

Oregon CASA Network (OCN) supports all Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs across Oregon that advocate for the best interests of children who have experienced neglect and abuse and are in protective custody. Together, we work to advance quality volunteer advocacy to help ensure every child has safety, permanency, and an opportunity to thrive. This service requires intention and action. We commit to interrupting inequities in the child welfare system. We will hold ourselves accountable to ensure advocacy at every level is equitable and just.

Anti-oppression and trauma-informed work is an essential foundation when advocating for child victims of abuse and neglect. OCN knows social and institutional systems of oppression create trauma and inequities for children and families before, during, and after interacting with child welfare systems. This multi-generational harm is a product of American culture, history, and national, state, and local laws, policies, and practices that extend opportunity to some while withholding it from others. The inequitable allocation of resources more deeply impacts families experiencing addiction, mental health illness, disability, and poverty. In Oregon, children of color, specifically Black/African American and Native American children, and LGBTQIA2S+ youth enter foster care at disproportionately higher rates and experience more inequitable outcomes.

Injustices occur at nearly every major decision-making point along the child welfare continuum, meaning they transpire within the composition of our network as well. For instance, there is inherent privilege in being able to volunteer one's time. Addressing these barriers requires institutional, organizational, and individual-level changes. OCN commits to developing capacity within the OCN Board and staff to identify and interrupt oppression, collectively examine and improve our practices, policies, and cultures through an equity lens, while providing support for local programs to do the same. OCN strives to collaborate with local programs in developing and nurturing advocates, board members, and staff who have shared life experiences with the children we serve. This includes people who have experienced abuse, neglect, foster care, and oppression related to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and beyond. Additionally, OCN will engage with Oregon Department of Human Services, the courts, funders, donors, legislators, and other partners to interrupt the structures of oppression that create disproportionality and disparity within the child welfare and related systems. OCN will collaborate with partners serving children and families who will help us grow in our equity commitments and together build more dignity, belonging, and justice.

*Board Approved 4/28/2025*