

**Franklin/Pittsylvania County
Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Volunteer
Job Description**

Franklin/Pittsylvania County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA Volunteers) are, trained community members, appointed by a judge to speak up for children in court. When a CASA is assigned to a case, he or she is responsible for taking time to learn as much information as possible about that child. The CASA gathers facts by reviewing records; interviewing parents; talking to teachers, doctors, and counselors; but most importantly, by listening to the child.

The CASA performs these duties with only one purpose in mind, "to protect the best interest of the child." A court report is presented to the Judge, detailing the information gathered throughout the investigation and making recommendations regarding the child's future. CASAs then monitor the Court's orders until the case is retired from the Court's docket. The CASA is expected to appear in court the day of the hearing and be prepared to testify upon request.

Status:

Volunteer Position

Time Commitment:

10 hours/month – 100% victim services – One Year Initial Commitment;
(6 month leave of absence available if requested in writing)

Qualifications of a CASA:

- Shall be at least 21 years of age
- Shall have the skills to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, to prepare court reports and provide testimony
- Shall process mature judgment, a high degree of responsibility and sufficient time to assist in advocating for the best interest of the child
- Shall be able to relate to persons of diverse cultures, ethnic backgrounds and different socioeconomic status

Screening requirements of a CASA:

- Shall successfully complete screening procedures which, at a minimum, shall include a written application, three reference reply checks, and personal interviews
- Pursuant to the Code of Virginia, § 9-153, program staff shall obtain a copy of the applicant's national criminal history background, fingerprint check, social security check, national sex offender background check, as well as, a child protective services check and any other regulatory requirements
- Shall complete required training as set by the Department of Criminal Justice Services and program staff (a minimum of 42 hours)
- Shall participate in 12 hours of continuing education annually to maintain appointment

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Agree to accept a case after consultation with program staff
- Meet with the child, the primary caretaker and other available family members to explain the role of CASA, gather information and obtain signed releases of information
- Interview social workers, agency professionals, school officials and others having any direct bearing on the case and share information with the guardian *ad litem*
- Thoroughly review all records and reports relevant to the case
- Investigate in person, all prospective placements of the child
- Prepare a written report that gives the basic descriptive information, states the factual findings and addresses temporary or permanent placement of the child. This report is submitted to program staff ten working days prior to the court hearings
- Meet with program staff to review the court report
- Monitor the progress made towards prescribed goals of the Court until final disposition is made
- Report all concerns of abuse and neglect

Commitments:

- Required to make a commitment of no less than one year
- Average monthly time commitment is 10-12 hours, depending on the number of children involved and the case progression

- Should the CASA find it necessary to withdraw from a case prior to dismissal of the matter, he or she, must contact program staff immediately
- All case files and case information must be returned to the office upon final disposition of the case
- CASAs are expected to be available for case assignments and to accept cases upon request

Professional Development:

CASAs are required to maintain 12 hours of on-going training annually. Training topics should reflect their job responsibilities and include current theory and research. Training certificates should be forwarded to the Director of Volunteer Services to be placed in their personnel file. Participation in on-going supervision and opportunities for peer review shall be required.

Competencies:

To perform the job successfully, a volunteer should demonstrate the following competencies:

- *Interpersonal Skills*
Maintains confidentiality; keeps emotions under control; and remains open to others' ideas
- *Oral Communication*
Speaks clearly and persuasively in positive or negative situations; listens and gets clarification; responds well to questions; and participates in meetings
- *Written Communication*
Writes clearly and informatively; edits work for spelling and grammar; and is able to read and interpret written information
- *Teamwork*
Balances team and individual responsibilities; gives and welcomes feedback; contributes to building a positive team spirit; and supports everyone's efforts to succeed
- *Ethics*
Treats people with respect; keeps commitments; inspires the trust of others; works with integrity and ethically; and upholds organizational values
- *Planning/Organizing*
Prioritizes and plans work activities; uses time efficiently; sets goals and objectives; and develops realistic action plans
- *Professionalism*
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; and follows through on commitments
- *Quality*
Demonstrates accuracy and thoroughness; looks for ways to improve and promote quality; applies feedback to improve performance; and monitors own work to ensure quality
- *Adaptability*
Adapts to changes in the work environment; manages competing demands; changes approach or method to best fit the situation; and able to deal with frequent change, delays, or unexpected events
- *Attendance/Punctuality*
Is consistently on time; ensures volunteer responsibilities are covered when absent; and arrives at meetings and appointments on time
- *Dependability*
Commits to needed hours to reach goals; and completes tasks on time or notifies appropriate person with an alternate plan
- *Initiative*
Volunteers readily; undertakes self-development activities; seeks increased responsibilities; looks for and takes advantage of opportunities; and asks for and offers help when needed

Note: This job description indicates in general terms the type and level of work performed and responsibilities held by the volunteer. Duties described are not to be interpreted as being all-inclusive. Personal interviews, background checks and other required screenings will be conducted prior to consideration of acceptance into the program.