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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much time is involved in being a CASA?

Once you complete the training (you must attend all training sessions), our CASAs spend from 3-15 hours a month, on average. Over 40% of our CASA volunteers work full time.

What is the daytime commitment?

Observation of Family Court - one morning or afternoon (approx. 3 hours), to complete the CASA training.

Case assignment - after you are assigned your case you will need to go to the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) office to read their record. This can take from 1 – 5 hours.

If you have a case that is reviewed in court, you would want to attend court that day – approximately 3 hours. These reviews are usually once every three months.

Daytime meetings take place at various agencies, 1-2 hours, once a month.

If the child is school age - you may want to visit their school to meet with the principal, guidance counselor, and/or teacher, which can only be done during the day.

Most contact, after the initial one with agencies and their staff, can be done over the phone - you must be able to talk in private on the phone during the day.

Visits to CASA children, relatives, and some agencies can take place in the evening or weekend.

How is CASA different from the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP)?

The case managers from DCPP have many cases. They have to provide services for the whole family. A CASA concentrates only on one child or family of children.

CASA for Children of Mercer and Burlington Counties is a not-for-profit agency. We are not part of the court or social services system. This helps us to maintain an independence from these agencies.

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How attached does a CASA become to the child(ren)?

CASAs do not have a close relationship with the child the way a Big Brother or Big Sister would. As an advocate, you see the child approximately twice a month. The CASA role is to facilitate services for the child, not to have the child or the family become dependent upon them.

Do CASAs go into the homes of the birth parents whose children have been removed?

CASAs meet birth parents in neutral places – such as: diners, fast-food restaurants, the place they may go for therapy or visits with their child, or outside the courtroom. The safety of the volunteer is very important to us. If the child is going to be reunited with the parent(s) the CASA often goes to visit where they live shortly before this takes place, as part of their independent assessment of the situation.

How do professionals feel about CASAs?

We are very fortunate that we have a wonderful working relationship with DCPD, Family Court, and the other service providers involved with the CASA children. We are constantly working cooperatively and meet on a regular basis to prevent misunderstandings.

CASA is endorsed Nationally by the American Council of Family Court Judges, American Bar Assoc., and is a priority project of the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

All volunteers are selected based upon their individual ability to meet the responsibilities of the CASA program. No individual will be rejected because of culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, national origin, race or sexual orientation.