



Bergen County Court Appointed Special Advocates, Inc.

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BERGEN COUNTY CASA, INC.

CASA Volunteer Description

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) are appointed by the Presiding Judge of Bergen County Family Court, to ensure that the best interests of children are met. In order to do this, the CASA must investigate the facts of the case, recommend a course of action to the court or Child Placement Review Board, facilitate the resolution of the presenting problems, and monitor the progress toward the established goals.

Qualifications of a CASA:

1. Interest in children, their rights, and special needs
2. Minimum age of 21
3. Ability to communicate orally and in writing - making oral and written reports to the Court, to the CASA supervisor and to other appropriate individuals
4. Ability to pass both background and State Central Record Bureau checks
5. Have four favorable references from sources other than relatives

Requirements of a CASA:

1. Training:
 - a. Attend information session
 - b. Attend interview
 - c. Attend all basic training sessions (30 hours, including completion interview)
 - d. Attend 3 hours of court observation
 - e. Attend 12 hours in-service training each year
2. Responsibilities:
 - a. Periodic visitation with child/children involved in your case
 - b. Maintain a complete, legible, up-to-date case file on each assigned case
 - c. Keep abreast of all deadlines and timetables involved in your case
 - d. Turn in reports on time
 - e. Devote sufficient time to investigation and follow-up of assigned case
3. Supervision:
 - a. Maintain communication with CASA supervisor on all case activity
 - b. Meet regularly for supervision
 - c. Periodic assessments with CASA supervisor: initial 3 month review, plus an annual review after one year
4. Confidentiality: Maintain strict confidentiality in accordance with Bergen County CASA's policies
5. Commitment: Minimum one year commitment

Specific duties of a CASA:

1. Investigate:
 - a. Gather all relevant facts through personal interviews and a review of all records, documents and clinical data
 - b. Upon assignment to a case, interview interested parties (child, family members, foster family, teachers, doctors, therapists, social service worker, etc.) to determine facts
 - c. Make agency visits to observe parent-child interaction
 - d. Make visits to home suggested as permanent or temporary placement
 - e. Research alternatives available for the child (relatives, foster placement, etc.)
 - f. Work with relevant parties to develop a permanency plan for the child and seek cooperative solutions with families and child protective system participants
 - g. Research whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts, are being provided to the child and family

2. Advocate and Recommend:
 - a. Ensure that all relevant facts are before the court at hearings, through written reports and possibly direct testimony
 - b. Prepare a written report stating findings and a recommendation for permanent disposition of the case
 - c. Submit the report to supervisor no fewer than ten business days prior to the court hearing
 - d. Appear in Court/Child Placement Review Board hearings to make recommendations and observe what is decided with regard to the case

3. Facilitate and Monitor:
 - a. Ensure that the court, social service representatives and legal counsel fulfill their obligations to the child in a timely fashion
 - b. Assist in the implementation of any plan prescribed by the court (whether recommended in the CASA report or not)
 - c. Continue contact with the child, family and others to monitor progress towards goals decreed by the court

CASA Volunteers will refrain from engaging in activities that will:

1. Jeopardize the safety of the child
2. Endanger the integrity of the program
3. Compromise the objectivity of the volunteer
4. Result in conflict of interest or
5. Expose the program or the volunteer to criminal or civil liability

CASA Volunteers are prohibited from:

1. Taking a child home with them
2. Transporting clients, birth parents, or any parties involved in their case, *under any circumstances*
3. Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling to a child and/or family
4. Making placement arrangements for the child or
5. Providing money or gifts to a child or family member

CASA is an Equal Opportunity provider and does not discriminate against anyone based on age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability or religion.