

WHAT IS A COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA)?

WHAT IS A CASA VOLUNTEER?

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Volunteer is a trained citizen appointed by the Juvenile and Judge to advocate for the best interests of a child involved in an abuse or neglect case.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CASA VOLUNTEER?

A CASA Volunteer provides the judge with a detailed report, which includes carefully researched background information of the child and parents. This information is obtained to help the court make an informed decision about the child's future. The Volunteer will visit the child at least 2 times a month, or once every 6-8 weeks if the child is placed out of the area. The CASA Volunteer follows through on the Case until Permanency is achieved. The CASA Volunteer can be assigned to at least once per month.

HOW DOES A CASA VOLUNTEER INVESTIGATE THE CASE?

The CASA Volunteer talks with the child, parents, family members, social workers, school officials, health providers, counselors, and others who are knowledgeable about the child's history and circumstances. The CASA Volunteer reviews records pertaining to the child, including school, medical and caseworker reports. The CASA Volunteer also conducts announced and unannounced visits to the parents' homes, possibly over the weekend or in the evening.

HOW DOES A CASA VOLUNTEER DIFFER FROM A CHILDREN AND YOUTH CASEWORKER?

The child-focused role of the CASA Volunteer is to give children a voice in court through reports submitted to the judge. The Volunteer monitor's compliance with services coordinated by Children and Youth caseworker (CYS) and ordered by the court. The CYS caseworker is responsible for coordinating services for the family and the child and to monitor compliance.

HOW DOES A CASA VOLUNTEER DIFFER FROM A GUARDIAN AD LITEM?

A Guardian ad Litem (GAL) must be a certified attorney. The CASA Volunteer does not provide legal representation in the courtroom.

WHAT TRAINING DOES A CASA VOLUNTEER RECEIVE?

CASA Volunteers attend a thorough training course of approximately 30 hours, plus courtroom observation. Volunteers learn about courtroom procedures, effective advocacy techniques, report writing, and investigation procedures. They also learn about child abuse and neglect, child development, adverse childhood experiences (ACE's), domestic violence, substance abuse and other topics relating to children who are abused and neglected. Active CASA Volunteers must continue their training through completion of 12 in-service credits annually.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE CASA PROGRAM?

CASA Volunteers offer children trust and advocacy during complex legal proceedings. The CASA Volunteer is a consistent figure and provides continuity for the child until permanency has been achieved. In addition, the CASA Volunteer provides the court with detailed information to assist the judge in making very important decisions about a child's future.

HOW LONG DOES A CASA VOLUNTEER REMAIN INVOLVED WITH THE CASE?

The Volunteer generally continues until the case is resolved or Permanency is achieved. This typically takes approximately 18 months.

DO JUDGES, LAWYERS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS SUPPORT THE CASA PROGRAM?

Yes! CASA has been endorsed by the American Bar Association, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, and the National Association of Counsel for Children.

DO THE FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS SUPPORT THE CASA PROGRAM?

Yes! CASA is a priority project of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (an office of the Department of Justice).

WHO CAN BE A CASA VOLUNTEER?

CASA Volunteers come from all walks of life. They have a variety of professional, educational and ethnic backgrounds. Volunteers may be working full or part time, or may be retired. Since training is provided for all CASA Volunteers, interested individuals do not need any special education or requirements. All CASA Volunteers must pass extensive background checks and are selected based on their objectivity, competence and commitment.

WHAT IS NOT THE ROLE OF THE CASA PROGRAM/VOLUNTEER?

The CASA Volunteer and staff do not offer legal advice, specific services or transportation for clients or their families. The CASA Volunteer is prohibited by regulation from questioning the child regarding a precipitating incident or allegation involving child abuse and neglect.



CASA OF FAYETTE COUNTY

39 S. Beeson Blvd.
Uniontown, PA 15401
724.220.6179
casafayette.org

CASA Fayette County, PA will be offering volunteer training starting September 20. For anyone interested, please visit casafayette.org or call 724-220-6170.