

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

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA)
START-UP GRANTS - FY 2015

Issue Date: April 9, 2014

Applications Due: April 25, 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 Start-Up and services.

The CASA volunteer is considered a friend of the court 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 Start-Up Grants. The grants are intended to support the initiation of new CASA programs in jurisdictions that are not currently being served. Subject to the provision of funds for Fiscal Year 2013, grants will be awarded to applicable programs that have a solid plan for the establishment of a sustainable CASA program.

Funding Priorities

For best consideration, applicants should demonstrate a need within the community that is to be served and that the program will work in collaboration with the court to meet that need.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible grantees include any government/government entities, non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education administering or planning to start a CASA program.

All groups must work in conjunction with the Maryland CASA Association when starting a program for a jurisdiction.

NOTE:

CASA Start-Up Grants are a "one-time" award. To be eligible for future CASA funding from the AOC, the program must:

- a. Become a member in good standing of the National CASA Association and be in*

- compliance with NCASAA standards;*
- b. Become a member in good standing of the Maryland CASA Association and be 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; (NOTICE: Qualifications of all new Program Directors must be submitted to the Administrative Office of the Courts prior to budget approval); and*
 - e. Demonstrate adequate internal financial controls to properly administer grant funds.*

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 and the Maryland CASA State Director. Final award determinations will be made based on the recommendations of the review committee.

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 expenditure report and a request for payment each quarter. If a grantee is unable to provide the services and programs without start-up funding, the grant agreement may allow for a percentage of funds, not to exceed 25% of the anticipated grant award, to be made available at the beginning of the project upon receipt of a request for payment.

Matching Fund Requirement

All 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.

Waiver: Applicants may request a waiver of the matching fund requirement. A waiver can be requested using section D on the last page of the grant application narrative form.

Reporting

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 the *CASA Outcomes Measurement and Evaluation Tool (COMET)* or the *CASA Efforts to Outcomes (ETO)* performance management system for data collection purposes. 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 the grantee prior to the start of the funding period.

Narrative

Grantees are required to provide a narrative report describing the progress the program has made and the challenges the program has faced during the quarter.

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

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

Grant Application forms are posted at: www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html.

Submission: This application must be submitted by mail. Two original copies are also required by mail.

Deadline: Two hard copies* with original signatures must be **mailed** to the DFA, **postmarked by: April 25, 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

Technical Assistance

The DFA grants staff is available to assist in the application process. Please contact Kelly Franks, Department of Family Administration, at (410)260-1722 with questions.