



Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook

Table of Contents

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:	05
JOB DESCRIPTION:	06
CODE OF ETHICS:	07
CONDUCT:	07
CONFIDENTIALITY:	07
KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING	07
NATIONAL AFFILIATION:	08
COLORADO CHILDRENS CODE:	08
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:	09
CONFLICT OF INTEREST:	10
CONFIDENTIALITY:	10
MEDIA CONTACT:	11
SOCIAL MEDIA	11
INVESTIGATION:	13
COURT ORDER:	14
MEETINGS:	14
TELEPHONE NUMBERS:	15
TRANSPORTATION POLICY:	15
CONCEALED CARRY/WEAPON POLICY:	15
REPORTING:	16

Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook *Revised 1.18.17*

CONTACT NOTES:	16
MONTHLY DATA:	16
COURT REPORTS:	16
REPORTING ABUSE:	17
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS:	18
ADVOCACY:	18
FACILITATION:	19
APPOINTMENT TO A CASE:	19
SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT:	20
IN SERVICE TRAINING:	21
HOME STUDY:	21
RESIGNATION:	22
CASE CLOSURE:	22
MILEAGE:	22
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CLAUSE:	22
NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY:	22
VOLUNTEER RECORDS:	22
ACCESS TO LEGAL ADVISE:	23
BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY:	23
CORRECTIVE ACTION	24
CRITERIA FOR DISMISSAL OF CASE:	24
TERMINATION OF A CASA ON A CASE:	25

Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook *Revised 1.18.17*

DISMISSAL FROM THE CASA PROGRAM: 25

CONFLICT RESOLUTION WITH STAFF: 26

CONFLICT OF RESOLUTION WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS: 26

THE PEER COORDINATOR MODEL 27

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT

For

CASA of Adams & Broomfield Counties

Program Volunteer Handbook ^(Standard 7.A)

Overarching Objective:

To provide abused and neglected child in the 17th Judicial District with a court-appointed volunteer child advocate who will help ensure their best interests are being met by following the policies and procedures adopted and approved by CASA National Guidelines* ^(Standard 1A and 7.A.3a)

Concrete Objective:

To provide program Child Advocate volunteers of CASA of Adams & Broomfield Counties Volunteer Guidelines and to support a policy that contributes to the organization through clear direction and strategies.

This policy and procedure handbook has been developed in alignment with National CASA Standards for Local CASA Programs (2013 Edition).

*Standards indicated in superscript red font.

Job Description (Standard 7B)
Court Appointed Special Advocate

Reports to: CASA Program Staff/Peer Coordinator

Purpose: The Court Appointed Special Advocate is a trained volunteer Child Advocate who: Speaks up for the interests of abused and neglected children in court; and works to insure that the child's right to a safe, permanent home is addressed quickly and with due consideration.

Qualifications:

- Interest in children, their needs and rights
- Completion of 35+ hours of pre-service training hours, court observation and 12 hours of additional in-service hours per calendar year
- Maturity, stability, confidence, common sense
- Ability to work with a broad spectrum of the community in a sensitive, positive and objective manner
- Good Communication skills
- Must be at least 21 years of age
- Ability to pass background checks
- Volunteers will be on probation for the first six (6) months of the case

Duties:

- Attendance at pre-service and in-service trainings;
- Commitment of a minimum 18 month assignment, averaging 3-10 hours a week
- Conduct an independent investigation into each case; meet with the child at least monthly and other relevant persons, review all pertinent records and documents, maintain contact with the child at least 2 times per month to monitor progress
- Attend all court hearings (mandatory unless it is an emergency), be prepared to give verbal reports in addition to written report submitted before the hearing
- Maintain complete and accurate records of time and activities through the contact log
- Submit a monthly date through Optima, the program's web based data tracking system.
- Submit quality written reports two weeks in advance of the case court date
- Assist in the identification of resources appropriate to meet the needs of the child
- Maintain strict confidentiality

Benefits:

- Training, support and supervision from the staff of CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties, paid and unpaid
- Opportunity to learn about Juvenile Court and Social Service Systems
- Opportunity to develop own skills and abilities
- Satisfaction from contributing to community services on behalf of abused and neglected children

National Court Appointed Special Advocates Code of Ethics

This Code of Ethics provides National CASA Association members with guidelines for professional behavior and ethical conduct. The Association may not, however, be held liable for the actions of its members. (Section 2.C)

Conduct (Section 2.C)

1. Members of the National CASA Association will abide by the NCASAA Code of Ethics and all laws and regulations governing their activities.
2. Members of the National CASA Association will uphold the credibility and dignity of the CASA concept by conducting all business in an honest, fair, professional, and humane manner.
3. Employees of CASA programs and CASA volunteer Child Advocates will not use their authority inappropriately, nor condone any illegal act or unethical practices related to their program or community.
4. CASA programs and individuals who are members of the National CASA Association may not use CASA for personal gain.
5. Members of the National CASA Association will avoid any action which could adversely affect the confidence of the public in the integrity of the Association.
6. National CASA and its member programs will serve and respond to requests without bias because of race, religion, sex, age, national origin or handicap.

Confidentiality (Section 10.D)

7. CASA programs and volunteer Child Advocates will respect the right to privacy of all individuals, and will keep all information about CASA cases confidential.
8. Persons affiliated with CASA will not use confidential information obtained through their work with CASA for personal benefit.

Knowledge and Understanding (Standard 7.C.5)

9. Individuals working in CASA programs as staff and/or volunteers must be trained in the operations of the court and child welfare systems, and in the nature of child abuse and neglect.
10. CASA programs and volunteers must respect a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets the child's best interests.

Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook *Revised 1.18.17*

National Affiliation (Standard 4.A.4)

11. A CASA program which is a member of the National CASA Association must operate in accordance with the NCASAA Code of Ethics, goals and purposes.
12. Official CASA designations may be used only for purposes in accordance with the goals and purposes of the National CASA Association.

Colorado Children's Code (Standard 5.A.1)

13. The role of the CASA volunteer Child Advocate is outlined in the Colorado Children's Code and adopted by the 17th Judicial District Courts and the Departments of Human Services as evidenced by the signed Memorandums of Understanding between CASA, the courts and human services.

Roles & Responsibilities of CASA Volunteers (Standard 7E)

The CASA volunteer Child Advocate engages in the following activities to ensure that the best interests of the child are met at all times:

- Investigation
- Facilitation
- Monitoring
- Advocacy

The goal is to promote strong teamwork between CASAs (Court Appointed Special Advocates), GALs (Guardian Ad Litem), and DSS (Department of Social Services), with each group retaining their independent pursuits while striving to meet the needs of each child.

The CASA volunteer Child Advocate shall not provide direct service delivery to any parties that could (but not limited to):

- a. Lead to a conflict of interest or liability problems
- b. Cause a child or a family to become dependent on the CASA

Examples of inappropriate volunteer practices include could (but not limited to):

- a. Taking a child to the volunteer's home or any home other's than the child's current placement
- b. Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling
- c. Making placement arrangements for the child
- d. Giving money or expensive gifts to the child, child's family or caregiver. This does not include small gifts, birthday acknowledgment, holiday recognition, or taking them out to eat
- e. Accepting money or gifts from the child, child's family or caregiver

Conflict of Interest:

A CASA volunteer Child Advocate should not be related or have a relationship to any parties to the case, or be employed in a position or with an agency that may result in a conflict of interest. (Standard 7.E.7.f)

Confidentiality:

CASA volunteers must adhere to the confidentiality policy. (Standard 7.E.7.b)

Violation of this policy will be grounds for termination of the court appointment and ongoing service as a CASA.

- A. The CASA shall maintain strict confidentiality as to the case and all proceedings in which the volunteer is involved. The CASA shall request only that information which the volunteer is authorized to receive.
- B. If it is necessary to obtain any privileged/confidential information about someone who is directly related to the case but is not the child/ren, the CASA must obtain from that person a written release of information which allows the professional, hospital or treatment center to discuss the matter with the CASA.
- C. While a person may sign a release allowing the CASA to obtain confidential information he/she may not want to authorize disclosure to other parties on the case and/or their attorneys. The CASA should review the signed release form very carefully and seek guidance from the Coordinator if the CASA Volunteer has any questions at all.
- D. The CASA is not allowed to disseminate documents to any of the parties, their attorneys, and or collateral sources, which are, covered by state and/or federal confidentiality laws. These documents may include drug and alcohol evaluations/records; involuntary mental health treatment and rape crisis center information; and some criminal histories. Those covered by federal law usually are stamped, "This information has been disclosed to you from records whose confidentiality is protected by Federal law (and) prohibits you from making any further disclosure." A general authorization for the release of medical or other information is NOT sufficient for this purpose."
- E. The CASA will take appropriate measures to ensure that confidential records may not be observed by casual observers (family members, etc.)
- F. The CASA should not promise a child or a party to the case that statements will be kept secret or confidential. The CASA should proceed on the assumption that all statements made or relied on in reaching recommendations will be subject to disclosure to the court and other parties.

- G. The CASA may discuss a case in hypothetical terms for purposes of illustration at seminars or meetings designed to provide education on child protection issues. The CASA must not mention names of individuals involved in the case or provide facts which would identify the case or parties. The CASA must never discuss a case for purely conversational purposes, even in general terms, with anyone.

Media Contact:

CASAs should not make any comments, to the media, about any CASA cases. Any general comments about CASA should be discussed with program staff prior to talking with the media. All comments or questions should be directed to the Executive Director or Board President.

Social Media:

Social media tools, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support and a sense of community for those engaged in advocacy for abused and neglected children. A thoughtful approach to online conversation and interaction among people online (on blogs, social networking, link-sharing, etc.) can enhance the reputation of *CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties'* movement and help recruit needed supporters and volunteers.

While *CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties* encourages CASA staff, board members and volunteers to join the global online conversation, we also believe it is important that those who choose to do so understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss CASA-related topics—whether at work or on their own time. Our ability to serve children as a cause depends on the trust and support of the public, and it is critical that we tell our story well—and handle the confidential information entrusted to us responsibly.

The following guidelines will help you engage in online conversations about your involvement with *CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties'* cause in a way that is appropriate, yet still interesting.

Online Communication and Social Media Guidelines

1. Be transparent. Identify yourself and your role at the CASA program (staff/volunteer/board member) when you discuss CASA-related matters. Write in the first person. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. Be clear that you are speaking for yourself, that the opinions expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of *CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties* (unless, of course, you are posting as part of your employment responsibilities for the program—as a communications or online outreach manager, for example).

2. Always comply with the law in regard to copyright/plagiarism. Never post someone else's work without his or her express permission (other than short quotes that comply with the "fair use" exceptions).

3. **Be aware of laws related to libel and defamation of character.** Defamation of character can lead to lawsuits against the author of the statement and will reflect negatively on the CASA cause. In choosing your words or content, imagine your supervisor and your family reading everything you post.

4. **Be respectful.** Don't pick fights. Be the first to admit and correct your own mistakes. You should show proper consideration for other's privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory, such as politics and religion.

5. **Be considerate.** Remember that anyone, including fellow volunteers and CASA staff, may be actively reading what you publish online. Refrain from any communication intended to bash, discredit or embarrass the CASA program, families, board members, donors or your colleagues. If you have suggestions for improvements, please state them constructively or, better yet, go through the proper channels to air your concerns and share your suggestions.

6. **Be accurate.** Even though your posts may be primarily made up of personal opinion, do your research well and check that your facts are accurate. Make sure you have permission to post any copyrighted or confidential information (e.g., images, statistics), and be careful about posting or linking to items that may contain viruses.

7. **Be committed.** If you decide to jump into online communication, do so with a commitment to post regularly and well. Link to others and show your unique contributions. Make it interesting and have fun!

8. **Try to add value.** Does your posting provide worthwhile information and perspective? Does it help you, your coworkers, volunteers and supporters better understand and feel more connected to our cause? Does it build a positive sense of community?

9. **Respect work commitments.** Please remember that blogging and other social networking activities—unless specifically assigned as part of your employment—are personal and should be done on your own time. The obvious exception is if you have specifically been assigned to perform an online activity related to your responsibilities as a CASA employee or volunteer.

10. **Don't reveal confidential information.** Sharing stories that illustrate the value of CASA advocacy for children is often the most powerful way to engage the public in our cause and promote empathy for the children we serve. However, National CASA Quality Assurance standards and the policy of CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties require:

- Respect for the children's and families' rights to privacy in regard to personal information
- Adherence to the confidentiality restrictions imposed by law and CASA policies and procedures

It is unacceptable to discuss online any identifiable details of cases and to post pictures that include children from a dependency and neglect case.

It is acceptable to discuss general details and to use non-identifying pseudonyms so long as the information provided does not contain information recognizable to the family or others associated with the family or case. For example, use general terms such as “youth” instead of “13-year-old girl.” You should be careful to protect the dignity of families, children and social agencies, even if they are not named.

Volunteers and staff should not link to personal pages (or become online “friends”) of families or children they may encounter in their capacity with the CASA program. This includes email addresses, instant messenger names, blogs, photo sharing sites and social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.

11. When in doubt, do not post. Staff and volunteers are responsible for their words and actions, wherever they are. Exercise sound judgment and common sense, and if there is any doubt, DO NOT POST IT. In circumstances where you are uncertain please contact your CASA Volunteer Coordinator, the Program Director, the Director of Marketing and Development or the Executive Director for guidance.

12. Know that the internet is permanent. Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if you “remove/delete” it later or attempt to make it anonymous. If your complete thought, along with its context, cannot be squeezed into a character-restricted space (such as Twitter), provide a link to an online space where the message can be expressed completely and accurately.

13. Be mindful that what you post can be a reflection on CASA and can influence the perception and reputation of the program. Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures.

Investigation: (Standard 7.E.5)

The CASA should determine whether court orders are being followed in an appropriate and timely manner; whether a permanency plan has been created; whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts, are being provided to the child and family; and whether the court ordered treatment plan is in compliance. Involvement with the family in these related areas should be focused on the best interests of the child(ren) on the case. The CASA should participate in any planning or treatment team meetings involving the child to stay informed of permanency plan developments. The volunteer should monitor the case by visiting the child twice a month or more if necessary to ensure that essential needs are being met. The CASA should also research permanent connections for the child(ren).

Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook *Revised 1.18.17*

Court Order: (Standard 5.A.1)

Once a CASA volunteer accepts a case, a court appointment acceptance form is filed with the court and a Court Order is signed by the Judge or Magistrate. All parties to the proceeding will receive copies.

Meetings: (Standard 7.E.5)

- **With the Caseworker, GAL and other professionals:** The CASA will meet with both the caseworker and the GAL. CASAs should notify the caseworker, GAL and other professionals by email of their appointment to the case within one week of appointment. It can be helpful to schedule a meeting with both parties, but if this is not possible the CASA may wish to meet individually with these professionals.
- **Children:** Arrange for an initial meeting with the child/children on your case within 2 weeks of appointment. It is required that you meet with your child/children at least twice per month. An exception may be granted at the discretion of program staff and with the completion of the Standard Exception form for monthly visit standard.
- **Parents:** Arrange a brief introductory meeting with the family to explain the CASA role and answer any questions the parents may have. If the children are in the home, this is a good time to introduce yourself to the children. It may be helpful to have this meeting with the GAL so that both roles can be defined at one time. This should be done within three weeks of receiving court appointment to the case.
- **Foster Parents/Children:** If children are in a foster home, the CASA will contact the foster parent to let them know a CASA has been appointed, let them know about the program and arrange to meet with the child and foster parents. A meeting should also occur within three weeks of the appointment. CASA may want to take the children for a walk or sit in another room to assure confidentiality of conversation with the children.
- **Other Professionals:** If the children are school age, the child's teacher will generally be the next person contacted to gather pertinent information regarding the child. If the child is in special education it is expected that the CASA will attend the IEP (Individual Education Plan) staffing. All CASAs are required to complete an educational advocacy checklist for children who are in preschool or older. School records can be obtained by contacting the secretary at the school children attend. In addition to educational advocacy, other contacts might include: therapists, doctors, lawyers and counselors who are working with the child or the parents.

Telephone Numbers:

A CASA should carefully consider the implications of giving their work and home telephone numbers to children or family members. The decision to give out these numbers is up to the CASA. The CASA may wish to consult with the CASA Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator in making this decision or obtain at own expense a cell phone. Messages may be left at the CASA office and they will be relayed to the CASA.

Transportation of Children or Family Members: (Standard 7.E.8)

For liability and safety reasons, CASAs must submit requests to transport CASA children to their Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator in advance. CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties recommends that CASAs be judicious in their requests to transport children. Transportation may be approved in certain situations, as determined by the Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator, if the following are in place:

- A. CASA must have a current (within past year) Motor Vehicle Record on file, as well as a copy of the volunteer's driver's license and auto insurance. CASAs should have adequate auto insurance coverage in compliance with Colorado state law. Volunteers who do not have an MVR and a current and valid driver's license on file, or do not have proof of adequate, current and valid auto insurance will not be allowed to transport children.
- B. The CASA must ask for permission from their Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator each time that they wish to transport a child. If the request is approved by the Coordinator, the CASA must accept responsibility for transporting the child/ren and sign a Transportation Waiver each time before the transportation may take place. This waiver can be signed in person, scanned and emailed or faxed. The original will be placed in the office case file and the CASA will receive a copy for their case file.
- C. The CASA must document each time they transport a child. This documentation will include: date, time of transportation, total time spent transporting the child (ren), location and purpose of visit. The signed documentation will be given to the Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator and signed by the Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator. The original will be placed in the office case file and the CASA will receive a copy for their case file.
- D. The CASA will abide by all federal, state and local transportation and safety laws.

This policy allows for limited transportation on a case-by-case **and** visit-by-visit basis. Although some transportation will be allowed, this policy is intentionally restrictive for liability and safety reasons and strict guidelines will be adhered to.

When considering transportation of CASA kids, the following points are important to remember:

Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook *Revised 1.18.17*

- It is not the role of the CASA to transport kids or adults to visits, appointments, staffing, etc. This is the role of the caseworker, case aides, foster parents and social services.
- CASAs are advocates for children versus mentors. Although it is important to establish a relationship with the children on your case, it is also important to remember appropriate boundaries.

Each time that you wish to transport a child, you must adhere to the above policy. All requests must be submitted to your Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator. Your Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator will make a decision as to whether the request is appropriate. We must have a copy of a recent Motor Vehicle Record, current and valid driver's license and current and valid car insurance on file!

Conceal Weapon:

In accordance with federal law on concealed carry, a CASA may not carry a firearm on the property of any school, courthouse, airport, or other location protected electronic security screening, or anywhere concealed carry is prohibited by law. Additionally, CASA of Adams & Broomfield Counties strongly recommends that CASAs licensed to carry a concealed weapon refrain from carrying their weapon when in the presence of their CASA child(ren), and that any such weapon be appropriately secured at all times.

Reporting: (Standard 11)

Maintaining Accurate Records:

- A. The official case file for CASA is kept in the CASA office. The court file or portions thereof can be copied for the volunteer to use in making contacts related to the case. The official record is never removed from the office.
- B. All records obtained from other agencies should be sent to the CASA office. CASA will copy the records and provide a working copy to the CASA through mail or in person. Confidential records are not to be electronically transmitted to computers used by persons other than the volunteer. If a volunteer has a fax or e-mail, which is strictly confidential, this should be noted in the volunteer's file and materials can be electronically transferred.
- C. Forms for these reports in hand-written and/or electronic form will be provided by CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties. Records are not to be altered after the original writing of the record. If records are kept electronically, it must be in a confidential file. These completed forms may be electronically transmitted to the CASA office.

Contact Notes: Each CASA keeps a log in Optima, the program's web based online data tracking system, which notes all contacts (in-person contacts, telephone, fax, e-mail, or written) with all individuals who are significant to the case, including attempts to reach parties which were unsuccessful. This log will include the time spent, the type of

contact (phone, personal, etc), miles/expenses, and date of the contact and should include appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances. These notes should be objective.

Monthly Data: By the end of each month the CASA will enter a summary of case involvement and all case contacts into Optima, the program's web based online data tracking system. This also includes statistics on the amount of personal contacts, hours, mileage and dollars that the volunteer contributed.

Court Reports: Court reports are required at every hearing (unless excused by you Coordinator) and will be provided to all parties to the case. As part of the court report, CASAs will make recommendations for specific appropriate services for the child, and when appropriate, for the child's family. These official documents are written by the CASA and reviewed by the Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator prior to submission to the court. The program staff will not alter the reports or recommendations without the knowledge or agreement of the CASA. The pertinent case information will be shared with all parties on the case. Reports shall be submitted to the CASA office 2 weeks prior to the court hearing. If the Senior Program Coordinator/Peer Coordinator does not receive the report 2 weeks prior to the court hearing, the CASA may not be able to speak in court. This time allows for the review and editing of reports if necessary. CASA Senior Program Coordinators/Peer Coordinators are responsible for final editing and distribution of all court reports. They will correct grammatical and spelling errors automatically. Although Advocate Coordinators/Senior Program Coordinators have final discretion on what is turned into the court, the factual information included by the CASA will not be significantly changed. CASAs may not distribute any written material to any parties to the proceedings involved in your case or outside your case, without initially discussing it and providing the material to the Senior Program Coordinator Coordinator/Peer Coordinator first for edit and consideration.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect: (Standard 7.E.7.a)

- A. The CASA should immediately report any suspected child abuse or neglect which is observed or discovered during the course of the CASA assignment. A report should be made by calling the child abuse and neglect hotline at **303-412-5212, (Adams County Social Services Department) or 720-887-2271, (Broomfield Health and Human Services)**. CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties is a mandatory reporting agency.
- B. The CASA should notify the assigned caseworker and Guardian ad Litem that this report has been made. The CASA should also report to the program staff as soon as possible after making the report. A full written report should be submitted to CASA within 24 hours.

1100 Judicial Center Drive
Brighton, CO 80601
Phone: 303-654-3378 (Adams)
Phone: 720-887-2170 (Broomfield)
Fax: 303-654-3379

E-mail: casa17th@casa17th.com

C. The CASA does **not** investigate the possible abuse. The CASA Program is a mandatory reporting agency per the Memorandum of Understanding. The social services department will determine the need for and whether to complete an investigation.

Cooperation in Criminal Investigation of Alleged Child Abuse

If any officer, director, employee or volunteer of the organization should be asked to produce information or documents, or discuss the facts of any alleged child abuse with any investigator or counsel of record for the office of the prosecuting attorney or the defense attorney:

- No documents (written reports of the incident) shall be produced without having been properly subpoenaed. Cooperation to facilitate the service of subpoenas should be extended as professional courtesy.
- In the event that any investigator or attorney of record wishes to conduct a personal interview, the person requested to appear may appear with legal counsel at such interview.
- If a telephone interview is given, care should be taken to assure the identity of the contact person. It is suggested that the staff or volunteer call the office through the main switchboard and be transferred to the person requesting the interview.
- It will not be necessary to be subpoenaed to this personal interview, although every effort should be taken to coordinate the time and date of the interview with the legal counsel.
- Before granting an interview, the volunteer and staff should review what may be discussed in the interview.

Advocacy:

Formulating Objective Recommendations

The CASA, with the support and supervision of program staff, will make recommendations in the court report regarding placement, visitation and appropriate services for the child and family.

Staffings and related meetings

CASAs should attend staffings and other related meetings that are significant to the safety and well-being of the child.

Appear at Hearings

The CASA will attend all court hearings to present information and advocate for the child's best interests. Certain circumstances may be approved by the advocate's Coordinator. The CASA is responsible for being aware of scheduled court dates and preparing in advance by gathering information and submitting reports. If the volunteer is unable to appear at a hearing, the volunteer should notify CASA program staff as far in advance as possible. The CASA should assure that the child's best interests are being represented at every stage of the case.

Facilitation: (Standard 7.E.5.c)

The CASA is often in a position where it is appropriate to facilitate communication between parties in the case. In difficult situations or when conflicts arise on cases, it is often appropriate to have a staffing, which is a meeting where all parties are invited to discuss the future direction of the case and what services should be provided. Although it is typically not the role of the CASA to call a staffing, it is appropriate on an as needed basis. Please discuss this option with your Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator if you think it may be appropriate.

CASAs are expected to communicate with all parties to the proceedings. Failure to communicate can result in dismissal from the case. It is recommended that CASAs email their Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator, GAL, and Caseworker about any visits, important contacts, or important information gathered regarding the child on the case.

Appointment to a Case: (Standard 7.E)

- A. After acceptance and completion of training by CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties, volunteers will be sworn in as Officers of the Court by the presiding juvenile judge.
- B. The Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator will choose several case options for CASAs to review based on submitted preferences. The general issues in a case will be discussed with the CASA and the CASA has the option to accept or reject a specific case based on their experience.
- C. CASAs will be assigned to one case at a time and may work on more than one case simultaneously only in exceptional circumstances. Exceptions for more than two open cases at the same time may be granted with the discretion of program staff. CASAs assigned to 3-5 cases must complete a Standard Exception Form for exceeding the two case limit. CASAs may not be assigned to more than 5 open cases at one time.
- D. The CASA has no authority to function on a case until officially appointed by order of the court, after being assigned to a specific case by the program staff.
- E. When a CASA is appointed, emphasis must be on the children in need of support rather than the needs of the parents. SAFETY of the children is the primary goal.

Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook *Revised 1.18.17*

- F. The first six months of service will be a probationary period during which extra supervision and support will be provided by program staff.

Supervision and Support: (Standard 7.D)

- A. After being assigned to a case, a CASA will meet with the program staff to discuss initial planning for action on the case. A preliminary case plan will be outlined to be used as a guide for the CASA's first steps on the case. Program staff will schedule regular case conferences (in person or via telephone) to review progress on the case with the CASA. Frequency of these consultations will be based on the stage of the case and the experience level of the volunteer.
- B. CASAs are encouraged to contact program staff at any time when questions arise about their work as a CASA. In addition, CASAs and their Coordinator/Peer Coordinator will communicate on a regular basis via email or telephone regarding your case, including information such as:
- develop and review a plan for independent fact gathering
 - discuss findings and observations
 - review progress in the case
 - discuss strategies for serving the best interest of the child.
- C. Program staff and the CASA will discuss the CASA's work on the case, the monthly data requirement, court reports, in-service training and comments from the judge and other parties, noting areas of achievement and areas in which additional support is needed. The CASA will have an opportunity to request an internal staffing at any time to problem-solve ideas and solutions related to their case.
- D. CASA of Adams & Broomfield Counties values its volunteers and has ongoing programs to recognize the efforts, dedication and hard work of our volunteers. Activities include, but are not limited to: (Standard 7.D.5)
- Employee recognition letter from Judges
 - Volunteer of the Month
 - Notes of appreciation and support
 - Annual Volunteer Appreciation banquet
 - Birthday cards signed by staff and board members
 - Annual CASA Family Fun Day

Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook *Revised 1.18.17*

- Annual holiday appreciation brunch
- Case closing recognition
- Recognition of other community involvement
- Numerous professional development & training opportunities
- Acknowledgement of birthdays and other significant life events
- Planned networking opportunities with other CASAs and Staff

E. A CASA shall be considered active if s/he participates in at least one case, gives time to CASA in outreach activities at least once per year or is an ongoing supporter of CASA. If the CASA is unable to do any of the above, the CASA will be in-activated and removed from mailing and emailing lists. If a CASA decides to become active again by participating in the above activities, s/he must contact CASA and a decision about how to proceed will be made at that time. After an extensive period between cases, the CASA may be required to participate in certain areas of the initial training. If there are special circumstances involved in a volunteer's inability to participate, the ability to remain active within CASA is at the discretion of the Program Director, Director of Advocate Development and the Executive Director.

In-service Training: (Standard 7.C.2)

In-service training will be offered throughout the year and CASAs should schedule a minimum of 12 hours of continuing training each calendar year. All training provided by any CASA organization will be eligible for training hours. Trainings offered by outside agencies must be approved by the Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator and Director of Advocate Development in order to count as in-service hours. Reimbursement for expenses related to these workshops may be available as the budget allows. CASAs should enter all continuing education into their training logs in Optima.

If there is a question about the CASA's status, the Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator should be contacted and asked about the Volunteer Status Categories under which a volunteer qualifies.

Home Study: (Standard 7.E.7.b)

CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties will not perform any "home study" which will be used by the court as approval of a family for placement.

Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook *Revised 1.18.17*

Resignation: (Standard 7.F.1)

The CASA should remain actively involved in the case until formally discharged by the court. The CASA should consider the CASA assignment a serious personal commitment. The CASA should give honest and adequate notice if it becomes necessary to leave an assignment before the conclusion of the case.

Case Closure: (Standard 7.F.2.)

The CASA may be terminated from a case through the following means: CASA program decision, the case being dismissed from court, or determination by a Judicial Officer that the CASA's services are no longer needed. CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties will have the discretion to terminate a CASA from his/her case. In rare cases, when agreed upon between the CASA staff and CASA, the CASA may maintain *occasional* contact with the children after the case is closed. This is for the benefit of children who have formed a close relationship with their CASA and will primarily occur on cases where an adolescent youth is aging out of the system. This often tapers off and may continue only by sending cards on an occasional basis. The volunteer will no longer contact anyone regarding case progress since the role as a child advocate has been terminated. The case file and all CASA related documents will be returned to the office within two weeks of the case closure.

Mileage: (Standard 11.B.12)

Mileage documentation (based on monthly report data) will be provided to volunteers at the end of the calendar year for tax purposes (see a tax consultant for more information on volunteer mileage deduction). CASA must enter their mileage into Optima in order to receive an annual statement.

Equal Opportunity Clause: (Standard 7.A.3d)

CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties shall not restrict its services or volunteer opportunities on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation or gender.

Non-Discrimination Policy: (Standard 7.A.2)

CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties does not discriminate in the solicitation of business, employment, or volunteers on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, gender, gender variance, gender identity, age, marital status, sexual orientation, military status or physical or mental handicap, provided that an individual or company is qualified and meets the requirements established by the agency.

Volunteer Records: (Standard 7.B.4)

CASA will maintain a written/electronic record for each volunteer that contains, at minimum:

Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook *Revised 1.18.17*

- Application
- Emergency & identifying contact information
- Job description
- Reference documentation
- Documentation of record checks
- Training records
- Performance evaluations and any other applicable documentation related to performance
- Documentation of volunteer status
- Copy of volunteer's driver's license, motor vehicles records check and verification of automobile insurance, if approved for transportation.

Volunteers may coordinate a time with CASA staff to review their personal file in the CASA office. The CASA Volunteer may submit additions and corrections to their volunteer record. The file may not be removed from the office and will be maintained at the CASA office per the program's record retention policy. These records will be retained while the volunteer is active and for 10 years after a volunteer becomes inactive.

Access to Legal Advice: (Section 2.C.4)

CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties will provide volunteers access to legal advice and representation, as needed.

Background Check Policy: (Section 7.B.4.c)

As part of the CASA Volunteer screening process, all CASA of Adams & Broomfield Counties Volunteers will participate fully in various background checks. The required background checks that will be conducted on every CASA Volunteer applicant prior to acceptance as a CASA and before being sworn in and before the completion of the initial training program to include: CBI (Colorado Bureau of Investigation), a Social Security Search, a 50 state Sexual Abuse Registry search, Adams County Sheriff's or Broomfield Police Department check, and Colorado TRAILS. If a volunteer applicant has lived in the state of Colorado for less than five (7) years, then similar out of state background checks will also be conducted. Volunteer applicants will be required to provide a deposit for their initial background checks. There are scholarship opportunities if payment for background checks is a financial hardship. The CASA program will conduct random background checks on annual basis on all volunteers, at no further cost to the volunteer. CASA Volunteers must immediately notify the program of any criminal or civil charges filed against them.

Corrective Action (Section 7.F)

Corrective action may be taken if the volunteer's work is unsatisfactory. Corrective action is within the discretion of the Executive Director, Program Director and Director of Advocate Development and may include any of the following actions as deemed appropriate:

- Additional supervision
- Temporary leave of absence
- Retraining
- Reassignment
- Referral to another volunteer position
- Separation from the program

Criteria for dismissal of a case:

A CASA may be discharged from a CASA assignment by the Court on its own motion or at the request of the Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator of CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties. If necessary, CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties may request that the Court relieve a volunteer of his or her appointment in cases of personal emergency. When the Court's jurisdiction terminates, the CASA appointment automatically terminates.

All records kept by the CASA volunteer must be returned to the CASA office when the assignment terminates.

Termination from a case may occur, at the staff's discretion, if:

- **Monthly Data:** If monthly data is not entered into Optima on a monthly basis and is more than two (2) weeks late and the tardiness occurs more than three (3) times in a calendar year. Copies of contact logs may be requested at any time.
- **Court Reports:** If a court report is more than one (1) week late and the tardiness occur more than two (2) times throughout the duration of a case.
- Adequate and sufficient contacts are not being made.
- Pertinent records and documents are not reviewed.
- All court hearings, without prior notification, are not being attended.
- Complete and accurate records of time and activities are not documented.

Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook *Revised 1.18.17*

- Close contact with the CASA Adams and Broomfield Counties Program Staff is not maintained. A minimum of once a month contact either by e-mail, voice mail or personal contact.
- Strict confidentiality is not maintained.
- Professional conduct within the parameters of the case is not maintained.
- Not following the CASA Adams and Broomfield Counties Conflict Resolution Procedure.

Criteria for termination of a CASA on a case:

Involuntary termination of a volunteer must be approved by the Executive Director, with the input of the program staff. In the absence of the Executive Director, the Program Director has the authority to terminate a volunteer from service.

The following include, but are not limited to, grounds for involuntary termination:

- Misuse of CASA Status: CASAs will not use their Volunteer status to promote other causes or for personal gain, unless otherwise stipulated by the Board of Directors. They are to call the Program Office when in doubt.
- The CASA takes action without program or court approval, which endangers the child or is outside the role of the CASA volunteer.
- The CASA engages in ex-parte communication with the court.
- The CASA fails to complete required pre-service or in-service training hours.
- The CASA violates program policy, court rule or law
- The CASA fails to demonstrate the ability to effectively carry out CASA duties
- The CASA falsifies information on the volunteer application or misrepresents facts during the screening process.
- There are allegations of child abuse/neglect against the volunteer.
- A conflict of interest arises which cannot be resolved.
- Not maintaining close contact with the CASA Adams and Broomfield Counties Program Staff. A minimum of bi-monthly contact either by e-mail, voice mail or personal contact.

Conflict with CASA Staff Resolution Procedure:

Overall Goal is Communication: Good communication is often the key to avoiding conflicts in any organization or setting. It is hoped that disagreements can be resolved through communication among the parties. In the event that assistance is needed to resolve any issues, the following procedure shall be followed:

A. Meet with your Senior Program Coordinator/Peer Coordinator

- I. If a volunteer disagrees with any action, including correction or separation, taken by CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties, Inc., or any of its agents, he or she shall first meet with the with the Program Coordinator/Peer Coordinator.

B. Meet with Program Director

- I. If the disagreement is not resolved to the satisfaction of the volunteer, the volunteer may elevate his or her concern to the Program Director.

C. Meet with the Executive Director

- I. If the disagreement is still not resolved to the satisfaction of the volunteer, the volunteer may elevate his or her concern to the Executive Director. If the issue is not resolved at this point, the volunteer can contact the Board of Directors Chair.

Conflict with Other Professionals Resolution Procedure:

A. Meet with Coordinator/Peer Coordinator

- I. If a volunteer disagrees with any action, taken by a caseworker, GAL or other professional or party to the case, the volunteer should first contact the Coordinator/Peer Coordinator on the case in order to express concern.

B. Contact the Professional directly

- I. With the assistance of the Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator, the volunteer should contact the professional with whom he or she has a conflict to discuss possible resolutions or compromises. If the volunteer and Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator believe that the Professional has engaged in inappropriate or unethical behavior, the Advocate Coordinator/Peer Coordinator should contact the Professional's direct supervisor or manager in order to issue a complaint. In certain situations, the Volunteer may want to include information regarding the misconduct in court reports.

The Peer Coordinator Model (6.G.6 & 7)

Peer Coordinator Job Description

AGENCY MISSION: To provide specially selected and trained community volunteers, CASAs, to advocate for abused and neglected children in the pursuit of safe and permanent homes.

POSITION: The Peer Coordinator position provides coaching and support to CASA Child Advocates ensuring that children involved with the CASA program receive sound advocacy and early permanency planning.

IMPACT OF POSITION: Advocates require and deserve competent coaching and support in order to provide effective and appropriate advocacy for children. CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties strives to offer support, which will maximize the CASA's strengths and minimize limitations.

REPORTS TO: Senior Program Coordinator, subject to Review after 60 days and annually thereafter.

RESPONSIBILITIES TO ADVOCATE:

- Support and coach 7-10 Advocates by providing assistance and consultation as needed and when requested
 - Review all case meetings with the Advocate and consult with Senior Program Coordinator if needed
 - Review and approve Advocates' court reports and forward to Senior Program Coordinator to finalize and distribute
 - Support your Advocates by attending swearing in and appreciation events
 - Provide coaching, support and motivation as necessary to maintain and enhance advocacy
 - Attend court hearings and other case related meetings as needed
 - Review cases with Advocates monthly, or more often if needed
- Conduct a Case Closing with each assigned advocate at the termination of each case.

RESPONSIBILITIES TO PROGRAM:

- Remain in good standing as an Advocate of CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties
- Familiarization with CASA Policies and Procedures including: Advocate Acceptance, Court Order of Appointment, Confidentiality Agreement, County Memorandums of agreement and Advocate Handbook
- Document the monthly review and other contacts with your Advocates
- Review cases with Senior Program Coordinator on a quarterly basis, or more often if needed
- Notify Senior Program Coordinator of critical events in a case
- Track court hearings and confirm Advocate's attendance
- Consult with Senior Program Coordinator regarding Advocate performance concerns
- Complete Case Closing Forms with Advocates at case closing
- Provide adequate notice to Senior Program Coordinator for planned absences
- Attend conferences, seminars, and meetings as requested by the Senior Program Coordinator
- Maintains Optima Activity log

COMMITMENT: Peer Coordinators will need to make a two year commitment with the approximate monthly workload of 20-40 hours a month.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Experience – Must have served as an Advocate for CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties in good standing on at least 1 case.
- Professionalism - Follows through on commitments; Approaches others in a tactful manner; Reacts well under pressure; Treats others with respect and consideration regardless of their status or position; Accepts responsibility for own actions.
- Teamwork - Gives and welcomes feedback; Contributes to building a positive team spirit; Puts success of team above own interests; Able to build morale and group commitments to goals and objectives; Supports everyone's efforts to succeed.
- Communication - Speaks clearly and persuasively in positive or negative situations; Listens and gets clarification; Responds well to questions; Participates in meetings. Writes clearly and informatively; Edits work for spelling and grammar; Varies writing style to meet needs; Able to read and interpret written information.
- Delegation - Delegates and monitors work assignments of Advocates; Matches the responsibility to the person; Gives authority to work independently; Sets expectations; Provides recognition for results.
- Problem Solving - Identifies and resolves problems in a timely manner; Gathers and analyzes information skillfully; Develops alternative solutions.
- Planning/Organizing - Prioritizes and plans work activities; Uses time efficiently; Sets goals and objectives; Assists Advocates with organizing their tasks.
- Interpersonal Skills - Focuses on solving conflict, not blaming; Listens to others without interrupting; Keeps emotions under control; Remains open to constructive feedback and others' ideas.
- Customer Service - Manages difficult or emotional Advocate situations; Responds promptly to Advocate needs; Solicits Advocate feedback to improve service; Facilitates communication.
- Initiative - Volunteers readily; Undertakes self-development activities; Looks for and takes advantage of opportunities; Asks for and offers help when needed.
- Computer Skills - To perform this job successfully, an individual should have knowledge of: Internet software; Spreadsheet software and Word Processing.

CASA Program Peer Coordinator Model Terminologies

Case Management: The actual work of advocacy, reading the file, investigating the case, interacting with parties and recommending placement and services.

Coaching: Supporting the advocate through empowerment and a culture of inquiry.

Advocate: Formerly referred to as a CASA volunteer.

Peer Coordinator: An unpaid staff position where an experienced advocate serves as the immediate supervisor for advocates. This supervisory position requires an approach of coaching rather than case management or “staffing.”

Senior Program Coordinator: This would replace the role of CASA supervisor and these staff members would support peer coordinators as well as subject matter experts supporting and enhancing our program.

Program Director: Supports the entire CASA program, with immediate coaching of the program Coordinators, Training Coordinator and Outreach & Recruitment Coordinator. Responsible for the implementation and management of the Peer Coordinator Model, Advocate and Staff Development, Quality Assurance, Advocate Retention and Appreciation.

Retention Rate: The length of time advocates continue to serve with our agency.

Retirement Rate: The number of advocates who decide to no longer take cases (supporters and retirees).

Multiple Case Load: When an advocate is assigned to more than one case at a time.

Peer Coordinator Model Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How will the new staffing model affect me?

It won't. From your perspective it should be "business as usual" other than we are now calling CASA Coordinators...Senior Program Coordinators.

Are our community partners (Professional Team Members, Social Services, Court) on board with the new model?

All of our community partners have various levels of knowledge & understanding about the new model. There is still a lot of opportunity to help educate our partners about the new model and we will be working to make that happen.

How do you recruit the "right" person for the Peer Coordinator position?

We have developed a Peer Coordinator Job Description that we believe captures the role, responsibilities and desired qualifications for the position. Peer Coordinators will be recruited from our CASA Advocate base so we will have a history of working with them. We also have nomination & selection processes in place.

Will Peer Coordinators have sufficient training?

Peer Coordinators will complete 5 hours of Initial PC training and participate in ongoing trainings focusing on peer coaching and skills. Peer Coordinators are also encouraged to attend any CASA 201 class that they need a refresher on.

How will CASA Volunteers be assigned to a Peer Coordinator?

The Program Director will work with the Senior Program Coordinators to match new CASA Advocates with a Peer Coordinator.

How much time does it take to be a Peer Coordinator?

Program Volunteer Child Advocate Handbook Revised 1.18.17

We estimate Peer Coordinators will be giving 6-30 hours per month of volunteer service outside of the Initial and ongoing training. Peer Coordinators will be asked to give a 2 year commitment to the role.

Can Peer Coordinators have a CASA case?

Peer Coordinators will remain on any current cases and have the choice of serving on subsequent cases if desired.

What is the staff's role in the new model?

Senior Program Coordinators will coach and support Peer Coordinators and their current CASA advocates while overseeing and implementing the direct service of the CASA program. They will also assume subject focus areas to provide expertise for the entire program.

VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

The volunteer policy handbook describes important information about CASA of Adams & Broomfield Counties, and I understand that I should consult the Program Director or Executive Director regarding any questions not answered in the handbook. I have entered into my volunteer relationship with CASA of Adams & Broomfield Counties voluntarily and acknowledge that the specified length of service is the duration of my CASA case. Accordingly, either I or CASA of Adams & Broomfield Counties can terminate the relationship at will, with or without cause, at any time, so long as there is no violation of applicable federal or state law.

Since the information, policies, and benefits described here are necessarily subject to change, I acknowledge that revisions to the handbook may occur, except to CASA of Adams & Broomfield Counties policy of termination-at-will. All such changes will be communicated through official notices, and I understand that revised information may supersede, modify, or eliminate existing policies. Only the Executive Director of CASA of Adams & Broomfield Counties has the ability to adopt revisions to the policies in this handbook.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that this handbook is neither a contract of employment nor a legal document. I have received the handbook, and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it.

VOLUNTEER'S NAME (printed):

VOLUNTEER'S SIGNATURE:

DATE: _____