



WISCONSIN CASA ASSOCIATION

Fact Sheet

CASA Volunteers advocate for children

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is the only volunteer organization that empowers everyday citizens as sworn “Friends of the Court” to champion the needs of abused and neglected children. Sanctioned under Wisconsin law, each CASA Volunteer acts under the jurisdiction of an appointing judge, assigned to advocate exclusively on behalf of a single child (or sibling group).



CASA Volunteers conduct weekly, face-to-face visits with their child (or children), making independent, objective observations about the child’s safety and well being, including how the child is coping, growing, interacting with others – and how she or he is responding to services and the environment. CASA Volunteers also

communicate the child’s wishes to the court, including what that child desires as an outcome of court intervention, and his or her concerns and hopes for the future. CASA Volunteers also make recommendations that they believe are in the child’s best interests; these recommendations are based on facts and observations.

Besides weekly contact with their child, CASA Volunteers have proactive contact with the child’s parents and primary caregivers, siblings, extended family members and foster parents. They talk with teachers and counselors (or daycare and Head Start providers) to monitor the child’s educational progress and social development. With a court order, CASA Volunteers also contact health and mental health care providers and review related records that are relevant to the child’s health and well-being.

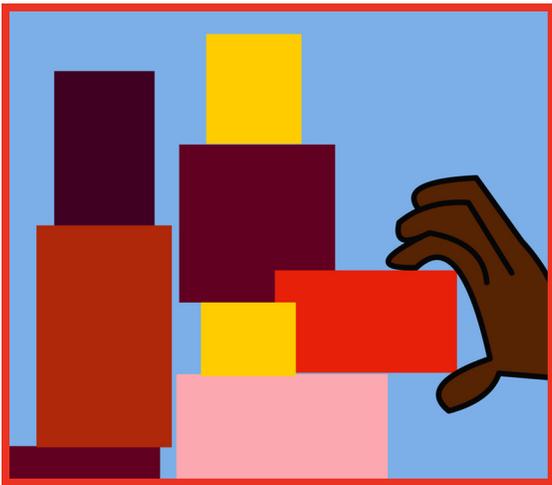


On a monthly basis (or as requested by the court), CASA Volunteers consolidate this information into a written summary for the court. They may also make recommendations to the court that they believe will benefit the child.



What is CASA?

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) are community volunteers who champion the needs of abused and neglected children – one child at a time. CASA Volunteers strengthen outcomes for children who are served by an overburdened social welfare system. They provide constant, consistent advocacy across the entire spectrum of a child’s needs: safety, health, emotional and physical development, education, family interaction, faith, recreation and the cultural continuity that children need to thrive.



CASA Volunteers are professionally trained

CASA Volunteers are recruited, screened, trained and supervised by professional CASA staff; all work is performed under National CASA practice standards. After initial interviews and screening, approved volunteers participate in 30 hours of training from the National CASA curriculum before they can begin service. To retain their certified status, each is required to have a minimum of 12 hours of additional training annually.

CASA staff reviews and approves each volunteer's reports before submission to the court; this helps ensure the contents of the report are clear, objective and meet the judge's requirements and expectations. It also ensures that any recommendation or information of a subjective nature are appropriately labeled as such.

CASA Volunteers respect confidentiality and adhere to statutory requirements related to maintaining and protecting the confidentiality of child victims. Though CASA Volunteers gather information from a fairly wide circle of sources, they do not share information or discuss their case observations with anyone other than the CASA program's supervising staff member, the child's CPS caseworker and the judge.



All CASA programs are required to participate in a thorough self-assessment process every four years. Governed and evaluated by the National CASA Association, compliance with CASA standards is required to maintain CASA program status, and CASA staff must address any areas of non-compliance within a prescribed timeline.

What statutes govern CASA practice in Wisconsin?

Wis. Stat. 48.236 describes the qualifications, activities, authority, and access to information of CASA Volunteers: Wis. Stat. 48.07(5) describes the required memorandum of understanding with the court, selection of volunteers, and their training, supervision and evaluation.

Where are CASA programs currently available in Wisconsin?

Wisconsin has seven CASA programs serving 10 counties; these include Brown, Columbia, Dane, La Crosse, Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Monroe, Rock, Sauk and Vernon counties.

How many Wisconsin kids have a CASA?

In 2009, 348 volunteers served 673 children as Court Appointed Special Advocates.



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For more information, visit www.wisconsin-casa.org.

Thanks to the State of Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance; the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Children's Justice Act; and the National CASA Association for their continuing support.