

CASASTARTSM

STRIVING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE REWARDING TOMORROWS

A Program of

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA)

at Columbia University

CASA'S MISSIONS

Founded in 1992 by Joseph A. Califano Jr., former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA*) is the only national organization that brings together under one roof all the professional disciplines needed to study and combat all types of substance abuse as they affect all aspects of society.

CASA's missions are to:

- Inform Americans of the economic and social costs of substance abuse and its impact on their lives.
- Assess what works in prevention, treatment and law enforcement.
- Encourage every individual and institution to take responsibility to combat substance abuse and addiction.
- Provide those on the front lines with tools they need to succeed.
- Remove the stigma of substance abuse and replace shame and despair with hope.

CASA conducts demonstration programs, tests the effectiveness of drug and alcohol treatment, and issues public policy reports on a variety of topics including assessments of the impact of substance abuse and addiction on American populations and systems.

CASA's staff is comprised of medical, legal and other professionals in the fields of business, communications, criminology, economics, education, epidemiology, government, history, journalism, medicine, psychology, public health, public policy, social work, sociology and statistics.

* The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University is neither affiliated with, nor sponsored by, the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (also known as "CASA") or any of its member organizations, or any other organization with the name of "CASA."

CASASTARTSM

PROGRAM MODEL AND RATIONALE

CASASTARTSM, **Striving Together to Achieve Rewarding Tomorrows**, is a community-based, school-centered program designed to keep high-risk 8 to 13 year-olds free of drug and crime involvement through an intensive and coordinated marriage of preventive services and community-based law enforcement activities.

A central notion underlying the program design is that while rates of experimentation with drugs and alcohol are roughly similar for pre-adolescents from all backgrounds, those who lack effective human and social support – family, school, community organizations – are at much higher risk of continuing and intensifying substance abuse. The program is designed to develop and compensate for these missing ties.

CASASTARTSM addresses the individual needs of the participants as well as broader problems in their families and communities. It operates on three levels: building resiliency in the child; strengthening families; and making neighborhoods safer for children and their families.

The program brings together key stakeholders in a community or neighborhood – schools, law enforcement agencies, social service and health agencies – under one umbrella and provides case managers to work on a daily basis with high risk children.

CASASTARTSM case managers work closely with teachers and other school personnel, police officers, social service agencies and neighborhood residents to coordinate, arrange for and provide needed services and support to prevent or counteract the familial, social, educational and psychological factors that make children vulnerable to substance abuse and juvenile crime.

While each community designs its own *CASASTARTSM* program according to its individual needs, all share these important characteristics:

The program operates within a clearly defined **geographic boundary**.

A **strong and committed lead agency** – a community-based organization, a community development organization, a citywide collaborative or a city agency – manages the program.

The program serves children who attend selected **schools** located in the designated area. Most program services or meetings take place at the school.

The city and the neighborhood demonstrate a commitment to **community** or **problem-oriented policing strategies** that encourage closer working relationships between police and residents to reduce drug selling and crime in the community.

Members of the community demonstrate a strong commitment to **youth development** by creating opportunities for young people to develop cognitive, social and decision-making skills.

Staff of *CASASTARTSM* partner organizations attends **a series of regular meetings** in three distinct forums (case conferences, administrative meetings and advisory board meetings) to build trusting relationships and ensure effective delivery of services.

All of the children in *CASASTARTSM* receive **all** of the services the program offers.

STRENGTHS OF THE CASASTARTSM MODEL

CASASTARTSM addresses several particular challenges that have hindered many social service and youth development programs in the past.

It focuses on a targeted population. Social service agencies have struggled with how to target services and set priorities such as whether to devote more resources to a small group of people who need help the most or whether to provide some less-comprehensive level of service to a broad range of people. Because the criteria for CASASTARTSM participation are narrowly defined, the program can offer a comprehensive set of services targeted specifically to those children and families who require significant support. Furthermore, because the core set of services has been carefully defined, the program can deliver these services in a logical, coordinated manner.

It reaches children early—before they get hooked on alcohol or drugs. Although some CASASTARTSM children are already in trouble with drugs, alcohol and crime when they enter the program, the primary aim of CASASTARTSM is to prevent substance abuse and delinquency. While the original model focused on children ages 11 to 13, CASASTARTSM lowered its threshold of eligibility to age eight because CASA found that by age 11, many of the children referred to the program would have benefited from services offered by CASASTARTSM.

It focuses on families and creates a support network outside of the program. CASASTARTSM helps families dig out of crises that may be contributing to a child's substance abuse or delinquency, but, more importantly, it places heavy emphasis on building strengths that will help the family – and the child – confront new crises in the future, after their participation in CASASTARTSM has ended. A focus on building assets and resources that endure beyond involvement with CASASTARTSM, even while addressing immediate crises, is central to the program's mission.

It is designed by the community. While CASASTARTSM is a well-defined program with a structured array of services and a targeted population, CASA offers communities wide latitude within this structure to develop a program that meets the particular needs of each community.

It is both neighborhood-based and national in its scope. While communities apply the CASASTARTSM model to meet their own needs, CASA's role as a national organization enables staff from each site to become part of a nationwide network involved in the work of a common program. This network shares information on how different sites develop and operate prevention strategies within the framework of the CASASTARTSM model.

It is flexible. CASA is a learning organization that strives to respond to the experience and preferences of community leaders and residents. In cooperation with program sites, evaluations and modifications of the program are conducted on an ongoing and as-needed basis to reflect this commitment to improving the program's effectiveness.

HISTORY

Beginning in 1992, CASA and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), funded by three constituent agencies of DOJ and by the Ford, Rockefeller, Annie E. Casey, Prudential and American Express Foundations, and the Pew Charitable Trusts, Ronald McDonald Children's Charities and United Technologies, began seeking the most effective ways to help children at high risk of using drugs and alcohol.

The Urban Institute, under contract to CASA and the National Institute of Justice, conducted a rigorous impact analysis of the *CASASTARTSM* model. This effort included a qualitative (process) study based on ethnographic methodology and analysis, an outcome evaluation involving both longitudinal random assignment and quasi-experimental design, and a management information system (MIS) designed specifically for collecting data at the sites.

The Urban Institute evaluation of outcomes for children one year after participating in the program, published in spring 1998, reported the following results:

Compared to the matched control group, *CASASTARTSM* children were significantly:

- ♦ *Less likely to use gateway and stronger drugs.*
- ♦ *Less likely to report involvement in drug trafficking.*
- ♦ *More likely to be promoted to the next grade in school.*

Compared to the matched control group, *CASASTARTSM* children reported significantly:

- ♦ *Lower levels of violent offenses.*
- ♦ *Higher levels of positive peer influence.*
- ♦ *Lower levels of association with delinquent peers.*
- ♦ *Less peer pressure.*

The U.S. Department of Education's Expert Panel on Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools cited the *CASASTARTSM* model as an Exemplary Program in January 2001. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the National Dropout Prevention Center named *CASASTARTSM* a "Model Program." The *Blueprint Project* at the University of Colorado's Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, and U.S. Surgeon General's Office have called the program a promising violence prevention program. These designations mean that the model is a scientifically valid prevention strategy.

CASA tested the model from 1992-1995 in Austin, Bridgeport, Memphis, Newark and Savannah. In 1995, the Ford Foundation gave CASA a grant to develop *CASASTARTSM*, the second generation of the model, and to provide training, technical assistance and oversight to communities interested in using the model. Based on lessons learned from the initial program experience, such as the need to place greater emphasis on engaging families of children in the program and centering many program activities in the participating school, CASA set up *CASASTARTSM* in five sites: the Echo Park/Westlake and Crenshaw Corridor neighborhoods in **Los Angeles**; **North Philadelphia**; **East Tampa**; and Washington Heights in **New York City**.

CASA continues to disseminate the program throughout the country and over 20 states have programs running now.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for *CASASTARTSM*, children must demonstrate at least four risk factors; at least two of them must be school-related. Students must have both academic performance and school behavior problems. Examples of risk factors include:

School risk factors:

- Poor grades.
- Enrollment in a special education curriculum.
- Grade retention.
- Truancy.
- Chronic tardiness.
- Weapons or substance possession.
- Disruptive behavior.
- Repeated out-of-school suspensions or expulsions.

Family risk factors:

- Family violence.
- Child maltreatment.
- Chronic mental illness.
- A family member involved with gangs or having had a criminal conviction within the five years prior to the program intervention.
- Drug use or sales.

Personal risk factors:

- A history of known or suspected drug use or sales.
- Threats posed by an unsafe community.
- Past arrests or involvement in delinquent acts.
- Gang membership.
- A serious emotional disturbance.
- Pregnancy or parenthood.
- Being the victim of child maltreatment.

CASASTARTSM is a voluntary program and children participate in *CASASTARTSM* for up to two years.

CASE MANAGERS

Case managers are the linchpins of *CASASTARTSM*. The case management method links all the key players, including family members, *CASASTARTSM* partner agencies and other needed resources and support networks in the community.

Potentially eligible children are referred to *CASASTARTSM* case managers by school or social service staffs, police or juvenile court personnel. Case managers determine whether children exhibit the requisite risk factors. Then they visit the child and family to describe *CASASTARTSM* and invite the family into the program.

Each case manager serves 15 families. In addition to seeking out participants, developing case plans, counseling, coordinating services and making referrals, *CASASTARTSM* case managers become involved in a range of activities, including:

- ◆ Helping parents learn how to navigate social, educational and legal systems to resolve problems.
- ◆ Advocating for children and family members in court.
- ◆ Running after-school or recreation programs.
- ◆ Arranging for or providing transportation to appointments for family members.
- ◆ Intervening to prevent eviction or utility shut-offs.

CORE *CASASTARTSM* PROGRAM COMPONENTS

CASASTARTSM case managers coordinate a menu of comprehensive services:

- ◆ **Social Support:** Working with a small group of families, case managers ensure that the needs of the child and family are met through either a direct intervention or a referral to a more appropriate service provider. During the period of program participation, intensive efforts take place for three to four months and are followed by on-going monitoring, support and crisis intervention.
- ◆ **Family Services:** Services include counseling, parenting skills training, stress management/coping skills, and identification and treatment of substance abuse and other health or mental health problems. Referrals are made to education and training programs, job search skills and employment services, and income and social support resources. Case managers make monthly home visits to each family.

Education services: Within the scope of this service, each site establishes academic goals for its participants, and incorporates educational enrichment and skill building into its activities. Case managers become aware of the learning strengths and difficulties experienced by participants. Case managers model the habits of life long learners and work with families to establish educational goals for their children. Tutoring or homework assistance is available for all children in the program, including remedial classes or other specialized courses.

- ◆ **After-school and summer activities:** All children are offered cultural and recreational programs, life skills/youth development programs, and training or educational opportunities, to ensure that their leisure time is spent in positive and productive activity.
- ◆ **Mentoring:** The program arranges with local organizations (i.e. colleges, high schools, police departments, faith organizations, Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs) to provide mentors for *CASASTARTSM* children.
- ◆ **Community Policing/Enhanced Enforcement:** Police officers are full members of the *CASASTARTSM* team. They participate at case conference meetings, work one-on-one with children and families, and collaborate with case managers on strategies to help individual children and families. Additional law enforcement activities in the target neighborhood may include posting police along “safe corridors” on routes frequently used by the youth to and from school, establishing neighborhood stations to ensure safety in the community, and building relationships with community residents. Stepped-up supervision and sanctioning of drug offenders also reduces their influence in the target neighborhoods.
- ◆ **Juvenile Justice Intervention:** Case managers work with juvenile court personnel to provide community service opportunities and enhanced supervision of children involved in the juvenile justice system.
- ◆ **Incentives:** Refreshments, gifts and special events are examples of incentives used to engage children, build morale and foster attachment to the goals of the program. Stipends may also be provided for goal achievement or community service.

It is important to note that all *CASASTARTSM* children receive all of the service components, except for juvenile justice intervention, which is provided only if the child is involved with the justice system.

***CASASTARTSM* FORUMS**

Because *CASASTARTSM* brings together disparate organizations – schools, law enforcement and social service agencies – it is essential that timely and meaningful communication occurs at several levels on a regular basis to ensure smooth and timely delivery of services. These forums involve *CASASTARTSM* case managers and administrative staff, other service providers, members of the community and policy makers. Experience has demonstrated that three kinds of *CASASTARTSM* forums are essential to provide program and policy guidance: case conferences, administrative meetings and advisory council discussions.

At **Case Conferences**, the case management staff, police officers, school guidance or social work personnel, and sometimes the parents of children in the program, discuss individual clients or prospective program participants. Meetings occur at least bi-monthly and are held in a participating school. The cases of new students are presented and the progress of students already enrolled is reviewed.

Administrative Meetings occur quarterly. Led by the executive director of the lead agency, they convene school principals and the police commanders. These meetings identify and resolve problems in serving children and families that cannot be solved by frontline staff because they involve larger agency policy or practice issues.

The **Advisory Council** consists primarily of middle and upper level managers from private and public child and family-serving organizations; it can include community residents and members of the business and faith communities as well. The board meets quarterly to review the progress of the *CASASTARTSM* program. Its members use information from these reviews to improve interagency service delivery systems and assess the practicality of creating additional *CASASTARTSM* programs in the city or county. The board also helps the project make connections with decision-makers in the political, philanthropic and private sectors, and identify sources of funding.

CASA SUPPORT

CASA has a sustained and active role in all phases of *CASASTARTSM*. CASA's guidance and oversight ensure that sites have the tools to make the program work. Once a state, city, county or organization has decided to establish the *CASASTARTSM* program, CASA directly supports its work in:

- Identifying target geographic area;
- Refining the eligibility criteria for program participation;
- Specifying the core services;
- Training site staff;
- Developing and maintaining collaborative relationships among staff;
- Supporting problem-oriented policing strategies in the neighborhood;
- Developing strategies to work through issues of confidentiality;
- Designing the data collection and management information systems;
- Structuring and conducting the program evaluation; and
- Assessing funding needs and assisting in fund development.

Once a site is ready to begin operations, CASA supports its work in three ways:

Site coordination: CASA makes regular visits to the sites; holds meetings with staff from all participating agencies; participates in program activities such as after-school programs or case conferences; holds conversations with youth and family members receiving services; meets with prospective funders and with policy makers in the municipality and state to educate them about the program; and provides constructive feedback to the site on its progress and performance.

In-service training: CASA trains site staff from all the partner agencies in key components of the model. CASA has developed curriculum on several topics including case management, service integration and collaboration, substance abuse prevention, working effectively with families and youth development strategies.

National CASASTARTSM network: To connect all the sites, CASA has established a CASASTARTSM link on CASA's home webpage: www.casacolumbia.org and holds annual all-site or regional conferences. These have been popular tools that allow frontline staff from CASASTARTSM sites to "talk shop" with their counterparts in other areas about how to solve "real life" problems. The network is a source of ongoing support and shared wisdom on how to work effectively with high-risk youth and their families, how to raise funds for the program and how to sustain and expand CASASTARTSM over time.

CASA also offers the CASASTARTSM *Field Guide: A Proven Youth Development Strategy that Prevents Substance Abuse and Builds Communities*. The CASASTARTSM Field Guide is the result of nine years of research, experience and evaluation in cities across the United States. It is used to help guide states and localities in the development of CASASTARTSM programs and is available at a nominal cost. Copies can be obtained by contacting CASA.

PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

CASA has the capability of evaluating the performance of each CASASTARTSM site when resources allow. The evaluation process begins by identifying a road map that ties the design of the program to its goal: improving health and life outcomes for children at high-risk. We then construct a data collection instrument that is sensitive to changes targeted by the intervention.

For the quantitative, or outcome, evaluation, CASA employs a quasi-experimental design, where children from each of the sites are matched with an equal number of children from a similar setting where the program does not operate. Each child completes a baseline survey prior to the CASASTARTSM intervention, and completes the same survey after the intervention and at the end of each school year. This analysis of the success of the program is supplemented with in-depth interviews of parents and teachers, enabling CASA to capture a rich portrait of the relevant and effective components of the program. These in-depth queries may also capture unintended benefits of the program. For instance, we have found that after participating in CASASTARTSM, children develop a greater trust of their parents and teachers, which led to benefits neither predicted nor measured in the survey.

For the quantitative, or process, evaluation, interviews are conducted with CASASTARTSM staff from all of the partner agencies, key stakeholders in the community, and program funders. In addition, focus groups are held with parents of the children in the program. The data are analyzed to learn the level of satisfaction of those involved in the program, how well the program parts are working together and the degree of change in law enforcement and service delivery, as they pertain to the specific group of CASASTARTSM participants and to the community in general.

CASA prepares reports based on the evaluation's findings and disseminates the information widely in scholarly journals, popular media, and in professional conference presentations throughout the United States. Most importantly, CASA offers the findings to the sites to help them improve, sustain and expand their own version of CASASTARTSM.

SELECTED CASASTARTSM FUNDERS

CASASTARTSM attracts funding from a variety of sources. Examples include the following:

Foundations:

- American Legacy
- Annie E. Casey
- The Colorado Trust
- The Daniels Fund
- J. Ira and Nicki Harris
- Polk Bros.
- Rose Community

Government:

- United States Department of Education

State Government

- Massachusetts Department of Health
- Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice
- Colorado Department of Education
- Maryland Office of Crime Control and Prevention
- Florida Department of Children Youth and Families

Local Government Funding

- District of Columbia
- San Antonio, TX
- El Paso, TX
- Philadelphia, PA
- Commerce City City Council, CO
- City/County of Denver, CO

CASASTARTSM BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

There are two categories of expense to consider when implementing CASASTARTSM: training and technical assistance, and program operating expenses.

Training and Technical Assistance:

CASA offers a package of 12 days of training and technical assistance during the first year of a site's implementation of the program. This includes eight days of training in case management, service integration, creating safe schools, behavioral-cognitive work with challenging families, mental health assessment of children and adolescents, and youth development theory and frameworks. In addition, CASA provides two 2-day follow-up visits. The total package is approximately \$36,000, inclusive of travel and materials. Though we consider this the minimal amount of support for faithful adaptation of the model, we are flexible, and if your budget cannot support this, we should talk about what we can provide.

Program Operating Expenses:

The attached CASASTARTSM Budget Model, which lists a total program cost of \$198,136, is a high-end estimate. Annual operating expenses are directed mainly by prevailing wages and the number of staff you hire. Program budgets have been as low as \$75,000 and as high as \$200,000. However, program costs also should reflect the number of students you serve. The program generally costs \$3,000 per child per year.

For more information on CASASTARTSM, please contact:

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