

Just What Is A CASA?

As a Court Appointed Special Advocate, or CASA, you are a volunteer who serves as an advocate for a child or group of siblings who are involved in formal child protective proceedings due to abuse or neglect on the part of child's parents or guardians.



In this role with Kalamazoo CASA, you'll become a sworn officer of the Court. To get there, you'll go through an extremely thorough training to help you best protect your precious cargo. Once trained, you'll be appointed and sworn in by the Kalamazoo County Ninth Circuit Court to serve in your role officially.

The kids in these child protective Court proceedings deserve to have at least one person who can provide consistent, continuous, and reliable advocacy for their best interest until all legal matters are resolved. Frequently, only the CASA remains a constant from beginning to end.

As a CASA volunteer, you'll provide the Court with an independent assessment of all aspects of your youngster's life, including things like their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. You'll be asked to provide an assessment of the child's best interests for a safe, permanent living environment as quickly as possible.

CASAs handle questions like:

- If the child is removed, how will s/he relate within a new home, a new school, new surroundings, and visitation with his/her parent(s)?
- What's being done to safely return the child home as soon as possible?
- Are court orders being followed by all parties within an appropriate time period?
- Are actual changes being made in the family structure or is compliance with court orders only a means to an end?
- Should a child be removed from his/her own home?

In your role, you'll meet with your assigned child, as well as any other people involved in the child's life such as natural parent/s, DHS caseworkers, attorney, primary caregivers, teachers, extended family members, and therapists.

As you do your work, you'll hang out with your CASA-appointed child and you may even take them for excursions like field trips, playground visits, restaurants, and other fun activities.

As you do all this, you'll observe, gather, and document information and facts – and your recommendations – to help the Court determine what is in the best interests of the kid/s you're assigned to.

CASAs most often work independently but may also partner with another CASA. Volunteers are well supported through monthly group meetings, assistance from active volunteers, and a responsive court staff on 24-hour call.

Are you CASA material? If you want to ensure that the best interests of abused and neglected children are upheld, you might make a great CASA.

Initial requirements to become a CASA:

- 21+ years old
- Commit to a minimum of 18 months of service
- Attend regularly scheduled hearings and monthly meetings
- Follow a case to completion
- Have your own insured vehicle
- Complete a 35-hour training program
- Uphold standards of confidentiality
- Ability to remain objective

[Click here](#) for a list of more specific CASA duties.

[Here are some important things to consider](#) before you apply as a CASA.

Ready to fill out the application? [Click here](#).

Questions:

Contact Kelly Kucinich, Director, Kalamazoo County CASA Program
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“Having a CASA meant the world to me.”



Kalamazoo County Court Appointed Special Advocate Program

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