

**South Dakota CASA Commission Meeting Agenda**  
**May 23, 2023**  
**12:00 PM – 5:00 PM Central Time**  
**In-Person: South Dakota Capitol Building, Room 412**  
**Virtual Link:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81536517624?pwd=ZVg4ejQ4RnNWYW5TUkZVaki4aW9QUT09>

**Attending:**

Commissioners: Kristie Fiegen (Chairperson), Patrick Smith, Jolynn Bostrom, and Crystal Aman.

CASA Program Executive Directors: Jackie Horton, Sherri Rodgers-Conti, Stacy Starzl-Hansen, Stacey Tieszen, Julie Wermers, Amy Cermak, and Kehala Two Bulls.

Visitors: Tiffany Even (Northern Hills CASA Board Treasurer), Mike Wiess (First Circuit CASA Board Chair), Tracy Bird (CPCM-CIP Committee Member), Carrie Mees (Minnehaha State's Attorney Office – CIP Committee Member), Gina Karst (Fifth Circuit CASA Planning Board), Jennifer Gray (Sixth Circuit CASA Planning Board), and Joey Knofczynski (Legislative Research Council – Fiscal Analyst).

UJS Staff: Sara Kelly

Attending in person: Commissioner Fiegen, Amy Cermak, Stacy Starzl-Hansen, Sherri Rodgers-Conti and Sara Kelly, all others attended virtually.

**Welcome:** Commissioner Fiegen called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm CT. The Commissioners, CASA executive directors and visitors introduced themselves. Commissioner Fiegen asked the program presentations highlight the programs 2022 accomplishments and highlights, identify any new funding, innovative recruitment, and staff development. The presentations were asked to stay at 10 minutes.

**Approve Meeting Minutes:** Commissioner Fiegen asked for a motion to approve the May, June, October 2022 meeting minutes, with an amendment to October minutes to attach the PowerPoint presentation to the minutes, and February 2023 meeting minutes. Commissioner Patrick Smith moved to approve, with the amendment, Commissioner Bostrom second. Motion carried.

**Update from UJS Staff:** Sara Kelly updated the Commissioners of the progress in the development of two new CASA programs in the Fifth Circuit (Aberdeen area) and Sixth Circuit (Pierre area). The planning boards for both programs meet monthly, the Articles of Incorporation, Employee Identification Number have been issued. The Fifth Circuit Program has received its 501C3 non-profit IRS status. The application for the Sixth

Circuit Program is pending. Sara Kelly and board members meet with National CASA staff for foundation building guidance and submit the required documentation when completed. Sara Kelly asked the Commissioners what they would like to see in place before an application is submitted for start-up of the new program. Commissioner Fiegen stated the program board, with officers, needs to be established, a board matrix established and pledges for matching funds from board members, city and county support and community pledges of support. Commissioner Fiegen asked thoughts from the other Commissioners thoughts on a percent of matching funds. Commissioner Smith stated a range for the first year, Commissioner Fiegen suggested 18 – 30 percent match for the first year. Sara Kelly asked if in-kind qualifies as a match or is the match for actual dollars? Commissioner Fiegen stated actual, true dollars is recommended.

Sara Kelly gave notice of a community group in Beadle/Sanborn Counties interested in starting a CASA program. Sara contacted Julie Wermers, East Central CASA, as the counties are in the Third Judicial Circuit for awareness of the inquiry. Sara met with the individuals and discussed the options of program expansion or new program start-up. Sara will follow up with the inquiry, keep Julie Wermers involved in the conversations and update the Commissioners as needed.

**Presentations:**

Seventh Circuit CASA:

Kehala Two Bulls, executive director, thanked the Commissioners for past support. Kehala shared some highlights the accomplishments, primarily working with child protection agency staff, building the community knowledge of CASA, connect with new foster parents and building tribal relationships. Kehala stated the program has two new funding outlets with Walmart and Target. The program has new leadership on the board in 2023 and highlighted the goal of having continuity for staff and volunteers.

Commissioner Fiegen asked for clarification on pairing a long-term volunteer with a new volunteer. Kehala state it's a way to help mentor and invigorate the long-term volunteers and help support the new volunteer. Commissioner Fiegen commented the new policies the board approves, as stated in the minutes, should be attached to the board minutes. Commissioner Fiegen asked if there were any strategic plan updates, Kehala state the updates are in process and hope to have them done soon. Commissioner Fiegen asked for clarification on the CASA Hike. Kehala reported the CASA Hike is a fundraiser to support the Southern Hills area.

Commissioner Aman ask if 357 children on the waiting list for a CASA volunteer is correct. Kehala stated it could be higher at this time as that number is from the end of 2022. Sara Kelly stated the 2021 statistic reported was 388 children on a waiting list, so the 2022 number is reasonable.

#### Northern Hills CASA:

Amy Cermak introduced herself again as the new executive director, reporting the former executive director, Kate Kelley, retired at the end of 2022. Amy thanked the Commission for past support. Amy stated the number of children coming into foster care is rising and they continue to offer both virtual and in-person training for new volunteers and ongoing training to support the volunteers and staff. Amy reported program staff continue to be involved in the community and conducted 42 presentations to services clubs and other organizations in 2022. They had several successful fundraisers in 2022, half-marathon, mountain bike race, and new event of Dueling Pianos and will host them in 2023. Amy reported no new funding sources, but the grants from city and county entities is increasing. A challenge they are facing is children placed out of the service area and the increase in mileage reimbursement for volunteers. Amy stated the board is aware and has increased the budget to reflect the need.

Commissioner Fiegen thanked Amy for saying “yes” to being the new executive director. Commissioner Fiegen asked for clarification on what the net amount was for the Dueling Piano fundraiser. Amy reported \$17,000.

Commissioner Fiegen asked how children are served by staff. Amy reported through team and attorney meetings and follow the case until a volunteer is assigned.

#### East Central CASA:

Julie Wermers introduced herself and thanked the commission for their past support.

Julie stated the best practice for the program is to provide advocacy through staff and volunteers. Staff monitor cases until a volunteer is assigned. Julie reported volunteer recruitment has been a challenge, they are working on recruitment in outlying counties to help cover cases in the counties less served. The program offers various trainings to the volunteers throughout the year. They are also recruiting board members to find the right person to propel its mission.

Julie stated the Fire and Ice fundraising event raised \$87,000. The program is looking for a fundraiser in the Watertown area. They had a third-party fundraiser in Milbank and hope to have smaller events in the outlying counties.

Commissioner Fiegen asked where the program and board is at for expanding to the last four counties in the Third Judicial Circuit. Julie stated the board acknowledges the need but is hesitant to expand due to sustainability concerns. Julie stated she is excited to hear of a group in Beadle County exploring the option to start a program.

Commissioner Fiegen asked about the program benefits. Julie stated the board will discuss this at their next meeting. Commissioner Fiegen asked about board development. Julie

stated the board reviews the board matrix and plan to grow the board with three to five new members.

Commissioner Fiegen reminded the entire group that a Strong Board and Strong Staff equal a Strong Program.

Sioux Falls Area CASA:

Stacey Tieszen presented a power point of the program plan for total engagement with the community and getting people know that CASA exists. Stacey gave an overview of their volunteer training and appreciation. Stacey highlighted the efforts to build a board with diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Stacey stated the numbers of children coming into care are increasing and they don't assign staff to cases but monitor cases to stay current. They conduct end of case evaluations with volunteers for acknowledgement and corrective action. Stacey stated the 100 Cape Campaign is for recruiting and training volunteers.

Commissioner Fiegen asked what the staff to volunteer ratio is. Stacey stated full-time staff manage twenty-two cases (volunteers) and part-time staff manage fifteen cases (volunteers).

Commissioner Fiegen asked how the board evaluation is the campaign and making any changes. Stacey stated there are no changes in how the campaign is being handled and board members are tasked with at least two connections for the campaign.

Commissioner Fiegen stated to maximize funding there needs to be a long-term strategic plan.

Southeast CASA:

Sheri Rodgers-Conti thanked the Commissioners for her past support and introduced the new executive director Stacy Starzl-Hansen. Sheri thanked the Commissioners for their past input and support on the program's salary structure and benefits.

Sheri stated Stacy Starzl-Hansen will attend the National CASA conference and participate in new executive director training.

Sheri highlighted the successes of the program, no children on a waiting list, growing the number of volunteers and increasing the program's presence in areas where they haven't had much presence in before. Sheri stated they are seeing the numbers of children coming into care increasing.

Sheri stated the board's goal is to increase funding and build individual donors and to tap into the Dakota Dunes area.

Commissioner Fiegen stated she liked seeing the efforts to grow the program's portfolio. Commissioner Fiegen asked why they canceled a fundraising event in 2022, due to COVID. Sheri stated the board did so out of concern with a new variant of COVID.

Commissioner Fiegen challenged the board on not having a major event and the need to sell the event as regional support.

Stacey Starzl-Hansen informed the Commissioners of a goal to add an attorney and accountant to the board.

First Circuit CASA:

Jackie Horton thanked the Commissioners for past support. Jackie stated the program doesn't have any children on the waiting list and they have seen successful reunification and adoptions in 2022. Jackie stated they use the flex training option for new volunteer training and that has worked well for their program.

Jackie stated the goals for 2023 are to have 25 new volunteers, board members host recruitment events and financial support and continue collaborative meetings with state and community agencies and programs.

Jackie reported staff attend conferences and other trainings through out the year for professional development. Jackie reported the Finance Committee will make a recommendation of a strategic plan to full board by October.

Commissioner Fiegen asked Jackie to explain Casual for CASA. Jackie stated local professional offices donate to wear jeans on Fridays and the donations are given to CASA.

2:10 pm CT – Break

2:20 pm CT – Reconvene

**Commissioner Comments:** Commissioner Smith stated his appreciation CASA for the role and the work the CASA program staff and volunteers do. He confirmed the Commissioners are not a rubber stamp commission and they make a concerted effort to examine program efforts. He stated the programs are some of the finest organizations to serve the needs of children and enjoys reading the grants and the positive efforts made in the communities.

Commissioner Aman thanked the executive directors for their work and the fundraising they do for program development and volunteer and staff support.

Commissioner Bostrom recognized the program's hard work and acknowledge recruiting and retaining volunteers is very difficult. She thanked them for their continued efforts and advocating for children.

**Awards:** Commissioner Fiegen suggested:

Southeast CASA - \$16,300  
 First Circuit CASA - \$23,400  
 Sioux Falls CASA - \$33,422  
 East Central CASA - \$21,725  
 Northern Hills CASA - \$18,400  
 Seventh Circuit CASA - \$33,025  
 Total \$146,272

Commissioner Smith suggest:

Southeast CASA - \$12,169.50  
 First Circuit CASA - \$22,844.50  
 Sioux Falls CASA - \$36,935.50  
 East Central CASA - \$24,522.50  
 Northern Hills CASA - \$16,012.50  
 Seventh Circuit CASA - \$33,733  
 Total \$146,217.50

Commissioners Bostrom and Aman commented they had similar award recommendations but didn't give their breakdowns.

Commissioner Smith moved to approve Commissioner Fiegen's recommendation of awards. Commissioner Bostrom second. Motion carried.

**Discussion**

- a. Review grant application for any changes for 2024
- b. Review data elements for 2024

**Other Business:** Commissioner Fiegen stated the 2024 meeting will be virtual and will revisit in-person meeting for 2025.

**Adjourn:** Commissioner Aman moved to adjourn, Commissioner Fiegen second, motion carried – adjourned 2:55 pm.