

# Utah Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA

## CASA Agreement

Attorneys with the Office of Guardian ad Litem (GAL) represent the best interests of minors in juvenile court child welfare cases and in other proceedings when appointed by the court. Pursuant to statute, the Office of Guardian ad Litem may use trained volunteers to help fulfill its responsibilities. The Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program allows GAL to maintain a pool of highly trained volunteers who assist in fulfilling its mission.

### **Expectations of CASA's**

1. Maintain consistent contact with the child(ren), or as directed by the Guardian ad Litem.
2. **Maintain strict confidentiality** regarding all communications, documents, and information. This obligation is ongoing and indefinite. No Information may be shared except upon the express direction of the Utah Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA.
3. Always carry your CASA Volunteer assignment papers and CASA ID badge when working on a case.
4. If you are uncertain about any aspect of the case or your CASA role, contact the CASA Coordinator or Guardian ad Litem to clarify before proceeding.
5. Attend volunteer in-service meetings. **Volunteers are required to complete twelve hours of continuing education per calendar year.**
6. CASAs are required to complete the state-mandated Defensive Driver Course every two years.
7. CASAs will avoid conflicts of interest and must notify the CASA Coordinator or Guardian as Litem if a conflict arises.
8. Attend court proceedings for assigned cases whenever possible.
9. Maintain an activity log documenting all actions taken in a case and the time spent. **Submit a monthly report of the time spent on the case to the CASA Coordinator by the 5th of each month.**
10. Once a case is closed or you are released from it, all notes and documents in your possession must be destroyed.
11. A CASA advocates' focus must remain on the child, the advocate should refrain from sharing personal experiences involving abuse, therapy, or relationships that could be detrimental to this focus.
12. Immediately report any concerns about the child's environment to the CASA Coordinator and Guardian ad Litem for appropriate follow-up.
13. Report any knowledge of child abuse to the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Line at 1-855-323-3237. First, attempt to notify the Guardian ad Litem attorney assigned to the child, then call the reporting hotline.
14. You must immediately notify the CASA Coordinator if you are ever a suspect in a criminal or DCFS investigation. This also includes reporting any serious traffic violations to our office.
15. Follow the court employee policy regarding concealed weapons, which prohibits CASAs from carrying or having access to a weapon while performing their CASA duties. Holding a concealed weapons permit does not exempt a CASA from this policy.
16. CASA volunteers are authorized to transport children only within the context of their CASA role, such as transporting a child to do an activity or in order to meet with the child.
17. Volunteers should report to work fit and able to safely and effectively perform all CASA responsibilities. This includes taking lawfully prescribed or over-the-counter medicines responsibly and determining whether the medication may interfere with safely performing CASA duties, including driving.
18. Notify the CASA Coordinator if you are unable to carry out responsibilities thoroughly, timely, and professionally, or if you are no longer able to participate in the program.

### **Volunteers WILL NOT**

- Transport Children to their homes or introduce the child to friends or family.
- Provide direct services to youth, or provide advice, training, or direct services to parents.
- Supervise visitation between the CASA child and their parents; however, they may observe visits with prior request and or approval from the Guardian ad Litem.
- Transport CASA child to parent visits, court hearings, or appointments.
- Transport children who are not assigned to them as their CASA client.
- Disclose any confidential information to anyone other than the CASA Coordinator or Guardian ad Litem. This includes personal friends, family members, foster parents, caseworkers, parties to the case, media representatives, or others. Unauthorized disclosure is a serious breach of legal and ethical responsibility.
- Copy, photograph, or remove GAL case files from the Office of Guardian ad Litem.
- Give legal advice to anyone, aside from suggesting that they obtain legal counsel.
- Have conversations or meetings with other attorneys regarding the case without the Guardian ad Litem present.
- Provide services or teach skills to parents.
- Promise children, foster parents, natural parents, or others anything. Recommendations may be made to the Guardian ad Litem, but the Judge makes the final decision.
- Communicate with a person who is represented by a lawyer in the matter, unless the lawyer has given consent.

### **Volunteer Termination Policy:**

Volunteers may be terminated by the CASA Coordinator for the following reasons: breach of confidentiality; citation for contempt of court; ex parte communications with the court; fabrication of reports, whether written or verbal; giving legal advice; or acting as a spokesperson for CASA, the Juvenile Court, any state agency, or the Office of Guardian ad Litem. Volunteers may also be terminated for any other reason the CASA Coordinator determines to be grounds for termination, including failure to perform required CASA duties. Conflicts of interest that cannot be resolved must be referred to the Director of the Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA.

### **I agree and understand that:**

**\* The CASA program is designated to serve the Court.** The Judge appoints a Guardian ad Litem attorney to a specific case and expects certain duties to be performed as part of that appointment. The Guardian ad Litem attorney calls upon a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), who is screened and trained by the Office of Guardian ad Litem, to carry out specific duties that cannot be accomplished by the attorney alone. The Court reserves the right to dismiss a CASA volunteer from a case for failure to perform duties in a timely manner, for breach of confidentiality, or violation of court order.

**\* The working relationship between the CASA program and the Department of Human Services (DHS) must be based on mutual respect to ensure success.** Even when disagreements arise regarding recommendations or plans for a particular child, respect should always be maintained for each person's role and responsibilities. The caseworker's role differs from that of the CASA volunteer, and the tools and approaches each uses to fulfill their duties will also vary.

**By signing this form, you acknowledge that you have read, understand, and agree to adhere to the above duties, responsibilities, and policies. If you engage in any prohibited activities, the Guardian ad Litem attorney and the Administrative Office of the Courts assume no responsibility or liability for your actions, and you will be personally accountable for your conduct.**

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PRINT NAME: First Middle Last

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SIGNATURE: CASA Volunteer

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DATE: