

Re: Information regarding CASA and the Volunteer Application

Thank you for your interest in helping abused and neglected children in Natrona County. This letter will explain more about becoming a CASA volunteer and what that involves.

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate. We recruit, train, and supervise volunteers to serve as advocates in court for children who have been abused or neglected, removed from their own homes, and placed in foster care. Our purpose is to ensure those children don't fall through the cracks or get lost in the system and that they are in safe, permanent homes as quickly as possible.

CASA volunteers must go through 30 hours of training and make an eighteen-month commitment to the program. The job of the volunteer is to investigate the circumstances surrounding a child's situation by talking with parents, teachers, counselors, the case-worker, the child, and anyone else who might be able to shed light on the problems and needs of the child. You will then take the information you have gathered and prepare a report with your recommendations regarding the best interests of the child. You will also attend any court or related meetings to help develop a plan for the child's reunification with his/her parents or placement with another family if reunification is not possible.

Actual time commitment on a monthly basis varies and is quite flexible but generally involves 2-5 hours per week for the first month of a new case and then 3-5 hours per month after that. Volunteers are generally assigned only one case at a time, though each case may have more than one child in the family.

CASA volunteers must go through a rigorous screening process prior to serving due to the sensitive nature of the work you will be involved with. That screening involves a criminal background check, motor vehicle records check, and child abuse registry check in addition to contacting 3 references. There are some fees associated with the screening: we will pay a portion and you will pay the remainder (about \$30).

Serving as a CASA volunteer is not necessarily an easy job and it isn't for everyone. (It's kind of a cross between a private detective, a Marine, and a Peace Corp volunteer... "We just need a few good men and women... for the toughest job you'll ever love!")

It requires an ability to communicate well with a variety of people, from children to attorneys. It requires an eye for detail and a willingness to pursue information even when that entails difficulty. And, it does involve writing. Volunteers who have access to computers and a command of the English language make the staff's jobs much easier.

Mainly, being a CASA volunteer requires your compassion and willingness to advocate for a child; to speak up for a child in court. You may or may not be rewarded with a truly wonderful outcome on your case... you may be able to help a severely abused child get a new start in life with a loving family... you may just do the best you can. We do know that the child you are assigned to will have a chance of a better life in a stable home if you are involved.

The next step, if you are still interested, is to complete the enclosed application and call the CASA office at 237-0889 to set up an interview appointment with a Case Manager.

CASA Volunteer Application Form

Fill out pages 1-2 completely. We will need 2 professional and 1 personal reference. Please make sure to include legible names and addresses for your references. We will contact all three references! Part Two of the Application Form is responses to the questions on page 3 that should be completed on separate sheets of paper and turned in with the rest of the form. This also includes a one-page autobiography.

Please fill this out completely, sign and return at your interview with the case manager.

After the interview a volunteer packet that has everything you need to go through the rest of the screening process. Generally, training is held 3 times per year. The next training will be held in July 2009. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me personally.

Traci E. Mears,  
Executive Director  
CASA of Natrona County