



October 2014- Vol 3, Issue 10

Court Appointed Special Advocates of Mendocino & Lake Counties



Member of the National
CASA Association

Psych Meds and Foster Youth: Alameda County California takes on a National Issue

On September 29, around 50 foster youth advocates and mental health professionals crowded into a conference room in Alameda County California's Behavioral Health Care Services (BHCS) building to discuss the steps the county can take to reduce the overmedication of children in foster care.



Of the 1,346 foster children in Alameda County in 2014, 290 had been authorized by the juvenile court to take psychotropic medications as of July 1, according to data presented by Anna Johnson, the lead consultant on the county's project to assess psychotropic use by youth in foster care or juvenile custody.

[Psych Meds](#)

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⌚ The CASA Board of Directors meets on the 3rd Tuesday each month at 11:30am at the CASA office.

⌚ The Mendocino Co. Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission meets monthly on the 3rd Friday noon to 2 p.m. at the Probation Dept. conference room, 589 Low Gap Road, Ukiah.

⌚ The Lake Co. Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission meets monthly on the 3rd Thursday at noon, conference room C, on the 3rd floor of the Lake County Courthouse, 255 N. Forbes St., Lakeport.

The Role of a CASA



In Mendocino and Lake Counties, together, there can be as many as 400-500 children placed in foster care because of abuse, neglect or abandonment. Their cases are brought to court before a Juvenile Judge who sometimes may only have a few minutes to make critical life-altering decisions about their future. Can they be safely reunited with their parents? Are there relatives or family friends who can care for them? Should they be placed for adoption? Making decisions about the lives of children and families is a heavy burden. Juvenile Judges need accurate and up-to-date information to make the right decision for a foster child. That's where a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) can help.

CASA helps to provide information to our Juvenile Judges by using trained community volunteers to investigate the background of a foster care case and make recommendations to the Judge that will best help to move the child to permanency as quickly as possible. Whether the plan is reunification with the parents, placement with relatives/kin or adoption, a CASA volunteer remains diligently focused on the child's need for permanency until the goal is accomplished. CASA volunteers come from all walks of life and all kinds of educational, ethnic and social backgrounds. Most work full time and no special prior experience is required. Objectivity and good communication skills are essential since a CASA volunteer must be able to work with a variety of people from child welfare professionals to birth parents. The amount of time spent working on a case varies depending on the stage of the proceedings. Each CASA volunteer is partnered with a Case Supervisor and they work together as a team on a case. Volunteers and their Case Supervisors communicate regularly, sharing information and developing and determining the steps to take on the case. All investigative work and reports to the Court or authorized agencies are undertaken together. On average, CASAs devote 10 to 15 hours a month to a case. A demonstrated sense of responsibility and commitment is important for our volunteers. CASA volunteers are responsible adults, at least 21 years of age, who care deeply about the welfare of children and know that when they take on a case, they take on a child's future!

A written application, personal interview, three references, criminal background check, fingerprinting and 30+ hours of in-class training is required to become a CASA volunteer. Training topics include: Dependency and Delinquency Law, The Child Protection System and the Courts; Children and Family Systems; The Impact of Child Abuse and Neglect; Exploring Our Cultural Sensitivity; Educational Advocacy; Healthcare Advocacy; Communication/Interviewing Skills; Information Gathering and Report Writing. Following the completion of training, volunteers are sworn in by a Juvenile Court Judge. Post-training, CASA volunteers are required to participate in 12 hours of additional training each year. CASA offers monthly continuing education to meet this requirement. For more information about becoming a CASA volunteer, contact Sheryn Hildebrand at 707-463-6503, ext. 13 or email Sheryn at shildebrand@mendocinocasa.org.

National Children's Advocacy Center (NCAC) FREE Online Trainings

Train without leaving the office!

The NCAC's National Training Center (NTC) offers a wide range of online training opportunities for child abuse professionals. The NTC's online training includes live and archived Webinars and *Ask the Expert* sessions, and Recorded Trainings (available at no charge).

Online training requires a one-time registration to create a user ID and password.



CASA Volunteers are mandated by the California Rules of Court to complete 12 hours of continuing education each year.



Sips, Eats & Sweets



- ♥ Hors d'oeuvre Taste-Off
- ♥ Sweets Delectables Taste-Off
- ♥ Celebrity Judge Panel
- ♥ Silent Auction
- ♥ Award-winning BARRA Wines*

An evening of fun, competitive hors d'oeuvre and sweet tastings, and exciting silent auction bidding to benefit the children served by the Court Appointed Special Advocates of Mendocino & Lake Counties.

Sun., Nov 16 2014
4:00 - 7:00 p.m. at



7051 State St. Redwood Valley

Sips, Eats, & Sweets:
\$15 in advance / \$20 at the door

- ♥ Sips with tickets sold separately at event only
- ♥ \$5 each or 3/\$25

Mendocino Book Co. in Ukiah

First Five Lake County

♥ Call CASA of Mendocino & Lake Counties by
calling 707-463-6503

MUST BE 21 OR OLDER TO ATTEND.

**"CASA of Mendocino & Lake Counties
trains & supports volunteer adult mentors
to connect & advocate for foster youth,
former foster youth, delinquent & at-risk youth."**

