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## CASA Volunteer Manual

*A Powerful Voice in a Child's Life*

### Mission:

To provide court appointed volunteers to advocate for the abused, neglected and/or dependent children who are involved in the juvenile court system.

### Vision:

To advocate in the best interest of all children in Macon County who have been indicated for abuse and neglect.

CASA volunteers are the heart of our organization. Only through the dedicated efforts of our volunteers, is CASA able to serve the abused and neglected children in Macon County. Having a set of volunteer advocate policies demonstrates to the Macon County community that CASA:

- Respects and protects the children it serves
- Values the time, skills and commitment of our advocates
- Maintains policies and procedures for accountability and effective management
- Strives to continually evaluate and improve the CASA Program

These policies contained in this CASA Volunteer manual are intended to provide overall guidance and direction for our volunteers so they can effectively advocate in the best interest for the abused, neglected and/or dependent children in Macon County.

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FOR CHILDREN

*CASA volunteers are welcomed to direct questions about these policies to the CASA program staff at any time.*

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## General Program Policies

### 1.1 Scope of the Policies

Macon County CASA considers its greatest asset to be its group of trained community volunteers who advocate for abused and neglected children in the Macon County juvenile court system. The CASA Board of Directors, staff and volunteers also comply with the orders of the 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, the program standards of the National CASA Association and the Illinois CASA Association. These policies are designed to provide guidelines for Macon County CASA volunteers in fulfilling their role in the court system.

All reference to "volunteer" or "advocate" in this document refer to sworn volunteer advocates serving Macon County CASA.

### 1.2 Purpose of the Policies

The Purpose of these policies is to provide overall guidance and direction to volunteers serving as advocates for Macon County CASA. These policies do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. Macon County CASA reserves the right to change any of these policies at any time, to advise advocates of such change and to expect adherence to the changed policy. Areas not specifically covered by these policies shall be determined by the Executive Director, Program Director, or the Board of Directors. Volunteers will be required to sign an agreement indicating that they have read, understand and will comply with all volunteer policies.

### 1.3 Exception to Policies

On occasion, certain exceptions may be made to any of the policies at the discretion of the Executive Director, Program Director or the Board of Directors of Macon County CASA.

### 1.4 Approval of Policies

Approval of the volunteer policies shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors of Macon County CASA. Amendments to these policies are subject to ratification by the Board of Directors, which has the final responsibility for such amendments, and reserves the right to amend these policies in any way, at any time.

### 1.5 Service at the Discretion of the Agency

Macon County CASA accepts the service of all volunteer advocates with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the program. Volunteers agree that the agency may, at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with the program.

### 1.6 Speaking on Behalf of the Agency

Advocates are encouraged to speak about the program, in general, throughout the community. However, the Executive Director must be informed of any speaking engagements the volunteers may wish to arrange on behalf of Macon County CASA, so the staff may assist with written materials or go with the volunteer to help with the presentation.

Volunteers are prohibited from speaking about details of any case within the Macon County CASA program.

Volunteers are prohibited from speaking to the media about Macon County CASA, unless granted permission to do so from the Executive Director.

#### 1.7 Fundraising on Behalf of Macon County CASA

The Board of Directors has a coordinated plan for fundraising for Macon County CASA. Any ideas that volunteers may have to assist with fundraising are appreciated. Volunteers may not initiate fundraising activities on their own on behalf of CASA, without the consent of the Macon County CASA Board of Directors and Executive Director. This avoids duplication of effort and the possibility of more than one CASA representative approaching the same person/corporation for possible funding.

#### 1.8 Sexual Harassment and Discrimination

Macon County CASA will seek to maintain an environment within the program which is free from intimidation, discrimination, coercion or harassment. Discrimination against a volunteer on the basis of age, race, religion, national origin, marital status, or sexual preference will not be tolerated. In the event of a question, complaint or allegation regarding the harassment or discrimination of any kind, the volunteer should speak with the Macon County CASA Program Director. If the allegation involves the Macon County CASA Program Director, the volunteer should speak with the Macon County CASA Executive Director. If the allegation involves the Macon County CASA Executive Director and Macon County CASA Program Director, the volunteer should speak to the Board of Directors Compliance Officer. Contact information for these individuals is available in the CASA office. The matter will be investigated in a discreet and confidential manner and after consideration of the facts; appropriate action will be taken in the best interests of the volunteer and the program. Such action may include recommendation for counseling, disciplinary warnings or termination.

#### 1.9 Substance Abuse

Volunteers serving as advocates for Macon County CASA are prohibited from being under the influence of, using, possessing, selling or otherwise being involved with illegal drugs or alcohol while engaging in their role as a CASA volunteer. Macon County CASA reserves the right to randomly drug test any volunteer who is believed to be under the influence of a substance while performing their role as a CASA volunteer. The cost of this testing is paid for by Macon County CASA and the results are confidential.

#### 1.10 Communicable Diseases

Macon County CASA will not tolerate discrimination against a volunteer or client who has become afflicted with a communicable disease or other medical condition. All staff and volunteers will respect the individual's right to privacy and maintain confidentiality regarding medical information and health status of all persons connected with the organization.

## Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

### 2.1 Recruitment

Volunteers shall be recruited by Macon County CASA on a proactive basis, with the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community. Volunteers shall be recruited and accepted into the program without regard to gender, disabilities, age (over 21 years), race or other condition. The sole qualification for volunteer recruitment shall be suitability to perform the duties of the volunteer position.

Macon County CASA will not accept individuals, into the program, who have been convicted of any criminal acts or who have been adjudicated in Juvenile Court to have an abused or neglected child. This is inclusive of, but not limited to, any sexual offense, abuse, neglect or related acts that would pose risks to children or the credibility to Macon County CASA

Members of the Board of Directors are prohibited from volunteering as a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

### 2.2 Application

All individuals who wish to be considered for the Macon County CASA program must submit the application provided by the CASA office. All volunteers must also submit three references (two of which may not be related to the applicant) as well as a release of information form. The Macon County CASA staff screens applicants and selected individuals will be asked to schedule an interview.

### 2.3 Interview

Macon County CASA staff members shall interview candidates for a training class in person. The interview will seek to determine the volunteer's suitability for interest in the position. The interview should determine the qualifications of the volunteer, their commitment to fulfill the requirements of the position and answer any questions that the volunteer might have about the position and the program.

### 2.4 Background Check

All CASA volunteers will submit to a CANTS check, fingerprinting and a local and federal police background check prior to being assigned to a case, or involved with the CASA files. This background check is at no cost to the volunteer.

### 2.5 Job Description

Each CASA volunteer will be provided with a copy of the CASA volunteer job description. An example of this job description is available in this manual as Appendix C.

### 2.6 Pre-Service Training

All CASA volunteers are required to successfully complete a minimum thirty (30) hours of training for new advocates. Each volunteer will be provided with a comprehensive training manual based on the curriculum set forth by the National CASA Association. Training provided will include information on:

CASA Volunteer role  
Laws, Court Process and Child Welfare System  
Cultural Awareness  
Understanding Families  
Understanding Children  
Communicating as a CASA volunteer  
Gathering information  
Reporting and Monitoring  
Supervision and Procedures

In addition, the volunteer will be required to observe a Macon County Juvenile Court hearing. Acceptance into training does not guarantee acceptance into the program. The program trainers throughout the training program will evaluate the volunteer's performance. The volunteer may be dismissed from the training program at any time prior to the official swearing-in ceremony.

## 2.7 In-service training

All CASA volunteers are required to achieve a minimum of twelve (12) continuing education credits (CEC) per fiscal year (July 1-June 30). The CEC requirement exists to ensure that each advocate remains current on juvenile welfare issues and to allow for the healthy challenging of individual thoughts and perspectives. The intention is to keep the advocacy efforts of each volunteer alive and vital, thereby preventing stagnation of approach.

New advocates will receive a one year "grace period" from the time they are sworn in. Once this "grace period" has expired, the advocate will be required to complete all CEC as expected of other current volunteers. Due to the varying times the new advocates are sworn in, discretions and circumstances can be made upon approval of the Macon County CASA Executive Director.

## 2.8 Acceptance into the Program

The Macon County CASA Program Director determines acceptance of a volunteer into the CASA program with input from other CASA staff and/or board members. Service as a volunteer advocate shall begin with the official swearing-in ceremony, which usually takes place shortly after satisfactory completion of the initial training, court observations and background checks.

## 2.9 Length of Commitment

All CASA volunteers serving as advocates for children who have been indicated for abuse and/or neglect are asked to commit to the Macon County CASA program for a minimum of 18 months or until the case to which they are assigned is closed by the Macon County court.

## 2.10 Immunity from Civil/Criminal Liability

Macon County CASA adheres to the Illinois Juvenile Court Act. *"Any court appointed special advocate acting in good faith within the scope of his or her appointment shall have immunity from any civil or criminal liability that otherwise might result by reason of his or her actions, except in cases of willful and wanton misconduct. For the purpose of any civil or criminal proceedings, the good faith of any court appointed advocate shall be presumed".* 405/2-17.1

## 2.11 Access to Legal Counsel

Macon County CASA does not and will not appoint an attorney for a volunteer's personal use. Macon County CASA does not and will not provide legal consultation for a volunteer's personal use. Macon County CASA does not and will not participate in any legal activities in which a current, former and/or prospective CASA volunteer is involved, unless subpoenaed by the court. Macon County CASA will monitor any legal case pertaining to a current, former and/or prospective CASA volunteer, in the interest of preventing a risk to the credibility of Macon County CASA.



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## Volunteer Supervision and Evaluation

### 3.1 Supervision

CASA volunteers are assigned to the CASA Program Director and/or his/her designee. Each CASA volunteer is responsible for submitting information to their supervisor upon request. Each CASA volunteer is responsible for submitting a court report to the CASA Program Director, prior to submitting the report to the court. Failure to adhere to this policy can result in the dismissal of a volunteer.

### 3.2 Professional Conduct

All CASA volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. Personal and professional conduct should uphold the credibility and positive reputation of CASA in the courtroom and in the community. CASA volunteers should dress appropriately for court and other meetings the CASA volunteer attends.

### 3.3 Evaluations

All CASA volunteers will be asked to participate in an annual performance evaluation with their supervisor. The evaluation is designed to be used as a positive tool for growth and success. Macon County CASA will seek to maintain an open atmosphere where the volunteer advocates will feel free to provide feedback on the program.

All CASA volunteers will also be given the opportunity to evaluate their supervisor. The CASA volunteer will be provided a standard evaluation form (provided by the CASA office) in order to provide feedback for their supervisor.

All CASA volunteers will be requested to sign a copy of the evaluation. Signing the evaluation does not signify agreement with the evaluation. It signifies that the evaluation has been explained to the volunteer.

The original evaluation will be kept in the volunteer personnel file. A copy can be provided to the CASA volunteer, upon request.

### 3.4 Complaints/Grievances

Every effort should be made to solve problems cooperatively and informally before presenting them as a formal grievance. Should informal efforts fail, the following policy is set forth in order to provide an outlet for complaints and a systematic way to resolve the matter. All complaints will receive thorough consideration and will be discussed with the individual who raises them. Complaints and grievances may arise from external or internal sources.

External: Since Macon County CASA is involved in work that involves the future of the lives of children and families, there may be situations that arise that will involve criticisms from many of the parties involved, especially when the CASA does not make recommendation that are in agreement with their point of view. Should a complaint arise from someone outside the CASA organization, the volunteer to whom the complaint was given would inform the CASA Program Director of the details of the complaint. It will then be the decision of the Macon County CASA Program Director to decide if the complaint has substance and to request a written statement from the individual initiating the complaint. The written statement will be kept on record in the CASA office. In addition, the Macon County CASA Program Director, with the consultation of the Executive Director, if needed, will

determine what action, if any, should be taken. If the complaint involves the Macon County CASA Program Director, the individual should speak with the Macon County CASA Executive Director. If the complaint involves the Macon County CASA Executive Director and Macon County CASA Program Director, the volunteer should speak to the Board of Directors Compliance Officer. Contact information for these individuals is available in the CASA office.

The matter will be investigated in a discreet and confidential manner and after consideration of the facts; appropriate action will be taken in the best interests of the program. Such action may include recommendation for counseling, disciplinary warnings or termination.

Internal: When a CASA volunteer wishes to make a statement of dissatisfaction with a policy, practice, condition or supervisor's decision, the volunteer should first discuss the matter with his/her supervisor. If the problem is not resolved to the satisfaction of the volunteer, he/she should forward a written statement of the grievance to the Executive Director. In the event that the volunteer is still not satisfied with the conclusion of the matter, after involvement of the Executive Director, the volunteer should present the written grievance statement to the Macon County CASA Board of Directors. The Board's decision will be final. The volunteer will be entitled to receive a written response to his/her formal grievance from the President of the Board of Directors, which outlines the position the Board of Directors have taken on the issue.

Illinois CASA Involvement: If the state office receives a complaint concerning a CASA volunteer, the state office will turn the complaint over to the Executive Director of the involved program. The state program only becomes involved in complaints against the program, as a whole.

### 3.5 Progressive Discipline

It is the policy of Macon County CASA to apply a practice of progressive discipline, when needed, to correct volunteer misconduct or improve performance. Depending on the circumstances, misconduct will result in disciplinary action, which may include a documented verbal warning, documented written warning or dismissal. Verbal and written warnings shall be administered by the Macon County CASA Program Director. If the action is dangerous/inappropriate or jeopardizes the credibility of Macon County CASA, termination of the volunteer may be warranted and will take place immediately.

### 3.6 Dismissal of a Volunteer

Dismissal of a CASA volunteer will normally follow progressive discipline, which is based on performance reviews and include a sequence of verbal and written warnings. Dismissal of a volunteer is the responsibility of the Program Director.

Macon County CASA reserves the right to "dismiss at will". The decision of the staff cannot be appealed. Immediate dismissal will only take place in the most serious of circumstances. Grounds for immediate termination may include (but are not limited to):

- Taking action without program or court approval that endangers the child or is outside the role or power of the CASA program
- Violating a program policy, court rule or law
- Demonstrating the inability/unwillingness to effectively carry out CASA duties
- Gross misconduct or insubordination
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing volunteer duties
- Lying or falsifying records

- Engaging in ex-parte communication with the court
- Failing to complete the required pre-service and in-service training
- Existence of child abuse/neglect allegations against the volunteer
- Existence of a conflict of interest that cannot be resolved

### 3.7 Resignation of a volunteer

Volunteers may resign their services for Macon County CASA at any time, for whatever reason. It is requested that volunteers who intend to resign provide as much advance notice as possible of their departure and a reason for their decision, in order to attempt to improve the Macon County CASA program.

### 3.8 Leave of Absence

Macon County CASA may request a Leave of Absence from the Macon County CASA program at any time. The length of the Leave of Absence may be up to one calendar year from the beginning date of the leave. After one calendar year, the volunteer will no longer be eligible to return to their duties as a CASA volunteer, unless the individual completes a Returning CASA Refresher Course, as detailed in 3.9 of the volunteer policy book.

### 3.9 Returning CASA Refresher Course

Due to the changing format of the commonly used work forms of Macon County CASA, it is the policy of Macon County CASA to offer a mandatory refresher course to any CASA volunteer who takes a leave of absence, whether medically or otherwise, for a length of time that exceeds one (1) calendar year from the time of departure of volunteer work with Macon County CASA. For a CASA volunteer to be considered reinstated, a documented discussion with the Program Director or Executive Director must be approved by the Executive Director, with completion of the refresher course. The document will then be filed by the Executive Director, into the personal file of the volunteer. The refresher course will consist of one hour training with the Program Director or Executive Director to discuss new work related forms, policies and/or procedures that may or may not have changed within the one (1) year leave of absence. The CASA refresher course length may vary from the one hour time length, as the needs for training vary and depending on the amount of documentation, policies and/or procedures that have changed in the time the CASA volunteer is not considered active.

Failure to adhere to the Returning CASA Refresher Course policy will result in a denial for request of reinstatement by the CASA volunteer as determined by the Program Director or Executive Director and Board of Directors.

### 3.10 Access to Personal File

Upon 48 hours of written request, a CASA volunteer shall have access to his/her volunteer related personnel records, except for confidential records to which access is privileged by law. Such requests may not be more than twice per calendar year. In the event that there is a disagreement over information contained in the record, it may be removed or corrected if both the Executive Director and the volunteer agree to do so.

### 3.11 Exit Interviews

An Exit Interview shall be conducted, whenever possible, with a volunteer who is leaving the program. The volunteer will be asked to complete an exit interview form, giving his/her comments on the

program. The interview will seek to ascertain why the volunteer is leaving and the possibility of involving the volunteer in some other capacity with Macon County CASA, as well as provide the opportunity for updating active case details and return of CASA materials.



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## Case Related Policies

### 4.1 Assignment to a case

Macon County CASA volunteers are matched to a case at the discretion of the CASA Program Director, with the influence of the initial volunteer interview. Once a case has been officially assigned to the volunteer, their supervisor will meet with them to discuss the details of the case. At that time, the supervisor will provide the volunteer with the needed documentation needed for the assignment. All expectations will be explained to the CASA volunteer at that time, and additional expectations may be explained at a later time, when necessary.

Macon County CASA volunteers will not be assigned to a case that is outside of the jurisdiction of Macon County CASA.

### 4.2 Right to Refusal

All CASA volunteers have the right to refuse a case, for whatever reason, upon initially being asked to accept the case. If the volunteer refuses the case, they will not be eligible to receive additional information regarding that particular case, once it has been reassigned to another volunteer.

### 4.3 Conflict of Interest

A CASA volunteer should not be related to or otherwise acquainted with any party involved in his/her case, or be employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest. A CASA volunteer should not enter into a business, service or professional agreement with any party to the case to which he/she is currently assigned. This includes, but is not limited to client families and attorneys.

### 4.4 Record Keeping

Once assigned to a case, the CASA volunteer shall maintain a case file at his/her home which includes a copy of the court order appointing CASA to the case, all notes and copies of documents related to the case including court orders, assessments, medical records, police reports etc, all notes relating to phone calls and in-person interviews and copies of all correspondence he or she has received or sent regarding the case. At the conclusion of the volunteer's involvement of the case, the entire case file should be returned to the advocates' supervisor.

Throughout the case, all CASA volunteers are required to keep a time sheet that tracks the amount of time the volunteer spends working on the case, throughout the month. The volunteer is required to turn in the time sheet on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of each month, to the CASA office.

### 4.5 Record of Expenses

Macon County CASA does not reimburse CASA Volunteer for expenses incurred while performing their duty as a volunteer. These expenses are considered an "in-kind donation" to the agency. Such donations *maybe* tax deductible.

### 4.6 Visits with a CASA child

CASA volunteers should make a personal visit with the child(ren) to which they are assigned, on a minimum monthly basis. CASA volunteers should avoid being in a position where someone could make a claim of abuse to the child against the volunteer by meeting in a public place with other adults present.

#### 4.7 Reporting of Abuse and/or Neglect

All CASA volunteers are mandated reporters and shall report all suspected incidents of abuse or neglect to their supervisor. Their supervisor will advise the volunteer as to whether or not to report the allegation to the hotline (1-800-25ABUSE) with details of the allegation. If the CASA volunteer feels the situation is an emergency, they should first call the hotline; then notify their supervisor.

#### 4.8 Volunteer-Client Relationship

CASA volunteers are not to provide direct service to any party involved in their case that could lead to a conflict of interest or liability problem, or cause the child or family to become dependent on the CASA volunteer or program, as a whole, for services that should be provided by other agencies. The role of the CASA volunteer is outlined in the job description and should not extend beyond the duties listed therein. Good judgment and common sense should dictate the relationship with parties involved in the case. Examples of inappropriate volunteer practices are (but are not limited to):

- Taking the child to the home of the volunteer
- Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling to anyone involved in the case
- Making placement arrangements for the child
- Giving money or expensive gifts to the child or family
- Engaging in activities that jeopardize the safety of the child

#### 4.9 Observing Parent/Child/Sibling Visits

CASA volunteers are permitted to observe parent/child/sibling visits. The purpose of attending these visits are for observation of family interactions. A CASA volunteer is not permitted to supervise or intervene with this visit. The CASA volunteer should respect these visits as limited, valuable time that the family has to spend together. Supervision of the visits is the responsibility of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and/or other participating agencies, not the CASA volunteer.

#### 4.10 Volunteer Safety

CASA volunteers should not put themselves in personal jeopardy in their performance of the CASA volunteer role and responsibilities. If a CASA advocate is uneasy about entering a neighborhood or a particular building, or about meeting with a particular party, the volunteer should discuss these concerns with their supervisor to make other arrangements. The CASA Program Director (or designee) may attend the meeting with the volunteer, to help relieve such apprehension.

#### 4.11 Court Reports

The CASA volunteer is responsible for submitting a typewritten report of his/her case to the CASA office eight days prior to each court hearing. The CASA staff will provide pre-service training on how to write and process these reports. Each report must be approved and signed by the volunteer's supervisor, prior to being submitted to the court. The report can be submitted to the court by the CASA staff.

The supervisor will review the report and offer suggestions regarding changes or additions to the report. If the supervisor disagrees with any portion of the report and they are unable to reach an agreement, the supervisor has the authority to rewrite the report.

#### 4.12 Confidentiality

All CASA Volunteers are responsible for maintaining strict confidentiality of all information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a party to their case, another volunteer or staff. Volunteers are not authorized to solicit other persons outside the CASA organization to aid them with a CASA case activity.

A CASA volunteer has become a recognized officer of the court, following the swearing-in ceremony. Any information pertaining to the individual families or children that the CASA volunteer receives in the discharge of his/her duties are strictly confidential. It may not be discussed with anyone, except the following:

- The Macon County Juvenile Court
- Macon County CASA staff and volunteers
- The State's Attorney assigned to the case
- The Attorney representing CASA and/or the child(ren) involved
- The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and/or private agency to whom the case is assigned.
- Other individuals assigned by the court to conduct pre-adjudication or pre-disposition investigation (i.e. service agencies)
- Other parties to the case

Other discussion of any confidential case is strictly forbidden. Violation of confidentiality can result in the discrediting of the CASA program and may be cause for immediate dismissal of the volunteer.

#### 4.13 Identification

The CASA program staff will provide all CASA volunteers with a copy of the court order, assigning CASA to the case. The CASA volunteer should have this item in their possession when executing any of their roles and responsibilities as a CASA volunteer. All CASA volunteers will be given an identification badge upon completion of the training. All volunteers are encouraged to show this badge to interested parties to validate the volunteer's involvement in the case.

CASA volunteers should not use their personal address in any communication or correspondence related to the execution of their duties as a CASA volunteer. If the CASA volunteer is asked to provide his or her contact information, the volunteer should give the CASA office contact information. Should an individual request further information, the volunteer should refer him/her to the CASA program staff. Phone calls from home can block caller ID by pressing \*67 prior to making a phone call.

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## Appendix A

### History of the Organization

#### Across the Nation:

The national movement to have the independent voice of child victims heard in court began in the 1960's. Judges realized they were making far-reaching decisions about the lives of children without hearing the unique perspective of the child. Some judges asked social workers or friends to informally investigate child abuse cases and make recommendations about what would best serve the needs and interests of the child.

The first volunteer guardian ad litem (GAL) program serving abused and neglected children was organized by King County Judge David Soukup in 1977 in Seattle, Washington. In the following years, word of the success of the King County program spread and similar programs began across the United States. Since some state statutes require the GAL to be an attorney, the term Court Appointed Special Advocate—CASA—was coined to describe volunteers from the local community who were trained to serve as advocates for abused and neglected children involved in the juvenile court proceedings.

In 1982, the National CASA Association was established to serve as an umbrella organization for the growing number of programs in the country. National CASA provides information, technical assistance, research, and training. National CASA also sponsors an annual national conference and has a grants program that annually awards millions of dollars to state and local CASA and GAL programs. Membership in National CASA is open to both individuals and programs. The National CASA phone number is: 1-800-628-3233 and their websites are: [www.nationalcasa.org](http://www.nationalcasa.org) and [www.casenet.org](http://www.casenet.org).

#### Across Illinois:

In Illinois, the development of protections for children followed the national movement. The first program organized in Illinois was in Cook County. The CASA program began serving the children of Chicago in 1986. Illinois CASA was established in June 1993 and until January 1999, the organization was primarily run by a statewide Board of Directors. In January, 1999 a full time Executive Director was hired with money secured from National CASA. The state office is located in Peoria, Illinois with another office in Springfield, Illinois. The Executive Director is responsible for technical support to existing programs and development of local programs throughout the state. As of August 2009, there are 34 counties providing CASA services in the juvenile court system.

Illinois CASA provides an annual conference for trained advocates and program staff, a quarterly newsletter and a unified voice across the state in child welfare issues. In addition, program directors gather annually to discuss pertinent issues and gain support from each other. Illinois CASA has been instrumental in acquiring start up funds for newly developing programs in the state and providing ongoing technical issues. The website for Illinois CASA is: [www.illinoiscasa.org](http://www.illinoiscasa.org).

#### In Macon County:

In September 1996, after hearing about the CASA program and previous efforts by the Illinois CASA Association to establish a program in Macon County, Webster Cantrell Hall employee, Ruth Hawkins, helped organize the beginning of a CASA program in Macon County. Ms. Hawkins enlisted the

assistance of Hon. Ted Paine and Hon. John Grenias. In 1997, Macon County CASA received a planning grant from the National CASA Association to develop the Macon County CASA program. In 1998, the first group of CASA volunteer advocates were sworn in and began accepting cases.

The intention was to have Macon County CASA branch on its own, from Webster Cantrell Hall, once it was financially able to do so. In 2003, the program lost funding. However, two current CASA volunteers and 5 board members continued to see the need for CASA in Macon County and the program was reestablished in 2004.



## Appendix B

### Mission Statement:

#### National CASA Association

(Together with state and local programs) To support and promote court-appointed volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children so that they can thrive in safe, permanent homes.

#### Illinois CASA Association

To provide leadership and support in the development and growth of local programs whose volunteers advocate for the best interests of children in the Juvenile Court System.

#### Macon County CASA

To provide court appointed volunteers to advocate for the abused, neglected and dependent children who are involved in the juvenile court system. It shall further be the purpose of this corporation to educate the community regarding its responsibility for children who have been abused or neglected and found to be dependent.

# CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

## Appendix C:

### Job Description

#### OBJECTIVE

To advocate for children who come to the attention of the court primarily as a result of abuse or neglect.

#### QUALIFICATIONS

Volunteers shall be of majority age and shall successfully complete screening requirements, which include a written application, personal interview, reference and a criminal background check, as well as a motor vehicle record check.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

A CASA volunteer respects a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets that child's best interests.

A CASA volunteer ensures that the child's best interests are represented at every stage of the case.

A CASA volunteer reports any new incidents of abuse or neglect to the CASA supervisor and the appropriate authorities.

A CASA volunteer reviews records and interviews appropriate parties involved in the case, including the child, to 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.

A CASA volunteer facilitates prompt, thorough reviews of the case.

A CASA volunteer attends all court hearings, foster care reviews, and all other hearings and meetings which pertain to the child.

A CASA volunteer maintains complete records and documentation about the case, including appointments, interviews, and information gathered about the child.

A CASA volunteer submits recommendations concerning the case to the court in a signed, written report.

A CASA volunteer makes contact with CASA supervisors, and other parties involved in the case, including the child, at least once a month.

A CASA volunteer maintains complete confidentiality regarding information about the child, as well as information regarding other parties involved in the case.

A CASA volunteer exhibits professionalism in behavior and appearance.

A CASA volunteer is not related to any parties involved in the case assigned to him or her or employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest.

A CASA volunteer does not provide direct services to any parties that could lead to a conflict of interest or potential liability, or cause a child or family to become dependent on the CASA volunteer for services that should be provided by other agencies or organizations.

## TRAINING

A CASA volunteer completes a 30-hour initial training course, which includes:

- policies and procedures of the CASA program, Department of Children and Family Services, and Macon County Juvenile Court
- dynamics and human behavior associated with child abuse and neglect
- relevant local, state, and federal laws
- permanency planning and family preservation
- cultural diversity
- communication and interview skills
- the role and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer.
- As part of their training, a CASA volunteer also observes a court proceeding and a foster care review board meeting.

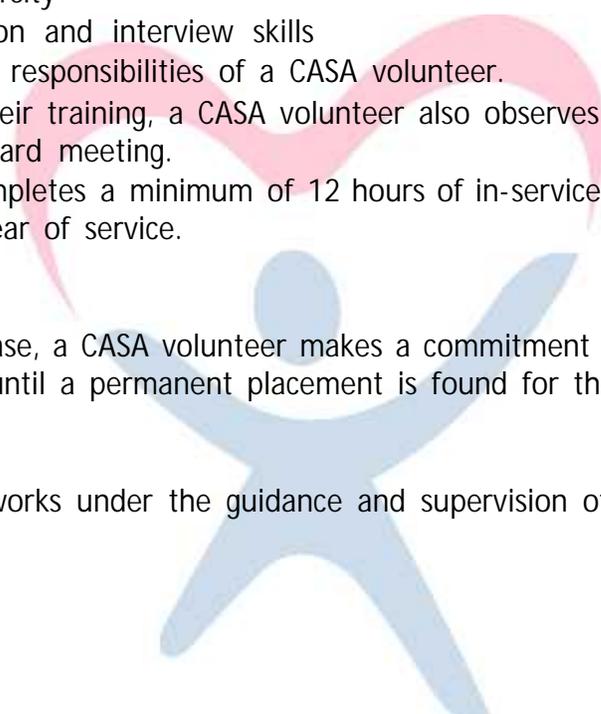
A CASA volunteer completes a minimum of 12 hours of in-service training each year, following their first year of service.

## TIME COMMITMENT

Once assigned to a case, a CASA volunteer makes a commitment to the case for at least one year, and preferably until a permanent placement is found for the child.

## SUPERVISION

The CASA volunteer works under the guidance and supervision of the CASA program director.



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

## Appendix D

### Pledge of Confidentiality

I, \_\_\_\_\_, promise that I shall hold in confidence all pertinent information. I will not violate the confidential relationship between Macon County CASA, its volunteers, its clients, related agencies, courts and all other parties involved. I will not remove written records from the office of Macon County CASA, the Macon County court house, or any agency without expressed permission.

I accept full responsibility for maintaining the confidential and private nature of all records and information.

I understand that I am responsible for the immediate return of any case related documents to the CASA office, at the close of any court case or upon the termination of my involvement as a CASA volunteer.

I understand that I am personally responsible and liable for any violation of this agreement. Furthermore, I acknowledge that Macon County CASA, its staff, volunteers, board members or any other party involved with Macon County CASA will not be held liable for my actions.

I further understand that my services as a CASA volunteer can and will be terminated for any violation of this agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
CASA volunteer signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

## Appendix E

### Conflict of Interest:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, promise that I will refrain from activity that shall be considered a conflict of interest with my duties as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer.

I understand that I should not be related to or acquainted with any person who is a party to a case, to which I am assigned. Once assigned to a case, I agree to inform the CASA Program Director, Advocate Supervisor or Executive Director immediately if such conflict arises.

I understand that I should not be employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest with my duties as a CASA volunteer. These agencies include but are not limited to: the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the Macon County Juvenile Court. I agree to resign from my duties as a CASA volunteer, should I accept such employment.

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CASA Volunteer

Date

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CASA Supervisor

CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN