

I am for the child[®]



CASA (noun)— *A common person with an uncommon commitment; a powerful voice in a child's life; a volunteer citizen working to make sure children live in safe and permanent homes.*

"We have the power to say right now that we won't let their story end like this."

— **Unknown**

"Every child is one caring adult away from a success story."

— **Josh Schupp**



Frequently Asked Questions

▶ What is a CASA volunteer?

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer is a trained volunteer who is appointed by a judge to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in court who are in the custody of the state. ORS 419B.112 (see back page)

▶ What is the CASA volunteer's role?

A CASA volunteer provides a judge with carefully researched background of the child to help the court make a sound decision about that child's future. The CASA volunteer must determine if it is in a child's best interest to stay with his or her parents or guardians, remain in foster care, be placed with other relatives, or move towards adoption.

▶ How do CASA volunteers help children?

CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to ensure abused and neglected children are not lost in the overburdened legal and child welfare systems or left to languish in inappropriate foster homes. Volunteers stay with each case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe and permanent home. For many children their CASA is the only constant adult presence in their life.

▶ How does a CASA volunteer investigate a case?

To prepare a recommendation, the CASA volunteer talks with the child, parents, family members, social workers, school officials, health providers and others who are knowledgeable about the child's history. The CASA volunteer also reviews all records pertaining to the child—school, medical and caseworker reports; and other documents.

▶ How does the role of a CASA volunteer differ from an attorney?

The CASA volunteer does not provide legal representation. That is the role of the attorney. However, the CASA volunteer may provide crucial background information that assists attorneys in presenting their cases.

▶ How many CASA programs are there?

There are nearly 1,000 CASA programs in 49 states across the country including Washington, D.C. and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In Oregon 22 programs serve 35 counties.

▶ **How much time does it require?**

Each case is different. A CASA volunteer usually spends about 10 hours doing research and conducting interviews prior to the first court appearance. More complicated cases take longer. Once initiated into the system, volunteers work about 8-10 hours a month. The average caseload is one–two cases per CASA.

▶ **How is CASA funded?**

In Oregon, CASA is state mandated. Funds are generally received through a combination of grants, fundraising and community donations.

▶ **What is our mission?**

Through our volunteers, CASA of Marion County advocates for abused and neglected children who need safe and permanent homes.

▶ **How do I apply to join CASA of Marion County as an advocate?**

1. Schedule an orientation/interview.
2. Submit an application via email, mail, or online.
3. Complete the background process which includes personal and professional reference checks, a child abuse registry check, criminal background check, and fingerprinting.
4. Complete the 30 hours of training for new CASA advocates which is offered multiple times a year and in a combination of on-line and in-person formats.

▶ **Who do I contact if I'm interested in becoming an advocate or if I have more questions?**

Call or e-mail us at: 503-967-6420, info@casamarionor.org

Key Outcomes for the CASA Model

- ▶ **A child with a CASA volunteer is more likely to find a safe, permanent home:**
 - More likely to be adopted
 - Half as likely to re-enter foster care
 - Substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care
 - More likely to have a plan for permanency, especially children of color
- ▶ **Children with CASA volunteers get more help while in the system...**
 - More services are ordered for the children
- ▶ **Children with CASA volunteers spend less time in foster care...**
 - "It is quite remarkable that children without CASA involvement are spending an average of over eight months longer in care, compared to children having CASA involvement."
- ▶ **Children with CASA volunteers do better in school...**
 - More likely to pass all courses
 - Less likely to have poor conduct in school
 - Less likely to be expelled
- ▶ **... and score better on nine protective factors**
 - Neighborhood resources, interested adults, sense of acceptance, controls against deviant behavior, models of conventional behavior, positive attitude towards the future, valuing achievement, ability to work with others and ability to work out conflicts.

**ORS 419B.112:
Court Appointed
Special Advocates**

- ▶ In every case the court shall appoint a court appointed special advocate. The CASA is deemed a legal party in these proceedings.
- ▶ Subject to the direction of the court, the duties of the court appointed special advocate shall be to:
 - ▶ Investigate all relevant information about the case;
 - ▶ Advocate for the child, ensuring that all relevant facts are brought before the court;
 - ▶ Facilitate and negotiate to ensure that the court, the Department of Human Services, if applicable, and the child's attorney, if any, fulfill their obligations to the child in a timely fashion.
 - ▶ Monitor all court orders to ensure compliance and to bring to the court's attention any change in circumstances that may require a modification of the court's order.

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