



## Court Appointed Special Advocates of Monterey County

### **BECOME AN ADVOCATE**

To help us find qualified volunteers, and to help you decide if you wish to become an advocate, we follow a specific selection and screening process. Read on to see if becoming a CASA is for you.

### **OUR PROGRAM**

#### **OUR GOAL**

The goal of CASA of Monterey County is to prevent abused, neglected and abandoned children from becoming lost in the Juvenile Court system. We work carefully to match a CASA Volunteer with a child to ensure that child's best interest is served.

The volunteer has four essential roles:

1. Represent the child's voice in court.
2. Assist the Court by investigating each case and reporting their findings and recommendations.
3. Monitor the progress of the case as it moves through the system to reduce judicial delays and continuances.
4. Facilitate the services needed to maintain the active and positive growth of the child

#### **OUR PROCESS**

CASA volunteers are unique in providing information not usually available to the Court. Because of the enormous number of cases filed in Juvenile Court and dwindling resources to adequately investigate cases, judges are often compelled to make decisions based on less than complete or objective data. A CASA's objective, unbiased recommendation in the best interest of the child is an invaluable aid to the judge. Once CASA of Monterey County receives a referral from the Judge, the case work begins:

1. The CASA selected reviews the case information and consults with the involved professionals and individuals involved in that child's life.

2. The CASA prepares a court report with their evaluations and recommendations for the child, prior to court hearings.
3. The Juvenile Court Judge reads and considers the CASA report along with the social worker's report prior to making a decision.
4. The CASA monitors the progress of the case.

### **OUR INFLUENCE**

In addition to our services to abused, neglected, and abandoned children, our program advocates for delinquent youth as well as those aging out of the social welfare system. CASA of Monterey County provides community education and awareness concerning issues of child abuse, neglect and child welfare policy. We are also committed to and strive for public policies that promote child abuse prevention and reforms in the Juvenile Foster Care and social welfare system.

### **SCREENING AND SELECTION PROCESS**

CASA of Monterey County Volunteer Advocates must meet the following qualifications:

- ◆ Must be at least 21 years of age
- ◆ Pass screening requirements
- ◆ Make an eighteen month commitment

Advocates must demonstrate ability to:

- ◆ Keep all client and court information confidential
- ◆ Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing
- ◆ Respect and relate to people from various backgrounds and lifestyles (economic, cultural, educational, etc.) in a variety of settings
- ◆ Transport oneself to a variety of locations
- ◆ Deal with hostility, anger, and other emotional attitudes
- ◆ Maintain objectivity
- ◆ Gather and accurately record factual information
- ◆ Demonstrate sound judgment and character
- ◆ Have a basic understanding of child development and family relationships
- ◆ Work independently as required, as well as the ability to accept supervision and direction as needed
- ◆ Advocate training includes a comprehensive 30-hour initial training. Advocates are required to participate in 12 hours of in-service or relevant ongoing education each year.

### **INITIAL INQUIRY:**

Contact CASA of Monterey County to express your interest. Our Training Coordinator will speak with you to answer your questions and invite you to join us at an orientation session.

### **ORIENTATION:**

Potential CASA volunteers should attend an orientation during which an overview of the program, including roles and responsibilities of the CASA volunteer, is given. The application, screening, and training processes are explained in detail at the orientation.

### **APPLICATION:**

Each potential CASA volunteer must complete a written application. Once the application is accepted, an interview will be scheduled.

- ◆ Interview I ~

The applicant will be interviewed by program staff to determine the applicant's willingness, ability, and appropriateness to perform the roles and duties of a CASA. Qualified applicants will be invited to attend the next training program.

- ◆ Applicants who are accepted into training must submit the following:

1. An FBI/DOJ background check
2. A DMV driving record printout\*
3. Three positive references
4. A statement of auto liability coverage\*

*\*must be updated annually*

### **REFERENCES:**

Each applicant must provide five references regarding the character, competence and reliability of the applicant, and suitability for assuming the role of a CASA volunteer.

## **TRAINING OF CASA VOLUNTEERS**

Through a comprehensive 30-hour training program volunteers are equipped with the necessary skills and information to serve as a voice for the child. The areas covered in the training include:

1. Advocacy
2. An Introduction to Discovery and Evidence
3. Child Development and Family Systems
4. Community Resources for Children
5. Court Appearances and Testimony
6. Court Report Writing
7. Cross-Cultural Issues

8. Dependency Law and Procedure
9. Dynamics of Child Abuse and Neglect
10. Ethics, Confidentiality of Information and Mandated Reporting
11. Interviewing
12. Investigation
13. Permanency Planning
14. The CASA Concept
15. The County CASA Program
16. The Role and Responsibilities of the CASA Volunteer
17. The Role of the Child Welfare Agency (Department of Human Services - DHS)
18. The Role of the Juvenile Court and Key Participants
19. The Role of the Law Enforcement Agencies

- ◆ Each trainee will observe at least one (four hour) morning or afternoon session of juvenile court.
- ◆ A CASA training manual will be provided to each trainee.
- ◆ Trainees must attend all training sessions. Missed sessions must be made up. Trainees who have missed no more than three sessions may be sworn in with their class but may not be assigned a case until all missed sessions have been made up.
- ◆ Upon completion of training, candidates will participate in a meeting with case supervisors. The purpose of this meeting is to allow trainees to evaluate the training, to make suggestions to strengthen future training, or to allow the program staff to terminate a trainee who has not successfully completed this screening process.

Contact CASA of Monterey County:

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