie County District Attorney. Guardian ad Litem (GAL)</li> </ul>		<p>Case work: Research; contact child and others involved in case (biological parents, foster parents, teachers, caseworkers, GAL); and prepare Court reports; attend court hearings, MDT's, or other meetings as required</p> <p>Training: Provide initial and ongoing training to volunteer advocates, who are community citizens of Laramie County; offer ongoing and continued support to the volunteer advocates who are advocating for the best interests of the children in our program.</p> <p>Outreach: Provide continued outreach reach to the community in an effort to educate them to our program and for the recruitment of volunteer advocates.</p>	
Outcome	Performance Measure	Method of Measure	
<p>CASA volunteer Advocates directly impact child abuse and neglect issues for children of Laramie County</p> <p>Key stakeholders in the community (Judge, GAL's, DFS caseworkers, foster parents) experience collaborative benefits from the work of CASA volunteer advocates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of Children served by CASA; # of visits with child; number of court hearings attended; # of additional training hours accumulated by advocates during the year.</li> <li># of MDT's (Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings), educational or family group conferences attended by CASA.</li> <li># of reports submitted to the court; timeliness of appointment to a case; average number of contacts and time spent per child per month/year</li> <li># of children who re-enter the court system six months or more after case closure with the court (given cooperation with DFS to determine this)</li> <li>% of children achieving permanent placement at 6, 12 and 18 months or more after assigned a CASA.</li> <li>% of children remaining in permanent home (placement at dismissal) 6 months after case closure with the court (given cooperation with DFS to determine this).</li> <li># of key stakeholders experiencing collaborative efforts with CASA</li> <li>Timeliness of volunteer availability for court appointments</li> <li>Average number of contacts and time spent with key stakeholders per month/year</li> <li>% of cases that the Judge appoints a CASA when such is requested.</li> <li>% of GAL's in Laramie County who work with CASA</li> <li>% of GAL's who have worked with more than one CASA volunteer</li> <li>Expressed support for program expansion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assignment of cases by court and number of available advocates.</li> <li>Volunteer monthly activity reports</li> <li>Volunteer training activity reports</li> <li>National CASA database</li> <li>CASA case files</li> <li>Review of DFS case files</li> </ul>	
Program Results		Results Analysis and Next Steps	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2009, CASA of Laramie County served 166 children (33 more than 2008), in a total of 85 family groups. In 2009, 57 new children were assigned to the CASA program. During this portion of the grant period, 66 children had their cases closed.</li> <li>Each time a volunteer observes or interacts with a child, and informs the court of that child's well-being, needs and wishes, and each time a CASA volunteer advocates for the child's best interest, this benefits the child. Our overview of the number of volunteer contacts with the child, the contacts with others associated with the child and the case (biological parents, foster parents, teachers, caseworkers, therapists, GAL's), and the number of times a CASA attended court, or an MDT(Multi-Disciplinary Team) or other meeting, indicates a thorough and ongoing delivery of services (i.e., contacts, reports and hearings).</li> <li>Each time a volunteer observes the child, assesses the situation, identifies a need and makes a referral to appropriate sources is a step towards a more secure future for the child. Each time a volunteer advocates for a child, that child has a voice he or she did not previously have. Every time a caring adult is involved with a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect is a positive impact on that child and his future, and an interruption of the abuse/neglect cycle.</li> <li>There continues to be an underserved population of child victims of abuse and neglect. There continues to be an unmet need in this community for advocacy services for abused and neglected children. There is a seemingly increase in the number of children served whose parents who were also a part of the abuse/neglect system.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In August 2009, Judge Edward Grant retired from the District Court. With the appointment of the new District Court Judge, Thomas Campbell. This was a smooth transition for CASA of Laramie County with only minor interruptions of service. The CASA Interim Director and a member of the Board of Directors were able to meet with Judge Campbell shortly after his appointment, which has resulted in a very positive light for our organization.</li> <li>CASA was able to extend out MOU to all</li> </ul>	