

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. See Appendix B for more information about National CASA.

This Technical Assistance Bulletin presents ideas for using non-advocate volunteers in CASA/GAL programs.



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## **Ideas for Using Non-Advocate Volunteers to Build Capacity in CASA/GAL Programs**

Recruiting, training and managing volunteers can be both task and time intensive. For organizations that utilize volunteers, these activities are necessary to create an atmosphere that supports, nurtures and retains a healthy volunteer network.

But the era of customization is upon us. Everything from athletic attire, computers and even baby bottles can be customized to suit the patron's interests or needs. This has resulted in organizational changes in approaches to volunteer recruitment, training and management that require being flexible and providing a variety of volunteer opportunities. CASA programs that respond to this changing atmosphere can foster volunteers' further involvement in the organization as CASA/GAL advocates, board members, legislative advocates, fundraisers, administrative supporters and myriad other options.

This document provides a summary of activities for non-advocate volunteers and practices and policies that engage and promote volunteer commitment and service.

### ***Benefits of Utilizing Non-Advocate Volunteers***

Developing opportunities to accommodate various levels of volunteer commitment serves multiple purposes for the CASA/GAL program as well as the volunteer. The CASA/GAL program benefits from the service of non-advocate volunteers and may seize the opportunity to foster these relationships and develop them to increase volunteerism and contributions to the organization. This experience can serve as an introduction to the CASA/GAL program. Similarly, volunteers that once served as advocates may wish to take a hiatus from case assignments but remain connected to the program in some capacity. Programs that develop creative and flexible ways to keep volunteers engaged improve the chances of retaining volunteers and case re-assignment. At the very least, the CASA/GAL program preserves a valuable source of knowledge and experience of veteran volunteers that can be shared with new volunteers and build a culture of continuity and camaraderie. Remember, not everyone in your community will have the skills, desire and time to be an advocate volunteer but your organization should have an opportunity for various community members to volunteer their services.

## ***Potential Activities for Non-Advocate Volunteers***

Most, if not all, CASA/GAL programs benefit from the invaluable contributions of non-advocate volunteers. There are a number of ways a CASA/GAL program can utilize non-advocate volunteers, including:

- Preparing materials for a volunteer training class
- Writing/layout/editing/publication/distribution of the program's newsletter
- Designing a website
- Maintaining current information on a program website
- Recruiting volunteers: public speaking, staffing tables at events, talking to friends
- Hanging CASA posters in your community
- Providing data entry on a regular basis
- Inviting CASA staff to present a program to their community or civic group, recruiting volunteers, requesting a donation, etc.
- Getting CASA information out in their workplace via e-newsletter, posters, brochures in pay envelopes, etc.
- Getting CASA information out in their faith community via bulletin and/or newsletter inserts; speaking to small groups with a mission focus; speaking during worship; hanging posters; requesting a donation; etc.
- Making treats for volunteer trainings or recognition events
- Organizing a fundraiser
- Contacting businesses for in-kind donations: food, prizes in connection with a special event or for volunteer recognition, office supplies, etc.
- Presenting an in-service training workshop on a topic about which they have professional expertise
- Connecting CASA staff to potential donors and/or foundations
- Making their home, workplace or other facility available to the CASA program for training, volunteer recognition, special events, etc.
- Selling tickets for a fundraiser
- Writing thank-you notes for donations or after a special event
- Keeping a scrapbook of CASA program clippings/history/special events
- Serving on governing boards or advisory councils or their committees

## ***Screening, Supervision and Training***

Non-advocate volunteers, like advocate volunteers, need and benefit from training. The level and type of training depends on the volunteer's activities, access to the children being served and case information. Certainly, all volunteers should complete an application, undergo a screening process and participate in an orientation that provides an overview of CASA/GAL work. A higher standard of screening, training and supervision is required for non-advocates that have access to CASA/GAL case information and files and/or are "higher profile," such as speakers and program representatives. While National CASA does not currently have standards for the application and screening process for non-advocate volunteers, program staff should consider the following as they activate non-advocate volunteers.

<b>Type of Activity</b>	<b>Screening, Training and Supervision</b>
<p>Works around data and confidential information, or acts as a representative or speaker on behalf of the program. Non-advocate volunteers in this category typically have an ongoing engagement with the program, but do not carry cases. However, they come in contact with confidential information and/or children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completion of CASA/GAL non-advocate volunteer application and screening process consistent with CASA/GAL standards. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A brief application that captures pertinent information relative to the level of volunteerism (see sample)</li> <li>○ Background checks</li> <li>○ Two or three written and/or verbal—but recorded—recommendations</li> <li>○ In-person interview of volunteer</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ CASA/GAL 101 or equivalent that provides the CASA/GAL history and mission</li> <li>▪ Confidentiality training and signing of a confidentiality agreement form</li> <li>▪ Identified tasks, goals and expectations</li> <li>▪ Supervision should be consistent with supervision provided if paid staff performed the tasks. Supervision must also be consistent with staff policies and procedures. Supervision may be provided by another volunteer.</li> <li>▪ Volunteer may be under the age of 21 depending on the assigned task</li> </ul>
<p>Assists with monthly newsletter, mailings, fundraising, etc., but does not work around data and confidential information. This level of non-advocate volunteer’s involvement can be inconsistent or revolve around special activities and tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completion of CASA/GAL non-advocate volunteer application and screening process. This level of volunteerism may not warrant the screening process as required by CASA/GAL standards and identified for those working around confidential information</li> <li>▪ CASA/GAL 101 or equivalent that provides the CASA/GAL history and mission</li> <li>▪ Confidentiality training and signing of a confidentiality agreement form</li> <li>▪ Identified tasks, goals and expectations</li> <li>▪ Supervision should be consistent with supervision provided if paid staff performed the tasks. Supervision must also be consistent with staff policies and procedures. Some tasks may allow for supervision to be conducted by another volunteer. Depending on the volunteer’s level of expertise, familiarity with the program and the difficulty level of the task(s), supervision may not require frequent in-person oversight. It may be possible for supervision to be conducted by other means, such as telephone or email</li> </ul>

Type of Activity	Screening, Training and Supervision
Plans and staffs CASA/GAL program events, fundraisers, etc. that do not include children and/or confidential information and data. These typically are single-event volunteers or those that seek volunteer-in-a-day opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completion of CASA/GAL non-advocate volunteer application and screening process. This level of volunteerism may not warrant a similar screening process as required by CASA/GAL standards.</li> <li>▪ CASA/GAL 101 or equivalent that provides the CASA/GAL history and mission</li> <li>▪ Confidentiality training and signing of a confidentiality agreement form</li> <li>▪ Identified tasks, goals and expectations</li> <li>▪ Supervision should be consistent with supervision provided if paid staff performed the tasks. Supervision must also be consistent with staff policies and procedures. A lower level of supervision that entails periodic check-ins and follow up in person, by email or telephone with the volunteer may suffice. Of course, this depends on the nature of the activity and the task that the volunteer is undertaking. Supervision may be delivered by another volunteer.</li> </ul>

A CASA/GAL 101 type of training/orientation provides the volunteer with an overview of the history, mission, values and responsibilities and roles of the CASA/GAL program (local, state, and national levels). It should also include information on confidentiality and record-keeping, as well as a thorough review of the volunteer’s roles and responsibilities. This information promotes the volunteer’s insight into and understanding of the importance of their involvement and contribution. Volunteers that know the mission, significance of the cause and the impact of their contribution are more likely to be retained. Providing the appropriate level of training and supervision helps ensure that the volunteers are equipped with the necessary information and support to conduct their activities in a safe and pleasant environment with a high degree of satisfaction. Staff interaction with volunteers helps build rapport and convey the message that volunteers are appreciated.

### ***Ideas to Cultivate and Retain Volunteers<sup>1</sup>***

There is a significant value to the organization and children served if high-quality volunteers are consistently cultivated and retained. Remember, volunteer is a pay grade not a performance level. As such, it is imperative to operate in a manner that gives volunteers a sense of belonging and willingness to continue to serve your organization. Some keys to volunteer retention include:

- Find or develop opportunities for volunteers to get involved right away. It is helpful to have a running list of various opportunities for volunteers. It may be helpful to ask the volunteer what activity or activities interest them.
- Have clear goals and expectations of what volunteers will do.
- Be flexible—have volunteer projects that can be accomplished on weekends and weekdays, morning and evenings. This kind of diversity of opportunity will enable volunteers to balance school, work, family and service!

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from “14 Things to Do to Keep Volunteers Around.”  
<http://www.fu.edu/~time4chg/Library/recruit.keep.html>.

- Make sure volunteers understand the importance of the task they are doing and how it fits into the overall mission and organization.
- Never allow people to feel that you wasted their time or that they weren't really needed.
- Provide a structure so that those who want to can take on roles of greater responsibility. Encourage greater involvement by those who meet your advocate volunteer criteria. Examples of greater involvement may include board membership; lobbying (or advocacy) on behalf of CASA/GAL programs with state legislatures and government officials; fundraising, speaking engagements; marketing and public relations campaigns; legal consultation; and general administrative support.
- Give constructive criticism and evaluations of work performance. People want to do their best and want to know if they miss the mark.
- Give honest and sincere praise, say "thank you," make people glad they came and participated.
- Make the project an "event"—make working on it more interesting than staying home and watching it.
- Recognize volunteers in speeches, media, meetings, etc.
- Reward volunteers with shirts, pins, buttons, etc.
- Invite all volunteers to parties, retreats, picnics and other "off-duty" events.
- Identify a contact person and volunteer activity/project lead.

Enacting a plan to engage non-advocate volunteers requires a multifaceted approach. Cultivating volunteer relationships calls for creativity, commitment, flexibility, readily available volunteer opportunities and a collaborative staff approach. The safety of the children being served and the integrity of the program must always be at the forefront of any programmatic initiative. Policies and protocols should promote volunteer involvement and preserve both the integrity of the program and the children served. The contributions of non-advocate volunteers are invaluable. The added resources and support they contribute help provide a foundation and the capacity to build stronger CASA/GAL programs. The aforementioned recommendations present a framework that can be adapted by CASA/GAL programs to initiate and/or augment non-advocate volunteerism.

### ***Partnering with Other Organizations***

In addition to customizing volunteer opportunities for those who are interested in giving their time to your CASA/GAL program, collaboration with other organizations is critical. Consider joining with the volunteer center of your local United Way or partnering with other local organizations that offer volunteer opportunities for children. One strategy would be a joint recruitment campaign that would allow several similar organizations to increase public awareness and garner more volunteers. The theme could be helping children and could include various types of involvement—from CASA/GAL volunteers to foster parents to emergency shelter care providers.

# Appendix A

## Sample Non-Advocate Volunteer Application

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**Please print**

First Name..... Last Name.....

Address..... City/State/Zip. ....

Telephone ..... Social Security # .....

Date of Birth ..... Spouse's Name.....

**What types of volunteer work are you interested in doing?**

.....

**Personal information (please circle correct response):**

Gender:      Male              Female

**Race (optional):**

Black      White      Hispanic/Latino      Asian      Native American      Other:\_\_\_\_\_

**Physical limitations:**    No    Yes (please explain)

**Education (highest level completed):**

Grades 1-5    6-9      11-12      College      Business      Graduate School      Technical/Vocational

**Occupation (if applicable):**.....

**List previous volunteer experience:**.....

**Do you have any special skills/training?**.....

.....

**Languages:**      Fluent      Read      Write

.....

**Volunteer availability (circle all that apply):**

Number of days per week: 1 2 3 4 5

Monday    Tuesday    Wednesday    Thursday    Friday    Weekends    No Preference

**How did you learn about [CASA/GAL program name] (circle all that apply):**

CASA Volunteer    Word of Mouth    Newspaper    Radio/Print Ad    Internet Search

Other (specify):

**References:**

Full Name ..... Telephone/Email.....

Organization..... Relationship .....

Full Name ..... Telephone/Email.....

Organization..... Relationship .....

Full Name ..... Telephone/Email.....

Organization..... Relationship .....

**In an emergency, notify:**

Full Name ..... Telephone .....

Volunteer hereby agrees to serve any client who is assigned regardless of race, sex, creed or national origin. I hereby authorize the CASA/GAL program and any law enforcement agency they authorize, to investigate my background to determine my fitness as a potential volunteer. I understand that failure to authorize this release of information and subsequent record checks will disqualify me from becoming a volunteer.

.....  
(Signature/Volunteer) (Date)

.....  
(Signature/Staff) (Date)

## **Appendix B**

### **Overview of the National CASA Association**

Over half a million children live in the foster care system today because they are unable to live safely at home due to some form of parental abuse or neglect. It is estimated that children who suffer abuse and neglect are 53% more likely to become juvenile delinquents and 38% more likely to become violent criminals as adults. A major factor in avoiding bad outcomes for an abused child is the presence of a concerned adult in that child's life. In 2007, over 243,000 abused and neglected children were able to have at least one consistent and concerned adult in their lives, a volunteer court appointed special advocate (CASA).

CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to advocate for the best interests of abused children and to ensure that they do not get lost in the overburdened legal system or languish in an inappropriate group or foster home. They stay with each child's case until the child is placed in a safe, permanent home with hope for a positive future. In some states, CASA volunteers are referred to as volunteer guardians ad litem (GALs).

The National CASA Association is a national organization of 954 local and state member CASA/GAL programs and satellite offices across the country. National CASA, headquartered in Seattle, WA, functions as a resource to support and increase the capacities of state organizations and local programs to serve more abused children and serve them better. We provide state and local program staff with training and assistance in a variety of areas, including program development, volunteer recruitment and training, program best practices, quality assurance, resource development and grant writing. We also provide local and state programs with grant funds to promote both program quality and growth to better meet the needs of abused children.

For more information, visit [nationalcasa.org](http://nationalcasa.org).



This project was supported by Cooperative Agreement No. 2007-CH-BX-K002 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the US Department of Justice.