

Supporting Children Together

CASA FAQs

What is the role of a CASA during court proceedings?

CASAs are required to attend all court proceedings related to their assigned child. They submit detailed reports to the court based on their independent observations, and they may be called to testify as witnesses. CASAs are responsible for ensuring that the child's needs are represented in court and that all decisions prioritize the child's best interest.

What documents and information can CASA have access to?

According to the Louisiana Children's Code, Article 424, CASAs are "given access to all portions of the court record relating to proceedings pertaining to a child for whom he is assigned and to the child's family." Upon assignment, "the court shall grant the CASA volunteer access to other information, including the department records as provided in R.S. 46:56, relating to the child and his family and to other matters involved in the proceeding in which he is appointed." Access to records allows for CASA to review the department's records pertaining to their assigned child. According to Louisiana Children's Code R.S. 45:56, "the department may provide such attorneys and court-appointed special advocates copies of the most recent case plan for the child and his family, the most recent court order and court report, and the child's most recent medical report." As an advocate for the child, CASA and DCFS works together to share information to make the most informed recommendations to the court.

What information can CASA share with DCFS?

CASA volunteers must abide by strict confidentiality laws to protect the information they receive on the child and their family to whom they are assigned. According to Louisiana Children's Code, Article 424, "all records and information requested or reviewed by the CASA volunteer in the course of his assignment shall be deemed confidential and shall not be disclosed by him except pursuant to court order. Such material will only be disclosed as directed by court order and will be subject to whatever protection order the court deems appropriate." While CASAs are not allowed to share documents they obtain unless ordered by the court, they can discuss findings with DCFS as the child's custodian, ensuring that everyone involved is working with the same information toward advocating for the child's best interest.

Do CASAs participate in Family Team Meetings (FTM)?

To best advocate for the children to whom they are assigned, CASAs work together with DCFS at Family Team Meetings to engage the family about necessary steps toward the goal and to ensure available resources are provided for the child and family. According to the Louisiana Children's Code, Article 424, CASAs are notified of and are entitled to attend all administrative review hearings and family team meetings concerning their assigned case.



This document was developed in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Children & Family Services.

LOUISIANA CASA ASSOCIATION LOUISIANACASA.ORG

Louisiana CASA Association is the statewide association for the 18 local CASA programs in Louisiana. CASA programs recruit, train, and support court-appointed volunteers who speak up for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

Can CASAs supervise family visits?

CASAs are not allowed to supervise family visits. Some CASA programs may be a part of an umbrella nonprofit agency that has a separate visitation program, but CASA volunteers are not allowed to supervise family visits for their assigned child(ren).

Can CASAs transport the child or family to whom they are assigned?

Yes, but this is decided by the local program. There is only one program in Louisiana that allows CASA volunteers to transport their assigned children.

Do CASAs make recommendations to the court?

Yes, CASAs provide formal recommendations to the court based on their independent observations and interactions with the child, family, and service providers. These recommendations focus on the child's best interest, including safety, well-being, and long-term placement. CASAs communicate their recommendations to the court and all parties in their reports, and they may testify in court if necessary. CASA's recommendations may sometimes differ from those of DCFS, but CASA works to discuss those differences in detail with DCFS prior to the court hearing, whenever it is possible to do so.

How do CASAs gather information for their reports?

CASAs gather information through direct contact with the child, interviews with family members, interactions with foster families, consultations with service providers, and collaboration with DCFS caseworkers. They observe the child's living conditions, emotional well-being, and educational progress, using this information to shape recommendations and provide detailed reports to the court.

Does DCFS get a copy of the CASA Court Report before the hearing?

CASAs submit court reports prior to each hearing as is required by the court. CASA reports are filed with the court and copies are distributed to all parties involved, include attorneys of record and DCFS.

How are CASAs trained and supervised?

CASAs receive extensive training before they are assigned to a case. CASAs must pass a rigorous background screening, which includes national and state criminal records checks, a child abuse registry check, local criminal records checks, a national sex offender check, a social security number check, and an in-person interview. Before becoming a CASA, volunteers are required to complete 30 hours of pre-service training. The training provides an overview of important topics such as recognizing abuse and neglect, understanding the court process, interacting with participants in a case, gathering information, and reporting to the court. CASA trainees also participate in case studies, observe court proceedings, and, upon completion, are sworn in by the court. Once certified, CASA volunteers must complete at least 12 hours of continuing education annually. These ongoing trainings are focused on topics relevant to the care and support of children affected by abuse and neglect. Throughout the duration of their service, CASA volunteers are supervised by experienced CASA staff who provide guidance and support.

How long does a CASA stay involved in a case?

CASAs are assigned to a case for its entire duration, from the time they are appointed by the court until the child reaches permanency—whether through reunification with their family, adoption, or another form of permanent placement. The consistency of CASA's involvement helps build trust with the child and ensures continuous advocacy.

Who do I contact if I have an issue with a CASA?

CASA volunteers work together with their supervisors on each case to which they are assigned. If there are any issues with an individual volunteer, those can be brought to the CASA Supervisor or the local program director. Visit the Louisiana CASA website to view a list of all of the local CASA programs in Louisiana, www.louisianacasa.org.