



BREAKING BARRIERS BUILDING HOPE



**2025 Louisiana
CASA Conference**

May 5 - 6, 2025

Baton Rouge, LA

Welcome

LOUISIANA CASA CONFERENCE

Dear Attendees,

Welcome to the Louisiana CASA Conference!

It is a true pleasure to have you with us as we come together around this year's theme: *Breaking Barriers, Building Hope*. This theme reflects not only the work we do every day, but also the spirit of this gathering—a space to be challenged, encouraged, and inspired.

This conference is one of our favorite times of the year because it brings together the people who make the CASA mission possible. Advocates, staff, board members, and partners from across the state are here because they believe in the power of a consistent voice in a child's life.

Your commitment to this work is what drives our collective impact, and we are honored to be on this journey with you.

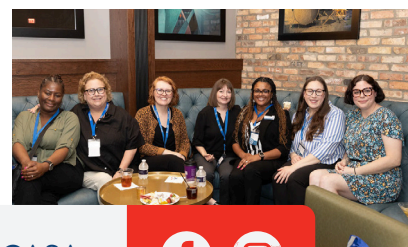
We've worked hard to build a program that meets the moment. Our sessions and speakers were thoughtfully chosen to equip you with new tools, spark meaningful conversations, and deepen your connection to this mission. Whether this is your first conference or your tenth, we hope you leave feeling more connected, more empowered, and more hopeful.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for the energy, time, and heart you continue to pour into this work. We're so glad to welcome you, and we look forward to what we will accomplish together.

Warm regards,

Amanda L. Moody

Amanda L. Moody
Executive Director
Louisiana CASA Association



Tag us in your photos! @LouisianaCASA

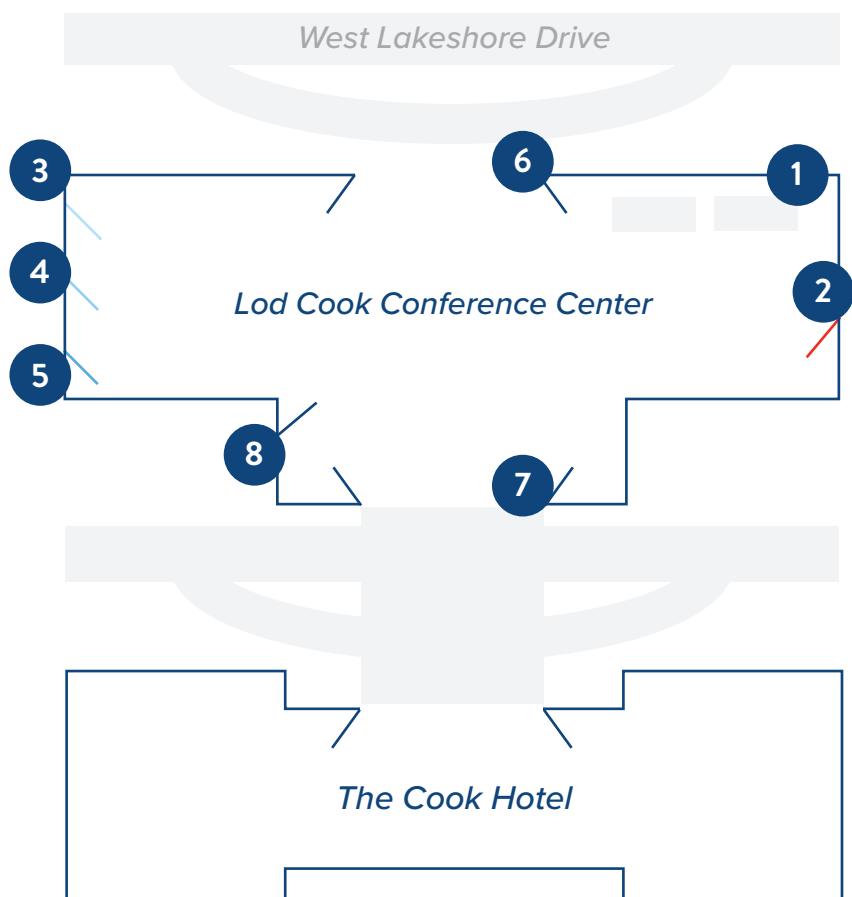


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Conference Map

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Speakers

LOUISIANA CASA CONFERENCE

Judge Timothy Ellender

Judges' Perspectives: The Impact of CASA in the Courtroom

Keynote | Day 1: May 5th | 10:00AM | Ballroom



Judge Timothy C. Ellender, Jr. is a native of Houma, Louisiana and currently sits as district court judge for Division "A" of the 32nd Judicial District Court. As the district court judge in Terrebonne Parish, he presides over a court of general jurisdiction. His diverse docket includes all child in need of care cases. Due to the complex and integrated nature of these types of cases, a judge will listen to all the presented evidence to discern what is in a child's best interest regarding the child's safety and well-being. As such, within his own courtroom, Judge Ellender provides a safe space to address the concerns and best interests of each child. Prior to taking the bench, Judge Ellender owned a private practice for 21 years which focused on both criminal and civil law specializing in divorce and family law. With this background, Judge Ellender has a unique perspective and sensitivity when adjudicating these complex cases. He is heavily invested in ensuring each child's best interest. Judge Ellender received a J.D. degree from Louisiana State University, Paul M. Hebert Law Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1998. He obtained a B.A. degree in Political Science with a minor in History from Louisiana State University in 1995.

Judge Jennifer Guillot Womble

Judges' Perspectives: The Impact of CASA in the Courtroom

Keynote | Day 1: May 5th | 10:00AM | Ballroom



Judge Womble serves as Judge for Section A of the Jefferson Parish Juvenile Court, elected in January 2023. A Tulane Law graduate and former public defender, she has over 20 years of experience representing children, indigent parents, and handling adoptions. Judge Womble is a National Child Welfare Specialist, a Fellow of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, and a lifelong advocate for children, including involvement with CASA since college. Her accolades include the Louisiana Public Defender Blackstone Award and the 2022 Crimefighters Crime Prevention Advocate of the Year Award. A Metairie native, she is active in local bar associations, a scout leader, and is married to attorney John Womble.

Judge Shaun Caillier-Harden

Judges' Perspectives: The Impact of CASA in the Courtroom

Keynote | Day 1: May 5th | 10:00AM | Ballroom



Judge Shaunn Caillier-Harden is a 1990 graduate of the Academy of the Sacred Heart who went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Arts and Sciences from LSU in 1993 and then attended LSU's Paul M. Hebert School of Law, earning a Juris Doctorate in 1996. She served as a Law Clerk for Judge John Saunders in the Louisiana 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals before opening her private practice in 1997. In addition to her own practice, she served as an Assistant District Attorney for the St. Landry Parish District Attorney from 1997-2020, including serving as Felony Section Chief prior to her election as Opelousas City Court Judge. She is a member of the Louisiana State Bar Association, Louisiana City Judges Association, Judges Association of the Third Circuit, Louisiana Judicial Council as well as the St. Landry Parish Bar Association for which she served as

President in 2007. She is also a former member of the Louisiana District Attorneys Association. She served on the CASA Finance Committee from 2016 to February 2020, and is a member, served as President of the Rotary Club of Opelousas Sunrise 2020-2021, and is a member of NAUW the National Association of University Woman. She previously served on the Board of Our Lady of Lourdes Regional Medical Center and she currently serves on the St. Landry Bank & Trust Board of Directors and is Co-Chair of the Opelousas Love Project. Her passion is engagement with parents and youth, promoting and recognizing the paramount importance of working together diligently to ensure avenues of hope, opportunities, productivity, and education. She is a lifelong resident of Opelousas and is married to Michael Harden, Sr. They have five children and three grandchildren.

Storm Ehlers

Judges' Perspectives: The Impact of CASA in the Courtroom

Keynote | Day 1: May 5th | 10:00AM | Ballroom



Storm Ehlers is the Deputy Judicial Administrator of the Division of Children and Families at the Louisiana Supreme Court, which administers the statewide FINS Assistance Program, CASA Assistance Program and Court Improvement Program (for child welfare). She has a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy from University of New Orleans and a law degree from Loyola University of New Orleans College of Law. She's been a licensed attorney in the State of Louisiana since October 2012. In Law School she interned with the Louisiana Supreme Court Division of Children and Families during her second and third years which introduced her to court administration. She worked for the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court as the Court Attorney and then the Deputy Judicial Administrator. She served as the Deputy Court Administrator of the 22nd

Judicial District Court prior to coming to the Louisiana Supreme Court again.

Meghan Goldbeck

Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention

Breakout Session | Day 1: May 5th | 11:15AM | Ballroom



Meghan Goldbeck is the Executive Director of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Louisiana and Mississippi Chapters. Meghan has had a career in the nonprofit sector for over a decade and is a strong advocate for mental health and suicide prevention in her community. She received a bachelor's degree in communications from Southern Illinois University Carbondale and is currently working on obtaining a master's degree in Nonprofit Administration from Louisiana State University Shreveport. She is certified in Mental Health First Aid and safeTALK, and presents AFSP's signature programs including It's Real: Teens and Mental Health, Talk Saves Lives, and more!

Lori Pilley

Strategic Volunteer Engagement for CASA Programs

Breakout Session | Day 1: May 5th | 11:15AM | Abel



Lori Pilley serves as the Director of Volunteer and Disaster Services at Volunteer Louisiana, the state service commission housed in the Office of the Lt. Governor. She manages strategic planning, grant administration, and partnerships for Louisiana's disaster volunteer networks in collaboration with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. Before joining Volunteer Louisiana, Lori was the Director of Donor Engagement at the LSU Foundation, where she spent eight years scaling donor operations during the university's \$1.5 billion fundraising campaign. Lori is a Certified Fund Raising Executive, a graduate of LSU's Master of Public Administration program, and the Lt. Governor's appointee to the State's Voluntary Agency Active in

Disaster board. After Hurricane Katrina, she served as an AmeriCorps member supervising volunteers with Habitat for Humanity. This experience laid the groundwork for a career focused on maximizing the effectiveness of organizations supported by philanthropy and volunteers.

Kristin Jones

Working with Immigrant Children in CINC Proceedings

Breakout Session | Day 1: May 5th | 2:00PM | Abel



Kristin Jones is the Supervising Attorney at Catholic Charities of New Orleans. She trains and manages attorneys, interns, and runs Catholic Charities' summer fellowship program. She also represents immigrant children and adults in removal proceedings with a focus on humanitarian forms of relief, like Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and asylum. Before joining Catholic Charities, Kristin worked in civil litigation, specializing in appeals.

Andrew Bridge

Hope for a Brighter Future

Keynote | Day 1: May 5th | 12:15PM | Ballroom

Why Kids Run

Breakout Session | Day 1: May 5th | 3:15PM | Ballroom



Andrew Bridge spent 11 years in Los Angeles County foster care. After aging out, he attended Wesleyan University, then graduated from Harvard Law School and was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship. He began his legal career representing children against the State of Alabama, where his work resulted in the closure of one of the country's most notorious psychiatric institutions, the Eufaula Adolescent Center. Returning to Los Angeles, he became CEO of The Alliance for Children's Rights, representing children in the foster care system where he grew up. Andrew is the co-founder of National Adoption Day and New Village Girls Academy for pregnant and parenting teens. As Chair of Los Angeles County's Blue Ribbon Task Force, he called for an end to the disproportionate removal of Black babies from their mothers. His memoir *Hope's Boy* was a New York Times bestseller. His newly released book about that fight against Alabama, *The Child Catcher*, is a National Bestseller.

Dr. Chan Hellman

The Science of Hope: A Protective Factor For Improving Wellbeing

Breakout Session | Day 1: May 5th | 2:00PM | Ballroom



Chan M. Hellman is a professor at the University of Oklahoma and Director of The Hope Research Center and has published over 100+ research studies. Chan has presented his work on hope with TEDx and has provided invited talks in Europe, United Kingdom, and the Middle East. Chan's research is focused on hope as a psychological strength helping children and adults overcome trauma and adversity. This research informed the development of the "Hope Centered and Trauma Informed" training program used to promote Hope Centered Organizations. Chan is the co-author of the award-winning book "Hope Rising: How the Science of Hope Can Change Your Life" published by Morgan James. As a result of this work, Chan was one of five invited workshops for Jane

Goodall's Activating Hope Summit (2021). Chan's work was featured as a main stage presentation at the 2023 American Psychological Association convention. Chan has Co-Founded Hope Rising Oklahoma along with First Lady Sarah Stitt in their effort to make Oklahoma a hope-centered state. Chan's work on hope has been featured in the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, American Psychological Association Monitor, CNN, and TIME Magazine. Chan received the 2024 "Building Knowledge Through Research" award by the US Department of Justice based on the effect the science of hope has on helping organizations serve victims of crime.

Natasha Fossett

The Chronology and Purpose of CINC Hearings

Breakout Session | Day 1: May 5th | 3:15PM | Abel



Natasha Fossett is an attorney with DCFS in the Alexandria, LA office providing legal services to eight parishes in the central Louisiana region. Natasha was a children's attorney prior to joining the Bureau of General Counsel and has experience with Children in Need of Care and Termination of Parental Rights actions under the Louisiana Children's Code.



Day 1 Feedback Survey

We want to hear from you! Once you have attended all of your sessions, please scan the QR code or visit surveymonkey.com/CASAday1 to take a quick survey. Your feedback helps Louisiana CASA plan for future events for our statewide network. Thank you for your participation!

Open to all
conference
attendees

May 5th
6:00PM
-9:00PM

Ballroom

Louisiana CASA Awards of Excellence

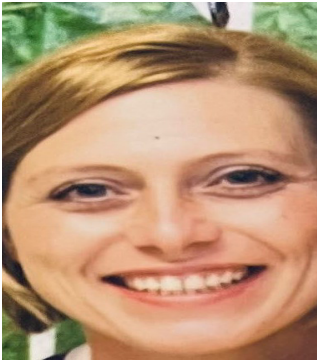
AWARDS PRESENTATION | Dinner, Live DJ, Cash Bar

Join us for a special celebration recognizing the incredible individuals who make CASA's mission possible. The Awards of Excellence honors the CASA volunteers, staff, judges, and community partners who go above and beyond to advocate for children in foster care. This inspiring evening will include a formal awards ceremony, a seated dinner, and an opportunity to connect with fellow advocates. All are welcome to join us in celebrating the dedication and impact of Louisiana's child advocacy champions!

Christy Johnson

Accessing Developmental Disability Services for Youth in Foster Care

Breakout Session | Day 2: May 6th | 8:30AM | Ballroom



Christy Johnson is the Waiver Director with the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities. Her professional career spans over 24 years and has been devoted to supporting an array of special needs populations. She has worked extensively in the community to provide home and community-based services to individuals with disabilities with her early career experiences including direct support and coordination of services for individuals receiving in home and vocational supports. She has worked the last 17 years for the Louisiana Department of Health, with over a decade with the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities. During her tenure with OCDD, significant accomplishments include the development and implementation of the OCDD guidelines for support planning and resource allocation systems to include provision of training, mentoring, and monitoring of support coordination agencies, service provider agencies and the local governing entities. She worked collaboratively with various internal and external stakeholders on all initiatives affecting HCBS supports including development and implementation of activities to achieve compliance with the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) Home and Community Based Service (HCBS) regulations, Self-Direction, OCDD's Needs-based Assessment process, System Entry, and Waiver Supports and Request for Services Registry improvements. Johnson earned her undergraduate degree in psychology from the Louisiana State University.

Travis Noote

Don't Drain the Trainer: Improv Your Delivery Methods

Breakout Session | Day 2: May 6th | 9:45AM | Ballroom



Travis Noote is the founder and owner of Boomerang Comedy Theater, Mid City's hub for improv and stand-up comedy. Travis moved all around the country growing up and lived in South Carolina and Georgia for most of his adult life before returning to his family's roots in Louisiana in 2021. His travel-centric upbringing steered him to develop a deep appreciation for community and connection, which he strives to foster through his business, his social circle, and his volunteer endeavors. In addition to theater operations, Travis teaches improv comedy classes, coaches some of the strongest improv teams in the area, and produces multiple recurring comedy shows. In addition to serving on the Board and Public Affairs Committee for Mid-City Merchants, Travis is the Baton Rouge Ambassador for the Alignable networking platform. He is married to Angi Noote, has two grown sons, two very friendly rescue dogs, and two aloof cats.

Sherrard Crespo, LCSW

VIA LINK and PCAL: Resources to Know for Accessing Support

Breakout Session | Day 2: May 6th | 9:45AM | Shelton



Sherrard Crespo is a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) who obtained her Masters Degree in Social Work from Louisiana State University in 2017. Her professional background is highlighted by her work with suicide education, prevention, intervention, and postvention. Sherrard is currently employed with VIA LINK in the position of Vice President of External Affairs where her current duties include: clinical oversight of VIA LINK's 24/7 contact center, community outreach and education on VIA LINK services as well as specialized skills and information on suicide response, crisis intervention, grief, and trauma. Sherrard also facilitates VIA LINK's support group: Survivors of Suicide Loss. She also serves as Director of Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana (PCAL), Louisiana's chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America in which her current focus includes education and advocacy for the community and professionals to support Louisiana families and prevent child abuse.

Lori Steele

Volunteers: The Heartbeat of an Organization

Breakout Session | Day 2: May 6th | 11:00AM | Ballroom



Lori Steele is a Community Educator & Media Specialist for the Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency or LOPA. Lori transitioned to these roles after years of reporting & anchoring for Television News Channels in both the Lafayette & Baton Rouge markets. She says the best part of her job is interacting & learning from her LOPA volunteers. The goals: to celebrate life & to honor donor heroes across Louisiana.

Wendy Lipsey

Volunteers: The Heartbeat of an Organization

Breakout Session | Day 2: May 6th | 11:00AM | Ballroom



Wendy has been a dedicated volunteer and advocate for over 15 years, serving as a certified public speaker and Vice Chair of the LOPA Foundation. Since 2008, she has supported the Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency (LOPA) by raising awareness about organ and tissue donation through education and community engagement. In addition to her work with LOPA, Wendy volunteers with the Big Buddy Program, mentoring and empowering youth, and supports the Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center's Lipsey Family Legacy through impactful fundraising efforts. Her unwavering commitment to service and advocacy continues to inspire positive change in her community.

Dr. Tresa Northington

Supporting Early Development: A Roundtable with Dr. Tresa Northington

Breakout Session | Day 2: May 6th | 11:00AM | Shelton



Tresa Northington is the Developmental Screening Coordinator (DSC) for the State of Louisiana with the Bureau of Family Health (BFH). As the direct link for the Developmental Screening Initiative, Dr. Northington trains and educates medical and early childcare providers on the importance of early intervention, developmental screening, developmental guidelines as well as the Developmental Screening Toolkit (DST). In addition to her position as the DSC, she also works with the ECCS Team to provide assistance and guidance on projects and other endeavors. Dr. Northington holds a BA in Spanish, MS in Spanish Language Education and Ed.D in Early Childhood Education. Prior to this position, she was an educator for 14 years and college professor for 5 years. As a bilingual professional, Dr. Northington has also educated, and provided many trainings and assistance in Spanish.

Dawn Cazedessus

From the Trailer Park to CEO

Keynote | Day 2: May 6th | 12:15PM | Ballroom



Dawn Cazedessus is a seasoned entrepreneur, business leader, and international speaker with over 20 years of experience in real estate, executive coaching, and organizational leadership. From founding a successful café franchise to building a thriving real estate mega-team, she has continually excelled in business innovation and leadership. Dawn has served as CEO for Keller Williams in Mandeville, Regional Director for Keller Williams Gulf States and Southeast Region, and CEO of Sterling Surgical Hospital and Fleur De Lis Law and Title Company. She now oversees Keller Williams franchises across Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee. A dynamic speaker, Dawn inspires audiences with proven strategies for achieving personal and professional success, leveraging her expertise to empower others to realize their goals.

Marie Smith

MCO's Role in Supporting Foster Care Youth into Adulthood

Breakout Session | Day 2: May 6th | 1:45PM | Abel



Marie serves as the clinical and judicial liaison for Aetna Better Health of LA, ABHLA, Marie holds a Ph.D. in the Administration of Exceptional Education, and a Master's in Counseling, with a minor in administration and psycho-educational assessment. She holds multiple licenses and certifications in the areas of mental health and education. Marie has extensive experience in direct services and the administration of educational and mental health programs, including advocating for individuals with disabilities. Marie served as a Regional Mental Health Director and Deputy Superintendent of programs for individuals in state custodial care.

Dr. Shantrell Charles

MCO's Role in Supporting Foster Care Youth into Adulthood

Breakout Session | Day 2: May 6th | 1:45PM | Abel



Dr. Shantrell Charles possesses over 15 years of experience working in the areas of child welfare and mental health on the State and local levels as well as within the non-profit sector. She earned her bachelor's degree in social work from Southeastern Louisiana University, Master's degree in Social Work from Southern University of New Orleans, and Doctorate in Social Work from Tulane University. Shantrell is a Licensed Master Social Worker and a Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) Practitioner. Prior to joining the Aetna Better Health of LA, ABHLA, Children's Specialty team, where she is the Principal Clinical Director for the Children Specialty program, Dr. Charles assisted in implementing the only multi-disciplinary non-profit law office in Houston, Texas serving as the Director of Social Services. Her previous employment included the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services, DCFS, for over 14 years, functioning in different programs and roles including foster care, in home family services, home development, investigations, operations, supervision and as a consultant with the LA Child Welfare Training Academy.

Stephanie Breeden, LMSW

Transforming Advocacy: New Child Wellbeing Assessment

Breakout Session | Day 2: May 6th | 1:45PM | Ballroom



Stephanie Breeden has been involved with the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program since 2006, holding various roles at Child Advocacy Services CASA. She earned her Bachelor's in Social Work from Southeastern Louisiana University and her Master's from Louisiana State University. As an Advocate Supervisor, Stephanie ensured foster children's voices were heard in Court and mentored colleagues for over 10 years as a Lead Advocate Supervisor. She also led fundraising efforts, built leadership committees, and assisted in the initiation of her local My CommUNITY Cares. Stephanie won the Louisiana CASA Staff Member of the Year award in 2010. In 2019, she became a CASA Recruiter where she gave countless interviews to media outlets, and in 2023, she joined Louisiana CASA as Director of Member Services where she provides training and technical assistance to local programs throughout the state. Stephanie is level 1 trauma-informed certified by the Attachment and Trauma Network and an educator of Adverse Childhood Experiences.



Day 2 Feedback Survey

We want to hear from you! Once you have attended all of your sessions, please scan the QR code or visit surveymonkey.com/CASADay2 to take a quick survey. Your feedback helps Louisiana CASA plan for future events for our statewide network. Thank you for your participation!

Sessions

LOUISIANA CASA CONFERENCE

KEYNOTE

Judges' Perspectives: The Impact of CASA in the Courtroom

Day 1: May 5th | 10:00AM | Judge Ellender, Judge Caillier-Harden, Judge Womble, Storm Ehlers
General CEU

A distinguished panel of judges will share their perspectives on the vital role of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) in the judicial process. Hear firsthand why judges appoint CASAs to cases in their courts and what they value most about their contributions. Panelists will discuss the types of information they seek in CASA court reports and testimonies, including how CASAs can effectively communicate their observations and recommendations. This session will provide valuable insights into how CASA volunteers support the court in making informed decisions that prioritize the best interests of children. Attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of how judges view CASA advocacy and the qualities they look for in appointed advocates, empowering them to make an even greater impact in the courtroom.

BREAKOUT

Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention

Day 1: May 5th | 11:15AM | Meghan Goldbeck | *General CEU*

Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention is AFSP's flagship suicide prevention education program that covers the scope of this leading cause of death, what the research has found to be the warning signs and risk factors of suicide, and the strategies that prevent it. Topics covered include: Scope of the Problem: The latest data on suicide in the U.S. Research: Information from research on what causes people to consider suicide, how certain communities are impacted by suicide differently, as well as contributors to suicide risk. Prevention: An understanding of the protective factors that lower suicide risk, and strategies for managing mental health and being proactive about self-care. What You Can Do: Guidance on warning signs and behaviors to look for, how to start a conversation with someone you are concerned about, and ways to seek and offer support and crisis resources for yourself or others.

BREAKOUT

Strategic Volunteer Engagement for CASA Programs

Day 1: May 5th | 11:15AM | Lori Pilley | *General CEU*

This engaging session focuses on strategic volunteer engagement practices tailored to the needs of CASA program staff. Designed to help CASA organizations recruit passionate advocates, prioritize impactful volunteer engagement, and create clear, actionable plans for the year ahead, this training equips participants with the tools and strategies they need to strengthen their programs and expand their reach. Participants will identify focus areas within their programs, align volunteer efforts with organizational priorities, and develop sustainable plans that enhance long-term recruitment outcomes. Through interactive discussions, collaborative exercises, and peer learning opportunities, attendees will gain practical resources and insights to elevate their volunteer engagement strategies.

KEYNOTE

Hope for a Brighter Future

Day 1: May 5th | 12:15PM | Andrew Bridge | *General CEU*

Andrew Bridge will share his personal and professional journey as an advocate for our nation's most vulnerable children. Drawing from his own experience growing up in foster care, and his career as a lawyer representing foster youth, his keynote address will explore the eleven years he spent in the foster care system, the circumstances that led him there, and the strides that have been made to reform the system. He will also discuss the critical challenges that still lie ahead and the extraordinary difference that CASAs make in children's lives everyday.

BREAKOUT

The Science of Hope: Protective Factor For Improving Wellbeing

Day 1: May 5th | 2:00PM | Dr. Chan Hellman | *General CEU*

Drawing on over 15 years of research, Dr. Hellman will highlight how nurturing hope is a key predictor of well-being, fostering positive outcomes for children, families, and service providers. Gain actionable insights into:

- Strengthening relationships through hope,
- Buffering the effects of adversity with hope,
- Practical strategies for nurturing and sustaining hope as a coping resource, and
- The role of hope in protecting service providers from burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

BREAKOUT

Working with Immigrant Children in CINC Proceedings

Day 1: May 5th | 2:00PM | Kristin Jones

Children without immigration status in CINC proceedings face unique challenges. The good news is that they likely qualify for some type of immigration relief. This presentation will go over the different types of immigration relief or visas that these children may be eligible for. We'll focus on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status because that's the most common type of relief, and it's where child welfare stakeholders have the biggest role to play. We'll end the presentation with a discussion on how immigration professionals and child welfare stakeholders can work together to protect children's immigration rights.

BREAKOUT

Why Children Run

Day 1: May 5th | 3:15PM | Andrew Bridges | *General CEU*

Led by Andrew Bridges—a former foster child, children's rights policy advisor, and lawyer—this session explores the issue of children running from foster care placements. Drawing on personal and professional insights, Andrew examines why children run, the dangers they face, and what they say about their reasons, such as missing siblings or feeling unheard. The session highlights running as a failure in case planning, not the child's fault, and offers strategies to prevent and address the problem, including steps to take when a child goes missing and how to engage with them upon their return.

BREAKOUT

The Chronology and Purpose of CINC Hearings

Day 1: May 5th | 3:15PM | Natasha Fossett

This session offers a comprehensive overview of the sequence and objectives of Child in Need of Care (CINC) hearings, designed specifically for CASA volunteers and staff. Participants will learn about the order in which CINC hearings occur, from the initial emergency hearing through review and permanency hearings, and the specific goals and legal findings the court aims to achieve at each stage. The session will also cover the critical role CASA plays in these hearings, offering practical insights on how to effectively navigate the courtroom process and advocate for the best interests of children. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of court timelines, key milestones, and how to prepare reports and recommendations that align with the court's objectives. By the end of the session, participants will be better equipped to support children and families throughout the CINC process, ensuring informed, impactful advocacy in their role as CASA representatives.

BREAKOUT

Poverty Simulation

Day 2: May 6th | *Attendance to all three sessions is required for participants*

Session 1 - 8:30AM | Session 2 - 9:45AM | Session 3 - 11:00AM | *General CEU*

The Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS) offers a powerful, interactive glimpse into the struggles of living in poverty. Participants will navigate a simulated month in the life of someone facing daily challenges like housing, transportation, healthcare, and unexpected crises, gaining deeper empathy and understanding of the complex, interconnected issues impoverished families face. This session is ideal for CASA volunteers and staff, providing insights into the realities of the children and families you serve. Walk away with a renewed perspective and tools to foster equity, support, and meaningful change in your community.

BREAKOUT

Accessing Developmental Disability Services for Youth in Foster Care

Day 2: May 6th | 8:30AM | Christy Johnson | *Clinical CEU*

Many children in foster care have developmental disabilities that require long-term support, yet navigating Louisiana's Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) services can be overwhelming for families and advocates. This session will provide an overview of OCDD and the services available to youth with developmental disabilities, including the New Opportunities Waiver (NOW), Children's Choice Waiver, and other essential supports. Attendees will gain insight into the application process, eligibility criteria, and the types of services families can receive while applying. The session will also focus on the role CASA can play in advocating for continued services after a child exits the foster care system, ensuring they do not lose critical support. Participants will leave with practical tools to help families navigate the system and advocate for long-term stability for children with developmental disabilities.

BREAKOUT

Don't Drain the Trainer: Improv Your Delivery Methods

Day 2: May 6th | 9:45AM | Travis Noote

Discover how to energize your training delivery and captivate your audience with dynamic techniques drawn from professional improvisation! Join Travis Noote of BoomerAng Comedy Theatre as he combines his expertise in improv with the activities from the National CASA pre-service training curriculum to showcase unique methods for engaging trainees. This session will empower you to adopt improvisational skills like active listening, adaptability, and creative problem-solving to foster a more interactive and impactful learning experience. Perfect for trainers and facilitators, this session provides practical tools to keep trainees motivated and engaged while preparing them to advocate for children who have experienced trauma. Don't just train—transform the way you connect, communicate, and inspire!

BREAKOUT

VIA LINK and PCAL: Resources to Know for Accessing Support

Day 2: May 6th | 9:45AM | Sherrard Crespo | *General CEU*

When you work or volunteer with children and families, access to support and resources is paramount, yet the navigating and knowing where to turn can be stressful. VIA LINK provides support to the state of Louisiana and strives to help the help-givers. This session will provide you information on supports that VIA LINK provides and how to access them. Services described will include: 988, 211, Teen Crisis Textline, LA Parentline, Prevent Child Abuse LA, resource database, free data dashboards, traumatic loss resources, educational trainings, and more!

BREAKOUT

Volunteers: The Heartbeat of an Organization

Day 2: May 6th | 11:00AM | Lori Steele & Wendy Lipsey | *General CEU*

CASA volunteers are the heartbeat of the mission to provide stability and a voice for children in foster care. In this session, experts from the Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency (LOPA) will share proven strategies for recruiting and retaining volunteers who are passionate about making a difference. Learn how to attract individuals aligned with CASA's mission, equip them to effectively advocate for children, and implement strategies to keep them motivated and engaged. Whether you're looking to grow your volunteer base or strengthen connections with current advocates, this session will provide tools and insights to cultivate a strong, dedicated team committed to supporting vulnerable children.

BREAKOUT

Supporting Early Development: A Roundtable with Dr. Northington

Day 2: May 6th | 11:00AM | Dr. Tresa Northington | *Clinical CEU*

Join Dr. Tresa Northington, Development Screening Coordinator with the Bureau of Family Health, for an interactive roundtable discussion on assessing developmental needs in young children. This session will provide a space for participants to ask questions about key interactions and observations that can help identify potential developmental concerns in children ages five and younger. Dr. Northington will also share valuable resources to help connect families with services that promote healthy development. Whether you are a CASA volunteer or staff, this discussion will enhance your ability to support children's early growth and well-being.

KEYNOTE

From the Trailer Park to C-Suite

Day 2: May 6th | 12:15PM | Dawn Cazedessus | *General CEU*

Be inspired by the remarkable journey of Dawn Cazedessus, a self-made businesswoman who rose from humble beginnings in a trailer park to achieving success in the corporate C-suite. In this motivational keynote address, Dawn shares her deeply personal story of perseverance, faith, and grit, demonstrating that success is attainable for anyone, regardless of where they start in life. Drawing from her own experiences, she introduces her Twelve Stones of Leadership—a powerful framework of principles to navigate challenges, build resilience, and foster integrity. This session will reignite your passion for providing hope and bridging gaps for children in foster care. Dawn's story is a testament to the transformative power of dedication, mentorship, and believing in possibilities, echoing the impact CASA volunteers can have on the lives of vulnerable children. Leave feeling energized and reminded that every effort you make as a volunteer can help a child overcome the odds and chart their path to success.

BREAKOUT

MCO's Role in Supporting Foster Care Youth into Adulthood

Day 2: May 6th | 1:45PM | Dr. Shantrell Charles & Marie Smith | *General CEU*

Youth in foster care continue to face challenges upon transitioning to independent living. This presentation will discuss how the Managed Care Organization is a resource for transitioning foster care youth through case management, beyond their primary role of providing health care and related benefits

BREAKOUT

Transforming Advocacy: New Child Wellbeing Assessment

Day 2: May 6th | 1:45PM | Stephanie Breeden | *General CEU*

Discover the power of the new Child Wellbeing Assessment in Optima! This session will provide CASA volunteers and supervisors with a comprehensive overview of this innovative tool, designed to improve advocacy and enhance the overall wellbeing of children in foster care. Attendees will learn how to effectively use the assessment to identify and address the specific needs of the children they serve, ensuring a more targeted and impactful approach to their advocacy efforts.

Through detailed explanations, practical demonstrations, and real-world examples, this session will equip participants with the knowledge and confidence to integrate the assessment into their work. Each attendee will also receive a set of guides that underscore the importance of wellbeing assessments and their potential to drive meaningful change in the lives of vulnerable children. Don't miss this opportunity to elevate your advocacy to the next level!

Schedule

LOUISIANA CASA CONFERENCE

DAY 1
MAY 5, 2025

9:00AM - 10:00AM | **Conference Sign-In**

10:00AM
-11:00AM
Ballroom

Judges' Perspectives: The Impact of CASA in the Courtroom

KEYNOTE | Judge Ellender, Judge Caillier-Harden, Judge Womble | General CEU

11:00AM - 11:15AM | **Networking & Refreshment Break**

11:15AM
-12:15PM
Ballroom

Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention

BREAKOUT SESSION | Meghan Goldbeck | General CEU

11:15AM
-12:15PM
Abel

Strategic Volunteer Engagement for CASA Programs

BREAKOUT SESSION | Lori Pilley | General CEU

12:15PM - 12:45PM | **Lunch Served**

12:45PM
-1:45PM
Ballroom

Hope for a Brighter Future

KEYNOTE | Andrew Bridge | General CEU

1:45PM - 2:00PM | **Networking & Refreshment Break**

2:00PM
-3:00PM
Ballroom

The Science of Hope: Protective Factor For Improving Wellbeing

BREAKOUT SESSION | Dr. Chan Hellman | General CEU

2:00PM
-3:00PM
Abel

Working with Immigrant Children in CINC Proceedings

BREAKOUT SESSION | Kristin Jones

3:00PM - 3:15PM | **Networking & Refreshment Break**

3:15PM
-4:15PM
Ballroom

Why Kids Run

BREAKOUT SESSION | Andrew Bridge | General CEU

3:15PM
-4:15PM
Abel

The Chronology and Purpose of CINC Hearings

BREAKOUT SESSION | Natasha Fossett

4:15PM - 6:00PM | **Free Time**

6:00PM
-9:00PM
Ballroom

Louisiana CASA Awards of Excellence

AWARDS PRESENTATION | Dinner, Live DJ, Cash Bar

Join us for a special celebration recognizing the incredible individuals who make CASA's mission possible. The Awards of Excellence honors the CASA volunteers, staff, judges, and community partners who go above and beyond to advocate for children in foster care. This inspiring evening will include a formal awards ceremony, a seated dinner, and an opportunity to connect with fellow advocates. All are welcome to join us in celebrating the dedication and impact of Louisiana's child advocacy champions!

Schedule

DAY 2
MAY 6, 2025

LOUISIANA CASA CONFERENCE

7:30AM - 8:30AM | **Conference Sign-In**

8:30AM
-9:30AM
Ballroom

Accessing Developmental Disability Services for Youth in Foster Care

BREAKOUT SESSION | Christy Johnson | Clinical CEU

8:30AM
-9:30AM
Abel

Poverty Simulation: Part 1

BREAKOUT SESSION | General CEU

9:30AM - 9:45AM | **Networking & Refreshment Break**

9:45AM
-10:45AM
Ballroom

Don't Drain the Trainer: Improv Your Delivery Methods

BREAKOUT SESSION | Travis Noote

9:45AM
-10:45AM
Shelton

VIA LINK and PCAL: Resources to Know for Accessing Support

BREAKOUT SESSION | Sherrard Crespo | General CEU

9:45AM
-10:45AM
Abel

Poverty Simulation: Part 2

BREAKOUT SESSION | General CEU

10:45AM - 11:00AM | **Networking & Refreshment Break**

11:00AM
-12:00PM
Ballroom

Volunteers: The Heartbeat of an Organization

BREAKOUT SESSION | Lori Steele & Wendy Lipsey | General CEU

11:00AM
-12:00PM
Shelton

Supporting Early Development: A Roundtable with Dr. Northington

BREAKOUT SESSION | Dr. Tresa Northington | Clinical CEU

11:00AM
-12:00PM
Abel

Poverty Simulation: Part 3

BREAKOUT SESSION | General CEU

12:00PM - 12:30PM | **Lunch Served**

12:45PM
-1:30PM
Ballroom

From the Trailer Park to C-Suite

KEYNOTE | Dawn Cazedessus | General CEU

1:30PM - 1:45PM | **Networking & Refreshment Break**

1:45PM
-2:45PM
Abel

MCO's Role in Supporting Foster Care Youth into Adulthood

BREAKOUT SESSION | Dr. Shantrell Charles & Marie Smith | General CEU

2:00PM
-3:00PM
Ballroom

Transforming Advocacy: New Child Wellbeing Assessment

BREAKOUT SESSION | Stephanie Breeden | General CEU

Exhibitors

LOUISIANA CASA CONFERENCE



ANDREW BRIDGE
NEW YORK TIMES BEST SELLING AUTHOR

Dawn Cazedessus
AUTHOR | COACH | CONSULTANT



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