

What is a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)?

- Trained community volunteers who are sworn-in and appointed by a judge to represent a child or a group of siblings in foster care and represent their best interests in court.
- Go through 40+ hours of training over an 8-week course.
- Have four main pillars they adhere to:
 - **Information Gathering:** CASAs look into all aspects of the case; case files, medical and educational records, and interview all parties including parents, family, teachers, doctors, therapists, etc.
 - **Facilitate:** CASAs report information findings to the judge and speak for the child to ensure everyone has the same information regarding the child's needs and current welfare.
 - **Advocate:** CASAs ensure that any unmet needs of the child are known; for example, does the child need glasses? CASAs shine a light on problems or barriers to ensure the child's needs are met.
 - **Monitor:** CASAs maintain regular contact with the child until the case is dismissed to ensure children have a safe, stable adult in their lives until they leave foster care.

Duties of a CASA

- Required to see the child a minimum of once per month.
- Document their findings and submit monthly reports focusing on safety, education, medical issues, and wishes of the child.
- Attend all court hearings and meetings about the case.
- Maintain confidentiality with case information, sharing only with appropriate parties to the case.
- Work for the best interests of the children by advocating for their safety, permanency, and well-being in a timely manner.
- Commit to being a consistent and reliable figure in the children's lives, regardless of how long the case takes to close.
- Listen to the children and help them understand the court process.
- Maintain case files, notes, and records.
- Keep in contact with their Peer Coordinator (volunteer supervisor).
- Participate in ongoing training each year.

CASAs Can...

- Observe and report a child's behavior and development in current placement or school.
- Be present during transitional points, such as changes in the home or school setting, or after parent visits to observe and report child's behavior.
- Visit with previous placements to learn the child's comforting routines and provide information to assist in times of transition.
- When appropriate and approved by the social worker, help facilitate case information to or from the social worker to other persons, such as the foster parents, teachers, therapists, etc.

CASAs Cannot...

- Be a foster parent or related to any party involved in the case.
- Drive a child or family anywhere.
- Supervise visits or babysit for the foster or biological parents.

- Determine the extent of the abuse or if the abuse occurred. However, if the CASA suspects current abuse, they are to report it to CPS.

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.
 - Will do better in school, both academically and behaviorally.
 - On average, will spend less time in the foster care system.
 - 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.

Requirements of a CASA

- At least 21 years old
- Ability to pass a background check
- Emotionally mature and stable
- High School diploma or equivalent
- Access and ability to use a computer, including using basic computer programs and email
- Own transportation
- Good verbal and written communication
- Basic understanding of children and families
- Ability to work within organizational guidelines
- Ability to maintain cooperative relationships with multiple agencies
- Ability to be objective, open-minded, and confident
- Ability to devote 5-15 hours per month to the case
- Ability to commit to an 18-24 month case
- Ability to learn the law and court process

How Do I Become a CASA?

- Attend an Information Session
- Submit an application (providing references)
- Attend an interview
- Complete background check paperwork
- Attend and complete 8-weeks of training

**“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.