



## **Special Conditions for FY23 Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Grants**

### **1. Overview of the Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program**

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 planning and services.

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), through Juvenile and Family Services (JFS), awards CASA grants to support these programs, which are designed to ensure that children are provided a CASA volunteer, as appropriate, to serve their individual needs and promote a safe, permanent placement as timely as possible.

### **2. Eligibility**

JFS awards two types of CASA grants: CASA Start-Up Grants and CASA Grants.

#### **A. CASA Grant Eligibility**

To be eligible to receive a CASA Grant, an applicant must be a:

- i. State or local government administering a CASA program, or
- ii. Non-profit organization administering a CASA program, or
- iii. Institution of higher education administering a CASA program.

AND, the program must also:

- i. Be a member in good standing of the National CASA Association and be in compliance with NCASAA standards\*;
- ii. Be a member in good standing of the Maryland CASA Association and in compliance with Maryland CASA standards (Appendix A);
- iii. Demonstrate the ability (i.e. experience and expertise) to provide the service (NOTE: Qualifications of all new Program Directors must be submitted to the Administrative Office of the Courts prior to budget approval and release of funds);
- iv. Demonstrate adequate internal financial controls to properly administer grant funds;
- v. For CASA programs who have received AOC funding in the prior year, submit all required reports and documentation prior to submitting an application for funding in a subsequent year; and
- vi. Be in compliance with all [Grant Conditions](#).

*\*All programs must submit a copy of their most recent Certificate of Compliance or other*

*documentation from the National CASA Association annually with their grant application.*

## **B. CASA Start-Up Grant Eligibility**

To be eligible to receive a one-time CASA Start-Up Grant, an applicant must be a state or local government, or non-profit organization, or institution of higher education in a jurisdiction where there is not presently an established and active CASA program, but where one is being planned. The program must demonstrate that they are working in conjunction with the Maryland CASA Association when starting a program for a jurisdiction. Programs interested in applying for a CASA Start-Up Grant must contact JFS in advance of the CASA application due date.

## **3. Award Determination**

### **A. CASA Grants**

Awards are a sum of the components outlined below:

i. Supervisory Needs – based on the number of supervisors need for program’s current capacity multiplied by half the current average of supervisor salaries\* (calculate using all programs).

*\*Based on the program survey completed in August 2021, the average supervisor salary being is \$52,147.*

ii. Current Capacity – based on percentage of children in- care served by the program. Calculated by the number report served in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the current year divide by the number of children currently in care in your jurisdiction.

*\*Number of children in care as reported by [The Annie E. Casey Foundation – Kids Count Data Center](#).*

iii. Children with an assigned volunteer – based on average, calculated by using the report data from the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of the previous year and quarters 1-3 of the current year. Data is pulled directly from program’s quarterly report.

iv. Volunteer Retention – based on retention formula (new volunteers minus volunteers who have left or are on leave), calculated by using the report data from the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of the previous year and quarters 1-3 of the current year. Data is pulled directly from programs quarterly report.

v. Diversity Plan – based on the program’s submission of approved plan with their application and the level of progress made toward completion of the goals outlined in that plan.

vi. Discretionary – based on the program’s current performance and plans to grow as detailed in the application.

The CASA grant review committee will review the data associated with the components above and the information provided in the application to make funding recommendations. Final award recommendations will be made by reconciling the review committee’s recommendations with the funding available. The final funding determination will be made by the State Court

Administrator after consultation with the Assistant Administrator for the Programs Division and Juvenile and Family Services.

#### **B. CASA Planning/Start-Up Grants**

The review committee will review all requests and make funding recommendations based on the need in the community, the strength of the program, and the program's potential for future sustainability. Final award recommendations will be made by reconciling the recommendations of the review committee with the funding available. The final funding determination will be made by the State Court Administrator after consultation with the Assistant Administrator for the Programs Division and JFS.

### **4. Matching Fund Requirement**

#### **A. Cash vs. In-Kind Match**

CASA grantees must provide a 100% match for their total CASA grant award. Up to 25% of the match can be in-kind with the remaining 75% being cash match.

- i. Cash Match is defined as the direct outlay of funds by the grantee or a third party to support the project.
- ii. In-Kind Match is defined as consisting of contributions of time and/or services of current staff members, supplies, space, etc., made to the project by the grantee or others working directly on the project.

#### **B. Documentation Required**

CASA programs must maintain documentation of all match reported, both in-kind and cash match. Documentation of in-kind match should show how the value of the contribution was derived. Grantees are also responsible for maintaining the needed back-up documentation to verify their valuations of in-kind costs. These documents may be reviewed on site visits and will be reviewed periodically by the Judiciary's Internal Audit Department.

#### **C. Waiver**

At the discretion of the grantor, matching fund requirements can be waived for start-up programs or for good cause upon consideration of JFS's Director. Programs that experience a financial hardship during the funding period that will impact their ability to meet the match requirement should provide a written explanation of that hardship and request a waiver or modification of their match requirement in advance of the submission of their final reports.

Programs that have not received a waiver and do not meet the match requirement may be subject to a reduction of their grant award by the amount of the unmatched portion.

### **5. Funding Period**

JFS awards CASA grants on the state's fiscal year cycle. Grants awarded for Fiscal Year 2023 will support program needs from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. All funds must be expended within this time period.

### **6. Accepting and Finalizing the Award**

By the end of May, funded applicants will receive a "Notice of Intent to Fund" email from JFS. This email will contain instructions for accepting and finalizing the grant award including any

**further** requirements or conditions of the award. Grantees are required to complete the requirements within two weeks, unless otherwise indicated.

All CASA grantees will be required to submit the documents listed below, including, but not limited to:

1. Completed and Signed Award and Acceptance Form
2. Completed Final Budget (with Matching funds listed)

Grantees who fail to provide the required documents before the start of the funding period (July 1) may have their grant award rescinded.

## 7. Reporting

### A. Program & Statistical Reporting

1. Programs must use a formal data tracking system such as the OPTIMA performance management system for data collection purposes. Other data systems may be authorized upon written request to JFS. Programs are required to report on progress toward specific project goals and to provide statistical information on a quarterly and annual basis.
2. Specific program and statistical reporting requirements, including required reporting forms, will be provided to grantees by email prior to the start of the funding period. Partial or incomplete reports will not be accepted.

### B. Financial Reporting

1. Programs are required to provide signed expenditure reports and grant invoices on a quarterly basis. These documents must be submitted by the due dates outlined below, even if the grantee did not expend any funds during the quarter.
2. Specific reporting requirements, including required reporting forms, will be provided to the grantee by email early in the funding period.

### C. Report Submission Requirements

All reports (financial and progress/statistical) must be submitted via AmpliFund by the due dates outlined below. The Guide to Quarterly Reporting in AmpliFund is included in Appendix B.

<u>Reporting Period</u>	<u>Report Due Date</u>
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter (July 1 thru Sept 30)	October 30
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter (Oct 1 thru Dec 31)	January 30
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter (Jan1 thru Mar 31)	April 30
Estimate of Remaining Funds	June 15
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter (April 1 thru June 30)	July 30

When a due date falls on a weekend or holiday, reports are due the next business day.

## 8. Grant Monitoring

### A. Programmatic

JFS will evaluate program performance and progress toward meeting stated goals and objectives throughout the funding period. This evaluation will be conducted by JFS staff and will include a

review of evaluations conducted through Maryland CASA Association's (MD CASA's) quality assurance process.

1. JFS staff will review submitted reports and follow-up with grantees as needed to gather additional information and assess performance. Follow-up will be made by phone, email and in person through site visits. The site visits will be designed to ensure compliance with the grant guidelines, verification of submitted data, and review progress toward the project's stated goals.

2. In addition, JFS will also rely on Maryland CASA's evaluation of each program to determine the program's level of compliance with the Maryland CASA Program Performance Standards (Appendix A) and progress toward achieving their diversity plan goals. As outlined in section 2. above, compliance with the Maryland CASA Standards is a requirement for a program to be eligible for Judiciary funding. All grantees are expected to be compliant with the Maryland CASA Association's quality assurance process. This includes participating fully in the evaluation process by providing timely responses to requests for information and allowing the MD CASA staff to have access to program records and files as needed to complete their evaluation. \*

*\*The confidentiality rules (MD Code Cts & Jud. Proc. §§ 3-810(b) & 3-827) provide a specific exception for CASA. JFS considers Maryland CASA staff as "CASA." Programs that have concerns may request copies of the screening and clearances of the MD CASA staff person conducting the evaluation from MD CASA. They are also free to request that the MD CASA staff person conducting the evaluation sign the program's confidentiality statement.*

## **B. Financial**

JFS staff will review submitted financial reports to evaluate the grantee's spending and progress toward meeting their stated goals and objectives. During one quarter per funding period, grantees will be required to submit back-up documentation of expenditures being invoiced and match being reported. Notice of this random financial check will be provided at the close of the quarter for which documents are being requested. Site visits will be conducted when the financial review raises a concern.

## **C. Audit**

All grantees funded by the AOC are subject to audit by the AOC's internal auditors. These audits will occur once every three to five years.

## **9. Contact Information**

### **A. Grantee Contacts**

Grantees are responsible for ensuring that JFS is provided with accurate and up-to-date contact information for their program. JFS sends all grant information by email.

### **B. JFS Contact Information**

All email communications with JFS should be sent to: [DJFSGrants@mdcourts.gov](mailto:DJFSGrants@mdcourts.gov).

Questions:

Pen Whewell, Grants Specialist: 410-260-1262

Karen Thomas, Grants & Services Analyst: 410-260-1267

## APPENDIX A

### Maryland CASA Program Performance Standards

## APPENDIX B

### Guide to Quarterly Reporting in AmpliFund