



Volunteer Policies & Guidelines

Clatsop CASA Program, Inc.
A National CASA Association Member Program

CLATSOP CASA PROGRAM INC.

Policies & Guidelines for Volunteers

There are certain policies and guidelines by which Court Appointed Special Advocates must abide. These are policies and guidelines that cover all CASA volunteers. They exist for the protection of the children, the corps of volunteers, and the CASA program. It is imperative that CASA volunteers familiarize themselves with these policies and guidelines and follow them. Any questions regarding the interpretation of these policies and guidelines should be brought to the attention of CASA staff.

Deliberate violation of any of these policies or guidelines will result in disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may include placement on probation, requirement of specific remedial action and/or immediate removal from the duties as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for Clatsop CASA.

If you think you may have broken a Clatsop CASA policy, call **the Executive Director or Program Manager immediately!** Clatsop CASA staff will work with you to try and sort out and correct any problems that result and your actions will demonstrate good faith. **It is infinitely better for Clatsop CASA staff to hear about a problem from a volunteer than it is to hear about it from someone else.**

Volunteers interact with a wide spectrum of individuals and agencies. Not everyone is happy to see a CASA volunteer at his or her home or office. **Problems can and do occur!** Knowing the program's policies and guidelines can help tremendously.

Mission & History

The mission of the Clatsop CASA Program Inc. is to provide trained volunteers to speak for the best interest of abused and neglected children in Clatsop County's court and child welfare systems. The Clatsop CASA Program promotes and supports quality volunteer representation for children, and assists CASA volunteers as they advocate for children to achieve permanency in safe, nurturing homes.

Clatsop CASA is also dedicated participating in community collaborations to enhance service delivery systems and strengthen family functioning in order to encourage permanent homes for every child in our community.

The first CASA program began in Seattle in 1977, as the brainchild of Judge David Soukup, a King County Juvenile Court Judge. There are now over 1,000 programs operating throughout the United States.

CASA was established in Oregon in 1985 when the legislature authorized funding for a CASA demonstration project. In 1987, the legislature mandated that all Oregon children in the child welfare system would be appointed a CASA. Currently all Oregon juvenile court jurisdictions have access to a CASA program. Clatsop CASA started out in 1992 under the umbrella of Boys and Girls Aid Society of Oregon, and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 1999.

Program Authority

Laws Governing CASA Programs

Oregon Revised Statutes 149B.112 governs the appointment duties and authorities of the Court Appointed Special Advocate. Public Law 96-272 provides the federal mandate for the appointment of a guardian ad litem for abused and neglected children.

Approval & Sanction

Clatsop CASA operates under the approval and sanction of the Clatsop County Juvenile Court.

Corporate Authority

Clatsop CASA Program, Inc., is a private, not-for-profit organization incorporated under the laws of Oregon and operating with non-profit status under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Clatsop CASA is governed by a Board of Directors.

VOLUNTEER PROCEDURES

Recruitment and Screening

Recruitment of volunteers will be conducted in such a manner as to provide a diverse group of qualified advocates, and to be as culturally, ethnically, racially, socio-economically and linguistically reflective of the children and families served as possible.

Role of the Executive Director

The Executive Director is responsible for the administration of the Program and for compliance with statutory authority, rights and responsibilities.

Who Can Become a Clatsop CASA Volunteer?

An individual may become a Court Appointed Special Advocate who:

- is at least 21 years of age;
- successfully completes an application and screening process;
- demonstrates the capability to adequately advocate for a child or children;
- has no criminal record or history with a child protective service (CPS) agency which impairs his or her ability to be appointed as a CASA; and
- successfully completes the required initial training.

Screening Procedures

Screening procedures include:

- review and evaluation of the written application;
- at least 3 written references from persons outside of the organization at not relatives;
- background checks in accordance with standards of National CASA Association, including but not limited to: social security number verification; criminal records from the local court jurisdiction; state criminal records; FBI or other national criminal database; national sex offender registry check; and child welfare check;
- initial interview;
- training (the initial hours of training also serves as a screening process); and
- post-training interview.

The Clatsop CASA program must ensure a high quality of service to children and therefore reserves the sole right, at any time during the screening process, to determine who may or may not be appropriate to serve as a Court Appointed Special Advocate. A prospective volunteer must sign all necessary consents to screening procedures. This includes consenting to having the program repeat the record checks for each active volunteer at least every four years.

Reasons for Rejecting an Application

Reasons for rejection of an application to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate may include, but are not limited to:

the application is incomplete, inaccurate or otherwise unsatisfactory;
references are not returned or are unsatisfactory;
criminal records and/or CPS check is unsatisfactory;
the applicant has unresolved abuse issues and is currently involved or potentially involved with the State Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Division (DHS), has pending litigation as a victim or survivor of abuse, is currently in treatment for substance abuse, has physically, sexually or emotionally abused or exploited a child, holds values in conflict with Clatsop CASA's core values, or is otherwise deemed unsuitable;
the applicant has falsified or misrepresented written or other information;
the applicant has been sanctioned or faces disciplinary action by a professional licensing or other governing body;
the applicant is employed or provides volunteer services in a capacity where conflicts of interest are perceived to be unavoidable; or
in the estimation of CASA staff, it becomes apparent through the training process that the applicant will be incapable of fulfilling the role of a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

Clatsop CASA 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 notification of their acceptance to commence training. Any conditions attached to their acceptance will be noted and explained.

Acceptance into the Clatsop CASA volunteer training program does not guarantee that the trainee will become a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

Recordkeeping

Records will be maintained by Clatsop CASA for all applicants to the program. Records associated with active, inactive, and past volunteers, including volunteer personal data, application materials, training records, record of appointment and case related information, will be maintained by the office staff. All applicants, as well as all active and inactive volunteers, must keep CASA staff apprised of any changes of name, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers so that the program's records are correct and current. Access to applications submitted to the program and to records of active, inactive, and past volunteers is limited to Clatsop CASA staff.

Training

Purpose

The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (NCASAA), the Oregon CASA Network (OCN) and the Clatsop CASA 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

Clatsop CASA requires a minimum of 30 hours of initial training and 12 hours of annual, on-going training for CASA volunteers. The initial training for prospective new CASA volunteers is normally scheduled over a six week period. To the extent possible, sessions are scheduled taking into account that many trainees are working members of the community who must request time off from employers to complete the full training requirements.

On-going training is required for all active and inactive volunteers. Clatsop CASA offers a regular schedule of in-service training as well as publicizes training opportunities presented by community service partners. In addition to attending the training offered by CASA, volunteers may meet the training requirement through:

- attending relevant workshops, seminars and other training offered through community service partners at the local, state or national level;
- attending relevant workshops, seminars and other training offered through their employers or other volunteer organizations with which they are associated or
- reading relevant books or articles or watching videos, television programs or documentaries as suggested or approved by Clatsop CASA.
- completing relevant online courses as suggested or approved by Clatsop CASA

On a quarterly basis, volunteers must report to CASA staff both the type of training and the number of hours completed. Volunteers must meet the twelve hour continuing education requirement by the end of each calendar year.

Volunteer Status Definitions

Active

Active volunteers are those currently (within the current quarter) appointed to at least one case by the Clatsop 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 three 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.

Retired

Volunteers will be considered to have retired their CASA status if the volunteer:
submits a letter or otherwise communicates to the organization that he or she is resigning as a CASA, or
has completed all cases to which he/she was appointed and has not accepted another for a period of one year.

Terminated

Volunteers may be terminated from CASA service if, in the sole opinion of the Executive Director, the volunteer:
is not pursuing the best interests of the child(ren) on their case(s);
does not adequately represent the mission of Clatsop CASA;
does not adequately or appropriately comply with the roles and responsibilities established for volunteers in this policy manual.

Returning to Active Status

A volunteer who has resigned may be eligible for a return to “active” status. Those individuals who have not actively worked on a case for 12 months or more may be required to complete the initial volunteer training to again be eligible for a case assignment.

Individuals who have been terminated from Clatsop CASA’s volunteer service will not be considered for a return to “active” status.

Transferring To or From another CASA Program

Individuals wishing to transfer to another CASA program must follow the guidelines for such a transfer established by that program. Individuals wishing to transfer into the Clatsop CASA program must meet all of the requirements established for Clatsop CASA volunteers.

CORE VALUES

Ethics

Ethical Behavior

Clatsop CASA is committed to the highest standards of ethics and integrity in all of the work we perform. Unethical behavior is never justified or acceptable, no matter the intention or outcome.

Respect

Clatsop CASA, both staff and volunteers, will treat all people with respect and fairness, no matter who they are or what their relationship may be to the CASA program and the work the program does. Rude, disrespectful or demeaning behavior is considered unacceptable at any level of the organization.

Confidentiality

Clatsop CASA is committed to the highest standards of confidentiality regarding clients, volunteers, staff and donors. The Executive Director, Board Chair, or their designated representative deals with inquiries from the media or the public for information regarding confidential or sensitive matters, consistent with the program's Media and Public Relations Policy. Decisions to release information about confidential matters are made on a case by case basis by the Executive Director, and the Board Chair. However, general information about the program and the work the program performs on behalf of abused and neglected children, may be discussed informally with the public by anyone associated with the organization.

A CASA volunteer must maintain absolute confidentiality regarding the child(ren) they represent and their families.

This policy is the cornerstone of the CASA program, reflecting the CASA's legal, moral, and ethical obligation 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, including that acquired in its training program. No information of any type may be released, except that the Court Appointed Special Advocate for a specific child in a specific case may discuss with and release information to:

- Legal parties to the case, in connection with case planning and services. Parties to the case generally are limited to the judge, attorneys and DHS caseworkers and supervisory personnel assigned to the case;
- other CASA volunteers on a "need to know" basis or in confidential staffings;
- Clatsop CASA staff

Children & Families

Responsibilities to Children

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. Examples include screening and case management procedures, training programs, staff qualifications, ratios of volunteers to staff, ratios of children to volunteers and a commitment to the highest standards of confidentiality.

Child Advocacy

Advocacy for the best interests of children requires commitment to three tenets - protecting children from abuse, safety and permanency for children, and actively valuing the child's attachment to his or her family.

Culturally Appropriate Advocacy

Advocacy for the best interests of the child requires tremendous sensitivity to both the child's family's culture, ethnic identity, religion, 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, Clatsop CASA must always strive to do better than the norm, to grow beyond our current understanding and competency level.

Attitudes toward Families

Children love and value their families, even families who have abused or neglected them. Clatsop CASA 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.

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

All staff and volunteers are required to report suspected child abuse as defined in ORS 419B.005. CASA staff will assist you in determining whether or not to make a report if you are unsure of the proper action. Reports shall be made to the Department of Human Services Child Welfare Division or the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

Volunteer Advocates

Clatsop CASA is committed to providing volunteer advocacy for children. Although not child welfare professionals, CASA volunteers have an imperative to function with the highest standards of professionalism.

Role of Lay Advocates in the Child Welfare System

Clatsop CASA believes in the tremendous value of lay advocacy within a system primarily staffed with professionals and that lay advocates are equal participants who deserve respect in their role. Likewise, Clatsop CASA believes in the importance of the professionals within the system and that CASA volunteers in no way replace those professionals.

Purpose of Providing Support to CASA Volunteers

CASA volunteers require and deserve competent and professional support in order to provide effective and appropriate advocacy for children. Clatsop CASA strives to offer support that will maximize the volunteer's strengths and address any limitations.

In addition to ongoing staff support, the staff will provide CASA volunteers with access to legal counsel when CASA staff deems it necessary.

The CASA's Autonomy and Limits on Autonomy

The CASA volunteer, by appointment by the juvenile court, is the child's advocate and is given wide latitude by the CASA program to determine and advocate for a child's best interest. In fact, CASAs are encouraged to be vigorous in their advocacy efforts. Clatsop CASA staff will normally support CASAs in this role. CASA staff is prohibited from altering reports or recommendations of the assigned CASA without the knowledge and agreement of the assigned CASA. 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
- 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, the program may ask the court to remove the CASA from his/her appointed case.

Relationships

Relationship to the Child Welfare System

Clatsop CASA values strong, professional and productive relationships and open communication with all the individuals associated to CASA cases and with the agencies working within the child welfare system. Although CASA volunteers often take positions in

specific cases that are at odds with others on the case, the CASA program does not cast itself in an adversarial role with any party. Clatsop CASA recognizes that reasonable people disagree and that the best outcomes for children result from a full and complete discussions of all issues and points of view.

Relationship and Responsibility to the Court

As the Clatsop County Juvenile Court’s designated Court Appointed Special Advocate program, Clatsop CASA has a responsibility to operate with the highest standards of ethics and accountability, doing nothing to discredit the Court or the position of trust the program has been given. As appointed officers of the Court, 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 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 additionally and equally apply to the Clatsop CASA staff and to the Clatsop CASA Board of Directors.

Responsibilities

Commitment to Diversity

Clatsop CASA recognizes that the best services will be provided to children when members of all the communities to which these children belong are well-represented at every level of the organization, i.e., policy setting (Board of Directors), support and supervision (CASA staff), and direct service (CASA volunteers).

Responsibility to Donors and to the Community

Clatsop CASA endeavors to be accountable to the communities we serve in matters of stewardship and in the conduct of services and to those who support our work financially.

VOLUNTEERS AND CASA STAFF

Role of Volunteers

At Clatsop CASA, volunteers are advocates for the children on their cases (see Appendix B for Volunteer Job Description). 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, about resources needed to diminish the problem and about how community involvement can become part of the solution. They can voice their opinions to elected officials regarding the wise usage of government resources and in the establishment of legislation that would protect children and benefit families.

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 system. They can keep the child welfare

system from becoming isolated from the larger community by continually re-infusing the system with the broader community's values. Volunteers are an integral piece in the accomplishment of Clatsop CASA's mission.

Inappropriate activities which may cause a CASA volunteer to be disciplined or terminated as a CASA include:

- Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling to anyone involved in the child's case.
- Making placement arrangements for the child (although CASAs may, and should, participate in DHS adoption committees and other placement-related decision-making).
- Giving money or expensive gifts to the child, the child's family, or the child's caregiver.
- Taking a child to the volunteer's home or any home other than the child's.

Transportation Policy

In general, the transportation of children or other persons by CASA volunteers in personal vehicles is discouraged but there may be instances in which it is necessary to facilitate the performance of a volunteer's duties and responsibilities. However, should a CASA volunteer choose to transport CASA children, it is extremely important to consider their safety as well as the volunteer's own safety and liability. The following guidelines must be adhered to when transporting CASA children or their family members. Any exceptions to this policy may be made only with the prior written consent of the Executive Director.

When may a CASA Volunteer transport a child?

Subject to the requirements of this policy, with the prior approval of the case supervisor, a CASA volunteer may transport a child in order to complete the requirements for face to face contacts with assigned children. If transport is requested for some other purpose, such as facilitating a visit with a parent or sibling, or transporting the child to a special activity, the CASA volunteer must specify the purpose for the transport in writing and obtain specific permission from his or her supervisor and the Executive Director, as well as the child's custodian and/or legal guardian (e.g., DHS).

In any case, all of the following requirements for drivers must be met:

Requirements for all drivers:

* CASA volunteers transporting a CASA child for any reason must complete and submit the "CASA Volunteer Transportation Permission to Transport Form", (see Appendix A) which secures permission of all necessary parties.

*** The child being transported must be age five or older unless accompanied by an authorized parent, guardian, foster parent, or other individual representative of the legal custodian.**

* Only volunteers with valid Oregon state driver's licenses are allowed to transport CASA children. All CASA volunteers must maintain current proof of insurance for their vehicle, and a copy of the proof of insurance and the valid driver's license must be provided to the CASA office prior to transport.

* CASA volunteers who have received two or more moving violations in the last three months or who have been involved in two or more vehicular accidents in the last twelve months are prohibited from transporting CASA children.

* Volunteers who have been convicted of DUII (Driving Under the Influence) within the last ten years may not transport a CASA child.

* CASA volunteers transporting a CASA child shall obey all applicable traffic laws and regulations including compliance with the posted speed limit.

Passengers:

A) All adult passengers (over the age of 18) must wear seatbelts, and must be persons approved by DHS or other legal custodian to be present.

B) All children between the age of eight (if not still in a child safety car seat) and eighteen must wear their own seatbelts and must not sit on adult's laps.

C) Child passengers must be restrained in approved child safety seats, properly installed, until they weigh forty pounds or reach the upper weight limit for the car seat in use. Infants must ride rear-facing until they reach both one year of age AND twenty pounds.

D) Children over forty pounds or who have reached the upper weight limit for their forward-facing car seat must use boosters (or child seat up to the highest weight limit allowed by the seat manufacturer), properly installed, until the child is at least 4'9" tall or age eight and the adult belt fits correctly.

Note: Belt or Booster?

Belt fit can vary greatly from one vehicle to another and one child to another. If the child meets Oregon's legal requirements for moving from a booster seat to safety belt but the driver still has doubts about whether the child fits in the belt in a particular vehicle, then the following simple test can help. Place the child in the vehicle without a booster seat and then ask these questions. Until you can answer YES to all of the questions, your child should stay in a booster seat.

1. Can the child sit all the way back against the vehicle seat?
2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the seat?
3. Does the shoulder belt cross the shoulder between the neck and arm?
4. Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs?
5. Can the child stay comfortably seated like this for the whole trip?

CASA staff will notify the DHS caseworker and/or supervisor that the CASA volunteer may be transporting the child(ren) and request that that DHS notify the child(ren)'s foster parents.

Roles and Responsibilities of CASA Staff

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

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

All CASA volunteer advocates shall take part in a periodic evaluation process to review their performance; such evaluation shall take place when a case to which the volunteer is assigned closes. The evaluation will be an opportunity for the volunteer and CASA staff to discuss what went well and identify areas where improvement is needed. An evaluation form will be completed that summarizes the discussion and, if necessary, includes additional comments by CASA staff. The original evaluation form will be kept in the volunteer's personnel file with a copy provided to the volunteer upon request.

Volunteer Responsibility to CASA

Volunteers, when sworn in and appointed to a case, are required by the Clatsop CASA Program to:

- 1) Visit the children on their case(s) at least one time per month and to inform the CASA supervisor if the CASA is unable to see the child for a greater period of time;
- 2) Discuss with the CASA supervisor the status of the children on their case on a monthly basis;
- 3) Prepare written court reports for the Juvenile Court for all hearings associated with the child(ren) on their case and submit those reports to the CASA supervisor for review and correction approximately ten days prior to the date of the scheduled hearing so that the final report may be submitted at least one week prior to the date of the hearing;
- 4) Talk with the CASA supervisor prior to scheduled hearings to prepare oral reports to the court;
- 5) Report to the CASA supervisor major case related meetings, e.g., Citizen Review Board (CRB), court hearings, etc;
- 6) Attend court hearings and CRB and DHS Family Decision and related meetings;

- 7) Report immediately to the CASA supervisor any major case related events, e.g., child is moved, re-abuse occurs; and
- 8) Return case files and other case related information to CASA office when case closes.

Teamwork

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

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 Clatsop CASA make all efforts to assure that avenues of communication remain open and productive. Open and productive communication is essential between CASA staff and volunteers as well as with all other individuals and agencies engaged in the child welfare system.

Social Networking

Social Networking is defined by, but not limited to use of media such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn, and blogging.

It is against program policy to participate in social networking activities with the child, family, foster care providers, or any community members who are associated with the case. It is also against program policy to discuss any case through social media with any legal parties to the case or service providers involved.

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 is 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 resets solely on the volunteer. It is strongly recommended that any suspected conflicts of this nature be brought to the immediate attention of the staff.

Volunteers may not, in any way, use their position to obtain financial gain for themselves, any member of their household, their friends, or any business with which the volunteer, a member of their family's household or a friend is associated.

Volunteers may not enter into a professional or personal relationship (outside of the CASA relationship) with any client of Clatsop CASA during their tenure as a Clatsop CASA volunteer advocate. Volunteers must disclose the existence and nature of any pre-existing personal or professional relationship with any Clatsop CASA client in order to prevent actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Volunteers may not remove or keep any confidential materials from Clatsop CASA upon separation from service. Such confidential materials include, but may not be limited to, donor, client, and volunteer records.

Requests for Specific Case Appointments

Requests by volunteers for 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.”

Travel Reimbursement

CASA volunteers who are assigned to cases in which the child(ren) are placed in foster homes or residential facilities outside of Clatsop County may request reimbursement of certain travel expenses to offset the costs of monthly visits to the child in accordance with the Travel Reimbursement Policy. CASA volunteers must obtain pre-approval by the case supervisor for travel expenses for which they wish to be reimbursed.

CASE PROCEDURES

Criteria for Case Appointments

For a child to receive Clatsop CASA services, a CASA volunteer must be appointed by the Clatsop County Juvenile Court to a case that fits the criteria of Oregon Law, that is, a case in which the child has a pending Juvenile Court matter involving abuse or neglect. The program does not 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 comes from the Juvenile Court Judge.

Organization Processes

Once a CASA appointment has been received by the program, the request is then processed by staff. The child(ren)'s case is thoroughly reviewed by CASA staff and a determination is made as to the program'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 as well as the legal parties to the case. If no appropriate volunteer is available, the case is assigned to the "Wait List."

Volunteer Selection for Appointment

Clatsop CASA 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 CASA volunteer to the right case. Staff will not appoint a volunteer to a case in which the volunteer is related to any parties in the case.

Wait List

The Clatsop CASA "Wait List" consists of those cases that have been referred to the organization but, due to lack of volunteers or appropriate volunteers, are not assigned a CASA volunteer.

Volunteer Caseload

It is desirable that CASA volunteers carry no more than two cases. In unique situations a volunteer may be asked to add a case (examples would be a “Courtesy” case) when a CASA’s involvement is critical to the “best interests of a child” and no other volunteer is available. In any case, a volunteer with more than two cases should be an exception to the rule.

Courtesy CASAs

Clatsop CASA, on occasion, will be asked to perform “Courtesy CASA” services. These requests usually come from other CASA programs. A “Courtesy CASA” is often requested in these instances to provide follow-up and other information that would otherwise be difficult to provide by an out-of-location CASA volunteer. Though normally a short-term assignment, Courtesy CASAs still require a court appointment. As Clatsop CASA wishes to provide safety for all children, the organization will seek to provide Courtesy CASAs whenever possible.

CASA Volunteer Removal

Removal of a CASA from a case may be voluntary at the request of the CASA, involuntary at the request of the organization (CASA staff) or the Court, or a result of case closure. In any case, the Juvenile Court and legal parties must be notified when a CASA volunteer is removed from a case unless a case closes.

Among the grounds for dismissal of a CASA by CASA staff are:

- **Taking action without prior program or court approval that endangers the child or is outside the role or powers of the CASA program;**
- **Ex parte communication with the court;**
- **Failing to complete required pre-service and in-service training;**
- **Providing false information on the volunteer application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process;**
- **The existence of child abuse/neglect allegations against the CASA; or**
- **The existence of a conflict of interest that cannot be resolved.**

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, Clatsop CASA would make a determination to appoint a Co-CASA. The Juvenile Court would then be asked to make the additional appointment. The supplemental volunteer should never be added with the intent of replacing the originally appointed CASA volunteer unless accomplished with a transitional plan in place.

Transfer of Jurisdiction

If a case is transferred out of the jurisdiction of the Clatsop County Juvenile Court, the appointment and the involvement of the Clatsop CASA volunteer will generally end. Should the volunteer and the CASA program wish the new jurisdiction to appoint a CASA volunteer, CASA staff will assist the volunteer in contacting the CASA program in the new jurisdiction.

If a case is transferred into the jurisdiction of Clatsop County and the volunteer from the case's place of origin wishes to continue in the role of CASA advocate, the Clatsop CASA 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 Clatsop CASA program staff will review the case to develop an opinion as to whether or not the case would benefit from Clatsop CASA involvement.

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 in Oregon, although the Court may retain custody until age 21), or by any court order mandating the end of jurisdiction.

Appendix A

CASA VOLUNTEER PERMISSION TO TRANSPORT

The following items are required in addition to this form, in order to transport the CASA child(ren) named below:

- Current proof of auto insurance
- Permission from DHS caseworker/supervisor (as needed)
- Permission by current placement provider (as needed)
- Copy of driver’s license

I, _____, have read and understood the Clatsop CASA Program, Inc. Transportation Policy. I authorize Clatsop CASA Program, Inc. to conduct nation-wide criminal records checks on me with regard to moving violations, vehicular accidents and/or convictions; I understand that any information obtained through this process is strictly confidential and for the sole purpose of confirming my driving record. I affirm that I have a valid Oregon state driver’s license and current proof of insurance and that I have not: (a) received two or more moving violations in the last three months; (b) been involved in two or more vehicular accidents in the last twelve months; or (c) been convicted of DUII (Driving Under the Influence) within the last ten years. I confirm that I have the necessary safety equipment in my vehicle, including safety belts, child safety seats and child booster seats, which is appropriate for the age of the child(ren) being transported. If there is an emergency, I will call 911 and then the CASA supervisor or director.

Name of Child(ren):

_____	_____
CASA Volunteer Signature	Date

_____	_____
CASA Volunteer Supervisor Signature	Date

For Transport For Reasons Other Than Facilitating Face to Face Contacts:

Reason for Transport: _____

_____	_____
CASA Executive Director Signature	Date

_____	_____
Child(ren)’s Custodian or Placement Provider	Date

_____	_____
DHS Caseworker/Supervisor or Legal Guardian Signature	Date



Clatsop CASA Program, Inc.

VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

Court Appointed Special Advocates are trained community volunteers appointed by Judges to speak for the best interests of children who are victims of abuse or neglect. A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is an official part of judicial proceedings, working alongside attorneys and social workers. By handling only one or two cases at a time, the CASA can thoroughly explore the history of each assigned case. The volunteer talks with the child, parents, family members, neighbors, school officials, doctors and others involved in the child's background who might have facts about the case. The volunteer reviews all facts about the case and the volunteer also reviews all court documents pertaining to the case, then submits formal reports to the Judge at scheduled hearings and reviews. The CASA continues to monitor the case to assure that the judicial and child welfare systems are moving ahead to secure a safe, permanent home for the child, and that court-ordered services are provided to the child and family.

PROGRAM MISSION

The mission of the Clatsop CASA Program, Inc. is to provide trained volunteers to speak for the best interest of abused and neglected children in Clatsop County's court and child welfare systems. Clatsop CASA promotes and supports quality volunteer representation for children, and assists CASA volunteers as they advocate for children to achieve permanency in safe, nurturing homes.

Clatsop CASA is also dedicated to participating in community collaborations to enhance service delivery systems and strengthen family functioning in order to encourage permanent homes for every child in our community.

PROGRAM GOALS/PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- To provide independent, factual information to the court regarding abused and neglected children;
- To provide advocacy for abused and neglected children who are the subject of judicial proceedings;
- To monitor cases until the terms of the court order and case plan have been fulfilled;
- To conduct independent and objective analysis concerning abused and neglected children;

- To factually and objectively report findings and observations to the court;
- To insure representation of the child's best interest in all judicial proceedings;
- To monitor cases following a court hearing or decision as designated by the court.

CASA VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

- To complete an intensive independent review of each case:
 - Speak with the child and relevant adults;
 - Review appropriate records and reports;
 - Observe the child and significant others.
- To report findings to the court and citizen review board by providing a written report containing factual information which makes specific recommendations for appropriate services for the child, and when appropriate, for the family.
- To ensure representation of the child's best interest:
 - Attends all court hearings to see that relevant facts are presented;
 - Attends appropriate interagency meetings regarding the child;
 - Encourages public systems action in the child(ren)'s best interests.
 - Determines whether a permanency plan has been created for the child and, if so, whether that plan is appropriate and in the best interests of the child.
- To monitor the case following a court hearing or decision as designated by the court.
- To monitor implementation of service plans and court orders, assuring that court-ordered services are implemented in a timely manner and that review hearings are held in accordance with the law.
- To consult regularly with the volunteer supervisor concerning assigned case and review progress and reports.
- To maintain complete and confidential records about the case in accordance with program requirements, and to maintain confidentiality in accordance with law as to all aspects of the case with all persons who are not legal parties to the case.
- To report quarterly volunteer hours, mileage, and mandatory continuing education progress.

REQUIRED SKILLS / ABILITIES

- A CASA volunteer must be at least 21 years of age and successfully complete the application, screening, and training process
- Ability to keep all case and court information confidential

- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing
- Ability to respect and relate to people from various backgrounds in a variety of settings
- Ability to transport self to a variety of locations
- Ability to deal with hostility, anger and other emotional attitudes
- Ability to maintain objectivity
- Ability to gather and record factual information accurately
- A basic understanding of child development
- A basic understanding of family relationships

TRAINING

- CASA volunteers are required to attend approximately 35 hours of pre-service training
- CASA volunteers will attend twelve hours in-service training or other continuing education opportunities (including approved independent study) annually, and receive direct supervision and guidance from program staff.

TIME COMMITMENT

- Volunteers are required to commit themselves to the program for two years or until the completion of an assigned case.
- Volunteers are expected to be available for case assignment and to accept cases unless other arrangements have been made.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Clatsop CASA is an equal opportunity employer and, as such, will not discriminate because of age, sex, race, color, national origin, disability, religious preference or sexual orientation. It shall be the policy of Clatsop CASA to hire, train and retain employees and volunteers fully capable of carrying out the program's goals and objectives. To affect this policy, continuous effort will be made to develop, implement and interpret sound personnel practices compatible with those in similar activities and organizations. Clatsop CASA recognizes that its ability to provide continuing leadership, technical competence and service in the field of child advocacy is dependent upon its employees and volunteers. It will, therefore, strive to provide a work climate which will assure optimum employee and volunteer contributions and commensurate rewards for all employees.

The policy applies to all areas of paid and unpaid employment, including recruitment, hiring, training and development, promotion, termination, layoff, compensation benefits, social and recreational programs, and all other conditions and privileges of employment in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws.



Clatsop CASA Program, Inc.

Policies and Guidelines

Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read the Clatsop CASA Volunteer Policies and Guidelines handbook. I understand that by signing this statement and becoming a Clatsop CASA Volunteer, I am agreeing to abide by these policies and guidelines in good faith and to the best of my ability.

Signature _____ Date _____