

Job Description for Volunteer Advocate CASA: The Voice of Clark County's Children

The CASA-The Voice of Clark County's Children Court Appointed Special Advocate ("CASA") Program mission is to advocate for the best interests of children involved in a neglect and/or abuse case in the court system of Clark County, Indiana.

Our Vision is for EVERY CHILD involved in a neglect and/or abuse case to have a court appointed special advocate.

Our Action statement: To recruit and train a diverse group of Volunteer/Staff to advocate for Clark County's children involved in an abuse or neglect case.

Position Title: CASA Volunteer Advocate

Reports To: Assistant Director and operates under the supervision of the Program Director.

Purpose of Position: A CASA volunteer advocates for the best interests of an abused or neglected child who is involved with the Department of Child Services.

The role of a volunteer Advocate is unique. CASA's maintain confidentiality about the cases and the children we serve.

Every case is unique and there is not a definitive length of time a case may stay open. Some cases close relatively quickly and others may stay open for long period of time for various reasons. We understand that committing to CASA for an indefinite period of time is challenging. We ask that if for any reason you are unable to continue as an Advocate that you give notice to the office as soon as possible (preferably two weeks) to allow us time to assign a new CASA to the case.

Volunteers must:

- a. Minimum 21 years of age.
- b. Successfully passes screening requirements, including a written application, criminal record and Child Abuse Registry checks, personal interview, and three non-relative reference checks.
- c. Successfully complete 30 hours of initial National CASA training provided by the CASA Program. Any missed sessions must be completed before being appointed to a case.
- d. Acceptance as a Volunteer by the Director and sworn in as an officer of the Court.
- e. observes 4 hours of CHINS/TPR proceedings.
- f. successfully complete 12 hours of continued training annually. The CASA office provides various training opportunities during the year to fulfill this requirement.
- g. Accept supervision by the Director.
- h. maintains the confidentiality of information; and
- i. immediately reports any past, present, or pending criminal charges to the Director.

Volunteer Responsibilities

- Time management skills needed to meet case obligations. Maintain contact with the Program Director or other assigned staff regarding case issues, or inability to attend meetings or hearings.
- Keep an accurate contact-activity case log in the Optima ® case management system.
- Report volunteer hours in Optima ® This is essential for program funding.
- Consult with Program Director or other assigned staff regarding case progress.
- **Keep all client and court information confidential.** The case should only be discussed in settings that provide for confidentiality and only with authorized individuals.

Child Advocacy Responsibilities

The responsibilities of a CASA include, but not limited to:

1. Conduct an independent investigation, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Review all relevant documents, including case records and DCS case file.
 - b. Conduct direct interviews with the child, parents, social workers, relatives, school personnel, and others with knowledge of relevant facts.
 - c. Maintain complete up-to-date written records about the case in Optima®, the Program's web-based case management system, including contact logs, interviews, and information gathered about the child, records reviewed, and time spent on the case.
 - d. Report any incidents of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities and then to the Director immediately.
 - e. **REMEMBER** to keep your advocacy focused on the child, not the parents. Advocate for the best interest of the child. Factors to consider include current age and a child's sense of time, level of maturity, culture and ethnicity, degree of attachment to family members, including siblings, and sense of belonging and identity.
 - f. Monitor the case for compliance and progress of the family with service providers by in-person contact with the child at least once every 30 days and maintaining contact with parents and service providers on a regular basis until the case is dismissed.
 - g. Participate in any planning or treatment team meetings involving the child to keep informed of the child's permanency plan.
- c. **Court hearings.** The Advocate's presence in the courtroom (either in person or virtually) for the hearing is strongly recommended; however, some circumstances may preclude the Advocate from attending. If the Advocate is unable to attend a hearing, the Advocate will notify CASA staff in a timely manner, so the hearing is covered by CASA staff. Up to date reports and Optima ® notes are critical so that the most up to date information is given to the Court.
- **EXCEPTION:** If the Advocate receives a subpoena, then they **must** attend the court hearing.

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