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CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN
LAKE COUNTY

CASA Lake County
Volunteer Policy Handbook
Approved July 1, 2010
(Revised August 2014)

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1. General Program Policies

1.1 Scope and Purpose

CASA Lake County's greatest asset is the group of trained community volunteers who together advocate for the abused and neglected children involved in Lake County juvenile court. Within our organization, volunteers donate their time and efforts to serve these children as advocates (CASAs), as pro bono attorneys, as board members, as board committee members and as Friends of CASA. The purpose of the policy manual is to provide overall direction and guidelines for the CASA volunteer in his/her role as a court appointed special advocate. The policy manual is intended for guidance only, and does not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual agreement.

1.2 Change in Policy

CASA Lake County reserves the exclusive right to change any aspect of the policy at any time.

1.3 Approval of Policies

Approval of the volunteer policies and procedures shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors of CASA Lake County. Amendments to these policies are subject to ratification by the Board which has final responsibility for such amendments, and may amend these policies.

1.4 Exception to Policy

Exceptions to these policies may be granted only by the Executive Director or designated staff and must be obtained in advance of any action on the part of the volunteer.

1.5 Service at the Discretion of the Agency

CASA Lake County accepts the service of volunteers with the understanding that such service is the sole discretion of the program. Volunteers agree that the agency may at any time dismiss a volunteer from the program.

1.6 Speaking/Fundraising on Behalf of CASA Lake County

Advocates are encouraged to speak about the program in general throughout the community. The Executive Director must be informed of any speaking engagements volunteers may wish to arrange on behalf of CASA Lake-County **Volunteers are prohibited from speaking with the media on behalf of CASA without explicit arrangement and consent of the executive director.**

1.7 Fund Raising

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

1.8 Sexual Harassment and Discrimination

CASA Lake County will seek to maintain an environment within the program which is free from intimidation, discrimination, coercion or harassment, including sexual harassment. Discrimination on the basis of age, handicap, race, national origin, marital status or sexual preference is against the law and in violation of the spirit of CASA.

1.9 Alcohol/Drugs

Volunteers serving as advocates for CASA Lake County are prohibited from being under the influence of, using, possessing, selling, or otherwise being involved with illegal drugs or alcohol while engaging in their role as a volunteer for the program. A volunteer who performs any activities in his/her roles as CASA while under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be suspended from his/her program duties pending an investigation.

1.10 Conflict of Interest

Volunteers of CASA Lake County may not have a direct or indirect financial interest in the assets, leases, business transactions, or professional services of the program.

A Volunteer should not have current or prior personal or business relationships or be related to any parties involved in the case he/she is assigned or be employed in a position and/or with an agency that might result in a conflict of interest.

Volunteers shall notify their advocate manager of any possible conflict of interest and any and all relevant information pertaining to the possible conflict and may

not participate in any activity related to the matter in which there may be a conflict of interest.

1.11 Confidentiality

Volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality agreement during training and renew the agreement annually. Volunteers may solicit case information by obtaining a release of information from the necessary party. As a CASA advocate, the volunteer becomes an officer of the court upon assignment to a case. Any information pertaining to the individual families or children that the CASA receives in the discharge of his/her duties is strictly confidential. The information may not be discussed with anyone other than the court, CASA staff, social service workers assigned to the case, the State's Attorney, or the GAL. Discussion of the case with others outside the CASA organization, even if the family name and other identifying information is omitted, is strictly forbidden. Violation of confidentiality can result in the discrediting of the CASA program and may be cause for immediate dismissal. These same standards apply to all volunteers including Board members and Friends of CASA who are associated with the CASA Lake County program.

1.12 Cases Outside of Lake County

If a volunteer's case is transferred to a court outside of Lake County, the CASA volunteer may be required to relinquish the case, but may stay involved for a short period in order to facilitate the transfer of information to the new workers. No volunteer will be assigned a case pending before a court outside of Lake County without approval of the Executive Director.

1.13 National CASA Association

As a member in good standing with the National Association of CASA Programs, volunteers of CASA are required to abide by the standards and professional conduct prescribed by this organization.

1.14 Illinois Association of CASA Programs

As a member in good standing with the Illinois Association of CASA Programs, volunteers of CASA are required to abide by the standards and professional conduct prescribed by this organization.

1.15 Code of Ethical Conduct
As a volunteer, all CASA business will be conducted in an honest, fair, professional, and humane manner.

1.16 Number of Cases
Pursuant to standards set by the National CASA Association, a volunteer will not be assigned to more than two cases at a time without approval of the Executive Director.

1.17 Photographs of CASA Children/Events
CASA volunteers may take photographs of CASA child(ren) with the express permission of the child(ren)'s guardian. CASA volunteers must use the photographs appropriately (e.g. for a court report) and are prohibited from posting on any internet site or social networking site (see further guidelines in the Protection Policy, below).

1.18 Social Networking
Many CASA youth and advocate volunteers maintain profiles on Facebook, MySpace and other social networking sites. Although network sites can be useful in maintaining communication, they may challenge confidentiality rules and appropriate CASA/child boundaries. The following are CASA Lake County's social guidelines:

GENERAL POLICY

Volunteers shall refrain from posting inappropriate material, links to inappropriate websites, or undesirable comments, references or pictures anywhere on the web where the posting directly or indirectly makes reference to CASA of Lake County or any name meant to refer to the organization. Anyone found to be in violation of this policy may be sanctioned at the discretion of CASA management staff.

This policy includes public postings to any electronic media including, but not limited to intranet and internet forums, blogs, web logs, photoblogs, social networking/online web communities, list serves, internet diaries, instant messaging, text messaging, podcasts, amateur video sites, and all web postings -- such as those in chat rooms, on bulletin boards, websites or web pages. Wikis, public/shared email, online compilations of photographs or videos, and links to any of these items are also prohibited.

SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICIES

1. In the interest of upholding confidentiality and maintaining appropriate boundaries between volunteers and youth, CASA advocates are strongly discouraged from being "friends" on social networking sites.
2. If an advocate chooses to connect with his/her youth online, standard confidentiality guidelines with regard to personal, private or case-related information must be followed at all times. If advocates are concerned about their youth's online behavior, they should share concerns with their Advocate Manager immediately.
3. Advocates who choose to connect with his/her youth online should carefully limit the personal information they make available to their youth through their profile by ensuring privacy settings prevent access to any personal information that would normally not be shared with their assigned youth.
    - In MySpace, from the homepage, select Account Settings, then review all Privacy Settings.
    - In Facebook, from the homepage, select Settings, then review all Privacy Settings.
4. If advocates and CASA staff or others involved in an assigned child's life are connected through a social networking site, the site should never be used to communicate confidential case information.
5. When promoting CASA or mentioning one's affiliation with CASA, confidentiality is of utmost importance. General information on volunteering or donating to CASA, event/campaign promotion or referencing one's role as a CASA is permitted as long as case-specific information is never included.

1.19 Protection Policy

In an effort to protect the best interests of both our CASA volunteers and the children they serve, CASA Lake County asks all volunteer to adhere to these important protection policies that apply to all CASAs working on an assigned case and interacting with children and the other adults in their lives. CASA volunteers should be aware of their environment, the circumstances, and their own vulnerabilities when working alone with children. Any questions should be directed to the CASA's advocate manager.

Transportation

- It is against the policy of CASA Lake County for a CASA volunteer to transport a CASA child.
- It would be acceptable for a CASA volunteer to accompany a CASA child in a taxi cab or public transportation given proper permission from the caregiver. However, if a volunteer plans to do this, they must advise their advocate manager, because there may be other reasons why this may be inappropriate under the circumstances.

Relationships

- CASAs should not form personal friendships with individuals who are close to the child they represent, such as relatives or friends of the child, or those who are related professionally to the case.

Visits with the Children

- Proper location for visits:
  - Visits between a CASA volunteer and the CASA child may take place in any common area of the home.
  - Visits may take place outside of the home in the yard or adjacent property given proper permission from the caregiver.
  - Time spent in other rooms of the home, including the child's bedroom, should be brief, with notice to the caregiver, and with the door to the room open.
  - After discussion with your Advocate Manager and with permission from the caregiver, the CASA volunteer may travel by foot in the community near the child's home (to visit a park, ice cream store, local shopping or local restaurant for example).

- Proper displays of affection
  - Casual touch – gentle contact during activities may be on children's head, shoulders.
  - Back rubs or any other type of massage are not appropriate.

- During seated activities encourage children to sit next to you. Lap sitting is not appropriate.
- Hugs – One arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are positive contact. Any full contact, body to body hugs, or kisses are inappropriate and should never be initiated by CASA. It is recognized that children often initiate hugs. In accepting a hug from a child, CASAs should always be mindful of their professional boundaries and minimize the amount of physical contact.
- CASAs should avoid picking up children (piggy back rides, physically strenuous play, etc.) to prevent physical injury to the child or themselves.
- Holding an infant is appropriate while in the full view of the caregiver.

Bathroom policy

- A CASA volunteer should not accompany a CASA child to the bathroom during a visit.
- A CASA volunteer may assist in the changing of an infant's diaper when in full view of the caregiver.

Cell phone contact

- A CASA volunteer may decide when and if to share their cell phone information with the family, foster home, residential facility or the child.
- A CASA volunteer may communicate via cell phone with a CASA child (under the age of 18) with notice to the caregiver.
- If the CASA volunteer does not elect to share their cell phone information then they should provide the telephone number for the CASA Courthouse Office where staff will take a message and contact the CASA volunteer.

E-mail contact

- With the approval of his or her advocate manager, CASA volunteers may communicate with a caseworker, foster parent, other professional or the CASA child via email. The advocate manager should be copied on all email communications. It is recommended, although not required, that a

separate e-mail address be created exclusively for CASA communication (e.g. gmail).

- Communication via e-mail between a CASA volunteer and a CASA child (under the age of 18) should occur only with notice to the caregiver.
- Email communications should be professional in tone and written with the understanding that CASA communications are never confidential and could be presented to the court by any party.

Skype or Facetime contact

- In some cases a child may be placed in a home that is prohibitively far from the CASA volunteer. After discussion with your Advocate Manager, the CASA volunteer may determine if it is possible to "visit" with the CASA child via a Skype or Facetime connection. This type of contact should be done with notice to the caregiver.

Text contact

- A CASA volunteer may communicate via text message with a CASA child with notice to the caregiver (under the age of 18).
- All communication, including text messages, are considered to be a part of the case file and are subject to scrutiny by CASA Lake County and the court if necessary. Although it may be difficult for CASA to control what a child might relay in a text message, CASA must not send text messages that contain confidential information to anyone.

Photographs

- Photographs may be taken of a CASA child with the permission of the caregiver as well as the child (when feasible) for the purpose of including in a court report.
- Photographs should be forwarded to your Advocate Manager and then promptly deleted from the camera or cellular device.
- Photographs may be printed for purposes of sharing with siblings in a case who are separated. Sharing sibling photographs should be done only with knowledge of the caregiver, possibly the caseworker, and may require the permission of the child's therapist. Discuss this with your

Advocate Manager first. After the photographs are printed, they should be promptly deleted from the camera or cellular device.

- Photographs may be saved on a computer or flash drive that is stored securely for purposes of maintaining a chronology of photographs during the life of a case. Once stored the photographs should be promptly deleted from the camera or cellular device.

2.Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

2.1 Recruitment

Volunteers shall be recruited by CASA Lake County on a pro-active basis, with the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community and to reflect the children served by the program.

2.2 Application Process/Job Description

All applicants to the CASA Program must:

- Complete a written application.
- Submit the names and address of three references of persons unrelated to the applicant
- Authorize CASA to secure the following background checks:
    - Social security verification
    - Criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant currently resides and works
    - State criminal records
    - FBI or other national criminal database
    - National sex offender registry
    - Child abuse registry or child protective services check
- Attend and participate in a personal interview
- Attend all pre-service training including Juvenile Court observation

2.3 Age Requirement

Volunteer advocates must be at least 25 years of age.

2.4 Background Check

All applicants for the position of CASA advocate must submit to a background check, consisting of the following:

- Social security verification
- Criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant currently resides and works
- State criminal records

- FBI or other national criminal database
- National sex offender registry
- Child abuse registry or child protective services check

Pursuant to the Illinois Court Appointed Special Advocated Statute (705 ILCS 405/2-17.1) no person convicted of a criminal offense as specified in section 4.2 of the Child Care Act of 1969 and no person identified as a perpetrator of an act of child abuse or neglect as reflected in the Department of Children and Family Services State Central Register, shall serve as a court appointed special advocate. CASA Lake County further reserves the right to decline the application of any candidate whose background check contains any confirmation of a criminal record, an allegation of child neglect or abuse, or any other background that would call into question the candidate's appropriateness for the CASA role.

2.5 Interview

The CASA Trainer or other appropriate staff shall interview candidates for the training class in person. The interview should determine the qualifications of the volunteer, his/her commitment to fulfill the requirements of the position, and should answer any questions that the volunteer might have about the position.

2.6 Volunteer File

CASA Lake County will maintain a confidential file for each volunteer. The file will include, but not be limited to:

- Application with identifying information and emergency contacts
- Reference check documentation
- Background check documentation
- Training records
- Evaluations
- Any documentation related to evaluation
- Signed case acceptance forms
- Signed confidentiality agreements
- Signed notification of mandated reporter status
- Signed commitment form

Upon written request, Volunteers may have access to all information in their personnel file with the exception of information solicited by CASA Lake County under the assurance of confidentiality.

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

2.7 Pre-Service Training

Volunteers are required to successfully complete CASA Lake County's pre-service training before acceptance into the program. The training sessions are part of the mutual screening process. Acceptance into the training program does not automatically guarantee that a case will be assigned upon completion of training. In addition to the classroom and small group training, each potential advocate is required to observe Lake County Juvenile Court in session.

Each prospective advocate will be provided with a comprehensive resource manual. Training includes information on:

- The CASA volunteer role
- The Laws, child protection services and the courts
- Developing cultural competence
- Families – their strengths and stressors
- Children - their development and their needs
- Communicating as a CASA - Information-Gathering and Relationship-Building
- Reporting to the Judge and Making Recommendations
- Monitoring a case until permanence is reached
- Community resources and program staff support

2.8 Non-Acceptance into the Program

Acceptance of applicants is at the Program's discretion. Reasons for non-acceptance include but are not limited to:

- Incomplete application
- References not returned or unsatisfactory
- Criminal background
- Allegations of child abuse or neglect
- Currently in treatment for substance abuse
- Currently involved with juvenile court
- Has falsified or misrepresented written or other information
- Has a conflict of interest

- During any part of the screening or training process, staff develop concerns which indicate the applicant may not be suitable for the CASA program.

Applicants who are denied will receive notification that their application has not been accepted. Every attempt will be made to assure the applicant is notified quickly and is treated in a respectful, fair, and discreet fashion.

2.9 Length of Commitment

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

2.11 Leave of Absence

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

3. Volunteer Supervision, Evaluation, and Development

3.1 Supervision

The roles and responsibilities of the advocate are clearly communicated through written policies, job descriptions and training, and are reinforced through the supervisory process. A volunteer is assigned to an Advocate Manager who will be his or her direct supervisor who will assist the volunteer with his or her case work. Volunteers are responsible to their Advocate Manager. A volunteer is expected to review his or her case with the Advocate Manager at least once per month through phone calls, email, or in person.

3.2 Duty of Disclosure

Volunteers have a continuing obligation to report to their Advocate Manager any and all pending criminal charges or allegations of child abuse or neglect. Active volunteers understand that they are subject to supplemental background checks every four years.

3.3 Continuing Education

Pursuant to standards set by National CASA, volunteers are required to participate in 12 hours of continuing education each year. A yearly in-service and other continuing education sessions may be provided by CASA Lake County. CASA Lake County will advise volunteers about available continuing education opportunities throughout the year. The volunteer shall report to a staff member any continuing education the volunteer has participated in during the month.

3.4 Evaluation

CASA volunteers will be asked to participate in an annual performance evaluation with their Advocate Manager. The evaluation is designed to be used as a positive tool for growth and success and is an interactive process.

3.5 Discharge and Termination of Volunteer

Dismissal of a volunteer is the responsibility of the Program Director on the recommendation of Program staff. Grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- The CASA volunteer takes action without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the role or powers of the CASA Program.
- The CASA volunteer violates a program policy, court rule or law.
- The CASA volunteer engages in ex parte communication with the court.
- The CASA volunteer fails to demonstrate an ability to effectively carry out assigned duties.
- The CASA volunteer falsifies his/her application or misrepresents facts during the screening process.
- There are allegations of child abuse or neglect against the volunteer.
- A conflict of interest arises which cannot be resolved.
- Criminal activities.
- Gross misconduct or insubordination.
- Falsification of any materials included in a report to the court.
- Failure to report significant case information to CASA staff or the court.

It is a mutual responsibility of the volunteer and his/her Advocate Manager to be in contact at least once per month either in person, via telephone contact or via e-mail correspondence. Failure on the part of the volunteer to maintain regular contact with his/her Advocate Manager may lead to discharge from the program.

If the Advocate Manager has not been able to make contact with a volunteer for longer than a two month period of time, the Advocate Manager will make 3 attempts to contact the volunteer. These attempts may be either by telephone or e-mail or a combination of both. If, following these attempts, the Advocate Manager does not receive a response from the volunteer regarding the status of their case, the Advocate Manager may choose to write a final letter to the volunteer requesting that he/she contact the Advocate Manager by a specified date. Failure to respond to this final request may result in dismissal from the CASA program. In that event, all case files must be returned to the CASA office and the case will be reassigned to a different volunteer.

3.6 Resignation

One of the primary goals of the CASA program is to remain a constant in the child's life while he/she is involved in juvenile court. CASA Lake County recognizes that there are situations where a volunteer may not be able to honor the commitment of remaining with the case until closure. CASA asks the volunteer to discuss his/her resignation with his/her case manager prior to making a final decision, giving as much advance notice as possible. Case materials must be returned within 7 days to the CASA program.

3.7 Exit Interview

An exit interview, whenever possible, will be conducted with a volunteer who is leaving the program. The interview will seek to ascertain why the volunteer is leaving and to provide an opportunity for updating case details and returning CASA materials.

3.8 Complaints and Grievances

CASA is involved in work that involves the future of the lives of children and families in an often emotionally charged atmosphere. As a result, it is expected that there may be criticism from other parties involved.

3.71 *Complaints Received Concerning a Volunteer's Handling of a Case*

If a complaint is received about a volunteer concerning the handling of a case the following procedure will take place:

- The volunteer's Advocate Manager will listen to the complaint.
- The volunteer will be notified about the complaint by his/her Advocate Manager
- The volunteer's Advocate Manager will discuss the situation with all parties to resolve the complaint

- In the event the parties involved are unwilling to meet, the volunteer's Advocate Manager will discuss the complaint with the volunteer and document the volunteer's file.
- Unresolved issues may be taken to the Program Director or Executive Director for resolution.

3.72 *Allegations of Misconduct of a Volunteer with a Child*
If an allegation of misconduct of a volunteer with a child is received, the following procedure will be followed:

- The volunteer will be contacted by telephone by the Program Director to discuss the allegations. If telephone contact is not made in 24 hours, this step will be eliminated.
- A letter will be sent to the volunteer temporarily suspending the volunteer from service on the case pending investigation and stating that the volunteer is to have no contact with any party involved in the case
- The Executive Director will be immediately notified by the Program Director of the allegations. The Executive Director will then notify the Board of Directors and the GAL.
- The volunteer will maintain contact with his/her supervisor to update the program on any progress with the investigation
- Legal counsel may be obtained for the volunteer if deemed necessary by the Board of Directors
- The volunteer will be notified promptly when the office learns about the result of the investigation
- The volunteer's file will be documented.

3.73 *Volunteer Complaint/Grievance Against Program Policy, Practice or Staff Member*
When a volunteer wishes to make a statement of dissatisfaction with a policy, practice, condition or supervisor's decision, the volunteer should first discuss the matter with his/her Advocate Manager. (If the grievance is regarding the Advocate Manager then the volunteer should discuss the matter with the Program Director.) If the problem is not resolved to the satisfaction of the volunteer, he/she should forward a written statement of the complaint or grievance to the Program Director. The Program Director will arrange a meeting with all of the parties involved. The volunteer will receive a written response to his/her grievance from the Advocate Manager or Program Director. The solution will be documented in writing; a copy will be sent to the volunteer and also placed in the personal file.

3.8 <u>Procedure for review, addition or correction of information contained in the Volunteer Personnel File</u>

The volunteer must submit a written request to the Program Director to review the non-confidential portions of their personnel file. Requests will be responded to within 30 days. All personnel file reviews must be conducted in the CASA Administrative Office; personnel files may be removed from the Administrative Office only with the express written approval of the Executive Director.

At the Volunteer's request, the file contents will be reviewed with the Volunteer, the Advocate Manager, and the Program Director. After the review, the Volunteer has the option of submitting a signed and dated written statement to amend information contained in the personnel file.

4. Volunteer Responsibility

4.1 Professional Conduct

At all times, CASA volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the credibility and positive reputation of CASA in the courtroom and in the community. CASA volunteers are required to immediately notify the CASA Program of any criminal charges.

4.11 Attire

CASA volunteers should dress appropriately for the community at all times and are expected to dress in a professional manner for court. Clothing that reveals cleavage, the back, stomach or underwear or any clothing with words, terms, or pictures that may be offensive to others is not appropriate at any time. Jeans, workout attire, or clothing that is torn or frayed is not acceptable for court. ***Volunteers who are not dressed in accordance with this policy will not be permitted to enter the courtroom.***

4.2 Volunteer Statistics

One of responsibilities of the CASA will be to track certain statistics on a monthly basis, such as volunteer hours spent on their case and miles driven on behalf of CASA. This information will be collected monthly. These figures are requested by National CASA annually and are needed by the program for a variety of reasons including grant requests. CASA relies heavily on grants to supply funds for the operation of the program and without this information the grants would not be available to us. The types of information that will be tracked and how to record it will be explained to the advocate by his or her Advocate Manager.

4.3 Case Assignments

CASA volunteers are matched to a particular case by the program staff. Volunteers may refuse an assignment for any reason. If the volunteer accepts a case, he/she must sign a case acceptance form; this will be a part of the permanent personnel file. The volunteer's Advocate Manager will meet with the volunteer to review the case, and send out appointment letters.

4.4 Record Keeping

Once assigned to a case, the CASA shall maintain a case file at his/her home which is to include the original documentation of his/her appointment to the case, all notes and copies of documents relating to the case. This file should be kept in a private place to protect confidentiality. The volunteer's Advocate Manager will maintain an office file of the case. At the conclusion of the volunteer's involvement with the case, his/her entire file shall be returned to the CASA office within seven days.

4.5 Visits with the Child(ren)

CASA volunteers should visit face-to-face with the child(ren) in his/her case at least monthly. Volunteers should meet with the child in a public place or in the home with other adults present, and conduct themselves at all times in accordance with the Protection Policy (sec. 1.19). CASA advocates are never to act the part of a "babysitter" while the primary caregiver is not present.

4.6 Mandated Reporter

CASA volunteers are mandated reporters and shall report all suspected incident of abuse and neglect to the DCFS Child Abuse hotline (1-800-25ABUSE). The Advocate Manager should be notified if a hotline call is made. The volunteer will work with the Advocate Manager to ensure that all required documentation of the Hot Line Report is provided to DCFS in a timely manner.

4.7 Volunteer-Client Relationship

CASA volunteers are not to provide direct service delivery to any party involved in their case that could lead to a conflict of interest or liability problems or cause a child or family to become dependent on the volunteer for services that should be provided by other agencies or organizations. The role of the CASA volunteer is outlined in the job description and does not extend beyond the duties listed therein. Examples of inappropriate volunteer practices include, but are not limited to:

- Taking a child to the CASA's home
- Giving legal advice to anyone involved in the case
- Giving therapeutic counseling to anyone involved in the case
- Making medical or educational placement arrangements for the child

- Giving money or expensive gifts to the child or family
- Engaging in activities which jeopardize the safety of the children
- Becoming overly involved with parents or children causing loss of objectivity
- Supervising visits between parent and child or between siblings

4.8 Transportation of Parties
CASA volunteers are prohibited from transporting any family member involved in their case, adult or child.

4.9 Observing Parent/Child or Sibling Visits
Under certain circumstances and with appropriate permission, the CASA volunteer may observe visits between the child and his/her parents/siblings. The purpose of attending such visits is only to observe the family interactions. The CASA volunteer should not intervene. CASA advocates must respect these visits as limited, valuable time that the family has to spend together. Under no circumstances should the CASA volunteer act on behalf of a court-ordered supervisor of the visit.

4.10 Correspondence
All correspondence sent by a volunteer pertaining to his/her case should be reviewed by the volunteer's Advocate Manager. A copy should be placed in the office case file.

4.11 Court Reports
A primary responsibility of the CASA volunteer will be the writing of court reports prior to each court appearance. Each report should be typed in the proper format and submitted to the CASA office for review by the volunteer's Advocate Manager at least 10 working days (2 calendar weeks) prior to the court hearing. The volunteer's Advocate Manager will review and discuss the report including recommendations and will offer suggestions to the volunteer regarding alterations to the report. A volunteer's report will not be altered without the knowledge and agreement from the volunteer. If the volunteer is unable to type the report, a handwritten copy may be submitted to the CASA office for typing. If the volunteer's Advocate Manager and the volunteer are unable to reach an agreement concerning a court report, the Program Director will be consulted.

4.12 Termination of Case
When the volunteer's case is closed in the juvenile court system or when CASA Lake County is discharged from the case by the court, the volunteer's

relationship with the child(ren), family, and other parties to the case is terminated. Any action taken by the volunteer once the case has been terminated is outside of the scope of the responsibility of a CASA volunteer. The volunteer's responsibilities to continue to maintain confidentiality continues.

4.13 Legal Advice
The volunteer will be given access to legal advice or representation when necessary and appropriate.

4.14 Reimbursement of Expenses
Expenses that a volunteer incurs in their role may be reported as an in-kind donation and may be tax deductible for the advocate.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Volunteers are expected to review and sign the confidentiality policy on an annual basis.

5. Anti-harassment Policy

5.1 General Anti-Harassment Policy

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

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

5.2 Freedom from Harassment and Discrimination

It is the policy of CASA to maintain an environment within the organization free of unlawful discrimination. Harassment or discrimination against a volunteer on the basis of a person's race, color, religion, national origin, veteran status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, or any other protected status will not be tolerated. In the event of a question, complaint, or allegation regarding harassment or discrimination of any kind, the volunteer should speak with his or her advocate manager. If the volunteer is uncomfortable discussing the matter with the advocate manager, the volunteer should address the matter with the executive director or the chairman of the board of directors. The matter will be investigated in a discreet and confidential manner and, after consideration of the facts, appropriate action will be taken in the best interests of the volunteer and the program. Such action may include recommendations for counseling, disciplinary warning, or discharge.

5.3 Unlawful Harassment

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

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

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

Sexual harassment can take many forms, including the following:

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

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

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

5.4 Reporting Unlawful Harassment

All volunteers have a right to work without harassment. If any volunteer feels that they are being harassed by a co-worker, a supervisor, a manager, a volunteer, a vendor, or a client, an employee may choose, but is not required to, make an effort to immediately tell the harasser to stop the offending behavior.

All advocates are advised that no member of the CASA staff, regardless of his or her title, is authorized to condition tangible actions – e.g., case assignment, withdrawal from a case, etc. – upon submission or opposition to harassment of any kind. A threat or an attempt by any CASA staff member to take such actions should be reported immediately, if possible, before any tangible action takes place.

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

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

An advocate is not required to report harassment to his or her Advocate Manager first. An advocate may report harassment by a staff member to any of the people listed above.

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

5.5 Action Taken on Reported Harassment

Such reports are taken very seriously and will be investigated thoroughly and promptly. The facts of each case will determine the response to each allegation. Appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination, will be taken if

it is determined that an advocate or employee has violated CASA's policy on harassment.

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

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

5.6 Anti-Violence Policy

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

5.7 HIV/AIDS Status

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

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
History of the CASA Concept

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

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

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

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

In 1994, CASA Lake County trained its first group of 14 advocates, and since then has grown to approximately 200 advocates. CASA currently resides at the Robert Depke Juvenile Justice Center in Vernon Hills. CASA also has an administrative office in Deerfield. CASA Lake County is a private 501(c)(3) corporation managed by a volunteer board of directors and a staff of committed professionals. In fiscal year 2007-2008, CASA Lake County served 535 children under the auspices of Juvenile Court. CASA Lake

County is a member of the Illinois Association of CASA Programs and the National CASA Association.

APPENDIX B

Mission Statement—CASA Lake County

CASA Lake County's mission is to serve as an advocate for children who come into contact with the court system as a result of abuse and/or neglect or dependency. Our mission also includes educating the community regarding the needs of abused and neglected children. Our goal is to provide a Court Appointed Special Advocate for every child in Lake County that needs a voice in court.

APPENDIX C

Inclusiveness Case Statement – CASA Lake County

To accomplish the mission of CASA Lake County, we must recognize and respond to the needs of the diverse communities we serve. Our goal is to create an environment that is inclusive, respectful, and equitable, and to employ the talents of people with different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. Our commitment to inclusiveness will be reflected I our strategic plan, volunteer training, and recruiting and staff development. CASA Lake County values the individual diversity of all employees, applicants and volunteers and strives to create and maintain an atmosphere where diversity is celebrated.

APPENDIX D

CASA Lake County Court Appointed Special Advocate Job Description

CASA, Court Appointed Special Advocate, volunteers are trained volunteers who are appointed by juvenile court judges to provide

objective information in the best interests of children who have open abuse or neglect cases in the court system.

Qualifications:

- Interest in the rights and individual needs of children.
- Ability to work respectfully with people of varied socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.
- Be available to visit children, gather information, and attend court hearings and other meetings while the case is active in Juvenile Court.

Required Skills / Abilities:

- Communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing, with the Court, program staff, clients, and other involved professionals.
- Maintain strict confidentiality regarding client information and court records.
- Maintain an open-minded approach in relationships with others.
- Have reliable transportation available, allowing independent travel
- Internet/e-mail access and capabilities

Specific Duties of a CASA Volunteer:

- Visit the children, at least monthly, for the duration of juvenile court involvement. Observe children and significant others in their life.
- Attend court hearings, school, and other interagency meetings regarding the children.
- Gather and record factual information regarding the child's welfare and needs and maintain case records.
- Determine if a permanent plan has been created for the child.
- Determine whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts, are being provided to the child and family.
- Prepare written reports for the Court providing factual, objective information and recommendations in the best interests of the children.
- Accept supervision from CASA staff and keep your Advocate Manager informed of case activities.

Time Commitment:

- Attend 40 hours of pre-service volunteer training.
- Spend approximately 10 – 15 hours per month on active casework.
- Accumulate 12 hours per year of continuing education credit.
- Commit to remaining with the case until permanency has been established and the Juvenile Court case has been closed.

Created: October 15th, 1999
Revised: July 15th, 2003, January 6th, 2009, July 1, 2010, August 15, 2011, March 18, 2014, August 26, 2014

CASA Lake County volunteers follow guidelines established by the National CASA Association.

APPENDIX E

National CASA Association Mission Statement

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