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## STRATEGIC PLAN FY26-28

Adopted by the Board of Trustees  
November 17, 2025

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## **Executive Summary**

In early 2025, leaders at CASA for Children of Mercer and Burlington Counties began a process designed to update the organization's strategic plan. Staff and Trustees were focused on continuing progress towards serving more children in foster care.

During the planning process, the organization was asked to consider expanding its services into Cumberland, Salem, and Gloucester Counties. Leadership completed the strategic plan but paused its adoption while it assessed the expansion opportunity. After determining that the expansion would be a positive move for both the existing organization and the three new counties, the Trustees adopted this strategic plan. The organization was renamed CASA of South-Central New Jersey to reflect its expanded geographic service area.

This plan emphasizes the same goals for all five counties, though measurable objectives differ to account for varying priorities in each county. Overall, the focus will be on recruiting and retaining volunteers in order to serve more children in care, expanding collaboration with other CASAs to increase efficiencies, investing in core partnerships, and maintaining organizational stability in spite of changes in the external environment.

This plan is an adaptive strategic plan. It is designed to provide guideposts for ongoing decision-making as CASA's circumstances change. The plan includes broad strategies to illustrate the kind of work that is likely to take place; some strategies are followed by examples of potential projects that might be pursued to fulfill plan objectives. Annual planning linked to budgeting and fundraising will determine the best options for pursuing strategic objectives each year.

## **Mission**

CASA of South-Central New Jersey advocates for children and youth in the foster care system to have their needs met and their rights protected. Our dedicated staff and well-trained volunteers connect each child in our care to resources that support their healthy growth and development, and advocate for the child's well-being and best interests.

## **Vision**

CASA volunteers change the trajectory of a child's life, connecting them to educational, medical, psychological, and social supports that help them to meet their challenges, learn, and grow.

CASA of South-Central New Jersey receives referrals for children who have been removed from their home and need an advocate's support. Advocates remain with children over time, so that each individual child has someone who is focused only on securing the best possible outcome for them.

Working in partnership with the Division of Child Protection and Permanency, the Family Courts, and partner agencies, CASA advocates serve as the voice of vulnerable young people from our community. Advocates identify each child's needs and make recommendations to positively influence decisions about their future.

Through these efforts, CASA advocates make a significant, long-term difference in the life of each child.

## **Summary of Strategic Goals & Objectives FY26-28**

*Progress towards objectives will be incremental over this three year period. Percentages and other milestones are intended to be achieved by the end of June 2028.*

### **Goal #1: Increase the size of our volunteer corps to provide skilled and trained advocates to more of the children in care who need one.**

- Provide an advocate for 60% of the children in out-of-home care in Mercer and Burlington Counties.
- Provide an advocate for 50% of the children in out-of-home care in Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties.
- Ensure that at least 60% of advocates remain active from year to year.
- Implement CASA Network Impact tools to build a strong sense of community and shared purpose among CASA advocates.

### **Goal #2: Enhance the efficiency and impact of our work through intentional collaboration with other programs in the CASA network.**

- Expand services into Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties, building strong participation in each County's CASA program.
- Increase cooperation and shared services among CASA state and local programs to support our overall program capacity and effectiveness.

### **Goal #3: Maintain CASA's organizational stability and success as it manages shifts in the organization and its external environment.**

- Successfully complete the upcoming Executive Director transition.
- Maintain a stable financial position.
- Increase annual revenue from private philanthropy by 15%.
- Strengthen board composition and practices to support key priorities such as expanding partners and supporters and ensuring long-term financial stability.

### **Goal #4: Strengthen CASA's program to position it as an essential resource to our partner organizations.**

- Continue to build collaborative relationships with NJ Division of Child Protection and Permanency staff to better support our advocates and children.
- Ensure that all judges understand CASA's role and routinely refer children for services.
- Expand supports that will help CASA youth who are aging out of the foster care system to achieve their goals for themselves.

## **Pursuing Our Strategic Goals**

This is an adaptive plan, designed to articulate CASA's goals while providing flexibility in the strategies used to achieve them. This plan includes broad strategies to illustrate the kind of work that is likely to take place; some strategies are followed by examples of potential projects that might be pursued to fulfill plan objectives. Annual planning linked to budgeting and fundraising will determine the best options for pursuing strategic objectives each year.

## **Goal #1: Increase the size of our volunteer corps to provide skilled and trained advocates to more of the children in care who need one.**

- Provide an advocate for 60% of the children in out-of-home care in Mercer and Burlington Counties.
- Provide an advocate for 50% of the children in out-of-home care in Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties.
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### **Strategy #1: Expand in-person recruiting strategies that connect us with promising target audiences.**

- Annually identify promising groups for advocate recruitment (for example, retiring teachers and nurses, lawyers, members of historically Black Greek organizations, members of cultural organizations like the Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce, members of organizations for active older adults, etc.).
- Invest in informal recruiting sessions like Coffee with CASA.
- Host intriguing speakers and include recruiting messaging as part of the event.
- Offer professional development sessions for education or youth development organizations, and include recruiting messages as part of the event.

### **Strategy #2: Enhance our social media strategy.**

- Align social media messaging with other CASA programs to build visibility across the network.
- Feature advocates on our social media, so that they can easily share their volunteerism on their own social channels.
- Expand our approach to “testimonial” marketing to include advocates, adults who were in care as children and benefited from having a CASA, families who were helped by CASA, etc.
- Explore how different social media channels can help us to reach our target audiences for recruiting (i.e., LinkedIn as a source for volunteers).
- Ask current and past advocates to help us recruit through their social media presence and in closed social media groups (for example, a Facebook group for NJ teachers).

**Strategy #3: Strengthen the sense of community and personal connection among our advocates.**

- Increase opportunities for advocates to gather in person for learning, camaraderie, and socialization.
- Increase learning opportunities for advocates (Air & Shares, panel discussions with advocates with expertise in specific areas like education, medicine, law, etc.).
- Create an active, private online space for advocates to share advice.
- Expand newsletter content to feature more information about advocates and CASA staff members, celebrate milestones like birthdays, CASA anniversaries, and successful case closings, etc.

**Strategy #4: Enhance support for advocates as they work cases, especially those cases that continue for an extended period of time.**

- Create opportunities for collaboration between advocates (have advocates with specialized knowledge about educational or medical advocacy consult on other cases, have “advocate buddies” who take a team approach to working cases).
- Consider how emerging artificial intelligence tools can be responsibly used to meet some case requirements (i.e., drafting initial court reports) and increase advocate time available for things like child visits and direct advocacy.

**Strategy #5: Build strong relationships with service organizations and potential partners in Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties.**

- Invest in opportunities to raise CASA’s profile in our new counties and build mutually beneficial relationships with other organizations that serve youth and promote volunteerism.

## **Goal #2: Enhance the efficiency and impact of our work through intentional collaboration with other programs in the CASA network.**

- Expand services into Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties, building strong participation in each County's CASA program.
- Increase cooperation and shared services among CASA state and local programs to support our overall program capacity and effectiveness.

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### **Strategy #1: Pilot shared services with other CASA programs to increase efficiency and manage expenses.**

- Test shared administrative services with other CASAs; for example, having all of our background checks administered by CASA of Atlantic, Cape May, and Camden Counties.
- Pilot a project to offer advocate training and professional development to other CASAs.

### **Strategy #2: Build infrastructure to support stronger CASA services in South-Central Jersey.**

- Expand services into Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem in FY26, supporting the rebuilding of CASA programs in those counties.
- Aim to serve at least 35% of the children in care in Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties by the end of FY26, as a starting point for increasing services in those counties.
- Realign staff responsibilities as needed to ensure effective staff coverage across our five counties.
- Build strong relationships with potential partners and supporters across all five counties.
- At the end of FY26, evaluate our progress at building infrastructure for CASA services in Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties, and determine next steps.

## **Goal #3: Maintain CASA's organizational stability and success as it manages shifts in the organization and its external environment.**

- Successfully complete the upcoming Executive Director transition.
- Maintain a stable financial position.
- Increase annual revenue from private philanthropy by 15%.
- Strengthen board composition and practices to support key priorities such as expanding partners and supporters and ensuring long-term financial stability.

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### **Strategy #1: Execute our succession plan.**

- Provide support for staff as roles change when our current Executive Director retires.
- Maintain the organization's capacity to provide support and counsel for the incoming Executive Director.

### **Strategy #2: Raise awareness of CASA's impact on the community among potential supporters and partners.**

- Increase CASA's visibility in the community of nonprofits in all five counties.
- Increase cultivation of prospective local donors and grantors.
- Enhance CASA's social media presence on channels where donors and partners are likely to see our content.

### **Strategy #3: Continue to refine the board's structure and practices.**

- Review the bylaws and adjust as needed (for example, consider term limits).
- Strengthen the board's capacity for ambassadorship by providing more opportunities to connect to the mission through staff and volunteers (for example, opportunities to shadow a case supervisor or sit in on advocate training/professional development).

### **Strategy #4: Increase contributed revenue from private philanthropy.**

- Invest in new donor acquisition, especially from people who have been involved with CASA in the past such as "retired" advocates.
- Explore shared fundraising opportunities, such as collaborating with other local CASAs to secure foundation grants or corporate sponsorships that cover an entire region.

## **Goal #4: Strengthen CASA's program to position it as an essential resource to our partner organizations.**

- Continue to build collaborative relationships with NJ Division of Child Protection and Permanency staff to better support our advocates and children.
- Ensure that all judges understand CASA's role and routinely refer children for services.
- Expand supports that will help CASA youth who are aging out of the foster care system to achieve their goals for themselves.

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### **Strategy #1: Increase the resources we provide directly to NJ Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) staff.**

- Collaborate on DCPP new employee training, positioning CASA as a resource as soon as people arrive at the agency.
- Offer ongoing case worker professional development that is eligible for CEUs.
- Increase personal outreach to DCPP staff, especially supervisors, who can effectively influence staff to collaborate with CASAs.
- Build our roster of advocates who can handle cases in Spanish and Portuguese, meeting a significant need for DCPP.

### **Strategy #2: Increase court awareness of our positive impact on children's cases.**

- Continue to improve our court report writing to ensure that all reports are substantial and helpful to everyone involved in a case.
- Work with judges and court staff in Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties to confirm processes for managing referrals and involving advocates in court proceedings.

### **Strategy #3: Expand our offerings for older youth.**

- Recruit more volunteers who have experience working with older youth, and provide them with training and support so they can help their teen set and meet their own goals.
- Recruit volunteers who can provide specific support or learning experiences for our older youth, especially those that are closer to aging out of the system (i.e., financial literacy, mental health self-care, job readiness, etc.)
- Increase workshops offered for teens, such as resume building, interviewing skills, life skills like minor home repairs and cooking, etc.

- Build new partnerships that provide older youth with resources they need (i.e., Dress for Success) and experiences that help them to set goals for themselves (arts and culture activities, career development, etc.).