



CASA/GAL (COURT APPOINTED ADVOCATED/GUARDIAN AD LITEM) DEPENDENCY SERVICES

SUMMARY: A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a **volunteer** appointed by the Court to advocate for the best interest of a child who is alleged to have been abused or neglected. In order to do this, the CASA/GAL must *investigate* the facts of the case, *recommend* a course of action to the Court, *explain* the Court's findings to the child, *facilitate* the resolution of the presenting problems, and *monitor* progress.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Challenge the system to do what it should be doing without being confined by the established legal and social work professions.
- Ensure that the system acts responsibly towards the child.
- Provide consistent follow-up on the case progress and the parties' compliance with the Court orders.
- Thoroughly research assigned case, influencing what is included in the case plan.
- Be a full party to the Court proceedings and have access to all Court documents relating to the case.
- Review case documents, maintain complete records, and speak with relevant individuals.
- Focus not on the guilt/innocence issues, but rather on the information that relates to the child's welfare.
- Bring significant changes in the family situation to the Court's attention.
- Advocate for the child's best interest, including permanency planning.
- Conduct an independent assessment of the case facts/issues from the prospective of a neutral third party.
- Question social workers about the appropriateness of case plans.
- Develop recommendations for the Court, which are included in a written report.
- Participate in all hearings and settlements.
- Report volunteer hours monthly to Volunteer Services.
- Attend ongoing training workshops (12 hours per year.)

THINGS A CASA DOES NOT DO:

- ❖ The CASA *does not* diagnose when a child has special needs (i.e., medical, educational, or psychiatric), but rather observes behaviors and make the necessary recommendations for counseling, treatment, or medical attention.
- ❖ The CASA *does not* become a friend to the child and help them through rough times or take them on overnight visits.
- ❖ The CASA *does not* provide a home for the child.
- ❖ The CASA *does not* arrange for the child's placement, medical treatment, or manage the case plan for the social worker.
- ❖ The CASA *does not* supervise but rather observes visitation between parents and children.
- ❖ The CASA *does not* file legal documents with the Court without assistance of counsel or a CASA supervisor.
- ❖ The CASA *does not* contact the judge directly to discuss a case.
- ❖ The CASA's legal role is not to prove or disprove the allegations in Dependency Petitions.

TRAINING, EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

- Post high school education preferred.
- Must study the CASA/GAL Training Manual prior to and attend the four-day training.
- Must observe Dependency Court prior to the CASA/GAL training.

SKILLS:

- Interest in youth, their rights, and special needs.
- Ability to work with a child, family members, and professionals, using tact, concern and basic human relations skills.
- Must possess excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Ability to be objective and maintain confidentiality.
- Must possess professional attributes of diplomacy, objectivity, decision-making ability, appearance, demeanor, and the ability to function in an adversarial situation.
- Possess the ability to establish a rapport with at-risk youth, while maintaining appropriate boundaries.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Must be at least 21 years of age.
- Must have a high school diploma or GED.
- Must attend Court hearings on assigned case.
- Maintain an up-to-date and complete file on each case assigned.
- Must adhere to deadlines and timetables involving an assigned case.
- Must turn in all reports *on time* or early.
- Must make physical contact with children in their placement homes monthly.
- Must have a telephone and be available and responsive by email.
- Must have valid driver's license and a good driving record.
- Must pass a thorough background check.
- Must complete a screening and interview process.
- Must attend a four-hour Cultural Diversity Training and successfully complete a four-day CASA Training Course.

RELATIONSHIP:

- Supervised by the GAL/CASA Coordinator.
- Responsible to the GAL/CASA Coordinator, the Dependency Supervisor, and the Volunteer Services Manager.

TIME COMMITMENT:

- Must be willing to commit to a chosen case for the duration of that assignment (Average duration of a case is 18 months to 2 years).
- Investigation and preparation for the first court hearing is generally 15 hours over a six-week period.
- Monitor court orders and prepare for twice-yearly review hearings: average 5-10 hours per month.