

CHANGE A CHILD'S STORY™



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF THE EASTERN PANHANDLE

www.mycasaep.org



CONTENTS

Information Flyer	3
Volunteer / Job Description	5
FAQs	7
Application	9
Donation Form	10



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF THE EASTERN PANHANDLE

**CASA OF THE
EASTERN PANHANDLE**

phone: 304.263.5100
email: volunteer@mycasaep.org
www.mycasaep.org

HOPE NEEDS A HELPING HAND

**VOLUNTEER AS A CASA (COURT-APPOINTED SPECIAL
ADVOCATE) AND CHANGE A CHILD'S STORY.™**

CASA volunteers are highly trained and appointed by judges to promote and protect the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

Imagine the experience of children who are removed from their home, their family, their siblings, and everything they know and care about. They find themselves in a world filled with social workers, lawyers, judges and courtrooms where life-altering decisions are made on their behalf.

Fortunately, children in the Eastern Panhandle can have court-appointed volunteer advocates who ensure that each child's voice is heard, and their needs remain a priority in an overburdened child welfare system.

CASA isn't your typical volunteer role, and it's one of the most impactful and empowering experiences you can have.

**CASA VOLUNTEERS
MAKE A LIFE-
CHANGING
DIFFERENCE IN
THE LIVES OF
CHILDREN WHO
HAVE EXPERIENCED
ABUSE OR NEGLECT.**

**CHILDREN WHO
HAVE A VOLUNTEER
ADVOCATE:**



**SPEND LESS TIME IN
FOSTER CARE**



**ARE FAR LESS LIKELY
TO RE-ENTER
FOSTER CARE**



**DO BETTER AT
SCHOOL**



WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A CASA VOLUNTEER

- A commitment to improving the lives of vulnerable children
- Passion, positivity and professionalism
- A willingness to learn and an open mind towards life experiences different from your own
- Availability to participate in 35 hours of training and contribute 10 hours per month on child engagement and advocacy



REAL STORY:

A woman sprawls unconscious in a parking lot.

In the stroller at her side are needles, alcohol, and a baby.

"The state recommended putting my kiddo in a van to visit her father for 30 minutes a week. All the attorneys, everybody agreed. Well, she's been in foster care since they found her in the stroller. She's only two years old, and it's a five-hour drive to the jail. So that's ten hours, round trip, for a 30-minute visit. I had to say, 'No, this just doesn't make sense.' The court listened to me."



CASA VOLUNTEER

CHANGE A

CHILD'S STORY™

BECOME A VOLUNTEER
ADVOCATE TO CHANGE
THE TRAJECTORY OF A
CHILD'S LIFE

LEND YOUR EXPERTISE
TO GROW AND BUILD
OUR PROGRAMS

MAKE A DONATION
TO SERVE MORE
CHILDREN

CONTACT US TODAY!

CASA OF THE EASTERN PANHANDLE

336 South Queen Street
Martinsburg, WV 25401

phone: 304.263.5100
email: volunteer@mycasaep.org

www.mycasaep.org

OUR VISION: SERVING EVERY CHILD IN THE EASTERN PANHANDLE



60
CASA volunteers help change
children's lives every day.
Learn more at
www.mycasaep.org.



189
abused and neglected
children had a CASA
volunteer speaking up
for their best interests
in the last year.



432
children are waiting for
a volunteer empowered to
find them a safe, loving,
permanent home.



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF THE EASTERN PANHANDLE

CASA VOLUNTEER

JOB DESCRIPTION

A COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA) is a trained and committed volunteer who ensures that each child's individual needs remain a priority in an overburdened child welfare system. CASAs are appointed by a Judge to advocate for the best interests of children who are removed from a home due to abuse and/or neglect.

CASA volunteers become an official part of judicial proceedings and work alongside attorneys and social workers in a Child Protective Services (CPS) case. They are entitled to access information about the child's situation and required to make reports to the court in the child's best interest.

By handling one or two cases at a time, CASAs can thoroughly explore the history of each assigned case. They talk with the child(ren), parents, family members, neighbors, school officials, counselors, doctors, and anyone else significantly involved in the child's life that might have facts about the case. They review all court documents and then prepare and submit a formal report to the judge at the scheduled hearing or case review. They monitor the case to assure that the judicial and child welfare systems are moving ahead to secure a safe, permanent home for the child and that court-ordered services are provided to the child and family as appropriate. A CASA is a critical resource to the child, attorney, social worker and judge in reaching the goal of safe and permanent placement for the child.

JUDGES VALUE CASA'S RECOMMENDATIONS, which help them make informed decisions in the child's best interest. The CASA is often the most constant person in that child's life and sometimes the only constant presence they've known. This volunteer exists in their life to truly know them and represent their wishes in court.

Children who have CASAs assigned to their cases are often placed in permanent homes faster than those without and have greater access to more community services. When safe to do so, it is in children's best interest to stay connected to their families of origin.

For children who've experienced abuse or neglect, CASA means having a home instead of feeling lost, and being a priority instead of feeling invisible.

FOR VOLUNTEERS, CASA IS A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE that reminds us we can each make our community a better place, one child at a time.



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF THE EASTERN PANHANDLE



WAYS TO VOLUNTEER:

- 1. COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA):** These are individuals in our community who ensure that abused and neglected children are placed in safe, permanent homes. They are trained and sworn in by a Judge to advocate for the best interest of a child, ensuring that their voices are heard in court. They spend 3-4 hours per week handling aspects of a case: meeting with children, reviewing court records, attending hearings, or identifying community resources to help children who have faced abuse or neglect.
- 2. FOSTERING FUTURES ADVOCATE:** These are CASAs specifically trained to advocate on behalf of youth between the ages of 14 and 21, mentoring and supporting them to achieve a healthy transition into independent living and adulthood.
- 3. ALLIANCE MEMBER:** Alliance Members are community volunteers and businesses who assist the organization with special projects, provide office assistance or support through fundraising and community events.

A CASA VOLUNTEER MUST:

- Be 21 years of age;
- Be able to transport self to a variety of locations;
- Be able to pass a drug test;
- Attend 39 hours of pre-service training to be sworn in;
- Complete 12 hours of annual in-service training while acting as an advocate;
- Maintain confidentiality regarding all client and court information.

SPECIAL TALENTS AND SKILLS OF A CASA:

- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing;
- Respect all people from various cultural, education and socioeconomic backgrounds and in a variety of settings;
- Deal with hostility, anger and emotional attitudes;
- Maintain objectivity;
- Gather and record factual information accurately.

CASA of the Eastern Panhandle provides **FREE PRE-SERVICE AND INSERVICE TRAINING** to all potential and active volunteers. New advocates may be assigned a mentor Advocate to support them in initial cases. CASA volunteers receive support and direct supervision on every case from a Volunteer Coordinator. Advocates will follow guidelines as established by the West Virginia CASA Association and the National CASA Association.

CONTACT US TODAY!



1. WHAT IS A CASA?

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained and committed volunteer who ensures that each child's individual needs remain a priority in an overburdened child welfare system. CASAs are appointed by a Judge to advocate for the best interests of children who are removed from a home due to abuse and/or neglect.

Our volunteer advocates come from every walk of life and share a commitment to improving children's lives, a willingness to learn and an open mind towards life experiences different from their own. **No special education, experience or background is needed.**

2. WHAT'S REQUIRED TO BECOME A CASA?

Volunteers must be at least 21 years of age and be able to pass extensive reference, Child Protective Services, sex offender registry and criminal background checks before becoming a volunteer. Applicants are required to complete an application, attend a pre-training interview, and participate in CASA training. Volunteers should have effective oral and written communication skills, and comfort with computer technology including email and word processing. You may not be a current foster parent or be in the process of adopting a child from Child Protective Services. If an attorney, you may not concurrently be appointed to any cases involving Child Protective Services in the Eastern Panhandle.

3. HOW MUCH TIME IS INVOLVED?

Most CASAs spend an average of 10 hours a month handling various aspects of the case – visits, phone calls, case review, meetings and court hearings.

4. DO I GET TO PICK MY OWN CASES? DO I HAVE TO TAKE ABUSE CASES?

All CASAs get to choose between three cases suggested by their Volunteer Supervisor. If a CASA is uncomfortable with the details following review of case files, the Volunteer Supervisor will provide additional cases for a CASA to select from.

5. WHAT'S THE PROCESS OF GETTING INVOLVED?

A Court Advocate application must be completed with CASAEP, followed by a background check and interview with the Volunteer Supervisor and/or Director of Training.

6. HOW LONG DOES A CASE LAST?

Length of case varies according to complexity and number of children involved. On average, CASAs are encouraged to commit to one year of service on each case.

7. DOES A VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE WORK WITH THE CHILD'S BIOLOGICAL FAMILY?

When it is safe to do so and in the child's best interest, CASA's primary goal is to reunify children with their families. This means it is essential for volunteer advocates to get to know and work with a child's biological parents and extended family to ensure the child(ren)'s continued feelings of connectedness and wellbeing. This may also require facilitating placement with relatives or to research and connect with distant relatives in ongoing cases as a way to engage or re-engage them in the lives of the child(ren).

8. HOW DOES A CASA INVESTIGATE A CASE?

To prepare a recommendation, the CASA volunteer gets to know and builds a trusting relationship with a child or family of children by seeing them in person at least once a month. They talk to parents, teachers, doctors, therapists, caregivers and other important adults in the child's life who are knowledgeable about the child's history and progress. The CASA volunteer has a court order that allows them to review all records pertaining to the child – school, medical, caseworker reports and other documents. This is not an investigation of the abuse or neglect that started the case. Investigators with CPS will have already concluded that investigation.

9. HOW DOES CASA SUPPORT THEIR VOLUNTEER ADVOCATES?

Volunteers are always paired with a staff Volunteer Supervisor who supports and guides them every step of the way. This includes preparing for and attending case-related hearings and meetings and guiding the volunteer to pertinent resources specific to each case. When a supervisor is not available for a meeting or hearing, another CASA staff member will attend to support the volunteer.

10. HOW DOES CASA DIFFER FROM CPS WORKERS?

CASA is a separate nonprofit organization that exists outside of the Child Protective Services state system. Volunteer advocates are appointed by the court to focus specifically on the best interest of the child(ren) with an unbiased community perspective. Volunteer advocates thoroughly examine a child's case, have knowledge of community resources, and can offer outside-the-box recommendations independent of state policy limitations and restrictions. Volunteers advocate for one child or family of children at a time, while a CPS caseworker has a full caseload of children they are working with.

11. DO CASAS STAY IN CONTACT WITH CHILDREN AFTER THE CASE CLOSES?

Once a case is over and children have safely reached permanency, the need for CASA ends, and CASA requires that volunteers end their contact with the children and family after a case closes. If a volunteer advocate remains in a child's life, they can become a reminder or anchor to a time of instability and confusion for children or create a dynamic of dependency with the advocate. It is important to have a healthy transition out of their lives once a case is closed. In certain occasions, a teen who ages out of care at age 18 may choose to keep their CASA volunteer in their lives as a supportive adult connection, but no longer in the role of advocate.

HOPE NEEDS A HELPING HAND



BECOME A CASA CHANGEMAKER

CASA of the Eastern Panhandle depends on passionate people like yourself to fulfill our mission of being agents of change for the most vulnerable children in the Eastern Panhandle. Let us know how you would like to support the mission of providing a safe, nurturing and permanent home to all children.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Cell: _____ Email: _____

Race/Ethnicity *This helps us ensure we are being inclusive in our recruitment efforts.* _____

How did you hear about CASA?* _____

☐ I want to learn more about becoming a court advocate for children.

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained and committed volunteer who ensures that each child's individual needs remain a priority in an overburdened child welfare system. CASAs are appointed by a Judge to advocate for the best interests of children who are removed from a home due to abuse and/or neglect.

Send me a hardcopy CASA application by (select one) ☐ postal mail ☐ email

Other Ways to Change a Child's Story:

☐ I'm interested in becoming a CASA-EP organizational volunteer.

☐ I'm would like to help at an event, host a fundraiser or serve on a planning committee.

☐ I would like to receive your newsletter and notices of upcoming events.



YES! I AM CHANGING A CHILD'S STORY

Please print:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____ **ZIP CODE:** _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

My Donation: \$ _____

☐ **I will make payment by credit card**

Please charge my credit card:

☐ Mastercard ☐ VISA

Card number: _____

Expiration date: _____

CVV / Security Code: _____

Signature: _____

☐ **Make this a reoccurring donation**

Monthly Donation amount: \$ _____

☐ **I will pay via check** *(enclosed)*

OTHER WAYS TO GIVE:

Our Website:

www.mycasaep.org/give/donations

Facebook:

Create a fundraiser on facebook at:

www.facebook.com/mycasaep.org/

Please complete this form and mail to:

CASA of the Eastern Panhandle

336 South Queen St. • Martinsburg, WV 25401

WWW.MYCASAEP.ORG





CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF THE EASTERN PANHANDLE

**CASA OF THE
EASTERN PANHANDLE**

phone: 304.263.5100
email: volunteer@mycasaep.org

www.mycasaep.org

