

**CASA of Deep East Texas**

**Policies, Procedures &**

**Volunteer Handbook**

**Approved by the CASA of Deep East Texas Board of Directors**

**January 15, 2015. This edition of the Handbook supersedes all previous editions.**

**Section 13: Volunteer Policies**

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  2. **Volunteer Recruitment and Selection**
  3. **Volunteer Training and Development**
  4. **Case Acceptance**
  5. **Volunteer Roles and Responsibility**
  6. **Volunteer Management, Supervision, and Evaluation**
  7. **Volunteer Support and Recognition**

**CASA OF Deep East Texas**



**VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

1. **The Volunteer Program**
2. **Volunteer Recruitment and Selection**
3. **Volunteer Training and Development**
4. **Case Acceptance**
5. **Volunteer Roles and Responsibility**
6. **Volunteer Management, Supervision, and Evaluation**
7. **Volunteer Support and Recognition**

**The Volunteer Program**

**13.11 Overall Policy on Utilization of Volunteers**

CASA of Deep East Texas is a volunteer agency. The achievement of the goals of this agency is served by the active participation of citizens of the community. CASA of Deep East Texas accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers at all levels and within all appropriate programs and activities.

**13.12 Purpose of Volunteer Policies**

The purpose of these policies is to provide overall guidance and direction to staff and volunteers engaged in management efforts and the work of CASA of Deep East Texas. Thesepolicies are intended for internal management guidance only, and do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. CASA of Deep East Texas reserves the exclusive right to change any of these policies in part or in entirety at any time. The Board of Directors annually reviews all policy and may make revisions at any time upon the recommendation of the Executive Director or a member of the Board.

**13.13 Scope of Volunteer Policies**

Unless specifically stated, these policies apply to all non-elected volunteers in all programs and projects undertaken on or on behalf of CASA of Deep East Texas, and to all departments and sites of operation of CASA of Deep East Texas.

**13.14 Program Volunteers**

A volunteer is anyone, who without compensation or expectation of compensation performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of CASA of Deep East Texas. A volunteer must be officially accepted and enrolled prior to performance of the task. Unless specifically stated, volunteers shall not be considered as employees of CASA of Deep East Texas.

Members of the Board of Directors are not accepted as direct service volunteers with CASA of Deep East Texas.

**13.15 Types of Volunteers**

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is appointed as the Guardian ad Litem for an abused or neglected child or sibling group in the custody of Child Protective Services. Advocates work for the best interest of the child/ren in the court and with related agencies.

A Friend of CASA helps CASA of Deep East Texas with activities, events, or assistance in its programs.

**Special Case Volunteers**

CASA of Deep East Texas accepts as volunteers those participating in student community service activities, student intern projects, and other volunteer referral programs. In each of these cases, however, a special agreement must be in effect with the organization, school, or program from which the special case volunteers originate and must identify responsibility for management and care of the volunteers. Special case volunteers must also complete the criminal and Texas Department of Protective Regulatory Services (TDPRS) background checks, sign a job description and sign a statement of confidentiality. Interns who will be spending a significant amount of time in the CASA office will be required to complete a CASA of Deep East Texas application as well as an interview.

An active volunteer is anyone who has completed the initial training, is current on in-service hours, and is available for assignment.

An inactive volunteer is anyone who has completed the initial training but has resigned, been dismissed, completed their term of service or been on-leave longer than 12 months; they must reapply for assignment.

A volunteer-on-leave is anyone who has completed the initial training but is not immediately available for assignment or reassignment.

**13.16 Employees as Guardians ad Litem**

CASA of Deep East Texas accepts the services of staff as volunteers as guardians ad litem as long as they are only appointed to one case at a time.

However, employees are not required to serve CASA of Deep East Texas outside their normal duties or normal work hours. This service is accepted with the understanding that the guardian ad litem service is provided totally without any coercive nature, does not involves work which is outside the scope of normal staff duties, and does not have to be provided outside of usual working hours.

Family members of staff are allowed to volunteer with CASA of Deep East Texas. When family members are enrolled as volunteers, they will not be placed under the direct supervision or within the same department as members of their family who are employees.

**13.17 Conflict of Interest**

A. No person who has a conflict of interest with any activity or program of CASA of Deep East Texas, whether personal, occupational, philosophical, or financial shall be accepted or serve as a volunteer.

B. A volunteer does not become inappropriately involved in a case by providing direct service delivery to any parties that would:

1. Lead to conflict of interest or liability problems;
2. Engage in activities which are likely to result in conflict of interest or expose the program or volunteer to criminal or civil liability; or
3. Cause a child or family to become dependent on the volunteer for services that shall be provided by other agencies or organizations.

Such activities may jeopardize the safety of the child, integrity of the program, or objectivity of the volunteer.

C. No person shall be accepted or serve as a volunteer if they, members of their immediate family, an organization to which they belong, or an agency with whom they are employed has a direct or indirect financial interest in the assets, leases, business transactions, or professional services of CASA of Deep East Texas. They shall not be accepted if the candidate has an agenda that might be seen as competing with the interests, concerns or services of the CASA program. No volunteer may be assigned to a case if they are related to any of the subjects

**13.18 Service at the Discretion of CASA of Deep East Texas**

CASA of Deep East Texas accepts the service of all volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of CASA of Deep East Texas. Volunteers agree that CASA of Deep East Texas may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer’s relationship with CASA of Deep East Texas.

The volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to sever the volunteer’s relationship with CASA of Deep East Texas. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the volunteer’s supervisor.

**13.19 Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities**

Volunteers are viewed as the most valuable resource to this agency, its staff, and its clients. Volunteers shall be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to be treated as equal co-workers, the right to effective supervision, the right to full involvement and participation, and the right to recognition for work done.

In return, volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the mission and procedures of CASA of Deep East Texas.

**13.110 Scope of Volunteer Involvement**

Volunteers may be utilized in all programs and activities of CASA of Deep East Texas, and serve at all levels of skill and decision-making. Volunteers should not, however, be utilized to displace paid employees from their positions.

**13.111 Criminal Charges**

All Volunteers are required to immediately notify the Executive Director of any criminal charges that they or their immediate family have been involved in.

**Volunteer Recruitment and Selection**

**13.21 Recruitment**

1. Volunteers shall be recruited by CASA of Deep East Texas on a pro-active basis, with the intent of broadening and expanding community involvement. Volunteers shall be recruited without regard to gender, physical disability, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation.
2. Volunteer recruitment will be an ongoing function of the organization coordinated by the Program Director. The volunteer recruitment effort will be the responsibility of every member of the organization and can be accomplished in any community setting
3. Qualifications for volunteers shall be defined by the requirements of the position. Volunteers may be recruited through either an interest in specific functions or through a general interest in volunteering which will later be matched with a specific function.
4. CASA of Deep East Texas will make every effort to recruit volunteers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, ages and socioeconomic levels.
5. The recruiting plan should be designed to make the public aware of the problems faced by abused and neglected children who enter the courts.
6. Recruitment can be accomplished at community gatherings, at local colleges, through presentations to local community and church groups, through local media (print and radio), through word of mouth from other volunteers and board members, and by many other sources.
7. CASA of DET will make it a priority to hold at least one formal recruitment event a quarter. These events will be targeted to meet the needs we have as an organization to build a diverse volunteer pool that reflects the children we serve.
8. Individuals making inquiries about volunteering should be provided general information by email and/or phone as to the purpose of CASA, the role and responsibilities of the CASA volunteer, age restrictions, minimal commitment of time, and an equal opportunities statement. Inquiries will be addressed by all staff members as they come in. The original point of contact will pass the inquiries information to the Volunteer Supervisor who tracks volunteer inquiries. That Volunteer Supervisor will log the inquiries information and send the inquiry an application and information regarding CASA of Deep East Texas and the dates for the next training class.
9. Applicants will be reviewed on a monthly basis at Supervisor Staff Meeting.
10. As part of its recruiting procedure, CASA will refer potential volunteers to other CASA programs or Texas CASA if the potential volunteer lives outside the program's service area.

**13.22 Volunteer Guardian ad litem Role**

1. A volunteer Guardian ad litem is an individual who has been screened, trained and appointed by the court to advocate for children who come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect.
2. All volunteers shall:

1) Make recommendations to the court, based on fact finding and investigation, that will servethe “best interest” of a child in the conservatorship of the Department of Family Protective Services, or a juvenile involved in the court system.

2) Believe that every child has the right to a safe, permanent home that meets the child’s basic needs.

3) Provide support, assistance, and advocacy to assure permanency for children.

4) Sign a job description outlining their roles and responsibilities which will be placed in their volunteer folder.

* 1. **Qualifications and Screening**

1. **Qualifications**

All potential GALs must be at least 21 years old and must complete an application and screening process that includes:

1. Submission of a written application that includes the applicant’s educational background, employment history, training, and experience with children.
2. Must complete a personal interview with a CASA staff member prior to being sworn in.
3. Submit three personal references two of which are not from family members.
4. Complete and pass a CPS background and state and national criminal background checks, FBI fingerprint background check, National Sex Offender Registry check, and Social Security Number Verification.
5. Have a current driver’s license and up to date auto insurance.
6. **Volunteer Applications**
7. A volunteer application will first be completed by every applicant and placed in their volunteer file.
8. Applications will include, but are not limited to, the following:
   1. educational background;
   2. training;
   3. employment history;
   4. experience working with children;
   5. the names of three references, at least two of whom are unrelated to the applicant;
   6. authorization for CASA of Deep East Texas and other appropriate agencies to secure national, state and local criminal records checks (if available), child protective services check and sex offender registry as appropriate and permissible by state law; and disclosure information (criminal history, involvement with courts or CPS) about individuals with whom they reside or regularly come into contact with.
9. Each applicant shall be asked for 3 references and may only include a relative as one reference.
10. The Program Director or Volunteer Supervisors will either call or email the listed references. If a check is done by phone, a form will be filled out to include the reference’s comments and placed with the application in the volunteer’s file. If a check is done by email, the email will be printed and placed in the volunteer’s file.
11. The Program Director or Volunteer Supervisor will follow up on any negative or questionable comments and note them on the applicant’s reference check form.
12. At least three reference checks must be completed on all applicants with supporting documentation placed in their volunteer file.
13. **Interviewing**
14. Candidates will be interviewed to determine their suitability for and interest in working for CASA of Deep East Texas. The interview will be completed with each applicant by a Volunteer Supervisor, Program Director or the Executive Director before the end of the training process.
15. The interview will determine:
    1. The qualifications of the volunteer.
    2. Their commitment to the position.
    3. Initial presence of conflicts, bias or limitations regarding the role.
    4. The applicant's motivation and commitment to being a CASA/GAL volunteer and to the CASA/GAL program mission.
    5. The emotional objectivity and/or prejudice(s) of the applicant.
    6. The maturity, stability, and self-esteem of the applicant while watching for indicators of transference, protecting, rescuing, and fixing.
    7. The applicant's natural/instinctive abilities.
    8. How the applicant handles confrontation and his/her adaptability to new situations.
    9. The applicant's current family attitudes and personal practices as well as those attitudes and practices present in his/her family of origin.
    10. The applicant's feelings about his/her personal background.
16. The application will be reviewed during the interview with regard to any questions, items of interest or concerns, the applicant’s release of information form and questions related to charges or convictions regarding the applicant as well as persons with whom they reside or regularly come into contact with.
17. The Executive Director reserves the right to determine the impact to the credibility of the CASA program of offenses committed by persons with whom the applicant resides or regularly comes into contact with. The ED may consult a board committee in making final rulings.
18. An applicant who is not selected shall be treated with dignity and respect and, if possible, encouraged to apply for an alternative volunteer opportunity with the CASA program.
19. **Background Checks**
20. Volunteers in any agency service programs (Board Members, Volunteers, Friends of CASA) and those assigned to specific office tasks will be asked to submit to national and local background criminal checks, CPS Central Abuse/Neglect Registry Checks and reference checks.
21. If the volunteer has resided in another state during the past five years a background check will also be requested from that state.
22. All criminal background checks must include:
    1. National sex-offender registry check.
    2. Fingerprint based criminal background check from the FBI OR an equivalent national criminal record check.
    3. A CPS Central Abuse/Neglect Registry Check.
    4. Social Security Number Verification
23. Volunteers who do not agree to these checks cannot be accepted.
24. CASA of Deep East Texas does not accept applicants if they, or a person with whom they reside or have regular contact with, has been convicted, have had prior charges or charges pending for a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, violent act, child abuse, neglect, delivery of illegal drugs or any act that would pose a risk to children or to the program’s credibility.
25. If an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is not listed point 5, the Executive Director reserves the right to determine the impact to the credibility of CASA of Deep East Texas of lesser offenses on the applicant’s eligibility to serve as a volunteer and will consider: offense, time since the offense occurred, rehabilitation, and other pertinent factors. The ED may consult a board committee in making final rulings.
26. A complete criminal background check as previously outlined will be repeated every 3 years on all staff, board members, and volunteers in any capacity. This will be monitored by the Executive Director.
27. A copy of all background checks or re-checks shall be placed in each volunteer’s file.

**Volunteer Training and Development**

**13.31 Orientation**

Volunteers will receive a general orientation on the nature and purposes of CASA of Deep East Texas, an orientation on the nature and operation of the program or activity for which they are recruited, and a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of the position for which they are applying.

**13.32 New Guardian ad Litem Training**

1. Guardian ad Litem training will be provided at a minimum of once quarterly.
2. The Executive Director, Program Director and Volunteer Supervisors are equally responsible for training potential Guardians ad litem.
3. The purpose of this training is to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of volunteers so they can fulfill the roles and responsibilities of a CASA Volunteer.
4. Volunteer Guardians ad litem will complete a 40-hour training course specific to the work of the Volunteer Guardian ad litem.
5. At least 10 hours of this training must be in face-to-face contact with the CASA trainer.
6. Training will include court observation in addition to the National CASA standard of 30 hours of pre-service training.
7. Training curriculum is adapted from NCASAA and Texas CASA with modifications being made so that it reflects Nacogdoches, Shelby, and San Augustine courts and foster care procedures and practices.
8. Training will be provided by staff and qualified guest speakers and will address:
   1. Roles and responsibilities of a CASA Volunteer
   2. Court process
   3. Dynamics of families including mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence and poverty.
   4. Relevant state laws, regulations and policies.
   5. Relevant federal laws and regulations and policies, including the Adoption and State Families Act (ASFA), the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), and the Multi Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA).
   6. Confidentiality and record keeping practices.
   7. Child development.
   8. Child abuse and neglect.
   9. Permanency planning
   10. Community agencies and resources available to meet the needs of children and families.
   11. Communication and information gathering.
   12. Effective advocacy.
   13. Cultural competency.
   14. Special needs of children served.
9. Volunteers will sign into every training class. These sign in sheets will be kept in a file in order to prove attendance.
10. A copy of their oath signed by the judge and a certification of completion of training will be kept in their volunteer folder.
11. Make up opportunities may be provided to volunteers on a case by case basis for extenuating circumstances.
12. Volunteers may not accept a case until they have completed 40 hours of training and have been sworn in by a judge in their respective counties.

**13.33 In-Service Training**

1. In-service training is calculated each calendar year and is required as follows:
2. Volunteer Guardians ad litem are required to attend 12 hours of in-service training each year.
3. Volunteers acquiring more than 12 hours of in-service training in one year may carry over a maximum of 3 hours for the following year.
4. In-service training must include annually: cultural diversity, child abuse, family violence, and applicable legal statutes.
5. In-service training is provided by CASA of Deep East Texas or by assisting the volunteer to access other educational programs and/or materials that are appropriate.
6. The Program Director will ensure that proof of all in-service training is kept on file in the CASA office.
7. CASA of DET will provide in-service training twice a month in the CASA office on the second Wednesday afternoon and last Monday evening of the month.
8. CASA of DET will work to provide alternative training opportunities for Guardians ad litem who are unable to attend either of these trainings.
9. Information regarding ICWA compliance will be kept on record in the CASA office in the Volunteer Resource Center.
10. CASA of DET will provide at least annually cultural competency training using National CASA’s *A World of Difference* manual and video or its equivalent.

**Case Assignment and Flow**

**13.41 Acceptance and Appointment**

No volunteer shall begin performance of any position until the background checks are in place, they have completed all enrollment paperwork and the required training, and have received copies of their job description, agreement of service and have been officially accepted for the position.

Proof of the volunteer’s participation in 40 hours of pre-service training shall be placed in each volunteer’s file. Service as a volunteer shall begin with an official notice of acceptance or appointment to a position and case, if serving as a volunteer guardian ad litem. The volunteer’s immediate supervisor or an authorized representative only, may give notice.

**13.42 Exceptional Circumstances**

A volunteer who, after acceptance and assignment by CASA of Deep East Texas, enters a course of medical treatment which might adversely impact upon the performance of their volunteer duties or is charged with a criminal act should immediately notify their supervisor.

The Executive Director and the Volunteer Supervisor will decide if the volunteer can continue in the assigned position.

**13.43 Volunteer Assignment**

1. When a new case is assigned to CASA of DET, staff will work together to determine the best volunteer match to the case, with the Executive Director having the final decision.
2. The interests and capabilities of the volunteer shall be matched to the requirements of the position and individual case. In addition, program staff shall be conscious of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity and select volunteers based on experience, understanding, and skills to deal with these considerations.
3. No placement shall be made unless the requirements of both the volunteer and the supervising staff can be met.
4. A volunteer is given the opportunity to accept or reject the case that is offered to them. The volunteer will read the unassigned case file and will sign the Case Acceptance and Acceptance of Confidential Records. Contact sheets, a copy of the Affidavit, and Order for Protection for their case are also given to the volunteer at this time.
5. The Volunteer Supervisor will send an appointment request to the respective court.
6. Once the GAL’s appointment is returned from the court, the case supervisor will notify and send a copy of the appointment by email or fax to the CPS caseworker, Attorney ad Litem, and any other invested parties.
7. The Volunteer Supervisor will also provide the GAL with copies of the appointment and place a copy of the official appointment in the case file.
8. No advocate will be assigned to more than two active case unless the Executive Director makes an exception. An ‘active’ is defined as requiring more than 5 hours of service per month.
9. No volunteer shall ever be assigned more than two cases unless an exception is made by the Executive Director. In this case, the decision to allow a higher case load shall be documented as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception in the volunteer’s case file.

**13.45 Reassignment**

Volunteers who apply for a different position shall be interviewed and shall receive all appropriate orientation and training for that position before they begin work. In addition, any screening procedures appropriate for that specific position must be completed, even if the volunteer has been working with CASA of Deep East Texas.

Volunteers who are discharged from an assignment or dismissed from a program cannot reapply to that same program.

**13.46 Length of Service**

The set term of service for the Volunteer Guardian ad litem is 12 months per case assignment. Friends of CASA volunteers have no set term of service. At the end of a set term a volunteer may continue the assignment, retire with honor, or seek a new assignment.

**13.47 Leave of Absence**

Volunteers are encouraged to inform their immediate supervisor of any pending leave of absence. If applicable, this leave of absence will not alter or extend the previously agreed upon ending date of the volunteer’s term of service.

**Volunteer Roles and Responsibility**

**13.51 Representation of CASA of Deep East Texas**

Volunteers are authorized to act as representatives of CASA of Deep East Texas as specifically indicated within their job descriptions and only to the extent of such written specifications.

Prior to any action or statement, which might significantly affect or obligate CASA of Deep East Texas, volunteers should seek prior consultation and approval from appropriate staff. These actions may include, but are not limited to, public statements to the press, coalition or lobbying efforts with other organizations, or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations.

**13.52 Confidentiality**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they have access, whether this information relates to a staff member, volunteer, client, or any other person involved in agency business.

Personal contact information may not be disclosed without consent of the contact and then only to professionals who are directly involved in a case.

Records maintained by the volunteer will be protected with the same confidentiality and will be returned to CASA of Deep East Texas at the close of the case or if the volunteer chooses to resign before the case closes.

Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in termination of the volunteer’s relationship with CASA of Deep East Texas or other corrective action.

**13.53 Dress Code**

As representatives of CASA of Deep East Texas, volunteers are responsible for presenting a professional image to clients and to the community. Volunteers shall dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties.

**13.54 Guardians ad Litem Minimum Expectations of Service to a Case**

1. A CASA/GAL Shall:
2. Sign Case Acceptance Form
3. Call CPS Caseworker to introduce yourself and arrange a time to read CPS file.
4. Identify and advocate for the best interest of the child/ren by obtaining first hand understanding of the needs and situation of the child/ren.
5. Have regular and sufficient in-person contact with the child where they are living every 30 days to ensure in-depth knowledge of the case and make fact-based recommendations. If child is local or within a drive of 1 hour, CASA/GAL will visit child once a month. Exceptions are: once every 3 months if the placement is 1 to 3 hours away, and once every six months if the placement is more than 3 hours away.
6. Have other types of age appropriate contact with child/ren including telephone calls, video conferencing and letters.
7. Communicate with DFPS worker after appointment and at least once monthly.
8. Meet in person with child’s primary placement in a timely manner after appointment.
9. Communicate with placement provide at least once monthly.
10. Advocate for child/ren’s best interest in the community through regular contact with attorney ad litem, mental health, educational and other community systems serving the child/ren.
11. Monitor child plan of service and advocate for permanency and educational and medical services.
12. Appear at all hearings to advocate for the child/ren’s best interest and provide testimony as needed
13. Provide at every hearing reports which include findings and recommendations.
14. Participate in all case-related meetings
15. Monitor implementation of service plans and court orders and advocate for timely implementation of orders.
16. Inform the court promptly of important developments in the case by appropriate means.
17. Maintain complete records of the case.
18. Communicate at least once monthly with CASA supervisor.
19. Participate in Continuing Education for 12 hours annually.
20. Shall not give legal advice or therapeutic counseling advice to child.
21. Do not make placement arrangements.
22. Shall not accept nor give money or expensive gifts to the child, child’s family or caregiver.

**13.56 Guardian ad litem Case-Related Time Logs**

Guardians ad litem are responsible for the accurate completion and timely submission of case-related Time Logs. Time logs should be submitted to their volunteer supervisor by the 4th day of the month for the previous month’s activities. Volunteer Supervisors will be responsible for following up with their volunteers who have not turned in time sheets.

**13.57 Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect**

A volunteer who suspects an incident of child abuse or neglect is required by the Texas Family Code to report that suspicion to the Child Abuse Hot line within 72 hours of discovery. If in the process of conducting a visit or investigation a child is seen to be in immediate danger the volunteer should call 911. If the child appears safe for the moment the volunteer should contact their supervisor to discuss their concerns and receive guidance for reporting suspected abuse or neglect.

**13.58 Communication**

Volunteers should exercise caution when dealing with biological family members. If a volunteer is uncomfortable giving a biological family their personal phone numbers, they may choose to give them their supervisor’s work phone instead. If a volunteer chooses to call the biological family from their own phone they may block their number if they feel it is necessary.

**13.59 Social Media Policy**

CASA advocates, staff, and volunteers are not allowed to post anything regarding CASA work or cases to any social media websites. The only thing that is acceptable to post regarding CASA is:

* Promotion of special events
* Recruitment of CASA volunteers
* Continuing education

This includes any references to activities such as, but not limited to, attending court, visiting CASA kids, and attending CPS meetings. In any comment or postings, there should be no references to children or anyone involved in any court proceedings.

\*See Appendix for Social Media Policy form for volunteers to sign.

**13.60 Transportation of Children**

Volunteers are prohibited from transporting a child or members of a child’s biological or foster family unless they are providing a vital service to the child. All transportation requests must be approved by the Executive Director. The Volunteer must sign a Volunteer Transportation Policy; provide a recent copy of their vehicle’s insurance card, and a recent state driving record. All documentation must be in the Volunteer’s file and must be approved by the Executive Director and the child’s conservatorship worker before the Volunteer is able to transport.

Volunteers are prohibited from transporting a child or members of a child’s biological or foster family unless they are providing a vital service to the child. All transportation requests must be approved by the Executive Director. The Volunteer must sign a Volunteer Transportation Policy; provide a recent copy of their vehicle’s insurance card, and a recent state driving record. All documentation must be in the Volunteer’s file and must be approved by the Executive Director and the child’s conservatorship worker before the Volunteer is able to transport.

Except in limited, special circumstances, (defined as “Vital Services”), the transportation of CASA children by volunteers or staff members is strictly prohibited. Before a CDET volunteer may transport their CASA child, prior approval must be obtained from the CASA of DET Executive Director and this transportation agreement must be signed by all parties. Volunteers and staff members are also prohibited from transporting members of a child’s biological or foster family.

For Vital Services, (such as counseling, medical needs, sibling or family visits, or adoption advocacy), staff members or volunteers may request to transport children at the discretion of the Executive Director.

Transportation for the sole purpose of recreation activities is excluded from this policy.

Consideration may be given to, but is not limited by, the following factors in approval determination: functioning level of the children, relationship between the children and the volunteer or staff member, flight risk of the children, and the driving record of the volunteer or staff member.

The authorization will be for a specified purpose and the duration will be at the sole discretion of the Executive Director who may withdraw approval at any time. If approval is withdrawn, the volunteer or staff member must immediately stop transporting CASA children.

Before approval is given, the volunteer or staff member must understand and agree to the policy and all requirements contained herein and in the Transportation Agreement/Release Form.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

1. Cleared Criminal Background Check on file.
2. Copy of valid driver’s license and current auto insurance on file.
3. Satisfactory Driving Record Check on file.
4. Signed Transportation Agreement/Release Form on file.

The Executive Director will review the policy and requirements with the volunteer or staff member prior to approval.

TRANSPORTATION AGREEMENT/RELEASE FORM

I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, understand and agree to comply with all transportation requirements covered by the CASA of DET Transportation Policy.

I understand that CASA of DET policy is that each circumstance must receive prior approval from the Executive Director before transporting any child.

I understand that any violation of CASA of DET policy may be grounds for dismissal as a volunteer.

I agree to cease transporting CASA case children if at any time it is deemed unsafe or otherwise directed by CASA of DET.

I hereby certify that I am physically and mentally capable of operating a motor vehicle for the express purpose of transporting one or more of my CASA case children, and will notify the organization of any change in my status.

I agree to provide a copy of my valid driver’s license and a copy of my driving record to CASA of DET, current proof of automobile insurance, and will update the organization of any changes in the status of either my license or insurance.

I certify that the automobile used to transport CASA case children has valid safety inspection and registration stickers, and is in compliance with all state safety and registration requirements.

I agree to ensure that the number of passengers does not exceed the designed capacity of the vehicle and that each passenger is secured by a safety belt or age appropriate car seat at all times when the vehicle is in operation.

I understand and agree to abide by the following emergency actions when transporting children:

1. In the case of an injury during an accident, emergency responders must be contacted first and immediately, and all instructions of the emergency responders followed. The accident must be reported to CASA staff as soon as possible but no later than six hours from the time of the accident.
2. In the case of a minor accident with no injuries and no emergency responders needed, the accident must be reported to CASA Staff as soon as possible but no later than six hours following the time of the accident.
3. In the case of children running away or unable to be located, emergency responders must be contacted first and immediately, and all instructions of the emergency responders followed. The incident must be reported to CASA staff as soon as possible but no later than six hours following the time of the incident.
4. If it is not appropriate at some point during the outing to transport the children back, the primary caregiver for the children must be contacted immediately so that transportation may be arranged. Neither volunteers nor staff will transport children if they feel it is unsafe or detrimental to the children.

I agree to accompany the children at all times during the visit.

I understand that it is prohibited to transport the family or other children involved in the case or to take the child to my home or any other destination aside from what is listed on this agreement.

I understand that I am only permitted to transport the children listed below and only for the express approved purpose.

Case Name and Cause No. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Children approved for transportation by CASA Volunteer or Staff Member.

For the express purpose/reason:

I\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, understand that in the course of working on behalf of the above named

(CPA/Conservator)

children to which CASA of Deep East Texas has been appointed guardian ad litem,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_may transport the children by car within the limits of this policy.

(Volunteer/Staff Member)

My signature below signifies that I so give my permission for the above named person to transport the above named children by car, within the stated limits.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

DFPS Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Conservator

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

CASA Volunteer CASA Executive Director

**Volunteer Management, Supervision, and Evaluation**

**13.61 Volunteer Supervision**

The productive utilization of volunteers requires a planned and organized effort. The function of the volunteer supervisors is to provide a central coordinating point for effective volunteer

management within CASA of Deep East Texas, and to assist and support volunteer efforts to jointly provide more productive services.

The Executive Director has responsibility for maintaining liaison with other volunteer-utilizing

programs in the community, assisting in community-wide efforts to recognize and promote

volunteering, and for recruiting suitable volunteers.

The Program Director has primary responsibility for planning volunteer training, for assisting

staff in monitoring performance and placement of volunteers, identifying tasks for volunteer

groups, and for tracking and evaluating the contribution of volunteers to the CASA program.

**13.62 Supervision Requirement**

Supervisor to Volunteer ratio will be one Supervisor to a maximum of thirty Volunteers. Volunteers will have a supervisor who is available for consultation, assistance, coaching and

support. Supervisors will supply needed resources and training and will oversee the management of the case by ensuring that all standards and expectations are met.

**13.63 Volunteers as Volunteer Mentors**

At the discretion of the Executive Director, a volunteer may act as a supervisor of other volunteers, provided that person is under the direct supervision of a paid staff member.

**13.64 Volunteer/Staff Relationships**

Volunteers and staff are considered to be partners in implementing the mission and programs of CASA of Deep East Texas, with each having an equal but complementary role to play. Volunteer Guardians ad litem working directly with children will be considered the child’s primary Volunteer; however, direction and guidance is provided by staff. Volunteer Supervisors shall not alter reports or recommendations of any volunteer without the expressed knowledge and approval of the volunteer.

Volunteers are at liberty to disagree with their Supervisors on recommendations regarding their cases. Any disagreement that is unresolved between volunteer and staff will be addressed together with staff’s immediate supervisor in an effort to construct an agreed upon plan of cooperation.

**13.65 Staff Volunteer Management Training**

An orientation on working with volunteers will be provided to all staff. In-service training on effective volunteer utilization will be provided to staff members who are involved in volunteer supervision.

**13.66 Volunteer/Staff Evaluation**

Effective utilization of volunteers is a component in the evaluation of staff that works with volunteers. Supervisors will ask volunteers to participate in evaluating staff performance, annually.

Volunteer Supervisors will evaluate the performance of all volunteers they directly supervise annually and at the end of service.

**13.67 Lines of Communication**

Volunteers are entitled to all information pertinent to the performance of their work assignments.

Accordingly, volunteers should be included in and have access to all appropriate memos, materials, and meetings relevant to the work assignments. Primary responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer receives such information will rest with the direct supervisor of the volunteer.

**13.68 Absenteeism**

Volunteers are expected to perform their duties on a regular schedule. If an absence is necessary, volunteers should inform their Volunteer Supervisor as far in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements may be made. Continual absenteeism will result in a review of the volunteer’s work assignment or term of service.

**13.69 Substitution**

Volunteers may, with the approval of their supervisor, find a substitute for an anticipated absence. Substitutes may only be recruited from those who are currently eligible as active volunteers with CASA of Deep East Texas.

**13.610 Standards of Performance**

Standards of performance are established for each volunteer position. These standards list the work to be done in that position, measurable indicators of whether the work is accomplished, and appropriate time lines for accomplishment of the work. Standards are given to the volunteer along with a job description at the beginning of their assignment.

**In Addition to volunteer standards and job descriptions, CASA volunteers agree to the following:**

The CASA volunteer will report any incident of child abuse or neglect, or any situation in which the CASA volunteer has reason to believe that a child is in imminent danger to the CASA supervisor and appropriate authorities, following state legal requirements as mandated in the Texas Family Code.

The CASA volunteer does not engage in the following activities:

* Taking a child to the volunteer’s home or any home other than the child’s.
* Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
* Making placement arrangements for the child.
* Giving money or expensive gifts to the child, the child’s family or caregiver.
* Taking a child on an overnight outing.

The CASA Volunteer will not:

* Engage in activities which are likely to result in conflict of interest or expose the program or volunteer to criminal or civil liability.
* Cause a child or family to become dependent on the CASA volunteer for services that are provided by other agencies or organizations. Such activities may jeopardize the safety of the child, the integrity of the program, or the objectivity of the volunteer.
* Accept or be assigned to a case in which the volunteer is related to any parties involved or be employed in a position or with an agency that might result in a conflict of interest.

The CASA Volunteer will discuss all recommendations concerning the case with the program supervisor prior to submitting recommendations to the court. **Supervisors will not alter a volunteer’s court report or recommendations without the knowledge and agreement of the volunteer.**

**13.611 Quality Assurance**

An audit of records will be conducted annually by the Program Director to assure compliance with: CASA of Deep East Texas standards of performance, filing procedures, Texas CASA standards, and National CASA standards.

**13.612 Records Maintenance**

*Volunteer Records*

A system of records will be maintained on each volunteer including application, background

checks, references, training log, dates of service, positions held, signed job description, program

forms, duties performed, evaluation of work, and recognition received. Volunteer personnel

records shall be maintained in a locked file cabinet to preserve the confidentiality of the contents.

Volunteer personnel records shall be accorded the same confidentiality as staff personnel records

*CASA Child Records*

A system of records will be maintained on each child assigned to CASA of Deep East Texas, including the following case-related documents filed accordingly. Each child’s records will be maintained in a locked file cabinet or in a locked office to preserve the confidentiality of the content.

*Storage/Retention of Records*

All closed volunteer records will be retained for seven (7) years and stored in a locked file

cabinet.

All closed child records will be retained under the youngest child on the case turns 18 years of

age and will remain stored in a locked file cabinet.

Destruction of records will be completed by appropriate staff using a shredder

**13.613 Evaluations**

It shall be the responsibility of each Volunteer Supervisor to schedule and perform periodic evaluations of volunteers and to maintain records of evaluations.

Volunteers shall receive evaluations annually, at the conclusion of their set term, or conclusion of service.

The evaluation session will:

• Review the performance of the volunteer,

• Address any issues or problems in volunteer duties,

• Suggest changes in work style, if appropriate,

• Seek the volunteer’s suggestions for enhancing his or her relationship with CASA of Deep East Texas.

• Convey the appreciation of CASA of Deep East Texas.

• Ascertain the volunteer’s interest in continued service in that or another position. A written record should be kept of each evaluation session.

Evaluations should include an assessment of the volunteer’s performance of position

responsibilities and any suggestions the volunteer may have concerning the position or project

with which the volunteer is connected.

A volunteer may request full access to their volunteer file/information. This request should be made to the volunteer’s immediate supervisor who will schedule a time with the volunteer to review the file. Any addition or correction needed may be made by the Casework Supervisor at that time.

**13.614 Incident Reports**

Incident reports will be written if the Volunteer:

* Takes action without program or court approval, which endangers the child or is outside the role or powers of the program;
* Violates a program policy, court rule or law;
* Demonstrates inability to effectively carry out volunteer duties or the program mission and values;
* Commits a verbal or written breach of confidentiality;
* Renders a recommendation or opinion that is willfully wrongful, given with conscious indifference or reckless disregard to the safety of another, given with bad faith or with malice, or grossly negligent
* Commits infractions contrary to the purpose of the program.
* Makes false statements on the volunteer application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process.
* Other action that has a negative impact on a child or impedes the credibility of CASA of Deep East Texas.

**13.615 Corrective Action**

Corrective action may be taken following an evaluation or an incident report. Corrective action may include, but may not be limited to, additional training, reassignment to a new position or dismissal from volunteer service.

**13.616 Dismissal of a Volunteer**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of CASA of Deep East Texas or who fail to satisfactorily perform their assignment are subject to dismissal. No volunteer’s service will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with their Volunteer Supervisor and the Executive Director. Final decision to terminate a volunteer and notification of the dismissal will be made by the Executive Director.

Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

• Gross misconduct or insubordination,

• Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while executing their duties as a CASA

• Theft of property or misuse of agency equipment or materials,

• Abuse or mistreatment, or allegations of abuse or mistreatment of children, families, or

co-workers,

• Failure to abide by agency policies and procedures,

• Failure to meet the physical or mental standards of performance,

• Failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties.

• Falsifying his or her application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process.

• Existence of a conflict of interest which cannot be resolved.

• Attempting to or engaging in ex-parte communication with the court.

• Failing to complete required pre-service and in-service training.

• Breach of confidentiality.

**13.617 Concerns and Grievances**

If a volunteer has a conflict with staff, personally or regarding any case, the volunteer should first discuss this conflict with their Volunteer Supervisor. If the volunteer is not satisfied with the Volunteer Supervisor’s handling of the matter, they will discuss the matter with the Executive Director. If the grievance is with the Executive Director, the volunteer should first discuss the conflict with the Executive Director. If an accord cannot be reached, volunteers may make a written grievance report to the President of the Board of Directors.

**13.618 Notice of Departure or Reassignment of a Volunteer**

In the event that a volunteer departs CASA of Deep East Texas, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, or is reassigned to a new position, it is the responsibility of the volunteer’s direct supervisor to inform those affected staff and clients that the volunteer is no longer assigned to work with them.

**13.619 Resignation**

Volunteers may resign from service with CASA of Deep East Texas at any time. It is requested that volunteers provide advance notice of their departure and a reason for their decision. They will be asked submit a letter of resignation which includes the reason(s) for their resignation. The Volunteer Supervisor for that volunteer will complete an exit evaluation for the volunteer and file it, along with letter of resignation, in the volunteer’s record.

**13.620 Exit Interviews**

Exit interviews, when possible, should be conducted with volunteers who are leaving their positions. The interview should ascertain the volunteer’s reasons for leaving, suggestions for improving the position and the prospect for future service.

**13.621 Communication and Volunteer Management**

Volunteer Supervisors are responsible for maintaining regular communication with their direct supervisor on the status of volunteers. Their direct supervisor should be informed immediately of any substantial change in the work or status of a volunteer.

The Executive Director should be consulted before any corrective action is taken.

**Volunteer Support and Recognition**

**13.71 Access to Agency Property and Materials**

Volunteers shall have access to CASA of Deep East Texas property and materials necessary to fulfill their duties, and shall receive training in the operation of any equipment as necessary. Property and materials shall be utilized only when directly required for agency purposes.

**13.72 Insurance**

Liability and accident insurance is not provided for volunteers engaged in CASA of Deep East Texas business. Volunteers are encouraged to consult with their own insurance agents regarding the extension of their personal insurance to include community volunteer work. Texas CASA standards require CASA of Deep East Texas to keep a copy of each advocate’s driver’ license and proof of insurance on file.

**13.73 Recognition**

An annual volunteer event will be conducted to highlight and recognize the contribution of volunteers to CASA of Deep East Texas. Additional notes of appreciation, calls, and other appreciation gestures will be provided during the volunteer’s service.

**Appendix**

* **Volunteer Application**
* **Background Check Form**
* **Social Media Policy**
* **Weapons Policy**
* **In Person Contact**

**CASA of Deep East Texas Volunteer Electronic & Social Media Policy and Acknowledgment**

Volunteers with CASA of Deep East Texas shall refrain from posting any inappropriate material; providing links to inappropriate websites; or posting undesirable comments, references or pictures anywhere on the web where the posting directly or indirectly refers to the CASA of Deep East Texas Program, to any pseudonym that is meant to refer to the organization, or to any individual associated with the organization. Volunteers found to be in violation of this policy may be sanctioned at the discretion of the CASA Executive Director.

This policy includes public postings to any electronic media: including, but not limited to, intranet and internet forums, blogs, web logs, photoblogs, online web communities, list serves, internet diaries, instant messaging, text messaging, podcasts, amateur video sites, and all web postings -- such as those in chat rooms, on bulletin boards, websites or web pages. Wikis, public/shared email, online compilations of photographs or videos, and links to any of the foregoing items are also included in this prohibition.

"Inappropriate material" shall be defined as postings, depictions or descriptions of illicit substances and/or their paraphernalia; underage drinking; inclusion of harassing, hostile, false, or confidential information; and any other acts that violate local, state, federal, or CASA of Deep East Texas laws, statutes, rules, and regulations. Also prohibited are prejudiced or discriminatory statements against any individuals, businesses, government agencies or groups. Volunteers from CASA of Deep East Texas should avoid creating the impression that the views expressed through any electric or social media outlet are anything more than personal opinions.

Postings which directly or indirectly make reference to the CASA of Deep East Texas Program include, but are not limited to, postings which name CASA, the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program or any name meant to refer to the organization; photographs or videos which depict the CASA name, logo, or symbols; photographs or videos which display any CASA of Deep East Texas-sponsored activities; postings which link to any local, state, national, international web page referring to CASA; and usernames or email addresses which indicate an affiliation with the CASA of Deep East Texas Program.

Also as a volunteer, you are to not accept friend requests from a child and/or family member involved in a CASA case via any social media.

I have read, understand and will abide by the **CASA of Deep East Texas Volunteer Electronic and Social Media Policy**; enhancing the credibility of the CASA role and the integrity of my activity as a CASA Volunteer.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer’s Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness Date

**Positive Social Media Examples:** *These sample posts tell the CASA story well without revealing confidential information about cases.*

**#1:** Had a blast with my CASA kid at Austin Park and Pizza. ESPECIALLY, the go-carts, which we did over and over. What a hoot!

**#2:** Great day at court as a CASA volunteer! Can’t believe what a difference one adult can make to a child. Learn more- [http://www.casatravis.org](http://www.casatravis.org/)

**#3:** Happy to have played a part in an awesome adoption for my CASA kid & help them have a good future! Become a CASA- [http://www.casatravis.org](http://www.casatravis.org/) *(This could also be about a family reunification, etc.)*

**#4:** CASA Superhero Run Sept ??! Come support us CASA volunteers so we can help more abused children! <http://bit.ly/casasuperrun>

**#5:** Helped my CASA kids get the school supplies & clothes they needed for a great start to school this year! I’m rooting for their success!

**Negative Social Media Examples:** *These sample posts either reveal too much information about a case or take a stance that could be damaging to future CASA relationships.*

**#1:** Great day in court as a CASA volunteer! I was the only one up there who knew the child well and was able to help get the judge make a good recommendation.

**#2:** Finally the judge ruled correctly on my CASA case! So happy to see my CASA kid get to a happy home.

**#3:** Had a blast yesterday with my 10-year-old CASA kid at Austin Park and Pizza. He loved the go-carts, which we did over and over. What a hoot!

**#4:** Just attended the graduation of my CASA kid from Reagan High School. I’m so proud!

**Weapons Policy**

The possession of firearms, dangerous weapons or explosives on the property of CDET or while engaged in the duties or functions as employee, volunteer or Board member of CDET is prohibited. The Standards for CASA programs in Texas shall provide that a local CASA program adopt a formal weapons policy that provides, at a minimum, the possession of firearms, dangerous weapons or explosives on the property of the local CASA program or while engaged in the duties or functions of employee, volunteer or Board member of the local CASA program is prohibited.