

CASA FAQ

What is a CASA volunteer?

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer is a trained community member who is appointed by a judge to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in court so that the children can be safe, have a permanent family and an opportunity to thrive.

What is the CASA volunteer's role?

A CASA volunteer does four things: **investigate** the child's current circumstances, **facilitate** communication to ensure that the child's needs are being met, **advocate** for the child's best interests in and outside of court and **monitor** the activities of all parties to make sure the court's orders are being followed. At each hearing, the volunteer provides the judge with a carefully researched, written report (and sometimes testimony, depending on local practice) to help the court make sound decisions. The report contains recommendations regarding the child's safety, permanency and well-being and where the child should be placed.

How does a CASA volunteer investigate a case?

The CASA volunteer visits the child regularly and talks with parents, foster parents, family members, social workers, school officials, health providers and others who are knowledgeable about the child's history. The CASA volunteer also reviews all records pertaining to the child: social services case record, school and medical records along with other documents.

How does the role of a CASA volunteer differ from an attorney?

The CASA volunteer does not provide legal representation. That is the role of the attorney. However, the CASA volunteer does provide crucial background information to the court.

Is there a "typical" CASA volunteer?

CASA volunteers come from all walks of life, with a variety of educational and ethnic backgrounds. There are more than 85,000 CASA volunteers nationally. Many are employed full-time outside CASA.

What kind of training is provided?

Volunteers go through 30-40 hours of interactive, pre-service training, including court observation. Depending on the program, training is offered on various day/evening/weekend hours and times of the year to accommodate different schedules. 12 hours of in-service training is required annually.

How many cases on average does a CASA volunteer carry at a time?

The number varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but an average caseload is one to two cases (which can include various numbers of children per family).

How much time does it require?

Each case is different. A CASA volunteer usually spends about 10-15 hours doing research and conducting interviews prior to the first court appearance. More complicated cases take longer. Once initiated into the system, volunteers work about 8-10 hours a month.

How many CASA programs are there?

There are now nearly 1000 CASA programs in 49 states across the country and Washington, D.C.

How effective have CASA programs been?

Research suggests that children who have been assigned CASA volunteers tend to receive more services, are less likely to re-enter foster care and more likely to find a permanent placement than those who do not have a CASA.

How is CASA organized?

Every CASA volunteer is part of a local CASA program staffed by professionals who recruit, screen, train and supervise volunteers, as well as educate the community about the needs of these children.

How is CASA funded?

Local CASA programs are generally funded through a combination of private and public sources.