

Northern Hills Area CASA

Director's Report

February 6, 2024 – March 11, 2024

Goals:

- **Enhance the work environment through the emphasis of teamwork.**
- **Promote retention of CASA volunteers through continuous support and educational training.**
- **Raise public awareness of NHCASA, child abuse prevention, and the unique role our volunteers play in the child welfare system.**
- **Maintain fiscal responsibility by increasing the amount of income received.**

Foster a positive culture of the work environment.

- Weekly team meetings are held, which include staffing of all cases and discussions regarding fundraisers, volunteer engagement, and grant applications.
- Monthly one-on-one SOS (Source of Support) meetings between the ED and staff members: Created personal and professional goals for 2024. Promoting self-care ideas continuously.
- Chelsie's 6-month performance review will be held in March 2024.

Strengthen the quality and professionalism of advocacy efforts.

- The staff discuss cases on a weekly basis to ensure best practice advocacy efforts.
- We currently have 21 CASA volunteers actively serving 47 children. Five CASAs have been appointed to cases in 2024.
- We have served 63 children thus far in 2024. Total year-end numbers for 2023 were 85 and 75 in 2022.
- CASA volunteers, Marcia Barnes, Victoria Hogrefe, Lisa Merkel, and Linda Stambaugh are assigned to two cases each.
- We have 9 children waiting for a CASA to be their voice. One teenage girl from Dewey County is placed in a residential facility in Parkson. A 17-year-old Ziebach County male is placed at McCrossan Boys Ranch in Sioux Falls. We have had three new cases since the February 8, 2024, board meeting which involves seven children.
- On February 13, 2024, a girl and a boy, ages 8 and 9, were removed from their mother in Butte County due to her arrest for substance use. She wasn't willing to agree to a Present Danger Plan with the maternal grandmother, so the children were taken into DSS custody.
- On February 29, 2024, Meade County law enforcement was contacted due to a report that a 16-year-old girl had disclosed sexual abuse by her father to one of her friends. She reported this occurred the previous weekend, and he had used a condom. The teenager completed a forensic interview which revealed potential sexual abuse of the three other siblings (male = age 12, female = age 8, and male = age 7). She also disclosed sexual contact amongst the sibling group. The children's mother did not believe the allegations and reported the children are "liars." Custody of all four children was given to DSS. There appears to be a history of sexual abuse within the family.
- In the newest Lawrence County case, DSS was contacted regarding concerns related to an infant who was born on January 3, 2024. The newborn had been in the NICU since delivery due to respiratory distress, growth restrictions in utero, and Down's Syndrome. Hospital staff noted concerns for the mother, age 19, who appeared disconnected from the child. The parents struggled to follow directions of hospital staff about feeding instructions and safe sleeping recommendations. The concerns persisted throughout the time the baby girl remained in the hospital, but she was eventually discharged to the parents on January 28. DSS received

additional concerns on January 29, as the mother was continuing to sleep with the newborn, who is at a high risk of SIDS due to her respiratory issues. Concerns persisted through the month of February, as the infant was not gaining weight as she should, and instead, was actually losing weight. The parents struggled to explain how they were mixing her bottles, and they continued to ignore recommendations about safe sleep habits. It was noted when hospital staff followed up with the family daily, she would gain weight; however, if that follow up was not provided, the newborn would lose weight. On February 21, 2024, DSS implemented a Present Danger Plan with the family, with care being provided by the maternal aunt. During the Initial Family Assessment (IFA), it was noted the mother was struggling with post-partum depression, and the child was deemed as failure to thrive. At the conclusion of the IFA, impending danger was identified, and the family did not meet the conditions for return, so DSS requested custody, which was granted on March 7, 2024.

- The new case, highlighted in the February 2024 Director's Report, involving three children who were placed with their father in Faith was dismissed, as no pending danger was present. CASA opposed this, as we recommended to give the family more time, so we could ensure the children's safety.
- We have attended 41 abuse and neglect hearings since January 1, 2024, plus a federal sentencing in Pennington County and several criminal hearings regarding parents.
- After serving on her first appointment for nearly 15 months, CASA Jessica Anderson's case, involving two teenage girls, ended with a successful guardianship by the maternal grandmother on February 26, 2024.
- New CASA volunteer Gabriella Hertz was sworn in on February 28, 2023. She was appointed to her first case on March 6, 2023, involving an 18-month-old little boy. The parents have a long history of methamphetamine use, criminal activity, substantiated neglect, and homelessness. They had little involvement with DSS and the child over the duration of the case. Gabriella provided crucial testimony at the Final Dispositional Hearing which led to termination of parental rights. She is recommending permanency be achieved with the paternal grandmother through an adoption and will remain on the case until it closes.
- The Court Improvement Program, along with the Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment, hosts virtual Lunch & Learn events dealing with child advocacy. The invitation to participate is emailed to all CASA volunteers and board members. Previous sessions can be viewed at <https://sdcpcm.com/our-work/cip/>. February's event focused on Family Violence in which five volunteers and one staff attended. The next virtual learning opportunity will be held on March 27, at 11:00 a.m. MT, and will focus on Empowering Indigenous Students and Families Through Multi-Generational Professional Mentoring Support.
- Refer to the updated NHCASA Calendar of Events for the virtual educational sessions regarding "Understanding ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and "Enough Abuse." Several CASA volunteers are taking advantage of these learning opportunities for their 12 continuing education hours which are required by the National CASA Association.
- We hosted an in-person Lunch & Learn on February 7. The featured speaker was Merritt Keehn, a former NHCASA volunteer. She presented information on the Families First Home Visiting Program. Seven CASAs and three staff were present. Subway of Spearfish donated sandwiches and cookies for the event.
- Anna and I continue to meet monthly with the Children's Worker, DSS Supervisor, and Attorney Karen Hunt to discuss long-term cases. We also participate in weekly calls with CASA volunteers and DSS for case updates.
- Anna and Attorney Karen Hunt met with CASA Kattie Bland to prepare her for providing testimony at a Final Dispositional Hearing.

- Anna scheduled a team meeting with DSS, Attorney Karen Hunt, foster parents, and CASA Holly Hansen to discuss issues surrounding communication with a case.
- Anna, Chelsie, and I met with the two DSS supervisors and the Regional Manager on February 29. Attorney Karen Hunt joined in for a portion of the meeting. Quarterly collaborations will be planned for the remainder of 2024.
- A “Learn About CASA” event was held on February 8, as a way to promote our new volunteer training. We had an overwhelming response, with 18 people present. This included 3 current CASA volunteers and BOD President Clair Garvin Grable. Anna and I presented information about our program. Volunteer Laura Moravec, 2023 Spirit of CASA honoree, was the featured guest speaker. CASAs Michelle Clark, Luke May, and Elana Frasier recruited new volunteer trainees.
- We started our new volunteer training on February 26, with Presiding Fourth Circuit Court Judge Mike Day as our guest speaker. A special thanks to the Spearfish Butcher Shop and Spearfish Creek Wine Bar for donating charcuterie boards for the orientation. We have 11 trainees, including three men, participating in the class. Thus, we outgrew our office space as the training venue. We are hosting the sessions at the Spearfish Chamber of Commerce. I have received email praise from several trainees regarding how informative and productive the first few classes have been.
- We have several others who are interested in becoming CASA volunteers. Therefore, we are adding a summer session on Saturdays in June, so they don’t lose interest by having to wait until the Fall class. We have nine people who tentatively want to participate. Our SMART goal for the year, of having ten new CASA volunteers trained, has already been achieved.
- Anna, Chelsie, and I met with the judges from the 4th Judicial Circuit on February 16. We discussed issues we have observed regarding best-practice advocacy in abuse and neglect proceedings. The collaboration was well-received by the judges.
- Anna, Chelsie, and I completed the suicide prevention training “QPR” (Question, Persuade, Refer) on March 5. We are considering having this as a topic at a future NHCASA Lunch & Learn event.
- I attended the South Dakota Kids Belong Gala. Approximately 200 people were present, including several DSS employees and foster parents.
- The entire NHCASA team and four volunteers attended the multi-disciplinary conference in Rapid City on March 7. Over 220 people were present. It was an informative day, filled with collaboration with other professionals from a wide range of advocacy networks.

Increase public awareness of the mission of NHCASA.

- We are preparing for Child Abuse Prevention Month. We will be hosting Cup O’CASA events in Spearfish, Deadwood, Sturgis, and Belle Fourche. An in-person Lunch & Learn will be held on April 17. Pinwheels for prevention will be highlighted. Stop by NHCASA in April to pick up your pinwheel to display in your yard or business, then take a picture of it and email it to Chelsie at development@nhcasa.org to post on social media. The Strike Out Child Abuse bowling activity is in the planning stages. I encourage the board to get involved.
- We continue to receive donations, in-person, through USPS, and online, from the ASK Letter which was sent to nearly 500 recipients in December. We have also had many people express interest in learning more about our program to which I follow up with phone calls.
- Our website, social media, area Chamber of Commerce newsletters, church bulletins, flyers hung in various businesses throughout our coverage area, and Visit Spearfish are used to promote the NHCASA mission, continuing education training events, and fundraisers. Chelsie is also posting information about NHCASA on Instagram. We are seeing a significant increase

- in followers/likes on the four Facebook sites (NHCASA, Spearfish Canyon Half Marathon, Black Hills Super 6, and the private NHCASA Volunteers page).
- We are members of the Spearfish, Belle Fourche, Deadwood, Lead, and Sturgis Chamber of Commerce. Information about the Half Marathon and BHS6 have been posted on their websites and in their e-news.
 - Event sponsorships are continuously being procured.
 - Chelsie has been participating in Coffee Connection events. Her current focus is on board member recruitment and fundraising event opportunities.
 - We were invited by the Counts Car Club to have a vendor booth, free of charge, at the Monument in Rapid City for the Car & Cycle Show. Anna, Chelsie, and I, along with three CASA volunteers, spent the weekend of February 16-18 (22 hours) talking to hundreds of people about our program. We had five people who expressed their desire to become CASA volunteers. A special thanks to CASA Luke May who was instrumental in this community awareness endeavor.
 - Chelsie participated in a workshop entitled, “Master the Secrets to Event Fundraising Success: Fusing Creativity and Purpose for Sustainable Giving.”
 - Chelsie and I, along with the Executive Board, had a planning session regarding TDG Communication’s “30 Deeds” project. Chelsie and BOD Vice President Natalie Owens participated in a call with TDG regarding some areas which we could use assistance with, including, but not limited to, board recruitment and ways to increase donations from individuals, businesses, and corporations. They are putting together a proposal for review.
 - Chelsie and I met with representatives from RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) on February 29. We discussed ideas on how to get their members involved in our organization.
 - We partner with other local organizations to promote our program. I am a board member of the Lawrence County Coalition and attend monthly meetings. I also attended the Sturgis ABC (Action for the Betterment of the Community) meeting on February 15. The guest speaker presented information on current drug trends in our communities.
 - NHCASA Monthly Spotlights are highlighted on our website, Facebook, Instagram, and are featured in our newsletters. The Counts Car Club and CASA Luke May were the February honorees. Testimonials can be found on our website at www.nhcasa.org. If you would like to view information on the NHCASA Volunteers Facebook private page, please request access.

Fiscal Responsibility

- Grants/Donations Received: VOCA monthly drawdowns from the FY24--July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024 (allocation of \$111,840); Jim and Janice Wright (\$220 monthly donations); Autum Johnson, Marcia Barnes, Scott Hunter (NEW donor with recurring donation of \$50 monthly), Ameriprise-Legacy Financial Partners Consulting (monthly contributions); United Way (monthly distributions--\$666.67); Deadwood Elks Lodge (\$200); First Presbyterian Church (\$211.35); First Gold Hotel (\$250); Deadwood Parking Fund(\$500); Golden West (\$500); Paul Slavec (\$1,000); Jon Auer (\$1,000 NEW donor); Coeur Wharf Sustainability Prosperity Fund (\$4,500).
- 2024 Confirmed Allocations: Lawrence County (\$15,000: two \$7,500 installments paid in June and December); City of Spearfish (\$6,500—to be dispersed on June 1); City of Belle Fourche (\$4,341); City of Deadwood (\$3,500); City of Lead (\$2,500); Montana-Dakota Utilities Resources Foundation (\$2,500—payable in August); Spearfish Optimists Club (\$500)
- Other grants submitted and awaiting response for 2024 include: Spearfish Zonta; FIB Lead/Deadwood Area Fund; Souper Starz; BH Energy; Midco Foundation; Allegiant Airlines; Butte Electric Operation Round Up; United Way Community Impact Grant.

- Upcoming grant applications: VOCA (Chelsie and I have been participating in the FY25 grant solicitation webinars); SD Community Foundation (Beyond Idea Grant); LIV Hospitality; Wells Fargo.
 - We received toy donations from Countryside Community Church and the Salvation Army.
 - Queen City Salon will be hosting a fundraiser for NHCASA. Free haircuts, in exchange for a donation to our program, will be given on April 8 and April 15.
 - The Spearfish Canyon Half Marathon/5K registration is open, with 36 people registered thus far. Payments are sent to us via Innovative Timing. Registrations are open for the Black Hills Super 6, as well. Sponsorships are continuously being updated on *ItsYourRace* and the NHCASA website. We are also utilizing social media for sponsor recognition. Please share the event flyers and post in your place of employment.
 - Race sponsorships received to date: Coeur Wharf (\$1,500 for Half and \$1,500 for BHS6), RCS Construction (\$1,500--Half), Spearfish Electric & Heating (\$500 for each event), Ketel Thorstenson (\$500--Half), Sabers Agency (\$100 for each event), SoDak Title (\$100 for each event), Spearfish Economic Development (\$100 for each event), Family Optical (NEW Sponsor: \$100 for each event), Stadium Sports Grill (\$100 for each event), KEVN (in-kind for both events), and the Black Hills Pioneer (in-kind for both events).
 - See the attached itemized income/expenses for February 6, 2024 – March 11, 2024.
- **CASA Connection:** In the last month, we have had eleven visits scheduled involving four families from our coverage area. We had a request from the Rapid City DSS office for Friday afternoon visits, as well. One family’s visits are being moved to the parental home, as they work toward a potential reunification. CASA Connections was also utilized for team meetings and for separate visits between CASA Linda Stambaugh and CASA Cheryl Hewitt and the four children they advocate for.

Case Reports for January 1, 2024 – March 11, 2024

	Total Children	Lawrence	Butte	Meade	Dewey	Ziebach	Corson	Perkins
Currently Active (3-11-2024)	56	15	12	26	1	1	1	0
Children Closed in 2024	7 (Guardianship = 3; Dismissed with opposition noted by CASA = 3; Transferred to another state = 1)	1	0	5	0	0	0	1
Total Served in 2024	63	16	12	31	1	1	1	1

YTD COMPARISONS	Total Children	Lawrence	Butte	Meade
Total Served (January 1, 2023 – March 11, 2023)	56	16	12	28

NHCASA Calendar of Events:

- **February 29 – March 21, 2024:** New CASA Volunteer Training
- **March 20, 2024:** Sturgis Chamber of Commerce Community Showcase; Vendor Booth; 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.
- **March 21, 2024:** Meeting with DSS to discuss long-term cases; 10:00 a.m.; Sturgis DSS
- **March 21, 2024:** Courtroom Training 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.; Dinner to follow
- **March 25-29, 2024:** Amy OUT
- **March 27, 2024:** Court Improvement Program Virtual Learning: Empowering Indigenous Families through Mentoring; 11:00 a.m.
- **March 29, 2024:** Good Friday; Option to use PTO/FLEX
- **April 2024:** Child Abuse Prevention Month: Cup O’CASA events in Spearfish, Belle Fourche, Deadwood, and Sturgis: Strike Out Child Abuse bowling activity; Pinwheels for Prevention
- **April 2-10, 2024:** Anna OUT
- **April 3, 2024:** Coffee Connection Partnership with SDCEO; NHCASA; 8:00 - 9:30 a.m.
- **April 11, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **April 17, 2024:** NHCASA Lunch & Learn; Topic TBD; Noon
- **April 18, 2024:** United Way Vendor Booth
- **April 18, 2024:** FIB Lead/Deadwood Community Fund Chili Feed/Award Presentation
- **April 24, 2024:** Court Improvement Program Virtual Learning; Domestic Abuse and Civil Legal Considerations; 11:00 a.m.
- **April 25-29, 2024:** Chelsie OUT
- **April 29 - May 3, 2024:** Amy OUT
- **May 7, 2024:** Child Watch Tour
- **May 9, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **May 20-24, 2024:** Amy OUT
- **May 27, 2024:** Memorial Day; NHCASA Closed
- **May 29, 2024:** Cup O’CASA; 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
- **June 5, 2024:** DSS Supervisor Meeting; 9:30 a.m.; NHCASA; Provide breakfast
- **June 13, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **June 15, 2024:** New CASA Volunteer Training; 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- **June 19, 2024:** Juneteenth; NHCASA Closed
- **June 20, 2024:** CASA Family Picnic; City Park Shelter; 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
- **June 22, 2024:** New CASA Volunteer Training; 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- **June 27/28, 2024:** Child Sexual Abuse Conference; Rapid City/Pierre
- **June 29, 2024:** New CASA Volunteer Training; 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- **July 4, 2024:** Independence Day; NHCASA Closed
- **July 8, 2024:** New CASA Volunteer Courtroom Training; 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.; Dinner to follow
- **July 11, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **July 13, 2024:** Spearfish Canyon Half Marathon/5K
- **July 22, 2024:** Cup O’CASA; 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
- **July 24-27, 2024:** Days of ’76 Rodeo VIP Bar
- **August 2-8, 2024:** Amy OUT
- **August 15, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **August 17, 2024:** Black Hills Super 6 Mountain Bike Race
- **August 28, 2024:** NHCASA Lunch & Learn; Topic TBD; Noon
- **September 2, 2024:** Labor Day; NHCASA Closed

- **September 5, 2024:** Learn About CASA; 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
- **September 6-10, 2024:** Amy OUT
- **September 12, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **September 19, 2024:** New CASA Volunteer Orientation; 6:00 p.m.
- **September 20, 2024:** Cup O’CASA; 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
- **September 23 – October 17, 2024:** New CASA Volunteer Training
- **October 3-4, 2024:** Community Response to Child Abuse Conference; Sioux Falls
- **October 10, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **October 14, 2024:** Indigenous People’s Day; NHCASA Closed
- **October 21, 2024:** Request Christmas Wish Lists
- **October 24, 2024:** Volunteer Appreciation Banquet; BHSU Joy Center; 5:00 p.m.
- **November 2, 2024:** Dueling Pianos; Spearfish Holiday Inn
- **November 6, 2024:** NHCASA Lunch & Learn; Topic TBD; Noon
- **November 11, 2024:** Veteran’s Day; NHCASA Closed
- **November 14, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **November 14, 2024:** NHCASA Social (Bingo); 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
- **November 18, 2024:** Christmas Wish Lists Due
- **November 20, 2024:** Cup O’CASA; 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
- **November 21, 2024:** Make Tree Tags
- **November 22-25, 2024:** CASA Christmas Gift Project Wish Lists Distributed to Tree Tag Locations
- **November 27-December 4, 2024:** Amy OUT
- **November 28-29, 2024:** Thanksgiving Break; NHCASA Closed
- **December TBD, 2024:** BOD Meeting & Annual Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **December 9, 2024:** CASA Christmas Gifts Due
- **December 12, 2024:** Christmas Gift Project Wrap Day; BHSU Joy Center; 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- **December 25, 2024:** Christmas; NHCASA Closed

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Accrual Basis

NHCASA - Office
Income by Customer Summary
February 6 through March 11, 2024

	<u>Feb 6 - Mar 11, 24</u>
ABBVIE	30.00
Addy, Alva & Sandra	500.00
Anonymous	130.00
Auer, Jon	1,000.00
Barnes, Marcia	57.60
Black Hills Butcher Block	0.00
City of Deadwood	500.00
Coeur Wharf	3,000.00
Coeur Wharf Sustainable Prosperity Fund	4,500.00
Countryside Community Church	0.00
Deadwood Lodge Elks	200.00
First Gold Hotel & Gaming	250.00
First Interstate Bank - Spearfish	443.70
First Presbyterian Church - Sturgis	211.25
Golden West - Customer	500.00
Hunsley, Christina	850.00
Hunter, Scott	49.95
Innovative Timing Systems, LLC	1,310.01
Johnson, Autum	12.50
Ketel Thorstenson	500.00
KEVN Fox 7	0.00
Mattison, McKayla	870.00
Real Estate Center of Spearfish	200.00
Slavec, Paul	1,000.00
SoDak Title	200.00
Spearfish Creek Wine Bar	0.00
State of South Dakota	10,391.38
Thrivent Grant	311.00
United Way of the Northern Hills	666.67
Wright, Jim & Jan	440.00
Zilberstein, Michael	30.00
TOTAL	<u>28,154.06</u>

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Accrual Basis

NHCASA - Office
Expenses by Vendor Summary
February 6 through March 11, 2024

	<u>Feb 6 - Mar 11, 24</u>
Adobe Vendor	9.99
All Net Connect	510.75
Amazon.com	36.39
American Family Insurance	602.85
Amy Cermak	438.85
Anna Schmidt	404.68
Antunez	104.12
Black Hills Pioneer - Vendor	223.16
Crow Peak Accounting	550.00
Culver's Vendor	20.00
Dairy Queen	20.00
Dakota Bus Service	1,375.00
godaddy.com	24.61
Lisa Merkel	534.08
Lueder's Food Center-Vendor	23.75
Marco	535.38
One Source The Background Check Company	34.00
Qdoba	20.00
Safeway - Vendor	11.97
Shop CASA	178.12
Spearfish Chamber of Commerce-Vendor	42.50
Starbucks	20.00
Subway	0.00
Superior Sanitation.	100.00
Tropical Smoothie Cafe - Vendor	20.00
US Post Office	20.19
Walmart	233.97
TOTAL	<u>6,094.36</u>