



Annual Report

2023

KENTUCKY CASA NETWORK, INC.

CHANGE A
CHILD'S STORY.™





2023 Annual Report

ABOUT THE KCN

The Kentucky CASA Network, Inc. (KCN) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, governed by a board of directors, that provides ongoing development, training, technical assistance, and resources to local CASA programs across Kentucky. The KCN also advocates for the needs and interests of CASA programs and volunteers with industry stakeholders in Frankfort, participates on state child welfare policy-making committees, and advances the CASA mission statewide.

MISSION

The mission of the KCN is to support the development, growth, and continuation of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) programs in Kentucky. CASA programs recruit and train volunteers to advocate on behalf of children who have come into the court system as a result of dependency, neglect, or abuse.

VALUES

Collaboration * Service * Accountability * Gratitude * Transparency

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Bryan Bulkley - **Chair**
Suzanne Blazar - **Vice Chair**
Laken Albrink - **Secretary**
Cole Bruner - **Treasurer**

BOARD MEMBERS

Robin Choate
Dana Hummel
Ruth Lynch
Lucinda Masterton
Hilary Morgan
Julie Paxton
Hollie Spade
Victoria Bengé - Local Program Representative

STAFF

Andrea Bruns - **State Director/CEO**
Brittany Garrett - **Senior Director of Communications & Marketing**
Kathleen Kelly - **Director of Network Services**
Melissa Paris - **Director of Training & Impact**
Karen Wilder - **Director of Quality Assurance**
Mary Turner-Scott - **Manager of Administrative Operations**
Terry Manuel - **Board Governance & Development Specialist**
Doug Myers - **Quality Assurance Specialist**
Norma Thomas - **Grants Specialist**

LETTER FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR

Dear Kentucky CASA Network friends, supporters, and stakeholders,

2024 marks a special milestone for CASA in Kentucky – 40 years since CASA was first introduced in Jefferson and Nelson Counties in 1984. The CASA network across the state has grown tremendously over the past 40 years, with CASA programs now covering 94 counties and thousands of CASA volunteers have advocated for even more children during this time. Throughout this next year, we will be celebrating this achievement by sharing stories from current and former CASA volunteers, staff, and board members; documenting the history and growth of the CASA network across the Commonwealth; hosting an ongoing recruitment workgroup that will culminate in a Volunteer Recruitment Summit this fall; and continuing to work even harder to provide a CASA volunteer to every child who needs one.



There are many ways for you to celebrate this anniversary with us, both in 2024 and beyond. If you've been considering becoming a CASA volunteer, take that next step and be an advocate for a child. Your life experiences and expertise are valuable, and you can help amplify a child's voice, wishes, and best interests. Or perhaps you have an interest in serving on a CASA board of directors – there are opportunities at both the local program and state level to share your skills as a board member, actively guiding the organization's long-term planning and vision. You now have the chance to become a Friend of CASA, the KCN's newest membership category, helping us spread the CASA mission and championing our efforts to provide best-interest advocacy for children statewide. New in 2024, Kentuckians also have the option to purchase a CASA specialty license plate, displaying your support for the mission in your daily travels. And as always, you can financially support our work by making either one-time or recurring donations. Individual contributions are an important element of fiscal diversification that help us be sustainable.

However you choose to support the Court Appointed Special Advocates program this year, we are tremendously grateful. Every Kentuckian can have a role in uplifting and advocating for our children. We look forward to work alongside you in fulfilling that mission.

Warmest regards,

Andrea Bruns
State Director/CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Bruns". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

IMPACT

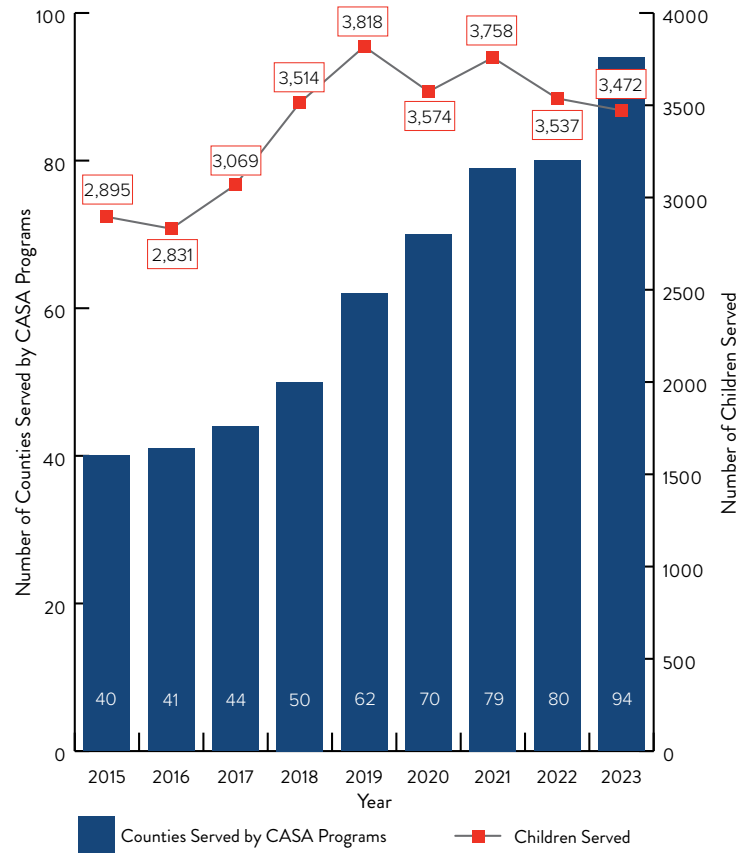
CASA's Impact in Kentucky in 2023:



16,347

Children in KY involved in cases of abuse, neglect, or dependency

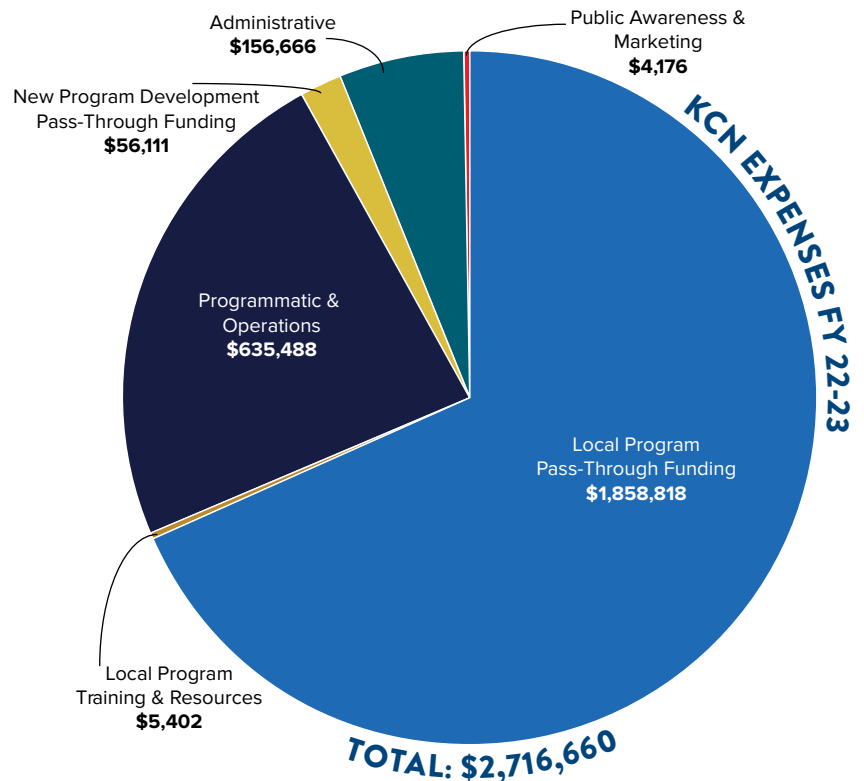
County Coverage Compared to Children Served



FINANCIALS

REVENUE	FY 22-23
Federal Funding	\$93,416
Other Grants	\$51,875
Other Unrestricted	\$136,231
State Contracts	\$3,026,584
TOTAL	\$3,308,107

All financial values rounded to nearest whole dollar



PROGRAM SERVICES

Board Governance Initiative

The KCN launched “A Foundation for Excellence: The KCN Local Program Board Development Project” this year, to meet the training and development needs of local CASA program board members while also ensuring compliance with National CASA/GAL Standards and Kentucky Revised Statutes. The four components of the project comprised of the following:

- 1. Creation of Board Training and Orientation Handbook:** Finalized in August and available to all local program board members; serves as a practical guide for board members to implement sound governance practices and understand the requirements of statute and standards.
- 2. Customized board member training:** Provide board members with tools needed to fulfill legal responsibilities to their programs and communities.
- 3. Creation of a peer mentorship program:** Match experienced board members with new board members throughout the network.
- 4. Facilitation of strategic planning:** Established a partnership with Nielsen Training & Consulting to facilitate local program board retreats that focus on team building, strategic planning, and writing strategic plans.

Quality Assurance Reviews

Throughout 2023, the KCN continued the current round of quality assurance reviews of local CASA programs. Kentucky law requires the KCN to monitor local programs for compliance with National CASA/GAL Standards, which serve as the basis for the KCN’s quality assurance reviews. This round of reviews began in late 2021 and on-site visits of all local programs were completed by the end of 2023. The quality assurance process consists of an extensive document review, on-site checks of volunteer and case files, interviews with executive directors and board chairs, and surveys of volunteers and board members. Local programs are provided with a report on the KCN’s findings that include program strengths and areas for growth, as well as the identification of best-practice documents, policies, and procedures that can be shared with other CASA programs in the network. The KCN has been following up with local programs for quarterly check-ins to monitor progress on any corrective actions and/or recommendations included in the final reports.

Network Trainings

This year, the KCN hosted several in-person trainings for network staff and directors, including multiple offerings of volunteer coordinator training and training of facilitators, as well as a full day of training for new executive directors. Webinars hosted throughout the year covered topics such as continuing education best practices, the DCBS Safety Model, pre-service facilitation, and grants management. In addition to the volunteer-focused sessions of the 2023 conference, the KCN offered sessions specific to board members, staff, and executive directors, as well. The KCN continues to gather feedback from local CASA programs - through candid discussions, surveys, and the quality assurance process - to evaluate the training needs of the network and curate training opportunities to meet those needs.

New Program Development and Expansion

The KCN worked with National CASA/GAL, existing programs, and local community members to continue the expansion of CASA services across the state in 2023. Fourteen new counties have been added since November 2022, including the development of the network’s newest program, CASA of the Gateway Region, which is headquartered in Morehead. The KCN will be creating a new three-year Growth Plan in 2024, with the goal of having CASA in all 120 of Kentucky’s counties by 2027.

2023 KENTUCKY CASA CONFERENCE

Conference Recap

The KCN was excited to present **Advocacy at the Core: 2023 Kentucky CASA Conference** in early October in Lexington. Conference attendees gained knowledge, skills, and understanding aimed at enhancing and supporting the best-interest advocacy provided to children served by CASA volunteers. This year's event provided sessions centered around the Core Model of CASA advocacy, which includes the following components of the CASA role:

- **Learn:** Sessions increased information gathering skills utilized during best-interest advocacy
- **Engage:** Sessions enhanced knowledge and skills utilized when developing relationships with abused, neglected, and dependent children
- **Recommend:** Sessions increased understanding of services available in communities, which services and supports are most effective for supporting the safety and permanency of children, and how to clearly articulate recommendations for these services and supports to judges in dependency, neglect, and abuse dockets
- **Collaborate:** Sessions provided updates on trends in local child welfare and court practice/policy, enhanced understanding of the court process, and gained best practices for collaborating with stakeholders to meet children's needs
- **Report:** Sessions enhanced court report writing and case monitoring skills

The conference kicked off with a keynote address from Ashley Rhodes-Courter, LCSW and a mini plenary during the awards luncheon, sponsored by Kosair for Kids, from Cameron Galloway. Other featured speakers included Angela Tucker, who hosted a documentary film screening, and five Family Court judges from across the state for a panel discussion.



Angela Tucker



Ashley Rhodes-Courter



Cameron Galloway



Senator Brandon Storm
KY Senate District 21



Judges Panel



Representative David Meade, Speaker Pro Tempore
KY House District 80

AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Since the publication of the KCN's most recent Annual Report, there have been two rounds of Awards of Excellence presented within the CASA network. Judges, volunteers, and program staff from across the Commonwealth nominated these winners for their excellent work to advance the CASA mission.

2022 Awards of Excellence

- **CASA Pioneer Awards:**
 - Ruth Lynch and Carolyn Self - CASA Program of Christian County, KY
 - Joseph Schuler - Kentucky CASA Network
- **Bob Babbage Volunteer of the Year:** Jackie Kennedy - CASA by the Lakes
- **Board Member of the Year:** Carol Lomicka - CASA of the River Region
- **Judge of the Year:** The Honorable Deborah Hawkins-Crooks - Graves County District Court
- **Program of the Year:** CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY
- **Program Director of the Year:** Stephanie Floyd - CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY

2023 Awards of Excellence

- **KCN Legislative Champions:**
 - Senator Brandon Storm, KY Senate District 21 (Casey, Laurel, Lincoln, Rockcastle)
 - Representative David Meade, Speaker Pro Tempore, KY House District 80 (Garrard, Lincoln, Pulaski)
- **Bob Babbage Volunteer of the Year:** Vicki Schmidt - CASA of the Heartland
- **Board Member of the Year:** Christopher Conley - The Buffalo Trace CASA Program
- **Judge of the Year:** The Honorable Gina Kay Calvert - Jefferson Family Court, Division 9
- **Core Model Program of the Year:** CASA of Lexington
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Spotlight:** CASA of the River Region and CASA of Lexington



Vicki Schmidt
CASA of the Heartland



Christopher Conley
The Buffalo Trace CASA Program



The Honorable Gina Kay Calvert
Jefferson Family Court, Division 9



William Myers
CASA of the River Region

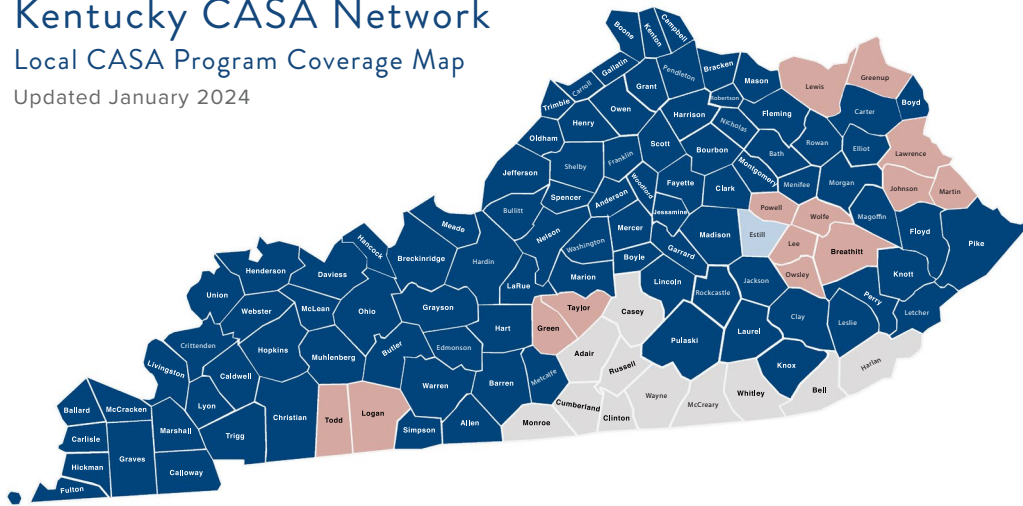


Melynda Jamison
CASA of Lexington

Kentucky CASA Network

Local CASA Program Coverage Map

Updated January 2024



Map Key

- Currently covered by a local CASA program
- Local community and/or existing CASA program actively working through National CASA/GAL Membership Process to bring CASA services to this county
- KCN Growth Plan to bring CASA services to these counties by mid-2024



CASA BY THE LAKES

Serving Calloway and Marshall Counties

CASA OF GRAVES COUNTY & SOUTHWEST KY

Serving Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, and Hickman Counties

CASA OF LEXINGTON

Serving Bourbon, Fayette, Garrard, Jessamine, Lincoln, Scott, and Woodford Counties

CASA OF MADISON AND CLARK COUNTIES

Serving Clark and Madison Counties

CASA OF MIDWEST KENTUCKY

Serving Crittenden, Henderson, Hopkins, Muhlenberg, Union, and Webster Counties

CASA OF NORTHEAST KY

Serving Boyd, Carter, Elliott, and Morgan Counties

CASA OF OHIO VALLEY

Serving Daviess, Hancock, McLean, and Ohio Counties

CASA OF SOUTH CENTRAL KY

Serving Allen, Barren, Butler, Edmonson, Hart, Metcalfe, Simpson, and Warren Counties

CASA OF SOUTHERN KENTUCKY

Serving Pulaski and Rockcastle Counties

CASA OF THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS

Serving Floyd, Knott, Leslie, Letcher, Magoffin, Perry, and Pike Counties

CASA OF THE BLUEGRASS

Serving Anderson, Boyle, Franklin, and Mercer Counties

CASA OF THE CUMBERLAND VALLEY

Serving Clay, Jackson, Knox, and Laurel Counties

CASA OF THE GATEWAY REGION

Serving Bath, Menifee, Montgomery, and Rowan Counties

CASA OF THE HEARTLAND

Serving Hardin and LaRue Counties

CASA OF THE LINCOLN TRAIL

Serving Marion, Nelson, and Washington Counties

CASA OF THE NORTHERN BLUEGRASS REGION

Serving Boone, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Harrison, Kenton, Owen, and Pendleton Counties

CASA OF THE RIVER REGION

Serving Bullitt, Henry, Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, and Trimble Counties

CASA OF WEST KENTUCKY

A project of Child Watch Counseling & Advocacy Center serving Ballard, Caldwell, Livingston, Lyon, McCracken, and Trigg Counties

CASA PROGRAM OF CHRISTIAN COUNTY, KY

Serving Christian County

THE BUFFALO TRACE CASA PROGRAM

Serving Bracken, Fleming, Mason, Nicholas, and Robertson Counties

TRI-COUNTY CASA

Serving Breckinridge, Grayson, and Meade Counties

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