

## *Abused children can't wait*

Experienced advocate Glorias Dixon has been working with a teenage girl through 12 placements in three years, but her dedication to the volunteer role and the children she serves is still fresh and new.

### **Have you had a moment when you felt the impact of CASA?**

My very first case was a baby girl. She was in foster care due to neglect and, as a grandmother, it was very difficult for me to understand how anyone could neglect an infant. We eventually identified a friend of the family who was interested in adopting her. Her adoption was my “moment” because I finally saw a brighter future for an infant who had no hope. The adoptive family invited me to the celebration after the adoption and christening, and I could see for myself how CASA had made a difference.

### **You’ve been working in difficult case involving a teenager for several years. What keeps you going?**

My teen came into care several years ago as a result of abuse and neglect and she has a history of running away. During my time with her, she’s been in more than 12 foster homes and residential treatment centers. Whenever she runs away, she always calls me because she knows I will listen to her and somehow try to get her back to where she belongs.

I can see potential in her despite the wrong turns she continues to make. I told her – and I was very serious – that as much as we’ve been through together I really love her though I don’t always like the choices she makes. She’s a teenager, which is frustrating enough, but she’s a teenager with family issues that complicate her life. Hopefully one day she will realize her potential. Until that day, I think we’re stuck with each other!

### **What do you tell friends and relatives who ask how you do what you do?**

I say that all children need an advocate, especially children in foster care who already feel abandoned. They need someone to be their voice when they feel no one is listening and they need someone who can be a constant presence in their lives.

### **How has being a CASA volunteer changed you?**

Although I am a mother, grandmother and retired from the school system, there’s a difference when dealing so closely with children in foster care. I have learned patience and compassion. Children can be resilient. They can survive if they know someone will be there. I have learned that their schools will change, their foster homes will change, their lawyers will change but CASA will always be there for them.

