

VOLUNTEER TRAINING PROGRAM AND SCHEDULE COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA)

Session 1: Intro/Overview of the CASA Volunteer Role

Offers an overview of the training agenda as well as a history of the Child Welfare Movement in this country and examines the development of the accompanying Federal Legislation. Provides information on the development of the CASA Program on both a state and national level, and discusses the roles and responsibilities of the CASA volunteer.

Session 2: Family Systems and Development

Focuses on family dynamics and discusses risk factors (including substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental illness), the impact of poverty, parental substance abuse, and domestic violence on children. How these factors influence the ways a family copes with change, crisis, and stress. The bond children have with their families. Activities in this chapter help the CASA volunteer recognize personal values and maintain objectivity regarding the risks for a child. This chapter also helps the participants focus on the feelings and fears of the children for whom they will advocate.

Session 3: The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

Provides an overview of the child protection system, focusing on the importance of confidentiality, how cases of abuse and neglect come to the attention of the DCYF, and how these cases track through the DCYF system. Includes discussion around the interaction between CASA and the DCYF and the facilitation of same.

Session 4: Exploring Cultural Awareness

Examines the dynamics of cultural differences. Participants examine values and how values determine how a culture meets and defines basic needs. Participants will identify their own values and relate them to those of other cultures. Activities will give participants the opportunity to identify how language, class, and culturally bound values influence the recommendations concerning the child. Participants are encouraged to gain competence in working cross culturally, identifying ways to become more sensitive to cultural diversity.

Session 5: Introducing the Law

Provides a general overview of the Family Court system and the child protective court process. The activities are designed to help the participants become more comfortable with the courtroom process and experience.

Session 6: Communicating and Interviewing Skills for CASA Volunteers

Names the basic elements of communication, recognizes the importance of observation in gathering information about children and identifies the elements of a successful child interview, reviews important skills for building rapport and trust with a child, applies a collaborative approach to dealing with conflict, identifies different styles of dealing with conflict, and revisits the concept of confidentiality.

Session 7: Practicing the CASA Volunteer Role – Working a Case

Reviews the process used to appoint a CASA volunteer to a case, identifies the interested parties in a case, designs and implements a strategy to gather information about a case, provides a framework for successfully carrying out the role of a CASA volunteer, and discusses the working relationship between the CASA volunteer and the CASA office.

Session 8: Practicing the CASA Volunteer Role – Report Writing

Systematically organizes information pertinent to a case, synthesizes information to write an effective court report, utilizes all of the above recommendations about the needs of the child, identifies strategies for testifying and effectively presenting information in court, and practices the steps to monitor a case from the dispositional order until the child is in a safe, permanent home. Activities are designed to help the CASA create an effective court report and gain confidence in presenting information to the court.

Session 9: Pulling it all Together – Forms and Wrap Up

Identifies the strategies for self-care, identifies safety tips for volunteers, reviews the role of the CASA program staff for volunteer supervision and support; reviews office procedures for case assignment, obtaining records, submitting court reports, revisits the need for an advocate for abused and neglected children.

[2011 VOLUNTEER CASA TRAINING SCHEDULE \(COMING SOON\)](#)