City of Lawrence Social Service Agency Bi-annual Report 2012

Reports on activity should be submitted electronically to Casey Toomay, Budget Manger at ctoomay@lawrenceks.org. Reports on activities from January to June are due on July 15th. Reports on activities from July through December are due on February 15th.

Agency Name: Douglas County CASA

1. Give a <u>brief</u> narrative of the activities that were funded with City funds over the reporting period checked above.

81 abused and neglected children were served by 50 CASA volunteers from January 1 through June 30, 2012. Children served included 43 girls and 38 boys; ages 0-5: 33; ages 6-11: 27; ages 12-15: 13; ages 16-17: 6; ages 18+: 2. Two new volunteer training classes were held; one in February 2012 and one in late May 2012. 15 new volunteers were trained. During this time period, 14 children achieved permanency when their Child in Need of Care cases closed. 9 children were adopted, 4 were reintegrated with a biological parent, and 1 teen aged out of the system (turned 18) and transitioned to independent living.

City funds were used toward training costs for new volunteers and helped support a child/advocate match for 22 new children served during this time period, while providing support for volunteers to serve 69 children who were already on our case load. City funds were also utilized to provide six in-service training workshops for volunteers, with topics ranging from domestic violence, educational advocacy, independent living, to child abuse/neglect issues.

2. Provide specific detail (and supportive documents, if needed) to demonstrate progress made toward your goals/objectives.

Our 2012 program objectives include 1) Child safety, 2) Child stability, and 3) Child permanency.

- 1) Our goal of 95% of children assigned a CASA volunteer will not experience reported or substantiated abuse or neglect in 2012 has been met so far. During the first half of 2012, 97% of children with a CASA volunteer did not experience a recurrence of abuse or neglect. Our volunteers carefully monitor their child's safety and several serious concerns were reported to the child abuse hotline during this time period. These safety concerns were also brought to the attention of the child's Guardian Ad Litem, the District Attorney, and the child's KVC case manager.
- 2) Our goal of 90% of children served by Douglas County CASA will remain with the same CASA volunteer throughout 2012 is on track so far. During the first half of 2012, 95% of children served by our program have had the stability of the same CASA volunteer. As many of these children experienced frequent placement changes and corresponding changes in schools, CASA stability has continued to be crucial for the child's emotional well being and for monitoring and advocating for the child's best interests.
- 3) Our goal of 90% of children whose cases close will not re-enter the local jurisdiction of the Court as a Child in Need of Care (CINC) within two years also demonstrates satisfactory progress thus far. During the first half of 2012, 93% of children whose cases closed in 2010 or 2011 have not re-entered the child welfare system. Although there have been several instances of recidivism so far this year, our overall percentage is within expected outcomes. In all three cases where former CASA children re-

entered protective custody as a Child in Need of Care, their former CASA volunteer was available to be matched with them again.

3. How have you impacted the citizens of Lawrence?

Douglas County CASA volunteers have had a positive impact on our community's most vulnerable children, by advocating for the best interests of child abuse and neglect victims. By advocating for the medical, educational, emotional and permanency needs of these children, our volunteers have helped facilitate better services and outcomes for children ranging from birth to age 18. These efforts have made a positive impact on our community as we protect and nurture children whose parents are unable to provide this support. Facilitating safe, permanent homes for children has a positive impact on our entire community. Our program has also helped increase community awareness regarding the issues of child abuse and neglect via ongoing outreach and special efforts in April (National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month), including "Pinwheels for Prevention" activities in the community. The latter included the planting and display of 89 pinwheels along the pathway between the Douglas County Courthouse and the Judicial and Law Enforcement Center in April 2012. Our program's efforts to educate Lawrence citizens regarding signs of abuse and neglect and the need and procedure for reporting suspected abuse/neglect has had an important impact on the community.

4. What barriers, if any, have you encountered?

A substantial increase in child abuse and neglect cases in Lawrence and Douglas County during the past 6 months has presented challenges for our agency. Our program served 89 children in 2011 and we have already served more than 81 children in just the first half of 2012. In addition, the number of children waiting for a CASA volunteer has doubled during the past six months, increasing from 25 to more than 50 children. The overall goal of CASA agencies nationwide is to provide a volunteer advocate for every Child in Need of Care, but increased funding is needed to achieve this goal and keep pace with the increase in child abuse/neglect victims in our community. We are also noting delays in the timeline for adoption procedures and these concerns have been shared at case plan meetings and in court reports. An additional barrier is the tremendous need for more foster homes in Lawrence and Douglas County. When children are taken into protective custody in Lawrence and foster homes are not available in our own community, these children are placed in resource homes in other counties. Our volunteers visit their assigned CASA child wherever the child is placed, and increased travel and rising gas prices have been a challenge. We do not have funds to reimburse our volunteers for their gas mileage so finding volunteers who are willing to travel outside of Lawrence at their own expense is a significant challenge. Our community members and officials must work together to recruit and license more foster homes in Lawrence and Douglas County.

5. Review the line-item budget you provided in your application. How much of your allocation has been spent?

Douglas County CASA was allocated \$20,000 in 2012 funding from the City of Lawrence. We have received half of this allocation (\$10,000) so far this year, and half of our allocation (\$10,000) has been spent.