



Volunteer Information Packet

Savannah/Chatham County CASA
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Savannah/Chatham County Court Appointed Special Advocates Fact Sheet

What is CASA?

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate. The CASA Program recruits, screens, trains and supervises volunteers who serve as advocates for abused or neglected children who are under the jurisdiction of the Chatham County Juvenile Court. CASA was founded in 1977 by David Soukup, a judge in Seattle, Washington, who was frustrated by having to make far-reaching decisions about children with only partial information. He decided to use community volunteers to be the eyes and the ears of the court. His efforts have grown and currently there are 900 CASA programs in all 50 states with over 47,000 volunteers nationwide.

Why is CASA needed?

Every day in America: 1,849 Children are abused, neglected or abandoned, 3 children die from child abuse, 1,188 children are removed from their homes and placed in foster care or institutions. In 2002 there were 942 cases of child abuse or neglect involving the following allegations; 86 sexual, 337 physical, 389 neglect and 130 emotional abuse cases in Chatham County. On an average day, there were nearly 300 children in foster care in our community. Sometimes, these children are in foster care for years before some permanent solution is found. The financial impact on the state and the emotional impact on the children are enormous. A 1998 study found that children who suffer abuse or neglect are 53% more likely to become juvenile delinquents, 38% more likely to be arrested as adults, and 38% more likely to become violent criminals. This shows that the child who's hurting today is the adult who may hurt others tomorrow.

How can CASA help?

Trained CASA volunteers help ensure that children do not get lost in the systems that are designed to protect them. The volunteers help the overburdened case workers and judicial system stay focused on the goal of providing a safe and permanent home for abused and neglected children as quickly as possible. CASA volunteers conduct an investigation of the situation and they give an independent recommendation to the judge as to what they feel should happen to the children, whether that be placement with a relative or foster care, returning the children to their family, or some other solution. The volunteers continue to follow-up on the situation to ensure that the court order is being followed and that the children and family are getting all the services that they need. They advocate for what they feel is best for the children which could include returning the children home or termination of parental rights so the children can be adopted by another family.

Savannah/Chatham County CASA has helped over 700 children but there are still many more children who need a CASA volunteer. CASA is serving less than 70% of the children who go through the juvenile court system because of abuse or neglect. Our goal by the end of 2003 is to have a CASA volunteer available for 100% of the children who needs one. To accomplish this goal CASA must continue to recruit and train additional volunteers. We also need your financial support. Currently CASA has just over 100 volunteers, however, that number will need to greatly

increase to serve all of the abused and neglected children in Chatham County by the year 2004. Together we can make a difference one child at a time.

Savannah-Chatham County CASA Program Volunteer Application

Name

Address

City

State

Zip Code

Mailing Address (if different from above)

City

State

Zip Code

Home Phone Number

Work

Fax

E-mail

Current Employer

Position

Length of employment

Address

Race _____ D.O.B. _____ Marital Status _____

Do you have children? ____ Yes ____ No

If so, what are their ages? _____

Education: (Circle highest)

High School: 9 10 11 12

College: 1 2 3 4

Graduate: 1 2 3

Major

Degree/Year

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

List any volunteer experiences and how long:

Do you have a valid Driver's License? ____ Yes ____ No
Access to a car? ____ Yes ____ No

Have you been charged or convicted of a crime? ____ Yes ____ No If yes, please explain (A CONVICTION DOES NOT NECESSARILY DISQUALIFY YOU FROM THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM)

Have you ever sought treatment or are you currently in treatment for a mental/emotional problem? (THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY DISQUALIFY YOU FROM THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM)

____ Yes ____ No Explain

Why do you want to be a CASA?

PERSONAL REFERENCES: Preferably two (2) personal references (only one family member) and two (2) professional references, (salaried or volunteer) for example, teacher, therapist, or employer.

(PLEASE PRINT)

1. Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

Relationship: _____

2. Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

3. Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

4. Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

I understand that the information requested in this application will be used only for the purpose of determining my suitability as a CASA volunteer. Further, I understand that completion of training does not guarantee that I will be assigned a case. If I have successfully completed the training and have met all other requirements, 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. If unforeseen circumstances prevent me from fulfilling this obligation, I will submit my written resignation to the program director with as much advance notice as possible. I am aware of the sensitive and confidential nature of the official documents, reports and other material I will examine in my capacity as a CASA volunteer. I will discuss these matters only with those persons directly involved in the case or who will be consulted for their professional knowledge and expertise.

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 (please print)

_____ Signature

Date

Witness

Savannah/Chatham County CASA Volunteer Job Description

Purpose of Job

A court appointed trained volunteer promotes and protects the best interests of an abused or neglected child.

Qualifications

1. Be 21 years of age or older.
2. Have the ability to commit to the program for at least one (1) year.
3. Be willing to participate in 30 hours of pre-service training and consent to a criminal records check.

4. Have the ability to work with a child, family members and professionals using tact, objectivity and concern.
5. Have the ability to communicate verbally and in writing.
6. Have an interest in children, their rights, welfare and special needs.
7. Have reliable transportation.
8. A CASA volunteer must not be related to any parties involved in the case assigned to him or her or employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest.

Duties

1. To make an independent investigation of the case and the needs of a child.
2. To determine possible resources within the family and community to meet the child's needs.
3. To be present at all court hearings to present information and make recommendations.
4. To assure that a permanent placement plan is being implemented for a child when removed from the custody of his/her parent or guardian.
5. To monitor the progress of the case and report problems to the court.
6. To maintain complete confidentiality regarding information about the child, as well as information regarding other parties involved in the case.
7. To attend pre-service and in-service training.
8. To prepare written reports about the progress of a case.
9. To report any new incidents of child abuse or neglected to the CASA supervisor and appropriate authorities.
10. To contact your CASA supervisor and other parties involved in the case, including the child, at least once a month.
11. To exhibit professionalism in behavior and appearance.

Savannah/Chatham County CASA Volunteer Agreement

1. Volunteers are responsible for adhering to policies and procedures as defined in training sessions and material.
2. Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner when acting as a CASA.

3. Following training, volunteers are expected to make a commitment of at least one year. If for any reason you choose to resign, we ask that you remain active until your current case closes, unless your reason is health related or you move to another city.
4. Volunteers are expected to attend bi-monthly Peer Group Meetings and other training opportunities offered. They must have a minimum of ten hours of in-service training each year.
5. Volunteers with active cases must turn in a monthly report indicating total hours and miles for the month and a brief summary. These reports are due by the 10th of each month. Also, volunteers must complete a court report prior to hearings and panel reviews.
6. Absolute confidentiality regarding all cases must be observed by each volunteer.
7. The CASA program does not recommend transporting children or families in volunteer's vehicles. The program will not be held liable if a volunteer does transport any one in their vehicles.
8. Any violation of volunteer responsibilities shall be considered grounds for termination at the discretion of the Executive Director.

I agree to abide by the rules of the Savannah/Chatham County CASA program as Stated above.

Volunteer

Date

Executive Director/Volunteer Coordinator

Date

Consent Form

I here by authorize the Chatham County Sheriff's Department to conduct a criminal background check, and to receive any history record information pertaining to me which may be in the files of any criminal justice agency.

Also, I consent to a record check with the Child Abuse Registry.

A photocopy of this release will be valid as an original thereof, even though the said photocopy does not contain an original writing of my signature.

Signature

Printed Name

Address

Telephone Number

City, State, Zip

Social Security Number

Date of Birth

Notary Public

Date