

# **CASA ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

## **PROGRAM STANDARDS**

### **I. Purpose of Standards**

These standards supplement National and State CASA Program Standards to provide guidance to CASA programs regarding the practices that must or should be followed in providing effective CASA services and in accounting for them through the CASA Assistance Program (CASA-AP).

### **II. Background**

Based upon a national model developed in 1976 by Superior Court Judge David Soukup of Seattle, Washington, Louisiana's first Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program began in New Orleans in 1986. In 1988, Art. 23.1 was added to the Code of Juvenile Procedure. This new law specifically authorized CASA appointments, delineated CASA duties, and provided a procedural framework for CASA operations. This article was later incorporated into the Louisiana Children's Code as Article 424. Article 424 was amended in 1997, and then again in 1999. The language formerly contained in Article 424 is now found in articles 424 - 424.10 of the Children's Code.

Until the Regular Session of the Legislature in 2001, the state CASA association and local CASA programs individually sought funding from a variety of sources, including federal grants, local court costs, private funds and various fund-raising activities. No state general funds have ever been appropriated for CASA.

In 2001, the legislature allocated \$3.6 million dollars in unobligated federal TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) money for the expansion of CASA statewide under the budget of the Louisiana Supreme Court. With approval of the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget, the Supreme Court entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Social Services and the Division of Administration to provide fiscal and programmatic management of the TANF-funded CASA expansion.

### **III. Standards**

#### **1. General Responsibilities of CASA Programs**

Each CASA program shall comply with Federal laws and regulations, Louisiana law, National CASA Association Standards and Louisiana CASA Association Program Standards.

## **2. TANF Goal Compliance**

Each CASA program that receives TANF funding shall perform services consistent with the TANF goal of providing assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.

## **3. Verification of TANF Services Eligibility**

Each CASA program that receives TANF funding shall verify the eligibility for TANF services for each child served, which eligibility shall be valid for a period of one year. Documentation of each eligibility determination shall be maintained by the program and made available upon request of the Supreme Court, the Department of Social Services, or the Division of Administration.

## **4. Program Management**

- A. Each CASA program shall submit with its application for funding to the Supreme Court a projected goals and activities sheet, which identifies deliverables on a monthly basis. These activities represent compliance with standards, performance based budgeting, and quality services to TANF eligible children/families.
- B. Each program shall submit to the Program Manager a monthly Program Activity Report reflecting the progress of the program in meeting its goals. The Program Manager, as part of its contractual responsibility with the Supreme Court, will review and compare the monthly reports to the stated goals. In the event the program has not met a stated monthly goal, or if any other poor performance is indicated by the monthly reports, the Program Manager will inform the program of the deficiency and provide technical assistance, as needed.
- C. Any program informed of a deficiency shall take corrective action and report such remedial efforts to the Program Manager. Should the deficiency not be corrected within 30 days, payment of funds will be suspended, pending program compliance or Supreme Court approval of an adjustment to the program plan. Any request for modification(s) to the program plan shall be submitted to the Supreme Court on the Program Modification form supplied by the Court.
- D. At the end of the first quarter, each program will be monitored for goal attainment, outcome measures, and ability to expend awarded funds. If a program is unable to perform its obligations, a

reallocation of funding will be recommended by the Program Manager.

- E. Each CASA program shall submit to evaluation and site review by the Program Manager and such other program evaluation as may be required by the Supreme Court, the Department of Social Services and the Division of Administration.

## **5. Fiscal Management**

- A. Each CASA program shall prepare and maintain separate budget, accounting and fiscal records for all TANF funds. An acceptable system is one which accounts for the receipt of funds as TANF funds, assures that the expended funds are applied to the appropriate budget category as defined by the Supreme Court, presents and classifies historical costs of the grant as required for budgetary and evaluation purposes, provides adequate cost controls to assure optimal use of grant funds, is integrated with a system of internal controls adequate to safeguard the funds, meets prescribed requirements for financial reporting of operations, and provides financial data for planning and evaluation of costs and budget projections.
- B. Each CASA program shall submit with its application for funding to the Supreme Court a projected TANF budget, using the format and budget category descriptions provided by the Supreme Court. Any request for adjustment to the TANF budget shall be submitted to the Supreme Court on the TANF Budget Adjustment form supplied by the Court.
- C. Each program shall timely submit, on a form provided by the Supreme Court, a monthly TANF Expenditures Report, completed and signed by the individual preparing the report, and certified for accuracy by original signature of the program Executive Director, and/or Board Treasurer. Funds will be disbursed by the Supreme Court in monthly payments upon timely receipt of the monthly TANF Expenditure Report, except as otherwise recommended by the Program Manager or disapproved by the Supreme Court. Failure to submit a completed monthly report in a timely manner may result in the suspension of monthly payment.
- D. Each CASA program is responsible for the proper use of TANF funds allocated to it for the expansion, improvement or addition of programs within federal and state laws, rules and regulations. TANF funds may not be used to supplant any other source of funding. A program found not to be in compliance with applicable

federal and state laws, rules and regulations shall repay any amounts incurred as a result of a federal sanction, penalty or disallowed expenditure attributable to the program.

- E. Each CASA program is subject to applicable federal and state audit requirements and shall cooperate with any audit requests by the Federal government, the Supreme Court and/or the Legislative Auditor's Office.

#### **6. Maintenance of Records and Equipment**

- A. Each CASA program shall maintain books and records in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. Each program shall keep records of receipts and expenditures of TANF funds, copies of reports submitted to the Program Manager and the Supreme Court, and supporting documentation for at least three federal fiscal years following the completion of the audit (including any audit resolutions resulting from the audit) of the last fiscal year during which TANF funds have been received and/or expended.
- B. Books, records and documents shall be made available to the Program Manager and the Supreme Court, for inspection and review upon request. Any request for access to such information by the state or federal government shall be granted and arrangements made through the Supreme Court.
- C. Equipment and materials purchased with TANF funds must be used for the program or project activity for which it was acquired in accordance with the Property Control Procedures of the Supreme Court.

#### **IV. Non-compliance with Program Standards**

Violation of these Program Standards may result in the loss of continued TANF funding to the offending program and require the return of any misappropriated or unexpended funds that have been paid to the program.