



# Annual Report

# 2024

KENTUCKY CASA NETWORK, INC.



40 YEARS



# 2024 Annual Report

## ABOUT THE KCN

The Kentucky CASA Network, Inc. (KCN) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, governed by a board of directors, that provides ongoing development, training, technical assistance, and resources to local CASA programs across Kentucky. The KCN also advocates for the needs and interests of CASA programs and volunteers with industry stakeholders in Frankfort, participates on state child welfare policy-making committees, and advances the CASA mission statewide.

## MISSION

The mission of the KCN is to support the development, growth, and continuation of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) programs in Kentucky. CASA programs recruit and train volunteers to advocate on behalf of children who have come into the court system as a result of dependency, neglect, or abuse.

## VALUES

Collaboration \* Service \* Accountability \* Gratitude \* Transparency \* Fairness

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Bryan Bulkley - **Chair**  
Suzanne Blazar - **Vice Chair**  
Ruth Lynch - **Secretary**  
Cole Bruner - **Treasurer**

### BOARD MEMBERS

Laken Albrink  
Robin Choate  
Dana Hummel  
Jonathan Koonce  
Lucinda Masterton  
Hilary Morgan  
Sara Osborne  
Julie Paxton  
Jessica Foust - Local Program Representative  
Nicky Jeffries - Local Program Representative

## STAFF

Andrea Bruns - **State Director/CEO**  
Brittany Garrett - **Network Engagement & Strategy Officer**  
Norma Thomas - **Grants Management & Accountability Officer**  
Kathleen Kelly - **Director of Program Growth & Capacity**  
Melissa Paris - **Director of Training & Impact**  
Karen Wilder - **Director of Network Services**  
Courtney Williams - **Director of Community Engagement & Volunteer Recruitment**  
Mary Turner-Scott - **Manager of Administrative Operations**  
Kathy Hertel-Baker - **Background Check Services Associate**  
Doug Myers - **Quality Assurance Specialist (Contractor)**

# LETTER FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR

Dear Kentucky CASA Network friends, supporters, and stakeholders,

2024 was a big year for CASA in Kentucky. We celebrated and acknowledged 40 years of the Kentucky Court Appointed Special Advocate Program. The first CASA programs were formed in 1984, covering just Jefferson County and Nelson County. At the end of 2024, we had 18 programs serving 97 counties. I am overwhelmed with gratitude to all the volunteers, staff, board members, donors, funders, community partners, and stakeholders who prioritized providing Court Appointed Special Advocate services to dependent, abused, and neglected children in Kentucky.

**If not for you**, we could not have served 3,376 children, recruited 286 new volunteers, or expanded into three more counties this past year.

Despite this upward trajectory, we still need to grow CASA statewide to ensure that every child in Kentucky has access to a community volunteer to speak up for their best interests. KCN and local CASA programs share common goals of increasing the number of volunteers to serve more children and bringing CASA to every corner of the Commonwealth so that any Judge who wants to appoint a CASA volunteer to a dependency, neglect, or abuse case can. In October 2024, the KCN Board of Directors adopted the association's **2025-2027 Statewide CASA Growth Plan**, which provides a roadmap for increasing volunteers and having CASA services in all 120 counties by year end 2027. KCN has been working with existing programs to merge, regionalize, and expand into neighboring counties, while also planning for the formation of new CASA programs.

In 2024, we hosted the first ever **Volunteer Recruitment Summit**, and, in collaboration with local CASA programs, we initiated the **Volunteer Recruitment Workgroup** to develop and coordinate volunteer recruitment efforts. We also centralized **Background Check Screenings** for local CASA programs, allowing KCN to free up local CASA programs' resources and time. We created two videos highlighting Kentucky CASA's 40-year history and were honored to be a partner for the Commissioner's Farm to Fork Dinner to kick off the Kentucky State Fair in August.

My final reflection after looking back on 40 years of CASA in Kentucky is that we continue to need your help so that more children can have access to a CASA volunteer. Please consider all of the ways you can contribute to our mission:

- To **volunteer**;
- To **become a board member** of a local program or the KCN;
- To **donate**;
- To **tell your network** of friends, family, and associates about the impact and reward of being a CASA volunteer;
- To continue to **support and invest** in our mission.

We need you - and so do Kentucky's most vulnerable children. Here's to 40 more years of this critical work.

Warmest regards,



Andrea Bruns  
State Director/CEO



# IMPACT

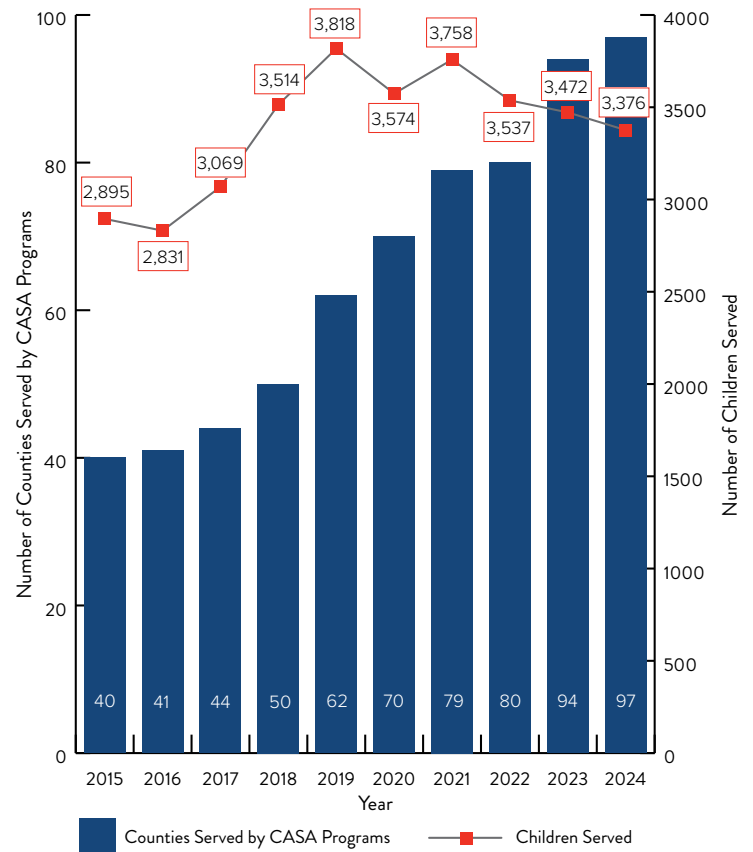
## CASA's Impact in Kentucky in 2024:



**16,347**

Children in KY involved in cases of abuse, neglect, or dependency

County Coverage Compared to Children Served

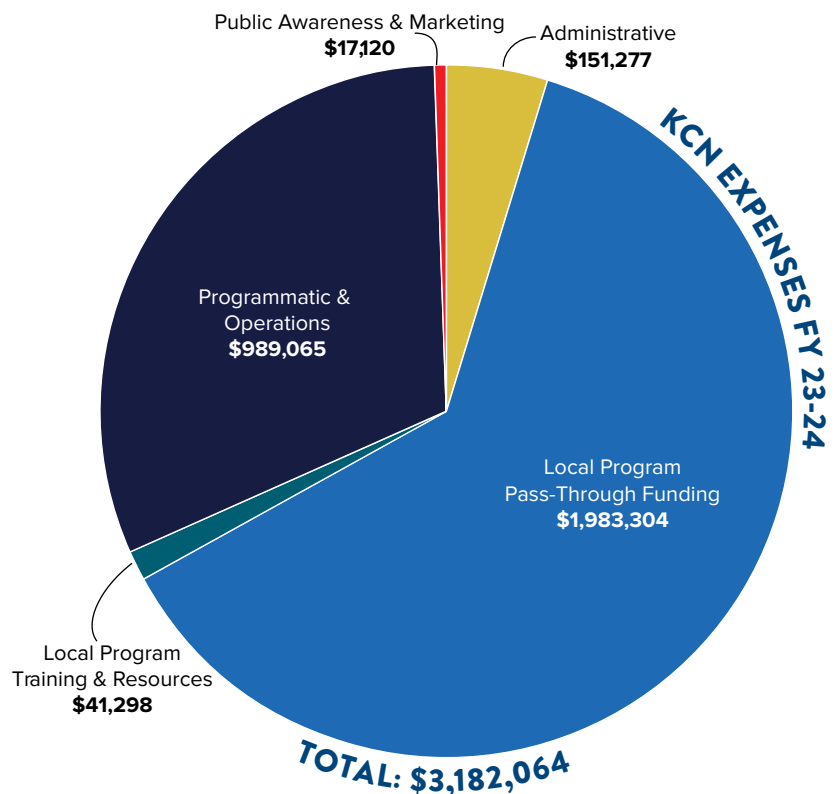


# FINANCIALS

REVENUE	FY 23-24
Federal Funding	\$85,639
Other Grants	\$7,400
Other Unrestricted	\$60,780
State Contracts	\$3,000,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,153,818</b>

Total Net Assets: \$881,359

All financial values rounded to nearest whole dollar



# PROGRAM SERVICES

## Quality Assurance Reviews

Throughout 2024, the KCN continued following up on quality assurance reviews of local CASA programs. Kentucky law requires the KCN to monitor local programs for compliance with National CASA/GAL Standards, which serve as the basis for the KCN's quality assurance reviews. This round of reviews began in late 2021, on-site visits were completed by the end of 2023, and all follow-up reviews will be complete by mid-2025.

## Network Trainings

This year, the KCN helped facilitate multiple opportunities for executive directors to network and learn from one another, offering a combination of virtual and in-person gatherings, as well as assisting with a full-day retreat for executive directors. The KCN also hosted three Trainings of Facilitators (TOF), a train-the-trainer program that prepares new staff for leading volunteer pre-service training, as well as a TOF Refresher for staff who had not attended a TOF in several years and wanted to update their facilitation skills. A total of 20 new staff and 9 veteran staff participated in these trainings.

In 2024, the KCN launched the inaugural Volunteer Coordinator Training Cohorts, a new and more comprehensive format for training newly hired local program staff. The KCN-led training activities complement orientation, pre-service training, and on-the-job training at the local program level. Staff are grouped into cohorts for enhanced networking and collaboration opportunities. The training uses Google Classroom for online learning and consists of a blend of self-paced and live (webinar and in-person) learning. A total of 36 local program staff participated in the cohorts. Participants provided positive feedback about the new training structure, including one staff member who noted, "I was feeling a little caught in the weeds prior to, and getting a bird's eye view through the training gave me a much clearer vision for how to carry out my work. It reoriented me around what is truly important in this job - building meaningful relationships with the volunteers and supporting them as they carry out such critical, life-changing work."

## Local Program Expansion and Regionalization

The KCN worked with local programs to continue the expansion of CASA services across the state in 2024. Three counties in Eastern Kentucky were added to CASA of the Wilderness Trail's service area, aligning with the KCN's intentional focus on development in the region. The KCN has continued to encourage regionalization and multi-county programs to achieve long-term sustainability, and three local programs (CASA of the Heartland, CASA by the Lakes, and CASA of the Gateway Region) merged with neighboring programs to achieve that goal. The KCN adopted a three-year Growth Plan in 2024, with the goal of having CASA in all 120 of Kentucky's counties by the end of 2027.

## Statewide Volunteer Recruitment Workgroup

In 2024, the KCN's new Statewide Volunteer Recruitment Workgroup brought together local program directors, staff, volunteers, and board members to develop innovative, targeted strategies for volunteer recruitment across the Commonwealth. The group created practical tools to support the entire network by dividing into six subgroups focused on recruiting men, people of color, in rural areas, and in faith communities; working with businesses; and analyzing recruitment strategies. Outputs included a narrative report from a male volunteer focus group, strategies for considering elements of diversity in recruitment, outreach templates for faith and business partners, a standardized inquiry form, and a rural recruitment guide. These deliverables are now in use across local CASA programs in Kentucky, providing a strong foundation for continued recruitment progress in 2025.

# CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF CASA IN KY

2024 marked the 40th anniversary of CASA in Kentucky, with the inaugural local programs establishing in Jefferson and Nelson Counties in 1984. Over the next few years, several additional CASA programs were incorporated, and comprehensive CASA-specific legislation was passed by the Kentucky Legislature in 1990, enacting the authority for appointment, specifics on the volunteer roles and responsibilities, and enabling legislation for the state association. The Kentucky CASA Network was developed as the new state CASA association in 2014, and two years later, the Kentucky Legislature first allocated state funding for the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program.

The KCN celebrated this milestone throughout the year, including exhibiting at seven large statewide conventions and conferences. In August, the KCN was joined by neighboring state associations to representation CASA at the National Conference of State Legislatures Legislative Summit, which took place in Louisville. Commissioner of Agriculture Jonathan Shell partnered with the KCN to host the first annual Commissioner's Farm to Fork Dinner; funds raised from the event provided direct economic support to children in foster care, allowing opportunities to participate and engage in agricultural tourism throughout the state. This year, the KCN used the funds to send more than 130 families from across the Commonwealth to the Kentucky State Fair, benefiting 390 children. The KCN also exhibited at the State Fair for the first time, which generated nearly 100 volunteer inquiries across 25 counties.

Other statewide volunteer recruitment efforts in 2024 included running a 9-month digital ad in the Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport, convening the Statewide Volunteer Recruitment Workgroup, and hosting a series of virtual statewide CASA 101 information sessions.

The KCN wrapped up the year by producing a short documentary-style video that captures the 40-year history of CASA in Kentucky, its impact on the Commonwealth's children and families, and a look ahead into the future.



# 2024 VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT SUMMIT

The October 2024 Volunteer Recruitment Summit marked a major milestone for the KCN, gathering CASA stakeholders from across the Commonwealth for a full day of training and collaboration in Bowling Green. The summit featured four main sessions: presentations of the Statewide Volunteer Recruitment Workgroup's practical tools, a session led by Bloomerang about utilizing recruitment data, an interactive elevator pitch workshop, and a session focused on community engagement strategies. Attendees also participated in networking circles to connect with their peers and discuss ways to further volunteer recruitment efforts both locally and statewide.

The event was capped by the 40th Anniversary Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, which recognized outstanding CASA volunteers and honored decades of service and impact in Kentucky. Bestselling author and children's rights lawyer Andrew Bridge delivered a moving keynote address where he provided a personal testimony of growing up in foster care.

The KCN received support for the Volunteer Recruitment Summit and Appreciation Dinner from AT&T, Kosair for Kids, ACBL, Bloomerang + Qgiv, and the Kentucky Bar Foundation.

## 2024 Awards of Excellence

- **Bob Babbage CASA Volunteer of the Year:** Toni Miller - CASA of West Kentucky
- **Longest Serving CASA Volunteer:** Diane Drescher - CASA of the River Region

## CASA All-Star Awards

- **Legacy of Service:** Sandra French - CASA of Midwest Kentucky
- **Determined Driver:** Linda Halter - CASA of the Wilderness Trail
- **Limitless Enthusiast:** Barb Davis - CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY
- **Lifelong Learner:** Carol Walker - The Buffalo Trace CASA Program
- **Community Connector:** Vivian Secrest - CASA of South Central KY
- **Tough Case Navigator:** Kacey Clanahan - CASA of West Kentucky
- **Unsung Hero:** Mary Jo Cleves - CASA of the Northern Bluegrass Region
- **Notable Newcomer:** Sarah Childers - CASA of the Lincoln Trail
- **Perseverance Champions:** Clarice Davie, Joseph DeMarco, Christina Morris, Tim Moss, Martha Steil, and Amy Wilcher - Christian County Volunteers (CASA by the Lakes)

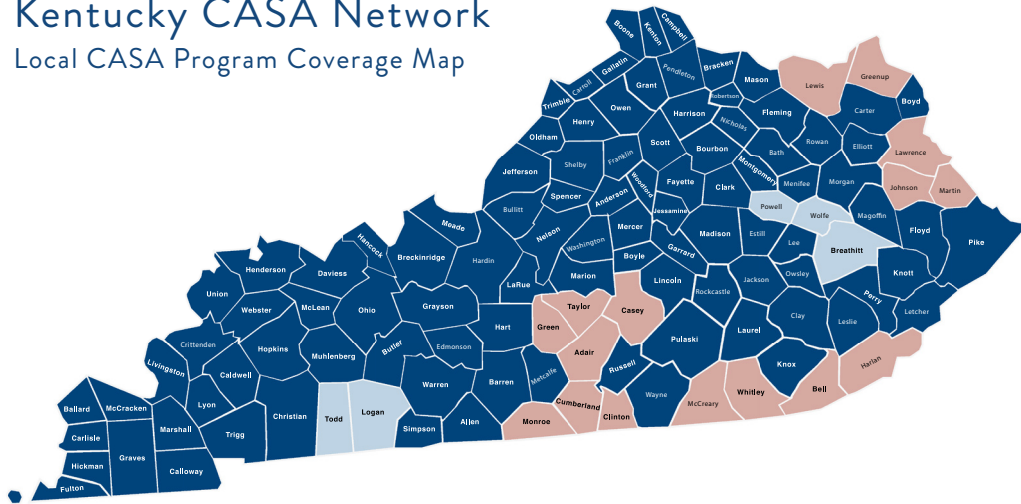


Toni Miller (center)  
Bob Babbage CASA Volunteer of the Year



# Kentucky CASA Network

## Local CASA Program Coverage Map



### Map Key

- Currently covered by a local CASA program
- Local community and/or existing CASA program actively working through National CASA/GAL Membership Process to bring CASA services to this county
- KCN Growth Plan to bring CASA services to these counties by year-end 2027



### CASA BY THE LAKES

Serving Calloway, Christian, and Marshall Counties

### CASA OF GRAVES COUNTY & SOUTHWEST KY

Serving Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, and Hickman Counties

### CASA OF LEXINGTON

Serving Bourbon, Fayette, Garrard, Jessamine, Lincoln, Scott, and Woodford Counties

### CASA OF MIDWEST KENTUCKY

Serving Crittenden, Henderson, Hopkins, Muhlenberg, Union, and Webster Counties

### CASA OF OHIO VALLEY

Serving Daviess, Hancock, McLean, and Ohio Counties

### CASA OF SOUTH CENTRAL KY

Serving Allen, Barren, Butler, Edmonson, Hart, Metcalfe, Simpson, and Warren Counties

### CASA OF SOUTHERN KENTUCKY

Serving Pulaski, Rockcastle, Russell, and Wayne Counties

### CASA OF THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS

Serving Floyd, Knott, Leslie, Letcher, Magoffin, Perry, and Pike Counties

### CASA OF THE BLUEGRASS

Serving Anderson, Boyle, Franklin, and Mercer Counties

### CASA OF THE CUMBERLAND VALLEY

Serving Clay, Jackson, Knox, and Laurel Counties

### CASA OF THE GATEWAY REGION

Serving Bath, Boyd, Carter, Elliott, Menifee, Montgomery, Morgan, and Rowan Counties

### CASA OF THE HEARTLAND

Serving Breckinridge, Grayson, Hardin, LaRue, and Meade Counties

### CASA OF THE LINCOLN TRAIL

Serving Marion, Nelson, and Washington Counties

### CASA OF THE NORTHERN BLUEGRASS REGION

Serving Boone, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Harrison, Kenton, Owen, and Pendleton Counties

### CASA OF THE RIVER REGION

Serving Bullitt, Henry, Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, and Trimble Counties

### CASA OF THE WILDERNESS TRAIL

Serving Clark, Estill, Lee, Madison, and Owsley Counties

### CASA OF WEST KENTUCKY

A project of Child Watch Counseling & Advocacy Center serving Ballard, Caldwell, Livingston, Lyon, McCracken, and Trigg Counties

### THE BUFFALO TRACE CASA PROGRAM

Serving Bracken, Fleming, Mason, Nicholas, and Robertson Counties

## Kentucky CASA Network, Inc.

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