



## **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

### **Mission Statement**

Heart of Missouri Court Appointed Special Advocates' mission is to train and support volunteers to be exceptional voices for every abused and neglected child in the Boone and Callaway county family courts.



CASA volunteers are ordinary people who are concerned about the happiness and safety of all children. You do not need a social work background or legal expertise to be a good advocate, but you do need to be committed to your case and willing to advocate for what is in the child's best interest. Part of the CASA program's success has been its diversity of volunteers—full-time workers and stay-at-home parents, retirees and college students, people of all races, religions, and economic backgrounds who want to make a difference in the life of a child. We do require that our volunteers are 21 or older, have a high school diploma or equivalent, and successfully pass our background screening, but all other skills and knowledge are taught in our extensive training program.

\*Member of the National CASA Association

\*Member of the Missouri CASA Association

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## History

CASA, which stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates, is a nationwide program of volunteers who investigate the cases of abused and neglected children in the Family Court System and then make recommendations to the judge for the children's long-term welfare. Simply put, our CASA volunteers speak up for these children and help them find safe, permanent homes.

### **How did CASA start?**

In 1976, juvenile court judge David Soukup of Seattle, WA, saw a recurring problem in his courtroom. Though he was receiving information from case workers, lawyers, teachers and other professionals, their opinions and recommendations were limited in scope. Soukup was frustrated that he couldn't see the whole picture of the child's life, and thus couldn't make a satisfying judgment for the child's placement.

“As a judge, I had to make tough decisions. I had to decide whether to take a child from the only home he's ever known, or leave him someplace where he might possibly be abused. I needed someone who could tell me what was best for the child—from the child's viewpoint.”

He initiated a program of community volunteers who would be sworn in as officers of the court and would then be responsible for investigating all aspects of the child's life and reporting their findings to the court. This one-on-one interaction would allow for a thorough synthesis of the child's needs and help the judge make a more-informed decision.

### **What exactly does a volunteer do?**

After extensive training, the CASA volunteer is sworn in as an officer of the court and is assigned to an abuse or neglect case by a judicial officer. The CASA then begins the process of understanding all the details of the child's case, from reviewing documents to interviewing everyone involved to meeting the child and his or her family. After compiling all of the information, the CASA is prepared to make a formal report to the court, recommending what he or she thinks is in the best interest of the child so the judge can make an accurate and informed decision. Moreover, the CASA volunteer can suggest and help implement services that the child or family might need, like substance abuse counseling or after-school tutoring. The CASA continues to monitor the case until the child finds a safe, permanent home and the case is closed.

### **Who is Heart of Missouri CASA?**

Heart of Missouri CASA was established on February 2, 2005 by a concerned group of citizens, making up the initial Board of Directors. The need for the organization and volunteers is great due to over 12,000 children in foster care in Missouri in 2004 ([www.dss.mo.gov](http://www.dss.mo.gov)). In collaboration with the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Family Court, the Children's Division, agencies, attorneys, and others involved in a case, the Heart of Missouri CASA program is working as a team to meet the child's needs and advocate for each child's best interests, one child at a time.



## Columbia / Boone County Resource and Referral Guide

### Boone County Court House

Judge Leslie Schneider .....573-886-4050

### Children's Division

Shelly Oberlag.....573-882-9180

Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline .....800-392-3738

### Juvenile Officer

Cindy Garrett .....573-886-4200

### Child Advocacy Center and Emergency Shelter

Rainbow House .....573-474-6600

### Columbia Police Department

Non-Emergency .....573-874-7652

Emergency.....911

**Columbia/Boone County Health Department** .....573-874-7345

### Counselors and Counseling Centers

Burrell Behavioral Health .....572-777-8400

Daybreak Treatment Center .....573-875-8088

Family Counseling Center .....573-443-2204

McCambridge Center.....573-449-3953

Missouri Psychiatric Center (MUPC) .....573-884-1130

MU Assessment and Consultation Clinic.....573-882-5092

New Horizons .....573-443-0405

Pathways .....573-449-4770

Phoenix Programs .....573-875-8880

University Hospitals and Clinics.....573-882-4141

### Other Important Resources

Adventure Club .....573-884-2582

Big Brothers/Big Sisters .....573-874-3677

Birthright of Columbia .....573-442-8844

Boone County Family Resources .....573-874-2995

Boys and Girls Club .....573-874-1697

Boys and Girls Town.....573-874-8686

Boy Scouts.....573-449-2561

Campfire USA.....573-449-6821

Camp Hickory Hill .....573-445-9146

CARE Program .....573-874-6300

Cedar Creek Therapeutic Riding Center .....573-875-8556

Central Missouri Community Action.....573-443-1100

Central (Emergency Food) Pantry .....573-874-7848

Centro Latino .....	573-449-9442
Child Care Aware of Missouri .....	573-445-5437
Children's House .....	573-443-2825
Columbia Housing Authority .....	573-443-2556
Columbia Parks and Recreation .....	573-874-7460
Columbia Public Library (Daniel Boone).....	573-443-3161
Columbia Public Schools .....	573-886-3400
CPS Title 1 Preschool.....	573-214-3585
Columbia Safe Kids Coalition .....	573-884-6381
Community Nursery Schools .....	573-449-5600
Consumer Credit Counseling.....	573-449-5144
DSS Division of Youth Services (DYS).....	573-449-2939
Easter Seals Children's Center.....	573-449-6783
Family Dental Center .....	573-777-8997
Family Health Center .....	573-214-2314
First Chance for Children/Lend and Learn.....	573-777-1815
Focus on Kids .....	573-884-1995
Focus on Learning .....	573-875-5187
Fun City Youth Academy .....	573-256-1436
Girl Scouts .....	877-312-4764
Granny's House .....	573-442-5683
Harbor House .....	573-442-1984
Harrisburg Early Learning Center .....	573-875-5959
Head Start.....	573-443-8706
Imani Mission Center .....	573-449-9625
Interfaith Day Center/Loaves & Fishes Soup Kitchen...	573-875-0826
Intersection .....	573-817-0089
Literacy Action Corps.....	573-442-42280
Love Inc. of Columbia .....	573-256-7662
Lutheran Family and Children Services .....	573-815-9955
Michael Center.....	573-268-4372
Mid-Missouri Legal Services .....	573-442-0116
Missouri Children's Division and Family Support Division .....	573-882-9180
Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation Center .....	573-882-9110
MU Thompson Center .....	573-882-6081
My Life Clinic .....	573-874-3561
NAMI of Columbia.....	573-499-3777
Nora Stewart Early Learning Center .....	573-449-5981
Office of Child Advocate .....	866-522-6870
Oxford House.....	800-689-6411
Parentlink.....	573-882-7321
Parents As Teachers .....	573-214-3955
Planned Parenthood .....	573-443-0427
Reality House Programs .....	573-449-8117
Reentry Opportunity Center (Jobpoint).....	573-777-1560
Salvation Army.....	573-442-3229
Services for Independent Living .....	573-874-4121

St. Francis House .....	573-875-4913
St. Vincent De Paul Society.....	573-424-1022
Think First Missouri.....	573-882-2370
True North.....	573-875-0503
University YMCA.....	573-882-1550
Voluntary Action Center (VAC) .....	573-874-2273
WIC Program .....	573-874-7384

**Callaway County Resources**

American Red Cross – Heart of Missouri Chapter.....	573-642-3776
Boy Scouts of America – Great Rivers Counsel.....	573-449-2561
Callaway County 4-H.....	573-642-0755
Callaway County Senior Center.....	573-642-2458
Callaway County Family Support Division.....	573-592-4138
Callaway County United Way.....	573-220-2209
Callaway County YMCA.....	573-642-1065
CMCA Callaway County Family Resource Center.....	573-642-3316
CMCA Fulton Head Start.....	573-642-3201
Coalition Against Rape and Domestic Violence.....	573-642-1418
(CARDV) Crisis Hotline.....	866-642-4422
Counseling Services.....	573-592-0120
Faith Maternity Care.....	573-642-7414
Family Counseling Center of Missouri.....	573-642-3239
Fulton Police Department.....	573-592-3100
Grace Family Resources.....	573-642-4370
Health Department.....	573-642-6881
Kingdom Projects, Inc.....	573-642-7333
Our House: Caring for Callaway’s Homeless.....	573-642-6065
PSY Care.....	573-642-0087
Public Administrator.....	573-642-6211
SERVE, Inc.....	573-642-6388
Sheriffs Department.....	573-642-7291
The Salvation Army: Callaway County Service Ext.....	573-642-6635

## Program Staff

Acting Program Coordinator .....Kelly Hill  
Volunteer Coordinator .....Terrie Foltz  
Contact Information .....Phone: 573-442-4670  
Email: [heartofmissouricasa@hotmail.com](mailto:heartofmissouricasa@hotmail.com)

## Supervisory Functions:

The Acting Program Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator are responsible for:

- Having general knowledge of each case to provide consultation and substitute for the volunteer in case of an emergency.
- Being accessible to the volunteers at all times through an established on call system.
- Holding regular case conferences and supervisory conferences.
- Attending court hearings with volunteers to offer support and monitor performance.
- Overseeing the preparation of the volunteer's written report. This includes consulting with the volunteer on the recommendations and following program policy should there be a difference of opinion.
- Facilitating regular peer meetings of volunteers for training and disseminating information.
- Providing frequent feedback.
- Being given adequate time and resources for maintenance of professional development.

Heart of Missouri CASA observes the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.



## **VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT**

It is important to be given standardized guidelines to be an effective volunteer advocate in the program. Heart of Missouri CASA provides a framework for recruitment, selection, training, supervision, retention, and evaluation of volunteers.

- Heart of Missouri CASA maintains written plans for recruiting and selecting volunteers.
- Heart of Missouri CASA maintains and uses an application process and selection criteria for its volunteers.
- Heart of Missouri CASA plans and implements a training and development program for volunteers to improve their knowledge, skills and abilities. The training consists of at least 30 hours of pre-service training and 12 hours of in-service training per year.
- Heart of Missouri CASA provides information about the backgrounds and needs of the children served by the Program.
- Heart of Missouri CASA provides adequate supervision of its volunteers.
- The roles and responsibilities of the CASA volunteer are clearly communicated through written policies, job descriptions and training, and are reinforced through the supervisory process.
- Heart of Missouri CASA has policies and procedures for the discharge or termination of a CASA volunteer.

## **VOLUNTEER FILE**

In efforts to provide an efficient and systematic approach for maintaining and monitoring volunteer data, Heart of Missouri CASA maintains a written record for each volunteer. Heart of Missouri CASA ensures the confidentiality of the volunteer file.

The volunteer record contains, as appropriate:

- Identifying information and emergency contacts.
- Written application.
- Signed job description.
- Reference documentation.
- Consent for and Security criminal background check information.
- Training records.
- Performance evaluations and any other documentation related to performance, if applicable.
- Signed Code of Ethics.
- Signed oath of confidentiality.
- Record of interview.
- Case assignments/copies of court orders.

## **Records Retention Policy Case, Volunteer, and Staff File Retention**

### **CASE**

All case files will be retained for two (2) years from date of case closing in a secure (locked) location either on-site or at an off-site file storage facility. At the two year anniversary of the case closing, all files pertaining to the closed case(s) will be destroyed, except in the event of a high-conflict case that has the possibility of re-opening, which will be retained indefinitely.

### **VOLUNTEER**

All volunteer files will be retained for seven (7) years from date of termination or last case assigned in a secure (locked) location either on-site or at an off-site file storage facility. At the seven year anniversary of termination or last case assigned, all files pertaining to the past volunteer(s) will be destroyed, except in the event of a high-conflict termination, which will be retained indefinitely.

### **STAFF**

All staff files will be retained for seven (7) years from date of termination in a secure (locked) location either on-site or at an off-site file storage facility. At the seven year anniversary of termination, all files pertaining to the past employee(s) will be destroyed, except in the event of a high-conflict termination, which will be retained indefinitely.

## **Heart of Missouri CASA Email and Voice Mail Retention Policy**

Because the costs of preserving electronic mail of enduring administrative value is cost prohibitive, any e-mail records with enduring administrative value should be printed and retained in paper format in the appropriate paper file. Care should be taken to ensure that electronic mail and other documents are appropriately scheduled on a records retention schedule. In extraordinary circumstances, when the agency in its opinion believes a voicemail has enduring value, the agency should have it transcribed verbatim for its records in the form of an affidavit by the employee, and appropriately notarized as to its accuracy.

## **VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

CASA volunteers are assigned to an abuse or neglect case by judges. Each volunteer is carefully screened, trained, and supervised. Volunteers conduct thorough research on the background of the case, reviewing documents, and interviewing everyone involved, including the child. They make reports to the court, recommending what they believe is best for the child, providing the judges with information that will help them make an informed decision. CASA volunteers can be instrumental in assuring that a child and/or family receives services which the court has ordered - things like substance abuse counseling or special education testing. During the life of a case, a CASA volunteer monitors the child's situation to make sure they remain safe and have a voice in court.

### **QUALIFICATIONS:**

- are 21 years of age or older;
- give consent to a routine criminal background check;
- have completed a high school education or equivalent;
- are willing to commit to an average of 10 hours per month for a minimum of two years, including two visits per month with each child;
- act as an independent investigator and represent the best interest of the child;
- write and submit monthly activity reports and written reports to the court

### **TRAINING:**

CASA Volunteers are required to attend 30 hours of pre-service training, in addition to following guidelines established by Heart of Missouri CASA and the National CASA association.

### **SKILLS AND ABILITIES:**

- To keep all client and court information confidential
- To communicate effectively both orally and in writing
- To respect and relate to people from various backgrounds in a variety of settings
- To maintain objectivity
- To gather and record factual information accurately
- To participate as a team member in order to collaboratively advocate for children and families
- Be available for daytime meetings and court hearings
- To transport self to a variety of locations

**PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:**

- To provide independent, factual information to the court regarding abused and neglected children.
- To provide collaborative advocacy for abused and neglected children who are the subject of judicial proceedings.
- To monitor cases involving abused and neglected children until the terms of the court order have been fulfilled.
- To conduct independent and objective analysis concerning abused and neglected children.
- To factually and objectively report findings and observations to the court.
- To insure representation of the child's best interest in all judicial proceedings.
- To monitor cases following a court hearing or decision as designated by the court.
- Complete an intensive independent review of the case.
  - Speak with the child and relevant adults
  - Review appropriate records and reports
  - Observe the child and significant others
- Report findings to court and insure representation is in the child's best interest.
  - Attend court hearing concerning the child
  - Attend and participate in all interagency meetings and conferences concerning the child
- Monitor decision designated by court.

**I understand and will adhere to the Volunteer Job Description listed above.**

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, & RESPONSIBILITIES

### RECRUITMENT:

In an effort to recruit volunteers that represent Boone and Callaway Counties, Heart of Missouri CASA's recruitment plan includes targeted strategies to attract Volunteers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and from a variety of age groups and socio-economic levels. Heart of Missouri CASA does not discriminate in its volunteer recruitment activities based on age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, socio-economic level, or religion.

- The Program prepares a standardized packet of written information (i.e., brochure, job description), in keeping with the National CASA graphic standards and requirements, which detail:
  - The purpose and role of the Court Appointed Special Advocate.
  - Qualifications.
  - Minimum commitment of time required.
- Media outreach, speaking engagements, and other appropriate strategies are used to recruit volunteers.
- Heart of Missouri CASA accepts applications on an on-going basis.
- Heart of Missouri CASA will refer potential volunteers to other CASA Programs or National CASA Association if the applicant volunteer lives outside the Program's service area.

### VOLUNTEER SELECTION CRITERIA

To provide for the selection of appropriate CASA volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children who come into the court system primarily as a result of alleged abuse or neglect that can best project the mission and philosophy of the CASA Program.

The CASA Program will ensure that an individual CASA volunteer meets the following criteria:

- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Never found guilty of, or pleaded guilty or *nolo contendere* to, or have charges pending for, any felony or any crime involving abuse or neglect, or abandonment of a minor child, or for related acts that would pose risk to children.
- Submit a written application with at least three (3) references.
- Submit to a personal interview.

- Pass a background check including contact of references and a law enforcement background check.
- If volunteer has lived in a different state within the last 5 years, such applicant agrees to background check in the state of prior residence. NOTE: Heart of Missouri CASA conducts a NATIONWIDE background check.
- Respects a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets the child's best interests.
- Is willing to assure that children's best interests are represented in the court at every stage of the case.

In order to ensure safety of each child Heart of Missouri CASA and other appropriate agencies will screen each potential volunteer using a criminal check, motor vehicles division record check, and child protective services check, as appropriate and permissible by state law.

- The CASA Program will reject any volunteer applicant who refuses to sign a release of information for appropriate law enforcement checks.
- If an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is unrelated to or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the CASA Program, the CASA Program will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony was committed and other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant as a CASA volunteer.

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Volunteers shall continually improve their knowledge, skills and abilities to assess needs and provide services to the children we serve.

- The CASA volunteer must successfully complete pre-service training consisting of at least 30 hours before being assigned to a case.
- The CASA volunteer obtains at least 12 hours in-service training per year.
- The training and development Program is reviewed annually and revised based on the Program's assessment of training needs.

The Executive Director regularly arranges for volunteer training, as necessary to meet volunteer, Program and client needs and to obtain Program goals. For

training purposes, the Program may use a variety of instructors, including Program staff, attorneys, judges, community agency representatives, and volunteers.

- The 30-hour pre-service or initial training includes:
  - The Program uses as its curriculum, the Comprehensive Training for the CASA/GAL, available from the National CASA Association.
  - Roles and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer.
  - Juvenile court process.
  - The dynamics of human behavior associated with child abuse and neglect.
  - Relevant state and federal laws.
  - Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).
  - Confidentiality and record keeping practices.
  - Child development.
  - Child abuse and neglect.
  - Permanency planning and resources.
  - Community agencies and resources.
  - Communication and information gathering.
  - Advocacy.
  - The special needs of the children served, differences in cultural and socio-economic norms, values and heritage.
  - Identification of personal and institutional bias or discrimination as it relates to the children and families being served.

The initial training will include an opportunity for each volunteer to visit the court while it is in session to observe proceedings. All training will be documented with in-service sign-in sheets, training completion certificates, in-service training schedule, training agenda and/or handouts and reference material covered.



## **VOLUNTEER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The roles and responsibilities of the CASA volunteer are clearly communicated through written policies, job description, training, and are reinforced through the supervisory process. The CASA Program ensures that the volunteer has a written job description with responsibilities outlined. These responsibilities may include but are not limited to:

- ***Maintaining strict confidentiality at all times.***
- Reviewing Records.
- Interviewing appropriate parties involved in the case, including the child.
- Determining if a permanency plan has been created for the child and whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts, are being provided to the child and family.
- Submitting a signed written report with recommendations to the court on what placement and services are best for the child.
- Discussing all recommendations concerning the case with the Program Director prior to submitting recommendations to the court.
- Attending court hearings.
- Attending multi-disciplinary reviews/meetings.
- Maintaining complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews, and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances.
- Forming and maintaining appropriate relationship with child; contact at least once a month.
- Reporting any incident of child abuse or neglect to the Program Director and appropriate authorities.
- Maintaining contact with CASA office, keeping Program Director timely informed of child's life circumstance and new occurrences.
- Completing 12 hours of in-service training per year.

- Attending and participating in regularly scheduled case conferences and meetings.
- Turning in monthly reports.
- Treating all parties with respect.

The CASA volunteer ***does not*** engage in any of the following activities:

- Taking a child home.
- Transporting a child or family member.
- Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
- Making placement arrangements for the child.
- Giving money or expensive gifts to the child or family.
- Supervise family visits (*CASA may observe visits only.*)

(Updated and adopted by CASA Board on March 16, 2009)

## CASA CODE OF CONDUCT & ETHICS

As a representative of Heart of Missouri CASA you are required at all times to use your best efforts to perform assigned tasks promptly, professionally, and with integrity. Courtesy, tact, and helpfulness on your part will do much to create the positive image we deserve.

**Confidentiality:** ***THE CASA MUST MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY AND RESPECT FOR THE PRIVACY OF OTHERS IN ALL MATTERS RELATING TO CASE ASSIGNMENTS.***

### **Respect, Fairness &**

**Courtesy:** The CASA should treat all parties with respect, courtesy, fairness and in good faith.

### **Development of Knowledge:**

The CASA should take responsibility for identifying and developing knowledge and fully utilizing information for performance of the CASA role.

**Program Integrity:** The CASA should not represent his/her personal views or opinions as those of the Program nor should the CASA refer to or use his/her participation with the Program to advance his/her personal views in any proceedings unrelated to the case in which he/she was appointed as CASA.

**Appearance:** While representing the Heart of Missouri CASA it is important to portray a professional image. Volunteers are expected to present a clean, neat appearance. At no time should staff wear revealing or transparent articles of clothing. You may also be required to dress appropriate for business/court room appearances and clothing should be neatly pressed.

**Discharge:** The CASA volunteer will be discharged from a case when the court has dismissed the case, or based on the request of the volunteer.

**Termination:** CASA volunteers may be terminated from the program if they violate the confidentiality agreement, program policies, or court laws. Other reasons that may result in termination are: (The Executive Director and Board must approve all terminations)

- Engaging in ex-parte communication with the court;
- Failure to contact the child on a minimum monthly basis;

- Failure to contact CASA staff for 2 months or longer;
- Violation of a program policy, court rule or law;
- Failure to complete required training;
- Failure to demonstrate an ability to effectively carry out assigned duties;
- Actions of discriminatory nature;
- Inappropriate conduct toward the child, family, or others involved in the case;
- Repeated failure to do court reports;
- Takes action without court approval;
- Endangers the child;
- Falsifies application or facts during screening process;
- Fails to provide information concerning criminal charges of any child abuse/neglect allegations against the volunteer or immediate family member;
- Conflict of interest arises which cannot be resolved;
- Acts outside of their role as CASAs or outside of the powers of the CASA program.

**I understand and will adhere to the CASA Code of Conduct and Ethics listed above.**

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Heart of Missouri CASA policies prohibit volunteers from doing the following:**

- Taking a child to the volunteer's home or any other home than the child's.
- Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
- Making placement arrangements for the child.
- Giving money to the child, the child's family or caregiver.
- Giving expensive gifts to the child, the child's family or caregiver.
- Being related to any parties involved in the case or being employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest.
- Submitting recommendations to the court prior to discussing all recommendations concerning the case with the executive director and/or volunteer coordinator.

**I understand and will adhere to CASA policies regarding limitations of myself as a volunteer. I also understand that the failure to adhere to any and all of these policies may result in my termination as a volunteer at Heart of Missouri CASA.**

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Heart of Missouri CASA**  
**Employee/Intern/Volunteer Office Email and Internet Usage policy**

Heart of Missouri CASA's E-Mail system is primarily intended for business use. The e-mail system is CASA property and may be used for CASA business. The system is not to be used for employee/intern/volunteer personal gain or to support or advocate for non-CASA related business or purposes. All use of the email system is subject to management access pursuant to this policy.

1. Incidental and occasional personal use of e-mail is permitted, but such messages will be treated no differently from other messages. Keep in mind that any personal message can be retrieved by CASA, even though it has been deleted from that person's inbox. It is recommended that you not put anything in an e-mail that you would not want others to see. Assume that the e-mail message that you are drafting will be made public, and draft it accordingly.

2. No computer system is completely secure. The e-mail system is not intended to transmit sensitive materials such as personnel decisions, legal opinions, and other similar information which may be more appropriately communicated by written memorandum or personal conversation.

3. Employees/interns may not intentionally intercept, eavesdrop, record, read, alter, or receive other person's e-mail messages without proper authorization in accordance with this policy.

4. This policy applies to all employees, contractors, part-time employees, volunteers, interns, and other individuals who are provided access to CASA's e-mail system as necessary for their business purpose with CASA, and only if they abide by all applicable rules.

5. All messages on CASA's electronic mail systems are CASA property and are subject to the requirements and restrictions of all applicable State and Federal Statutes and Regulations concerning the collection, creation, storage, maintenance, dissemination, and access to data created and/or maintained by CASA.

6. Employees' e-mail communications should be routinely and regularly deleted from their in-box.

## **Heart of Missouri CASA Volunteer Resignation Procedure**

While it is our hope and expectation that every volunteer appointed as a CASA stays with their case until permanency has been established and the CASA has been released from the case by the judge, our office knows that unforeseen, emergency circumstances may arise that prevent a volunteer from completing their assignment.

The following procedure was designed to ensure that proper steps are taken by the CASA to prevent further harm to the child and to the child's case. Below are the procedures that must be followed to be removed from your CASA case:

Step 1: Submit a letter to the Judge explaining the reasons for withdrawing from the case

Step 2: Provide a copy of that letter to the CASA office

Step 3: Meet in person with the children involved to inform them of your leaving, when appropriate.

Step 4: Submit a final report to CASA, giving a brief summary of the current situation with the children and any concerns you have about the case.

By signing below you are stating that you understand the above procedure and that you agree to the terms of this procedure and that you will complete all steps before being removed from a case

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer Signature

## Confidentiality Policy

The CASA 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 volunteer requests or receives information. However, these guidelines cannot cover every possible situation which may arise. Any questions and/or concerns the CASA volunteer has regarding confidentiality or the application of this policy should be discussed with the Executive Director and Volunteer Coordinator. These will be resolved on a case by case basis.

- In requesting information in the course of an investigation, a CASA may need to obtain information from doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, attorneys, clergy, teachers, or other professionals who have a protected relationship status with a party or the child. By statute, there are limitations on the disclosure of information a professional receives during the course of his/her relationship with a client/patient. Many professionals also have ethical principles which govern their ability to disclose information. The professional has no authority to provide any information to a CASA volunteer without 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 the child/ren, the volunteer must obtain from that person a written release of information which allows the professional, hospital, or treatment center to discuss the matter with CASA.
- While a person may sign a release allowing the CASA volunteer to obtain confidential information, he/she may not want to authorize disclosure to the other parties or their attorneys. The CASA volunteer should review the signed release form very carefully and seek guidance from the Executive Director and Volunteer Coordinator if the volunteer has any questions.
- The CASA volunteer is not allowed to distribute documents to the parties, their attorneys, and/or collateral sources, which are covered by state, federal, or local laws. These documents may include drug and alcohol evaluations/records, involuntary mental health treatment, rape crisis center information, some criminal history.
- The CASA volunteer shall never discuss an assigned case with anyone outside of the case or for conversational purposes.
- The CASA volunteer should not promise a child or any party to the assigned case that his/her statements will be kept confidential.
- The CASA volunteer must disclose confidential information learned during the course of the investigation in three circumstances:
  - When consulting with the Executive Director, Volunteer Coordinator, or Guardian Ad Litem
  - When ordered by the court in a hearing or trial
  - When the CASA volunteer believes there is reasonable cause that the child has suffered abuse or neglect.
- The CASA volunteer may disclose confidential information and discuss a case when:



- The volunteer consults with a professional service provider who has a release of information regarding the case.
  - When the court orders disclosure.
- The CASA may discuss a case in hypothetical terms for purposes of illustration. The volunteer shall not, however, mention the names of any individuals involved in the case or provide facts which may identify the case or parties.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## CASE ASSIGNMENT

### WORKING A CASA CASE

The 13<sup>th</sup> Juvenile Court Judge will use a systematic and efficient mechanism to assign CASA cases to CASA volunteers, in order to ensure quality of work and to prevent burnout.

- The CASA volunteer is sworn in by the judge before appointment to a case.
- A referral is received from the Juvenile Office or Juvenile Judge.
- Case referrals are assigned to the appropriate volunteer in a timely manner.
- No volunteer will be assigned to more than one case at any one time.

The Volunteer Coordinator contacts Children's Division case manager to setup appointment to copy case file, particularly but not limited to:

- Petition and any court minutes.
- Treatment plan(s).
- Medical records.
- Intake forms and all prior reports, as available.
- Interviews/examinations of parties, etc.

The Volunteer Coordinator will consider the needs, goals, preferences, abilities, resources and supports of the client, client's family and the volunteer to assign the appropriate volunteer. The Volunteer Coordinator will consider ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity issues to assign appropriate volunteer and will make an appointment with potential volunteer to determine if conflict exists to prevent assignment of case, conflict may be:

- Prior relationship with family.
- Case too complex for experience.
- Case too time intensive.
- Gender mismatch.
- Volunteer preference.

The Volunteer Coordinator initiates the court order by assigning a CASA volunteer to the specific case and has the volunteer signs a court order or document accepting assignment.

- The court order is delivered to judge for signature and date.
- The order is then filed with the Court Clerk who makes 2 certified copies.
- Copies of the signed, file stamped order are made to be distributed as follows:

- Original-to the Judge.
- Copy-to office case file.
- Copy-in Volunteer file.
- Several copies for volunteer to use as necessary.

The CASA volunteer is not privileged to ex-parte communication with the court and must strictly abide by all confidentiality laws. The CASA Volunteer Coordinator and/or the court notifies all parties and agencies involved in the case of the CASA volunteer's appointment.

## **VOLUNTEER FORMS FOLDER**

The Court Appointed Special Advocate will receive or obtain all necessary documents to fulfill expected roles and responsibilities. The CASA volunteer will maintain logs and reports of monthly activities and adhere to all Program policies and procedures. Upon completion of the pre-service training or assignment of first case, the volunteer will be given documents containing CASA procedures and forms consisting of but not limited to:

- Blank monthly reports.
- Volunteer time and activity log.
- Court Order copies
- Case information

## REPORTING POSSIBLE ABUSE OR NEGLECT

To ensure that all suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect are reported under the appropriate laws and regulations. CASA volunteers and staff reports all suspected cases of abuse and/or neglect in compliance with appropriate state statutes to appropriate protection organization(s).

### **Definitions:**

**Abuse:** Any act that constitutes a violation or a criminal sexual conduct statutes; the intentional and non-therapeutic infliction of pain or injury or any persistent course of conduct intended to produce mental or emotional distress.

**Neglect:** Failure of a caretaker to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, health care, or supervision; or the absence or likelihood of absence of necessary food, clothing, shelter, health care, or supervision of the child.

**Caretaker:** An individual or facility accountable for caring for child either responsible for all or some of the care voluntarily or by contract or agreement, such as: a parent, relative, foster parents, daycare, or residential institutions.

**Report:** Any correspondence received by the local child protection agency, police department, county sheriff, or licensing agency; a verbal and/or written statement of abuse and/or neglect states the following:

- What has happened?
- To whom it happened.
- When it happened.
- Where it happened.
- Who did the abusing or was responsible for the neglect.

**Individual mandated to report:** A professional or the professional's delegate who is engaged in the care of the child, or in education, social services, law enforcement, or any related occupations, who had knowledge of the abuse or neglect of a child, has reasonable cause to believe that a child is being or has been abused or neglected, or has knowledge that a child has sustained a physical injury that is not reasonably explained by the history of injuries provided by the caretaker or caretakers of the child. Any CASA volunteer or staff member who discovers, within the course of providing services, any suspected abuse and/or neglect will immediately report such occurrence to their immediate supervisor and/or appropriate protection agency. This includes:

- Any knowledge of abuse and/or neglect.
- Any knowledge of child self-abuse and/or neglect.
- Reasonable cause to suspect abuse and/or neglect.
- Reasonable cause to suspect self-abuse and/or neglect.
- Any knowledge that a child has sustained an injury that is not reasonably explained by the child's history of injuries.

## **CASE FILE**

As a framework for quality management of the Program's case files, Heart of Missouri CASA maintains complete and accurate records for all children served. All case files are confidential and accessible only to the volunteer appointed to the case and CASA staff.

The case record file includes:

- Biographical or other identifying information.
- Background on the nature of the presenting problem or reason for the referral by the court.
- Court reports and any other orders related to the service being provided.
- Copies of Volunteer court reports.
- Correspondence concerning the case, notes from phone or in-person contacts.
- The treatment plan(s).

The case files are kept up-to-date through:

- Current contact entries and monthly reports.
- Periodic progress notes, summaries and case conference notes.

Upon termination of service, a closing summary of services provided is entered into the case record. The case file is closed and stored according to Program policy and procedure.

The volunteer turns in all case records to the CASA office, including all notes when case is closed. Their records will be destroyed, erased or delivered to the CASA office. All computer files will also be destroyed regarding the case when their case is closed.

## **Heart of Missouri CASA Access to Volunteer Files**

Heart of Missouri CASA maintains confidential volunteer files. These files contain documentation regarding all aspects of employment, such as performance evaluation, disciplinary actions, the original volunteer application, interview questions and letters of recommendation. Volunteer files are the property of CASA and shall be maintained confidentially in the Executive Director's office or in the case of the Executive Director, such documentation will be held by the Board President. A volunteer may review his/her volunteer file upon request and in the presence of the Executive Director at a mutually convenient time. Volunteers are not entitled to a copy of their volunteer file. If inaccurate information is included in the volunteer file, the volunteer may write a note of correction to his/her supervisor. A volunteer's written response to inaccurate file information will be placed in the volunteer's volunteer file.

## **GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE**

### **Policy Statement:**

To provide a process for handling complaints, concerns, disputes and disagreements regarding the handling of a CASA case, the best interest of the child(ren) and the organization.

The Grievance Committee shall receive and review grievances, pertaining to the best interest of the children and the organization. The decision made toward the resolution of the grievance shall be final.

The Program shall have a committee consisting of five members with a requirement of three for a quorum. The Committee shall consist of:

- Three (3) Board members.
- One (1) Executive Director
- One (1) CASA volunteer.

Should one of the committee members be involved in the grievance, the President will appoint a replacement for this specific conflict.

If the Executive Director cannot informally resolve the grievance, or the grievance is especially problematic, the Executive Director shall have the option of requesting the assistance of a Board Member.

If the grievance cannot be resolved at this level, the grievance shall be filed in writing with the Executive Director or President of the Board, who shall be required to notify the chair of the Grievance Committee within five working days, unless such grievance requires immediate resolution.

The Chair shall then be required to notify the committee in order to review the grievance and to accept or reject the same.

After review, the Grievance Committee shall have the authority to accept or reject the grievance and shall notify the party(ies), in writing, of their decision.

If accepted by the Committee, a hearing before the Committee shall be scheduled. All decisions made by the Committee must be presented to the Performance Improvement Committee and Board for review, at the next scheduled meeting for final decision.

The Committee will notify all parties of the decision made.



## **Heart of Missouri CASA Anti-Discrimination Policy**

### **Policy Statement:**

Heart of Missouri CASA will provide equal opportunities for all applicants for employment, volunteer positions and all employees and volunteers without regard to national origin, race, color, religion, age, gender, pregnancy, appearance, disability, marital status, veteran status, or any other protected status.

Any illegal discrimination or harassment, regardless of its form, is unacceptable. An objective of Heart of Missouri CASA is to provide a working environment that is free of discrimination for all employees and volunteers.

### **Procedure:**

It is the responsibility of management to ensure that equal opportunity and equal consideration be given to all applicants for employment, volunteer positions and employees in personnel actions including recruitment, hiring, selection for training, promotion, demotion, discipline, rates of pay or other compensation, transfers, layoffs and terminations.

## **Heart of Missouri CASA Anti-Harassment Policy**

### **Policy Statement:**

Heart of Missouri CASA's Board and staff are committed to a work environment that reflects dignity, respect, and equitable treatment. Harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, marital status, disability, appearance, veteran status, citizenship or any other protected status is a violation of the law. Offensive or harassing behavior will not be tolerated against any employee or volunteer.

This policy applies to conduct by or directed toward any Heart of Missouri CASA employee, other worker, volunteer, business associate, or client in our workplace. It also applies to any business-related settings outside the workplace, including business trips, meetings and business-related social events.

### **Definitions:**

Offensive conduct or harassment of a sexual nature, or based on race, color, religion, age, gender, national origin, marital status, disability, appearance, veteran status, citizenship or other protected status is prohibited. This may include but is not limited to:

- Offensive physical actions, written or spoken, and graphic communication that ridicules, denigrates, insults, belittles, or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of national origin, race, color, religion, age, gender, pregnancy, appearance, disability, marital status, veteran status, citizenship or any other protected status.
- Any type of physical contact when the action is unwelcome by recipient (for example, brushing up against someone in an offensive manner).
- Expectations, requests, demands or pressure for sexual favors.
- Slurs, jokes, posters, cartoons, and gestures that are offensive. Any such offensive conduct will be considered a prohibited form of harassment when any of the following are true:
- There is a promise or implied promise of preferential treatment or negative consequence regarding employment decisions or status.

- Such conduct that has the effect of creating an intimidating or hostile or offensive work environment, or unreasonably interferes with a person's work performance.
- A third party is offended by the sexual conduct or communication of others.
- Harassment is considered a form of employee misconduct. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who violates this policy. Based upon the seriousness of the offense, disciplinary action may include verbal or written reprimand, suspension, or termination of employment or volunteer status.

### **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE:**

- Anyone who believes he or she is being discriminated against as a result of harassing behavior (for example other employees being given special treatment in exchange for sexual favor(s)), should immediately report the incident to the Executive Director, or his/her designee; in the instance of the Executive Director, the matter should be reported to the President of the Heart of Missouri CASA Board of Directors.
- If you believe you have witnessed or experienced inappropriate behavior in the workplace, or if you are aware of such behavior, you have a responsibility to report the behavior immediately to the Executive Director or member of the Heart of Missouri CASA Board of Directors.
- The individual stating a claim of discrimination, harassment or retaliation must file a written and signed complaint with the Executive Director. No formal action will be taken against any person under this Policy unless a written and signed complaint is on file containing sufficient details to allow the Executive Director to determine if the policy may have been violated. The employee making the complaint (complainant) may use the complaint form below (made a part of this policy)?
- Upon receiving the complaint, the Executive Director will review the complaint.
- Within five (5) working days of receiving the complaint, the Executive Director will:
  - Provide a copy of the complaint to the person(s) charged (respondent); and

- Initiate the investigation to determine whether there is a reasonable basis for believing that the alleged violation of this policy occurred.
- During the investigation, the Executive Director together with her/his designee will interview the complainant, the respondent and any witnesses to determine whether the conduct occurred.
- Within fifteen (15) business days of the complaint being filed (or the matter being referred to the Executive Director or her/his designee who conducted the investigation will conclude the investigation and submit a report of her/his findings to the Board of Directors with copies to the complainant and respondent.
- If it is determined that harassment or discrimination in violation of Heart of Missouri CASA's policy has occurred, the Executive Director will recommend that appropriate disciplinary action be taken by the organization. The appropriate action will depend on the following factors: (a) The severity, frequency and pervasiveness of the conduct; (b) Prior complaints made by the complainant; (c) Prior complaints made against the respondent; (d) The quality of the evidence (first hand knowledge, credible corroboration, etc.).
- If the investigation is inconclusive or it is determined that there has been no harassment or discrimination in violation of this policy but some potentially problematic conduct is revealed, preventative action may be taken.
- Within five (5) days after the investigation is concluded, the Executive Director will meet with the complainant and the respondent separately, in order to notify them in person of the findings of the investigation and to inform them of the action being recommended.
- The complainant and the respondent may submit statements to the Executive Director challenging the factual basis of the findings. Any such statement must be submitted no later than five (5) working days after the meeting with the Executive Director in which the findings of the investigation is discussed.
- At the next regularly scheduled Board meeting after the date the Executive Director meets with the complainant and respondent, the Board of Directors will review the investigative report and any statements submitted by the complainant or respondent, discuss results of the investigation with the Executive Director and other management staff as may be appropriate, and decide what action, if any, will be taken. The Executive Director will report the Board of Directors' decision to the complainant and

respondent and other management staff as is appropriate. Heart of Missouri CASA's decision will be in writing and will include findings of fact and a statement for or against disciplinary action. If disciplinary action is to be taken, the sanction will be stated.

**No Retaliation Permitted:**

The following will not be permitted:

- Retaliation against an individual for reporting unlawful harassment
- Retaliation against an individual for participating in an investigation into allegations of harassment.

If you have witnessed or experienced behavior you believe to be retaliation, or if you are aware of such behavior, you have a responsibility to report the behavior immediately to the Executive Director.

Heart of Missouri CASA will not tolerate any effort to avoid, hinder, or corrupt the complaint or investigation process, including refusal to cooperate with an investigation or knowingly making false statements to management or personnel during the complaint or investigation process. Such action may result in action up to and including termination of employment or volunteer status.

**Heart of Missouri CASA**

Harassment Complaint form:

Your name (complainant): \_\_\_\_\_

Person complaint filed against (respondent): \_\_\_\_\_

Title of respondent: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the facts of the incident, i.e. nature of the actions, words exchanged, etc. (be as factual as possible). (Additional sheets may be attached if more space to write is needed):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For Office Use:

Received by Executive Director on: \_\_\_\_\_

Executive Director's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Heart of Missouri CASA Equal Employment Opportunity**

**Heart of Missouri CASA** is deeply committed to a policy of equal employment opportunity for all of its employees. This commitment means Heart of Missouri CASA actively seeks and employs qualified persons in all job classifications, and administers all personnel actions affecting employees without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, marital status or sexual orientation. This policy applies to recruitment, placement, promotion, transfer, retention and training, as well as to all other privileges, personnel programs, policies, procedures and terms and conditions of employment. Heart of Missouri CASA does not tolerate discrimination against applicants for employment or employees.

## **TERMINATION POLICY**

The CASA program has policies and procedures for the discharge or termination of a CASA volunteer.

### **Corrective Action**

Corrective action may be taken if the volunteer's work is unsatisfactory. Corrective action is within the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator or the Executive Director and may include:

1. Additional supervision
2. Reassignment
3. Retraining
4. Referral to another volunteer position
5. Separation from the Program

### **Separation from Program**

Separation from the Program may occur in the discretion of the Executive Director. Appropriate grounds for separation include:

1. The Volunteer being charged with a crime against a child or any gross neglect or misconduct
2. Breach of confidentiality
3. The Volunteer takes action without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the capacity or power of the CASA Program
4. The Volunteer violates a Program policy, court order or law
5. The Volunteer demonstrates inability to effectively carry out CASA volunteer duties
6. The Volunteer fails to complete required ongoing training
7. The Volunteer falsifies volunteer applications or misrepresents fact during the screening process
8. The Volunteer becomes inappropriately or over involved with the child or family



9. The Volunteer fails to satisfactorily complete initial training
10. The Volunteer's references are not consistent with application or screening process
11. Violation of the program's nondiscrimination and/or sexual harassment policy
12. Soliciting or accepting gratuities
13. Neglect of duty or incompetence
14. Failure to contact child on a monthly basis without a legitimate reason
15. No contact with CASA staff for two months including no reports to the office, no replies to letter and/or returning phone calls from CASA staff
16. When the child's best interests are not being served
17. Repeated failure to do Reports to the Court or monthly reports to office

**Dismissal from a Case**

A volunteer may be dismissed from a case for the following reasons:

1. At the request of the volunteer
2. At the request of the Juvenile Judge
3. For failure to make court appearances
4. For failure to provide court reports and/or turn them in on time
5. Insubordination or refusal to follow an order
6. For failure to act in a professional manner as deemed by the Executive Director

At the time of a volunteer dismissal all files, notes, and any other materials associated with the CASA case will be returned to the CASA Executive Director within five (5) working days of the dismissal.

## **Screening Procedure**

(Adopted by Heart of Missouri CASA board on March 19, 2009)

All potential volunteers with Heart of Missouri CASA agree to the following:

1. Agree to a check of the sex offender registry. Heart of Missouri CASA will check the sex offender registry for each applicant who wishes to participate in volunteer training.
2. Agree to a check of the Child Abuse registry maintained by the State.
3. Agree to a Personal Interview.
4. Agree to consent to a Nation-wide criminal background check.
5. Agree to a check of personal and professional references.
6. Agree to employment verification.

\*\*\*\*\* If an application has lived in another state within the last 5 years, the applicant agrees to submit to a background check in the prior state of residence. \*\*\*\*\*

## Volunteer Acknowledgement

The Heart of Missouri CASA Volunteer Handbook describes important information about becoming a successful child advocate. I understand that I should contact the Executive Director if I have any questions regarding anything covered in the Volunteer Handbook or any other Heart of Missouri CASA policies.

I have entered into a volunteer relationship with Heart of Missouri CASA and acknowledge that I shall not nor shall I expect to receive any form of payment for volunteer talents and services I contribute to Heart of Missouri CASA.

Since the information and policies described in the Handbook are subject to change, I acknowledge that revisions to the Handbook may occur. I understand that I will be informed of any changes that are made due to federal or state laws, National CASA, or Heart of Missouri CASA policy.

I understand the time commitment to each case varies according to the case requirements. However, the average time commitment is approximately 132 hour per year. I understand the materials and case content are confidential at all times, even after the case is closed or the volunteer role is completed.

The contents of this Handbook and the policies and procedures described in it are presented as a matter of information. The Handbook is intended to provide guidelines for the Executive Director, Volunteer Coordinator, and volunteers. I have received the Volunteer Handbook, and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this Handbook.

Volunteer Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_