



Become an Advocate

To help us find qualified volunteers, and to help you decide if you wish to become an advocate, we follow a specific selection and screening process. Read on to see if becoming a CASA is right for you.

Our Program

Our Goal

The goal of CASA of San Benito County is to prevent abused, neglected, and abandoned children from becoming lost in the Juvenile Court system. We work carefully to match each CASA volunteer with a child to ensure the child's best interest is served.

The volunteer has four essential roles:

1. Represent the child's voice in court
2. Assist the court by investigating each case and reporting their findings and recommendations.
3. Monitor the progress of the case as it moves through the system to reduce judicial delays and continuances.
4. Facilitate the services needed to maintain the active and positive growth of the child.

Our Process

CASA volunteers are unique in providing information not usually available to the court. Because of the number of cases filed in the Juvenile Court and dwindling resources to adequately investigate cases, judges are often compelled to make decisions based on less than complete or objective data. A CASA's objective, unbiased recommendation in the best interest of the child is invaluable aid to the judge. Once CASA of San Benito County receives a referral from the judge, the case work begins:

1. The CASA selected reviews the case information and consults with the involved professionals and individuals involved in that child's life.
2. The CASA prepares a court report with their evaluations and recommendations for the child, prior to the court hearings.
3. The Juvenile Court Judge reads and considers the CASA report along with the social worker's report prior to making a decision.
4. The CASA monitors the progress of the case.



Screening and Selection Process

CASA of San Benito County volunteer advocates must meet the following qualifications:

- Must be at least 21 years of age
- Pass screening requirements
- Make an 18 month commitment to the program

Advocates must demonstrate ability to:

- Keep all client and court information confidential
- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing
- Respect and relate to people from various backgrounds and lifestyles (economic, cultural, educational, etc.) in a variety of settings
- Transport oneself to a variety of locations
- Deal with anger, hostility, and other emotional attitudes
- Maintain objectivity
- Gather and accurately record factual information
- Demonstrate sound judgement and character
- Have basic understanding of child development and family relationships
- Work independently as required, as well as the ability to accept supervision and direction as needed
- Advocate training includes a comprehensive 36 hour initial training
- Participate in 12 hours of continuing education each year

Initial Inquiry

Contact CASA to express your interest. One of our staff will speak with you to answer any additional questions you may have.

Application

Each potential CASA volunteer must complete a written application. Once the application is accepted, an interview will be scheduled.



Pre-Training Interview

The applicant will be interviewed by program staff to determine the applicant's willingness, ability, and appropriateness to perform the roles and duties of a CASA. Qualified applicants will be invited to attend the next training session. Applicants who are accepted into training must submit the following:

- DOJ, FBI, and CACI background checks; applicant will complete Live Scan fingerprinting
- DMV driving record printout; applicant will be enrolled in the DMV's automatic update program
- Three positive personal references; applicant will provide personal reference information on volunteer application
- Proof of auto liability coverage; must be updated when coverage expires
- Proof of current driver's license; must be updated when license expires

References

Each applicant must provide five references regarding their character, competence, and reliability of the applicant, and sustainability for assuming the role of a CASA volunteer. Volunteer reference questionnaires will be mailed to the references listed on the potential volunteer's application.

Training of CASA Volunteers

The CASA of San Benito County program adheres to both the National CASA and local criteria for the initial training of volunteers. Through a comprehensive 36-hour training program, volunteers are equipped with the necessary skills and information to serve as a CASA advocate. The areas in the training include:

- Introducing the CASA Volunteer Role
- Introducing the Law, CPS & The Court
- Developing Cultural Competency
- Understanding Families
- Understanding Children
- Communicating as a CASA Volunteer
- Gathering Information
- Reporting and Monitoring
- Runaways and Connectedness
- Conflict Resolution



- Permanency Planning
- Goal Setting and Case Planning
- Affects of Mental Illness
- Affects of Substance Abuse
- Attachment Theory
- Disproportionality
- Community Resources
- Self-Care for Volunteers

Additionally, a CASA training manual will be provided to each trainee. Trainees must complete all classes; missed classes must be made up before a trainee will be assigned to a case. At the completion of training, each trainee will observe one afternoon session of Juvenile Court, at which, they will be sworn in as Officers of the Court.

Contact

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