



CASA Quarterly

The Newsletter of CASA Philadelphia



- Fall 2026-

News from the Executive Director's Desk

Ten Years of Putting Hope into Action

A Reflection from Executive Director Happi Grillon, MSW

As I reflect on my 10 years as Executive Director of CASA of Philadelphia, I am filled with gratitude, pride, and renewed commitment to the children and youth we serve. When I think about this journey, I think about the many volunteers who have opened their hearts, the staff who show up every day with dedication, and the children whose resilience inspires us to keep moving forward.

Over the past decade, CASA Philadelphia has grown in ways that strengthen our ability to advocate for children in foster care. We have expanded our volunteer community, invested in our staff, and created new opportunities to support the people who make our mission possible.

Ten highlights from the past 10 years:

1. A 100% increase in active volunteers.

Over the past decade, CASA Philadelphia has doubled the number of active volunteers, expanding our community of dedicated advocates and strengthening our ability to stand alongside children and youth in foster care.

2. A 102% increase in our annual budget.

Over the past decade, CASA Philadelphia has more than doubled its annual budget, strengthening our ability to invest in our programs, staff, and volunteers while advancing our mission of advocating for children and youth in foster care.

3. Trained all volunteers to serve as Educational Decision Makers, if needed.

This expanded our capacity to advocate for children's educational needs and rights, helping ensure that their voices and best interests are represented in educational decisions.

4. Launched the CASA Speaker Series in November 2016.

This initiative has created opportunities for volunteers, child welfare professionals, and community members to learn, connect, and engage in conversations about the needs of children and youth in foster care.

5. Increased monthly in-service training opportunities for volunteers.

We have expanded opportunities for ongoing learning, helping volunteers build their knowledge and confidence as advocates.

6. Established monthly peer support groups for volunteers.

These gatherings provide a space for connection, encouragement, shared experiences, and the support that sustains long-term advocacy.

7. Held monthly Information Sessions for prospective volunteers.

These sessions have helped introduce more community members

to the CASA mission and the opportunity to advocate for children.

8. Launched the CASA Quarterly Newsletter.

Our quarterly newsletter keeps supporters, volunteers, and community partners informed about CASA Philadelphia's work, accomplishments, and opportunities to get involved.

9. Launched CASA Connections, our monthly internal newsletter for volunteers.

This communication keeps volunteers informed, engaged, and connected to the resources, training opportunities, and updates that support their advocacy.

10. Invested in our staff through compensation, benefits, and growth.

We have strengthened staff compensation and benefits, expanded our team, and improved staff retention. These investments have allowed us to provide more consistent support to volunteers and strengthen our capacity to advocate for children.

Behind every one of these accomplishments are people.

Volunteers who make time in their busy lives to visit a child, attend a school meeting, review a case, or speak up in court. Staff who provide guidance, encouragement, and expertise. Community partners who share our belief that every child deserves safety, stability, and a permanent, loving home.

Over these 10 years, I have learned that organizational growth is meaningful only when it strengthens our ability to fulfill our mission. At CASA Philadelphia, we continue to innovate while staying close to our purpose: training and supporting community volunteers to advance the welfare of children in foster care through effective advocacy.

I am especially grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such committed volunteers, staff, board members, and community partners. Together, we have built a stronger CASA Philadelphia, and there is still so much work ahead.

Thank you for believing in CASA, for investing in our mission, and for putting hope into action for children and youth in foster care.

Mark Your Calendar!

Two Upcoming CASA Philadelphia Speaker Series Webinars

CASA Philadelphia Speaker Series 2026

Webinar

November 5, 2026 12pm



Reframing Vision Care for Children in Foster Care

Uncorrected vision problems can exacerbate learning difficulties, social isolation and emotional distress. Children in foster care already face disproportionate risk for these difficulties. Early identification and treatment of vision issues can significantly improve a child's ability to succeed academically and engage socially.

Our SPEAKERS will be:

Judy Dawson RN BSN, Nurse Coordinator Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Fostering Health Program

Kristine Fortin MD MPH, Medical Director Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Fostering Health Program

Katherine Kellom BA, Director Qualitative Research Core, administrative manager, PolicyLab at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Emma Golub MPH, Policy Analyst PolicyLab at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

PA CLE and CLU are provided by the Support Center for Child Advocates. Application for credits will be sent after you register for webinar.

Training OBJECTIVES:

1. Recognize the unique vision care needs and barriers experienced by children and youth in foster care, including disruptions in care, placement changes, transportation challenges, and difficulty accessing providers.
2. Appreciate and Learn from the work being done by colleagues at the Fostering Health Program around access to vision care and research regarding this critical area of health and well-being for foster youth.
3. Determine strategies for practical and systematic interventions to improve access to vision care for youth in foster care.
4. Incorporate lived experience perspectives of impacts of vision care into program design and policy recommendations.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Webinar
February 19, 2027 1pm

**Recognizing Fetal Alcohol
Syndrome (FASD):
From Screening and
Diagnosis to Effective Court
Advocacy**



SAVE THE DATE!
Registration information
to be announced!

CASA Philadelphia Speaker Series

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CASA ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT SPRING 2027

Inquire by emailing
info@casaphiladelphia.org



Meet the Newest Addition to the CASA Board



Brendan Nyreen is a Senior Investment Product Manager at Vanguard, where he leads teams responsible for investment products and portfolio construction capabilities supporting financial advisors and clients. He relocated to Philadelphia two years ago and was eager to become more involved in the local community through meaningful service.

Brendan was drawn to CASA's mission because of the critical role advocates play in supporting children in the foster care system. He is particularly passionate about helping ensure every child has a consistent voice championing their best interests.

As a member of the Board and Finance Committee, he hopes to leverage his background in strategy, investment management, governance, and financial oversight to help strengthen CASA Philadelphia's long-term impact and sustainability.

Discover What's New on The CASA Blog:



*Every Diploma
Tells a Story:
Celebrating CASA's
Class of 2026*



**CASA Is a Family
Affair: The Brill
Family's
Journey in
Advocacy**

Children in foster care deserve a dedicated advocate. CASA Philadelphia trains and supports volunteers who help ensure their voices are heard.

Scan the QR code to make a gift today. Your support strengthens advocacy for children throughout Philadelphia County. Thank you for making a difference.

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