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**ORGANIZATION’S NAME:** Voices for Children

**PROJECT NAME:** *Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program for Teen Girls and Young Women*

**ORGANIZATION’S WEBSITE:** [www.speakupnow.org](http://www.speakupnow.org)

**PROJECT BUDGET:** $702,452

**AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM RSFWF:** $35,000

**ORGANIZATION’S ANNUAL BUDGET**: $8,854,132 / **LOCAL CHAPTER:** $6,385,928

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:** VFC’s *CASA Program for Teen Girls and Young Women* addresses an urgent, ongoing, and critical need in the community by providing support to vulnerable girls and young women in foster care. Research indicates that 50–90% of child victims of sex trafficking were in foster care. The program matches girls in foster care ages 13–21 with *CASA* volunteers who advocate on their behalf in court, at school, and throughout the community. Through this project, *CASAs* ensure that young women have access to the services, the right school or educational setting, healthcare, and extracurricular activities they need to thrive. Moreover, *CASAs* develop trusting, non-judgmental relationships with girls and provide them with guidance, moral support, and a stable and reliable adult presence in their lives. Through personal visits and communication with caregivers, therapists, doctors, teachers, social workers, and others, *CASAs* gain a thorough understanding of each girl’s circumstances. Every six months, *CASAs* provide the Court with a comprehensive report about each girl’s health, education, and overall well-being. *CASAs* help young women avoid or recover from sex trafficking. VFC trains *CASAs* to identify warning signs of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and provides specialized resources to combat these issues. *CASAs* encourage involvement in extracurricular activities that mitigate isolation and help young women prepare resumés, explore career pathways, and apply for jobs as a path toward financial security and independence. *CASAs* ensure that young women have access to confidential medical care and resources for their reproductive and sexual health.

**NEED/SOLUTION:** Girls and young women face myriad challenges inherent with being placed in foster care, not the least of which is being targeted for sex trafficking due to their vulnerability. VFCmatches these girls with *CASA* volunteers who mitigate isolation and poor self-esteem, which make these girls especially vulnerable, and who nurture their physical and mental health, education, and overall well-being. *Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs)* play critical roles in ensuring girls and young women, ages 13–21, in foster care receive access to beneficial physical and mental health care while helping them to avoid or escape sex trafficking.

**IMPACT:** Approximately 113 volunteers will support VFC’s*CASA Program for Teen Girls and Young Women*, including 14 who will be funded by this grant.

**SITE VISIT DETAILS**

**RSFWF Site Visit Leader:** Marilyn Tedesco

**Date/Time:** Monday, February 26th at 10:00 AM