

CASA of Pima County

YOU can help
change a child's
story.®

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Agenda

Child Welfare in Arizona

What is a Dependency

Navigating Foster Care

**CASA-Who We Are &
What We Do**

Other Ways to Help





Child Welfare in Arizona

Who Takes Custody?

The Department of Child Safety (DCS)



- The main purpose of the department is child protection and safety.
- Their mission is to successfully engage children and families to ensure safety, strengthen families and achieve reunification and permanency.

Types of Maltreatment



ABUSE

PHYSICAL

EMOTIONAL

SEXUAL

ABANDONMENT

NEGLECT

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

DIRTY/UNSAFE HOMES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

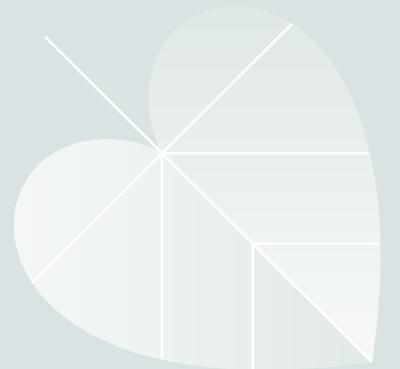
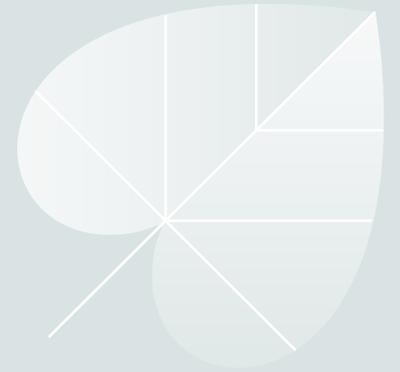
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

***CONSIDER POVERTY AND HOW IT PLAYS A ROLE IN THE NEGLECT OR MALTREATMENT OF CHILDREN.**



Arizona Child Welfare Statistics*

- **Number of Reports-** Calls made to the Hotline (not all calls are substantiated)
State: 22,227
Pima County: 4,459
- **Number of Dependencies Filed-** When a report is substantiated, it goes to court
State: 4,967
Pima County: 352 (Jan-Aug)
- **Children in Out-of-Home Care-** A judge has ruled the child is a ward of the State.
State: 12,725
Pima County: 1,500



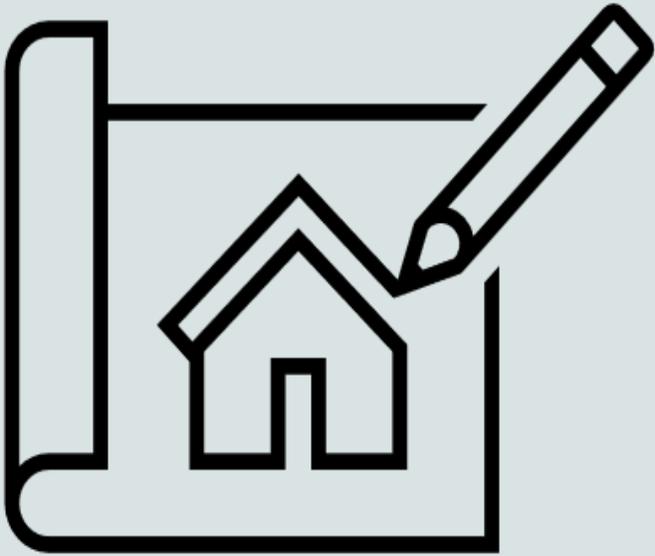


What is a Dependency?

- A call is made to the Hotline.
- A DCS Investigator goes to the home to do interviews and observe the surroundings for evidence of abuse or neglect.
- The Investigator finds the report to be unsubstantiated (the report is closed) or substantiated (reported concerns are confirmed).
- The child is removed from the home, DCS files a dependency petition within 72 hours of removal
- The petition is heard in court within 5-7 business days of removal, a judge will determine if it is safe for the child to return home or if they will become a ward of the State, DCS will be the child's legal guardian.
- Services are recommended to the family to help with safe reunification.
- Oversight will be provided by the court to determine if and when a child can safely be reunited with their parent(s)/family.

Types of Placement

When children are removed, they can be temporarily placed with:



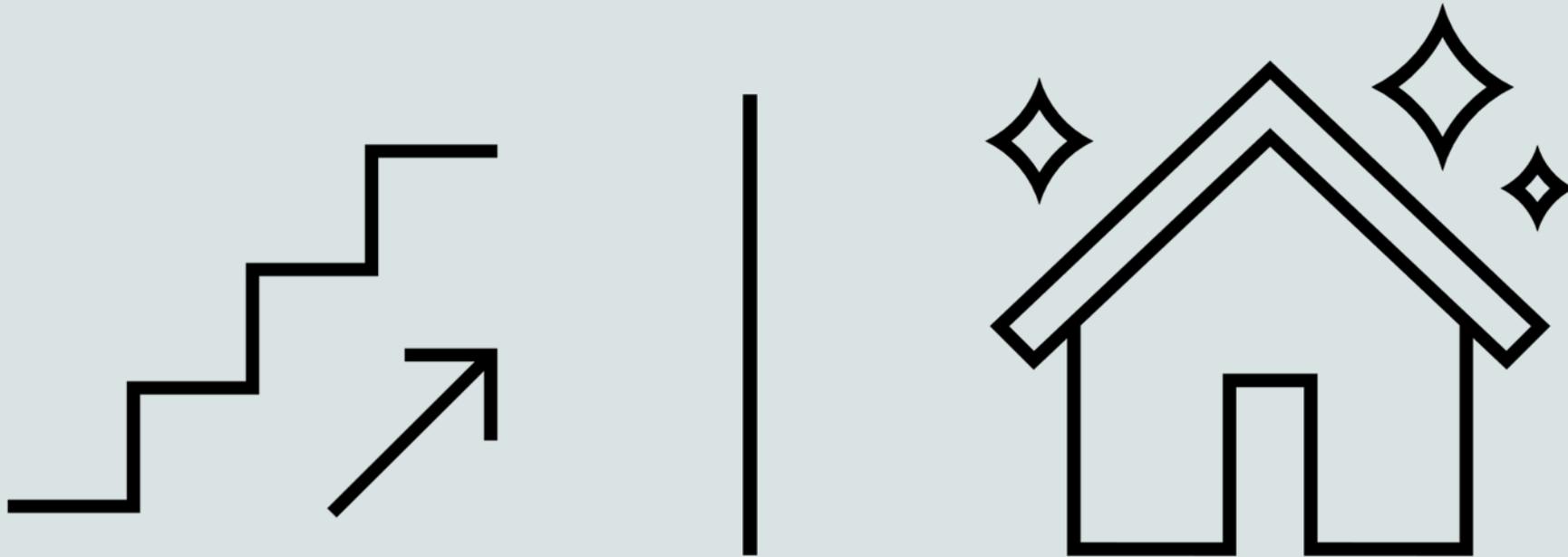
Relative/Kinship

Licensed Foster Home

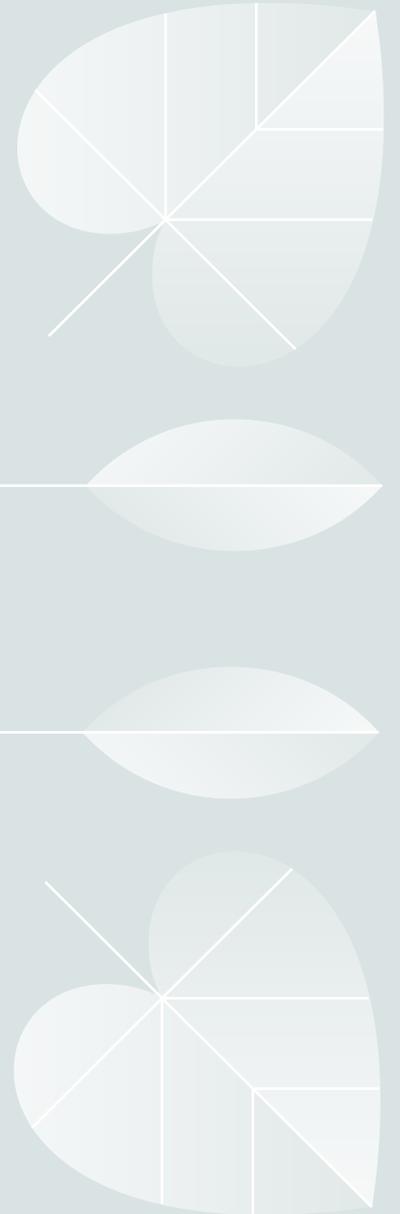
Group Home, Shelter, or
Residential Treatment Center

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

Steps to Reunification



The CASE PLAN sets out tasks, or steps, intended to remedy the concerns found by DCS and the court. These are ACHIEVABLE expectations that are intended to prepare the parent(s) for safe reunification of their child(ren).



Four legal pathways for a dependency case to end:

Reunification

Permanent Guardianship

Adoption

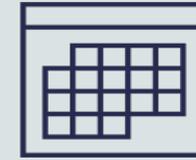
APPLA-Another Planned
Permanent Living
Arrangement

When Reunification is not an Option

Dependency Reviews and Permanency Hearings



At 6 months if the
child was under 3
at the time of
removal.



At 12 months in
the child was over
3 at the time of
removal.





Navigating Foster Care



Trauma

- All children in foster care have been exposed to some form of trauma.
- Foster children may be placed in multiple foster homes and/or group homes during the length of the case.
- Approximately 1 in 4 children in foster care will show signs of PTSD.

Services

- There may be a lack of appropriate services.
- Long wait times.
- Frequent changes in providers, supports, and environments.

Court Appointed Special Advocate-CASA

The CASA Mission

Our mission is to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children who are involved in the juvenile courts. We promote and support community-based volunteers, certified by the Arizona Supreme Court, who provide quality advocacy to help assure each child a safe, permanent, and nurturing home.



CASA Program History: 47 Years of Advocacy

First CASA Program
(WA State, Judge Soukup)

AZ Supreme Court
CASA of Arizona



1977



1979



1987



1991



Pima County CASA
(Second in the Nation!)

CASA of Arizona
(House Bill 2419)

Who is a **CASA** Volunteer?



Everyday members of the community, like you and me, who care about the well being of children.

They are **appointed by a judge** to advocate for the best interest of abused and neglected children during a dependency case.

A CASA advocate is often the only consistent person in the child's life while in foster care.

Volunteers come from *all walks of life*, and represent various ages, education levels, and professions.

They are they **eyes and ears** for the judge and the voice for the child's best interest.



Volunteer Qualifications

- US Citizen or Legal Resident
- At least 21 years of age
- Ability to pass a background check with a successful outcome, including:
 - FBI, DPS, MVD, Polygraph test, and ongoing recertification.
- Ability to dedicate approximately 10-20 hours a month to change a child's life
- Ability to complete 30 hours of preservice training **before** certification and 12 hours of in-service training annually **after** certification



How Does a Child Get Appointed a CASA?

➤ Referral

- A judge, DCS case worker, or attorney on the case can submit a referral for a child to be appointed a CASA.
- The referral is sent to the county's CASA program and uploaded into a tracker.
- Pima County screens every dependency petition that comes through the juvenile court to check if any dependent children may need a CASA but have not been referred.

➤ Case Selection

- CASA Coordinators pull from the tracker 3-4 cases that are in line with what the CASA feels most comfortable working with.
- The CASA may select a case based on what has been pulled, or the Coordinator may pull additional cases to be looked through.
- Once a CASA selects a case, they will then meet with and start spending time with the child. CASAs stay on the case until it is closed.

Building Connections and Advocation

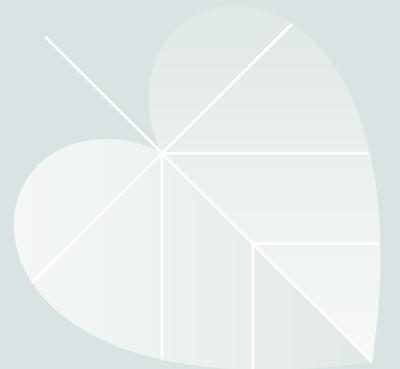
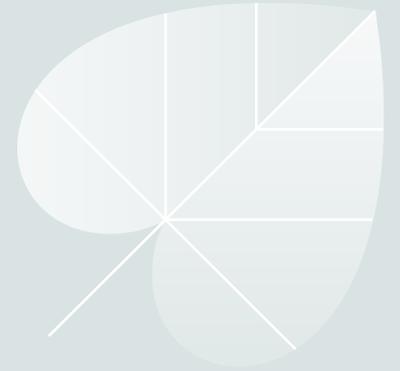
➤ Relationship With The Child

- Be a consistent positive adult in a child's life
- Model safe and secure relationships
- Visit with the child a minimum of once a month

➤ Advocate For The Child

- Ensure they are receiving the services they need-medical, behavioral health, educational, and that they are benefiting from services
- Attend meetings on the child's case
- Report to the court about the child and progress of the case

Average of 15 hours a month



Best Interest Advocacy



CASA Volunteers advocate for the best interests of children who have been abused or neglected. Here's what that means.



LEARN

Learn all you can about the child and his or her family and life.



REPORT

Report what you have learned and observed to the court.



ENGAGE

Engage with the child during regular visits.



RECOMMEND

Speak up for the child's best interests in court. Make recommendations regarding the child's placement and needed services and monitor the child's situation until the case is released by the court.



COLLABORATE

Collaborate with others to ensure that necessary services are provided and are in the child's best interest.



Key Benefits of a CASA Advocate

Children who have experienced abuse or neglect have better successful outcomes with a CASA volunteer on their side.



Studies have shown:



They are **more likely** to find a safe, permanent home.



They are **more likely** to succeed in school.



They are **half as likely** to re-enter the foster care system.

Benefits of a CASA Advocate

- CASAs are highly effective in court
- Fewer placements
- CASAs play a critical role in supporting families
- Considerable influence on transportation issues
- Significant influence with children aging out

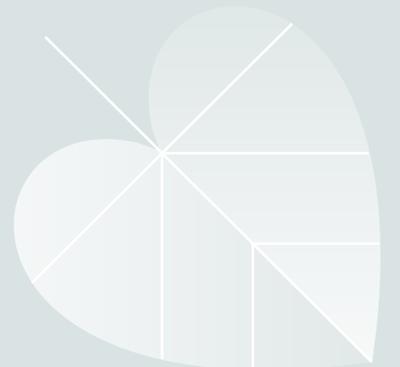
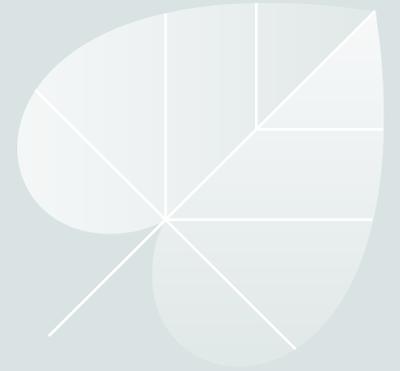


Role and Responsibilities

- Develop and maintain a trusting relationship with the child.
- Research facts and interview people involved in the case (foster parents, service providers, DCS caseworkers, etc.).
- Monitor the child's placement, observe child's behavior in various contexts, assess needs and report successes.
- Identify service needs and make recommendations to regarding services being provided.
- Make recommendations regarding the case plan and permanency for the child.
- Gather information and provide written reports of your findings to assist the court in making informed decisions about the child's future.

Court Reports:

- Written before every Dependency Review and Permanency Hearing
- Include any new information gathered since the last DR/PH
 - The CASA will provide the Judge an assessment on the placement, visitation, services provided to the child and family, physical and social development of the child, education, family strengths, and the child's wishes.
- Reasonable Efforts
- Opinions and Concerns
- Recommendations
- Resources and Records Reviewed



CASA of Pima County Program Stats

199 Volunteers
169 Active CASAs
189 Children with CASAs

398 Court Reports Filed by
CASAs
14,905 Hours Served by CASAs
174,751 Miles Driven By CASAs

1,208 Open Dependency Cases
1,949 Dependent Children

* Numbers pulled from AZ Dashboard for FY24



Other Ways to Help

Pima County CASA Support Council

- Support for CASAs and children
- Donations/Tax Credit
- Join the CASA Support Council Board



Foster Care Review Board (FCRB)

- Paper review of casasa once every 6 months
- Make recommendations to the court about cases
- Once a month commitment

Bring Attention to Foster Children in AZ

- Share with your friends/family what you have learned today



Questions

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I am a [CASA Volunteer](#)