

CASA serves abused and neglected children who are involved, through no fault of their own, in the Family Court. A CASA volunteer is assigned by the Judge to represent the best interest of the child. The CASA volunteer regularly visits the child or children as well as family members, teachers, case workers, counselors and attorneys in order to report to the Judge on the child's well-being, needs and wishes. These reports assist the Judge in the difficult task of making decisions that represent the child's best interest.

A CASA Story

A young boy is neglected and placed in foster care due in part to his mother's own past abuse and poor parental skills.

Agencies serving the family are leaning toward a permanency plan of adoption for the boy.

When it seemed that the mother was about to lose her child forever, a CASA volunteer rolled up her sleeves and figured out what it would take to turn things around.

"After getting to know the mother and the child, I was able to see that there was a true love and connection. The mother had been abused and out of her home since she was 8 years old. She had not had anyone to be a role model for her. My frustration came from community members that had already made up their mind that parental rights should be terminated." The mother spent countless hours learning basic parenting skills- including how to use the laundromat. With the CASA's support and encouragement the mother has obtained a job, secured housing and medical

"I thank the lord above for where I am today and that somebody was there to help us kids when we were going through bad times. I hope that people like my CASA Worker will continue to help kids through bad times because without them we feel lost."

-- 15 year old foster child
from Newaygo County

Facts about CASA

- Oceana County's CASA program was established in 2001 and has since served 71 children
- Newaygo County CASA was established in 2003 has served 35 children.
- Judges have observed that CASA children spend less time within the foster care system than those who do not have CASA representation.
- CASA children have a better chances of finding permanent homes than non-CASA children.
- CASA volunteers are required to have 30 hours of training prior to being assigned a case, and need 10 hours of continuing education per year to keep their accreditation.
- We currently have 38 trained CASA Volunteers in Oceana County and 23 in Newaygo County.

care for her child's chronic illness. "It is amazing how often people say 'I could never do what you do.' What I try to explain is that CASA advocates are there to think about what's going to be best for a child who's had a hard time. The learning of *what to do* becomes manageable if you *care* what happens to the child"