

# VOLUNTEER POLICIES (PROGRAM NAME)



**(Program Name) is a member of the  
National CASA Association  
(See Appendix A)<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Used with permission from the Ohio CASA/GAL Association

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## **Part 1: GENERAL PROGRAM POLICIES**

### **1.1 Scope of Policies**

(Program Name) considers its greatest asset to be its group of trained community volunteers, who together are reaching out to help abused and neglected children involved in (Court Name). Within our organization, volunteers donate their time and talents to serve these children as CASA/GAL advocates, board members and general program support volunteers. These policies are designed to provide guidelines for the CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates)/GAL (Guardian ad Litem) volunteer in their role. Certain policies are universal to all (PROGRAM NAME) volunteers. Therefore, throughout this manual the word volunteer is non-exclusive in meaning.

### **1.2 Purpose of Policies**

The purpose of these policies is to provide overall guidance and direction to volunteers serving as CASA/GAL volunteers. These policies do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. (PROGRAM NAME) reserves the right to change any of these policies at any time and to expect adherence to the changed policy. Areas not specifically covered by these policies shall be determined by the Executive Director. CASA/GAL volunteers will be required to sign an agreement indicating that they have read, understood and will comply with all CASA/GAL volunteer policies.

### **1.3 Exception to Policy**

On occasion, certain exceptions may be made to any of the policies at the discretion of the Executive Director or/and the Board of Trustees of (PROGRAM NAME).

### **1.4 Approval of Policies**

Approval of the CASA/GAL volunteer policies shall be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees of (PROGRAM NAME). Amendments to these policies are subject to ratification by the Board, which has final responsibility for such amendments, and reserves the right to amend these policies in any way at any time. Any amendments to these policies will be distributed to all CASA/GAL volunteers and staff within 14 days of ratification.

### **1.5 Service at the Discretion of the Agency**

(PROGRAM NAME) accepts the service of all CASA/GAL volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the program. CASA/GAL volunteers agree that the agency may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the CASA/GAL volunteer's relationship with the program.

### **1.6 Speaking on Behalf of (PROGRAM NAME)**

CASA/GAL volunteers are encouraged to speak about the program in general throughout the community. However, the Executive Director must be informed of any speaking engagements CASA/GAL volunteers may wish to arrange on behalf of

(PROGRAM NAME), so that staff can assist with written materials or go with the CASA/GAL volunteer to help with the presentation. **All volunteers are prohibited from speaking with the media on behalf of (PROGRAM NAME) or their clients.**

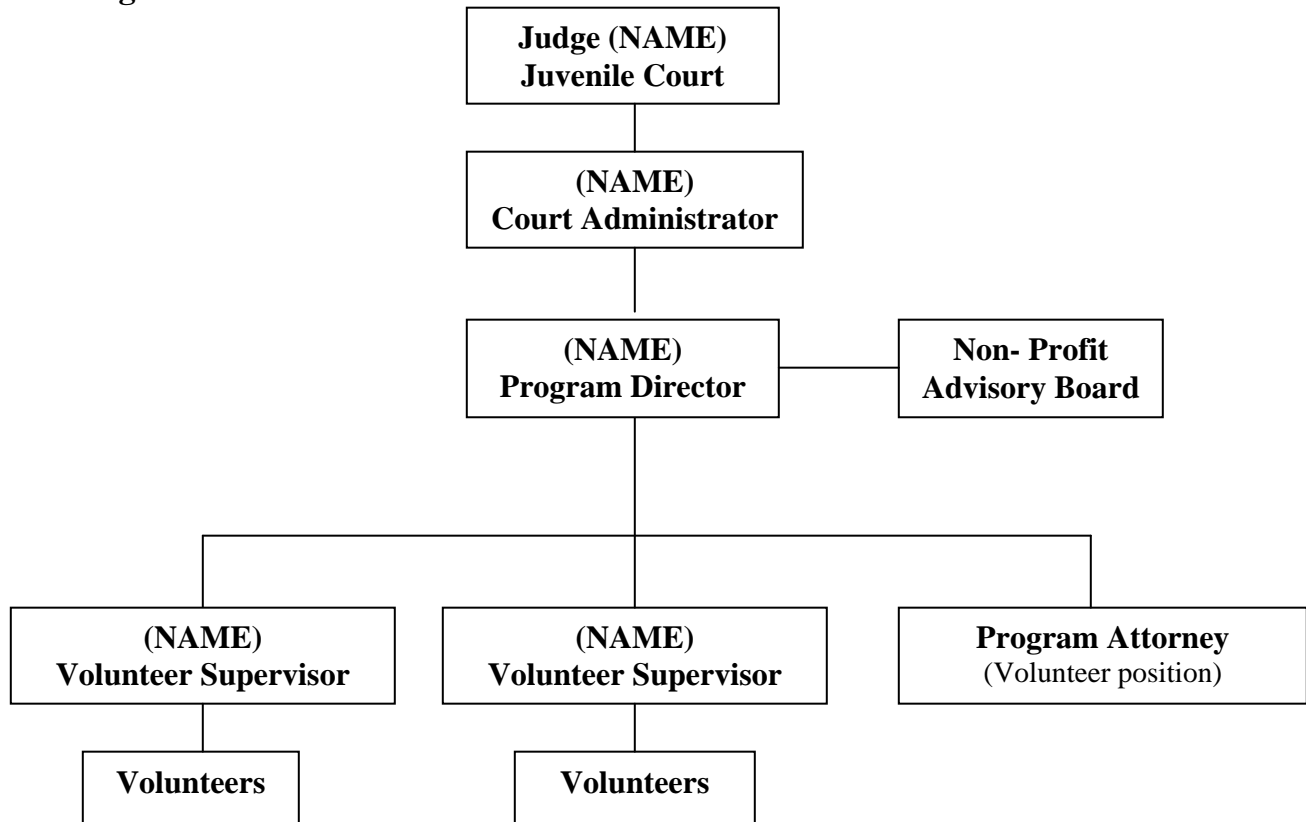
The Executive Director and the Board of Trustees has a coordinated plan for fund raising for the organization. Any ideas that CASA/GAL volunteers may have to assist with fund raising are appreciated. CASA/GAL volunteers may not initiate fund raising activities on their own on behalf of (PROGRAM NAME). This avoids duplication of effort and the possibility of more than one (PROGRAM NAME) representative approaching the same person or corporation for funding.

**Part 2: (PROGRAM NAME) OVERVIEW**

**2.1 Mission**

The mission of (PROGRAM NAME) is to recruit, train, guide, monitor and maintain CASA volunteers (Court Appointed Special Advocates), who are appointed by the (COURT NAME) Judge as Guardians ad Litem to represent the best interests of abused, neglected, and dependent children in court.

**2.2 Organizational Chart**



**Part 3: VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA/GAL) volunteers will be recruited by (PROGRAM NAME) on a proactive basis, with the intent of broadening and expanding

the volunteer involvement of the (County Name) community for the purpose of serving abused and neglected children involved in the (Court Name) System.

### **3.1 Recruitment**

Strategies for the recruitment of CASA/GAL volunteers.

(PROGRAM NAME) will recruit (County Name) volunteers using but not limited to the following methods:

- Media outreach including television, radio, newspaper and other print media.
- Speaking engagements
- Distribution of agency literature such as brochures, newsletters, recruitment flyers, volunteer applications.
- Special Events
- Speakers Bureau activities

General information about the agency, information about the need for CASA/GAL volunteers and the roles and responsibilities of CASA/GAL volunteers will be made available to the entire community through as many avenues as possible.

### **3.2 Volunteer Qualifications**

CASA/GAL volunteers will be recruited and accepted into the program without regard to gender, disability, age (over 21 years of age), race, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation or socio-economic level. The sole qualification for volunteer recruitment will be suitability to perform the duties of the CASA/GAL volunteer position.

Qualifications for CASA/GAL volunteers exclusions including but not limited to:

1. (PROGRAM NAME) will not accept into the program individuals who have been convicted of or have charges pending for any criminal act involving a child or who have been adjudicated in Juvenile Court to have abused or neglected a child. This is inclusive of, but not limited to, any felony or misdemeanor involving a sexual offense, abuse, neglect, or related acts that would pose risks to children or to credibility.
2. Staff, employees and individuals employed either directly or indirectly by the (County Name) Children Services Board or (Court Name) will not be accepted as CASA/GAL volunteers.
3. (PROGRAM NAME) will not accept into the program individuals who have been convicted of any criminal act involving drugs or alcohol within the past 5 years.
4. Individuals who have an indicated or substantiated case within the Child Abuse Registry or with (County Name) Children Services Board will not be accepted as a volunteer.

### **3.3 CASA/GAL Volunteer Application**

Individuals may apply to serve as advocates for (PROGRAM NAME) by submitting a written application provided by the agency. The application will contain information about the applicant's educational background and training, employment history, and

experience working with children. Included with the application will be an authorization form for background checks and a request for 3 letters of reference (at least 2 of whom are unrelated to the applicant). (PROGRAM NAME) staff screens applications and references and selected individuals will be asked to schedule an interview.

### **3.4 Interview**

Candidates for a training class shall be interviewed in person by the (PROGRAM NAME) staff. The interviewer will seek to determine the volunteer's suitability for an interest in the CASA/GAL position. The interviewer should determine the qualifications of the volunteer applicant, his/her commitment to fulfil the requirements of the position and should answer any questions that the volunteer applicant may have about the volunteer CASA/GAL position. Applicants will be assessed regarding their respect for a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets his/her best interests and if they are an individual who could assure that a child's best interests are represented at every stage of the case.

During the selection process all applicants will be given information about the agency, CASA/GAL volunteer duties, qualifications, and time commitment required for volunteers. Candidates will be treated with dignity and respect and if applicant is not suited for volunteering with CASA/GAL, he/she will be notified of this and if appropriate referred elsewhere.

### **3.5 Background Check**

Background checks are conducted on the volunteer applicant by screening criminal records through local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, the central child abuse registry and sex offender registry in the county and state in which the volunteer applicant resides and works. If the volunteer applicant has lived in another county/state within the past 5 years, the above listed checks in that area will be requested unless previously covered by the national background check. The program will complete these checks before a volunteer is accepted into the program and will update these checks at least every four years.

(PROGRAM NAME) will reject a volunteer applicant if he/she refuses to sign releases of information for security checks or if it is found that information on their application has been falsified.

### **3.6 Criminal Charges**

Any volunteer applicant found to have been convicted of or having charges pending for a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse or neglect or related acts that would pose a threat to a child or (PROGRAM NAME)'s credibility will not be accepted as a volunteer.

Any volunteer applicant found to have committed a felony or misdemeanor that is unrelated to or would not pose a threat to a child or would not negatively impact the credibility of the agency may be considered as a volunteer. Staff will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the offense and any other factors that may influence the

decision to accept the applicant as a CASA/GAL volunteer. The decision of the (PROGRAM NAME) staff regarding this matter is final.

All volunteers must report any current criminal charges and any abuse, neglect or dependency investigations of which they are subjects to their supervisors at the agency. (PROGRAM NAME) staff reserves the right to immediately suspend CASA/GAL status pending resolution or investigation into the above charges.

### **3.7 CASA/GAL Job Description**

Every CASA/GAL volunteer will be provided with a copy of the CASA/GAL job description and is encouraged to offer suggestions for changes in the position or its description. (Refer to Appendix B – CASA/GAL Volunteer Job Description for specific duties.)

### **3.8 Pre-service Training**

(PROGRAM NAME) provides training and development for CASA/GAL volunteers. This includes training (Pre-service) which is required before a volunteer is sworn in as a Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardian Ad Litem and educational opportunities offered to ongoing CASA/GAL's.

CASA/GAL volunteer applicants are required to successfully complete (PROGRAM NAME)'s training class for new advocates. Training follows the standards and guidelines required by the National CASA and Ohio CASA/GAL Associations. Training includes a minimum of 30 hours and covers:

- Roles and responsibilities of a CASA/GAL volunteer
- Juvenile Court Process
- Dynamics of families including mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence and poverty
- Ohio and federal laws, regulations and policies related to Juvenile Court processes (including ASFA, CAPTA, ICWA and MEPA)
- Confidentiality and record keeping practices
- Child development
- Child abuse and neglect
- Permanency Planning
- Community agencies and resources
- Communication, interviewing and information gathering
- Advocacy
- Special needs of children served, differences in cultural and socio- economic norms, values and heritage
- Cultural competency
- Agency guidelines

Any absence must be discussed with the (PROGRAM NAME) staff. Each applicant will be provided with a comprehensive training manual. Training will be provided by a variety of instructors. Acceptance into the training course does not guarantee acceptance

as a CASA/GAL volunteer. All volunteers must also observe at least 4 hours of court hearings before case assignments as a CASA/GAL volunteer.

### **3.9 In-service Training**

CASA/GAL volunteers are required to attain a minimum of 12 education hours per year annually after their initial training. (PROGRAM NAME) provides opportunities for training through regularly scheduled in-service training meetings. (PROGRAM NAME) also provides information to CASA/GAL volunteers on educational opportunities available by such groups as NCASA Association, Ohio CASA/GAL Association, (County Name) Children Services Board, Children's Hospital and other local social service agencies. (PROGRAM NAME) also allows the educational requirement to be met through other means such as attending seminars, conferences, trainings or reading or viewing educational documentaries, programs, materials or literature. The topics must be related to the work done within the CASA/GAL volunteer arena, such as, but not limited to: child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, advocacy, foster care, adoption, volunteerism, child development, family relationships, domestic violence, alcohol or drug abuse, personal safety, divorce, single parenting, court mediation, criminal behavior, etc. Volunteers will receive in-service credit of two hours per book read, and can get credit for a maximum of two books per year. Volunteers can receive two in-service hours for any college course taken in a related field. Credit for any in-service opportunity not provided or disseminated by (PROGRAM NAME) must be pre-approved. Volunteers should notify their supervisor and fill out the appropriate form ahead of time. Volunteers are responsible for notifying the (PROGRAM NAME) office regarding their completion of the 12 hours of education and in-service training annually.

### **3.10 Acceptance into the program**

Acceptance as a CASA/GAL volunteer is determined by the (PROGRAM NAME) staff. Service as a CASA/GAL volunteer with (PROGRAM NAME) requires: completed written application form, three acceptable written references, satisfactory completion of the volunteer training, completion of court observation hours, official Swearing In with the CASA/GAL's oath of office, completion of the police, FBI and social service background checks and determination of suitability for CASA/GAL volunteer work by the (PROGRAM NAME) staff.

### **3.11 Length of Commitment**

Volunteers serving as a CASA/GAL for children are asked to commit to the (PROGRAM NAME) program for a minimum of one year.

### **3.12 Leave of absence**

Volunteers may request a leave of absence from their role as a CASA/GAL volunteer. It is requested that the volunteer provide information regarding the time period of their intended leave to the (PROGRAM NAME) staff as early as possible.

## **Part 4: VOLUNTEER SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION**

CASA/GAL volunteers are assigned to a Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator(s) will report to the Executive Director. The Executive Director reports to

the Board of Trustees. When practical, the supervision ratios will not exceed 30 volunteers to 1 supervisor and/or 45 cases/family groups to 1 supervisor.

#### **4.1 Supervision**

A CASA/GAL volunteer will be contacted on a regular (monthly) basis by the Volunteer Coordinator who will offer supervision, support and guidance and review progress on their case. (PROGRAM NAME) staff will make efforts to provide quick and thorough guidance and to be accessible to CASA/GAL volunteers whenever needed. A CASA/GAL volunteer also must keep the (PROGRAM NAME) office current of any new developments with his/her child's case.

#### **4.2 Access to Legal Counsel**

The CASA program, including staff and volunteers, has access to legal counsel for consultation or representation, as needed.

#### **4.3 Professional Conduct**

At all times CASA/GAL volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the credibility and positive reputation of the (PROGRAM NAME) program and the CASA/GAL in the courtroom and the community.

#### **4.4 Volunteer Statistics**

One of the responsibilities of the CASA/GAL volunteer will be to keep certain statistics on a monthly basis and report this information back to the (PROGRAM NAME) staff. These figures are needed by the program for grant reports and evaluation purposes. The office staff keeps the volunteer's information using the NCASA's COMET system (CASA Outcome Measures and Evaluation System) data base. The type of information needed and how to record it will be explained to the CASA/GAL volunteer.

#### **4.5 Evaluations**

CASA/GAL's will be asked to participate in a performance evaluation. This will generally be done at the close of the volunteer's case by the CASA/GAL's supervisor with input from the CASA/GAL volunteer. If the case takes over 18 months the evaluation may be done at this time.

#### **4.6 Complaints and Grievances**

Every effort should be maintained to solve problems cooperatively and informally before presenting them as a formal grievance. Should informal efforts fail, the following policy is set forth in order to provide an outlet for complaints and a systematic way to resolve the matter. All complaints will receive thoughtful consideration and will be discussed with the individual who raises them. Complaints and grievances may arise from external or internal (within the program) sources.

External: (PROGRAM NAME) is involved in work that involves the future of the lives of children and families, it is emotionally charged work that evokes a wide range of feelings. It is therefore common and expected that there will be criticism from many of the individuals involved in a case, especially when the CASA/GAL does not make

recommendations that are in agreement with others' point of view. Should a complaint arise from someone outside the CASA/GAL organization, the volunteer or Supervisor to whom the complaint was given should inform the Executive Director of the details of the complaint. It will be the responsibility of the Executive Director to decide if the complaint has substance and if so, to request a written statement from the individual initiating the complaint. The written statement will be kept on record in the (PROGRAM NAME) office. In addition, the Executive Director, with advice from the Board of Trustees if needed, will determine what action, if any, should be taken.

Internal: When a CASA/GAL volunteer wishes to make a statement of dissatisfaction with a policy, practice, condition of Supervisor's decision, the volunteer should first discuss the matter with their Supervisor. If the problem is not resolved to the satisfaction of the CASA/GAL, she/he should contact the Executive Director. In the event that the CASA/GAL is still not satisfied with the conclusion of the matter after involvement of the Executive Director, the CASA/GAL should present a written grievance statement to the Director and (PROGRAM NAME) Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees may elect to form a special committee to hear the grievance. The Executive Director will discuss the grievance with the staff involved and the (PROGRAM NAME) Board of Trustees members. The CASA/GAL volunteer will be entitled to receive a written response to their formal grievance from the Board of Trustees outlining the position the Board of Trustees has taken on the issue. The Board of Trustees' decision will be final.

#### **4.7 Progressive Discipline**

It is the policy of (PROGRAM NAME) to apply a practice of progressive discipline when needed to correct CASA/GAL volunteer misconduct or poor performance. Depending on the circumstances, misconduct can result in disciplinary action that may include a verbal warning, written warning or dismissal or can result in a written agreement for corrective action. Verbal and written warnings shall be administered by the CASA/GAL volunteer's Supervisor within one week of notice of misconduct or poor performance. When a CASA/GAL volunteer's actions are dangerous or otherwise inappropriate termination can take place immediately. A written termination letter will be sent to the volunteer within one week.

#### **4.8 Dismissal of a Volunteer**

Dismissal of a CASA/GAL volunteer will normally follow the program's progressive discipline process. Dismissal of a CASA/GAL volunteer is the responsibility of the Volunteer Coordinator and Supervisory staff of (PROGRAM NAME). (PROGRAM NAME) reserves the right to "dismiss at will." Immediate dismissal will take place only in the most serious of circumstances. Grounds for termination may include, but are not limited to:

- falsifying a volunteer application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process
- failing to complete required pre-service or in-service training;
- taking action without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the role or powers of the CASA/GAL program;

- violating a program policy, court rule or law;
- demonstrating inability to effectively carry out CASA/GAL duties;
- engaging in ex-parte communication with the court;
- gross misconduct or insubordination;
- being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing volunteer duties;
- lying or falsifying records;
- criminal charges or allegations related to drugs or alcohol, or abuse or neglect of a child;
- conflict of interest which cannot be resolved;
- transporting any child, family member, care provider, service provider, professional, party to the case, etc. at any time while performing CASA/GAL duties.

#### **4.9 Resignation**

CASA/GAL volunteers may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to resign from their volunteer service with (PROGRAM NAME). It is requested that volunteers who intend to resign provide as much advance written notice as possible, and the reason for their decision.

#### **4.10 Volunteer File**

(PROGRAM NAME) will maintain a file on each CASA/GAL volunteer. The CASA/GAL volunteer record contains, as appropriate:

- identifying information and emergency contacts;
- application;
- job description;
- reference documentation;
- security check documentation;
- training records;
- transportation Liability and Release Form;
- performance evaluations and other documentation related to performance, if applicable.

#### **4.11 Volunteer File Retention**

All volunteer files will be retained for seven (7) years from date of termination or last case assigned in a secure (locked) location either on-site or at an off-site file storage facility operated by (County Name) Records Center. At the seven year anniversary of termination or last case assigned, all files pertaining to the past volunteer(s) may be destroyed by shredding, except in the event of a high-conflict termination, which will be retained indefinitely.

#### **4.12 Review of Volunteer File**

CASA/GAL volunteers can review their file at any time by appointment with their Supervisor. Reference documentation will be removed when the volunteer has waived rights of review on the volunteer application.

#### **4.13 Additions and Corrections to Volunteer File**

Any CASA/GAL volunteer can supplement their file for additions or corrections after review by submitting a letter to the Executive Director.

### **Part 5: VOLUNTEERS AND CASE RELATED POLICIES**

#### **5.1 Assignment – Right of Refusal**

CASA/GAL volunteers are assigned to a particular case by the Supervisor. CASA/GAL volunteers are free to refuse an assignment for any reason. If the CASA/GAL volunteer does accept a case, their Supervisor will meet with him/her to review the case information and at that time will provide the volunteer with the documentation needed for the assignment. CASA/GAL volunteers must follow the directions of their Supervisor, including but not limited to, the removal from case assignments or any limitations on contact with CASA/GAL clients or former clients.

#### **5.2 Conflict of Interest**

Any relationships or activities, including, but not limited to those of an employment, business, professional, or personal nature which may conflict with a volunteer's responsibility as a CASA/GAL must be disclosed by the volunteer. A CASA/GAL volunteer should not be related to any parties involved in the case or be employed in a position or with an agency that might result in a conflict of interest. A CASA/GAL volunteer is prohibited from having a direct or indirect financial interest in the assets, leases, business transactions, or professional services of the program.

Since a conflict of interest may arise at any point in time, the CASA/GAL volunteer has an ongoing duty to disclose the existence of any actual or potential conflicts in a timely manner. It is the CASA/GAL volunteer's responsibility to prevent the occurrence of those conflicts of interest over which the volunteer has control. CASA/GAL volunteers are to remove themselves from discussions amongst CASA/GAL program staff regarding the conflict. CASA/GAL volunteers are subject to the progressive discipline process, up to and including termination, in the event said person fails to disclose the conflict prior to becoming involved in the transaction or decision affected by the conflict.

#### **5.3 Recordkeeping**

Once assigned to a case, the CASA/GAL shall maintain a confidential case file which is to include the original documentation of their appointment to the case, all notes and copies of documents relating to the case including court documents, assessments, medical records, etc., all notes relating to phone calls and other interviews, and copies of all correspondence they have received or sent in regard to the case. CASA/GAL's are required to maintain their case file in the most confidential way possible. If this is not possible in your home, arrangements can be made to keep your file in the (PROGRAM NAME) office. This file remains the property of (PROGRAM NAME) at all times. In addition, the CASA/GAL's Supervisor will maintain a file of the case. At the conclusion

of the CASA/GAL volunteer's involvement with the case, their entire file shall be returned to the (PROGRAM NAME) office for storage.

#### **5.4 Reimbursement of Expenses**

CASA/GAL volunteers are not eligible for reimbursement of any expenses related to their work as CASA/GAL volunteers. They may come to the (PROGRAM NAME) office to make long distance phone calls as not to incur these costs at home and use office equipment as needed such as computers for typing reports or copier for making copies of documents etc. (PROGRAM NAME) may receive grant funds or coupons for reimbursement to CASA volunteers for specific items such as mileage or food. These grants are often limited. CASA Volunteers will be notified of the availability and purpose of any such funds. Mileage, copy and phone call expenses that a volunteer incurs in their role as an advocate should be reported to the program and may be tax deductible for the volunteer.

#### **5.5 Visits with Child**

CASA/GAL volunteers will visit face-to-face with the child(ren) on their case at least 2 times monthly. If child is placed far away, the CASA/GAL volunteer shall consult with the (PROGRAM NAME) staff for clarification on contacting the child. At least every month a visit should occur within the child's residence. Visits should be made by appointment. Only after discussion with their Supervisor, should CASA/GAL volunteers make unannounced visits to a child's placement, including a foster home.

#### **5.6 Reporting of Abuse/Neglect**

CASA volunteers are required to report any incident of child abuse or neglect, or any situation in which the CASA volunteer has reason to believe that a child is in imminent danger to the CASA/GAL supervisor and appropriate authorities, following the state legal requirements for mandated reporting. Any questions regarding what is abuse or neglect should be directed to their Supervisor. The Supervisor will advise the volunteer as to whether or not to phone (County Name) Children Services Board with details of the problem. If the CASA/GAL volunteer feels that the situation is an emergency, they should first call Children Services and /or the police (911), then notify their Supervisor.

#### **5.7 Volunteer – Client Relationship**

CASA/GAL volunteers are not to provide direct service delivery to any party involved in their case that could:

- a) lead to a conflict of interest or liability problems: or
- b) cause a child or family to become dependent on the CASA/GAL volunteer for services that should be provided by other agencies or organizations. The role of the CASA/GAL volunteer is outlined in the job description and does not extend beyond the duties listed therein. Good judgement and common sense should dictate the relationships with parties involved in a case. Some examples of inappropriate volunteer practices are:
  - a.) taking a child to the CASA/GAL's home or any residence not approved by the court;
  - b.) giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling to anyone involved in a case;

- c.) making placement arrangements for the child;
- d.) giving money or expensive gifts to the child, family or caregiver;
- e.) engaging in activities that jeopardize the safety of the child; or
- f.) any payment of services.

### **5.8 Transportation of Children and Other Parties**

CASA/GAL volunteers of (Program Name) are not to provide transportation to any child, family member, care provider, service provider, professional, party to the case, etc. at any time while performing CASA/GAL duties.

### **5.9 Observing Parent/Child or Sibling Visits**

Under certain circumstances, CASA/GAL volunteers may observe visits between the child and their parents/siblings. The purpose of attending such visits would be to observe the family interactions, not to supervise or interfere. CASA/GAL volunteers should respect these visits as limited, valuable time that the family has to spend together. Supervision of visits is never to be the responsibility of CASA/GAL Volunteer.

### **5.10 Volunteer Safety**

No volunteer should feel obligated to put himself or herself in personal jeopardy as they perform their role as a CASA/GAL. If the volunteer is uneasy about entering a neighborhood, building, or meeting with a particular party, the volunteer should arrange the meeting in a more comfortable location (such as a public place or CASA/GAL office) or arrange for another CASA/GAL, supervisor or other person to accompany him/her.

### **5.11 Court Reports and Appearance**

A primary responsibility of the CASA/GAL volunteer will be to compile a typewritten report on his/her case prior to each appearance in court. The CASA/GAL volunteer will receive training from the program on how to write and process these reports. The (PROGRAM NAME) office will contact the volunteer 4 weeks in advance to remind volunteers of the hearing date and need for a court report. The reports are to be approved by the Supervisor of the CASA/GAL prior to submission of the report to the court. This report should be received by the Supervisor 2 weeks prior to the court appearance. The Supervisor will then review the report and offer suggestions to the volunteer regarding any alterations to the report. The Supervisor will not alter the report or recommendations without the knowledge of the CASA/GAL. If the Supervisor disagrees with the CASA/GAL volunteer's recommendations, and the Supervisor and CASA/GAL volunteer are not able to reach an agreement, the Supervisor will have authority to delete items they believe may cause harm to the child or agency.

CASA/GAL volunteers are responsible for arriving at court 15 minutes before scheduled to meet with their Supervisor to cover any last minute issues. All CASA/GAL volunteers will have a (PROGRAM NAME) staff accompany them to court. CASA/GAL volunteers are to discuss all oral recommendations with the Supervisor prior to the hearing.

## **5.12 Confidentiality**

CASA/GAL volunteers respect the child's right to privacy by maintaining confidentiality. CASA/GAL volunteers are responsible for maintaining strict confidentiality of all information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a party to their case, another (PROGRAM NAME) case, another volunteer, or staff. Volunteers are not authorized to solicit other persons outside (PROGRAM NAME) to aid them with specific duties outlined in the CASA/GAL job description.

A CASA/GAL volunteer becomes an officer of the court upon assignment to the case. Any information pertaining to the individual families or children that the CASA/GAL volunteer receives in the discharge of his or her duties is strictly confidential. It may not be discussed with or distributed to anyone except the following:

- a.) (Court Name)
- b.) (PROGRAM NAME) staff and volunteers
- c.) CSB and its employees
- d.) Other parties to the case and their counsel
- e.) Others as permitted by statute or by the court.

Discussions of the case with others, even if the family name and other identifying information are omitted, is strictly forbidden. Violation of confidentiality can result in the discrediting of the CASA/GAL program and may be cause for immediate dismissal.

Volunteers will take measures to ensure that all electronic and hard copy correspondence, files and records are safely and securely maintained. Volunteers should maintain their files in a way and place that does not allow for any breach of confidentiality. The volunteer should confer with their volunteer supervisor before releasing their case file to any involved party. Volunteers must also return their entire case files to the program within two weeks of case closure. Care will be taken by all volunteers to protect the identity of clients within e-mail transmissions by omitting the client's name where possible.

## **5.13 Closing a Case**

A volunteer, in conjunction with the (PROGRAM NAME) staff, will decide when their CASA/GAL case should be closed. In certain circumstances, the (PROGRAM NAME) staff may decide to close a case. CASA/GAL volunteers will meet with the (PROGRAM NAME) staff and discuss the case closing. Volunteers will bring their case files and notes to the (PROGRAM NAME) office and sign the necessary forms to close the case. The office will send information to the parties on the case notifying them that the CASA/GAL has closed his/her case and will no longer be a CASA/GAL on this case. Volunteers are asked to write a summary which will be included in the closed file.

It is mandatory for all volunteers, upon closing a case, to return any and all case related material to the (PROGRAM NAME) office. All case files from date of case closing will remain in a secure (locked) location either on-site or at an off-site file facility operated by (Facility Name). These files will be retained indefinitely and be maintained in a safe, secure environment and remain confidential.

## **Part 6: HEALTH & NON DISCRIMINATION RELATED POLICIES**

### **6.1 Sexual Harassment and Discrimination**

(PROGRAM NAME) seeks to maintain an environment within the program which is free from intimidation, discrimination, coercion or harassment, including sexual harassment. Discrimination against a volunteer or client on the basis of age, disability, race, national origin, marital status or sexual orientation by another volunteer or staff member of (PROGRAM NAME) will not be tolerated. In the event of a question, complaint or allegation regarding harassment or discrimination of any kind, the volunteer should speak with his or her Supervisor. If the volunteer is uncomfortable discussing the matter with their Supervisor, the volunteer should address the issue with the Executive Director. The matter will be investigated in a discreet and confidential manner and after consideration of the facts, appropriate action will be taken in the best interests of the volunteer and the program. Such action may include recommendations for counseling, disciplinary warning or discharge.

### **6.2 Alcohol/Drugs**

CASA/GAL volunteers for (PROGRAM NAME) are prohibited from being under the influence of, using, possessing, selling or otherwise being involved with illegal drugs and/or alcohol while engaging in their role for the program. CASA/GAL volunteers are expected to notify the (PROGRAM NAME) office if arrested for an alcohol or drug related offense.

### **6.3 AIDS – Communicable Diseases**

(PROGRAM NAME) will not tolerate discrimination against a volunteer or staff member who has become infected with HIV/AIDS or other contagious medical condition. All staff and volunteers will respect the individual's right to privacy and maintain confidentiality regarding medical information and health status of all persons connected with the organization including clients.

### **6.4 Whistleblower Policy**

A whistleblower as defined by this policy is an employee, board member or volunteer of the CASA program who reports any activity that he/she considers to be illegal, dishonest, unethical or inappropriate to one or more of the parties specified in this policy. The whistleblower is not responsible for investigating the activity or for determining fault or corrective measures; appropriate management officials are charged with these responsibilities.

A. ACTIVITIES include but are not limited to:

1. Examples of illegal, dishonest, unethical or inappropriate activities which are violations of federal, state or local laws; such as billing for services not performed or for goods not delivered; and other fraudulent financial reporting.

B. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

1. If a volunteer has knowledge of or a concern of such activities, the employee is to contact the Board of Trustees who is responsible for investigating and coordinating corrective action.
2. The volunteer must exercise sound judgment to avoid baseless allegations. A volunteer who intentionally files a false report of wrongdoing will be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

C. WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS include:

1. Confidentiality - Insofar as possible, the confidentiality of the whistleblower will be maintained. However, identity may have to be disclosed to conduct a thorough investigation, to comply with the law and to provide accused individuals their legal rights of defense
2. Preventing Retaliation - The CASA program will not retaliate against a whistleblower that makes a report in good faith.
3. Any whistleblower who believes he/she is being retaliated against must contact the board of trustees immediately. The right of a whistleblower for protection against retaliation does not include immunity for any personal wrongdoing that is alleged and investigated.

WHISLTLEBLOWERS CONTACTS – Volunteers with any questions regarding this policy should contact the executive director or member of the board of trustees.

## **6.5 Diversity Plan**

Non Discrimination and Diversity Plan - As a commitment to diversity and non discrimination, (PROGRAM NAME) will use communication that is acceptable to all people and shows diversity. We will advertise in venues that are directed at a cross section of the population. We will advertise and recruit fairly and throughout the entire community and work to reach all underrepresented populations. We will encourage staff and volunteer training in the area of understanding diversity.

(PROGRAM NAME), it's staff, board and volunteers are committed to diversity and will keep an ongoing written plan to guide and measure progress in increasing inclusiveness and diversity with measurable actions that will demonstrate progress towards goals.

The Executive Director, staff and board will keep this document current and up to date through annual reviews.

**Part 7: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RECEIPT OF VOLUNTEER POLICIES**

I acknowledge receipt of the Volunteer Policies of (Program Name). I have carefully read the Volunteer Policies and understand them.

I further understand that the Policies are subject to change at the discretion of the CASA, and that CASA may deviate from, discontinue, modify or change policies, as it deems necessary, without notice. If I need clarification of any of the policies, I will advise the Program Director.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix A:

### **National CASA Mission Statement**

The mission of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association, together with its state and local members, is to support and promote court-appointed volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children so that they can thrive in safe, permanent homes.

### **National CASA Code of Ethics**

This code of Ethics provides National CASA Association members with guidelines for professional behavior and ethical conduct. The Association may not, however, be held liable for the actions of its members.

#### **CONDUCT**

1. Members of the National CASA Association will abide by the National CASA Association Code of Ethics and all laws and regulations governing their activities.
2. Members of the National CASA Association will uphold the credibility and dignity of the CASA concept by conducting all business in an honest, fair, professional, and humane manner.
3. Employees of CASA programs and CASA/GAL volunteers will not use their authority inappropriately, or condone any illegal act or unethical practices related to their programs or community.
4. CASA programs and individuals who are members of the National CASA Association may not use CASA to promote personal gain.
5. Members of the National CASA Association will avoid any action which could adversely affect the confidence of the public in the integrity of the Association.
6. National CASA and its member programs will serve and respond to requests without bias because of race, religion, sex, age, national origin or handicap.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

1. CASA programs and Volunteers will respect the right to privacy of all individuals, and will keep information about CASA cases confidential.
2. Persons affiliated with CASA will not use confidential information obtained through their work with CASA for personal benefit.

#### **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING**

1. Individuals working in CASA programs as staff and / or volunteers must be trained in the operations of the court and child welfare systems, and in the nature of child abuse and neglect.
2. CASA programs and volunteers must respect a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets the child's best interest.

## **NATIONAL AFFILIATION**

1. CASA programs which are members of the National CASA Association must operate in accordance with the National CASA Association Code of Ethics, goals and purposes.
2. Official CASA designations may be used only for purposes in accordance with the goals and purposes of the National CASA Association.

## **COMPLIANCE**

1. The Membership Committee shall monitor compliance with the Code of Ethics in accordance with the bylaws of the National CASA Association

## CASA/GAL VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

### **POSITION**

Court Appointed Special Advocate / Guardian ad litem (CASA/GAL) volunteer.

### **REPORTING RELATIONSHIP**

Reports to Volunteer Supervisor.

### **TIME COMMITMENT**

30 hours pre-service training; 12 hours of annual in-service training; other flexible hours as necessary for the assigned case (minimum of 10 hours per month).

### **POSITION PURPOSE**

To serve as a Court Appointed Special Advocate / Guardian ad litem (CASA / GAL) volunteer, working independently to investigate and monitor cases of juvenile abuse, neglect and/or dependence in the **(Name of Court)**.

### Duties and responsibilities:

- Obtain first hand a clear understanding of the needs and situation of the child by reviewing all relevant documents and records and interviewing the child, parents, social workers, teachers and other persons to determine the facts and circumstances of the child's situation.
- Identify and advocate for the best interest of the child.
- Seek cooperative solutions by acting as a facilitator among parties.
- Provide at every hearing reports which include findings and recommendations.
- Appear at all hearings to advocate for the child's best interests and provide testimony when necessary.
- Have regular and sufficient in-person contact with the child to ensure in-depth knowledge of the case and make fact-based recommendations to the court. The CASA/GAL volunteer shall meet in-person with the child once every thirty days at a minimum. An exception may be granted at the discretion of program staff; however, the justification and reasons for a decision to permit less frequent-in person contact must be documented.
- Make recommendations for specific appropriate services for the child and, when appropriate, the child's family.
- Determine if a permanent plan has been created for a child.
- Monitor implementation of service plans and court orders assuring that court-ordered services are implemented in a timely manner and that review hearings are held in accordance with the law.
- Inform the court promptly of important developments in the case through appropriate means as determined by court rules or statute.

- Advocate for the child's best interests in the community by interfacing with mental health, educational and other community systems to assure that the child's needs in these areas are met.
- Participate in all scheduled case conferences with supervisory staff.
- Participate in all in-service training.
- Maintain complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances.
- Return case files to the program after the case is closed.

Qualifications:

- Must be at least 21 years of age.
- Must successfully pass a thorough screening/background check.
- Successful completion of pre-service training program.
- Attend a minimum of 12 hours in-service hours annually.
- Able to respect and relate to individuals from various backgrounds and cultures in a caring and sensitive manner.
- Good oral/written communication skills.
- Understands and is willing to commit to a minimum of a one-year volunteer position serving on a minimum of one assigned case.
- Willing to accept supervision, training and evaluation from the professional staff
- Able to provide own transportation.
- Must be a dedicated child advocate, willing to learn the best possible means to ensure that the needs of the children in the **(County Name)** juvenile justice system are being met.

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<sup>2</sup> Used with permission from the Ohio CASA/GAL Association