



CASA of the Mid-Shore

2021

Job Description for Court Appointed Special Advocate Volunteers

Note: COVID-19 may impact certain requirements and responsibilities.

PROGRAM GOALS

1. To provide independent factual information to the Circuit Courts for Talbot, Dorchester, Queen Anne's and Kent Counties regarding children under court protection.
2. To provide advocacy for children under court protection who are the subject of judicial proceedings.
3. To monitor cases involving appointed children until the terms of a Court Order have been fulfilled.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. To conduct independent research concerning children who have been abused, neglected, abandoned, or their parents are unable to safely care for them.
2. To factually and objectively report findings and observations to the Talbot, Dorchester, Queen Anne's and Kent County Circuit Courts.
3. To ensure representation of the child's best interest in all judicial proceedings.
4. To monitor cases following a court hearing or decision as designated by the court.

TRAINING

CASA Volunteers are required to participate in 37+ hours of Pre-Service Training (PST), a portion of which is independent on-line study*. [**In response to COVID-19, PST will be conducted virtually.*] Upon completion of PST and acceptance by the Executive Director, the CASA is sworn in and is then eligible for case assignment.

In-service Training (Continuing Education) opportunities are scheduled throughout the year. A minimum of 12 hours continuing education is required annually. CASAs will also receive direct supervision, one-on-one training, and guidance from the Case Supervisor, Assistant Director, and the Executive Director.

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JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Complete intensive, independent research.
 - a. Interview the child and relevant adults, including learning about the child's culture.
 - b. Review appropriate records and reports.
 - c. Observe the child and significant others.
 - d. Ensure that a permanency plan has been developed.
2. Report findings to the court.
 - a. Provide a written report containing factual information prior to each hearing.
 - b. Testify at court hearings concerning the child if/when necessary.
3. Ensure representation of the child's best interest.
 - a. Attend all court proceedings to see that all relevant facts are presented.
 - b. Attend appropriate interagency meetings regarding the child.
 - c. Participate in case conferences concerning the child.
 - d. Prod public systems into action.
4. Monitor case following a court hearing or decision as designated by the court.
5. Attend training.
 - a. Attend and complete Pre-Service Training sessions. Basic computer proficiency is necessary, as is access to a computer with video, audio, and internet capabilities, in order to participate and complete training.
 - b. Obtain a minimum of 12 hours Continuing Education annually.
6. Consult regularly with CASA professional staff concerning assigned case.
 - a. Develop case-related plans, setting appropriate goals and objectives.
 - b. Discuss preliminary findings.
 - c. Review progress in the case.
 - d. Maintain required case notes documentation using Optima.
7. Participate in evaluations.
 - a. Evaluate your work with your Case Supervisor.
 - b. Assess your job satisfaction.
 - c. Evaluate quality of supervision at the time of case closure.

REQUIRED SKILLS/ABILITIES

1. Ability to maintain confidentiality of client and court information.
2. Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.
3. Ability to respect and relate to people from various backgrounds (economic, cultural, educational) in a variety of settings.
4. Ability to transport self to a variety of locations. Children's placements do not always remain local.
5. Ability to deal with strong emotions.
6. Ability to maintain objectivity.

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7. Ability to gather and accurately record factual information.
8. A basic understanding of child development.
9. A basic understanding of family dynamics.
10. Basic computer proficiency.

COMMITMENT TO PROGRAM/CASE ASSIGNMENT

CASA volunteers (CASAs) are asked to commit themselves to the program for one year. The CASA's commitment to the program is revisited on an annual basis. It should be noted that the majority of CASAs choose to remain active with their cases when the case duration exceeds one year. If a CASA requests to be removed from a case, he/she is expected to give ample notice so that the CASA staff can prepare for the transition to a new CASA volunteer.

Once a case has been referred to the CASA program by the court, case assignment is handled through mutual agreement between the Executive Director, Assistant Director, Case Supervisor, and the CASAs volunteer.