

The Role of a Court Appointed Special Advocate



Purpose

The CASA Volunteer advocates for children involved in court proceedings in the Seventh Circuit Court due to alleged abuse and, or neglect. The volunteer represents the best interests of the child and ensures that a permanent plan for the child is established in a timely manner.

Supervision

Volunteer Coordinators on the staff of the CASA Program supervise volunteers, who in addition, report to the Seventh Circuit Court.

Responsibilities

To research: thoroughly and conscientiously researches all the relevant facts in the situation and interviews concerned persons, including the child, family members, caseworker, teachers, foster family and counselors.

To advocate: ensures that the court, social service personnel and legal counsel fulfill their obligations to the child in a timely manner.

To monitor: monitors compliance to court orders by all parties and brings to the court's attention any change in circumstances that may require modification of a court order.

To report: the volunteer provides the court with pertinent factual information regarding the child's situation, including cultural sensitivities and laws.

Qualifications

1. Have an interest in children, their rights and special needs.
2. Be conscientious, diligent, thorough and reliable.
3. Able to maintain a balanced perspective and objectivity in an emotionally charged situation.
4. Have adequate time to devote to training, investigation and follow-up of each assigned case: volunteers are asked to make a one-year commitment and devote approximately 10 – 15 hours a month, once appointed to a case.
5. Able to work with children, family members and professionals using tact, concern and basic human relations skills.
6. Have good communication skills.

Requirements

1. Complete the initial volunteer training sessions.
2. Complete 12 hours of continued education after the first year.
3. Maintain strict confidentiality.
4. Maintain a current and complete file on each assigned case.
5. Keep Volunteer Coordinator informed regarding the status of the case and confer with as needed.
6. Be aware of deadlines and timetables involving assigned case.
7. Must be 21 years of age **and** able to pass the Central Registry and Criminal Background checks.

Benefits

1. The opportunity to make a significant impact in the life of a child.
2. Training by experts in child abuse, neglect, advocacy, family dysfunction, the legal, social service system, and other relevant issues.
3. Experience in child advocacy and the juvenile justice system.