



Judicial Council of California · Administrative Office of the Courts

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

For business meeting on: October 28, 2011

Title	Agenda Item Type
Budget: Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Grant Funding Allocations for Fiscal Year 2011–2012	Action Required
Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected	Effective Date
None	October 28, 2011
Recommended by	Date of Report
Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee	October 28, 2011
Hon. Kimberly J. Nystrom-Geist, Cochair	Contact
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Executive Summary

The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee recommends that the Judicial Council approve CASA grant funding levels for fiscal year 2011–2012. The recommended funding levels would maintain current programs at a reduced level, award implementation funding for new start-up programs, allocate prorated development grant funds for one program, and reserve funds for technical assistance.

Recommendation

The state judicial branch budget for Judicial Council CASA grants for FY 2011–2012 is \$2.059 million. This represents a 6.8 percent reduction from FY 2010–2011. At the same time, grant applications for FY 2011–2012 have increased because of the addition of three new CASA programs and one CASA program currently in development. Therefore, further reductions to existing CASA programs are necessary to support emerging CASA programs.

The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee recommends that the Judicial Council, effective October 28, 2011:

1. Reduce CASA local assistance grants to existing CASA programs by 10.25 percent from baseline awards in FY 2010–2011;
2. Award implementation funding to three new start-up CASA programs;
3. Allocate prorated development grant funds for one existing development CASA program in order to extend funding through August 31, 2012; and
4. Continue to reserve funds for technical assistance to local programs to address program challenges.

The recommended budget is included in Attachment A at page 6.

Previous Council Action

Legislation (Stats. 1988, ch. 723) amended Welfare and Institutions Code section 100 et seq. to require the Judicial Council to establish guidelines encouraging the development of local CASA programs that assist abused and neglected children who are the subject of judicial proceedings. The legislation also called for the establishment of a CASA grant program to be administered by the Judicial Council and required CASA programs to provide local matching or in-kind funds equal to program funding received from the Judicial Council. At the February 9, 1999, meeting, the Judicial Council delegated approval of the allocation of Judicial Council CASA grant funds to the Executive and Planning Committee.

In August 2003, at the recommendation of the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee, the Executive and Planning Committee approved a formula-based method for distributing Judicial Council CASA program funding to California CASA programs. The new funding approach replaced the previous competitive request for proposals process with predetermined program awards. When the allocation process transitioned to a formula-based method, the baseline awards were determined by averaging the amounts of the previous two years of funding. However, since 2003, the baseline awards have been equal to the previous year's awards.

While the application for funding process is formula based, programs are required, through both a contract and an evaluation process, to demonstrate that they meet a number of program objectives, including compliance with rule 5.655 of the California Rules of Court, volunteer recruitment, volunteer training, board development, and sound fiscal management.

Rationale for Recommendation

On August 12, 2011, a request for funding application was sent to CASA programs. Applications were received from 40 existing programs (including 3 from multicounty programs), 1 existing program expanding services to a neighboring county, and 2 new start-up CASA programs. One development program serving two counties is also expected to apply for continued funding.

CASA program growth

In FY 2009–2010 and FY 2010–2011, the CASA grant program began program development in six new counties. This growth is largely attributed to the recommendation by the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care that “the Judicial Council continue to support the development and expansion of CASA programs and to help make available CASA volunteers for all foster children in the dependency system.”¹ As a result, six courts have requested the development of new CASA programs: one began serving children in 2010, three will begin services in 2011, and one program serving two counties will begin serving children by 2012.

As a result of this success, 44 programs serving 49 counties are expected to apply for Judicial Council funding in FY 2011–2012. This growth in services and applications for funding come at a time when state judicial branch funding for CASA has been reduced. However, failure to provide Judicial Council grants to these new programs would cut short CASA services to five courts. Therefore, further reductions to existing CASA programs are necessary to support emerging CASA programs. The Judicial Council grant represents 11 percent of total CASA program funding, and programs are able to absorb a reduction. In addition, the CASA grant program has successfully helped programs secure additional funding.

Reduction to existing CASA programs

The committee recommends reducing the baseline local assistance awards to established CASA programs by 10.25 percent from FY 2010–2011. This results in a net reduction ranging from \$3,900–\$6,800 per single-county program and \$7,700–\$10,100 per multicounty program. See attachment A for details.

Special exceptions. After factoring the recommended 10.25 percent cut to established single-county CASA programs, the minimum award to an established CASA program is \$34,500. In FY 2010–2011, one program was awarded an implementation grant for \$34,000 to start program operations. Since this implementation award already falls below the minimum award for established CASA programs, the award for this sophomore program will be maintained at \$34,000.

In FY 2006–2007, one program was established as an independent program after operating for several years as a multicounty program. The program was awarded an additional \$3,000 to assist with this transition to independence. This award was continued in subsequent years. The program is now an established, independent CASA program. Therefore, this transition award will be discontinued in FY 2011–2012. The baseline reduction of 10.25 percent plus the elimination of the transition award will result in a net reduction of 14.6 percent, for a total award of \$58,400. This award amount is consistent with awards to programs of a similar size, age, and geographic region.

¹ Judicial Council of California, California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care. *Fostering a New Future for California’s Children: Ensuring Every Child a Safe, Secure, and Permanent Home, Final Report and Action Plan*, (May 2009), p. 18.

CASA program development and implementation

Each year, the CASA grant program provides a portion of funding for CASA program development. The program development option is available to those courts or organizations interested in developing CASA programs in their counties.

The program development funding option was offered in FY 2010–2011, and four development grants were awarded to programs designated by local courts. Development grants were funded in FY 2010–2011 primarily by the CASA Administration/Technical Assistance budget, which has been eliminated in FY 2011–2012. These four recipients are expected to apply for additional funding in FY 2011–2012:

- Three development grant recipients successfully completed program development and require implementation funding for the first start-up year of program operations. Previous implementation awards ranged between \$25,000 and \$35,000. However, with limited funds and since caseloads are relatively low during the first year of CASA program operations, a baseline award for \$20,000 will allow new programs to sustain implementation efforts in FY 2011–2012.
- One grant recipient requires a prorated development grant for four months (\$3,500) to sustain program development through August 31, 2012, and align the new program with the existing CASA program grant award cycle.

Because of limited funds, additional development funding is not available for new applicants in FY 2011–2012.

Reserve fund for technical assistance

Every CASA program faces the challenge of increased needs for services combined with diminishing resources to fund costs for salaries, benefits, financial audits, background checks, and volunteer training and supervision. A small fund will continue to be reserved for technical assistance to local programs as program challenges arise.

Alternatives Considered and Policy Implications

The following alternative actions were considered, but are not recommended for adoption by the Judicial Council at this time:

Option 1: Discontinue implementation and development grants

Reductions to existing programs could be minimized through elimination of start-up and development grants. The emerging programs have already gathered dependency stakeholder support and conducted public outreach to promote CASA in their communities. Two programs have already recruited and trained CASA volunteers. Elimination of Judicial Council funding would sever this momentum and terminate CASA services in five counties, and the committee does not recommend this option.

Option 2: Implement new funding methodology based on need

A new funding methodology could be implemented this fiscal year based on program need. A new methodology should be studied with the input of CASA stakeholders, such as the California CASA Association and CASA directors. A new funding methodology would likely lead to award increases for some but also deep cuts to a number of programs. CASA programs should be provided ample notice to changes in the award methodology to prepare for the effects on program budgets and operations, therefore the committee does not recommend changing the funding methodology this year. The committee recommends a CASA stakeholders workgroup be developed to propose new funding methodology options for FY 2012–2013.

Implementation Requirements, Costs, and Operational Impacts

There are no implementation requirements and costs other than the estimated \$2.059 million of state judicial branch funding to be distributed to the CASA programs. Reductions to the state judicial branch budget for CASA local assistance may affect CASA services because of reduced revenue available for volunteer supervision. However, in 2010, the AOC also began providing additional federal funds to CASA programs through title IV-E.

In October 2008, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (Pub.L. No. 110-351) extended eligibility for federal title IV-E reimbursement to include CASA volunteer training. In 2010, the AOC successfully procured an interagency agreement with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to provide title IV–E reimbursement to CASA programs. This funding is available only for reimbursement of CASA volunteer trainings that are eligible under title IV–E. In FY 2010–2011, 36 CASA programs received title IV–E funds, ranging from \$1,577 to \$16,700, depending on each program’s eligible training expenditures. As a result, a total of \$321,510 was provided to California’s CASA programs in FY 2010–2011. The AOC has renewed the title IV–E interagency agreement with CDSS to continue federal title IV–E reimbursement to CASA programs through FY 2013–2014.

Attachment

1. Attachment A: *Proposed Allocation for FY 2011–2012 Judicial Council CASA Local Assistance*

Attachment A
Proposed Allocation for FY 2011-2012
Judicial Council CASA Local Assistance

COUNTY	FY 10-11		FY 11-12	Net Funding Adjustment
	Judicial Council Local Assistance	CASA Admin & TA	Judicial Council Local Assistance	
Funding Item	A	B	C	D ((a + b) - c)
Alameda	\$63,000		\$56,500	(6,500)
Amador	\$42,400		\$38,100	(4,300)
Butte/Glenn	\$74,900		\$67,200	(7,700)
Contra Costa	\$63,000		\$56,500	(6,500)
Del Norte	\$40,100		\$36,000	(4,100)
El Dorado	\$59,900		\$53,800	(6,100)
Fresno/Madera	\$98,700		\$88,600	(10,100)
Humboldt	\$58,100		\$52,100	(6,000)
Imperial	\$58,100		\$52,100	(6,000)
Inyo/Mono*	\$0	\$10,000	\$3,500	(6,500)
Kern	\$65,200		\$58,500	(6,700)
Kings ☼	\$0	\$10,000	\$20,000	10,000
Lassen	\$40,100		\$36,000	(4,100)
Los Angeles	\$57,800		\$51,900	(5,900)
Marin	\$44,700		\$40,100	(4,600)
Mariposa	\$40,100		\$36,000	(4,100)
Mendocino/Lake ☼	\$41,400		\$57,200	15,800
Merced ☼	\$0	\$10,000	\$20,000	10,000
Modoc	\$42,400		\$38,100	(4,300)
Monterey/San Benito	\$76,900		\$69,000	(7,900)
Napa	\$44,700		\$40,100	(4,600)
Nevada	\$42,900		\$38,500	(4,400)
Orange	\$62,900		\$56,500	(6,400)
Placer	\$38,400		\$34,500	(3,900)
Plumas	\$40,100		\$36,000	(4,100)
Riverside	\$57,600		\$51,700	(5,900)
Sacramento	\$56,100		\$50,300	(5,800)
San Bernardino	\$66,100		\$59,300	(6,800)
San Diego	\$65,100		\$58,400	(6,700)
San Francisco	\$65,100		\$58,400	(6,700)
San Joaquin	\$43,500		\$39,000	(4,500)
San Luis Obispo	\$60,200		\$54,000	(6,200)
San Mateo	\$68,400		\$58,400	(10,000)
Santa Barbara	\$52,700		\$47,300	(5,400)
Santa Clara	\$65,100		\$58,400	(6,700)
Santa Cruz	\$50,600		\$45,400	(5,200)
Shasta ◊	\$34,000		\$34,000	0
Siskiyou	\$40,100		\$36,000	(4,100)
Solano	\$43,500		\$39,000	(4,500)
Sonoma	\$47,500		\$42,600	(4,900)
Stanislaus	\$41,200		\$37,000	(4,200)
Tulare	\$58,100		\$52,100	(6,000)
Ventura	\$59,000		\$53,000	(6,000)
Yolo ^	\$40,100	\$9,100	\$44,200	(5,000)
Total Judicial Council PROGRAM GRANTS	\$2,209,800	\$39,100	\$2,055,300	(154,500)
Reserve	\$200		\$3,700	3,500
Total Judicial Council Local Assistance BUDGET	\$2,210,000		\$2,059,000	(151,000)
Title IV-E Funding	\$321,510		\$350,000 (estimate)	
Total CASA Funding Awarded	\$2,531,510		\$2,409,000	(\$122,510)

☼ = FY 11-12 New CASA Program ◊ = FY 10-11 New CASA Program * = Development Bridge Grant (4 Months) ^ = FY 10-11 Corrective Actions tied to TA funds

