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Boston CASA Spring 2025 Newsletter

A Letter from Our Executive Director

Dear Community,

In a time of great uncertainty for many nonprofit organizations, I'm pleased to report that Boston CASA remains steady, strong, and firmly advancing our **Plan for Growth**. While recent federal funding cuts have affected others, Boston CASA stands resilient, thanks entirely to the generosity of the communities we operate in. Last year, we achieved a 25% increase in total funds raised, and the momentum continues. In the first half of this year alone, we've seen a rise in foundation support and an outpouring of generosity from individual donors, while state funding has remained stable. We are growing from a position of strength, and that's because of you - our supporters, volunteers, and partners.

Our Plan for Growth demands a collective effort across the entire organization. Under the leadership of Charly Snellings, our Director of Community Relations and Volunteer Services, we've expanded our volunteer recruitment, launching, for the first time in Boston CASA's history, a third annual CASA training. This will prepare 20 new volunteers, allowing us to advocate for more children than ever before.

Programmatically, our Director Taisha Alexis and her team of Advocate Supervisors have initiated a court liaison program that places CASA representatives in every courthouse monthly. This presence has improved communication and visibility, leading to more referrals from judges and faster closing of resolved cases to free more special advocates for their next case - freeing up CASAs to take on new cases more quickly. The results have been wonderful for the children we serve. For FY 2024 the goal was 100 new case referrals. We surpassed it, reaching 109. For FY 2025, our target is 120, and we're already on track to exceed it - 86 children have been

matched with CASAs just seven months into the year. At this pace, we expect to reach 140 new referrals and serve a total of nearly 340 children by the fiscal year's end. These numbers reflect real impact. They show that we are not just planning for growth, we are achieving it!

Over the past 18 months, one of my greatest challenges has been finding adequate ways to express my gratitude to everyone who has invested in our vision. I've come to realize that perhaps the most powerful expression of thanks is action. Your support enabled us to hire a Transitional Age Youth Coordinator, not only to lead our Youth Advisory Board but also to expand CASA assignments for our children and youth. I find myself more grateful than ever as the support and generosity keeps growing. Following a record-breaking fundraising year in FY 2024, we developed a new partnership with Lego, and we've welcomed even more donors and deeper generosity. Most notably, this spring we received a transformational \$100,000 grant from the McQuillan Family to accelerate our Plan for Growth. This grant is helping us build a robust development strategy, including a partnership with Teak Media to craft a marketing campaign that will raise Boston CASA's visibility, attract new volunteers, and bring in more champions to invest into the health and welfare of the children we serve.

In closing I must share this with you: every time I have an opportunity to introduce the work of Boston CASA to a member of our community who is unfamiliar with our mission, I am told the same thing, "You do important work." Indeed, our CASAs certainly do. And I am grateful for this incredible community who makes it possible.

Warm regards,
Nicole Stewart

Boston CASA Not Impacted by the Department of Justice Cuts to National CASA/GAL

On April 22, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued over 360 notices of termination of federal grant awards, which included National CASA/GAL. According to the notices, the three grants to National CASA/GAL were terminated because they "no longer effectuate the program goals or agency priorities."

In early May, National CASA/GAL submitted three appeals (one for each terminated grant) to the U.S. Department of Justice to reinstate funding, believing strongly that the work it does fully aligns with the department's priorities of protecting American children and has made a strong case for that. There is no articulated process or timeline for the DOJ's review.

Boston CASA is not affected by this termination. It does not receive pass-through money from the National CASA/GAL Association or federal funding. While it is a member organization of the National CASA/GAL Association and adhere to its standards, Boston CASA operates as a fully autonomous, independent 501(c)(3). Its funding sources are diverse, including state and local government, private foundations, grants, individual donations, and corporations.

For more information on the national scope of the loss of Federal Office of Justice Programs (OJP) funding is described in the article below:

[US cancels hundreds of grants for police, crime victims, Justice Dept documents show](#)

Boston CASA's Transforming Lives Gala

Boston CASA held its 13th Annual Transforming Lives Gala on April 17 at the Artists for Humanity Epicenter, and the evening was marked by the honoring of outstanding contributors to Boston CASA's efforts to provide foster children and youth with the essential benefits provided by a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).

The Suzan J. Ganz recipient was Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley whose dedication to helping the underserved in our community is unparalleled and her membership in the Congressional Foster Youth Caucus speaks to her commitment. She shared, in a moving speech, the challenges in her life that forged her determination to help others overcome the hurdles they face.

The inaugural Jack and Marci Williams Philanthropy Award was given to Jack and Marci Williams who have dedicated over four decades to helping foster children through their Endowment for Wednesday's Child. Supporters of Boston CASA since its inception as a nonprofit organization in 2012, their name on the award is fitting. Liz Walker, who had a book signing that evening, introduced Jack via video, and Jack thanked everyone, on behalf of Marci and him, for their work and support of foster children through Boston CASA.

The Judge David W. Soukup Award recognized one of our amazing CASAs, Chris Willis. Chris has been a CASA since 2021 and has supported four youth during his time with Boston CASA. Chris was introduced by Boston CASA's Program Director, Taisha Alexis, who has worked with Chris throughout his time with CASA. Chris

shared about the impact that this work has had on not only the youth he has worked with, but also himself.

The community in attendance was deeply moved by all of the presentations, especially the final speaker Andre. He spoke about his experience of being in the system since he was six years old. Because of the separation from his family, the numerous placements in foster care, and far too many different caseworkers, he developed a distrust of all the adults until he was paired with a CASA at age 12. To have someone consistently involved in his life, reliable and available, has made a huge difference on his outlook and the possibilities for him.

The evening closed with a Stand Up and Shout challenge grant of \$100,000 from the McQuillan Family. Paddles were raised in support of Boston CASA for a total of \$110,000, far exceeding the previous year's \$72,000. These funds will go the Plan for Growth to recruit, train, and support more volunteers to serve as CASAs for children separated from their families due to neglect and abuse.





Taisha Alexis (Program Director), Chris Willis (CASA) and Jaylene Tiscareno (Transitional Youth Coordinator)

Save the Date for Boston CASA's Golf Outing

Please join us for Boston CASA's Third Annual Golf Outing at the William J. Devine Golf Course on Monday, August 11, 2025. Along with a wonderful day of golf, this event serves as an opportunity to increase awareness of the organization's essential work while raising funds so more foster children and youth of Suffolk and Middlesex Counties have the essential support of a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

To be a part of the event, you can be sponsor, bring a foursome, or just be added to a foursome as an individual golfer. To learn more, please click here: [3rd Annual Boston CASA Golf Outing by Boston CASA](#)



Check out our Youth Advisory Board!



Members of Boston CASA staff, Youth Advisory Board,
Small House Inc. and Second Step

Our Youth Advisory Board has been hard at work over the last few months learning from both each other, Boston CASA staff and our partners. During

April our Youth Advisory Board discussed what healthy relationships look like. Board members met with the team at Second Step to talk about communication, boundaries, and respect. Through their meeting they dived deep into what makes relationships strong and positive.

Our YAB members have also been finalizing their topics for the Youth Forum that will be hosted in November.

Looking for an opportunity to hear directly from our youth? Join us on November 1st at the Cambridge Library to hear from our Youth

Advisory Members about topics that
impact them everyday.



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