

Volunteer Policy & Procedures

- A. Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect
1. All CASA volunteers must report any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect to the CASA office and to the Department of Human Services according to **Oklahoma's Child Abuse Reporting Law: 21. O.S Section 846**. Every person, private citizen or professional, in Oklahoma who has a reason to believe that a child under 18 has been abused is mandated by law to report the suspected abuse. Failure to do so is a crime. No person, regardless of their relationship with the child or family, is immune from reported suspected abuse. A person making a report in good faith is immune from both civil and criminal liability.
 2. Important Numbers:

State Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-522-3511
Muskogee County Child Welfare	918-684-5306
Wagoner County Child Welfare	918-485-4101
- B. Roles and Responsibilities
1. Under no circumstances shall the CASA volunteer take a child into the CASA volunteer's home, provide shelter for the child, or take the child on an overnight outing.
 2. CASA volunteers shall not give legal advice or therapeutic counseling. The volunteer may recommend to the Court these services be provided but should never offer these services directly.
 3. CASA volunteers shall not make placement arrangements. The volunteer may make a recommendation to the court regarding placement. Should an emergency placement be needed, volunteers should contact Child Welfare Services and the CASA office.
 4. CASA volunteers are prohibited from giving money or expensive gifts to the child or family. Volunteers may purchase "token" gifts such as a card of small toy for holidays and birthdays.
 5. CASA volunteers will have access to legal advice or representation as needed on their cases.
- C. Reports to Court
1. CASA volunteers will discuss all recommendations concerning the case with the CASA supervisor prior to submitting recommendations to the court. Both the volunteer and supervisor will sign each "Report to Court" before it is submitted to any party to the case.
 2. CASA staff is prohibited from altering reports or recommendations without the knowledge and agreement of the CASA volunteer. Both the volunteer and supervisor will sign each "Report to Court" before it is submitted to any party to the case.
 3. In the event of a conflict in regards to the content of a "Report to Court" between the CASA volunteer and volunteer supervisor the Executive Director will attempt to resolve the conflict. If the matter needs further

attention steps will be followed as outlined in the standard grievance procedure set forth in the CASA program policies and procedures. The report will not be submitted to any party until the conflict is resolved.

D. Conflict of Interest

CASA volunteers shall not be related to any parties involved in the case or be employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest. If a volunteer discovers a conflict after accepting a case, they should report it to the CASA office immediately.

E. Circumstances for Volunteer Dismissal

1. One or more of the following may result in volunteer dismissal:

- a. Taking action without program or court approval that endangers the child or is outside the role or powers of the CASA program including violating a program policy, court rule or law including:
 - i. When the child's best interest are not being served
 - ii. Initiating an ex-parte communication with the court.
 - iii. Violation of Confidentiality Policy
- b. Displays of attitudes and actions of a discriminatory nature. Inappropriate conduct toward a child, family or others on the case.
- c. Failure to demonstrate an ability to effectively carry out assigned duties including:
 - i. Failure to contact child on a monthly basis (minimal) without a legitimate reason.
 - ii. No contact with CASA staff for 2 months including no reports to the office, no replies to letters and/or returning phone calls to CASA staff.
 - iii. Repeated failures to do *Reports to Court* or *Monthly Activity Report*.
 - iv. Inadequate case activity on the part of the CASA
- d. When the Judge orders dismissal from the bench.
- e. When the CASA volunteer requests to be removed from the case.
- f. Falsifying his or her application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process.
- g. Existence of child abuse/neglect allegations against the volunteer.
- h. Existence of a conflict of interest that cannot be resolved.

2. Volunteers are required to turn in all case records, including notes when the case is closed or the volunteer is dismissed.

3. In the event a volunteer wishes to submit a grievance to appeal dismissal, the standard grievance procedure set forth in the CASA program policies and procedures will be followed. Once the volunteer has been notified of the decision to dismiss, program staff will prepare an order to the Judge's signature rescinding the CASA's appointment. CASA staff will select and assign a replacement, if available.

F. Grievance Procedures

Formal Resolution of grievance to appeal CASA volunteer's dismissal from a case and other case management conflicts with staff shall proceed as follows:

1. The volunteer shall send a written statement of grievance to the CASA Director, with a copy to the volunteer's supervisor, requesting an opportunity to discuss the grievance.
2. The CASA Director and supervisor shall confer with the volunteer within 10 working days after the written grievance has been submitted.
3. The volunteer shall receive written notification of the CASA Director's decision within 5 working days after the above-mentioned conference.
4. If the volunteer does not concur with the Program Director's decision, the volunteer has the option to request that the matter be referred to the CASA Committee. The grievance shall be discussed with the volunteer and their supervisor at the next CASA Committee meeting. The grievance will be discussed for no more than 1 hour. The grievance will be heard by at least three members of the CASA Committee, selected by the CASA Chair who shall preside over the grievance hearing.
5. The volunteer shall receive written notification of the grievance decision within 5 working days of the above-mentioned CASA Committee meeting.
6. This procedure and form shall be supplied to any CASA volunteer who has a grievance with any CASA staff member.

G. Transporting Clients

The CASA volunteer will not transport children, parents, or other parties to their assigned cases.

H. Ex-Parte communication with the Court

When the volunteer has information that he/she feels should be brought to the Juvenile Judge's attention outside of the courtroom

1. The Volunteer will discuss the information and situation with the CASA Executive Director and/or Volunteer Coordinator.
2. The Director/Coordinator will make an appointment with the Judge after the interview with the volunteer. The CASA Director/or Volunteer Coordinator will go together to the Judge and make the information available to him/her.

