2026 CASA Volunteer Symposium

Thursday, November 5, 2026

Gheens Foundation Lodge

The Parklands of Floyds Fork, Louisville

9:00-9:45	**Registration & Check-In**
9:45-10:00	**Welcome: Andrea Bruns, State Director/CEO, Kentucky CASA Network**
10:00-11:00	**Players in the Court: An Interactive Training to Understand the Role of Each Professional and Advocate in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases**

During this session, panelists will model a courtroom hearing. A retired judge will preside over a mock disposition hearing in a hypothetical case, joined by panelists in the roles of parents' attorney, GAL, county attorney, child protective services, CASA volunteer, and CFCRB volunteer. Together, the players will bring the courtroom process to life, walking attendees through the steps leading to disposition and highlighting what each role does before, during, and after the dispositional hearing. This engaging look at the court process will give attendees an opportunity to see how the different perspectives come together in the courtroom – and how each role contributes to the work of supporting children and families.

Panelists:

- Hon. Lucinda Masterton, Fayette Family Court Judge (Ret.)
- Samantha Oerther, MSSW, CSW, Service Region Administrator, Jefferson Service Region, CHFS
- Joe Schuler, Regional Counsel, CHFS
- Becky Smither, Esq., Assistant County Attorney, Shelby County
- Troy DeMuth, Partner, Brown Carrington, PLLC
- Issac Horton, Citizen Foster Care Review Board Volunteer

11:15-12:00 | From Intake to Permanency

Using the same hypothetical scenario from “Players in the Court,” DCBS staff from the Jefferson Service Region will take attendees behind the scenes to explore what happens after a report of child endangerment or maltreatment is received by the Cabinet for Health and Family Services. This session offers a practical look at investigation, case work, and permanency planning following a report of child endangerment or maltreatment.

Presenters: Billy Jenkins, Jr., MSSW; Tim Padgett, MSW; and Crystal Wilder, MSSW (Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services)

12:00-1:15 | Lunch | Kinship 101: Supporting Children and Relative Caregivers

When children cannot remain safely at home, placement with relative caregivers (kinship care) offers stability and continuity. Join Kentucky Youth Advocates for a practical overview of kinship care tailored for CASA volunteers. Learn how to navigate the complex legal and legal-custody pathways, identify key financial and support resources for relative caregivers, and leverage advocacy opportunities to ensure children in kinship placements thrive.

Presenters: Andrew Alvey, Senior Policy & Advocacy Analyst and Linda Stettenbenz, Community Impact Manager (Kentucky Youth Advocates)

1:15-2:00 | Refresh, Recharge, Relate: Putting Your Recovery Routine into Practice

Take a walk through the beautiful Parklands of Floyds Fork, practice guided mindful meditation with Mindfulness Mentors with the Earth & Spirit Center, or engage in meaningful conversation with your fellow CASA volunteers – the journey is up to you. This session allows attendees to choose how they want to put their recovery routine into practice.

2:00-3:00 HOPE in CASA: Building Positive Childhood Experiences

Research indicates that positive childhood experiences are powerful protective and healing factors for immediate and long-term child well-being. Promoting positive childhood experiences happens in all contexts and is the work of all helping providers working with youth and families. This interactive session will summarize the current research on positive childhood experiences, share the HOPE (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences) framework of 4 Building Blocks of positive childhood experiences, and focus on identifying, developing, and creating strategies CASAs can utilize to promote positive experiences as part of your interactions with youth, families, the justice system, and communities.

Presenter: Miriam Silman, Executive Advisor (Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities)

3:15-4:00 Grounded in Learning Awards Presentation & KCN Annual Meeting

Hear from the KCN team about the highlights from this past year and priorities for 2027. Attendees will also have the opportunity to share their feedback during this session.

Closing out the Symposium will be the presentation of the 2026 Grounded in Learning Awards. Each local CASA program selected a volunteer whose service and advocacy as a CASA volunteer is grounded in learning. This may be someone who always seeks out new opportunities for continuing education, or perhaps they go above and beyond to learn all they can to best support the children on their cases.

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