



COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES OF COOK COUNTY

Dear Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer at Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Cook County. CASA volunteers are trained to become effective advocates for abused and neglected children in Cook County. The CASA program offers a unique and rewarding volunteer opportunity.

Because of the unique nature of the volunteer's role, not everyone can become a CASA volunteer. We ask that you closely examine the enclosed materials about the role and responsibility of a CASA volunteer. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at 312.433.6987. If you decide to apply to the program, please complete and return the enclosed Volunteer Application Packet.

Upon receipt of your application, a standard law enforcement background check is conducted. If there are no issues with the background check, we will contact you to schedule an interview. The interview provides the opportunity for us to get to know one another better and to address any questions or concerns about becoming a CASA volunteer. After a successful interview, you will be accepted into the next available training program. A list of the training dates can be found at the end of this packet. The training is an approximately 30-hour program comprised of several classroom sessions and at least one weekday court observation. Applicants must attend *all* of the training sessions in order to be sworn-in as a CASA volunteer.

Please enclose a check for \$35.00 with your completed application to help defray the cost of applicant screening. CASA of Cook County is a not-for-profit organization that depends solely on donations for support. If your circumstances preclude you from including the \$35 fee at this time, please contact the CASA office so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Again, please carefully review the enclosed documents. We are delighted that you are interested in becoming a CASA volunteer and, in turn, becoming "a powerful voice in a child's life." We look forward to working with you.

Best regards,

LaDora Robinson - Locke
Director of Recruitment and Training



CASA of Cook County Frequently Asked Questions

How did CASA begin?

In the 1960s Judges realized that they were making far-reaching decisions about the lives of children without hearing the unique perspective of the child. The first Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) program began in 1977 in Seattle, Washington by King County Judge David Soukup. As word of the programs success spread, similar programs began all over the United States. Because some states require GALs to be attorneys, the term Court Appointed Special Advocate – CASA- was coined to describe volunteers from local communities trained to serve as advocates for abused and neglected children involved in juvenile court proceeding. In 1982 the National CASA Association was established to assist the growing number of programs in the country.

CASA of Cook County was established in 1986 as the first CASA program in Illinois, as a program of Illinois Action for Children. In 2001, CASA of Cook County became an independent not-for-profit organization and today continues its mission to advocate for our most vulnerable citizens, children.

Who are CASA volunteers?

A CASA volunteer is a unique individual who is committed to providing factual information about the situation of an abused or neglected child. The information and recommendations the CASA volunteer provides to the Court assists the court in making crucial decisions about a child's future. CASA of Cook County volunteers represent the diverse communities found within Chicago. CASA volunteers come from all professions, races, ethnicities, and social and economic backgrounds. CASA volunteers must be at least 21 years old.

What do CASA volunteers commit to do?

- Volunteers successfully complete training and are sworn in as CASA volunteers.
- Volunteers commit to serving 12 months as a CASA volunteer.
- Volunteers accept assignment to a child or sibling group's case and actively advocate on behalf of the child(ren).
- Volunteers work closely with their Advocate Supervisors, who provide direction and supervision on the cases.
- Volunteers spend approximately 10-15 hours a month on a case gathering information from visiting with the child(ren) and those adults who impact the child(ren).
- Volunteers need some flexibility during the day in order to be present and effective at court hearings, as well as at other meetings that are held between court dates. The time will vary depending on the status of the case. Court hearings typically occur in 6-week cycles, but may vary depending on the complexity of the case.
- Volunteers attend 12 hours of additional training per year.

How are CASA volunteers effective?

- By actively monitoring the child's case as it progresses through the court system to ensure that the child's best interests are being met and that the necessary services are provided.
- By gathering information and conducting an independent investigation about the family's situation.
- By observing family and sibling visits.
- By making recommendations to the court regarding the child's best interests.
- By submitting computer generated reports to the Court and involved parties at each hearing.
- By being present at all court hearings and providing oral testimony.
- By being present at other meetings that affect the child(ren)'s best interests between court dates.
- By communicating with the child(ren), parents, other family members, and professionals using concern, tact and basic communication skills.
- By respecting and relating to people from various social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in a variety of settings.
- By maintaining accurate records and objectivity.
- By remaining in close communication with their Advocate Supervisors.
- By having a flexible personal and professional schedule in order to accommodate court dates and meetings.
- By having a telephone equipped with voicemail or an answering machine.



Volunteer Application

Date _____ Social Security Number: ____-____-_____

Name: _____
Last First MI

Maiden Name: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip Code

Date of Birth: _____ Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

E-mail: _____ Fax: _____

Do you have an answering machine/voice mail? YES NO

Do you have access to a computer? YES NO

Do you have access to a car? YES NO

Drivers License Number: _____ State Issued: _____

Exp. Date: _____ Restrictions: _____

Do you have auto insurance? YES NO
If yes, please indicate the company and policy number. _____

What is your experience working with children?

Are you presently or have you ever been a foster or adoptive parent? YES NO
If yes, please provide name of agency:

Name your local community or neighborhood newspaper other than the *Tribune* or the *Sun-Times*:

Current Employment Status: full-time part-time student not employed retired

Current Employer _____ Phone _____

Address _____
Street City State Zip

Name of Supervisor: _____ May we contact? YES NO

Length of Employment: _____ Position: _____

Employment History:

Previous Employer #1 _____ Phone _____

Address _____
Street City State Zip

Name of Supervisor: _____ May we contact? YES NO

Length of Employment: _____ Position: _____

Previous Employer #2 _____ Phone _____

Address _____
Street City State Zip

Name of Supervisor: _____ May we contact? YES NO

Length of Employment: _____ Position: _____

Education (highest level obtained): _____

Name of school	City and State	Graduation date	Degree Obtained
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High

College

Other

Having been convicted of or plead guilty to traffic offenses or criminal charges does not necessarily exclude you from being a CASA volunteer. Please be aware that the CASA program will reject an applicant found to have been convicted of, or having charges pending for, a felony or misdemeanor involving violence, moral turpitude, a sex offense, child abuse or neglect, or related acts that would, in the sole discretion of the CASA program, pose risks to children or the CASA program's credibility

Have you ever been convicted of or plead guilty or no contest to any criminal charges, ordinance violations, or serious traffic offenses? YES NO

Have you ever been sentenced to or served time in any prison, jail or other correctional facility? YES NO

Do you have any criminal charges pending? YES NO

If you answered "yes" to any of the four previous questions, please describe the offense below.

Date of offense	Age at the time	Charge	City/State
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Have you ever been the subject of, or been involved with any child protection proceedings, investigations, actions or claims in the child welfare system? YES NO
If yes, please explain:

Have you had any personal experience with:

- Child Welfare Foster Care
 Juvenile Court System Other Child Related Agencies

If yes, please explain: _____

Please list your previous addresses for the last **five** years:

Street City State Dates

Street City State Dates

Street City State Dates

Street City State Dates

How did you hear about the CASA Program?

Friend: _____ Newspaper/Magazine: _____

Local Media: _____ National Media: _____

Internet: _____ Other: _____

Please list previous/current volunteer activities: _____

Describe any personal or professional constraints that may restrict your time:

Rank your skill level:

	Low				High
Problem Solving	1	2	3	4	5
Typing/Computer	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to analyze situations	1	2	3	4	5
Writing Skills	1	2	3	4	5
Self Motivation	1	2	3	4	5
Organization	1	2	3	4	5

Please feel free to elaborate: _____

Please list any resources or talents that you have which might be of assistance to CASA, including fluency in any foreign languages:

Please answer on an attached sheet (150 words or less):

WHY DO YOU WANT TO BE A CASA?

Please read carefully

I hereby certify that all statements on this application are true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that by submitting this application, I authorize the CASA program to make annual inquiries concerning my employment, character, police records, and background for the purpose of determining my suitability as a volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). I understand that all of this information will be held in the strictest of confidence.

Signature

Date



References

Please list three references, two personal and one professional, which are **NOT** related to you. References will be contacted by e-mail and/or mail. Please carefully consider your choices and complete all lines.

1. NAME: _____

E-MAIL: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: W: _____ H: _____

RELATIONSHIP: _____

2. NAME: _____

E-MAIL: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: W: _____ H: _____

RELATIONSHIP: _____

3. NAME: _____

E-MAIL: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: W: _____ H: _____

RELATIONSHIP: _____

The following information is requested solely for demographic purposes and will be utilized exclusively for planning, recruitment and training by the CASA program. It will not be distributed, exchanged, or sold to other individuals or organizations.

Ethnicity: check one

African-American Hispanic/Latino Caucasian Arab/Middle Eastern
Native American Asian/Pacific Islander Multi-racial Other

Annual Income: below \$20,000 20,000-30,000 31,000-40,000
41,000-50,000 51,000-60,000 61,000+

Please return your completed application to:

CASA of Cook County
1100 S. Hamilton St., 8-W
Chicago, IL 60612

312-433-4927 (fax)

Thank You.

**CASA of Cook County
Cook County Juvenile Court
1100 South Hamilton 8-West
Chicago, IL 60612**

Driving Directions

From North

Take Lakeshore Drive south to Roosevelt Rd. Go west on Roosevelt Rd. to Hamilton Ave. Make Rt. on Hamilton and enter parking garage across from Juvenile Justice Center.

From South

Take I-94 W – Take the exit – exit #52B – towards Roosevelt Rd./ Taylor St. Turn Left onto W Roosevelt Rd. Turn right onto Hamilton Ave. and enter the parking garage across from the Juvenile Justice Center.

From West

Take I-290 East – take exit 2400 W/Western Ave exit, exit #27C. Continue on W Congress PKY. Turn Right on S Western Ave. Turn Left on W Taylor St. Turn right on S Hamilton Ave. and enter the parking garage across from the Juvenile Justice Center.

Public Transportation

Yellow Line

Take Yellow Line to Howard. Transfer to Red Line train - go south on Red Line until you reach Roosevelt. Take bus #12 Roosevelt Westbound to Ogden and Taylor. Entrance is on Ogden just past Hamilton St.

Purple Line

Take Purple Line to Howard. Transfer to Red Line train - go south on Red Line until you reach Roosevelt. Take bus #12 Roosevelt Westbound to Ogden and Taylor. Entrance is on Ogden just past Hamilton St.

Red Line

Take Red Line to Roosevelt. From Roosevelt take bus #12 Roosevelt Westbound to Ogden and Taylor. Entrance is on Ogden just past Hamilton St.

Blue Line

Forest Park Line: Take the Forest Park Line towards Forest Park. Exit at Medical Center. Go west along the platform and up the ramp to the Damen St. exit. Make a left onto Damen St. Walk several blocks to Ogden. Make a right on Ogden (diagonal street). Walk several blocks until you see a large white building on your left. Entrance is on Ogden just past Hamilton St.

Pink Line

Take the Pink Line to the Polk St. exit. Make a left out of the station onto Polk.

- Walk to Juvenile Justice Center: Take Polk west several blocks to Ogden. Make a left on Ogden. Walk several blocks until you see a large white building on your left. Entrance is on Ogden just past Hamilton St. **OR: (Monday-Friday rush hour)**
- Take the #38 Ogden/Taylor bus westbound to Ogden from the Polk station. You will see the Juvenile Justice Center on the corner of Ogden and Taylor. Entrance is on Ogden just past Hamilton.

Brown Line

Take Brown Line to Belmont. Transfer to Red Line - take Red Line to Roosevelt. Transfer to bus #12 Roosevelt Westbound to Ogden and Taylor. Entrance is on Ogden just past Hamilton St.

Green Line

Take Green Line to Roosevelt. Transfer to bus #12 Roosevelt Westbound to Ogden and Taylor. Entrance in on Ogden just past Hamilton St.

Orange Line

Take Orange Line to Roosevelt. Transfer to bus #12 Roosevelt Westbound to Ogden and Taylor. Entrance in on Ogden just past Hamilton St.

Additional entrance is located at 1100 South Hamilton across from the parking garage. The Ogden entrance is closed on weekends.

Follow the red path marked on the floor to the bank of elevators on your right. CASA is on the 8th floor.

CASA of Cook County Volunteer Advocate Training



August 2008

Saturday, August 2, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, August 9, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, August 16, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, August 23, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
Court observations on flex schedule
Swearing In—
Wednesday, August 27, 9:00–10:30 a.m.

Location: Fourth Presbyterian Church
on North Michigan Ave, Chicago

September 2008

Tuesday Evenings, 6 p.m.– 9 p.m.
September 9, 16, 23, 30
October 7, 14, 21, 28
November 4
Court observations on flex schedule
Swearing In—
Friday, November 7, 9:00–10:30 a.m.

Location: Cook County Juvenile Center

January 2009

Saturday, January 10, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, January 17, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, January 24, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, January 31, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
Court Observations on flex schedule
Swearing In—
Wednesday, February 4, 9:00–10:30 a.m.

Location: Cook County Juvenile Center

February 2009

Tuesday Evenings, 6 p.m.– 9 p.m.
February 10, 17, 24,
March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
April 7
Court Observations on flex schedule
Swearing In—
Friday, April 10, 9:00–10:30 a.m.

Location: Cook County Juvenile Center

April 2009

Saturday, April 25, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, May 2, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, May 9, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, May 16, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
Court Observations on flex schedule
Swearing In—
Wednesday, May 20, 9:00–10:30 a.m.

Location: South Holland, IL

June 2009

Saturday, June 6, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, June 13, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, June 20, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Saturday, June 27, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
Court Observations on flex schedule
Swearing In—
Wednesday, June 30, 9:00–10:30 a.m.

Location: Cook County Juvenile Center

If you are interested in training as an Advocate, please contact LaDora Robinson-Locke, Director of Recruitment and Training, for more information.