



## Legislation Text

**File #:** 18-175, **Version:** 1

Receive a presentation on the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program and delegate authority to the County Administrator to address a request from CASA to increase the dedicated County owned space in the County Courthouse at 600 Union Avenue in Fairfield California to CASA

Published Notice Required? Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing Required? Yes ☐ No ☒

### **DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:**

The County Administrator recommends the Board receive a presentation on the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program and delegate authority to the County Administrator to address a request from CASA to increase dedicated County owned space in the County Courthouse at 600 Union Avenue in Fairfield California to CASA.

### **SUMMARY:**

CASA of Solano County advocates for abused, neglected, and other identified children within the court system, with the belief that every child is entitled to a safe and stable home. CASA of Solano County is committed to advocating for the best interests of children; Providing ongoing support and comprehensive training programs to educate volunteer advocates; Maintaining public awareness and educate the community regarding child abuse and neglect; and Act as liaison with public and private agencies at the direction of the Juvenile Court Judge.

Since CASA's formation as a 501c3 organization in July of 2005, serving the foster children of Solano County, the need for CASA volunteers and requisite support staff has increased dramatically. In July of 2005, CASA had served 54 children involved in the Solano County child welfare system. In the calendar year 2017, CASA served 183 children and provided over 225 services. The value of these services was over one million dollars.

CASA will provide a presentation on the CASA program and its success in delivering services in Solano County. In addition CASA staff will share with the Board challenges the organization is facing as the need for services continues to grow. In addressing these challenges CASA is requesting the County consider a request to increase dedicated County owned space in the County Courthouse at 600 Union Avenue in Fairfield California to CASA. See the request as outlined in Attachment A "CASA Request Letter 2018". The County Administrator is currently exploring options for the expansion of dedicated space to CASA and is recommending the Board delegate authority to the County Administrator to address this space request if available space is identified which can be dedicated to meet the needs of CASA, while maintain adequate space for the Courts and the County.

In addition, CASA has requested an increase in the County Non-Contribution beginning in FY2018/19 to address the need for expanding staffing to serve their growing caseload. At this time, the Board is not being asked to consider recommended action regarding this request. This request, which is outlined in Attachment A "CASA Request Letter 2018", will be evaluated in connection with the County Administrator's recommendations for the FY2018/19 Budget which will be brought back to the Board for consideration during Budget Hearings in June 2018.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no cost associated with receiving this presentation. The Solano County FY2017/18 Adopted Budget includes \$80,325 in the form of a Non-County Contribution to support CASA operations. In FY2016/17 the County provided \$80,325, FY2015/16: \$76,500 and in FY2014/15: \$76,500. In addition to the Non-County Contribution, the County also provides dedicated office space in the County Courthouse at 600 Union Avenue in Fairfield California for CASA operations.

CASA has submitted a request for an increase in the County's Non-County Contribution beginning in FY2018/19 of \$50,000 per fiscal year. The County Administrator is reviewing this request in connection with the FY2018/19 Recommended Budget. The Board is being provided this request for information purposes only at this time and will be asked to consider action on this request in connection with the FY2018/19 Recommended Budget process during Budget Hearings in June 2018.

## **DISCUSSION:**

CASA of Solano County advocates for abused, neglected, and other identified children within the court system, with the belief that every child is entitled to a safe and stable home. In support of this mission, CASA of Solano County is committed to the following:

- Advocate for the best interests of children.
- Provide comprehensive training programs to educate volunteer advocates.
- Recruit volunteers to act as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA's).
- Provide ongoing support to CASA staff and volunteers.
- Create and maintain public awareness and educate the community regarding child abuse and neglect
- Provide advocacy networking and liaison with public and private agencies and individuals.
- Act in liaison with, and at the direction of, the Juvenile Court Judge.

For further information on the CASA Program see the video link below on the CASA program. This video will be played for the Board during the presentation. See link below:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzGXyzP\\_CBw&t=78s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzGXyzP_CBw&t=78s) <[https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A\\_www.youtube.com\\_watch-3Fv-3DSzGXyzP-5FCBw-26t-3D78s&d=DwMFaQ&c=e71KFwQiz1Uq9SWN1ahPySYgwkr698SChpwjtuH1HMQ&r=MT7Cqn9nnN0yrloGh3aeJqtZ67RHwg\\_gFrEKzZsY20&m=U7rq5EA7UUPyvpQW\\_RpOmmRyn2lvtwhMUj851twoqY&s=U-jMywAxVRJ-ljyAguhGhP630blJ9qGB1zT6nsGWIUw&e=>](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_www.youtube.com_watch-3Fv-3DSzGXyzP-5FCBw-26t-3D78s&d=DwMFaQ&c=e71KFwQiz1Uq9SWN1ahPySYgwkr698SChpwjtuH1HMQ&r=MT7Cqn9nnN0yrloGh3aeJqtZ67RHwg_gFrEKzZsY20&m=U7rq5EA7UUPyvpQW_RpOmmRyn2lvtwhMUj851twoqY&s=U-jMywAxVRJ-ljyAguhGhP630blJ9qGB1zT6nsGWIUw&e=>)

## **Background:**

In July 2001, the Solano County Superior Court Executive Committee met with representatives of California CASA, National CASA, and the Judicial Council Administrative Office of the Courts, to discuss a proposal to bring a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program to Solano County. The meeting provided the Courts with an opportunity to ask questions and have open dialog about their concerns.

Following this important meeting, in September 2001, the courts agreed to support a Solano County CASA program.

The Courts did, however, have some caveats. First, they felt it important to have direct input in creating the program and requested that the County agree to the creation of the program and to placing it under the Office of Family Violence Prevention (OFVP). They requested that it remain under the OFVP until it reached sustainability and then they would reevaluate its placement. Second, the courts requested that volunteers receive 40 hours of training rather than the 30 hours required by National CASA Association.

In October 2001, a request was made of the Board of Supervisors to support the creation of a CASA program

under the Office of Family Violence Prevention umbrella. The Board agreed and asked that the OFVP return in two years with a status report on achieving sustainability. An advisory board, including representatives of the Courts, the Board of Supervisors, Child Welfare Services, legal counsel, and other key agencies, was established to help guide the CASA program in its development.

On April 8, 2003, CASA held its first volunteer training class of ten potential volunteers. On June 11, 2003, Commissioner J. Paul Coan swore in eight new advocates. Two additional training classes were held and swearing-in ceremonies were conducted on December 17, 2003 and May 10, 2004. In December 2003, the courts made their first CASA appointments.

On July 1, 2005, it was decided by the Solano County Board of Supervisors that CASA could now sustain itself as a nonprofit entity and Solano County CASA became "CASA of Solano County" a non profit organization. With 47 volunteers, 2 1/2 full time staff positions and a fully functioning governing Board, CASA moved to its new office space at the County Courthouse (600 Union Ave., Suite 204, Fairfield, CA 94533).

### **CASA Office Space Request:**

The County owned space in the County Courthouse at 600 Union Avenue in Fairfield California which is currently designated for CASA use is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Courthouse and consists of staff office space, front counter, conference room, and a small storage room.

CASA has been working diligently to find donated resources for children and have found quite a bit of success. CASA has a "CASA Closet" stocked with clothing, shoes, school supplies and toys that are available to ALL foster children in Solano County, not just those who have been assigned an advocate. Due to the success, CASA has run out of space for the number of donations received and have no additional place to store the items. CASA offices are overrun with items. Even with youth coming in on a regular basis to get these much-needed items, new items are coming in regularly and CASA needs to have a wide variety of sizes and styles available at all times. CASA is therefore requesting additional space for the "closet".

The County Administrator's Office is currently exploring available space in the County Courthouse which may be dedicated to CASA to address the current needs. This is a coordinated effort with the Court Executive Office and County Departments. At this time, the County Administrator is still working to find a solution and is recommending the Board delegate authority to the County Administrator to address this space request if and when available space is identified which can be dedicated to meet the needs of CASA, while maintain adequate space for the Courts and the County.

### **ALTERNATIVES:**

The Board could choose not to receive the presentation or delegate authority to the County Administrator to address the space request; however, this alternative is not recommended as CASA provides a critical service to the children in our county and the Board has supported the CASA program in previous fiscal years.

### **OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

The County Administrator is reviewing the CASA increase funding request, and is coordinating with the General Services Department, and the County Court Executive Office in reviewing the CASA space request.

### **CAO RECOMMENDATION:**

**APPROVE DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION**