



Frequently Asked Questions

Who are CASA volunteers?

Ordinary community members who care about the well-being of kids. CASA volunteers come from a vast set of backgrounds. Many are employed full-time. Some are students, couples, or retired. Most CASA volunteers work on one case at a time. No legal expertise is required.

What is a CASA?

A CASA, or Court Appointed Special Advocate, works to ensure a foster child's needs remain a priority in an over-burdened child welfare system while finding safe, permanent homes for these most vulnerable youth. CASA volunteers get to know the children, their caregivers, and the facts of the case. They take part in child and family visits, court hearings, meetings about the children's needs, and make recommendations to the court.

What do children gain from having a CASA?

Decisions are made every day which affect the lives of children in foster care. CASA volunteers form trusting relationships with the children they serve and represent the children's interests at all times. Advocates work for quicker, better outcomes, and provide children in foster care with the knowledge that there is a community around them who cares.

Are CASA volunteers trained and supported?

Yes. CASA has a training program which requires 30 hours of training prior to case assignment. All volunteers are matched with an Advocacy Coordinator who is a member of the CASA staff. Advocacy Coordinators provide individual guidance, support, and accompaniment to the volunteer during their time as a CASA Advocate. New volunteers may also request a seasoned Advocate as a mentor for additional support.

Are Advocates really important in the child welfare process?

Absolutely! Foster children and courts all over the country depend on their local CASA volunteers to help inform and expedite the child welfare process. Judges implement the CASA program in their jurisdictions and appoint Advocates to as many cases as possible. Child Protective Services includes CASA in meetings, visits, and other proceedings. CASA has been endorsed by the American Bar Association, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency, and the Department of Justice. CASA could not serve the children of the South Plains area without its many dedicated volunteers.

Is there a 'typical' CASA and are there special qualifications?

Volunteers come from a variety of professional, educational, and ethnic backgrounds. Many are employed full-time. Volunteers must be 21 years of age or older, undergo background checks, a personal interview, complete the training curriculum, and agree to abide by the policies and guidelines of CASA of the South Plains. Volunteers must be patient, open-minded people who have good communication skills, a history of following through on commitments, and a willingness to accept guidance. Above all, they must care about children.

How does CASA feel about family reunification after child abuse?

CASA holds the safety of children as its highest priority. A child's best chance for love and protection is often with his or her birth family, and CASA is supportive of reunification when it is in the best interest of the children involved. However, CASA will only advocate for children to return home if they can do so safely, receiving the love, stability, and protection they deserve.

Do CASA volunteers wield authority in child welfare cases?

Volunteers have court-mandated access to certain information and proceedings, but they do not have authority to decide outcomes. Rather, they rely on their communication skills, their informed recommendations, and the respect of the courts to influence outcomes.

How much time does it take to be a CASA?

It will vary each month, and will generally range from 10-15 hours per month depending on the type of volunteer assignment you choose. Some of this time can be spent on evenings or weekends, but there are court hearings, phone calls, and meetings during working hours as well. We will work with you to find an assignment that suits your availability and your volunteer goals.

Can I include my family in my volunteer work?

Only trained Advocates are able to work with the children we serve. Children in foster care are assured a degree of confidentiality, and friends and family of Advocates who are not current CASA volunteers are not allowed to meet them or to know their identity. Only volunteers who have been fully screened, trained, and sworn in as officers of the court may have contact with CASA children. For other volunteer opportunities email Gabe Ballesteros, Director of Communications and Marketing at gabrielb@casaoftthesouthplains.org or call (806) 763-2272.

Do I have to volunteer alone?

Not necessarily. In fact teaming up with a partner for CASA can make it a shared experience. Volunteers can team up with a spouse, friend, family member, or co-worker and share advocacy responsibilities together. Both people must meet the volunteer requirements, complete the required training, and background checks.

Is it difficult to be a CASA?

Being a CASA is extremely rewarding, however it can be challenging on occasion. The child welfare system is bureaucratic and overburdened. Advocates often have to work hard to get the system to respond. Because of court decisions, social service plans, and other factors out of our control, the volunteer can face disappointments. Your Advocacy Coordinator is there to assist and support you with any issues you may face.

What do I gain from becoming a CASA?

The most important benefit of being a CASA volunteer is the chance to make a meaningful and positive contribution to the life of a foster child who desperately needs your help. Many volunteers choose to stay in contact with their CASA kids even once the case is complete.

What do I have to do to become a CASA?

To take the first step towards becoming an Advocate, complete a volunteer application and return it to the CASA office by mail at 1215 Avenue J, Suite 301, Lubbock, Texas 79401 or by fax at (806) 763-2273.