



# TEXAS CASA STANDARDS FOR LOCAL CASA/GAL PROGRAMS

FY2021 | PROGRAMS STRUCTURED AS NONPROFITS



NATIONAL CASA/GAL ASSOCIATION

## **TEXAS CASA VISION**

Texas CASA envisions a safe and positive future for all Texas children and families.

## **TEXAS CASA MISSION**

Texas CASA's mission is to support local CASA volunteer advocacy programs and to advocate for effective public policy for children and families in the child protection system.

## **ABOUT TEXAS CASA**

Texas CASA is the statewide association for 72 local CASA programs. We work to connect each part of the CASA community and empower the local programs to perform at their highest level.

At the local level, the programs recruit, train and supervise Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers to advocate for children involved in the child welfare system and improve their well-being.

At the state level, Texas CASA provides financial support, training and services to help the local programs operate effectively.

We are a member of the National CASA/GAL Association, the federated membership association for 948 state and local court-appointed special advocate (CASA) and volunteer guardian ad litem (GAL) programs in 49 states and the District of Columbia.

**Standards Effective June 25, 2021**  
**Approved by Texas CASA Board of Directors**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY                               | 4  |
| HOW TO USE THE STANDARDS                        | 5  |
| STANDARDS AT A GLANCE                           | 6  |
| STANDARD 1: CORE MODEL AND MISSION              | 8  |
| STANDARD 2: GUIDING PRINCIPLES                  | 10 |
| STANDARD 3: DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION     | 12 |
| STANDARD 4: ETHICAL CONDUCT AND CONFIDENTIALITY | 14 |
| STANDARD 5: GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION       | 17 |
| STANDARD 6: MANAGEMENT AND FUNDING              | 26 |
| STANDARD 7: HUMAN RESOURCES                     | 33 |
| STANDARD 8: VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION            | 40 |
| STANDARD 9: PUBLIC EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT     | 51 |
| STANDARD 10: DATA AND RECORDS                   | 53 |
| STANDARD 11: NETWORK AND MEMBERSHIP             | 55 |
| GLOSSARY  | 57 |
| DOCUMENTATION LIST                              | 61 |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

These 11 updated Standards reflect National CASA/GAL's focus on becoming a highly effective organization at the national level and desire to see highly effective organizations on the state and local levels. They also represent as our collective unwavering commitment to providing quality volunteer advocacy for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. Texas CASA worked with Regional Representatives and select local programs across the state to incorporate the new National CASA Standards as well as legal requirements of CASA programs and Texas-specific Standards. A public comment period was also provided to incorporate network input into these requirements.

The objective of Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs is to set performance levels for local programs to ensure quality, while allowing individual programs the room for creativity and innovation. A set of quality standards to measure a program's operations demonstrates that a program:

- Respects and is committed to quality for the children and families served and that volunteers provide best-interest advocacy
- Utilizes established policies and procedures necessary for effective management and governance
- Manages their financial affairs prudently, are financially sound, and are committed to the principles of public disclosure
- Continually evaluates its services and operations
- Works positively and collaboratively with their stakeholders, other local programs, Texas CASA and with National CASA/GAL
- Recruits, trains, develops and supports a high-caliber team through effective human resource practices

Programs participate in standards-based quality assurance (QA) reviews which foster greater awareness among staff, volunteers and governing bodies about how the programs are governed, operate, and execute our shared mission. Texas CASA is strongly committed to high-quality best-interest advocacy and will support this commitment through dedicated technical assistance to the local network to achieve these Standards.

# HOW TO USE THE STANDARDS

The document provides a framework for quality program management and operations excellence for nonprofit CASA/GAL programs. The document is organized into sections dealing with specific areas of program management. Each section begins with a standard. There are 11 standards for local CASA/GAL programs. The order of the standards does not in any way represent importance; they are all equal in stature.

The standard statement in each section defines the overall approach to manage a particular aspect of program operations. Under each standard, “Elements of Practice” are provided as indicators for how the standard is implemented. Elements of Practice operationalize the standards by specifying activities, policies and/or processes for a local program to have in place to adhere to and to carry out the intent of the overall standard.

Texas CASA Standards include the National CASA/GAL standards as well as state laws, regulations and court rules that apply to CASA. State laws take precedence over National CASA/GAL Association standards and Texas CASA standards.

A Glossary of Terms is provided as a complement to the standards to provide a definition of select terms. The first use of each term in the Standards at a Glance and the Elements of Practice is linked to the term in the glossary.

The Documentation List is organized by standard and is designed to itemize the documents or type of documentation that will or can help to substantiate the Elements of Practices for the respective standards. Though all documentation is requisite, a series of the documents will be required to be submitted to National CASA/GAL or Texas CASA as a part of the QA process, depending on who is conducting the audit.

# STANDARDS AT A GLANCE

## **1** STANDARD 1 **CORE MODEL AND MISSION**

Adheres to the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model of providing screened, trained and qualified community court-appointed volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children and youth who are before the court as a result of allegations of abuse or neglect as the subject of a Suit Affecting the Parent-Child Relationship or in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), living at home or in out-of-home care, as well as operates in alignment with the mission. CASA/GAL volunteers advocate for children from birth through the age of 21 as defined by Texas statute as the limit to youth remaining in care. All CASA programs in Texas inherently follow the Core Model.

## **2** STANDARD 2 **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Provides best-interest advocacy for children as reflected in these guiding principles, which recognize the importance of child safety, family preservation and reunification, equity, diversity, inclusion and collaboration.

## **3** STANDARD 3 **DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

Commits to diversity, equity and inclusion and demonstrates these qualities in its own operations, governance, management and quality advocacy for children.

## **4** STANDARD 4 **ETHICAL CONDUCT AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Upholds the credibility, integrity, dignity and reliability of CASA/GAL advocacy by conducting all interactions in an honest, fair, respectful, professional and compassionate manner. The CASA/GAL program incorporates policies and practices to avoid conflicts of interest and preserve confidentiality.

## **5** STANDARD 5 **GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

Oversees and ensures compliance with applicable laws, regulations, fiduciary obligations, written agreements, standards and financial sustainability of the CASA/GAL program.

## **6** STANDARD 6 **MANAGEMENT AND FUNDING**

Demonstrates mission-oriented leadership in operations management and is a responsible steward of all resources in order to maximize advocacy for children who are eligible for and in need of a CASA/GAL volunteer.

## **7** STANDARD 7 **HUMAN RESOURCES**

Follows written policies for recruiting, screening, training, supervising, evaluating and developing staff from diverse backgrounds in an equitable and inclusive environment that advances the CASA/GAL mission.

## **8** STANDARD 8 **VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION**

Follows written policies for recruiting, screening, training, supporting, supervising, recognizing and retaining volunteers to fulfill the role and duties of court-appointed special advocates/guardians ad litem, in accordance with applicable laws, rules, regulations and standards.

## **9** STANDARD 9 **PUBLIC EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

Communicates and actively engages with stakeholders and the general public to provide information and build support for the CASA/GAL mission and the needs of children in the child protection system and their families.

## **10** STANDARD 10 **DATA AND RECORDS**

Compiles, maintains, manages and reports quality data and information in accordance with applicable laws, policies and/or standards. The CASA/GAL program maintains complete, accurate and current case records and volunteer files.

## **11** STANDARD 11 **NETWORK AND MEMBERSHIP**

Maintains membership with National CASA/GAL Association, is a member or an affiliate of Texas CASA, and meets the standards, requirements and policies of both.

# STANDARD 1: CORE MODEL AND MISSION

*Adheres to the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model of providing screened, trained and qualified community court-appointed volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children and youth who are before the court as a result of allegations of abuse or neglect as the subject of a Suit Affecting the Parent-Child Relationship or in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), living at home or in out-of-home care, as well as operates in alignment with the mission. CASA/GAL volunteers advocate for children from birth through the age of 21 as defined by Texas statute as the limit to youth remaining in care. All CASA programs in Texas inherently follow the Core Model.*

## ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE<sup>1</sup>

### **A. Adheres to and operates in a manner consistent with the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model\*, with the following required elements:**

1. Utilizes community volunteers that:
  - a. Are screened, trained and qualified.
  - b. Are appointed by the court.
  - c. Advocate for the best interests of children and youth.
2. Serves children and youth:
  - a. Before the court as a result of allegations of abuse or neglect as the subject of a Suit Affecting the Parent Child Relationship or in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).
  - b. Living at home or in out-of-home care.
  - c. Birth through the age defined by the state statute as the limit to youth remaining in care.
3. State statute takes precedence if it provides for the CASA/GAL volunteer to take other types of cases.

<sup>1</sup> The National CASA Core Model is essentially the Texas CASA model as well—to provide screened, trained and qualified community volunteers to advocate for the best interest of children, guided by the principle that children grow and develop best with their family of origin, when safely possible; and the advocate’s role includes gathering information, visiting the child, collaboration, making recommendations to the court and closely monitoring the case until dismissed by the court.

- Each CASA/GAL program complies with the requirements and provisions of the contract between Texas CASA and the Health and Human Services Commission.

### **B. Establishes a CASA/GAL program mission statement that is:**

- Written.
- Consistent with the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model.
- Adopted by the CASA/GAL program's governing board.
- Inclusive of volunteer advocacy for children.
- Approved by Texas CASA.

### **C. Establishes CASA/GAL program values that are:**

- Written.
- Consistent with the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model.
- Adopted by the CASA/GAL program's governing board.



## STANDARD 2: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

*Provides best-interest advocacy for children as reflected in these guiding principles, which recognize the importance of child safety, family preservation and reunification, equity, diversity, inclusion and collaboration.*

### ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE

#### **A. Integrates the following guiding principles into all aspects of CASA/GAL program practices, policies and procedures:**

1. Recognize the importance of family preservation and/or reunification:
  - a. It is in a child's best interests to remain with their family of origin when safely possible.
  - b. The CASA/GAL program acknowledges that children experience trauma when separated from their family of origin.
  - c. If a child is removed from their family of origin, it is in the child's best interests to be reunified with their family of origin as soon as safely possible.
  - d. 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 interests.
  - e. Strengthening families, through recommendations for services, supports, visitation and communications, is in the child's best interests to achieve stability and/or reunification.
  - f. The CASA/GAL program requires and demonstrates respect for the parents and all parties associated with the case.
  - g. The CASA/GAL program ensures that information regarding the family's strengths is incorporated into reports to the court.
  - h. The CASA/GAL program ensures that information regarding the child's wishes is incorporated into reports to the court.
  - i. 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 interests.

2. Recognize the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion:
  - a. 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.
  - b. The CASA/GAL program acknowledges the existence of implicit bias and takes steps to minimize and/or eliminate implicit bias.
  - c. The CASA/GAL program demonstrates an understanding of disproportionality impacting children who are in the child protection system due to allegations of abuse or neglect.
3. Recognize the importance of collaboration:
  - a. The CASA/GAL program's governing board and the executive director, along with CASA/GAL program staff and volunteers, cooperate and coordinate with other volunteer and public service agencies, the courts, community groups, families and individuals to:
    - i. Improve services for individual children and their families.
    - ii. Advocate for needed change in the conditions which adversely affect the children served.
  - b. At least once in a two-year period, the CASA/GAL program conducts a review through surveys of volunteers, judges and other key stakeholders, which includes assessment of the CASA/GAL program goals, degree to which the CASA/GAL program meets the needs of the children it serves, changing demographics and effectiveness of its services.

**B. Provides orientation, training and continuing education for staff, volunteers and nonprofit governing board members about these guiding principles.**

## STANDARD 3: DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

*Commits to diversity, equity and inclusion and demonstrates these qualities in its own operations, governance, management and quality advocacy for children.*

### ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE

#### **A. Works to diversify its staff, volunteers and governing board to reflect the population and meet the needs of the children served.**

1. Written plan and action steps are adopted to diversify the CASA/GAL program's staff, volunteers and governing board to reflect the population of children served.
2. Written plan and action steps are adopted to promote equity and inclusion of diverse staff, volunteers and members of the governing board.
3. Written plan is measurable and reviewed by the governing board to assess progress, at least annually, as part of the CASA/GAL program evaluation process; and the goals and measures are updated every three years.
4. The governing board identifies strategies and outcomes for diversity, equity and inclusion for CASA/GAL program planning.
5. The CASA/GAL program engages in collaborative efforts with Texas CASA to foster diversity, equity and inclusion.
6. The CASA/GAL program staff, volunteers and governing board participate in, at least annually, education and training approved and documented by the CASA/GAL program related to diversity, equity and inclusion.
7. The CASA/GAL program engages individuals who can:
  - a. Help the CASA/GAL program identify and understand the needs of the children served.
  - b. Identify the action steps the CASA/GAL program can take to address these needs in governance, recruitment, training, supervision, retention, evaluation and advocacy.

**B. Promotes equity and inclusion through its governance, management, operations, recruitment, continuing education, retention and advocacy policies and practices.**

**C. Commits to understanding disproportionality and disparate outcomes.**

1. Collects and reviews data which may include: race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic, gender, sexual orientation and disability for the children served to inform the CASA/GAL program about disproportionality and disparate outcomes.
2. Engages in activities to increase the awareness and understanding of volunteers, staff and governing board members regarding issues of disproportionality and disparate outcomes within its local child welfare and court systems.
3. Participates and works in partnership with child welfare providers and court representatives in identifying, understanding and addressing their community's issues of disproportionality and disparate outcomes.

**D. Promotes a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace.**

1. The CASA/GAL program is inclusive and actively recruits qualified staff reflective of the children and community it serves in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, and cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.
2. The CASA/GAL program administers its human resources practices to all persons without discrimination based upon age, race, ethnicity, national origin (ancestry), color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or physical challenge.
3. The CASA/GAL program's staff recruitment and selection practices are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
4. The CASA/GAL program is in compliance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Act.
5. The CASA/GAL program has written equal opportunity, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies which clearly state its practices in recruiting, selecting and promoting staff.
6. The CASA/GAL program publicizes its equal opportunity policy in their staff recruitment materials.
7. The CASA/GAL program makes reasonable efforts to ensure the workplace is free of barriers for staff, volunteers and others.

# STANDARD 4: ETHICAL CONDUCT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

*Upholds the credibility, integrity, dignity and reliability of CASA/GAL advocacy by conducting all interactions in an honest, fair, respectful, professional and compassionate manner. The CASA/GAL program incorporates policies and practices to avoid conflicts of interest and preserve confidentiality.*

## ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE

### A. Requires ethical conduct.

1. The CASA/GAL program establishes policies to govern ethical conduct of its staff, paid consultants, volunteers and governing board.
2. The CASA/GAL program maintains a written conflict of interest policy approved by the governing board. The conflict of interest policy:
  - a. Is signed annually by staff, paid consultants and members of the governing board; and the CASA/GAL program retains this document in the appropriate record or file.
  - b. Identifies and defines conduct and transactions in which a conflict of interest exists or has the potential to exist and warrants disclosure, including but not limited to:
    - i. A conflict that renders the person unable or potentially unable to perform duties in an impartial manner.
    - ii. A conflict that permits a person to receive or potentially receive private gain or favor for themselves or others, or otherwise creates the appearance of impropriety.
  - c. Prohibits staff, paid consultants, volunteers and members of the governing board from having direct or indirect financial interest in the assets, leases, business transactions or professional services of the CASA/GAL program.
  - d. Prohibits staff and/or assigned CASA/GAL volunteers from being related to any parties involved in the case or being employed in a position and/or affiliated with an agency that might result in a conflict of interest.
  - e. Identifies other specific conduct or circumstances that constitute a conflict or potential conflict and would therefore be prohibited.
  - f. Requires that the individual involved makes timely disclosure to the CASA/GAL program of any conflict or potential for conflict of interest.

- g. Includes a procedure for recusal from the transaction, case or decision by the individual with the conflict or potential conflict.
  - h. Includes a procedure for dismissal or other appropriate discipline of the individual involved with a conflict in the event said individual fails to disclose the conflict prior to becoming involved in the transaction, case or decision affected by the conflict.
  - i. Includes a procedure for dismissal of a volunteer, employee or board member who has abused or neglected any position of trust or violated the policies governing ethical conduct or otherwise created a negative image for the CASA/GAL program.
  - j. Prohibits discrimination against any individual on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), age, national origin, disability or other legally protected classes.
  - k. Includes restricting the employment of any person related within the second degree of affinity (spouse, in-laws or the grandparents/grandchildren of a spouse) or the third degree of consanguinity (parent, child, sibling, grandparent/child, niece/nephew, aunt/uncle) to any member of the governing body, or to any other officer or employee authorized to employ or supervise such person.
3. Although legal counsel may be provided to the CASA/GAL program under voluntary auspices on a pro bono basis and a lawyer who offers legal counsel may sit on the CASA/GAL program board, the CASA/GAL program clarifies these roles in order to keep the two functions separate.
  4. If active volunteers are members of the governing board, there are processes and procedures in place for handling potential conflicts of interest in relation to human resources and other issues with potential for a conflict of interest.
  5. If an employee also serves on the governing body, they may not be a voting board member.
  6. The CASA/GAL program's staff, volunteers and governing board members must immediately notify the CASA/GAL program of any criminal charges filed against them.
  7. The CASA/GAL program shall promptly refer to National CASA/GAL Association and Texas CASA any credible evidence that a staff person, volunteer, governing board member, contractor, subcontractor, subgrantee or other person affiliated with the CASA/GAL program has committed a criminal or civil violation of law pertinent to fraud, conflict of interest, bribery, gratuity or similar misconduct involving CASA/GAL program funds.
  8. CASA/GAL staff and volunteer advocates may foster or foster/adopt a child or children only when the case is based outside the CASA/GAL program'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.

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

## **B. Maintains confidentiality.**

1. The CASA/GAL program follows written policies and procedures regarding access to, use of and release of information about the children it serves to ensure that the confidentiality of children and their families is maintained at all times.
2. Staff and volunteers respect the child's right to privacy by maintaining confidentiality.
3. Volunteers take an oath of confidentiality upon completion of the National CASA/GAL Association pre-service training and sign a statement of confidentiality upon acceptance of each case.
4. Staff and members of the governing board sign a statement of confidentiality upon hire or affiliation with the CASA/GAL program.
5. The CASA/GAL program counsels volunteers, employees and directors on what constitutes confidential information.
6. The CASA/GAL program demonstrates its compliance with applicable statutory requirements pertaining to confidentiality of case-related information by ensuring that its policies, procedures and practices are consistent with all applicable laws and regulations.
7. Access to records is limited to the court, authorized CASA/GAL program staff, volunteer advocates and others outside the CASA/GAL program whose request for access to confidential information is permitted by statute or the court.
8. The CASA/GAL program has a written policy to protect confidential information of staff, volunteers, governing board and advisory committee members, donors, and the children and youth it serves.
9. The CASA/GAL program 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.
10. All confidential electronic and hard copy correspondence, files and records are securely maintained and are readily accessible.

# STANDARD 5: GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

*Oversees and ensures compliance with applicable laws, regulations, fiduciary obligations, written agreements, standards and financial sustainability of the CASA/GAL program.*

## ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE

### **A. Ensures the governing board adheres to its role and responsibilities:**

1. Ensures CASA/GAL program compliance with the Texas Family Code and any other applicable state and local statutes, court rules, ordinances, executive orders and appropriate regulations which govern the relationship with the court.
2. Provides the CASA/GAL program with access to legal counsel and/or relevant legal expertise to clarify the meaning of laws and regulations governing its program operations and to provide legal counsel as needed to assist in performing the duties assigned to the volunteers by the courts.
3. Establishes a written strategic plan with annual operational goals and objectives with an action plan and timeline for meeting those goals and objectives that is reviewed and whose progress is evaluated annually.
4. Ensures development of and compliance with all policies required by National CASA/GAL Association.
5. Reviews all required policies at least every three (3) years (or more often if required by law, rule, regulation, ordinance, executive order, court order or standards) to assess the need for updates. The date of the most recent review shall be noted on the corresponding document.
6. Adheres to a whistleblower policy which provides members of the governing board, staff and volunteers a procedure for reporting unethical, inappropriate or illegal activities by members of the governing board, staff or volunteers and such policy affords the reporter protection in making good faith reports about such activities.
7. Secures sufficient financial resources, and manages resources prudently in order to support the CASA/GAL program's provision of services.

8. Adopts the CASA/GAL program's written budget annually which guides the management of resources based on:
  - a. Funding anticipated during the CASA/GAL program year that is based on CASA/GAL program goals and objectives.
  - b. Fixed and incremental costs of operating the CASA/GAL program and identification of potentially changing costs.
  - c. Review, approval and documentation of any budget deviations.
  - d. No more than 50% dependence on funding through HHSC.
9. Ensures the CASA/GAL program has applicable insurance coverages, such as liability insurance, workers' compensation insurance and directors' and officers' coverage.
10. Appoints the executive director, or functional equivalent, and delegates authority and responsibility for CASA/GAL program operations, financial management and policy implementation to the executive director.
11. Evaluates the performance of the executive director in writing at least annually utilizing written performance criteria.
  - a. Provides for the participation of the executive director in the evaluation process.
  - b. The executive director is given the opportunity to sign the evaluation report, to obtain a copy and to include written comments before the report is entered into the human resources record.
12. Establishes a written succession plan for the executive director position. The plan makes provision for the following:
  - a. Designating an interim executive director, if necessary.
  - b. Charging a committee or designee with responsibility for conducting a formal search.
  - c. Identifying and providing resources needed to carry out the search effectively.
  - d. Notifying Texas CASA, National CASA/GAL Association, significant funders, staff and stakeholders promptly.
13. Maintains records of every governing board meeting and accurately reports all actions taken by the governing board and includes a summary of the governing board's deliberations. The written record also includes reports of board committees. The written record is prepared in a timely manner and copies are

made available to members of the governing board. A master copy of the written record, to include all board meeting minutes, dates, topics or agendas and attendance records, is kept with the CASA/GAL program's official documents.

14. Ensures the CASA/GAL program has been granted the legal authority to operate through state or local statutes, statewide MOU, executive or judicial order or court rules.
15. Ensures the CASA/GAL program has a statute or signed written agreement with the court of jurisdiction over the Suit Affecting the Parent-Child Relationship or in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), that defines the case assignment and acceptance process as well as the working relationship between the CASA/GAL program and the court.
  - a. The agreement must be reviewed at least once every two (2) years to assess the need for updates.
  - b. The written agreement between the CASA/GAL program and the court must be renewed when there is a change in the judicial leadership or changes in policy, law or local court rules, or CASA/GAL program resources that substantially impacts the relationship between the CASA/GAL program and the court.
  - c. The CASA/GAL program has regular communication with the court in order to evaluate the court's satisfaction with the CASA/GAL program and to obtain the court's recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the CASA/GAL program.
16. Ensures the CASA/GAL program has in place and follows a memorandum of understanding which defines the working relationship between the CASA/GAL program and the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), or with their Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) if the CASA/GAL program is within a Community-Based Care catchment area, reviewed every two years, that is approved by Texas CASA.
17. Ensures the development of, compliance with and review of by-laws for CASA/GAL programs structured as nonprofits. At a minimum, the by-laws:
  - a. Meet statutory requirements.
  - b. Describe the organizational structure and responsibilities of the governing board.
  - c. Include a rotation of directors as well as term limits for directors and executive committee officers as well as the mechanisms for selection, duration of membership and election of officers.

- d. Require at least nine members, with an executive committee comprised of, at a minimum, the offices of president, vice president, secretary and treasurer.
- e. Describe terms of board membership, including a minimum age of 21.
- f. Set the minimum number of formal meetings of the full governing board at least four (4) times per calendar year.
- g. Set the quorum for these meetings of at least a simple majority of the current membership of the governing board.
- h. Describe standing committees to include executive and finance committees.

**B. Ensures and monitors screening of all staff, volunteers and members of the governing board as follows:**

1. Obtains a completed written application from each prospective staff person, volunteer or governing board member containing information about educational background, training, employment history and experience working with children.
2. Obtains the names of three (3) or more references that are unrelated to the applicant.
3. Obtains written authorization and information for the CASA/GAL program 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. Criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant currently resides and works.
  - b. State criminal records.
  - c. A fingerprint-based search 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. The CASA/GAL program shall retain documentation allowed by DPS.
  - d. 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.
  - e. Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry maintained by the DFPS in accordance with federal law and Texas Family Code 261.002.

- f. Social security number check or the equivalent that allows for additional names, aliases and/or addresses to be obtained for the individual for further checks, if not included in the fingerprint-based check.
4. Conducts a personal interview in-person with each prospective staff person, volunteer and governing board member.
5. Secures county and state criminal record checks for any county or state not covered by a national criminal background check in which the prospective staff person, volunteer or governing board member has resided for the previous seven (7) years.
6. Secures a child abuse registry or child protective services check, unless prohibited by law, for any state in which the prospective staff person, volunteer or governing board member has resided for the previous seven (7) years.
7. Declines any prospective staff person, volunteer or governing board member who refuses or fails to sign a release of information form or submit the required information necessary for any of the checks required by these Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs.
8. 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.
  - a. 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.
  - b. A volunteer, staff or board member must be barred from service or employment if the volunteer, staff or board member knowingly or intentionally places a child through the actions of the volunteer, staff or board member in direct contact with a person whose criminal history involves an offense listed above, other than a CPS-approved visitation.
  - c. Ten-Year Bar for Felony Offenses: 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 that includes any grade of felony, other than for offenses listed as a permanent bar, is barred from service or employment for 10 years after the offense, after which time the CASA/GAL program will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the offense as well as other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant as a board member, staff or volunteer.

9. Considers, if an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is not listed as a permanent bar or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the CASA/GAL program, the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony was committed, as well as other factors that may influence the decision, to accept the applicant as a staff person, volunteer or governing board member.
10. If a volunteer, staff or board member has a pending charge, a new review of the applicant may be made if the charge is dismissed or a finding of not guilty or other determination of innocence is made.
11. Completes and documents all screening before the staff person, volunteer or governing board member is accepted by the CASA/GAL program, and written verification is maintained on file at the CASA/GAL program office.
12. Provides written notification as part of the application process for prospective staff, volunteers and governing board members about all screening and background check requirements.
13. Repeats and documents these record checks for each active staff person, volunteer and governing board member at least annually. Rap back services may be utilized for criminal and child abuse background re-checks.
14. Determines and monitors adherence to policies related to corrective action(s) for any current staff person, volunteer or governing board member who violates a CASA/GAL program policy, court rule or law that poses a risk to a child or negatively impacts the CASA/GAL program.

### **C. Provides CASA/GAL program administration oversight as follows:**

1. Ensures clear lines of accountability and authority exist at all levels of the CASA/GAL program's organizational and management structures and are formalized in a chart of the organization, showing lines of accountability, to which all staff, volunteers and governing board members have received orientation.

2. If the CASA/GAL program is under the umbrella of a parent organization, a written agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) is developed that:
  - a. Details the rights and responsibilities of the CASA/GAL program and the parent organization.
  - b. Includes procedures for resolving situations in which a conflict of interest exists between the CASA/GAL program and its parent organization.
  - c. Contains the protocol for resource development activities of both organizations.
  - d. Sets a time frame of no more than two (2) years for review and possible revisions of the agreement.
  - e. Specifies the process for termination of the agreement or memorandum of understanding.
3. Communication and collaboration between staff, volunteers and governing board members is promoted by providing opportunities for interactions amongst volunteers, staff and the governing board.

#### **D. Recruits members of the governing board:**

1. The governing board is diverse and has members who bring a range of skills, backgrounds and knowledge which support the CASA/GAL program in fulfilling its mission.
2. The CASA/GAL program utilizes a written plan or matrix to guide its recruitment efforts.
3. The CASA/GAL program governing board includes individuals with various capabilities:
  - a. Skills and experience to serve at a policy-making level.
  - b. Ability to advocate for sufficient financial resources for the CASA/GAL program to carry out its purpose.
  - c. Knowledge of the court system and the community served.
  - d. Ability to reflect community and client interests and to advocate for culturally responsive service delivery.
  - e. Other specialized skills needed to carry out the objectives of the CASA/GAL program.

4. The CASA/GAL program develops and utilizes on an ongoing basis the following:
  - a. Job descriptions for board members.
  - b. Board recruitment strategies.
  - c. Election and screening procedures.
  - d. Written application for board members including consent and release for record checks.

**E. Provides formal orientation for governing board members:**

1. Ensures new members of the governing board receive formal orientation to:
  - a. Applicable laws and regulations.
  - b. The National CASA/GAL Association Core Model.
  - c. The Texas CASA Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs.
  - d. The roles of national, state and local CASA/GAL programs.
  - e. The CASA/GAL program's goals, objectives, structure and operations.
  - f. Applicable fiduciary responsibilities, including financial oversight.
2. Ensures the governing board members are familiarized with CASA/GAL program services and are provided with key documents related to CASA/GAL program governance and/or nonprofit board responsibilities.
3. Completes screening and background checks for governing board members consistent with Standard 5.B above prior to affiliation.

**F. Establishes a written plan for ongoing training and development to improve the knowledge and skills of the governing board that is reviewed and evaluated annually.**

1. At least one board member from each CASA/GAL program will attend the Texas CASA Local Board of Directors (LBOD) training, virtually or in-person, that will enable the CASA/GAL program to accomplish duties assumed by it in connection with its responsibilities.

**G. Maintains governing board records:**

1. Applications and screening documentation consistent with Standard 5.B for each governing board member.
2. Signed and dated statement of confidentiality for each governing board member.
3. Signed and dated conflict of interest policy for each governing board member.
4. Board minutes approved or signed by the board secretary or designee, including attendance, dates of meetings, agendas, topics covered and decisions or resolutions.
5. Standing committee meeting minutes, including attendance, dates of meetings, agendas, topics covered and decisions or resolutions, if applicable.

# STANDARD 6: MANAGEMENT AND FUNDING

*Demonstrates mission-oriented leadership in operations management and is a responsible steward of all resources in order to maximize advocacy for children who are eligible for and in need of a CASA/GAL volunteer.*

## ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE

### A. Demonstrates CASA/GAL program leadership.

1. The executive director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the CASA/GAL program.
2. The executive director has the following qualifications:
  - a. Education and/or training in a related field.
  - b. Management skills and experience to effectively administer the CASA/GAL program's human and financial resources.
  - c. Ability to effectively coordinate services with the court and other community agencies.
3. The executive director:
  - a. Plans and coordinates with the governing board the development and periodic review of CASA/GAL program policies for approval.
  - b. Establishes a logic model that is adopted by the governing board and evaluated annually.
  - c. Attends, or is represented by a designee, at all meetings of the governing board and its committees to the extent authorized by the governing board.
4. The executive director is delegated human resources management authority by the governing board, and the executive director ensures that the CASA/GAL program's staff management is carried out in accord with written policy.

### B. Manages financial resources.

1. The CASA/GAL program follows a written plan for securing and maintaining

diversified financial resources adequate to accomplish its established goals and objectives that reflect community support.

2. The CASA/GAL program maintains its tax-exempt status.
3. The CASA/GAL program seeks to conserve its financial resources by:
  - a. Accessing benefits allowed for tax-exempt organizations, when applicable.
  - b. Maintaining sound policies regarding purchasing and inventory control.
  - c. Using competitive bidding, where applicable, in accordance with governing board policy and law or regulation.
4. The CASA/GAL program regularly analyzes:
  - a. Cost of operations.
  - b. Current and potential funding sources.
  - c. Allocation of funds.
  - d. Effectiveness in achieving budget objectives.

### **C. Reports and accounts for fiscal operations.**

1. The executive director is accountable to the governing board for prudent financial management.
2. The executive director ensures the submission of financial reports to the governing board at least quarterly.
3. The CASA/GAL program shall submit quarterly and annual financial reports to Texas CASA, as determined by HHSC.
4. The CASA/GAL program ensures that an annual report is developed which includes financial, statistical and service data summary information.
5. The CASA/GAL program annually files the required Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 990 in a timely manner which is provided to the governing board or designee prior to filing.
6. The CASA/GAL program makes timely payments to the IRS and to other taxing authorities, as required by law.
7. Independent audits, financial reviews or compilations are required annually as

follows in the table below. Audits are recommended at least every three (3) years regardless of annual revenue.

- a. A financial audit, review or compilation is completed within nine (9) months following the close of the fiscal year, and the audit is submitted to Texas CASA by the designated deadline.
  - i. The audit must contain a separate schedule of all funds provided under CVC and VOCA contracts and a Statement of Functional Expenses.
- b. A designated committee of the governing board, such as a finance or audit review committee, or a designated member of the governing board, reviews the audit findings and meets with the independent auditor as necessary.
- c. The auditor's report is reviewed and formally approved or accepted by the governing board and is made available for public inspection.
- d. When a management letter has accompanied the audit, the governing board promptly reviews and ensures that the recommendations are implemented.
- e. The CASA/GAL program sends to Texas CASA any audit findings or questioned costs from any private or government audit/monitoring report within 60 days of receipt of findings.
- f. CASA/GAL programs receiving grant funding through National CASA/GAL Association may be subject to additional financial oversight.

| Annual CASA/GAL Program Revenue | Time Requirement | Required Level of Independent Review | Acceptable Service Provider |
|---------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| >\$500,000                      | Annual           | Audit                                | Independent CPA             |
| \$250,000-\$500,000             | Annual           | Audit                                | Independent CPA             |
| <\$250,000                      | Annual           | Audit                                | Independent CPA             |

#### **D. Adheres to accounting and financial reporting policies.**

1. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) apply to independent audits and reviews. Therefore, management's financial statements must be prepared in accordance with GAAP.
2. The CASA/GAL program has written operational policies and procedures with regard to accounting controls to which the CASA/GAL program adheres. In the case of CASA/GAL programs under an umbrella organization, the CASA/GAL

program adheres to the extent that is within the CASA/GAL program's control. These policies and procedures include:

- a. Descriptive chart of accounts.
  - b. Prompt and accurate recording of revenues and expenses.
  - c. Maintenance of a filing system which contains account records and receipts.
  - d. Safeguarding and verification of assets.
  - e. Control over expenditures.
  - f. Separation of duties to the extent possible.
  - g. Internal financial control policies:
    - i. Accounting controls including limited system access, segregation of duties and dual controls.
    - ii. Authority parameters and approval procedures.
    - iii. Documentation standards.
    - iv. Protection of assets.
    - v. Limited access to key assets.
    - vi. Reports, reconciliations and reviews.
    - vii. Compliance with Texas CASA CVC and VOCA Grant Contract Assurances.
3. The CASA/GAL program uses a financial management system that ensures the segregation of restricted funds.
  4. When the CASA/GAL program has the authority, its policies and procedures require that:
    - a. Staff with financial responsibilities receive orientation to the bookkeeping system and retraining when system changes occur.
    - b. Systems are in place to prevent or to detect fraud or abuses of the system, such as control, use and review of the system by more than one person.
  5. The CASA/GAL program's accounting records are kept up to date and balanced on a monthly basis.
  6. The CASA/GAL program reconciles bank statements to the general ledger on a monthly basis.

**E. Develops resources to sustain the CASA/GAL program.**

1. The CASA/GAL program's governing board sets policies and provides oversight for resource development activities carried out by its staff and volunteers.
2. The CASA/GAL program registers with the applicable state agency to conduct charitable solicitations.
3. The CASA/GAL program provides potential funders with an accurate description of the CASA/GAL program, its purpose and services as well as the financial needs for which the solicitation is being made.
4. The CASA/GAL program spends funds for the purposes for which they were solicited and/or designated, except for reasonable costs for administration of resource development activities.
5. The CASA/GAL program establishes controls on processing and acknowledging contributions in accordance with applicable laws.

**F. Manages the workplace.**

1. The CASA/GAL program operates from commercial or community (donated, leased or owned) offices, which provide a safe, well-maintained physical environment for its staff, volunteers and visitors.
2. The CASA/GAL program maintains a work environment for its staff and volunteers that is conducive to effective performance.
3. The CASA/GAL program's facilities comply with applicable health, fire safety and accessibility codes and regulations.
4. The CASA/GAL program takes reasonable measures to maintain its equipment and ensure it is used as intended.
5. The CASA/GAL program plans for the disposition of property in the event of its dissolution.

**G. Monitors for and minimizes risk.**

1. The CASA/GAL program protects its physical, human and financial resources by evaluating, preventing and reducing the risks to which it is exposed.
2. The CASA/GAL program has liability protection for the governing board, the

organization, CASA/GAL program staff and volunteers through the court, state statute or private insurance coverage.

3. The governing board has responsibility for determining the extent and nature of the liability protection needed for the CASA/GAL program, staff, volunteers and governing board, when applicable laws are unclear or silent, and has a plan for regularly reviewing potential liability and establishes the necessary protections for preventing or reducing exposure.
4. The CASA/GAL program evaluates and reduces potential liability by:
  - a. Assigning the risk management function to a person or committee whose job description includes responsibility for risk management policies and activities.
  - b. Ensuring that appropriate bonding, self-insurance or external coverage is adequate to meet the potential liability.
  - c. Developing a process to identify risks in terms of their nature, severity and frequency.
  - d. Avoiding risk through loss prevention and risk reduction.
  - e. Evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of the risk management function.
  - f. Carrying workers' compensation insurance and other insurance as deemed necessary based upon evaluation of its risks and protecting itself through means such as indemnification, participation in a risk-pooling trust or external insurance coverage.
  - g. Establishing and adhering to procedures to safeguard all staff, volunteer, governing board and CASA/GAL program confidential email, digital and electronic communications.
5. The CASA/GAL program requires all persons with authority to sign checks, handle cash or contributions, or manage funds to be bonded or the CASA/GAL program maintains appropriate insurance coverage to cover losses which may be incurred. The amount of the fidelity bond must equal, at a minimum, the CASA/GAL program's combined CVC/VOCA grant awards.
6. The CASA/GAL program informs its governing board members and executive director of the amount and type of coverage that is provided on their behalf by the CASA/GAL program.
7. The CASA/GAL program annually reviews its insurance coverage with its insurance carrier to insure adequate coverage.

8. The CASA/GAL program displays licenses and notices required by and in accordance with applicable statutes, rules or ordinances.
9. The CASA/GAL program requires staff, volunteers and governing board members to immediately notify the CASA/GAL program leadership if/when they have been involved in any criminal activity.
10. When the practice of transporting children is not prohibited in the state, and the CASA/GAL program allows staff or volunteers to provide transportation for children, the CASA/GAL program:
  - a. Has written policies.
  - b. Secures the necessary liability insurance to cover the CASA/GAL program and the staff or volunteer.
  - c. Ensures that the staff or volunteer obtains written permission of the supervisor or executive director.
  - d. Obtains written permission of the child's legal guardian or custodial agency.
  - e. When allowing use of a personal vehicle for transportation of children, ensures that the staff or volunteer who has agreed to provide the transportation:
    - i. Has passed a motor vehicles division record check annually.
    - ii. Provides annually to the CASA/GAL 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/GAL program's insurance carrier minimum if absent a state minimum.
    - iii. Is knowledgeable of the potential personal risk of liability and chooses to accept the responsibility.

# STANDARD 7: HUMAN RESOURCES

*Follows written policies for recruiting, screening, training, supervising, evaluating and developing staff from diverse backgrounds in an equitable and inclusive environment that advances the CASA/GAL mission.*

## ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE

### A. Maintains and adheres to human resources policies.

1. The CASA/GAL program has and adheres to written human resources policies and practices that specify the responsibilities of staff. Human resources policies and practices are equitable, clear and consistent.
2. Written human resources policies are made available to all CASA/GAL program staff, which include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Human resources practices.
  - b. Working conditions.
  - c. Wage policies and benefits, as applicable.
  - d. Insurance protection.
  - e. Required and supplemental training, and development opportunities.
  - f. A social media policy.
  - g. A policy requiring all staff and contract workers to disclose any paid employment, contract work, volunteer service or membership on a board of directors that might present a conflict of interest.
  - h. A whistleblower policy.
  - i. A media/crisis communication plan.
  - j. A weapons prohibition policy approved by Texas CASA, stating that individuals are prohibited from possessing any firearm, ammunition or weapon of any kind in CASA/GAL offices or in violation of any state or federal law or regulation. This policy will include the following:
    - i. Prohibition of firearms, ammunition or weapons of any kind being carried or transported

by CASA/GAL volunteers while involved in any case-related activity.

- ii. Law enforcement agents are exempt from this policy.
3. Each staff person receives a copy of the human resources policies and provides a signed acknowledgement of reading and understanding the policies which is kept on file.
4. The CASA/GAL program complies with applicable laws and regulations governing fair employment practices.
5. The executive director and/or appropriate designee reviews at least every three (3) years the human resources policies including equal employment opportunity (EEO), anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and practices; updates policies and revises the policies as needed; and submits the proposed policies to the governing board for review and approval.
6. Salaries and benefits are established by considering practices of similar nonprofit organizations in the CASA/GAL program's area.
7. The CASA/GAL program maintains written operational procedures regarding grievances to provide staff, volunteers and community members the opportunity and means to lodge complaints and appeals.
8. The CASA/GAL program acts on any complaints in accordance with its procedures and keeps documentation on file.
9. The complainant is informed of the resolution of any complaint, subject to confidentiality limitations, and a copy of the notification is maintained on file.
10. Written procedures allow for the periodic participation by the executive director or delegate in the governing board's review of human resources policies and for written notification to staff of any changes to the human resources policies.

## **B. Recruits and selects diverse qualified staff.**

1. Recruitment and selection procedures ensure that the needs of the CASA/GAL program are adequately met through an ongoing planning process, which details the type and number of staff required to accomplish its goals and objectives.
2. The CASA/GAL program obtains a written application and conducts an interview with all applicants considered for employment with the CASA/GAL program.
3. The CASA/GAL program is required to complete full screening of any applicants, who must be at least 21 years old, considered for employment prior to finalizing

any offer of employment, consistent with Standard 5.B.

4. The CASA/GAL program's selection process for all staff includes discussion about the issues and challenges that impact the children and families the CASA/GAL program serves.

### **C. Retains qualified staff.**

1. The CASA/GAL program establishes a succession plan for key staff.
2. The CASA/GAL program retains staff qualified to carry out its CASA/GAL program goals.
3. The CASA/GAL program has a written job description for each position or group of similar positions which clearly specifies qualifications and responsibilities.
4. The CASA/GAL program efficiently manages its administrative systems, including accounting, bookkeeping, human resources records and statistical reporting, and assigns appropriately skilled staff to carry out those tasks.
5. Administrative and/or supervisory responsibility is assigned to staff qualified by experience and training.
6. CASA/GAL program staff meet all applicable state registration, licensing or certification requirements for their assignment and/or use of professional titles.
7. The CASA/GAL program, in its ongoing planning process, details the type and number of staff required to accomplish the CASA/GAL program's goals and objectives.

### **D. Ensures new staff receive orientation.**

1. The CASA/GAL program provides new staff orientation introducing the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model, Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs, Role of the local CASA/GAL program, the CASA/GAL program's policies and services including, but not limited to:
  - a. Information about confidentiality laws and CASA/GAL program policies and the staff person's responsibility to abide by these laws.
  - b. Information about the CASA/GAL program's structure, service mandates, relationship to the court and human resources policies including sexual harassment and non-discrimination policies.

- c. Lines of accountability and authority within the CASA/GAL program.
  - d. Information about pertinent laws, regulations and policies.
  - e. Demographics of the community and the children served by the CASA/GAL program.
  - f. Job responsibilities and description.
2. Newly hired CASA/GAL program directors and volunteer supervisors complete the National CASA/GAL Association Pre-Service Training within six (6) months of hire.

### **E. Trains and develops staff.**

1. The CASA/GAL program implements a training and development plan for staff that is reviewed annually and ensures that staff complete 12 hours of continuing education annually to improve knowledge and skills to fulfill the requirements of their respective positions and/or advance the CASA/GAL mission.
2. The training and development plan prepares executive directors and volunteer supervisors to effectively support volunteers who work with children who have experienced abuse or neglect. The training and development plan provides information about the court and child welfare system, law and legal process, trauma-informed care, child development, cultural competency, inclusion and diversity issues, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and other relevant subjects, and the importance of family reunification when safely possible.
3. A CASA/GAL program considering using a peer coordinator model (or other models utilizing volunteers coordinating other volunteers) must:
  - a. Inform National CASA/GAL Association of intent to explore and/or implement the model, and undergo any required training and adhere to applicable standards, policies and procedures.
  - b. Seek legal counsel before adoption so the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and all applicable laws are considered.
  - c. Engage in a review of insurance considerations, including workers' compensation, to explore implications of such a model.
  - d. Participate in learning opportunities about the peer coordinator model.
  - e. Undergo an organizational assessment to determine need and readiness including considerations around budget, training, recruitment, staffing and

organizational culture.

- f. Develop a written plan and timeline for implementation of the model.
4. A CASA/GAL program that adopts and implements a peer coordinator model (or other models utilizing volunteers coordinating other volunteers):
    - a. Has a written job description and policies or procedures for the position of peer coordinator.
    - b. Provides adequate supervision for the peer coordinator based on written supervisory policies or procedures and holds them accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.
    - c. Has a written policy that requires a peer coordinator to participate in equivalent staff orientation, training and evaluation as paid staff.
    - d. Maintains that any staff assigned to the supervision of a peer coordinator as a full-time function will not supervise more than 15 peer coordinators.
    - e. Maintains that a peer coordinator will not oversee more than 10 volunteer advocates.
    - f. Establishes a plan for managing cases assigned to the peer coordinator in the event that the peer coordinator leaves or becomes unavailable.

#### **F. Supervises and evaluates staff.**

1. The CASA/GAL program provides adequate supervision for its staff and holds staff accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.
2. Frequency of individual or group supervision is arranged on the basis of staff needs, the complexity and size of the workload and the staff's familiarity with assignments.
3. The CASA/GAL program supervisor holds regularly scheduled case conferences with staff who supervise volunteers to review progress on each case.
4. The CASA/GAL program develops and implements a system for the periodic evaluation of all staff.
5. At least once a year, the performance of each staff person is evaluated to review performance against established criteria, and the evaluation is documented and kept on file. The staff person actively participates in this process.

6. Staff evaluations include:
  - a. Assessment of job performance in relation to the quality and quantity of work defined in the job description and to the performance objectives established in the most recent evaluation.
  - b. Clearly stated objectives for future performance.
  - c. Opportunity for staff self-evaluation.
  - d. Recommendations for further training and skill building, if applicable.
7. Staff are given the opportunity to sign the evaluation report, to obtain a copy and to include written comments before the report is entered into the human resources record.
8. The CASA/GAL program's human resources policies and practices specify, in writing, the conditions for disciplinary action and termination of employment, including violations of CASA/GAL program policy and/or documented substandard performance. The CASA/GAL program's policies and procedures specify the person or persons with authority to implement disciplinary action(s) and/or terminate employment.
9. The CASA/GAL program has policies and procedures for termination of employment that are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

#### **G. Maintains human resources records.**

1. Maintains a confidential file or record for each staff person that contains:
  - a. Identifying information and emergency contacts.
  - b. Recruiting and screening documents such as applications, resumes and educational verification.
  - c. Pay and compensation information.
  - d. Job description.
  - e. Training and/or professional development records.
  - f. Performance evaluations with signature page.
  - g. Disciplinary notices.
  - h. Termination of employment notices.

- i. Letters of commendation or recommendation.
  - j. Time and attendance.
2. Separately retains the following confidential information, as applicable:
- a. Security/background/three unrelated reference checks.
  - b. Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9) forms.
  - c. Self-identified disability, veteran or other status records.
  - d. Medical/insurance forms and records.
  - e. Drug test results.
  - f. Child support/garnishments.
  - g. Requests for employment/payroll verification.
  - h. Workers' compensation claims.
  - i. Internal investigation notes and reports.
  - j. Litigation-related or legally privileged communications and documents.

# STANDARD 8: VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION

*Follows written policies for recruiting, screening, training, supporting, supervising, recognizing and retaining volunteers to fulfill the role and duties of court-appointed special advocates/guardians ad litem, in accordance with applicable laws, rules, regulations and standards.*

## ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE

### A. Recruits volunteer advocates.

1. The CASA/GAL program has a written, inclusive plan for recruiting and selecting volunteers who reflect the diversity of children served.
  - a. The recruitment plan includes CASA/GAL program Guiding Principles (Standard 2), measurable goals and strategies to attract a diverse volunteer pool.
  - b. The recruitment plan includes measurable goals and strategies for community collaboration, media outreach, speaking engagements and other appropriate recruitment efforts.
2. The CASA/GAL program prepares standardized information that is readily available to recruit volunteers which includes the following:
  - a. Purpose and role of the CASA/GAL volunteer.
  - b. Qualifications to become a CASA/GAL volunteer.
  - c. Minimum time commitment required.
  - d. Equal opportunity statement.
3. The CASA/GAL program informs potential volunteers of, and refers them to other CASA/GAL programs, or National CASA/GAL or Texas CASA if the applicant might be eligible for or prefer to serve in another CASA/GAL program.
4. The CASA/GAL program responds to all potential volunteer inquiries within five (5) business days of receipt.

**B. Screens prospective volunteers.**

1. A volunteer CASA/GAL is an individual who is at least 21 years of age and has successfully passed the application and screening process, has successfully completed the National CASA/GAL Association\* Pre-Service Training, serves under the supervision of the CASA/GAL program, and is appointed by the court to advocate for children who come into the court system as a result of allegations of abuse or neglect as the subject of a Suit Affecting the Parent-Child Relationship or in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).
2. All volunteer applicants are required to provide the necessary information for screening, consistent with Standard 5.B.
3. If a volunteer applicant refuses or fails to provide the necessary documentation for screening consistent with Standard 5.B., the applicant is rejected.
4. The CASA/GAL program's volunteer selection procedures ensure that those not selected are treated with dignity and respect and, if appropriate, referred to alternative volunteer opportunities.
5. The CASA/GAL program completes all screening consistent with Standard 5.B. before the volunteer is assigned to a case, and all screening is documented on file at the CASA/GAL program office.
6. Upon selection, prior to assignment of a case, the CASA/GAL program obtains signed agreement from each volunteer to the following written policies:
  - a. Conflict of interest policy.
  - b. Confidentiality policy.
  - c. Social media policy.
  - d. CASA/GAL volunteer policies and procedures.
7. A qualified volunteer who transfers to a new CASA/GAL program must complete the full application and screening process consistent with Standard 5.B.
8. The CASA/GAL program has a written policy regarding the reactivation of volunteers who have been inactive for more than one (1) year. The written policy shall include guidelines under which a volunteer would not have to be retrained. The volunteer's file must include documentation of reactivation.

### C. Trains volunteers.

1. The CASA/GAL program 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 the National CASA/GAL Association Use of Pre-Service Training Materials Policy).
2. The CASA/GAL program verifies and documents that all volunteers successfully complete the required pre-service training including:
  - a. Training dates.
  - b. Name(s) of facilitator(s).
  - c. Verification that the facilitator has been trained as specified below.
  - d. Participant attendance and completion records.
3. The National CASA/GAL Association Pre-Service Training is to be delivered in accordance with the one of the National CASA/GAL Association modalities and for the duration specified by the chosen modality, for a minimum of 30 hours, including in-person contact for CASA/GAL program staff to evaluate the applicant's suitability to serve as a volunteer, as specified by the chosen modality.
4. 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 Standard 8.C.1 above, and
  - a. Completed the National CASA/GAL Association Training of Facilitators, or
  - b. Completed a training of facilitators provided by Texas CASA's facilitator who has completed the National CASA/GAL Association Training of Facilitators, or
  - c. 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.
5. The CASA/GAL program ensures that the training facilitator(s) offer the current, approved curriculum and prohibit the use of curriculum or materials that have been retired.
6. The CASA/GAL program documents that the facilitator completes 12 hours of continuing education annually to include topics related to facilitation, child welfare and CASA/GAL mission.

7. Guest speakers shall not deliver the curriculum unless trained to facilitate the CASA/GAL training or a CASA/GAL Training Facilitator co-facilitates the content.
8. In addition to 30 hours of pre-service training, if allowed by the court, the CASA/GAL program requires each volunteer to visit the court served while the court is in session to observe abuse/neglect proceedings before appearing in court for an assigned case.
9. The CASA/GAL program ensures that volunteers complete 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 the CASA/GAL program 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 the local CASA/GAL program 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.
10. A qualified volunteer who transfers to a new CASA/GAL program must complete, at a minimum, training regarding the background and needs of children served by the CASA/GAL program, local court, laws, CASA/GAL program policies and procedures, investigation and report writing.

**D. Establishes and adheres to policies for acceptance, assignment and closure of cases.**

1. The CASA/GAL program has procedures for the acceptance and assignment of cases.
2. The CASA/GAL program accepts and assigns cases consistent with the Guiding Principles (Standard 2), statutory authority, National CASA/GAL Association Core Model and CASA/GAL program capacity.
3. A volunteer is sworn in by the judge or court personnel before appointment to a case.
4. Cases are accepted and assigned without discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, national origin (ancestry), color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or physical challenge.
5. When possible, a volunteer is assigned at the earliest possible stage of the court proceedings.

6. All appointments and assignments are made by an appropriate written order of the court.
7. The CASA/GAL program or the court notifies all parties and agencies involved in the case of the volunteer's appointment and release.
8. Once the CASA/GAL program accepts appointment, advocacy and documentation of advocacy must begin and continue during appointment.
9. Volunteers are assigned to children with consideration to:
  - a. Experience, knowledge, skills and performance as a CASA/GAL volunteer.
  - b. Nature and difficulty of the current assignments.
  - c. Specific circumstances and availability of the volunteer.

#### **E. Supervises volunteers.**

1. The CASA/GAL program provides supervision which is appropriate to the volunteers' needs and complexity of case assignments and monitors performance consistent with Standard 8.F, following written procedures on failure to perform.
2. Supervisors provide timely and thorough guidance to volunteers through contact at least once per month by video conference, telephone, email, text or in-person meeting.
3. CASA/GAL program 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.
4. A staff person performing the duties of a volunteer shall provide the advocacy and documentation of advocacy consistent with Standard 8.F.
5. The CASA/GAL program supervisor holds regularly scheduled case meetings with volunteers to review the issues or progress of the case and needs of the child(ren).
6. The CASA/GAL program 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.
7. The CASA/GAL program has in place a written plan to retain volunteers which includes mechanisms for volunteer recognition.

**F. Establishes and adheres to volunteer administration policies and procedures.**

1. The CASA/GAL program maintains written volunteer policies and procedures.
2. Each volunteer receives a copy of the current volunteer policies and procedures and provides signed acknowledgement of reading and understanding the policies which is retained by the CASA/GAL program in the volunteer's record.
3. The job description of the CASA/GAL volunteer is clearly communicated through written policies, role descriptions, pre-service training, continuing education and supervision.
4. The CASA/GAL program volunteer policies and procedures specify the role and responsibilities of the CASA/GAL volunteer, are developed to align with the Texas Family Code 107.002 and align with the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model and Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs.
5. The volunteer policies and procedures shall include a description of the volunteer's role and responsibilities including but not limited to the following. The volunteer:
  - a. Reports any incident of child abuse or neglect, or any situation in which the volunteer has reason to believe that a child is in imminent danger, to the appropriate authorities and the CASA/GAL program supervisor, as mandated in the Texas Family Code.
  - b. Obtains 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 relevant persons to gather information about the child's situation.
  - c. Identifies and advocates 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 CASA/GAL program staff.
  - d. Collaborates and coordinates with legal, child welfare and other partners to ensure service provision that is in the child's best interests, following applicable confidentiality requirements.
  - e. Provides independent and factual information regarding the child, in writing, to the court and to counsel for the parties involved at every statutorily required hearing, and additionally as permitted, which includes information and

recommendations about the child's needs and best interests.

- f. Appears in court to advocate for the child's best interests, and provide testimony when necessary.
- g. Meets in-person with the child once every 30 days at a minimum.
  - i. In-person contact should take place where the child lives for a majority of visits to ensure in-depth knowledge of the child's environment for informed recommendations to the court.
  - ii. To allow for an exception, the CASA/GAL program must have a written exceptions policy outlining circumstances when exceptions may be permitted.
  - iii. Exceptions to permit less frequent in-person contact, or alternatives for in-person contact, shall be documented and retained in the CASA/GAL program's case record as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception.
  - iv. For any child not seen by an advocate within the prescribed time, without an approved exception, CASA/GAL program staff must see the child within 10 days.
- h. Makes recommendations for services for the child and the child's family, including referrals to existing community services.
- i. 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.
- j. Monitors implementation of service plans and court orders and assesses whether court-ordered services are implemented in a timely manner and whether review hearings should be scheduled with the court.
- k. Informs the court promptly of important developments in the case through appropriate means as determined by court rules or statute.
- l. Advocates 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.
- m. Monitors the child to ensure the child's safety and to advocate against unnecessary relocations of the child to multiple temporary placements
- n. Participates in all scheduled case reviews with CASA/GAL program supervisory staff.

- o. For a child at least 16 years of age, ascertains 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.
  - p. 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 Department of Family and Protective Services or SSCC.
  - q. Participates in continuing education relevant to CASA/GAL service.
  - r. Maintains complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances.
  - s. Discusses all recommendations concerning the case with the CASA/GAL program supervisor prior to submitting recommendations to the court.
  - t. Is prohibited from the following activities:
    - i. Taking a child to the volunteer's home.
    - ii. Taking a child to any location that is not pre-approved by the child's legal guardian, custodial agency and CASA/GAL program supervisor or director.
    - iii. Taking a child on an overnight outing.
    - iv. Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
    - v. Making placement arrangements for the child.
    - vi. Giving or lending money or expensive gifts to the child, the child's family or caregiver.
    - vii. 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.
  - u. Returns the case file and notes to the CASA/GAL program when the volunteer's assignment concludes or the case closes.
6. The CASA/GAL program supervisor does not alter the volunteer's reports or recommendations without the knowledge and documented agreement of the CASA/GAL volunteer.
7. The CASA/GAL program has a written policy to resolve conflicts between a volunteer and the CASA/GAL program supervisor regarding the handling of a case, reporting of information, or the recommendations to be included in a report to the court.

8. The CASA/GAL program will not assign more than two (2) cases at a time to a volunteer.
  - a. To allow for an exception, the CASA/GAL program must have a written exceptions policy outlining circumstances when exceptions may be permitted. An exception may be granted in the discretion of the CASA/GAL program staff. However, the decision to permit additional assignments shall be documented as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception.
  - b. Under the exception, a volunteer is not assigned more than five (5) cases and the CASA/GAL program ensures that the volunteer adheres to the roles and responsibilities as described in Standard 8.F.5.
9. The minimum ratio of volunteers to assigned children is 80%.
10. When the practice of transporting children is not prohibited in the state, and the CASA/GAL program allows staff or volunteers to provide transportation for children, the CASA/GAL program:
  - a. Has written policies.
  - b. Secures the necessary liability insurance to cover the CASA/GAL program and the staff or volunteer.
  - c. Ensures that the staff or volunteer obtains written permission of the supervisor or director.
  - d. Obtains written permission of the child's legal guardian or custodial agency.
  - e. When allowing use of a personal vehicle for transportation of children, ensures that the staff or volunteer who has agreed to provide the transportation:
    - i. Has passed a motor vehicles division record check annually.
    - ii. Provides annually to the CASA/GAL 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/GAL program's insurance carrier minimum if absent a state minimum.
    - iii. Is knowledgeable of the potential personal risk of liability and chooses to accept the responsibility.
11. No CASA/GAL program staff or volunteer shall provide:
  - a. Housing or lodging for children.
  - b. Bathing facilities for children.
  - c. Supervision of a child overnight or for any shift while a child is in the physical

custody of CPS.

12. When a CASA/GAL program allows volunteers or staff to take photos of children, the CASA/GAL program has written policies that guide the purpose, use, distribution, storage and destruction of the photos after case closure.
  - a. Policies allow photos only when:
    - i. Requested or required by the court to be included with or in the court report, or
    - ii. Written permission is obtained from the legal guardian or the young adult, if 18 years of age or older.
  - b. 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.

### **G. Takes corrective action when necessary.**

1. The CASA/GAL program has policies and procedures that specify the conditions for corrective action and non-voluntary dismissal of volunteers.
2. Appropriate grounds for dismissal of a volunteer may include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Taking action without CASA/GAL program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the role or authority of the CASA/GAL program.
  - b. Engaging in ex-parte communication with the court.
  - c. Violating a CASA/GAL program policy, court rule or law.
  - d. Failing to complete the required National CASA/GAL Association Pre-Service Training or 12 hours of continuing education each year.
  - e. Failing to effectively carry out assigned duties, which may include not following CASA/GAL program direction or guidance.
  - f. Falsifying a volunteer application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process.
  - g. Having allegations of child abuse or neglect brought against them.
  - h. Experiencing an irresolvable conflict of interest.
3. The CASA/GAL program's policies and procedures specify the person or persons with authority to dismiss a volunteer.

## H. Maintains volunteer records.

1. The CASA/GAL program maintains a written confidential record for each volunteer that contains, at minimum:
  - a. Application.
  - b. Emergency and identifying contact information.
  - c. Volunteer job description.
  - d. References documentation.
  - e. Documentation of all records checks.
  - f. Pre-service training and continuing education records.
  - g. Performance evaluations and any other applicable documentation related to performance.
  - h. Documentation of volunteer status.
  - i. Copy of volunteer's current driver's license, motor vehicles records check and verification of automobile insurance (if CASA/GAL program allows transportation).
  - j. Documentation of personal interview.
  - k. Name of each child assigned.
  - l. Date of each assignment.
  - m. Date of release from each assignment.
2. Written policies outline when, and if, volunteers have access to their records and detail the procedures for review, addition and correction (by volunteers) of information contained in the record.
3. The CASA/GAL program retains the record after a volunteer has left the CASA/GAL program in accordance with the CASA/GAL program's records retention policy.

# STANDARD 9: PUBLIC EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

*Communicates and actively engages with stakeholders and the general public to provide information and build support for the CASA/GAL mission and the needs of children in the child protection system and their families.*

## ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE

### A. Educates and engages the public.

1. Consistent with the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model and National CASA/GAL Association Brand Guidelines and Intellectual Property Standards, the CASA/GAL program establishes and executes a written plan for public information, outreach and education activities to provide an understanding of the CASA/GAL program's purpose, function and role in judicial proceedings and the community social service system.
2. The CASA/GAL program disseminates public information to broaden awareness about the needs of the children and families it serves and the benefits of CASA/GAL advocacy for those children.
3. The CASA/GAL program works closely with representatives from the legal and social services communities, other child advocacy programs, community service and civic groups, as well as with businesses to advance the CASA/GAL mission and to foster interagency collaboration and coordination of services for children and families.
4. The CASA/GAL program works in partnership with Texas CASA and the National CASA/GAL Association to disseminate timely information concerning newsworthy events, stories and occurrences to advance the CASA/GAL mission and benefit the children and families served.
5. The CASA/GAL program has a written communications policy that:
  - a. Aligns with the National CASA/GAL Association Brand Guidelines and Intellectual Property Standards.
  - b. Outlines appropriate contact with the media and an escalation protocol for state or national media inquiries.

- c. Identifies who communicates with the public.
  - d. Addresses use of social media.
  - e. Describes when to escalate issues to CASA/GAL program, Texas CASA and National CASA/GAL Association leadership.
6. The CASA/GAL program has a written crisis management plan that addresses issues that may have significant impact on the credibility, reputation or funding at the local, state or national level. This crisis management plan provides for information sharing between the CASA/GAL program, governing board, national, state and local CASA/GAL organizations within 24 hours, subject to confidentiality limitations.

# STANDARD 10: DATA AND RECORDS

*Compiles, maintains, manages and reports quality data and information in accordance with applicable laws, policies and/or standards. The CASA/GAL program maintains complete, accurate and current case records and volunteer files.*

## ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE

### A. Collects Data for Reporting.

1. The CASA/GAL program collects the information needed to complete Texas CASA's quarterly reports and the National CASA/GAL Association's six-month and annual surveys, and other data collection requests.
2. The CASA/GAL program has a tool and/or software for the collection of data with the following safeguards:
  - a. Operational procedures governing use of the tool, system and/or software.
  - b. Confidentiality policies concerning electronic data and information sharing via electronic media.
  - c. Review of all decisions regarding electronic files by CASA/GAL program management.

### B. Retains child and case information.

1. The CASA/GAL program maintains complete, accurate and current records for each child served, which include:
  - a. Name of the child.
  - b. Name of volunteer.
  - c. Date of appointment by the court.
  - d. Date of assignment of the case to the volunteer.
  - e. Date the case is closed by the court.
  - f. Date the volunteer is released from the case.

- g. Biographical or other identifying information.
    - h. Background on the nature of the presenting problem or reason for referral by the court.
    - i. Court reports and any court orders related to the service being provided.
    - j. Social service case plan, or other document from the child protection agency indicating the plans for the child.
2. Records for all children served are kept up to date through:
  - a. Current contact entries.
  - b. Monthly progress notes or summaries.
3. The CASA/GAL program maintains copies of all volunteer reports, written correspondence concerning the case, and documentation of significant case updates and issues discussed through non-written communications (such as in-person meetings or phone calls) not otherwise included in volunteer reports or written correspondence, and requires its volunteers to turn in their case records including all notes when the case is closed.
4. Upon case closure, a record (e.g. court order, case closure summary, recording in database) is made of the date and reason for closure.
5. The CASA/GAL program has written operational procedures, consistent with legal requirements, and with the policy on confidential information, governing the retention, maintenance, protection, destruction and return of case files when the case is closed. Procedures should include:
  - a. Records are kept a minimum of seven (7) years from case closure unless there is a court or statutory requirement that dictates otherwise.
  - b. Electronic children's case files are backed up on a separate system at least once a week and the backup is kept off site.
6. The CASA/GAL program has established procedures for the legal and programmatic release, in writing, of volunteers when a case is closed or when a volunteer is removed from a case.

# STANDARD 11: NETWORK AND MEMBERSHIP

*Maintains membership with National CASA/GAL Association, is a member or an affiliate of Texas CASA, and meets the standards, requirements and policies of both.*

## ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE

### **A. Is a member of the National CASA/GAL Association for Children.**

1. The CASA/GAL program maintains membership and works cooperatively and collaboratively with the National CASA/GAL Association for Children.
2. The CASA/GAL program adheres to all National CASA/GAL Association standards, policies and agreements.
3. The CASA/GAL program follows all National CASA/GAL Association protocols.
4. If the CASA/GAL program has an auxiliary, the CASA/GAL program has a written agreement with the auxiliary, follows any National CASA/GAL Association policies relating to working with an auxiliary, and makes the auxiliary aware of National CASA/GAL Association standards and requirements for CASA/GAL auxiliary program membership.
5. The CASA/GAL program provides a copy of the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model and Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs to its governing board and CASA/GAL program staff, and reviews these periodically to strengthen understanding and clarity of the role and requirements of CASA/GAL programs in advancing our shared mission.
6. Existing CASA/GAL programs contemplating expansion to a new county, regionalization, merger or a change in governance structure must adhere to the applicable procedures of the National CASA/GAL Association Program Membership Process and Texas CASA expansion process.

**B. Is a member of Texas CASA.**

1. The CASA/GAL program maintains membership in good standing with Texas CASA.
2. The CASA/GAL program takes advantage of the services available from Texas CASA which may include:
  - a. Technical assistance.
  - b. Resource materials.
  - c. State conference.
  - d. Local CASA/GAL program directors' meetings.
  - e. Training opportunities.
  - f. Web resources.
3. The CASA/GAL program complies with Texas CASA standards, the Texas Family Code, the Texas Administrative Code, any other applicable state statutes, and state and federal funding requirements. When the CASA/GAL program believes a conflict exists between National CASA/GAL Association standards and Texas CASA standards, the CASA/GAL program and Texas CASA present the perceived conflict to the National CASA/GAL Association. National CASA/GAL Association will review the conflict and determine which takes precedence.
4. Recognizing the unique relationship between tribal programs and state organizations, the tribal CASA/GAL program and state CASA/GAL organization collaborate to the fullest extent possible.
5. The CASA/GAL program demonstrates compliance with Texas CASA standards through a quality assurance process.
6. Neither the Office of the Attorney General nor Texas CASA will be liable for the actions of the CASA/GAL program volunteers, governing body or employees.

# GLOSSARY

## **Administrative Authority**

The oversight authority for a publicly administered program.

## **Audit**

When a certified public accountant (CPA) examines a CASA/GAL program's financial records in order to formulate an opinion on the financial statements. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) apply to independent audits and reviews. Therefore, management's financial statements must be prepared in accordance with GAAP and the auditor must follow generally accepted auditing standards. Internal controls are evaluated and transactions are tested for legitimacy and separation of duties. These tests provide a basis for an audit opinion which will state the accuracy of the financial statements.

## **Best Interest**

"Best Interest" is always the primary consideration of the court in determining the issues of conservatorship, possession, well-being, permanency and access to the child. Section 263.307 of the Texas Family Code provides factors that can be considered when determining the best interest of the child.

## **Case**

A Suit Affecting the Parent Child Relationship (SAPCR) or in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) before the court for abuse or neglect involving one child or a sibling group.

## **Core Model**

The National CASA/GAL Association Core Model identifies the foundational elements of CASA/GAL best-interest advocacy. This includes guiding principles, types of cases served, primary activities performed by CASA/GAL volunteers, parameters for staff serving cases and the screening, training and supervision requirements.

## **Child Protective Services (CPS)**

Child Protective Services (CPS) is a division of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). CPS investigates reports of abuse and neglect, provides services to children and families, obtains placement for children in foster care and provides case management services. CPS duties may be assumed under Community-Based Care by a private agency for a defined geographic area.

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## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)**

Affirming the whole person through the inclusion of and acceptance of different identities in a way that allows for equal opportunities for success and belonging.

## **Disproportionality**

The over- or under-representation of populations of certain groups compared to their representation in the general population.

## **Executive Director**

This title is used throughout the standards to refer to the person who manages the day-to-day operations of the local nonprofit CASA/GAL program and is accountable to a nonprofit governing board. Other titles may be utilized by local programs for this role, such as Chief Executive Officer.

## **Guardian ad litem**

Guardian appointed by the court to represent the interest of a child or incompetent.

## **IRS Form 990**

An Internal Revenue Service form required to be completed and filed annually by nonprofits.

## **Local CASA Program**

Stand-alone, independent CASA/GAL member programs that recruit volunteers to provide best-interest advocacy for children and service to families. Local programs may cover a single county/jurisdiction or multiple counties/jurisdictions.

## **Logic Model**

A strategy encompassing the intended outcomes and impact of CASA advocacy that identifies the inputs, activities and outputs required to reach stated goals. The Texas CASA network collaborates on a statewide logic model.

## **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

A written agreement between the local CASA program and another entity that defines the working relationship. Local CASA programs create an MOU with their local court. Texas CASA maintains an MOU with DFPS and Community-Based Care providers.

**National CASA/GAL Pre-Service Training**

A required training using National CASA/GAL's proprietary or National CASA/GAL-approved 30-hour curriculum that is completed by volunteers in preparation to serve a child or group of siblings.

**Operational Procedures**

Organizational protocols and procedures that establish controls over any internal and/or financial processes. Written operational procedures for accounting may also be known as internal financial controls.

**Peer Coordinator**

A volunteer coordinating and supporting other volunteers within the guidelines of the Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs.

**Peer Coordinator Model**

The policies and practices of implementing and managing Peer Coordinator volunteers who coordinate and support other volunteers within the guidelines of the Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs.

**Program Auxiliary**

A nonprofit organization, independent from the CASA/GAL program, whose purpose is to promote the CASA/GAL program primarily by raising funds and heightening community awareness of the program. Not used in Texas.

**Program Director**

This title is used to refer to the person who manages the direct-service side of program operations, such as supervision of volunteer coaches, volunteer training, and the management of case and volunteer data.

**Risk Management**

The overall systematic approach to analyzing risk and implementing controls to minimize risk.

**Screening**

The process of vetting potential volunteers, staff and nonprofit governing board members which includes, but is not limited to, an application, reference checks, background checks, personal interviews and pre-service training (for volunteers, staff supervising volunteers and training facilitators).

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## **Trained and Qualified Community Volunteers**

The CASA mission supports court appointment of individuals who serve as volunteers to advocate for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. Standard 8 sets forth required training and supervision for individuals who serve as trained community volunteers. Volunteers must meet the screening and training requirements and be under the supervision and guidance of a CASA/GAL program. The National CASA/GAL Association acknowledges that there may be exceptional times when it would be necessary and appropriate to appoint local program staff members to fulfill all or a part of the CASA/GAL volunteer role and responsibilities as set forth in Standard 8 for a limited and time-specific basis. In the event local program staff members are assigned, the staff member appointed by the court must be trained and supervised in the same manner as required for volunteers in Standard 8. A minimum of ratio of 80% volunteer assignment to children served must be maintained.

### **Volunteer Job Description**

A document that describes the role and responsibilities of the volunteer advocate.

### **Volunteer Ratio**

The percentage of children served by a volunteer (PChV) must be maintained by a local CASA/GAL program to reflect that at least 80% of all children served by the program are appointed a trained and qualified community volunteer. Program staff are not eligible to count within the 80% volunteer ratio.

# DOCUMENTATION LIST

This list has been prepared to provide local CASA/GAL program staff the documents or type of documentation that will or can help to substantiate the Elements of Practices for these local Standards. The documents are organized by standard and are listed in the order in which they appear and/or are applicable in the Texas CASA Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs.

**Note:** Any documents in **bold** represent the documents required to be submitted to National CASA/GAL as a part of the self-assessment phase of the local quality assurance (QA) process. Other documents may be reviewed during the QA process but are not necessarily required for submission. Texas CASA is requesting certification to substitute for National CASA/GAL QA reviews.

## STANDARD 1

- Mission statement with proof and date of adoption by the governing board
- Written values with proof and date of adoption by the governing board
- Board minutes reflecting board adoption of the mission and values**

## STANDARD 2

- Court report(s) (report template and redacted samples)
- Documentation of orientation materials, including guiding principles topics for staff and governing board members (table of contents, agenda and/or materials - may be included in orientation or onboarding materials)
- Record/documentation of orientation attendance or dates of completion for staff and governing board members

## STANDARD 3

- Diversity, equity and inclusion plan(s) with proof and date of adoption by the governing board (these plans may be separate or combined)
- Confirmation/documentation of annual diversity, equity and inclusion training

for staff, volunteers and nonprofit governing board members

- Equal employment opportunity (EEO) policy\*
- Anti-discrimination policy\*
- Anti-harassment policy\*
- \* *These may be included in human resources policies or separate documents (see also Standard 7)*
- Board minutes reflecting review of and/or updates to required plans and policies included in this standard**

## STANDARD 4

- Conflict of interest policy with proof and date of governing board approval
- Signed, dated conflict of interest policy, statement or agreement for each staff person, paid consultants and governing board members
- Confidentiality policy with proof and date of adoption by the governing board
- Release of information policy/protocol (this may be included in the confidentiality policy)
- Signed, dated confidentiality policy, oath or agreement from each volunteer, staff person and governing board member
- Policy for protection of non-case information (this may be combined with or included in confidentiality policy or records retention policy)
- Board minutes reflecting review of and/or updates to required plans and policies included in this standard**

## STANDARD 5

- Strategic plan or equivalent
- Whistleblower policy (this may be included in human resources policy)
- Current budget with date of adoption by governing board

- Certificate(s) of insurance for all insurance policies
- Executive director performance evaluation form (a copy of the blank form; see also Standard 7)
- Dated signature sheet from most recent executive director performance evaluation
- Current succession plan for executive director position
- Statute or memorandum of understanding (MOU) that defines case assignment and acceptance, as well as working relationship with the court
- Bylaws
- Screening application form(s) (a copy of the blank form)
- Written/signed authorizations for background checks (redacted if necessary) or case management system report with completion dates
- Documentation of all background screening for volunteers, staff and members of the governing board (see Standard 5.B elements of screening)
- Sample application or information packet(s) for volunteer recruitment, staff recruitment and/or governing board recruitment that contains notice about background screening requirements
- Documentation that background screening checks have been updated annually for anyone not included in rap back services; confirmation of rap back service for criminal background checks and subscription for child abuse checks will be required
- Organization chart showing management structure and lines of accountability
- For CASA/GAL programs operating under an umbrella organization, an MOU between the program and the umbrella organization
- Recruitment plan or matrix for governing board
- Job descriptions for members of the governing board Board election and screening procedures
- Documentation of orientation materials for governing board members, including guiding principles' topics (table of contents, agenda and/or materials - may be included in orientation or on-boarding materials)
- Training and development plan for governing board Board records as specified in Standard 5.G

- Board minutes reflecting review and/or updates to required plans and policies included in this standard**
- Board minutes of annual meeting**
- Board minutes reflecting review and adoption of annual budget**
- Board minutes reflecting review and/or updates to insurance coverage**
- Board minutes reflecting review and/or updates to agreement with the court (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding)**
- Board minutes reflecting review and/or updates to bylaws**

## STANDARD 6

- Logic model**
- Financial resources plan (might also be known as resource development plan, fundraising plan or sustainability plan)
- 501(c)(3) designation letter from IRS
- Purchasing and inventory control policy/policies (might also be known as procurement policy)
- Quarterly financial reports submitted to the governing board Annual report
- IRS form 990
- IRS form 941s or proof of payment
- Most recently completed financial audit, review or compilation as required by Standard 6.C**
- Documentation of the governing board's review of the audit, financial review or compilation (This may be in board or committee minutes)**
- When applicable, **Management Letter, confirmation of review of management letter and audit findings** are sent to National CASA/GAL
- Operational policies, manual or handbook consistent with Standard 6.D.2  
Internal financial controls policy (this may be included in operational policies)  
Financial management system (e.g. QuickBooks or Dynamics)

- Resource development policies (this may be included in resource development plan, operational policies or equivalent)
- Documentation that the program is recognized by the state government as approved to conduct charitable solicitations
- Controls or procedures for processing and acknowledging contributions in accordance with applicable laws (This may be included in internal controls or internal financial controls)
- Plan for disposition of property in the event the program is dissolved (may be included with Articles of Incorporation filed with the state)
- Certificate(s) of insurance for all insurance policies (e.g. general liability, workers' compensation; see also Standard 5)
- Email communication policy (This may be included in communications plan, social media policy or confidentiality policy)
- When the practice of transporting children is not prohibited in the state, and the program allows staff or volunteers to provide transportation for children, the program has written policies for transportation that include the following required documents (see also Standard 8):
  - Proof of appropriate liability protection/insurance for the program and staff
  - Written permission of the supervisor or executive director
  - Written permission of the child's legal guardian or custodial agency
  - When allowing use of a personal vehicle for transportation of children:
    - ◇ Documentation of annual motor vehicles division record
    - ◇ Annual 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 program's insurance carrier minimum if absent a state minimum
- Board minutes reflecting review and/or updates to required plans and policies included in this standard**
- Board minutes reflecting review of quarterly financial reports**
- Board minutes reflecting review of annual report**
- Board minutes reflecting review of IRS Form 990**
- Board minutes reflecting review of the financial audit, review or compilation, and any corresponding management letter of findings**

## STANDARD 7

- Human resources policies, manual or handbook
  - Human resources practices
  - Working conditions
  - Wage policies and benefits, as applicable
  - Insurance protection
  - Required and supplemental training, and development opportunities
  - Social media policy
  - Policy requiring all staff and contract workers to disclose any paid employment, contract work, volunteer service or membership on a board of directors that might present a conflict of interest
  - Whistleblower policy
- Signed, dated acknowledgment of receiving human resources policies from each staff person
- Equal employment opportunity (EEO) policy\*
- Anti-discrimination policy\*
- Anti-harassment policy\*

*\*These may be included in human resources policies; see also Standard 5*

- Human resources policies or operational policies (see above) include procedures for staff grievances and appeals unless prohibited by law
- Complaints, investigations and responses are documented and kept separate from main human resources file for each staff person
- Human resources policies include (see above) or separate governance policy that allows periodic participation by the executive director or delegate in the governing body's review of human resources policies and for written notification to staff of any changes to the human resources policies
- Staff recruitment plan detailing the type and number of staff required to accomplish program goals and objectives (this may be included in strategic plan)
- Documentation of background screening for each staff person as required in Standard 5.B
- Current succession plan for key staff ("key" staff is determined by the program)

- succession plan for key staff may be reflected in executive director succession plan)
- Job descriptions for each staff person or group of similar positions
- Documentation of staff orientation
  - Staff orientation agenda, curriculum and/or materials
  - Attendance and/or completion dates
- Documentation of employment start date and pre-service training completion date for executive directors and staff supervising volunteers
- Professional development plan for staff (individually or as a group)
- Documentation of continuing education and on-going training hours and content with dates of attendance and/or completion
- If considering a peer coordinator model, written plan and timeline for implementation
- If using a peer coordinator model:**
  - **Written job description for the position of peer coordinator**
  - **Policy that requires a peer coordinator to participate in equivalent staff orientation, training and evaluation as paid staff**
  - **Plan for managing cases assigned to the peer coordinator in the event that the peer coordinator leaves or becomes unavailable**
- System for staff periodic evaluation(s) (This may be included in human resources policies)
- Staff performance evaluation form(s) (a copy of the blank form)
- Dated signature sheets for each completed staff performance evaluation
- Policies or procedures that specify conditions for disciplinary action and termination of employment, including violations of program policy and/or documented substandard performance; the program's policies and procedures specify the person or persons with authority to implement disciplinary action(s) and/or terminate employment (this may be included in human resources policies)
- Human resources records as specified in Standard 7.G
- Board minutes reflecting review and/or updates to required plans and policies included in this standard**

## STANDARD 8

- Recruitment plan for volunteer advocates
- Sample of standardized information used to recruit volunteer advocates  
Volunteer application (a copy of a blank form or redacted as necessary)
- Documentation of background screening for each volunteer advocate as required in Standard 5.B
- Signed agreements from volunteer advocates:
  - Conflict of interest policy
  - Confidentiality policy
  - Social media policy
  - CASA/GAL volunteer policies and procedures
- Reactivation policy for volunteers who have been inactive for more than one (1) year. The written policy shall include guidelines under which a volunteer would not have to be retrained. The volunteer's file must include documentation of reactivation (this may be included in volunteer policies and procedures)
- Copy of equivalent curriculum for review and written pre-approval before use from National CASA/GAL** if the program is not using the current National CASA/GAL Association pre-service training curriculum or the approved Texas CASA adaptation of the National CASA/GAL curriculum
- Documentation of pre-service attendance and completion date for each volunteer advocate
- Documentation/confirmation that facilitator requirements have been met consistent with Standard 8.C.4
- Documentation of continuing education hours and content for pre-service training facilitators (this may include professional development hours for staff)
- Proof of court observation if allowable (documentation of dates) Pre-service training records:
  - Training dates
  - Name(s) of facilitator(s)
  - Verification that the facilitator has been trained in accordance with the standard
  - Participant attendance and completion records

- Documentation of continuing education hours and content for volunteer advocates to include dates of attendance and/or completion
- Procedure for acceptance and assignment of cases (This may be included in operational policies, MOU with the court, or a separate procedure)
- Signed court order(s) of appointment
- Documentation of staff supervision meeting dates with volunteer advocates (These may be notes in a case management system)
- Case assignment list to include case number, name of volunteer advocate and staff supervisor
- Volunteer performance evaluation documentation Volunteer retention plan
- Volunteer policies and procedures
- Signed acknowledgement of receiving the volunteer policies and procedures for each volunteer advocate
- Volunteer job description, roles and responsibilities (this may be included in Volunteer Policies and Procedures)
- Exceptions policy, if applicable, for in-person contact minimum requirement per Standard 8.F.5.g (This may be included in the volunteer policies and procedures)
- Policy to resolve conflicts between volunteer advocates and the program supervisor (This may be included in the volunteer policies and procedures)
- Exceptions policy, if applicable, for case assignment ratios per Standard 8.F.8 (This may be included in the volunteer policies and procedures)
- When the practice of transporting children is not prohibited in the state, and the program allows staff or volunteers to provide transportation for children, the program has written policies for transportation that include the following required documents (see also Standard 8):
  - Proof of appropriate liability protection/insurance for the program and staff
  - Written permission of the supervisor or executive director
  - Written permission of the child's legal guardian or custodial agency
  - When allowing use of a personal vehicle for transportation of children:
    - ◇ Documentation of annual motor vehicles division record
    - ◇ Annual 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 program's insurance carrier minimum if

absent a state minimum

- When a program allows volunteers or staff to take photos of children, the 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
  - Policies prohibit the use of photos for social media, marketing or personal use unless written authorization is provided by the legal guardian
- Policies and procedures for corrective action and non-voluntary dismissal of volunteers (this may be included in volunteer policies and procedures)
- Volunteer records include documentation of elements listed in Standard 8.H
- Policies that specify when, and if, volunteers have access to their records and detail the procedures for review, addition and correction (by volunteers) of information contained in the record (This may be included in volunteer policies and procedures)
- Records retention policy (see also Standard 10)
- Board minutes reflecting review and/or updates to required plans and policies included in this standard**

## STANDARD 9

- Plan for public information, outreach and education
- Communications policy
- Crisis management plan
- Board minutes reflecting review and/or updates to required plans and policies included in this standard**

## STANDARD 10

- Operational procedures for data collection tool or software
- Confidentiality policies concerning electronic data and information sharing via electronic media. Case records include documentation consistent with elements listed in Standard 10.A.2
- Child and case records per Standard 10.B
- Court reports and correspondence
- Date and reason for case closure documented in the case file
- Written operational procedures, consistent with legal requirements, and with the policy on confidential information, governing the retention, maintenance, protection, destruction and return of case files when the case is closed
- Procedures for the legal and programmatic release, in writing, of volunteers when a case is closed or when a volunteer is removed from a case (this may be included in volunteer policies and procedures or operational procedures)
- Board minutes reflecting review and/or updates to required plans and policies included in this standard**

## STANDARD 11

- If the program has an auxiliary, the program has a written agreement with the auxiliary
- Board minutes reflecting review and/or updates to required plans and policies included in this standard**

## ADDITIONAL DOCUMENT

- Growth plan** (if not at 100% service to eligible children)



**TEXASCASA**  
Court Appointed Special Advocates  
 **FOR CHILDREN**

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STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

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