

CASA OF JACKSON COUNTY



VOLUNTEER POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

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Volunteer Policies and Guidelines
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Introduction

The purpose of this policy manual is to provide guidance and direction to staff and volunteers engaged in CASA of Jackson County activities. These policies are intended for guidance only and do not constitute either implicitly or explicitly a binding contractual or personnel agreement. They exist for the protection of the children, the volunteers, the staff and the CASA program. Each volunteer is asked to read them carefully and to provide a signed statement indicating that they have read and understood the expectations.

Mission

Mission

The mission of CASA of Jackson and Josephine Counties is to provide specially trained community volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children in the pursuit of safe and permanent homes.

Historical Perspective

Judge Soukup, a Juvenile Court Judge, watched as many parties entered and exited the juvenile dependency courtroom, but he never heard anyone speak strictly on behalf of the child. Thus, in 1977 Judge Soukup's idea of providing a "voice" in court for abused and neglected children resulted in the birth of the first CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) program in Seattle. In 1982 the National CASA Association was established to serve as an umbrella organization for the growing number of programs in the country. There are now over 900 programs operating throughout the United States under both federal and state mandates.

Oregon The CASA program came to Oregon in 1985 when the legislature authorized a pilot CASA project. In 1987, the legislature mandated that all Oregon children who were abused or neglected should be appointed a CASA. Thirty-one Oregon counties currently operate a CASA program.

Jackson County. CASA of Jackson County began in 1990 as a county run program. In 2003 and in the face of drastic county budget cuts, an advisory group "The Friends of CASA" brought CASA of Jackson County out from under the county auspices and established it as a 501 (c)(3) non-profit agency. The program has successfully grown each year in both the number of volunteer CASAs and in children served.

Volunteers

Definition of Volunteer

A “volunteer” in this context is anyone who without compensation or expectation of compensation performs a task at the direction and on behalf of CASA/JC. A volunteer must be officially accepted, trained and appointed by the court before performing any task on behalf of CASA/JC. Unless specifically stated, volunteers shall not be considered as employees of the agency.

CASA of Jackson County volunteers are advocates for the children on their cases. They are also advocates for abused and neglected children in a larger, collective sense. CASA volunteers educate the public regarding the scope of their community’s child abuse problem.

CASA volunteers can advocate within the private sector for financial, human and other resources to assist in solving the difficult problems confronting children. They can advocate for responsible change within the child welfare and human service systems. The CASA program asks that the volunteers coordinate their efforts first through the CASA office to ensure message continuity and that best resources are being used. The accomplishment of CASA of Jackson County’s mission is dependent on the efforts and commitments of volunteers.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The goal of CASA of Jackson County is to recruit a representative cross-section of the public who will effectively and compassionately serve as advocates for the dependent children of Jackson County. It is the policy to provide equal opportunity to all volunteers and staff in recruitment, screening, training, and supervision. CASA respects the dignity and diversity of our community and will not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin or ancestry, marital status, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, political affiliation or socioeconomic level.

Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers will be conducted in such a manner as to supply a diverse group of qualified advocates. Volunteers shall be recruited by CASA of Jackson County on a pro-active basis, purposefully seeking to build a volunteer pool that is culturally, ethnically, racially, socio-economically and linguistically reflective of the children and families served.

Screening Procedures

Screening procedures include:

- Review and evaluation of the written application
- Written reference checks (a minimum of 3 non-relative)
- Advanced Criminal Package Search through Verified Volunteers: Social Security Trace, OFAC, 50 State DOJ Sex Offender Registry (Dru Sjodin); Nationwide Database Search with primary source validation; automatic current county/state of residence search; monthly updating of Nationwide Database Search with primary source validation (for a full year)
- An initial interview

- Participation in training (the initial 40 hours of training also serves as a screening process)
- A pre-case interview
- Signature and disclosures on a conflict of interest policy on a yearly basis and a complete criminal history background reassessment every four years, at least.

Qualifications of CASA Volunteers

CASA volunteers must:

- Be at least 21 years of age (National CASA Standard)
- Successfully complete an application and screening process
- Demonstrate the capability to adequately advocate for a child or children
- Have no criminal record or history with a child protective service (CPS, DHSCW) agency which impairs his or her ability to be appointed as a CASA
- Successfully complete 40 hours of required initial training and four hours of court observation

Reasons for Denying an Application

Reasons for rejection of an application to become a volunteer for CASA of Jackson County may include, but are not limited to the following:

- The applicant has falsified or misrepresented facts during the screening process
- References are not returned or are unsatisfactory
- The applicant has a conflict of interest with any activity or program of CASA/JC, whether personal, philosophical or financial
- The applicant has been convicted of, or has charges pending, for a felony or misdemeanor or has committed a sex offense, child abuse or neglect or related act
- Criminal records and/or CPS checks are unsatisfactory
- The applicant is currently in treatment for substance abuse
- There is existence of a conflict of interest which cannot be resolved
- The applicant has been sanctioned or faces disciplinary action by a professional licensing or other governing body
- The CASA staff concludes during training that the applicant will be incapable of fulfilling the role of a volunteer

The CASA of Jackson County program must ensure a high quality of service to children. Therefore, the program reserves the sole right, at any time during the screening process, to determine who may or may not be appropriate to serve as a volunteer.

The final decision regarding the rejection of an applicant will be made by the Executive Director. The Director will consult with program staff in making this decision. An applicant who has been denied will receive written notification from the Executive Director that the application has been rejected. CASA of Jackson County reserves the right to offer or withhold information related to the reasons for rejecting the application.

Accepting Applicants

Applicants who are accepted into the initial training will receive written notification of their acceptance to commence training. Any conditions attached to their acceptance will be noted in this letter. **Note: Acceptance into the CASA of Jackson County volunteer training program does not guarantee that the trainee will become a Court Appointed Special Advocate.**

Record Keeping

A system of records will be maintained on each volunteer who applies to CASA of Jackson. The following is included in each volunteer file:

- Application
- Volunteer pre-training interview/s
- Background check authorization
- ID copy
- Conflict of interest statement
- Background check screen (currently through Verified Volunteers)
- DHS background check screen
- 3 references (nonfamily)
- Confidentiality agreement
- Volunteer P&P acknowledgement
- Pre-case interview
- Training syllabus
- CASA graduation certificate
- Case exemption form (if more than 2 cases)
- If MYTI: MYTI driving agreement, auto insurance, driving record

Volunteer records will be maintained by the staff responsible for supervising the volunteer and will be accorded the same confidentiality as personnel records. A volunteer may have access to her/his records. Removing or changing documents must be approved by the Program Manager. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to keep the Case Supervisor informed of any changes of name, mailing address and/or telephone number.

Volunteer Status Definitions

Active: Active volunteers are those currently appointed to at least one case by the Jackson County Juvenile Court Judge or by a judge associated with a courtesy CASA case.

Inactive or On Leave: Volunteers will be considered inactive or on leave if they have completed a case and two or more months have passed since they have been active, or are currently eligible for a case appointment but request to be on leave for a period of time. Leaves are normally for one year or less. Volunteers on leave are expected to satisfy the continuing education requirement and attend at least 1 in-service per quarter.

CASA volunteers who are on leave for more than one month, will be dismissed from their active CASA cases. At this time, another CASA will be reappointed to ensure face-to-face visits are completed and the children's best interests are served.

Alternative Program Support: Volunteers who have completed a case may continue to be involved in the program by serving in other capacities.

Corrective Action

Corrective action may be taken if the volunteer's work is unsatisfactory. Corrective action is within the discretion of the Case Supervisor and the Program Manager and may include:

1. Additional Supervision
2. Reassignment
3. Retraining with possible supervision
4. Referral to another volunteer position
5. Dismissal from the CASA Program

Dismissal

Volunteers may be dismissed from CASA service if the agency determines one or a combination of the following reasons:

- The volunteer is not pursuing the best interests of the child(ren) on her/his case(s)
- The volunteer does not adequately or appropriately represent the mission of CASA of Jackson County
- The volunteer recommends or takes action without program or court approval and such actions endanger the child
- The volunteer does not carry out assigned duties effectively. This includes submitting monthly progress reports, speaking in court, and submitting both court and CRB reports two weeks prior to the court or CRB hearing and visiting the child on a monthly basis
- The volunteer does not adequately or appropriately comply with the roles and responsibilities established for volunteers in this policy manual
- The volunteer engages in behavior which may negatively affect the credibility and integrity of the CASA program
- A conflict of interest arises during the time of service
- The volunteer acts in a biased or partisan manner in carrying out assigned duties

The decision regarding dismissal will be made following consultation between the Case Supervisor, Program Manager and Executive Director. The Program Manager will communicate the decision to the volunteer and provide the volunteer with a written statement of the decision.

Delaying Case Appointment

Volunteers who successfully complete the 40 hour training may delay taking a case for up to three months. After three months, the volunteer will discuss with the Program Manager what parts of the training need to be repeated if the volunteer still wishes to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

Returning to Active Status

Any volunteer who has resigned, or is on leave, may be eligible for a return to "active" status. Those individuals who have not actively worked on a case for twelve months or more may have

to complete some or all of the 40 hours of initial volunteer training to again be eligible for a case assignment.

Individuals who have been dismissed from CASA of Jackson County by the Executive Director for reasons cited above will not be considered for a return to “active” status.

Training

Purpose

The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (NCASAA), the Oregon CASA Network (OCN) and the CASA of Jackson County program all share guidelines that call for appropriate and adequate initial and on-going training, education, and professional development of CASA volunteers.

General Training Requirements

CASA of Jackson County requires thirty (30) hours of initial training and twelve (12) hours of annual, on-going training for CASA volunteers.

On-going training is required for all active and inactive volunteers. CASA provides brown bag lunch meetings and monthly in-service meetings. Other continuing education opportunities that arise in the community may also count as part of the annual requirement. Volunteers can take advantage of information on workshops, seminars and training classes attended as well as approved books and video/ audio tapes, and attending court hearings and Citizen Review Hearings. These continuing education activities, which may be part of their employment or other volunteer positions, can be considered as credit toward their annual twelve-hour CASA requirement.

Code of Ethics

Ethical Behavior

CASA of Jackson County is committed to the highest standards of ethics and integrity, with all employees and volunteers expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with commonly accepted professional ethical standards of behavior. Unethical behavior will not be tolerated.

The following are the primary elements of the ethical code of the organization:

- To regard as their primary obligation the welfare of the children served
- To refuse to discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability and to work to prevent and eliminate such discrimination in rendering services

- To hold themselves responsible for the quality and extent of services they perform
- To respect the privacy of the people they serve and the members of the organization
- To use in a responsible and respectful manner the information gained in the course of their association with CASA/JC
- To treat with respect the findings, views and actions of colleagues and to use appropriate channels to express judgments on these matters
- To accept responsibility for working toward the creation and maintenance of conditions within CASA/JC that will enable all board members, staff and volunteers to conduct themselves in keeping with this code

Respect

CASA of Jackson County, both staff and volunteers, will treat all people with respect and fairness. Rude, disrespectful or demeaning behavior is considered unacceptable at any level of the organization and will result in grounds for dismissal on cases.

Conflicts of Interest

The primary obligation of both CASA staff and CASA volunteers is to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children as objectively as possible. Outside employment or personal business activities should not conflict with the volunteer's primary responsibility as a child advocate. Responsibility for recognizing and preventing such conflicts rests solely on the volunteer. It is strongly recommended that any suspected conflicts of this nature be brought to the immediate attention of the CASA's Case Supervisor.

Any personal quote, personal advertising and political statement is **not allowed** and **unacceptable** on any form of communication, including electronic mail and written communication.

Confidentiality

Any decision to release confidential information should be discussed with your Case Supervisor.

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves staff, volunteers, clients or other persons.

This policy is one of the fundamental principles of the CASA program, reflecting the CASA's legal (ORS 419B.112), moral and ethical obligation to protect the child's and family's right to privacy.

CASA volunteers must hold in confidence all information regarding children and families which comes to them as a result of involvement in the CASA program. CASAs must use extreme caution in transporting and storing written material about their case. E-mail accounts should only allow access to the CASA volunteer to ensure privacy and protection of confidential documents.

The Court Appointed Special Advocate for a specific child may only discuss with and release information to:

- Legal parties to the case in an effort to assist in case planning. (Parties to the case include: judges, attorneys and caseworkers assigned to the case)
- CASA of Jackson County staff
- Professional counselors providing mandated services to CASA children in a case

Confidentiality/Social Networking

To protect the privacy of the child in which you are an advocate; participation in social networking is not allowed with anyone related to the case, such as foster parent/s, child, extended family members, etc. Social networking is defined by media such as, Facebook, My Space, Pinterest, Twitter, or blogging.

Confidentiality/Courtroom

Although the Juvenile Courtroom is open, it is CASA of Jackson County's recommendation that a CASA not bring family members, friends or spouses to the courtroom when attending court for their assigned cases. This recommendation and its adherence are to protect CASA's integrity, perception of confidentiality among community partners and the privacy of the case material.

Confidentiality/Public Relations and the Media

CASA volunteers should not attempt to speak to the media regarding anything involving CASA cases, but instead direct the inquiry to the Executive Director, Board President, or their designated representative.

Confidentiality/Records and Materials

Volunteers may not remove or keep any confidential materials from CASA of Jackson County upon separation from service. **Records kept on a computer hard drive must be deleted.** Such confidential materials include but may not be limited to donor, client, and volunteer records.

Children & Families

Child Advocacy

Advocacy for the best interests of children requires commitment to three tenets: (1) protecting children from abuse; (2) safety and permanency for children; (3) and actively valuing the child's attachment to his or her family of origin.

Culturally Appropriate Advocacy

Advocacy for the best interests of the child requires tremendous sensitivity to both the child's and family's culture, ethnic identity, religion, language and the many other factors that contribute to a child's identity. The CASA organization and all those within it must make a diligent and

deliberate effort to ensure that advocacy is culturally sensitive and appropriate. Furthermore, CASA of Jackson County must always strive to enhance cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Attitudes Towards Families

Children love and value their families, even families who have abused or neglected them. CASA of Jackson County therefore recognizes that advocacy for the child is often closely tied to advocacy for the family. We promote respectful treatment of all parents and family members.

Safety and Permanency

Safety and permanency for children is a major focus of all CASA programs. Children require and deserve to live without the threat of physical or psychological harm to either themselves or to others in their home. Likewise, children require and deserve stability and permanence in order to develop bonds and attachments that lead to healthy, nurturing and meaningful relationships.

The CASA's Autonomy and Limits on Autonomy

The CASA, as appointed by the Juvenile Court, is the child's advocate and is given latitude by the CASA program to determine and advocate for a child's best interest. CASA of Jackson County staff will normally support CASAs in this role. However, if the CASA program is in conflict with the opinions and recommendations of a CASA volunteer, the program may:

- Submit a separate report to the court detailing its concerns, opinions and recommendations; or
- Ask the court to remove that CASA from his/her appointed case if the program feels that either the welfare of the child or of another individual is jeopardized by the actions and/or recommendations of a CASA volunteer.

Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships

The Responsibilities of a CASA

Volunteers will be provided with a clear, complete and current description of the duties and responsibilities of a CASA. Position descriptions will be reviewed and updated at least every two years.

Relationship to the Child Welfare System

CASA of Jackson County values strong, professional and productive relationships with all the individuals associated with CASA cases and with the agencies working within the child welfare system. Although CASA volunteers often take positions in specific cases that are in conflict with others on the case, the CASA program **does not cast itself in an adversarial role** with any party. CASA of Jackson County recognizes that reasonable people disagree and that the best outcomes for children result from a full and complete discussion of all issues and points of view.

Mandatory Reporting

As mandatory reporters, CASAs must contact DHS/CW Intake Team or a law enforcement agency if they have reasonable cause to believe a child with whom they have had contact is being abused or a person has abused a child. It is important to report information regarding

suspected abuse and neglect to DHS/CW as soon as possible. Additionally, CASAs must report suspected abuse to the CASA staff as soon as possible.

Responsibility and Relationship to the Court

As the Jackson County Juvenile Court's designated Court Appointed Special Advocate program, CASA of Jackson County has a responsibility to operate with the highest standards of ethics and accountability. This program has been provided a position of trust in the Courtroom, therefore as appointed parties to the case, Court Appointed Special Advocates must consistently demonstrate these high standards in all of their conduct, both inside and outside of the courtroom. They must abide by the laws of Oregon and the federal government and follow the rules of the Court, doing nothing to bring dishonor to either the Court, the role in which they serve, or to the CASA program. These expectations apply equally to the CASA of Jackson County staff and Board of Directors.

Responsibility and Relationship to the Child

The organization's first responsibility is to advocate for the best interests of the children served by the program. All resources are allocated and policies and procedures are enacted in accordance with this responsibility. The CASA is expected to work to develop a trusting relationship with the child. The following guidelines have been developed for the protection of the CASA volunteer, the children and the integrity of the CASA program:

- The CASA shall not supervise parent-child visits nor shall the CASA provide social services to an appointed child.
- The CASA volunteer is not permitted to transport their CASA children or families. It is NOT the CASA volunteer's role to directly assist any party in accomplishing their goals but rather to monitor their compliance and success. In addition, it is in the CASA's best interest to avoid being alone in a car with the children or related individuals associated with his/her case.
- The CASA shall not permit any assigned child to be placed in the CASA's home, either as temporary shelter or as a long-term placement.
- The CASA shall not provide child care or invite the child to their place of residence.
- The CASA is encouraged to visit the child as often as possible (at least once per month) in order to determine what the child's needs are and whether or not they are being met.
- CASAs are discouraged from giving money to their assigned children, or buying them clothing or gifts. If a child has needs (clothing, school supplies, etc.) that are not being met, the CASA is encouraged to consult with the CASA program staff to explore possible solutions. Occasionally items such as teddy bears and children's books are donated to the program for CASA children.
- Communications between a child and a CASA are not privileged in law, and a CASA shall not assure the confidentiality of such communications.

Saying Goodbye

- CASA Volunteers have a time-limited relationship with the children on their cases. In the process of ending a case, it may be appropriate for a volunteer to make a "goodbye visit" to the child(ren) and family. **Consultation with your Case Supervisor is necessary prior to the termination of the case.**

- An important part of the “goodbye visit” is to communicate to the family the positive message that you will no longer need to be a resource to them now that they are cared for well enough to be out of the system. If you and your Case Supervisor agree that the family can contact you in the future, make it clear that you will no longer be in the CASA role.
- Remember, every case is unique and every relationship is different. Discuss your ideas for future contacts, including the questions of cards and gifts, with the Case Supervisor.

Roles and Responsibilities of CASA Staff

It is the role of CASA staff to maintain the integrity of the CASA of Jackson County program. This is accomplished through the establishment and maintenance of relationships with the Court and with all individuals and agencies that are engaged in and supportive of the child welfare system. This is also accomplished with the professional recruitment, training and on-going support of the agency’s corps of volunteers

Members of the CASA staff have the responsibility to assess the needs of the program and to continually ensure that the program functions with a high level of competency and ethical standards. CASA staff has the responsibility to ensure that the court is presented with appropriate, well-researched and professionally written reports. CASA staff also has the responsibility to recruit volunteers in good faith, to provide professional and pertinent training to its volunteer corps, and to offer on-going, professional support to CASAs who are actively working on cases.

Specific roles of CASA staff are as follows:

- Case Supervisor: The Case Supervisors provide supervision and guidance for CASA volunteers. Each CASA is assigned to a supervisor who provides mentoring and assistance in all aspects of the volunteer’s work.
- Training/Recruitment Coordinator: The Training/Recruitment Coordinator assists in the recruitment of volunteers, coordinates the application and screening process, schedules and coordinates CASA training and conducts final screening procedures.
- Office Manager: The Office Manager provides program support, fund raising support, clerical and phones, and assists the Executive Director and Board of Directors.
- Director of Development and Communications: The Director of Development and Communications is responsible for managing the volunteer Guild, developing, coordinating and promoting fund raising events and securing sponsorships.
- Program Manager: The Program Manager is responsible for supervision of the Case Supervisors and Training Recruitment Coordinator. The Program Manager is responsible for the administration of the program.
- Executive Director: The Executive Director is responsible for the management of the agency. Acting at the pleasure of the Board of Directors of CASA of Jackson County, she/he provides policy, compliance and HR oversight, fiscal oversight, grant, donor and fund raising development and managerial functions for the organization. The Executive Director makes the final decision regarding the dismissal of a practicing CASA and the rejection of an applicant.

Volunteer's Responsibility to CASA Staff

Volunteers, when sworn in and appointed to a case, are expected by the CASA of Jackson County program to:

- Keep in regular contact and/or visit with the children on the case(s) at least one time per month and more frequently if possible
- Report to and discuss with assigned Case Supervisor on a monthly basis, the status of the children on their case
- Prepare written court reports for the Juvenile Court for all hearings associated with the child(ren) on their case – these reports must follow the agency's established format and be submitted to the volunteer's assigned Case Supervisor for review and correction two weeks prior to the date of the scheduled hearing
- Be in contact with their Case Supervisor prior to scheduled hearings to prepare an oral report to the court. **It is mandatory to stand up and speak for your CASA child in Court.**
- Turn in monthly progress reports to their Case Supervisor as instructed.
- Share all written information with the Case Supervisor before sharing it with any party
- Attend court hearings, CRB hearings, Child Safety Meetings and Family Decision Meetings and notify Case Supervisor if attendance is impossible
- Report immediately to their Case Supervisor any major case related events or concerns, e.g., child is moved, re-abuse occurs, concern about foster family, etc.
- Return case files and other case related information to CASA office when case closes
- Receive guidance and supervision from your Case Supervisor.

Teamwork

Everyone working to further CASA of Jackson County's mission regardless of job title or paid or volunteer status is equally important. Teamwork is vital!

Communication

Positive and respectful communication is essential to the success of the CASA program. Given that it is a normal dynamic of human interaction to experience communication breakdowns, it is imperative that all individuals associated with CASA of Jackson County make all efforts to assure that avenues of communication remain open and productive. This includes communication between staff and volunteers as well as with all other individuals and agencies engaged in the child welfare system.

Safety

For the safety of the CASA children for whom we advocate, it is CASA of Jackson County's policy that the CASA volunteer remain in earshot or visual view of another adult when visiting with their child(ren). This rule is to protect you against a false allegation as well as the safety of the child.

Grievances

A volunteer who feels that they have been treated unfairly may take a grievance to the Program Manager, Executive Director or Board of Directors. The Program Manager, Executive Director

or Board of Directors will consult with staff and other individuals as deemed necessary in responding to the volunteer and resolving the problem.

Requests for Specific Case Appointments

Requests by volunteers for a specific case appointment will be handled on a case by case basis. Decisions on such requests will be based on the “best interests of the child.”

General Procedures

Swearing-In of Volunteers

All volunteers who successfully complete the 40 hour training and wish to become Court Appointed Special Advocates must take an oath and be sworn-in by the Juvenile Court Judge.

Background Check

CASAs are required to resubmit to a background check every five years. If a CASA’s criminal standing should change while being a CASA, they should inform the agency immediately. This includes receiving a stalking or Temporary Restraining Order and/or personal involvement with any Child Welfare agency.

Criteria for Case Appointments

For a child to receive CASA of Jackson County services, a CASA volunteer must be appointed to a case by the Jackson County Juvenile Court and fit the criteria of Oregon law. CASAs are appointed to cases in which a child has a pending Juvenile Court matter involving abuse or neglect. The program cannot accept appointments to cases involving purely delinquency or custody issues.

Referrals

Referrals for a CASA appointment to a case may come from any source, i.e., the Juvenile Court Judge, caseworkers, counselors, etc. The decision on whether or not to make an appointment ultimately rests with the Juvenile Court Judge, CASA Executive Director and Program Manager.

Agency Processes

Once a referral for a CASA appointment has been received by the program, the request is then processed by agency staff. The child(ren)’s case is thoroughly reviewed by CASA staff and a determination is made as to the agency’s ability to provide an appropriate volunteer. If an appropriate volunteer is available, the program will submit that volunteer’s name to the Juvenile Court and request that he/she is appointed to the case. If no appropriate CASA volunteer is available the case is assigned to the agency’s “Wait List.”

Volunteer Selection for Appointment

CASA of Jackson County staff, when submitting a volunteer for appointment to a case, will take into consideration the strengths and weaknesses of each available volunteer and make a

determination as to which individual volunteers would best serve the needs of the child(ren) on the case. All cases are unique and volunteers have varying levels of knowledge, skills and experiences. It is with this in mind that the program will seek to match the right volunteer to the right case.

Wait List

The CASA of Jackson County “Wait List” consists of those cases in which a petition has been filed with the court and has been referred to the agency but, due to a lack of volunteers or appropriate volunteers, are not yet assigned a CASA. This list is maintained, updated and prioritized by the staff. The following guidelines inform the prioritization process:

- Children whose abuse is life-threatening
- Children who are unsupported by the non-offending parent
- Children who have a history of repeated referrals to DHS
- Children who are from families with a history of parental rights being terminated on other siblings
- Children who have experienced a previous out-of-home placement

Volunteer Caseload

It is desirable that CASA volunteers carry no more than two cases. In unique situations, a volunteer may have additional cases (examples would be a “Courtesy” or a high priority case), when a CASA’s involvement is critical to the “best interests of a child” and no other volunteer is available.

Case Closure

Cases achieve closure when the Juvenile Court removes itself and the state from custodial jurisdiction of the child(ren). This may be achieved by the child(ren)’s adoption or legal guardianship, a return to the biological family, the child(ren) reaching the age of majority (18), or by any court order mandating the end of such jurisdiction.

CASA Volunteer Removal From a Case

Removal of a CASA from a case may be voluntary at the request of the CASA, involuntary at the request of the agency or the Court, or a result of case closure. In every case the Juvenile Court must sign a termination motion for a CASA volunteer to be removed from a case unless a case closes.

Courtesy CASAs

CASA of Jackson County, on occasion, will be asked to perform “Courtesy CASA” services. These requests usually come from other CASA programs, parents, foster parents or others associated to a case that relocates to Jackson County. A “Courtesy CASA” is often requested in these instances to provide follow-up and other information that would otherwise be difficult to provide by a CASA volunteer from another county. Though normally a short-term assignment, Courtesy CASAs still require a court appointment. As CASA of Jackson County wishes to provide safety for all children, the agency will seek to provide Courtesy CASAs whenever possible.

Background Check

CASAs are required to resubmit to a background check every four years. If a CASA's criminal standing should change while being a CASA, they should inform the agency immediately. This includes receiving a stalking or Temporary Restraining Order and/or personal involvement with any Child Welfare agency.

Assigning an Additional Volunteer to a Case

Under certain circumstances, cases may benefit from having an additional volunteer appointed. This may occur, for instance, if the case would benefit from a certain expertise, e.g., bilingual skills. In such a situation, the CASA supervisor assigned to the case would make a determination in conjunction with the Program Administrator to appoint a Co-CASA. The Juvenile Court would then be asked to make the additional appointment.

Transfer of Jurisdiction

If a case is transferred out of the jurisdiction of the Jackson County Juvenile Court, the appointment and the involvement of the CASA of Jackson County volunteer will generally end. Upon consultation with the Case Supervisor, a new CASA request may be initiated in the new jurisdiction.

If a case is transferred into the jurisdiction of Jackson County and the volunteer from the case's place of origin wishes to continue in the role of CASA advocate, the CASA of Jackson County program will make a determination as to whether or not that relationship remains in the "best interest of the child(ren)" on that case. In any case, the CASA of Jackson County program staff will review the case to develop an opinion as to whether or not the case would benefit from CASA of Jackson County involvement.

Communication

Monthly Reporting

CASAs are required to report case activities monthly to their assigned supervisor. This information will become part of the case records kept in the CASA office. Reviewing case activities regularly with the CASA office ensures that we are up to date on all cases. Monthly reporting is also a **requirement** of National CASA in order for CASA of Jackson County to remain in good standing. Reporting can be done verbally, by email and/or in writing. **Failure to submit a monthly progress report with hours, mileage and an update on the child will result in the initiation of the termination of CASA appointment.**

Quarterly Reporting: Miles, Dollars Spent, Time, Trainings

CASA of Jackson County is required to report volunteer activity to the state and national CASA organizations as well as the Commission to Children and Families. Locally we use this information in grant writing, presentations, financial reporting, in-kind donations etc. Our volunteer in-kind donations are the crux of our program's ability to serve abused/neglected children and are an important indicator of community support and agency strength.

All volunteers must report monthly:

- Miles traveled doing CASA work
- Time spent doing CASA work
- Trainings pertinent to CASA work

Personal Information: Address, Email, Phone

It is the responsibility of each CASA to keep the office updated on contact information such as: phone number including cell phone number, work phone number, mailing address, email address and any other contact information that will help the CASA office be able reach a volunteer.

Please notify the CASA office or your Case Supervisor if you will be leaving town for longer than 3 days. It is important for staff to be able to respond to your case needs in the event of your absence.

CONFIDENTIALITY 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 that may arise. **Any questions and/or concerns the CASA volunteer has regarding confidentiality or the application of this policy should be discussed with the CASA staff.** These will be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

- 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. Your Appointment Order should cover most cases. By statute, there are limitations on the disclosure of information a professional receives during the course of his/her relationship with a client or patient. Many professionals also have ethical principles that govern their ability to disclose information (for example, attorneys are bound by Rules of Professional Conduct; doctors, psychologist, and social workers also have ethical codes). The professional has no authority to provide any information to a CASA without the 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 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 their Case Supervisor.

- The CASA is not allowed to disseminate documents to any of the parties, their attorney's 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 is protected by the 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 from 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 Executive Director, Program Manager or Case Supervisor 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 physical and/or sexual abuse.
- A CASA may disclose relevant confidential information and discuss relevant 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.
- The CASA may disclose a case in hypothetical terms for the purpose 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 individuals involved in the case or provide facts that may identify the case or parties.

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

1. When visiting with children it is advisable that the CASA volunteer remain in visible contact of another adult, for example, if visiting with a child in their home or foster home, conversation can take place outside in the yard or in another room, with the door open.
2. The CASA volunteer is not permitted to transport their CASA children or families. It is NOT the CASA volunteer's role to directly assist any party in accomplishing their goals but rather to monitor their compliance and success. In addition, it is in the CASA's best interest to avoid being alone in a car with the children or related individuals associated with his/her case.
3. If a volunteer is with a child in a public swimming pool or beach at a lake there must be a licensed life guard on duty.
4. It is highly recommended that all CASA volunteers receive CPR training.
5. Under no circumstances is a CASA volunteer to address sexual abuse issues with a child unless a trained professional DHS worker is present or the child's counselor in a pre-approved visit.
6. When speaking with a child, if an emotionally intense issue causes the child to become emotionally or psychological distressed the volunteer should end the conversation, report the distress to the care giver, and put closure on the conversation so that it ends on a positive note. CASAs are not therapists and should not attempt to serve in that role.
7. As a CASA Volunteer you are a mandatory reporter. This means that:
 - a. If a child says that they are thinking of committing suicide or speaks about suicide in any capacity, or of hurting themselves or others, you must report this immediately to the Child Welfare Program, the child's case worker, their supervisor, or on-call staff, or if need be to the police if no one else is available. You should also report this to the child's care provider. This is also true if you notice any sign of suicidal behaviors, cuts on wrist, for example.
 - b. If a child reports to you (and has not reported to any other person) that they have been sexually abused by an adult or any other person or child, you must also report this to the Child Welfare Program, the child's case worker, their supervisor, or on-call staff or the police.
 - c. Any information reported as a mandatory reporter must also be reported to CASA within 12 hours.

8. Whenever you are in the company of a child, ensuring their physical and emotional safety is a large part of your responsibility.

VOLUNTEER AND STAFF CONDUCT POLICY AND EXPECTATIONS

1. All CASA volunteers and staff are required to pass a criminal background check before becoming volunteers.
2. All staff and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves professionally at all times, be courteous and polite when dealing with all parties and related parties in a case.
3. Sexual harassment of anyone, related or non-related to a case, is grounds for a written reprimand that will be noted in your staff or volunteer file, and possible grounds for losing your position or volunteer status if serious enough. As a CASA volunteer you represent this program when working, working on a case, or in the community. Sexual harassment is considered:
 - a. Inappropriate jokes that have sexually implicit or explicit meanings.
 - b. Jokes related to sexual gender.
 - c. Asking someone out and not accepting no for an answer.
 - d. Inappropriate communication through telephone, email, or in person.
4. All inappropriate comments or jokes related to ethnicity, race, or religion are unacceptable. No personal belief system, political, religious, or otherwise, should be shared with anyone who makes it clear they are non-receptive or who seem obviously offended by the conversation or communication.
5. No staff or volunteer should use their CASA association for personal gain in anyway.
6. When interacting with other agencies, volunteers and staff should be familiar with CASA policies and procedures.
7. CASA volunteers and staff are agents of the Children's Court, and it is mandatory that volunteers maintain strict confidentiality rules (see policy), report any and all known incidents of child maltreatment, and follow the procedures of the courtroom when appearing in court.
8. As a representative and agent of CASA the well being of all children is your special concern.

419B.112 Juvenile Code: Dependency

Court appointed special advocate

- duties
- immunity
- access to information
- funding
- rules

(1) In every case under ORS chapter 419B, the court shall appoint a court appointed special advocate. The court appointed special advocate is deemed a party in these proceedings and may be represented by counsel, file pleadings and request hearings and may subpoena, examine and cross-examine witnesses. If the court appointed special advocate is represented by counsel, counsel shall be paid from funds in the Court Appointed Special Advocate Fund established under ORS 458.584 (Court Appointed Special Advocate Fund). Counsel representing a court appointed special advocate may not be paid from moneys in the Public Defense Services Account established by ORS 151.225 (Public Defense Services Account), from moneys appropriated to the Public Defense Services Commission or from Judicial Department operating funds.

(2) Subject to the direction of the court, the duties of the court appointed special advocate are to:

- (a) Investigate all relevant information about the case;
- (b) Advocate for the child or ward, ensuring that all relevant facts are brought before the court;
- (c) Facilitate and negotiate to ensure that the court, the Department of Human Services, if applicable, and the child or wards attorney, if any, fulfill their obligations to the child or ward in a timely fashion; and
- (d) Monitor all court orders to ensure compliance and to bring to the courts attention any change in circumstances that may require a modification of an order of the court.

(3) If a juvenile court does not have a sufficient number of qualified court appointed special advocates available to it, the court may, in fulfillment of the requirements of this section, appoint a juvenile department employee or other suitable person to represent the child or wards interest in court pursuant to ORS 419A.012 (Duties of director or counselor) or 419B.195 (Appointment of counsel for child or ward).

(4) Any person appointed as a court appointed special advocate in any judicial proceeding on behalf of the child or ward is immune from any liability for defamation or statements made in good faith by that person, orally or in writing, in the course of the case review or judicial proceeding.

(5) Any person appointed as a court appointed special advocate, CASA Volunteer Program director, CASA Volunteer Program employee or member of the board of directors or trustees of any CASA Volunteer Program is immune from any liability for acts or omissions or errors in judgment made in good faith in the course or scope of that persons duties or employment as part of a CASA Volunteer Program.

(6) Whenever the court appoints a court appointed special advocate or other person under subsections (1) to (3) of this section to represent the child or ward, the court may require a parent, if able, or guardian of the estate, if the estate is able, to pay, in whole or in part, the reasonable costs of court appointed special advocate services, including reasonable attorney fees. The courts order of payment is enforceable in the same manner as an order of support under ORS 419B.408 (Enforcement of support order).

(7) Upon presentation of the order of appointment by the court appointed special advocate, any agency, hospital, school organization, division, office or department of the state, doctor, nurse or other health care provider, psychologist, psychiatrist, police department or mental health clinic shall permit the court appointed special advocate to inspect and copy, and may consult with the court appointed special advocate regarding, any records relating to the child or ward involved in the case, without the consent of the child, ward or parents.

(8) All records and information acquired or reviewed by a court appointed special advocate during the course of official duties are deemed confidential under ORS 419A.255 (Maintenance).

(9) For the purposes of a Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5101 et seq.) grant to this state under P.L. 93-247, or any related state or federal legislation, a court appointed special advocate or other person appointed pursuant to subsections (1) to (3) of this section is deemed a guardian ad litem to represent the interests of the child or ward in proceedings before the court. [2012 c.97 §2; 2012 c.107 §105]

Note: 419B.112 (Court appointed special advocate) was enacted into law by the Legislative Assembly but was not added to or made a part of ORS chapter 419B or any series therein by legislative action. See Preface to Oregon Revised Statutes for further explanation.