



CASA of the Continental Divide

# **Case for Support 2023**

**Every child deserves to have a loving, caring environment in a safe and permanent home with the ability to thrive.**

Julie\* was a baby who had been neglected and abused. When the abuse was discovered, a CASA volunteer was appointed to step in. Here is our advocate's account of Julie's story:

*"A childhood of neglect, abuse, and fear are no life for a child and I'm proud to have been part of the team that made a difference. I worked on a case for a precious baby who won't remember me or that she ever needed a CASA. What she will remember is growing up in a stable home where she was adored by two doting parents and surrounded by an extended family rich in culture, food, and fun.*

*She will always have a caring parent to come home to and will feel the warmth and love every child deserves at the end of each day, good or bad. She will have years of birthday parties, friends, family memories, and guidance that will shape her into the young person she is meant to be. If Child Services and CASA hadn't stepped in, her life would look so much different. Just seeing her grow over the last year into a carefree thriving baby who is secure in her home made all the meetings (sometimes tense) and court reports worth it. The end result could not have been better.*

*She was formally adopted into her wonderful family this month and she can grow-up in safety and security and is free to just be a normal kid." - CASACD Volunteer*

A childhood brimming with fond memories of adventure, laughter, and love is what we all want and need. Often, it includes loved ones that fill these memories with feelings of safety, hope and warmth. However, child neglect and abuse are real and ongoing problems in this community. CASA of the Continental Divide believes that every child deserves to grow up in a stable home where safety and permanency are a constant. This is why we recruit, train and mentor Court Appointed Special Advocates who get to know these children, and investigate what barriers they might have to safety, permanency, and education before speaking on their behalf in court.

*\*name changed to protect the child's identity*

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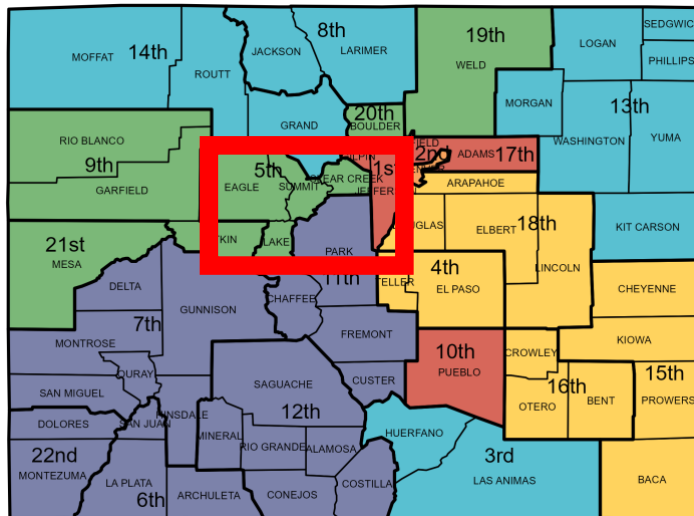
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# What is CASA of the Continental Divide?

CASA of the Continental Divide (CASACD) is the only child advocacy program of its kind in Colorado's 5th Judicial District, making the services we provide vital for the children in the communities we serve. The children and families we serve live across Eagle, Summit, Clear Creek, and Lake Counties.

In each of our programs (Child Advocacy in Dependency and Neglect, and Truancy) CASACD recruits, trains, supervises, and mentors community volunteers to advocate for child victims of abuse, neglect, and truancy. Each assigned volunteer conducts independent investigations, is in direct contact with the child or student, and gets to know their unique needs so they can advocate for the child's best interests. In this way the child has a voice, someone on their side during a difficult time that can drastically affect their well-being, safety, and future. We recommend supports and services to help our assigned children and families have better access to resources necessary to thrive.



*1 This photo from The Colorado Office of the Child's Representative illustrates Colorado's Judicial Districts geographically. Colorado's 5th Judicial District can be found in green, surrounded by a red rectangle.*

## Our Programs

### Child Advocacy in Dependency and Neglect

Our Dependency and Neglect program ensures that child victims' voices are at the center of court proceedings. The child is assigned a volunteer advocate who is independent of the court and able to devote time getting to know the child and the unique needs affecting their well-being. Advocates conduct independent investigations into the needs and barriers affecting each child's well-being, they continuously monitor the child's situation and collaborate with others to ensure necessary services are provided and make recommendations to the court regarding placement, safety, and resources. Advocates participate in family engagement meetings, foster care review meetings, school meetings, court hearings and essentially any other professional

collaborative processes during the life of the case. They become a member of the professional team, engaging with the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), Department of Human Services Caseworker, teachers, caregivers, family members, medical professionals and many others depending on the circumstances of the case. Advocates report all findings and observations to the court to help inform the court's decisions in the case. In this way each child's best interests remain at the forefront of court proceedings.

## Child Advocacy in Truancy

CASACD's Truancy program works directly with the county courts and the school districts. Volunteer advocates in our Truancy Program focus on ensuring children are thriving in school by breaking through educational barriers. As in the Dependency & Neglect advocacy outlined above, the CASA volunteer conducts an independent investigation and gets to know each child and their unique needs. The volunteer advocate works as a member of the truancy team along with the child, school representatives, the child's family, GAL (Guardian Ad Litem), and judge. The team builds a Truancy Action Plan (TAP) for how to re-engage each child in school and remove barriers to attendance to prevent further issues of truancy. The case is monitored closely by the volunteer advocate and the truancy team, and the TAP is reviewed regularly to determine progress toward goals.



## History

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The CASA program began in 1977 when a Seattle juvenile court judge concerned about making impactful decisions with insufficient information conceived the idea of citizen volunteers to speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children in court. From that program has grown a national network of nearly 1,000 CASA and guardian ad litem programs in 49 states and the District of Columbia.

Our local program CASA of the Continental divide was established by Debby Webster and recognized as a 501(c)3 on February 18, 1999. Initially the program served children in Summit and Eagle Counties and was later expanded to include Lake and Clear Creek in 2000 and 2001, respectively.

## Present Needs

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- Ramp up recruitment efforts.
- Create new training resources.
- Provide more continuing education opportunities.
- Diversify our organization's representatives and extend more Language Line services. *(See Diversification Objectives)*

Sometimes all it takes is one caring, present, and consistent adult in a child's life to make a world of difference. With community support, CASA of the Continental Divide can continue to recruit, train, and mentor a volunteer advocate to be that child's safe and stable presence as they navigate the child welfare system. Now in our 24th year of serving child victims and their families across 4 counties, CASACD is preparing for an unpredictable influx of cases, and the

challenges that come with them. This means we need to ramp up our recruitment efforts to have enough volunteers to cover 100% of children assigned to our programs.

Child abuse and neglect cases are complex, they have a multitude of unique concerns and barriers to safety. Additional complexities occur when the child is a member of a marginalized population. It is of the utmost importance that advocates working these cases have proper training and access to information surrounding the concerns of each child with whom they work. Access to resources for our volunteers can be a significant barrier to providing the information needed due to the on-demand nature of these cases. The availability of continuing education resources influencing virtual and in-person training, access to media and professional contacts are vital to ensuring that recommendations are well-informed and appropriate for each child's well-being.

## **Diversification Objectives**

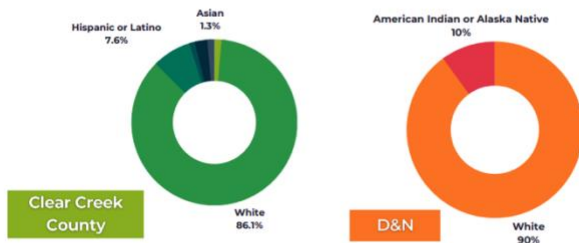
The children CASA of the Continental Divide serves come from every socio-economic background, race, ethnicity, and culture. In our Child Advocacy in Dependency and Neglect program, we understand that marginalized children are overrepresented in the child welfare and legal systems we work with. Language inequality is a prevalent issue in the communities that we serve, which often creates barriers for families in the legal system. To that end, our organization would greatly benefit from Language Line Services, as well as Spanish-Speaking individuals who can assist in building trust, connection, and communication between child, family, and CASA volunteers by acting as translators and interpreters.

Based on the demographics of the children we are currently serving, there is a clear need for diverse representation from our organization and our volunteer advocates. We continue to actively recruit volunteers who best represent the demographics of the children we serve. Primary points of focus in this endeavor are male volunteers and LantiX volunteers.

*(See below demographics)*

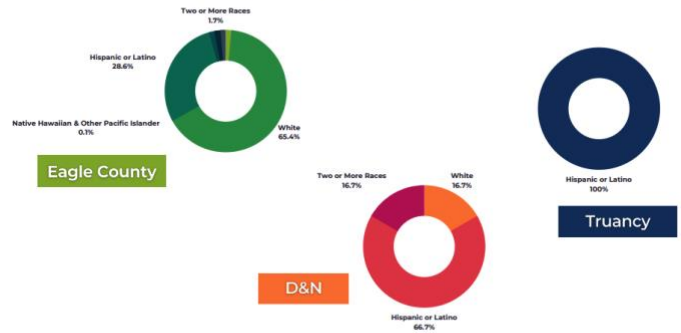
## CASA of the Continental Divide

### Clear Creek County Demographics



## CASA of the Continental Divide

### Eagle County Demographics



CASACD Children Demographics for Dependency and Neglect (D&N) cases as of January 19, 2023

Legend: Clear Creek County Demographics (Green), Dependency & Neglect Program Demographics (Orange)

CASA  
CHILD ABUSE SERVICES  
OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

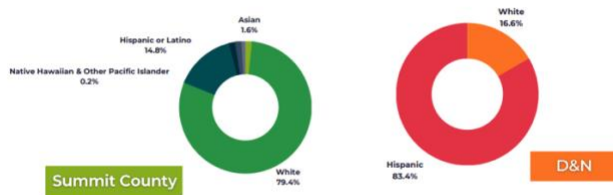
CASACD Children Demographics for Dependency and Neglect (D&N) and Truancy cases as of January 19, 2023

Legend: Eagle County Demographics (Green), Dependency & Neglect Program Demographics (Orange), Truancy Program Demographics (Dark Blue)

CASA  
CHILD ABUSE SERVICES  
OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

## CASA of the Continental Divide

### Summit County Demographics



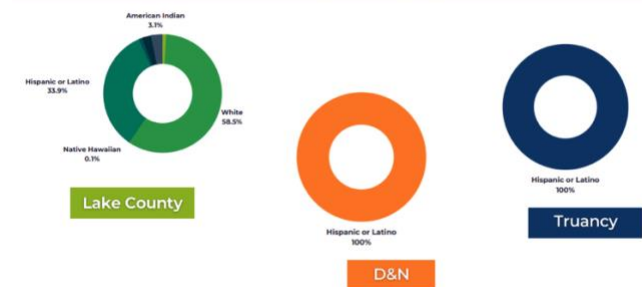
CASACD Children Demographics for Dependency and Neglect (D&N) cases as of January 19, 2023

Legend: Summit County Demographics (Green), Dependency & Neglect Program Demographics (Orange)

CASA  
CHILD ABUSE SERVICES  
OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

## CASA of the Continental Divide

### Lake County Demographics



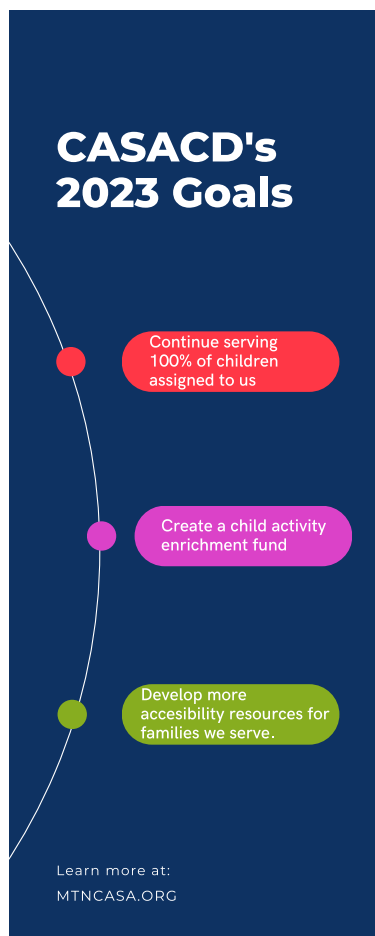
CASACD Children Demographics for Dependency and Neglect (D&N) and Truancy cases as of January 19, 2023

Legend: Lake County Demographics (Green), Dependency & Neglect Program Demographics (Orange), Truancy Program Demographics (Dark Blue)

CASA  
CHILD ABUSE SERVICES  
OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

2 These graphs represent the demographics of the children CASACD serves in both programs amongst each county as of February 2023.

# Future Goals



## **Goal #1: Continue serving 100% of children assigned to us.**

With an unpredictable influx of children assigned to our services annually, it is critical to have enough volunteer advocates prepared to take on several cases at any given time.

### ***How we will achieve this goal with your help***

Your donation is used to support recruiting and training volunteers, training materials, and supervisory costs. This compensates for the time and effort of mentoring, supervising, advising, and supporting the volunteer advocates, attending court hearings and other team meetings; and for the required record keeping involving the children we serve.

## **Goal #2: Create a child activity enrichment fund.**

CASA of the Continental Divide is implementing a new fund dedicated to enrichment activities for children assigned to our programs. These activities will provide relationship and trust building between our CASA volunteers and their kids across both our Dependency and Neglect program and our Truancy Program, and supply mentally stimulating and educational experiences

that they wouldn't have the opportunity to do otherwise. Activities will be planned and executed by the child's volunteer advocate, who gets to know them and grows familiar with their unique interests and needs.

### ***How we will achieve this goal with your help:***

Your donation will help cover the cost of each enrichment activity for the child and their advocate to attend together. Examples of enrichment activities are attending a class they've expressed interest in with them, visiting a museum, teaching them to cook, or doing outdoor recreation activities with them.

## **Goal #3: Develop more accessibility and language resources for families we serve.**

Our efforts toward inclusiveness remain a priority as we are dedicated to advancing our knowledge through continuing education and to ensure our organization best reflects the children and families we serve. CASACD has implemented and is acting towards a diversity,

equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategic plan outlining a 2-year timeline and a call to action for board members with full transparency.

### ***How we will achieve this goal with your help***

Your donation will provide our organization with access to a language line service; enabling interpretation opportunities for our CASA advocates to effectively communicate with the children and families we serve. It will also help us maintain our website's accessibility tool feature which offers a variety of accommodations for those who need them.

## Leadership

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### **CASA of the Continental Divide Board of Directors 2023**

#### **Robert Tate, Co-Chair**

*Human Resources Specialist, Retired*

#### **Jeanette McMurtry, Co-Chair**

*Marketing and Business Development*

*"CASA is important to me because it not only helps families in needs, but it also sets up generation and communities for success. If we do not take care of our youth, assure safe and emotionally healthy childhoods, and set children up for success, our communities will be deprived of further talent, innovation, and leaders. Our society will continue to struggle for DEI and we will just repeat the negative cycles we've 'managed' not prevented for decades, generations, and more. CASA opens a path for families to stay together and build the roots of communities in healthy and productive ways. It also being diverse people together as volunteers work with and become close to people they would not otherwise know, which narrows the gap of people from various lifestyles within local communities and society at large. CASA is a gift to all." – Jeanette McMurtry*

#### **Karmen Serbinski, Secretary**

*Social Worker, Eagle County Schools*

*"The mission of CASACD and the vital roles they play in a vulnerable child's life are the reasons I'm compelled to engage in this incredible organization. CASACD gives a voice to children when they need it most. This work is critical and provides pathways to safety and stability." – Karmen Serbinski*

#### **Margaret M. Olle, Board Member**

*Early Childhood Special Education, Eagle County Schools*

#### **Paloma Hammond, Board Member**

*Academic Advisor, Colorado Mountain College*

*"When I heard about CASA and its essential work, I knew I wanted to be involved in any capacity with this organization, mainly because of my childhood experience. So many of us, as volunteers or board members, do this type of work, and we will continue to do this work because our biggest reward is safeguarding the kids we work*

*with and ensuring they no longer have to go through abuse or neglect. Last year, I worked with a single mom and her five kids. I saw my mom in her, and I understood what most Latinx parents have to endure to provide for their families. It is not easy, and most of the time is heartbreaking. Due to CASA's mission and outstanding volunteers, many families remain together and learn tools that benefit the children's well-being. For example, we connected the family with local resources to help with rent and food. Still, the success is knowing that the children are safe and cared for and that they live with a mother who loves them unconditionally. CASA is about this, and I am proud to be part of it." – Paloma Hammond*

### **Micayla Bellamy, Board Member**

*Vocal Music Director, Clear Creek High School*

*"I was a recipient of CASA services. As a youth "in the system," it's challenging to feel like you have a voice in the things that happen to you. My CASAs helped me feel heard. I want to play a part in supporting other youth like me. " – Micayla Bellamy*

### **Laurie Cruz, Board Member**

*Pediatrician*

*"As a pediatrician, I am an advocate for children. Those who have been harmed are at risk for physical as well as emotional problems. Having regular contact with a supportive adult can lessen the long-term effects of these traumas. I am thrilled to be on the board of CASACD to help provide well-trained adult volunteers to serve this crucial role." – Laurie Cruz*

## **CASA of the Continental Divide Key Staff 2023**



**Cathy Hyde**

*Co-Executive Director of Operations*

*"I feel incredibly grateful to be part of an organization that supports children and families at such a tumultuous time in their lives. Elevating a child's voice during this time ensures that their needs, well-being, and wishes are not lost in the chaos. Our volunteers are a supportive pillar to the child and the family; I am constantly in awe of the work that they do." – Cathy Hyde*



**Janine Mariani**

*Co-Executive Director of Programs*

*"CASACD is important to me because I know that supportive, caring adults change lifelong outcomes for children and young people. Interrupting cycles of poverty, abuse, neglect, substance abuse and truancy mean creating a better world for children to grow up in." – Janine Mariani*



**Siri Lewis**

*Program Coordinator - Clear Creek County*

Siri Lewis is joining the CASA team and brings with her over twenty years of experience in the public-school setting. She is a resident of Clear Creek County and is looking forward to supporting her community in the new role of Program Coordinator. Siri graduated from Fort Lewis College and then went on to Lesley University to earn her MA in Education. She loves the outdoors and spends much of her time on trails, off piste and exploring the Continental Divide. Her explorations of the mountains are not limited to the summer months as she grew up on the Colorado slopes and tromping through the beautiful terrain on snowshoes. Siri recently began exploring waterways and has fallen in love with paddle boarding and canoeing.



**Katherine Ruark**

*Program Coordinator - Eagle County*

Kate has been building experience in the nonprofit sector through her career path since 2016. She was awarded a competitive position with the Winter Burgess Leadership Fellows in the SeriousFun Children's Network, where she worked with a small cohort in professional development focused on leadership. This inspired Kate to pursue structured professional learning in her life and she is graduating with a Masters in Nonprofit Management from Regis University. Kate was born and raised in Colorado. Several opportunities have brought her all over the west, but her heart is in the Rocky Mountains. On the weekends you can find Kate enjoying wildflowers and dirt roads with her camera and dog Gordie Howe.



**Lenora Myers**  
Program Coordinator

*"CASACD is vital to me because I believe that children's lives are changed forever through the work that the volunteer advocates do. I recently heard a family in court say how appreciative that they were that their CASA guided them as they literally had to change the way that they behaved within their family in dealing with their special needs children. They are very proud of the way that they are now able to step up and take care of their children using the tools that they have learned, when at one point they thought they would lose their children. I think that that parent testimony reflects the real change that our CASA's at CASACD are making in families." – Lenora Myers*



**Lori Engels**  
Operations Coordinator

*"I have learned so much over the last year and a half being a part of CASACD and the work our programs provide for the children and families in the communities we serve. I have seen firsthand through staff, volunteers, and most importantly learning the impact of unfortunate situations children have experienced. I empathize for the children as well as with the dedicated volunteers sharing their time to get to know the children and elevating their voices in court proceedings because it's not easy. I am a witness of why we do the work we do and it is not possible without our volunteers. This is what makes me passionate about my work and the utmost respect I have for our organization." – Lori Engels*



**Reilly Spence**  
Development Coordinator

*"Working for CASA of the Continental Divide has opened my eyes to both the unfortunate reality of child abuse and neglect in our community, and the inspiration that is our volunteer advocates. It is an honor to work beside staff and volunteers who dedicate hundreds of hours, thousands of miles, and so much more to protect and advocate for children who need our help." – Reilly Spence*

# Gifts and Benefits

CASA of the Continental Divide is seeking donations to reach our goals for 2023.

## Gifts and Benefits

\$186,000 goal for fundraising from individual donations.



# of gifts Needed	Each Gift	Total for this level	Cumulative Amount
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Goal #1

8	\$20,000	\$160,000	\$160,000
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**Goal #1: Continue serving 100% of children assigned to us.**

Goal #2

20	\$100	\$2,000	\$2,000
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**Goal #2: Create a child activity enrichment fund.**

Goal #3

6	\$4,000	\$24,000	\$24,000
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**Goal #3: Develop more accessibility and language resources for families we serve.**

## Activity Opportunities

\$2,000 goal for the activity fund activities from individual donations.



Activity	Estimated Available	Donation
Class of the child's choice	3	\$100 each or \$300
Sporting event	2	\$100 each or \$200
Ski day or lesson	3	\$100 each or \$300
Bike rental	2	\$100 each or \$200
Arts & Crafts	3	\$100 each or \$300
Child's favorite food	2	\$100 each or \$200
Child's choice	5	\$100 each or \$500

4 This graph illustrates the different activities donors can choose to donate to or sponsor.

# Financial Information

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*(Will be inserted after budget is finalized)*

**Every child deserves to have a loving, caring environment in a safe and permanent home with the ability to thrive.**



Each year our organization sees on average more than 50 children like Julie, who are victims of abuse and neglect. These children are placed into the child welfare system with no one to speak on their behalf in the courtroom.

CASA of the Continental Divide's volunteer advocates provide a voice for these children, and a shoulder to lean on as they embark on life-altering journeys.

Since opening our doors in 1999, CASACD advocates have provided services to 682 children suffering from abuse and neglect, and \_\_\_ children undergoing truancy and barriers to education.

Help us continue the fight to see every child in Colorado's 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District thrive by donating today.



[Mtncasa.org](http://Mtncasa.org)

Reilly Spence

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