

Update to National CASA *Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs*

The National CASA Association Board of Trustees recently approved revisions to three of the standards in our *Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs*. The revisions appear in Standard 6: Human Resources Management; Standard 7: Volunteer Management; and Standard 8: Financial, Facility and Risk Management. These revisions are the result of feedback from the network and research conducted to determine better program practices. The revisions were recommended by our Standards Committee and were presented to the board of trustees for approval after a vetting process which included input from member programs.

The language describing background screening and selection of both employees (Standard 6: Human Resources Management) and volunteers (Standard 7: Volunteer Management) was updated to clarify the required checks and create consistency between the employee and the volunteer standards. The list of background checks was expanded to include all required checks and to clarify that a national criminal background check must be completed—either via fingerprinting or a national criminal database. The requirement that programs verify the accuracy of all information submitted by the prospective employee was removed because some aspects (e.g., educational background) were found to be difficult to prove.

In Standard 8: Financial, Facility and Risk Management, changes were made to the audit and financial review requirements. Additionally, a new requirement, a compilation for programs with expenditures under \$50,000, was added. Based on member input about the quickly rising cost of audits, and in an effort to be consistent with the dollar threshold requirements of other organizations for audits, it was determined that the current requirements were unreasonably stringent. Therefore, the requirement thresholds were increased as follows:

- An audit is required for programs with expenditures exceeding \$200,000
- A financial review is required for programs with expenditures between \$50,000 and \$200,000
- A compilation is required for programs with expenditures under \$50,000

The revised language for standards 6, 7, and 8 is provided below. Asterisks indicate where a change or addition has been made and provide a brief explanation of that change.

Standard 6: Human Resources Management

6. E. Recruitment and Selection of Qualified Employees

1. Recruitment and selection procedures ensure that the personnel needs of the CASA/GAL program are adequately met.
2. All applicants for paid employment with the CASA/GAL program are required to:
 - a. Complete a written application containing information about educational background, training, employment history and experience working with children.
 - b. Submit the names of three or more references, at least two of whom are unrelated to the applicant.

- c. Authorize the CASA/GAL program and other appropriate agencies and provide the necessary information for them to secure the following record checks:*
 - Criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant currently resides and works.
 - State criminal records.
 - FBI fingerprint or other national criminal records.
 - National sex offender registry.
 - Child abuse registry or child protective services check where permissible by law.
 - d. Attend and participate in personal interview(s) with CASA/GAL program personnel.
3. The CASA/GAL program is required to complete the following:
 - a. Secure a completed written application for each applicant containing information about educational background, training, employment history and experience working with children.**
 - b. Secure three or more references, either written or documented by the program in writing, at least two of whom are unrelated to the applicant.
 - c. Secure the following record checks on each volunteer applicant:
 - Criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant currently resides and works.
 - State criminal records.
 - FBI fingerprint or other national criminal database.
 - National sex offender registry.
 - Child abuse registry or child protective services check where permissible by law.
 - d. Conduct a personal interview with the employee applicant.
4. If the prospective employee has lived in another state within the past five years, the CASA/GAL program secures the local/county and state record checks specified in 6.E.2 in any area in which the person has resided in the previous five years. Those checks may be covered in the FBI fingerprint or other national criminal database check if the county and state the applicant lived in is covered in the national check.
5. An employee applicant is rejected by the CASA/GAL program if he/she refuses to sign a release of information form or submit the required information or fingerprints for any of the checks required by 6.E.2 and 6.E.3. This policy is stated on the employee application form.
6. The CASA/GAL program repeats the record checks required in Standard 6.E.3 for each active employee at least every four years.***
7. If the CASA/GAL program permits staff to transport children or drive on behalf of the program, the applicant shall provide to the program at the time of the application:
 - a. Copy of a valid current driver's license.
 - b. Adequate personal automobile insurance.

8. The CASA/GAL program secures a motor vehicle division records check on each prospective employee. In addition, the CASA/GAL program has policies and procedures in place to assure that the following occur prior to CASA/GAL staff members transporting children or driving on behalf of the program:
 - a. Obtains permission of the supervisor or director.
 - b. Obtains permission of the child's legal guardian or custodial agency when transporting a child.
 - c. Are knowledgeable of the potential personal risk of liability.
 - d. Chooses to accept the responsibility.
9. The CASA/GAL program's selection process for all employees includes an assessment of the applicant's awareness and sensitivity to the cultural and socioeconomic factors of the children and families the CASA/GAL program serves.
10. Any 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 risks to children or the CASA/GAL program's credibility is not accepted for employment. This policy is stated on the employee application form.
11. If an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is unrelated to or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the CASA/GAL program, the CASA/GAL program will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony was committed as well as other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant for employment.
12. The chief executive officer/program administrator or designee notifies all applicants in writing of their application when the position applied for is filled.

**Expanded screening language to include specific checks*

***Removed the requirement to "verify" applicant information required in item 3a*

****Added requirement to recheck employee records every four years*

Standard 7: Volunteer Management

7. B. Volunteer Application, Screening and Selection Process

1. A CASA/GAL volunteer is an individual who is at least 21 years of age and has successfully passed the application and screening process, been trained by the CASA/GAL program and appointed by the court to advocate for children who come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect.
2. A CASA/GAL volunteer is an individual who respects a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets that child's best interests.
3. The CASA/GAL volunteer is an individual who advocates for the child's best interests in the court at every stage of the case once appointed by the court.

4. All CASA/GAL volunteer applicants are required to:
 - a. Complete a written application containing information about educational background, training, employment history and experience working with children.
 - b. Submit the names of three or more references, at least two of whom are unrelated to the applicant.
 - c. Authorize the CASA/GAL program and other appropriate agencies and provide the necessary information for them to secure the following record checks:
 - Criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant currently resides and works.
 - State criminal records.
 - FBI fingerprint or other national criminal records.
 - National sex offender registry.
 - Child abuse registry or child protective services check where permissible by law.
 - d. Attend and participate in personal interview(s) with CASA/GAL program personnel.
5. The CASA/GAL program is required to do the following:
 - a. Secure a completed written application for each applicant containing information about educational background, training, employment history and experience working with children**
 - b. Secure three or more references, either written or documented by the program in writing, at least two of which are unrelated to the applicant
 - c. Secure the following record checks on each volunteer applicant:
 - Criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant currently resides and works.
 - State criminal records.
 - FBI fingerprint or other national criminal database.
 - National sex offender registry.
 - Child abuse registry or child protective services check where permissible by law.
 - d. Conduct a personal interview with the volunteer applicant.
6. If the prospective volunteer has lived in another state within the past five years, the CASA/GAL program secures the local/county and state record checks specified in 7.B.5 in any area in which the person has resided in the previous five years. Those checks may be covered in the FBI fingerprint or other national criminal database check if the county and state the applicant lived in is covered in the national check.
7. If a volunteer applicant refuses to sign a release of information form or submit the required information or fingerprints for any of the checks required by 7.B.4, 7.B.5 and 7.B.6, the CASA/GAL program rejects the application. This policy is stated on the volunteer application form.

8. The CASA/GAL program repeats the record checks required in Standard 7.B.5 for each active volunteer at least every four years.***
9. Any 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 risks to children or the CASA/GAL program's credibility is not accepted as a CASA/GAL volunteer. This policy is stated on the volunteer application form.
10. If an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is unrelated to or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the CASA/GAL program, the CASA/GAL program will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony was committed as well as other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant as a CASA/GAL volunteer.
11. The CASA/GAL program's volunteer selection procedures ensure that those not selected are treated with dignity, respect and, if appropriate, referred to alternative volunteer opportunities.
12. All screening is completed before the volunteer is assigned to a case and written verification is on file at the program offices.

**Expanded screening language to include specific checks*

***Removed the requirement to "verify" application information required in item 5a*

****Added requirement to recheck volunteer records every four years*

Standard 8: Financial, Facility and Risk Management

8. C. Financial Reporting and Accountability

1. The CASA/GAL program is accountable to its governing body for prudent financial management.
2. The CASA/GAL program ensures that an annual report is available which includes financial, statistical and service data summary information.
3. The nonprofit CASA/GAL program annually files the appropriate required IRS form 990 in a timely manner.
4. Whenever the actual expenditure of funds exceeds \$200,000 annually, an audit of the nonprofit CASA/GAL program's financial statements, which conforms to generally accepted auditing standards, is performed. The audit occurs annually within nine months of the end of the fiscal year by an independent certified public accountant approved by the governing body.*

Additionally:

- a. A designated committee of the governing body, such as finance or audit review committee, or a designated member of the governing body, reviews the audit findings and meets with the independent auditor as necessary.
 - b. The auditor's report is reviewed and formally approved or accepted by the governing body and is made available for public inspection.
 - c. When a management letter has accompanied the audit, the nonprofit CASA/GAL program's governing body promptly reviews and ensures that management acts on its recommendations.
5. Whenever the actual expenditure of funds exceeds \$50,000 and is less than \$200,000 annually, a financial review of the nonprofit CASA/GAL program's financial statements is performed. The review occurs annually within nine months of the end of the fiscal year and is performed by an independent certified public accountant approved by the governing body.**
 6. Whenever the actual expenditure of funds is under \$50,000 annually, a compilation of the nonprofit CASA/GAL program's financial statements is performed. The compilation occurs annually within nine months of the end of the fiscal year and is performed by an independent certified public accountant approved by the governing body.***
 7. In a CASA/GAL program under public auspices, the audit is conducted periodically by an independent auditor covering all years since the previous audit and in accordance with laws or regulations governing the audit of a public agency's financial operations.

**Amended audit threshold from \$100,000 to \$200,000*

***Amended financial review threshold from \$25,000 to over \$50,000 and under \$200,000*

****Added requirement for compilation for programs whose expenditure of funds is less than \$50,000*

We believe strongly in our network and member programs' commitment to providing high quality advocacy and compliance with our standards. We are confident that the revisions described above were made in the best interest of local programs and will continue to strengthen our ability to serve children well across the country.