



ONE ADVOCATE.

ONE VOICE. ONE LIFE
CHANGED.

Child Advocates - Denver CASA

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



OUR PROMISE

Today, children and youth who have experienced abuse or neglect are among the most vulnerable populations in America. Many who enter foster care have endured physical, psychological or emotional trauma and years of uncertainty – waiting for a permanent solution. These early experiences have lasting effects, increasing the risk of challenges such as homelessness, incarceration, and unemployment. They are also more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking.

There is a simple and proven way to change that trajectory: **A CASA Volunteer.**

CASA – which stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate – a trained community member appointed by a judge, advocates as an agent of the court for a child's best interest. CASA volunteers work alongside caseworkers, attorneys, and families to ensure that every child's voice is heard, and their needs are prioritized.

When a young person has someone in their corner – someone who listens, speaks up, and shows up – their chances of success grow dramatically. They are more likely to thrive in school, find stability, and build a future full of possibilities.



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Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on 2024, we are deeply proud of the thousands of hours devoted to serving more than 300 children and youth across Denver County. In a time when volunteerism is on the decline nationwide, 224 committed community members stepped up for our kids—and for that, we are immensely grateful.

Over the past few years, Denver CASA has made intentional strides to diversify our volunteer base so that every child can have an advocate who understands and reflects their unique background and experiences. This effort has paid off: we saw a 21% year-over-year increase in CASA Volunteers who are men, people of color, or members of the LGBTQIA+ communities. Many of our volunteers, board members, and staff also bring personal or professional experience with the child welfare system, including teachers, social workers, and attorneys. Their expertise has been especially valuable when assigning complex or high-needs cases.

While all CASA Volunteers work closely with professionals to ensure children are placed in safe, stable environments, they also play a critical role in securing additional services. Last year, 69% of volunteers advocated for mental and physical health services, and 75% helped secure educational evaluations and interventions. These efforts ensure that children and youth not only feel safe but also receive the support they need to heal and thrive.

However, the challenges our children face are growing. Many are experiencing heightened anxiety and stress—not only from instability at home but also from the broader uncertainty and division affecting communities across our state and nation. Children from immigrant families and LGBTQIA+ youth, in particular, are often navigating added layers of fear and discrimination. As a result, our CASA Volunteers need—and deserve—more training, resources, and support to serve these populations with empathy, knowledge, and care.

At Denver CASA, we remain steadfast in our mission: to provide every child with a dedicated advocate and the individualized support they deserve. With your continued partnership, we will keep showing up, speaking out, and standing strong—for every child, in every circumstance.

With gratitude,



Bernadette Johnson, Board Chair and Karen Silverman, Executive Director



CASA Denver's 2024 Impact

By the Numbers

120+

Community members
educated at ten CASA 101s

75

Backpacks distributed at
Back to School Fair

72

Winter coats distributed at End of
Year Holiday Shopping Event

1,000+

Community members engaged at
community partner events, including
Denver PrideFest, Juneteenth Fest,
and Community Day at the Zoo

OUR MISSION

Child Advocates – Denver CASA advocates for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect by training diverse volunteers who create opportunities for children, youth and families to thrive.

OUR VISION

Our vision is that all children, youth and families are thriving emotionally, mentally, and physically with lifelong connections to caring and responsible adults, a permanent home, and a safe and nurturing environment where they have a sense of belonging.



**Interested in partnering with
Denver CASA for a community
event?**

Contact our Community Engagement
Manager, Mila Garcia, to learn more!

mgarcia@denvercasa.org

FINANCIALS

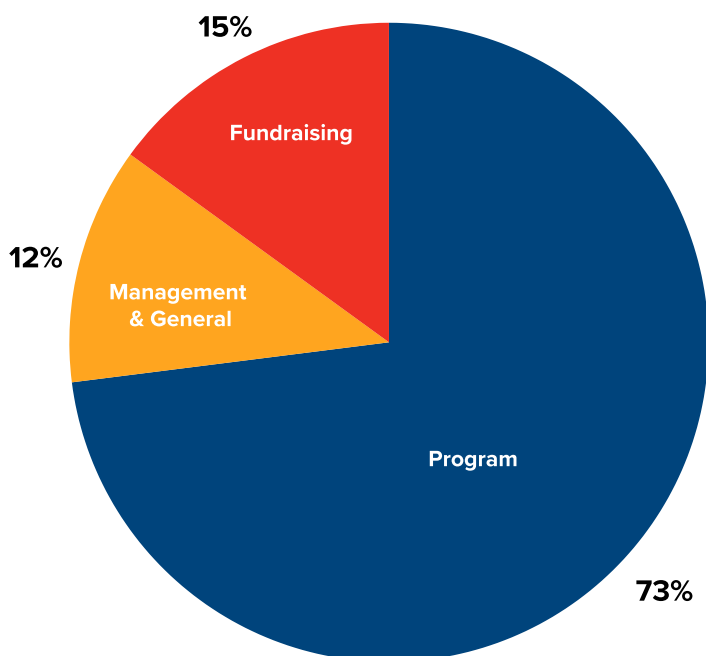
In 2024, 1,750 Denver children were referred to the Colorado Department of Human Services due to concerns of abuse or neglect. Nearly 900 entered foster care, which is a stark reminder of the challenges facing our community's most vulnerable.

But hope is never too far. In Denver's 2nd District, 213 CASA Volunteers stood by 307 children and youth, offering stability, advocacy, and encouragement. From strengthening family ties to mentoring older youth, our volunteers made a lasting impact when it mattered most.

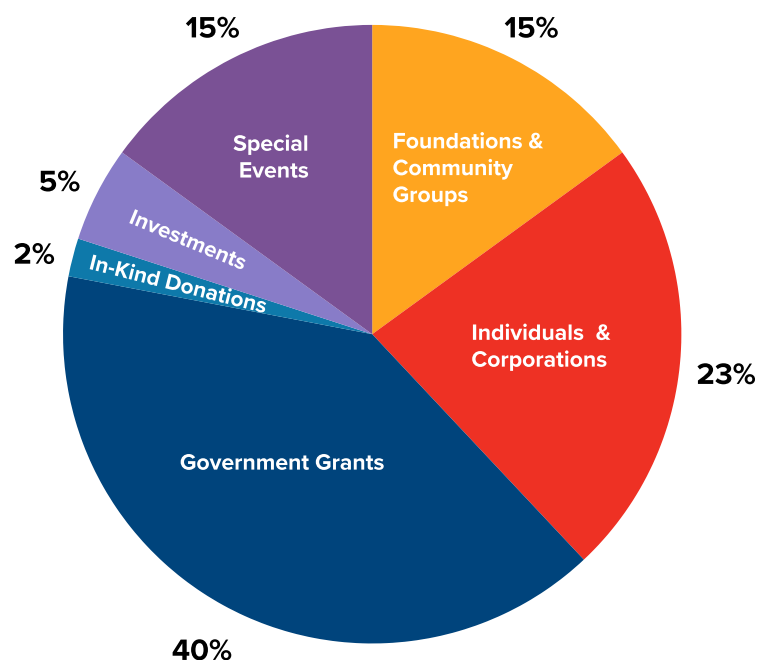
The generosity of our donors and partners, in 2024, fueled essential services, innovative programs, and deeper community impact.

Because of you, lives are being transformed—one child at a time. We remained focused on delivering life-changing advocacy and support, **with 73% of total expenses directly funding programmatic services.**

Expenses



Sources of Revenue



Impact Snapshot

307

Children and youth served

213

CASA volunteers

7

Trainings held

152

Dependency and neglect cases

54

New CASA volunteers sworn in

29

Participants in Older Youth program

\$185,342

Value of hours served

6

Peer coordinators



ONE VOICE

Changes A Life

Sometimes, the universe brings the right people together at just the right time. That's exactly what happened with Nicole and Zhi*, whose paths crossed over a year ago—and neither of their lives have been the same since.

Zhi, who is deaf, came to the United States from China at the age of six. With no language skills and limited support, he faced immense challenges. Though he was adopted by a family with hearing impairments, the placement proved unstable. His teachers, recognizing his unmet needs, stepped in to provide basic necessities like food and properly fitting clothes, which they kept at school just for him.

At age 10, Zhi entered the child welfare system under a Dependency and Neglect (D&N) case. Now 17, he has spent much of his time with a consistent foster father, with whom he shares a positive relationship. But it was clear he needed more—someone to truly advocate for his unique needs.

That someone was Nicole.

Nicole, a CASA Volunteer, brought a rare combination of experience and empathy to Zhi's case. With a background in international adoption—specifically from China—and a degree in American Sign Language, she was uniquely equipped to understand and support Zhi.

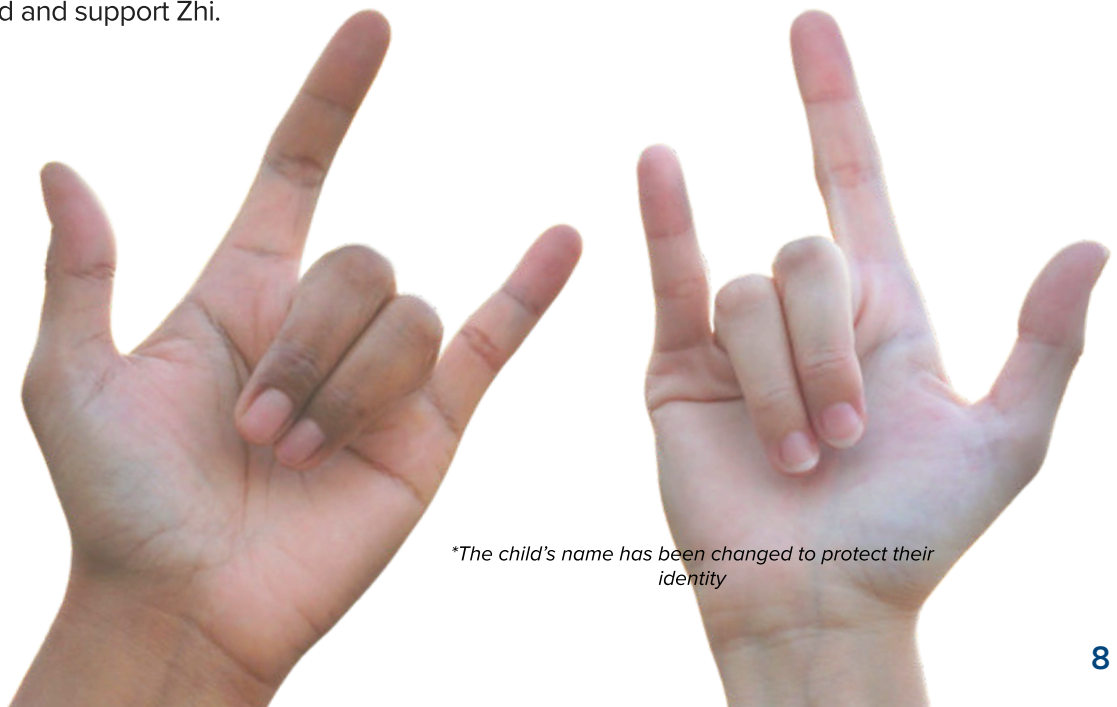
She worked tirelessly with his team to ensure he had the tools he needed to thrive: video relay services, a phone, and visual alarms including a bed shaker and strobe lights. For the first time, Zhi could wake up independently and arrive on time to school—small victories that helped him stay on track with his education.

Nicole's advocacy didn't stop there. Knowing Zhi's love for soccer, she helped arrange for him to attend a Colorado Rapids game with a family considering adoption. It was a joyful experience. This summer, Zhi is attending a soccer camp, specifically one for deaf youth—another first, and another step toward a brighter future.

There are still challenges ahead, but Zhi is thriving. His confidence is growing, his world is expanding, and his future looks promising.

All because one advocate found her voice—and used it to change one life.

"It's been a pleasure getting to know Zhi. He's a great kid, and I truly enjoy our time together. I'm proud that my support has helped him prepare for adulthood, and I look forward to watching him grow and achieve his goals."



*The child's name has been changed to protect their identity

OLDER YOUTH PROGRAM

Everyone should have a Lesley

Since the launch of the Older Youth Program (OYP) in 2021, Lesley has been by Jenna's side—steadfast, supportive, and unwavering. Over the past four years, their relationship has grown into something truly transformative.

From the start, Lesley helped Jenna navigate the full spectrum of challenges that come with adolescence and early adulthood. Together, they tackled everything from high school academics and social dynamics to emotional regulation, family relationships, employment, and future planning. With Lesley's guidance, Jenna learned how to study effectively, write with confidence, and take pride in her work. Lesley didn't just help Jenna succeed in school—she helped her believe in herself.

That belief paid off. In May 2025, Jenna graduated from high school, earning special recognition from her JROTC program. It was a milestone that reflected not only her hard work, but also the consistent encouragement and accountability Lesley provided—checking in with teachers, helping Jenna advocate for herself, and showing up even when Jenna didn't feel like she could.

Their journey wasn't always easy. In quarterly meetings with the OYP Manager, Lesley and Jenna had honest, sometimes difficult conversations about trust, authenticity, and accountability. But those conversations became the foundation for a relationship built on mutual respect and growth.

Now, Jenna is stepping into a new chapter. Inspired by her experience in JROTC and the skills she's developed, she has chosen to enlist in the Navy. Lesley continues to be a trusted adult in her life—a permanent part of Jenna's support network.

At Jenna's recent OYP Exit Meeting, the room was filled with reflection and emotion. As she looked back on how far she's come, Jenna teared up and said something that captured the heart of their journey. "Everyone should have a Lesley."

Older Youth Program's 2024 Success

\$17,850

Youth incentives dispersed

4

Graduated from the program

19

Participants were hired or retained employment

29

Youth served

Individual Youth Goals Accomplished:

Increased mental health, educational advancement, improved financial literacy

**The child's name has been changed to protect their identity*

THE DENVER CASA TEAM

Board

Bernadette Johnson

Board President

GM – Power & Renewables,
Enverus

Ryan Gensler

Board Vice President

Director of National
Partnerships, CareerWise
Colorado

Shelley Banker

Board Secretary

Director, Office of Economic
Security, Colorado Department
of Human Services

Alex Savinar

Board Treasurer

Financial Advisor, UBS
Financial

Natalia Arango

OB/GYN

Stefanie Brown

Associate Director of Finance,
University of Colorado College
of Nursing

Bek Coelho

Student, University of Colorado
School of Medicine

John Galloway

Owner, Toprock Real Estate

Ramiro Jimenez

Senior Vice President,
FirstBank

Alexandra Romeo Boyles

Senior Wealth Strategist,
Partner AC Family Office

Donna Schmalberger

Retired Judge, Denver Juvenile
Court

Ann Tinnin

VP HR Business Partner,
Empower

Chris Vandall

Senior Associate Manager, OZ
Architecture

Colin Ware

Gift Planning Officer,
Intermountain Health
Foundation

Staff

Karen Silverman

Executive Director

Vonia Adams

Director of Programs

Theresa Cole

Director of Operations

Dana Rinderknecht

Director of Development

Sabrina Angel

Development Associate

Jessica Batt

Advocate Supervisor

Nicole Fortenberry

Peer Coordinator Program
Manager

Mila Garcia

Community Engagement
Manager

Justin Leech

Volunteer Coordinator

Savanna Phelan-Jones

Older Youth Program Manager

Holly Stokes

Advocate Supervisor

BE THE ONE WHO MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

Join us in building a future where every voice is heard,
and every child has the chance to thrive.

Do you know all the ways you can support Denver CASA?

Whether you are ready to give today or exploring how to leave a legacy, there are many meaningful ways to make a difference. Your support fuels our advocates to bring stability and opportunity to the children and families we serve. With thoughtful planning, your gift can also support your financial and tax goals.

Start Changing Lives Now

Cash Gifts

Gifts of cash to Denver CASA are eligible for the Colorado Child Care Tax Credit. Donors who make a qualifying contribution may claim a state income tax credit of 50% of the total qualifying gift.

Donor-Advised Funds (DAF)

Donor-advised funds allow you to make a charitable contribution, receive an immediate tax deduction, and recommend grants over time – so if you have a DAF, consider supporting Denver CASA with a grant recommendation today to reinvest in your community.

Appreciated Stock

Turn stock market gains into a gift to help children. If you make a donation of stock to Denver CASA, you will receive a tax deduction on the stock's full market value.

Qualified Charitable Deductions (IRA Charitable Rollovers)

If you are 70 ½ or older, save on taxes by giving your QCD directly to Denver CASA.

Interested in maximizing the impact of your charitable contribution?

We invite you to consult your tax advisor to explore the most effective strategies for giving. Then, contact our team – we're here to help you align your generosity with meaningful outcomes for the children we serve.

Your Voice, Heard for Generations

Bequests

You can designate a set amount or a percentage of your estate in your will or living trust to Denver CASA, making bequests the simplest gifts one can make to a charity.

Life Insurance Donations

These can be made by designating Denver CASA as a beneficiary in your life insurance policy or making Denver CASA the owner of a paid-up life insurance policy.

Retirement Accounts

You can make legacy gifts by designating Denver CASA as a beneficiary.

Charitable Trusts

Charitable trusts can be set up to generate a guaranteed life income for you as a donor while leaving a legacy to Denver CASA in the future.

See Our Complete Donor List!
Use the QR Code Below



*Every gift, every voice, every act of advocacy
brings us closer to a world where no one is
left behind. Thank you for being the one who
stands up, speaks out, and changes lives.*

— Denver CASA Staff



KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US!



Child Advocates - Denver CASA



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