

Utah State Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA

CODE OF ETHICS

This Code of Ethics provides Utah CASA programs and trained advocates with guidelines for professional behavior and ethical conduct.

CONDUCT

1. CASA programs and trained advocates will abide by this Code of Ethics and all laws and regulations governing their activities. Each CASA program is expected to train their staff and advocates on the Code of Ethics, provide them with a copy, and have them sign an acknowledgement that they have read and received the Code of Ethics and will abide by it.
2. CASA programs and advocates will abide by and uphold National CASA Standards. Program employees and advocates will act with credibility and dignity by conducting all work in an honest, fair, professional, and humane manner.
3. Employees and trained advocates of CASA programs will not use their authority inappropriately, nor condone any illegal acts or unethical practices related to their program or community.
4. CASA programs and advocates will not use their program relationship for inappropriate personal, professional or financial gain.
5. CASA programs and advocates will avoid any action that could adversely affect the confidence of the public in the integrity of the CASA concept.
6. CASA programs and advocates will not initiate, permit or participate in any *ex parte* communications with the judge outside the presence of the parties concerning a pending or impending proceeding.
7. CASA programs and advocates will not practice, condone, facilitate or participate in any form of discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, or mental or physical handicap.
8. CASA programs will take necessary steps to avoid conflicts of interest on cases. CASA programs will ensure that each volunteer exercises independent judgment on behalf of a child and advocates solely for whatever is in the best interest of the child. CASA programs and advocates will resist influences and pressures that interfere with impartial judgment and will report honestly and impartially to the court on what is in the best interests of the child. In order to avoid conflicts of interest and even the appearance of impropriety, the CASA program shall not allow employees of the Court or Department of Child Services to serve as a volunteer. Foster parents and employees of service providers that provide services to the Department of Child Services also should not serve as trained advocates absent special circumstances that

are approved by the Director. A CASA program shall not appoint any volunteer to a case when the volunteer has prior involvement with a family or with the circumstances surrounding the case unless there is full disclosure of the potential conflict to all parties and any perceived or actual conflict is waived.

CONFIDENTIALITY

9. CASA programs and volunteers will respect the right to privacy of all individuals. CASA programs will maintain strict confidentiality of all information related to a case. CASA programs will take all reasonable steps to ensure that advocates also maintain strict confidentiality. CASA programs will provide training to advocates about confidentiality and will have advocates sign a confidentiality agreement. Neither a CASA program nor advocates will disclose confidential information relating to a case to any person who is not a party to the case except in reports to the court and as provided by law or court order.

10. Persons affiliated with CASA programs will not use confidential information obtained through their work with CASA for personal benefit.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

11. Individuals working in CASA programs as staff or advocates must be trained in the court and child welfare systems; child abuse and neglect issues; relevant state and federal laws; permanency planning and family preservation; cultural awareness; confidentiality and ethics; and the roles and responsibilities of an advocate.

12. CASA programs and trained advocates must respect a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe and permanent environment that meets that child's best interests.

COMPLIANCE

13. The Director of the Utah Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA with the assistance of the CASA Program State Administrator shall monitor compliance with this Code of Ethics.

Signature _____ Date _____