CASA Roles
National – State – Local

National CASA/GAL Association Core Model

The National CASA/GAL Association is the membership organization of all CASA state and local programs in the U.S., the core model provides screened, trained, and qualified community volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children and youth who are before the court as a result of abuse or neglect as defined by the state child welfare laws, living at home or in out-of-home care. State statute takes precedence if it provides for the CASA/GAL volunteer to take other types of cases.

CASA/GAL best interest advocacy is driven by the guiding principle that children grow and develop best with their family of origin if that can be safely achieved. CASA/GAL volunteers serve children from birth through the age defined by state statute as the limit to youth remaining in care.

CASA/GAL volunteers advocate for children's best-interest through the following activities:

- Information gathering
- Visit the child at least monthly
- Collaborate and coordinate with legal, child welfare and other partners to assure service provision that is in the child's best interests
- Report to the court with recommendations regarding the child's placement and needed services
- Monitor the case until released by the court

CASA/GAL volunteers are:

- Screened per National CASA/GAL Association Standards
- Trained according to National CASA/GAL Association Training and Facilitation Standards
- Supported by staff or peer in accordance with National CASA/GAL Association Standard

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The Role of National CASA/GAL Association

The role of National CASA/GAL Association is to strategically establish, promote and support the formation, recruitment, training, development and activities of highly effective member programs.

- Establish, promote and support the formation, training, development and activities of highly effective state organizations
- In partnership with state organizations, strategically establish, promote and support the formation, recruitment, training, development and activities of highly effective local programs that work to provide high quality volunteers to act as the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) or guardians ad litem (GAL) for children and youth who come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect , and to advocate for their best interests, so that every child can be safe, have a permanent home, and the opportunity to thrive

- Establish membership criteria, policies and practices for all affiliations with the National CASA/GAL Association i.e., local programs, state organizations, auxiliaries, individual memberships, strategic alliances and partnerships
- Establish the core model for CASA/GAL advocacy
- Promote, manage, conduct and encourage evidence-based research, scholarship, education, training and the distribution of information in, between and among volunteer CASA and GAL programs
- Lead a child advocacy movement through public education and awareness regarding children and youth who have experienced abuse or neglect
- Develop and disseminate materials to promote the CASA/GAL program and increase the public's awareness resulting in increased volunteers, donors and other program supporters Build and protect the National CASA/GAL Association brand
- Establish CASA/GAL standards and ensure achievement through a quality assurance process
- Develop and provide a national standardized curriculum that trains volunteer advocates and staff to deliver positive outcomes for children
- Take the primary role in seeking federal funding and national policy to build capacity and advance the goals of the mission

- Build and grow the relationships with federal, state and tribal legislative, judicial and executive branches of government in furtherance of our mission
- Maintain, strengthen and deepen the relationships with partners to further the mission of the organization
- Develop roles and activities for local programs and state organizations and approves any ancillary activities
- Identify and promote the replication and spread of best practices and models in the provision of volunteer court-based advocacy for children who are victims of abuse and neglect

The Role of Texas CASA

Consistent with the National CASA/GAL Association mission and core model, Texas CASA:

Strategically support the formation, recruitment, training, development, and activities of local member programs that provide high quality volunteers to act as the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) or Guardians Ad Litem (GAL) for children and youth who come into the judicial system as a result of abuse or neglect, and to advocate for the best interests, so that every child can be safe, have a permanent home, and the opportunity to thrive.

Promote Awareness of the Organization and the Children Who Have Experienced Abuse and Neglect

- Increase statewide awareness of the CASA brand/movement
- Participate in statewide child welfare organizations in order to have a voice and serve as thought leaders
- Work with stakeholders to promote CASA/GAL movement and protect the CASA brand throughout the state in furtherance of our mission
- Collect, manage and compile data statewide for assessment, to inform planning and to report to external stakeholders

Support Local Programs

- Review local programs for quality and to determine what support is needed to meet state requirements and National CASA/GAL Association standards
- Be a model organization embodying the qualities expected by and of the local programs
- Provide technical assistance to local programs

- Assist programs in planning and execution to build capacity to serve more children including working with local programs in the development and execution of a strategy to stimulate statewide growth
- Involve and collaborate with local program leaders in state planning and strategizing
- Serve as a conduit of pass through Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and Health and Human Services (HHSC/CVC) funding

The Role of Local Programs

In partnership with Texas CASA and the local judiciary, provide a sound organizational framework to recruit, screen, train, supervise, support and retain court appointed special advocates (CASAs/GALs). These volunteers advocate for the best interests of children and youth who come into the judicial system as a result of abuse or neglect in their jurisdiction so that every child can be safe, have a permanent home, and the opportunity to thrive.

To that end, the role of a local program is to deliver the following as related to best-interest child advocacy:

Support Volunteers to Advocate for the Best Interests of Children Who Have Experienced Abuse and Neglect

- Mandate that child safety is a priority
- Engage and collaborate with parents and family members to maximize a child's connections and support
- Make recommendations for access to culturally-appropriate, therapeutic, age-appropriate, developmental, educational, medical and mental health services for each child to begin healing from their trauma
- Make recommendations to judges in regards to the appropriateness and safety of temporary placements
- Ensure each child has an adequate advocacy plan for normalcy, permanency and the opportunity to thrive
- Advocate for the child's best interests within the judicial system while maintaining confidentiality as prescribed by law
- Know the community resources, understand the children's needs and work to meet those needs
- Ensure that advocacy is provided for all aspects of the child's life

Raise Awareness

- Raise community awareness of child abuse and neglect issues
- Raise community awareness of the program's mission
- Provide education to the community, to include local and Tribal officials and state legislators, regarding CASA/GAL's role
- Create a positive presence in the community served
- Protect the CASA brand

Interact Effectively within the Judicial System and Community

- Create and maintain positive relationships within the judicial system and community stakeholders
- Educate, as needed and partner with judges on the role of CASA/GAL volunteers
- Understand and meet the judges' expectations of the CASA/GAL volunteers
- Ensure that all CASA/GAL staff and volunteers are advocating in compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)
- Build a rapport with other local child welfare stakeholders including State and Tribal child welfare agencies

Recruit, Screen, Train and Support Volunteers

- Train thoroughly screened volunteers according to National CASA/GAL Association research-informed curriculum and training standards
- Recruit, support, and celebrate volunteers with a variety of experiences and backgrounds that understand the needs of the community served.
- Ensure volunteers are effectively supervised
- Ensure volunteer advocates receive continuing education to expand their knowledge of those issues and practices that impact the children we serve

Ensure a Program with a Strong Foundation

- Be compliant with National CASA/GAL Association standards and existing State standards for quality assurance and reporting requirements
- Work actively and collaboratively with Texas CASA to support and achieve the mission of the CASA/GAL network
- Promote the value of CASA/GAL volunteers by demonstrating the ability for one person to make a positive impact in a child's life
- Build, maintain, and grow relationships with funders to secure diversified and sustainable funding