

# APPLICATION FOR CITY OF Lake Elsinore

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Organization Web Address: [www.speakupnow.org](http://www.speakupnow.org)

Does your Organization expend \$750,000 or more a year in federal funds? Y ☒ or N ☐

Number of paid staff: 17

Number of volunteers: 346

Members/Board of Directors (*Attach*): See attached.

### III. PROJECT ACTIVITY

A. Name of Project: Riverside County Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Progr

B. Specific Location of Project

*(Attach Project Map - include street address; if a street address has not been assigned provide APN)*

Street or APN: Countywide, including the City of Lake Elsinore

City: Lake Elsinore

Zip Code: Countywide

C. CDBG Funds Requested: \$10,000 *(total amount for the project only)*

D. Where will the proposed activity occur (be specific as to the geographic boundaries)? If the project involves a new or existing facility, what is the proposed service/benefit area for the facility?

Voices for Children (VFC) created the Riverside County (CASA) program to serve children in foster care throughout Riverside County. We operate offices in, Riverside, Temecula, and Palm Desert, but our CASA volunteers and professional staff travel countywide to visit children, attend meetings, and advocate in court.

E. In which City (ies)/Communities does the activity occur?

City (ies): A grant from the City of Lake Elsinore CDBG program would specifically serve children from the City of Lake Elsinore.

Community (ies): A grant from the City of Lake Elsinore CDBG program would specifically serve children from the City of Lake Elsinore.

*NOTE: HWS will make the final determination of the appropriate service area of all proposals.*

F. If this project benefits residents of more than one community or jurisdiction, have requests been submitted to those other entitlement jurisdictions? (i.e., County district(s) 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and/or 5<sup>th</sup>, City of Palm Springs, City of Moreno Valley, City of Riverside, etc.)

Yes, VFC plans to submit CDBG applications to the County of Riverside and the cities of Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Corona, Hemet, Riverside, Perris, San Jacinto, and Temecula, all of which have previously funded our program. We also plan to submit a CDBG application to the City of Beaumont. Additionally, we have submitted CID applications to each of the five County of Riverside Districts.

G. Check **ONLY** the applicable category your application represents.

- ☒ Public Service
- ☐ Homeless Activities
- ☐ Real Property Acquisition (Must consult with HWS prior to submitting application)
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Rehabilitation/Preservation (please provide picture of structure) Public
- ☐ Facilities (construction)
- ☐ Infrastructure (i.e. Streets, Sewer, Sidewalk, etc.)
- ☐ Other: (provide description) \_\_\_\_\_

H. Respond to A & B **only** if this application is for a public service project.

(a) Is this a NEW service provided by your agency? Yes ☐ No ☒

(b) If service is not new, will the existing public service activity level be substantially increased or improved?

A City of Lake Elsinore CDBG grant will help VFC expand our CASA program in Riverside County (specifically in Lake Elsinore) to serve more children in foster care who are in need of advocacy.

#### IV. PROJECT NARRATIVE

A. Provide a detailed Project Description. The description should only address or discuss the specific activities, services, or project that is to be assisted with CDBG funds. If CDBG funds will assist the entire program or activity, then provide a description of the entire program or activity:

The mission of Voices for Children (VFC) is to transform the lives of abused, abandoned, or neglected children by providing them with trained volunteers called Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs). This year, approximately 5,000 children will spend time in the Riverside County foster care system. Each child has experienced one or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), including abuse or neglect. Multiple ACEs are associated with negative outcomes throughout one's life. Once in foster care, children face new stressors: being separated from their families, living with strangers, and frequently lacking consistent and caring adult figures in their lives. Research suggests that social support and equitable access to essential services will strengthen children and families that have had experience with the child welfare system. CASAs provide comprehensive advocacy for children in foster care, from birth to 21 years old. They connect these children with educational, physical and mental health, housing, and other resources in the community. CASAs commit to serving for at least 12 months and spend 10-plus hours a month on their cases. For children in foster care, a CASA is often the most consistent and caring adult presence in their life. A stable relationship with a consistent caring adult can serve as a protective factor against negative outcomes and provide critical support. According to a review of the literature by the National CASA Association, children with CASAs are healthier, do better in school, and avoid many of the at-risk behaviors that lead to justice system involvement and substance abuse. Every CASA is supervised by a VFC Advocacy Supervisor who provides them with ongoing training, supervision, and support. VFC CASAs provided services to 56 Lake Elsinore children in foster care during the last fiscal year and aim to continue serving more children year over year. A grant of \$10,000 will enable VFC to provide CASAs to advocate on behalf of five previously unserved children from the City of Lake Elsinore

- B. Provide a detailed description of the proposed use of the CDBG funds only (e.g. client scholarships, purchase of specific equipment, rent, supplies, utilities, salaries, etc.):

A \$10,000 grant from the City of Lake Elsinore will support the growth of the Riverside County CASA program by funding a portion of the salaries and benefits for two of VFC's staff Advocacy Supervisors. Advocacy Supervisors provide direct support and supervision to 40-45 CASA volunteers each. They accompany CASAs and their case children to court and child welfare meetings. They help CASAs to identify community services and resources that will benefit a specific child. They also staff an emergency cell phone line that CASAs can access 24 hours a day/365 days a year when they encounter case emergencies. VFC is also requesting support for indirect expenses at a 10% de minimis rate, which will be used to fund administrative staff salaries. These CASA will work directly with children who live in the City of Lake Elsinore.

- C. What are the goals and objectives of the project, service, or activity? How will you measure and evaluate the success of the project to meet these goals and objectives (measures should be qualitative)?

During FY 2025-26, VFC will accomplish the following:

Objective 1: VFC will provide CASAs to 625 children in Riverside County foster care, including five Lake Elsinore children whose services will be funded by the Lake Elsinore CDBG program.

Activities: CASAs will meet with children at least once a month and submit written reports to Juvenile Court judges detailing information about a child's education, physical and mental health, housing, and unmet needs.

Measurement: We will consider this objective to be accomplished if five children in foster care from Lake Elsinore are provided with CASAs who submit semi-annual court reports on their behalf.

Objective 2: Recruit and train 100 new CASA volunteers.

Activities: We will hold volunteer information sessions and present to local community groups to spread awareness about the need for additional CASA volunteers. We will hold 10 sessions of Advocate University, our internal CASA training program.

Measurement: We will consider this objective to be accomplished if 100 new community members complete training and are matched to the case of a child or sibling group in foster care.

- D. Please identify the project milestones using an Estimated Timeline for Project Implementation:

VFC's program activities take place on an ongoing basis throughout the fiscal year. In order to monitor our progress on grant objectives, we will use the following benchmarks.

Quarter 1: By the end of Q1, we will provide 156 children in foster care with CASAs, including two children from Lake Elsinore. We will enroll 25 community members in Advocate University, and 25 CASAs will complete training and be matched with children.

Quarter 2: By the end of Q2, we will provide 312 children with CASAs, including one more child from Lake Elsinore (for a running total of three children served). We will enroll 25 community members in Advocate University, and 25 CASAs will complete training and be matched (for a running total of 50 new CASAs).

Quarter 3: By the end of Q3, we will provide 469 children with CASAs, including one more child from Lake Elsinore (for a total of four children served). We will enroll 25 community members in Advocate University, and 25 CASAs will complete training and be matched with children (for a running total of 75 new CASAs).

Quarter 4: By the end of Q4, we will provide 625 children with CASAs, including one more child from Lake Elsinore (for a total of five children served). We will enroll 25 community members in Advocate University, and 25 CASAs will complete training and be matched with a child (for a total of 100 new CASAs).

V. PROJECT BENEFIT

- A. Indicate the number of people or households that will directly benefit from your proposal using CDBG funds: *Note: This is based on the expected number of clients to be served if the County funds your project for the requested amount.*

During FY 2025-26, City of Lake Elsinore CDBG funding will fund CASA services for five children. The CASA program's impact on these children could endure for generations, enhancing the community and mitigating ACEs. Children with CASAs often exit foster care sooner than those without CASAs. They are also less likely to reenter foster care, require public assistance, or become incarcerated later in life.

- B. Indicate the number of unduplicated clients that will be served (*An unduplicated client is counted only once, no matter how many direct services the client receives during a funding year*):

VFC will provide CASA services to a total of 625 unduplicated clients during FY 25-26. We expect that we will provide CASAs to at least 25 children from Lake Elsinore. Services for five of these clients will be directly funded through a grant from the City of Lake Elsinore CDBG program.

- C. Length of proposed CDBG-funded activities or service (weeks, months, year):

The proposed CDBG-funded services will fund one year of CASA advocacy for each of the five grant-funded children. CASAs spend time with children on a monthly basis, at a minimum. On average, CASAs spend 10-plus hours a month visiting their case child, attending child welfare meetings and court hearings, and communicating with everyone in a child's support network, including biological parents, caregivers, educators, physical and mental healthcare providers, and child welfare professionals. Every six months CASAs accompany their case children to court and provide moral support during what can be a very scary experience for a child. Before each hearing, CASAs submit objective, written reports detailing each child's progress and status. Judges rely on these comprehensive reports to make informed decisions about a child's education, mental and physical health, housing, and overall well-being.

- D. Service will be provided to (check one or more):

☐ Men

☐ Seniors

☐ Women

☐ Severely Disabled Adults

☒ Children (Range of children's ages : birth - 21)

☐ Migrant Farm Workers

☐ Homeless (Number of beds at facility :           )

☐ Families

- E. What methods will be used for community involvement to assure that all who might benefit from the project are provided an opportunity to participate?

Children are referred to the VFC program by social workers, attorneys, and judges. Some older youth even refer themselves. VFC's program team meets regularly with Juvenile Court judges, attorneys, and the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) to share information with them about the CASA program so they can continue to refer children in need of advocacy to our program.

- F. What evidence is there of a long-term commitment to the proposal? Describe how you plan to continue the work (project) after the CDBG funds are expended?

VFC's Riverside County CASA program has grown consistently each year since its inception in 2015. To achieve this, we have developed an annual fundraising plan to secure additional funding and resources. We rely on a diverse revenue stream, with our program budget consisting of revenue primarily generated through individual philanthropy (27%), foundation and corporate support (16%), government grants (25%), and special events (30%). We seek support through grant requests, major gift solicitations, direct mail campaigns, and fundraising events. Our professional fundraising team seeks out new relationships and strengthens existing ones. For example, we established a new partnership with PositiviTEE and received increased funding from the Houston Family Foundation. These efforts will help us ensure the long-term sustainability of our programs even if funding in one category is lower than expected, allowing us to have a greater impact that goes beyond funding from any single source. VFC has served children in foster care from the City of Lake Elsinore since our Riverside County program's inception in 2015, and we are confident that we can continue to do so after CDBG funds are expended through our strategic fundraising plan.

**VI. National Objective**

**All CDBG-funded activities must meet at least one of the following National Objectives of the CDBG program. Indicate the category of National Objective to be met by your activity.**

**CATEGORY A: Benefit to low-moderate income persons (must be documented).** Please choose either subcategory 1 or 2:

**1. Limited Clientele:**

The project serves clientele that will provide documentation of their family size, income, and ethnicity. Identify the procedure you currently have in place to document that at least 51% of the clientele you serve are low-moderate income persons.

N/A

2. Clientele presumed to be principally low- and moderate-income persons:

The following groups are presumed by HUD to meet this criterion. You will be required to submit a certification from the client (s) that they fall into one of the following presumed categories.

The activity will benefit (check one or more)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Abused children | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless persons         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Battered spouses           | <input type="checkbox"/> Illiterate adults        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elderly persons            | <input type="checkbox"/> Persons living with AIDS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Severely disabled adults   | <input type="checkbox"/> Migrant Farm workers     |

a. Describe the clientele above to be served by this activity:

The Riverside County CASA program exclusively serves children who have experienced abuse and neglect. VFC receives documentation of each child's status as an abused and/or neglected child from the Juvenile Court.

b. Discuss how this project directly benefits low- and moderate- income residents:

All children served through the Riverside County CASA program are presumed to be low- and moderate-income (LMI) persons according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition because they have experienced abuse. Our program directly benefits these children by increasing their access to supportive services through their CASAs.

**CATEGORY B: Area Benefit - The project or facility serves, or is available to, ALL persons located within an area where at least 51% of the residents are low/moderate-income. (Applicant is welcome to contact a County of Riverside, HWS CDBG Program Manager for Census Information)**

2020 Census Tract and Block Group numbers:

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Total population in Census Tract(s) / block group(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Total percentage of low-moderate population in Census Tract(s) / block group(s): \_\_\_\_\_



**CATEGORY C:** Activities undertaken to create or retain permanent jobs, at least 51% of which will be made available to or held by low/moderate-income persons.

**Proposed Job Creation/Retention**

Total Jobs Expected to Create: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Jobs Expected to Retain: \_\_\_\_\_

**CATEGORY D:** Activities that provide assistance to micro-enterprise owners/developers who are low/moderate-income.

**Proposed Assistance to Businesses**

New Businesses expected to assist: \_\_\_\_\_

Existing Businesses expected to assist: \_\_\_\_\_

Enter Total Businesses expected to assist: \_\_\_\_\_

**VII. FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

**A. Proposed Project Budget**

Complete the following annual program budget to begin July 1, 2025. If your proposed CDBG-funded activity will start on a date other than July 1, 2025, please indicate starting date. Provide total Budget information and distribution of CDBG funds in the proposed budget.

The budgeted items are for the specific activity for which you are requesting CDBG funding - **NOT** for the budget of the "entire" organization or agency. (Note: CDBG funds requested must match amount requested in Project Activity, C above.)

(EXAMPLE: The Valley Senior Center is requesting funding for a new Senior Nutritional Program. The total cost of the program is \$15,000 and \$10,000 in CDBG funds is being requested for operating expenses associated with the proposed activity. The total Activity/Project Budget will include \$5,000 of other non-CDBG funding and \$10,000 in CDBG funds for a Grand Total of \$15,000).

	<b>TOTAL ACTIVITY/ PROJECT BUDGET</b> <b><u>(Include non-CDBG Funds and CDBG Funds)</u></b>	<b>CDBG FUNDS REQUESTED-Only</b>
<b>I. Personnel</b>		
A. Salaries & Wages	\$ 1,280,400 _____	\$ 8,220 _____
B. Fringe Benefits	\$ 143,350 _____	\$ 780 _____
C. Consultants & Contract Services	\$ _____	\$ _____
<b>PERSONNEL SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,423,750 _____</b>	<b>\$ 9,000 _____</b>



II. Non-Personnel

A. Space Costs	\$ 99,600	\$
B. Rental, Lease or Purchase of Equipment	\$	\$
C. Consumable Supplies	\$ 17,050	\$
D. Travel	\$	\$
E. Telephone	\$ 12,600	\$
F. Utilities	\$	\$
G. Other Costs	\$ 235,900	\$
<b>NON-PERSONNEL SUB-TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 365,150</b>	<b>\$</b>

III. Other

A. Architectural/Engineering Design	\$	\$
B. Acquisition of Real Property	\$	\$
C. Construction/Rehabilitation	\$	\$
D. Indirect Costs	\$ 225,400	\$ 1,000
E. Other	\$	\$
<b>OTHER SUB-TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 225,400</b>	<b>\$ 1,000</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 2,014,300</b>	<b>\$ 10,000</b>

B. Leveraging

List other funding sources and amounts (commitments or applications) which will assist in the implementation of this activity. Current and pending evidence of leveraging commitments/applications must be submitted with application. (Attach)

Federal: At this point in time, we have no direct Federal funding.

State/Local: VFC plans to raise approximately \$1,500,000 in state and local grants through the California CASA Association, the Riverside County Transportation Commission, and the County Board of Supervisors, the Desert Healthcare Foundation, and other local grant programs.

Private: VFC plans to raise approximately \$465,000 in private contributions, including foundation and corporate support and individual giving.

Fees: VFC charges no fees for our services.

Donations:

Other:

- C. What type of long-term financial commitment is there to the proposal? Describe how you plan to continue the work (project) after the CDBG funds are expended?

VFC has successfully served Riverside County since 2015, and San Diego County since 1980. We are confident that we will deliver on our mission of transforming the lives of Riverside County children in foster care for years to come. We receive consistent and generous support from our foundation, corporate, and individual partners. We are also strengthened by our 44 years of organizational experience; strong partnerships with the Riverside County court system, DPSS, and other local community organizations; and dedicated staff and volunteers.

- D. Provide a summary by line item of your organization's previous year's income and expense statement. (Attach)

Please see attached.

- E. Does this project benefit residents of more than one community or jurisdiction, have requests been submitted to those other jurisdictions? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify sources and indicate outcome.

For FY 25-26, VFC plans to submit applications to the County of Riverside CDBG program and the CDBG programs of the cities of Moreno Valley, Corona, Perris, Hemet, Riverside, Temecula, San Jacinto, Banning, and Beaumont. We are just beginning to prepare these applications. We also plan to apply for CID funds from the County of Riverside Districts 1-5.

If no, please explain.

- F. Was this project or activity previously funded with CDBG? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, when?

Is this activity a continuation of a previously funded (CDBG) project? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, explain:

VFC is requesting \$10,000 in CDBG funding from the City of Lake Elsinore to provide CASA advocacy to five additional unduplicated children in foster care in Lake Elsinore.

#### **VIII. MANAGEMENT CAPACITY**

- A. Describe your organization's experience in managing and operating project or activities funded with CDBG or other Federal funds.

VFC has extensive experience managing and operating CDBG projects and other projects funded with federal pass-through dollars. VFC is currently implementing a \$100,000 County of Riverside CDBG grant, CDBG grants from eight cities, and grants through the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (.). VFC has successfully implemented more than 35 CDBG grants and multiple local, state, and federal grants over the past nine years. Since we receive more than \$750,000 in government funding annually, VFC completes a single audit each year.

B. Management Systems

Does your organization have written and adopted management systems (i.e., policies and procedures) including personnel, procurement, property management, record keeping, financial management, etc.?

VFC is subject to an annual financial statement audit by an independent CPA firm. During the audit process, they review our policies concerning personnel, procurement, property management, record keeping, financial management, and volunteer services and training. Our Board of Directors (27 members) has governance responsibilities to ensure that all policies and procedures are adhered to.

C. Capacity

Please provide the names and qualifications of the person(s) that will be primarily responsible for the implementation and completion of the proposed project.

VFC's Riverside County Managing Director, Sharon Morris, will be responsible for the implementation and completion of the proposed project. Sharon began employment at VFC in 2015. She currently directs the CASA program for all of Riverside County, including CASA recruitment, training, and advocacy support. Sharon was previously the Director of Programs for the Riverside County CASA program and oversaw its year-over-year programmatic growth for the past nine years. She has also managed each of our previous CDBG projects. An outstanding leader and wonderful ambassador for VFC, Sharon is well respected by our judges and colleagues in child welfare. Sharon first joined VFC as a CASA volunteer in 2010 while working at Sony Online Entertainment, LLC as Director of Customer Service. Sharon earned her Applied Associates of Paralegal Studies from Kaplan University and her Bachelor of Arts in history from Brunel University in London.

**IX. APPLICATION CERTIFICATION**

Undersigned hereby certifies that (check box after reading each statement and digitally sign the document):

1. The information contained in the project application is complete and accurate. ✓
2. The applicant agrees to comply with all Federal and County policies and requirements imposed upon the project or activity funded by the CDBG program. ✓
3. The applicant acknowledges that the Federal assistance made available through the CDBG program funding will not be used to substantially reduce prior levels of local, (NON-CDBG) financial support for community development activities. ✓
4. The applicant fully understands that any facility built or equipment purchased with CDBG funds shall be maintained and/or operated for the approved use throughout its economic life, pursuant to CDBG regulation. ✓
5. If CDBG funds are approved, the applicant acknowledges that sufficient non-CDBG funds are available or will be available to complete the project as described within a reasonable timeframe. ✓
6. On behalf of the applying organization, I have obtained authorization to submit this application for CDBG funding. **(DOCUMENTATION ATTACHED Minute Action and/or written Board Approval signed by the Board President)** ✓

DATE: 5/10/24

Signature: 

Print Name/Title  
Authorized Representative: Jessica Minor  
President & CEO