

CASA of DUPAGE COUNTY

Advocate Policy Handbook

September 2021



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VISION STATEMENT

All children deserve a safe, permanent and nurturing home where they can thrive.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of CASA* is to recruit, train and support volunteer citizen advocates to effectively speak to the best interests of abused, neglected, dependent and vulnerable children in the DuPage County court system.

PURPOSE OF CASA ADVOCATE POLICY HANDBOOK

This handbook is intended as a guide to help you understand many of our policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are subject to change with or without prior notification. This handbook does not create any sort of employment contract, express or implied. The Executive Director and the Board of Directors reserve right to make any changes or exceptions to this handbook as appropriate.

Please read the contents of this handbook carefully. You will be required to sign an agreement indicating that you have read, understand and will comply with these policies and procedures.

If you have any questions concerning the information in this handbook, please contact your Advocate Supervisor, the Program Director and/or the Executive Director.

WHO WE ARE

The ranks of CASA are filled with energetic, dedicated and caring individuals who fill a variety of roles. They are dedicated to making a difference in a child's life, one child at a time. Our purpose is to serve the abused, neglected, dependent and vulnerable children throughout DuPage County. We accomplish our purpose through our program staff and our volunteers. Our program staff is skilled in organization management, child support skills and child advocacy training. Our volunteers are the heart of the organization. They serve as child advocates and still others are engaged in service activities such as board membership, office support, fundraising, community awareness and various duties required to support child advocacy. CASA's Board of Directors, program staff and volunteers cooperate and coordinate with other voluntary agencies, the courts, public agencies, community groups, and with families and individuals to fulfill our mission

The CASA Board of Directors, program staff, and volunteers serve at the request of the 18th Judicial Circuit Court of DuPage County, Illinois and in accordance with provisions of the Illinois Juvenile Court Act. The CASA Board of Directors, program staff, and volunteers also comply with the National CASA/GAL Association for Children and Illinois CASA program standards. Information can be found at the following websites: <https://nationalcasagal.org/> and <https://illinoiscasa.org/>

** All references to CASA, unless otherwise specified, refer to CASA of DuPage County, Inc.*

THE CASA ORGANIZATION

The organizational structure of CASA of DuPage consists of a Board of Directors, program staff, volunteer advocates and volunteer community supporters called Friends of CASA.

Board of Directors – The volunteer Board of Directors is the governing body of CASA of DuPage County, Inc. The Board is responsible for formulating the mission, philosophy, and the goals and objectives. It assures that all governance, administrative and operating policies and procedures are consistent and conform to legal requirements.

Program Staff – The program staff are paid employees of CASA. They are responsible for the daily operation and development of the CASA organization. They maintain alliances with court personnel, other agencies in the court system and in the community. They also provide supervision, training and support for the volunteer advocates, CASA Friends and coordinate the caseloads and case information.

Advocates – All references to *advocate* in this handbook refer to sworn volunteer advocates serving CASA of DuPage County, Inc. Advocates are trained community volunteers appointed by a judge to advocate for children who come into the court system primarily as a result of abuse, neglect and/or dependency. They work for the judge, alongside attorneys and social workers. The advocate gathers information by reviewing records and talking to foster parents, agency caseworkers, parents and most importantly, the child(ren). In certain circumstances, the advocate may talk to teachers and other professionals involved in their CASA child's life. By getting to know the child and understanding the circumstances of the child's life, the advocate can then prepare objective written reports to the court and speak for the child's best interests.

Friends of CASA – Friends of CASA are volunteers who generously donate time, talent, resources and/or knowledge to ensure that the voices of the abused, neglected and dependent children are heard. The Friends is a group that supports the Board of Directors, staff and Advocates to fulfill our mission. Generally, the time commitments are short, well-defined and are dependent on the type of project, skill or interest match and availability of the Friend. Activities that CASA Friends may be involved with are fundraising events, community awareness activities, and office support activities.

GENERAL POLICIES

CASA of DuPage County, Inc. accepts the service of all volunteer advocates with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the program. Advocates agree that the agency may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the Advocate's relationship with the program.

Speaking On Behalf Of CASA of DuPage County, Inc.

Advocates are encouraged to share information about the CASA program in general throughout the community. CASA representatives are available to present CASA information and provide written materials. Employees, Advocates, and other volunteers who are invited to speak, teach or lecture on behalf of CASA may do so with written approval from the Executive Director. Solicitation of legislative support, legislative advocacy or lobbying while using the CASA name or logo, or representing CASA on issues, without the express written approval of the Executive Director/Board of Directors is prohibited.

Fundraising on Behalf Of CASA of DuPage County, Inc.

As a small non-profit organization, CASA is dependent on a well designed and executed financial plan. That plan is dependent on a variety of fundraising activities. The Board of Directors has a coordinated fundraising plan for the organization. Any ideas Advocates may have to assist with fundraising are welcome and appreciated. They can be directed to the Executive Director. Advocates may not initiate their own fundraising activities on behalf of CASA. This avoids duplication of effort and the possibility of more than one CASA representative approaching the same person or organization for funding.

Ethics and Conflict Of Interest

CASA wishes to avoid any potential conflicts of interest involving any CASA volunteer. All Advocates are required to disclose all interests that could constitute or be viewed as a conflict. A CASA volunteer must not be related to any party involved in the assigned case, or be employed in a position and/or by an organization that might result in a conflict of interest. A CASA volunteer must not enter into a business, service or professional agreement with any party to the assigned case. This includes, but is not limited to, client families, foster families and attorneys. Since a conflict of interest may arise at any point in time, the Advocate has an ongoing duty to disclose the existence of any actual or potential conflicts.

It should be understood that something that is reportable is not necessarily a conflict of interest. All individuals associated with CASA are required to disclose circumstances that could create the fact or appearance of a conflict of interest at the time of association and as may arise thereafter. Any failure to disclose circumstances that could create the fact or appearance of a conflict of interest can result in disciplinary action up to and including involuntary termination.

Professional Conduct

CASA of DuPage County, Inc. expects all staff members, Advocates and volunteers to share the responsibility for maintaining a professional and collegial work environment and to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the credibility and positive reputation of the organization. Therefore, CASA's policy requires every Advocate to agree to take no action or engage in any conduct that would cause CASA or any of its associates embarrassment or humiliation, that creates the appearance of impropriety, or otherwise causes or contributes to CASA or its associates being held in disrepute by the general public, court personnel, social service providers, supporters or other entities with whom CASA may interact.

Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment

CASA is committed to maintaining an environment free of discrimination and to offer opportunities without regard race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, order of protection status, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, or unfavorable discharge from military service, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state and local law. In keeping with this commitment, CASA will not tolerate harassment of CASA volunteers, staff, advocates, board members, and other non-employees who conduct business with CASA.

All CASA associates have a role in preventing discrimination and harassment. If an advocate experiences or witnesses any conduct that appears inconsistent with this policy, CASA expects the advocate to

immediately notify their supervisor or the Executive Director, Board President, or any other member of management who they would feel comfortable contacting. CASA forbids retaliation against anyone for reporting harassment, assisting in making a harassment complaint, or cooperating in a harassment investigation. Complaints will be accepted in writing or orally. All complaints shall be treated in a confidential manner to the extent possible.

Upon receipt of a complaint or in circumstances where CASA becomes aware of alleged offending conduct, a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation shall be made concerning any alleged offending conduct. If the investigation leads to a determination that an individual is or has engaged in conduct in violation of CASA's policy, appropriate corrective action will be taken immediately, including the possible termination of the offending party. In investigating complaints under this policy, CASA may impose discipline for inappropriate conduct that comes to CASA's attention, without regard to whether the conduct constitutes a violation of a law.

Substance Abuse

CASA is committed to providing a drug-free work environment. Illegal drugs and alcohol misuse are inconsistent with this commitment and will not be tolerated. Consequently, whenever Advocates are on CASA premises or performing CASA-related work, they are prohibited from using, possessing, buying, selling, and manufacturing, dispensing or being under the influence of illegal drugs. Likewise, any Advocate under the influence of alcohol while reporting for or performing case-related duties will be deemed in violation of this policy. Prior approval by the Executive Director is required before any CASA-sponsored activity may include the serving or consumption of alcohol.

Use, possession, or sale of drugs off CASA premises is illegal and may be cause for or result in disciplinary action, including termination, if such off-duty conduct adversely affects the Advocate's performance, CASA's reputation, or the safety of the advocate, client, other associates, and third parties.

Violation of this policy is cause for immediate disciplinary action, up to and including termination, as well as possible referral to appropriate law enforcement agencies. This policy does not apply to the lawful use and possession of prescription medication on the orders of a physician.

Advocates who are convicted of violating a criminal drug statute must notify the Executive Director within five (5) days of such conviction. Individuals who are convicted of unlawful, off-the-job drug activity will be considered in violation of this policy. In determining what action to take, CASA will review the nature of the charges, the individual's performance record with CASA, the impact of the individual's conviction on CASA's ability to maintain efficient operations and its good reputation in the community, and any other factor which CASA deems relevant under the circumstances.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted inside CASA premises at any time. CASA expects its Advocates to be respectful of and conform to the smoking policies or desires of those with whom they are working or visiting when off CASA premises.

Safety

Advocates should never put themselves in personal jeopardy in the performance of their roles and responsibilities. Advocates who are uneasy about entering a neighborhood or particular building, or about meeting with a particular party, should discuss these concerns with the Advocate Supervisor and make alternative arrangements. Alternative arrangements may include meeting in a public place, having the Supervisor attend the visit, or accompanying the caseworker on a visit.

CASA PROPERTY AND RESOURCES

CASA property is to be used for the performance of CASA-related duties. CASA property includes, but is not limited to: computers, telephones, fax machines, copiers or other equipment, supplies, work areas and furniture.

Copyrighted Materials

Copyrighted materials belonging to entities other than CASA may not be transmitted by Advocates on the organization's e-mail/Internet system or in connection with CASA related duties, except with permission, or as a single copy to reference only.

Electronic Equipment, Online Communications, Social Media and Electronic Data Policy

All Advocate-generated data is the property of CASA. As such, all electronic-mail messages composed, sent and received are and always remain the property of CASA. Therefore, CASA reserves the right at any time to retrieve and read any message composed, sent, or received; accordingly, privacy of messages cannot be guaranteed to anyone, and an Advocate should have no expectation whatsoever with respect to privacy of the messages.

Advocates using personal computers or devices for CASA related duties are responsible for the content of all text, audio or images that they place or send over e-mail/Internet system in connection with their advocacy work. No e-mail or other electronic communications may be sent in connection with CASA duties or services which hides the identity of the sender or represents the sender as someone else or someone from another organization if performing CASA services. While electronic mail may accommodate the use of passwords for security in certain circumstances, the reliability of such for maintaining confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Advocates must assume that any and all messages may be read by someone other than the intended or designated recipient.

Social media tools, 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. If an Advocate chooses to discuss CASA-related topics, whether online or in person, that Advocate is held to the highest standards of maintaining case confidentiality and presenting a professional view of CASA, the court and other parties involved the case. Please consult the full Online Communication and Social Media Policy attached hereto.

As a general matter, Advocates should not give their email address or cell phone number to the child(ren) or family members they may encounter in their capacity as a CASA volunteer, and should not link to personal pages (or become online "friends") of the families or children. This includes email addresses,

instant messenger names, blogs, photo sharing sites and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. However, CASA recognizes that there may be certain situations where such communications with children or families is necessary and beneficial to the relationship between the advocate and the child/family. Such communications MUST be approved on a case-by-case basis in advance by the Program Director and/or Executive Director and be undertaken in such a manner so as to maintain case confidentiality and avoid disclosure of case sensitive information.

VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUPERVISION

Length of Commitment

Volunteers serving as advocates for abused and neglected children in DuPage County Juvenile Court are asked to commit to the CASA program for a minimum of 24 months or until the case is closed by the court. In this way, CASA staff can ensure that a sense of stability can be maintained for the welfare of the child affected. It is critical that the welfare of the child affected be taken into consideration when contemplating any change in representation within the court system.

Leave of Absence – Inactive Status

Volunteers may request a leave of absence from their role as a CASA advocate. The volunteer should notify his or her Advocate Supervisor regarding the time period for the requested leave as soon as possible so that the advocate's case may be assigned to another CASA advocate. If the leave of absence has been approved, the volunteer will be placed on inactive status for up to six months and allowed 6-month renewals at the discretion of the Advocate Supervisor. The volunteer may return to active status with the approval of the Program Director and/or Executive Director. Advocates who have been on leave for more than one (1) year and have not responded or communicated with CASA staff may be automatically dismissed at the discretion of the Program Director.

Activation of Advocates Returning from Leave/Resignation or Upon Transfer

If an advocate has been inactive or resigned for more than one (1) year and, depending upon the experience of the advocate and the length of the leave or time since resignation, the advocate may be required to complete supplemental training. The Program Director and/or Advocate Supervisor will discuss training requirements with the advocate when ready to return to active status. Advocates returning from leave will be expected to be current with or complete 12 continuing education credits before being assigned to a case.

Advocates who transfer from other Illinois or other state CASA programs will be required to complete the application, background check and provide the other documentation required of a new advocate. Transfer advocates will be required at a minimum to complete training regarding local court procedures, program policies and procedures and report writing procedures. Any further training requirement will be at the discretion of the Program Director based upon the experience of the transferring advocate.

Immunity from Civil or Criminal Liability

According to the Illinois Juvenile Court Act, *"Any court appointed special advocate acting in good faith within the scope of his or her appointment shall have immunity for any civil or criminal liability that otherwise might result by reason of his or her actions, except in cases of willful and wanton misconduct. For the purpose of any civil or criminal proceedings, the good faith of any court appointed advocate shall be presumed."* 705 ILCS 405/2-17.1(8)

Supervision

All Advocates are assigned to an Advocate Supervisor upon case assignment. The Advocate Supervisor will assist the advocate with the casework and provide direct supervision and monitoring of each assigned advocate. Advocates are to communicate with their Advocate Supervisor on a regular basis regarding their case, and to accept supervision. Advocates are also required to check the Optima Dashboard and their e-mail regularly for CASA communications.

Continuing Education Credits

All CASA volunteers are required to complete a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education credits ("CEC") annually. The training may be provided by CASA of DuPage County or other agencies as approved by the CASA staff. The CASA staff may also approve other ways in which in-service hours may be completed, such as attendance at community speakers/events, reading educational books, etc. For specific details of the CEC policy and CEC opportunities, please consult the CEC policy attached hereto and on the CASA website under "Advocate Resources".

Advocates who are on cases and not in compliance with the CEC requirement may be dismissed from the program at the discretion of the staff. Advocates who are not on cases and not in compliance with this requirement may not receive a case until compliance is achieved or substantial good faith effort is displayed.

Volunteer Statistics

CASA compiles and maintains various statistics in connection with the operation of the program. These statistics are needed by the program for use in grant requests to supply the funds for the operations. One area tracked includes the hours Advocates spend on their cases and in other service to CASA, as well as miles driven in connection with advocate duties. The CASA staff will advise Advocates as to the procedures for tracking and reporting hours and miles. Advocates are expected to comply with such tracking requests.

Performance Appraisal

It is the policy of CASA to assess performance of Advocates on an ongoing, informal basis to ensure that Advocates receive feedback regarding good performance and appropriate suggestions for improvement when necessary.

Case Assignment and Right of Refusal

Advocates are matched to a particular case by the Advocate Supervisor. The Advocate Supervisor reviews the case information with the Advocate and the Advocate is free to refuse an assignment at the Advocate's discretion. The Advocate must notify the Advocate Supervisor of acceptance or refusal of the case in a timely manner. Upon acceptance of the case, the Advocate Supervisor will notify the other staff members and provide the Advocate with all necessary case information.

Advocates are generally assigned to one case at a time. Exceptions may be made for experienced Advocates who may be assigned to more than one case at the discretion of the Advocate's Supervisor and the Program Director. Exceptions will be based upon the status of the cases (such as nearing case closure), the availability of other advocates for assignment, the familiarity of the advocate with the family/children involved, the complexity of the case and other special circumstances. No advocate will be assigned to more than three abuse, neglect or dependency cases at any one time.

Record Keeping

Once assigned to a case, the advocate will receive a letter from CASA staff formalizing the case assignment and provided access to information and documents pertaining to the case through CASA's Optima software system. In performing the case-related advocate duties, the Advocate may also create and/or receive notes, reports, correspondences, email communications, text messages, voice messages, and other communications regarding their case. All such notes, documents, and communications whether electronic or hard copy are considered part of the case file. The Advocate must maintain the case file in accordance with the Confidentiality policy. At the conclusion of the Advocate's involvement with the case, the entire case file in their possession must be returned or shredded and any electronically stored file materials must be deleted, in accordance with CASA policy.

Visits with Child

Advocates are required to personally visit with the child/children in their assigned case on a monthly basis (at least every 30 days minimally). Less frequent visitation may only occur with the express authorization of the Advocate Supervisor, based upon such factors as the distance/accessibility of a placement. Advocates should not enter a home in which a parent or caregiver is not present, and should meet the child only with other adults present in the general proximity to avoid being in a position where someone could make a claim of abuse or other misbehavior against the advocate. Advocate visits should be made in the foster home or where the child resides for a majority of the visits. There are occasions where visits may be made in public places or other locations, depending upon circumstances of the case. Advocates must consult with the Advocate Supervisor in determining alternate visit locations. Visits should be scheduled in advance and unannounced visits to a child's placement, including a foster home, should be made by an Advocate only with the approval of their Advocate Supervisor.

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

Advocates should report all suspected incidents of abuse or neglect they may witness or observe to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (1-800-25ABUSE). Procedures for making a hotline call are addressed in pre-service training. The advocate should notify the Advocate Supervisor prior to making such a call, if

circumstances permit. Otherwise, the Advocate Supervisor should be notified of the circumstances as soon as possible after a call is made.

Volunteer — Client Relationship

CASA Advocates should not provide direct services to the child or to any party in their case. The relationships with the parties involved in a case should remain professional at all times. Any gifts to the family/child should be nominal and done with Advocate Supervisor approval. Inappropriate practices include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Transporting any party involved in a case: child or adult.
- Inviting any party to a case to the advocate's home.
- Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling to anyone involved in the case.
- Making placement arrangements for the child.
- Giving money to the child or family.
- Engaging in activities which jeopardize the health or safety of the child.
- Supervising parent/child visitations, or supervising the child alone.

Observing Parent/Child or Sibling Visits

Under certain circumstances and with Advocate Supervisor permission, Advocates may observe visits between the child and parents and/or siblings. The purpose of attending such visits is to observe the family interactions, not to supervise or intervene. Advocates should respect these visits as limited, valuable time that the family has to spend together. Supervision of these visits is the responsibility of DCFS or other social service agency assigned to the case. The social service agency may delegate this responsibility to another party, such as a contracted homemaker or foster parent, but not to the Advocate.

Confidentiality and Communications with Parties

A CASA volunteer advocate becomes a *Friend of the Court* upon swearing in by a judge. Any information that an Advocate receives pertaining to individual children or families in the discharge of the Advocate's role and responsibilities is strictly confidential. This information may not be discussed with anyone except the following:

- The DuPage County Juvenile Court*
- CASA of DuPage County, Inc. staff and volunteer advocates
- The Assistant State's Attorney assigned to the case
- The Guardian Ad Litem assigned to the case
- The parents' attorney of record
- The Department of Children and Family Services and other private agencies appointed to the case

*Advocates should not have any communications or discussions regarding any case or case-related information with the Judge without all parties to the case present. This is called an *ex parte* communication and is not permitted.

Advocates may be asked to testify during court hearings about their observations of the child/ren and their family. During testimony, an Advocate may be asked questions by the judge, the *guardian ad litem*, attorneys for the state, or attorneys for the parents. Advocates may only testify in court regarding their own observations concerning the child/ren as well as any statements of which they have personal knowledge made by parties named in the case.

Volunteer advocates are not authorized to solicit other persons outside the CASA organization for assistance with CASA case activities except under the direction of their Advocate Supervisor. Discussion of the case with individuals other than listed above, even if the family name and other identifying information are omitted, is strictly forbidden. **All Advocates are required to sign CASA's Confidentiality Policy and violation of confidentiality may be cause for immediate dismissal.** Questions concerning this policy, including what constitutes confidential information, should be referred to the Program Director and/or Executive Director.

Court Reports

The Advocate is responsible for submitting a written case report to their Advocate Supervisor prior to each court hearing. ***Advocates are not to provide their report to anyone other than their Advocate Supervisor.*** If a party or person involved in the case requests a copy of the report from the advocate, the advocate should refer the request to their Advocate Supervisor. The CASA staff provides pre-service training on how to write and process these reports. Please consult the Report Writing guide for specific procedures.

Identification

The CASA program staff provides all Advocates with an identification badge and, for each assigned case, a case assignment letter and a copy of the court order assigning CASA to the case. Advocates should use these items as necessary to execute any of their advocate roles and responsibilities. Identification badges must be surrendered upon termination from the program. Volunteer advocates are not required to use their last name in any communication or correspondence related to the execution of their duties as a CASA. If the advocate is asked to provide his or her address or phone number, the volunteer can give the address and phone number of the CASA office. Advocates may provide their cell phone numbers and/or email addresses at their discretion. If an individual requests further identity information from the advocate, the advocate should refer the person to the Advocate Supervisor.

Removal from Case

Volunteer advocates must follow the directions of their Advocate Supervisor regarding an advocate's removal from a case assignment and any limitations set forth regarding contact with CASA clients, former CASA clients, or other individuals involved in the case.

Disciplinary Action

CASA has adopted rules and regulations for its operational needs and for the protection and safety of its employees, volunteers, visitors, and the community. CASA Advocates are expected to perform their jobs satisfactorily and obey CASA's rules and regulations. These rules and regulations are subject to change, with or without notice.

These rules and regulations are intended to provide volunteers with general expectations for proper conduct. However, no list can include all instances of conduct that can result in discipline, and the specific rules that CASA may adopt do not replace sound judgment, common courtesy or common-sense behavior. The circumstances of each situation are different, and CASA reserves the right to impose appropriate disciplinary action at its discretion. Disciplinary action may call for any of four steps—verbal warning, written warning/probation, suspension, or termination of service—depending on factors such as the severity of the problem, the number of occurrences and length of service. There may be circumstances when one or more of the steps are bypassed. CASA will review the individual circumstances to determine the appropriate discipline at its discretion. The following list includes, but is in no way limited to the rules of conduct that can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of volunteer service:

- Inappropriate or unwelcome physical contact with any child at any time.
- Insubordination or refusal to perform assigned duties.
- Unauthorized presence on CASA property.
- Dishonesty or falsification of CASA documents or records including, but not limited to misrepresentation or omission of information of volunteer applications.
- Theft, unauthorized possession or destruction of CASA property or the property of other employees, volunteers, visitors, patrons, contractors, owners, or others doing business with CASA. Unauthorized destruction of organization records is unacceptable.
- Dishonesty regarding any aspect of service with CASA.
- Abuse or misuse of CASA property or funds.
- Performing or attempting to perform CASA duties while intoxicated or under the influence of illegal drugs, and illegal manufacture, possession, use, sale, distribution or transportation of drugs.
- Abusing, threatening or intimidating other employees, volunteers, visitors, contractors, owners, patrons or others doing business with CASA.
- Violation of any of CASA policies, rules or regulations, including the policies contained in the CASA Advocate Policy Handbook or otherwise distributed by CASA or required under applicable local, state or federal law or regulation.

Advocates have additional unique responsibilities due to the nature of their role in the court process. While not all inclusive, the following violations may also result in disciplinary action up to and including termination:

- Taking action without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the role or authority of the CASA program.
- Failure to follow the directions of the Advocate Supervisor regarding contacts with clients or parties to the case, including failure to visit the children in the case monthly or as otherwise directed by the Advocate Supervisor.
- Failure to follow the directions of the Advocate Supervisor regarding submission of and revisions to court reports.
- Repeated late submissions of court reports to the Advocate Supervisor.
- Failure to exhibit appropriate conduct during court hearings and other meetings where the volunteer is participating as the child's advocate and/or as a representative of CASA.
- Failure to complete 12 hours of in-service training annually.

- Failure to maintain appropriate volunteer-client relationships.
- Assuming responsibility for a supervised visitation or for supervising a child.
- Transporting any party involved in a case: child or adult.
- Violating the oath of confidentiality.
- Being convicted of a crime that indicates unfitness for service or raises a threat to the safety or well-being of CASA or its clients, volunteers, employees or property.
- Failing to report to CASA, within (5) days, being convicted of a felony.
- Failure to report abuse of a child.

Complaints and Grievances

Every effort should be made to solve problems cooperatively and informally before presenting those problems as formal grievances. Should informal efforts fail, the following policy is set forth in order to provide procedures for registering complaints involving CASA matters. All complaints will receive thoughtful consideration and will be discussed with the individual who raises them. Complaints may arise from external sources or internal (within the program).

External: Because CASA is involved in work that touches the lives of children and families, it is emotionally charged work that evokes a wide range of opinions and feelings. As a result, there may be criticism of a CASA advocate from the parties in a case, especially when the CASA advocate does not report findings in agreement with an individual party's point of view. Should a complaint arise from someone outside the CASA organization and the complaint is not resolved informally, the person to whom the complaint was given should inform the Program Director and/or Executive Director of the details of the complaint. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director in consultation with the Program Director to investigate the circumstances surrounding the complaint and determine what action, if any, should be taken.

Internal: When a CASA volunteer advocate wishes to make a statement of dissatisfaction regarding a policy, practice, condition or supervisor's decision or performance, the advocate should first discuss the matter with the Advocate Supervisor. If the problem is not resolved to the satisfaction of the advocate, the advocate may forward a written statement of the specific grievance to the Program Director and/or Executive Director. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director in consultation with the Program Director to decide if the complaint has substance. The Advocate is entitled to a written response to the formal grievance outlining the position the Executive Director has taken on the grievance.

Resignation

An advocate may decide to resign from the program at any time at their discretion. CASA requests that volunteer advocates actively assigned to a case provide as much advance notice as possible of the anticipated date of their departure, preferably at least three weeks. When providing the notice of departure, the volunteer advocate should provide the date of departure, reason therefore, and status of all current cases. Additionally, Advocates may be asked to provide case summary information, including names, addresses and telephone numbers of individuals with whom the advocate has been involved in the case. Advocates may also be asked to assist in the transition of the case to a new advocate, if possible.

Exit Interviews

Upon resignation or dismissal from the program, an advocate may be asked to complete an exit interview, giving comments on the program. The interview seeks to ascertain why the advocate is leaving and the possibility of involving the advocate in some other capacity with the program. The exit interview provides the opportunity for updating active case details, the return of CASA materials, and the CASA identification card.