

CASA Volunteer Responsibilities Checklist:

1. **Diving in to the case:** Review the petition with CASA program staff. Go to agencies, schools, hospitals, etc. and use your CASA Judgment to request copies of any hospital records, police records, photos, protective services investigation, or other documentation. Carefully review all DCFS records –be sure to ask for past or closed records.
2. **Child:** Meet with the child at least once per month and never make promises. Always find out what the child wants to happen in the case and why they want that. Your recommendations to the court will often differ but it is important to know what the child wants and explain to them what you are recommending. Keep the child informed on the case. Remember, building a relationship takes lots of time and trust takes even longer so give this proper time. Find creative ways to connect with the child!
3. **ICWA:** Check at the start of a case to see if ICWA applies and if it does, make sure the tribe or Bureau of Indian Affairs has been notified of the case and make sure the child’s tribal enrollment rights are protected.
4. **Build a team of Support:** You have the ability to talk with many people so use that ability for the child’s best interest. Although you may not agree with everyone on every point, you can find common ground and facilitate building a team of support for the child. Respect everyone on the case. Remember you only have one case, while others have multiple cases!
5. **Relatives:** Throughout the case, check to see if the child has relatives that could serve as a foster placement (they have to clear background checks and home inspections). Even if the relative cannot be a foster parent, they could potentially be a continually presence in the child’s life. A relative (including fictive kin) always have preference over a non-relative for adoption so best to find the relatives as soon as possible.
6. **Parents:** Meet with the parents- get permission from each parent’s attorney if they are represented separately. Depending on the situation, you can visit a parent in prison. Treat the parents with respect.
7. **Foster Parents:** You want to be flexible with the times you can meet with the child at their homes. They are a great source of information. It will take time to build a relationship with them. Confidentiality applies here and you cannot share any information on the child or the case. If the case is moving to adoption, make sure the foster family is serious about adopting and if they are not, request the child be moved to an adoptive placement.
8. **Social Worker:** Before asking your social worker for information, try to get it yourself using your CASA Judgment and if you have questions, consult your CASA supervisor. When you do get information, such as a report card, share it with the Social Worker. You can share all information with the Social Worker. They are the legal guardians of the child – e.g., if the child needs a permission slip signed, they are in charge of that.
9. **School:** Determine what, if any, special problems or unmet needs the child has (e.g., counseling, a special school program, transportation, after-school care, medical treatment, etc.). If the child needs an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or it is out-of-date, request a new one (in court reports and with the school). Aside from home, school is where a child spends the majority of his/her time.
10. **Doctors:** You cannot diagnosis a child but you can make fact-based recommendations for a child to go to a doctor. If there has been no physical or psychological examination of the child or the parent(s), and one is warranted, request one. Talk with psychologists and medical caregivers involved with the child and obtain their written reports.
11. **Investigate:** Meet with any person who has had substantial contact with the child on a frequent basis. Remember confidentiality includes not sharing confidential information with the foster parent(s). You can always give them the social worker’s number.
12. **Court:** Come prepared and appear at all hearings. Send your court report to your CASA Supervisor at least 2 weeks prior to your court date (Remember - All recommendations you make are fact-based!). If you know you will not be at court, let you CASA supervisor know as soon as possible and why you cannot be there. Make a checklist prior to attending court of important topics you want addressed, scratch off the topics as they are talked about, and if one is not addressed, raise your hand and speak up! You can share confidential information with the Attorneys and the Social Worker. You CANNOT speak with the Judge about the case outside of legal proceedings or meetings so NEVER send them information.
13. **Outside of Court Meetings:** Attend all staffing (e.g., meeting about the situation in school, DCFS mental health center) related to the child. You are a professional with expertise to add so come prepared to these meetings and be prepared to give your input.
14. **Resources:** Find resources for the child that meet his/her needs, and contact appropriate agencies, or persons. This might be for educational needs (e.g., tutoring), social needs (e.g., a mentor, a sport team, or a scouting opportunity), placement needs (e.g., contacting a relative), medical or psychological treatment needs, or resources for any other identified need.
15. **Logging the case:** Any work you do on a case, log it in the OPTIMA system. This will help you with your court report and also help your CASA supervisor guide you. Also, upload all documents you receive on your case to OPTIMA.
16. **Working the case:** Continually monitor the case, repeating the above activities to ensure orders of the court are being followed by all parties and current needs of the child are being met. Make a determination based on fact as to whether the parents are correcting the situation that led to the removal of the child from their home initially.
17. **CASA Supervisor:** Court reports must be submitted to the Advocate Supervisor 2 weeks prior to court date. Meet/talk with the Advocate Supervisor to discuss the case and if you have questions about what will happen in a particular court hearing. Contact your CASA Supervisor if you think the case may need to go back to court sooner than the next scheduled court date; work with your supervisor to see if there is an alternative to going back to court.
18. **Timeline:** Make sure the case is not being drawn out for unnecessary reasons. Review the permanent plan to insure that it complies with ASFA and is in the best interest of the child.
19. **In-Service:** Complete 12 hours of In-Service per year.