

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is a CASA volunteer?**

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates. CASA of Brown County is a volunteer-based nonprofit organization that provides a voice for abused and neglected children under the legal protection of the court system. Judges appoint CASA volunteers to visit with children under court protection and submit monthly reports on their safety and well-being. These court reports help judges make well-informed decisions about each child's future.

- **Why is it important for children under court protection to have a CASA volunteer?**

CASA volunteers are a source of hope and critical support for abused and neglected children under court protection, many of whom are in foster care. CASA volunteers build special relationships with these children through regular contact and advocate exclusively on their behalf in monthly reports to the judge. For many abused and neglected children, CASA is the only constant during a chaotic, uncertain time.

A child with a CASA volunteer is more likely to receive much-needed services, report higher levels of hope, and find a safe, permanent home. CASA volunteers make a lasting impact.

- **What kind of person is a CASA Volunteer?**

We have dedicated CASAs—encompassing all races, ethnic origins, religions, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. They work full-time, part-time, are retired, stay-at-home parents and are students. No legal experience or prior knowledge is required; we provide all the training and support needed to be a successful CASA volunteer.

All Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers, must meet the following requirements:

- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Commit to a minimum of one year of service.
- Pass a criminal background check.
- Pass a Child Protective Services check.
- Pass references checks.
- Proof of auto insurance.
- Driver's license.
- Minimum commitment of 4-6 hours a month on the child's case.

- **Are CASA volunteers trained and supervised?**

CASA of Brown County thoroughly trains volunteers to be the best possible advocates for children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect. Our volunteers complete a 30-hour pre-service training program that includes topics such as the role of the CASA volunteer, the child welfare system, needs and development of children, trauma, mental health, poverty, communication, cultural competence, and court report writing. All classes must be completed for a volunteer to graduate and be sworn in by a Brown County Judge to become a CASA volunteer. Training typically takes place on weekday evenings.

After a CASA volunteer is sworn in, they work closely with an Advocate Supervisor on the CASA staff who provides support and guidance throughout the court process and child's journey. CASA volunteers are also required to complete 12 hours of continuing education each year.

- **What kind of person is a CASA volunteer?**

You do not need any specialized skills to become a CASA volunteer. CASA volunteers come from all walks of life, and most are employed full-time. CASA volunteers must be 21 or older, complete a volunteer application, undergo and pass a background check, child protective services check and reference checks, take part in a personal interview, and complete CASA volunteer training. They are patient, open-minded people who have good communication skills, a history of following through on commitments, and a willingness to accept guidance. Above all, they care about children and their futures!

- **How much time does it take to be a CASA volunteer?**

Most of this time can be spent during weekday evenings or weekends with the child, as well as phone calls and occasional meetings Monday-Friday between 9 am -5 pm. CASA volunteers on average spend between 4-6 hours a month between visits with their child and writing monthly objective court reports.

- **How does CASA serve children from diverse backgrounds?**

Children of all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds enter protective care. To serve children effectively, CASA of Brown County strives to maintain a pool of volunteers, staff, and supporters who reflect the diversity of our community. We welcome volunteers of all abilities, races, national and ethnic origins, religions, ages, sexual orientations, genders, gender identities, and gender expressions. Volunteer diversity helps us to recognize and respond to the needs of individual children and provide informed, culturally competent advocacy.