

Child Advocate (CASA)

Job Description



Basic Function:

A child advocate is a trained community volunteer appointed by a judge to speak for the best interests of an abused and neglected child. A child advocate works as an official part of the judicial proceedings, working alongside attorneys and social workers. By handling only one or two cases at a time, the child advocate has time to thoroughly explore the history and circumstances of each assigned case.

Supervision:

Direct supervision and guidance is provided by the volunteer supervisor(s).

Major Duties and Responsibilities:

- Complete an extensive, independent review of each case:
 - Meet face-to-face with child at least once a month;
 - Speak with the child and relevant adults (parents, family members, school officials, doctors, and others involved in the child's life who might have facts about the case);
 - Review appropriate records and reports;
 - Observe the child and significant others
- Report findings to the court by submitting formal reports to the court at every scheduled hearing/review:
 - Provide a written report containing factual information to the program office two weeks prior to every hearing;
 - Attend court hearings concerning the child.
- 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:
 - Ensure that the judicial and child welfare systems are moving ahead to secure a safe, permanent home for the child;
 - Ensure that court-ordered services are provided to the child and family.
- Consult regularly with Child Advocate supervisor concerning assigned case:
 - Develop a plan for advocacy;
 - Review progress and reports.

Training/Support Plan:

- Child Advocate volunteers are required to attend approximately 40 hours of pre-service training and 12 hours of in-service training annually.
- Child Advocate volunteers follow guidelines established by the National CASA Association.
- Child Advocate volunteers have access to additional training opportunities offered by other agencies.
- Child Advocate volunteers receive direct supervision and guidance from program staff.
- Child Advocate volunteers are encouraged to call their volunteer supervisor at any time with any questions/concerns.

Time Commitment:

- Child Advocate volunteers are required to make a twenty-four month commitment to the program.
- Child Advocate volunteers are required to attend all court hearings on their cases.
- Child Advocate volunteers are expected to be available for case assignment and to accept cases immediately upon completion of pre-service training, unless other arrangements have been made.
- Child Advocate volunteers, on the average, spend 10-15 hours a month on each case.

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Necessary Knowledge and Skills:

- Ability to keep all client and court information confidential.
- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.
- Ability to respect and relate to people from various backgrounds.
- Ability to transport self.
- Ability to maintain objectivity.
- A basic understanding of child development and family relationships.
- Good common sense.
- Does not require specific educational training beyond a high school diploma or GED.
- Must be 21 years of age.

Benefits:

Although we cannot provide you with monetary rewards, there are many benefits to volunteering as a child advocate. These include the opportunity to:

- Make a difference in the life and future of a child who has been a victim of abuse and/or neglect;
- Help a child/children find permanency in a safe, loving home;
- Assist judges in obtaining a clear picture of a child's life and needs;
- Gain an understanding of the courts, legal proceedings, and social service agencies;
- Develop/utilize communication skills;
- Develop/utilize assertiveness;
- Utilize your past experience/skills;
- Form friendships with like-minded people in your community;
- Have access to training.

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