



100 South Third Street, Suite 460

Geneva, Illinois 60134

VOLUNTEER POLICY HANDBOOK

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This version supersedes all prior versions.

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WELCOME TO CASA KANE COUNTY!

Dear CASA Kane County Volunteer,

Thank you for giving us the gift of time to serve our most vulnerable youth. You are the heart and soul of our child advocacy organization and because of you we are able to advocate for the best interests of every child. On behalf of the CASA Kane County organization, leadership, staff, judiciary and the children we serve, we thank you for your commitment to serve the best interests of our youth in care.

As you begin what we hope will be a fulfilling experience with CASA, this handbook will help you become more familiar with our goals and policies, as well as give you an insight into what is expected of you and what you can expect in your role.

Please take time to carefully review our Volunteer Policy Handbook and do not hesitate to direct any questions you may have to our Training and Education staff. We will be happy to assist you in any way we can. We are operating in an ever-changing environment, and therefore it may be necessary to update or change some of the policies that are set forth in this Handbook from time to time. When those changes occur, we will notify you as soon as possible, although CASA Kane County reserves the right at its sole discretion to modify, suspend, revoke, terminate, or change the contents of this Volunteer Handbook at any time without prior notice.

Again, welcome to CASA Kane County. Please remember that we are here to assist at any time with any questions, concerns or needs you may have as we all work together to ensure a better tomorrow for our youth in foster care.

We are proud to have you as a CASA/GAL Volunteer!

Jim Di Ciaula

Executive Director

JimD@casakanecounty.org

630-443-3109

INTRODUCTION TO HANDBOOK

CASA believes that each individual is an important and essential part of the entire organization. We have developed this Volunteer Handbook to inform you of the policies and regulations which are a part of maintaining our successful organization. While we have attempted to include as much information as possible about CASA's volunteer policies, it is not possible for policies to cover every circumstance or to answer all questions. Nor is it possible to update this Handbook to reflect every change as soon as it occurs. CASA strives to continually improve its operations, the services that it provides to children, and positive relations with its volunteers and employees. All volunteers are encouraged to bring suggestions for improvements to the attention of our leadership. While we ask for a minimum commitment from our volunteers to help ensure consistency for the child, your volunteer status with CASA is on an at-will basis. Accordingly, a volunteer is free to resign at any time, with or without cause and with or without notice. Similarly, CASA Kane County may terminate the relationship at any time, with or without cause and with or without notice.

Nothing in this Volunteer Handbook creates or is intended to create an employment contract between CASA Kane County and its volunteers or interns, whether express or implied. Nothing contained in this Handbook or in any other document provided to volunteers is intended to be, nor should it be, construed as a contract for employment or any benefit for a defined period of time.

By working together, CASA hopes that it will share with its volunteers a sincere pride in the services that we are all here to provide.

ROLE OF THE CASA/GAL VOLUNTEER

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer provides intensive advocacy for children and youth through a unique one-on-one relationship between the trained volunteer and a child/youth (newborn - 21 years of age) who has experienced abuse, neglect, or abandonment. CASA volunteers are sworn officers of the court whose role is representing the best interests of the children/youth in their appointed cases.

CASA/GAL Volunteers serve not only as volunteers for the CASA organization, but also as the Guardian ad Litem for children who are the subjects of proceedings in the 16th Judicial Circuit, County of Kane, Illinois.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CASA/GAL VOLUNTEER

The responsibilities of a CASA/GAL volunteer include, but are not limited to:

1. Meet with the child in-person, at least once per month, to monitor their placement and assess the child's physical, mental, behavioral and educational needs.
2. Make recommendations for evaluations of services if needed.
3. Review/research case information.
4. Participate in case staffing meetings, child/family team meetings, agency meetings, court hearings, school related meetings, etc.
5. Establish rapport and relationships with the child and all other parties in the case.
6. If age appropriate, help the youth understand the court process.
7. Observe parent-child interactions, noting strengths and/or concerns.
8. Advocate for the best interest of the child. Utilize as many factors as possible in making this recommendation, including the child's current age and sense of time, level of maturity, culture and ethnicity, degree of attachment to family members, including siblings, and sense of belonging and identity.
9. Check for accountability in service planning and delivery.
10. Document all activities in Optima, accurately taking note of any concerns, progress or lack thereof.
11. Identify resources within the child's family and help build/maintain connections.
12. Facilitate communication among parties while maintaining confidentiality at all times.
13. Submit required reports and case updates on or before the specified due date.
14. Monitor compliance with court timelines to expedite permanency.
15. Maintain consistent contact with the Advocate Supervisor (at least monthly).
16. Maintain monthly contact with Foster Parent(s) or Caregiver(s).

The following activities are outside the boundaries of a CASA/GAL role and are strictly prohibited:

1. Providing transportation to any party on the case, including child(ren).
2. Taking photos or videos of or with children on the case.
3. Meeting a youth for a meal or a movie, etc., without the foster parent present, unless the youth is 18 years or older with an independence goal.
4. Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
5. Giving money or expensive gifts to the child/youth.

6. Introducing the child(ren) to your family, friends or pets.

Because of the critical need to ensure each child has consistent advocacy throughout their time in care, CASA will review the activities of each CASA/GAL Volunteer on a monthly basis. Key expectations include:

1. Monthly in-person child visits
2. Monthly contact with foster parent or caregiver
3. Timely submission of court reports
4. Timely addition of Optima contact logs

CASA values the contributions of each GAL Volunteer and understands that all requirements may not be completed due to personal issues, work commitments, family obligations, etc. When these situations occur, Volunteers are requested to communicate with the Advocate Supervisor to ensure the best interests of the child continue to be met. The Advocate Supervisor will provide support for the Volunteer where needed or requested. If communication cannot be established within 60 days, CASA will remove the Volunteer from the case and discharge them from the program.

If at any time during the course of a Volunteers participation in a case it becomes apparent that the minimum expectations are not being met, CASA reserves the right to discharge the Volunteer. The Advocate Supervisor will attempt, at minimum, two forms of communication including sending an electronic message to the Volunteer's CASA email account and phoning the Volunteer at their preferred phone number.

Upon dismissal or case closure, all CASA related information must be returned, destroyed or deleted.

ROLE OF THE ADVOCATE SUPERVISOR

An Advocate Supervisor works with volunteers to give case guidance and support. You and your Advocate Supervisor work together to ensure that a young person's best interests are being met. The Advocate Supervisor provides resources, feedback, and is available to discuss questions and concerns. The Advocate Supervisor will assist you with the court process, including editing court reports, providing current information on court hearings and staying up to date on reviewing your Optima documentation.

You are required to complete a monthly case review with your Advocate Supervisor. You can also contact your Advocate Supervisor anytime you need support or have a question.

If you are unable to reach your assigned Advocate Supervisor and there is an urgent case matter, contact the CASA office and ask to speak to the Director of Advocate Supervision, or the Executive Director.

If you are not in contact with your Advocate Supervisor for 60 days, without prior discussion (such as for a planned vacation/ health need), you may be relieved from your case and discharged from the CASA program.

MINIMUM CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENT

All CASA/GALs are required to complete a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education annually. CASA recognizes that our volunteers' time is valuable. We offer live and online content to help our Advocates complete the minimum requirement. A failure to complete the minimum continuing education requirement in accordance with this section may result in termination from the program. Should you need assistance in accessing material to count toward your annual continuing education requirement, please contact a member of the Training and Education department.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Office Hours

CASA office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Please note that Advocate Supervisors complete child visits on a regular basis, so contact your Advocate Supervisor prior to stopping by the office to confirm they will be available.

CASA is located at 100 S. 3rd St., Geneva, IL. All volunteers must go through security to access the CASA office or visit with staff. Parking is available in the west parking lot. The CASA Office and Courthouse are not accessible to volunteers after hours.

After Hours Support

There may be an urgent situation on your case that occurs after hours or over the weekend. In these situations:

- Get in touch with the child/youth's social worker and/or treatment team to discuss the situation and decide on next steps.
- Call the Child Abuse Hotline (800) 252-2873 (800-25-ABUSE) to be connected to a DCFS social worker.
- Call 911 if the child/youth is in imminent danger.
- Call or email the Advocate Supervisor on your case if it is urgent but does not require a 911 call.

It is not your role to respond in-person to crisis situations. Do not meet or transport the child/youth in crisis. You may want to stay in communication with the child/youth during the situation to provide support. You should always follow up with your Advocate Supervisor, the child/youth's social worker and CASA attorney the next business day.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Abuse

The use, possession, distribution or sale of drugs, tobacco or alcohol, or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, is strictly prohibited while on CASA premises, in the Courtroom, or in the presence of CASA youth. Violation of this policy may result in the termination of the volunteer role with CASA Kane County.

Personal Appearance

In the interest of the projection of a professional image to those we serve and others with whom we come in contact, volunteers are expected to exercise appropriate judgment with regard to personal appearance, dress and grooming to be most effective in the performance of their volunteer duties. Unless expressly stated otherwise, the dress code at CASA is business professional for all volunteers who are attending court or attending meetings, and at any other time designated by the organization as "business professional dress required."

CASA will reasonably accommodate a volunteer's religious beliefs in terms of professional attire unless the accommodation creates an undue hardship. Those requesting professional attire accommodation based on religious beliefs should contact the Executive Director.

Volunteer Identification Cards

The CASA Volunteer Identification Card is provided to a CASA/GAL once they have been sworn in. The identification card is nontransferable and may not be used by anyone other than the volunteer to

whom it belongs. CASA requests that a volunteer wear their ID card when participating in any CASA related tasks or responsibilities. Abuse of an identification card by a volunteer for personal use will result in discipline including revocation of card privileges, and up to termination of the volunteer partnership with CASA Kane County. Volunteers must surrender their identification cards when their commitment to CASA ends. If a volunteer loses their card, they should notify their Advocate Supervisor immediately.

Confidential Information

In the course of your work with CASA, you will have access to confidential and privileged information. The protection of this confidential and privileged information is one of your most serious responsibilities. No one may disclose, directly or indirectly, any information or documentation relative to a case. Common examples of information which may not be disclosed, include:

- The identity of a child(ren)
- The fact that the child is in car
- Any document or information from or about a child
- The names of foster parent(s) or biological parent(s)
- The address of foster parent(s)

All volunteers are cautioned to refer any requests for any information related to a case or a child to the Advocate Supervisor and/or supervising GAL attorney.

All volunteers are also specifically warned regarding the dangers of casual conversations which may be overheard by others.

Political Endorsements

It is in the best interest of CASA and those that are served by the organization to develop and further positive relationships with all constituents in our county and surrounding areas. As such, CASA does not and will not endorse any political party, candidate, platform, or campaign. Volunteers are strictly prohibited from using their position with the organization to allow any person or entity to use the name of "CASA" or their position with CASA to promote a person or cause for political gain.

Nothing within this section shall prohibit a volunteer from expressing their own political position provided the expression of those beliefs does not violate this Section.

Personal Use of CASA Property

Volunteers are prohibited from using CASA property, such as stationery, letterhead, name, logo, or equipment for personal use, without the express written permission of the Executive Director.

Video Surveillance

Volunteers may be subject to video surveillance on CASA and other premises in which they perform volunteer duties.

SCOPE OF ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIP/LENGTH OF SERVICE

The children our program serves can experience a high amount of “adult turnover” in their lives, during the duration of their time in care. The goal of the CASA mission is to provide every child with a caring adult that they can trust. For this reason, CASA requests that all CASA/GAL volunteers commit to three years of uninterrupted service with the program. That said, all volunteer partnerships with CASA are voluntarily entered into and have no specified term or length. The volunteer is free to resign at will, at any time, with or without cause, and with or without notice. However, if you are able to provide ample notice that you will be resigning from your role, this is preferred and significantly appreciated. Additionally, CASA may terminate a volunteer at will, at any time, with or without cause, and with or without notice subject to the protections afforded to persons under federal and state law.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION POLICY

If a volunteer displays any violence in the workplace or threatens violence while performing CASA duties, the volunteer is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of the working relationship. Communication of or joking about violence will not be tolerated. “Violence” is defined to include physically harming another, shoving, pushing, harassment, intimidation, coercion, brandishing weapons, and threats or talk of violence.

WEAPON PROHIBITION

The possession or use of any type of weapon in the CASA Office or while conducting one’s duties as an employee or volunteer of CASA is prohibited. Weapons include, but are not limited to firearms, ammunition, air guns, spear guns, blowguns, airsoft guns, paint pellet guns, martial arts weapons, bows and arrows, crossbows, swords, knives, batons, clubs, tasers, stun guns, and explosives of any type. Anyone found in possession of a weapon in violation of what is set forth herein may be subject to disciplinary, termination, and/or criminal proceedings.

INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

CASA Property, Security, Privacy

All volunteers are assigned a casakanecounty.org email exchange. This email is the form of electronic communication permitted between volunteers and others related to work on their case. The casakanecounty.org email exchange is encrypted and offers a heightened level of protection for the confidential information being exchanged on the internet. Volunteers are strictly prohibited from retaining paper case materials – including their own notes. All papers and notes received or generated by a volunteer must be scanned and uploaded into CASA’s designated case management software system (Optima). If unsure of how to comply with this section, volunteers should immediately contact their Advocate Supervisor.

Another method of preferred communication for CASA/GALs, is to obtain a Google Voice number on your cell phone to communicate with parties on your case. The Google Voice number allows a volunteer to call and text parties on the case, without compromising their private cell phone number. CASA Staff strongly recommends obtaining and utilizing a google voice number during the duration of one’s case.

CASA’s computer systems and other technical resources, including any voice mail or e-mail systems, are provided for use in the pursuit of CASA business and are to be used only in that pursuit, except as provided in this policy. As a result, computer data, voice mail, and e-mail are readily available to numerous CASA Staff, and may be monitored at any time. If, during the course of an individual’s service, a volunteer performs or transmits work on CASA’s computer systems or other technical resources, his/her work may be subject to the investigation, search, and review in accordance with this policy. In addition, any electronically stored information, and communications that a volunteer either sends to or receives from others may be retrieved and reviewed where such investigation serves the legitimate business interests and obligations of CASA.

Volunteers have no right of privacy as to any information or file maintained in or on CASA property or transmitted or stored through CASA’s computer systems, voice mail, e-mail, or other technical resources. For purposes of inspecting, investigating, or searching a volunteer’s computerized files or transmissions, voice mail, or e-mail, CASA may override any applicable passwords or codes.

Volunteers may only access files or programs, whether paper or electronic, that they have legitimate reason to obtain or review. Unauthorized review, duplication, dissemination, removal, damage or alteration of files, passwords, computer systems or programs, or other property of CASA, or improper use of information obtained by unauthorized means, may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of the working relationship.

Social Media and Similar Forms of Communication

Each volunteer is responsible for the content of all text, audio, or images he or she sends or receives over the Internet and/or cellular telephones during their work as a CASA/GAL volunteer. Fraudulent, harassing, or obscene messages are prohibited. All messages communicated on the Internet should have a volunteer’s name attached. No messages will be transmitted under an assumed name. Users may not attempt to obscure the origin of any message. Information published on the Internet should not violate or infringe upon the rights of others. No abusive, profane, or offensive language is to be transmitted through the system. Volunteers who wish to express personal opinions on the Internet are encouraged to obtain their own usernames on other Internet systems. All messages composed,

sent, or received through the electronic communication systems are and remain the property of CASA. They are NOT the private property of any volunteer and should not be considered private. CASA reserves and intends to exercise the right to review, audit, intercept, access, print, read, and disclose all messages created, received, or sent over the electronic communication systems for any purpose. Please note that even when a message is deleted, it is still possible to recreate the message; therefore, ultimate privacy of messages cannot be guaranteed to anyone.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMITMENT

CASA will treat all employees equally and fairly and supports the concepts of Equal Employment Opportunity and pledges to conduct all personnel transactions without (1) discrimination because of race, traits associated with race (including hair texture and hairstyles) color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, national origin, language (when unrelated to job duties) age, marital status, pregnancy, military or veteran status, unfavorable discharges from military service, citizenship and/or immigration status, ancestry, national origin, physical or mental disability, genetic information (including family medical history), arrest record, housing status, credit report or credit information, use of lawful products or any other characteristic protected by law (the “Protected Characteristics”); or (2) retaliation for engaging in conduct consistent with the public policy of the State of Illinois. It is CASA’s philosophy to comply with all state, federal, and local equal employment opportunity laws, and public policies.

CASA prohibits discrimination against individuals providing services in the workplace pursuant to a contract, unpaid internship, volunteers, or another limited duration program to provide unpaid work experience. This commitment applies to all persons involved in the operations of CASA and prohibits unlawful discrimination by any employee of CASA, including supervisors and co-workers. All such discrimination is unlawful.

CASA seeks to comply with legal requirements to ensure equal employment opportunities for persons who are qualified individuals with a disability. In order to make known to CASA the person’s disability, any applicant, volunteer or employee who requires accommodation in order to perform the essential functions of the job should contact the Executive Director and request such accommodation. The individual with the disability should specify what accommodation he or she needs to perform the job. CASA will then engage in a good faith interactive process with the volunteer, employee or applicant to determine what, if any, effective accommodations can be made for the volunteer, employee or applicant. CASA will investigate to identify the barriers that make it difficult for the applicant or employee to have an equal opportunity to perform his or her job. CASA will identify possible accommodations, if any, that will help eliminate the limitation. If the accommodation is reasonable and will not impose an undue hardship, CASA will make the accommodation. In addition, CASA will document the investigation.

An applicant, volunteer, employee, independent contractor, or unpaid intern who requires accommodation of a religious belief or practice should also contact the Executive Director to discuss the need for accommodation. If the accommodation request is reasonable and will not impose an undue hardship on CASA, CASA will make the accommodation.

If a volunteer or employee believes they have been subjected to any form of unlawful discrimination, he/she is to inform their immediate supervisor as soon as possible. A complaint can be made either orally or in writing. If the complaint relates to their immediate supervisor or the employee is uncomfortable speaking to their immediate supervisor, he/she shall provide the complaint to the

Executive Director. A volunteer or employee's complaint should be specific and should include the names of the individuals involved and the names of any witnesses. If a supervisor receives any complaint of action or conduct in violation of this Policy, or personally observes or overhears behaviors, actions, or comments in violation of this Policy, the supervisor must immediately report the information to the Executive Director

Based on the investigation, CASA will determine what, if any, remedial action should be taken, commensurate with the severity of the offense. Appropriate action will also be taken to deter any future discrimination. CASA does not permit retaliation against an employee, unpaid intern, independent contractor, or volunteer for making a complaint or participating in any workplace investigation.

Executives, managers, supervisors, and employees who observe a violation of this policy or who receive a request for accommodation should inform the Executive Director immediately.

Employment decisions shall, therefore, comply with all applicable State and Federal laws prohibiting discrimination in employment.

POLICY AGAINST UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

CASA is committed to providing a work environment that is free of unlawful discrimination and unlawful harassment. Together with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commitment policy described above, CASA maintains a strict policy prohibiting unlawful harassment in any form, including verbal, physical, and visual harassment. To encourage all personnel to cooperate in implementing this policy, the following specific elements of the policy shall be strictly adhered to:

CASA policy prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, traits associated with race (including hair texture and hairstyles) color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, national origin, language (when unrelated to job duties) age, marital status, pregnancy, military or veteran status, unfavorable discharges from military service, citizenship and/or immigration status, ancestry, national origin, physical or mental disability, genetic information (including family medical history), arrest record, housing status, credit report or credit information, use of lawful products or any other basis protected by federal, state, or local law, ordinance, or regulation.

The use of derogatory comments, statements, or innuendos related to any of the protected categories referenced above is against CASA policy.

All individuals shall be treated without regard to race, traits associated with race (including hair texture and hairstyles) color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, national origin, language (when unrelated to job duties) age, marital status, pregnancy, military or veteran status, unfavorable discharges from military service, citizenship and/or immigration status, ancestry, national origin, physical or mental disability, genetic information (including family medical history), housing status, credit report or credit information.

CASA requires those who believe this policy is being violated to report any questionable situations directly to their immediate supervisor. CASA's Open Door Policy assures CASA encourages responses from its employees and wishes to assist in alleviating misunderstandings or uncomfortable situations in the work environment.

If an individual believes they have been subjected to any form of harassment that violates this policy, they must inform their immediate supervisor as soon as possible. A complaint can be made either orally or in writing. If the complaint relates to their immediate supervisor, or the person is uncomfortable speaking to their immediate supervisor, they shall provide the complaint to the Executive Director. The complaint should be specific and should include the names of the individuals involved and the names of any witnesses. If a supervisor receives any complaint of action or conduct in violation of this policy, the supervisor must immediately report the information to the Executive Director. CASA will undertake a fair, timely, thorough, and impartial investigation that provides all parties with appropriate due process and reaches reasonable conclusions based on the evidence collected. CASA will keep the investigation confidential to the extent possible but does not promise that the investigation can be kept completely confidential.

POLICY AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT

CASA is committed to providing a work environment that is free of sexual harassment. In keeping with this commitment, CASA maintains a strict policy prohibiting unlawful sexual harassment in any form.

Sexual harassment is prohibited by CASA, is against the law, and will not be tolerated.

What is Sexual harassment?

“Sexual harassment” means any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or any conduct of a sexual nature or because of a person’s sex or sexual orientation when (i) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment, (ii) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (iii) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Sexual and other harassment can occur in a variety of circumstances. The victim as well as the harasser may be a woman or a man. The harasser can be the victim’s Supervisor, a coworker, or a nonemployee such as a vendor or a customer. However, in all cases the harasser’s conduct must be unwelcome.

Sexual harassment in violation of this policy includes but is not limited to:

- Sexually suggestive or vulgar comments or jokes, inappropriate comments about another person’s sexual behavior or body, or insulting or ridiculing an employee because of his or her gender.
- Improper or intrusive questions or comments about an employee’s romantic or sexual experiences or preferences, or unwelcome or offensive sexual flirtations, propositions, advances, or requests.
- Use, display, or communication of sexually suggestive or offensive words, objects, pictures, calendars, cartoons, articles, letters, e-mail messages, computer programs, or internet websites.

Making or threatening undesired physical contact (such as touching, embracing, or pinching) or impeding another’s movements in a deliberate manner; and offering or providing employment benefits in return for sexual favors or an employee’s agreement to provide sexual favors, or taking or threatening to take adverse action against an employee because the employee rejects requests for sexual favors.

It is important to note that sexual harassment does not have to involve conduct of a sexual nature in order to constitute unlawful behavior. For example, abusive, offensive, or demeaning behavior that is directed to members of one gender only (whether male or female) may be deemed a form of sexual harassment, even though the conduct was not motivated by sexual desire or gratification.

If Sexual harassment occurs:

- If the individual is comfortable and able to do so, they may confront the harasser and request them to stop. The harasser may not realize the advances or behaviors are offensive. When it is appropriate and sensible, an individual should tell the harasser the behaviors or advances are unwelcome and must stop. Sometimes a simple conversation will end the situation. However,

if the individual is not comfortable addressing the situation directly with the alleged harasser, or the behavior does not cease immediately, they shall report their concerns and the events to their supervisor, the Executive Director, Human Resources Support, or the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors as soon as possible.

- If the individual reports the harassment to their supervisor and is not comfortable with the response, or if the individual is not comfortable with reporting the conduct to their immediate supervisor, the individual should immediately report it to the Executive Director.
- Sexual harassment or retaliation may be reported in writing or verbally. An individual may report such activities even though they were not the target of the harassment.
- CASA will undertake fair, timely, thorough, and impartial investigation that provides all parties with appropriate due process and reaches reasonable conclusions based on the evidence collected. CASA will keep the investigation confidential to the extent possible but does not promise that the investigation can be kept completely confidential.
- CASA will take whatever corrective action is deemed necessary, including discipline or discharge any individual who is believed to have violated this prohibition against unlawful harassment. CASA will also take action to protect the complaining individual and to prevent further unlawful harassment or retaliation.

Protection against retaliation:

CASA forbids retaliation against any individual who opposes sexual harassment, files a complaint, testifies, assists, or participates in any manner in an investigation, proceeding or hearing conducted by the Department of Fair Employment and Housing or the Fair Employment and Housing Commission.

Additional Information:

CASA will make every effort to resolve all complaints internally. However, an employee has the right to contact the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) at (217) 785-5100 or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) at (800) 669-4000 or (202) 663-4900 about filing a formal complaint. An IDHR complaint must be filed within 180 days of the alleged incident. A complaint with the EEOC must be filed within 300 days of the alleged incident.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

CASA is committed to fully complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as applicable state and local laws, to ensure Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) for all qualified individuals with disabilities. To be “qualified,” a volunteer must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodation, all the essential functions for his or her position. Reasonable accommodation is available to all qualified individuals with disabilities unless the accommodation poses an undue hardship or infringes upon the safety of the accommodated individual or other employees. If you require accommodation, you must inform the Director of Advocate Supervision. We will collaborate with you on a case-by-case basis to determine if and how reasonable accommodation can be provided. If you, after going through the process, wish to file a complaint regarding the grant or denial of your request, you should send a letter addressed to your Human Resources Director, Attn: Human Resources Department, CASA 100 S. 3rd Street #460 Geneva, IL 60134. Within ten (10) days of receiving the complaint, the Director of Advocate Supervision will provide you with a written decision

on whether the request was approved and/or denied. If you feel your complaint is still unresolved, you may appeal to the Executive Director, who will issue a final written decision.

CHILD TRANSPORTATION POLICY

CASA Volunteers may **not** transport anyone associated with their case, including the children they advocate for, family members or foster parents.

All questions regarding this policy should be brought to the attention of the volunteers Advocate Supervisor, the Director of Advocate Supervision, or the Executive Director. Violation of this section may result in disciplinary action including immediate dismissal from the program.

Child Visits

CASA/GAL volunteers are required to complete an in-person visit with the children in their assigned case at least once a month, for a duration long enough to obtain adequate and substantial information. For child(ren) who are back in the care of their parent(s) in a return home goal, child(ren) must be visited twice per month. Child visits should be scheduled in the first half of a calendar month to allocate time in case the visit needs to be cancelled due to illness or other circumstances. CASA/GALs who are not able to schedule a visit with a child should immediately contact their Advocate Supervisor. A failure to execute a child visit may result in termination from the program.

If an in-person visit is not possible due to illness, child being on the run, etc., the attempt must be noted in Optima, including the month, name of the child and the date the visit was originally scheduled and/or attempted. A virtual visit is acceptable in lieu of missing a child visit due to an illness within the foster home and should be noted in Optima.

While in-person visits are preferred, utilizing a virtual platform to complete 2 visits every 3 months is acceptable for children who are in placement locations 180 miles from the CASA Kane County office (100 S. 3rd St., Geneva).

If an Advocate has a safety concern about making in-person visits to the home or location where their assigned child(ren) is placed and after the general safety precautions have been exhausted or determined not able to allay such safety concerns, Advocate Supervisors at their discretion and in consultation with the Executive Director and Director of Advocate Supervision, can make an exception to the monthly in-person visit requirement.

Observation of Parent-Child or Sibling Visits

As part of your advocacy, CASA/GALs should observe parent-child and/or sibling visits. Please note you should never be the organizer, or supervisor of such visits; that is the role of the agency affiliated with the family. During observations, CASA/GALs should be as non-intrusive as possible. Family visits are special times for the children to connect with their loved ones. Unless absolutely necessary, CASA/GALs should strive not to interrupt or interfere with the family during this time.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

All volunteers that may have direct or indirect contact with children served by CASA are required to submit to a criminal background check as a condition of program participation. The existence of a criminal history will not necessarily bar a person's involvement with CASA depending upon the nature of the offense. Each person's history will be considered in light of the total circumstances surrounding each incident disclosed or reported. CASA may ask for supporting documentation from prospective

volunteers in support of explanations surrounding certain criminal charges and offenses. Criminal background checks are not required for volunteers that serve in the organization in a limited role with no expectation of child contact (i.e., event volunteers). Background checks will be re-completed every 2 years, per DCFS standards. An individual will also be subject to fingerprinting during the background check process, as determined by DCFS criteria, to finalize a background check.

GENERAL PROGRAM POLICIES

Volunteer File

CASA shall maintain an electronic file for each volunteer including, but not limited to, such materials as the application, reference and background check information and evaluations. Volunteers who wish to review their electronic file should contact the Executive Director. With reasonable advanced notice, a volunteer may review their file in the office of CASA and in the presence of the Executive Director or other appointed individual. Volunteer files are maintained in a secure database in electronic format.

Open Door Policy

The Executive Director has an open-door policy for all volunteers. In the event that a volunteer has a grievance, feedback or praise they wish to share, they may speak directly to the Executive Director without going through any other paths of communication or layers of administration.

Personal Safety

CASA takes the safety of its volunteers very seriously and asks that all volunteers take responsibility for promoting their own safety. By following CASA's policies, procedures, and guidance; making sure they do not place themselves at significant risk while volunteering; reporting all incidents, near misses and causes for concern to their supporting staff member; attending and actively taking part in any training provided related to safety while volunteering.

CASA/GAL volunteers should be prepared to respond to a crisis and consider some basic safety issues including carrying a fully charged cell phone, leaving belongings at home, conducting visits during daytime, being aware of your surroundings, etc.

When you are making visits always tell someone the general region where you are going and when you believe you will return. We cannot provide our approximate location to others, as this information is confidential. If you have been told there may be danger in the home, or if you are uneasy about entering a particular neighborhood or building, speak with the Executive Director, Director of Advocate Supervision or Advocate Supervisor to make appropriate arrangements which may include meeting in a public space, having the Supervisor attend the visit, or accompanying the caseworker on a visit.

If you ever feel threatened, do as follows:

1. Leave the area.
2. If you cannot leave, call 9-1-1 and explain that you are a CASA/GAL volunteer.
3. As soon as you are in a secure area, call your Advocate Supervisor.

If a child runs away, attempts suicide, or is the victim of a serious accident or injury, do as follows:

1. If you are present, call 9-1-1. However, you do not have the authority to authorize medical care for the child.
2. Call the Executive Director, Director of Advocate Supervision or your Advocate Supervisor.
3. Call the Caseworker or the Caseworker's Supervisor.

Translation

To ensure equal access to services and the courts for all persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), CASA Kane County will take meaningful steps to facilitate access to an interpreter in court proceedings and other court mandated services. Volunteers should contact their Advocate Supervisor if they believe an interpreter will be needed. CASA also can facilitate interpretation services as needed outside of court proceedings, specifically for monthly child and foster placement visits.

Complaint Procedure

If any CASA volunteer believes that he or she has been discriminated against or that his or her civil rights have been violated, the individual, in addition to contacting CASA Kane County's Executive Director, may file a complaint with the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA), the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR), and the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Civil Rights.

Complaints filed with ICJIA should be directed to ICJIA's Civil Rights Officer. ICJIA complaint forms can be found at ICJIA's website or by contacting the ICJIA's Civil Rights Officer at 312-793-8550.

Complaints filed with ICJIA may be filed via the web (<http://www.icjia.state.il.us/public/>), mail (Civil Rights Officer, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 300 West Adams Street, Suite 200, Chicago, Illinois 60606), or email (icija.civilrightsofficer@illinois.gov).

The individual may also file a complaint directly with the OCR at the following address: Office for Civil Rights; Office of Justice Programs; U.S. Department of Justice; 810 Seventh Street N.W.; Washington, DC 20531.

Complaints may also be filed with the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR).

IDHR offices:

CHICAGO OFFICE

100 W. Randolph Street, 10th Floor
Intake Unit
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 814-6200 or (886) 740-3953 (TTY)

SPRINGFIELD OFFICE

222 South College Street, Room 101
Intake Unit
Springfield, IL 62704
(217) 785-5100 or (886) 740-3953 (TTY)

Foster Parent Exclusion/Conflict of Interest

In order to prevent the appearance of, or potential/actual conflict of interest, CASA does not permit volunteers or employees to act as foster parents to children whose cases originates from or is pending in the 16th Judicial Circuit Court, Juvenile Division, Kane County. Since the organization is appointed to 100% of the cases in the 16th Judicial Circuit abuse and neglect court, the potential for conflict is unavoidable. CASA does not prohibit a volunteer or employee from acting as a foster parent for children in care whose cases originated in a county other than Kane and are not pending in the 16th Judicial Circuit, Kane County.

In addition, a volunteer shall not be assigned to a case in which the volunteer is related to persons involved in the case, is biased by prior knowledge of circumstances or facts regarding the case or persons involved in the case or may benefit financially.

Speaking on Behalf of CASA

Only the Executive Director, the Board of Directors, or their officially designated designee may make statements on behalf of CASA, subject to the operational model of the organization. Volunteers who want to advocate positions to be taken publicly by CASA must channel such positions through the CASA office for consideration by the Executive Director. Final approval for any public statement must come from the Executive Director.

Fundraising on Behalf of CASA

Only the Executive Director, the Board of Directors, or their officially designated designee may fundraise on behalf of CASA, subject to the operational model of the organization. Volunteers who want to fundraise for CASA must channel such efforts through the CASA office for consideration by the Executive Director. Final approval for any fundraising efforts must come from the Executive Director. Nothing within this section shall prevent a volunteer from becoming a donor of the organization. All donor inquiries should be made directly to the Executive Director.

CASA/GAL Reports

CASA/GALs are required to prepare a written report as ordered by the Court. CASA/GALs learn how to prepare a written report in the initial training program and may participate in additional report writing workshops through CASA's continuing education program. Written reports are to be prepared by the CASA/GAL and submitted to their Advocate Supervisor four weeks in advance of the scheduled court date. The Advocate Supervisor will then provide feedback to the CASA/GAL. If there is a fundamental disagreement between the CASA/GAL and the Advocate Supervisor, that disagreement may be brought to the attention of the Director of Advocate Supervision and the CASA/GAL Attorney who will discuss with all parties and work toward a mutually acceptable agreement.

Gift Giving

As a general rule, CASA/GALs are not encouraged to give gifts to a child, relative or caregiver involved with CASA program. It is important that CASA/GALs retain their role as an independent legal advocate and that children and parties not start to see the CASA/GAL as a financial benefactor. An exception to this rule is Christmas and birthdays. CASA/GALs may purchase a reasonably priced gift, defined as under \$25, to give to a child on Christmas or on their birthday. All gifts shall be disclosed in your report to the Court, logged in Optima and communicated with the Advocate Supervisor. Gift cards are available through CASA to celebrate a child's birthday. Speak to your Advocate Supervisor about obtaining. If a particular object or item is needed for a child on your case, please visit the Connection Corner at the CASA Office, or discuss it with your Advocate Supervisor to see if CASA has that item within its own inventory.

MANDATED REPORTING

Duty to Report

CASA volunteers assume the responsibilities as Mandated Reporters under the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act. Therefore, in the event that any CASA employee, or volunteer has a suspicion that a minor may have been or is being abused, they must report their suspicions

immediately to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-25 ABUSE. In addition to calling the Hotline, nothing shall prevent a person under this section from contacting law enforcement as well.

Failing to make a report under this section may result in criminal prosecution of the mandated reporter under Illinois or other applicable law. Further, failure to make a report under this section will result in disciplinary action being taken against the mandated reporter including immediate dismissal from the program.

Following the report, the employee or volunteer making the report should notify their Advocate Supervisor who shall then promptly notify the Executive Director.

Mandatory Training

All CASA volunteers are required to complete an online training to be certified as a Mandated Reporter every three years, in order to remain in good standing with the organization. When you are due to recomplete this training, a CASA staff member will contact you with information on how to re-certify. Failure or refusal to complete the training or training renewal may result in disciplinary action being taken against the mandated reporter including immediate dismissal from the program.

SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

Scope & Purpose

CASA is committed to the safety of all individuals in its program. However, CASA has particular concern for those who are potentially vulnerable, including minor children, who require special attention and protection. This section establishes guidelines for those in the CASA organization who may work or interact with individuals under 21 years of age who are CASA program beneficiaries, with the goal of promoting the safety and wellbeing of minors. All CASA volunteers are responsible for understanding and complying with this section.

CASA is committed to make every reasonable effort within its power to prevent the occurrence of a sex abuse allegation by a volunteer, and to deal promptly and effectively with allegations that may arise.

Reporting of Allegation of Sexual Abuse or Misconduct

The allegation of any sexual abuse or misconduct involving minors will be treated with the utmost seriousness and investigated thoroughly. CASA will immediately report any allegation of sexual abuse or misconduct and cooperate fully with public authorities that may investigate the matter and will take care not to interfere with any public investigation. Therefore, all legal requirements regarding notification of such charges will be observed.

Any and all allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct by a volunteer against any will be reported to law enforcement – regardless of the nature of the allegation. CASA will not, on its own accord, perform an investigation into the matter prior to reporting to law enforcement. CASA will, also, promptly discharge its duty as a Mandated Reporter under Illinois law. CASA will, however, perform an independent investigation into the allegation as set forth in this Section albeit not as a precursor to making the report as described above.

Any volunteer of CASA who is the subject of an allegation of sexual abuse or misconduct against a minor child shall be promptly discharged from the program with or without notice to the program volunteer.

Methods of Reporting Allegations of Sexual Abuse or Misconduct

Volunteers who have knowledge or have formed a reasonable suspicion or who have received a report of alleged sexual abuse or misconduct involving a minor child are required to immediately make a report to the Executive Director. The report may be made in-person, via a telephone call or through an email. The report must be made by no later than the end of the business day upon which the knowledge, reasonable suspicion or report is received. If the report cannot be made during business hours, the employee or volunteer must report by no later than noon on the next available business day.

If the Executive Director is not available to receive the report, the report may be made to a CASA/GAL Attorney. If the allegation is against the Executive Director, a report should be made to the Board of Directors. Nothing in this section shall prevent anyone from making a report directly to the Board of Directors.

To make a report, applicable persons under this section may call the CASA Office at (630) 232-4484; appear at the CASA Office during regular business hours Monday through Friday – excluding applicable court holidays - (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) at 100 South Third Street, Suite 460, Geneva, Illinois 60134; or email any of the persons identified above whose contact information is available at <https://casakanecounty.org/our-staff/>.

In case of an emergency, employees and volunteers should immediately dial 911.

CHILD CONTACT POLICY

Scope & Purpose

CASA is committed to protecting its volunteers and program beneficiaries from being placed in situations that could be misconstrued or misunderstood as inappropriate. Many (if not all) of the children served by CASA are or have experienced abuse or neglect. After experiencing trauma, the children we serve may be particularly vulnerable. In spite of the best intentions, contact that might be appropriate in other settings may not be appropriate when working with a child in care. For this reason, CASA has a strict child contact policy. All CASA volunteers are responsible for understanding and complying with this section.

Physical Contact

Volunteers should be role models as children learn to understand the appropriate boundaries of physical contact in different situations.

We cannot assume that a child will understand a touch that is intended as a friendly gesture. Children in care may have backgrounds where there has been inappropriate physical contact or even abuse. These children will be confused about adult-child contact and may experience it as intrusive. This can have consequences for the child and for any employee or volunteer where a touch, meant as a caring gesture, is reported as inappropriate.

Physical contact can be one of the trickiest subjects to navigate. The easiest way to ensure that a child is comfortable during a visit is to allow the child to maintain their personal space. Physical contact should **never** be initiated by a volunteer. These guidelines must be followed:

- Ensure other adults are around and be prepared to be accountable to them;
- Never be alone with a child behind a closed door or in a small space;
- The area between a child's waist and mid-thigh or near the chest should not be touched in any circumstance;
- Where a child tries to become physically closer than appropriate, it is important they do not feel rejected, but are gently guided to a more appropriate behavior by a positive suggestion such as a "high-five".
- Never kiss a child;
- Allowing a child to sit on the lap of a volunteer is strictly prohibited.
- Children, including infants, should never be picked up or carried unless it is an emergency situation.
- Volunteers are never to assist a child with bathroom needs, changing a diaper, getting dressed, etc.

VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT FORM

This is to acknowledge that I have read and reviewed a copy of the Volunteer Policy Handbook, understand that it contains important information on CASA’s general personnel policies and on my privileges and obligations as a volunteer.

I understand that I am governed by the contents of the handbook and that CASA may change, rescind, or add to any policies, benefits, or practices described in the handbook from time to time in its sole and absolute discretion, with or without prior notice. CASA will advise volunteers of material changes within a reasonable time.

I also understand and agree that the use, possession, sale, distribution, being under the influence of or transportation of any prohibited items, while representing CASA, on CASA-owned, leased occupied or operated property, or while in or aboard CASA vehicles of any kind, is prohibited.

I further understand that I assume full responsibility for my own health and safety. I recognize and accept the risks inherent in this volunteer role, including but not limited to, the risk of illness arising from in-person meetings, property damage, personal injury, emotional distress, and harassment and attack. I acknowledge that there is no direct or indirect medical health coverage afforded to me or any insurance of any kind for my benefit as a result of my relationship with CASA/GAL program.

To the full extent permitted by law, I, on behalf of myself and my heirs and successors, hereby release CASA/GAL program and its directors, officers, partners, agents, employees, successors, assigns, licensees, sponsors, donors, representatives, guests and affiliates from, and waive and covenant not to sue for, any and all claims and causes of action, whether known or unknown, arising out of, based upon or relating to my participation as a CASA/GAL volunteer, including without limitation, any negligence of CASA/GAL program, its officers, directors, partners, employees, agents, successors, assigns, licensees, sponsors, donors, representatives, guests, and affiliates. I indemnify and hold harmless CASA/GAL program and its directors, officers, partners, agents, employees, successors, assigns, licensees, sponsors, donors, representatives, guests and affiliates from any allegations, claims, or investigations arising from or relating to my breach of this liability release and waiver and my volunteer service.

I understand and agree that this acknowledgement form contains a full and complete statement of the agreements it recites, and supersedes all previous agreements, whether written or oral, express or implied, relating to the subjects covered in the acknowledgement.

Volunteer Name

Volunteer Signature

Date