



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Child abuse has high costs nationwide, but can be combated right here in Austin

AUSTIN, TEXAS (February 6, 2012) – A new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention finds that the child abuse and neglect occurring in the span of one year will cost our country \$124 billion throughout the life of the victims. For a survivor of child abuse, the average costs over their lifetime will be \$210,012, including health care, child welfare, criminal justice and special education costs. In Texas alone, the Child Protective Services budget is \$1.2 billion per year, not including additional costs such as health care, mental health services, etc.

Child abuse and neglect is a tremendous burden on our taxpayers, but more importantly the lives and futures of our community's children are at stake. Fortunately, our community can take action as Court Appointed Special Advocates or CASA volunteers.

Children with CASA volunteers to advocate for them are substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care, half as likely to re-enter foster care and significantly more likely to end up in safe, permanent homes than children without CASA. Children with CASA are more likely to get the services they need, including medical, mental health and educational services, to give them a better chance at a successful future as healthy, contributing adults. Children with CASA spend an average of eight months fewer in care than those without. Every month less that a child remains in care saves taxpayers \$1,835 in foster care payments.

Everyday these diverse community volunteers are helping children who've been victims of abuse and neglect to overcome trauma, reach safe, permanent and loving homes, lead more successful lives and ultimately be less of a burden on the taxpayer. CASA of Travis County served 81% of the children in care in Austin last year, but more volunteers are needed to help.

CASA of Travis County hosts Open Houses on the first Tuesday of each month, including Tuesday, February 7th, from 10 am to 6 pm at their offices where those interested can stop by to ask questions and meet our staff. The CASA offices are located at 7701 N Lamar Blvd, Ste 301.

About CASA of Travis County

CASA of Travis County speaks up for children who've been abused or neglected by empowering our community to volunteer as advocates for them in the court system. When the state steps in to protect a child's safety, a judge appoints a trained CASA volunteer to make independent and informed recommendations in the child's best interest. After 33 hours of intensive training, background checks and being sworn-in by a judge, volunteers are appointed to a child or family of children and spend an average of 20 hours a month advocating for these children for at least a year. Created in 1985, CASA of Travis County is now one of the top ten CASA programs in the nation, supporting more than 550 volunteers who advocate for at least 1,400 children a year.

Learn more about volunteering with CASA of Travis County at www.casatavis.org or 512.459.2272.

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