



**Advisory Committee to the
Court Appointed Special Advocate
and Children's Justice Act Programs**

AGENDA

In-Person Committee Meeting

Virginia Department of Social Services
5600 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060
York River Room, 111B
April 25, 2025
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

- 1. Welcome, Roll Call and Introduction of Guests**
- 2. Review and approval of January 24, 2025 Minutes**
- 3. Appointment of Nominations Committee**
- 4. Center for Evidence Based Partnerships Presentation on the Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis of Virginia's Family First Implementation Efforts – Michael Southam Gerow, Director**
- 5. Final Outcome of Tracked General Assembly Bills**
- 6. CJA Program Update**
 - **Virginia MDT Stakeholder Group**
 - Annual Survey
 - MDT 101 and Good to Great Training Series
- 7. CASA Program Update**
- 8. Citizen Review Panel**
 - Development of 2025 CRP Recommendations
- 9. Adjournment**

VIRGINIA COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE PROGRAMS

What CASA Does

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers are appointed by juvenile court judges to cases involving child abuse and neglect. These specially trained citizen volunteers provide a consistent presence and a voice in court for children, helping to ensure the best possible outcome for child victims of abuse and neglect. CASA volunteers provide victims with a chance to thrive during one of the most vulnerable times in their young lives by ending the cycle of violence, and assisting the court in securing safe, permanent homes.

FY2024 CASA PROGRAM STATISTICS AND HIGHLIGHTS

- 27 operational CASA programs in Virginia
- 6 new localities received CASA services
- 3,260 children received advocacy services, representing a 1% increase over the previous fiscal year
- 1,331 citizen volunteers active on cases, a comparable number to the previous fiscal year
- 138,202 volunteer advocacy hours, valued at \$4,613,183, were contributed, which represents a 10% increase over the previous fiscal year
- 14,468 key challenges were tracked and monitored on children served by CASA volunteers; this represents a 1% increase from the previous fiscal year and a 25% increase since FY2019

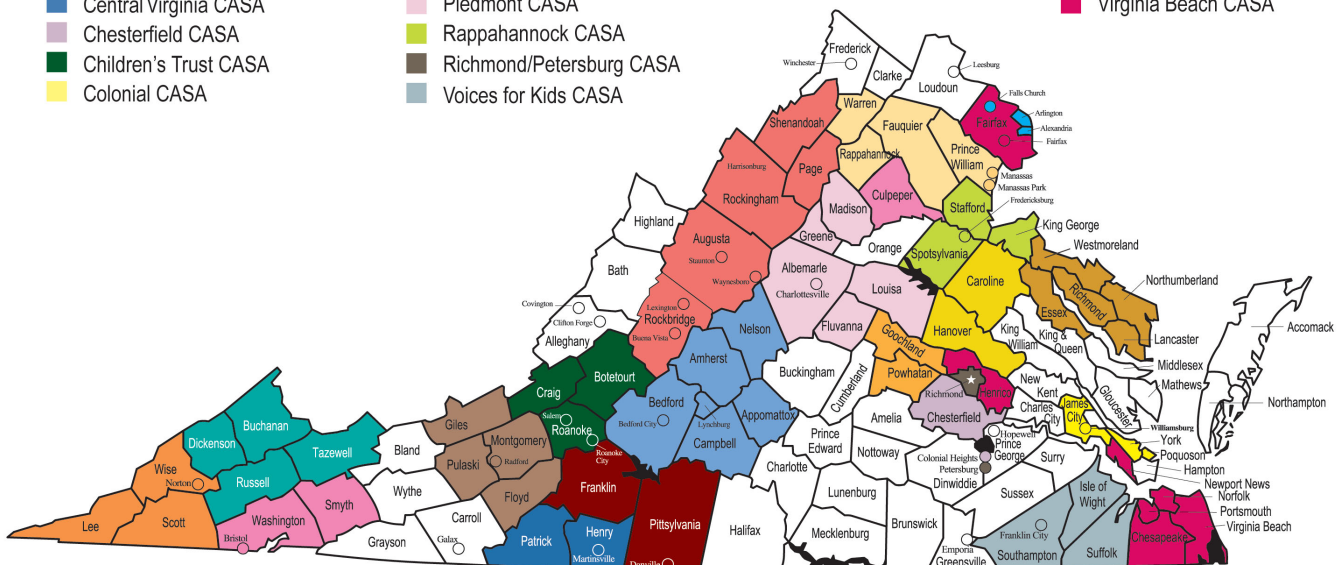
Programs in Virginia

Multi-Jurisdictional Programs

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 28th Judicial District | FOCUS on Youth CASA |
| 29th Judicial District | Franklin County/Pittsylvania County CASA |
| Alexandria/Arlington CASA | Goochland/Powhatan CASA |
| CASA Child Intervention Services | Hanover CASA |
| Blue Ridge CASA for Children | LPOY CASA |
| CASA of the New River Valley | Northern Neck CASA |
| Central Virginia CASA | Piedmont CASA |
| Chesterfield CASA | Rappahannock CASA |
| Children's Trust CASA | Richmond/Petersburg CASA |
| Colonial CASA | Voices for Kids CASA |

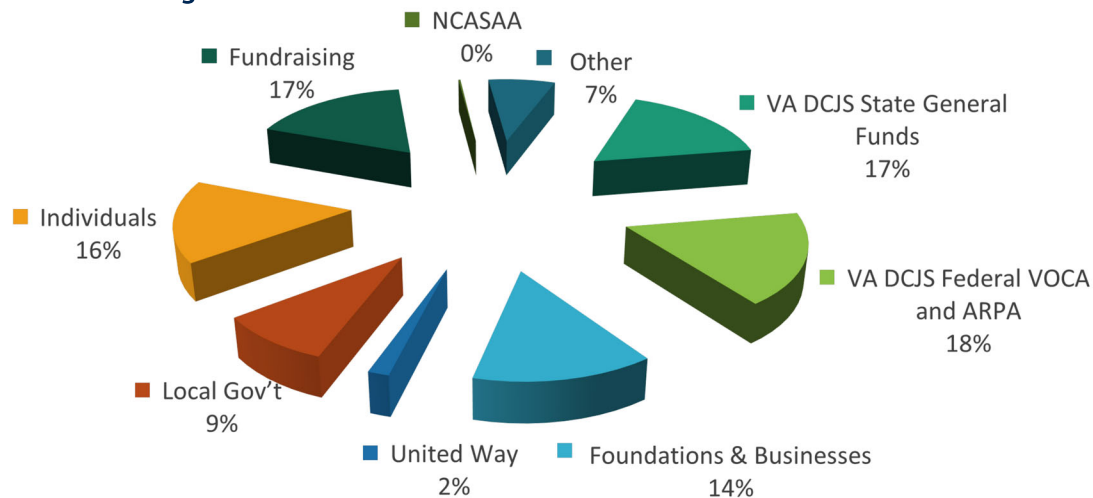
Single Jurisdiction Programs

- Chesapeake CASA
- Fairfax CASA
- Henrico CASA
- Newport News CASA
- Norfolk CASA
- Portsmouth CASA
- Virginia Beach CASA



VIRGINIA CASA PROGRAMS HAVE DIVERSE FUNDING

2023–2024 CASA Program Income



**TOTAL INCOME =
\$9,212,642***

**as of January, 2025*

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Abuse and Neglect in Virginia in FY2024

- 39,841 children involved in Child Protective Services family assessments
- 4,474 abused and neglected children in founded Child Protective Services investigations
- 30 children died as a result of abuse or neglect
 - Data as of December 3, 2024 with 43 investigations pending final disposition
- 5,109 children in foster care
- 46% of the children in Virginia's foster care system are between the ages of 13 and 19

Young People Aging Out of Foster Care

CASA programs are dedicated to improving outcomes for older youth continuous, youth centered advocacy until age 21. CASA volunteers focus advocacy to create successful independence if other permanency efforts are not achieved for older youth who may age out of the system. Without support, research shows that, when compared with their peers, young people aging out of care, on average are:

- Less likely to have a high school diploma
- Less likely to be pursuing higher education
- More likely to experience unemployment
- Less likely to be earning a living wage
- More likely to experience homelessness
- More likely to have had a child without being married
- More likely to become involved with the criminal justice system

(Barth, 1990; Cook, 1991; Courtney & Barth, 1996; Courtney & Piliavin, 1995, 1998; McDonald, Allen, Westerfelt & Piliavin, 1996)

CASA Volunteers Make an Impact in the Lives of Children

- 83% of CASA volunteer recommendations are accepted and incorporated into judicial court orders
- 88% of children had one CASA volunteer throughout the duration of their case. Scientific research indicates the presence of one caring, stable adult relationship is one of the keys to building skills of resilience.^(1, 2)

¹ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2015). Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience: Working Paper 13. www.developingchild.harvard.edu

² Levine, S. (2003). Psychological and social aspects of resilience: A synthesis of risks and resources. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, 5, 273-280. doi: 10.31887/DCNS.2003.5.3/slevine

CASA Programs are Economical

Of the various interventions provided to a child, CASA provides a cost effective service. In Virginia in FY2024, it costs:

- \$2,830 to provide CASA advocacy services to one child
- \$5,952 to \$8,820 to provide basic foster care to one child
- An average of \$25,000 to serve one child in Therapeutic Foster Care and \$45,036 for Residential Treatment
- \$236,920 to serve one child in the direct care of Virginia's Department of Juvenile Justice

For questions regarding the administration of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program and funding in Virginia, please contact: Melissa O'Neill • 804-239-0473 • melissa.o'neill@dcjs.virginia.gov

2024 CASA Program Survey Key Findings

The Virginia CASA State Leadership Team developed the 2024 CASA Program Survey to determine the needs of local CASA programs. The survey is used to update the State Leadership Team strategic plan. The response rate for the survey was 100%. The survey was launched in January 2025 and results were compiled in February 2025. The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services Research Center assisted in the deployment of the survey and prepared the final data analysis.

Below is a summary of the key findings from the Survey Report.

CASA Programs need volunteers despite some increases in recruitment

- 15 of the 27 CASA programs (56%) reported they were unable to serve all the children referred by the courts.
 - Of those, 12 (80%) reported that they were unable to serve the children referred due to lack of available volunteers.
- 17 CASA programs (63%) reported an increase in the number of inquiries from potential CASA volunteers.
- 14 CASA programs (52%) reported an increase in the number of CASA volunteers trained.
- 13 CASA programs (48%) reported an increase in the number of new CASA volunteers sworn in to serve children.
- In programs experiencing resignations, top reasons for volunteer resignations
 - Moved from the area 48%
 - Resigned/Retired 30%
 - Health Issues 26%
 - Employment Situation 26%

CASA Programs continue to experience turnover in leadership

- 6 CASA programs (22%) experienced a change in Executive Director or Program Director leadership positions.

Volunteer recruitment methods have not changed

- The top two volunteer recruitment methods were word of mouth (89%) and social media (81%).

CASA programs have experienced changes in judicial leadership

- 10 CASA programs (37%) reported a new judge appointed last year.

CASA programs observed high levels of local DSS worker turnover

- 93% of CASA programs (25) report an increase in local department of social services personnel turnover.

CASA programs prefer virtual training modalities

- The majority of programs reported participating in virtual CASA College trainings including the Director Series **(67%)**, Program Staff CASA Conversations **(93%)**, and Volunteer Advo-Chats **(96%)**.
- Virtual trainings also ranked highest **(100%)** among the training formats most likely to attend in the future.

Virginia CASA programs are fiscally responsible (22 of 27 CASA Programs responded to these questions about these questions)

- Of those responding, all reported that in the past three fiscal years, they raised the funds needed to meet their current operational budgets.
- All reported having an average of 10.6 months of unrestricted savings for operating expenses (5 programs did not report).

CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Citizen Review Panel 2025 Recommendations

DRAFT 4-4-25

CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Citizen Review Panel Overview

The Virginia Department of Social Services has the responsibility to identify three Citizen Review Panels in order to comply with the requirements of the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) pursuant to [sections 106\(c\)\(4\)\(A\)\(i\) and \(ii\)](#). The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee serves as one of three Citizen Review Panels (CRP) in Virginia.

CAPTA directs each panel established as a CRP to examine the policies, procedures and practices of state and local departments of social services and where appropriate, review specific cases to evaluate the extent to which the state is fulfilling its child protection responsibilities in accordance with its CAPTA State plan. A panel may also examine other criteria it considers important to ensure the protection of children including the extent to which the state and local CPS system is coordinated with the Title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs of the Social Security Act. CRPs are also authorized to review child fatalities and near fatalities in the State.

1. Child Abuse Prevention

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) should continue to focus timely prevention efforts that ensure safety and well-being of the child and support families in ways that provide support and enhance timely permanency. This includes providing services to prevent removal, and services to support adoptive and kinship families.

a. Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)

VDSS should continue implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) and build capacity for evidence-based practices and services. Primary and secondary prevention efforts should focus on avoiding further social services engagement and continued need for tertiary services. Services should include respite for all members of the family including siblings in the home. VDSS should consider including the development and integration of best practices of the Science of Hope framework in working with children and families. Education stability should be included as a prevention strategy.

b. Parental Child Safety Placement Program Implementation

The Virginia Parental Child Safety Placement Program (PCSPP) intends to prevent unnecessary foster care entry by supporting temporary, time limited placements with relatives or fictive kin when a child's safety is at risk. The program requires accountability for such pre-court placements. Legislation was passed in 2024, and the goal of the program is to provide services to the family while assessing safety for the child.

The Advisory Committee seeks updates on the implementation of the PCSPP. Information should include reports on the number of cases served, length of time cases are served, outcomes of efforts, interventions and services provided, how many cases were non-compliant, and what steps the Department took when cases were non-compliant.

c. Child Abuse Prevention Services Model

The VDSS should develop mechanisms for reporting on its prevention services model. This would include establishing criteria and definitions of the various levels of prevention interventions. Consideration should include reports on the number of prevention (pre-court intervention) cases served, length of time cases are served in prevention, outcomes of prevention efforts, interventions and services provided, how many prevention cases were non-compliant, and what steps the Department took when cases were non-compliant.

2. System Improvement

a. Workforce Support and Development

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) continues to focus on family engagement practices as a cornerstone of the child welfare system. To implement family engagement practices effectively, more trained workers are needed. Efforts should be expended to explore interagency collaboration regarding delivery of case management services and implementation of lived experience navigator services to guide parents. VDSS has experienced the impacts of a reduced workforce due to the lingering effects of the pandemic, fiscal constraints, and vicarious trauma. Retention of workers is important to maintain uniformity and strengthen the workforce.

b. Cross System Collaboration

VDSS should encourage local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) to improve communication and collaboration across jurisdictions when investigating child abuse and neglect and participate in a local multidisciplinary team (MDT), if available. Per Virginia Code § 15.2-1627.5, LDSS-Child Protective Services Unit representation is a required member on a local MDT.

VDSS should encourage LDS agencies to improve cross systems collaboration to support thorough investigations of child abuse and neglect. This should include cross systems joint training opportunities. Upon commencement of dependency proceedings, VDSS should encourage inclusion of attorneys, relatives and other actors in service planning (i.e., family partnership meetings and team meetings).

c. Data Collection and Evaluation

The Advisory Committee makes several data collection and evaluation recommendations. The pandemic presented numerous challenges, especially for frontline workers. The VDSS should continue to examine the preparedness for the COVID19 pandemic and begin planning for the next pandemic that will inevitably strike. Included in this planning should be helping teachers and other mandated reporters to identify child abuse and neglect in a virtual environment.

VDSS should continue to study trends in the reductions of the number of child abuse and neglect complaints and determine if the reduction in complaints trends actually equates to a reduction in harm to children.

VDSS aligned in-home services, CPS ongoing practice, prevention services, and the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act. The Advisory Committee requests continued collection of data and evaluation of this alignment.

The Advisory Committee requests data and information around the efforts to implement more Evidence-Based Services under the Family First Prevention Services Act along with progress in securing providers that are properly certified and authorized to provide Evidence-Based Services. The Advisory Committee recommends the Department continues collaboration with the Center for Evidence-Based Practices-Virginia to support localities' efforts to build service array capacity.

The Advisory Committee requests data and information on the PCSPP to include the number of cases served, length of time cases are served, outcomes of efforts, interventions and services provided, how many cases were non-compliant, and what steps the Department took when cases were non-compliant.

The Advisory Committee requests data on the number of Relief of Custody cases served by VDSS including the interventions and services provided.

As the Virginia Department of Social Services builds the new Child Welfare Information System (CWIS), the Committee requests updates and asks the Department to seek stakeholder input into the development of data points for the system.

Report to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee

April 25, 2025, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Programs

Prepared by: Melissa O'Neill, CASA Coordinator - DCJS

I. CASA Network State Leadership Team Updates

The SLT is a partnership between the CASA Network and DCJS. DCJS participates on some but not all the committees. DCJS facilitated one meeting of the SLT during this reporting period.

The following is a highlight of accomplishments of the SLT committees during this reporting period.

A. Training Committee

The revision of the Virginia Case Studies pre-service training curriculum is now complete. During this reporting period, the committee concentrated on enhancing the training components for facilitators. As part of this effort multiple resources have been developed, including a facilitator's guide, sample agendas and planning guides, sample activities to reinforce key concepts, and an implementation guide. These materials are currently in draft form and undergoing final review and edits by the team.

B. Data Committee

DCJS led the development and implementation of the CASA Program Survey to identify statewide program needs and gather data in partnership with the SLT Data Committee. Conducted every three years, this survey serves as a valuable resource for planning efforts by DCJS and the SLT. The CASA Program Survey was completed in January. The Survey results were compiled by the DCJS Research Center, and the report was finalized in February.

The Data Committee met once during this reporting period to review the CASA program survey results and set goals for the remainder of 2025. The CASA Manager User Group (CMUG) met twice during the reporting period.

DCJS continued to monitor technical support requests from local programs regarding CASA Manager. Overall, the volume of support requests has reduced and there are not any trends emerging within the tracked calls. The Data

Committee determined there is value in continuing to track support requests, with a shift in focus to identifying needs and gaps in service and functionality. Additionally, there is consensus from the Data Team that overall, CASA Manager has made improvements in the system and responsiveness to users.

C. Marketing Committee

The SLT continues its partnership with The Idea Center, allocating a portion of CASA Network funds to support the most effective digital marketing initiatives aimed at volunteer recruitment. SLT members received details on the success of the campaign at the last SLT meeting.

The Marketing Committee is developing strategies to assist local CASA programs with enhancements for local program social media and digital marketing campaigns.

D. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging (DEIAB) Committee

The DEIAB Committee is facilitated and chaired by a local CASA program director. Due to recent changes at the federal level requiring National CASA to remove all references and requirements related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and gender ideology from its standards, training, website, and foundational documents, the committee awaiting further guidance from National CASA.

E. Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee is chaired by a local CASA program director and is meeting monthly. The committee monitors state and federal legislation of impact to the CASA programs. The committee continues to work with the CASA Program network to determine the actual costs for operating a local program that complies with state regulations and national standards.

II. Network Support Meetings

DCJS facilitated three CASA Network Support meetings and two New Director Support calls using virtual technology during this reporting period. These meetings assist local programs with navigating program operations and management concerns.

III. DCJS CASA Grant Program

DCJS announced the grant application process for the FY2026 CASA grants. The total amount available to local CASA programs is \$1,533,840 in state general funds and \$1,499,900 in federal VOCA funds. This year, DCJS is offering a one-time supplement of Children's Justice Act (CJA) funds in the amount of \$22,000 for the limited purpose of

reimbursing volunteers for mileage for travel on behalf of the children to whom they are appointed. The total amount available for CASA program grant awards totaled \$3,055,940. Applications were received and are currently being reviewed for approval by the Criminal Justice Services Board at the May 2025 meeting. Programs will receive award notices in June 2025.

IV. CASA Regulatory Revision

The approved draft of the proposed changes to the CASA regulations remains at the approval stage by the Attorney General's office.

V. DCJS Staffing Update

DCJS received approval to hire a part-time CASA Program Training Coordinator. This position will support statewide training efforts including implementation of the Case Studies pre-service curriculum and the CASA College training series.

Report to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee

April 25, 2025 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Children's Justice Act (CJA)

Prepared by: Jenna L. Foster, Children's Justice Act Coordinator - DCJS

I. CJA Mini Grants for Programs Working with Child Victims of Abuse or Neglect

DCJS awarded one-time grants to 25 child serving agencies in Virginia. Several Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts received funding to create child-friendly waiting rooms. The funding period is April 1-September 30, 2025.

II. Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Support

In January, DCJS convened a meeting of the Virginia MDT Stakeholder Group to address training and technical assistance needs for 2025. Since Child Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA) focuses on MDTs with CAC involvement, DCJS's MDT efforts will focus more on localities that need MDT support that are not served by a local CAC or satellite center. Four training sessions have been scheduled:

MDT 101: Building a Strong Foundation for MDT Success (Virtual)

Thu, 04/24/2025 - 10:00am – 1:00pm

Thu, 08/21/2025 - 10:00am – 1:00pm

Good to Great: Enhancing MDT Effectiveness and Functioning (In Person)

Danville, VA - Tue, 09/09/2025 - 10:00am – 4:00pm

Tappahannock, VA - Tue, 10/28/2025 - 10:00am – 4:00pm

MDT 101 (virtual) Registration: <https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/training-events/mdt-101-building-strong-foundation-mdt-success>

Good to Great (in-person) Registration: <https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/training-events/good-great-enhancing-mdt-effectiveness-and-functioning>

III. ChildFirst Scholarships for Law Enforcement

Beginning October 1, 2025, the CJA program will scholarships for 10 law enforcement officers to enroll in CACVA's ChildFirst training. These scholarships cover tuition for the week-long forensic interviewing training. At least four of these scholarships must go to law enforcement officers from rural jurisdictions in Virginia.

IV. Domestic and Sexual Violence (DHSV) Children's Programming Workgroup

In March, the DSVV Children's Programming Workgroup traveled to YWCA South Hampton Roads to learn more about the children's programming in their domestic violence shelter and to tour the Norfolk Family Justice Center. The Family Justice Center (FJC) model appears better suited to communities that have ample transportation offerings. DCJS is exploring similar models that may work in rural communities, which often have limited public transportation options.

DRAFT

Pursuant to § 2.2-3707.1 of the Code of Virginia this DRAFT of the minutes of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and Children's Justice Act (CJA) Advisory Committee is available to the public. The public is cautioned that the information is provided in DRAFT form and is subject to change by the Advisory Committee prior to becoming final. Once the minutes have been finalized, they will be marked "FINAL" and made available to the public.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE/CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

January 24, 2025

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children's Justice Act programs was held virtually on January 24, 2025.

Members Present

Randy Bonds
Jackie Robinson Brock
Judge Eugene Butler
Shamika Byars
Morgan Cox
Davy Fearon
Katharine Hunter
Sandy Karison
Jeannine Panzera
Giselle Pelaez
Pat Popp, Vice-Chair
Eric Reynolds
Lora Smith (for Shannon Hartung)
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair

Members Not Present

Lana Mullins
Ashley Thompson

Guests

Rachel Miller (VDSS Staff to the Citizen Review Panel)
Jeff Williams (VDOE)

Staff Present

McKayla Burnett
Jenna Foster
Laurel Marks
Melissa O'Neill
Terry Willie-Surratt

- I. **Call to Order:** Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM. Members introduced themselves.
- II. **Approval of Minutes:** The committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of the October 25, 2024, meeting. Shamika Byars made a motion to approve the minutes and Randy Bonds provided the second. The motion was approved with Sandy Karison and Davy Fearon abstaining.
- III. **Conflicts of Interest and Financial Disclosure Reminder:** The committee was reminded that as members they are required to complete annual financial disclosure statements. Members should have received emails with instructions for completing the forms. Additionally, every two years, members must complete the Conflict of Interest Act training. Those members required to complete the training this year will be notified.
- IV. **General Assembly Session: Presentation of Bills of Interest**

DCJS and members of the committee reported on bills of interest introduced during the 2025 General Assembly session regarding the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse cases.
- V. **Presentation of Licensed Childcare Updates**

Jeff Williams, Director of Child Care Health and Safety at the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), gave a presentation to the Advisory Committee outlining the responsibility of VDOE around licensing childcare facilities across the Commonwealth. In cases of alleged abuse or neglect, VDOE collaborates with the local Department of Social Services (DSS) and law enforcement during investigations. The DCJS Child Death Investigation Protocol (CDIP) training will be modified to include a section on childcare-related deaths and VDOE's role in their investigation as part of the Unsafe Sleep section.
- VI. **Presentation of Human Trafficking MDT Mandate**

McKayla Burnett, State Trafficking Response Coordinator at DCJS, gave a presentation on the mandate to establish Human Trafficking Multi-Disciplinary Teams across the state. The new mandate, which went into effect on July 1, 2024, requires the team to meet at least once annually, and that the DCJS State Trafficking Coordinator or their designee be invited to at least one Human Trafficking MDT annually in each locality. She shared details about the training and resources created by the DCJS Human Trafficking team.
- VII. **CJA Program Update:** The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee was provided with a written report prior to the meeting detailing significant activities of the CJA program this quarter. The following additional updates were provided:
 - a. Discussion related to the current MDT training provided by the Virginia MDT Stakeholder Group (convened and facilitated by DCJS) and the future enhancements of training content to better support developing MDTs throughout the Commonwealth.
 - b. An MDT locality-specific contact list is being developed now and will be updated annually based on self-reported information.
 - c. The mandatory CJA Grantees Meeting will be held on March 31, 2025, in Bethesda, Maryland.

VIII. CASA Program Update: The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee was provided with a written report prior to the meeting detailing significant activities of the CASA program this quarter. The following additional updates were provided:

- a. A budget amendment of \$161,500 was submitted for the CASA programs in response to the findings of the CASA Expansion Study report.
- b. In December 2024, the National CASA Association issued an updated set of standards for local programs, marking the fourth revision in seven years.

IX. Citizen Review Panel: Prior to the meeting, committee members received copies of the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) response that was provided to the Citizen Review Panel's 2024 recommendations in accordance with the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). They also received a copy of the 2024 recommendations to prepare for discussions on potential revisions for 2025.

Members discussed initial recommendations and will submit additional suggestions to Melissa O'Neill before the next meeting for consideration. Recommendations must be finalized at the April meeting.

X. New Business: Members provided updates, information and news from their respective agencies and disciplines.

XI. Adjourn: Pat Popp made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Giselle Pelaez provided the second. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 12:03 PM.

Next meeting dates:

Friday April 25, 2025

Friday July 25, 2025 – Virtual

**The Court Appointed Special Advocate/Children's Justice Act Advisory
Committee (CASA/CJA)
POLICY FOR THE REMOTE PARTICIPATION OF MEMBERS**

1. AUTHORITY AND SCOPE

- a. This policy is adopted pursuant to the authorization of Va. Code § 2.2- 3708.3 and is to be strictly construed in conformance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA), Va. Code §§ 2.2-3700—3715.
- b. This policy shall not govern an electronic meeting conducted to address a state of emergency declared by the Governor or the Board of Supervisors. Any meeting conducted by electronic communication means under such circumstances shall be governed by the provisions of Va. Code § 2.2-3708.2. This policy also does not apply to an all-virtual public meeting.

2. DEFINITIONS

- a. "Advisory Committee" means the Court Appointed Special Advocate/Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee (CASA/CJA Advisory Committee) or any committee, subcommittee, or other entity of the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee.
- b. "Member" means any member of the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee.
- c. "Remote participation" means participation by an individual member of the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee by electronic communication means in a public meeting where a quorum of the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee is physically assembled, as defined by Va. Code § 2.2-3701.
- d. "Meeting" means a meeting as defined by Va. Code § 2.2-3701.
- e. "Notify" or "notifies," for purposes of this policy, means written notice, such as email or letter. Notice does not include text messages or communications via social media.

3. MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Regardless of the reasons why the member is participating in a meeting from a remote location by electronic communication means, the following conditions must be met for the member to participate remotely:

- a. A quorum of the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee must be physically assembled at the primary or central meeting location; and
- b. Arrangements have been made for the voice of the remotely participating member to be heard by all persons at the primary or central meeting location. If at any point during the meeting the voice of the remotely participating member is no longer able to be heard by all persons at the meeting location, the remotely participating member shall no longer be permitted to participate remotely.

4. PROCESS TO REQUEST REMOTE PARTICIPATION

- a. On or before the day of the meeting, and at any point before the meeting begins, the requesting member must notify the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Chair (or the Vice-Chair if the requesting member is the Chair) that they are unable to physically attend a meeting due to (i) a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance, (ii) a family member's medical condition that requires the member to provide care for such family member, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance, (iii) their principal residence location more than 60 miles from the meeting location, or (iv) a personal matter and identifies with specificity the nature of the personal matter.
- b. The requesting member shall also notify the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee staff liaison of their request, but their failure to do so shall not affect their ability to remotely participate.
- c. If the requesting member is unable to physically attend the meeting due to a personal matter, the requesting member must state with specificity the nature of the personal matter. Remote participation due to a personal matter is limited each calendar year to two meetings or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater. There is no limit to the number of times that a member may participate remotely for the other authorized purposes listed in (i)— (iii) above.
- d. The requesting member is not obligated to provide independent verification regarding the reason for their nonattendance, including the temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition or the family member's medical condition that prevents their physical attendance at the meeting.
- e. The Chair (or the Vice-Chair if the requesting member is the Chair) shall promptly notify the requesting member whether their request is in conformance with this policy, and therefore approved or disapproved.

5. PROCESS TO CONFIRM APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF PARTICIPATION FROM A REMOTE LOCATION

When a quorum of the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee has assembled for the meeting, the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee shall vote to determine whether:

- a. The Chair's decision to approve or disapprove the requesting member's request to participate from a remote location was in conformance with this policy, and
- b. The voice of the remotely participating member can be heard by all persons at the primary or central meeting location.

6. RECORDING IN MINUTES

- a. If the member is allowed to participate remotely due to a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition, a family member's medical condition that requires the member to provide care to the family member, or because their principal residence is located more than 60 miles from the meeting location the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee shall record in its minutes (1) the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee's approval of the member's remote participation; and (2) a general description of the remote location from which the member participated.

- b. If the member is allowed to participate remotely due to a personal matter, such matter shall be cited in the minutes with specificity, as well as how many times the member has attended remotely due to a personal matter, and a general description of the remote location from which the member participated.
- c. If a member's request to participate remotely is disapproved, the disapproval, including the grounds upon which the requested participation violates this policy or VFOIA, shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.

7. CLOSED SESSION

If the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee goes into closed session, the member participating remotely shall ensure that no third party is able to hear or otherwise observe the closed meeting.

8. STRICT AND UNIFORM APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This Policy shall be applied strictly and uniformly, without exception, to the entire membership, and without regard to the identity of the member requesting remote participation or the matters that will be considered or voted on at the meeting. The Chair (or Vice-Chair) shall maintain the member's written request to participate remotely and the written response for a period of one year, or other such time required by records retention laws, regulations, and policies.

Child Welfare

[HB 1727](#)

Status: Approved

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-241, 20-49.1, 20-49.4, 20-124.1, 63.2-903, 63.2-1202, 63.2-1222, and 63.2-1233 of the Code of Virginia, relating to establishment of parent and child relationship; persons who committed sexual assault.

SUMMARY AS INTRODUCED:

Establishment of parent and child relationship; persons who have committed sexual assault. Provides that no parent and child relationship shall be established when a biological parent has been convicted of rape, carnal knowledge, or incest, or has been found by clear and convincing evidence to have engaged in such prohibited conduct, and the child was conceived of such violation or conduct. The bill further provides that a person with a legitimate interest in the child does not include a person whose interest derives from or through a person who has been convicted of or found to have engaged in such conduct by clear and convincing evidence. The bill provides that consent for adoption is not required of a birth father when such father has been found by clear and convincing evidence to have engaged in rape, carnal knowledge, or incest and the child was conceived of such conduct; under current law, such consent is not required when the birth father has been convicted of rape, carnal knowledge, or incest.

[HB 1728](#)

Status: Acts of Assembly Chapter

An Act to amend and reenact § 18.2-67.9 of the Code of Virginia, relating to testimony by child victims and witnesses using two-way closed-circuit television or other securely encrypted two-way audio and video technology; standard.

SUMMARY AS PASSED:

Child victims and witnesses using two-way closed-circuit television or other securely encrypted two-way audio and video technology; standard. Allows the court to order that the testimony of a child be taken by two-way closed-circuit television or other securely encrypted two-way audio and video technology if it finds that the child is unavailable to testify in open court in the presence of the defendant, the jury, the judge, and the public if the court finds, by clear and convincing evidence, based upon expert opinion testimony, that the child will suffer at least moderate emotional trauma that is more than nervousness or excitement or some reluctance to testify as a result of testifying in the defendant's presence and not in the courtroom generally where such trauma would impair the child's ability to communicate.

Under current law, the court may order such testimony be taken by two-way closed-circuit television if it finds that (i) the child has a substantial inability to communicate about the offense or (ii) there is a substantial likelihood, based upon expert opinion testimony, that the child will suffer severe emotional trauma from so testifying.

The bill also extends the application window for the party seeking such order from seven to 14 days before the trial date or such other preliminary proceeding to which such order is to apply.

[HB 1733](#)

Status: Acts of Assembly Chapter

An Act to amend and reenact § 16.1-277.02 of the Code of Virginia, relating to petitions for relief of care and custody of a child; investigation by local department of social services; Office of the Children's Ombudsman work group; report.

SUMMARY AS PASSED HOUSE:

Petitions for relief of care and custody of a child; investigation by local department of social services; Office of

the Children's Ombudsman work group; report. Requires a local department of social services, as a part of its investigation after the referral of a request for a petition for relief of the care and custody of a child, to (i) refer the parent to the local family assessment and planning team and (ii) create a written report. The bill directs the Department of Social Services, in coordination with the Virginia League of Social Services Executives, to create a template for and provide guidance on what should be included in such written report.

The bill also directs the Office of the Children's Ombudsman to convene a work group composed of relevant stakeholders to (a) determine the factors a court should consider when determining whether there is good cause shown for a petitioner's desire to be relieved of the care and custody of a child and (b) explore the potential benefits and considerations of raising the standard of evidence for granting temporary relief of custody from the current standard of preponderance of the evidence to clear and convincing evidence. The bill directs the work group to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Chairs of the House and Senate Committees for Courts of Justice and the Virginia Commission on Youth by November 1, 2025. Certain provisions of the bill have a delayed effective date of January 1, 2026. As introduced, this bill was a recommendation of the Virginia Commission on Youth. This bill is identical to SB 1372.

[HB 1777](#)

Status: Acts of Assembly Chapter

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 2.2-438, 2.2-441, 2.2-445, and 2.2-446 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Office of the Children's Ombudsman; foster youth's right to receive information.

SUMMARY AS INTRODUCED:

Office of the Children's Ombudsman; foster youth's right to receive information. Requires the Department of Social Services or a local department of social services, a children's residential facility, or any child-placing agency to provide certain information along with the contact information for the Office of the Children's Ombudsman to a biological parent, prospective adoptive parent, or foster parent, as well as to any child in foster care age 12 or older upon the opening of a foster care case for such child. The bill also provides that, in relation to complaints made to the Ombudsman, if such child is the complainant, the Ombudsman need not gain the consent of the Department or local department of social services, the children's residential facility, the child-placing agency, or the foster parent or guardian of the child or other person having custody or care of the child to receive information from or communicate with the child. This bill is identical to SB 1406.

[HB 1854](#)

Status: Acts of Assembly Chapter

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-241, 16.1-278.15, and 20-124.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to person with a legitimate interest; parent whose rights have previously been terminated; custody and visitation.

SUMMARY AS PASSED HOUSE:

Party with legitimate interest; parent whose rights have previously been terminated. Allows a parent whose rights previously have been terminated to be considered a party with a legitimate interest for the purposes of filing a custody or visitation petition, provided that the child whose custody or visitation is at issue (i) is at least 14 years of age, (ii) has had a permanency goal previously achieved by adoption, (iii) has had his adoptive parents die or each of such child's adoptive parents has permanently been relieved of custody of such child and each adoptive parent has had his parental rights terminated, and (iv) is in the custody of a local board of social services, and provided that the parent whose rights had previously been terminated has (a) complied with the terms of any written post-adoption contact and communication agreement entered into and (b) maintained a positive, continuous relationship with the child since termination. Under current law, a party with a legitimate interest does not include any person whose parental rights have been terminated by court order, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

HB 2115

Status: Approved

An Act to amend and reenact § 16.1-263 of the Code of Virginia, relating to summonses of a juvenile; custody, visitation, and support proceedings.

SUMMARY AS INTRODUCED:

Summonses of a juvenile; custody, visitation, and support proceedings. Provides that the court may direct the issuance of a summons to a juvenile on its own motion or upon request of a party to a custody or visitation petition. The bill further provides that the court may direct the issuance of a summons to a juvenile on its own motion or for good cause shown by a party to a support proceeding requesting the issuance of such a summons. The bill is a recommendation of the Committee on District Courts.

SB 801

Status: Approved

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 2.2-5209, 2.2-5211, and 2.2-5212 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Children's Services Act; state pool of funds.

SUMMARY AS PASSED SENATE:

Children's Services Act; state pool of funds. Makes a number of changes to the Children's Services Act state pool of funds for the provision of public or private nonresidential or residential services for troubled youth and families, including (i) removing from the purpose of the state pool of funds the consolidation of categorical agency funding and the institution of community responsibility for the provision of services; (ii) removing language specifying that references to funding sources and current placement authority for the target population served by the state pool of funds are for the purpose of accounting for the funds and should not be intended to categorize children and youth into funding streams in order to access services; (iii) modifying the target population served by the state pool of funds by (a) removing references to the Department of Education's private tuition assistance and the Interagency Assistance Fund for Noneducational Placement for Handicapped Children and (b) adding children and youth who are determined to be a child in need of services, as such term is defined in relevant law; (iv) removing the requirement that the financial and legal responsibility for certain special education services remains with the placing jurisdiction, unless the placing jurisdiction has transitioned all appropriate services; (v) requiring that the uniform assessment instrument used to determine eligibility for funding through the state pool of funds be approved by the State Executive Council for Children's Services; and (vi) modifying the eligibility criteria for funding through the state pool of funds by adding language that (a) specifies that the child or youth's emotional or behavioral problems have resulted in the child or youth, or place the child or youth at imminent risk of, entering purchased residential care and (b) includes the determination by a court that the child or youth is a child in need of services, as such term is defined in relevant law. The bill also includes technical changes. As introduced, this bill was a recommendation of the Virginia Commission on Youth.

SB 1277

Status: Approved

An Act to amend and reenact § 8.01-396.2 of the Code of Virginia, relating to minor witnesses; appointment of guardian ad litem in circuit court.

SUMMARY AS INTRODUCED:

Minor witnesses; appointment of guardian ad litem in circuit court. Authorizes a circuit court to appoint a discreet and competent attorney-at-law as guardian ad litem for a minor witness called to testify in a matter before the circuit court involving certain sex offenses. Under current law, a general district court may appoint a guardian ad litem for a minor witness called to testify in any proceeding and the circuit court may continue the appointment or appoint a new

guardian ad litem for such matter on appeal.

[**SB 1372**](#)

Status: Acts of Assembly Chapter

An Act to amend and reenact § 16.1-277.02 of the Code of Virginia, relating to petitions for relief of care and custody of a child; investigation by local department of social services; Office of the Children's Ombudsman work group; report.

SUMMARY AS PASSED SENATE:

Petitions for relief of care and custody of a child; investigation by local department of social services; Office of the Children's Ombudsman work group; report. Requires a local department of social services, as a part of its investigation after the referral of a request for a petition for relief of the care and custody of a child, to (i) refer the parent to the local family assessment and planning team and (ii) create a written report. The bill directs the Department of Social Services, in coordination with the Virginia League of Social Services Executives, to create a template for and provide guidance on what should be included in such written report.

The bill also directs the Office of the Children's Ombudsman to convene a work group composed of relevant stakeholders to (a) determine the factors a court should consider when determining whether there is good cause shown for a petitioner's desire to be relieved of the care and custody of a child and (b) explore the potential benefits and considerations of raising the standard of evidence for granting temporary relief of custody from the current standard of preponderance of the evidence to clear and convincing evidence. The bill directs the work group to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Chairs of the House and Senate Committees for Courts of Justice and the Virginia Commission on Youth by November 1, 2025. Certain provisions of the bill have a delayed effective date of January 1, 2026. As introduced, this bill was a recommendation of the Virginia Commission on Youth. This bill is identical to HB 1733.

[**SB 1406**](#)

Status: Acts of Assembly Chapter

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 2.2-438, 2.2-441, 2.2-445, and 2.2-446 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Office of the Children's Ombudsman; foster youth's right to receive information.

SUMMARY AS INTRODUCED:

Office of the Children's Ombudsman; foster youth's right to receive information. Requires the Department of Social Services or a local department of social services, a children's residential facility, or any child-placing agency to provide certain information along with the contact information for the Office of the Children's Ombudsman to a biological parent, prospective adoptive parent, or foster parent, as well as to any child in foster care age 12 or older upon the opening of a foster care case for such child. The bill also provides that, in relation to complaints made to the Ombudsman, if such child is the complainant, the Ombudsman need not gain the consent of the Department or local department of social services, the children's residential facility, the child-placing agency, or the foster parent or guardian of the child or other person having custody or care of the child to receive information from or communicate with the child. This bill is identical to HB 1777.

[**SB 1460**](#)

Status: Governor's Recommendation

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 19.2-327.15, 19.2-327.17, 19.2-327.18, and 19.2-327.19 of the Code of Virginia, relating to issuance of writ of vacatur for victims of human trafficking.

SUMMARY AS PASSED:

Issuance of writ of vacatur for victims of human trafficking. Amends the procedure that allows victims of human

trafficking, defined in the bill, to file a petition of vacatur in circuit court to have certain convictions vacated and the police and court records expunged for such convictions. This bill is identical to HB 2393.

Governor's Recommendation

(SB1460)

GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION

1. Line 48, enrolled, after trafficking:

strike

and

2. Line 49, enrolled, after adjudication

insert

: and (vi) that the petitioner has ceased to be a victim of human trafficking or has sought rehabilitative services

Counts: HB: 6 HJ: 0 SB: 5 SJ: 0