



## VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Monterey County recruits, trains, and supports community volunteers who are appointed to speak on behalf of abused and neglected children within the Monterey County Dependency Court system. A CASA is a caring adult who advocates for the best interest of a foster child and reports these findings to the court.

A processing fee of approximately **\$55-\$60** (subject to change) is required to cover the costs of the volunteer background check. We ask that our volunteers cover the cost of this fee.

### PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Investigate each child's case. Report findings and observations and make recommendations to the court.
- Facilitate any and all services in the best interest of the child, as ordered by the court.
- Advocate for the best interest of the child involved in judicial proceedings.
- Monitor each case until the court determines the role of the CASA has been fulfilled.

### REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS

- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Advocates are required to attend a minimum of 35 hours of pre-service training.
- Advocates follow program guidelines as established by National CASA, W&I Code, and California Rule of Court 5.655.
- Tools used to screen volunteers:
  - Pre- and post- training interviews.
  - Reference checks.
  - Background checks (to include FBI, CACI, Social Security Number Verification, DOJ, DMV, and National Sex Offender Registry).

### ADVOCATE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. *Investigate and review your child's case*
  - Get to know your CASA child; listen to and observe him/her.
  - Speak with and observe adults involved in the child's life.
  - Review appropriate records and reports.
2. *Facilitate appropriate services for your child*
  - Research, review, and recommend services and providers.
  - Participate in the development of appropriate service plans as needed.
3. *Report and advocate findings to the court*
  - Provide a written court report containing factual information with guidance from staff.
  - Attend court hearings and case meetings concerning the child.
  - Collect and record the data as required by the program.

4. *Monitor your child's case to ensure his/her best interest is represented*

- Attend all court hearings to see that all relevant facts are presented.
- Attend appropriate inter-agency meetings regarding the child.
- Consult regularly (minimally monthly) with your Advocate Supervisor concerning your child's case.
- Advocates are required to consistently (minimally monthly) enter contact logs in the CASA Optima database. The information to be entered concerns interactions with the child, the child's team, the status of the child's case, time spent in the role of the CASA, and mileage driven.
- This information is critical to the development of the Advocates' court reports and to tracking the child's case and progress.
- The Advocate contact logs are very important to CASA of Monterey County. Your Advocate Supervisor wants/needs to be aware of how your child is doing, and we also use this report data (time and mileage information) when applying to grants.

**SKILLS/ABILITIES**

- Maintain complete confidentiality of all child and court information.
- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Respect and relate to people from various backgrounds (economic, cultural, etc.).
- Ability to transport self and child to a variety of locations.
- Ability to maintain objectivity and gather and record factual information accurately.

**TIME COMMITMENT**

- A minimum 18-month commitment until the case is closed or the court vacates the CASA appointment.
- Anticipate spending an average of 12-16 hours per month on your child's case (this includes everything tied to the case, such as time spent with the child, drive time, talking/writing to anyone tied to the child, etc.)

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION YOU SHOULD KNOW**

- Under National CASA standards, active advocates are required to complete 12 continuing education (CE) hours annually. CE sessions and various other self-guided opportunities are provided by CASA throughout the year to make earning these CEs as easy and convenient as possible.