

## **Job Description**

Volunteer Advocate

### **DESCRIPTION:**

A CASA volunteer respects a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe, loving environment that meets the child's best interests.

A CASA volunteer is appointed by the Blount County Juvenile Court to ensure that the needs of a child who may have been abused or neglected are met. In order to do this effectively, the CASA must investigate the facts of the case, recommend a course of action to the Court, facilitate the use of services or assistance where needed, and monitor progress toward established goals. The CASA volunteer can be an invaluable resource for the Court and the child's team in developing and tracking goals for permanency.

A CASA volunteer works with the child, family, neighbors, schools, medical professionals, and others involved in a case to facilitate a safe, positive outcome for the child.

### **QUALIFICATIONS:**

Volunteers must be 21 years of age or older, and must successfully complete screening requirements, including a written application, personal interview, reference checks, and a criminal background investigation. The volunteer must then successfully complete training, including all homework assignments and class participation.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Complete base 30-hour CASA training and in-Court observations.
- Complete a minimum of 12 hours of in-service training each year, following the first year of service.
- Once assigned to a case, commit to at least one year of service on that case.
- 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.
- Review Court, medical, and other records. Interview appropriate parties involved in a case, including but not limited to: the child, the placement, parents, relatives, neighbors, school employees, medical or therapeutic providers, Department of Children's Services (DCS) workers.
- Provide written reports to the Court in a timely manner. Reports shall include the results of interviews and investigation of the situation, an evaluation of the Permanency Plan and progress made towards goals, whether appropriate services are being provided, and an evaluation of the appropriateness of placement. Reports shall also contain recommendations to the Court in support of the child's best interests, needs, and wishes.
- Make oral recommendations to the Court where needed in support of the child's best interests.

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- Facilitate prompt, thorough reviews of the case when needed.
- Attend and participate in all Court hearings, Foster Care Review Board, Child Family Team meetings, and all other meetings pertaining to the child.
- Make contact with the child and CASA program staff at least once per month
- Provide monthly reports to CASA program staff on mileage, hours served, case contacts, and case status.
- Maintain complete records for each case, including appointments, interviews, and information and documentation gathered. Ensure all case files are returned to the CASA offices at the end of each case.
- Maintain complete confidentiality regarding information about the child, as well as other parties to a case. Ensure all CASA confidentiality policies are followed regarding documentation and information received.
- Disclose any potential conflict of interest or relation to any party in a case as soon as discovered.
- Monitor each case to ensure that the judicial and child welfare systems are moving towards a safe, permanent home for the child.

### **CASA CODE OF CONDUCT**

The CASA role is a unique position for a volunteer. The nature of the work is very sensitive and the role requires a high level of visibility in the community and frequent interaction with professionals. It is important to observe strict standards of conduct that will facilitate, rather than restrict, the acceptance of the volunteer as a part of the community's skilled team responding to child abuse and neglect. Therefore it is important for CASA to adhere to the following standards:

- Maintain contact with program staff, communicating on matters of progress, issues of concern, and the general direction and desired outcomes of cases.
- Accept supervision from staff, including direction, guidance, technical and policy issues.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional relationships and the ability to give and receive feedback in a non-personal manner.
- Exhibit professionalism in appearance and behavior.
- Refrain from the use of alcohol or drugs during or prior to CASA related actions.
- A CASA volunteer DOES NOT provide direct services to any parties involved in a case assigned to him/her. This could result in conflict of interest or potential legal liability. Failure to uphold this policy will result in dismissal from service.
- A CASA volunteer DOES NOT provide gifts, services, or transportation to any party in a case.