

# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



**PO Box 1627  
Jefferson City MO 65102  
573-893-2272  
Capitalcitycasa.org  
office@capitalcitycasa.com**

## MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Capital City CASA to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the 19th Judicial Circuit of Missouri, based on the belief that all children are entitled to a safe and permanent home. The mission will be accomplished through trained volunteers in cooperation with the courts, key agencies, legal counsel and community resources.



CASA volunteers are ordinary people who are concerned about the happiness and safety of all children. You do not need a social work background or legal expertise to be a good advocate, but you do need to be committed to your case and willing to advocate for what is in the child's best interest. Part of the CASA program's success has been its diversity of volunteers—full-time workers and stay-at-home parents, retirees and college students, people of all races, religions, and economic backgrounds who want to make a difference in the life of a child. We do require that our volunteers are 21 or older, have a high school diploma or equivalent, and successfully pass our background screening. All other skills and knowledge are taught in our extensive training program.

\*Member of the National CASA Association

\*Member of the Missouri CASA Association

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## HISTORY

CASA, which stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates, is a nationwide program of volunteers who gather information about abused and neglected children in the Family Court System and then make recommendations to the Judge for the children's long-term welfare. Simply put, our CASA volunteers speak up for these children and help them find safe, permanent homes.

### **How did CASA start?**

In 1976, Juvenile Court Judge David Soukup of Seattle, WA, saw a recurring problem in his courtroom. Though he was receiving information from case workers, lawyers, teachers and other professionals, their opinions and recommendations were limited in scope. Soukup was frustrated that he couldn't see the whole picture of the child's life, and thus couldn't make a satisfying judgment for the child's placement.

"As a Judge, I had to make tough decisions. I had to decide whether to take a child from the only home he's ever known or leave him someplace where he might possibly be abused. I needed someone who could tell me what was best for the child—from the child's viewpoint."

He initiated a program of community volunteers who would be sworn in as officers of the court and would then be responsible for investigating all aspects of the child's life and reporting their findings to the court. This one-on-one interaction would allow for a thorough synthesis of the child's needs and help the Judge make a more informed decision.

### **Who is Capital City CASA?**

Capital City CASA was incorporated/established under the umbrella of the Kiwanis Club of Jefferson City, Missouri, in February 2009. The Kiwanis Club recognized the needs of children in the juvenile court system. They saw the need as an opportunity to continue their mission of emphasizing services to children and youth through initiatives intended to improve the quality of life of children through establishing a CASA program in Cole County. The Kiwanis Club formed a committee to establish a CASA program locally. An Executive Director was hired in 2010 and worked with the CASA committee to create an educational public relations strategy to inform the community of what CASA was about and who the organization served. By March of 2011, 22 new volunteers had been sworn in to advocate for abused and neglected children and provide the children the first opportunity to have their voice heard and their wishes made known to the juvenile court.



## PROGRAM STAFF

Executive Director.....Gina Clement  
Advocate Coordinator/Educational Advocacy..... Jane Berry  
Advocate Coordinator/Optima..... Lori Hodges  
Advocate Coordinator/Finance..... Alex LeCure  
Advocate Coordinator/Teen Specialist..... Nikki Barnard

### Supervisory Functions:

The Advocate Coordinators are responsible for:

- Having general knowledge of each case to provide consultation and substitute for the volunteer in case of an emergency.
- Training new volunteers and continuing education for active volunteers.
- Being accessible to the volunteers.
- Attending court hearings with volunteers to offer support and monitor performance.
- Review of the volunteer's written court report. This includes consulting with the volunteer on the recommendations and following program policy should there be a difference of opinion.
- Facilitating regular peer meetings of volunteers for training and disseminating information.
- Providing frequent feedback.

Capital City CASA observes the following holidays:

New Year's Day (January 1st)  
Martin Luther King JR Day (3rd Monday in January)  
President's Day (3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in February)  
Memorial Day (Last Monday in May)  
Independence Day (July 4th)  
Labor Day (1st Monday in September)  
Thanksgiving (4th Thursday and Friday of November)  
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day (December 24<sup>th</sup> and 25th)

## **VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT**

It is important to be given standardized guidelines to be an effective volunteer advocate in the program. Capital City CASA provides a framework for recruitment, selection, training, supervision, retention, and evaluation of volunteers.

- Capital City CASA provides information about the backgrounds and needs of the children served by the program.
- Capital City CASA provides adequate supervision of its volunteers.
- The roles and responsibilities of the CASA volunteer are clearly communicated through written policies, job descriptions and training, and are reinforced through the supervisory process.
- Capital City CASA has policies and procedures for the discharge or termination of a CASA volunteer.

## **VOLUNTEER FILE**

In efforts to provide an efficient and systematic approach for maintaining and monitoring volunteer data, Capital City CASA maintains a written record for each volunteer. Capital City CASA ensures the confidentiality of the volunteer file.

The volunteer record contains, as appropriate:

- Identifying information
- Written application
- Reference documentation
- Consent for and criminal background check information
- Documentation related to performance, if applicable
- Signed Code of Ethics
- Signed Oath of Confidentiality

### **Volunteer**

All volunteer files will be retained for seven (7) years from date of termination or last case assigned in a secure (locked) location either on-site or at an off-site file storage facility. At the seven-year anniversary of termination or last case assigned, all files pertaining to the former volunteer(s) will be destroyed, except in the event of a high-conflict termination, which will be retained indefinitely.

## **VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

CASA volunteers are assigned to an abuse or neglect case by staff. Each volunteer is carefully screened, trained, and supervised. Volunteers collect collateral information, review documents, and interview everyone involved, including the child. They make reports to the court, recommending what they believe is best for the child and providing the Judge with information that will help them make an informed decision. CASA volunteers can be instrumental in assuring that a child and/or family receives services which the court has ordered - things like substance abuse counseling or special education testing. During the life of a case, a CASA volunteer monitors the child's situation to make sure they remain safe and have a voice in court.

### **Qualifications:**

- are 21 years of age or older
- give consent to a routine criminal background check
- have completed a high school education or equivalent
- are willing to commit to an average of 10 hours per month for a minimum of two years, including at least one visit per month with each child
- advocates for the best interest of the child

### **Training:**

CASA Volunteers are required to attend 40 hours of pre-service training including observing a court hearing and family support team meeting in addition to following guidelines established by Capital City CASA and the National CASA association.

### **Skills and Abilities:**

- To keep all client and court information confidential
- To communicate effectively both orally and in writing
- To respect and relate to people from various backgrounds in a variety of settings
- To maintain objectivity
- To gather and record factual and objective information accurately
- To participate as a team member to collaboratively advocate for children and families
- Be available for daytime meetings and court hearings
- To transport self to a variety of locations

## **PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:**

- To provide independent, factual and objective information to the court regarding abused and neglected children
- To provide collaborative 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 ensure 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
- Complete a review of the case
  - Speak with the child and relevant adults
  - Review appropriate records and reports
  - Observe the child and significant others
- Report findings in writing to court and ensure representation is in the child's best interest
  - Attend court hearing concerning the child
  - Attend and participate in all interagency meetings and conferences concerning the child
- Monitor decisions designated by court

## **TRAINING & RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Training and Development**

Volunteers shall continually improve their knowledge, skills and abilities to assess needs and provide services to the children we serve-

- The CASA volunteer completes at least 12 hours of in-service training per year through training opportunities provided by staff and approved books, articles and movies in the CASA library.

The training and development program is reviewed annually and revised. Program staff regularly arranges for volunteer training, as necessary to meet volunteer, program and client needs and to obtain program goals. For training purposes, the program may use a variety of instructors, including program staff, attorneys, Judges, community agency representatives, and volunteers.



## Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the CASA volunteer are clearly communicated through written policies, job description and training, and are reinforced through the supervisory process. The CASA program ensures that the volunteer has a written job description with responsibilities outlined. These responsibilities may include but are not limited to:

- ***Maintaining strict confidentiality always.***
- Reviewing Records.
- Talking with appropriate parties involved in the case, including the child.
- Determining if a permanency plan has been created for the child and whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts, are being provided to the child and family.
- Submitting a signed written report with recommendations to the court on what placement and services are best for the child.
- Discussing all recommendations concerning the case with their supervisor (Advocate Coordinator or Executive Director) prior to submitting recommendations to the court.
- Attending court hearings.
- Attending multi-disciplinary reviews/meetings.
- Maintaining complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews, and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances.
- Forming and maintaining appropriate relationship with child; contact at least once a month.
- Reporting any incident of child abuse or neglect to their supervisor (Advocate Coordinator or Executive Director) and appropriate authorities.
- Maintaining contact with CASA office, keeping their supervisor timely informed of child's life circumstance and case developments.
- Completing 12 hours of in-service training per year.

- Attending and participating in regularly scheduled case conferences and meetings.
- Treating all parties with respect.

The CASA volunteer **does not** engage in any of the following activities:

- Taking a child to the volunteer's home or any home.
- Transporting a child or family member.
- Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
- Making placement arrangements for the child.
- Giving money or expensive gifts to the child or family.
- Supervise family visits (*CASA may observe visits only.*)

## CASA CODE OF CONDUCT & ETHICS

As a representative of Capital City CASA and an Officer of the Court, you are required at all times to use your best efforts to perform assigned tasks promptly, professionally, and with integrity. Courtesy, tact, and helpfulness on your part will do much to create the positive image we deserve.

**Confidentiality:** ***THE CASA MUST MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY AND RESPECT FOR THE PRIVACY OF OTHERS IN ALL MATTERS RELATING TO CASE ASSIGNMENTS.***

### **Respect, Fairness &**

**Courtesy:** The CASA should treat all parties with respect, courtesy, fairness and in good faith.

### **Development of**

**Knowledge:** The CASA should take responsibility for identifying and developing knowledge and fully utilizing information for performance of the CASA role.

**Program Integrity:** The CASA should not represent his/her personal views or opinions as those of the program nor should the CASA refer to or use his/her participation with the program to advance his/her personal views in any proceedings unrelated to the case in which he/she was appointed as CASA.

**Appearance:** While representing Capital City CASA it is important to portray a professional image. Volunteers are expected to present a clean, neat appearance. You are required to dress appropriately for business/court room appearances. **Volunteers should not wear revealing or transparent clothing for business/court appearances.**

**Discharge:** The CASA volunteer will be discharged from a case when the court has dismissed the case or based on the request of the volunteer.

**Termination:** CASA volunteers may be terminated from the program if they violate the confidentiality agreement, program policies, or court laws. Other reasons that may result in termination include but are not limited to: (Terminations from the program may only be done by the Executive Director and terminations from a case may only be done by a Judge)

- Engaging in ex-parte communication with the court;
- Failure to contact the child on a minimum monthly basis;

- Failure to contact CASA staff for 2 months or longer
- Failure to complete required training;
- Failure to demonstrate an ability to effectively carry out assigned duties;
- Actions of discriminatory nature;
- Inappropriate conduct toward the child, family, or others involved in the case;
- Repeated failure to do court reports;
- Acts without court approval;
- Endangers the child;
- Falsifies application or facts during screening process;
- Fails to provide information concerning criminal charges of any child abuse/neglect allegations against the volunteer or immediate family member;
- Conflict of interest arises which cannot be resolved; and
- Acts outside of their role as CASA volunteer or outside of the powers of the CASA program.
- Interfering with the plan

**Capital City CASA policies prohibit volunteers from doing the following:**

- Transporting the child(ren) or parents anywhere
- Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling
- Making placement arrangements for the child
- Giving money to the child, the child's family or caregiver
- Giving expensive gifts to the child, the child's family or caregiver
- Being related to any parties involved in the case or being employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest
- Submitting recommendations to anyone prior to approval of court report by Advocate Coordinator and/or Executive Director

## CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

The CASA volunteer shall adhere to the following guidelines with respect to maintaining confidentiality and respecting the privacy of others in all matters relating to an assigned case. The guidelines are set out below. They govern circumstances in which the volunteer requests or receives information. However, these guidelines cannot cover every possible situation which may arise. Any questions and/or concerns the CASA volunteer has regarding confidentiality or the application of this policy should be discussed with the Executive Director or Advocate Coordinator. These will be resolved on a case by case basis.

- In requesting information, a CASA volunteer may need to obtain information from doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, attorneys, clergy, teachers, or other professionals who have a protected relationship status with a party or the child. By statute, there are limitations on the disclosure of information a professional receives during his/her relationship with a client/patient. Many professionals also have ethical principles which govern their ability to disclose information. The professional has no authority to provide any information to a CASA volunteer without a court order.
- If it is necessary to obtain any privileged/confidential information about someone who is directly related to the case but is not the child/ren, the volunteer must obtain from that person a written release of information which allows the professional, hospital, or treatment center to discuss the matter with the CASA volunteer.
- While a person may sign a release allowing the CASA volunteer to obtain confidential information, he/she may not want to authorize disclosure to the other parties or their attorneys. The CASA volunteer should review the signed release form very carefully and seek guidance from the Executive Director or Advocate Coordinator if the volunteer has any questions.
- The CASA volunteer is not allowed to distribute documents to the parties, their attorneys, and/or collateral sources, which are covered by state, federal, or local laws. These documents may include drug and alcohol evaluations/records, involuntary mental health treatment, rape crisis center information, some criminal history.
- The CASA volunteer shall never discuss an assigned case with anyone outside of the case or for conversational purposes.
- The CASA volunteer should not promise a child or any party to the assigned case that his/her statements will be kept confidential.
- The CASA volunteer must disclose confidential information learned in three circumstances:
  - When consulting with the Executive Director, Advocate Coordinator, or Guardian Ad Litem
  - When ordered by the court in a hearing or trial

- When the CASA volunteer believes there is reasonable cause that the child has suffered abuse or neglect
- The CASA volunteer may disclose confidential information and discuss a case when:
  - The volunteer consults with a professional service provider who has a release of information regarding the case.
  - When the court orders disclosure.
- The CASA may discuss a case in hypothetical terms for purposes of illustration. The volunteer shall not, however, mention the names of any individuals involved in the case or provide facts which may identify the case or parties.

## **VOLUNTEER OFFICE EMAIL AND INTERNET USAGE**

Capital City CASA's E-Mail system is primarily intended for business use. The e-mail system is CASA property and may be used for CASA business. The system is not to be used for volunteer personal gain or to support or advocate for non-CASA related business or purposes. All use of the email system is subject to management access pursuant to this policy.

## **EMAIL AND VOICE MAIL RETENTION**

Because the costs of preserving electronic mail of enduring administrative value is cost prohibitive, any e-mail records with enduring administrative value should be printed and retained in paper format in the appropriate paper file. Care should be taken to ensure that electronic mail and other documents are appropriately scheduled on a records retention schedule. In extraordinary circumstances, when the agency in its opinion believes a voicemail has enduring value, the agency should have it transcribed verbatim for its records in the form of an affidavit by the employee, and appropriately notarized as to its accuracy.

## **ACCESS TO VOLUNTEER FILES**

Capital City CASA maintains confidential volunteer files. These files contain documentation regarding all aspects of employment, disciplinary actions, the original volunteer application, and letters of recommendation. Volunteer files are the property of CASA and shall be maintained confidentially in the Executive Director's office or in the case of the Executive Director, such documentation will be held by the Board President. A volunteer may review his/her volunteer file upon request and in the presence of the Executive Director at a mutually convenient time. Volunteers are not entitled to a copy of their volunteer file. If inaccurate information is included in the volunteer file, the volunteer may write a note of correction to his/her supervisor. A volunteer's written response to inaccurate file information will be placed in the volunteer's volunteer file.

## CASE ASSIGNMENT

### Working a case

The 19<sup>th</sup> Juvenile Court Judge will sign the court order assigning a volunteer to a case following:

- The CASA volunteer being sworn in by the Judge upon completion of the required 40 hours of training, court and family support team meeting training.
- A case being received in the CASA office from Children's Division or the Juvenile Office.
- Case referrals being assigned to the appropriate volunteer in a timely manner.
- Volunteers may be assigned to 1-2 cases at any one time. This is decided on a case-by-case basis.

The Advocate Coordinator will inform a volunteer of the details of the case, provide their Court appointment, when received, and copies of all court documents but not limited to:

- Petition and any court documents.
- Treatment plan(s).
- Medical records.
- Intake forms and all prior reports, as available.
- Interviews/examinations of parties, etc.

The Advocate Coordinators will consider the needs, goals, preferences, abilities, resources and supports of the client, client's family and the volunteer to assign the appropriate volunteer. The Advocate Coordinators will consider ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity issues to assign the appropriate volunteer and will make an appointment with the potential volunteer to determine if conflict exists. Potential conflicts may include, but not limited to:

- Prior relationship with family.
- Case too complex for experience.
- Case too time intensive.
- Gender mismatch.
- Volunteer preference.

The CASA volunteer is not privileged to ex-parte communication with the court and must strictly abide by all confidentiality laws. The CASA Advocate Coordinators and/or the court notifies all parties and agencies involved in the case of the CASA volunteer's appointment.



## **CASE FILE**

As a framework for quality management of the program's case files, Capital City CASA maintains complete and accurate records for all children served. All case files are confidential and accessible only to the volunteer appointed to the case and CASA staff.

The case record file includes:

- Biographical or other identifying information.
- Background on the nature of the presenting problem or reason for the referral by the court.
- Court reports and any other orders related to the service being provided.
- Copies of Volunteer court reports.
- Correspondence concerning the case, notes from phone or in-person contacts.
- The treatment plan(s).

The case files are kept up-to-date through:

- Current contact entries.
- Periodic progress notes, summaries and case conference notes.
- Court reports.

Upon termination of service, a closing summary of services provided is entered into the case record. The case file is closed and stored according to Program policy and procedure.

The volunteer turns in all case records to the CASA office, including all notes when the case is closed. All computer files regarding the case will also be destroyed when the case is closed.

## **PROTOCOL FOR NAVIGATION CONFLICT**

*When CASA volunteers encounter conflicts with other parties (i.e., disagreements, personality clashes, miscommunication, complaints, etc.) volunteers should comply with the following protocol:*

### **1. Communication**

#### **a. Written documentation.**

- i. Submit written documentation in the form of an email to your CASA Advocate Coordinator within 24 hours of the conflict. Include detailed information in regard to the conflicts (i.e., people involved, your role in the conflict, if applicable, what was the cause of the conflict)
- ii. CASA Advocate Coordinators will inform the Executive Director of all complaints in writing.

#### **b. Phone Contact.**

- i. Contact CASA Advocate Coordinator by phone to discuss the conflict.
- ii. If your Advocate Coordinator is unavailable and it is during business hours, you may speak with another CASA Advocate Coordinator who is familiar with your case.
- iii. Please be forthcoming about any role you may have played in this conflict.
- iv. Advocate Coordinators should contact the CASA Executive Director to keep him/her informed of issues/concerns.
- v. If the conflict is urgent, contact your Advocate Coordinator immediately.

#### **c. Direct Communication**

- i. If the complaint is received by the CASA office from another party (i.e., team member, foster parent, child), your CASA Advocate Coordinator will ask the party if they have spoken with the CASA volunteer directly about their concerns.
- ii. If the CASA volunteer has not been contacted to resolve the issue, the CASA Advocate Coordinator will request the party to contact the CASA volunteer.
- iii. CASA Advocate Coordinator will contact the CASA volunteer to obtain information in regard to the issue and inform them that the complainant will be contacting them directly.

## CASA RESPONSIBILITIES TO AVOID CONFLICT

### **Comply with CASA Volunteer Contract of Expectations.**

Read, understand, ask clarifying questions, if needed, and comply

### **Operate Collaboratively.**

CASA volunteers should be viewed as members of the team, not adversaries. Work with, rather than against others in a cooperative, rather than a competitive manner to complete the job. When teams operate collaboratively, issues of difference or disagreement become issues to settle, not battles to fight.

### **Provide monthly updates.**

These should be emailed to the children’s attorney, Children’s Division case worker, juvenile officer, Advocate Coordinator or in person with your Advocate Coordinator and/or through Optima. This will help to ensure all parties have the same information regarding your work on and knowledge of the case. Be certain that information you share with and receive from service providers is known by all the assigned Children’s Division workers and/or Advocate Coordinators. Provide any significant new information about the case as soon as possible.

### **Contact your Advocate Coordinator.**

When you are feeling frustrated about something, ALWAYS remember to contact your Advocate Coordinator to vent or process. **Please do not do this with members of the team.**

<u>Ten Tips to Enhance Teamwork</u>	<u>Ten Actions that Lend Credibility to Your Communications</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make new members feel welcomed</li> <li>• Keep information flowing by following through, informing them of what happened or what you found out about the issue, letting others know something in advance or passing on information that is helpful</li> <li>• Offer assistance to the team members</li> <li>• Ask for help by asking questions</li> <li>• Speak up in meetings</li> <li>• Talk in terms of outcomes</li> <li>• Give feedback supportively</li> <li>• Take problems right to the source</li> <li>• Maintain a sense of humor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following through</li> <li>• Returning phone calls</li> <li>• Being passionate</li> <li>• Demonstrating expertise</li> <li>• Disagreeing without being disagreeable</li> <li>• Staying calm under pressure</li> <li>• Taking positive approaches to problems</li> <li>• Listening first, acting second</li> <li>• Showing sincerity</li> <li>• Being straightforward</li> </ul>

*The toughest person to manage in any interaction is yourself.*

## Tips for Self-Control

- 1. Take time to calm down.** Do not send emails or have conversation with other parties or your CASA child when you are upset. Take some time to calm down and process the situation with your Advocate Coordinator prior to contacting the individual.
- 2. Keep emotions in check.** Please keep your emotions in check when talking to team members. For example, crying to your team members may make them concerned about your boundaries or professionalism. When you're in control of your own emotions, you're better able to influence the direction on a conversation toward achieving a positive outcome.
- 3. Work to understand others.** Make as much of an effort to understand where someone else is coming from as you do when you're letting the other person know your own point of view. This means actively listening so you can show true understanding of what others have to say, especially in conflict situations. You should listen and show understanding first, instead of pushing your point of view harder.
- 4. Shift and show understanding first.** Probe to get the points fully explained. Paraphrase or reflective paraphrase (rendering the message using *your own* words and sentence structure).
- 5. Speak to clarify, not to counter.** "Let me clarify something for you." "Please allow me the chance to add something that will help clarify my point." "I'd like to briefly address a concern you raised."
- 6. Ask the other person questions to check understanding or your message.** Ask open-ended questions, such as, "Can you please provide feedback regarding your understanding of what I was telling you."
- 7. Practice good boundaries.** Practicing appropriate boundaries may help to avoid conflict. For example, do not share personal information about yourself with your youth or other team members. Be prepared that once you share this information, you cannot control what the other party does with this information. Try to focus conversations on the child within your and their comfort level; avoid talking in excess about yourself and your family.
- 8. Remain neutral and non-judgmental.** Practice this with parents, children and team members. Do not express your opinion of the parents even if asked. It's okay to say positive things about parent(s) when applicable/appropriate.
- 9. Assess your readiness.** How in control of yourself are you? How well ordered are your thoughts? What are you seeking to accomplish?

Get your thoughts in order, set your objective for a positive outcome and outline your agenda for managing the meeting or phone call.

**10. Respect.** Treat all parties with respect; don't talk down to them or criticize them.

**11. Be forthright and sincere.** People sometimes worry so much about being nice to others that they can't be clear and honest when they attempt to address their concerns. Conflict situations are neither about nice nor mean; they're about working out issues and differences to make positive results.

**12. Maintain professionalism.** Do not yell, blame, react defensively, focus on perceived intentions, avoid dealing with the situation, make subtle digs or sarcastic remarks, make personal insults, constantly complain about the situation, issue an ultimatum, send angry emails, or go to others, rather than the source.

### **TIPS FOR NAVIGATING AND AVOIDING CONFLICT**

<b>What to do:</b>	<b>What not to do:</b>
<p><b>Explain CASA Role:</b>            Explain your role as a CASA volunteer in words that children, caregivers and team members can understand. Communicate in a manner appropriate for their age and developmental level. Make sure to emphasize that you are an advocate and will ask questions periodically about the child's education, health, etc., write court reports, attend court, and submit recommendations to the Judge.</p>	<p><b>Do not threaten team members:</b>            Avoid threatening remarks, such as, "If you don't let me talk to my CASA youth, I'm going to file a complaint against you."</p>
<p><b>Address concerns directly with the source:</b>            CASA volunteers are encouraged to ask parties to share their concerns with them prior to escalating any issues that arise. The speaker should state the problem constructively and place the emphasis on collaborating with the other person to work out a resolution.</p>	<p><b>Avoid splitting:</b>            Do not allow the youth to "split" you from the rest of the team. Children may contact you to make a complaint about their caregiver, Children's Division case worker or attorney, and it is important that you call the person involved and get their side of the story before reacting to the situation.</p>
<p><b>Follow-up by phone:</b>            If there is an issue on the case, contact the individual on the phone first, before you send an email with a Cc to all parties. This can help preserve your working relationship with the individual.</p>	<p><b>Do not attempt to resolve conflict by email:</b>            Conflicts should be resolved in-person or over the phone. Please do not attempt to resolve a major conflict by email.</p>

<p><b>Be solution focused:</b> Examine the problem, not to blame or find fault with anyone but to understand the issue and move toward developing a solution. Creating the solution becomes the main focus in working with others.</p>	<p><b>Do not blame:</b> Recognize that people are a part of every problem. Blaming them for the problems solves absolutely nothing but creates animosity and distrust. Working with others to solve problems is the best way to get solutions which work and others will support.</p>
<p><b>Communicate first, act second:</b> Check with the people involved first, making sure that everyone is on the same page before you take action. No matter how well intentioned you are or how brilliant an idea you have, when you don't consult with the other parties first, they're often upset, and as a result, may even reject a legitimate action or idea.</p>	<p><b>Don't think you always know what is best:</b> When you think you know best, you're already taking actions or making decisions for someone else without first checking with the person who is affected directly by what you are doing.</p>
<p><b>Check in before making plans:</b> Check with caregiver and caseworker to discuss arrangements of an idea for an outing prior to discussing with the child.</p>	<p><b>Making promises:</b> Don't make promises you can't keep; keep the promises you make.</p>
<p><b>Stay firm yet willing to compromise:</b> Being firm means being strong in your convictions and confident in your manner, but not harsh in your tone or language. Show openness to hear the other person's input.</p>	<p><b>Don't reward inappropriate behavior:</b> If the youth is in trouble, but you have scheduled a visit confirm visit with caseworker first. Avoid addressing the issue with the child prior to receiving clarification from the caseworker as to the problem. CASA interactions should not be limited or removed as a form of punishment for the child.</p>
<p><b>Practice good listening skills:</b> Affirm that you have heard what was said. Summarize or paraphrase significant statements and then ask if you understood correctly. If strong emotions are expressed, affirm your awareness of the feelings of the speaker.</p>	<p><b>Avoid debating:</b> This fuels more defensiveness and will make you sound defensive as well. When something sounds contrary to your thoughts, avoid reacting quickly with a negative comment or disagreement. Confer with your Advocate Coordinator if the problem is unresolved. Avoid escalating conflicts and agree to disagree when there is no solution that is immediately available.</p>
<p><b>Assume that the other person means well:</b> Pull all conspiracy theories aside. This</p>	<p><b>Focusing on intentions:</b> Focusing on intentions instead of actions may cause you to interpret</p>

<p>assumption allows you to see and deal with the actions and ideas of others at face value. Assume positive intent.</p>	<p>inconsequential actions (the little things) as destructive or ill will. When you focus on someone's intentions, you often approach people with undue suspicion.</p>
<p><b>Check the facts:</b> Remember that people (children and adults) sometimes lie, manipulate and misrepresent issues and conversations. Check the facts with others before making judgements. If you know the person is lying to you, give them the opportunity to "own up" and tell you the truth. If they do, offer praise for being honest and don't become angry.</p>	<p><b>Avoid jumping to conclusions:</b> In this situation, you know what someone is going to say or whether something can work before you get the whole story. The assumption usually manifests in several annoying ways including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finishing people's sentences for them</li> <li>2. Interrupting before a message has been fully stated.</li> <li>3. Tuning out as soon as a person whom you find unfavorable starts talking.</li> <li>4. Dismissing a new idea before hearing the rationale for it.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Build relationship for long-term potential:</b> Try not to do things that make other people feel hurt and disrespected because sooner or later you're likely to run into those people again and they won't forget acts that they view as unprofessional conduct directed towards them.</p>	<p><b>Avoid assumptions and stereotyping:</b> Assumptions can also lead to mistakes, misunderstandings, and strained relationships when they're acted upon as absolute facts.</p>
<p><b>Deal with each person as an individual:</b> One person doesn't represent everyone. Get to know each person as an individual. The more you understand others, the better you can communicate with them.</p>	<p><b>Avoid generalizations:</b> Generalizations about people often come off as stereotypical remarks. By taking experiences with a limited number of people and attempting to make those experiences sound like absolute facts, you ignore the profound individual differences.</p>

## **VOLUNTEER RESIGNATION PROCEDURE**

While it is our hope and expectation that every volunteer appointed as a CASA stays with their case until permanency has been established and the CASA has been released from the case by the Judge, our office knows that unforeseen, emergency circumstances may arise that prevent a volunteer from completing their assignment.

The following procedure was designed to ensure that proper steps are taken by the CASA to prevent further harm to the child and to the child's case. Below are the procedures that must be followed to be removed from your CASA case:

Step 1: Submit a letter or email to the CASA office and/or appear in Court to request removal from a case.

Step 2: Advocate Coordinator will notify all parties involved and assign another volunteer to the child(ren), if appropriate.

Step 3: Submit a final report to CASA, giving a summary of the current situation with the children and any concerns you have about the case.

Step 4: Submit all documents, records and case file information to your Advocate Coordinator.

Step 5: After acceptance by Advocate Coordinator and/or Executive Director, meet in person with the children involved to inform them of your leaving.

Step 6: Meet with member of Advocate Advisory Committee for exit interview.

Documentation of the issues which led to consideration of termination, and documentation of the termination itself must be retained in the volunteer's file.

## **TERMINATION**

**A volunteer may be removed from an individual case at any time by the order of the Juvenile Court Judge.**

### **Corrective Action**

Corrective action may be taken if the volunteer's work is unsatisfactory. Corrective action is within the discretion of the Executive Director and the Advocate Coordinator and may include but is not limited to:

1. Additional supervision



2. Retraining
3. Referral to another volunteer position
4. Separation from the Program

### **Separation from Program**

Separation from the Program may occur at the discretion of the Executive Director. Appropriate grounds for separation include but are not limited to:

1. The Volunteer being charged with a crime against a child or any gross neglect or misconduct.
2. Breach of confidentiality.
3. The Volunteer acts without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the capacity or power of the CASA Program.
4. The Volunteer violates a program policy, court order or law.
5. The Volunteer demonstrates inability to effectively carry out CASA volunteer duties. (See Request for Removal from a case)
6. The Volunteer fails to complete required ongoing training.
7. The Volunteer falsifies volunteer applications or misrepresents fact during the screening process.
8. The Volunteer becomes inappropriately or over-involved with the child, natural family or placement provider.
9. The Volunteer fails to satisfactorily complete initial training.
10. The Volunteer's references are not consistent with application or screening process.
11. Violation of the program's nondiscrimination and/or sexual harassment policy.
12. Soliciting or accepting gratuities.
13. Neglect of duty or incompetence.
14. Failure to contact child monthly without a legitimate reason.

15. No contact with CASA staff for two months including no reports to the office, no replies to letter and/or returning phone calls from CASA staff.
16. When the child's best interests are not being served.
17. Repeated failure to do Reports to the Court.

### **Request for Removal from a case**

In the event corrective action is insufficient to improve the work of a volunteer a request will be made to the Juvenile Office to review the status of a CASA's appointment. A motion will be filed, and the volunteer will be noticed. The volunteer will be given the opportunity to resign voluntarily or explain to the Judge in court why they should remain on a case.

### **Dismissal from a Case**

A volunteer may be dismissed from a case for the following reasons:

1. Interfering with the case plan.
2. At the request of the Juvenile Judge.
3. For failure to act in a professional manner as an Officer of the Court.
4. Breach of confidentiality.

At the time of a volunteer dismissal all files, notes, and any other materials associated with the CASA case will be returned to the CASA Executive Director within five (5) working days of the dismissal.

### **Procedure for Dismissal from a Case**

Upon a motion being filed for removal of a CASA from a case by Capital City CASA, a parent's attorney, Guardian Ad Litem, Juvenile Office or Children's Division, a hearing will be scheduled. The volunteer will appear before the Judge and be given an opportunity to defend their actions. The Juvenile Judge will make the final decision on the volunteer's ability to stay on a case or be removed.

## REPORTING POSSIBLE ABUSE OR NEGLECT

To ensure that all suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect are reported under the appropriate laws and regulations, CASA volunteers and staff report all suspected cases of abuse and/or neglect in compliance with appropriate state statutes to appropriate protection organization(s).

### **Definitions:**

**Abuse:** Any act that constitutes a violation or a criminal sexual conduct statute; the intentional and non-therapeutic infliction of pain or injury or any persistent course of conduct intended to produce mental or emotional distress.

**Neglect:** Failure of a caretaker to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, health care, or supervision; or the absence or likelihood of absence of necessary food, clothing, shelter, health care, or supervision of the child.

**Caretaker:** An individual or facility accountable for caring for child either responsible for all or some of the care voluntarily or by contract or agreement, such as: a parent, relative, foster parents, daycare, or residential institutions.

**Report:** Any correspondence received by the local child protection agency, police department, county sheriff, or licensing agency; a verbal and/or written statement of abuse and/or neglect states the following:

- What has happened
- To whom it happened
- When it happened
- Where it happened
- Who did the abusing or was responsible for the neglect

**Individual mandated to report:** A professional or the professional's delegate who is engaged in the care of the child, or in education, social services, law enforcement, or any related occupations, who had knowledge of the abuse or neglect of a child, has reasonable cause to believe that a child is being or has been abused or neglected, or has knowledge that a child has sustained a physical injury that is not reasonably explained by the history of injuries provided by the caretaker or caretakers of the child. Any CASA volunteer or staff member who discovers, within the course of providing services, any suspected abuse and/or neglect will immediately report such occurrence to their immediate supervisor and/or appropriate protection agency. This includes:

- Any knowledge of abuse and/or neglect.

- Any knowledge of child self-abuse and/or neglect.
- Reasonable cause to suspect abuse and/or neglect.
- Reasonable cause to suspect self-abuse and/or neglect.
- Any knowledge that a child has sustained an injury that is not reasonably explained by the child's history of injuries.

Child Abuse Neglect Hotline.....800-392-3738

### **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

**Policy Statement:**

Capital City CASA will provide equal opportunities for all applicants for volunteer positions without regard to national origin, race, color, religion, age, gender, pregnancy, appearance, disability, marital status, veteran status, or any other protected status.

Any illegal discrimination or harassment, regardless of its form, is unacceptable. An objective of Capital City CASA is to provide a working environment that is free of discrimination for all volunteers.

**Procedure:**

It is the responsibility of management to ensure that equal opportunity and equal consideration be given to all applicants for volunteer positions.

### **ANTI-HARRASSMENT POLICY**

**Policy Statement:**

Capital City CASA's Board and staff are committed to a work environment that reflects dignity, respect, and equitable treatment. Harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, marital status, disability, appearance, veteran status, citizenship or any other protected status is a violation of the law. Offensive or harassing behavior will not be tolerated against any employee or volunteer.

This policy applies to conduct by or directed toward any Capital City CASA employee, other worker, volunteer, business associate, or client in our workplace. It also applies to any business-related settings outside the workplace, including business trips, meetings and business-related social events.

## **Definitions:**

Offensive conduct or harassment of a sexual nature, or based on race, color, religion, age, gender, national origin, marital status, disability, appearance, veteran status, citizenship or other protected status is prohibited. This may include but is not limited to:

- Offensive physical actions, written or spoken, and graphic communication that ridicules, denigrates, insults, belittles, or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of national origin, race, color, religion, age, gender, pregnancy, appearance, disability, marital status, veteran status, citizenship or any other protected status.
- Any type of physical contact when the action is unwelcoming by recipient (for example, brushing up against someone in an offensive manner).
- Expectations, requests, demands or pressure for sexual favors.
- Slurs, jokes, posters, cartoons, and gestures that are offensive. Any such offensive conduct will be considered a prohibited form of harassment when any of the following are true:
  - There is a promise or implied promise of preferential treatment or negative consequence regarding employment decisions or status.
  - Such conduct that has the effect of creating an intimidating or hostile or offensive work environment, or unreasonably interferes with a person's work performance.
  - A third party is offended by the sexual conduct or communication of others.
  - Harassment is considered a form of employee misconduct. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who violates this policy. Based upon the seriousness of the offense, disciplinary action may include verbal or written reprimand, suspension, or termination of employment or volunteer status.

## **Complaint Procedure:**

- Anyone who believes he or she is being discriminated against because of harassing behavior (for example other employees being given special treatment in exchange for sexual favor(s)), should immediately report the incident to the Executive Director, or his/her designee; in the instance of the Executive Director, the matter should be reported to the President of the Capital City CASA Board of Directors.

- If you believe you have witnessed or experienced inappropriate behavior in the workplace, or if you are aware of such behavior, you have a responsibility to report the behavior immediately to the Executive Director or member of the Capital City CASA Board of Directors.
- The individual stating a claim of discrimination, harassment or retaliation must file a written and signed complaint with the Executive Director. No formal action will be taken against any person under this Policy unless a written and signed complaint is on file containing sufficient details to allow the Executive Director to determine if the policy may have been violated. The employee making the complaint (complainant) may use the complaint form below.
- Upon receiving the complaint, the Executive Director will review the complaint.
- Within five (5) working days of receiving the complaint, the Executive Director will:
  - Provide a copy of the complaint to the person(s) charged (respondent); and
  - Initiate the investigation to determine whether there is a reasonable basis for believing that the alleged violation of this policy occurred.
- During the investigation, the Executive Director together with her/his designee will interview the complainant, the respondent and any witnesses to determine whether the conduct occurred.
- Within fifteen (15) business days of the complaint being filed or referred to the Executive Director, the investigation will conclude, and a report of findings submitted to the Board of Directors with copies to the complainant and respondent.
- If it is determined that harassment or discrimination in violation of Capital City CASA's policy has occurred, the Executive Director will recommend that appropriate disciplinary action be taken by the organization. The appropriate action will depend on the following factors: (a) The severity, frequency and pervasiveness of the conduct; (b) Prior complaints made by the complainant; (c) Prior complaints made against the respondent; (d) The quality of the evidence (first hand knowledge, credible corroboration, etc.).

- If the investigation is inconclusive or it is determined that there has been no harassment or discrimination in violation of this policy, but some potentially problematic conduct is revealed, preventative action may be taken.
- Within five (5) days after the investigation is concluded, the Executive Director will meet with the complainant and the respondent separately, to notify them in person of the findings of the investigation and to inform them of the action being recommended.
- The complainant and the respondent may submit statements to the Executive Director challenging the factual basis of the findings. Any such statement must be submitted no later than five (5) working days after the meeting with the Executive Director in which the findings of the investigation are discussed.
- At the next regularly scheduled Board meeting after the date the Executive Director meets with the complainant and respondent, the Board of Directors will review the investigative report and any statements submitted by the complainant or respondent, discuss results of the investigation with the Executive Director and other management staff as may be appropriate, and decide what action, if any, will be taken. The Executive Director will report the Board of Directors' decision to the complainant and respondent and other management staff as is appropriate. Capital City CASA's decision will be in writing and will include findings of fact and a statement for or against disciplinary action. If disciplinary action is to be taken, the sanction will be stated.

**No Retaliation Permitted:**

The following will not be permitted:

- Retaliation against an individual for reporting unlawful harassment
- Retaliation against an individual for participating in an investigation into allegations of harassment.

If you have witnessed or experienced behavior you believe to be retaliation, or if you are aware of such behavior, you have a responsibility to report the behavior immediately to the Executive Director.

Capital City CASA will not tolerate any effort to avoid, hinder, or corrupt the complaint or investigation process, including refusal to cooperate with an investigation or knowingly making false statements to management or personnel during the complaint or investigation process. Such action may result in action up to and including termination of employment or volunteer status.

**Capital City CASA**

Harassment Complaint form:

Your name (complainant): \_\_\_\_\_

Person complaint filed against (respondent): \_\_\_\_\_

Title of respondent: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the facts of the incident, i.e. nature of the actions, words exchanged, etc. (be as factual as possible). (Additional sheets may be attached if more space to write is needed):

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Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For Office Use:

Received by Executive Director on: \_\_\_\_\_

Executive Director's signature: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Conceal and Carry**

While citizens of Missouri are free to carry a concealed weapon in other situations in compliance with Missouri State law, the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Capital City CASA program has a strict policy prohibiting CASA volunteers from concealing/carrying any weapon while acting in the role of a CASA volunteer.

This holds true, not only for child visits, but also for all other parts of the assigned child's case and time in court. This is for safety reasons, combined with maintaining the high credibility of Capital City CASA.

From the National CASA perspective, one of the primary duties of CASA volunteers is to look out for the safety of their assigned child/ren and to reduce the likelihood of future harm. Putting a child/family at risk in any way, such as carrying a concealed weapon while with the child/family, would be contrary to the CASA mission.

As we all know, being a CASA volunteer is a privilege not a right. We thoroughly screen CASA volunteers to protect the vulnerable children with whom CASA works. Capital City CASA has a duty to ensure that its volunteers exemplify the values of the National CASA program while in the role of Court Appointed Special Advocate.

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATION WITH PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY**

### **Policy:**

The 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Court Appointed Special Advocates (“CASA”) will take reasonable steps to ensure that persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access and an equal opportunity to participate in our services, activities, programs and other benefits. The policy also provides for communication of information contained in vital documents. All interpreters, translators and other aids needed to comply with this policy shall be provided without cost to the person being served, and clients and their families will be informed of the availability of such assistance free of charge.

Language assistance will be provided through use of competent bilingual staff, staff interpreters, contracts or formal arrangements with local organizations providing interpretation or translation services, or technology and telephonic interpretation services. All staff will be provided notice of this policy and procedure. CASA will be attentive to the language access needs of our client population, as well as update this policy and these procedures, as necessary.

### **Procedures:**

#### **1. Identifying LEP people and their language**

CASA will promptly identify the language and communication needs of the LEP person. If necessary, staff will use a language identification card (or “I speak cards,” available online at [www.lep.gov](http://www.lep.gov)) or posters to determine the language.

#### **2. Obtaining a qualified interpreter**

The Executive Director is responsible for contracting with an appropriate contract agency when the need arises. The Director will:

- (a)** Maintain an accurate and current list showing the name, language, phone number and hours of availability of bilingual staff, if any;
- (b)** Contact the appropriate bilingual contract staff member to interpret, in the event that an interpreter is needed, if an employee who speaks the needed language is available and is qualified to interpret;
- (c)** Obtain an outside interpreter if a bilingual staff or staff interpreter is not available or does not speak the needed language.

Some LEP persons may prefer or request to use a family member or friend as an interpreter. However, family members or friends of the LEP person will not be

used as interpreters unless specifically requested by that individual and after the LEP person has understood that an offer of an interpreter at no charge to the person has been made by the facility. Such an offer and the response will be documented in the person's file. If the LEP person chooses to use a family member or friend as an interpreter, issues of competency of interpretation, confidentiality, privacy, and conflict of interest will be considered. If the family member or friend is not competent or appropriate for any of these reasons, competent interpreter services will be provided to the LEP person.

Children and other clients will not be used to interpret, to ensure confidentiality of information and accurate communication.

### **3. Providing written translation**

**(a)** When translation of vital documents is needed, a CASA will submit documents for translation into frequently-encountered languages to the Executive Director. Original documents being submitted for translation will be in final, approved form with updated and accurate legal and medical information.

**(b)** Facilities will provide translation of other written materials, if needed, as well as written notice of the availability of translation, free of charge, for LEP individuals.

## **VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Capital City CASA Volunteer Handbook describes valuable information about becoming a successful child advocate. I understand that I should contact the Executive Director if I have any questions regarding anything covered in the Volunteer Handbook or any other Capital City CASA policies.

I have entered a volunteer relationship with Capital City CASA and acknowledge that I shall not receive any form of payment for volunteer talents and services I contribute to Capital City CASA.

Since the information and policies described in the Handbook are subject to change, I acknowledge that revisions to the Handbook may occur. I understand that I will be informed of any changes that are made due to federal or state laws, National CASA, or Capital City CASA policy.

I understand the time commitment to each case varies according to the case requirements. I understand the materials and case content are always confidential, even after the case is closed or the volunteer role is completed.

The contents of this Handbook and the policies and procedures described in it are presented as a matter of information. The Handbook is intended to provide guidelines for the Executive Director, Advocate Coordinators and volunteers. I have received the Volunteer Handbook, and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this Handbook.

Volunteer Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_