



Oregon CASA Network

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OCN RECEIVES GRANT TO STRENGTHEN DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Portland, OR – May 24, 2019 – Oregon Community Foundation awarded Oregon CASA Network a \$45,000 grant to strengthen the application of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles in the statewide CASA network in partnership with the Center for Equity & Inclusion and Portland State University's Center for the Improvement of Child & Family Services.

More than 11,000 children enter foster care in Oregon each year. In Oregon and nationally, children in foster care are disproportionately children of color. Some studies indicate LGBTQ children are also overrepresented in foster care.

Being removed from one's home, even to be protected from abuse or neglect, is a disruptive, uncertain, and challenging time for any child.

Volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates – CASAs -- are paired with children in the court and child welfare system to advocate for their best interests and ensure they receive appropriate services, have a voice in determining their future, and ultimately return to or find a safe, permanent home where they can thrive.

Among all the dedicated people engaged in the child welfare system, CASAs are the only ones whose sole responsibility is to advocate for the best interest of the child. They often become the one familiar face as a child navigates a complicated process that can involve numerous social workers, foster parents, and service providers.

Current and former foster youth want more diverse CASA volunteers, and local CASA directors recognize the need to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion in our programming.

"A CASA volunteer's success depends on their ability to build an enduring, trusted relationship with each child and fully appreciate the child's view of the world. That requires volunteers of any background to set aside conscious and unconscious bias and challenges all of us to foster work cultures where we can openly discuss different experiences, perspectives, and beliefs.

"Strengthening our CASA programs' diversity, equity, and inclusion practices is a strategic priority for OCN and receiving this grant is a great step toward that goal. We're grateful to Oregon Community Foundation for its support and look forward to collaborating with our partners at the Center for Equity & Inclusion and PSU's Center for the Improvement of Child & Family Services."

-- Debra Gilmore, CEO, Oregon CASA Network