



# Child Advocates of Placer County

Making a lifelong difference for a child

United Way California Capital Region is proud to have Child Advocates of Placer County as one of its 142 certified agencies in our five-county region: Amador, El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo.

Child Advocates of Placer County began with a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program. The program pairs a volunteer with a foster youth to serve as their mentor and voice in the court system. There are 300-400 kids in foster care over the course of a year in Placer County. But the county only has 1 judge, 3 attorneys and 10 social workers to work with these children. That is where CASA comes in to help. "The CASA volunteer is the eyes and ears of the child and the voice of the child. It is amazing how much our court and child welfare agency collaborate with our program to allow the CASA to speak up on behalf of the child." says Don Kleinfelder, Executive Director.

Child Advocates recruits, screens, trains and supervises community volunteers to become CASA's. CASA volunteers spend time one on one with their child weekly. While the volunteers bring positive impact to their child's life, the volunteers are also affected. "The impact on the volunteers is tremendous, how it changes their lives. More and more the volunteers are saying that the experience made their life better. We are developing a new community of people who are coming together and making connections with the youth", says Don Kleinfelder.

Based on the success of CASA, Child Advocates has expanded with several additional programs:

**Adult to Youth (A2Y) Mentors:** Two years ago, the Placer County Office of Education approached CASA with request to provide mentors for children to help prevent them from entering the court system. At risk children are identified by school personnel and social workers. The adult mentor is provided to help them find what they need to succeed. Child Advocates currently has 50 kids working within the mentor program.

**Family CASA Program:** Child Advocates has created a family mentor program to work with young families on basic life skills such as home care, child care, shopping and basic skills to make sure the child has a stable home environment and does not re-enter the child welfare system. In past years as much as 25% of children under age 5 re-entered the child welfare system within a year after being reunited with their parents. Every time a child is moved out of their home it is traumatic. The Family CASA program aims to stop this cycle.

The program has grown rapidly, with 20 children served in 2006, and 268 in 2010. Volunteers donated 194,000 hours in 2010, and each volunteer spends money to share activities with their child. CASA has 195 volunteers currently, but needs more male volunteers at this time. 20% of volunteers are male and 50% of kids are male. Most of those kids have never had a consistent male role in their life.

For more information about Child Advocates of Placer County, visit [www.casaplacer.org](http://www.casaplacer.org) or call 530-887-1006.

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