

CASA Feedback

Special Edition - Transitional Age Youth

Spring 2014

"Connecting our Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program to our CASA Volunteers"



Millie's Message:

Board of Directors

President

Chris Roach

Vice President

Susan Medeiros

Secretary

Tresa Headrick

Treasurer

Austin O'Malley

Gregory Cho

Maryann Wakefield

Sharon Dee-Ausiello

Executive Director

Millie Gilson

Staff

Training Coordinator

Heloisa Heinen

Volunteer Supervisor

Dr. Amanda Mason

We at CASA strive daily toward the long term success of each child we serve. There is nothing we want more than to see our CASA youth grow up to become healthy and productive members of society. With this in mind, we have worked hard to secure the knowledge and resources to assist our volunteers and youth in this task. This newsletter contains information that will support you, the CASA volunteer, in your efforts to help our CASA youth through the process of emancipation and independent living.

For those of you who have youth under the age of 12, 13 or 14 years old, I ask that you will look at this newsletter as a preparatory document with useful educational resources.

Statistics show that adulthood or independence for the average youth is typically achieved at 26-27 years old, but for our CASA youth it is forced on them at 18 or 19 years of age when they are asked the question, "Are you ready to live independently?" Some youth will say yes, and they begin life on their own. Others will opt to

Volunteer Supervisor

Lorrie Quam

Volunteer Supervisor

Heidi Alvarez

Office Manager

Valerie Araujo

Adriana Pacheco

Ureka Abbushi

Webmaster

GOsustainably

Pamela Snyder

Interns

Veranika Savitskaya

Gerard McCarthy

Office Advocates

Carol White

Grace Cazneau

Sarah Cobb

stay in the care of the Child Welfare System for another year or even up to their 21st birthday. Regardless, there are resources and support systems to help foster youth prepare for this transition, and CASA volunteers can do a great deal to start preparing them for the life changes they will face.

We would like to dedicate this newsletter to all of those youth currently on our caseload and to you, the CASA volunteers who serve them. Your patience, kindness and openness to their struggle is admirable and something we as the CASA staff respect. Many of you have been CASAs on cases for several years and are watching these youth grow into their teen years. Others of you have generously stepped up to the challenge by being appointed to your cases during the middle of these turbulent years. Regardless of where you find yourself in this process, you are all to be applauded for your dedication to this very "at-risk" population.

It seems that a higher percentage of youth today are required to grow up too fast and are faced with making choices without the benefit of a solid foundation. Youth of the Juvenile Court System are at an even greater disadvantage, having had many aspects of the decision-making process taken away from them. Whether it was abuse perpetrated against them, a sense of abandonment they carry with them or layers of anger that weigh them down, these youth need to support of CASAs and staff to prepare themselves and attain the skills they'll need to live independently.

We are working every day to secure the needed funds, expertise from advisors, staff support and other resources to help you support your transitional age youth. You are the dedicated, steadfast friend, the positive adult role model and the life coach who can make it all come together, increasing the chances of success for foster youth.

With the Children at Heart,

Millie Gilson

Founding Executive Director



Empowering Youth

Youth need to be empowered, and to be educated about their rights and the services available to them. We as CASAs must also thoroughly understand these rights and services to ensure our youth are eligible and in a position to receive all that they are entitled to. Two very helpful publications available at the CASA office are *Kids and the Law - An A-Z Guide For Parents* and "When You Become 18 - A Survival Guide." We must help our youth put a plan together. Here is how to get started:

Create a life plan.

Why not? Sounds a little crazy but let's do it. Organizations have strategic plans. Why not help a child figure out a life plan. Prepare your youth. And if they don't want to do the plan with you, do it yourself. You (CASA) need to be ready and you need to plan ahead for the well-being and success of your CASA youth.

Start by putting together a timeline.

Begin with the time the youth will leave the system. This is usually around the date of their high school graduation, on their 18th birthday or if they opt to stay in care as defined by AB12. From this date backtrack important dates. Keep backing up this timeline until all dates are documented, such as birthdays, holidays, medical/dental checkups, testing dates, and preparation for graduation.

Schedule meetings with the ILP social worker & VOICES representative about transitional living, in addition to making an appointment be oriented at Job Link, which your youth needs to attend before they can take advantage of the classes and job search facilities. Pencil in a visit to the school counselor to make sure the youth fulfills all of the necessary units of credit to graduate. Set a date to open a bank account and to apply for a California ID. Remember to schedule in Drivers Ed and dates to go apartment hunting. Be creative and have fun with this process.

Dream big.

Now add in the financial plan. How much will it take to complete these tasks? This can be a real eye opener and provide some motivation for your youth to see exactly how much it will take for them to accomplish their goals. It is estimated that one has to make \$15-18 an hour

to live on their own in Sonoma County.

Team work is important.

Talk with youth social worker, VOICES program and independent living program ILP worker to make sure everybody is on the same page.

Set up a wallet.

Help your youth organize a wallet, including important phone numbers, IDs and medical alert information. Make sure they view it as a place to keep important documents, and help your youth practice responsibility and organization. Set up an emancipation file at the CASA office and make sure we have everything they might need copies of later such as SS#, birth certificates, lists of medications, phone numbers.

Develop a calendar or a day runner (paper or electronic).

Help the youth start understanding the importance of time management. Many of our youths do not have good organizational skills and find multi-tasking difficult. Outlining the next few weeks, months, or years can feel empowering. Teach your youth to use a calendar and a date book.

Educate youth on availability of grants, scholarships, and tuition waiver programs.

Discuss future dreams for financial independence. Include both educational and vocational options in your discussions. All foster youth are granted a waiver allowing them to attend the SRJC. Several additional scholarship resources are identified on this newsletter.

Ensure health records are in order and there is access to mental health and wellness services.

Begin to help youth develop a transitional health plan. It is particularly important to make sure your youth has a complete understanding of their medications and family medical history. Make sure to include any tests and evaluations that are available. Help them develop a positive image of their bodies, and encourage them to attend to personal hygiene and become aware of birth control/protection options.

Ensuring mental health services and transitional health plans are set up can provide a safety net. Work with the youth on setting up an area at their home where all related health care information can be kept.

Review employment options with your youth.

Advocate for your youth to be enrolled in appropriate job training programs. Job Corps has educational job training and other residential programs administered by government to assist at risk youth ages 16 to 24.

Review housing options.

Know what housing options exist for youth over 16 who are still in the system as well as for youth 18 and over. Sonoma County has a great transitional housing program that allows youth to live in a more independent environment while still in foster care. The Redwood Children's

Services also operates a great program. Call them and set up an interview to learn more.

Learn who is in the Support system.

We know that CASA is one, but these youth need many other adults. Make a list and gather them all around the table to talk about what they can do to help with this child transition. You may be surprised of what they have to offer; sometimes they simply need to be asked.

After the youth leaves the system then what? Does the youth have friends or family? Do they need a roommate or need to apply for Section 8 housing? And when all other avenues have been exhausted, know the homeless shelter phone numbers and what they each provide. Make a plan and work with the ILP staff, VOICES, and your social worker to do this.

What we know youth lose when they leave the Juvenile Court System:

Although our most rebellious youth may resist, we need to prepare them with the information to make better choices and with a larger vision of who they are, what they can accomplish and what opportunities await them. They may not be ready to listen now, but they need to hear the message that we believe in them. Many youth just want adults out of their lives during their teens, but whether they choose to remain in extended foster care under AB12 or leave the Court system, they need information and support. When our youth leave the system, whether it be at 18, 19, 20 or 21, this is what they lose:

Access to the courts: Court enforce orders that provide funding and services, as well as attorneys and CASA advocates who fight for their right to access these services.

Consistent adults: Foster parents, CASAs, lawyers and judges work for their best interest. who are working for their best interest. We are their life coaches whether they like it or not.

A sense of security: It may have been provided by the child welfare system involvement. At least they have some where to go if they want or need it something.

Medical coverage:

Youth who leaves the child welfare system often face significant challenges with respect to health. They are more likely to have a health condition or disability that limits daily activity and to be in poorer overall health. Since foster youth in CA is allowed to keep their health insurance until they are 21, they will lose it if they are not in care anymore.

Housing:

While in care the state must guarantee a youth's housing needs are addressed, but after leaving, a youth is left to find housing on their own or through a supportive housing program.



CASA Facts 2013/2014 Fiscal Year:

*CASA served 220 children every year.

*CASA volunteers provided over 22,000 hours of volunteer time.

*CASA volunteers wrote over 500 court reports.



News and Important Information for CASAs working with Transitional Age Youth:

It is important for the CASA, as well as for the youth, to understand that if they decide to leave the system and not become or remain a "Non-Minor Dependent (NMD)", they can change their mind and return up through age 21. They can also change their mind multiple times; and they do not have to already have a job or be back in school to regain NMD status. They just need the intent to do what they need to do to be eligible.

Successful transition case reviews.

CASA has implemented a proactive approach to help youth 16-18 years old - "Successful Transitions (ST) Case Reviews." ST Case Reviews are opportunities for CASAs to gather resources and discuss what our youth need to know before they transition out of the system. Successful Transitions Case Reviews are held every 4th Wednesday of every month at Noon (for a complete calendar of dates, refer to the calendar section of this newsletter). Anything and everything that is of concern to CASAs and/or transitioning youth will be discussed, and pertinent guest speakers will be invited to join those sessions as well.

List of tasks - what youth needs to know before aging out.

During a few past ST Case Reviews, CASAs put together a list of what kids need to know before they age out of the system. The full list contains 77 tasks that were deemed important for youth to learn. One of our brilliant CASAs, Eve Goldberg, then shared the list with her youth and asked him what matters most, so a shorter and more user-friendly list resulted. This is a great exercise for you and your youth. You can find the list of 77 tasks [here](#).

Attending the yearly Independent City event.

Independent City is a great annual event. Foster youth are given a "life" packet describing who they are and what they do for living. Then they go to the different booths, such as the bank or rental office, to take care of life tasks. How much rent can they afford? Do they want a roommate? Oh no...their car broke down and they need an extra \$200. They win prizes, get practice learning how to fill out applications, check registers and make "life" decisions. We encourage you to take your youth (or encourage them to attend) and to Volunteer with CASA to work in a booth. It is SO fun and SO worthwhile!

Be aware of deadlines for the pre-priority enrollment at the SRJC.

AB 194 allows foster youth pre-priority state college enrollment. Up until recently, this applied only to foster youth who were Non-Minor Dependents. But, exciting news! Now at Santa Rosa Junior College, any youth who is or was a foster youth (even for only 1 day in their life) can take advantage of pre-priority enrollment up until age 30. This means that they can choose their classes before the other 30,000 or so students there. However, they do have to follow some rules and meet some deadlines to get this pre-priority enrollment, such as taking specific English and Math placement tests and Basic Counseling, so if your youth is thinking about attending SRJC, don't wait to set up a time to meet with your youth and Nick Lawrence, SRJC Program Coordinator of the Foster Youth Success Program.

Get ahold of the *Lifebok for Transitional Age Youth*

The LIFEBOOK is a time-tested, results-producing workbook designed to successfully guide Transitional Age Youth (14-24) to self-sufficient, independent living. The LIFEBOOK is a unique, practical and effective, evidence-based workbook that was developed by the Family Care Network, with involvement from Transitional Age foster youth. The LIFEBOOK is a great resource for not only Transitional Age Youth, but for also for parents, social workers, educators, case managers, probation officers, therapists and other individuals helping young adults work towards independence. This workbook provides a step-by-step guided journey through seven areas of life with practical, achievable activities under each step. These life domains include: Planning & Organizing, Educational Achievement, Employment & Career, Community Supports, Personal Living, Finance & Savings, and Health & Safety. It also includes web-based resources to help complete the journey. The LIFEBOOK is a very comprehensive life skill building program. A Youth successfully completing the LIFEBOOK will be very well prepared for a successful, productive, self-sufficient life.

For more information follow this [link](#).

What we want the courts to know!

The outline below is included in all court reports for youth 15 and over. CASAs are to explore these topics and make sure they have been addressed.

- Youth is aware of and understands ILP/NMD opportunities.
- CASA and Minor have toured and understand VOICES.
- The minor understands the process and legal time frames of exiting/re-entering the juvenile court system and the possibilities of becoming a non-minor dependent.
- The minor has thought about his/her current preparation for independence.
- The minor has thought about whether he/she would like to attend college, training or vocational program.
- The minor understands health records, family medical history, medications and related concerns understood.
- The minor is in possession of his/her educational records such as IEP, educational certificates, transcripts.
- The minor has organized ID information, such as SS#, personal ID information, photo ID.
- The minor has a SS card and understand the significance of the number.
- The minor has obtained a California ID and determined if he/she is eligible for driving classes.
- The minor has a birth certificate, proof of citizenship and/or a green card.
- The minor understands the financial requirements to live independently such as budgeting, cost of living.
- The minor knows where to search for job information such as Job Link, EDD, SAY, VOICES) and if the minor is currently employed.
- The minor has explored career options such as Job Corp, Military Services, College, JC, Vocational training.

Learn the Ropes about AB 12:



♥ [California's AB 12: Historic Step Toward Helping Foster Youth Attend College, But Much Work Ahead.](#)

♥ [TOP 5 Things Higher Education Representatives Working with Foster Youth Need to Know About California's Fostering Connections to Success Act \(AB12\).](#)

♥ [John Burton Foundation](#)

The John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes is a non-profit organization based in San Francisco, working throughout California to improve the quality of life for California's foster, former foster, and homeless children. They have a very strong AB12 advocacy program with superb resources. We encourage you to sign up for their [AB12 question of the week.](#)

Resources for Transitioning Youth:

Independent Living Info

VOICES

714 Mendocino Ave
Santa Rosa, CA 95401
Phone: (707) 579-4327
Fax: (707) 579-4323



Independent Living Program (ILP)

Schools & College

SRJC Foster Youth Success Program

Getting our kids to and through college!
Coordinator: Nick Lawrence
nlawrence@santarosa.edu
707-535-3752

SRJC Bound Manuals

One of our very active CASAs, Karen Bushnell has developed a manual/guide to assist CASAs & their youth with the various processes involved with preparing for, applying to, obtaining financial assistance for and attending classes at Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC).

- >>[SRJC Bound Manual for CASAs](#)
- >>[SRJC Bound Manual for Students](#)

California College Pathways

- >>[Campus Support for Foster Youth](#)
- >>[Why College Matters for Foster Youth](#)
- >>[Guide to Helping California's Foster Youth Access Higher Education and Reach their Educational Goals*](#)

*Please proceed with caution. This handbook has a lot of great information, however, if you are working with a youth

Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps

[Click for Program Flyer](#)

Youth Connections

Help with passing the GED or earn a High School diploma. This program is "youth-driven", allowing participants to develop self-efficacy, and essential life and leadership skills.

Transitional Housing & Utilities

True to Life Children's Services (TLC)

707-823-7300

>>[Transitional Housing Placement Program \(THPP\)](#)

>>[Transitional Housing Placement Plus \(THP-Plus\)](#)

>>[Transitional Housing Placement-Plus-Foster Care Program \(THP+FC\)](#)

Redwood Children's Services

707-468-5536

Youth 16-18 years

Tamayo House

707-528-7500

Youth 18-24 years

that has not been on an academic path - don't scare them away from college with this manual! Youth that have NOT prepared in the way this manual suggests (for whatever reason) can still succeed and do well at college. Let's talk about it!

Foster Youth Support on California Universities:

[>>List of UC Campus Contact](#)

[>>List of CSU Campus Contacts](#)

Graduate School:

[>>How about graduate school? Yes, graduate school!](#)

[>>Check out UC Davis' program supporting foster youth in graduate school!](#)

Scholarships & Grants

<http://www.santarosa.edu/app/paying-for-college/scholarship-office/>

<https://www.scholarships.com/>

<https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

<https://www.chafee.csac.ca.gov/>

<http://www.fastweb.com/>

<http://www.finaid.org/scholarships/>



Job Resources & Vocational Programs

Exploring Career Possibilities &

North Coast Energy Services

1-800-233-4480

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Offers once a year help with wood, propane, kerosene or financial assistance with PG&E.

Emergency Shelters

Mental Health Services

24 Hour Services:

3322 Chanate Road

Santa Rosa, 95404

Acting Section Manager:

Denise Hunt, RN (707) 565-6911

Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES)

EMERGENCY - (707) 576-8181 or 1

(800) 746-8181

Emergency mental health counseling and referrals. Screening for all psychiatric inpatient admissions to Sutter Medical Center Psychiatric Unit. Extended stabilization services up to 23 hours. Staffed 24 hours a day. Medi-Cal/Medicare/Insurance/Sliding scale fees.

MediCal

Medical benefits are now available to our youth up until age 26 for former and current foster youth!

* Full scope MediCal benefits for foster youth; with or without employment

* Eligibility requires that youth needs to have aged out of foster care: That they lived in their foster home/relative home with the Dependency Court case open on their 18th birthday. They do not have to have opted in the AB12 (non-minor dependent) program.

Please note: If you know or are still connected to a young adult 18-26 that meets these requirements, please inform them of this benefit. It includes medical coverage and mental health assistance. If they meet

Occupations

Mapping Your Future!

Here you can explore careers, prepare for college, pay for college (financial aid), and manage your money (student loans and more).

Sonoma County Job Link

"Where people and jobs connect."

SonomaWorks

Job Corps

Education, training and support services are provided to students at Job Corps center campuses located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.

Worth our Weight

No-cost culinary apprenticeship program for youths ages 16 - 24 years old (there's some flexibility). Youth is guaranteed help finding a job after graduating the program. There are some housing spots and youth get stipends starting at \$50 a week up to \$100.

these requirements, they can and fill out a 1 page form to begin the enrollment process. Click on this [link](#) for the form.

California Medicaid

California is operating a State-based Marketplace, known as Covered California. California is expanding Medicaid coverage to low-income adults effective January 1, 2014.



Miscellaneous Resources

California I.D.

Social Security Number

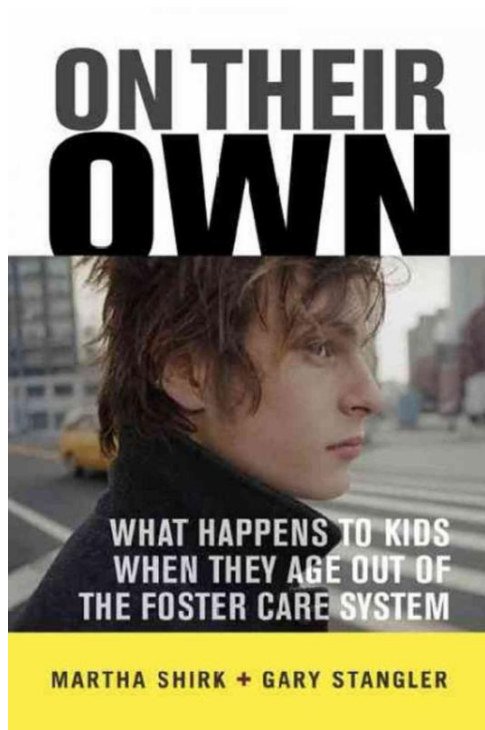
Managing Budgets

Book Review:

For most young people, crossing the threshold from adolescence into adulthood is an angst filled journey that can take years to complete, and requires the guidance and support of caring adults.

But for some children, there is a deadline past which no guidance, support, or supervision is available. Each year, as many as 25,000 teenagers "age out" of foster care, usually when they turn eighteen. For most of their lives, a government agency had made every important decision for them. Suddenly they are entirely alone, with no one to count on.

What does it mean to be eighteen and on your own, without the family support and personal connections that most young people rely on? For many youth it means largely unhappy endings, including sudden homelessness, unemployment, dead-end jobs, loneliness and despair. On Their Own tells the compelling stories of ten young people whose lives are full of



promise, but who face economic and social barriers stemming from the disruptions of foster care. For other youth, proper preparation for adulthood and support from caring adults helps them develop the resiliency and skills needed for success.

Reporter Martha Shirk and long-time children's advocate Gary Stangler do more than document the struggles of these young men and women. They call for action to provide youth in foster care the same opportunities on the road to adulthood that most of our youth take for granted - access to higher education, vocational training, medical care, housing, and relationships within their communities. As President Jimmy Carter writes in his Foreword: "The question we should ask ourselves is this: if we willingly give our own children the benefit of our support as they struggle to become independent, productive

adults, why do we tolerate the abrupt withdrawal of support for youth who are aging out of care"?

CASA Successful Transitions Calendar & Events



♥ **CASA Successful Transitions Case Reviews 2014**

All will be held at Noon:

06/25	07/23	08/27
09/24	10/22	11/26

♥ 06/04 12:00 - 2:00 pm

Continuing Ed. Workshop (workshop cancelled and will be rescheduled)

"Gender & Self Identity" with Positive Images

♥ 06/05 9:00 am - 12:30 pm

Continuing Ed. Field Tour

SRJC Bound Tour - CASA & Youth

♥ 07/02 9:00 am - 3:30 pm

SRJC Event

CASA & Youth - Inspiration Day!

♥ Every Year in Spring

Independent City at SRJC

Independent City is a great annual event. Foster youth are given a "life" packet describing who they are and what they do for living. Then they go to the different booths, such as the bank, rental office, to take care of life tasks. They win prizes, get practice learning how to be independent.

♥ Every Year in February

Annual Sonoma County Transition Fair

Supporting students with disabilities and their families in the transition to adulthood

Sonoma County Office of Education

5340 Skylane Blvd., Santa Rosa

♥ First Saturday of every month

07/05

08/02

09/06

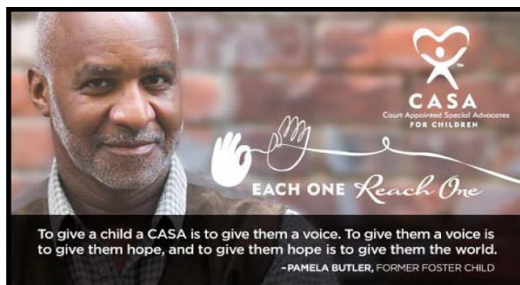
10/04

11/01

12/06

CASA Art Classes

[Calendar of Art Classes](#)



Consider becoming a child advocate or inviting a friend! We offer quarterly training sessions, and the next session is on July 17th & 22nd through 24th.

Classes allow you to gain an understanding of the Foster Care System, the Juvenile Court System and the many challenges faced by our

CASA youth. A team of dedicated professionals is standing by to help you develop the skills to change a child's life forever.

Newsletter Team: Millie Gilson, Heloisa Heinen, Lorrie Quam, Nan Van Gelder

CASA - Court Appointed Special Advocates of Sonoma County

Phone: 707-565-6375 Fax: 707-565-6375 www.sonomacasa.org

Get Involved

Like us on Facebook 

Donate Now

View our videos on YouTube 

[Forward this email](#)



This email was sent to info@sonomacasa.org by info@sonomacasa.org | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

CASA of Sonoma County | P.O. Box 1418 | Kenwood | CA | 95452