



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA KANE COUNTY

CASA Kane County
Volunteer Advocate Handbook
Approved May 2008

Table of Contents	Page
General Program Policies.....	4
Anti-Harassment Policy	4
Advocate Recruitment and Selection.....	7
Advocate Supervision and Evaluation	9
Case-Related Policies	12
Appendices	
A. History of the CASA concept	16
B. Mission Statement of CASA.....	17
C. Volunteer Job Description.....	18
D. National CASA Mission Statement.....	19
E. NCASAA Code of Ethics	20
F. CASA Kane County Volunteer Agreement.....	22
Index.....	23

1.0 GENERAL PROGRAM POLICIES

1.1 Scope of Policies

CASA Kane County (hereafter referred to as CASA) considers its greatest asset to be its group of trained community volunteers who together are reaching out to help abused and neglected children involved in Kane County Juvenile Court. Within our organization, volunteers donate their time and efforts to serve these children as advocates (CASA/Guardians ad Litem), as pro bono attorneys, as board members, and as board committee members. These policies are designed to provide guidelines for the CASA volunteer advocates in their role as Guardians ad Litem (GAL). This handbook will refer to those volunteers as “advocates” hereafter.

1.2 Purpose of Policies

The purpose of these policies is to provide overall guidance and direction to advocates serving as CASA/GALs for Kane County. These policies do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. CASA reserves the right to change any of these policies at any time and to expect adherence to the changed policy. Areas not specifically covered by these policies shall be determined by the executive director. Advocates will be required to sign an agreement indicating that they have read, understood, and will comply with all policies affecting advocates.

1.3 Exception to Policy

Exceptions to these policies may be granted only by a case manager or the executive director and must be obtained in advance of any action on the part of the advocate.

1.4 Approval of Policies

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

1.5 Sexual Abuse and Misconduct

CASA Kane County is committed to make every reasonable effort within our power to prevent the occurrence of any sex abuse allegation by any volunteer or employee, and to deal promptly and effectively with allegations that may arise. CASA Kane County has enacted a Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Policy regarding the procedures to be followed in the event of a report of abuse and outlining appropriate conduct for CASA employees and volunteers. Each employee and volunteer is required to read, and acknowledge this Policy as a condition of his or her employment or volunteer service at CASA Kane County.

1.6 Service at the Discretion of the Organization

CASA accepts the service of each advocate with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the organization. By signing the agreement, the advocate

acknowledges that the CASA organization may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the advocate's relationship with the program.

1.7 Speaking on Behalf of CASA Kane County

Advocates are encouraged to speak about the program in general throughout the community. The executive director must be informed of any speaking engagements advocates may wish to arrange on behalf of CASA so that a record can be kept of the speaking engagement, a follow-up done and staff assigned as needed to assist with written materials or accompany the advocate to augment the presentation.

Advocates are prohibited from speaking with the media on behalf of CASA without explicit arrangement and consent of the executive director.

1.8 Fund Raising

Participation in fund-raising activities by advocates is deeply appreciated, as are ideas they may have to assist with raising funds. The board of directors has a coordinated plan for fund-raising for the organization and, in light of this plan, advocates may not initiate fund-raising activities on their own on behalf of CASA. This avoids duplication of effort and the possibility of more than one CASA representative approaching the same person or corporation for funding.

2.0 ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

2.1 General Anti-Harassment Policy

It is the policy of CASA to maintain a safe and professional work environment free of harassment. To that end, CASA has adopted the following policy:

- CASA strictly prohibits sexual harassment of or by any advocate. Additionally, CASA strictly prohibits all other forms of harassment based upon that person's race, color, religion, national origin, veteran status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, or any other protected status.
- CASA is committed to the prevention of any and all harassment. To that end, CASA's position on harassment is one of zero tolerance.

2.2 Freedom from Harassment and Discrimination

It is the policy of CASA to maintain an environment within the organization free of unlawful discrimination. Harassment or discrimination against an advocate on the basis of a person's race, color, religion, national origin, veteran status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, or any other protected status will not be tolerated. In the event of a question, complaint, or allegation regarding harassment or discrimination of any kind, the advocate should speak with his or her case manager. If the advocate is uncomfortable discussing the matter with the case manager, the advocate should address the matter with the executive

director or the chairman of the board of directors. 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 advocate and the program. Such action may include recommendations for counseling, disciplinary warning, or discharge.

2.3 Unlawful Harassment

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, ethnic slurs or racial epithets, name-calling, jokes, cartoons, pictures, gestures, unwelcome physical touching, and other conduct based on a person's race, color, religion, national origin, veteran status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, or any other protected status.

Harassment can occur between an advocate and anyone affiliated with a case, a CASA employee or another advocate. CASA will not tolerate harassment of advocates or harassment by advocates.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual harassment can take many forms, including the following:

- Sexual remarks, jokes, or other sexual conduct that interferes with another person's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment;
- Display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures;
- Decisions by staff regarding case assignments or access to training based on an individual's submission to or rejection of sexual advances; or submission to a sexual advance used as a condition of affiliation with CASA whether expressed in explicit or implicit terms.

Harassment can occur between any advocate, male or female, staff or not, or between an advocate and a client or other person affiliated with a case, vendor, or other non-employee.

This anti-harassment policy applies equally to all persons who volunteer or are employed by CASA. Harassment can apply to conduct anywhere the advocate goes in relation to his or her assignment.

2.4 Reporting Unlawful Harassment

All advocates have a right to work without harassment. If any advocate feels that they are being harassed by a co-worker, a supervisor, a manager, a volunteer, a vendor, or a client, an employee may choose, but is not required to, make an effort to immediately tell the harasser to stop the offending behavior. ***See Section 4.11 Advocate Safety for policies relating to harassment by a person related to a case.***

All advocates are advised that no member of the CASA staff, regardless of his or her title, is authorized to condition tangible actions – e.g., case assignment, withdrawal from a case, etc. – upon submission or opposition to harassment of any kind. A threat or an attempt by any CASA

staff member to take such actions should be reported immediately, if possible, before any tangible action takes place.

CASA has an “open-door” policy. This means that any advocate who feels harassed, or any advocate who witnesses harassment, is required to immediately and personally report the harassment to any one or all of the following people:

- A. Executive Director
- B. Board of Directors Chair
- C. Board of Directors Vice-Chair
- D. Board of Directors Secretary
- E. Board of Directors Treasurer

An advocate is not required to report harassment to a case manager first. An advocate may report harassment by a staff member to any of the people listed above.

If any advocate witnesses another person being harassed by a staff member, that advocate should report the harassment to one of the people listed above.

2.5 Action Taken on Reported Harassment

Such reports are taken very seriously and will be investigated thoroughly and promptly. The facts of each case will determine the response to each allegation. Appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination, will be taken if it is determined that an advocate or employee has violated CASA’s policy on harassment.

All information regarding any specific incident will only be released on a need to know basis within the necessary boundaries of the fact-finding process.

Reprisals or retaliation against the advocate reporting the allegation of harassment will not be tolerated. The advocate reporting the allegation of harassment will be kept updated as to the investigative process and the final outcome. Advocates making purposefully false claims of harassment will be subject to termination from the program.

2.6 Anti-Violence Policy

CASA is committed to providing a safe environment for its advocates. Violent acts or threats of violence will not be tolerated. CASA enforces a “zero tolerance” policy against actual or threatened violence against advocates, staff, clients, or any other persons. This “zero tolerance” applies regardless of whether the person is on the CASA premises or has contact with advocates or clients off the premises in the course of their duties. No weapons will be allowed on the premises. Advocates are required to report every verbal or physical threat or act of violence immediately to the executive director or to the board chairman. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action including possible termination.

2.7 HIV/AIDS Status

CASA will not tolerate discrimination against an advocate who has HIV/AIDS. All staff and advocates will respect the individual's right to privacy and maintain confidentiality regarding medical information and health status of all persons connected with the organization, including clients. The office will maintain current information on resources for counseling/support.

3.0 ADVOCATE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

3.1 Recruitment

Advocates shall be recruited by CASA on a pro-active basis, with the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community. Advocates shall be recruited and accepted into the program without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, veteran status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, or any other protected status. The sole qualification shall be suitability to perform the duties of the advocate position. Exceptions:

1. CASA will not accept into the program individuals who have been convicted of any felony or who have been adjudicated in Juvenile Court to have abused or neglected a child. This is inclusive of, but not limited to, any sexual offense, abuse, neglect, or related acts that would potentially pose risks to children or to the CASA program's credibility.
2. Staff, family of staff and foster parents will be admitted to the advocate program at the discretion of the executive director.
3. All advocates must be over twenty-one (21) years of age.

3.2 Application

Individuals may apply to serve as advocates for the CASA organization by submitting a written application provided by the office after attending a general information meeting. Included with the application will be a release of information form and requests for four references. Applications are screened by CASA staff and selected individuals will be brought in for an interview.

3.3 Interview

Candidates for a training class will be interviewed in person by CASA staff. The interview will seek to determine the prospective advocate's suitability for and interest in the position. The interview should determine the qualifications of the prospective advocate, his or her commitment to fulfill the requirements of the position, and should answer any

questions that the prospective advocate might have about the position. Following the interview, each candidate will be notified as to his/her acceptance into the program.

3.4 Background Check

All applicants for the position of CASA/GAL will submit to a Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) check, fingerprinting, and a state police background check. If the applicant has moved to Illinois in the last five years, a background check of previous states of residence will be completed. I understand that I will be subject to supplemental background checks every three years, depending on my continued volunteer work.

3.5 Advocate Files

The CASA program maintains a written record for each advocate that contains, at minimum, as appropriate:

- A. Application;
- B. Emergency and identifying contact information;
- C. Reference documentation;
- D. Documentation of all record checks;
- E. Training records; and/or
- F. Performance evaluations and any other applicable documentation relating to performance.

The CASA organization maintains the record after an advocate has left the program in accordance with the organization's records retention policy.

3.6 Job Description

Every advocate will be provided with a copy of the CASA/GAL job description and is encouraged to offer suggestions for changes in the position or its description.

3.7 New Advocate Training

Prospective advocates are required to complete CASA's 35-hour training successfully. Each prospective advocate will be provided with a comprehensive resource manual. Training includes information on:

- A. Orientation to CASA Kane County;
- B. Roles and responsibilities of a CASA/GAL;
- C. Confidentiality, policies and procedures;
- D. Cultural awareness;
- E. Child abuse and neglect;
- F. Child development;
- G. Permanency planning;

- H. Communication and information gathering (interviewing techniques);
- I. Report writing;
- J. Juvenile court process;
- K. Child development and attachment;
- L. Substance abuse and domestic violence;
- M. DCFS.

In addition, the prospective advocate will be required to observe Kane County Juvenile Court in session. Acceptance into training does not guarantee acceptance into the organization as an advocate.

3.8 Acceptance into the Program

Acceptance of a prospective advocate as a CASA/GAL is determined by the case managers and the director of advocate education, with notification to the executive director. Service as an advocate with CASA shall begin with the official swearing-in of the trained advocate, which usually takes place shortly after satisfactory completion of initial training and upon completion of background/reference checks.

3.9 Length of Commitment

Advocates for children in juvenile court are asked to commit to the CASA program for a minimum of 24 months.

3.10 Leave of Absence

Advocates may request a leave of absence from their role as a CASA/GAL. It is requested that the advocate provide information regarding the time period of this leave to his or her case manager as early as possible so that any active case may be transitioned to another advocate. Depending on the length of the leave, an advocate may be asked to do some retraining upon his/her return.

4.0 ADVOCATE SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION

4.1 Supervision

The roles and responsibilities of the advocate are clearly communicated through written policies, job descriptions and training, and are reinforced through the supervisory process. An advocate is assigned to a case manager who will be his or her direct supervisor and, initially, to a volunteer mentor, both of whom will assist the advocate with his or her case work. Advocates and mentors are responsible to their case manager. Case managers report to the executive director. An advocate is expected to review his or her case with the case manager through monthly phone calls and/or email.

4.2 Mentors

All advocates new to the program will be matched with a mentor. This mentor will help further the advocates training, provide guidance on his or her case, including editing the initial report, and give the advocate a chance to network with other advocates. The mentor and case manager will determine when the advocate no longer needs the assistance of the mentor.

4.3 In-service Attendance

Advocates are required by National CASA to obtain 12 hours (equal to 12 continuing education credits) of in-service training annually. CASA requires this to remain a voting member of the organization and to continue to be eligible to serve as an advocate. These sessions may be provided by CASA or other agencies deemed appropriate by the organization.

4.4 Advocate Statistics

One of the responsibilities of the advocate will be to track certain statistics on a monthly basis, such as total number of hours spent on his or her case, and report this information back to the CASA office. These figures are needed by the program for grant requests. CASA relies heavily on grants to supply funds for the operation of the program and without this information the grants would not be available to us. The types of information that will be tracked and how to record it will be explained to the advocate by his or her case manager.

4.5 Professional Conduct

At all times, CASA advocates are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the credibility and positive reputation of CASA in the courtroom and in the community. Advocates should dress appropriately for court and for other meetings wherein the advocate is participating as a representative of the CASA organization. Communications by phone, fax or e-mail should be of a professional caliber whether addressed to staff, case contacts or other persons related to the advocates' CASA duties.

Advocates for 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 volunteer for the program.

4.6 Advocate Evaluations

CASA advocates will be asked to participate in an annual performance evaluation with their case managers. The evaluation is designed to be used as a positive tool for growth

and success. CASA will seek to maintain an open atmosphere where advocates will feel free to express their opinions on any aspect of the program.

4.7 Complaints and 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 thoughtful consideration and will be discussed with the individual who raises them. Complaints and grievances may arise from external or internal (within the program) sources.

External: Because CASA is involved in work that involves the lives of children and families, it is emotionally charged work that evokes a wide range of feelings. It is therefore common and expected that there will be criticism from many of the parties involved, especially when the advocate does not make recommendations that are in agreement with their point of view. Should a complaint arise from someone outside the CASA organization, the advocate or case manager to whom the complaint was given should inform the executive director of the details of the complaint. It will be the responsibility of the executive 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 executive director, with advice from the board if needed, will determine what action, if any, should be taken.

Internal: When a CASA advocate wishes to make a statement of dissatisfaction with a policy, practice, condition, or supervisor's decision, the advocate should first discuss the matter with his or her case manager. If the problem is not resolved to the satisfaction of the advocate, he or she should forward a written statement of the grievance to the executive director. In the event that the advocate is still not satisfied with the conclusion of the matter after involvement of the executive director, the advocate should present the written grievance statement to the board of directors of CASA Kane County. The board's decision will be final. The advocate will be entitled to receive a written response to his or her formal grievance from the executive director outlining the position the director or the board has taken on the issue.

4.8 Progressive Discipline

It is the policy of CASA to apply a practice of progressive discipline when needed to correct advocate misconduct or improve performance. Depending on the circumstances, misconduct may result in disciplinary action, which may include a verbal warning, written warning, or dismissal. Verbal and written warnings shall be administered by the case manager or executive director. Sometimes an advocate's actions are so dangerous or otherwise inappropriate that termination takes place immediately.

4.9 Dismissal of an Advocate

Dismissal of an advocate usually will follow the program's progressive discipline process that is based on performance reviews and includes a sequence of verbal and written warnings. Dismissal of an advocate is the responsibility of the executive director, on the recommendation of the case management team, and their decision is final. An appeal of this action may be taken to the board of directors. Immediate dismissal will take place only in the most serious of circumstances. Grounds for termination may include, but are not limited to:

- taking action without organization or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the role or powers of the CASA program
- engaging in ex-parte communication with the court
- violating an organization policy, court rule, or law
- failing to complete required pre-service and in-service training
- failing to demonstrate an ability to carry out assigned duties effectively
- falsifying a volunteer application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process
- having allegations of child abuse or neglect brought against them
- gross misconduct or insubordination
- being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while performing advocate duties
- lying or falsifying records
- experiencing irresolvable conflict of interest
- unlawful harassment or discriminatory conduct

4.10 Resignation

The advocate may, at any time, decide to sever his or her relationship with the organization. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the advocate's case manager. It is expected that, insofar as possible, the advocate will continue to fulfill his/her responsibilities until another advocate can be assigned to the case.

4.11 Exit Interviews

Advocates who are leaving the organization will be asked to complete an exit survey form, whenever possible, either during a face-to-face interview or by mail. The survey form will seek to ascertain why the volunteer is leaving as well as provide the opportunity for evaluating the organization.

5.0 CASE-RELATED POLICIES

5.1 Assignment: Right of Refusal

Advocates are matched to a particular case by the case managers. Case assignments will be made, whenever possible, with the preferences of the advocates in mind. Advocates are free to refuse an assignment for any reason. If the advocate does accept a case, his or her case manager will meet with him or her to review the case information and at that time will provide the advocate with the documentation needed for the assignment. An advocate must follow the directions of his or her case manager regarding removal from case assignment or any limitations on contact with CASA clients or former clients.

5.2 Cases Outside of Kane County

Advocates should consult with their case manager and attorney if they wish to oppose a motion for change of venue on their case. Should the case be transferred out of Kane County, the advocate will relinquish the case, but may stay involved for a short period in order to facilitate the transfer of information to the new workers. No advocate will be assigned to a case out of Kane County without the approval of the Executive Board of CASA Kane County and the Illinois CASA Association.

5.3 Conflict of Interest

An advocate should not be related to or acquainted with any party involved in his or her case, or be employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest.

5.4 Record-Keeping

Once assigned to a case, the advocate shall maintain a case file at his or her home which is to include the original documentation of his or her appointment to the case; all notes and copies of documents relating to the case including court documents, assessments, medical records, etc.; all notes relating to phone calls and other interviews; and copies of all correspondence he or she has received or sent in regard to the case. The advocate assumes responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of all records in his or her

possession, whether written or computerized. At the conclusion of the advocate's involvement with the case, his/her entire file, including notes, must be turned over to the case manager in a timely way.

In addition to the record maintained by the advocate, the case manager who supervises the advocate will maintain an office file of the case.

5.5 Reimbursement of Expenses

Advocates are eligible for reimbursement of expenses related to long distance phone calls they made in the course of their casework. Advocates should submit a copy of their phone bill to the office for processing of this expense. Other expenses that an advocate incurs in their role may be reported as an in-kind donation and may be tax deductible for the advocate.

5.6 Visits with the Child

Advocates make a commitment to visit face-to-face with the child(ren) on their case at least monthly. If children are residing with their biological parents, advocates make a commitment to visit a minimum of two times per month. Advocates should avoid being placed in a position where someone could make a claim against the advocate that he or she has abused a child, and avoid meeting the child alone in a room with a closed door.

5.7 Reporting of Abuse/Neglect

Advocates in the course of their duties are mandated reporters and shall report all suspected incidents of abuse or neglect to their case manager. The case manager will advise the advocate as to whether or not to phone the hotline (1-800-25ABUSE) with details of the problem. If an advocate feels that the situation is an emergency, he or she should first call the hotline, then notify his or her case manager. Failure to follow this procedure may result in immediate dismissal from the program.

5.8 Advocate/Client Relationship

Advocates are not to provide direct service delivery to any party involved in their case because that could a) lead to a conflict of interest or liability problems; or b) cause a child or family to become dependent on the CASA advocate for services that should be provided by other agencies or organizations. The role of the advocate is outlined in the job description and does not extend beyond the duties listed therein. Good judgment and common sense should dictate the relationships with parties involved in a case. Examples of inappropriate advocate practices are:

- A. taking a child to the advocate's home;
- B. giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling to anyone involved in the case;

- C. making placement arrangements for the child;
- D. giving money or expensive gifts to the child or family; and/or
- E. engaging in activities which jeopardize the health or safety of the child.

5.9 Transportation of Parties

Advocates are prohibited from transporting any party involved in their case, adult or child. Violation of this policy could result in termination of the advocate.

5.10 Observation of Parent-Child or Sibling Visits

With appropriate notification, advocates will observe visits between the child and their parents/siblings. The purpose of attending such visits is to observe the family interactions, not to supervise or intervene. Advocates should respect these visits as limited, valuable time that the family has to spend together. Supervision of visits is the responsibility of DCFS who may delegate this responsibility to other parties, such as a homemaker, but not to the advocate.

5.11 Advocate Safety

The safety of advocates is of primary importance to the CASA organization. Advocates should never feel obligated to put themselves in personal jeopardy in the performance of their role as a CASA/GAL. If an advocate is uneasy about entering a neighborhood, building, or meeting with a particular party, the individual should let his or her case manager know and then arrange the meeting in a more comfortable location or arrange for another CASA to accompany him or her. If the advocate feels harassed or threatened by a party to his or her case this must be reported immediately to the case manager who will work with the advocate to take appropriate action which might include, but not be limited to: arranging for an escort whenever the advocate might have contact with the individual; reporting the matter to the juvenile court judge, children's attorney and/or the State's attorney; initiating a cease and desist warning to the person making the threat; and/or filing a police report.

5.12 Court Reports

A primary responsibility of the CASA/GAL will be to compile a typewritten report on his or her case prior to each appearance in court. The advocate will receive training from the organization on how to write and process these reports as part of the basic training. The initial report will be first submitted to his or her assigned mentor for suggestions. The report should be received by the case manager ten working days prior to the court appearance. The case manager will then review the report and offer input to the advocate regarding any alterations to the report. If the case manager disagrees with the advocate's recommendations, and the case manager and advocate are not able to reach agreement even after involvement of the executive director, the case manager will have authority to rewrite the report.

5.13 Confidentiality

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

An advocate becomes an officer of the court upon assignment to a case. Any information pertaining to the individual families or children that the advocate receives in the discharge of his or her duties is strictly confidential. It may not be discussed with anyone except the following:

- A. The Kane County Juvenile Court as a part of the court proceedings;
- B. Kane County CASA staff and advocates;
- C. The State's Attorney assigned to the case as a part of the court proceedings;
- D. The attorney representing CASA;
- E. The Department of Children and Family Services and their private agencies assigned to the case;
- F. Other individuals assigned by the court to conduct pre-adjudication or pre-disposition investigation (e.g., service agencies such as SASS, etc.); and
- G. Other parties to the case who are privileged to get the information.

Discussion of the case with others, even if the family name and other identifying information is omitted, is strictly forbidden. Violation of confidentiality can result in the discrediting of the CASA program and may be cause for immediate dismissal.

HIV issues may not be disclosed to outside parties or documented (even in your notes). If an advocate becomes aware that a party to the case has an HIV/AIDS status, it must be discussed with the case manager immediately!

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A History of the CASA Concept

During the 1970s, a growing awareness of children's rights and subsequent changes in legislation produced an environment of change in child welfare where creative solutions to recognized problems could be developed.

One such innovative program emerged in 1977 in Seattle, Washington, when King County Superior Court Presiding Judge David W. Soukup saw a recurring problem in his courtroom. He felt strongly that he was not getting all the facts needed to make well-informed decisions affecting the future of the children whose cases came before him—decisions about where they would live, for how long, and under what conditions; what services and treatment would be ordered; and what steps should be taken to reunite the child with the birth parents or to place the child in a new family unit.

Judge Soukup believed it was feasible to recruit and train qualified community volunteers to step into the courtroom on behalf of children. In 1977, trained lay volunteers began representing the best interests of children as guardians ad litem in King County Juvenile Court. They came to be known as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs).

The CASA concept soon caught the attention of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). In October 1977, that body voted to endorse the volunteer CASA program as a model for safeguarding the child's rights to a safe and permanent family. Today there are CASA programs in all 50 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands, with volunteers advocating for over 200,000 children.

In 1988, CASA Kane County trained its first group of eight advocates, and since then has grown to approximately 200 advocates. CASA currently resides on the 4th Floor of the Kane County Courthouse in Geneva. CASA Kane County is a private 501(c)(3) corporation managed by a volunteer board of directors and a staff of committed professionals. In 2007, CASA Kane County served 463 children under the auspices of Juvenile Court. CASA Kane County is a member of the Illinois Association of CASA Programs and the National CASA Association.

APPENDIX B

Mission Statement—CASA Kane County

CASA Kane County is a non-profit volunteer organization that advocates for the best interests of abused and neglected children within the juvenile court system.

APPENDIX C

CASA Kane County Court Appointed Special Advocate Job Description

The **Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)** is a trained volunteer whose role is to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the juvenile court system, serving as the child's appointed Guardian ad Litem (GAL). The CASA advocate:

- demonstrates emotional maturity
- is objective and flexible
- exhibits self assurance and assertiveness
- has the ability to make decisions and set goals
- is willing to commit to the program for a minimum of 24 months
- demonstrates the ability to write and speak clearly and concisely.

Qualifications:

- Age 21 or older
- Attendance at a general information meeting (GIM)
- Completion of CASA application (including all reference checks), CANTS, fingerprinting, and background checks
- Participation in the pre-training interview
- Successful completion of the CASA 40-hour new advocate training

Duties and responsibilities:

- Accept the assignment of the case as agreed upon between the volunteer and the case manager
- Read and review all relevant records pertaining to the case
- Meet with the assigned case manager and mentor to plan case strategy
- Interview all principals in the case
- Maintain complete written records of the case
- Continue contact with the child(ren) at least once monthly
- Maintain all case information in strict confidence
- Monitor and facilitate case progress through the court system
- Prepare written reports for the court in timely manner
- Maintain contact with the case manager
- Maintain contact with the appointed attorney
- Attend all court hearings and assure that the best interests of the child are being represented at every stage of the process
- Keep CASA case manager and mentor informed of case activity and progress on a monthly basis
- Pursue professional development in the areas of child welfare, family issues, and related topics
- Participate in 12 hours of continuing education (in-service) per year
- Accept, adhere to and support philosophies and policies of CASA Kane County

APPENDIX D

National CASA Association Mission Statement

The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (NCASAA) is a nonprofit membership organization which advocates for the best interests of abused and neglected children. It supports the development, growth, and continuation of programs which recruit and train volunteers to serve as court appointed special advocates for abused and neglected children in juvenile dependency proceedings.

APPENDIX E

National CASA Association Code of Ethics

This Code of Ethics provides National CASA Association members with guidelines for professional behavior and ethical conduct. The association may not, however, be held liable for the actions of its members.

Conduct

1. Members of the National CASA Association will abide by the NCASAA Code of Ethics and all laws and regulations governing their actions.
2. Members of the NCASAA will uphold the credibility and dignity of the CASA concept by conducting all business in an honest, fair, professional, and humane manner.
3. Employees of CASA programs and CASA volunteers will not use their authority inappropriately, or condone any illegal act or unethical practices related to their programs or community.
4. CASA programs and individuals who are members of NCASAA may not use CASA to promote personal gain.
5. Members of the NCASAA will avoid any action which could adversely affect the confidence of the public in the integrity of the Association.
6. NCASAA and its member programs will serve and respond to requests without bias because of race, religion, sex, age, national origin, or handicap.

Confidentiality

7. CASA programs and volunteers will respect the right to privacy of all individuals and will keep information about CASA cases confidential.
8. Persons affiliated with CASA will not use confidential information obtained through their work with CASA for personal benefit.

Knowledge and Understanding

9. Individuals working in CASA programs as staff and/or volunteers must be trained in the operations of the court and child welfare systems, and in the nature of child abuse and neglect.
10. CASA programs and volunteers must respect a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets the child's best interests.

National Affiliation

11. CASA programs which are members of the NCASAA must operate in accordance with the NCASAA Code of Ethics, goals, and purposes.
12. Official CASA designations may be used only for purposes in accordance with the goals and purposes of the NCASAA.

Compliance

13. The Membership Committee shall monitor compliance with the Code of Ethics in accordance with the bylaws of the NCASAA.

Appendix F

CASA Kane County Volunteer Agreement

As a volunteer advocate for the Kane County CASA program, I:

Understand that my basic responsibility is to establish a non-threatening relationship with the child that I represent, and to advocate for that child's best interests in and out of court.

Understand that if I am unable to meet this commitment, the Board of Directors of CASA Kane County, at the recommendation of the executive director, may dismiss me from this position, or I may submit my resignation with as much prior notice as possible.

Understand that all individuals participating in the CASA program are required by law to maintain client confidentiality. I understand that any information read or received by me regarding a client or his/her family is strictly confidential. I will not repeat or divulge in conversation or communication with anyone, except CASA staff and other professionals involved in the case, any information about my client.

Accept and support the program as stated in the CASA Kane County advocate handbook.

Have read, understand, and agree with all policies and procedures as stated in this document.

Understand that my failure to abide by these policies may be grounds for dismissal from the program.

Signature _____
CASA Advocate

Date _____

Signature _____
Executive Director

Date _____

Index

Alphabetical List of Policies	Section	Page
Abuse/Neglect, reporting of	5.7	14
Acceptance into Program	3.8	09
Advocate files	3.5	08
Advocate / Client Relations	5.8	14
Anti-violence	2.6	06
Application Process	3.2	07
Assignment, right of refusal	5.1	13
Background check	3.4	08
Cases outside of Kane County	5.2	13
Commitment, length of	3.9	09
Complaints and grievances	4.7	11
Confidentiality	5.13	16
Conflict of Interest	5.3	13
Court Reports	5.12	15
Dismissal	4.9	12
Evaluations	4.6	10
Exit Interviews	4.11	13
Fundraising	1.8	04
Harassment and discrimination, freedom from	2.2	04
Harassment, action taken	2.5	06
Harassment, General	2.1	04
Harassment, reporting of	2.4	05
Harassment, unlawful	2.3	05
HIV / AIDS	2.7	07
In-service attendance	4.3	10
Interview	3.3	07
Job Description	3.6	08

Leave of Absence	3.10	09
Mentors	4.2	10
New Advocate Training	3.7	08
Parent-child visits, observation of	5.10	15
Policies, approval of	1.4	03
Policies, exception to	1.3	03
Policies, scope of	1.1	03
Policies, purpose of	1.2	03
Progressive Discipline	4.8	11
Professional Conduct	4.5	10
Public speaking on behalf of CASA	1.7	03
Record-keeping	5.4	13
Recruitment	3.1	07
Reimbursement of expenses	5.5	14
Resignation	4.10	12
Safety Issues	5.11	15
Service terms	1.6	03
Sexual Abuse and Misconduct	1.5	03
Statistics	4.4	10
Supervision	4.1	09
Training, new advocate	3.7	08
Transportation of parties	5.9	15
Visits with child	5.6	14