

JOB DESCRIPTION

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) of McLean County

Purpose:

The CASA serves by court order as an Officer of the McLean County Juvenile Court. The CASA serves on a volunteer basis as an independent advocate for the child's best interest and monitors the case until permanency is achieved. The CASA is directly responsible to the CASA Supervisor and must adhere to the rules and guidelines of the Juvenile Court Act.

Qualifications:

- A. Age 23 or older
- B. Be objective and flexible.
- C. Be able to keep information confidential.
- D. Be able to write clearly and concisely.
- E. Be willing to commit to 5-10 hours a month to an assigned case.
- F. Be willing to commit to the program for a minimum of 18 months.
- G. Complete a CASA application and pre-service interview.
- H. Clear the state and national Child Abuse/Neglect Tracking System (CANTS), the National and State Sex Offender Registry, Social Security verification, and local, state, and national criminal records check of any convictions as outlined in 705 ILCS 405/2-17.1(4).
- I. Successful completion of 30 hours pre-service CASA training.
- J. Participants cannot be licensed foster parents who are currently fostering children.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- A. Conduct independent investigation of case
 - 1. Read (and review as appropriate) all relevant records
 - a. Court file
 - b. Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) file
 - c. Private agency file
 - 2. Meet with the child once a month (personal advocacy)
 - 3. Provide on-going emotional support
 - 4. Interview all principals in case
 - a. Biological parents
 - b. Foster parents or residential facility personnel
 - c. Other professionals who may have pertinent information (Teachers, Physicians, Therapists, etc.)
- B. Maintain all case information in strict confidence
 - 1. Give case-related information only to parties involved.
 - 2. Ensure security of confidential material in case notebook.
 - 3. Return all case-related materials to CASA office within 10 days after the case is closed, or if volunteer service is terminated.
- C. Monitor and facilitate progress of case through the court system

1. Review Client Service Plan
2. Monitor parent's progress in following service plan
 - a. Maintain independent personal contact with parents.
 - b. Consult with service providers (Therapists, etc.).
3. Follow DCFS'/private agencies' efforts to achieve permanence
 - a. Maintain contact with DCFS/Private Agency worker.
 - b. Attend Administrative Case Review (ACR) meetings.
4. Ensure the child is adequately cared for and special needs are addressed.
 - a. Maintain monthly contact with child and foster parents or residential facility personnel.
 - b. Consult with service providers (Therapists, Teachers, etc.).
 - c. Attend Child and Family Team Meetings, IEP (individual education plan) meetings, and any other meetings regarding the child.
 - d. Verify relevant mental health and therapy services are provided.
5. Consult with Guardian ad Litem (GAL) regarding case
 - a. Keep GAL apprised of current case developments.
 - b. Clarify any legal questions regarding the case.
6. Consult with other appropriate persons (ASA, etc.) as needed.
7. Discuss referrals for crisis intervention with the caseworker as needed.
8. Consult with the caseworker to ensure necessary referrals for needed and identified services to community providers are being made in a timely fashion.

D. Ensure all relevant information is available to the Court

1. Prepare Court report prior to hearing
 - a. Update case status.
 - b. Make recommendations regarding case.
 - c. Submit report to the CASA office by the assigned date.
 - d. If appropriate, submit supplemental written reports to the court concerning any changes in circumstance.
2. Attend all Court hearings
 - a. Be prepared to testify if called upon.

E. Keep CASA Supervisor informed of case activity and progress

1. Maintain regular contact with CASA Supervisor
 - a. Discuss case advocacy issues and concerns via telephone as issues arise.
 - b. Meet with CASA Supervisor on a monthly basis.
 - c. Submit monthly hour tracker form at the end of every month.
 - d. Keep Supervisor informed of illness or vacations which would temporarily prevent CASA activity.
 - e. Notify CASA Supervisor of any change of address, phone numbers, email, or employment.
 - f. Submit Continuing Education form totaling at least 12 hours at the end of the year.

What CASAs DO NOT do

- A. A CASA should not provide direct service delivery to any parties that could, a.) Lead to a conflict of interest or liability problems or b.) Cause a child or family to become dependent on the CASA advocate for services that should be provided by other agencies or organizations.

Examples of inappropriate advocate practices are:

1. Taking a child home or sheltering a child in the home.
 2. Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
 3. Making placement arrangements for the child.
 4. Giving money or gifts to the child or family.
- B. A CASA should not transport a child in the course of his/her duties as a CASA volunteer.
- C. A CASA should not be related to any parties involved in the case, or be employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest.
- D. A CASA should not talk about a CASA child, the child's family, or any court proceedings with persons not involved with the case, such as the CASA's family members, friends, co-workers, etc.