

Court Appointed Special Advocate Policy

POLICY: Oregon Revised Statutes provide legal protection for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) by stating that CASAs’...**shall be immune from any liability for acts or omission or errors in judgment made in good faith in the course and scope of that person’s duties or employment as part of a CASA volunteer program.**” (ORS 419A.170(5)). To demonstrate good faith. The following procedures must be followed. Failure to follow these procedures may result in probation or immediate dismissal from one’s duties as a Court Appointed Special Advocate

1. CASA volunteers must maintain absolute confidentiality regarding the children they represent and their families. This procedure is the cornerstone of the CASA program, and reflects the CASA’s legal (ORS 419A.170 and 419A.255), moral, and ethical obligations to protect this child’s and family’s rights to privacy.
 - a. The CASA may discuss and release information to legal parties of the case, including only the following persons: the parents and their attorneys, the children and their attorneys, the Child Welfare case worker, Deputy District Attorney, Assistant Attorney General, CASA Program Manager, and the Judge.
 - b. The CASA may discuss and release information on order of the court.
2. A CASA volunteer should never have a child in his or her care or custody, nor be responsible for the child. This is to protect the children served by the CASA program. It also protects the CASA from unfounded accusations of abuse, and from becoming inappropriately emotionally involved with the child.
 - a. Examples of inappropriate practice include: providing transportation to the child; taking a child home or sheltering in the home; and taking the child to the restaurant or park, no matter how nearby.
3. CASA volunteers should not provide direct services to children or their families. This is to help keep the CASA’s role very clear, and to prevent CASA volunteers from becoming involved in activities that could jeopardize their objectivity, lead to conflict of interest or to liability problems, or cause a child or family to become dependent on the CASA for services.
 - a. The CASA’s role is to advocate for services, not provide them. Some examples of inappropriate volunteer practices are: giving legal advice or counsel; transporting the parent or child; supervising visits between the parent and child, being a big brother or big sister to the child; making placement arrangements for the child; arranging appointments for drug treatment, counseling, parent training classes and any other services; performing crisis counseling or other counseling; and giving money or gifts to the child or family (other than a very small gift such as a color book or token item that serves a purpose; very small means less than \$5; even very small gifts should be given infrequently).
4. A CASA volunteer does not engage in activities that jeopardize the safety of the child, the integrity of the program, or the objectivity of the volunteer, or in activities that are likely to result in a conflict of interest or expose the program or volunteer to criminal or civil liability. The CASA volunteer also abides by the National CASA Code of Ethics.

- a. The CASA must never establish a personal or professional relationship (other than as a CASA) with a child or the child's family.
 - b. To avoid conflicts of interest, a CASA shall not be appointed to a child with whom or with whose family the CASA has a professional or personal relationship.
 - c. Discuss any doubtful activities with the CASA Program Manager.
5. A CASA volunteer must report any suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities and to the CASA Program Manager. It is also important to inform the current Child Welfare case worker or the worker's supervisor. To report suspected incidents of abuse, call the Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-547-3897 or 9-1-1.
 6. If you think you have broken one of these procedures, call your CASA Program Manager immediately. The CASA Program Manager will work with you to sort out and fix any problems that result, and your actions will demonstrate good faith.