

FAQs

Have questions? Our FAQ page provides answers to some of the most often asked questions about CASA. If you have additional questions, please email us on our contact page or give us a call.

What does CASA mean?

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate. CASA of Lackawanna is the CASA volunteer advocacy program in Lackawanna County.

What is a CASA Volunteer?

CASA volunteers are trained advocates appointed by the Judge to help determine the child's best interest. Court-appointed special advocates (CASA Volunteers) may be appointed to participate as advocates for children who are dependent or alleged to be dependent. CASA Volunteers shall be appointed only by the court and shall be sworn in by the court in recognition of both the importance and confidential nature of their duties. CASA Volunteers shall, at all times, be under the supervision of a CASA program which has the legal authority to operate, and which is recognized and supported by the court. The program has a written agreement with the court defining the working relationship between the CASA program and the court. CASA Volunteers may not be assigned to a case until it is determined that all preservice training and qualification requirements have been met.

Who can be a CASA Volunteer?

In Pennsylvania, the qualifications of a CASA Volunteer are laid out in the rules of judicial procedure under 42 Pa. C.S. § 6342. Volunteers must be at least 21 and pass a thorough screening and background check.

How Does a CASA Volunteer Become Involved in a Case?

Anyone may request that a CASA volunteer be assigned to a case, including parties such as a Dependency Court Master, Office of Youth and Family Services caseworkers, supervisors, or solicitors, the Child's and/or family's attorney or other human service agencies. However, only a Family Court Judge can assign a CASA volunteer to a case.

To What Type of Cases in a CASA Volunteer Assigned?

A CASA volunteer is assigned to children, from newborn to age 21, who are adjudicated dependent; already in the foster care system or to those at risk of entering foster care as a result of abuse, neglect and/or the parents or guardians' inability to care for the children. CASA volunteers cannot be assigned in a custody case.

What are the Responsibilities of a CASA Volunteer?

A CASA volunteer is a mentor for a child, and an advocate for their best interest in the child welfare system. CASA volunteers are responsible for taking the time to find out as much information as possible about the child and the child's circumstances through reviewing all relevant records and interviewing all relevant people, most importantly, the child. The CASA volunteer visits the child in their foster home, observes family visits, talks to caregivers and other involved professionals, and attends court hearings regarding the child. CASA volunteers then submit a written report to the Court to recommend to the Judge what they believe is best for the child. In all cases, CASA volunteers advocate for safe and permanent homes for children.

Do I Need Training to be a CASA Volunteer?

Each volunteer is subject to a thorough screening process, including background checks, interviews, and thirty-two hours of initial training where volunteers learn about the human service system, the juvenile court, and issues such as substance abuse and mental health as well as the special needs of children who are involved in abuse and neglect cases.

After being sworn-in by the Judge as official CASA volunteers, they must complete at least twelve hours of additional in-service training each year.

A CASA Volunteer is assigned to a child I know – what information should I provide?

CASA volunteers have a court order giving them access to all documents that relate to the child in the case. CASA volunteers should be invited to all meetings regarding the child and should be notified any time a child is to be moved.

CASA volunteers must take an oath before the Court that requires them to fulfill the roles assigned to them and to do so while respecting the confidentiality of all information and/or reports revealed to them.

CASA volunteers are trained to only share information with direct parties to the case and only the direct parties to the case will have access to review the CASA reports submitted to the Judge.

Can a CASA Volunteer Really Make a Difference?

Research studies have shown that the introduction of just one caring adult in the life of an abused child can change the course of that child's life forever. With CASA volunteers, children who have known only hurt, rejection and disappointment from adults learn to trust, hope and love. A CASA volunteer advocate makes a profound and positive difference for neglected and/or abused children.