

South Dakota CASA Commission Meeting  
April 29, 2015  
8:30am Central  
Room 412, Capitol Building, Pierre, SD

Commissioners: Kristie Fiegen, Judge Patrick Smith, Judge Karen Jeffries, Kim Max, JoLynn Bostrom

Court Improvement Committee: Judge Jeff Davis

SCAO: Nancy Allard, Sara Kelly, Alison Goetz (recording secretary)

CASA Directors: Scott Bader, Amy Benda, Kate Kelley, Sherri Rodgers-Conti, Julie Wermers, Jackie Horton

Public Attendees: Jennifer Stalley

### **Call the Meeting to Order**

Ms. Max called the meeting to order at 8:32am.

The Commissioners, CIP members, and SCAO staff introduced themselves to the group.

### **Commission Vote for Chair and Vice-Chair**

Ms. Fiegen moved and Judge Jeffries seconded the motion to appoint Ms. Max as Chair for the CASA Commission. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Judge Jeffries moved and Judge Smith seconded the motion to appoint Ms. Fiegen as the Vice Chair for the CASA Commission. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

### **Overview of Roles, Responsibilities, and Process of the Commission / History of CASA**

Judge Davis and the Commissioners provided a historical overview of the CASA Commission, as well as an overview of the roles, responsibilities, and process of the Commission.

### **Award History and Amount Available for 2015**

Ms. Max announced that there is \$195,000 available for the 2015 award year, which is \$5,000 more than last year.

### **Approve 2014 Meeting Minutes**

Judge Jeffries moved and Ms. Fiegen seconded the motion to approve the 2014 CASA meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

### **Presentations and Q&A**

### **First Circuit CASA (Mitchell)**

Ms. Horton thanked the Commissioners for their support. She explained that training and community presentations have been the focus this year. They had 11 new volunteers and with National CASA funding, were able to start serving two new areas. Nine families and 14 children were served in the first quarter. The board has been active. They hired Non-profit Leadership Solutions, did board development training, and worked on strategic planning. They have one new hire, Bonnie Scott, who came from Life Quest.

Through a CIP grant, they were able to implement Optima Software. Their books were audited in 2014 by Carlin and Miller.

Fundraisers completed this past year include a church concert, a 50/50 raffle, Baskets of Hope, Cool Nights Warm Hearts, and the popcorn ball event. They ended the year in the black with no children on the waiting list.

Ms. Max complimented Ms. Horton on the training aspect. Ms. Max added that law enforcement training to volunteers is valuable. Ms. Bostrom commended Ms. Horton for zero children on the waiting list. Judge Smith congratulated Ms. Horton on this achievement as well.

Ms. Fiegen noted that the board engagement this past year was good to see, as well as the community trainings and board giving at 100%. She added that strong boards make strong organizations.

Ms. Fiegen asked about #4 on page 8 under the list of staff as it is hard to figure out who is paid and who are volunteers. Ms. Horton replied that she is paid as well as Bonnie who replaced Jen Lowrie. LaRae Oberloh was part-time and was paid through CASA grant. Viola was not paid and Jean was an unpaid intern. They have two full-time paid staff.

Ms. Fiegen asked about internal controls. Ms. Horton explained that the Experience Works employee (Viola), along with another staff, open the mail, date stamp, and distribute the mail. Viola writes receipts and deposits checks at the bank. Ms. Horton files the paperwork. Viola is in the office Monday-Thursday. On Fridays, Ms. Horton and another staff open the mail and do not do money deposits on this day.

Ms. Fiegen asked about payroll. Ms. Horton replied that they looked at outsourcing payroll but it was not cost effective at this time.

Ms. Fiegen noted that the board looked at salary reviews and that is good to keep up with the market.

Ms. Fiegen asked about their strategic plan for the next 3 years. Ms. Horton stated they are in the planning process of strategic planning for 3 years starting in the summer of 2015.

Ms. Horton noted that the board looked at the accountability piece in the strategic plan and now each member has a certain role.

Ms. Fiegen asked about their board development structure. Ms. Horton stated they have a committee to recruit new members and the makeup of the board includes a deputy sheriff, someone from the insurance industry, a former nonprofit executive director, an employee from St. Joseph's Indian School,

office managers, a financial development director, and a social worker. They do not currently have an accountant but have a banker who is the treasurer and no attorney after some attempts to recruit one.

### **Southeast CASA (Yankton)**

Ms. Rodgers-Conti thanked the Commissioners for their support. She noted that it has been 3 years since they first assigned their first volunteer. Sixty-two children have been served so far.

Ms. Rodgers-Conti explained that Southeast CASA is a United Way agency and that they participate in their activities. Fundraisers have included a reverse raffle, a Superhero Fun Run, and a golf ball drop. They will put on a second gala event and each year they do a direct mailer. During the holiday season, the board does a friend-raiser/thank you event. A USD sorority does two fundraisers a year for CASA and help with the other events. They also received funds from a local poker run.

Ms. Rodgers-Conti informed the group that they have five new board members since last summer. They are planning to have a board retreat this fall to focus on strategic planning.

They have 13 trained CASA Volunteers and advocated for 24 children. Seventy-one percent of children served are age 5 or younger (3 infants). They do a monthly in-service for volunteers on different topics.

They plan to expand their service area from Yankton County by July 1 to Clay and Bon Homme Counties. The office hired a second staff person who has experience working with CASA.

Ms. Bostrom commended Ms. Rodgers-Conti on the 100% children served. She asked how many children they expect to help in Clay and Bon Homme Counties. Ms. Rodgers-Conti stated that Bon Homme has one or two cases a year, Clay County has about two-thirds of what Yankton County has, and they expect to double their load.

Ms. Max stated she was excited to see expansion and asked where the board is at with this. Ms. Rodgers-Conti replied that they struggled with a board that was an establishing board to a board that is transitioning to a sustaining board and as term limits have expired or members have resigned they've replaced with people who are passionate and understand their role better. She explained that she does a board orientation, which outlines expectations.

Ms. Max asked what the plans are for fundraising in the new communities. Ms. Rodgers-Conti replied that they have never taken money out of reserve funds and that the new staff person is from Vermillion and will be based there. They are planning to have one fundraiser in Clay County and the new hire will be tasked with that development. There is an advisory committee for Clay County that includes professionals with a wide range of backgrounds helping them get started.

Ms. Max asked how many board members they currently have. Ms. Rodgers-Conti stated they have 13 board members and plan to replace with people from the advisory committee and get members from the other two counties.

Ms. Fiegen asked what Ms. Conti-Rodgers title is and who manages staff. Ms. Rodgers-Conti stated her title is program director and that she manages staff.

Ms. Fiegen asked why no volunteers were recruited last year. Ms. Rodgers-Conti replied that it was her decision not to train new volunteers. They had 13 volunteers and had not lost any of those. Four volunteers applied, two applicants didn't work out, and she didn't feel training two people was a good use of her time. Ms. Fiegen asked if volunteers are recruited or if they wait for applications. Ms. Rodgers-Conti replied that she does not recruit but the volunteers do. Ms. Fiegen complimented the 1,200 participants at the fundraisers and the mission moments at board meetings. Ms. Fiegen asked what the strategic steps are for the Clay County and Bon Homme expansion. Ms. Rodgers-Conti replied that when she wrote the grant they did not have the advisory board yet. The steps are to look at the case numbers and need, financial needs, adding a second staff person, reach out to social services, and reach out to judges and states attorneys. There has been some press in the new areas and an announcement was made at a sorority event.

Ms. Fiegen asked if the advisory committee understands their role and goals. Ms. Rodgers-Conti stated they have helped CASA have visibility in the community. They are community leaders and have an idea of what CASA is all about. The goal is to have doors open in the community.

Ms. Fiegen asked if board members are voted on because it is not reflected in the minutes. Ms. Rodgers-Conti stated they are voted on.

Ms. Fiegen asked about payroll in 2013. Ms. Rodgers-Conti stated she was paid a bonus at the end of the year and that they have a bookkeeper that does Federal/Employment taxes. Ms. Fiegen stated that it didn't look like employees were paid all the time and expressed concern about being compliant with federal laws.

Ms. Rodgers-Conti stated she worked 3/4 time at one point and then was reinstated to full-time. She ended up working some overtime and that is the reason for the bonus. Ms. Fiegen stated to ask the board review payroll and federal/state laws in ensure compliance. .

Ms. Fiegen asked about the role of the hiring committee for the board and hiring staff, as it seems they are managing staff. Ms. Rodgers-Conti stated she asked for some help from the board with the hiring process.

Ms. Fiegen asked if they have a board development committee. Ms. Rodgers-Conti stated that they do and they are active. The board is still missing someone from the financial world and that this committee meets separately from the regular board and that she does not attend these meetings. Ms. Fiegen asked if Ms. Rodgers-Conti has asked to attend board development committee meetings, because a strong organization has the director involved with the discussions, normally. Mr. Rodger-Conti stated that she thought it was not her role to be involved in board development. Ms. Fiegen asked if they do orientation. Ms. Rodgers-Conti stated when they approach someone to join the board they provide information to that person about the board and she reaches out to them and she conducts the orientation.

**Sioux Falls Area CASA (Sioux Falls)**

Ms. Benda thanked the Commissioner's for their support. She explained to the Commission that she is the point person for National CASA. Some 2015 highlights include 20 years of CASA in Sioux Falls and a Red Shoe Extravaganza fundraising event which raised \$20,000. The board made the decision to continue the event next year. They added a Volunteer Development Manager position with the help from grants from the United Way and Rotary West. Heather Miller was hired last fall from within the organization. They have seen great improvements with recruitment, retention, and recognition efforts.

Ms. Benda explained that training now includes a role-playing section, which was well received by the volunteers. The board and volunteers have monthly in-services, which are planned 6-9 months in advance and they invite other groups/agencies to attend.

Ms. Benda explained that they converted to Optima software and plans to put all volunteers on Optima by July 2016. They currently have 25 licenses and the volunteers like using it. The organization underwent strategic planning last fall. The Development Committee works closely with Heather. They had a recognition event and challenged guests to bring someone who might be a good volunteer. The chair of the Development Committee owns an ad agency and he helped them come up with a message map activity. They also created a promo video with their volunteers and judges – one video is for United Way and the other video is for other organizations. Ms. Benda explained with the new volunteer development staff person hired, she will now have more time for fundraising and is working on big goals for next year and growing partnerships with organizations, and businesses that can help share their story.

Ms. Benda explained that board meetings are now structured with the first 15 minutes to review financials, the next 30 minutes is when they plan board training, or have a brainstorming session, and the last 15 minutes includes a mission moment. Board giving is at 100%.

Ms. Max asked what Ms. Benda's role is as a National CASA representative since South Dakota no longer has a state association. Ms. Benda explained that SD used to have an association and in 2013, at the point the association's effectiveness went down, it was decided that SD didn't need an association. SD CASAs have a state network but not an association. Ms. Benda is the representative for the state for NCASA conference calls and meetings. She noted that the National CASA director is retiring and they are looking for a new CEO. The regional CASA positions were eliminated and now National CASA is restructuring. The restructuring is in developmental stages. NCASA now has offices in Seattle and Washington, DC.

Ms. Bostrom asked what is planned for new volunteers, as there are 31 new volunteers and 41 resigned. Ms. Benda replied that it is part of the process to clean house. With Heather in the new position to keep up with volunteer status, she will take the PR role too and they are working on an overall plan now.

Ms. Fiigen stated she was glad to see the volunteer goal, likes the new position, and commended her on the three fundraisers that are 3<sup>rd</sup> party.

Ms. Fiigen asked if board members serve 2 terms of 3 years each, could they take a break and come back on the board. Ms. Benda stated they have two, 3-year terms. Ms. Fiigen asked if they could change their by-laws regarding this. Ms. Benda replied that she thinks so.

Ms. Fiigen asked about new volunteer training and if there is anything all CASA's can work together on to train across the state. Ms. Benda replied that there are certain parts that are the same and then

certain parts are localized. Ms. Fiegen asked how many hours of training could be local and how many hours could be general. Ms. Benda replied that 30 hours total are needed – half local and half of the hours general. Ms. Fiegen asked if any of the trainings could be recorded and uploaded to share. Ms. Benda replied that National CASA has flex learning and some hours are online and then some are in-person. There is a \$70 per person fee for this type of training.

Ms. Bostrom noted that she likes the recognition efforts and thank you notes written by board members.

### **East Central CASA (Brookings)**

Ms. Wermers thanked the Commissioners for their support. She stated that East Central CASA covers the same counties as in the past including the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe and then case-by-case in Beadle County. They are looking forward to expanding in Watertown. Last year they trained 7 new volunteers with one in Watertown. They allow an independent study for training and then the volunteers meet with the volunteer coordinator for more training.

Ms. Wermers explained that they hosted a Fire and Ice event and had a record turnout. They are looking at ways to expand and strengthen and have 100% giving from staff and board members. They also had some 3rd party fundraising events. They are looking for volunteers to help with the diverse group of children they serve. They had a booth at the Brookings Arts Festival in July. They previously had an issue with wine at a fundraising event, but the legislature passed HB120, which will make this type of fundraising effort more feasible in the future. In 2014, they worked with 46 children and 22 volunteers. They offer in-service training to volunteers along with webinars and the UJS training.

Ms. Wermers stated that the board did look at a financial control policy and made check signer changes. Ms. Wermers and a board member signs the checks, if a board member is not available Ms. Wermers and a staff person will sign. They have received free advertising from Brookings Transit and were featured on a Live United radio ad. They will distribute a survey in 2015 to judges, attorneys, and DSS workers to find out their responses to their CASA volunteers. Staff remains the same in the office and the case manager is now a licensed social worker.

Ms. Max noted that East Central CASA has a lot of counties to cover and asked how they are handling working in Beadle County. Ms. Wermers replied that Judge Foley requested a CASA volunteer for a case and they realize the numbers are high there.

Judge Jeffries asked about their relationship with the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe. Ms. Wermers replied that they have an MOU with the tribe and the involvement goes up and down. They used to have an office in Flandreau when they had funding through National CASA but when that funding was lost that office was closed. There are about 4-5 tribal advocates in Flandreau and a new social worker. Ms. Wermers commented that it has been challenging lately, but they continue to make efforts. Ms. Bostrom asked about jurisdiction. Ms. Wermers replied that the majority of cases originate in tribal court and that sometimes the jurisdiction can be tricky.

Ms. Bostrom commended Ms. Wermers on zero children on the waiting list and that 96% of children keep the same volunteer.

Ms. Fiegen asked about why the number of board members was only at seven. Ms. Wermers replied that they can have up to 13 board members, but the board seems to function well the way it is set up. Ms. Fiegen asked if there is a board development committee. Ms. Wermers replied that they work at it as a whole and every other month development is discussed.

Ms. Fiegen asked about the other personnel line item who was paid \$6,000. Ms. Wermers stated a limited part-time person was hired to fill in hours when Erin was working on her MSW.

Ms. Fiegen asked about internal controls and who signs checks. Ms. Wermers replied that the bookkeeper cuts checks and a board member and she sign them. The bank statements are online and they have debit card. Ms. Fiegen replied a board member should sign every check and not two staff members when a board member is gone. Vote on more board members to be check signers.

Ms. Fiegen stated that she didn't see goals listed for the Watertown expansion. Ms. Wermers stated that the expansion has been challenging. They want a face from Watertown to help with the expansion and when funding was cut last year, the board pulled back to make sure it had a successful plan. They continue to make steps forward and are still discussing at the board level to decide what the best route is at this point. Ms. Fiegen stated that expansion is hard and that they need a plan and buy-in. Ms. Wermers stated the good volunteer candidate they had trained in Watertown is now relocating to Yankton.

### **Northern Hills CASA (Spearfish)**

Ms. Kelley thanked the Commissioners for their support. She explained that 110 children were served in four counties using 35 volunteers. They are using the National CASA curriculum geared towards children aging out of the system. They are working with the older children to make sure they have a plan to go out on their own and sometimes the CASA volunteer can help connect them with resources to make that transition easier. Part of the curriculum is online and part is in the classroom. They also brought in young adults who have aged out of system to share their experience.

Ms. Kelly stated that their visitation center opened and the room is only for CASA children visits. The center includes a kitchen, playroom, craft, and outdoor area. It provides a safe, secure place to have confidential visits. Part of the grant for the center included installing a security system. Social Services use the center to do family visits. They opened the center last year in May and had 99 family visits by the end of the Year.

Ms. Kelley stated that last year they did a facilities tour of treatment facilities and children agencies. Seventh Circuit CASA also attended the tour. The board had a strategic planning session in March with the Chiesman Center. The board is currently reviewing the material and will be voting next meeting on the plan. The plan includes action items assigned to people with deadlines. The board development committee is working on recruiting board members from other communities.

Ms. Kelly stated that last winter they were approached by an orthodontics office to be recipients of one of their fundraisers, as well as from a local chiropractor's fundraiser. These events also helped recruit volunteers.

Judge Jeffries asked how many board members can be on the board. Ms. Kelley replied that they have 9 members and allow up to 15. Judge Jeffries asked where the volunteers are from. Ms. Kelley stated most are from Lawrence, Meade, Butte, and Corson Counties.

Ms. Bostrom thanked Ms. Kelley for zero children on the waiting list and that there are not many volunteers but all of the children were served. She added that connecting with older kids is great.

Judge Jeffries asked if they receive funds from DSS to utilize the center. Ms. Kelley replied that they do not get funds but the communication time is valuable.

Ms. Fiegen stated she liked how the accomplishments were put together on the grant on a month by month basis.

Ms. Kelley noted that they received a large grant and the board would like to wisely invest the money. They are exploring options and the financial committee will make recommendations.

Ms. Fiegen asked if they had space rented in 2013. Ms. Kelley replied that the office is upstairs and there are renters downstairs.

Ms. Fiegen asked about the audit, which shows that staff cannot carry over vacation, and recommended talking to the board about this as it is important for the board to look at staff/ salaries/ benefits for non-profits. Non-profits are often more generous with time-off and carry over. Ms. Kelley stated she would like to readdress this with the board and would like to provide more benefits to staff.

Ms. Fiegen congratulated Northern Hills CASA that \$28,000 of the revenue was received from counties and encouraged asking for funds from counties that do not provide money, as these children are part of their community. She also noted that it is good to see the outside accounting firm and the new board orientation. It appears that check authority was voted on and noted in meeting minute, which is proper.

Ms. Fiegen and Ms. Kelley discussed the board application process.

### **Seventh Circuit CASA (Rapid City)**

Mr. Bader thanked the Commissioners for their support. Mr. Bader explained that he has been with CASA for 17 months. He informed the group about the outcomes of the previous director's situation and sentence. The story was in the press but they did not get negative fallout and the community was supportive of their situation. The major donors were informed of the situation.

Mr. Bader explained that a year ago they had 6 employees (5 ½ FTE). Two people have left and now they have 5 employees at 4.6 FTE. One of the employees retired and the other person that resigned was the executive assistant who left for advancement purposes. Mr. Bader explained that with these staff changes he now has their bookkeeping contracted out. He prepares vouchers and the bookkeeper cuts the checks. He takes the checks to one of three designated check signers. There are always two check signers and they discontinued staff as a second signer. Data entry responsibilities have shifted to volunteer coordinators. They put together a committee of volunteers to organize the Fire and Ice event. With the departure of the executive assistant, some of the other responsibilities have fallen by the wayside and explained he is considering adding at least a part-time position.

Mr. Bader proposed getting a new office space but the board did not agree with buying a place and renting other spaces out. They looked at 7-8 spaces and decided to stay in the current office for a while. They've upgraded their computer systems thanks to a grant from the United Way and VOCA.

Mr. Bader noted they need to look at a new strategic plan. They would like to bring in a developer to create a plan for the next 3-4 years.

Mr. Bader stated the Fire and Ice event giving went up 5%. The Rotary Club did a poker run and 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit CASA were the recipients of the funds raised. They also benefited from a local orthodontics office where a portion of patient fees are donated to a charity. A board fundraiser drive is planned as well. Judge Davis sent a thank you letter to volunteers during child abuse awareness and that was extremely impactful.

Mr. Bader noted that the Seventh Circuit CASA partnered with Northern Hills CASA on a facilities tour, it was a beneficial networking opportunity for volunteers and staff. They trained 15 new volunteers in October and three more in November. More training is planned for July and October.

Mr. Bader made a clarification about funds not matching up in FY13 on application page 8 due to an adjustment made by the auditors.

Ms. Bostrom asked about the three training sessions a year. Mr. Bader stated that is the goal.

Ms. Bostrom asked what the plan is moving forward as she is concerned with 174 children on the waiting list. Mr. Bader replied that they need to develop a solid strategic plan. They would like to reach out more into the community and recruit more volunteers, including the air force base. They will work with existing volunteers to see if they can recruit as well.

Judge Smith commented that embezzlement cases are hard and the way Seventh Circuit CASA handled it by prosecuting was a good example for others on how to handle it.

Ms. Fiegen stated she is glad to see they will be revising the strategic plan and suggested tapping into resources to see if a qualified retired person or professional with time to donate could help with this. She congratulated him on training 13 new volunteers. Ms. Fiegen and Mr. Bader discussed the organizations retirement plan.

Ms. Fiegen asked about internal controls for events and when cash is received. Mr. Bader replied that they do not receive a lot of cash in general but two people will count it at one time and then take the money back to the office and lock it up until a deposit can be made.

Ms. Fiegen asked about a February training that received a poor review. Mr. Bader explained that many things went wrong with the training that was out of the control of staff, like presenters not showing up.

Ms. Fiegen asked about internal controls with bank statements. Mr. Bader stated the statements are mailed to the office and the treasurer opens and reconciles them. Ms. Fiegen remarked that it is a lot of work for a volunteer and to perhaps have the bookkeeper do this. She suggested that a board member review every few months but a bookkeeper should do the reconciliations. She added that any changes to policies and procedures should be documented, in detail, in the minutes so people always know what was changed. Ms. Fiegen asked if they have board insurance. Mr. Bader replied that they do under

general liability. Ms. Fiegen noted that his board asks for statistics of service at every board meeting and this is a great idea.

Judge Jeffries asked about the two volunteers from Pine Ridge. Mr. Bader stated that they are from the tribal court and was unsure on the follow up on this. Judge Jeffries asked if any volunteers are Native American. Mr. Bader replied that some volunteers are Native American but the board is 100% white.

### **Commission Discussion, Allocations, and Action**

Judge Jeffries made a motion for distribution of funds: \$23,000 to 1<sup>st</sup> Circuit CASA, \$12,000 to Southeast CASA, \$71,000 to Sioux Falls Area CASA, \$15,750 to Brookings/East Central CASA, \$22,500 to Northern Hills CASA, and \$50,750 to Rapid City CASA – totaling \$195,000 of funds to be distributed. Ms. Fiegen seconded the motion to distribute the funds as listed.

Judge Jeffries remarked that all CASA's have really improved since last year. Ms. Max noted that in the past additional funding was provided to Ms. Benda because she had taken on the duty for being the National CASA contact.

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

### **Grant Application Changes**

Suggested changes:

- remove cover letter requirement
- #2B delete
- encourage month-by-month accomplishment listings (bullet snapshots)
- no need to fill out #3 when strategic plan is submitted
- #4 list paid staff and volunteer staff and/or interns
- #5 & #6 omit as it is part of national standards
- #7 delete, can see on financial statements and board minutes
- #8 delete, can see on the budget
- #9 delete
- #10 clarify who CASA agencies are requesting grants from, the amount requested, what is received and what is the award
- #11 - indicate if the year is an audited amount or in-house amount

The group discussed adding a line in the application where they can list the amount requested.

The group discussed new changes created by the restructuring of National CASA. The group agreed to have Ms. Benda send a notice to Ms. Sara Kelly about any big changes.

## **Discuss 2016 Dates**

Ms. Sara Kelly will send an email 4-5 months in advance of the next potential meeting date looking at the same time of year.

## **Best Practices Discussion**

Ms. Fiegen shared some best practices with the group:

- Mission Moments at board meetings
- Have the board review program statistics at each meeting
- Board orientation is important and the director should be involved in board recruitment
- It would be okay to extend board terms to more than 6 years
- Thanking at the board level is a good idea
- Try to get staff time out of 3<sup>rd</sup> party fundraising
- Boards need to vote on check signers, new board members, and anytime there is a policy or procedure addition or change
- Boards should do an evaluation of staff compensation, benefits, and retirement, along with a staff survey of regional nonprofit organizations and business

## **Adjourn**

Judge Jeffries made a motion and Ms. Bostrom seconded the motion to adjourn. All agreed to adjourn by voice vote at 12:53pm.