

General Overview




A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer is a trained citizen who is appointed by a judge to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in Family Court. The CASA program provides children with a CASA Volunteer, who speaks for that child in court. CASA Volunteers receive special training in advocacy.

When an abused or neglected child becomes caught up in the complexities of the court system, the CASA Volunteer is there to tell the child's story. The CASA Program recruits, screens, trains and supervises CASA Volunteers so that they can perform this important advocacy role for children. Volunteers go through extensive screening procedures. After an in-depth interview, each volunteer goes through a criminal background check, (The Central Sex Offender Registry and Health and Welfare child abuse records are checked.) Four letters of reference are required for each applicant.

CASA volunteer applicants receive an initial pre-service CASA 101 training lasting 30-34 hours. Training topics include the following: aspects of child abuse and neglect, advocacy for children, the court system and community resources. Volunteers are required to obtain 12 hours of continuing education each year.

When a CASA volunteer is appointed to a child's case, the CASA Volunteer takes the time to find out as much as possible about that child. CASA Volunteers review records, speaks with family, relatives, teachers, service providers, and -- most important -- the child. These volunteers then appear in court, alongside attorneys and caseworkers, to bring issues and concerns about that child to the judge's attention. This enables the judge to have a clearer picture of what's best for that child's future. We know that a child who is represented by a CASA volunteer stands a better chance of living in a safe, permanent home.

Research into the effectiveness of CASA programs shows CASA involvement can have important positive effects on child abuse and neglect cases:

-  Having a CASA volunteer reduced the time children spent in out-of-home care. Once a CASA was assigned to a case and has begun interviewing parties and providing information to the court, the average time children spent in out-of-home care was shorter than in control groups.
-  The CASA volunteer contacted the child and visited the home in a higher percentage of cases than either caseworkers or attorneys, resulting in a more thorough knowledge of the case.
-  Judges gave CASA's high marks. In evaluating CASA volunteers, judges rated CASA's positively on the quality of their written reports, verbal testimony, overall case assessments, and appropriateness of their recommendations and concerns.

The CASA program helps children find safe, nurturing homes.

CASA Volunteer Advocate – Job Description

Mission: To recruit and train volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children in Family Court.

Qualifications: Characteristics that make a successful CASA volunteer:

- Self-motivated, but able to take direction
- Self-confident and assertive
- Able to keep information confidential
- Ability to follow through
- Able to work within established guidelines
- Open minded and objective, Common sense, Good listener, a sense of humor
- Skilled in oral and written communication
- Able to proficiently use a computer, including email, word processor, internet etc.
- Understanding of children and families
- Recognition of limits and boundaries
- Flexible daytime hours to make phone calls, visit homes, and attend meetings and court hearings
- The ability, as needed, to make calls or visits during the evening or on weekends
- If employed during the daytime, the ability to make and receive phone calls at place of employment
- Valid driver's license and reliable transportation.

Requirements:

- Must be age 21 or older. (Under 21 can still volunteer for other activities)
- Complete the volunteer application form.
- Provide three references.
- Complete an eligibility interview.
- Agree to a background checks.
- Participate in the initial 30-34 hours of training and observe in court at least three hours.
- Submit a biography that summarizes your background, current situation and special interests.
- The CASA Director may conduct an interview after training is completed. If it is mutually found that CASA is the volunteer opportunity for you, you will be sworn in by a Family Court Judge.

Individuals are not eligible to become CASA Volunteers if they:

- Are under age 21
- Have a felony conviction or history of perpetrating child abuse/assault/neglect.
- Have a past or present relationship with Children & Youth Services that would be likely to create a conflict or compromise the advocate's role.

Responsibilities:

- Advocate for the cases assigned as directed by the court.
- Research all the facts about the case.
- Communicate with your CASA Coordinator all information derived from your interviews.
- Facilitate a working relationship among all parties involved, including the Department of Social Services, Attorneys and service providers and parents.
- Monitor court orders.
- Submit a typed report to the court, and all pertinent parties, the results of your research, as directed by your CASA Coordinator.
- Attend meetings at various agencies and schools.
- Attend all court hearings.
- Commit to a case for the length of the CASA assignment, or a minimum of two years.
- Maintain comprehensive notes and records about each case, including appointments, length of time spent on calls, interviews, meetings, and results of contacts.
- Compile a monthly log of your activities, using the form provided with the case file. Send the updates/ time sheet to the CASA office by the 5th of each month.
- Report any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect to the CASA Volunteer Coordinator.
- Attend a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education training or outside training sessions

The initial training consists of 30-34 hours of instruction based on a curriculum developed by the National CASA Association. Topics covered include: the court and child protection systems; child development; cultural diversity; legal issues; interviewing; report-writing. Completion of training does not guarantee case appointment.

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 children already in the foster care system or to those at risk of entering foster care as a result of abuse, neglect and/or the parent's/guardian's inability to care for the child.

3. How old are the children involved?

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

4. What are the responsibilities of a CASA volunteer?

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. All CASA volunteers must have common sense; the ability to communicate clearly, both orally and in writing; and must complete approximately 30-34 hours of training, 3 hours of courtroom observation, and submit a brief autobiography.

6. How are prospective volunteers screened?

To be accepted into a training session, prospective volunteers must complete the application form (providing four non-relative character references), give permission for a background check, and participate in an initial meeting and interview with the Volunteer Coordinator. Following classroom training, the prospective volunteer may be called in for a final interview with the CASA Director or other staff member.

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

The amount of time devoted to a case depends on the specific case and the amount of time the volunteer has available. Volunteers devote an average of five to ten hours per month; a very few put in up to 40 hours per month. CASA volunteers may refuse to take a case.

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

Many CASA volunteers work full or part-time, some are retired, and some do not work outside the home. Flexibility is essential to attend daytime court appearances and meetings

9. Is travel involved?

Yes. CASA volunteers are expected to do home visits (sometimes out of county); attend court hearings, as well as agency and school conferences.

10. Do CASA volunteers work by themselves?

Most of the time, volunteers work alone, but are assigned to a Coordinator who helps guide them through the case.



Who am I?

*There was once a tree full of apples, which was my
family. Then one day I fell off.*

Some grownups came and put me in a pear tree.

Then I fell off.

*A little boy came and put me with apples,
oranges, pears and peaches.*

Then I fell off.

*Then I sat there forever wondering who will
pick me up next?*

Where will I go? Will I go where I belong?

Or will I waste my whole life living

With fruits who I don't belong with

*Because they can't encourage me to accomplish my dreams,
or can't tell me who I am because they don't know who I am.*

It's up to you.

Who am I?

Danielle Marie Bush

Age 11,

In foster care



*Thank you for your interest in CASA of the
Southern Tier, Inc. Program*

*Please read the STEPS and REQUIREMENTS thoroughly before
completing your APPLICATION.*

1. Submit a COMPLETED Application Packet
2. Submit to Criminal Background Check and other clearance forms
3. Participate in a Personal Interview
4. Attend and Complete Required Training Sessions
5. Take an Oath of Confidentiality
6. Participate in a Case Meeting with your Volunteer Coordinator
7. Participate in On-going CASA Trainings to Enhance Your Advocacy Skills
8. Review and sign Volunteer Policy and Procedure Manual
9. Commit to at Least 2 Years of Service
10. Visit you assigned Children at least MONTHLY
11. Maintain Confidentiality Regarding All Cases
12. Advocate for children in Family Court!!!
13. Enjoy your CASA work!



Court Appointed Special Advocates

FOR CHILDREN

PO Box 778

Corning, NY 14830

(607) 936-CASA

Fax: (607) 391-2004

info@casasoutherntier.org

www.casasoutherntier.org

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

The following information will be kept strictly confidential.

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____ Social Security Number: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

Emergency Contact's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone: _____

Are you currently employed: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, ☐ Full-time or ☐ Part-time

Present Occupation: _____ Present Employer: _____

Employer's Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Education:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Degree/Year Graduated</u>
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High School: _____		
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Vocational School: _____		
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College: _____		
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Graduate School: _____		
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Other Training: _____		
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Volunteer Experience and Experience working with children (*Membership in clubs, faith communities, professional groups, etc.*):

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Dates Involved</u>	<u>Type of Experience</u>
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1. _____		
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2. _____		
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3. _____		
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4. _____		
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5. _____		
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Have you lived outside of New York State in the past five (5) years: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you prepared to complete 30-34 hours of pre-service training, court room observation and a minimum of twelve hours per year of in-service training? ☐Yes ☐No

Does your schedule permit you to attend meetings and court hearings during the work day? ☐Yes ☐No

Are you prepared to commit to at least two years of volunteer service? ☐Yes ☐No

Languages spoken, other than English _____

Hobbies/Special Interests/Training _____

Do you have any cases pending in any court? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please explain:

Have you been convicted of a crime as an adult? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, please explain: _____

(A conviction will not bar you necessarily from becoming a volunteer.)

Have you ever been involved with the child protective system or family court? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, please explain: _____

Do you hold a valid driver's license? ☐ Yes ☐ No Class of driver's license: _____ Expiration date: _____

Do you consent to a routine check of criminal records? ☐Yes ☐No

Please list four references of people who know you well, other than relatives. If you are currently working, either paid or as a volunteer, please include the name of your supervisor.

Name

Address

Phone

Relationship

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Please submit an autobiography that summarizes your background, current situation, reason for wanting to volunteer with CASA and expectations. Please feel free to make this as long or short as you are comfortable with.

I, _____ hereby affirm that all of the answers provided on my volunteer application are true. I hereby authorize **CASA of the Southern Tier, Inc.** and other appropriate agencies and provide the necessary information for them to secure the following record checks: criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant currently resides and works; state criminal records; FBI or other national criminal database; National Sex Offender Registry; child abuse registry or child protective services where permissible by law; and social security number verification. 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. If you refuse to sign a release of information form or submit the required information or fingerprints for any of the checks required, the **CASA of the Southern Tier, Inc.** not accept your application.

Any applicant 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 our program's credibility will not accepted as a CASA volunteer. 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 Programs 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 neglected children, my services as a CASA volunteer will be terminated.

Signature _____

Date _____

CASA of the Southern Tier, Inc.
PO Box 778, Corning, NY 14830

AUTHORIZATION FOR REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

CASA STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, AND BOARD MEMBERS

I, _____, hereby authorize the release to the Executive Director of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) or his or her designee by the New York State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) of all information contained within the SCR regarding indicated reports in which I am a subject of the report, to the extent permitted by section 422(4)(A) of the Social Services Law, in relation to my request to be approved as a prospective CASA staff person or volunteer.

Following is information about me, my children and other persons residing in my current household, as well as at my previous addresses. This information is necessary to enable the SCR to conduct a thorough search of its records. I understand that the listing of these persons will not result in the release of information regarding any reports involving them in which I was not a subject of the report.

I. Prospective CASA Staff Member/Volunteer/Board Member

Please provide your current address and any other addresses at which you have resided since 1973 including city and state for each individual being cleared. If individual achieved age 18 after 1973 address need only be provided from that year to the present. Attach additional pages if necessary.

[illegible]

II. Spouse, Children and Other Household Members of the Applicant

LAST NAME AND MAIDEN/ALIAS	FIRST NAME	MI	SEX M F	DOB (mm/dd/yyyy)
LAST NAME AND MAIDEN/ALIAS	FIRST NAME	MI	SEX M F	DOB
LAST NAME AND MAIDEN/ALIAS	FIRST NAME	MI	SEX M F	DOB
LAST NAME AND MAIDEN/ALIAS	FIRST NAME	MI	SEX M F	DOB
LAST NAME AND MAIDEN/ALIAS	FIRST NAME	MI	SEX M F	DOB
LAST NAME AND MAIDEN/ALIAS	FIRST NAME	MI	SEX M F	DOB
LAST NAME AND MAIDEN/ALIAS	FIRST NAME	MI	SEX M F	DOB
LAST NAME AND MAIDEN/ALIAS	FIRST NAME	MI	SEX M F	DOB

SIGNATURE

On this _____ day of _____, 200 , before me personally came _____ to me known and known as the same person described in and who executed the within statement, and he/she duly acknowledged to me that he/she executed the same.

Notary Public

CASA of the Southern Tier, Inc.

Authorization For Release of Confidential Information

I, _____, hereby certify all statements made on this application are true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand by submitting this application I authorize inquiries to be made concerning my suitability as a volunteer. The information requested in this application and any information that may be obtained by the CASA Volunteer office through inquiry of others, will be used only for the purpose of determining suitability as a Family Court CASA program volunteer.

I further understand all information received as a result of the CASA Volunteer office inquiries will be held in strict confidence, and any information received by the program in this regard shall not be released to the applicant.

I understand that my records are protected under the Federal Confidentiality Regulations and cannot be disclosed without my written consent unless otherwise provided for in the regulations. I also understand that I may revoke this consent at any time except to the extent that action has been taken in reliance on it and that in any event this consent shall automatically expire upon me termination of involvement in CASA of the Southern Tier, Inc. Volunteer Program.

PURSUANT TO FEDERAL CODES, DISCLOSURE OF CLIENT INFORMATION IN A MANNER NOT AUTHORIZED BY 42 CFR PART 2 IS FEDERAL CRIMINAL OFFENSE PUNISHABLE BY A FINE OF NOT MORE THAN \$500.00 IN THE CASE OF A FIRST OFFENSE AND NOT MORE THAN \$5,000 IN THE CASE OF EACH SUBSEQUENT OFFENSE.

Signature

Date

Witness

Date

CASA

A POWERFUL VOICE IN A CHILD'S LIFE™

Court Appointed Special Advocates

CASA of the Southern Tier, Inc.

PO Box 778

Corning, NY 14830

607 936-CASA

casasoutherntier@aol.com

Authorization for Release of Information

I hereby grant Court Appointed Special Advocates authorization to conduct a National criminal background check and sex offender register check on my record, and give permission for the release of all pertinent information held by county, state, or federal officials.

Full Name:

Last	First	Middle	Maiden
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Current Address:

Street	City	State	Zip Code	County
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Addresses for the last five years if different from above: (include dates)

Social Security No.: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Signature: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Today's Date: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY:

Information requested from _____ is requested on the above named Volunteer applicant relevant to their service for CASA of the Southern Tier, Inc.

Please check if the above named person has **NO** record on File: _____

Please check if the above named person **has a** record on file: _____ (Please attach)

Signature: _____ Date: _____