

Role & Responsibilities of the CASA Volunteer

As a CASA volunteer, you will:

1. **Investigate:** seeking a clear and deep understanding of the child's situation.
2. **Plan:** working with child welfare professionals to determine what strategies promote the best interests of the child.
3. **Advocate:** reporting to the court what you have discovered and working within other systems (such as education and health care) to make sure that the child receives the services needed to advance his or her safety, permanency, well-being, resilience, and interdependence.
4. **Connect:** strengthening and building the child's personal and professional support network, continuously seeking to establish permanence and family for the child.

A. The CASA Role

After you complete the training, and complete a background check, you must take an oath and be sworn in before the court. This oath requires that you fulfill the CASA role, which means you:

1. **Gather Information and:**
 - Have regular, in-person contact with the child sufficient for you to have in-depth knowledge of the case and make fact-based recommendations.
 - Learn the needs and situation of the child by reviewing all relevant documents and records and interviewing the child, parents, social workers, teachers, and other relevant people.
 - Determine if a permanent plan has been created for the child.
2. **Facilitate Communication and Collaboration by:**
 - Seeking cooperative solutions by acting as a facilitator among involved parties or as a bridge to the many professionals working with the child and the family.
 - Finding resources for the child and family and working with those agencies to ensure services are being rendered as promised.
 - Looking for opportunities to facilitate communication between parties that should be communicating (*i.e.*, child and caregiver or child and relative).
3. **Advocate by:**
 - Identifying and communicating the best interests of the child.
 - Providing reports that include factual findings and recommendations at every hearing.
 - Appearing at all hearings to advocate for the child's interests and providing testimony when necessary.
 - Making recommendations for specific services that are appropriate for the child and family.
 - Informing the court promptly of important developments in the case by filing interim court reports.

- Advocating for the child's interests in the community by engaging mental health, education, and other systems to assure that the child's needs are met.
 - Participating in all scheduled case conferences with CASA program staff.
- 4. Monitor the Case by:**
- Maintaining regular, in-person contact with the child so that you can develop the depth of knowledge necessary to make intelligent, fact-based recommendations.
 - Ensuring that services and court orders are implemented in an intelligent and timely fashion.
- 5. Protect Confidentiality/Maintain Records by:**
- Respecting the child's right to privacy by maintaining confidential information.
 - Complying with all confidentiality laws.
 - Safely and securely maintaining all relevant case records.
 - Returning case files to the program after you are dismissed from the case.
 - Maintaining complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews, and information gathered about the child and his/her circumstances.
- 6. Comply with Program/Administration by:**
- Recording volunteer hours and submitting your activity log to the CASA program office.
 - Participating in all scheduled case conferences with CASA supervisory staff.
 - Participating in at least 12 hours of continuing or in-service training a year.

B. The CASA Volunteer's Relationship with the Child

One of the essential components of effective advocacy is building a strong, trusting relationship with your CASA child. This one-on-one relationship will give you much needed access to information and the needs of your child. The stronger the relationship, the more effective an advocate you can be. Here are some basic guidelines:

- Know the child well enough to make appropriate recommendations to the court.
- Remember that you are, by design, a temporary intervention in the child's life.
- Establish and maintain proper boundaries with the child and model a healthy adult/child relationship.
- Be a consistent, stable, and supportive presence in the child's life.
- Do not take the child to your home or work, and do not introduce him/her to your family or friends.
- Collaborate with other professionals in the child's life to ensure that the child is receiving appropriate attention.
- Respect the privacy of the relationship while also letting the child know that you are a mandated reporter.