



## **Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardian ad Litem Job Description**

### **Job Description:**

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a volunteer appointed by the Court to advocate for the best interest of a child who is alleged to have been abused or neglected. In order to do this, the CASA/GAL must investigate the facts of the case, recommend a course of action to the Court, explain the Court's findings to the child, facilitate the resolution of the presenting problems, and monitor progress toward established goals.

### **Examples of Duties:**

- Upon assignment of a case, interview all parties involved to determine the facts.
- Review records (court, CPS, law enforcement)
- Investigate alternatives available for the child, such as placement and services, etc.
- Submit written reports to the court for each court hearing.
- Appear at court hearings to make recommendations to the Court.
- Continue contacts with child, family, social workers and others to monitor court orders.
- Bring significant changes in the family situation to the Court's attention.
- Determine whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts, are being provided to the child and family.
- Maintain complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews, and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances.
- Determine if a permanent plan has been created for the child.
- Not a mentor program; but have enough contact with the child to understand their needs.

### **Prerequisites:**

- No criminal convictions in the past ten years.
- No criminal convictions ever, involving offenses related to child abuse or exploitation, or physical or sexual abuse.
- Participate in screening interview and allow for background checks prior to training.
- Observe in courtroom at least four hours prior to completing the initial volunteer training.

### **Requirements of a CASA:**

- Complete initial volunteer training sessions (approx. 30 hours in length).
- Maintain strict confidentiality.
- Attend in-service training sessions on an on-going basis - 12 hours per year.
- After initial training, serve as a CASA/GAL for at least one child or sibling group until a permanent placement plan has been implemented (usually an 18 month commitment).
- Keep volunteer supervisor informed of all case-related activities, conferring periodically in person or by phone for guidance and/or assistance.
- Maintain an up-to-date and complete file on each case assigned. Return all files, notes, casework upon the completion and closing of each case.
- Adhere to deadlines and timetables involving an assigned case and turn in all reports on time.
- Turn in all hours worked on case and case updates on a minimum monthly basis.
- Maintain a valid Washington State Driver's License and state-mandated auto insurance.



- Immediately report to your CASA Program Coordinator or the Program Manager any arrests/charges/convictions for any crime, including but not limited to: domestic violence involving law enforcement response; child related offenses of any kind; DUI or drug related arrests or charges; any driving offense that will limit your driving privileges or ability to maintain auto insurance.

**Selection Factors:**

- Interest in children, their rights, and special needs.
- Time to devote to training sessions, investigation and follow-up of a case assigned (an 18-month commitment required).
- Ability to work with children, family members, and professionals using tact, concern, and basic human relations skills.
- Ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds including varied cultures, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, religions, sexual identities, and sexual orientations.
- Strong written and oral communication skills. Volunteers receive ongoing support and coaching as needed.
- Support the philosophy and issues relating to the work of the Juvenile Court.

**Time Frames:**

- Attend at least 12 hours of on-going training per year.
- Investigate and prepare for the first court hearing: generally, 15-25 hours over a four to six-week period.
- Monitor court orders and prepare for twice yearly reviews hearings: average 10-15 hours per month on busy cases and 5 hours per month on most stable cases. Time in court additional.
- Commit to the duration of the case(s) you are assigned.

**Benefits:**

- Involvement in the CASA Program provides an opportunity to; enhance written and oral communication skills, gain an understanding of the juvenile legal system, increase awareness of child abuse and neglect, and most importantly, to have a positive impact on the quality of a vulnerable child's life.

***Lift up a child's voice. A child's life.***