

# #173

**COMPLETE**

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Page 1

**Q1** Name of your organization.

Voices for Children

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**Q2** Grant #

20160674

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**Q3** Grant Period

November 1, 2016 to October 31, 2017

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**Q4** Location of your organization

City	<b>Riverside County</b>
State	<b>California</b>

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**Q5** Name and Title of person completing evaluation.

Rebecca Rader, Senior Vice President of Philanthropy

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**Q6** Phone Number:

(858) 598-2211

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**Q7** Email address.

RebeccaRa@speakupnow.org

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Page 2: Key Outcomes and Results

**Q8** Total number of clients served through this grant funding:

25

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**Q9** Describe the project's key outcomes and results based on the goals and objectives. Use the following format: State the Goal: State Objective 1: Describe the Activities, Results and Outcomes for Objective 1: State Objective 2 (if applicable): Describe the Activities, Results and Outcomes for Objective 2: State Objective 3 (if applicable): Describe the Activities, Results and Outcomes for Objective 3:

Voices for Children's (VFC's) goal for the Riverside County Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program was to provide individualized advocacy for 300 Riverside County foster children during the grant period—double the number of children served during the previous year. We are so pleased to report that during this grant cycle, VFC provided 295 abused and neglected children in Riverside County with individualized advocacy that only a CASA can offer. With the generous support of the S. L. Gimbel Foundation, our service rate soared to new heights and we are now helping to make life better for hundreds of boys and girls living in foster care. Every day, we see the powerful impact that CASAs make and studies show that this model of advocacy improves foster children's lives: with a CASA by their side as they navigate the chaotic, overburdened system, these children receive more services, spend less time in foster care, and find safe, permanent homes sooner. During this grant cycle, 53 child cases were successfully closed: 26 children with CASAs were reunified with their parents after appropriate services, 16 were placed with permanent guardians, and 11 were adopted into loving "forever families". Zero children who had CASAs suffered re-abuse and thus re-entry in to the system, an outcome which is sadly more common among children who do not have access to CASAs. For the children whose cases are still open, VFC's professional staff and expertly trained CASAs continue to provide comprehensive advocacy in court, the classroom, and the community.

These accomplishments were achieved through the following objectives:

1. VFC successfully recruited, trained, and graduated 138 new CASA volunteers in Riverside County during the grant period. Each new CASA completed 35+ hours of training in Advocate University, VFC's comprehensive CASA training program, and was sworn in by a judge as an official Officer of the Court.
  2. VFC carefully matched newly trained CASA volunteers with 188 Riverside County foster children. Advocacy services continued for an additional 107 children, for a total of 295 children served during the grant period. Because CASAs are matched with a single child or sibling group, they are able to provide a level of service that the foster care system alone simply cannot offer. They meet with all the relevant stakeholders such as social workers, biological and foster families, teachers, and doctors, become experts on their foster child's case, and write formal court reports that include knowledgeable recommendations to dependency judges. CASA court reports are so thorough that judges rely on them to help inform the decisions they make affecting each child's medical care, education, and permanent home placement. Ultimately, CASAs represent the best interests of each foster child while being a consistent source of support for them during their time in dependency.
  3. VFC's staff supervises the provision of advocacy services for the duration of each CASA's volunteer service, a minimum commitment of 18 months. Every CASA is matched with a professional VFC Advocacy Supervisor, who supports and guides them in every aspect of their advocacy duties. Together, VFC's staff and CASAs worked to improve the quality of life for 295 Riverside County foster children in crisis, helping to clear a path out of the complex, overburdened child welfare system and into safe, permanent homes.
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**Q10** Please describe any challenges/obstacles the organization encountered (if any) in attaining goals & objectives.

At Voices for Children, our constant challenge is to raise enough funding to recruit, train, and supervise the number of CASA volunteers necessary to serve the extraordinary number children in foster care. As the only organization authorized by the court to provide CASAs to Riverside County and San Diego County foster children, it is our responsibility to inform the citizens in our community of the plight of foster children and the need for CASA volunteers. VFC's recruitment and staff expenses comprise the largest portion of our operating budget, not only because we serve a huge geographic region (11,400 square miles between San Diego and Riverside counties), but because CASAs must have a professional staff member to help oversee their case and to continually guide and support their complex and legally sensitive work. It is vital that we reach as many potential volunteers as possible, since for each volunteer recruited and trained by VFC, a vulnerable child will have a brighter future. Sadly, our community is facing a child abuse crisis, with an estimated 4,800 children spending time in Riverside County foster care this year. If our Riverside CASA program is to continue in our current growth trajectory, then we will need the support of all who passionately believe in our mission. The generosity of the S. L. Gimbel Foundation has allowed us to serve nearly 300 abused and neglected children over the past year, and we are grateful.

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**Q11** How did you overcome and/or address the challenges and obstacles?

VFC's fundraising team follows a detailed, strategic plan of research, cultivation, solicitation, and donor stewardship to seek a balanced mix of funding for our Riverside County CASA program. In order to continue to expand this vital program, VFC has recently added a new Development Director based in Riverside County. The Development Director will collaborate with VFC's senior management team and Board of Directors to create a detailed development plan to identify and pursue new and diverse funding sources in Riverside County.

To recruit more volunteers and therefore serve more children, VFC employs targeted, cost-effective marketing campaigns designed to reach as many potential volunteers as possible, including radio and online advertising, email, and direct mail campaigns. In addition, our Riverside County Program Director and Recruitment and Training Coordinator conduct outreach presentations to various community groups. During the grant period, 22 presentations were given throughout Riverside County. These efforts help us to recruit a wide variety of volunteers who represent the diversity of the children we serve.

With the support of individuals, groups, and organizations who share our concern and compassion for abused, neglected, and abandoned children, we can continue to expand our Riverside CASA program and make life better for more vulnerable boys and girls.

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**Q12** Describe any unintended positive outcomes as a result of the efforts supported by this grant.

A CASA's intervention into a child's life can literally save tens of thousands of public dollars when one considers the devastating statistics for former foster children who end up homeless or incarcerated as young adults. CASAs advocate for the rights and well-being of foster children in the courtroom, the classroom, and the community. They research and gather information on the foster children to whom they have been assigned and every six months present reports to the Court, helping judges make the best decisions for each individual child, e.g., special services, therapies, educational assistance, and extracurricular activities, and 85% of CASA recommendations are accepted by the Court. CASAs change the trajectory of a foster child's life because they are a source of caring focus, consistency, and stability.

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**Q13** Briefly describe the impact this grant has had on the organization and community served.

As a direct result of this grant, 25 foster children in crisis were provided with a CASA of their own to stand up for their best interests in Court, the classroom, and the community. The fact that they have a CASA by their side as they navigate the chaotic foster care system will positively impact these children for the rest of their lives. The grant made by The S.L. Gimbel Foundation has allowed VFC to serve a record number of children since the Riverside CASA program's inception and we could not have achieved this without your incredible support.

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Page 3: Budget

**Q14** Please provide a budget expenditure report of the approved line items. Include a brief narrative on how the funds were used to fulfill grant objectives.

Funds were primarily used to support the salary of VFC's Recruitment and Training Coordinator in Riverside County, as well as a portion of the salaries of two of our Riverside County Advocacy Supervisors.

The Recruitment and Training Coordinator organized, managed, and facilitated 40 CASA Information Sessions and eight sessions of Advocate University during the grant period, resulting in 138 new CASAs who were matched with 188 foster children in desperate need of advocacy.

VFC's Advocacy Supervisors are an integral part of the CASA program. As highly educated experts on the foster care system, they assist CASAs in every aspect of their advocacy duties, from connecting children with the supports and services they need to helping CASAs cope with the extreme trauma that is often involved in these cases. Each VFC Advocacy Supervisor oversees approximately 45 CASA volunteers.

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Page 4: Success Stories

**Q15** Please relate a success story:

When CASA Carrie met 7-year old Sierra, she could not have guessed that the quiet, sad little girl in front of her actually had a bubbly, outgoing personality and an infectious smile. Sierra and her sister Tamra, 10, had just entered Riverside County foster care due to neglect stemming from their parents' drug addictions. Adding to the devastating loss of their home, their parents, and everything familiar to them, the girls were placed in separate foster homes. Alone and frightened, they had no idea when they would see each other again. Thankfully, CASA Carrie was immediately assigned by VFC to advocate for both sisters.

Carrie thoroughly studied Tamra and Sierra's case files and met with all of the relevant stakeholders in the girls' lives. She discovered that they were very behind in school and with medical and dental appointments. Carrie jumped into the case immediately and worked with Tamra and Sierra's social workers and caregivers to obtain medical records, arrange for doctor's appointments, and find tutoring for both girls. While the girls were waitlisted for tutors, Carrie began taking them on weekly visits to the library to do homework and to spend time together.

Tamra and Sierra are now receiving tutoring and are nearly caught up to their peers in school. While they miss being together all the time, they treasure their weekly visits. Every few months, Carrie writes Court Reports for the judge on the case detailing how the girls are doing, and attends court hearings to ensure that progress is being made to find them a permanent home—together. Tamra and Sierra are smiling again, and no longer feel all alone. Thanks to CASA Carrie, they still have each other and they are on a path toward happier childhoods and more stable lives.

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**Q16** Please relate a success story here:

Respondent skipped this question

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**Q17** Please relate a success story here:

Respondent skipped this question

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Page 5: Organizational Information

# S.L. Gimbel Foundation Fund

**Q18** Which category best describes the organization.  
Please choose only one.

Other (please  
specify):  
Advocacy for abused and neglected  
children

**Q19** What is the organization's primary program area of  
interest?

**Health & Human  
Services**

**Q20** Percentage of clients served through grant in each  
ethnic group category. Total must equal 100%

African American	<b>28</b>
Asian/Pacific Islander	<b>1</b>
Caucasian	<b>26</b>
Native American	<b>1</b>
Hispanic Latino	<b>38</b>
All Ethnicities	<b>0</b>
Other	<b>6</b>
Unknown	<b>0</b>

**Q21** Approximate percentage of clients served from  
grant funds in each age category.

Children Birth-05 years of age	<b>4</b>
Children ages 06-12 years of age	<b>22</b>
Youth ages 13-18	<b>60</b>
Young Adults (18-24)	<b>14</b>
Adults	<b>0</b>
Senior Citizens	<b>0</b>

**Q22** Approximate percentage of clients served with  
disabilities from grant funds.

Mentally/Emotionally Disabled	<b>5</b>
Learning Disabled	<b>5</b>

**Q23** Approximate percentage of clients served in each  
economic group.

At/Below Poverty Level	<b>100</b>
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**Q24** Approximate percentage of clients served from  
grant funds in each population category.

Abused Women/Children	<b>100</b>
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