

## **Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program**

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The first CASA program was started in Seattle, WA in 1977. Currently, every state has one or more programs. The first Kansas CASA program was established in Wichita in 1981.

The primary goal of CASA programs is to assist in securing permanency for children who are in the child welfare system because of alleged or confirmed abuse and/or neglect. The presiding judge in such a case may appoint a volunteer CASA who is responsible for advocating the best interests of the child and assisting the child in obtaining a permanent, safe, and homelike placement. Also, CASA volunteers can be appointed to work with children in the juvenile justice system and children involved in domestic relations cases.

CASA programs are not-for-profit organizations governed by local Boards of Directors. Additionally, local programs must meet certain standards which are established by the Kansas Supreme Court. Programs are reviewed annually to insure compliance with the Supreme Court standards. Only programs meeting these standards are eligible to assign CASA volunteers to cases.

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

The duties and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer are set out in Supreme Court Rule 110. A CASA volunteer should:

- Personally, investigate and become acquainted with the facts, conditions, and circumstances affecting the welfare of the child for whom appointed
- Visit the child as often as necessary to monitor the child's safety and observe whether the child's essential needs are being met
- Attend court hearings pertaining to the child
- Participate in meetings with professionals assigned to the child to discuss case status
- Participate in the development of the written reintegration plan and/or modification of such plan, and
- Submit written reports to the court prior to scheduled court hearings involving the child

### **How do you qualify to be a CASA?**

A CASA volunteer must be at least 21 years of age. A potential volunteer must complete the following screening procedure:

- Complete a written application providing information which includes educational background, employment history, and personal experience with child abuse & neglect
- Provide three written references from person unrelated to the applicant
- Participate in a personal interview
- Pass a substantial background records check through state child abuse registries and the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, FBI, and national criminal data bases
- Complete no less than 30 hours of specialized training through the CASA program
- Complete 12 hours of continuing education training annually

Individuals successfully passing the screening process are certified as CASA volunteer advocates. Once certified, a volunteer is eligible to be assigned a case.