

**THE BUFFALO TRACE CASA PROGRAM,**  
**INC**

**VOLUNTEER MANUAL**

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**



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## **BUFFALO TRACE CASA PROGRAM**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Buffalo Trace CASA Program, Inc. is to provide trained community volunteers to speak for children in court who are victims of dependency, neglect and/or abuse.

### **HISTORY OF NATIONAL CASA**

In 1976, Judge David Soukup of Seattle, Washington, then the presiding Judge of the King County Superior Court, began to look for ways to make sure the best interest of the child could be consistently presented to the Court. He felt that he needed more information to determine what placement would be best for a dependent, abused and neglected child's long-term welfare. He also felt that if he could have someone to make an independent investigation and submit a report, this would enhance his decision-making ability. Realizing that there was a lack of funding, Judge Soukup recruited and trained community volunteers asking them to make a long-term commitment to each child for whom they would serve as *guardian ad litem*. His concept became an active program on January 1, 1977. In its first year the program provided 110 trained *guardians ad litem* for 498 children in 376 dependency cases.

In the fall of 1977, the Children in Placement Committee of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Courts Judges (NCJFCJ) was developing guidelines to assist the juvenile justice system in protecting the child's right to a safe and permanent home. When the Seattle program came to its attention, the Committee voted to incorporate the Seattle volunteer concept as one of its models. The Committee coined the term "Court Appointed Special Advocate" (CASA) denoting any volunteer who follows a clearly defined role. With Florida taking the lead, states began to pass legislation authorizing such programs.

Currently, there are 950 CASA/GAL programs in 49 states recruiting, training and supporting volunteers to represent the best interests of children who have been neglected or abused. The programs are known by different names: CASA, GAL, Pro-Kids, Child Advocates, and Foster Child Advocate Services.

### **HISTORY OF LOCAL CASA**

The CASA Program for Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties, Inc., was incorporated in 1998 as a 501(c)3 organization. The Honorable Todd Walton II and his assistant, Brenda Donahue, researched the information on how to establish a local CASA branch. With the help of many local supporters, the CASA Program for Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties, Inc. was established.

The primary impact of CASA is three-fold. First, providing the Court with a reliable and consistent source of information, from an independent perspective, allowing for

enhanced decision making on behalf of the Court. Without CASA as a resource, unnecessary court delays and continuances may occur. Second, continuous monitoring by a CASA Volunteer reduces the likelihood of further abuse and neglect and allows for faster response time by the Court if such events do occur. Finally, the CASA Program serves as an important asset to other agencies involved, such as the Department for Community Based Services (referred to as DCBS), in working toward the goal of a safe and permanent home for all abused, neglected or dependent children.

In 2021, with the approval of the Kentucky CASA Network and National CASA, the CASA Program for Bracken, Fleming, and Mason Counties, Inc. expanded into Nicholas and Robertson Counties and the program changed its name to the Buffalo Trace CASA Program, Inc.

### **GOVERNANCE**

An independent non-profit Board of Directors is set in place to govern over the Buffalo Trace CASA Program. The Board of Directors is comprised of at least 15 citizens (but not more than 21) representing each county in the Buffalo Trace CASA Program with expertise in various relevant areas that support and promote the project within the community. The Board monitors the operations of the program in accordance with CASA By-Laws, complies with National CASA and Kentucky CASA Network Standards. CASA for Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties, Inc. is a member of both the Kentucky CASA Network and the National CASA Association.

### **STATISTICS**

Regular reports provide valuable information in regard to the demographics of clientele, volunteer hours on specific projects as well as the overall program's activity. This data is collected and reported to funding sources and annual reports are submitted to the CASA Board of Directors, the National CASA Association and the Kentucky CASA Network. This information is also made available to all stakeholders.

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### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CASA PROGRAM & CASA VOLUNTEERS**

The Buffalo Trace CASA Program, Inc. is an independent agency that advocates for children that are victims of dependency, neglect and/or abuse and whose case is involved in the juvenile court system. We are officers of the court. CASA Volunteers are independent investigators appointed by the Court with and under the supervision of the CASA Program. CASA Volunteers are appointed to objectively advocate on behalf of the child. Recommendations and reports submitted to the Court act as the voice of both the CASA Program and the CASA Volunteer. While CASA Volunteers are independent advocates for abused and neglected children involved in the court

system, they are not independent from the CASA Program and must adhere to their policies, procedures and program philosophies.

A CASA Volunteer is guided by professional CASA Program staff who have a thorough knowledge of each case, statutory requirements and the social service delivery system. The CASA Program staff define the framework for the volunteer's conduct and ensure that the recommendations provided to the Court reflect realistic expectations that are within the parameters of the Court's jurisdiction (*National CASA Guide to Program Development*).

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## **KRS DUTIES OF CASA VOLUNTEER: LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **620.525 Duties of CASA volunteers.**

- (1) CASA volunteers who have a conflict of interest in a case shall not be appointed to the case.
- (2) The CASA volunteer shall:
  - (a) Attend all court hearings except that the CASA volunteer may be excused by the court or the program director if emergency circumstances arise;
  - (b) Submit a written report and recommendation to the judge for consideration in determining the best interest of the child at the dispositional hearing, dispositional review hearings, other hearings as requested by the court, and at least one (1) report every six (6) months for as long as the case is assigned to a CASA volunteer;
  - (c) Monitor the case by visiting the child as often as necessary to observe whether the child's essential needs are being met and whether court orders are actually being carried out;
  - (d) Participate in any treatment planning conferences and reviews involving the child to assess whether reasonable efforts are being made to provide services to the child and family and determine the appropriateness and progress of the child's permanent plan;
  - (e) Advocate a prompt, thorough review of the case if the child's circumstances warrant the attention of the court;
  - (f) Interview parties involved in the case, including interviewing and observing the child;
  - (g) Maintain complete written records about the case;
  - (h) Report any incidents of child or adult abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities and to the program director;
  - (i) Remain actively involved in the case until dismissed from the case by the program director or judge with competent jurisdiction, or when an adoption proceeding is finalized;
  - (j) Return all case-related materials including, but not limited to, written notes, court reports, and agency documents, to the program director upon the request of the program director; and
  - (k) Work with the cabinet representatives to advocate the best interest of the child.

**Effective:** July 15, 1996; **History:** Amended 1996 Ky. Acts ch. 245, sec. 7, effective July 15, 1996. -- Created 1990 Ky. Acts ch. 264, sec. 6, effective July 13, 1990.

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## **VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT**

Volunteers will be recruited year-round through local print, community events, and social media outlets. CASA Volunteer Training events to be held quarterly as necessary to serve the need for and supply of volunteers.

Volunteers will be recruited by:

- Recruitment stories and/or ads in local and area media including social media
  - Recruitment posters/fliers to be posted prior to training events
  - E-mail campaigns
  - Social Media campaigns
  - The program website
  - Contact via phone, mail and e-mail of prospective volunteers as maintained in the Optima database \*
  - Speaking engagements with civic groups and organizations
  - Board of Directors and CASA Volunteers to help recruit one new volunteer annually
  - Community events

\*Calls, mail or e-mail correspondence will verify with each individual that they wish to remain a prospective volunteer if they are unable to attend the current training session.

## **VOLUNTEER POLICIES:**

### **APPLICATION & SCREENING PROCESS**

1. All individuals must complete and submit a written application, which shall contain information about the applicant's educational background, training, employment history and experience working with children.
2. Upon receipt of the application, the designated staff member will check the applicant's references and submit forms for a criminal records check, State Background check, a Child Abuse & Neglect Registry check, Sexual Offender Registry check, Caregiver check and National check. If an applicant has lived out of state within the past five years, similar records will be requested from the state(s), as permissible by law.
3. Program staff will conduct personal interviews with the applicant.
4. Program staff shall have the discretion to seek information from other individuals or agencies that may have knowledge of the applicant in order to further determine suitability to serve as a CASA Volunteer.
5. Any applicant that refuses to consent to all required background checks, or who is found to have been convicted of, or has charges pending for a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse/neglect or related acts would, in



the judgement of the program staff, pose risks to children or the program's credibility and shall not be allowed to serve as a CASA Volunteer.

6. When an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is unrelated to, or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the program, the program staff shall consider the extent of rehabilitation since the act was committed and other actions to determine the applicant's suitability to serve as a CASA Volunteer.
7. All information gathered during the screening process will be held in strict confidence and is for internal use only.
8. All applicants must successfully complete pre-service training consistent with state law and National CASA standards.
9. At any stage during the application, interview and training process, the program staff shall have the discretion to reject the applicant if, in their judgement, the individual would not be a good fit for the program or would be ineffective as a CASA Volunteer. Any such decision shall be final.
10. Upon completion of training, the applicant will be invited to be sworn in by a District Court Judge and take an Oath of Confidentiality. Each sworn volunteer signs a statement of commitment and agrees to **SERVE AT LEAST ONE YEAR** as a CASA Volunteer.

#### **VOLUNTEER SCREENING:**

The screening process will consist of the following steps and will be in compliance with National CASA standards.

1. **Initial Contact:** All interested persons will receive a CASA Volunteer application and any other information necessary such as links to CASA's website, brochures, etc.
2. **Applications:** All completed and returned applications will be reviewed by program staff. All written applications will receive correspondence regarding the status of said application. CASA Volunteer applications will be in compliance with National CASA standards.
3. **Criminal Records Check:** Upon receipt of the required and signed background check form, a thorough background check meeting all National and State of Kentucky requirements for CASA Programs will be initiated. A designated program staff member will verify the applicant's references and submit forms for their criminal records check, the Child Abuse & Neglect registry check and the sexual offender registry check. If an applicant has lived out of state within the past five years, similar records will be requested from that state(s), as permissible by law.
4. **Personal Interview:** All applicants who successfully meet the requirements to be a CASA Volunteer will be contacted by phone or in writing/e-mail to schedule their personal interview. The interview must take place prior to Swearing In or any case assignments. Interviews will be conducted by at least one program staff member.

5. **Volunteer Training:** Volunteer training is required for all applicants who wish to perform tasks and duties as a CASA Volunteer for The Buffalo Trace CASA Program, Inc.
6. **Certification of CASA Volunteer:** Upon successful completion of all formal training requirements, the Volunteer Coordinator(s) and/or Executive Director will recommend to the Court names of those applicants who are to be certified as CASA Volunteers. At such time a Swearing-In ceremony will be scheduled by the Volunteer Coordinator(s) and/or Executive Director with the District and/or Family Court Judge.

All personal records received during the screening process, i.e. the application, records and reference checks, interview notes, etc. will be maintained by program staff. These records are confidential and shall be filed in a manner that they shall be inaccessible to the general public.

CASA Volunteers must meet the following criteria:

1. Be at least 21 years of age.
2. Never been found guilty of, or pleaded guilty or nolo contendere to, or have charges pending for, any felony or crime involving abuse or neglect, or abandonment of a minor child, or for related acts that would pose a risk to children.
3. Submit a written application with at least three (3) references.
4. Submit to a personal interview.
5. Pass all required background checks as listed in the CASA requirements and ensure that the CASA Program receives a written response from all three (3) given references.

CASA Volunteers shall possess the following skills:

1. Independent and objective thinking.
2. Dedication to completing a thorough investigation.
3. Ability to serve as an active CASA during the entire litigation of the case.
4. Impartiality.
5. Verbal and non-verbal communication skills.
6. Willingness and ability to learn.

The Volunteer's special expertise in such fields as child development, substance abuse and special needs may be particularly useful to the Court. The volunteer's life experiences also may contribute to their ability to deal sensitively with the children on their cases.

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## **VOLUNTEER TRAINING**

Volunteer training will be in compliance with National CASA standards and shall utilize National CASA training materials. Training will consist of a minimum of 30 hours of pre-service training and shall observe 3 CASA Court Cases. During the training, the potential applicant, will spend one-on-one time with the CASA Staff in order to evaluate the applicant's appropriateness to serve as a CASA Volunteer. After the training, the Volunteer will spend time with the CASA Staff in personal contact with and under supervision of program staff. The CASA/GAL Program provides Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) compliance information and resources to all volunteers. In-service training opportunities include, but are not limited to, cultural competency, disproportionality, disparity in outcome training and recognizing abuse.

### **ORIENTATION & TRAINING:**

The Buffalo Trace CASA Program, Inc. uses the training curriculum developed by the National CASA Association.

### **CONTINUING EDUCATION:**

CASA Volunteers are required to complete a **MINIMUM** of 12 hours of continuing education each year after completion of their formal training.

To meet this requirement the CASA Program will provide in-service training meetings, including refresher courses. In addition, CASA Volunteers may use other appropriate educational opportunities toward their 12-hours of continuing education.

- Examples: reading a book relating to your work; seminars; educational programs on television; on-line educational material; webinars; Kentucky CASA Network Resources; National CASA Resources; any applicable professional trainings, etc. Outside trainings may be approved for training hours if they are applicable to the role of a CASA Volunteer and are approved by CASA Program staff.

Regarding books, volunteers should make a short, written report (1 page or less) or provide other documentation such as a seminar agenda to the CASA Program office so that this may be documented in the Volunteer's file. It is the **VOLUNTEER'S RESPONSIBILITY** to report all continuing education hours to the CASA Program staff in order for the volunteer to get proper credit for their hours. Continuing Education hours must be completed by **DECEMBER 31st** of each year. When the CASA budget allows, we will cover the cost of registration for CASA Volunteers to attend the Kentucky CASA Network's State Conference.

### **TRAINING EVALUATION:**

Quality and pertinent training is of the utmost importance to the CASA Program. The Buffalo Trace CASA Program, Inc. provides thirty hours of initial, pre-service training, which is based on the recommended curriculum published by the National CASA Association. Program staff and community professionals provide this training to potential volunteers. Program staff and community professionals also provide

twelve hours of professional in-service training yearly for all sworn-in CASA Volunteers. In an attempt to provide dynamic and useful topical sessions, all participants are requested to fill out an individual Session Evaluation Form. The CASA Program's Executive Director and other staff will review these forms prior to planning and presenting future training events. This evaluation process will provide for continuing improvement and will allow program staff to better meet the training needs of all CASA Volunteers.

**REACTIVATION OF VOLUNTEERS:**

Volunteers who have been inactive for **12 months or more must re-train** and meet all current training requirements. This training will consist of a minimum of 30 pre-service training hours, during which time these volunteers will spend a minimum of 10 hours in personal contact with and under the supervision of program staff in order to evaluate the volunteer's appropriateness to once again serve as an active volunteer.

When volunteers are reactivated, they will be expected to complete a prorated amount of continuing education in order to meet the minimum requirement of 12-hours of continuing education annually. Other refresher courses or one-on-one trainings may be recommended, as needed, by CASA Program staff.

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**VOLUNTEER SUPERVISION, SUPPORT & MANAGEMENT:**

All CASA Volunteers are under the supervision of the CASA Program staff. Volunteers are held accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities. The Volunteer Coordinator will utilize the following to evaluate the performance of all CASA Volunteers:

- Direct Contact
- Written Reports – **due 7 days before COURT HEARINGS**
- Attendance and participation at monthly meetings and monthly contacts
- Case records (activity forms, mileage reimbursement forms, documents, Optima, etc. should be submitted on a **MONTHLY** basis)
- Adherence to Policies & Procedures of the CASA Program
- Frequency of individual or group supervision is arranged on the basis of volunteer needs, the complexity and size of the workload and the newness of the assignment
- Volunteers must communicate with their Volunteer Coordinator at **LEAST ONCE MONTHLY.**

Volunteer Coordinators must remain easily accessible and shall make every effort to provide quick and thorough guidance to all CASA Volunteers.

The Case Supervisory Ratio is approximately 30:1 for a Full Time Volunteer Coordinator. This ratio is adjusted according to the number of employee work hours devoted to supervision and/or additional responsibility the supervisor may hold. (National CASA Standards)

The Volunteer Coordinator holds regularly scheduled case conferences with volunteers to review progress on each case and written case records. These conferences may also be staffed with the Executive Director.

Program staff (Executive Director and/or Volunteer Coordinator(s)) shall be notified and must be present at all staff events involving the Commonwealth/County Attorney's office, attorneys, DCBS supervisors and/or multi-disciplinary meetings.

Volunteer court reports will focus on the **best interest of the child** and may not be used as a forum to disparage parties in the case or to complain about the quality of their job performance.

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### **VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

**Reports To:** CASA Program staff

**Purpose:** The Court Appointed Special Advocate is a trained volunteer who: speaks up for the best interest of abused, neglected and dependent children in the court system; and works to ensure that the child's right to a safe and permanent home is addressed quickly and with due consideration.

**Qualifications:**

- Interest in children and their needs and rights
- Completion of 30+ hours of pre-service training, observation of at least 3 CASA court cases and 12-hours of additional in-service continuing education hours per calendar year
- Maturity, professionalism, confidence, common sense and stability
- Ability to work with a broad spectrum of the community in a sensitive, positive and objective manner
- Good communication skills
- At least 21 years of age
- Able to pass extensive criminal background check

**Duties:**

- Attendance at pre-service and in-service trainings

- Commitment to a minimum one-year assignment, averaging 10 hours per month
- Conducting an independent investigation into each case; meeting with the child and other relevant persons **AT LEAST ONCE PER MONTH**, reviewing all pertinent records and documents, maintaining contact with the child **AT LEAST TWICE PER MONTH** to monitor progress
- Attend **ALL** court hearings (**IF POSSIBLE**), be prepared to give verbal reports in addition to the written reports submitted prior to certain hearings. If not attending court, must notify program staff and update them on the case.
- Maintain complete and accurate records of time and activities through Optima contact logs or handwritten Activity Forms (to be submitted to CASA program staff **MONTHLY**)
- Submit a **MONTHLY** report (via CASA Program staff or Optima)
- Submit quality written reports **NO LESS THAN SEVEN DAYS** in advance of your next court date for all applicable hearing types
- Assist in the identification of resources appropriate to meet the needs of the child/children in your case
- **MAINTAIN STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY**

**Investigator:** As an investigator, it is the job of the CASA Volunteer to obtain all the information about the child and child's family. This is done by interviewing all parties to the case (DCBS, GAL, parents/guardians, and the child him/herself if age permits) and any secondary sources such as teachers/school personnel, therapists and physicians that may have knowledge of the child's situation. Determining all relevant facts through personal interviews and thorough review of records, documents and clinical data. Once the investigation is complete, the CASA Volunteer will then submit a written report to the Court, which shall include their objective recommendations **BASED UPON FACTS.**

**Reporter:** As a reporter, it is the job of the CASA Volunteer to ensure that all of the facts of the case are presented before the Court. These are presented in the form of both written report and/or direct, spoken testimony. Written reports shall include all relevant, factual information gathered from interviews and record reviews done during the investigative phase, an assessment of the child's current situation and all recommendations regarding placement and provision of services to the child and the child's family.

**Monitor:** As a monitor, it is the job of the CASA Volunteer to keep strict watch on the child's situation in regard to staying in compliance with all court orders. It is also important to monitor the various agencies involved to ensure that they are making a good faith effort in providing services in a timely fashion and are not the cause of

unnecessary delays. The child must be monitored in terms of his/her environment and in terms of his/her educational, therapeutic and medical needs. If non-compliance is discovered, the CASA Volunteer will then contact the CASA office, DCBS and the GAL assigned to their case. CASA Volunteers ensure that the Court, DCBS and all legal counsel involved in their case are fulfilling their obligation to promote the best interests of all children involved.

**Advocate:** The most important function of a CASA Volunteer is that of an advocate. Most children have natural advocates in the form of their parents. However, in child abuse, neglect and dependency cases, the CASA Volunteer may very well be the **ONLY** person who is first and foremost **THEIR** advocate. The CASA Volunteer is the one person who can directly speak up for that child and that child's needs. CASA Volunteers are a voice for children who are otherwise voiceless.

**Mandatory Reporter:** CASA Volunteers are, therefore, required by law to report any case of suspected abuse, neglect or dependency. If during the course of their work as a CASA Volunteer they glean firsthand knowledge of or have suspicions that a child is being abused or neglected, they **MUST** report their concerns **IMMEDIATELY** to the CASA office and to DCBS.

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CASA Volunteers are the eyes and ears of the Court, making independent, objective recommendations regarding the best interest of the child. Since the CASA Volunteer is only one of the parties providing recommendations to the Court, the Court may or may not accept their recommendations. Each case is decided upon the basis of the facts presented by all parties and how those facts relate to the case and to state and federal law.

\*A CASA Volunteer is encouraged to get to know the appointed child well, but is cautioned to keep the relationship on a professional level in order to maintain an objective viewpoint.

**Benefits:**

- Training, support and supervision from the staff of the CASA Program for Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties, Inc.
- Opportunity to learn about the juvenile court system as well as Social Services
- Opportunity to develop own skills and abilities
- Satisfaction from contributing to community services on behalf of children who are abused, neglected and/or dependent

## **VOLUNTEER DO'S:**

1. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** report any incident of child abuse/neglect to the CASA Program office, DCBS and other appropriate authorities.
2. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** discuss all recommendations concerning the case with the Executive Director or Volunteer Coordinator prior to submitting recommendations or written reports to the Court.
3. The CASA Program **DOES** have a clear policy in place to resolve conflicts between a CASA Volunteer and their Volunteer Coordinator regarding the handling of a case, the reporting of information or the recommendations to be included in a written report to be submitted to the Court.
4. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** visit the child/children in their assigned case **NO LESS THAN ONCE PER MONTH.**
5. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** consult with their Volunteer Coordinator on how to monitor children who have moved outside of program service area.
6. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** document and credit all sources of hearsay information in their court reports.
7. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** attempt to communicate with the DCBS Social Worker assigned to their case **NO LESS THAN ONCE PER MONTH.**
8. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** attempt to have regular contact with the child/children's GAL, mental health professionals, educators, community service agents and placement providers **NO LESS THAN ONCE PER MONTH.**
9. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** review permanency goals, educational and health information of each child and makes recommendations regarding each. Children in Foster Care will have medical information documented in their "Medical Passport Book".
10. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** appear at ALL hearings regarding their assigned case(s) barring an APPROVED EMERGENCY and **DOES** submit written reports to the Court for all hearings requiring such. CASA Volunteers **DO** report any important case developments to the Court.
11. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** get to know their appointed child/children well, but is cautioned to keep the relationship on a professional level in order to maintain an objective viewpoint.
12. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** participate in case staffing and any other meetings pertaining to the child/children.
13. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** monitor the case plans for all parties until the child/children have permanency.
14. The CASA Volunteer's **DOES** make opinions, recommendations and status reports based upon their own independent observations of the child.
15. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** maintain complete case files and **DOES** make sure that the CASA Program office has the same information in their files.
16. The CASA Volunteer **DOES** receive guidance by professional CASA Program staff that have thorough knowledge of the child/children, family, statutory



requirements and the social service delivery system. The CASA Program staff defines the framework for the CASA Volunteer's conduct and ensures that their recommendations reflect realistic expectations that are within the parameters of the Court's jurisdiction.

### **VOLUNTEER DON'TS:**

17. The CASA Volunteer **DOES NOT** engage in the following:

- Transporting a child/children
- Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling
- Making placement arrangements for the child/children
- Giving money or expensive gifts to the child/children or family
- Being a baby-sitter for the child/children to whom she or he is appointed
- Becoming an advocate for the child/children's parents or anyone other than the assigned child/children
- Taking on the role of "Big Brother" or "Big Sister"
- Taking the child/children into his or her home or having the child/children in their custody
- Becoming a surrogate
- Becoming part of the resolution of the case
- Supervising visits between parents and child/children
- Trying to work out problems between family members except by making recommendations to the Court or the DCBS SOCIAL WORKER assigned to the child/children's case
- Providing services to the child/children or family to whom he or she is assigned
- Making recommendations that are not **FACT** based

18. The CASA Volunteer Coordinators **DO NOT** alter CASA Volunteer reports or recommendations without the knowledge and consent of the CASA Volunteer.

19. The CASA Volunteer **DOES NOT** have a conflict of interest regarding parties in their assigned case. Examples: being related to any parties involved in their assigned case, being employed in a position and/or agency that may result in a conflict of interest in their assigned case, being close friends of any of the parties involved in their assigned case, etc.

20. The CASA Volunteer **DOES NOT** report the status of their assigned child/children based solely on information provided by social workers, foster parents, caretakers, etc.

### **CONDUCT:**

The CASA Volunteer role is a unique position. The nature of this position is very sensitive and the role requires a high level of visibility in the community and frequent interaction with professionals. It is important therefore to observe certain standards

of conduct that will facilitate, rather than hinder, the acceptance of the CASA Volunteer as a part of the community's skilled team responding to child abuse/neglect. CASA Volunteers must always identify themselves to clients and professionals as a Court Appointed Special Advocate from the Buffalo Trace CASA Program, Inc. Picture identification cards are provided to each CASA Volunteer, which should be presented for clarification of identification.

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**ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY:**

- **Confidentiality:** The CASA Volunteer must maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of others in all matters relating to case assignments.

The District Court Judge will administer an Oath of Confidentiality, which the CASA Volunteer will affirm and sign at the "swearing in" ceremony. The signed Oath will be placed in the CASA Volunteer's personnel file.

CASA Volunteer case notes/files, including electronic files, are to be kept confidential and secured from non-sworn-in volunteer's ability to review. All hard copy files must be returned to the CASA Program office upon closure of the case and all electronic files must be deleted.

- **Respect, Fairness & Courtesy:** The CASA Volunteer should treat all parties to the case with respect, courtesy, fairness and good faith.
- **Use of Authority:** The CASA Volunteer should make appropriate use of authority in his/her case appointment, limiting the role of CASA Volunteer to fulfilling responsibilities within the particular case.
- **Development of Knowledge:** The CASA Volunteer should take responsibility for identifying and developing knowledge and fully utilizing information for his or her performance of their CASA Volunteer role.
- **Program Integrity:** The CASA Volunteer should not represent his/her personal views or opinions as those of the program nor should the CASA Volunteer refer to or use his/her participation with the program to advance his/her personal views in any proceedings unrelated to the case in which he/she was appointed as the CASA Volunteer.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to prevent the interests of board members, staff, volunteers and paid consultants from interfering with the performance of their duties

to the Buffalo Trace CASA, Inc. This policy prohibits employees, paid consultants, board members and volunteers from having direct or indirect financial interest in the assets, leases, business transactions or professional services to the Buffalo Trace CASA, Inc. and requires the disclosure of any conflicts of interest and the recusal of any interested party in a decision relating thereto. Our program upholds the credibility, integrity, dignity, and reliability of the CASA mission by conducting all business in an honest, fair, professional, respectful, and compassionate manner. Recognizing and respecting the sensitive nature of the work, the program maintains the highest confidentiality.

#### PROCEDURES:

1. A conflict of interest is defined as an interest that might affect, or might reasonably appear to affect, the judgment or conduct of any board member, staff member, volunteer or paid consultant in a manner that is adverse to the interests of CASA.
2. A conflict of interest may exist when the interests or potential interests of any board member, staff member, volunteer, paid consultant or that person's close relative, or any individual, group, or organization to which the person associated with the CASA program has allegiance, may be seen as competing with the interests of the program, or may impair such person's independence or loyalty to the Buffalo Trace CASA, Inc.
3. No board member, staff person, volunteer or paid consultant may participate in any decision-making process when he/she, or members of his/her immediate family, or any party, group or organization to which said person has allegiance, may have an interest that may be seen as competing with the interests or concerns of Buffalo Trace CASA, Inc. Staff members, paid consultants, governing body members and volunteers of a nonprofit or public CASA program are prohibited from having direct or indirect financial interest in the assets, leases, business transactions or professional services of the program.
4. CASA Volunteers are prohibited from being related and/or friends to any parties involved in the case or being employed in a position or affiliated with an agency and/or have any contact with a case that might result in a conflict of interest.
5. Board members, staff members, volunteers and paid consultants must weigh carefully all circumstances in which there exists the possibility of accusations of competing interest and make timely disclosures of any possible conflict of interest and any and all relevant information pertaining to the possible conflict and may not participate in any decision-making process related to the matter in which there may be a conflict of interest. Further, board members, staff, volunteers and paid consultants shall excuse themselves from the room when there is any deliberation and decision-making concerning the matter in which there may be a conflict of interest. If a

potential conflict is identified during a board meeting, the matter under discussion should be tabled until the board executive committee can convene to determine whether or not a conflict exists.

6. In the event of possible conflict of interest in a decision-making process within the CASA office, the Executive Director shall report to the board in writing that the conflict of interest was disclosed and that the interested person was not in the room and did not participate in the final deliberation and decision on the matter of interest.

7. Include a procedure for dismissal or other appropriate discipline of the person involved with the conflict in the event said person fails to disclose the conflict prior to becoming involved in the transaction or decision affected by the conflict.

8. Notwithstanding the above, the Board of Directors Executive Committee may waive the foregoing restrictions and allow a board member, staff member, volunteer or paid consultant with a conflict of interest to join in such portion of the discussion on the matter of interest as the board deems appropriate.

9. Transactions with related parties should occur only if the following are observed:

- a. A material transaction is fully disclosed in the audited financial statements of the organization;
- b. The related party is excluded from the discussion and approval of such transaction;
- c. A competitive bid or comparable valuation exists; and
- d. The organization's board has acted upon and demonstrated that the transaction is in the best interest of the organization.

10. The minutes of Buffalo Trace CASA, Inc. Board and/or committee meetings shall reflect that the conflict of interest was disclosed and that the interested person was not present during the deliberation and decision on the matter of interest. When there is doubt as to whether a conflict of interest exists, the matter shall be resolved by a vote of the executive committee, excluding the person(s) who may have the possible conflict.

11. Board members, staff, volunteers and paid consultants will review this policy annually and disclose any possible conflict of interest below. Failure to disclose prior to becoming involved in a transaction or decision affected by such conflict may result in disciplinary action and /or removal from a position with Buffalo Trace CASA, Inc. The extent of such action will be determined by the Board of Directors Executive Committee.

12. Volunteers must sign the Conflict-of-Interest Policy annually.

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**ANNUAL EVALUATION PROCESS:**

Volunteers receive annual evaluation to review their performance. The evaluations allow for a volunteer and Volunteer Coordinator or Executive Director to suggest changes, seek suggestion and enhance the relationship between the volunteer, staff and CASA. The evaluation is discussion period, and both supervisor and volunteer should establish an equal line of communication.

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**REIMBURSEMENTS:**

Reimbursements are available for mileage CASA Volunteers. Mileage vouchers should be submitted monthly to the Volunteer Coordinator or program staff. Mileage is the state rate set forth by the Kentucky Finance Cabinet.

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**CASE ASSIGNMENT & RELEASE PROCEDURES:**

- CASA Program staff receive a request for appointment of a CASA Volunteer or make a recommendation based on case screening
- CASA Program staff consult and select a CASA Volunteer and assign the case
- CASA Volunteer and Volunteer Coordinator discuss the case assignment
- CASA Volunteer receives a file from the Volunteer Coordinator containing information from the court file
- CASA Volunteer reviews preliminary information
- CASA Volunteer and Volunteer Coordinator discuss how to proceed with the case and develop a plan for investigation
- CASA Program staff sends copies of CASA’s Court Order to all parties of the case
- CASA Volunteer conducts their investigation. CASA Volunteer makes visits, conducts interviews, observes interactions, participates in conferences and multi-disciplinary team meetings and reviews records that include but are not limited to: DCBS, police, medical, school reports, etc.
- CASA Volunteer checks with CASA Program staff frequently to review progress, work through problems and further develop the plan of action on the case.
- CASA Volunteer writes a report for the Court after their investigation and presents their findings and recommendations at review hearings.
- CASA Volunteer submits their report to the CASA Program office as directed by their Volunteer Coordinator.
- CASA Program staff reviews the CASA Volunteer’s report, makes comments and discusses the report with the CASA Volunteer.
- CASA Program staff signs the CASA Volunteer’s report, makes copies and disperses said copies to all parties in the case.

- CASA Volunteer meets with CASA Program staff to prepare for court. CASA Volunteer attends case meetings with the Assistant County Attorney, DCBS SOCIAL WORKERS and CASA Program staff to review and share case information (if conducted).
- CASA Volunteer attends court hearings on their case and may speak to the Court in regard to both the facts of the case and their concerns in relation to said case.
- CASA Volunteer monitors the case until the case is dismissed by the Judge or the CASA Volunteer is dismissed from the case.
- In the event that a CASA Volunteer must be removed from a case or released, CASA Program staff must complete a release document and notify the District Court.
- CASA Volunteer must return all confidential materials related to the case to the CASA Program office.
- CASA Volunteer and CASA Program staff review and evaluate work done on the case and discuss supervision and training needs. Cases are closed by CASA Program staff in Optima.
- CASA Program staff will have the CASA Volunteer complete a Case Closing Exit Interview.

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**FIRST STEPS IN VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT OF A CASE:**  
**THE CASA OFFICE**

**THE CASA STAFF WILL:**

1. Notify all parties of the CASA Volunteer's assignment.
2. Give all parties the contact information: CASA Volunteer's name, phone number, e-mail address, Volunteer Coordinator's name, phone number and e-mail address.
3. Obtain preliminary case file information for the CASA Volunteer.
4. Obtain party contact information for the CASA Volunteer: names of attorney(s), DCBS Social Worker, etc.
5. Obtain information on child/children: name(s), phone number(s) and address(es) of foster parents/relative placements/guardians.

**FIRST STEPS IN VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT OF A CASE:**  
**THE CASA VOLUNTEER**

**THE CASA VOLUNTEER WILL:**

1. Contact DCBS Social Worker and set an appointment to discuss the case.
2. If applicable, contact intake worker.
3. Contact foster parents/relative placement/guardian(s) and visit the child/children. Sign Client Intake Packet with placement.
4. Contact parent(s). Sign Client Intake Packet with parents.

5. Staff case with Volunteer Coordinator and outline how to proceed.
6. Keep in frequent contact with Volunteer Coordinator between hearings.
7. Staff case with Volunteer Coordinator at least seven days prior to all hearings.

### **SAFETY PROCEDURES**

#### **WHEN VOLUNTEERS MAKE VISITS:**

1. Volunteers should never place themselves in compromising positions.
2. Ideally, all interviews should take place in public areas if the CASA Volunteer feels uncomfortable in the home setting.
3. CASA Volunteers should check “in” and “out” when going to an interview. This should be done with the CASA Program staff, the CASA Volunteer’s friends or family members.

### **CONTACTING/MEETING**

#### **WITH THE DCBS Social Worker, GAL & OTHER PROFESSIONALS:**

The CASA Volunteer will meet with both the DCBS Social Worker and the GAL. CASA Volunteers should notify the social worker, GAL and other professionals by phone or e-mail to schedule and appointment regarding their case within one week of their appointment to the case. It can be helpful to schedule a meeting with both parties at once. The GAL working on the case may or may not meet with the CASA Volunteer.

#### **CHILDREN:**

The CASA Volunteer **MUST** arrange for an initial meeting with the child/children on their case within **AT LEAST TWO WEEKS OF THEIR APPOINTMENT**. It is required that they meet **AT LEAST ONCE PER MONTH** with their child/children and that they provide accurate documentation of such meetings to the CASA Program office. An exception may be granted at the discretion of the CASA Program staff and with the completion of the Standard Exception Form.

#### **PARENTS:**

The CASA Volunteer must arrange a brief introductory meeting with the child/children’s family to explain CASA’s role in their case and to answer any questions that the parents may have. If the child/children are in the home, this provides an excellent opportunity for the CASA Volunteer to introduce themselves to them as well. This should be done within **AT LEAST THREE WEEKS OF THEIR APPOINTMENT**. Be certain to sign Client Intake Paperwork with the parents.

#### **FOSTER PARENTS/CHILDREN:**

If the child/children are in Foster Care, the CASA Volunteer will contact the foster parent/family to let them know a CASA Volunteer has been appointed to their case

and to give them some information about a CASA Volunteer's role in regards to the child/children in their care as well as arranging a meeting with both the foster parent/family and the child/children. This meeting should take place within **AT LEAST THREE WEEKS OF THEIR APPOINTMENT**. In order to assure confidentiality of conversation with the children at said meeting, the CASA Volunteer may want to take the child/children for a walk or opt to sit in a separate room (with the door being left open and unlocked). Be certain to sign Client Intake Paperwork with the placement.

### **OTHER PROFESSIONALS:**

If the child/children are school aged, their teachers will generally be the next people contacted in an effort to gather pertinent information regarding the child/children. If the child/children are in special education it is expected that the CASA Volunteer will attend the Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting. All CASA Volunteers are required to complete an educational advocacy checklist for any child/children who are in preschool or older. School records can be obtained by contacting the secretary of the school in question. In addition to educational advocacy, other contacts may include: therapists, lawyers and counselors who are working with the child/children or the parent(s).

### **TELEPHONE NUMBERS:**

The CASA Volunteer should carefully consider the implications of giving their work and home telephone numbers to children or family members of children on their assigned cases. The decision to give out these numbers is up to the discretion of the CASA Volunteer. Messages may be left at the CASA Program office for any active CASA Volunteer that prefers that option.

### **PERSONAL INFORMATION:**

CASA Volunteers should carefully consider the implications of speaking about personal family to children or family members of children on their assigned cases. The decision to speak about their family members to the children, foster family, family members, etc. is at the discretion of the CASA Volunteer.

### **HOME EVALUATION:**

The CASA Program for Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties, Inc. will not perform or conduct any "home evaluation" which will be used by the Court as approval of a family or family member for placement of the child/children in their assigned case. CASA Volunteers can and will "walk through" homes and report upon what they observed to the Court.

### **CASE CLOSURE:**

CASA volunteers are required by statute to return all case materials/file upon closure of the case. Additionally, the CASA volunteer will sign a statement, witnessed by



staff, stating that all electronic case materials/files have been deleted from their computers. The program will retain all case information for at least seven years. Thereafter, discretion will be made by the Executive Director to shred hard copy files and delete electronic files.

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### **RESIGNATION, REMOVAL & DISMISSAL**

The CASA Program is given discretion to dismiss CASA Volunteers as it deems appropriate, but such decisions are often very difficult. The following is a written policy to outline those actions or omissions that are considered grounds for removal/dismissal or resignation.

1. The CASA Program or Court shall have the discretion to remove a CASA Volunteer as a party to a specific case if it finds the CASA Volunteer is unable to represent the child's best interests effectively or that a conflict of interest is developing.
2. The CASA Program's Executive Director shall have the discretion to dismiss a CASA Volunteer if it is found that the CASA Volunteer:
  - Endangers the child/children, an interested party, a witness or other person
  - Is outside the powers or role of a CASA Volunteer
  - Initiates an ex-parte communication with the Court
  - Violates a project policy, court rule, project procedure or law
  - Fails to demonstrate the ability to effectively carry out assigned duties (refer to CASA Volunteer job description)
  - Falsifies volunteer application or misrepresents facts during the screening process
    - Has allegations of child abuse/neglect against them
    - Fails to report any criminal charges
    - Fails to follow CASA Program staff or Court direction
    - Has a conflict of interest which cannot be resolved
    - Has an unsatisfactory performance evaluation
    - Violates a program policy, Court rule or law
    - Fails to complete required training
    - Misrepresents him or herself as a CASA Volunteer
    - Misuses their CASA Volunteer role for personal gain/reasons
    - Fails to maintain objectivity
  - Is unwilling to work with all parties on their case(s), including but not limited to parents, DCBS SOCIAL WORKERS, attorneys and other agencies

- Lack of correspondence within a 30-Day period without notifying the CASA Program office, including but not limited to phone, mail or e-mail
3. The CASA Program's Executive Director has the authority to terminate or discharge a CASA Volunteer.

**GROUND FOR IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL:**

1. Breach of confidentiality
2. Willingly and knowingly violating policies, procedures and standards of the CASA Program
3. Confirmation of child abuse, either to the child to whom they are assigned or any other child

**REMOVAL FROM A CASE:**

Upon removal from a case or dismissal from the CASA Program, the CASA Volunteer will immediately surrender all case records, notes and reports to the CASA Program office.

**CONFIDENTIALITY REGARDING NON-VOLUNTARY DISMISSAL/TERMINATION:**

Any information regarding why a CASA Volunteer is dismissed or terminated from the CASA Program is confidential between the CASA Program's Executive Director and the CASA Volunteer. It is not the intent of the CASA Program to embarrass a CASA Volunteer due to a conflict that may arise between the CASA Volunteer and the CASA Program by notifying parties in the case or the Board of Directors about the issue. In situations when requested, the CASA Program's Executive Director may be required to provide this information to the Judge or the Board of Directors. However, information about the dismissal or termination will be given only when requested and will be given In Camera. In other words, no other parties in the case are privileged to have this information. Upon dismissal or resignation of a CASA Volunteer, such CASA Volunteer's status as a party to all cases to which he or she is then appointed shall automatically terminate.

**TRANSFERRING VOLUNTEERS:**

If a CASA volunteer is transferring from another program, The Buffalo Trace CASA Program, Inc. will contact that program for a reference. If a positive reference is given, the volunteer will undergo a full application and screening process consistent with NCASA Standards 5.B and 8.B.7.

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**Dress Code:**

The CASA Program for Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties, Inc. dress code policy is designed to help us all present a consistently professional appearance to our customers, the court, and our colleagues. Our appearance reflects on ourselves and CASA. The goal is to be sure that we maintain a positive appearance and not to offend customers, clients, or colleagues.

- Dress in business attire when attending court hearing. During home visit, casual attire is acceptable.
- Clothing must always present a clean, professional appearance.
- Everyone is expected to be well-groomed and wear clean clothing, free of holes, tears, rips, frays or other signs of wear.
- Clothing with profanity, drug-related memes, or offensive or inappropriate designs or stamps are not permitted. Likewise, overly revealing clothing is prohibited. Specific items prohibited from wear are:
  - Tank tops/spaghetti string tops/” tube” tops or other strapless or backless tops/halter tops
  - Tops/shirts that have a deep neck and show cleavage, or are short cropped and show the tummy, or that are see-through
  - Overly tight pants/leggings (unless worn under dress/skirt/long tunic top) or overly tight shirts/tops, sweatpants, wind-pants, exercise clothing and shorts
  - Skirts more than 3 inches above the knee.
  - Flip-Flops, Shower shoes or House shoes should never be worn.

**NOTE:** Any clothing deemed inappropriate will be addressed by individual Supervisors on an “as needed” basis. Volunteers should err on the side of conservatism when considering attire that could be classified in a “gray area.”

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**VOLUNTEER RECORDS:**

A file will be maintained on each volunteer which includes their application, records checks, reference checks, evaluation forms, and any other applicable form. Volunteers may review their file and be given the opportunity to correct any inaccurate information. Requests to modify their files should be written and presented to the Executive Director. The Director will review the request. If request granted, a written notice will be given to volunteer. If the request is controversial in nature, the request will be

presented to the Board of Directors for resolution. The volunteer will receive written notice of decision. Files will be maintained for seven years after service is terminated.

### **Volunteer Records**

CASA will maintain a written record for each volunteer that contains, at minimum:

- Application
- Emergency & identifying contact information
- Job description
- Reference documentation
- Documentation of record checks
- Training records
- Performance evaluations and any other applicable documentation related to performance
- Documentation of volunteer status
- Copy of volunteer’s driver’s license
- Volunteers may coordinate a time with CASA staff to review their personal file in the CASA office. The CASA Volunteer may submit additions and corrections to their volunteer record. The file may not be removed from the office and will be maintained at the CASA office per the program’s record retention policy. These records will be retained while the volunteer is active and for 7 years after a volunteer becomes inactive.

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### **TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN:**

The CASA Program for Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties DOES NOT allow CASA Volunteers to provide transportation to children. CASA volunteers are accepting full responsibility if transporting children and/or their families.

### **INSURANCE**

KRS 411.200 protects volunteers and board members from personal liability. However, the Attorney General’s Office wrote an opinion in 1991 regarding this legislation that states the belief that the law is unconstitutional. In addition, Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties self-insurance policy, covers ... “any employee, board, volunteer ...” individually or collectively while acting in their official capacity or in the scope of their duties.

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### **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY:**

- In conducting interviews with parents, children, foster parents, teachers and other professionals pertaining to the case, the CASA Volunteer may collect information but is prohibited from giving out any information to the person(s) being interviewed. There should always be a free exchange of information with your DCBS/Social Worker, child's attorney, and CASA staff.

- The CASA office will notify all parties about the CASA Volunteer's assignment to the case. Attorneys may tell their clients not to discuss their case with the CASA Volunteer. CASA Volunteers should talk with their Volunteer Coordinator for guidance if this occurs.
- When discussing your case with others: CASA Volunteers, Social Workers not assigned to the case; the CASA volunteer **shall NOT** reveal any identifying information such as names or addresses. The identities of families involved with the Juvenile Court are strictly protected by law.
- Remember that CASA volunteers are not "privileged information" professionals. Anything that you may be told may have to be reported to the court. Inform your CASA child and family of this in advance. At the onset of establishing your relationship with them they should be told this. This can prevent many problems down the road.
- NEVER make any statement to the media regarding your CASA case or the CASA program. CASA volunteers should talk with their Volunteer Coordinator for guidance if they are approached by the media.
- Mark your CASA log book and any records pertaining to your CASA case "Confidential." Keep these records in a private place at home where family members will not have access to them.  
YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS INFORMATION!
- ALWAYS keep in mind your obligation to maintain confidentiality. If you are ever in doubt as to what to discuss with someone, call the CASA office before you release any information.
- A breach of confidentiality is a serious problem which will result in removal from your CASA case and can have criminal action.

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**PROCEDURES BEFORE COURT HEARINGS:**

- The CASA volunteer should discuss their case with their Volunteer Coordinator a month before the hearing date.
- Make a preliminary outline of concerns/assessments and/or recommendations.

- Contact service providers, etc. to get necessary documentation for Court Reports.
- Attend the staffing held before your hearing date is scheduled to discuss the case with all parties involved (see “Case Staffing’s”).
- Write the court report and submit to your Volunteer Coordinator 11 days before your case hearing.
- Social workers and attorneys are busy and are often out of their offices. If you have difficulty contacting them, talk with your Volunteer Coordinator regarding the issue(s) in the case. Ask for assistance from the CASA staff in relaying case information to your social worker and the attorneys. Text messages works well with Social Workers.

**EX PARTE COMMUNICATION:**

The CASA volunteer should not engage in *ex parte* communication with the Judge. In other words, no conversation or correspondence concerning the case the volunteer is involved with should take place outside the courtroom with the Judge. This includes telephone calls or written correspondence.

Volunteers are not to submit letters from foster parents or any other interested party or person or pass along any other type of information to the Judge outside of the courtroom.

In situations where the volunteer has sensitive information that is important for the court to know, but may create harm to the child or place the child or others in a compromising and/or difficult position if presented in court or in a court report, contact the CASA Executive Director. The Executive Director will provide guidance on how to proceed.

**CASE STAFFINGS:**

The CASA Volunteer, Volunteer Coordinator and/or Executive Director must be present at all multidisciplinary team meetings or staffing and all meetings that include the County/Commonwealth Attorney’s office, attorneys or DCBS supervisors. Volunteers should attend CASA case staffing when their case is to be staffed.

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**CASA VISITATION AND COURTESY VISIT:**

Regular, in-person contact with children allows the CASA volunteer to get to know and build rapport with the children on their caseload. Sufficient in-person contact

allows CASA volunteers to effectively advocate for the best interest of the children to whom they are assigned.

Taking into consideration both National CASA Association standards as well as state statute, the member programs of the Kentucky CASA Network agree in principle that it is impossible for a CASA volunteer to successfully advocate for a child on their caseload when the CASA volunteer is not seeing the child regularly. This policy sets out the parameters for child visitation and courtesy visits among Kentucky CASA member programs.

#### I. Minimum Child Visitation Policy

- A. Each CASA volunteer shall visit each child on their caseload at least every 30 days **(monthly)** in their current home placement if the child lives within two hours of the front door to the CASA program, without exception.
- B. Each CASA volunteer shall visit each child on their caseload at least every 60 days in their current home placement if the child lives further than two hours from the front door to the CASA program, without exception. The CASA program staff will complete the appropriate “Exception to Monthly Visitation Form” as required by the National CASA Association when CASA volunteer contact is reduced.
- C. If a child moves to a placement that is more than two hours away from the front door of the CASA program, the program staff shall evaluate its resources, both human and financial, to determine if it has the ability to continue advocating for the child. This evaluation shall include an honest assessment of the volunteer’s time commitments and willingness to drive to the child’s placement location. The CASA member programs agree, in principle, that a CASA volunteer should have face-to-face contact with their assigned child(ren) at least every 60 days.
- D. If the program decides that it can meet the needs of a child who lives more than two hours away, the CASA program will determine whether or not they will need another CASA member program to conduct a courtesy visit.

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#### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE:**

##### **Overall Goal: Communication**

Good communication is often the key to avoiding conflicts in any organization or setting. It is hoped that disagreements can be resolved through communication among the parties.

It is recognized that from time to time conflict may arise. The most effective way to address conflict is usually through a calm, open discussion between the people involved. All efforts should be made to resolve the conflict at the lowest level. If the conflict cannot be resolved in this manner, the following procedures are to be followed:

1. The complaint shall be submitted in written form, signed and dated, to the Executive Director.
2. The Executive Director will acknowledge in writing the receipt of the complaint within ten working days.
3. The Executive Director will:
  - Investigate the complaint or problem thoroughly, discreetly, and promptly;
  - Gather facts from all persons involved
  - Meet with the parties and designated CASA to discuss the problem and possible solutions;
  - Provide his/her decision in writing as soon as possible, but no more than thirty days from the receipt of the complaint.
4. Appeal process: should the volunteer be dissatisfied with the Executive Director's decision, a copy of said document and the complaint should be forwarded to the Board Chair who will review the matter with the Executive Committee. They may ask the volunteer and the Executive Director to attend a meeting to discuss the complaint. The decision rendered by this body will be final.

#### **CASA & DCBS AGREEMENT:**

- The CASA volunteer shares with the DCBS social worker any information they have obtained. Likewise, the social worker shares information with the CASA volunteer.
- The CASA volunteer attempts to negotiate and work out resolutions in the case at CASA staffing before the court hearings.
- The CASA volunteer's court reports will not criticize the social worker or make disparaging remarks, but will focus on the **best interest of the child**.
- The CASA Volunteer and DCBS will not share each other cell numbers with clients.

#### **CASA VOLUNTEER HAS A COMPLAINT ABOUT A SOCIAL WORKER:**

- The CASA volunteer will discuss concerns they may have with their Volunteer Coordinator and plan of action.



- The CASA volunteer should first address their concerns with the DCBS Social Worker and attempt to correct the issue with the DCBS Social Worker.
- If this is unsuccessful, the CASA Volunteer should return to their Volunteer Coordinator and discuss the issue with the Executive Director.
- The Executive Director will make the ultimate decision on what course of action to take. The Executive Director may contact that DCBS Social Worker's Supervisor to discuss the issue to try and resolve the conflict. CASA Volunteers and other program staff should NOT contact DCBS Supervisors regarding conflicts with DCBS Social Workers.

**DCBS HAS A COMPLAINT ABOUT A CASA VOLUNTEER:**

- DCBS Supervisor should contact the Executive Director to discuss concerns about the CASA Volunteer.

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**GENERAL MEDIA CONTACT**

**WHEN THE MEDIA CALLS:**

Only the person designated to speak with the media should make any statements to the media. This person will be the CASA Program Executive Director or a representative from the Oklahoma CASA Association. CASA Program staff or CASA Volunteers contacted by the media concerning a crisis or an unusual event are to notify the CASA Program Executive Director or Board Chair, who will then respond to the media.

**THE MEDIA:**

If a problem arises, the CASA Program staff or CASA Volunteer obtain the following information and advise the CASA Program Executive Director, Board Chair and/or the appropriate Oklahoma CASA Association contact:

- Name of the reporter
- Name of the publication or media outlet
- Contact information (telephone number/e-mail address)
- List of specific questions being asked
- Deadline

The press can and will repeat any rumors or misinformation, so do **NOT** provide them with any information regarding the case/situation in question. To assist the media in doing their job, the persons designated to speak on behalf of the CASA Program for Bracken, Fleming & Mason Counties, Inc and CASA for Kids, Inc. will release any relevant and factual information.

**ASSURING THE PROPER BALANCE:**

CASA Program staff and CASA Volunteers should be sensitive to the needs of the media, but will also weigh those needs against the needs of the program. Both newspaper and television news crews often have hard and fast deadlines. As a result, CASA will schedule news conferences, grant interviews or issue statements within those deadline timeframes if at all possible. They will remain aware, however, that often reporters have been trained to use these deadlines as a method to pressure people into releasing information prematurely. Be assured that the CASA Program staff designated to field these media inquiries are not required to answer anything if there remains any doubt as to the accuracy of their information.

**DO NOT SPECULATE:**

Be aware to never fall into the trap of speculation, even if a question is posed to you in the form of an off-handed remark. Speculation leads to the spread of misinformation and should be avoided at all cost.

**VOLUNTEER MEDIA CONTACT:**

CASA Volunteers should **NOT** make **ANY** comment to the media regarding their case or any other case that the CASA Program is involved in.

**PURPOSE:**

The reason for this policy is to share with all CASA Program staff, Board of Directors and CASA Volunteers in the Commonwealth of Kentucky what is and what is **NOT** an acceptable use of social media and social networking platforms both at work and outside of work.

Social media and social networking platforms include, but are not limited to, websites, apps and all forms of online community activities such as social networks, message boards, blogs, conversation pages and chat rooms.

Examples of social media and social networking platforms include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Google+, YouTube, etc. The absence of, or lack thereof explicit reference to a specific site does not limit the extent of the application of this policy.

In cases where no policy or guideline exists, all CASA Program staff, Board of Directors and CASA Volunteers should use their best judgement and take the most prudent action possible. CASA Program staff, Board of Directors and CASA Volunteers should consult with their manager, Board Chair or supervisor if additional guidance is required.

Violations of these rules or any other CASA Program policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or volunteer dismissal. This policy will be interpreted and enforced in compliance with local, state and national law.

**RULES FOR ALL CASA PROGRAM STAFF, BOARD MEMBERS AND CASA VOLUNTEERS PARTICIPATING IN ANY FORM OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY:**

The rules in this section apply to all CASA Program staff, Board members and CASA Volunteers participating in any form of social media or social networking activities whether inside or outside of work.

- A. Under **NO** circumstances may a CASA Program employee, CASA Volunteer or CASA Program Board member publish any personal information regarding any client of the CASA Program or any information specific to any case in which the CASA Program is involved or may potentially become involved.
- B. CASA Program logos and trademarks may not be used on any sites outside of the CASA Program's official website and Facebook account without the express written consent from the Executive Director of your CASA Program. Your posts must comply with copyright, privacy, fair use, financial disclosure and other applicable laws.
- C. Do not provide or publish your CASA Program's confidential or other proprietary information. You must not comment on your CASA Program's financial information, business performance or future business plans.
- D. Do not provide or publish your CASA Program's policies or procedures.
- E. Make sure none of your professional or personal internet postings are in violation of any applicable policy of the CASA Program.
- F. Refrain from posting anything that may be deemed defamatory, discriminatory, libelous, threatening, harassing or abusive to the CASA Program, its products or services, its clientele, employees, board members and/or volunteers, any judge or court employee or agent, any employee or agent of the Commonwealth of Kentucky as well as any vendors.
- G. If a member of the media contacts you about an internet posting related to the CASA Program, refer them to your CASA Program's Executive Director. When this occurs, your CASA Program's Executive Director should immediately notify the State Office.

**RULES GOVERNING AUTHORIZED USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT**

**WORK:** Specific CASA Program staff, board members and CASA Volunteers have been authorized by their senior management team or Board of Directors to participate in social media and social networking activities during regular business hours. Their participation should focus solely on promoting the CASA Program's interests and activities, ensuring client satisfaction and identifying additional business opportunities.

Regardless, all authorized CASA Program staff, board members and CASA Volunteers must understand that what they post online is public and therefore they have no privacy rights in regards to this information. CASA Program staff, board members and CASA Volunteers engaged in the authorized use of social media at work are expected to follow the rules as outlined in this Policy manual.

- A. At no time should the participation in social media and/or social networking interfere with the CASA Program's staff's primary job responsibilities.
- B. Identify yourself by stating your name and your role with the CASA Program (when relevant) any time you are discussing CASA Program related matters.
- C. Do not offer any specific personal advice or any general advice specific to any individual existing or potential court case. Report any commentary or questions about such matters to senior CASA Program staff.
- D. Respect your audience at all times. **NEVER** use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenities or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable or permitted in the CASA Program's professional workplace. CASA Program staff, board members and CASA Volunteers should always show proper consideration for the privacy of others and avoid any topic that may be considered inflammatory, such as politics or religion.
- E. Never cite or reference current, past or potential clients.
- F. Never cite or reference partners or vendors without their approval.
- G. Refrain from making referrals or recommendations to other local businesses. If a CASA Program staff member, board member or CASA Volunteer were to do this as a representative of the CASA Program, it may give the appearance that the CASA Program endorses the particular business or individual in question. This sort of situation has the potential to create a liability for the CASA Program if another party were to hire the recommended business or individual on the basis of our recommendation.
- H. Never post any images online without the written consent of your CASA Program's Executive Director.
- I. Always remain aware of your association with the CASA Program in all your social network activity. If you publicly identify yourself as an affiliate of the CASA Program, please ensure that your personal social media profiles and all related content are consistent with how you wish to represent the CASA Program to others. The CASA Program's brand is best represented by its members and anything that you publish is a reflection on the program as a whole.

**RULES GOVERNING PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKING OUTSIDE OF WORK:**

The following guidelines apply to all CASA Program staff, board members and CASA Volunteers that participate in any form of personal social media and social networking platforms. CASA Program staff, board members and CASA Volunteers must understand that what they post publicly online has no privacy rights associated with it. All CASA Program staff, board members and CASA Volunteers engaged in the personal use of social media and social networking platforms are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

- A. Personal social media and social networking activities should not be conducted during work hours. CASA Program staff, board members and CASA Volunteers may maintain or contribute to personal blogs, message boards, conversation pages and other forms of social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) only outside of work hours.
- B. CASA Program staff, board members and CASA Volunteers are personally responsible for the content they publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated media. They must remain mindful that what they publish may remain public for years to come and they should make a concentrated effort to protect their own privacy.
- C. Avoid engaging in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications of any sort. You are free to voice your opinions but, the CASA Program asks that you do so in a reasonable and professional manner. This means avoiding the use of any language that may be deemed defamatory, harassing, discriminatory or inappropriate. You should also refrain from making statements that conflict with the overall interests of the CASA Program and/or its clientele.
- D. Refrain from providing personal, business, financial or any other advice in the name of the CASA Program. When discussing any personal, business, financial or other advice or opportunities, be clear that you are speaking only for yourself and not on behalf of the CASA Program. Be sure to never state or imply that you are commenting on behalf of the CASA Program in any of your personal dealings.
- E. Do not quote from any proprietary written materials of the CASA Program, including but not limited to, service information or brochures, procedures, disclosures or websites that do not provide links to the CASA Program's external or internal websites from your personal social networking accounts without express permission to do so.
- F. If you identify yourself as a CASA Program staff member, board member or CASA Volunteer or your status as such can be inferred from the content of an internet post or profile, you are required to include the following disclaimer in a reasonably prominent place: "the views expressed on this post are mine and do not reflect the views of my employer"

Should any aspect of provision of this policy conflict with any federal, state or local law or regulation, this policy shall be enforced only so far as it does not conflict with the applicable federal, state or local law or regulation. No aspect or provision of this policy should be interpreted to prevent you from engaging in any concerted activity about the CASA Program's wages, hours and working conditions.

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**LEGAL ADVICE**

In most circumstances, the CASA program staff will be able to guide CASA volunteers as they conduct their work. However, if the need arises for more specific legal advice, the volunteer shall consult with the Volunteer Coordinator and/or Program Director. The program staff shall assist the volunteer in obtaining access to the appropriate legal advice.

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

The Buffalo Trace CASA Program, Inc. shall not restrict its services or volunteer opportunities on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation or gender.

**NATIONAL CASA POLICIES:**

**MEMBER CODE OF ETHICS**

This code of ethics provides National CASA Association (NCASAA) members with guidelines for professional behavior and ethical conduct. The Association may not, however, be held liable for the actions of its members.

1. Conduct
  - CASA programs and volunteers will abide by the NCASAA Code of Ethics and all laws and regulations governing their activities.
  - CASA programs and volunteers will uphold the credibility and dignity of the CASA concept by conducting all business in an honest, fair, professional and humane manner.
  - Employees of CASA programs and CASA volunteers will not use their authority inappropriately, nor condone any illegal act or unethical practice related to their program or community.
  - CASA programs and individuals who are members of the National CASA Association may not use CASA to promote personal gain.
2. Confidentiality
  - CASA programs and volunteers will respect the right to privacy of all individuals, and will keep information about CASA cases confidential.
  - Persons affiliated with CASA will not use confidential information obtained through their work with CASA for personal benefit.
3. Knowledge and Understanding

- Individuals working in CASA programs as staff and/or volunteers must be trained in the operations of the Court and the child welfare systems, and in the nature of child abuse and neglect.
  - CASA programs and volunteers must respect a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets that child's best interests.
4. National Affiliation
    - CASA programs, which are members of the National CASA Association, must operate in accordance with the NCASAA Code of Ethics, goals and purposes.
    - Official CASA designations may be used only for purposes in accordance with the goals and purposes of the National CASA Association.
  5. Compliance
    - The Nominating Committee shall monitor compliance with the Code of ethics in accordance with the by-laws of the National CASA Association.

### STANDARDS FOR CASA PROGRAMS

In order for The Buffalo Trace CASA Program, Inc. to be recognized by the National CASA Association, programs and volunteers must comply with the following minimum standards.

Standards for National CASA Association Member Programs 2020 Edition

- I. Core Model and Mission
- II. Guiding Principles
- III. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- IV. Ethical Conduct and Confidentiality
- V. Governance and Administration
- VI. Management and Funding
- VII. Human Resources
- VIII. Volunteer Administration
- IX. Public Education and Engagement
- X. Data and Records
- XI. Network and Membership

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RECEIPT OF VOLUNTEER MANUAL**

I acknowledge receipt of the Volunteer Manual for the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).

I have carefully read the Manual and agree to follow them.

I further understand that the Policies are subject to change at the discretion of CASA, and that CASA may deviate from, discontinue, modify or change policies, as it deems necessary, without notice.

If I need clarification of any of the Policies, I will advise the Executive Director.

I understand that nothing contained in these Policies, any procedure or document issued by CASA, or any statement of a supervisor or the Executive Director, either verbal or written, is intended to create or suggest a contract of employment between CASA and me.

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Print Volunteer's Name

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature