

CASA Volunteer Job Description

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained volunteer appointed by the juvenile court to provide objective, factual information in the best interests of a child who is involved in an abuse or neglect case in the court system. The CASA takes into account the child's age, maturity, culture, and ethnicity to achieve the goal of a safe and permanent home as quickly as possible.

Qualifications

- Must be 21 years of age or older.
- Must have interests in the rights and individual needs of children.
- Must have a flexible schedule with time available to visit children regularly, gather information, and attend court hearings and other meetings while the case is active in Juvenile Court.
- Must be committed to the mission of the CASA program.
- Must successfully pass a reference check and a criminal/DCFS background check.
- Must successfully complete a 40-hour volunteer training program.
- Must be in a stable period in your life in order to commit fully to the children you will serve and maintain the consistency and reliability needed for this volunteer experience.
- Must be able to provide your own transportation.
- Must have access to computer, private email, and private voice mail.

Required Skills and Abilities

- A desire to work with and support children.
- Ability to work respectfully, objectively, and non-judgmentally with people of varied backgrounds [socio-economic, racial, religious, ethnic, cultural, educational differences, etc.]
- Patience with the child welfare and court systems.
- Communicate tactfully and effectively, in writing and verbally. Write court reports in English.
- Maintain strict confidentiality regarding client information and court records.
- Adhere to deadlines and timetables involving an assigned case and turn in all reports on time.
- Basic writing and computer skills (email and word processing).

Time Commitments

- Participate in initial and end-of-training interviews to discern appropriate fit of position.
- Participate in 40 hours of pre-service volunteer training, which consists of weekly pre-work and in-person classes. Training may include a Thursday or Friday morning of court observation.
- Spend approximately 10-12 hours every month on active casework and reporting, including visiting the child in-person at least twice a month until the court closes the case.
- Participating in monthly supervision with your Advocate Manager.
- Accumulate 12 hours per year of continuing education credit.
- Commit to remaining with the case until permanency has been established and the Juvenile Court case has been closed (usually a minimum of one year; average case length is 2 years).

Specific Duties of a CASA Volunteer

- To be the Eyes and Ears of the Court, and the Voice for the child.
- Be available for a case assignment unless other arrangements are made. Case assignment will include one child or one sibling group.
- Establish a relationship with the child that builds rapport but maintains enough distance to objectively report findings to the Court. (CASA is not a mentor program.)
- Visiting the child in-person at least twice a month until the court closes the case.
- Conduct an ongoing, independent investigation to obtain a firsthand, clear understanding of the child's needs while consistently focusing on the child's future.
- Gather and record factual information regarding the child's welfare and needs.
- Maintain timely and thorough case notes in program's system of record, including all hours and mileage logs.
- Prepare and submit timely written reports to the Court for each court hearing, providing factual, objective information and recommendations that are in the best interests of the child.
- Attend scheduled court hearings, school meetings, administrative case reviews, and other inter-agency meetings regarding the child.
- Monitor the court orders and approved plans for the child to assure implementation.
- Participate in monthly supervision with CASA staff and provide timely, regular updates regarding all case activity.
- Support the court's permanency goal for the child unless able to provide clear, convincing, and objective information to support a goal change.
- Never transport the child or be in a position to be the sole supervisor of the child.
- Perform mandated reporter duties, if they become necessary.
- Know and adhere to all volunteer personnel policies.
- Adhere to standards set forth by Illinois CASA and National CASA programs.

Advocates are to conduct themselves in an ethical manner which upholds the credibility and dignity of CASA of McHenry County's mission by conducting all business in an honest, fair, professional, and humane manner.

Equal Opportunity

CASA of McHenry County is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in accepting, training and assigning applicants. CASA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, or other category. CASA will act in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.