

Brush Country CASA



Volunteer Policy and Procedure Manual

Approved by the Board on: 09/19/2022



CASA/GUARDIAN AD LITEM OATH

Training Completion Date: _____
Fingerprint Based Check Completed: _____
DFPS Background Check Completed: _____

I, _____, the undersigned, do solemnly promise and pledge that I will faithfully execute the duties of a Court Appointed Special Advocate, as assigned and appointed by Jaime E. Carrillo to advocate for children in foster care in the Brush Country area. I will abide by the Orders of the Court and ensure that orders are properly executed. I will, to the best of my ability, respect and preserve the confidentiality of any and all information received. I promise and pledge that as a Court Appointed Special Advocate, my paramount concern will be the best interest of the children I represent until formally relieved of this responsibility by the Court.

Judge

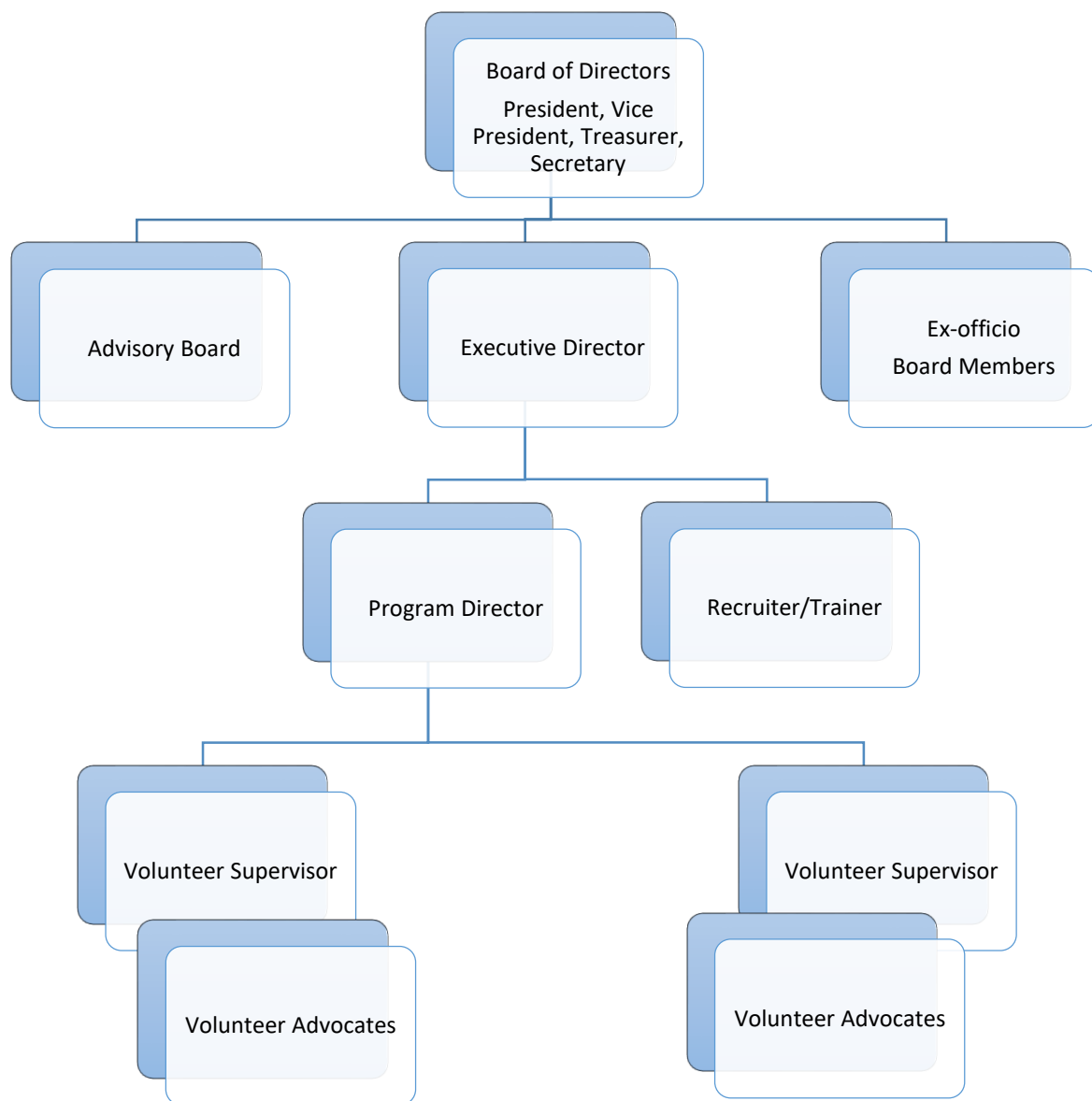
Date

Volunteer Advocate

Date



Organizational Chart



History of Brush Country CASA

In 1976, David Soukup, a superior court judge in Seattle, became greatly concerned about making decisions that had significant impact on dependent children's futures, so he created a plan to train and appoint community volunteers to research the best interests of children in cases of abuse and neglect. He needed to be sure he was getting all the facts and that the long-term welfare of children was represented, so he depended on these volunteers to make informed recommendations to the court about getting children in safe, permanent homes as soon as possible. Today, that judge's idea has evolved into one of the largest volunteer organizations in the country.

District judges hold an enormous responsibility in deciding what is best to facilitate a child's growth. An abused or neglected child enters a judge's court through no fault of his or her own, and judges have a very limited time frame to decide that child's future. CASA volunteers can provide judges with the information they need to make the best decision for that child. With no allegiance to any particular agency, oblivious to caseloads and financial constraints, a CASA volunteer can make things happen. A CASA volunteer will bring continuity to cases and facilitate necessary services for timely, safe, permanent placement for the children in Brush Country CASA. Brush Country CASA will provide exclusive advocacy for each child and his or her best interests. When a CASA volunteer is utilized in Child Protective Services cases, that child is ushered through the system more expeditiously, therefore saving Texas taxpayers money.

All volunteers must successfully pass an extensive background check, attend a 30-hour training, and complete 12 hours of annual continuing education. The supervisors and volunteers act as fact-finders for the court by conducting interviews, making home and/or foster placement visits, monitoring the progress of cases, and submitting reports to the judge. They research the situation of the child they are court-ordered to serve, and make written and oral recommendations directly to the court. According to need and availability, the presiding judge appoints CASA to a case.

CASA of Kleberg County was organized in 2001 to initially serve the rural area of Kleberg County and expanded its program to include Brooks, Duval, Jim Wells and Kenedy Counties in 2005. Brush Country CASA is an independent 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation. The Board of Directors assumes all responsibility for operation of the program. All policy, procedures and standards for Brush Country CASA are part of a comprehensive plan for managing risk to the program, its employees, volunteers and board members. Brush Country CASA accept court-referred cases that meet the definition of children who come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect and will not seek or accept appointment except in suits affecting the parent/child relationship brought by or involving the Department of Family and Protective Services/Child Protective Services.

Mission Statement

Brush Country CASA's Mission is to support dedicated community volunteers to advocate for children and youth within the child protective system who have experienced abuse or neglect.

Brush Country CASA is a member of the National CASA Association and Texas CASA. Brush Country CASA demonstrates compliance with Texas CASA standards through a quality assurance process.

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CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates)

Each year in this country, hundreds of thousands of children are placed in some form of foster care and thusly thrown into the court system. They have committed no crime, but are simply child victims who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned. It is then up to a judge to decide their futures. The judge must consider the following: (1) Did the conditions at home warrant removal? (2) Is the home now safe enough to allow the child's return or should that child be permanently placed in another home?

In the past, judges have often had to base such decisions on incomplete information. Overburdened child welfare workers and attorneys have had neither the time nor the resources to thoroughly monitor compliance with court orders or to find out first-hand what was truly happening with each individual child. Additionally, high turnover rates for Child Protective Services caseworkers, especially in the rural areas, aggravated the problems of lack of trust and consistency in the life a child who have been removed from his or her home. As reports of abuse and neglect keep crowding court dockets, more and more children have become quietly "lost" in the confusing maze of the foster care system.

Attitudes toward abused and neglected children have changed dramatically in the United States over the course of the last 50 years. In the first half of the 20th century, neglected and abandoned children were most commonly placed in institutional settings such as orphanages and asylums. Abuse was considered a family matter, and children were rarely removed from their homes because of physical harm inflicted by their parents. It wasn't until the early 1960's that child advocates succeeded in raising the awareness of the public and of the courts, and child abuse was recognized both as a serious problem and as a crime. During this period there was also growing recognition of the importance of a child's attachment to caregivers. Judges began placing children in families instead of in institutions, thus giving birth to the modern system of foster care.

By the 1970's, however, foster care had become permanent for too many children. It was not uncommon for children to be placed in a series of foster homes with no efforts made to reunite them with their biological parents or to find other permanent families. For these children, becoming a part of the foster care system meant the loss of a family for the remainder of their childhood. Consequently, national attention focused on the dynamics of child abuse and neglect, leading Congress to finally pass major laws that were instrumental in restructuring child welfare services in this country. These laws also laid the groundwork for the development of CASA programs.

Today, thousands of volunteers speak up for these children through CASA. CASA volunteers are assigned by a judge to represent the best interests of children whose cases are before the dependency court. Because of the access to confidential information through a court order, CASA volunteers serve as the eyes and ears for the judge, gathering relevant information about the case – from parents, foster parents, relatives, teachers, doctors, counselors and the child(ren). They interview anyone who might have information about the child(ren) and the family. The volunteers then make recommendations to the judge regarding what, in their judgment, is in the *child's best interest*. The focus of the CASA investigation is to identify the child(ren)'s needs, not to prove innocence or gather evidence for criminal prosecution.

A certified CASA volunteer is appointed by the court to advocate for children who come into the court system primarily as a result of abuse or neglect. The benefits of having citizens appointed as volunteer officers of the court extend far beyond the courtroom into the community at large. CASA volunteers are speaking out for improved services for children. As we do this, we are also raising awareness in our community about some of the problems abused children face. Volunteers bring no personal agendas into the courtroom – they are there because they **want** to be rather than because they **have** to be. CASA volunteers perform valuable work every day for children in foster care.

Volunteer Qualifications

Brush Country CASA ensures and monitors screening of all staff, volunteers and members of the governing board as follows:

- Declines or dismisses any prospective or current staff person, volunteer or governing board applicant found to have been convicted of, or having charges pending for a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse or neglect or related acts that would pose risks to children or the CASA/GAL program's credibility.
 - Barred Felony or Misdemeanor Offense: A board member, staff or volunteer whose background check produces a conviction, guilty plea, plea of no contest, acceptance of deferred adjudication or pending charge is permanently barred from service or employment if the charge is any level of offense under the Texas Penal Code, Chapters: 19, 20, 20A, 21.02, 21.07, 21.08, 21.11, 21.12, 22.011, 22.02, 22.021, 22.04, 22.041, 22.05, 22.07, 22.11, 25, 28.02, 29, 30.02, 33.021, 42.072, 43, 46.06, 46.09, 46.10, 48.02, 49.045, 49.05, 49.07, 49.08, 49.09, 71, or any other charge involving violence, child abuse or neglect, assault with family violence, a sex-related offense or a history of founded allegations of abuse with DFPS.
- Obtains written authorization and information for the Brush Country CASA and other appropriate agencies to secure, and secures, a background check on each prospective staff person, volunteer and governing board member initially, and at least every two (2) years if there are no rap back services to include:
 - A fingerprint-based check, conducted by the Texas Department of Public Safety (TDPS), in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). If unable to complete a fingerprint-based check after two attempts as determined by DPS, a name based criminal history check shall be completed with re-checks annually. Brush Country CASA shall retain documentation allowed by DPS.
 - National sex offender registry maintained by US Department of Justice and Texas Public Sex Offender Registry maintained by TDPS, if not included in the fingerprint-based check.
 - Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry maintained by the DFPS in accordance with federal law and Texas Family Code 261.002.
- Obtains the names of three (3) or more references that are unrelated to the applicant.
- Completes and documents all screening before the staff person, volunteer or governing board member is accepted by Brush Country CASA, and written verification is maintained on file at the Brush Country CASA office.
- Determines and monitors adherence to policies related to corrective action(s) for any current staff person, volunteer or governing board member who violates a Brush Country CASA policy, court rule or law that poses a risk to a child or negatively impacts Brush Country CASA.

All volunteers of Brush Country CASA must complete a written application as well as consent and release forms for appropriate background investigations. Background investigations may include but are not limited to the procurement of relevant information on Finger Print Background Check (FBC), Automated Background Check (ABC) and Social Security Number Verification that include national criminal history, state criminal history, Child Protective Services history, and Sex Offender history, from references, courts, the Central Registry, law enforcement, motor vehicles and other governmental agencies. If the candidate has lived in another state within the past seven (7) years, Brush Country CASA shall conduct a background investigation in that area.

Criminal history (including guilty pleas, pleas of no contest, acceptance of deferred adjudication, and charges, whether pending or not, and regardless of whether an offense is classified as a felony or misdemeanor) involving violence, child abuse or neglect, or sex or drug related offenses, or any other felony listed on the Texas CASA Standards 5.C.9, of an applicant or individual or of someone with whom the applicant or individual resides or regularly comes into contact with, will preclude that applicant or individual from volunteering with Brush Country CASA . For those who have been convicted of a felony not listed in Texas CASA Standard 5.C.9, the program will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the offense as well as other factors may influence the decision to accept the applicant as a volunteer. Furthermore, the refusal to execute consent and release forms shall disqualify an individual from becoming a volunteer with Brush Country CASA.

Driving Under the Influence convictions (including guilty pleas and pleas of no contest) or charges may disqualify individuals from volunteering with Brush Country CASA. A thorough investigation of the driving record and insurability of a person volunteering may be conducted. Documentation of a current driver's license and satisfactory personal liability insurance must be submitted regularly and kept in the volunteer file.

Brush Country CASA obtains the names of three (3) or more references that are unrelated to the applicant.

Record checks will be repeated every two (2) years in accordance with CASA Texas standards.

Volunteers of Brush Country CASA must notify the Executive Director immediately of any criminal charges filed against them.

Upon selection, prior to assignment of a case, each volunteer receives a copy of the conflict of interest policy, confidentiality policy, social media policy, and the current volunteer policies and procedures and provides signed acknowledgement of reading and understanding the policies which is retained by Brush Country CASA in the volunteer's record.

Volunteers transferring from another program must undergo the complete application and screening process as all of the new volunteers for Brush Country CASA.

Brush Country CASA responds to all potential volunteer inquiries within five (5) business days of receipt.

Brush Country CASA establishes and adheres to policies for acceptance, assignment and closure of cases. Once Brush Country CASA accepts appointment, advocacy and documentation of advocacy must begin and continue during appointment.

Training Requirements

Brush Country CASA delivers training to volunteers using the current National CASA/GAL Association Pre-Service Training curriculum (or equivalent curriculum and process for qualification of facilitators that is

reviewed and pre-approved in writing by National CASA/GAL Association in accordance with National CASA/GAL Association Use of Pre-Service Training Materials Policy).

The National CASA/GAL Association Pre-Service Training is to be delivered in accordance with one of the National CASA/GAL Association modalities and for the duration specified by the chosen modality, for a minimum of thirty (30) hours, including in-person contact for Brush Country CASA staff to evaluate the applicant's suitability to serve as a volunteer, as specified by the chosen modality.

The National CASA/GAL Association Pre-Service Training must be delivered by a qualified facilitator. A qualified facilitator has previously completed the National CASA/GAL Association Pre-Service Training in accordance with Texas CASA Standards, and

- Completed the National CASA/GAL Association Training of Facilitators, or
- Completed a training of facilitators provided by Texas CASA's facilitator who has completed the National CASA/GAL Association Training of Facilitators, or
- Co-facilitates their first pre-service training with a qualified facilitator who has completed the training of facilitators offered by the National CASA/GAL Association or Texas CASA.

In addition to 30 hours of pre-service training, Brush Country CASA requires each volunteer to complete courtroom observation(s) while the court is in session to observe abuse/neglect proceedings before appearing in court for an assigned case.

Brush Country CASA ensures that volunteers complete twelve (12) hours of continuing education annually (pro-rated based on the volunteer's date of swearing in) consistent with National CASA/GAL Association guidelines and Brush Country CASA documents completion of this requirement for each volunteer. Continuing education hours should be related to the work of best interest advocacy, and can be completed through a variety of sources and delivery methods such as education events hosted by Brush Country CASA or state organization (such as an annual conference), program-approved externally provided opportunities (in person or online), National CASA/GAL Association webinars, program-approved books and videos. To encourage a diverse learning experience, no more than four (4) hours of continuing education should be completed by reading books/articles.

In addition, in-service training, must include, but is not limited to, cultural competency on an annual basis, disproportionality, disparity in outcome training, and recognizing abuse.

Any volunteer who is inactive for over one (1) year must complete the full thirty (30) hours of training. In addition, all background checks and driving standards will be brought up to date.

Volunteers transferring from another program who have had a case within twelve (12) months must undergo the complete application and screening process, six (6) hours of pre-service training regarding local court laws, program policies and procedures, investigation and report writing and courtroom observation(s) as all of the new volunteers for Brush Country CASA.

Brush Country CASA works to diversify its staff, volunteers and governing board to reflect the population and meet the needs of children served. Brush Country CASA staff, volunteers and the governing board participate in, at least annually, education and training approved and documented by Brush Country CASA related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Guiding Principles

Brush Country CASA integrates the following guiding principles into all aspects of the programs practices, policies and procedures by recognizing the importance of family preservation and/or reunification:

- It is in a child's best interest to remain with their family of origin when safely possible.
- Brush Country CASA acknowledges that children experience trauma when separated from their family or origin.
- If a child is removed from their family of origin, it is in the child's best interest to be reunified with their family of origin as soon as possible.
- If a child is removed from their family of origin, the child should be placed with a relative whenever safely possible and in the child's best interest.
- Strengthening families, through recommendations for services, supports visitation and communications, is in the child's best interests to achieve stability and/or reunification.
- Brush Country CASA requires and demonstrates respect for the parents and all parties associated with the case.
- Brush Country CASA ensures that information regarding the family's strengths is incorporated into reports to the court.
- Brush Country CASA ensures that information regarding the child's wishes is incorporated into reports to the court.
- When a court determines a child cannot be safely reunified with their family of origin consistent with legal mandates, another permanent placement is in a child's best interest.

In addition, Brush Country CASA recognizes the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion:

- All children regardless of age, race, ethnicity, national origin (ancestry), color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or physical challenge, or socioeconomic status should be safe, have a permanent home and an opportunity to thrive.
- Brush Country CASA acknowledges the existence of implicit bias and takes steps to minimize and/or eliminate implicit bias.
- Brush Country CASA demonstrates an understanding of disproportionality impacting children who are in the child protection system due to allegations of abuse or neglect.

Brush Country CASA provides orientation, training and continuing education for staff, volunteers and nonprofit governing board members about these guiding principles.

Volunteer Advocate – Child Relationship

The volunteer advocate is responsible for establishing a relationship with the child that promotes the child's well-being and enhances the advocate's objectivity while serving as the CASA Volunteer/Guardian ad Litem. **In order to establish such a relationship, the advocate is prohibited from the following activities:**

- Introducing or identifying the child as a CASA child to anyone not professionally related to the child's case
- Involving the child with anyone who is not related to the child's case
- Taking the child to the advocate's home or any home other than the child's current placement
- Giving or lending money or expensive gifts to the child, the child's family or caregiver
- Accepting expensive gifts or significant material support from the child or family
- Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling

- Making placement arrangements for the child
- Taking a child on an overnight outing
- Allowing the child to come into contact with someone the volunteer knows has a criminal history involving violence, child abuse, neglect, drugs, or a sex related offense
- Making a recommendation or intervening in the physical removal of children to initiate a legal case prior to CPS making a recommendation on the removal based on their investigation.

Additionally, the CASA Volunteer is prohibited from:

- Engaging in activities which are likely to result in a conflict of interest or expose the program or volunteer to criminal or civil liability
- Causing a child or family to become dependent on the CASA volunteer for services that are provided by other agencies or organizations. These activities may jeopardize the safety of the child, the integrity of the program, or the objectivity of the volunteer

No CASA program staff or volunteer shall provide:

- Housing or lodging for children
- Bathing facilities for children
- Supervision of a child overnight or for any shift while a child is in the physical custody of CPS.

Case Closure

The role of a Court Appointed Special Advocate is by nature a transitory one. An effective advocate recognizes that abused and neglected children face many unpredictable transitions in their lives. In order to lessen the negative impact of such transitions, an advocate is responsible for providing a healthy transition for the child(ren) when CASA is dismissed from the case. It is Brush Country CASA's expectation that each volunteer advocate will carefully plan and execute their final contact with their CASA child(ren), and that their exit from the case not be abrupt. An advocate's Child Advocacy Specialist/supervisor can provide resources to assist in smooth transitions for children.

Upon case closure, a record (e.g. court order, case closure summary, recording in database) is made of the date and reason for closure.

Volunteer Advocate Contact with the Child(ren) After their Case is Closed

In very specific cases, when a youth is on track to become independent and is without adult support or permanency, his or her volunteer advocate may choose to maintain a friendship. This is not an expectation of CASA and the role would not be as the youth's CASA, but rather as a friend who agrees to be supportive in selective ways. The Permanency Contract is beneficial in defining this relationship. This would occur only after the case has closed and the case files have been returned to the CASA office.

Child Abuse, Non-violent verbal/Non-verbal Disciplinary Methods

Rarely will a staff member or volunteer be faced with a situation where it is appropriate to discipline a child. However, it is reasonable to assume this situation may occur. Therefore, Brush Country CASA takes the following position regarding disciplinary methods.

It is expected that CASA volunteers will comply with all laws regarding child abuse as specified in the Texas Family and Penal Codes. Furthermore, Brush Country CASA does not endorse or condone any form of violent disciplinary methods toward children. **Physical discipline shall not be used by anyone representing Brush Country CASA under any circumstance. Further, using language or mode of speech that is degrading or embarrassing (i.e. abusive verbal communication) is not an acceptable form of discipline.** Discipline must be constructive and educational in nature. Correction must be fair, reasonable, consistent and related to the specific misbehavior. Discipline should be individualized and age-appropriate.

Any incident of unacceptable verbal/non-verbal discipline (as described/defined above) of a child that occurs while conducting CASA business will be considered child abuse and appropriately reported to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Any staff or volunteer who is alleged to have engaged in any form of child abuse will be reported to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and immediately placed on administrative leave for the duration of the investigation. If child abuse allegations are substantiated, the volunteer and/or staff members involved will be subject to immediate termination.

If any staff member, volunteer advocate or board member has reason to believe a child has been mistreated or has reason to believe that a child is in imminent danger, that person has an obligation to comply with the Texas Family Code 261.101 regarding the requirement to report child abuse and neglect. **Child abuse can be reported to TDFPS at 1-800-252- 5400.**

Child Visitation and Transportation

In the course of fulfilling the duties as a child's advocate, it will be necessary for the volunteer advocate to have in-person contact with their CASA child(ren).

When the practice of transporting children is not prohibited in the state, and the CASA program allows staff or volunteers the use of a personal vehicle for transportation of children, the CASA program ensures that the staff or volunteer who has agreed to provide the transportation has passed a motor vehicle division record check annually.

CASA staff and volunteer advocates must provide annually to the CASA program a copy of a valid unexpired current driver's license, and proof of adequate personal automobile insurance that meets the required state minimum if one exists or the CASA program's insurance carrier minimum if absent a state minimum. **These documents, along with a signed transportation policy, must be on file in the CASA office before the staff or advocate can transport a child in an automobile.**

Advocates are expected to maintain a safe driving record and to cooperate with CASA to obtain copies of the same on request. Advocates must report all accidents immediately, as required by law. Advocates must also report all arrests and traffic convictions (including speeding tickets, accidents, failure to turn, etc.) to the Volunteer Data Specialist at CASA. Repeated traffic convictions or failure to report traffic accidents or convictions may result in disciplinary action.

An advocate may not transport a child in a vehicle other than a personal standard automobile without the written consent of the advocate's supervisor (or director) and the child's legal guardian or child's managing conservator. Advocates must have a valid driver's license for the type of vehicle to be operated, follow any restrictions listed on the license, and keep the license(s) with them at all times while driving.

Advocates must adhere to all safe driving rules mandated by state or local laws. Traffic laws in particular must be obeyed. The volunteer advocate and all passengers must wear seatbelts at all times. Children being transported must be secured in the appropriate type of car seat.

Brush Country CASA considers travel expenses incurred by volunteer advocates that are, at a minimum, of 100 miles one-way. The volunteer advocate must submit their gas receipt(s) within ten (10) business days. Brush Country CASA does not reimburse volunteer advocates for any case-related expenses incurred while performing the duties of a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

Records for all children served are kept up to date through current contact entries and monthly progress notes or summaries.

Exception Policy for In-Person Child Visits

The CASA program shall have regular and sufficient in-person contact with the child where they live to ensure in-depth knowledge of the case and make fact-based recommendations to the court.

Brush Country CASA staff and volunteer are to meet in-person with the child once every thirty (30) days at a minimum. To allow for an exception, the CASA program must have a written exceptions policy outlining circumstances when exceptions may be permitted. For any child not seen by an advocate within the prescribed time, without an approved exception, the CASA program staff must see the child within 10 days.

Based on geographic distances within the state of Texas, for children placed far from their home jurisdiction requiring excessive travel, an exception to monthly in-person visits may be granted based on distance to placement:

- If the child(ren) are placed further than sixty miles, less than 120 miles away, CASA will meet with the child in-person every other month, with a virtual visit or other age appropriate contact in the alternating months.
- If the child(ren) are placed more than 121 miles, less than 300 miles away, CASA will meet in-person with the child(ren) at least once every three months, with a virtual visit or other age appropriate contact in all other months.
- If the child(ren) are placed more than 301 miles away, CASA will meet in-person with the child(ren) in their place of residence at least once every six months, with a virtual visit or other age appropriate contact in all other months.
- Visits will occur in the child's place of residence at least 50% of the time.

Other types of monthly age appropriate contact with the child(ren) can include telephone calls, emails, video conferencing, letters and cards as applicable for the child's age and interests.

Confidentiality Policy

Brush Country CASA is committed to the confidentiality of certain information regarding its clients, volunteers, staff, Board and donors as a means of ensuring compliance with the law and protection of clients' safety and anonymity. Confidentiality is defined as the assurance that access to information regarding any client, volunteer, employee, board member or donor shall be strictly controlled, and that any violation of such control shall be a breach of faith. Information regarding any client, volunteer, employee, board member or donor of Brush Country CASA shall not be used for purposes that were not intended by the person when the information was provided. Information on individual clients is used solely for the provision of services for them.

Confidential information shall include but is not limited to the following:

- Any and all case files, records or other information regarding a current or former client, including their names, the addresses of employment, residence, and family addresses of clients, staff, volunteers, student interns, donors and board members
- Photographs taken of clients or volunteers unless explicit permission is provided to the Executive Director or assigned designee by the individual(s) involved
- The contents of any current or former employee's personnel file
- The contents of any current or former volunteer's file
- The contents of any current or former donor's records at CASA

Brush Country CASA will establish clear procedures for handling confidential information and information requests. This will include but is not limited to access to records, subpoenaed information, and release of information. The Executive Director or his/her designee shall be the custodian of all records and shall ensure that all policies and procedures are implemented correctly.

All board members, employees and volunteers will receive a copy of Brush Country CASA's Policy and will be asked to sign a Statement of Confidentiality. This statement will cover confidentiality during the board member's tenure or the employee's or volunteer's service, and will also include a provision for maintaining confidentiality after board tenure, employment or volunteer service is over.

Brush Country CASA protects confidential information of staff, volunteers, governing board and advisory committee members, donors, and the children and youth it serves.

All volunteers are required to take an oath of confidentiality upon completion of National CASA/GAL Association pre-service training and maintain a current, signed statement of acknowledgement of confidentiality policies upon initial case assignment, and at the acceptance of each new case.

All subpoenas for records must be served to the Executive Director (or his/her designee) as custodian of records. Response to a subpoena of records will be decided on a case-by-case basis. Brush Country CASA's supervisor/custodian of records will consult its attorney and may consult other legal advice regarding such subpoena. The response to the request will then become a part of the record. Brush Country CASA has the right to require twenty-four-hour notice for purposes of making the file available.

Except by order of the court, as a general rule, no information pertaining to a client, volunteer, employee or board member may be released without a properly executed written consent form.

Information may be released in an extreme emergency with the express approval of the Executive Director. This includes but is not limited to suspected child abuse, medical emergencies that are life threatening to the client or child, medical incompetence, or when the safety or welfare of the client is at extreme risk.

Brush Country CASA shall not share, except as state law or court order allows, the following: the child's full name; the child's location; the child's placement; the child's history of abuse and neglect; records regarding social services, law enforcement records, school records, records of a probate or court proceeding, medical, mental health or drug or alcohol treatment record; or any relevant records related to the child obtained as Guardian ad Litem or CASA advocate.

Brush Country CASA is required by law to report any act of child abuse, suspected child abuse, elder abuse, or disabled abuse to the proper authorities.

It is against Brush Country CASA's policy to keep confidential of any threats to human life of either a suicidal or homicidal nature.

Notwithstanding any of the above, Brush Country CASA may determine that disclosure of confidential information shall not be made even though all requirements of release have been met. Where Brush Country CASA concludes that the requested release would endanger the client, Brush Country CASA, other clients, staff, student interns, volunteers or board members, the Executive Director is not bound by the requirements of release. Brush Country CASA may also conclude that disclosure in a particular case will create an appearance of non-confidential services that will undermine the integrity of the program. The Executive Director (in consultation with an attorney) is authorized to resist disclosure by all appropriate and lawful means, citing statute, public policy, contractual obligation, constitutional privacy claims, etc. Where the client, nonetheless, seeks disclosure, the Executive Director should advise the President of the Board of the decision to resist and seek board support for her/his decision since CASA resources may have to be allocated to the protection of confidential information.

Financial or statistical information regarding policies, procedures, or methods of determining eligibility or any other information that does not identify a client is not considered confidential.

Confidentiality Procedures

Case Record

A confidential, written case record shall be maintained on each CASA client. The Executive Director will establish procedures for the review of these records. Brush Country CASA shall use the following procedures:

- All case records, open or closed, will be regarded as confidential and will be kept in secure, locked files in CASA Offices and shall not leave the control of Brush Country CASA at any time unless authorized by a release from the Executive Director. The Executive Director, or her/his designee, is the official custodian of the records.
- A volunteer advocate officially assigned to a case by Brush Country CASA may possess a copy of the case file on their assigned case ONLY. It is the responsibility of the volunteer advocate to protect the security and confidentiality of this file and to return this file to the CASA office immediately upon their resignation from the case.
- Brush Country CASA will release information contained in volunteer files to other CASA programs to which the volunteer advocate may apply in the future only with the express written permission of the volunteer advocate.
- Content of Case Records - Case records shall be considered to include all materials containing information provided by the client, other case parties, professional providers, including tape recordings, photos, videotapes, interviews, etc. The following shall govern the content of case records:
 1. The content of case files is limited to information that is required for statistical and funding purposes, establishing goals for permanency and for documenting the need for services.

2. Entry into client files must indicate the name and date of the staff member making the entry.
3. Client files must not include the names of other clients.

When a CASA program allows volunteers or staff to take photos of children, the CASA program has written policies that guide the purpose, use, distribution, storage and destruction of the photos after case closure.

- Policies allow photos only when:
 - Requested or required by the court to be included with or in the court report, or
 - Written permission is obtained from the legal guardian or the young adult, if 18 years of age or older.
 - Policies prohibit the use of photos for social media, marketing or personal use unless written authorization is provided by the legal guardian or the young adult, if 18 years of age or older.

Telephone Communication and Confidentiality

Brush Country CASA is committed to the preservation of private and safe telephone communications. New telephone technology makes privacy and safety more complicated and costly. All those associated with Brush Country CASA is expected to be conversant with strategies to preserve telephone safety and confidentiality for themselves and clients. It is critical that no confidential information is inadvertently disclosed and all volunteers will adhere to the Confidentiality Agreement.

Brush Country CASA evaluates and reduces potential liability by establishing and adhering to procedures to safeguard all staff, volunteer, governing board and Brush Country CASA confidential email, digital and electronic communications.

Conflict of Interest

It is important to avoid any conflict of interest that may arise on a case to which a volunteer advocate is assigned. The relationships that are established with case parties need to be treated with the utmost professionalism. A CASA volunteer is considered by other case parties as a paraprofessional on the case. This requires the advocate to act as a professional throughout the life of the case.

The following policy should be followed when a conflict of interest exists:

Personal – Definition: A volunteer advocate taking a personal role in a CPS case involving a friend or family member; being related to any party on the case to which you are assigned - e.g., acting as a character witness or placement option in another CPS case. A volunteer advocate should make a choice between their CASA case and the other CPS case. If the volunteer advocate chooses to continue with the CASA case they should not have any contact with any of the professionals on the other case. As well, they should not go to court or any other official meeting related to the other case.

Professional – Definition: A volunteer advocate has dual professional roles on the same case - e.g., serving as the CASA and the classroom teacher for the same child. The volunteer advocate should not accept that case or resign the case as soon as the conflict becomes apparent. This specifically includes but is not limited to acting as a foster parent to any child in the conservatorship of CPS, unless the volunteer is related to the child, or acting as an adoptive placement to any child in the conservatorship of CPS prior to adoptive consummation.

Endorsements – Definition: A volunteer advocate using their Court Appointed Special Advocate status to endorse a political candidate, product, program or service. Using CASA status for anything other than promoting the CASA program or serving as an advocate for a child is considered a conflict of interest and is strictly prohibited.

The volunteer advocate should immediately notify their supervisor if he/she becomes aware of any situation that has the potential to create a conflict of interest with a CASA case.

Brush Country CASA staff and volunteer advocates may foster or foster/adopt a child or children only when the case is based outside of Brush Country CASA's counties served or court jurisdiction; or if the staff or volunteer is biologically related or is fictive kin to the child, defined as a close, pre-existing relationship with the child prior to coming into care.

Individual CASA/GAL staff and volunteers have no contractual relationship with DFPS or designee within their court jurisdiction.

Communication

Official Communication

Because the volunteer advocate acts as a representative of Brush Country CASA on the case to which they are assigned, it is required that all official communication (case documents, letters, reports, notices, evaluations etc.) be routed through the Brush Country CASA office utilizing the agency's appropriate contact information.

A court report that includes findings and recommendations will be prepared by the volunteer advocate for each court date. This report will be submitted to the Volunteer Supervisor for discussion and review. The Volunteer Supervisor then secures signed approval from the Program Director prior to e-filing the report to the court.

Court reports should be submitted to the Volunteer Supervisor ten (10) days prior to each court date.

No report or recommendations will be altered by a Volunteer Supervisor without the knowledge and documented agreement of the volunteer advocate.

The CASA logo and letterhead are the property of Brush Country CASA and may not be used or reproduced without the consent of the Executive Director.

Informal Communication

Throughout the duration of the case, in the course of fulfilling the responsibilities of a volunteer advocate, it will be necessary for the advocate to communicate on a regular basis with case participants. Volunteer Advocates are required to contact and update their supervisor regarding their case monthly. Additionally, it is imperative an advocate's supervisor be kept apprised of important case developments. Volunteers are prohibited from making written recommendations to the court that have not first been discussed and agreed upon with their supervisor. Conversely, the supervisor may not submit written recommendation to the court without the knowledge and agreement of the volunteer advocate.

Email communication should be considered as written communication and as such it is essential to maintain objectivity and professionalism when communicating in this manner. All email communication can potentially be subpoenaed in the event of a trial. It is a good practice when utilizing email communication to copy the supervisor.

Social Media Policy

Online Communication and Social Media Guidelines

Brush Country CASA believes that social media, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support and community involvement for those who engage in advocacy for children who have been abused or neglected. We also believe it is important that those who choose to engage in social media understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss CASA-related topics. Our ability to serve children depends entirely on the trust and support of our community, and it is critical that we handle the confidential information entrusted to us responsibly.

When you engage in social media and online communication, you become a public figure. As a public figure that is associated with CASA, you have a responsibility to help protect this organization and our clients.

The following expectations, along with both positive and negative social media examples, are intended to give you guidance in both promoting and protecting CASA, and to protect the children we serve.

Online Communication and Social Media Expectations:

- 1. Never reveal confidential information.** Sharing stories that illustrate the value of CASA advocacy for children is often the most powerful way to engage the public in our cause and promote empathy for the children we serve. However, our standards and policies prohibit the sharing of confidential information.

It is unacceptable to discuss any identifiable details of current cases online. This includes names, ages, case-specific details, time-specific statements and the sharing of photographs. It is acceptable to discuss general details and to use non-identifying pseudonyms and non-time-specific statements so long as the information provided does not contain information recognizable to the family or others associated with the family or case. For example, use general terms such as “youth” instead of “13-year-old girl.” You should be careful to protect the dignity of families, children and social agencies, even if they are not named.

- 2. Use common sense.** Don’t put anything online that you would not want to see with your name attached to it on the front page of the newspaper where your boss, your mom, your co-workers and neighbors can read it. Remember, it is possible that you will work with this judge, supervisor, caseworker, lawyer, etc. again in the future or even bump into them on the street, so don’t burn bridges. Even if you don’t see them again, CASA definitely will and it is important not to hurt CASA’s relationships.

Keep in mind that anything you say online is not private. Evaluate what you say about working with CASA in advance to make sure that your online statements will not affect your position in the courtroom when you are advocating for a CASA child.

- 3. Don’t be a hero.** If you see something negative posted about CASA online, don’t jump to our defense immediately, because you might just feed the flames of someone who just wants to pick a fight online. Please inform us if you see a negative representation of Brush Country CASA online and we will determine the best way to respond.
- 4. Be transparent.** Identify yourself and your role at Brush Country CASA (staff/volunteer/board member) when you discuss CASA-related matters. Write in the first person. If you have a vested interest in something

you are discussing, be the first to point it out. **Be clear that you are speaking for yourself, that the opinions expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Brush Country CASA.**

- 5. Be considerate.** Remember that anyone, including fellow volunteers, board members, CASA children and CASA staff, may be actively reading what you publish online. Refrain from any communication intended to bash or embarrass Brush Country CASA, families, board members, donors or your colleagues. If you have suggestions for improvements, please go through the proper channels to air your concerns and share your suggestions. Always show proper consideration for other's privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory, such as politics, religion and sexual orientation. Although everyone has a **right** to their own personal opinions and views, we also have the **choice** to be kind, respectful and professional.

Always consider how other parties on a case might feel about your statements. While we recognize the tremendous work that CASA volunteers do every day, be careful about implying that another party on a case did not do their job adequately, or accidentally insulting anyone involved with the case, as you could hurt feelings and damage both your and CASA's relationship with those involved in this system.

- 6. Be accurate.** Even though your posts may be primarily made up of personal opinion, do your research well and check that your facts are accurate. Make sure you have permission to post any copyrighted information (e.g., research, statistics), and be careful about posting or linking to items that may contain viruses. Be the first to admit and correct your own mistakes.
- 7. Try to add value.** Does your posting provide worthwhile information and perspective? Does it help people better understand and feel more connected to our cause? Does it build a positive sense of community?
- 8. Always comply with the law in regard to copyright/plagiarism.** Never post someone else's work without their expressed permission (other than short quotes that comply with the "fair use" exceptions).
- 9. Be aware of laws related to libel and defamation of character.** Defamation of character can lead to lawsuits against the author of the statement and will reflect negatively on the CASA cause. In choosing your words or content, imagine your supervisor, your family and all parties on your CASA case are reading everything you post.

In #8 and #9 above, Brush Country CASA only wish to raise awareness of these issues. We believe this is an area in which our staff, volunteers and supporters should be aware of possible risk and try to inform themselves, but we are not offering any legal advice on these matters.

Positive Social Media Examples: These sample posts tell the CASA story without revealing confidential information about cases.

- #1:** Had a blast with my CASA kid at the local park and DQ. Especially, the seesaw, which we did over and over. What a hoot!
- #2:** Great day at court as a CASA volunteer! Can't believe what a difference one adult can make to a child. Learn more - Call (361) 595 – 7233.
- #3:** Happy to have played a part in an awesome adoption for my CASA kid! Become a CASA Volunteer (This could also be about a family reunification, etc.)

#4: Brush Country CASA rocks.....Come support CASA volunteers, so we can help more abused children at our fundraiser! Email brushcountrycasa@sbcglobal.net to see how you can help!

#5: Helped my CASA kid get the school supplies & clothes they needed for a great start to their school year! I'm rooting for their success!

Negative Social Media Examples: These sample posts either reveal too much information about a case or take a stance that could be damaging to future CASA relationships.

#1: Great day in court as a CASA volunteer! I was the only one up there who knew the child well and was able to help get the judge make a good recommendation.

#2: Finally, the judge in Kleberg County ruled correctly on my CASA case! So happy to see my CASA kid go to a happy and stable home.

#3: Had a blast yesterday with my 10-year-old CASA kid at Anderson Park and Pizza Hut. He loved the game machines, which we played over and over. What a hoot!

#4: Just attended the graduation of my CASA kid from H. M. King High School. I'm so proud!

Harassment Policy

Brush Country CASA is committed to maintaining high standards of professional conduct in the volunteer experience. In keeping with this commitment, we prohibit any form of harassment, which would have the effect of creating a threatening, uncomfortable, or hostile environment. Brush Country CASA categorizes any unwelcome conduct or discriminatory behavior based on a person being in a protected class (i.e., gender, ethnicity, sexual preference) as harassment. Examples of behavior that might be considered unwelcomed include jokes, slurs and offensive emails or comments.

Brush Country CASA promotes equity and inclusion through its governance, management, operations, recruitment, continuing education, retention and advocacy policies and practices.

It is the responsibility of all volunteer advocates to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to creating a harmonious environment that is free of sexual or otherwise unlawful harassment and intimidation. Each advocate will be held individually responsible for his or her acts of sexual or otherwise unlawful harassment while conducting their responsibilities for Brush Country CASA.

Brush Country CASA also recognizes that our advocates could become victims of harassment by an individual(s) outside of CASA but connected to the advocate's casework. It is the responsibility of each advocate to inform his/her supervisor (who will inform the Executive Director) if the advocate believes he/she is being harassed by any other individual connected to the advocate's casework.

Immediate and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken in response to any incident of harassment. Brush Country CASA will not retaliate against anyone for a good faith claim of harassment.

Safety

Volunteer advocates are prohibited from dispensing prescribed or over-the-counter medication to or authorizing medical treatment for the child without the permission and direction of the child's conservator or placement.

The advocate is expected to comply with Brush Country CASA's safe and drug free work policy (printed below) as it applies to employees.

Weapons Policy

No firearms, ammunition or weapons of any kind will be carried or transported by CASA employees, volunteers or board members while involved in any CASA-related activity. This prohibition includes those weapons carried under license issued by the State of Texas. Law enforcement agents are exempted from this policy. Violation may result in removal from service.

Safe and Drug Free Workplace Policy

Brush Country CASA is committed to providing volunteers and clients with a safe, efficient and productive environment. Using or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol may pose serious safety and health risks.

Drinking alcohol while in the presence of clients is prohibited. Keep in mind that the children we are assigned to may have had extreme experiences concerning alcohol abuse. It is strongly encouraged that alcohol is not consumed prior to meetings with the clients and is prohibited before transporting of clients.

Volunteers using prescription drugs or over the counter drugs are responsible for being aware of any potential side effects such drugs may have on their judgment or ability to perform their duties. If such use may impair the volunteer's judgment or ability to perform his/her job, the volunteer should report the potential side effects to his/her supervisor prior to meeting with clients. Together they can plan the best strategy for meeting the client's needs during the time the medication is required.

Any illegal activity will be reported to appropriate law enforcement officials. CASA will cooperate fully with law enforcement agencies in the detection, arrest and prosecution of any employee, board member, volunteer or other person engaged in such activity.

Support and Supervision of the Volunteer Advocate by Brush Country CASA

A Volunteer Supervisor will be assigned to each Volunteer Advocate.

It is the responsibility of the Volunteer Supervisor to work with the volunteer in selecting and matching them to a case in need of a CASA. This is done by discussing the case with the prospective CASA Volunteer/Guardian ad Litem (GAL) and once they have verbally agreed to accept the case, preparation of the Order of Appointment, Certificate of Acceptance and all other initial documents begin. The Program Director then e-files the Order to the District Clerk's office in the appropriate county and the notice is distributed to all parties of the case once the file stamped document is received.

The minimum ratio of volunteers to assigned children is 80%.

A volunteer advocate will not be assigned to more than two cases at a time. An exception may be granted in the discretion of the Executive Director; however, the decision to permit a higher caseload shall be documented as to

the justification for and reasonableness of the exception. Under the exception, a volunteer will not be assigned to more than five cases.

The Volunteer Supervisor will maintain contact with the Volunteer Advocate and provide guidance and feedback regarding issues that may arise on their case(s). The volunteer is encouraged to utilize the Volunteer Supervisor as a sounding board and resource regarding their case.

The Volunteer Supervisor shall meet monthly with the volunteer advocate by video conference, telephone, email, text or in-person meeting and review the volunteer's performance and the status of the case. They will, at this meeting also plan a course of action for the upcoming month.

The Volunteer Supervisor will review, and collaboratively edit as needed the volunteer's court report.

The Volunteer Supervisor will attend all court hearings with the volunteer.

In the event that the Volunteer Supervisor has to perform the duties of the Volunteer Advocate, the Volunteer Supervisor shall provide the advocacy and documentation of advocacy consistent with Texas CASA Standards (i.e. Standard 8.F.).

Brush Country CASA staff supervising volunteers full time will not supervise more than 30 active volunteers or a maximum of 45 cases. If the staff person is required to perform duties other than supervision of volunteers, the number of volunteers to be supervised shall be reduced pro rata.

The Volunteer Supervisor conducts a review of the case and the volunteer's performance of the job description of a CASA/GAL Volunteer on an ongoing basis and as a component of case closure.

It is rare for a Volunteer Advocate and the Volunteer Supervisor to be in conflict regarding their positions on a case however, at times this situation exists. The Volunteer Supervisor will attempt to mediate such conflicts. When a volunteer and supervisor have a conflict that cannot be resolved amongst themselves, the Executive Director and/or Program Director will act as a mediator to resolve the conflict. If a Volunteer Advocate and the Volunteer Supervisor cannot reach a consensus, it is imperative that the volunteer understand that Brush Country CASA is appointed to every child served by its program. Volunteer Advocates act as designated representatives of the CASA program. Therefore, Volunteer Advocates are expected to discuss areas of controversy and conflict and defer final judgment to Brush Country CASA.

Grounds for Immediate Dismissal from a Case

- Taking action without program or court approval that endangers the child or is outside the role or powers of the Brush Country CASA program
- Initiating ex-parte communication with the court
- Violating a program policy, court rule, or law
- Failing to complete the required Pre-service and In-service training
- Failing to demonstrate an ability to effectively carry out assigned duties
- Falsifying a volunteer application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process
- Having allegations of child abuse/neglect brought against you

- Experiencing an irresolvable conflict of interest

At the discretion of the Executive Director, a volunteer advocate may be dismissed/terminated for any reason that compromises the best interest of the child or the CASA organization.

Whistleblower Policy

The Brush Country CASA Board of Directors wants to be made aware of all unethical, inappropriate or illegal activities by members of the Board, staff or volunteers. Such information should be provided to the Board President. The reporter is afforded protection in making a good faith report about such activities.

Minimum Expectations of Service to a Case

CASA Will:

1. In a timely manner after appointment, obtain first hand a clear understanding of the needs and situation of the child by conducting an ongoing review of all relevant documents and records, including medical, psychological and school records; and interviewing the child, parents (as available and permissible), social workers, educators, child welfare service providers, Attorney Ad Litem, any foster parent, and other persons to gather facts and circumstances of the child's situation.
2. Maintain confidentiality of all issues and records of the case, returning all case files to the CASA program after the case is closed.
3. Notify all parties to the case of CASA's appointment.
4. Communicate with the DFPS caseworker after appointment and at least one time per month for the duration of the case.
5. Meets in-person with the child once every 30 days at a minimum.
6. Have other types of monthly age appropriate contact with the child(ren) including telephone calls, emails, video conferencing, letters and cards as applicable for the child's age and interests.
7. Meet in person with the child's primary placement provider in a timely manner after placement occurs, and communicate with the placement provider at least once a month thereafter for the duration of the assignment of the child's case.
8. Identify and advocate for the best interests of the child, considering the child's expressed objectives without being bound by those objectives, through monthly contact or documented attempts with the parents (as available and permissible), caregivers, case managers and Brush Country CASA staff.
9. Advocate for the child(ren)'s best interest in the community by interfacing with mental health, medical, legal, educational and other community systems to assure that the child(ren)'s needs in these areas are met.
10. Seeks information about whether a permanency plan has been created for the child and makes recommendations concerning permanency that encourage the permanent placement of children with their families, relatives or through timely placement with adoptive families.

11. Participate in all scheduled case related meetings.
12. Seek cooperative solutions by acting as a facilitator among parties maintaining communication with the child(ren)'s parents, family members, Attorney Ad Litem, teachers, and other service provides as applicable.
13. Appear at all hearings to advocate for the child(ren)'s best interest and permanency. Provide testimony when necessary, making recommendations for specific appropriate services for the child and when appropriate, the child's family, including referrals to existing community services. Provide written court reports for all permanency and review hearings.
14. On each case, assigned CASA staff and volunteers will communicate at least once monthly to update case files and contact logs and to participate in case conferences as scheduled.
15. Inform the court promptly of important developments in the case through appropriate means as determined by court rules and statute.
16. Monitor implementation of service plans and court orders assuring the court-ordered services are implemented in a timely manner and that review hearings are held in accordance with the law.
17. Advocate for the child's best interests in the community by quarterly interfacing with mental health, educational and other relevant systems, subject to confidentiality limitations, including reviewing the medical care provided to the child and eliciting, as appropriate, the child's opinion on the medical care provided.
18. Monitors the child to ensure the child's safety and to advocate against unnecessary relocations of the child to multiple temporary placements.
19. For a child at least 16 years of age, establishes whether the child has received the following documents: a certified copy of the child's birth certificate, a social security card or replacement card, a driver's license or personal identification certificate, and any other personal document Department of Family and Protective Services determines appropriate.
20. Seeks to elicit in a developmentally appropriate manner the name of any adult, particularly an adult residing in the child's community, who could be a relative or designated caregiver and/or connection for the child, and immediately provide the names of those individuals to the Volunteer Supervisor and the Department of Family and Protective Services or SSCC.
21. Participate in In-service training.

Crime Victims Qualification Procedures

Process for Handling CVC Applications for Child Victims

- When a volunteer accepts a new case, the volunteer will research qualifications for Crime Victims Compensation.
- The Volunteer Supervisor will document in the case file if the case qualifies for claim assistance.
- If the case qualifies for CVC assistance, the Program Director will contact the family to assist with application completion for all child victims.

- If the child is permanently placed in a foster home or is adopted, the volunteer will follow up to tell the permanent caregiver the information about the child's benefits and how to file a claim.

A claim should be filed when there is reason to believe there has been a criminally injurious act to the child such as sexual assault, child endangerment or physical abuse and such a crime has been reported to law enforcement.

- When a child's case documentation submitted to the CASA program indicates that there were possible criminal violations by the parent(s) that may have included elements of child endangerment and these violations were reported to law enforcement, then a claim should be filed. The OAG will investigate the case and determine if elements of endangerment did exist and if the child is eligible for benefits.
- Claims should be filed with:

Office of the Attorney General
Crime Victim Services Division, CVC Program
P.O. Box 12198
Austin, TX 78711-2198

Main Statewide Phone: 1-800-983-9933
Austin Phone No.: 512-936-1200
Fax No.: 512-936-1800
www.oag.state.tx.us

- The Program Director and/or Volunteer Supervisor and CASA Volunteer will insure that follow-up is provided so that when the child finds a permanent home and is placed out of CPS custody, the new family is notified that a claim was submitted and the child may be eligible and approved for future CVC benefits.

A claim should not be filed if the case information provided to the CASA program only indicates neglect and does not include a law enforcement report. The CASA program should document this in the child's file.



Volunteer Policy and Procedure Manual Acknowledgement

I have received a copy of and have read the Brush Country Volunteer Policy and Procedure Manual, and am familiar with its terms. I understand that it is not a binding contract, but a source of information and a set of guidelines for implementation of program policies. I understand that Brush Country CASA can unilaterally rescind, modify or make exceptions to any of these policies, or adopt new policies, at any time. I also understand that the provisions of this Manual will supersede any contrary statements, representations or assurances made by any supervisory personnel except those made in writing by the Board of Directors.

I also understand that, notwithstanding any of the provisions of this Manual, that I am not obligated, if called upon, to accept a case herein applied for, and that Brush Country CASA is not obligated to assign me to a case. As a part of CASA's policy, additional personal information may be gathered during the interview process. Brush Country CASA retains the right to refuse any individual it feels would not be appropriate for the program and CASA is not required to state the reason(s) for non-acceptance. I further understand that my volunteer role with Brush Country CASA may not be modified except by a written document approved by the Board of Directors and signed by the Executive Director, who I understand is the only individual with authority to make such modifications on behalf of Brush Country CASA.

Volunteer Advocate

Date

CASA Staff

Date

Please sign this page and return it to the Executive Director immediately. A copy of this acknowledgment will be retained in your volunteer file.