



37th Judicial CASA

Court Appointed

Special Advocate Job Description

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) are trained community volunteers appointed by District Court Judges as officers of the court to speak for the best interests of children in state custody.

MISSION:

Trained and qualified community volunteers provide advocacy to abused and neglected children. The program's goal is a safe, permanent and nurturing home for every child it serves.

OBJECTIVE:

To advocate for children who come to the attention of the court primarily as a result of abuse or neglect.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- CASA volunteers shall be at least age 21.
- Have access to high speed internet.
- Personal, not shared email address or from a shared server such as a school or business.

CASAs shall successfully complete screening requirements including:

- A written application
- A personal interview
- A criminal background investigation
- A valid driver's license and proof of vehicle insurance coverage
- Three personal or professional, non-familial references

CASAs shall successfully complete training requirements including:

- 30 hours of initial training
- Minimum 12 hours of continuing education in-service hours in any 12-month period of service

RESPONSIBILITIES:

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) will:

- Spend an average of 5-15 hours a month on a case.
- Maintain complete confidentiality regarding information about the child, as well as information regarding other parties involved in the case.
- Exhibit professionalism in behavior and appearance.
- Obtain first hand a clear understanding of the needs and situation of the child by reviewing all relevant documents and records, interviewing the child and other persons to determine the facts and circumstances of the child's situation.

- Maintain records and documentation about the case, including meeting notes, hearing notes, notes outlining details of any personal contact with parties pertaining to the case, and any other information gathered about the child and family.
- Submit monthly logs to the program coordinator of all contacts pertaining to the child by the first of each month.
- Visit the child to conduct either supportive conversation or age-appropriate activities for at least one hour every month, either in the child's placement or in the child's school or any other safe, adequately supervised location.
- Call or text the child on the phone generally once a week to conduct supportive conversation if the child is of an appropriate age for phone conversation.
- Provide an objective court report detailing contacts at least one week prior to scheduled hearings.
- Attend appropriate inter agency meetings regarding the child, including meetings where the child is not present.
- Continually monitor the case to assure that the judicial and child welfare system move ahead to secure a safe, permanent home for the child, and that appropriate court ordered services are provided to the child and family.
- When necessary, consult with appropriate parties involved in the case to determine if an appropriate permanency plan is in place for the child, and whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts, are being provided to the child and family.
- Ensure that the child's best interests are represented at every stage of the case.
- Report any new incidents of child abuse or neglect to the CASA supervisor and appropriate authorities.
- Make contact with CASA supervisor at least once a month.
- When the case is closed, return all documentation to the CASA office to be shredded.

A CASA will not:

- Be a kin to, or related to, any parties involved in a case assigned to him or her.
- Be employed in an agency that also employs parties involved in a case assigned to him or her.
- Be employed in any other position which may involve a conflict of interest relative to the case.
- Provide direct services to any parties that could lead to a conflict of interest or potential liability, or cause a child or family to become dependent on the CASA volunteer for services that should be provided by other agencies or organizations.

PROGRAM GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

- To provide independent, factual information to the court regarding the child.
- To provide advocacy for abused and neglected children who are the subject of judicial proceedings.
- To monitor cases involving abused and neglected children until the terms of the court order have been fulfilled.
- To conduct independent and objective analysis concerning abuses and neglected children.
- To factually and objectively report findings and observations to the court.
- To insure representation of the child's best interest in all judicial proceedings.

- To monitor cases following a court hearing or decision as designated by the court.

A CASA will not have more than two cases at one time and only one case for the first year.

COMMITMENT:

Once assigned to a case, a CASA makes a commitment to the case until a permanent placement is found for the child. (Permanency is usually achieved in one to one and a half years.) 37th Judicial CASA asks for at the very least 1 year commitment. It is hoped advocates remain a part of the support system after the case is closed.

SUPERVISOR:

At least one program staff member will be assigned to guide and assist the CASA for the duration of the case.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

- Ability to keep all client and court information confidential
- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing
- Ability to respect and relate to people from various backgrounds
- Ability to transport self
- Ability to maintain objectivity
- Ability to recognize when another set of eyes would be beneficial to advocating for a child
- Ability to seek consultation and advice when needed
- A basic understanding of child development and family relationships
- Good common sense
- Does not require specific educational training beyond a high school diploma or GED

BENEFITS:

Although we cannot provide you with monetary rewards, there are many benefits to being a CASA volunteer. These include the opportunity to:

- Make a difference in the life and future of a child who has been a victim of abuse and/or neglect
- Help a child find permanency in a safe, loving home
- Assist judges in obtaining a clear picture of a child's life and needs
- Gain an understanding of district and family courts, legal proceedings, and social service agencies
- Develop/utilize communication skills
- Develop/utilize assertiveness
- Utilize your past experience/skills
- Form friendships with like-minded people in your community
- Have access to training statewide