



Family Court of the State of NY • Hall of Justice • Room 332 • Rochester, NY 14614

Phone: 585-428-5297 • Fax: 585-428-2780 • Email: casarny@aol.com • Web: www.casarochester.org

Dear Prospective Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in CASA. CASA provides a challenging and rewarding volunteer experience, advocating for the best interests of abused and neglected children in, or at risk of entering, foster care.

Included in this packet please find the following: a Volunteer Advocate Job Description, CASA's Top 10 Questions Asked by Prospective Volunteers, a Disclaimer with Equal Opportunity Statement, and a Volunteer Application Form. Please return your completed Volunteer Application Form to our office, along with your resume if you have one. Upon receipt and review of your materials at the CASA office, an initial interview will be scheduled.

If you have scheduled an interview, this is where to find us: CASA is located on the third floor of the Hall of Justice on Exchange Street, opposite the Blue Cross Arena. You may wish to park in the Civic Center Parking Garage, which is off of Broad Street facing Fitzhugh Street. (Other parking lots are on Exchange Street opposite the Hall of Justice, and at the Sister Cities Garage on Fitzhugh Street.) From the Civic Center Parking Garage, follow the signs for the Hall of Justice, take the elevator to level 3, and turn left. From there, you will go through the security area to the elevators in the main lobby of the Hall of Justice. Take the elevator to Floor 3, and ask the deputy at the desk to call CASA to announce your arrival. You will be directed where to go to meet a CASA staff member. (The CASA office is in a secure area, so you will not be able to go there directly.)

After the initial interview, you are welcome to schedule your 6 hours of required courtroom observation and register for the next prospective volunteer training course. The training course is offered typically three times per year and consists of approximately 24 hours of classroom time. Attendance is expected for all of the 24-hour course. While you are training to be a volunteer, you will have to write an autobiography and complete two forms allowing CASA to perform background checks.

When all of the items are completed and returned to the CASA office, your second interview with a CASA staff person can be scheduled. Then, we can arrange a time for you to appear before a Family Court Judge, take an oath of confidentiality, and be sworn in as a CASA volunteer.

If you have any questions about CASA, please call our office or visit our website at www.casarochester.org.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Wolfe, Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteer Advocate Job Description for CASA of Rochester/Monroe County, Inc.

Mission Statement: CASA of Rochester/Monroe County, Inc. is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to train and supervise a diverse group of volunteers to advocate for children who have been abused and/or neglected. These children are at risk of being removed, or have been removed, from their homes.

Characteristics of a successful CASA volunteer:

- Self-confident, assertive, and self-motivated, but able to take direction
- Able to keep information confidential, work within established guidelines, and recognize limits and boundaries
- Able to follow through and pursue answers to questions
- Common sense and a sense of humor
- Skilled in listening, and oral and written communication
- Understanding of children and families with open-mindedness and objectivity

Requirements:

- Must be age 21 or older.
- Have a valid driver's license and reliable transportation.
- Whether employed or not, have flexible daytime hours to make and receive phone calls, and attend meetings and court hearings.
- Be able, as needed, to make calls or visits during the evening or weekend hours.
- Complete the Volunteer Application Form, provide three references, and comply with background checks.
- Provide a resume (or a summary of work and/or volunteer experience).
- Complete an initial interview.
- Complete approximately 24 hours of classroom training, as well as 6 hours of courtroom observation.
- Submit an autobiography that summarizes your life experiences, including your childhood and adulthood to the present time.
- Meet with a CASA staff person for a second interview. If it is mutually agreeable that CASA is the volunteer opportunity for you, you will take an oath of confidentiality and be sworn in by a judge.

Responsibilities:

- Commit to a case for the length of the CASA assignment, or a minimum of two years.
- Investigate all the facts about the case, and advocate for the best interests of the children on the case.
- Follow-up on all case issues, and ask clarifying questions.
- Obtain monthly updates regarding the children and family on the case.
- Meet with the children on the case a minimum of once every three months—preferably, once a month.
- Report any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect to the CASA supervisor.
- Monitor court orders, and facilitate a working relationship among all parties involved.
- Attend agency meetings, school meetings, and court hearings.
- Maintain comprehensive notes and records about each case, including appointments, length of time spent on calls, interviews, meetings, and results of contacts.
- Communicate with your CASA supervisor and the primary players on the case at least twice a month.
- Inform your CASA supervisor if you will be out of town for an extended period of time.
- Report to the court and all pertinent parties, whether verbally or in writing, the results of your investigation, as directed by your CASA supervisor.
- Complete monthly statistics of your activities using the Volunteer Activities Form provided with the case file. Send the form to the CASA office by the 5th of each month.
- Attend CASA in-service trainings or outside training sessions (as approved by the CASA Director).
- When your case closes, complete the Volunteer's Closed Case Questionnaire, and return the form with the case file to the CASA office.

CASA's Top 10 Questions Asked by Prospective Volunteers

1. How does CASA become involved on a case?

Only a Family Court Judge can assign CASA to a case.

2. To what types of cases does CASA get assigned?

CASA is assigned to Family Court cases involving allegations that a parent or guardian has abused or neglected a child or children in the home. The children already may have been removed from the home and placed in foster care, or they may be at risk of entering foster care.

3. How old are the children involved?

CASA is assigned to children ranging in age from newborn to age 18 (or up to age 21 if the child is enrolled in an educational/vocational program).

4. What are the responsibilities of a CASA volunteer?

Please see the Volunteer Advocate Job Description.

5. What educational or work experience is required to become a CASA volunteer?

No one specific type of background is required. A CASA volunteer does not have to have any legal training or a social work background.

6. How are prospective volunteers screened?

Prospective volunteers must complete a Volunteer Application Form, provide three non-relative references, have an initial interview, observe courtroom activity for 6 hours, complete a training course of approximately 24 hours, write an autobiography, complete two forms allowing CASA to perform background checks, submit a resume, and have a second interview. After all of these steps are completed, the prospective volunteer must take an oath of confidentiality before a Family Court Judge.

7. How much time will I be expected to contribute each month?

Each volunteer and each case is different. The amount of time devoted to a case depends on the specific needs of the case and the amount of time the volunteer has available. Volunteers devote an average of ten hours per month to each case. Some volunteers are assigned to only one case, whereas other volunteers are able to take more than one case.

8. Do CASA volunteers work in addition to volunteering on a case?

Most CASA volunteers work full-time or part-time, some are retired, and some do not work outside the home. Flexibility, rather than employment status, is the critical factor.

9. Is travel involved?

Yes—within Monroe County. CASA volunteers are expected to do home visits; attend court hearings, as well as agency and school conferences; and may also elect to take a child to an extracurricular activity. However, if a volunteer decides he/she is comfortable with transporting a CASA child or client, the volunteer does so at his/her own risk and must be covered by his/her own auto insurance. Reimbursement for mileage and parking related to casework is available. All transportation arrangements should be made with the knowledge or understanding of the volunteer's CASA supervisor.

10. Do CASA volunteers work by themselves?

Most of the time, volunteers work by themselves. However, the staff will support and assist volunteers upon request. For example, a volunteer may request that a staff person accompany him/her to a meeting or court hearing.



Disclaimer

Volunteering with CASA is not an appropriate choice for everyone. The following are some items to consider before pursuing a volunteer opportunity with CASA of Rochester/Monroe County, Inc.:

- A prospective volunteer must not be a currently licensed foster parent in Monroe County. Foster parents currently licensed in Monroe County may volunteer with CASA programs in other counties.
- Our advocacy work requires the ability to traverse Monroe County without hindrances. Without the aid of personal transportation, it may be very difficult to attend visits at parents' homes or county buildings, meetings at schools or residential placement facilities, and court hearings.
- Volunteers are not permitted to give legal advice or therapeutic counseling advice to their clients.
- Applicants who have been convicted of DWI (Driving While Intoxicated) or DUI (Driving Under the Influence) or any other violation of NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law Article 31 within the last five (5) years shall not be permitted to serve as Court Appointed Special Advocates.
- Applicants who are found to have been convicted of, or have 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 CASA program's credibility shall not be permitted to serve as Court Appointed Special Advocates.
- 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 the misdemeanor or felony would not negatively impact the credibility of the CASA program, the following will be considered:
 - The extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony was committed.
 - Other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant as a CASA volunteer.

Equal Opportunity Statement

CASA's commitment to equal opportunity is a basic part of our philosophy. All volunteer policies are administered without discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, age, handicap, marital status, or sexual orientation. This policy applies to all volunteer practices, including recruitment, training, supervision, and termination.



Court Appointed Special Advocates of Rochester/Monroe County, Inc.

Laurie A. Holmes, Director

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Volunteer Application Form

Today's Date _____ Date of Birth _____

Name _____
Last First Middle Initial (Maiden)

Current Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Length of Stay at This Address _____

Home Phone _____ Email _____

Employment and Volunteer Experience

Are you currently: _____ employed full-time _____ employed part-time _____ self-employed _____ not employed

Position _____ Length of current employment _____

Employer _____ Work Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please attach a resume, listing current and past employment and volunteer experience for at least the last five years. Also include educational information, including degrees or certifications attained or anticipated. Indicate if you are fluent in a language other than English. Include any training or seminars you have completed which you feel may be pertinent.

Background

Have you ever been involved in Family Court or with Foster Care? _____ Yes _____ No

Has there been a Child Protective Services report against you? _____ Yes _____ No

On the back of this page, provide a brief explanation of any "Yes" answers above.

Note: CASA conducts background checks of prospective volunteers.

References

Please list at least three personal references. Please do not include family members. Choose **no more than one** reference from each category:

Current or previous employment supervisor

Current or previous volunteer supervisor

Teacher

Friend

Member of your place of worship

Neighbor

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Is the above a work or home address? _____ Phone: _____
Home Work

References – Continued

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Is the above a work or home address? _____ Phone: _____
Home Work

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Is the above a work or home address? _____ Phone: _____
Home Work

How did you become aware of CASA?

Have you thoroughly read the Volunteer Advocate Job Description? Please read the job description before continuing.

In light of the Volunteer Advocate Job Description, what do you hope to achieve as a CASA volunteer? What qualities do you have that you feel would make you a good CASA volunteer? (Continue on back, or attach a separate sheet as needed.)

Volunteer Commitment

Can you commit a minimum of two years to CASA? _____ Yes _____ No

With prior notice, can you attend meetings and court hearings during the daytime? _____ Yes _____ No

Can you make and receive phone calls during the daytime as needed? _____ Yes _____ No

Do you have a valid driver's license and a reliable form of transportation? _____ Yes _____ No

Affirmation

I, _____, hereby affirm that all of the answers provided on my volunteer application
(Insert your name.)

are true. I hereby authorize CASA of Rochester/Monroe County, Inc., and any law enforcement agency they authorize, to investigate my background, including a Criminal History Record Search and a search of the State Central Child Abuse Register. I understand that my application may be rejected if I am 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 to the CASA program's credibility.

I understand that the information requested in this application will be used only for the purpose of determining my suitability as a CASA volunteer. Further, I understand that completion of training does not guarantee that I will be assigned a case. If I have successfully completed the training and have met all other requirements, and it has been determined that I am a suitable volunteer, I understand that I will be expected to serve a minimum of two years in the CASA program. If unforeseen circumstances prevent me from fulfilling this obligation, I will submit my written resignation to the program director with as much advance notice as possible. I am aware of the sensitive and confidential nature of the official documents, reports and other material I will examine in my capacity as a CASA volunteer. I will discuss these matters only with those persons directly involved in the case or who will be consulted for their professional knowledge and expertise.

I also understand that if for any reason it becomes apparent that my activities are contrary to the policies, goals and/or philosophy of CASA and their desire to provide quality services to abused and/or neglected children, my services as a CASA volunteer will be terminated.

Signature

Date

Please return the following items to our office at this time:

- Completed Volunteer Application Form
- Resume (or summary of work and/or volunteer experience)

Our office address is CASA, Hall of Justice, Room 332, Rochester, NY 14614.

Please note that if you proceed through training, additional paperwork will be requested from you in order to complete your application packet.