



FINALIST: CASA Contra Costa County

Overview: CASA of CONTRA COSTA COUNTY'S (www.cccocasa.org) mission is to recruit, train and support volunteer advocates as a powerful voice for the best interest of abused and neglected children during the court process, in order to help every child ultimately thrive in a stable and permanent home and complete their education. In 1977, CASA Seattle was created by Juvenile Court Judge John Soukup, out of a dire need to have more information about the children appearing before him. CASA Contra Costa County was one of the first four in the nation to be established, and has been serving the County's most needy children since 1981.

CASA's primary program is to train and support volunteers to work with foster youth one on one. CASA is in its 3rd year of a 5 year expansion program with the ultimate goal to serve 400 foster children a year. CASA has met its goals for the first 2 years of expansion and will serve 285 traumatized youth, ages 5 to 21, this year. Over the last year, CASA started partnering with other organizations to provide services for a wider foster youth community, including the proposed partnership with Contra Costa Crisis Center.

Grant Request: Impact 100 East Bay's grant would support the first year of a new two-year program to develop a systemic solution to the problem of not enough trained mental health professionals to work with foster youth who need care in Contra Costa County. According to a February 2018 report, "California's Current and Future Behavioral Health Workforce", the state is facing an imminent crisis with the number of mental health professionals expected to decline while the need for services is expected to increase.

CASA and Contra Costa Crisis Center have unique organizational expertise to do so: CASA in trauma-informed care for foster youth and Contra Costa Crisis Center in running in-person counseling programs. There are no other organizations in the County offering the training program they are proposing to provide an ongoing source of trained counselors to effectively work with foster youth.

This new program includes four components:

- 1) Develop an evidence-based online curriculum for licensed professionals to earn or renew necessary licenses,
- 2) Develop an evidence-based in-person curriculum and training for MFT and MSW graduates working to accumulate needed clinical hours,
- 3) Pilot both curriculums to ensure they are successful in teaching skills needed to work with traumatized children, and
- 4) Develop the infrastructure to allow the program to become ongoing and self-supporting after the first year.

Projected Impact: The program's goals for the first year are to:

- 1) Train 25 licensed mental health professionals on-line to work with traumatized youth,
- 2) Train 10 post-master's health professional in-person in how to work with traumatized youth, and
- 3) Formalize the online curriculum, in-person curriculum and develop the application process for training programs for year 2 and beyond.

Transformational Potential: With additional funding and time, this program is a potential breakthrough for CASA organizations beyond Contra Costa County by influencing and/or providing a model for others. Today there are 1000 CASA programs in 49 states recruiting, training and supporting over 76,000 volunteers to represent the best interests of over 251,000 abused and neglected children.

Sustainability: The Impact 100 grant will account for approximately 85% of funds for the 2-year program (\$102,000 of total project of \$120,500). There are financial commitments for the minor shortfall of year one, but CCCC will need to secure Medi-Cal funding to pay for the Clinical Director of the counseling program in year 2 and beyond. **As of September 22, we were advised that year one focus will be online and off-line training and year two will address the counseling portion, where additional time is needed to secure matching funds for a 50% commitment for Medi-Cal reimbursement from the County Behavioral Health Department.** Given CASA's strong Board, impressive leadership team, and partnership with CCCC, we are confident that this program will produce results and gain additional/ongoing support over the 2 years.