

# **Standards for Local CASA Programs**

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# Introduction

The objective of *Standards for Local CASA Programs* is to set the minimum performance for state and local programs to assure quality while allowing individual programs room for creativity and innovation. Therefore, administrative and program staff must weigh how to create efficiencies and effectiveness to arrive at the highest quality advocacy on behalf of the children they serve, related to their models, governing structure and legislated constraints. It is expected that programs make decisions related to best practices with continual reflection and evaluation of outcomes for children.

A set of quality standards to measure a program's operations demonstrates that a program:

- Respects and protects the children it serves.
- Utilizes established policies and procedures necessary for effective management.
- Manages its financial affairs prudently and is committed to the principles of public disclosure.
- Continually evaluates its services and operations.

## Background

The National CASA Association (National CASA) first issued standards and recommended management practices for CASA/Guardian ad litem programs in 1990. A year later, compliance with the standards became a mandatory condition of National CASA Association membership. In 1994, the board of directors appointed a committee to review the existing standards, recommend management practices and revise the 1990 standards. *The Standards for National CASA Association Member Programs* were approved by the National CASA Board of Directors in 1997 and have remained in effect with minor revisions until 2006. In 2000, the National CASA Board appointed the standards committee and charged this committee with the responsibility of developing a quality assurance process for state and local programs and amending state and local standards. The standards committee developed the *Standards Self-Assessment* review process for local programs. The Self-Assessment was approved by the National CASA Board and programs implemented the Self-Assessment during the period 2003-2005. The standards committee, with in-depth input from the entire CASA network, reviewed and revised the 1997 *Standards for National CASA Association Member Programs*. This review culminated in the 2006 edition, *Standards for Local CASA Programs* approved by the National CASA Board in April, 2006.

## Document Organization

A explanation of terms and an appendix has been added to the 2006 edition to help programs understand several key areas that the National CASA Association recognizes require definition in order for programs to accurately implement and record standard compliance.

This standards document combines previous standards, recommended management practices and the code of ethics into one comprehensive document. It is organized into sections dealing with specific areas of program management. Each section begins with a standard. Under each standard, requirements are provided specifying how the standard is implemented.

The document as a whole provides a framework for quality program management. The standard statement in each section defines the most effective overall approach to manage a particular aspect of program operation. The requirements operationalize the standards by specifying the practices that carry out the intent of the standard.

## **Implementation**

The primary goal and guiding principle of a standards system within the National CASA network is to strengthen programs and support their efforts to provide high quality child advocacy and achieve the maximum level of excellence.

As programs implement these standards, National CASA is eager to provide clarification, interpretation or technical assistance. Examples of policies addressed in the standards can be found on National CASA's website for program members and may also be requested. National CASA is pleased to work with the network to increase the capacity and effectiveness of each and every program.

Compliance with standards is assessed in various phases. Initially, the focus will be on program self-assessment. Submission of the completed *Standards Self-Assessment* instrument and accompanying Indicators of Compliance every four years is a requirement of National CASA full program membership. Through the self-assessment process, programs will evaluate both strengths and weaknesses and identify areas where training or technical assistance is needed. This phase should be viewed as a process of analyzing how the organization does business and whether or not the program utilizes efficient and effective practices.

The second phase will involve implementing a more in-depth system of reviews. At this time, there has been no decision about what kind of review system will be utilized. The National CASA standards committee is in the process of considering various options which would include opportunities for program members to provide valuable input.

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# Standards at a Glance

## **Standard 1: Program Mission and Purpose**

The CASA program's purpose is to provide court-appointed volunteer advocacy to abused and neglected children. The program's goal is a safe, permanent, nurturing home for every child it serves.

## **Standard 2: Program Governance**

The CASA program has a governing body responsible for overseeing the program's compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, adoption of policies, definition of services and guidance of program development assuring the program's accountability to the courts and community.

## **Standard 3: Program Development and Implementation**

The developing CASA program engages in a comprehensive planning and implementation process that guides the program's development.

## **Standard 4: National Affiliation**

The CASA program is a member of the National CASA Association and meets its standards, requirements and policies.

## **Standard 5: State Affiliation**

The CASA program communicates, collaborates and shares information with its fellow programs in the state and is a member of the state organization, association or network, if one exists.

## **Standard 6: Human Resources Management**

The CASA program follows written policies for recruitment, selection, diversity, training, retention and effective performance of its paid personnel.

## **Standard 7: Volunteer Management**

The CASA program follows written policies for its volunteers regarding recruitment; application, selection and screening; training; supervision; volunteer roles and responsibilities and dismissal.

## **Standard 8: Financial, Facility and Risk Management**

The CASA program manages its operations in accordance with generally accepted financial and risk management practices and applicable federal, state and local statutory requirements.

## **Standard 9: Public Relations**

The CASA program communicates with its community and other service providers about its program and of the needs of the children it serves and cooperates with other agencies to plan for needed programs of service for children.

## **Standard 10: Planning and Evaluation**

The CASA program maintains management information and data necessary to plan, evaluate and report its services.

## **Standard 11: Record Keeping**

The CASA program maintains complete, accurate and current case records and follows written policies for acceptance and assignment of CASA cases.

## **Standard 12: Inclusiveness and Diversity**

The CASA program demonstrates that inclusiveness and diversity are essential components of quality advocacy for the children it serves.

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# Standard 1: Program Mission and Purpose

**The CASA program’s purpose is to provide court-appointed volunteer advocacy to abused and neglected children. The program’s goal is a safe, permanent, nurturing home for every child it serves.**

## 1. A. CASA Program Mission:

1. The CASA Program’s mission statement is:
  - a. Consistent with the mission and standards of National CASA.
  - b. Written.
  - c. Adopted by the program’s governing body or advisory council.
2. The child population served by the CASA program is clearly defined.
3. The CASA Program provides trained and qualified community volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children who come into the court system primarily as a result of abuse or neglect.
  - a. The CASA program accepts court-referred cases that meet the definition of “children who come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect.”
  - b. The CASA program uses individuals who meet the definition of “trained community volunteers.”
4. The CASA Program assures that volunteers have regular and sufficient in-person contact with the child to enable them to have an in-depth knowledge of the case and make fact based recommendations to the court. The CASA volunteer shall meet in person with the child once every thirty (30) days at a minimum. An exception may be granted in the discretion of the CASA program staff; however, the decision to permit a less frequent in person contact shall be documented as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception.

Exceptions may be necessary depending on the physical location of the child, type of placement, age of the child. When granting exception, staff should consider the needs and safety of the child, expectations of the court and type of placement. In the case of exceptions, a minimum of a quarterly visit is required.

5. The CASA program is an inclusive organization whose governing body members, employees, and volunteers reflect the diversity of the children they serve.
6. The CASA program consistently offers services in a manner that reflects:
  - a. CASA program mission.
  - b. Available personnel and financial resources.
  - c. Program's funding sources and requirements.

- d. Roles and responsibilities required by law.
7. The CASA program's governing body and personnel cooperate and coordinate with other volunteer agencies, the courts, public service agencies, community groups and with families and individuals to:
  - a. Improve services for individual children served and their families.
  - b. Advocate for needed change in the conditions which adversely affect the children served.
  - c. Identify gaps in services and work to eliminate them.
  - d. Share training and other resources efficiently and effectively.

### **1. B. Legal Authority to Operate**

1. The CASA program has been granted the legal authority to operate through state or local statutes, executive or judicial order or court rules.

### **1. C. Court Recognition and Support**

1. Nonprofit and publicly administered CASA programs have a written agreement, which must be renewed every four years, with the juvenile or family court that defines the working relationship between the program and the court.
2. The court-based CASA program abides by the statutes or court rules which govern the relationship with the court.
3. The CASA program has regular communication with the court in order to evaluate the court's satisfaction with the program and to obtain the court's recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the program

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## Standard 2: Program Governance

**The CASA program has a governing body responsible for overseeing the program’s compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, adoption of policies, definition of services and guidance of program development assuring the program’s accountability to the courts and community.**

### 2. A. Roles of the Governing Body:

1. Ensures programs compliance with applicable state and local statutes, court rules, executive orders or appropriate regulations.
2. Provides CASA program access to legal counsel with relevant legal expertise to clarify the meaning of laws or regulations governing its program operation and to provide legal counsel as needed to assist in performing the duties assigned to the volunteers by the courts.
3. Maintains personnel policies and periodically reviews and adopts needed changes.
4. Procures sufficient financial resources, ensures a balanced budget and manages resources prudently in order to support its provision of services.
5. Appoints the chief executive officer/program administrator and delegates authority and responsibility for program and financial management and policy implementation.
6. Holds the chief executive officer/program administrator accountable for the program’s performance.
7. Evaluates the management’s handling of the CASA program’s financial affairs.
8. Reviews financial reports at least quarterly comparing actual versus budgeted expenditures and revenues.
9. Examines and approves the program’s audited financial statements, operating budget and fiscal policies.
10. The organizational structure of the governing body is qualified to carry out its responsibilities for adopting or recommending agency policies, selecting and evaluating the chief executive officer/program administrator and engaging in strategic planning, financial overseeing, resource development, diversity outreach and court and community relationships.
11. The governing body of the CASA program maintains a written record of every meeting. The written record accurately reports all actions taken by the governing body and includes a summary of the governing body’s deliberations. The written record also includes reports of board committees. The written record is prepared in

a timely manner and copies are made available to members of the governing body. A master copy of the written record is kept with the organization's official documents.

12. In a nonprofit organization, the CASA program's bylaws or written operational procedures:
  - a. Describe the organizational structure and responsibilities of the governing body.
  - b. Establish the mechanisms for selection, rotation and duration of membership and for election of officers.
  - c. Set the minimum number of formal meetings of the full governing body or advisory council at four times per calendar year.
  - d. Set the quorum for these meetings so at least a simple majority of the current membership of the governing body or advisory council.
  
13. In a nonprofit CASA program, the governing body serves as the link between the program, the court, and the community, establishes and evaluates the program's goals, develops resources, and approves policies.

## **2. B. Program Administration**

1. Clear lines of accountability and authority exist at all levels of the program's organizational and management structures and are formalized in a chart of the organization showing lines of accountability to which all employees, volunteers, and governing body members have received formal orientation.
2. Communication and collaboration between employees, volunteers and governing body members is promoted by:
  - a. Providing opportunities for in-person meetings for volunteers, employees and governing bodies.
  - b. Providing opportunities to serve committees as appropriate.
  - c. Maintaining brief records of committee meetings.

## **2. C. Ethical Conduct**

1. The CASA program establishes policies to govern ethical conduct of members of the governing body, employees, and volunteers.
2. The CASA program upholds the credibility, integrity, and dignity of the CASA mission by conducting all business in an honest, fair, professional, and compassionate manner.
3. The chief executive officer/program administrator, any employee, paid consultant, volunteer or governing board member of the CASA program serves in accordance with written policies governing conflict of interest, accountability and delegation of authority.

4. Although legal counsel may be provided to the CASA program under voluntary auspices on a pro bono basis and a lawyer who offers legal counsel may sit on the CASA program board (particularly in a small or developing program), the program clarifies the roles in order to keep the two functions separate.
5. The CASA program shall maintain a written conflict of interest policy approved by the governing body. This policy shall govern the conduct of members of the governing body, program staff, volunteers and paid consultants. The conflict of interest policy will:
  - a. Identify and define conduct and transactions in which a conflict of interest exists or has the potential to exist and warrants disclosure.
  - b. Prohibit employees, paid consultants, governing body members and volunteers of a nonprofit or public CASA program from having direct or indirect financial interest in the assets, leases, business transactions or professional services of the program.
  - c. Identify other specific conduct which is prohibited.
  - d. Establish the requirement that the individual involved make timely disclosure of the conflict or potential for conflict in the transaction.
  - e. Include a procedure for recusal from the transaction or decision by the person with the conflict or potential conflict.
  - f. Include a procedure for dismissal or other appropriate discipline of the person involved with the conflict in the event said person fails to disclose the conflict prior to becoming involved in the transaction or decision affected by the conflict.

## **2. D. Governing Body Membership and Orientation**

1. The governing body reflects the diversity of the children served and has members who bring a range of skills, backgrounds and knowledge which support the CASA program in fulfilling its mission.
2. The CASA program governing body includes individuals with various capabilities:
  - a. Skills and experience to serve at a policy-making level.
  - b. Ability to advocate for sufficient financial resources for the program to carry out its purpose.
  - c. Knowledge of the court system and the community served.
  - d. Ability to reflect community and client interests and to advocate for culturally responsive service delivery.
  - e. Other specialized skills needed to carry out the objectives of the program.
3. The program develops and utilizes on an ongoing basis the following:
  - a. Job descriptions for board members.
  - b. Board recruitment strategies.
  - c. Election and screening procedures.
4. The members of the governing body receive formal orientation to the CASA program's goals, objectives, structure and methods of operation, are familiarized

with its services and are provided with key documents related to governance and board responsibilities.

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# Standard 3: Program Development and Implementation

**The developing CASA program engages in a comprehensive planning and implementation process that guides the program's development.**

## 3. A. Initial Planning Process

1. The CASA program requests start-up materials (including the *Guide to Program Development*) from National CASA and the state association.
2. The CASA program contacts all judges in the jurisdiction to be served by the program prior to start-up to dialogue with them about the CASA program and gain judicial support.
3. The CASA program contacts key community leaders to dialogue with them about the CASA program and gain support.
4. The CASA program creates a steering or planning committee to guide the initial development activities.
5. The steering or planning committee conducts a needs assessment and creates a written document to confirm the need for the CASA program in the community/geographic location.
6. The needs assessment includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Interviews with key players (for example, judges, child protective services personnel, prosecutor, state CASA director, guardian ad litem attorneys and community child advocates.
  - b. Baseline statistics including the number of reports and substantiations of suspected child abuse and neglect in the area; the number of petitions filed; the demographics of the children before the court and in foster care; average length of stay of children in foster care; duration of the court process in child abuse cases and permanency outcomes for children.
7. The nonprofit CASA program develops the first board of directors so that it reflects the diversity of the children served and has members who bring a range of skills, backgrounds and knowledge which support the CASA program in fulfilling its mission. The program develops the following:
  - a. Job descriptions for board members.
  - b. Board recruitment strategies.
  - c. Election and screening procedures.

8. The members of the governing body receive formal orientation to the CASA program's goals, objectives, structure and methods of operation, are familiarized with its services and are provided with key documents related to governance and responsibilities.
9. The CASA program develops a written mission statement.
10. The CASA program develops written goals and objectives to guide the first year and beyond, including activities, designation of responsibility, timelines and key indicators to measure progress.
11. The CASA program identifies and targets potential funders and community supporters needed to successfully start the program.
12. If the CASA program will be under the umbrella of a parent organization, a written agreement is developed which details:
  - a. The rights and responsibilities of the program and the umbrella organizations.
  - b. Procedures for resolving situations in which a conflict of interest exists between the CASA Program and its parent organization.
  - c. The protocol for resource development activities of both organizations.
  - d. Establishes a time frame of no more than two years for review and possible revisions of the agreement.
13. Within one year of the receipt of National CASA Association provisional membership, the CASA program completes the necessary steps to be granted full program membership.

### **3. B. Development and Execution of an Implementation Plan**

1. Based on the outcomes of the planning process, the CASA program develops and executes an implementation plan which includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Projections of the number of staff needed to effectively operate the program.
  - b. Projections of the number of volunteers needed to effectively serve the population.
  - c. A first year budget.
  - d. Strategies to secure resources, including in-kind contributions and other sources of revenue to meet long and short term financial needs.
2. The governing body develops and implements a plan to recruit, select and train employees and volunteers.
3. If an executive director/program administrator has been retained, the governing body delegates the staffing function to him or her.

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## Standard 4: National Affiliation

**The CASA program is a member of the National CASA Association and meets its standards, requirements and policies.**

### 4. A. National Affiliation

1. The CASA program takes advantage of the services available from National CASA which include:
  - a. Technical assistance.
  - b. Resource materials.
  - c. National conference.
  - d. Training opportunities.
2. When using National CASA trademarks including taglines, slogans, and logos, the CASA program adheres to National CASA graphic standards.
3. The program uses the name CASA, GAL or identifies itself as a member of the National CASA Association on all promotional, public relations and recruitment materials.
4. The CASA program adheres to the resource development, government relations and other approved protocols of National CASA.
5. If the local CASA program has a program auxiliary or affiliate, the program makes that entity aware of National CASA standards and protocols.
6. The CASA program supports National CASA's efforts to collect data as needed.
7. The CASA program demonstrates compliance with National CASA's standards through the quality assurance process.
8. The CASA program provides a copy of the *Standards for Local CASA Programs* to its governing body and supervisory staff.

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## Standard 5: State Affiliation

**The CASA program communicates, collaborates and shares information with its fellow programs in the state and is affiliated with Georgia CASA.**

### 5. A. State Affiliation

1. The CASA program complies with all state laws, regulations, administrative and court rules.
2. The CASA program takes advantage of the services available from Georgia CASA which may include:
  - a. Technical assistance.
  - b. Resource materials.
  - c. State conference.
  - d. Training opportunities.
3. The CASA program complies with state standards. When the program believes a conflict exists between National CASA standards and state standards, laws, regulations or court rules, the program and state organization, present the perceived conflict to the National CASA Association. National CASA will substantiate a conflict and determine which regulation takes precedence.
4. The local CASA program acts in a manner consistent with any agreements made with Georgia CASA.
5. The CASA program shall inform the state organization of any significant event in the operation of the program that could impact other local programs, Georgia CASA or The National CASA Association.

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# Standard 6: Human Resources Management

**The CASA program follows written policies for recruitment, selection, diversity, training, retention and effective performance of its paid personnel.**

## 6. A. Administration:

1. The chief executive officer or designee is responsible for the management of the CASA program.
2. The chief executive officer or designee has the following qualifications:
  - a. Education and/or training in a related field.
  - b. Management skills and experience to effectively administer the organization's personnel and financial resources.
  - c. Effectively coordinate services with the court and other community agencies.
3. The chief executive officer or designee:
  - a. Plans and coordinates with the governing body the development of CASA program policies.
  - b. Attends or is represented by a designee at all meetings of the governing body and its committees to the extent authorized by the governing body.
4. The chief executive officer or designee is delegated overall personnel management authority by the governing body and ensures that the CASA program's personnel management is carried out in accord with written agency policy.
5. The chief executive officer or designee annually reviews and revises personnel policies including Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and practices; updates policies as needed and submits the proposed policies to the governing body for review and approval.
6. The chief executive officer or designee is responsible for the overall financial management of the program and reports to the governing body at least quarterly on the program's financial status.
7. The governing body adopts a written succession plan. The plan makes provision for the following in the event of the replacement of a chief executive officer:
  - a. Designates an interim chief executive officer/program administrator, if necessary.
  - b. Charges a committee with responsibility for conducting a formal search.
  - c. Provides the resources needed to carry out the search effectively.

8. There is a written plan for the delegation of authority in the absence of the chief executive officer.

### **6. B. Retaining Qualified Employees**

1. The CASA program retains employees qualified to carry out its program goals.
2. The CASA program has a written job description for each position or group of similar positions which clearly specifies qualifications and responsibilities.
3. The CASA program efficiently manages its clerical and administrative systems, including accounting, bookkeeping, personnel records and statistical reporting and assigns appropriately skilled personnel to carry out those tasks.
4. Administrative and/or supervisory responsibility is assigned to employees qualified by experience and training.
5. CASA program employees meet all applicable state registration, licensing or certification requirements for their assignment and/or use of professional titles.
6. The CASA program, in its ongoing planning process, details the type and number of personnel required to accomplish the program's goals and objectives.
7. Every five years, all employees must consent to a fingerprint based FBI records check.
8. If a current CASA program staff has criminal charges brought against them while employed by CASA, the director or governing body, in the case of a director, will consult with Georgia CASA regarding the course of action to ensure the safety, credibility and reputation of the CASA program. If the charges involve a sex offense, child abuse or neglect, or related acts that would pose risk to children or the CASA program's credibility, immediate action will be taken. If the charge is unrelated to or would not pose risk to children, the CASA director or governing body, will consult with Georgia CASA to determine the extent to which the pending charges and or disposition of the case will impact the CASA program credibility and the individuals ability to carry out their job responsibilities.

### **6. C. Personnel Policies**

1. Personnel policies and practices specify the responsibilities of paid personnel and are equitable, clear and consistent.
2. Personnel policies and practices are outlined in a handbook provided to all employees which covers:
  - a. Personnel practices.
  - b. Working conditions.
  - c. Wage policies and benefits, as applicable.
  - d. Insurance protection.
  - e. Required and supplemental training and development opportunities.
3. The CASA program complies with applicable laws and regulations governing fair employment practices.

4. CASA program personnel salaries and benefits are established by considering practices of similar agencies and organizations in its area or are in compliance with salary and benefit levels set by appropriate executive, legislative or elected bodies, in the case of a public entity.
5. The CASA program maintains written operational procedures regarding grievances to provide personnel the opportunity and means to lodge complaints and appeals, where this is allowed under state law.
6. The CASA program acts on any complaints in accordance with its procedures with all documentation kept on file.
7. The complainant is informed of the resolution of any complaint and a copy of the notification is maintained.
8. Procedures allow for the periodic participation of personnel in management's review of personnel policies and for written notification to personnel by management of any changes in those policies in regard to personnel.

#### **6. D. Workforce Diversity**

1. The CASA program is inclusive and actively recruits, selects, and promotes qualified employees reflective of the children served.
2. The CASA program administers its personnel practices without discrimination based upon age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, or religion.
3. The CASA program's personnel recruitment and selection practices are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
4. The CASA program is in compliance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Act.
5. The CASA program has a written equal opportunity policy, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies which clearly state its practices in recruiting, selecting and promoting personnel.
6. The CASA program publicizes its equal opportunity policy in their personnel recruitment materials.
7. The CASA program makes an effort to ensure their facility is free of barriers which restrict the employment of or use by physically challenged employees, volunteers and other clients.
8. The CASA program develops and implements a plan to diversify the workforce to promote cultural competency and equal opportunity consistent with the National CASA Association diversity philosophy, commitment and guiding principles.

#### **6. E. Recruitment and Selection of Qualified Employees**

1. Recruitment and selection procedures assure that the personnel needs of the CASA program are adequately met.
2. All applicants for paid employment with the CASA program are required to:

- a. Complete a written application containing information about educational background and training, employment history and experience working with children.
  - b. Submit the names of three or more references, at least two of whom are unrelated to the applicant.
  - c. Authorize the CASA program and other appropriate agencies to secure a state and local criminal records check as well as a national criminal records check (if available), child protective services check and sex offender registry as appropriate and permissible by state law.
  - d. Attend and participate in personal interviews, if requested.
3. The CASA program verifies the accuracy of the information submitted by the prospective employee on the written employment application, specifically verifying the information required in 6.E.2. The program verifies applicant information with a minimum of three persons listed by the prospective employee as references.
  4. The CASA program secures a criminal background check on each prospective employee. The CASA program uses the fingerprint-based FBI records check for this purpose where possible. The employee agrees to submit the required fingerprints. The CASA program secures a sex offender registry check on each prospective employee. If permissible by law, the CASA program secures a child protective services history check through the Child Abuse Registry or other child protection services records on each prospective employee.
  5. If the prospective employee has lived in another state within the past five years, the CASA program secures the records checks specified in 6.E.4 in any area in which the person has resided in the previous five years.
  6. An employee applicant is rejected by the CASA program if he/she refuses to sign a release of information form or submit to fingerprinting for any of the checks required by 6.E.2, 6.E.4 and 6.E.5. This policy is stated on the employee application form.
  7. Any employee applicant who is employed by the Juvenile Court, the Department of Family and Children Services, or its contractors, foster parents, or is a volunteer with the Citizen Review Panel may not be employed by a CASA program due to the risk of conflict of interest.
  8. No CASA staff person shall transport a child, family or related person involved in a CASA case.
  9. If an applicant refuses to sign a release of information form or submit to fingerprinting for any requested records check required in 6.E.2, the applicant is rejected by the CASA program. This policy is stated on the employee application form.
  10. The CASA program's selection process for all employees includes an assessment of the applicant's awareness and sensitivity to the cultural and socioeconomic factors of the children and families the CASA program serves.
  11. Any applicant 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 the CASA program's credibility is not accepted for employment. This policy is stated on the employee application form.

12. If an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is unrelated to or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the CASA program, the CASA program will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony was committed as well as other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant for employment.
13. The chief executive officer/program administrator or designee notifies all applicants in writing of their application when the position applied for is filled.

## **6. F. New Employee Orientation**

1. The CASA program provides new employee orientation introducing its mission and purpose, policies and services including, but not limited to:
  - a. Information about confidentiality laws and the employee's responsibility to abide by these laws.
  - b. Information about the CASA program's structure, service mandates, relationship to the court and professional ethics including sexual harassment and non-discrimination policies.
  - c. Lines of accountability and authority within the program.
  - d. Information about pertinent laws, regulations, and policies.
  - e. Information about the mission and purpose of CASA programs on local, state and national levels.
  - f. Demographics of community and children served.
  - g. Employee's job responsibilities and description.

## **6. G. Employee Training and Development**

1. The CASA program plans and implements a training and development program for employees to improve their knowledge, skills and abilities and provide information about the backgrounds and needs of the children served by the program.
2. The training and development program is reviewed annually and revised based on the CASA program's assessment of its training needs.
3. The training and development program includes the opportunity for employees to pursue continuing education to upgrade knowledge and skills to fulfill the requirements of their respective positions.
4. The training and development program includes information related to children who are abused and neglected and in the court system, including cultural competency, inclusion and diversity issues.
5. The CASA program provides ICWA compliance information and resources to all employees.

## **6. H. Employee Supervision**

1. The CASA program provides adequate supervision for its employees and hold employees accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.

2. Frequency of individual or group supervision is arranged on the basis of employee needs, the complexity and size of the workload and the employee's familiarity with the assignment.
3. Supervisors are easily accessible and make every effort to provide quick and thorough guidance to CASA employees.
4. The CASA program supervisor holds regularly scheduled case conferences with employees to review progress on each case.

### **6. I. Employee Performance Evaluation**

1. The CASA program develops and implements a system for the periodic evaluation of all employees.
2. At least once a year, the performance of employees is evaluated by the person to whom they are accountable, using a standardized evaluation form, to review their performance against established criteria. The employee is an active participant in this process.
3. Employee evaluations include:
  - a. Assessment of job performance in relation to the quality and quantity of work defined in the job description and to the performance objectives established in the most recent evaluation.
  - b. Clearly stated objectives for future performance.
  - c. Recommendations for further training and skill-building, if applicable.
  - d. Opportunity for employee self-evaluation.
4. Employees are given the opportunity to sign the evaluation report, to obtain a copy and to include written comments before the report is entered into the personnel record.
5. The governing body:
  - a. Evaluates the performance of the chief executive officer/organization administrator in writing at least annually against written performance criteria and objectives established for the time span between evaluations.
  - b. Provides for the participation of the chief executive officer/organization administrator in the evaluation process as well as their review, signature and response to the evaluation before it is entered into the personnel record.

### **6. J. Employee Discipline and Termination**

1. The CASA program has policies and procedures for termination of employees that are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
2. The CASA program's personnel policies and practices specify the conditions for disciplinary action and termination of employees, including violations of program policy and/or documented substandard performance.

3. The CASA program's policies and procedures specify the person or persons with authority to terminate or discharge an employee.

#### **6. K. Maintaining Personnel Records**

1. The CASA program maintains a written confidential personnel record for each employee that contains as appropriate:
  - a. Employee application.
  - b. Job description.
  - c. Reference documentation.
  - d. Documentation of all records checks.
  - e. Verification of education for professional and administrative personnel.
  - f. Training records.
  - g. Performance evaluations.
  - h. Disciplinary actions.
  - i. Termination summaries.
  - j. Letters of commendation.
  - k. Time attendance records.
  - l. Proof of eligibility to work in the US (I-9 form).
2. Written policies grant employees access to their records and detail the procedures for review, addition and correction by employees of information contained in the record.

#### **6. L Whistleblower Policy:**

The governing body of the CASA program adopts a "whistleblower policy" which provides members of the governing body, staff and volunteers a procedure for reporting unethical, inappropriate or illegal activities by members of the governing body, staff or volunteers and such policy affords the reporter protection in making a good faith report about such activities.

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## Standard 7: Volunteer Management

**The CASA program follows approved written policies for its volunteers regarding recruitment; application, selection and screening; training; supervision; volunteer roles and responsibilities and dismissal.**

### 7. A. Volunteer Recruitment

1. The CASA program is inclusive and has a written plan for recruiting and selecting volunteers who reflect the children served.
2. The recruitment plan demonstrates that inclusiveness and diversity are essential components of quality advocacy and includes targeted strategies to attract volunteers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and from a variety of age groups and socio-economic levels.
3. The CASA program prepares a standardized packet of written information (for example, a brochure or information kit) to recruit volunteers which includes the following:
  - a. Purpose and role of the CASA volunteer.
  - b. Qualifications.
  - c. Minimum time commitment required.
  - d. Equal opportunity statement.
4. Community collaboration, media outreach, speaking engagements and other appropriate strategies are employed to recruit volunteers.
5. The CASA program informs potential volunteers of, and refers them to other CASA programs, National CASA or the state CASA organization if the applicant might be eligible for or prefer to serve in another CASA program.

### 7. B. Volunteer Application, Screening and Selection Process

1. A CASA volunteer is an individual who is at least 21 years of age and has successfully passed the application and screening process.
2. A CASA volunteer is an individual who has been trained by the CASA program and appointed by the court to advocate for children who come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect.
3. A CASA volunteer is an individual who respects a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets that child's best interests.
4. The CASA volunteer is an individual who advocates for the child's best interests in the court at every stage of the case once appointed by the court.

5. All CASA volunteer applicants are required to:
  - a. Complete a written application containing information about educational background, training, employment history and experience working with children.
  - b. Submit the names of three or more references, at least two of whom are unrelated to the applicant.
  - c. Authorize the CASA program and other appropriate agencies to secure a state and local criminal records check as well as a national criminal records check if available, child protective services check and sex offender registry as appropriate and permissible by state law.
  - d. Attend and participate in personal interviews with CASA program personnel.
6. The CASA program verifies the accuracy of all information submitted by the applicant on the written volunteer application, specifically verifying all information required in standard 7.B.5. The program verifies applicant information with a minimum of three persons listed by the prospective volunteer as references.
7. The CASA program secures a criminal background check on each prospective volunteer. The CASA program uses the fingerprint-based FBI records check for this purpose where possible. The volunteer agrees to submit the required fingerprints. The CASA program secures a sex offender registry check on each prospective volunteer. If permissible by law, the CASA program secures a child protective services history check through the Child Abuse Registry or other child protection services records on each prospective volunteer.
8. If the prospective volunteer has lived in another state within the past five years, the CASA program secures the records checks specified in 7.B.7 in any area in which the person has resided in the previous five years.
9. If a volunteer applicant refuses to sign a release of information form or submit to fingerprinting for any of the checks required by 7.B.5, 7.B.7 and 7.B.8, the CASA program rejects the application. This policy is stated on the volunteer application form.
10. Any applicant 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 the CASA program's credibility is not accepted as a CASA volunteer. This policy is stated on the volunteer application form.
11. If an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is unrelated to or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the CASA program, the CASA program will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony was committed as well as other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant as a CASA volunteer.
12. Any volunteer applicant who is employed by the Juvenile Court, the Department of Family and Children Services, or its contractors, foster parents, or is a volunteer with the Citizen Review Panel may not serve as a CASA volunteer advocate due to the risk of conflict of interest.

13. The CASA program's volunteer selection procedures ensure that those not selected are treated with dignity, respect and, if appropriate, referred to alternative volunteer opportunities.
14. All screening is completed before the volunteer is assigned to a case and written verification is on file at the program offices.

### **7. C. Volunteer Training**

1. The CASA program delivers training to volunteers using the *National CASA Volunteer Training Curriculum* or its equivalent. The purpose of the training is to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of volunteers so that they can fulfill the roles and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer.
2. The training consists of at least 30 hours of required pre-service training and 12 hours of required in-service training per year.
3. The training program is reviewed annually and revised based on the CASA Program's assessment of its training needs.
4. Guest speakers including a variety of instructors including attorneys, judges, agency representatives and volunteers may deliver the training under supervision of staff.
5. Pre-service training includes the following topics:
  - a. Roles and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer
  - b. Court process.
  - c. Dynamics of families including mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence and poverty.
  - d. Relevant state laws, regulations and policies.
  - e. Relevant federal laws, regulations and policies, including the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Multi Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA).
  - f. Confidentiality and record keeping practices.
  - g. Child development.
  - h. Child abuse and neglect.
  - i. Permanency planning.
  - j. Community agencies and resources available to meet the needs of children and families.
  - k. Communication and information gathering.
  - l. Effective advocacy.
  - m. Cultural competency.
  - n. Special needs of the children served.
6. The CASA program verifies that volunteers successfully complete at least 30 hours of pre-service training during which the volunteer must spend a minimum of 10 hours in personal contact with and under the supervision of the program staff delivering the training sufficient for staff to evaluate the applicant's appropriateness to serve as a volunteer.
7. In addition to the 30 hours of pre-service training, if allowed by the court, the program requires each volunteer to visit the court served by the CASA program

while the court is in session to observe abuse/neglect proceedings before appearing in court for an assigned case.

8. The CASA program provides ICWA compliance information and resources to all volunteers.
9. In-service training opportunities include cultural competency training using National CASA's *A World of Difference* manual and video or its equivalent

#### **7. D. Volunteer Supervision**

1. The CASA program provides supervision which is appropriate to the volunteer's needs and complexity of the case assignment and holds volunteers accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.
2. Supervisors are easily accessible and provide timely and thorough guidance to CASA volunteers.
3. For employees assigned to supervision as a full-time function, the employee will not supervise more than 30 active volunteers or a maximum of 45 cases. In the event the employee is required to perform duties other than supervision of volunteers, the number of volunteers the employee can supervise shall be reduced pro rata.

In the event that the staff to volunteer ratio is more than 30 active volunteer or 45 cases, the program is required to develop a plan to meet the standard within one year or if the quality of volunteer supervision is negatively impacted. The plan is submitted to Georgia CASA for review. Volunteer retention rates and satisfaction should be closely monitored.

4. The CASA program supervisor holds regularly scheduled case conferences with volunteers to review progress on each case and written case records.
5. The CASA program has in place mechanisms for volunteer recognition
6. Every five years, all active volunteers must consent to a fingerprint based FBI records check.
7. If a current CASA volunteer has criminal charges brought against them while serving as a CASA, the director and/or governing body will determine the most appropriate course of action to ensure the safety, credibility and reputation of the CASA program. If the charges involve a sex offense, child abuse or neglect, or related acts that would pose risk to children or the CASA program's credibility, immediate action will be taken. If the charge is unrelated to or would not pose risk to children, the CASA director and/or governing body should determine the extent to which the pending charges and or disposition of the case will impact the CASA program credibility and the individual's ability to carry out their volunteer responsibilities.

## 7. E. Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities

1. The roles and responsibilities of the CASA volunteer are clearly communicated through written policies, job descriptions and training, and are reinforced through the supervisory process.
2. The CASA program maintains a current manual of volunteer policies and procedures.
3. Each volunteer receives a copy of the volunteer policies and procedures and provides signed acknowledgement of reading and understanding the policies.
4. The CASA program volunteer policies and procedures specify the role of the CASA volunteer, developed with the input and approval of the court (if not already determined by statute).
5. Written roles and responsibilities should include the following. The volunteer will:
  - a. Obtain first hand a clear understanding of the needs and situation of the child by reviewing all relevant documents and records and interviewing the child, parents, social workers, teachers and other persons to determine the facts and circumstances of the child's situation.
  - b. Identify and advocate for the best interest of the child.
  - c. Seek cooperative solutions by acting as a facilitator among parties.
  - d. Provide at every hearing reports which include findings and recommendations.
  - e. Appear at all hearings to advocate for the child's best interests and provide testimony when necessary.
  - f. Have regular and sufficient in-person contact with the child to ensure in-depth knowledge of the case and make fact-based recommendations to the court. The CASA volunteer shall meet in-person with the child once every thirty (30) days at a minimum. An exception may be granted at the discretion of program staff; however, the justification and reasons for a decision to permit less frequent in-person contact must be documented.
  - g. An exception may be granted in the discretion of the CASA program staff; however, the decision to permit a less frequent in person contact shall be documented as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception.
  - h. Make recommendations for specific appropriate services for the child and, when appropriate, the child's family.
  - i. Determine if a permanent plan has been created for the child.
  - j. Monitor implementation of service plans and court orders assuring that court-ordered services are implemented in a timely manner and that review hearings are held in accordance with the law.
  - k. Inform the court promptly of important developments in the case through appropriate means as determined by court rules or statute.
  - l. Advocate for the child's best interests in the community by interfacing with mental health, educational and other community systems to assure that the child's needs in these areas are met.
  - m. Participate in all scheduled case conferences with supervisory staff.

- n. Participate in in-service training.
  - o. Maintain complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances.
  - p. Return case files to the program after the case is closed
6. A volunteer will not be assigned more than two cases at a time. An exception may be granted in the discretion of the CASA program staff; however, the decision to permit a higher caseload shall be documented as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception. Under the exception, a volunteer will not be assigned to more than five cases.
  7. The CASA program's volunteer policies and procedures include but are not limited to the following:
    - a. The CASA volunteer reports any incident of child abuse or neglect, or any situation in which the CASA volunteer has reason to believe that a child is in imminent danger to the CASA supervisor and appropriate authorities, following state legal requirements for mandated reporting.
    - b. The CASA volunteer does not engage in the following activities:
      - Taking a child to the volunteer's home or any home other than the child's.
      - Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
      - Making placement arrangements for the child.
      - Giving money or expensive gifts to the child, the child's family or caregiver.
    - c. The CASA volunteer discusses all recommendations concerning the case with the program supervisor prior to submitting recommendations to the court.
    - d. CASA program supervisors do not alter reports or recommendations without the knowledge and agreement of the CASA volunteer.
    - e. The CASA program has a clear policy to resolve conflicts between a volunteer and the program supervisor regarding the handling of a case, reporting of information or the recommendations to be included in a report to the court.
    - f. A CASA volunteer should not be related to any parties involved in the case or be employed in a position or with an agency that might result in a conflict of interest.
  8. No CASA volunteer or board member shall transport a child, family or related person involved in a CASA case.

## **7. F. Dismissal of a CASA volunteer**

1. The CASA Program has policies and procedures that specify the conditions for disciplinary action and non-voluntary dismissal of volunteers.
2. Appropriate grounds for dismissal include, but are not limited to, the CASA volunteer:

- a. Taking action without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the role or powers of the CASA program.
  - b. Engaging in ex-parte communication with the court.
  - c. Violating a program policy, court rule or law.
  - d. Failing to complete required pre-service and in-service training.
  - e. Failing to demonstrate an ability to effectively carry out assigned duties.
  - f. Falsifying a volunteer application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process.
  - g. Having allegations of child abuse/neglect brought against them.
  - h. Experiencing an irresolvable conflict of interest.
3. The CASA program's policies and procedures specify the person or persons with authority to dismiss or a volunteer.

## **7. G. Volunteer Records**

1. The CASA program maintains a written record for each volunteer that contains, at minimum, as appropriate:
  - a. Application.
  - b. Emergency and identifying contact information.
  - c. Job description.
  - d. Reference documentation.
  - e. Documentation of all records checks.
  - f. Training records.
  - g. Performance evaluations and any other applicable documentation related to performance.
  - h. Documentation of volunteer status.
2. Written policies outline when, and if, volunteers have access to their records and detail the procedures for review, addition and correction (by volunteers) of information contained in the record.
3. The CASA program retains the record after a volunteer has left the program in accordance with the program's records retention policy.

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## Standard 8: Financial, Facility and Risk Management

**The CASA program manages its operations in accordance with generally accepted financial and risk management practices and applicable federal, state and local statutory requirements.**

### 8. A. Budgeting

1. The CASA program has a written budget which guides the management of its financial resources, based on:
  - a. Funding anticipated during the program year.
  - b. Fixed and incremental costs of operating the CASA program and identification of potentially changing costs and conditions.
2. The budget is reviewed and approved by the governing body prior to the beginning of the fiscal year.
3. The governing body or its designee reviews and approves all deviations from and revisions to the budget.

### 8. B. Financial Resources

1. The CASA program follows a written plan for securing and maintaining diversified financial resources adequate to accomplish its established goals and objectives.
2. The CASA program maintains its tax-exempt status, if applicable.
3. The CASA program seeks to conserve its financial resources by:
  - a. Taking advantage of benefits allowed tax-exempt organizations, when applicable.
  - b. Maintaining sound policies regarding purchasing and inventory control.
  - c. Using competitive bidding, where applicable, in accordance with board policy and law or regulation.
4. The CASA program regularly analyzes:
  - a. Cost of operations.
  - b. Current and potential funding sources.
  - c. Allocation of funds.
  - d. Effectiveness in achieving budget objectives.

### **8. C. Financial Reporting and Accountability**

1. The CASA program is accountable to its governing body for prudent financial management.
2. The CASA program assures that an annual report is available which includes financial, statistical and service data summary information.
3. The nonprofit CASA program annually files IRS form 990 in a timely manner (if required).
4. A financial review of the nonprofit CASA program's financial statements is performed within nine months of the end of the fiscal year by a certified public accountant approved by the governing body/volunteer board of directors whenever the actual expenditure of funds exceeds \$25,000 annually.
5. An audit of the nonprofit CASA program's financial statements should conform to generally accepted auditing standards and is performed within nine months of the end of the fiscal year by an independent certified public accountant approved by the governing body whenever the actual expenditure of funds exceeds \$100,000 annually.
6. In a CASA program under public auspices, the audit is conducted periodically by an independent auditor covering all years since the previous audit and in accordance with laws or regulations governing the audit of a public agency's financial operations.
7. In a nonprofit CASA program, a designated committee of the board of directors, such as finance or audit review committee, or a designated member of the board of directors reviews the audit findings and meets with the independent auditor as necessary.
8. The auditor's report is reviewed and formally approved or accepted by the board of directors and is made available for public inspection.
9. When a management letter has accompanied the audit, the nonprofit CASA program's governing body promptly reviews and insures that management acts on its recommendations.

### **8. D. Financial Accounting and Record Keeping**

1. The CASA program receives, disburses and accounts for its funds in accord with generally accepted accounting principles.
2. The CASA program has written operational policies and procedures with regard to accounting control to which the program adheres. In the case of programs under public auspices or an umbrella organization, the program adheres to the extent of the program's control. These policies and procedures include:
  - a. Internal financial controls.
  - b. Descriptive chart of accounts.
  - c. Prompt and accurate recording of revenues and expenses.
  - d. Maintenance of a filing system which contains account records and receipts.

- e. Safeguarding and verification of assets.
  - f. Control over expenditures.
  - g. Separation of duties to the extent possible.
3. The review and monitoring of the CASA program's financial management is delegated to its governing body or to the appropriate committee or entity when the program is under public auspices.
  4. The nonprofit CASA program makes timely payments to the Internal Revenue Service and to other taxing authorities, as required by law.
  5. The CASA program uses a financial management system that ensures the segregation of restricted funds.
  6. When the CASA program has the authority, its policies and procedures require:
    - a. Personnel with financial responsibilities receive orientation to the bookkeeping system and retraining when system changes occur.
    - b. Systems are in place to prevent or to detect fraud or abuses of the system, such as control, use and review of the system by more than one person.
  7. The nonprofit CASA program's accounting records are kept up-to-date and balanced on a monthly basis.
  8. The nonprofit CASA program reconciles bank statements to the general ledger on a monthly basis.

## **8. E. Resource Development**

1. The nonprofit CASA program's board of directors sets policies and exercises control over resource development activities carried out by its employees and volunteers.
2. The nonprofit CASA program conducts solicitations of individuals, groups, corporations, and other potential funders in an ethical manner.
3. The nonprofit CASA program registers with the applicable state agency to conduct charitable solicitation
4. The nonprofit CASA program provides potential funders with an accurate description of the program, its purpose and services as well as the financial needs for which the solicitation is being made.
5. The nonprofit CASA program spends funds for the purposes for which they were solicited, except for reasonable costs for administration of resource development activities.
6. The nonprofit CASA program performs a costs-benefits analysis prior to engaging in resource development activities.
7. The nonprofit CASA program establishes controls on processing and acknowledging contributions in accordance with applicable laws.

## **8. F. Facility and Workplace Management**

1. The CASA program operates from offices which provide a safe, well-maintained physical environment for its personnel, volunteers and visitors.
2. The CASA program maintains a work environment for its personnel and volunteers that is conducive to effective performance.
3. The CASA program's facilities comply with applicable health, fire safety and accessibility codes and regulations.
4. The nonprofit CASA program plans for the disposition of property in the event of its dissolution.
5. The CASA program takes reasonable measures to maintain its equipment and ensure it is used as intended.

## **8. G. Risk Management**

1. The CASA program protects its physical, human and financial resources by evaluating, and preventing or reducing the risks to which they are exposed.
2. The CASA program has liability protection for governing body, organization, program staff and volunteers through the court, state statute or private insurance coverage.
3. The governing body has responsibility for determining the extent and nature of the liability protection needed for personnel and volunteers, when applicable laws are unclear or silent, and has a plan for regularly reviewing potential liability to the organization and staff and establishes the necessary protections for preventing or reducing exposure.
4. The CASA program evaluates and reduces its potential liability by:
  - a. Assigning the risk management function to a person or committee whose job description includes responsibility for risk management policies and activities.
  - b. Ensuring that appropriate bonding, self-insurance, or external coverage is adequate to meet the potential liability of the CASA program.
  - c. Developing a process to identify risks in terms of their nature, severity and frequency;
  - d. Avoiding risk through loss prevention and risk reduction.
  - e. Evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of the risk management function.
  - f. Determining how often records checks are required on governing body, staff and volunteers. Unless otherwise determined in standards.
5. The CASA program carries worker's compensation insurance and other insurance as deemed necessary based upon evaluation of its risks and protects itself through means such as indemnification, participation in a risk-pooling trust or external insurance coverage.

## Exhibit A – Standards and Requirements

6. The CASA program requires that all persons with authority to sign checks, handle cash or contributions, or manage funds to be bonded or the program maintains appropriate insurance coverage to cover losses which may be incurred.
7. The CASA program informs its governing body members, officers, employees and volunteers of the amount and type of coverage that is provided on their behalf by the program.
8. The CASA program annually reviews its insurance coverage with its insurance carrier to insure adequate coverage.
9. The CASA program staff, volunteers and governing body members must immediately notify the CASA program of any criminal charges filed against them.

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## Standard 9: Public Relations

**The CASA program communicates with its community and other service providers about its program and of the needs of the children it serves and cooperates with other agencies to plan for needed programs of service for children.**

### 9. A. Public Relations

1. The CASA program conducts an ongoing program of public information and education to provide an understanding of the program's purpose, function and place in judicial proceedings and the community social service system.
2. The CASA program disseminates public information to broaden awareness of the needs and problems of the children it serves.
3. The CASA program makes known its role, functions and capacities to other agencies, community organizations, governmental bodies and corporations, as appropriate to its services and as a basis for interagency cooperation and coordination of services.
4. The CASA program works closely with representatives from the legal and social services communities, other child advocacy programs, community service and civic groups as well as with businesses to accomplish its purposes.
5. The local program works in partnership with the state organization and National CASA to provide timely information concerning newsworthy events, stories and occurrences which may raise awareness of the CASA movement
6. The CASA program has a written crisis management plan that addresses issues that may have significant impact on the credibility, reputation or funding at the local, state or national level. This crisis management plan provides for information sharing between national, state and local organizations in a timely manner, subject to confidentiality limitations.

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# Standard 10: Planning and Evaluation

**The CASA program maintains management information and data necessary to plan, evaluate and report its services.**

## 10. A. Data Collection

1. The CASA program collects the information needed to complete The National CASA Association's survey to deliver, monitor, and evaluate its services.
2. The CASA program maintains data which includes:

Information on Children:

- a. Demographic information including age, gender and ethnicity for new, active and closed children's cases within a specific time period.
- b. Total number of children served within a specific time period.
- c. Number of new children served within a specific time period.
- d. Number of children whose cases were closed within a specific time period.
- e. Type of case.
- f. Type of abuse or neglect in abuse/neglect cases;
- g. Reason for CASA case closure by the program and court.
- h. Placement of child at time of CASA case closure by the program and court.

Information on Volunteers:

- a. Demographic information including, age, gender, ethnicity within a specific time period, education and work status;
- b. Status of volunteers during a specific time period (for example, numbers of volunteer assigned to cases, available for cases and those at inactive status as well as length of service with program.
- c. Number of volunteer hours contributed.
- d. Length of time volunteer is assigned to each case.

Other Information:

- a. Number of children in the court's jurisdiction needing CASA volunteers vs. number of CASA volunteers assigned to cases.
  - b. Case outcomes.
  - c. Any other data required by funding sources.
3. When the CASA program develops and/or participates in a computerized information system, the following safeguards are implemented:
    - a. Operational procedures governing use of the system and software;
    - b. Confidentiality policies concerning electronic data and information sharing via electronic media and;

- c. Review of all decisions regarding computerized files by agency management.

## **10. B. Program Planning**

1. The CASA program engages in ongoing and systematic planning to determine the scope of need for its services and how its services can most effectively be delivered.
2. During the planning process the CASA program seeks input from their governing body, staff, volunteers and local community, as appropriate to the program's structure.
3. The planning process includes:
  - a. Identifying advocacy needs of the child population served by the CASA program;
  - b. Documenting long and short term measurable goals for 1) child outcomes, 2) volunteers and 3) resource development.
  - c. Determining objectives related to the goals.
  - d. Assessment and tracking progress.
  - e. Carrying out tasks with related timeframes and specified person responsible).
  - f. Listing resources needed for achieving goals.
  - g. Assessing management's capacity to carry out the planning effort.
  - h. Allowing for an annual review of the plan.

## **10. C. Program Review**

1. At least once in a two-year period, the CASA program conducts a review which includes assessment of the program goals, objectives and outcomes as well as alignment with those of National CASA and the state CASA organization that pertain to local CASA programs:
  - a. Degree to which the program identifies and meets the advocacy needs of the children it serves;
  - b. Changing demographics, increased community need, over-utilization and other reasons indicating a need to expand service, establish a priority system or refrain from increasing the caseload size carried by the program;
  - c. Effectiveness of the services, based upon predetermined definitions and criteria of effectiveness.
  - d. Progress made in implementation of the inclusiveness and cultural competency plan.
2. CASA management:
  - a. Submits results of its planning and evaluation processes to the governing body.
  - b. Shares findings with personnel and volunteers.
  - c. Disseminates information or findings to funders, the courts and other community agencies, as appropriate.

#### **10. D. Maintaining Confidentiality**

1. The CASA program follows written policies and procedures regarding access to, use of, and release of information about the children it serves to ensure that children's confidentiality is maintained at all times.
2. CASA employees and volunteers respect the child's right to privacy by maintaining confidentiality.
3. The CASA program demonstrates its compliance with applicable statutory requirements pertaining to confidentiality of client information by ensuring that its policy, procedures, and practices are consistent with all applicable laws and regulations.
4. Access to records is limited to the court, authorized agency personnel and others outside the agency whose request for access to confidential information is permitted by statute or the court.
5. All electronic and hard copy, correspondence, files and records are safely and securely maintained.
6. Controls exist which enable records to be located at any time.

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# Standard 11: Record Keeping

**The CASA program maintains complete, accurate and current case records and follows written policies for acceptance and assignment of CASA cases.**

## 11. A. Case Records

1. The CASA program maintains complete, accurate and current records for each child served, which includes:
  - a. Biographical or other identifying information.
  - b. Background on the nature of the presenting problem or reason for referral by the court.
  - c. Court reports and any court orders related to the service being provided.
  - d. Social service case plan.
2. Records for all children served are kept up to date through:
  - a. Current contact entries.
  - b. Periodic progress notes or summaries.
3. Entries made in the case record are specific, factual and pertinent to the nature of the service.
4. The CASA program maintains copies of all volunteer reports, correspondence concerning the case, notes from telephone or in-person consultations and requires its volunteers to turn in their case records including all notes when the case is closed
5. Upon termination of service, a closing summary of the case is entered into the case file.
6. The CASA program has written operational procedures, consistent with legal requirements and with the policy on confidential information governing the retention, maintenance, protection, destruction and return of case files when the case is closed.
7. The CASA program has established procedures for the legal and programmatic release, in writing, of volunteers when a case is closed or when a volunteer is removed from a case.
8. The CASA Program has established procedures for encrypting confidential email messages sent through public accounts.

## 11. B. Acceptance, Assignment and Closure of Cases

1. The CASA program has procedures for the acceptance and assignment of cases.

2. A CASA volunteer is sworn in by the judge before appointment to a case.
3. Cases are accepted by the program without discrimination based on a child's gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability or religion.
4. A CASA volunteer is assigned at the earliest possible stage of the court proceedings.
5. The judge and the program's administrator determine which cases are to be referred to the CASA program. Written referral criteria are reviewed regularly and changed as program resources change.
6. All appointments and assignments are made by an appropriate written order of the court.
7. The CASA program, in cooperation with the court, retains the right to determine from among cases referred for appointment those it can serve appropriately, within the limits of its resources, capacities, statutory authority and mission.
8. A CASA program or the court notifies all parties and agencies involved in the case of the CASA volunteer's appointment and release.
9. Ethnic, cultural and religious diversity issues are considered in the appointment of volunteers to cases.
10. Volunteers are assigned to cases with consideration to their experience, understanding, skills, availability and case type preference in relation to the specifics of the case.
11. In determining caseload size, management or supervisory personnel the following must be assessed:
  - a. Nature and difficulty of the tasks assigned.
  - b. Work and time required to serve each child or to complete each task.
  - c. Responsibilities that may be assigned.
12. A CASA program maintains complete case assignment records.

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## Standard 12: Inclusiveness and Diversity

**The CASA program demonstrates that inclusiveness and diversity are essential components of quality advocacy for the children it serves.**

### 12. A. Inclusiveness and Diversification

1. The program adopts and implements an on-going, written plan to guide and measure progress in diversifying its governing body, staff and volunteers. As part of the planning process, the program:
  - a. Identifies the goals and activities established by the program as well as progress made toward achieving those goals and identifies goals and activities to be met in the future.
  - b. Engages individuals who can help the program identify and understand the needs of the children served and the actions the programs can take to address these needs in governance, recruitment, cultural competence training, supervision, retention, evaluations and advocacy from a diversity perspective.
  - c. Creates and implements an on-going written plan as part of the organizational strategic plan for governing body, staff and volunteers with measurable actions in the areas listed in b. that will demonstrate progress.
  - d. Monitors the progress of these actions at least once every year.

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## Explanation of Terms

The purpose of the following explanations are to assist the programs in understanding the context of several key areas which National CASA recognizes will help programs to consistently and accurately implement and record standard compliance.

<b>A-133 Audit:</b>	If a program expends \$500,000 or more in federal funding in one fiscal year, then an audit with Government Auditing standards must be performed. Government Auditing Standards are issued by the Comptroller General of the US. These standards are in addition to generally accepted auditing standards. They include compliance tests to give federal agencies reasonable assurance that grant funds are being spent according to laws, regulations and the terms of grant agreements. The audit report must be submitted to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse within 30 days of receipt of the report, but no later than 9 months after the end of the fiscal year. An A-133 audit for programs with less than \$500,000 in federal funding is not required to meet National CASA Association standards.
<b>Audit:</b>	A certified public accountant examines a CASA program's financial records in order to formulate an audit opinion on the financial statements. The auditor must follow generally accepted auditing standards. Internal controls are evaluated and transactions are tested for legitimacy. These tests provide a basis for an audit opinion which will state the accuracy of the financial statements
<b>Case:</b>	An action before the court involving one child or a sibling group.
<b>Children who come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect:</b>	The CASA mission is to advocate for children who are before the court as a direct result of abuse or neglect, as defined in the state's child welfare laws. This includes all forms of civil child protection proceedings. This includes the following types of cases filed in the court by or on behalf of the child welfare agency: child protective order proceedings, child removal and foster care proceedings alleging a child have been abused or neglected.
<b>Compilation:</b>	A certified public accountant puts the financial information from the CASA program into the form of financial statements. The accuracy of the financial information is the responsibility of the CASA program. A compilation only does not meet the standards for review or audit.
<b>Governing Body:</b>	A nonprofit volunteer board of directors or public entity administrative officer or team.
<b>Local program:</b>	Includes stand alone, independent CASA member programs, programs within an umbrella organization and local offices (for example, district, county or circuit offices of a publicly administered program).
<b>National CASA:</b>	The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, also referred to as National CASA
<b>Program auxiliary or affiliate:</b>	Some CASA programs are associated with separate nonprofit organizations whose primary purpose is to promote the CASA program by raising funds, heightening community awareness of the program, supporting the activities of the volunteers and/or promoting the activities of the CASA

program in other ways. Such nonprofit organizations are referred to as "program auxiliary or affiliate" organizations.

**Reflect the Diversity of Children Served:**

National CASA recognizes each child is an individual with his or her own experiences and background. Various features of a child's experience or background may be held in common with others, and some may be unique. For example, a child who has a parental heritage of both Latino and Asian cultures may have language and cultural commonalities with individuals possessing the same background. The intent of this language is for CASA programs to include among the governing body, staff and volunteers, those persons who share the backgrounds and experiences of the children served, including race and ethnicity. The objective is not to set quotas of participation, but rather to enrich the program itself, to improve advocacy for children and to provide opportunities for those who understand the backgrounds and experiences of children to participate in a very direct way in the CASA program at all levels. The perspectives of these persons would be seen to complement sometimes challenge but ultimately enhance the perspectives of those serving CASA children.

**Records Checks:**

Record checks include fingerprint-based criminal background checks from the Federal Bureau of Investigation or NCIC, sex offender registry, child abuse registry, or CPS or court records.

**Review:**

A certified public accountant reviews the CASA program's financial statements to ensure they are presented in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. A review includes inquires and analytical procedures to identify trends or areas in the financial statements which may be presented incorrectly. The accuracy of financial information is the responsibility of the CASA program.

**Trained community volunteers:**

The National CASA Association history and mission support court appointment of individuals who serve as volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children. Standard 7 sets forth required training and supervision for individuals who serve as trained community volunteers. National CASA acknowledges that there may be exceptional times when it would be necessary and appropriate to appoint local program staff members to fulfill all or a part of the CASA roles and responsibilities as set forth in Standard 7.E. on a limited and time specific basis. In the event local program staff members are assigned, the staff member appointed by the court must be trained and supervised in the same manner as required for volunteers in Standard 7.

**Written Operational Procedures:**

Organizational protocols and procedures or administrative codes. Written operational procedures for accounting are also called Financial Internal Controls.