



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

2023/2024 Annual Report CASA Sacramento

As we reflect on this past fiscal year, we are profoundly grateful for your trust, support, and commitment to providing advocacy and mentoring to Sacramento's most vulnerable youth.

Thanks to your efforts, 246 youth in the greater Sacramento area were provided with over 11,000 hours of advocacy from a Court Appointed Special Advocate. Additionally, fifty new CASA advocate volunteers were trained and appointed to youth. These advocates provide our youth with attention and consistency that is so important.

In partnership with the Court, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office and the Probation Department, CASA Sacramento was able to expand services to youth in the juvenile justice system.

With additional support provided by the California state allocation, California CASA invested in CASA Sacramento to support our staff and volunteer advocates as we build out our organizational infrastructure, implement new volunteer recruitment efforts, and provide valuable oversight and guidance to our advocates serving youth. We look forward to seeing our efforts move us closer to our goals of serving all youth that may benefit from an CASA advocate through recruiting more volunteer advocates.

We want to thank you all for your contributions to our work and to supporting better outcomes for the youth in then dependency and juvenile justice systems. As one of our youth said, "My CASA makes me feel like I'm in my own world because she lets us choose what to do, and we didn't have that growing up. She makes me feel special because she listens to me. Amy, I don't know where I'd be without you!" Together, we can all help every child have the hope and encouragement to reach for the stars.

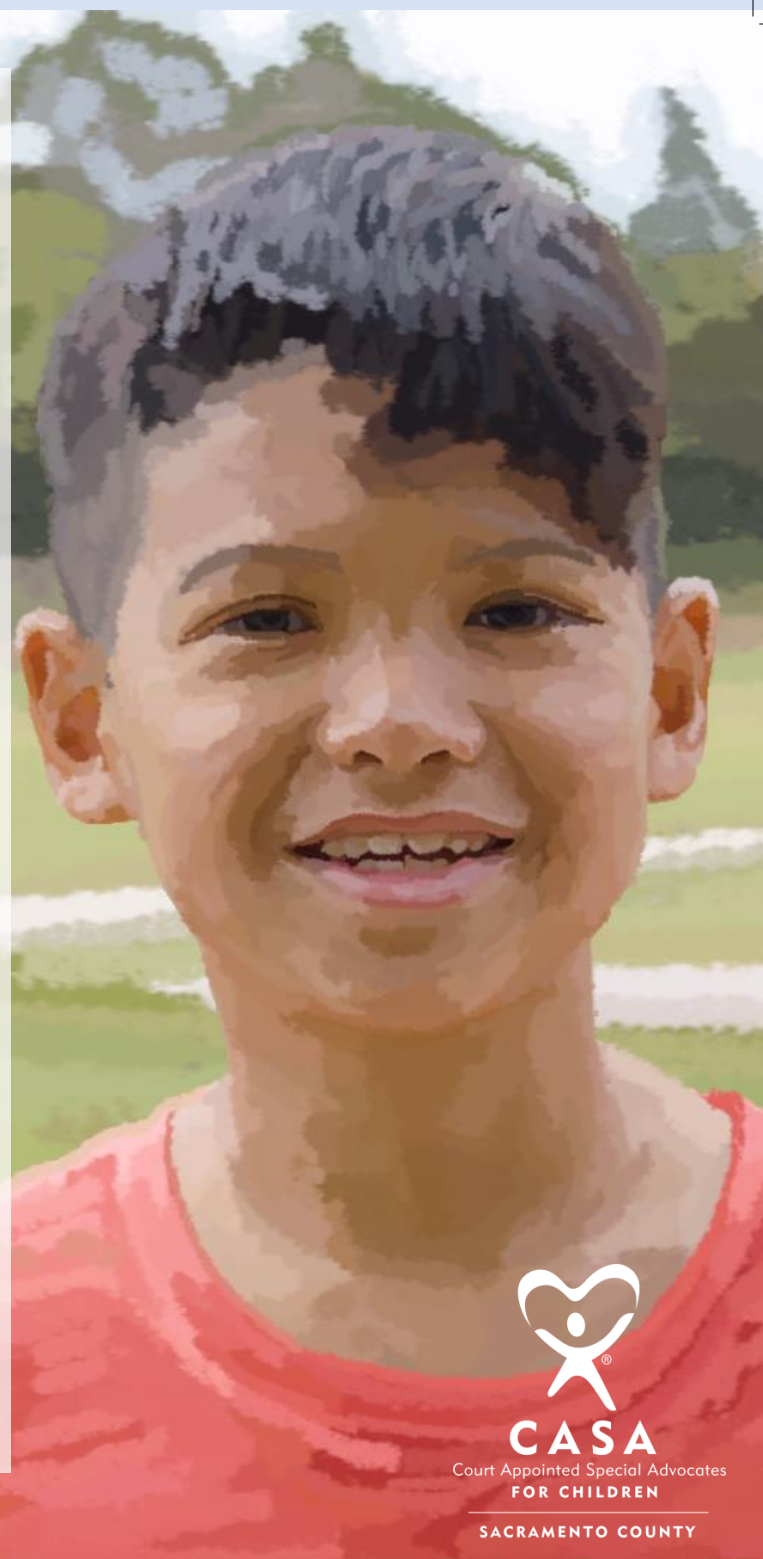
With gratitude,



Carol Noreen, JD
Executive Director



Elizabeth Leet Jackson, Esq.
Board President



About the cover image:

CASA Youth Art Piece, "Reach for the Stars"

Reach for the Stars is a collaborative piece made by youth and their CASA Volunteers at CASA Sacramento's 2023 Out of This World summer picnic. Some kids wanted to color individual stars, methodically filling a neat and contained space with vibrant color. Others wanted the expressive freedom of painting the swirling night sky, negotiating boundaries as one child's area overlapped with another's. A CASA/youth pair encouraged each other while they painted the full and crescent moons, and they liked each other's so much that they asked for both to be included in the final piece. CASA Volunteers provide unconditional positive regard to youth in foster care, keeping the ladders steady as their youth climb their way to the stars.

The CASA Mission

Ensuring consistency and support for children in the foster care system through the use of volunteer advocates advancing the best interests of each child.

The CASA Vision

Every child in need is appointed a CASA to champion them in Court, without compromise, on the path to a safe and permanent home.

WELCOME CASA TRAINING CLASSES 101, 102, 103, 104, AND 105



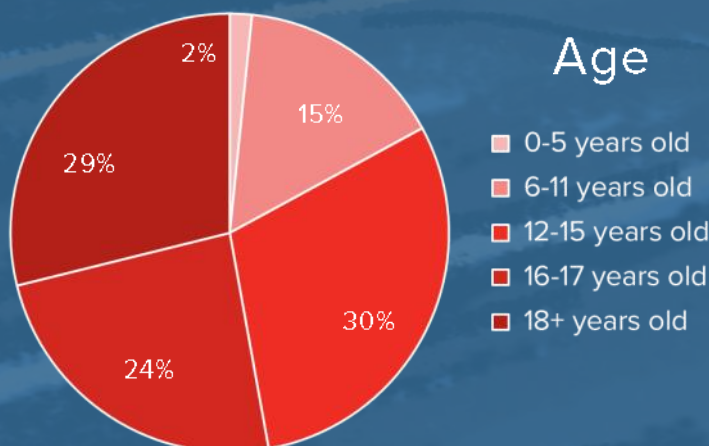
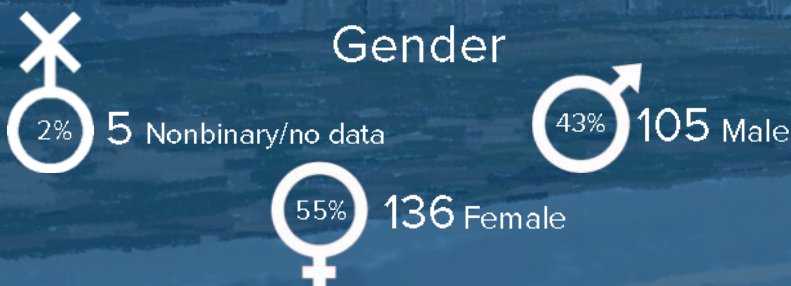
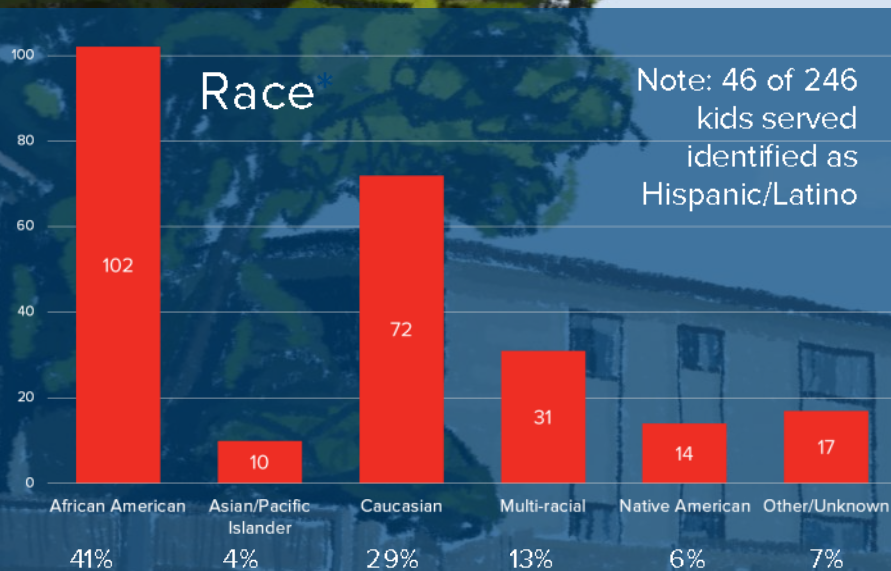
"A lot of being a CASA Volunteer is simply showing up for the child."

2023/2024 PROGRAM IMPACT

246 foster children served
11,647 volunteer hours contributed*
50 new volunteers trained
189 active volunteers

* This is a value of \$434,666.04 in service at the current volunteer rate of \$37.32/hr

DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHILDREN SERVED:



The average time youth referred to the CASA program spend waiting to be matched with a CASA Volunteer is down to **105.6 days**. Target is ≤ 90 days.

We are deeply grateful to **Fair Oaks United Methodist Church** for their extraordinary \$100,000 donation. Special thanks to Pastor Dr. Carieta Cain Grizzell and Board Members Tom and Cynthia Wold, along with their entire Board and congregation. This transformative gift will enable us to match 40 youth from our waitlist with CASA Volunteers, providing these children with dedicated advocates in court and positive role models in their lives.

IMPACT SINCE 1991:

4,468 foster children served by
1,913 volunteers contributing over
271,664 volunteer hours

CASA Volunteers:

INVESTIGATE barriers to success in foster care

ADVOCATE to improve current services

MENTOR youth

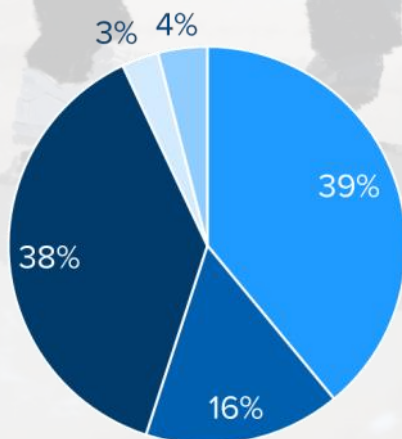
REPORT progress to the dependency judge

MONITOR the case

Juvenile Justice

Over the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year we served 28 crossover youth and were officially appointed to and served 7 wardship youth. There were 275 Juvenile Justice hearings for youth to whom the CASA program was appointed, with a CASA or staff member attending a majority of said hearings. CASA Volunteers attended many Multi-Disciplinary and Child Family Team Meetings, and logged thousands of hours of critical work and advocacy.

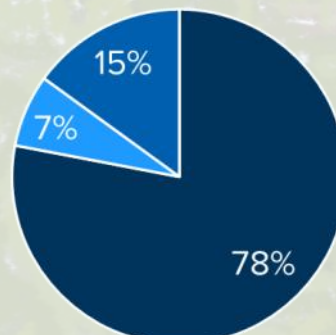
2023/2024 FINANCIALS



INCOME

- Individual Giving
- Fundraising Events/Misc.
- Government Grants
- Private Foundation Grants
- In-Kind Contributions

REVENUE: \$3,170,159



EXPENSES

- Direct Program
- Fundraising
- Administration

EXPENSES: \$2,003,362

Support for our Advocates and Youth

Our Case Supervisors support our CASA Volunteers as they advocate for timely services and the best possible outcomes for youth in care. We asked them for their observations from the past year:

"The youth our CASAs are serving experience high levels of trauma, leading to more significant mental health challenges. Our CASAs have really supported the youth they serve through sometimes insurmountable odds, just to be the only one in the end standing by their side in the detention facilities and at court." – Sarah T

"My new CASAs have also been really taking their time deciding on which youth to pick, they seem very eager to make a good connection with the youth they choose. I also noticed the decrease in placement options for youth. A lot of recent placements have not met the needed standards by the Department or Probation which further delays placements." - Natasha

"More than ever before, my CASAs have been the main support person in their youth's life. I have a number of very challenging, high needs cases, where the youth has all but given up on themselves and the system, but the CASA has been someone they trust and are willing to maintain a relationship with." - Haley

"I have been struck by the diversity of experiences our youth and our advocates encountered this year. In the same day that one advocate and youth is facing a significant challenge like being removed from an adoptive home, another advocate and youth are celebrating getting their first paycheck with an ice cream. Like each year does, 2023 held its share of both beauty and pain, and our advocates had the privilege of supporting their youth through many of these moments." - Michelle

Thank you Sarah T, Michelle, Alexandra, Haley, Tanya, Sarah B and Natasha. Your dedication, compassion and expertise positively impact both our advocates and youth.



CASA Staff Strengths Finder Workshop, June 2024. L-R (standing): Danielle Dace, Michelle Doupe, Dani Wogulis, Sarah Torres, Jamarian Ramirez-Hayes, Lindy Meeker, Tanya Torres, Breana Figueroa, Sarah Bond, Alexandra Infante, Athena Di. Front row: Matthew Romsa, Kelley Donato, Carol Noreen, Natasha Keys, and 34Strong facilitator Cara Lane.

Recruiting Volunteers & Education of Public



Athena Di with River Cats mascot Digger at the EDD Family Leave Fair, June 2024

As we strive to serve every child who needs CASA Volunteer support, CASA Sacramento actively recruits volunteers from diverse backgrounds to represent the demographics of the youth population that we serve. Training & Recruitment Director Danielle Dace and Volunteer Engagement Coordinator Athena Di have spent this year out in the community to reach as many new volunteers as possible. Highlights include radio interviews on Access Sacramento, KDEE FM, and 99.5 K-LOVE; being featured on Good Deeds Sacramento, Good Day Sacramento, and CBS News; and representing CASA Sacramento at the Kings Do Good Summit. Concurrently with California CASA's statewide advertising campaign, we've continued our local campaigns on television and in coffee shops, churches, and community centers. Danielle and Athena's hard work is paying off – the number of volunteer inquiries has tripled and our class sizes are growing again!

This year, 236 people attended a volunteer orientation



CASA Sacramento's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, formed in June of 2020, aims to create stronger and more collaborative ways to address the systemic oppression of others based on their ethnicity, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, country of origin, age, or disability.

2023/2024 Staff & Volunteer Trainings

August 2023 — "Pushout: The Criminalization Of Black Girls In Schools" Movie Screening & Panel

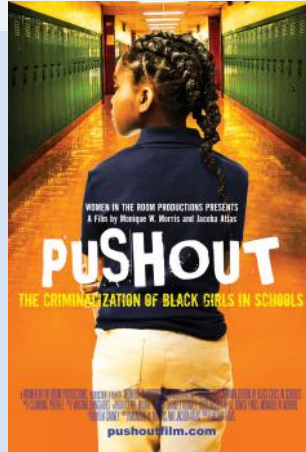
October 2023 — Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women: "Sisters Rising" Movie Screening & Discussion

February 2024 — "Stamped from the Beginning" Movie Screening & Discussion

June 2024 — LGBTQ+ Resource Panel

2024 Diversity & Inclusion Committee Members

Michael Butler - CASA Volunteer
Danielle Dace - Training & Recruitment Director
Fancesca Negri - CASA Board Member
Dani Wogulis - Development Manager



LGBTQ+ youth are over-represented in the child welfare system, and disproportionately likely to leave foster care without a permanent family. Many of these youth experience neglect, abuse, and/or abandonment specifically because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. All Children – All Families, a project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, promotes LGBTQ-inclusive policies and affirming practices among child welfare agencies, and formally recognizes those agencies that are leading the field with innovative approaches to inclusion. CASA Sacramento has achieved the Tier of Recognition: Solid Foundation for Inclusion. At this level, benchmarks go beyond basic non-discrimination protections. Agencies have assessed their practices specific to youth to ensure LGBTQ inclusion and acted to make these efforts sustainable for the long-term.

Donor Relations Director Matthew Romsa with his wife, Jean Minton, and their daughter Arya at Sac Pride 2024



Global Awareness

In June 2024, CASA Sacramento had a wonderful afternoon hosting the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program with delegates from 21 different countries working in Human Rights. We enjoyed sharing CASA's mission and the work we do for youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Making Memories



Comfort dog Rahab posing politely in the summer picnic photo booth.

Making Memories funds also support our annual summer picnic and winter holiday party.

At our winter holiday party, the youth enjoyed bowling, arcade games, lunch and crafting with their CASA Volunteers. The Sacramento Library brought an assortment of new books to fill the kids winter breaks with good reading.

We are thankful to our generous donors who collected enough gifts for the kids to pick special items for themselves and their sibling/s!

We also had a wonderful Up, Up and Away Summer Picnic for our youth and their CASA Volunteers in June! Special thanks to the Sacramento Public Library for bringing new books, the Mad Scientist for cool lessons, and Rahab the Therapy Dog for snuggles. The youth got summer gifts and gift cards, played games, did crafts, and got their faces painted. Best of all, we had delicious tacos with freshly made corn tortillas.



Making Memories is a program of CASA Sacramento which provides special experiences to children in foster care who otherwise would not have the resources to pay for them. For children who have moved many times through many homes, basketball or theater camp has typically never been an option. Making Memories funds extracurricular activities to help children and young adults learn social skills, build confidence and provide the relief of getting to be a young person among peers.

This year, Making Memories distributed nearly \$15,000 in funds to provide 66 youth with individual extracurricular experiences.



Top row, right: Tanya Torres, Natasha Keys, Breana Figueroa, Alexandra Infante, Tamara Simental, Athena Di, Sarah Bond, and Tanya again at the winter holiday party. Bottom row, left: CASAs and youth at the summer picnic art table. Bottom right: CASA Staff in summer picnic photo booth—back row: Natasha Keys, Sarah Bond, Athena Di, Lindy Meeker, Dani Wogulis, Tanya Torres. Front row: Michelle Doupe, Haley Cavanaugh, Sarah Torres, Alexandra Infante, Breana Figueroa.

Caring for CASAs is a peer support group for our fabulous CASA Volunteers. This year, CASA hosted 11 Caring for CASAs gatherings attended by 114 volunteers. This is a way for volunteers to connect with each other and share community resources and ideas.

"I applied to be a CASA Volunteer during one of the busiest times of my life. At first the time commitment sounded like a lot but when you break it down, it's just a little bit at a time. The visits are really something you look forward to... not to mention the fact every minute you are with your child is a minute that you are making a difference." - CASA Volunteer



JANUARY 9, 1984 - DECEMBER 28, 2023

With the end of 2023 came the devastating loss of Crystal Burns, our Community Relations & Development Director, after a fearless battle with cancer. Crystal began her journey with CASA as an advocate in 2014, sharing her astuteness and love of literature with teenage girls who needed a stable, compassionate adult in their lives. She wore many hats at CASA, serving as a CASA Volunteer, a Case Supervisor, Transition Age Youth Coordinator, a grant writer, an event coordinator, and a cheerleader for staff and volunteers alike.



Crystal spent her nine years at CASA ensuring that Sacramento's most vulnerable children and young adults have the support, guidance, and advocacy they need to navigate the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. She was selected as an honoree of the Sacramento Business Journal's 40 Under 40 Awards. Her commitment to CASA and the youth we support was recognized on November 16, 2023.

Crystal leaves behind a legacy of generosity, kindness and compassion with a smile that would light up the darkest night. She believed that every kid deserves to have someone by their side as they traverse the tumultuous waters into adulthood. CASA Sacramento is forever grateful for the time, energy, and talents that she shared with us.

Crystal (center) at the 40 Under 40 Awards with CASA Board Member Jeannie Benoist (left) and Associate Director Kelley Donato (right).



CASA Sacramento had the honor of being chosen as the charity beneficiary for the 7th Annual Capitol Cup, a soccer match featuring Northern California Legislators versus Southern California Legislators. The event on May 29, 2024 raised a whopping \$60,000 for CASA Sacramento. A huge thank you to the event sponsors, organizers, volunteers, and players, and congratulations to the NorCal team for their sweeping 4-1 victory!



Light of Hope

After several years on hiatus, CASA Sacramento was thrilled to relaunch our annual Light of Hope event on May 9, 2024. It was a beautiful evening hosted by CASA Board Member Benush Venugopal and his wife Sanggeetha at their lovely home, and featured live music and dance performances, delicious food and wine, and a touching story by CASA Volunteer Jeff Wahleithner (pictured below, left). Thank you to everyone who attended and helped us raise over \$16,000 for Sacramento's children in foster care!



Special Thanks to:

Benush & Sanggeetha for hosting,

Felipe Ferraz for music,

Hook & Ladder Manufacturing Co. for catering,

Kalanjali Dances of India for dancing,

CASA Volunteer Jeff Wahleithner for speaking,

and YOU for supporting Sacramento's children in foster care!

Notte Toscana Crab Dinner

On February 3, 2024, CASA Sacramento's Notte Toscana Crab Dinner grossed a record \$333,000 in support of Sacramento's youth in foster care. Thank you to everyone who made this night possible!

Event Sponsors

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On May 2, 2024, 340 donors came together to raise over \$90,000 for CASA Sacramento. Thank you for supporting Sacramento's children in foster care as they reach for the stars!

Thank You to Our Donors

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Become a Recurring Donor

Youth Empowerment Sustainer

\$210 per month – train a new CASA Volunteer and match them with a youth for a year

\$125 per month – support an existing CASA Volunteer and their youth for a year

\$50 per month - give a youth an advocate for 5 months

\$25 per month - give a youth an advocate for 10 weeks

or Set your own level

Monthly Gift

Annual Gift

\$25,000 and above
Support a new CASA
for ten or more youth

\$5,000 - \$9,999
Support a new CASA
for up to four youth

\$10,000 - \$24,999
Support a new CASA
for up to ten youth

\$2,500 - \$4,999
Support a new CASA
for one or two youth

Circle of Hope

By joining one of CASA Sacramento's recurring donor circles, you become a partner in a child's success. As a volunteer-driven organization, supporting CASA is one of the most effective ways to invest in the lives of local foster children, and ultimately improve the communities in which we live and work. Your commitment will ensure the good work of CASA Sacramento will continue in our community long into the future.

For more information, please contact Matthew Romsa at 916-875-0163 or MatthewR@sacramentocasa.org

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In Memory Of

Crystal Burns, Florence Fong, Frances Gordon, Tim Sires, Glennis Weatherall

2024 Youth Empowerment Sustainers

Amanda Burnitt, Diane Fishburn, Claire Fishburn Jones, Caroline Godkin, Alan Gordon, Lynette Hall, John Hillard, Sarah Huchel, Eric Jones, Deborah Kanner, Aulaina Knight, Kai Koumatos, Robby & Janet Lake, Derek Link, Joe Manes, Brenda Marsh, Carrie McNeil, Linda Middleton, Francesca Negri, Carol Noreen, Ian Rambarran, Matthew Romsa, Rick Sanders, Jennifer Soloway, Nancy & Gary Szydelko, Marian Thacher, Aart Van Beek, Christine Ward, Sharon Wills, Dennis Winger, Alicia Wood, Kavisa Wood, Craig Yamada, Kenneth Zeng

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CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

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