

VOLUNTEER PACKET



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates

FOR CHILDREN

SAVANNAH/CHATHAM COUNTY

Savannah/Chatham CASA, Inc. • 428 Bull Street • Suite 205 • Savannah, Georgia 31401
Phone: (912) 447-8908 • Fax: (912) 447-0699 • info@savannahcasa.org • www.savannahcasa.org



About the CASA Movement

Savannah/Chatham County CASA

Mission

The mission of the Savannah/Chatham Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Inc. is to provide training and supervision to volunteers who advocate for the best interests of abused children who are under the jurisdiction of the Chatham County Juvenile Court.

Purpose

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained community volunteer who is appointed by a judge to advocate on behalf of a foster child in court. A CASA volunteer receives 30-hours of classroom based training as well as 10-hours of court observation. Once sworn-in as a CASA volunteer, volunteers are asked to maintain 12-hours of in-service training hours per year. A CASA volunteer spends time with the child and researches the circumstances surrounding the family, foster home and other factors to determine the best course of action through the court for the child. The CASA volunteer makes a recommendation to the judge and follows through with the child until all advocacy issues have been resolved.

Service Delivery

Children who are victims of abuse and neglect who have become dependents of the court are assigned CASA volunteers when there are unresolved or significant issues surrounding their court case or life situation.

Because children are often unable to provide a voice for themselves during this critical and difficult time of their life, a CASA volunteer makes it possible to be their voice by advocating on their behalf. Victim assistance services provided by our program include assistance with participation in criminal justice proceedings. Our victim services include, but are not limited to:

- Provide victim information on all victim rights available.
- Information about case status and scheduled court proceedings.
- Information about case progress and disposition.
- Allow victim to give input on case.
- Training for all employees (on victim services).
- Accompaniment to interviews, meetings, and court hearings as necessary.
- Brochures and/or general information about court process.
- Support during court process.
- Social services referral and referral to community based victim services.
- Volunteer utilization.

The Savannah/Chatham CASA program is proudly supported through funding from Georgia DHS Promoting Safe & Stable Families, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council – State of Georgia, United Way of the Coastal Empire, various grants from foundations, and individual donations. The local program is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

To learn more about CASA, donate to the cause or become a volunteer advocate for children in your community, please visit www.savannahcasa.org, or contact ZaDonna Slay, Executive Director, at info@savannahcasa.org or (912) 447-8908.



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CASA Volunteer FAQ

Savannah/Chatham County CASA

A powerful voice for foster children

What does a CASA volunteer do?

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained community volunteer that is twenty-one (21) years of age or older, who is appointed by a judge to advocate on behalf of a foster child in court. All of the children are victims of abuse or neglect. A CASA volunteer spends time with the child and researches the circumstances surrounding the family, foster home and other factors to determine the best course of action through the court for the child. The CASA volunteer makes a recommendation to the judge and follows through with the child until all advocacy issues have been resolved.

Which children are assigned CASA volunteers?

Children who are victims of abuse and neglect who have become dependents of the court are assigned CASA volunteers when there are unresolved or significant issues surrounding their court case or life situation.

How does a CASA volunteer investigate a case?

The CASA volunteer meets with the child, parents, family members, social workers, school officials, healthcare providers and others who are knowledgeable about the child. The CASA volunteer also reviews records pertaining to the child – school, medical and caseworker reports, as well as other pertinent documents.

How does a CASA volunteer differ from a social worker?

State governments generally employ social workers. A social worker is required by law to be assigned to every case through the Department of Family and Children Services. A CASA volunteer, on the other hand, has an opportunity to do a thorough investigation because he or she only has one or two cases at a time. The CASA volunteer provides valuable information that focuses on the child, and assists the social worker assigned to the case.

How much time does it require?

To be trained, CASA volunteers undergo 30 hours of classroom training, followed by 10 hours of court observation hours. Once sworn-in as a volunteer, CASAs work about 20 hours per month, sometimes more and sometimes less. Each case is different. A CASA volunteer typically spends about 20 hours doing research, conducting interviews and attending meetings, and court hearings.

Does the CASA volunteer act as a lawyer?

No. The CASA volunteer does, however, provide valuable information that may assist the child's attorney in presenting the case.

What is the benefit to the child of having a CASA?

A CASA volunteer offers a child someone to trust and feel safe with during complex, and sometimes frightening, legal proceedings. The CASA explains complicated court hearings to the child, supports them in court and explains all the various people involved in that child's case. One of the primary benefits of the CASA program is that the CASA volunteer is a consistent figure in the proceedings and provides continuity for the child. A CASA volunteer also listens to the child's desires and makes them known to the court, although the CASA will always make recommendations in the child's best interests.

What if I don't have time to be a CASA?

As an interested person or community stakeholder, you can get involved with CASA by making a charitable donation; supporting CASA through events, fundraisers or trainings; supporting our wish list; or you may serve as a member of the non-profit's Board of Directors or Community Advisory Council.

Have you ever been convicted of any violation of law, other than minor traffic violations?

(Having been convicted of or plead guilty to traffic offenses or criminal charges does not necessarily exclude you from being a CASA volunteer. Please be aware that the CASA program will reject an applicant found to have been convicted of, or having charges pending for, a felony or misdemeanor involving violence, moral turpitude, a sex offense, child abuse or neglect, or related acts that would, in the sole discretion of the CASA program, pose risks to children or the CASA program’s credibility) Yes No

Have you ever 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 the CASA program’s credibility? Yes No

Have you sought treatment for, or are you currently in, treatment for a mental health issue? (A “yes” does not necessarily disqualify you from the volunteer program.) Yes No

Do you speak a foreign language? Yes No

If yes, please list:

Do you have any training or experience in any of the following?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Development | <input type="checkbox"/> News Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising or Public Relations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Welfare | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drug or Alcohol Abuse Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Art or Graphic Design |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminology | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement | |

SHORT ANSWER (if necessary, attach additional sheets)

Please describe professional experiences you have had which involved child abuse or neglect, the Department of Family and Children Services, the Juvenile Court system, foster care, or other agencies offering services to children:

Volunteer Experiences and/or Community Activities (type of work and length of service):

List any other experience, education or training related to children and families:

Why do you want to be a CASA volunteer?

REFERENCES – Preferable two (2) personal references (only one family member) and two (2) professional references, (salaried or volunteer). For example, teacher, internship, or employer.

Name:

Address:

City:	State:	Zip Code:
Telephone:	Email:	Relationship:

Name:

Address:

City:	State:	Zip Code:
Telephone:	Email:	Relationship:

Name:

Address:

City:	State:	Zip Code:
Telephone:	Email:	Relationship:

Name:

Address:

City:	State:	Zip Code:
Telephone:	Email:	Relationship:

By signing below, I affirm that all answers provided are true and answered to the best of your ability. I understand that the information requested in this application will be used for the purpose of determining my suitability as a CASA volunteer. If I have successfully met all

other requirements and completed the training, and it has been determined that I am a suitable volunteer, I understand that I will be expected to serve a minimum of one year in the CASA program. I have carefully considered the job description and am aware of the training timeframe and, if accepted, will offer my services as a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

I also understand that if for any reason it becomes apparent that my activities are contrary to the policies, goals and/or philosophy of the CASA program, and their desire to provide quality services to abused and neglected children, my services as a CASA volunteer will be terminated.

Name (Printed):

Signature:

Date:

THIS IS NOT AN APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

Savannah/Chatham CASA is an Equal Opportunity organization and does not exclude applicants on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, marital status, gender identification, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.