



# **POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

## **FOR VOLUNTEERS**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
of Atlantic & Cape May Counties, Inc.  
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# VOLUNTEER MANUAL

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## **I. WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to the children in our community. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Atlantic and Cape May Counties, is pleased to welcome you to our organization. Since 2001 CASA volunteers have provided a critical voice in court to children living in foster care – your voice is now one of many that will help these children find safe, permanent homes.

As we mentioned throughout training, this manual provides basic information about CASA's volunteer policies and procedures. All CASA volunteers are expected to respect and follow these policies, including any future changes or additions that may be made. This manual is not a contract; it does not guarantee any fixed terms and conditions of a CASA volunteer's participation in the program. Your service as a volunteer will last only as long as you and the organization mutually agree, though we always envision a long and beneficial relationship with all of our volunteers.

Your commitment to the policies and procedures outlined in this manual will help you be a more effective CASA volunteer and will help make the organization stronger and more efficient. If you have any comments or suggestions for improving our services please contact me or anyone of the CASA staff at (609) 601-7800.

Thank you again for your commitment to abused and neglected children.

Sincerely,

Angela J. Waters  
Executive Director

## II. CASA VOLUNTEER STANDARDS

### A. Court Appointed Special Advocates of Atlantic & Cape May Counties, Inc.

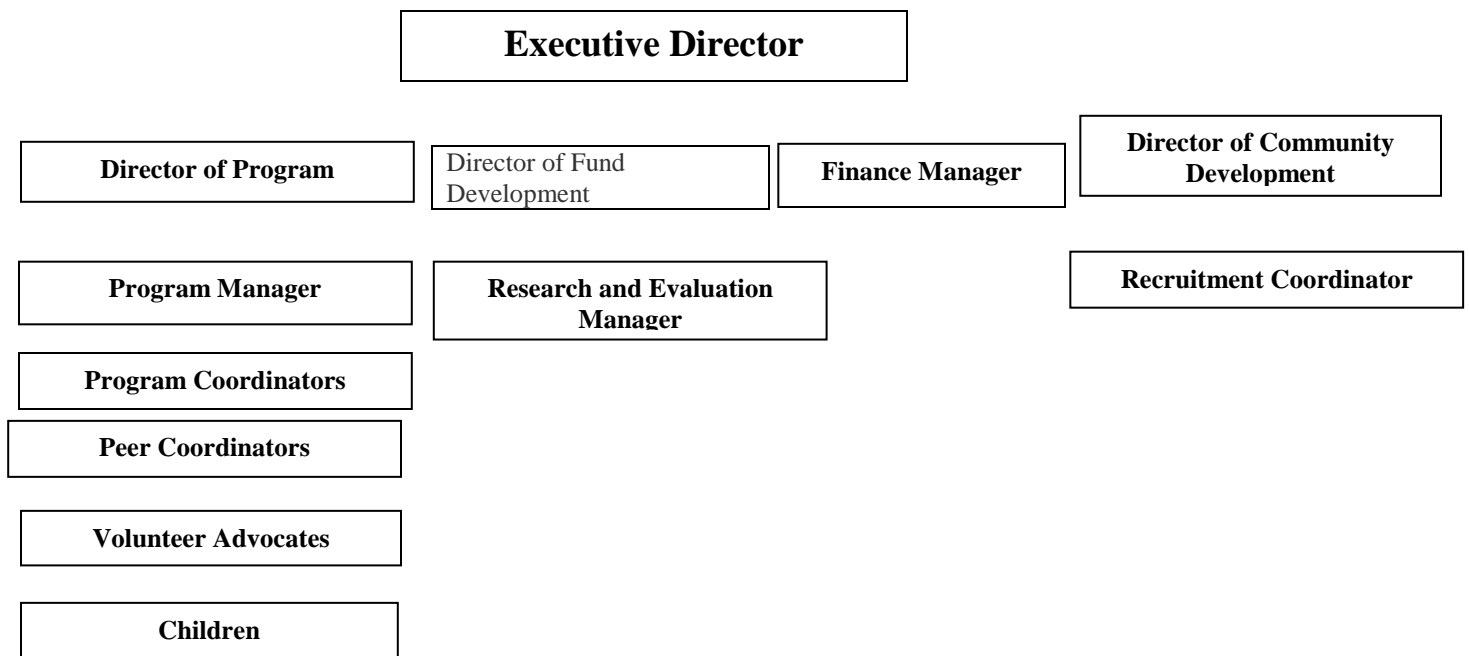
#### Mission Statement:

Court Appointed Special Advocates of Atlantic & Cape May Counties, Inc. (CASA) and its trained volunteers speak on behalf of abused and neglected children in the foster care system and are dedicated to ensuring these children are placed in safe permanent homes as quickly as possible.

#### Vision Statement:

The Vision of CASA is to serve all children living within the foster care system in Atlantic & Cape May Counties by providing the best trained volunteer advocates to ensure these children will enjoy a safe and permanent home as quickly as possible.

### B. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



### **III. NATIONAL CASA ASSOCIATION AFFILIATION**

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.

#### **A. NATIONAL AFFILIATION**

1. CASA programs which are members of the National CASA Association must operate in accordance with the NCASAA Code of Ethics, goals and purposes.
2. The Executive Director and the Board of Trustees shall monitor compliance with the Code of Ethics in accordance with the bylaws of the National CASA Association, NJ State Statute and AOC Standards.

#### **B. CASA PROGRAM**

1. This CASA program provides trained community volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children who come into the court system primarily as a result of abuse and neglect. This CASA program recruits, screens, trains, and supervises these volunteers to serve as an independent third party “Friend of the Court”.
2. This CASA program is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization.
3. This CASA program has a mission and purpose in keeping with the mission and purpose of the National CASA Association and abides by the National CASA Code of Ethics.
4. This CASA program operates with access to legal counsel.
5. The management and operation of this CASA program assures adequate supervision of CASA Volunteers. This CASA program keeps written records on each applicant, volunteer and case. The program also has written management and personnel policies and procedures, screening requirements, training curriculum, and keeps relevant data on the operation of the program.
6. This CASA program does not accept applicants if they have been convicted of, or have charges pending for, a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse or neglect, or related acts that would pose risks to children or to the CASA program’s credibility.
7. This CASA program has an established procedure to allow the immediate reporting to the court and through the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) of a situation in which a CASA volunteer has reason to believe that a child is in imminent danger.

8. This CASA program intends to be an inclusive organization whose volunteers, staff and board members reflect the children they serve and their community in terms of gender, ethnicity, and cultural and socio-economic background.

### **C. CONDUCT**

1. CASA Volunteers will abide by the NCASA Code of Ethics and all laws and regulations governing their activities.
2. CASA 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, nor condone any illegal act or unethical practices related to their program or community.
4. CASA programs and individuals who are members of the National CASA Association may not use CASA to promote personal gain.
5. CASA Volunteers will avoid any action that could adversely affect the confidence of the public in the integrity of the NSCASA.
6. The National CASA Association and its member programs will serve and respond to requests without bias because of race, religion, sex, age, national origin or handicap.
7. All CASA volunteers will be required to read, sign and date the Code of Conduct, a copy of which is attached. One copy of the signed and dated document should be retained by the CASA volunteer.

### **D. CONFIDENTIALITY**

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

### **E. KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING**

1. 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.
2. 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 interest.

## **IV. VOLUNTEERING AT CASA**

### **A. CASA Volunteer**

1. A CASA Volunteer is an individual who has been screened and trained by a recognized CASA program and appointed by the court to advocate for children who come into the court system primarily as a result of abuse or neglect. A volunteer reviews records, facilitates prompt, thorough review of the case, and



interviews appropriate parties in order to make recommendations on what would be in the best interest of the child.

2. A CASA Volunteer is of majority age in the state and has successfully passed screening requirements which include a written application, personal interview, reference and criminal records checks and Child Abuse Registry (CARI) check.
3. A CASA Volunteer has successfully completed a minimum of 30 hours of initial training that includes instruction on the court and child welfare systems, child abuse and neglect, relevant state and federal laws, permanency planning and family preservation, cultural awareness, and the role and responsibilities of a CASA Volunteer.
4. A CASA Volunteer does not engage in activities which jeopardize the safety of the child, the integrity of the program, the objectivity of the volunteer; or activities which are likely to result in conflict of interest or expose the program or the volunteer to criminal or civil liability. A CASA Volunteer also abides by the National CASA Association Code of Ethics, Judicial Code of Ethics and AOC Standards.
5. A CASA Volunteer respects the right to privacy by keeping information that would identify parties involved in CASA cases confidential.

#### **B. Application and Screening Process for Prospective CASA Volunteers**

All prospective CASA volunteers must complete a written application, provide the names and addresses of three non-relative references, have a personal interview with CASA staff, and pass a full criminal background check (including; national, state and local criminal records check, National Sex Offender Registry check, motor vehicle check, and social security verification check) and child abuse registry check. The CASA program does not accept applicants if they have been convicted of, or have charges pending for, a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse or neglect, or related acts that would pose risks to children or to the CASA program's credibility.

Any prospective CASA volunteer that has lived in another state in the past seven (7) years, will be required to secure a child abuse registry or child protective services check, where permissible by law, in any state in which they have resided for the previous seven (7) years. Additionally, any prospective volunteer that has lived in another county and that jurisdiction is not covered by the national criminal background check utilized, the program is required to secure county and state criminal records checks in any county and state in which they have resided for the previous seven (7) years.

Any CASA volunteer who has completed at least two years of service with CASA may apply to become a Peer Coordinator. An application, interview, and evaluation will be required in order to ascertain if the volunteer's skills and abilities match the needs of the CASA program.

CASA of Atlantic & Cape May Counties adheres to the guidelines utilized by The Division of Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P) regarding any misdemeanor or felony and if it is determined that this previous act would not pose a risk to children or harm to the credibility of the CASA program the volunteer may be accepted into the training program.

It is CASA policy to verify information on applications. Acceptance or continuation as a volunteer is dependent on the application being complete and correct.

### **C. Initial Orientation and Training of Prospective CASA Volunteers**

CASA provides prospective volunteers with an initial 30 Hour Training Program adapted from the curriculum that the National CASA Association provides. Topics include: the roles and responsibilities of volunteers, cultural awareness, child development, casework strategies and information pertaining to court and the child welfare system and information about how to approach specific problems and situations. All CASA volunteers must observe family court for the minimum of three hours. All prospective CASA volunteers must attend these training sessions.

Upon successful completion of the Training Program, and acceptance as a CASA volunteer, a CASA volunteer will be sworn-in as a Court Appointed Special Advocate, by a representative of the Superior Court of New Jersey. Only after being sworn in may a CASA volunteer be assigned to work on a case.

CASA Volunteers interested in becoming a Peer Coordinator must attend a 10-12 hour training which includes such topics as policies and procedure, coaching, editing court reports, CASA Manager (the database utilized at CASA), and how to approach difficult scenarios and boundary issues. This advanced training prepares peer coordinators to coach and support volunteers with the guidance of their Volunteer Coordinator and CASA staff. Peer Coordinators may maintain a case of their own in some circumstances.

### **D. CASA Volunteer Evaluations/Termination of Relationship**

CASA is not appropriate for everyone. Therefore, the first three months will be regarded as a probationary period. This will allow CASA volunteers to learn more about the role of a Court Appointed Special Advocate and for CASA to evaluate volunteers. At the end of this period you will schedule an evaluation with your Peer Coordinator.

After the initial probation period, CASA will periodically evaluate volunteers informally and formally evaluate CASA volunteers annually. CASA expects these periodic evaluations to be helpful in sustaining a long and mutually productive association with each of our volunteers. CASA Volunteers are invited to use the evaluation sessions to discuss areas of concern and to make suggestions about improving the CASA volunteer program. If CASA determines that it's best interest are not being served, in its sole discretion, it may work with a CASA volunteer to develop a plan to improve his or her efforts or may terminate the relationship immediately.

CASA reserves the right; however, to determine at any time whether or not an individual's participation continues to serve CASA's best interests.

### **Termination of Volunteering**

CASA's effectiveness and standing in court depends on volunteers maintaining professional relationships with children and families and adhering to CASA Standards and Policies. CASA Volunteers are expected to adhere to these standards or may be asked to resign from their case.

There are specific infractions that may result in automatic dismissal from this CASA volunteer program that include, but are not limited to:

- Taking action without program and court approval that endangers the child or is outside the role or powers of the CASA Program
- Initiating in ex-parte communication with the court
- Violating CASA program policy (listed in policy agreement), court rule or law – specifically, but not limited to:
  - Transporting any child or family member relating to your case
  - Giving any legal advice or therapeutic counseling
  - Taking a child home
  - Giving money to the child
  - Engaging in any media communications regarding CASA without the specific consent of the Executive Director
  - Failing to demonstrate an ability to effectively carry out assigned duties
  - Falsifying his or her application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process
  - Existence of allegations of abuse or neglect against a volunteer
  - Existence of a conflict that cannot be resolved

CASA reserves the right to determine at any time whether or not an individual's participation continues to serve CASA's best interests. If CASA determines that its best interests are not being served, in its sole discretion, it may work with a CASA volunteer to develop a plan to improve his or her efforts, including:

1. First, an informal verbal meeting with the Peer Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator.
2. A more formal meeting with the Volunteer Coordinator and the Program Manager which will be documented
3. A probationary period allowing the volunteer, Peer Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator to work on corrective actions and develop a plan for a more productive relationship and volunteer opportunity

CASA may still terminate the CASA volunteer which will be done by the Program Manager in a verbal conversation and written form which will be documented in the Volunteer File.

### **E. Media Communication**

Inquiries concerning CASA, its policies, practices, or clients, must be referred to the Executive Director. CASA Volunteers are not permitted to make any statements involving CASA to the media without the consent of the Executive Director.

### **F. Direct Service Provision**

CASA is NOT a “direct service” agency. We are a child advocacy organization: we advocate for direct service agencies to provide appropriate services to clients. *Therefore, volunteers are restricted from providing direct services such as: transporting parties, intervening in domestic disputes, providing counseling, offering to provide funds for food or other necessities, etc. CASA is a facilitator; it is our job to advocate for the direct service agencies to provide these vital services to clients.*

### **G. Personal Involvement with Children and Families**

CASA’s effectiveness and standing in court depends on volunteers maintaining professional relationships with children and families. CASA volunteers and staff are not expected to become personally involved with CASA children and families. For example, they should not take children on outings or in their car. CASA volunteers are expected not to put themselves in situations where they are alone with a child. If they do become personally involved, CASA volunteers may be removed from a case at the discretion of the Executive Director.

## **V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE**

### **A. Role of a Court Appointed Special Advocate**

A Court Appointed Special Advocate Volunteer serves as an independent, third party: Friend of the Courts, as defined by the Administration of the Courts.

### **B. Responsibilities of a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)**

The responsibilities of a CASAVolunteer Advocate may include all or some of the following, depending upon the needs of each individual case:

1. Conduct an independent investigation
  - This “independent” investigation is conducted under the guidance of and through regular communication with the CASA Peer Coordinator
  - The first step in the investigation process is to review all relevant documents and records including those of child protection services (New Jersey Division of Child Protection & Permanency, “DCP&P”), police, court, physician and school. The second step in the investigation process is direct interviews with the child and foster parents in the foster home
  - The third step in the investigation process is direct interviews with the parents, social workers, relatives, school personnel and others having knowledge of the facts in the situation. This is crucial in getting a clear picture of the child’s life

- The Volunteer Advocate should continue to seek out information throughout the time the child is assigned to them and should have regular in-person contact with the child
  - Volunteer Advocates need to determine if a permanent plan has been created and whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts are being provided to the child and the family
2. Formulate recommendation in accordance with the best interest of the child.
    - The Volunteer Advocate is to confer with their Peer Coordinator and utilize many factors in these recommendations, including:
      1. Current age and sense of time
      2. Level of maturity
      3. Culture
      4. Degree of attachment to family members including siblings
      5. What situation would best provide continuity, consistency and a sense of belonging and identity
  3. Seek cooperative solutions
    - The Volunteer Advocate may function as a mediator among conflicting parties to facilitate the resolution of problems and to foster positive steps toward achieving permanency for the child.
  4. Provide monthly logs to the CASA Peer Coordinator and confer regularly (weekly for the first three months assigned to the case) with the Peer Coordinator to seek guidance and provide new case information.
  5. Write a report consistent with the standard report that has been established. This report should be a collaborative effort between the CASA Volunteer and Peer Coordinator and should be turned in one week (seven business days) prior to the hearing. The report should be based upon the information provided in the volunteer's monthly case logs. CASA Peer Coordinators will make changes to the report if necessary but will never alter reports without the prior knowledge of and agreement from the CASA Volunteer.
  6. Only the Volunteer Coordinator will distribute this report to the Court, the Deputy Attorney General, Law Guardian and lawyers for the parents before each court hearing.
  7. Depending upon work or other obligations of the volunteer, the CASA Volunteer Advocate should appear at all hearings to represent the child's best interest and ensure that all relevant facts are presented.
  8. Explain the Court/ proceedings and the role of CASA to the child in terms the child can understand.
  9. Monitor implementation of service plans and Court orders.

- The CASA Volunteer Advocate should advocate that Court ordered services and tasks are completed in a timely manner, and the desired outcome is accomplished and should make the Court aware when this is not done.
  - The CASA Volunteer Advocate should monitor the Court process to assure that hearings are held in a timely manner.
10. Inform the Court promptly of important developments.
  11. Advocate for the child's best interests in the community including interfacing with mental health, educational and other community systems to assure the child's needs are being met in all areas.
  12. Continue to visit with the child at least once a month for the duration of the case until permanency is achieved.

### **C. Time Commitment**

Volunteer Advocates are expected to devote the necessary time to serve as a Volunteer Advocate. While there is no minimum or maximum amount, CASA Staff encourages volunteers to spend 5-8 hours per month volunteering. Volunteer Advocates are to send their completed case log sheets to their CASA Peer Coordinator by the fifth of every month, along with the number of hours expended. In an effort to assure continuity and effective advocacy for the children assigned to the Volunteer, advocates are expected to commit to a child for the duration of the case until permanency is achieved. If a volunteer will be unavailable for his or her case due to a lengthy illness, family emergency, or plan to be out of town for employment or vacation for 7 or more days, he or she is required to notify his or her Peer Coordinator.

### **D. Casework Files and Reports**

All Volunteer Advocates must maintain complete and up-to-date records on each assigned case. Notes must be clear, accurate, written legibly and devoid of slang and jargon. Reports should present an unbiased, factual and historical record and should be free of subjective editorial comments. Each Volunteer Advocates must keep abreast of all deadlines and timetables involved in cases. Reports must be turned 1 week prior to the court hearing. If Volunteers Advocates are unable to meet a deadline they must notify the assigned Peer Coordinator immediately.

At the conclusion of the volunteer's involvement with the case, including by resignation or termination of the volunteer, the volunteer must return the entire case file to CASA. This includes, but is not limited to, all original documentation of the volunteer's appointment to the case, court documents, documentation of phone calls or other interviews, any correspondence, medical records or other assessments, and any and all personal notes on the case. The volunteer must also return his/her CASA photo identification badge.

### **E. On-Going Volunteer Training**

CASA believes that proper training is an essential ingredient for success for all volunteers. CASA offers 24-30 hours of in-service training sessions annually. Additionally CASA Staff will keep volunteers informed of other opportunities throughout the community and encourages volunteers to attend relevant workshops on their own. All volunteers are expected to participate in a minimum of 12 hours of in-service training each year. Every time volunteers attend training, they should inform their Peer Coordinator and/or a member of the Program Staff.

### **F. Confidentiality: Your Responsibility as a Court Appointed Special Advocate**

1. CASA volunteers are expected to honor the oath of confidentiality signed and administered at the time of the volunteer's swearing in.
  2. General responsibility to protect confidential information about the parties to a case:
    - CASA expects CASA Volunteers to respect children and families' rights to privacy in regard to personal information.
    - No case information may be disclosed to people not involved in the case or to the outside world in general. No information should be released to anyone not authorized to receive it.
    - No information should be released to the foster family, biological family, or friends of parties involved in a case, even in professional meetings. Requests for information from these parties should be directed towards DCP&P.
    - No disclosure of case information should be made to anyone who does not have a professional reason for receiving such information. Requests for information from these parties should be directed towards DCP&P.
    - Confidential information may be shared with professionals, including the child's Law Guardian, staff at CASA and, of course the Superior Court of New Jersey, Family Part.
1. Expectations of the parties confidentiality
    - There is no privilege or expectation of absolute confidentiality of information provided to CASA. It is the role of CASA to transmit the information it collects to the court. It therefore becomes important to inform all parties and sources of information to a case of this fact. At the beginning of a case, CASA should carefully inform all parties and sources of information regarding what records would be maintained about them and what information will be shared, with whom, and under what circumstances.
    - CASA reports are confidential documents prepared for the courts based on the information received by parties in the case.

- The reports are transmitted to the following individuals: the Family Court Judge and their designee, the Deputy Attorney General, the Law Guardian, and the Defense Attorneys. Reports are not to be circulated to any other party members including litigants.

2. Internal safeguard of confidential information and records.

- In order to insure maintenance of confidentiality, CASA has adopted certain procedures regarding case records which volunteers follow. In the CASA office, records are maintained exclusively in separate file cabinets. All copies of letters and reports concerning a case must be filed in case folder.
- Volunteers who keep case files outside the CASA office (either in paper or electronic format) must take the steps to ensure that the files are maintained in such a way to prevent inadvertent disclosure to persons not having a reason to know. In addition, volunteers must ensure that they have a private place for phone conversations about the CASA duties away from the CASA premises.
- No discussions of any individual or family situation of any kind are to be held in hallways, elevators or other public places. At any group case review held for consultation or review, all parties should be referred to by first names and last initial only (e.g. Mary S). Full names must be used in supervision and staff meetings in order to ensure that the staff is fully aware of all cases for which they are responsible.

3. Duty to disclose.

In some situations, Volunteer Advocates and staff may have a duty to immediately disclose information.

- Child Abuse or neglect
- CASA is required to report any case of suspected child abuse or neglect to the Division of Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P) immediately tot 1-877-NJABUSE.
- Harm to self and others

If you learn someone may harm himself or others, you have a duty to disclose this information immediately through the following avenues:

- If for instance the child indicates that he has a weapon, or access to one, and intends to use it; Call 911
- The 24 Hour/7 Days Week DCP&P Hotline at 1-877-NJABUSE
- DCP&P Caseworker or DCP&P Caseworker Supervisor
- Your Peer Coordinator or member of the Program Staff

**G. Volunteer Advocates Rights to Review Records**

Volunteer Advocates records contain the application, background check, references, and performance reviews in a confidential file. Access to those records shall be determined on a case by case basis by the Program Manager. Volunteer Advocate Files are the property of CASA. Volunteer Advocates who desire to review their own file should make an appointment with the Program Manager. Volunteer Advocates are encouraged



to update a member of the Program staff immediately of any change in address, employment, etc... to ensure updated files.

## **VI. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PEER COORDINATOR**

### **A. Role of a Peer Coordinator**

The Peer Coordinator position provides coaching and support to CASA's volunteer advocates ensuring that children involved with the CASA program receive sound advocacy and early permanency planning.

### **B. Responsibilities of a Peer Coordinator**

The responsibilities of a Peer Coordinator may include all or some of the following, depending upon the needs of each individual case:

1. Support and coach 5-8 Volunteer Advocates by providing assistance and consultation as needed and when requested.
2. Review new cases and introduce the policy and procedures manual with newly assigned Volunteer Advocates.
3. Meet with Volunteer Advocates to review court reports and forward to Volunteer Coordinator for final review and distribution to the courts.
4. Maintain regular communication and review cases with Volunteer Advocates weekly for the first three months and subsequently at least once a month, or more often if needed.
5. Remain in good standing as a Volunteer Advocate with CASA of Atlantic and Cape May Counties.
6. Understand all CASA Policy and Procedures.
7. Document monthly review and other contacts with Volunteer Advocates.
8. Review cases with Volunteer Coordinator on a quarterly basis and stay in communication with Volunteer Coordinator at least monthly and more often as needed.
9. Notify Volunteer Coordinator of any problems or critical events in cases immediately.
10. Provide notice to Volunteer Coordinator for planned absences at least one week in advance.
11. Maintain and submit monthly time sheets by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month
12. Participate in ongoing in-service Peer Coordinator trainings.

The responsibilities described for Volunteer Advocates in section V also apply to the Peer Coordinator.

### **C. Time Commitment**

Peer Coordinators are asked to make a commitment to the program for at least 2 years. The monthly workload for a Peer Coordinator will depend upon the caseload and schedule of each individual Peer Coordinator (typically one Peer Coordinator could expect to spend 3-4 hours per month per advocate).

## **VII. Safety Policy/Procedures**

### **A. Safety Procedures**

- CASA Volunteers should exercise maximum care and good judgment at all times to prevent accidents and injuries.
- CASA Volunteers should report to CASA staff any injuries, no matter how minor, and seek first aid.
- Volunteer Advocates should immediately report unsafe conditions, equipment or practices to their Peer Coordinator and/or CASA staff.

### **B. Substance Abuse**

It is in the best interest of CASA, its employees, volunteers and clients that all volunteers are able to work to the best of their capabilities, and that employees and volunteers are not exposed to the hazards that arise when drugs or alcohol are present on the premises. Therefore, CASA does not tolerate the possession, use or sale of alcohol, controlled substances, or any illegal drug on CASA premises, or the impairment of volunteer performance arising from the use of these substances at any time, including in the presence of the CASA children.

### **C. Field Visits**

CASA's safety procedures for field visits have been established in order to give CASA volunteers guidelines on avoiding possible harmful situations. The following suggestions for ways to protect oneself have proven to be extremely effective with CASA Volunteers throughout the state of New Jersey in the past

- Dress in a fashion, which is casual and not conspicuous.
- Avoid exposing expensive jewelry or other items. Keep jewelry hidden under shirts or blouses. No volunteer should travel with large sums of money.
- Wear your official name tags and carry a CASA identification card and court order at all times when working in an official capacity for CASA.
- Before going in the field, verify the appropriate route with your Peer Coordinator or other staff already familiar with the area.
- Upon approaching an area or building, if you do not feel totally comfortable because of suspicious people loitering, darkness in the hallways, etc. do not enter the area or

building. Another visit can be made at another time and, if necessary, arrangements can be made to have someone accompany you.

A neutral location, such as a local fast food restaurant, the courthouse, or the DCP&P Office, can be used as an alternate meeting location if the home area or building does not feel safe

#### **D. Availability of CASA Staff after hours**

A member of the CASA staff will always be accessible to CASA volunteers after hours. CASA staff “on-call” after the business hours of Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 5:00pm will rotate monthly. The current on-call staff member will be announced in the monthly CASA email and will also be listed on the CASA website. Contact information for CASA staff can be found on the Organizational Chart in the Case Assignment binder.

### **VIII. CASA Volunteer Relations**

Ultimate responsibility for all CASA cases rests with the Executive Director and the staff. As a Volunteer Advocate, however, you too represent CASA, and what you do reflects on the organization. Always conduct yourself in a way that reflects favorably on CASA. Volunteer Advocates must comply with all rules and policies that CASA may change when warranted, at its discretion. Staffing changes may result in a switch of assigned Peer Coordinator or Volunteer Coordinator

#### **A. Working Environment**

CASA endeavors to promote a comfortable and productive working environment for all volunteers. In keeping with this policy, sexual, racial, religious, ethnic, or other kinds of harassment of or by volunteers is a violation of CASA policy and will not be tolerated. We expect volunteers to treat each other and CASA staff with mutual respect. Please let the CASA Executive Director know if you experience any difficulties in this regard.

All volunteer policies are administered without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap, marital status, or sexual orientation. CASA volunteers are required to follow the organization conflict of interest policy.

#### **B. Open Door**

CASA has an “open door” policy. If you have any problems or questions concerning either the responsibilities or the provisions outlined in this manual, or other matters directly related to your volunteer work at CASA, you are encouraged to take up the matter directly with the Executive Director. Additionally, if you have a case related question, please feel free to discuss with any member of the Program staff.

#### **C Conflict of Interest**

CASA volunteers are required to follow the organizations conflict of interest policy. CASA governing body members, employees, and volunteers refrain from positions of conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest and do not use their program relationship for personal or professional gain.

A CASA volunteer shall not be related to any parties involved in a specific case or be employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest. Upon application, exception may be made by the Presiding Judge.

#### **D. Agency Letterhead**

CASA volunteers act as official representatives of CASA when using CASA letterhead. CASA volunteers may use CASA letterhead only when corresponding about the CASA cases assigned to them and with approval from Volunteer Coordinator. Use of letterhead is not permitted for personal correspondence or for correspondence related to what the CASA does (letter to the editor expressing personal opinions regarding relevant legislation etc.)

#### **E. Non-Partisanship**

CASA volunteers are reminded that, as a tax exempt organization, CASA is restricted in its ability to engage in activity which would influence legislation, and that it is inappropriate for CASA to support or oppose any candidate for public office, such activity is personal in nature and is outside of the scope of the individual's relationship with CASA. CASA volunteers are expected to avoid the appearance that their personal political activity is authorized by or on behalf of CASA.

CASA volunteers are expected to refrain from any activity which would constitute support for or opposition to, candidates for public office when such conduct could be construed as activity on behalf of CASA. For example, CASA volunteers may not use CASA letterhead or wear items with CASA's logo when promoting political activity or support for a candidate or legislation. Such activity must be conducted on the CASA volunteer's personal rather than professional time and is wholly apart from any CASA.

#### **F. Policy Against Violence**

CASA prohibits any acts of threats of violence at any time against its clients, visitors, CASA volunteers or employees by any individuals on the premises of CASA, or while such individual is engaged in CASA's business on or off CASA's premises.

CASA volunteers are expected to warn any CASA staff member(s) of any suspicious workplace activity, situations or incidents that they observe or know about that involve employees, other CASA volunteers, former CASA volunteers or employees, clients, or visitors and that appear suspicious or problematic. This would include, for example, threats of violence, aggressive conduct, offensive acts, threatening or offensive comments or remarks about firearms, weapons or the like. Reports will be held in confidence, to the maximum extent possible. CASA will not condone any form of retaliation against any employee or CASA volunteer for making report in good faith under this policy.

Physically hostile conduct or threats, regardless of how transmitted, towards employees, CASA volunteers, clients and visitors are prohibited. Such conduct should be immediately reported to a supervisor or the Executive Director. Any CASA volunteer engaged in such conduct will face termination of his/her volunteer relationship with CASA.

### **G. Technology Responsible Use Policy**

Each CASA volunteer is expected to use CASA's available computer technology responsibly and professionally. This policy requires all volunteers who use computers and related technology to do so prudently, legally and for the benefit of CASA.

Computers and email are not to be used for personal use. While serving as a volunteer, volunteers should not have any expectation of privacy with respect to the files of the computers they use or the contents of email messages, either sent or received, or downloaded or uploaded files from the Internet. CASA reserves the right to access and disclose the contents of any of its computer files or any email message for any lawful purpose. CASA volunteers will be issued an email address through CASA to be used for communications pertaining to their case. This email domain is the property of CASA of Atlantic and Cape May Counties, Inc. and will be subject to all of the above provisions.

CASA volunteers are not to display any material on their computer monitors at the office that is offensive to the CASA staff, other CASA volunteers or visitors to the CASA office. Every CASA volunteer is responsible for communicating to the appropriate staff member his or her discomfort, if any, with material displayed on computer terminals at the office.

CASA volunteers are also restricted from utilizing blogs and other forms of social media for discussing inquiries concerning CASA, its policies, or clients as in accordance with the CASA Media Relations Policy.

As a reminder, it is a violation of law and of the CASA Responsible Use Policy to download and distribute material from the Internet if such distribution would constitute a violation of copyright laws. It is also a violation of CASA Responsible Use Policy to use CASA's computers for any activity in connection with pornography.

CASA volunteers who violate CASA's Responsible Use Policy will face termination of his/her volunteer relationship with CASA.

Please refer to **Appendix A** for the National CASA Association Online Communication and Social Media Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers.

### **H. Anti Harassment Policy**

CASA is committed to an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has a right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminating practices, including harassment. It is therefore the expectation that all relationships among individuals associated with CASA be business like and free of bias and prejudice. Illegal harassment and improper interference with the ability of individuals to perform their duties is prohibited. CASA's policy against harassment applies to employees, non-employees, including volunteers.

Each CASA volunteer is responsible for contributing to a harassment free environment and CASA management is strictly responsible for maintaining an atmosphere free of discrimination and harassment, sexual or otherwise. Reporting of all perceived

incidences of harassment is required as outlined below. Retaliation against any individual who reports or participates in the investigation of a report of harassment is prohibited. Retaliation in violation of this policy is grounds for termination of the CASA volunteer relationship.

### **I. Mandatory Reporting Harassment**

If you observe or experience any discrimination or harassment based on your race, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or another factor, or believe that you have been treated in a discriminatory manner, promptly report the incident to the Executive Director. If you believe it would be inappropriate to discuss the matter with the Executive Director, you may bypass the Director and report the concern directly to the President of the Board of Trustees. Your complaint will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible and no retaliation will be taken against you for lodging a complaint.

### **J. Conduct by Non Employees/Including Volunteers**

This policy extends to conduct of non-employees, including volunteers, which affects employees and non-employees, while they are working. Consequently, conduct by clients, vendors, family members of clients, or any other individual, which, if conducted by an employee, would be in violation of this policy, will not be tolerated. This policy requires CASA volunteers to immediately report such offensive conduct to the Executive Director.

### **K. Prohibition against Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment occurs whenever unwelcome sexual conduct, unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, physical, or visual conduct of a sexual nature occurs in the course of CASA work. It also occurs when such intentional or unintentional conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonable interfering with an associate's work or creates an otherwise hostile, intimidating, or offensive working environment.

A hostile or offensive working environment is classified by unwanted, repeated and severe or pervasive conduct that has sexual overtones. For example:

- Ongoing patterns of crude jokes and/or sexist remarks/innuendoes
- Inappropriate visual contacts (e.g. leering or staring at another's body) or physical contacts (e.g. intentional touching in a sexually offensive manner)
- Unwelcome sexual advances, propositions, or repeated requests for dates or other social engagements
- Expectations of working in an area where sexually suggestive or derogatory language or visual depictions are present (such as computer graphics, photos, posters, cartoons or other print material).

Unwelcomeness is determined by reaction to a behavior by a recipient, NOT by the intention of the person initiating it. Conduct is unwelcome if the recipient did not initiate it and regards it as offensive. Conduct such as consensual joking, teasing, touching, etc. does not amount to harassment if it is not unwelcome or offensive to any direct recipients or indirect observers.

#### **L. Confidential Complaint Investigation Procedures for Harassment Complaints**

A complaint is investigated discreetly, impartially and promptly. It is coordinated by the Executive Director and other designee as assigned by the Executive Director, and will normally begin promptly after the complaint is received. The matter will be resolved in a fair and timely manner. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent permitted by the circumstances.

#### **M. Policy on Employee/Volunteer Relationships**

CASA prefers to avoid potential conflicts that may arise as a result of a social relationship between CASA employees and CASA volunteers. CASA requires that all relationships between a supervisor and a CASA volunteer, in the nature of “dating” or intimate interpersonal relations, be reported to the Executive Director. CASA will take appropriate action to ensure that no CASA volunteer is directly supervised by another employee with whom the employee has a personal relationship.

#### **N. Retaliation Prohibited:**

CASA prohibits any form of retaliation against any CASA volunteer for filing a bona fide complaint under this policy or for assisting in a complaint investigation. However, if, after investigating any complaint of harassment or unlawful discrimination, the Agency determines that a complaint is not bona fide, was not made in good faith, or that a CASA volunteer has provided false information regarding a complaint of harassment, the CASA volunteer may face the possibility of termination of the volunteer relationship with CASA.

#### **O. Travel Policies**

##### Automobile Use and Business Expenses

CASA volunteers will be required to use his/her automobile on all CASA business. Any mileage and travel expenses are considered an in-kind donation to the organization and the CASA volunteer can choose to itemize this expense for tax purposes accordingly. CASA suggests consultation with a tax advisor.

If travel expenses hinder a CASA volunteer from advocating on a case, the CASA volunteer needs to meet with the Program Managers to discuss consideration for reimbursement before the travel expenses are incurred. Special requests must be authorized in advance by the Executive Director. Once an expense is approved, all reimbursement statements need proper itemization and receipts.

#### **P. Becoming a Resource Parent**

If a potential CASA volunteer is already a resource parent or an adoptive parent having adopted through DCP&P, they will be screened carefully for bias or potential lack of objectivity. CASA may choose to accept the individual as a CASA volunteer, provided they are not currently a resource parent for a child placed from the same Family Court or assigned to a local DCP&P office within the county in which they are volunteering.

If an existing CASA volunteer wishes to become a resource or adoptive parent, CASA will require the volunteer to meet with their Volunteer Coordinator to discuss and sign an agreement stating that:

- s/he will keep the two roles separate
- s/he will not divulge any confidential information learned in their work as a CASA volunteer for any purpose other than in their assigned caseload.
- s/he will not discuss information regarding their resource and/or adoptive child with the CASA program unless:
  1. There is a CASA volunteer assigned to that foster child and the information is disclosed only to that assigned CASA or their Peer Coordinator.
  2. There has been a finalized adoption

All CASA volunteers having been or currently acting as resource parents must be disclosed to the court.

#### **Q. Volunteer References**

All requests for CASA volunteer references for any current or former CASA volunteer must be directed to the Program Manager. References for CASA volunteers will be provided by the Program Manager with input given by the CASA volunteers current Peer Coordinator.

#### **R. VOLUNTEER IDENTIFICATION BADGE**

During case assignment, the volunteer will receive a CASA volunteer photo identification badge. The badge should be displayed only when the volunteer is performing CASA-related duties. It must not be used or displayed for any other purpose. If applicable, the volunteer must obtain a renewal badge after the expiration date. When the volunteer leaves CASA, s/he must relinquish the badge immediately to CASA staff.



## **Appendix A SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY**

When volunteer's are blogging or using other forms of web-based forums, such as social networking sites, CASA must ensure that these communications maintain the organization's integrity and reputation while minimizing actual or potential legal risks, whether used inside or outside the organization. Volunteers are expected to protect the privacy of the families and parties that CASA works with and are prohibited from disclosing any information obtained in their role as a CASA volunteer. Unless written reprint permission has been obtained in advance from Executive Director, no copyrighted information can be posted on any blog or social networking site. Likewise, the use of any of CASA's logos/ trademarks is not permitted without specific written permission of the Executive Director.

Generally, volunteers are permitted to state that they are associated with the CASA organization and identify their years of service without the permission of the organization. Volunteers who wish to post information on a blog or social networking site beyond their positions and years of service, including information about CASA, its employees (current or former), and its volunteers/clients/vendors, must receive prior written authorization from Executive Director and must comply with all of the terms of this policy. If you have any question with respect to whether your publication of specific information is acceptable under this policy, you must speak with Executive Director.

## **IX. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

TO: Executive Director  
CASA of Atlantic and Cape May Counties, Inc.  
321 Shore Road  
Somers Point, NJ 08244

I have read and understand CASA's Volunteer Policy and Procedure Manual. I understand its contents and agree to follow the policies and procedures as set forth in it. I also consent to CASA's access and disclosure at any time of computer files, Internet Files, and email messages generated from or transmitted while performing CASA duties.

Name (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Code of Conduct for Court Appointed Special Advocates of Atlantic & Cape May  
Counties, Inc. Volunteers**

I, the undersigned certified CASA volunteer, have read, understand and agree to comply with the following.

**A CASA volunteer shall:**

1. Maintain high standards of conduct carrying out his or her duties and obligations;
2. Diligently represent and be guided solely by the best interests of the child;
3. Report honestly and impartially to the Court on what is in the best interests of the child;
4. Respect the privacy of the child and the family;
5. Hold confidential all information obtained in the course of service as a CASA volunteer, as required by law and the Policy and Procedures Manual for CASA volunteers;
6. Not be related to or develop an intimate, social, or other nonprofessional relationship with any person connected to the case or be employed in a position that might result in a conflict of interest;
7. Decline appointment, withdraw, or request assistance when the volunteer recognizes that he or she may not have the time or ability to effectively advocate for a child;
8. Affirmatively advise the program if the volunteer is charged with or convicted of a criminal offense, or becomes involved in any other court proceeding which might cause a conflict of interest or adversely affect the volunteer's ability to effectively advocate for a child;
9. Report any incident of child abuse or neglect to the CASA Staff and DCP&P hotline 1-877-NJABUSE
10. Notify the Executive Director if the volunteer or any member of the volunteer's immediate family becomes involved in a case with allegations of child abuse or neglect;
11. Discuss all recommendations concerning the case with Peer Coordinator and Program staff prior to submitting recommendations to the Court;
12. Obtain review/approval from Peer Coordinator and Program staff before submitting any document to the Court or other parties;

13. Monitor the child regularly pursuant to the policy established by CASA of Atlantic & Cape May Counties;
14. In an emergency situation or crisis, such as:
  - A. A client is at risk for imminent physical, sexual or emotional abuse
  - B. A client discloses an intent to harm himself/herself or another party
  - C. A client runs away from a placement
 The CASA volunteer must notify Staff at the Division of Child Protection and Permanency immediately. After 4:30 p.m. or on weekends and holidays, the CASA volunteer must call at 1-877-NJABUSE. After notifying the Division, the CASA Volunteer will notify their Peer Coordinator and/or Volunteer Coordinator.
15. To maintain confidentiality, CASA volunteers must return identification card and all case files and related materials to CASA of Atlantic & Cape May Counties office upon discharge from the case or dismissal from the Program as per Court Order;
16. Discuss case progress and volunteer activity at least every thirty (30) days with Peer Coordinator and regularly submit case activity sheets;
17. Complete 12 hours of in-service training annually.

**CASA volunteers shall not:**

1. Take action which:
  - A. Endangers the child, a party, a witness or other person;
  - B. Is outside the powers or role of the CASA volunteer; or
  - C. Violates the state or local law, Court rule, program policy or Court or Program procedure.
2. Give information concerning case specifics to anyone involved in the case, including foster parents and birth parents.
  - A. CASA volunteers do not give the addresses and phone numbers of birth parents to the foster parents or those of the foster parents to the birth parents.
  - B. CASA volunteers do not reveal specifics of discussions at professional meetings to birth parents, foster parents or the child(ren).
  - C. DCP&P and other professionals have given all pertinent information to birth parents and foster parents. If questioned, refer them to the appropriate professional.
  - D. CASA volunteers shall not share personal opinions with birth parents, foster parents or the child(ren).
  - E. CASA volunteers are still bound by the same oath of confidentiality after a case has closed.
3. Violate staff or Court direction;
4. Repeatedly or significantly fail to perform a responsibility as a CASA volunteer;

5. Take a child home or shelter a child in the home;
6. Place themselves in a position of being alone in a home with their CASA child(ren).
7. Supervise visitations.
8. Provide transportation for the child, parents, foster parents, or any other parties;
9. Give legal advice;
10. Give therapeutic advice;
11. Give money or gifts to the child or family;
12. Practice, condone, facilitate, or participate in any form of discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical disability, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or status;
13. Accept a fee for services as a CASA volunteer;
14. Misrepresent the role or position of the CASA volunteer;
15. Engage in any ex parte conversation with the Judge.

Violation of Code of Conduct and/or Volunteer Agreements that jeopardize the CASA program will lead to termination.

Signature of Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of CASA Peer Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of CASA Volunteer Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_