



CASA of Cook County

Inclusiveness Initiative Work Plan

Created on 8/6/07
Updated in 5/2009

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Inclusiveness Initiative Committee Members

LaTonya Armstrong, CASA Volunteer

Pamela Brown, Director of Child Advocacy

Stephanie Brown, Lead Trainer

Lanetta Haynes, Board Member

Sharon Hurwitz, Executive Director

Jessie Macdonald, Board Member

Sheila Russell, Volunteer Recruiter

Two members of the Cook County Inclusiveness Committee were unable to attend the meeting:

Helen Jones, CASA Volunteer

Heidi Weise, Board Fellow from University of Chicago

**CASA of Cook County
 Inclusiveness Initiative
 SWOT Analysis**

The following table outlines the **Strengths**, **Weaknesses**, **Opportunities** and **Threats** for each Key Issue Area: Recruitment and Retention, Organizational Culture and Community engagement.

Key Issue Area #1: Recruitment and Retention

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great, easy to understand mission • Experienced volunteers (those who are retained) • Community outreach • Good support for volunteers • Being a CASA gives volunteers the opportunity to make an immediate impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with retention • Time commitment of both the volunteer experience and the training • Location of training • Difficult, emotionally draining volunteer role (uncomfortable?) • Lack of awareness of CASA |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Untapped group – opportunity for outreach • Opportunity to improve sense of community and connectivity among CASAs • Exit interviews when staff turnover | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People’s “busyness” impacts time available to volunteer as an advocate • Negative perceptions of CASA by some people in the child welfare system • Distrust in the community of people involved in the child welfare system • Perception of CASA as not being diverse • Staff turnover |

Key Issue Area #2: Organizational Culture

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from ad sups for volunteers • Involvement in this project • Commitment of leadership towards diversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception that leadership might not be committed • Need to make CASA more positive and uplifting • Lack of connection across volunteers, board and staff • Lack of diversity and inclusiveness |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community awareness – increasing • To change organizational culture through learning • To change perception of leadership’s commitment to diversity and inclusiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational change is hard • Staff turnover |

Key Issue Area #3: Community Engagement

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant gives us resource to engage community • Committee member and volunteer connections to the community • Great mission • Compelling story | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness • Few established relationships • Negative perceptions • Knowing who to target – so many possible partners |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach, greater awareness • Be more creative in our approach • So many possible partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community has its own work and programs • Perceptions about volunteering |

**CASA of Cook County
 Inclusiveness Initiative
 Work Plan**

Key Issue Area #1: Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment Goal: Increase the number of African American volunteers.

Objective A: Increase the number of African American volunteers by 50% to 84 in 18 months.

Measurements: Number of active African American volunteers

Retention Goal: Increase the number of active African American volunteers who fulfill a case commitment.

Objective A: Increase the number of active African American volunteers who fulfill a case commitment by 50% to 17 in 18 months.(30 African American volunteers left their cases in FY07. 11 of them left when CASA's assignment was complete or when the case closed in court. Thus, an increase of 50% would be 17.)

Measurements: Number of active African American volunteers who fulfill a case commitment

| Action Steps | Start Date | Person(s) Responsible | Costs and Resources | Completion Date |
|---|----------------|--|---------------------|--|
| RECRUITMENT | | | | |
| Involve board members in African American recruitment efforts by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking them to network at other functions they attend and to set up outreach meetings • Asking current African American board members for introductions to their professional affinity groups and for the opportunity to speak at meetings • Ensuring that all board members know the compelling story • Having them participate in outreach meetings when appropriate | September 2007 | Board members who are members of the inclusiveness committee will take the lead, but all board members will be responsible | Food for meetings | Ongoing. Goal is 2-4 contacts by end of calendar year Of the volunteers sworn in FY09, 45.8% are African American and 41.7% are Caucasian |
| Involve volunteers in African American recruitment by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting all volunteers to a brainstorming meeting to identify their connections to community groups/leaders | September 2007 | Director of Recruitment and Training Volunteers | Food for meeting | 1/4 of our African American volunteers this year was referred by their friend |

| Action Steps | Start Date | Person(s) Responsible | Costs and Resources | Completion Date |
|--|----------------|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking them to recruit African American individuals that they know Ensuring that they know the compelling story Having them participate in outreach meetings when appropriate | | | | who was a CASA volunteer. |
| <p>Make a list of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influential African Americans in Chicago African American retiree groups such as retired teachers and police officers African American churches/faith based organizations African American community organizations Colleges and universities <p>Ask the individuals/organizations to meet with us to hear our message (could be group meetings or individual meetings or lunch)</p> <p>Offer incentives, but express benefits of advocacy and its effect on lives</p> | September 2007 | <p>Director of Recruitment and Training will compile list with input from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Director Inclusiveness Committee Members Board members Volunteers Staff <p>DRT will arrange meetings and invite others to join her as appropriate</p> | <p>Food for meetings</p> <p>Possibly facility costs if we rent large space for a group meeting</p> <p>Incentives (movie tickets, books, small trips)</p> | Accomplishments: Established relationship with retired teachers association and three colleges heavily attended by African American students. |
| <p>Participate in community outreach events and cultural events (e.g., Bud Billiken parade, community expos, organization fairs)</p> | Immediately | <p>Director of Recruitment and Training Executive Director</p> | <p>Entry cost to event Cost of brochures, banners</p> | Accomplishments: Attended 5 community outreach events |
| <p>Make community more aware of who we are and what we do through media outlets (i.e., newspapers, radio, email)</p> <p>Approach radio and TV personalities to assist with recruitment</p> <p>Use FOX in the Morning or popular radio stations to talk about CASA</p> | August 2007 | <p>Director of Recruitment and Training Executive Director BLH</p> | <p>Advertisements</p> | Advertised on radio and newspaper |
| <p>Hold training sessions in African American communities</p> | October 2007 | <p>Director of Recruitment and Training</p> | <p>Space rental</p> | Training held in South Holland in April/May 2008. |

| Action Steps | Start Date | Person(s) Responsible | Costs and Resources | Completion Date |
|--|-----------------|--|--|--|
| | training | | | Doubled number of African American volunteers from last year training in south suburbs. |
| RETENTION - Volunteers | | | | |
| Hold annual talent show for CASA Find hidden talent Event where your family can come and see you sing/dance Gives a sense of connection | Spring 2008 | Director of Child Advocacy Volunteers | Planning | Consider holding talent show after the 5K |
| Hold an annual panel where staff/volunteers take active role in planning and speaking on child welfare issues—allows untapped resources and a feeling of belonging to organization Invite internal and external sources | Annually | Executive Director | Networking Planning | Incorporated volunteer panel for continuing education. |
| Open up newsletter articles for volunteers to write pieces and share their passion Gives everyone a chance to get to know each other | Next newsletter | Development Director | None | Have not yet started but have implemented volunteer spotlight in monthly volunteer e-newsletter |
| Help manage expectations of volunteers so they don't feel guilty about their ability to meet their role Help volunteers avoid burnout | September 2007 | Director of Recruitment and Training Director of Child Advocacy Advocate Supervisors | Time | Ongoing |
| Implement exit interviews for volunteers and use results to assess where we can change and make improvements | October 2007 | Director of Child Advocacy Advocate Supervisors | Time Technology if we do it online Postage if we do it by mail | Began yearly volunteer self-evaluation process and supervisor feedback instead of exit interviews |
| Hold social receptions before each monthly inservice | November | Director of Recruitment | Refreshment costs | Ongoing |

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| Action Steps | Start Date | Person(s) Responsible | Costs and Resources | Completion Date |
|--|------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| | 2007 | and Training | | Implemented quarterly happy hour events |
| Create mentoring program with volunteers as mentors Consider matching mentor to mentee by race | January 2008 | Director of Child Advocacy Advocate Supervisors Volunteers | Technology Talk with other programs | Still under consideration |
| Make recognition events and inservices conveniently located for African American volunteers | November 2007 | Director of Child Advocacy Director of Recruitment and Training | Space Rental Food | Ongoing |
| Consider reinstating advocate supervisor support meetings with their volunteers as a group | January 2008 | Director of Child Advocacy | Food | Still under consideration |
| RETENTION - Staff | | | | |
| Offer mental health or personal day | Upon request | Board would need to approve change to the leave policy | Salary and benefits | Implemented floating holiday and telecommuting policy for staff |
| Hold quarterly or semiannual staff meetings geared towards team building and concerns not just reporting | Within 3 months of new ED starting | Executive Director | Meeting space rental Food Consultant for team building? | Implemented yearly staff retreats as well as monthly staff meetings and bi-weekly Director's meetings |
| Schedule exit interviews for staff | Immediately | Executive Director or board (when appropriate) | Time | Still under consideration due to change in circumstances |

Key Issue Area #2: Organizational Culture

Goal: Build a more inclusive organization where everyone feels respected and valued.

Objective A: Increase the number of culturally sensitive events, trainings, etc. to at least 4 annually

Objective B: Conduct semiannual inclusiveness satisfaction surveys.

Measurements: Number of culturally sensitive events; number of surveys conducted

| Action Steps | Start Date | Person(s) Responsible | Costs and Resources | Completion Date |
|---|-------------|--|---------------------------------|---|
| OVERALL INCLUSIVENESS | | | | |
| All staff and board members participate in cultural competency training | June 2007 | Executive Director Board members who are on the inclusiveness committee | Training costs | Staff training was in June. Board training still to be determined. After that, will make a plan for ongoing training. |
| Make inclusiveness part of our daily and weekly discussions | Immediately | Everyone | None | Ongoing |
| Communicate, communicate, communicate Keep everyone informed about the Inclusiveness Committee and other initiatives Let people know we are serious about inclusiveness and want to make progress | Immediately | Executive Director Other committee members | Postage Letterhead/envelopes | Ongoing |
| Continue to increase board, staff and volunteer diversity | Immediately | Everyone | Outreach costs | Ongoing |
| Expand Inclusiveness Committee to include more Caucasians and other races/ethnicities | Immediately | Inclusiveness Committee | none | Inclusiveness Committee disbanded, need to consider re- |

| Action Steps | Start Date | Person(s) Responsible | Costs and Resources | Completion Date |
|--|----------------------------------|---|--|--|
| | | | | instituting similar concept |
| Celebrate more often! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold annual events to celebrate successes, retention, elevation, etc. • Hold award ceremonies, picnics, family outings, etc. • Hold potluck cultural celebrations (maybe combine this with the receptions for monthly inservices) Each person writes something personal about the recipe they have shared (e.g., always served in certain seasons, grandmother handed down recipe) | Summer 2008 | Executive Director and Board would be lead on staff celebrations Director of Child Advocacy is responsible for volunteer celebrations Possibly a volunteer committee? | Food, location rental, decorations, prizes | Ongoing |
| OFFICE ENVIRONMENT | | | | |
| Have a receptionist greet everyone who comes in, direct them to where they want to go and help them with the information they need | September 2007 | Executive Director/board responsible for hiring | Job advertising Salary and benefits | Completed and ongoing |
| Make office environment, particularly reception area, clean, friendly and inviting culturally (reflected in décor and attitude) | When new Admin. Assistant starts | Admin. Assistant takes the lead, with help from other staff | Décor costs | Completed and ongoing |
| STAFF RELATIONSHIPS | | | | |
| "Open door policy" Executive director sets aside specific time to talk with staff individually to build relationships, listen, address concerns, show support, etc. Prioritize and dedicate the time and keep it focused | When new ED starts | Executive Director Staff | Time | Ongoing |
| Continue monthly brown bag lunches with ED and staff | Already started | Executive Director | None | Replaced by monthly lunches prior to staff meeting and |

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| Action Steps | Start Date | Person(s) Responsible | Costs and Resources | Completion Date |
|---|--------------------|---|---|---|
| | | | | is ongoing |
| Use suggestion box and talk about ideas at staff meetings | When new ED starts | Executive Director Staff | Box | Still under consideration |
| Review, revise and compose policy regarding how to respectfully talk to fellow employees How to disagree and bring up difficult issues Everyone has an opportunity to talk and every voice is heard | When new ED starts | Executive Director and staff | Time | This is no longer an issue for organization |
| Orientation and training for new staff Include organizational and functions New staff required to participate in advocate training to become more familiar with CASA and its purpose | Immediately | Executive Director with help from other staff | Time | Ongoing |
| BOARD/STAFF RELATIONSHIPS | | | | |
| Provide opportunities for staff and board to work together, to interact Hold annual retreats for board and staff to strategize organizational growth and to get to know each other and our roles | June 2007 | Board | Food Facilitator for the retreat | Board committees have already started to involve more staff members. Board will plan a social event with staff by end of calendar year. |
| Publish "who's who" newsletter articles featuring new staff and/or board members Announce arrival and share background Let everyone know there is someone new in the group | Immediately | Executive Director | | Ongoing |

Key Issue Area #3: Community Engagement

Goal: Increase the awareness of and develop a positive perception of Cook County CASA.

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Objective A: Conduct 200 community touches a year (including meetings, presentations, attendance at fairs, correspondence, etc.)

Objective B: Form 10 community partnerships.

Objective C: Conduct semiannual inclusiveness satisfaction surveys of our partners.

Measurements: Number of community touches; number of community partnerships; change in perception of organization

| Action Steps | Start Date | Person(s) Responsible | Costs and Resources | Completion Date |
|--|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Many of the activities listed in the other sections will help with community engagement as well | | | | |
| Walk with a CASA banner in the Bud Billiken Parade with CASA volunteers and kids | August 2007 | Executive Director | Entry fee for booth Banner | August 2007 |
| Implement communication plan | Already started | Executive Director Director of Recruitment and Training | Printing Postage Meeting costs | Ongoing |
| Set up meetings with retired judges who support CASA and ask their advice | 6-8 months after new ED starts | Executive Director | | Still needs to be implemented |
| Invite foster parents and families to learn more about what CASA does and to discuss their needs and perceptions | June 2008 | Executive Director Director of Recruitment and Training with help from Advocate Supervisors to identify families | Refreshment costs | Still under consideration |
| Identify and use community speakers (e.g., foster parents and former foster children) to speak on behalf of CASA | July 2008 | Director of Recruitment and Training will coordinate, but will get info from Advocate Supervisors | Compensation and appreciation costs | ongoing |

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| Action Steps | Start Date | Person(s) Responsible | Costs and Resources | Completion Date |
|--|-----------------|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Attend and/or sponsor community roundtable events to hear the voice of the African American community and show commitment to being part of the community | January 2008 | Everyone | Meeting costs | ongoing |
| Become aware and be a visible presence at meetings that address concerns that might affect our youth | September 2007 | Everyone, but especially Executive Director and Director of Child Advocacy | Time | Ongoing |
| Join African American affiliation groups and community groups so we can establish liaisons between CASA and the community | September 2007 | Board Executive Director Director of Recruitment and Training Director of Child Advocacy | Membership fees | Became member of two organizations |
| Create additional compelling stories to reflect "real time/life" experiences of staff and volunteers | December 2007 | Director of Recruitment and Training with help from Advocate Supervisors and Volunteers | | Ongoing |
| Subscribe to African American publications to keep abreast of news and events in the community | Already started | Inclusiveness Committee (make list) | Subscription costs | completed |
| Take advantage of Austin Voice editor's offer to co-host a community meeting | Spring 2008 | BLH Director of Recruitment and Training | Room rental Refreshment costs | To be determined |
| Connect with Essence Cares Partners: 100 Black Men, The Links, NAACP, NUL | Spring 2008 | Director of Recruitment and Training Executive Director | | ongoing |