

VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

Reports To: CASA Program staff

Purpose: The Court Appointed Special Advocate is a trained volunteer who: speaks up for the best interest of abused, neglected and dependent children in the court system; and works to ensure that the child's right to a safe and permanent home is addressed quickly and with due consideration.

Qualifications:

- Interest in children and their needs and rights
- Completion of 30+ hours of pre-service training, observation of at least 3 CASA court cases and 12-hours of additional in-service continuing education hours per calendar year
- Maturity, professionalism, confidence, common sense and stability
- Ability to work with a broad spectrum of the community in a sensitive, positive and objective manner
- Good communication skills
- At least 21 years of age
- Able to pass extensive criminal background check

Duties:

- Attendance at pre-service and in-service trainings
- Commitment to a minimum one-year assignment, averaging 10 hours per month
- Conducting an independent investigation into each case; meeting with the child and other relevant persons **AT LEAST ONCE PER MONTH**, reviewing all pertinent records and documents, maintaining contact with the child **AT LEAST TWICE PER MONTH** to monitor progress
- Attend **ALL** court hearings (**MANDATORY** unless it is an **EMERGENCY**), be prepared to give verbal reports in addition to the written reports submitted prior to certain hearings
- Maintain complete and accurate records of time and activities through Optima contact logs or handwritten Activity Forms (to be submitted to CASA program staff **MONTHLY**)
- Submit a **MONTHLY** report (via CASA Program staff or Optima)
- Submit quality written reports **NO LESS THAN FOUR DAYS** in advance of your next court date for all applicable hearing types
- Assist in the identification of resources appropriate to meet the needs of the child/children in your case

- **MAINTAIN STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY**

Investigator: As an investigator, it is the job of the CASA Volunteer to obtain all the information about the child and child's family. This is done by interviewing all parties to the case (DCBS, GAL, parents/guardians, and the child him/herself if age permits) and any secondary sources such as teachers/school personnel, therapists and physicians that may have knowledge of the child's situation. Determining all relevant facts through personal interviews and thorough review of records, documents and clinical data. Once the investigation is complete, the CASA Volunteer will then submit a written report to the Court, which shall include their objective recommendations **BASED UPON FACTS.**

Reporter: As a reporter, it is the job of the CASA Volunteer to ensure that all of the facts of the case are presented before the Court. These are presented in the form of both written report and/or direct, spoken testimony. Written reports shall include all relevant, factual information gathered from interviews and record reviews done during the investigative phase, an assessment of the child's current situation and all recommendations regarding placement and provision of services to the child and the child's family.

Monitor: As a monitor, it is the job of the CASA Volunteer to keep strict watch on the child's situation in regard to staying in compliance with all court orders. It is also important to monitor the various agencies involved to ensure that they are making a good faith effort in providing services in a timely fashion and are not the cause of unnecessary delays. The child must be monitored in terms of his/her environment and in terms of his/her educational, therapeutic and medical needs. If non-compliance is discovered, the CASA Volunteer will then contact the CASA office, DCBS and the GAL assigned to their case. CASA Volunteers ensure that the Court, DCBS and all legal counsel involved in their case are fulfilling their obligation to promote the best interests of all children involved.

Advocate: The most important function of a CASA Volunteer is that of an advocate. Most children have natural advocates in the form of their parents. However, in child abuse, neglect and dependency cases, the CASA Volunteer may very well be the **ONLY** person who is first and foremost **THEIR** advocate. The CASA Volunteer is the one person who can directly speak up for that child and that child's needs. CASA Volunteers are a voice for children who are otherwise voiceless.

Mandatory Reporter: CASA Volunteers are, therefore, required by law to report any case of suspected abuse, neglect or dependency. If during the course of their work as a CASA Volunteer they glean firsthand knowledge of or have suspicions that a child is

being abused or neglected, they **MUST** report their concerns **IMMEDIATELY** to the CASA office and to DCBS.

CASA Volunteers are the eyes and ears of the Court, making independent, objective recommendations regarding the best interest of the child. Since the CASA Volunteer is only one of the parties providing recommendations to the Court, the Court may or may not accept their recommendations. Each case is decided upon the basis of the facts presented by all parties and how those facts relate to the case and to state and federal law.

*A CASA is encouraged to get to know the **appointed child well**, but is cautioned to keep the relationship on a professional level in order to maintain an objective viewpoint.

Benefits:

- Training, support and supervision from the staff of the CASA Program for Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties, Inc.
- Opportunity to learn about the juvenile court system as well as Social Services
- Opportunity to develop own skills and abilities
- Satisfaction from contributing to community services on behalf of children who are abused, neglected and/or dependent

VOLUNTEER DO'S & DON'TS

1. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** report any incident of child abuse/neglect to the CASA Program office, DCBS and other appropriate authorities.
2. The CASA Volunteer **DOES NOT** engage in the following:
 - Transporting a child/children
 - Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling
 - Making placement arrangements for the child/children
 - Giving money or expensive gifts to the child/children or family
 - Being a baby-sitter for the child/children to whom she or he is appointed
 - Becoming an advocate for the child/children's parents or anyone other than the assigned child/children
 - Taking on the role of "Big Brother" or "Big Sister"
 - Taking the child/children into his or her home or having the child/children in their custody

- Becoming a surrogate
 - Becoming part of the resolution of the case
 - Supervising visits between parents and child/children
 - Trying to work out problems between family members except by making recommendations to the Court or the CHFS SSW assigned to the child/children's case
 - Providing services to the child/children or family to whom he or she is assigned
 - Making recommendations that are not **FACT** based
3. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** discuss all recommendations concerning the case with the Executive Director or case supervisor prior to submitting recommendations or written reports to the Court.
 4. The CASA Case Supervisors **DO NOT** alter CASA Volunteer reports or recommendations without the knowledge and consent of the CASA Volunteer.
 5. The CASA Program **DOES** have a clear policy in place to resolve conflicts between a CASA Volunteer and their Case Supervisor regarding the handling of a case, the reporting of information or the recommendations to be included in a written report to be submitted to the Court.
 6. The CASA Volunteer should **NOT** have a conflict of interest regarding parties in their assigned case. Examples: being related to any parties involved in their assigned case, being employed in a position and/or agency that may result in a conflict of interest in their assigned case, being close friends of any of the parties involved in their assigned case, etc.
 7. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** visit the child/children in their assigned case **NO LESS THAN ONCE PER MONTH**.
 8. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** consult with their Case Supervisor on how to monitor children who have moved outside of Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties that are more than two hours away.
 9. The CASA Volunteer **DOES NOT** report the status of their assigned child/children based solely on information provided by social workers, foster parents, caretakers, etc.
 10. The CASA Volunteer's opinions, recommendations and status reports **ARE** made based upon their own independent observations of the child.
 11. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** document and credit all sources of hearsay information in their court reports.
 12. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** attempt to communicate with the DCBS SSW assigned to their case **NO LESS THAN ONCE PER MONTH**.
 13. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** attempt to have regular contact with the child/children's GAL, mental health professionals, educators, community

service agents and placement providers **NO LESS THAN ONCE PER MONTH.**

14. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** review permanency goals, educational and health information of each child and makes recommendations regarding each. Children in Foster Care will have medical information documented in their “Medical Passport Book”.
15. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** appear at **ALL** hearings regarding their assigned case(s) barring an **APPROVED EMERGENCY** and **DOES** submit written reports to the Court for all hearings requiring such. CASA Volunteers **DO** report any important case developments to the Court.
16. The CASA Volunteer **IS** encouraged to get to know their appointed child/children well, but is cautioned to keep the relationship on a professional level in order to maintain an objective viewpoint.
17. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** participate in case staffing and any other meetings pertaining to the child/children.
18. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** monitor the case plans for all parties until the child/children have permanency.
19. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** maintain complete case files and **DOES** make sure that the CASA Program office has the same information in their files.
20. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** receive guidance by professional CASA Program staff that have thorough knowledge of the child/children, family, statutory requirements and the social service delivery system. The CASA Program staff defines the framework for the CASA Volunteer’s conduct and ensures that their recommendations reflect realistic expectations that are within the parameters of the Court’s jurisdiction.

CONDUCT:

The CASA Volunteer role is a unique position. The nature of this position is very sensitive and the role requires a high level of visibility in the community and frequent interaction with professionals. It is important therefore to observe certain standards of conduct that will facilitate, rather than hinder, the acceptance of the CASA Volunteer as a part of the community’s skilled team responding to child abuse/neglect. CASA Volunteers must always identify themselves to clients and professionals as a Court Appointed Special Advocate from the CASA Program for Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties. Picture identification cards are provided to each CASA Volunteer, which should be presented for clarification of identification.

ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY:

- **Confidentiality:** The CASA Volunteer must maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of others in all matters relating to case assignments.

The District Court Judge will administer an Oath of Confidentiality, which the CASA Volunteer will affirm and sign at the “swearing in” ceremony. The signed Oath will be placed in the CASA Volunteer’s personnel file.

CASA Volunteer case notes/files, including electronic files, are to be kept confidential and secured from non-sworn-in volunteer’s ability to review. All hard copy files must be returned to the CASA Program office upon closure of the case and all electronic files must be deleted.

- **Respect, Fairness & Courtesy:** The CASA Volunteer should treat all parties to the case with respect, courtesy, fairness and good faith.
- **Use of Authority:** The CASA Volunteer should make appropriate use of authority in his/her case appointment, limiting the role of CASA Volunteer to fulfilling responsibilities within the particular case.
- **Development of Knowledge:** The CASA Volunteer should take responsibility for identifying and developing knowledge and fully utilizing information for his or her performance of their CASA Volunteer role.
- **Program Integrity:** The CASA Volunteer should not represent his/her personal views or opinions as those of the program nor should the CASA Volunteer 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 the CASA Volunteer.