

CASA Mentors - Volunteer Mentors for Former Foster Youth

[Click here to read the New Times story about mentoring.](#)

The statistics for youth leaving the foster care system at 18 in California are very disheartening: 65% of youth leaving foster care do so without a place to live and 40% will be homeless within 18 months; less than 50% of former foster youth are employed 2.5 to 4 years after leaving care; and 1 in 5 will be incarcerated – 70% of California prisoners have spent some time in foster care.

To address this tragedy, Assembly Bill 12, now called After 18, was enacted to give needed support to foster youth, enabling them to further their education and develop work and living skills needed in adult life. Since January 2012, foster youth are eligible to receive foster care and Independent Living Program (ILP) services until the age of 21 when they meet eligibility criteria.



During a recent forum at Cuesta College which included former foster youth from the California Youth Connection (CYC) and was sponsored by the Department of Social Services and Cuesta's Independent Living Program, the youth identified a need for mentors who would work with them to learn the living skills needed to make a successful transition to adult life.

Because of the success of the CASA program and its capacity to recruit, screen, train and supervise volunteer advocates, CASA was asked to be the agency to establish and oversee a mentor program

for youth who had been dependents of the court before their 18th birthday.

After completion of the CASA training program, CASA Mentors will complete additional classes covering such topics as Identifying Needed Life Skills. CASA Mentors will be asked to make a one-year commitment to a youth.

Participation will be voluntary for the youth who will have taken the Casey Life Skills Assessment before entering the program. The assessment covers eight domains of a youth's life which includes: Permanency, Daily Living, Self-Care, Relationships and Communication, Housing and Money Management, Work and Study Life, Career and Education Planning, and Looking Forward. Mentors will have access to their assigned youth's assessment and together with the youth will identify areas where support and education is needed. During the one-year assignment, mentors will meet weekly with the youth to further skills and knowledge in areas as needed. At the end of the first year in the mentoring program, youth will take the assessment again to track any changes in increased knowledge and/or skills.

CASA is currently recruiting volunteers to be CASA Mentors. Help us spread the word about the new CASA Mentor program. Contact CASA at staff@slocasa.org or 541-6542 for more information.