

Subject: JDRC- CASA/SCAN Budget Request

**FY 2018 Proposed Budget
Budget Work Session Follow-up**

4/17/2017

The following information is provided in response to a request made by Mr. Jay Fisette via email on 4/10/2017, regarding additional information on SCAN/CASA as an organization and its court advocacy proposal (an increase from \$16,250 in the proposed budget to \$45,000 requested).

Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN) of Northern Virginia is a child advocacy provider working to address the problem of child abuse and neglect in Arlington. The County Manager's Proposed FY 2018 budget included \$16,250 in new funding to support the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Program, which is operated by SCAN. The Juvenile Domestic Relations Court (JDRC) recommended this amount as it was commensurate with the funding level provided by the City of Alexandria which utilizes the service at a similar level.

The request for SCAN by the JDRC included funding to provide assistance toward overhead, training, and supervision of the CASA volunteers. CASA services have been used by the JDR Judges for many years. CASA workers are assigned when specifically ordered by a Judge to serve in a child abuse and neglect case by providing independent recommendations and advocacy to the court in support of the victim. Recently, JDR Judges have more frequently appointed CASA workers and they are now involved in a majority of the abuse and neglect cases before the Court. This has resulted in an increase in the County's use of CASA services. SCAN/CASA has requested that the proposed County contribution for FY 2018 be increased from the County Manager recommended \$16,250 to \$45,000.

Additional Background:

Children are referred to SCAN by the Juvenile Court judges who preside over cases of child abuse and neglect. When appointed to a case, the CASA volunteer accompanies the child and/or sibling groups through the difficult court process. He or she gathers information from family members, school staff, therapists, and others to make recommendations to the judge, regarding services and community resources to meet the child's needs. These volunteers are described as the "eyes and the ears" of the judge, and judges rely on their information to make decisions. The benefits to the involvement of CASA volunteers include; advocacy in court for the crime's victim, shorter stays the Foster Care system, and increased likelihood that a child will not return to Court or the Foster Care system. Between FY 2012 and FY 2015, the number of children served by CASA in Arlington ranged between 63 and 81 cases. In FY 2016, the number increased to 106 cases, and cases have remained around that level in the current fiscal year. It is currently the practice of both Arlington Juvenile Court Judges to appoint CASA workers to the majority of abuse and neglect cases before the court. Previous Judges did not use CASA services as frequently.