

# Things to Consider Before Becoming a CASA

There's no doubt you have the best intentions in wanting to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate, or CASA, and protect kids. But we want to be honest with you: this role is a BIG responsibility – for them and for you. **So, let's have some real-talk, shall we?**

The work of a CASA is challenging in many ways; particularly emotionally and timewise. It requires a lengthy and often difficult commitment. But it's also tremendously rewarding.



It is vital to the children, the Court, the CASA program, and to yourself that you make the decision to become a CASA having full knowledge of your own expectations, as well as those of the program. Our hope is that these questions allow you to examine areas of your life that are likely to be impacted in your work as a CASA, as well as exploring your “fitness” to take on such a crucial role. Think about your responses to explore your readiness to take on the very important role of CASA.

## **1. DO YOU HAVE THE TIME?**

The time commitment of being a CASA can vary pretty widely. Some weeks there may not be much more than an hour of work. Other weeks as Court proceeds could demand much more of your time. It all depends on how the case is going, so there's a need to be flexibly available. There may be times you fulfilled your responsibilities for the day and are anticipating time for yourself...then remember you must write a CASA report for the Court for tomorrow. Or what about a weekend interrupted by a phone call from your CASA kid/s saying they need to talk... today. Will you be willing and able to give up your free time to make that important time for them? Do you really have time to see the children every week? Will you have time to visit others involved in the children's lives – teachers, caseworkers, counselors, and others? Is your work/school schedule flexible enough to allow you to attend the required Court hearings during the day?

## **2. HAVE YOU RECENTLY GONE THROUGH SIGNIFICANT LIFE CHANGES?**

Life events such as marriage, divorce, illness or death of a loved one, birth of a child, new home or job, etc. are events that cause stress and uncertainty. If you've recently experienced any of these (or others), consider whether you are ready to take on the role of as an advocate for abused and neglected children. This work often comes with emotionally charged circumstances that require your 100% attention and commitment.

## **3. ARE YOU LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE SCHOOL- OR JOB-RELATED PRESSURE?**

Are you about to take on a new position or add responsibility to the roles you currently have? Is there a chance you may be transferred in the next year? Are you entering a significant time in school that will add additional pressure?

## **4. WHAT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, SPOUSE, LIFE PARTNER?**

Have you talked with your significant other and your own kids about taking on this big new role? How did they react? Do you feel like you do not spend enough time with them already? Do you have any added responsibilities within your family?

## **5. WHAT KIND OF ROLE MODEL WILL YOU BE FOR YOUR CASA KIDS?**

Have you had positive experiences in your own childhood? Have you had positive experiences in raising your own children, or with others you may have spent time with? The children you'll be working with may be traumatized and experiencing some very difficult circumstances. Do you feel capable of

meeting them where they are and being compassionate to their situations? Are you ready and willing to speak up for them in Court and with professionals? Are you willing to communicate with angry parents, difficult professionals, attorneys who may try to discredit you, judges, and most importantly, a traumatized, unsure, and frightened child?

**6. WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR EXPERIENCE AT CASA WILL BRING YOU?**

It's important to approach your CASA role with your intention of advocating for a child as the main priority. Undoubtedly, you'll find your role as a CASA rewarding, after all, you'll be playing a significant role for children in Court and in the community. However, it is essential that you are able to keep a healthy perspective and not allow an ego to get in the way.

**7. ARE YOU PATIENT?**

Are you able to await factual information to substantiate and formulate a decision you'll make about parents, children, and others? Can you maintain a high level of energy over a period of months, even if you feel the "system" could have operated differently for children? Can you accept that others may need more time to accomplish tasks that you have already completed or can accomplish quickly?

**8. DO YOU HAVE A TENDENCY TO BE JUDGEMENTAL?**

Can you agree and understand that other people's lifestyles – though different from your own – can be acceptable for children, provided their lifestyles are not illegal or harmful to the kids in a specific, provable way?

**9. EXAMINE AND ASSESS YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH.**

With the help of the CASA program director, other CASAs, and those in your personal support network, will you be able to take care of yourself in the times that are likely to prove emotionally stressful in your CASA work? This is very important for many reasons, particularly because the kids assigned to you need to be protected from yet another person abandoning them.

**10. WILL YOU BE ABLE TO "LET GO"?**

After the case closes and you have provided intensive advocacy for children, will you be able to stand back and let the natural parents, the guardians, or adoptive parents take on their proper responsibility? Will you be able to move on and allow the children to do the same?

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

The CASA role is described in more detail [here](#).

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

Questions? Contact Kelly Kucinich, Director, Kalamazoo County CASA Program  
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**"My CASA felt like a big sister. She listened and never judged. I feel like I have a best friend forever."**



**Kalamazoo County Court Appointed Special Advocate Program**

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