



**Lyon County Court Appointed Special Advocates**  
 31 S. Main St. (Mailing Address: PO Box 242)  
 Yerington, NV 89447  
 775-344-1411

August 6, 2021

RE: CARES Act Funding Proposal

To: City of Fernley

Lyon County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is a non-profit organization that provides compassionate, highly trained volunteers who are empowered by the Third Judicial District Court to represent the best interests of the most vulnerable children in Lyon County – children who have been removed from their homes due to neglect and abuse. CASA volunteers are specially trained to know how to understand the needs of each child and then advocate for those needs in the court system. For many abused children, their CASA volunteer is one of the few reliable adults present in their lives. Volunteers stay with each case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. It is our mission to serve **all** of the abused and neglected children coming into the child welfare system in Lyon County.

In 2019, our organization served 66 of Lyon County’s children entering the child welfare system due to abuse and neglect. Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, our organization has seen an increase in the number of children coming into foster care, and the cases are more severe in nature. Last year, our program served 87 children with 10 volunteers who spent over 1,600 hours advocating for these abused and neglected children. As of July 2021, we have served 86 children with only 8 active volunteers. Children are entering into the system at a rate never before seen in Lyon County, and our organization does not have enough volunteers for each child to have their own advocate!

	<b>As of July 2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Number of children served</b>	86	87	66
<b>Number of active volunteers</b>	8	10	13

It has been the goal of the CASA organization to ramp up recruitment efforts to increase volunteer numbers to meet the needs of all of the children. In the past, we have found the most effective recruitment efforts have been through participation in community events, service groups, and local government meetings. Due to the COVID-19 statewide stay at home and social distancing directives, most of the community outreach events and meetings were cancelled or moved virtually. This negatively impacted the organization's ability to recruit volunteers and spread awareness about Lyon County CASA. Volunteer inquiries have decreased during this time, and the organization was not able to obtain the number of desired new volunteers needed to provide an advocate for every child served by the organization.

In addition to the difficulty with recruitment during the pandemic, there have been new, concerning factors that individuals have had to consider when deciding to volunteer. First, potential and active volunteers have had concerns of exposure to COVID-19 while volunteering due to the increase in COVID-19 case numbers and deaths throughout the county. Volunteers had to consider the health of themselves, their families, and others whom they may come into contact. Second, training opportunities, court hearings, and child visitations have moved to virtual platforms. This has posed a problem for potential and active volunteers who are not technologically savvy or do not have access to the technology or support needed to participate virtually.

Third, for children and families who have experienced abuse and neglect, the social isolation and economic uncertainty brought on by COVID-19 has had far-reaching consequences- increased homelessness, support networks disrupted, visits and court hearings delayed, a lack of technology for virtual learning and visits, critically important services like medical/therapy sessions suspended, and foster homes in short supply. These factors have a bearing on the increase in severity of abuse and neglect cases that have come into the system. For example, in 2019 prior to the pandemic, we served 16 children that were secondary victims of domestic violence. During the pandemic, we have served 41 children that are secondary victims of domestic violence. The increase in the severity of cases influences whether an individual would like to volunteer with the organization as these are difficult and heart-wrenching cases to work. It also impacts the decision of active volunteers on whether they would like to take additional cases.

Finally, due to COVID-19 directives, the Division of Child and Family Services has not been able to hold trainings and conduct home studies to recruit foster parents. Many of the children removed from their homes in Lyon County are being placed in foster homes as far away as Ely, Battle Mountain and Pahrump due to the lack of available foster homes in the community. Volunteers are required to visit or maintain contact with their CASA kids at least once a month, and the distance creates a problem on many levels when volunteering- volunteers may not be able to travel that distance, are concerned about connecting with a child through virtual means, and/or want to volunteer directly in the community in which they reside. COVID-19 has affected volunteer numbers and recruitment efforts which negatively impacts the children we serve as we cannot provide every child with a volunteer advocate.

With the decrease in volunteer numbers and increase in caseload, the organization has put into place a case monitoring and management system for children who are not immediately assigned a volunteer. The Executive Director and Case Coordinator monitor these cases to ensure each child without a volunteer has a set of eyes on the case to continue to identify the needs of the children and aid with resources. As described above, volunteer numbers decreased during the pandemic which led to the Executive Director and Case Coordinator monitoring more cases. In addition, the Executive Director spent extra time supporting active volunteers through the tougher cases, assisting volunteers with new virtual platforms and technological support, ensuring volunteers and staff were following statewide COVID-19 directives, and providing added training on navigating/working cases during the pandemic.

As a result of the above-mentioned effects of COVID-19 on volunteer and case numbers, we would like to use funds for salary to increase the executive director's position from 3/4 time to full-time from August to December and increase the case coordinator's position from 1/2 time to full-time from August to December. This would allow for the case coordinator to assist in managing volunteer assignment and monitoring cases, and allow the executive director more time to recruit, train and support additional volunteers to meet the current need of cases. Due to the pandemic, it is more important than ever to ensure these children have a CASA volunteer or staff member to advocate for these children's needs!

CARES Act Funding Request Amount

Description	Amount
Executive Director's Salary	\$3,612.50
Case Coordinator's Salary	\$7,040.00
Recruiting materials	\$1,267.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$11,920.41</b>

Sincerely,



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