



## **VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

### INTRODUCTION

Court Appointed Special Advocates are trained community volunteers appointed by family court Judges to speak for the best interests of children who are brought before the court for reasons of abuse or neglect.

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is an official part of judicial proceedings, working alongside attorneys and social workers. By handling one or two cases at a time, the CASA has time to thoroughly explore the history of each assigned case. The volunteer talks with the child, parents, family members, neighbors, school officials, doctors, and others involved in the child's background who might have facts about the case. The volunteer reviews all court facts about the case and the volunteer also reviews all court documents pertaining to the case. He or she then is expected to submit formal reports to the Judge at every scheduled hearing. The CASA continues to monitor the case to assure that the judicial and child welfare systems are moving ahead to secure a safe, permanent home for the child, and that court-ordered services are provided to the child and family. The CASA can be an invaluable resource for the attorney of the child and social worker in reaching their goals for permanency.

### PROGRAM GOALS/PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- To provide independent, factual information to the court regarding abused and neglected children.
- To provide advocacy for abused and neglected children who are the subject of judicial proceedings.
- To monitor cases involving abused and neglected children until permanency has been achieved (i.e. termination of parental rights, adoption, long-term foster care or return home to parent/guardian).
- To conduct independent and objective analysis concerning abused and neglected children.
- To factually and objectively report findings and observations to the court.
- To insure representation of the child's best interest in all judicial proceedings.
- To monitor cases following a court hearing or decision as designated by the court.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CASA VOLUNTEER

To complete an intensive independent review of each case:

- Speak with the child and relevant adults
- Seek out relatives to the child
- Review appropriate records and reports
- Observe the child and significant others

To report findings to the court:

- Provide a written report containing factual information 14 days prior to hearing date
- Attend court hearings concerning the child

To insure representation of the child's best interest:

- Attend all court hearings to see that all relevant facts are presented
- Attend appropriate interagency meetings regarding the child
- Participate in case conferences concerning the child
- Monitor case following a court hearing or decision as designated by the court
- Consult regularly with the volunteer advocate coordinator concerning assigned case, develop a CASA case plan, and review progress and reports

## REQUIRED SKILLS/ABILITIES

- 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 from various backgrounds (economic, cultural, educational) in a variety of settings
- Ability to transport self to a variety of locations
- Ability to deal with hostility, anger and other emotional attitudes/situations
- Ability to maintain objectivity
- Ability to gather and record factual information accurately
- A basic understanding of child development
- A basic understanding of family relationships

## TRAINING

- CASA volunteers are required to attend approximately 40 hours of pre-service training
- CASA volunteers follow guidelines established by the National CASA Association
- CASA volunteers will attend 12 hours of in-service training and receive direct supervision and guidance from program staff
- CASA volunteers will attend at least eight monthly volunteer meetings annually

## TIME COMMITMENT

- Volunteers are required to commit themselves to the program for 18 months
- Volunteers are expected to be available for case assignments and to accept cases unless other arrangements have been made

## CONCLUSION

Cass County CASA, Inc. has been appointing trained volunteers to abused and neglected cases since 1997. CASA plays an integral part in assuring that children do not become lost in the court system. A CASA volunteer is a caring adult who tries to understand the child's concerns and report them to the judge. The long-range goal is to have a trained CASA volunteer available to all abused and neglected children in Cass County.

Early contact with the children, who become involved in the Cass County court system as a result of abuse and/or neglect, can help to prevent future involvement either as a delinquent or an offending adult. The CASA program is dedicated to the premises that all children are entitled to grow up in a safe and loving home. The CASA program is committed to the reunification of child/children with their biological family, when that home can be made safe for the child/children. Most important is the CASA volunteer's role in ensuring that all decisions regarding the child are made within their best interest. Cass County CASA volunteers make a difference, one child at a time.