

# The difference begins with you.

In our courts today, there are many organizations who work for a child's welfare. But in the midst of bureaucratic agencies, it is rare to find a single person really knows the child involved, and who knows the personal dynamics of their situation.

In these situations, the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children Program steps in. For abused or neglected children in the state of Delaware, CASA for Children represents the *one person* who can represent them during this difficult time. While there are several organizations who help with the plight of child welfare, only CASA empowers everyday citizens as appointed offices of the court to represent the interests of an abused or neglected child, to so see that they are placed in a safe, permanent home which will allow them to reach their full potential.

In Delaware courts, CASA acts as a personal, unbiased advocate for each child— someone who listens to them, speaks for them, and who stands with them in court as they go through one of the most difficult experiences of their life.

To become a CASA volunteer, contact one of the local programs at the numbers below:

**New Castle County: (302) 255-0461**

**Kent County: (302) 672-1037**

**Sussex County: (302) 855-7410**

Visit Delaware CASA under Family Court at:

**[www.courts.delaware.gov](http://www.courts.delaware.gov)**

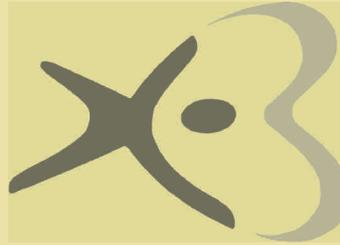
Visit the National CASA website at:

**[www.nationalcasa.org](http://www.nationalcasa.org)**

"As a judge, I had to make tough decisions. I had to decide whether to take a child from the only home he's ever known, or leave him someplace where he might possibly be abused. I needed someone who could tell me what was best for that child from the child's viewpoint. That's what CASA does."

- David Soukup, Founder of CASA

CASA  
Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN



The difference begins with you.



Place  
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Here

Family Court of the State of Delaware  
New Castle County Courthouse  
500 King Street, Suite 3500  
Wilmington, DE 19801-3757

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**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

FAMILY COURT OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE

## What is a CASA Volunteer?

CASA volunteers are Court Appointed Special Advocates who are appointed by a Family Court judge to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in the court system. A CASA volunteer acts as the "eyes and ears" of children involved in court proceedings, and offer judges a critical perspective of what is in the best interests of each child, based on information gathered first-hand through research, interviews and observations.

Studies show that once a CASA volunteer is assigned to an abused or neglected child, that the child is much more likely to receive vital services such as health care, education and therapy. By getting involved as a CASA volunteer, you can help create healthier families and communities— and change the course of a child's life.

## What do CASA volunteers do?

As an impartial advocate for children in the Court, a CASA volunteer plays 4 major roles:

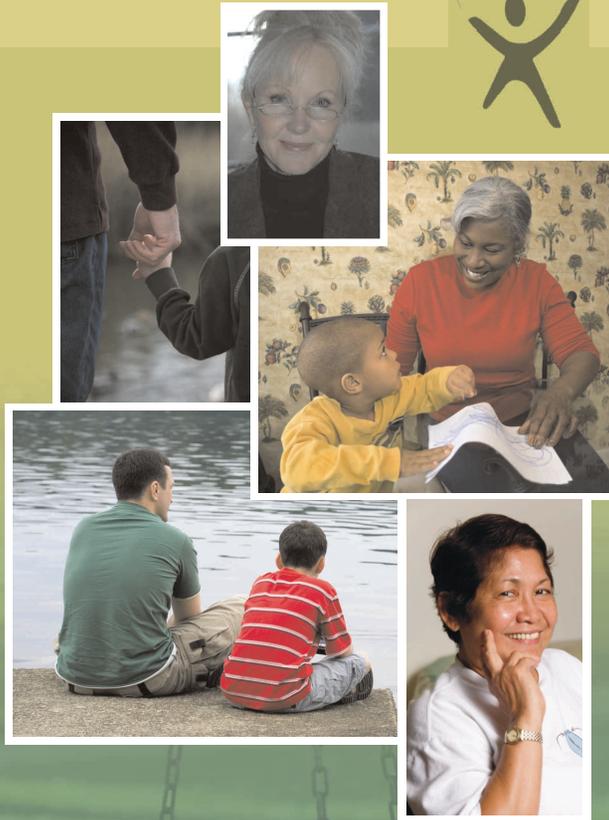
- 1 Gather information about the child
- 2 Report and make recommendations to the judge
- 3 Advocate for the child's needs
- 4 Monitor until the child has a safe, permanent home

A CASA volunteer personally visits the child and speaks with everyone involved, including foster parents, parents, caseworkers, teachers and service providers. After reviewing all records, attending meetings and court hearings, the CASA volunteer considers the facts of the case, along with their own observations, and then reports in court, making recommendations to the judge about what they believe is in the best interest of the child.

## How do they learn what to do?

Before a CASA volunteer is assigned to a child, they are given initial hands-on training. From there, they continue to receive specialized, interactive training on a monthly basis so that they can continue to develop their skills and knowledge. Each CASA volunteer is assigned a Program Coordinator who serves as their direct supervisor. Through regular case discussions, the Program Coordinator is able to give each CASA volunteer direct support, personal guidance and information. When it's time to go to court, the Program Coordinator helps the CASA volunteer prepare their recommendations and findings for the judge.

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*"For me, the greatest reward has been seeing the entire course of a child's life changed for the better— and knowing that difference came because of me."*

*- CASA Volunteer*

## Do judges listen to CASA?

CASA volunteers act as child's guardian *ad litem*, which means that they represent the child in litigation, or in court proceedings. They don't serve as a child's legal guardian or custodian, and they have no control over the child's person or property. What the CASA volunteer does have is the authority to gather information, to bring witnesses who will testify about what's best for the child involved, and to make final recommendations to the judge as an independent party in all court proceedings.

Usually, the other parties involved are the Division of Family Services (DFS) and the child's parents. Because a CASA volunteer is there only to represent the child, their recommendations can often differ from the opinions of DFS or of the parents. In these instances, judges consider CASA's recommendations carefully because they recognize that CASA's only agenda is to do what is in the best interests of the child.

## Why is CASA so important?

In court proceedings involving children, CASA provides an unbiased, child-focused point of view that is vital to help determine what situations will allow a child to thrive. In most cases, the children represented by CASA have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. In these cases, a judge must decide if a child can safely return home to their family, or if a permanent home must be arranged in order to keep a child healthy and safe. When considering the actions of parents or child welfare agencies, it's usually the child who has the most at stake— and their needs can often be overlooked. CASA is there to act as a voice for each child, and to help discover what is in the best interests of each child.

## How can I make a difference?

The first step is to contact your nearby CASA office to arrange a preliminary screening. From there, you can learn more about the CASA Program and discover if you meet the basic requirements for getting involved. CASA is looking for mature, reliable adults who can be objective under difficult circumstances, and can relate to people from all backgrounds and lifestyles. In 2006, CASA was able to represent over 553 abused and neglected children in the Delaware court system— but many more still need our help. By becoming a CASA volunteer, you can help protect *every child* who come before the courts— and make sure that they are given the chance to grow up in a safe and nurturing home.