

**CASA**  
**of the**  
**Pikes Peak Region**  
Section III

**Volunteer Policy Manual**



**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

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**CASA OF THE PIKES PEAK REGION**

*Effective December 2013*

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## STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

### I. EXPECTATION: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A CASA

- 1) A CASA shall:
  - a) report any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect to the Peer Coordinator, CASA Supervisor, Social Services Hot Line and any other appropriate parties to the proceedings.
  - b) maintain complete written records about the case, including appointments, interviews, observations and other pertinent information gathered.
  - c) direct child and family to appropriate community resources.
  - d) investigate and fact find per the court order.
  - e) ensure that the child's best interest are being represented in all facets of the case by attending court hearings, attending foster care reviews and school staffing, writing timely court reports and advocating verbally to parties involved.
  - f) monitor the case by visiting the child a minimum of **two times each month** and
  - g) contacting involved parties to observe whether the child's essential needs are being met and whether the Court's orders are being followed. One of these visits must be at the child's current placement, whether foster care, relative or home.
  - h) participate and/or recognize the need for planning meetings or hearings involving the child in order to move positively toward a permanent plan for the child.
  - i) remain actively involved in the case until formally discharged by the Court and/or the CASA Program.
  - j) provide quarterly documentation of case activities to the Program.
  - k) determine if a permanent plan has been created for the child, and whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts are being provided to the child and family – in D&N cases.
  - l) submit written reports to the Court a minimum of once every three months in D & N cases, unless otherwise directed by their Case Supervisor or the Court.
  - m) earn 12 hours of in-service training each year.
  
- 2) A CASA Volunteer shall **not** provide direct service delivery to any parties that could: A) lead to a conflict of interest or liability problems or B) cause a child or a family to become dependent on the CASA Volunteer for services that should be provided by other agencies.

Examples of inappropriate volunteer practices are:

  - a) sheltering a child in the home
  - b) giving legal or therapeutic advice
  - c) making placement arrangements for the child
  - d) giving money or expensive gifts to the child or family
  - e) excessive or inappropriate contact with the child
  
- 3) A CASA volunteer at their own choice may transport children if he/she has a valid driver's license, safe driving record, current automobile insurance with the current state minimum requirement coverage (25/50) and follow Colorado's Child Passenger Safety Law. (For complete regulations regarding child passenger safety go to [http://www.csp.state.co.us/faq\\_detail.cfm?FAQ\\_ID=13](http://www.csp.state.co.us/faq_detail.cfm?FAQ_ID=13)).

  - a) The CASA must get permission from the person or agency that has legal custody of the child and their CASA case supervisor. It is the supervisor's responsibility to check the volunteer's file to verify license and insurance are current.

- b) The CASA must remain knowledgeable about the potential personal risk of liability and choose to accept it.
- 4) A CASA may not be related to any parties involved in the case or be employed in a position which might result in a conflict of interest.
- 5) A CASA is discouraged from giving children or family members their personal, home or work numbers.
- 6) The expectation of the CASA Program and Board of Directors is that of excellence in the job performance of volunteers. Job duties are outlined in the Volunteer Job Description, National CASA Code of Ethics, and the Volunteer Agreement. The National Standards are policies which are adhered to by CASA of the Pikes Peak Region, Inc. All three documents are included in these policies.

## II. REQUIREMENTS:

A volunteer applicant in the D&N advocacy program must be of a majority age in the State of Colorado. To be considered as a prospective volunteer, each applicant must successfully pass the screening requirements. These include: written application, volunteer questionnaire, four personal references, volunteer interview and national background checks. Background checks include; national criminal background check, child abuse registry, national sex offender registry, Social Security number verification, and driver's license bureau. Background checks will be repeated on all active volunteers every four (4) years.

## III. REJECTION:

Applicants for the CASA Volunteer Program may be rejected at the discretion of the administrative staff for any reason to include but not limited to: an applicant who refuses to sign a release of information form or has a criminal record.

## IV. COMPLETION OF TRAINING:

The volunteer must successfully complete the 30-37 hour CASA core training, sign the Volunteer Agreement form, Confidentiality Statement, Job Description, Volunteer Policies, and be sworn in as an official of the court. Completion of 12 additional hours of in-service are required annually (see *In-Service Training Credit Guidelines*.)

## V. MANDATORY REPORTING OF SUSPECTED ABUSE:

All suspected child abuse must be reported by volunteers *immediately*, first to the D.H.S. Hot Line, promptly thereafter to the CASA Staff, Peer Coordinator, to the Caseworker, to the Guardian ad Litem (GAL).

## VI. PROBATION PERIOD:

All volunteers once trained and sworn in, will be subject to a probationary period of six months after receiving their first case. At the end of six months, a review of their case work and in-service training will take place based on the CASAPPR Volunteer Policies and Standards, the Volunteer Agreement and the Code of Ethics. The review will be conducted by the Peer Coordinator, Case Supervisor, the Volunteer Manager or the Executive Director.

## VII. CORRECTIVE ACTION:

Corrective action may be taken if the volunteer's work is unsatisfactory. Corrective action is within the discretion of the Program Managers or the Directors and may include:

1. Additional supervision
2. Reassignment
3. Retraining
4. Referral to another volunteer position
5. Separation from the Program

## VIII. DISMISSAL PROCEDURE:

Separation from the program may occur at the discretion of the administrative staff. The ED has the discretion to dismiss a volunteer or if not available he/she may assign a proxy in their place. Appropriate grounds for separation include, but are not limited to:

1. The volunteer being charged with a crime against a child or any gross neglect or misconduct.
2. Breach of confidentiality.
3. The volunteer fails to satisfactorily complete initial training.
4. The volunteer takes action without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the capacity or power of the CASA Program.
5. The volunteer demonstrates inability to effectively carry out CASA duties.
6. The volunteer fails to complete required ongoing training.
7. The volunteer falsifies volunteer application or misrepresents facts during the screening process.
8. The volunteer becomes inappropriately over-involved with the child or family.
9. The volunteer violates a program policy, court order or law.
10. Engaging in ex-parte communication with the court
11. The existence of a conflict of interest that was not disclosed or cannot be resolved
12. criminal charges or allegations related to drugs or alcohol, or abuse or neglect of a child
13. The volunteer's references are not consistent with application or screening process

## IX. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CLAUSE:

As stated in the By-Laws of CASA of the Pikes Peak Region, Inc.

*The Corporation shall not restrict its services, employment, membership of the Board of Directors, and all other public involvement by the Corporation because of age, race, creed, color, nationality or sexual orientation.*

## X. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

It is CASA's policy to prohibit sexual harassment of its volunteers in the work place by any person and in any form. If a volunteer believes that they are the victims of sexual harassment, the matter should be reported promptly to the Executive Director. When the

allegation involves the Executive Director, the President of the Board of Directors or any other member of the Board should be notified.

#### XI. RESIDENT ALIENS AS CASA VOLUNTEERS

When a person with resident alien status applies to be a CASA volunteer, the CASA program will ascertain:

- 1) How long that person has been in the United States
- 2) How long that person has had resident alien status
- 3) Whether the CASA program is able to conduct an adequate background check and gather necessary information from the prospective volunteer.

The person with resident alien status shall provide physical evidence of this status. Resident alien status is a legal status and should not prohibit someone from becoming a CASA volunteer. The inability to do an adequate background check or to obtain necessary information from any prospective volunteer could make it difficult for that person to become a CASA volunteer. The language skills of the resident alien CASA volunteer may be valuable to the child and to others in the child welfare system.

### **ADDENDUM A - POLICIES THAT PERTAIN TO VOLUNTEER CONDUCT**

#### **CRIMINAL CASE HEARING POLICY**

CASAs do not go to hearings on other cases that include the family unless there is specific information the volunteer feels he/she needs to gather from the hearing. The CASA needs to talk with his/her supervisor before going to the hearing and seek approval from the supervisor. The supervisor, before granting approval, will discuss it with the program manager and decide if it is appropriate for the volunteer to attend the criminal case hearing.

#### **WRITTEN MATERIAL TO PARTIES**

CASA Staff (Case Supervisor or designee) must review all correspondence (including e-mail), reports and legal documents regarding all appointed CASA cases. Volunteers may not distribute any written material to any parties to the proceedings involved in your case or outside your case, without initially discussing it and providing the material to the Case Supervisor first for edit and consideration.

CASA staff supervisors are responsible for final editing and distribution of all court reports. They will correct grammatical and spelling errors automatically. They will not, however, significantly alter the content of reports or recommendations without consulting the CASA. CASA staff has final discretion to make edits in cases where there is not agreement.

#### **PERSONAL LEGAL ISSUES AND THE VOLUNTEER**

While the CASA staff wishes to be supportive of volunteers both on their cases and in their personal lives, we will not become involved in any way with family court proceedings that involve the volunteer or their families (relatives), i.e., domestic relations or domestic violence cases. We cannot be personal character witnesses nor will we become involved in child custody issues due to a conflict of interest.

## **MISUSE OF CASA STATUS**

CASA volunteers will not use their status to promote other causes, unless otherwise stipulated by the Board of Directors. This may include but is not limited to: gaining access to restricted or confidential information for personal reasons, using the CASA name to promote a personal interest or business, posting personal business in the chat room of the website or using CASA addresses or phone numbers for personal use. Volunteers are to call the Program office when in doubt.

## **MEDIA RELATIONS**

Volunteers will refer all media inquiries to the Executive Director. Volunteers will not make any comments on any CASA case that they are asked about by the media.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

The National CASA Association and CASA of the Pikes Peak Region believes that social media tools (i.e. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, etc.), when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support and sense of community for those of us engaged in advocacy for abused and neglected children. We believe that a thoughtful approach to online conversation and interaction among people online (on blogs, social networking, link-sharing, etc.) can enhance the reputation of the CASA movement and help recruit needed supporters and volunteers.

While CASA encourages staff, board members and volunteers to join the global online conversation, we also believe it is important that those who choose to do so understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss CASA-related topics—whether at work or on their own time. Our ability to serve children as a national cause depends on the trust and support of the American public, and it is critical that we tell our story well.

**Don't reveal confidential information.** Sharing stories that illustrate the value of CASA advocacy for children is often the most powerful way to engage the public in our cause and promote empathy for the children we serve. However, National CASA Quality Assurance standards require:

- Respect for the children's and families' rights to privacy in regard to personal information
- Adherence to the confidentiality restrictions imposed by law and CASA policies and procedures

**It is unacceptable to discuss online any identifiable details of current cases.** It is acceptable to discuss general details and to use non-identifying pseudonyms so long as the information provided does not contain information recognizable to the family or others associated with the family or case. For example, use general terms such as "youth" instead of "13-year-old girl." You should be careful to protect the dignity of families, children and social agencies, even if they are not named.

Volunteers ***are prohibited to*** link to personal pages (or become online "friends") of families or children they encounter in their capacity as a CASA volunteer. This includes instant messenger names, blogs, photo sharing sites and social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. In addition, volunteers ***are encouraged not to*** give their email address or phone number(s) to the child(ren) or family members on any case to which they are assigned ***whenever possible***.

## **COURT EMPLOYEES AS VOLUNTEERS**

Individuals employed by the Fourth Judicial District in either permanent FTE or a temporary position should not become CASA volunteers advocating for children, because of the appearance of a conflict of interest. They could assist with administrative tasks or committee work as a volunteer.

## **NON-ACCEPTANCE OF A CASE**

It is the policy of CASA of the Pikes Peak Region, Inc. that we will not accept cases where the volunteer or members of the agency knows the party(ies) involved or are related to the parties.

## **CRIMINAL CHARGES**

CASA volunteers must immediately notify their CASA supervisor of any new criminal, traffic or child abuse charges they receive after admission into the CASA program. The supervisor will then notify the Executive Director. An internal staffing may be convened to discuss what, if any, actions need to be taken regarding the volunteer and the case. A background screening process will be repeated every four years.

## **ACCESS TO VOLUNTEER RECORDS**

CASA volunteers may request to review their personal files at any time. Files may be reviewed in the presence of CASA staff. If volunteers have additions or corrections to their files, they may submit them at any time for automatic inclusion. The CASA program will retain possession of the original file, although a copy can be made for the volunteer upon request.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR CLIENTS AND PROFESSIONALS**

If complainant is not a party to case we cannot discuss the case.

The complainant will first try to resolve the issue with the person with whom they have the grievance. If unresolved, the issue would then be brought before the Peer Coordinator or the CASA employee's/volunteer's direct supervisor. If still unresolved, the Case Supervisor and Program Manager would address the issue. If the complainant continues to need relief, the complainant will send the grievance in writing to the Volunteer Services Manager. The Volunteer Services Manager will determine whether it is a grievance or a court issue.

If still unresolved, the issue may be brought before the Executive Director if it involves wrong doing, prejudice or lack of competency, but only after a written grievance has been submitted and reviewed by the Executive Director. The Director will review the grievance within 30 days of receipt. The Executive Director will respond in writing.

If still unresolved the grievance would be brought to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors who would have 60 days to review. The Executive Director would be present. The decision of the Executive Committee will be final.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR VOLUNTEERS**

If complainant is not a party to case we cannot discuss the case.

The complainant will first try to resolve the issue with the person with whom they have the grievance. If unresolved, the issue would then be brought before the CASA direct supervisor. If still unresolved, the Program Manager would address the issue. If the complainant continues to need relief, the complainant



will send the grievance in writing to the Volunteer Services Manager. The Volunteer Services Manager will determine whether it is a grievance or a court issue.

If still unresolved, the issue may be brought before the Executive Director if it involves wrong doing, prejudice or lack of competency, but only after a written grievance has been submitted and reviewed by the Executive Director. The Director will review the grievance within 30 days of receipt. The Executive Director will respond in writing.

If still unresolved the grievance would be brought to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors who would have 60 days to review. The Executive Director would be present. The decision of the Executive Committee will be final.

## **CASE MANAGEMENT CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Case management concerns *ABOUT* Advocates:

If the case supervisor or PC is concerned about a recommendation or case management of the assigned advocate, the supervisor/PC shall:

- Initiate a conversation with the advocate to coach around the identified issues.
- Allow the advocate to express herself/himself to qualify her/his recommendations or activities.
- Redirect or support advocate's position based on facts and jurisdictional procedures and accepted agency practices.
- Make an entry in the volunteer's electronic record in the program database.
- Depending on the seriousness of the issue, the lead case supervisor and/or D&N program manager and/or volunteer services manager shall be informed to discuss next steps, if any.

Case management concerns *FROM* Advocates:

If the advocate is concerned about the activity or coaching method of the PC and/or paid staff, the advocate shall:

- Initiate a conversation with the PC and/or paid staff to discuss the identified issues.
- If the advocate is not comfortable having this conversation with either the PC or paid staff, the advocate may take concerns directly to the Lead Case Supervisor and/or the D&N Program Manager and/or the Volunteer Services Manager and/or the Director of Program.

Case Management Concerns About PCs and/or Paid Staff:

If the case supervisor is concerned about the PC's activity or coaching method of the advocate, the supervisor shall:

- Initiate a conversation with the PC, to coach around the identified issues.
- Allow the PC to express herself/himself to qualify her/his activity or coaching method.
- Redirect or support the PC's position based on facts, jurisdictional procedures and accepted agency practices.
- Make an entry in the PC's electronic record in the program database.
- Depending on the seriousness of the issue, the lead case supervisor, D&N program manager, volunteer services manager and/or program director shall be informed to discuss next steps, if any.

If the PC is concerned about the case management or coaching by the paid staff supervisor, the PC shall:

- Initiate a conversation with the supervisor to discuss the concerns.

- Allow the staff to express herself/himself to qualify her/his case management involvement.
- If the PC is not satisfied, the PC shall inform the lead case supervisor and/or the D&N Program Manager and/or the Volunteer Services Manager, and/or Director of Programs to help resolve the issue.

## **WHISTLE BLOWERS POLICY**

A whistleblower as defined by this policy is an employee, board member or volunteer of the CASA program who reports any activity that he/she considers to be illegal, dishonest, unethical or inappropriate to one or more of the parties specified in this policy. The whistleblower is not responsible for investigating the activity or for determining fault or corrective measures; appropriate management officials are charged with these responsibilities.

ACTIVITIES include but are not limited to:

Examples of illegal, dishonest, unethical or inappropriate activities which are violations of federal, state or local laws; such as billing for services not performed or for goods not delivered; and other fraudulent financial reporting.

### COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

- If a volunteer has knowledge of or a concern of such activities the volunteer is to contact the Board of Trustees who is responsible for investigating and coordinating corrective action.
- The volunteer must exercise sound judgment to avoid baseless allegations. A volunteer who intentionally files a false report of wrongdoing will be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS include:

- Confidentiality - Insofar as possible, the confidentiality of the whistleblower will be maintained. However, identity may have to be disclosed to conduct a thorough investigation, to comply with the law and to provide accused individuals their legal rights of defense.
- Preventing Retaliation - The CASA program will not retaliate against a whistleblower that makes a report in good faith.
- Any whistleblower who believes he/she is being retaliated against must contact the Board of Trustees immediately. The right of a whistleblower for protection against retaliation does not include immunity for any personal wrongdoing that is alleged and investigated.

WHISLTLEBLOWERS CONTACTS – Volunteers with any questions regarding this policy should contact the Executive Director or member of the Board of Trustees.

## **CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

Anytime a volunteer perceives a threat or receives an actual verbal or physical threat, it must be reported to their CASA supervisor within 24 hours of the incident. Critical incidents can include serious accidents or deaths of family members directly involved on the case, i.e. suicide of parent, domestic violence incident requiring treatment, or serious injury to the child. The same procedure is followed regarding reporting and calling a meeting immediately. CASA staff will respond immediately to the needs of the volunteer by: notifying the Executive Director, Volunteer Services Manager and Program Director, gathering factual information, calling a meeting with CASA staff and having a discussion with the volunteer of required actions. The purpose of the meeting is to understand and clarify the situation, offer options and support to the volunteer. A critical incident form is required to be filled out by the supervisor

with the details provided by the volunteer, if the incident reaches the definition of critical incident as defined.

## **VOLUNTEER RETIREMENT POLICY**

Any time after a volunteer has fulfilled their commitment to CASA, they may retire from casework at their own request or through the request of a staff member. Retirement may be based on, but is not limited to, physical or mental disability, family or career commitments, etc. The volunteer may be offered other opportunities at the discretion of the CASA staff. Retired volunteers will be referred to as “**alumni**” and will be recognized as life-time contributors to CASA.

## **VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE BEEN INACTIVE FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR**

Any volunteer who has retired, or is on leave may be eligible to return to "active" status. CASAs who have not actively worked on a case for twelve months or more may be required to complete part or all of the pre-service training to be eligible for case assignment. Retraining requirements will be decided on a case-by-case-basis. Individuals who have been terminated from CASAPPR will not be considered for a return to "active" status.

## **TRANSFERING TO OR FROM ANOTHER CASA PROGRAM**

Individuals wishing to transfer to another CASA program must follow the guidelines established by that program. Individuals wishing to transfer into the CASAPPR program must meet all the requirements established for the CASAPPR program. Transfer requirements are decided on a case-by-case basis.

## **VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT WITH FAMILIES AFTER CASE CLOSURE**

After a CASA is legally removed from a case through case closure or rescission/withdrawal, CASAPPR is no longer responsible for the volunteer’s involvement with that family. Further contact is at the sole discretion of the family. If the family does not want any contact with the CASA, then the volunteer should not pursue it. If the volunteer chooses to remain in touch with the family or child, they do so at their own discretion and risk. As mandatory reporters, all advocates are still required to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the El Paso or Teller County Department of Human Services. In addition, volunteers are required to report requests for re-appointment, threats, and any child related concerns directly to the CASA office.

## **DRUGS AND ALCOHOL POLICY**

The use of illegal drugs (controlled substances) and the misuse of alcohol and prescribed drugs increase the risk of accidents and jeopardize the safe work environment for volunteers, employees, customers, clients, and the public in general. The goal of CASA is to provide a safe and healthy workplace. Therefore, CASA is committed to an alcohol and drug-free workplace to promote the safety and well-being of its volunteers, employees, clients and the public.

## **WEAPONS POLICY**

Volunteers may not, at any time while on any property owned, leased or controlled by CASAPPR, including any time that company business is being conducted, such as client locations, trainings,

restaurants, organization event venues, and so forth, possess or use any weapon. Weapons include, but are not limited to, guns, tazers, knives or swords with blades over four inches in length, explosives, and any chemical whose purpose is to cause harm to another person.

Regardless of whether a volunteer possesses a concealed weapons permit or is allowed by law to possess a weapon, weapons are prohibited on any company property or in any time in which the volunteer represents the company for business purposes, including those listed above.

Possession of a weapon can be authorized by the Executive Director or designee to allow security personnel to have a weapon on company property when this possession is determined necessary to secure the safety and security of company volunteers and employees.

**Volunteers** who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary actions, up to and including termination.

## **DEFINITION OF A CASA VOLUNTEER'S ROLE**

The CASA volunteer is appointed by the Fourth Judicial District Juvenile Court, as a party in Dependency and Neglect cases. The Memorandum of Understanding dated 1989 states that these guidelines are to be followed by the CASA volunteer.

### **DUTIES**

The volunteer's role includes:

1. Impartial observer, conducting an independent investigation.
2. Information gatherer, obtaining all relevant facts about the child and the case except as it relates to the specific allegations that are set out in the Dependency and Neglect petition. Monitor, to ensure that the court's orders are carried out by the parties (parties – people legally involved in the case);
3. Reporting to the court and sending copies of the report to the parties in the case;
4. Keeping all information obtained by the CASA in confidence except as is necessary to report to the court and to obtain supervision from the Peer Coordinator/Case Supervisor;
5. May testify if called as a witness.

### **RIGHTS**

The CASA has the right, as a party, to have notice of and to appear (if possible) at all court hearings, staffings and case conferences. In addition, the CASA has the rights listed below, but the CASA volunteer will **not** exercise these **unless**:

1. An exceptional circumstance exists;
2. Prior discussion with the CASA Executive Director has occurred and the volunteer has obtained prior approval from the Executive Director to exercise the particular right.

The restricted rights are:

1. To address the court (other than in response to a question by the court);
2. To call witnesses;
3. To cross-examine witnesses;
4. To file motions and pleadings (other than their reports); only in regards to pleadings on their own behalf;
5. To be represented by an attorney instead of appearing pro se.

## CASA CODE OF ETHICS

- I. The CASA volunteer shall support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution and laws of the State of Colorado.
- II. The CASA volunteer shall recognize that he or she occupies a position of responsibility and shall faithfully perform all of the duties pertaining to his or her position as a Court Appointed Special Advocate to the best of his or her knowledge and ability.
  - A. The CASA volunteer is an officer of the court, the voice for a child, and a representative of the community and has a responsibility to each of these three entities to assist the court in determining the best interests of the child.
  - B. The CASA volunteer should not neglect the responsibility vested in him/her and should strive to achieve the highest standard at all times.
  - C. The CASA volunteer should be careful not to provide services that he or she is not qualified to provide. Although it is appropriate for the volunteer to give common sense responses or instructions on topics including budgets, nutrition, discipline, etc., it is not appropriate for the volunteer to provide therapy or counseling or to draw professional conclusions.
  - D. The CASA volunteer should refrain from becoming involved in domestic relations and criminal proceedings or the aspects of those proceedings related to the CASA case and should focus on the treatment plan and the status of the child.
- III. The CASA volunteer shall not breach the trust vested in him/her but shall recognize, respect and protect the confidentiality of the cases assigned to the volunteer and the information he/she shall learn and report to the court in that capacity.
  - A. The CASA volunteer must at all times preserve the confidentiality of the information he/she learns during the CASA case.
  - B. The CASA volunteer should gather information but not dispense information to anyone other than the CASA director (case supervisor) or the court by means of written reports and testimony. Although the volunteer's report is disclosed to the parties and their lawyers, it is not public information and cannot be disclosed to others.
  - C. The volunteer should recall that the parties to the case are the child, Social Services, parents, step parents or significant other adults in the parental role for the child. The parties to the case do not include foster parents, teachers, relatives, interveners, doctors, neighbors, etc.
  - D. The CASA volunteer should consider information received by individual parties, attorneys, case workers, therapists, neighbors, doctors, etc. to be information that is kept confidential between the volunteer and the information source. This information can be included in the volunteer's report, but is otherwise received as "background" and should not be repeated to other players outside the CASA program or the court.
  - E. The overriding responsibility of protecting the confidentiality of information about an individual child is founded largely on the critical impact such information could have on the child's future if it were to become public. The CASA volunteer should be mindful of this dangerous potential at all times.
  - F. The CASA volunteer, in speaking to friends and acquaintances outside the program, may tell interested individuals the type of case the volunteer is working

on, whether the child is at home, and whether there are siblings. The volunteer should not tell other people any identifying or personal information including names, geographic location of the child, age, sex, or other details about the child or his/her family.

- G. The CASA volunteer may not remove from the office of CASA any written records without the express permission of the case supervisor. The CASA volunteer should return all information that he/she has gathered and printed matter or notations relevant to any and all cases to which that volunteer has been assigned at the close of each case or if the volunteer's service to CASA comes to an end.
- IV. The CASA volunteer shall recognize that the principle on which that volunteer's responsibility is founded is the desire to protect the best interests of the child.
- A. This principle includes the volunteer's evaluation of whether the child's placement is appropriate whether the basic physical, emotional, educational, and spiritual needs of the child are being met, and whether the treatment plan is adequate and feasible.
  - B. The volunteer should recall that, although the best interests of the child is the focus of the volunteer's inquiry, what the child wants or believes he wants is not necessarily in that child's best interest, and the volunteers is not merely an echo of the child's spoken desires.
- V. The CASA volunteer should recall at all times that every child is entitled by law to be raised by and with his blood family except when the conditions in that family are not conducive to a safe nurturing environment.
- A. The CASA volunteers should recall at all times that every child is entitled by law to be raised by and with his blood family except when the conditions in the family are not conducive to a safe nurturing environment.
  - B. The volunteers should recognize that the physical, emotional, and spiritual development and safety of the child in each case are paramount and the volunteer should also consider whether the treatment program is fair to the parents and whether they have the capacity to fulfill those requirements, whether they can be retrained, and whether the plan is reasonable. If there is no compliance with the treatment plan, the volunteer should inquire why there is a lack of compliance and whether the system is doing what it should be doing to help the family.
- VI. The CASA volunteer shall not act as judge and jury, but shall report, evaluate, and make recommendations to the court based upon the facts learned by the case volunteer in his/her own investigation.
- A. The CASA volunteer should repeatedly look for problems and solutions, look for successes as well as failures, and determine whether the information sought and received will be helpful to the court.
  - B. The CASA volunteer's reports and testimony should be based on first hand observations or the professional conclusions of experts. The reports of the volunteer must have a solid factual foundation and be supported by clear, logical reasoning and not vague and indefinite feelings.
  - C. Remember that, in a Dependency and Neglect case, the Judge must decide whether to permanently terminate a parent's parental rights to his or her child. A

decision as serious and long lasting as this one must be founded on comprehensive research, accurate reporting, thorough and unbiased investigation and frank, common sense input from the CASA volunteer. Anything less would be a disservice to the parents, the child, the court and the community.



## **CASA VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

### ***Position Title and Area of Mission:***

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA): Child abuse and neglect

### ***Purpose of Position:***

- To provide independent, factual information to the court regarding abused and neglected children.
- To monitor cases involving abused and neglected children.
- To advocate and insure representation of the child's best interest in all judicial proceedings, schools and placements.

### ***Duties:***

- Visit the child(ren) a minimum of two times each month.
- To complete an independent, intensive inquiry into the child's life.
- To report findings to the court in the form of objective written reports.
- To insure representation of the child's best interest by attending all court hearings, staffings and conferences.
- To monitor the implementation of service plans and court orders assuring that court-orders services are implemented in a timely manner and that review hearings are held in accordance with the law.
- To have regular and sufficient in-person contact with the child to ensure in-depth knowledge of the case and make fact-based recommendations to the court.
- To seek cooperative solutions by acting as a facilitator among parties.
- To become a referral source for community services available to families and the child.
- To participate in all scheduled case conferences with supervisory staff.

### ***Requirements:***

- A genuine care and concern for our community's abused and neglected children.
- Must be 21 years old and pass background screening.
- Access to transportation and telephone and email.

### ***Commitment:***

- 3-6 hours per week
- The duration of a case (14-16 months average for D&N)

### ***Training Provided:***

- Mandatory initial 30-37 hours of core training and 12 hours per year in-service training

### ***Required Skills and Knowledge:***

- Ability to keep all client and court information confidential.
- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in written form.
- Ability to respect and relate to people of varying backgrounds in a variety of settings.
- Access to transportation to attend court, meetings, etc. Must provide copies of driver's license, safe driving record and proof of auto insurance renewals when due.
- Ability to deal with anger, hostility and other emotional attitudes.
- Ability to remain objective.
- Ability to gather and accurately record factual information.
- Ability to meet timelines and deadlines.
- A basic understanding of child development and family relationships.

## CONFIDENTIALTY POLICY

The volunteer shall adhere to the following guidelines with respect to maintaining confidentiality and respecting the privacy of others in all matters relating to an assigned case. The guidelines are set out below. They govern circumstances in which the CASA requests or receives information. However, these guidelines cannot cover every possible situation, which may arise. Any questions and/or concerns the CASA volunteer has regarding the confidentiality or the application of this policy should be discussed with the CASA Peer Coordinator or Case Supervisor. These will be resolved on a case by case basis.

- Cases involving parties who are known to the CASA program as being HIV positive, having AIDS and/or having other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are governed by an additional confidentiality protocol to which the volunteer must adhere. If, after accepting a case, the CASA learns it involves an STD, the CASA should immediately contact the Peer Coordinator or Case Supervisor.
- In requesting information in the course of an investigation, a CASA may need to obtain information from doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, attorneys, clergy, teachers, or other professionals who have a protected relationship status with a party or the child. The appointment order allows access to child/ren records. A signed release by the parent or other responders must be executed to get any records or verbal information on the parents. By statute, there are limitations on the disclosure of information a professional received during the course of his/her relationship with a client or patient. Many professions also have ethical principles which govern their ability to disclose information (for example, attorneys are bound by Rules of Professional Conduct; doctors, psychologists, and social workers also have ethical codes). The professional has no authority to provide any information to a CASA without express permission of the client or a court order.

If it is necessary to obtain any privileged/confidential information about someone who is directly related to the case, but is not the child/ren, the CASA must obtain from that person a written release of information which allows the professional, hospital or treatment center to discuss the matter with the CASA.

While a person may sign a release allowing the CASA to obtain confidential information, he/she may not want to authorize disclosure to the other parties to the case and/or their attorneys. The CASA should review the signed release form very carefully and seek guidance from the Peer Coordinator or Case Supervisor if the CASA has any questions at all.

- The CASA is not allowed to disseminate documents to any of the parties, their attorneys, and or collateral sources, which are covered by state and/or federal confidentiality laws. These documents may include drug and alcohol evaluations/records; involuntary mental health treatment and rape crisis center information and some criminal histories. Those covered by federal law usually are stamped, “this information has been disclosed to you from records whose confidentiality is protected by Federal law (and) prohibits you from making any further disclosure. A general authorization for the release of medical or other information is NOT sufficient for this purpose.”
- The CASA **shall never** discuss an assigned case for purely conversational purposes, particularly in specific terms, with anyone.

- The CASA **should not** promise a child or any party to the assigned case that his/her statements will be kept secret or confidential.
- The CASA **must disclose** confidential information learned during the course of an investigation in three circumstances:
  1. When consulting with the Peer Coordinator, Case Supervisor, Program Manager, Volunteer Services Manager or Executive Director who must be provided all significant case specifics known to the CASA;
  2. When ordered by the court in a hearing or trial;
  3. When the CASA thinks that there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse.
- A CASA **may disclose** confidential information and discuss case specifics in two circumstances:
  1. When the CASA consults with a professional service provider (medical personnel, mental health specialist, social worker, etc.) who is providing services to the child/ren who has agreed to the professional's disclosure or because their client signed a Release-of-Information form.
  2. When the petitioner and respondent agree or when the court orders the disclosure.
- A CASA **may discuss** a case in hypothetical terms for purposes of illustration at professional meetings (seminars) designed to address issues promoting the best interests of children. The CASA shall not, however, mention the names of any individual involved in the case or provide the facts, which may identify the case or parties.

## VERIFICATION OF RECEIPT OF VOLUNTEER POLICIES

This is to acknowledge that I have received my personal copy of the volunteer section of the CASA of the Pikes Peak Region policy manual. I understand that it is my responsibility to read and become familiar with the practices contained within. I also understand that the information provided in the handbook is necessarily subject to change without notice and that any changes in the practices may modify, interpret, supersede or eliminate practices in this handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to observe these practices and to consult my supervisor or CASA staff should I have any need for clarification.

**CASA reserves the sole right to change, interpret, withdraw or add to its policies and procedures at any time.** I also understand that these policies are not intended, and should not be construed, as a contract, either expressed or implied. **Nothing contained herein is intended to give rise to any legal claim or cause of action by any volunteer. The agency and the volunteer recognize that either party may terminate the relationship without prior notice, with or without cause.**

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Signature of CASA Volunteer

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DATE

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Print Name

## VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

The Court Appointed Special Advocate program makes a commitment to:

1. Provide on-going training, support and evaluation of the volunteer's work.
2. Provide consultation, coaching and necessary support in order to promote relevant interventions into the child situation and to facilitate appropriate recommendations about the current or future placement of the child.

As a volunteer, I understand that I am a part of the CASA of the Pikes Peak Region staff and therefore, I can be requested to resign from the position for reasons listed in the volunteer policies.

In signing this form, I am agreeing to these policies and understand the commitment to a case (barring unforeseen situations) is for a minimum of 14-16 and approximately three to six hours per week.

This agreement is entered into for the purpose of providing the best possible service to the CASA client population.

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Date