



# KASSERIAN INGERA?

**"HOW ARE THE CHILDREN?"**

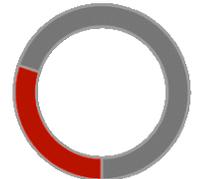
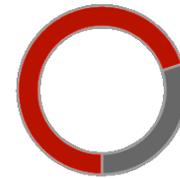
Among the most accomplished and fabled tribes of Africa, no tribe is considered to have warriors more fearsome or more intelligent than the mighty Masai. It is perhaps surprising, then, to learn the traditional greeting that passes between Masai warriors. "Kasserian Ingera," one always says to another. It means, "How are the children?"

This traditional greeting among the Masai acknowledges the high value that the Masai always place on their children's well-being. Even warriors with no children of their own always give the traditional answer: "All the children are well," meaning, of course, that peace and safety prevail, that the priorities of protecting the young, the powerless, are in place, that Masai society has not forgotten its reason for being, its proper functions and responsibilities. "All the children are well" means that life is good. It means that the daily struggles of existence do not preclude proper caring for the young.

We at Voices for Children/CASA of St. Louis and our volunteer advocates work on behalf of foster children in St. Louis to ensure their needs are met and help them find a safe, permanent home. Providing voices for the voiceless, we pay special attention to the hardships that African-American children and youth continually face, 365 days a year.

With the help of a Court Appointed Special Advocate, or CASA volunteer, these children and youth are more likely to be adopted, half as likely to re-enter foster care, substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care, more likely to have a plan for permanency, and are more likely to have a consistent, responsible adult to speak up for their best interests and help ensure their needs are not only met, but understood.

## AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



**42%** of African American children in foster care in Missouri are in St. Louis.

**70%** of children in foster care in St. Louis are African American

**only 30%** of the St. Louis population is African American  
(Source: US Census)

# 950

**THE NUMBER OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN ST. LOUIS CURRENTLY IN NEED OF A CASA VOLUNTEER**

### FOSTER CARE ENTRY FACTORS

African American children served by Voices for Children/ CASA of St. Louis entering foster care in FY18

- 21%** parental substance use
- 21%** physical abuse
- 6%** abandonment
- 5%** sexual abuse

### AGE BREAKDOWN

African American children served by Voices for Children/ CASA of St. Louis in FY18

- 31%** are <5
- 39%** are 5-13
- 30%** are 14+

# CASA

## COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE SERVICE DESCRIPTION

### POSITION SUMMARY:

The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer serves by court order as an officer of the court. The CASA volunteer serves as an advocate for the child's best interests, provides an independent voice for the child, and monitors the case until permanency is achieved.

Upon successful completion of an in-person interview, written application, background and reference checks and 30-hour training, the new advocate will be sworn in by a judge to begin his/her advocacy service.

### MINIMUM VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

- Be willing and able to dedicate 10-15 hours per month to the child and their case
- Be willing to commit to the child's case until permanency is achieved
- Be able to attend court hearings and meetings scheduled during the day.
- Age 21 or older
- Be able to keep information confidential
- Be able to write clearly and concisely
- Have regular access to the Internet and email; have access to a computer; be moderately computer literate
- Be able to work within established guidelines
- Be objective, flexible and accountable

## THE PLIGHT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



"African American children experience disparate treatment once involved with the system. These children frequently have **longer stays in out-of-home care, experience more placements and have significantly different discharge patterns** than their white peers, regardless of age or gender"

"African American children are **less likely to return home to their families, be adopted or find legal guardianship than their white counterparts and are more likely to age out of foster care**"

"Aging out of foster care is associated with negative consequences, and more than half of youth who age out of foster care are youth of color"



"Youth who do not achieve permanency through reunification, adoption or guardianship have, on average, **more and earlier pregnancies, lower educational attainment, increased involvement with the justice system and poor employment outcomes**"

In one study, "approximately **20%** of youth who age out of foster care do not have a high school degree or equivalent by **age 26**. **72%** of youth women and **53%** of youth men report having children by **age 26**"



"Many [youth who age out of foster care] struggle to find or keep full-time work. **More than half** of young women and **more than 80%** of youth men experience an arrest between the time they age out of foster care and **follow-up at age 26**"

African American children, on average, spend **6 months longer** in foster care prior to achieving permanency **compared to their white counterparts.**

