

VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Volunteer's Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Program: _____ (check file or program placement)

Staff Interviewers: _____

(There must be two completed question forms in each volunteer's file. Please make sure that you complete this form entirely for the file.)

INTERVIEWER: Intro for Volunteer Interview

- Purpose of Interview – Get to know volunteer better on an individual basis in order to support their needs and make their volunteer work with CASA a positive experience
- Structured questions for every volunteer
- Write answers as volunteer gives them – not making any assessments
- Encourage questions from volunteer throughout interview

Intro for Questions About Volunteer's Family of Origin

- Information is confidential – assigned advocacy coordinator will review file
- Goal is to ensure our volunteers can make the best, most objective recommendations regarding the children we serve
- Our (staff and volunteers) experiences growing up affect or "color" the way we see the world
- We may believe the way we "coped" or "handled" a problem would be the right way for everyone
- We may "project" our feelings on the parent, or child or caseworker – this could prevent us from seeing them as unique individuals whose lives have also been affected by their own family experience
- **We want the volunteer experience to a positive one for volunteers and for the children we serve**
- **Just because there is a history of abuse in a person's family, this does not exclude them from being a volunteer at Child Advocates**

Procedures for Concerns during Volunteer Interviews

1. Review file prior to interview to determine if there are any obvious concerns. Address these during interview.
2. If either one of the interviewers has a concern about a volunteer, allow that interviewer to take the lead and pursue questioning.
3. If the concern is not resolved, or there are any other concerns, then that volunteer will be called back for a 2nd interview. Do not let the volunteer leave thinking that everything is fine if there are concerns. Staff concerns with CASA Program Director prior to 2nd interview.
4. If the concerns appear to be insurmountable (i.e. racist remarks, emotionally unstable during interview, agitated and angry, strong biases that would negatively impact their casework, a total lack of understanding of the nature of their casework, lack of resolution of childhood abuse, complete lack of written and verbal communication skills), the interviewers can make a decision at that time not to call the volunteer back for a 2nd interview. If the interviewers do not feel comfortable addressing these concerns during this interview and would like the time to discuss privately and get feedback from others, the volunteer should be told what the concerns are and that they will be discussing these with the CASA Program Director prior to giving them a final decision.

SECTION A

- I. A) What influenced you to become a Court Appointed Advocate volunteer? There are many opportunities in our community to work with children – why did you choose our organization?

- B) How does your family feel about your involvement in the program? Explain:

- C) What were strengths/weaknesses of the AU training?

SECTION B

- II. When we work with families, it is important to look at our own families to help us realize where our perspective comes from. *(We are looking for volunteer's ability to be objective and to intervene effectively.)*
 - A) Tell us about your family / who makes up your family? / Where are they?
 - 1) How would you describe your childhood?
(Give examples: Where did you grow up? What was it like where you grew up?)

- 2) What were the roles of your family members?

- 3) What kind of rules did you have?

- 4) What happened if you broke the rules?

- 5) If you have children, how do you discipline them?

- 6) What were some of the happier moments in your childhood?

- 7) What would you change about your childhood and your parents?

- 8) Tell us about some experiences in your life that were traumatic, sad, abusive or that you feel had an impact on your life:

9) Was there ever a time when you thought there was possible neglect toward you or anyone in your family? What about SXAB, physical abuse, emotional abuse or domestic violence?

10) Was CPS ever involved with anyone in your family of origin?

B) Who in your family, which includes parents, grandparents, siblings, spouses, children or You, if anyone, have abused substances?

1) How did their usage play a role in their interaction with the family?

2) If volunteer identifies self: What was the recovery process?
(If in AA or similar organization, ask if we can contact their sponsor.)

3) How did you and your family cope with this?

If Yes to Abuse

(Look for cognitive distortions. Volunteer should be able to verbalize how the abuse affected their thinking before and how they have straightened it out. If they don't know how it affected their thinking then maybe they haven't changed their thinking or perceptions.)

- What was your family's reaction to the disclosure of abuse? *(The reaction to the child's disclosure is critical to their ability to heal. This could be an issue for a volunteer who has been abused as a child and it is important to find out what happened when they disclosed and how they are handling this now as an adult.)*

- What did the non-offending parent say and do?

- Have you sought or received counseling for this?

- Who in your family knows about this? How have they talked about it? *(Look for how the volunteer has changed their distorted patterns of thinking.)*

- How do you think your abuse changed your relationship with your family & others? *(It is important that they are not living with the abuse everyday.)*

How is your perception of life now different from your perception while the abuse was occurring or as you grew up with it? *(Look for lost hope and regained hope – how did they regain the hope. The volunteer should be able to verbalize, “When I was a kid the abuse affected my thinking...and this is how I've straightened it out...” If you (the interviewer) aren't hearing how the abuse affected them, then maybe they don't know.)*

How will your experience impact your work as a CASA volunteer? *(The volunteer needs to be able to answer this question. It is a red flag if they say there will be no effect at all. Our experience has shown that it will have an effect. We need the volunteer to think about how it might impact them before we would feel comfortable putting them in a similar situation. People who have an awareness of how their own abuse has changed them and how they see the world differently can pretty much know when they are in a situation that is making them feel uncomfortable and they will know what to do about it. If not, (they feel that it is in the past...) they can get blindsided and have strong emotional reactions and not know what is going on. This will impact their ability to be objective and intervene effectively.)*

If volunteer can't remember large amount of childhood

(Important because the volunteer may recover memories when faced with abuse issues)

- Does that bother you?

- How does that affect you?

If Volunteer Would Be Best Suited for Another Volunteer Role

Tell them: We can see that you are working hard to live a happy productive life; there are other volunteer opportunities that would not cause as much distress as working as a CASA may cause.

Give them YPC, FOCA, and Special Events info and/or: Give them phone # to the Volunteer center. They can direct them to other volunteer opportunities

SECTION C

III. A) What is your understanding about why people abuse their children?

1) How do you feel about people who abuse their children? *(Underlying rage is not good, explain that they will need to be able to work with perpetrators and they won't be effective CASA's if they can't work with them due to rage)*

2) How do you think a child would feel if they had been SXAB?

3) How do you think they would feel toward the perpetrator?

4) How do you think they would feel toward the non-offending caregiver?
(Explain that the child may still feel some sense of love toward both parents)

5) Why do you think a child may recant their disclosure of sexual abuse?

B) What types of abuse do you feel you can or cannot work with?

1) *(If they say they are uncomfortable with certain type of abuse, e.g. SXAB)*
What is it specifically that would make you feel uncomfortable or make you think you would not be able to work the case? *(We can teach you how to work the case and will provide supervision, so what is it specifically that they are worried about?)*

- 2) We work with a diverse group of children with individual needs. Some of our cases include multiple siblings. Are you prepared, with our supervision, to work with any child who needs a Court Appointed Advocate volunteer? (Including physically or mentally challenged, blind, HIV, severe emotional problems.)
- 3) Do you have any preferences about age and sex of the child you work with?

C) CASE SCENARIO:

You are visiting a child and during your conversation the child begins to disclose that they have been sexually abused. How would you handle this situation? (*Please note their actual answer and what you had to explain.*)

INTERVIEWER: *We are looking for some of the following answers. You may want to add to their answers if clarification is needed. - LISTEN, VERBALLY COMFORT, THANK THEM FOR TELLING YOU, TELL THEM THAT YOU WILL MAKE SURE THAT THEY GET THE HELP THAT THEY NEED, THAT YOU CANNOT KEEP IT A SECRET BECAUSE SOME SECRETS AREN'T MEANT TO BE KEPT, ETC. Point out that the purpose is to acknowledge, not to investigate.)*

SECTION D

Boundaries

Physical sharing of information (how physical is it okay to be with others and to allow others to be with you?)

Verbal sharing of information (what do you verbally share with others and what do you let others talk with you about?)

Emotional sharing of information (how selective are you with sharing your emotions?)

*The children we work with have no boundaries because they have been violated. They will let anything "in" and **the people working with them have to have really good boundaries.** If we share inappropriate information (physical, verbal or emotional) with a child, they will be unable to prevent this from happening. This can cause them to worry about things that they shouldn't have to. We have to model appropriate "in and out" boundaries.*

1. What is your perception of boundaries?

2. How much self-information do you share? When would this be appropriate or not appropriate and how would you make that decision?

SECTION E

- IV. A) What are some of your hobbies/recreational activities?
 - 1) What can your advocacy coordinator do to effectively supervise you and motivate you?
 - 2) What are some things that cause you stress in your life?
 - 3) How do you react in stressful situations?
 - 4) How do you take care of yourself?
- B) Tell us about some of your strengths:
- C) What are some areas that you still need to develop?

SECTION F

- V. 1) In your own words, what is your understanding of the role and purpose of a Court Appointed Advocate Volunteer?
- 2) What do you expect to personally accomplish?
- 3) Once you are assigned a case what will you do? What do you think will be some of your casework activities?
- VI. How would you arrange your daily schedule to consistently remain actively involved in your case? *(Remind of necessity to follow through with GAL responsibilities such as attending hearings, meetings, ongoing gathering of information, making necessary visits, completing reports, etc.)*
- VII. What, if anything, would prevent you from attending scheduled court dates or important staffings or important meetings regarding the welfare of the child? *(If need to elaborate ask, "What do you qualify as an emergency?")*

INTERVIEWER: *Please make sure that you stress the importance of their attendance, especially at court hearings in the Court Program, since the judges want to hear from the volunteer, not an Advocacy Coordinator.*

- VII. Are you willing and able to commit to being a child's advocate for one year? This entails monthly visits, court appearances, timely and complete court reports and program reports, extensive phone calls and commitment to a permanent plan for the child.