

# Standards for Excellence Institute



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**THE STANDARDS FOR EXCELLENCE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES FIRST EVER NATIONAL  
STANDARD FOR EXCELLENCE™ SEALS AWARDED TO:  
THE NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE ASSOCIATION,  
HOMESTRETCH, INC. AND THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP  
OF WEST VIRGINIA,**

**ALL RECOGNIZED FOR BEST PRACTICES IN ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT**

**Baltimore, MD** (May 10, 2007) – The Standards for Excellence Institute is pleased to announce that The National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association is the first of three national organizations to be awarded the Seal of Excellence by The Standards for Excellence Institute after successfully completing the voluntary certification process. Also awarded the Seal of Excellence are Homestretch, Inc. of Falls Church, Virginia and the Community Development Partnership of West Virginia. Receiving the Seal is recognition that these nonprofit organizations operate with the highest standards of accountability and ethics.

The certification recognizes superior business models for how the most well managed and responsibly governed nonprofits operate. Since the Sarbanes-Oxley Act passed in 2002, businesses throughout the US have strived to meet the high standards of corporate accountability and transparency. Now non-profit organizations are proactively addressing the same issues. **Peter V. Berns, Chief Executive Officer of The Standards for Excellence Institute**, is thrilled that National CASA is the first national organization to be certified by the Institute.

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*“CASA serves to encourage and set a crucial example for other national and local nonprofit organizations large and small to follow,” Berns said. “We can’t expect the nonprofit sector to survive if it does not work to aggressively protect and preserve the public’s trust.”*

The National CASA Association has strived to meet excellence through ethical operation and corporate social responsibility since its inception in 1982. National CASA feels it is their duty to set an example of top management principles for the 946 state and local CASA program offices that are encouraged to operate with the highest level of organizational integrity.

**Michael Piraino, Chief Executive Officer for National CASA**, believes that standards certification for nonprofit organizations is critical in the United States.

*“We cannot expect the public to assume we are doing our jobs well,” Piraino said. “Having someone take an objective look at CASA can assure that public trust in nonprofit work is well placed.”* Piraino says the organization has sought third-party quality assurance compliance opportunities since 1995. *When the Standards for Excellence Institute became available nationally, National CASA jumped at the opportunity.*

In addition to National CASA, The Standards for Excellence Institute announces two additional organizations that have achieved the Seal of Excellence, Homestretch, Inc. of Falls Church, Virginia and The Community Development Partnership of West Virginia.

*“It is a splendid honor to be chosen as an organization worthy of the Standards for Excellence award,” said **Christopher Fay, Executive Director of Homestretch, Inc.** “We are constantly seeking to provide the best possible services and exhibit the highest level of integrity, effectiveness and compassion to our clients, who so desperately need trustworthy role models in their arduous, often tenuous and always courageous path to building new lives.*

*“The Community Development Partnership is pleased to be the first nonprofit in West Virginia to earn the Standards for Excellence™ Seal of Excellence,” said **Executive Director, Pat McGill.** The staff and board of the CDP are committed to making nonprofits in West Virginia operationally strong and accountable to the public and we believe that the national Standards for Excellence™ provide the model for achieving this.*

### **The Standards for Excellence Institute**

Under the auspices of The Standards for Excellence Institute, initially through state level partners, over 150 local nonprofit organizations around the country have completed the rigorous certification process and earned the right to display the Seal of Excellence.

The Standards For Excellence Institute provides the Code of best practices for the nonprofit sector enabling nonprofit organizations to implement sustainable high standards in organizational management through educational resources, technical assistance, a network of replication partners, licensed consultants as well as the extremely rigorous voluntary certification process. For more information about the Standards for Excellence Institute visit [www.standardsforexcellenceinstitute.org](http://www.standardsforexcellenceinstitute.org).

### **About National CASA**

In 1977 a Seattle judge, concerned over making decisions about abused and neglected children's lives without sufficient information, conceived the idea of using trained community volunteers to speak for the best interests of these children in court. So successful was this program, that judges across the country began utilizing citizen advocates. Today, more than 950 CASA/GAL offices operate in 49 states, with more than 50,000 men and women serving as CASA/GAL volunteers. **For more information about the National CASA Association, please view our website at [www.nationalcasa.org](http://www.nationalcasa.org).**

### **About Homestretch, Inc.**

Homestretch is the largest provider of transitional housing and comprehensive, holistic services to homeless families in Fairfax County, with the capacity to house 70 families and 6 single women at any given time. In the past 11 years, Homestretch has assisted 500 homeless families with almost 1500 children. The mission of Homestretch is to empower homeless families in Northern Virginia to return to stable housing and self-sufficiency, giving them the knowledge, skills and hope they need to become productive participants in their community. For more information about Homestretch, Inc., visit: <http://www.homestretch-inc.org/>

### **About Community Development Partnership**

The Community Development Partnership of West Virginia (CDP) is a statewide organization formed in 2003 to assist community based nonprofit organizations to build their organizational capacity and leverage and increase resources for community economic development. For more information about CDP of West Virginia, please visit: <http://www.cdpwv.org/>