

Understanding the Role of Court Appointed Special Advocates in JDR Courts

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History of CASA

Program Created by Judges

Provides trained volunteers to advocate on behalf of children who are the subjects of juvenile court proceedings involving allegations of abuse and neglect.

In Virginia, CASA programs are regulated by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and comply with standards from the National CASA Association in Seattle.

Established in 1994, Henrico CASA is the largest of the 27 CASA programs in Virginia, serving between 350 and 400 children each year.



CASA 101





Legal Foundation / Mandate

Code of Virginia § 9.1-153

1. Investigate the case to provide independent factual information to the Court.
2. Submit a written report at hearings, including recommendations as to the child's welfare.
3. Monitor the case to ensure compliance with the Court's orders.
4. Assist the guardian ad litem in providing effective representation of the child's needs and best interests.
5. Report suspected abuse or neglect of a child.

Helping to uphold the legal Best Interests Standard and child welfare Minimum Level of Sufficiency Standard.

CASA's Role in the Child Welfare System

Engaging with Court Proceedings Va. Code. Ann. § 9.1-152

- Submit written reports
- Make recommendations

Collaborative Approach to Child Advocacy Va. Code. Ann. § 9.1-153

- Families, Attorneys, Social Services, Service Providers

Improving Long-term Outcomes

- Psychological wellbeing, school performance, reducing repeat maltreatment
- Appropriate services to the child and family
- Higher chance of reunification with family and for permanency.





Ensuring Effective Advocacy

Quality Considerations Va. Code. Ann. § 9.1-153

- Pass Rigorous Screening Process
- Complete 40 Hours of Classroom Training
- Daily Supervision by Staff Members
- Annual Continuing Education Requirements

Ethical Considerations

- Maintain Neutrality and Objectivity
- Respect Confidentiality and Privacy
- Navigate Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity

In Practice...

The CASA Model



Learn

Learn about the child and his or her life and current circumstances.



Engage

Engage with the child and family during regular visits in locations where the child lives or visits.



Collaborate

Collaborate with case professionals to ensure that necessary services are provided and are in the best interest of the child.



Report

Report what is observed to the Court.



Recommend

Make recommendations regarding placements and services for the child and family.



Holistic Advocacy

- Building trusting relationships with children and families
- Gathering comprehensive information and insights
- Speaking up for children in the courtroom and the community
- Identifying resources and services to support needs of children and families
- Working collaboratively with other case professionals



Achieving Impact

Working Collaboratively

- Leveraging Multidisciplinary Perspectives
- Sharing Expertise and Information for Comprehensive Advocacy

Embracing Challenges

- Navigating Different Professional Roles and Perspectives
- Effective Communication
- Overcoming Barriers to Achieve Common Goals



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Questions?



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