

**CASA OF GRAVES COUNTY AND SOUTHWEST KENTUCKY
STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 - 2024**



**Facilitated By: Gregory Nielsen, JD
President and CEO
Nielsen Training & Consulting, LLC**



CASA OF GRAVES COUNTY & SOUTHWEST KENTUCKY STRATEGIC PLAN

1. Our Mission.

The mission of CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY, Inc. is to provide trained community volunteers for court appointment to advocate on behalf of dependent, abused, and neglected children in Graves County and Southwest Kentucky.

2. Agency History.

Mayfield-Graves County Child Advocacy Program, Inc. formed in 1989 and was established as a 501(c)(3) organization out of concern for a rising number of child abuse/neglect reports in Graves County. Initial funding for the agency came primarily from the KY Justice Cabinet's Crime Victims Trust Fund which allowed the agency to begin a Body Safety program for K – 2nd grade students. Eventually, the agency secured United Way and VOCA funds and a part-time staff was hired to coordinate and administrate the agency and its programs. As a result of being awarded National CASA Association funds a full-time director began in December 1997. In 1998, the agency started its work to add CASA services and appointment to child abuse and neglect cases in Graves County began in 2000.

In 2007 the program's name changed to Graves County Child Advocacy Program, Inc. The agency's primary focus became CASA. In 2010, as a result of a grant received from the Child Victims Trust Fund, the agency began implementing the Building Healthy Relationships program in addition to CASA. Building Healthy Relationships relied upon collaboration with Mayfield and Graves County Family Resource Centers to deliver the program within area schools. Funding supported a community educator position to deliver the curriculum. Children in grades 3 and 6 was the primary population served. In 2015, the grant would no longer support salaries therefore the position went to part-time and it became increasingly hard to keep the position filled. The Building Healthy Relationships program was not delivered in 2018.

In 2017, CASA started receiving State funds. State funds support growth and capacity. VOCA funding increased substantially and as a result Graves County Child Advocacy Program was able to add a full-time volunteer coordinator position. In 2018, the agency piloted CASA into Carlisle County and Hickman County. In January 2019 during a board retreat the directors made the decision to narrow agency services to CASA and to work to expand into unserved neighboring counties. In February 2019 the board voted to formally expand into Carlisle and Hickman Counties and to expand into Fulton County by January 2020. The agency name changed in June 2019 to CASA of Graves County and Southwest KY and the organization's mission was revised to provide trained community volunteers for court appointment to advocate on behalf of dependent, abused, and neglected children in Graves County and Southwest Kentucky.

3. Strategic Context.

Since 2017 the agency has been dedicated to staff and volunteer retention along with growth and expansion of our CASA services. For years our agency provided both prevention education and CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) for abused and neglected children. In January 2019, the Board of Directors engaged in a vision planning retreat and as a result it was decided that we would hone our focus to CASA and expand services into neighboring counties. Our business name changed to CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY, Inc. and our mission statement was revised now reading: The mission of CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY is to provide trained community volunteers for court appointment to advocate on behalf of dependent, abused, and neglected children in Graves County and Southwest Kentucky.

CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY now provides court advocacy for children of Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, and Hickman Counties. The number of program volunteers has increased by 200% since 2016. The average volunteer serves on one case at a time and most all cases for which our CASA program is appointed are assigned to a volunteer within one month. Our CASA program provides best interest court advocacy for an average of 105 children a year.

We aspire for every child to have the opportunity to grow up in a safe environment. Our goal is to have a waiting list of volunteers available to advocate for the best interests of abused/neglected and dependent children rather than a list of children waiting for a CASA advocate.

a. External Landscape.

The following factors shape the external landscape of child abuse and neglect cases and form the core issues to be addressed by CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY throughout this strategic plan:

- i. 238 children (20 Carlisle, 35 Fulton, 161 Graves, and 22 Hickman) were involved in court cases of abuse, neglect, and dependency in 2020
- ii. In 2020, while COVID-19 stay-at-home orders were in place children were not going to school and a critical safety net was lost. This meant that teachers, school counselors, and coaches were not able to witness the signs of abuse and neglect and report to the proper authorities. In turn, it is assumed that abuse/neglect and dependency were underreported in 2020.
- iii. Volunteers advocated for a total of 106 children in 2020 and 52 of those children were new based on judge's request of CASA.
- iv. 34 trained CASA volunteers actively serving on cases in 2020.

b. Our Call To Action.

The CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY Board of Directors and organizational leaders identified the following critical community conditions that compel change:

- i. In 2020, 1,275 CASA volunteers served 3,574 abused and neglected children in Kentucky.
- ii. More than 13,400 children in Kentucky still need a CASA volunteer by their side.
*Based on number of new petitions for dependency, abuse, and neglect filed in 2020.
- iii. Data shows that CASA programs save lives
 1. A child with a CASA volunteer is more likely to find a safe, permanent home
 2. A child with a CASA volunteer is half as likely to re-enter the foster care system
 3. A child with a CASA volunteer performs better in school

4. Executive Summary.

This strategic plan sets CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY on a trajectory for deepening our impact and improving every aspect of our organization. The plan includes three high-impact goals, along with strategies, action steps, and metrics. In summary, our strategy roadmap is as follows:

- Sustainability:
 - Enhance organizational sustainability.
- Volunteer Recruitment and Retention:
 - Increase volunteer recruitment and retention with a vision of a volunteer for every child in need.
- Organizational Infrastructure:
 - Ensure that as organization grows, adequate space exists to fulfill mission and meet volunteer and training needs.

5. Methodology.

CASA of Graves County & Southwest Kentucky used the following methodology in developing this strategic plan:

- One-on-one interviews with organization and Board leaders
- Survey of all volunteers
- Board strategy retreat
- Planning sessions

6. Timeframe.

The Board of Directors and organization leaders execute this strategic plan to be completed over a 3-year period from 2021 - 2024.

7. Goals and Strategies.

Goal 1: Enhance organizational sustainability.

- **Strategy 1: Ensure staff capacity for current programs and future growth.**

<u><i>ACTION STEPS</i></u>	<u><i>LEADER</i></u>	<u><i>TIMING TO ACHIEVE</i></u>	<u><i>METRIC</i></u>
Evaluate the current staff capacity	Executive Director and Board	Year 1	Report created and presented to Board
Determine criteria under which to add staff position	Executive Director and Board	Year 1	Criteria scorecard developed
Act on findings of staff evaluation and criteria scorecard	Executive Director and Board	Year 2	Staffing measures enacted to meet capacity needs

- **Strategy 2: Enhance fundraising programs and engagement.**

<u><i>ACTION STEPS</i></u>	<u><i>LEADER</i></u>	<u><i>TIMING TO ACHIEVE</i></u>	<u><i>METRIC</i></u>
Develop consistent organizational messaging around mission, vision, programs, and impact	Executive Director and Volunteer Coordinator	Year 1	Messaging materials prepared and integrated with Board and staff
Evaluate fundraising infrastructure to ensure that donating to organization is user-friendly and accessible for all	Executive Director Treasurer	Year 1	Review of infrastructure completed and any necessary changes implemented
Establish a recurring gift program	Executive Director and Board	Year 2	Minimum of 5 recurring donors within 2 years

Expand individual donor base by 10 new donors per year	Executive Director and Board	Year 3	40 total donors within 3 years
--	------------------------------	--------	--------------------------------

- **Strategy 3: Enhance commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)**

<u>ACTION STEPS</u>	<u>LEADER</u>	<u>TIMING TO ACHIEVE</u>	<u>METRIC</u>
Create DEI plan to guide recruitment of Board members and volunteers	Executive Director and Board	Year 1	Plan created, Board ratified, monitored annually Board and volunteers more closely reflect the diversity and need (defined broadly) of community served
Host DEI specific training for Board and volunteers	Executive Director	Year 2	Training developed and hosted Feedback received

Goal 2: Increase volunteer recruitment and retention with a vision of a volunteer for every child in need.

- **Strategy 1: Strategically expand volunteer recruitment to align with need and demand.**

<u>ACTION STEPS</u>	<u>LEADER</u>	<u>TIMING</u>	<u>METRIC</u>
Enhance organizational awareness and visibility through community and church presentations and event participation	Volunteer Coordinator	Year 1	Participate in minimum one community/church event quarterly with focus on Graves County and track results

Strategically focus volunteer recruitment efforts on Graves and Fulton Counties based on data and need	Volunteer Coordinator	Year 2	Graves County = 40 volunteers Fulton County = 8 volunteers
--	-----------------------	--------	---

- **Strategy 2: Increase volunteer retention through focus on building lasting relationships.**

<u><i>ACTION STEPS</i></u>	<u><i>LEADER</i></u>	<u><i>TIMING TO ACHIEVE</i></u>	<u><i>METRIC</i></u>
Develop and implement volunteer recognition program to link Board members with volunteers	Volunteer Coordinator and Board	Year 2	Retain 75% of CASA volunteers on annual basis

- **Strategy 3: Ensure Board continues to reflect highest standards of governance and effectiveness**

<u><i>ACTION STEPS</i></u>	<u><i>LEADER</i></u>	<u><i>TIMING TO ACHIEVE</i></u>	<u><i>METRIC</i></u>
Establish clear Board expectations, recruiting, and orientation plan	Board	Year 1	Plan created and approved by Board
Recruit a minimum of 1 Board member from each river county	Board	Year 2	Minimum of 1 Board member from each river county
Develop Board succession plan	Board	Year 3	Plan created and approved by Board

Goal 3: Ensure that as organization grows, adequate space exists to fulfill mission and meet volunteer and training needs.

- **Strategy 1: Identify infrastructure needs, potential partners, and space alternatives**

<u>ACTION STEPS</u>	<u>LEADER</u>	<u>TIMING</u>	<u>METRIC</u>
Document ideal space, training needs and budget	Executive Director and Board	Year 1	Needs and budget identified and documented
Evaluate potential space sharing partners in the community that preserves independence	Executive Director and Board	Year 2	Potential partners identified
Identify other potential office sites	Executive Director and Board	Year 3	Sites identified and evaluation scorecard created

8. Our Path Forward.

Since its founding, CASA of Graves County and Southwest Kentucky has become a vital part of the community, serving children who have been victims of abuse and neglect. This strategic plan sets us on a trajectory for deepening our impact and improving every aspect of our organization. As we carry out this plan, we anticipate seeing a number of important benefits, including:

- Expansion of staff capacity to grow programs
- Highly engaged and effective Board governance
- Greater commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Expanded volunteer recruitment and retention
- More diverse and sustainable funding, while maintaining the highest fidelity to ethics and transparency

As we encounter the challenges inherent in social change, we are committed to remaining connected to our mission and values – those enduring ideals that serve as a compass for CASA as we navigate our way into the future.