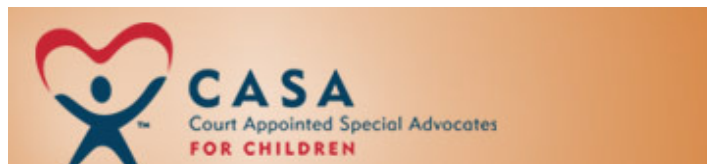


CASA VOLUNTEER HANBOOK



CENTRAL GEORGIA

CASA

(Revised September 2008)

Make a Lifelong Difference for a Child.



THE MISSION AND FOUNDING OF CASA

Mission. Central Georgia CASA (CGC) strives to foster the safety, stability, and security of neglected and abused children by representing their best interest in the Macon Judicial Circuit’s juvenile court deprivation proceedings. CGC accomplishes this mission by training and supporting citizen volunteers who serve as advocates for individual children.

Founding. The first CASA program began in Seattle in 1977 as the idea of Judge David Soukup. That one program initiated a movement, which has since mushroomed to over 900 programs in all 50 states.

In Georgia. Georgia CASA was established in 1989 and was based on Judge Soukup’s model. O.C.G.A. Section 15-11-55 states that “...In deprivation cases, an attorney or court appointed special advocate, or both, may be appointed as the child’s guardian ad litem.” It further specifies that “...the term ‘court appointed special advocate’ means a volunteer who has been screened and trained regarding deprivation, child development, and juvenile court procedures and has been appointed as a guardian ad litem by the court in a deprivation case.”



AUTHORITY FOR THE PROGRAM

Laws Governing CASA. O.C.G.A. 15-11-09 governs the appointment and authorities of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). Public Law 93-247 (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act [CAPTA]) provides the federal mandate for the appointment of a guardian ad litem for abused and neglected children.

Approval and Sanction. This program operates under each county's approval and sanction of the Macon Judicial Circuit's Juvenile Court.



CORE VALUES OF CENTRAL GEORGIA CASA

Confidentiality. We are committed to the highest standards of confidentiality regarding clients, volunteers, staff, and donors. Inquiries from the media or public for information regarding confidential matters are dealt with only by the Executive Director, Board Chair, or their designated representative. Decisions to release information about confidential matters are made on a case by case basis by the Executive Director and Board Chair. However, general information about the CASA program may be released by anyone associated with the organization.

Responsibility to Children. The organization's first responsibility is to protect and advocate for the best interest of the children served by the program. All resources are allocated and policies and procedures carried out in accordance with this responsibility.

Cultural Competent Advocacy. Advocacy for the best interests of children requires tremendous sensitivity to the child and family's culture, ethnic identity, religion and the many other factors that contribute to the child's identity. The organization and all those within it must make diligent and deliberate efforts to ensure that advocacy is culturally sensitive and appropriate. Further, we must always strive to do better in this area, to grow beyond our current understanding and competency level.

Attitude toward Families. Children love and value their families, even families who have abused or neglected them. We, therefore, recognize that advocacy for the child is often closely tied to advocacy for the family. We promote respectful treatment of all parents and family members. However, ultimately the recommendations are based solely on the best interest of the child.



ROLE AND DEFINITION OF COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA VOLUNTEERS OR CASAs)

The CASA's Autonomy. The CASA is the child's advocate, and is given wide latitude by the CGC program to determine and advocate for the child's best interests. CASAs are encouraged to be vigorous advocates. Staff supports them in their role, assisting them through supervision and consultation to provide the best advocacy possible.

Limitations to the CASA's Autonomy. Staff does not summarily override the judgment of CASA volunteers in specific cases except where the welfare of the child (or safety of another person) is seriously jeopardized. The decision to override a CASA is done rarely and with great caution.

Roles and Responsibilities of a CASA Volunteer. As an advocate, the volunteer:

1. Acts as an independent gatherer of information whose task is to review all relevant records and interview the child, parents, case workers, teachers, and other persons to ascertain the facts and circumstances of each child's situation.
2. Determines the best interests of the child with consideration for his or her age, maturity, social and cultural background, taking into account the need for a safe home for the child and the importance of family preservation and permanency planning.
3. Seeks cooperative solutions, which will best serve the child's interests and protect his/her welfare.
4. Provides typewritten reports of findings and recommendations to the court at each hearing to assure that all the relevant facts are before the court and to ensure that appropriate motions to relieve the child's situation are filed.
5. Appears at all hearings to represent the child's interests, ensuring that appropriate witnesses are called and examined.
6. Explains the role of the CASA and the court proceedings to the child, when appropriate, in a language the child can understand.
7. Requests that clear, specific orders are entered for evaluation, assessment, services, placement and treatment for the child and the child's family.



8. Monitors implementation of service plans and disposition orders to determine whether services ordered by the court are provided in a timely manner and are accomplishing their desired goals. Monitors the progress of a case through the court process and advocates for timely hearings.
9. Informs the court promptly if services are not being made available to the child and/or family, if the family fails to take advantage of such services, or if the services are not achieving their purpose. Brings to the court's attention any violation of orders, new developments, or changes in the child's circumstances.
10. Advocates for the child's interest in the mental health, education, and other community systems.
11. Ensures that a permanent placement plan is developed and is being implemented for any child removed from the custody of his or her own parent or guardian.
12. Remains actively involved in the case until permanency is achieved.
13. Makes monthly contact with Program Coordinator
14. Submits all required paperwork to Program Coordinator on a monthly basis.
15. In order to maintain certification, each Court Appointed Special Advocate is required to participate in a minimum of 12 additional hours of training annually. These hours are earned/credited during the calendar year, January 1-December, through monthly trainings provided by the Volunteer Coordinator.

A CASA volunteer respects the right to privacy by keeping information that would identify the parties involved in CASA cases confidential. The volunteer does not become inappropriately involved in a case by engaging in activities which jeopardize the safety of the child, the integrity of the program, the objectivity of the volunteer, or activities which are likely to result in conflict of interest or expose the program to criminal or civil liability. A CASA volunteer abides by the National CASA Association's Code of Ethics.

CASA volunteers who persistently demonstrate behavior or attitudes inconsistent with the core values of the CGCASA program may be released.



RELATIONSHIPS

Relationship to the Child Welfare System. CGC values strong working relationships and open communication with all others working within the child welfare system. It is essential to communicate regularly and effectively with all professionals working with each child. This includes complete discussion of all issues and all opinions. It is expected that this will occur in a professional manner.

Relationships and Responsibility to the Court. As the Court's designated court appointed special advocate program, CGC had a responsibility to operate with the highest standards of ethics and accountability, doing nothing to discredit the Court or the position of trust it is accorded.

As appointed officers of the Court, CASAs must demonstrate the highest ethical standards in all of their conduct, both inside and outside of the courtroom. They must abide by the laws of Georgia and the federal government, and the rules of the Court, doing nothing to bring dishonor to the Court, the role in which they serve, or the CGC program. Behavior unbecoming an appointed officer of the court is not tolerated.

The same principles apply to paid staff and members of the CGCASA Board.



DISCIPLINARY PROTOCOL

Generally, offenses are subject to progressive disciplinary action as follows:

- 1st Offense-Verbal Warning-handled by a Program Coordinator or Executive Director during a private review session
- 2nd Offense-Probationary Status
 - Probation. A person may be placed on probationary status for up to six months for concerns related to the ability to perform in the position or failure to meet initial or annual certification requirements. The probation period ends when the person has adequately addresses the concerns. The reasons for both invoking and completion of probation shall be documented in the volunteer's personnel file the reason for initiating probationary status or its invocation.
- 3rd Offense-Immediate Dismissal

Disciplinary action, including 1st and 2nd offenses, will be done in writing by either the Program Coordinator or the Executive Director and must be signed by the volunteer and the Program Coordinator or the Executive Director.

Certain offenses require immediate dismissal from the program and will be determined at the discretion of the Program Coordinator, in consultation with and approval of the Executive Director.

Reasons for termination include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Failure or inability to perform one's duties as a Court Appointed Special Advocate to the necessary level of competency
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Harm/Endangerment to a child
- Deliberate violation of agency policies or state law, including breach of confidentiality
- Unwillingness to accept feedback or input from staff members
- Commission of an offense during time of service



- Lying on the application or during the screening process
- History of conviction or charge of child abuse/neglect
- Unavailable to perform one's duties; including required training
- Conflict of interest
- The inability to be objective in the role of a Court Appointed Special Advocate.
- Engaging in ex-parte communication with the court

The Program Coordinator, in consultation with and approval of the Executive Director, reserves the sole right to determine what constitutes grounds for termination.

Procedure. The Program Coordinator determines that one of two issues has been presented: the advocacy of the CASA is not serving the best interest of the child, wither by significant inappropriate advocacy or lack of involvement with the case; or the advocacy of the CASA is damaging the program or its mission. The Program Coordinator should explore all options for resolving the situation, short of termination the volunteer. Options include providing verbal and written feedback, providing specific warnings, developing work plans with the volunteer, and other supervisory action.

When the Program Coordinator has exhausted all options, the Program Coordinator must staff the issue with the Executive Director, reviewing all measures taken to date and identify a plan of action.

The Program Coordinator then carries out the plan of action and thoroughly documents efforts.

Case Files and Documentation. All case files and documentation are the property of the CGC program and must be returned to the CGC office in a timely manner, including any related notes or materials.

Documents outlining policies, procedures, responsibilities and laws related to this program are reviewed in the initial volunteer training and include but are not limited to: Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities; Volunteer Statement of Commitment; Volunteer Job Description; National CASA Code of Ethics; Protocols between CGC and National CASA; Georgia CASA, the Bibb, Peach, or Crawford Juvenile Court; and Bibb, Peach, and Crawford County DFCS.



COMPLAINT PROTOCOL

- Volunteer complaints shall be made in writing. Complaint forms must be signed by the complainant.
- Complaints will be investigated promptly and in as confidential manner as possible by the Executive Director or the CGCASA Board Chair.
- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the resolution, the complainant may request, in writing, a hearing before the Board of Directors.



VOLUNTEER MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT

Supportive Atmosphere. The organization shall strive to create and maintain an atmosphere which provides optimum support to its CASA volunteers in the performance of their work.

Assigning New CASAs to a Program Coordinator. Upon successful completion of training and being sworn in, volunteers will be assigned to a Program Coordinator based on the county served.

Reasoning of Supervisor. A Program Coordinator may request reassignment of a CASA to another Program Coordinator, if available, in certain circumstances. Examples of such circumstances includes: unresolved personality conflicts or a conflict of interest arising from the Program Coordinator's relationship to a particular case. A CASA may also request reassignment to another Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will evaluate this request with the Executive Director and make the determination, preferably jointly.



STANDARDS FOR CASA ACTIVITY AND INVOLVEMENT

Regarding Contact with the Child. The program's expectation is that the CASA see the child (lay eyes on the child) a minimum of once per month with at least one additional contact during that same period. Exceptions due to distance of child from the respective County or other reasons must be cleared with and documented by the Program Coordinator.

CASA's are prohibited from taking a child to his/her home or any other home.

CASA's are prohibited from giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling.

CASA's are prohibited from making placement arrangements for the child.

CASA's are prohibited from giving money to the child, the child's family, or caregiver.

CASA's are prohibited from giving expensive gifts to the child, the child's family, or caregiver.

Regarding Contact with Others. Corroboration and collaboration are necessary for effective advocacy. Particularly, a CASA is required to maintain monthly contact with the DFCS worker assigned to the case throughout their assignment.

Regarding Confidentiality. Volunteers shall be expected to maintain strict confidentiality in regards to all case information. Sharing of any case information is restricted to parties to the case, the Court, CGC staff, and other CASAs from this program only.

Contact between the Program Coordinator and CASA. After accepting a new case, it is important during the first month that the CASA and the Program Coordinator stay in close communication, particularly when it is the CASA's first case. CASA's are required to discuss recommendations concerning the case with the Program Coordinator prior to submitting recommendation to the court.

Documentation. Both the CASA and Program Coordinator shall document significant contact in their respective case files. The Program Coordinator shall further complete appropriate administrative forms, as required.

Transporting Children. CASA's are prohibited from transporting assigned children for any reason. Failure to abide by this policy will result in termination.



ASSIGNING CASES

Matching Cases to CASAs. CASAs and their supervising Program Coordinator collaborate in finding the most appropriate case assignment. Every effort is made to choose a case that will take advantage of a particular CASA's special attributes and interests. These attributes may include knowledge, skills, or experience relation to culture, language, medical condition, age group, disability, or educational need.

CASAs are encouraged to share with the Program Coordinators particular types of cases in which they would be most interested. CASAs have the opportunity to fill out a Volunteer Preference Form. Effort will be made to honor those requests, though final decisions regarding case matching will always be based on what is judged by staff to provide the best possible advocacy for a child(ren).

Procedure for Assigning a Case. The general procedure for assigning a case involves the CASA meeting with the Program Coordinator. A copy of the legal file is given to the CASA. This file should be an up-to-date representation of all juvenile court involvement in the case, along with any other information gathered by the CGC office. A completed case summary sheet, which identifies parties, their phone numbers, addresses, and any other known contact persons, shall be included.

Time should be available for the Program Coordinator and the CASA to review the file as required, answer any questions, and highlight any particularly significant legal concerns or facts, such as upcoming hearing dates. The Program Coordinator should assist, as required, the CASA in identifying the key issues in the case and formulating an initial "plan of action." Of particular notes should be any concerns regarding safety, either for the child or the CASA.

Concurrent with accepting the case, the CASA should be provided with a copy of the signed court order appointing him or her as the CASA.

CASA Volunteers have Input into which Case they Accept. CASA volunteers should always be given the opportunity to consider whether a particular case is a good match for their skills and interests. Even though staff does their best to identify good matches, CASAs should be able to accept or turn down any given case. When the CASA decides not to accept a particular case, staff will attempt to promptly identify another case that better matches the CASA's preferences.

Maximum Number of Cases per CASA. Volunteers may carry one to two cases at a time and may never carry more than five cases at one time.



Assigning Additional Cases to a CASA. It is the Program Coordinator's responsibility to monitor a CASA's involvement in their case. As a new CASA gains experience and demonstrates acceptable performance, the Program Coordinator may offer the CASA additional cases which can be assigned concurrently. The CASA has the responsibility to identify whether or not they are capable of the extra demands of an additional case, although the Program Coordinator should be sensitive to the demands (outside of CGCASA) on the Volunteer's time, and shall not exceed standards for maximum caseloads (see above).



CLOSING CASES

Reasons for Closing. Closing cases can happen for a variety of reasons: temporary custody is dismissed, an adoption has taken place or the Program Coordinator and CASA determine that the need for a CASA no longer exists or is no longer productive. In addition, circumstances surrounding the CASA may also necessitate case closure. If custody is dismissed the program is automatically relieved from the case. If a CASA is closing a case for any other reason the court must relieve the CASA in an order or the CASA must file a motion to be relieved.

Closing the Case. When a case is closed it is the responsibility of the CASA to return the case file, with all closing notes, to the CGCASA office.



REPORTS TO COURT

Format. The format of CASA reports to court should follow the prescribed format (on disk distributed by the Program Coordinator), unless there is good reason to deviate from this format. In other words, it should serve a purpose in assisting the CASA to better communicate to the Court the issues in the case, rather than simply being a stylistic preference.

Deadlines for Receiving Reports in Court. In order to meet the Court's rules for receiving written case materials, reports must be received in the CASA office a minimum of two (2) working days prior to the court hearing. Additional information received after report submission may be sent to the CGCASA office in the form of an addendum to the report.

Changes to the Report. The report and recommendations belong to the CASA. The role of the Program Coordinator is to review the report and make recommendations for change which will strengthen the CASA's advocacy for the child. Changes (other than minor typographical and grammatical changes) are not made to the CASA's report without the permissions of the CASA. Suggestions for change are based on these criteria: 1) the report should be complete, logical, and present a sound advocacy position to the court; 2) it should be based on fact and observation rather than speculation and unfounded opinion; and 3) the report should be coherent and represent the CASA in a credible manner (thus, grammar may need to be changed, typos and misspellings should be corrected). Reports may be modified by the Program Coordinator to follow the prescribed format without change to basic content.

Timely Distribution. Court rule is that reports must be received by all parties at least two working days prior to the hearing. All efforts are made to comply with this rule by the Program Coordinator.

When the CASA does not Receive Timely Notice of the Hearing. If this results in the report being distributed late, the Program Coordinator should support the CASA in informing the Court and parties so the CASA will not be unfairly penalized.



MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE

The CASA volunteer will immediately contact the caseworker, the case worker's supervisor, or the child abuse reporting hotline when they suspect they suspect that a child is in imminent danger or is being abused or neglected. The CASA will then immediately contact the Executive Director.

POLICY FOR REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

CASA Volunteers and Staff are mandated reporters of child abuse and/or neglect. According to Georgia law, mandated reporters must report any suspected abuse and/or neglect a child might be suffering to the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS), or in the absence of such an agency, to the appropriate police authority or district attorney.

When a CASA Volunteer learns of possible abuse or neglect being suffered by a child, they must first report it to the Program Coordinator or Executive Director within a 24-hour period. Staff will then instruct the volunteer to report the information to the Child Protective Unit of the Bibb, Peach, or Crawford County DFCS (the county where the child resides). This report must include:

- Details of the incident
- Names and addresses and phone numbers (if known) of the persons involved; and
- Description of how and from whom the information was obtained.

CASA staff is required to report the information to the CPS unit. If the case is an open CASA case, the report must be documented in writing containing the above information and placed in the file. The staff member must also include the following information in the file:

- Date and time report was made;
- Agency contacted to make report; and
- Persons to whom report was made.

Any person or entity participating in making a report to a child welfare agency or appropriate authorities shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability provided their report is made in good faith. However, mandated reporters who knowingly and willfully fail to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.



VOLUNTEER PROCEDURES

CASA volunteers carrying a case shall:

1. Review the procedure with their Program Coordinator before they decide to accept the case. A CASA should be aware of the responsibilities of taking on a case
2. Visit the child(ren) a minimum of twice a month with at least one of those visits being face-to-face. If this becomes problematic, contact the Program Coordinator and plan to have someone else visit.
3. When possible return to original sources of information, e.g., emergency room doctors, hospital social workers, the DFCS worker. This will include setting up interviews with these professionals and obtaining applicable documentation that will assist with the assessment process.
4. Work to reconcile all information about progress in current services with all information regarding the original injuries. Facilitate staffings between various professionals with differing points of view or with involvement at different time in the case history; for example, the original emergency room personnel, and both the child's and parents' counselors.
5. Utilize the opinion of the medical professionals on the nature, seriousness, and likely cause of the injuries. With very young children, CASA must let the medical evidence speak for them since the child cannot give an explanation on their own behalf. If necessary, the Program Coordinator will help the CASA secure medical professional to review the case and advise on the nature of the injuries, and whether the injuries could have been unintentional or accidental.
6. Make use of staffings with case participants to review case progress and planning.
7. Make it a personal challenge to continually ask questions and try to see the case in a different light. Be especially thoughtful about differing opinions of case participants, and use these as an opportunity to challenge your thinking.
8. Take advantage if other avenues for review of the case. Arrange then with the Program Coordinator if there is need for additional input. These include staffing the case with the Program Coordinator and the Executive Director as a group.
9. Make contact with Program Coordinator after DFCS court staffing. NOTE: Due to DFCS policies, only CGCASA staff may attend DFCS court staffing.
10. Maintain open communication with Program Coordinator.





VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

A CASA volunteer is responsible for:

- Completing an extensive review of each assigned case (i.e. speaking with the child and relevant adults, reviewing appropriate records and reports).
- Reporting findings to the court (i.e. typed-written report containing information, attend court hearings concerning the child, participate in case conferences concerning the child).
- Attending all court hearings to ensure that all the relevant facts are presented.
- Attending appropriate interagency meetings regarding the child.
- Ensuring that public systems respond to the needs of the child.
- Monitoring the assigned case following a court hearing or decisions as designated by the court.
- Consulting regularly with the Program Coordinator concerning the assigned case.
- Coordinating with the Program Coordinator to develop a CASA plan and review progress and reports.

REQUIRED SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Ability to keep all client and court information confidential.
- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.
- Ability to respect and relate to people from various backgrounds (economical, cultural, education) in a variety of settings.
- Ability to transport self to a variety of locations.
- Ability to deal with a wide range of emotions (i.e. hostility, anger).
- Ability to maintain objectivity.
- Ability to gather and record factual information accurately.



- A basic understanding of child development.
- A basic understanding of child relationships.
- Be physically, emotionally and mentally competent.

TRAINING

- CASA volunteers are required to attend approximately 40 hours of pre-service training.
- CASA volunteers follow guidelines established by the National CASA Association.
- CASA volunteers are required to attend in-service training and receive direct supervision and guidance from program staff.

TIME COMMITMENT

- Volunteers are required to commit themselves to the Central Georgia CASA Program for at least 12 months.
- Volunteers are expected to be available for case assignment and to accept cases unless other arrangements have been made.



CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

The volunteer shall adhere to the following guidelines with respect to maintaining confidentiality and respecting the privacy of others in all matters relating to an assigned case. The guidelines are set out below. They govern circumstances in which the CASA requests or receives information. However, these guidelines cannot cover every possible situation which may arise. Any questions and or concerns that CASA volunteer has regarding confidentiality should be discussed with the Program Coordinator. These will be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

- Cases involving parties who are known to the Central Georgia CASA Program as being HIV positive, having AIDS, and /or having other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are governed by an additional confidentiality protocol to which the volunteer must adhere. If after accepting a case, the CASA learns it involved an STD, the CASA should immediately contact the Program Coordinator to obtain the protocol.
- As part of advocacy endeavors, the CASA may need to obtain information from doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, attorneys, clergy, teachers, or other professionals who have protected relationship status with a party or the child. The court order should cover most cases. By statute there are limitations on the disclosure of information a professional receives during the course of his/her relationship with a client or a patient. Many professions also have ethical principles which govern their ability to disclose information (for example, attorneys are bound by Rules of Professional Conduct; doctors, psychologists, and social workers also have ethical codes). The professional has no authority to provide any information to a CASA without the express permissions of the client or a court order.

If it is necessary to obtain any privileged/confidential information about someone who is directly related to the case but is not related to the child(ren), the CASA must obtain from that person a written release form very carefully and seek guidance from the Program Coordinator if the CASA has any questions at all.

While a person may sign a release allowing the CASA to obtain confidential information, he/she may not want to authorize disclosure to the other parties to the case and/or their attorneys. The CASA should review the signed release form very carefully and seek guidance from the Program Coordinator if the CASA has any questions at all.

- The CASA is not allowed to disseminate documents to any parties, their attorneys, and or collateral sources that are covered by state and/or federal



- confidentiality laws. These documents may include drug and alcohol evaluation/ records; involuntary mental health treatment and rape crisis information; and some criminal histories. Those covered by federal law usually are stamped: This information has been disclosed to you from records whose confidentiality is protected by Federal law (and) prohibits you from making and further disclosure. A general authorization for the release of medical or other information is NOT sufficient for this purpose.
- The CASA **shall never discuss** an assigned case for purely conversational purposes, particularly specific terms, with ANYONE.

The CASA should not promise a child or any party to the assigned case that his/her statement would be kept secret or confidential.

- The CASA must disclose information learned during the course of gathering information in three circumstances:
 1. When consulting with the Program Coordinator, Executive Director, and assigned DFCS worker who must be provided all significant case specifics known to the CASA;
 2. When ordered by the court in a hearing or trial;
 3. When the CASA thinks there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered physical and/or sexual abuse.
- The CASA may discuss a case in hypothetical terms for purposes of illustration at professional meetings (seminars) designed to address issues promoting the best interests of children. The CASA shall not, however, mention the names of any individuals involved in the case or provide facts that may identify the case or parties.

Printed Name

Signature

Date



STATE ADVOCATE COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

When a CASA wishes to file a complaint with the State Child Advocate.

1. The CASA staffs the case in questions with the Program Coordinator and/or Executive Director.
2. Complete complaint form provided by the State Child Advocate's office and submit to Program Coordinator for review.
3. The Program Coordinator will amend complaint as needed and send through Executive Director for approval.
4. Prior to sending complaint to the State Child Advocate, all parties (CASA, Supervising Program Coordinator, and Executive Director) must be in agreement with the content.
5. A cover letter from the Executive Director in support of the action must be attached to the complaint.
6. Do not send supporting documentation with initial complaint. Three days after submitting initial complaint form, call the State Child Advocate's office to determine assigned investigator. Inform them of the supporting documentation and ask for the subpoena.
7. Complaints are to be submitted through the CASA office only. No complaint should be submitted privately by an active CASA representing the Central Georgia CASA program.
8. Send original to State Child Advocate Office, copy to Executive Director, volunteer file, volunteer, and Georgia CASA.



STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT Volunteer Contract

Upon appointment as a Court Appointed Special Advocate of Central Georgia CASA, I agree to:

- Act in a responsible, professional manner as an Office of the Court in accordance with the Central Georgia CASA Program's policies and relevant laws;
- Act as an advocate for the best interest of the child, taking into account the child's age, maturity, culture, and ethnicity;
- Maintain a trusting, meaningful relationship with the child via face-to-face contact;
- Act as an independent fact-finder whose task is to review all relevant records and interview the child, the parents, social workers, teachers, and other relevant persons, to ascertain the facts and circumstances of the child's situation.
- Seek cooperative resolutions to the child's situation within the scope of the child's interest and welfare;
- Provide information through written report and/or testimony to the Court that is provided to the Program Coordinator at least two days prior to the court hearing;
- Attend all hearings, in conjunction with the Central Georgia CASA staff;
- Explain the court proceedings to the child in a language and terms that the child can understand;
- Ask that clear and specific orders are entered for the evaluation, assessment, services, and treatment of the child and the child's family;
- Monitor implementation of service plans and dispositional orders to determine whether services ordered by the Court are actually provided, are provided in a timely manner, and are accomplishing their desired goal;
- Inform the Program Coordinator and the Court in writing or orally if the services are not being made available to the child and/or families, if the family fails to take advantage of such services, or if such services are not achieving their purpose;



- Bring to the Court’s attention any violation of orders, new developments requiring the Court’s attention;
- Seek and accept support and supervision from Central Georgia CASA Program staff.
- Participate in on-going training;
- Accept as least one case within two (2) months of being sworn in as a CASA;
- Maintain a commitment to the mission and goals of Central Georgia CASA for at least one year; and
- Return all case files and related case materials at the end of my commitment and/or termination from the Central Georgia CASA Program to the program staff.

CASA Volunteer Signature

Date

With appreciation for your willingness to serve your community as a CASA volunteer, and in recognition of the above pledge, the Central Georgia CASA Program assures you of our support.

Executive Director

Date



Georgia Code O.C.G.A. 15-11-9 G

CODE SECTION 01/23/01

15-11-9.

- (a) As used in this Code section, the term “court appointed special advocate” means a volunteer who has been screened and trained regarding deprivation, child development, and juvenile court procedures and has been appointed as a guardian ad litem by the court in a deprivation case.
- (b) The court at any stage of a proceeding under this article, on application of a party or on its own motion, shall appoint a guardian ad litem for a child who is a party to the proceeding if the child has no parent, guardian, or custodian appearing on the child’s behalf or if the interests of the parent, guardian, or custodian appearing on the child’s behalf conflict with the child’s interests or in any other case in which the interests of the child require a guardian. A party to the proceeding or employee or representative of a party to the proceeding shall not be appointed. In deprivation cases, an attorney or court appointed special advocate, or both, may be appointed as the child’s guardian ad litem.

