

El Dorado County Behavioral Health Commission (BHC) Ad Hoc Evaluation Committee Report - CASA El Dorado

By Kathryn Hamilton, Commissioner and Jim Abram, Commissioner

This report is a narrative summary based on a visit with CASA El Dorado, by the evaluation committee on August 13, 2024. Representing CASA were Rosemary Breitwieser, Program Director, Natalie Moore, Executive Director, and Rebecca De Gennaro, Fiscal Manager.

The BHC Ad Hoc Evaluation Committee evaluated the MHSa Children's Full Service Partnership (FSP) Project, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), being provided by CASA El Dorado.

Some Children's MHSa FSP Project goals are:

*"Reduce out of home placement, hospitalizations, and incarcerations of children/youth

*Reduce at risk behavior."

The evaluation committee submitted a group of questions to CASAEI Dorado, who completed the questions that were applicable to their program and provided additional information. During the 2 hour meeting, the answers to the questions and their program were discussed. This report provides an overview of some of the questions answered by CASA El Dorado. The complete set of questions and answers are attached to this committee's report out.

CASA El Dorado's "agreement with El Dorado County MHSa stipulates that we train, supervise and assign court appointed volunteers to advocate on behalf of children and at-risk youth, with the goal of positively impacting their lives."

"CASA El Dorado's program recruits, trains, and manages volunteers from the community who then serve youth in juvenile justice and foster courts." CASA assigns a staff member to advocate and serve all eligible youth in the Juvenile Justice System. Volunteer advocates are the eyes and ears for the courts.

"Serving as sworn officers of the courts, Court Appointed Special Advocates are assigned to the children experiencing abuse, neglect, and/or violence. CASA El Dorado establishes a caring consistent relationship with the child which is essential to building resiliency against adverse childhood experiences (ACES.)"

CASA El Dorado "serves every child requested by the judge."

“CASA volunteers provide youth advocacy. The volunteer’s role is to identify all services/needs of the youth and assure that those needs and services are provided by appropriate partner agencies.”

Advocates “ are trained to meet our youth where they are and respond to the community and individual needs. CASA El Dorado’s family first approach is what is in the best interest of the child.”

CASA El Dorado “most frequently collaborate(s) with El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency, Child Welfare, El Dorado County Probation; El Dorado County Superior Court; Unity Care. El Dorado County Office of Education, Sierra Child and Family Services, Summit View and Live Violence Free.”

CASA Volunteers “interact with social workers, probation officers, foster parents, biological parents, school staff, doctors, therapeutic services attorneys, as well as with the judge providing a detailed fact-based report. These interactions happen on every case for the average span of 18 to 24 months.”

CASA El Dorado currently serves 15 Juvenile Justice youth (probation involved) and 98 Dependency Youth (CPS involved.)

Over the last FY (2023-2024), CASA served 176 children with advocates

CASA keeps records on all volunteers and youth served. It enables them to keep track of all services provided to youth. Program managers work with volunteers, advocates, and families management caseloads.

Program Director:

Supervises up to 10 volunteers, and 5+ paid staff: 3 West Slope and 2 South Lake Tahoe.

Senior Program Managers:

Supervises up to 35 volunteers, allocates 33% of their time to the MHSA Program, trains and manages CASA advocate volunteers, and conducts continuing education for volunteers.

Program Manager:

Supervises up to 45 volunteers. At the time of this interview, there were 70 volunteer advocates.

Over the last year, 176 children were served and 65 cases were closed.