



A child's voice.
A child's life.
Lifted up.

ADVOCATE VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

An advocate volunteer is assigned by CASA following an appointment by Ulster County Family Court to ensure that the best interests of abused and neglected children involved in Family Court proceedings are met. In order to do this, the advocate must meet regularly with the child or children to whom they are assigned, research the facts of the case, provide written reports assisting the court to identify concerns, facilitate the resolution of the presenting problems, and monitor progress toward established goals.

Qualifications of an advocate volunteer:

- Interest in children, their rights and special needs.
- Time to devote to training sessions, investigation and follow-up of an assigned case (18 month minimum commitment).
- Ability to respect and relate to people from various backgrounds in a variety of settings using tact, compassion and basic human relations skills.
- Ability to communicate verbally and in writing – making verbal and written reports to the court, to the CASA staff and to other persons as needed.
- Ability to gather and record factual information accurately.
- Ability to be approved following a background investigation.
- Ability to provide at least three references from sources other than relatives.

Requirements of an advocate volunteer:

- Complete training curriculum mandated by the National CASA Association. 30-35 hours in length, followed by Court observations.
- Be sworn in by an Officer of the Court.
- Meet with assigned child or children *at least* once a month, preferably in their home environment. Be in regular contact with all adults involved in the case.
- Maintain strict confidentiality and objectivity.
- Attend 6 to 12 in-service training sessions annually.
- Complete an intensive independent review of each case.
- Keep CASA staff regularly informed of all case-related activities.
- Maintain an up to date and complete file on each case assigned, including dates of court appearances and visits with the children.
- Be aware of deadlines, Court appearances and timetables involving an assigned case; and turn in all reports in a timely manner.

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Specific Duties of an advocate volunteer:

- Have regular and sufficient in-person contact with the child where they live to ensure in-depth knowledge of the case and make fact-based recommendations to the court. Meet in-person with the child once every thirty (30) days at a minimum.
- Obtain first hand a clear understanding of the needs and situation of the child by conducting an ongoing review of all relevant documents and records and interviewing the child, parents, social workers, teachers and other persons to determine the facts and circumstances of the child's situation.
- Identify and advocate for the best interest of the child.
- Seek cooperative solutions by acting as a facilitator among parties.
- Provide reports which include findings and recommendations for each hearing and for interim periods as determined by the court or program staff.
- Appear at all hearings to advocate for the child's best interests and provide testimony when necessary.
- Make specific recommendations for appropriate services for the child and, when appropriate, the child's family.
- Determine if a permanency plan has been created for the child and make recommendations concerning permanency.
- Monitor implementation of service plans and court orders assuring that court-ordered services are implemented in a timely manner.
- Inform the court promptly of important developments in the case through written report.
- Advocate for the child's best interests in the community by interfacing with mental health, educational and other community systems to ensure that the child's needs in these areas are met.
- Participate in all scheduled case conferences with supervisory staff.
- Participate in in-service training.
- Maintain complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances.
- Return case files to the program after the case is closed.