

# Utah State Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA CODE OF ETHICS

This Code of Ethics establishes standards of professional behavior and ethical conduct for all Utah CASA programs, staff, and trained advocates. Its purpose is to ensure that all activities are conducted with integrity, respect, and in the best interests of the children we serve.

## CONDUCT

### 1. Adherence to the Code and Laws

CASA programs and advocates will abide by this Code of Ethics and all applicable laws, regulations, and National CASA Standards governing their work and responsibilities. Each program must train its staff and volunteers on these principles, provide them with a copy of the Code, and obtain a signed acknowledgement confirming their understanding and commitment to uphold it.

### 2. Professional Integrity

Program employees and advocates are expected to demonstrate integrity and professionalism by performing all duties honestly, fairly, and with respect for the dignity of others.

### 3. Appropriate Use of Authority

Employees and trained advocates of CASA programs are prohibited from using their authority inappropriately or from permitting, engaging in, or condoning any illegal or unethical acts related to their duties or community.

### 4. Avoidance of Personal Gain

No CASA program or advocate will use their affiliation for personal, professional, or financial benefit.

### 5. Preserving Public Confidence

CASA programs and advocates will refrain from any actions or behaviors that may diminish public trust in the integrity or credibility of the CASA concept.

### 6. Judicial Communications

CASA programs and advocates shall not initiate, permit, or participate in any *ex parte* communication with a judge regarding a pending or impending proceeding outside the presence of all parties.

### 7. Non-Discrimination

CASA programs and advocates will not practice, condone, facilitate or participate in any form of discrimination based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, or mental or physical disability.

### 8. Conflicts of Interest

- CASA programs will take all necessary steps to prevent conflicts of interest in case assignments.
- CASA programs shall ensure that each volunteer exercises independent judgment and advocates solely for the best interests of the child.
- CASA programs and advocates shall resist any influence or pressure that could compromise their impartial judgment and shall report to the court honestly and objectively on what serves the best interests of the child.
- To avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of impropriety, CASA programs shall not appoint as volunteers:
  - Employees of the Court or Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS)
  - Foster parents or employees of service providers that contract with DCFS, unless specifically approved by the Director of the Office of Guardian ad Litem under special circumstances.

- A CASA program shall not assign a volunteer to a case in which the volunteer has prior involvement with the family or the circumstances of the case, unless all parties are fully informed of the potential conflict and any actual or perceived conflict is waived.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

### **9. Protection of information**

- CASA programs and volunteers must respect the privacy rights of all individuals. All information related to a case shall be treated as strictly confidential.
- CASA programs are responsible for taking all reasonable measures to ensure that advocates uphold these confidentiality standards. CASA Programs will provide advocates with training on confidentiality requirements and require them to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- Neither CASA programs nor advocates may share any confidential case information with anyone who is not a party to the case, except when included in reports to the court or as required by law or court order.

### **10. Proper use of Information**

Persons associated with CASA programs are strictly prohibited from using confidential information acquired through their CASA duties for any personal advantage or benefit.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING**

### **11. Training and Competence**

Individuals serving in CASA programs as staff or advocates must receive training in the court and child welfare systems; child abuse and neglect; applicable state and federal laws; permanency planning and family preservation; cultural competency; confidentiality and ethics; and the roles and responsibilities of an advocate.

### **12. Commitment to the child's Best Interests**

CASA programs and advocates shall uphold every child's fundamental right to dignity and to a safe, permanent living environment that meets the child's best interests.

## **COMPLIANCE**

### **13. Oversight and Enforcement**

The Director of the Utah Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA, in collaboration with the CASA Program State Administrator, shall monitor and ensure compliance with this Code of Ethics.

By signing this form, you acknowledge that you have read, understand, and agree to comply with all CASA program policies and requirements stated herein.

Signature:

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Print Name:

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Date:

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