
Cumberland County COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE Program

Cumberland County CASA Program
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CASA Volunteer Job Description

TITLE	Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Volunteer
OBJECTIVE	To act as an advocate, in accordance with the PA Juvenile Act (Title 42 Act PA C.S. Sec. 6301 et.seq.), for children who come to the attention of the court primarily as a result of abuse and/or neglect.
QUALIFICATIONS	Volunteers must be at least twenty-one years of age and must successfully complete screening requirements including a written application, personal interview, at least four personal references and criminal background investigations. CASA volunteers shall be recruited and accepted into the Program without regard to gender, disabilities, age (21 or older), race or other condition.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A CASA VOLUNTEER

1. Respects a Child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets that Child's best interests.
2. Identifies and ensures that the Child's best interests are represented throughout the entire case.
3. Obtains first-hand a clear understanding of the needs and situation of the Child by reviewing all relevant documents and records and interviewing the Child, parents, social workers, teachers, mental health and medical professionals and other persons to determine the facts and circumstances of the child's situation.
4. Determines that an appropriate permanent plan has been created for the Child and that services, including reasonable efforts for reunification, are being provided to the child and family.
5. Monitors whether service plans and court orders are being implemented in a timely manner and whether review hearings are being held in accordance with the law.
6. Reports any new incidents of child abuse or neglect to ChildLine, the CASA coordinator, Children & Youth Services, and other appropriate authorities, as a mandated reporter under the Child Protective Services Law.

7. Attends all court hearings, Permanency Hearings and/or Family Service Plan Reviews, staffings and other meetings that pertain to the Child, as appropriate, advocating for the Child's best interests to assure that the Child's needs in these areas are being met.
8. Maintains complete records and documentation about the case, including appointments, interviews, and information gathered about the Child.
9. Submits findings and recommendations for specific appropriate services for the Child and, when appropriate, the child's family, in a written report at every hearing.
10. Informs the Court promptly of important developments in the case through appropriate means as determined by court rules or statute.
11. Seeks cooperative solutions by acting as a facilitator among parties.
12. Notifies Children & Youth Services of any changes in address, phone number, or household composition of child and/or parents.
13. Continues contact with the CASA office at least once per month.
14. Has regular and sufficient in-person contact with the Child at least once monthly to ensure in-depth knowledge of the case and to make fact-based recommendations to the Court.
15. Maintains complete confidentiality regarding information about the Child, as well as information regarding other parties involved in the case.
16. Exhibits professionalism in behavior and appearance.
17. Assures that there is no relationship to any party involved in the assigned case, or that she/he is not employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest.
18. Provides no direct services to any party that may lead to a conflict of interest or potential liability, or cause a child or family to become dependent on the CASA volunteer for services that should be provided by other agencies or organizations.
19. Remains actively involved in the case until a permanent resolution is established for the Child and/or formal discharge is ordered by the Court.
20. Returns all case-related materials to the CASA office after Dependency of the child has been terminated, by Order of the Court.

TRAINING

- A CASA volunteer completes 35-40 hours of initial training, which includes policies and procedures of the CASA Program and Dependency Court; dynamics and human behavior associated with child abuse and neglect; relevant local, state and federal laws; permanency planning and family preservation; communication and interview skills; and the roles and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer. As part of training, a CASA volunteer also observes Dependency Court proceedings.
- A CASA volunteer must complete 12 hours of in-service training each year, following the first year of service.

TIME COMMITMENT

- Once appointed to a child, a CASA volunteer makes a commitment to the case for at least 18-24 months, or until a permanent placement is found for the child.