



Volunteer Job Description

The mission of the Lehigh County Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program is to provide consistent, credible and trained volunteers who investigate, facilitate, monitor and advocate for Lehigh County's abused and neglected children in juvenile dependency court. These CASA volunteers serve as the "eyes and ears" of the Court. Input from these dedicated CASA volunteers assists the Court in making sound decisions that will provide safe, sure and permanent homes for these at-risk children

A Lehigh County Court Appointed Special Advocate (**CASA**) Volunteer is appointed to a child or children who have been removed from their home of origin due to abuse and/or neglect and adjudicated dependent by a Lehigh County Judge.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Volunteers must be at least 21 years of age;
- Submit a written application and three, non-family, references;
- Complete a personal interview with CASA staff;
- Successfully complete the 40 - 45 hours of pre-service training and **ALL** requirements;
- Undergo and pass a criminal background investigation including fingerprinting;
- Commit to spending an average of 10 – 15 hours per month on a case;
- Commit to dedicating 18 – 24 months to a case, once assigned;
- Complete 12 hours of continued training each year; and
- Lehigh County CASA's provides Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) to all volunteers and applicants for advocacy.

The CASA's role is to speak for the child!

RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Volunteers **cannot transport children and/or parties involved in the case** under any circumstances;
2. Respects a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets the child's best interests;
3. Ensures that the child's best interests are represented at every stage of the case.
4. Meets with the child on a weekly basis, unless other scheduling arrangements are approved by CASA staff;
5. Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing;
6. Maintains **strict confidentiality** with all information related to the child, as well as information regarding other parties involved in the case;
7. Reviews, records, and gathers information from appropriate parties involved in the case, including the child, to determine if a permanent plan has been created

for the child and whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts, are provided to the child and family;

8. As a mandated reporter under the Child Protective Services Law, report any new incidents of child abuse or neglect to ChildLine, CASA staff, Children & Youth Services, and appropriate authorities;
9. Attends all hearing, permanency reviews, Family Service Plan reviews, and all other meetings which pertain to the child, as appropriate;
10. Communicates regularly (at least one time per month) with CASA staff about the case and advocacy steps taken to ensure the best interest of the child are represented in court;
11. Maintains **complete** records and documentation about the case including appointments, notes, and information gathered about the child;
12. Notifies Children & Youth Services of any changes in address, phone number, or household composition of the child and/or parents;
13. Provides written reports of findings and recommendations to CASA staff prior to court hearings;
14. Exhibits professionalism in behavior and appearance (must abide by Judicial Dress Code). Shows respect for people of all backgrounds and cultures (economic, cultural, educational);
15. Volunteers cannot be related to any parties involved in the case assigned to him or her, or employed in a capacity that might result in a conflict of interest.
16. Volunteers cannot provide direct services to any party that could lead to a conflict of interest or potential liability, or cause a child or family to become dependent on the CASA Volunteer for services that should be provided by other organizations;
17. Remains actively involved in the case until a permanent resolution is established for the child and/or formal discharge is ordered by the Court.

TRAINING:

- A CASA Volunteer completes 40 – 45 hours of pre-service training. This includes: policies and procedures of the CASA program and the Court system; dynamics and human behavior associated with child abuse and neglect; relevant local, state, and federal laws; permanency planning and family preservation; communication and interviewing skills; and the roles and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer. The volunteer also observes Dependency Court proceedings.
- A CASA Volunteer must complete the Mandated Reporter Training as a requirement of pre-service training, to be completed outside of regularly scheduled training time. This is included in the total number of hours of pre-service training.
- CASA Volunteers complete at least 12 hours of continued training per year.