



CALL FOR PRESENTERS

The Kentucky CASA Network Presents:

Advocacy at the Core: 2023 Kentucky CASA Conference

Empowering Advocates, Empowering Children

October 4, 2023

Embassy Suites by Hilton Lexington/UK Coldstream
1801 Newtown Pike, Lexington, KY 40511

What is Advocacy at the Core: 2023 Kentucky CASA Conference?

The Kentucky CASA Network will host a statewide conference in Lexington, the first in-person Kentucky CASA conference since the pandemic. Volunteers, staff, and board members from local CASA programs throughout the state will be the primary audience, although stakeholders and guests will also be invited. The majority of attendees are expected to be CASA volunteers, who directly advocate for children experiencing abuse, neglect, or dependency. Conference attendees will gain knowledge, skills, and understanding aimed at enhancing and supporting the best interest advocacy provided to children served by CASA volunteers. This year's event will provide sessions centered around the core model of CASA best interest advocacy, which includes the following components of the CASA role: Learn, engage, recommend, collaborate, report. These aspects of the core model are explained in more detail below.

What is CASA?

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers are community-based advocates who are appointed by judges to serve in child abuse and neglect cases. Once assigned to a child, the volunteer researches the child's case, reviews documents, interviews relevant people, and makes a report to the court as to what is in the best interest of the child in terms of services, placement, visitation, reunification, and permanency. CASA volunteers are objective community members who are not part of the child welfare system. They focus their efforts solely on gathering information and making recommendations regarding children in abuse, neglect, or dependency cases – children who would otherwise have no voice.

About the Kentucky CASA Network

The Kentucky CASA Network (KCN) is the principal organizer of **Advocacy at the Core: 2023 Kentucky CASA Conference**. The 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 the Commonwealth. Currently, the KCN is an association of 22 programs, covering nearly 90 of Kentucky's counties. 1,239 CASA volunteers served more than 3,500 abused and neglected children in 2022. The KCN, as well as all local CASA programs, are governed by Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS 620.500-550).

Theme and Areas of Focus for Conference Sessions

This year's event will provide sessions centered around the core model of CASA best interest advocacy, which includes the following components of the CASA role: Learn, engage, recommend, collaborate, report. These components are explained in more detail and sample topics are included.

Sessions should directly relate to at least one of the below components of the CASA core model. The KCN is also prioritizing sessions incorporating content on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- **Learn:** Increase information gathering skills utilized during best interest advocacy
Example topics: Motivational interviewing skills, managing bias, engaging with biological families
- **Engage:** Enhance knowledge and skills utilized when developing relationships with abused, neglected, and dependent children
Example topics: Home visiting safety, self-care and boundaries, engaging with teens, cultural awareness, engagement strategies for special populations
- **Recommend:** Increase understanding of services available in communities, which services and supports are most effective for supporting the safety and permanency of children, and how to clearly articulate recommendations for these services and supports to judges in the dependency, neglect, and abuse dockets. (Note: Referenced services/supports may be for a child or the child's caregivers, if the caregiver services/supports enable them to increase the child's safety and well-being.)
Example topics: Best practices for therapeutic services for children impacted by trauma, effective services for caregivers in DNA cases, culturally responsive services, a CASA volunteer's guide to assessments
- **Collaborate:** Provide updates on trends in local child welfare and court practice/policy, enhance understanding of the court process, and/or gain best practices for collaborating with stakeholders to meet children's needs
Example topics: DCBS policy/practice updates, working with social workers, working with GALs, fostering biological parent and foster parent partnerships
- **Report:** Enhance court report writing and case monitoring skills
Example topics: Court report writing, case monitoring practices, evaluating service effectiveness

Other Details

Breakout sessions will be scheduled for approximately 90 minutes. The morning plenary session (keynote address) may be scheduled for 45-60 minutes. Number of attendees per session will depend upon conference registrations but can be estimated (for session planning purposes) closer to the date.

Compensation

Breakout session presenters: The KCN will offer a \$500 stipend per session and provide presenters with free conference registration, lodging, and reimbursement for travel within Kentucky. Agency representatives who will be presenting on agency time will have the option to waive the stipend.

Keynote speaker: Compensation will be discussed upon submission of proposal.

Proposal Submission

Please submit session proposals using [this form](#). Contact [Melissa Paris](#) with questions.