



Funds Distribution Report

Recipient Organization:
Family Law CASA

Address:
16300 Christensen Rd, Suite 306
Tukwila, WA 98188

Contact:
(206) 748-9700
<https://www.familylawcasa.org>

Organization's General Goals:
Volunteer Court Appointed Support Advocates (CASA's) help vulnerable children by working within a structured program that includes screening; intensive training; professional guidance; legal consultation and representation; technical report templates and forms; educational webinars and workshops; and community building events.

Date of Award:	Level:
2019 Q4	\$2,501 to \$5,000

For more information, please read the attached report from Family Law CASA.

8802 27th Ave NE
Tulalip, WA 98271

TulalipCares.org

Family Law CASA 2020 Grant Report (Q4 2019 14.2) for the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Contributions Fund

It is with gratitude that we submit our final report for Tulalip Tribes Charitable Contributions Fund's generous \$█████ grant in May of 2020 for our Child Advocacy Services and share the impacts your partnership has helped us achieve. **All the children we serve have experienced traumas including domestic violence (45% in 2020), untreated parental substance abuse (46%) or mental health problems (36%), neglect (22%), criminal activity (20%) or sexual or physical abuse (18%). Sixty percent of children served were children of color.** Without a child advocate involved in their parents' contentious divorce, they would continue to be at high risk for future safety concerns. A CASA advocate ensures that the children's voice is heard and their needs prioritized.

Major Activities and Accomplishments: Thanks to your donation, Family Law CASA (FL CASA) was able to achieve many accomplishments in our Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020):

- Provided an advocate for 264 low-income children and served 384 separate households
- Served 14 Judges and Commissioners in King County Superior Court in Seattle and Kent
- Submitted 163 comprehensive written reports to the court; litigated 56 trials; contributed to 52 mediations; and appeared at 283 additional court hearings
- Recruited and trained 54 new volunteer advocates and retained 105 CASAs. 12,720 hours were donated by volunteer advocates (CASAs) to support vulnerable children
- CASA's reports helped 34% of families settle their case out of court – decreasing further trauma

Organizational Updates: FL CASA is grateful that we have been able to successfully adjust to the variety of challenges posed by COVID-19. Our staff and volunteers have smoothly transitioned to digital files and working remotely. Interviews with families and collateral contacts occur via phone and videos. Reports are completed and regularly updated as the court system has been backlogged after a closure in the spring to retrofit the court system for video conferencing. Tragically, the needs of vulnerable children and fragile families are only increasing during COVID-19 as its impacts increase all risk factors such as domestic violence, substance misuse, etc. **For the first half of fiscal year 2021 (7/1/20 - 12/30/20), FL CASA has: served 183 children and 64 new households; completed 71 written reports; participated in 21 trials, 29 mediations, and 104 other court hearings; and onboarded 31 new advocates.**

We at FL CASA are aware of systemic racial injustices and are deepening our commitment, growth, and meaningful action to reducing inequities. In Fiscal Year 2021, we have been working with DEI consultants on implementing a diversity, equity, and inclusion plan for board & staff to have a clear path forward. Among other actions, our team created FL CASA's guiding values. **Equity** - including celebration of diversity and inclusivity - is our primary and overarching value.

Related to our commitment to racial justice and equity, FL CASA is excited to move our office to a location that more reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the families that we serve. FL CASA's office has been located in the Central Building in downtown Seattle for 10 years. During that time, the majority of our cases have shifted to the Kent Courthouse (61% in FY20). **In March 2021, our team and office are moving to**

Tukwila - 16300 Christensen Road, Suite 306, Tukwila, WA 98188. In addition to being a fiscally responsible move, we are confident that embedding our office in a more diverse community will continue to help us in our long-term goal of attracting a wide diversity of staff, volunteers, and board members.

Challenges: While it is less than ideal for FL CASA to operate 100% virtually, our staff and volunteers have been fabulous in their adjustment to completing their tasks remotely. What has been more difficult is the impact of COVID-19 on King County Family Courts – a large and complex system. First, family courts closed for several months from March until June. Additionally, courts were forced to change their documentation practices and operations unexpectedly and rapidly to be COVID-19 compliant. This involved both the conversion of paper files to digital and the creation of policies, procedures, and systems so court appearances and hearings can be conducted virtually. The impact of these challenges has resulted in a slower pace and significant backlog of cases in the court system.

As a result, while FL CASA continues to offer to take 10 new cases every month, the courts are not always capable of using each appointment. However, FL CASA staff and volunteers remain very busy addressing the existing and new cases, many of which have increased in complexity. In order for reports to stay current, advocates regularly provide updates and addendums to cases. For example, in January of 2021, a CASA reported that while their initial report took her 135 hours to complete, the backlog of cases resulted in the need for 2 addendum reports. The first addendum took 39 hours and the second 14 hours for a total of 188 hours. That dedicated and diligent work from the team results in regular feedback like the following,

“I appreciate the advocate’s ability to see our situation for what it was. I’m grateful that she never made me feel like my opinions were less than anyone else’s. I felt the advocate truly was giving me her undivided attention when she would interview me. She made things comfortable and not awkward. The advocate stayed true to what she put down on paper and did not waiver when tested. Thank you. This advocate was a hero for my kiddos!” CASA parent, 2021

Successes: “Freddie” experienced intense anxiety and nightmares. His father was severely verbally and physically violent towards his mother – hitting her and threatening to kill her and Freddie. A judge assigned a FL CASA advocate to the case while his parents went through an emotional and combative divorce.

The CASA spent 75-100 hours interviewing contacts and reviewing police reports and mental health records. They provided the court an extensive and detailed report which aided the judge in creating a strong safety plan for Freddie and ensuring his dad received necessary supports and treatments. Freddie now lives in a home free from violence, he no longer has nightmares, and he attends therapy to cope with the traumas he experienced. Secure with the knowledge that his father is receiving the treatment he needs to heal from his own sounds, Freddie looks forward to repairing their fragile relationship.

Another heartwarming success is that FL CASA has been honored by an increase in interest from community members who want to serve as CASAs since COVID-19 hit. We have conducted 2 new virtual volunteer trainings since COVID-19 including one in September that onboarded a record-breaking 37 new CASAs. We’re currently placing potential new volunteers on a “waitlist” as we wait for the courts to catch up with their backlog of cases. The picture on page 3 of the report shows June, 2020 group of new volunteers receiving their virtual training to become Court Appointed Special Advocates.

Thank you again for the Tulalip Tribe’s partnership and helping us strengthen fragile families, connect children & families to needed treatments, and ensure safe living environments for King County low-income children. We are so grateful for your support and couldn’t do this work without our valued partners!



A FL CASA New CASA Cohort during their June, 2020 2-day virtual training