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## STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

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# Computers for CASA Overview

### Background Information:

Senate Bill 78 by Senator Jane Nelson was passed during the 85<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, giving CASA programs access to Texas' state agency surplus computers. All of the computers that CASA programs access through this program are required to be distributed directly to foster children and youth served by CASA and in need of a computer for educational and normalcy activities. After Texas CASA launches the program with a webinar and online training in its Learning Management System (LMS), CASA programs will be given access to the computers on a first come, first served basis beginning in February 2018.

### Process for Accessing the Computers:

Currently, all state agency salvage or surplus equipment is uploaded by each agency to the Texas Facilities Commission's auction site. After 10 days, computers and laptops not purchased during the bidding period go to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) for repair and refurbishment by inmates. TDCJ reported to Texas CASA that they receive hundreds of computers each month for refurbishment and currently have a regular stock on hand. All non-computer surplus items go to Texas State Surplus Property storefronts in Austin, San Antonio and Fort Worth, for sale:

<http://www.tfc.state.tx.us/divisions/supportserv/prog/statesurplus/>.

After refurbishment by the TDCJ Program, the computers are donated and delivered for free directly to school districts, state agencies, political subdivisions of the state or CASA programs in the relative order of preference per the Texas Governmental Code Section 497.012 (b). Computers must be requested completing BOTH the System Configuration Request Form, MAL – 115B and the Organization Eligibility Certification MAL – 115C form, which can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.tci.tdcj.texas.gov/services/computer.aspx>.

When completing the System Configuration Request form, select "Local Volunteer Advocate Program" under type of organization. For more information on the terms included on the form and types of equipment, please refer to the [\*"Basic Considerations for Computers for CASA"\*](#) document developed by Texas CASA. When completing the Organization Certification form, select "Local volunteer advocate program" and include your CASA program name under "organization's name and address." Once the forms are completed and printed, they should be faxed to the TDCJ facility closest to your CASA program location.\* The facility and fax information is included on the Systems Configurations Request form.

\*Texas CASA recommends that only paid staff complete the above forms on behalf of a CASA program. A volunteer should not request computer equipment without the express consent of local program staff.

### Training:

Before requesting a computer, at least one CASA staff person must complete the [Computers for CASA 101](#) training. This comprehensive training includes an overview of the program, steps to request a computer, software requirements, installation and reimbursement process, and finally, the delivery of the computer to

the child or youth. The training, including the final assessment quiz, must be completed by at least one CASA staff person in order to receive reimbursement funds through the Computers for CASA Direct Grant.

### **Choosing Foster Youth to Receive Computers:**

While each CASA program is the best judge of the children and youth they are serving and can request a computer for any youth they choose, Texas CASA recommends prioritizing the following populations:

- 1) Youth emancipating out of the child welfare system,
- 2) High school students,
- 3) Middle school students, and
- 4) Children over the age of 10 in kinship homes without a computer.

Children and youth who already have a personal computer are not eligible to receive one from a CASA program. Additionally, a CASA volunteer or staff person should talk with the child prior to giving him/her any equipment to ensure that the child is interested in receiving it.

### **Receiving the Computers:**

After submitting the request forms to the nearest TDCJ Program, CASA programs should expect to receive confirmation of receipt via fax **one day to one week** after submitting the request. The computers and equipment should arrive within **two to four weeks** following the request, unless TDCJ cannot fulfill the request.

Once the equipment is delivered, local program staff must complete the following steps before delivering the computer to the foster youth:

1. Install an operating system (requires an IT professional, either internal, contracted or volunteer)
2. Install Microsoft Office Suite (recommend the latest version of Office)
3. Install the Norton anti-virus program

### **Reimbursement Funds Available:**

Texas CASA has secured a grant from the Reissa Foundation to enable local programs to be reimbursed for contracted IT work and software purchased for this program. Programs cannot request reimbursement for any of the above items if they were not used specifically for computers and equipment ordered from a TDCJ Program for distribution to a foster child or youth.

Local programs will be eligible to receive reimbursement of up to \$400/computer for the following\*:

1. Purchase of the Microsoft Office Suite (recommend the latest version of Office)
2. Purchase of the Norton anti-virus program
3. Contracted IT support related to this project

\*At least one staff person at the program must complete the [Computers for CASA 101](#) training provided by Texas CASA in order to receive reimbursement for any of the items listed above. For additional reimbursement information, please review the [grant project guidelines](#) for this program.

### **Delivering Computers/Equipment to Foster Children & Youth:**

At least one CASA program volunteer or staff person must deliver the equipment to the youth in person. Texas CASA also requires that both the youth's caregiver and the youth be there in person to receive the equipment. The CASA program representative should show the equipment to the youth and caregiver and should go over the ["Best Practices for Internet Safety"](#) document. Additionally, the CASA program representative and the caregiver and foster youth must sign and date the ["Release of Equipment and Liability Form."](#) The CASA program representative should bring the signed copy of the Release of Equipment and Liability Form back to the CASA program office to be filed.