

# Foster Parents Guide to CASA

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate. Judges appoint CASAs to speak up for children involved in court cases because of parental abuse or neglect. Most children served by CASA are in foster care, while some are at home under court monitoring. Anyone can request a CASA for a child in care.

CASAs meet at least once a month with the children they serve and speak to Foster Parents and others who know the children. The CASAs then make fact based recommendations about appropriate resources to meet the child's needs and informs the court of the child's wishes and whether those wishes are, in the opinion of the CASA, in the child's best interest.

## **CASAs are...**

Community members who have undergone extensive training and background screening to become child advocates. They come from various cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, educational, and professional backgrounds. They became CASAs because they believe vulnerable children deserve to have someone speaking up exclusively for them.

## **CASAs are not...**

Paid employees. Their service is strictly on a volunteer basis. They do not work for DHS/CW and they are not attorneys.

## **Comprehensive Advocacy**

CASA's advocacy is guided by Oregon Revised Statute 419B.112 and standards set by National CASA and our local program. Below is a brief list of what CASA volunteers are expected to do:

- The CASA will thoroughly investigate the child's circumstances. This includes interviewing people who know the child, such as teachers and counselors, and reviewing pertinent records.
- The CASA will submit a written report to the judge before most hearings with recommendations about the child's well-being and where the child can safely live.
- The CASA will, per National CASA guidelines, "ensure that advocacy is provided for all aspects of the child's life."
- The CASA will monitor compliance with court orders.

## **If a CASA is appointed to serve your Foster Child**

The CASA will call to arrange a visit to your home. CASAs have to meet with the children they serve at least once a month. Some CASAs will need to visit children more than once a month depending upon child needs and case needs.

While visiting, the CASA will talk with the child to see how things are going. (If the child is too young to talk, the CASA will observe the child and talk with you instead.) The conversation will vary depending on age, but the CASA will likely ask the child about school, the adjustment to the foster home, favorite activities, the child's hopes and wishes, and whether the child has any concerns or needs help with anything.

The CASA will also want to hear your thoughts about how the child is doing and will ask a range of questions about the child's behavior, health, parent/sibling visits, and overall well-being. The CASA will check in periodically to see if anything has changed. All along, the CASA will be gathering information from multiple sources to help assess the child's needs and whether he/she can safely return home.

## **Connecting with your Foster Child's CASA**

Your foster child's CASA will hope to develop a strong relationship with you, as CASAs know that Foster Parents are knowledgeable about the children in their care and can share information that helps CASAs serve as effective advocates. Ideally:

- CASAs and Foster Parents will work together to schedule CASA visits at a time that is mutually agreeable.
- CASAs and Foster Parents will promptly respond to each other's calls, emails, and texts. CASAs sometimes need to reach out after visits to make sure the information they plan to report to judges is still up-to-date, and it is helpful when Foster Parents reach out to tell CASAs about new developments in the children's lives.
- CASAs are often the most available person to help answer your questions. They can certainly provide information about the general legal process, next steps, and other case-related information. They are bound by confidentiality regarding specifics.
- While CASAs ask many questions, they often cannot answer yours, particularly if they are about parental details. They are bound by confidentiality rules and can share very little about what they know, except in their reports to judges. Attorneys, but not Foster Parents, get copies of those reports. If you have questions about your foster child's family or history, the CASA will suggest you speak to the caseworker.

**Foster Parents are tremendous resources for children in need.  
Thank you so much for the incredibly important role you play in  
children's lives!**