

## COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

### CODE OF CONDUCT

#### *Ethics:*

The Court Appointed Special Advocate Program (CASA for Kids, Inc.) provides training for staff and volunteers as a way to assure competence to children, to the courts and to the public. CASA for Kids, Inc. is dedicated to the principle that individuals must conform their behavior to the highest standards of ethical practice. To that end, CASA for Kids, Inc. has set forth the minimum standards of conduct, which all individuals are expected to honor. Failure to comply with an obligation or prohibition set forth in the code may result in discipline and/or dismissal by CASA for Kids, Inc. All CASA for Kids volunteers must sign a Code Of Conduct prior to beginning active service as a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

#### *Commitment:*

As a CASA volunteer, I understand the caliber of commitment that I am called upon to make in order to serve the children to whom I am appointed. To that end, I pledge to make a commitment to:

- Serve on each case that I am assigned to for at least eighteen (18) months.
- Conduct the necessary home visits to evaluate the child(ren)'s situation.
- Attend all court hearings regarding my family.
- Consult with my CASA supervisor at least twice monthly to facilitate accurate information flow regarding case developments and case strategy.
- Keep thorough and up to date records on the status of my investigation and the status of the child(ren) at all times in the life of my case.
- Attend twelve (12) hours of ongoing training each year.

#### *Professionalism:*

CASA for Kids, Inc. volunteers play a key role in the lives of children undergoing difficult times. The need for respect and sensitivity is crucial. Therefore, it is paramount that volunteers treat all child(ren) and their families with respect and a sense of caring. To that end, CASA volunteers should:

- Be friendly, courteous and culturally sensitive to all children, family members and professionals involved.
- Maintain professional boundaries with children, families and professionals at all times. Relationships should be based on respect and not friendship. Conversations of a personal nature should be limited.
- Language should be respectful and professional. The use of slang, profanity or derogatory comments is impermissible.
- Dress should be of an appropriate manner that is professional in light of the environment in which they work, the duties of their job, and the impressionable youth they serve. Clothing that is disruptive, provocative, profane, vulgar, offensive or obscene is prohibited.

#### *Confidentiality:*

All information gathered in the course of the investigation will be held in the strictest confidence. Such information will be divulged only to those directly connected to the case and only if such disclosure is necessary to further the best interest of the child(ren). Prior to disclosing

information, either during or subsequent to CASA for Kids, Inc. service, such disclosure will be first discussed with the CASA supervisor.

*Liability:*

The CASA volunteer should not become inappropriately involved in a CASA case that could lead to a conflict of interest or liability issue. The CASA volunteer should not be related to any parties involved in the case, or be employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest. Any potential conflicts of interest should be immediately brought to the attention of the Program Director or Executive Director for consideration. Examples of inappropriate volunteer practices include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Transporting a CASA child or any other adult involved in the case in the volunteers car.
2. Taking a child to the volunteer's home.
3. Bringing one's own family members/friends to visit anyone on the case.
4. Discussing a child's case with anyone besides approved parties, CASA staff, or other CASA volunteers.
5. Having unauthorized conversations with the media regarding your CASA case.
6. Establishing any type of personal relationship with anyone on your case during your service as a CASA. This includes but is not limited to attending social engagements, accepting or granting favors (i.e. house sitting), offering personal/parenting advice or engaging in an employer/employee relationship.
7. Taking a child from a home/shelter or off an authorized premise without the permission of the parent/family/caretaker, foster parent, group home or residential facility administrator.
8. Purchasing any gift or item for a child or person on a case without the express permission of the caretaker or the natural parent. No gift should exceed an amount of \$25.
9. Giving or loaning any amount of money to a child or family member, without the express permission of the CASA supervisor.
10. Feeding a child or family member any food, including candy, with the express permission of your CASA supervisor and the caretaker of the child.
11. Failing to report the child's whereabouts to the proper authorities, including CASA staff, in case of an emergency.
12. Failing to report allegations of child abuse or neglect concerning the CASA child to the CASA staff, CYS or the police.
13. Failing to notify CASA staff of any criminal charges or convictions of the volunteer or pending or threatened charges against the volunteer, including, but not limited to those involving the manufacturing, distributing or dispensing a controlled dangerous substance; or the possession with intent to manufacture, distribute or dispense a controlled dangerous substance.
14. Failing to notify CASA for Kids, Inc. of any criminal charges or convictions of the volunteer or pending or threatened charges against the volunteer, including but not limited to those involving child abuse, neglect, murder, rape, child pornography, child abduction, kidnapping or a sex offense.
15. Failing at anytime to notify CASA for Kids, Inc. of any charges or convictions of the volunteer or pending or threatened charges against the volunteer, including but not limited to DUI violations.
16. Failing to notify CASA for Kids, Inc. of a lack of automobile insurance, registration or driver's license.

- 17. Failing to attend the requisite ongoing training requirements without a reasonable excuse.
- 18. Failing to adhere to direct instructions of your supervisor or other CASA staff regarding any of the policies and procedures of CASA for Kids, Inc.

*I accept full responsibility for maintaining the confidential and private nature of all records and information. I will not violate the confidential relationships between CASA, its volunteers, related agencies, courts and all parties involved. I will not speak to the media regarding my case or any CASA case without expressed permission from the CASA Executive Director. I understand that I am personally responsible and liable for any violations of this agreement.*

*If at any time I feel unable to fulfill my duties of a Court Appointed Special Advocate, I will immediately consult with my CASA supervisor. I understand that in such a circumstance another Court Appointed Special Advocate may be assigned. If another Advocate is assigned, I will assist in the transition by providing all records that I have gathered any by meeting with the new volunteer as appropriate.*

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, HAVE READ THE ABOVE CODE OF CONDUCT STATEMENT AND I AGREE TO ADHERE TO THE STANDARDS. I UNDERSTAND THAT FAILURE TO MEET THE CODE MAY RESULT IN THE REVOCATION OF MY STATUS AS A CASA VOLUNTEER AND MY ASSIGNMENT TO A CASE.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**CASA Volunteer**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**CASA Supervisor**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**