

**VOLUNTEER POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL**  
**FOR**  
*(Insert name of program)*

*(Insert program logo)*

*(Insert program address, ect.)*

# Volunteer Policy and Procedure Manual

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Dear Volunteer,

On behalf of the Court Appointed Special Advocates program of *(Insert county)*, thank you for deciding to volunteer with our program. Since *(Insert the date your program started)* the CASA program in its present form has acted as a “powerful voice” for children who are in or at risk of being placed in foster care in *(Insert county)*. We are delighted that you would like to become a part of our organization and are eager to begin our work with you. Your commitment to the philosophy and goals of the CASA program will help us maintain a high level of effectiveness and professionalism. As a volunteer, you serve an important function within our organization.

This manual was developed to provide you with information about some basic volunteer policies. We hope you will familiarize yourself with this information because it will help you in your job and in your contribution as a CASA volunteer. From time to time, the CASA program may change or revise procedures. You will be notified of any changes that are made. As a volunteer, it is your responsibility to stay abreast of current procedures.

The policies and procedures manual does not guarantee any fixed terms and conditions of a volunteer’s participation in the CASA program. Your service as a volunteer will last only as long as you and the CASA program mutually agree. However, we look forward to a long and rewarding relationship with all of our volunteers.

CASA volunteers are an integral part of the program. Your commitment to our policies and procedures will not only make the CASA program a stronger and more effective organization but will also help to enable you to provide children with a sense of permanency and belonging.

We hope your experience with us will be gratifying for you and beneficial for our assigned children. We welcome suggestions you may have for improving our services, program or volunteer policies and procedures.

Sincerely,

*(Program Director)*  
*(Insert name of program)*

## 2) VOLUNTEERING AT *(Insert name of CASA program)*

### **CASA Volunteer**

A CASA Volunteer is an individual who is at least 21 years of age, has completed the application and screening process, been trained by *(Insert name of program)*, sworn in before a Family Court Judge, taken an oath of confidentiality and appointed by the Court pursuant to Part 44 of the rules of the Chief Judge of the State of New York to “provide assistance to the Court in cases regarding children in or at risk of out-of-home placement.”

A CASA Volunteer is an individual who respects a child’s inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets that child’s best interests.

The CASA Volunteer is an individual who advocates for the child’s best interests in the Court during the period of the program’s court assignment.

### **Working Environment**

*(Insert name of program)* endeavors to promote a comfortable and productive working environment for all volunteers. In keeping with this policy, sexual, racial, religious, ethnic, or other kinds of harassment of volunteers is a violation of *(Insert name of program)* policy and will not be tolerated. We expect volunteers to treat each other, those we work with, and CASA staff with respect. Please let us know if you experience any difficulties.

All volunteer policies are administered without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.

### **Application and Screening Process for Prospective CASA Volunteers**

All prospective volunteers must:

- complete a written application containing information about educational background, training, employment history and experiences working with children;
- provide the names and addresses of three references (who are not relatives of the applicant);
- have a personal interview with the CASA Director before and after the training.

Volunteers must also authorize the CASA program and other appropriate agencies to conduct the following record checks and provide necessary information:

- Criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant currently resides and works
- State criminal records
- FBI or other national criminal database
- National Sex Offender Registry
- New York State Central Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment
- Social Security number verification

It is *(Insert name of program’s)* policy to verify information on applications as possible.

If a volunteer applicant refuses to sign a release of information form or submit the required information or fingerprints for any of the checks required *(Insert name of program)* rejects the application.

Record checks will be repeated at least every four years.

If the prospective volunteer has lived in another state within the past five years, *(Insert name of program)* secures the records checks specified in any area in which the person has resided in the previous five years. Those checks may be covered in the FBI or other national criminal database check if the county and state the applicant previously lived in is covered in the national check.

Any applicant found to have been convicted of, or having charges pending for a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse or neglect or related acts that would pose risks to children or the *(Insert name or program)* program's credibility is not accepted as a CASA Volunteer.

If an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is unrelated to or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the *(Insert name of program)*, the program will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony committed as well as other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant as a CASA Volunteer.

All screening must be completed before the volunteer is assigned to a case and written verification is on file at the *(Insert name of program's)* office.

Volunteers are required to keep staff apprised at all times of matters in their personal and professional lives that may impact on their availability.

### **Initial Orientation and Training of Prospective Volunteers**

*(Insert name of program)* provides prospective volunteers with an initial training and orientation. Topics such as cultural awareness, legal issues, the child protective system, child development, and collaboration with others involved in the case in order to provide helpful information about how to approach specific problems and situations. It is mandatory that all prospective volunteers attend these training sessions.

At the end of the training period, prospective volunteers must participate in an interview and be advised if they are suitable as new CASA Volunteers. At this time Volunteers may choose to not become a CASA Volunteer. Volunteers must then participate in a swearing-in ceremony performed by the Family Court Judge and sign an oath of confidentiality.

### **If Being a CASA Volunteer is Not Right for You**

Occasionally, a volunteer's performance or conduct is inappropriate and will place the volunteer in danger of dismissal. The CASA supervisor will, after discussion with the volunteer, set a time period with specific goals for improvement and action to be considered. At the end of this period, the situation will be reviewed. The volunteer will either be restored to his/her previous status or dismissed. All volunteers may discuss disciplinary decisions with the CASA supervisor. If the matter remains unresolved, the volunteer may ask for an appointment with the CASA Director.

*(Need to specify the person or persons with authority in your program to terminate or discharge a volunteer and the procedures that need to be followed.)*

### **Conflicts (Added from point of view of Volunteer)**

Volunteers with grievances are encouraged to handle these grievances with the staff member assigned to the volunteer. If you do not reach a resolution regarding the grievance, then you are encouraged to discuss the grievance with the Program Director (*Insert your local program protocol*). Grievances include, but are not limited to, the handling of a case, reporting of information, or the recommendations to be included in a report.

### **Grounds for Disciplinary Action and/or Dismissal**

Reasons for Dismissal of a CASA Volunteer include, but are not limited to:

- a) Taking action without program approval that endangers the child or is outside the authority of the program.
- b) Failing to complete the training requirements of the initial training and continuing education requirement of 12 hours per year.
- c) Initiating or engaging in ex-parte communication with the Court.
- d) Violating a program policy, court rule or law.
- e) Breach of confidentiality. Failing to demonstrate an ability to effectively carry out assigned duties.
- f) Falsifying his/her application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process.
- g) Having allegations of child abuse/neglect and other criminal charges brought against the volunteer.
- h) Existence of a conflict of interest which cannot be resolved.

## **3) RESPONSIBILITIES AS A CASA VOLUNTEER**

### **Attendance**

CASA Volunteers are encouraged to work on their CASA case diligently as the demands of each case requires. To assure that a child's best interests are being represented, volunteers are to appear at all hearings, meetings, and conferences that involve the child. In addition, the CASA volunteer is to visit the child at least monthly in order to express appropriate concerns to the Court. In some circumstances, CASA staff may substitute for the assigned volunteer.

### **Casework**

All volunteers must maintain a complete, accurate and up-to-date written case file on each assigned case in a secure location. Case notes should be written legibly and should avoid slang, jargon, and judgmental statements. Keep in mind that (*Insert name of program*) case records could be subpoenaed and reviewed by attorneys or judges. Therefore, notes must be clear and accurate. Cases file should be fact based, child focused, unbiased, historical record, including dates and sources of information; and should be free of subjective editorial comments. Volunteer activity records and hours must be submitted on a monthly basis. At case closure all case materials must be submitted to the CASA program within two weeks. Case files may need to be transported between the CASA office, court, and meetings; however, the CASA Volunteer should ensure the confidentiality of the files at all times. (*Insert local program protocol*) Court rules say volunteers must receive guidelines for record-keeping and data collection that include provisions for confidentiality of print AND electronic files (refer to page 9, D. 1.)

The CASA Volunteer must keep abreast of all deadlines and timetables involved in their case(s). Volunteers should make at least monthly direct contact with their supervisor to keep them abreast of the case. This contact should include case planning and the most up to date case information and concerns.

Reports must be turned in to the CASA Director a minimum of *(Insert local program protocol)* prior to a Court appearance. Any substantive changes to a volunteer's reports will not be made without the knowledge and consent of the volunteer. CASA staff must approve all reports, including all concerns, prior to their submission to Court. *(Insert local program protocol)* Should there be a conflict between the CASA Volunteer and staff regarding the reporting of information and concerns, CASA staff will determine the appropriate course of action.

During the course of a case, the volunteer monitors whether court ordered services have occurred and how the child is faring in his/her placement. Under no circumstances is a CASA Volunteer to transport the child or other parties *(Insert local program policy)*; take a child to the volunteer's home; give money or expensive gifts to the child or family; provide legal advice or therapeutic counseling; or make direct placement arrangements for the child. No volunteer is to assume their professional role when serving as a CASA volunteer. CASA volunteers must keep in mind that they are advocates for the children not the parents.

### **On-going Volunteer Training and Supervision**

*(Insert name of program)* believes that on-going training is an essential ingredient for productivity as well as job satisfaction. *(Insert name of program)* offers regular training and supervision opportunities for volunteers, such as in-service training sessions, case review, and individual supervision.

- The *(Insert name of program)* provides supervision which is appropriate to the volunteer's needs and complexity of the case assignment and holds volunteers accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.
- Supervisors are easily accessible and provide timely and thorough guidance to CASA Volunteers.
- The CASA program supervisor holds regularly scheduled case conferences with volunteers to review progress on each case and written case records.

Volunteers are required to attend at least twelve hours of in-service training sessions each year. In addition, volunteers are encouraged to attend relevant workshops offered outside the program.

The *(Insert name of program)* has in place mechanisms for Volunteer recognition.

### **Annual Evaluation and Re-Commitment**

The CASA Director will formally evaluate each volunteer on an annual basis, including discussion of the volunteer's re-commitment to CASA. The volunteer will also have an opportunity to evaluate the program services.

## **Conflict of Interest**

Under no circumstances may a CASA Volunteer be:

- related to any party involved in a case;
- employed in a position and/or agency or involved in volunteer or board activity that could pose a conflict with the case;
- have personal or professional relationships with any party in the case;
- have a current personal case in Family Court that might result in a conflict of interest. In the event a volunteer is presented with a potential conflict of interest, this should be discussed with the CASA program director as soon as possible, and the program director will determine the appropriate action.

If a potential conflict could affect the Court case, this should be discussed with the program director as to any disclosure that needs to be made in front of the Court.

## **Confidentiality: Your Responsibility as a Court Appointed Special Advocate**

### **A) General responsibility to protect confidentiality:**

It is (*Insert name of program's*) policy that volunteers and staff must respect children's and families' rights to privacy in regard to personal information. Each volunteer must take an Oath of Confidentiality at the conclusion of training. The basis for this policy can be found in national and state CASA standards and court rules.

1. No information should be released to anyone not authorized to receive it and there should be no disclosure of case information to people who are not directly involved in the case.
2. The CASA Volunteer shall never discuss an assigned case in public.
3. No information should be released to family or friends of the parties without the express written consent of the party. No disclosure of case information should be made to anyone who does not have a professional reason for reviewing such information.
4. Confidential information may be shared with (*Insert name of program's*) staff.
5. All case materials are to be kept in a safe confidential place.

### **B) Obligations to Disclose:**

Information gathered by a CASA Volunteer is safeguarded as confidential to a limited extent. Unlike doctor-patient or lawyer-client relationships, there is no privilege of absolute confidentiality for CASA. It is a CASA Volunteer's job to transmit the information it collects to the Court. It is important to let all parties to a case know this when gathering information. At the beginning of a case, the CASA Volunteer should carefully inform all parties about their rights in regard to confidentiality; for example, what will be maintained about them and what information will be shared, with whom and under what circumstances.

### **C) Access to Records:**

1. **Case Records:** No one outside of (*Insert name of program*) staff may have access to a CASA case record without a court order. Copies of CASA court reports are provided according to program policy to the presiding judge, attorney for the child, and attorneys or other representatives of the respondents, but not to the respondents

themselves unless they are not represented by counsel. Any other circumstances should be discussed with the program director.

**2. Volunteer Records:** A CASA Volunteer may request access to their Volunteer Record at any time except for volunteer references which are confidential. The CASA director can grant access to review portions of the Volunteer Record. If a volunteer finds a discrepancy in the volunteer record, the volunteer should inform the CASA director immediately.

#### **D) Internal Safeguards of Confidential Information and Records:**

In order to insure maintaining confidentiality, *(Insert name of program)* has adopted certain procedures regarding case records that volunteers must follow. All CASA materials concerning a case or volunteer must be filed in the case file. CASA volunteer case records and any other materials relating to their case should not be left in plain view of, or accessible to, any unauthorized persons.

**1. Electronic file safety:** Increasingly, we will all be dependent on electronic means of communication. There are some basic “netiquette” rules to follow:

- a. Emails intended for one individual should not be copied or forwarded to another without the original author’s permission.
- b. Use the “blind copy” when using individual’s email address in a group message so you are not inadvertently sharing someone’s personal email account without their permission.
- c. Take care that many email programs automatically copy previous emails on a reply, so you may inadvertently be sharing discussions or information that was intended to be private or that we simply do not have someone’s permission to forward.
- d. Emails can serve the purpose of recording a conversation in a way that allows documenting information or retrieving this information at a later date. However, this also means these can develop a life of their own, showing up in an inopportune time or place.
- e. Emails can also serve to include a number of individuals in a discussion so you do not need to repeat the conversations.
- f. Give thought before hitting “reply all” that everyone on an email needs or should have the information you are sending. It can save time and energy to “reply all” to include people in a discussion. Conversely, it can unnecessarily clog people’s email boxes or share information you did not intend to share with someone.
- g. Listservs are set up in different ways. For some, replying will send the email to the entire listserv; in other cases, just to the host. Check the intended recipient to make sure you are communicating with the right entity.
- h. Acknowledge receipt of emails as quickly as possible. Sometimes emails do vanish, and this helps you know that the intended recipient has received the information.
- i. Spam filters will sometimes automatically send emails to your “spam” folder if the sender’s email is not recognized. Periodically check your spam folder to make sure you are not missing critical emails. The sender sometimes, but not always, will receive a message that the email has not

gone through. This will sometimes happen if your spam filter recognized a subject line it deems inappropriate.

- j. Be mindful of sending or opening attachments from unrecognized sources as they may contain viruses or objectionable material.
- k. Take great care of what you email, forward along, or search for on your work computer. Follow your agency's policies regarding appropriate use.
- l. The tone of emails can mis-communicate your intent. We tend to be more conversational in email, but humor or a casual comment may be misconstrued. As email becomes more common place, it can be a positive tool for communication but one of which you should be very mindful and careful.

As technology evolves, more social media will be available. We have blogs, twitters, texting and other means that not only are ways of communicating with individuals but may be available to anyone with access to the internet. The above rules are good guidelines to follow when using any electronic communication.

#### **E) Obtaining Confidential Materials:**

Using local program protocol (*Insert name of program*) is entitled to receive confidential materials on the children and families assigned to us by the Court. However, CASA must get written, signed Consents for Release of Information that must be completely filled out prior to accessing records.

#### **F) Re-Disclosure of Confidential Materials:**

Any confidential materials received from another individual or organization may not be re-disclosed to anyone outside CASA's professional staff, the parties in the case and the Court except by court order.

#### **G.) Duty to Disclose:**

##### **1. Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect:**

- a. If a CASA Volunteer has a "suspicion" that a child within their assigned case is being maltreated, neglected, or abused, the volunteer should report his/her suspicion to a CASA supervisor immediately. ***CASA program staff will determine whether to report these incidents of suspected child abuse or neglect to the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment.***
- b. The CASA Volunteer reports any situation in which the CASA Volunteer has reason to believe that a child is in imminent danger to appropriate authorities. The CASA volunteer reports emergency calls to the CASA staff as soon as possible, but in an emergency call the police first.

If a volunteer has any questions, based on their external professional status, about their obligation to report, they should confer with the program director and if necessary, the licensing body for their profession.

##### **2. Harm to self and others:**

If you learn someone may harm himself or others, you may have a duty to disclose this information. You must discuss this immediately with your supervisor, but in the case of an emergency, call the police first.

## 4. OFFICE POLICIES

### **Reimbursable Expenses** (*Volunteer expenses are reimbursed per program policy*)

In connection with day-to-day work, (*Insert name of program*) will reimburse the following expenses, where reasonable and with prior approval based on availability of funding:

- Parking.
- Transportation required for meetings or home visits.
- Business telephone calls: CASA Volunteers may use the telephones in the CASA offices for CASA purposes. We ask that only essential personal calls be placed through CASA office telephones. We request that volunteers do not make personal toll calls while at the CASA offices.
- Volunteers must obtain prior approval from the CASA Director for all other expenses.

### **Property**

(*Insert name of program*) cannot accept responsibility for personal property. Volunteers are requested to keep all valuable property safely secured.

### **General Safety**

(*Insert name of program*) considers its volunteers to be its most important asset. You are asked to help us maintain a safe work environment. It is the responsibility of every volunteer to report any unsafe or questionable conditions to your CASA Director.

### **Safety Procedures for Home Visits**

CASA program safety procedures for home visits have been set up in order to give volunteers guidelines on avoiding possible harmful situations. Fieldwork is difficult and at times may be dangerous. Therefore:

- A. All initial visits may be made in pairs, and are to be announced and planned. Appropriate personnel, such as CASA staff, or a provider from another agency may accompany you.
- B. Safety factors to be considered in preparation for any home visit include: the intended purpose of the visit; the family's history of harmful behavior; domestic violence; or substance abuse; the current psychiatric functioning and recent behaviors of all household members; the likely presence of others who may pose an additional threat; the surrounding environment; the family's past and present response to other service providers entering the home.
- C. Dress in a fashion that is office casual and not conspicuous.
- D. Jewelry and valuables: Do not make visits with expensive jewelry. No volunteer should travel with large sums of money.
- E. Always let your supervisors know when you plan a home visit, and when you are expected to return.
- F. Upon approaching a building, if you do not feel totally comfortable about entering because of suspicious people in the area, dark conditions, etc., do not enter. Arrangements for another visit may be made at another time. A home visit that may pose a security risk should be terminated in a non-confrontational manner immediately.

### **Safety for Phone Usage**

- A. Be aware phone calls from your home or cell phone can leave a foot print or trace. Remember to use \*67 for your cell phone or home phone.
- B. Always use the CASA office phone number, fax and mailing address.

*Please bring any safety concerns to the attention of CASA staff immediately.*

## **5. AGENCY – PROGRAM VOLUNTEER RELATIONS**

Ultimate responsibility for all CASA cases rests with the CASA Director. As a volunteer, however, you also represent *(Insert name of program)*, and what you do reflects the organization. Always conduct yourself in a way that reflects favorably on the program. Volunteers must comply with all rules and policies stated herein, which *(Insert name of program)* may change at its discretion when warranted. The CASA Director holds the final decision whether to retain the services of a volunteer and may terminate any volunteer for non-compliance with policies or procedures or for any other reason that CASA staff, in its sole discretion, deems appropriate.

### **Open Door**

*(Insert name of program)* has an “open door” policy. If you have any questions or concerns regarding either the responsibilities or the provisions outlined in the *(Insert name of program)* manual, or other matters directly related to your work, you are encouraged to take up the matter directly with the CASA Director.

### **Agency Letterhead**

Volunteers act as official representatives of *(Insert name of program/umbrella agency)* when using CASA letterhead in normal business situations. Use of letterhead is at the discretion of the program and must receive prior approval.

### **Media Communications**

The CASA Director handles inquiries concerning *(Insert name of program/umbrella agency)*, its policies and procedures, practices, or clients. Volunteers are not permitted to make any statements involving *(Insert name of program)* to the media without the prior consent of the CASA Director.

### **Direct Service Provision (Adjust for your program)**

*(Insert name of program)* is not a “direct service” agency. We are a child advocacy organization: we advocate for direct service agencies to provide proper direct services to clients. Therefore, CASA volunteers should avoid providing direct services such as: transporting parties or children; supervising visits; intervening in domestic disputes; providing counseling or legal advice; entertaining children; offering to provide funds for food or other necessities; providing gifts or money directly to the child or family; etc. Remember, CASA is a facilitator: it is our job to get the direct service agencies to provide these vital services to the clients.

### **Personal Involvement with Children and Families (Adjust to your program)**

*(Insert name of program's)* effectiveness and standing in Court depend on volunteers maintaining professional relationships with children and families in their cases. Volunteers

and staff will maintain professional volunteer boundaries with CASA children and families, volunteers shall not give money or expensive presents to children, families or caretakers; or accept or extend invitations to attend personal social engagements unless approved by CASA staff. CASA Volunteers are not permitted to transport the child or other parties or take a child to the volunteer's home or any other home.

### **AIDS and Confidentiality**

Laws and policies on AIDS confidentiality are changing rapidly. There are competing means of accessing medical treatment and protecting against discrimination. The HIV or AIDS status of any party to a case (child or birth parent particularly) **should not be revealed by CASA** in open court orally or in written reports. If there is suspicion of HIV or AIDS, a CASA volunteer should bring this to his/her supervisor's attention immediately to discuss how to handle this information in a professional and respectful manner. Here at *(Insert name of program)* we keep separate from the case file any information that may identify the child/adult as having AIDS in a separate locked file in a folder marked confidential.

### **Dress Code**

When attending court or professional meetings please dress in a professional manner such as dress slacks, collared shirts for men, no blue jeans, or t-shirts.

### **Transportation**

*(Transporting children or other parties has to be an individual program decision, with approval from the Board of Directors. National CASA, CASANYs, and NYS UCS CASA Assistance Program do not recommend transporting. Programs do this at their own risk. For more information see National CASA standards)*

*(If your program does not allow the transportation of children or other parties, the following statement could be utilized here, "CASA Volunteers are not permitted to transport children or other parties or take children to the volunteer's home.")*

*(If your program does allow volunteers to transport children or other parties, add your policy here.)*

### **Legal Advice**

*(Insert name of program)* will provide for legal advice or representation pertaining to CASA business as needed. The volunteer should not directly contact this individual, but should do so through the program director.

## **6. CORE VALUES – ETHICS**

We are committed to the highest standards of ethics and integrity in all our work. Unethical behavior is never justified, no matter the intention or outcome.

### **Respect**

We expect all people will be treated with dignity, fairness and respect. Rude or demeaning treatment is and will not be tolerated anywhere within the organization.

### **Confidentiality**

We are committed to the highest standards of confidentiality regarding clients, volunteers, staff and donors. Inquiries from the media or public for information regarding confidential matters are dealt with only by the CASA Director, Board President or their designated representative. Decisions to release information about confidential matters are made on a case basis by CASA Director and Board President. However, general information (not case information) about the CASA program may be shared by anyone associated with the organization with the exception of contact with the media.

### **Children and Families**

The organization's first responsibility is to protect and advocate for the best interests of the children served by the program. All resources are allocated and policies and procedures carried out in accordance with this responsibility. Examples include screening and case management procedures, training programs, staff qualifications, the ratio of volunteers to paid staff, the ratio of children to volunteers and commitment to the highest standards of confidentiality.

### **Child Advocacy**

Advocacy for the best interests of children requires commitment to two tenets: protecting children from abuse, and actively valuing the child's attachments to his or her family. Neglecting either tenet can be disastrous: serious physical injury or even death of a child on the one hand, or emotional and psychological injury that may never be repaired.

### **Culturally Competent Advocacy**

Advocacy for the best interests of the child requires tremendous sensitivity to the child and family's culture, ethnic identity, religion, and the many other factors that contribute to the child's identity. The organization and all those within must make diligent and a deliberate effort to ensure that advocacy is culturally sensitive and appropriate. Further, we must always strive to do better in this area, to grow beyond our current understanding and competency level.

### **Attitude Toward Families**

Children love and value their families, even families who have abused or neglected them. We therefore recognize that advocacy for the child is often closely tied to advocacy for the family. We promote respectful treatment of all parents and family members.

### **Volunteer Advocates**

*(Insert name of program)* is committed to providing volunteer advocacy for children. Although not child welfare professionals, the CASA program operates with the highest standards of professionalism.

### **Role of Advocates in the Child Welfare System**

We believe in the tremendous value of CASA volunteers working within a system staffed by professionals, and that they are equal participants and deserve respect in their role. Likewise, we believe in the importance of all professionals within the system, and CASA Volunteers in no way replace them. As people who have dedicated their careers to child welfare, these professionals deserve respect. CASA volunteers should strive to collaborate with all professionals involved in their case.

### **Purpose of providing support to CASA Volunteers**

CASA Volunteers need and deserve excellent, competent, professional support to be the most effective child advocate possible. We work hard to offer support which will maximize volunteers' strengths and minimize their limitations.

### **The CASA's Autonomy**

The CASA Volunteer balances autonomy with being a team player to advocate for the child's best interests. CASA Volunteers has the ability to bring creative insight to the case. CASA volunteers bring an outsider's viewpoint to regulated systems. Staff supports volunteers, assisting them through supervision and consultation to provide the best advocacy possible.

### **Limitations to the CASA Volunteer's Autonomy**

*(Insert name of program)* staff collaboratively work with volunteers.

### **Relationships**

#### **A. Relationship to the child welfare system:**

*(Insert name of program)* values strong working relationships and open communication with all others working within the child welfare system. Although the CASA program often takes positions in specific cases which are at odds with others on the case, the CASA program does not cast itself in an adversarial role with any party. CASA recognizes that reasonable people may disagree, and that the best outcomes for the children result from a full and complete discussion of all issues and points of view.

#### **B. Relationship and responsibility to the Court:**

As the Court's designated Court Appointed Special Advocate program, *(Insert name of program)*, has a responsibility to operate with the highest standards of ethics and accountability, doing nothing to discredit the Court or the position of trust it is accorded. CASA Volunteers must demonstrate the highest ethical standards in all of their conduct, both inside and outside the courtroom. They must abide by federal and state laws and New York State court rules doing nothing to bring dishonor to the Court, the role in which they serve, or the CASA program. Behavior unbecoming is not tolerated. The same principles apply to paid staff and members of the Board/Advisory Board.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **A. Commitment to inclusivity:**

CASA recognizes that the best services will be provided to children when members of all the communities to which these children belong are well represented at every level within the organization: policy setting (Board of Directors), service (CASA Volunteers), and support roles (paid and unpaid staff).

#### **B. Responsibility to donors and the public:**

We endeavor to be accountable to the public in matters of stewardship and the conduct of our services, and especially to those who support us financially.

**Teamwork**

Everyone working to further the CASA Program's mission, regardless of job title or paid or volunteer status, is equally important. Teamwork is necessary.

*Thank you for your vital work,  
on behalf of (Insert name of county's) most vulnerable children*



*(Insert name of program) Volunteer Signed Acknowledgement*

***Each volunteer receives a copy of the Volunteer Policies and Procedures Manual and provides signed acknowledgement of reading and understanding the policies and procedures.***

I have read the *(Insert name of program)* Volunteer Policies and Procedures and agree to abide by them.

***Volunteer Name:*** \_\_\_\_\_ ***Date:*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Program Representative:*** \_\_\_\_\_ ***Date:*** \_\_\_\_\_