

Volunteer Service Description

Program Goals

1. To provide independently derived, factual information to the Juvenile Court regarding abused, neglected and dependent children and youth.
2. To advocate for children who have been declared Children In Need of Assistance (CINA).
3. To monitor cases involving Children In Need of Assistance until the children have been permanently placed and/or the Court, the CASA volunteer and the CASA staff mutually agree that CASA's involvement is no longer necessary.

Volunteer Responsibilities

1. **Conduct an independent investigation concerning CINA's**
 - Interview the child and, whenever possible, all relevant adults involved in the case and the child's life.
 - Review appropriate records and reports to include but not be limited to court records, DSS records, health records and school records.
 - Observe and interact with the child and other significant individuals in the child's life.
2. **Factually and objectively report all relevant findings and observations to the Juvenile Court and CASA staff**
 - Provide a signed written report to the Court and all parties to the proceeding with recommendations about what placement and services are in the child's best interest that takes into account all relevant information and the child's wishes.
 - Participate in case conferences and Department of Social Services facilitation meetings.
3. **Ensure representation of the child's best interest in all judicial proceedings**
 - Attend all court proceedings to ensure that all relevant facts are presented.
 - Participate in any planning or facilitation meetings involving the child in order to keep informed of the child's permanent plan and progress towards achieving goals outlined in the plan.
 - Work collaboratively with public systems to ensure action on behalf of the child.
 - Work collaboratively with all interested parties to provide services to the child as appropriate.
 - Alert the court of the immediate needs of the child when necessary.
4. **Monitor the case following all Court Hearings**
 - Ascertain whether the child and family are receiving all services as ordered by the court.
 - Determine if a permanent plan has been created for the child, evaluate its merits, and determine whether appropriate services including "reasonable efforts" are being provided to the child and family.
 - Monitor the case by visiting the child a minimum of twice a month (or as arranged with the case supervisor) to observe whether the child's essential needs are being met, and whether the Court's Orders are being carried out.
 - Monitor the family's ability to comply with court orders.
 - Alert the social worker, child's attorney, CASA supervisor and the court, as appropriate, of the immediate needs of the child and family when necessary.
 - Remain actively involved in the case until formally discharged by the Court.
 - In cases of youth who are preparing to emancipate to independence, assist in the planning and execution of a Transition Plan to ensure they are prepared to live on their own.
5. **Attend training arranged by Program Staff**
 - Attend all pre-service training sessions.
 - Attend 12 hours of in-service training each year.



6. Consult regularly with your case supervisor concerning your assigned case

- Regularly attend supervision meetings with your case supervisor.
- Develop a case investigation plan with your case supervisor.
- Discuss preliminary findings.
- Review progress in the case by maintaining contact with all relevant service providers and interested parties.
- Review reports presented to the court.
- Maintain complete written records about the case, including appointments, interviews, time spent and information gathered about the child and submit monthly time and mileage logs.

Required Skills and Abilities:

- Ability to relate to a child or youth in age-appropriate manner, to respect the child's feelings toward family members, explain the role of the volunteer and explain that conversations may be shared with the Court or other parties to the case.
- Ability to keep all client and court information confidential.
- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.
- Ability to respect and relate to people from various backgrounds (economic, cultural and educational) in a variety of settings.
- Ability to transport self to a variety of locations.
- Ability to maintain objectivity.
- Ability to gather and accurately record factual information.
- A basic understanding of child and young adult development.
- A basic understanding of family relationships.

Training:

Volunteers must attend all of the scheduled pre-service sessions in order to be sworn in as a CASA volunteer. This training consists of 35-40 hours and is scheduled several times a year. Following satisfactory completion of the training, volunteers are required to accept a case within three months.

All volunteers must complete 12 hours of in-service training each year. A variety of opportunities including conferences, work-shops, book clubs and online training are offered to complete this requirement.

Time Commitment:

1. One year or one case commitment to the program
2. Visit with the child(ren) a minimum of twice per month or as arranged by your case supervisor.
3. Acceptance of a case assignment within three months of completion of pre-service training.
4. Attendance at all court hearings which occur about every six months.
5. 12 hours of in-service training per year.
6. Attendance at regularly scheduled supervision meetings with your case supervisor.



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CASA Federal Tax ID Number: 52-1772617
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