

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

THE SAN FRANCISCO CASA PROGRAM

A POWERFUL VOICE IN A CHILD'S LIFE

Mission

The **San Francisco Court Appointed Special Advocate (SFCASA) Program** trains community volunteers to serve as officers of the court to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the foster care system.

Vision

Our vision is that every child has a safe, loving home and is given the opportunity to thrive.

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Preface

This manual provides guidelines for helping a CASA volunteer work their case effectively, to follow CASA policies, and to remember CASA's role in the court system. This manual is not intended to replace volunteer training. On the contrary, this manual supplements the training all volunteers receive and assumes the user has a basic understanding of the CASA program.

CASA volunteers are professionals working alongside other professionals, such as attorneys, judges and social workers. CASA has a voice in the court system to ensure that every abused and neglected child has the right to a safe, permanent home.

Program Policies

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program provides trained community volunteers to advocate for the best interests of the children who come into the court system primarily as a result of abuse or neglect.

A CASA program has a mission and purpose in keeping with the mission and purpose of the National and California CASA Association and abides by the National and California CASA Code of Ethics and Standards. A CASA program operates with access to legal counsel. The management and operation of a CASA program assures adequate supervision of CASA volunteers. A CASA program keeps written records on each volunteer applicant and case. The program also maintains management and personnel policies and procedures, screening procedures, training curriculum, and relevant data on each case and on the operation of the program. A CASA program does not accept applicants if they have been convicted of, or have charges pending for, a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse or neglect, or related acts that would pose risks to children or the CASA program's credibility. A CASA program strives to be an inclusive organization whose volunteers, staff, and board members reflect the children they serve and the community in terms of gender, ethnicity, and cultural and socio-economic background.

Role of the CASA Volunteer

A CASA volunteer is appointed by the court to advocate for children who come into the court system primarily as a result of abuse or neglect. A CASA volunteer advocates for the best interests of the child to whom they are assigned. They perform an independent investigation and then report back to the judge with their findings through written reports. They supplement the role of other professionals involved in the case. They visit with their child(ren) on a regular basis. They interview and collaborate with the parents,

teachers and social workers. A CASA becomes a consistent support for the child throughout their time as a dependent of the court.

Qualifications and Abilities of the CASA Volunteer

- To make a *minimum* 18 month commitment to the program.
- To understand and follow all CASA policies.
- To maintain confidentiality at all times.
- To respect and relate to people from various backgrounds in a variety of settings.
- To communicate effectively both orally and in writing.
- To gather and accurately record factual information.
- To meet report deadlines and requirements.
- To be objective, open-minded and flexible.
- To accept supervision and seek feedback from CASA staff.
- To maintain professional and collaborative relationships with all community service providers.
- To provide one's own transportation.
- To pass a security check including a criminal background check, DMV record check, Child Abuse Index Registry check, and four [4] Letters of Recommendation.

Responsibilities of the CASA Volunteer

- Maintain consistent weekly contact with assigned CASA child(ren).
- Maintain consistent monthly (or more often when necessary) contact with CASA Supervisor.
- To attend conferences and/or court hearings regarding CASA child(ren).
- Provide a monthly record of hours spent on CASA Case to CASA Supervisor (**see monthly log samples at end of Handbook**).
- Maintain appropriate case notes.
- Provide CASA Supervisor with court reports **at least ten days** prior to each hearing.
- Attend 12 hours of on-going training during the course of a year (**see page 6**).
- To always have professional conduct, be respectful, tactful and patient while performing your duties as a CASA volunteer, keeping in mind that you are acting under the direct authority of the Dependency Court as well as the CASA program.

The CASA Volunteer **does not** engage in the following activities:

- Take the child to your home.
- Give legal advice or therapeutic counseling to youth or family.
- Be related to any parties involved in a case or employed in a position or agency that may result in a conflict of interest. (i.e. foster parent)
- Make placement arrangements for the child.
- All activities prohibited by local dependency and juvenile courts.
- Include a spouse, significant other, own children in activities with assigned child.

- Transport the child in a vehicle with anyone other than a sworn CASA volunteer or CASA staff.
- Transport a child/youth without required insurance limits.
- Disclose the confidential placement of a foster youth to anyone other than CASA staff, Child Welfare Worker or the minor's attorney.
- Give money or provide financial support to the child, child's family or caregiver.

Role of the CASA Supervisor

A CASA supervisor is assigned to a volunteer to give guidance and support. A CASA supervisor and a volunteer become a team working together to ensure that a child's best interests are being met. CASA supervisors assist volunteers in information gathering, court report writing, and are available to the volunteer to discuss questions and concerns that may arise. Supervisors also attend court hearings and help edit court reports. A CASA volunteer is expected to maintain contact with their case supervisor, at a minimum of once a month. CASA volunteers must also submit monthly logs to their case supervisor once a month. Failure to maintain contact with your case supervisor is grounds for dismissal.

Role of Child Welfare Services

Child Welfare Services' primary concern is the safety of the child. Child Welfare Services is mandated by law to protect children from abuse and neglect. The role of the social worker is to investigate abuse allegations, identify service needs, and work with families and/or the courts to develop strategies that will enable the family to successfully and safely parent their child(ren).

Volunteer Training

Volunteers attend 40 hours of volunteer training. Training covers areas such as: child abuse and neglect, courtroom procedures, court report writing, substance abuse, permanency, child development, cultural awareness, and other topics that involve child welfare. Outside professionals such as social workers, attorneys, judges, and others who are actively involved with the child welfare system participate in the volunteer training. After volunteers have completed their initial training, they are sworn-in by a judge as officers of the court.

Continuing Education

Volunteers are required to attend twelve hours of continuing education throughout the year. This training may be obtained in a variety of ways: attending SFCASA continuing education classes, attending workshops or classes in the community, watching pertinent videos, reading applicable books, etc. Books, videos and resource materials are available in the CASA office. Check with CASA staff for suggestions.

Training Manuals

CASA provides training manuals to volunteers when they begin volunteer training. They offer helpful materials that address issues such as cultural sensitivity, the role of the CASA volunteer, substance-abuse information and other valuable information that pertains to at risk children. Handouts with additional and pertinent information are also given prior to each training class.

Case Matching

The San Francisco CASA program has a waitlist of over one hundred children. Many of these children are school aged and teens, and many live out of county.

Towards the end of training, the Training and Recruitment Manager will meet one on one with volunteers to discuss matching and any other issues that may have come up. All trainees will complete a Volunteer Preference Form on the last night of training indicating any preferences they have regarding age, sex, race, and geographic location. However, there is no guarantee that these preferences will be met. The more flexible a volunteer is regarding preferences, the easier the matching process will be. Volunteers who are rigid or extremely specific in their preferences may need to wait an extensive period of time until they are matched.

Once a CASA volunteer is sworn in, they are contacted by their Case Supervisor to come in and review files. The Case Supervisors contact new CASA volunteers within two weeks of being sworn-in. The files selected for a volunteer to read are based on their particular skills, strengths, and where at all possible, their preferences. A volunteer will be given anywhere from one to five files to read.

After selecting a case the CASA volunteer shall obtain access to the appropriate case materials including the court file, the appointment order, the assignment letter, and CASA business cards.

CASA Case Files and Notes

The CASA case file is the property of CASA. Upon assignment, a copy is made for the CASA volunteer. A volunteer must make copies of any new documents and provide them to the CASA office. This includes all information received by the CASA such as school and medical records.

Volunteer case notes are the property of SFCASA. They contain confidential information about the children assigned to our program. When a case is closed, whether due to resignation, termination or a permanent situation for the child, the file and all volunteer case notes must be returned to the CASA office as soon as possible.

Ending a Case

When a case is closed the advocate will be evaluated and given an opportunity to give feed-back to the program. Prior to taking another case, volunteers are encouraged to give themselves time to transition, as well as to assess their training needs. The volunteer must return all case files to the office.

Reasons for Dismissal

Causes for dismissal include:

- Failure to fulfill Volunteer roles and responsibilities including visits with the child, maintaining contact with case supervisor and court report filing.
- Failure to attend on-going training.
- Breach of confidentiality.
- False information on volunteer application.
- Allegations of child abuse or injury to a child against a volunteer.
- Disregard for the policies and procedures of SF CASA.
- Arrest for drug or alcohol charges.

The Program Director or CASA Supervisor will provide written notice that addresses the concerns of the volunteer and will schedule a time to meet with the volunteer. If the volunteer wishes to contest their dismissal, they may request a copy of the CASA grievance policy from any of the CASA staff.

Resigning from CASA

If not involved with a case, a volunteer may notify the CASA office of resignation in writing or on the telephone. If active on a case, the volunteer must call the CASA Supervisor to discuss the resignation, develop a transition plan, relinquish the case file and all case information and documentation, and cease all contact with parties on the case. The case file must be returned prior to separation from the organization.

Grievance Process

Every effort should be made to solve problems cooperatively and informally before presenting them as a formal grievance. We encourage anyone to contact the San Francisco CASA office and ask to speak to the Program Director to discuss any concerns. Should informal efforts fail, the following policy is set forth in order to provide an outlet for complaints and a systematic means to resolve grievances. All complaints will receive thoughtful consideration and will be discussed.

1. Grievances Against Volunteers:

If a written complaint is lodged against a CASA volunteer, it will be dealt with in the following manner:

- The Program Director shall be notified.
- The matter shall be reviewed and resolved by the Case Supervisor, Program Director and Executive Director. Such review shall include contact with the complainant and the volunteer.
- At the Program Director's discretion, based on the severity and nature of the complaint, the Program Director may consult with California CASA, the Juvenile Court Judge, the program Board of Directors or other appropriate parties prior to resolution.
- A written reply shall be made to the complainant and a copy shall be placed in the volunteer file.

2. Grievances Against Program Staff:

If a written complaint is lodged against a CASA program staff member either by another agency or by a CASA volunteer, it shall be dealt with in the following manner:

- The Program Director, or Executive Director if the matter involves the Program Director, shall be notified.
- The matter shall be reviewed by the Program Director or by the Executive Director if the matter involves the Program Director, and shall include contact with the complainant and the staff member.
- At the Program Director's discretion, or the Executive Director if the matter involves the Program Director, based on the severity and nature of the complaint, the Program Director or Executive Director may consult with California CASA, the Juvenile Court Judge, or other appropriate parties prior to resolution.
- The Program Director or Executive Director will provide a written report to the complainant with copies to the staff member's personnel file.

Statements to the Public

The official spokesperson for the CASA organization shall, at all times, be the Executive Director or the Chairman of the Board. All inquiries on cases assigned to the CASA office are referred to the Executive Director. All inquiries from the public, the court, or community organizations and agencies on matters considered sensitive or relating to policy, procedures or issues of CASA are referred to the Executive Director; and all inquiries from the media (television, radio, press) are referred to the Executive Director.

Reporting Abuse to the Authorities

In their role as advocates, CASA volunteers are mandated reporters and required by law to report any reasonable suspicion that a child is a victim of child abuse or serious neglect to Child Welfare Services or the appropriate authorities. The San Francisco County Child Abuse Hotline phone number is (415) 558-2650. Phone reports must be followed up by written reports within 48 hours. Report forms are available in the CASA office. Case Supervisors can assist a volunteer who has questions regarding filing a report and can assist volunteers with the forms.

Advocates will function in compliance with the following information and reporting practices:

- Child abuse must be reported when one who is a legally mandated reporter “has knowledge of or observes a child in his or her professional capacity or within the scope of his or her employment whom he or she knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse...” (P. C. 11166 (a))
- “Reasonable suspicion” occurs when it is objectively reasonable for a person to entertain such a suspicion, based upon facts that could cause a reasonable person in a like position, drawing when appropriate on his or her training and experience, to suspect abuse. (P. C. 11166 (a))
- If you suspect, report.

Reporting:

- Notify the CASA office to report an incident of suspected child abuse as soon as practically possible. The incident must be reported to the Case Supervisor. Document that you called the office and the date in which you reported the incident.
- Notify Child Protective Service (CPS) to report an incident of suspected child abuse as soon as practically possible and report to the assigned social worker.
- Complete “Suspected Child Abuse Report” FORM SS 8572 *within 36 hours* of becoming aware of the incident.
- In an emergency, dial 911, report to the appropriate law enforcement agency, and follow-up with the CASA office, CPS, and complete Form SS 8572.

Court Reports

The court report is the formal submission of CASA’s fact-finding and recommendations to the court. CASA gives copies of the report to all parties and retains another copy in the CASA office case file. The effectiveness of court communication is dependent upon the language used and the accuracy of information presented, and the timeliness of the report. Court reports drafts are due to your case supervisor two weeks before the hearing date and to the court one week before the hearing date. CASA volunteers write reports with the assistance of their supervisor; supervisors are responsible for filing the reports with the court. Court Report writing is covered in the CASA Volunteer training.

Case Notes

CASA volunteers should regularly write and maintain CASA Case notes. Volunteers will also be provided with a monthly log template to use to track what has been done on the case each month. Case notes provide documentation for future court reports. The importance of thorough and accurate documentation cannot be stressed enough. In court, this consistent documentation will enhance the credibility of the CASA voice. The time a volunteer takes to keep current on documentation will be worth the effort in the final documentation and presentation of a case. You should not keep “process” notes in the file in case the file is ever subpoenaed to court. Your thoughts as you work on a case can be highly subjective. Processing the case is critical in making a plan of work, but such notes should only be used for designing interviews or creating other plans and then should be destroyed. It is important to protect the confidentiality of any such material; when destroyed, the material must be shredded.

See the back of this handbook for the monthly log template. On the monthly log you will record:

- Date of contact, Time of contact, including how much time was spent on the contact.
- Name of contact, relationship or profession of contact. (i.e. foster parent, district attorney, school principal)
- Summary of the contact, including the topics discussed, new information and source of new information.
- Record of observations, objective statements describing specific behaviors or facts.
- Record of ideas or opinions expressed by others.
- Record of plans, actions or decisions.

CASA case notes may be subpoenaed. The case notes in your file *should not* include:

- Interpretations or diagnosis.
- Statements unable to be supported.
- Statements which diminish professional credibility.
- Personal feelings about the case or individuals involved in the case.

When a volunteer makes a phone call to the CASA office, home visits to parents or children, leaves phone messages with caseworkers, attends court hearings or any other visits, or drives to any meetings or visit, the activity must be recorded. With thorough and accurate documentation of activity, the CASA is equipped for defense of positions and recommendations.

Monthly Update

The monthly update is the minimum case communication between the CASA and the supervisor. Communication between the advocate and the supervisor is imperative to effectively advocate for CASA children.

The monthly update should include:

- Monthly log recording monthly hours. (due each month)
- Any changes in placement, health, school, social workers or service providers.
- A listing of individuals contacted during the month.
- A summary of any contacts with the key players in the case.
- The dates of any meetings, hearings or reviews attended.
- Any concerns about the case as well as highlights.
- Any changes in CASA Advocate's residence, pertinent phone numbers, etc.
- Any changes in CASA Advocate's ability to maintain regular visits/contacts with child(ren). (vacation, health, schedule change)

Recording Volunteer Hours

As discussed above, a monthly log (**see sample at end of chapter**) is provided to assist you in recording the number of hours volunteered for the month. The monthly log is due in the CASA office each month. Please include the number of hours spent visiting with the child(ren), talking to the social worker, teachers, attorneys, and other parties involved in the case. Also include any continuing education hours completed during the month. This documentation helps add credibility to your court report, and aids a CASA volunteer in writing an accurate court report. These records are also required for Grants/Funding that CASA receives.

Home Visits

Volunteers visit or contact their CASA children on a regular basis. This is usually once a week, but the frequency of the contact will be determined by the volunteer, the case supervisor and the child's primary caregiver. A volunteer must be consistent and reliable in terms of visits with their assigned child. Failure to maintain consistent visits is reason for dismissal from a case. If a volunteer is sick or going on vacation and will miss a visit, this needs to be communicated in as much advance notice as possible to the CASA supervisor and child's caregiver and/or child.

Federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997

The Federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 states that volunteers will not be held personally liable for their acts or omissions if they are acting within the scope of their volunteer responsibility for the organization and the harm is "not caused by willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed." Prior to and subsequent to

the passage of this federal law, dozens of states passed similar volunteer protection/immunity legislation. Additionally, the SF CASA program has purchased liability insurance to offer some level of protection for our volunteers, staff, Board, and program. One of the most sound ways to protect yourself from liability is to act within your prescribed CASA volunteer role and in accordance with CASA procedures and policies.

Transportation

Transportation by volunteers in personal vehicles of children or other persons during the course of performing their duties and responsibilities is not mandatory. Volunteers can still perform their CASA duties without transporting a child; however, a volunteer may desire to take their CASA child out for ice cream, skating, or another activity which would require transportation. A current copy of the volunteer's car insurance and driver's license are required before any volunteer may transport the child they are assigned to. Approval to drive your assigned child must be on file prior to being sworn-in. If it is not, you must sign a "no drive" statement. If after signing a "no drive" statement, a volunteer should decide they want to drive, they must provide their case supervisor with all necessary documents prior to being granted permission to drive. Any further questions regarding this policy should be directed to a CASA Supervisor.

When transporting CASA children, it is extremely important to consider their safety as well as your own safety. The following guidelines must be adhered to when transporting CASA children or their family members:

- Only volunteers with valid California driver's licenses and auto insurance are allowed to transport children and family members.
- CASA volunteers who have received three (3) or more traffic citations (moving or non-moving) in the last three (3) months or who have been involved in three (3) or more vehicular accidents in the last twelve (12) months are prohibited from transporting CASA children or family members.
- CASA volunteers shall not transport any child if they have been drinking any alcoholic beverages or taking any medication that may impair their ability to drive.
- Volunteers who have been convicted of DWI or DUI (Driving while intoxicated or Driving under the influence) within the last seven (7) years shall not be permitted to transport a CASA child or family member.
- CASA volunteers transporting a CASA child shall not exceed the posted speed limit.
- CASA volunteers are responsible for the passengers in their vehicle. The driver should not begin to transport any person(s) until such person(s) have complied with the safety guidelines (A-C) detailed below for **passengers**:

- A) Children must be properly secured in a child restraint system that meets federal standards until they are at least 6 years old or 60 lbs. Children must also ride in the back seat until they are at least 12-13 years old (depending on size).
- B) Children who are at least 6 years old or weigh at least 60 lbs and are under age sixteen (16) must be properly secured in a child restraint system or a properly fitted seat belt. They must also wear their own seat belts and must not sit on their parents' or other adults' laps.
- C) Children over the age of 16 and all adults must wear safety belts. They may be cited as well as the driver for not being properly restrained.

It is each volunteer's responsibility to safely transport CASA children.

All CASA volunteers must maintain current proof of insurance for their vehicle and a copy of the insurance must be kept in the files for each volunteer. When a volunteer's insurance expires, it is that volunteer's responsibility to forward the renewal or proof of current insurance to the CASA office. Failure to do so will result in loss of driving privileges and that volunteer will be asked to sign a "no drive" statement.

Safety Issues

To the best of our knowledge, a CASA volunteer has never been harmed in the line of duty, but common sense is always in order. Never put yourself in a situation you feel may not be safe. Your CASA supervisor is available to help you work things out, so call with questions or concerns.

Be certain you have a correct address before visiting a home. Contact the family ahead of time to tell them you will be visiting with them. For example, do not make home visits late in the evening.

CASA advises against giving out your home or office phone number and suggest you use your cell phone. Do not let children visit your home. Your home is not a temporary housing option if placement falls through, even for one night.

Confidentiality

The high level of professionalism and confidentiality expected of the CASA program is the foundation of the relationships that exists between the program and the court; the volunteer and the clients, and other agency or organizational interactions relative to assigned cases. No one other than the assigned CASA volunteer and the authorized CASA staff shall have access to case files. Please do not leave your case file or any other documents out where someone else could see them, even your family members or

roommates. No one other than the assigned CASA volunteer and the authorized CASA staff shall have access to file names or court-assigned case file numbers.

All volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality policy as part of the volunteer training.

A CASA shall adhere to the following guidelines with respect to maintaining confidentiality and respecting the privacy of others in all matters relating to an assigned case. The guidelines are set out below. They govern circumstances in which the CASA requests or receives information. However, these guidelines cannot cover every possible situation which may arise. Any questions or concerns the CASA volunteer has regarding confidentiality or the application of this policy should be discussed with the CASA Supervisors. These will be resolved on a case by case basis.

In requesting information in the course of an investigation, a CASA may need to obtain information from doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, attorneys, clergy, teachers, or other professionals who have a protected relationship status with a party or the child. Your ***Court Order*** should cover most cases. By statute, there are limitations on the disclosure of information a professional receives during the course of his/her relationship with a client or patient. Many professions also have ethical principles which govern their ability to disclose information (for example, attorneys are bound by Rules of Professional Conduct; doctors, psychologists and social workers also have ethical codes). These professionals have no authority to provide confidential information to a CASA without the express permission of the client or a court order.

If it is necessary to obtain any privileged or confidential information about someone who is directly related to the case but is not the child, the CASA must obtain from that person a written release of information which allows the professional, hospital or treatment center to discuss the matter with the CASA.

While a person may sign a release allowing the CASA to obtain confidential information, he or she may not want to authorize disclosure to the other parties to the case or their attorneys. The CASA should review the signed release form very carefully and seek guidance from the CASA Supervisor if the CASA has any questions.

The CASA is not allowed to disseminate documents to any of the parties, their attorneys, or collateral sources which are covered by state or federal confidentiality laws. These documents may include drug and alcohol evaluations/records; involuntary mental health treatment and rape crisis center information; and some criminal histories. Those covered by federal law usually are stamped, "This information has been disclosed to you from records whose confidentiality is protected by Federal law (and) prohibits you from making any further disclosure. A general authorization for the release of medical or other information is NOT sufficient for this purpose."

The CASA shall never discuss an assigned case for purely conversational purposes, particularly in specific terms, with anyone.

The CASA should not promise a child or any party to the assigned case that his/her statements will be kept secret or confidential.

The CASA must disclose confidential information learned during the course of an investigation in three circumstances:

1. When consulting with the CASA Supervisor, or Program Director, who must be provided all significant case specifics.
2. When ordered by the court in a hearing or trial.
3. When the CASA thinks that there is a reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered physical and/or sexual abuse.

A CASA may disclose confidential information and discuss case specifics in two circumstances:

1. When the CASA consults with a professional service provider (Medical personnel, mental health specialist, social worker, etc.) who is providing services to the children who has agreed to the professional's disclosure or because their client signed a Release-of-Information Form.
2. When the petitioner and respondent agree or when the court orders the disclosure.

The CASA may discuss a case in hypothetical terms for purposes of illustration at professional meetings (seminars) designed to address issues promoting the best interests of children. The CASA shall not, however, mention the names of any individuals involved in the case or provide facts that may identify the case or parties.

Email Communication

It is the policy of San Francisco CASA to keep all electronic communication confidential. CASA volunteers may not share an email account with a spouse or anyone else and use that email account for CASA related communication. Volunteers must have or establish an email account that they and they only have access to. When referring to a CASA child in email communication between CASA volunteers and Case Supervisors or any other professionals including social workers and attorneys, initials only will be used.

SFCASA Social Media Policy

San Francisco Court Appointed Special Advocate (SFCASA) believes that social media, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support and sense of community for those of us engaged in advocacy for abused and neglected children. We believe that a thoughtful approach to online conversation and interaction among people online (on blogs, social networking, link-sharing, etc.) can enhance the reputation of SFCASA and help recruit needed supporters and volunteers.

While SFCASA encourages staff, board members and volunteers to join the global online conversation, we also believe it is important that those who choose to do so understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss SFCASA-related topics—whether at work or on their own time. Our ability to serve children depends on the trust and support of the public, and it is critical that we tell our story well—and handle the confidential information entrusted to us responsibly.

This policy governs the publication of and commentary on social media by employees and volunteers of SFCASA. For the purposes of this policy, social media means any facility for online publication and commentary, including without limitation blogs, wiki's, social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. This policy is in addition to and complements any existing or future policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the internet.

SFCASA employees and volunteers must have prior approval to publish or comment via social media in any way during work hours or using work facilities, or in any way that suggests they are doing so in connection with SFCASA. SFCASA employees and volunteers who are given permission are free to publish or comment via social media in accordance with this policy. Such employees and volunteers are subject to this policy to the extent they identify themselves as a SFCASA employee or volunteer (other than as an incidental mention of place of employment in a personal social media on topics unrelated to SFCASA).

Before engaging in work-related social media, employees must read and sign the attached social media policy acceptance form.

Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary.

All uses of social media must follow the same ethical standards that SFCASA employees and volunteers must otherwise follow.

Setting up Social Media

Social media identities, logon ID's and user names may not use SFCASA's name without prior approval from the Major Gifts Manager, Executive Director and / or Office Manager.

Don't Tell Secrets

It's perfectly acceptable to talk about your work and have a dialog with the community, but it's not okay to publish confidential information. Confidential information includes things such as the names and identification of foster children, youth and families. We must be mindful of the privacy of our children, youth, and families in our database.

Protect your own privacy

Privacy settings on social media platforms should be set to allow anyone to see profile information similar to what would be on the SFCASA website. Other privacy settings that might allow others to post information or see information that is personal should be set to limit access. Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see.

Be Honest

Do not blog anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. We believe in transparency and honesty. Use your real name, be clear who you are, and identify the role that you play for SFCASA. Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, point it out. But also be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be cautious about disclosing personal details.

Respect copyright laws

It is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use or fair dealing of copyrighted material owned by others, including SFCASA own copyrights and brands. You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work, and always attribute such work to the original author/source. It is good general practice to link to others' work rather than reproduce it.

Respect your audience, SFCASA, and your coworkers

The public in general, and SFCASA's employees and volunteers, reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Don't say anything contradictory or in conflict with the SFCASA website. Don't be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory - such as politics, religion, and others who work in the field. Use your best judgment and be sure to make it clear that the views and opinions expressed are yours alone and do not represent the official views of SFCASA.

Protect SFCASA volunteers and children/youth

Supporters, board members, volunteers and children/youth should not be cited or obviously referenced without their approval. Never identify supporters, board members, volunteers, or the children/youth by name without permission and never discuss confidential details of a CASA/foster youth relationship. It is acceptable to discuss general details about these relationships and to use non-identifying pseudonyms for a person (e.g., youth 123) so long as the information provided does not make it easy for someone to identify the person.

Controversial Issues

If you see misrepresentations made about SFCASA in the media, you may point that out. Always do so with respect and with the facts. If you speak about others, make sure what you say is factual and that it does not disparage that party. Avoid arguments. Make sure what you are saying is factually correct.

Be the first to respond to your own mistakes

If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so. If someone accuses you of posting something improper (such as their copyrighted material or a defamatory comment about them), deal with it quickly - better to remove it immediately to lessen the possibility of a legal action.

Disclaimers

Wherever practical, you must use a disclaimer saying that while you work or volunteer for SFCASA, anything you publish is your personal opinion, and not necessarily the opinions of SFCASA.

The Major Gifts Manager can provide you with applicable disclaimer language and assist with determining where and how to use that.

Don't forget your day job.

Make sure that blogging does not interfere with your job or other commitments.

Enforcement

Policy violations will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination for cause.

Reasons for Exclusion

The following are reasons for exclusion from serving as a CASA volunteer advocate:

- 1) Arrest and/ or conviction for acts punishable as any crime which follows:
 - a) Crimes against a child.
 - b) Violent felonies.
 - c) Any sex crimes.
 - d) Drug/substance (DUI/DWI) violations.Arrests without convictions are subject to thorough review by Agency staff and approval by the Board and the Judge. **Convictions are an automatic exclusion regardless of time frame.**
- 2) Undergoing prosecution at time of application:

With the exception of vehicle code misdemeanors, **exclusion is automatic.**

- 3) Convicted of a crime within five years before applying to be a CASA:
With the exception of vehicle code infractions, **exclusion is automatic.**
- 4) Motor vehicle code violations (using DMV point system):
 - a) Drivers with any 2-point violation on their current record; and/or excessive speed.
 - b) Drivers with a 3-point total of violations on their current records.
- 5) Acts punishable as a crime, arrests and/or convictions other than specified above:

The CASA Program staff may or may not exclude applicants after consideration of factors including but not limited to the following as evidence of good character and rehabilitation:

- a) The nature of the crime.
 - b) Period of time since the crime was committed and number of offenses.
 - c) Circumstances surrounding the commission of the crime that would demonstrate the unlikelihood of repetition.
 - d) Activities since conviction, including employment or participation in therapy or education, that would indicate changed behavior.
 - e) Granting by the Governor of the full and unconditional pardon.
 - f) Character references.
 - g) A certificate of rehabilitation from a Superior Court.
 - h) A "Finding of Factual Innocence" as described in Penal Code Section 851.8.
- 6) CPS involvement in family:
 - a) Parent of a child who is or has been an adjudicated dependent or has been placed under informal supervision of any county's children's social services agency. **Automatic exclusion.**
 - b) Spouse or significant other of a parent of a child who is or has been adjudicated a dependent or has been placed under informal supervision of any court's children's social service agency; and/or
 - c) Adult whose acts have been responsible for a child being adjudicated a dependent or placed under informal supervision of any court's children's social services. **Automatic exclusion.**
 - d) A relative who is seeking or has been given custody and care of minor(s) with an active case in the Juvenile Court System.
 - 7) Child, parent, spouse, household member or significant other of parent of child who has been the subject of a CPS report:

The CASA Program staff may or may not exclude applicants after consideration of factors including but not limited to the following as evidence of good character and rehabilitation:

- a) The nature of the report(s).
- b) The period of time since report(s) filed.
- c) Number of reports.

d) Circumstances surrounding the reports.

8) Persons providing services to children and/or their parents within the child welfare and/or juvenile court system: **Exclusion subject to staff review of conflict of interest.**