



## **Become a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Volunteer!**

In Los Angeles County, there are 30,000 children and youth in the child welfare system. Of those, more than 20,000 have been removed from their homes because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. These children often move from home to home and each time must adjust to new caregivers, new schools, new teachers, and a new social circle. Many of them deal with this alone. Without the proper support, the outcomes for these children and youth are dismal. They are less likely than their peers to graduate from high school or college and are more likely to end up unemployed, homeless, or incarcerated.

**CASA of Los Angeles** mobilizes community volunteers to advocate for children who have experienced abuse and neglect. CASA volunteers are paired with a child and, unlike other professionals, work one-on-one to advocate for the child's best interests. Volunteers' advocacy activities with children are focused on: ensuring safety during their time in the dependency system; facilitating permanency through placement with parents, other family, or adoption; and promoting enhanced well-being.

***To learn more about CASA of LA's work and becoming a volunteer, visit:***

**<http://casala.org/volunteer/>**

### **Qualifications**

Anyone over the age of 21 who is committed to helping children may apply to become a CASA volunteer. No specific education background is required. Volunteers must have strong communication and problem solving skills. Traveling is necessary as the duties of a CASA include monthly, face-to-face contact with a child wherever the child is residing. All volunteers undergo a background check, including fingerprinting.

### **Responsibilities**

- Complete our 40-hour pre-service training program, which includes both in person and online components.
- Commit an average of 15 hours per month to activities on behalf of the child.
- Maintain regular contact with the child (visit at least once a month).
- Gather information about the child's circumstances, evaluate the facts independently, and provide recommendations to the court by means of written reports.
- Communicate sensitively and objectively with children, social workers, foster care providers, therapists, teachers, attorneys, parents, or other family members who may be involved in the case.
- Maintain and submit monthly documentation of advocacy work, including time spent and contacts made on the case via our online database.
- Attend court hearings.
- Complete 12 hours of continuing education each year. CASA of Los Angeles provides many educational opportunities, including monthly in-service training.
- Fulfill a minimum two-year commitment to CASA of Los Angeles.

There are a few restrictions to becoming a CASA volunteer. You cannot be:

- Involved in or a party to a dependency court matter.
- Approved as a Resource Family (even if there are no currently approved children living in your home) or pursuing adoption through the County of Los Angeles.
- Employed by or volunteering at an agency which could present a conflict of interest.