

National CASA Quality Assurance System

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the National CASA Quality Assurance System all about?

Commitment to quality is a commitment to the children we serve. National CASA aims to develop and support a system that encourages, inspires and assists program to achieve their greatest potential and deliver high quality advocacy on behalf of the children they serve. National CASA recognizes the diversity of the CASA/GAL network and the need for flexibility in the system. The National CASA Quality assurance system assesses program operations based on the *Standards for National CASA Member Programs*.

2. What is the primary purpose of the National CASA Quality Assurance System?

The primary purpose is to support our mission of providing *quality* volunteer representation for children to provide each abused or neglected child in the court system a safe, permanent, and nurturing home. It is integral to the National CASA mission that member programs and programs calling themselves CASA meet standards. Additionally, the quality assurance system helps identify program strengths, challenges and needs to promote program growth and sustainability.

3. What are the benefits of the National CASA Quality Assurance System to the local programs?

As reflected under the questions above, the programs benefit by strengthening their programs, fostering greater awareness among staff, volunteers and governing body of how the program operates, including both program excellence and program challenges. Accountability to the court, funders, and the community all help build and protect public trust as well as donor trust. An additional benefit is improved recruitment and retention of volunteers, the very core of advocacy for children. National CASA has made Quality Assurance a dedicated commitment and will support this commitment through technical assistance to programs in partnership with state associations.

4. What does the National CASA Quality Assurance involve and what is required?

The National CASA Quality Assurance System consists of two levels. The first level is provisional membership self-assessment for new CASA/GAL programs and is required to become a provisional member of National CASA. The second level is full program membership self-assessment for established CASA/GAL programs and is required every four years to continue full program membership in National CASA.

5. What does the self-assessment process for full program members entail?

The self-assessment process consists of the completion of a questionnaire style tool via a self-assessment team and submission of supporting documentation. The tool has three sections: program information, a series of yes/no questions for each standard, and the checklist of supporting documentation, called indicators of compliance.

6. Who in the program should participate in the self-assessment team?

A representative committee or group of people associated with the CASA/GAL program should complete this self-assessment tool. The representative committee should include a combination of program staff, volunteers, and governing body members. There are areas in the tool where the views and opinions of judges will be helpful in assessing compliance with the *Standards for National CASA Member Programs*.

7. *How is the self-assessment tool scored?*

Each standard is scored individually, with the score simply calculated as the number of 'no' responses subtracted from the total number of items. There are several items where an N/A response may be appropriate based on administration type or some other program characteristic. The specific qualification for the N/A response is included with such items and these N/A responses are not scored.

8. *What score is required to be considered compliant with standards?*

A minimum of 85% compliance is required for all Standards. 100% of the indicators of compliance are required unless noted as not applicable and any omissions are justified as not applicable by the program. Standard 3 relates to the new program development and is not addressed in this tool.

9. *Who reviews and scores the self-assessment tool?*

National CASA recruits outside reviewers to review the self-assessment tool and indicators of compliance. Reviewers all have CASA/GAL experience with diverse backgrounds, perspectives and skills and will be trained to review the tool and indicators, to include specific training on the variety of administration and model types and program characteristics that may lead to greater challenges for programs to operate in compliance with standards

10. *After submitting the self-assessment tool, when will we hear back from National CASA and if we are out of compliance, how much time will we have to get into compliance?*

A report will be sent to the program **approximately ten to twelve weeks after receipt** of the self-assessment materials. If the program is out of compliance with one or more standards, the program will work together with National CASA staff to develop a compliance plan for the standards with which the program is not compliant. The program will have up to six months from the date of the report to come into compliance. A three - six month extension may be granted when appropriate and approved by National CASA.

11. *With whom will National CASA share the report from the self-assessment information?*

National CASA will send the full report to the regional program officer, program and state director only. The program will be informed whenever communication occurs with the judge.

When the program has demonstrated compliance with the standards, the program will receive a letter of commendation from National CASA along with a certificate of compliance, and a sample press release package. Additionally, a letter of compliance will be sent to the governing body, local judge, and state director.

12. *How will National CASA support our efforts to get into compliance with standards?*

National CASA staff is very committed to quality assurance and to providing programs with technical assistance and support to get into compliance. The National CASA regional officers and quality assurance specialist look forward to this opportunity to work closely with programs toward assuring the highest quality advocacy for the children served.

13. *When will the programs be notified of their assigned wave?*

Programs will be notified within 4 months of their submission deadline. If you would like to be in an earlier wave or have any concerns, please contact the quality assurance specialist. The wave assignments are based on a number of factors.

14. *How much time will it take to complete the self-assessment tool?*

The first round of programs spent approximately 10 - 12 hours total to complete the self-assessment tool, over a 4 month period of time. Factors that could affect the amount of time required include how well organized the program is, how readily available policies and procedural documents are, and the input of the

people involved in the process. It may be more productive to view the time as an investment in strategic planning and long term growth of the program. Whatever time is required to pull together the information will save the program time in the long run by having all of the information organized and centrally located.

15. *How do you suggest that we prepare for the self-assessment process and how do you suggest that we approach the self-assessment tool?*

It seems to be the general consensus of programs having completed the self-assessment tool that the tool appears much more daunting at first glance than it actually is when the program really gets into it. Here is a specific way that a program might approach the self-assessment process:

Preparation

1. Do an initial dry run through the self-assessment tool.
2. Recruit committee members.
3. Assemble documents listed in the indicators of compliance checklist.

Self-assessment completion

4. Answer all questions in the self-assessment tool, paying attention to which items are addressed in the indicators of compliance.
5. Create/revise/adopt indicators of compliance as necessary.
6. Submit self-assessment and indicators of compliance.

16. *Are there examples available of the indicators of compliance?*

Examples of indicators of compliance are available for download at CASAforChildren.org. Some state associations have also developed sample forms for the programs in their states. Inquire with your state director, regional program officer or quality assurance specialist for more specific assistance.