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CASA Program Seeks Volunteers to Advocate on Behalf of Iowa Children

Des Moines, Iowa (February 13, 2014) – The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program is seeking volunteers to serve as advocates for children in Iowa’s foster care system. Currently, 460 CASA volunteers are providing advocacy on behalf of more than 900 children in the system. “We have heard from judges and service providers that many more Iowa foster children would benefit greatly from having an advocate in court. We hope to double the number of CASA advocates over the next two years,” said Jim Hennessey, administrator of the Child Advocacy Board (CAB), who oversees the CASA program. “We believe many more Iowans will step forward to help these children if they know of the need,” he added.

A court appointed special advocate represents the interest of a child in any judicial proceeding in which the child is involved. Individuals who volunteer for the CASA program will complete a 30-hour pre-service training course before being assigned to a case. Once assigned to a child’s case, the volunteer can expect to spend an average of 10 hours per month getting to know the child and his or her specific circumstances.

“Volunteers get to know the child they represent by talking with everyone in the child’s life – parents and relatives, foster parents, teachers, medical professionals, attorneys, social workers, and others,” Hennessey continued. “They use this collected information to inform judges and others of the child’s needs, including what would appear to be the best permanent home for him or her. Serving as a CASA volunteer is a meaningful and rewarding way to be involved in the life of a child, advocating for a child’s needs and rights in court and in the community,” Hennessey added.

Iowans who would like to make a difference in the life of a child, are urged to contact the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program at 1-866-448-4608, or emailing the CASA Program Coordinator at clare.gee@dia.iowa.gov.

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