

# CASA of the Tennessee Heartland

(Serving Anderson, Blount and Scott Counties)

www.casatnh.org

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**CASA of the Tennessee Heartland** is a non-profit, volunteer-based agency with a mission to empower CASA volunteers to advocate on behalf of abused and neglected children in juvenile court.

**A CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) volunteer** is a trained community member appointed by the juvenile judge to represent the best interest of a child in court by providing the court with a carefully researched background of the child. The CASA volunteer, after investigation, makes recommendations about placement and services and monitors a case until it is permanently resolved. The volunteer must determine whether to recommend that it is in the child's best interest to stay with his or her parents or guardians, be placed in other situations such as foster care, or be freed for permanent adoption. When necessary a volunteer advocates to ensure that the child is receiving needed services and monitors the case to be sure that the child does not become lost in a complex system.

In order to prepare a recommendation the CASA volunteer interviews the child, parents and other family members, social workers, school officials, health providers and others who are knowledgeable about the child. The CASA volunteer also reviews written records pertaining to the child. The CASA volunteer does not investigate the actual abuse.

The CASA volunteer does not replace workers from other agencies involved in a case. The volunteer is an independent appointee of the court and can make recommendations independent of state and federal agency restrictions. CASA volunteers come from all walks of life with a wide variety of professional, educational, and ethnic backgrounds. They may be employed, retired, or not employed as long as the volunteer has occasional daytime availability for court appearances. Nationally there are more than 58,000 volunteers in more than 950 programs. Volunteers must pass a comprehensive background check and screening process.

CASA volunteers must successfully complete a thorough 30 hour training course. The training includes instruction on the court and child welfare systems, child abuse and neglect, relevant state and federal laws, permanency planning and family preservation, and the role and responsibility of a CASA volunteer. In-service training is held on a regular basis, and volunteers receive ongoing assistance and support from the CASA staff.

CASA volunteers, who spend an average of twelve hours a month on a case, offer children trust, advocacy, and continuity during complex legal proceedings.

**For further information, please contact us.**

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