



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a CASA Volunteer?

A CASA, or Court Appointed Special Advocate, is a trained community volunteer. They are sworn in as a "friend of the Court" and are appointed by our local Judge, at his/her discretion, to represent the best interest of a child and help ensure a child's voice in court. They are trained, assigned a case, supervised by CASA of Rock County program staff, and become stable adult figures in the eyes of the child.

### What would my role as a CASA Volunteer be?

A CASA provides the Judge with important information about the child, giving that child a voice that is otherwise often lost in order to help the Court make sound decisions about the child's future. Each case is as unique as the child involved.

As a CASA, you would visit weekly with the child in places such as the child's school, home, or foster home to ensure the child is safe and the Court's orders are being carried out. These visits include outings done with the child to bond and gain their trust, as well as bring some fun and joy into their lives. You also make sure the child is getting the services and support they need.

### How long/what's involved in training?

Training occurs through a 2.5-hour session once a week for 10 weeks (22.5 hours total). There are also 10 hours spent at home doing self-study on various topics talked about at the meetings and completing 4 hours of court observation for a grand total of approximately 36 training hours.

Throughout the training, you will learn the overview of the child welfare process in Rock County as well as the various laws involved. You will also learn about child trauma, domestic violence, and mental health and how to identify and deal with these various factors with your assigned case. Essentially, we provide you with all the tools and training needed to be an effective CASA and be the best that you can be for your assigned child.

### I met with my CASA child, now what?

Based on the weekly visits, you prepare a report every three months for the court summarizing observations, concerns, and recommendations you've made as well as the expressed wishes, hopes, and opinions of the child. You do not make the case decision, but you do provide the important information to the decision-makers (i.e. Judge, caseworker) for consideration about what is best for your CASA child.



### How do I get information about the case?

In addition to speaking with the child, you will talk with other adults in the child's life such as parents, foster parents, other family members, social workers, school officials, health providers, and others who may have knowledge about the child and the case. You will have access to the child's school, medical, caseworker reports, and other documents so you can better understand your child and what they have been through.

### Do I, as a CASA Volunteer, have the legal right to do these things?

Yes! Wisconsin Statutes dictate the role of an advocate and give the volunteer the legal right to act within that role. Once appointed by the Judge to serve on a case, you may request that parent(s) or legal guardian(s) sign an Authorization for Release of Information, as these consents are required for other service providers to share verbal and written information with you.

### How long will I be involved in the case?

Typically, you will remain involved from the time the case is assigned to you until the case is permanently resolved (on some occasions, you could be released from your responsibilities prior to the closure of the case). This time period varies case by case. One primary benefit of the CASA program is that unlike other service providers who often rotate cases, you would be a consistent figure and provide continuity for the child which they desperately need.

### How do I differ from a Child Protective Services (CPS) Social/Case Worker?

The CPS worker is an employee of the county who is legally represented and advised by a county attorney and is responsible for providing case management services to many families at a time. You, as a volunteer, are not paid nor a party in the case and only have one child or sibling group at a time. You do not replace the CPS caseworker, rather you act as an objective third-party who is appointed by the court. You are able to thoroughly examine the child's case and write reports to the Court independent of state agency restrictions.

### How do I differ from the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)?

A GAL is an attorney appointed by the court to legally represent the best interest of the child and is a party in the case. You, as a volunteer, are not a party in the case, do not represent the child legally in the courtroom, and cannot call witnesses to testify. However, the GAL receives and reviews the CASA volunteer reports, which provide crucial background information that may assist the GAL in presenting the case to the court.



Are there any other agencies or groups that provide the same service?

No! There are other child advocacy organizations, but CASA is the only program where volunteers are appointed by the court to represent a child's best interest.