



What is a CASA?

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate. A CASA is a trained community volunteer who is appointed by a judge to be the investigative body for the Court and the voice of abused and neglected children. CASAs work for the best interest of the children by advocating for a safe, permanent home for the children as quickly as possible, while also advocating for the children's health, safety and educational needs. Each CASA commits to being a consistent and reliable figure in the children's lives and helps guide the children through the court process, regardless of how long it takes. CASAs ensure the children will not get lost in the legal and child protection systems, and assist the court in making decisions regarding a safe and permanent home for the children, whether that is reunification with their family or an alternative option, such as kinship care or adoption.

What are the benefits of having a CASA?

Studies have shown that children who have a CASA spend less time in the foster care system than those who don't have a CASA. These children have been found to do better in school and are placed in safe, permanent homes much more quickly. These children are also less likely to experience problems that impact the community such as teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, poor school performance, drug use, mental health issues and suicide.

What are the requirements to be a CASA?

In order to become a CASA, one must be:

- 21 years old
- Emotionally mature and stable
- Objective
- Confident
- Open-minded

One must also have:

- A high school diploma or equivalent
- A basic understanding of children and families
- The ability to work within organization guidelines
- The ability to maintain cooperative relationships with multiple agencies
- Good verbal and written communication
- Access and ability to use a computer, including using basic computer programs and email.
- Their own transportation
- The ability to devote 5-15 hours per month to the case
- The ability to commit to an 18-24 month case
- The ability to acquire 12 hours each year of continued training
- The ability to understand the law and court process

How do I become a CASA?

The process of becoming a CASA requires an extensive screening process which includes attending an Information Session, submitting an application, providing references, attending an interview, and passing background checks. The CASA applicant will also participate in an 8-week training course which will cover a variety of topics aimed at providing a broad range of learning including child development, social services systems, court processes, Montana state and federal law, community resources, cultural awareness, the special needs of abused and neglected children, and skills in interviewing, information gathering, report writing and testifying.

Following successful completion of training, the CASA is sworn in as an officer of the court. This gives the CASA the legal authority to conduct research on the child's situation and submit reports to the court. The CASA is then appointed to a case consisting of a group of siblings or sometimes one child, and is asked to commit to that case for its entirety in the court system. An average case can last up to 24 months. The CASA works one-on-one with their Peer Coordinator, a seasoned volunteer who is available for advice, support and who is also able to attend hearings and meetings on the CASA's behalf when unavailable.

What does a CASA do once appointed to a case?

- Represent the best interests of children whose cases are before the court due to neglect or abuse
- Visit the children at least once per month
- Listen to the children and help the children understand the court process
- Investigate by gathering information about the children and the family
- Review documents and records
- Talk to people involved who may have information about the case, such as parents, relatives, foster parents, therapists, teachers, medical professionals, attorneys, social workers and most importantly the children
- Attend court hearings and Child & Family Services meetings
- Document their findings and provide written reports to the Court and other involved parties
- Maintain case files and records
- Keep in contact with their Peer Coordinator
- Participate in ongoing training
- Advocate for needed services such as health, education, mental health to the appropriate professionals
- Monitor case plans and court orders

**“To give a child a voice is to give them hope,
and to give them hope is to give them the world.”**

CASA of Yellowstone County provides equal employment opportunities to all applicants and employees based on qualifications and abilities without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sex, age, marital status, national origin, veteran status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or any other protected status. This policy applies to recruitment and placement, promotion, training, transfer, retention, rate of pay and all other details and conditions of employment

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