National CASA/GAL Core Model



The National CASA/GAL Association Core Model identifies the foundational elements of CASA/GAL best-interest advocacy. This includes our guiding principles, our work on behalf of the court, the types of cases served, the key activities performed by CASA/GAL volunteers, and the screening, training and supervision requirements.

THE NATIONAL CASA/GAL CORE MODEL:

Court-appointed volunteer advocacy is foundational to the National CASA/GAL Core Model¹. The CASA/GAL program provides screened, trained, and court appointed community volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children and youth who are involved in judicial proceedings related to abuse or neglect, as defined by child welfare laws, living at home or in out-of-home care. CASA/GAL volunteers/program may also serve other types of cases if allowed by State or Tribal laws. CASA/GAL volunteers serve children from birth through the age defined by state law, Tribal law or court rule as the limit to youth remaining in care.

CASA/GAL best-interest advocacy is driven by the guiding principle that children do best with a strong, stable and safe, permanent family. Family preservation and reunification are key components of CASA/GAL best-interest advocacy and are foundational to the well-being of children/youth with the understanding that children, youth and families experience trauma when separated. When children/youth are separated from their families, regular contact with their parents/caregivers, siblings, relatives and community are critical.

Grounded in the knowledge and understanding of the need for cultural humility and trauma-informed practices, with a commitment to family preservation, reunification and permanence, CASA/GAL volunteers advocate for children's best interests through the following activities:

- Meet in-person with the child/youth every 30 days at a minimum
- Gather information from and collaborate with the child/youth, family, professionals, and those with relevant information about the child/youth
- Assess and identify risks to inform needs for services and supports for the child/youth and family
- Ensure each child has advocacy to achieve permanency and the opportunity to thrive
- Provide up-to-date, independently obtained fact-based information/recommendations to the court that addresses the needs and best interests of the child/youth and build on strengths of their family, community and culture to help the judicial officer make the most well-informed decisions
- Provide the child's wishes/voice to the court
- Provide active advocacy and attend court hearings until directed otherwise by the court or released by the program

Qualified CASA/GAL volunteers are:

- Screened per National CASA/GAL Association Standards prior to and regularly throughout their service
- Trained in the National CASA/GAL research-informed pre-service curricula and according to National CASA/GAL Training and Facilitation Standards and meet annual continuing education requirements
- Supervised and supported by staff or peer in accordance with National CASA/GAL Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs

¹ CASA/GAL staff assigned to provide best interest advocacy to children is kept to a minimum. Staff and/or volunteer advocates serving children must adhere to the service provisions and standards required by the National CASA/GAL Association.

ii Family is an enduring relationship, whether biological or non-biological, chosen, or circumstantial, connecting a child/youth and parent/caregiver through culture, tradition, shared experiences, emotional commitment, and mutual support. (Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development)