



[www.casacookcounty.org](http://www.casacookcounty.org)

# CITY Initiative

## Creating Independent Transitions for Youth (CITY) Initiative

Youth in the foster care system at teenage years will most likely remain in the system until they reach adulthood. Without the proper support and guidance of caring adults, these youth face a daunting future filled with many challenges and uncertainties. At CASA of Cook County, we feel that every young person deserves a bright future. Through CITY, young people have the opportunity to receive a caring volunteer advocate to help them with the tools necessary for a successful transition to adulthood.

### About CITY

CITY recruits, trains and supervises volunteer Advocates to work with youth age 16 and older in the foster care system to evaluate their individual needs and determine—with the assistance of the court and all involved parties—the services and tools needed to reflect each young person's individual goals of independence. In addition to assisting the youth make and take action on their own plans for a successful future, the volunteers monitor the youth's current living situation for safety and appropriateness and help youth reconnect with extended family members in order to develop long-term supportive relationships.

Youth benefit from having a CITY Advocate in multiple ways. Because each volunteer is assigned to only one case at a time, the youth receive the individual attention they deserve and are able to build a trusting relationship with their volunteer. Through regular and direct communication between the youth and Advocate, the youth's wants, needs, and desires for their future are clearly communicated to the court. Most importantly, youth begin to understand how to advocate for themselves and how to become successful, productive members of their communities.

A 2006 study\* of youth transitioning from foster care in Illinois found that over 1/3 did not have a GED or diploma, 60% were unemployed, 14% had been homeless at some point since leaving the system, and 12% indicated that they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat.

\* *Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago*

**CASA of Cook County's mission  
is to give abused and neglected  
children a voice in court and work  
toward securing them safe and  
permanent homes.**



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# Advocacy

## Volunteering with CASA of Cook County as an Advocate

CASA of Cook County is the only volunteer-based organization that empowers everyday citizens to become officers of the court. In an overstrained foster care system with access to very limited resources, many abused and neglected children all too often slip through the cracks. **CASA volunteers change that.** Appointed by judges, CASA volunteers gather information from everyone involved in the child's life — teachers, therapists, doctors, foster parents, relatives, caseworkers, attorneys — and then provide the judge recommendations on how to support a child through the system until the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. While others may come and go, CASA volunteers provide stability and a consistent presence that children need in order to thrive.

## Why you should volunteer

Last year, over 300 CASA volunteers advocated for 700 abused and neglected children. However, there are approximately 6,500 children in the foster system in Cook County—much more than the current volunteer base can handle. Our volunteers are an amazing force for good, but we need more of them. Our vision is that every child who needs a volunteer will have one. With your help, we can reach that goal.

## Who is a CASA Volunteer?

Anyone with a desire to help abused and neglected children in our communities can volunteer.

Regardless of your professional background, you can be directly involved in helping a child find a safe and permanent home by becoming a CASA volunteer. While some volunteers may have experience working within the foster care or legal system, becoming an Advocate does not require a special degree. We provide you with the training and tools you need.

## What does it take to be a CASA volunteer?

The first step: Every volunteer completes the application process, including a background check, and participates in a 30-hour training course.

After successfully completing the training, the volunteer is assigned a case. A volunteer's average time commitment is about 10 hours per month.

During that time, volunteers Advocates learn about the case, talk to everyone involved and report back to the court to help judges make more informed decisions about children's futures.

Volunteer advocates are asked to dedicate themselves to at least one-year of advocacy to help a child in need.

Advocates are supervised and guided every step of the way by our professional staff.

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# Donating

## Your Support Can Help CASA of Cook County

Four-year-old Natasha lived in 7 different foster homes within her first year in the child welfare system. When she had to move again to her eighth home, because of special medical needs, Natasha's dedicated, volunteer Advocate recommended that a meeting be held to ensure her new foster home was more carefully selected for long-term care. The court agreed and ordered a meeting between the lawyers, caseworkers, guardians, and, of course, the dedicated Advocate to help identify the best home for Natasha—one where she could receive the loving care she needed without the fear of being moved again once she was settled.

## Donate Now

**The generosity of caring individuals is essential to the success of CASA of Cook County.**

Your donation will help provide Natasha, and children like her, with an Advocate who:

- Volunteers 10 hours each month and visits Natasha in her home
- Attends court and provides the judge with a report about Natasha, including Natasha's wishes
- Provides the judge with vital information about Natasha's education and health challenges
- Ensures that Natasha receives important therapy so that she can become the happy child she deserves to be
- Breaks the cycle of child abuse by ensuring that Natasha lives in a safe, permanent and loving home

**Visit our website** at [www.casacookcounty.org](http://www.casacookcounty.org) or **mail** your donation to CASA of Cook County, 910 W. Van Buren #339, Chicago, IL 60607

### Other Ways to help

- **In-kind Donations**—CASA of Cook County appreciates the donation of printing, catering, office supplies, and other in-kind services.
- **Matching Gift Programs**—Double or even triple the value of your gift with your employer's Matching Gift Program. Just ask your resource department for a matching form. Many companies even make charitable donations that match the time you spend volunteering.
- **Third Party Fundraising Event**—If you're having an event, make it a fundraiser for CASA of Cook County! Proceeds from private, corporate, or other events help to expand existing services to more children in need.
- **Stock Donations**—Although every gift to CASA is tax-deductible, donations of stock can significantly increase your tax benefits. By donating appreciated stock, you can avoid the capital gains taxes that you would have paid if you had instead sold the stock and donated the cash proceeds.
- **Planned Giving**—If you are planning to leave a portion of your estate to charity, please keep CASA of Cook County in mind. Please let us know if you have named CASA of Cook County in your will, so that we can thank you for your planned gift.
- **Corporate Partnerships**—CASA of Cook County offers a variety of corporate partnership opportunities related to special events and projects. Each opportunity is designed to fulfill the specific needs of both parties involved.

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# Friends

## The CASA Friends Network

The CASA Friends Network is perfect for anyone who wants to help CASA of Cook County, but whose life is currently too busy to train as a traditional CASA volunteer Advocate. It's also great for current or retired Advocates who have additional talents to contribute to CASA of Cook County or who just want to keep in touch with what's going on at the CASA office.

## Our Mission

CASA Friends Network is a coalition of individuals who support CASA of Cook County, its Advocates and the children they serve. The CASA Friends Network is active in supporting and staffing special events, strengthening community awareness, and increasing public support for the mission of CASA of Cook County.

## Opportunities within the CASA Friends Network

CASA Friends can contribute to the success of CASA of Cook County in a variety of ways

**Special Events**—Volunteer for CASA of Cook County's fundraising events by either serving on a committee, helping out at the event, or connecting CASA staff with new resources.

**Speakers Bureau**—Help spread the word about the important work of CASA volunteers by attending volunteer fairs or speaking at informational meetings.

**CITY Friends**—The Creating Independent Transitions for Youth (CITY) initiative helps prepare older foster youth to successfully age out of the foster system. You can help by offering your expertise in critical areas such as resume writing and other life skills.

**Other**—CASA of Cook County occasionally requests help with one-time projects such as special mailings or data entry.

## As a CASA Friend, you will enjoy

- Email notification of special events or projects where help is needed
- Subscription to *Speak Up!*, our print newsletter, and other e-updates
- Invitation to meetings and events throughout the year to meet fellow CASA Friends

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